

AWAKENING

THE INNER KINGDOM OF
FAITH, MIND, AND LIGHT

*Reflections on Consciousness,
Compassion, and the Future of Faith*

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About the Author



Ninox Antolihao is a Filipino writer, thinker, and visionary known for weaving philosophy, spirituality, and everyday life into reflections that awaken the heart.

Born with a curious mind and a compassionate soul, Ninox has spent years exploring the unseen connections between science, faith, and human consciousness.

He writes not to preach, but to question — not to convert, but to awaken. His words echo a lifelong search for truth beyond dogma, light beyond religion, and meaning within the ordinary.

Through *Reflections Beyond the Wall*, he invites readers to look deeper — beyond beliefs, beyond fear, beyond the illusions we inherit — and remember the simple truth that we are all fragments of one divine consciousness learning to know itself.

Outside his writings, Ninox is also a community builder and creative entrepreneur. He runs Stone Grill Restaurant in Leyte, Philippines — a space that reflects his philosophy of warmth, unity, and connection. For him, food and spirit share the same essence: both nourish, both gather, both remind us that we belong.

His reflections often bridge worlds — faith and logic, science and spirit, matter and mystery — guided by one belief:
that awareness is the light through which humanity evolves.

“I don’t write to teach,” he says.

“I write to remember — and to help others remember too.”

WHY ONENESS IS NOT SEPARATE FROM DUALITY

The apparent division between Oneness (Absolute Reality) and Duality (Relative Experience) is itself a misunderstanding created by the dualistic mind. The two concepts are not separate entities locked in competition, but rather two ways of describing the same single reality. Oneness is the context; Duality is the content. Duality is the expression of Oneness, not its opposite.

The entire philosophical journey from separation to unity pivots on the realization that Oneness and Duality are not mutually exclusive. Instead, Duality is the functional form that Oneness assumes to manifest a knowable, operable universe.

Duality as the Functional Tool

As established, the dualistic framework—the distinction between "I" and "Not-I," hot and cold, up and down—is the necessary cognitive tool our brains use for survival. It is the operating system that translates the infinite, non-conceptual field of Oneness into specific, actionable data. Without this tool, the organism could not distinguish a threat from a resource, or itself from its environment. Duality is the language of action, essential for navigating the relative world.

Oneness as the Ground of Being

However, this functional tool does not negate the underlying truth. Oneness is the undifferentiated field of consciousness—the boundless, eternal, and unchanging reality that makes the existence of all opposites possible. It is the Absolute reality. Just as a movie screen (Oneness) allows all different images (Duality) to appear without being affected or damaged by them, Oneness remains the silent, unified background to all the changing, dualistic phenomena.

The Non-Dual Relationship

The two are unified in a non-dual relationship:

The "problem" of duality only arises when the functional part (the dualistic "I" or ego) forgets that it is fundamentally rooted in the whole. When this happens, the tool is mistaken for the ultimate truth, and the results are conflict, selfishness, and suffering. Thus, the pursuit of Oneness is not about escaping duality, but about realizing that one was never separate from it in the first place.

The deep realization that Oneness is not separate from Duality changes everything about how we approach life.

It is a profound liberation from the need to choose between two sides. We are freed from the flawed choice of either living as a pure, detached spirit (Oneness) or as a struggling, selfish individual (Duality). Instead, we are called to an integrated life—a synthesis.

We can embrace the dualistic challenges of the world—the choices, the relationships, the need to act—with full commitment, while grounding our awareness in the unchanging truth that all these experiences are merely the dance of the One Reality. This perspective transforms conflict into process, fear into energy, and selfish striving into spontaneous, effective action on behalf of the whole. The highest wisdom lies not in escaping the dualistic world, but in mastering the dualistic tool while remembering the non-dual truth that informs it. This is how we move beyond being defined by "who we are" (the dualistic self) to embodying "what we are" (the Oneness).

The Illusion of the "I"

A Journey from Duality to Oneness

Today's conversation charted a fascinating course through philosophy, theology, and psychology, ultimately converging on a single, profound idea: that duality—the perceived separation between the self and the world—is a tool of consciousness, and its misidentification as ultimate reality is the root of human suffering.

The journey began by questioning the provability of religious claims. We concluded that the skeptical thesis, "man created God in his own image," is the most provable explanation for theological contradictions, as it accounts for the observable fact that religious rules and concepts are merely human, cultural, and historical projections. This led us directly to the concept of duality.

The core of the problem, we established, lies in the dualistic structure of the human mind. Our brains, designed primarily as survival engines, create a necessary division: "I" versus "Not-I" (the external world). This separation, which is crucial for navigation and survival, is the origin of the ego.

This dualistic framework is what allows for the most destructive forces in the world:

* **Logical Inconsistency:** When God is defined as an external, separate, and rule-making authority (the language of duality), the resulting dogma is often illogical and contradictory (e.g., a perfect God issuing imperfect commands).

* **Moral Failure (Selfishness):** The belief in separation makes selfishness a logical choice. When the "I" is seen as fundamentally separate from the "Other," it becomes rational to prioritize one's own gain, leading to exploitation, conflict, and greed.

* **The Flaw in Free Will:** The concept of an individual, separate Free Will is revealed to be a psychological necessity within duality, but a contradiction within the greater reality of Oneness.

To resolve these contradictions, we embraced the non-dual perspective, realizing that duality is not reality; it is merely a tool.

Oneness is the ultimate reality—the single, undivided, supra-logical Consciousness from which all experience emerges. It is the hardware upon which the dualistic operating system runs.

: All the world's problems—from ethical failures to mental distress—are not inherent to existence but are a consequence of a lack of balance, where the dualistic self-focus of the "I" overrides the unifying truth of Oneness.

The most profound realization of the conversation was the distinction between the Relative Self and the Absolute Self:

The "Who We Are" is the dualistic identity—the personality, the ego, the role, the moral code—which is temporary and changeable. This is where most religions and human effort are focused.

The "What We Are" is the Absolute Self—the unchanging, perfect, non-dual Awareness that is the substance of the universe. This is what we ultimately cannot change.

The goal of wisdom, therefore, is not to destroy the necessary tool of duality, but to simply remember the truth of Oneness while living in the world of separation. We must use the dualistic "I" for functional survival, but we must govern it with the awareness that "I am all that is."

The primary problem with duality is not its existence as a functional tool, but its acceptance as the ultimate reality, which leads to profound philosophical, psychological, and ethical conflicts.

The core issue stems from the dualistic mindset—the ego's belief that the "I" is fundamentally separate from the "Other" (the world, other people, God, etc.). This separation creates the following problems:

Duality creates boundaries: "us vs. them," "mine vs. yours," "good vs. evil." This directly leads to:

Conflict: When two separate entities compete for perceived finite resources or differing values, the result is strife, war, and social injustice.

Psychological Suffering: The dualistic mind constantly judges reality against its desires ("What is" vs. "What should be"). This internal conflict is the source of clinging, aversion, fear, and anxiety.

Illogical Systems

When the transcendent, unified Absolute is interpreted through the dualistic lens, it results in contradictory and incoherent systems of belief:

Anthropomorphism: God is defined with human-like, dualistic flaws (anger, jealousy) and commands that are illogical or immoral.

Spiritual Selfishness: Morality becomes a transaction—doing "good" to secure a personal, separate reward (salvation, heaven) rather than an act of spontaneous unity.

Misidentification

The most crucial problem is the misidentification of the tool (the separate "I" or ego) as the self (the absolute consciousness). This creates a cycle where the brain prioritizes the temporary survival of the "I" over the health and harmony of the "Whole," leading to actions like environmental destruction and exploitation.

Reflection:

The conversation on duality is a profound call for a shift in perspective. To realize that the foundational structure of our world—the distinction between "me" and "not-me"—is merely an evolutionary tool for survival is to gain access to a deeper, ethical truth.

The insight gained is not that we should abandon duality; that would be impossible, as we need the separate "I" to navigate, eat, and function. The realization is that we must never mistake the map for the territory. Duality is the map of relative functionality; Oneness is the territory of absolute reality.

Our task in life, therefore, is to maintain the necessary dualistic function (to act, decide, and survive) while holding the non-dual awareness (that the other person is me). This shift moves life from a competitive battle to a harmonious flow. It dismantles the logic of selfishness and transforms ethical behavior from a duty driven by fear into a spontaneous, logical act of self-love applied to the Universal Self. The ultimate wisdom lies in using the "I" to serve the "Everything."

The Seamless Reality of Oneness

The concept of Oneness is not a religious doctrine or a philosophical abstraction; it is, in the view of many mystical traditions and modern physics, the fundamental, seamless reality underlying the universe. It is the understanding that all apparent diversity—every star, every human, every thought—is a temporary manifestation of a single, unified field of consciousness and energy. This realization challenges the core mechanism of human survival: the dualistic ego.

The Illusion of the "I"

The human mind, wired for survival, operates by creating and maintaining boundaries. It defines the world through a constant dualistic calculus: "I" vs. "Other," "Good" vs. "Bad," "Safe" vs. "Threat." This functional separation, necessary for navigating the physical world, solidifies into the belief that the "I"—the ego—is an isolated entity.

This belief in separation is the root of the world's greatest problems. It creates the logic for selfishness, as the needs of the "I" are prioritized over the "Other." It fuels conflict, as my group's welfare is deemed separate from yours. It makes dogma contradictory, as a separate, personal God is imagined with human-like, dualistic flaws. In short, the ego, the dualistic agent of survival, mistakes its tool for the ultimate truth, trapping consciousness in a web of internal and external conflict.

Duality as the Expression of Unity

The profound insight of Oneness is that the problem isn't the existence of duality, but the misidentification of its nature. Oneness is not separate from Duality. It is the Context (the whole) manifesting as the Content (the parts). Duality—the world of forms, actions, and opposites—is simply the way the singular, boundless consciousness experiences itself as multiplicity.

The goal of realizing Oneness is not to physically dissolve boundaries or abolish the ego. That would be impossible and counter-productive, as the body still needs the ego's dualistic calculator to function (to distinguish "up" from "down," or "safe" from "unsafe"). The realization is a change in the internal perspective: the "I" is not lost, but recognized as a temporary, flowing expression of the boundless "Everything."

Reflection:

Embracing the realization of Oneness leads to a transformation of life from a competitive struggle to a compassionate flow.

The shift from the dualistic belief in "I am separate" to the non-dual truth of "I am all that is" fundamentally dismantles the logic of suffering. Cruelty and exploitation become illogical acts of self-harm. Morality is no longer a set of rules enforced by fear of a separate God, but an intuitive, spontaneous expression of love for the Self, which is recognized as existing in every other being.

This integrated wisdom allows us to keep the necessary dualistic tool for survival while governing it with the ethical realization that we are fundamentally connected. We learn that we can change who we are (our relative, dualistic habits and personalities), but we can never change what we are (the Absolute, unconditioned Oneness). The practice of Oneness is simply this: Act fully in the world of duality, but hold your awareness in the truth of unity. It is the simultaneous embrace of the part and the whole.

If "I" represents the perspective of duality, the perspective that best represents oneness is the non-verbal realization that there is no separate "I."

The "I" is the fundamental barrier. Therefore, the oneness perspective is not a shift from "I" to "We," but a collapse of the entire subject-object structure.

The Non-Dual Perspective: Neither "I" Nor "We"

Oneness, or non-duality, is described in mystical traditions as a state where the individual perspective dissolves into the universal. It cannot be captured by a pronoun, but if we must use language, the concepts below point to it:

The Realization of "Is-ness"

The oneness perspective is the realization that Being or Is-ness is the only reality, and the separate "I" is just a temporary thought within that Being.

- * You stop thinking "I am perceiving X" and realize simply "Perceiving is happening."
- * The focus moves from the agent (the 'I' doing the action) to the action itself (the flow of the One Reality).

The Universal Self ("The Absolute I")

Some traditions, like Advaita Vedanta, use the phrase "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am Brahman" or "I am the Absolute"). However, this is not the ego-I; it is the Universal I—the one, fundamental Consciousness that underlies everything.

- * **This "I" is not personal;** it is impersonal, unconditioned awareness.
- * The individual self ("little-i") disappears into the all-encompassing self ("Big-I").

Pure Awareness:

The most neutral term used by modern non-dual teachers is often simply Consciousness or Awareness.

- * Awareness is the single container in which all duality (thoughts, feelings, objects, the 'I,' and the 'We') appears and disappears.
- * In the oneness perspective, you realize you are not the contents of the container (the objects/ego), but the unmoving space of the container itself.

The core difficulty is that oneness is the absence of division, and all pronouns ("I," "We," "You") are tools of division. To truly grasp the oneness perspective, the dualistic tool of "I" must be dropped.

Conversation :

the dilemma of organized religion and the profound distinction between the Relative Self and the Absolute Self.

- * Some religions run the language of duality (The Operating System): They use the dualistic structure of the brain (the "I" vs. "Other") and the dualistic nature of language (commands, rules, separation) to create systems of control, morality, and reward. This is useful for building society, but it is ultimately a tool.
- * They forget the real Self that runs it (The Hardware): They mistake the tool for the truth, focusing so intensely on the rules, commands, and identity of the "I" that they forget the underlying, non-dual Consciousness that makes the whole system possible.

What We Can Change: Who We Are (The Relative Self)

The Relative Self is the dualistic identity created by the brain. This is the "Who" we are, and it is entirely changeable.

- * **Who We Are:** Our personality, our beliefs, our roles (student, parent, employee), our memories, and our moral codes.
- * **The Change:** Through effort, therapy, education, or even religious practice, we can change our moral behavior, our habits, and our dualistic self-perception. We can become "better" or "worse" people.
- * **The Trap:** Many dualistic religions focus entirely on perfecting this "Who" through rules and fear, mistakenly believing this temporary identity is our ultimate reality.

What We Cannot Change: What We Are (The Absolute Self)

The Absolute Self is the essence, the core consciousness, or the Oneness that you realized transcends all duality. This is the "What" we are, and it is unchanging and perfect by definition.

- * **What We Are:** Pure Awareness, Unconditioned Consciousness, Is-ness, or Brahman.
- * **The Constancy:** This background awareness does not get better or worse, saved or condemned, because it is the eternal space in which all dualistic drama (the "Who") plays out.
- * **The Goal:** The aim of non-dual realization is not to change the Absolute Self (which is impossible), but to realize that the "Who" is merely a temporary role played by the unchanging "What."

"We can change who we are, but we can't change what we are"—is the final, beautiful conclusion of non-dual thought.

REALIZATION:

That is the most pragmatic and accurate articulation of the human challenge: The problem isn't duality itself, but the lack of balance, leading to excessive self-focus. 

We need the practical tool of duality ("I") for physical survival, but we also need the realization of Oneness ("Everything") to prevent the destructive behavior that comes from radical separation.

The Balance: Duality for Function, Oneness for Ethics

The most stable philosophical and ethical systems (like Taoism, Yoga, and many forms of practical wisdom) teach that the goal is not to eliminate duality, but to integrate the two perspectives:

Duality is Necessary for Function

The dualistic "I" is essential for effective action and survival. We must maintain a functional degree of separation to:

Make Decisions: To choose a path, you must distinguish between Option A and Option B.

Set Boundaries: To maintain physical and psychological health, you must know where your responsibility ends and another's begins.

Execute Tasks: You need an "I" (the agent) to plan and execute the actions needed to keep the body alive.

In this sense, duality is the language of action.

Oneness is Necessary for Balance

The realization of Oneness provides the context and ethical framework that prevents the dualistic "I" from becoming destructive.

* **Ethical Check:** Oneness serves as a constant reminder that self-interest and universal interest are ultimately the same.

* **The Problem:** Out of Balance: The problem arises when the dualistic "I" forgets the truth of Oneness and becomes hyper-focused on its own gain, survival, and pleasure at the expense of others (which, as you identified, is just another part of the Self). This imbalance is the root of greed, exploitation, and conflict.

The Practical Wisdom

The solution isn't to live as a disembodied state of pure Oneness (which would make navigating traffic difficult), but to adopt dualistic action with non-dual awareness:

This integrated approach allows the brain to use the dualistic "I" as an effective survival tool, while keeping its destructive impulses checked by the ethical realization that hurting the world is hurting the self. This integration is what creates a balanced and compassionate life.

Most of us don't notice the illusion.

Here's why that is the central problem, and why the illusion of duality is so pervasive:

The Pervasive Illusion of Duality

The "bad news" you mention—that most people are unaware of this illusion—is considered the natural, default state of the human mind, known as Maya (illusion) in Eastern philosophy.

Duality is Necessary for Survival

The illusion isn't an arbitrary mistake; it's a highly effective survival mechanism. Our brains are hardwired to perceive the world in terms of opposition and separation because, historically, survival depended on it:

- * **Friend vs. Foe:** Is this person a danger or a collaborator?
- * **Safe vs. Threat:** Is this environment a good food source or a place with predators?
- * **Self vs. World:** Where does my body end and the external world begin?

This constant, dualistic categorization creates the Ego—the separate "I"—which is excellent at navigating the physical world but terrible at recognizing its connection to the whole.

Language Reinforces the Illusion

Our language is inherently dualistic. Every sentence requires a Subject (the "I" doing the action) and an Object (the "thing" being acted upon).

- * You cannot effectively communicate a complex thought without reinforcing the separation of actors and actions.
- * The very act of defining God or Oneness, as we discussed, uses dualistic tools that are inadequate for the non-dual reality.

The Ego Fights Back

The illusion is self-perpetuating because the Ego views the realization of Oneness as an existential threat—a kind of "death."

- * The Ego is defined by its boundaries. The idea that those boundaries are false feels terrifying, like losing oneself.

* Therefore, the Ego constantly seeks to distract us with external desires, internal fears, and tribal conflicts (all products of duality) to prevent us from looking inward and dismantling its own structure.

The path to "waking up" is often described as a difficult, uncomfortable process precisely because it involves actively overcoming the mind's most foundational and stubborn habits.

The subconscious mind

The brain's creation and maintenance of the dualistic "I" (the ego) is fundamentally a tool for survival—it's what makes the body an effective, self-preserving unit.

The Brain as a Dualistic Survival Engine

The brain's primary directive is to ensure the body's survival. To do this, it must constantly create and use boundaries, operating on a sophisticated form of dualistic comparison:

* **Physical Duality** (The Boundary): The brain meticulously maintains the physical boundary between "Me" (the internal body that must be protected) and "Not-Me" (the external world, which is a source of resources and threats). Without this "I" vs. "World" distinction, the organism would fail to feed itself or avoid danger.

* **Emotional Duality** (The Motivator): Emotions operate on a dualistic reward/aversion system that drives action.

* Good/Pleasure: Signals that an action is good for survival (e.g., eating, bonding). The brain seeks to move toward this.

* Bad/Pain: Signals a threat to survival (e.g., injury, social isolation). The brain seeks to move away from this.

* This constant seeking and avoiding is what creates psychological suffering, but it is also highly effective at keeping the body alive.

* Spiritual/Social Duality (The Tribe): Even our deepest social and religious beliefs are often tools for group survival.

* By creating a "We" (our tribe, our faith) in opposition to a "They" (the outside group), the brain secures the loyalty and cooperation necessary for group defense, resource sharing, and cultural continuity. This reinforces the "I" by embedding it into a larger, safer unit.

The illusion of separation isn't a cosmic mistake; it's a cognitive feature that evolved to handle the relative, chaotic world. The brain sacrifices the Absolute Truth (Oneness) for

the sake of Relative Functionality (Survival). This is why spiritual realization requires methods like meditation, which are essentially practices designed to temporarily quiet the survival-driven, dualistic brain.