THE DR. BRONNER'S BOTTLE

"It is all the mind can do -
discover the unreal as unreal.
The problem is only mental.
Abandon false ideas, that is all.
There is no need of true ideas.
There aren't any."
- Nisargadatta Maharaj

SO WHAT THEN, AFTER ALL, is there to say? Very little. The seeker community is daft about teachers and teachings and seeking and awakening, but from here quite obviously there is nothing to seek and nothing to teach. The whole grand show goes on, and even while this body/mind is very much part of the show, there is now a seeing it all from a very different perspective. It is clear that it is not the body/minds that are seeing.

There is no ‘point,’ no ‘purpose.’ Dream characters, characters in a movie, in this soap opera, spend their lives in anguish trying to discover their purpose. Take themselves
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so seriously! There is a witnessing, and a knowing that all the suffering, all the anguish, the yearning, the loss, the pain, the confusion, the hurt, the trying so damn hard, is all dreamstuff, all created by us in our attempts to get ourselves out of what we are not in.

Self-improvement, spiritual practice, seeking, attempts to walk the path, to follow the way; all attempts to dig ourselves out of a hole we create by the trying. It's like quicksand; the struggling is instinctive, and we think it helps, but actually it is itself the problem. The struggling, the seeking, is the sense of individual self trying to keep telling its story. There is nothing to seek. Separation is the illusion; there is nothing to be separate, no-thing. There is only One, not-two, and That Is. All else is not. And That not-two that Is is what is 'I,' here. All there Is is no-thing, This This-ness, This I-ness, which 'I' is, which is All That Is.

"I trust I make myself obscure?" It's really not the intention, but do you see why I prefer to go about my work and not talk about this much, why so much of what everyone is involved in makes so little sense; why it is so difficult even to understand questions and sometimes impossible to answer them? Everybody's running around everywhere thinking they actually exist! It's the silliest damn thing that's ever been seen! And anything that I can say all comes out gibberish ranting, sounds like reading the label on the bottle of Dr. Bronner's soap that you can find in health food stores. "All One, Eternally One, All One or none! Exceptions Eternally? Absolute none!" And so on, ad infinitum; it's great stuff, but does anyone take it seriously? The man's raving!

There is a very beautiful phrase in the Islamic Call to

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Prayer that sums up and expresses this as best as can be done. "La 'illa ha il' Allahu." Since the root of the name for God, 'Allah,' is the same as the word for 'What Is,' the phrase can be translated any number of ways, all of them correct. "There is no God but God." "There is no reality but God." "There is nothing which is not God." "What Is, is God." "All there is, is What Is." Great stuff, but does anyone really understand?

As there is no 'purpose,' so also it is obvious that 'you,' 'me,' all of 'us,' are not 'doing' anything. Nevertheless the sense is that it is somehow 'right' that 'we' appear to be here... after all, Consciousness is dreaming this, with all the beauty and pain and wonder, so how can it be other than right and beautiful? It's so funny, and nobody gets it. When I say, "it doesn't matter," and, "there is no purpose," some people get angry: "Well then, what's the point of being here? Why get up in the morning?" While in fact the experience is that it is all more beautiful, and more clear, and more simple and enjoyable, even the hard parts, than it ever was before this seeing. Yes, even the chaos and violence and insanity in life. Feeling love and compassion and sadness or anger or revulsion are all so much more clearly felt and deeply experienced without the involvement as to what this might mean or what might result. And yet they also pass more quickly, without a sense of importance or apparent attachment. This awakening

"...doesn't mean that you can't feel desire, hurt, pain, joy, happiness, suffering or sorrow. You can still feel all of those; they just don't convince you." (Ken Wilber)

There seems to be an idea among seekers that after awakening, life presents you with a different set of experiences,
and in particular that the experience of emotions flattens out or goes away. But that's not true. A visual aid that comes to mind to describe this is a graph with a scale going from zero on the bottom to ten on the top. During life your emotional state fluctuates and may be anywhere on this graph, from the pits of despair at zero to the heights of pure joy at ten. What happens when the Understanding occurs is not that the range of experience flattens out, but rather something very different. The range of emotion from zero to ten is still experienced; it's just that there is now an awareness that this range is not all there is. The graph of zero to ten, it is seen, sits on top of an immense range extending down to a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, an infinite expanse which supports and carries that zero to ten range of human emotion and experience. That range is still felt in its totality, but it is seen and felt that that totality is of insignificant amplitude, barely a squiggle on the surface of the infinity of All That Is.

With the understanding that it is all a dream, that there exists nothing other than All That Is, you then re-enter the dream. Like Neo at the end of the movie The Matrix: re-enter and continue in the game, with full knowledge that the individual is not 'real.' I used to think that we 'forget' in order to experience separation from the One. We forget all right, but we simply forget that there is no separation to experience; that not only everything that the individual apparently experiences, but also the individual itself, is a fiction, a thought bubble, lila, God's play.

Many seekers, when they begin to understand on an intellectual level that all of this is as a dream, quickly come up with the question, "Well then, how do I get out of the dream?" As if that is the next logical step. As if the mind
thinking this, the one realizing that this is a dream, is not itself illusory, part of the dream. Anything that can arise here in the dream, including thoughts like these and characters like the one you call your 'self,' are necessarily themselves dream thoughts and dream characters. Nisargadatta Maharaj:

"The very idea of going beyond the dream is illusory. Why go anywhere? Just realize that you are dreaming a dream you call the world, and stop looking for ways out. The dream is not your problem. Your problem is that you like one part of the dream and not another. When you have seen the dream as a dream, you have done all that needs to be done."

But just because these 'minds,' here in the dream, are conditioned to think in terms of dualism does not mean they are not capable of thinking otherwise. Just that it is a very unusual and sometimes awkward transition requiring much stretching of boundaries.

It is interesting that most Advaitic teachers do not talk of 'the One.' The word a-dvaita means 'not two,' and that is the phrase that is used. To say God and creation, or Unmanifest Source and the manifestation, or What-Is and the dream, are 'not two' seems at first a little awkward, but it is used this way to address a certain maddening confusion that can arise, in which 'oneness' can be taken to represent the dualistic opposite of separation. In phenomenon, the manifestation, one half of a dualistic pair cannot exist without the other; so in that sense one can think there has to be separation in order for there to be oneness. But beyond dualism, in unitive consciousness, unity and separation are 'not two;' Consciousness and the manifestation are 'not two;' there is only unity; separation has never existed.
Our minds have also been trained to think in terms of causation: "The watch implies a watchmaker." However, there is that consistent thread of the perennial teaching in which this is seen as an unnecessary and unjustified leap. The dream does not necessarily imply a dreamer. A Buddhist text says, "No doer is there who does the deed." And there is a phrase in Taoism in which the Tao is described as "the web that has no weaver." This is actually the key. The idea that there is witnessing but no entity of any kind to be a witnesser is incomprehensible to our minds as they have been trained. However that does not mean that this understanding is impossible. If that shift happens, and it is understood at the deepest possible level that there is no individual doing, thinking, experiencing anything, then nothing else need be understood, nothing else need be done.

Realizing always that these are all concepts only and not the Truth. Concepts don't matter. Experiences, even experiences of awakening, don't matter. Because all concepts and all experiences are dreamstuff. All that matters is the Understanding: as Nisargadatta said, the Understanding is all. Because the Understanding is the single point at which What Is (what is not the dream) intersects what is not (what is the dream.)

The funny thing is, you can't get there from here. Or at least, don't ask me. I was blinded, hijacked, shanghaied in the jungle. And even then, I didn't get 'there.' I was taken 'here,' where 'I' have always been. There is no 'there.' There is only here. Wei Wu Wei writes that there is no 'path' to follow, because all paths lead from here to there, and thus lead away from All That Is, from the only place there is to be, from home. There is no path that leads from here to here. Which is why no practice or study or devotion or
learning or work or anything 'you' can 'do' on a 'path' will ever get 'you' 'there.' You are already Here.

In traditional Advaita, jnana yoga follows the questions, Who am I? (Or perhaps, Who am I not?), Who is experiencing? Who's the dreamer?... And rather than asking them rhetorically, follows them as a mantra, insistently, persistently, to where they lead. Many teachers say that these are precisely the questions which, if followed persistently, can get you there. Maybe. But don't ask me.

In my case there is a pure, clear, deep simplicity to it all. In satsang, on the 'path' of jnana yoga, the idea is to incessantly ask questions, to back your mind into some kind of corner where it will finally be forced beyond itself. I've tried it, during the time when I was learning how to think about what happened in the jungle, and I've tried to take it seriously, but from this perspective it's nonsense. There are no questions that are not immediately answered by the realization that that question, all questions, are empty thoughts. There is no individual understanding this or questioning it. Life appears to happen: thoughts, feelings, actions, experiences. There is no individual doing anything, thinking anything, experiencing anything. Once this is seen, questions just don't hold up.

All there Is, is Presence. And I Am That. You had a question?

The Dr. Bronner's bottle again. It really is pretty funny.

You can get caught up in this and make a lifetime out of it: path, no path; questions, no questions; enlightenment, no enlightenment; and it will still all be nothing, nonsense.
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All there is now is for life, the dream, the illusion, to continue to happen while it continues to happen. For enjoyment and appreciation and gratitude to happen. To be in openness in *Sat Chit Ananda* to the Love Compassion Gratitude Outpouring. To rave with Dr. Bronner and Rumi. To know, deeply, that everything simply is; and that the 'I' which knows this is not 'me,' which is not: It is All That Is.