



Reality Check By Helen Hamilton

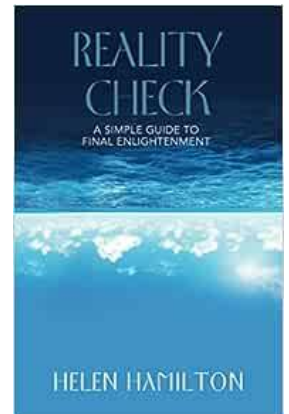
Introduction

How to use/study this book

It may be helpful to read the notes in this guide first before reading each chapter in the main book. Just reading through the book slowly, along with these notes, with an intention to understand deeper but with no struggle is the most effective way to do this. None of us need to work hard at this; repetition is the key rather than effort. Just reading in an open and relaxed way.

These notes are meant to be used after reading each chapter of the book.

Reality Check – by Helen Hamilton [link](#)



Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Reality Check” was written to help us understand the first and last duality or set of opposites. This last idea of mind (or the first one formed) is not something we are consciously thinking and yet pervades our whole belief system, our lives and most definitely our awakening to a full and final Truth. The duality appears as the sense that the invisible, formless Silence we perceive in our meditation is opposite to and totally different to the world we see when we open our eyes after meditation is complete. Form and formless are two separate things according to this belief. Silence and sound are too opposites seemingly, awareness is different to the objects I am aware of (such as thoughts). There are countless ways we could describe this and no matter how we do define it, we will notice it running our whole lives if we are willing to see. In my own awakening, for the longest time I had a resentment to having to still live in the world after a clear seeing of what I really am. I didn’t want to go out to work in my business (as I was doing then) and I hated having to come out of the bliss I found during my meditation. Opening my eyes and moving about again was sure to lead to thoughts, suffering and negative emotions. The physical world seemed to be so harsh, unforgiving and bleak that I could not even begin to consider it would ever reveal itself to me as my very own Self. I didn’t even want to look at it. This is why it took me so long to see that everything I experience is none-other than my own Self and that the world is safe, beautiful, abundant, loving and reflecting constantly what I think and feel about myself. So when you open your eyes after meditation, do you feel a desire to stay in the peaceful place of just the Silence? Do you wish you had more time to just sit and soak in the Beingness? Are you rushing back home after work and doing what you need to do before you can sit down and get into the “real stuff” of meditation and inquiry? If you are like I was then you may find a feeling deep down that all your life is just the necessary stuff that needs to get done so that you can get to the important stuff of awakening.

This desire to meditate more, to move away from the world, to seclude ourselves and live in an ashram or monastery is simply the desire emerging to transcend this final duality. We want to never come out of meditation, even when at work, with our families, on the food shopping, in a busy airport and even around the Christmas dinner table with our extended family. This is a holy desire and it is intense and powerful when we really see what it is that we want. We do not really want to escape the physical world. We want to escape the world in our heads of believing in the names and labels we have for everything. When we forget that the world appears inside us then we lose our peace. When we forget what the world really is made of and that these objects of perception are the same stuff as the perceiver, then we divide ourselves into two and it hurts. It never hurts more than when we REALLY want to know the Truth. When we are subtly or overtly rejecting the whole world as “not me” then we will feel the spiritual pain of the division into two (me and other) more than ever. We will be caught in an impossible conundrum of wanting the Self so much and yet vigorously rejecting how the Self is showing up as the worldly/daily life that we have. This rejection is only because we are still thinking about the world, rather than actually experiencing it. This comes from the idea that we are moving around in a world of forms which are different to (and separate from) the unmanifest from which they arose. We are believing the myth of creation and feeling the two-ness of form and formless. The only way out of this is to move beyond this last duality and deeply see that everything is completely empty of substance at its essence. No thing exists separate to the essence it arose out of, as no wave is separate to the ocean it rises out of.

Traditionally, in awakening, this last duality has been transcended by very few beings, relatively speaking. If we look at the number of people that start along the path compared to the number of those who live in Absolute freedom, total peace and bliss whether they are sitting in deep meditation or flying across the world, working their job or raising a family, we will see it is less than a few percent. “Reality Check” was written to help this last and yet most fundamental of all duality be revealed clearly. There are many reasons why this duality of “form vs formless” seems to be so challenging to transcend and we do not have the space to go into them all here but let’s look at the most important one briefly. There is a mass belief in the human species and spiritual community that it is rare to enlighten completely and fully. We see only a few beings achieving this and we hold them up as heroes and role models but usually with the sense that they have achieved something extraordinarily difficult and used some super human skills in the process. It is this very

belief that keeps this experience being common to all humanity. If we actually look at our life as our awakening deepens, we will see the active part of our awakening getting simpler all the time. In the end it comes down to seeing what we really are and questioning the truth and relevance of any old belief. This stage of our awakening is no different. We are simply now being asked to question deeply if there ever was two, if formlessness ever actually became form, if creation ever actually happened. All this is then is a simple focus on one idea and questioning it as long as is needed and we have done that many times already!

Where the Sage lives is the simplest, easiest “place” of all. The sage knows only one thing - “there is nothing other than me, the formless Awareness”. Sagehood then could be said to be living in this simplicity permanently and effortlessly because it has been chosen from all the other options consistently until it becomes a habit. The Sage has formed a habit to perceive Reality, rather than think about it. Like any habit, it eventually becomes effortless, fun and easy. We are all Sages. Our inner Sage is moving into view and taking over our life, filling it with wonder and joy. There is nobody who can fail at this and we must only stop believing it is hard to do. Just because we see evidence that only a few beings ever fully wake up (perhaps one or two in every generation) does not mean it is true! If it is what we already are AND what everything is, then how can it be hard to realise it? As we step into our study of this book, let’s try to keep this viewpoint as often as possible. After all, this book is only helping what is ALREADY unfolding and is not going to start or cause it.

Chapter 2 Discovering That You Are Formless

This chapter of the book takes us through how to best use the tool of self-inquiry. I do not want to repeat that in these notes but rather to use this space to remind us about resistance. Resistance will arise to all authentic spiritual practice even for those that have been practising for years. Resistance is from the mind and it is because the mind feels we are safer if things do not change. If we expect resistance in our practice we will not be at the effect of it but aware of it. Resistance can come in many forms, some subtle and some will be more obvious.

Self-inquiry is one of the most direct methods to awaken to the Truth and as such we may have more resistance to this than anything else we may practise. We may feel that we do not know how to do it, that we cannot get a clear answer or that we need to do self-inquiry with a teacher who can help us. All of these are subtle forms of resistance to starting inquiry. We may notice even more resistance when we have really become quite proficient in our inquiry because here is where the separate sense of self may feel most threatened. This kind of resistance may be much more subtle and manifest in various ways, such as not feeling interested in doing any inquiry, feeling lazy or sleepy, noticing that there is always something else that seems to need doing before we can get started or restlessness during inquiry.

Perhaps the most powerful resistance of all will come in the form of arrogance in the mind. It is very common to feel “I have done inquiry many times before. I don’t need to do it again. I’ve seen what the Self is.” It is important to know that every time we directly experience what we are, we will see it even clearer than last time and the Self will reveal something else about its nature to us if we are open to see. There is a never-ending beautiful unfolding of revelation that becomes such a joy to see and we will miss out on this if we let our mind cheat us out of it. Mind isn’t deliberately trying to sabotage us in this case, it just innocently assumes that (as in the world of form) once you have seen the Self, that is all there is to see. This could not be further from the truth but the mind cannot understand this.

We can avoid getting caught in resistance at any stage along our journey if we simply expect resistance and understand why it is happening. It does not mean that anything is going wrong or that we are not doing our practice correctly, in fact it means we are really progressing and things are beginning to deepen for us. If we are aware of resistance it will not be able to slow us down.

One final note before we dive into this chapter of the book. Finding out what you really are is formlessness requires us to be willing to see this. Living as this formlessness requires us to be

willing to give up thoughts that define us as a “someone”. At some point we will have to let go of these thoughts but not all at once. We can let go of them bit by bit as we see they are not true. Seeing what we really are helps us to let go of beliefs we have held for a long time about ourselves because we see they are not true.

Chapter 3 What Does It Mean to Be Formless?

Going beyond pleasure and pain

To reach the fullest awakening possible for a human being we must be willing to go beyond all thoughts that we have previously believed. Most of us readily let go of thoughts that are causing us pain but resist transcending thoughts that are pleasurable at first to believe, such as “I am really starting to understand this” or “I am waking up much faster now” or even “I didn’t believe that thought at all!” To go even deeper we must be willing to give up thoughts that give us a momentary pleasure to entertain them and not be attached to pleasure. This is easy to do when you realise that if you believe the thoughts that feel good, you will also have to eventually trade that pleasure for painful experiences. Whenever we live in a dualistic way (which is when we believe any thoughts!) we will have to experience the opposite soon and often. That is the nature of duality or the sense of opposites. When I enjoy believing the thought “My awakening is really deepening now!” I will have to experience “My awakening seems to have stalled out” or even “I am going backwards!” You simply cannot have the pleasurable thoughts without the painful ones.

Take a moment now to notice which pleasurable thoughts you believe on a regular basis. Notice those thoughts that sneak in during a deep meditation and promise you progress, fulfilment and peace and yet must come with the experience of disturbance and suffering. Perhaps the very next moment, after we come out of our meditation, we experience anger or fear arising and notice the thought “I have lost my peace!”

See if you can recognise some pleasurable thoughts you may have:

- Which thoughts do you think about your awakening overall?
- Which thoughts make you feel good when you compare yourself to others?
- Which thoughts make you feel superior to others?
- Which judgements of others driving, clothing choices etc do you indulge in?

As we notice these thoughts, we can simply notice without judging ourselves. These are simply places that we have traded eternal joy for momentary pleasure. Nothing is wrong with this and we are simply noticing so we can detach from these thoughts and find peace and joy. Do we want a 10 second roller coaster pleasure ride or a fulfilled lifetime of eternal peace, love, joy and abundance? In these small choices, our awakening is made or undone!

Now, see if you can recognise the painful thoughts that are the opposite of the pleasurable ones:

- Where do you feel you are failing or unworthy in your life or awakening?
- Which thoughts make you feel bad when you compare yourself to others?
- Which thoughts make you feel inferior to others?
- Which judgemental thoughts about yourself do you still indulge in?

As you notice these thoughts, be sure not to judge yourself for them. These are simply places where you have traded eternal peace, love and joy for the momentary high or buzz of being angry, sad, fearful or ashamed. If we judge ourselves when we see we are doing this then we are making a choice to choose separation over freedom. This is very literally how our awakening blossoms or is held back. We all believe some thoughts and the only way out of it is non-judgement of what is revealed as you do this work. We have all been addicted to thoughts for many millennia and one by one, we simply choose peace instead of the momentary high or low.

Going beyond all subtle thoughts.

To go further still into our awakening, we must now cultivate a willingness to let go of thoughts we may not even know we are believing. At first it may seem impossible to do this if we do not know what these thoughts are but watching and listening to an awakened teacher, sage or saint we will see (if we are very observant and we can all become observant) that they do not believe or think in the normal human way at all. If we are lucky enough to be able to associate with or study the teachings of a teacher, we can even ask them outright to show us how they think differently to us. There is no shame in asking this and any genuine teacher will be happy to provide this service to speed up our awakening.

What do we all take for granted that an awakened being has seen to be completely untrue? That is a powerful question that will bring these unknown thoughts to the surface. How do we move through our lives, subtly and unknowingly reinforcing our identity as a separate being? These types of thoughts are not easy to see but when we read the great scriptures and study the teachings of any awakened being, we will see they live in a very different way. If we can listen openly and without self-judgement, we may just hear vital clues to deepen our awakening. No compassionate teacher is going to tell you outright “what you just said there is completely wrong and untrue” when you are claiming to know what is true but still believe you have a body! However, they will be happy to show you why it is not true if you are open to question how you see the world, others and yourself compared to how the teacher does.

Consider the following statements and spend some time with each one. Notice any resistance to the statement and do not judge yourself. Notice any feeling that it is impossible for you to come to know this fact as well as the great sages did. Ponder over each one as best you can and discuss with fellow students to speed your progress.

- The world is not different from or separate from the Self
- The manifest did not ever arise out of the unmanifest
- There is no difference between form and formless
- You are not a spiritual being having a human experience – there is not being or human.
- The world only appears to be real until you see what it really is and what you really are.

Which statements seem impossible to know? Which ones feel hard? Which ones seem ridiculously untrue? Are you willing to challenge these perceptions?

A fully enlightened being is one that has cultivated a habit of challenging what everyone else takes for granted. A fully awakened being is willing to live without any thought-based structure to rely upon. A fully awakened being has made a lifetime commitment to Truth and curiosity. You are here to fully awaken or you would not be interested in this kind of book!

Let us study the statements below also, noticing again which ones seem ludicrous, untrue and which ones you have resistance too. Often resistance will present itself as feeling distracted or that you cannot come to know what the sages have seen. Push beyond these feelings and do not let them take away your birth right of peace, love and joy!

- Being formless means you are effortlessly here
- Being formless means you are immortal
- Being formless means there is nothing other than you, different from or separate from you.
- Being formless means you never, ever, end or begin.
- Being formless means you are unlimited and always have been.
- Being formless means you cannot die and were never born.
- Being formless means you can appear as forms and shapes and objects. Form is not different from formless.
- Being formless means you know everything – because everything is you.
- Being formless means you are infinite. You can never run out of anything, be lacking in anything or want or need anything.

It is up to each one of us to question why these statements may seem untrue for us as yet. Take one statement per day if needed and contemplate on it. The rest of the chapters of the book are

going to give you investigative approaches and contemplation points to help you open up to the ultimate Reality, which you already are.

Make use of the sangha, of the teacher and of your own deductive powers. Challenge the ideas that everyone else believes and be free!

Chapter 4 There Are No Forms or Objects

In this chapter we will look at the core of duality and therefore suffering, which is the belief that form and formless are real and different to each other. As we move through this and later chapters of the book, let's really slow down and try to do the exercises in this commentary and the contemplation points in the book. "Reality Check" is meant as a practical handbook but we may notice resistance to doing the actual spiritual work suggested in the book because it may seem that it is impossible for us to know the Truth as deeply as the Sages do.

The fact is that there is only One and so duality is not real but it will always seem to be. Simply coming to know it is not real AND it will continue to appear to be real is enough.

The aim of the whole of this book is to get you to be willing to habitually think in different ways to the majority of humanity. If you look at the questions below you will see they are very different to the usual questions we ask ourselves, even in our awakening. A question that asks "What is the weirdest/most unusual question I could ask right now?" is a valuable tool!

Just to realise that we tend to think in very similar ways and not change our thoughts is a huge key to realisation of the Truth. There is no need to know how to think differently but just to realise that you want to. Each time we look at the idea of duality we may think of it a different way than before. Perhaps there are infinite ways and conclusions to explore. An expanded and open mind is the key to a deep and rooted awakening.

Questions to contemplate

Take some time with these questions and really be open to see. Answers and insights may come during the actual session but most of the deeper answers will come later as you move about your life. The real gift of this book and commentary on it can only come if you are willing to slow down and deeply ponder the pointings in the text and in this commentary. Don't miss your chance to enter deeper into sage hood because of a wish to simply get through the book.

1. Am I in the room or is the room in me?
2. Could both be true?
3. Why am I so sure that objects are real and different to the Self?
4. What is the most important evidence I will accept? Sense perception or direct experience?
5. Why have I valued sense perception more than other ways of knowing?
6. What am I actually seeing when I open my eyes? What am I actually hearing through my ears? Is it forms and sounds?
7. Why do I feel the waking state has a greater reality than sleep, dream or being without a body?

The Wooden Table

Imagine a wooden table for this exercise or if you have one then you can directly look at it as we do this exercise.

Take each one of these questions and stay with it for at least a few minutes if you can. Resistance will come up at some point and it will seem impossible to answer some questions but it is only impossible to the mind. Open up and enter the realm of all possibilities if you can.

1. What is the table? (This question alone could take a long time)

2. Where is the table?
3. In the table “out there”, “in here” (in my mind) or both?
4. Is the table form or formless? Or both?
5. Why does the table seem solid when I touch it?
6. Is the table sentient or insentient?
7. Why do I tend to want to think of the table in only one way? (i.e. as form/formless)
8. Can I really make any conclusions about the table that are reliable?

Again, let’s notice these questions are intended to get us to think in different and unique ways. When we assume things to be true we close off to new insights and a deeper realisation of the Truth.

A Family Member

Imagine someone in your mind from your family, work or a friend. You can also use any awakened being, any famous person or any human being you can think of. This investigation works best if it is someone you have met before physically or meet regularly.

Consider the following questions slowly and carefully. If you do this with the following questions (or any of the questions/points in the book or this commentary) you will be profoundly changed as a result.

1. Where is this person now?
2. Did you notice how you perhaps thought about where their body was geographically and not them?
3. If you did think about their bodily location first, why was that your first automatic choice? (Let us not judge ourselves here)
4. What is this person?
5. Are they a form? Or are they formless? Or both?
6. Why do we say that the air they are about to breathe in is not them and yet the air inside their lungs right now is them?
7. Is it air then actually? Or is it my family member?
8. Is my family member made of air? Or water they drank?
9. Can we clearly define what or where they are?
10. Are they “in here” in our thoughts, “out there” as a physical form or both?
11. Are they neither of these?

As you contemplate these questions, it may help to keep a journal of your insights and seeings as they come up and to share them with others in the Sangha. Each one of us can learn to ask weird questions and think differently and as a group we can speed this up much more by working together.

Chapter 5 The Difference Between the Subject and An Object

This chapter deals with the same subject as the previous one (as does the rest of the book) but it is written about in a different way and called different names. This is done on purpose to help open and expand our thinking process. When we meet with some names for our Self that we may have some resistance to (or even an outright aversion to) it is important to stop and wonder why we feel the way we feel. Many students tell me “I don’t like this doorway” when speaking about the various ways to tune into the Noumenon found in the “Dissolving the Ego” book. “Recognising your own Subjectivity” is perhaps one of the least liked doorways initially but intelligent seekers who have no patience to wait for awakening can investigate this deeply.

Here is another chance to think differently, to learn to think with an open mind. “Why don’t I like the word ‘Subjectivity’?” is an excellent question. “Why do I seem to get foggy and confused with this chapter and want to skip it?” “Why does this word ‘Subjectivity’ make me feel any less amazing than ‘Silence’, ‘Zooming out’ or ‘Stillness’ when they mean the same thing?”

If we would like to really shortcut the time left for full realisation, I would urge you to begin to think in ways like this. Naturally, there will be resistance and a kind of lethargy to think in new ways at first but every human being that has excelled at anything on this planet has had to learn this skill. Deeply in love with the Silence of our Being, we find a kind of genius capacity which each of us has but few touch upon. Genius is really only the ability to see things that others cannot and it is a natural part of being awakened. "Genius" is defined in the dictionary as "exceptional intellectual or creative power or other natural ability" and may seem superhuman but it is really only a natural faculty of the Self.

Those destined for full realisation of the Self in this lifetime will encourage this kind of genius thinking to emerge. It is not arrogant to think this way and is a necessary part of this process. All artists, musicians, master chefs, sculptors, athletes and successful scientists have mastered their ability to tap into the genius faculty of the Self even if they did not know that is where this knowledge comes from.

So, what do we do now when we experience the urge to avoid this word "Subjectivity"? The answer to that will determine whether full awakening happens in the next few moments, the next few years or the next few lifetimes. There is of course no rush but most people I meet are in a huge rush, like I was!

If you want to REALLY shortcut the time needed for the rest of this process then it would be good to contemplate or inquire what resistance or avoidance really is. What is it that makes us get distracted from the most important tasks of all?

The basic error in our thinking that is explored in this chapter is the idea that we know what the Subject is in any experience. We feel there is a subject (me who is experiencing) and an object (what I am experiencing) and that we know what they are. We feel that we know that the subject is formless and yet still believe that formlessness includes objects. To realise this, we must contemplate these points deeply (and the whole chapter in the book):

1. **If there are two substances there is still duality-Pure Subjectivity does not contain any objects at all.** There are no objects separate to the Subjectivity (formlessness) of the Self. The Subjectivity appears as form and formlessness and is never divided into two.
2. **Just because there seems to be form and formlessness does not mean there really is.** The appearance, or "seems to be" of something does not mean it is actually so.

Let us ponder these questions deeply and slowly to come to a fuller understanding of this chapter and the whole book:

1. Why do I feel that there is a subject (me) and an object (what I am experiencing)?
2. What makes me so convinced I am separate to the object of my experience? (Subtle objects like fear or gross objects like our body)
3. Why do I imagine a dividing line somewhere between the subject and the object?
4. Can we really divide something that is pure Subjectivity (formlessness) into subject and object?
5. Why do I keep doing that in my imagination?
6. What is my actual experience when I try to find out if I am actually divided into two, many or billions?
7. The body reading this, the air it is breathing, the words, this book all seem to be separate to each other. Why do they seem to be separate?
8. Am I still treating the Self as a phenomenon or object? Am I imagining it stops where an "object" starts?

Chapter 6 The Difference Between the Noumenon and Phenomena. **What is Real and Unreal?**

“Noumenon”-do you have resistance to this word? If so, what will you do about it? Will you skip past and continue reading or will you deeply inquire why you do not like it? What if this one choice changes the course of your entire life?

One of the common assumptions that we may have as we progress along the path is that the Noumenon exists outside of time and space and that all phenomena exist as part of, inside of or at the effect of time and space. We believe the Noumenon and phenomena are opposites and this is simply not true.

Ponder these questions deeply and slowly to realise more deeply that “Noumenon” and “phenomenon” are synonyms:

1. What is the Noumenon?
2. Why do I feel the phenomena are more real and separate to the Noumenon?
3. What would it mean if the Noumenon and the phenomena are the same one thing?
4. What if the phenomena only appear to exist?
5. How does it change my life, my mind and my awakening if there are no phenomena?

Do these questions seem impossible to answer? Perhaps we can realise the important thing is that we asked different questions to what we usually do. Perhaps the answers aren't so important.

Oneness means we have to let go of the final dualities of “Truth and illusion” and “Manifestation and unmanifested”

Here are some more questions to stimulate some new and original thinking and an opening:

1. What is the difference between “Truth” and “illusion”?
2. Is there actually Real and unreal? Is there actually two?
3. Why do I think the manifestation is different to the Unmanifest Silence?
4. Is there a Creator and created? Are they different?
5. Is manifestation a “happening” or an ongoing process?

What are you then? If you cannot (or will not even define yourself as “Noumenon” or “phenomenon”? What do you find yourself to be when you will not define yourself?

Use the self-inquiry you have learned to find out directly that there is only one when you look for yourself. That One is showing up as form and formless, truth and illusion, real and unreal. In your direct experience you will find only You-some places you are invisible and some you are visible. That's all.

1. Why do we think otherwise then and imagine duality?
2. Above/before the mind, Oneness is clear. Through the mind it is not clear at all. Where do you want to hang out-in thoughts or in direct experience?
3. Can you ever make the mind realise the Self?
4. Do you need to make the mind realise the Self to be enlightened?
5. Can you live without mind's definitions?
6. Who are you when you do not think about yourself?

Chapter 7 One Final Note

Before we finish our study of this book it is important to note one final and very important point. As you read through chapter 7 in the book, notice how you may have really identified with some of the stages in the chapter. Can you notice how humans want to find the right answer?

Can you notice even here in this book study, we may be trying to find a final answer? Is the final understanding that there is no way to define you only answers? You are the Unknown and the Unborn but that also includes all the known and all that is born and dies.

Finally, we will reach a point where we do not even care to know whether it is better to still be identified as a separate being or to know who we really are. Where is that place inside us that does not even want to say enlightenment is better than illusion? When we have forgotten how to classify and categorise, we respect the rock, a speck of dust, a human being stuck in illusion, an ant and a sage equally because they are all beautiful manifestations of the Divine Self.

Reading this book slowly along with the commentary, at regular intervals along your pathway will shortcut the time it takes to see you are already Home.

In the place before exclusion and inclusion, we are Home. I'll be waiting there for you.