



Everyday Enlightenment: Seven Stories of Awakening, Sally Bongers, Non-Duality Books, 2008, 0955829038, 9780955829031, 128 pages. Sally Bongers, the distinguished Australian cinematographer, compiled these interviews whilst researching subjects for a documentary film on Enlightenment. Initially she sought out established spiritual teachers, but her emphasis changed to interviewing ordinary people who had experienced a shift of perception which, in the Eastern tradition, would be called Enlightenment or Liberation. She found men and women who still live their lives much as they had done before the realisation, working and living in the everyday world. Seven of their stories were chosen for this book. Hearing these people talk about living with this understanding in the real world (not in an ice-cave somewhere!) confirmed the closeness of it all. These stories make it clear that Enlightenment can 'happen' to anyone, regardless of so-called spiritual qualifications..

Waking from Sleep Why Awakening Experiences Occur and How to Make Them Permanent, Steve Taylor, 2010, Body, Mind & Spirit, 271 pages. Argues that, most of the time, our waking life is a kind of "sleep" that we only occasionally "wake up" from, experiencing a more intense and complete reality and explains how

The Light Behind Consciousness , Rt John Wheeler, LLM, 2008, , 244 pages. .

Pass the Jelly Tales of Ordinary Enlightenment, Gary Crowley, 2009, Biography & Autobiography, 199 pages. Reading this funny and slyly profound memoir, you will laugh and nod in agreement as the author penetrates people's false assumptions about life. The Pass the Jelly Principle

Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment , Thaddeus Golas, Jun 5, 2002, Religion, 112 pages. \$10.95 cloth hardcover 1-58685-190-X 5 x 7 in, 112 pp, Rights: W, Self-Help Originally published by the author in 1972, the underground classic Lazy Man's Guide to

No Ordinary Moments A Peaceful Warrior's Guide to Daily Life, Dan Millman, 1992, Body, Mind & Spirit, 301 pages. Uses essays and stories to remind readers of some age old coping tools that can be applied to everyday life to clear the mind, open the emotions, and energize the body.

Love's Quiet Revolution The End of the Spiritual Search, Scott Kiloby, May 20, 2008, , 266 pages. This book is a beautiful expression of Oneness and the end of the spiritual search..

The Book of No One Talks and Dialogues on Non-duality and Liberation, Richard Sylvester, Apr 30, 2008, , 256 pages. In 'The Book of No One - Talks And Dialogues On Non-Duality And Liberation' Richard Sylvester continues to communicate the radical and uncompromising view of non-duality

Life Without a Centre Awakening From The Dream of Separation, Jeff Foster, Dec 30, 2006, , 168 pages. We try to escape from the play of life and the suffering that being "a person in the world" entails. Our efforts to find spiritual enlightenment have the opposite effect and

The Transparency of Things Contemplating the Nature of Experience, Rupert Spira, Oct 30, 2008, ,

274 pages. The purpose of Rupert's book is to look clearly and simply at the nature of experience, without any attempt to change it. A series of contemplations lead us gently but directly

All There Is , Tony Parsons, Sep 1, 2008, Philosophy, 258 pages. Parsons shares a radical and uncompromising message of absolute non-dualism that speaks directly to the very core of a wisdom that is imminent in everyone..

The End of Your World Uncensored Straight Talk on the Nature of Enlightenment, Adyashanti, Mar 1, 2009, Religion, 218 pages. More and more people today have had a glimpse of genuine spiritual awakening, only to see it slip away after a few hours or days. Adyashanti calls this the "I got it/I lost it

Three Men in New Suits , John Boynton Priestley, 1945, Fiction in English, 217 pages. Three pals return from war to find greed and struggle for power prevalent and agree to try to build a better world..

Sally Bongers, the distinguished Australian cinematographer, compiled these interviews whilst researching subjects for a documentary film on Enlightenment. Initially she sought out established spiritual teachers, but her emphasis changed to interviewing ordinary people who had experienced a shift of perception which, in the Eastern tradition, would be called Enlightenment or Liberation. She found men and women who still live their lives much as they had done before the realisation, working and living in the everyday world. Seven of their stories were chosen for this book. Hearing these people talk about living with this understanding in the real world (not in an ice-cave somewhere!) confirmed the closeness of it all. These stories make it clear that Enlightenment can 'happen' to anyone, regardless of so-called spiritual qualifications.

"So I'm a number cruncher, a bean counter - that's the historical phrase they use for accountants - I count beans all day. It's a perfectly meaningless job for me. A government bean counter is precisely the job you want if you are not career orientated and you just somehow get sucked into this spiritual consciousness thing."

"All the clichés are dreadfully, dreadfully true. When you say, 'I am that,' it really is true, which is extraordinary because I'd mouthed that in Sanskrit and Hindi for twenty-five years and thought very seriously: 'I am that. I am God. I am not different from God.'" Indeed I'm not - but it's not quite what I meant at the time."

"When I was with Osho, he was a beautiful person, but very distant. I thought I had to become this person, a kind of holy man, and I thought that this was 'enlightenment.' Tony Parsons made it so simple and down to earth, which possibly helped me to recognise the moment. And to be able to cope with it."

I truly loved this book.. I have read and seen many teachers in the advaita tradition but to read the stories of "everyday" people does help to feel how close "it" is and how the everyday experiences may be "it"..there is nothing more to seek..I would love to read more stories from people like this and not from the "elevated" perspective of one who is teaching.. thank you for writing this book..

The seven contributors--for reasons not made clear, we are only given their initials--hail from Europe, the U.K., Australia, and the United States. They include a man brought up as a Muslim, a forty-nine year old female artist in Amsterdam, a fifty-eight year old strategic consultant in Melbourne, an accountant from Chicago, and a sixty-nine year old man from New Orleans.

The artist recounts the way in which she came to see that she is not her thoughts, body, or feelings, but a kind of "is-ness." She goes on to say: "'Is' is alive. 'Is' is aware. 'Is' is consciousness, pure consciousness, pure awareness. The sea is alive. It's aware. Douglas Harding used to talk about an 'ether', you know, the glassy ether, or glassy essence. It's just aware presence."

A Chicago accountant expounds on how awareness "was always there as a background thing that was completely ignored. It has no meaning, doesn't mean anything at all to the mind. That's why, when it's pointed to, it can't be found with the mind...There may be intellectual understanding or frustration but usually there is just an ignoring of it and going on with one's story."

And a former Regent College student notes that being in the presence of a self-realized teacher or speaker has its own kind of magic and energy: "When I heard Tony Parsons speak, I instinctively knew what he was saying made absolute sense to me. There was no question about it. And I was blown away by it. It wasn't so much that it made sense in my mind, it 's like I knew at some level, somehow I knew it already."

A long time ago I've read a book about 'Tao' and to me it's the same thing that one might call 'Awareness'. Point is, of course, that neither 'Tao' nor 'Awareness' are 'things'. The way the writer described 'Tao' is the same way I would describe 'Awareness', by eliminating all that it's not. Very simple. And if you finally realize that you have to eliminate every-thing to be left with Awareness (or 'Tao') your search has come to an end.

In 2007, Rodney discovered his innate and radiant clarity after reading one of the books of John Wheeler, who recognized his own natural state after having discussions with "Sailor" Bob Adamson. Rodney lives in Columbia, South Carolina, and enjoys conversing with those who are seriously interested in self-knowledge.

The book itself is a short volume (112 Pages) ([Amazon UK link](#)) with seven stories told in the first person by people who believe they have experienced enlightenment. Firstly, it's important to say that when this book talks about enlightenment it's essentially talking about nonduality. This website, [living non duality](#), has a good and detailed description of what I'm talking about.

The general message I took from this book was that once enlightenment happens, nothing much changes. That in itself is fascinating. I've thought for a while that with enlightenment would come some sort of urge or motion towards monasticism or at least a substantial drawing away from society. For the people in the book this isn't the case. The subjects are from all around the world (USA, UK, and Australia, I think) and whilst their individual histories are very different there is the common themes that most of them had been 'spiritual seekers' for a period of their life before they attained enlightenment. Some of people in the book, specifically the person in the second chapter, seem to have had a rough time in the spiritual search and only found a state of grace after decades of what sounds like painful effort. Others seem to come to it with more ease.

For none of them, though, is there 'key' that unlocks this state. Perhaps there are significant events that lead up to their attainment, crescendos of experiences ending with a cadence into enlightenment, but there's no one thing for the reader to take away. This for most readers who have been exploring the world of nonduality this will come as no surprise.

What came across to me is that a powerful sense of 'OK-ness' arose in the seven interviewees. As Anthony De Mello says 'All is well, all is well'. I understood them to be expressing a strong sense of contentment, of not needing to change anything or anyone. A quote from one of the chapters, 'there is no australia', might help illustrate:

It's very ordinary actually. It's really very ordinary. There's nothing more. I'm not suddenly the bookcase. The bookcase isn't me. There's none of that spiritual stuff. It's very ordinary. It's simply, if you like, whatever appears in my awareness now is all there is. That's all there is. There's nothing else. But yet there's still some mystery here. I have often wondered that if I were to become enlightened how my actions would follow. If there's no 'I' to want to do things, where would the inertia come from to want to do anything? If you know that the I is false and that any thought that comes up is as relatively meaningful/meaningless as any other thought then how on earth is one to decide which to follow, which to ignore? How is one to summon up the caring required to choose one action over another? In the chapter 'i am the sea', the interviewee says:

Although the higher self doesn't form judgments or make choices, somehow or other C. [initial of the interviewee] does have to operate in the world and he does have to make choices. That's the nature of being human. You have to make choices. What I have found increasingly over the years is that the choices I make are made more slowly. They come almost out of a process. They arrive. The choices emerge. I let the process work. So no answers (sensing a theme by now? :-)) but an interesting perspective. Choices, action, emerges, curiously, from...nowhere. Perhaps when C says he makes choices more slowly he means that his 'I' is shut off. The 'I' usually wants decisions now, now, now so slowness fits. But 'almost come out of a process'. What are we to make of this? Surely a process must be a thing of the 'I', taking into account I assume consideration of the past, present and future. This doesn't sound likely and yet there are no pointers to understand this.

My first big question is that I do not see how full non-dual realisation could be compatible with the ability to continue living in anything like the way you were before (the author of the last quote is some kind of management consultant and continues to practice). What it seems to me is that enlightenment for the people in this book is a nice way for them to end their own suffering. Through disconnecting from the 'I' they are not tumbled and roughed up in the way that most 'unawakened' people are (99% of people I've ever met, at least). Through their own enlightenments they have ceased their spiritual search. Through discovering emptiness, they have become full. But nothing has changed. Maybe they've slowed down, maybe they make different decisions, but the processes carry on. I don't have the capacity to understand this at present.

The second issue this book raised for me was about the nature of realisation. The link I used above to explain non duality (livingnonduality.org) uses a metaphor I had often thought of myself -- of an optical illusion. One moment you, unrealised, are looking at two candlesticks. The next, you, unrealised, are looking at two faces nose to nose. Realised, you see that both are present in the whole. I appreciate that in oneness the picture is not either/or candlesticks and faces but both candlesticks and faces. It is all part of the one. Perhaps I am too attached to the idea that the death of the self should be a revolutionary process. Perhaps the fact that the 'I' carries on even after it is known truly to be false is not a problem. But I find this all very untidy and not adequately or critically addressed by those who have experienced enlightenment. If 'seeing' enlightenment is really a falling away of delusion and not just an understanding that the self is false then how can enlightenment and the self coexist? Perhaps this is a fallacy on my part but either you exist as a self and you understand enlightenment and the benefits it could bring, or you are enlightened and everything else goes out the window.

The third issue (and I won't go on after this, things are neater in threes) is about action. The unrealised person goes about their day-to-day lives doing things for a number of reasons. Because they 'want' to, because they think it will make them happy, or sad, because of a sense of duty, because that's what their parents did etc etc etc. These motivations for action all arise from the impermanent self, the I, conditioning. On the other hand you've got an enlightened person. For all the talk of nonduality I took away a distinct dual impression from the interviewees. It's like there's the 'I' doing all this stuff for whatever reason and then deep beneath there is a huge calm pool of awareness that can be used to stabilise and calm the self when it gets out of hand and tries to take over the show.

The troubling thing that comes through some of the case studies, particularly the first one, is that some of these people have done things that made me feel uncomfortable and then have rationalised it after the event as they know that 'all is one' or that 'it's all OK'. The first interviewee says "...one change can be the freedom to let the inner bastard or the inner bitch out...to be rude if she felt like it...there's a freedom to that". If this is not letting 'I' take control of the proceedings what is? This surely is justifying suffering-causing behaviour (being a 'bitch' because you are dissatisfied with the current situation, trying to get others to change because you are dissatisfied with them) and is this 'good' for an individual or the people around them? I know this is a dualist perspective; all is one they say, but where does it stop.

If being enlightened mean letting your inner bitch out, why doesn't it mean doing other similar things. Screaming at people in a traffic jam, berating shop assistants that aren't helping you, telling people

they are stupid. You could take it further. If you realise all is one then why not run naked in public, why not kill or steal or commit random acts of violence? Why not allow your inner sociopath out? I know this is exaggerated, but I find that some of the interviewees in the book to be troublingly naive about what's going on. I'm not saying I know what's going on but I don't think you can write things off as 'OK' as easily as they might.

Whether this world is a dream state, whether one-ness is real or not, the abiding impression I get of life is that I live in a place full of animals and people and things who appear to be thinking, feeling agents acting independently of my action. It follows that although my actions may not 'mean' anything in a universal sense or that it is impossible to compare one action, thing or thought to another in terms of absolute value there are consequences of actions on the world and on people. Is there a danger in non-dual enlightenment that it could be experienced as a sort of solipsism where people perform actions directed by their self or otherwise with no interest as to what impact they may have? I find this disquieting.

The author of this short book, Sally Bongers, is a film director of Hollywood films (Resistance, Sweetie, Snakes and Ladders, Rapunzel in Suburbia). She decided to work on a film, called the Enlightenment Project, about people who have experienced this rather elusive consciousness alteration typically called enlightenment. In her process it seems, she decided to put some of the audio interviews into a book form, and called it Everyday Enlightenment.

The theme of this altered consciousness is a dropping away of the self, the "me," the one who identifies with decisions, careers, our body, our ideas, our thinking process, and especially our viewpoints. Another feature that seems to be characteristic of this major perceptual adjustment of consciousness is that you, me and the world are already perfect the way they are. The notion of an acceptance of what IS is dominant in the literature. A subset of that acceptance is that to seek to try to change or transform or become somebody misses the point exactly; in fact the more we seek the more we move away from it. And the self inquiry process helps us at least learn about the conceptual pointers as we can deconstruct what is really going on.

I was certainly thrilled to discover this book of seven stories by ordinary people who have experienced and are now grounded in what is often called a "seeing," an awakening, liberation or I'm sure there are other names for this—but it is certainly not a temporary state or a brief experience or from the imagination or an intellectual understanding. What's interesting is that there are some commonalities and differences among the seven people. Some people still feel their individual selves but their self/ego nature is basically in the background. One person said that during an emotional crisis, his "self" became foreground for a short period of time but then subsided into the background, after an ease of the emotional chatter and a remembrance returned. The authors of the seven stories speak about how this new "seeing" is not that big of a deal, it's often spoken about as a shift in perspective even though it cannot be manipulated or controlled or intellectually understood. I found myself wondering if this was in fact the real deal or if they did have something genuine and rather than "keep going" as in going deeper, it's as if they decided to hang out there. Like as the Sufis say, "building real estate on sand castles." It's just a question. I don't know the answer.

Most had been on a path, whether it was with Bhagwan Rajneesh (Osho) or Da Free John or Ramesh Balsekar or Tony Parsons or some of the lesser-known teachers of awakening. Most did not like Bush. One is an IRS agent. Another is an environmentalist. I was drawn to the latter because he was an activist before his awakening and continues to be one. He explains his new seeing as not being attached to the activist outcomes and he doesn't get so irritated at the devastation he sees environmentally; and, he said, that he may feel even more passionate about the environment since his new intimacy includes the knowledge that we humans come from nature and we need nature to survive. He says that in his workshops he asks his audience that if they don't understand our intricate and delicate need for the planet he asks them to simply count to 30 while holding their breath. "Works all the time," he says.

He went on to describe the fun he and his social change agents would have at the serious agenda

making meetings. There is an obvious lightness that he brings to the table. I appreciate his story very much because after reading Adyashanti's *The End of Your World*, I became of the opinion that I needed to leave that activist world altogether since how could one want to "exchange the world" while simultaneously seeing the world as being already complete and perfect and flourishing and simply being itself. Fascinating; perhaps I could also include activists in that similar flow, a nondualistic participation in the perfection of it all.

And Sally, if you add the stories in the book to make it to the film's editing room please include other teachers who are not of the Tony Parsons "camp." The film will need a variety of "teachers" who are present at the moment when we, like these seven people, have a shift that might just alter us everyday people forever.

<http://edufb.net/351.pdf>

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