

Awakening to the Dream

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Leo Hartong

NON-DUALITY PRESS

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With Gratitude to:

Alan Watts for showing The Way of Zen;
Ramesh Balsekar, through whom Consciousness
Speaks;
Wayne Liquorman for removing the 'I' from the
understanding;
Tony Parsons for telling it As It Is;
Nathan Gill for taking the time to be clear;
Jae for invaluable tweaking, input and feedback;
Chuck Hillig for inspiring the title;
And the One who speaks through each and all.

*O space and time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars
of the morning.**

* From *Song Of Myself* by Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892)

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Foreword by Tony Parsons

The book, *Awakening to the Dream*, is written with a clarity of perception that is rare to find in the multitude of published outpourings that these days purport to express wisdom.

Most popular teachings about enlightenment are based on the mistaken idea that there is such a thing as a separate individual who can choose through effort and purification to attain something called enlightenment. This prescriptive and goal-orientated approach is, of course, very attractive to the guru mind, which above all else wishes to remain employed by simply compounding confusion. From the non-dualistic perception, however, no part of this activity is seen as relevant, and Leo Hartong speaks straight out of the clear blue sky of non-dualism, gently but uncompromisingly leading the readers to see the original and abiding nature of what they are.

The book begins very well, with a clear explanation of its intent, and throughout the work there is the feeling of reading a letter written by a friend who gently, but passionately, wants to make something very clear. As the writer communicates his perception of the mystery, he intersperses his ideas with appropriate traditional and contemporary quotations.

In simple terms, it is the absence of seeking that reveals the wonder of that which already is, but although this simple and awesome mystery is impossible to express in words, Leo's exploration is a joy to share in.

Tony Parsons

www.theopensecret.com

1

What happens when you fall off the earth's edge?

Is there a promise in awakening to what I truly am? Is there something I can get out of this that will improve my life? Will it make me a better and more successful person? In short: What will it be like to live an awakened life? These seem perfectly reasonable questions, and they frequently come up during the search.

For many, the hope for a better life is the core motivation to invest so heavily in this quest. There is, however, a problem with these questions that prevents a direct answer, and that is that they originate from the limited perspective the seeker wants to transcend. The questions may sound reasonable, but they are intrinsically flawed.

Let me give you a concrete example. Before we knew that the earth was round, the question of where one would end up after falling off its edge was perfectly reasonable. From our current perspective, however, the question makes no sense. If you were to go back in time, you could not provide a simple answer, but would have to explain that the earth is, in fact, round and falling off it is not possible. This, of course, would go against the common sense of the questioner, who would point to the horizon and insist that he could clearly see where the earth ended. Asking the questioner to imagine the perspective of an astronaut

would probably be seen as a conceptual abstraction to avoid the real issue, namely: 'What happens when you fall off the earth's edge?' That being said, I'm going to tell you what you will get out of enlightenment. If the answer is initially disappointing, don't give up. Read on and see if you come to the place where disappointment changes into clarity.

So here we go: The answer is that you will get nothing out of it because enlightenment is the realization that there *is* no you to get enlightened; that your sense of separation and individuality is an illusion. This reply will most likely go against your direct experience. You might have learned that you are part of an ongoing process in which the fittest will survive and that you have to pass on your genes to the next generation or die trying. You may also believe that the art of living is in improving yourself and your life's circumstances. If you're poor and hungry, a roof over your head and a meal a day may do it for you. If you're lucky enough to live in a situation where your basic survival needs are covered, you will most likely pursue happiness and fulfillment via relationships, the acquisition of material goods, and social status.

When this is not enough you might become what is known as a seeker. A seeker is someone who feels that the so-called material world cannot deliver true and lasting contentment and that an inner dimension needs to be explored to find peace, enlightenment, or Self-realization. As a seeker you'll perhaps try psychotherapy, rebirthing, getting in touch with your inner child, past life regression therapy, yoga, transcendental meditation, or one of the other techniques believed to lead to lasting fulfillment and happiness. Such methods may indeed deliver results

that you can experience as improving or enriching your life. However, you'll probably discover that after some time the original euphoria wears off. You come to realize that experiences and states of mind are always temporary. After this recognition, many seekers consider the so-called non-dual approach to Self-realization or enlightenment.

Non-duality is a general term that covers several – mostly eastern – schools of thought, which point to the single source before and beyond all temporal experiences and apparent diversity. While reading texts from non-dual systems such as Zen, Advaita, Taoism, or Dzogchen, you will find the affirmation that Self-realization has no promise other than to release you from your belief in a separate self or ego. That's it. The dropping away of an illusion simply revealing *this as it is*, often summed up in the phrase 'Before enlightenment chop wood and carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.'

The ego, which certainly does not want to hear that it is an illusion, may claim to accept this as a concept, but invariably resists its realization, persisting in the belief that the carrying and chopping that come 'after' are somehow different. Now, if there's nothing in it for me, why would I even bother? 'Give me some motivation,' says the ego; 'Give me something that makes it worth my while to pursue this.'

This way of thinking seems right to us, who are conditioned to look for a future purpose in whatever it is we're doing. Logic dictates that we should gain something here instead of merely hearing that we don't exist. From this perspective, it gets even worse. Enlightenment not only shows that your separate identity is an illusion, it reveals that sheer purposelessness is at the heart of this

whole creation. This sounds absurd to the goal-and-future-oriented mind; yet I will tell you unequivocally that the whole point of this manifestation is nothing other *than* this manifestation.

Realizing this is far from the bleak reality the mind imagines it to be. True, this is of no use to the ego, since it is about freedom *from* the ego, not freedom *for* the ego. The final understanding is not the result of seeking, but brings freedom from seeking. It is not about fulfilling expectations, but about being free of them. There are no future rewards in store. This very clarity turns out to be its own reward. Like Zen Master Hakuin exclaimed:

*This very land is the pure lotus land,
This very body is the body of Buddha!*

Nothing changes, but everything is released from its conceptual mold, as well as from the person who tried to fit life into the mold. Life's freshness is recognized; its presence is acknowledged; its oneness is seen – but by no one. There simply is recognition, acknowledgment, and seeing.

All this text will do is remind you of your true identity. It is not about self-improvement or methods. It contains no seven-step-systems to help you become more relaxed, more loving, or more fulfilled. If that is what you're looking for, there are plenty of other books and people that will cater to your needs.

If you want the truth, you have to look beyond the concepts of ego and self-improvement, and beyond the states of mind you would like to acquire. This book will explore – and attempt to puncture – the belief that you are a separate entity. It wants to point at the sourceless source

from which all arises, and it asks you to remember that you are this source. Once this is recognized and it is clear what you truly are, you'll see that everything is exactly as it should be. It will not all fall magically into place. It already *is* and always has been in place.

This is not about a gradual progression to a future goal, but about a radical awakening to what is. No conditions have to be fulfilled for this to become clear. Self-realization can happen at any time for anyone. There can be quirky, irreverent, irritable characters who are certain about what they truly are and there can be relaxed, friendly, happy people who never even thought about so-called enlightenment. Calmness, friendliness, and happiness may or may not be or become part of your daily experience as a consequence of awakening, but at the same time it will become evident that this clarity is not about being in a good mood all the time. You don't need to do anything to 'become ready' for it. It will happen by itself and reveal that Awakeness is – and always has been – fully present. It will shine when it shines, and it will shift the attention from the content of Awareness to Pure Awareness itself. This Pure Awareness is what you truly are. When you think you're not it, this thought is part of the temporal content of Awareness and has no bearing on Awareness itself. Just let yourself be. Give yourself permission to be up, down, pissed or delirious. Observe the process and don't get caught in the content. Know yourself as the limitless field of Pure Awareness in which the drama of life merely arises.

For me this understanding has marked the end of my search and released me from the burden of trying to control my life and constantly improve myself. It did not

set me free, but showed that I am freedom itself. It did not give me anything, but took 'the me' away. What I truly am is what I always was: Pure Awareness. This is true for you, the cat, the book, and everything else. To the mind, there seem to be separate objects; but in reality, everything emanates from the same essence. Seeing or not seeing this does not change anything. Everything simply is as it is, which is a lot less and infinitely more than I anticipated it to be.

2

Who is the author?

There has been gentle but persistent persuasion from people around me to include some of my personal history in this book. I felt some reluctance to do this, since confirming a personal story is – as will become clear later on – contradictory to what this book asserts. Furthermore, I had already included a description of ‘my awakening’ in the chapter *Blinded by the light*. My lady, however, pointed out that it is used there to illustrate what is being said in that chapter, rather than as an introduction to the me I once believed myself to be. As is so often the case, she was right.

From where I’m sitting, I can trace back several lines in space and time and arrive at a number of different ‘histories’ for this apparent individual. All are equally true and untrue; all are subjective and incomplete. Now that I’ve started, I will attempt to give you some background information and try to keep it relevant to my role as the author of this text, although any claim on my part to actually being the author contradicts what this book is about. Please keep this paradox in mind when you read the following linear description of the non-linear events experienced by this human being.

First, however, I’d like to share something from the Irish

scholar and philosopher who published his work under the pseudonym of Wei Wu Wei (1895 – 1986), although he certainly would never have claimed that it was ‘he’ who wrote it.

Tom, Dick, and Harry think they have written the books that they sign (or painted the pictures, composed the music, built the churches). But they exaggerate. It was a pen that did it, or some other implement. They held the pen? Yes, but the hand that held the pen was an implement too, and the brain that controlled the hand. They were intermediaries, instruments, just apparatus. Even the best apparatus does not need a personal name like Tom, Dick, or Harry.

*If the nameless builders of the Taj Mahal, of Chartres, of Rheims, of a hundred cathedral symphonies, knew that – and avoided the solecism of attributing to their own egos the works that were created through their instrumentality – may not even a jotter-down of passing metaphysical notions know it also?**

As for me, I was born in October of 1948 to a poor couple in Amsterdam. From an early age, I was familiarized with the idea that life has a spiritual dimension, although currently I no longer make the distinction between spiritual and non-spiritual. Psychic healers and clairvoyants were part of the crowd my parents hung out with. There were hand-laying sessions, divinations, and séances trying to contact ‘the other world.’

Some of my earliest memories of ‘spiritual’ experiences

* From *Fingers pointing Towards The Moon: Reflections of a Pilgrim on the Way* by Wei Wu Wei. Sentient Publications

go back to a time when I was young enough to be put to bed when it was still light outside. The curtains would close, and a pattern of silver roses printed on a brick-colored background would allow a filtered light into the bedroom, creating the illusion of dancing creatures on the wall. At certain times I would lie awake and think about how there was nothing between the ceiling and me. I then tried to imagine what it would be like if there were no ceiling so that I could look into uninterrupted nothingness. I soon noticed that this little game would put me in a special state. A sensation, at once strange and pleasant, would come over me as my mind surrendered more deeply into the impossibility of imagining ‘nothing.’ When we would go to the park on a clear day, I would try to get at this ‘nothing’ by lying on my back and staring into the sky. Always, though, something – a bird, a cloud, or some grass – would enter my field of vision. Closing my eyes didn’t work either, as swirling patterns seemed to dance on my retina and, at some point, I’d have to give up on the game.

When I was eight years old my parents divorced, and my two younger brothers and I stayed with my mother. In those days in Holland it still was not considered proper for a woman to be without a husband. Some people tried to help, but many others – neighbors, schoolteachers, and civil servants from the Social Security Office – made us feel judged. Bringing up three young boys was hard on my mother. She did the best she could, while my father was reluctant to chip in.

At one point, we converted to Catholicism. This was as much for the comfort of religion as for getting help from the church. It was my first brush with organized religion, and I took a very critical look at it. I hated going to church, but

was intrigued by the religious teachings we received at my new Catholic school. There seemed to be an endless supply of fascinating stories from the Bible, but I soon noticed that my probing questions were not always appreciated. Whom did the children of Adam and Eve marry? If God is good, why is there so much injustice? How could a God of love destroy whole cities just because most of the people in them did not live by his commandments; and why did he send people to Hell to burn for eternity? Sometimes they told me that certain Bible stories were symbolic; then at other times, they'd insist that the Bible had to be taken literally.

Another mystery was that eating fish on Friday was considered to be fasting, while it was obviously feasting. The Friday lunch – served with white wine – was the highlight of the week for the priests of our parish.

We learned that all people were equal in the sight of God, but the richer people would have reserved places with softer kneeling cushions in the front rows of the church. It all seemed confusing, and it was clear that there were more questions than answers. I suppose that being introduced to the faith at a later age than the other kids at school made it more difficult for me to just accept what I was told. This made me a seeker, distrustful of spiritual authority.

Even then, I believed that there must be more to life than meets the eye. I believed in God, but could not accept what I was taught about him. By the age of twelve, I came upon an advertisement for a correspondence course in Raja Yoga. I persuaded my mother to sign up for it, and we started to receive regular lessons in the mail. The teacher was a professor of oriental studies. Although much in his texts was beyond my comprehension, something kept me

going. There were new words and ideas about God, the Self, and life as a whole that sounded more real than that which I was hearing about at school.

As I got a little older, it became time to choose between continuing school and taking a job. Neither option seemed appealing. I wanted to draw or paint or have an adventurous life of travel and exploration. It was the sixties, and I learned to smoke hashish. I was still a minor, and the authorities that kept an eye on the children of divorced parents decided that I would be better off in a state home for difficult children. I'm sure they meant well, but at the time I did not see it that way.

In this place I mixed with kids who were there for more serious matters, such as car theft, burglary, and rape. I was told that I was there as a preventive measure, while most of the others were there as a punishment. I failed to see the fairness in this and escaped with one of the 'punished kids' who, even at this early age, was a skilled survivor. He knew how to open a safe, and I was an apt pupil.

I was now living on the streets. I hitchhiked throughout Europe and learned about hard drugs and needles. Finally psychedelics – especially LSD – took me away from addiction and brought me back to a more balanced state.

I became a macrobiotic hippy, got married, and had my first daughter, Leela. I was back reading and meditating and indulging my interest in all things mystical. Like many others of my generation, I made an overland trip to India. Along the road were new cultures, time to read, to party, and to practice yoga; though, I must say, spiritual practices did not really do it for me. There was no specific teacher. Alan Watts' books were my guiding light and main inspiration; but life was the real teacher and, somehow, whatever

was appropriate to my search's unfolding presented itself, although I often did not recognize it at the time.

Looking back I can see how in magic moments I occasionally glimpsed this living presence appearing openly as, and at the same time hidden in, everything. It is for this reason that several people, including Wei Wu Wei and Tony Parsons, have referred to this as 'the open secret.'

During this journey there were so-called mystical or peak experiences; but in the end, all I can say is that there has been pain and pleasure, loss and gain, times of poverty and times of riches, parties and prisons, hospitals and health. There have been moments of despair on white sandy beaches and moments of great freedom in cold dank cells with iron bars.

In and through all this, the seeking continued, but in retrospect, nothing in the search can be assigned a function or meaning that, in itself, led to awakening – unless we consider giving up the search as a consequence of that search. The search consisted of acquiring information and experiences, while awakening was and continuously is revealed in the dropping of concepts and expectations. This dropping has happened by itself and not as an act of my personal will. In the process, this supposed individual's story was dropped as well, and even as I tell it, there is no one left to claim either the prize of enlightenment or the authorship of this text. Perhaps it is clear to you what this disclaimer means. If not, perhaps it will become clear during the reading of this book.

3

At the river's edge



You too are already on the other side. Enlightenment, or Self-realization, is not something that exists for only a select few. This book maintains that it is your true nature, right here and right now. Although it is a good idea to read it from the beginning, it is not, nor can it be, a linear how-to-get-enlightened manual. It is also not about self-improvement or the acquisition of knowledge. It is about the paradox of remembering what was never really forgotten. It's about who and what you truly are, not about what you should be or should become. You could think of it as a loom, weaving words into concepts

that point at that which shines from beyond the realm of conceptual thinking.

All this book has to say in various ways is 'This is *it*; you are *it*,' and that's all there is to it. If reading it just once is enough for you, great; but if you're a seeker or simply in love with this subject, you can use the text to explore this message through such ideas and concepts as enlightenment, the ego, the intellect, the body, death, spiritual practices, the position of teachers, and your identity as a seeker. It talks about the surprise of *re*-cognizing the mystery of our collective and true identity and about *re*-membering the treasure trove within. It is not intended to make converts or to replace old beliefs and concepts with new ones. It is not about something I have or know, but you don't. It talks about Pure Awareness which, in the final analysis, is all there is. That being true, then ipso facto, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, whether there is an apparent seeking for enlightenment or not, *you are IT*.

This text can serve as a small nudge, which if delivered at the right moment, can trigger an awakening in the same way that a snowball can trigger an avalanche. The following story of the master printing-press technician illustrates this point nicely:

A publishing company owned a huge printing press, which was essential to its business. One morning, after years of faithful service, the machine did not want to start. The company's technical people tried in vain to revive it. They finally gave up and contacted an expert who lived on the other side of the country. The next evening he arrived. It was too late to start work so he checked into a hotel for the night.

First thing in the morning, he took his tool kit over to the publisher and was shown the silent machine. He walked around it, did some tests, and found nothing wrong, except for the fact that vibrating over years of service had caused the press to be less than level, which prevented it from starting up. He did some measuring, took a wedge from his tool kit, and decided on the exact spot between the floor and the machine to insert it. He then gave it a few delicate taps with a hammer, flipped the switch, and the machine came instantly to life. The company was delighted with the quick result, but thought the bill of \$2,700 excessive. When the master technician was asked to explain, he broke down his bill as follows:

*\$450 for the plane fare;
\$150 for food and hotel;
\$ 90 for his time;
\$10 dollars for the wedge to level the machine;
and finally, \$2,000 for knowing where and how to
apply it.*

This book can be such a wedge. Nothing needs to be repaired. You are whole as you are. The (re)activation of this understanding simply depends on whether or not it is the appropriate moment for you to 'level' with yourself. In the east, it is said that at such a moment of ripening the Guru will appear. This does not necessarily mean that one fine morning the doorbell will ring and a sage will be standing there saying, 'Good morning, dear seeker of the truth. It has been brought to my attention that you have reached the point where you're ready to receive THE ANSWER, and I am here to deliver it.'

What it does mean is that the invitation to see who you really are is always right here. What in eastern traditions is called the *guru* is that which extends the invitation. The guru (G-U-R-U) can appear as a person, but is not a person. Rather, the guru is a manifestation of the animating energy that appears in and as everything. It is life itself.

*It is the inner consciousness by which he is unceasingly revealing his existence. This divine upadesa (instruction) is always going on naturally in everyone.**

Sri Ramana Maharshi

As long as we look through the distorted glass of our personal needs and opinions, we overlook this ever-present invitation. The data we select from the totality of our experience is filtered primarily for its relevance to our survival and immediate needs and desires. We look, amongst other things, for nourishment, sexual partners, social status, and security. This divides our sensory input into two basic categories: usable and unusable data. The usable data are admitted to *headquarters*, while the vast majority of signals get ignored. This way of managing information may be an extremely effective survival strategy, but it comes at the price of limited sensitivity and perception.

Next to fulfilling our concrete and basic material needs, we also use this data-management system to sustain our more abstract ego needs by looking for confirmation of our opinions and beliefs. We sift through the constant stream of information for whatever serves our needs or confirms what we accept as true. This selective perception operates on all levels from the obvious to the less obvious. For

* From *The Power of the Presence* by David Godman

example: You just bought a VW Beetle, and all of a sudden you notice Volkswagens everywhere. If you are in love with someone, you might be blinded to their shortcomings; while if you are prejudiced against a certain racial group, you will tend to overlook or discount the positive actions and characteristics of members of that group in favor of that which supports your opinion. Of course the VW Beetles were always there; your beloved is just as perfect or flawed as anyone else; and all races contain some people who are kind, some who are cruel, some who are wise, and some who are foolish. What you see is determined to a great extent by your 'inner selection committee,' much like it is for the travelers in the following Sufi story:

Upon entering a new country a traveler noticed an old man sitting under a tree. He approached him and asked about the people in his land. The old man answered by asking, 'How are the people in your country?'

'Oh' said the traveler, 'they are friendly, hospitable, and cheerful.' 'Well,' the old man said, 'you'll find them to be the same in my country.'

A few days later another traveler came up to the man under the tree with the same question, and again the old man responded by asking how the people in the traveler's country were.

'They are always in a rush, they have very little time for each other, and their main concern in life is how much money they can make.'

The old man shrugged and said, 'You'll find them to be the same in my country.'

When, at some point, there is a spontaneous surrender

of the personal needs, preferences, desires, opinions, and beliefs that function as ‘reality filters,’ the realization of your true identity may spontaneously arise. When this happens there will be no more questions. You see that everything is the answer – that the guru is and has always been completely present. He manifests as the person, inner voice, or happening that triggers this surrender. Any way the invitation is extended, it functions as the guru. It may be silence from a sage or words from a shopkeeper. The surrender may come through agony or ecstasy. It can happen through an apple falling on your head; it can come from the smile of a child; or it can arise from deep inside as you walk along a beach at sunset or when you burn your finger on the stove. At any time, your sense of separation may dissolve to reveal the One beyond all duality. As a Zen master wrote on awakening to his true nature:

*When I heard the temple bell ring,
suddenly there was no bell and no I,
just sound. **

Finally, yet importantly, there are no answers here, except those you are ready to give yourself. If this book resonates with you in such a way that it leads to insight, it will be by grace and not through the writer’s or reader’s accomplishment. In fact, as said in the previous chapter, this text will attempt to show that there is neither reader nor author. These words are nothing but a gentle reminder from yourself to yourself that you are the awakened one.

* From *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* by David Loy. Humanity Books