

The Edge of Enlightenment (excerpts)

David Hall

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ISBN: 979-8-8464-4245-0

PREFACE

It's been around 25 years since writing my first book, *Philosophical Contemplations*. It focused on patterns in the world and understanding the nature of this World of Opposites. This book is effectively a follow-up, written in a similar vein, as a collection of contemplations on the nature of reality, leading towards enlightenment. I've called it the Edge of Enlightenment, but really this book is about how there are no edges. We assume the world is finite, but infinity is everywhere. Enlightenment itself is merely a letting go of ignorance, letting go of the belief in the finite and one's identity as finite.

It's hoped that these insights may be of help to those seeking answers to the biggest questions in life. Philosophically, the theme here can be described as Nonduality, Advaita or Zen. It is a pointing towards the true nature of reality being an infinite singularity, which is the heart of our being, the heart of all beings. You'll find terms such as the Infinite One, the Self, I am, and God, used throughout. They all attempt to describe the indescribable, the infinite peace at the heart of existence.

So if you're interested in Nonduality, keen to understand reality, or interested to know your true nature and follow that old directive, 'Know Thyself', then read on.

Infinite thanks to Ramana Maharshi, Mooji and Eckhart Tolle for pointing the way to the heart of being.

1 THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ILLUSION

Basic principles

This book looks at three basic principles of existence:

1. Separateness is an illusion

The world appears to consist of many separate things, but this is only its appearance. In truth there are no clear defining edges of things. All is one interconnected flow. Separateness is not true.

2. Singularity is the truth

The world, or what is, remains as one, a singularity. Although it appears to have split into opposites, into many, it forever remains as one. It is an infinite one without limits: no beginnings or ends, no inside or outside.

3. Mistaken identity

Humans generally consider themselves separate from others. But this is a mistake. There is only ever the infinite one. Identifying as the thoughts and the body puts limits on our true infinite nature. Enlightenment is letting go of these mistakes.

Where do I begin?

We have concepts of this world being finite, but the reality is infinity.

For example, I could think of my body as Dave: I was born, will live my life then die, and that's the end. But really this body is part of an infinite flow of life. Dave is not an isolated individual with a beginning and an end. When did this body become a body? When does the food, drink and air become this body? At what exact point? When did it become alive? When it dies, at what exact point is it no longer alive? There is no exact point. It is the flow of life. An infinite flow of life that gives the appearance of having beginnings and ends.

We have a view of 'alive' and 'body' but these, like all concepts, have fuzzy edges. This is because the concepts we have are not real. They are our way of understanding the world, putting concepts and labels on portions of infinity. They are useful in this world, but if we believe in them we will overlook the truth; we will look for answers but won't find them; we will continually look for the smallest particle and we will try to look further and further into space. We will overlook the obvious, right here and now.

Understanding the world of opposites

It helps to recognise that the perceivable world is a world of opposites. Opposites are an essential feature in its presentation: highs and lows, good and bad, positives and negatives, what is and what is not. These are throughout the world in all aspects of this creation. For example, in energy, in music, in waves, in atoms. And this points to an important insight, that the visible world of opposites is itself a reflection of an invisible singularity. This singularity can be described as infinite, complete and eternal. The singularity is like the hub of the wheel of the world of opposites, the one around which and within which the apparent many revolve.

The world of opposites reflects this reality in its many patterns of stillness and movement, many branching out from one, like flowers opening from the centre, and planets spinning around a sun. The human body shows this, with limbs from a central torso, and from each limb there are fingers or toes. These many can all be traced back to a centre.

The opposite of the visible is invisible. The opposite of many is one. The opposite of movement is stillness.

Understanding Nonduality

Nonduality is a concept of no concepts. The basic principle of Nonduality is that the world is not plural, not made of many things, just one. The perceivable world is a world of opposites, a duality that appears as many. But this is only an appearance. The opposites appear to be separated from one another, but it is not a true separation.

It's as if the world of opposites that we see has come about by the singularity splitting into two opposites, and the pattern repeating until the one has become an innumerable many.

But, like the branches of a tree stretching out and multiplying, the one doesn't really become many. In the concept of Nonduality there is only ever one: there are not many beings, only one appearing as though it is many.

Separateness

It is important to consider separateness, as there is generally an assumption that there are separate 'things' in the world. But this is our conceptualisation. There are not separate things. There is one world which gives the appearance of being many. This is enabled by the different variations of the same thing.

The colours of the rainbow are not separate; they blend through changes. They have no clear definable edges, but we pick out portions of this and label them as specific colours.

Also consider the example of a cup shape chiselled out of ice and water poured into it. When heated up this can all evaporate. But it is all one substance. It is the same with the whole of the world – it is all one substance with different levels. Nothing is truly separate. There is only an appearance of separation. Having a fundamental assumption that there truly are separate 'things' in the world will lead to errors of understanding.

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The illusion

The world your body moves around in is an illusion. It's a dream created by the magic of the infinite consciousness. If you question it you will find that it is telling you what it is all about. It just takes some observation. There are patterns in the world that show many coming from one, branching out from one and multiplying. But if you try to find where one ends and another begins you will find that it is not as clear as you thought. There are no real beginnings or ends. The beginnings are vague. The endings are vague.

You think of yourself as an individual separate from others. But that's not real. Where do you end? When does the food you eat or the air you breathe become you? Are you the one who has been growing and changing all these years? Or are you the constant, essential one within?

Relative truths

If I place a pen on a table and come back a month later and it is still there, has the pen moved? Relative to the table it hasn't moved. Relative to the house it hasn't moved. Relative to the earth, maybe it has moved slightly. But relative to the solar system it is in a very different place.

This is an example of how our concepts are relative to each other. We use words and concepts as if they explain the truth. If we say the pen hasn't moved that isn't really true.

2 WHO AM I?

There is a dream

In the beginning.... No, before the beginning.... No, now.... No, never. Well, words aren't good enough, but here goes. There is a dream where separateness exists. In the dream there are many things because of separateness. They team up, they unite, they break up, they fight.

The dream spreads out like a tree, branching out into many different directions. The dream, like the tree, has many different twigs and branches, creating new branches, new experiences, new interactions. But also like the tree, the dream is one, no matter how many branches there are.

The dream of separateness keeps on rolling through eternity. Upon the many branches created beings blossom. They realise that it is a dream, and that throughout the dream of separateness there is a reality of one. They realise that the only real permanent truth is the infinite one who they are: the one observing the dream; the one who is unaffected by the dream; the one who is without time or space, who neither grows nor shrinks, who neither wakes nor sleeps; the one who is beyond the world of separateness and opposites.

Mistaken Identity

When one realises that separation is an illusion, this leads to questioning, "Who am I?" We have assumed that we have our own separate identity. We will have identified with the body assuming this to be who we are. Then maybe later we find that we are not the body, but we are the soul. But if there is no separation then we are none of these. And in fact all concepts fall when one realises that separation is not a reality. I am.

The separate individual

There is a sense of self fashioned by identity with the physical body. This can be called the ego. It is a sense of being a separate individual. But it is a mistake. Separateness is an illusion. There are no separate individuals. The world is a play of separation, presented upon the singularity of the infinite Self. Like a painting of many people on canvas, it is all just one canvas. The play of separation and the many separate individuals are all just the one Self.

So the identity with the human form and the ego we have is flawed. The human body itself has no clearly defined edges. It could be said that the skin contains the body, but the skin is constantly changing. And there is also 'external' interaction through breathing, eating, drinking, and the bodily

functions that follow. There is no clear point when food, drink or air becomes the body, and no clear point when excretions are no longer the body. But there is an assumption in the mind that the body is a separate individual and there are other separate individuals to interact with.

Through questioning and seeking answers, the ego can go on a wild goose chase trying to find its purpose in life, having difficult interactions, mental turmoil and confusions along the way. Ultimately though, it may see that things aren't what they seem, and it may ask itself, "Who am I?" In seeking its own identity the ego will find that it was mistaken, it is not a separate individual after all. All the beliefs, defences and mental structures the ego has built upon its own flawed identity will fall. The mistake of the ego and the separate individuals will be no more.

The phantom ego

The phantom ego arises when formless consciousness identifies with finite form, as an individual separate from others. The mind fashions a sense of self separate from the world around it. It is the opposite of the infinite Self.

The ego will never be satisfied, for in reality it is not separate, it is a phantom based on the perception of being separate. So when enlightenment comes and the reality of oneness is clear, the illusion of separateness falls and the phantom ego flees like a shadow in total light.

Who am I?

So I am not the one who does things. I am not the body. I am not the soul. I am the one who has always been here. These things come and go. Thoughts come and go. Attachments to things come and go. Identity comes and goes. Throughout it all I am here.

I cannot see myself. I cannot find myself. I am the mystery. If I think I have found myself it is not myself. I am like silence: if I think I can hear it then that is not it.

I am

Before the world of movement and change, I am
Throughout the world of movement and change, I am
When the world of movement and change has gone, I am
I am not that which moves or changes
I am the constant that is always here
I do not go out, I do not come in
I am not shaken and thrown about
I am present in all that exists
I am all that exists
I am

Don't take it personally

Your true nature is not personal. We identify with the body and believe we are a separate individual, the person who has a name, who lives and dies. But this is not who we really are. It is a body, a person, that has life because we are the life presence. Our natural state of awareness looks through the body's

senses and observes its play within the world. We are aware of its thoughts and these form a personality based on its experiences and concepts within the world, an identity where it considers itself separate from the rest of the world.

But the body and the mind are part of the flow of life. There are no real defined limits that clearly separate the body as an individual. The 'person' is an imaginary being or believed concept in the world of opposites, which is itself the opposite of our true identity. Holding onto the person as a truth gives rise to innumerable problems.

We are not one clearly defined individual separate from others. Our true nature is infinite oneness where there are no boundaries and no others. Our true being does not clash with others. It does not rise and fall, or change and move about. It is not dependent on others for sustenance, happiness, fulfilment or peace. Our true self is content and complete, regardless of where life appears to flow. Allow the world to flow and know that you are the perfect peace and stillness that witnesses this.

Who's fooling who?

Some may think that the illusion is fooling us and keeping humanity enslaved. But who's fooling who? There is only the One. The One dreams the dream of the world in its consciousness of infinite possibilities. Separates appear upon the indivisible. Limits appear upon the unlimited. They interact and create more. Conscious beings appear that don't know who they are. They evolve to a point of self-awareness, when they start to realise it's all a dream and they are the One dreaming. They are the infinite being. They were never limited and never can be.

Many

The Infinite One, the Self, or I Am, are terms for the one being that exists eternally. It may be thought of as the creator of the illusion of duality – the world of opposites and limitations we see. The illusion of separateness is the only way that the infinite One can experience many. Many can never be a reality.

Souls are created within this illusion of duality, but the centre of our being remains I Am. So we are all I Am. The I Am experiences itself as many. Each soul experiences itself as many. Each soul has its own path and direction – to go out, explore, experience and return.

Spokes on the wheel

The centre of our being is like the hub of a great wheel. The spokes stretch out in separation from the hub. At the limits we appear most separate and can think of ourselves as different beings with different views – separate individuals from others. But our core is one. We can all trace the centre of our being to the Eternal One. We are all this same one expressed as many.

3 EDGING TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT

Is there no end?

One may think, “Is there no end to this search for truth? Is there no end to this striving?” But really there is no start. There is no searching. There is no striving. These things happen in the illusory world of motion, which is infinity imitating the finite. You, your real Self, is beyond this, beyond the world of motion. You do not do anything. You do not search. Your Self remains still and perfect, untouched by the dream of creation that swirls around and within it. You do not go anywhere. Your Self, being infinite, does not move or need to move. There truly is no beginning or end. But this is a natural thing. The mistake is the dualistic thinking that one needs to reach an end.

Disenchantment

The human being belongs in the world and develops conditions and concepts based on its biological history and survival instinct, culture, experience and environment, to name a few. These conditions and concepts have their uses in the world, but on an existential level they are flawed and connected with the illusory world.

As the human being becomes more conscious of the world, at some point it begins to recognise that the concepts it believes and has been living by are not the truth. It becomes more and more aware, making changes to how it lives and interacts with the world. It is becoming disenchanted, heading to a point of realisation that its whole concept of being is flawed.

The human being reaches the edge of enlightenment where it knows that the world in which it has been living and the life it has been experiencing are not real. There are no things, no others. All that is real and unchanging is the core of its being. Everything that moves is an illusion, a dream in its own infinite consciousness. It recognises that the familiar things which it has learnt and known are enchantments that have distracted it. It has fallen in love, fought enemies, searched for answers, faced calamity, overcome challenges, been abandoned and ultimately wandered alone separate from others. But now it realises that it hasn't done these things. It has not been anywhere or done anything. As the realisation of this seeps into its dream, the dreamer begins to become conscious of the dream. Standing on the edge of enlightenment it will need to leave behind its mistaken beliefs and concepts, and its sense of personal identity. It is faced with the leap into the void of no identity.

What is enlightenment?

What is enlightenment to the human being? Enlightenment is not when a human realises that it has a soul that has lived many lives and it gains a sense of peace with all other beings. Enlightenment is when the human realises the truth of reality, in that the appearance of the world in which it lives is an illusion, and its Self is all that exists. Maybe more accurately enlightenment is when the being sheds its mistaken perceptions of the world and its true nature is realised.

How to become enlightened?

So how do we do it? How do we become enlightened?

Question. Find who you are. Look for the one who sees but is not seen. Look for the one who observes the thoughts. You are not the thoughts. Be who you are.

Become more like the good. Help others and try to do no harm. In time you will realise they are not others. They are yourself. What you do to them is reflected in you. But in time you will realise that you are the true reality and nothing is done. So work towards understanding that you are not doing anything. You are the unmoving in the world of movement.

Realise you are the Infinite One.

Give up what you are not

The ultimate aim of the created being is to realise that all things that move and change are not real – there are really no ‘things’ that can be defined anyway. It will realise that identifying itself with these ‘things’ that change is a mistake. The created being will come to realise that at its core it is the truth, it is the stillness within the hurricane eye. It is the unmoving witness, whose nature is infinite oneness. Perhaps ‘witnessing’ is more accurate than ‘witness’, as there is no identity or form in the Infinite One.

There are many practices that we humans can do to reach this realisation. But in reality there is no need to practise to be who we really are. It is more that we created beings need to give up the identity and attachment to what we are not.

Resolving conflict

Conflict is part of the physical world, the world of opposites, where ‘things’ are separated and dense, clashing against each other. There is also inner conflict that arises because of separateness. But separateness is not real. Recognising that one is not separate from others will reduce conflict, when one realises that all are one.

Let it go.

Self enquiry

Instead of asking, “Why does this happen to me?” ask, “Who am I?” When thoughts arise such as, “I must get this done,” or, “How can I get through this?” catch your thoughts and ask, “Who is it that does anything?”

Sri Ramana Maharshi spoke of Self Enquiry. As thoughts arise, seek who is thinking them. In doing this the thoughts dissipate and the Self remains. If the thoughts appear and disappear, who is the permanent one who witnesses them?

Instead of focusing on the thoughts and floating away with them, let them go. Turn your attention to the awareness and rest in your infinite peace.

Finding yourself

You think you are a human being. But look deeper. The human body is like clothing you wear. It isn't you. Look deeper. You have thoughts. You sense your thoughts and feel that they are you. But they are not you. Look deeper. You can observe the thoughts before you. They appear and disappear. Who are you that observes? Rest in your true inner self beyond the thoughts, ideas, shapes and forms, and let go of attachment to these.

The more one practises observing the thoughts and letting go of thoughts, the more easily one can rest in the stillness of the Self. You will not see yourself, but you will rest in the pure awareness of your being.

Who is to blame?

When something bad happens, who is to blame? Me, you, him, her or them? We are one. There is no other. Whatever happens, we are I Am, the one Self. When pointing the finger at others we are really pointing at our self.

The universe is one being. If I dropped an expensive ornament from my right hand and it smashed to pieces on the hard floor, is it fair for my left hand to blame the right?

By letting go of blame and complaints you will let go of the binds that prevent your freedom. Be at peace with the world of opposites. There really is no one to blame.

The simplicity of karma

In this world of opposites each negative is linked to a positive. This is the Law of Opposites. It stems from the singularity seeming to split into two and perpetuating this throughout the universe. This of course is an illusion, because the singularity does not split. But that aside, we can see how in this world if there is a negative action it must be balanced out by a positive. This is the simplicity of karma and the Law of Opposites, that the universe will ultimately rebalance its opposites.

So created beings in this world of opposites create karma and their actions will ultimately be balanced out. An awakened being however does not identify as the created being that is subject to this law of opposites. The awakened one is free of karma. True harmony is ever-present.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Hall lives in Wales in the United Kingdom. In 1996 he wrote the book, “Philosophical Contemplations,” which focused on the Law of Opposites and the patterns in the world that point to the unseen truth.

Under the name Goldcup7, the author has written many songs and electronic music tracks. He is the creator of Celtic knotwork design software, and has made many designs with this software, including the cover design for this book.

Some of the author’s works can be found on his website at www.goldcupdesign.co.uk