

Reviews and Testimonials for
Life Beyond Belief, Everyday Living as Spiritual Practice
by Alice Gardner

"I love this book. It is down to earth and essential-
- where heaven and earth meet!"

Gangaji, spiritual teacher and author of many books including *The Diamond in Your Pocket*, *Discovering your True Radiance*, *You are That* and *Freedom and Resolve*.



"Alice welcomes us to the simple wonder of what is, to the effortless Self that is always present behind every thought, every action. This is a journey from mind to heart, from separation to oneness. Follow its thread, because these are words that can open what is closed, free what is imprisoned, and help you to live awake."

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee Ph.D., Sufi teacher and author of *Working with Oneness*.



"This book offers important guidance for people who want to realize their true spiritual nature while living active, productive lives. Gardner's down-to-earth voice and her honesty about her own challenges and limitations make it enjoyable, accessible reading."

Judith Blackstone Ph.D., educator, licensed psychotherapist, and author of *The Empathic Ground*, *Living Intimately* and *The Enlightenment Process*.



"In this wide-ranging account rooted in profound personal experience, Alice Gardner takes the reader on a journey of penetrating significance. It ends up where all such journeys inevitably invite us to travel - deep into the lived experience of love. Thus, she provides a wonderful guidebook for your own such journey."

Mark Brady, Ph.D. author of *A Little Book of Parenting Skills* and *The Wisdom of Listening*.



"Alice Gardner brings exquisite awareness of the opportunities life provides for self-examination. In this lucid book she takes us to the edge of our own traditions so that we may glimpse a universal question for those of us attempting to hold a spiritual path: How are we to practice during the daily activities of life? Gardner offers, gently, an answer: Take those activities as the kindling for the fire of personal transformation. Wonderfully written, biographical of the human condition, I highly recommend this book!"

Ryan Rominger Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology, Spiritual Director and expressive artist.



Alice Gardner points to a spirituality that does not depend on belief or dogma. It bridges all barriers in an age where spirituality is divided according to beliefs that only create more separation. She brings it back home to the moment to moment experience of our daily lives and the centrality of our own direct experience beyond all beliefs.

Spirituality has historically been about getting away from or transcending our daily life experience. Alice Gardner's practical offering of life beyond our beliefs puts spirituality back into its rightful place, at the center of what is happening each moment in our day to day life.

Lynn Marie Lumiere MFT, Psychotherapist, co-author of *The Awakening West* and contributing author to *The Sacred Mirror*.

"Excellent book, beautifully structured, written, and edited."



"Alice Gardner's personal touch creates a bond with the reader. She leads you from exactly where you are -- physically, emotionally, spiritually -- through layers of beliefs, programming, and conditioning, to a place of accessible freedom."

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“Gardner says you find the truth of your existence regardless of the context in which your life is currently being live or what your mental conditioning is. You don't have to go to a monastery. You don't have to get divorced. You don't have to go on a diet. You don't have to do anything other than look (into what is already in your life) where Alice Gardner points you.

“Gardner talks about marriage, eating for emotional reasons, family, relationships, body image, self-esteem, deep listening, layers of emotionality, love. The writing style is breezy and calm, organized and focused, and at the same time revelatory and demanding. Don't expect your life to become perfect, it won't, but what seem like problems will ease. You'll have a whole new view of your world.

"Pretty" spirituality has had its day. So has "comforting" spirituality. We're all getting on in years, and we need to face the truth of our lives and the truth of who we are, even if some of our emotional reactions may never change. Alice Gardner is an excellent person to take you into the world of radically honest spirituality. Go with her.”

Jerry Katz, www.nonduality.com. Editor, *One: Essential Writings on Nonduality*.



After thousands of years of teachings that point to the Truth of Being, it appears that now is the time for teachings on how to *live* the Truth of Being. *Life Beyond Belief* will hold its place among those teachings. Whether you have experienced just a *glimpse* of who you really are, or whether you *know* who you really are, *Life Beyond Belief* offers a wise and compassionate companion on the journey to *live* who you really are.

Carol Schira MFT, MA in Integral Counseling Psychology), Psychotherapist

“Alice Gardner has succeeded brilliantly in breathing her humanity into the story of awakening to “what is.” Throughout the book, she points out the universality of the cross-cultural perennial Truth that everything is, quintessentially, only One. By directly encouraging us to actively use whatever experiences show up as an occasion to deepen our awareness, she short-circuits the mind’s proclivity to separate itself from the heartbeat of Life. Clear, personal and very readable. Highly recommended.”

Chuck Hillig

Author of: *Enlightenment for Beginners, Looking for God: Seeing the Whole in One, Seeds for the Soul, The Way IT Is, and The Magic King.*

www.chuckhillig.com



“While working on a project establishing an Interfaith Council in a small, diverse college in Vermont, I first met Alice Gardner. My path has been as a Christian theologian, a staff member of an international ecumenical organization, and a professor at Andover Newton Theological School. In these roles I have been able to provide many people with guidance and support as they sought out a meaningful spiritual life and as they prepared to aid others in that search as ministers. I was pleased to be asked to read this book. I was *delighted* when I finished reading it. It fills a needed niche in the burgeoning spiritual literature of today: the spirituality of everyday life. Already it has helped shape my own practice. I can commend it to others on the basis of that experience and its appeal across spiritual and religious divides.

In this book Gardner clearly draws on eastern traditions but writes as a child of the west (not as an imitator of the east). There are many points where the resonances to biblical tradition are evident to me in her writing, allowing easy substitution of my own Christian vocabulary for

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the reality she describes. For instance, her description of the “mind-made” version of ourselves and the difficulties it causes us, translates beautifully into the Christian tradition. (Paul struggles with the problem in Romans 7. “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”) Awakening to our authentic selves puts the mind-made persona in its proper place—as the servant of the self rather than its master. This same transformation is called for in the Gospel tradition where Jesus says, “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:39) I suspect people from other religious traditions could easily do the same. Gardner writes in a mystical tradition that historically has transcended the boundaries of the various faith communities, uniting us in the commonality of our everyday life experiences.

Frithjof Schuon describes this kind of boundary-crossing in his book, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*¹. He posits that the various revealed religions are diverse pointers to a divine reality that transcends them all. As Huston Smith observes in his introduction to Schuon’s book:

“Forms are to be transcended by fathoming their depths and discerning their universal content, not by circumventing them. One might regard them as doorways to be entered, or rather as windows, for the [mystic] doesn’t leave them behind, but continues to look through them toward the Absolute. . . . The [mystic] finds the Absolute within the traditions as poets find poetry in poems.”² It is in the context of such an understanding that Gardner’s work is so important. She sees our traditions and religions as our servants and not our masters: they are asked to

both support and challenge us in every circumstance of our ordinary lives.

As knowledge of diverse traditions increases, there is more and more “borrowing” amongst them. Huston Smith, a devout Methodist, nevertheless engages in more than one spiritual practice he learned from his study of eastern traditions. Trappist monks in Massachusetts had a Zen master teach them meditation. A Dominican priest wrote a book on “Christian Yoga.” My own pastor is a yoga practitioner and takes retreats at meditation centers periodically. It is clear that many religious people in the west discover that practices from the eastern traditions are helpful to them. The goal is to weave together whichever practices are fruitful for each unique individual in such a way that they provide us with integrity and coherence.

Love is the ultimate nature of reality for Gardner, and therefore the actuality of our authentic self—even when we do not realize it. All the processes she describes as functioning naturally in daily life are designed by Love to open us to this reality not only in fact but in function.

Gardner’s very title, “Life Beyond Belief” gives an important perspective on belief in a time of fundamentalisms and ideologies functioning as idols in human life. Her experience points out that belief is a shallow substitute for the actual experiencing of the divine in the midst of life. No matter what our spiritual leanings, she invites us into to a way of living that connects us with the divine at work in our own daily experience.

M. B. Handspicker, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Emeritus, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts



¹ Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1993.

² *Ibid.*, p.xxv