**Enlightenment**

The phenomenon enlightenment has been subject to mystification for hundreds of years. I consider it my quest to de-mystify this rather laden concept, to clear it from unnecessary vagueness and mysteriousness. (p229)

In this final chapter we explore enlightenment as crowning our work in learning to think what we want to think. (p229)

Most pain is ego-pain. In a sense, even all pain is ego-pain. We suffer from pain because we are afraid not to exist anymore, not to be what we think we should be, not to be what we think others think we should be. (p233)

Enlightenment means you acquire more flexibility in dealing with this sort of existential pain. We free ourselves, slowly but gradually, from our fears. We learn to face ever growing challenges in a wholesome way. (p235)

Ultimately only one big spiritual challenge remains: to help others to also attain enlightenment. (p235)

In the book *What is enlightenment?* I distinguish seven definitions of enlightenment. (p235) [Following are the short definitions, they have been elaborated on in class]

1. Every being is already enlightened.
2. Everyone who aspires after enlightenment is enlightened.
3. (S)he is enlightened who has realized you can know nothing for certain.
4. Everyone who has had a deep spiritual experience is enlightened.
5. (S)he is enlightened who continuously and consciously lives in a sense of oneness.
6. Ego is not transcended, it is not even there.
7. As final definition I want to name: being dead.

Enlightenment appears in degrees. We briefly discuss the three stages of enlightenment as distinguished in the zen tradition. (p241)

We speak of kensho when we briefly let go of ego. Kensho is also remarkable in the sense that it simultaneously feels completely familiar and utterly new. This combination of the known and unknown is typical of enlightenment. (p241)

Samadhi is an enlightenment experience that resembles to a large extent the ‘runner’s high’. It is a feeling of flow, euphoria. (p243)

Someone in samadhi is in every respect a good sport: (s)he is full of energy, but also full of empathy. (p244)

Satori is the deep insight, or Great Enlightenment. It pertains to especially the last three of the seven definitions of enlightenment. (p244)

Practice: Describe what you recognize of the different enlightenment experiences in your own life.