

Outshining Division and Transcending Reductionism in the Field of Psychology: A Critical  
Review of Nondual Psychotherapy

Matthew Jones

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Psychology

August 1, 2018

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Matthew Jones

2018

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## Dedication

First and foremost, this dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful wife, who walked with me on this strenuous 5-year journey, supported the painstaking hours I devoted to the writing of this monstrosity, and gracefully tolerated the seriousness instilled in me during this process. I look forward to sharing more lightness and laughter in our next chapter and cannot thank you enough for your unwavering love and compassion. This dissertation is also dedicated to our amazing dogs, Sigmund and Tallulah. His charm and insatiable stubbornness make each day brighter, while her playfulness and youthful spirit infuses our lives with vigor. Even with the occasional bouts of sleep deprivation that accompany raising a puppy, I love our family and appreciate the constant reminders about what's truly important in life. On that note, this dissertation is also dedicated to my Beloved Guru, Parama-Sapta-Na Adi Da Samraj, who inspired me to write this topic in the first place. Thank You for Your guidance and wisdom, and for the blessing of opening my heart to the Radiance of Your Divine Spiritual Presence. I am eternally grateful, profoundly humbled, and always bowing to You, Love-Ananda Heart-Master Da. You saved my life and showed me a way home. Da.

## Abstract

In this research, the movement of nondual psychology is investigated by employing a critical review of the literature methodology. An exploration of nonduality and nondual interventions described in the ancient wisdom tradition of spiritual adepts, sages, and gurus is conducted. Following this exploration, nondual psychology and non-dual-psychotherapeutic interventions are critically reviewed, demonstrating the state of non-dual-psychotherapeutic literature and highlighting the significant benefit of psychology's engagement with nonduality—namely, reinfusing spirit into psyche and discovering the true therapeutic mechanism of change. The findings of this study not only provide nondual psychology with a foundation for future inquiry and integration with existing psychological theories, but also challenge the materialistic and reductionistic underpinnings of modern, Western psychology. In total, this dissertation illuminates the considerable value that the spiritual and philosophic realization of nonduality provides to the theory and practice of psychotherapy.

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## Chapter 1: Nature of the Study

### Background

As the field of psychology privileges its march toward the medical model of scientific reductionism, or reducing complex interactions into the sum of their parts (Notterman, 2000, 2001), it is of grave importance that practitioners question this movement toward a renewed positivism and materialism. Rather than blindly supporting the movement of American psychology toward smaller mechanisms that reportedly account for higher order processes (Robinson, 1995), it is important for voices within the psychological community to critique the root cause of this shift and the unspoken agreement that the psyche pertains to the mind, or even the brain alone. As noted by Notterman (2000), the prefix of psychology is the Greek word *psyche*, which means *breath* and *spirit*, but has evolved to be understood as *soul* in the East and *mind* in the West. This is to say that the reification of psyche toward spirit not only challenges scientific, materialist dogmatism in the field, it also propels Western psychology back toward its roots to earlier form of healing found in indigenous healers, shamans, and sages. One ancient form of healing that continues to animate today is found in the spiritual and philosophic phenomenon of what has been called *nonduality*.

At the heart of traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Advita Vedanta, various yogic traditions, and mystical Christianity, Judaism, and Islam is the spiritual and philosophic realization of nonduality. Nonduality, or *not-two*, asserts that all conditional and phenomenal experiences exist within an indivisible oneness that is Consciousness Itself. Although the words chosen to represent the realization of nonduality vary by tradition and realizer, the words point to the ancient and sacred experience of prior unity (Adi Da Samraj, 2015), and challenge the central concept of psychology—in particular, the belief in an individual separate self (Prendergast,

Fenner, & Krystal, 2003). This dissertation will explore the many ways this ancient and sacred experience of unity is understood within a multicultural context and trans-theoretical psychological framework. This dissertation will investigate nonduality as informed by spiritual realizers and use that context to inform a critique of nondual psychotherapy.

Nondual awareness has found a place of integration into the context of Western psychotherapy (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). In fact, leaders within the nondual psychological paradigm have compiled two comprehensive anthologies containing articles written by seasoned nondual psychotherapy clinicians and spiritual teachers (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). In the first volume, Fenner (2003) describes a nondual approach to therapy in detail. For example, he highlights the healing power of the unconditioned mind, notes the obstacles to experiencing an unconditioned mind, describes supportive practices, and notes distinctive features to a nondual approach to therapy such as pure listening and speaking. Adyashanti (2003) discusses the transformation of the ego during a profound spiritual experience called an awakening process, and contributes a nuanced approach to the ways in which the roles of spiritual teachers and psychotherapists may overlap within the context of nondual psychotherapy. For example, Adyashanti states that therapists can facilitate an awakening experience with their clients by being awakened themselves, which is similar to the philosophy of many spiritual teachers. In addition, describing a method he employs titled *being together*, Prendergast (2003) conveys his way of inviting Presence into the foreground of awareness with clients by engaging in a relaxing, nonintentional, mutual eye-gazing. Further, Krystal (2003) integrates nonduality with eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and compares nondual psychotherapy with *satsang*, or conversations in which seekers converse about

truth and the nature of a real God.

In contrast, advocating for a balanced view of nonduality rather than a one-sided transcendentalism that views external reality as illusory, Welwood (2003) searches for an integration of nonduality into relational contexts. Hunt (2003) describes how nondual healing occurs and how therapists can aid in this development. Berkow (2003) challenges the assumption of the separate individual experiencer and uses nondual wisdom to denote foundations of a psychology of “no-thingness,” suggesting that therapy should involve a spontaneous inquiry rooted in the present-focused openness to *what is* by seeing through the separate self. Integrating nonduality from the ancient discipline of Yoga Nidra, Miller (2003) illustrates his nondual psychotherapy process with clients. Similarly, Bodian (2003) brings the ancient practice of self-inquiry from traditions of Zen and Advaita Vedanta to psychotherapy. Lumiere (2003) takes somatic experiencing into greater depths by adding elements of nondual awareness and nondual presence, which improves the healing of trauma in the here and now. Bringing together Jungian analysis and nonduality, Wittine (2003) relates Jung’s notion of the Self with transcendence and uses nonduality to inform the process of individuation. Finally, Welwood (2003) explores relationship dynamics within a nondual framework. Many of the above listed authors made significant contributions to the second anthology of nondual psychotherapy, which elaborated on and refined themes in the first volume. This dissertation will examine these many areas of nondual psychotherapy including how nondual psychotherapists conceptualize their treatment and the methods they use to invite the shared experience of union within the therapeutic encounter.

In addition to these writings, other practitioners of nondual psychology are also making meaningful contributions to the field. Brett (2002) analyzes and compares the differences

between nondual mystical and psychotic states of awareness. Nixon (2012) integrates the Wilber's (1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006) spectrum of consciousness model to addiction, then illustrates the application of transpersonal stages of development into treatment and recovery. Additionally, Theriault (2012) applies nondual awareness to the experience of grief and loss, which he believes is a catalyst to experiencing nondual consciousness.

Many more individuals apply their knowledge and experience with nonduality to make meaningful contributions to the field of psychology. Blackstone (2006) perceives nonduality as illuminating and encompassing intersubjectivity theory. Through her critical theoretical and clinical work, she explains how integrating nonduality into theories of Western psychology can be of theoretical and clinical utility. Similarly, Bradford (2007) examines the topic of therapeutic neutrality, as discussed in psychodynamic literature, from the standpoint of nondual awareness. He integrates aspects of intersubjectivity and relational theories in his reformulation of neutrality. Finally, Loy (2007) continues the integration of nondual psychotherapy with psychodynamic formulations by revisiting Freudian concepts of repression, and then, in a timely assertion, extends nondual awakening to the realm of social behavior—arguing that a spiritual awakening to unconditioned presence is incomplete without a corresponding and co-occurring social awakening. Although these writings offer individual contributions, taken as a whole, nondual psychology is an important development in the field of psychology.

In this dissertation, I argue that nondual psychological literature is crucial to the practice of psychotherapy, in particular, and, in a broader sense, the field of psychology. As we see, it is of vital importance to include spirituality within the clinical domain because spirituality challenges the biases of the Western psychiatric paradigm. Western psychology is embedded within metaphysical commitments that reflect materialist ideologies, and therefore reengaging with

spirituality may offer valuable insight into the medical, scientific, and secular nature of current psychotherapeutic practices (Brown, 2016).

Despite the literature written on the application of nonduality to psychotherapy, there have been no critical reviews of the literature. In this dissertation, I examine how nonduality, as described by a wide range of sages and gurus, informs and conceptualizes the practice and understanding of psychotherapy. I highlight the ways in which understanding nonduality deconstructs the foundation of psychology as the study of the individual separate self. When I refer to an individual separate self, I mean the colloquial assumption that you as an individual exist. As certain psychodynamic theories recognize, the self is a construction, an activity occurring in each moment. Nonduality illuminates with the utmost clarity the ways in which this separate self is the root of all suffering and a misunderstanding of your true nature, which is Consciousness Itself. Finally, I explore how nondual psychotherapeutic sensibilities and perspectives critique the assumptions of the field of psychology and its movement toward scientific materialism and reductionist tendencies. Although the topic of nondual psychology offers important professional relevance, it is also important to identify its personal significance that has influenced the choice of this research direction.

For as long as I can remember, I have felt a sense of connection to the transcendent. Early memories of sunsets, blades of green grass shimmering in the wind, the eternal sound of tree leaves bristling in the wind, and the unmistakable feeling of serenity are the first thoughts, feelings, and images to arise when I reflect on my early sense of connection to the sacred. My mother tells a story about a unique encounter she had when I was six months old. She says that, while boarding an airplane, a man dressed in all black with a silver medallion approached her. “A beautiful boy,” he said. “Matthew is a special soul. He is wise beyond his years and will

bring you much happiness.” My mother was speechless, astonished that a man she had never met knew my name. After sharing that he was a guru and receiving her permission, he opened my third eye chakra before taking his seat in the back of the plane. Upon landing, my mother searched for the man, but never saw him again. Even from my earliest days, it seems like I was destined to encounter spirituality.

After years of ignoring my initiation and intuition, I transformed my life by listening to my inner guide and practicing what I preached to help others in their self-development and healing journeys. Although I have always been interested in spirituality, my spiritual growth accelerated only after addressing ego wounds in my own psychotherapy, and aligning my behaviors with my values. Psychotherapy and spirituality, therefore, have been a long-standing interest, passion, and source of inspiration for me. In addition to psychotherapy, I have also engaged in many other beneficial practices like meditation, yoga, and reading nondual authors and realizers, or individuals who identify as being enlightened or awakened, including Osho, Krishnamurti, Mooji, Tony Parsons, Alan Watts, Rupert Spira, Ramana Maharshi, and Adi Da Samraj. I have read these authors during my graduate school because their words speak to my subjective experience greater than many psychological or philosophical theories.

In fact, at times I have experienced frustration with the field of psychology because of its underlying philosophy—a philosophy which does not ring true to my embodied experience. As someone who has gone through massive psychological transformations and spiritual awakenings, I live in, and experience, an elevated state of consciousness that is no longer constantly entrenched in gross *body–mind–ego* identification. Therefore, I have found it disappointing that all psychological theories have at their center the assumption of *body–mind–ego* identification as the achievement of health and well-being. Although I have found merit and value in

understanding psychological theories, each is limited by its philosophical assumptions based upon dichotomies between self and other, which reinforce the reductionist notions found within the current culture of scientific materialism. By reading this nondual literature during graduate school, I have continued developing my own awareness.

The nondual literature I have read has coincided with tangible benefits. The Truth that these authors, sages, and teachers point to with their words has illuminated and deepened my state of consciousness. Although I am not enlightened (and indeed there is no “one” who could claim to be enlightened), my own awareness oscillates between transpersonal states of consciousness and intermittent periods of body–mind–ego identification. My awakening to various transpersonal states of consciousness is not yet fully embodied, and therefore not constant, in my daily experience. I do experience varying degrees of nondual presence daily and frequently with clients. At times, I notice a felt sense of Presence arising and pervading myself and clients during our sessions together. I am excited to invite clients, when appropriate, to join me in this shared experience of healing and Being. This state of open awareness changes the way I perceive myself, the world, and the field of psychology, and it is my dream to further integrate nondual wisdom into my own psychotherapeutic practice.

However, several limitations arise in writing on the topic of nonduality. First, as previously mentioned, I, as the body–mind–ego Matthew Jones, am not enlightened or constantly abiding in a nondual state of consciousness. Although I have gone through a series of awakenings, I recognize that I have not fully or most perfectly transcended my identification with and as my body–mind–ego complex. I identify as being in an ongoing state of integration—a liminal experience in which I am not enlightened and yet recognize that the apparent separate self of Matthew Jones is a fictitious process being created in each moment through the constriction of



awareness—a mere manifestation of consciousness playing hide and seek with itself (Watts, 1966). Because I neither identify as being enlightened or as my body–mind–ego complex alone, it feels as if I am moving between two worlds. This limitation of not being enlightened will prohibit, to an unknown extent, my ability to convey certain aspects of nonduality that may not have entered my awareness or been integrated in my lived experience. In fact, most nondual psychotherapy practitioners note that nondual psychologists must have their own nondual awakening experience to engage in the discipline (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003). I do believe that I have gone through several nondual awakening experiences, however, and this leads me to recognize, honor, and give credence to individuals that have higher levels of awakening than myself who may be better able to convey certain aspects of nonduality and nondual psychotherapy.

Second, my observations and frustrations with the underpinnings of psychological theories may impact the way that I critique both nondual psychology and the field of psychology more broadly. Most psychological theories have left out the notion of spirit and replaced it with mind, and the brain itself as the seed of experience. Although I still appreciate certain philosophical and psychological theories, each is only partially accurate and dependent upon a certain point of view—that of the separate self-identification. Only after that assumption can those theories have personal merit to my lived experience, and even then, they are all subject to the problems associated with the root-issue of egoity. Needless to say, I find that these psychological theories are unsatisfactory and incomplete. In fact, I have noticed that reading these theories restrict and limit my level of consciousness by increasing my ego identification via constant mental activity rather than expanding it to higher transcendental states. These personal observations and frustrations of psychological theories will impact the way that I describe and

critic nondual psychology and the fervor with which I will attempt to deconstruct the materialist and reductionist tendencies in the field of psychology.

Third, the topic of nondual psychology is difficult for many individuals to comprehend. As Wilber (2006) indicates, less than one percent of the population exists within transpersonal states of awareness. Some of the details added in conversations of nonduality can become, at times, esoteric. The elitism within certain discussions of nonduality often prevents people from taking an interest in and from truly investigating it. However, this dissertation will demonstrate that nonduality is available to every single person, regardless of their level of education. To become aware of nonduality, one simply must become present and open themselves up to the possibility of exploring themselves, their reality, and their sensations with ease, effortlessness, and humility. When reading nondual literature and certain sections of this dissertation, one must try to read from one's energetic heart rather than staying limited to the cognitive domain. Truly, nonduality is not an idea, it is living Truth—a verb beyond description and categorization.

Fourth, the language used to discuss nonduality impress upon the reader the very dualities it says are inherently false (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003). For example, by naming what nonduality is, I am simultaneously unmarking what it is not. This creates the very division nondual wisdom indicates is false. Safran (2006) relates this limitation to the old saying that something “stinks of Zen,” which “refers to the situation in which one speaks of the ineffable in an inauthentic fashion” (p. 226). I must give care to my language and ensure that I am pointing at, but not definitively defining, nonduality.

Fifth, I am writing this dissertation within an academic institution that is embedded within an exosystem of scientific reductionism and materialist philosophy. The human sciences in general are moving toward reducing phenomena through the use of labeling, then the isolation

and study of these processes. Ultimately, many of the sciences reinforce positivism by positing that there is an objective, knowable reality that is external to oneself—which is dualistic thinking and contrary to nondual wisdom. Therefore, within my own academic institution, many individuals may come into the field believing in these values and may not be open to, supportive of, or knowledgeable about my area of study. Many individuals who read my dissertation within this context may find themselves reducing nondual awareness to mere factual knowledge or perceiving it as antiscientific, which would be a misappropriation and misunderstanding of nonduality.

Therefore, I may be doomed to fail. Many of my peers and colleagues will not understand the nondual concepts I will convey, those individuals that can comprehend nonduality are likely to approach it as an object to be studied and reinforce the subject–object dichotomy that nondual awareness demonstrates is illusory, and the very language I use will be incomplete and limited due to my own level of awareness and the confines of language, itself.

From the point of view of my individual separate self, I may be condemned to a punishment of futile and hopeless labor. Like Sisyphus, the price I pay for my earthly passions will be exerting my entire being toward accomplishing nothing. However, abiding in and as the witness consciousness, I am watching the unfolding of a beautiful drama in which the main character’s dissertation is his rock, and his fate is in his hands. As Camus (1955) says, “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (p. 123).

## Chapter 2: Methodology

Qualitative research has been performed examining the application of nondual psychology in psychotherapy. Although this area of inquiry is increasing in frequency, it is still underdeveloped and far from expansive. There is a gap in the literature pertaining to an in-depth examination and critique of nondual psychology, as well as the ways in which nondual psychology impacts trends in modern psychology. The existing literature on nondual psychology would benefit from further exploration and methodical review, which may illuminate the contributions and limitations of nondual psychological literature.

### **Comprehensive Review and Analysis of the Literature**

A comprehensive review and analysis of the literature integrates empirical research to answer research questions posed by the researcher (Dissertation Manual, 2013). The critical review of the literature is efficacious when a researcher aims to assess an area of research that is relatively unstudied. This type of inquiry allows the researcher to develop a foundation for future research by gathering empirical sources and demonstrating the applicability of these sources in relation to the research question (Dissertation Manual, 2013). The three main components of the critical literature review include a thorough investigation of available research, assimilating various theoretical orientations, and developing a new understanding of the topic based upon the previous research (Dissertation Manual, 2013)

A critical literature review also needs to explain why the research is a significant contribution to the developing field of psychology. Throughout the critical literature review, I analyze the available materials to identify the key components and theories that emerge throughout the research and also attempt to identify areas of the research that has not received the same empirical attention. In general, critical reviews of the literature answer research

questions that lack significant empirical support. In this dissertation, the examination of nonduality and nondual psychology answers the question of how nonduality informs, challenges and critiques psychotherapy and the underlying materialist and reductionist assumptions of the field of psychology.

### **Positioning of the Researcher**

One limitation of the comprehensive review and analysis of the literature is that it is influenced by my own perspective (Dissertation Manual, 2013). I have the potential to overlook various contributions to the existing literature and may also select and attend to various themes within the literature that others may not view with the same significance. Both of these possibilities lead to the possibility of drawing conclusions and forming interpretations that may not be interpreted the same way by another researcher (Dissertation Manual, 2013). Due to these limitations, it is important to discuss my subjectivity in order to identify the potential biases that may influence the analysis and review of the current literature. These limitations and the subjectivity were discussed in the introduction.

### **Dissertation Structure**

This study contributes to the conversation pertaining to reductionism and materialism in the field of psychology by highlighting the importance and significance of the movement of nondual psychology. It promotes growth in the discipline of nondual psychology through the compilation and critique of current nondual psychological literature, informed by nondual realizers. This dissertation hypothesizes that nondual literature informs, challenges, and critiques reductionism and materialism in the field of psychology by returning psychology to its roots as healers, building a bridge linking the spirit back to the psyche, and transforming the conceptualization of psychotherapeutic healing processes. It also posits that the examination of

nondual psychological literature through informative readings written by nondual realizers increases the clarity of best-practices in nondual psychology, illuminates various efficacious techniques and frameworks, and highlights the current limitations within nondual psychology.

In Chapter 1, I provide a brief introduction to the concepts that are explored throughout the remainder of this investigation. I provide the reader with a background on why this thesis study is personally important to me and mention the limitations surrounding the topic of inquiry. Further, I provide the readers with a general overview of current applications of nondual psychology to highlight aspects of the body of research that are pertinent to the topic.

In the current chapter, Chapter 2, the methodology of the study is explored. This section contains the justification of a critical review of the literature as a methodology. It also contains valuable information regarding the possible limitations of this scientific method of inquiry. Finally, this chapter provides a preview of the remaining components of the current study.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the limitations of discussing nonduality. This chapter demonstrates the challenges associated with discussions regarding levels of consciousness and how language, itself, limits nondual awareness. Further, this chapter provides an overview of how individuals should approach reading nondual literature, which is different than conventional, intellectual reading. This chapter increases the audience's ability to appreciate the contents of this dissertation, while understanding the significant limitations that inevitably follow.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of nonduality, as informed by nondual realizers. This chapter discusses models of transpersonal states of consciousness to provide adequate basis for discussing nondual states of consciousness. It also deepens the readers' understanding of awakening and enlightenment, as well as the self-contraction and body–mind complex. In total,

this chapter provides readers with an in-depth understanding of nonduality so that they can then approach nondual psychology with an informed perspective.

Chapter 5 provides background of nondual interventions and methods employed by sages, realizers, and gurus throughout time. This overview highlights the functions of such spiritual teachers and highlights a few of the methods they use to elicit awakening experiences in their followers such as the guru function, *mirroring* and *self-inquiry*, meditation, and the manipulation of attention. The limitations of seeking realization or enlightenment, according to nondual realizers, are also discussed in this chapter. Demonstrating the complexity and breadth of these functions and interventions, this chapter creates the foundation for comparison with nondual psychological interventions.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of nondual psychology and nondual psychotherapy. It conveys the current state of the literature of nondual psychology by first articulating differences between nondual and traditional psychotherapy and then describing the fundamental values of nondual psychology. The chapter then mentions the importance of the therapist's own awakening experience in becoming a nondual psychologist. Taken as a whole, this chapter provides considerable depth of understanding and clarifies the essence of nondual psychology and nondual psychotherapy.

Chapter 7 provides an exploration of nondual psychological methods and interventions. It exhibits the techniques being employed by nondual psychologists working with clients. This chapter includes methods such as the therapeutic relationship and being together, sacred mirroring and original speech, inquiry and koans, and also highlights unique nondual psychotherapeutic approaches, protocols, and integration with existing Western psychotherapy modalities. Demonstrating the applicability of nonduality in the field of psychology, this chapter

contains considerable value and offers clinical and theoretical utility of the integration of nonduality with Western psychology.

Chapter 8 applies the knowledge established in previous chapters to the current context of psychology. It posits that nonduality and the nondual psychological movement challenges the ideological assumptions of modern psychology, including that of reductionism and materialism. This chapter highlights the ways in which dominant assumptions of materialism and reductionism are present in current psychology and then demonstrates the ways in which nonduality moves psychology beyond such limiting beliefs.

The ninth and final chapter is a conclusion. This section features a summary of the study in its entirety. Then the limitations of the investigation are discussed. Next, implications for future research are identified, along with several areas of growth for the field of nondual psychology. Finally, the significance of the study highlights the importance of this dissertation's contributions to the field of psychology.

### **Summary**

This dissertation will utilize a critical review of the literature methodology to preserve and honor the sacred philosophic and spiritual realization of nonduality. Grounding this dissertation's critique of nondual psychotherapy within the context of original writings of spiritual gurus, realizers, saints, and sages will prevent the colonization and misappropriation of nonduality and better inform the analysis the state of nondual psychotherapy. Within the domain of nondual psychology, no existing publications have utilized a critical review of literature methodology, therefore, this comprehensive review offers value to a field of many unique contributions. This method direction aims to propel and unify the field of nondual psychotherapy by illuminating its various limitations, challenges, and encouraging contributions to the field of



psychology more broadly. In doing so, this dissertation will make a meaningful contribution to the field of psychology by centering psyche back into the context of spirit rather than mind.

From an individual point of view, this dissertation will cover a lot of metaphorical ground. It aims to illuminate, critique, and deconstruct certain dualistic, materialistic, and reductionist philosophical underpinnings in psychotherapy and the field of psychology more broadly. This dissertation will investigate, in great detail, nonduality according to various spiritual traditions and enlightened individuals, and use those revelations to critique the existing nondual psychological literature. Above all, this dissertation will introduce the spiritual and philosophic realization of nonduality to many individuals that may not have an active interest in discovering their true nature by making the topic of nonduality more approachable. The information presented in this dissertation may be limited by certain subjective experiences of the writer, however, the timeless, limitless, and profound truths will shine through and point readers toward the True *Ground of Being*—or the “Indivisible Oneness of Unbroken Light” (Adi Da Samraj, 2004).

## Chapter 3: Limitations of Discussing Nonduality

### Language Complexities and Challenges

First, it is important to indicate the limitations of discussing nonduality. Nonduality is not a concept—it is beyond words, beyond definitions, and transcends the conceptual mind. As Prendergast (2003) states, “By its nature, that which is nondual is undivided and nonconceptual. The conceptual mind can never nail it down. It is not limited by a set of principles since it is the source of all principles” (p. 4). However, language is the only medium through which this dissertation conveys information about nonduality, which posits a challenge for the reader and the writer. The writer and the many authors included within this dissertation use many words to point toward the embodied experience of nonduality. Although there is no single summative list to convey all of the possible words or phrases used to discuss the unitive experience of nonduality, Watts (1966) offers many suggestions:

This mysterious something has been called God, the Absolute, Nature, Substance, Energy, Space, Ether, Mind Being, the Void, the Infinite—names and ideas which shift in popularity and respectability with the winds of intellectual fashion... these names are often used to designate the content of a vivid and almost sensorily concrete experience—the “unitive” experience of the mystic, which, with secondary variations, is found in almost all cultures at all times. (p. 142)

In this quote, Watts (1966) illustrates several important components of the discussion of nonduality. First, he demonstrates that there are many names to describe the Ground of Being. Although the conceptual mind makes many subtle associative conceptual differences between these labels, those distinctions may be arbitrary, in that these words may be referring to and representing the same essential experience and Truth. Mooji (2010) uses terms like Absolute,

Awareness, Consciousness, Existence, Self, and Truth. Adi Da Samraj (2004, 2009, 2015) uses similar terms and adds “the Bright,” Divine Reality, the True Source-Condition and Self-State of Reality Itself, and Real God to describe *it*. As you can see, many nondual authors prefer certain language descriptions due to the ways in which language can influence readers and misrepresent the elusive constructs they point toward.

Most nondual authors recognize that words, themselves, are translucent symbols rather than the concrete object that many readers assume. For example, Watts (1951) states that a common error made by exoteric religions is mistaking the symbol for the reality, “Words and measures do not give life; they merely symbolize it. Thus all ‘explanations’ of the universe couched in language are circular, and leave the most essential things unexplained and undefined” (p. 48). For example, Safran (2006) indicates that *direct pointing* in Zen means to demonstrate Zen in nonsymbolic words or actions. This form of communicating points to Zen without giving it a name or label, which would, through the linguistic act of marking, imprison Zen into a static concept rather than acknowledging its boundless fluidity. As Mooji (2010) notes, “Imposing a mental concept of ‘oneness’ on the world ultimately only nourishes the feeling of ‘other’. It can cultivate arrogance in the shroud of false humility” (p. 175). Therefore, it is imperative that reader understands that the use of language in this dissertation is employed strategically to point to, rather than to represent, nonduality. Because this dissertation is written within a context of an academic and scientific endeavor, traditional words and language are also used to describe nonduality. Therefore, the reader should note that these words, phrases, and concepts are an attempt to point toward, rather than fully illuminate and pinpoint, nonduality. As such, when this dissertation uses certain words to describe nonduality, it does so in a symbolic fashion and should not be interpreted—reduced—by the application of positivist and reductionist

assumptions. When the subject being described is inherently beyond comprehension, paradox and cognitive confusion is expected.

Second, with his use of capitalization, Watts (1966) highlights that most references to the pervasive Self-State and Source-Condition of Consciousness Itself, to borrow language from Adi Da Samraj (2003, 2009, 2015), use capital letters to denote their significance. Similarly, to further develop the sacred vocabulary of English, Avatar Adi Da Samraj (2003, 2009, 2015) strategically employed capitalizations to a wide range of words that are not ordinarily capitalized. The words he capitalized indicate that the word refers to the Unconditional Divine Reality, rather than the conditional reality of the body–mind–ego complex. The use of this type of capitalization, which is found in many other nondual authors when referring to Divine Reality or Awareness Itself, offers subtle and powerful communication to readers. Adi Da Samraj (2003, 2009, 2015) also used punctuation to improve the clarity of his message, and underlines to emphasize certain words or phrases. Thus, the use of language markers, including capitalization, punctuation, and underlining, changes not only the emphasis of certain concepts, but also differentiates between “high” and “low” concepts. Said another way, authors utilize the linguistic and font-based strategies that are available to highlight the difference between body–mind–ego point of view and the perspective of Awareness Itself, the True Self. Other Western writers who use capitalizations identify the dichotomy of the immanent and the transcendent, or the relative and the absolute to distinguish between these two states. For example, Penny Fenner (2007) specifies that the relative reality involves the world experienced through the body and mind, whereas the absolute or transcendent reality refers to “the open, unmarked, and insubstantial reality that underlies the existence of everything” (p. 198). Therefore, as one reads nondual writings, they may come across the word *self* to describe the body–mind–ego complex and

corresponding relative, phenomenological reality, and the *Self* when referring to the Absolute and Transcendental Reality. As such, it is of vital importance to notice the ways in which certain linguistic markers, such as capitalization, are employed in writings within the nondual paradigm.

Third, Watts (1966) demonstrates that this language is often used with the intention to designate a dynamic sensory-based experience of union, rather than a stable, definable concept. Many nondual authors and realizers possess similar intentions. For example, Mooji (2010) states:

Truth has no structure and cannot be confined by any concept. It is formless, beyond and at the same time prior to any mental understandings. Words which emanate directly from this Source – through one who is liberated from the ego – have life and power of their own. An energetic transmission of the Truth rather than a mental comprehension occurs.

(p. xix)

Many enlightened nondual authors suggest that the energetic transmission of nondual truths is more important than the conceptual understanding, which they say is often misused to serve the ego and thereby restrict transcendental states of consciousness. The felt sense of reading Truth should be held in high regard, more than the intellectual comprehension because the subject matter under investigation is prior to thought, experience, and difference.

Overall, when regarding the language used to discuss nonduality, we can say that the concepts fail to fully encapsulate the unitive experience of an encounter with the Ground of Being. As Watts (1966) states with eloquence, “Language can no more transcend duality than paintings or photographs upon a flat surface can go beyond two dimensions” (p. 149). Therefore, the concepts in this dissertation will be used with the intention of expressing truth rather than possessing it (Watts, 1951). After all, “We discover the ‘infinite’ and the ‘absolute,’ not by

straining to escape from the finite and relative world, but by the most complete acceptance of its limitations” (Watts, 1951, p. 27).

In conclusion, this dissertation avoids writing about nonduality, which is ineffable, in an inauthentic manner. The critical review of the literature was the chosen method to situate and illuminate nonduality within the context of nondual realizers in order to preserve and honor the transmission of this sacred knowledge. Anchoring this dissertation within the context of spiritual sages and teachers allows their words and ideas to be conveyed with clarity and authenticity to avoid distorting and misrepresenting nonduality. For example, Safran (2006) indicates that there is a Zen phrase that something “stinks of Zen,” which “refers to the situation in which one speaks of the ineffable in an inauthentic fashion” (p. 226). This phrase serves as a reminder and a warning against the disingenuous use of nonduality. Nondual wisdom from various spiritual traditions should not be removed from its original contexts, commoditized, and then exploited. The reification of spiritual colonialism within the context of academia is not something this dissertation aims to produce. It is important for all readers to understand that this dissertation performs due diligence to communicate the sacredness and profound respect of nondual wisdom.

Integrating nondual wisdom into the field of psychology is not without its challenges as well. Blackstone (2006) notes that certain nondual teachings that emphasize only perceptual, cognitive, or behavioral shifts can lead to confusion that may be detrimental to psychological health. He states that these methods may exacerbate a person’s fragmentation between the subject and object rather than producing wholeness. Blackstone is correct, because for some individuals without full ego development or improper spiritual instruction, there can be negative psychospiritual consequences to nondual methods of awakening. However, Prendergast (2003) notes that nonduality cannot be delineated to a set of practices, or reduced to a psychospiritual

practice alone, despite the fact that some spiritual practices may help prepare individuals for awakening or facilitate a momentary awareness of our true selves. He states that nonduality “is both no-thing and everything, empty yet full of pure potentiality. It is immanent and transcendent, formed and formless. And it is none of this. It is *what is* and *what we are* and little more of any meaning can be said about it” (p. 4). He echoes that psychology needs to proceed with caution when attempting to integrate nondual awareness into a framework, because, as stated above, nonduality is not merely a concept.

### **How to Read Nondual Literature**

This dissertation also discusses a generative way to approach nondual reading in greater depth. As previously mentioned, the conceptual mind cannot grasp nonduality, which is a realization beyond and prior to thoughts. Although this presents many conceptual difficulties and has the potential to become esoteric, this dissertation follows the intention of Watts (1951), who shared that he does not aim to make the knowledge of the true nature of our experience a secret, but rather, wants to make it plain and open for all to see. However, as he notes, readers must have an adequate mindset to approach the knowledge transmitted in nondual writings, which is different than other epistemologies. Just as you can only see the sky through a clear window, Watts (1951) argues that readers must enter this sacred dialogue with open minds, free of assumptions and expectations. Similarly, we must be aware that to clear space for new experiences and fresh knowledge, we must abandon our beliefs, relinquish our clinging to a future life, and end our attempts to escape from finitude and morality in which we are embedded. Once this mindset is created, the reader may turn toward their *here and now* experience of reading nondual literature.

Given that all language we use to describe the Ground of Being are merely signs pointing toward nonduality, it is important to approach the reading of this content in a unique manner likely foreign to academics. Many esoteric spiritual leaders, such as Mooji (2010) indicate that the Guru's words are directed toward Consciousness Itself rather than the body–mind complex of the reader. When reading about nonduality throughout this dissertation and especially when reading various nondual spiritual teachings quoted on these pages, the best intention to possess is to read from the heart rather than the mind. Because the words describing the Source have no single definition and are beyond concepts, there is no transcendent value in parsing and contemplating each word through the application of your previous knowledge and analytical acumen. In fact, most nondual gurus argue that emphasizing the semantics is rooted in egoity and based in the conceptual mind rather than in the awareness the words are intended to evoke. The application of the thinking mind prevents you from Realization, which is beyond the mind. For example, Mooji (2010) recommends inquiring into your experience of where the words are emanating from and noticing the subtle sensations you feel when reading them, rather than focusing on the preconceived meanings your mind associates with the words. This new mind-less approach to learning is why Krishnamurti (1969) states, “understanding is not an intellectual process” (p. 22). He asserts that all knowledge about ourselves is old and dead because it is from the past and recommends that all learning about the Self should be present-tense and involve a significant sensitivity and attunement to embodiment. When readers reach conclusions or start examining content by comparing to their previous knowledge structures, then they are “translating every living thing in terms of the old,” which takes readers further away from the embodied experience of nonduality that is attainable when reading with fresh eyes (Krishnamurti, 1969, p. 24). Therefore, instead of interpreting content in this typical manner,



Krishnamurti (1969) argues that if you simply look at the statements, do not interpret them, and give them your full attention, “you will find there is neither the observer nor the observed, neither the thinker nor the thought” (p. 103). This experience of presence and embodied engagement with nonduality is much more aligned with the intention of this writer and the spiritual leaders featured in this dissertation. However, reading in this manner causes challenges to many people that are not used to such a *mind-less* technique.

Mooji (2010) indicates that because there is no concept to grasp and nothing for the conceptual mind to do with nonduality, it often becomes confused. The mind also becomes perplexed because the typical dualistic distinctions between self and other, inside and outside, the observer and the observed, are no longer prioritized. As such, the way that most people think about themselves, others, and the world becomes dislodged. Watts (1966) explains:

The problem is that IT is so much more myself than I thought I was, so central and so basic to my existence, that I cannot make it an object. There is no way to stand outside IT, and, in fact, no need to do so. For as long as I am trying to grasp IT, I am implying that IT is not really myself. (p. 151)

Because the “you” that is reading about the pervasive presence giving rise to your experience, the mind becomes tangled in thought. The thinking mind becomes lost, and if it is not allowed to be lost, then struggle and suffering will inevitably arise. This frustration is the byproduct separation, an “avoidance of relationship” (Adi Da Samraj, 2003) with the Divine—your desire to maintain connection to your body–mind–ego complex rather than swim in the Infinite. To prepare your mind for the openness and flexibility required to grasp nondual dialogue, it is important for you to recognize that you are always in relationship with Consciousness because it is this Awareness that gives rise to the experience of “you.” In fact and due to this logic,

Krishnamurti (1969) says that humans can only come to know themselves through relationships because all of life is a relationship—in that we as seemingly separate individuals exist only in relationship to people, ideas, and things. Therefore, Krishnamurti (1969) posits:

To understand anything you must live with it, you must observe it, you must know all its content, its nature, its structure, its movement...In order to observe the movement of your own mind and heart, of your whole being, you must have a free mind, not a mind that agrees and disagrees, taking sides in an argument, disputing over mere words, but rather following with an intention to understand—a very difficult thing to do because most of us don't know how to look at, or listen to, our own being any more than we know how to look at the beauty of a river or listen to the breeze among the trees. (p. 23-24)

If you challenge yourself to maintain the type of mindset Krishnamurti and others advocate, this dissertation may impact you on many levels, not merely by providing knowledge regarding the clinical utility of integrating nondual wisdom with western psychology. Given the challenge of practicing a new mindset for learning within a nondual context, many readers may find themselves exerting greater effort by using their conceptual minds in attempt to grasp the concepts being presented, which is precisely counter to the intentions being recommended by the nondual authors.

Due to the limitations of language used to point toward nondual experience, the inseparability between the observer and the observed, and the importance of reading from a playful mind and open heart nondual teachers and practitioners advocate that there should not be substantial strain in reading nondual works. Mooji (2010) iterates that “Effort is needed to pursue everything other than What Is. You cannot pursue What Is because you already are What Is” (p. 86). Therefore, instead of applying effort to understand, allow *what is* to be. Mooji (2010)

clarifies that, “Effort appears with the idea that there is a ‘someone’ having an action to perform,” and nonduality points us to the truth that there is no separate someone to perform an action (p. 112). Following that intention, allow yourself to be present and sensitive without needing to accept any one word, statement, or idea to disturb your presence. Permitting your conceptual mind to debate the semantics of the language will paradoxically prohibit deeper understanding. As Krishnamurti (1969) indicates:

To be free of all authority, of your own and that of another, is to die to everything of yesterday, so that your mind is always fresh, always young innocent, full of vigour and passion. It is only in that state that one learns and observes. And for this a great deal of awareness is required, actual awareness of what is going on inside yourself, without correcting it or telling it what it should or should not be, because the moment of correct it you have established another authority, a censor. (p. 20)

Removing your internalized authority aids your ability to presently experience and recognize the Truth described in this dissertation. This dissertation then becomes an invitation for investigation, presence, and acceptance of the present moment in all of its simplicity, complexity, and paradox. Watts (1951) proclaims that there are two ways of understanding experience. The first is to compare the present experience with a memory of the past, and the second is to be aware of the present experience as it is in this moment and forget the past and future altogether (p. 92). Similarly, Baba Ram Dass (1971) reminds us to abandon your past, relinquish your future, and simply be here, now. With these intentions present, reading nonduality will be informative and transformative.

Despite these limitations, the exploration of nonduality and nondual psychotherapy is beneficial. Not only does its presence within current psychological dialects challenge scientific

materialist and reductionist movements, it also links the current practice of psychotherapy to the lineage of traditional healers throughout history. Because nondual awareness has been central to many spiritual traditions and realizations, connecting nonduality to psychology can add spiritual depth and appreciation back into the field. Prendergast (2003) states:

Awakening nondual awareness adds a depth dimension to any of the existing schools of psychology, regardless of their orientation, through the psychotherapist's deepening awareness. Whether their model is neoanalytic (object relations, self psychology, intersubjectivity), Jungian, cognitive/behavioral, humanistic/existential, or Integral/Transpersonal, awakening psychotherapists bring a quality of awareness that transforms their work. (p. 5)

These themes will be elaborated and discussed in later sections of this dissertation. With these limitations stated and the potential benefits ahead, we will now turn to an in-depth exploration of the definition of nonduality.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the limitations inherent in communicating about nonduality, which is beyond words and indeed the conceptual mind, itself. Because nonduality is the very state and nature of Consciousness Itself, the mere use of language—of marked and unmarked symbols—necessarily reduces it. This investigation preserves the sacred transcendent property of nonduality by sharing excerpts from nondual experts, gurus, sages, and nondual psychologists. Within these diverse perspectives, each author or teacher uses many words to describe the Absolute and also use capitalization and other punctuation to highlight the difference between the Ultimate and nonultimate. Some of these words include *Absolute*, *Consciousness*, *Awareness*, *Truth*, *Existence*, *Self*, *Divine Reality*, *Source-Condition*, or *it*

(Mooji, 2010; Adi Da Samraj, 2004, 2009, 2015; Watts, 1966). However, all of these words are employed to point toward rather than represent nonduality, which would be to reify, commodify, and reduce it. Just as this investigation aims to speak of nonduality in an authentic manner, the reader must also challenge themselves to engage with this content in new ways.

Reading this study and other nonduality requires intentionality. The reader must relinquish their hold of all previous knowledge to remain open to the unique unfolding of reading about Consciousness in the here and now. This type of reading is sacred. For example, Mooji (2010) indicates that the Guru's words are always directed toward Consciousness Itself, rather than to the separate self, or body–mind complex. As such, reading from the *heart-place* of serenity, fresh aliveness, and being, rather than the cold, mechanical mind is beneficial and recommended. In this way, the understanding conveyed in this study is not an intellectual process, but an invitation for deeper presence—an acceptance of this moment's simplicity, complexity, and paradox. These complexities of language, limitations of discussing nonduality, and the frame of how to approach nondual literature are all efficacious in the reading of the current investigation.

## Chapter 4: Descriptions and Definitions of Nonduality

### Introduction

Considering the complexities of the language utilized to describe nonduality as discussed in the previous section, it should come as no surprise that attempting to define nonduality—the purpose of this section—will be far from linear. This dissertation will not follow stringent Aristotelian logic, instead, the writing will survey the Ground of Being and provide the reader with ample time to become immersed in the subject. This section will elaborate many different topics, all of which will provide the scaffolding required to create a basic understanding of nonduality. The specific areas of focus include: models of transpersonal states of consciousness, general descriptions and definitions of nonduality, descriptions and definitions of nondual realization, awakening, and enlightenment, and finally, definitions and descriptions of the ego, self-contraction, body–mind complex, or self. To start, we turn to models of transpersonal states of consciousness as a way to gain greater insight into the so-called “higher states” of consciousness embodied by saints and sages in various esoteric spiritual traditions.

### Models of Transpersonal States of Consciousness

Descriptions of nondual awareness are similar across various spiritual traditions (Loy, 1998). Despite these similarities, Loy (1998) notes that Asian nondual teachings differ in their method of achieving a nondual state of consciousness and in their philosophic interpretation of nonduality. As this dissertation continues its exploration of nonduality, it is important to be aware that the diverse expressions of nonduality described may, in fact, reflect differences in conceptual and philosophic understanding. These conceptual and philosophic differences may be the result of several distinct states of consciousness being described by diverse nondual realizers, rather than one unitary experience of nondual awareness.

To begin, it is useful to cite Wilber's spectrum of consciousness model as a framework for understanding differences in transpersonal states of consciousness. Transpersonal psychology describes how human consciousness extends from the body–mind to include transpersonal and spiritual levels (Almaas 1996; Wilber, 1986, 1996). Although Western psychology focuses on prepersonal and personal levels of human development and often concludes that self-actualization is the highest state associated with the evolution of consciousness, Wilber (1986, 1996) describes three levels of conscious development that transcend the mature ego. These levels include the psychic, subtle, and causal levels.

Wilber's (1986, 1996) psychic level of consciousness involves an evolution of consciousness in which the individuals' cognitions and perceptions become more fluid and expansive, resulting in the transcendence of the narrowly defined self as the body–mind–ego complex. The subtle level is comprised of archetypal forms and symbols, subtle sounds, and transcendent insight and absorption (Wilber, 1986). The causal level involves the transcendence of archetypal forms of experience and the identification with the pure subjective Witness, which is a state of formless consciousness. The causal state exists prior to all arising phenomena including time, space, and all objects that are perceived in awareness. The causal level is aware and present during deep sleep, dreaming, and waking states of consciousness (Wilber, 1986, 1996). The nondual state occurs when the Witness merges with the Ground of Being. As Theriault (2012) indicates, "Once the Witness is dropped nondual consciousness is revealed" (p. 359). Nondual consciousness, according to Wilber (1986), is not a separate level, but the embodiment of all levels, in which there is perfect reflection of clear awakened consciousness:

Passing fully through the state of cessation or unmanifest causal absorption, consciousness is said finally to reawaken to its prior and eternal abode as nondual Spirit,

radiant and all pervading, one and many, one and all—the complete integration and identity of manifest form with the unmanifest Formless... Strictly speaking, the ultimate is not one level among others, but the reality, condition, or suchness of all levels. (p. 74)

Wilber's spectrum of consciousness and integral theory is a staple of transpersonal psychology and represents a great integration of Eastern contemplative practices with knowledge found in western scientific traditions. Additionally, other models are also helpful in facilitating understanding and discussion of higher levels of consciousness.

One model that will prove useful in critiquing existing nondual psychological literature is Adi Da Samraj's (2001) stages of life model. In fact, much of the language and esoteric descriptions of the subtle yogic body, including chakras, employed by Wilber (1986, 1996) are based, in part, on Adi Da Samraj's work. In Wilber's (2001) book, *No Boundary: Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth*, Wilber acknowledges that the model posited by Adi Da Samraj, then using the name, Da Bubba Free John, is of vital importance, "The works of Bubba free John are unsurpassed" (p. 3).

The stages of life model proposed by Avatar Adi Da Samraj (2001) is a developmental account that recognizes all phases of human growth from birth to adulthood that includes progressive stages of yogic enlightenment. Instead of relying on science and philosophy, the *Sat-Guru's* (*Sat* means "Truth," "Being," and "Existence." Thus, *Sat Guru* means "True Guru," one who can lead beings into Light, or Living Truth) unique "map" is based on his enlightened state of awareness and highlights the interrelatedness of the subtle esoteric anatomy and higher, more enlightened states of consciousness (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, p. 316). The stages of life, of which there are seven total, highlight the ways in which human growth, defined in terms of conscious identification, occurs. For example, the first three stages of life involve the identification with the



“gross self,” or the physical body, and range from the progressive adaptation to the physical body to the emotional-sexual dimension, and finally to the integration of the psycho-physical personality. The first stage is zero to seven years old, the second is seven to fourteen, and the third stage is fourteen to twenty-one. However, like most developmental stages, failed adaptation at earlier stages makes maturity in the third stage difficult to attain. Most individuals fail to complete the third stage of life, precluding them from truly beginning their spiritual development, which begins in the fourth stage. Speaking about what He calls the “Great Tradition of humankind,” Adi Da Samraj (2009) states that the first three stages of life have always been present throughout time, just differing in terms of their own unique style of “materialistic purposiveness” (p. 189). Thus, individuals in these first three phases of life are generally consumed in mainstream cultural practices and values rather than pursuing spiritual realization.

The fourth stage involves the transition from identification with the gross bodily based point of view of the third stage to the subtle, or mind-psyche-based, point of view found in the fifth stage of development. Individuals in the fourth stage move toward identification with the subtle realm by aligning their gross bodily functions with higher psychic forms of being, such that spiritual energy (also called, *Spiritual Force*, *Holy Spirit*, or *Shakti*) “purifies” their gross personality. Adi Da Samraj (2001) describes that the subtle energy is perceived to flow down from the front of the body from above the head down to the bodily base in the early parts of the fourth stage. Later in the advanced fourth stage, the subtle energy continues up the spinal line until attention rests at the doorway to the brain core.

The fifth stage of life involves attention being concentrated on the subtle levels of awareness in ascent. The Spirit Force moves through the brain core and rests in what has been

called “the Matrix of Light and Love-Bliss Infinitely Above the crown of the head” (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, p. 451). This subtle energetic transformation may result in the temporary and conditional fifth stage experience of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, or “formless ecstasy,” which is one type of enlightenment that spiritual leaders display and discuss in various spiritual traditions. Adi Da Samraj (2009) states that the fourth and fifth stages originate first in the religions of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, and in esoteric traditions of mysticism and mystical spirituality, including descending and ascending yogic traditions

The sixth stage of life has been the pinnacle of enlightenment throughout mankind prior to Adi Da Samraj, and is the basis of several spiritual traditions that many nondual psychologists cite in their work. The traditional development of the sixth stage of life involves a strategic effort to identify with Consciousness Itself by excluding conditional phenomena, which are considered and described as illusions. Within the deepest state of meditation, sixth stage practitioners dissolve the ego and merge into the “Blissful and undifferentiated Feeling of Being” (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, p. 451). This experience has been called *Jnana Samadhi*, or the temporary Realization of the Transcendental Self. This realization is temporary because it is only possible in its totality during meditation. Adi Da Samraj (2009) states that the orientation to the sixth stage of life is first (entry-level) found in traditions of Samkhya and Jainism, second (moderate level) in schools of Buddhism and Taoism, and third (most completely) in Advaitism, Advaita Vedanta. He notes that some schools of Buddhism, including Mahayana and Vajrayana, are less direct but also contain some of the third variety. Avatar Adi Da Samraj (2001) delineates that this strategic exclusion of conditional, imminent reality is, contrary to the spiritual traditions in which this enlightenment is developed, an act of egoity that must be transcended for what he calls “Most Perfect Divine Realization.” He says that, prior to His Divine Avataric Incarnation,

there have been several suggestive teachings pointing toward Divine Self-Realization of the Seventh Stage in unique individuals within Advaitism and Buddhism traditions, however, these were founded in a philosophical persuasion and not fully embodied and thereby perfectly demonstrated.

The seventh stage of life is unique to the Revelation of Adi Da Samraj. The seventh stage involves the “Most Perfect and Permanent Identification with Consciousness Itself.” The seventh-stage characteristic is *Sahaj Samadhi*, or the Samadhi of “Open Eyes,” in which all conditional appearances are “Divinely Self-Recognized without ‘difference’, as merely apparent modifications of the One Self-Existing and Self-Radiant Divine Consciousness” (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, p. 452). This Most Perfect Real-God-Realization culminates in what Adi Da Samraj (2001) coined Divine Translation, “or the permanent Outshining of all apparent conditions in the inherently Perfect Radiance and love-Bliss of the Divine Self-Condition” (p. 452). In this type of enlightenment, the external immanent reality is not disassociated from in order to maintain an enlightened state; instead, it is Self-Recognized and Outshined.

The understanding of Wilber’s (1986, 1996) stages of consciousness model and Adi Da Samraj’s (2001, 2009) stages of life model is helpful for many reasons. One benefit of both models is that they, as stage theories, clearly illuminate differences between what they describe as distinct types of higher states of consciousness and nondual realizations. Although many gurus, enlightened individuals, and nondual psychologists refer to Awareness and Consciousness, they typically do not specify their own state of consciousness—which impacts the realizations they describe. As such, when they refer to the Ground of Being and their embodied experience of that state, all of their descriptions and recommendations for how to access it may be very different and distinct to their own developmental stage of conscious

development. This topic becomes increasingly important in later sections of this dissertation, which use these models to inform a critique of current nondual psychological literature.

Similarly, these insights are also central to consider as we explore definitions and descriptions of nonduality.

### **Descriptions of Nonduality According to Realizers**

Nonduality is the immediate presence existing eternally in the here and now, prior to identification with the body and mind (Adi Da Samraj, 2004; Adyashanti, 2000; Maharshi, 1985). As these authors attest, nonduality is the Ground of Being that is always already present, prior to identification with objects and conditions in consciousness. Adi Da Samraj (2009) states: “In the Most perfect Stand of Consciousness Itself, you Realize...that you Stand in the Indivisible Domain of Infinite Energy---and you Realize that every conditionally apparent being, thing, and event is simply an apparent modification of Infinite Energy” (p. 243). In this quote, Adi Da Samraj shares His insight that when the identification with the separate ego is transcended and one identifies with and as Consciousness Itself, all conditional phenomena are identified as a modification of the Source-Condition of Conscious Light. He is referring to the realization that the energy pervading all entities in space time share the same essence, in that they originate in and are simply a play and modification of that primary energy. Echoing this realization, Mooji (2010) says, “You are the Self, the Absolute, expressing as the spontaneous, but you don’t know it” (p. 121). Mooji (2010) argues that once you—as Awareness Itself—choose to believe the mind’s way of viewing reality, you have cut yourself off from the Source, which results in disharmony and suffering. When taken together, these quotes offer a contrast that highlights important aspects of nonduality. Adi Da Samraj (2009) shares the perspective of Most Perfect Divine Self-Realization and Mooji (2010) illustrates that most people live in a

world of duality, of separation from the Source Condition due to an illusory identification with the body–mind. These quotes demonstrate an important consideration of nonduality, which is the recognition that each seemingly different person is actually a modification of Awareness, but is unsuspecting that this is the case. To offer more language to describe nonduality, we will continue our investigation of Mooji and Adi Da Samraj’s teachings.

Mooji (2010) refers to the sense of being that naturally arises as the sense of ‘I Am.’ He articulates that the sense of ‘I Am’ is the subtle energetic body, rather than the gross, physical body. Similarly, Adi Da Samraj (2001) states that, “No matter what arises (or does not arise), you Are Only Consciousness Itself. This is the Great (and Principal) Esoteric Revelation of Reality Itself, or Truth Itself, or Real God” (p. 318). The concepts mentioned above illustrate two very important descriptions of nonduality, which involves the recognition that, despite the fact that most people think of themselves as real, separate, entities, they are merely Consciousness or Awareness Itself. As such, no matter what conditional appearances or events occur, there exists a possibility of connecting to and embodying the Ground of Being. Demonstrating this point, Mooji (2010) states, “Awareness is the constant in the absence and presence of all experiences and is present even now in the waking state and is prior to ‘I Am’” (p. 126). Elaborating on this theme, Mooji (2010) offers this key to nonduality and nondual realization:

The Self that you are, is already here, but recognition of this unchanging Space, this unchanging Awareness, must occur. For this reason, I ask you to recognize that which cannot leave. It cannot come and It cannot go, but within It there is taking place the play of comings and goings, watched in the presence of This. (p. 144)

Many of these quotes are not merely trying to convince readers to conceptually understand the truth of nonduality; they are also inviting readers to experience the naturally arising feeling-of-

being. Several nondual realizers describe the experience of identifying with the Self as blissful and joyous. When sharing his thoughts on nonduality, Maharshi (2016) states that “Happiness is the very nature of the Self; happiness and the Self are not different” (p. 14). He notes that when the mind is directed outwards to the conditional phenomenological world, it experiences misery, but in a state of *samadhi*, or deep sleep, the mind is turned inwards and happy. This expression and type of realization fits well into Adi Da Samraj’s sixth stage of life, in that the mind is strategically turned inwards upon itself. Transitioning from a focus on happiness and bliss to an emphasis on the unitary process of consciousness—another theme in describing nonduality—we turn to a well-received Western teacher.

Krishnamurti (1969) states that, “...when we look at what is taking place in the world we begin to understand that there is no outer and inner process; there is only one unitary process, it is a whole, total movement, the inner movement expressing itself as the outer and the outer reacting again on the inner” (p. 16). This quote illustrates that the boundaries and dichotomies that our minds use to understand the world, such as the difference between inner and outer, the observer and the observed, are false mental constructs based upon identifying with the body–mind–ego complex. Krishnamurti (1969) demonstrated that when there is distance between the observer and the observed, which is the case for all separate selves, energy is wasted due to friction between the two. This wasted energy and the corresponding friction are the manifestation of suffering. Therefore, when the oneness of each is embraced, and the truth that the “I” does not exist is realized, energy without motive effortlessly and spontaneously moves. Unlike many other spiritual leaders, Krishnamurti (1969) emphasized the ways in which sociocultural forces influence and restrict people from realizing their true nature: “When you become aware of your conditioning you will understand the whole of your consciousness. Consciousness is the total

field in which thought functions and relationships exist” (p. 29). He argues that individuals need to understand the complex and pervasive ways in which their culture and exosystem conditions their minds. He believed that if the mind could see through its social conditioning and attune itself with the field of consciousness, it could become more prepared for enlightenment to spontaneously arise. Unlike Krishnamurti, who often employed critical thinking and deduction to discover and convey spiritual insights, Adi Da Samraj shared his descriptions of nonduality through other means.

Adi Da Samraj (2001) notes that there is no separate entity that experiences an objective outer world, and emphasizes in similar fashion to Krishnamurti and others, that the separation of the experience and experiencer, internal and external, exoteric and esoteric, or other divisions between self and “not self” are inherently false concepts. These incorrect ideas are illusions created by a specific point-of-view in space time—the body–mind–ego complex—that is already separated from the Source Condition. Adi Da Samraj (2001) makes this point clear in the following declaration:

Consciousness (Itself) Cannot Be experienced or known—Because It Is The “Experiencer” and The “Knower”. Consciousness (Itself) Stands Always Already Prior To any and every object of experience or knowledge—and Always Already Prior To the psychophysical faculties of experiencing or knowing any and every object of experience or knowledge. (p. 223)

In a perspective informed by nondual wisdom, it is clear that trying to stand apart from consciousness is impossible, since it consciousness is both the experienced and the experiencer. Adi Da Samraj (2001) continues that “There Are No Two “Things.” There Is Only One. There Is Only This Samadhi” (p. 293). He notes that objects in consciousness appear to arise only when

one is identified as the ego. When one has obtained Perfect Realization, none of these divisions or experiences truly exist, as The Divine Self-Domain remains unchanged because it is prior to all experiences of separation and gives rise to experiencing itself. Although many of these statements may appear strange, Adi Da Samraj (2001), like other nondual realizers, embraces paradox as a natural feature of Awareness, “Reality Is An Immense Paradox That Cannot (From any conditional point of view) Be Comprehended. Ultimately, All conditional Efforts To Investigate Reality and Figure It Out Are Confounded” (p. 293). Referencing Allan Watts’ famous quote, trying to define and identify consciousness is like trying to bite your own teeth. These points give credence to expressions of nonduality—or not two—that highlight that there is only One Divine Source-Condition of all phenomena, including opposites, contradictions, and paradoxes. One conventional word popularized by exoteric religions to describe this Oneness and Unity is God. Adi Da Samraj (2009) shares that God is this pervasive, encompassing Ground of Being that gives rise to all experiences and conditions:

Reality Itself—Which Is Truth Itself, and the Only Real (Acausal) God—Is (Necessarily, and Inherently) all-and-All-Inclusive and (Therefore) One and Non-dual... Truth Itself (or Real Acausal God) Is, Simply, the Inherent (and Intrinsically egoless) Nature (or Intrinsically Limitless Self-Condition) of Reality Itself. (p. 331)

It is important to appreciate that the God referenced by enlightened Gurus is not a “man in the sky,” a parental figure, an ultimate rescuer, or another separate self that can be bargained with through favors. God, in this case, is not a mental and psychological projection, but the dynamic energetic essence that gives rise to all experience. Similarly, other nondual realizers share that nonduality transcends the limitations of dichotomies, and is the very substance that gives rise to these apparent opposites.



In addition to these descriptions, individuals with various degrees of awakening within the field of psychology also offer their experiences with nondual awareness. Theriault (2011) defines nonduality as “a stateless state which includes and goes beyond the dualities of being and non-being, of illness and health, and of happiness and grief” (p. 355). Here the author is indicating that nonduality transcends the limitations of dichotomies, but also is the very substance that gives rise these apparent opposites. For example, Mooji (2010) states: “Awareness is the constant in the absence and presence of all experiences and is present even now in the waking state and is prior to ‘I Am’. It’s from Awareness that the ‘I Am’ is watched” (p. 126). Here Mooji (2010) illustrates that nondual awareness is the constant condition that gives rise to all experiences, including the subtle sense of *I Am* that occurs during the waking state of consciousness. Both definitions point to nonduality as transcending dichotomies, opposites, and being the very substance that gives rise to those conditions. This dissertation will explore other definitions of nonduality that link to these ideas.

As indicated by previous definitions and descriptions of nonduality, a nondual state of consciousness cannot be maintained when one identifies with the body–mind–ego complex (Adi Da Samraj, 2004). Several nondual psychologists agree with this experience. Blackstone (2006) offers a beautiful summary of nondual awareness:

The spaciousness of nondual consciousness is experienced as vast stillness, within which all of the movements of life—our perceptions, thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and actions occur. As our realization of nonduality progresses, all of these dynamic aspects of our experience gain their optimal fluidity and freedom. In other words, we are able to allow experiences, such as emotion, thoughts or perceptions to occur, or to flow, without impeding them. Examples of this unimpeded experience are an increased subtlety

and vividness of perception, a greater depth of emotional responsiveness, as well as greater emotional resiliency, and a more spontaneous flow of creativity. For this reason, nondual realization is often referred to as freedom. It is freedom from our own constraints placed upon ourselves, from our rigid organizations of experience. (p. 32–33)

The sense of spaciousness Blackstone portrays is echoed by many authors and practitioners. In describing the pure awareness that emerges when the self is not engaging in the act of identifying itself, Almaas (1988) says:

One experience oneself as a vast, dark, silent emptiness. It is a sheer emptiness, boundless, infinite and absolutely silent. One experiences oneself as an emptiness that has no characteristic except that of being a totally silent Impersonal Witness. There is a stupendous vastness, an absolute silence, a complete impersonality, and a singularly clear but absolutely uninvolved awareness of everything. (p. 426–427)

Although these descriptions of nonduality are not all-inclusive, in total, they provide insight into a wide-range of nondual experiences.

In summary, this section’s investigation of the definitions and descriptions of nonduality uncovered several themes from individuals with varying degrees and levels of embodied nondual states of consciousness. First, many authors (e.g., Maharshi, 2016) describe the experience of transcending the body–mind–ego complex and identifying with the Self as blissful and joyous. These authors share that these feelings of happiness and bliss are related to a nonmental felt sense of unity with all *that is* arising in consciousness. Other authors (such as Adi Da Samraj, 2001) note that the divisions between self and “not self” are seen through as illusions when examined from higher, unitive states of Awareness. As such, the experiencer and experienced are no longer conceptualized as separate, but instead, are perceived as a merely apparent

modification conditional manifestation, or play, of Consciousness Itself. From the standpoint of Perfect Realization, no divisions between self and other exist and the Ground of Being remains As Is, because it is prior to all experiences and is the substance from which experiences arise. This perspective, which is only accessible after transcending the ego, informs the reader that the God referenced by nondual sages is not a psychophysical projection of mind, an all-knowing parent, but is instead, the Self-State and Source-Condition of Reality Itself. Finally, contributions from nondual psychologists that experience varying degrees of nondual awareness also highlight that there is a felt sense of freedom and spaciousness in addition to bliss and happiness. These authors (i.e., Almaas, 1988; Blackstone, 2006) indicate that these feelings emerge when the only sense of self is that of an impersonal witness awareness. Overall, these findings will prove illustrious when the dissertation examines nondual psychotherapy and nondual psychotherapeutic interventions in later sections. Next, this dissertation will describe the transformative experience of awakening, realization, and enlightenment to further illuminate both nonduality and the process of transcending the body–mind complex.

### **Descriptions of Nondual Realization, Awakening, and Enlightenment**

Just as various terms are utilized to refer to Awareness, individuals use a wide range of language to describe the transformation that occurs when one discovers their true nature as Consciousness Itself. This transformation process, which can occur spontaneously or gradually over time, is typically referred to as realization, awakening, or enlightenment. Much like the various stages of consciousness proposed by Adi Da Samraj (2001, 2009) and Wilber (1986, 1996), several accounts of awakening experiences suggest that there are different types, levels, or stages of enlightenment. Describing early stages of awakening, Krishnamurti (1969) indicates that individuals begin to recognize patterns of consciousness. For example, people start to

understand both conceptually and in their lived experience that each thing, or condition, within Awareness contains its opposite. Much like Jung's juxtaposition of the Self with the Shadow and Newton's third law of motion, individuals begin noticing that each condition contains its hidden, opposite essence. Articulating this with precision, Adi Da Samraj (2009) states:

When the mechanics of egoity are transcended in "self"-understanding, then it becomes obvious that life (or conditionally manifested phenomenal existence) is simply a "play" of opposites... the "play" in conditional Nature is always in the direction of perpetuating the dynamics of the "play" itself—and, therefore, polarity, opposition, struggle, alternation, death, and cyclic repetition tend to be perpetuated as the characteristics of phenomenal existence. (p. 114)

Krishnamurti (1969) shares an example of this realization when he writes, "It is the struggle to repeat and perpetuate pleasure which turns it into pain" (p. 37). Individuals in early stages of awakening begin perceiving life's "game of circles" and play of opposites, which leads to a greater sense of freedom, joy, relaxation, and tranquility. In a similar characterization, Watts (1951) says that, "For those who see clearly that it is a circle and why it is a circle, there is no alternative but to stop circling. For as soon as you see the whole circle, the illusion that the head is separate from the tail disappears" (p. 70). In this case, both authors highlight that a greater sense of freedom is developed after discovering the translucent presence of universal patterns. The authors recognize that despite the ongoing difficulties that often continue to arise, a larger perspective of an ever-changing play of circles and opposites emerges, providing individuals with greater nonattachment to conditional occurrences. Ramana Maharshi (2016) agrees and states that, "Inquiring into the nature of one's self that is in bondage, and realizing one's true nature is liberation" (p. 16). This theme of liberation, nonattachment to conditional existence,

and the joy that emerges from that participation in the play of consciousness is frequently discussed among spiritual teachers. For example, Adi Da Samraj (2009) indicates that no one can become happy, they can only *Be Happy*, meaning that happiness is not an object to be attained, but instead, a state of being—the natural essence of unrestricted awareness. He expresses that the self-contracted being seeks happiness by searching for objects and other people, failing to realize that “Happiness (or Love-Bliss) is an Inherent Characteristic of the Nonconditional (or Divine) Reality Itself” (Adi Da Samraj, 2009, p. 307). This statement echoes the experiences of many other individuals that proclaim awakening, even in its nonperfect and not yet fully embodied presence, results in feelings of love and joy. Watts (1951), for example, describes the undivided mind as transforming the way that one perceives the environment. Following a degree of realization, he notes that there is an experience of unity. Love, Watts (1951) argues, is the organizing and unifying principle of the universe and the essence of mind, which becomes experienced when the mind is whole. When taken together, these quotes highlight that realization is often accompanied by feelings of love, joy, and freedom. Many nondual spiritual teachers agree that varying degrees of nondual realization is a liberating experience that transforms the way one interacts with the world and with others.

In his later work, Watts (1966) states that after discovering the truth of nonduality one may return to the world of practical affairs with a new spirit of lightness and playfulness. He indicates that seeing through the illusion of the separate ego alleviates your fear of death because you recognize that the death, in this case, is simply the trough between the crests of an endlessly waving ocean. Continuing, he indicates that politics and morality also change as a result of nondual realization. Watts (1966) describes that, after expanding your awareness, you recognize dependence upon all forms of life, including your enemies. He indicates that, even if you are

involved in competitive games of life, you are unable to believe in the illusion that “othered” individuals are bad, offensive, or should be destroyed. Mooji (2010) argues that the reason one cannot believe the illusion that other people are evil is due to a change in perception resulting from an experience of Union with the Self. He states, “Once this Union with the Self has become your own reality, what you used to perceive as another person will have blurred to nothing more than a unique fragrance of the Self” (Mooji, 2010, p. 116). After nondual realization, Mooji (2010) believes that you see that same Self in all things and people. He posits that deep layers of social conditioning allow awakened individuals to continue speaking the language of separation and appearances following their realization. Stated in a different manner, after individuals experience the Union with the Self, they can still refer to, and recognize, separate individuals: however, there is a deeper seeing and understanding that all experiences are just appearances of the Self. Perhaps this underlying connectedness and recognition of man’s essence as Consciousness is why Watts argues that awakening helps people remain calm during conflict and increases willingness to find peaceful compromises.

Although these practical benefits of realization are important, the experience of awaking is not always pleasant. For example, Watts (1966) says that, “You will feel like an onion: skin after skin, subterfuge after subterfuge, is pulled off to find no kernel at the center. Which is the whole point: to find out that the ego is indeed a fake—a wall of defense around a wall of defense...around nothing” (p. 122). Although some individuals find this emptiness comforting, many individuals may not approach this lack of center with humor. Based on the revelation of nonduality, one could argue that many individuals spend their entire lives defending against this fear of the inner void. However, according to many nondual sages, most of the people that fear this emptiness are also the individuals that have not profoundly entered into it, due to a desire to

protect the images and narratives they associate with themselves. Speaking on this desire to maintain connection to the illusion of separateness, Mooji (2010) states:

For as long as you purchase your conditioning as having something to do with you, you are dreaming a dream of separation in which you experience yourself as an autonomous player in the world you love and don't want to let go of. When it is recognized that both the conditioning and the apparent one who is conditioned are ideas arising in unconditioned Being – the Self – this dream ends, which Silence, Beauty and Peace being revealed unto itself. (p. 21)

For those who taste the freedom of seeing through the illusory state of the world when perceived from the ego, there becomes a merger with Reality. Watts (1966) says, “When you know for sure that your separate ego is a fiction, you actually *feel* yourself *as* the whole process and pattern of life. Experience and experiencer become one experiencing, known and knower one knowing” (p. 121). Similarly, Adi Da Samraj (2001) states: “To Realize Consciousness Itself is not merely to stand over against ‘things’ (in the disposition of regarding ‘things’, without being them)” (p. 318). This blurring of boundaries between the experiencer and the experienced and the merger between subject and object, highlights an undivided mind, free from tension of trying to stand apart from the experience occurring in the here and now, resulting in a ripening of existence (Watts, 1951). For example, Watts (1951) says that when you realize that you *are* this moment and not apart from it, it allows you to relax and fully experience all things that enter your experience, including pain and pleasure. This realization allows you to dance with no intention of getting somewhere else, to a different experience other than what is arising now. The newfound intimacy with *what is* resulting from enlightenment brings greater awareness of the present moment and decreases the desire to escape the present through contemplating the past or future

(Watts, 1951). As a metaphor, Watts (1951) offers the idea that music is fulfilled in each moment—that you do not play a song in order to make it to the final chord. He argues that if the ending were the fulfillment rather than each chord, musicians would simply write finales. This metaphor helps convey that it is the mind that creates meaning and strives for more, when the experience of Being Itself is already complete when experienced from a nondual perspective. Similarly, Mooji (2010) describes realization by stating, “Only when you have cleaned yourself of all that is not you, will you lose the fear of Existence; then you will dance as Existence itself” (p. 26). In this case, there is no separation between the dancing and the dancer; both are arising as One, which is the heart of nondual realization. This meaningful insight is one that sages argue can occur spontaneously in one moment, or gradually over time.

Many spiritual teachers think that the process of revealing encounters resistance from the mind. This resistance, or defenses against nondual realization, prevents many people from deepening their awakening, but can gradually lessen over time. Mooji (2010) states that “The initial unsteadiness in the experiential realm represents the birth pangs as you are being reborn into Emptiness” (p. 58). He offers the image of throwing a bottle of water in the ocean, which makes *blurp* sounds prior to being filled with water and sinking to the bottom. Your mind is the bottle, initially resisting the downward pull, but eventually becoming still and sinking. He says that the mind gradually suffocates and blurps up old energies during *satsang*, which is difficult for most people to tolerate, but is an important part of the realization process. Krishnamurti (1969) posits that we must use awareness and attention to set the stage for awakening to take place. He notes that there is no “doer” method, or action that will bring awakening, however, he believes that attention has a critical role. In speaking about the awakening process, Krishnamurti (1969) posits:



It depends on your state of your mind. And that state of mind can be understood only by yourself, by watching it and never trying to shape it, never taking sides, never opposing, never agreeing, never justifying, never condemning never judging—which means watching it without any choice. (p. 33)

The continual watching of the mind, free of judgment and condemnation, is what he calls “choiceless awareness.” This type of awareness is similar to what many other spiritual teachers refer to as “the witness” or “witness-consciousness.” Adi Da Samraj (2001, 2009) places Krishnamurti’s emphasis on choiceless awareness within the sixth stage of realization, which is a perspective also shared by Mooji. Mooji (2010) indicates that our conditioning ties Consciousness to our attention, which is frequently directed outwardly toward objects instead of resting in its Source. He states that, “When attention remains in the Source, it is true attention. This attention will gradually merge and remain one with the Source and become synonymous with the Source, which is beyond both attention and inattention; It is nameless and formless” (Mooji, 2010, p. 167–168). Therefore, the manipulation of attention is “strategically dissociated” from external conditional and phenomenal reality and redirected upon the “inner” Source Condition. This reorientation of attention, however, is widely accepted as a technique to prepare the mind for deeper levels of awakening. For example, Krishnamurti (1969) uses a metaphor of a room, which must be kept organized and cleaned for awakening to take place. Although the organization of the room is helpful for facilitating realization, the awakening itself is a breeze coming through the window. It cannot be predicted and it cannot be forced. There are some practices that may help provide space for the breeze to pass, but ultimately, there is no doing involved. Krishnamurti (1969) declares:

You cannot invite it. To invite it you must know it and you cannot know it. It doesn't matter who says it, the moment he says, 'I know', he does not know. The moment you say you have found it you have not found it. If you say you have experienced it, you have never experienced it. Those are all ways of exploiting another man. (p. 122)

This excellent quote demonstrates another important paradox commonly described in nondual literature—if someone says that they are enlightened, they are not enlightened. Many nondual realizers argue that it is impossible for a separate self to become enlightened. Therefore, when an awakening takes place, there is no individual to claim it as their own. True nondual realization is the awareness and recognition that there is only Consciousness Itself (Adi Da Samraj, 2001).

One tradition that attempts to convey this nondual truth, when rightly understood, is yoga. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, which means *to unite*. Adi Da Samraj (2001) notes that yogic spiritual practices help individuals come to the nondual realization that the *Atman*, or your irreducible personal essence, is the same as the apparent outer universe, or *Brahman*. Therefore, yoga unites *Atman* with *Brahman*, which is the realization of nonduality. Although there is an increasing number of individuals who claim to have experienced varying degrees of awakening, many of whom are making excellent contributions to various fields like psychology, the more profound levels of enlightenment are exceedingly rare and absolutely uncommon (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Although many individuals can access glimpses of nondual realization, only those who constantly embody this awareness are Most Perfectly Enlightened. Adi Da Samraj (2009) summarizes, “If you are truly Transcendentally Spiritually Awakened, then you intrinsically transcend the (apparently separate) ego-“self” and the (apparently “objective”) “world”—in every moment.” (p. 66). This quote can be contrasted with Mooji's (2010) previous point about nondual realization being a gradual process. The deeper levels of

awakening do not just involve a constant presence of an enlightened, higher state of consciousness, but even the embodied experience itself has degrees of profundity that become self-evident in the transformation of the psychophysical apparatus (see Adi Da Samraj, 2001, for more information on the yogic, energetic changes that result from Realization). For Most Perfect Divine Self-Realization to occur, many unique circumstances must take place. The first is that the individual person must relinquish their attachment to their socio-cultural conditioning and self-understanding. Adi Da Samraj (2001) indicates that, “Divine Enlightenment, or Most Ultimate Divine Awakening, Requires (As A Prerequisite) That You Be Absolutely Confounded, Absolutely knowledgeless, and Absolutely Surrendered—Utterly Free Of Any Effort To Control or To Survive” (p. 293). As previously stated, no “one” can claim to be enlightened because it is impossible for a separate self to claim a sacred and eternal state of Oneness. Similarly, more profound degrees of realization require a relinquishment of the body–mind–ego complex, something that most individuals find terrifying much like the onion fearing its empty core. This prerequisite is mirrored by Mooji (2010), who requests: “Give up the idea of a journey to Truth and Truth is instantly revealed” (p. 97). The idea that awakening cannot take place without letting go of one’s ego is common in spiritual circles: “Human beings themselves cannot awaken to the esoteric process that fulfills their Spiritual heart-impulse until the spell of mythological and ego-possessed thinking is broken” (Adi Da Samraj, 2009, p. 77).

To summarize, this section investigated many themes related to the process of enlightenment to deepen understanding of nondual states of consciousness. Authors featured in this section described several important themes related to realization. First, the transformative process of awakening can occur spontaneously or gradually over time. Saints and spiritual sages indicate that this enlightenment has varying degrees and levels. They indicate that early in an

awakening process, individuals frequently become aware of patterns of consciousness that were previously unexamined. They discover that each action has an opposite reaction, and that life's "game of circles" is simply a play of opposites. This recognition is reported to result in greater freedom and relaxation for the individual, who now has a unique appreciation for nonattachment to life's ever-changing conditions and a greater connection to the transcendent. Feeling more connected to the essence of Being Itself, these individuals experience Love-Bliss, happiness, and experience tastes of liberation. Following this change in perception, individuals may continue participating in dominant culture, but do so in a way that honors others, who are Divinely Self-Recognized as a unique fragrance of the Self. Unfortunately, nondual gurus also indicate that many individuals fear the ego death that must take place for higher levels of realization to occur. The transcending of the body–mind complex in enlightenment indicates that it is not possible for "someone" to be awake, as the separate self is only an illusion with no historical existence. Because transcending the ego to varying degrees is a requirement of the realization process, as described by nondual saints and sages, the next section will involve a deeper investigation and clarification of the ego, self-contraction, self, and the body–mind complex as referred to in this passage and in other nondual literature.

### **Descriptions of the Self-Contraction, Ego, Body–Mind Complex, and Self**

Contrary to the majority perspective of humankind, nondual spiritual insights convey that the primal illusion of human existence is that the "I" is a "self" separate from everyone and everything else (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Spiritual literature and teachers apply a wide range of words to describe this separate self that maintains an illusion of separateness from the Source-Condition. Some authors refer to it as the self or "self," both with featuring lowercase letters to distinguish it from the Self, or the nondual Ground of Being, and one using quotation marks to

further illuminate this distinction. Others refer to it as the self-contraction to highlight the dynamic activity of the self-mechanism. Different sages employ the terminology of the *body–mind*, *body–mind complex*, or *ego* to describe this entity with an empty center that experiences itself as the subject separated from objects in consciousness. In addition to the wide range of language used to mark this dynamic activity, many nondual gurus share insights that there are multiple levels of selves that must be transcended for Most Perfect Enlightenment. This section will begin by investigating what nondual sages say about the ego.

One challenge that nondual saints and sages address is the identification of Consciousness as a separate self. Speaking of this identification, Mooji (2010) states that, “Something is identifying with this ‘I’ which holds onto the ‘I am the body’ feeling. When it is strongly attached to the ‘I am the body’ feeling, then it arises as personality” (p. 160). In this case, Mooji is highlighting the identification of consciousness with the gross physical body, which then—through association—gives rise to the self-mechanism. Unlike most scientific and psychological traditions, nonduality asserts that upon close inspection and investigation, the conscious being searching for itself will be unable to locate “who” or “what” it is because it is not separate from the awareness it is utilizing to search in the first place! These spiritual teachers argue that the “you” reading these words is neither the mind, nor body, but rather, Awareness Itself. Watts (1966), for example, thinks that the individual has been misunderstood as an isolated person. Similar to Jung, he posits that a more accurate conceptualization would be as a focal point in which the whole universe is expressing itself as an incarnation of the Self. Watts (1966) argues that, “the ego-fiction is in no way essential to the individual, to the total human organism, in fulfilling and expressing his individuality” (p. 79). He uses metaphor to explain the idea that a human comes out of the universe as a branch comes out of a tree, and states that each

individual is a unique expression of the whole and does not lose that sensitivity or uniqueness by recognizing its connection to the whole. Many individuals that have undergone awakening experiences have their own interpretations of the body–mind and its relation to Reality. A contrasting viewpoint is offered by Adi Da Samraj (2001), who states that, “the ‘problem’ of human suffering is always (and inherently) the presence (or presently effective activity) of the ego ‘I’ (or the self-contracted—or separate and separative—point of view)” (p. 171). Thus, he and many other spiritual realizers think of the ego not as a unique expression of the Whole that should be admired, but a problematic process resulting from social conditioning that is always limiting, restricting, and creating suffering. Adi Da Samraj (2001) states that egoity, or the body–mind complex, is a moment-to-moment activity that is created through associations and self-reflexivity. In this definition, Adi Da Samraj (2001) argues that the self is a dynamic construction of pure awareness constricted upon one point of view in space-time, created through associations with conditional appearances and rigid identification with the narratives deriving from lived experience. This mechanism, many insightful individuals argue, is the heart of all human suffering. For example, Watts (1966) states, “The hallucination of separateness prevents one from seeing that to cherish the ego is to cherish misery” (p. 78). One aspect of this hallucination of the ego that is pervasive and difficult to dispute is what has been called the “I” thought.

Regarding the “I” thought, Maharshi (2016) states, “The thought ‘I’ is the first thought of the mind; and that is egoity. It is from that whence egoity originates that breath also originates” (p. 9). Maharshi’s (2016) quote illustrates that the thought of “I” is synonymous with the mind itself, and because popular cultural narratives reinforce this thought as referring to something concrete, it is assumed to be real and true. Adi Da Samraj (2001, 2009) echoes this idea when he

argues that the “I” to which people refer, or the “I”-reference, is only a social convention, not something that can be known. He posits that exercises in thinking and active thoughts occur without an “I”-reference. Using the convention of speech “I,” he argues, is typically reserved for use within the context of socially interactive communication with others, not referring to an unchanging, separate entity. Another layer to this conversation that may be efficacious to explore is an idea nested within Maharshi’s (2016) quote above, which is his proposal that the gross and subtle levels of ego arise simultaneously.

Many nondual sages refer to three different levels of the body–mind complex, which are similar to but simpler than the models of consciousness presented earlier in this dissertation. Adi Da Samraj (2001) clarifies that there are actually three egos, or “the self-contraction-active psycho-physical illusion of separate and separative self-consciousness” (p. 173). He notes that there is a lower self associated with the gross physical body, the higher self that is associated with the subtle energetic body, and the root-self that he calls the causal ego. It is the combination of these three processes that manifest and create the conditional “I” point of view that most individuals identify with and as. When he and many other spiritual realizers refer to the “ego-‘I’” this entire mechanism is what they are referencing.

Exploring the ego structure in greater depth, Adi Da Samraj (2001) notes that the first of the three egos is the *money-food-and-sex ego*, which is the socially constructed, gross bodily based personality. This ego is present and develops in Adi Da’s first three stages of life and is prominent during the waking states of consciousness. Mooji (2010) believes that at this lower level of consciousness, individuals need objects like relationships, goals, and concepts—all things other than ourselves—to enjoy. These objects elicit happiness that is limited and transient, far from the Love-Bliss available to the Self. He says, “This joy which is not about something, is

the joy of the Free. And it cannot be compared, conveyed or imagined. It can only be experienced” (Mooji, 2010, p. 176).

The second ego, the *subtle ego*, Adi Da Samraj (2001) calls the “brain-mind ego,” which is constructed by the brain and nervous system, resulting in the mental and perceptual based distinction between self and other. This is the ego that develops in the fourth and fifth stages of life, and is present during the dreaming state. This type of ego is commonly discussed in relationship to what some spiritual teachers call the witness consciousness. Mooji (2010), for example, distinguishes between a phenomenal or personal witness and the pure Witness, “which is impersonal and remains unaffected by either experience or the one who experiences. The pure Witness is beyond the mind and thus cannot arise in the mind... The mind arises within the pure Witness” (p. 165). In this case, he highlights that the Witness is something beyond the second or subtle ego. Another way of saying this is that the mind, itself, originates from this subtle ego. Maharshi (2016) supports the hypothesis that the mind originates in the subtle energetic body, which some call the soul. He argues that the subtle energy body always corresponds with gross physical existence because it cannot arise on its own. In this case Maharshi (2016) argues that within the domain of conditional existence, the subtle energetic body, or second ego, gives rise to the mind, which always corresponds with the body—giving rise to the experience of embodiment. Although many realizers in the fourth to fifth stages of life highlight and emphasize identification with the subtle ego, Adi Da Samraj (2001) argues that these identifications are signs of not fully-complete revelations due to their association with the self-contraction. However, the sixth stage of life, which emphasizes identification with the third ego, moves closer to Most Perfect Enlightenment.



The third *root ego* exists within the causal dimension, or attention itself. Adi Da Samraj (2001) calls this “the exclusively disembodied, and mindless, but separate, and, altogether, causal-body-based self-consciousness—or the causal, or root-causitive, pattern and activity of self-contraction” (p. 174). He states that this is the ego of the sixth stage of life and is present even during deep sleep. Discussing the Silence and Spaciousness of this casual ego, Mooji (2010) recalls a statement made by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, who says that “The ‘I Am’-ness is like a door that swings one way into all of manifestation and the other way into Infinity” (p. 161). Mooji (2010) says that when the door is present, it perceives manifestation, which is the waking state of Consciousness. During the waking state, you have the privilege of seeing the diversity of Consciousness. The door reaching Infinity is the nonexperiential state of deep sleep, in which the body and the “I Am” disappear. Many make the mistake of thinking that the nonexperiential state is only within deep sleep and disappears within the waking state, but this is not the case. The deeper state of peace and stillness accessed in deep sleep is accessible during waking states of consciousness. Those who have higher degrees of embodiment of their nondual realizations abide in these deeper states of awareness while fully awake. Talking further about the experience of these states for those not awakened, Mooji (2010) says that, “In deep sleep you are totally in love but not in a dualistic sense, you are in the Unicity of Love” (p. 162). Sharing his own experience, Mooji (2010) states that, “These words you’re hearing me speak are emanating out of this pure state. Sometimes this state is referred to as being asleep while fully awake” (p. 162). Other spiritual traditions refer to this state as *no-mind*. One reason for such terminology is demonstrated by Maharshi (2016), who shares that there is no mind apart from thoughts, because thoughts are the nature of mind. Pointing toward deep sleep in which there are no thoughts, he notes that in waking and dreaming the corresponding world and images appear

due to the mental activity of thoughts. Continuing, Maharshi (2016) argues that when the mind resides within the Self, there is no outer “objective” world, and that it is only when the mind leaves the Self that the conditional world appears: “When the world appears (to be real), the Self does not appear; and when the Self appears (shines) the world does not appear” (p. 7). The experience Maharshi (2016) conveys regarding the lack of an outer world when the mind is identified with the Self is a great example of enlightenment of the sixth stage of life, in which attention is turned in upon itself at the exclusion of conditional existence. One relevant aside to mention is that Adi Da Samraj’s (2001) critique of all realizers previous to his incarnation, is that they have only transcended, at most, the first two egos. His life work mapped the great spiritual traditions and teachers, showing that many traditions emphasize identification with the subtle ego (fourth to fifth stage), whereas others have pointed to the causal ego (sixth stage). Adi Da Samraj (2001) argues that the teaching revelations from Adepts identifying with the casual ego were not complete. He argues that it is only through the divine outshining of all conditional existence—gross, subtle, and causal—that one identifies with and as Divine Consciousness Itself. Adi Da Samraj states that the reason for his incarnation was to provide, articulate, and embody this level and stage of consciousness in order to complete the great spiritual traditions, while showing the process that others can use to reach this same degree of ego-transcending identification. This argument is important because it highlights that for Most Perfect Divine Self-Realization, all three egos must be transcended. Summarizing the seventh-stage nondual transcending of the self-contraction and all three levels of egoity, Adi Da Samraj (2009) states:

The Acausal Divine, or Real (Acausal) God, the One to be Realized, is not other than Reality Itself. That One Transcends your personal, conditional existence—but your conditional existence arises in That One. All of this conditionally arising “world” is a

modification of That One, a “play” upon That One. To Realize That One, you must enter profoundly into the Intrinsically egoless Self-Position—but not by means of the traditional “method” of introversion, or turning attention “inward”. That “inward”-turning effort is simply one of the ego-based solutions to the presumed “problem” of existence. That Which must be Realized is in the Perfectly Subjective Self-Position—and It is Realized not by appeal to Something “outside” of yourself nor by entering into childish dependence in relation to some great Principle, but by transcending your own separative (and “self”-contracting) activity (p. 101).

As you can see, the ego referred to in nondual literature is multifaceted. According to nondual realizers, the self-contraction is a dynamic mechanism created through associations with conditional existence. Instead of referring to an actual, permanent object, the ego referenced by gurus is this dynamic activity fixating around an empty center. Some enlightened teachers refer to this activity as the body–mind complex to highlight that the ego-mechanism functions along gross, subtle, and casual dimensions. These spiritual teachers argue that this egoic activity must be transcended to varying degrees in order for nondual realization and enlightenment to occur.

### Summary

The information presented in this section covered substantial metaphorical ground. First, we examined models of transpersonal states of consciousness, one by a Western scientist, and another was presented by a Guru. These models provided a frame and resource that illuminates the subtle variations of so called “higher” states of consciousness described by a wide range of nondual psychologists and enlightened sages. Through the explorations of the general descriptions and definitions of nonduality, we discovered that the embodied experience of nonduality has been described by sages as being full of bliss, happiness, and freedom. These

experiences coincide with realizations that the divisions on experience, such as the dichotomy between the observer and the observed, are mental heuristics rather than reflective of Reality. Additionally, the separate self is only an apparent conditional manifestation arising within Consciousness Itself. The Ground of Being, or impersonal witness consciousness, remains unchanged, no matter what content or play is occurring within its dynamic Light. To clarify these descriptions and add additional context, the next section offered descriptions and definitions of awakening.

Nondual realization and enlightenment, according to nondual sages, can occur spontaneously or gradually over time. The precise stage, or degree of consciousness embodied, varies according to the degree of ego transcendence. In early stages of awakening, individuals report greater clarity and awareness of conscious patterns, leading to greater freedom, appreciation, and nonattachment. This change in perspective leads these individuals to engage in new ways with the dominant culture. Many people honor and respect other people, whom they now perceive as manifestations of the Self. Despite these positive developments, many people fear ego death and transcendence, which prevents realization from deepening. Referencing the transcending of the body–mind with such regularity led the reader to the next section.

Definitions and descriptions of the ego illuminated the multifaceted body–mind complex. Nondual literature demonstrates that the ego must be transcended to varying degrees for enlightenment and awakening to occur, however, there are differences of interpretation regarding which levels of “self” must be overcome. Some traditions emphasize transcending the gross ego, whereas others recommend transcending the gross and subtle ego. Others still desire the transcending of gross, subtle, and causal levels of ego activity. This self-contraction is not a static, stable, separate self, but rather, a dynamic moment-to-moment activity created through

associations with conditional phenomena. Each of these findings offer valuable contributions to current psychological literature and theory, and provide important data that will inform the examination of nondual psychotherapy and nondual psychotherapeutic interventions. Prior to investigating the state of nondual psychotherapy, however, this dissertation turns to nondual interventions according to nondual realizers.

## Chapter 5: Nondual Interventions According to Nondual Realizers

### Introduction

Methods and interventions utilized by nondual realizers to awaken their followers vary according to spiritual traditions and each practitioner's stage of consciousness. Instead of investigating each spiritual tradition in isolation, this dissertation surveys common methods utilized across many esoteric spiritual lineages. The nondual interventions included within this section include the functioning of and submission to a Sat Guru, self-inquiry, and meditative practices that involve the manipulation of attention. There will also be a brief dialogue regarding the limitations of using behaviors and interventions to seek an awakening experience, or enlightenment. To initiate the discussion of methods, we turn to the utilization of the guru.

### The Guru Function

The Western world's focus on individualism presents a barrier to understanding the function of a Guru within Eastern spiritual traditions. Emphasizing the importance of "finding one's own way," and "being your own guru," Western cultures distort the Guru's function and purpose in spiritual realization. Although Western spiritual practices emphasize that awakening can occur without the aid of a Guru, Eastern traditions dating back thousands of years have employed this very method. Throughout the history of various yogic lineages, the customary tendency was for spiritual seekers to discover and then spend time with a Realizer. Renouncing worldly vices, these individuals became devotees and submitted to the Guru, who would ultimately lead them to enlightenment. The process of submission to a Guru means recognizing them as Divine incarnates, or as enlightened beings, rather than relating to them as ego-bound "ordinary" people. The reason a Guru was and is considered essential for realization is because they, as enlightened beings, are the only ones who know "the way." Because they have already

experienced awakening, they understand what is required to lead others to enlightenment (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Adi Da Samraj (2009) asserts, “since the most ancient days, all truly established (or real) Spiritual practitioners have understood that devotional Communion with the Adept-Guru is, Itself, the Great Means for Realizing Real (Acausal) God, or Truth Itself, or Reality Itself” (p. 162).

Unfortunately, individuals within the first three stages of life are unable to properly utilize the Guru. These individuals are identified with their own body–mind complex to such an extent that they are unable to relate to the Guru as anything other than another egoic object—which leads to misunderstandings regarding the guru-devotee relationship (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). In fact, within the dominant mainstream culture, which is confined by the first three stages of life, Gurus are often considered taboo. Adi Da Samraj (2009) argues that unresolved emotional and psychological issues cause these individuals to enact their psychophysical conditioned patterns by rebelling against authority figures, in this case the Guru, much like the patterns an adolescent enacts against their parents. He argues that, even if such individuals seek a Guru, they are more likely to relate to Him like a parent. This unhealthy and incorrect relationship is, Adi Da Samraj (2009) argues, the foundation of cults and cult-like behavior. For individuals associated with the first three stages of life, the options are to relate to esoteric spiritual through mental and intellectual ways, or attempting to be one’s own guru, or incorrectly relating to a guru in an infantile, immature manner. The Real and True way to relate to a Guru is to engage in Spiritual Communion with them, such that you gradually become ego-forgetting, ego-transcending, and identified with the transcendental spiritual transmission that the True Guru embodies (Adi Da Samraj, 2009, Yogananda, 1998). Adi Da Samraj (2009) and others state that this holy relationship upon the great spiritual law of “you become what you meditate on.”

Following similar spiritual revelations, Yogananda (1998) argues that enlightened saints, due to their holy vibration alone, provide greater benefit to the world than even the most accomplished humanitarians. He discusses statements by Padmapada in the *Panchapadika*, a manuscript of importance in Vedanta philosophy, in which Padmapada states:

If the philosophers' stone be assumed as truly such, it can only turn iron into gold, not into another philosophers' stone. The venerated teacher, on the other hand, creates equality within himself in the disciple who takes refuge at his feet. The guru is therefore peerless, nay, transcendental (quoted in Yogananda, 1998, p. 105).

This demonstrates the unique and profound value of a Realizer. They have historically been worshiped and understood as possessing the power to transform the consciousness of others by facilitating their awakening through their function as a Guru.

True Masters or True Siddha-Gurus are the Divine Means for all living beings to transcend their body–mind complexes. According to Adi Da Samraj (2009), these “True-Sat-Gurus” have transcended various levels of their own egoity, according to their degree of realization, through their Surrender to the True Self Condition (p. 182). He says that this becomes a gift to all individuals, because they have the opportunity to practice devotion and surrender to the Guru as a means to transcend their own egos. Echoing the important function of the Guru and how the process is not cognitive, Mooji (2010) iterates, “What is being shared is not a teaching. It is only a reminder, an opportunity for recognition of what is already so. I’m not here to push you to develop, to create, to imagine, but point you back to what is eternally true” (p. 144). Thus, an additional function for a Guru is to lead by example, to demonstrate and embody transcendental spiritual presence, and remind people of the eternal truth that they often forget through their social conditioning and egoic complex. The relationship to a Guru is unlike



any other because one is not relating to another “separate self,” but rather to the Divine Incarnated.

Describing the Guru relationship is challenging because such a relationship is founded upon principles dissimilar from the egalitarian individualism of Western society. For example, bowing to the Spiritual Master and touching his feet are often considered taboo within Western culture, but are considered normative, beneficial, and necessary within Eastern yogic traditions. In describing his relationship with his guru, Yogananda (1998) shared that he was always thrilled to touch Sri Yukteswar’s holy feet. From his personal experience, he shares that disciples experiences a subtle energy current when in contact with their spiritual master. During these intimate moments, Yogananda (1998) states, “The devotee’s undesirable habit-mechanisms in the brain are often as if cauterized; the grooves of his worldly tendencies are beneficially disturbed. Momentarily at least he may find the secret veils of *maya* lifting, and glimpse the reality of bliss” (p. 133-134). This devotional response, which is imperative to the Guru-devotee relationship, necessarily involves the surrender to the Adept. Adi Da Samraj (2001) summarizes:

If the living being is to Realize the Inherent Freedom of Oneness with its True Source-Condition (Which Is its True, or ego-less, Self-Condition), it must become truly devoted to a True Master (or Truly Realized Siddha-Guru). And such True Devotion constantly (and forever) requires the heart’s Love-responsive Gesture (or ego-transcending Sadhana) of True Guru-Devotion (to one’s heart-Chosen True Siddha-Guru), such that the otherwise egoic (or separate, and separative) body-mind is Surrendered to be actually, truly, and completely Mastered by That True Master (p. 182).

This quote highlights several aspects of the relationship worth noting. First, Adi Da Samraj (2001), unlike several spiritual teachers popular in Western culture, such as Krishnamurti, argues

that devotion to a Truly Realized Siddha-Guru is absolutely necessary for Most Perfect Divine Self-Realization, or enlightenment. In this statement, He is not saying that other degrees of awakening are impossible on one's own, but he is saying that an ego-bound individual cannot master or transcend the entirety of their ego complex without intervention by a Realized Guru. He rests this argument on the history of Gurus throughout time, who have historically been accepted as the means by which individuals awaken. Adi Da Samraj (2009) argues that these spiritual pillars have been acknowledged and celebrated throughout time, however, have been increasingly marginalized and avoided through the globalization of Western individualistic values and modern technological innovations.

Second, real devotion to a spiritual master requires, what he calls a Love-responsive Gesture, or an ego-transcending spiritual practice. This Love-responsive Gesture is directly related to the third point, which is that the Sadhana must continue until the individual's body-mind is surrendered to the Master, and it is the Guru that masters the individual's ego-based pattern—not the individual, themselves. In this case, the individual's purpose and the effective use of a Guru is to fully submit, through spiritual sadhana, one's ego-based patterning to the Guru through a love-response to their Divine Self-Transmission. The Guru's transmission and the individual's sadhana becomes stronger over time, and the spiritual purification process that creates realization and enlightenment occurs. However, the devotional response to the guru requires absolute surrender and trust. This process involves an acknowledgement that the individual cannot master themselves and conquer their egoic tendencies. The devotee recognizes that, no matter how difficult their experience becomes due to the instructions of the Adept, such discomfort is always in the service of enlightenment. For example, in mastering other people's

egoic tendencies, which are clearer to the Sat Guru than to the devotee, the Realizer may use words to puncture the person's vanity. In describing these methods, Yogananda (1998) states:

I sometimes felt that, metaphorically, he was discovering and uprooting every diseased tooth in my jaw. The hard core of egotism is difficult to dislodge except rudely. With its departure, the Divine finds at last an unobstructed channel. In vain It seeks to percolate through flinty hearts of selfishness (p. 138).

The relationship, therefore, is one based on following the Guru's instructions and releasing one's decision-making processes in a Love-responsive Gesture that acknowledges the Guru's Divine State. To clarify this process, Adi Da Samraj (2009) states:

The Essence of the practice of devotional Communion with the Adept-Guru is to focus attention on (and thereby to, in due course, become Identified with, or Realize Indivisible Oneness with) the Realized Condition of a True Adept Guru (especially One Who Is presently and constantly In Samadhi—or in the actual State of True Realization. (p. 162)

Therefore, the degree of realization of the Guru's Samadhi has a direct impact on the degree of realization possible for devotees to attain through their relationship to the Guru. Although Adepts also teach people through literature, art, and other means, Adi Da Samraj (2009) argues that the Great Function of the Adept-Guru is the Guru-Function, or the purifying and enlightening relationship to others. This function is determined therefore, by the Realizer's degree of nondual embodiment, as the transmission they provide others is a direct reflection of their own experience.

To summarize, the guru function is unique to Eastern traditions and is contrary to many of the individualistic notions in the West. Although many spiritual teachers in the West emphasize "being your own guru," many practitioners in the East believe that a Guru is not only

important for spiritual development, but required for higher degrees of Self-Realization. Many individuals are unable to make use of the guru-devotee relationship due to their own level of awareness and cultural conditioning. However, those who are able to rightly approach a guru, through a love-responsive gesture of surrender, receive the tangible transcendental spiritual transmission of their heart-master. Within the context of this unique relationship, the individual does not attempt to fix their egoic tendencies, but instead, surrenders those faculties to the guru. The guru then masters the individual's self-contracted tendencies and self-serving impulses, creating an open channel through which they may transmit their transcendental spiritual realization. The devotee, as this process is deepened and purified, becomes enlightened to varying degrees according to the guru's own state of consciousness. Although this relationship is central to enlightenment, Adepts from other various esoteric spiritual traditions argue that another valuable method for realization is *mirroring* and *self-inquiry*.

### **Mirroring and Self-inquiry**

Realizers, through their embodiment of higher states of consciousness, reflect to others both their True Nature and their egoic tendencies. Mooji (2010) states, "Every person offers a little reflection of the one Self, but a sage is like a huge mirror in whose compassionate presence the disharmonious is seen" (p. 106). This quote highlights that, when someone in an early stage of life encounters a Sage, they may feel that their ego is more visible in comparison to the Adept. For this reason, Mooji (2010) argues that the mirroring function of a Guru is often, in and of itself, an effective means of unveiling the Self. However, mirroring in this manner often coincides with self-inquiry, or questions designed to point one toward the nondual Ground of Being.

Describing self-inquiry, Mooji (2010) summarizes:

Self-enquiry is the mirror in which the Eternal recognizes itself. By looking with the aid of this mirror, you come to know instantaneously who you really are; not who your body is, not who you think you are or who others say you are; no, through this looking a direct non-dual perception of your Self is revealed. (p. 6)

This deep investigation into *what is* does not utilize the mind's typical associations, but rather, invites a fresh perception—not based on prior images or old knowledge—to emerge. This is similar to Krishnamurti's (1969) process of inquiry, which involves the witnessing of the entire movements of emotions rather than cognitively examining the objects they attach to. He posits that the mind must be silent in this process, because much in the same way that it is difficult for you to listen to someone while talking yourself, the mind must be still for you to watch your mind. He recommends looking without trying to resolve any “problems” being observed, without using courage (which brings its opposite), and without trying to escape from it. He says that if you are seeking to control it, get rid of it, or understand it, you are attempting to escape rather than witness whatever is arising in the moment. This simple observation, or witnessing, prevents the mind from creating new problems. For example, Krishnamurti (1969) proclaims:

When you do not compare at all, when there is no ideal, no opposite, no factor of duality, when you no longer struggle to be different from what you are—what has happened to your mind? Your mind has ceased to create the opposite and has become highly intelligent, highly sensitive, capable of immense passion, because effort is a dissipation of passion—passion which is a vital energy—and you cannot do anything without passion. (p. 64)

In this manner of simple and effortless observation, Krishnamurti (1969) states that his words are only mirrors that provide an opportunity for people to view themselves as they are. This method of observation that is central to self-inquiry can be applied to many mood states and psychophysical experiences. For example, Mooji (2010) argues that watching pain is great inquiry, “When pain, be it emotional or physical in expression, is magnified to the utmost intensity, then you stand the greatest chance to see what you are not!” (p. 82). He also indicates that “if there is nothing to be done, surrendering into the pain is essential. Fighting it only exaggerates the discomfort” (p. 82). These statements are intended to guide someone into the mindset required for self-inquiry—the ability to witness without mental engagement, allowing the mind to rest in its source. Mooji (2010) clarifies that during the self-inquiry process, instead of picking up more projections, conditioning, and concepts, you must leave them and remain naked, as pure awareness. He also says that, by following that process, “there is no distance to cover to be and to know the Self” (p. 11). To explore questions utilized in self-inquiry, we will now turn to Ramana Maharshi.

Maharshi (2016) advocates for engaging in a constant state of self-inquiry as a way to attain enlightenment. He states, “The thought ‘Who am I?’ will destroy all other thoughts, and like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then there will arise Self-realization” (p. 8). Agreeing with this esoteric spiritual tradition, Watts (1966) says that “the more resolutely you plumb the question ‘Who or what am I?’—the more unavoidable is the realization that you are nothing at all apart from everything *else*” (p. 120). Continuing, Maharshi (2016) states that when thoughts arise during daily life, one should not pursue them, but instead inquire: “To whom do they arise?” He posits that a frequent answer to this question, for most people, is “To me,” at which point it is appropriate to ask, ‘Who am I?’”

as a technique point toward the Self (p. 8). Maharshi (2016) indicates that this form of inquiry will move the mind back to its source, create quiescence, and remain in the Source as this process is repeated many times. Another question typically employed is described by Mooji (2010), who asks, “Can the observer be observed?” He argues that if this question is properly pursued, using the witnessing observation style described above, rather than approached merely intellectually and mentally, it will devour the questioner into the serenity and peace of the Self (Mooji, 2010). Another potent question to facilitate self-inquiry is “Can you, the Perceiver, be seen?” Mooji (2010) states that everything is contained in that question, in that it is powerful and can lead us Home, and that everything else is secondary to this important question. Other similar queries that guide people to the Self include the following posited by Mooji (2010), “Who is aware of the search, of the seeker and what is being sought? Is that not you? If what is being sought is found, are you not there? If it is lost, are you not there? Who are you?” (p. 48). This type of questioning, which is embraced in many nondual traditions, is one of many methods employed by nondual Realizers to elicit awakening experiences in others. Another method traditionally described involves meditation and the manipulation of attention.

In summary, this section discussed the method of mirroring and the practice of self-inquiry. Mirroring, it was discovered, occurs spontaneously when an individual encounters an enlightened presence. The person’s egoic pattern of self-involvement and self-diluted thinking are magnified in comparison to the embodied presence of a Realizer. As the patterns of the body–mind become more visible, so too the Self shines through the limitations of mind and becomes more visible to all present in this sacred encounter. Similarly, the practice of self-inquiry, or asking specific questions to guide the mind back to rest in its Eternal Source, facilitates movement toward Consciousness Itself. Consistent questions help quiet the mind and

return it to experiencing the here and now from a witness–awareness position, revealing greater passionate energy and effortless connection to *what is*. The state of tranquility achieved by these methods is also observed in strategic manipulation of attention and in meditation.

### **Meditation and the Manipulation of Attention**

Discussing the similarity between self-inquiry and mediation, Maharshi (2016) states, “Inquiry consists in retaining the mind in the Self. Meditation consists in thinking that one’s self is *Brahman*, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss” (p. 16). Noticeably absent from this quote is the attachment to typical thought contents discussed in the context of normal, waking consciousness. For example, within the context of self-inquiry, Maharshi (2016) keeps his mind’s attention rooted in Existence-Consciousness-Bliss instead of contemplating or giving attention to more typical, conventional and phenomenal issues. Similarly, Mooji (2010) articulates that individuals should not give conditioned and repetitive thoughts any attention. He says that we need not do anything during mediation, instead, just “exercise the power to recognize that you are just the watching. The invitation then loses its appeal and natural discernment arises from the stillness that remains” (p. 76). Exploring this theme in greater detail, Krishnamurti (1969) provides a visual example of how inattention manifests the division between the observer and the observed. He discusses looking at a tree without any associations, thoughts, images, or other forms of knowledge you have about the tree. He asks you to remove those thoughts and images, which act as a screen that covers *what is*, and instead, offer your full attention to the tree in front of you. He says that when you observe the tree with the totality of your energy, “In that intensity you will find that there is no observer at all; there is only attention. It is when there is inattention that there is the observer and the observed” (p. 90). This exercise demonstrates that when you give something complete attention, so much so that there are no room for thoughts or memories, there



is a self-abandonment resulting in what he calls actually *seeing*—the state of love. He believes that when you are in a state of love, you *are* beauty, because there is no center, there is only the witnessing of experience. Krishnamurti (1969) says that the total energy of full attention is the highest form of intelligence because that state of mind is completely silent and still, and that no words can articulate such a state.

In describing what he considers to be real meditation, Krishnamurti (1969) denotes that the observer creates images of what he observes. Through meditation, the observer recognizes that he too is an image that has been separated from the others and thought to be permanent. As this permanent and separate image, the observer creates a division and time interval between himself and the images he sees, resulting in an inner conflict between himself and the external world, which he thinks is the cause of his problems. Realizing this, the observer thinks that he must get rid of the conflict, but in doing so realizes that the very desire to eliminate the conflict creates another image. To all of this, Krishnamurti (1969) sermonizes:

Awareness of all this, which is real meditation, has revealed that there is a central image put together by all the other images, and that this central image, the observer, is the censor, the experiencer, the evaluator, the judge who wants to conquer or subjugate the other images or destroy them altogether. The other images are the result of judgments, opinions and conclusions by the observer, and the observer is the result of all the other images—therefore the observer *is* the observed. (p. 96)

In this illustration, Krishnamurti indicates that the fundamental duality between the observer and the observed, the self and the other, is a fundamentally incomplete perspective and false cognition founded upon identification with the observer only—which can be seen through during real meditation. Traversing deeper into this meditative process, Krishnamurti (1969) states that,

“Meditation is to be aware of every thought and of every feeling, never to say it is right or wrong but just to watch it and move with it” (p. 115-116). He says that meditation leads to an awareness of the entire movement of thought and feeling, which results in silence, as the mind is emptied of the past. That sense of spaciousness, emptiness, and intimacy with *what is* has been touted as one of the greatest arts in life because it cannot be taught or learned from any system or technique. Krishnamurti (1969) argues that this state of meditation must be learned and experienced by oneself to be understood. In summarizing mediation from his unique perspective, Krishnamurti (1969) says:

In the understanding of meditation there is love, and love is not the product of systems, of habits, of following a method. Love cannot be cultivated by thought. Love can perhaps come into being when there is complete silence, a silence in which the meditator is completely absent; and the mind can be silent only when it understands its own movement as thought and feeling. To understand this movement of thought and feeling there can be no condemnation in observing it. To observe in such a way is the discipline, and that kind of discipline is fluid, free, not the discipline of conformity. (p. 116-117)

Krishnamurti’s (1969) emphasis on simple observation rather than a concrete technique or purposeful avoidance of various internal experiences, like thoughts, is the reason Maharshi (2016) does not advocate for applying methods other than self-inquiry. Maharshi (2016) believes that attempting to control thoughts or focus on the breath creates dependence on them, and that when these methods and techniques are removed, so too the quiescence of mind will follow. He says controlling the breath, meditating on an object, repeating mantras, and restricting food all have the same impact—merely quieting the mind without transcending it. Maharshi (2016) states that “As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the very place of their

origin is non-attachment” (p. 12). That process of destroying the thought and resting the mind in the Source is, as we have seen from this exploration of self-inquiry and meditation, common to practices focused on transcending the body–mind complex.

To summarize, this section reviewed the methods of manipulating attention and meditation. In the technique of meditation discussed by certain nondual sages, one enters a state of profundity in which they experience communion with the Divine. They do not merely rest their mind in the Self, they experience themselves as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. This intimate connection to the Ground of Being erases the distance and tension between the observer and the observed, resulting in feelings of tranquility and stillness. A realization accompanying this practice is that the observer *is* the observed, which leads to deeper stages of awakening. However, just as these methods and techniques can be helpful when utilized within a proper context, some nondual sages argue that dependence on these techniques for enlightenment can be problematic. Once removed, the body–mind temporarily forgets its True Condition and returns to ego-bound patterning. Therefore, concluding this discussion by briefly mentioning the limitations of all behaviors of seeking realization is important to further illuminate the context of nonduality and nondual interventions.

### **Limitations of Seeking Realization or Enlightenment**

The interventions and techniques mentioned above are only often prescribed only in the context of a traditional Guru-devotee relationship. When taken out of this sacred context as a means for the ego seeking enlightenment—an oxymoron, as no ego can exist in awakening and realization is not an object that can be possessed—problems inevitably ensue. This is one reason Watts (1966) is not overly enthusiastic about “spiritual exercises” such as meditation when they are performed in order to get or attain illumination or awakening, because “they strengthen the

fallacy that the ego can toss itself away by a tug at its own bootstraps” (p. 122). Further, Watts (1966) indicates that trying to get rid of the ego-sensation is the last resort of invincible egoism, “It simply confirms and strengthens the reality of the feeling. But when this feeling of separateness is approached and accepted like any other sensation, it evaporates like the mirage that it is” (p. 122). Similarly, Adi Da Samraj (2001) recommends that people stop trying to control, avoid, seeking, or clinging to conditional forms or events. He notes that many religions and esoteric spiritual practices, unfortunately, encourage these activities. Unlike other methods that value either looking inward or outward as a way to seek truth, realization, and enlightenment, he invites everyone to:

Notice conditional forms and events and activities as they arise or continue or change or pass away, but Simply and Constantly and Merely Be (and Intuitively Identify Your Self As) The Self-Existing Consciousness and Self-Radiant Love-Bliss (or The Most Prior Feeling Of Perfectly Subjective Being), In, Of, and As Whom all conditional forms, events, and activities Are (Apparently) presently arising, continuing, changing, or passing away. (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, p. 254)

The discipline Adi Da Samraj (2001) describes illustrates that there is nothing (no-thing) to be attained in awakening. Enlightenment is timeless, formless, and the energy within which all conditional forms arise. Seeking to attain it by applying various methods and techniques, therefore, is a game of egoity, an illusory fundamental misunderstanding, which is why Mooji (2010) states that no prior knowledge of any kind is needed for realization. Mooji (2010) argues that awakening is a natural discovery once individuals are willing to look and question the mind’s suggestions. He states that it is due to our acquired knowledge and conventional psychophysical conditioning that the Truth of our existence appears inaccessible. Disillusioning

seekers of enlightenment, Mooji (2010) states that “There is no path. This is the ultimate Truth” (p. 3). This section concludes where the discussion of nonduality began, in paradox: any searches for a technique to create awakening, no matter how thorough and profound, will prevent its appearance.

In summary, when nondual interventions are removed from their original context and appropriated as a means to attain enlightenment, they are often mere tools of the ego. Therefore, this misapplication of techniques—although they may lead to relaxation of the body–mind—fail to facilitate awakening experiences. Often the desire to seek experiences outside of oneself reinforce the lack of presence already existing in the person’s life. As such, seeking enlightenment and applying various methods to “achieve” awakening paradoxically restrict a person’s access to the Source, as it dissociates them from the intimacy of *what is*. The truth is that there is no prior knowledge needed for realization—only a willingness to closely examine one’s experience, surrender to the unknown, and remain open to those who embody higher levels of consciousness.

### Summary

In conclusion, this section focused on nondual interventions according to nondual realizers. These interventions began with the guru function, which was discovered to be a relationship unfamiliar to Western society. The gesture of surrender to the Realizer is the ancient, and in some cultures still the preferred means to awaken to higher states of consciousness. This guru-devotee relationship is the foundation upon which other methods and techniques were prescribed. These techniques included mirroring and self-inquiry. Mirroring occurs when an individual comes into contact with an enlightened individual. In comparison to the embodied nondual presence of a True Sat Guru, an individual can clearly see the Source as well as their

own egoic tendencies that restrict their connection to the Ground of Being. Self-inquiry, or questions designed to help one's mind rest in the Source, help guide individuals back to Consciousness Itself. Asking these questions at an appropriate time decreases mental activity and allows the mind to rest in silent intimacy with *what is*. Meditation and the manipulation of attention is another means through which individuals reconnect with the Self-State of Reality. These techniques are crucial in their ability to help create communion with the Divine, however, are not efficacious when removed from their original context. Similarly, the limitations of seeking awakening are clear: the search for enlightenment prevents its attainment. Searching for something outside of one's immediate experience reinforces the lack of its presence in the here and now. All individuals are already awake, it is their conditioning and body–mind–ego complex, or self-contracted state, that dissociates them from Reality and creates seeking behaviors. Therefore, it is important for all to remember that the misapplication of nondual teachings are often a mascaaed of the egoic yearning for self-preservation. As we will see, these descriptions and definitions of nonduality, awakening, and the methodology employed by Realizers to facilitate enlightenment in their followers lay the foundation for the understanding and development of nondual psychotherapy.

## Chapter 6: Defining Nondual Psychology and Nondual Psychotherapy

### Introduction

Nondual psychology seeks to return psychology to its shamanic roots by acknowledging the interconnectedness—the formless-emptiness—of the Real and True Ground of Being. This reorientation of psychotherapy as informed by the spiritual wisdom of nonduality requires both a reconceptualization of the essence of what therapy *is* and perhaps what psychotherapy *does*. To accomplish sufficient depth of understanding of this process, this chapter describes differences between traditional psychotherapy and nondual psychotherapy. After describing the differences between nondual psychotherapy and traditional psychotherapy, the next section articulates the basic tenants and foundational values of nondual psychotherapy and nondual psychology more broadly. Finally, the process and importance of awakening in nondual psychotherapy is discussed prior to a summary. This chapter will prove to be a comprehensive review of the current status of nondual psychotherapy.

### Differences Between Nondual and Traditional Psychotherapy

There are many distinctions between traditional psychotherapy and nondual psychotherapy. None are more significant in scope and implication than the assumption of a separate subjective self from which life is perceived. Traditional therapies align with dominant social narratives that assume the ontological existence of a separate self (Puhakka, 2007). The therapist and client are both understood as separate selves meeting and interacting with one another in the therapy room. Although there is variance in the type of therapeutic work to occur during psychotherapy according to each theoretical orientation, all traditional psychotherapeutic theories assume that the client's self will endure (Puhakka, 2007). In stark contrast to this perspective, nondual psychotherapy both acknowledges the appearance of two individuals sitting

in a room being with one another and draws upon nondual wisdom that indicates an ultimate nonseparation or inherent Unity of all things—people included. Therefore, nondual psychotherapy follows ancient wisdom traditions by demonstrating that the resolution to all conflicts and healing exists within the recognition of one’s nondual nature (Therriault, 2012). These psychologists and healers assert that the realization of the Ultimate Truth—that the separate self does not exist as a concrete entity—creates freedom by releasing the tension with which individuals cling to and identify with problems. With continued exposure to the nondual ground of being, this release of tension leads to the recognition that problems and difficulties are merely mental constructions created from the identification with a separate point of view (Boadian, 2003). Fenner (2003) elaborates on this important ideological shift: “The nondual approach to therapy directs people to the experience of the unconditioned mind as a way of transcending suffering, and healing the psychological wounds of the past” (p. 29). In this way, nondual approaches to healing invite clients to drop into unmitigated awareness of the present moment by encouraging them to release their attachments, efforts, and struggles associated with their identification with a limited, conditional, and evolving separate self (Fenner, 2003). This release from the struggles of a separate self and surrender to *what is* lays at the heart of nondual psychotherapy.

Nondual psychotherapies, according to Bodian (2003), make no attempt to change or get rid of anything, “including the personality with all its inclinations, idiosyncrasies, and preferences” (p. 238). Instead, Bodian (2003) believes that the purpose of nondual psychotherapy is to shine the light of awareness onto the contents of experience to decipher the difference between the true and the false, the real and the unreal. In this way, nondual psychotherapy helps clients recognize the limitations of self-contraction, or the separate self, and in doing so,



improves their ability to live in accordance and coincidence with Ultimate Truth. Compare this with traditional psychotherapy, which despite its unique theoretical orientations, all embrace the thoughts, narratives, somatic bodily experiences, and other associations with the separate self. These traditional psychotherapies, divorced from the awareness of nonduality, seek to modify behavioral, cognitive, or emotionally based patterns.

The value nondual psychology places on unconditioned awareness rather than the separate self is also observed in their approach to clients' self-perceptions. Nondual therapists do not follow their client's need to know and label thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Therapists, from a nondual perspective, do not encourage their clients to elaborate their mental processes, but rather, maintain intimate communication and relationship to them free of all desire to change anything that is occurring. They refrain from analyzing, restructuring, and reframing the clients' experiences. More likely, nondual therapists simply encourage the client to be with *what is* without needing to change it. In this way, nondual therapies open up the possibility of full attunement to and immersion within *what is* through its deemphasis of thinking and interpretation (Fenner, 2003). This approach is in stark contrast to traditional psychotherapies, all of which involve themselves and focus almost exclusively on the client's perceptions, thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. Where traditional approaches to therapy emphasize the thinking mind and thereby support the construction of a separate self, nondual approaches deemphasize the thinking mind and place greater value on being instead of doing.

Many nondual psychotherapists echo that the important, healing component of nondual psychotherapy—as previously mentioned—is the ability to be in intimate contact with *what is*. Bodian (2003), for example, indicates that the foundation of nondual approaches to therapy is the process of “being with” experience using bare attention, free from judgment or evaluation. In this

sacred encounter, the client and therapist are present with the unfolding of experience and attention is shifted back from the contents of experience to the bodily felt experience of beingness (Bodian, 2003). In this sense, the open and spacious “being with” experience is the field in which therapy occurs and all experiences happens, and is therefore the mechanism of healing in nondual psychotherapy.

Because nondual psychotherapy asserts that all healing occurs within the context of intimate contact with Awareness Itself, it necessarily undermines an important ideological assumption of most traditional psychotherapies—that the client needs to change. Summarizing this perspective, Miller (2003) indicates that the assumptions of the client possessing a “problem” or something that “needs to be fixed” is the product of a divided mind—something that inherently produces conflict. Miller (2003) states:

Therapy ultimately fails when it emphasizes the need for clients to be other than they are. It is in welcoming every movement of life—grief and joy, shame and potency, sadness and happiness, fear and safety—that we are able to go beyond the pairs of opposites into our true resolution as freedom. (p. 216)

This quote exemplifies the paradoxical approach of nondual psychotherapy: instead of processing, labeling, and altogether mentalizing the experience of being, nondual psychotherapy aims to maintain an intimate contact with these experiences such that they are *seen through* and realized as an apparent modification of the consciousness that gives rise to all experience and every possible point of view. From this unique perspective, some nondual psychotherapists have indicated that there is no specific work that needs to be accomplished in psychotherapy. Fenner (2003), for example, states that, “The nondual approach to therapy is paradoxical. There are no methods in the nondual experience because there is no work to be done” (p. 44). From this

perspective, Fenner (2003) highlights the ways in which the act of constructing a separate self and attaching to various elements in our conditional experience results in suffering. Therefore, if individuals merely realize their true nature as Awareness Itself rather than a subject or object, it is possible to transcend suffering and awaken to the nondual ground of being. In order to recognize and have contact with unconditioned presence, however, psychotherapists must operate on the presumption of nonduality and ultimate nonseparation rather than the assumption of individuality and separateness. This stance of nondual psychotherapy is in contrast with that of traditional psychotherapy that maintain the ontological and ideological assumption of a separate self.

Operating from a stance of separateness from the beginning of therapeutic treatment in traditional psychotherapies results in many limitations not found within nondual psychotherapy. For example, Welwood (2003) iterates:

When we fail to recognize our nature as nondual, not only do form and emptiness become divided, but each also becomes a distorted version of itself. Rather than emptiness being an open expanse whose natural potency generates form, it becomes a negative deficiency that we have to work against in order to maintain form. (p. 293)

In traditional psychotherapy, moments of immersion into the vast emptiness of unconditioned presence may be defended against through dialogue, mentalization, or discomfort on the part of client and therapist. According to Prendergast and Bradford (2007), unlike other therapies, nondual psychotherapy asserts that, “The core of human suffering lies in the resistance to *what is*—especially to this apparent lack...It is rigorously repressed, avoided, and misinterpreted, so much so that it is barely mentioned in most Western psychologies” (p. 4). This quote and the argument it illuminates is important because behind suffering is resistance—the desire to avoid

an experience or to keep and maintain an experience. Nondual therapists help clients realize the ways in which they are avoiding and or clinging to attachments and then, relinquish them. This facilitates the natural release of beliefs and emotions by creating a space free of any pressure to change or be the same (Fenner, 2003). Instead of traditional therapy in which therapists hypothesize about certain emotional difficulties a patient has and then discuss aspects of their limiting narratives in order to release emotion, nondual therapists can deconstruct the problem and the act of separation creating it so that clients can disidentify problems, dilemmas, and searching for something other than *what is*.

Although some traditional psychological theories may label and define an inherent sense of emptiness as pathological, nondual psychotherapy encourages all individuals, regardless of their psychological sophistication and personality structure, to directly experience the emptiness from which their selves arise. Traditional psychotherapy's labeling of inner stillness and emptiness as pathological extends to the privileging and reinforcing of the client's apparent problem. On this topic, Prendergast and Bradford (2007) indicate that therapists enmeshed within a dualistic mindset, of a separation between self and Other, the experiencer and what is experienced, "confirm and concretize the apparent objectivity of 'the problem' as well as the 'problem holder'" (p. 2). In this way therapists may prevent deeper healing that comes from being aware of the fabricated nature of consensual reality, and therefore, the ways in which suffering is co-constructed in relationships (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). Similarly, Conway (2007) argues that when a client enters psychological treatment with a presenting concern, a therapist unaware of Absolute Reality believes that the person is suffering from a particular problem, which is likely a symptom of a more entrenched problem. Therefore, from the traditional standpoint, both the symptom and its underlying cause need to be eradicated for

deeper healing and prolonged improvement to occur. In contrast, a nondual psychotherapist is aware that, “on the level of Conventional Truth, yes, the *personality* has psychic-mental-emotional-physical issues to work through, but one’s fundamental utterly *transpersonal* nature has no dilemma whatsoever, no lack, flaw, complication, or suffering” (Conway, 2007, p. 241). Speaking to the value nondual psychotherapy places on not further problematizing or pathologizing a client’s suffering, Conway (2007) notes that nondual psychotherapists need not relate to clients suffering and reinforce it through dialogues about childhood experiences, cultural conditioning, or other personality-formative challenges. Such dramatization of client problems further contributes to the play of a client-victim and therapist-rescuer dynamic. Instead, therapists need to move toward providing a space that facilitates the letting go of those conditional associations and the emergence of the nondual ground of being.

From his depth-oriented perspective, a nondual psychotherapist recognizes the client as who they really are—the Infinite Awareness of peace, freedom, and radiant vastness. Upon this recognition, Conway (2007) indicates that the Divine is playing a role of a struggling individual and a healer. Further, Hunt (2007) posits that, “All psychotherapists who identify with their “role,” even those practicing with some degree of awareness of the Mystery of their own being, operate from their conditioning” (p. 117). She iterates that in traditional therapy, two apparently separate people—each with their own conditioning, education, training, insights, and personalities—meet, creating a mixture of those factors that are embedded within larger socio-cultural factors and the deeper collective unconscious of humankind. Instead of offering a “solution” to the “problem” that may be interpreted from the above, Hunt (2007) challenges practitioners to drop conceptions and live as the Mystery—thereby not playing any particular role but being fully available and responsive to the client, guiding them to that same mysterious

beingness. Similar to the notions described by Conway (2007), Miller (2003) argues that this framework extends the role of a psychotherapist, “from a healer of the psyche who helps the client reconstruct a healthy psychological identity, to therapist as spiritual midwife who assists the client in deconstructing their notion of being a separate ego-I, thus enabling the client to realize their nondual Nature” (p. 212). This radical shift in the position of a therapist demonstrates an extension of traditional psychotherapy, which merely aims to reduce symptoms and or facilitate changes in personality structure to better accommodate adaptation to society. Nondual psychotherapy furthers this aim by deconstructing the identification with a personality and problems, leading to a connection with profundity and contact with Awareness Itself.

As the reader may have noticed, nondual psychotherapy’s emphasis on accepting each moment as it is may be more easily accessible for individuals who have already engaged in traditional therapy services or have a proclivity toward spirituality. That is why Miller (2003) indicates that where most psychotherapy ends, nondual psychotherapy begins. Miller (2003) also notes that as psychological insights and integrations occur, certain clients demonstrate the ability to heal beyond their body–mind complex and into a unitive impersonal field of awareness. He argues that although many nonoriented therapists may not recognize these glimpses of True Nature that occur at certain junctures during the psychotherapeutic process, nondual-oriented therapists can work within the psychological, ego-I domain and then invite clients to experience nondual awareness when such opportunities present. Therefore, nondual psychotherapy has in it the ability to extend the process of psychotherapy by shifting its focus, at appropriate moments, from the personal content of an individual’s subjective consciousness to the impersonal Presence within which such content arises (Miller, 2003). This type of experience facilitated in nondual psychotherapy does not involve or rely on the conceptual, thinking mind.

Elaborating on this important distinction, Hunt (2007) argues that traditional psychotherapy actively engages the rational thinking mind whereas nondual psychotherapy rests in the emptiness and silence within which the rational mind arises. Although traditional therapy may involve a conceptualization and the utilization a theory to inform interventions, nondual psychotherapy encourages clinicians to remain in a state of not-knowing, and paradoxically, open to multiple possibilities (Hunt, 2007). Hunt (2007) states:

The point here is not what to do or not do, but to ask whether the mind is willing to *not know* when it doesn't. It is actually in *unknowing* that we are open to and guided by the deeper levels of Consciousness in any given moment. (p. 116)

As exemplified in this quote, a state of unmoving depth of openness, flexibility, and spontaneity is the valued state of the therapist. Hunt (2007) continues:

Nondual wisdom, if it can be said to be anything at all as it pertains to psychotherapy, is the spontaneous *movement* of life responding to itself or expressing itself from true seeing and true listening in the moment... It moves from Totality and not from conditioned thought. (p. 100)

This quote demonstrates the movement of nondual psychotherapy from conditioned thought and spontaneous, uninterrupted thinking to direct, pure awareness—free from thoughts, interpretation, and filters that create distance between the perceiver and perceived. In contrast, other more traditional therapies may recommend listening for certain things—relational patterns, affect, or illogical thoughts—creating a much different experience on the part of therapist and client. Along these lines, Prendergast and Bradford (2007) state that traditional psychotherapeutic listening occurs from “the eyebrows up,” in that therapists are listening from an educated and conditioned mind, which filters and often affirms preconceived notions based on

our conceptual understandings and theoretical orientations, which is not the way listening occurs in nondual psychotherapy. Instead, listening in nondual psychotherapy involves a whole-bodily response of feeling, listening, watching, and participation without judgment or demands in the background of awareness (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). Prendergast and Bradford (2007) convey, “Listening from the heart of Silence draws upon a different source of intelligence, a heart wisdom (*prajna* in Sanskrit) that Jung called “*l’intelligence du Coeur*” (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007, p. 3). These authors indicate that this deep listening from Silence involves attention resting in its nonseparate and nondual source, allowing the mind to wonder with an open, lucid, and spacious surveying of *what is* (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). This type of listening extends to a much different philosophical model of treatment.

In illustrating the ways in which whole-bodily contentless attunement to the experience in the room impacts clinical work, Bradford (2007) argues that traditional therapy works through fixations by thinking about and examining the fixation in greater detail. This traditional method also focuses on the role and impact of conditioning on the client’s sense of self and relationship with others and the world. In contrast, nondual psychotherapy emphasizes facilitating an environment and presence within which the experience of being nonfixated is allowed to “sink in” (Bradford, 2007). Summarizing this key distinction, Bradford (2007) states:

What conventional psychotherapy has not recognized is that the glimpses releasing liberating self-understandings are glimpses only. Once this is experientially understood, it becomes possible to attend to openness itself as well as to that which emerges through it. This marks the ‘ontological difference’ between what has been taken as the field proper to psychology to date: attending to confusion and its clarification through self-



knowledge, and the potentially broader field for the practice of psychology in the future:  
attending to the sanity of unconditional wakefulness (*buddhi*) itself. (p. 71)

Many other nondual psychotherapy practitioners agree with Bradford's (2007) conceptualization. Caplan (2007), for example, argues that there is an implicit danger in traditional psychotherapy—spending endless time unwinding deep knots in the psyche one at a time. She indicates that this type of therapy—devoid of nondual wisdom—results in errors and misperceptions that do not facilitate a deeper letting go found in nondual psychotherapy (Caplan, 2007). In a potent dialogue, Caplan (2007) captures the essential shortcomings of traditional psychotherapy: “Similar to the medicines that treat symptoms only without understanding or addressing the underlying causes of the illness itself, traditional psychotherapies often fail to address the core issues of consciousness itself and are therefore limited by their very nature” (p. 192). Highlighted in this quote is one reason nondual psychotherapy has substantial value to offer traditional psychotherapy: because nondual psychotherapy starts at the foundational issue or root-cause of consciousness rather than beginning with the assumption of a separate, finite self, it contains the possibility to address causes rather than symptoms. It also can address the body–mind complex in a way more aligned with ancient knowledge from which traditional psychotherapy is dissociated. Summarizing this value and the future possibilities of integrating nondual wisdom further into the fabric of traditional psychotherapies, Caplan (2007) states:

To contextualize the dynamics of the human mind from the perspective of nondual experience is the beginning of the creation of an enlightened psychology. The psychology of mind becomes transformed into the psychology of truth...modern psychology will reach its peak when it becomes one with spirituality (p. 194).

Overall, there are several important points to consider about nondual psychotherapy. Similar to other therapies, the focus of nondual psychotherapy exists in the here and now. However, in comparison to other therapies that tend to examine conditioning, thoughts, and historical events in the present moment, nondual psychotherapy takes a more intimate investigation into the ways in which individuals are attached or averse to their embodied experience of the present moment (Fenner, 2003). Nondual psychotherapy does not privilege the individual content of experience, including client's thoughts and either the client's or therapist's rational minds. Instead, nondual psychotherapy values 'dropping into' a state of awareness that is the context giving rise to the contents of consciousness. This emphasis on letting go of attachments, including the need to be a separate self with a "problem" needing to be solved, moves nondual psychotherapy further away from traditional psychotherapeutic roots and into a depth-oriented, often unexplored terrain. As nondual psychotherapists situate themselves in knowing and embodying the One Free Awareness, many are able to intuitively respond from that unmitigated presence to spontaneously serve the needs of clients. This process rather than a logical or rational mind-based conceptualization is the starting point for nondual psychotherapy and a divergence from the traditional conceptualization of psychotherapy (Caplan, 2007). Finally, it is important to mention that nondual psychotherapy is not a single approach or identical therapeutic experience. As Bodian (2003) states, "There are as many nondual therapies as nondual therapists" (p. 237). Many nondual psychotherapists come from diverse backgrounds, including unique faith and spiritual traditions among many other factors of diversity, resulting in differing perspectives on the values and principles of nondual psychotherapy. This conversation will be further elaborated on in the next section. However, it is important to briefly note that the unifying principle of nondual psychotherapy is the awareness of nondual consciousness as the

Source Condition of Reality and the corresponding realization that the separate self is not fundamental in that undifferentiated field of Formless Awareness (Therriault, 2012).

### **Basic Tenants and Values of Nondual Psychotherapy and Nondual Psychology**

To further elaborate the distinctions between nondual psychotherapy and traditional psychotherapy, this section describes several basic tenants and fundamental values of nondual psychology. Transitioning to these basic tenants, it is first important to mention the origins of nondual psychotherapy. Fenner (2003) postulates that nondual approaches to therapy developed from the interest in masters and sages in various nondual spiritual traditions. Many healers and psychologists have encountered numinous, spiritual experiences that are not adequately described or contained within a Western psychological paradigm. Looking to more ancient esoteric spiritual teachers, then, allows psychologists with an interest in spiritual work to expand their familiarity and knowledge of nondual spiritual practices, while also deepening their own *sadhana*, or spiritual practice. This alchemic transformation results in a new perspective from which psychologists operate in the world and therefore changes their approach to clinical work. Nondual psychologists follow in the footsteps of these spiritual masters by using their embodied presence to provide a healing environment through which clients can be invited to experience the unconditioned mind. Because there are many diverse spiritual teachers, there is a corresponding diversity of thought, approaches, techniques, and beliefs within the nondual psychotherapeutic community. This diversity leads to different uses of language and perhaps different experiences and degrees of awakening. However, all nondual psychotherapies have one thing in common, which is that they are rooted in nondual experience (Fenner, 2003, Peter Fenner, 2007).

One extension of this primary nondual experience includes a tenant central to nondual psychology—that all beings are motivated by the drive to awaken to nondual consciousness

(Almaas, 1996; Blackstone, 2006; Nixon, 2010; Prendergast, et al 2003; Theriault, 2012). This urge to merge with the Source Condition, rather than any other motivation, is the primary and often misplaced drive that is the foundation of human life. Due to their adherence to varying spiritual traditions, some nondual psychologists argue that awakening to the unconditioned mind is a process that occurs gradually over time, whereas others argue that awakening occurs spontaneously and cannot be influenced by anything other than spiritual grace. Regardless of how awakening occurs, most practitioners acknowledge that awakening can occur independent of one's personality structure or psychological development (Theriault, 2012). The awakening process is valued by nondual practitioners because awakening helps individuals see through mental projections and constructions while also increasing one's sense of intimacy with what is prior to mentalized conceptions, or reductions of consciousness (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). Further, Prendergast and Bradford (2007) argue that "mature nondual realization fully embraces the paradox of emptiness and fullness...the world reappears as an expression or play of unconditioned awareness rather than as a separate object" (p. 12). This type of awakening, or realization, leads to freedom and happiness beyond the typical limited experiences tasted by a separate self. The type of embodied nondual realization described by nondual psychotherapists is distinct from the concept of integration found in psychospiritual literature that refers to an individual attempting to integrate spirituality into their lives. In fact, postawakening nondual embodiment involves the conditional body–mind surrendering to and living harmoniously with the deepest truth of nonseparation. This type of awakening transcends the mental splitting between the observer and the observed, the subject and object, and the self and other (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). It is clear, then that nondual psychology is established in the process of awakening to the True nondual state of being. In addition to the foundation of nondual

psychology being rooted in nondual experience, including acknowledging the drive of all individuals to awaken, nondual psychologists also believe that there is no separate self.

Another important central tenant of nondual psychology that distinguishes it from all traditional psychology is that nondual psychotherapy does not place its emphasis on addressing the client's apparent separate self or colloquial ego. Theriault (2012), for example, states that "The fundamental difference between conventional schools of psychotherapy and nondual psychology rests on the existence of a separate self" (p. 361). He illustrates that nondual psychology challenges the traditional assumed reality of the separate self. Although traditional forms of psychotherapy hypothesize that clients need to be diagnosed and treated to live full lives, Theriault (2012) notes that nondual psychotherapy recognizes the already healed and awakened condition of nondual consciousness in which the apparent self is arising. This shift from the separate self to the consciousness within which it arises marks another important value of nondual psychotherapy. As such, a nondual therapist abides within the paradox of realizing that there is ultimately no separate self, however, there appears to be one, and that one appears to be encountering suffering (Theriault, 2012).

Due to the shift in focus from the individual to unconditioned presence, nondual psychotherapy reconceptualizes the therapeutic relationship. Regarding the conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship from a nondual perspective, Berkow (2003) indicates that there is no separation or division of happening to the client or therapist. Although there are feelings of distinctness arising from physical sensations, there is no split between the two. Even if there appears to be a process occurring from a mental point of view, healing occurs through the "unsplit presentness" of moment—that which is always already the case (Berkow, 2003, p. 204). In this new formulation, the therapist is even further removed from being assigned the role of

“objective observer” and transformed to a guide and co-participant sharing and playing in the experience of opening. This type of conceptualization—from a two-person psychology to the oneness of being itself or recognition of Prior Unity (Adi Da Samraj, 2009)—changes wellbeing from individual progress and adaptation to environment to aligning with Being as *is*. Further, this transition to viewing the self as a moment-to-moment construction positions the release of suffering in the center of psychology. Rather than conceptualizing individuals as possessing certain disorders and then attempting to help that individual better adapt to society, the focus moves from symptoms to cause (Berkow, 2003). Summarizing this thought process, Berkow (2003) states:

Such a shift in psychology will view problems in living, not as having originated in a past that is being carried into the present, but as a present attempt to exist as a separable entity that is being defined by bringing the past into the present (p. 188).

Given the frequency of identifying as a separate entity bringing the past into the present, it is important to discuss the ways in which individual problems are discussed and understood within nondual psychology.

According to Hunt (2003), nondual psychotherapists work without judgment or an agenda. There is no need or motivation to “fix” or “change” anyone, however, that does not mean that transformation does not occur. It simply means that there is no desire or intention to change what is already the case. Instead, there is a shift in nondual psychology to the relinquishment of the attachments, defenses, and processes preventing the unmitigated experience of unconditioned awareness. Hunt (2007) conveys:

Traditional psychotherapy gives “problems” great reality. An enormous amount of time and energy is frequently expended trying to get rid of emotions that would simply pass

through, like changing weather, if we weren't judging them to be a problem to be solved, or a statement about a "me" rather than about a moment. (p. 118)

This eloquent quote exemplifies one way nondual psychology distinguishes itself from traditional psychology, mainly, seeing through the constructions of "people" and "problems" by acknowledging them as cognitively-based assumptions based on a separative point of view. By applying nondual wisdom in this manner, nondual psychotherapy reconceptualizes problems as "the mistaking of a dependently constructed self-object for the real situation of an independent observer, doer, and experiencer" (Berkow, 2003, p. 185–186). These self-objects are projections of the nonexistent self, which then manifest as psychological problems when they are mistakenly assumed to be truth. The individual's use of projection coincides with separation from the observer and the observed, resulting in worsened suffering (Berkow, 2003). Hunt (2003) states that nondual psychotherapists do not collude with their clients' ideas that changing something creates happiness. Rather, happiness and the alleviation of suffering is understood to be connecting to the prior condition of awareness instead of attachment to the mental projection of a separate self-image. Summarizing how nondual psychology generally considers client problems, Bradford (2007) articulates:

There is no assumption that a client's therapy should go anywhere other than where the person is in the moment. No therapeutic ambition is deployed by the therapist to get the client to go deeper, be more mature or more integrated than he is, or less repressed, less reactive, or less passive aggressive than she is. In short, practicing with unconditional presence, there is little or no collusion in the co-construction of the client's self, which could otherwise be conceived as needing to be deepened or otherwise improved upon. (p. 74)

This quote exemplifies the extension of nondual psychology's tenant of acknowledging that the separate self is an illusion in the Ultimate Reality. If there is, from the perspective of Reality, no such thing as a separate self, then that self's possessions—including problems—are *maya*, or illusion based on that artificially constructed perspective. Another value and central belief of nondual psychotherapy that has been implicated but not yet directly elaborated in this chapter is that coming into contact with unborn awareness is healing.

Most nondual psychotherapists agree that experiencing unconditioned presence is inherently healing and liberating. As Hunt (2007) conveys, "Whenever we are not separated from our vast Totality, we will see an instantaneous reduction or disappearance of fear." (p. 111). As such, one important aspect of nondual psychotherapy is supporting the ways in which individuals may awaken to the truth of their experience and in doing so, find some degree of liberation from suffering. The healing and liberating experience of awakening to the Source Condition is the fulfilment of the "great impulse" of humankind (Adi Da Samraj, 2007, 2009). This is why practitioners like Fenner (2003) describe nondual psychotherapy as follows, "In its most essential form, nondual therapy is the unimpeded and uncontrived expression of a contentless wisdom that instantaneously and effortlessly reveals the free and open nature of all structures of existence" (p. 27). The inherent release from bondage and human suffering resulting from contact with Presence is healing for several reasons.

First, when one is embodying the unconditioned mind, one is free from wants or needs to be or do or change anything other than what is present. Second, spending time in that state of awareness allows people to discover how to find and enter it again. This helps individuals re-enter a state of being that is free of dilemma and is therefore inherently healing. Third, the unconditioned mind deconditions individuals by making layers of conditioning more visible in



contrast to the stillness and contentlessness of awareness and through the influence of subtle energies and mechanisms (Fenner, 2003). This experience increases awareness of conditioning and therefore has the potential to increase insight. The influence of subtle energy can purify subtle structures of the body–mind complex and increase the spiritual connectivity to the Source Condition. Additionally, another reason that experiencing unconditioned presence is healing is because when the self is not maintained and carried forward in the course of nondual psychotherapy, the continual and dynamic flux of emotions—including negativity, shame, resentment, rage, and anxiety—dissolve (Berkow, 2003). The lack of self-maintenance and the avoidance or over indulgence in connecting to these temporary and dynamic emotional states is released. Similarly, Conway (2007) states that when we become one with difficult or painful emotional situations, there is a letting go or loss of the dualistic sense of subject and object. This leads to an unmitigated experience of Formless Awareness, which is at the core of a healing, and indeed, all experience.

Many nondual psychologists find that the radical acceptance of pain leads to the direct revealing of our true nature and thus, healing. This invitation for clients to fully experience what is present paradoxically provides relief. For example, Hunt (2003) states that if a client reporting struggling with depression fully experiences their sadness, anger, stuckness, and helplessness in session, they will likely not feel depressed. In fact, their depression, understood from a nondual perspective, is a refusal to fully experience the present moment (Hunt, 2003). Penny Fenner (2007) views nondual psychotherapy as aiding in the identification of a particular issue or emotion and then, rather than processing it or making intellectual interpretations about it, directing clients' awareness to the experience using the breath and feeling whatever is arising. She argues that this simple method helps untie the knots holding fixations in place. She also

indicates that the more deeply we practice loving kindness, or entering uncomfortable feelings in a direct manner with a kindhearted disposition, the more profoundly intimate we become with our experience. Penny Fenner (2007) states that, “Ignoring somatic impulses or overanalyzing the manifestation of pain or difficulty does not free us up. It simply conditions us to avoid what is arising by employing sophisticated self-justifying stories” (p. 213). In this way, many nondual psychotherapists avoid contributing to limiting self-narratives about themselves and their apparent problems by focusing, instead, on intimately contacting pain and discomfort. Doing so often leads to the feelings dissolving in the face of utter openness (Penny Fenner, 2007). In a similar theme to Penny Fenner’s (2007) discussion about the value nondual psychotherapists place on creating direct contact with pain, often resulting in its paradoxical disappearance, Conway (2007) summarizes this concept with clarity:

One can drop the “suffering” of certain painful situations by letting go [of] inner judgements, resentments, regrets, expectations, and the sense of being the hapless target-entity afflicted by cruel outside forces, and instead simply *notice pain*, along with intelligently making any changes needed (e.g., pulling the hand away from the fire or moving beyond a chronically abusive relationship). (p. 248)

This quote highlights the nondual psychological value that not only is contact with unconditioned awareness healing in and of itself, but the relinquishment of limiting self-narratives and entering into rather than avoiding pain leads to their paradoxical disappearance. Although many nondual psychotherapy practitioners agree with the general tenants described above, there is a multitude of perspectives regarding the goals and approaches of nondual psychotherapy.

Due to the diversity within the nondual spiritual traditions of which certain nondual psychologists follow, there is a conflict regarding what nondual psychology prioritizes as its central goal. Peter Fenner (2003) asserts that the main task of nondual psychotherapy is to facilitate “awakening an experience of the unconditioned mind for the therapist and client, and the ongoing cultivation of this experience” (p. 28). In a more recent volume, Peter Fenner (2007) articulates:

The final aim of all nondual approaches to therapy and healing is to introduce people to a way of being that exists beyond pain and ordinary pleasure and helps them become more and more familiar with this mode of being. (p. 121)

Peter Fenner (2007) indicates that nondual psychotherapists can facilitate this experience of no-mind by speaking and listening from pure awareness. This ability, along with staying “in communication and in an intimate relationship while gradually reducing the ideas, concepts, and advice we give people to process” is at the core of what Peter Fenner (2007) perceives as the foundational nondual psychotherapeutic task (p. 139). In contrast to this perspective, Hunt (2003) postulates that there is no goal to facilitate an awakening experience in clients because when abiding in the truth of our intimate being, there is no “one” to wake up. From her perspective, there is only unconditional and Infinite Awareness playing different roles in the conditional world. In this sophisticated conceptualization grounded in an embodied presence, Hunt (2003) employs nondual wisdom to the domain of psychotherapy in such a way that undermines the subject-object and self-other dichotomies. Hunt’s (2003) perspective of not having a goal to create an awakening experience leaves an important topic to be discussed—the role of the psychotherapist. To this end, Hunt (2003) states that one possible direction to explore in therapy may be the self-contraction or ego. She recommends allowing clients to become aware

of the bodily feelings of this knot of fear—the “me”—in sessions. Opening space to be with and experience this knot of identity could be helpful in coinciding with its release into presence.

A similar perspective is found in Berkow (2003) who indicates that the deep sense of trust in a nondual therapeutic relationship does not expect the client to change or stay the same. When the subject-object dichotomy has been removed from the therapeutic encounter, there is no need to fix, manipulate or change a client. As a result, the client’s assumptions about therapy and of their own identity are undermined, leading to the healing impact of therapy by presently releasing attachments and expectations related to past conditioning and self-image (Berkow, 2003). Following this line of thought, Berkow (2003) argues that the challenge of this type of therapy, then, involves the client releasing their sense of self that was dependent upon identification with historical events and mental-emotional projections. Berkow (2003) posits that, “Psychotherapy done from this perspective can only involve attunement and resonance that assists opening, which neither posits nor relies on a maintained central image of self” (p. 196). This standpoint endorses a quality of embodied realization that does not value the client’s opening or maintenance of a separate self, but simultaneously facilitates an experience that does not demand that they maintain their self-identification. Concluding this thought process, Berkow (2003) indicates that one aspect of nondual therapy that is important to mention is that seeking change or intending to cause a person’s self to drop away is rooted within the self-other dichotomy and thus not consistent with a nondual approach. When such an occasion is ready to occur, it will do so spontaneously and without apparent causation.

Another unique perspective on whether or not there should be a goal to enlighten a client in nondual psychotherapy is found in Caplan (2007), who advocates for what she calls *enlightened duality*. Caplan (2007) indicates that according to this perspective, “The *context* of

enlightened duality is nondual awareness, while its *content* is duality” (p. 192). From the standpoint of enlightened duality, nondual consciousness is expressed in and as fully experiencing and enjoying the play of duality. Therefore, there is no need to evoke nondual experience through teaching or applying a technique but rather, recognize that nondual awareness is the silent context from which ordinary experience is considered (Caplan, 2007). Caplan (2007) states that, “When enlightened duality is applied to therapy, the nondual perspective is transmitted to the client through the energy or awareness of the therapist such that spiritual insight arises naturally within the client’s own awareness, even though spiritual theory and technique may never be mentioned” (p. 193). This unique concept of enlightened duality represents another diverse perspective found within nondual psychology.

To highlight one final perspective regarding the primary goal of nondual psychotherapy, we turn to Puhakka (2007), who argues that the self fixates by resisting either of its two spontaneous activities—pulling in and flowing out. She indicates that the pulling-in activity corresponds with maintaining the stance as a subject, whereas the flowing-out activity involves the self securing a position as an object. These movements can occur individually, together, and fluctuate in each moment (Puhakka, 2007). Puhakka (2007) contends that the fixation of the client’s self is at the root of all of their apparent problems. She claims that therapists with more coherent and successful patterns of fixations can be helpful to many clients with less coherent and more problematic fixations. However, she notes that a moment in therapy “that embraces the client unconditionally without fixation of self on the part of therapist can hold the client with a depth of acceptance and love not possible when the therapist is coming from a fixated self” (p. 156). Although this theory does not explicitly notate that the function of a nondual psychologist is to facilitate an awakening experience, it does implicate the experience of contact with

unconditioned awareness as being central to healing and perhaps coinciding with the release of the self's fixation. When reviewing these perspectives as a whole, the pattern is clear: although there is uncertainty regarding whether or not the nondual therapist's goal or function is to facilitate an awakening experience or not, all approaches—in one way or another—utilize the experience of unconditioned presence as the foundation for healing and freedom from the pain, limitation, and suffering of the separate self.

The lack of agreement regarding the primary goal or value of nondual psychotherapy is made more complex by some nondual psychologists who assert that, since there is no separate self, there is no such thing as nondual psychology. Hunt (2003), for example, indicates that there is no “nondual psychotherapy” because there is nothing being added—there is no separate “I” to “learn” and apply nondual principles. She clarifies that “ultimately, in the realization of who/what we are, one is surrendered into nondoing” (Hunt, 2003, p. 170). Similarly, Berkow (2003) indicates that, “a psychology of no-thingness knows subject/object relatedness, without postulating an independently existing doer, knower, or subjectivity with defined location” (p. 185). Further, Krystal (2007) indicates that from a nondual psychological perspective, “There is no separate therapist and no client, no one doing and no one being done to” (p. 217). From these perspectives, it is clear that a psychology of no-thingness involves many factors and central tenants. There must be an understanding that the separate self-identity or body–mind complex is not-a-thing and, in the ultimate perspective of Reality, an unnecessary, apparent modification of consciousness. The application of nondual wisdom indicates that the healing and liberating experience of contacting the nondual ground of being is the only way to release suffering at its root. This requires the letting go of limiting self-narratives and, in a deeper process, transcending the constriction of awareness that comprises the separate self or ego-based point of view. Finally,

nondual psychotherapists wrestle with language and differing degrees of realization from diverse spiritual traditions in their conceptualization of whether or not they should aim to facilitate an awakening experience or transcend self-object dichotomies and accept whatever arises in the moment and happening of therapy (Berkow, 2003). Regardless of the consensus or disagreement among nondual psychologists, Penny Fenner (2007) challenges all nondual psychotherapeutic practitioners by stating:

No matter how spiritual or evolved we are, the true task in embodiment lies in our willingness to be courageously honest and lovingly present to whatever arises. The real wisdom lies not in seeking to hang out in the absolute, but in uncompromisingly embracing the entirety of being in the relative world. (p. 214)

This challenge of embodied spirituality, rather than merely talking about nonduality in an elusive, esoteric, and dissociated manner, is the worthwhile battle nondual psychologists fight. Hunt (2003) notes that trying to decipher the difference between certain ways of being or techniques to label them as “nondual” or not is only a play of the mind. She notes that it is only from the assumption of a separate self that the mind divides what is seamless (Hunt, 2003). To conclude, words, no matter how eloquent and paradoxical, fall mute when contacting the profound stillness and silence of Presence.

### **The Importance of Awakening in Nondual Psychotherapy**

In this brief section, the importance of nondual psychotherapists having their own awakening experience will be discussed. As the reader may have noticed by now, for nondual psychotherapy to be optimally effective, the therapist must have attained some degree of embodied enlightenment. For without the ability to abide in nondual presence, the nondual psychotherapist cannot facilitate, co-construct, or likely even participate in an awakening

experience of a client. Prior to discussing the importance of the nondual psychologist's state of consciousness, it is useful to briefly describe realization from a nondual psychological perspective.

Prendergast and Bradford (2007) note that awakening “points to a radical shift in our identity that is like waking up from a dream. There is the realization that what we took to be real—our constructed self/world-image—isn't” (p. 6). This important shift in perspective creates many valuable opportunities for continued being in the world. For example, the authors note, “The dream continues, yet we no longer feel trapped as a character within it. This brings a sense of unbounded freedom, innocent bemusement, and quiet joy” (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007, p. 6). From these quotes, the reader can readily observe the qualities of liberation and freedom within nondual realization, in which an individual notes that one's constructed image of oneself, others, and the world is false and that they are existing within a complex play of Consciousness Itself. In this way, the self is *seen through*. There is a knowledge and trust that the self is illusory—a moment to moment construction or activity that is both “real” and non-Ultimate. This realization leads to an alleviation of suffering and the ability to deidentify problems associated with the limited character one once presumed oneself to be. Prendergast and Bradford (2007) state that the deeper the awakening, the less individuals identify with conditioning. They note that it may still arise, but that the awakened individual, so to speak, is not bound or limited by such conditioning in the same way as prior to the awakening (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007).

Therefore, in awakening, the relationship between one and one's thoughts and self-identity are radically shifted in a way fundamental to the practice of nondual psychotherapy. For example, Hunt (2003) notes that if therapists have not experienced intimate awakens—observing and experiencing without using the conceptual mind—then they cannot invite clients



to do the same. Hunt (2003) also notes that clinicians who have not experienced these states of consciousness should not “try on” what that person thinks being enlightened or awakened means because doing so may be harmful to clients. Continuing this dialogue, Berkow (2003) states that the therapist must “have integrated as the undivided being in which subject and object have no psychological distance” (p. 193). After this integration, the therapist does not perceive the relationship through the subject object dichotomy, which alleviates the sense of pressure the therapist may perceive for the client to change. This releases any expectation that the client needs to change or stay the same because the awakened individual is focusing on and responding to the awakens in each apparently separate individual (Berkow, 2003). Regarding the client, Prendergast and Bradford (2007) note that nondual therapists—especially those who are awake—must refrain from leading a client toward enlightenment if the client does not desire to do so. If a therapist finds themselves pushing for awakening, it is likely that they have lapsed into a dualistic perspective that views the client as having problems from which they need to be awakened.

An awakened therapist can be of great utility within nondual psychotherapy. As Prendergast and Bradford (2007) note, “a therapist with deep nondual understanding can help facilitate both pre- and postawakening sides of this sacred process, monitoring and guiding clients through possible pitfalls, and supporting them during this sometimes difficult and frightening unfolding” (p. 17). Therapists must know the way in order to help guide and advise their clients as they embark on this transpersonal path of awakening. To summarize this perspective, we turn to Hunt (2007). In sharing some experiences that she notices in interactions with clients, Hunt (2007) articulates an important aspect of nondual psychotherapy and why

nondual psychotherapists must embody some degree of a higher state of consciousness. She states:

Clients often comment that they had problems before entering my office, but those problems seem to disappear when they are here. This is not because life has ceased being life; it is because unconditioned Awareness is so much stronger than thought that it attunes to itself. Where opposites can meet without struggle, in awareness resisting nothing, the perception of “problems” disappears. (p. 118)

This quote demonstrates the power of embodied unconditioned presence. When the therapist is attuned to the nondual ground of being, then the client’s experience as a separate self is transformed and melted when encountering that real and true presence. Working from an awakened perspective not only allows for the conscious ability to guide individuals down a similar path of realization, but according to the quote above, it also offers natural and spontaneous exploration of the transcendental spiritual presence in which therapy takes place. From this perspective, it is clear that awakening is valued and, according to many nondual psychotherapists, a precursor for the practice of nondual psychotherapy.

### Summary

To summarize, this chapter reviewed many important aspects of nondual psychotherapy. It began by discussing the most common distinctions between nondual and traditional psychotherapy. The most significant difference discovered was nondual psychotherapy’s deconstruction of the separate self that is, in the context of Western psychotherapy, privileged as the primary unit of observation. Although traditional therapies assume the ontological existence of a separate body–mind complex, nondual psychology applies nondual wisdom to *see through* the moment-to-moment constriction of awareness known colloquially as the ego. Next, unlike

traditional therapies, nondual psychotherapies place little to no value in the client's or therapist's conceptual, thinking mind, and instead prioritize the unmitigated and direct experiencing of Pure Awareness. This radical reformulation enables the client and therapist to drop preconceptions about problems and problem-holder and allows for subject–object dichotomies to melt into the Formless Awareness prior to all mentally based identifications. In this manner, nondual psychology both de-problematizes the client and embraces the client *as is* without adding pressure to change or stay the same—another difference between it and many traditional psychotherapies. Across all nondual psychology, the direct experience of Beingness is the vehicle of all healing and transformation.

The next section built upon this foundation by drawing attention to the basic tenants and fundamental values of nondual psychotherapy and nondual psychology. These values include the recognition that there is no one consistent approach, language, or technique that encompasses nondual psychology, as many nondual psychotherapists encounter their own realizations in the context of many unique spiritual traditions. Thus, the approaches, language, conceptualizations, and perhaps the degree of nondual awareness embodied and perceived by nondual psychotherapists varies. However, the one common element connecting all nondual psychotherapies and another core value, is that they are all rooted in nondual experience. As such, nondual psychotherapists believe that all beings are motivated to awaken to nondual consciousness. Through this integration of and contact with sacred wisdom, nondual psychology asserts another central tenant: that the separate self or body–mind complex is only an apparent modification of Consciousness Itself rather than an ontologically existing entity. From the standpoint of Ultimate Reality, then, nondual psychology asserts that there is no need to fix or change the client because all such motivations are rooted in a dualistic perspective and are

simply *maya* or illusions from that separative position. As previously mentioned, another important and related value is that experiencing unconditioned presence is inherently liberating and healing. Nondual psychotherapists know that resting in nondual awareness allows all of the ego's sense of dilemma and struggle with problems to which it appears identified drop into the heart of nothingness. Finally, the last tenant experiences differing opinions within the nondual psychological community, which is currently unsure whether or not nondual psychotherapy aims to facilitate an awakening experience in others or not. Many of these distinctions and the plethora of perspectives on how to approach nondual psychotherapeutic work appears rooted in different degrees of realization along with the unique spiritual traditions to which practitioners adhere.

In the last section, the importance of awakening in nondual psychology was discussed. It was discovered that the nondual psychotherapist must, as a prerequisite to practicing nondual psychotherapy with clients, be awakened to one degree or another. When a nondual psychotherapist is enlightened, they have the capacity to consciously guide consenting clients down a similar spiritual path and simultaneously offer all clients a natural and spontaneous exploration of the stillness, fullness, and completeness that pervades all of existence.

In conclusion, this chapter reviewed many important aspects of nondual psychology, including: common distinctions between nondual and traditional psychotherapy, the basic tenants of nondual psychotherapy and nondual psychology, the application and integration of nonduality into Western psychology, and the importance of awakening in nondual psychology. Although not yet specifically mentioned, Chapter 8 will discuss the ways in which this dialogue about nondual psychology challenges the dominant materialistic and reductionist narratives currently influencing mainstream, Western psychology. The section will also discuss the ways in which the nondual reformulation of psychotherapy reorients psychotherapy from the doctor-patient

dichotomy back to its shamanic roots and challenges the reification of this sacred healing experience. Prior to this dialogue, one final chapter must be addressed—nondual psychological interventions.

## Chapter 7: Nondual Psychological Interventions and Methods

### Introduction

Extending the conversation from the foundational elements of nondual psychotherapy to the investigation of certain nondual psychotherapeutic interventions is this chapter's purpose. This chapter includes a broad survey of possible techniques applied by nondual psychologists by discussing several nondual psychotherapist's unique work. This overview contains sections that elaborate on the therapeutic relationship and the method of being together, sacred mirroring and original speech, the use of inquiry and koans, and will describe many distinct nondual psychotherapeutic approaches and protocols developed by nondual psychotherapists. As a whole, this chapter shifts nondual psychology from an abstract theoretical construct to a living psychotherapy. These nondual psychotherapeutic techniques and especially their integration with Western psychotherapeutic domains proves considerable thoughtfulness for the ways in which nonduality can continue shaping therapeutic work and conceptual thinking in the future. A summary section will highlight the key themes uncovered in each section.

### The Therapeutic Relationship and Being Together

An important starting point for nondual psychotherapeutic interventions is to discuss the therapeutic relationship itself. As readers may have intuited up to this point, the fundamental component of the therapeutic encounter is Awareness, or Consciousness Itself. Therefore, most nondual psychologists recognize that Presence, rather than the psychologist, is the facilitating force leading to healing and awakening (Krystal, 2003). Although other theoretical orientations may assert that the therapist is the "provider" or "container," from a nondual psychological perspective, the therapist is a merely apparent play within Awareness Itself. As such, the therapist's function is to deeply resonate with Presence. Miller (2003) indicates that the more

Presence is consciously embodied, the more clients can experience and describe the contents of their awareness. Thus, the therapist's embodiment of nondual states of consciousness is fundamental to their lived experience of the therapeutic relationship and to their therapeutic transformation. Miller (2003) states, "The therapist's attunement with Presence enables clients to unfold their deepest experiences of conflict, pain, and trauma, working through projection and transference and uncovering solutions appropriate to each life circumstance" (p. 221). In this way, the therapist simply resonates with the nondual ground of being. The attunement to this free-flowing energetic state allows all healing and experience to occur. Metaphorically, the therapist is the vehicle through which nondual states of consciousness are embodied and transported, not the driver or creator of such experiences. Similarly, Krystal (2003) recommends that the therapist rest in Presence, because this is where the deepest healing resonance occurs. However, once in this state of awareness, interventions may arise spontaneously (Krystal, 2003).

Therapeutic techniques and developmental theories may be employed in nondual psychotherapy; however, they are only viewed as ways to facilitate movement toward nondual realization. Fixating on a particular technique or theory would limit the spontaneous responsiveness that connection to nondual consciousness offers (Prendergast, 2003). Furthering this point, Bodian (2003) states that interventions "arise as a natural response to a felt-from-the-inside dissonance or discrepancy between how the client interprets reality and reality itself" (p. 237). This description highlights that the therapist does not use a preestablished agenda or conceptualization to strategically contemplate and then deliver an intervention, rather, the intervention unfolds effortlessly and spontaneously. In nondual psychology, the resting and abiding in Presence leads to a unique interaction between the client and therapist in which all suffering, contractions, avoidance, and resistance to experience is magnified in contrast to the

profundity of formless, contentless awareness. Confronting this Silence magnifies or mirrors the ways in which clients and or therapists are avoiding its embodiment. As such, psychologists such as Krystal (2003) note that nondual therapists, when responding from this state of awareness, have access to many of their therapeutic techniques, such as: meditation, visualization, mandalas, quiet nonintentional mutual eye gazing, mantra, metaphor, paradox, storytelling, dream analysis, various forms of body work, and EMDR. However, these possible interventions are only employed from a state of not-knowing rather than cognitively. And strategically utilized for a specific result (Krystal, 2003).

Adding more complexity, Peter Prendergast (2007) focuses on the nondual psychotherapeutic relationship by calling attention to the importance of intimacy and spaciousness, which he views as two aspects that contribute to healing and the facilitation of presence. He argues that intimacy devoid of space leads to merging, whereas space devoid of intimacy creates disconnection. He suggests that nondual psychotherapists can aid in the deepening of both intimacy and spaciousness, because the source of both is the nondual ground of being. Further, Peter Prendergast states that, “The more that we realize that *this* is what we really are, the more intimate and spacious we feel in our relationship to our daily life and the people in it” (p. 37). When discussing the intimacy and shared experience found within a nondual therapeutic relationship, Peter Prendergast (2007) describes empathetic resonance, or “a mutual attunement to a shared field or energetic frequency,” as an important factor—one that is possible at its deepest level, only through the transcending of self. Such empathetic resonance or mutual attunement is likely what a client may experience in a nondual psychotherapy. Describing what it might be like to be a client in session with a nondual psychologist, Bradford (2007) states:



Finding himself within the unconditional gaze and presence of a therapist, a client may be influenced to shift from taking himself primarily as an enduring Self, a kind of property owner who *has* problems, to being someone who is more of an *unfolding, open-ended awareness* within a shared field of subjective experiencing, in which problems arise, persist, and pass away. (p. 65)

This important conversation is furthered when elaborating on a concept and experience coined by Prendergast (2003) termed *being together*.

According to Prendergast (2003), there are moments in therapy in which sensations of falling into a vast space with clients arise. Many therapists not familiar with nonduality frequently overlook such moments of *being together*, however, Prendergast (2003) advocates that such experiences can be beneficial and healing. To amplify this experience of spacious intimacy, Prendergast (2003) invites clients to share and engage in nonintentional looking at one another. He believes that over time, the intimate and spacious sharing of silent, nonintentional gazing can lead both the nondual therapist and the client to the center of the client's wound and melt the sense of separation that is at their core. Such experiences are often power for clients, who report experiences ranging from a sense of love and gratitude to becoming more aware of intense feelings of anger and sadness that they are trying to avoid. They may feel judged, or encounter erotic feelings, or feel pressured to do something a certain way, or they may encounter unusual visual phenomena like subtle lights. This method of nonintentional eye gazing invites clients into *being together* in a deep manner not typically encountered in conventional relations outside of nondual psychotherapy. The quality of being created from such shared intimate contact with presence may not be appropriate for all clients, and as such, must not be prescribed without intuition (Prendergast, 2003). Instead of applying this technique to create a sensation,

Prendergast (2003) indicates that nondual psychotherapists should merely be aware of when this shared presence is naturally occurring, and spontaneously offer the non-intentional eye-gaze if it feels appropriate. For clients with high disturbances, personality disorders, or a history of boundary violations, it may be inappropriate (Prendergast, 2003). To demonstrate what an invitation of *being together* may look like, Prendergast (2003) outlined an example of how he might introduce the exercise:

Would you be interested in joining me for a period of quiet looking? Let your gaze be very relaxed and soft. This is not a staring contest. Just notice your inner experience—your thoughts, feelings, and sensations—and stay with me. There is no wrong way to do this and there is nothing to achieve. Welcome whatever arises. Feel free to be silent or to speak, to close your eyes at times, or to move so that you are comfortable. We can end anytime that you feel like it. (p. 115)

This technique of being together is similar to another nondual psychotherapist's use of silence in the therapeutic encounter.

Hunt (2003) asserts that simply being together is the backdrop of all therapeutic work and indicates that silently being together with clients happens frequently in work with clients. In contrast to Prendergast (2003), Hunt (2003) emphasizes that she never invites sitting together in silence—so as to use it as a technique—but rather, allows it to occur spontaneously. She says that when the therapist is filled with Silence it seems to attract or invite silence to itself. Along these lines, Conway (2007) also advocates for the allowance of spontaneous silence, saying that, “Spontaneous silence can allow our intrinsically *mind-free* Identity to abide unto ItSelf” (p. 245). In this sacred meeting of and in Silence, awakeness is awake to itself in the room, which allows the melting away of separate identifications and a shared movement into the heart space (Hunt,

2003). In this space, there is a shared experience of the love and clarity of our essential being—what Hunt (2003) calls “presence in unknowing.” Epitomizing a nondual approach to therapy in the context of being with clients, Hunt (2003) indicates that there are two main ways healing seems to occur in her work with clients:

One is simply *being* together without an agenda, without a place to arrive, without needing to refuse, get rid of, or change anything. The other is the continual invitation to the direct experience of the moment as it is. *Whatever* is arising—be it feeling, belief, story, body sensation, energy, suffering itself—is an opening into the mystery of our nonseparate *being*. (p. 171)

Hunt (2003) also states that if practitioners are open to subtle energy, there are moments in shared Stillness in which the client’s energy vibrates in the therapist’s body, which allows a deepening of attunement to the felt experience in the room. This can be powerful for the therapist and the client, who is sometimes aware that their energetic experience is shared intimately with another person. She argues that trying to tease out who is responsible for the energy in the room is difficult due to the experience of nonseparation, it is much easier to understand that in that sacred meeting the energy was simply shared and present in the room (Hunt, 2003).

As you can see from these examples, the quality of being is at the core of the psychotherapist’s function in nondual psychotherapy. Rather than being a container or another separate entity, the therapist must recognize the illusion of separateness and rest in the nondual ground of being. As such, the quality of being together with clients, whether invited for mutual nonintentional gazing or the spontaneous arising of silence, is privileged above prescriptive therapeutic techniques. Building upon this foundation of resonating with presence at its center, it is important to turn our attention to sacred mirroring and original speech.

### Sacred Mirroring and Original Speech

Sacred mirroring and original speech are two separate functions that occur spontaneously when a nondual psychotherapist is abiding in unconditioned presence. Prendergast (2003) describes sacred mirroring as a technique that has historically been assigned to a guru or spiritual preceptor, but is now increasingly utilized in nondual psychotherapy. According to Prendergast (2003), “sacred mirroring reflects back the impersonal Ground of Being shared by client and therapist” (p. 95). In this formulation, sacred mirroring is distinct from therapeutic mirroring, which reflects back a client’s personal experience. Prendergast (2003) asserts that sacred mirroring is also distinct from the blank screen of early psychoanalysis. Whereas they both appear to function as a detached observation on the surface, the quality of awareness is different. In sacred mirroring, the therapist does not feel apart from the client, they feel fundamentally connected. Similarly, “while a blank screen is designed to evoke transference, a sacred mirror will simply reflect back a client’s multidimensional experience, which may include transference phenomena when this is relevant” (Prendergast, 2003, p. 98). Prendergast (2003) indicates that sacred mirroring occurs spontaneously following realization, rather than through any ego-based effort. He indicates that if there are any personal needs to be idealized or admired in any way then true sacred mirroring is undermined. However, when the impersonal ground of being is reflected back to clients, it opens up space to Being (Prendergast, 2003). It is from this position of unconditioned awareness that spontaneous, original speech arises.

Hunt (2003) posits that nondual psychotherapists speak “*from* what is awake *to* what is awake,” rather than inviting the mind to enter into the process of determining how to heal or change the present experience (p. 181). When engaging in pure listening from the unconditioned mind, Peter Fenner (2007) indicates that the listener has no need to conceptually comprehend

what the speaker is saying. Further, he posits that this type of listening does not involve filtering the speech through our own interpretations. The listener is neither focused nor distracted: they are merely abiding in no-mind. The listener is not trying to relate the person's experience to his or her own and is not listening for anything in particular. This listening, he argues, creates pure receptivity and an effortless presence to emerge (Peter Fenner, 2007). Based on this important function of no-mind and the spontaneous emergence of speech, Hunt (2003) indicates that an important aspect of nondual psychotherapy is questioning where the work is coming from rather than what techniques are efficacious. She argues it should come from awareness to what is awake, which will be far more effective than any prescriptive technique (p. 181). Further, Hunt (2003) states:

There are no “nondual” techniques for the mind to learn and apply. Obviously, methods and techniques may be used in psychotherapeutic work, but our effectiveness depends on how much we can *unlearn*, how much our minds can rest in unknowing. (p. 181)

This ability to rest in the unknowing and not-knowing of no-mind, along with the speech, silence, and mirroring cultivated when connected to it, is one reason Peter Fenner (2007) posits that the single most important thing a nondual therapist can do is to abide in and share the quality and experience of serenity.

Returning to the concept of original speech, Hunt (2003) suggests that intuitive speaking and listening as being spontaneous, intimate, and effective in nondual psychotherapeutic work. She notes that such speech may contain elements of certain therapeutic techniques, the difference is that there is no intention to facilitate change (Hunt, 2003). Hunt (2007) specifies that deep listening—one important aspect of nondual therapy—involves a whole-bodily response to all gross and subtle experiences in the moment with a client. She indicates that this intimate Seeing

does not contain judgment or evaluation but is aware and has the capacity to respond (Hunt, 2007). Knowing that thoughts, analyses, judgments, and interpretations are the mind's way to separate from the intimacy or *is-ness* of experience, Hunt (2007) declares that therapists and clients may find the doorway to our true nature by intimately meeting experience as the awake Mystery rather than focusing on the mind's dialogue and sense of separateness. As one may intuit from this depth of the therapist's embodiment of presence, Peter Fenner (2007) suggests that listening and speaking from no-mind can create a transmission of contentlessness, no-mind, or pure unconditioned presence in clients. In fact, he indicates that this pure listening and spontaneous speech transforms the structure of how the other person relates and communicates to the nondual psychotherapist, as they are interacting with an awareness that is not—to the same extent as most body-minds—conditioned, and therefore, are not receiving a conditioned response in return (Peter Fenner, 2007). Encapsulating what he considers to be the most important element of nondual psychotherapy, Peter Fenner (2007) proclaims:

By sharing our experience of nondual awareness without words or effort, we invite the people with whom we're in relationship to entrain or attune to this experience themselves. As we rest in a state that is free of all ambition, the energy of serenity naturally transfers from one person to another like two bells resonating together. In nondual therapy, much of the work occurs through this process of energetic entrainment.

(p. 125)

This ability to transfer and resonate together with a client and the nondual ground of being is why Peter Fenner (2007) argues that nondual therapists are more effective when they remain in a state of no-mind and invite clients to share in and resonate with this state of consciousness, rather than “meeting” the clients in the conditioned mind. Meeting in unconditioned mind where there

are no problems offers clients the opportunity to notice the experience of their suffering dissolving into the present moment. As such, nondual therapists speaking from the unconditioned mind do so without forethought or strategy, without anticipating the consequences, and without knowing how or if they will finish their speech. This pure speech does not try to convince the client of anything, but merely spontaneously responds to what is happening in the here and now in a way that can reveal no-mind (Peter Fenner, 2007).

Aligned with these interpretations of spontaneous speech, Puhakka (2007) describes original speech as coming from nothing, which is therefore representative of a spontaneous expression of a self arising afresh in its creativity. She states:

Original speech is simple, spacious, and usually sparse. No words are said that are not meant, and nothing that is meant is left unsaid. It is simple because there is no hidden agenda to preserve or validate the existence or esteem of the self. (Puhakka, 2007, p. 160)

This emphasis on simplicity rather than complexity is important in nondual psychotherapy. Authors and practitioners such as Conway (2007) indicate that excessively employing absolute-level speech is often contra-therapeutic. Instead, Conway (2007) argues for the application of a compassionate blending between “conventional-level psychospiritual counsel along with Absolute-level teachings” (p. 245). He argues that such an approach works best for most individuals rather than using speech that can increase a person’s rational, thinking mind or perhaps lead to spiritual bypassing.

As observed in this section, original speech comes from nothing and speaks to nothing. It occurs spontaneously when the nondual psychotherapist is aligned with presence and such speech is typically simple and direct rather than vague and absolute—so as to avoid implicating the thinking mind of the listener. This spontaneous speech reinforces the value and importance of

the therapist's abiding in Awareness Itself, which may also the function of sacred mirroring, or reflecting back the nondual ground of being that gives rise to all experience. Next, we will observe the use and application of inquiry and koans.

### **Inquiry and Koans**

Similar to the section above, *inquiry* and *koans* are two distinct, yet related, methods that may be spontaneously employed in nondual psychotherapy. Bodian (2003) states that the technique of inquiry, or questioning, has been implemented in traditional psychotherapy to generate insight into emotional and behavioral patterns by uncovering the relationships between past and present experiences. In contrast to the function of inquiry in traditional psychotherapy, Bodian (2003) articulates:

In the nondual wisdom traditions of the East, self-inquiry has long been a powerful practice to help the spiritual seeker penetrate the empty or insubstantial nature of everyday phenomena, including the apparent self constructed of thoughts and feelings, to gain insight into the essence of Reality itself. (p. 229)

Similar to the self-inquiry used in these ancient spiritual traditions, the inquiry utilized in nondual psychotherapy aims to move individuals beyond mind and into direct contact with Awareness Itself. Fenner (2003) calls inquiry a form of deconstructive conversations, which can be spoken or silent, and aim to dismantle the foundation of our conceptual understandings in order to reveal the unstructured mind. The end result of these conversations in therapy are to help the client come to notice that their problems cannot be found (Fenner, 2003). Bodian (2003) notes that deconstructive methods like inquiry become internalized and continue to chip away at parts of the illusory, constructed self even after their application in the therapeutic encounter. He asserts that, "by inquiring into the beliefs and constructs, we gradually penetrate the layers of



self-identification, thereby revealing the feelings that were formerly hidden and making them more accessible to direct, nonconceptual experiencing” (Bodian, 2003, p. 238). As such, inquiry can help illuminate the emptiness of our experience—of Being Itself.

Many examples of questions used in inquiry exist and may vary according to the nondual psychotherapeutic practitioner. Bodian (2003) articulates several questions used in inquiry: Who are you? Where is this “me” you are referring to? For whom is this a problem? What is experiencing this emotion right now? Is there anything missing right now? In this moment, where is the problem you have been describing? These questions, he asserts, “directly point not to any object of awareness, but to the background Awareness Itself, the vast, spacious context in which experience takes place and that ultimately constitutes the client’s true self” (Bodian, 2003, p. 241). Another example of these questions is found in Fenner (2003), who asks, “what would you say you’re doing right now? Another may be distinguishing between the content and function of a story” (p. 50). One final example of critical deconstruction described by Bodian (2003) is his summary of “four questions” by Byron Katie: Is this story, belief, or cognition true? Can you absolutely know that it is true? How do you react when you think that thought (i.e., hold that story or belief)? Who would you be without it? Although the questions listed above vary, the underlying premise remains the same: turning the focus of awareness from illusory contents of conditional manifestation back upon itself. As Bodian (2003) states, “By turning the light of awareness back on the experiencer itself, such inquiry has the potential to awaken clients to a deeper level of identity where old beliefs, stories, and patterns of conditioning no longer exert the same control” (p. 247). It is important to briefly mention that, as with all other nondual psychological interventions, inquiry is not prescribed—it is spontaneously offered at a moment within which the nondual psychotherapist intuitively may lead to a release from the limited,

conceptual mind into the vastness of present awareness. Prescribing inquiry as an intellectual or philosophical exercise devoid of the nondual psychotherapeutic context is likely to elicit cognition rather than contentless awareness.

Another method of inquiry involves deconstructive conversations. When the moment feels intuitively correct, Peter Fenner (2007) argues that nondual therapists may choose to employ deconstructive conversations. These types of conversations slow the pace of therapy down, which results in the emergence of presence. An example of a deconstructive conversation is questioning conventions of speech such as “I” or “think.” The nondual therapist invites the client to share in the possibility that we do not tacitly know what these concepts refer to. The timing of this type of inquiry is important, as the goal is to join in the sense of wonderment and uncertainty of no-mind. This requires trust and a certain readiness of the client. For example, a person may report that they hate the experience of overthinking. A deconstructive conversation may involve validating the client’s report and then asking them what the word hate refers to. What *is* hate? That type of questioning deconstructs the definitions and associations most individuals are socialized and conditioned to assume. The purpose of this questioning is not to elicit conscious or unconscious associations, but to experience with intimate curiosity and in doing so reveal the unconditioned, not-knowing mind. Slowing the pace of therapy to examine such assumptions, when timed correctly from awareness to awareness, may lead to a state of no-mind (Peter Fenner, 2007). A similar, yet distinct technique is the use of koans.

Fenner (2003) notes that koans, or questions that cannot be conceptually solved, are usually associated with the tradition of Zen Buddhism. He proposes that koans may be used as tools to deconstruct our thinking mind and open up space for unstructured awareness to reveal itself. Koans used in nondual psychotherapy may include questions like: Could you enhance this

experience? Is there anything we need to be doing at the moment? These questions can, according to Fenner (2003) aid in the nondual psychotherapist's ability to check the purity of the unconditioned presence being shared and experienced. Peter Fenner (2007) also advocates for natural koans, or questions that cannot be solved with the analytical mind and whose resolution elicits the emergence of nondual presence. A few examples include: Why am I doing this? Is there any point in this? Who is doing this? To aid in the therapeutic understanding and utility of this method, Bodian (2003) recommends that clients receive contextual information regarding koans and be instructed not to think about them. Instead, he argues that clients become one with the koan and allow the response to spontaneously emerge from and as an expression of nondual reality (Bodian, 2003). Noting the complexities of applying these methods, Peter Fenner (2007) postulates that many clients need to be in a refined and unstructured state of mind before asking them to contemplate these types of questions. Otherwise, these techniques may produce more thinking rather than less. However, if these questions are timed correctly, they lead to unconditioned presence and can help people slow their thinking and reduce the density of their thoughts (Peter Fenner, 2007).

Taken together, inquiry, koans, and deconstructive conversations possess a unique ability to shift clients from their conceptual minds to unmitigated awareness of the present moment. Although each offers a unique value to eliciting the experience of no-mind in clients, the timing of such interventions is very important. Clients struggling with basic meditation skills, for example, may not benefit from these methods, as it may encourage increased rather than decreased thinking. Next, this dissertation examines distinct nondual psychotherapeutic approaches and protocols developed by nondual psychotherapeutic practitioners.

### **Nondual Psychotherapeutic Approaches and Integration with Western Psychology**

A growing number of psychologists are integrating nonduality and psychotherapy (Therriault, 2012; Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). This growing community of psychologists have collaborated to establish the movement of nondual psychology (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). Many of the practitioners integrating nondual wisdom and nondual psychological values into their psychotherapeutic practice do so in an utterly unique manner. Therefore, to capture the depth and breadth of this emerging field of study, this section provides a brief review of several practitioners, highlighting the integration between nondual psychology and traditional psychotherapy. Because this review will be succinct, it is recommended that interested readers identify and seek out authors with whom they resonate.

A useful starting point is the comprehensive anthology compiled by Prendergast, Fenner, and Krystal (2003), which contains articles written by seasoned nondual psychotherapy clinicians and spiritual teachers. In that volume, Krystal (2003) integrates nonduality with eye movement de-sensitization and reprocessing (EMDR). In this fantastic example of integration, Krystal (2003) asserts that spiritual and contemplative traditions inform a nondual approach to psychotherapy that can invite both the therapist and client to investigate the deepest truth. This process is comparable to *satsang*, which means to come together in the company of God and Truth. Within this sacred therapeutic encounter, Krystal (2003) indicates that clients may begin to understand that they are not their thoughts, which initiates a process of disidentification that leads to peace and deeper presence. She hypothesizes that nondual psychotherapy will begin dualistically—by identifying a client’s problems and gathering a personal history. However, as therapy matures and both the client and therapist meet in Presence, the client’s problems will

become dismantled (Krystal, 2003). Taking that nondual wisdom and integrating it with her psychotherapy practice, Krystal (2003) saw a perfect pairing, as she believes EMDR tends illuminate defense mechanisms and personality strategies to awareness and then attempts to restructure the personality's habitual tendencies. She asserts that the possibility for integration with nondual awareness occurs when clients become empowered to return themselves back into peaceful states following emotionally charged moments. This consistent practice may lead these clients to the deeper experience of nondual presence. On this basis of EMDR paired with nondual presence, Krystal (2003) developed a transpersonal EMDR protocol for clients that have already desensitized their personal histories of traumas, uncomfortable cognitions, and symptoms. The protocol allows clients to deepen their experience of nondual reality after working through other personality-related challenges.

There are several phases of this protocol. First, the preparation phase involves a life review while undergoing bilateral stimulation. After all emotional disturbances are desensitized and not experienced in the body, clients can rest in calmness. From this position, they are prompted to describe any distractions from peace and contentment. Clients can then learn to meditate and join the therapist in a state of nondual awareness. This experience of meeting in the silence of *satsung* replaces the safe place in traditional EMDR protocol. Next, the assessment phase begins. Clients establish a contentment baseline on a scale of light, medium, and deep, where light is distracted and deep is not distracted by any thoughts, feelings, etc. The client and therapist quiet themselves for 10 to 15 mins and then the client rates their experience. Targets for eye movements become any distractions that remove awareness from contentment and emptiness. Next, client and therapist make a new measure for level of distraction on a 0-10 scale with 0 being *not distracting* and 10 being *very distracting*. During the processing phase, clients

are encouraged to rest in their contentment baseline and allow any contents to enter awareness. Then they label them using that scale and then use bilateral stimulation to process them until they are reduced to 0. Over time, clients deepen their experience and rest longer and longer in the Ground of Being (Krystal, 2003). Krystal (2003)'s protocol is not only an excellent example of integration between a traditional psychotherapy (EMDR) and nondual psychotherapy, but also displays the diverse techniques nondual psychotherapists may employ according to their expertise.

Another example of integration is seen in Wittine (2003), a Jungian psychoanalyst who integrates Jungian analysis with nondual wisdom in his depth-oriented approach to client work. Wittine (2003) argues that some clients require a therapeutic approach that addresses two paths of development: a vertical path oriented toward spiritual transcendence and a horizontal path that encompasses individuation. The vertical path includes work focused on awakening to the Self, whereas the horizontal “involves illuminating and transforming the shadow, or the wounded, lost, and disowned parts of the personality,” and actualizes each individual's unique gifts and talents (Wittine, 2003, p. 269). Wittine (2003), almost opposite to Krystal (2003) appears to nest nondual psychotherapy within Jung's approach and conceptual framework. Although this may not be representative of other nondual psychotherapeutic approaches, it demonstrates another possibility for integration into the field of psychology more broadly.

Miller (2003) developed his own unique approach by integrating Yoga Nidra with psychotherapy within a nondual framework. He argues that Yoga Nidra is a process that assists clients to locate, describe, and welcome sensations, emotions, beliefs, and memories that prevent their current challenges from resolving. This method contains several phases. During the initial constructive phase, Yoga Nidra aids clients' ability to develop an integrated psychological

identity that can process all past and present experiences. In the deconstructive phase, it shifts focus from the content of awareness to Awareness Itself. In this phase, the client works to see beyond their separative ego-identity and realize that their true identity is that of Consciousness Itself (Miller, 2003). This approach exemplifies integration with one's own spiritual tradition in the formulation of a nondual psychotherapeutic framework.

Another example is seen in Lumiere (2003), who integrates Dr. Levine's Somatic Experiencing with nondual psychotherapy to heal trauma. She asserts that Somatic Experiencing deepens the client's capacity to be present with their bodily experiences, aids their ability to unravel embodied patterns and symptoms, and discharge traumatic stress. These faculties combine to help stabilize the nervous system and develop the resiliency to remain in the present moment. For her, this letting go process opens people up to feelings and experiences of love, bliss, and ease, all of which are intrinsic to our true nature as Awareness Itself. Given the value placed on letting go, Lumiere (2003) argues that healing from trauma provides an opportunity for profound surrender and awakening. Healing from trauma, from her perspective, requires a letting go of the mind and mental processes that typically provide an illusion for control and for separateness, and in doing so, provides access to the beingness that pervades experience (Lumiere, 2003).

Fenner (2003), as another example, states that nondual therapists like himself perform the following interventions: Introduce people to the unconditioned mind, knowing that there is nothing else that needs to be thought about, discussed, or understood; identify when that state is present through various questions that reveal whether or not people are resting in unstructured awareness; assist people to remain in the experience by recognizing how people move out of this state and drawing attention to those processes. He also discusses pure listening as being

important to therapy. Fenner's (2003) approach shows the value nondual psychotherapists can place on refining the embodiment of nondual states of consciousness through noticing when one is not allowing themselves to contact such awareness.

Another example of integration is found in the second comprehensive anthology of nondual psychology by Prendergast and Bradford (2007). In this volume, Prendergast (2007) investigates empathy, empathetic resonance, and projective identification from a nondual psychological perspective. He posits that many of the current psychodynamic descriptions of such processes are pointing to and unknowingly illuminating subtle energetic and interpersonal influences, without directly explaining how those processes work. The author then uses his own awareness and embodiment of nondual wisdom to provide substantial value to these concepts by offering a nondual reformulation of these processes. Because this lengthy and theoretically-dense material requires substantial elaboration, it will not be covered in further depth in this dissertation. However, another author in this anthology describes another important topic in psychotherapy and in psychodynamic psychotherapy: the topic of neutrality.

According to a nondual perspective, Bradford (2007) asserts that in its original formulation, the idea of neutrality on the part of the clinician is rooted within a dualistic worldview. Summarizing recent relational and intersubjective formulations, Bradford (2007) highlights the softening of this dualism within modern psychodynamic psychology. He then extends this work through the application of nondual awareness, in which the dualistic stance of neutrality is then seen through, altogether. According to his reformulation of neutrality in terms of unconditioned presence, the concept of neutrality becomes "the capacity and courage to be both open and responsive to the Otherness of self and other" (p. 56). In this reformulation, Bradford (2007) proclaims that nonduality moves from "emphasizing the separate *subjectivities*



aspect of *intersubjectivity* to giving more emphasis to the *inter-ness* aspect, and in the process release the healing potential of neutrality as unconditional presence” (p. 63). Therefore, Bradford (2007) transcends the self-other dichotomy upon which client and therapist subjectivity is privileged at the expense of the impersonal Ground of Being upon which the play of existence as a particular point of view in space time comes into being. The recommendation is not to maintain a once idealistic stance of neutrality, conceptual or otherwise, but to drop identification of and as a separate self altogether and to allow the interrelated and interconnected mere presence to emerge from the therapeutic encounter. In describing what it might be like to be a client in session with a nondual psychologist with this reformulation of neutrality, Bradford (2007) states:

Finding himself within the unconditional gaze and presence of a therapist, a client may be influenced to shift from taking himself primarily as an enduring Self, a kind of property owner who *has* problems, to being someone who is more of an *unfolding, open-ended awareness* within a shared field of subjective experiencing, in which problems arise, persist, and pass away. (p. 65)

Bradford’s (2007) focus on dropping the subject-object dichotomy by coming into intimate contact with awareness also has implications for traditional psychotherapy. Bradford (2007) indicates that the ability for a therapist to allow and elicit nondual presence can be efficacious for any depth-oriented therapy. He reasons that nondual presence can aid liberating self-reflection, which requires a relaxing from a fixed perspective to illuminate unconscious content and processes. He also declares that clients who are prepared and interested in more fully embodying unconditional presence may benefit from nondual psychotherapy, which can serve as a practice field for the play of unconditional presence (Bradford, 2007).

Another example of the integration of nondual psychotherapy with traditional psychotherapy within the second anthology comes from Loy (2007), who integrates a conceptualization of nondual psychotherapy with concepts familiar to psychodynamic and existential theories, such as repression. Loy (2007) briefly reviews Freud's thoughts on repression, along with the symptoms resulting from repression. He then discusses the argument by existential psychologists that human's primary repression involves death awareness. Finally, integrating his understanding of nonduality, Loy (2007) argues that the anguish and despair experienced by clients are not the result of neurotic symptoms, but their source. He states that symptoms shield individuals from the death, meaninglessness, and groundlessness that they repress as a separate self (Loy, 2007).

Next, Loy (2007) extends the theoretical application of nondual psychotherapy to society and social movements. He indicates that individual's feelings of groundlessness, their basic insecurity, is fed through consumerist tendencies. Although spiritual paths like Buddhism indicate that only spiritual solutions can help alleviate this fundamental groundlessness, most individuals fixate themselves on material items, which never create the desired lasting feeling of groundedness (Loy, 2007). Demonstrating why focusing on material items and conditional appearances does not alleviate the fundamental suffering of groundlessness, Loy (2007) states, "A mind that seeks to ground itself by fixating on something dooms itself to perpetual dissatisfaction, for the impermanence of all things means no such perch can be found" (p. 176). Exemplifying nondual wisdom, this quote also has several social implications. Just as the individual seeks to ground itself by fixating on impermanent material objects, the larger social collective also performs the same process of ego-based identification to impermanent social constructions. Loy (2007) posits that the ego's mechanism of identification with race, gender,

class, and nation leads to a collective identity that distinguishes itself by discriminating against other groups. Like the ego, collective ego identities construct and thus perceive in inside that is different from the outside, which results in inevitable conflicts. He argues that the social construction of a group identity, which is formulated through the discrimination against others, means that one's own group, much like one's individual self, can never feel secure. These observations lead the author to an important conclusion: spiritual awakening is not complete unless there is a corresponding social awakening, in which individuals recognize the ways in which their patterns of hedonistic consumption impact social conditions and the environment. Therefore, nonduality not only has its application within psychology, but also has within it an establishment of moral and ethical values that may guide social policies and inform sociopolitical institutions (Loy, 2007). To summarize his position, Loy (2007) eloquently states, "Usually we think of expanded consciousness in individual terms, but today we must penetrate through the veils of collective delusion to attain greater understanding of dualistic social, economic, and ecological realities" (p. 180).

Finally, Krystal (2007) integrates many somatic practices, including things like "Reichian bodywork, deep tissue massage," Trager work, Reiki, laying on of hands, yoga, and *pranayama*, or deep yogic breathing (p. 220). From her body-based perspective, clinical work becomes an inquiry into psychological and physical patterns of trauma held in the physical body. She engages in work by resting in a state of silent oneness, providing undivided attention, breathing deeply, and touching the client in various ways to facilitate or alter the flow of energy in the body. In addition to these foundation practices, Krystal (2007) describes other techniques that may be helpful to other nondual psychotherapists. For example, she describes synchronizing her breathing with clients to further blur any separation between the two. Then, she and the client

gradually increase the speed of their breathing, creating increased oxygen, changes in the acidity of blood, and an altered state of consciousness in which old conditioning, traumatic memories, and various emotions rise to the surface of experience. In this state, she finds that movement, including things like hitting pillows, stretching, making noises, may be helpful in releasing energy and letting go of old defenses (Krystal, 2007). Although this may sound similar to other forms of bodywork, as the practitioner, Krystal (2007) notes, that all of this work occurs within the context of oneness and is guided by intuition rather than conscious and deliberate decision-making capacities (p. 221). She also asserts that body-based nondual psychotherapy offers unique advantages, in that cultural conditioning and other mind-based ways of being are seen through and preverbal, somatically induced releases of energy are observed. Such releases of energy and bypassing of cultural conditioning leads to an emergence of deeper awareness one that is prior to mind (Krystal, 2007). This last approach exemplifies an embodied, holistic approach to healing within a nondual psychological framework. Thus, the authors found within the two comprehensive anthologies of nondual psychology cover a wide range of terrain—from the integration of existing psychotherapies such as EMDR with nondual psychology to the domain of spiritual awakening and corresponding social justice.

In addition to these writings, other practitioners of nondual psychology are also making meaningful contributions to the field. Brett (2002) analyzes and compares the differences between nondual mystical and psychotic states of awareness. She found that one common thread between the two is the understanding of events as being determined by something other than or bigger than the egoic self, which becomes pathological when it is externalized in a dualistic sense rather than integrated and embodied in a nondualistic manner (Brett, 2002). Nixon (2012) integrates the Wilber's (1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006) spectrum of consciousness model

to addiction, then illustrates the application of transpersonal stages of development into treatment and recovery. Theriault (2012) applies nondual awareness to the experience of grief and loss, which he believes is a catalyst to experiencing nondual consciousness. Similar to Lumiere's (2003) approach to healing from trauma, Theriault (2012) asserts that "Grief and loss invites us to enquire into our own fear and terror of non-being and open up to uncharted realms of our own consciousness," (p. 259). He states that transpersonal psychologists with awareness of transpersonal states of consciousness can guide and process clients through those experiences. Rather than taking an existential approach and exploring their meaning and purpose, Theriault (2012) invites grieving patients, under the correct clinical circumstances, to radically accept and fully surrender to their own images, thoughts, and feelings about death and nonbeing as a way to enter nondual awareness. Other individuals also perceive death as being an entry to nondual states of consciousness.

Adyashanti (2008) supports the idea that death and mourning can be an entry way into nondual awakening stating that, "We must die in order to truly live. We must experience absolute non-existence in order to truly exist, in a conscious way" (p. 215). Almaas (1996), too, indicates that when a client radically accepts their own death and nonbeing, they can see through their separate self and enter into a stateless state of no-self:

When the [client] finally settles into this experience of deficient emptiness, allowing it without judgment, rejection or reaction, she sees that it is a state of no self, or, more specifically, no identity. When we fully experience this state of no identified self, it transforms naturally and spontaneously into a luminous vastness, a deep spaciousness, a peaceful emptiness. (p. 336)

Although these examples of healing from trauma and grief represent unique ways in which specific experiences may be gateways to presence, other nondual psychotherapists describe their application of nondual psychology in broader terminology. Finally, and importantly, Blackstone (2006) integrates the felt sense of nondual awareness with intersubjectivity theory, noting that they are similar in that they do not acknowledge the existence of an individual self, what Stolorow and Atwood (1992) refer to as an existentially independent entity. Blackstone (2006) provides a great example of integrating nondual awareness with existing theories of psychology and highlights that “nondual realization does not eradicate intersubjectivity; rather it encompasses and illuminates it” (p. 26). This perspective of understanding the ways in which the root-perspective of nondual reality encompasses and illumines existing psychological perspectives is one example of the value nonduality can offer psychology.

Blackstone (2006) developed a method called *realization process* that helps clients experience nondual consciousness in the clinical encounter. Following her assumption that the subtle energetic body is the entranceway to nondual consciousness, she designed a series of exercises that attune the individual to subtle energy and then the nondual consciousness that is perceivable both as pervasive of one’s whole body and in others. These gradually help the client become open and sensitive enough for nondual consciousness to arise spontaneously. Blackstone’s (2006) method also aids the client and therapist’s ability to uncover what holding patterns in the body are obstructing openness.

Continuing, Blackstone (2006) states that if both the therapist and client are aware of nondual realization, then therapy can become “a progression toward uncovering the unfragmented, nondual relational field” (p. 35). Therefore, although a task of nondual psychotherapists is facilitating awakening, there are no expectations that it will occur. Blackstone

(2006) created a “Realization Process,” that involves several steps. The initial component involves the client inhabiting their body part by part and then all at once, while also being aware for the essential qualities of being within the body. This is practiced with eyes closed then with eyes open. The next part of the exercise involves the client attuning to the nondual space that pervades their own body and the environment simultaneously. Blackstone (2006) says that “With practice, one no longer has to ‘attune’ to nondual consciousness, but simply finds that the luminous transparency of this subtle dimension is everywhere” (p. 39). This powerful method of body-based nondual psychotherapy demonstrates the ways in which energy-based healing modalities may be compatible with nondual psychotherapy. Blackstone’s (2006) magnificent work also highlights the six ways that the therapist’s state of being impacts the nondual therapeutic relationship. First, she indicates that nondual realization deepens the therapist’s capacity for contact, which is experienced in the depth of another being, such that one may experience a qualitative felt sense of another person. Second, nondual realization provides the therapist with a felt sense of equality to the client due to the dissolved self or other boundary—a recognition of the therapist’s essence is unified with that of the client. Third, it refines the therapist’s ability to experience and respond to each moment in a genuine and spontaneous way. The therapist brings receptive stillness and silence to the clinical setting. Fourth, the therapist can remain open to each moment and not be rigidly bound in fixed patterns of understanding or patterned responses based on their historical influences. Being fully present and immersed in the moment means that the therapeutic process occurs spontaneously and that “Healing emerges from the relational field, affecting both the client and the therapist” (Blackstone, 2006, p. 35). Fifth, it deepens the therapist’s ability to empathize because the therapist can see and experience the transparent permeable consciousness in their own body and the bodies of their clients, which

helps them observe both the surface level facial expressions and observe feelings and sensations within the client's body. This enhances the therapist ability to accurately perceive and feel what the client feels. Finally, nondual realization allows the therapist to remain in contact with him or herself and experience unity with the client, due to the nondual consciousness pervading both of their bodies (Blackstone, 2006). Regarding this final point, Blackstone (2006) summarizes:

The mutual stimulation of this resonance is healing in itself. Wherever one person is more open in their own being than the other, it will help dissolve the rigid organizations of the other person. Thus the nondual encounter facilitates each person's realization of nondual consciousness. There is a discernible shift in the depth and quality of contact in the spontaneity of dialogue, whenever the subjective organizations of either person give way to the mutuality of the nondual field. (p. 36)

With these benefits to the therapeutic relationship, it should come as no surprise that many nondual practitioners value not only the theoretical application of nonduality to the field of psychology, but also the lived, embodied experience of realization.

As we have seen from this brief survey of the integration of nonduality with existing modes of psychology, there are many ways to form a dialogue between ancient wisdom and traditional psychotherapy. These possibilities include both theoretical applications and direct experiential modalities that transform the therapeutic encounter. Taken as a whole, these contributions represent a small, but growing community of nondual psychologists that will continue adding value to the field of psychology. Additional nonduality specific therapeutic techniques will be discussed in the following chapter. For now, we turn to the final piece of defining nondual psychology and nondual psychotherapy—the importance of awakening.



## Summary

In conclusion, this chapter investigated many important nondual psychological interventions. This broad overview included a survey of possible techniques that may be applied by nondual psychotherapists in their unique work. Starting with the therapeutic relationship and the method of being together, this chapter demonstrated that the therapeutic relationship is the single most important aspect of nondual psychotherapy. The quality of this relationship is unique to nondual psychotherapy, in that the therapist does not act as a consultant, coach, container, or even a separate entity as found in traditional psychotherapy, but instead rests in unconditioned presence. As the therapist abides in awareness and recognizes the Prior Unity of all things, they also paradoxically appreciate that the apparent separate self of the client experiences suffering. However, instead of attending to clients' subjective thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, the therapist privileges moments of letting go, in which clients open themselves up to experience the contentless and problemless present moment. Nondual psychotherapists, then, value the quality of *being together* with clients and may draw attention to moments in therapy in which the pervasive Silence acts as a gateway to nondual presence. With the quality of this presence at its core, nondual therapy recognizes that this transcendental quality of being is more important than any therapeutic techniques.

The second section focused on two techniques that may spontaneously arise from Awareness during nondual psychotherapy sessions. Sacred mirroring was briefly mentioned as a byproduct of the nondual psychotherapist's embodiment of nondual states of consciousness. When clients come into contact with someone embodying such stillness, they are provided a mirror into their true nature as Consciousness Itself. Although some individuals may see themselves and their perceived limitations, others have the opportunity to connect with an

expansive state of being. From this nondual state of being, original speech occurs. Nondual therapists speak spontaneously from their awareness without filtering or attempting to be cognitively strategic in their words. Instead, they keep their speech simple and direct to avoid engaging the client's conceptual mind. Nondual psychotherapeutic speech is not planned or conceptualized, rather, is a spontaneous movement from the unconditioned presence pervading the practitioner to that same awareness supporting the client. Some of this original speech may contain techniques that were covered in the next section.

One way nondual psychotherapists may further invite clients to experience unmitigated awareness is through the use of inquiry, koans, and deconstructive conversations. Each of those techniques aim to shift clients from their conceptual thinking minds to direct contact with the nondual ground of being. These methods of eliciting the experience of no-mind in clients come with an important caveat—the timing must be appropriate for the client's developmental maturity and spiritual readiness. If a client struggles with basic meditation skills, these interventions may lead to increased rather than decreased thinking. Therefore, it is important for nondual practitioners to be spontaneously responsive rather than predictive in their application of such therapeutic techniques.

The final section of this chapter investigated distinct nondual psychotherapeutic approaches and protocols. This survey of current nondual therapeutic modalities demonstrated the wide-ranging application of nonduality to Western psychology. It highlighted the ways in which some nondual psychotherapists value a bodily and somatically based approach, whereas others integrate existing spiritual traditions to their work with clients. Others were shown to integrate nondual wisdom into existing Western psychotherapeutic modalities and theoretical orientations. Others still focused on how different experiences such as trauma and grief can be

catalysts for the experience of unconditioned awareness. As a whole, this section highlighted the value and diversity of nondual approaches to psychology. Altogether, these contributions represented a small, yet growing community of psychologists integrating and applying nonduality to traditional Western psychotherapy and others developing their own unique nondual psychotherapeutic approaches.

In conclusion, this chapter represents a wide-ranging survey of nondual psychology. It highlights many nondual psychotherapeutic interventions while also maintaining the important context from which these interventions arise. Most nondual psychotherapeutic methods, protocols, and applications are rooted in each practitioner's experience and degree of awareness. The unitive factor of this diverse field is the awareness that Consciousness Itself is the Source Condition in which all forms—including our own—arise within. From this realization of nondual wisdom comes, above all, the ability of embodied spiritual practitioners to *be with* clients and invite them to share in the experience of unconditioned awareness, within which no problems and indeed no self can be found.

## Chapter 8: Nondual Psychotherapy: Transcending Reductionism in Modern Psychology

### Introduction

Although dominant scientific narratives support materialistic and reductionistic tendencies in the field of psychology, a simultaneous movement of individuals seeking to challenge these values by integrating ancient sources of Eastern knowledge with Western psychotherapy exists. As the ongoing dialogue between these two apparent opposite voices continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the perceived distance between these ideological premises may exasperate at an accelerated rate. Left unchallenged, the materialist and reductionist values underlying modern psychology will continue to silence other ways of being and reify the process of healing. To address these concerns, this chapter first discusses reductionism and materialism in modern psychology. It describes these ideological premises and then identifies possible shortcomings and problematic outcomes of these values. Then, the next section expresses how nonduality and nondual psychology leads to the transcending of division and leads to a profound encounter with the silence of Beingness Itself.

### Reductionism and Materialism in Modern Psychology

As psychology continues its privileging of and search for physically observable psychological phenomena, it necessarily confines itself to reductive and materialistic mechanisms. Thus, reductionism and materialism are at the heart of modern psychology. The premise that psychological concepts must be physically observable to be scientifically valid reflects ontological reductionism to the exclusion of many other worldviews and ways of knowing (Robinson, 1995). However, this tension in the center of modern psychology is far from new. For example, Robinson (1995) asserts:

Reductive strategies of the materialistic stripe have *always* been either declared or undeclared wars on psychology, for such strategies have as their principal objective the elimination of all psychological entities from the domain of the actually existing. This is why it is so ironic, if not pathetic, to witness contemporary psychology lusting after them. (Robinson, 1995, p. 6)

From this perspective, the very materialistic and reductionistic tendencies employed by physical sciences to negate, undermine, and critique psychological perspectives are now being praised and valued by modern psychology. This valuing of materialist underpinnings to support psychological notions, then, simultaneously legitimizes and devalues the science of psychology within the larger scientific community. On the surface, psychology appears to become supported by biology and neurology, thus inching closer to being considered a “hard science.”

Unfortunately, it may be argued that psychology becomes less important than directly addressing neurological and biological issues in the human body itself. These tendencies toward materialism and the reduction of complex processes down to mere biology, then, is the seed containing both the legitimacy and the destruction of psychology. However, prior to continuing this important dialogue and its implications, it is valuable to briefly describe materialism and reductionism.

There are many perspectives regarding the origin of scientific reductionism and materialism and how they influence contemporary psychology. For example, according to Sperry (2013):

Reductionism and dualism are philosophical constructs underlying the materialist reductionism perspective. Like reductionism, dualism is a central tenet of the perspective that posits the dual nature of reality. Although Descartes championed the mind-body split, many in psychology separate the mind from the brain. (p. 5)

Within this perspective, reductionism and materialism are related to dualism. Dualism has been described as the split between mind and body proposed by Descartes. This split between mind and body, has led to the privileging of physical, measurable, and observable phenomena in science, which seeks to exert power and control over these natural forces. The result of this dualistic process extended over time is materialism, or the belief that reality consists of matter or physical existence and its movements (Notterman, 2001). This materialist perspective classifies and reduces human consciousness to a passive bystander to mechanical biological processes (Sperry, 2013). Within the context of this present investigation, which asserts that Consciousness is that within which all conditional phenomena arises, such a definition of consciousness proposed by the materialistic perspective not only fails to account for the explanation of what consciousness *is*, it further demotes consciousness to a secondary, emergent property of materialistic or biological underpinnings. Such a narrow and restricted definition of consciousness also results in a significant shift in psychology.

Notterman (2000), for example, states that reductionism often occurs in psychology. He asserts that, although reductionism is most observable in cognitive psychology, reductionism may have resulted from psychologists' needs to communicate to each other in public spaces. He thinks that in order to communicate effectively, psychologists decreased the number of variables under discussion and simplified both language and concepts, which lead to reductionist tendencies. However, these once trivial processes are now running amok as modern, American psychology increasingly seeks neurological, biochemical, and physiological explanations of behavior (Notterman, 2000). This shift in ideology is also observable in the types of articles most frequently published in psychological journals over time. Notterman (2001) conducted a survey of psychological journals from 1980 to 2000 to identify the names of journals with words

referring to physiology-neurology-biochemistry and similar terms. He found that there were 60% more such titles in 2000 than in 1980 (Notterman, 2001). Another example is observed in the excessive reliance on psychotropic medications. The oversimplification of complex processes into a simple chemical imbalance—a clever marketing ploy by drug companies—epitomizes the biologically based reductionism of modern American psychology (Notterman, 2001).

Reductionism is further observed within psychological theories, themselves. For example, the booming industry of manualized approaches to treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy, highlights psychology's desire to concretize, simplify, and control psychotherapy. However, this trend toward reductionism and materialism in psychology is hardly new. In fact, these tendencies may originate with psychology's greatest intellectual.

Psychological reductionism is exemplified by Freud's classical psychoanalytic approach, which believes that there is no need for spiritual interventions to impact development (Sperry, 2013). Freudian psychoanalysis, which has dominated psychological thought since its inception, appears to be aligned with a secular worldview that is also influenced by Freud's background in neurology (Brown, 2016). Because Freud was groomed within a scientific community and had intimate ties with the practice of medicine, "the institutionally endorsed reading of Freud tended to emphasize his status as a scientist. As such, psychoanalysis was typically taught and practiced against a background of positivist assumption" (Brown, 2016, p. 189). From this positivist assumption rests the necessity to scientifically prove, through reductionistic processes, the materialistic foundation of psychological constructs. In this way, Freud's ties to and admiration of neurology, along with his deemphasis of spirituality, may have initiated psychology into the dominant reductive narratives dominating medicine.

Although more recent movements in psychology, such as relational psychoanalysis, have incorporated postmodernism and social constructivism that may in some ways challenge reductionism, they too suffer from limitations of materialism. Brown (2016) notes that, “although relational psychoanalysis has done much to promote a pluralistically nuanced approach to treatment, the underlying secular worldview remains intact” (p. 189). Therefore, traditional psychoanalysis may outright reject spirituality, whereas relational approaches may be more open to its integration, but also fail to acknowledge its secular values (Brown, 2016). These tendencies observed in contemporary relational psychoanalysis are echoed in other theoretical orientations. Existential-humanistic and spiritually oriented psychoanalytic approaches perceive psychology and spirituality as essentially different with psychology taking primacy (Sperry, 2013). From this standpoint, spirituality has historically been reduced by psychoanalysis to a psychological process. However, modern American psychology has taken this reductionism one step further, by asserting that spirituality has a materialist foundation—a biochemical and neurological process in the brain (Sperry, 2013).

The widespread reduction of complex processes to biological mechanisms has profound and troubling implications. This tendency toward gross materialism and positivist discourse reduces communication to manifest content at the exclusion of latent or symbolic content. It privileges conscious, observable mechanisms that can be measured and controlled at the expense of subjective realities and the acknowledgement that the observer fundamentally impacts what is observed. As technology continues its rapid progression within this reductive paradigm, it would not be hard to imagine text messaging and robot-based services to replace human interaction in the treatment of specific symptoms. This cold vision leaves behind the true value of psychotherapy: intimate human connection. As such, these materialistic and reductionistic



tendencies not only threaten to impose secular assumptions on patients, but also are devoid of spiritual depth, which offer profound connections to the sacred beingness of the human experience. However, psychotherapy has undergone such significant changes over the last 30 years that perhaps it is now ready for a reengagement with spirituality (Brown, 2016). Therefore, it may be valuable to see what spiritual experts think about several of these issues.

Guru Adi Da Samraj (2009) states that the human-centered thinking pattern that is currently dominant within society was only of secondary importance in ancient times. Now that these patterns of thinking, which include an over-reliance and over-valuing of a reductive and materialistic-based science, are foundational to society, they have destructive possibilities. He states:

Human “knowing” is now devoted to analytical reductionism, or the process of reducing everything to the individual human being, to human processes, to humankind in the lowest, most rudimentary—or material—sense. Many social and cultural enterprises remain valuable, with the potential to improve the condition of humanity, yet a profoundly destructive (materialistic, analytical, disunitary, and anti-sacral) philosophical enterprise is also operative at the same time. (Adi Da Samraj, p. 58)

This quote demonstrates that, although there may be great utility of science and other analytical processes to improve living conditions for human life, several of the dominant narratives therewithin are harmful when left unchallenged. Although he is not a scientist, Adi Da Samraj (2009) values science as a legitimate method of inquiry with practical applications that result in the accumulation of knowledge. However, he believes that science is always associated with an ego-centered orientation—leading science to a thirst for power and control over life’s conditions (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Adi Da Samraj (2009) asserts that science’s egoic search for power has

resulted in gathering control over culture and politics. He notes that the philosophy of materialism is inherently ignorant, de-constructive, reductionistic, and oppressive, which is why it can be potentially destructive of the sacred and that which is beyond materialism (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Other individuals agree. For example, describing possible limitations of science, Watts (1951) states:

The scope and purposes of science are woefully misunderstood when the universe which it describes is confused with the universe in which man lives. Science is talking about a symbol of the real universe, and this symbol has much the same use as money. It is a convenient timesaver for making practical arrangements. But when money and wealth, reality and science are confused, the symbol becomes a burden. (p. 50)

Thus, from the standpoint of individuals aware of the context of nonduality, science and its reductive, materialistic tendencies have created an environment that over-values ideas—the symbol rather than the symbolized. Cleverly articulated by intellectuals, ideas become worshipped to such an extent that they fundamentally replace the reality to which they point. Modern culture, then, discusses ideas in dialects moving toward what it believes to be truthful, all the while forgetting what is symbolized. As this movement toward an illusory, temporary, and fleeting truth continues, science becomes similar to religion in its attempt to offer a scaffolding to the Gods. However, when enquiring into the beginning of thoughts, or the condition that observes thoughts, themselves, the entire edifice of ideas comes into question. As Krishnamurti (1969) says:

We have separated ideas from action because ideas are always of the past and action is always the present—that is, living is always the present. We are afraid of living and therefore the past, as ideas, has become so important to us. (p. 100)

As we see, the worshipping of previous ideas and clinging to concepts leads science down a road of control. At its root, this desire for power and control is what nondual psychologists and nondual sages may call the self-knot of fear, the ego, or the body–mind complex. Therefore, another perspective is that the ego mechanism of psychological science is seeking to control conditions by discovering materialistic underpinnings of psychological processes in order to defend against awareness of its own mortality. The larger social-cultural ego is engaged as the same process as the body–mind complex of an individual: contracting away from awareness of its own condition. This perspective is summarized well by Watts.

At the core of materialistic and reductive values, Watts (1966) states that we are hypnotized into playing the role of an individual separate self, or isolated ego. He asserts that “The most strongly enforced of all known taboos is the taboo against knowing who or what you really are behind the mask of your apparently separate, independent, and isolated ego” (Watts, 1966, p. 12). The reason dismantling the conception of the separate self is problematic is because it is threatening to our species’ sense of specialness. Suggesting that the personal ego is a hallucination attacks what society perceives as its most sacred value. Reacting from fear, the individuals hearing such a proposition fear that transcending the ego would result in humans becoming ants—an organized mass in which some workers are expendable (Watts, 1966). However, what becomes clear when discovering one’s true nature is that the fear being experienced by the ego and dominant scientific narratives is the result of believing in both a separate self and a corresponding physical reality. As Watts (1951) states, the notion of security and the corresponding fear it elicits, is due to the presumption of a stable, permanent sense of self. He states that discovering that there is no center and no stable sense of self is, paradoxically, the one thing that brings true security (p. 81). Similarly, perhaps science’s awakening to the truth

of nonduality as being the Consciousness within and as which all material and nonmaterial conditions arise may liberate it from the destructive and limiting tendencies of materialism, reductionism, and division.

### **Transcending Reductionism, Materialism, and Division**

Reductionism and materialism have waged war with humanity. Within the field of psychology, human suffering has been reduced to symptoms and consciousness has been reduced to brain activity. Further, healing has been reduced to the manifest content of words or behavioral interventions. Each of these limitations originating from positivist assumptions have profound implications for the future of psychology. Healing, for example, may continue to neglect latent meanings and unconscious influences. Suffering may continue to neglect the client's lived experience and fail to address possible root-causes of such emotional distress. Finally, consciousness may continue to be divorced from the timeless realization shared by many realizers throughout time—that the *Atman* (or personal self) is the *Brahman* (or the Self of the Universe). From the standpoint of this ancient knowledge, there is no Ultimate division between subject and object—no fundamentalist dualism from which reductionism and materialism emerge. Therefore, a reengagement with spirituality and nonduality in particular offers the possibility of transcending these ego-based tendencies and finding greater balance in psychology and other social institutions.

To start, the prefix of psychology is the Greek word *psyche*, which means breath and spirit. However, this word has come to mean soul in the East and mind in the West (Notterman, 2000). Although the mainstream Eastern understanding of soul may not be identical to the teachings of nondual gurus and realizers, it is abundantly clear that the West needs a reengagement with spirit. Brown (2016) indicates that it is of vital importance to include

spirituality within the clinical domain because spirituality challenges the biases of the Western psychiatric paradigm. Spirituality in general, then, may be helpful in limiting the tendency to reduce reality and experiences to materialistic notions at the exclusion of alternative conclusions and metaphysical interpretations.

Along these lines, Brown (2016) indicates that true cultural competence—a hot-button topic in modern psychology—also involves recognizing the dogmas underlying the materialist and reductionist zeitgeist in which we are living. One aspect of this cultural competence is to recognize that the therapeutic encounter itself is a manifestation and expression of particular metaphysical commitments. In this case, traditional psychotherapy these metaphysical commitments are embedded within materialistic and reductionistic assumptions. These assumptive tendencies refute basic claims of ancient sources of wisdom (Brown, 2016). For example, Adi Da Samraj (2009) states:

The arguments of both scientific materialism and conventional “God-religion” are mind-based, body-based, and (most basically) ego-based (or “point-of-view”-based). All such arguments are mere conventions of mind, inherently associated with a space-time-bound “point of view”—which is to say that they are inherently space-time-defined, inherently dualistic, and inherently separate (or separated, and separative). Therefore, all such arguments are inherently (and actively, and strategically) separate from (and separative in relation to) Reality Itself, Truth Itself, and Real (Acausal) God. (p. 330)

From the standpoint of ancient esoteric knowledge, materialist and reductive tendencies are obvious extensions of the self-contraction. Watts (1951), for example, states the obvious: that most philosophers overlook the fact that the very ability to formulate a rational philosophy of the universe is only possible with the assumption that you are separate from it. Much like

philosophy, psychology itself was built upon a dualistic foundation that also shares materialist, reductionist, and positivist ideologies. To move beyond these limitations, psychology not only needs a reengagement with spirituality, but also needs to experience *satsang* with nondual wisdom.

Nonduality inherently outshines and transcends all division upon which materialistic and reductionistic tendencies depend. At their root, reductionism and materialism are founded upon a divisive tendency—typically a Cartesian dualistic split between the mind and body. However, further than that, the mind-body split originates within the presumption of separateness between subject and object, the observer and the observed, and essence and existence. All of these dichotomies are fundamental errors created by the body–mind complex. Such splits, dichotomies, and divisions only exist from the position of separateness. According to ancient wisdom, when one is identified with and as Awareness Itself, no such dilemmas exist (Mooji, 2010; Krishnamurti, 1969; Adi Da Samraj, 2004, 2009, 2015). Therefore, nondual psychology, through its engagement with this knowledge, pioneers early stages of transcending reductionistic and materialistic tendencies.

As observed within nondual psychology, whether conceptually understood or realized experientially, the nondual ground of being offers a compelling and transformative perspective that outshines division by offering a thorough understanding of the mechanism creating the primary and fundamental separation from Reality: the ego, self, self-contraction, or body–mind complex. Once this mechanism that separates from Awareness on gross, subtle, and causal levels is understood and transcended in higher states of consciousness, all such divisions melt in the presence of the Divine. Nonduality simultaneously highlights the ways in which this separation and division is a fundamental error, or an imperfect and un-enlightened understanding of Reality.

Whether through the lens of Wilber (1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006) or Adi Da Samraj (2001), the accounts of individuals occupying higher states of consciousness and more mature stages of life confirm that the ego, or self-contraction, is the source of all division and dilemma. This realization becomes clearer with time—that the self-contraction is an imposition or restriction of Awareness Itself onto an apparently “fixed” object or self that does not actually exist. According to awakened individuals, there is no self—only the assumption of one based on an activity that separates one from the Is-ness of Reality (Mooji, 2010; Krishnamurti, 1969; Adi Da Samraj, 2004, 2009, 2015). Once this is made clear, then the egoic tendencies of materialism and reductionism are seen as nothing more than the obvious collective ego-based activity of a lost culture. One that does not appreciate the sacred. One that does not respect Godliness or Buddhahood. And one that fails to have sensitivity for Real Spiritual Power of Sages, Gurus, and Real-God Realizers. This immature and un-enlightened disposition of modern cultures is divorced from the great tradition of humankind, which understood that awakening or Real-God Communion is the True function and expression of life.

Materialism and reductionism, much like subject-object dichotomies and general egoic tendencies, melt into the nothingness from which they emerge when confronted with the Brightness of Transcendental Spiritual Light. From the position of an embodied nondual presence, those divisions are felt to be false. Even from the position of an intellectually-based understanding of nonduality, those divisions may be conceptualized as a collective ego-based effort to control what they, as isolated self-entities, perceive as a dangerous universe in which death, nonbeing, and meaninglessness lurks behind every unknown, unquantifiable, and unmeasurable variable. Therefore, whether intellectually or experientially engaged, nonduality

offers a radical or “at-the-root” means to transcend all divisions and re-enliven psyche with spirit.

### Summary

In conclusion, reductionism and materialism are two dominant ideological assumptions underlying modern American Psychology (Robinson, 1995). The first section elaborated on examples of these processes in psychology. For example, both materialism and reductionism are related to dualism, or the Cartesian split between mind and body, and are observed in the foundation of psychology. Freud himself valued neurology and founded psychology within a reductionistic, materialistic, and secular paradigm that separated spirit from psyche and instead privileged the mind. Although some forms of contemporary relational-psychoanalytic theories offer more pluralistic nuance in their treatment, they are largely secular and devoid of spiritual processes. Thus, although such approaches may have power in their divergence from more mainstream reductive and materialistic approaches, they do not transcend dualism. From this seed, modern psychology’s emphasis on manualized treatment, the over-use of prescriptive medicines to treat psychological distress, and the wide publication of physiology-neurology-biochemistry psychological articles sprouts (Notterman, 2000). Unfortunately, modern psychology’s emphasis on these materialistic and reductionistic philosophies both legitimizes and undermines its profession. As more emphasis is placed on physically observable physiological processes, psychology becomes aligned with other “hard sciences,” and valued for its materialistic reality. At the same time, however, it is de-legitimized and undermined for treatments that address these bio-mechanisms more directly. Similarly, the complexity of psychological treatment is reduced down to manualized approaches, then, to text-messaging services, and then, perhaps to automatized, robotic communications ad infinitum. This cold



technological vision—a logical extension of the reductive and materialistic philosophies currently in vogue—leaves out psychology’s most important component: the element of human connection.

The second section continued this important dialogue by detailing the ways in which nonduality and nondual psychology offers a way beyond dualism, materialism, and reductionism. Through a reengagement with ancient sources of nondual wisdom, nonduality can move psychology beyond dichotomies of difference. Nonduality, as described by nondual psychotherapists and nondual sages, highlights the many ways in which these divisive tendencies are related to the body–mind complex. Reductionism and materialism, from a nondual perspective, are extensions of the egoic process of constricting away from Awareness Itself into a separate and separative position. As an apparently separate, yet unreal and illusory self, individuals and the collective humankind embodies fear—fear of death and meaninglessness—because the act of self-contraction is the act of fear itself. Thus, identification with the body–mind complex is the act that creates all separation, division, and dilemma. When this realization is profoundly understood, whether intellectually or, preferably, embodied-as-experience, liberation and the transcending of limitation is possible. Therefore, if modern American psychology engages with nonduality through listening and considering the profound knowledge of ancient Realizers, it may begin to outshine its self-imposed division.

As Watts (1951) states, “The feeling that we stand face-to-face with the world, cut off and set apart, has the greatest influence on thought and action” (p. 114). This separation is, fundamentally, the result of the body–mind complex. Materialism and reductionism are extreme extensions of the egoic process—the act of self-contraction. To move beyond the dark epoch of modern time, the True Self must be realized and integrated into psychology. Krishnamurti (1969)

states that, “Immaturity lies only in total ignorance of self. To understand yourself is the beginning of wisdom” (p. 12). Thus, in acknowledging and honoring the wisdom tradition of Adepts throughout time and integrating this conceptually and, most importantly, experientially into psychology, real wisdom may be generated. To close, Watts (1951) says, “To ‘know’ reality you cannot stand outside it and define it; you must enter into it, be it, and feel it” (p. 114). In this way, modern psychology must drop its worshiping of symbols at the expense of the symbolized and reengage the transcendent spirit such symbols point toward. Centering nonduality into the theory and practice of psychology returns psyche to spirit, psychologists to shaman, and doing back to being.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

### Summary of the Critical Review

Far from uninspired, the present critical review of the literature surveyed and paid homage to the sacred philosophic and spiritual realization of nonduality. This investigation's use of the critical review methodology, as discussed in Chapter 2, is of great utility to the field of psychology and nondual psychotherapy, which until the present study, has not been reviewed in this manner. This method offers the potential to unify the field of nondual psychology and nondual psychotherapy by highlighting its various limitations, challenges, and meaningful contributions to the field of psychology. In this way, the current study infuses spirit back into psyche.

Beginning with the inherent limitations in using language to articulate nonduality, Chapter 3 offered the readers a new way of reading nondual literature. Appreciating that, according to nondual sages, nonduality is beyond the conceptual mind, this chapter illuminated the ways in which nondual gurus and nondual psychologists employ language to point toward The Divine. Some authors, for example, use words like Absolute, Awareness, Truth, Existence, Self, IT, or Divine Reality (Mooji, 2010; Adi Da Samraj, 2004, 2009, 2015; Watts, 1966). However, the most important component of this chapter and the purpose of using such capitalizations and other linguistic markers of distinction, is to recognize that these words are symbols, not the signified itself. The words utilized aim to point toward rather than represent the Nondual Ground of Being. As such, an important aspect of reading nondual literature is the responsibility of the reader to read from the heart rather than the mind, so to speak.

Although many other forms of literature and scientific investigations implicitly ask readers to investigate and critique the content of what is being read, nonduality requires the

relinquishment of old knowledge and openness to a new experience. Many gurus indicate that their utterances are directed to and from Consciousness Itself rather than to the separate self and body–mind complex (Mooji, 2010). When an individual reads and critically examines nondual literature on the basis of their existing knowledge, they remain closed from its wisdom. They are translating new experience into the form of the old (Krishnamurti, 1969). Therefore, nondual literature, especially when conveyed through a Realizer, is intended to resonate with a much different aspect of the human experience—that which arises prior to point of view, itself. This requires intentionality on the part of the reader, who must relinquish control over the content and allow the spontaneous process to unfold. This third chapter, then, marked the beginning of something new in nondual psychology—a guide to the reader.

The fourth chapter also offered something new; an in-depth frame of nonduality according to nondual sages. This chapter first investigated two distinct models. One was a Western scientist's model of transpersonal states of consciousness (Wilber, 1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006), the other was a stages of life model proposed by a Guru (Adi Da Samraj, 2001). Both models established a frame of reference and resource for individuals new to nonduality and enlightened states of awareness. Chapter 4 then surveyed definitions and descriptions of nonduality according to realizers. Through these descriptions, it was discovered that the embodied presence of higher states of consciousness was valued by nondual sages. These lived experiences of enlightenment were described as bliss, real happiness, and true freedom. Further, these experiences revealed to these spiritual masters that all dichotomies, including those between the observer and observed, self and other, are mental heuristics rather than the True Condition of Reality (Adi Da Samraj, 2004; Maharshi, 1985; Krishnamurti, 1969). These mental processes of separation and division are reflections and projections of the self-

contraction, or the body–mind complex. When standing prior to the body–mind complex, these Sages articulate that the True Ground of Being is the Witness Consciousness, the formless, groundless, Undivided and Indivisible Conscious Light Itself (Adi Da Samraj, 2001, 2004). These descriptions were contextualized through the investigation of awakening.

Nondual saints articulated that enlightenment can appear to occur spontaneously or gradually over time. They indicated that the particular stage or degree of consciousness embodied varies based on the degree of ego transcendence and spiritual tradition of the realizer (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Further, the types of experiences reported by awakened individuals also vary. Early in the awakening process, individuals reported greater awareness of conscious patterns, which led to greater appreciation and nonattachment to conditions of Reality. Similarly, these smaller awakenings also loosened the self-other dichotomy (Krishnamurti, 1969; Maharshi, 2016). At some level of experience, individuals recognized that others, similar to themselves, are manifestations of the Self (Mooji, 2010). Although many of these changes were valued, many individuals were also cited as fearing the death or transcendence of their ego (Watts, 1966). To clarify what nondual realizers mean by the ego, the next section investigated the body–mind complex in greater detail.

The final section of Chapter 4 provided an in-depth investigation of the ego, or separate self, according to nondual sages. This nondual teaching demonstrated that the ego must be transcended for awakening to occur (Watts, 1966; Mooji, 2010). However, the types or degree of ego to be transcended in awakening varied according to the nondual practitioner's own spiritual tradition. For example, although some traditions emphasized transcending the gross or subtle levels of egoity, other recommended transcending the gross, subtle, and causal levels in order to awaken to Most Perfect Divine Self-Realization (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). The ego, or self-

contraction, was found to be a dynamic moment-to-moment contraction from the prior Source-Condition of Reality. This contraction is created through the manipulation of attention and associations with conditional phenomena and results in the basic identification with a nonexistent separate self (Adi Da Samraj, 2001; Maharshi, 2016).

Taking this information as a whole, the fourth chapter provided significant depth of fundamental concepts in nonduality. It articulated two models of consciousness to provide readers with a greater understanding of enlightenment and higher states of consciousness described by nondual realizers. It then utilized the ancient wisdom of various gurus and sages to point toward nonduality, awakening, and the self-contraction. Each of these areas offered significant depth to the present study and built the scaffolding upon which nondual psychology may be constructed.

Next, Chapter 5 provided an overview of the various interventions employed by nondual realizers to aid in the awakening process of their followers. The most ancient of these methods is the guru function. Within a sacred relationship, the devotee surrenders their body–mind to the spiritual master, who prepares and purifies the devotee’s body–mind complex to receive their transcendental spiritual transmission, or Divine Grace. It is this grace that awakens the devotee (Adi Da Samraj, 2009; Yogananda, 1998). This guru function, although taboo in Western culture, is the foundation upon which most other nondual interventions are prescribed. Other interventions commonly employed, according to the realizer’s spiritual tradition, including mirroring, self-inquiry, and meditation.

Similar to the guru function, mirroring occurs when one comes into contact with a Realized individual. In this meeting, the individual’s egoic tendencies that are at the core of their resistance to intimate contact with Awareness are reflected with the utmost clarity. This

mirroring is said to occur due to the embodied presence of a realizer being much different than a typical nonenlightened being (Mooji, 2010). Self-inquiry is a technique utilized by many sixth-stage practitioners (Adi Da Samraj, 2001). It involves asking questions that trace one's attention back into its source—Consciousness Itself. These questions, when asked at the appropriate time, have the potential to release the mind from its typical attachment to objects and allow it to rest in the formless present awareness. Similarly, meditation manipulates attention to reconnect to the Source Condition (Maharshi, 2016; Mooji, 2010; Krishnamurti, 1969). This chapter also investigated the limitations of seeking awakening.

According to nondual realizers, the search for enlightenment prevents its attainment (Watts, 1966). For example, through many of his teachings Adi Da Samraj (2009) indicates that seeking is the pursuit of union with something that you are actively separating yourself from via the self-contraction. Therefore, to seek something outside or even inside of oneself is based on the fundamental error—a prior separation from Reality. The complexity and nuance presented in chapters three and four constructed the necessary scaffolding for the reader to situate and contextualize nondual psychotherapy.

Chapter 6 provided a comprehensive review of nondual psychotherapy. Starting with the common distinctions between nondual and traditional psychotherapy, this chapter highlighted the unique qualities of nondual psychotherapy. It was discovered that nondual psychotherapy, unlike traditional psychotherapy, emphasizes the deconstruction of the separate self, which is considered, according to nondual wisdom, an illusion (Puhakka, 2007). From this radical or at-the-root shift, nondual psychotherapy places much less value on the client's conceptual thinking mind and instead privileges the direct and unmitigated experiencing of Formless Awareness, which it views as the source of healing. Nondual psychotherapy, then, de-problematizes client

suffering and unconditionally embraces *what is* (Theriault, 2012; Hunt, 2007; Boadian, 2003; Fenner, 2003). Through this reorientation to the nondual ground of being, nondual psychotherapy places no pressure or expectation on the individual to change or stay the same (Fenner, 2003; Miller, 2003). Finally, nondual psychotherapy notes that all healing arises by means of the direct experiencing and intimate contact with Awareness Itself, rather than being due to conscious or unconscious processes in the client, therapist, or co-constructed relatedness (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007; Conway, 2007; Miller, 2003; Fenner, 2003)

Next, the chapter highlighted basic tenants and values of nondual psychology. First and most importantly, this section demonstrated that there is no one unitary approach, language, or technique of nondual psychology. Each nondual psychotherapist possesses a unique approach that is reflective of their own stage of consciousness, spiritual tradition, degree of embodied presence, and other variables (Fenner, 2003). Despite the lack of consistent language, conceptualizations, and means of intervening, nondual psychology is united by its belief that all beings are motivated to awaken to nondual consciousness—the True Ground of Being (Almaas, 1996; Blackstone, 2006; Nixon, 2010; Prendergast, et al 2003; Theriault, 2012). Next, nondual psychology generally agrees with ancient wisdom that the separate self or body–mind complex is a moment-to-moment contraction of awareness rather than an ontologically existing entity (Theriault, 2012). The fundamental belief that the separate self is an illusion is one reason nondual psychology also asserts that there is no need for the client to change or stay the same. From their perspective, all motivations to *do* something rather than to *be* are rooted in a dualistic mindset and active separation between the observer and the observed rather than reflective of the embodied nondual Reality (Hunt, 2003; Hunt, 2007; Berkow, 2003; Bradford, 2007). A related central value of nondual psychology is that experiencing unconditioned presence is healing.



Unmitigated contact with the present moment allows the ego's struggles to melt into the heart of silence and awaken to its true, timeless, and formless state of being (Penny Fenner, 2007; Hunt, 2003; Conway, 2007). Finally, this investigation concluded that there is a significant divide within nondual psychology as to whether or not nondual psychotherapy aims to facilitate an awakening experience or not in its clients (Peter Fenner, 2007; Hunt, 2003; Berkow, 2003; Krystal, 2007). Although perspectives were shared in support of and against this framework, it is likely that these differences are related to the clinician's unique lived experience and spiritual tradition. Because awakening, then, played a central role in nondual psychology, it became the final section of Chapter 6.

Surveying the nondual psychological literature demonstrated that nondual psychotherapeutic practitioners must be awakened to one degree or another. As a prerequisite to practicing nondual psychotherapy, practitioners must have a lived experience of higher states of consciousness. For without this experience, guiding others toward presence is incongruent, inauthentic, and perhaps impossible. However, having an enlightened disposition allows the embodied presence of the nondual psychotherapist to transform psychology to the act of healing. Thus, nondual psychology values the awakening of its practitioners (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007; Hunt, 2007). To gain greater insight of the interventions employed by these nondual practitioners, we turn to Chapter 7.

Nondual psychotherapists employ many interventions; however, the most important intervention involves the therapeutic relationship itself (Krystal, 2003; Miller, 2003; Bodian, 2003). Chapter 7 explored the nondual psychotherapeutic relationship, which was found to be distinct from other qualities of traditional psychotherapies. Within a nondual psychotherapeutic relationship, there is a unique felt sense of relatedness emerging from the unconditioned presence

embodied by the nondual psychologist. In contrast to other therapeutic modalities, the nondual psychotherapist rests their awareness in a higher state of consciousness and uses this quality of being to invite the client to join them in the problem-free, symptom-free love bliss of mere being or Consciousness Itself. Rather than consciously attending to the client's subjective thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, the nondual psychotherapist may both model compassionate acceptance of those factors and invite the client to move beyond them—opening themselves up to the present moment by letting go of any “self”-constructed challenges. If clients discover themselves to be resisting this contentless awareness, then their resistance is mirrored back, providing them with the opportunity to deepen their awareness of that hesitancy. However, regardless of what is experienced in the therapeutic relationship, the emphasis is clear: nondual psychological interventions are an extension of this sacred, intimate contact. Nondual psychology emphasizes, then, that the transcendental quality of *being together* is more important than any further therapeutic techniques (Peter Prendergast, 2007; Prendergast, 2003; Hunt, 2003).

Additional techniques that were found to be utilized by nondual psychologists included sacred mirroring and original speech. Both of these techniques arise from and secondarily to the nondual psychotherapeutic relationship. Regarding sacred mirroring, when the client comes into contact with the embodied spiritual presence of a nondual psychologist, they are provided with their own reflection. They are able to clearly perceive, sometimes in stark contrast, the ways in which they are avoiding contact with the unmitigated awareness embodied by the nondual psychologist. Other individuals may not encounter such resistance and may, alternatively, experience the opportunity to drop into a deeper state of being (Prendergast, 2003). Similarly, when the nondual psychologist speaks, the speaking is coming from no-mind. This original

speech involves not consciously planning or thinking or strategizing of what to say. Rather, original speech is free, in that it is unplanned, unfiltered, simple, and direct. The purpose of original speech is to engage the client's unconditioned mind rather than their intellect (Hunt, 2003; Peter Fenner, 2007; Puhakka, 2007). Some of this original speech may include additional interventions.

Additional interventions utilized by nondual psychotherapists include the use of inquiry, koans, and deconstructive conversations. Each of these techniques further invites clients to explore unmitigated awareness by shifting their thinking from conceptual-intellectual contemplation to a state of no-mind. Inquiry involves the asking of questions that directs clients toward awareness rather than conditional objects (Bodian, 2003). Koans involve telling stories, questions, or statements that demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning (Fenner, 2003; Peter Fenner, 2007; Bodian, 2003). These anecdotes are intended to invite meditation and stillness rather than interpretative thinking. Deconstructive conversations involve the deconstruction or breaking down of concepts to the level of consciousness, not-knowing, or Divine Ignorance (Fenner, 2003; Peter Fenner, 2007). Although all three methods originate in unique spiritual traditions, within nondual psychotherapy, all three may be employed to heighten the client's sensitivity to the nondual ground of being. The nondual psychologists that utilize these methods emphasized the importance of in their administration, as offering these interventions too early may result in increased rather than decreased thinking. In addition to each of the aforementioned methods, the final section of this chapter investigated the unique therapeutic approaches employed by nondual psychotherapists.

Highlighting many distinct approaches, the final section of Chapter 7 demonstrated the wide-range of the application of nondual wisdom and its integration with existing psychological

theories (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). Although some practitioners were found to use body- and somatic-based approaches (Lumiere, 2003; Krystal, 2007), others were discovered to emphasize their personal spiritual traditions in their interactions with clients (Miller, 2003). Further, other individuals integrated nondual wisdom with existing Western psychological theories and modalities (Wittine, 2003, Loy, 2007). Others still utilized experiences of trauma and grief as catalysts to nondual presence (Adyashanti, 2008; Almaas, 1996). In total, the current investigation demonstrated evidence that nondual psychology is a broad category encompassing everything from more traditional spiritual approaches to healing to utilization of nondual wisdom in the conceptualization and treatment of clients through a Western psychological lens (Blackstone, 2006; Prendergast, 2007; Bradford, 2007; Loy, 2007). This chapter provided significant depth understanding the current state of nondual psychotherapeutic literature.

Finally, Chapter 8 demonstrated the ways in which reductionism and materialism are dominant ideological assumptions in modern American psychology (Robinson, 1995; Notterman, 2000; Notterman, 2001). This chapter traced the dualistic Cartesian split between mind and body, a foundational component of both materialism and reductionism, to the roots of psychology: Freud. From the perspective of neurology, Freud began psychology from a reductive and materialistic paradigm that separates psyche from spirit and privileges the division between self and not self (Sperry, 2013). Contemporary “two person” psychological models such as relational psychoanalysis were discovered to offer more pluralistic nuance, yet in their secular nature also tend to be devoid of spiritual processes (Brown, 2016). Other approaches and trends illuminating the entrenchment of psychology within materialistic and reductionistic philosophies were discussed, and implications were also mentioned. For example, as psychology becomes

more aligned with the dominant discourse the physical sciences, it de-legitimizes psychological approaches that cannot be measured in a materialist fashion, despite the efficacy described in phenomenological and subjective accounts. As this march toward reductionism and materialism continues, one must reflect on how far this situation may continue and contemplate the cold mechanics of future psychological work if these philosophies remain unchallenged.

Within Chapter 8's final section, it was argued that nondual psychology offers a viable means of transcending the dualism upon which materialistic and reductionistic philosophies depend. Through its reengagement of nondual wisdom, nondual psychology illumines the ways in which both materialism and reductionism are nothing more than logical extensions of the separate self, or body–mind complex. Following the fundamental divide between self and not self, the ego searches for meaning inside or outside of itself, without realizing the Ultimate Truth that the *Atman*, or personal self, is the *Brahman*, or the Self of the universe. It fails to comprehend the timeless realization transmitted by Realizers that when one examines outer objects to their core, there is only Light–Energy and similarly, when one traces one's own existence to the inward subjective core, there is only Consciousness. Further, the Sages indicate that these elements of Light–Energy and Consciousness are Most Perfectly One and Indivisible (Adi Da Samraj, 2009). Therefore, nondual wisdom, whether discovered intellectually or, preferably, embodied in presence, offers the possibility of creating a profound movement in psychology—one that combats the commoditization and reduction of healing by aligning itself with the Truth of Being. In this way, nondual psychology reinfuses spirit into psyche, transforms therapists into shaman, and reorients therapy from an activity to the profound encounter with living, breathing Truth.

In conclusion, the current investigation covered substantial metaphorical ground. In an effort to articulate the current state of the literature, it employed a critical review of the literature methodology. It also described the positioning of the researcher and the dissertation structure in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 articulated limitations of discussing nonduality, clarified language common to nonduality, and provided recommendations for how to read nondual literature. Chapter 4 described models of transpersonal states of consciousness to orient readers to the higher states described by sages. It also allowed Sages and other Realizers and Gurus to convey their understandings of nonduality, awakening, and the ego. Building upon this dialogue, Chapter 5 allowed these same teachers the opportunity to share several nondual interventions employed within the context of a guru–devotee relationship. These included the guru function, mirroring and self-inquiry, meditation, and briefly mentioned the limitations of seeking enlightenment. From the introduction and background of these ancient sources of wisdom, nondual psychology and nondual psychotherapy was explored in Chapter 6. This chapter demonstrated common distinctions between nondual and traditional psychotherapy, and then highlighted both the basic values of nondual psychotherapy and the importance of the therapist being awakened in nondual psychology. From this understanding of nondual psychology came Chapter 7. This chapter illustrated nondual psychological interventions, which included the therapeutic relationship and being together, sacred mirroring and original speech, and the use of inquiry and koans. Also within this chapter were nondual psychotherapeutic approaches and the integration of nondual wisdom with Western psychology. This section demonstrated the unique applications and integrations of nondual psychology and highlighted its therapeutic value to the field of psychology. Chapter 8 extended the value of nonduality in psychology from practice to theory. It articulated the ways in which modern American psychology is nested within materialism and

reductionism, and then asserted that nondual psychology is a viable means to transcend these divisive philosophies. It was argued that nondual psychology not only challenges these dominant ideological assumptions, but it also reinfuses spirit to psyche and aligns psychology with Truth.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of the present investigation that warrant further discussion. This section will describe these limitations, articulate why they exist, provide reasons they were unable to be avoided, and then assess the impact of each limitation in relationship to the present study.

First, the study's methodology must be reviewed. One of the most important components of a critical review of the literature is achieving sufficient depth and breadth of the field under examination. Within the context of this investigation, there were two large areas of focus that demanded intensive review: nonduality and nondual psychology. One limitation is that, although the present investigation integrated material at a depth sufficient for submission, the breadth of literature is somewhat limited.

Nonduality is an immense subject that requires significant nuance and familiarity with esoteric spiritual practices and knowledge. Within the domain of spirituality from which nonduality emerges, there are many traditions that describe nonduality and higher states of consciousness. Each tradition does so using its own language, practices, and traditions. As such, there is an incredibly wide range of material available to someone interested in the subject that spans hundreds of years. Complicating matters further, many of the spiritual traditions that teach and describe nonduality do so in a manner unique to their spiritual tradition. As such, the author of the present study excluded several spiritual traditions and cultures that describe nonduality because they may have been thematically repetitious. Further, the writer lacks intimate

knowledge of these traditions. Therefore, to speak of these cultures and their descriptions of nonduality may have been both superficial and not reflective of the depth of their traditions. Additionally, this dissertation has several time constraints that restricted the length of time to be spent completing this review. When considering the immensity of nondual literature, the restricted breadth of this investigation could not be overcome without additional years of research and advanced training within various spiritual traditions in addition to those presented. Unfortunately, this limitation of lacking breadth given the vast range of nonduality may have a significant impact on the study. Several of the author's conclusions and findings regarding nonduality and thus, nondual psychology are influenced by the literature consumed. Therefore, to an unknown extent, the writer's lack of knowledge of these other traditions and the lack of exclusion in the current investigation may have influenced the portrayal of nonduality and higher states of consciousness. However, it is probable that this limitation and its impact is an unavoidable outcome of the critical review of the literature, regardless of the specific researcher due to the subjectivity of the researcher.

A related limitation is the positioning of the researcher. The word "nonduality" has been used many hundreds of times in this investigation. Despite my knowledge of what that word means according to the Adepts I studied, I do not *realize* the word's condition. I possess abstract knowledge about it. I have tasted moments of it. But ultimately, I do not know what it *is*. This limitation exists because I am not enlightened and did not awaken while completing this study. Further, this limitation impacts the investigation—as my findings, including the areas of future research in the following section, are all based upon my subjective experience. My subjective experience is a reflection of my state of consciousness. And my state of consciousness is limited to the perspective of the body–mind more often than not. Therefore, this limitation has, arguably,



a significant impact on the present study, which focuses on higher states of awareness and other concepts pointing toward ineffable, radiant being. However, this limitation of subjectivity within un-enlightened perspectives is likely also observed in many other authors, including, perhaps unknowingly, several individuals within the field of nondual psychology.

To summarize, the two most prominent limitations of the present investigation are the positioning of the researcher and the breadth of literature reviewed. Both the researcher's subjectivity as un-enlightened and the time restraints underlying the lack of breadth found in this critical review of the literature are limitations that could not be overcome. Although future critical reviews may benefit from increased duration of investigation, they too may be limited, in their own unique fashion, to the subjectivity and stage of consciousness of the investigator.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Following the study's limitations, several themes that implicate areas of future research emerged from the current investigation. For example, within the nondual psychological literature, it was discovered that many authors discuss nonduality in a ubiquitous manner. Within both *The Sacred Mirror: Nondual Wisdom and Psychotherapy* edited by Prendergast, Fenner, and Krystal (2003) and *Listening From the Heart of Silence: Nondual Wisdom and Psychotherapy* edited by Prendergast and Bradford (2007), the word nonduality was used frequently by many experts in the field of nondual psychology. However, few authors describe differences in degrees of nondual experience or nondual embodiment. Although some individuals may acknowledge there to be a difference between embodied presence and abstract spiritual knowledge without its realization, no authors specifically detail experiences of nondual presence that may be unique to one's degree of realization or level of consciousness. This is problematic given the many distinctions that are possible within the spectrum of transcendental

states of consciousness, as outlined by Wilber (1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006). Further, the other model introduced in this study proposed by Adi Da Samraj (2001, 2004) makes explicit distinctions between types and degrees of realization according to each practitioner's spiritual tradition or approach toward nondual awakening.

When these nondual psychological authors fail to distinguish their degree of awakening or stage of consciousness, they obscure the subjectivity of nondual states of consciousness and obfuscate the signs associated with their degree of realization. For example, certain levels of consciousness within the transcendental spectrum involve what Adi Da Samraj (2004) refers to as “dissociative introversion.” Adi Da Samraj (2004) notes that many Buddhist traditions describe the material world as an illusion, and therefore turn their attention to the inward experience of awareness. In doing so, they “dissociate” from the outside world—which, as noted by Adi Da Samraj (2004), reinforces a dualism that is fundamentally ego-based and therefore not “most perfect” nondual realization. This foundation practice of engaging in dissociative introversion has subtle energetic signs of embodiment and can be distinguished from other types of nondual embodiment found in other traditions, such as kundalini yoga. Therefore, familiarity with the models proposed by Wilber (1977, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2006) and Adi Da Samraj (2001, 2004) are of great utility to the field of nondual psychology. For understanding of such models may illuminate patterns within nondual psychotherapeutic approaches related to the degree of embodiment, which may be related to an individual's approach to spirituality.

When nondual psychotherapy authors assume that their subjective experience of nonduality—or transcendental states of consciousness—is the same as other spiritual realizers or clients with whom they work, they make a mistake analogous to early waves of feminism—assuming similarities of experience despite complex, intersecting factors of difference. Not all

experiences of higher states of consciousness are identical. Honoring the great spiritual traditions of mankind necessarily involves giving credence and recognition to individuals that have obtained higher degrees of realization than oneself. This may be difficult for many practitioners of nondual psychotherapy, which exist within the zeitgeist of Western individualistic values. Within this cultural context, many Western individuals practice individualized spirituality that requires neither association to spiritual lineage nor submission to a guru. Practitioners of nondual psychotherapy, therefore, may not recognize that their individual experiences of higher levels of consciousness are in fact different from one another depending on the degree of realization embodied. Therefore, within the framework of future research, it would be efficacious to encourage authors to contemplate their own experience and embodiment of nondual presence. Doing so would, potentially, clarify differences in nondual experience and also illuminate the sometimes-contrasting values found between nondual psychologists. For example, the disagreement between whether or not nondual psychotherapists should facilitate an awakening experience in clients may be due to differences in degree of nondual embodiment, different stages of consciousness, or unique factors related to specific spiritual traditions. Future research within the field of nondual psychology would benefit from a thorough examination of this area by taking into consideration the stage models described in this study.

Another area of future research stems from the work of Prendergast (2007), who articulated that nonduality may be used to further deepen and clarify unconscious interpersonal dynamics within the domain of psychoanalytic theory. Based on the nondual psychological literature and its application to various psychodynamic theories and concepts, it appears likely that a deeper dialogue between nonduality and psychoanalysis may be beneficial. As noted by Blackstone (2006), who asserted that nonduality illumined the intersubjective space within

intersubjectivity theory, psychoanalysis has much to gain from a theoretical and conceptual understanding of nonduality alone. Perhaps future research could find other theory and practice-based means of contemplating the ways in which nonduality may inform and reform psychoanalytic theory.

Finally, one last area of future research involves both the mechanism of therapeutic change and the challenging materialism and reductionism in the field of psychology. Rather than a perfectly timed interpretation or other traditional therapeutic intervention, many nondual psychologists (Miller, 2003; Hunt, 2003, et al.) indicate that therapeutic transformation occurs from the ability to access unconditioned Presence. If future research could continue to investigate the shared quality of consciousness between therapist and client, it is possible that the mechanism of therapeutic change may be better understood. Such a clear understanding would empower therapy to treat the root-cause—egoity and the self-contraction—rather than mere symptoms (Caplan, 2007). This reformulation of therapeutic change from alterations in thoughts, behavioral patterns, or momentary epiphanies to the opening of shared spaciousness between two apparent individuals within and as modifications of the conscious field itself, offers a radical departure from all previous psychological theories. In reformulating the therapeutic agent of change, psychology also challenges its own tendencies of reductionism and materialism.

Most current therapies perceive the “doing” of therapy as “causing” therapeutic transformation, which necessarily ignites the reductive process of dichotomizing “self” from “not self.” From this dualism, all other reductive processes emerge and cascade upon psychology until psyche is reduced to biological mechanisms in the brain. Therefore, nondual psychology’s conceptualization of presence as the embodiment of Spirit and not-doing, which is viewed as healing and the true process of therapeutic change, challenges the root-process of ego that

culminates in a radical reductive and materialistic process. The more that future research can speak to the therapeutic agent of change posed by nondual psychology, the greater impact this dialogue may have in the disillusionment of materialism and reductionism in the field of psychology.

To summarize, this study highlights several areas of future inquiry that are beneficial to the field of psychology and vital to the nondual psychological movement. One significant area that would benefit from additional research would be focusing on stages of consciousness or degrees of realization and how those impact the recommendations and values of nondual psychologists. For example, since few nondual psychotherapists discuss their own degree or level of awakening relative to stage of consciousness, it is possible that contrasting perspectives are related to unique revelations from a specific stage of realization. To investigate this area in greater detail may be beneficial for the field of nondual psychology. Another area of future investigation is found in the application of nonduality within existing psychological theories. Several nondual psychotherapists articulated the ways in which nonduality informs and illuminates certain psychodynamic processes (Blackstone, 2006; Prendergast, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that many more clinicians and existing psychological theories may benefit from an engagement with nonduality. Finally, another area of future research involves the application of nondual wisdom that states the true mechanism of change in psychotherapy is the quality of embodied presence. Further investigation into this mechanism not only has profound implications for the practice of psychotherapy, but it also challenges materialist and reductionist philosophies in psychology.

### Significance of the Study

Modern psychology is at war with itself. Although many dominant narratives supporting the materialistic and reductionistic processes underpinning the medicalization and manualization of therapy flourish, there is a small but growing community of psychologists and other healers reconnecting with ancient sources of wisdom. This dissertation transmits these ancient sources of wisdom and highlights the ways in which that knowledge is infused within the nondual psychological movement. Having summarized the current state of nondual psychological literature, describing the current investigation's limitations, and articulating future areas of inquiry based on this information, it is now appropriate to mention this study's significance.

This study offers substantial value to the field of psychology, which is currently suffering from excessive reductive and materialist philosophies. Nondual wisdom transcends and outshines materialism by illuminating the egoic processes that are at the root of all reductive and materialist processes—the separation between “self” and “not self.” This fundamental dualism extends *ad infinitum* from the position of a limited, restricted, mortal, and unenlightened, separate self that is divorced and set apart from objects. Upon critical examination, nonduality demonstrates that this separate self is a false or non-Ultimate, illusory moment-to-moment construction. Similarly, the perspectives and processes extended from this self-contraction are necessarily limited because they are extending from a fundamental misunderstanding of Reality from an enlightened nondual perspective. Therefore, this study has demonstrated that nonduality addresses the concerns of materialism and reductionism at their source rather than symptom—by addressing the body–mind complex in a direct manner analogous to ancient traditions. Challenging the root-cause of these philosophies aligns nonduality with the sacred knowledge of Adepts, who articulate that embodied nondual presence is the realization of nonseparateness—

the tacit comprehension and felt sense that all conditional phenomena, including all physical matter, is none other than the Divine Conscious Light (Adi Da Samraj, 2009).

The current study, then, not only offers substantial value to psychology as a whole through its liberation from reductive and materialist philosophies, but it also creates space for other perspectives that are also in contrast with dominant cultural values. Because nondual psychology critiques and undermines materialist and reductionistic philosophies at their core, it also invites other voices that are typically silenced and oppressed by these philosophies to speak up and be heard. Nonduality is not incongruent with other philosophical traditions, although it may be understood to conceptually underpin and encompass all traditions. By privileging nonduality, other psychological theories may benefit.

Similarly, this dissertation also makes a significant contribution to the theory and practice of psychotherapy. The philosophical and embodied realization of nonduality implicates unconditioned presence as the true mechanism of change in treatment. By shifting the focus from prescriptive interventions to the embodied quality of presence, nonduality redefines therapy as a quality of being. Such a shift changes the practice of psychotherapy from emphasizing interventions to prioritizing both the embodiment of higher states of consciousness, which allow for a shared melting into the depths of the present moment free of conditions, limitations, and fear. This allows clinicians and clients to shift their focus from the co-construction of their chattering minds to the sacred wisdom of not-knowing that paradoxically allows for the unconditioned embrace of what is. Moving attention from the self-serving dialogue of separateness to the unmitigated gateway to presence enables the stimulation of the body–mind complex to dissolve in the profundity of silence in the therapeutic encounter.

As an extension of this reformulation of the mechanism of change in therapy and its ability to challenge materialism and reductionism, this dissertation offers a significant contribution to humanity as a whole. Many individuals are unnecessarily trapped within reductive frameworks that only increase suffering. As most existing models seek to modify the body–mind through psychopharmacologic or psychological interventions, they may improve an individual’s ability to function within a dysfunctional society, but they do not teach individuals how to transcend such suffering at its root—the ego mechanism itself. Nonduality and nondual psychology demonstrate the ways in which humans, as body–mind complexes, create their own suffering in each moment-to-moment identification, with ever-changing conditions of existence. It empowers them to access that which is always already the case—prior to and underlying all conditions—such that they may reduce the self-inflicted injury that perpetuates their existence as a limited, separate self. To awaken to this knowledge does not require enlightenment in its fullest expression, but merely an openness to letting go of the assumed-to-be-known and surrendering to the tacit experience of unimpeded being. With fewer individuals conditioned to focus on symptoms and more individuals attuned to the fundamental nature of reality according to nondual wisdom, more people will experience liberation from suffering—even if still bound to the conditional experiences of the body–mind complex. This reintegration of ancient knowledge into larger society is a significant contribution of the present study and an amazing opportunity for nondual psychology moving forward.

Further, this theoretical shift in the mechanism of change in psychotherapy has many theoretical applications. From the foundation of nonduality, many existing psychological theories can be seen in a new light. Nonduality illuminates certain processes occurring within the context of traditional psychotherapeutic relationships, just as Blackstone (2006) articulated in her



description of intersubjectivity. Such theoretical applications of nonduality, as observed within this dissertation, also extend to the integration of nonduality with existing psychological theories. Therefore, this dissertation reinfuses spirit into psyche and has implications for individuals interested in spiritual psychotherapeutic work.

The current study makes a meaningful contribution to clinicians interested in spiritually-based psychotherapy. In addition to making such approaches more palatable by highlighting the ego-based extensions of reductionism and materialism, nondual psychotherapy allows for the transcending of dichotomies between spiritual and therapeutic work. Nondual psychotherapists contend that spiritual and psychological shifts typically co-occur in therapy sessions. They assert that therapeutic work, much like spiritual work, may involve opening up to experience what is without judgment, labels, or looking to escape (Prendergast & Bradford, 2007). In short, Prendergast and Bradford (2007) state, “Spiritual work unleashes elements that are thoroughly psychological, just as psychological transformations prepare the ground for spiritual awakenings” (p. 11). Therefore, it is observed within the current study that there need not be an artificial division between spirit and psyche.

Finally, this dissertation makes an important contribution to the field of nondual psychology. By conveying the current state of the literature and illuminating areas of future inquiry, this investigation provides an invaluable foundation for authors looking to publish in this area. Similarly, no article within the domain of nonduality and nondual psychology have previously discussed the ways in which nonduality inherently and explicitly challenges the ideological assumptions and philosophical underpinnings of modern, Western psychology. As such, this dissertation takes a radical stand against materialism and reductionism, while paying

homage to the spiritual wisdom of the Sages—the Self-incarnations of conscious light and the mechanism through which Divine Grace enters the world.

In the end, this dissertation escapes the fate of Sisyphus. Through discovering the ways in which he, as Narcissus, is contracting upon his self-constructed image as a separate entity, he has the opportunity to release this fixation. To step away from his reflection, cease this futile moment-to-moment activity, and, instead, swim in the infinite fullness of knowing that he is not separate from the pond. That there is no rock to be pushed, no fate to be suffered. That there is only “the egoless, Non-separate, Indivisible, and Self-Evidently Divine Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State That Is Reality Itself” (Adi Da Samraj, 2009, p. 1797). The rock is outshined. His body–mind is transformed. And he vibrates with All That Is.

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