

What is Nondual Spirituality?

A Christian Perspective

by Philip St. Romain, M.S., D. Min. September 5, 2024

What is perceptual nonduality?

- Not-separate — “oneness without a second” Literally, not-two.
- Perceptual — non-separation between subject and object
https://youtu.be/UMQPr6_e56s?si=m0SQSyfoVG3gBhbR
- Direct, non-reflecting, non-conceptual experience of sensation and feeling, etc.
- Practices include mindfulness, meditation, contemplative disciplines.
- Enlightenment, awakening,

Nondual mystical experience

- Non-reflecting awareness predominates
- diminishment of reflective, dualistic thinking and judgment
- No separation between subject and object (including the divine)
- separate, defined self considered an illusion, egoic
- Intuitive intelligence predominates
- rational, conceptual intelligence considered divisive
- Always present as awareness prior to thought
- Often considered a highest state of human consciousness
- David Hawkins, Ken Wilber, Sri Arubindo

Map of Consciousness

Developed By David R. Hawkins

	Name of Level	Energetic Log	Predominant Emotional State	View of Life	God-view	Process
Spiritual Paradigm	Enlightenment	700-1000	Ineffable	Is	Self	Pure Consciousness
	Peace	600	Bliss	Perfect	All-Being	Illumination
	Joy	540	Serenity	Complete	One	Transfiguration
Reason & Integrity	Love	500	Reverence	Benign	Loving	Revelation
	Reason	400	Understanding	Meaningful	Wise	Abstraction
	Acceptance	350	Forgiveness	Harmonious	Merciful	Transcendence
	Willingness	310	Optimism	Hopeful	Inspiring	Intention
	Neutrality	250	Trust	Satisfactory	Enabling	Release
	Courage	200	Affirmation	Feasible	Permitting	Empowerment
Survival Paradigm	Pride	175	Scorn	Demanding	Indifferent	Inflation
	Anger	150	Hate	Antagonistic	Vengeful	Aggression
	Desire	125	Craving	Disappointing	Denying	Enslavement
	Fear	100	Anxiety	Frightening	Punitive	Withdrawal
	Grief	75	Regret	Tragic	Dodainful	Dependancy
	Apathy	50	Despair	Hopeless	Condemning	Abdication
	Guilt	30	Blame	Evil	Vindictive	Destruction
	Shame	20	Humiliation	Miserable	Despising	Elimination

Metaphysical implications of nondual perception?

- Various forms of monism
See-er and seen are one substance, variously conceived. E.g., Pantheism.
Absolute nonduality.
- Panentheism - Entities are in God and God in entities, but God also transcends universe.
Relative non duality

Eastern / New Age Critique of Christianity

- God and creatures are "separate." This is an illusion.
Christian teaching on sin exacerbates this issue.
- Western versions over-emphasize rational explanations, contributing to subject - object dualisms, patriarchy, and authoritarianism.
- Christian teaching and spirituality does not lead to enlightenment, but to relational union, which is still "dualistic."
- Misunderstood Jesus' message that humans, like him, were in possession of divine nature.
"The Father and I are One." (E.g., Adyashanti, Jesus as Avatar)

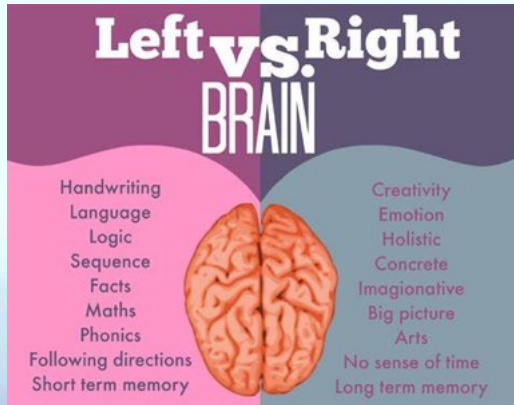
Nondual experience and Christianity

- How might we understand these experiences in the light of Christian teachings?
- How are they similar to and different from the kind of experiences described by Christian mystics?
- Can they lead us away from Christ and his Spirit, or can they help us open more fully to Him?
- Do they help us individuate? Grow in relationships? Practice works of mercy?
- Should Christians practice disciplines like Zen and certain forms of meditation associated with nondual experience?

Is Christianity a Nondual Religion?

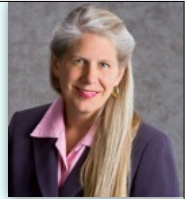
- God creates, conserves and communicates with creation.
 - God and creation as not-separate, but are distinct
- Creatures are real beings, each a distinct center of freedom and intelligence.
- Jesus and the Father are one in several ways
 - in mission and purpose
 - in the Spirit
 - incarnate Logos as Person one with the Father in the Trinity
- The risen one is the individual, Jesus of Nazareth
- Ontological and relational connectedness affirmed
I + Thou = WE
- Nondual mysticism can be affirmed in the above context

Duality - Nonduality



Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor

Neuroanatomist (brain scientist)



- Stroke extinguished most left brain function
- Unable to distinguish sounds, shapes, meanings of people and things around her
- Secure and blissful when resting in right brain function
- Could feel energy and friendliness of people around her
- Eventually recovered left brain function
- 2008 TED Talk. *My Stroke of Insight* book

<https://www.drjilltaylor.com/the-power-of-the-easter-resurrection-and-your-brain/>
Jill Bolte Taylor - https://youtu.be/5WxomyK-Fgc?si=Zw_87u2vp2cVPQm3

Human consciousness

- Both dual and nondual in its operations; integration of left and right brain.
- Egoic consciousness — reflecting, intentional, discriminating, practical. Helps us navigate our lives among other creatures and circumstances. Develop and integrate a sense of identity, actualize our gifts. More left brain
- Nonreflecting consciousness — open, accepting, intuitive backdrop to Egoic. Can learn to experience through meditative practices. Direct, non-conceptual experience of reality, a kind of mystical experience. More right brain
- Unconscious mind — deep sleep, dreaming

Nondual spirituality

- Disciplines that reduce left brain activity
- Shifting attention to right brain activity
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- Does ultimate reality not express in ways the left brain connects with?
- Is left brain activity not spiritual in its own manner? Truth, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, etc.
- Should Christians be more open to nondual practices?

