

nonduality

an analysis

ton haarmans

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Ton Haarmans

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Colophon

Nonduality. An analysis

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Contents

Personal positioning **12**
Introduction **16**
Why an analysis of nondual worlds? 16

Part I

Terminological clarification **20**
The nondual language field 20
Philosophical Core Concepts 27
Own Terms 32
On the Position of This Book 37
Chapter 1 **38**
Nonduality as Philosophy and as Experience 38
Chapter 2 **44**
1. Nonduality as One Reality 44
2. Nonduality as the Dismantling of Every Ground 45

3. Nonduality as Direct Experience 47
4. Nonduality as Radical Denial 48
5. Nonduality as Integration of the Human 50
6. Comparative Sketch of the Five Approaches 51
Provisional Conclusion 54
On Involvement and Preference 54

Part II

Chapter 3 **60**
Advaita Vedanta 60
Zen 62
Taoism 63
Dzogchen 65
Christian Mysticism 66

Part III

Chapter 4 **70**
Ramana Maharshi 70
Nisargadatta Maharaj 71
H. W. L. Poonja (Papaji) 73

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho) 74
Jiddu Krishnamurti 76
U. G. Krishnamurti 77
Alan Watts 79
Concluding Reflection 80

Part IV

Chapter 5 **86**
Rupert Spira 86
Robert Saltzman 88
Tony Parsons 89
Richard Lang 91
Jeff Foster 92
Miranda Warren 94
Jed McKenna 95
Byron Katie 96
Darryl Bailey 98
Concluding Reflection 99

Part V

Nonduality as Spiritual Phenomenon 102
Individualization of Liberation 103
Resonance and Desire 103
Nonduality as Cultural Configuration 104
Provisional Assessment 105
Final Conclusion 106

Personal positioning

It began with a sudden recognition while walking through the town where I lived: I was searching. Not merely curious, but searching.

Until then I had been reading spiritual literature for some time — Castaneda, Krishnamurti, Gurdjieff, Ram Dass, but it had remained optional. Interesting. Stimulating. Not urgent.

In that moment it became existential. I felt that something was missing. Something fundamental. I wanted to understand how "it" was structured. I wanted someone who knew. Someone who could guide me beyond ordinary consciousness, like Don Juan in Castaneda's books.

I found that figure in Rajneesh. His radical tone, especially his attack on hypocrisy and moral pretence, was compelling. Spirituality, in his presentation, was not withdrawal from life but its intensification. Meditation, confrontation, ecstasy. Enlightenment and celebration.

What followed was full immersion: a new name, red clothes, meditation techniques, therapy groups, communes. It was intense, chaotic, sometimes ecstatic. At the same time there was manipulation,

group pressure, the breaking of so-called resistance, reverence for leaders and, inevitably, for Rajneesh himself.

With his death that world collapsed. Many former sannyasins turned to other Indian teachers such as Nisargadatta Maharaj and H. W. L. Poonja. Their Western students began giving satsangs, also in Europe. It felt different. Less theatrical. Less institutional.

But the core remained the same: *enlightenment*. The idea that a decisive breakthrough was possible. I read obsessively. I kept assuming that the next book, the next teacher, the next video would bring the final shift.

The movement only began to slow when I encountered the work of Joan Tollifson, Shiv Sengupta and Robert Saltzman. There the path itself was questioned. The promise of a higher state lost its appeal. What remained was this: what appears here does not need to be improved. No teaching is required.

Reading Miranda Warren made this even sharper. There is no higher position. Her condition is not better than mine. Mine is not inferior to hers. I encounter myself and the world as they appear, and that is no different for her. This does not mean her world is the same as mine. But it is not more fundamental or more real.

This insight was less dramatic than what had preceded it, but more stable. Less spectacular, but more honest. Without promise.

Gradually it became clear that what I had undergone was not an exceptional trajectory, but a movement within a broader field of articulations that all operate under the same name: nonduality.

Introduction

Why an analysis of nondual worlds?

Over the past decades nonduality has become an influential current within contemporary spirituality and philosophy. What was once embedded in specific traditions such as Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, or Taoism now appears in books, gatherings, podcasts, and online dialogues in many different forms.

Some voices present nonduality as the ultimate truth behind all religions. Others describe it as a shift in experience. Still others deny that anything can be attained or realized at all. At the same time nonduality is often presented as more radical than religion, freer than dogma, and deeper than psychological inquiry.

But what is actually happening here?

This book does not defend nonduality. It does not attack it. It does not propose a new teaching and it does not correct an old one. Its aim is simpler and more demanding: to bring clarity to a field that gathers

divergent and sometimes incompatible worldviews under a single name.

Nonduality does not stand apart from other forms of spirituality and philosophy. It moves within tensions. Between metaphysics and dismantling. Between religious tradition and modern individuality. Between a path of liberation and the denial of any path. Sometimes it presents itself as the core of all religion. Sometimes as the end of religion. Sometimes as philosophical precision. Sometimes as existential shock.

What is examined here is not the truth of these claims, but their architecture.

Each articulation of nonduality forms a coherent configuration. It determines what counts as real. What is called illusion. What liberation means. What the role of experience is. What happens to the person.

Through a dioramic approach these articulations are described as worlds. Coherent configurations in which certain assumptions appear self-evident while others remain invisible. Nonduality itself turns out not to be a neutral ground, but a field of different worlds.

This book addresses readers who are already familiar with nondual language, as well as those who wish to understand it without

submitting to it. It requires no belief and offers no method. It asks only a willingness to look carefully.

Clarity matters here more than conviction.

This book examines how nonduality is thought and articulated. It does not pronounce on the authenticity or depth of anyone's experience.

Part I

For clarification: the language fields of nondualism, philosophical terms, and my own terminology.

Terminological clarification

The nondual language field

Nonduality is rarely presented as a single claim. It appears as a language field. Certain words recur and seem self-evident. Yet each carries a background. Whoever uses them often already speaks from within a particular world.

This chapter does not attempt definitive definitions. It makes visible what is often presupposed.

The seeker

The word “seeker” implies lack. Something is missing. There is a goal, a truth, a liberation not yet realized. Seeking implies movement in time. Someone moves from ignorance to insight.

In some articulations this structure is central. Seeking is necessary. It culminates in recognition.

In others the seeker itself is the problem. Not the absence of insight, but the assumption that someone must attain something sustains the movement.

The term is not neutral. It installs or undermines an entire structure of time, goal, and development.

The one who has found

Whenever awakening or enlightenment is discussed, a distinction tends to appear between those who see and those who do not.

This distinction may be explicit or subtly denied. But as soon as realization, transmission, or recognition is invoked, the question arises: who recognizes, and who does not?

There is a tension here. Even when it is said that no one awakens, the statement itself can function authoritatively. The denial of hierarchy can operate hierarchically.

This does not imply misuse. It does indicate that language here easily produces structure and difference.

Liberation, enlightenment, awakening

These words are often used interchangeably. They share an underlying assumption. There is a before and an after. Bondage and freedom. Sleep and awakening. Ignorance and insight.

A transition is implied. A shift regarded as fundamental.

In some articulations this shift is decisive and irreversible. In others it is relativized or denied. What is sought was never absent.

Again the terminology is not neutral. It introduces a temporal structure and often an evaluation.

Ego

"Ego" usually refers to the sense of being a separate center. The feeling of an autonomous agent who thinks, chooses, and acts.

In some articulations the ego is described as illusion.

In others as psychological structure.

In still others as functional but not fundamental.

The word often carries a negative charge. Yet it rarely points to a clearly identifiable entity. It refers to an interpretation of experience. The sense "I am the doer."

When the disappearance of the ego is discussed, the question remains: what disappears? An entity? A belief? A framework of interpretation?

Self

"Self" can mean different things.

The psychological self: memory, preference, character.

The felt sense of "I am."

Or a deeper identity said to underlie the personal.

Without clarification the term remains ambiguous.

Some articulations deny the small self while affirming a greater Self. Others question every notion of self altogether.

The distinction is not trivial. It determines the structure of the world in which the word functions.

Self

With a capital letter the term usually refers to an absolute or universal identity. The true Self that is not limited to the individual.

This appears primarily in ontological nonduality. It functions as a positive account of what one essentially is.

An origin structure often accompanies it. One must recognize that one already is this Self.

In dismantling articulations this notion is treated as subtle metaphysics.

Illusion

"Illusion" is a strong word. It suggests that something does not truly exist.

In classical Advaita the world may be described as relatively illusory.

In radical articulations the self is called illusion.

In other contexts illusion simply means misinterpretation.

Importantly, illusion rarely implies absolute nonexistence. More often it refers to a mistaken attribution of independence or solidity.

The word easily acquires a dismissive tone that exceeds its intended meaning.

Consciousness

"Consciousness" is one of the most loaded terms in the nondual field.

In ontological articulations it refers to the ultimate reality in which everything appears.

In phenomenological approaches it simply indicates that there is experience.

In dismantling articulations even this term is avoided or relativized.

The decisive question is always this:

Is consciousness described as the condition of experience, or as the metaphysical ground of everything?

The difference determines the architecture of the world in which the word operates.

Presence

"Presence" is often used as a softer alternative to consciousness.

It refers to immediate awareness without conceptual overlay. Yet presence can also be treated as something stable or fundamental.

The term sounds less metaphysical, but it can function in the same way when it is treated as ultimate reality.

Unity

"Unity" can mean several things.

Ontological unity. Everything is one reality.

Experiential unity. No separation between observer and observed.

Relational connectedness.

Without specification the term remains ambiguous.

In ontological nonduality unity is positively affirmed.

In dismantling articulations even the idea of unity is questioned.

Emptiness

"Emptiness" refers in Buddhist contexts to the absence of independent essence.

It does not mean nothingness, but relationality and dependent arising.

In Western interpretations emptiness is sometimes equated with open space or pure awareness, which does not always correspond to its philosophical function.

The question remains:

Is emptiness used to correct metaphysics, or does it become a new metaphysics?

Existence

"Existence" is sometimes used as a neutral designation for what is. In other contexts it acquires a quasi-sacral tone.

When one speaks of trusting existence or surrendering to existence, it begins to function as a quasi-personal instance.

Again the question arises:

Is existence a neutral term for what appears, or is it treated as a sustaining force?

Provisional Conclusion

These terms are frequently used without explicit clarification. Yet they decisively shape how a world is constructed.

In what follows they will not be treated as self-evident. Each will be examined in terms of the structure it presupposes and the world it makes possible.

Philosophical Core Concepts

The following terms are drawn from philosophy. They are used here in a straightforward sense, without technical elaboration. Their function is not to create distance, but to make structures visible.

Ontology

Ontology concerns the question: what is real?

When someone says that consciousness is the only reality, that is an ontological claim.

When someone says that everything is empty of inherent nature, that too is ontological.

Ontology does not primarily concern how something is experienced, but what is ultimately taken to be real.

Metaphysics

Metaphysics investigates what lies behind or beneath visible reality.

Whenever one speaks of an ultimate ground, an absolute reality, a deepest essence, or a sustaining principle, one enters metaphysical territory.

Not every articulation of nonduality is metaphysical. Some attempt to avoid any claim about an ultimate ground.

Yet it is important to see that even the denial of a ground can carry metaphysical weight.

Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the question: how do we know what we know?

When liberation is described as insight, the question arises how such insight is possible. Who knows? What changes? Is this knowledge experiential, conceptual, or something else?

As soon as recognition, realization, or misunderstanding is invoked, epistemological questions are already in play.=

Soteriology

Soteriology concerns liberation or salvation.

A soteriological structure usually presupposes a fundamental lack, ignorance, or bondage, and the possibility of release from it.

In religious contexts this may involve redemption from sin or suffering. In many nondual articulations a similar structure is present, even when the language appears anti-goal or anti-hierarchical.

If there is talk of awakening, breakthrough, or freedom, a soteriological dynamic is at work.

Ground

A ground is that which something rests upon or derives its validity from.

In ontological nonduality consciousness or Brahman may function as ground.

In other articulations every ground is refused.

The term is used here descriptively, not polemically. It simply indicates whether an ultimate reference point is assumed.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy means ranking.

When a distinction is made between those who are awakened and those who are not, hierarchy arises.

Sometimes it is denied ontologically while functioning implicitly in teaching or authority.

Naming hierarchy is not an accusation. It is a structural observation.

Duality

Duality refers to the distinction between two poles, such as subject and object, self and world, mind and matter.

Nonduality does not always negate this distinction in the same way.

Sometimes it is said that both are ultimately one.

Sometimes it is said that the distinction itself lacks independent existence.

Sometimes even the language of one and two is abandoned.

Relative and Absolute

Relative means dependent or context-bound.

Absolute means independent and unconditional.

When a tradition distinguishes between relative and ultimate truth, a two-layered structure of reality is implied.

This distinction is not neutral. It orders what counts as fundamental and what does not.

Transcendent and Immanent

Transcendent means beyond or outside ordinary experience.

Immanent means present within phenomena themselves.

When nonduality is presented as something behind the world, it tends toward transcendence.

When it is described as fully present in what appears, it is formulated immanently.

Concluding Remark

These concepts are not used to establish superiority. They function as instruments of clarification.

They help distinguish whether an articulation:

- affirms an ultimate reality

- denies any ultimate ground
- centers experience
- or undermines the entire framework of seeking and finding

This explanation is not neutral. It forms part of the perspective of this book.

Own Terms

The analysis in this book makes use of terms that do not originate within the traditional nondual field. These terms are not neutral. They constitute a way of seeing and ordering.

What follows is not a final definition, but a clarification of how these words are used here.

Diorama

Originally the word diorama refers to a constructed spatial scene in which perspective, scale, and coherence are already determined.

What is shown is not the world as such, but a configured presentation.

In this book the term "diorama" is used as a model for experiential configuration.

A diorama is:

- a coherent set of assumptions
- within which certain distinctions appear self-evident
- while others do not appear at all
- and within which what counts as real is already implicitly ordered

The term does not suggest that the world is fictional.

It makes visible that experience always appears already structured.

A diorama is not an illusion. It is a configuration.

World

Here "world" does not refer to the physical universe.

It refers to the way reality appears within a coherent framework.

A world includes:

- what counts as real
- what counts as illusion
- what counts as liberation

- what counts as a problem
- what or who appears as subject

When this book speaks of "nondual worlds" it does not imply multiple physical universes.

It indicates different coherent structures within which reality is interpreted and organized.

A world is therefore an experiential and meaningful framework.

Configuration

The term "configuration" emphasizes that a world does not consist of isolated elements.

It is a network of interdependent positions.

When one element shifts, for example the status of the self, the whole shifts.

The term avoids two misunderstandings.

First, that a world is merely a collection of ideas.

Second, that it is an arbitrary construction.

A configuration has internal coherence. It sustains itself as long as its distinctions remain convincing.

Grid

The word "grid" refers to the analytic scheme used in this book to compare different articulations.

The grid does not claim neutrality.

It functions as an instrument to make visible:

- where a ground is assumed
- how liberation is understood
- what happens to the person
- whether hierarchy emerges

The grid is not a final measure. It is a tool. It clarifies difference without reducing it.

Fundamental

When this analysis speaks of a "ground" or of something as fundamental, it refers to that which is treated as ultimately real and from which other phenomena derive their status.

This may be explicit, such as Brahman or consciousness.

It may also function implicitly, for example when the absence of ground becomes itself unquestionable.

The term is used descriptively, not polemically.

Position

"Position" does not mean a consciously chosen theory.

It refers to the place from which speaking and thinking occur.

Every articulation, including the denial of all positions, has a structure within which certain statements are possible and others are not.

To name a position is not to disqualify it.

It makes its contours visible.

Concluding Remark

The terms used here form a world of their own.

The word "diorama" is not an escape from all frameworks. It is a way of rendering frameworks visible.

The analysis that follows does not claim a final ground.

It offers a way of seeing in which differences become articulate without one being declared definitive.

On the Position of This Book

This analysis does not stand outside language.

The terms used here, such as world, structure, and position, are not neutral labels. They form a particular way of seeing.

This book does not claim a final standpoint. It offers no alternative ground and no corrected version of nonduality. It attempts to make visible how different articulations function.

The chosen approach can itself be questioned. It installs no new liberation and no new hierarchy. Yet it is not without perspective.

What happens here is not an escape from positions, but an attempt to render positions recognizable.

Chapter 1

Nonduality as Philosophy and as Experience

Under the name nonduality two different dimensions are often brought together that do not automatically coincide:

- Nonduality as worldview or philosophy of life
- Nonduality as lived experience

These two are frequently conflated.

1. Nonduality as Philosophy

Here nonduality functions as a coherent worldview.

Statements are made such as:

- everything is one reality
- the self does not exist

- consciousness is the only reality
- there is no separate doer

These function as theoretical positions. They organize how reality is interpreted.

In this form nonduality is an interpretive framework. It determines:

- what counts as real
- what counts as illusion
- what liberation means
- how suffering is understood

As philosophy, nonduality stands alongside other worldviews. It offers a structured way of understanding existence.

2. Nonduality as Experience

Here nonduality is not presented as theory, but as direct experience.

Descriptions may include:

- the disappearance of the boundary between self and world
- a sense of unity

- absence of a separate center
- immediate presence without interpretation

In this context nonduality refers to how experience appears, not to what is metaphysically true.

Such experience may be temporary or enduring. Mild or disruptive.

Crucially, experience alone does not establish ontology.

A feeling of unity does not in itself prove that there is only one ultimate reality.

3. The Confusion

In the nondual field these two levels are often intertwined.

An experience of unity is interpreted as evidence of metaphysical unity.

An ontological claim is presented as something directly observable.

A circular movement emerges:

- experience confirms theory
- theory explains experience

Yet they belong to different levels.

An experience can occur without being interpreted as ultimate truth.

A philosophy can be adopted without any specific experiential shift.

4. Four Possible Combinations

Once the distinction is made, several positions become visible:

Experience without metaphysics. A shift is described without ontological claims.

Metaphysics without specific experience. Nonduality is affirmed as conviction.

Experience interpreted as ontology. A felt unity becomes proof of ultimate unity.

Dismantling of both. Theory and experience alike are relativized.

This differentiation clarifies why articulations of nonduality diverge so strongly.

5. Place Within This Book

Experiences are not denied. They are distinguished from the interpretations attached to them.

An experience of the absence of self is not in itself a theory.

But once it is formulated as "there is no self," a philosophical position has been taken.

This book examines those positions.

That does not reduce experience. It renders its interpretive frame visible.

6. Caution

The distinction between philosophy and experience is analytic. In lived situations they often interweave.

Whoever undergoes a shift seeks language for it.

Whoever adopts a theory may begin to interpret experience differently.

For that reason the two levels must nevertheless be distinguished.

Chapter 2

1. Nonduality as One Reality

In this approach nonduality means that there is ultimately only one reality. The multiplicity of appearances, including personal life, is understood as expression, manifestation, or appearance of a single ground. That ground may be called consciousness, being, Brahman, God, or pure awareness.

The central claim is simple. There are not two realities. What appears separate is not truly independent from the ground out of which it appears.

Within this view liberation has a clear meaning. It consists in recognizing that one is not the limited individual, but that one reality itself. What seemed to be a separate self was never truly apart from the ground.

This articulation has considerable appeal. It offers coherence. The world is situated within a larger whole. Personal life is not denied, but interpreted as expression of something more fundamental.

Yet tensions arise.

If one ultimate ground is affirmed, a fundamental reference point is installed. However carefully formulated, something is treated as more real than the multiplicity of appearances. This raises the question of the status of those appearances. Are they less real? Dependent? Secondary?

A second tension concerns hierarchy. If liberation is recognition of the ground, a distinction emerges between those who recognize it and those who do not. Even if this distinction is denied at the level of the ground, it often operates implicitly at the level of teaching and community.

These tensions do not invalidate the position. They reveal that nonduality here is not merely the negation of duality, but a positive claim about what is ultimately real.

That is a definite position.

2. Nonduality as the Dismantling of Every Ground

In this approach nonduality does not mean that everything is ultimately one, but that no reality possesses a fixed and independent core. Any attempt to designate an ultimate ground is regarded as a new fixation.

What appears, appears without enduring foundation. There is no hidden substance behind the multiplicity of phenomena. The idea of an unchanging reality upon which everything rests is itself brought into question.

Here nonduality takes on a different meaning. It is not a positive claim about what is ultimately real, but an undermining of such claims. Not one reality instead of many, but the collapse of the distinction between fundamental and derived.

Liberation is understood differently as well. It is not recognition of a ground, but release from the need for one. Not discovery of what was always present, but the seeing through of the impulse to secure reality.

This approach has its own appeal. It prevents nonduality from becoming a metaphysical system. It resists elevating emptiness, consciousness, or unity into new substances.

Yet tensions appear here too.

If every ground is denied, does this denial itself function as a ground? Does the absence of fixed essence become an unquestioned principle? And from what position is dismantling carried out?

Another question concerns liberation. If there is no fixed core and no ultimate ground, what changes when one "sees"? Is there a shift, or only the falling away of a belief?

Here as well nonduality is not a simple negation of duality, but a specific way of speaking about reality and experience.

That too is a definite position.

3. Nonduality as Direct Experience

In this approach the central question is not what is ultimately real, but what presents itself here and now. Nonduality refers to a shift in perspective in which the separation between observer and observed appears less self-evident.

There is seeing, hearing, sensing. Yet when examined closely, it becomes difficult to locate a separate center that owns or controls this experience. What once appeared as a firm boundary between "self" and "world" no longer seems fixed.

Nonduality here is not formulated ontologically. It is not presented as a theory about the nature of reality, but as direct recognition. The concern is not explanation of what exists, but observation of how experience appears.

Liberation is often described as the falling away of misunderstanding. Not transition into another reality, but insight into how the sense of separation is constructed. The world remains what it is, but the relationship to it shifts.

This approach has clear appeal. It avoids elaborate metaphysical systems and appeals to what seems immediately verifiable. There is no appeal to hidden ground, but to direct observation.

Yet questions arise.

When this shift is described as liberating, does it not implicitly establish a norm? Does a distinction appear between those who see and those who do not? And if experience becomes the measure of what is real, does it not function as a new criterion?

Moreover, even when no ground is explicitly named, the absence of a center may still be thought against the background of something that holds everything together. What remains unspoken may still operate structurally.

Here too nonduality is not merely negation of duality, but a specific articulation of experience and reality.

That is again a definite position.

4. Nonduality as Radical Denial

In this approach even the idea of recognition or shift is questioned. There is no separate individual who can attain, understand, or realize anything. Speaking of liberation, awakening, or insight is regarded as part of the illusion of the seeker.

Nonduality does not refer to a state and not to an experience. There is no process and no transition. What appears simply appears. There is no hidden center that must be freed from misunderstanding.

The structure of before and after is rejected. There is no ignorance to overcome and no enlightenment to attain. Every spiritual trajectory is seen as confirmation of the belief that something is missing.

This approach has a certain stark clarity. It refuses consolation and future promise. It strips nonduality of developmental narrative and hierarchical structure.

Yet tensions remain.

When it is stated that there is no one and no liberation, a claim is nevertheless made. That claim may function as a position even while denying all positions. The denial of hierarchy may generate a new distinction between those who "get it" and those who continue seeking.

There is also the question of language. If every structure of meaning is undermined, what happens when speaking continues? Does speech itself not reintroduce structure?

Here again nonduality is articulated in a specific way. The radical refusal of process and attainment is not absence of position, but a position of refusal.

5. Nonduality as Integration of the Human

In this approach nonduality is not framed as denial of human experience, but as its inclusion. Emotions, relationships, trauma, doubt, vulnerability are not obstacles to be removed, but expressions of what is.

Nonduality does not primarily refer to ontological ground or dismantling of all positions. It refers to a way of being present in which nothing is excluded. There is no higher reality opposed to everyday life. The ordinary is not reduced to illusion and not denied.

Liberation here often takes on a softer meaning. Not a radical break and not an endpoint, but a relaxation of resistance. Not attainment of another state, but the fading of the need to be different from what one is.

This approach has obvious appeal. It avoids metaphysical abstraction and avoids radical negation. It makes room for psychological process without elevating it to ultimate solution.

Yet questions arise here as well.

If everything is included, is distinction still possible? Does nonduality become a form of acceptance psychology? And if sharp denial is

softened, does the original radical edge of nonduality dissolve into lifestyle?

Even this articulation forms a definite position within the field. It is neither ontological grounding nor radical refusal, but a specific way of situating nonduality within human life.

6. Comparative Sketch of the Five Approaches

The five ways of articulating nonduality differ not only in tone, but in structure. They situate reality, liberation, and the person in distinct ways.

1. Where does the emphasis lie?

Ontological unity emphasizes what is ultimately real. The question is: what is the ground of everything that appears?

The dismantling of every ground emphasizes the undermining of such claims. The question is: can any ultimate ground be designated at all?

Direct experience focuses on what is given here and now. The question is: how does experience appear when examined closely?

Radical denial undercuts the entire framework of seeking and finding. The question is not what is true, but whether there is anyone who must know.

Integrative nonduality centers the human condition as a whole. The question is: what happens when nothing is excluded?

2. What happens to liberation?

In ontological unity, liberation is recognition of the ground.

In dismantling approaches, liberation is release from the need for a ground.

In direct experience, liberation is insight into the constructed nature of separation.

In radical denial, liberation as an idea is rejected.

In integrative nonduality, liberation is often described as relaxation, integration, or the fading of resistance.

The same word carries different temporal structures. In some cases there is decisive transition. In others transition itself is denied.

3. What happens to the seeker?

In ontological unity, the seeker is someone who has not yet recognized their true nature.

In dismantling approaches, the seeker is seen as constructed, though not always denied.

In direct experience, the seeker is examined within experience itself.

In radical denial, the seeker is the central misunderstanding.

In integrative approaches, the seeker is often treated with patience. Seeking is part of the human process.

4. Is a ground assumed?

Ontological unity: yes, explicitly.

Dismantling approaches: no, every ground is questioned.

Direct experience: not necessarily, though sometimes implicitly.

Radical denial: no, not even absence is treated as ground.

Integrative nonduality: usually no explicit ground, though values such as presence or acceptance may function structurally.

5. Does hierarchy emerge?

Ontological unity: often yes, between recognition and ignorance.

Dismantling approaches: hierarchy is resisted, but may arise implicitly.

Direct experience: can become normative when experience functions as criterion.

Radical denial: denies hierarchy, but may differentiate itself from seeking.

Integrative nonduality: minimizes hierarchy, yet may install an ideal of openness.

Provisional Conclusion

The differences between these approaches are not merely terminological. They concern the placement of reality, time, experience, and the person.

Yet they circulate under the same name.

Nonduality therefore does not designate a single position, but a field of distinct architectures. Whoever speaks of nonduality speaks from within one of these structures, explicitly or implicitly.

On Involvement and Preference

My own development has brought me closer to articulations of nonduality that do not install an ontological ground and that do not affirm hierarchy between the awakened and the unawakened.

In that sense I feel affinity with voices that question the structure of seeking itself and that are cautious in speaking of higher states.

What follows is not a confirmation of that affinity.

It remains a description of different articulations as they present themselves.

Part II

Classical Articulations

When nonduality is discussed, reference is often made to older traditions in which the idea of an indivisible reality was systematically developed.

These traditions do not form a homogeneous background. They differ in metaphysical commitment, in language, and in practice. What connects them is not a shared doctrine, but a sustained attempt to rethink the division between self and reality at a fundamental level.

The traditions discussed here are not treated as origins that explain later discourse. They are historical articulations in which comparable questions were developed within different contexts.

In each of them nonduality appears in a distinct configuration. Sometimes it is formulated as a clear ontological claim. Sometimes it

takes an apophatic form. Sometimes it is primarily practical and experiential.

These classical traditions are not presented as foundations upon which later articulations rest. They appear as specific configurations within the broader field that circulates under the name nonduality.

They too are read as worlds, each with its own ontological commitment, soteriological structure, and relation to the person.

The aim is not to reconstruct an origin, but to make visible how nonduality took shape in different historical contexts.

Chapter 3

Advaita Vedanta

In Advaita Vedanta nonduality is formulated explicitly and systematically in ontological terms. In the work of Adi Shankara the thesis that Atman and Brahman are not two receives a developed metaphysical foundation. The deepest self and ultimate reality coincide. The experience of separateness rests on avidya, ignorance, which makes infinite consciousness appear as a limited individual.

This articulation distinguishes different levels of reality. On the everyday level the world functions with its distinctions and causality. On the highest level there is only Brahman, unchanging and without a second. The world of appearances is not simply denied, but its independent reality is relativized. It is often described as maya, not as pure illusion, but as dependent and provisional.

Later teachers such as Ramana Maharshi express this in less scholastic terms. The question “Who am I?” functions as a direct pointer to that which precedes every identification. Yet here too the ontological

commitment remains intact: the true self is not the body or the mind, but the timeless consciousness in which these appear.

Realization means seeing through misidentification. What remains is not a newly acquired state, but recognition of what has always been the case. In this way nonduality acquires a clear hierarchical structure. There is knowledge and ignorance, the relative and the absolute, the changing and the unchanging.

It is precisely this clarity that raises questions. When Brahman is affirmed as the only reality, how exactly should the status of maya be understood? Is the world of appearances truly nothing other than Brahman, or does an asymmetry remain between the absolute and the relative? And when liberation is linked to knowledge of the absolute, does there not remain an implicit distinction between those who know and those who do not?

In Advaita Vedanta nonduality appears as consistent ontological monism, connected with liberation from existential suffering. It offers systematic clarity, but does so by assigning clear priority to the absolute over the appearing. The separation between self and reality is not merely psychologically dissolved, but metaphysically denied.

Zen

In Zen Buddhism nonduality is not primarily articulated as an ontological doctrine, but as direct practice. Rather than establishing a metaphysical system, Zen emphasizes immediate experience and the dismantling of conceptual fixation.

Central to Zen is the insight that reality does not divide itself into subject and object in the way ordinary thinking assumes. The separation between observer and observed is not affirmed as ultimate. Yet this is not replaced by a positive metaphysical claim about an underlying unity.

The language of emptiness plays an important role. Emptiness does not indicate a hidden substance or a deeper ground. It refers to the absence of independent essence. Things arise in interdependence and have no fixed core. This includes the self.

In Zen, awakening is not described as discovering a metaphysical identity, but as seeing through the habitual structuring of experience. The emphasis lies on direct realization rather than theoretical formulation. Koans, meditation practice, and teacher-student interaction function as means to interrupt conceptual closure.

Yet even here structural elements become visible. There is talk of awakening and non-awakening, of delusion and insight. Although

Zen often resists systematic hierarchy, a difference between seeing and not seeing remains operative.

Moreover, the refusal of metaphysical formulation does not eliminate structure. The insistence on immediacy and emptiness can itself become a stable orientation. The rejection of ontological grounding may function as a principled stance.

In Zen nonduality appears less as monism and more as the collapse of rigid distinctions. It does not affirm a single substance behind phenomena. It questions the assumption that phenomena possess fixed and independent identity.

Where Advaita establishes a clear ultimate ground, Zen destabilizes every attempt at fixation. Nonduality here is not unity as substance, but the fluidity of dependent arising.

Taoism

In Taoism nonduality appears in a different tone and structure. The Tao is not presented as a metaphysical substance in the strict sense, nor as a personal absolute. It is described as the way or course of things, the underlying process in which opposites arise and transform.

The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao. From the outset language is relativized. What is pointed to cannot be fixed in

conceptual form. Nonduality here does not take the form of systematic ontology, but of alignment with what unfolds.

Dualities such as being and non-being, action and non-action, strength and weakness are not denied. They are seen as mutually dependent. Each pole implies the other. The emphasis lies not on eliminating distinction, but on recognizing their dynamic interplay.

The principle of wu wei, often translated as non-action, does not mean passivity. It indicates action in accordance with the Tao, without forcing or resisting. The separation between self and world softens when activity is no longer driven by assertion and control.

Unlike Advaita, Taoism does not clearly distinguish between ultimate and relative reality. The Tao is not sharply separated from the world of appearances. Nor is there a detailed soteriological structure of ignorance and liberation.

Yet a normative dimension remains. Living in harmony with the Tao is valued. Acting against it leads to disharmony. Even without metaphysical absolutism, an orientation toward balance and naturalness is present.

Nonduality in Taoism therefore does not appear as ontological monism or radical negation. It appears as attunement. Not discovery of an ultimate ground, but participation in a larger movement that precedes deliberate control.

Dzogchen

Dzogchen, originating within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, presents nonduality in a distinct manner. Rather than constructing a systematic metaphysics, it points directly to what is called the nature of mind.

This nature is described as empty and luminous. Empty in the sense that it lacks fixed essence. Luminous in the sense that appearance and awareness are inseparable. What appears does not arise apart from knowing.

Unlike classical Madhyamaka, Dzogchen often speaks more positively about this immediacy. The ground is not introduced as substance, yet there is explicit reference to a primordial condition that is already complete.

Recognition plays a central role. Liberation is not gradual construction, but direct recognition of what is always already present. Nothing needs to be added or purified in principle. What obscures recognition is misunderstanding, not lack.

Practice in Dzogchen therefore consists in introduction and stabilization. The teacher points out the nature of mind. The practitioner learns to remain without distraction in that recognition.

Here a delicate balance emerges. On the one hand, there is no ultimate substance affirmed. On the other hand, the language of primordial awareness can approach ontological formulation. The distinction between empty nature and luminous appearance may begin to resemble a subtle grounding.

As in other traditions, hierarchy can arise. Recognition and non-recognition function as meaningful distinctions. Although the nature of mind is said to be universal, the difference between recognizing it and not recognizing it structures the path.

In Dzogchen nonduality appears as immediate presence that is both empty and cognizant. It neither constructs a strict metaphysical monism nor reduces everything to negation. Instead it emphasizes the inseparability of emptiness and appearance within lived awareness.

Christian Mysticism

Within Christian mysticism nonduality does not appear as systematic ontology, but as experiential theology. The emphasis lies not on metaphysical monism, but on union with God.

Figures such as Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, and the author of The Cloud of Unknowing articulate a path in which the soul is purified of images, concepts, and attachments. The movement is one of detachment and surrender.

God is not described as an object among objects, nor as a being within the world. God transcends conceptual grasp. Yet this transcendence does not dissolve the distinction between Creator and creature. The language of union coexists with the language of difference.

In Meister Eckhart one encounters formulations that approach nondual expression. The ground of the soul and the ground of God are said to be one ground. At the same time, orthodox theology maintains distinction. The tension is not resolved into metaphysical identity.

Apophatic language plays a central role. God is beyond being, beyond name, beyond concept. Negation is used not to deny God, but to protect divine transcendence from fixation.

Liberation, or salvation, is not self-recognition in the Advaitic sense. It is transformation through grace. The initiative is not solely human. The structure remains relational.

Here nonduality appears within a theistic framework. The separation between self and God is not simply declared illusory. It is traversed in union, while difference is not entirely abolished.

From the perspective of this analysis, Christian mysticism forms a distinct configuration. It shares with other nondual articulations the critique of egoic selfhood and the move beyond rigid subject-object division. Yet it retains a theological structure that resists ontological monism.

Union does not eliminate relation. Nonduality here is experienced as intimacy without collapse of transcendence.

Part III

Transitional Figures

With the transition to modern teachers and interpreters, nonduality begins to shift in tone and emphasis. The classical traditions were embedded in broader religious and philosophical systems. Their language was shaped by established metaphysical and theological frameworks.

In the twentieth century and beyond, nonduality increasingly appears outside these traditional structures. It is detached from monastic context, ritual, and formal doctrine. What remains is often a distilled articulation, sometimes psychological, sometimes existential, sometimes radically simplified.

The figures discussed in this section do not simply repeat classical formulations. Nor do they fully abandon them. They reinterpret, translate, or intensify earlier articulations within a modern horizon.

Nonduality here begins to circulate in a new field.

Chapter 4

Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi stands historically within the line of Advaita Vedanta, yet his articulation differs in tone and method. Where Shankara presents a developed metaphysical system, Ramana speaks almost exclusively through direct indication.

The core of his approach is self-inquiry. The question "Who am I?" is not a theoretical reflection, but an instrument that turns attention back toward the source of the "I"-sense. The focus is not analysis of the world, but investigation of the one who experiences themselves as separate.

Ontologically, Ramana remains within the Advaitic structure. The Self is not a psychological center, but the only reality. Body, mind, and world appear within this consciousness. Realization means seeing through identification with the personal.

Yet a shift takes place. The emphasis lies less on systematic ontology and more on direct recognition. There is no extended cosmology, no

elaborate distinction between levels of reality. The path is radically simple: trace the "I"-thought back to its origin.

In this sense Ramana forms a transition. The classical ontological ground remains intact, but scholastic formulation gives way to existential inquiry. Nonduality becomes less a metaphysical system and more a direct pointing.

At the same time the soteriological structure remains. There is ignorance and there is realization. There is misidentification and there is recognition. The distinction between knowing and not knowing is not abolished, but implicitly maintained.

Ramana Maharshi shows how a classical ontology can shift toward a direct practice of self-inquiry without fully abandoning its ground.

Nisargadatta Maharaj

Nisargadatta Maharaj stands in the lineage of Advaita, yet his articulation is sharper and more confrontational than that of Ramana. His dialogues, later collected in works such as I Am That, present nonduality in a stripped-down form.

Central in his teaching is the sense "I am." This basic sense of being is distinguished from all qualities, memories, and personal

characteristics. One is asked to remain with the bare feeling of existence prior to identification.

Ontologically, Nisargadatta retains the Advaitic structure. There is an ultimate reality beyond the personal. The manifest world is transient and dependent. The individual is not the final truth.

Yet his language is less systematic and more direct. The emphasis lies not on metaphysical exposition, but on dismantling identification. Questioning is used to destabilize every position the interlocutor takes.

Realization is described as recognition of what precedes body and mind. At the same time, Nisargadatta often speaks of the Absolute beyond even consciousness. In this respect, his articulation can become more radical than classical Advaita. Consciousness itself is not ultimate, but an appearance within the Absolute.

A hierarchy remains present. There is knowledge and ignorance. There is clarity and confusion. Even when it is said that all is the Absolute, the distinction between recognition and non-recognition structures the dialogue.

Nisargadatta thus intensifies Advaita. The ontological ground remains, but is expressed in existential and sometimes uncompromising language. Nonduality here becomes both metaphysical claim and direct existential challenge.

H. W. L. Poonja (Papaji)

H. W. L. Poonja, often called Papaji, was a direct student of Ramana Maharshi. His articulation of nonduality shifts the emphasis further toward immediacy.

Where Ramana centers sustained self-inquiry, Papaji repeatedly points to the possibility of instantaneous recognition. No preparation, no gradual purification, no extended discipline are ultimately required. What one seeks is already present.

Ontologically, the Advaitic structure remains recognizable. The true nature of the individual is not separate from ultimate reality. Misidentification alone sustains the sense of bondage.

Yet Papaji's language reduces the path to a decisive moment. "Stop." "Be quiet." "See what is here." The structure of gradual development recedes. Recognition is not presented as culmination of effort, but as simple seeing.

This shift has consequences.

The soteriological structure becomes compressed. Ignorance and realization remain distinct, but the temporal distance between them is minimized. Liberation is not future attainment, but immediate possibility.

At the same time, a subtle hierarchy persists. The teacher confirms recognition. The distinction between those who have seen and those who have not remains operative, even if it is described as provisional.

Papaji marks a further transition. The ontological ground is retained, yet the emphasis moves toward direct and often dramatic breakthrough. Nonduality becomes less a philosophical position and more a performative encounter.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho)

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho, presents nonduality within a broad and eclectic spiritual framework. Unlike the relative austerity of Advaita or the sharp directness of Papaji, his articulation is expansive, psychological, and often deliberately provocative.

Osho draws on multiple traditions: Zen, Tantra, Sufism, Christianity, Taoism. Nonduality is not confined to a single doctrinal structure. It becomes part of a wider vision of transformation that includes meditation techniques, emotional release, celebration, and individual freedom.

Ontologically, Osho sometimes speaks in Advaitic terms. Consciousness is presented as fundamental. The individual ego is seen as a construction. Yet he does not consistently develop a systematic metaphysics. His language shifts depending on context and audience.

What becomes central is the transformation of the individual. Liberation is not only insight into nonduality, but a release from repression, conditioning, and social constraint. Psychological freedom and existential authenticity are emphasized.

The soteriological structure is therefore strong. There is a before and an after. There is unconsciousness and there is awakening. The teacher plays a central role in catalyzing this shift.

At the same time, Osho's approach introduces complexity. The dismantling of ego is intertwined with therapeutic processes. Nonduality does not stand apart from human development. It is integrated into a broader vision of growth and celebration.

Hierarchy is present in practice. The awakened master occupies a distinct position. Even if all are said to possess the same essential nature, the difference between realization and non-realization structures the community.

Osho thus represents a transitional configuration in which classical nonduality is reframed within modern psychological and existential concerns. The ontological ground is not abandoned, but it becomes less central than the transformative process.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Jiddu Krishnamurti occupies a singular position within modern articulations of nonduality. Although often associated with Eastern thought, he consistently rejected affiliation with any tradition, system, or authority.

Nonduality in his work does not appear as ontological monism. He rarely speaks of an ultimate ground or a metaphysical Absolute. Instead, his focus lies on the structure of thought and the psychological division it produces.

Central to his inquiry is the observation that the observer and the observed are not fundamentally separate. The division between thinker and thought, experiencer and experience, is examined as a construction of memory and conditioning.

Krishnamurti does not offer a method in the traditional sense. He repeatedly insists that truth cannot be approached through organized practice or gradual development. Authority, including spiritual authority, is regarded as an obstacle.

Yet this refusal of method does not mean absence of intensity. He calls for choiceless awareness, a form of attention in which psychological movement is seen without distortion. This attention is not cultivated as technique, but invited as immediate fact.

Soteriologically, there remains a difference between confusion and clarity. Although Krishnamurti denies the structure of path and attainment, he speaks of radical transformation of the mind. The possibility of such transformation gives his inquiry urgency.

There is no explicit metaphysical ground affirmed. Reality is not described as a single substance. Instead, the emphasis lies on the ending of psychological division.

Krishnamurti thus marks a decisive shift. Nonduality is no longer framed primarily in ontological terms, but as dissolution of inner fragmentation. Authority is dismantled. Tradition is questioned. Yet the seriousness of liberation remains.

U. G. Krishnamurti

U. G. Krishnamurti represents one of the most radical breaks within modern articulations often associated with nonduality. Although his name is frequently linked to spiritual discourse, he rejected both the label and the entire framework of enlightenment.

He denied the existence of a spiritual path, denied the possibility of transformation in the traditional sense, and dismissed the very idea of self-realization as cultural fiction. According to him, what is sought does not exist.

Unlike Advaita or even Jiddu Krishnamurti, U. G. does not articulate an alternative vision. He does not replace one metaphysical structure with another. He refuses the entire structure of seeking.

The notion of enlightenment is treated as projection. The promise of liberation sustains psychological continuity. Teachers, traditions, and spiritual experiences are interpreted as extensions of desire.

In this articulation, there is no ground to discover and no ignorance to overcome. There is no meaningful distinction between bondage and liberation. The human organism functions as it does, without spiritual dimension.

Yet even this refusal carries structure. The rejection of enlightenment becomes a decisive stance. The dismantling of spiritual language forms its own coherence.

Hierarchy is explicitly denied. There is no awakened individual and no path to awakening. But the clarity of this denial can itself create distinction between those who accept the critique and those who continue to seek.

U. G. thus radicalizes the movement already visible in Jiddu Krishnamurti. Nonduality dissolves into a critique of the entire spiritual enterprise. What remains is not metaphysical unity, nor experiential insight, but uncompromising negation of the search itself.

Alan Watts

Alan Watts occupies a different position within the modern transmission of nonduality. Rather than presenting himself as a realized teacher or radical critic, he functions primarily as interpreter and cultural mediator.

Watts translated elements of Zen, Taoism, and Advaita into a language accessible to Western audiences. His articulation is philosophical, playful, and often metaphorical. Nonduality appears less as doctrine and more as shift in perception.

Central in his exposition is the critique of the isolated ego. The sense of being a separate center, cut off from the universe, is described as cultural conditioning. The individual is not an independent entity, but an expression of the whole.

Ontologically, Watts does not consistently construct a metaphysical system. At times he speaks in terms close to Advaita, describing reality as a single process or unified field. At other times he emphasizes relationality and interdependence in a manner closer to Taoism or Zen.

Liberation in his work is not framed as dramatic breakthrough. It often appears as recognition of one's participation in a larger movement. The seriousness of salvation is softened into existential clarity.

Hierarchy is generally minimized. Watts does not position himself as exclusive authority. Yet the distinction between seeing and not seeing remains implicit in his exposition.

His contribution lies less in systematic formulation and more in translation. Nonduality is reframed as a way of understanding the human condition within modern culture.

Watts thus completes the arc of transitional figures. The movement from classical ontology to modern reinterpretation becomes visible. Nonduality is no longer confined to traditional religious structures. It circulates as philosophical reflection, psychological critique, and cultural narrative.

Concluding Reflection

The figures discussed in this section do not form a unified school. They differ in tone, method, and emphasis. Yet together they mark a shift.

In the classical traditions nonduality was embedded in broader metaphysical and religious systems. In these transitional figures that embedding loosens. Ontology becomes less scholastic. Language becomes more direct. The individual teacher becomes more visible.

Ramana and Nisargadatta retain the Advaitic ground, but reduce systematic exposition. Papaji intensifies immediacy. Osho integrates

psychological and existential dimensions. Jiddu Krishnamurti dismantles authority and method. U. G. rejects the entire structure of enlightenment. Alan Watts translates nonduality into cultural and philosophical language.

Across these articulations, the relation between ontology, experience, and liberation shifts.

The ultimate ground may remain, but its formulation becomes less systematic. The path may remain, but it is compressed into immediacy. Authority may be rejected, yet a distinct voice remains central.

Nonduality here becomes mobile. It detaches from strict doctrinal frameworks and begins to circulate in modern culture. It is reinterpreted, intensified, psychologized, radicalized, or translated.

At the same time, structural elements persist. Questions of ground, hierarchy, and liberation do not disappear. They are reformulated.

These transitional figures prepare the terrain for contemporary articulations in which nonduality becomes even more diverse, and sometimes more extreme.

Part IV

Contemporary Articulations

In recent decades nonduality has detached itself almost entirely from traditional religious frameworks. It circulates through books, gatherings, online dialogues, and individual teachers who operate independently of established institutions.

The language becomes more varied. Some articulate nonduality as ontological clarity. Others as psychological deconstruction. Others as radical negation of the entire spiritual project.

The differences between these voices are often obscured by shared terminology. Words such as awareness, presence, freedom, and no-self continue to circulate, but their structural placement differs.

What becomes visible here is not unity of doctrine, but plurality of configurations.

These contemporary articulations are not treated as deviations from an original core. They are read as worlds in their own right, each with its

own ontological commitment, soteriological structure, and relation to the person.

The field becomes more explicit in its diversity.

Chapter 5

Rupert Spira

Rupert Spira presents nonduality in explicitly ontological terms. Central to his articulation is the claim that awareness is the fundamental reality in which all experience appears.

The starting point is phenomenological. Attention is directed toward immediate experience. Thoughts, sensations, perceptions arise and pass. Yet that in which they arise, awareness itself, does not come and go. It is described as continuous, open, and self-knowing.

From this observation a broader claim follows. Awareness is not merely a feature of the individual mind. It is the universal ground of all appearances. The apparent multiplicity of selves and objects is understood as modulation of one and the same awareness.

Liberation, in this framework, is recognition of this fact. The separate self is not an independent entity, but a set of thoughts and sensations appearing in awareness. When this is seen, the identification with a personal center relaxes.

Spira frequently distinguishes between awareness and the contents of experience. Awareness is said to be independent of what appears within it. Objects depend on awareness, but awareness does not depend on objects.

In this way a clear ontological asymmetry is installed. Awareness functions as ground. The world and the individual are appearances within that ground.

Although the language is often gentle and experiential, the structure is metaphysical. Awareness is not merely descriptive of experience. It is affirmed as the ultimate reality.

A soteriological dimension remains present. There is ignorance of one's true nature and there is recognition. The difference between these states is meaningful, even if it is described as the recognition of what has always been the case.

Hierarchy is minimized rhetorically, yet the distinction between recognizing and not recognizing awareness structures the teaching.

In Spira's articulation, nonduality appears as contemporary ontological monism. The metaphysical ground is retained, but expressed in phenomenological language. Awareness functions as the fundamental principle from which all multiplicity derives its apparent existence.

Robert Saltzman

Robert Saltzman articulates nonduality in a markedly different tone. Although often associated with the radical nondual milieu, his language is less concerned with ontological grounding and more with the texture of lived experience.

He does not systematically affirm awareness as ultimate reality. Nor does he construct a metaphysical framework. Instead, he points toward the ordinariness of what is already the case.

In his articulation, nothing needs to be added, removed, or transformed. The movement of seeking is itself part of what appears. The promise of awakening is treated with suspicion, not as false in principle, but as structurally bound to dissatisfaction.

Liberation, if the word is used at all, is not framed as attainment or recognition of a higher state. It is closer to the falling away of the need for improvement. Nothing special replaces the search. What remains is this, without enhancement.

Saltzman avoids installing a new ground. Awareness may be mentioned, but not as metaphysical foundation. There is no strong asymmetry between ground and appearance. The emphasis lies on the immediacy of experience without interpretation.

Hierarchy is implicitly minimized. There is no clear distinction between those who have realized and those who have not. The tone is conversational rather than declarative.

Yet structure remains. The refusal of metaphysics is itself a position. The dismantling of spiritual ambition functions as critique of the traditional soteriological scheme.

In Saltzman's articulation, nonduality appears as existential sobriety. Not as unity of substance, not as dramatic awakening, but as the simple absence of a problem that needed solving.

Tony Parsons

Tony Parsons represents one of the most radical contemporary articulations often associated with nonduality. His message is uncompromising: there is no separate individual, no path, no choice, and no possibility of becoming liberated.

Nonduality is not presented as a philosophy, nor as an experience to be attained. It is described as what is already the case. Everything that appears simply appears. There is no one to whom it happens.

The central claim is stark. The sense of being a separate self is an illusion. It arises as a contraction within what is already whole. The search for enlightenment is itself the expression of this contraction.

Liberation, in the traditional sense, is denied. There is no awakening event for an individual. There is no transformation from ignorance to knowledge. The entire structure of before and after collapses.

In this articulation, ontology is minimized in explicit form. There is no systematic claim that awareness is ultimate reality. Yet what remains is often described as wholeness or what is. This can function implicitly as undifferentiated totality.

Hierarchy is rhetorically rejected. There are no teachers and no students. There is only what is happening. Yet the clarity of this statement can generate distinction between those who resonate with it and those who continue to seek.

The tone is often abrupt. There is no encouragement, no method, no consolation. The message is not progressive but absolute.

In Parsons' articulation, nonduality appears as radical negation of the spiritual project. The search is exposed as unnecessary. Nothing needs to be done because there is no one to do it.

This position eliminates soteriology entirely. Yet in doing so, it forms one of the most clearly defined contemporary configurations within the nondual field.

Richard Lang

Richard Lang continues the work of Douglas Harding and the so-called Headless Way. His articulation of nonduality is explicitly experiential and method-oriented, yet without heavy metaphysical framing.

The central invitation is simple: look for your head. When attention turns toward the place from which perception occurs, no face or object is found. Instead there is openness. The world appears where one expected a personal center.

This shift is not presented as mystical event, but as immediate fact available to direct inspection. Exercises are offered to make this visible. The emphasis lies on seeing rather than believing.

Ontologically, Lang does not insist on a developed metaphysical system. He sometimes speaks of awareness or space, yet without systematic grounding. The language remains descriptive rather than doctrinal.

Liberation, in this framework, is not dramatic breakthrough. It is recognition of what is already evident when attention is properly directed. The individual self is not abolished as functional identity, but seen as appearance within a wider field.

Hierarchy is generally minimized. The exercises are accessible to anyone. Recognition is not dependent on long preparation or initiation.

Yet structure remains. There is a difference between overlooking and seeing. There is guidance. The exercises presuppose that something has not yet been noticed.

In Lang's articulation, nonduality appears as direct perceptual shift. It does not construct a heavy ontology, nor does it dismantle language entirely. It invites a simple reversal of attention in which the presumed center dissolves into openness.

Jeff Foster

Jeff Foster articulates nonduality in a tone that differs markedly from both ontological monism and radical denial. His emphasis lies on inclusion rather than transcendence.

In his early work, nonduality was expressed in language close to radical immediacy. The absence of a separate self and the futility of seeking were central themes. Over time, however, his articulation shifted toward a more explicitly human register.

Suffering, trauma, doubt, and emotional vulnerability are not treated as obstacles to awakening. They are not bypassed in favor of

metaphysical clarity. Instead, they are welcomed as expressions of life itself.

Nonduality here does not mean escape from the human condition. It means that the human condition is not separate from what is called wholeness. Nothing needs to be eliminated in order for wholeness to be present.

Ontologically, Foster avoids systematic grounding. Awareness may be mentioned, but not as a rigid metaphysical absolute. The language remains fluid and experiential.

Soteriology is softened. There is no dramatic crossing into a higher state. The emphasis lies on relaxation of resistance. What changes is not the world, but the attitude toward what appears.

Hierarchy is minimized. There is no claim to special status. The distinction between awakened and unawakened becomes less central than the shared fact of vulnerability.

In Foster's articulation, nonduality appears as integration. The radical edge of earlier formulations is not denied, but tempered. The human is not an obstacle to truth, but its expression.

Miranda Warren

Miranda Warren articulates nonduality in a tone that is both simple and uncompromising. Her language avoids elaborate metaphysics and does not construct a systematic ontology.

There is no sustained affirmation of awareness as ultimate ground. Nor is there emphasis on mystical experience. What appears, appears. Nothing stands behind it.

The sense of being a separate individual is treated as assumption rather than entity. It is not something that must be destroyed. It is simply not found when examined.

Liberation is not presented as attainment. There is no path and no progressive development. At the same time, the message is not framed as harsh negation. It is delivered without drama.

Hierarchy is largely absent. There is no strong distinction between those who have realized and those who have not. The tone suggests that nothing special has occurred.

Yet structure remains. The difference between believing oneself to be separate and seeing that no separate entity can be located functions implicitly. Recognition is understated, but meaningful.

Miranda Warren represents a contemporary articulation in which nonduality is neither ontological monism nor radical deconstruction, nor psychological integration. It is expressed as simple clarity without metaphysical extension.

Her position illustrates how nonduality can be articulated without installing a ground and without dramatizing its denial.

Jed McKenna

Jed McKenna presents nonduality in a style that is confrontational, ironic, and deliberately destabilizing. His books are written as narrative, yet the underlying message is uncompromising.

Central to his articulation is the distinction between what he calls "spiritual enlightenment" and what he dismisses as spiritual belief or self-improvement. Enlightenment is described not as bliss or integration, but as destruction of illusion.

The illusion in question is the constructed self and the conceptual world that sustains it. According to this view, what most people call reality is narrative overlay. Awakening consists in the collapse of this narrative.

Unlike ontological nonduality, Jed does not systematically affirm awareness as ultimate ground. Nor does he develop metaphysical

theory. The emphasis lies on ruthless inquiry, sometimes described as "spiritual autolysis," in which every belief is examined and discarded.

Soteriology is both central and inverted. There is a sharp distinction between enlightenment and non-enlightenment. Yet enlightenment is portrayed as stripping away, not attainment of higher state. It offers no consolation and no improved life.

Hierarchy is explicit in tone, though not institutional. The enlightened are rare. The distinction between truth and delusion is drawn sharply. Yet no spiritual path is offered as reliable route.

Jed McKenna represents a contemporary articulation in which nonduality takes on existential severity. It is neither devotional nor integrative. It does not celebrate wholeness. It dismantles.

Nonduality here appears as demolition of illusion without metaphysical reconstruction.

Byron Katie

Byron Katie articulates nonduality through a structured method of inquiry known as "The Work." Rather than presenting an ontological claim about ultimate reality, her focus lies on the examination of stressful thoughts.

The central premise is simple. Suffering is not caused by events themselves, but by the thoughts attached to them. By questioning these thoughts in a precise manner, their hold weakens.

The inquiry consists of four questions and a turnaround. Each thought is examined for its truth, its effects, and the possibility of alternative perspectives. The emphasis lies not on metaphysical insight, but on cognitive clarity.

Nonduality here does not appear as doctrine of unity or as denial of the self. It emerges implicitly when rigid identification with thought relaxes. The separation between self and world softens when the narrative that sustains it is questioned.

Ontological grounding is absent. There is no sustained affirmation of awareness as ultimate reality. Nor is there radical denial of the spiritual project. The method remains practical and psychological.

Soteriology is modest. Liberation is not framed as final awakening, but as relief from unnecessary suffering. The path is accessible and repeatable.

Hierarchy is minimized. The method is presented as universally available. There is no claim to special status beyond clarity of application.

In Byron Katie's articulation, nonduality becomes operational. It is not described as metaphysical truth, but enacted through inquiry into belief. The dissolution of separation occurs through examination of thought rather than through ontological affirmation or radical negation.

Darryl Bailey

Darryl Bailey articulates nonduality in a sober and restrained manner. His language avoids metaphysical elaboration and does not cultivate dramatic tone. The emphasis lies on simple clarity.

There is no sustained affirmation of awareness as ultimate ground. Nor is there insistence on radical negation. What appears, appears. The sense of being a separate individual is examined and found to be conceptual rather than substantial.

Bailey often points out that experience happens without a central controller. Thoughts arise, sensations occur, actions take place. The presumed doer cannot be located as independent entity.

Liberation is not framed as attainment of higher state. It is closer to the recognition that there was never an autonomous self directing events. Nothing special is added. The ordinary continues.

Hierarchy is minimized. There is no emphasis on teacher-student distinction. The tone is conversational and understated.

At the same time, the difference between believing in a separate self and seeing through that belief remains structurally significant. Even when no hierarchy is proclaimed, clarity and confusion function as implicit contrast.

In Bailey's articulation, nonduality appears as direct simplicity. It neither constructs metaphysical system nor celebrates radical demolition. It quietly questions the assumption of personal authorship and leaves what remains untouched.

Concluding Reflection

The contemporary articulations discussed in this section do not form a unified movement. They share vocabulary, but not structure.

In some cases awareness functions as ontological ground. In others every ground is questioned. In some articulations liberation remains central, even if reframed. In others the very idea of liberation is rejected. Some emphasize direct experience. Others cognitive inquiry. Others radical negation.

What becomes visible is not agreement, but divergence.

Under the same name, nonduality, fundamentally different configurations operate. The role of the person, the status of reality, the

meaning of freedom, and the presence or absence of hierarchy vary considerably.

In certain articulations a clear asymmetry remains between ground and appearance. In others this asymmetry is dismantled. In still others the entire framework of metaphysics is set aside in favor of existential clarity or psychological practice.

These differences are not superficial. They concern the architecture of the world in which nonduality is spoken.

Contemporary nonduality is therefore not a single doctrine spreading in new forms. It is a plural field in which ontological monism, experiential immediacy, radical denial, psychological integration, and pragmatic inquiry coexist.

What binds these articulations together is not identical content, but a shared gesture: the questioning of the separate self and the division between self and reality.

How that questioning is resolved, or whether it is resolved at all, differs.

This plurality does not require unification. It invites careful differentiation.

Part V

Nonduality as Spiritual Phenomenon

Nonduality today does not function only as philosophical position or religious doctrine. It circulates as a contemporary spiritual phenomenon.

Its transmission increasingly takes place outside institutional religion. It appears in books, online gatherings, retreats, and individual teaching formats. Authority is no longer anchored in lineage or formal ordination, but in perceived clarity and resonance.

This shift changes the function of nonduality.

In classical traditions, liberation was embedded within shared cosmology, ritual structure, and communal life. In contemporary contexts, realization is often framed as individual recognition, independent of institutional belonging.

The focus moves from collective structure to personal insight.

This does not necessarily weaken the claim of nonduality. It alters its social position. Nonduality becomes available as option within a plural spiritual marketplace.

Individualization of Liberation

Liberation is increasingly described as direct possibility for the individual.

There is less emphasis on long-term discipline and more on immediate recognition. Even when practice is present, it is often framed as supportive rather than constitutive.

The authority of tradition recedes. The authority of experience increases.

This development strengthens accessibility. It also intensifies subjectivity. Recognition becomes something one either sees or does not see, often outside communal verification.

Resonance and Desire

Contemporary nonduality frequently operates through resonance rather than doctrinal commitment.

A listener recognizes something in the words of a teacher. A text seems to articulate what was already intuitively sensed. This resonance becomes criterion of truth.

At the same time, desire remains active. The promise of freedom, even when denied, exerts attraction. Even radical messages that reject liberation can function as object of longing.

Nonduality thus participates in structures it sometimes critiques. The movement of seeking may be denied conceptually, yet sustained existentially.

Nonduality as Cultural Configuration

Nonduality does not emerge outside culture. Its contemporary forms reflect broader cultural tendencies:

- individual autonomy
- suspicion of institutions
- psychological language
- global accessibility

Even radical negation is articulated within modern communicative frameworks.

What presents itself as timeless insight is always expressed within historical conditions.

This does not invalidate the articulations. It situates them.

Provisional Assessment

Seen from this perspective, nonduality today is not single teaching spreading unchanged through time. It is a shifting field of configurations responding to historical context.

Ontological monism, experiential inquiry, radical negation, psychological integration, and cognitive deconstruction coexist within the same discursive space.

The term nonduality functions as umbrella. Beneath it operate distinct architectures.

Understanding this plurality does not require choosing among them. It requires clarity about their structure.

Final Conclusion

This book has not asked whether nonduality is true.

It has asked how nonduality is articulated.

Under a single name, divergent positions appear. Some affirm an ultimate ground. Others dismantle every ground. Some retain a soteriological structure. Others dissolve it. Some center awareness. Others center experience. Some reject even that distinction.

Nonduality does not designate a unified doctrine.

It designates a field.

Within that field, positions become visible when their assumptions are named: about reality, about liberation, about the self, about hierarchy.

The question therefore shifts.

Not: Is nonduality true?

But: From which position is it spoken?

And further:

From which position do I listen?

The analysis offered here is itself a position. It does not stand outside the field it describes.

It does not resolve plurality. It makes it visible.