

Miranda Warren's notes on Nonduality, an analysis by Ton Haarmans

The lack of critical examination of nonduality, excepting perhaps one school of its expression criticizing another, is unfortunate and allows many of its concepts and assertions to go unexamined. A balanced, insightful exploration such as this book is most welcome.

The degree of transparency and clarity regarding the manner in which nonduality is explored here is extremely helpful and preempts questions regarding unspoken assumptions inherent in undertaking this investigation. I appreciated the glossary so that terms used could be understood in the manner in which they are intended and to bring depth to the scope of the material. The concept of the diorama was quite interesting.

I always find the intersection, or absence thereof, of the "lived experience" of inseparability and the conceptualization of the nondual worldview to be one of the most interesting subjects. I appreciate your discussion of this topic.

The breakdown of the major frameworks of nonduality seems quite correct and is rarely pointed out with such clarity. As Sakura and Howard Chance, among others, have always pointed out, every approach includes a claim and embodies a definite position (no matter whether this is denied as part of the form of nondual expression). This is a fundamental point that seems one of the few areas nonduality speakers may be somewhat disingenuous about, as they tend to live and die (their "message" at least) by espousing a set of declarative statements about the nature of "reality." Even if the statements include a caveat that no one knows what they are talking about, anyone who is not part of that nonduality worldview will easily be able to find claims in almost every talk given by a nonduality speaker of any approach.

It seems that a blend of certain of the five approaches may be found in various expressions. While some are clearly incompatible, others may emphasize one major approach but include minor echoes of another approach that fills in gaps that would be obvious if a singular approach was held as a kind of fundamentalist belief.

"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."

This is a profound point that cannot be overemphasized. My postmodern philosopher friend Patricia has talked about dismantling the outward language to reveal the assumptions and assertions of any discourse. Nonduality is still a fringe perspective and thus fails to get a great deal of attention, but recognizing that there are distinct approaches, each with a set of often unstated but obvious precepts, is essential to any possible understanding.

I appreciate the historical discussion. My friend Alissa was the first to point out that while Ramana is seen as expressing a traditional view from the perspective of some modern speakers, he actually made a very dramatic break with tradition without which the modern expression might not have evolved. She has said that the modern seeker would benefit greatly from a broader understanding of the evolution of the contemporary perspective, and I agree. I think this book will help with that understanding.

Osho is particularly interesting, as I am told Tony Parsons was greatly influenced by him at one time. It seems that modern teachers gradually broke away with the more rigid teachings of their past and freed nonduality from certain structures. But, of course, they may have retained or even introduced other structures which are not often obvious.

J Krishnamurti was one of the few proponents of nonduality I had been familiar with, though I am not sure I knew the term then, as I always had an avid interest in physics and read his dialogues with David Bohm. Bohm had an idea based on his interpretation of quantum physics of a singular ground of being, the implicate order, that manifested as what appears, the explicate, and was primary but also inseparable.

Tony Parsons is fascinating. It seems that almost all the speakers I've been influenced by at some point were deeply enfolded in his message, including ones that did not go on to speak of "radical" nonduality. As you point out, he denies the idea of liberation for an individual. Yet everyone who is aware of him knows his story of walking through the park and then there being "no one walking." His oft-quoted phrase "I hope you die soon" seems to imply a transition from one state to another, even if it is meant as awakening to the reality that there are no states as there is no one to be in them (or out of them).

I was not familiar with Darryl Bailey but just looked him up and found some very resonant words that I will look into more fully.

I would say that Byron Katie, in addition to her more "practical nonduality" found in the work, has a fuller expression of nonduality in lesser known works. She extends her absolute skepticism to all claims, as in these quotes:

The "I" is the origin of the whole universe.
All thought is born out of that first thought,
and the "I" cannot exist without these thoughts.
Every story of enlightenment is gone.
It's just one more story about the past.
If it happened five seconds ago,
it might as well have been a million years.
Each thought believed
is what allows the "I" to exist as a you,
a separate identity.

When you see this,
you see that there's no "you" to be enlightened.
You stop believing in yourself as an identity,
and you become equal to everything
that appears to be and or not to be.

To see things just as they are,
you would need to think only
in what I call "first-generation thoughts":
single nouns,
with no other words attached to them
—for example,
"tree," "sky," "table," "chair."
But even tree, sky, table, and chair
have to be questioned,
since any point of reference
is pure imagination.
So it's not a table,
though you call it a table;
it's not a tree,
though you call it a tree.
Calling it something
doesn't make it the something you call it.
Nothing is ultimately true;
there's nothing that can't be questioned.
The last reality is
"There is no reality,"
and I invite you to go beyond even that.
You can find no anchor,
no identity,
no self.

I also found Jed at times to be asserting that there is only consciousness, though he also asserts that there is no ultimate knowledge. I found his book *Theory of Everything* to be interesting, although I would not necessarily agree with all of his conclusions.

Robert Saltzman has always been a breath of fresh air. He and Michael Markham have offered very rare and perceptive critiques of the various ways nonduality is mystified and elevated to a belief system, from the most radical expressions to the more overtly spiritual. I keep a number of his quotes handy to share with those who write to me, and this is always a favorite:
"For me, "awake" is the understanding there is no actual "myself" inside me to whom or to which events, thoughts, and feelings are happening. From that angle, it does not feel as if I have achieved anything. All of this is just what it is, and no one is doing it. But that's just words unless you see it for yourself. I understand that this last sentence could sound paradoxical--if there is no "me" inside oneself, who is the one who sees it? I don't know how to get around that while still

using words. No one sees it. Seeing and the seer are the same arising, the same gesture, the same flow.

All of this--sights, sounds, emotions, thoughts, bodily awareness, fears, desires, etcetera--arises constantly, but no one is causing it to arise. All of this just is, just exists, including the feeling of being a "self," and no one knows why, how, where it comes from, what it means--none of that."

I think you captured the essence of the Miranda expression quite well, and it was interesting to read.

"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... 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."

This is one of the most crucial realizations about this topic, and grasping this will help dispel a lot of confusion and turn many arguments into discussions based on acceptance that there is no singular position called "nonduality" that must or can be discovered.

It is also rarely discussed that nonduality exists in a cultural context. As you point out, contemporary nonduality must be seen as part of the zeitgeist of our time, despite the negation of this by most speakers. The rejection of authority and the seemingly paradoxical emphasis on individual realization (whatever form that may take) as opposed to valuing community are aspects of a certain cultural milieu just as earlier teachings reflected their cultural environment. Many of my messages from older "seekers" tell that when they were younger it was almost universally accepted that you needed a teacher or guru. Of course, this has not really changed, except that seekers and contemporary speakers dismiss such language or the strict hierarchy of that relationship. But very few hear a talk and then go out into life to find its message; they keep returning to the same or other speakers.

"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."

I believe this book has succeeded very well in doing this, and as such holds a significant place in the annals of nondual discourse.

Thank you,
Miranda

