

SHARING NONDUAL AWARENESS

The origins of the Nondual Teacher and Therapist Training

Peter Fenner

I have had the wonderful fortune to be involved in many great events that are unfolding through the comprehensive meeting of Eastern and Western cultures. The first event, for me, was the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to the West. I was living in Australia when Lama Thubten Yeshe made his first visit to Australia in 1974. His energy, love, wisdom and absolute confidence were incredibly inspiring for me. I asked him to be my guru and he accepted. I studied Mahayana Buddhism at centers and universities, was a monk for 9 years, and taught East-West Philosophy at Australian universities for many years.

I was always drawn to Asian teachings on nonduality. I completed a Ph.D. in the theory and practice of emptiness and felt a very deep connection with the traditions of Dzogchen, Mahamudra and Madhyamika. I always looked for the essence. I was wanting—I needed—the core that liberated me and others from our suffering. I sought to discover the experience that was liberating in the fullest sense of the word. When I first encountered Hindu and Buddhist spirituality I felt that in order to be free, I needed to change everything on the outside and inside; like becoming ordained and completely changing the way I thought.

There are clear limits to what we can change inside and outside of ourselves. We always have our body, and our own personality characteristics. These change over the years but we are recognizably ourselves, even as the decades pass. The wonder and brilliance of the nondual form of liberation is that it reveals the possibility of being totally free, with things exactly as they are. We experience that we can be free of all suffering, protected even from the possibility of suffering, with nothing concrete needing to change at all: no change in our financial situation, our relationships or the state of our body.

Another event I've been involved in is the integration of nondual wisdom into mental health. In the blink of an eyelid the powerful stream of Asian nonduality is pouring into our Western culture. This is changing our conceptions of wellbeing, and how to achieve this. In the Americas and all over Europe there are thousands of people with 30 or more years of training in *both* mental health and traditions like Zen, Mahayana and Advaita. Concurrently we are also witnessing the emergence of high quality Western teachers of nonduality. This last event is accelerating very fast.

My interest for over 30 years has been on integrating nondual wisdom and helping make it more available to Westerners who aren't necessarily attracted to Tibetan, Indian or Japanese cultural forms. In 1985 I offered a workshop titled "Therapeutic Applications of Buddhist Psychology." That was the real beginning for me. The workshop was specifically for mental health professionals. There weren't any models for what to do at that time. I wanted the workshop to be practical and

transformational. So I had to come up with a process for transmitting nondual awareness without referring to esoteric teachings or giving people practices that they couldn't do.

I've been working at refining this process for 25 years. I keep finding easier ways for transmitting the centerless awareness that we all share as our birthright as conscious beings. I started travelling and offering workshops and retreats in Europe, Israel and USA. In 1999 I teamed up with a friend, Dr. Jean-Marc Mantel, a psychiatrist from France. Together we created a conference on Spiritual Wisdom and Mental Health in San Francisco.

At this gathering the interest in nondual wisdom was phenomenal. The presenters had spent years working at the interface between psychotherapy and forms such as Dzogchen and Advaita. It felt like the birthing of nondual therapy. People came at this from different angles but we all shared the understanding that awareness itself is indivisible and beyond whatever we think. We were all on the same page. In 2002 I created a 9 month training called Radiant Mind (www.radiantmind.net). The first time I offered the course I targeted psychotherapists. Then in subsequent years I opened it up for the informed general public to participate.

Many of the participants in the Radiant Mind Course rejoined the Course, year after year, always extracting more from it. Many were becoming very experienced as coaches and mentors, helping guide people into the direct presencing of the nondual. Four years ago it was obvious that I needed to create a Teacher Training (www.nondualtraining.com) in order to give undivided attention to the mechanics, as it were, of sharing nondual awareness with others. This Training is now fully fledged. Last year we had 58 people in two trainings, one in San Francisco and the other in Europe.

I remember a few years ago someone saying to me; "You can't "teach" people how to transmit nondual awareness. It's beyond the mind. The nondual is beyond any form of teaching or instruction. You can't show people how to do "This". Of course, from one angle this is true. There is nothing to teach because the nondual isn't an object of knowledge. It is not a "thing" like objects of awareness. Nor is it a "non thing" like a vacuum or dark space. It's "This" that we can't point to. And, in fact, this—what we are doing right now, shows us *how* we do this. We are doing it right now! "Doing what?" you might say. We can't say, because "This" is not a thing, it's not a specific action, it's not a feeling or an insight. *And* this is how we do it! This is one way we point to this moment as the ineffable source-field of everything that is.

It's also possible to show people how to "be no one—be centerless awareness—when they are in public, in a workshop, for example, present to people's positive and negative judgments and projections. It's possible to show people how our experience is shaped by our concepts and judgments: how we continually construct the personal "I". And we can also show people how, when we look for the "thinker," for that which experiences all of this, we can't find anything. There is nothing new in

this. Therapists learn how to “come from awareness.” They learn how to create bridges that take clients from states of struggle and preoccupation, through to the freedom of boundless awareness. The Nondual Training brings the light of nondual wisdom to psychotherapy and counseling.

In the Nondual Teacher and Therapist Training (www.nondualtraining.com) we are keeping alive a lineage of transmission that’s been active and vital for thousands of years, especially in Asia. We are also bringing together perspectives drawn from different traditions such as Zen, Madhymika and Advaita, since these are all now available and accessible to us. We have fused selected methods from these traditions into very minimalist, precise and adaptable form of nondual transmission that can be used in groups, coaching and psychotherapy.

The Training is designed for psychotherapists, coaches, and people who work with groups in a psycho-spiritual or meditative context. In previous Trainings we have had; psychotherapists, Zen teachers, Tibetan Buddhist teachers, Sufi teachers, integral coaches, psychiatrists, meditation instructors, yoga teachers, artists and social workers. We’ve also had people who are on the verge of becoming nondual facilitators, and have been inspired and empowered by working in a supportive community with finely-honed methods and distinctions.

Looking back over 40 years the changes in terms of the Western integration of Asian nondualism is nearly unimaginable. It seems we can look forward to a flowing of awareness that will continue for at least a few decades. I am extremely grateful that I have been caught up, and involved in these changing times.

If the Nondual Teacher and Therapist Training appeals to you don’t hesitate to apply online or call to make a time to speak with me.

Warm wishes,

Peter