

# Faces of Nondualism

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This paper is created to help the participants of the Center for Nondualism and Abhyasa Ashram better understand the wide range of principles and practices related to Nondualism (The paper will be revised from time to time to make it ever more clear). Although there is ultimately only one Nondual reality, people approach the direct realization of this through a variety of faces. Following are brief descriptions of many, if not most of these approaches. By exploring the breadth of approaches, we can better understand our own chosen path to direct experience of the Nondual Reality, Truth, Source, or other such ways of denoting this. Individual seekers will find much greater depth within his or her own tradition.

Unfortunately, from lack of understanding some people incorrectly believe nondualism to be “against” dualism, whereas dualism is actually an essential aspect of the journey towards realization in direct experience of the Nondual Reality, Truth, or Beingness. Gently, lovingly one treads the path of life in the world towards the knowing of that Nonduality which is both beyond and yet inclusive of the world. There is no separateness, no division. It is only due to ignorance (avidya) that there appears to be separateness and division where there is actually seamless Nondual Reality.

Nondualism is a minority worldview in our times. In the U.S. especially, the dominant worldview is that of dualistic Christian monotheism. It is in large part for this reason that people of the Nondualism perspective can benefit from coming together in a spirit of friendship to explore the principles and practices of the various paths leading to nondual experience.

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## Nondualism

Nonduality means "not two" or "nonseparation". It is the sense that all things are interconnected and not separate, while at the same time all things retain their

individuality. An awareness of nonduality gives you a bigger perspective on life, a greater sense of freedom, and brings you a more stable happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Nondualism is a worldview or a context in which many diverse religions, traditions, philosophies and practice may approach in different ways. The core context is essentially the same, although the specific methods or practices may be different.

The word Nondualism originally came from the Sanskrit word “advaita”, which literally translates as “nondualism” (a=not or non; dvaita=two, dual, or dualism).

The term "nondual" (meaning "not two") can refer to a belief, condition, theory, practice, or quality. The concept of Nondualism has been linked with "Monism" or "qualified monism" with which it is sometimes confused (even conflated). However, the general concept of "nonduality" is now a pervasive paradigm in Western scholarship throughout diverse academic disciplines. Michaelson (2009: p. 130) writes: "Conceptions of nonduality evolve historically."<sup>2</sup>

"Nondualism", "nonduality" and "nondual" are terms that have entered the English language from literal English renderings of "advaita" (Sanskrit: not-dual) subsequent to the first wave of English translations of the Upanishads commencing with the work of Müller (1823–1900), in the monumental Sacred Books of the East (1879), who rendered "advaita" as "Monism" under influence of the then prevailing discourse of English translations of the Classical Tradition of the Ancient Greeks such as Thales (624 BCE–c.546 BCE) and Heraclitus (c.535 BCE–c.475 BCE). The first usage of the terms are yet to be attested. The English term "nondual" was also informed by early translations of the Upanishads in Western languages other than English from 1775. The term "nondualism" and the term "advaita" from which it originates are polyvalent terms. The English word's origin is the Latin duo meaning "two" prefixed with "non-" meaning "not".<sup>3</sup>

To the Nondualist, reality is ultimately neither physical nor mental. Instead, it is an ineffable state or realization. This ultimate reality can be called "Spirit" (Sri Aurobindo), "Brahman" (Shankara), "God", "Shunyata" (Emptiness), "The One" (Plotinus), "The Self" (Ramana Maharshi), "The Dao" (Lao Zi), "The Absolute" (Schelling) or simply "The Nondual" (F. H. Bradley). Ram Dass calls it the "third plane"—any phrase will be insufficient, he maintains, so any phrase will do. The theory of Sri Aurobindo has been described as Integral advaita.<sup>4</sup>

Michaelson (2009: p. 130) identifies what he perceives to be the origins of nondualism proper founded in the Neoplatonism of Plotinus within Ancient Greece and employs the ambiguous binary construction of "the West" [as different to 'the East', refer Saïd's utilization of the discourse of 'The Other' in Orientalism (1978)]:

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Katz, <http://nonduality.com/lrn.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Michaelson, Jay (2009). Everything Is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism. Shambhala Publications. ISBN 1590306716, 9781590306710. Source: [1] (accessed: Thursday May 6, 2010), p.130

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia

"Conceptions of nonduality evolve historically. As a philosophical notion, it is most clearly found for the first time in the West in the second century C.E, in the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his followers."<sup>5</sup>

### ***Nonduality.com Website***

This is a very useful resource for exploring nondualism or nonduality. The site has over 4500 pages which can be searched.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Dualism and Nondualism***

We may believe in one or the other of the philosophies of Dualism or Non-Dualism. We may see these philosophies as either contradictory or complementary.

However, when we want food or sex, or feel threatened, we automatically respond from Dualism, not Non-Dualism. If we watch a person die, or look at a corpse, are we not all struck by the mystery of apparent matter and consciousness? The higher truth quickly goes out the window in such moments and we find we are faced squarely with the Dualistic, conditioned response of the stuff of our mind.

There is something between us and Truth, the Absolute Reality, and that is called the mind. Training the mind is the starting point for Patanjali, in the Yoga Sutras. For example, one of the first things he talks about is observing which of our thoughts are useful or not useful, positive or negative. Then he directs us to learn to make choices in life on the basis of what is positive and helpful in our growth, choosing to do that which we know leads towards a stable, inner state of tranquility. Such self-observation, self-examination, and self-training are necessary in preparation for the deeper practices.

The Dualism of the Yoga Sutra gives us detailed instructions on how to clear away the clutter so we can find the door. Non-Dualistic Vedanta philosophy gives us a sound contemplative base for deeper understanding of the nature of the door and that which is beyond. Tantra shows us how to open the door, as well as how and where to knock.

To view these as contradictory leads to confusion. To view them as complementary leads to freedom. We can apply the Dualistic and Non-Dualistic philosophies as different aspects of the same one journey within, which eventually leads to the direct experience of the center of consciousness, wherein all these questions are resolved and dissolved.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Nondualism Books:***

The following books focus on nondualism primarily through the lens of modern Western people who have removed it from its original context. While some of it is very interesting, I suggest that you read these along side of the more traditional nondualism texts so as to have a balanced view.

One: Essential Writings on Nonduality by Jerry Katz, ISBN 1591810531.

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<sup>5</sup> Michaelson, Jay (2009). Everything Is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism. Shambhala

<sup>6</sup> <http://nonduality.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.swamij.com/dualism-nondualism.htm>

Living Nonduality by Robert Wolfe

No Boundary by Ken Wilber, ISBN 1570627436

Atman Project by Ken Wilber

## Advaita

Advaita Vedanta is considered as the most influential sub-school of the Vedānta (literally, end or the goal of the Vedas, Sanskrit) school of philosophy. Other sub-schools of Vedānta are Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita. Advaita (literally, non-duality) is a monistic system of thought. "Advaita" refers to the identity of the Self (Atman) and the Whole (Brahman).

The key source texts for all schools of Advaita Vedānta are the Prasthanatrayi—the canonical texts consisting of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras. The first person to explicitly consolidate the principles of Advaita Vedanta was Adi Shankara, while the first historical proponent was Gaudapada, the guru of Shankara's guru Govinda Bhagavatpada.<sup>8</sup>

### **Advaita Website**

This is possibly the most thorough and most accessible website for the exploration and study of Advaita (Nondualism) <http://www.advaita-vedanta.org/avhp/><sup>9</sup>

### **Upanishads**

The Upanishadic literature is not a religious scripture and is free from dogma and doctrines. It is not a part of any religion but is a philosophy for all times and for all. This philosophy does not oppose any school of thought, religion, or interpretation of the scriptures, but its methods for explaining its concepts are unique. The Upanishads should not be confused with the religious books of the East; there is a vast difference between the philosophy of the Upanishads and the preachings of any of the religious scriptures of the world. In religion and religious books, there is little practicality and much theory. One is not supposed to interpret religious sayings, for there is always the possibility of distortion. For this reason, their explanation is delegated to a few teachers and preachers who are considered to be the custodians and authorities on these scriptures. Common people do not have the opportunity to study the scriptures in depth, but instead must rely on the interpretations of such preachers who may show no signs of enlightenment and yet have influence over the conscience of the masses. Whether these clerics actually know and practice religious truths or not is never questioned, and those who do question are considered to be atheists and heretics. Intellectual bankruptcy such as this leads the masses to blind faith and causes many wars and divisions in the human race. For the younger generation today, however, empty religious preachings are not fulfilling, for the modern mind likes to use reason and logic before it accepts anything as truth.

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<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.advaita-vedanta.org/avhp/>

The Upanishads prepare, inspire, and lead the student to know and realize the Ultimate Truth. First of all, the philosophy of the Upanishads frees one to cast away his intellectual slavery to blind faith, superstitions, sectarian beliefs, and dogmas. Then it helps one to expand his individual consciousness to Universal Consciousness; thus one's personality is transformed, and one becomes a universal being. An individual is essentially Brahman, or identical to Universal Consciousness, and direct realization of that truth is called enlightenment. Current religious preachings, on the other hand, are enveloped in a thick layer of dust, and they need a complete shakeup. Religion needs modification to suit the needs of modern man. There seem to be two options for humanity: either it stops listening to the preachings, starts seeking the truth, and rejoices in the broader awareness of truthful living; or it continues to follow religious dogma, fails to attain the next step of civilization, and remains in ignorance and suffering. Upon careful analysis of the living and thinking structure of modern human society, anyone can see that the process of human evolution is in a state of stagnation. All current research is directed to the external world; thus the human goal has become materially oriented and superficial. Human beings today have nothing better to live for than acquiring many comforts. These may be necessities and means, but because attaining them lacks a goal or aim, they create a hollow and empty philosophy that brings only strain and stress.

The preachings of religion make a person dependent on priests, temples, idols, blind faith, and dogma, and dependence is a habit of the lower mind. Such crutches may be useful at a certain stage for some people, but they do not lead one to Ultimate Truth. A dependent mind is not free, and without freedom, enlightenment is impossible. Religious dogmas are full of beliefs and myths that do not satisfy the human intellect and that bind believers to a narrow view of life and human potential. Such preachings instill more fear than love in the hearts of the masses. Religion either promises salvation or threatens the tortures of hell, but it does not provide sound solutions to the hellish problems and situations that plague human beings here and now. Nor does it satisfactorily explain life before birth or after death. One of the main themes of Upanishadic philosophy, however, is to attain a state of fearlessness, cheerfulness, and self-confidence. In addition, the Upanishads lead the student to know life in its totality. Knowledge of life before birth, knowledge of now, and knowledge of life hereafter can be realized through the methods given in the Upanishads. The Upanishads provide systematic methods for self-training, self-transformation, and self-enlightenment. They lead aspirants “from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from mortality to Immortality.”<sup>10</sup>

### ***Bhagavad Gita***

The Bhagavad Gita is the fountainhead of Eastern psychology.... These profound psychological insights are intertwined in the Bhagavad Gita with philosophical concepts... Self-realization is the goal of human life. The purpose of Eastern religion, philosophy, and psychology is to fulfill that goal.... Though the Bhagavad Gita is composed of only seven hundred verses, it contains all the principles of the philosophy and psychology of the East. There are eighteen lessons in the Bhagavad Gita, each describing a different aspect of the process of self-transformation.... The perennial

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<sup>10</sup> Philosophy, Not Religion, from Enlightenment without God by Swami Rama

psychology of the Bhagavad Gita deals with analyzing and training the internal processes of the human being so that one becomes creative in the external world and attains a state of tranquility at the same time. That which needs detailed analysis, understanding, and unfoldment is the mental life, which is vast in its characteristics.... The Bhagavad Gita contains in condensed form all the philosophical and psychological wisdom of the Upanishads.<sup>11</sup>

### **Mahavakyas**

The Mahavakyas are the Great Sentences of Advaita Vedanta and Jnana Yoga, and are contained in the Upanishads. Maha is Great, and Vakyas are sentences, or utterances for contemplation. They provide perspective and insights that tie the texts together in a cohesive whole. The contemplations on the Mahavakyas also blend well with the practices of yoga meditation, prayer, and mantra, which are companion practices in Yoga. The pinnacle of the wisdom and practices of the ancient sages is contained in the terse twelve verses of the Mandukya Upanishad, which outlines the philosophy and practices of the OM mantra.<sup>12</sup>

Sanskrit:

English:

- |                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Brahma satyam jagan mithya | Brahman is real; the world is unreal |
| 2. Ekam evadvitiam brahma     | Brahman is one, without a second     |
| 3. Prajnanam brahman          | Brahman is the supreme knowledge     |
| 4. Tat tvam asi               | That is what you are                 |
| 5. Ayam atma brahma           | Atman and brahman are the same       |
| 6. Aham brahmasmi             | I am brahman                         |
| 7. Sarvam khalvidam brahma    | All of this is Brahman               |

### **Shankara**

Adi Shankara also known as Śankara Bhagavatpādācārya and Ādi Śankarācārya, was an Indian philosopher who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta, a sub-school of Vedanta. His teachings are based on the unity of the soul and Brahman, in other words non-dual Brahman, in which Brahman is viewed as without attributes. He hailed from Kalady of present day Kerala.

Shankara travelled across India and other parts of South Asia to propagate his philosophy through discourses and debates with other thinkers. He founded four mathas ("monasteries"), which helped in the historical development, revival and spread of Advaita Vedanta. Adi Shankara is believed to be the organizer of the Dashanami monastic order and the founder of the Shanmata tradition of worship.

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<sup>11</sup> Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita by Swami Rama.

<sup>12</sup> <http://swamij.com/mahavakyas.htm>

His works in Sanskrit, all of which are extant today, concern themselves with establishing the doctrine of Advaita (Nondualism). He also established the importance of monastic life as sanctioned in the Upanishads and Brahma Sutra, in a time when the Mimamsa school established strict ritualism and ridiculed monasticism. Shankara represented his works as elaborating on ideas found in the Upanishads, and he wrote copious commentaries on the Vedic Canon (Brahma Sutra, Principal Upanishads and Bhagavadgita) in support of his thesis.<sup>13</sup>

Adi Shankara wrote Bhāṣya (commentaries) on

- Brahmasūtra
- Aitareya Upanisad (Rigveda)
- Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad (Śukla Yajurveda)
- Īśa Upanisad (Śukla Yajurveda)
- Taittirīya Upanisad (Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda)
- Katha Upanisad (Kṛsna Yajurveda)
- Chāndogya Upanisad (Samaveda)
- Māndūkya Upaniṣad (Atharvaveda) and Gauḍapāda Kārika
- Mundaka Upaniṣad (Atharvaveda)
- Praśna Upaniṣad (Atharvaveda)
- Bhagavadgīta (Mahabhārata)
- Vishnu Sahasranama (Mahabhārata)
- Gāyatri Mantra<sup>14</sup>

### **Advaita Books:**

Advaita Vedanta : A Philosophical Reconstruction by Eliot Deutsch, ISBN 0824802713.

The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal translated by Swami Prabhavanada and Frederick Manchester, ISBN 0451528484

Shankara's Crest Jewel of Discrimination translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, ISBN 0874810388

Journey From Many to One / Essentials of Advaita Vedanta by Swami Bhaskarananda, ISBN 1884852122

Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita by Swami Rama

Enlightenment without God by Swami Rama

Wisdom of the Ancient Sages by Swami Rama

Vedantic Meditation by David Frawley

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<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia



# Monism

Monism is any philosophical view which holds that there is unity in a given field of inquiry, where this is not to be expected. Thus, some philosophers may hold that the universe is really just one thing, despite its many appearances and diversities; or theology may support the view that there is one God, with many manifestations in different religions. Hinduism is considered to be primary proponent of Monism. In the Hindu religion, Brahman is the eternal, unchanging, infinite, imminent, and transcendent reality which is the Divine Ground of all matter, energy, time, space, being, and everything beyond in this Universe. The nature of Brahman is described as transpersonal, personal and impersonal by different philosophical schools and the Brahman' religious belief is just seen as different paths to the one god. <sup>15</sup>

## ***Philosophical monism***

Monism in philosophy can be defined according to three kinds:

- Idealism, phenomenism, or mentalistic monism which holds that only mind is real.
- Neutral monism, which holds that both the mental and the physical can be reduced to some sort of third substance, or energy.
- Physicalism or materialism, which holds that only the physical is real, and that the mental or spiritual can be reduced to the physical.

Certain other positions are hard to pigeonhole into the above categories, see links below.

## ***Ancient Western philosophers***

The following pre-Socratic philosophers described reality as being monistic:

- Thales: Water.
- Anaximander: Apeiron (meaning 'the undefined infinite'). Reality is some, one thing, but we cannot know what.
- Anaximenes: Air.
- Heraclitus: Fire (in that everything is in constant flux).
- Parmenides: Being. Reality is an unmoving perfect sphere, unchanging, undivided.

## ***And post-Socrates:***

- Neopythagorians such as Apollonius of Tyana centered their cosmologies on the Monad or One.

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<sup>15</sup> Brodd, Jefferey (2003). World Religions. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. ISBN 978-0-88489-725-5.; from Wikipedia

- Stoics, like Spinoza later, taught that there is only one substance, identified as God.
- Middle Platonism under such works as Numenius express the Universe emanating from the Monad or One.
- Neoplatonism is Monistic. Plotinus taught that there was an ineffable transcendent God, 'The One,' of which subsequent realities were emanations. From The One emanates the Divine Mind (Nous), the Cosmic Soul (Psyche), and the World (Cosmos).<sup>16</sup>

### ***Hinduism and Monism***

Monism is found in the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rigveda, which speaks of the One being-non-being that 'breathed without breath'. The first system in Hinduism that unequivocally explicated absolute monism was the non-dualist philosophy of Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Shankara. In short, Advaita declares - All is Brahman. It is part of the six Hindu systems of philosophy, based on the Upanishads, and posits that the ultimate monad is a formless, ineffable divine ground of all being.

Vishishtadvaita, qualified monism, is from the school of Ramanuja. Shuddhadvaita, in-essence monism, is the school of Vallabha. Dvaitadvaita, differential monism, is a school founded by Nimbarka. Dvaita, dualism, is a school founded by Madhvacharya is probably the only Vedantic System which is opposed to all types of monism. It believes that God is eternally different from souls and matter in both form and essence. All Vaishnava schools are panentheistic and view the universe as part of Krishna or Narayana, but see a plurality of souls and substances within Brahman. Monistic theism, which includes the concept of a personal God as a universal, omnipotent Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, is prevalent within many other schools of Hinduism as well.

The concept of Brahman explains the prevalence of Monism in Hinduism. According to Hinduism, Brahman is the eternal, unchanging, infinite, immanent, and transcendent reality which is the Divine Ground of all matter, energy, time, space, being, and everything beyond in this Universe. The nature of Brahman is described as transpersonal, personal and impersonal by different philosophical schools. And since a Brahman is considered to be anyone irrespective of religious belief, Hinduism is monistic.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Buddhism and Monism***

Buddhist philosophy is generally suspicious of ontology. The Buddha himself, and some of his prominent disciples such as Nagarjuna, discouraged ontological theorizing for its own sake.

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<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>17</sup> Wikipedia, including Brodd, Jefferey (2003). World Religions. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. ISBN 978-0-88489-725-5.

According to the Pali Canon, both pluralism (naanatta) and monism (ekatta) are speculative views. A Theravada commentary notes that the former is similar to or associated with nihilism (ucchedavada), and the latter is similar to or associated with eternalism (sassatavada). See middle way.

Among the Madhyamaka school of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, the ultimate nature of the world is described as emptiness, which is indistinguishable from material form. That appears to be a monist position, but the Madhyamaka views - including variations like Prasangika and Yogacara and the more modern shentong Tibetan position - will fail to assert in the ultimate nature any particular point of view. They instead deconstruct any assertions about ultimate existence as resulting in absurd consequences. The doctrine of emptiness is also found in earlier Theravada Buddhist literature.

In Soto Zen teaching, it is said that "All is One and All is Different." Since non-dualism does not recognize a dualism between Oneness and Difference, or even between dualism and non-dualism, it is difficult to state the meaning of this doctrine. All discussion of this teaching by Soto Zen masters falls under the Buddhist concept of skill in means, which is to say, not literally correct, but suitable for leading others to the Truth. Chinese Soto (Cao-Dong) master Tozan (Tung Shan, Dongshan) wrote the Verses of the Five Ranks (of the Ideal and the Actual), which is also important as a set of koans in the Rinzai school. Dongshan describes the Fifth Rank in part thus:

Unity Attained:  
Who dares to equal him  
Who falls into neither being nor non-being!<sup>18</sup>

## Monism and Nondualism

There is a fine point of distinction between Monism and Nondualism. Many sages of direct experience of the ground reality (that which has not emerged from a subtler reality or level) have pointed out that the experience is not describable, that it has no characteristics of its own. It is the very foundation out of which all has emerged. It is tempting to call this the level of "One" or "Oneness". However, the reasoning goes, that even this is attributing a characteristic to that ground reality. Hence, it is reasoned, the only thing you can really say is that it is "not two" or "non dual". There is no separateness anywhere in the fabric of the manifest or unmanifest universe or universes. In our practical, day to day language, we may commonly refer to the "Oneness" or "Source" while still remembering the implication of Nondualism that while there appears to be lots of diversity, there is in fact no separation at all.<sup>19</sup>

## Dysteleology and Teleology

Dysteleology is the philosophical view that existence has no telos or final cause from purposeful design. The term "dysteleology" is a modern word invented and popularized by Haeckel.[1] Dysteleology is an aggressive, yet optimistic, form of science-oriented

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<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>19</sup> Explanation is by Swami Jnaneshvara.

atheism originally perhaps associated with Ernst Haeckel and his followers, but now perhaps more associated with the type of atheism of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, or Christopher Hitchens. Western philosophy since Copernicus has been increasingly dysteleological. Unlike traditional philosophical and religious perspectives, modern philosophical naturalism sees existence as having no inherent goal. Philosophical schools that have rejected dysteleology include German idealism (including the philosophies of Hegel and Schelling), Integral theory, and some adherents to the Anthropic principle.

A teleology is any philosophical account which holds that final causes exist in nature, meaning that design and purpose analogous to that found in human actions are inherent also in the rest of nature. The word comes from the Greek τέλος - telos, root: τελε-, "end, purpose."

Teleology was explored by Plato and Aristotle, by Saint Anselm around 1000 A.D., and later by Immanuel Kant in his Critique of Judgement. It was fundamental to the speculative philosophy of Hegel.

A thing, process or action is teleological when it is for the sake of an end, i.e., a telos or final cause. In general it may be said that there are two types of final causes, which may be called intrinsic finality and extrinsic finality.[citation needed]

- A thing or action has an extrinsic finality when it is for the sake of something external to itself. For example, Aristotle argued that animals are for the sake of man, a thing external to them.[1][2] Humans also exhibit extrinsic finality when they seek something external to themselves (e.g., the happiness of a child). If the external thing had not existed that action would not display finality.
- A thing or action has an intrinsic finality when it is not for the sake of something external to itself. For example, one might try to be happy simply for the sake of being happy, and not for the sake of anything outside of that.<sup>20</sup>

## Pantheism and Panentheism

Pantheism is the view that the Universe (Nature) and God are identical. Pantheists thus do not believe in a personal, anthropomorphic or creator god. The word derives from the Ancient Greek: πᾶν (pan) meaning 'all' and θεός (theos) meaning 'God'. As such, Pantheism denotes the idea that "God" is best seen as a way of relating to the Universe. Although there are divergences within Pantheism, the central ideas found in almost all versions are the Cosmos as an all-encompassing unity and the sacredness of Nature.... All varieties of Pantheism involve reverence for the Universe or Totality rather than for any creator being or personal God. All imply some level of unity in reality..<sup>21</sup>

Panentheism (from Greek πᾶν (pân) "all"; ἐν (en) "in"; and θεός (theós) "God"; "all-in-God") is a belief system which posits that God exists and interpenetrates every part of nature, and timelessly extends beyond as well. Panentheism is distinguished from pantheism, which holds that God is synonymous with the material universe. Briefly put,

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<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia.

in pantheism, "God is the whole"; in panentheism, "The whole is in God." This means that the Universe in the first formulation is practically the Whole itself, but in the second the universe and God are not ontologically equivalent. In panentheism, God is not necessarily viewed as the creator or demiurge, but the eternal animating force behind the universe, some versions positing the universe as nothing more than the manifest part of God. In some forms of panentheism, the cosmos exists within God, who in turn "pervades" or is "in" the cosmos. While pantheism asserts that God and the universe are coextensive, panentheism claims that God is greater than the universe and some forms hold that the universe is contained within God. Hinduism is highly characterized by Panentheism and Pantheism.<sup>22</sup>

## Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is a term associated with a group of new ideas in literature that emerged in New England in the early-to-middle 19th century. It is sometimes called American transcendentalism to distinguish it from other uses of the word transcendental. The movement developed in the 1830s and 40s as a protest against the general state of culture and society, and in particular, the state of intellectualism at Harvard and the doctrine of the Unitarian church taught at Harvard Divinity School. Among transcendentalists' core beliefs was the belief in an ideal spiritual state that "transcends" the physical and empirical and is realized only through the individual's intuition, rather than through the doctrines of established religions. Prominent transcendentalists included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott, Orestes Brownson, William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Christopher Pearse Cranch, John Sullivan Dwight, Convers Francis, Margaret Fuller, William Henry Furness, Frederick Henry Hedge, Theodore Parker, Elizabeth Peabody, George Ripley, and Jones Very.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American poet, philosopher and essayist. He is known to be the leader of the mid 19th century Transcendentalist movement.... He began to read Bhagavad Gita and Henry Thomas Colebrooke's Essay on the Vedas. Emerson was influenced by the ideas presented in Vedas which included heavy leanings toward nondualism. Emerson's essay The Over-soul was noted for its clear examples of this influence towards nondualism.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Henry David Thoreau***

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was an American philosopher, poet, and environmental scientist whose major work, Walden, draws upon each of these identities in meditating on the concrete problems of living in the world as a human being. He sought to revive a conception of philosophy as a way of life, not only a mode of reflective thought and discourse. Thoreau's work was informed by an eclectic variety of sources. He was well-versed in classical Greek and Roman philosophy, ranging from the pre-

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<sup>22</sup> Wikipedia.

<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.clickinks.com/The-Life-and-Works-of-Ralph-Waldo-Emerson.html>

Socratics through the Hellenistic schools, and was also an avid student of the ancient scriptures and wisdom literature of various Asian traditions. He was familiar with modern philosophy ranging from Descartes, Locke and the Cambridge Platonists through Emerson, Coleridge, and the German Idealists, all of whom are influential on Thoreau's philosophy. He discussed his own scientific findings with leading naturalists of the day, and read the latest work of Humboldt and Darwin with interest and admiration. His philosophical explorations of self and world led him to develop an epistemology of embodied perception and a non-dualistic account of mental and material life.<sup>25</sup>

## Buddhism

All schools of Buddhism teach No-Self (Pali anatta, Sanskrit anatman). Non-Self in Buddhism is the Non-Duality of Subject and Object, which is very explicitly stated by the Buddha in verses such as “In seeing, there is just seeing. No seer and nothing seen. In hearing, there is just hearing. No hearer and nothing heard.” (Bahiya Sutta, Udana 1.10). Non-Duality in Buddhism does not constitute merging with a supreme Brahman, but realising that the duality of a self/subject/agent/watcher/doer in relation to the object/world is an illusion.<sup>26</sup>

Within the Mahayana presentation, the two truths may also refer to specific perceived phenomenon instead of categorizing teachings. Conventional truths would be the appearances of mistaken awareness - the awareness itself when mistaken - together with the objects that appear to it or alternatively put the appearance that includes a duality of apprehender and apprehended and objects perceived within that. Ultimate truths, then, are phenomenon free from the duality of apprehender and apprehended.[25]

In the Mahayana Buddhist canon, the Diamond Sutra presents an accessible nondual view of "self" and "beings", while the Heart Sutra asserts shunyata — the "emptiness" of all "form" and simultaneously the "form" of all "emptiness". The Lotus Sutra's parable of the Burning House implies that all talk of Duality or Non-Duality by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is merely Skillful Means (Sanskrit upaya kausala) meant to lead the deluded to a much higher truth. The fullest philosophical exposition is the Madhyamaka; by contrast many laconic pronouncements are delivered as koans. Advanced views and practices are found in the Mahamudra and Maha Ati, which emphasize the vividness and spaciousness of nondual awareness.

Mahayana Buddhism, in particular, tempers the view of nonduality (wisdom) with respect for the experience of duality (compassion) — ordinary dualistic experience, populated with selves and others (sentient beings), is tended with care, always "now". This approach is itself regarded as a means to disperse the confusions of duality (i.e. as a path). In Theravada, that respect is expressed cautiously as non-harming, while in the Vajrayana, it is expressed boldly as enjoyment (especially in tantra).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/thoreau/>

<sup>26</sup> "Enlightenment in Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta: Are Nirvana and Moksha the Same?"; from Wikipedia

<sup>27</sup> Wikipedia

## **Vajrayana**

Gross (2009: p. 207) a leading Feminist theologian identifies the nondual import of yab-yum iconography where His ever-so-skillful 'method' (upaya) really enjoys Her ever-so-spacious 'wisdom' (prajna), a wisdom where wisdom-in-reciprocity enjoys method; where His-Her enjoining is coincident in 'great bliss' (mahasukha):

...a vital point must be made, especially given that the yab-yum image is always said to be an image in which the partners are in sexual union...[t]hough it may seem paradoxical and difficult to understand, this image, nevertheless, is not literally about sex, as in sexual intercourse. It is about nonduality, which is visually represented by the yab-yum icon.<sup>28</sup>

## **Dzogchen and Bön**

Dzogchen is a relatively esoteric (to date) tradition concerned with the "natural state", and emphasizing direct experience. This tradition is found in the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, where it is classified as the highest of this lineage's nine yantras, or vehicles of practice. Similar teachings are also found in the non-Buddhist Bön tradition, where it is also given the nomenclature "Dzogchen" and in one evocation the ninth in a nine vehicle system. The nine vehicles in both the Bonpo and Buddhadharma traditions are different but they mutually inform. In Dzogchen, for both the Bonpo and Nyingmapa, the primordial state, the state of nondual awareness, is called rigpa.<sup>29</sup>

## **Ngakpa tradition**

Caplan (2009: p. 163), with an indirect quotation, conveys her understanding of the view of a contemporary Ngakpa who holds duality and nonduality to be nondual:

"Ngakpa Chögyam, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher from Wales, offers a perspective on nonduality that includes all of life as a direct expression of the nondual core of truth. He explains that nonduality, or emptiness, has two facets: one is the empty, or nondual, and the other is form, or duality. Therefore, duality is not illusory but is instead one aspect of nonduality. Like the two sides of a coin, the formless reality has two dimensions -- one is form, the other is formless. When we perceive duality as separate from nonduality (or nonduality as separate from duality), we do not engage the world of manifestation from a perspective of oneness, and thereby we fall into an erroneous relationship with it. From this perspective it is not "life" or duality that is maya, or illusion; rather, it is our relationship to the world that is illusory."<sup>30</sup>

## **Lotus Sutra**

Lotus Sutra translated by Burton Watson and The Threefold Lotus Sutra translated by Bunno Kato, et. al.:

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<sup>28</sup> Gross, Rita M. (2009). A garland of feminist reflections: forty years of religious exploration. University of California Press. ISBN 0520255852, 9780520255852.; from Wikipedia.

<sup>29</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nondualism#Dzogchen>; from Wikipedia.

<sup>30</sup> Caplan, Mariana (2009). Eyes Wide Open: Cultivating Discernment on the Spiritual Path. Sounds True. ISBN 1591797322, 9781591797326.; from Wikipedia.

"The concept, often described in English as "nondualism," is extremely hard for the mind to grasp or visualize, since the mind engages constantly in the making of distinctions and nondualism represents the rejection or transcendence of all distinctions."<sup>31</sup>

## Christianity

Christianity is subject to many interpretations. The International Bulletin of Missionary Research (2009) says there are 40,000 Christian denominations.<sup>32</sup> Surely there are many people within that vast number of denominations who share the nondual perspective. Modern Christian mystics aligned with the nondual perspective include Bede Griffiths and Abhishiktananda. These two are a great starting place in the exploration of Christian nondualism.

### ***Bede Griffiths***

Griffiths' (1906–1993) form of Vedanta-inspired or nondual Christianity has been given the nomenclature 'Wisdom Christianity' or 'Sapiential Christianity'. Barnhart (1999: p. 238) explores Christian nondual experience in a dedicated volume and states that he gives it the gloss of "unitive" experience and "perennial philosophy".<sup>33</sup>

Bede Griffiths (1997): "Advaita (nonduality) does not mean "one" in the sense of eliminating all differences. The differences are present in the one in a mysterious way. They are not separated anymore, and yet they are there."

Further, Barnhart (2009) holds that:

"It is quite possible that nonduality will emerge as the theological principle of a rebirth of sapiential Christianity ('wisdom Christianity') in our time."

### ***Wisdom Christianity***

Wisdom Christianity is a movement within Christianity that embraces Vedanta and the teachings of the East. It places importance on experiencing the divine through mysticism, which the originators found somewhat lacking in the traditional way of teaching Christianity in the West.

The premier figure in Wisdom Christianity was Bede Griffiths, who sought to take the mystical elements in Hinduism and Taoism and unify them with Christianity. In doing this he hoped to restore Christianity to what he considered its roots where meditation and direct experience of God was emphasized, as with the Desert Fathers. Proponents consider this spiritual wisdom to be found in the New Testament, but believe that has been de-emphasised throughout much of Christian history.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.nonduality.com/faq.htm>

<sup>32</sup> <sup>32</sup> <http://www.swamij.com/pdf/IBMR2009.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Barnhart, Bruno (1999). *Second simplicity: the inner shape of Christianity*. Paulist Press. ISBN 0809138328, 9780809138326. Source: p.238; from Wikipedia



While never losing sight of the fact that Jesus is the way to salvation, in Wisdom Christianity the idea (from the New Testament) that "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) is married to the Hindu concept of the atman. By allying Christianity with mysticism, the movement seeks to ground faith in direct experience and wisdom arising from the mystical experience of nonduality and thus allow Christianity to return to being a more inwardly-directed religion.

The most famous church of Wisdom Christianity is the Saccidananda Ashram, or Ashram of the Holy Trinity, formerly known as Shantivanam Ashram in the Tiruchirapalli District of Southern India.

The Second Vatican Council, in its Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, said that "the Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions". In Wisdom Christianity, Hindu holy texts such as the Mahabharata and the Puranas are considered to be gifts from God. Brother John Martin Sahajananda summarizes this Roman Catholic teaching as, "All the sacred scriptures are a gift of God to humanity."<sup>34</sup>

### ***Abhishiktananda***

Abhishiktananda's affirmation of both nonduality and non-monism was influenced by Christian Trinitarianism, interpreted as an expression of the Many from the One. Jesus's experience of Sonship with the Father is an advaitic experience that is equally available to everyone. Abhishiktananda believed that the early Upanishads report a similar experience. A monistic interpretation of advaita only developed later with the "dialectics" of Shankara's disciples. In non-monistic advaita, the world is not an illusion. Using ideas derived from tantra and Kashmir Shaivism, Abhishiktananda interpreted maya not as illusion, but as the shakti or power of Shiva. He compares shakti to the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup>

Doctoral Thesis of Dr. J. Glenn Friesen, "Abhishiktananda's Non-Monistic Advaitic Experience" (University of South Africa, 2001).<sup>36</sup>

### ***Christian Nondualism***

Christian Nondualism is a mysticism that does not try to escape from the world. Instead it seeks to fully experience the world, in both a theoretical and a non-theoretical way, from out of our nondual center, or heart, as it has been redeemed in Christ. Christian Nondualism rejects all dualistic ideas, and provides a nondual perspective for understanding the nature of our selfhood, of our relation to God, of our relation to others, and of our relation to the world.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Christian Science***

Christian Science has been described as nondual. In a glossary of terms written by the founder, Mary Baker Eddy, matter is defined as illusion and when defining individual

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<sup>34</sup> Wikipedia.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Mainheadings/Abhi.html>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.members.shaw.ca/abhishiktananda/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/>

identity she writes "There is but one I, or Us, but one divine Principle, or Mind, governing all existence".<sup>38</sup>

## Books on Christianity and Nondualism

Christianity and the Doctrine of Non-Dualism by Alvin Moore, ISBN 1597310174

## Eckankar

The teachings of ECK<sup>39</sup> define the nature of Soul more carefully than do other current religions. Each person is Soul, a particle of God sent into the lower worlds (including earth) to gain spiritual experience. Purified by the spiritual exercises, he comes into contact with the Holy Spirit. His goal is spiritual freedom in this lifetime, after which he becomes a Co-worker with God, both here and in the next world. Karma and reincarnation are primary beliefs.

Key to the ECK teachings is the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master. He has the special ability to act as both Inner and Outer Master for ECK students. He is the prophet of Eckankar, given respect but not worship. He teaches the sacred name of God, HU, which lifts one spiritually into the Light and Sound of God, the ECK.

The ECK (the Holy Spirit) purifies one of karma (sin), making it possible for him to accept the full love of God in this lifetime. Then he gains wisdom, charity, and freedom.

Personal experience with the Light and Sound of God is the cornerstone of Eckankar. Of all the religions on earth today, Eckankar offers the most direct teachings on the Light and Sound of God. These twin pillars are missing in whole or in part from the rest. People who truly find these two aspects of God undergo a complete spiritual change. Life becomes fresh and new again, as it was in early childhood.<sup>40</sup>

## Gnosticism

Since its beginning, Gnosticism has been characterized by many dualisms and dualities, including the doctrine of a separate God and Manichaeism (good/evil) dualism. The discovery in 1945 of the Gospel of Thomas, however, has led some scholars to believe that Jesus' original teaching may have been one accurately characterized as nondualism.<sup>41</sup>

An English rendering from The Gospel of Thomas that showcases a nondual vision of reconciling opposites which are also preserved, that is "make the two one":

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<sup>38</sup> Eddy, Mary Baker. Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures. ISBN 0-87952-259-3; from Wikipedia

<sup>39</sup> Local followers of the Eckankar path have visited our Center for Nondualism and have personally explained that for them the Eckankar path is one of nondualism.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.eckankar.org/belief.html>

<sup>41</sup> Miller, Ronald. The Gospel of Thomas: A Guidebook for Spiritual Practice; from Wikipedia

When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same...then you will enter [the Kingdom].<sup>42</sup>

The Gospel of Philip also conveys nondualism:

"Light and Darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable. Because of this neither are the good good, nor evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death. For this reason each one will dissolve into its earliest origin. But those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal." [42]

## Islam/Sufism

Sufism or taṣawwuf (Arabic: تصوّف) is defined by its adherents as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam. A practitioner of this tradition is generally known as a Ṣūfī (صُوفِي). Another name for a Sufi is Dervish.

Classical Sufi scholars have defined Sufism as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God." Alternatively, in the words of the Darqawi Sufi teacher Ahmad ibn Ajiba, "a science through which one can know how to travel into the presence of the Divine, purify one's inner self from filth, and beautify it with a variety of praiseworthy traits."

Classical Sufis were characterised by their attachment to dhikr (a practice of repeating the names of God) and asceticism. Sufism gained adherents among a number of Muslims as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 CE[6]). The Sufi movement has spanned several continents and cultures over a millennium, at first expressed through Arabic, then through Persian, Turkish and a dozen other languages.[7] "Orders" (ṭuruq), which are either Sunnī or Shī'ī in doctrine, trace many of their original precepts from the Islamic Prophet Muhammad through his cousin 'Alī, with the notable exception of the Naqshbandi who trace their origins through the first Caliph, Abu Bakr. Other exclusive schools of Sufism describe themselves as distinctly Sufi.

According to Idries Shah, the Sufi philosophy is universal in nature, its roots predating the arising of Islam and the other modern-day religions; likewise, some Muslims consider Sufism outside the sphere of Islam. Mainstream scholars of Islam, however, contend that it is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam.<sup>43</sup>

The 2007 short film 'Vishwaas Ki Goonj/The Echo Of Faith', highlights the universal message of Sufism and conveys mankind's ability to practice and uphold the notion of 'oneness of beings'. Directed and presented by Basant P. Tolani, the film received first prize in the Global Festival of Films on Peace and Spirituality 2008 by IFTC

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<sup>42</sup> Burrus, Virginia & Keller, Catherine (2006). *Toward a theology of eros: transfiguring passion at the limits of discipline*. Transdisciplinary theological colloquia. Fordham University Press. ISBN 0823226360, 9780823226368. Source: [24] (accessed: Friday April 23, 2010), p. 145; from Wikipedia

<sup>43</sup> Wikipedia

(International Films & Television Club) and AAFT (Asian Academy Of Films and Television)<sup>44</sup>

### ***Ibn Arabi***

Muhyiddin Muhammad b. 'Ali Ibn 'Arabi (or Ibn al-'Arabi) is considered to be one of the most important Sufi masters, although he never founded any order (tariqa). His writings, especially al-Futuh al-Makkiyya and Fusus al-hikam, have been studied within all the Sufi orders as the clearest expression of tawhid (Divine Unity), though because of their recondite nature they were often only given to initiates. Later those who followed his teaching became known as the school of wahdat al-wujud (the Oneness of Being). He himself considered his writings to have been divinely inspired. As he expressed the Way to one of his close disciples, his legacy is that 'you should never ever abandon your servanthood ('ubudiyya), and that there may never be in your soul a longing for any existing thing'.<sup>45</sup>

### **Jainism**

"The theory of nonduality is the fundamental philosophical construct, created and developed in the bosom of classical Eastern historical thought, the Bharata Dharma, which includes Advaita-Vedanta, Buddhism and Jainism.<sup>46</sup>

### **Judaism and Hasidism**

Michaelson (2009: p. 130) identifies that nonduality was unambiguously evident in the medieval Jewish textual tradition which peaked in Hasidism:

"As a Jewish religious notion, nonduality begins to appear unambiguously in Jewish texts during the medieval period, increasing in frequency in the centuries thereafter and peaking at the turn of the nineteenth century, with the advent of Hasidism. It is certainly possible that earlier Jewish texts may suggest nonduality -- as, of course, they have been interpreted by traditional nondualists -- but...this may or may not be the most useful way to approach them."

Judaism has within it a strong and very ancient mystical tradition that is deeply nondualistic. "Ein Sof" or infinite nothingness is considered the ground face of all that is. God is considered beyond all proposition or preconception. The physical world is seen as emanating from the nothingness as the many faces "partsufim" of god that are all a part of the sacred nothingness. Sometimes the faces are referred to as colored spheres "sphirot" that are the same as chakras in eastern traditions. sphirot are seen as emanations or fruit of the tree of life in the sacred garden of paradise. The tree exists and emanates through many, sometimes infinite, stages or levels of reality. All is considered one nondualistic whole. nothingness and somethingness are considered one united and inseparable thing.

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<sup>44</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>45</sup> K. al-Wasa'il, quoted in The Unlimited Mercifier, Stephen Hirtenstein, p. 246; Wikipedia

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.nonduality.com/hl2669.htm>

Duality is seen as an illusion of brokenness or contraction and enlightenment is the act of inner restoration or repair "tikkun" of god's unity.<sup>47</sup>

## **Kaballah**

By mastering the practice of binah consciousness, which is a practice of selflessness, we can enhance the potential for experiencing chochma consciousness, in which we enter the emptiness of ayin, the realm of Nothingness out of which everything is born. In other traditions, this realm has names such as nirvana, Wisdom, and Sophis. In Jewish mysticism, it is called chochma.<sup>48</sup>

## **Pagan**

In Neoplatonism, there's the idea that the ultimate Divine is beyond gender--a "One" beyond human conception. This concept is found in Gardnerian Craft and called "Dryghton." It's also a thoroughly Pagan concept. The conflict in late antiquity was NOT "one God versus many Gods"--monotheism versus polytheism; that was a rhetorical device used in Christian propaganda. The real conflict was between the monotheism of the Christians and the monism of the Pagans. The Christians said there was only one God and his name was YHVH, so all other gods were false. The Pagans said there was ultimately only one Divine Unity (which they sometimes called "God"), so it necessarily had to encompass and embrace all gods and all faiths. It was a conflict of exclusivity vs. inclusivity. The fact that non-dualism is at the heart of the Western Pagan tradition has been obscured or lost, because we Pagans have let the Christians of late antiquity define the terms of the argument!<sup>49</sup>

## **Sikhism**

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion which holds the view of non-dualism. A principle cause of suffering in Sikhism is the ego (ahankar in Punjabi), the delusion of identifying oneself as an individual separate from the surroundings. From the ego arises the desires, pride, emotional attachments, anger, lust, etc., thus putting humans on the path of destruction. According to Sikhism the true nature of all humans is the same as God, and everything that originates with God. The goal of a Sikh is to conquer the ego and realize your true nature or self, which is the same as God's.<sup>50</sup>

## **Taoism**

Dechar (2005: p. 5-6) identifies that the terms "Tao" and "[D]harma" are etymologically rooted by identifying the etymon "da":

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<sup>47</sup> Michaelson, Jay (2009). Everything Is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism. Shambhala Publications. ISBN 1590306716, 9781590306710; from Wikipedia

<sup>48</sup> Seeing through the eyes of God: Mystical Practices of Kabbalah by Rabbi David A. Cooper, ISBN 9781591795926.

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.researchpubs.com/books/mpex\\_frew.php](http://www.researchpubs.com/books/mpex_frew.php)

<sup>50</sup> Wikipedia.

"The word Tao has no exact English translation, but it relates most closely to the Western idea of wholeness, to the unknowable unity of the divine. When used by the Taoist philosophers, Tao became the Way, the path or cosmic law that directs the unfolding of every aspect of the [U]niverse. So Tao is the wisdom of the divine made manifest in nature and in my individual life. The Chinese word Tao has an etymological relationship to the Sanskrit root sound "da", which means "to divine something whole into parts". The ancient Sanskrit word dharma is also related to this root. In the Buddhist tradition, dharma means "that which is to be held fast, kept, an ordinance or law...the absolute, the real." So, both dharma and Tao refer to the way that the One, the unfathomable unity of the divine, divides into parts and manifests in the world of form."<sup>[44]</sup>

Taoism's wu wei (Chinese wu, not; wei, doing) is a term with various translations (e.g. inaction, non-action, nothing doing, without ado) and interpretations designed to distinguish it from passivity. From a nondual perspective, it refers to activity that does not imply an "I". The concept of Yin and Yang, often mistakenly conceived of as a symbol of dualism, is actually meant to convey the notion that all apparent opposites are complementary parts of a non-dual whole. The Tao Te Ching has been seen as a nondualist text; from that perspective, the term "Tao" could be interpreted as a name for the Ultimate Reality (which, as the Tao Te Ching itself notes, is not the reality itself).<sup>51</sup>

### ***Tao Te Ching Passages***

Here are a few of the passages from the Tao Te Ching:

The Tao is infinite, eternal. Why is it eternal? It was never born; thus it can never die. Why is it infinite? It has no desires for itself; thus it is present for all beings.

We join spokes together in a wheel, but it is the center hole that makes the wagon move. We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.

Since before time and space were, the Tao is. It is beyond is and is not.

There was something formless and perfect before the universe was born. It is serene. Empty. Solitary. Unchanging. Infinite. Eternally present. It is the mother of the universe. For lack of a better name, I call it the Tao.

When you have names and forms, know that they are temporary. All things end in the Tao as rivers flow into the sea.

The great Tao flows everywhere. All things are born from it, yet it doesn't create them. It pours itself into its work, yet it makes no claim. It nourishes infinite worlds, yet it doesn't hold on to them.

The Tao gives birth to One. One gives birth to Two. Two gives birth to Three. Three gives birth to all things.

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<sup>51</sup> Wikipedia

## Books Taoism

Tao Te Ching, translations by various authors; search Amazon.com

The Shambhala Guide to Taoism by Eva Wong, ISBN 1570621691

## Zen

Zen is a non-dual tradition. It can be considered a religion, a philosophy, or simply a practice depending on one's perspective. It has also been described as a way of life, work, and an art form. Zen practitioners do not rely on labels, saying, 'The finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself.' Tozan, one of the founders of Sōtō Zen in China, had a teaching known as the Five Ranks of the Real and the Ideal, which points out the necessity of not getting caught in the duality between Absolute and Relative/Samsara and Nirvana, and describes the stages of further transcendence into fully realising the Absolute in all activities. Nondual themes are very strong in the literary work of Dogen (1200–1253).<sup>52</sup>

### Zen Books:

Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy by David Loy (a Zen practitioner), ISBN 1573923591

Review on Amazon.com: Many Western philosophers are poorly informed about the issues involved in nonduality, since this topic is usually associated with various kinds of absolute idealism in the West, or mystical traditions in the East. Increasingly, however, this topic is finding its way into Western philosophical debates. In this "scholarly but leisurely and very readable" (Spectrum Review) analysis of the philosophies of nondualism of (Hindu) Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism, Loy, who is a Zen practitioner, extracts what he calls "a core doctrine" of nonduality of seer and seen from these three worldviews and then applies the doctrine in various ways, including a critique of Derrida's deconstructionism. (This is an important work addressing one of the central patterns of Asian thinking.)

## Nisargadatta

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (birth name: Maruti Shivrampant Kambli) (April 17, 1897 – September 8, 1981) was an Indian spiritual teacher and philosopher of Advaita (Nondualism), and a Guru, belonging to the Inchgiri branch of the Navnath Sampradaya.

One of the 20th century's exponents of the school of Advaita Vedanta philosophy (nondualism), Sri Nisargadatta, with his direct and minimalistic explanation of nondualism, is considered the most famous teacher of Advaita since Ramana Maharshi.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Foshay, Toby Avarad (1994). "Denegation, Nonduality, and Language in Derrida and Dogen." Philosophy East and West. Volume 44, Number 3. July 1994, pp.543-558.; from Wikipedia

<sup>53</sup> Intro to I am That.

In 1973, the publication of his most famous and widely translated book, *I Am That*, an English translation of his talks in Marathi by Maurice Frydman, brought him worldwide recognition and followers.<sup>54</sup>

## **Teachings**

Sri Nisargadatta's teachings are grounded in the Advaita Vedanta interpretation of the Advaita idea *Tat Tvam Asi*, literally "That Thou Art", (*Tat* = "Divinity", *Tvam* = "You", *Asi* = "are") meaning You are (actually) Divinity (who thinks otherwise). He also had a strong devotional zeal towards his own guru, and suggested the path of devotion, *Bhakti yoga*, to some of his visitors, as he believed the path of knowledge, *Jnana yoga* was not for everyone.

According to Sri Nisargadatta, our true nature is perpetually free peaceful awareness, in Hinduism referred to as Brahman. Awareness is the source of, but different from, the personal, individual consciousness, which is related to the body. The mind and memory are responsible for association with a particular body; awareness exists prior to both mind and memory. It is only the idea that we are the body that keeps us from living what he calls our "original essence", the True Self, in Hinduism referred to as *Atman*.

He describes this essence as pure, free, and unaffected by anything that occurs. He likens it to a silent witness that watches through the body's senses, yet is not moved, either to happiness or sadness, based on what it sees.

For Nisargadatta, the Self is not one super-entity which knows independently, regardless of things; there is no such super-entity, no Creator with infinite intellect. God does not exist independently from creation. What does exist is the "total acting" (or functioning) of the Ultimate or Absolute Reality along the infinite varying forms in manifestation. This Absolute Reality is identical to the Self.

Nisargadatta's teachings also focus on our notion of causality as being misinterpreted. He understood that the interconnectedness of varying forces in the universe is so vast and innumerable that the notion of causality, as presently understood, is wasted. The endless factors required for anything to happen means that, at most, one can say everything creates everything; even the choices we make are predetermined by our genetic code, upbringing, mental strivings and limitations, our ethical and philosophical ideals, etc., all of which are uniquely combined to each person and recontextualized accordingly.

This leads to the radical notion that there is no such thing as a "doer". According to him and other teachers of Vedanta, since our true nature or identity is not the mind, is not the body, but the witness of the mind and body, we, as pure awareness, do nothing. The mind and body act of their own accord, and we are the witness of them, though the mind often believes it is the doer. This false idea (that the mind is the self and responsible for actions) is what keeps us from recognizing our Self. Nisargadatta cautions:

"The life force [*prana*] and the mind are operating [of their own accord], but the mind will tempt you to believe that it is "you". Therefore understand always that you are the

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<sup>54</sup> Nisargadatta profile at realization.org



timeless spaceless witness. And even if the mind tells you that you are the one who is acting, don't believe the mind. [...] The apparatus [mind, body] which is functioning has come upon your original essence, but you are not that apparatus." - The Ultimate Medicine, (pp.54 - 70)

Among his most known disciples are Sailor Bob Adamson, Stephen Wolinsky, Jean Dunn, Alexander Smit, Robert Powell, Timothy Conway, and Ramesh Balsekar.<sup>55</sup>

### **Quotes of Nisargadatta Maharaj**

"All you can teach is understanding. The rest comes on its own."

"Truth is not a reward for good behaviour, nor a prize for passing some tests. It cannot be brought about. It is the primary, the unborn, the ancient source of all that is. You are eligible because you are. You need not merit truth. It is your own. Just stop running away by running after. Stand still, be quiet." - Interview with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

"My advice to you is very simple – just remember yourself, 'I am', it is enough to heal your mind and take you beyond, just have some trust. I don't mislead you. Why should I? Do I want anything from you? I wish you well – such is my nature. Why should I mislead you? Common sense too will tell you that to fulfill a desire you must keep your mind on it. If you want to know your true nature, you must have yourself in mind all the time, until the secret of your being stands revealed." - I Am That

"There is only life, there is nobody who lives a life." - I Am That pp. 43

"A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the sun on rising makes the world active, so does self-awareness affect changes in the mind. In the light of calm and steady self-awareness inner energies wake up and work miracles without effort on your part."

"There is nothing to practice. To know yourself, be yourself. To be yourself, stop imagining yourself to be this or that. Just be. Let your true nature emerge. Don't disturb your mind with seeking."

"When I see I am nothing, that is wisdom. When I see I am everything, that is love. My life is a movement between these two."

"The search for Reality is the most dangerous of all undertakings, for it destroys the world in which you live."<sup>56</sup>

## **Ramana Maharshi**

Sri Ramana Maharshi (December 30, 1879 – April 14, 1950), born Venkataraman Iyer, was a Hindu sage. He was born to a Tamil-speaking Brahmin family in Tiruchuzhi, Tamil Nadu. After having attained liberation at the age of 16, he left home for Arunachala, a mountain considered sacred by Hindus, at Tiruvannamalai, and lived there for the rest of

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<sup>55</sup> Wikipedia, from various other sources.

<sup>56</sup> Wikipedia from various sources.

his life. Although born a Brahmin, after having attained moksha he declared himself an "Atiasrami", a Sastraic state of unattachment to anything in life and beyond all caste restrictions<sup>57</sup>. The ashram that grew around him, Sri Ramana Ashram is situated at the foothill of Arunchala, to the west to the pilgrimage town of Tiruvannamalai.

Sri Ramana maintained that the purest form of his teachings was the powerful silence which radiated from his presence and quieted the minds of those attuned to it. He gave verbal teachings only for the benefit of those who could not understand his silence.<sup>58</sup> His verbal teachings were said to flow from his direct experience of Consciousness (Atman) as the only existing reality.<sup>59</sup> When asked for advice, he recommended self-enquiry as the fastest path to moksha. Though his primary teaching is associated with Non-dualism, Advaita Vedanta, and Jnana yoga, he recommended Bhakti to those he saw were fit for it, and gave his approval to a variety of paths and practices.<sup>60</sup>

### **Teachings**

Sri Ramana's teachings about self-enquiry, the practice he is most widely associated with, have been classified as the Path of Knowledge (Jnana marga) among the Indian schools of thought. Though his teaching is consistent with and generally associated with Hinduism, the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta, there are some differences with the traditional Advaitic school, and Sri Ramana gave his approval to a variety of paths and practices from various religions.

His earliest teachings are documented in the book *Nan Yar?*(Who am I?), first written in Tamil. The original book was published by Sri Pillai, although the essay version of the book (Sri Ramana Nutrirattu) prepared by Sri Ramana is considered definitive as unlike the original it had the benefit of his revision and review. A careful translation with notes is available in English as 'The Path of Sri Ramana, Part One' by Sri Sadhu Om, one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramana. Selections from this definitive version follow:

As all living beings desire to be happy always, without misery, as in the case of everyone there is observed supreme love for one's self, and as happiness alone is the cause for love, in order to gain that happiness which is one's nature and which is experienced in the state of deep sleep where there is no mind, one should know one's self. For that, the path of knowledge, the inquiry of the form "Who am I?", is the principal means.

Knowledge itself is 'I'. The nature of (this) knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss.

What is called mind is a wondrous power existing in Self. It projects all thoughts. If we set aside all thoughts and see, there will be no such thing as mind remaining separate; therefore, thought itself is the form of the mind. Other than thoughts, there is no such thing as the world.

Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind, the thought 'I' is the first thought.

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<sup>57</sup> Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi the Atiasrami, p.1; from Wikipedia, including more extensive biography.

<sup>58</sup> Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi; from Wikipedia

<sup>59</sup> Be As You Are Introduction; from Wikipedia

<sup>60</sup> Wikipedia.

That which rises in this body as 'I' is the mind. If one enquires 'In which place in the body does the thought 'I' rise first?', it will be known to be in the heart [spiritual heart is 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest']. Even if one incessantly thinks 'I', 'I', it will lead to that place (Self)

The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'Who am I?', destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre.

If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire, 'To whom did they arise?', it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?', the mind (power of attention) will turn back to its source. By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases.

The place where even the slightest trace of the 'I' does not exist, alone is Self.

Self itself is the world; Self itself is 'I'; Self itself is God; all is the Supreme Self (siva swarupam)

Sri Ramana warned against considering self-enquiry as an intellectual exercise. Properly done, it involves fixing the attention firmly and intensely on the feeling of 'I', without thinking. It is perhaps more helpful to see it as 'Self-attention' or 'Self-abiding' (cf. Sri Sadhu Om - The Path of Sri Ramana Part I). The clue to this is in Sri Ramana's own death experience when he was 16. After raising the question 'Who am I?' he "turned his attention very keenly towards himself" (cf. description above). Attention must be fixed on the 'I' until the feeling of duality disappears.

Although he advocated self-enquiry as the fastest means to realization, he also recommended the path of bhakti and self-surrender (to one's Deity or Guru) either concurrently or as an adequate alternative, which would ultimately converge with the path of self-enquiry.<sup>61</sup>

## **Books related to Ramana Maharshi**

The Spiritual Teaching of Ramana Maharshi (ISBN 1-59030-139-0)

Be as You Are: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, by David Godman (ISBN 0-14-019062-7)

Guru Vachaka Kovai (Garland of Guru's Sayings) by Sri Muruganar, translation Sri Sadhu Om PDF[55]

The Collected Works Of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Contains compositions by Sri Ramana, as well as a large number of adaptations and translations by him of classical advaita works (ISBN 81-88018-06-6)

The Path of Sri Ramana, Part One and The Path of Sri Ramana, Part Two, by Sri Sadhu Om (ASIN B000KMKFX0) PDF[56]

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<sup>61</sup> Various sources in Wikipedia

Happiness and the Art of Being: A Layman's Introduction to the Philosophy and Practice of the Spiritual Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana (ISBN 1-4251-2465-8) PDF[57]

The Essential Teachings of Ramana Maharshi: A Visual Journey (ISBN 1-878019-18-X)

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, by Munagal Venkataramiah, covers the period 1935 to 1939 (ISBN 81-88018-07-4) PDF[58]

Reflections: On Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, by S.S.Cohen (ISBN 81-88018-38-4) PDF[59]

Padamalai: Teachings of Ramana Maharshi Recorded by Sri Muruganar, edited by David Godman (ISBN 0971137137)

Sri Ramana Gita (ISBN 81-88018-17-1)

The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in his own words, by Arthur Osborne (ISBN 81-88018-15-5) PDF[60]

Day by Day with Bhagavan by A Devaraja Mudaliar (ISBN 81-88018-82-1). An account of daily discussions during the period 1945 to 1947.

Gems from Bhagavan, by A. Devaraja Mudaliar

Maha Yoga, by 'Who' (Lakshmana Sharma), Rev 2002 (ISBN 81-88018-20-1), PDF[61]

Ramana Puranam: Composed by Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Muruganar (ISBN 81-8289-059-9)

Origin of Spiritual Instruction, by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (ISBN 978-0970366733)

Who am I?: the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi by Ramana Maharshi

## Himalayan Yoga meditation tradition

This is the term used to describe the tradition<sup>62</sup> or lineage of Babaji (Mahavatar Baba), Bengali Baba, Swami Rama of the Himalayas, and Swami Jnaneshvara, as well as others who were direct students/disciples of Swami Rama.

Source of the tradition: The systematic practice of Yoga Meditation comes from the ancient cave monasteries of the Himalayas, the source of the mystical Shangrila or Shambala. This lineage of teachers is at least 5,000 years old, though eternal in nature. It includes Swami Rama and his teachers Bengali Baba, who is disciple of Mahavatar Baba, known as Babaji. (See Swami Rama's book, Living with the Himalayan Masters.

Encompassing all forms of yoga: The tradition of the Himalayan masters encompasses all of the Yogas. Self-Realization comes through Yoga meditation of the Yoga Sutras, the contemplative insight of Advaita Vedanta, and the intense devotion of Samaya Sri Vidya

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<sup>62</sup> This is the tradition of Swami Jnaneshvara and several of the other people involved with the Center for Nondualism.

Tantra, the three of which complement one another like fingers on a hand (See: Yoga, Vedanta, Tantra article on SwamiJ.com). We employ the classical approaches of Raja, Jnana, Karma, and Bhakti Yoga, as well as Hatha, Kriya, Kundalini, Laya, Mantra, Nada, Siddha, and Tantra Yoga. Together, they guide one directly through the layers (Koshas) of our being to the direct experience of the center of consciousness. Meditation, contemplation, mantra and prayer finally converge into a unified force directed towards the final stage, piercing the pearl of wisdom called bindu, leading to the Absolute.

These methods self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-realization include the following:

- Yoga Sutras: The ancient, oral yoga system, codified by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras is accepted as a preliminary or foundation step, with yoga resting on the foundation of sankhya philosophy. Yoga meditation systematically discerns pure consciousness from the many false identities, attractions, aversions, and fears.
- Advaita Vedanta: Philosophically, the Advaita Vedanta system of one absolute Reality without a second is practiced as elucidated in the Upanishads, particularly the Mandukya Upanishad, relating to AUM and the four states of waking, dreaming, sleep, and the fourth state, turiya. Contemplative meditation is a process of inspection within, exploring the levels of manifestation so as to uncover the absolute core of one's being.
- Sri Vidya: Both Mother and Father principles of the universe are acknowledged, practicing the purely internal form of Tantra to awaken kundalini and experience the highest. Maya (illusion) is seen as the creativity of the Mother principle, and is thus not an obstacle. The inner tantra practices trace all of the inner energies back to their finest source of pure energy.
- Specific Practices: Include Meditation from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Contemplation from Vedanta, as well Yoga Nidra and Kundalini practices from Tantra.<sup>63</sup>

## SYDA and Swami Muktananda

The SYDA Foundation is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1973. The SYDA Foundation's role is to protect, preserve, and disseminate Siddha Yoga philosophy and culture. The Foundation works within the framework of a long-range vision to maintain all aspects of the Siddha Yoga path and preserve it as a dynamic spiritual path, now and for generations to come.<sup>64</sup>

The Foundation disseminates the Siddha Yoga teachings given by Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, Swami Muktananda, and Bhagawan Nityananda. With Gurumayi's inspiration and guidance, sevites in the Foundation's Philosophy and Culture Area create and produce Siddha Yoga teaching and learning events and products. These include

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<sup>63</sup> <http://www.swamij.com/tradition.htm>

<sup>64</sup> SYDA Yoga is specifically mentioned here because several of the followers of this lineage have been involved in the Center for Nondualism.

Siddha Yoga Shaktipat Intensives, Siddha Yoga retreats, Global Audio Satsangs, and the Siddha Yoga Home Study Course. <sup>65</sup>

Siddha Yoga [of SYDA Yoga Foundation] is a spiritual path (or new religious movement) based on the Hindu spiritual traditions of Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism. The Siddha Yoga path was founded by Swami Muktananda Paramahansa (1908–1982). The present spiritual head of the Siddha Yoga path is Gurumayi Chidvilasananda. The two main ashrams are: Gurudev Siddha Peeth in Ganeshpuri, India, and Shree Muktananda Ashram in upstate New York. The Siddha Yoga organization has ashrams and meditation centers in a number of countries, including India, the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Brasil and Japan. <sup>66</sup>

## Course in Miracles

A Course in Miracles is an expression of nondualism that is independent of any religious denomination. For instance in a workshop entitled 'The Real World' led by two of its more prominent teachers, Kenneth Wapnick and Gloria Wapnick, Gloria explains how discordant the course is from the teachings of Christianity:

"The course is very clear in that God did not create the physical world or universe - or anything physical. It parts ways right at the beginning. If you start with the theology of the course, there's nowhere you can reconcile from the beginning, because the first book of Genesis talks about God creating the world, and then the animals and humans, et cetera. The course parts company at page one with the Bible." <sup>67</sup>

A Course in Miracles<sup>68</sup> presents an interpretation of nondualism that recognises only "God" (i.e. absolute reality) as existing in any way, and nothing else existing at all. In a book entitled The Disappearance of the Universe, which explains and elaborates on A Course in Miracles, it says in its second chapter that we "don't even exist in an individual way - not on any level. There is no separated or individual soul. There is no Atman, as the Hindus call it, except as a mis-thought in the mind. There is only God." [46] A verse from the course itself that displays its interpretation of nondualism is found in Chapter 14:

"The first in time means nothing, but the First in eternity is God the Father, Who is both First and One. Beyond the First there is no other, for there is no order, no second or third, and nothing but the First." <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> SiddhaYoga.org

<sup>66</sup> Wikipedia. Note that siddha yoga is a widely known term, and while SYDA Yoga Foundation widely disseminates teachings, there is no group that has exculsive domain over siddha yoga as a yoga.

<sup>67</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>68</sup> Several of the people historically involved with the Center for Nondualism have a long history of studying the Course in Miracles.

<sup>69</sup> Wikipedia