

NONDUAL WISDOM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Approaching problems entirely from the ego-mind can result in some insight as well as some improvement in your situation, and in your ability to deal with your life's problems. However, it does not result in freedom from them altogether. The change which insight does bring about is often temporary and there is still a conditioned identity that will continue to create problems and suffering in more subtle and creative ways. What I am pointing to here is a deeper solution -- one that frees us from the whole conditioned identity to begin with. Whether we know it yet or not, what we truly want is freedom from identification with that which creates the suffering in the first place. It is the difference between rearranging furniture in a prison cell in order to make it more comfortable versus getting out of the cell altogether.

In the realm of the nondual, absolute reality, psychotherapy is irrelevant because there is no separate self to receive it and no problem to work on or solve. Yet, there is also the expression of relative reality. There is both absolute and relative reality; they are two sides of a single coin. A therapist who has this understanding holds both at the same time.

If we say that psychotherapy is not needed because there is no individual self or problem, then we are stuck on the absolute side of duality. If we focus only on a self with a problem to fix without recognition of what is already present and free, then we are stuck on the other side of duality. In both cases we fail to notice the nondual truth that they are two aspects of the same one consciousness.

From the vantage point of awakened, nondual awareness, there is a fresh, new view that is vast and all-inclusive. This view does not ignore the dissatisfactions of our life and problems of the psyche; however, it views them from a much larger perspective. This view does not perceive things in terms of what's wrong. The goal is not to change what is, but rather to awaken to the truth of what is. And from there, whatever needs to change will change on its own. What does not serve us simply releases when met with the wisdom and compassion of our true being. As Adyashanti says, "When conditioning arises, if it is not claimed as "mine", it arises within an undivided state of being. When conditioning meets an undivided state, there is an alchemical transformation. There is a sacred miracle."

It is important to note that psychotherapy that includes nondual wisdom can never truly be another method or theory. It is about working from the Unknown Mystery itself and that cannot be clearly mapped out and concretized as a method. It is something that unfolds from the unknown, new and fresh each moment. Nonduality can never be limited or confined by a theory, technique or method. Also, nondual awareness cannot be limited to or defined as a solution to problems. In fact, this awareness is not limited in any way. It can and does use anything and everything to point us to our true nature. It is the source and substance of all that is.

Nondual awareness is ultimately all that is needed to free us from psychological suffering and problems. It is already free of suffering and waits silently, patiently to be discovered. All other solutions are ultimately temporary or superficial.

Nevertheless, psychotherapeutic methods can support and assist both the recognition and embodiment of nondual awareness. If we are in a great deal of pain, conflict and crisis, it can be difficult to connect with this depth of awareness, even though it is always present no matter what the circumstances. And if there is recognition of true nature, it can be difficult to remain in contact with it. Therefore, psychotherapy or other forms of healing can be valuable in terms of bringing one's life and body-mind into more stability and balance in order to awaken or embody the nondual presence of being.

On the other hand, realization of this presence greatly facilitates the psychotherapeutic process. When we are conscious of the presence of being, we have the safety, detachment, clarity and wisdom to allow the resolution and dissolution of our conditioning and psychological wounds or symptoms. This not only makes this process move more easily and quickly, it is actually what makes it fully possible.

From the perspective of nondual wisdom, psychology and awakening come together as one process. In non-duality, there is no distinction between the impersonal absolute reality and the personal relative reality. Nondual awareness does not distinguish between the psychotherapeutic goal of self-individuation and the spiritual goal of self-liberation. Together, they form a powerful union that offers the possibility of true freedom from psychological suffering.