

QUEST

Sunday, June 7 at 9:15 in Dobkin Hall
Childcare Provided

Non-Duality & the Lightness of Being



with Heidi Kaufman

*"Did they teach you about that which cannot be seen, cannot be heard, cannot be known
about which nothing cannot be seen, cannot be heard, cannot be known?"*

Peter Russel from *Non-Duality and the Mystery of Consciousness*

During our most recent Quest we focused on perception and the brain's ability to perceive reality. This Sunday we will explore perception from the perspective of non-duality (not two), the concept and experience of interconnectedness of all things as an indivisible whole, where self and the world, subject and object are not separate entities.

For those of us brought up in Western culture, seeing and experiencing the world from a non-dual perspective can be difficult. We are deep into the "reality" of separateness - you and me or us and them with opposing or complementary forces inside and all around us; my mind vs body, good vs evil, light vs darkness. But, like the experience of using our non-dominant hand, opening our mind and senses in a non-dualistic way, with time and practice, may bring unexpected and surprising moments of insight, peace, connection, clarity and wellbeing.

Please see the following videos and article to prepare for the discussion.

The first two explore what non-duality is and how we might experience it. The 3rd one is about how the non-dualistic approach can positively influence our emotional health, especially in regard to reducing anxiety and depression.

<https://youtu.be/3BI-W6FzPyA?si=kWEFoYvmoyPxH1OE>

[Non-Duality and the Mystery of Consciousness - Science and Nonduality \(SAND\)](#)

[Beyond Black & White: Using Non-Dualism to Heal Splitting - The Center for Mind & Relationship](#)

Questions to Consider

In the first video Shamash provided some analogies and experiences to better understand non-duality. He refers to the experience of music where your sense of self falls away and all there is, **is** the music, or you are in a deep conversation, and the sense of time and space disappears. "There is no me managing or controlling the conversations, trying to make it go one way or the other, there is just this sense of deep connection and nothing else. In those moments the usual narrator in your head, the one that keeps track of how you are doing, what people think of you, what's coming up next, what happened in the past, that narrator starts to go quiet and what's left doesn't feel empty, what's left actually feels more alive, it feels more real you feel more present, not less".

What did you think of these examples and the other examples he provided? Do they help you to better understand non-duality? Can you relate to what he is talking about and have you had similar experiences?

Shamash addresses the common misperception that non dualistic perception means the self is an illusion, that nothing matters, that "I don't really exist". He does so by providing the analogy of a fence between 2 gardens that wasn't exactly solid, more like a hedge full of gaps.

What was it he was trying to say with this example? Was it a helpful way to think about the self? Can you think of any other examples?

In Peter Russel's talk he uses a Buddhist saying to illustrate what may seem counterintuitive for experiencing our essential essence - "There is nowhere to go. There is nothing we need to do. There's no one to be"

What do you think he meant by each of those statements? How are they helpful for experiencing that sense of essence, of essential being, "that core sense of me"?

One of his favorite personal aphorisms is "seek and you shall not find" because the attitude of seeking is looking for something else, the attitude of seeking is a tension that comes into the mind which is the opposite of letting the mind totally relax. He says, " Just pause for a moment, let the mind relax. In that pause we begin to touch something. When I ask people what it is they say it's a sense of ease, a sense of spaciousness, a sense of clarity, a sense of contentment, a lightness of being. These are all the qualities we begin to touch as we step into our true nature."

Do you think he is right about the attitude of seeking? Have you had that experience yourself? What about pausing your thoughts? Do experiences with pausing your thoughts mirror what he is talking about?

In the article Beyond Black and White we see how the differences between dualistic vs non-dualistic thinking can be more than an esoteric exercise about the nature of reality. There are real life consequences with adverse effects on our mental and emotional wellbeing.

Can you relate to any of the examples they provide? Do you think their non dualistic approach could be or has been helpful for you or others you know?

On a larger scale, beyond just our own personal experiences, are there ways in which a non-dualistic approach can be helpful to the larger community in which we live?

Are there ways in which we as Unitarian Universalists are moving in that direction?