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Nondual Realization and Intersubjectivity Theory

PSYCHOANALYTIC intersubjectivity theory and Asian nondual philosophy have in common two radical claims about human existence. One is the ultimately subjective nature of all experience, with its corollary that there is no objective reality that we can know with certainty. The other is the denial of an independently existing individual self.

One of the main differences between intersubjectivity theory and Asian nondual philosophy is their understanding of the nature of subjectivity. Intersubjectivity theory emerges from and articulates the post-modern view that all experience is subjectively organized. “The principal components of subjectivity, in our view, are the organizing principles, whether automatic and rigid, or reflective and flexible” (Orange, Atwood, & Stolorow, 1997, p. 7). In contrast, Asian nondual philosophy asserts that we can encounter—or unveil—a nonorganized, self-existing (unconstructed) basis of subjectivity. This self-existing subjectivity, or consciousness, is experienced as nondual: as pervading both subject and object as a unity. Nondual realization, as it is understood in this book, is the emergence of a nonconceptual experience of self/other unity. It is the basis of deepened contact with oneself, one’s environment, and with other people. It constitutes a very subtle and intimate dimension of human relationships.

In my view, nondual realization does not negate the hermeneutic, co-constructed approach to psychotherapy adhered to in intersubjectivity

theory; rather, it facilitates it. Orange (2000) writes, “The rigidity that we associate with various kinds of psychopathology can be grasped as a kind of freezing of one’s experiential horizons so that other perspectives remain unavailable” (p. 489). As rigid organizations of experience are articulated and resolved in the psychotherapeutic process, an openness or availability to experience emerges. With some guidance, this openness can progress to reveal the self-existing dimension of nondual consciousness.

INTERSUBJECTIVITY THEORY

Psychoanalysis began with Sigmund Freud’s theory of biologically based sexual and aggressive drives that must be controlled for the client to adapt to societal standards of normative behavior. Although this theory views the client in relation to his or her world, it is concerned with the internal desires and fantasies that set the client against the restrictive and seemingly objective reality of the environment. The psychoanalyst represents the reality of the objective world, and assumes the authority to analyze the client’s distance from it.

The Freudian model presents us with a pathological subject who must conform to the healthy object of society in general, and the analyst in particular. In the classical psychoanalytic relationship, the client lies passively on a couch, focused solely on the flow of his or her own thoughts; the analyst is removed from the client’s line of vision. This position represents the hermetic, intrapsychic nature of psychological healing, as it is understood in classical psychoanalysis.

In the generations following Freud, psychoanalysis went through a “humanistic” transformation, exemplified by the self psychology of Heinz Kohut (1977, 1984), among others. Kohut saw the origin of psychopathology as the child’s reaction to deficits of empathic attunement and approval in his or her environment. Kohut’s ideas were embedded in a worldview that viewed industrialized society not as the measure of reality and health, but as potentially damaging to the human spirit. Along with Carl Rogers (1965), R. D. Laing (1965), Rollo May (1953), and many others, Kohut was concerned with addressing an internal hollowness or fragmentation, a lack of self-contact that was seen as a malaise

afflicting modern humanity in general. The humanistic turn shifted the goal of psychoanalysis from helping clients adjust to society to helping them recover from the conforming, dehumanizing aspects of society, as well as the destructive elements of their childhood environments.

The relationship between the therapist and client also shifted. The therapist was no longer a remote authority, commenting from afar on the client's monologue. Instead, the therapist became an empathic guide for the client's inward journey. Even the positions of the therapist and client changed. The client now sat upright, a more proactive stance than the prone position on the couch, and faced the therapist. In this position, the therapist and client were inevitably engaged in a two-way communication, in which both could become more aware of their responses to the other.

Intersubjectivity theory is a theoretical and practical psychoanalytic framework introduced in the late seventies by Robert Stolorow and George Atwood. Both in its theories and its practical application to clinical psychology, intersubjectivity theory is as radical a departure from the humanistic phase of psychoanalysis as that was from Freud's classical drive model. Stolorow and Atwood (1992) write, "We wish to emphasize that, although the development of the theory of intersubjectivity owes much to psychoanalytic self psychology (see Stolorow, 1992), significant differences exist between Kohut's (1971, 1977, 1984) concept of a self/selfobject relationship (a relationship that serves to restore, maintain or consolidate the organization of self-experience) and our concept of an intersubjective field. An intersubjective field is a system of *mutual reciprocal influence* (Beebe and Lachman, 1988a). Not only does the patient turn to the analyst for selfobject experiences, but the analyst also turns to the patient for such experiences (Wolf, 1979; Lee, 1988), and a parallel statement can be made about the child-care-giver system as well. To capture this intersubjective reciprocity of mutual influence, one would have to speak of a self/selfobject/selfobject-self relationship" (pp. 3–4).

Like Kohut's work, intersubjectivity theory is embedded in a general shift in our culture's psychological, philosophical, and scientific understanding. In the simplest terms, this shift can be described as a transition from focus on the empowerment and fulfillment of the individual to an understanding of the individual as always in some sense in

relationship with his or her environment. Intersubjectivity theory claims that each moment of a person's experience is shaped within the context of self/other interaction.

The understanding that the psychotherapeutic process takes place in a field of reciprocal, mutual influence between the therapist and the client counters the traditional notion of the therapist as an authoritative evaluator of the patient's experience, or even as an empathic observer. It acknowledges that the therapist's own psychological organization helps shape the course of the therapy.

Stolorow and Atwood base this theory on another more subtle supposition. This is the idea that since all experience is necessarily subjective and shaped within the changing contexts of self/other interactions, there is no absolute reality to be known, either by the therapist or the client. This means that the therapist and client are not only face to face now, they are regarded as equals. Since there is no truly objective view of reality, and no position that can separate the observer from the observed, the interpretation of events or behaviors by the therapist cannot be assumed to be more valid than the client's. "The analyst's frame of reference must not be elevated to the status of objective fact" (Stolorow, Brandchaft & Atwood 1987, p. 6). This understanding of client/therapist equality sharpens the focus on transference and countertransference as an interconnected phenomenon. Although I believe that this understanding of mutuality enriches the healing potential of the therapeutic relationship, it also poses some interesting questions about the direction or goal of psychotherapy that I will address in a later chapter.

ASIAN NONDUAL PHILOSOPHY

References to nondual experience can be found in all of the world's major religions, but Buddhist and Hindu traditions describe it most explicitly. As I have said, the type of nondual realization that I am concerned with in this book is expressed most clearly in the Dzog-chen and Mahamudra lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, and the Hindu Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism schools. From a purely phenomenological perspective, there is no difference between the nondual experience

described in these Buddhist and Hindu teachings. They all describe nondual realization as the experience of an extremely subtle, luminous expanse of consciousness pervading all of one's internal and external experience as a whole. Self and object are experienced as a unity because they are pervaded and encompassed by a single, unobstructed consciousness.

In Tibetan Buddhism, this unobstructed consciousness is usually called nondual (or primordial) awareness. In Hindu traditions, it is called unified consciousness, *Brahman*, or Self, among other names. In this text, I refer to it as nondual consciousness.

Here is a description of nondual consciousness from Tibetan Buddhism: "Mind itself—that is, the nature of awakened mind—is pure like space, and so is without birth or death . . . it is unchanging, without transition, spontaneously present, and uncompounded" (Rabjam, 2001a, p. 51). Notice how similar it is to this description from Advaita Vedanta: "I am the Supreme Brahman which is pure consciousness, always clearly manifest, unborn, one only, imperishable, unattached, and all-pervading and non-dual" (Shankara, 1989b, p. 111).

Tibetan Buddhism describes this experience of pervasive consciousness as "cutting through solidity" (Rabjam, 2001a) because the phenomenal world appears to be transparent, or permeable. All objects appear to be as permeable, luminous, and empty as consciousness itself. There is no discernible difference, no duality, between appearances (objects) and the consciousness that perceives them, or between experiences and the one who experiences them.

This produces an immediacy of experience, called direct or bare perception. All perceptions, cognitions, emotions, and sensations seem to arise directly, vividly, and spontaneously out of the clear space of nondual consciousness. An early Buddhist text describes this as, "in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard, just the heard, in the sensed, just the sensed, in the cognized, just the cognized" (Nanananda, 1971, pp. 30–31). It also produces a felt sense that neither the experiencer nor the experience exists independently. Buddhist philosophy describes objective reality—the attribution of reality to objects "from their own side"—as illusory. The experience of subject/object dichotomy is considered a mental construction or reification superimposed upon the actual unity of subject and object.

This is very close to the view put forth in intersubjectivity theory. Stolorow and Atwood (1992) write, “The myth of the isolated mind ascribes to man a mode of being in which the individual exists separately from the world of physical nature and also from engagement with others. This myth in addition denies the essential immateriality of human experience by portraying subjective life in reified, substantialized terms” (p. 7).

Contemporary Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor (2000) writes, “To be empty of a fixed identity allows one to enter fully into the shifting, poignant, beautiful and tragic contingencies of the world. It makes possible an acute awareness of life as a creative process, in which each person is inextricably involved. Yet despite the subjective intensity of such a vision, when attention is turned onto the subject itself, no isolated observer is to be found” (pp. 44–45).

According to Asian nondual philosophy, nothing can be said to have inherent existence outside or apart from our experience of it. In other words, the desk at which I sit has no essential “deskness” of its own; it is rather my perception of the desk. The desk and my perception of it are a single phenomenal reality. This does not mean that the desk will disappear when I leave the room, but only that there is no objective, absolute knowledge of the desk accessible to me. To say that the desk is really there would be a speculation, an ontological leap (just as it would be to say that the desk is not really there).

Likewise, my experience of myself sitting at the desk has no essential “selfness,” but is rather my perception of myself in this moment. If I search for something more essential in either the desk or myself, I only find more clearly the subjective basis of my experience. I find the luminosity and emptiness of consciousness itself. For this reason, Asian spiritual philosophies claim that things exist like reflections in a mirror, or like the reflection of the moon in a lake.

The major difference between the Buddhist and Hindu articulations of nonduality, and between the various schools of thought within these traditions, is in their interpretation of what nondual experience actually is. In general, the Buddhists speak of nonduality as the true nature of one’s own mind. “Mind itself is an unchanging vast expanse, the realm of space” (Rabjam, 2001a, p. 126). In contrast, the Hindu philosophies often describe it as an ontological dimension that is some-

how behind or at the root of all phenomena. Swami Nikhilananda (in Shankara, 1989a) writes, “Turiya (pure consciousness) alone is the Reality behind all experiences, the Reality behind the universe. It is the universe in its true essence. . . . Life is not possible without the substratum of Turiya, which is the Reality pervading the universe” (p. 65, parentheses added).

The difference between these two interpretations is so subtle that it sometimes seems to disappear altogether. Some nondual Buddhists do claim, just as Hindu traditions, that the awakened mind is the true nature of all phenomena. The medieval Tibetan philosopher Longchen Rabjam (1998) writes, “The source of phenomena is awakened mind” (p. 43). Also, “The naturally pure ground is your fundamental nature—buddhanature, mind itself, inherently and utterly lucid” (Rabjam, 2001a, p. 6).

Contemporary Buddhist teacher Traleg Rinpoche (1993) states that, in Buddhism, nonduality does not refer to the numerical oneness of subject and object, but to the experience that the nature of the subject and the nature of the object are the same; they are “one taste.” He writes, “Instead of being one, they are inseparably united” (p. 42). Nondual Hindu philosophy considers that there is one single consciousness of which all phenomena are an expression; one single Self that we each refer to as our own self. An ancient Advaitin text says, “As waves, foam and bubbles are not different from water, so the universe emanating from the Self is not different from it” (Astavakra, 1981, p. 19).

Here again, the difference between Buddhist and Hindu interpretations often disappears. Rabjam (1998) writes, “Awareness—oneness—is the ground of all phenomena. Although there is the experience of multiplicity, to say that there is no wavering from oneness is to say that the naturally occurring timeless awareness is the single source” (p. 49). And a traditional Zen koan quotes fourth century Chinese Buddhist philosopher Seng-Chao as saying, “The whole universe is of one and the same root as my own self.”

As an ontologically existent dimension, nondual consciousness can be spoken of as existing separately from the phenomena it reflects. The Buddhists therefore criticize the Hindu Advaitins for reifying nondual consciousness into an existent “thing.” Hindu philosophy does claim that, in states of deep meditative absorption, nondual consciousness can

be experienced purely, without “content” or without the appearance of the phenomenal world, while the Buddhists emphasize the “co-emergence” (Traleg, 1993) of nondual consciousness and phenomena. However, both Buddhist and Hindu descriptions of nondual realization make it clear that nondual consciousness and the changing phenomena of everyday life can be experienced simultaneously, as an ongoing awakened state. The *Siva Sutras* (one of the main source texts of Kashmir Shaivism) state, “When the mind is united to the core of consciousness, every observable phenomenon and even the void appear as a form of consciousness” (Singh, 1979, p. 58). This seems to be in complete accord with the ancient Buddhist text that states, “Within this emptiness, ungrasped, appearances are vividly displayed” (Rangdrol, 1993, p. 51).

Both Buddhist and Hindu descriptions of nondual consciousness agree that it is “uncreated,” that it is an innate dimension of our being, which we uncover rather than construct. Traleg Rinpoche (1993) writes, “It’s not so much that Buddha-nature has this active power to manifest. It doesn’t do the manifesting itself. It’s revealed when obscurations are removed” (p. 23). Also from Tibetan Buddhism, Rabjam (1998) writes, “Awareness, the origin of everything, is spontaneously present with a lucid radiance” (p. 180). Shankara (1989a), the revered eighth-century Advaitin philosopher, writes, “As the sun appears after the destruction of darkness by dawn, so *Atman* (True Self) appears after the destruction of ignorance by Knowledge” (p. 154, parentheses added). Abhinavagupta, tenth-century Kashmir Shaivite, writes, “For the power of space (*akasa-sakti*) is inherent in the individual soul as the true subjectivity, which is at once empty of objects and which also provides a place in which objects may be known” (quoted in Muller-Ortega, 1989, p. 146).

Since nondual consciousness is an inherent, spontaneously present dimension of being, it is beyond or more subtle than any sort of organization or manipulation of experience. For this reason, these Asian traditions consider nonduality to be our true nature: our true Self in Hindu traditions, and our Buddha-nature or “natural mind” in Buddhism. It is in this claim—that we have, inherently, a fundamental unconstructed dimension of being or consciousness—that Asian nondual philosophy differs most sharply from intersubjectivity theory. Inter-

estingly, it is also a major point of conflict within Buddhist nondual philosophy itself. Since my application of nondual consciousness to psychotherapy in the following chapters hinges on the potential to experience this unconstructed dimension, I will briefly examine this conflict as it is articulated within Buddhism.

BEYOND IMPERMANENCE

According to the contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche (2001), the vast conglomerate of Buddhist nondual philosophy can be divided into two main categories: the *Rangtong* and the *Shentong*. The Rangtong view claims that nothing exists beyond the changing flux of experience. Realization is the true knowledge of impermanence, along with the ability to relinquish one's fixations on any aspect of this flux, including the changing sensations and perceptions that one associates with one's own self.

In contrast to intersubjectivity theory, the Rangtong Buddhists maintain that experience can be shorn of the conceptual elaboration that veils and distorts perception. But there is agreement between them that there is nothing beyond the dynamic, ephemeral "content" of experience.

The Shentong Buddhists, on the other hand, claim that our true nature—our Buddha-nature—is luminous, blissful, spacious awareness. When we let go of our grip on the changing flux of experience, we discover this luminous blissful expanse pervading everywhere. The theories and practices that I am presenting in this book are aligned with the Shentong view.

The Rangtong approach, articulated most clearly in Buddhist *Madhyamaka* philosophy, uses a conceptual process to deconstruct one's belief in the permanence of existence. The Shentong approach argues that, since our true Buddha-nature is beyond conceptualization, it cannot be found through the Rangtong conceptual method. It can only be discovered through meditative processes that uncover more subtle, nonverbal, realms of experience. Gyamtso (2001) writes, "It (nondual consciousness) is completely free from any conceptualizing process and knows in a way that is completely foreign to the conceptual mind. It is

completely unimaginable in fact. That is why it can be said to truly exist” (p. 74, parentheses added).

Arguing against the Rangtong view, twentieth-century Zen Buddhist philosopher Hisamatsu writes, “For the nothingness of Zen is not lifeless like emptiness, but, on the contrary, it is quite lively. It is not only lively, but also has heart and, moreover, is aware of itself” (quoted in Stambaugh, 1999, p. 79).

Hindu nondualists point out that the one doing the deconstructing of reality is the innate nondual consciousness itself. “The existence of the Self or Consciousness cannot be doubted, because the doubter himself is the Self, or Conscious Entity” (Nikhilananda, in Shankara, 1989a, p. 45). The Tibetan Buddhist Gyamtso (2001) echoes this argument when he writes, “How can mere nothingness account for the manifestations of *samsara* and *nirvana*? . . . Mere emptiness does not account for this. There has to be some element that is in some sense luminous, illuminating, and knowing” (p. 65).

In the language of intersubjectivity theory, we can say that the realization of nondual consciousness is a direct encounter with the one who is doing the organizing of experience.

THE EXPERIENCE OF NONDUAL REALIZATION

The literature of Buddhist and Hindu traditions abounds with descriptions of the experience of nondual consciousness. Rabjam (2001b) writes, “Within the spacious expanse, the spacious expanse, the spacious vast expanse, I Longchen Rabjam, for whom the lucid expanse of being is infinite, experience everything as embraced within a blissful expanse, a single nondual expanse” (p. 79).

Shankara (1989a) writes, “I fill all things inside and out, like the ether” (p. 149). And “He who has attained the supreme goal . . . dwells as the embodiment of infinite consciousness and bliss” (p. 152).

The *Siva Sutras* (Singh, 1979) states, “The individual mind intently entering into the universal light of foundational consciousness sees the entire universe as saturated with that consciousness” (p. 59).

Kashmir Shaivism scholar Muller-Ortega (1989) writes, “No longer do finite objects appear as separate and limited structures; rather, the

silent and translucent consciousness out of which all things are composed surfaces and becomes visible as the true reality of perceived objects” (p. 182).

These descriptions, from diverse and even antagonistic Asian nondual philosophies, all point to the same specific and unusual experience. It is not that a new object of consciousness is being described, but rather a different type of consciousness itself—a different way of knowing, revealing a different view of that which is known.

Although the Western postmodern world is convinced that all consciousness is intentional, always consciousness “of” something, nondual consciousness differs from intentional consciousness in several ways. One of the most important is that nondual consciousness knows itself at the same time as it reflects objects. Zen philosopher Hisamatsu writes, “The nature of Awareness beyond conceptual differentiation is that it directly knows Itself in and through Itself. It is not like ordinary consciousness or knowing, which is a conditioned, object-dependent intentional knowing” (quoted in Stambaugh, 1999, p. 74). Nondual consciousness is described as “self-knowing,” “self-reflecting” (see Traleg, 1993, Rabjam, 1998) and “self-apprehending” (Muller-Ortega, 1989).

Also, nondual consciousness transforms our experience of the objects it reflects. Objects are now “saturated” with translucent radiance. They appear permeable, in that our nondual mind pervades them. And they no longer appear to be “out there” in the world, separate from our own self. Instead, we experience continuity between our internal experience of thoughts, feelings, and sensations and the external world of perceptions. All this inner and outer experience appears to emerge from the same unified ground of consciousness.

Most important, nondual consciousness is not just a mental or cognitive experience. It emerges along with a transformation of our entire organism. Nondual realization is the experience that our own body is saturated with consciousness, just as the objects around us are saturated with consciousness. When we realize nondual consciousness, we experience our own body, and everything around us, as permeable or transparent. In our body, this is experienced as a clear-through openness. It feels as if we are made of empty, sentient space.

Nondual consciousness, as the openness of our whole body and being, does not just perceive and cognize, it also feels and senses. As

Hisamatsu says in the earlier quote, it has a “heart.” The openness that we experience with nondual realization is a deepened availability of our awareness, emotion, and physical sensation to respond to the world around us. The more we experience the stillness of nondual consciousness, the more deeply and fluidly our thoughts, emotions, and sensations move through us. This unobstructed fluidity of response is the basis of authenticity and spontaneity.

CONCLUSION: THE NONDUAL BASIS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

This chapter has looked at the relationship between the innate, uncreated dimension of nondual consciousness, described in Asian philosophy, and the co-created (or co-organized) intersubjective field described in intersubjectivity theory. The main difference involves their conceptions of what subjectivity is. Asian nondual philosophy views subjectivity as basically unmodified and unconditioned, pervading all experience as clearly as a mirror. It claims that the reification of experience into subject/object dichotomies and the mental elaboration superimposed on experience block one’s attunement to this unmodified subjectivity.

Intersubjectivity theory describes subjectivity as consisting solely of “organizing principles.” “These principles, often unconscious, are the emotional conclusions a person has drawn from lifelong experience of the emotional environment, especially the complex mutual connections with early caregivers” (Orange, Atwood, & Stolorow, 1997, p. 7).

It is clear from this description that intersubjectivity theory is concerned with the modifications of subjectivity. In fact, it explicitly rejects the idea that there is a dimension of experience beyond these context-sensitive, intersubjectively generated organizations. Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood (1987) write, “Any assumptions of a more objective reality of which the transference is presumed to be a distortion not only lie outside the bounds of psychoanalytic inquiry; they constitute a pernicious obstruction to the psychoanalytic process itself” (p. 13).

Although Asian philosophers maintain that we can achieve a clear or direct perception of phenomena, they do not conceive of this as a more objective reality, but rather as a more clearly experienced subjective real-

ity. Nishitani (1982) writes, "Emptiness lies absolutely on the near side, more so than what we normally regard as our own self" (p. 97).

The difference between intersubjectivity theory and Asian nondual philosophy with regard to the basic nature of subjectivity has direct bearing on the direction of the therapeutic process. For intersubjectivity theory, the goal of psychotherapy is to help a person achieve more functional and flexible organizations of experience. Stolorow and Atwood (1992) write, "Successful psychoanalytic treatment, in our view, does not produce therapeutic change by altering or eliminating the patient's invariant organizing principles. Rather, through new relational experiences with the analyst in concert with enhancements in the patient's capacity for reflective self-awareness, it facilitates the establishment and consolidation of alternative principles and thereby enlarges the patient's experiential repertoire. More generally, it is the formation of new organizing principles within an intersubjective system that constitutes the essence of developmental change throughout the life cycle" (p. 25).

Asian nondual philosophers would consider an "expanded repertoire of organizing principles" to be far from the spontaneity, openness, and directness of experience that occur with nondual realization. If we recognize, as Asian philosophy does, that subjective organizations can give way to a subtler, more essential dimension of (subjective) experience, then we can expand our understanding of both the healing potential of psychotherapy and the potential of human development.

Intersubjectivity theory considers its conception of intersubjective worlds to be an antidote to the Cartesian split between mind and body, or mind and environment, or mind and mind: "experiential worlds and intersubjective fields are seen as equiprimordial, mutually constituting one another in circular fashion, not as a Cartesian entity localized inside the cranium" (Stolorow, Atwood, & Orange, 2002, pp. 95–96). In this sense, the unified ground of nondual consciousness constitutes a more radical solution to the Cartesian problem. As an experience of openness and unity, nondual realization is a state without strategy or manipulation. It is the antithesis of the individual cut off from and set against his or her environment.

As I noted in the introduction, some types of subjective organization can coexist with our experience of nondual consciousness. For

example, nondual realization does not mean that we abandon our historical or cultural background—or even our tastes and preferences. It does not mean that we forget the words and meanings that we learned to ascribe to objects. Both the unique and culturally shared facets of our personality continue to enrich our lives as well as our exchanges with other human beings. However, nondual realization does mean that we gradually let go of those organizations that limit our receptivity or responsiveness to our environment.

To the extent that we have realized the clear open space of nondual consciousness, we experience the unobstructed impact of our perceptions, cognitions, emotions, and sensations, and the free, spontaneous flow of our responses. Even our interactions with our environment emerge as spontaneous (uncalculated) movement within the nondual field.

Just as Asian philosophy, with its understanding of openness and unity, can enhance the therapeutic process, intersubjectivity theory, with its rich knowledge of subjective organization, has much to contribute to the attainment of nondual realization. Although Asian philosophy refers often to the “obscurations” that obstruct nondual realization, the origin of these obscurations in the matrix of childhood relationships is not part of their knowledge. Consequently, they have no methodology that addresses them directly. Yet the “affect-laden, archaically determined configurations of self and object” (Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987, p. 36) discussed in intersubjectivity theory contribute extensively to the self/object bifurcation that obscures nondual realization. The process of relinquishing the defensive barrier between self and other, in the context of a caring relationship with a psychotherapist, is an effective method for achieving the openness and self/other unity of nonduality.