



2. JERRY KATZ

Jerry Katz founded Nonduality Salon in 1998, the first online place where people could speak freely about nonduality without the hovering presence of a specific teacher or tradition. This kind of a free, unaffiliated, and independent nonduality was novel in its time. Thus a "people's nonduality" was born. Free of bonds to academia, a guru, or an tradition -- but friendly to all -- it attracted independent realizers and seekers. Through blogging, social media, and in-person gatherings, "people's nonduality" has grown to become a cultural/spiritual niche. Jerry also started the first independent nonduality website, Nonduality.com. His newsletter, the Nonduality Highlights, has published over 4500 issues since 1999. He lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he holds regular satsangs. He travels around the world to share the message of nonduality. Through all these efforts, Jerry Katz has believed that the word "nonduality", or some form of it, is a teaching in itself, since anyone looking up the meaning of the word could enter into a radically new world view.

www.nonduality.com.

INTERVIEW

Q: In some of the ancient non dual traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, Sufism, Gnostic Christianity, dana (generosity) or forms of this practice is built right into the teachings and they say a very significant part of it. In terms of contemporary non duality, is a non duality teacher more like being a professional psychologist, or a scientist of some kind?

Jerry Katz: Today's nonduality has no center of authority and there is no typical nondualist. At one extreme is the Baumann Foundation which funds investigation into conscious experience. There are also people giving away teachings, books, and time at various meetups and gatherings. Many provide free access to some of their writings and videos. At the other extreme there was Osho -- Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh -- who generated huge profits and invested them in a hundred Rolls Royce automobiles. Andrew Cohen, Eckhart Tolle, and Deepak Chopra also appear to attract relatively large sums of money, and there are others.

In between are those who charge fees that would at least cover expenses, if not result in a profit. These people fall into such categories as

- Teachers, educators, sages, spiritual personalities, and gurus.
- Those who combine their profession with the teaching of nonduality, especially psychotherapists.
- Yoga teachers and alternative/holistic health practitioners.
- Writers, bloggers, and artists of all sorts.
- Anyone else who creates value while incorporating the teaching of nonduality, most especially compilers, producers, publishers, and distributors of nonduality media.

-- Conference organizers.

-- Educational institutions, such as California Institute of Integral Studies.

Upon becoming self-realized, one doesn't immediately think, "Now I can make some money." Rather, there is the unstoppable tendency to express truth in one's own way. One lives and speaks from beingness, and cannot do otherwise.

However, the crystallization of context for one's coming from beingness -- that is, the packaging and distribution of expressions of truth -- generates costs. Someone has to pay for satsang, a book, a painting, a play, a conference, a workshop, a meetup, a psychotherapy session, a scientific study, and other crystallizations of context.

Some people don't bother getting self-realized or enlightened. They see business opportunity in being enlightened. They pretend to be enlightened by learning the language, mannerisms, and culture of enlightenment and then charge a lot of money for courses, seminars, books, etc.

Anyone who has an understanding of nonduality, whether or not they are enlightened, can declare themselves a teacher of nonduality.

Q: What is it that fundamentally drives or motivates someone to charge for the teachings or not to charge?

Jerry Katz: For one who sees things as they are, there's only acting directly and appropriately, and that could mean charging outrageous amounts, giving away outrageous amounts, and every degree of interaction in between. Self-realization and motivation are incongruous. Motivation is not a middle ground between being and doing. We don't see motivational speakers within the nonduality community. Motivation does not need to be

stimulated, awakened, or injected into the life of self-realization. It would only be a distraction. Rather, we tend to see teachers neutralizing motivation, advising you that there is no such thing as enlightenment, declaring that your thoughts are not real, and stating that you are not who you think you are. They remove the ground for motivation. However, they are not anti-motivational either. If anything, nonduality teachers are pro-"being". Just be and allow action to arise. The element of motivation is nowhere to be found in that instruction as it would be an intrusion.

The question becomes, "Is there motivation present when it comes to charging or not charging for teachings?" Yes, in some cases. I don't know how easy it is to know whether there is motivation or not. And even a teacher with solid motivations could be beneficial to someone at some point in their life. As far as what those motivations are, they are entwined with thought-formed and programmed selves and therefore hard to extract and identify. All I'm suggesting is to look at the nature of motivation and to see whether it has a place in relation to being and acting. And if you see a teacher apparently acting from a specific motivation, consider anyway whether the teaching could benefit you.

Q: If Ramana, or Papaji did not charge or ask for donations, then why do their students who got these teachings for free, turn around and charge others in the west?

Jerry Katz: Someone paid something to support Ramana and Papaji. Even if the government of India provided the land, the maintenance, and the food -- and I don't know if it did -- someone paid.

The students are functioning in different contexts. Yet the truth still holds that someone pays for the packaging and delivery of teachings.

It's also possible that some teachers are not self-realized, and therefore the natural tendency to simply give away teachings isn't developed. One might consider that the self-realized teacher who is giving away teachings doesn't stop and think, "I'm giving away teachings." They're just living. If someone is prideful that they are giving away teachings, or if the giving away of teachings is part of a strategy toward extracting money from followers, they may as well charge. There's no difference.

There is also the opinion that teachings are not valued unless one pays a significant amount of money for them. Other people are suspicious of anything given away for free. In that regard, some students actually want to pay a lot of money for an encounter with a nonduality sage, and those students should be served.

What "should" a nonduality teacher do? Live in a natural way. Whether that means creating huge profits and whimsically buying fancy cars, or creating a foundation and giving money away in an intentional and thoughtful manner, or striking a balance between costs and donations received, it does not matter at all. The joy and wonder of existence is nature playing out in a vast multitude of ways. That is, the beingness of nature is its activity.

END OF INTERVIEW