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An Explication of All Cogent Scientific Conceptualizations Regarding the Non-Dual: Finding Nothing to Write

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Sometimes more is less, even within scholarly writing, known for its all too frequent verbosity. This paper follows approaches that sparingly used words, even to the point of using no words at all. One example of this strategy is a renowned psychology article describing its author's unsuccessful self-treatment of his own writer's block, which led to a blank paper (Upper, 1974). Another, in the area of interventions, which are commonly seen as demanding empirical support to evaluate risk-benefit analyses, involved a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of parachutes in preventing deaths. This research was presented, but never conducted—as no controlled trials containing a non-parachute condition could be identified, which again led to a blank paper (Gordon & Pell, 2003). Both of these papers, which used fewer than the minimum number possible for a word count, illustrate the value of research that went less-far than presenting results about null hypotheses to being themselves completely null. Throughout a long career in transpersonal psychology, this paper's author has similarly called for silence as the only proper response as a scientist toward considering anything labeled as non-dual—and has characterized all attempts to articulate conceptualizations directly about this topic as futile (e.g., Author, 1983, 2002, 2015). This does not mean that all transpersonal notions within psychology are incoherent or worthless, but those that attempt to pontificate directly about ultimate states, such as alleged states (or non-states) of the non-dual (or similar supernatural conjectures that defy empirical efforts required for falsification), reside outside of science's limits. However, speculations about such notions continue unabashedly within transpersonal psychology. Consequently, in this paper the author painstakingly exhausts every possible good scientific conceptualization about the non-dual from a psychological perspective, but finds none to explicate. This does not discount the value of speculation from non-scientific vantages, such as the legitimate uses of poetry and art to describe and depict the non-dual in imaginative ways not to be taken literally and concretely. It also does not limit psychology as a science from pointing to the possibility of the non-dual, including studying people's claims—and their concomitants about such a possibility, but psychology as a science has not yet meaningfully engaged directly in exploring this topic, and it appears thoroughly outside of any cogent scientific framework to entertain. Although this paper is written as succinctly as possible, readers are encouraged to take in the vast scope of this inquiry's unstated implications in order to arrive at their own conclusions, and to consider deeply whether there might be any value in continuing efforts within transpersonal psychology, as Watts (1972) proudly proclaimed, “to say what cannot be said, to eff the ineffable, and to unscrew the inscrutable” (p. xiii). Perhaps it would be desirable to conclude that this paper constitutes the last word on this troubled subject, but not a word is offered, as even one word would be too much—so there is no last word. Alas, only silence suffices for conceptualizing the non-dual from the limited framework of science.

Keywords: *ineffable, inscrutable, non-dual, science, transpersonal psychology*

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