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## Consciousness: *Ideas and Research for the Twenty-First Century*

### Complexities and Challenges of Nonduality

[Elizabeth Stephens](#)

#### Abstract

States of consciousness referred to as nonduality, awakening, enlightenment, moksha, peak experience, unitive states, or void states, among other terms, have garnered increasing secular attention and have become a topic of psychological and neuroscientific research. A review of the literature revealed many challenges to studying this set of states, such as inconsistent conceptualizations, a variety of models and theories, and conflicting descriptions indicating that the actual experience may not live up to the superlative descriptions found in historical texts or the expectations put forth by nondual teachers. A great deal more empirical research on this topic is needed, and researchers should bear in mind the complexities and challenges that have surfaced on the related topics of mindfulness and meditation.

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In spirituality, nondualism, also called non-duality, means "not two" or "one undivided without a second". Nondualism primarily refers to a mature state of consciousness, in which the distinction between "subject" and "object" is dissolved or "integrated" and "without distinction". At least this state of consciousness is described in the

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