Dr. Mark Hopkins

University of Texas at Austin

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The Temple Builders: Buddhist Advaya and Nonduality in the Work of Otokar Březina

The mystical concept of nonduality asserts that the entirety of existence consists of only one essential reality. Since consciousness and awareness are also elements of existence, they, too, must be synonymous with this singular essential reality. As such, there is no actual distinction between a subject and its object or the Absolute and the relative. While this seemingly radical philosophy originates with the Buddhist concept of advaya and the mystic Hinduism of Advaita Vedanta, it has, in fact, been at the core of a number of world philosophical, religious, and cultural traditions from the Greek philosopher Plotinus and Neoplatonism to Gnosticism, Sufism, Kabbalah, Transcendentalism, Unitarian Universalism, Theosophy, and many more.

The nondual worldview found a sustaining echo in the Czech symbolist poet and philosophical essayist Otokar Březina (1868-1929). Twice nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Březina lived a modest life as a schoolteacher in a Moravian village, rejecting university professorships and fame. Nonetheless, he developed friendships with some of the most prominent artists and intellectuals of his day, and studied philosophy and world religions in nearby libraries. This paper will employ nondual selections from his collection of poetry *Hands*, as well as selections from his philosophical essay anthologies *Hidden History* and *Music of the Springs* to elucidate his fascination with Buddhism and the influence it had on his work.