

**mental activity diminishes  
to a crystalline transparency  
when subject, object and action interpenetrate  
i.41**

Mental activity is a prerequisite of human survival. We need perception and the underlying differentiations that make sense of it in order to learn to navigate the world. For this we need a solid reliable centre of reference. We spend our infancy developing the sense of self as the central subject of our life. We are not born with one<sup>1</sup>. In order to survive a child needs a central reference point around which sensorimotor input is organised into the sensory, motor and cognitive engrams that underlie our perceptions, simulations, projections and actions.

This is the sense of self which has as its object the world with all of its experiential dualities of up and down, left and right, hot and cold, soft and hard. At the core of this is the central duality of self and other. This functional, and developmentally necessary, duality is the foundation of the sense of separateness and isolation underlying human experience. What is me and what is not me is the primal conceptual distinction being made by the exploring child as she develops the sensory, motor and cognitive engrams that underpin our habituated activity.

Even though we need this process to develop a comprehensive simulation of the world, it leaves us isolated in our sense of

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<sup>1</sup> When my youngest daughter Bindu was two years old she was filmed sliding down some steps with a look of delighted curiosity declaring “where’s bindu?” not yet having made herself into an object at the centre of her experience.

separation. A subtle, compelling divide is established between us and the world in the subject-object split, which split is bridged but never closed by action and perception. It is from this split, this deep though subtle sense of separation, that so much of our suffering stems. Not just our feelings of isolation and vulnerability, but our anxiety, regret, shame, resentment, guilt, blame, hostility, contempt and pride too. All of which depend on the identification of actions with their instruments that solidifies as the sense of personal self and other.

As we become intimate with mental activity this split closes. The ability and need to distinguish and know evaporates into the crystal clear light of awareness within which previously distinguished objects and actions become transparent, losing their individual significance and separate identity. The duality of self and other, the split between subject and object, naturally dissolves back into the ground of awareness from which it had been conjured by the need of the mind to know. Self and other, subject and object interpenetrate each other and their duality dissolves into the clear light of awareness. The mental activity generated by the sense of self fades away into apparent silence: the silence of an untroubled mind. It is not possible to force the mind to become quiet, although it can become quiet spontaneously, even while the sense of self remains. Although we can learn to establish brief moments of imposed stillness, this requires a deep though subtle effort that generates an even deeper, more subtle tension. The stillness, effort and tension all express the presence of the sense of self. When that dissolves, the only mental activity left is that necessitated by deliberate action, and the unconscious processing of incoming data to the brain, neither of which require or necessitate a controlling self to blow them out of proportion.

**who sees clearly  
lets go of maintaining the sense of self  
then mind is taken by nonduality towards kaivalya  
between the rising impulses of karmic-imprints  
which are eclipsed in disidentification  
iv 25-28**

The embodiment of consciousness in and as the human organism is a remarkable phenomenon. Not least for the opportunity it offers consciousness itself. For it is only in the biological and neurological sophistication of the human body that consciousness is able to fully know and enjoy itself. Yet this remains no more than a possibility never realised for most human beings. The primary obstacle to this realisation is the self in all of its subtlety. The essence of which is the identification of consciousness with its instrument as "I am", within which the impersonal universality of consciousness begins to take on the basis of an individuated identity. This identity becomes distinctly personal once consciousness claims for its instrument the source or origin of its actions and perceptions as "I am this, that and the other". In this way we become the one that is too big, too small, too early, too late, too old or too young to engage fully with life as it is actually happening.

At the same time the localisation of universal consciousness in its local and finite instrument generates a specific, local field of awareness. During infancy this field is a dynamic singularity with no fixed reference points. Yet every experience an infant has lays the

foundations for the fundamental divisions between inside and outside, self and other to be established, along with all other experiential and conceptual dualities. This process is a developmental necessity without which the human adult could not make any decisions, and conscious decision making is the basis of human survival, rather than instinct. The dualistic split of the cognitive field and the identification of consciousness with the experiences of its instrument continuously uphold and strengthen the sense of self, which becomes an almost insurmountable barrier between consciousness and its field, generating resistance between the organism and the world. Nevertheless this barrier has no intrinsic substance: it is nothing more than a captivating impression of awesome scope and resilience, that has become enshrined and indispensable to the social and cultural institutions through which all human societies regulate themselves.

It is the sense of self in its innate precariousness that resists the flow of life by turning attention away from the direct power of experience to its own concerns and priorities. First of which is to maintain the illusion of its existence. This turning away is the source of the deep psychosomatic armour with which the sense of self defends itself, and the world is kept at bay as if it were threatening. This armour only serves the self, and inhibits both body and mind from expressing a free and full response to the flow of circumstance.

When samadhi allows us to see the self for what it is, by clarifying the dynamics by which it is generated, the sense of self can not be maintained. The nonduality of the meditative mind not only undermines the self by revealing its illusory nature, it also elucidates the karmic origins of our psychosomatic armour that constitutes the deep core of our identity-field and begins to dissolve them. The weakening of the identity-field and the weakening of the self

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support each other in a virtuous circle within which mind becomes more and more free from the roots of the self and the neurotic thinking it generates.

As more of our samskaras dissolve there is less unresolved unconscious energy to express itself and disturb the mind. Within that spaciousness the natural intelligence of awareness is spontaneously drawn towards otherlessness whenever mind becomes quiet. As this cycle of liberation gains momentum mind becomes more and more discerning, and discards the habits of dualism that obscure the nondual ground of otherlessness. Eventually all the karmic traces of the self are eclipsed and dissolution of the identity-field is complete.

by Godfrey Devereux