

WHO WE ARE

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If we rely solely on empirical observation, we must conclude that we live in a universe of material phenomena—stars, planets, nebulae, gas clouds, black holes, and all that is manifest to the human senses. But the mystic's vision reveals that, at a subtler, more primal level, we are living in a universal Consciousness in which all the individual constituents are interconnected and possess the same universal identity. That Consciousness—which we refer to as “God”—is an integral noumenon (Mind) underlying the phenomenal universe and is the Creative Source and substance of all that we experience as the material universe and its contents, including the bodies we regard as our own as well as all the objects in our environment.

Science has shown that the phenomenal universe of time, space, and individual forms is a result of ‘the Great Radiance’ or ‘Big Bang,’ that released an immense amount of particulate matter in the form of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation some fourteen billion years ago. This resulting universe of form is the manifestation of that ‘Great Radiance’ projected by and within the one universal Consciousness. And because this universe exists *within* the universal Consciousness, it is thereby imbued with, permeated by, and fully participant in that all-pervading universal Consciousness.

That universal Consciousness, which is our sole primary reality, is therefore, also our primary *identity*. And since every one of the individual constituents of this universe are participants in the one universal Consciousness, each individual entity within the universe operates in accordance with the coordinated movement of the entire system. In other words, as is revealed in

the mystic's vision, "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain."¹ So, while we may regard our separate individual selves to be independently free to act in accord with our individual wills, at a subtler level, it is apparent that we are all governed in our being, in our willing, and in our actions by the single omnipotent and all-embracing will of the one universal Consciousness.

That universal Consciousness is One; It is the eternal Source, who, by Its Creative Power, creates and contains "all things." And all those *things*—including us—are moving together of one accord, interconnected in one intricately coordinated Whole. So, do you have free-will? Yes. Of course, you do! The more pertinent question is, 'Who are you?' There is only one here. That One is the sole identity of all; It is who you are. That One is both the Mover and the moved, both the Governor and the governed, both the Determiner and the determined.

But how do we understand the paradox that, while we are manifest as constituents of the Divine Consciousness that is God, each individual believes that it has the freedom to choose his or her own course of action, and feels responsible for his or her own actions, good or bad? The answer is that we have the sense that our individual will is free because, in fact, it is! Remember, we are not merely an individual soul manifested in the world of time and space; we are the one Consciousness who is determining everything, and that one Consciousness truly *is* free. In other words, while we may believe ourselves to be separate individual entities responsible for our individual actions, the fact is that our true, eternal, identity is God, the one divine Consciousness, who, alone is responsible for every action. It is He who is doing everything.²

Here is another way to understand this paradox: When we sleep, as dreamers, we (subconsciously) create our dream characters and their roles in our dreams, and yet, while dreaming, we *identify* with the dream-character in the dream, and, as that dream-character, we feel that we are free to choose our actions within the dream. The truth, however, is that we, the dreamer of the dream, create the dream-roles of those characters, so that the characters

and their roles are wholly determined by us. Free-will only *appears* to exist in the dream world; in fact, all the dream-characters and their actions are entirely determined by us, the dreamer.

Likewise, in the phenomenal world, it is God—the one Divine Consciousness—the Creator of this universe, who is the *real* Identity of everyone, and who is determining every action and every outcome. It is He who projects this heated drama, with all its twists and unforeseeable turns, and it is He who will bring it to its fitting conclusion. The notion of an *individual* self apart from the one eternal Self, is merely an illusion. It is only because we are, in fact, the eternal Self, the one Consciousness who is determining everything, that we are aware of our illimitable freedom.

The ‘ego’, or ‘I’ awareness, is not an exterior *thing* that afflicts us; it is simply a false or illusory perspective in which one believes oneself to be a singular and independent being among a multitude of beings and objects—as opposed to the perspective in which one identifies with the indivisible Self underlying all of existence. From that illusory perspective, we convince ourselves that we are self-determined individuals; but it is ‘mystical experience,’ or ‘the grace of God,’ that provides a glimpse into the egoless state, where there is only the one conscious continuum, where there is only the One Being, who is seen to be our sole everlasting identity! “Ego” simply means “I,” and “I” can signify a distinct individual soul associated with a particular body or it can signify the universal Divine Spirit. One of these I’s is the eternal Reality, and the other is merely a transient appearance imaged forth by the Divine Mind. Which of these “I’s” are you?

We do need to acknowledge that, while we exist within the manifested universe of space and time, we possess a distinctly unique body and soul/mind, but our underlying identity is the absolute Self, or Consciousness, from which the body and soul are produced and in which they are contained. So, who are we? What are we going to identify with? If we identify with the body, we are identifying with an entity that is transient. If we identify with the individualized soul, we are still identifying with a transient entity, though the soul’s duration is somewhat greater than that of the body. But if we

identify with the Self, we identify with the eternal truth; we acknowledge that we are the one immortal, imperishable and invincible Reality.

Listen to these words of Sri Shankaracharya:

“The fool thinks, ‘I am the body;’ the intelligent man thinks, ‘I am an individual soul united with the body.’ But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as the only reality, and thinks, ‘I am Brahman.’” ³

Jesus of Nazareth had also realized this truth:

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.” ⁴ “I and my Father are one,” he said.⁵

At another time, identifying with the transcendent Consciousness, the eternal Self, Jesus said:

“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.”” ⁶

And here are the words of the great Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi:

“When the mystery of the oneness of the soul and the Divine is revealed to you, you will understand that you are no other than God. ... For when you know yourself, your sense of a

limited identity vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same.”⁷

The one Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is the *only* One. There *is* no second. All the illumined seers have realized this same truth, and they wish you to also know and realize this truth in yourself.

NOTES:

1. Quoted from the utterance recorded *during* this soul's unitive experience; Swami Abhayananda, *The Supreme Self*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984; *The Supreme Self* is downloadable in its entirety in PDF format at www.themysticsvision.com; pp. 31-32.
2. The all-embracing will of the universal Consciousness governs the life of every soul throughout its many incarnations as it accrues the results of its individually evolving karma. Eventually, each soul becomes purified and awakened by that Divine will to the knowledge of its eternal identity and knows itself as the One. For more, see my article, “The Astrologer’s Vision,” at my website, “The Mystic’s Vision” (www.themysticsvision.com).
3. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, III:10; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, Vedanta Press, 1978, p. 58.
4. *The Gospel of John*, 13:40.
5. *The Gospel of John*, 10:30.

6. Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Gospel of Thomas in The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977; verse 77, p. 135.
7. Landau, Rom, *The Philosophy Of Ibn Arabi*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959; pp. 83-84.

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