

The Dream of Consciousness

Each night, the mind imagines a world within itself and enters that world as one of its own characters. From within the dream, the world seems to lie outside the one who inhabits it. On waking, the whole of it is understood to have been made of the very mind that dreamed it.

Consciousness is a field of infinite potential. It cannot know that potential directly, for consciousness, being all that is, cannot stand apart from itself. To bring what lies within it into existence, it must seem to divide itself into a subject that knows and a world that is known. Each of our minds is one such division, a dream in the infinite mind of consciousness. The one difference from the dream at night is that a mind asleep can have only one dream at a time. Consciousness has innumerable dreams simultaneously.

In order to dream, the dreamer must overlook herself. In order to appear as each of us, consciousness must overlook its own unlimited nature and freely consent to limit itself. This is not a mistake. It is a creative act, and its price is paid willingly for the sake of tasting its own possibilities in the form of the world.

From within the dream, the character concludes from the evidence of her senses that the knowing with which she knows her experience lives inside her head. It lives, however, in the mind of the one who is dreaming her. Likewise, the knowing with which each of us knows our experience is not generated by the body or contained within it. It is unlocated, unlimited consciousness itself.

The One Seems to Become the Many

Every experience takes the form of a subject joined to an object: I know my thoughts, I feel sad, I see the landscape. It is this subject-object relationship that draws existence out of being.

The world that appears is the activity of consciousness, refracted through the perceiving faculties of a finite mind. Because those faculties are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling, the activity of consciousness appears as sights, sounds, textures, tastes and smells. There are no objects standing behind these qualities. Perception refracts the one activity into an apparent multiplicity, and thought gives each refracted form a name. In the new

language of non-duality there are no nouns. A tree is consciousness treeing, exactly as each of us is consciousness Petering, Jane-ing or Mary-ing.

This is not a denial of the world's reality. It is a denial of the absolute reality of its appearance. A mirage is illusory as water and real as light. The world is illusory as matter and real as consciousness. The separate self is illusory as a separate self and real as a localisation of infinite consciousness, just as the space in a room is illusory as a separate space and real as the one space of the universe.

We all see the same world. The materialist takes this as proof that the world exists outside consciousness, made of matter. It is proof of something else. We see the same world because each of our minds is calibrated in the same way, and therefore renders the activity of the same consciousness identically. It is the sameness of consciousness that gives rise to the sameness of the world.

Meditation and prayer reverse the process by which consciousness seems to become a finite mind. The finite mind does not become infinite consciousness. It is relieved of the limitations it borrowed from experience, and its reality stands revealed. The wave does not become water when it dissolves. It was never anything else.

Being, Love and the Doorway Named 'I'

Before you experience anything, you experience simply being, and you express this by saying, 'I am'. The self that is and the self that knows that it is are one self. Being is self-aware, as the sun illuminates itself.

Followed to its source, prior to any experience, this being has no limits, for there is nothing in it with which it could be divided. The knowledge 'I am' is the shining of infinite, indivisible being in each of us, as our very own self. When that one being assumes the activity of perception, it throws a boundary around itself and appears as an individual. There are not numerous beings, only one, refracted by perception into many.

The felt recognition of this shared being is love. When you love someone, what separates you falls away and your prior unity stands revealed. Love is your natural condition and the ground of all relationship, even relationships marked by conflict.

Every faculty offers a pathway home. Through thought, the mind sets aside what is not essential to it until only being aware remains. Through feeling, the whole content of one's life is surrendered to the one. Through perception, one goes so deeply into any experience that its origin is found at its heart. The path by which you fall is the path by which you rise.

'I' is the name the mind gives to itself. Everything the mind knows is changing; 'I' refers to the knowing that remains present throughout, and investigated deeply it shares none of the limitations of what it knows. It is the trace that infinite consciousness leaves of itself in each of our minds. Like the full moon in a nocturnal watercolour, which turns out on close inspection to be the only part of the paper left unpainted, the knowledge 'I am' is a gap in the mind through which infinite consciousness shines, illuminating everything in the mind while belonging to none of it.

The Search for Happiness

When consciousness localises itself as a finite mind, it squeezes the infinite into the finite. This sets up a tension that is always seeking to return to its natural condition. The contraction is felt as suffering. The pull back towards equilibrium is felt as the desire for happiness.

Most feel this pull as the search for happiness in objects, substances, activities and relationships. When these have failed often enough, the search is refined into the search for enlightenment or union with God, through practices, teachers, teachings and traditions. The object has become subtler; the impulse is unchanged.

The reason you search for happiness at all because its memory lives in every finite mind. Happiness is your nature. There is either happiness or the veiling of happiness, never its absence. The desire for happiness is the gravitational pull of your true nature on itself when it has lost itself in its own imagination. Each time a desire is fulfilled, the seeking that veiled your nature subsides and you taste the happiness that was always present, as the blue sky is revealed when clouds part. The mistake is to attribute the happiness to the object.

The freedom you feel is an echo of the freedom of infinite consciousness, and nothing but the absolute can satisfy its pursuit of happiness. Desire is not to be renounced but widened, until only the absolute can fulfil it. It is a sacred

pathway, the pull of the infinite drawing you back to itself.

The Ego Is an Activity

The finite mind is a localisation of consciousness, brought about by perception. The ego is the felt sense of separation that usually attends that localisation. It has two consequences: a sense of lack, which generates desire, and a sense of vulnerability, which generates fear. Seeking and resisting are all there is of the ego. It is not an entity that desires and fears. It is the activity of desire and fear.

All the mind needs to do to be relieved of this is to cease being exclusively fascinated by the content of its experience and to ask instead about the nature of the knowing with which it knows that experience. What follows is a revelation in the original sense of the word: an unveiling of something already there.

Beneath your innumerable desires lies a single desire, to be divested of the limitations you have acquired from experience and returned to your true nature. Desire, understood in this way, is a wave that can be surfed all the way home.

The Taste of Eternity

Walk through any city and nearly everyone you pass is seeking, in one way or another, to relieve the lack and fear that lie as a wound at the centre of the ego. The forms could hardly look less alike – a fall from a great height on a length of elastic, a Mass, a glass of wine – and one movement runs through all of them. The terror of the fall silences thought for an instant, and in that instant the person steps off the line of time and tastes their own eternity. The devotion of the Mass expands the ego beyond its customary limits and commends it to God's infinite being, where it rests. In each case the ego's hold is loosened, being is briefly felt, and the peace is then attributed to the fall, the rite or the substance rather than to what was revealed. The seeking resumes.

None of this need happen by accident. All that is necessary is to notice that your own being – the simple, ordinary experience you refer to when you say 'I am' – is shining quietly in every experience, is unaffected by any of them, and is shared with everyone and everything.

Peace and happiness are the nature of your being, and you share your being with everyone and everything.