

Dictionary on Ego and Desire



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I am all that a man may desire
Without transgressing
The law of his nature.
(Sri Krishna in BG, 71.)

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⌘ Chapter 1. The Problem of Desire ⌘

The nature of the individual human being is consciousness of a separate self or ego

The absolute Brahman at the inner entrance [of the house of God] is the bright triune Parabrahman, absolute ... but cognizable; at the threshold of the porch He is Parabrahman envisaging Maya, and the next step carries Him into Maya, where Duality begins, Purusha differentiates from Prakriti, Spirit from Matter, Force from Energy, Ego from Non-Ego; and as the descent into phenomena deepens, single Purusha differentiates itself into multitudinous receptacles, single Prakriti into innumerable forms. This is the law of Maya. (Sri Aurobindo, UP, 27.)

All created things perish. (The Buddha, TCB, 66.)

Whatsoever is originated will be dissolved again. (The Buddha, GB, 41.)

All phenomena, existing and apparent,
Are ever transient, changing, and unstable. (Milarepa in TGYM, 176.)

Whatever takes form is false.
Only the formless endures.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 5.)

The nature of the relative world is mutability. The nature of the individual man is his consciousness of ego. (Sri Krishna, BG, 74-5.)

Above the senses is the mind. Above the mind is the intellect. Above the intellect is the ego. Above the ego is the unmanifested seed,¹ the Primal Cause.

And verily beyond the unmanifested seed is Brahman,² the All-pervading Spirit, the unconditioned. (UPAN, 24.)

¹ The One Self or Atman.

² The All Self or Brahman.

The senses derive from physical objects, physical objects from mind, mind from intellect, intellect from ego, ego from the unmanifested seed, and the unmanifested seed from Brahman -- the Uncaused Cause. (UPAN, 19-20.)

It is the unchanging witness that experiences the ego, the intellect and the rest, with their various forms and changes. (Shankara, CJD, 68.)

That Reality is the witness of the three states of consciousness, and is distinct from the five bodily coverings. ... [It] knows all things, from the sense of ego to the body itself. It is the knower of pleasure and pain and of the sense objects. It knows everything objectively -- just as the man knows the objective existence of a jar. (Shankara, CJD, 52.)

The minerals and plants have a subconsciousness; the animals have conscious awareness; and man - a self or ego consciousness. Within each higher level of the natural kingdom, the other lower degrees of consciousness are included as well. Man - who is characterized by his ego consciousness - has a subconsciousness and conscious awareness as well.

The subconsciousness includes many Divine processes, including the guidance of the Angelic hierarchy for example. The thoughts and energy of the Angelic hierarchy manifest through all beings. It is this which creates the subconsciousness: the treasury of the past.

Ego consciousness is a singular process of the individual. Whenever a person thinks and desires to comprehend the meaning of Life, he makes use of this consciousness. All degrees of Consciousness above the ego consciousness are referred to as the 'Supraconsciousness.' There are moments when man is in communion with the Cosmic Consciousness which is one of the levels of Supraconsciousness.

Ego consciousness does not yet exist in animals. Human consciousness is different in that man is conscious of himself as an individual. When man is inspired by the Cosmic Consciousness, he will experience the Oneness of Life; he begins to look at Nature as one living organism, the cells of which are vital: the plants, the animals, the human beings - altogether, these constitute One Body.

When a person first enters into the Cosmic Consciousness, new centers in the brain with new capabilities will begin to develop. Man's level of

development is determined by his level of consciousness. Until man develops the ability to commune with the Cosmic Consciousness, he will be elated in one moment and sorrowful in the next. The mere fact that he has entered into the Cosmic Consciousness does not indicate that he has attained or comprehended everything: levels of understanding exist there as well. And yet, he will be able - at least in part - to eliminate some of the hardships of his existence. For as long as man lives by his ego consciousness, he will continue to live in constant fear and anxiety of what will happen to him. Man has lived by his ego consciousness for many years. The time has come for him to enter into the Cosmic Consciousness. (Beinsa Douno, "Cosmic Consciousness," WOG.)

Troubles are born from *Avidya*, Ignorance. Ignorance is the perception of the nonexistent, and the nonperception of the Existent. (Sri Yukteswar Giri, HS, 47.)

Through *Avidya* man believes that this material creation is the only thing that substantially exists, there being nothing beyond, forgetting that this material creation is substantially nothing and is a mere play of ideas on the Eternal Spirit, the only Real Substance, beyond the comprehension of the material creation. This Ignorance is not only a trouble in itself but is also the source of all the other troubles of man.

... Ignorance, *Avidya*, is nothing but a particle of Darkness, *Maya*, taken distributively, and as such it possesses the two properties of *Maya*. The one is its darkening power,¹ by the influence of which man is prevented from grasping anything beyond the material creation. This darkening power produces *Asmita* or Egoism, the identification of Self with the material body, which is but the development of Atom, the particles of the universal force; and *Abhinivesa* or blind tenacity to the belief in the validity and ultimate worth of the material creation.

By virtue of the second² of the properties of *Maya*, Ignorance or *Avidya* in its polarized state produces attraction for certain objects and repulsion for others. The objects so attracted are the objects of pleasure, for which an Attachment, *Raga*, is formed. The objects that are repulsed are the objects producing pain, for which an Aversion, *Dweshha*, is formed.

... By the influence of these five troubles -- Ignorance, Egoism, Attachment, Aversion, and Tenacity to the material creation -- man is induced to involve

himself in egoistic works and in consequence he suffers. (Sri Yukteswar Giri, HS, 47-9.)

¹ Tamas?

² Rajas?

The delusion that this relative world is real ... arises from [our] own desire and hatred. (Sri Krishna, BG, 73-4.)

Veiled in my Maya, I am not shown to many.
How shall this world, bewildered by delusion,
Recognize me, who am not born and change not?
(Sri Krishna, BG, 73.)

Man dwells in the realm of maya. Maya does not permit him to see God. It has made him a victim of ignorance. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 269.)

On account of Maya, Satchidananda is not seen. Though now and then one may get a glimpse of It, again Maya covers It. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 831.)

Once, when I was explaining God's actions to someone, God suddenly showed me the lake at Kamarpukur.¹ I saw a man removing the green scum and drinking the water. The water was clear as crystal. God revealed to me that Satchidananda is covered by the scum of maya. He who puts the green scum aside can drink the water. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 260.)

¹ Paramahansa Ramakrishna's birthplace.

What the gunas are and what role they play

Maya, or Prakrti, [sic] is said to consist of the three gunas, known as sattva, rajas, and tamas. The word *guna* is usually translated into English as "quality", which does not give the precise meaning of the original. Sattva, rajas, and tamas are not qualities of maya in the same sense that hardness is a quality of iron, or softness of butter, or heat of fire. The three gunas are the ingredients of maya; they may be compared to three strands with [sic] constitute the rope of maya, the rope by which maya binds man to the illusory world. Maya has no existence independent of the gunas. The three

gunas are present, in varying degrees, in all objects, gross or subtle, including the mind, the buddhi, and the ego. The food which nourishes our body, the thought which is the function of the mind, the duty which elevates a man from the animal level, charity, worship, sacrifice -- in short, everything belonging to the universe of maya -- contains these three gunas. ...

The three gunas ... belong to maya, Prakrti [sic] or ignorance, which includes everything in Nature -- inorganic, organic, or psychic. They are the characteristics of relativity. As long as man is attached to any of them he is a phenomenal being and not a free soul. Even the gods and angels are under the influence of the gunas. The gods or superhuman beings show a preponderance of sattva; men, of rajas; and sub-human beings of tamas. Brahman, alone untouched by maya, is beyond the gunas. Sattva binds a man with attachment to happiness, rajas with attachment to activity, and tamas with attachment to delusion. ... Truth lies beyond the three gunas. (Nikhilananda, "Introduction" to SK, 65-8.)

Identification with the body is delusion

When the pure rays of the [One Self] are ... concealed, the deluded man identifies himself with his body, which is non-[Self]. (Shankara, CJD, 54.)

All material beings ... have identified themselves with the infinitely smaller territory of the human body. (Paramahansa Yogananda, SCC, I, 19.)

The concept "I-am-the-body" is the primal ignorance. It is known as the firm knot of the heart. It gives rise to the concepts of existence and non-existence. If there is no trace of it at all everything will be found to be the Reality of the Supreme Absolute Being. (Da Free John in HRG, 15.)

This inert body does not say 'I'. Reality-Consciousness does not emerge. Between the two, and limited to the measure of the body, something emerges as 'I'. It is this that is known as *Chit-jada-granthi* (the knot between the Conscious and the inert), and also as bondage, soul, subtle-body, ego, *samsara*, mind, and so forth. (Ramana Maharshi, FVR, verse 24.)

The jiva [individual] is nothing but the embodiment of Satchidananda. But since maya, or ego, has created various upadhis [limitations], he has forgotten his real Self. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 169.)

Because you think you are the body,
For a long time you have been bound.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 4.)

The intelligent man may be learned in the Vedanta and the moral laws. But there is not the least hope of his liberation until he stops mistakenly identifying himself with the body and the sense-organs. (Shankara, CJD, 58.)

Desire calls forth the separate self to fulfil its demands

The desire to experience creates the experiencer, who then accumulates and remembers. Desire makes for the separation of the thinker from his thoughts; the desire to become, to experience, to be more or to be less, makes for division between the experiencer and the experience. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 66-7.)

He who believes himself to be acting or experiencing is known as the ego, the individual man. (Shankara, CJD, 48.)

He who experiences is conscious of himself. Without an experiencer, there can be no self-consciousness. (Shankara, CJD, 68.)

The acceptance of the instrumental ego-consciousness and the will-to-desire are the initial consent of the self to the lapse into the lower ranges of experience in which it forgets its divine nature of being; the rejection of these things, the return to free self and the will of the divine delight in being is the liberation of the spirit. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 655.)

[Modification of the mind depends] on the awareness of 'I,' 'I'. If the consciousness of 'I' vanishes or is stopped altogether for some time, there can be no modification in the mind. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna in Saradananda, SRGM, 439.)

All activities of conformity and denial, of analysis and acceptance, ... strengthen the experiencer. The experiencer can never understand the whole. The experiencer is the accumulated, and there is no understanding within the shadow of the past. ... Understanding is not of the mind, of thought.... In the awareness of this whole process there is a silence which is not of the

experiencer. In this silence only does understanding come into being. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 38.)

Experience is already in the net of time, it is already in the past, it has become a memory which comes to life only as a response to the present. Life is the present, it is not the experience. The weight and strength of experience shadow the present, and so experiencing becomes the experience. The mind is the experience, the known, and it can never be in the state of experiencing; for what it experiences is the continuation of experience. The mind only knows continuity, and it can never receive the new as long as its continuity exists. What is continuous can never be in a state of experiencing, which is a state without experience. Experience must cease for experiencing to be. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 32.)

Opposing desires are still desires

Desire may break itself up into many opposing and conflicting urges, but it is still desire. These many urges go to make up the 'I,' with its memories, anxieties, fears, and so on, and the entire activity of this 'I' is within the field of desire; it has no other field of activity. ... The demand for the cessation of the 'I' becomes the new activity of the 'I'; but it is not new, it is merely another form of desire. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 117.)

Positive and negative continuance are similar. The gathering centre is desire, the desire for the more or the less. This centre is the self, placed at different levels according to one's conditioning. Any activity of this centre only brings about the further continuity of itself. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 108.)

Desire brings misery

The forceful, activating impulse of wrong desire is the greatest enemy to the happiness of man. (Sri Yukteswar Giri in AY, 126.)

The mind of man fastens itself to various material objects hoping to find enjoyment in them. Instead it gathers only misery. (Dattatreya, AG, xxi.)

Desire is the cause of sorrow. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 8.)

Desire is the root of all sorrow, disappointment, affliction, for though it has a feverish joy of pursuit and satisfaction, yet because it is always a straining of the being, it carries into its pursuit and its getting a labour, hunger, struggle, a rapid subjection to fatigue, a sense of limitation, dissatisfaction and early disappointment with all its gains, a ceaseless morbid stimulation, trouble, disquiet, asanti. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 629-30)

Wherever you find delight, you find bondage. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 15.)

Sensuality leads to misery and bondage. (Dattatreya in AG, xx.)

If your mind delights in sensual pleasure, you will miss heaven and liberation. (Dattatreya in AG, xx.)

If you fast not from the world, you will not find the Kingdom. (Jesus, GATT, 19.)

The separate self pursuing its own desires creates conflict

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Jesus in Matthew 6:21.)

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Jesus in Matthew 11:34.)

We call God with many desires. The mind is filled with desires, not with God's Form. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 8.)

Conflict exists when desire assumes the form of the experiencer and pursues that which is to be experienced; for that which is to be experienced is also put together by desire. (Krishnamurti, COL3, 36.)

Sensations are limited, personal, they cause conflict and misery. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 65.)

Sensations are ... identified with separateness. ... The constant desire to be more or less gives rise to the feeling of individuality and separateness. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 76.)

Wherever desire and ego harbour, passion and disturbance harbour with them and share their life. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 225.)

The heart of a wicked man is like a stormy sea. (Isaiah 57:20.)

When the objects of experience are pleasant, [the individual] is happy. When they are unpleasant, he is unhappy. Pleasure and pain are characteristics of the individual -- not of the Atman, which is forever blissful. (Shankara, CJD, 48.)

Conflict is the very structure of the self. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 124.)

The mind is like a machine that is working night and day, chattering, everlastingly busy whether asleep or awake. Another part of this intricate and complex mechanism tries to control the whole movement, and so begins the conflict between opposing desires, urges. One may be called the higher self and the other the lower self, but both are within the area of the mind, The action and reaction of the mind, of thought, are almost simultaneous and almost automatic. This whole conscious and unconscious process of accepting and denying, conforming and striving to be free, is extremely rapid. So the question is not how to control this complex machine, for control only brings friction and only dissipates energy. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 231.)

Sensations do not make up our whole life. [When] the mind as memory, which is sensation, becomes calm, no longer torn by its own conflicts, [then] and only then, ... is there the possibility of living without the "me" and the "mine." (Krishnamurti, COL1, 76.)

Sensations have a beginning and an end, they can be repeated and expanded; but experiencing is not within the limits of time. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 65.)

Grow attached and you lose discrimination, alertness

Thinking about sense-objects
Will attach you to sense-objects;
Grow attached, and you become addicted;
Thwart your addiction, it turns to anger;
Be angry, and you confuse the mind;
Confuse your mind, you forget the lesson of experience;
Forget experience, you lose discrimination;
Lose discrimination, and you miss life's only purpose.

(Sri Krishna, BG, 42.)

Attachment to body, objects and persons is considered fatal to a seeker for liberation. (Shankara, CJD, 45.)

Don't become attached. Once attached, you're unaware. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 15.)

A man living in [the] midst [of lust and greed] gradually loses his spiritual alertness. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 131.)

Man, deluded by [lust and greed], forgets God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 710.)

Attachment is blinding; it lends an imaginary halo of attractiveness to the object of desire. (Paramahansa Yogananda, AY, 104.)

An attachment to a creature makes a person equal to that creature; the firmer the attachment, the closer is the likeness to the creature, and the greater the equality. For love effects a likeness between the lover and the object loved. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 78.)

By the mere fact, then, that a man loves something, his soul becomes incapable of pure union and transformation in God; for the baseness of a creature is far less capable of the sublimity of the Creator than is darkness of light. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 78.)

Clothed in these affections, a person will be incapable of the enlightenment and dominating fullness of God's pure and simple light, unless he rejects them. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 77-8.)

The light of divine union cannot be established in the soul until these affections are eradicated. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 78.)

Until a man is purged of his attachments he will not be equipped to possess God, neither here below through the pure transformation of love, nor in heaven through the beatific vision. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 78.)

Grow attached and you stoke a limitless appetite

The thirst of a thoughtless man grows like a creeper; he runs from life to life, like a monkey seeking fruit in the forest. (The Buddha, TCB, 68.)

Those who are slaves to passion follow the stream of desires, as a spider runs down the web which he has made himself. (The Buddha, TCB, 69.)

These transient pleasures -- the robber of our happiness and our wealth, ... which float empty and like illusions through the world -- infatuate men's minds even if they are only hoped for -- still more when they take up their abode in the soul.

The victims of pleasure attain not to happiness even in the heaven of the gods, still less in the world of mortals; he who is athirst is never satisfied with pleasures, as the fire, the friend of the wind, with fuel.

There is no calamity in the world like pleasures -- people are devoted to them through delusion; when he once knows the truth and so fears evil, what wise man would of his own choice desire evil? (The Buddha, BMT, 112-3.)

So-called seekers after liberation, who lack the true spirit of renunciation, try, nevertheless, to cross the ocean of this world. The shark of craving catches them by the throat, and drags them violently from their course, and they are drowned mid-way. (Shankara, CJD, 44.)

For those lacking in reason [desire] is a limitless appetite for the material, a thrust originating in that chronic urge to dwell with the ephemeral, that living, mastering longing to remain with whatever is applauded by the senses. (Pseudo-Dionysius in CWPD, 151.)

Sensation is always seeking further sensation, ever in wider and wider circles. There is no end to the pleasures of sensation; they multiply, but there is always dissatisfaction in their fulfilment; there is always the desire for more, and the demand for more is without end. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 239.)

The more externalized we are, the more sensations and distractions there must be, and this gives rise to a mind that is never quiet, that is not capable of deep search and discovery. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 14.)

We drift along in confusion desiring now one thing and then another. We are attracted to whatever is the allurements of the moment, but there is no

singleness of purpose, no conception of the underlying force that guides our lives. (Swami Rama and Swami Ajaya, CUE, 85.)

Even a mind that knows the path
Can be dragged from the path:
The senses are so unruly.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 42.)

The wind turns a ship
From its course upon the waters:
The wandering winds of the senses
Cast man's mind adrift
And turn his better judgment from its course.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 43.)

Playthings of the passions,
Hither, thither tossed by adverse waves,
Upon a shoreless sea, they blinded roll,
Unable to resist or to the tempest yield.
(Pythagoras, GVP, 8.)

We grow attached to the intoxicating pleasure of wanting itself

It's not that difficult for an individual to experience some insight now and again. It's not even that unusual for a serious seeker to have an experience of transcendence -- if that's what they really want. But to be able to see clearly, to be able to see things as they really are, is something else altogether. Only the individual who wants to be free more than anything else, only the individual who wants to know the truth more than anything else, will find within themselves the power of discrimination necessary to see through that which is unreal. Most of us won't be able to do it. Why! Because without knowing it, like everyone else, we will be too invested in the intensely intoxicating experience of wanting. You see, *we don't want not to want*. And this is what the problem is.

A lot of people say, "I just want to be happy, I just want to live a simple life." But it couldn't be true, because to experience real happiness, to experience true simplicity, we have to be willing to abandon the wanting. *It's only when*

the wanting diminishes that we can begin to experience a fullness that is always there. ...

In this world it is the experience of wanting, the intoxicating thrill of wanting, that most people are completely hypnotized by. You can be a very intelligent person and still be utterly and completely lost in the intoxication of wanting. And as long as we allow ourselves to be hypnotically distracted by that intoxication, we will never be able to see things clearly, we will never be able to see things as they really are. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 25-7.)

Seeing clearly and being able to see illusion for what it is, is entirely dependent upon our fundamental relationship to life. For most of us, our relationship to life is driven essentially by the unending desire to have and to possess. "I want for me" is our modus operandi. Indeed, usually this is what our fundamental relationship to all of our experience is based on. And as long as this remains the case, it will be very difficult for us to be able to see things as they are.

Now the way to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood is not simply by trying to see clearly. Because if you're making the effort to see clearly and yet you still fundamentally want only for yourself, where are you going to end up! You're only going to be able to see with greater clarity what it is that you want for yourself. ...

This "*I want for me*" is expressed in gross and subtle ways thousands of times every single day--when we look, when we turn our head, when we reach out. And only when this movement slows down will we begin to notice that our perception and the way that we interpret our experience has begun to change. It changes in conjunction with the lessening of this wanting for oneself. It happens automatically.

Merely perceiving that [wanting] clearly, without any movement away from it -- having the courage to experience it and to stay with it -- in and of itself will open the door to another possibility, another way of being. In this other way of being we will discover, not once or twice, but over and over and over again, that real happiness, profound peace and true sanity are found only when we want nothing. ...

The wanting, you see, is really so painful. Of course the ego and personality experiences the wanting as pleasure. But when we look very, very closely,

we become aware of the fact that the wanting is not pleasure, but pain. ... It's an endless tension. And peace, joy, sanity and clarity are discovered when that tension ceases. When it ceases, and even when it only begins to lessen, instantly we feel more comfortable, more at ease. When the tension decreases even more, we feel even more at ease, more present, more at home in our own mind and body. And however unhappy a person we may have been, suddenly we find that we're comfortable being exactly who we are. This is a new experience for us, marvelous and unknown. And in this experience, the wanting and all the tension inherent in it that before we perceived as pleasure, we now recognize to be pain. This recognition has profound significance. It is the dawning of awakening. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 31-4.)

The desire to become brings emptiness

How strong is our will to succeed, to become. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 20.)

The cause of ... inward emptiness is the desire to become; and, do what you will, this emptiness can never be filled. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 54.)

As long as you want to become something, at whatever level, there is bound to be misery and confusion. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 67.)

The mind is not quiet when it is acquiring or becoming. All acquisition is conflict; all becoming is a process of isolation. ... Such a mind is a dead mind, it is isolating itself through various forms of resistance, and so it inevitably creates misery for itself and for others. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 32.)

Self-expansion in any form, whether through wealth or through virtue, is a process of conflict, causing antagonism and confusion. A mind burdened with becoming can never be tranquil, for tranquillity is not a result either of practice or of time. Tranquillity is a state of understanding, and becoming denies this understanding. Becoming creates the sense of time, which is really the postponement of understanding. The "I shall be" is an illusion born of self-importance. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 22.)

Ambition in any form -- for the group, for individual salvation, or for spiritual achievement is action postponed. Desire is ever of the future; the desire to become is inaction in the present. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 11.)

The desire to possess ends in fear

One never can guard
His home when it's full
Of jade and gold:
Wealth, power and pride
Bequeath their own doom.
(Lao Tzu, WOL, 61.)

Ownership denies love, does it not? To own is to be secure; possession is defence, making oneself invulnerable. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 12.)

We *are* the things we possess, we *are* that to which we are attached. Attachment has nobility. Attachment to knowledge is not different from any other gratifying addiction. Attachment is self-absorption, whether at the lowest or the highest level. Attachment is self-deception, it is an escape from the hollowness of the self. The things to which we are attached – property, people, ideas – become all-important, for without the many things which fill its emptiness, the self is not. The fear of not being makes for possession; and fear breeds illusion. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 113.)

The desire to store up is the desire to be secure, to be certain. This desire for certainty through identification, through condemnation and justification, is the cause of fear, which destroys all communion. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 26-7.)

How difficult it is for the man of possessions to be free! It is a great hardship for a rich man to put aside his wealth. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 230.)

Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (Jesus in Matthew 19:23-4.)

Desire creates an endless stream of thought

I have found that most of us, even though we're rarely aware of it, live a great deal of our lives very much lost in and distracted by psychological and sensory experiences that have no independent reality outside the field of our own inner experience. This means that a large part of what many of us experience has no objective reality. It's something that we actually create. ...

What creates this almost perfect continuity of illusion, this unreal stream of thought and sense perception is the endless craving, the endless wanting for personal gratification. To some this may appear obvious, but its implications are unthinkably profound. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 5.)

Desire hides the One Self

Smoke hides fire,
Dust hides a mirror,
The womb hides the embryo:
By lust the Atman is hidden.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 49.)

Lust hides the Atman in its hungry flames,
The wise man's faithful foe.
Intellect, senses and mind
Are fuel to its fire:
Thus it deludes
The dweller in the body,
Bewildering his judgment.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 40.)

Match-sticks, if damp, won't strike fire though you rub a thousand of them against the match-box. You only waste a heap of sticks. The mind soaked in worldliness is such a damp match-stick. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 173.)

Desire leads to death and rebirth

He who, brooding upon sense objects, comes to yearn for them, is born here and there, again and again, driven by his desire. (UPAN, 48.)

Fools follow the desires of the flesh and fall into the snare of all-encompassing death; but the wise, knowing the Self as eternal, seek not the things that pass away. (UPAN, 20.)

[The] addicts of sensual pleasure, made restless by their many desires, and caught in the net of delusion ... are full of egoism, vanity, lust, wrath, and consciousness of power. ...They are constantly reborn, in degradation and delusion. They do not reach me, but sink down to the lowest possible condition of the soul. (Sri Krishna, BG, 115-6.)

He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, Mara¹ will certainly overthrow him, as the wind breaks down a weak tree. (The Buddha, TCB, 53.)

¹ The tempter.

That man who delights in children and cattle.
That man whose heart adheres thereto,
Death takes that man and goes his way,
As sweeps away a mighty flood a sleeping village.
(The Buddha, TCB, 46.)

Those deluded beings who are tied to the objects they experience by the strong cord of desire, so hard to break, remain subject to birth and death. They travel upward or downward, impelled by their own karma, that inescapable law. (Shankara, CJD, 43.)

So long ... as man identifies himself with his material body and fails to find repose in his true Self, he feels his wants according as his heart's desires remain unsatisfied. To satisfy them he has to appear often in flesh and blood on the stage of life, subject to the influence of Darkness, *Maya*, and has to suffer all the troubles of life and death not only in the present but in the future as well. (Sri Yukteswar Giri, HS, 46-7.)

Men foolishly cling to Passion, that evil guide..., so that they do not think of Fate and by the bent of their nature forget Death.... They ceaselessly wander about on the path of Desire, they are tossed about by evil Passion, they clothe themselves in Spite while striving after fugitive possessions; in their youth they are drunk with Pride, and at the end of their time they shall be full of Regrets. (Zarathustra, GZ, 107-8.)

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death;¹ but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.² (St. Paul in Romans 8:5-6.)

¹ That is, keeps one in the mortal round of birth and death.

² Leads to immortality and peace.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:¹ but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.² (St. Paul in Romans 8:12-3.)

¹ Those who have carnal or fleshly desires will not achieve enlightenment, but will be reborn again and again to live out these desires.

² However, those who have turned aside from worldly desires shall find Self-Knowledge and pass beyond the cycle of birth and death to immortality.

⌘ Chapter 2. The Problem of the Ego ⌘

The nature of the separate self or ego

The seat of the ego is said to be in the Buddhi [intellect]; it is an ignorance of the discriminating mind and reason which discriminate wrongly and take the individuation of mind, life and body for a truth of separative existence and are turned away from the greater reconciling truth of the oneness of all existence. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 650.)

In man it is the ego idea which chiefly supports the falsehood of a separative existence. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 650.)

The ego is like a stick that seems to divide the water in two. It makes you feel that you are one and I am another. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 387.)

The mind, together with the organs of perception, forms the "mental covering". It causes the sense of "I" and "mine". (Shankara, CJD, 59.)

The mind ... is the self. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 34.)

I was always looking and listening for that structure in consciousness ... which is chronically prior to ordinary awareness. ... Eventually I began to recognize a structure in consciousness. ... I saw that my entire adventure, the whole desperate cycle of awareness and its decrease, of truly conscious being and its gradual covering in the whole mechanics of living, seeking, dying and suffering, was produced out of the image or mentality that appears hidden in the ancient myth of Narcissus. The more I contemplated him the more profoundly I understood him. I witnessed in awe the primitive control that this self-concept and logic performed in all of my behavior and experience. I began to see that same logic operative in all other men and every living thing, even the very life of the cells and the energies that surround every living entity or process. It was the logic of separation itself, of enclosure and immunity. It manifested as fear and identity, memory and experience. It informed every function of being, every event. It created every mystery. It was the structure of every imbecile link in the history of our suffering. (Da Free John, KOL, 25-6.)

The self, at whatever level it is placed, is still of the mind. Whatever the mind can think about is the mind. The mind cannot think about something which is not of itself; it cannot think of the unknown. The self at any level is known; and though there may be layers of the self of which the superficial mind is not aware, they are still within the field of the known. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 68.)

[Virtue and vice] both exist and do not exist. If God keeps the ego in a man, then He keeps in him the sense of differentiation and also the sense of virtue and sin. But in a rare few He completely effaces the ego, and these go beyond virtue and sin, good and bad. As long as a man has not realized God, he retains the sense of differentiation and the knowledge of good and bad. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 328.)

The ego or separate soul is a concept. God, the world, the mind, desires, action, sorrow and all other things are all concepts. (Ramana Maharshi, HRG, 15.)

Concentration is an activity of the separate self

Concentration in meditation is a form of self-centred improvement, it emphasizes action within the boundaries of the self, the ego, the 'me.' Concentration is a process of narrowing down thought. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 236.)

Seeing more than One causes conflict

Those who see duality are always submerged in an ocean of grief. (Dattatreya, AG, xxi.)

Duality breeds conflict, problems, the separate "I" and its activities. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

Delusion means mortality. And awareness [of Self] means buddhahood. It's just that people distinguish delusion from awareness. When we're deluded there's a world to escape. When we're aware, there's nothing to escape. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 25.)

Oneness is the secret of a right and a divine existence. But the ego cannot have it, because it is in its very nature separative and because even with regard to ourselves, to our own psychological existence it is a false centre of unity; for it tries to find the unity of our being in an identification with a shifting mental, vital, physical personality, not with the eternal self of our total existence. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 653.)

The cause of the conflict lies in the idea that the ego is the doer of actions. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

As long as there is an actor, there will be division. Krishnamurti, COL2, 67.)

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matthew 6:22.)

As long as God keeps the awareness of "I" in us, so long do sense-objects exist. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 243.)

As long as one is conscious of the body, one is also conscious of objects. Form, taste, smell, sound and touch -- these are the objects. It is extremely difficult to get rid of the consciousness of objects and one cannot realize 'I am He' as long as one is aware of objects. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 181.)

As long as a man remains conscious of the body, he is conscious of duality. ... Man dwells in the realm of Maya. Maya does not permit him to see God. It has made him a victim of ignorance. (Sri Ramakrishna, GSR, 269.)

The mind has no existence bereft of the sense objects. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC, 1, 26.)

At the very moment when we try to examine and observe what it is that we are experiencing, we slip back into the activity of reasoning, at which we become aware of distinction between ourselves and God. (Ruusbroec in Wiseman, John Ruusbroec, 176.)

The phenomenon of the observer and the observed is not a dual process, but a single one; and only in experiencing the fact of this unitary process is there freedom from desire, from conflict. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 61.)

The sense of “I” and “mine” constitute ignorance

'I' and 'mine' -- these constitute ignorance. 'My house,' 'my wealth,' 'my learning,' 'my possessions' -- the attitude which prompts one to say such things comes of ignorance. On the contrary, the attitude born of Knowledge is: 'O God, Thou art the Master, and all these things belong to Thee. House, family, children, attendants, friends are Thine. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 105.)

Ego is the illusion of separateness that doesn't want to give up its illusion of separateness. Remember it is not the ego that longs to be Free. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 37.)

If you see yourself as separate,
Then you are bound.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 2.)

Man is in bondage because he mistakes what is non-Atman [non-Self] for his real Self. This is caused by ignorance. Hence follows the misery of birth and death. (Shankara, CJD, 54.)

The ego simply cannot grasp what is beyond itself. The SELF can only know the SELF and in this understanding there is no personality or ego involved. There cannot be if the understanding is real. (Andrew Cohen, letter to his mother, AOA, 33.)

The sense of separation gives rise to fear

So long as there is the least idea of separation from him, there is fear.
(UPAN, 56.)

The self cannot be if there is no cumulative effect of experience; and the fear of death is the fear of not being, of not experiencing. If there were the assurance, the certainty of experiencing, there would be no fear.
(Krishnamurti, COL1, 89.)

For as long as man lives by his ego consciousness, he will continue to live in constant fear and anxiety of what will happen to him. (Beinsa Douno, “Cosmic Consciousness,” WOG.)

Your ego is terrified of the unknown. No matter how terrible the known past is, the ego prefers it to the unknown present. All of its energy goes into trying to make the present into the past. It thinks that this creates safety, but in truth it creates continued terror, a constant aggravation of the wound until the pain is so intense that it must be dealt with. You see, everything, even your ego, conspires toward your awakening!

So living the past over and over again creates the ultimate terror. Outwardly, life seems safe and predictable. Inwardly, the dynamite has been lit. (Paul Ferrini, SOH, 22.)

Living in fear, the ego-mind seeks safety, but never finds it. Because it never investigates its own fear, it is constantly driven by that fear unconsciously, and its creations are unconscious projections of that fear. This includes all its relationship dramas.

Fear must be faced. It must be dealt with. It must be made conscious. This brings the darkness to the light. It ends the split between ego and spirit, inner and outer. The light that comes when darkness has been fully explored is not the same light that was there when darkness was pushed away. (Paul Ferrini, SOH, 24.)

When the individual loves himself, egotism arises

Egoism results from a lack of discrimination between the physical body and the real Self. (Sri Yukteswar Giri, HS, 48.)

The centre of all resistance is egoism. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 316.)

The result of egotism is blindness. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

The water of God's grace cannot collect on the high mound of egotism. It runs down. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 111.)

What defines the unawake self more than anything else is its total and absolute fascination with itself. (Adyashanti, <http://www.members.shaw.ca/adyashanti/>, downloaded 16 May 2004.)

Egoism in the mind ... attaches itself to its preferences, its habits, its past or present formations of thought and view and will because it regards them as itself or its own, weaves around them the delicate threads of "I-ness" and "my-ness" and lives in them like a spider in its web. It hates to be disturbed, as a spider hates attack on its web, and feels foreign and unhappy if transplanted to fresh viewpoints and formations as a spider feels foreign in another web than its own. This attachment must be entirely excised from the mind. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 315.)

A man achieves neither Knowledge nor liberation as long as he has egotism. He comes back again and again into the world. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 633.)

It is futile to be egotistic. ... You may be a judge or anybody else, but it is all for two days only. Therefore you should give up vanity and pride. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 630.)

Your mental body wishes to think itself proudly separate, to think much of itself and little of others. Even when you have turned it away from worldly things, it still tries to calculate for self, to make you think of your own progress, instead of thinking of the Master's work and of helping others. When you meditate, it will try to make you think of the many different things which *it* wants instead of the one thing which *you* want. You are not this mind, but it is yours to use; so here ... discrimination is necessary. You must watch unceasingly, or you will fail. (Krishnamurti, AFM, 24-5.)

Egoism rises from tamas

Egotism, sleep, gluttony, lust, anger, and the like, are the traits of people with tamas. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 630.)

Egotism is of the nature of tamas. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 630.)

Pride and delusion come from tamas. ... If you cannot get rid of pride, then be proud to say that you are a servant of God, you are the child of God. Thus turn the ... passions toward God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 861.)

As long as we are aware of a separate self, we cannot know the One Self

On account of the barrier of ego one does not see God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 630.)

It is on account of the ego that one is not able to see God. In front of the door of God's mansion lies the stump of ego. One cannot enter the mansion without jumping over the stump. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 790.)

Oneness is the secret of a right and a divine existence. But the ego cannot have it, because it is in its very nature separative and because even with regard to ourselves, to our own psychological existence it is a false centre of unity; for it tries to find the unity of our being in an identification with a shifting mental, vital, physical personality, not with the eternal self of our total existence. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 653.)

The aspirant does not attain the Knowledge of Brahman as long as he is conscious of his ego. The ego comes under one's control after one has obtained the Knowledge of Brahman and seen God. Otherwise the ego cannot be controlled. It is difficult to catch one's own shadow. But when the sun is overhead the shadow is within a few inches of the body. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 430.)

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.¹ (Jesus in Matthew 6:24.)

¹ In essence, the world.

The separate self is a fantasy

Self is but a heap of composite qualities, and its world is empty like a fantasy. (The Buddha, GB, 60.)

All worry about the self is vain; the ego is like a mirage, and all the tribulations that touch it will pass away. They will vanish like a nightmare when the sleeper awakes. (The Buddha, GB, 41.)

When a great bodhisattva delves deeply into perfect wisdom, he realizes that the four elements and five shades are devoid of a personal self. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 38.)

There is no I nor thou, but only one divine Self equal in all embodiments, equal in the individual and the group, and to realize that, to express that, to serve that, to fulfill that is all that matters. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 316.)

⌘ Chapter 3. The Answer to the Problem of Desire ⌘

Experience is not the One Self

Experience is not reality. Reality cannot be experienced. It is. If the experiencer thinks he experiences reality, then he knows only illusion. ... Experience cannot meet reality. Experience shapes knowledge, and knowledge bends experience; they must both cease for reality to be. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 74.)

The experience of pleasure and pain is direct, individual; but the understanding of the experience is after the pattern of others, of the religious and social authorities. We are the result of the thoughts and influences of others; we are conditioned by religious as well as political propaganda. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 61-2.)

Every desire must be rooted up

Complete nakedness and freedom of spirit [are] necessary for divine union. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 68.)

Every plant¹ which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. (Jesus in Matthew 15:13.)

¹ Every desire and every work that springs from desire.

Be aware of the ways of desire

Awareness of the ways of desire is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the beginning of meditation. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 67.)

Awareness of the ways of desire is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the beginning of meditation. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 66-7.)

It is possible to live without conflict

It is entirely possible to live without conflict, the conflict of greed, of fear, of success; but this possibility will be merely theoretical and not actual until it

is discovered through direct experiencing. To exist without greed is possible only when the ways of the self are understood. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 124.)

The happiness that we get from worldly objects is only an infinitesimal fraction of the bliss that we get from within. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 8.)

The question of how to experience [this unitary process] should never arise. It must happen; and it happens only when there is alertness and passive awareness. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 61.)

Liberation from desire is liberation from the separate self

These two things are one, liberation from the will that is of the nature of desire and liberation from the ego, and the oneness which is brought about by the happy loss of the will of desire and the ego, is the essence of Mukti [liberation]. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 654.)

When the mind is entirely free of this structure of desire, is the mind then different from the void? (Krishnamurti, COL2I, 37.)

Every desire must be completed but the desire for God

Complete nakedness and freedom of spirit [are] necessary for divine union. (St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 68.)

Every plant¹ which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. (Jesus in Matthew 15:13.)

¹ Every desire and every work that springs from desire.

It is clearly necessary for the soul, aiming at its own supernatural transformation, to be in darkness and far removed from all that relates to its natural condition, the sensual and rational parts. The supernatural is that which transcends nature, and, therefore, that which is natural remains below. Inasmuch as this union and transformation are not cognizable by sense or any human power, the soul must be completely and voluntarily empty of all that can enter into it, of every affection and inclination, so far as it concerns itself.... On this road, therefore, to abandon one's own way is to enter on the

true way, or, to speak more correctly, to pass onwards to the goal; and to forsake one's own way is to enter on that which has none, namely, God. For the soul that attains to this state has no ways or methods of its own, neither does it nor can it lean upon anything of the kind. ... To arrive there is to depart hence, going away, out of oneself. ... Our way to Him is therefore, of necessity, in self denial¹. (St. John of the Cross, Bucke, CC, 145-6.)

¹ A denial of the clamor and demands of the self.

All consists in one hearty renunciation of everything which we are sensible does not lead to God. (Brother Lawrence, PPG, 18.)

Our renunciation must obviously be an inward renunciation; especially and above all, a renunciation of the attachment and the craving of desire in the senses and the heart, of self-will in the thought and action and of egoism in the centre of the consciousness. For these things are the three knots by which we are bound to our lower nature and if we can renounce these utterly, there is nothing else that can bind us. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 314.)

[Be] tranquil, steadfast,
Master of ego,
Standing apart
From the things of the senses,
Free from self;
Aware of the weakness
In mortal nature,
In bondage to birth,
Age, suffering, dying;
To nothing be slave,
Nor desire possession
Of man-child or wife,
Of home or of household;
Calmly encounter
The painful, the pleasant.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 101-2.)

The soul ... will not be transformed in God if it has only one imperfection.
(St. John of the Cross, CWSJC, 98.)

Can one not see God as formless Reality? Of course one can. But not if one has the slightest trace of worldliness. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 213.)

[God] is constantly attracting us, as a magnet attracts iron. But the iron cannot come to the magnet if it is covered with dirt. When the dirt is washed away, the iron is instantly drawn to the magnet. Weep for God and the tears will wash away the dirt from your mind. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 1024.)

The truth is that you cannot attain God if you have even a trace of [worldly] desire. Subtle is the way of dharma. If you are trying to thread a needle, you will not succeed if the thread has even a slight fibre sticking out. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 769.)

That which makes it so difficult for us to see clearly is the ceaseless wanting for ourselves. If we want to be able to see clearly, if we want to be able to know what's true, we have to be willing to renounce the thrill of wanting. The thrill of wanting itself is what has to be given up. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 34-5.)

So the great challenge in all of this is to find the willingness to renounce the thrill of wanting. This is the greatest challenge for the ego and the personality. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 35.)

If we want to see clearly, we have to look into our fundamental relationship to life. We have to begin to see that for most of us, our entire relationship to life is based on what is in the end a very greedy and selfish wanting only for ourselves. Merely perceiving that clearly, without any movement away from it -- having the courage to experience it and to stay with it -- in and of itself will open the door to another possibility, another way of being. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 33.)

Of the steps to liberation, the first is declared to be complete detachment from all things which are non-eternal. Then comes the practice of tranquillity, self-control, and forbearance. And then the entire giving-up of all actions which are done from personal, selfish desires. (Shankara, CJD, 42.)

I [God] am all that a man may desire
Without transgressing the law of his nature. (Sri Krishna, BG, 71.)

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. (Exodus, 20:5.)

There will be no sorrow if and when the sense organs are withdrawn from sense objects. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC, 1, 24.)

When objects of sense experience are all ignored, then the transcendental brightness of Intuition will shine forth mysteriously, and you will have found the true source of cognition and tranquillity. (The Buddha, BB, 209.)

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Deuteronomy 5:9.)

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30.)

A word of warning: [God] is a jealous lover, and will brook no rival; he will not work in your will if he has not sole charge; he does not ask for help, he asks for you. His will is that you should look at him, and let him have his way. You must, however, guard your spiritual windows and doorways against enemy attacks [i.e., desires for anything but God]. If you are willing to do this, you need only to lay hold upon God humbly in prayer, and he will soon help you. (Anonymous author of CU, 52.)

No act binds the unattached, the egoless

He whose mind dwells
Beyond attachment,
Untainted by ego,
No act shall bind him
With any bond.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 121-2.)

The desire to be free must be stronger than anything else

I'd say that the foundation of my teaching is the cultivation of the intention for liberation to become unconditional. (Andrew Cohen, "Empty Cognizance with a Core of Knowing," WIE, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1995, on WIEWS, 6 February 2000.)

What ultimately destroys ignorance? An unconditional relationship to the attainment of perfect Liberation in this life, supported by an unwillingness to compromise for that. (Andrew Cohen, FHNH, 1.)

I've noticed that for most human beings, getting to that point where the relationship with liberation is unconditional, and finally there's no relationship with it at all, is a very rare thing. And this is why most people need an intention in order to generate a great momentum towards one's liberation. (Andrew Cohen, "Empty Cognizance with a Core of Knowing," WIE, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1995, on WIEWS, 6 February 2000.)

The first tenet [of my teaching], *Clarity of Intention*, states that if we want to be free, then we have to cultivate the *intention* to be free to such a degree that it will always be more powerful than *any other desire*. The first tenet tells us that if we want to succeed in liberating ourselves from fear, ignorance and self-deception, then that desire for Liberation must always be stronger than any interest in wealth or worldly fame, more powerful than even our love for our children, our husband or our wife. Simply put, the first tenet says that our desire for spiritual freedom must become *the most important thing in our lives*. Indeed, for success to be a realistic possibility, the first tenet tells us that our desire for Liberation has to be cultivated to such a degree that it *alone* becomes that which determines the choices that we make and the actions that we take.

Of course, very few of us want to be free *that* much, because it demands such unusual courage. You see, the world we live in insists that we all conform. But the individual who wants to be free more than anything else must be unwilling to conform. They must be ready to stand alone in that which they have recognized is most important.

If we sincerely want to become a liberated person, then we have to be willing to be independent in a world where few truly think for themselves. (Andrew Cohen, WAI, 15-6.)

Wanting to Realize – that's the crux, the key issue. Truly wanting that more than anything else and knowing you want it more than anything else. Grace cannot function uninhibitedly unless in your heart of hearts, Realization is all that you want. If you are serious, it's got to be choiceless. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 19.)

If you are serious about becoming free in this life, you have to be willing to take a stand that is immovable.

If you are deadly serious about liberating yourself from fear and ignorance, you have to be willing to take an absolute stand in relationship to thought, to feeling and to time. If you want to be free, you have to be strong, clear and above all doubtless about what is important. Indeed, if you are sincere you have to allow the desire for Liberation to be more important than anything else.

Given the right environment and the right company it's not difficult to taste, even if only briefly, peace, joy and bliss, to know what it's like to be free from the tyranny of the mind. In that kind of experience it's possible to discover how extraordinary life can be. But the fact is, most who do taste this kind of experience fall from it soon after. They may stumble upon it once again, but most often it slips away as it did before. This is why it's so important to take an absolute stand if you want to be free in this life. (Andrew Cohen, FHNH, 9-10.)

⌘ Chapter 4. The Answer to the Problem of the Ego ⌘

Illusion does not exist: it is an empty appearance

Teachers of Enlightenment often use the word "illusion." ... From the perspective of Enlightenment, what does the word "illusion" mean? ...

If something is illusory, it means that it literally does not exist. It means that what we are perceiving has no independent self-existence. It means that what we are experiencing does not exist outside of our own mind and field of sensory experience. It means, therefore, that what we are experiencing is something that we are creating with our own mind and then projecting upon the world around us. (Andrew Cohen, POP, 3-4.)

When awakening, unity, and fusion occur

The awakening of Self-recognition is when this innocence recognizes itself as the Self and ego is recognized as non-Self. Under the weight of this Self-discovery the ego is seen as unreal. This is when the whole universe turns upside down and this is when all is revealed to be very different than it had seemed. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 37.)

The mind's conditioning and attachments prevent it from knowing the One Self

The mind is the product of environment, re-creating and sustaining itself on sensations and identifications; and that is why the mind clings to codes of conduct, patterns of thought, and so on. As long as the mind is the outcome of the past, it can never discover truth or allow truth to come into being. In holding to organizations it discards the search for truth. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 24.)

From where does this ego come which thinks, "I am. I am doing"? It comes through memory. Your memory goes on recording happenings: you are born, you are a child; then youth comes, then you are old. Things happen: love happens, hatred happens, and the memory goes on recording it. When you look at the past, the whole accumulated memory becomes your "I." (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, IATG, 8.)

Knowledge, belief, conviction, conclusion and experience are ... the very structures of the self. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 89.)

You are this knowledge, you are the things that you have accumulated; you are the gramophone record that is ever repeating what is impressed on it. You are the song, the noise, the chatter of society, of your culture. Is there an uncorrupted 'you' apart from all this clatter? This self-centre is now anxious to free itself from the things it has gathered; but the effort it makes to free itself is part of the accumulative process. You have a new record to play, with new words, but your mind is still dull, insensitive. (Krishnamurti, COL3, 86.)

The restless, busy nature of the world, this, I declare, is the root of pain. Attain that composure of mind which is resting in the peace of immortality. (The Buddha, GB, 60.)

So the question is, if this is true, but it is not one's own experience, then why isn't it? If it's not one's own experience, then it means that somehow we must be interfering with it, because I'm speaking about something that is absolutely spontaneous. It has nothing to do with effort; it has nothing to do with will. So if this absolute condition or absolute nature is not something that's being expressed as ourselves, then it means that somehow we must be in the way, somehow we must be interfering with this kind of movement within ourselves. And if that's the case, then we have to really ask ourselves how we are doing that. How are we interfering and why are we interfering?

When people begin to look inside, what usually is discovered are some very fixed ideas that one is holding on to that make the spontaneous expression of the Self nature impossible. What fixed ideas? Maybe I have a fixed idea that I am a certain person, or you have a fixed idea that you are a certain person. Any fixed idea we have about ourselves will inhibit the spontaneous and natural expression of who we really are. But it's a very scary thing for a person to be able to be fully who they are without clinging on to any fixed notion of self. A lot of people would say, "Well, if I don't know who I am, I won't know how to respond. I won't know where to go. I won't know what to do." But I say that's not true. If you don't know who you are, you may find that you know how to respond in ways that you never even imagined. So that's really the key to it. (Andrew Cohen, "Surrender Means Having No Control," WIE, Fall 1995, Vo. 4, No. 2.)

It is the mind with its demands and fears, its attachments and denials, its determinations and urges, that destroys love. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 223.)

Recognize that the separate self was created to help us know the One Self

Each man is himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life. But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly, and by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognizes this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use and by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality. When he knows that for this his wonderful complex, separated life exists, then, indeed, and then only, he is upon the way. (Mabel Collins, LOP, 13.)

The personal will of the sadhaka [spiritual aspirant] has first to seize on the egoistic energies and turn them towards the light and the right; once turned, he has still to train them to recognize that always, always to accept, always to follow that. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 54.)

The gunas are the doer

Every action is really performed by the gunas. Man, deluded by his egoism, thinks: 'I am the doer.' But he who has the true insight into the operations of the gunas and their various functions, knows that when senses attach themselves to objects, gunas are merely attaching themselves to gunas. Knowing this, he does not become attached to his actions. (Sri Krishna, BG, 47-8.)

Give up the sense of doership

It is very difficult to remember that events are happening and you are not the doer. For example, I am speaking. If I say that I am speaking and I mean that "I" am speaking, then I have misinterpreted the phenomenon. I am speaking, speaking is happening through me, but I do not know what the next sentence will be. When it comes you will know it and I will also know it. It is a

happening, something comes through me. I am not at all a doer; something happens in me. (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, IATG, 8.)

Attending to the Self means attending to the work. Because you identify yourself with the body, you think that work is done by you. But the body and its activities, including that work, are not apart from the Self. What does it matter whether you attend to the work or not? When you walk from one place to another you do not attend to the steps you take and yet you find yourself after a time at your goal. You see how the business of walking goes on without your attending to it. So also with other kinds of work. (David Godman, ed., *Be As You Are. The Teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi.*)

To be conscious of being free is not freedom. Consciousness is the experiencing of freedom or bondage, and that consciousness is the experiencer, the maker of effort. ... The breaking down of the experiencer ... cannot be done consciously. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 166.)

You think that you are engaging in sadhana, but actually it is He who does everything, without Him nothing can be done. And if you imagine that you receive according to what you do, this is not correct either, for God is not a merchant; with Him there is no bargaining. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal will, wisdom, force, virtue the selective, formative, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and body. Enlightenment brings us to the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our supreme and integral Self, one with the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 53.)

Bondage is nothing but the feeling "I am doing." (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 57.)

The thought that "I am the doer" should go. God is the doer. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 49-50.)

Ignorance lasts as long as one has ego. There can be no liberation as long as the ego remains. 'O God, Thou art the Doer and not I' -- that is knowledge. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 204.)

If by the grace of God a man but once realizes that he is not the doer, then he at once becomes a jivanmukta. Though living in the body, he is liberated. He has nothing else to fear. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 169.)

He is firmly convinced that he is the machine and God is its Operator, that God alone is the Doer and all others are His instruments. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 245.)

In spite of the way things appear to be, in spite of the appearance of thought, feeling and the body, and of others and the whole world, there's some mysterious cause that completely transcends individuality that is doing everything. That's the point: that something is doing everything. And then at that point there's no sense of the individual bringing anything from anywhere to anywhere else. There is just the pure and spontaneous expression of one's own self. (Andrew Cohen, "Surrender Means Having No Control," WIE, Fall 1995, Vo. 4, No. 2.)

Humility is essential to experience the One Self

Humility is essential for experiencing. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 32.)

Do not treat men with scorn, nor walk proudly on the earth: Allah does not love the arrogant and the vain-glorious. Rather let your gait be modest and your voice low: the harshest of voices is the braying of the ass. (Koran, 186.)

The Lord is the one life shining forth from every creature. Seeing him present in all, the wise man is humble, puts not himself forward. His delight is in the Self, his joy is in the Self, he serves the Lord in all. Such as he, indeed, are the true knowers of Brahman. (UPAN, 47.)

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. (Deuteronomy 10:16.)

He that is great among you shall be your servant.

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (Jesus in Matthew 23:11-2.)

Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. (Proverbs 3:34.)

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 51:17.)

But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight in themselves in the abundance of peace. (Psalm 37:11.)

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (Jesus in Matthew 5:5.)

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. (Job 9:20.)

Whosoever ... shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Jesus in Matthew 18:4.)

Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. (Jesus in Matthew 19:30.)

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5.)

God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ... that no flesh should glory in his presence. (St. Paul in I Corinthians 27 and 29.)

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:7.)

The death of the separate self is not a game

Ego death is not a game. The part of the human animal that is vicious pride, that is the tenacious desire to have and to be separate and unique in the face of God, is what "ego" is. Ego is the irrepressible, ever defiant, always-knowing-better hubris that never wants to submit unless there is something to be gained for itself. That ego is the one and only enemy of Enlightenment,

of True Love in this world of multiplicity and mystery in which we all find ourselves. (Andrew Cohen, IDGP, 14.)

Die to the separate self

As long as the slightest trace of ego remains, one lives within the jurisdiction of the Adyashakti [primal power]. One is under Her sway. One cannot go beyond Her. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 460.)

Whatever is within the domain of maya is unreal. Give it up. Destroy the prison-house of name and form and rush out of it with the strength of a lion. Dive deep in search of the Self and realize It through samadhi. You will find the world of name and form vanishing into void, and the puny ego dissolving in Brahman-Consciousness. (Totapuri in GSR, 28.)

Long life it is to die and not perish. (Lao Tzu, WOL, 86.)

Strike down my assumed "I" and destroy by Your death¹ my "I," so that I² no longer live, since in myself I only sin. Kill the evil beast full of false cunning and self-desire, and redeem the poor soul from its heavy bondage. (Jacob Boehme in WTC, 35.)

¹ God-realization.

² My false "I" or ego.

I killed Yogananda long ago. No one dwells in this temple now but God. (Paramahansa Yogananda in PATH, 219.)

In the imperfect "I" the ego is present, while the realisation "I am the Self Atma" is of the perfected "I". (Ananadamayi Ma, AHLW, n.p.)

It is said that the disciple's task is to efface the ego and become a blank. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

It is the disciple's duty to polish away the I-ness. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

Freedom and love arise when you die into the unknown mystery of being. (<http://charityfocus.org/insp/clubs/tow/?pg=26#page315>, delivered 12 January 2004, downloaded 16 May 2004.)

To cast away the chain of ego and go back to free self, immortal spiritual being is the soul's return to its own eternal divinity. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 654.)

We must pursue [egoism] into every covert and disguise and drag it out and slay it; for its disguises are endless and it will cling to every shred of possible self-concealment. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 316.)

Is the path to Enlightenment for everyone? Of course not. Who except only the most serious among us would venture so far beyond the known! Who would dare to venture *that* far beyond the status quo of the materialistic, self-aggrandizing world of difference that is samsara? No, the path of Enlightenment is not for the faint-hearted, nor for any except those who have come to the point in their own evolution where they have no doubt that they want to be free from the chains of ego *in this very life*, and who are willing to pay the price. What is the price? Ego death. (Andrew Cohen, IDGP, 13.)

All religions postulate the three fundamentals, the world, the soul, and God, but it is only the one Reality that manifests Itself as these three. One can say, 'The three are really three' only so long as the ego lasts. Therefore, to inhere in one's own Being, where the 'I', or ego, is dead, is the perfect State. (Ramana Maharshi, FVR, verse 2.)

Question: Which of the two is better - to break down the door and enter, or, having broken down the ego, to remain lying in the doorway?

Answer: In the first instance the ego still has confidence in its own power and capacity, while in the second it is a case of self-surrender - and therefore He is sure to let you see the Light Eternal through the open door. (Ananadamayi Ma in AHLW, n.p.)

Self is the Lord of self, who else could be the lord? With self well-subdued, a man finds a lord as few can find. (The Buddha, TCB, 60.)

Getsuan said to his students: "Keichu, the first wheel-maker of China, made two wheels of fifty spokes each. Now, suppose you removed the nave

uniting the spokes.¹ What would become of the wheel?² And had Keichu done this, could he be called the master wheel-maker?"³ (Paul Reps, ZFZB, 96.)

¹ The ego, self, or mind.

² The structure of craving, aversion, and ignorance.

³ The question cannot be answered from within a mundane frame of reference. If one considers wheel-makers, had Keichu done this, he would destroy the wheel and so would be no wheel-maker at all. As a Zen master, if Keichu destroyed the wheel of birth and death, then he would be *the* master wheel-maker, or a Buddha

Seek in the heart the source of evil¹ and expunge it. ... Only the strong can kill it out. The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. ... He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart. And then the heart will bleed, and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved. This ordeal must be endured; it may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life; it may not until the last. (Mabel Collins, LOP, 7-8.)

¹ The ego or personal self.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. (St. Paul in Romans 6:7.)

Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (St. Paul in II Corinthians 4:17.)

I protest, by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (St. Paul in II Corinthians 15:31.)

I remember ... I had been with my teacher for two weeks, and we were sitting quietly in his room when I said out loud, "I'm ready to die but I don't know how." This was a shock to me – I jumped. It just came out by itself. I realized I hadn't been thinking about it. I said again, "I'm ready to die but I don't know how." This was a real declaration of death. It meant that I was ready to give up this life for another. ... I was scared at the time, but it didn't stop me. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, xi.)

When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation. ... The self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment; its surrender to that which transcends it is its liberation from bond and limits and its perfect freedom. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 53.)

In truth, nothing is broken and nothing needs to be fixed. If we could dwell in this awareness, all our wounds would heal by themselves. Miracles would happen, because the ego structure blocking the miracle would dissolve. (Paul Ferrini, SOH, 18.)

A man is able to see God as soon as he gets rid of ego and other limitations. He sees God as soon as he is free of such feelings as "I am a scholar," "I am the son of such and such a person," "I am wealthy," "I am honourable," and so forth. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 363.)

Nowadays I do not find my 'I'; I see that it is God alone who resides in this sheath. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 846.)

It is only when the experiencer ceases that there is the creative movement of the real. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 232.)

When shall I be free? When 'I' shall cease to be. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 900.)

According to the Vedanta one has to know the real nature of one's own Self. But such knowledge is impossible without the renunciation of the ego. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 387.)

Now is all suffering ended; he who saw is seen no more. (The Buddha, BPM, 178.)

Reality cannot be sought; it is when the seeker is not. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 167.)

When the ego disappears in samadhi one realizes Brahman as one's own inner consciousness. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 387.)

Maya is nothing but the egotism of the embodied soul. This egotism has covered everything like a veil. 'All troubles come to an end when the ego dies.' ... This maya, that is to say, the ego, is like a cloud. The sun cannot be seen on account of a thin patch of cloud; when that disappears one sees the sun. If by the grace of the guru one's ego vanishes, then one sees God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 168-9.)

To get liberated, "I" should go. (Mata Amritanandamayi, AC1, 31.)

You will be all when you make nothing of yourself. (Ibn Arabi, KK, 7.)

The man of knowledge ... is lost and buried in nothingness. (Ibn Arabi, KK, 35.)

The man who comes to this station is now in complete annihilation. Completely and simply he has reached non-existence. ... After this one would not speak of him as having state or station, he has here neither observation nor gnosis, and the explanation or interpretation of these is not possible because this place is a station of complete non-existence. Even the word station is used here only to explain because the person here knows neither station nor sign. (Ibn Arabi, KK, 7.)

A man attains [God-Realization] as soon as his mind is annihilated. With the annihilation of the mind dies the ego, which says "I," "I." (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 776.)

Non-existence ... is death. But it is a death in accordance with the hadith, "Die before dying." The Perfect Man, when he does this, dies with a death which is consequent to and leaning on a will and he has thrown himself into the ocean of He,¹ without having feet or head or having any trace of exterior or interior being in him. There he is drowned, he is annihilated, and name or sign of him no more remains, and he becomes He. Because the drop has fallen into the ocean and become the ocean. (Ibn Arabi in KK, 37.)

¹ The Father.

Is it an easy thing to obtain the Knowledge of Brahman? It is not possible unless the mind is annihilated. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 776.)

Reaching the seventh plane, the mind is annihilated; man goes into samadhi.
What he feels then cannot be described in words. (Paramahansa
Ramakrishna, GSR, 170.)

When there is no longer any sense of ego, that is perfect knowledge.
(Shankara, CJD, 104.)

Know you are one,
Pure awareness.
With the fire of this conviction,
Burn down the forest of ignorance.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 2-3.)

You are one and the same.
You cannot change or die.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 39.)

I am always
Without I.

So where is the one
Who acts or enjoys?
(Ashtavakra, HA, 75.)

No "I,"
No "mine."

He knows there is nothing.

His mind has stopped working!

It has simply melted away ...

And with it,
Dreams and delusions and dullness.

And for what he has become,
There is no name.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 49.)

Die, die, die in this love.
If you die in this love, your soul will be renewed.

Die, die, don't fear the death of that which is known.
If you die to the temporal, you will become timeless.

Die, die, cut off those chains that hold you prisoner to the world of attachment.

Die, die, die to the deathless and you will be eternal.

Die, die, come out of this cloud.
When you leave the cloud, you will be the effulgent moon.

Die, die, die to the din and the noise of mundane concerns.
In the silence of love you will find the spark of life. (Rumi's poem from Deepak [Chopra] and Friends, *A Gift of Love*. Libra Music.)

Dualistic vision does not arise in the still mind

The mind and the world are opposites, and vision arises where they meet.
When your mind doesn't stir inside, the world doesn't arise outside.
(Bodhidharma, *ZTB*, 27.)

When the mind, which is the cause of all cognitions and of all actions, becomes quiescent, the world will disappear. (Sri Ramana Maharshi, *WHO*, 12.)

When there is awareness of the world there is no awareness of the Self.
When there is awareness of the Self, awareness of the world is not there either. (Mata Amritanandamayi, *AC*, 1, 39)

Pure mind sees God and ordinary mind does not function. (Sri Ramakrishna, *GSR*, 687.)

That State is agreeable to all, wherein, having given up the objective outlook, one knows one's Self and loses all notions either of unity or duality,

of oneself and the ego. (Ramana Maharshi, FVR, verse 3.)

The cosmic intelligence in which the universe, as it were, ceases to be, is the Lord. In him the subject-object relationship appears to have ceased, as such. He is the void in which the universe appears to exist. In him even cosmic consciousness stands still like a mountain. ...

Only when the creation is known to be utterly non-existent is the Lord realized. (Vasistha, CYV, 43-4.)

Advance, find an eye [i.e., the Third Eye].

Remedy by it.

And now, look from Him to Him. (Ibn Arabi, KK, 33.)

This very day you shall behold the whole universe with all things animate and inert made one within this body of mine. And whatever else you desire to see, that shall you see also.

But you cannot see me thus with those human eyes. Therefore, I give you divine sight. Behold -- this is my yoga power. (Sri Krishna, BG, 91.)

Be free of duality; see but One in all

He is free of duality.

... Finding freedom in this life,
The seeker takes nothing to heart,
Neither duty nor desire.

He has nothing to do
But to live out his life.
(Ashtavakra, HA, 52.)

Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray.
(Kabir, PP, 10.)

Who sees the separate
Lives of all creatures
United in Brahman

Brought forth from Brahman,
Himself finds Brahman.
(Sri Krishna, BG, 105.)

Nothing arises in me.
In whom nothing is single,
Nothing is double.

Nothing is,
Nothing is not.
(Ashtavakra, HA, xxiv.)

When you're deluded, this shore exists. When you wake up, it doesn't exist. Mortals stay on this shore. Those who discover the greatest of all vehicles stay on neither this shore nor the other shore. They're able to leave both shores. Those who see the other shore as different from this shore don't understand zen. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 25.)

Since the world points up beauty as such,
There is ugliness too.
If goodness is taken as goodness,
Wickedness enters as well. (Lao Tzu, TTC, 54.)

It is a venerable¹ way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.

For first it must war against its own self, and after much strife and dissention, it must be overcome of one part; for the contention is of one against two,² while it flies away, and they strive to hold and detain it.

But the victory of both is not like, for the one hasteth to that which is God, but the other is a neighbour to the things that are Evil; and that which is Good desireth to be set at liberty, but the things that are Evil love Bondage and Slavery.

And if the two parts be overcome, they become quiet, and are content to accept of it as their *Ruler*; but if the one be overcome of the two, it is by them led and carried to be punished by its being and continuance here.³

This is, O Son, the Guide in the way that leads thither; for thou must first forsake the Body before thy end, and get the victory in this contention and strifeful life, and when thou hast overcome, return.⁴ (Hermes, DPH, 2.)

¹ Already "venerable" in the days of Hermes, some four thousand years ago.

² Hermes is referring to the problem of duality here. The one is overshadowed by the rise of the two. As Kabir said: "Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray." (Kabir, PP, 10.)

³ If unitive consciousness is overcome by dualistic consciousness, the individual must be reborn until unitive consciousness is restored.

⁴ You must overcome the demands and desires of the body while still physically alive and reach enlightenment; only then can you safely turn your attention to the world.

The experiencing of the integral, unitary process¹ frees the mind from its dualism. Thus the total process of the mind, the open as well as the hidden, is experienced and understood -- not piece by piece, activity by activity, but in its entirety. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 69.)

¹ The Father.

Abide as That which does not, when scrutinized, show any duality..., That in which, when the mind is absorbed in It, there is no fear of duality at all. (HRG ed. Da Free John, 20.)

All the gunas must be transcended

Sattwa must be transcended as well as Rajas and Tamas, the golden chain must be broken no less than the leaden fetters and the bond-ornaments of a mixed alloy. The Gita prescribes to this end a new method of self-discipline. It is to stand back in oneself from the action of the modes and observe this unsteady flux as the Witness seated above the surge of the forces of Nature. He is the one who watches but is impartial and indifferent, aloof from them on their own level and in his native posture high above them. As they rise and fall in their waves, the Witness looks, observes, but neither accepts nor for the moment interferes with their course. First there must be the freedom of the impersonal Witness; afterwards there can be the control of the Master, the Ishwara.

... The detached Witness ... perceives the ego to be nothing better than a device and ... perceiving it, he is delivered from the illusion of the lower egotistic Nature. ... Thus convinced and conscious of the essential vice of the ego-sense in all our personal action, he seeks no longer to find a means of self-correction and self-liberation in the rajasic or sattwic ego but looks above, beyond the instruments and the workings of Nature, to the Master of works alone and his supreme Shakti, the supreme Prakriti. There alone all the being is pure and free and the rule of a divine Truth possible.

... Observing and unmoved by the grief and desire of the lower members, smiling at their joys and their strainings, ... uncompelled and unattached to the mind's illuminations and its relief and sense of ease or of power in the return of light and gladness, it throws itself into none of these things, but waits unmoved for the intimations of a higher Will and the intuitions of a greater luminous knowledge. Thus doing always, it becomes eventually free even in its dynamic parts from the strife of the three modes and their insufficient values and imprisoning limits.

[Finally] ... the intelligence, the thinking, understanding and reflective mind, renounces its sattwic limitations and opens to an essential light and peace. An infinite knowledge offers to us its splendid ranges, a knowledge not made up of mental constructions, not bound by opinion and idea or dependent on a stumbling uncertain logic and the petty support of the senses, but self-sure, authentic, all-penetrating, all-comprehending, a boundless bliss and peace.... A higher force, bliss and knowledge from a source beyond mind and life and body seize on them to remould in a diviner image. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 226-8.)

When ego and desire are destroyed, what remains cannot be described

Not until the "I" is perfect - in other words, not unless "Aham Brahmasmi" I am the Supreme Being has been realised - will the roots of the ego be destroyed. (Ananadamayi Ma, AHLW, n.p.)

When the 'I' disappears, what *is* remains. That cannot be described in words. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 915.)

Renunciation is renunciation of the ego, of selfishness -- not of life. (UPAN, 26.)

Attachment and desire must be utterly cast out; there is nothing in the world to which we must be attached, not wealth nor poverty, nor joy nor suffering, nor life nor death, nor greatness nor littleness, nor vice nor virtue, nor friend, nor wife, nor children, nor country, nor our work and mission, nor heaven nor earth, nor all that is within them or beyond them. And this does not mean that there is nothing at all that we shall love, nothing in which we shall take delight; for attachment is egoism in love and not love itself, desire is limitation and insecurity in a hunger for pleasure and satisfaction and not the seeking after the divine delight in things. A universal love we must have, calm and eternally intense beyond the brief vehemence of the most violent passion; a delight in things rooted in a delight in God that does not adhere to their forms but to that which they conceal in themselves and that embraces the universe without being caught in its meshes. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 314-5.)

Those who have renounced ego and desire will reap no fruit at all, either in this world or in the next. (Sri Krishna, BG, 121.)

Longing for liberation is the will to be free from the fetters forged by ignorance -- beginning with the ego-sense and so on, down to the physical body itself -- through the realization of one's true nature. (Shankara, CJD, 36.)

It [is] an ineffable "That" of which nothing can be said; for the universe and all that is does not exist in That. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 350.)

Nobody knows what remains after the 'I' disappears. Nobody can express it in words. That which is remains. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 758.)

I saw everything passing from form to formlessness. I want to tell you the things I saw, but I cannot. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 933.)

I had many mystic experiences, but I cannot reveal their contents. Under the bel-tree I had many flaming visions. There I practised the various sadhanas prescribed in the Tantras.

... M. sat motionless as a picture on canvas, hearing about these unique visions of the Master. The other devotees were also spellbound. There was a dead silence in the room. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 814.)

There are two selves, the apparent self and the real Self. Of these it is the real Self, and he alone, who must be felt as truly existing. To the man who has felt him as truly existing he reveals his innermost nature. ... These are the highest truths taught in the scriptures. (UPAN, 24.)

Enlightenment is true innocence. If there is true innocence it means that the ego will not be a big obstruction to Liberation. We are born with this innocence and it is this very innocence in us that experiences the pain of separation.

The awakening of Self-recognition is when this innocence recognizes itself as the Self and ego is recognized as non-Self. Under the weight of this Self-discovery the ego is seen as unreal. This is when the whole universe turns upside down and this is when all is revealed to be very different than it had seemed. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 37.)

Seeing the One Self is a shock

The true or real fact of emptiness, when it is recognized with rare and unusual depth, requires a very rare degree of intention to be truly free in this life in order to withstand the shock of what is being recognized and being seen. ("The True Fact of Emptiness," WIE, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1995, on WIEWS, 6 February 2000.)

High intentionality is needed to fuse with the One Self

You have to be deadly serious about being deadly serious. When you are deadly serious about being deadly serious, you will soon find that the ego never sought Enlightenment. You will discover that the ego could never ever want to be Enlightened. Realize that. Realize that the ego never wanted anything to do with it.

When you realize that it is not the ego that seeks Enlightenment you will stumble upon the Heart and find what you have been looking for all along. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 32.)

I'd say that the foundation of my teaching is the cultivation of the intention for liberation to become unconditional. (Andrew Cohen, "Empty Cognizance with a Core of Knowing," WIE, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1995, on WIEWS, 6 February 2000.)

What ultimately destroys ignorance? An unconditional relationship to the attainment of perfect Liberation in this life, supported by an unwillingness to compromise for that. (Andrew Cohen, FHNH, 1.)

I've noticed that for most human beings, getting to that point where the relationship with liberation is unconditional, and finally there's no relationship with it at all, is a very rare thing. And this is why most people need an intention in order to generate a great momentum towards one's liberation. (Andrew Cohen, "Empty Cognizance with a Core of Knowing," WIE, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 1995, on WIEWS, 6 February 2000.)

The first tenet [of my teaching], *Clarity of Intention*, states that if we want to be free, then we have to cultivate the *intention* to be free to such a degree that it will always be more powerful than *any other desire*. The first tenet tells us that if we want to succeed in liberating ourselves from fear, ignorance and self-deception, then that desire for Liberation must always be stronger than any interest in wealth or worldly fame, more powerful than even our love for our children, our husband or our wife. Simply put, the first tenet says that our desire for spiritual freedom must become *the most important thing in our lives*. Indeed, for success to be a realistic possibility, the first tenet tells us that our desire for Liberation has to be cultivated to such a degree that it *alone* becomes that which determines the choices that we make and the actions that we take.

Of course, very few of us want to be free *that* much, because it demands such unusual courage. You see, the world we live in insists that we all conform. But the individual who wants to be free more than anything else must be unwilling to conform. They must be ready to stand alone in that which they have recognized is most important.

If we sincerely want to become a liberated person, then we have to be willing to be independent in a world where few truly think for themselves. (Andrew Cohen, WAI, 15-6.)

Wanting to Realize – that’s the crux, the key issue. Truly wanting that more than anything else and knowing you want it more than anything else. Grace cannot function uninhibitedly unless in your heart of hearts, Realization is all that you want. If you are serious, it’s got to be choiceless. (Andrew Cohen, EIS, 19.)

If you are serious about becoming free in this life, you have to be willing to take a stand that is immovable.

If you are deadly serious about liberating yourself from fear and ignorance, you have to be willing to take an absolute stand in relationship to thought, to feeling and to time. If you want to be free, you have to be strong, clear and above all doubtless about what is important. Indeed, if you are sincere you have to allow the desire for Liberation to be more important than anything else.

Given the right environment and the right company it's not difficult to taste, even if only briefly, peace, joy and bliss, to know what it's like to be free from the tyranny of the mind. In that kind of experience it's possible to discover how extraordinary life can be. But the fact is, most who do taste this kind of experience fall from it soon after. They may stumble upon it once again, but most often it slips away as it did before. This is why it's so important to take an absolute stand if you want to be free in this life. (Andrew Cohen, FHNH, 9-10.)

Ego death is not a game. The part of the human animal that is vicious pride, that is the tenacious desire to have and to be separate and unique in the face of God, is what "ego" is. Ego is the irrepressible, ever defiant, always-knowing-better hubris that never wants to submit unless there is something to be gained for itself. That ego is the one and only enemy of Enlightenment, of True Love in this world of multiplicity and mystery in which we all find ourselves. (Andrew Cohen, IDGP, 14.)

Open your mind and receive the One Self

If but once, only,
A man will open
His mind to receive you
Truly that man is free forever.
(Shankara, CJD, i.)

⌘ Chapter 5. Fusion or Absorption ⌘

What liberation is

A free heart is ... a heart delivered from the gusts and storms of the affections and the passions; the assailing touch of grief, wrath, hatred, fear, inequality of love, trouble of joy, pain of sorrow fall away from the equal heart, and leave it a thing large, calm, equal, luminous, divine. These things are not incumbent on the essential nature of our being, but the creations of the present make of our outward active mental and vital nature and its transactions with its surroundings. The ego-sense which induces us to act as separate beings who make their isolated claim and experiences the test-of-values of the universe, is responsible for these aberrations. When we live in unity with the Divine in ourselves and the spirit of the universe, these imperfections fall away from us and disappear in the calm and equal strength and delight of the inner spiritual existence. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 676-7.)

At the seventh plane, all forms and separate selves merge in the formless, the One Self

[When the kundalini reaches the seventh plane and Shakti unites with Shiva] the individual soul¹ and the Supreme Soul² become one. The aspirant goes into samadhi. His consciousness of the body disappears. He loses the knowledge of the outer world. He does not see the manifold any more.³ His reasoning comes to a stop. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 245.)

¹ The Child.

² The Father.

³ The manifold, the outer world, body-consciousness are ways of saying "the Mother's domain" or nature.

In samadhi man becomes one with God. Then he can have no egotism. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 767.)

It is said in the Vedas that a man experiences samadhi when his mind ascends to the seventh plane. The ego can disappear only when one goes into samadhi. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 169.)

In the top of the head is the seventh plane. When the mind rises there, one goes into samadhi.¹ Then the Brahmajnani² directly perceives Brahman.³ But in that state his body does not last many days. He remains unconscious of the outer world. If milk is poured into his mouth, it runs out. Dwelling on this plane of consciousness, he gives up his body in twenty-one days. That is the condition of the Brahmajnani. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 151.)

¹ Nirvikalpa samadhi, a trance state in which the mind disappears.

² Knower of God; a sage.

³ God the Father.

When the mind reaches the seventh plane, then the ego vanishes completely and the man goes into samadhi. ... What happens when the mind reaches the seventh plane cannot be described. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 170.)

The king lives beyond the seven gates. At each gate sits a man endowed with great power and glory. At each gate the visitor asks, 'Is this the king?' The gate-keeper answers, 'No. Not this, not this.' The visitor passes through the seventh gate and becomes overpowered with joy. He is speechless. This time he doesn't have to ask, 'Is this the king?' The mere sight of him removes all doubts. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 218.)

[When] the aspirant goes into samadhi..., for him, the forms or attributes of God disappear altogether. Then he does not feel God to be a Person. Then he cannot describe in words what God is. And who will describe it? He who is to describe does not exist at all; he no longer finds his 'I'. To such a person Brahman is attributeless. In that state God is experienced¹ only as Consciousness, by man's innermost consciousness. He cannot be comprehended by the mind and intelligence. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 859.)

¹ Realized.

And last of all is the seventh plane, which, according to Tantra, is the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus. When the Kundalini arrives there, the aspirant goes into samadhi. In that lotus dwells Satchidananda Siva, the Absolute. There Kundalini, the awakened Power, unites with Siva. This is known as the union of Siva and Sakti. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 499.)

Awareness of the One Self causes awakening, unity, absorption, or fusion

It was about six weeks before I left Madura for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. I was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house ... [and] I just felt "I am going to die." ... The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inward and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: "Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies." ... But with the death of this body, am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the "I" within me, apart from it.

So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit." All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process. "I" was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that "I". From that moment onwards the "I" or Self focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on. Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the "I" continued. (Ramana Maharshi in Osborne, ed. CWRM, 1979 iii.)

Such an experience of Identity does not always, or even normally, result in Liberation. It comes to a seeker but the inherent tendencies of the ego cloud it over again. ... The miracle was that in the Maharshi's case there was no clouding over, no relapse into ignorance: he remained thenceforward in constant awareness of identity with the One Self. (Osborne in CWRM, iii.)

There follows a third kind of experience, namely, that we feel ourselves to be one with God, for by means of our transformation in God we feel ourselves to be swallowed up in the groundless abyss of our eternal blessedness, in which we can never discover any difference between ourselves and God. This is the highest of all our experiences and can be experienced in no other way than by our being immersed in love. (John Ruusbroec in JR, 176.)

As [the] rivers, when they are united with the sea, do not know whether they are this or that river, likewise all ... creatures..., when they have come back from Brahman, know not whence they came. (UPAN, 69.)

The seer knows peace...
He lives without craving:
Free from ego, free from pride.

This is the state of enlightenment in Brahman:
A man does not fall back from it
Into delusion.
Even at the moment of death
He is alive in that enlightenment:
Brahman and he are one.
(Sri Krishna in BG, 43-4.)

The separate self melts or fuses in the One Self

[A] man becomes silent when [samadhi] is attained. Then the 'I', which may be likened to a salt doll, melts in the Ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and becomes one with It. Not the slightest trace of distinction is left. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 148.)

Once a salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean. No sooner did it enter the water than it melted. Now who could tell how deep the ocean was? That which could have told about its depth had melted.

Once a boat enters the 'black waters' of the ocean, it does not return. Nobody knows what happens to the boat after that. Therefore the boat cannot give us any information about the ocean. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 170.)

Awakening, unity, and fusion is free of and beyond all dualisms

You see the same room whether you look at it from one side or from the middle of the room. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 908.)

When everything in this world, including the body, becomes unreal and void like space, then truly one knows [God]. Then there is no longer any parade of dualities for him. (Dattatreya, AG, 20.)

When the Ten Thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been. (Sen T'sen, PP, 14.)

By discriminating you will realize that what you call "I" is really nothing but Atman. Reason it out. Are you the body or the flesh or something else? At the end you will know that you are none of these. You are free from attributes. Then you will realize that you have never been the doer of any action, that you have been free from virtue and faults alike, that you are beyond righteousness and unrighteousness. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 208.)

When you're deluded, this shore exists. When you wake up, it doesn't exist. Mortals stay on this shore. Those who discover the greatest of all vehicles stay on neither this shore nor the other shore. They're able to leave both shores. Those who see the other shore as different from this shore don't understand zen. (Bodhidharma, ZTB, 25.)

Since the world points up beauty as such,
There is ugliness too.
If goodness is taken as goodness,
Wickedness enters as well. (Lao Tzu, TTC, 54.)

The one does not come into being until the many cease. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 37.)

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.¹ (Jesus in Matthew 12:25.)

¹ The individual is the kingdom. Individuals who apprehend duality (are divided against themselves) must remain mortal, destined to die (brought to desolation); they will not see, or stand in the presence of God, as long as they perceive duality (divided house shall not stand). The next passage is again concerned with the perception of duality.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single,¹ thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.² (Jesus in Matthew 6:22-3.)

¹ Non-dual.

² Bringing this out of the Biblical code, a rough translation might be: As long as you see with the eye of duality, you live in darkness. When you see with the unitive eye, the eye of oneness, the spiritual eye, then you shall be enlightened.

The one Moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water, And all the moons in the water are embraced within the one Moon. (Yung-chia Ta-shih, PP, 8.)

The world consists of the illusory duality of knowledge and ignorance. ... But Brahman is unattached to these. Good and evil apply to the jiva, the individual soul, as do righteousness and unrighteousness, but Brahman is not at all affected by them. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 152.)

Brahman is beyond vidya and avidya, knowledge and ignorance. It is beyond maya, the illusion of duality. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR (Abridged), 151.)

If a thorn gets into your foot, a second thorn is needed to take it out. You have to procure the thorn of knowledge to remove the thorn of ignorance; then you must set aside both knowledge and ignorance. God is beyond both knowledge and ignorance. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 899.)

It is a venerable¹ way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.

For first it must war against its own self, and after much strife and dissention, it must be overcome of one part; for the contention is of one against two,² while it flies away, and they strive to hold and detain it.

But the victory of both is not like, for the one hasteth to that which is God, but the other is a neighbour to the things that are Evil; and that which is Good desireth to be set at liberty, but the things that are Evil love Bondage and Slavery.

And if the two parts be overcome, they become quiet, and are content to accept of it as their *Ruler*; but if the one be overcome of the two, it is by them led and carried to be punished by its being and continuance here.³

This is, O Son, the Guide in the way that leads thither; for thou must first forsake the Body before thy end, and get the victory in this contention and strifeful life, and when thou hast overcome, return.⁴ (Hermes, DPH, 2.)

¹ Already "venerable" in the days of Hermes, some four thousand years ago.

² Hermes is referring to the problem of duality here. The one is overshadowed by the rise of the two. As Kabir said: "Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray." (Kabir, PP, 10.)

³ If unitive consciousness is overcome by dualistic consciousness, the individual must be reborn until unitive consciousness is restored.

⁴ You must overcome the demands and desires of the body while still physically alive and reach enlightenment; only then can you safely turn your attention to the world.

The One Self is not timebound and has no continuity

Reality has no continuity; it is from moment to moment, ever new, ever fresh. What has continuity can never be creative.¹ (Krishnamurti, COL1, 45.)

¹ Creating happens in the moment; it is distinguished from repeating. It alone is the experience of the new, the unknown.

What *is* can be understood only with the fading of tomorrow. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 52.)

Knowledge of the One Self brings about transformation in the immediate present

The understanding of what *is* brings about transformation in the immediate present. It is this transformation that is of supreme importance. (Krishnamurti, COL1, 52.)

The individual self, deluded by forgetfulness of his identity with the divine Self, bewildered by his ego, grieves and is sad. But when he recognizes his

worshipful lord as his own true Self, and beholds his glory, he grieves no more. (UPAN, 47.)

Fusion takes place in the still mind

As long as there is an actor, there will be division. The fusion takes place only when the mind is utterly still without trying to be still. There is this stillness, not when the thinker comes to an end, but only when thought itself has come to an end. (Krishnamurti, COL2, 67.)

This stillness of awareness is all there is. (<http://www.members.shaw.ca/adyashanti/>, downloaded 16 May 2004.)

When we are raised up to and drawn into this highest of all our experiences, all our powers stand empty and idle in a state of essential enjoyment. They are not, however, [permanently] annihilated, for in that case we should lose our creaturely status. As long as with open eyes and a spirit that is so inclined -- but without rational reflection -- we stand empty and idle, we can contemplate and enjoy. (John Ruusbroec, JR, 176.)

Fusion takes place in the purified mind

If the lower instruments have been purified of egoistic desire, wish, will, egoistic passion, egoistic emotion and the Buddhi itself of egoist idea and preference, then the knowledge of the spiritual truth of oneness can find a firm foundation. (Sri Aurobindo, SOY, 650.)

People are in different states of readiness and readiness for Enlightenment is true innocence. If there is true innocence it means that the ego will not be a big obstruction to Liberation. We are born with this innocence and it is this very innocence in us that experiences the pain of separation.

False identification of the separate self and One Self is dispelled only by perfect knowledge

This false identification can be dispelled only by perfect knowledge. Perfect knowledge, according to the revealed scriptures, is the realization of the Atman as one with Brahman. (Shankara, CJD, 65.)

When the separate self vanishes, we remain in the One Self

When the I-consciousness of the Master vanished altogether, he remained in oneness with the 'unqualified being of the Divine Mother' beyond the limits of this all-pervading I. And with the vanishing of this 'individual I' vanished also the last vestige of the infinite waves of ideas emerging from that 'immense 'I', which we call the universe. (Swami Saradananda, SRGM, 443.)

The One Self is beyond description

No one can say with finality that God is only 'this' and nothing else. He is formless, and again He has forms. For the bhakta He assumes forms. But He is formless for the jnani, that is, for him who looks on the world as a mere dream. The bhakta feels that he is one entity and the world another. Therefore God reveals Himself to him as a Person. But the jnani -- the Vedantist, for instance -- always reasons, applying the process 'Not this, not this'. Through his discrimination he realizes, by his inner perception, that the ego¹ and the universe are both illusory, like a dream. Then the jnani realizes Brahman in his own consciousness. He cannot describe what Brahman is. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 148.)

¹ Sense of a separate self.

⌘ Chapter 6. After Fusion or Absorption ⌘

The state of mind of the liberated is sattwa

The mind, in a deep sense of liberation, tends to get very quiet. It doesn't have its job anymore. It has its usefulness, but it doesn't have its full-time occupation of sustaining an intricately fabricated house of cards. (<http://www.members.shaw.ca/adyashanti/>, downloaded 16 May 2004.)

The state of mind of the liberated ones who are still living and who see both the supreme truth and the relative appearance, is known as satva (transparency). It is improper to call it the mind: it is really satva. These knowers of truth are mindless and are in a state of perfect equilibrium; they live their life here playfully. They behold the inner light all the time, even though they seem to be engaged in diverse actions. Concepts of duality, unity or such others do not arise in them, for there are no tendencies in their heart. The very seed of ignorance is burnt in the state of satva and it does not again rise to delusion. (Venkatesananda, CYV, 260-1.)

The mind of the knower of truth is no-mind: it is pure satva. After living with such no-mind for some time, there arises the state known as turiya-atita (the state beyond the transcendental, or the turiya, state).¹ (Venkatesananda, CYV,, 306.)

¹ Turiya-atita is vijñana (a state superior to spiritual union), and probably the knowledge of No-Self. See Matrix 1, Chapter 10.

Their mind has fully entered the state of satva or divinity and was therefore utterly free from delusion, from egoistic notion ('I do this') and from the desire for achievement -- though they did not reject such achievement or the rewards for their actions. They did not indulge in vain exultation when they defeated their enemies, nor did they give way to despair and grief when they were defeated. They were engaged in natural activities, allowing all actions to proceed from them non-volitionally. (Venkatesananda, CYV, 275.)

Such a [sattwic] mind ... is untouched by sins like greed and delusion, even under the worst provocation. Virtues like delight (in the prosperity of others) do not leave the person whose ego-sense has been dissolved. The knots of

mental conditioning and tendencies are cut asunder. Anger is greatly attenuated and the delusion becomes ineffective. Desire becomes powerless. Greed flees. The senses function on an even keel, neither getting excited nor depressed. Even if pleasure and pain are reflected on his face, they do not agitate the mind, which regards them all as insignificant. The heart rests in equanimity. (Venkatesananda, CYV, 410-11.)

Separate-self consciousness continues falling away

[During my] two-year journey ... I experienced the falling way of everything I can call a self.¹ It was a journey through an unknown passageway that led to a life so new and different that, despite forty years of varied contemplative experiences, I never suspected its existence. (Bernadette Roberts, ENS, 9.)

¹ Atman-Brahman.

Within the traditional framework, the Christian notion of loss-of-self is generally regarded as a transformation of the ego or lower self into the true or higher self as it approaches union with God; throughout this journey, however, the self retains its individual uniqueness and never loses its ontological sense of personal selfhood. (Roberts, ENS, 9-10.)

[But] I came upon a permanent state in which there was no self, not even a higher self, a true self, or anything that could be called a self. Clearly, I had fallen outside my own, as well as the traditional, frame of reference when I came upon a path that seemed to begin where the writers on the contemplative life had left off. (Roberts, ENS, 10.)

Since I knew that this experience was not articulated in our contemplative literature, I went to the library to see if it could be found in the Eastern religions. ... [In Hinduism] the final state is equivalent to the Christian experience of oneness or transforming union.¹ If a Hindu had what I call the no-self experience, it would be the sudden, unexpected disappearance of Atman-Brahman, the divine Self in the "cave of the heart," and the disappearance of the cave as well. It would be the ending of God-consciousness, or transcendental consciousness -- that seemingly bottomless experience of "being," "consciousness," and "bliss"² that articulates the state of oneness. To regard this ending as the falling away of the ego is a grave error; ego must fall away before the state of oneness can be realized. The no-

self experience is the falling away of this previously realized transcendent state.

Initially, when I looked into Buddhism, I did not find the experience of no-self there either; yet I intuited that it had to be there. The falling away of the ego is common to both Hinduism and Buddhism. Therefore, it would not account for the fact that Buddhism became a separate religion, nor would it account for the Buddhists' insistence on no eternal Self - be it divine, individual, or the two in one. I felt that the key difference between these two religions was the no-self experience, the falling away of the true Self, Atman-Brahman.

Unfortunately what most Buddhist authors define as the no-self experience is actually the no-ego experience. The cessation of clinging, desire, the passions, etc., and the ensuing state of imperturbable peace and joy articulates the egoless state of oneness; it does not, however, articulate the no-self experience or the dimension beyond. (Bernadette Roberts, PNS2, 136-7.)

¹ Nirvikalpa samadhi or Brahmajhana.

² Satchidananda = being, consciousness, and bliss.

Four years later, however, I came across two lines attributed to Buddha describing his enlightenment experience. Referring to self¹ as a house, he said, "All the rafters are broken now, the ridgepole is destroyed." And there it was -- the disappearance of the center, the ridgepole; without it, there can be no house, no self. When I read these lines, it was as if an arrow launched at the beginning of time had suddenly hit a bull's-eye. It was a remarkable find. These lines are not a piece of philosophy, but an experiential account, and without the experiential account we really have nothing to go on. In the same verse he says, "Again a house thou shalt not build," clearly distinguishing this experience from the falling away of the ego-center, after which a new, transformed self is built around a "true center," a sturdy, balanced ridgepole. (Bernadette Roberts, PNS2, 137.)

¹ Atman-Brahman.

It is not good for ordinary people to say, 'I am He.' The waves belong to the water. Does the water belong to the waves? (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 248.)

We cannot get rid of the separate self completely

You may reason a thousand times, but you cannot get rid of the ego. The ego is like a pitcher, and Brahman like the ocean -- an infinite expanse of water on all sides. The pitcher is set in the ocean. The water is both inside and out; the water is everywhere; yet the pitcher remains. ... As long as the ego remains, 'you' and 'I' remain. ... The ego cannot be got rid of; so let the rascal remain as the servant of God, the devotee of God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 708.)

The "I" cannot be effaced altogether. You may explain it away through reasoning, but the next moment it reappears, nobody knows from where. It is like a goat that bleats faintly and jerks its legs even after its head has been cut off. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 1019.)

You may discriminate, saying that the ego is nothing at all; but still it comes, nobody knows from where. A goat's legs jerk for a few moments even after its head has been cut off. Or perhaps you are frightened in a dream; you shake off sleep and are wide awake, but still you feel your heart palpitating. Egotism is exactly like that. You may drive it away, but still it appears from somewhere. Then you look sullen and say: "What! I have not been shown proper respect!" (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 210.)

Even after attainment of Knowledge this 'I-consciousness' comes up, nobody knows from where. ... All our suffering is due to this 'I'. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 105.)

The ego does not vanish altogether. The man coming down from samadhi perceives that it is Brahman that has become the ego, the universe, and all living beings. This is known as vijnana. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 104.)

Why does a vijnani keep an attitude of love towards God? The answer is that "I-consciousness" persists. It disappears in the state of samadhi, no doubt, but it comes back. In the case of ordinary people the "I" never disappears. You may cut down the aswattha tree, but the next day sprouts shoot up. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 105.)

The ripe and unripe ego

In the attitude of mind expressed in "I am the Lord's eternal servant", there also seems to be duality, but the worldly "I" no longer survives. (Ananadamayi Ma, AHLW, n.p.)

The "I" that God retains in His devotee after he has seen Him is called the "ripe I." It is like a sword turned into gold by touching the philosopher's stone; you cannot hurt anybody with it. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 1019.)

The 'I' that makes one a worldly person and attaches one to [the objects of lust and greed] is the 'wicked I'. The intervention of this ego creates the difference between jiva and Atman. Water appears to be divided into two parts if one puts a stick across it. But in reality there is only one water. It appears as two on account of the stick. This 'I' is the stick. Remove the stick and there remains only one water as before. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 170.)

The "ego of a child" is not attached to anything. The child is beyond the three gunas;¹ he is not under the control of any of them. One moment you find him angry; the next moment it is all over. One moment you see him building his play house; the next moment he forgets all about it. Now you see him love his playmates; but if they are out of his sight a few days he forgets all about them. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 708.)

¹ In Eastern religions, the cosmic qualities of attraction, repulsion, and balance. See Gunas.

Let the ripe ego be the servant of God

Prahlada had two moods. Sometimes he would feel that he was God. In that mood he would say, "Thou art verily I, and I am verily Thou." But when he was conscious of his ego, he felt that God was the Master and he was His servant. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 791.)

It is good to have a trace of ego, which makes it possible for a man to feel that he is the servant of God. As long as a man thinks that it is he who is doing his duties, it is very good for him to feel that God is the Master and he

God's servant. When one is conscious of doing work, one should establish with God the relationship of servant and Master. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 280.)

Unless one renounces the ego, one does not receive the grace of God. ... I am not asking you to renounce the "ripe ego", the ego that makes a man feel he is a servant of God or His devotee. Give up the "unripe ego", the ego that creates attachment to "woman and gold". The ego that makes a man feel he is God's servant, His child, is the "ripe ego". It doesn't harm one. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 790.)

I am not asking you to give up all of the "I." You should give up only the unripe "I." The unripe "I" makes one feel: "I am the doer. These are my wife and children. I am a teacher." Renounce this "unripe I" and keep the "ripe "I," which will make you feel that you are the servant of God, His devotee, and that God is the Doer and you are His instrument. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 269.)

The ego cannot be got rid of; so let the rascal remain as the servant of God, the devotee of God. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 708.)

It is impossible to get rid of the ego. Therefore it should be made to feel that it is the devotee of God, His servant. (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 788.)

It is good to look upon God as the Master and oneself as His servant. As long as man feels the body to be real, as long as he is conscious of "I" and "you," it is good to keep the relationship of master and servant; it is not good to cherish the idea of "I am He." (Paramahansa Ramakrishna, GSR, 908.)

Since you are identified with the ego, since you think you are the doer, since you say: "I can do this and that," and since you get angry, greedy, and so forth, you therefore have to apply your "I-ness" to the thought of Him. (Ananadamayi Ma, AHLW, n.p.)

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