

## Self-Realisation, Non-Duality and Enlightenment

### Self-Realisation

Most people are suffering from mistaken identity – taking ourselves to be someone we are not. The goal of psycho-spiritual development is to correct this mistaken identity; not to strengthen or improve our false identity. The self that we think we are does not exist; it is a figment of our imagination. The self that we think we are cannot awaken – we have to awaken from that false-self in order to realise our true-Self. When this occurs, we realise that we have been our true-Self all along, but had simply forgotten.

### The Labyrinth

Our inner journey takes us through the labyrinth of our ego structures to discover our true-Self (at the core of our being). A labyrinth differs from a maze in that it only has one path which leads to the centre, so the path is already mapped out for us – all we have to do is walk it. If we stop resisting and controlling, the flow of life will naturally carry us to our destination. Some parts of the journey will be tough and others will be wonderful, but they will all be experiential opportunities for the reintegration, development and liberation of our consciousness.

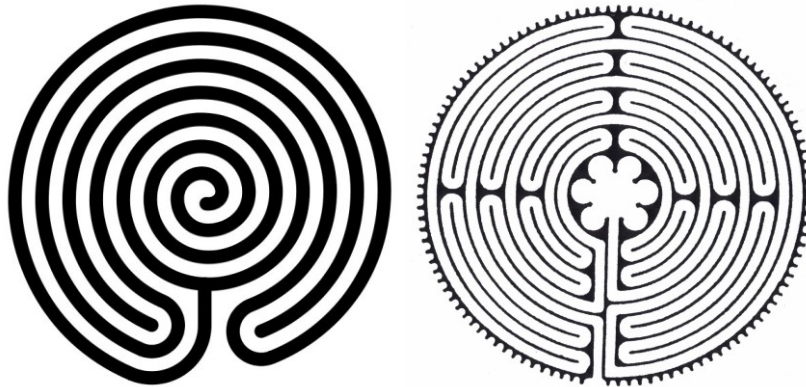


Figure 24 – The Labyrinth: Symbolic Depictions of the Ego Super-Structure

The most effective way of journeying through the labyrinth of our ego structures is to do so with conscious awareness and presence, because then we can process the psychological material (i.e. dissolve the ego structures and reintegrate our consciousness) as we encounter it. Then, when we finally reach the core of our being and realise our true-Self, we can be confident that we will not relapse back into ego-identification because the ego will have largely been dissolved.

Seeking Self-realisation before we are ready is unwise and will ultimately be unsuccessful because we are seeking freedom from something (the ego-self) that we still require for our development. However, our conditioning can cause us to remain misidentified with the ego-self for longer than is absolutely necessary. So here a few simple things that we can do to loosen our identification with our ego-self (in addition to the methods and techniques previously described in this book):

- **Challenge your thoughts:** Don't automatically assume that just because you thought it, you have to believe it and buy into it. Most thoughts are unnecessary hindrances that don't serve at all. When you notice such thoughts, silently say to yourself "that's not me".
- **Don't take things personally:** Our psychological patterns are simply being activated by someone else's patterns. Our patterns feel personal but they are actually generic. So it's not personal - it is just reactivity.
- **Forgive everyone and everything:** You can't change what has happened so why hold onto the personal feeling of victimhood?
- **Be selfless:** Put other people needs ahead of your own and dedicate part of your life to serving or helping others.

- **Be authentic:** Don't put on different personas at different times.
- **Have fewer preferences, opinions and beliefs;** especially about things that don't really matter.
- **Change the question:** Don't ask "How can I become Self-realised?" Ask "What am I doing that is keeping me from being Self-realised?"

### The Path to Self-Realisation

In early childhood, if something authentic (e.g. an essential quality or our true-Self) is not acknowledged and mirrored back to us by our parents, we assume it is unimportant so we repress it and develop ego structures to help us cope without it. Psycho-spiritual development is about reversing that process – removing the blockages, bringing things into the light and turning the repression into expression. Self-realisation only becomes possible when sufficient psychological "undoing" has been completed – when our conditioning has been neutralised and our awareness has been purified (i.e. dis-identified from ego).

Even though Self-realisation is an instant event, there are several stages leading up to it that can be used to gauge our progress and guide us on to the next stage of our journey:

- **Stage 1** involves consciously noticing our thoughts, emotions and body sensations.
- **Stage 2** involves realising that these thoughts, emotions and body sensations are not us.
- **Stage 3** involves realising that we are the awareness that is noticing these things.
- **Stage 4** involves developing a felt sense that we are this awareness.
- **Stage 5** involves experientially knowing and feeling that we are pure awareness.
- **Stage 6** involves experientially knowing and feeling that Awareness (God/Life/Universe) is being us.

In a meditation (superconscious) we might be able to reach stage 3 or 4, but in our everyday lives (waking consciousness) we may still be at stage 1 or 2. This is quite normal, but we can bring these higher states of consciousness into our everyday lives through Conscious Living (see Chapter 4) and Living Presence (see Chapter 6). When we reach stage 3 or 4 in our meditation practice we can start practicing spiritual Self-inquiry (see Chapter 6); prior to that it is more beneficial to practice personal self-inquiry (see Chapter 4).

### Non-Duality

Self-realisation results in non-dualistic perception – a direct and intimate union with everything we encounter. But what does it really mean and how does it work?

- **Dualistic Perception:** The true-Self has forgotten who it really is and believes it is the false-self (a conceptual self-image). So the false-self stands between the true-Self and objective reality (as depicted in Figure 25). The false-self perceives the object, and the true-Self believes it is the false-self perceiving the object, so there is no direct perception. There is separation between the true-Self and the object – hence duality. Note: The false-self doesn't actually do any perceiving (because it is just a thought-form); it is more like a lens that the image passes through (and often gets distorted by) on its way to being perceived by the true-Self.

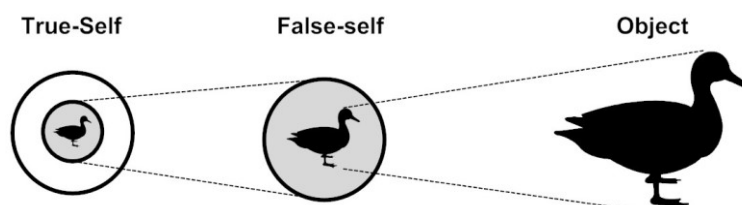


Figure 25: Dualistic Perception

- **Non-Dualistic Perception:** With the false-self no longer present, the true-Self can perceive the object directly (as depicted in Figure 26). There is nothing between the true-Self and the object, so the true-Self can intimately merge with the object to directly perceive every attribute – hence unity (or non-duality).

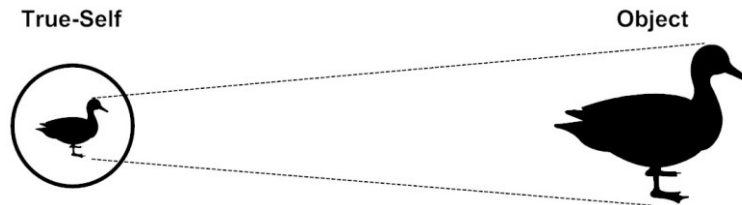


Figure 26: Non-Dualistic Perception

Separation and duality are learning experiments. The Self becomes identified with the false ego-self in order to experience duality – to experience life from a different, separate, non-unified perspective. When we have learnt all we can from separation and duality we will naturally return to unity and non-duality (i.e. Self-realisation/enlightenment).

**The Mechanics of Self-Realisation**

Figure 27 shows the relationships between the authentic personality, the true-Self, the false-self and the ego-personality. The numbered blocks at the bottom of the diagram correspond to the following numbered points:

1. Collectively, the mind, heart and body constitute the authentic personality.
2. The true-Self is the core of the authentic personality (prior to enlightenment).
3. But the true-Self has lost sight of its true nature and believes it is the false-self.
4. The false-self is the core of the ego personality.

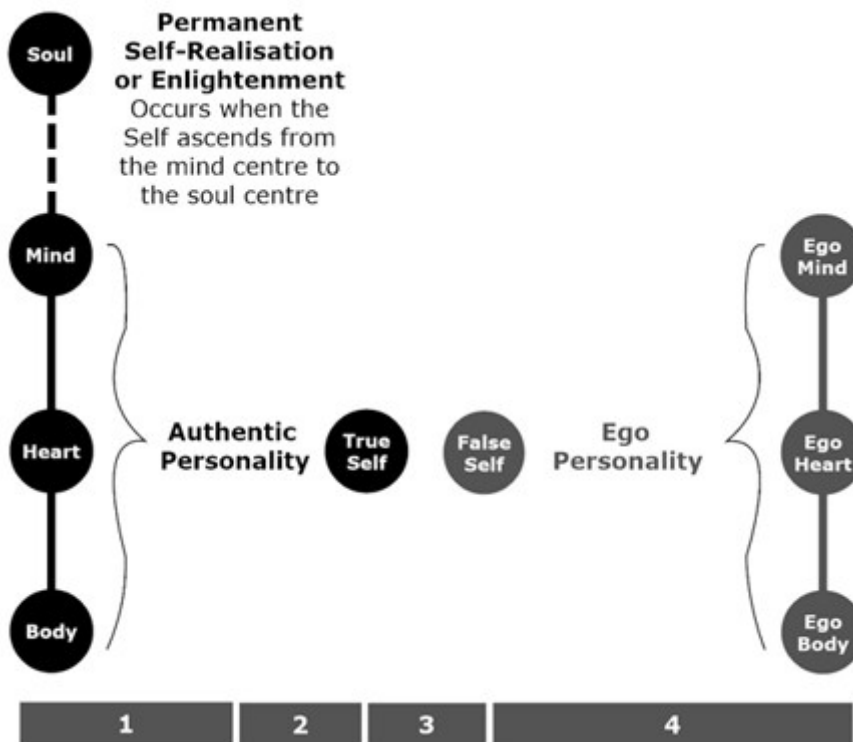


Figure 27: Self-Realisation

The more ego structures we dissolve, the more authentic consciousness is liberated. This gradually shifts the balance of power from the false-self and the ego-personality to the true-Self and the authentic personality. Self-realisation becomes possible when the balance of power has shifted in favour of the true-Self and authentic personality.

## **Enlightenment**

Enlightenment occurs when the Self transcends the personality to centre itself in the soul, at which time the Self instantly and fully realises itself (whether it was partially realised before or not). Enlightenment is full and permanent Self-realisation. It is waking up to a new and higher level of reality which allows us to see things from a completely different perspective. This new perspective is difficult to describe because it transcends (yet includes) the conceptual mind. At enlightenment we realise that pretty much everything we ever believed was true; isn't. And pretty much everything we ever thought was important; isn't. Consequently, it can take weeks, months or years to become fully accustomed to this new state of being.

## **The Personality**

Immediately prior to enlightenment, the Self is centred in the mind (the highest aspect of the personality triad – mind, heart and body). At the moment of enlightenment, the Self transcends the personality and centres itself in the soul. In transcending the personality our consciousness becomes more transpersonal (i.e. not limited to the personal). The Self must transcend the personality to complete the final stage of human evolution, namely to dissolve the remaining ego structures and perfect the personality. Just as we cannot demolish a building while we are still inside it, the last of our ego structures cannot be dissolved while our Self is centred in the personality. After enlightenment, the personality remains an important aspect of our being but we are no longer identified with it. The mind, emotions and body are simply tools that we can utilise in our daily lives. Tools that we can continue to utilise for the development of our consciousness, but in a different way now.

## **Life After Self-Enlightenment**

Many of the things that I am about to describe are often experienced for short periods of time prior to enlightenment, as we are given glimpses of what our lives could be like:

- Most people think that enlightenment will be something different and amazing (e.g. peace, bliss and unity), but we are already these things – they are our true nature. When we rediscover our true nature we realise that these qualities have been present all along, we just didn't notice them. So yes, enlightenment is very different in one respect, but it is also very normal and familiar.
- Our new sense of Self is far subtler than our old (false) sense of self, so much so that we may initially believe that we have no self.
- We discover new ways of being, knowing, loving and doing.
- Finding and realising our life's purpose becomes less important as our concept of a personal self fades away.
- "I am" becomes "I am everything", but it also becomes "I am not" as the duality of being and non-being dissolves.
- Without a false-self to defend and bolster we can relax into our being, which results in a relaxed confidence and a general sense that everything is ok.
- The entire personality relaxes under the direction of the true-Self (i.e. without interference from the ego-self). The need to plan our lives and control everything falls away – without our old fear-based strategies we can relax and just allow life to unfold.
- A sense of direct knowing arises, which means we no longer need anyone else to validate our experiences, beliefs or sense of self.
- Our sense of Self is inherent – it is no longer derived from our thoughts, emotions or body, or feedback we receive from others.
- The mind becomes quieter and stiller. The constant labelling, narration and projection stop, and our personal story no longer seems important.

- The emotions become purer, more authentic and less reactive. The heart opens up and personal, clingy love transforms into impersonal, indiscriminate, unconditional love that is more intimate than anything we have felt before.
- The body relaxes and becomes more sensitive. Even the ordinary things in life take on a new depth and can become extraordinary. It is like seeing the world through new eyes – everything seems so fresh, new, beautiful, exciting, curious and satisfying.
- We realise that we are Life (Consciousness, God, Nature, Universe, Source, etc.) dressed up as a human being, and so is everyone and everything else. There is only one consciousness and Life is playing all the roles. But like a molecule of water in the ocean, each of us is an individual and a unified part of the whole.

### Common Misconceptions After Enlightenment

Henry T Laurency wrote, in *The Knowledge of Life Part 5*, “The evolutionary way of man consists of a series of ‘awakenings’ and at these he is seized with the desire to throw ‘overboard’ all that he has acquired so far... This only shows how far he has still to go before he becomes one with all.” This section explains a couple of these common misconceptions:

- **There is no individual Self:** Some say that there is no individual Self and that there is only oneness. By definition there can be only one oneness (i.e. the entire universe), so if an enlightened person was that oneness they would be the entire universe and would have detailed awareness of everything that is occurring within the entire universe. But they don’t; they only have detailed awareness of the part of the universe that is around them. So there is a centre of consciousness after enlightenment, but it is extraordinarily subtler than the previous false sense of self was – hence the misunderstanding.
- **(No individual Self means) we have no free will:** Learning from our own decisions is an essential aspect of human development. It is true that ultimately everything is controlled by Life/Universe/God, but we are part of that universal consciousness. Gradually letting go of our individual will and becoming more aligned with universal will is an important aspect of our journey, but at no point do we have to completely give up our individual will. We remain an individual while our consciousness expands into the universal oneness.

### Common Difficulties After Enlightenment

The profound shift in our identity that accompanies enlightenment can give rise to some psychological difficulties:

- **Integration Time:** It is quite normal to be a little “spaced out” after completing any healing and reintegration work, as our psychological circuitry re-wires itself. After enlightenment the changes are much more significant and can have far greater and longer-lasting effects on our psychological state. So please don’t make any important decisions until everything has settled down.
- **Lack of Motivation:** After enlightenment our ego’s false-will may no longer be accessible, so unless we have already activated our essential-will (an essential quality) we may be left with little will or motivation. Without anything to motivate us we may not want to do anything, which could cause our entire life to fall apart. It won’t matter much to us, but it will affect those around us. It can take months or years to actively develop sufficient essential-will to enable us to properly function in the world again.
- **Remaining Ego Structures:** We can’t completely demolish our home (ego) while we are still living in it (prior to enlightenment). So after enlightenment, when our Self has moved out of the ego, we must finish dissolving any remaining ego structures to refine our personality and complete the final stage of development through the human kingdom. Until we do this, the remaining ego structures will still activate and impact our life.

Generally, the more ego structures (false qualities) that remain at the time of enlightenment the more difficulties will be encountered. So it is advisable to do the inner work first and allow enlightenment to occur naturally, when we are truly ready.