

Defining The Sense of Self

by Adrian Newington © 1991

Understanding the ways in which personal identity forms,
and the influence it exerts on our lives
by Adrian Newington

Introduction

What is The Self?

What Influences and Shapes the Sense of Self?

THE LEVELS MAKING UP THE PYSCHE

1. Physical
2. Mental
3. Emotional
4. Spiritual

Introduction

" Who am I ? "

" Why am I me ? "

" Why aren't I that other person ? "

These questions I would often ponder as a young child, but would dismiss them as silly, unanswerable and definitely not as much fun as fishing for crabs at the local jetty.

Now that I look back with an adult and refined spiritual viewpoint, I can see that those questions were indeed quite profound for a little boy. From this reflection, I make no claim or desire to call myself an enlightened master or such, it is simply an acknowledgment that such questions can only come from a pure space. That space being a 'spiritual space' and is common in uncomplicated childhood.

Such questions are fundamental philosophical inquiries, which have been asked time and time again by countless individuals, all expressing the strange need to find an answer to the seemingly unanswerable mysteries of life.

Having now developed a spiritual and philosophical approach to living my life, I can see that my efforts have returned me to that childhood space, but with an ability to see that those questions are not silly by any means. In fact, the pursuit of these sorts of answers does indeed have great purpose.

It is my belief that to ask, "Who Am I ?", would have to be one of the most profound questions a person could ask, and carrying great merit. The merit lies in the potential for an individual to raise their consciousness above mundane levels thereby allowing a new spiritual maturity to unfold.

What is The Self?

The 'self' is a term meant to describe the essential or true identity of a person. But what is further identified as the "True-Self", is generally not the self or identity that is revealed to the world in every day life. Often, the person we see is hidden by the many masks we wear as we interact among people in our daily lives. Through this we see an illusive or superficial image of people. Even if we think we know some one quite well, there are still aspects of ones true identity that is not known to us.

In fact, a persons True Self can even be hidden from themselves leaving the individual caught in an illusive view of themselves and the world. Unfortunately, this is more common than we'd like to believe. This is where the attainment of the permanent experience of the True Self is so valuable. The love that emanates from the enlivened true self is a love full of compassion and only wants to give so that all others can live the experience that it has.

What Influences and Shapes the Sense of Self?

Through the various stages of a persons human, social, spiritual development, the sense of WHO a person is (*that is?, the inner identification where self-fulfilment, and the recognition of self worth emanate from*), **should** progress to new meanings as the individual experiences life more completely. I purposefully use the word "should" to indicate that many people do not necessarily progress to a more refined view of their existence beyond a basic sense of self identification aligned with the physical or mental levels.

Levels of Being =>	Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual
The various relationships amid Body, Mind & Spirit which help define or qualify the Sense of Self	I know I Am Because of my body	I know I Am Because I think I Am	I know I Am Because of my feelings	I Am
	My body verifies my existence	My thoughts verify my existence	My feelings verify my existence	I exist without a need for validation
	I exist because of my physical presence	I exist because my thoughts tell me I exist	I exist because I can feel my presence	I alone exist
	My experience in physical life proves my existence	My experience in mental abilities and achievements proves my existence	My emotional experiences from interaction with people proves my existence.	I experience myself through myself alone
Sources of Fulfilment	Physical associations bring me fulfilment	Intellectual associations bring me fulfilment	Emotional associations bring me fulfilment	Self fulfilment is inherent

Table 1: Exploring the Sense of Self.

From the table above, we can examine each level of being and see how the human psyche matures in life. Each level of existence re-defines and matures the sense of self through relative experiences, associations, comparisons and other qualifications. This can all serve us by ultimately allowing a revelation, that one-day we can cast aside the need for external qualifications and rest in the knowledge that we exist because we exist. Such an attitude is

devoid of comparisons and analogies, since we can then see ourselves as forever being complete. Our true self is a spiritual being and to paraphrase "we are spiritual beings on physical journey".

THE LEVELS MAKING UP THE PYSCHE

1. Physical

In various stages of life, a person can derive a sense of personal power as well as feelings of fulfilment and competency from positive physical achievements like sports and athletics. On the other hand, a negative use of physical attributes like ?Bullying? may also bring about a sense of personal power or self. However, to continue the use and cultivation of ones personal power in this way will lead to problems, as one day such a person may encounter someone stronger and more assertive. Here the persons personal power or sense of self would be **taken away**. Achievements like sports and athletics are healthy and positive in defining a sense of self, but they to must be considered vulnerable as to fall into ill health or injury could rob a person of the source of their sense of self.

2. Mental

Once again, in various stages of life a person can derive a sense of personal power and feelings of fulfilment and competency from successful use of logic and intelligence. But mental abilities can fade, or people with grander capacities can be encountered possibly leading to feelings of inadequacy. Such a situation could also take away personal power, or sense of self.

3. Emotional

Further to this, the experience of love and more importantly un-conditional love, brings a degree of release to the "sense of self" derived from the physical and mental experience linked to external dependence.

From the experience of true or un-conditional love, the need for external validation *from physical attributes* greatly dissipates, however, a person can still derive a sense of self from the experience of being loved by another. This too is vulnerable should the love or other emotional support of others not be forthcoming anymore.

To have lifted ones sense of self through the experiences at the emotional level is an important stepping stone into the next level of "True Self" identification.

4. Spiritual

Here the sense of self is allowed to bloom or unfold and be known as it truly is. Such a degree of self-knowledge is attained through the nurturing of spiritual philosophies, principles and practices, along with tolerance and self-love.

Upon attaining such a sense of self, the recognition of all personal power and fulfilment as coming from within liberates one from the limitations of worldliness, and the interpretation of a world that is harsh and lacking compassion. It allows the establishment of a viewpoint that defines the world as neutral, and that previous methods of judging the world have all been based on inner perceptions based on individual experience.

"Perceptions are not knowledge", is the new catch-cry for the enlightened.

The True self does not need or require:

- Rationalisation
- Justification
- Belief systems

...and even to say the phrase; **"your True Self"**, is incorrect because it implies that the True Self belongs to, or is tied to the small self. The small self is an illusion, an imitation of the real thing. To finally come to know and experience the true self is to forever cast aside the pale imitation of the identity you thought was you.

Living in the experience of the true self will allow the natural attributes of the true self to emerge into daily life. These are:

Vision

The ability to see deeply and with wisdom

Clarity, *that comes from vision*

The mind enhanced by its own stillness

Peace, *that comes from clarity*

The experience born of stillness

Confidence, *that comes from peace.*

Through lack of confusion

Courage, *that comes from confidence*

Through being armed with truth

and finally, that which is independent of all,

Without condition, without need, without expectation, but full of its want to share.

LOVE

This love is a love that can only give since it is never lacking and its cup is always full.

**THIS LOVE ALONE IS THE REASON FOR THE QUEST
TO KNOW YOURSELF...**

TO KNOW YOUR TRUE SELF

IT IS LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.

**...and until you can claim the experience as your own,
your mind's judging potential must be placed aside whilst the
higher mind guides you to Love to sooth all other loves.**

Be Peaceful,

Adrian