

Advaita Vedanta: The Self

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The Vedantic Self is the subject matter of the Upanisads, the scriptural texts of Advaita Vedanta, a spiritual teaching tradition originating out of the Vedic culture of India and still maintained within modern Hindu culture. The Vedas, of which the Upanisads form the last section, are the sacred scriptures of the Hindus and are, traditionally, considered to be a revealed body of knowledge. They are purported to be beginningless, manifesting with each cycle of creation, and infallible within their unique sphere of knowledge. The Vedas are four in number and each Veda comprises two distinct sections. The first section, the *karmakanda*, concerns itself primarily with rituals for achieving various ends and with *dharma*, proper behavior, while the second section, the *jnanakanda*, comprises the Upanisads that have for their subject matter the nature and reality of the individual, world, and God. The four Vedas differ only in focus, not in vision. Each Veda concentrates on different aspects of religious rituals in the first section and on different perspectives of the nondual nature of reality in the second section (the Upanisads).

The Upanisads, along with Bhagavadgita, and Brahmasutras are the *prasthanatrayam*, the "three pillars" or main canons of Advaita Vedanta. The Bhagavadgita, the centerpiece of the famous Hindu epic the Mahabharata, gives the essence of Upanisadic wisdom in a manner that is accessible to the lay person. In contrast to the Bhagavadgita, the Brahmasutras is a very difficult and terse analytic text that analyzes the purport of the Upanisads and reconciles any seeming contradictions. It is only after all of the Upanisads and their commentaries have been studied that one undertakes a study of the Brahmasutras. Sankaracarya is the main and most revered commentator of these major texts, and his work is authoritative for Advaita Vedantins. He has written commentaries on the major Upanisads and on the Bhagavadgita and the Brahmasutras. The Upanisads teach that the ultimate nature of reality is *advaita*, meaning "non-dual." "Vedanta" means the last portion of the Vedas, the word "anta" meaning "last" or "end," and refers to the Upanisads located at the end of the Vedas. Accordingly, Advaita Vedanta is the name of a spiritual teaching tradition that teaches the non-dual nature of reality, as revealed in the Upanisads. Vedanta views the Upanisads as a revealed means of knowledge (*pramana*) for the direct cognition of the Self.¹

¹ According to Vedanta, there are six means of knowledge (*pramanas*): perception, inference, presumption, comparison, non-apprehension, and verbal testimony. Vedanta, as a means of knowledge, falls under the category of verbal testimony (*śabda-pramana*). Verbal testimony can convey sense-based knowledge, but can also impart revealed knowledge that is not available to sense perception.

Introduction

The Self, as revealed in the Upanisads, is the non-dual substrate reality of all that exists--the substance of both psyche and world, individual and God, knower and known, subject and object. According to Vedanta, the Self alone is real and everything else enjoys only an apparent reality, having no independent existence of its own. Just as the wave and ocean have no being of their own apart from water and thus are completely dependent for their existence on water, so too, are all forms in the universe dependent for their being on the Self. The waves have only an apparent reality; the water alone is real. Likewise, the forms in the universe have an apparent reality; the Self, alone, is real.

According to Vedanta, in order for something to be real, that is, to be truly existent in its own right, it cannot be subject to change. If a given thing is subject to change, then it is bordered by non-existence on either side of its change. If something comes from non-existence and goes back into non-existence, we cannot say that it "really" exists during the interim period of its appearance. Rather, it must enjoy an apparent reality, being dependent upon something else for its existence, which survives its modifications. This substance would be its truth. The wave and ocean have for their truth the water. Vedanta asserts that the universe has for its truth the Self. The relationship between that which is real or true and that which is apparent is non-dual in that the form has no existence apart from its content. If the water were to be removed from the wave, nothing would be left; thus the relationship between the water and the wave is non-dual.

The Self, which Vedanta reveals to be the non-dual truth of the entire creation, is by nature pure existence, consciousness, and limitlessness. It is the source of one's ongoing Self-experience of conscious being, as well as one's experiences of love. The Self is by nature limitless and free but, because it is falsely identified with the body, mind, and sense organs, it takes on their attributes and thus is perceived as limited and subject to change. The teaching methodology of Vedanta differentiates the Self from its false identifications, thus removing the ignorance that is the source of the problem.

Vedanta asserts that Self-knowledge releases or liberates a seeker from his or her false sense of bondage and limitation and in doing so fulfills the human quest for fullness and completion. What is sought in life is found in the seeker. The Vedantic Self is, by nature, full and complete, being the source of the love one seeks throughout life. Self-ignorance causes the Self to be projected onto the world and then sought through various pursuits and accomplishments. Knowledge of the Self puts an end to this projection and allows the source of wholeness and love to become immediately available to the seeker as his or her own Self.

According to Vedanta, the Self has defied definition because by its nature, it cannot be an object of knowledge. What is objectified must be other than the objectifier. The very foundation of one's experience, the experiencer, though it may be sentient or conscious by nature, has no means of knowing itself without the employment of an appropriate means of knowledge. Whereas we do have appropriate means of knowledge for sense perception--eyes for color, ears for sound, and the like--and for inferences and

presumptions that are based on sense perception, we do not have a means of knowledge for knowing the conscious entity, the Self, that is central to these experiences. Vedanta claims itself to be a revealed means of knowledge for knowing this Self that cannot otherwise be known.

Advaita Vedanta, as it is traditionally taught in India, has very limited exposure in this country. Very few reliable expositions on Advaita Vedanta are available in the English language. English translations of Vedantic texts are available, but are very difficult to understand because the Sanskrit language uses a wealth of terms for which we have no comparable concepts. Also, Vedantic texts are extremely terse, for they are meant to be elaborated upon by a teacher who has been instructed in the teaching methodology.

Unfortunately, only the smallest handful of traditional teachers of Vedanta know English. Most teach in Sanskrit and in their native tongue--Hindi, Telegu, Tamil, to name a few. Many of them are renunciates (sannyasis), and abiding by ancient scriptural prohibitions, never leave their native soil. Without the aid of a teacher who has been taught in the traditional manner (srotriya) and who has personally realized the import of the teaching (brahmanistha), the Vedantic teaching methodology for the direct revelation of the Self cannot be employed and students are left to the study of texts that were not designed for self-study.

This study attempts to bring the Vedantic teaching methodology to the written word so that the reader can actually "see," rather than just intellectually appreciate the Self as an interesting possibility. This is a difficult task. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung often stated that in order to understand what he was saying, a person needed to go through the analytic process because he was describing experiential actualities of the psyche, not experience-distant theories. Similarly, Vedanta is pointing to a Self that is an experiential actuality of the psyche and not an experience-distant theory. The Vedantic Self is there to be recognized for those who have eyes to see, but the eyes, in this case, are meant to be in the form of a living teacher, not in the words of a book. The unfoldment of the Self presented in this study can only fall short if compared to the teachings of a qualified teacher. Just as one needs an analyst to be analyzed, one needs a teacher to be taught. Still, this study is designed to give the reader an experiential understanding of the Self to whatever degree that is possible and I hope that it will accomplish its task.

In Vedanta, the Self is defined as consciousness, existence, and limitlessness. Such words are elusive in their meaning because they are not labeling an objectifiable reality. For example, the word "tree" evokes an image of a tree in the mind. The word is associated with an image that can be described because the tree is an object of perception. The word "consciousness," on the other hand, does not invoke an image in the mind because consciousness is not an object of perception, but rather is the subject, the essential nature of the perceiver of the perception.

Words are normally used to define objects in the world or in the psyche that are available for sensory perception or other means of knowledge, such as inference and presumption, both of which are dependent upon sense perception. Such objects can be identified by their qualities, activities, relationships, species, and the like. For example, the object, tree, can be defined by its appearance, utility, species, and so forth. Consciousness, on the other hand, is not an object in the world and so cannot be defined by words meant to differentiate one object from another. Existence (sat) and limitlessness (ananda), the two other words used to define the Self, also suffer from the same problem. They do not denote objects in the world or in the psyche that can be differentiated from other objects. We cannot say: "Look at the existence," in the same way we can say, "Look at the tree."

The Vedantic definition of Self as existence, consciousness, and limitlessness does not shed any light on the nature of the Self if these defining words themselves are in need of definition. Vedanta as a teaching methodology and as a means of knowing the nature of the Self must be able to unite the defining words of the Self with their meaningful content, so that, for instance, the word "consciousness" invokes experientially in the mind the actual nature of the Self as consciousness. Otherwise, the Vedantic Self, like the Jungian and psychoanalytic Self concepts, will only be a theoretically useful construct of something whose essence remains unknown.

The Vedantic enquiry into the nature of the Self begins by dividing the psyche into its two primary experiential components, that of subject and object. It does this through a methodological process that differentiates the "seer" from the "seen" in any given experience. This methodology is based on the logic that the subject cannot be the object, that is, the perceiver cannot be the perceived. This analysis results in a recognition of the innermost non-objectifiable subject of experience, which is the Vedanta Self. Once the subject/Self has been differentiated from what it illumines, Vedanta then proceeds to analyze the nature of experience in light of the Self and arrives at the realization that all experience depends on the Self for the reality of its being.

Without a means of knowledge such as Vedanta, the Self remains undifferentiated from our experience, because none of our means of knowledge, all of which are based on sense perception, can be employed to "see" the "seer," the Self who has the experience. The Vedantic teaching methodology reveals the Self as the subject component of our experience. This being the case, the Self is not outside the psyche's purview, and can be directly known through a means of knowledge that differentiates it from the images of the psyche with which it has been misidentified.

The next three sections discuss the Vedantic Self as consciousness, existence, and limitlessness, relying on traditional methods of instruction to fill the defining words with real and immediate content. We will conclude with a discussion concerning the Self and the mind in relation to Jungian psychology. The hope is that through this presentation, the reader will be able to experientially differentiate the Self that the Vedantic teachings aspire to reveal.

I. The Self as Consciousness

Consciousness is at the very core of subjectivity. In fact, without consciousness, there is no subjectivity. It is the constant in all experience. It is that factor through which one is aware of the ever-changing emotions, moods, thoughts, and perceptions, and it is the continuous thread that strings these experiences together under the rubric of a single Self that has varied experiences. Though consciousness is constant and invariable in all experience, without a means of knowledge, one is unable to know the nature of consciousness, per se. Neither its source nor its nature, free from the experiences that it illumines, fall within the scope of sense perception and sensory-based means of knowledge. Therefore, the source and nature of consciousness is unknown. However, the human experience of being consciousness is not unknown. Consciousness is intrinsic to the knower/subject of all experience. It is because of consciousness that experiences are known.

In order to know consciousness as it is in and of itself, Vedanta uses a teaching methodology called *dr̥gdr̥syaviveka*, the discriminative analysis of the seer and the seen, to differentiate consciousness from the objects and experiences it illumines. This teaching methodology is based on the logical premise that the subject cannot be the object; the seer cannot be the seen. Simply put: I see the horse, therefore, I am not the horse; when the horse moves, I need not move; when the horse leaves, I need not leave. The knower/subject is independent of the known/object. This, of course, seems obvious. A normal person does not commit the mistake of identifying him or herself with objects external to the physical body. But the same logic that distinguishes the Self from an external object such as the horse can be easily extended to include objects with which one does identify without a second thought. For instance, the same five sense organs that perceive the horse, making the horse a known object to the knower/subject, also objectify the physical body. Were one's sense organs to be removed, the perception of the world, including the physical body, would cease accordingly. And yet, there is a strong natural identity between one's Self and one's body.

By the objectification of objects of identification such as the body, the conscious subject, the one who is the knower of the body, is separated from the object both logically and experientially. The teaching methodology extends this logic of subject/object differentiation further. As the physical body is an object of perception to the sense organs, so too, the sense organs are an object of perception to the mind. For instance, the mind knows whether the eyes can see well, dimly, or not at all, because the mind can objectify the eyes as a known object. At this point of instruction, consciousness is identified with the mind that now can be seen to use the sense organs as instruments of

knowledge different from the conscious subject. The conscious mind is not dependent upon the existence of the sense organs, though an object of sensory perception is. A blind man has not lost his mind, he has lost his sight. His Self remains intact.

Upon further inquiry, the mind also is recognized as an object of knowledge, in that the thoughts, moods, emotions, and perceptions of the mind are known. Thoughts come and go, illumined by the awareness of the knower. Even the "I" thought is an object of knowledge. Such statements as "I am," "I am conscious," "I am tired," "I am hungry," and "I am a woman" all are illumined by consciousness. One's sense of Self is not dependent on the presence or absence of an identifying thought such as "I am," any more than the existence of a pot is dependent on the label, "This is a pot." Through this teaching methodology anything that can be objectified is separated from the subject. When this process is complete consciousness alone remains as the content and substance of the Self. All else is an object of consciousness and is seen to come and go within consciousness, thus transitory by nature.

Consciousness is the only constant in experience. The presence of this unchanging consciousness must first be recognized amidst the transitory modifications of the body, mind, and sense organs. Until this differentiation occurs, consciousness is identified with them and is not recognized as something in and of itself. An example often used to illustrate this identification is the red-hot iron ball. If a person has never been exposed to iron and fire separately, then the nature and qualities of the one will be superimposed on the other, creating what appears to be a single object that can be described as round, heavy, and red hot. Once the iron and fire have been separated, then even when combined, the nature of each remains known. Similarly, consciousness, once separated from its objects of identification, is easily discernible amidst them, but until then it appears as one with the body/mind complex. This phenomenon, called super-imposition (adhyasa), is caused by ignorance. When two things are occupying the same place and time, if the nature of each is unknown, then the two appear to be one. Once discrimination takes place, then, in spite of experiencing the two together, the individual nature of each remains evident, as in the example of the red-hot iron ball.

The nature of consciousness is not completely unknown. Though consciousness cannot be objectified, it is the very nature of the subject, the Self, and is Self-luminous. Consciousness does not need another consciousness to illumine it, just as the sun does not need a second source of light. However, though consciousness is the constant subject of all experience and is Self-luminous, its nature, in and of itself, remains unknown without a means of knowledge. We do not need to experience consciousness because it is already the very substance of all experience. However, we do need to differentiate it from its false identifications in order to know it. Differentiating the Self from the objects with which it is identified, such as the body, mind, or sense organs, is the first step in this process of recognition. It brings to light the separate natures of Self and the not-self that were previously taken to be one because of mutual superimposition.

Once the Self has been liberated from its objects of identification, consciousness in relation to the individual, world, and God has to be understood. It is important to remember that we are not looking for an experience of consciousness (it is already experientially present as the content of the knower), but we need to know its nature, *per se*, and its place in the scheme of things. Consciousness cannot be defined by what it objectifies. If I am conscious of my body, I cannot describe my Self in terms of the body. If I am conscious of my mind, I cannot describe myself in terms of the mind. Removing all that can be objectified from consciousness, there is nothing to differentiate one consciousness from that of another. This is because all limiting adjuncts that could differentiate one consciousness from another are objectified and thus can no longer delimit it.

There is a famous story within the Vedantic tradition that reveals the non-dual nature of consciousness. The student of a great rishi asked him to teach her the wisdom contained in the Upanisads. The rishi said to her: "My dear one, where are you right now?" "I am seated next to you in front of the hut," she responded. "Where is the hut?" he asked. "The hut is in Rishikesh." "Where is Rishikesh?" "Rishikesh is in the Himalayas." "Where are the Himalayas?" "The Himalayas are in India." "Where is India?" "India is on the earth." "Where is the earth?" "The earth is in space." "Where, my dear one, is space?" She was quiet for a moment and then answered, "Space is in my mind." "Then where is your mind?" Again she was quiet, and finally answered, "My mind is in my body." Here she fell into circular thinking: My body is in front of the hut that is in Rishikesh that is in India that is on the earth that is in space that is in my mind that is in my body. The rishi corrected her saying, "My dear one, your mind is consciousness."

This story places the universe in consciousness rather than consciousness in the universe. The Self, disidentified with objects of knowledge, cannot be limited by them. If the universe, including space, is objectifiable, then it enjoys a subject-object relationship with the Self and thus cannot limit it. The ultimate nature of the subject/knower then has to be unbounded because all limiting factors exist within time and space, are objectifiable, and are, therefore, other than the Self. The question then comes as to whether these objects that are other than the Self have any existence apart from the Self. The nature of existence, itself, has to be examined.

II. The Self as Existence

Like consciousness, the experience of existing does not need a means of knowledge to verify it. It is one of the experiential baselines that we take for granted, more for granted than the air we breathe. However, though the experience of existence is Self-evident, its nature is unknown to us. Like consciousness, the sense of being cannot be objectified. It is not an object of perception, nor is it a thought, mood, or emotion. Rather, it underlies and pervades all experience. Because it is not objectifiable, it is, like consciousness, beyond the scope of our means of knowledge and so, though we know that we exist, we don't know what existence is.

Vedanta uses several different teaching methodologies to reveal the nature of existence and its identity with the Self, three of which will be examined in this section. They are: (a) existence in relation to non-existence, (c) existence in relation to name and form, and (d) existence in relation to time.

Existence in Relation to Non-existence

It is an obvious truth that something cannot come from nothing; that existence cannot come from non-existence. However, if we analyze the implications of this statement, a complication immediately arises. The existence of any object of experience (pot, plate, tree, table, dog, mood, or thought) is taken for granted; however, every object of experience is subject to birth and death, has a beginning and an end and, thus, is bordered by non-existence. If this is so, existence cannot belong to them in between these negating two borders.

Vedanta defines real existence as that which cannot be negated in the three periods of time, past, present, and future. For something to truly exist, it cannot be subject to change, because any change ends the existence of the prior condition. A lump of clay can be formed into a pot, then changed into a plate, and then into a cup. The changing names and forms negate each other and cannot be said to have real existence. Existence can only be attributed to that which doesn't change. In this example, clay represents real existence because it does not come and go in reference to the changing forms of pot, cup, and so on. In reality, of course, clay also is bound by change and not real, but within the confines of the illustration, the relationship between the clay and the pot represents the relationship between the real and the apparent.

In the search for one's own reality, the same logic holds true. One's existence cannot be an attribute of what changes, and all names and forms, subtle and gross, are subject to change. This leads to the logical conclusion that existence is being falsely attributed to all objects of perception, including the body and mind. Existence must be changeless and that which does not change has to be beyond time and space. Only the Self fulfills this qualification. Consciousness, alone, both exists and is free from time and space.

Existence in Relation to Name and Form

Because forms (objects) come and go, they do not exist in and of themselves. Rather, they depend upon their content for existence. This is true of any form, subtle or gross: only the content has existence, never the form. The form always enjoys a dependent reality (mithya). Again, to use the clay pot example, it is clear that the pot depends upon the clay for its existence. If you take the clay from the form, absolutely nothing is left. Therefore, the pot has no existence apart from the clay, while the existence of the clay is independent of the pot.

Forms (objects) do not have real existence because they have no independent being; their reality is dependent upon something else, as the pot depends upon the clay. Though this seems obvious, the search for content tends to end up in an infinite regress, because sense perception is only capable of revealing forms. This results in the content of form being endlessly defined by smaller forms. At the level of the smallest measurable form, we are faced with the same problem that we confront with a larger form: Form is not content. Previously the clay pot example was used to show the non-dual relationship between form and content: Form is totally dependent upon its content for existence, while the reverse is not true. But upon examination, clay is itself a conglomerate of forms, being composed of smaller forms that are themselves composed of smaller forms, progressing from different types of clay particles, to molecules, to atoms, to quarks, and so on until the end of our current capacity for perceiving micro-forms is reached.

If a form can be divided into smaller forms, the larger form is really not a form, per se, but rather is an aggregate of forms. In the search for the content of a form, then, a form that is not, in reality, an aggregate of smaller forms would have to be found. This leads to the search for an ultimate form that is the basic building block of the aggregate form. However, as long as a form takes up space, it is further divisible into smaller particles, inability to perceive those particles being due only to the limitations of the instruments used. Hypothetically, then, form is infinitely divisible. But, if it were possible to discover the smallest measurable form, its content would still need to be examined. And this content could not have a form, because if it did, the same situation of searching for the ultimate building block of a given aggregate would result. This line of inquiry naturally leads us from a scientific to a metaphysical inquiry about the ultimate cause and underlying nature of things. The real content of a given form has to be formless, and being formless, it is not going to change as the aggregate is dissected into smaller and smaller forms. Therefore, in order to find the true content of form, three conditions are necessary: (a) It must be non-objectifiable, (b) It must be changeless, and (c) It must be the content of all forms, because what is non-objectifiable cannot have parameters. Existence, alone, will fit this definition. Existence is both non-objectifiable and is the common denominator in all forms. For example, in the breakdown of the clay into its smaller and smaller forms, the forms are the variables, the existence of the forms is the constant: The clay exists, the clay particles exist, the molecules exist, the atoms exist. All names and forms have their being--their content--in existence, alone: the forms are subject to negation, the existence not. But existence, being non-objectifiable, can only be found in the subject--the one who reduces the forms into further forms is the only one left behind. Any existent object has to become evident to the witness/subject in order for its existence to be known. Thus, when one says, "The pot is," the actual experience is, "pot consciousness is." In this experience, the variable is the pot, clay, particles, molecules, and atoms: it is the consciousness that provides the invariable that is existence, itself. Therefore, the existence that is the non-objectifiable Self-experience is not different from the existence or substantial being of all other forms in the universe. There is only one existence and that existence is the Self.

Existence in Relation to Time

It is clear to most that only the present exists. The past can be remembered in the present and the future can be imagined in the present, but the actual events do not exist. This leaves us with the present, alone. The question then arises as to what exactly is the present--how can it be demarcated from past and future? The linear and thus infinitely divisible nature of time presents a difficulty here. Any "moment," as long as it takes up time, is divisible into smaller "moments," which makes any length assigned to a moment arbitrary, not absolute. For example, it takes one moment for a needle to dart through a hundred rose petals lined up one against the other. But that moment can be divided into one hundred smaller moments--the time it took the needle to pass through each individual petal. Those moments could be broken down even further. A moment, as long as it takes up time, can always be further divided into past, present, and future. There is no end to such divisions.

Since time is infinitely divisible, a true present cannot be found within it. However, there is an ongoing experience of the present and nothing really exists outside it. (The past is gone and the future has not yet come.) The source of this experience has to be the Self. The Self, as the witness of time, is the timeless presence through which infinitely divisible time passes. The one who is aware of time is present to all three divisions and it is the presence of that being that provides the experience of an ongoing present. Existence can only belong to the timeless Self. It cannot belong to a moment in time, because there is no ultimate moment to be found within infinitely divisible time. Therefore, the content of time is timeless. Again, existence resolves in consciousness.

III. The Self as Ananda

What is free from time and form is limitless. Being timeless, it is bound neither by past, present, nor future and, is therefore, eternal. Being formless, it cannot be circumscribed and is, therefore, infinite. The Sanskrit term for "limitless" is ananta, which means "without end." The word used in Vedanta to convey the emotional manifestation of limitlessness is ananda, often translated as "bliss" or "love." According to Vedanta, the limitlessness of the Self (ananta) manifests in the mind as love (ananda) or happiness, and is responsible for the mind's experience of many and varied positive affects such as joy, compassion, pleasure, and ecstasy.

As we have seen, the complete Vedantic definition of the Self is sat-cit-ananda meaning that consciousness is existence and it is limitless--all three words being used to indicate the singular nature of the Self. Because of Self-ignorance, a mutual superimposition occurs (anyonya-adhyasa), wherein the Self and the body, mind, and sense organs are mutually identified with each other. The limitless nature of the Self is missed because of this false identification caused by ignorance. However, just as the existence and consciousness of the Self are experiential givens (though misidentified), so too is limitlessness, in the form of love or happiness a misidentified experiential given. (The two words "love" and "happiness" are used in juxtaposition to define the Sanskrit word

"ananda" in terms of one's experience.) Everyone has experiences of love or happiness, but its source or cause is unknown.

Vedanta asserts that love is the essential nature of the Self. When the mind is calm and peaceful, the Self is reflected in the mind, like the sun in a clear still pool of water. Because of Self-ignorance, the experience of love, that is, in fact, the experience of the Self, is attributed to the objects that accompany the experience. Everyone searches for love or happiness because of Self-ignorance. This search manifests itself in the form of desires. The generic or template form of a desire is, "I want this so that I can be happy." This template is directed at an object that the seeker believes has the capacity to bestow happiness. The desire causes a certain mental tension and anxiety in the mind, taking away a calmness that would naturally be there if the mind were desireless. As one approaches the fulfillment of the desire, the mind begins to relax, reflecting more clearly the nature of the Self. As it does so, the mind experiences love or happiness. According to Vedanta, it is the relaxation of the mind caused by the fulfilled desire that causes the experience of happiness, and not the particular object of desire. Happiness is attributed to the desired object because of Self-ignorance. However, if the object really were the source of happiness, then the object, like the sun, would shine the light of its happiness on whomever comes into its vicinity and this, of course, is not the case. No object has the capacity to make everyone happy at a given time, nor can any object make one person happy all the time. Consider, for example, the hypothetical relationship of three people toward a fourth person. The fourth person is the estranged partner of the first person, the new partner of the second person, and a stranger to the third person. The feelings that fourth person (the object) evokes in each person are quite different, ranging from hurt to happiness to indifference. If the fourth person were truly the locus of happiness, all three people would experience it whenever they were in his or her presence. Though it may be said that the fourth person triggers an emotional response in each person, it cannot be said that the fourth person is a carrier of the emotion. The cause for and locus of the emotion has to be found elsewhere.

During the pursuit of a desired object, the world divides into three categories--the helpful, the obstructive, and the uninvolved, producing affects of love, hate, and indifference respectively. Whenever a person or situation aids in the fulfillment of a desire, it gives the mind hope that the object of desire will be fulfilled. This causes the mind to relax, which allows happiness to be experienced, which is then attributed to those who are helping. The opposite occurs when a person or situation obstructs the attainment of a desire. The obstructor causes the mind to tense up because of a fear that the desire will not be fulfilled, and thus happiness will be denied. The tense mind obscures love, which produces experiences of dislike or hatred, and those affects are attributed to the obstructor, who becomes the hated one.

Moods and emotions are produced by the qualitative closeness of the mind to the Self--a relatively still, quiet mind reflects the absolute calm of the Self; an agitated mind, on the other hand, feels discordant with the Self. It is the mind's qualitative closeness to or distance from the Self that causes the seeming presence and absence of love. The reflection of the sun in a pool of water is a good illustration of this

relationship. Depending on the condition of the water, the sun's reflection can vary from almost negligible in extremely muddy water to its mirror image in clear water. Though the sun does not change, the reflection does. If, because of ignorance, the sun is taken to be the reflection, then the sun becomes subject to change. Analogously, if, because of ignorance, the Self is identified with the changing conditions of the mind, then the Self (the reflection) appears to change. Affects of the mind ranging from feelings of total isolation (the muddy water) to a peaceful state of well-being (the clear water) are identified with the Self. Such statements as, "I am depressed," "I am agitated," and "I am peaceful," are examples of this identification.

IV. The Self and the Mind

The mind, according to Vedanta, is as much an object of consciousness as are objects of sense perception, including the physical body. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the mind reflects consciousness in a way that objects of sense perception do not. A rock and a mirror held up to the sun are both equally illumined and warmed by the sun, but only one of them is able to reflect it. Though the mirror can reflect the sun and the rock cannot, neither enjoys the luminous nature of the sun, in and of itself. Similarly, the mind reflects consciousness in such a way that it seems to be conscious by nature (like the sun in the mirror), but in reality, the mind is no more inherently conscious than any other object.

The Self is always present as the conscious substratum of the mind and so, wherever the mind is, the Self is. In this situation, unless the Self is differentiated from the mind, the two will be taken as one, like a red-hot iron ball to one who is ignorant of the separate natures of iron and fire. If the changelessness and independent substrate existence of the Self remains undifferentiated amidst the changing thoughts and moods, then even though thoughts and moods are fleeting objects of consciousness, they are identified with the consciousness that illumines them. The relationship of consciousness to the mind in Vedanta is much different from Jung's understanding. For Jung, consciousness is a product of the mind, and is produced by the ego's contact with inner or outer objects of its perception. For Vedanta, consciousness is the nature of the Self, and is the underlying substrate reality of all existence. It is not an attribute of the mind; rather, it is the substratum of the mind that lends its consciousness to the mind.

The Vedantic model of the mind has for its primary purpose the differentiation of the mind from the Self. Its emphasis, therefore, is on an analysis of the types of thoughts that present themselves to consciousness, rather than on the nature of the unconscious and its relationship to the conscious mind. Thus, Vedanta concerns itself primarily with what Jung, in his model of the psyche, defines as the conscious mind and the ego.

Vedanta categorizes the types of thoughts that occur in the mind into four groups: (a) the decisive mind or intellect (buddhi); (b) the fluctuating, indecisive mind (manas); (c) the memory (citta); and (d) the "I"-notion or ego (ahankara). These four categories comprise thought processes that are the domain of the mind alone, as opposed to the mental images of sense perception. The intellect (buddhi) consists of decisive or determined thoughts,

such as, "This is a rose," or, "All men are mortal." All logical, rational, deliberate thought processes fall into this category. The indecisive mind (manas) comprises non-decisive or doubting thoughts, such as, "Did I lock the door or not?" or, "Is she telling the truth or not?" The manas is resolved by the buddhi: "No, I did not lock the door," or, "Yes, she is telling the truth." Indeterminate thought flow, free association, the chattering mind, daydreaming, can be included in manas. The memory (citta) is the aspect of the mind that remembers and it comprises our memories. The "I"-notion or ego (ahankara) is characterized by self-consciousness, and comprises self-referent thoughts such as, "I am tall" or "This is mine."

The Vedantic concept of the ego is similar to the Jungian concept but also different. The Vedantic ego, similar to Jung's definition of the term, connects itself to all objects of consciousness as the "I" who is in relation to the object. However, in Vedanta, the ego is a type of thought modification that results from Self-ignorance, causing the Self to be identified with the not-Self. For instance, in the statement "I am tall," the ego equates the Self with a characteristic of the physical body; in the statement, "I am upset," the ego equates the Self with a condition of the mind; and in the statement, "This house is mine," the Self is equated with the individual who owns the house. The Vedantic ego thus creates a false identity and/or relationship between the Self and not-Self.

The fourfold division of the mind into the intellect, mind, memory, and ego categorizes types of thinking that we consciously experience. Moods, emotions, and affects are not included in this categorization because they are qualitative conditions of the mind rather than types of thought. Any of the four categories of thought can be colored by them.

As we have seen, the moods are caused by the mind's qualitative similarity or dissimilarity to the nature of the Self. When the mind is dull or agitated, it will feel pain and isolation because its condition does not mirror the Self. If the mind is still and relaxed, it feels pleasure, peace, and harmony, because its condition reflects and blends in with that of the Self. This gives a sense of well-being, centeredness, and non-isolation. The reflection of the sun in a quiet still clear pool of water is qualitatively similar to the sun. However, the reflection of the sun in a muddy rippling pool of water is not. In that case, the sun's reflection appears dull and wavy, qualitatively different from the sun of which it is a reflection. Though the sun equally illumines both pools of water, its reflection appears differently depending on the condition of the water. Likewise, the Self illumines the mind whether quiet or agitated. Both states of mind enjoy existence and consciousness equally. But when the mind is quiet, it feels at home and one with the Self; when agitated, it feels isolated and estranged from the Self.

The Vedantic model of the mind does not include the unconscious as a differentiated category of the psyche, as does Jung in his model. As explained earlier, the primary purpose of the Vedantic model of the mind is to differentiate the Self from that with which it is falsely identified. The inner workings of the psyche are not its concern unless they relate directly to this process of differentiation. However, Vedanta does address some phenomena that Western psychology attributes to unconscious processes without labeling them as such, because they do relate to Self-knowledge. The Vedantic

understanding of projection, for example, is very similar to that of the West, but addresses this phenomenon for a different reason than does Western psychology.

In psychology, we understand projection as the expulsion of unconscious material onto an object in the world that, in some way or another, is a suitable locus for the projection. The unconscious material is most often a disowned conflictual trait in the unconscious that is projected out onto the external environment as a way to deal with the problem less painfully outside of oneself. In the therapeutic process, the psychoanalyst works to help the patient bring his or her unconscious material to consciousness in order to deal with the problem where it actually lies, that is, in the psyche. To the degree that unconscious material is brought to consciousness and personally owned, its projecting power diminishes and the person is able to have a less distorted relationship with his or her environment. Jung (1951/1959) says:

As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting. Hence one meets with projections, one does not make them. The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face. In the last analysis, therefore, they lead to an autoerotic or autistic condition in which one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable.²

One often-told Vedantic story highlighting the nature and power of projection described above by Jung concerns the mistaking of a rope for a snake. As the story goes, two friends are walking along a path at dusk. One boy trips over a rope lying across the path. It being dusk, the boy does not see the rope as it is; rather, he sees only its shape--something several feet long, about two inches in diameter, wavy--and he mistakes this shape for a snake. He feels its fangs--the uneven twine protruding from the end of the rope--pierce his skin as he trips over it. Terrified, he falls to the ground, calling out to his friend that he has been bitten by a snake. The friend runs up to him and immediately understands what has happened: His friend tripped over a rope and mistook it for a snake. He explains this to his "bitten" friend and takes him back to see the rope. There, the terrified boy sees the same object lying across the path, but now without the projection. The projected snake, though unreal, generated a "real" reaction in the boy that could only be relieved by knowledge of the mistake.

The snake projection requires two things: an object that lends itself to the projection and ignorance of the object as it is. In this case, the rope is only partially known, and so anything that resembles it can be projected onto it. For instance, a water streak, a stick, and a crack in the earth could have been projected as well as the snake: All are compatible with the general shape of the rope. That the boy happened to project a snake rather than a water streak speaks to what was closest to the rope in the boy's mind.

² Jung, C. G. (1959). Aion. In R. F. C. Hull, Trans., *The complete works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 9, Part 2). Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Original work published in 1951. pg. 9.

Other Vedantic examples illustrating the nature of projection are very similar in their emphasis. The mother of pearl shell on the sand appears as a piece of silver to the distant onlooker, who then pursues it only to find a sea shell when he reaches it. A post is mistaken for a man lurking in the darkness to one walking alone in the night. Mirage water is seen in the desert by the thirsty traveller. In all cases, the projection requires ignorance of the true nature of the locus on which it is projected. And it also requires ignorance of the projection as a projection. If I knew, for example, that I was only imagining the snake on the rope, I would not feel fear. And if I had seen the rope as such, I could not have projected a snake upon it.

In projection, the projected object has only a subjective reality, whereas the locus of the projection has an objective reality. In the projection of the snake on the rope, the snake is subjective, in that it is not available for another's perception. The rope, on the other hand, has an objective existence because it can be experienced by others. Something that exists subjectively in the mind assumes the objective reality of what it is projected upon. The length, diameter, and bends of the rope form the shape of the snake that is imagined upon it.

Projection cannot occur without ignorance, and removal of ignorance requires knowledge of the projection, its locus, or both (the rope and/or the snake). Vedanta and depth psychology are similar in their understanding of this, and both work to differentiate the projection from its locus. However, psychology focuses primarily on making the unconscious contents of the psyche (the snake) conscious in order to remove the projection. Vedanta's primary concern, on the other hand, lies more in the recognition of the locus. This is evident in the Vedantic examples given above. The focus is on knowledge of the rope, post, sea shell, or desert sand as opposed to the illusory snake and so forth. Both Vedanta and Western psychology do, however, equally emphasize the power of the projection in causing one to behave toward the real object in an incongruous way (e.g., the terror of the rope when perceived as a snake).

The Vedantic model focuses primarily on the differentiation of the Vedantic Self from the psyche. This differentiation of Self from the psyche results in an expanded view of projection that includes the projection of a Self not taken into account by Jung or by Western psychology in general. It is this level of differentiation that Vedanta holds to be the ultimate curative factor for all psychological suffering.

Western psychology only takes into account two orders of reality: the subjective reality of the psyche and the objective reality of the world. From its standpoint, the Self, no matter how differently it may be conceptualized, never transcends these two orders of reality. An absolute substrate reality upon which both subjective and objective reality depend is not within its purview. Therefore, the curative factor of psychological treatment is limited to the manipulation of these two domains. Vedanta, however, brings to view the Self as a third order of reality. And, according to Vedanta, it is the differentiation of the Self from both the subjective and objective orders of reality that cures, because ultimately, all our anguish is rooted in Self-ignorance.

Another concept, similar to projection, needs to be discussed for a full understanding of the Vedantic concept and application of projection. This is the Vedantic concept of super-imposition (adhyasa). Super-imposition and projection are similar, in that in both cases one object is superimposed on the other because of ignorance. However, in superimposition, two objective realities are taken to be one. By objective reality, here, I mean that the object of experience is not a subjective creation, as would be the snake, mother of pearl shell, and mirage water in the previously given examples. A projection, being subjectively created, can be removed by knowledge (e.g., the snake on the rope). A superimposition, on the other hand, is not removed by knowledge, because the superimposed objects are not Self-created. However, a differentiation of the seeming one into its components through knowledge changes one's relationship to the object.

This difference between projection and superimposition is important in differentiating the Vedantic Self from the psyche. Neither the Vedantic Self, the psyche, the physical body, nor the world is a subjective creation of the individual. We do not subjectively create the consciousness, existence, and limitless nature of the Self because the Self underlies and informs all experience, subjective and objective. Nor do we subjectively create the psyche--it is part of the human package with which we are born. Nor do we create the world into which we are born: It is here before, during, and after any given life.

In projection, an inner subjective experience is projected onto an outer experience. And knowledge has the power to remove it completely (e.g., the illusory snake, post, mirage water). In superimposition, two objective realities existing in the same time and place are experienced as one because of ignorance of their respective natures. Because the elements are objective rather than subjective, knowledge does not eliminate either object; however, once the two elements have been differentiated, both elements are recognized in the perception and so are no longer taken to be one. The example of the red-hot iron ball illustrates this point. In this example, if both fire and iron are known individually, the mistake will not take place, even though the two are experienced together in one locus. Similarly, to the degree that the Self has been differentiated from the psyche, physical body, and world, though existing in the same place and time, it will not be taken as one with it. Though the Self is the baseline of and pervasive to all experience as one's sense of being, consciousness, and fullness, because it is not known in and of itself it is superimposed upon the psyche, body, and world. This superimposition causes the Self to assume the limitations and nature of the other object, and the other object to assume the nature of the Self. For example, the Self superimposed on the body becomes male or female, so many years of age, tall or short, and so on, and the body becomes a conscious existent entity in its own right.

To summarize, superimposition differs from projection in that even if we know the components of the superimposed objects, they continue to be perceived (e.g., the red-hot iron ball is known to be fire and iron, yet the red-hot iron ball continues to be perceived.) In projection, a subjective element is projected onto an external objective element, and upon knowledge, the subjective element disappears (e.g., the rope/snake). Though superimposition, like projection, is caused by ignorance, the removal of ignorance will not cause a change in the perception because both objects exist

in objective reality. The Self, psyche, body, and world continue to occupy the same time and place even after their separate natures have been clearly differentiated and ignorance has been removed; thus, we use the term superimposition rather than projection to account for ignorance-based confusion.

Because of the absence of the Vedantic Self in depth psychological models of the psyche, the concept of superimposition will only be in relation to the ego's identity with unconscious contents of the psyche. Jung discusses this type of superimposition in relation to the individuation process in which the ego is or can become identified with the Jungian Self and other archetypal figures, including parental imagoes in the unconscious. The individuation process involves the ego's differentiation and separation from these figures, allowing the ego to come into relationship with them as opposed to identifying with them. The ego's identification with unconscious imagoes causes the ego to assume behaviors that belong more to the imagoes than to the true nature of the individual. Had Jung known of the Vedantic Self, he might have taken the process of differentiation deeper, to include the differentiation of the ego and psyche from the Vedantic Self in the individuation process.