

Ego Is the Mask God Wears While Pretending To Be You

David Center

The fundamental assumption (a.k.a. ontological primitive) underlying the following comments is that of panentheism¹ or monistic idealism². This assumption is that ALL That Is, is comprised of objects in Universal Mind, which arises from and within Primordial Awareness or the Ground of ALL Being. Consider Primordial Awareness to be an undifferentiated or unity state of potential Consciousness that is assumed to be omnipresent and have infinite intelligence, creativity and attentive capacity. Primordial Awareness, exercising its infinite intelligence and creativity, imagined a continuous process of Creation incorporating the principle of Evolution. This is not to be confused with Darwinian evolution, which is a superficial imitation of Primordial Evolution. The process of Creation then began generating objects of Consciousness in Primordial Awareness. When focus of Attention is active, then “objects” residing in Primordial Awareness are Perceived and become objects or evolving objects of Consciousness. In short, for Primordial Awareness to be Conscious of something means the “thing” becomes particularized within Primordial Awareness through focus of Attention, and thereby, there is Perception of it as individuated or separate from other “things.” Attention in Primordial Awareness is unlimited, and therefore, the objects of Consciousness are unlimited. Thus, Universal Mind comes into existence within the field of Primordial Awareness. By way of analogy, one might think of Universal Mind as a movie playing out on a screen (Primordial Awareness). Some people might even say this is a description of the Mind of God. Call it what you will.

All That Is, is the content of Universal Mind and thus everything that exists is an object in Consciousness. Every object of Consciousness is an individuated subset of Primordial Awareness brought into Consciousness by the Attention given it. If you are made in the image of God, then that identity is due to you being an aspect of Primordial Awareness and an object of Consciousness. An aspect of Primordial Awareness with biological potential can exist in a formless state within Consciousness or it can be expressed in a form. What you experience as a body is a biological form. The non-biological world that you experience is comprised of forms of varying densities (a.k.a. physical matter). Some physical matter will be denser than and some less dense than biological forms. All forms are objects of Consciousness and exist only in Universal Mind. All biological forms, as aspects of Universal Mind, have some degree of consciousness.

Since ALL That Is arises within Primordial Awareness and from its infinite intelligence and creativity, everything in Universal Mind is accepted unconditionally by Primordial Awareness. This unconditional acceptance, when experienced by a human form within Universal Mind, is experienced as Divine Love. Divine Love is always a fundamental characteristic of Universal Mind and therefore always applies to every object of Consciousness whether that object is aware of it or not. Unconditional acceptance or Divine Love cannot be judgmental, therefore, there is no “moral” hierarchy within Universal Mind -- no good or evil, right or wrong, or other dualities necessary for experience.

Human forms can be thought of as *attractors*. A human form is too circumscribed to be the recipient of the infinite possibilities that exist within Universal Mind. Thus, each human form is like a receiver tuned to a limited set of content. In a human form, the receiver is defined by the initial conditions manifest in the biological form. Think of these initial conditions as genetic predispositions, epigenetic modifications, glandular configurations, neurological organizations, birth circumstances, etc. The initial conditions define and set certain limitations on the human form, which in turn determines what sort of content (thoughts, ideas, images, feelings, emotions, sensations, perceptions, impulses, etc.) that a human form initially attracts to itself from Universal Mind. These initial conditions in a human form are what I would equate with karma, which can be perceived as having both positive and negative aspects. Most elements comprising the initial conditions are prompts related to still unfolding development that would benefit from attention. A few elements comprising the initial conditions may be related to specific choices intended to provide entirely new conditions and an opportunity to learn from experiences related to those conditions. As long as you are identified with the body/mind, karma sets the agenda for your life. While the ‘blueprint’ provided by karma can be and usually is followed, it can also be transcended.

Transcending karma requires a shift in identity. Almost everyone identifies with the body/mind, but the body/mind is only a vehicle, a means of providing Primordial Awareness access to an experiential dimension of its own creation. Your awareness is an aspect of Primordial Awareness. Interaction with the material dimension strongly focuses your awareness in the body/mind. Think of yourself as analogous to awareness and of an automobile as analogous to the body/mind. You use, appreciate and maintain the automobile but you do not identify with it; i.e., you do not confuse the automobile for yourself. Likewise, do not confuse your essential essence (awareness) with the vehicle (body/mind) that it employs. Identify “self” with awareness rather than with the body/mind and you may come to know the True Self and transcend your karma. Now, let’s return to ego.

Early in development, a human form perceives stimuli in its environment as neutral. This is what is known as bottom-up perception. Experience with environmental stimuli attracts content. There is a predisposition to react to that content according to initial conditions. A human form will then retain in memory some of the content, explore it, elaborate it and begin creating character traits or fundamental action patterns around it. Many of these patterns, along with core patterns (e.g., the survival pattern) that are preset, come to automatically produce interpretations, motivations, decisions and impulses to action. The more automatic they become the less awareness one has of their operation. These patterns, which I discuss as automatic programs (APs) elsewhere³, are eventually woven into a basic self-narrative. Part of the purpose of the self-narrative is to explain why one is thinking, feeling and doing things that are being driven by APs that operate outside of awareness.

With the emergence of the basic narrative, ego has begun forming and the process of top-down perception begins. Thus, the evolving ego structure becomes a framework for interpreting experience through the narrative-defining ego. Ego structure becomes a filter that both interprets experience and selects content attracted from Universal Mind. The ego structure is further elaborated by beliefs encountered in the environment that resonate with ego's narrative. Especially important are cultural beliefs that are incorporated into the narrative supporting the ego process. The evolving structure is reinforced and strengthened by the resonant content recalled from memory or attracted from the Universal Mind. There is a neurological process called the default mode network^{4,5} that is closely tied to the maintenance and strengthening of ego. Anytime you are in a state of relaxed attention, it begins presenting you with material either drawn from memory or newly attracted from the Universal Mind. Attending to and engaging this material helps to refresh and elaborate the ego narrative.

As I pointed out in another essay⁶, many spiritual traditions teach that one significant task, on the spiritual journey, is to regain the ability to return to using bottom-up perception. Both meditation⁷ and awareness in the moment⁸ (a.k.a. presence) practices are used to help meet this goal. In both cases, the objective is to quiet the mind, which means dampening the effect of the default mode network. Because content naturally arises from memory and is regularly attracted from Universal Mind, it is difficult, probably impossible, to stop this process entirely. However, it is sufficient to learn to not focus attention on this content in awareness and thereby avoid making the content objects of consciousness and thereby become entangled in them.

Meditation helps you learn to maintain an attentive focus on a single stimulus such as the breath. While holding such a singular focus, it becomes possible to simply observe the flow of content in awareness as background rather than bringing it to the foreground and responding to it. Learning to simply observe content as a flow in the background will significantly reduce the amount of content arising in your awareness. In awareness practice, one focuses on a diffuse state of awareness where the field of awareness is usually external and may be full of content or potential objects of consciousness. However, none of the potential objects become true objects of consciousness. This is because nothing is singled out and established as a particular focus of attention. The focus of attention is on the field of awareness as a whole or a unified field and not on anything in particular within it. When awareness is holistic and no objects of consciousness are given focus, top-down perception is suspended.

Meditation and awareness practices are means of coming into a proper relationship with the ego process, which is a powerful process but still merely psychological. In the absence of disciplined attention, the ego process is unrestrained and dominant. Personal awareness identifies with the ego narrative, which is believed to arise from the body/mind. All experience is filtered through this narrative (top-down perception). Thus, top-down perception literally creates the reality that is experienced. A dominant ego interprets every thought, image or feeling that arises in awareness as being its thought, image or feeling and worthy of attention and thus as an object of consciousness.

A dominant ego process is the master of your life. Some narratives are largely functional, others largely dysfunctional and most somewhere in between. As one brings the ego process under control, making it a servant rather than a master, it is important that dysfunctional elements be addressed⁹. If it is to become a useful tool (a servant), it needs to be a tool that is in good working order. Becoming a self-aware being that employs the ego narrative as a tool for negotiating the world, one uses top-down perception selectively. One becomes largely disentangled from individual and cultural narratives and thus in the world but not of the world. This does not mean disengaged from the world but rather being better at determining what to engage and what not to engage, knowing how to engage dispassionately and impeccably and accepting whatever the outcomes of engagement are with equanimity.

By way of analogy, imagine what it would be like to be an actor on stage with other actors, who are in a hypnotic trance, and thereby be the only one who is aware that a play is in progress and that everyone is merely performing their part in the play. As is said in some spiritual circles, you would be the only one awake and the

only one who actually understood what was going on. You could watch the play unfold, guided by its script, and understand that the actors are performing their parts while believing that they are engaged in reality. You, however, would have a choice whether or not to stay “in character” and perform as the other actors expect you to perform or deviate from the narrative (a.k.a. the script) controlling those expectations.

As an awake person or one grounded in the natural mind⁶, there exists the possibility for unity with the unconditional acceptance or Divine Love that is the essence of Primordial Awareness. As discussed in a short essay¹⁰, unification is not a causal event. That is, it is a response-independent event. Unity may happen and it may not. It is independent of anything you can do from within the “play.” However, being grounded in the natural mind is good preparation in the event of grace.

References

1. See “On the Nature of Evil” at <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php> or here: <http://innerego.com/Appendix-Nine.php> and “Free Will and the Evolution of Consciousness at <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php>
2. See “Monistic Idealism” at: <http://innerego.com/Video-Audio.php>
3. See “Automatic Programs” subsection at: <http://innerego.com/I%3A-Techniques-for-working-on-the-self.php>
4. See “Meditation and the Brain” at: <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php>
5. See “Research Update” at: <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php> or here <http://innerego.com/Appendix-Six.php>
6. See “The Natural Mind” at: <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php> or here <http://innerego.com/II%3A-Becoming-open-to-the-Self.php>
7. See “Meditation” subsection here: <http://innerego.com/II%3A-Becoming-open-to-the-Self.php>
8. See “Self-Inquiry” subsection here: <http://innerego.com/II%3A-Becoming-open-to-the-Self.php>
9. Entire section here: <http://innerego.com/I%3A-Techniques-for-working-on-the-self.php>
10. See “Taken” at: <http://davidcenter.com/At-the-Brink.php> or here <http://innerego.com/II%3A-Becoming-open-to-the-Self.php>