

Self

Noun

1. In philosophy, the self is the relationship of an individual's own being, knowledge and values. Self relates the experiences of one's inner and outer living in presence. The first-person perspective distinguishes self-hood from personal identity. Wikipedia
2. The total, essential, or particular being of a person; the individual.
 - The essential qualities distinguishing one person from another; individuality.
 - One's consciousness of one's own being or identity; the ego.The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition.

This term is a particularly powerful example of the core insight into the cravings and clinging of Samsara at the heart of Buddhism. The above definitions announce the problem quite clearly. By reading carefully the above definitions it becomes obvious that the primary assumption is that the “self” is a thing, a consistent and enduring thing, a *person, place or thing*, as a *noun*. It would be more useful to understand the term “self” as a **verb**, an action:

1. The part of speech that expresses existence, action, or occurrence in most languages.
 - a) Any of the words belonging to this part of speech, as *be, run, or conceive*.
 - b) A phrase or other construction used as a verb.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition.

We tend to think of our selves as a container with a particular label like John, Judy, Bartholomew, Joan, Betty, Shanikwa, etc... In other words we think of our “Self” as **unique** and **persisting** from past to present and into the future. So how can we square this with everything we learn from Shakyamuni lessons and terms? **Impermanence**, **Anatman**, and even **Enlightenment** itself is an *instance* to be *maintained*.

When we Awaken our GoHonzon-mind to experience Buddhahness, we do not *exterminate* the “self”, but rather we alter its process of karmic momentum (see, **9 consciousnesses**, **moment-to-moment**, **karma**, **Engine of Life**, and **Nirvana**)

Awakening is “**Liberation**” as defined in the Four Noble Truths. Liberation makes explicit our *disconnection*, our *detachment*, our **no longer clinging** to a *persistent Ego* or **Self**, but, instead we understand that we “*are*” a constantly re-instantiating karmic freight-train of momentum, accruing influences and changes from one moment to the next at a pace we simply cannot perceive directly but can observe evidence of daily (see, **Moment**). We move away from “being” Angela the *noun*, and toward Angela the *verb*, *the process*, the moment-to-moment instantiation from formations to form, birth-death-rebirth-death-rebirth... action (cycle) of “being” with momentum (see, **cycle of birth and death**).

What our Samsaric mind constructs as the framework for a self is based on Samsaric data collection and the establishment of identifications to build characteristics and qualities in the physical experience of our bodies and thoughts. This constructed Ego is the adherence to and the maintenance of those identifications as personal traits.

A construct in psychology and neuropsychological evidence for its multiplicity

Abstract

What is the self? Philosophers and psychologists pursuing an answer to this question immediately find themselves immersed in a host of questions about mind and body, subject and object, object and process, the homunculus, free will, self-awareness, and a variety of other puzzling matters that largely have eluded satisfying theoretical explication. In this paper I argue that some of this difficulty is attributable to our implicit, phenomenologically-based belief that the self is unitary entity—i.e., a singular “I” that remembers, chooses, thinks, plans, and feels. In this article I address the question of what the self is by reviewing research, conducted primarily with neuropsychological participants, that converges on the idea that the self may be more complex and differentiated than many previous treatments of the topic have assumed. Although some aspects of self-knowledge such as episodic recollection may be compromised by cognitive and neurological disorders, other aspects—for instance, semantic trait summaries—appear largely intact. Taken together, these findings support the idea that there is no single, unified “I” to be found. Rather, I argue “the” self may best be construed as a set of interrelated, functionally independent systems. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

From the above quotation we can see that modern science is coming to the same conclusions, although painfully slowly, to the insights of Shakyamuni.

We tend to construct and revise our idea of a unique self by selecting moments. A moment from this morning, added to several moments from last week and six months ago and, oh yes, that time when little Johnny stole my this or that, and we construct our collected self, and adhere to it ferociously as our identity. Of course this falls apart quickly when we start to realize the *3000 Realms in each thought moment of life* and the expression of our collective and constantly altered “personal” karma is never a repetition or stagnant condition from the past and barely present in this moment, as we transition immediately into the next. What begins to form is the knowledge that the most awakened condition for our mind is to maintain awareness in our state of mind, our attitude and our intent, focused on fully realized potential and expression of our best tendencies to guide and influence this massive momentum of birth-death-rebirth-etc... into our next moments.

To maintain focus on this dynamic and constantly developing “*self*” it becomes imperative that we let go of the past, let go of our *clinging* for the past. We must train our mind, our consciousnesses with the 9th consciousness of enlightenment to lead the way, to wrap all other eight consciousnesses into a singular Bodhisattva path of enlightened “Being”, the Buddha Way.