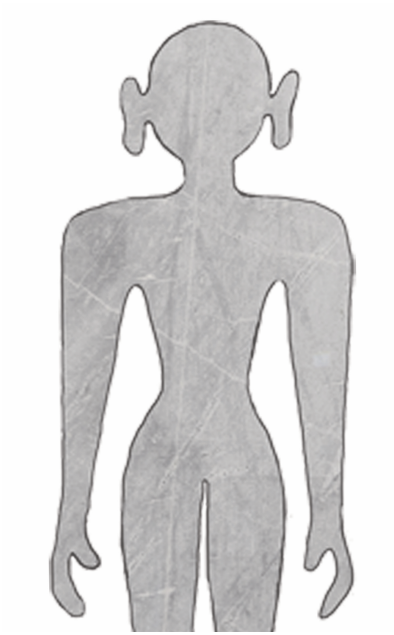


A dialogue about body, mind, ego and awareness



This Mystery and I

Peter Ingle

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Foreword

In response to my previous books, readers were asking to organize a series of gatherings where they could learn more about how I was combining ideas from non-dualism and the fourth way to deepen an understanding of both traditions. A small group eventually met for several sessions which were recorded and edited for publication as this book. What follows is a dialogue about how body, mind, and ego contribute to our sense of 'I', and how this relates to the self-realization of awareness.

As ideas about enlightenment have become more popular, it has become easier to misconstrue enlightenment as an experience that happens to 'me' the person becoming more enlightened, more mindful, more awake. Bringing together ideas from the fourth way and non-dualism helps explain the cause of this psychological pitfall, how to recognize it, and how to avoid it.

The book's title, *This Mystery and I*, was inspired from a line in Walt Whitman's poem 'Song of Myself' which can be understood in two ways at the same time: that body, mind, and ego are seen as a mystery by the real 'I' of awareness; and conversely that the egoic 'I'

purported by body, mind, and ego can sense but never comprehend the mystery of awareness. The title can also stand as simply a statement that the dialogue comprises both topics, which it does.

The discussion that follows does its best to suggest and hint and convey what awareness *is*, but that remains an elusive goal. As Gurdjieff said, “Man cannot explain what he himself really is.” This is because awareness is a higher dimension that is incomprehensible to the body and mind and to the ego they foster. At their best, body and mind can intuit the flavor of awareness, learn to recognize some of its traces, and deduce what it is *not*. The more this happens, the more awareness comes to realize itself as the consciousness of itself.



I would like to better understand what the ego is and how it operates as our identity.

The ego is a psychological hologram that the mind projects every few seconds as a sense of 'I'. This hologram bends and twists and takes on different colors according to the situation. As a result, we project a slightly different persona at work, another at home, another at dinner parties, another when we meet strangers. We look the same, but our sense of 'I' and our projection of 'I' changes. To understand why the ego does this, you have to understand it in relation to awareness.

Whereas the ego is your feeling of 'I' and 'me', awareness is your consciousness of this sense of 'I'. But this consciousness is not usually aware of *itself*, and because of this it unwittingly attaches itself to what it perceives. When it attaches to thoughts and emotions, the mind uses this attachment to project the ego.

The more awareness attaches to your mind, the more it loses consciousness of itself and the more it strengthens your feeling of identity as a person. This is why attachment is also called identification, although it is more accurate to say that attachment ends up as identification.



Where does the feeling of 'I' reside?

In between awareness and the mind there is a thin membrane. Over time, the ego accumulates in this membrane as an image of 'I'. The mind projects the image of 'I' into the membrane where it leaves an imprint, almost like a developed photograph. But because awareness is not conscious of itself, and because the membrane is transparent, awareness does not distinguish between itself and the image of 'I' in the membrane. It thinks it is the hologram. Only when awareness brings *itself* into focus does the distinction become clear.



But the ego comes from somewhere, doesn't it?

We are not born with an ego. It is not a natural part of who and what we are when we are born. It accumulates during our life as a by-product of awareness repeatedly identifying with our thoughts, emotions, and sensations. After just a few years as a human being, this accumulation molds the foundation of a sense of 'I'. By the age of six or seven, most children have a well established ego. After that, their

sense of 'I' grows stronger and the membrane housing the ego gets more opaque until awareness no longer shines through as itself.



What happens to the ego in enlightenment?

Because the ego is just a hologram, it evaporates under the light of conscious awareness. If the light is strong enough, it completely absorbs the image of 'I' and the image disappears. As this happens, the membrane that housed the ego becomes transparent again and the mind returns to being simply an instrument absent of identity. Awareness prevails as the conscious realization that it is pure awareness.



Can you say more about the membrane of the ego?

It is just a description, an analogy. But we can say that near the back wall of the mind there is a thin membrane where the ego accumulates as a sense of 'I'. Due to the transparency of this membrane, the ego and awareness mistake themselves for each other. Awareness thinks it is 'I' and 'I' thinks it is awareness. The

question, “Who am I?” forms in this membrane. The self-realization of awareness happens on the other side of it.



How does identification come into play?

Identification acts as an electric current that cauterizes awareness to the mind and body. It transfers unconscious awareness to the mind and body where it is appropriated as a feeling of ‘I’. With self-realization, this energy returns to awareness and the feeling of ‘I’ dissipates.

You can also think of identification as an electric cable. By means of this cable, the energy of awareness attaches itself to whatever it perceives. If you reverse the flow of energy in the cable, it returns to awareness and awareness becomes aware of itself as pure perception.

A good way to notice identification is in the form of momentum. You can’t stop moving or talking or emoting or eating. Identification has absorbed you in its flow. The opposite happens when momentum gets broken, such as when you get ill or injured or suffer loss. You suddenly find yourself more established in presence. The next step is then whether presence becomes aware that it is present.