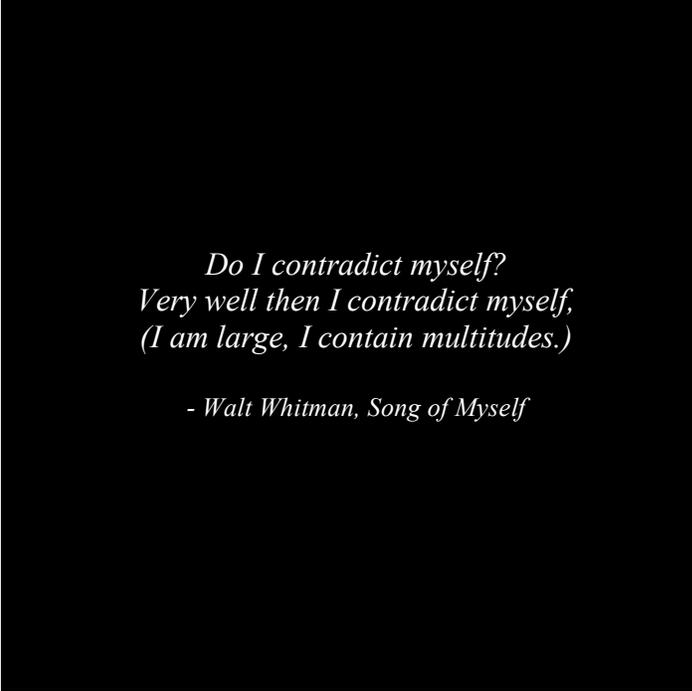


## Reincarnation, Karma and other Chameleons: The impossibility of division



*Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*

*- Walt Whitman, Song of Myself*

Many theorists within the disciplines of psychology and philosophy, such as Carl Jung, Rudolph Steiner and others, have been involved with understanding Oneness. This is either from Steiner's expression, a monism of intuition, which is an energetic field that is also expressed in the new-science of quantum phenomena, or Jung's collective consciousness, which is best described as super-consciousness because in this way divisions are not made. However, both men also had a great interest in the ideas of reincarnation and karmic cycles.

Historically it is in the Vedas of India that we get the first glimpse of the reincarnation ideology, as well as in other ancient traditions the world over. However, what is misconceived here is that the ideas of reincarnation at the time of the Vedas are the same at the time of a modern western person's viewpoint, or in fact later conceptions of the ideology within the east, in attempting to understand it from a more individualist-dualist view. Reincarnation as an ideology has had many re-interpretations up until and beyond the "Tibetan book of the Dead" (800AD) and other such literature. We have to look instead at the main principles in order to understand reincarnation at its roots, before it got spread around the world influencing religions in the Middle East, Tibet and numerous other growing cultures. The point I want to look at is much like the perfect expression of Whitman above, this is the kind of thinking that is root to the ideas of reincarnation and "past-lives" and Karma in today's world. The problem is that this base is lost and as such, if we look away from the Oneness for a moment, we can very easily slip into a duality, which is something that the above scholars seem to have done.

The problem of reincarnation, as we see it today, is that it presumes a person has something called a soul, which goes beyond the body, has a separate identity in its own right and manifests in a body. At death, it takes on a new form, living and dying in another body. Therefore it is considered there is indeed a body and a spirit and that these are separate. This is fundamental dualism. The problem continues, since, in such a situation the body-person has memories of previous lives, which were supposedly lived by that soul. This means that in this life a person is attempting to deal with all the memories and situations that went on in previous existences, with all the “karmic consequences” that the past lives have lived. Karma is something that has again been skewed in modern times. It is seen to be more than just a simple process of a movement into streams of reactive or hallucination driven/past-memory fantasies being played out, and given a god-like dualistic retribution ideology in that there are situations from the past, which “catch up with you”, so to speak. If a soul has done “dreadful” things in past existences, then repercussions occur which are supposedly about the balance of the universe, causing more or less suffering through a person’s existence. This can take many forms: disabilities from birth, defects, damage, injury and accident, all come under the category of karmic retribution of some kind or another, pointing out the obvious, that all events are linked together. However, for the believer there is a fatalism involved, since one cannot get out of the domino effect of past karma, so one simply needs to deal with whatever is occurring. This developed into politically-motivated ideologies like the Caste system in India which is based on a Karmic ideology of hierarchy and notions of “higher” and “lower” states of poverty or riches which cannot be meddled with, often for political rather than religious bases. While Karma does give the notion of the nature of the mind and its process of causing domino effects of the dis-ease of “individualism”, the now warped idea of Karma can be said to be its own dis-ease!

Ultimately there are numerous problems with this picture, based on fundamental Oneness/non-duality or monism, whichever word you like. When something is One, it is one, you can’t make a division, which would be implied if there was a separate floating soul that reincarnates at birth and floats away again at death. This misses the deeper meaning of the nature of reincarnation. Karma occurring to an individual is also an impossibility, as within Oneness no divisible person exists. So if reincarnation doesn’t exist, then what is the reason for the memories? Why is it that people feel they have had past lives and *déjà vu* experiences, all sorts of dreams and feelings from the past? When we consider Oneness as a thought process or concept we are looking merely at ideas. However, what what I’m talking about is what we see and feel in the observation of nature, so see if that corresponds to your own experience. When we look at nature, we watch cycles and patterns, there is a flow of expression, things are born, grow and die. When something dies, new life grows, when something grows, death also occurs. There is a Oneness, therefore, of life and death. However the ground state is death. Like Jung’s expression of the super-conscious, if we take the least mind-based expression of this, it is simply Oneness, an energy pool. This is like the origin of life on the planet: as life emerges different forms occur, then they die back into the pool, they express as something and then fall back into the darkness. This is the nature of forms. The forms, be they humans, animals or plants, all grow out of the Oneness, then fall back into it at death and then other forms grow out. It’s a bit like a fist - hold the fist of your hand tightly

closed, then open it out, the fingers represent life; allow the hand to close again, this is death or return.

Thoughts are like this too. There is a still pool and from it, without cause or reason, a thought intuitively emerges. It then forms something else, like a cloud in the sky, or a ripple, which moves to stillness again. This is the nature of all life and everything. The ancients understood the original Oneness, in India called Brahma, with Atman as the expression of this, as being a finger of the hand of Oneness within the human. From this perspective, reincarnation means the re-formation of a human being from Oneness. This of course is going on the whole time. Just as one finger closes, so another opens. When reincarnation is seen to happen, not to any one individual but as the nature of Brahma or Oneness itself, then we can talk about reincarnation. One could therefore draw a connection between reincarnation and the evolutionary understanding we have within modern science, although broader than this materialist view; that energy transforms and re-forms over time. This, too, was known by the Vedic peoples. The human being is part of a larger picture, that of the body of humanity, we function on the human wavelength, so to speak. As such, there is a resonance of thoughts and feelings associated with this, rather than of elephants or dolphins. Generally we can more easily connect to humans than to other animals, so in life and in death there is a field of energy which contains all past information within the present, as held memory, within this Oneness. As past and future are mere concepts of the mind, present is the only true experience there is. Even memory is experienced in the present moment, so in essence there is no past and as such no possibility of going into the past or the future.

There is however the “field” of everythingness, which also includes past expressions in the collective mind – energy vibration that is human. At deeper states of sleep and trance a person becomes very receptive and can connect to this, which is what Jung termed the super-conscious. It is really just like a constant radio signal, providing the echoes of past expression in the present, a kind of memory bank of everything which humans can access - the human-frequency - just like the fact that we can only see a certain spectrum of light. Also these past situations are not *owned* by anything. When the person is receptive, they may be listening to Radio Ancient Egypt one day and the next day Radio Mexico, the point is that the stations can shift and change. No person owns the information because there is no individual. If there were, this would be like a nerve cell saying “no, sorry, I own this impulse, I’m not passing it on to you because this bit is mine. I need it to do some deep psychotherapy on my life”. This unfortunately is a state of contraction of a person’s ideas, to believe that they have an absolute body and soul and want to hold onto it. But why would such ideas have arisen?

As always with the human mind, the answer is fear - fear of the unknown, fear of death which is the fundamental human fear of the dissolution of the person they think they are. Simply letting go into a totally natural, automated state of being, where they do not have a “self” to speak of and as such behave as animals do, simply being One with nature, is the alternative. Somehow humans believe that the nature of self-consciousness is something that is a highlight of adaptation rather than another nuance of nature, that moves to extinction, as so many other species have done before us, when an adaptive

ability has become a burden. Humans would like to believe themselves to be at the top of a chain of hierarchy of maximum consciousness, being in the state of the monk, rather than the low level of the ant or the earwig, but actually all are at the same level. There is no hierarchy at all. Some animals can swim underwater, some can smell blood a mile away, some can see a needle in a haystack from a hundred yards and humans have memory and mind. There is nothing special here, just adaptations – and they are all beautiful.

Karma and reincarnation are allied concepts - reincarnation is about the cycles of life and death which are recurring events, not an owned “incarnation”, but rather of Oneness, with which memories are also associated. So what of karma? This is not happening to the individual either but is seen within the human species as a warping of the mind. Fundamentally, Karma is a belief in the past - the end of karma is when the belief in the past ends. Karma really is the flow of the cycle of constant agitation of the mind, it is the idea of separation at its root and the in-born notion of something happening to the “individual”. This means that ideas and thought processes that went on before, during and after birth for all humans on the planet at that time, also cause a particular load of mental ideas on a “person’s” life. This however, depends literally on a “natural selection” process which the karma or simply mind-attitude of separation can be seen through - utterly dissolving in a flash, or gradually being worn away. The nature of karma as an absolute, if it is considered to be owned, i.e. “your” karma or “my” karma, is also associated with ideologies of separation, which are the root basis of fear and lack of clarity.

The web has no weaver, there is no separate being pulling the strings, just extensions of that which “I” am. I can be seen in various ways. There is the view of me as the individual: the view further back is of “me” as a town, the view still further back is the country, then the world, then the solar system, then the universe. Or if we look inwards, we can go from the human “me” into the cells and then into the genes, the molecules, the atoms, then to sub-atomic, and finally into the nothingness that exists within the fundamental particles, as well as in the background of the universe. The point is that “I” have an entire hierarchy of expressions, like concentric circles, and the inner and out circles meet in Oneness. Therefore “I” only appears to be contradictory, because from the mind of the modern human adult I am an individual, but from the sense and instinct of an infant, a person rooted in native culture or those who understand the ancient ways, there is no such contradiction, no such problem, as there is only Oneness. There is nothing else but these thoughts and intuitions. which are simply known to be the direction from the whole movement, the whole body of nature, rather than “my own” idea.

Matter and energy are intimately One. A physical existence is utterly united with energetic or spirit qualities. Everything that is physical has spirit, even a dead body has spirit, it is just not in a form which functions as a live human being, therefore no point of death. It is a misconception to believe that there is some sort of body-shell and that it dies. It is true that life happens through a person, from the inside out and outside in and this is one process, but even this does not give a good description. The person is a channel or a vessel for life but at the same time the vessel itself is life. Therefore when

energy accumulates to form something in the universe, it has some sort of form. A soul with no form is an accumulation of no-thing, an expression of pure energy. Why would this suddenly appear? This isn't a materialist question, this is actually about the nature of Oneness. Energy without form is like yin without yang. It is a dualism to suggest that such a thing can be possible, because it cannot. There is no evidence of this within our world. There are those who suggest that ghosts and apparitions appear, but these are not commonplace events and also it is not clear why they would need to be explained as disembodied spirits. That there is energetic Oneness and total unity is deeply clear, in every sense, but that suddenly, within this, there can be an apparition which is not of the universe, is something quite different, in fact impossible. I do not have an explanation for this but I know from simple observation of the natural world, that this does not occur, there is no grass spirit when grass dies, no mice spirits to be seen. The concept of ghosts is prevalent in much of ancient Chinese belief systems, but classical Taoist philosophers, or neo-Taoists, such as Wang Chong, AD 27–97, gave chase to the idea of ghosts in this way:

*“People say that spirits are the souls of dead men. That being the case, spirits should always appear naked, for surely it is not contended that clothes have souls as well as men”.* (from his *“Lun Heng”*).

Simple understanding of this nature is not to suggest that these occurrences do not exist but rather that as yet they are not fully comprehended, therefore to suggest that they are souls and spirits is to uphold an ideology of dualism. Materialism is dualism also – it is not the case that pure material existence is the only possibility. This would be to say there is no yang and only yin. To say there is a spirit and a body separation is also a dualism suggesting yang without yin. All of these kinds of pictures of reality are formations of the mind that attempt to make sense of its pictures, memories and thoughts and pins them onto an individual. There is that which underpins all of this, both yin and yang, from which they are both born - this is Void, Emptiness or Oneness, and as such there is nothing divided. One can be sure that whatever phenomenon one witnesses, it is part of Oneness and as such is connected to both yin and yang, material form and ethereal expression simultaneously, expanding and accumulating, falling in and out of the sea of oneness in different forms - all a dream or all a reality, it makes no difference, it just is.

A dear friend recently pointed out to me that it must be that “karma” and “reincarnation” and the process of it being a continual “improvement” (in its association with Hinduism and Buddhism and other modern ideologies that have taken this concept on), is ONLY about the human mind. How can a flower grow more or less perfectly? It is entrenched in the dualism of a better-worse morality. The ideology of karma makes out that the human is polishing itself towards “perfection” yet when we look around at nature, it is clear that there is no improvement necessary, hence karma must be exclusively for humans, it cannot include all of nature, or it would mean that all of nature and the universe as we know it was created just for humans. This smacks of the delusion of “self”, for as far as we know, we are the only ones with this dis-ease and so the sense of separation that forms the concepts of karma and reincarnation in the first place. They are expressions that simply miss the simple reality that the human perception is very narrow, it forms

concepts like karma and reincarnation due to its narrowness; these are expressions of a warped state of being. This dis-ease state looks at the world and sees the human as wrong and nature as even more wrong than the human, the human as hierarchically more important than all other forms of life on the planet and all things being separate from each other, karma and reincarnation make sense. However it is only sense to a deranged mind fraught with this kind of separation. Nature is perfect. The human therefore is already perfect, yet he/she feels like she is missing something...this in itself is the dis-ease. The seeking in itself is the suffering for humans.

In the writings of various western people we see the ideas of reincarnation and karma coming into what we are told is a monism. Whereas Oneness accepts that people do think this way, as the mind is our tool for separating things, it is also accepted that it is utterly illusive to believe an individual owns a soul or that reincarnation has an owned past or has a karmic load to “deal with”. All accounts of there being such a thing as “an individual” are untrue to our instincts and senses, which are in fact what allow freedom, rather than preventing it. The seeming “individual” never feels free, but always at odds with nature and with seeming “other individuals”.

When we tread the path of attempting to understand other cultures, we have to come from the roots of that culture, because very often separation from the roots occurs later in its development. For every point of stillness in nature, in our history of the mind, there is a much longer time during which became explained as separatism. So for example, in China Taoism originated, then was almost immediately overrun by religious Taoism and Confucianism, which were both dualistic. From Christ we move to Christianity, Christ was monist, Christianity dualist. Buddha’s expression of Oneness became Buddhism, dualist. Similarly, the Vedic /yogic peoples had an understanding of Oneness, but Hinduism is generally dualist. This is always the problem, even in tribal cultures, although here there is often such a root base of being close to nature that the philosophical is not intertwined with the exultation of the individual by civilization. The primal principle stays close to the earth and as a result doesn’t overrun itself, otherwise the tribes also would turn into a civilization and would die out, as for example, the Egyptians and the Mayans.

While this looks like a case for Oneness or Monism, it is actually a case for consistency of understanding. When we understand something, even at the theoretical level, consistency has to be key otherwise we lose the thread of clarity within a dualism. Most western thinkers have a tendency to move between knowing there is something important in Oneness but then turning to the dualistic. One can always tell the struggle these people go through because generally there is no consistency in their writing. There is a jump from monism to dualism and a flickering in between, a kind of dance, due to the nature of writing itself. This is because they are in this place with their theoretical ideologies, but the trend tends to continue into subsequent generations because the dogmatism left behind from the dualist aspects of their work is picked up by the mind. Those writers who speak of Oneness in a true and deep way, end themselves within what they are writing. Whitman is an example above, another might be Lao Tzu, when he speaks of the nature of the human:-

In the *Tao Te Ching* there is this famous verse (lines 14–17):

*Heaven and Earth are ruthless, the myriad creatures are treated as straw dogs; therefore the Natural Person is ruthless and treats the people as straw dogs.*

*Is not the space between heaven and earth like a bellows?*

*It is empty without being exhausted:*

*The more it works the more comes out.*

*Much speech leads inevitably to silence*

*Better anchor in the Void.*

The straw dog is latterly a dog made of straw, to be used in ceremonies, the making of the dog being an expression of the growth of the human, the ceremony itself the peak of that life; then after the ceremony the dog is discarded and trampled underfoot. They are no longer part of the life of the world and they return to the Void. For there to be realization of Oneness there has to be a deep acceptance of death, in the hilarious understanding that there is no self to die!

David Nassim  
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