

## A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Dr. David K. Banner

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Our self-concept (also called the ego identity) has been studied for years by psychologists. It is composed of all the beliefs, attitudes and values that make up our definition of ourselves. It has our concepts about our strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, what we think is good and what we think is bad, and so forth. We created it as a result of our identification with ourselves as a separate entity (what the Fundamentalist Christians often call the Fall from Grace; I am not including their other interpretations about that event!) and have passed along its major assumptions from generation to generation through the socialization process and through race memory. Let us explore this very important frame or paradigm in more detail.

### THE EGO IDENTITY

Who exactly are you? This question has been part of the human experience for quite some time. People answer this in a variety of ways. For some, the answer is ***I am my body***. For these folks, the body is the center of their concern; this means that the center of conscious attention is the body's wellness, strength, safety, endurance, etc. These folks can be body builders, or health fanatics, or sickly people who are always at the doctors. What all of these people have in common is a concern for, and identification with, the body. We worry about the body getting older, getting infirm, getting overweight, etc. Addictive obsessions like bulimia or anorexia can be seen as manifestations with identity found in the body. The problem, of course, with an identity in the body is that the body is a temporal form, i.e., it grows old, wears out and eventually dies.

Another option for identifying who I am is ***I am my feelings and emotions***. In this identity, I identify with my emotional state. Again, this is an unstable identity because emotions and feelings are transient entities, changeable as the wind. Not exactly a recipe for an enduring identity! When you say "I am sad" or "I am happy", you are creating an identity out of an emotional experience. People that identify with their emotions as who they are find their identity buffeted around by changing conditions in their environment, especially if they are expecting the environment to make them happy. Many people who think they are their feelings will try to create an image for the world to approve of, so that they will feel loved and appreciated.

Yet a third option is the identity of *I am my mind*. This one is very popular, especially in Western culture. Since all of our so-called great technological achievements have evolved from mental activity, i.e., inventions, new gadgets, etc., we tend to think that we are our minds. The great philosopher Descartes is said to have posited: “I think, therefore I am.” This is a fundamental error; the opposite is actually the truth: “I am; therefore, I think.” Or, stated differently, I am a being who has the capacity to think.

Since science split off from religion, science has become the new religion for many people. The scientific method is put forth as a great triumph over barbarism and superstition. We now can “prove” things; using controlled experiments. We can use an experimental group (which receives some experimental variable X) and a control group, similar in every way to the experimental group but without the introduction of the variable X, measure them on some scale for variable Y (the dependent variable) before the treatment with X, and after the treatment. If there is a significant difference in the dependent variable Y, then we can say that X caused Y. This seems to give us great predictive power. The reason the scientific method has become so popular is that the ego identities, whether body-centered, mind-centered or feeling-centered, are all temporary, form-oriented identities that change and eventually die. Each of these fear-based, temporary identities want *prediction and control* so that life’s vagaries and “dangers” can be avoided or mitigated. The scientific method seems to give us that prediction and control.

Then, of course, there are a number of sub-identities people adopt like *I am my job, I am my personality, I am my possessions, I am who I know, I am (fill in the blank here)*. Each of these sound ludicrous when you say them out loud, but, if you think about it, this is exactly what we are doing when, for example, our job and status defines who we are! Anything that is perceived as an enhancement to the ego is fair game for a sub-identity. A person with a need to be liked sees an identity in being attractive, having the “right” job, being a “pleaser”, etc. A person with a need to be seen as an achiever will *be* their job. A person who wants to be seen as unique will want unusual occupations, artistic interests, etc. A person who wants to be seen as smart will accumulate information, show how smart they are, and feel safe in that identity. People who need to be seen as powerful and a leader will adopt the identity of *I can take over and lead us to where we want to go*

Each child in the ego state will experience trauma (the ego *loves* trauma, drama and conflict because it offers “proof” of the separate, isolated self) and then adopts an identity that represents a survival strategy for that person in the “dangerous” world. As we mature into adulthood, we tend to keep doing what worked for us as children to help us survive., The main point here are this: the ego identity is a false identity (we made it up, literally!), it is based in fear since it is separated from the rhythms that rule the Cosmos and it is harmful to us (and others) because of that fact. We literally are holding the power of the Universe at bay as we adopt this pitiful, puny ego identity and keep it alive. It takes so much of our energy to keep this charade going day by day; it has been argued that this is why we need so much sleep at night!(MSI, Ascension, 1997)

So, why do we insist on hanging on to it? Because we learned that this is who we are, from our parents, from the media, from the churches, etc. There seems to be a consensus on the planet that this is what human beings are. So, to go against the weight of this agreement is tough. But, remember this: *it is a choice*.

Where did the ego come from? We are all born from a perfect state of *oneness* from our mother's womb. Then, almost immediately, we realize that we have to become dependent on other folks to take care of our needs. Then what usually happens is that our caregivers use *conditional love* to get us to do what they want us to do. This looks like "If you obey Mommy, you will get an ice cream cone" or "If you do this that I told you not to do, I will punish you." Quickly, the child perceives, with great sensitivity, that its survival depends upon the goodwill of the powerful adult(s), who is (are) actually a God to them at that stage. As children, we are open to everything and our parents seem to be omnipotent and omniscient. Then, the process of individuation begins, as we slowly begin to see ourselves as separate and alone in the Universe with a need to be loved, protected and accepted. And how do we win the love (or at least the acceptance) of significant others? It is by conforming to an image that they want from us. This marks the onset of the false self and the loss of innocence.

This is the process of socialization. Since many are firmly convinced that people are basically bad (the "flawed sinner" concept from most religions), we must train them to be "good.", i.e., conform to societal standards of good and avoid the "bad." We fear anarchy because, above else, we must have control and predictability in our world. This is why terrorism is so feared...it is unpredictable. As Hermann Goering (the infamous WW II aide to Hitler) pointed out, fear is the best way to control ego-identified humans. The current neo-conservative Administration, in my opinion, has made an art form of this fact. Keep people in fear; you can control them.

The ego identity has convinced you that you are basically helpless in the world with only your mind to help you. Sure, you have friends and family but you are separate and alone....the mythology of our culture ("the rugged individualist") supports this conclusion. So, the ego identity produces a fantastic world that is really the opposite of Reality. Your *body* is a product of ego thinking and assumptions; your *mind* is actually connected to the Cosmic Mind (or Cosmic Intelligence or Universal Intelligence) , but, with the ego in charge, you never realize this. You never hear the "still, small voice" that the Old Testament Bible talks about; you only hear the loud, fear-based voice of the ego. Your *emotions* are a product of your thinking; you experience being "happy" when something happens in your subjective, ego reality that the ego likes; you are unhappy when something happens (or, more correctly, appears to happen), in your ego reality that the ego doesn't like...and so on. The ego has firmly convinced each of us that the world is the way it appears to the ego's mind state

The ego needs a certain level of stress, problems, trauma, to keep itself going; after all, the ego cannot accept the peace and balance that comes with adopting the larger identity, because its basic assumptions of separateness, danger, fear, etc. would be challenged. Holding grievances against other people is one way to keep the level of “problems” high and feed/validate the ego.

However, luckily, the ego’s version of the world is NOT reality. It is, as two of the major world religions ( Hinduism and Buddhism) have pointed out, a waking dream or an illusion. The inside (beliefs, attitudes, values, assumptions, expectations) is projected outside and then we react to what we have created. This is a startling revelation! Your eyes are merely projectors of your belief systems, and your brain does not think; it just uses your beliefs, attitudes and values to “decide” that which agrees with the internal programming. In the darkness of the ego, you cannot see, hear, smell, taste or touch anything of *reality*. Everything is a projection from the ego’s insanity. Furthermore, since most people on the planet are in the grip of the ego trance, there is produced a “consensus reality”. (Castereda, 1971) We share a certain number of beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations and assumptions so we can communicate with each other; we all agree that water is wet, solids are hard, etc. Beyond, that, there are individual belief systems which determine whether you see a dangerous, hostile world out there (negative thoughts ) or a bright, sunny world full of opportunity and potential fun ( positive thoughts). However, it is all ego. It is basically the difference between a pleasant dream or a nightmare, but it is all a dream. Do you now see why the world is so sick?

### THE TRUE IDENTITY

I am making the argument that all personality types are all identities of the human ego. As such, they are false identities since the ego itself is a false structure. Created by the experience of the Fall from Grace, this fearful structure of thought forms is an identity based on transient forms like the body, mind and emotions. But who you REALLY are is a spiritual being having a human experience IN a body, with a mind and emotions. Your essence is one with the “kosmic consciousness” (to use Ken Wilber’s phrase) that animates the entire Universe and beyond. Therefore, your true identity is vast, infinite and unchanging, not subject at all to the vagaries of time and space. If you actually adopt this identity, you will find that your fear vanishes. What is there to be afraid of if you identify with the Spirit that animates the cosmos? This is why it is so helpful to do regular meditation ; by touching into the vast emptiness of Being, we come to recognize it as our rightful home. But the ego is afraid, very afraid, because, in truly acknowledging this fact, it means the death of the ego identity, and the ego will do *anything* in its bag of tricks to prevent that outcome.

Let us say that you have an assumption of identity in the larger whole (the cosmos and the energy/intelligence that animates it), not in a separate, isolated, small ego identity. An apt metaphor is this: say you are a wave in the ocean. You are equally “wet” as the ocean itself and all other waves. Do you want to choose an identity as a wave or as the ocean? As a wave, you are tiny and insignificant; as the ocean, you are mighty and strong. There is another huge difference between the two identities. In the fear-based ego state, you don't experience reality; you see, hear, taste, touch and smell a projection of your belief systems; the waking dream is like a movie with you as the projectionist...except you don't realize it.. In true identity, you basically let the Spirit (God) shine through your eyes for “radiant seeing”, through your ears for “radiant hearing”, etc. You let the mind of God do your thinking and you have “radiant thinking.” In this way, you perceive the actual, true reality and not a projection of your ego.

There is some awareness of this on the planet in tribal or aboriginal cultures. When we lived in Australia, I had an Aboriginal student in my class on Organizational Behavior. I gave an exam and he failed. But I sensed that he was a bright guy and I asked him to come to my office for an oral exam; he did brilliantly. His culture was holistic, not linear-sequential like ours and he thought holistically....as long as he could develop his argument in non-linear ways, he was fine. I wondered if he and many others like him had “failed” at Western educational institutions because of this. Also, the South Africans, with their model of reconciliation after apartheid, is an inspiration for all of us. John Renesch, in his most recent FUTURE SHAPERS MONTHLY (#96, July, 2006), had this to say:

I asked a woman from South Africa this question: ‘What is so different about your country that it embraced this approach rather than the militaristic-retribution model that dominates the headlines throughout the world?’ She told me it had to do with ‘ubuntu’, the centuries-old African philosophy that centers on the belief of the interconnectedness of all people. She told me that the African culture was steeped in the understanding that each person’s ‘beingness’ was dependent on and tied to every other person’s ‘beingness.’

I since learned this system of African values underpins large parts of the continent’s social structure and is now considered the backbone of the new South Africa. Ubuntu serves as the unifying philosophy in a society previously divided and ravaged by apartheid. Ubuntu means ‘humanity’ or ‘humanness’ and is widely accepted as essential in the transformation of all of South Africa’s systems. The African saying ‘Umntu Ngumntu Ngabantu’ means ‘a person is a person through other people.’ Ubuntu has played a major role in the forging of a national consciousness and continues to be vital in the process of nation building. This philosophy...has four components :(1) the equality and dignity of all people; (2) an emphasis on humanness and brotherhood/sisterhood of humankind;(3) the

sacredness of life; and (4) working towards the most desirable state of human existence...In his book GOD HAS A DREAM, Archbishop Tutu writes ubuntu 'is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours. It speaks about wholeness. It speaks about compassion...In the traditional setting, when people quarreled, the main intention was not to punish the miscreant but to restore good relations.

In a similar vein, the African tribal elder Malidoma Some speaks of the village tradition used with young people who commit an offense to another person. Instead of punishing the person, they simply remind the person of their life purpose to get them back on track. This life purpose was articulated to the person at their birth and every year thereafter to keep them in the Divine Design for their lives. What a wonderful way to bring the person back into alignment with true purpose!

Of course, these traditions are holistic in nature and help to guide people in the separated human state to more humane actions *but* they are not, in themselves, what I am talking about. No conceptual framework will work to get us out of the experience of ego identity. They will help if they are beneficent like these, but they are not the true answer. True Identity can only come with a transformational experience (or, rather, a number of them) that cause a breakdown in the old ego paradigm and the emergence of the true identity.

What must it be like to live in True Identity? Since I don't know anyone doing it on a full time basis, I can only make some speculations. I have known two men who seem to live there and they have shared with me a lot of their experience. This state is what the Transcendental Meditation people called *unity consciousness* and what the Ascension folks call *unified perpetual consciousness*. It is, apparently, a state where the boundary between "you" and everything else is very thin and gossamer-like. It is not that people in Unity don't have egos; it is just that they can watch the ego and its antics with detached bemusement. These people have a calm, centeredness to their demeanor; they are focused, on-purpose in the lives and are "living deliberately", as Harry Palmer of AVATAR says. It does not mean that they are humorless; quite the contrary! But their humor is in the delight of simply living, not at the expense of another being. If you listen to Eckhardt Tolle give a lecture, he will giggle almost all the time. The same is true for Ken Wilbur and Jaxon-Bear; these people are having fun watching the ego show with detachment. When asked about this, Tolle said that he finds the human ego-identified state amusing in the extreme! People in *unity* have no conflict or judgment because there is nothing to oppose; they are *one* with all life. They may experience human emotions like anger, sadness, joy, etc.(all of which are derived from the ego), but an overriding sense of peace and calm is always the ground of their Being.

There are no guarantees. From the viewpoint of fear, none are strong enough. From the viewpoint of love, none are necessary...Emmanuel

Another aspect of life in True Identity is integrity. Integrity means wholeness, completeness. (Owen Waters, "Infinite Being", June 11, 2006) Waters goes on to say:

Guilt and fear are, of course, part of the tradition we have inherited from our forebears. That tradition is one of separateness, e.g., separation of people into sexes, races, colors, religions. Then there is the separation of cities via competing sports teams, the separation of nations through battles and war. Even consciousness has been separated into subconscious, super-conscious and regular waking events. Separation is the opposite of wholeness. Separation divides while integrity unifies. It is the difference in viewpoints between, for example, "Is your community Protestant or Catholic?", and the response, "Our community contains both Protestants and Catholics." Integrity is inclusive; separation is exclusive. Integrity is the ability to say "and" instead of "or." Wholeness allows your energies to be directed towards any activity without them being dissipated by inner conflicts. Integrity, therefore, empowers effectiveness.

The traditions of guilt and fear come from the old reality, which is one of separation. Guilt and fear were primarily tools used to control other people

Today's inherited cultural baggage includes many subconscious archetypes. Among these are the ideas of oaths of allegiance, poverty and chastity. Whether you have made these oaths in previous incarnations as a monk or a nun, or just inherited them along with today's cultural mindset, they can be equally debilitating. It is time to let these unconscious, outmoded restrictions go.

I like what Waters has to say here. But I believe he doesn't go far enough to the root of the problem; the ego-dominated mind. We *need* these vows in some sense if people are completely ruled by self-centeredness. We *need* laws, courts, police, jails, for the same reason. Unless we can transcend the ego assumptions that dominate our consciousness, we will not move into complete integrity and harmony with all sentient life forms. I don't believe we can legislate or police our way out of this dilemma! Remember, in the ego state, you are inherently insecure, so you try to control others and "get on top" so you'll feel safer. It doesn't work, however, especially for creating a just, safe and sane society. In the dawning new reality, we find it our responsibility to transform these tools of the "Dark Ages" in which we now live.

Life in True Identity also acknowledges the inherent divine design of Life. (Hammond, "Tragedy into Triumph?", June 15, 2006) Hammond goes on to say:

Without design, there is no morality. With no design, there is no right or wrong, everything just happens blindly, purposelessly, and constantly changes with no rational, purposeful direction. Life is seen as a series of mindless accidents proceeding towards nothing sensible or meaningful at all. There is a saying 'There

is none so blind as they who will not see.” It might also be said, “There are none so blind as they who cannot see.” Many cannot see. They are locked into a distorted mindset which blinds them to vision of true meaning. Often, when debates are raised, people get upset when their points of view aren’t agreed with. (In True Identity) we don’t get upset if others don’t agree with us. Frequently, especially in religious circles, if there is not agreement, then anger rises up and damnation is preached. ‘If you don’t agree with us, you are damned.’ That is just the angry and frustrated human ego reduced to cursing its opponent. We (in True Identity) have no need to be disturbed if people do not agree with us. We know that the Law of Being is working. Everything is unfolding as it must, and that is just fine with us.

The human ego in its aggressive stance tends to dismiss other people’s concepts as false if they don’t agree with its own. ‘Only I am right’ is what it boils down to. This is the view of the human ego. However, identified in Spirit, we begin to see whatever reality is back of any concepts. We discern the spirit that creates any particular concepts. In doing this, we are not saying that all concepts are true, because Spirit as it emerges through human beings now is not always clear and true, and so there are false elements in virtually every concept. But, as we are identified in the Tone of True Being, the Creator, we interact with the spiritual level in everyone rather than the conceptual level.

Love, the identity that you are, is a “full emptiness”, as Deepak Chopra and Eli Jaxon-Bear point out. (Chopra, 1991; Jaxon-Bear, 2001) It is *not* a “state” or a stage of development. It is literally who you are. Consciousness wants to come home to *reality* but, first, it must go through the process of letting go of the unreal. That is our job in this incarnation. We have to give up the separate identity, no matter how much “fun” it seems to be. Now, this is *not* another concept; in fact, I believe such nostrums as “*we are all one*” and “*oneness is the true reality*” actually keep people stuck in the ego state because the mind then thinks it knows.....and a belief about something is *not* knowing it. We must feel the un-workability of the ego identity and let it dissolve. This reveals what has been hidden; this is the splendor of the True Self.

Someone just sent me a fascinating email about a Hawaiian therapist who heals mentally ill people by healing himself! (Vitale, 2006) This man healed criminally insane patients without ever seeing any of them. He would study an inmate’s chart and then look within himself to see how he created that person’s illness. AS he improved himself, the patient improved. Talk about taking 100% responsibility for your world!! This Hawaiian healing process is called “ho’oponopono”. The doctor’s name is Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len. (“Google” it; there are a number of articles there) Mr. Vitale asked the doctor: “What were you doing within yourself that caused these people to change?” The doctor said “I was simply healing the part of me that created them” Dr. Len explained that total responsibility for your life means everything in your life...simply because it is in your life...is your responsibility. In a literal sense, the entire world is your creation.

He goes on to say:

Being responsible for what I say or do is one thing. Being responsible for what everyone in my life says or does is quite another. Yet, the truth is this: if you take complete responsibility for your life, then everything you see, taste, touch or in any way experience is your responsibility because it is in your life. This means that terrorist activity, the President, the economy or anything you experience but don't like is up for you to heal. They don't exist, in a manner of speaking, except as projections from inside you. The problem isn't with them, it's with you, and, to change them, you have to change you. Blame is far easier than total responsibility...I began to realize that healing to the doctor means loving yourself. ..I then asked the doctor: What are you doing when you look at those patients files? He said 'I just kept saying I am sorry and I love you, over and over gain.'

Turns out that loving yourself is the greatest way to improve yourself and, as you improve yourself, you improve the world. ..I later attended a ho'oponopono workshop with Dr. Len. He is now 70 years old....He told me that as I improve myself, my book's vibration will rise and everyone will feel it as they read it. In short, as I improve, my readers will improve. 'What about the books that are already sold and out there', I asked. 'They aren't out there', he explained. They are still in you. In short, there is no out there. Suffice it to say, that, whenever you want to improve anything in your life, there is only one place to look: inside you. When you look, do it with love. It is the attraction factor; like attracts like-his God-self was so strong that it attracted the God-self in others.

Could we need any more "proof" that we are all *one* and inter-connected at the deepest levels of our minds? Do we need to know more about how we create the worlds we experience in our minds? Back in the 1980's, there was a wonderful book called YOU CAN'T AFFORD THE LUXURY OF A NEGATIVE THOUGHT...I couldn't agree more! All "problems are merely a projection of the mental software that we use to create our worlds . To change ourselves *must* be the best way to change our world, since we made up the world we experience!!!

I have now made the case for the true Identity, an Identity in the Spirit of Life, or God, or Cosmic Consciousness...whatever term you want to use.. We can agree on this mentally. However, the ego has a strong grip on all of us, and it takes a conscious intention to grow and develop spiritually to overcome the ego's "gravitational field." But how do we do this? There are a number of experiential practices that have given me an EXPERIENCE of myself as one with the animating force that moves the cosmos. I am writing a book (FRAMESHIFTING; A PATH TO WHOLENESS) that outlines a number of these experiences. I now know that spiritual growth occurs with a changed FRAME or way of seeing that is more in line with Divine Consciousness. The journey is certainly *not* over for me by any means, but I can now see the impact of these practices on my awareness of who I really am and my connection to the larger whole of Life.

David K. Banner, PhD, is Professor of Leadership at the Dahl School of Business, Viterbo University, LaCross, WI. In addition, he mentors PhD students in Organization

and Management at Walden University in Minneapolis. From 2003-2006, he was Director of the MBA program at Viterbo, essentially starting the program from scratch, recruiting students, setting up a Board of Advisors, hiring and mentoring faculty and getting the program accredited. He is the author of six books, 30 journal articles, and 35 conference papers on transformational leadership, self-management, new paradigm organization design, ethics and integrity in business and related topics. In his varied career, he has been an aerospace engineer for NASA, a management consultant for Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, an entrepreneur, a university professor and an author.