



Illusion of Oneself, by Alan Watts

"We need a new experience -- a new feeling of what it is to be 'I.' The lowdown (which is, of course, the secret and profound view) on life is that our normal sensation of self is a hoax, or, at best, a temporary role that we are playing -- with our own tacit consent, just as every hypnotized person is basically willing to be hypnotized. The most strongly enforced of all known taboos is the taboo against knowing who or what you really are behind the mask of your apparently separate, independent, and isolated ego." "As is so often the way, what we have suppressed and overlooked is something startlingly obvious. The difficulty is that it is **so** obvious and basic that one can hardly find the words for it. The Germans call it *Hintergedanke*, an apprehension lying tacitly in the back of our minds which we cannot easily admit, even to ourselves. The sensation of 'I' as a lonely and isolated center of being is so powerful and commonsensical, and so fundamental to our modes of speech and thought, to our laws and social institutions, that we cannot experience selfhood except as something superficial in the scheme of the universe." "The difficulty in realizing this to be so is that conceptual thinking cannot grasp it. It is as if the eyes were trying to look at themselves directly, or as if one were trying to describe the color of a mirror in terms of colors reflected in the mirror. Just as sight is something more than all things seen, the foundation or 'ground' of our existence and awareness cannot be understood in terms of things that are known." "You cannot teach an ego to be anything but egotistic, even though egos have the subtlest ways of pretending to be reformed. The basic thing is therefore to dispel, by experiment and experience, the illusion of oneself as a separate ego." "Furthermore, on seeing through the illusion of the ego, it is impossible to think of oneself as better than, or superior to, others for having done so. In every direction there is just one Self playing its myriad games of hide-and-seek. Birds are not **better** than the eggs from which they have broken." --Alan Watts