

Chapter III

The True Nature of the Mind

After having considered the nature of the self as a unitary subject so far, I believe you are by now convinced of its existence and subjecthood as a unitary agent of perception. So taking the matter as settled for now, I shall proceed to discuss another point at issue, a question as to where to locate the seat of the self in that character, and what it looks like. Now I shall try to settle the question in the light of ascertained facts, for without solid facts to go on, the attempt may end in vain speculation. And by doing so you will be able to make sure of the truth of the self as an experiencing agent.

1 The Mind — Its Seat and Aspects

Let us give some more consideration to the nature of the mind before entering into the discussion concerning the present subject. It is the function of the mind to know various kinds of objects. The mind being responsible for perception, it is essential to locate its seat in order to bring to light the identity of the mind. Where do you think your mind exists? Please look at me. I believe my face is distinctly seen on this side of the room, by you who are seated on the opposite side. How would you respond if I said this face of mine is indeed a thought within you?

You are capable of seeing things, because you have eyes. It is because you have good eyesight that you are able to see things well. But is it your eyesight or your mind that enables you to see things? I want you to give thought to what the word “see” represents. To say “holding up one’s hands” as I am doing now, is a verbal description of a movement like this. That applies to the word “see.” I want

you to consider well the fact that the word "see" denotes.

On calling to mind your mother's face, you recognize it as her face, and it is a matter of course which none of you will deny that it is our mind that recognizes her face. You can see her face before your eyes, because you know her face well enough. Seeing this blackboard here is tantamount to knowing its form and colours. "To see things" is "to know things." There is a time-honoured proverb that "If the mind is absent, you may look, but you see nothing, and you may listen, but you hear nothing." For it is not your eyes, but your mind that see things. That is the reason why you have to discover in the first place where the mind exists.

Now please look this way. I have asked you earlier to let me know what you think of my remarks, when I said that this person of mine was ultimately a thought of yours. I wonder if some still insist that it is quite impossible because they know their mind exist in their brain. Some may say, "Since your face is outside of us and you are a material being which has form and colour, it is impossible to conceive of it as a thought of ours," or "Our mind is formless and exists in our brain. It is something immaterial."

We ordinarily think in this way. Going on a tour around the country, we gain many new experiences in various places we visit which are impressed on our mind. We think that, no matter where we may go, we can carry back those mental pictures with us which are developed within the nerve cells. Even when back home in Kyoto from a visit to Nikkō, you are able to call to mind the beautiful Yōmei Gate of Nikkō and look back mentally on the highest achievement of architectural art which they represent.

To my statement that this face of mine is nothing but a thought of yours, you may respond with quoting from the assertion by a scientist that the brain cortex is the seat of the mind. Anticipating a reply of that sort which may be in store for me, I shall continue my inquiry.

You may dream at times. I will be excused if the remark sounds somewhat reproachful in your ears, because of an old saying that a

sage never dreams. Be that as it may, let me ask you to call to mind the dreams you have had. In a dream you have of your mother, you are probably looking from your side through a transparent luminosity at her on the opposite side. Have you ever had a dream in which you are not there? I should say that is most unlikely. You never have a dream without yourself being there.

Is your mother's face as visioned in your dream different at all from its actual counterpart? Does your mother look like a smoky little creature in your dream? No, it is most unlikely. Your mother whom you see in a dream is a being with her colour and form, in no way different from your mother you see in life. In case you find any difference, you ought to realize that the woman you take to be your mother is not really your mother you see in real life.

It is, however, because you do not find the least difference between the mother of your dream and your mother in real life that you never hesitate to address her as mother. If otherwise you will not dare to call her mother. You are so sure indeed that your mother you see in a dream is none but your real mother. In this way whatever you may see and hear in your dream is exactly identical with an actual experience you have in your daily life. Do you think your mother you see in a dream is a material being or a thought? A dream is the reflection of the memory recalled in your mind in sleep. Viewed in that light your mother in a dream is to be considered as a thought.

From this it follows that the feeling you experience towards your mother in the dream, which is a thought itself, is identical with the recognition of your mother in real life, a fact which no one will refuse to admit. There are two different kinds of dreams, one of which is a reflection of the memory recalled in the mind, while the other is a projection of imagination. But let me remind you that you have not only memories still alive but also those which are forgotten for the moment, though it may sound strange.

Though varieties of sceneries you see in a dream may appear to be quite new to you, your dream is in fact made of such stuff that is

a combination of information stored in your memory, while it is as well a representation of your imagination, based on the memory all the same. Then I propose to give further consideration to the subject of the dream and to clarify its nature in the light of my personal experience, which tells how dreams coincide with realities.

At another time as I saw two boats in my dream, I could distinguish between red and blue colouring of the boats. Thinking back over the dream now, I got a notion into my head that even in a dream people are capable of discerning so distinctly between different colours, despite the assertion made by a psychologist that people have no sense of colour in a dream. Even in a dream you feel resistance to the touch.

Once when I saw in a dream a woman at work weaving cloth on her handloom, somehow I knew it was all a dream. Then an idea occurred to me that since a dream is a thought, the dream would be gone in case I could divert my attention to something else, and as I began repeating the sacred name of Amida Buddha in a loud voice, all disappeared from my sight. There was left only nothingness, the absolute reality that transcends time and space. Since the whole universe is the absolute mind, all the rest vanishes into emptiness, the moment the mind is made to converge in a certain direction.

The sights and sounds you see and hear in a dream have their exact counterparts in the actual world. When you have a dream, you have, in nine cases out of ten, no idea it is a dream. To the best of my belief, you are persuaded by now that a dream is nothing but a thought. In your dream, you who are on this side recognize your mother's face which you see over there through transparent lightness, as in real life. All that there is, however, is a thought of yours. It is therefore, only because a person, a material being called Sasamoto, is appearing outside of you, that you find it difficult to decide whether it is really nothing but a thought of yours or not. And so I shall proceed to consider in more detail the matter, in order to make it doubly sure that the person that appears before your eyes is the very duplicate of your thought of him.

I want you to take a look at me please. Suppose you see a vision of our gathering today in a dream, and your vision is bound to be an exact copy of the sight you are witnessing here and now. You can see me seated here as well as all of the things that surround me, though less distinctly. Now when and where do you think your memory of me originates? I want you to try to get at the facts. Where is the image of me, as you see now, produced so as to be impressed on your memory? The thing for you to do is to know the truth at first hand. You have, naturally enough, no memory of my appearance inborn in you. As you fix your eyes on me from moment to moment, memory of me is built up. That is why it may return to you later in a dream. And as long as you keep your eyes away from me, memory of me ceases to grow. Then my own self, which appears now right before your eyes and will remain in your memory, exists only in this place and not anywhere else.

From this it follows that a person called Sasamoto who appears here as well as all objects dimly visible around him are the very thoughts of yours, in which the memory of them originates. They are thoughts that will be recalled in your mind. I believe that our mind has grown considerably broader, for the breadth of your mind depends upon the range of your eyesight. We are composed of body and mind. Viewed from the mental aspect, we are not always bound to our ego. But we remain under its sway as long as we persist in our belief that the mind exists in the brain.

We have had a great variety of experiences in our life, which in truth are as many thoughts. It is in this sense that the import of a Buddhist axiom "All is thought" should be interpreted, in regard to all that you see and hear in life. Now, I am not so thin as a sheet of paper but have some amount of substance within me. There is something that exists regardless of it being visible or invisible.

You get together in this temple away from home, but you must have left something behind in your house. There is a world of vibration there. Though you may hear no roars of the Falls of Nikkō here, there are vibrations going at a pitch of from eight to

sixteen through approximately fifty thousand per second at Nikkō. You cannot hear at the moment the roaring sounds of the water falls, because it is when the vibrations reach your ears that you catch them as sounds.

It is by the impact of a stimulus on the nerve cells in the brain lobe center that the power of attention is aroused into action and enables you to catch sight of objects where attention is directed. The stimulus I refer to now is the vibration with a frequency of four hundred and fifty trillion through seven hundred and fifty trillion per second which exists in your dwelling, though it does not reach you as long as you are here. But when back home, you come within reach of the vibration which makes an impact on your nerve tissue and arouses attention, so that you can see various things that are in your house.

I have stated so far that as far as the objects of sight and hearing are concerned, all of them are nothing but thoughts, but I have not yet touched upon the question regarding the objects which are out of the range of your eyesight right now. It is those objects that are referred to as vibrations in terms of physics, and which Buddhism describes as actions of the mind, or "*Alayashiki*" a store of consciousness.

We have been accustomed to regard an object of perception as existing by itself apart from the perceiving agent, taking for granted that the object is a material thing, while the subject which perceives it is a mind that exists in the brain, and is something colourless and formless. Do you still think that an object perceived exists apart from the subject that perceives it? You find in *Ge-jin-mik-kyō*, Sutra of secret teachings, a passage which reads; no phenomenon is able to see phenomenon well—the former refers to the subjective perceiver, while the latter to the object of perception. The gist of the whole passage is that there is neither the subjective nor the objective, but all that exist is the mind.

I shall briefly touch on it to make it sure. It is generally accepted conception that memory is, so to speak, a mental photo-

graph developed in the brain. No memory, however, is by any means developed in the brain. Even though the memory of a headache you had may be recalled in your brain, all things in nature appear in endless succession and in varying form, near and far, here and there outside of you. I believe you can easily get at the meaning of my statement by thinking of dreams you have had. In your dream you see your mother appear distinctly in human shape on the far side through a transparent luminosity.

Then you understand that the notion that memories originate within the narrow confines of the brain is an empty theory that takes no account of the facts. For the fact is that thoughts appear in array presenting themselves in different shapes far and near, inside and outside, centering around the self.

2 The Aspects of *Shiki*, or Consciousness

There are nine aspects of *Shiki*, or consciousness, as enumerated in the following chart.

Five Primary Aspects of Consciousness	Organs	Objects
sight-consciousness	eye-organ	world of form
hearing-consciousness	ear-organ	world of sound
smell-consciousness	nose-organ	world of smell
taste-consciousness	tongue-organ	world of taste
touch-consciousness	touch-organ	world of touch
The Sixth Consciousness function of the intellect, or thought consciousness	organ of thought	world as an object of the mind
The Seventh Consciousness		

Manashiki, the manas-consciousness, which signifies the organ of thought itself, and vice versa.

The Eighth Consciousness

Alayashiki, the store-consciousness, or *Kon-Kyō-Shiki*, sense organ-object-consciousness-all-combinedness.

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The Ninth Consciousness

Ammalashiki, or thusness, which means the whole-beingness.

In order to acquire an accurate knowledge of the objects which are seen and heard, it is essential to make distinction between the five primary consciousness and the sixth consciousness. The teachings of Buddhism explain the consciousness by dividing it under eight heads. So far I have only referred to the five primary consciousness.

Now I shall go on to the sixth thought-consciousness which is in most cases understood in its broader sense. But it can be considered in the light of its two aspects, namely the clearly-perceiving thought-consciousness and the vaguely-perceiving, to give precision to the definition. The thought-consciousness being responsible for the recognition of the object, the clearly-perceiving thought-consciousness operates with the first five consciousness (of sight, audition, smell, taste and touch), and it is because the thought-consciousness of this kind functions, that you can recognize me on seeing me. This consciousness is defined as the clearly-perceiving thought-consciousness.

On the other hand, when thinking of the face of a friend or even your mother's, you can picture it to yourself only dimly, the consciousness that functions is called the vaguely-perceiving thought-consciousness. This kind of consciousness is also described as the independent consciousness, because in this case you do not see it as an object which appears before your eyes but merely picture it in your mind. In case you see something in a dream, which is a state of the vaguely-perceiving, or independent consciousness. It is quite different from the case in which the object actually exists and operates as a stimulus to attract your attention.

You can remember your mother, when your memory of her is aroused in a certain physiological state of the brain cortex. And as you speak with someone about your mother or read a particular book, you are probably led to think of her under its stimulus. You rarely recall her to mind just haphazardly. You recollect her accord-

ing to the law of association under a given stimulus which causes you to do so. When you think about your mother's face and figure, or see them in your dream, you are seeing a projected replica of her image impressed on your memory.

Whereas the term consciousness is ordinarily used in the broader sense of the word, in the context of Buddhist scriptures it is used in its limited sense to denote the sixth and last of its different aspects. The consciousness which functions under that aspect, at times in association with Samadhi, is what enables you to perceive the realm of existence as an object of the mind. In reading a Buddhist scripture you must not forget to make sure of the exact sense in which a particular word is used in the context. Otherwise you fail to gain a correct understanding of the entire statement.

As the worlds as objects of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are called the worlds of form, of sound, of odor, of taste and of physical contact respectively, the object of the thought-consciousness is known as *Hokkai*, a realm of existence as an object of the mind, and the eye which sees *Hokkai* is called *Hōgen*. *Hokkai* is in most cases used in its broadest sense in that it comprises all that is perceived by means not only of the *Hōgen* but also of *Tengen*.

The Pure Land, however, which *Hōgen* sees is not a world of form and vibration, not a world of illusion. It is a world of *Jō-rakuga-jō*, of non-changing, non-suffering, freedom from bondage, and no illusion. Therefore it is a land of *Fumetsujōjū*, of endless life, permanent beingness.

The world, on the other hand, which is perceived by means of *Tengen* differs from the Pure Land. The former is still a world of form which is not free from perpetual repetition of birth and death. The Pure Land appears to you only when you have achieved the supermundane Samadhi.

The *Manashiki* is self-consciousness or the sense of self, which is generally called *Ikon*, the faculty of the intellect that discerns one's self from others. But you must bear in mind that this is a treacherous affair, for as long as the *Manas* consciousness persists, you are

prevented from being awakened to the endlessness of life. I shall give you only one instance among many, which I think fit to cite in illustration of my statement that the "*Manas*" consciousness stands in your way to spiritual awakening.

As long as we live, our "*Manas*" consciousness is bound up with the brain cortex so fast that it cannot be easily detached, until, as is believed, it casts itself off the body on our death. Even while alive, however, we are able to cast off the "*Manas*" consciousness, through devoting ourselves to the practice for Buddhahood. A long while ago I went down to Izu with a friend to stay there for about ten days, to give ourselves exclusively to the invocation of the sacred name of Amida Buddha. Then an incident happened during the community Nembutsu practice we participated in.

Though my friend was apparently absorbed in repetition of the holy name, it seemed to me that he applied himself to his Nembutsu practice as a means of spiritual concentration, not so much with an aspiration to receive a welcome from Nyorai. One evening when he finished his practice of the Nembutsu for the day, repeating the sacred name of Amida Buddha, in a rapid flow of speech as was his wont, he recounted to me all that happened to him while absorbed in the Nembutsu.

He told me how he suddenly slipped out of his forehead while lost in repetition of the sacred name, and flew his way, hovering high and low over the fields, forests, rivers, and valleys, looking down on them from above, and then retraced his way to come into the same forehead. After the session was over for the day, he went in person this time to the places he travelled in his flight to make sure. For he could hardly bring himself to believe it was all a dream he had, so vividly he witnessed the sights beneath him.

He found the sceneries he witnessed with his naked eyes were exactly identical with those which he saw flying in the air. He was positive that it was not in a dream he had during the session that he took a flight from his own flesh into the sky while lost in the Nembutsu, and saw from above the sights unfolding underneath.

The truth must be that he actually saw them while hovering up and down after he flew out of his head. In this way even if the “*Manas*” consciousness never leaves you until your death, as described in the Sutras, you are certainly able to get rid of it, while you are alive, by means of a specific power attributed to the concentration of the mind.

Alayashiki, alternately termed *Zōshiki*, is the store consciousness in which all of the memories are preserved. Tradition says that the Himalaya Mountains were so named, because people imagined them to be the storehouse of snow, “*alaya*” meaning a storehouse and “*hima*” snow. In the same way, it is believed that “*Alaya*” consciousness which stores all the memories, is flowing as an undercurrent in the depths of our mind from the beginningless past. We have accumulated a wide variety of objects in the memory during our lifetime. They could be called numberless. The memory when awakened becomes consciousness, while the dormant remembrances do not. In Buddhism the memories which are dormant are defined as those stored in “*Alaya*” consciousness. “*Alaya*” consciousness does not only preserve memories, but it is from this consciousness that all thoughts emerge.

I have stated earlier that my appearance you see here is no other than a thought of yours, but there ought to be a cause which contributes to producing it. The cause is considered to exist in “*Alaya*” consciousness. While the first five consciousness, the sixth consciousness and the “*Manas*” and “*Alaya*” are all referable to the world of form, namely of waves, the thusness, the absolute reality can be likened to water.

The “*Alaya*” consciousness is in no way everlasting for it perishes from moment to moment to be succeeded by its analogues. It is nothing but form. It is written in the Sutra called *Ge-jin-mik-kyō*, the commentary on the deep meaning of the secret teachings, that the Buddha never preached on the “*Alaya*” consciousness. He was afraid that his audience might mistake it for soul.

Lastly, the “*Ammala*” consciousness signifies thusness, or the

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absolute reality upon which all existence depends and which is one and the same in any time and place.

Then leaving aside the question of the "*Alaya*" consciousness for the present, I think I will proceed to the next subject. It is to the first five primary consciousnesses among the nine consciousnesses that I have given some consideration, arriving at the conclusion that all objects in the whole creation that are seen and heard are nothing but thoughts which appear on each occasion.

I described them as appearing in array far and near, outside and inside of you, following each other in endless succession in different places but centering around yourself. Believing that you are satisfied with my explanation, I shall go on to the next chapter.