

Adyashanti's teaching on the No-Self Experience

Nini Praetorius – on behalf of Adyashanti¹

Abstract. The paper presents Adyashanti's rendering of the lived experience of No-Self. To fully understand what this state entails, it is necessary to view the trajectory of forms and qualities that consciousness can take during the spiritual unfolding, and how the experience of No-Self fits in into the overall arch of awakening *from* Ego *to* Self, and *from* Self *to* No-Self. Based on his Study Course, "*The Experience of No-Self*" the paper introduces Adyashanti's view on Ego, Self and No-Self, defined as particular acts and types of consciousness, and what it entails to let go of both Ego and Self. Finally the paper elaborates on the human expression of life beyond Self - and thus of becoming who and what we eternally are.

Introduction

Adyashanti sets out in his Study Course, "The experience of No-Self" firstly, to *explore* the precarious territory of No-Self and to *understand* exactly what the experience of No-Self is; and secondly, to account for how No-Self fits in within the overall arch of awakening. To fully understand what this state entails it is necessary to view the trajectory of forms and qualities that consciousness can take in one's spiritual unfolding, i.e. how, according to Adyashanti, it fits in into the overall arch of awakening *from* Ego to awakening *to* Self, and awakening *from* Self to awakening *to* No-Self .

The paper is divided into the following three parts:

Part I, *Ego and Self* introduces Adyashanti's concepts of Ego and Self which he defines as *acts* of consciousness and *forms* that consciousness may take, and describes the entanglement of "I" (the Self) and "me" (the Ego) in what is called the *Egoic state*.

Part II, *Beyond Ego and Self* , presents Adyashanti's view on the shift from Ego to Self, and the continuum of the higher Self to No-Self. It concludes with the Loss of Will and Motivation of Ego and Self.

In Part III, *The Nature, Qualities and Dimensions of No-Self*, Adyashanti first explains what it means to Letting Go Completely, of Ego and Self, and how it is experienced. Next he elaborates on the Expressions of Life Beyond Self and on what Becoming What We Eternally Are entails. Finally, it conveys Adyashanti's lived experiences of relating from and trusting Divine Wisdom and Love - and explains the true meaning of Freedom.

¹ With permission from Adyashanti. The quotations and representations of Adyashanti's teachings in this paper stems from his online Study Course *The Experience of No-Self*, http://www.adyashanti.org/index.php?file=productdetail&iproduct_id=588

Part I: Ego, Self and No-Self

Ego

There are many definitions and complex theories of ego within philosophy and psychology. However, according to Adyashanti, ego is actually something very simple: Ego is simply *self concern, self obsession*; it is to be identified with one's inner psychology – meaning all the self referencing ideas, thoughts, opinions, judgments, self images, and story lines. Put shortly, ego is basically *the act* of consciousness being obsessed with the inner psychology.

More specifically, says Adyashanti, ego is the act of being trapped in an *identity* and a world view predominantly viewed through one's self concern. That's basically how everybody starts out with an ego development. A more grown up or mature ego, a healthy ego, will eventually begin to reach out beyond its own self obsession and be concerned and truly care about and have feeling for something beyond itself. For example, concern for the loved ones, the family, and perhaps a little bit wider, to the local community, people in one's religion and culture and maybe country. Indeed, it could go to something much vaster, to humanity at large.

However, ego even in its higher sense, in its higher desires, is still the self centred act of desire, craving, wanting and aversion, of pushing away, rejecting. 'I don't want this', 'I do want that'. This is *the movement* of the ego, not what ego is *doing*, but what the ego *is*, and this movement of desire and aversion contributes to its self centred orientation. When someone is really bound in the ego, says Adyashanti, one has a feeling of being encased and enclosed and small and isolated.

Different kinds of spiritual practices are meant to loosen up this adherence to and boundedness of ego, initially by trying to support the opening up to something bigger, e.g. by tapping into the higher ego's morality, which is the concern of all being and the welfare of all life; or it could be tapping into a love of God, or into existential questions such as: What is reality? What is really true? These are all ways that ego looks for a deeper truth than itself, its self concern and self obsession. There are all kinds of means of going about loosen the Ego's self obsession within different wisdom traditions, for example prayer, meditations, contemplation and spiritual inquiry.

What initially happens when one gets involved in spirituality is that the ego takes on a deeper identification; now one are a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Sufi or a Hindu. That is, the ego re-identifies with a spiritual identity. The ego can play almost any game you can imagine, it's extremely mouldable. Indeed, one of its main tendencies is to keep turning itself into new forms all the time. And this continues - until we start developing a kind of wisdom and become familiar with the ways the ego "shape-shifts". When at a certain point

you start to see the whole movement of ego, says Adyashanti, something *deeper* starts to recognize it.

Ego and Self as forms of consciousness

Adyashanti uses two terms, ego and self, to denote two *different forms of consciousness*. *Ego*, as we have seen, is a form of consciousness being obsessed with its own self concern. *Self*, on the other hand, is that which looks at ego; it's the act of *reflecting* within. Put differently, self is the *act of self-consciousness*, and self-consciousness is what self *is*. Ego, then, is what self consciousness *reflects upon* when it looks inside. What self consciousness sees and experiences in its center, in its own inner personal psychology, is what we call ego.

Now, when you have a deep experience of going beyond that ego identity and transcending it, says Adyashanti, you start to experience and know yourself *not* to be the ego. The ego may be there, i.e. all your thinking, feelings and inner psychology: but you know that it doesn't really define you. Adyashanti describes it this way:

“So, when you have awoken to a deeper dimension of being ... it often feels like you have transcended ego - and for a while it can seem like the ego is completely non-functional. You can be in a complete state of flow which is what it feels like not to be trapped in ego; it feels like a flow, a certain kind of ease and a certain lack of self-consciousness – a lack of egoic consciousness, actually. And that feels very easy and flowing and open and free and dynamic and vital. It may seem like the ego is completely gone. But in many instances, probably most, some amount of the egoic structure will automatically, literally automatically, start to try to put itself back together. It can never put itself back together in the same completeness once you've seen through it. However, it differs from one individual to the other how much the ego puts itself back together”.

One of the ways the ego put itself back together is by trying to hold on to a moment of spiritual revelation - in other words, by trying to hold on to a moment of awakening. The ego thinks ‘I really want this and I don't want to lose it’; but, Adyashanti reminds us, as soon as you think ‘I don't want to lose this wonderful and beautiful experience’, it is still self concern. And as soon as there is self concern, you start to *grasp* at what you don't want to lose. And as soon as you grasp at it, your grasping *solidifies* the experience of ego. All kinds of grasping, no matter what level the grasping is happening at, is essentially an egoic activity.

In conclusion, ego is *a movement* of consciousness, according to Adyashanti; it's a *verb*, a form that consciousness takes. There's not an entity in there called ego.

Self

According to Adyashanti, Self is the unseen *subject* or *witness* of all experience and all perception. Self is in this sense the 'I'. When people are talking about themselves they say: 'I feel this, or I feel that'. 'I' is consciousness surveying the field of perception and then commenting on it. However, you cannot experience what the self is; it can never be made into an object of observation. Self is what is watching your thoughts, is noticing your feelings; self is what looks at ego and self can even talk about ego. This way of using the language puts a distance, at least conceptually, between self and ego.

Ego, on the other hand, is really the 'me'. And 'me' is really a psychological process, i.e. thinking, feeling, memory, judgment, opinions, ideas; all of that goes into the Ego. The orientation of the lower form of ego is aversion and desire, 'I don't want that' and 'I do want this', 'I like this and I don't like that'

When the ego identification is deep and profound, says Adyashanti, then 'I' and 'me' are *fused* in experience. In other words, the Self or 'I' is identified with my Ego and *is* anything it identifies with. That's the *Egoic state* of consciousness, the Egoic identity: 'I am what I think I am, what I feel that I am, what I imagine that I am, or judge that I am'.

Generally, in the Egoic state of consciousness the self-ego arch has collapsed, at least experientially, says Adyashanti. Self and ego are experienced as one and the same thing. However, spirituality knows from its deep understanding of inner life, that ego and self are actually two distinctly different things. The self is the witness, and you can never see the witness or subject. You can only see what the witness witnesses. Spirituality tries to emphasise that as a way to disengage from the lower nature of the ego when they say: you are not what you think, but the *awareness* of what you think; you are not what you feel, but the *awareness* of what you feel. You are not your body, but your *awareness* of your body. And if and when there is a fundamental shift in the identity and the identity leaves the ego/me arch, it naturally goes back to the self, the witness, the unseen subject of all experience. Witnessing, then, is consciousness; it is the aware witnessing of all experience and the subject as well.

The experience beyond Ego

Now, there is the *transcendence* of ego, and then there's *falling away* of ego. When you *transcend* the ego there's a sense of relief, according to Adyashanti. The aversion and desire of Ego used to create a friction and contraction inside, but now it's gone – as well as the self images and ideas about ourselves, about others, about the world; 'am I good'? , 'am I bad?', 'am I wrong'?, 'am I worthy'?, 'am I unworthy'? All the emotional turmoil that ego is made up of is gone.

In contrast to the momentary *transcendence* of ego, the permanent *falling away* of ego is often precipitated with the feeling of a kind of death. Indeed, there is an innate fear within the ego of going beyond itself. So when consciousness starts to move beyond the ego, to the boundary of the ego, the ego is going to feel, literally, experientially, that it is going to die. It is not actually going to die, but it cannot *know* what's beyond itself, and since it can't imagine anything beyond itself, it can only conclude that it's a kind of annulation.

However, the ego can't make its own disappearance happen. It can't get rid of itself any more than your foot can outrun itself. Any effort by ego to get beyond itself is just another act of self concern and self obsession. To let go of it, however, is often a very scary thing for ego, very disorienting. So, it tends to clutch until it's ready to not clutch. And when it's ready to not clutch, to stop doing, it just doesn't clutch anymore. That's grace.

Part II Beyond Ego and Self

What Self consciousness reflects on when Ego falls away

When ego falls away there's an experience of great peace and a lack of division, psychologically. And what *self consciousness* then reflects upon is this lack of division. So your sense of your own being is no longer the ego which fell away, but it becomes an empty center, an aware empty space. When it reveals itself as that empty center, it is *experienced* as divine; as precious and un-conditioned, almost as the origin, the un-manufactured source of life; as something of extraordinary meaning. Although you can never verbalize what the meaning is, it is of an extraordinary significance – it's to be *unified* within. So, the act of self, which is just self-reflecting, used to look upon ego, but now ego is not there. Instead there is a kind of emptiness, which reveals itself to be divine, to be an infinite ground of being

When that inner sense of divinity, of wholeness and completeness becomes mature, then, according to Adyashanti, you see and intuit that the same divinity is *everything*; you *know* that everything and everyone is that divinity, no matter what their experience is; no matter what they are going through, and no matter what form it takes: a human being, a cloud, a rock, a force, a wave, ocean, a lake, a can of garbage in the city. There's a sense of that astounding divinity everywhere.

But as it really matures, this astounding quality of divinity starts to lessen, since there's no reflection on what *it's not*. In other words, you forget the old state of egoic being and now the divinity inside and outside becomes more like just a lived reality; it takes on a kind of normalcy. Furthermore, one realises that for a long, long time we have made this fundamental error of thinking that our experience of things is what they are. And we take this right into spirituality and think 'my experience of divinity, my experience of God and the truth is what the truth of God or divinity is!' However, our experience of things are - merely - our *experience* of things. Self in its seed form is the act of self-consciousness; it's self-conscious looking within, i.e. on its experiences, and in a certain sense just as before, identifying with that which it *experiences*.

No-Self is when self consciousness stops

The experience of No-Self, says Adyashanti, is when self-consciousness and looking within stops. Indeed, when self consciousness stops, there's no reference within any more. It doesn't mean that you fall into some state of unconsciousness or go blank, but that you are

falling into a state of *un-self consciousness*. Again one can't say why it happens, nor can self consciousness just stop being self conscious – for everything self consciousness does to not be self conscious is an act of self consciousness.

Self consciousness is just a *particular type* of consciousness, says Adyashanti, and we cannot understand what it is - until it's not there anymore. It's like ego, you cannot fully understand ego until it's not there any more. Then you understand it. Self is the same way, we can't really completely understand it experientially, until it's not there, and then you understand it, because, you *know*. It is what's no longer there. Then the understanding of it is quite obvious, quite simple. When self falls away, there's no alternative *identity*, it is not exchanging a little identity for a bigger identity, or an egoic identity for a divine identity. No-Self means essentially: *no identity*.

It's hard to think of oneself – here is where the language breaks down, says Adyashanti –in any other terms than a self, and also to think of oneself in any other terms than an identity. We start with an egoic identity, small, very well defined even though it's very chaotic. And when that drops away, then our identity goes into a vast state, and we'll say: 'I am awareness'. Awareness is something which is very transparent; it's not like an ego, it's very transparent and very quiet; it's very unifying, and it's very whole. When we have a very deep experience of awareness, well then it sees itself as everything it's aware of.

That's also another identity though, so spirituality in one sense is the going from a less true identity that is more dense and confined and solid to a more transparent and vast. The more true the identity is, the less confined, the less solid, the less defined - until identity finally just drops away entirely. And in that case one can't say anything, because all statements would be kind of identity statements. They are claims, they are definitions, but in the real experience of No-Self there is no claim, there is no 'I am this, I am not that'; there is no identity, there's no description.

Anyway, there is an obviousness of *what* it is, according to Adyashanti - for example, you may say that it is the infinite knowing itself, recognizing itself. The knowing of what it is, is not as an act of self consciousness. However, that's not conceivable to the way our minds are hooked up.

Part III: The Nature, Qualities and Dimensions of No-Self

The transition to No-Self

Adyashanti describes the experience of letting go of Self as relinquishing Self to the eternal void - the dark light. According to Adyashanti, there is often an experience of great fear when we open to the dark light, to the voidness, because it feels like an annihilating presence. If you let yourself go into it, you sense that you will never come back, you will just be annihilated. At that moment, says Adyashanti, many will pull back – instinctively – whether they consciously decide it or not. Pure survival instinct will kick in and enforce

this pulling back from that dark light, from that annihilating void. And many will come back into their selfhood – relieved they weren't devoured - but also strangely anticipating and desiring to come to that point of reckoning once again. One is so repelled by it and so drawn to it simultaneously. It seems like a complete annihilating void to self – and in many ways it is - because it is annihilating the last selfhood. This is not only taking away all the comfortableness of the human condition or, conversely, of the sadness, sorrow and despair, says Adyashanti. But it is also the dropping away of so many sacred and beautiful spiritual experiences and states that we have been in: From bliss to unity and beyond.

And yet, only when we finally relinquish our hold through an unreserved *desire for truth* and *yearning to know* what lies on the other side of that vital encounter with the void, that's what pulls us through. When finally letting go takes place, the moment of being an ego, a self, even an infinite self, disappears. In fact it is likely that all experience, even awareness disappear. And you will only notice the disappearance when you come back from it. But in that disappearance is the possibility of the falling away of the self.

And then follows the resting in and the acknowledgement and understanding of that ground of being, which is absolutely without *otherness* – even of the otherness of reflecting on yourself. That ground is the ground beyond all experience. However, that ground, which is fundamentally *void*, is also an infinite *potential*. Without itself being something material, the infinite is the potential of all material existence and of all created things. It is not simply the *essence within* things; it is not the *presence within* all things. It is actually the material existence of all things. That may sound contradictory or paradoxical; the material existence of all things is itself not material. But that's how it is.

Seeing from the Eyes of Grace and from Divine Knowledge which is un-selfless love

The deeper we move into the lived encounter with the deepest, most fundamental nature of reality, says Adyashanti, the more paradoxical it becomes – i.e. to the *mind*. However, to *experience* it doesn't seem paradoxical at all – it is simply so.

At this level of consciousness self-reflection does not exist, only divine knowledge that knows and recognizes itself. This is the knowledge of non-distinction and non-otherness. This knowledge is received in its reality as *un-selfless* love. This is not the selfless love of human beings trying to act selflessly; that is of course a perfectly noble endeavour, a stage in one's development and consciousness. Adyashanti is not talking about a *desire* to act selflessly, but about *being* selfless. *And that has its greatest expression in love*. Selfless love is self-less; it's a quality of love that arises from the very ground of being, which is beyond all distinction. Even beyond love.

Selfless love is a kind of love which can't be turned on or off. It is an indiscriminate love of what is. It loves what you humanly like and what you humanly don't like so much; what you would prefer or not prefer. It is an indiscriminate love that cannot be denied, it cannot be held back, no matter what. This selfless love comes directly from the ground of being, not from any self. There is no choice in it.

According to Adyashanti, there are some amazing, beautiful qualities of this fundamental knowledge *cum* love - absolutely beyond all imagination. One can never possess it or hold

or use it. When self has fallen away there is nothing using it, nothing using knowledge or love; there is just *being it*. In the being of it we can have no image of what it is going to look like. No portraying or image like of e.g. a saintly person or even a holy person, or a person who conforms to one's spiritual or religious ideas. To go beyond self is to go beyond all that, however beautiful and noble it may be.

It is also a return to an absolute simplicity and ordinariness. It's an extraordinary ordinariness. If you want to be extraordinary, says Adyashanti, then you should stay in the higher dimensions of self, where you are expanded and you see yourself in everything; where there is a great sense of unity, of power and dynamics. But when we go beyond self, when it finally falls away, it doesn't express itself through all those powers and dynamics. In fact it is quite easy to miss!

“Doing” beyond the falling away of any personal will, desire and motivation

As Ego drops, says Adyashanti, so does the desire and aversion - which is a kind of energy: of grasping and pushing away. It's what we experience as *personal will*: "I want this" and "I don't want that". Personal will is a basic *energetic* quality of motivation - for everything, actually. From getting out of bed in the morning to waking to the breakfast table, to putting you clothes on, and to go to work. Everything you do during the day needs a kind of motivation. When there is no motivation the ego is powerless, it's like an electrical appliance in your kitchen that you have unplugged from the wall. Ego can't do anything without personal will and without the energy that it gets from it to animate the ego. So, as ego starts to fall away, says Adyashanti, we experience this loss of personal will.

When that happens there are often a lot of questions about 'how do I do this?', 'how do I know that?', 'What moves me in life when I no longer have the personal will'? However, you *can* actually move and you *can* do; not from personal motivation or even personal energy, but you can move and do, for example, from *necessity*. And you can move and do from *love*; love for your life or for your family, friends or who ever. There can be a moving from love, which is not the same as personal motivation. Instead, you are doing as an *act of love*, and not because you want anything out of.

Just like ego, self also has a kind of will. It is the will or desire towards God. That's the higher will of the self. Its motivation is around love, without any reason or gain. The ego will loves – but it wants something in return. In the higher form of self there is no desire for any returning of the love, it's a natural out-flowing of self, of love and compassion, altruism. In this state Self is completely empty – there is no *there* to it. But it is not a dead emptiness, because there is an alive quality to the emptiness. But in that emptiness there is no motivation or will akin to the egoic will, but a *radiance* of boundless love and well being. Even though it comes from self it is love which is *un-self concerned*, that is *un-self obsessed*. It reaches out, and it loves all things unconditionally. The reason it does so is that in its higher realization of self, it notices itself to be the common thread within all being. Your un-seen self and everybody else's un-seen self is the *same* self. It has no history, it has no past to it, it has no form; it's very, very pure and profound – and it is *universal*: the radiance of boundless love is the energy that drives it.

When self starts to drop away, what we are losing is the unseen self: The unseen self that we see in all things, the absolute subject of all our experience. When that falls away, there is a kind of will that is lost with that too. According to Adyashanti, that loss is more fundamental than the loss of egoic personal will; it's the radiant, motivational force and energy which falls away.

Even so, when self falls away, *doing* becomes actually simple. From that dimension beyond self, *reality itself* moves in just the most obvious way. It just does *the next obvious thing*, and that's how it is happening. Incidentally, this is available to everybody no matter what state of consciousness you are in: *Just to do the next most obvious thing*. However, often when we are entrapped in various forms of identity, says Adyashanti, we are not simple enough; we are not clear enough, or quiet or empty enough to see just what's the next most obvious thing to do. But from the dimension beyond self, from that ground of being beyond all distinction, which is in each of us, one of the most obvious ways it moves, e.g. in practical moving, day to day, is to do the next obvious thing.

It does not necessarily move from causes and reasons. It moves from something prior to causes and reasons: Something else moves it. *What* that is, we cannot really put into words. You can't control it. You can't do it. We just notice it. When ego and self aren't in there vying for position, says Adyashanti, that simple knowing becomes more and more obvious and more and more simple. And when we are not in our mind, trying to figure it out, and not being so disoriented and anxious about all that's happening, we know that there is actually an inner movement; very simple and beautiful. It doesn't have why's or guarantees, or saying: "yes everything will be ok", nor telling you: "yes you can be certain that it's the truth". That's not how reality moves, that's more human *mind-stuff*.

All these questions may be understandable, but they are based in fundamental *existential anxiety*. The realm beyond self has no existential anxiety at all. It's always there, available; but generally we never chose it. Nobody has ever told us or suggested to us that there is a dimension of our being, of our actual experience, with no anxiety that holds no weight. Where there are no psychological dilemmas that sees life through their lenses. There is something else within each of our being, says Adyashanti, which is always there and that moves with the most profound simplicity and quietness. It moves in the absence of personal motivation and ambitions.

From the conditioned mind of ego and self to the unconditioned mind of No-Self

The conditioned mind is what we are taught to do, literally. It filters anything in from the medium of our own conditioned judgments, opinions and ideas. According to Adyashanti, we have been *taught* to filter all the incoming impressions, e.g. people we meet, relationship that we have, events that we go through, through the medium of our own conditioned mind. Conversely, we are unconsciously imposing our judgments, beliefs and opinions onto life, other people and existence. However, they have nothing to do with life. They are just our particular programming. The unconditioned mind first starts to come into our experiences, when we suddenly *realise* that we have been spending most of our life experiencing life through a filter. A filter that operates automatically and unconsciously like a program in a computer. It means that you do not experience anything or anyone as

they actually are, in themselves, but only through the medium of your opinions, judgments and beliefs, that is, through your conditioned mind. When you really see that, it is, first of all, shocking. Coming upon the unconditioned mind is literally to step out of that, but it also requires that one has an *interest* in seeing things from the view point, say, of the person you are talking with. You begin to have an interest in what life looks like when seen from that person's point of view, through their eyes. Not how do *I* experience them, but how do they experience themselves.

In order to do that you have to be able to put aside your own belief structures and judgments, and be really interested in how things look like from their point of view. Or, take life itself – how does life look like from its own point of view, and not from my point of view? Life does not share my belief or my opinions, clearly, or my judgments. It operates completely independently of them; indeed everything in life operates independently of my beliefs. Still, we ask, 'why isn't life the way I want it to be'? The short and true answer is: Because life doesn't operate according to your conditioned mind. From reality's and life's point of view our opinion and ideas are completely irrelevant. Only we value them – until we don't. If you are not interested in how things are beyond your own idea and beliefs, you will never come upon what they are, or see them as they are independently of those beliefs and opinions, and thus see them from the un-conditioned mind beyond your own self interest; how you want the world to be.

Because you understand someone else's point of view, says Adyashanti, it does not necessarily mean that you go along with it, but only that you see it, and you know it, and that changes the entire relationship with another human being; and it changes the relationship with life, with existence, indeed, with everything. Where self has fallen away we are seeing reality from the point of view of reality. We are seeing eternity from its point of view. We are seeing from God's point of view. We are not experiencing God anymore, or relating to God, or relating to our existence or life anymore. We are seeing from the point of view of life and existence and eternity. And in one sense we are becoming eternity and seeing from God's or the absolute truth's point of view. That's the relationship between the unconditioned mind and No-Self.

It's not that we cannot have any personal points of view, but we see them as not significant. What is significant and relevant is seeing from reality's point of view and from truth's point of view. When you really come upon just how much you see or have seen life, others, yourself and existence from the point of view of your conditioned mind, it's a big relief, because you are no longer wondering why life or other people do not see things like you do – you are just not obsessed with it anymore. You have dropped it. They do not see it the way you do, because it is not their job to see it the way you do, says Adyashanti. They do not have any interest in it either, nor the capacity for it. When you start to see this, it often starts as something which is quite small, quite ordinary, but which can grow into something vast and extraordinarily meaningful, i.e. from the un-conditioned mind and all the way to the mind of God.

Love beyond self

When transcending self happens, you realize that there is a deeper, even more profound love that's not defined by how you feel. When you connect with this deeper kind of love, it can be very confusing, because it is so far outside of what we are taught. As soon as you've stopped feeling – for example feeling that your heart is swelling when you think of a loved one – it can be quite disorienting. Before this transition almost all of our descriptions of love are in some way feeling-based - even if it's *Agape*, or the selfless love of all beings. Even the altruistic and universal love of God is still *feeling*. But at some point, paradoxically, you start to *experience* a kind of love which is not based simply in experience. Instead, you *know* love - whether you feel it or not. This is the beginning of the transformation. When you begin to realize there *is* love whether you feel it in the given moment or not, and thus that there can be love which completely transcends how you feel, then, eventually, you realize that deeper more fundamental aspects of love exists, which cannot be defined in any way whatsoever by how you feel.

This deepest form of love is *divine* love. It is the love *of* God, the love *of* reality, not *for* it, but *of* it. In other words, it is love experienced through the mind and eyes of God, or through the mind and eyes of the ultimate, or through the mind and eyes of eternity. When you begin to realise that, even if only momentarily, you really start to recognize that from that point of view, love is not a feeling or an emotion. This doesn't necessarily exclude feelings and emotions – there may be overflowing feelings of love: but once you begin to realize a love which is not a feeling or an experience, then you know – even if your mind cannot make sense of it – then you recognise that the deepest divine love is God recognizing God as everything and in everything.

When you begin to realise this in a deep way, says Adyashanti, you realise that this divine love, which is beyond experience, is also *indiscriminate* love in the sense: it simply loves. There is nothing personal about it; it doesn't love one thing, or one person, or situation and exclude all the rest; it loves what is. It loves what is, because it is what is. So there is no choice in this love.

Freedom

Right up to self realisation there is a greater and greater sense of freedom. However, says Adyashanti, freedom falls away when self falls away. There is no sense of freedom, indeed, freedom doesn't make sense anymore. It literally does not compute. Where is the freedom when there is love – no matter what. In divine love there is no freedom to choose what to love and what not to love. You are stuck with it!

However, it doesn't feel as if you are stuck with it, says Adyashanti, that's just a matter of speaking. It's not like bondage, because freedom is only relevant in contrast to its opposite, which is bondage. When there is no more sense of bondage or limitation, there is no sense of freedom. There is no lack of freedom either – that's the beautiful part. There is freedom of being free from freedom – and certainly freedom of the psychological drive to experience freedom.

The threat of the un-known beyond self

Beyond self – here we really run out of words. We talk about the direct experience of No-Self, however, it's an experience which cannot be defined by feeling-states, but neither is it un-feeling; it is not the opposite of feeling, e.g. distant or cold or detached, because that's all feeling. So, we do not have words in our language to talk about anything beyond that. That's also why when we begin to come near that, ego or self sees this as very threatening, because the whole way of perceiving and experiencing life is being threatened – and self feels it and it knows it to be true, and it knows that it can't know what it will be like on the other side. Self knows that it can't know. And it is true that it cannot know. That's why it gets so afraid – and it projects the fear, says Adyashanti, into the unknown, into eternity. So eternity that's what is scary, the void is scary, infinity and silence is scary, because it's going to annihilate me. But this is all experiences - and none of those belong to eternity. Those all belong to self. For, there is no fear in eternity, in the absolute, in truth or in divine love. All the fear belongs to self. All of what it is so afraid of, of what might lie beyond its own experience, all of that fear belong solely to itself. It's no indication of what lies beyond it. Which is good news, very good news, says Adyashanti.

Unfortunately, however, the love and knowledge, which is beyond self that Adyashanti is talking about, is a kind of love and knowledge that you find no encouragement of in society, nor any acknowledgement either. As a culture, we do not even know that it exists. In fact, says Adyashanti, we would be terrified of it. However, it is part of the great silence of what exists beyond self. Moreover, this is the important thing, not the actual falling away of self, but what exists beyond self: How is life seen beyond self? How is life seen from the eyes of eternity? How is life seen from the eyes of God?