

# ***You Are Your Body, But Not in a Fundamental Way***

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You have probably heard the following statement many times: You are not your body.

Please allow me to add just one word: You are not *fundamentally* your body.

And here's the companion teaching: You *are* your body, *but not in a fundamental way*.

To clarify what I am getting at here, I need to explain what I mean by that word "fundamental" so let's get into that right now.

For this, I like to use my favorite metaphor, the actor and the character. In this metaphor, it's easy to see that the actor is the source of the character. Furthermore, every action that appears to be done by the character is really done by the actor. What appears to be the will and power of the character are really the will and power of the actor. Every quality or aspect of the character is truly a quality or aspect that is put on display by the actor. The character is not the source of anything and has no substance *of its own*. And yet in an important way, *during the play*, the actor and the character are one. When you look into the eyes of the character, you are looking directly into the eyes of the actor. They are one.

Now, since the actor can drop the role of the character at any time without losing anything essential to the actor, we say that the role of the character is non-essential (nonfundamental) to the actor even though it is essential to the play itself. (If you remove the character from the play, you no longer have the same story.) Speaking within the framework of the metaphor, we can say:

*The actor exists fundamentally as the actor, and yet the actor also exists in a nonfundamental way as the character.*

While the essence of the character is the actor, the essence of the actor is not the character since, again, the role of the character can be dropped at any time without losing anything essential to the actor. This means that even though the actor and the character are one, they are not the same. And we also note that if they were the same, we could say that the character is the source of the actor but that obviously isn't true.

Think about these points for a while, especially the idea that they are one and yet they are not the same. This idea is what the word "nondual" is pointing to but that is a subject for another time. (You can read more here: [Why Do We Call It Nondual Wisdom?](#))

Now imagine an actor who is completely invisible – completely imperceptible in every way – and imagine that this actor can manifest a physical body and then animate that body while permeating it and looking out of its eyes and listening through its ears and so forth.

This is what we have in our world. God is the one invisible Actor who is arising as each and every visible character, as each and every visible person.

*It is God who is arising as everyOne, and it is God who is doing everything.*

So where are “you” in all of this?

As you may know from my other essays, I offer this:

You are not fundamentally your body, and you are not even fundamentally your soul. Instead, *you are fundamentally pure awareness*. This awareness is not a thing or an object and cannot be perceived in any way whatsoever. And most importantly, this awareness is the One Awareness, the Divine Awareness. I often call this God, the only Reality that was not created. This Divine Awareness is the source of all of creation and it is the only witness to it. *This is your true fundamental self and this Source-Awareness is looking out of your eyes right now!*

(You can read more here: [The Loving Heart of Enlightenment](#).)

This sums it up: Your *fundamental identity* is Source-Awareness, the one, uncreated, formless (imperceptible) Reality, the Divine Essence of all creation. Your *nonfundamental identity* is the totality of created reality. And your *functional identity* is the person you appear to be. All of this is thoroughly divine since God is infinitely intimate with all of creation. God is creation just as the actor is the character.

But I still have a few more subtle yet important points to make. As we all can see, when the actor arises as the character, the actor is the character. And it is with the character that the actor pretends to be a doctor or a fireman or whatever. We all know that the doctor on the stage is not a real doctor yet we can use this pretend doctor to tell a story. So the doctor is not real even though the character itself is real. If the character were not real, we would not be able to see it. In other words, if the character did not exist, we would not be able to witness it.

Now, when God arises as the person you appear to be, *God is that person. God is not pretending to be that person, God is that person*. Look again closely at the metaphor. The actor is not pretending to be the character, the actor is the character. It is with this character that the actor is pretending to be a real doctor. This layer of pretending is absent when God arises as the person you appear to be. There is no fake person being offered as a real person for acceptance by an audience. There is “only” God arising as a real person used in the construction of the real story that we call our ordinary reality. When I say that our ordinary reality is a real story, I mean that it exists in a way that we can witness it.

Since this point is misunderstood so often, let me go a bit further. You often hear people say, “Thank God that nightmare wasn’t real, it was only a dream,” or “That wasn’t real, it was only a movie.” While we do understand what is being said, it is much more accurate to say that the dream *is real as a dream* and the movie *is real as a movie*. Again, if they were not real, we would not be able to witness them. Yes, of course, the story told by a fictional movie did not happen historically, but nevertheless, that movie does exist as a fictional story.

So if you hear people say that nothing is real or that the world is unreal or that you do not exist, this is the confusion that they are lost in. Our ordinary world certainly has a reality to it which is why we can experience it. And the substance of that reality is this divine Source-Awareness.

You appear to exist fundamentally as a person and yet the truth is that you exist in a nonfundamental way as the person. This means that the person exists in a deceptive way. Since an illusion is something that exists in a deceptive way, we can say that the person is an illusion. But just because the person is an illusion does not mean that the person does not exist or that you do not exist!

God is indeed arising as everything and you are all of that. You are the mountains, you are the rivers, you are the sea. You are the sky, you are the sun, you are the moon. You are all of created reality and yet you are none of that fundamentally. Fundamentally, you are pure Awareness, Source-Awareness, the Divine Source and Substance of everything. You are the dream and you are the Dreamer.

I will leave you to ponder this. In truth, I honor your divine nature.

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