

Q: Hi, Robert. I would very much like to understand what you call “splitting” in more depth. Would you write something or point me towards something concise that you have already said on the matter, please? I ask because when I’ve heard you speak of splitting, I think you are naming the state I was in for some years, which I was mentored/bullied into by an “enlightened” man, and I’m still trying to understand and deconstruct that period of my life.

Thanks in advance if you can help me here, and for all the things you share on Facebook. They have been really valuable to me. Appreciation.

A: Thanks, Toby. It always feels good to hear that my words have been helpful to someone. You are most welcome.

The most basic case of splitting is dividing this aliveness into experiences (perceptions, feelings, and thoughts) on the one hand, and the experiencer (myself) who “has” experiences on the other hand.

The subject/verb/object structure of language suggests that split. For example, I (the subject) see (verb) a tree (the object). But is there really an "I" who sees a tree, or is the seeing and the tree part of "I?" And aren't the seer, the seeing, and the seen all mutually codependent (without any one of them, the others would not exist)? Without any perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, would there even be an "I?"

The so-called “enlightened” man, such as the one who bullied you, is entirely lost in such splitting. I consider that view folly, not "enlightenment." As I see it, no discrete, autonomous “myself” actually exists. Rather, what we call “myself” arises moment-by-moment and passes away again composed of various separate elements that are not necessarily related and have no ultimate staying power.

That was the observation of Gotama, the Buddha, who pointed out that the self is not a fixed entity with an essence of its own, but a confection constructed unconsciously from five different elements: a body, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and awareness of the body, feelings, perceptions, and thoughts. Many contemporary spiritual teachers like to claim that “myself” is “pure awareness,” but that leaves out the other factors enumerated by Gotama. After all, is there really a "myself" entirely separate from feelings, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and the body?

That "myself"--the one touted by the silly geese gurus-- is another case of splitting, in this case, splitting “awareness” from the objects of awareness. But, as I wrote in *The Ten Thousand Things*, “Without awareness, there are no objects, but without objects, there is no awareness. So, it is not that objects arise in or upon awareness . . . but that objects are awareness, and awareness is objects.” [page 28].

To me, it seems clear why people cling to the belief in so-called pure awareness. If the bodily element in the Buddha's list can be split off from "myself," then the fear of death—the fear of not being at all—disappears. Since all I "really" am is pure awareness, I don't need a body. The body is just my "meat suit." To believe that nonsense has been the goal of "spiritual" people forever: Vahalla, the Elysian Fields, the happy hunting ground, Shangrila, Heaven with Jesus, etcetera ad nauseum.

That is the ultimate splitting: I am not the body; I am a soul. Yes, perhaps, but without a body and a brain, there would be no "you" to believe such a thing. When that is understood, the split is healed. That is what I call sanity.

Be well.