

Our State of Mind: The Ring that Binds

by Bob Fergeson

We all go through life maintaining our belief system, or state of mind, to the point of controlling everything in sight, so as to keep the ego of body and mind alive and well. This will hold even in the face of death, for we would rather be right than admit our error and live with it. We also grant our fellow man this same hell, by forcing him to be as we, even if it means controlling his every action, all in order to keep our precious ego afloat. To grant ourselves freedom, eternal and infinite, we must do the same for everyone else, and leave the hypnotic ring of attachment to the ego of body and mind. Through the clear examination of our very 'selves', and those of our friends, we break the ring, and find freedom in simple awareness. This is how we become, and in so becoming, free ourselves from the chains of mind and ego.



Most states of mind involve the application of pressure to keep us running in the circle of body and mind. We feel a certain pressure, perhaps coming through the body, as a need for a certain pleasure. The mind is then used to rationalize the pressure releasing act. The mind can also be the initial source of the pressure. We may have an irrational fear, never really questioned but now a habit, which the mind forces on the body causing it to perform irrational actions. These circular patterns of behavior and rationalization tie up our energy and direction, negating any real spiritual progress.

We're left trapped in a world of inner fantasy and imagination as concerns our inner journey, for the real motivations of our daily life are left to forces of direction other than our own. These forces then use us as agents to recruit our friends into whatever peculiar trap with which we have become enamored, creating another ring of attachment and descent.

How can we escape from this ring, this trap of identification with the dominant state of mind of our body-ego? John of Ruysbroeck points to the path to freedom, when he tells us of the differences between the Servants of God, His Friends, and His Sons. Each step along the inward path requires more and more objectivity to the very thing we know the least about: our very 'self'. The hidden must be revealed, whether we believe in it or not. Each step along the path from Servant to Son requires a lessening of attachment to objects, whether these objects are people, desires, fears, or our own manifestation as an apparent body/mind. The Servant deals in the world of objects, serving his conception of the higher good through the manipulation of these objects according to his beliefs. As these beliefs are questioned and called into the light of discrimination, the seeker becomes less attached to objects, and moves inward towards the formless. His progress is helped by those above him, the true spiritual Friends, who see clearer than he, and grant him the freedom to become as they.

One way to see the hidden but dominant state of mind that runs our life, is to observe how the trap of unconscious belief works in our friends. It is much easier to see the irrational habits, desires and fears in

those around us, for it is not so threatening to our own ego. The mistakes, rationalizations and contradictory behavior of those familiar to us can be used as a door to our own mind. We may begin to see how our relationships are based on mutual neediness, in keeping similar states of mind afloat. If we are lucky, we may have the intuition that the imperfections in our friends are much the same as those hiding in us. This can be a frightening thought, for once we see clearly the traps of body and mind that snare our friends, we get the hint that we, too, are just as unconsciously snared.

By taking this simple step within, and realizing that we are asleep to our basic motivations and drives, we lessen their hold on us, and become less attached. Most attachments are dependent on a mental image, usually that of a state or object which we wish to possess, coupled with the ego's illusion that we are in control and know what we are doing. Through questioning our desire or fear of these mind-objects, we become a little freer, and self is a bit diminished.

In moving within, to a state of mind less attached to the systems of desire and fear, of energy loss and objects, we come to move in a straight line, rather than in the downward spiral of the blind leading the blind. From this straighter path leading within, we can also help those of similar bent. If we have no pressure forcing us to change the world of objects, having lost our attachment to them, we will no longer treat our friends as objects, and thus grant them the freedom to move within also. We may begin to get hints that they, too, are using us as examples of what states of mind can do, and are thus making progress through viewing our own particular displays of folly.

Through the seeing of 'self' in our friends, we may gradually come to see 'self' in ourselves. This 'fathomless staring and seeing' leads to the lessening of attachment to this 'self', and its eventual demise through a startling discovery. We come to see that there are no separate 'selves' or objects, including our own 'self' or that of our friends, but only the Universal Awareness of Man.