

## NOT SELF

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When I first came across the Buddhist idea that there is no such thing as Self, only a not-Self, it seemed to make no sense at all, but it really scared me. It has taken years, decades, to get a handle on this.

But it's just a more thoughtful way of seeing ourselves. We know biologically we are part our parents and grandparents, back thousands of generations. We have more in common with marmosets than you'd imagine. And bizarre as it sounds 50% of our genes are shared with bananas! So, I am not just 'me' obviously. I am less me than I think, and much more than just the me I thought I was.

I was a very poor scholar at school. But I had an Indian gentleman for a couple of years as my English teacher. This was a novelty in my day where I lived. He added to this by wearing rose- tinted spectacles. Consequently, I paid more attention in his classes. I flunked school but my ability to read and write opened up the whole world to me as an adult. So, part of me is that Indian gentleman.

As a teenager, I was an angst- ridden, pretentious monster that kept my parents awake at night and gave them nightmares when they could sleep. I'm not like that anymore. But what troubled me then has influenced who I am now.

So, part of me is that teenager, as part of me is that Indian gentleman, as part of me is marmoset. Not to mention the banana.

And a hundred million other things besides. Including the carbon and oxygen atoms in our bodies that came from exploding supernovas billions of years ago. So, part of me is exploding supernova as well.

My "self" really isn't just myself at all, is it? It's a constantly changing, enriching, redefining mixture of an infinity of things. This makes me much more amazing than I thought I was!

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