

**Clarification of the Personality
from Diamond Heart, Book IV**
by A.H. Almaas

Many spiritual teachers describe their experience of realization as if they suddenly became realized and the personality just died, or fell away. So it is understandable that you might fantasize that one day you will finish your meditation and there will be no personality left. This idea of enlightenment or self-realization is misguided, although it is true that you can experience sudden revelations or insights that can change the rest of your life. My perception of what happens with people who claim to have lost their personality totally and spontaneously is that there often remains a split-off or suppressed part which will manifest as a distortion or a lack of integration. This means that there has been an essential realization, but the realization has not clarified the personality. It is, rather, a state of transcendence of the ego personality. If the personality is abandoned rather than integrated, the totality of life cannot be lived.

We can look at the process of realization from the perspective of transcendence or from the perspective of embodiment. When people talk about getting rid of the ego, they're talking about a transcendent experience. It is possible to transcend the personality or the ego, or even physical existence. However, there is a more difficult process which leads to the state of embodiment of reality. Rather than simply transcending the personality or physical existence, this state involves actually embodying essential existence in one's life.

Of course, some systems do encompass both transcendence and embodiment. If you look at your experience here in terms of essential realization, what you will see in the approach to our Work is transcendence followed by embodiment. This is what is sometimes called death and rebirth; death is transcendence and the rebirth is embodiment. In embodiment, the personality itself becomes permeable, and thus it is influenced by the essential realization. True essential personal life becomes possible only when essential realization permeates the personality so that you are living according to your realization. You have a personal, practical life-relationships, career, interests, things you enjoy doing, things you don't want to do. You're still a person, not just a disembodied spirit.

This process of embodiment is very intriguing and exciting. It is fulfilling and satisfying in such a way that you realize how having a human life makes sense. It makes sense to all of you--to the mind, to the heart, to the personality, to your body. Human life is not complete until the realization can be integrated into every aspect of you, so that all elements of you are in harmony and have an understanding of the situation. If one part of you is alienated, rejected or split away, the integration is not yet complete.

Embodiment becomes possible as the personality is clarified. The idea of clarifying the personality can be confusing because we often experience the personality as the source of our trouble. As we work on ourselves, we are constantly seeing the problems and suffering of the ego-ignorance, hatred, rage, fear, jealousy. So how, we wonder, can the personality be spiritual? It seems that the best thing we could do would be to obliterate it, to wage spiritual warfare, inner guerrilla warfare. In fact, many stages of the Work do feel like a kind of warfare. But successful warfare doesn't mean destruction of the enemy, it leads, rather, to the annexation of the territory. This is often the original reason for warfare; it is actually a movement towards expansion rather than destruction.

It's a strange thing, this struggle we go through between our beingness and the personality. It is like warfare--one side triumphs over the other-but even though there is an annexation of the territory, inner turmoil continues. The counterrevolutionary action inside doesn't end just because one side annexes the other and takes it over. As long as one side is dominating the other, there cannot be peace. In order to resolve this conflict, we need to understand the actual nature of the personality. If we look at it objectively with no preconceived ideas, what is this creature? Why does it cause so much trouble? Why does everyone blame everything on the ego? Many spiritual books call personality the devil, the animal or the monster, judging and rejecting it. At the same time, everyone talks about love. People say you must submit or surrender your personality.

It is true that sometimes the personality appears as a monster or a devil. If you look with an inner eye, it might even look like such a thing. But what is this personality that sometimes appears as a devil, sometimes a child, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, sometimes a frustrator, sometimes a saboteur, sometimes a doer, sometimes an observer, sometimes a rebel, and so on? The personality must have some kind of intelligence, some amazing power, to manifest in all these ways. One minute it appears as an innocent child; the next, it's a monster. One moment it's vulnerable and defenseless, the next moment it's a gladiator.

At some point we can perceive that the inner child, the ego, the ego identity, the emotional self, the mind, the false personality, the observer, the doer, the actor, the one who resists, and the one who hates, are actually all one. They're just different faces of the same thing that we call personality, appearing in different forms depending on the situation. We have seen that Essence is a substantial presence, but we are surprised when we realize that it is not only Essence that is substantial; the personality itself is a substantial existence. You can observe that even your personality itself is a material. It has an inner substance.

It is true that there are thoughts and feelings and sensations connected to it, but at some point you feel your personality as a kind of presence. It doesn't have the sense of immediate reality and freshness, the sense of truthfulness, brilliance and luminosity of Essence; in fact, it is usually felt as a thickness, a dullness, a heaviness. But personality is not just a collection of thoughts; it exists as its own kind of material or medium.

Many systems claim that the personality does not exist, that ego does not exist. It is true that from a certain perspective one can see that it does not exist. But at the level where personality does not exist, neither does anything else. Your body does not exist on that level, nor does physical reality for that matter. As long as there is conceptualization, your personality exists just like anything else, just as Essence exists. When we can see this substantial existence of the personality, it is possible for us to comprehend what it would mean for the personality to be purified and clarified.

For most people, the Personality manifests at the beginning as a kind of resistance, a leadenness, a cloudiness in the mind. When the personality is unclear, the personality exists as an unclarified, impure substance. We call it 'impure' not in a judgmental or moralistic sense, but because it doesn't exist as its own pure nature. What are the "impurities" of the personality? What will be clarified from the personality? The answer is simple: the past. The thickness, the dullness, the suffering that you experience as the personality are there because the personality does not exist in its pure form. It carries the past with it, and the past exists as conflicts, memories, undischarged feelings, misunderstandings, ignorance, and all the reactions, associations, and fantasies corresponding to all the ignorance from the past.

The personality is like dirty water that has been used many times to clean things but it has not been cleaned or purified itself. The personality needs to be filtered. The past needs to be discharged, eliminated. The substantial state of the personality-what I call false pearl-creates a certain contraction in the spleen and pancreas area. I believe the connection to the spleen and the pancreas is that the physiological job of the spleen is to eliminate dead white corpuscles. The white blood cells exist for defense and protection, which is what the personality is trying to do. Once these cells have done their job, they are cleared from the blood.

The personality, however, does not usually discard old defenses that are no longer needed, and these old defenses constitute much of the unclarity and dullness of the personality. At different points in your work you experience different aspects of this unclarity, depending on what area you are working on, and the previous level of clarification of your personality. For example, you might be working for some time on material in the personality that has to do with security and the essential aspect of Will, and another time you might be working on defenses regarding Strength.

Also, the deeper you go into your work, the more the subtle structures in the personality are experienced as false. We call this unclarity the 'false pearl,' contrasting it to the true person, which we call the Pearl.

So perhaps we are beginning to understand something about the unclarity, the opaqueness of the personality: It contains elements that were supposed to have been discharged, but have not yet been eliminated. A major part of what needs to be eliminated is conditioning that was once useful for protection and defense, even for physical survival. Many of our patterns, conflicts, and ignorance remain as part of the struggle for survival, for protection. We are now stuck with those patterns and mechanisms that we developed in our past to protect us from too much pain or from annihilation. We have not been able to let them go, and they have determined the content of our personality.

This is the process of the clarification of the personality: Each time you understand an issue or an identification with a past conflict or a now-unnecessary defense, you discharge feelings associated with the issue and work through the feelings and the beliefs about it. As you have seen many times, working through an issue-which involves ceasing to be identified with it--typically allows the arising of an essential state. In this process of working through an issue related to any essential quality, the personality confronts the part of its structure that substitutes and compensates for the lack of that true quality. For example, issues around essential strength will uncover the false

strength of the personality. When this compensation is seen through and the essential strength is freed, there is no more need for the personality structure of the false strength.

Thus, the arising of each essential aspect will shed light on a certain element of the ignorance in the personality. When you are inquiring, the presence of an essential state allows you to become very specific about your issues. In the process of inquiry, the personality becomes clearer and purer each time a quality of essence is realized and the issues around it are understood. You let go of some old beliefs, old self-images, and old tensions. If you feel the state of the personality when it is somewhat relaxed, you realize that although it's still dull and heavy, it is also comfortable or even warm and cozy. The felt sense of the personality is like the blankets that babies carry around with them. It reminds you of your blanket, your bed, of your mother when she took care of you when you were sick. It's a protective device that has been doing its job. Then, when the actual essential states are able to arise-states that the personality has been unsuccessfully trying to recreate through such devices there is a potential for a clarifying impact on the personality. Of course, sometimes essential states arise without a connection to issues, for instance, as a result of meditation or some spiritual practice. But when a person experiences these states without looking at the issues, which is a common occurrence, there is no clarification of the personality. The personality stays the way it is.

It is this development that is often called spiritual realization: The person is in an essential state, and in some sense identified with it, but the personality remains as it is. In order for the person to embody the essential experience, Essence must impact the personality; it must transform the personality. We can integrate this influence only by working through the actual issues and understanding how they manifest in all areas of our lives, specific and general. When you are working on understanding a specific issue and an essential state manifests, you may notice that the experience doesn't end your struggle with the issue. There is still a duality between personality and Essence. Spiritual realizations or essential states may lighten and harmonize your daily life or make you feel more fulfilled, but the struggle of the duality continues. You might also notice that you are still engaged in the process of development but from the perspective of personality rather than from the perspective of Essence. This persistent lack of clarity is the hallmark of personality.

In your process, you might find that particular personal issues have become more clear and that issues from your personal history have become more clarified. But there must come a time when you begin to look at the personality itself, not in terms of its particular issues but as a whole. The issue then is not a matter of, 'I don't have my will,' or 'Why can't I find a girlfriend?' or 'I don't feel any self-worth.' Each issue is real and needs to be resolved but there is something which underlies all the particular issues. When you explore this underlying something, an awareness will emerge that the duality itself is the source of the conflict. You will discover that the fact that you feel that there are two entities-Essence and personality-instead of one, is the problem.

This issue of perceived duality then becomes the focus of your work. The split in your experience has been there for as long as you can remember. You can remember that you have always labeled your experience as good or bad, pure or impure. Some of your experience has been luminous, full of love, intelligence, and clarity. But part of you remains somewhat opaque and stubbornly continues to reassert itself. Before your awareness of Essence, you identified with the opaque part and wanted the good stuff. But after experiencing these wonderful states, you realize that these experiences don't solve the problem. You might have many experiences of Essence--yummy, powerful, sweet experiences like Merging Love, Value, and Truth. But as long as your identification is primarily with personality, these experiences tend only to inflate the personality and you develop an inflated ego, believing yourself to be a personality that has Essence. So then you might feel proud that you are someone who knows God, who communes with God, right? You feel that you are important, that you have accomplished something. All this experience happens and you may become full of yourself, full of richness, power, clarity, and will. But eventually you begin to realize that this sense of 'filling' the personality with Essence is a problem. You begin to become aware that the problem is you, yourself-your very identity, and the way you look at all things. The issue is not what you get or don't get. At this point in your process, the suffering doesn't come from the content of your experience or from any object of your perception. It comes from the operator in you, the one who perceives, acts, and experiences. That's the problem: you as the doer, the actor, the observer. You begin to perceive that something needs to happen to 'me.' You begin to see that you suffer because of the split, the duality.

This understanding becomes accessible only when you have experienced Essence in a very deep and integrated way. When you first begin to work on yourself, the personality is all you experience and so of course you want to make it better. Then you begin to perceive the more real part of you--Essence--perhaps in the form of Value or Truth. It's not that it wasn't there before, but you had just never seen it, or at least it had been hidden for years and years. So the next stage is that there is a struggle in which the development of Essence increasingly exposes the personality.

Now you have an opportunity to develop a new understanding of the duality between Essence and personality. You see that despite your essential experiences, the personality continues to act, thus maintaining its identity. This perpetuates the duality, this very activity of doing something is the problem. The personality is operating, working on itself, becoming realized, achieving this and that, and all this activity is what creates your suffering. The mere fact that you do, that you hope, that you desire, is the problem.

So you turn towards the issue of identity, and see that your very identity is an inner activity. The past exists in us as activity, and the content of personality is an activity, a movement. Ego activity is the substance of suffering; it is contraction itself. You can see this more specifically if you look at the activity in each center of the body. If you look at the activity in the head, you'll see concern and worry. In the heart, it's a sense of guilt and frustration. Looking at activity in the belly, you'll see it as attachment and desire. But it is all the same thing: ego activity. And ego activity is always connected with issues from your past. It is what is called personal karma, or the wheel of life and death. It is the movement of your mind, your personality, your choices, preferences, judgments, resistances-anything you do actively. The moment you choose to do something or to reject something, you are acting, and that inner activity is the content of personality that makes the personality unclear. It muddies the water and separates the personality from the clear stillness of Essence.

Essence is Being, and Being is complete stillness, with no action. When you act, the movement of your thoughts or desires separates you from Essence. You're not Being. But a very interesting thing happens when you become aware of the movement of your personality and you don't go along with it. What happens is you realize that when you don't go along with it, there is no one to go along or not go along.

There are actually two ways of working on the personality: one of them is seeing the personality, thus becoming separate from it, which is called disidentification. The other method involves complete immersion in the personality. In the state of self-realization, based on disidentification and separation from the ego, the personality is not matured and integrated with Essence; it is not clarified completely. The personality has merely been set aside, not worked through and transformed.

In using the second method, we need to understand more thoroughly what is meant by immersion in the personality. There is a willingness to clearly and completely experience the personality itself without resistance, without the attempt to escape from or 'transcend' it. In this process you have to be the personality itself, to completely embody it. You see, conceive, and experience yourself in action as the personality. You have to experience for yourself that, 'I am the personality completely, I am that and my very movement is suffering.' This must happen completely, not by disidentifying - by looking from above and witnessing but by being it. The experience must be sensual, physical, and intuitive. It is not a reflection or a thought. This is direct perception, beyond the discursive mind.

At this point we can see the importance of clarifying your personal issues. It is difficult to see the ego activity as a whole when you are identified with one part of the personality which is engaged in unconscious conflicts. In this condition you are controlled by an unconscious issue that keeps you stuck in ego activity without realizing it. When the issues are clarified, it is easier to become aware of the movement itself, of the wheels in motion-not of what is being churned but of the actual churning itself. When you become aware that you are the machine in action and you are completely convinced that the activity itself is what is churning up problems, only then is it possible for the wheels to stop. When the wheels stop and there is no activity, there is also no defensiveness. You're not defending yourself in any way because, as we have seen, the very basis of personality activity is defense. When the activity stops, you recognize that most of your thoughts and desires and efforts are resistance and what you have been resisting is the present moment, the now.

You realize that the "nowness" and presence are your Beingness. And you begin to experience the presence of the Supreme Being as you, as yourself, in this moment. This experience enables you to see that the activity of resisting the present moment is exactly what has been separating you from Being. When there is ego activity, you might be aware of your being, but you are somewhere else. When the wheels are turning, they are pushing away who you are, separating you from Being. This separation is also what makes the personality feel perpetually deficient.

The moment you become aware of the vicious cycle of the activity of defensiveness, you will see clearly that what you have been rejecting is yourself, and that the rejection is useless and unnecessary. Then you will relax and stop. The complete perception of this cycle is the stopping of the wheels. Then the personality is dissolved by clarity. There is clarity because there is no movement in the personality separating it from Being.

As you can see, this insight comes only with a great deal of work. It takes a long time to get to the point of seeing the totality of ego activity. To see it experientially and directly rather than from a disidentified or transcendent perspective is made possible by a deep exploration of the territory of personality from within. This experience of Being relies on many kinds of realizations, understanding unconscious issues, and expansion into Being. When you are working on one particular issue you will see a part of this supreme reality, but working on all your issues makes it more possible to see the whole.

You must see the totality of your personality in the present--all the thoughts, desires, feelings, and dreams, which are continuous with your past. You may also see your personality, at all times continuous with the social structure around you, in all your relationships, the influence of your society on your personality, and so on. You will see that your ego activity is what connects you to the social network of personality, making you vulnerable to the various external influences that obscure the truth of who you are, and what reality is. When you see this completely, it is possible for the movement in you--that connects you with the rest of society--to stop. When it stops, you become pure, clarified personality, soul with no ego structure. This clarifies and heals the split from Being. The split simply is not there. In that instant you see that you and the supreme reality are one. For the first time, you can perceive the actual substance of the personality without the past. The basis of the personality, the underlying principle that makes it possible for you to be a person, the thing that you have rejected all this time, is nothing but the supreme reality as a person. The very substance of the personality is ultimately a substance which I call the Supreme Pearl, or the supreme person: pure personal presence with no qualities. It is just Being, pure and simple, but manifesting as a human person. So when the personality is completely clarified, and yet you feel you are a person, the personality doesn't disappear; it is now the supreme person, the truest person. This is a sublime reality existing as you, the human individual

Here, the supreme reality is seen as a personal reality, not only as the objective, impersonal Supreme, which also exists. After the realization of Supreme Being, there is a further process which is this unification, the final merging of the personality with the supreme reality. This is the same thing as the complete understanding and clarification of the personality. You recognize that you are the most real a person can be, the supreme person. Some people call this state of being the Son of God, because it is related to what Christ stated when he said, 'I and the father are one.' This process of clarification--which is the clarification of the soul--is the development of the Personal Essence, what we call the Pearl Beyond Price. The development of the Pearl is a process which keeps moving towards further clarification until it becomes the Supreme Personal Essence.

Each essential state has become personalized as the personality has become clarified, as each essential aspect has become you. You yourself become the personal essential reality, and thus, this reality can be integrated at the level of the Pearl. When you experience Compassion, that Compassion becomes you. 'I, personally, am Compassion. I am Value, I am Truth.' When you own it, it is no longer you experiencing it, but you know you are it. The personality becomes so permeable that it is completely merged with the aspect. This is what I call the personalization of the essential state. As the essential aspects are Personalized Compassion, Merging Love, Will, Peace, Value, Identity, and so on--you will reach a further, a more boundless personalization, which is the personalization of the Supreme.

The surprise is that this is what you have been all the time. It's never been otherwise. You've always been the supreme person, all the time, in your very substance, including the substance of the personality. That's why you have always identified with it, that's why you cannot disidentify from it: It is you. How can you disidentify from that? How can you get rid of that? It is ultimately you. Here we see that to try to disidentify from the personality and live from a transcendent identity is to leave the very ground of the reality that was never truly separate from personality.

You come to realize, then, that the purified, clarified personality, which is what I call the supreme person, is just a clarity. You experience yourself as the clarity. It's not just that your mind is clear; all of you is a clarity, an absolute openness and clarity, completely light. When all the impurities go, you remain as a lightness, an openness. But this is a personal openness, a person who is freedom. You are not a free person, you are a person who is the freedom. It is complete personal freedom. As the past is digested and eliminated, that personal freedom remains as the freedom of the personal Supreme, or the eternal person. You are a transparent personal form of pure presence, a body of clear light.

The supreme person is eternal in that you can experience yourself, personally, as timeless. When you become One, when the personality is clarified and unified, you will feel that it is an eternal oneness outside of time. It has nothing to do with time. Some people say that the self doesn't really exist; and on this level, it feels like a kind of emptiness, a nothingness. This is because of its lightness. It's not just that there is no gravity; it feels like empty gravity. You just light up; you're full of joy. You are full of personal joy, personal happiness. Finally, you are You,

completely; yet, who you are is the supreme reality itself, or the personalization of the supreme reality. It is not exactly nonexistence; it feels like nothing but it is a substantial nothing which is a qualityless essential presence.

When you become yourself, you are clarified and your action becomes love instead of frustrated ego activity. Action from your true personality is a flow of love, which has actually been the basis of the whole process all along. You realize that the flow of love doesn't begin with this new experience of integration; it has been present during the entire process. You understand that even the activity of the ego, which created resistance and suffering, was based at the beginning on love and compassion for yourself and others.

All that effort to be a person has been the result of the developmental thrust towards being the supreme person, whether you were conscious of this thrust or not. But most of the time you misunderstood this thrust. You thought it meant you needed to be this or that person. That is why you have been resisting and rejecting. You want to protect yourself, and this desire is motivated by love. Sometimes you've resisted in order to protect other people, like your parents; you've done this because you love them. But we forget this original love; the accumulations of the past have blinded us to our original motivation. This is why you need to understand all the accumulated layers of your reactions, until you get to what lies beneath. Only then can you understand the initial impulse of resistance, which is love. Only when you perceive the love under it all, will you realize you have not been eliminated or replaced by Essence, but that you and Essence are one. Duality was never really there. There has been only ignorance and an accumulation of undigested experience.

When you see this unity and understand that it has always been there, you will understand the meaning of Ridhwan, the name of our school. In Arabic, ridhwan means totally satisfied, satisfying, fulfilled, fulfilling, contented, contenting. You are personally and impersonally contented, objectively contented for yourself and all others. Your story and the story of each and every human being makes sense in the light of this unity underlying all of experience. Without this understanding of unity, your mind's questions are still unanswered. Many people say (and it is true for some states of realization) that the questions are not answered; the questions are simply not there any more. In this state of embodiment, however, all of the questions, including even your mental questions, are actually answered. They must be, for you to be completely satisfied and fulfilled. Your mind itself is full of ridhwan. All of you, not just one aspect of you, is satisfied. All of you is complete. There is no duality. All of you must become satisfied: your mind, your body, your personality-every aspect of you. All of it must be integrated, not discarded.

This is what I call then the integrated identity. Personality, Essence, Supreme, body, mind, are all one identity operating without a split. Then you are simply ordinary. You are not someone who is working on himself. You are someone who is just living. You do what you do without feeling that there is something wrong with you, that some part of you needs to be rejected. It cannot be that there is one part of you that works on another part of you. That is artificial. Can you imagine a tiger working on himself? Really! A tiger is an integrated being. Integrated human beings don't work on themselves either. It would be just as ridiculous as thinking that your dog is meditating, trying to understand his personality. Doesn't it sound ridiculous? You don't exist as a package of different things. Your mind makes these separations, and sets up all situations so that this part is always struggling with that part. But when you are unified, you see that your system functions naturally-what needs to be digested will be digested; what needs to be eliminated will be eliminated. When this happens naturally, there is no disharmony. This is health. It is the normal, ordinary state for a human being. In a state of health you don't think about your health. You don't dwell on it. Everything is fine. It's the same when you are completely integrated-you don't think about yourself. You just live in a healthy way.

This understanding is a synthesis of all our work so far. Where has it been leading? What is the thread? We are trying to see the thread connecting all of it, the thread of the clarification of the personality. This is a good time to speak explicitly about this process, so that you realize that personality is not the culprit. Personality is not something to be eliminated. It is simply full of fear because it does not know its true nature. The personality needs to be completely and thoroughly understood and cherished. Only with that compassionate, accepting, objective love is it possible to understand the true reality of the personality.

With clarification comes this understanding, and then your heart becomes completely nourished. Because of the fullness in the heart, love can flow. The heart is completely contented--the ultimate 'eating and drinking to your heart's content.' The heart spills over, and it's no big deal. You don't think about it; it is spontaneous and natural. If you are a truly normal, ordinary person, living your life in a healthy way, you cannot help but be loving; that lovingness is the source of, and the motivation for, your action.

You live in joy and you relate through love, because you are taking no action that is divisive. So what is seen at the beginning as opaque, dull, and heavy, becomes light, clear, and timeless. By accepting and understanding the

personality, by going through this process of clarification, you learn that understanding yourself allows you to love yourself.

The thing that we experience as personality at the beginning, and for a long time on the path, is actually nothing but the soul. The personality is our soul, but our soul imprinted and shaped by past experience. Our past experience shapes and forms our experience of ourselves and of our conscious and dynamic soul, and obscures its true nature by remaining as residual content in our true nature. These residues are the self-images, the internalized object relations, the reactions, the suppressed feelings, memories, and the many defenses we use to protect ourselves. The process of clarification is basically the dissolution of these residues through the light of understanding. This way, the personality reveals itself as the soul developing towards individuation. The soul develops into the Supreme Pearl Beyond Price, which is the individuation of Being. This is the embodiment of Being.

Copyright © 1997 A-Hameed Ali