

# My Transcendent Core-Self

Stephen J Brewer, June 2015\*

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*In which Orin concludes that a self-regenerating ‘core-self’ is necessary for life to endure the flux of events. This is the ‘still point of the turning world’, the transcendent centre around which the world of time and space flows.*

*Interviewer:* What is the nature of self?

*Orin:* In my opinion, the self is *the* essential element of our embodied minds because it is the only element that *endures* through all the changes and turmoil thrown at us by the world.

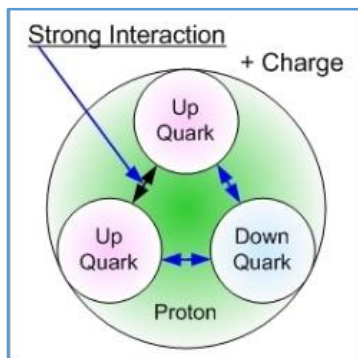
*Interviewer:* But there are those who say the self does not endure, it is just a construct of human social interactions and as fickle and inconstant as any social fashion.

*Orin:* This concept focuses on a superficial aspect of self. It is about the different personas or fashionable masks we wear when acting out our public roles. We can switch between them depending on whether we are at work, home, out with friends and so on. The self I am referring to is a core-self, the one that actually puts on and takes off these masks.

*Interviewer:* Others argue that we are a construct of highly edited memories. The self is an ever-evolving story, a narrative that is always changing able to justify and explain how we got to where we are now.

*Orin:* This ‘narrative theory’ of self is yet another aspect of this core-self. Many argue that if you strip away all these layers of being, there is nothing left. But I argue that something must be left, an enduring kernel of being. This core exists whether or not there are memories. Even people with Alzheimer’s disease and amnesia still find themselves present in the moment even though they have no histories from which to construct themselves.

*Interviewer:* So what form does this core-self take, and why is it so hard to grasp?



*The Proton: achieving stability in motion by self-regeneration.*

*Orin:* I believe this self can best be understood as a self-regenerative system. The ability to reconstitute itself is always found in any dynamic entity if it is to endure. This process explains how the most stable entity in the universe, the proton, endures. In animals, evolution has built on this process to produce biological systems also able to maintain a constant inner state in the face of environmental changes. Of course, if these external events are too traumatic the regeneration fails and the self is destroyed. The self, just like the proton, may endure many challenges to its being, but it is not immortal.

*Interviewer:* Surely, you are only describing the physiological process by which our internal environment is stabilized.

*Orin:* This process is called homeostasis, but my concept focuses on how we experience these states. This is through emotions surfacing deep from within us. Ones such as hunger and thirst are ultimately derived from the cellular level and require us to find food and water to re-establish homeostasis. But with humans, it is even more complex because our survival depends on our social group. So it includes the need to balance our behaviour to meet various social settings and so avoid group exclusion. In primitive societies this means death. This is when we call on our memories and our own narrative of self to help us choose the appropriate mask. This bottom line is that this core-

self seeks social as well as physiological homeostasis.

*Interviewer:* Does this mean we are some fixed and unchanging entity?

*Orin:* No, this core-self is not a static 'thing' but as a dynamic process always bringing about social and physiological harmony. So although the core-self's process goal is unchanging, the inputs are always changing. Tactics for achieving social harmony are to wear various masks and narratives, while to satisfy physiological needs such as hunger and thirst are simply to eat and drink. The states of disharmony are emotionally felt as desires and the achievement of harmony as the satisfaction of these desires.

*Interviewer:* So does this model help us explain other aspects of our being?

*Orin:* This enduring core-self, this necessary stabilising self-regenerating process, is always present, always active, always with the same aim. It does not change with time, nor does it change with place, for if it did, it would not remain the centre of physical and social events. The core-self is our unchanging desire for harmony at the centre of the changing world.



This 'still point of the turning world' is actually transcendent of space and time, just as clocks are not in the time they measure and the zero dimensional point is not a location in real space<sup>i</sup>. This means that physically, the core-self provides the necessary and sufficient central reference point against which our movement through space and time is measured. It is the transcendent centre around which our world flows.

*Interviewer:* So how do we uncover this core-self?

*Orin:* We seldom notice it because we are so busy processing and enjoying the flow of conscious experience. We can suddenly become conscious of this core-self in those rare occasions of ecstasy, sheer awe or terror, when the world stops and we are entirely in the moment. It can also be deliberately revealed by the practice of prayer and meditation when the images of self are systematically stripped away.

*Interviewer:* So what experience do we have when we become this core-self?

*Orin:* Stillness! Here we are confronted by an existential death of our carefully constructed social-self and so we run from it by looking for distractions. But paradoxically, it is only because of this enduring core-self that our narrative and social selves exist.

The fact is I am only explaining what the poet T.S. Elliot has already said in a much more concise and elegant way:

*"At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement.*

*And do not call it fixity,*

*Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

*I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time."*

*\* T.S. Eliot Four Quartets*

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<sup>i</sup> See 'A Waste of My Time' in this series.