

# Projection and Denial

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## Projection and Denial

Projection and denial aren't really "thinking" as we understand the word, because you are usually aware of your thoughts. These twin forces come from the deepest level of *Maya* and cause endless suffering. Projection is *rajas*. Projection means that ignorance puts a thought in your mind that may or may not correspond to the reality of a given situation, and *tamas* makes you think that the thought is the reality of the situation. It denies you access to the source, so you think it is true because it is "your" thought and that reality will benefit from it, which may or may not be true. In other words, you can't tell the difference between what you think and what is going on in the world around.

Do thoughts actually belong to you? They do, but they don't. They don't, because they are generated unconsciously by habit, but since no one but you identifies with them, they become "your" thoughts.

You could also argue that "you" created the *vasanas* because *vasanas* don't exist without actions and "you" did the actions, but did "you" do them or did the *gunas*, which you didn't create, cause the thoughts and the actions?

Other conscious beings who are the beneficiaries of your thoughts are unaware that *avidya* is the source, and that ignorance is hard at work in their subconscious minds projecting beliefs and opinions which they think are real, so they can't understand what you mean and you can't understand what they mean. This causes conflict, usually arguments which do not bode well for happiness.

Projection also means that you think the object that you're experiencing, another person, for instance, caused the thought, but is that true? For example, you are riding in a car, and your normally voluble companion is quiet, for no other reason than that she has nothing to say. But you believe that her silence is a comment on your driving, which hasn't been particularly spectacular, to be sure; you nearly collided with a car a few blocks back because your cell phone rang and you were fumbling in your purse to retrieve it, but you didn't think it was your fault, because you answer your phone all the time when you are driving and nothing happens, so you blame the other driver. Blame is the poster child for projection.

Anyway, as you pass a familiar landmark your companion says, "We're almost there, we just passed Pizza Hut," which you did. You were paying attention to the road after the close call, so you didn't see it, and because your mind was distracted by the irritation caused by the other driver who had just "carelessly jeopardized your life," to use your own words, you snapped at your companion, "That wasn't Pizza Hut. It's coming up!"

Your companion, who was quiet and paying attention to the scenery, calmly said, "No, that was Pizza Hut," because it was. No projection, just an observable fact. This made you even angrier, so you said, "You always contradict me!," which wasn't true. It was just her statement of fact that interfered with your belief that the thought in your mind was real. Game on.

To wrap up this sad story, you honestly believed that your companion secretly thinks you are a bad driver, which does your self-esteem no good. You honestly believed that the close call was the other guy's fault and you sincerely believed that your companion was wrong about the location of that particular Pizza Hut. Nothing can convince you otherwise, because you "experienced" reality that way. You may have experienced reality that way, but you didn't experience reality as it was unless reality for you is your thoughts.

More examples: you blame America for all the trouble in the world. If it wasn't for America the world would be fine. The fact is that nobody ever saw an America. America is a projection, a thought. Many Americans think that America is the world's savior. Who is right, the yeasayers or the naysayers? Was America "America" before it was inhabited by Europeans? The native Indians didn't think so. You may have been to California, but did you find any object anywhere that had California written on it, apart from a t-shirt in San Francisco that obviously is only a collection of cotton threads? You saw buildings and people, but that's all you see anywhere on the earth. America and California are projections, and a projection can be anything you want it to be. But what you want and reality are two different things. It helps to know the difference.

### **You Think the Distortion Is Reality**

What isn't a projection? Everything you think and feel – your experience – is an abstraction, a stream of thoughts – memories, actually garnered from the past and superimposed on reality. There is a material transactional reality connected to your body that seems to be away from you, but you never jump out of your body to experience a tree, for example. If there is no thought in your mind and you open your eyes in the presence of a tree, you will have a tree-thought. That thought is not a projection. It had nothing to do with you. It is a thought that is true to the object. The tree-thought just is. It doesn't mean anything. It isn't a "nice" tree or an "ugly" tree. It is just something that is actually there, not something that you're putting there. You can argue that your thoughts are actually there too and you would be right, but you don't have the same relationship to them that you have to a tree. They are more than just "there." They imply something.

What they "mean" is added to them by *rajas*, *Maya's* projecting power, and *Maya's* veiling power keeps you from understanding that the pure perception of reality is actually distorted by your thinking. You think the distortion is reality.

Projection causes suffering because reality exists independently of your projections. So when reality demands a response, and you respond from your projections you are asking for emotional problems because every situation is new and demands that you think on your feet. It needs what it needs, not necessarily what you think is good for it. If you don't give it what it wants, it will anger you or depress you. Thinking what happened caused your emotions is just another projection. Reality does not have it in for you. It just doesn't care what you think and feel. It is only friendly to grown-ups. We will presently see how to get out of this problem.

In any case, life is unfulfilling and you are an unfulfilled – dare I say boring – person if your thinking is purely mechanical. However, life is good when you are in control of your thoughts and exceptionally wonderful when you think spontaneously.