

of former states which we conceive as continuously connected and coherent with the immediate present; and it is thus much larger and wider than the present, but also much less defined and clear in its remoter regions. The immediate present seems to be contained within the larger area of our whole past, so far as memory has preserved or can regain it.

This latter region appears, therefore, as a dim background with less defined features. From it stands out what we experience and take in at any moment; and so we establish involuntarily a difference between what we see clearly before us, and the larger and vaguer background which we nevertheless always feel with less or greater vividness.

This larger background, in which we conceive the present experience to be located, we call our Self: it is identical with the total experience before us, including the vivid present and the dimmer past; and being much larger, wider, and deeper, changing continuously, taking in what is new, but not altogether relinquishing what is old, it forms the plane of reference of our experience.

The language of common-sense shows clearly that our Self is identical with that whole of experience which constitutes at any moment our inner firmament: when it is ranging over a large area, full of reminiscences, the immediate present dwindles into a small compass, or is absolutely unnoticed; whilst at other times startling sensations absorb the whole of our attention and contract our view so much that the larger and dimmer background becomes still more obscure, the feeling of it vanishes, and we have lost our Self in an absorbing present.