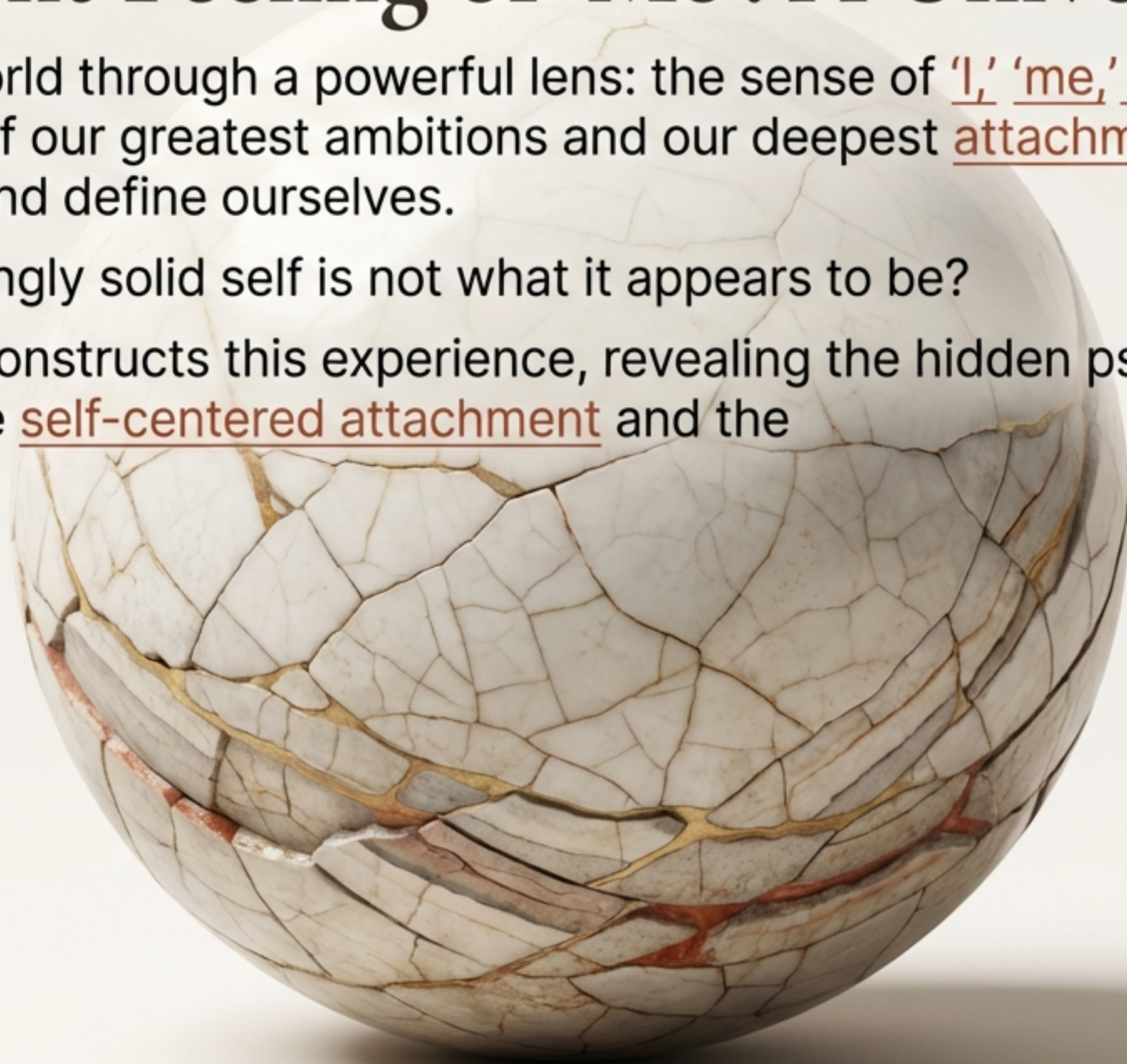


# The Persistent Feeling of 'Me': A Universal Puzzle

We experience the world through a powerful lens: the sense of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine.' This feeling is the source of our greatest ambitions and our deepest attachments. It drives us to protect, possess, and define ourselves.

But what if this seemingly solid self is not what it appears to be?

This presentation deconstructs this experience, revealing the hidden psychological mechanics that create self-centered attachment and the suffering that follows.



# The Blueprint of Experience: The Five Aggregates (Khandhas)

To understand how the sense of "self" is built, we first need to see the raw materials. In this framework, all human experience can be understood through five distinct, interdependent processes, or "aggregates." These are not parts of a person, but a dynamic flow of events we mistake for a person.

## Form (Rūpa)

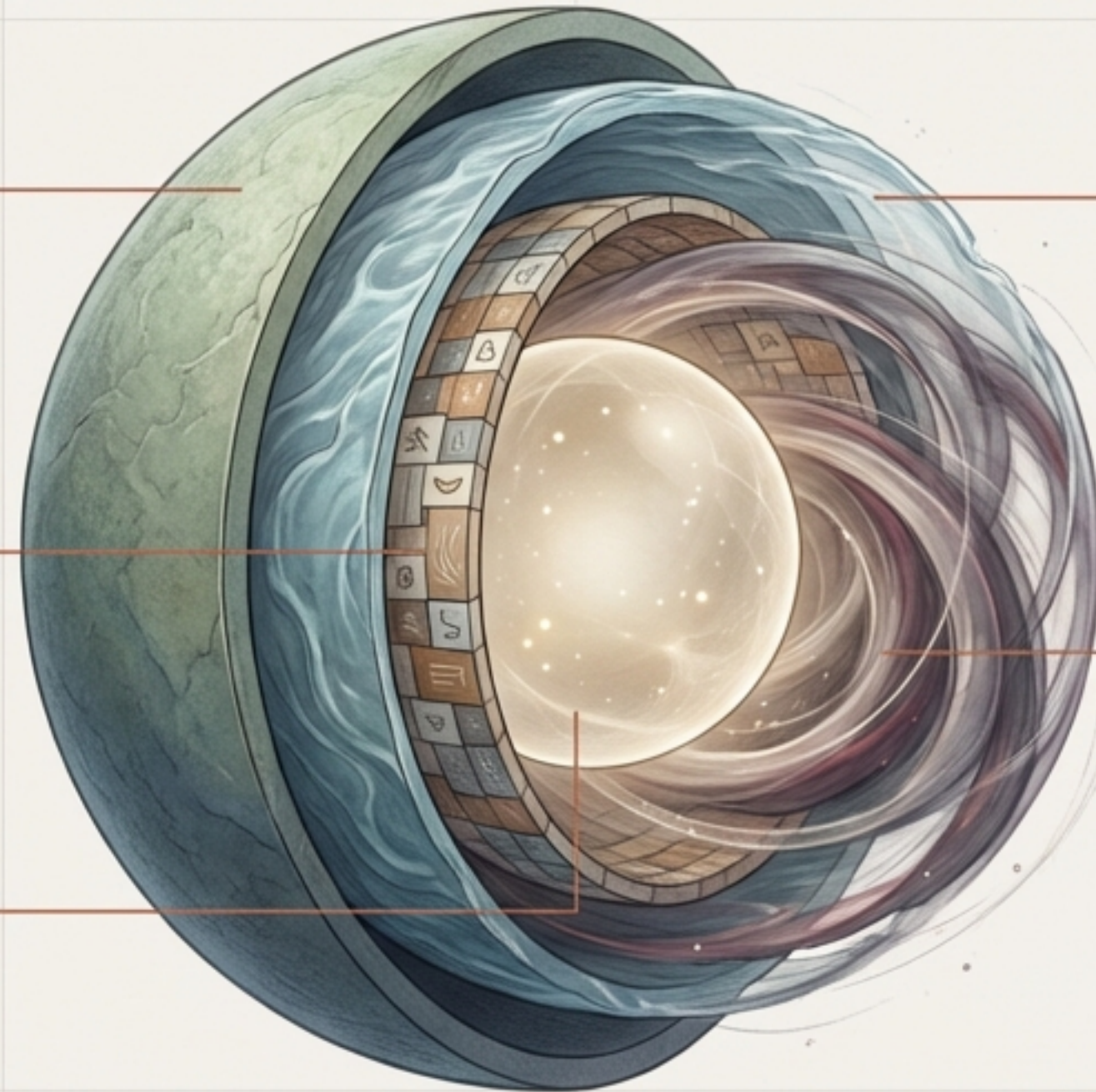
The physical world. Our body, appearance, and all material things.

## Perception (Saññā)

The act of recognition. Labeling, remembering, and making sense of data.

## Consciousness (Viññāṇa)

The faculty of knowing. The basic awareness that arises at the sense doors.



## Feeling (Vedanā)

The raw sensations. Pleasure, pain, and neutrality that arise from contact.

## Mental Formations (Saṅkhāra)

The engine of will. Intentions, habits, dispositions, and reactions.

# The Four Faulty Assumptions: How We Misidentify the Self

The sense of a solid "self" arises from a subtle but persistent cognitive error. For any component of our experience (X), we instinctively misidentify it in one of four ways. These four patterns are the root of Sakkāyadiṭṭhi, or "identity view."

Title: X is self

Subtitle: This experience is me.

Caption: (Direct Identification)

Title: Self possesses X

I own or control this experience.

(Ownership)

X

Title: X is in self

Subtitle: This experience happens inside of my true self.

Caption: (Containment - inward)

Title: Self is in X

My true self is located inside this experience.

(Containment - outward)

# The 20 Forms of Mistaken Self-View: A Framework for Deconstruction

When the five aggregates are combined with the four faulty assumptions, they generate twenty specific forms of mistaken self-view. Each one creates a unique flavor of attachment and suffering. The following slides will deconstruct this matrix with practical, modern examples.

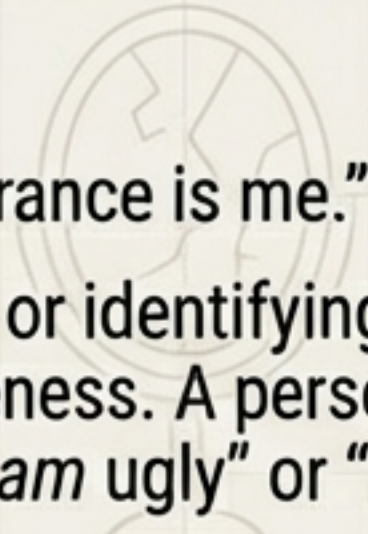
	...is self	Self possesses...	...is in self	Self is in...
Form ( <i>Rūpa</i> )				
Feeling ( <i>Vedanā</i> )				
Perception ( <i>Saññā</i> )				
Mental Formations ( <i>Saṅkhāra</i> )				
Consciousness ( <i>Viññāṇa</i> )				

# Deconstructing Form (*Rūpa*): The Body as Mistaken Identity

## Form as self

“This body/appearance is me.”

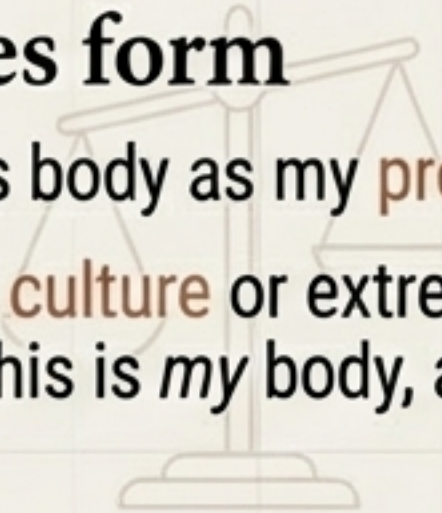
**Body dysmorphia** or identifying one's **worth** with physical attractiveness. A person looking in the mirror thinking, “*I am ugly*” or “*I am beautiful*.”



## Self possesses form

“I own/control this body as my **property**.”

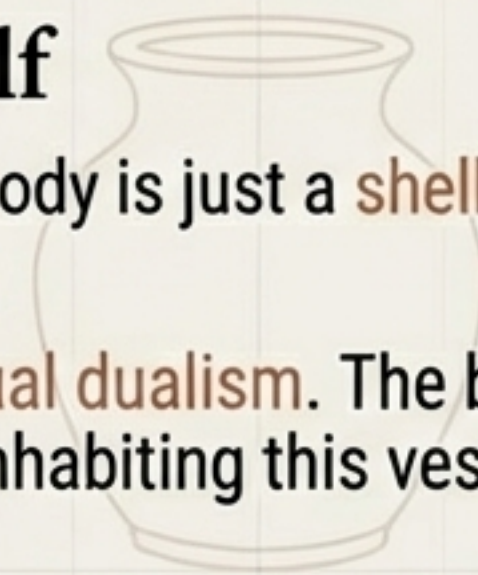
**Obsessive fitness culture** or extreme dieting. The mindset of “This is *my* body, and I will master it.”



## Form in self

“This physical body is just a **shell** housed within my true self/soul.”

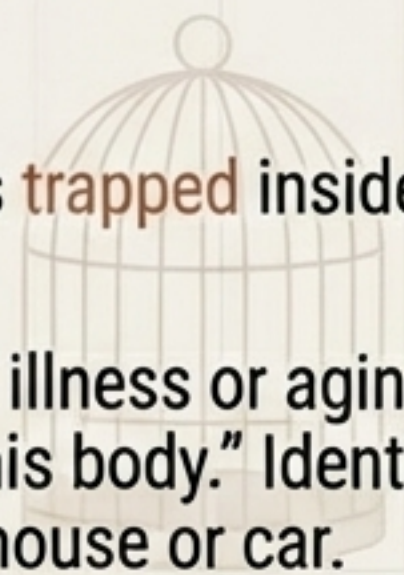
Common **spiritual dualism**. The belief that “My spirit is temporarily inhabiting this vessel.”



## Self in form

“My essential self is **trapped** inside this physical form.”

Feeling **confined** by illness or aging. “I can't be my true self until I fix this body.” Identifying the self with possessions like a house or car.



# Deconstructing Feeling (*Vedanā*): The Self Built on Pleasure and Pain

## Feeling as self

**Meaning:** "These sensations ARE me."

**Modern example:** Emotional dependency or depression. The thought "I *am*\* my anxiety" or "If I'm not feeling happy, I don't exist."

## Self possesses feeling

**Meaning:** "I own my emotions and I must control them."

**Modern example:** Curating a hyper-positive social media persona to "own" happiness, or using substances to suppress and "control" negative feelings.

## Feeling in self

**Meaning:** "Feelings arise within my inner core/soul."

**Modern example:** The belief "Deep in my soul, I feel sorrow." This treats the self as a permanent container for transient feelings.

## Self in feeling

**Meaning:** "My true self is contained within this specific feeling."

**Modern example:** Over-identification with moods. "When I feel this joy, I am closest to who I truly am." Feeling that "my real self" is revealed in moments of intense emotion.

# Deconstructing Perception (*Saññā*): When Worldviews Become “Me”

## Perception as self

**Meaning:** **in Inter:** “My point of view, memories, and beliefs define me.”

**Modern Example in Inter:** Political or ideological polarization. Someone whose entire identity is their label: “I *am* a liberal,” “I *am* a nationalist.”

## Perception in self

**Meaning:** “Perceptions arise within my stable, inner self.”

**Modern Example:** The belief in a “watcher” self that perceives the world. “The inner me sees through all deceptions.”

## Self possesses perception

**Meaning:** “My unique perspective is mine and I own it.”

**Modern Example:** Willfully shaping a personal narrative online. The idea that “My views are mine alone,” leading to defensiveness when challenged.

## Self in perception

**Meaning:** “My self resides in the act of perceiving or in my unique interpretation.”

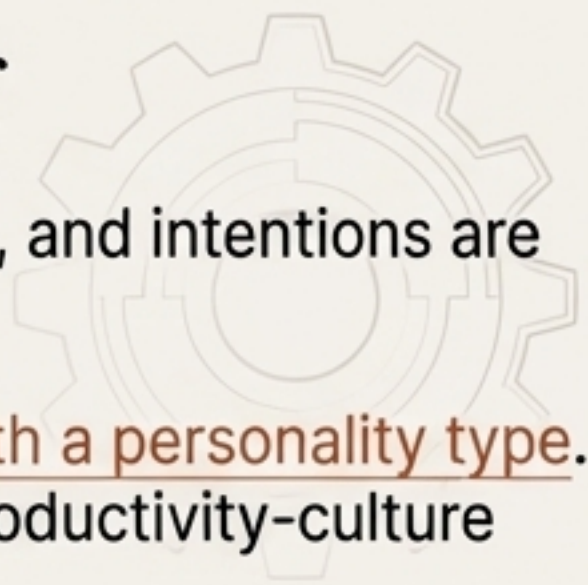
**Modern Example:** “My unique lens on the world reveals my soul.” The feeling that one’s aesthetic taste or intellectual framework *is* the self.

# Deconstructing Mental Formations (Saṅkhāra): The Illusion of a Fixed Personality

## Mental Formations as self

**Meaning:** "My habits, tendencies, and intentions are who I am."

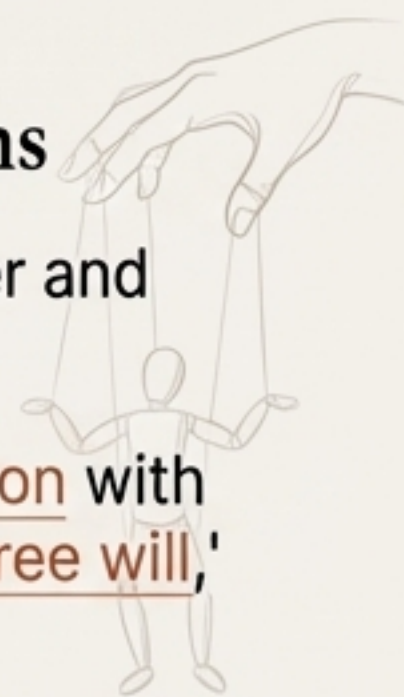
**Modern Example:** "Identifying with a personality type. 'I *'am'* an angry person,' or the productivity-culture identity: 'I *'am'* a hard worker.'"



## Self possesses Mental Formations

**Meaning:** "I own and control my willpower and choices."

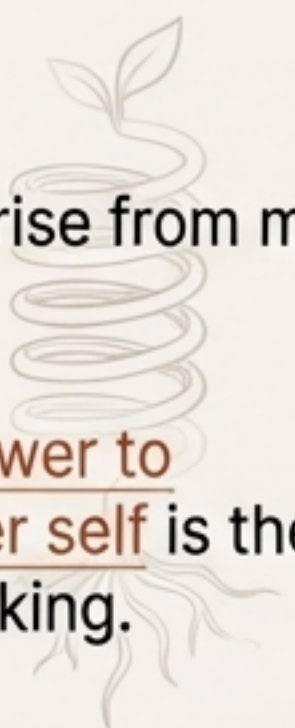
**Modern Example:** "The self-help obsession with 'mastering' habits. The belief 'I possess free will,' treating volition as a personal attribute."



## Mental Formations in self

**Meaning:** "These intentions and habits arise from my core being."

**Modern Example:** "'Within me lies the power to change.' Believing that a permanent inner self is the source of all motivation and decision-making."



## Self in Mental Formations

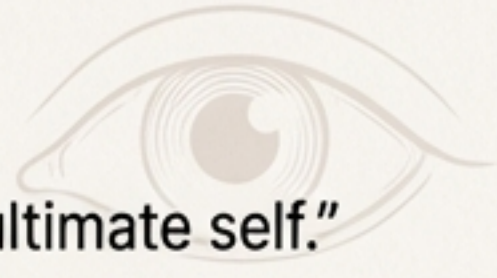
**Meaning:** "My true self is embedded within my character and reactions."

**Modern Example:** "The feeling that 'My habits reveal my real self.' A sense that without one's specific attitudes and dispositions, one would be nothing."



# Deconstructing Consciousness (Viññāṇa): Questioning the 'Observer'

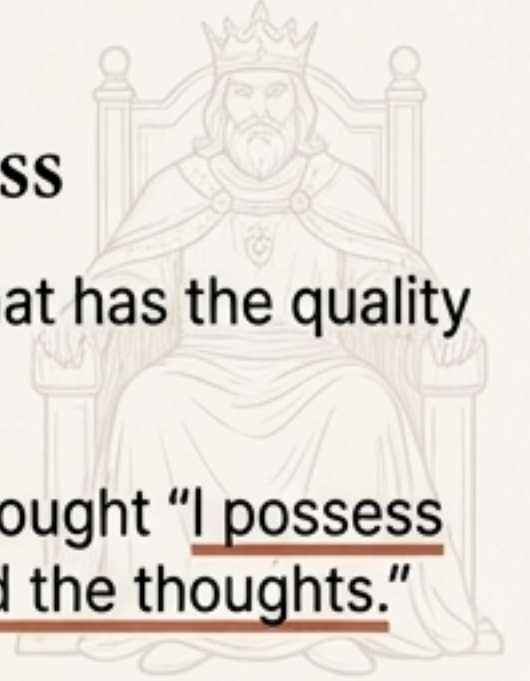
## Consciousness as self



**Meaning:** "My awareness is my true, ultimate self."

**Modern Example:** "New Age or spiritual teachings that posit 'I am pure awareness' or 'I am the witness.' The identification of the self with the act of knowing."

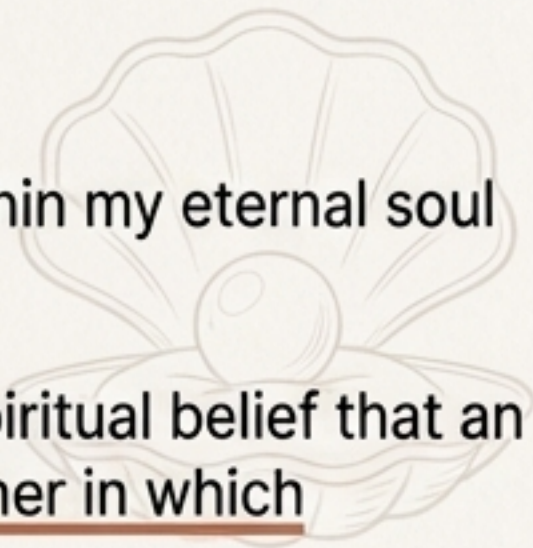
## Self possesses consciousness



**Meaning:** "I am a permanent being that has the quality of consciousness."

**Modern Example:** The ego-centric thought "I possess sentience" or "I am the thinker behind the thoughts."

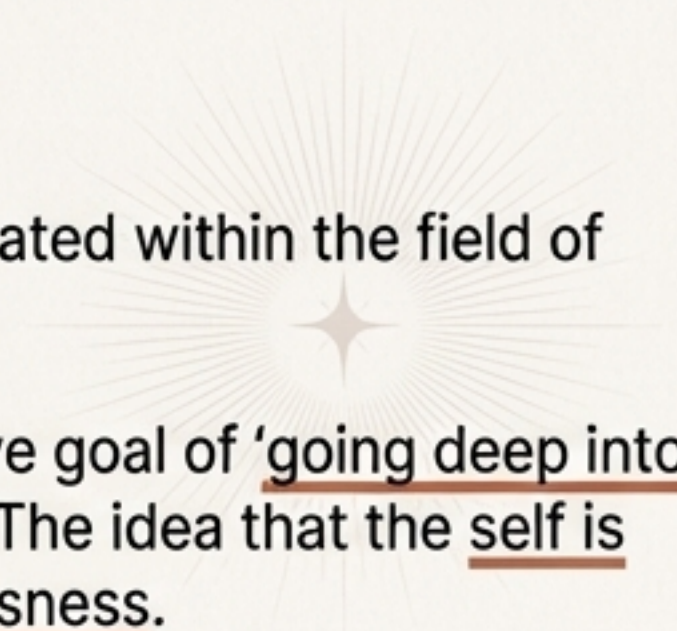
## Consciousness in self



**Meaning:** "Consciousness arises within my eternal soul or core self."

**Modern Example:** The religious or spiritual belief that an immortal atman or soul is the container in which awareness arises.

## Self in consciousness



**Meaning:** "My self is a spark located within the field of awareness."

**Modern Example:** The meditative goal of 'going deep into awareness to find the real self.' The idea that the self is an entity hiding within consciousness.

# From Wrong View to Awakening Insight

Recognizing these twenty patterns is not a purely academic exercise. It is a direct path to insight (paññā) that dismantles attachment (taṇhā). Each mistaken view can be transformed through clear seeing.

## Wrong View

## Awakening Insight

### Aggregate: Form (Rūpa)

This aging body is me.  
I am growing old.



This body changes, ages, and dies regardless of my will. It is conditioned, not-self (anattā).

### Aggregate: Feeling (Vedanā)

I am my depression.  
This suffering defines me.



Pain arises and passes, but awareness remains. Pain is an impermanent event, not-self.

### Aggregate: Mental Formations (Saṅkhāra)

I am my thoughts. I am the one who is planning and worrying.



Thoughts arise spontaneously from past habits (saṅkhāra). I don't choose them; they are not-self.

# The Engine of Attachment: How Fleeting Pleasure Fuels a Fixed View

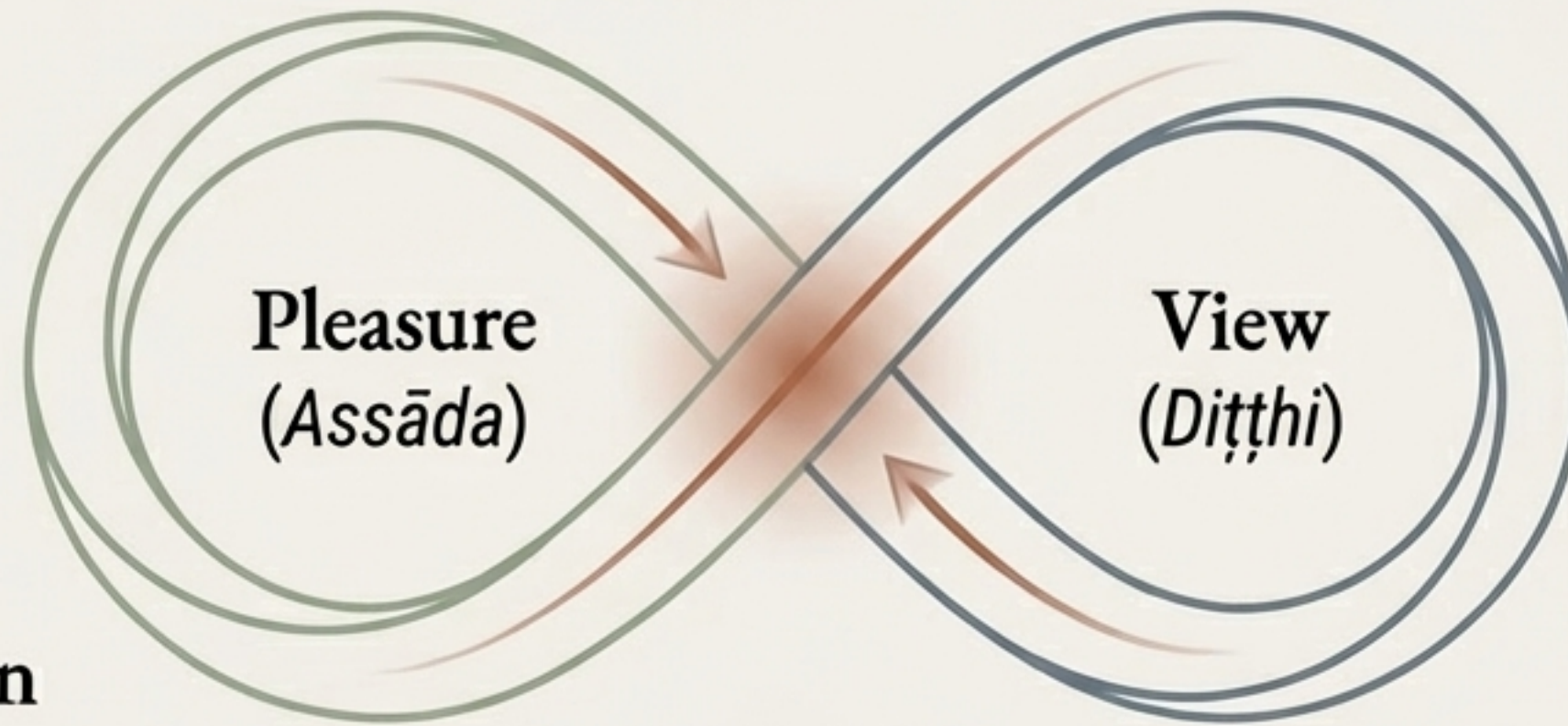
Our attachment is supercharged when a pleasant feeling (Assāda) becomes entangled with a self-centered view (Diṭṭhi). The pleasure reinforces the view, and the view gives meaning to the pleasure, creating a powerful feedback loop.

## Social Media Selfies

The pleasure of likes + the view "My appearance is my worth."

## Luxury Shopping

The pleasure of new clothes + the view "Style defines my personality."



## Romantic Attraction

The pleasure of another's company + the view "They complete me."

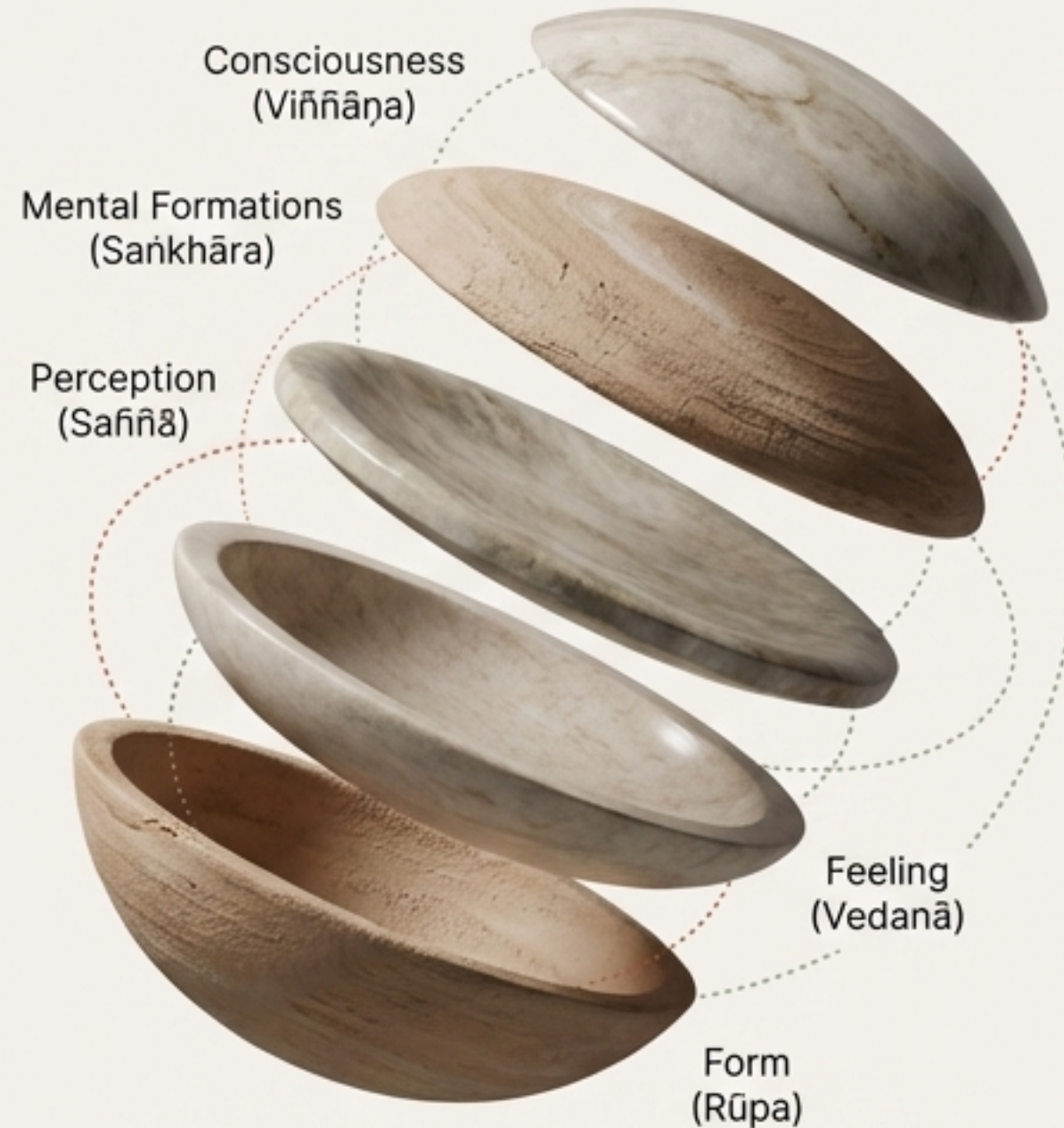
## Professional Status

The pleasure of an award + the view "I am my success."

# Seeing the Process, Not the Person

The deconstruction of the self is not an act of destruction, but of clarification.

It reveals that what we call "I" is not a fixed entity, but a dynamic, conditioned process of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.



By seeing this process clearly, we are not losing a self, but gaining freedom from the attachments and fears that a mistaken identity creates.

The mystery is not who we are, but how the illusion of a separate self is continuously, and unnecessarily, constructed.