

There was no one in him; behind his face (which even through the bad paintings of those times resembles no other) and his words, which were more, more

THE WORLD

taste in style, than any other man of his time. He had only a bit of cologne, a dream of no one...

is made of

STORIES

Historians tell us that before after dying he found himself in the presence of God and that Himself was he. He was a many men in vain want to be

one and myself." The voice of the Lord answered from a whirlwind: "Neither am I

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anyone; I have dreamt the world as you dreamt your work, my Shakespeare, and among the forms in my dream are you, who like myself are many and no one."



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Preface

Those who meditate are familiar with the warnings: “Don’t cling to concepts!” We should let them go because they distort our perceptions. Yet concepts in themselves are fragments, meaningful as parts of stories. The problem is not stories themselves but how we relate to them. We do not see our stories as stories because we see *through* them: the world we experience as reality is constructed with them.

That the world is made of stories is consistent with what Buddhism says about the human predicament and how it can be resolved. The foundational story we tell and retell is *the self*, supposedly separate and substantial yet composed of the stories “I” identify with and attempt to live. Different stories have different consequences. Karma is not something the self has but what the sense of self becomes, when we play our roles within stories perceived as real. As those roles become habitual, mental tendencies congeal and we bind ourselves without a rope.

If the self is made of stories, what does that imply about its death? If the world is made of stories, what does that imply

about its emptiness, what Buddhism calls *shunyata*? Do our stories obscure a craving for power that underlies and motivates what we do, or is power itself a screen-story for something else? If delusion is awareness stuck in attention-traps, and enlightenment liberates awareness, does the spiritual path involve finding the correct story, or getting rid of stories, or learning to story in a new way?

In addressing these and other issues, the story that follows offers—among other things—a new way of understanding Buddhism and a new Buddhist understanding of the Way.