

## Non-Duality is Self Knowledge

Hi James,

I have a couple more questions, if you don't mind. Both are basically aimed at trying to understand how everything is "in" consciousness, the first aspiring towards the non-dual, and the second merely trying to grasp the dual!

It's clear that I'm not, as an identity in any fundamental sense, this body or mind, but merely the witness of them. The body ages, thoughts change, and awareness remains. Experience verifies this, but, of course, it still implies duality. If the world isn't "out there" but a projection of myself, in myself, like a dream, then there could be unity, with no real separation between subject and object. I think this is true, but it is not actually by my own (unshakable) understanding or experience.

James: You are right that the world appears in you, like a dream. But this is not duality, although it seems to be. I think you believe that the world is supposed to 'disappear' when you realize non-duality, like a snake disappears when it is known to be a rope? But this is not the meaning of non-duality. Non-duality is just knowledge. It is the knowledge that what appears to be separate is not separate at all. A mirage appears to be water but it is not water at all. It is just an image created by perception under certain conditions. So duality is just a perception brought about by ignorance of how ignorance can make something that is non-dual appear to be dual. The world that you see as something separate is brought about because your point of reference is the body. From its point of view, the world is definitely something other than the body. But when you understand that the world is made out of your perception and your perception is made out of you, you can see that it is non-separate from you, awareness. But the experience of duality is going to remain as long as you live. Non-duality means that you know that duality is a false projection and you find it funny.

Everything is 'in' consciousness because consciousness is necessary for anything to exist. Nothing exists apart from consciousness, the knowing principle. Nothing is actually inside consciousness like things are inside the body, but everything that

is appears in you, in awareness. You cannot find anything outside of awareness. To do so awareness would have to be there.

Guy: And in the same vein, although I can understand myself as the witness, it's hard to necessarily see others as that same awareness (though I know, logically, objectless awareness can only be one in number - what could distinguish it if it were two?). Apparently, it's an egoic witness! How does one bridge this gap?

James: The problem is caused because you are associating awareness, the witness, with the body/mind entity. The awareness that animates others is the same awareness that animates you. It might help to think of awareness as similar to life. You are alive. I am alive. Is the life in me different from the life in you? Or think of electricity. When it functions through a light bulb it comes out as light, through a heater it manifests as heat, through a radio it appears as sound. Each of us has a different instrument but the awareness/life animating every one of us...including the plants and animals...is the same. What applies to one body/mind entity does not apply to another, however, because each one is unique in so far as we are the product of different choices made at different time in differing situations. So, on the body/mind level we are completely different. But on the level of the self, our awareness, that because of which we know what we know, we are one.

Guy: Also, I'm not sure how pure limitless awareness associates with a particular body-mind.

James: There is no actual association. There is a seeming association created by ignorance.

Guy: In an ultimate sense, it doesn't seem there would be a connection...

James: That's right.

Guy:.... but somehow subtle and causal bodies are introduced here (with their attachments and tendencies), apparently being senior to a given body (as reincarnation would demonstrate, if it is the case). Granting the mystery that anything is happening at all, the connection to the self makes sense in terms of the causal body (somehow) arising from the self, the subtle from the causal, and

the gross from the subtle. But what about matter with no (apparent) consciousness like rocks - do they have the additional bodies?!

James: No. They are just gross elements. They are completely insentient. When we move to the plant kingdom we start to see sentiency, a mixture of sentient and insentient consciousness. The mixture gets more complex in animals and becomes very sophisticated in humans. Mind you, there is no actual mixture, although it certainly seems so.

Guy: Or if matter is originating in these finer planes, how, when an individual dies, can the gross body (now a corpse) continue when the causal and subtle associations have ceased (dissolving or transmigrating, whichever the case may be), if the gross body is existentially supported by these prior conditions?

James: The gross body is just the five gross elements. It is always available. It is Iswara's creation. So when the subtle body propelled by the causal body takes up residence in a fertilized egg attached to the uterine wall, it has access to all the elements and slowly draws them to itself to shape the kind of body it needs for the present birth.

James