

A Subtle Topic

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Jason: James, let me start by saying how grateful I am to have found you in this lifetime and I do truly feel that my searching is over. The obvious simplicity of Vedanta continues to wash away my confusion as I continue to listen to your recordings every day. It seems like that is all I am really interested in.

James: Good for you. Obsession with liberation is the most important qualification.

Jason: I also realize that my loved ones, my religion, by and large are not qualified to accept the true meaning of the symbolism they so highly value, due to the unfortunate fact that they lack dispassion. That is to say that they are too attached to form as it pertains to their own identity and that in itself prevents any intelligent discussion.

James: There is a quote from the Bible that says something like, "Let he who has eyes see." There was an old saying that my father used considerably: "You can lead horse to water but you can't make him drink." Ritualists are dualist extroverts seeking experiential results, not freedom from the doer. They do not even know they don't know who they are. You are absolutely right, they are not qualified to know. At some point, however, inquiry dawns because the ritualistic approach does not remove suffering. It is just a Band-Aid.

Jason: Am I to understand that awareness is not the polar opposite of ignorance as I previously thought?

James: Yes, indeed. I don't think you have the correct notion of awareness. I think you mean reflected awareness, the mind. Knowledge and ignorance are known in the light of awareness. It is free of both. However, you cannot know nor can you be ignorant without awareness. Knowledge is the opposite of ignorance. Maybe by awareness you mean knowledge. You are on the right track, but we need to establish a proper terminology for our communication to be useful. I think you are interpreting Vedanta according to your previous ideas. No blame. Everyone does it. If you come to the Berkeley seminar I think you will get a clearer idea of how to listen. Maybe we can have a Skype chat.

Jason: But rather desire is the polar opposite, and awareness shines on the result?

James: Now I understand your confusion. Awareness has no polar opposite. It is beyond duality. It is completely free of things and their opposites. The mind is in duality. It thinks in terms of opposites: good/bad, right/wrong, up/down, here/there, etc. This is the result of a division in the mind brought about by ignorance of the self. You cannot bring awareness into the mind. It is

always free of your thoughts, feelings, perceptions, etc. Self-knowledge – knowledge of awareness and its relationship to experience – removes duality. Awareness is like a mirror and the mind is like a reflection in the mirror. Although you cannot physically separate the reflection from the mirror, they are not the same. The reflection has no impact on the mirror. When you removed the object that is reflecting in the mirror the mirror is unchanged. The reflection leaves no trace on it.

Jason: This is a very subtle topic, but still eluding my grasp.

James: Yes, this is the most subtle topic, Jason. The mind needs to be purified for it to understand *satya* and *mithya*, the relationship between the apparent (objects) and the real (awareness), the subject. There are only two ontological categories in our non-dual reality: the subject (awareness, i.e. you) and the object (Jason, reflected awareness, i.e. the experiencing entity). There is no contradiction between them, because they are in different orders of the one reality. A wave is different from the ocean but it is not opposite the ocean, because both it and the ocean are water. Similarly, Jason and awareness are not the same but they are not different either, because they are both awareness. Jason is one small wave in the ocean of awareness and God is the “big” awareness of everything, but they have one factor in common: they are both aware. They cannot be aware unless awareness exists. Awareness is existence. It is always present and it was never created. Out of it the world and the conscious beings that experience the world appear as if by magic.

~ Love, James