

All-Pervasive Awareness and Others

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Jackson: Hi, Ted.

If there are no others, and the person belongs to *Isvara*, the *gunas* and the *dharma* field (which is just “my” mind – because “my” mind is the ocean, and “I,” the self, am H₂O), and H₂O is not doing anything, the ocean is the doer (but not really, because nothing is “actually” happening in the ocean; it’s only “apparently” happening), then how does this account for others? If there is only H₂O and an ocean made of the thoughts of H₂O, then why when I press “send” on this email do I have a 99% chance of getting a reply from a person called Ted?

How do you (and others) fit into the equation?

Is “Ted” the ocean, and the sentiency that is Ted the same H₂O as I am?

~ Thanks, Jackson

Ted: Hi, Jackson.

Ted is a wave in the ocean, just as Jackson and everyone – and for that matter, every object – is. The ocean is *Isvara* (i.e. God-the-creator-sustainer-resolver of the universe, or in impersonal terms the collective physical, psychological and moral laws that govern the cause-and-effect operation of the manifestation). H₂O is *brahman* (i.e. all-pervasive consciousness; absolute awareness; limitless conscious existence). *Maya* is an inherent aspect of *brahman* that makes *brahman* appear to be myriad objective phenomena. Thus due to *maya*, *brahman* takes on the appearance of Jackson and Ted, and hence an interaction between these two apparent entities can transpire.

From *brahman*’s perspective (though technically *brahman* doesn’t have a perspective, for “it” is all-pervasive and, moreover, is not a discrete entity with an intellect) nothing is happening, for, appearances notwithstanding, the essential nature of limitless conscious existence does not change. The general parameters of experience are the three basic orders of reality: *paramarthika satya*, *vyavaharika satya* and *pratibhasika satya*.

The “highest” level is that of pure limitless awareness. At this level, nothing ever happens. There are no objects, and thus no interactions and thus no experiences. As there is nothing other than awareness itself and awareness is not a happening – a point that we need to discuss in reference to some of the comments you make later in this email – no activity occurs. Awareness simply is. In Sanskrit, this level of existence is called *paramarthika satyam*. It is the only level that we can refer to as real because it is the only level at which there is no change.

The next level is that of the empirical reality, the manifest universe. This level is what we often refer to as God’s creation. It consists of all the seemingly separate tangible “outer” objects, including body of the apparent individual one takes oneself to be, as well as all the subtle “inner”

objects (i.e. thoughts and feelings) experienced by the apparent individual that constitute the “surrounding world” from the apparent individual’s point of view. This is the arena in which all “worldly” transactions take place. It is characterized by limitation and changeability. Every object existing within its defining parameters of time and space has a limited shelf life and a limited range of power. In Sanskrit, this level of existence is called *vyavaharika satyam*. This apparent reality is nothing more than an elaborate dream projected by the power of ignorance on the screen of pure awareness. Though pure awareness is attributeless, all-pervasive and perfectly full, and thus incapable of action, when pure awareness “wields” its own inherent power of *maya* it assumes the role of *Isvara*, or God the Creator. Hence we say the manifest universe is *Isvara*’s creation, which is referred to in Sanskrit as *Isvara shrishti*.

With regard to the manifest universe being *Isvara*’s creation, however, it is important to understand that *Isvara* is not a personal entity, or some grand gray-bearded cosmic king, orchestrating events within his creation according to his own agenda. Though *Isvara* is personified as a benevolent entity watching out over the universe, the reality is that *Isvara* is simply a name we give to the universal, impersonal, inviolable set of physical, psychological and ethical laws that govern the cause-and-effect operation of the apparent reality. *Isvara* is essentially the *dharma* (collection of universal laws) that governs the *karma* (action) that takes place in the world. Contained within the physical laws of the universe are the blueprints, so to speak, for all the objects, both gross and subtle, that exist within its realm. These blueprints are basically *Isvara*’s *vasanas*. In this context, we can think of *vasanas* as ideas for creation. And since ideas are essentially the foundation of desires (i.e. even at the individual level desire is rooted in our ideas of how things should be or how we would like them to be), we might say that the manifest universe is the outpicturing of *Isvara*’s desire. Moreover, *Isvara* is both the totality of the creation itself and each seemingly discrete aspect existing within it. In other words, *Isvara* is at once both the universal and individual aspects of the apparent reality.

Be that as it may, *Isvara*’s creation is quite obviously not under the control of the apparent individual. The apparent individual exists within the manifest universe and his life is governed by its laws of operation. Though pure awareness is beyond all limiting factors, when it pulls the wool over its own eyes, so to speak, and assumes association with a particular mind-body-sense complex it also assumes the limited scope of knowledge, presence and capability of that mechanism. In reality, pure awareness never loses its limitless nature, but in order to assume the role of an apparent individual within the context of *Isvara*’s creation it seemingly forgets or “pretends” to forget its true nature and subjects itself to the limitations imposed upon it by *Isvara*, which is actually itself. All in all, it is simply one grand game of make-believe.

The fundamental existential problem – i.e. suffering – arises when, having forgotten its true nature, awareness identifies with the mind-body-sense complex with which it is merely associated and takes the apparent person it appears as to be real, assumes the experiences (i.e. the interactions, sensations, emotions and thoughts) generated by the mind-body-sense mechanism to be its own, and believes that it can actually be enhanced or diminished, helped or hindered, strengthened or weakened, improved or worsened, etc. by these experiences. This erroneous notion is the root cause of all the desires and fears that mire one in a perpetual feeling of existential angst and compel him to pursue objects that he hopes will complete him.

The final level of existence is that of the *jiva*, the apparent individual person. In Sanskrit, this level of existence is called *pratibhasika satyam*. This level is the apparent individual’s interpretation of *Isvara*’s creation, which essentially determines the apparent individual’s experience. It is based

on the *vasanas*, the likes and dislikes, associated with and expressing through the mind-body-sense complex of that particular person. Outside of a few universal ethical values, all of which essentially boil down to the principle of non-injury, the manifest universe is value-neutral. No object within it is inherently good or bad, no experience intrinsically right or wrong. The judgment imposed on any object or experience is subjectively determined by each individual with regard to how it accords with his *vasana*-influenced values and goals. This superimposed interpretation of *Isvara shrishti* is referred to as *jiva shrishti*, or the individual's creation.

Thus Vedanta's assertion that the entire universe is a projection of the self does not amount to solipsism – i.e. the idea that the universe is nothing more than a projection of the individual's mind. Rather awareness, assuming the role of *Isvara*, who enjoys universal knowledge, will and power, creates one "level" of the grand dream of existence, and awareness having associated with a particular *jiva*, who enjoys limited knowledge, will and power, creates another.

~ *Namaste*, Ted