

# Awareness and Attention

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Thanks, Ted, for getting back to me. It's becoming so clear to me now that I can't even express it. I had a breakthrough the other day after doing inquiry when I wrote to you the last email and I feel I'm on the "tip" of full realization with the one minor "blockage" that I just can't seem to fully comprehend pertaining to this damn understanding of "knowing."

My final question is about the "witness."

I see now clearly how all experience can only be said to actually "be" when illumined by something that is obviously formless (what I am). I see emotions and all objects as obviously not separate from me but also having a beginning and an end while the clear "noticing" of this has no beginning and end.

So when we can actually say "anger is arising but I can see that there is a noticing of this" (which stops the anger in its tracks)... the anger is only "known" because it's being illumined by me, of course. I totally see this as it is so incredibly clear. Therefore I'm not asking how "objects" are illumined, which I completely understand. Instead, considering the self does not know objects directly as objects other than via mind, the actual "witness" during inquiry or meditation that "sees" the "emotion arising" or "notices" the thought arising has to be the self seeing reflected awareness via the intellect, I would think. Would you agree? Perhaps this is what I have been ultimately missing all along.

**Ted:** You've got it, by Jove.

**Mitch:** Another example: when I see an emotion such as "fear or even happiness" arise. Now, there is a clear "noticing of this fear or happiness" as opposed to the past where I "became" the fear/happiness. I can see where it starts and see where it ends. I am free from it always, granted its essence is me, of course.

**Ted:** Yes, the distinction is that while the fear or happiness is you, i.e. essentially constituted of and appearing within you, awareness, you are not the fear or happiness in the sense that no limited object can comprehensively define or characterize you. In other words, all the emotions come and go while you remain ever the same. By analogy, though the ornaments are many, i.e. rings, bangles, bracelets, anklets, necklaces, earrings, etc., the gold is never enhanced, diminished or otherwise affected in any way.

**Mitch:** Attention is automatically drawn now to the feelings/thoughts/desires as they arise before they become "identified" with. So would you say that this attention that notices/witness thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc. is, once again, just self "utilizing" the vehicle of mind (so to speak, of course)?

**Ted:** Yes. But again, there is only one awareness. So awareness is the ultimate “witness,” we might say, while the intellect is simply the instrument that allows the apparent individual person, who is actually the self apparently under the spell of ignorance and posing as an apparent individual person, to “know” the objects that appear within its limited scope and also, through self-inquiry, to know its true identity as limitless awareness.

**Mitch:** Where does attention come from? Can you just clarify that one last time for me? I feel like I’m chasing my own tail here.

**Ted:** Yes, you are chasing your own tail although as attributeless awareness you, of course, have no tail. Attention is awareness directed through the mind onto an object. In its purest form, so to speak, attention is your own self-luminous nature. Just as all-pervasive sunlight is concentrated into a single beam when focused through a glass lens, so pure awareness manifests as attention when focused through the mind.

It seems you are getting hung up by trying to see the whole picture from only one perspective. Vedanta, however, is a complete means of knowledge that enables you to look at experience from the perspective of pure non-dual awareness, the self, you, as well as that of reflected awareness, the pseudo-self, the apparent individual person you take yourself to be when apparently under your own deluding power of ignorance. From the self’s standpoint, you know yourself and all objects, which are essentially nothing other than you because you are yourself. In this sense, your knowledge is not characterized by a subject-object dichotomy whose recognition registers as a thought-form in the mind but is rather a sense, so to speak, of self-evident existence. From the apparent individual person’s standpoint, you know objects as apparently objective phenomena via the intellect. Hence the mind can never directly know the self but can only understand the implication of the formless reflection of awareness in a pure intellect.

**Mitch:** I apologize for the redundancy of my past two emails, but I feel like I’m just about “there” and even feel content to not ask any more questions, just knowing that I am free of everything, but yet the rational mind wants answers. I would love your take for one last time.

~ Thanks again, Mitch

**Ted:** Because self-knowledge is just that knowledge rather merely a belief, it is important that you have every doubt resolved. Otherwise your mind will never rest and you will never fully assimilate the knowledge that sets you free. So you don’t have to apologize for asking for further clarification. My job, so to speak, is to serve you in precisely that regard.

It’s always a pleasure to field your questions.