

# Both the Doer and the Dharma-field are Non-dual Consciousness

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Hi, Ted.

In the karma yoga section of “How to Attain Enlightenment,” James says: *Actions have results because reality is non-dual awareness. This means that the doer of action is conscious and the field of which actions are done is consciousness.*

So here are my questions:

Is the doer only ‘conscious’ because the Self is illuminating it? Because in other talks I thought I heard James say the doer is NOT conscious. Did I misunderstand?

Ted: No, you did not misunderstand. The doer is only conscious (i.e., sentient) because the body-mind-sense complex is illumined by consciousness.

The body-mind-sense complex is nothing more than an inert object composed of a combination of gross and subtle matter. The physical body is composed of the *sthula bhutas*, five gross elements, and the subtle body (i.e., mind and sense organs) is composed of the *sukshma bhutas*, the five subtle elements. The elements are the same in both cases: space, air, fire, water, and earth. The difference between the subtle and gross elements is simply their density or degree of “grossification.” The subtle elements are the material of which dreams, thoughts, emotions, etc., are made; the gross elements that of which tangible objects are made.

The subtle body is a “reflective” instrument. That is, it is a manifesting medium for consciousness. Consciousness is all-pervasive and, thus, is equally present in a rock and a person. But whereas the rock has no subtle body and therefore no capacity for sentiency, the person does have a subtle body that can “conduct” consciousness and, thus, the person can walk and talk and think and feel and generally do all the doings that the doer seemingly does.

This doing business is not a problem in and of itself. It only becomes problematic when the ego gets involved. The ego is the fundamental symptom of *avidya*, self-ignorance. The ego is nothing more than a thought in the intellect that claims ownership of the body-mind-sense complex and responsibility for its actions. The ego is the notion that I am the body and I think these thoughts and feel these emotions and do these actions and enjoy these experiences. This erroneous notion causes consciousness to become identified with the body-mind-sense complex with which it is associated. And it is this identification that is at the root of all suffering, for consequent to it we function under the erroneous assumption that what affects the body-mind-sense complex affects us. In other words, we fail to recognize the fact that just as the light illumining a room is not in the least affected by the objects in the room, so we—the “light” of awareness—are not in the least affected by the objects (i.e., sensations, emotions, or cognitions) appearing within the scope of the mind-body-sense complex.

When we have assimilated self-knowledge and thereby negated the reality—not the existence, mind you, but the reality—of the ego, then we put an end to the suffering that results from the

erroneous identification with the body-mind-sense complex. Thereafter, we can still use the body-mind-sense complex as the vehicle by means of which we navigate through the apparent reality and experience life, but we will no longer take it seriously and suffer as a result of its experience.

Kaz: It would make sense that the doer is the same 'consciousness' as the 'conscious field' because it seems to come from there (correct?).

Ted: Yes, this is true on two accounts. The mind-body-sense complex is composed of the same elements as the entire *dharm*-field (i.e., manifest universe or apparent reality). Moreover, consciousness is not only the *nimitta karana*, the intelligent source of the manifestation, but also the *upadana karana*, its material source. Given the non-dual nature of reality, there is no second source to draw upon for either material or ideas.

Kaz: If so, then does that just leave the Self being a lovingly impersonal presence to both? And it's only jiva "Kaz" who seems to be interacting as a doer and with the conscious field — again while I/Self is just (lol about 'just', holy cow... no just as in the sun is 'just' a light... :) the loving light that makes it all known?

Ted: Yes. You've got it J.

Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Best,

Kaz