

Finally Gets It

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/364>

Mario: Dear James, I am having difficulty trying to understand the following concept:

Awareness is like the space inside a room, objects exist inside the room and subject to change.

Yet the space inside the room remains the same, unaffected and non-discriminate as to what is happening inside the room, ever-present.

Question 1: Is there more than one room, i.e. you have a room and I have a room? Or do we all share the same room?

James: There is one room. There is only awareness. It is like electricity. It is one but when it flows in a heater it produces heat, when it flows through a light bulb it produces light, when it flows through a radio it produces sound.

Mario: Question 2: If I am but a body/object inside the room, then to be “aware” will mean I would need to somehow get outside of the room and take a view from the outside looking into the room. In this case, am I viewing not only the objects inside the room but also the room itself?

James: The awareness in the room is reflected awareness. It cannot get outside the room, meaning it cannot see the awareness it reflects. It is like the moon reflecting the light of the sun. Reflected awareness shows certain objects – sense objects, feelings and thoughts – but it does not shine on pure awareness, its source. Pure awareness is like the sun and reflected awareness is like the moon, so you cannot be aware of awareness. You are awareness and you are only aware of yourself with or without the objects reflected in you.

Mario: Am I then aware of awareness?

James: No, you are awareness and awareness is self-aware. There is nothing you can do to be aware of awareness because you are already awareness.

Mario: Thank you for replying! Reading your reply brought a great big smile to my face. Your reply hit straight home. How can I describe... not to sound rude but as I was reading your reply, it felt like I knew it all along. I was thinking to myself, “Wow, that’s right! How could I not have realised that in the first place?”

I spent about one hour writing up the question, phrasing and rephrasing it trying to make it as clear as possible as to what I was trying to understand, yet your reply never dawned on me, but was so familiar.

I had come across the sun/moon, reflected/pure awareness concept which you had explained in one of your YouTube videos, yet it never dawned on me that that was the explanation to my question.

After reading your reply several times, I don't have any further questions at the moment. Is it okay that I correspond with you in the future to help answer the questions which I will surely have? I appreciate the time you've taken to reply.

I hope this makes sense. Below is my train of thought. I hope you can see my current state of confusion. Please, in no way at any point do I mean any disrespect to you when I ask myself if you are real or not.

James: I will try to make sense of it for both of us. Don't worry about offending me. I am not someone to be offended.

Mario: 1. That I am writing this to you means I have accepted that I am Mario typing this message and you are James to whom I am writing this email.

2. Yet I have come to agree that this universe/earth/people/objects that exist right now all stem from my thoughts. To be exact, all stem from the root thought that "I, this body and mind," exists and all other objects sprout from it.

3. If all these are only thoughts stemming from the root thought then this universe/earth/people/objects are not real and I... this body and mind... am not real.

4. This means you as James are not real, and I, Mario, am not real.

James: So far, so good, Mario. No confusion yet.

Mario: 5. Then what is to be achieved by Mario asking James these questions? Whatever I as body and mind achieve would not be real anyway.

6. James is not real, you are just one of my many thoughts; how can you help me in this case then?

James: Well, this may be hard to believe, Mario, but you are not talking with James. You believe you are but you are actually speaking with awareness – yourself. You cannot doubt that you are not real because you are that part of you that does not change, that part that observes Mario's confusion and operates the logic you are presenting now. If you observe Mario's confusion, you cannot be Mario. You are real and Mario isn't. Mario is just an idea, a thought. The observer is the "I." It is a non-experiencing observer. The "I," the root awareness, is real and the thoughts and objects appearing in it are not. They exist but they do not last, so they are not real.

Mario: 7. Likewise, to you am I just one of your thoughts as well? Or are you devoid of thoughts? In which case, Mario does not exist then?

James: You are not one of my thoughts. You are me, awareness, with some confusing thoughts. However, Mario does exist. He is just not real. In fact Mario refers to you, awareness, not to a “person.”

And I am not James, with or without thoughts. I am awareness and as such I am free of thoughts, even when they appear in me. “James” is just an idea that appears in me from time to time. It is not there in deep sleep.

Mario: 8. If we all come from the same source (awareness), then why would someone like you bother with helping someone like me?

James: I am not helping you. If help is happening, you, as me, are helping you. I am you. But if you think I am James, why shouldn't I help you? James is an expert on awareness, so Mario, who doesn't know he is awareness and thinks he is Mario, comes to an expert to get the right information about his real identity. It is a wise thing to do.

Mario: I am after all only just a reflection of pure awareness. Do you even care if you can help me (Mario) or not?

James: Assuming I am James, I don't have to care if I can help you or not. I just reply to questions to the best of my ability and if it helps, it helps, if it doesn't, it doesn't. It has nothing to do with me – once I say what I say.

You say you are a reflection of pure awareness. The reflection is not conscious. It is like the moon. It borrows its light from the sun. It cannot see the sun. The sun sees it. You, pure awareness, see Mario. He cannot see you. If you start your thinking from the reflection, you will get nowhere. You have to start your thinking from pure awareness, then work down to the reflection. Everything makes sense that way.

If you take the reflection to be conscious – which it actually isn't – then you need to know that the reflection is only capable of limited understanding. It can never know the big picture and see itself painted on the canvas of pure awareness. Mario can only be known by you, by pure awareness. It encompasses all, knows all. So if you take this standpoint, everything makes sense.

Mario: 9. Is this the mind (ego) asking these questions, trying to deter and confuse me? Because it sure is doing a good job at it!

James: It is ignorance. The mind, ego, is not conscious to do any confusing. Have you read my book *How to Attain Enlightenment?* It think it may be helpful.

Mario: 10. I ask myself, who is it that is asking these questions? And I get an answer inside of me saying, “Me, I,” but I do not know who this “me, I” is.

James: It is you, awareness, under the spell of ignorance. If you listen to someone like me, maybe the ignorance can be removed.

Mario: 11. And that is where I'm left stranded. I keep asking who is the "me, I" that asks these questions. I cannot delve any further past "me, I."

James: The "me" is awareness. You are aware. It is self-evident, obvious. The problem is that you do not know what it means to be awareness. So you need some teaching. That is what Vedanta is all about.

Mario: I hope you can make sense of this and would appreciate any advice you can give. Thank you.

James: I made sense of it for me. I hope it makes sense to you.

Mario: Hi, James, thanks for taking the time to reply.

I remember reading an article on the Web that said in time of need, desperation or desire awareness manifests itself in whatever means/form is necessary to help guide, show, teach or unveil itself to the seeker.

When I read your reply about you being awareness itself, this memory came out. You are awareness manifested as James! It brought a smile to my face as I sat and absorbed this thought. Then I realised that all the books and videos that I've watched in the past were also manifestations of awareness. It has been here all along, guiding me.

I have read your reply over and over and as I read it things become clearer. I then go off to do other things but when I think back my mind is again blurred. So I go back and read your reply again and the blur becomes clearer.

After your reply "You have to start your thinking from pure awareness, then work down to the reflection" I sat down and thought, "It appears that I been talking to myself all this time then. I have been talking to my own shadow and other shadows I have created without turning around and looking at the light. The light is the reason why they are in the first place, yet when I realise that the shadows cannot exist without this light source, I realise that Mario does not exist as well without this light source.

James: This is an important understanding, Mario. It is the beginning of inquiry.

If you want freedom you need to accept the light source, not Mario, as your identity. If you look at your language, you are actually speaking as the light – not as Mario – because Mario appears as an object to you. Everybody is unaware that they are actually the light of awareness. They assume that awareness – the light – is something else, situated somewhere else and so they believe the story they have concocted about who they are. "I am so-and-so... I come from... I do

this and that..." They want to turn toward the light or experience the light or merge with the light. But it is not possible because they are already the light.

Mario: I try to look at the Mario-shadow from the point of view of the light source. I think, "Look, this light that shines on Mario and makes a shadow is nice. Let it continue. When Mario disappears, then the shadows will disappear and what will be left over is the source light still shining, not the least disturbed that Mario has disappeared."

James: I do not know what you mean when you think about Mario's disappearance but you should know that Mario does not have to disappear to make the light permanent. It shone before Mario. It shines on Mario now. It shines when Mario is gone. You are that light.

Mario: Yet I cannot maintain this thought. A sound arises or someone talks to me and I'm back to being Mario.

James: Now I see the problem. You think that Mario has to disappear to be enlightened, to be free. This is not correct. If you are the light you are already free of Mario. You are identified with an idea. That idea is Mario. There is no Mario apart from the idea of Mario. The word "Mario" actually refers to you, awareness. Right now you are awareness observing the Mario-thought.

This is a thought that you cannot maintain. It is just knowledge. You do not have to maintain the thought that you are Mario. You know that you are Mario. Similarly, you do not have to maintain the thought that you are awareness, you just have to know that you are awareness and what it means to be awareness.

Mario: I find myself asking, is this thought pattern still within the mind (ignorance)? After all, is it still a thought in the mind?

James: Yes, it is a thought in the mind and the mind is in you and you are awareness lighting up the Mario-thought.

Mario: Mario continues to have his back to the light source BUT knows that these shadows that are being created cannot exist without this light source. How does Mario then turn around and look at the light source? And ultimately view Mario from the light source's point of view? That's what I cannot grasp, understand, practise, do (or not do).

James: Mario can't do that. Nobody can. Mario is the light that shines on the Mario-thought. You think that Mario is a conscious doer who is in control of his experience. But Mario is not in control. A belief that you are Mario is in control, meaning that you, awareness, have identified with it and therefore it seems real to you. Since it is not a true thought you want to get rid of it but because you do not know it is only a thought, you think that "you" can control it. If you know that you are awareness, you will understand that the Mario-thought can turn in any direction it wants and it is

quite okay with you. You will see that a thought cannot grasp or understand a thought. You will see that thoughts cannot do anything. There are only two things in reality, awareness and thoughts. Thoughts are not conscious. Awareness is conscious. Liberation is knowing the difference between awareness and the thoughts appearing in it.

Mario: I continue to read your reply, as each read brings about this frame of mind/view, but as mentioned above, I can't seem to sustain this way of thinking, seeing, understanding, viewing nor can I even begin to comprehend how to apply this to my daily experiences.

James: Don't try to sustain this way of seeing until you have understood what Mario is and what awareness – you – are and what the relationship between Mario and you is. Once you are clear about who you are it will be easy to maintain this way of seeing.

Mario: I hope to get a copy of your book soon to read and try to understand. Finally applying this understanding would be a different challenge in itself.

James: Yes, but it is good work. What else do you have to do? You are a smart guy and have a good, logical mind so the book will move you along very nicely. You are a lot closer to what you seek than you think.

Mario: James, I must thank you again for the time you have taken to reply and assist me in understanding. I feel as a result from our conversations that I have gained a further insight and attention to what I should be inquiring.

Your comment "Liberation is knowing the difference between awareness and the thoughts appearing in it" is so clear and simple. I read it and it makes perfect sense, and I agree 100%. However, I feel the wisdom to know the difference is what I am lacking. It's like it's hidden in plain sight. I feel like I went to see a concert and spent the whole time looking/listening at the audience rather than the people on stage. It's hard to describe. I feel frustrated that I can't even describe it. It's a feeling of knowing it's there but at the same time cannot see/grasp/understand/know/be it.

James: "Don't try to sustain this way of seeing until you have understood what Mario is and what awareness – you – is and what the relationship between Mario and you is. Once you are clear about who you are it will be easy to maintain this way of seeing."

Thank you for pointing me in the right direction. I hope to reflect on this and will try to progress in this understanding.

I have no further questions. I plan to read your book and hopefully gain further understanding. I hope to contact you again after I read it, whether it be with further questions or just a simple thank-you.

I hope our paths meet one day.

Note: This story has a good ending. Mario finally realizes who he is. I posted his last email in

October. It is entitled *Set Free by Vedanta* and was posted December 17, 2012.