

# No Suspect Agenda

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Seeker:** Hi, James. I was just reading the latest *satsangs* with interest, particularly the ones about God and Satan. I have always found Satan to be the most interesting figure in Christianity, as he embodies the illusion of separateness. The myth goes that he was originally Lucifer, the “light-bearer,” meaning he most perfectly reflected the glory of God. But he refused to bow down before man, as he felt that would be an insult to God. So God banished him from heaven, and he dedicated himself to the destruction of humans. His mistake was not seeing that there is nothing that is not God, including man, and therefore worthy of love and reverence. He represents the problem of the ego, of mistaking apparent reality for reality. And his war on humanity is simply our own inability to see past our own egos to the awareness underlying them.

I like so very much your insistence that God is self-evident. That has always been clear to me, and it baffles me somewhat that it isn't to others. But I suppose it stems from the foolish teaching that God is “a being” rather than “being” itself. The best theologians have never made that mistake, but their work never seems to reach the level of the average person. Instead, they are filled with images of a cranky old man in the sky. Who could believe in that? Well, many can, obviously. But I never could, and never had any desire to. I often say that I “don't believe in belief.” One either knows something or one does not. And for me, God is as obvious as air or light.

Scott Peck wrote about levels of spiritual development, and “level two” was that stage which requires a personal God and institutional religion with all its rules, to order people's inner chaos. “Level three” is the scientific/atheistic level, which more and more people seem to be entering now. I confess that I find the smugness and self-righteousness of “level threes” irritating in the extreme. But I try to remember it is a necessary phase, one that I went through myself in my teens. But as I say, God was always so obvious to me that I couldn't get stuck at that point. Peck calls “level four” the communal/mystic phase, when the insights of the lower levels are applied with great freedom and self-inquiry becomes more important than dogmas and regulations. It seems to me that the whole “spiritual” movement is people who are entering “level four,” but flailing around in a sea of contradictory and often exploitative “paths.” Vedanta is the only one I have found that seems complete, with answers to every question and no suspect “agenda.”

I went through an intense professional experience earlier this month, and found myself approaching it with a much greater sense of detachment. I mean, I was immersed in the process, but wasn't obsessing over the results. It was much more like play than work, and the result was the work turned out far better than usual. I also was suffused with a great sense of gratitude for the experience, which communicated itself to everyone involved and made for a far more memorable time for us all. “Detachment” is such a problematic word because it suggests coldness, but if understood as recognizing one's lack of ultimate responsibility for results, it is tremendously liberating.

**James:** Yes, indeed. This is an excellent definition. You do what you can in the best way according to who you and what you know at the time, and you don't think beyond that. That is

dispassion. The results are out of our hands.