

Tat Tvam Asi! You Are That!

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Arlindo: Hello, Fausto. This topic involving awareness/*maya/Isvara*, as well their relationship, becomes philosophical or speculative when we bring in the famous word “WHY.” There are beautiful Vedanta texts explaining how the creation takes place. They are not really required for self-knowledge, but sometimes they are helpful for intellectual types like you and me. They help the mind to relax as those “hows and whys” are properly fed.

As far as how and why *maya* came into existence, nobody knows. I believe you will not find it in the Vedanta scriptures. Some people in the past have started speculative stories that awareness got bored and decided to have something to play with, therefore decided to produce *Isvara* and the world using its power called *maya*. But if you really look into these stories, you will find that, at most, they are good allegories.

You see, awareness is non-dual and attributless, therefore it is not a thinker, a feeler or a doer. In its non-dual existence, it is free from time, space and causality. Nothing ever happens to awareness. Yes, as you say, “the self is desireless and actionless.” And it is important to notice that it is not an effect of any causal factor, therefore it is unborn – beginningless. So, “why and how *maya* came to be” is a question impossible to be answered, because *maya/Isvara/jiva/jagat* are all effects.

Effects are grossified forms of energies born out of their causal energies. The gross, being an effect of its cause, cannot objectify and know its cause, because they belong to different dimensions of reality. The subtle can objectify and know its effects. For example, the intellect can objectify and know the mind, the emotions, the ego, the physiological systems and the physical body – but not the other way around. The same way, the intellect cannot objectively know *Isvara* and *maya*.

The only way we can know something about *maya/Isvara* is by what *Isvara* revealed to us (scriptures). We *jivas* can also verify the truthfulness of scriptures by following inferential analyses based on our common experiences. And inferential knowledge is a valid means of knowledge. In fact most of our scientific knowledge is inferential.

But for self-knowledge and *moksa* all one needs is to know awareness! But not objectively as a sensorial experience, and not mentally or philosophically as a concept, but as your own self. Self-knowledge is not perceptual or inferential, but rather direct and immediate because self is self-evident as the ever-present knower of all perceptual and inferential knowledges.

Fausto: “...but even the knowledge of the self as actionless, desireless, unlimited, etc. is false, as words cannot withstand Truth. Therefore it is impossible to mentally know the self as this body-mind.”

Arlindo: Yes, and moreover, the self is said to be attributeless – we cannot say anything about something empty of attributes and qualities. But yet the scriptures say that the self is of the nature

of existence-consciousness-bliss/limitlessness. The scriptures on the self (*jnana yoga*) are very simple: everything is consciousness, and you are that (*Tat Tvam Asi*)! In order to know the self, one needs to know I AM the SELF – it can ONLY be known as you, yourself.

On the other hand, the scriptures on *karma/dharma yoga* are extensive because they need to explain the relationship between *Isvara/jiva/jagat*, as well the laws governing creation. All spirituality is but a process of purification of mind so that *jiva* can understand this most simple and obvious statement: you are this consciousness!

Fausto: "...but many argue that Self is beyond consciousness and we cannot label the self as consciousness, because consciousness is illuminated by the self, and therefore not the self."

Arlindo: They confuse pure consciousness with individual/personified consciousness. One is OC (original consciousness) and the other is RC (consciousness reflected in a subtle body). Self and pure consciousness are the same thing. And there is only one self, one consciousness, and everything is IT. Nisargadatta was largely responsible for propagating this confusion due to his linguistic imprecision and lack of a teaching methodology.

Fausto: What Nisargadatta called "consciousness" Vedanta calls *mithya*. And what he called awareness Vedanta calls "consciousness," which according to Vedanta is synonymous with the self and awareness. Maybe it was for the benefit of the many Western seekers who think of consciousness as containing objects?

Arlindo: To tell you a story, I was closely associated with Nisargadatta's "statements" (they cannot be called teachings) for about 20 years. He was my most beloved *guru*. He used to present awareness as a state he used to call "the Absolute" – something beyond human consciousness that still could be experienced. Go and figure it out!

On the other hand, he used to refer to consciousness as "I-am-ness," or the thought-feeling-sense of one's existence as the "I-thought," which is but awareness in association with or reflected in the subtle body.

His suggestion was to hold on to this "I-am-ness" (the sense "I exist" as experiential consciousness) and then meditate on it, hoping and waiting to be eventually "transferred" to the Absolute. ☺

His words were infused with the powerful authority of someone who knows with certainty, but unfortunately contaminated with misleading action/experience connotations which, in my case, had created much confusion and delay. There is nothing like learning from the scriptures!

Fausto: Yes, I know what you mean, Arlindo, as it is only since I came across Vedanta that Nisargadatta has made real sense to me. Vedanta cannot be topped, nothing comes close.

Arlindo: Understood. And if you stay with Vedanta for the full run, you will also realize how many of his statements made no real sense. ☺

