

The Creator and the Created

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Charles: Hi, James. I have a Vedanta question for you. I read recently “the mind creates the world.” I understand each person’s *vasanas* create a certain world through their individual projections. For example, a person with negative thoughts sees the world in a negative way. But this quote was referring to the mind as actually creating the world, in other words, the world would not be there if were not for the mind. I think this is what you meant in your book when you asked, “Do I see the world because it is there or is it there because I see it?” I’m still not sure why “it is there because I see it.” I know if I am not conscious of it then I cannot prove it exists for me but it seems as if it still exists for everyone else and therefore is not being created by my mind. Thanks in advance for your comments.

James: The teaching that answers this question is called *jiva/isvara sristi*. It means “the creation of *jiva* and the creation of *Isvara*.” *Isvara* is *maya*. It creates, sustains and destroys the whole universe. The world we see with our senses and the senses with which we see it is *Isvara*’s creation. Within *Isvara*’s creation are innumerable *jivas*, individuals: plants, animals, humans, insects, etc. *Jivas* are living beings with gross, subtle and causal bodies. Human *jivas* have intellect which makes them self-aware, self-reflective. This means that they can interpret their experiences. The way that a *jiva*’s subtle body interprets its experience is its “world.” Its interpretation is its “creation.” When we say the world would not be there without the mind (subtle body) we mean *jiva*’s interpretation, its projection, would not be there, not that the material world, the senses, subtle body and the *vasanas* would not be here. We call the *jiva*’s creation “*pratibhasika satyam*,” the subjective reality. There is only one Charles Smith and he sees things a certain way owing to his conditioning. *Isvara*’s creation is called “*vhyvaharika satyam*,” the objective world. This is the world of science, the objects and the laws which are not under the control of any *jiva*. We need this teaching so the *jiva* does not confuse its creation with *Isvara*’s. The *jiva* is in *Isvara*’s creation and is required to respond to it. This is called *dharma*, appropriate response. If it responds properly to what *Isvara* wants, it will be in harmony with *Isvara*, the creation, meaning its environment. But if it is living in its own world, gets a request from *Isvara* and responds according to its fears and desires, likes and dislikes, it is quite possible that it will run afoul of *Isvara* – read: its circumstances – and suffer. So this teaching makes it aware of the difference between the subjective and the objective realities. If it is clear which is which it can choose to follow *dharma*, not its own desire in case they are different. There is no problem with *jiva*’s desires as long as they conform to *dharma*.

Charles: Okay, so if the *jiva* is in *Isvara*’s creation and is required to respond to it then it seems “I see the world because it is there.”

James: Yes, that is correct. It looks out through the body, identifies with the senses, perceives a world and thinks that it is seeing what is actually there. It knows it didn’t create it. The *jiva* is seemingly responsible even for *Isvara*’s creation insofar as unless it looks out through the senses and the mind there is no world for it. But the *jiva*, which is actually awareness, can’t perceive a

world unless *Isvara* has already done its job as a Creator.

Charles: But like the saying “Does a tree falling in the woods make a sound if no one is there to hear it?,” I have heard the answer is you have to be there, meaning you create the world. Is that right? Thanks.

James: This saying is the equivalent of “the world is there because I see it.” This means that without awareness there is no world. I am not sure who you mean when you say “you have to be there.” You must mean awareness, because *jiva* does not create the objective world. *Jiva*, under the spell of ignorance, interprets what it perceives and this interpretation is its creation, or its “world.”

If you do not mean awareness the answer is no, except in the sense that I mentioned above when I said that the *jiva* is seemingly responsible for the external creation insofar as it doesn't exist (for it) unless it is perceiving it. However, it should be clear from the example of deep sleep that the *jiva* doesn't create the world because there is no world for it when it is asleep. Yet the world is there for other waking *jivas*. That shows that some other factor – we call it *Isvara* – is the creator.

So the next question is: What is the relationship between *jiva* and *Isvara*? *Jiva* can't see a world that appears to be “out there” unless it is aware, and *Isvara* can't create the whole objective world unless it is aware. We know that *Isvara* is aware because its creation is intelligently designed: it all hangs together.

So there is essentially no difference between *jiva* and *Isvara* except in their capacity to create. *Isvara* creates the objective world, and *jiva* creates the subjective world. They are both conscious. Consciousness is the common denominator. This is why Vedanta says they are “essentially” the same. If this is true then we can eliminate both *jiva* and *Isvara* as real, and take ourselves to be consciousness.

We can eliminate them as real because their capacities are different. *Isvara* is not a person with likes and dislikes, and *jiva* cannot create the sun, moon and the stars. And we can eliminate them because neither *Isvara's* creation nor *jiva's* creation hides consciousness. It is always present prior to the creation and prior to the birth of individuals. You can't have a macrocosmic creation without consciousness. Something had to exist before *Isvara* could “bang” the creation into existence. That something we call *paramatma*, pure consciousness, free of both *Isvara* and *jiva*.

Consciousness – me – is never affected by *Isvara's* creation or by *jiva's* creation. It is the knower of both.

Or you can look at it this way: it is clear that *jiva* is conscious. Charles is conscious. It is also clear that *Isvara* is conscious because the creation is consciously designed. Inference tells us that, and inference is a valid means of knowledge. We do not have to meet *Isvara* in person – not that *Isvara* is a person – to know that it is conscious. So if Charles's consciousness depends on *Isvara's* consciousness, and *Isvara's* consciousness depends on *paramatma*, pure consciousness, then both Charles and *Isvara* are pure consciousness. An effect (*jiva*) is just the cause (*Isvara*) appearing in a form. We can't apply the same logic to *Isvara* except loosely

because consciousness does not “cause” *Isvara*. *Isvara* – beautiful, intelligent ignorance – is something altogether different. It is not an effect but it is a cause with reference to the creation. In any case, both *Isvara* and *jiva* depend on pure consciousness but pure consciousness does not depend on either. If you don't depend on the world or on Charles you certainly can't be either one of them.

They are merely ideas appearing in you, pure consciousness. You never experience a *jiva* or an *Isvara* apart from the thought of them. They are objects known to you, so they cannot be you. The whole problem starts when you identify with the body. This make it look like the world is out there, that you are dependent on it and that whatever is in charge of it is controlling you.

We know the world is not real because when you analyze it, it resolves into empty space and space resolves into consciousness insofar as you cannot know space without consciousness. It is an object known to you. So there is just you, consciousness, in which the *jiva*, Charles, appears in a particular a priori environment, i.e. *Isvara*.

~ Love, James