

The Direct Path

Ram (James Swartz)

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Greg Goode: Hey, James. Thanks for your close and careful reading of *The Direct Path: A User Guide**! I've been recommending your traditional approach too!

[*Editor's note: A book by Greg Goode, author of *Standing as Awareness: The Direct Path*.]

James: Hi, Greg. Lovely to hear from you. I had a chance to read *Atma Darshan* and most of *Notes on Spiritual Discourses* and I finished *The Direct Path* and am at least better position to write.

Greg Goode: I think we agree on almost everything. The emphases in this teaching are different from traditional Shankaracharyan Advaita Vedanta.

James: I think it is right that the emphasis is different, but I can't find anything, in terms of knowledge, to distinguish Atmananda's teaching from traditional Vedanta. I read *Atma Darshan* carefully and it is pure Vedanta. Here is an excerpt from an email that I wrote about Atmananda and the Direct Path that was part of a flurry of emails occasioned by your statement about deep sleep. My correspondant suggested that the Direct Path was New Vedanta or Modern Vedanta.

"It looks like Modern Vedanta but it is actually traditional Vedanta.

"Ted just gave me a copy of all of Atmananda's writings, and I read *Atma Darshan* carefully and we have been discussing them in light of Greg's comment about deep sleep, and it seems that Atmananda is actually a perfect Vedantic sage, like Swamiji, but who was a child of his times and used the language of the day, which in India, among the upper classes (from whom most of the *jnanis* come), had already been corrupted by Vivekananda, Krishnamurti (who was actually the father of the Neos – 'no path, no teaching' – as Otto pointed out the other day) and others. It was the language of knowledge formulated in the language of experience. In fact you find both *yoga* (experience) and Vedanta (knowledge) presented in the *Upanishads*, which don't discuss the apparent confusion between knowledge and experience/action, because they were revelations that happened to different people at different times. It was only later as the Vedanta *sampradaya* developed that this issue was resolved – but not really, because in general people interpret instead of trying to understand.

"It resolves in this simple way: action is good for preparation of the mind, and knowledge is required for *moksa*. The Direct Path is actually pure Vedanta for people with a contemplative, investigative temperament. Atmananda knew both paths – the experiential path, which he called the cosmological path because it relies on creation theories to explain the apparent reality, take the piss out of the doer and set the doer up for the Direct Path. I understand Atmananda well because in the old days when the light of inquiry burned brightly I found the cosmological inquiries boring and the immediacy of discrimination exciting, which he obviously did too. But I teach creation theories – the *gunas*, etc. – for the reason stated above.

The doer has to understand why action will not get it what it actually wants, which opens the door to Vedanta. Unfolding the *gunas* and the *panchikarana* definitely convinces the doer that it is not a doer. If you read Atmananda you can see how you can get the experiential notion. For example, he uses the word 'realization' frequently. It is a very interesting word that implies both knowledge and experience. You can only figure out which meaning is primary in his mind by his usage, and it invariably comes down on the side of meaning 'knowledge.' But if you have the *yogic* idea of *moksa*, which is experiential, as you know, you can interpret it as experience, which opens up a can of worms. That quote from Dayananda that Marcel sent about the actual meaning of the word '*anubhava*,' which is almost exclusively used to mean 'experience' in the spiritual world but actually means 'knowledge,' is like the word *turiya*, 'the fourth,' which is invariably translated as 'the fourth state' even though the *Upanishad* does not call awareness the fourth state.

"Without understanding the primacy of knowledge as far as *moksa* is concerned and being committed to experience for obvious reasons, i.e. it is the coin of the realm of *samsara*, it is easy to see how individuals believe that enlightenment is experiential. As you know, the impact of knowledge on experience is profound but the impact of experience on knowledge is decidedly less profound insofar as individuals are fascinated with it owing – ironically – to lack of self-knowledge, which is why I spend so much time unfolding the distinction. The success that I have had of late is not due to my sparkling personality ☺ but to the importance of this distinction alone. It sets the doer free to convert its desire for experience into a desire for knowledge. Another ambiguous word is "enlightenment" which Atmananda uses and which, upon analysis of the context, yields the meaning of knowledge – without discounting the experiential ramifications of knowledge. As you well know, you cannot separate them in reality insofar as both are just ideas appearing in awareness and non-separate from it. As teachers all we have is words and they need to be looked into with great care."

Sundari: Yes, Atmananda's language is difficult but I agree that nothing he says contradicts Vedanta. It is not just *smriti*, knowledge extracted from personal experience. It is *sruti*, Vedanta. But what is this higher reason thing? I don't quite get it. Perhaps it is just a language problem? Also, do you think that Greg has blurred the knowledge and experience issue? It seems he has. It is all very well to fuse knowledge and experience, of course they are inseparable, that is obvious, but what is not obvious, unless it is taught, is that, like you said in your email yesterday, the confusion in thinking arises because viewed from the individual's perspective, Greg's book makes it seem as if they are the same thing and they are not from the experienter's perspective – which he is addressing. It is definitely not clear to most. In which case, the ego hangs onto the experience as the focus instead of the immediacy of the knowledge it is supposed to deliver. And the experiments in Greg's book always lead to the conclusion 'I am awareness,' which is knowledge. So it seems to me that experience is only a vehicle for delivering self-knowledge. I would be happy to hear more on this topic."

James: The 'higher reason' that Atmananda speaks about is actually the teachings of Vedanta that are only available to someone with a refined mind. For the *jiva* it means discrimination, curiosity with reference to the causes of things, in this case, the universe. It is the hallmark of inquirers. Again, Atmananda was a creature of his times and 'higher reason' was a term in vogue then. I think it was coined by Hegel or Kant or one of the European philosophers. In his day educated Indians were much in love with Western philosophy and co-

opted many Western terms, probably to show that they were up to the mark, philosophically. They were, but there was a kind of amusing innocence and eagerness to prove their spiritual and intellectual bona fides to the successful Western countries. You see it even today. I think this was also why Vivekananda corrupted the tradition, although he may not have actually appreciated the tradition for what it is in the first place.

“I don’t think Greg has blurred the knowledge and experience issue. As you say, in his book he reduces the result of his experiments to knowledge, i.e. that the objects only apparently exist and that the self is awareness. I think the purpose of the book is to convince beginners that the way they experience reality is not the way it is. It does seem to leave open the idea that perhaps *moksa* is objectless experience – which is a common belief. I think it would benefit from a discussion of the experience/knowledge confusion.”

Greg: The Direct Path is best as an oral teaching with meditations, body and sensory explorations guided by the teacher. It doesn’t read through the *Upanishads* or the *Bhagavad Gita sloka* by *sloka*. Atmananda hardly ever referred to these texts.

James: It seems to me that the body, sensory explorations, etc. fall under the aegis of the cosmological path, the experiential stuff – the practices of yoga, etc. The sense I get from his statements about the Direct Path is that the Direct Path is the path of knowledge. He seems to be in lock-step with the Vedanta *sampradaya*. As you undoubtedly know, in the *Upanishads* there are only two paths, the path of action and the path of knowledge. The *Gita* also presents both. It is a *moksa shastra* and a *dharma shastra*, *moksa* here meaning *samkhya*, or self-knowledge; *dharma* meaning *yoga*, particularly *karma yoga*.

Maybe what confuses people is that he speaks of the Vedantins as if he was not one of them. But this is consistent with the point of view of awareness, which is obviously his point of view, not that awareness is a point of view. Vedanta is a throwaway, a dualistic means of knowledge, to be wielded by the self in the form of a *srotriya*, a qualified teacher. Any *jnani* worth his salt knows he or she is not a *jnani*, a Vedantin or a Direct Path person, because these are limited identities.

Vedanta is not a philosophy or a path. It is solely a *pramana*, a means of knowledge for something that is not available to be known by perception and inference. I think one of the biggest confusions in the Vedanta world is the idea that Vedanta is a path or a philosophy. The use of the words “*Advaita*” Vedanta reveals this confusion.

They, like the word “Hinduism,” are a misnomer because they imply other Vedantas. The word “*advaita*” means “non-dual” and implies the concept of duality. Indeed, those who view Vedanta as a school of thought speak of Dwaita Vedanta (dualistic Vedanta), VishistAdvaita Vedanta (qualified non-dualism) and even Bhakti Vedanta (devotional Vedanta) or they compare it with philosophies or religions that present similar ideas.

The word “*advaita*” is not an adjective meant to modify a particular type of Vedanta but a word that describes the nature of the self. Keeping in mind that words are always symbols, although non-dual implies dual, it is more appropriate to refer to the self as non-dual than as one since one is a number that implies two, many and even zero, nothing. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to label Vedanta, which is merely a means of knowledge, as non-dual because it is in fact a dualistic device operating in a dualistic situation, one that ironically delivers non-dual

knowledge. I digress.

Greg: We can wait until after you have a chance to read Atmananda to discuss lots of things, such as the differences and similarities between his approach and Shankaracharyan Advaita. I studied also in the Chinmaya Mission for years, and Atmananda's "direct path" approach for years as well. I'd recommend Atmananda's *Notes* for information on deep sleep, and *Atma Darshan*, especially the preface, for how he handles his teachings. Those two works will come closest among his public works to dealing with the points you raise.

By the way, my terminology would resemble Atmananda's more closely but I wanted to steer away from that. His publisher, which is related to the Menon family, has sent threatening letters to many people who quote or paraphrase language from his copyrighted works. I have gotten many letters, and so have Chris and Dennis and Ananda Wood.

James: Yes, I had them at my website but my friend Matthias, who has written you and heard of this silliness from you, warned me, so I took them down. Nonetheless, I continue to distribute them surreptitiously. The Menon family are jerks. This kind of knowledge only gets to the people for whom it is intended anyway. If morons read it they will not understand it. And it is nothing new. It is the wisdom of the ages, and countless attempts to corrupt it have left it intact.

Greg: But even now we can talk about the things that are specific to my book, such as "interval," who the "you" is that is being addressed by the text and the distinction between knowledge and experience.

First, let me say that the book is organized in a certain order. It follows the same kind of sublational structure that traditional Advaita follows in progressing from *srshti-drshti vada* to *drshti-srshti vada* to *ajati vada*, according to the readiness of the student. If too "high" a teaching is given too soon, then the student will objectify it and turn it into another belief. If too "low" a teaching is given, then the student will question the teaching itself and perhaps lose interest. If the teacher is present for this process, then the teacher can guide and fine-tune the teaching on an instantaneous basis and meet the student where the teaching can be most fruitful.

James: I understand this argument, and it has its merits, but I think that it is an overly cautious approach because if a teaching is actually aimed at the self, the self will understand it, irrespective of the eligibility of the student. And if it doesn't – if it is the ego, the self under the spell of ignorance – and you follow it up with *karma yoga* and other *yogas*, the ego will have a clear idea of what it is seeking even though it has not completely assimilated the knowledge in terms of its everyday experience. And it is very important for experience-oriented people – most – to have a clear idea of the goal. And it will have tools to prepare itself to understand. This in fact is how the *Gita* presents the teaching. Krishna does not coddle Arjuna even though he is sitting around like a kid whining about his problem. He gives him knowledge at the get-go and then, realizing that the knowledge has not stuck, he gives him *karma yoga*, which seems like action but is actually the application of knowledge. In my experience – and I am criticized for it by the traditionalists even though I teach traditional Vedanta – I hit beginners and highly-qualified people alike with it directly at the very beginning because Vedanta not only communicates to the ego, it communicates around the ego, directly to the self. One cannot argue with the results. The

highly-qualified get it right away and the less-qualified get non-dual experience and are given all the tools to develop the qualifications – the experiential stuff, therapies, if you will, that will clear the deadwood.

Many people come who were told that enlightenment is experiential, and often spend up to thirty years doing experiential stuff – most wise up a bit sooner but ten or fifteen years of practice is not uncommon – and are at the end of their spiritual ropes when they come to Vedanta. This is where your book is so helpful. If everyone was forced to perform these experiments it would save them a lot of time running through all the other experiential paths. But even then, self-knowledge will tend to be indirect, which is not the kiss of death, but which leaves the experiencer with an identity as an experiencer, not as awareness which is a non-experiencing, or transparent, witness. Incidentally, I like the way you distinguish the “opaque” and “transparent” witness. It amounts to the distinction between *nirguna* and *saguna brahman*. It’s very clear.

In any case, if you point out the experience/knowledge confusion at the beginning and teach the self directly according to the method of superimposition and negation, irrespective of the qualifications, you have a very inspired inquirer for two reasons: (1) the inquirer is no longer in the dark about the goal and (2) whether or not self-knowledge sticks permanently at the first hearing or not – it usually doesn’t – it definitely produces non-dual experience, not that there is anything else, as your inquiries show. This is important because it destroys the belief that the inquirer is going to get some kind of big jackpot-type experience at the end of a long, arduous experiential *sadhana*. One sees immediately how downright ordinary and natural the non-dual nature of experience actually is. This takes the anxiety out of seeking. If there are still doubts, then the experiments in your book should serve to convince the inquirer of the non-dual nature of experience. That is why I recommend it.

This is not a criticism (usually, when they say that it is a criticism ☺) but I think that there is a lot of unconscious paternalism operating in the classic teaching model. That is why I treat my students as the self, not as seekers who need to be prepared, although most do. Of course one needs minimum qualifications for knowledge, and a certain amount of caution is perhaps justified simply because direct knowledge goes over the head of most – until a lot of contemplation has been done. Apart from a few confusions, disappointments and disillusionments I think there is little danger of doing any real damage by assuming the inquirer is the self and not the person he or she thinks she is, particularly if the teaching reveals it over and over.

I tell them out front that what they are going to hear is counterintuitive, that it is provocative, that I am the bringer of bad as well as good news, and then I proceed like Krishna to rain down the complete teaching. In spite of the fact that the pampered egos of modern people are infected with masturbatory levels of self-regard and feel entitled to have every gratuitous feeling catered to by the teachers, the direct approach works – as long as you deliver the message with a good dollop of humor. Many teachers respond to the bourgeois decadence of modern seekers with the idea that they need to protect the students: “There, there, sweetheart, I will give you final teaching when you are ready. Papa knows best.” I think seekers should be assumed to be mature adults whether they are or not. People like it when you take them seriously and try not to protect them from harm. I am occasionally criticized for being a bit too direct and straightforward, for being cynical and uncaring, but people grow up fast if you treat them as the self.

Having said that, I basically don’t teach people who need to be convinced experientially that they are the awareness, the reason being that probably seventy percent of seekers have had non-dual

epiphanies – some multiple, profound and prolonged – which have not dissolved the basic subject-object orientation. Experience does not change entrenched thinking patterns, except perhaps momentarily. Ignorance invariably returns and the solution is not more non-dual experience – I have a friend who said, “I have realized the self 500 times” – because experience is knowledge in the sense that there is not some pure, raw thing called “experience” that can be known by an experiencing entity. For the experiencer, experience is always an interpretation by the *vasanas* of pure, raw, impersonal, non-dual awareness/experience.

If a person does your experiments, what is to keep them from doubting the knowledge “I am awareness” which is what they all reveal? The self wouldn’t be doing the experiments unless it was under the spell of ignorance as it knows its nature very well. And if it is under the spell of ignorance it may very well conclude “I am awareness” but fail to understand what it means to be awareness. So there should be more – a teaching that reveals non-duality from all the fundamental perspectives – knowledge and experience, *karma*, *dharma*, *bhakti*, values, the three states, the three *gunas*, etc. Oh, yes, and *Isvara*. What about *Isvara*? ☺

Here is a question, just in, from a Finnish woman:

“**Katya:** Also, you said Greg Goode’s direct approach is good, but I got confused reading his book with he not mentioning *Isvara* at all, or just ‘the thoughts appear, all is *Brahman*.’ Where did *Isvara* go in the Direct Path? And I also got confused when he said I am ‘deep sleep.’ What did he mean by that?”

James: Is your “global awareness” *Isvara*, the macrocosmic causal body?

Greg: So the deep sleep portion of the book comes at the end of the section about the mind, just at the place where the student might still treat deep sleep as another state of mind as waking and dreaming.

James: But why isn’t it? Waking, dream and deep sleep are *Isvara*’s states of mind, not *jiva*’s. The student is just *viswa*, *jiva* appearing as the waker. The way I understand it, the three states teaching is meant to get the *jiva* to see the three states of experience as awareness sees the states (because it is actually awareness) – as objects appearing in it. The last verse of Atmananda’s Chapter XI, “Reality as It Is,” says, “Merger will never be into deep sleep but into one’s own Being.” This clearly discriminates awareness from deep sleep. Correct me if I’m wrong, but isn’t the presupposition behind the idea that deep sleep is a special state, not necessarily a state of mind like waking and dreaming, equivalent to *moksa*? If it is then won’t it lead the student to think that it needs to experience deep sleep – while waking? This is more or less what the *yogis* think *nirvikalpa samadhi* is whereas both words, *nirvikalpa* and *samadhi*, just refer to awareness. Furthermore, deep sleep is called a state (*avastha*) to distinguish it from awareness – which is not a state.

Greg: The purpose of the deep sleep portion of the teaching is to show how the Self, as awareness, is present all along, whether objects happen to be arising or not.

James: Yes. As you say on page 181, it is to show that you don't need objects to be who you are. But show to whom? This statement presupposes that the teaching is aimed at the *jiva*, the experiencing entity. But the deep sleep teaching from the *Mandukya* – and you can't argue with the logic – negates the existence of the *jiva* (*viswa*) as a knower, insofar as while the *jiva* in deep sleep is present it is not present as a knower, only as an experiencer, and therefore deep sleep does not deliver self-knowledge, which the self masquerading as a waking-state *jiva* needs in order to destroy its notion that it is actually a conscious experiencing entity, a doer, and not the transparent, non-experiencing witness. Yes, the knowledge "I am present in deep sleep" is valid insofar as inference is a valid means of knowledge but inference is not direct knowledge/experience, and direct knowledge/experience is *moksa*.

Greg: The utility of seeing deep sleep like that, for Atmananda and the other teachers in this approach (Jean Klein, Francis Lucille, Rupert Spira and me), is that deep sleep can give one the same evidence that *nirvikalpa samadhi* can give.

James: Yes, but it is indirect knowledge, which leaves the student as a experiencer, not as awareness. If the *Mandukya* is taught properly and not used as evidence, it destroys the student on the spot because the logic of the *prakriya* makes it crystal-clear that neither the waker, dreamer or the deep sleeper and the respective states are conscious, or real, leaving the student as the self. The self doesn't need evidence. This is what Vedanta calls direct knowledge and it reveals the fact that experience is awareness – but awareness is not experience. If the Direct Path is a path and not knowledge, then the way you are using this teaching is in fact indirect because it leaves the student as a student, albeit it with evidence that awareness is non-dual, not the direct knowledge "I am non-dual awareness" which upon contemplation reveals the non-duality of experience. You can work up from experience to self-knowledge, as your experiments demonstrate, but it is much easier and more direct to work from self-knowledge down to experience, assuming the *prakriyas* are operated properly.

Greg: When I called it an "interval" I know that it is ambiguous and possible to be objectified. The "interval" can be taken in two ways, like the colors in a zebra's fur: white and black are intervals to each other. Where white is, black is not. Where black is, white is not. This is NOT the kind of interval that I wish to point out. The other way to understand the word is the one I wish to point out. That sense of "interval" is like the gaps between the intermittent lines painted on a road: the road is present under the paint as well as where there is no paint. This is more like the gap between thoughts, which is global awareness, the same as deep sleep.

James: So you mean the interval is the road, the substrate? That is what I thought you must be referring to. But, Greg, you really need to explain this clearly. Your book has generated a lot of interest but this is not clear to anyone I know who has read it. I just got another email this morning praising the book but mentioning the confusion. Words are everything in this enlightenment game. Neither the ostensible nor the implied meaning of "interval" actually works without the example you just gave. I think it would be helpful if you explained it this way in the next edition.

Here is a paragraph from the email:

"One last note: I totally agree with your comment about the mistake Greg Goode made

concerning the deep sleep state being the Self. This bothered me when I read the book as well. Other than that, I found the exercises quite a nice complement to the teaching methodology of Vedanta.”

Greg: And at this point in the book, it is certainly possible to objectify any term such as interval, gap, absence, space – at this point it is okay, for two reasons:

1. The purpose of the deep sleep teaching at this point in the inquiry is to help debunk the student’s notion that deep sleep is merely a state of the body, where the body and bedroom and world are still there but unobserved. This physicalistic set of assumptions is what the teaching is trying to address.

James: That’s interesting. I haven’t heard that doubt before but I understand what you mean.

Greg: 2. The other reason that it’s okay at this point that the student turns the “gap” or “interval” of deep sleep into a subtle object is that this will get corrected a bit later in the book. Later in the book kinds of subtle objects are themselves examined in great detail, along with time and space and logical relations, which normally don’t seem like objects at all, but the forms of intuition, the ways we experience. In the direct path teaching, all of these very subtle things are objects. Seeing them as such will come later, and will help collapse the witness into pure consciousness. This witness is what Atmananda calls the “higher” witness.

James: This is good. It is important to do this. Experience itself is an object. Doesn’t this present a problem for the Direct Path, because how can you use an object, i.e. experience, to prove the non-existence of objects?

In any case, my complaint, ☺ which I am sure you understand, is about the statement that deep sleep is your nature. It makes the rest of the book difficult. For example, on page 181 you say, “You will not think that the goal of non-duality is to be in deep sleep forever, because you as awareness do not need objects in order to exist...” But if deep sleep is your nature you would want to be in it forever, not, of course, that you can be in it if you are it. And if deep sleep is your nature then how does it relate to your nature as awareness which, you say rightly, is your nature? I don’t see how you can reconcile the words “awareness” and “deep sleep” (and “interval”). If they were synonyms you could use one or the other. And all along you have used “awareness” as the word for your nature, never “deep sleep.”

In the first paragraph on the same page you say, “...arising that happen during the present are incapable of proving what went on in a past time when deep sleep was... unable to prove the past as it claims to do.” The difficulty here, as you can see, is that if you are deep sleep you are an arising because deep sleep occurs. Again, if it is your nature it is not going to occur. But direct experience shows that you are not an arising. ☺

Greg: So if the deep sleep module helps the student correct the physicalist assumption that the physical body is present in the bedroom overnight, then that’s all the module needs to do at this point.

James: Is that really a concern of inquirers? I cannot imagine that anyone in the waking state is concerned about whether the body is present in deep sleep or not, since it is obviously not. Why not just point out that the body is an object in the waking state and that the self is the awareness of it? This is a matter of direct experience.

Greg: You also ask who is being addressed. Who is the book talking to? This is not firmly set forth in Direct Path teachings. There is no theory that says that the seeming separate self is really an ego or locus of ignorance or anything else. So in the beginning of the book (p. 13ff) I confront this directly and work the ambiguity into the teaching. Instead of telling students who the separate self “really” is according to a theory, the teaching meets the students where they are and lets them continue with whatever assumptions they have about themselves, knowing that the assumptions will all be encountered and handled later in the text. If the student thinks he/she is the body, the mind, the memories, the values, the character, the thinker, the chooser, the homunculus behind the mental camera – all these things are examined later in the book and shown as objects arising and passing away in awareness, as awareness.

You also ask about knowledge versus experience. As you saw, this is a distinction that the direct path doesn't make much of – I'll say more about why in a moment. But first, I totally agree with you on the primacy of knowledge over experience when they are understood the way most *satsang* and Neo non-dualist teachings understand them. For those teachings, which are influenced by Western psychology and New Age feel-good teachings, “knowledge” is intellection and “experience” is emotion. Those teachings go for “experience” because in their shallow way their goal is to have good feelings forever. So the traditional Advaita Vedanta emphasis on knowledge is a very radical counteractive teaching for this.

James: Yes, indeed. I should have read this before I wrote all that above about knowledge and experience. ☺

Greg: The Direct Path doesn't really make the knowledge/experience distinction, because they come to the same thing. So it doesn't fall into the New Age non-duality “experience trap.” There is no intellectual/emotional distinction either. Those functions are merely seen as objects arising in awareness, as awareness. In the Direct Path, knowledge and experience just are awareness from the get-go.

James: Yes. If reality is non-dual then knowledge and experience are just awareness. But basically only *jnanis* understand this. Inquirers see a distinction and so they need to have the distinction clarified to keep them from longing for a discrete non-dual experience that will somehow confirm their knowledge. How does the Direct Path address this issue? At its heart the *satya/mithya* teaching makes it clear that knowledge, which can't be negated, is real, and experience, which is subject to change, interpretation and error, is apparently real. Both Atmananda and Vedanta say that knowledge alone is *moksa*.

Greg: Another thing we can talk about later, if you wish, is the mechanics of “how” all of this happens. You know, the difference between traditional Advaita Vedanta's *akandakara vritti* and

the Direct Path's "higher reason." There are many things to talk about!

James: Yes, I would be interested in how this happens. And yes, indeed, there are many things to discuss. I am sorry about the delay but I have gotten so popular that the email queue is pretty long – and while I would like to bump your letters to the top of the list insofar as it is very nice to talk with someone who understands and can communicate properly – it is not fair to the others. My wife is helping out, taking some of the load off, but it still takes time. The e-*satsang* section of my website, which is very popular, has well over two thousand pages of *satsangs*. I have written over seven hundred pages since March.

Greg: PS: Have you noticed that some of the people who used to be Neos have now been turning to Dzogchen [Buddhism]? That is interesting since it gives them lots of poetic awareness-talk and lots of practices. Many of them have discovered that their no-practice, no-doer teaching just didn't work!

James: Yes, I noticed. I get them after Dzogchen. ☺ Anyway, I think your book is a very important work for the world of inquiry. It is more than a complement to other experiential paths. It is very simple and direct and it does what it purports to do. In a way, I am doing for Vedanta what you are doing for experience, moving it into the language of the 21st century. Vivekenanda and Chinmaya moved Vedanta into English. Dayananda moved their New Vedanta back to pure Vedanta and illumined the knowledge and experience issue, but the Sanskrit and the traditionalist trappings have made the transition to the West ineffective. Obviously, one does not need Sanskrit and the trappings of the tradition for *moksa*, so it is important to help the knowledge find its home here. If you are planning a sequel, I think *The Direct Path* would benefit from a discussion of the relationship between knowledge and experience. As I mentioned above, it is obviously a topic whose time has come. I was happily languishing in obscurity until I wrote *How to Attain Enlightenment* and now I can't keep up with the demand.

~ Take care of yourself, James