

The Eckhart Religion

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Rick: James, thanks for the reply! ☺

The thread is evolving. What began as a recommendation of your book morphed into a series of questions about Vedanta, responses from those “in the know(ish),” more questions, more responses, etc., avid amateur-level discussions, I’d say. None of us is an “expert” in Vedanta... which is one of the main reasons I emailed you. It strikes me that misinformation about these things can do gobs of harm, and – as you point out in your book – a lot of it is counter-intuitive = easy for a non-expert to get wrong.

If I could sum up the source of contention/confusion/controversy in one question, it would probably be: How can one KNOW, with utter certainty, that non-dual awareness (*brahman*) is real rather than just a beautiful fairy tale?

The reason this question is so important is, if one cannot KNOW with utter certainty, then Vedanta becomes a leap of faith, and such a leap (no matter how spirited!) is doomed to fall well short of Truth/enlightenment, isn’t it?

Thanks!

~ Rick

James: Hi, Rick. How do you know that you are Rick and this world is real? You believe it based on what you think. There is absolutely no evidence that you are a Rick nor is there any way for anybody to determine what the word “Rick” refers to apart from consciousness and a particular body, which is nothing but meat/matter. It is clear that you are not the body, because the body is an object known to you, so that only leaves consciousness. That you are consciousness is self-evident. If you weren’t, the meat tube would be six feet under.

Minus an epiphany, it is true that you need faith in Vedanta’s contention that you are limitless, ever-free awareness. But that should not be hard, because the idea that you are Rick is purely a belief too. Why should you dismiss one belief in your identity in favour of another? The only reason you persist in the Rick belief is because your desires and fears have generated actions that produce experiences that seem to reinforce the belief that you are Rick. You think that what happens to that body-mind is Rick’s life. But there is another explanation for that life that is much more convincing.

The belief that you are whole and complete, non-dual, actionless awareness is only a blind belief, like the belief in God or Rick, without a way to prove that it is a fact. So Vedanta provides a method of discrimination based on the unexamined logic of your own experience that reveals the belief to be a fact.

If you practise it properly, you will notice your fears and desires dry up and a sense of uncaused happiness gradually arise and you will start to notice that reality confirms the belief in your

completeness. As this process unfolds, the belief in your Rickness will slowly abate. You will see that Rick is just an idea that somehow you picked up from outside without hard and fast evidence.

You cannot expect an epiphany to change your identity, because discrete experiences do not change thinking patterns, which are as deeply embedded in your consciousness as an idea that you are a specific so-and-so, an experiencing meat tube. So you have to do inquiry, meaning apply the proven teachings of Vedanta over and over again to remove the effects of the ignorance that makes you think you are Rick.

Short of a methodology to actualize the statement that you are whole and complete awareness, you are left high and dry. Eckhart (and the Neos) tell you, based on his experience, that you are awareness, but he gives no method, so his teachings are nothing but beliefs. Yes, his statements coincide with the truth, but what good is it? This is why Neo-Advaita is unsatisfying. It wakes you up but promptly lets you fall back to sleep, left only with the tantalizing memory of your true identity. In fact Eckhart gives a method – that is just absurd – without a way to actualize it. He says you need to be in “the now.” But this is impossible because you are the now. Even if you can’t understand it and if time exists, which it doesn’t apart from a way to measure the interval between discrete experiences, which is totally subjective, and there is a now as opposed to a future and a past, you are already in it, assuming you are a Rick.

So inquiry based on a proven methodology is necessary and Vedanta is such a method. It is the application of self-knowledge. But before you apply it you need to know what self-knowledge is and what ignorance is. If you think you are a Rick and you think that you can figure it out on your own, you will not succeed, because you are not a Rick, an experiencing entity, and because the Rick-entity is not actually conscious as Rick. It is just a reflection of awareness in the subtle body. To get the knowledge you need to be taught. Even reading books on Vedanta will not set you free unless you are highly qualified, because, assuming they are actually Vedanta and not some *guru*'s or intellectual's interpretation of Vedanta – which most of them are – does not work, because your ignorance will cause you to misunderstand.

The short answer to your question is that you have no doubt that you exist – do you? What you call *brahman* is just you, your existence. All that is left to determine therefore is the nature of your existence. At present you think that it is limited, but Vedanta says that it is limitless and proves it – if you are qualified to understand.

I hope this is helpful.

~ Love, James