

The Origin of Intention

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Ernest: Hi, my friend.

I had an interesting conversation about the subject intend, intent and intention. And I have reflected on it. Is every intention coming from *Isvara*/Creator/the unmanifest (macrocosmic causal body) or mind?

Ted: *Isvara* is the original source of all intentions. Intentions are the offspring of desires, which are rooted in *vasanas*, the impressions of the *jiva*'s past experiences, which in turn give rise to *raga-dvesha*, likes and dislikes, which are the two factors that impel the *jiva*'s actions, some of which are backed by conscious intention, most of which are executed spontaneously.

The *jiva*'s intentions would seem to originate from the *jiva*'s mind, but if we follow the chain of logic inherent in this circumstance, we find that the *jiva* is not responsible for its preferences. That is, the *jiva* did not decide for itself what it would like and dislike, what it would desire and fear. While the *vasana/raga-dvesha* "bundle" associated with the body-mind-sense complex that constitutes the material aspect of the *jiva* (awareness being the source of its apparent sentience, the enlivening factor that enables it to perform the functions of acting, thinking, feeling and experiencing, which is technically what instills the *jiva* with "*jiva*-hood") is unique to each *jiva* and its character and quality is affected (i.e. the *vasanas* are either fortified or weakened) by the *jiva*'s experiences and actions, the *jiva* did not pack its own bag, so to speak, before its trip through the transmigratory process began.

The fact that the *jiva* is not the original source of its preferences, however, does not let the *jiva* off the hook concerning its actions and the intentions that impel them, whether those intentions be conscious or unconscious. Part of the parcel of *jiva*-hood is a modicum of free will that affords the *jiva* the capacity to act with intention, and thus either fortify or neutralize the *vasanas* that compel habitual tendencies that bind the *jiva* to the pursuit of objects and the consequent roller coaster ride of joy and sorrow that characterizes *samsara* or cultivate *vasanas* that give rise to behavioral habits that are beneficial to self-inquiry and facilitate the assimilation of self-knowledge that frees one from *samsara*.

Ernest: And is intention an object known to me?

Ted: Yes. You are aware of or able to identify your intentions, right? Anything and everything that is perceivable, conceivable or experienceable in any way whatsoever is an object. And you, pure awareness, are the "light" by means of which those objects come to be known by the mind, which is itself an object.

Ernest: Awareness/self does not have an intention, because it is attributeless. Am I right?

Ted: Yes.

And though often overlooked, the implication of the fact that you are attributeless is quite profound: you are not a personal entity. In other words, not only are you not the body-mind-sense complex of the apparent person you seem to be, but you are also not the “knower” or “witness” of the body-mind-sense complex in the sense of being a knowing subject in relation to a known object.

Scripture refers to the self as *sakshi chaitanya*, or “witnessing awareness,” but this reference is figurative. The witnessing associated with the self is not a *karma* (i.e. action) performed by the self, but rather the *svarupa* (i.e. nature) of the self. In other words, “witnessing” or “knowing” is not something awareness does, but rather what awareness is. To reiterate the previously mentioned analogy, the self (i.e. pure awareness) is the “light” in which all objective phenomena appear, the “light” that illumines the mind and thereby imbues the relative knower (i.e. the *jiva*) with the capacity to know objects and, by extension, to execute actions with the intention of achieving specific ends.

This is a very subtle understanding and one that invariably trips up seekers until such time as the mind is quite or still enough to “see” or understand, as it were, its own limited scope as the forms, including even the apparent “void,” that populate – or to state it more accurately, actually constitute – its field of experience, and moreover, to recognize or “intuitively sense” the limitless “expanse” of pure awareness in which the galaxy of objective phenomena that is the mind is appearing.

The bottom line is that the entire experience of being a *jiva* is nothing more than a dream-like projection that is both made of and “arises from,” “abides in” and inevitably “subsides back into” you, pure awareness. Nothing other than pure awareness actually exists. That is, while objects do exist in the sense that they are experienced, they are not real in the sense that their forms are entirely constituted of awareness (i.e. in the form of *prakriti*, or original matter) and the quality of inherent knowability by means of which their existence is established presupposes, and thus is entirely dependent on the “light” of consciousness (i.e. the *purusha*).

Returning to your question, then, you are correct to conclude that awareness has no intention. While the apparent individual is constantly engaged in intentional or purposeful action, pure awareness is simply the “field” in which the intentions play out and the “light” that illumines the actions – both subtle (i.e. thoughts and feelings) and gross (i.e. physical actions) – as which those intentions manifest.

Ernest: What is intention anyway? ☺

Ted: Intention is the focused application of willpower for the purpose of satisfying a desire.

Ernest: Does meaning imply creation, creator, universe and *jiva* (*jiva-jagat-Isvara*) always?

Ted: I don’t really understand this question as it is worded. But in order for any object or action to

be meaningful and in order for intention to manifest as meaningful action, a creation (which, by extension, necessarily implies a creator) or universe in which a *jiva* can act with intention in an effort to find meaning is necessary.

In fact objects are only meaningful within the context of the relative apparent reality. The term “meaningful” is only relevant within a context in which there is something to be gained or achieved. Therefore intentional action is only meaningful with regard to obtaining objects, the ultimate object being self-knowledge. Since the self is already complete as is, the concept of meaningfulness does not apply to “it.”