

You Don't Have a Head

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Porter: Hi, Ted. Thanks a lot for taking the time to get back to me. I know you're busy with school, and having the added issue of computer malfunctions can really slow a guy down.

Ted: Sometimes I think modern technology is a cosmic prank pulled by *Isvara*. ☺ Of course, that's basically what everything is. The apple looks delicious but beware the possible (certain) worm inside.

Porter: Things continue to go really well although I do feel like a freak of sorts spending as much time as I am on the teaching.

Ted: Welcome to the club. Vedanta has a tendency to inspire a zealous approach in the serious seeker so get your freak on, my friend.

Porter: I see now that I was negatively influenced by some of the Zen teachings on emptiness. It kind of left me in a pretty, well, um, empty place.

Ted: It did me too. Then again, think about it, what did you expect? The good news is, ha, ha, you reached the goal. ☺

Seriously, the idea of emptiness is, well, um, empty. It don't hold water. It don't hold nothin'. And that's its fatal error. I mean, something can't come out of nothing, and despite the fact that it is not real due to its being impermanent and wholly dependent on awareness for its existence, the apparent manifestation is definitely something. Were it not, we would not experience it. Failing to recognize and acknowledge this curious ontological circumstance is where the Zen no-mind teaching devolves into a simple lack of intelligence. I mean no offense to die-hard Zen-heads (or would they be "no-heads"?), but the no-mind/no-thought teaching simply doesn't stand the test of logical scrutiny, which is ironic given that the Buddha himself said, "Believe nothing you've read or anything you've heard even if I have said it unless it corresponds to common sense and reason."

Admittedly, it is advisable, worthwhile and necessary to cultivate a quiet mind that is no longer compelled toward extroversion by binding *vasanas* (i.e. unbridled likes and dislikes, desires and fears) if one wants undertake serious self-inquiry and hopes to ultimately assimilate self-knowledge but one needs a mind a healthy, functional, thinking intellect with which to carry out self-inquiry and continuously discriminate between the real and the apparent (i.e. *sat-asat/mithya-viveka*), or the self and the not-self (i.e. *atma-anatma-viveka*), which is the essence of self-knowledge. Moreover, self-knowledge is for the intellect. The self already "knows" who it is. The ignorance that defines the mind of the apparent individual is only an apparent veil that only partially conceals the self. It is only the intellect that is deluded. Once the intellect recognizes its

true nature as pure awareness of which its apparent reality is only a reflection then it is freed from the erroneous notion of limitation that was the root cause of all its existential angst. The point is that since the intellect is the instrument of knowledge, the mind (i.e. the inner instrument, or *antahkarana*, consisting of the mind, intellect, ego and memory) needs be present in order for the apparent individual to assimilate the self-knowledge that will set him or her free.

Porter: I've been using the "I am whole, complete, limitless, ordinary awareness" almost as a *mantra* to counteract some of the negativity that had been coming up. Is this right in how to use it? I find it very useful and effective. It's smoothed the subtle body out.

Ted: Yes, this is an effective means of counteracting the habitual negative thought patterns to which the mind has grown accustomed. The assimilation of self-knowledge is essentially a matter of reprogramming the mind to think in accordance with the truth rather than the erroneous thoughts of inadequacy and incompleteness to which it has been conditioned.

Two things should be borne in mind, however, concerning the repetition of this thought.

First, you should repeat it with conscious understanding of the implications of the words. If you simply parrot it to yourself it will have little effect. Though there is a great deal of hype in the spiritual world about the power of *mantra* to grant liberation simply through the sound vibrations inherent in the sacred syllables, such notions are essentially baseless. Sure, the repetition of a single thought, especially a positive one, can have a hypnotizing effect on one's psyche and lend it a peaceful quality but in order to truly change deeply ingrained thought patterns one needs to root their replacements in the fertile soil of understanding rather than the fallow fields of mesmerism.

Second, you should understand that the "I" in the statement is not the apparent individual parading around as Porter. You are not Porter. Porter will not one day get enlightened. At best Porter will simply seem to realize he is not Porter, which will really be the self recognizing itself through the mechanism of the apparent mind-body-sense complex so labeled as Porter. The irony of the situation is that you are already whole, complete, limitless, ordinary awareness. And neither you nor the apparent Porter character need to do anything in order to get free. The intellect of the Porter character, however, simply needs to be reconditioned in order for the knowledge of its true identity to register. It's as if the self were the electricity feeding a computer and thus "causing" it to function. But the computer, which represents the mind-body-sense complex that constitutes the apparent individual, has a programming glitch that prevents it from correctly executing its functions and properly processing information, the most essential piece of which is that it is not an independent entity capable of functioning on its own but is rather wholly dependent upon the electricity that enlivens it (here, of course, the analogy breaks down because the mind-body-sense complex is not only enlivened by awareness but is made of and thus essentially nothing other than awareness). Neither the electricity nor the computer is the problem. There is simply a programming error that needs to be corrected.

Porter: I was wondering if you recommend any of Greg Goode's stuff??... especially his experiments.

Ted: Yes, I found the experiments in the book *The Direct Path: A User's Guide* very helpful. Greg does make a fundamental error in the book by equating the true nature of the self with the deep sleep state but other than that I thought the book was great. James addressed the issue of the equation of the self and the deep sleep state with Greg and there followed an interesting exchange of emails that are available for reading under the heading *The Direct Path*, which is among those posted under Satsang at the ShiningWorld website.

Porter: Sometimes it's not entirely clear that awareness isn't originating in or at least focused in the head space. This is due to much of my previous practice of focusing awareness/attention there.

Ted: Awareness does not originate in the head. The head as well as all the contents of the mind, which is figuratively associated with the head, originate and appear within awareness. You don't have a head. Porter's head as well as all thoughts associated with the apparent entity referred to as Porter appear within you.

Porter: Also, it seems like *triguna vibhava yoga* has much richness to it. I'd love to learn more. Do you have any recommendations with regard to it?

Ted: *Triguna vibhava yoga*, or the *yoga* of the three "qualities," or energetic constituents, of creation, is basically a matter of energy management through which one attempts to adjust the relative levels of *rajas* (whose character is passion, desire, activity and projection) and *tamas* (whose character is dullness, inertia, ignorance, grossness, concealment and denial) in relation to *sattva* (whose character is knowledge, intelligence, purity and peace) in order to cultivate a predominately *sattvic* mind that is capable of executing successful self-inquiry and ultimately assimilating self-knowledge.

Though there are many books about the proper diet, and James writes extensively about the lifestyle choices that most effectively lead to the cultivation of a *sattvic* mind, there is no formula or one-size-fits-all guideline that works for everyone with regard to this intended outcome. Here again, the mind is an invaluable aid in the process of self-realization.

You have to monitor your mind-body-sense complex on a moment-to-moment basis in order to accurately assess what behaviors, activities, indulgences, etc. produce what effects in your psyche. Based on this observation, assuming you want freedom, you then pursue those activities that bring you clarity, peace and happiness and temper those activities that produce dullness, fear, desire and agitation. For more details concerning the practice itself, read the chapter titled "Lifestyle" in *How to Attain Enlightenment*.

It should also be borne in mind that though *sattva* is necessary for successful self-inquiry and is the quality of mind that is the springboard to self-realization, or the assimilation of self-knowledge that results in or equates to *moksa* (i.e. liberation), *sattva*, or the state of clarity, peace and happiness, is not in itself "enlightenment." *Sattva* is simply another state of being like any other, and it too will pass. In other words, it is impermanent, as all experience is, and must ultimately be "transcended" as well in order to be free. The point being that *sattva* should be cultivated but at the same time should not be mistaken for the goal. The self is the self whether *sattvic* or not.

Porter: Anyway, I hope you are well and, as always, thanks for taking the time to reply to me.

~ Be well, Porter

Ted: All the best to you, my friend. Keep in touch.