

How Do I Know That I Am Awareness?

Tan

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Mark: Hi, Tan.

I've slightly amended my query and added a bit more:

How exactly do I know that I am awareness itself as well as being merely aware? I mean, I know I am aware of A, B and C (except that sometimes I am not aware of anything for a while till later, when I think, "Oh, where have I been?"). But how do I get from "I am sometimes aware of A, B and C" to "I am awareness"?

Tan: "I am not aware of anything" just means:

No or very few objects in the form of thoughts or feelings are known to me.

You have had to be there to make the statement that very few or no objects ("anything") were known.

Awareness of no objects does not negate you, awareness. To make the statement "I am not aware of anything," awareness has to be there to know that there were no objects arising.

The teaching of the three states of experience (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) shows that you, awareness, are there during deep sleep although no objects are there to be aware of.

Your statement "Oh, where have I been?" relates to the typical case of identifying with the subtle body, reflected awareness. A typical example is daydreaming while driving a car. Your body arrives at the destination without your mind cognizing that fact. So your mind was turned towards something else (not the drive) and your conclusion is "I was somewhere else" or "I was not here."

But that is incorrect. It has to be known to you, awareness, that the mind (which you identified as "you") was "not there" to make that statement. And "not there" just means producing no or other thoughts than expected.

Mark: Can you see what I mean? There seems to be a jump between these two statements. Everybody knows or can say "I am aware of A, B and C" or, for example, "I am aware that I'm bored," but people would not say "I am awareness" or "I am boredom." How would you prove to them that as well as being aware they are also awareness itself? You cannot say "Because I am aware I am awareness" any more than you can say "Because I am bored I am boredom" or "Because I am happy, I am happiness."

Tan: Forget everything you heard or read about spirituality, Vedanta or whatever. Let us start from the beginning.

You exist. This is certain without a doubt.

You know this for certain and cannot negate that.

If you negate: "I do not exist," this is foolishness because the one who negates has to exist to negate.

I think we have to agree on that or else we cannot proceed. So we start with the certainty that you, the "I," exists.

Now since your question here is about identity we have to continue and ask: "Who or what is that I that exists?" meaning, basically, "Who am I?"

Now let us start with the simple inquiry:

Subject/seer-object/seen-discrimination (*drig-drishya-viveka*).

What is known to me I cannot be.

You have to sign up for the logic that what is known to you, you cannot be.

I know the chair so I cannot be the chair. The chair is known to me.

I am the subject. The chair is the object.

My body is known to me so I cannot be my body.

My thoughts and feelings (including feelings of loneliness and boredom) are known to me so I cannot be my thoughts and my feelings.

The idea of Mark, the doer, is known to me so I cannot be the doer. So in conclusion:

I am neither my body nor my mind (feelings) nor my intellect (my thoughts) nor the doer/ego. Every object that is arising before me and is seen I cannot be.

And that is the whole universe. Every conceivable object cannot be me. What is left?
I - am left.

But what is that?

The knowing principle is left. That through which knowing itself is possible is left.

So I am left because I cannot dismiss myself as a known object.

I know that I exist but I cannot prove this since the seer cannot see itself. But my existence is self-evident and does not need proof or evidence.

I am what is left and I have to be that knowing principle that can be called awareness. I also have to be existence itself because I am existing and that is self-evident and cannot be negated.

And I also have to be truth since all the things rise and disappear before me. All these objects change before me. But I never change and am always there. Therefore I am always true since I cannot be negated.

Therefore I am *sat* (truth, existence) and *chit* (awareness).

Mark: Also, in the statements "I am aware" and "I am awareness" who or what is

the I that thinks this?

Tan: The statements “I am aware” and “I am awareness” are thoughts known to you.

There is no “I that thinks.” Thoughts are arising and are known. The capability of the subtle body to produce thoughts is called intellect. But there is actually no “I” which thinks. The *vasanas* produce all the thoughts. So *Isvara* produces all the thoughts because all *vasanas* belong to the macrocosmic causal body, which is *Isvara*.

Mark: In connection with this James says in his book (page 227): “The final stage of this discrimination is to determine whether or not awareness is the same as you or different from you. It obviously cannot be different. Therefore you are awareness...”

Why can awareness not be different from me?

Tan: As stated before: awareness cannot be different from you because everything is known to you. And that knowing principle is awareness. All objects arising in you are not aware of you. They borrow their reality from you. Boredom does not know you but it is known to you. This whole universe depends on you because without you, the knowing principle, or awareness, nothing would be known and therefore known to exist.

Ignorance and a drifting or absent mind is also known to you as the ignorance “Where have I been?” is known to you.

You are awareness, truth and existence.

~ Love, Tan