

Is the Ego Conscious?

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Tan: Hi, Rob. Here are the answers to your questions.

Rob: Is the ego conscious? I have heard that the ego is just a thought.

Tan: We use “consciousness” and “awareness” as interchangeable words, synonyms.

No, there is only you, consciousness/awareness. The ego seems to be conscious because it borrows its consciousness from you, awareness. The reason is that the subtle body (consisting of three phenomena: intellect, mind/emotions and ego) is reflective and borrows its consciousness, like the moon borrows its light from the sun. In this metaphor you, awareness/consciousness, are the sun and the moon is the intellect-mind-ego. Another term for the ego is *aham-kara*, meaning “the source of the I-notion/thought.”

So the ego is just the thought “I am doing/being,” etc., like “I am feeling, I am thinking, I am running.” This I-notion can only be known in you, awareness.

Rob: James has said in videos that life is a zero-sum game. For every gain there is a loss. For every loss there is a gain. How does this apply to enlightenment? What is the loss and gain?

Tan: Enlightenment is actually neither a gain nor loss for you. You awareness can neither become enlightened nor unenlightened, because you are the awareness in whose light everything is known. Also, the notions “enlightenment” and “unenlightenment” are known through you. These are dualistic notions which appear in you, awareness. The dualistic intellect seems to lose the notion of being a body-mind-intellect and seemingly gains the notion “I am awareness.” Since this notion “I am awareness” is the truth and actually is knowledge that is always true and was always there before the confusion through ignorance, therefore it remains hard and fast when the subtle body is qualified.

Rob: Can you explain that “I am the body but the body is not me” teaching? I have heard James say this in his videos.

Tan: No, it is the other way around. I am sure James has said it the other way around. And to make it more concrete, let us use “gross body” as a refinement of the word “body.”

So it actually is (a) I am not the (gross) body but (b) the (gross) body is me.

Or to address you: (a) you are not the (gross) body but (b) the (gross) body is you.

To explain statement (a) we can use a teaching also called seer/seen discrimination (*drig-dishya-viveka*).

The seer (subject) cannot be the seen (the object). You see the body. So you cannot be the body. This is a very important understanding. Please see if you can follow that the subject cannot be the object. If you were object, the body, you would not be able to see the body. The eye cannot see itself. The hand cannot shake itself.

Also, another notion: if you lose your leg, are you less? Yes your body is less and smaller, but are you less? Is your "I" less?

One way to explain statement (b) is through the "location of objects" teaching. Here it is:

Where is the body? Or let us use a part of your body, for example, your hand.

Is your hand out there or in you?

The first intuition is to say the hand is out there but that is apparently true only if you identify with your body. Now let us think along these lines:

Light reflects off the hand and goes through the senses/eyes and is transformed into a pattern of knowledge (form/color of hand) in the mind. Now, actually the hand is only ever recognized and appears as hand-knowledge-pattern in the mind.

How far are you away from the mind? Not one inch. You do not have to travel to reach your mind. The mind is in you, consciousness.

So the hand appears in the mind and the mind appears in you. So the hand appears in you. So the body appears in you and is made out of you awareness. So the body is you. The body is like a wave that appears in you the water.

The wave is always water. But water is not always a wave.

Rob: What is meant by "awareness is impersonal"? It appears that there are things that are personal, such as likes and dislikes. "I want this, don't want that."

Tan: Yes, likes/dislikes seem to belong to the person. But are you the person?

You are aware of the person Rob with his likes and dislikes. But again, if you are aware of him can you be him?

Take, for example, in your dream you can be a totally different person or even an animal like an eagle and absolutely be sure that it is you. So you are there although you seem to be a totally different person or body. That is because you are awareness, in which every type of person or personality can appear. It is the same with the body. You - awareness - are not the person. But the person is you, awareness.

Awareness is that which is true and which never changes. All changing objects, like thoughts, feelings, observations, experiences, arise in you, awareness, and fall back into you. You remain constant. You are unchanging. The person constantly changes: the thoughts change, the body ages and changes, feelings change, etc. But you, awareness, do not change. You see all those changes come and go. Even the person

and the likes and dislikes come and go. But you remain unchanged. That is why you, awareness, are impersonal. "Impersonal" is just another way of saying you are free from change.

~ Love, Tan