

Curious about Non-Duality

Ram (James Swartz)

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James: Hi, Benjamin. Sorry for the delay, but – same old story – many emails ahead of yours in the queue. This is a good one and I hated to let it slide, but I have to be fair and answer them in the order in which they come in. Even with Sundari writing them, we can't keep up.

Benjamin: Hi, James. Now that I'm liberated from existential suffering, my interest is in knowing what non-duality is experientially. I know I am not the doer/experiencer, because I have SEEN that I am the knower of the thought processes and emotions involved in doing/experiencing. The FEELING that I am the doer/experiencer lingers in a binding way at times, but is less troublesome than before, to put it mildly. I'm not worried about that, as I have faith the binding force has sustained a lethal blow. Its lifeline has been cut.

James: I take the capitalization of the word "feeling" to mean that you know that feelings are objects and not real. I take the word "seen" to mean "know."

Non-duality is not experiential. It is simply knowledge. Although the feelings you describe are associated with it, it is not a feeling. Feelings are objects known by you, awareness. You don't "feel" feelings. You observe feelings. If the knowledge is firm – it probably is – "lethal blow" suggests to me that it is – the identification – which seems to be fading – will just continue to fade until it merges into you, awareness. Ignorance is gone, but the effects of ignorance remain. When the snake is known to be a rope, the fear engendered by the snake does not disappear at once.

Benjamin: But the seeing of this "non-duality" is very intriguing. I can reason that all objects can only be known via perception, thus they are made of perception, and perception is made of awareness, and I am awareness. But I believe non-duality is an appreciation I have yet to know fully. I can report a strong sense of "belovedness" for much of what I perceive. There is a strong sense of things being sacred, and the inner and outer worlds being infinitely rich with friendly allure. The sense, "everything is me," is not present, however.

James: I don't know what the "sense" of "everything is me" entails for you, Benjamin. It is probably based on some kind of experiential expectation set up by years of reading and listening to the grandiose and hyperbolic language that characterizes the spiritual world in general. Non-duality is just the understanding that everything is me – in the sense in which you described it, the knowing that known objects appear in me and are manufactured out of me, awareness.

Feelings of oneness may appear from time to time, but the basic experiential sense is one of limitless satisfaction and peace and an ironic sense of knowing as the apparent reality – the objects – float on the background of the real – and you watch.

The only access to non-duality is through knowledge. However, this knowledge

ripples out and affects the body-mind-sense complex in the ways you described. Things unfold, but you, awareness, have nothing to do with them, nor does Benjamin have anything to do with them. They unfold according to the will of *Isvara*. Basically, on the experiential level, things get lighter and more loving, but within that certain disturbances may arise which slide off awareness like water off a duck's back.

Benjamin: Faith tells me I'm experiencing it right now, but just don't know it. This is not a complaint or a problem. I'm just very curious. Presumably, that appreciation will flower in its own time.

James: Whatever you are experiencing right now is it, Benjamin. There is no experience to come apart from an increasingly gradual and very subtle appreciation of the fullness and completeness that you are.