

Experience Is Very Dumb

Ram (James Swartz)

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Edward: Hi, James. Your comments were very helpful. Good to know that I dodged the red pencil that time. 😊 There are a couple of points I'd like to run by you if possible:

James: Yes, indeed. The knower/known is *Isvara*, the essential structure of the apparent reality. The basic duality is eternal. When you wake up in the morning it becomes active and when you sleep at night it becomes dormant. This knower is an experiencing witness. It is called the subtle body, reflected awareness. It is apparently contaminated by what it knows/thinks and feels. You, the self, are the non-experiencing witness, the light (awareness) that reflects on the experiencing witness."

The phrase about *Isvara* being "the essential structure of apparent reality": I really liked that. What made me go "Yeah!" was the distinction between a witness that experiences (via reflection) and a witness that does not experience but is the light causing that reflection. I'm interested in your use of the expression "apparently contaminated" with reference to the contents of the subtle body. My take on this is that all thoughts/feelings/knowledge that arise within the subtle body are actually neutral, being neither good nor bad, but only become so through judgment thoughts (à la Shakespeare) and that judgment itself is yet another object floating around in the subtle body sea and that's only known because of our friend *atma*. Is this akin to a democratization of consciousness where "all thoughts are created equally"?

James: Yes. *Isvara's* structure and the thought/feeling objects appearing in the structure - the subtle body - are value-neutral. One's interpretation of them makes them meaningful. How they are interpreted depends on what one knows about *Isvara* as pure awareness and *Isvara* as the structures in pure awareness. When you understand the setup you stop interpreting or you see the interpretation as a projection and you don't identify with it.

Edward: Also, where does the causal body fit into this? I tried to diagram the *atma*, subtle and gross bodies with all the experiencing/non-experiencing witnesses and objects of knowledge onto a Post-it note. I wanted to see if I could represent the reflections.

James: Have you seen the chart I teach from? The whole structure is represented in it. It is at the website.

James: It is not a stretch. Everything is *samadhi*, meaning has equal (*sama*) value. It is all just awareness - you - in a particular form. *Samadhi* is not something to be achieved, although there are a couple states of mind that are called *samadhi*, but it is what you are. The view from the self, as the self, is that everything is the same substance, awareness. The '*dhi*' in *samadhi* is a contracted form of *buddhi*, intellect. It is an intellect that knows that, appearances

notwithstanding, everything is only manufactured out of thoughts and thoughts are just me, awareness, arising and falling like waves in the ocean.”

Edward: The part about *samadhi* being “what you are” rather than it being something “to be achieved” seems like a huge burden lifted from my shoulders. As I said, I’ve done plenty of meditation in all sorts of different styles resulting in all sorts of experiences. I was, for a good while, working with a teacher in a Hermetic/Kabbalistic/magical vein thus a lot of ceremony, ritual, symbolism, etc. In hindsight, it was a “phase” and probably necessary because I started to suspect that this ever more Byzantine collection of “experiences” wasn’t actually going to get me anywhere and that I had been distracted from my original purpose. I kept getting told, “Oh, just you wait, really big stuff is just around the corner!” or “When IT happens, you will know!,” etc. I started to think that the big, promised and never-defined “IT” might not exist and if it did it really might not make a difference in my life. When I found Swami Dayananda and heard him say that experience isn’t knowledge and that experience was DUMB, that was the missing link. I knew something was wrong but I couldn’t verbalize it until I came across that statement. Later I stumbled upon the writing of Eknath Easwaran and learned more about conditioning from his books and meditation than I had learned in years of the other. Becoming aware of the *vananas* and learning how to manage them better was a useful course correction for me.

James: Understanding the distinction between experience and knowledge is the great salvation. Craving experience, believing it is going to set you free, is the biggest impediment to happiness there is. It is quite amazing how one can chase something that is as insentient as experience and expect it to fulfill oneself. “Dumb” is a word I use often to refer to it.

“**James:** It is an intellect that knows that, appearances notwithstanding, everything is only manufactured out of thoughts and thoughts are just me, awareness, arising and falling like waves in the ocean.”

Edward: Best news ever! No more “are we there yet?” experience-hunting, although I have found that sometimes, when the importance of your statement sinks in deeply, that it’s like being clued in on how a magician does a trick. I had a very nice, well-intentioned trainee medium (who is obsessed with his “inner visions”) inform me that “perhaps in your next life you too can develop your psychic abilities.” I figured that it was just best to nod in agreement and not open that can of worms. The cabinet has a trap door and mirror in it!

James: His next-life statement would be funny if it wasn’t so stupid. Just what I want, psychic abilities. 😊

Edward: As always, this is really helpful. I hope I’m not being a pest.

James: I’ll let you know when you become pestiferous, Edward. I am glad that you are getting it sorted.