

The Correct Use of I-Thought

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Ken: In meditation, to get an experience of the reflection of the Self, I have recently been saying, "I am not thinking this thought," i.e. the Self/consciousness that I am is not the (apparent) doer that is causing this thought to appear. It seems like a self-deconstructing action, since as the sentence starts I feel as if I'm thinking it (in the sense in which someone still sees a blue blob on the desert landscape even if they know it's just a mirage, at least if not more strongly), but then the meaning lands and I realize I'm just watching the mind think it. As I realize this, I go into what I have been calling *samadhi*. Is this a true thing to be repeating?

Sundari: Yes, this is taking a stand in awareness as awareness, observing the mind.

Ken: If it is, it seems to me to follow that if the Self can't "do" anything, then the word "I" can never really be used, right? Since its use implies a doer capable of using it accurately? It seems to me the relation between the Self and the mind is like a person tied up in front of a computer that flashes text on its screen, text like "I need to change the batteries in my mouse and clean my monitor." Over time, because of processes having nothing to do with the person (because there's no causal connection between computer and person), the computer may flash more accurate text, like "I am the person sitting tied up in front of this computer and these are not my thoughts" - but the computer's use of the pronoun "I" is still inaccurate, isn't it? That is, if there is no doer, then no statement using an "I" pronoun can be correct, right? Since every statement is made by a mind, and minds are not the Self? Is it right to say the mind cannot speak for the Self, so no enlightened person can ever say "I" (except in the *vyavaharika* sense, where "I" just refers to a *jiva*)? Is it right to say that ignorance and enlightenment happen in the person and "I" have nothing to do with any of it, to help or to hinder?

Sundari: No, the use of the word "I" when correctly identified with the Self is not a problem. When I say "I" and I know it unites me with the whole universe and encompasses everything, then I know that I am the "all-pervasive reality" - *TAT TVAM ASI*. I am *nirammar* - without ego, or identification with the doer. But if I say "I" and it separates me from everything, alienating me from *Isvara* (Total Mind) and the world, or Creation, then I am *ahamkara* - identified and bound to the doer, limited, small, fear-based and inadequate.

Remember that doing never stops for the *jiva*, it's only the identification with the doer that is a problem and causes suffering. Let me explain the problem. The idea that the ego (the doer) is a problem for *moksa* when it is present and not a problem when it is gone is ignorance (*avidya*), i.e. duality. It is only a problem if the mind is confused about non-dual thought - which it seems yours is. Reality is non-dual consciousness, i.e. you (*satya*). By the grace of *Maya*, it appears in two orders: *satya* and *mithya*.

The ego, the "I-sense," is in the *mithya* dimension. Anything in the *mithya* dimension does not affect or negate *satya*, just as the table in a wooden table does

not negate the wood. If you weigh the wood and subtract the weight of the table, the weight of the wood is the same.

Satya, you, are always free of *mithya*, so there is no reason to get rid of *mithya*, the “I-sense.” The problem is due to a confusion of the word “I-sense” and ignorance. “I-sense” is an effect of ignorance that remains when Vedanta reveals the fact that you are limitless awareness. Although it remains, it is as good as non-existent because it has no effect on you, as I mentioned. The “I-sense” is an essential component of the subtle body because you can’t do actions unless they are motivated by a thought (“I want” or “I don’t want,” for instance); that’s the way *Isvara* has set it up.

Vedanta advises “clinging” to the thought “I am limitless, non-dual awareness,” not to the “I-sense,” because contemplation of it in the context of the *satya-mithya* teaching sets the inquirer free as far as *moksa* is the discrimination between the Self and the “I-sense.” To say that *moksa* is discrimination implies that the “I-sense” is not a problem. The “I-sense” is like a ray of sunlight with reference to the sun itself. There is no contradiction. They share the same nature, light.

When one’s discrimination is clear, the “I-sense” doesn’t “drop away,” it is negated. Negated means that it continues to exist but that it is known to be *mithya*, not real, a paper tiger. See the imprecise nature of the meaning of words that appear in the books about these modern teachers. And without exposure to the whole Vedanta teaching, an inquirer has no way to contextualize specific teachings, like the “I-sense” teaching.

Ken: I guess I’d say that I feel intellectually clear on the “I am awareness” aspect of the teachings, but I still don’t see how it can be that awareness isn’t split into parts, one for each person. I’m trying to understand the alternative.

Sundari: We have already been through this in our previous emails. You are stuck trying to make non-duality fit into duality. It cannot be done. The only alternative to duality is non-duality; however, there is no real alternative to non-duality, because there is only non-duality and duality is not real, i.e. it is not always present and is always changing, whereas non-duality is always present and never changes. You seem to think duality is as real as non-duality. It is not. Duality is superimposed on non-duality by *Maya*, the power in awareness to delude, to make the changing appear to be changing – just like the mirage analogy you mention further down.

Ken: I understand the idea of an *upadhi*, but what I don’t see is how, if all *upadhis* are known by the undivided awareness, why doesn’t undivided awareness know all the *upadhis* at once so that there would only be one “point of view” in manifestation with all minds known by it?

Sundari: It seems clear that you also do not understand the subtle difference between pure awareness and *Isvara* (pure awareness plus *Maya* = Total Mind), as I said explained in my last email. *Isvara*, the Creator, does know all *upadhis* at once, the technical name is *Hiranyagarbha*, the “golden egg,” or totality of all subtle bodies. But *Isvara* also refers to pure awareness – and as such sees no difference, because all it sees is awareness, non-duality. There is no real Creation, Ken. IT IS A MIRAGE.

Ken: By analogy, if you put a red lens and a blue lens over a single person's eye, that person will see both red and blue smooshed into one combination of both – purple – not one blue visual field and one red one. You would have to divide that person's awareness somehow (I think?) in order for them to see one red and one blue visual field, and you'd certainly have to do something pretty drastic to them in order to get the "part" of them that saw red to be unaware of the "part" that saw blue. Can you please comment on why my analogy is invalid?

Sundari: Your thinking and analogy are invalid if you are talking about the Self, non-duality – that which makes seeing possible but itself does not see anything but itself. awareness is not a "seer." It would be more appropriate to say that the Self, seeing only itself, is that which knows the seer with reference to the seen only when *Maya* is operating. The self-aware Self appears as a seer; but it never actually is a seer, unless seeing refers to its own Self. When ignorance is operating the *jiva* thinks that the seer is different from the seen, the subject and object are different. The seer, *Isvara*, is also known as *saguna brahman*, and because it operates *Maya* (the *gunas*) it is never deluded by them, i.e. it is pure *sattva*. When *tamas* and *rajas* arise in *saguna brahman*, then pure awareness apparently becomes a *jiva* and is deluded by *Maya*. *Sattva* seems to be clear and pure – only with reference to the objects appearing in it, which are impure. *Isvara* is the wielder of *Maya* but is never deluded by *Maya*. Purity and holiness are projected by the *jiva* when it is under the spell of *sattva*.

The Self is never constrained to or limited by the senses or sense organs – it is that which illuminates and makes them capable of perception.

Ken: Am I right to understand that you agree with my "consciousness is the essence of water, the actual ocean is *Isvara*, and each wave is a *jiva*" analogy? If you do agree, am I right to say that I as Water (the essence of water, so water with a capital W) am undivided into an ocean or waves, but the actual instances of water in the world are divisible (in thought/name and form only) into ocean (*Isvara*) and waves (*jivas*)? So it does make sense to say that one wave has THIS bit of water and another wave has THIS OTHER bit? Neither wave has "the essence of Water" any more or less than any other wave, but they do have different bits of "actual instances of water"? Essence-of-Water is indivisible, but actual instances of water are divisible?

Sundari: You are getting yourself so hung up in your thinking and going around in circles. Your analogy applies if you are discriminating *mithya* from *mithya* because all objects in *mithya* are made up of parts. The four features that define objects are experience, division, function and status. Water is water. It is divisible because it is an object known to awareness, it is *mithya*. The essence of water as of all objects subtle and gross – Self/awareness, is beyond name and form, how can it be divided? Can you divide space? No, obviously. Well, awareness is like space – indivisible, ever-present, all-pervasive.

Ken: I suspect I'm getting too abstract in this paragraph, if not overall, but I've heard it said that consciousness "shines on" objects to illumine them, and this had me thinking that the usual model of consciousness (or at least my previous model) is

as a sort of black hole into which various objects get drawn and felt. But it seems to me that the Vedanta view is more as consciousness “projecting” onto the various objects, causing them to be illumined where they are. “I” am not a dimensionless point of view at the core of some structure, I am more like a space that has length and breadth, and the various qualia in me are just hanging free and separate. Can you see what I’m trying to say and expand on it or am I way off?

Sundari: I think you are a serious inquirer, but I must admit I do lose patience with this kind of thinking.

Here is how perception works:

Gross objects require consciousness to be known. Human objects require consciousness to know anything. When you look at an object the subtle body (mind) sends out a thought. Consciousness shines on the subtle body, illumining the senses, which in turn illumines the object. But the subtle body plus the thought, or ray of consciousness, is inert. Consciousness is delivered to objects through the mechanical process of reflected consciousness shining on or bouncing off a conscious or sentient being, or *jiva* (mind). Thus experience takes place. If you cannot see a material object, no thought can reach it. So you have no experience of it. Like gross objects, subtle objects like thoughts and feelings are also known in the mind by consciousness shining on and in the mind. Therefore all experience of objects is nothing more than a thought which takes place only in the mind, nowhere else.

Ken: As I understand it, ShiningWorld’s interpretation of Vedanta is that all beings are always experiencing the Self, in that all that can be experienced ever are objects of awareness, which are made of awareness, and awareness is the Self.

Sundari: Yes, it’s true all you are ever experiencing is awareness because that is the only option, this being a non-dual reality. If you are identified with the body-mind, then you believe that all that can be experienced are objects, that objects are separate from you, even though you are only ever experiencing awareness. The whole point of the teachings is to make clear the fact that awareness can never be an object of perception and that there ARE NO OBJECTS FOR AWARENESS – FULL STOP! If your inquiry has not yet revealed to you that all objects have merely an apparent existence and are not real, then you had best go back and start at the beginning.

ShiningWorld does not interpret Vedanta. It teaches pure, traditional Vedanta in a slightly non-traditional way. We never touch or change the teachings in any way, except make them more accessible for the Western mind. If Vedanta is interpreted by anyone and taught according to their understanding, it is contaminated, and not pure Vedanta.

Ken: However, ShiningWorld also says that a properly prepared and *sattvic* mind can experience the reflection of the Self within itself, and that this is what a non-dual experience really is.

Sundari: Yes, but a non-dual experience of the Self is still just that – an experience.

It changes and ends. The reflection can never know the cause. Does your reflection in the mirror know you? We have been through this at length as well. When Self-knowledge has fully obtained, you know yourself as the Self, 100% of the time, you do NOT need to experience anything, because you are it.

Ken: My question – if we’re always directly experiencing the Self anyway, why should a mere reflection of it feel so much more profound than any other experience? Shouldn’t a reflection be dimmer, weaker, less direct than a direct experience of the self?

Sundari: See above. Knowing who you are is not an experience, Ken. It is hard and fast permanent knowledge, nothing else.

Ken: Regarding the newsletter, when Ram starts one of his paragraphs with, “This incident also confirmed what I already knew; that he did not appreciate the value of the *nididhyasana* stage,” is he referring to the student he cut off or to Swami Dayananda? I ask because I got the impression it was the student, but the previous paragraph was talking about the Swami.

Sundari: The student of course.

Ken: I’ve gone over my message and think I can improve it in two ways. (1) I see now that the answer to my question about there being “no doer anywhere” is clearly yes. (2) I see that my question about why a “mere” reflection of the Self would feel more profound than the direct experience of the Self everyone is always having ignores that the reflection is also a direct experience of the Self, ON TOP OF WHICH is layered the reflection of the Self, so it makes sense it would be more intense.

Sundari: Yes, to the first, no to the second. *Moksa* has nothing to do with experience, it is KNOWLEDGE, which confirms all experience.

~ Om, Sundari