

There Is NO Direct Experience of Non-Duality

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Jack: “To see everything and everyone in terms of the Self is an experience – to see no difference between subject and object, knower and know, is an experience – if one doesn’t have those experiences, no amount of saying ‘I am the Self’ will make one Self-realized” – that is the state of my understanding so far.

James: To see no difference between subject and object is experience, not AN experience. Why? Because reality is non-dual, the Self, the subject, can’t be objectified. Furthermore, any discrete experience of non-duality always ends. What begins ends. Also, if reality is actually non-dual as Vedanta claims, the subject and the object are never apart in the first place. Ramana’s famous experience OF the Self convinced him – in his words – “I realized that I was the Self.” So he extracted the knowledge of the non-separation of the subject and the object from the experience. There is no direct access to the Self, because you are already the non-dual Self.

However, if you take yourself to be an experiencer, there is indirect access. When you are driving a car you need to know what is going on behind you but you can’t turn your head around every two seconds to find out, so you look in the rear-view mirror. You don’t see the car in the mirror. You see its reflection. But the reflection is as good as seeing it directly and it saves you the trouble of turning your head from front to back every two seconds.

Inference is a valid means of knowledge. It is as good as direct perception. You don’t need direct perception, because you are already experiencing the Self as your existence/consciousness. The problem with so-called “direct experiences of the Self,” which are never direct, because they don’t subsume the ego, the separate self, but leave it intact, is that these epiphanies tend to suppress the intellect (because they are so sublime and unusual) so, unlike Ramana, who was very dispassionate, the experiencing entity is in no position to extract the knowledge “I am the Self” as Ramana did. Do you imagine that when the experience ended he had to make another “experiment” to get the experience back and another and another, etc? Ramana taught knowledge. Read *Upadesha Saram* and *Sat Darshanam*.

But this is precisely what people who have epiphanies try to do. They get caught up in a *samadhi* loop, clinging to the experience when it is happening and trying to get it back when it goes. So this kind of so-called experience OF the Self is little more than a dangerous drug. However, knowledge is always good if it removes the belief that “I am an experiencing entity.” If you are completely convinced that you are the Self by a particular experience, then if you subsequently forget your true identity, you can simply dismiss the ignorance with the knowledge and presto chango – you’re back!