

One Exasperated Guru

Ram (James Swartz)

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Kirby: Given, as you have said, that the mind takes the “shape” (knowledge) of the object of its experience, I’m wondering how “far” this goes. Can one say this “shaped” mind is equal to one’s experience in that moment?

James: Yes.

Kirby: The mind, under the spell of ignorance, appears to be limited in knowing only that which is grosser than it? Maybe even this is not completely true, given spiritual experiences...

James: The mind is actually the self, consciousness, so it can know anything, subtle or gross, but it cannot know the self except as an object.

Kirby: Is the realization “process” one of removing apparent limitations of the mind – by revealing unlimited knowledge to the mind?

James: Yes. Ignorance resides in that part of the self called the mind. When the thought, “I am limitless awareness,” removes the ignorance the self realizes itself. The individual’s mind never has limitless knowledge. Only *Isvara*, the macrocosmic mind, has limitless knowledge.

Kirby: Is the mind only as “limited” as the knowledge it can “hold”?

James: The individual’s mind is always limited in some way. Enlightenment does not change the capacity of the mind to know. Enlightenment is self-knowledge. As the self you know everything that needs to be known. It is the knowledge that “ends the search for knowledge.”

Kirby: When you speak of holding self-knowledge in the mind (and seeing that in awareness) – is this the same as the mind taking the shape of the self and thus its apparent lack of limitation?

James: No. The mind is always limited. The self is limitless.

Holding self-knowledge in the mind just means contemplating the meaning of “I am awareness” and applying it to the thoughts that are appearing in the mind at an moment.

Kirby: Experience beyond the mind happens, but as we know, this is not

“enlightenment” but mere occurrence, and *moksa* is knowledge. As I noted in your ShiningWorld Facebook video, you mention non-dual vision as an appearance in the mind. I get that too – it’s simply the appearance of an uninterpreted world in a still, *sattvic* mind.

James: Yes.

Kirby: So I guess the thrust of this is in what is the appropriateness of speaking about the fundamental and important role of the mind, illustrating that the mind can take the shape/knowledge of the self and thus experience the self more “directly.”

James: No. The mind cannot experience the self, Kirby. The mind only experiences objects. The self is not an object. Your problem is that you have been in the spiritual world so long and had so many epiphanies and read so much stuff that you are almost completely confused. It would be just great if you could forget everything you know and everything you have experienced and listen to the Vedanta with an empty mind. I could enlighten you in about ten minutes if that was true, but this way is like pulling teeth. I got fed up teaching you before because of all this experiential stuff. This doubt should have been laid to rest in Vedanta 101. To repeat: the mind cannot experience the self. I do not know how you missed this. Please read Chapter II of my book. It is very frustrating communicating with you, Kirby, because it seems like you don’t listen to what I say. People are realizing who they are right and left these days from this teaching, and you seem to be completely lost.

Kirby: It has occurred to me in a wide variety of experiences – some “spiritual” and some not – that we “share” experience at the subtler “realms” of apparent existence. When I sat in silence with a friend, and I witnessed them and the world around them “dissolve” I was very surprised to hear them suddenly say, “What’s happening? You’re dissolving!” In such a moment the self, withdrawn from limitation, is in contact with experience at a level of creation with less individuated limitation? And this is occurring in the mind also?

Kirby: Jesus, Kirby! You have completely missed the point. You have been hearing and reading me for two or three years and it seems that nothing has sunk in at all. Why are you bothering with experience? Experience is “not-self.” Dismiss it as “not-self” and contemplate on the one to whom experience occurs. I do not know how I can teach you if you are so fixated on experience and the mind, etc. This is about you, not what you experience. Who gives a damn what you experience? Why do you care about what you experience? What is the point? Experience is totally illusory. You are seeking where there is nothing to be found.

Really, I cannot understand. You cannot be listening. Or if you are, you are trying to fit Vedanta into what you already know. You should be discarding what you know in light of the teachings of Vedanta.

Kirby: I have been “collecting” and “remembering” experiences that seem to fall under this heading of “our capacity for shared experience, beyond our personal limitations” – and I find myself wanting to talk about it, maybe to write about it.

James: Whatever for? I cannot imagine anything more boring than talking about experiences. Who really cares? Abide in your self. Enjoy your self. Let your mind die in the self. What is there to say? Are you lonely? Are you bored? There are thousands of books and websites of people nattering on about their fucking experiences. It is a total waste of time.

Kirby: There's so much "talk" about the evolution of "consciousness," and I don't see that the self evolves, but that maybe experience of it does and can do so as a cultural shift as well. If we are to "evolve," what would that look like? Surely we can't continue on this me, me, me train and get anywhere less confined than we currently are. So, what if the "collective unconscious" can become the "collective conscious"? What if we learn to tune into this less limited capacity for experience and began to really learn how to treat our fellow man because your experience is also his? It is seeing the self in those around me and seeing that we do reach across this threshold of human limitation into a more unified experience in awareness.

I wonder what you think of all of this?

James: I think you are nuts. Give it a rest. I can't understand why you are writing to me. It seems you do not know even the basics of Vedanta.

Kirby: Maybe a Skype would be a way to chat about it?

James: Chat about experience and evolution? Neither of these topics interest me in the slightest, Kirby. I love you, Kirby, but I think you are a bit goofy. I teach Vedanta. It is only one topic: you - minus experience.

~ Love, James