

Message: 1

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 10:44:50 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: What is the point of it all?

The sruti, other scriptures, the words of the sages and even the more enlightened Western philosophers all tell us that they cannot describe any ultimate truth - reality is far more subtle than our meagre intellect. At best, they can only be a 'finger pointing at the moon' or a 'thorn to remove a thorn'. This is reasonable and acceptable (if not always reassuring) but how much licence does this give them? Does it mean that source A can say one thing while source B says the complete opposite and still both can be pointing at the (same) moon?

I am currently having problems reconciling what is said by modern sages (from Nisargadatta through to Wayne Liquorman and from Krishnamenon, who I haven't yet read, through to Francis Lucille) with the more traditional teachings of Advaita (such as the Upanishads, the Gita and Sankara). And yes, I know that people like Liquorman claim openly that sages DO contradict each other but one still expects that they ought to be saying 'more or less' the same sort of thing.

I have felt an intuitive sympathy with Direct Path teachings for many years now. I am 'happy' (?) with ideas such as the following: -

There is no individual who could become realised.

There is no 'path' that can be followed.

We cannot 'do' anything.

There is no such thing as choice or free will, only the illusion of this; everything that will happen is effectively already determined. We act irrevocably according to our natures and events around us.

There is no one who could die (only the material body reverting to its elements) and there is no one who could be born or re-born. There can be no such thing as reincarnation.

All of this being the case, my questions are as follows. Why do the traditional approaches talk of those who are ignorant and those who have attained knowledge? In what way can there be all of the variously described ways to enlightenment - karma yoga, bhakti and jnana etc.? Why are we told that we have to act in certain ways, follow prescribed rituals or whatever? Why is so much effort and so many words devoted to explaining principles of karma and all the other concepts of advaita? And what of samsara? We are told that only humans can attain realisation; that we may have spent thousands (millions?) of lives, progressing through the various levels of existence; that now we have the opportunity to achieve enlightenment and escape from the eternal round of birth and death.

It seems that Self-realisation is an almost random event, occurring 'through Grace'. All it means is that the related individual totally recognises the truth that he does nothing at all, that Consciousness acts through his body-mind without any 'individual' being involved. And this is fully accepted, bring peace and reconciliation. But there never was any individual and the Consciousness operating through that body-mind was never separate from the One Consciousness, which is all that there is. That event called realisation is only of any relevance for the remainder of the life of that body-mind. To talk of samsara or of someone now having escaped the wheel is quite meaningless.

So what is the point of all of the confusing and ultimately misleading teachings in traditional Advaita? And, perhaps even more disturbing, what is the point of our following it and immersing ourselves in it (not that we have any choice!)?

Dennis

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Message: 2

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 06:10:40 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

Waavh! Dennis.

I see you have already made several conclusions before asking! I am wondering what is the point of the mail since you have made many sweeping conclusions already.

Conclusion without experimentation is unscientific!

I hope to find some time to address the issues you have raised but I am sure there will be several others who can address these issues to their satisfaction.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

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Message: 3

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 04:35:30 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

Greetings Dennis:

Namaskar,

One of the human ingenuity is

One of the human ingenuity is to fall into pitfalls even after knowing the consequences. No one can step a determined mind with such an attitude. We have the options to:

understand and misunderstand;

like and dislike;

negotiate and confuse;

believe and doubt;

kind and rude; and

stand and fall.

To exercise these options, we do possess the discriminating intellect. In addition, the selection of the option is also influenced by our attitude - positive and negative. The options that choose mostly depends on this mental attitude. With a positive attitude and with an open mind, we become more receptive to ideas and willing to wait instead of making hasty conclusions. Shankara never imposed the Advaita Philosophy on anyone forcefully. This is an open forum and the purpose of this forum is change our negative tendencies into positive. This is not an easy task and we can agree or disagree on one or more aspects of the philosophy of life as spelled out by Shankara. His goal is not force anyone to immerse in what he said but force us to think and decide and develop a positive attitude of our life. As he has rightly said in Vivekachoodamani: " Human life is a

rare opportunity; few among us get the opportunity to think and seek the truth and very few among us may realize the TRUTH." Let us not miss this golden opportunity!

regards,

Ram Chandran

--- Dennis Waite <dwaite@dircon.co.uk> wrote:

- > .....quite meaningless.
- > So what is the point of all of the confusing and
- > ultimately misleading
- > teachings in traditional Advaita? And, perhaps even
- > more disturbing, what is
- > the point of our following it and immersing
- > ourselves in it (not that we
- > have any choice!)?
- >
- > Dennis
- >
- >

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Message: 6

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 08:09:05 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Why Vedanta?

P.S. This discussion may also address some of the issues raised by Shree Dennia Waite in his last mail, though not directly.

Couple of days ago, I had long interesting telephone chat with a x-member of the advaitin list. He is an ardent seeker trying to find answers to some of the fundamental questions that most of us are concerned with. Since his questions are relevant to many of us, I am taking the liberty to paraphrase them to the degree that I remembered and understood. He kindly provided some of his background before I could address the issues that he had raised.

Question: I have been following Mehar Baaba and some other Gurus of the late Seventies. I could not come to grips with their or their disciple's proclamations that they are Bhagavan-s or Avatar-s. Are they really Gods? Who or what is God anyway? I have also read, Vivekananda, the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj. Since advaita appealed to me to some degree and appeared to be close to Judaism, I have jointed the advaitin list serve but left the list this summer due to (a) my heavy work load and (b) the fact that majority of the discussions appear to be impertinent for me since they are dealing mostly with what Shankara said or what another one said, etc. There are not much of discussions in terms of how what one or other said is relevant to me in this new millennium. What good will it do by knowing who I am or who is Brahman, etc. Why should I know all that? What good it will do by knowing what Shankara said or what others have said and how is it relevant to me, now, in this modern age? How does knowing advaita helps me in my day to day problems where all the problems and transactions involve duality and not advaita or non-duality? Paraphrasing his questions - they are: Who is God? Why do we need him? Who am I? What is Brahman? Why is it important for me to know all these to solve my day to day transactions that involve duality?

My response: I am sure everyone of this list member has his or her answer to all of the above questions, and I hope they can discuss them in the list. I am providing here my understanding, or at least wanted to communicate to him on the phone.

There are many ways to address the issues raised and here I want to share my understanding:

### Fundamental Human Problem

It is everyone's experience that there are two fundamental entities that one is dealing with throughout one's lifetime, from birth to death. The first one is related to his own presence in this world, who is the conscious entity, the questioner or the individual I, and the second one is the rest of the world which includes both living and non-living entities. The facts as it appears to be are (a) that I came in to this world, rather not out of my choice and must quit this world whether I want it or not, and (b) the existence of this universe which is so vast and so huge beyond anyone's comprehension. The fact of the matter is that I am propelled to interact with this universe, which some sometimes is conducive to my likes and many times it is not. I am forced to yoke out experiences from this world, from day in day out and from birth to death. I find myself happy when my experiences and environments are favorable to my liking and unhappy when they are unfavorable or when I dislike them. Bottom line is, as long as I am here in this world, I want to be happy. This is true centuries ago, this is true now and will be true even in next millennium. Hence I

go on looking for environments or experiences that are conducive to my likes so that I can be happy. It is a continuous struggle since environment keep changing continuously and does not remain constant to my liking, and even if the environment remains the same, my likes and dislikes keep changing. The experience which enchanted me the first time looks pale the next time when I seek for it. Thus the same experience or environment does not seem to give me the same degree of happiness as it did before. I seem to be hunting constantly for that ideal environment wherein I am fully satisfied and contented, ever happy, with no more desires to change either myself or the environment and no more longing for one thing or the other. That is a state of mind free from any wanting and therefore is fully contented with what one has. When I look around I find that everyone is struggling for the same thing, from the beginning of the time whether in past millennium or in this new one. This seems to be a perennial problem - a fundamental human problem - longing for eternal uninterrupted happiness or absolute happiness, whether I am a sinner or a saint, a believer or non-believer, a Hindu, Jew or Christian, a cave man or 21st century modern man with a rational intellect. These are labels; but the problem is common and beyond the labels. Whether I like it nor not, I have to deal with this problem as long as I live. In fact, the essence of my life itself is only to solve this problem - In all my actions (pravR^itti) or inactions (nivR^itti), what I am seeking is only a solution to this fundamental problem.

What I am looking for is not to learn what Shankara said or Jesus said etc, but how do I solve this problem, which appears to be a fundamental and universal problem, since everyone else seems to be having the same problem. What they like may be different, the environments or the experiences they seek may be different, but the bottom line is fundamentally they all are longing for an eternal uninterrupted happiness or absolute happiness, free from anymore longing, no more searching or seeking. The approach or the path that each one is taking to solve this problem may be different. Some long for sensuous objects some drugs, some religion, some advaitin lists and some other pursuits in life.

It is the experience of everyone that whatever pursuits one takes to solve these problems, they appear to give only a temporary relief. In the end, one is still left with a desiring or longing or searching mind for a new improved or an additional experience with the hope that the new one will bring him to a state where there is no more seeking or searching, and wherein one is fully contented with what one has gained. The struggle goes on endlessly until one kicks the bucket. The problem, however, remained unsolved.

This is the central problem addressed by Advaita Vedanta. It first acknowledges the fact that however one tries to solve this fundamental

problem, one is going to fail miserably, as is confirmed by everyone's experience. Any effort on the part of a seeker to seek a solution to this problem only reinforces the problem and he will never be able to find a solution to the problem. Advaita Vedanta declares that there is no solution to the problem because the problem is an invalid problem. Only solution to the problem is to recognize that the problem itself is invalid. This is because what one is seeking for one has already has it. If one is already has it and if one is still searching for it what he has already has, it only means that he does not know that he already has it. If I have the bunch of keys in my own pocket, and without recognizing it, if I am searching for it all over the house, I will never find it, however much I search. The seeker of the keys is already a possessor of the keys. He has to rediscover his true nature than search for a solution elsewhere. Hence self-knowledge is the only solution to the problem caused by self-ignorance.

The problem actually is very simple and therefore solution is also very simple-similar to finding the keys in once own pocket - to discover that the seeker of the keys is already the possessor of the keys. But yet the problem got very much muddled because of everyone's strong preconceived notions about oneself - who we are and what we are; that is, we have firm knowledge about ourselves, which is totally opposite to what we truly are. Hence even if Vedanta, through a teacher, tries to teach, who we really are, our minds are not available to accept the truth or accept with strong conviction about our true identity. It is like a smoker who knows intellectually that smoking is bad, yet he cannot give up being a smoker since his mind has become a slave to being a smoker. The situation of course is worse when he is not even convinced that smoking is bad for his health. The processes of quitting the smoking may involve three stages - (a) First step is to hear from a reliable or trustworthy authority, say a Doctor, that smoking is bad for his health so that he realizes the importance of it (b) Second, one develops firm conviction in his mind beyond any doubt that smoking is indeed bad for his own survival and (c) finally one has to make a deliberate attempt to divert the mind from indulging in smoking to something better till the mind comes under his full control, till the teaching that he heard from authority fully sinks in and becomes part of his. In Vedanta these steps are called shravaNa, manana and nidhidhyaasana. ShrvanNa is most important step that is to hear from an authority in whose words one has full faith. Next is to contemplate on it to get convinced beyond any trace of doubt (where discussions as in advaitin list are helpful - reflection of the teaching) and third is to withdraw the mind that habitually runs out to earlier notions to redirect to delve on what one has heard and convinced about oneself. Thus ShravaNam is the essential cause for liberation while the other two are preparation of the mind to fully get established on what one has heard. Advaita insists that this is only way to solve the fundamental human problem which

is the core for all human suffering. So what do I gain by knowing who I am - I gain what I am longing for in all my pursuits. That is the very fulfillment of life itself since everyone is only seeking this - uninterrupted absolute happy state of mind - a mind free from wanting or longing. I am not looking for Brahman, I am not looking for God or I am not looking for Atma - These are words, words and words. What I am looking for is true understanding of my own self which is free from all limitations - since all limitations are just products of my misunderstanding about the true nature of myself. What Advaita Vedanta declares again and again that the true nature of myself is I am the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss beyond all forms and names, and limitations- The self I am is the self in all, the very life principle in all - the very consciousness that pervades everything - and that consciousness is nothing Brahman - "PrajNaanam Brahman" says Upanishads that is consciousness is Brahman. It is not 'that consciousness' - it is not an object for me to experience, it is not a conceptual thought - I am that consciousness - I am that Brahman - There is No world - No God - Nothing - I am that totality - Everything is in the consciousness that I am - The world raises in consciousness, sustained by the consciousness and goes back into consciousness that I am. "sarva bhuutastam aatmaanam sarva bhuutaanica atamni" I am in all and all are in me.

This is the teaching of the Advaita Vedanta which is brought out beautifully by Adi Shankara - The purpose of the list serve or discussions is to focus on the essential teaching of Advaita Vedanta as taught by Shankara not just for quoting what one knows or what Shankara said or the other one has said - but (a) to learn from each other till one is fully convinced beyond any doubt about the teaching- that is to reflect on the teaching till one is fully convinced. (b) To provide a forum for one's own contemplation to think deeper and deeper till the habitual mind slowly gets out of the wrong habitual thinking about oneself - that is removing one's own wrong notions about oneself. These two - mananam and nidhidhyaasanam - are the well established methods, proved by many who have tried successfully in the past, for owning the teachings of the Advaita Vedanta.

That is the main purpose of the discussions on this list serve, as I understand - that is the reason I participate since it provides another venue for my mind to dwell on it. Only through the open discussions the teachings get confirmed. Everyone who participates freely in the discussions learns from it and in that sense 'advaitin list serve' managed by Shree Ram Chandran and others have been serving extremely well.

I take this opportunity to invite all those silent readers of the list to come forward and actively participate and share their knowledge. This is because when one expresses his thoughts, particularly in writing, one is forced to think and thinking gets crystallized. If there are any wrong

understanding, that also gets clarified by the participation by learned members who have gone through the same process before.

Now brief comment about what is God or who is God, without going into exhaustive details. In Advaita Vedanta, God is a factor brought in (like X in mathematical problems) to explain the second entity discussed above in the first few paragraphs. In the final understanding, the concept of God itself disappears or to say correctly - dissolved into that Brahman that I am. Hence if Mehar Baba or some other realized soul claims that he is Brahman or God- it is from that state of understanding that the claims are made. Sitting in the state of ego or limited entity, it is then difficult to appreciate that state - But remember all those that claim that they are Gods also claim that you are one too - only difference is they know it and we don't - If one has faith in them and in their understanding then one can follow their teachings and reach the same state of understanding that they have reached. But a right teacher is one who even though he has realized that state directs his disciple not to take him as an authority but to the Vedanta as the basis for establishing the truth - a means independent of individuals, time and place. Hence Vedanta provides the pramaana or a reliable source and not the teacher per se, the teacher interpreting Vedanta in the background of his experience. If we hang on to the teacher we become a burden to him and to others. They are there to direct the path pointing the pitfalls in the path - We have to take the path ourselves taking the Vedanta as the light and guidance of the teacher to insure we do not get trapped in the path forgetting the goal. As Swami Chinmayanandaji used to say - there are no mule Gurus in this world to carry their disciples on their back to the state of realization. One has to know oneself by oneself in oneself - and that is the real teaching of Vedanta as explained by Adi Shankara and the real purpose of our existence.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

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Message: 9

Date: Wed, 09 Aug 2000 23:19:04 +1000  
From: Colette <colette@bb.com.au>  
Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

Dearest Dennis hi. I find your enquiry a worthy one. I too have found life rather confusing at times. This is because basically we are unconditioned spirit free & boundless which has come into conditioned thought patterns through being indoctrinated by parents society etc. So from oneness unconditioned & free, we are also apparently more identified with the limited version that is presented to us as children. This we can call the personality (or personal self). We are bound by the boundaries of our conditioning as we enter this realm of matter. So it seems to me .. So our remembrance of our unity is forgotten or overshadowed. So meditation allows us to transcend this over identification with conditioned thoughts.

It is true that in essence we are already One. We can say this is our unmanifest Self. :-) Our being. It is so pure it is free of conditioned thoughts. At times we get glimpses into this free witness Self observing, but not bound by the play ..

But our attention is identified predominately with the manifest self which has been conditioned to think in limited ways, even about ourself. So we are not conscious of our unconditioned pure consciousness till we learn how to let go attachment to that false disguise. Meditation & teachings of the Great Masters like the ones you mention help us in this endeavour.

I believe the teachings which focus on 'you are already free so you need DO nothing' are actually only for devotees who have reached quite an advanced stage on their path. So really there is yes a need to 'do' .. but ya know the 'doing' in a good meditation .. is really a 'not doing' anyway. I believe this is called surrender & devotion.

Thanks for starting a good discussion,

Peace,

Col

- > It seems that Self-realisation is an almost random event, occurring 'through
- > Grace'. All it means is that the related individual totally recognises the
- > truth that he does nothing at all, that Consciousness acts through his
- > body-mind without any 'individual' being involved. And this is fully
- > accepted, bring peace and reconciliation. But there never was any individual
- > and the Consciousness operating through that body-mind was never separate
- > from the One Consciousness, which is all that there is. That event called
- > realisation is only of any relevance for the remainder of the life of that
- > body-mind. To talk of samsara or of someone now having escaped the wheel is
- > quite meaningless.
- > So what is the point of all of the confusing and ultimately misleading
- > teachings in traditional Advaita? And, perhaps even more disturbing, what is
- > the point of our following it and immersing ourselves in it (not that we

> have any choice!)?  
>  
> Dennis

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Message: 15

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 10:16:32 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

>  
>I believe the teachings which focus on 'you are already free so you need  
>DO nothing' are actually only for devotees who have reached quite an  
>advanced stage on their path. So really there is yes a need to 'do' .. but  
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>anyway. I believe this is called surrender &  
>devotion.  
>  
>Thanks for starting a good discussion,  
>  
>Peace,  
>  
>Col

Colette that reminds me Swami Chinmayananda's story of 'Mr. Jones and the Rat' which I discussed some time back. To remind again - Mr. Jones suddenly got the feeling that he is a rat and not a man. Why he got the feeling? - we cannot provide a rational answer for that - all we can say is that it is 'anirvachaniyam' - that is it is for inexplicable reason. When did he become a rat - that of course is a silly question since he is or was or will be never a rat. But Mr. Jones does not know that. He thinks he is rat from beginning-less time that he knew off, and since he got the feeling in his mind he was always a rat and never a man. The fact of the matter is that he has intense feeling that he is a rat. - So his wife took him to some authority, a psychiatrist when she failed to convince him by herself that he is not a rat but a man. Since Mr. Jones has lot more faith in the Doctor, especially when he is paying for the services; he slowly got convinced that he is a man and not rat. He knows in and out of what a man is and what a rat and why he is man and not rat. There was really no path for him to become a man since he was a man all the time. But he needs to sit few sittings in the Doctor's office and pay hefty price to reflect in himself that he is man and not a rat. At last when Doctor, Mr. Jones and Mrs. Jones have realized that he know who he is, he was

released from Doctor's care. But after an hour, Mr. Jones came running back knocking the Doctor's door, and gasping for his breath. When Doctor asked what is the problem, Mr. Jones said - 'Doctor I know I am a man and not a rat. But I am afraid that the cat in the street does not know that I am man and not a rat". -

We are in the same state as Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones does not have to do anything to become a man since He is always a man and never a rat to start with. But Mr. Jones does not think so. He thinks he is a rat and to solve his problem he has to become a man - he has to gain that tansendental experience that he is man and not a rat. So doctor told him to sit in intense meditation and contemplate that 'aham narosmi' - I am a man - I am that - tat twam asi - etc. Now how long he has to sit in meditation to realize that he is indeed a man and not a rat. Does he have any other alternatives? - It has to firmly sink into him mind that He indeed is a man now and for ever. He himself has to get fully and firmly convinced what he is. He does not have to do any thing to become since he is what he is looking for. But he does not know that. One can say like Dennis points out that one can wait for ramdomness to operate! one can randamly gains the knowledge that one is a man and not a rat. Of course one can relay on that chance, or take that chance and wait for your chance to become a man! Or one can start brain wash yourself that you are indeed a man and not a rat! - It is your choice to choose Dennis- Since you do not belief in free will your choices are limited or none, since there is no will to choose. Of course Mr. Jones has a choice to keep hiding himslef from all the cats that he sees till that randomness hits him or sit in meditation and contemplate why he is not a rat but a man till the knowledge of what he really is sinks into him.

Yes it is a path less land - I am what I am seeking - but as long as I am seeking I have not realized what truly I am. Hence mananam to remove all doubts in the mind and nidhidhyaasanam to own that knowledge that I am what I am - not the body, mind or intellect that I take my self to be. That is the purpose of the meditation. This is the purpose of the discussions and this is purpose of the advaitin list.

Hari Om!  
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Message: 18

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 11:32:12 -0400

From: "Harsha" <harsha-hkl@home.com>

Subject: What is the point of it all?

Hi Dennis. Hopefully you won't mind my being blunt.

Respectfully Dennis, you seem to be completely caught in the jungle of the intellect. In your paradigm, some of the "modern sages" have more of value to offer you than the traditional Advaita Vedanta. Also you say, you have intuitive sympathy with the "direct path" teaching. What exactly is the problem then? Go with what appeals to you. Why should you be bothered if others prefer more "traditional" approaches and are comfortable with it. You do what you like. No one prevents you from following a path or a teacher with whom you have an affinity.

You wish clarification about why traditional Advaita Vedanta is so confusing, etc. Well, it is not confusing to everyone. Advaita Vedanta is the Same. Modern or Traditional. Advaita Vedanta points clearly to Self-Realization.

The main issue for you, as I see it, is your being bothered and disturbed by something that occurs in your imagination. That needs your attention and focus.

For example, Dennis, you said in your post:

"So what is the point of all of the confusing and ultimately misleading teachings in traditional Advaita? And, perhaps even more disturbing, what is the point of our following it and immersing ourselves in it (not that we have any choice!)"

Read the above statement again Dennis and go to the bottom of it. What creates this feeling of frustration?

Is anyone forcing \*you\* to understand traditional Advaita Vedanta and giving you Sanskrit lessons against your wishes and having you recite vedic hymns at 4am every morning?

If the "modern sages" you mention have brought you to this point of confusion, consider the possibility of abandoning them! :-).

I would recommend that you read the teachings of the Sage of Arunachala, Sri Ramana Maharshi, with an open heart and mind.

Open your heart and mind Dennis. Do what you like. Follow whomever you please. Practice that teaching which helps you. But why be bothered if others do what they like.

Love  
Harsha

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Message: 19

Date: Wed, 09 Aug 2000 12:18:16 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

Hello Dennis and Harsha,

I'd like to chime in about the multivarious approaches, and agree with Harsha-ji in urging you to open your heart and mind, and follow your affinities. If you have the intuition or the confidence that the non-dual teaching is the one for you, then within this confidence, there is no wrong "place" to go. There isn't even more than one place to begin with, and even that "place" is not a place. The point of a teaching or path is not to give a valid, accurate description of reality. Instead, all teachings are "upaya" or expedient means to sever attachments to world, body, and mind. One of the attachments is that there is an external spiritual reality that a theory can accurately point to. The purpose of these teachings is not to be delivered from the wrong views by taking up the "correct" views. It is to be free of views and belief altogether. Many teachings have been introduced that succeed in this.

Like Harsha said, some paths are traditional, some are modern. Some are in Sanskrit, some in English. Some are complicated, some are simple. The

variety of approaches reflects the variety of needs in aspirants.

One interesting point - you say you are happy with the Direct path teachings, but your questions are progressive-path questions. If you are *\*really\** convinced that there is nothing we can do, and no path to follow, then the questions you raised wouldn't arise. Are you *\*really\** happy with these ideas, or do they just seem like un-answerable points?

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Message: 21

Date: Wed, 09 Aug 2000 12:30:37 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Dennis/Harsha/OOoops, forgot to finish

Dennis/Harsha,

Sorry, I pressed [Send] too soon, thought I was in another message!

The last thing I said was whether Dennis really felt an affinity for the "direct path" teachings. A true affinity for these teachings resolves the intellectual tension aroused by "why" and "what if" questions. The intellectual speculation that phenomenality could be different from what is presented in the Now - this speculation finds a peaceful resolution, and the questioning impulse doesn't arise on those issues. There's still lots of room for intellectual speculation, but it usually finds its movement in other directions.

Your heart will incline you in the way to go. Indeed, many people find direct Path kinds of teachings too dry and intellectual. I know several people who decided again to take up mantras, devotional practices, and other approaches because for them, some element seemed missing in the direct path teachings.

Love,

--Greg

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Message: 22

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 14:52:48 -0230 (NDT)  
From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@morgan.ucs.mun.ca>  
Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

The point of it all is for this knowledge to be part of you. That is, it changes from knowledge that is apart from you to knowledge that are you. This would happen if one's citta is pure.

There are no short-cuts to moksha. Direct path/traditional path are words only. The basic point is the same. The point of it all is citta-shuddhi.

People strive for realization without being ready for it. While realization (I am brahman) looks so simple, the 'path' is very hard and razor-sharp. People have to purify themselves thoroughly before aspiring for moksha.

Purification involves, as shri shankara's works say, the victory over the ariShaDvargA-s (the six great enemies: kAma (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (miserliness), moha (passion), mada (pride), mAtsarya (jealousy)). Before one talks of realization or moksha, one should question oneself: have I won over these six great enemies? Only a few blessed souls can answer that question affirmatively.

Purification involves choosing shreyaH over preyaH (good over the pleasant) as Lord Yama says in kaTha upanishad. This choice of good over the pleasant cannot be a conscious choice but an inherent natural part of the jIva.

Only when citta is pure, then only one can think of moksha. Until then, go back again and again to block the negative thoughts and have only pure thoughts in the heart and continue the purification process.

Then, one would recognize that SELF-realization is not a random event after all. Of course, only a few souls will be blessed with that, but these are the souls who are pure and whose citta reflects the Atman with hundred percent perfection.

> Dennis  
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Regards

Gummuluru Murthy

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Message: 23

Date: Wed, 9 Aug 2000 14:21:28 -0400

From: "Harsha (Dr. Harsh K. Luthar)" <hluthar@bryant.edu>

Subject: Dennis/Harsha/Greg

-----Original Message-----

From: Greg Goode [<mailto:goode@DPW.COM>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 09, 2000 12:31 PM

To: advaitin@egroups.com; advaitin@egroups.com

Subject: [advaitin] Dennis/Harsha/OOoops, forgot to finish

Indeed, many people find direct Path kinds of teachings too dry and intellectual. I know several people who decided again to take up mantras, devotional practices, and other approaches because for them, some element seemed missing in the direct path teachings.

Love,

--Greg

Thank you for sharing Greg-Ji. As usual, you offer profound insights and go to the heart of the matter. Let me offer a quick follow up on your last paragraph as it appears to suggest a subtle hierarchy (which is probably unintended) between Devotion and Jnana. Devotional practices are not inconsistent with Jnana. How could they be? The great Sages have also been great devotees. Both Sri Shankra's works and life and Sri Ramana's life reflect that and their devotional hymns to the Goddess and Arunachala respectively are well known. If I recall, under the gaze of the Sage of Arunachala, once Ganpati Muni composed a 1000 songs on Uma within a few hours.

Love to all  
Harsha

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Message: 24

Date: Wed, 09 Aug 2000 15:03:31 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Dennis/Harsha/Greg

Hi Harsha-ji,

This is correct, Harsha-ji, no hierarchy intended! No inconsistency at all! In fact, devotion and jnana are like two blades of a pair of scissors, which, working together, snip samsara at its root.

I'm glad you brought this up - some people (even non-dualism teachers) do draw a rigid distinction between these approaches, this kind of distinction can get "in the air." It can be a sticky point, because some of these teachers say that no other methods are necessary, in fact that they say they are harmful. In fact, in their zeal for the intellectual jnana teachings and their own views, these teachers unthinkingly recommend the satsang-attendees to give up all other practices. They say that other practices strengthen the notion of a separate doer and ego. Some of these teachers do, however, accept devotion when directed towards themselves... :-)

Love,

--Greg

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Message: 25

Date: Tue, 08 Aug 2000 14:39:39 -0400

From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>

Subject: Re: What is the point of it all?

hariH OM! dennis-

have you ever noticed how in one 'life scene' your mood runs accordingly, with the mind engaging related thoughts...while it could be even a moment later in another scene and your mood/thought-realm switches to another whole

level? this radical shifting occurs merely in one person. now imagine how different the mood/thought-realm can vary from one person to the next...

this is one reason for the different approaches and teachings in existence.

the mind is the most complex thing in the universe. obviously. all of these paths and situations have their application for different individuals. when the aspirant reaches the path of jnana, he/she gets the overview of all that you're talking about. at the same time, within this overview, can be found a specific path that concerns a profound simplicity--which is where the Self-enquiry method is found, which itself amounts to the elimination of all these entanglements and tangential considerations through the 'neti, neti' process. sri ramana has referred to this as maha yoga, and described it as an \*UNlearning\* process, where virtually all the ideas and insights in fact are undone, leading one to the threshold of manonasa [the extinction of the \*philosophical\* Mind]. it all boils down to this brand of blanking the mind and thus experiencing pure Being. then all these questions become irrelevant, and in fact--in \*that\* place, even ridiculous! for once that happens it's equivalent to dropping the hydrogen bomb of satchidananda right in the middle of the fertile mind-complex; where thereafter the relative problems/matters of the world are dealt with accordingly, and so without the common bewilderment factor associated with the human tendency--no, obsession!--toward philosophical speculation.

as to the ethics, morality and purpose of what it is we're involved in [in life], it's ultimately seen as nothing more than a Play. we do our best in its mysterios/wonderfilled arena, realizing at the same time that, as in Lennon's words in STRAWBERRY FIELDS, "...there's nothing to get hung [up] about."

peacelove in OM,  
frank

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Message: 7

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 15:31:54 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: What is the point - Part 2

Allow me to make a few comments first since there seems to have been some misunderstandings regarding my intentions. I have no disrespect for the teachings. I am not making any unconsidered criticisms. I am not about to 'give up on' advaita, commit suicide or take any other drastic action. I will continue to read avidly from traditional and modern sources, meditate twice daily and read and participate in such (excellent) groups as this. I will also, no doubt, continue to question anything and everything, since that is my nature.

(For those who may not know) I have been studying advaita for many years (at least 20 - I've lost track). I have always had some qualms about apparent contradictions in what is said by various sources, though all purporting to be representing the same philosophy. I have never been seriously upset by this however. I acknowledge that 'the tao that can be spoken is not the true tao', to pinch a quote from another tradition. Indeed I have always found the most valuable material to reside in metaphor and the many amusing stories to be found throughout commentaries on the scriptures. The main reason that my criticisms have crystallised at this point is my recent involvement with Francis Lucille and Wayne Liquorman and their uncompromising views. I am in the (slow) process of writing a book on advaita and it is necessary for me to get my ideas straight so that I can represent them for others.

As Sadananda observes, I had made several conclusions before asking but the point about experimentation does not seem really to apply. (I cannot consciously investigate the theory of reincarnation for example!) The reason for my post was genuinely to seek guidance from others, such as yourself, to indicate how you reconcile the more glaring inconsistencies. The most obvious is the question of rebirth and samsara. Since there are in reality no individuals, how can there be reincarnation? Nisargaddatta says "The objective part of what was once a sentient being will be destroyed, never to be re-born as the same body. And consciousness is not an object, not a thing at all - therefore, consciousness, as something non-objective, cannot be 'born', cannot 'die' and certainly cannot be 're-born'." This seems so obvious. How, therefore can traditional presentations claim this?

What concerns me particularly is that I have always been led to believe that, for those aspects that are not amenable to direct discovery ourselves, one resorts to the sruti. These provide the source of knowledge for all those things (c.f. the superb posting from Jaishankar Narayanan on pramaanam recently). If living sages directly contradict what is said there, then it

seems that nothing can be trusted.

Ram talks about our 'having the options to understand and misunderstand; like and dislike etc.' but no, we don't. This is one of the points I was making. We only think we have choice. In fact, our genetic heritage together with the multifarious influences upon us since our birth dictates irrevocably how we respond to any given situation. Yes, we have an intellect that we like to think discriminates but it can only use the data that is available to it and all of that originated mechanically. (Reading through this later, I realise I could disagree with this! I have previously argued that buddhi operates correctly in stillness, when it is able to respond freshly, not affected by old habits. But choice is not involved here either, is it?) I agree that the 'choice' is influenced by our attitude, positive or negative, but whence does that attitude arise? Is it not simply part of our nature, again determined by genetics and environment? We can change a negative into a positive attitude but not through choice. Our views are mechanically influenced by others with whom we come into contact, books we read etc. The words of Sankara influence us irrespective of his intentions but there is no 'free will' involved in any of this. It seems that, this being the case, the idea of human life being an 'opportunity' is misconceived - it simply IS and, if the nature of this particular body-mind identification is to 'realise the truth', great! (If not, tough!) There is nothing I can do about it either way.

Yet another clear and apposite article 'Why Vedanta?' from Sadananda. No quibbles with most of this except the part about solutions. Yes, I agree with the steps shraVaNa, manana and nidhidhyaasana, but again you are implying that one can choose to do this and I believe (and believe that the sruti states this in some places) that an 'individual' cannot 'do' anything - and that includes 'choosing' to do something, itself an act. Yes, 'I am that consciousness - I am that Brahman'; I am not an individual with self-determining ability to act.

I agree with most of what you say, Colette, though I have recently begun to doubt the worth of meditation in respect of helping one towards realisation. Apart from the fact, again, that an individual can never become realised, any 'result' of meditation (such as clarity and peace of mind etc.) can only ever be just that - a state of mind. States of mind have nothing to do with enlightenment. As I read somewhere recently, how long has TM been around? How many hundreds of thousands have taken it up and been meditating for years and years? And how many of those have you heard of becoming enlightened? (As mentioned above, though, this has not stopped me from practising!) Also, you end up by saying that 'really there is a need to do'. At the risk of repeating myself, we cannot 'do' and whether we are able to 'surrender' and exhibit 'devotion' is a result of our nature and nurture.

I love the story about the rat and Mr. Jones - I remember reading it before. It is a very useful analogy and I fully appreciate the import. I also have full intellectual appreciation that I am not a rat! Obviously, we all realise that something more than this is needed, however. I was not saying that one CAN wait for randomness to operate, I was saying that one has no choice but to do so. The individual setting off on a path and doing this or that (were any of this possible anyway) would never get anywhere. The individual cannot become enlightened. (Presumably we do all agree with this last statement? I am a bit worried when you make statements such as 'I am what I am seeking - but as long as I am seeking I have not realized what truly I am'.) Depending upon our nature, we may follow a process of

brainwashing ourselves that we are indeed a man. Presumably all of us on this list will do so - I certainly will. But I do this because I am that sort of a person, not because I have a choice. Also, I accept that it can never achieve anything for ME (other than intellectual amusement and a feeling that I am doing something useful with my life). Consciousness is already consciousness; is all there is and never was anything else. The fact that its manifestation in this body-mind mechanism has resulted in the illusion of a separate entity does not alter the reality of the situation.

I don't mind your being blunt, Harsha. My problem is not with my particular nature finding more affinity with modern than traditional, it is with there being some elements that seem blatantly contradictory. I believe there is only one Truth and, even though this is beyond words, I expect those in whom this truth has been manifest to make more or less the same statements. Not being expressible does not seem a licence for being contradictory. I didn't mean that traditional advaita was confusing per se, it becomes confusing only when modern sages flatly contradict what it seems to be saying. I agree that I am confused, however! But I don't think it is imagination. Although I don't have a Concordance for the Upanishads (it seems you can only get one from India), my first 10 - 15 years worth of exposure to advaita derived from traditional sources and I was fairly clear about what claims were being made for the nature of life and death etc. I thought it was a legitimate question to ask of the group whose background is presumably very diverse and might be able to offer some explanations. (Incidentally, I have been given Sanskrit lessons initially against my wishes - later with enthusiasm - and had to recite vedic hymns at 5.30 in the morning, only one and a half hour later!) Again I have no problem with everyone 'doing as they like'... other than the fact that they have no choice in the matter!

Similarly, I agree with Greg - there are lots of 'paths' to suit all tastes BUT ultimately they are all describing the same truth. Surely they should not differ in fundamentals. Either there is really a creation or there isn't; there are paths or there are not; one has choice or hasn't; individuals are reborn or they aren't. Surely no one truth can have it all ways? As I said at the beginning, I am 'reasonably' resolved on these issues in my own mind. My concern for asking is in respect of wishing to represent, rationalise and justify the views in the forthcoming book (within the very limited framework of the human intellect of course!).

I acknowledge Gummuluru's statements about purification but again have to say that all of this implies choice and doing. Either these are available to us or they are not. Can you 'block negative thoughts'? Is this not an impossible thing to do? If something occurs to block, surely you have already had the thought and therefore cannot block it? Which thoughts you have are surely determined again by nature and impressions etc. etc., all things beyond your control. I don't dispute that purification may occur if these pursuits are followed, only that whether or not they ARE followed is not something in which there is choice.

I really do appreciate your comments, Frank and acknowledge the reference to maha yoga. The danger of books and intellectual speculation is spelled out in detail in the 'Maha Yoga of Bhagavan Sri Ramana' by 'Who'. "The book-taught philosopher is even worse off than other men; his egoism is swelled by the pride of knowledge; his heart is beset with new attachments - from which the illiterates are free - which leave him no time for the enterprise of finding the real Self." But I am not attached to any of these beliefs and that, he says, is the 'mark of the Truth-lover'. The presence of

a sage and their words and silence count for far more than translations of commentaries on ancient Sanskrit texts. Nevertheless, as indicated several times now, one doesn't expect contradictions.

I was intending to end with a quotation but this post has gone on far too long already and I don't expect the discussion will end just yet!

With respect and a bow to you all,

Dennis

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Message: 8

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 11:14:29 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

Hi Dennis,

What a well-thought and well-presented reply to the various postings that your thread has generated! I understand a lot better where you are coming from now, and thanks for being so clear about it.

One thing leaps out at me, and that is your intuition that those who transmit this message shouldn't contradict each other or themselves. Similarly, that Teaching A should be consistent with teaching B, and Teacher A should be consistent with herself and with Teacher B.

My question is, what is wrong with contradictions? I can see the need for consistency, e.g., when doing the mathematical stress-analysis for a skyscraper or a suspension bridge. But in an enterprise like advaita, whose teachings are expedient only, teachings whose effect is to dissolve ignorance and superimposition, what is wrong if a given teaching is not consistent with some other teaching somewhere else?

Another, rhetorical question -- if someone achieves liberation with the help of a certain strand of advaita teaching, then later finds out that there are other teachings that contradict it, what should be done? Should the person say, well, then I'm can't really be Consciousness after all??

If you know Wayne Liquorman, then you might have heard him say that a given teacher will contradict himself several places per paragraph! And he also gives the example of various roads leading up to the Grand Canyon. The roads differ from each other, but all of them lead unfailingly to the Grand Canyon...

Do you find advaita teachings or teachers that contradict the core teaching -- that you are Consciousness?

OM!!

--Greg

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Message: 9

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 09:04:19 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

Let me join with Greg for the comprehensive reply from Dennis.

Greg's question, "what is wrong with contradictions?" should be preceded by the question, What is a contradiction? If we take a moment to think, we can identify the cause for the illusionary contradiction - our ignorance. (Gandhiji once pointed out that all the illusionary contradictions were due to his ignorance - contradiction is essentially an illusion!)

I agree that free-will and choice are in appearance. However, we have to exercise free-will as though it is real. (This was pointed by Swamiji Viditatmanandaji of Arshavidya Gurukulam).

Finally, I appreciate your style of presentation with clarity,

Warmest regards,

Ram Chandran

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Message: 10

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 12:27:23 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

I like the direction of Swamiji's comments on the free-will notion. The appearance-will in response to appearance-situations appears to be required before certain appearance-effects arise... This view can (appear to) save one from the hopelessness and sense of desperation that can often (appear to) strike.

Om!

--Greg

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Message: 11

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 13:58:17 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: What is the point - Part 2

Dennis

Free will - sadhana - realization etc are as real as the 'problem' or samsaara is. If one thinks the problem that I am samsaari is real then to the same of order of reality, the others also correspond to. From the realized state samsaara is only a joke and so are the others too. By the by, even the scriptures fall under the same category.

One can surrender ones free will at the alter of love then 'His will' will be done - it amounts to -whatever I will - will be considered as His will alone. In the process 'i' do not take the responsibility - the 'I' or HE takes the responsibility - at least that will be the surrender's conception - which frees his mind to contemplate.

Dennis I have known you enough through this and other lists, and therefore aware of your Vedantic background. I was only surprised in your strong assertive or concluding statements of the nature of the problem and the solutions that you propose. If the problem is 'self - ignorance' then 'self-knowledge' is the only solution. I do agree with you that self-knowledge or any knowledge for that matter can not be willed. If so everybody could have willed his or her realization. But at the same time for any knowledge, again whether it is an objective knowledge or self-knowledge, mind needs to be prepared - I cannot leave the mind to a random choice and let it learn randomly physics, chemistry or math or ones own self. The probability of my receiving randomly the knowledge of Chemistry or math is close to zero. But if I make effort to concentrate and study under proper guidance, it is no more random since there is bias set in the direction and the probability can be very high depending on how committed I am. In effect I have to prepare the mind adequately to receive the knowledge. That is by free-will or choice or by sadhana. That of course cannot guarantee that I will gain the self knowledge since it is what Vedanta calls it as 'vastu trantra' and not 'purusha tantra' - it has to dawn on me and rather than I try to reach it.

But if the solution depends on somebody else - like the grace of God etc. then I have no choice but wait for the grace to fall. Then I have to be in favorable terms with Him to get his grace - being favorable terms with Him may be my choice if I know how to be in favorable terms. That part atleast is free will but His grace is not my free will - In effect His grace is the same as knowledge dawning on one whose mind is ready to receive.

But if I have got bound by a random process then I agree with you that the liberation is also by the same way. But if there is a 'will' involved then there is a will involved in Sadhana too. Well we cannot say how we started getting bound, we can see that we can get more and more bound by our indulgence that is by expersicing ones free will - That is what - Dhyayato vishhayaan pumsaH sanghaste shuupa jayate ... etc slokas in the Ch. II of B.G where Krishna describes how we get bound through our indulgence.

About the animals issue you raised: It is the same process- animals do not get more bound since they have no will. A cow does not have to sit down

and evaluate her self and wonder why she should be vegetarian - neither a tiger for that matter. They are instinctively driven and there is no sin involved in their actions. - mostly because they do not perform willful actions. Even by Law a will-full misconduct is much more punishable than an accidental behavior. If the ignorance is the problem then for the knowledge to takes place one should have subtle intellect to receive that knowledge - Hence the glorification of the human being. There is a famous subhaashitam:

ahaara nidraa bhaya maitunancha saamanyametat  
pashubhinnaraanaam|  
buddhirhi teshhaam adhiko visheshhaH, budhyaa vihiinaaH pashubhi  
samaanaaH||

Hunger for food, sleep, fear and desire for prodigy are the same for animals and human beings.

Only that makes the difference between the two is the intellect and if it is not there (or used properly) then man and animal are the same.

Hence if there is a 'will' in falling down -then there is a 'will' in raising up - Hence Shankara says:

satsangatve nissangatvam, nissangatve nirmohatvam|  
nirmohatve nischala tatvam, nischala tatve jiivanmuktaH||  
Bu the company of good one (sat sangh) one gains detachment and by detachment one looses the longingness for sensuous pleasures and by that one gains a calm and quiet mind and from that one gains liberation while living. Hence the process of ascend is described and involves exercise of choice to be with company of the good - essentially Shama and Dama - mentally and physically avoiding the circumstances that dissipate mental energies.

Hence all these including the problem are realities within the Vyavahaara - when one transcends these then neither there is a problem of bondage nor free will etc. In fact you see this in the deep sleep state itself were the ignorance as non-apprehension alone remains without a misapprehension. At that time one has no concept of bondage and there is no free will either.

Well, think about it without accepting or rejecting right away - I am sure we will be discussing these again and again in one form or the other until there is no more 'We' to have the free-will to do the discussions.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

K. Sadananda  
Code 6323  
Naval Research Laboratory  
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Fax: (202) 767-2623

Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 19:45:34 -0000  
From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>  
Subject: the point of it all

Dear Dennis,

You may remember that we corresponded in the past. I was never able to make a secret of my heretical tendencies when participating on the advaitin list and I eventually ceased to take an active part when it was suggested that I ought to find myself a guru. I was of course extremely interested (and I confess not a little amused) by your heartfelt exclamation about the point of it all (i.e. Advaita).

The passage below (from your message) seems to me to be a succinct statement of how things are: there is no free-will, no soul, no sin, no karma and no reincarnation. (And I might add that consciousness is just an epiphenomenon of matter although of course I know you won't agree with that statement.) What puzzles me is that you seem to feel that there is something that you are missing ('self-realization') as if an honest appraisal of the way things are leads inescapably to nihilism and despair....

Regards,  
Patrick

There is no individual who could become realised.  
There is no 'path' that can be followed.  
We cannot 'do' anything.  
There is no such thing as choice or free will, only  
the illusion of this;  
everything that will happen is effectively already  
determined. We act  
irrevocably according to our natures and events  
around us.  
There is no one who could die (only the material  
body reverting to its  
elements) and there is no one who could be born or  
re-born. There can be no  
such thing as reincarnation.

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Message: 14  
Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2000 18:27:40 -0500  
From: "Robert Watson" <niche@21stcentury.net>  
Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

-----Original Message-----  
From: Dennis Waite <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>  
To: advaitin@egroups.com <advaitin@egroups.com>  
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2000 9:23 AM  
Subject: [advaitin] What is the point - Part 2  
[...]

>Similarly, I agree with Greg - there are lots of 'paths' to suit all tastes  
>BUT ultimately they are all describing the same truth. Surely they should  
>not differ in fundamentals. Either there is really a creation or there  
>isn't; there are paths or there are not; one has choice or hasn't;  
>individuals are reborn or they aren't. Surely no one truth can have it all  
>ways?  
[...]

I sympathize with the sincere, seeking tone of your questions and comments, but I would just like to point out that, from any beginning set of assumptions, the issues are not always so clear cut. For example, is piece of steel solid or not? Obviously in the gross sense it is, and yet every school child knows that it is composed of a crystal lattice of atoms, and that most of the space it occupies is empty. So the question: "Is it or isn't it?" must sometimes be answered with: "Yes and no, depending on the context and how you look at it." One thinks of Ramana Maharshi and his statement that the personal deities "are as real as the people who believe in them." The man could be devilishly clever with the turn of a phrase...

Robert.

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What is the point - Part 3

Greg makes a very good point (sorry, couldn't resist it - I guess you must be as sick of it as I am about puns on my name!). I know Wayne says many times that contradictions, even from one teacher, are natural. Nisargaddatta says the same thing too. Why should I complain? I suppose it's the thing about pramaana. How can it be claimed so ardently that the sruti is (are?) incontrovertibly true, when a sage can (and does) say things which are contradictory?

I think I am happier with your second point. Since reality is beyond description, once someone achieves liberation (contradiction of course) they must be, by definition almost, beyond the contradictions of those teachings that were not instrumental in their liberation. I accept also that no teachers are contradictory about the core of Advaita.

I agree too with Ram. Contradictions clearly do arise from our ignorance. Also, we certainly do have to continue to act as though we had free will. Many of the discussions that we have relate only to intellectual ramblings and not to practical behaviour, don't they! I know we have had all of these discussions before under the headings of vyaavahaarika and paaramaarthika.

That also brings us to Sadananda's point. All of this stuff is in the realm of vyaavahaarika anyway so I guess that, yes, all is as meaningless as the rest ultimately so that whether it is contradictory is irrelevant. I'm not sure which statements you are referring to as giving you surprise at their assertiveness. I agree that the problem is self-ignorance and that self-knowledge is the solution but, as you say, this cannot be willed. You imply therefore that, since knowledge will not arise randomly, one has to 'make effort and study under proper guidance'. I'm not sure I agree with this. I have already said that I do not believe one can choose to do this. It may well be that one's nature predisposes one to study Advaita. Mine does, so I

will continue to do so. But I do not believe that this will help per se. Nisargadatta puts it very clearly when he says 'so long as there is an entity seeking liberation, he will never find it'. Also, I don't think you can use knowledge of chemistry or math as an analogy for Self-knowledge - the latter has nothing to do with acquired information, rather with complete transformation and, so I am led to believe, it occurs instantaneously, regardless of previous preparation. Your reference to the probability increasing proportional to one's level of commitment implies that you disagree with Nisargadatta's statement.

Also, I am not really happy with your anthropomorphic treatment of grace. Surely it is not meaningful to talk about 'being on good terms with God'? Consciousness is not a person (except that our precise trouble is that we think it is in our own case!) and I do not see that attributing human behaviour to it can be helpful. This is one of the main quibbles I have with Christianity and its wrath and retribution rubbish. God is as 'responsible' for the bad as it is for the good. (That should trigger a few objections!)

I have re-read my post several times now and cannot find the 'animal issue' to which you refer. I agree that animals have no will. Let's not introduce 'sin' - that's another contentious issue, I'm sure!

I think perhaps you reach the nub of the issue when you say that the problems are realities only within vyaavahaara and that when this is transcended all the concepts become equally meaningless. When the sage or the sruti talks about paths and freedom of will to choose paths and move towards enlightenment, or when a sage says something quite the opposite, all are talking about the unreality of vyaavahaara. You could say that, since the topic of discussion is unreal, then nothing that can be said is true so that contradiction is ok. Fine! But then it does make a bit of a nonsense to cite the sruti as an ultimate authority, doesn't it?

I like Robert's analogy of the steel, which either is, or isn't solid, depending on the instruments used to observe it. I wonder though whether it is a valid analogy. Could one say that, if life is looked at one way there is reincarnation; if looked at in a different way, there isn't? I like Nisargadatta's view that manifestation in the physical universe is only meaningful in terms of space and time and that, since this framework is conceptual, the so-called objects must themselves be concepts. (And he hadn't read Kant either!) 'Therefore', he says, 'understand firmly once and for all, that no conceptual object, although mistaken as a separate entity, could possibly have any kind of independent existence or personal volition. No one is born; no one dies. What is born is only a concept. There is no entity to be freed. Not understanding this fact constitutes the bondage of ignorance; apperception of it is the freedom of truth. Remember, truth is absolute correspondence with reality. It is the unshakeable knowledge of man's true nature. It is the total negation of entity-ness.'

Namaste,

Dennis

Message: 3

Date: Fri, 11 Aug 2000 09:37:04 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>  
Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

Shree Dennis Waite wrote:

>

>As Sadananda observes, I had made several conclusions before asking but the  
>point about experimentation does not seem really to apply. (I cannot  
>consciously investigate the theory of reincarnation for example!) The reason  
>for my post was genuinely to seek guidance from others, such as yourself, to  
>indicate how you reconcile the more glaring inconsistencies. The most  
>obvious is the question of rebirth and samsara. Since there are in reality  
>no individuals, how can there be reincarnation? Nisargaddatta says "The  
>objective part of what was once a sentient being will be destroyed, never to  
>be re-born as the same body. And consciousness is not an object, not a thing  
>at all - therefore, consciousness, as something non-objective, cannot be  
>'born', cannot 'die' and certainly cannot be 're-born'." This seems so  
>obvious. How, therefore can traditional presentations claim this?

>

>What concerns me particularly is that I have always been led to believe  
>that, for those aspects that are not amenable to direct discovery ourselves,  
>one resorts to the sruti. These provide the source of knowledge for all  
>those things (c.f. the superb posting from Jaishankar Narayanan on pramaanam  
>recently). If living sages directly contradict what is said there, then it  
>seems that nothing can be trusted.

Dennis here is my understanding:

For things beyond mind and intellect such as extra sensory perceptions etc, you are right the pratyaksha and anumaana are not the means of knowledge - For example, of the existence of heaven or hell or reincarnation - for that only shabda specifically shRiti, is the pramaanam. In Vedanta, no words of any specific realized soul is taken as valid, however great he may be, unless they are in tune with the Vedic statements. Hence the Veda-s become ultimate pramaana and not the statements of a particular realized souls. For example Kapila muni's saankhya is taken and discussed even by Krishna in sankhya yoga only the parts that agree with Vedantic view. The parts that are in disagreement with Vedanta are rejected out right, and Badaraayana does that effectively in Brahmasuutra-s. Hence teaching at an individual level is rejected and considered not as a pramaana when it disagrees with the Vedic statements. Hence there are no contradictions from the Vedantic point - if there are any, they are only apparent and arise due to lack of correct understanding of the scriptures - hence a teacher or a sampradaaya teacher is needed to unravel the teachings correctly. Now coming back in terms of Nisargadatta's statements - one has to understand with reference to what he is addressing the issue. From the point of Brahman there is no question of incarnation - then what to talk about reincarnation. From the point of matter there is no incarnation or reincarnation either. What incarnates or reincarnates are the notions in the mind that I am jiiva -This is a pseudo entity - when consciousness identifies with the body, mind and intellect, forgets who he is and get established in that notions - that is the ego or jiiva. As long as ego or jiiva is considered as real - incarnation and reincarnations are equally real. But from the point of truth, ego itself is false and when it falls away where is the question of reincarnation and who is going to ask whom?. Hence one has to understand Nisargadatta's statement in correct perspective - from what reference state he is talking about. This is the reason why one has to be carefully in taking somebody

statement on its face value without fully realizing complete context of the discussions and also from what reference state the statement was made. No realized soul wants to mislead anybody but one get mislead if the discussion is not properly understood. Hence if one discovers any controversy it is better to go back to the original source, the Vedanta, which is independent of any particular person or place.

Hence place a trust not any living or non-living sage but in Vedantic pramana as the independent source. Hence a right teacher is one who directs his disciple not to rely on his statements per se but to the original scriptures - Hence Vedanta advises one to approach a teacher who is not only well established in Brahman but who himself has undergone the teaching from a teacher of Sampradaya - that is who has the through knowledge of scriptures and who can also communicate the ideas in the light of his understanding and experience.

>

>Yet another clear and apposite article 'Why Vedanta?' from Sadananda. No >quibbles with most of this except the part about solutions. Yes, I agree >with the steps shravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana, but again you are >implying that one can choose to do this and I believe (and believe that the >sruti states this in some places) that an 'individual' cannot 'do' >anything - and that includes 'choosing' to do something, itself an act. Yes, >'I am that consciousness - I am that Brahman'; I am not an individual with >self-determining ability to act.

Dennis - here the problem as I see is you are jumping from one reference to the other. From the absolute Brahman, one without a second, there is no question of doing - hence free will etc does not arise. Hence if you have understood that "I am Brahman" - the problem is already solved and there is no need of these discussions either. Accept my pranaams and that is the end.

Discussion is only when we have only saamanaya Jnanam - that I am Brahman but not realized that 'I am Brahman' - Hence when I consider that I am a jiva - then there is doership associated with the jivaship - and free will operates since I got into that state by my own free will.

Bottom line is one has to be very careful from what reference one is discussing these issues. From one reference the other looks contradictory - if we are not aware that we are unconsciously switching references then we find lot of controversies in the teachings.

Any way think about these things and see if you still find contradictions in the teachings.

>I love the story about the rat and Mr. Jones - I remember reading it before. >It is a very useful analogy and I fully appreciate the import. I also have >full intellectual appreciation that I am not a rat! Obviously, we all >realise that something more than this is needed, however. I was not saying >that one CAN wait for randomness to operate, I was saying that one has no >choice but to do so.

Dennis - I see some contradiction in your last statement. - waiting for randomness to operate or not waiting for randomness to operate - is it a

choice or is it random too! - if it is random then the statements confirms that one has to wait for randomness to operate - if you are not waiting then you are doing something along the lines your mind is directing towards the goal you have in mind. If there is no goal at all then you will end up waking randomly. But as discussed in Vedanta - and emphasized by Shree Jayashankar that one is naturally driven in the direction of seeking oneself - as everyone is seeking ananda in all pursuits. Then it is no more a random walk problem.

>The individual setting off on a path and doing this or  
>that (were any of this possible anyway) would never get anywhere.

I think this is a conclusion that is not right from the point of Vedanta. For the Brahma vidya one has to be adhikaari as Shankara points out in his bhaasha on Brahmasutra - That is one has to acquire the sadhana chatushtayam the four fold qualifications and the purpose of all paths, karmas, as Shankara emphasizes is precisely for one to get qualified for the knowledge - that is not by random process.

>The  
>individual cannot become enlightened. (Presumably we do all agree with this  
>last statement? I am a bit worried when you make statements such as 'I am  
>what I am seeking - but as long as I am seeking I have not realized what  
>truly I am'.)

My statement was made from the point of knowledge. Whenever the seeker and sought are one and the same, any seeking on the part of the seeker is likely to fail since in the very process of seeking one has made an intrinsic assumption that the sought is not there where the seeker is. But to prepare oneself in receiving the true knowledge 'you are that' one has to prepare the mind - since mind is not ready to accept since as Shankara puts it - one needs chitta sudhhi - purified mind - a mind free from all notions - including a notion that it is a random process! Remember even for Nisargadatta Maharaj it took three years after his teacher taught him that 'you are not this but that'. He was meditating on the teachings of his master before he realized that indeed he is not this but that.

Depending upon our nature, we may follow a process of  
>brainwashing ourselves that we are indeed a man. Presumably all of us on  
>this list will do so - I certainly will. But I do this because I am that  
>sort of a person, not because I have a choice. Also, I accept that it can  
>never achieve anything for ME (other than intellectual amusement and a  
>feeling that I am doing something useful with my life). Consciousness is  
>already consciousness; is all there is and never was anything else. The fact  
>that its manifestation in this body-mind mechanism has resulted in the  
>illusion of a separate entity does not alter the reality of the situation.

True it does not alter the reality of the situation and thank God for that. But what it appears to have altered is my notions about myself. I do not consider myself to be 'pure unadulterated consciousness that truly I am' but take myself this limited body, mind and intellect. At least that much is altered and that is the big problem! That apparent change appears to be real unless the apparent aspect becomes apparent. To see the substratum of absolute reality in this apparently changing reality, my mind has to stand

back and watch for the substratum and not to get carried away with the appearances. To be able to stand apart and watch (witness), I have to have certain detachment from the apparent flow. The process of detachments is what is called purification of the mind and for which yoga and sadhana are emphasized as a means. I cannot wait for the random process to make me detach from the flow of apparently real things.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

Message: 4

Date: Fri, 11 Aug 2000 09:50:50 -0400

From: "Harsha \ (Dr. Harsh K. Luthar\)" <hluthar@bryant.edu>

Subject: RE: What is the point - Part 2

-----Original Message-----

From: Dennis Waite [<mailto:dwaite@dircon.co.uk>]

Sent: Thursday, August 10, 2000 10:32 AM

To: advaitin@egroups.com

Subject: [advaitin] What is the point - Part 2

I don't mind your being blunt, Harsha. My problem is not with my particular nature finding more affinity with modern than traditional, it is with there being some elements that seem blatantly contradictory. I believe there is only one Truth and, even though this is beyond words, I expect those in whom this truth has been manifest to make more or less the same statements. Not being expressible does not seem a licence for being contradictory.

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Dennis, I see what you are saying. You are looking to the "outside" for a general consensus and confirmation of the Truth of the Self. Self-Realization is Self-Confirming. There can be no one "outside" to confirm it. So the question of contradictions cannot rise. The genuine Sages say "Go Within" Or "Dive Deep in to your own Reality" through what ever spiritual practice that comes easy to you.

The traditional yogic path is that of meditation, self-inquiry, Samadhis of various types and then Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Then, the natural process of integration and thinning of vasanas and the Sahaj state follows. Ramana Maharshi has said that Moksha is our very nature, but the false notion that we are the body prevents the Realization from becoming apparent. As Murthyji pointed out, there are no short cuts to Moksha. According to the scriptures, the two wings that take one to Moksha are said to be Varaigya - Renunciation (detachment from the mental tendencies) and Abhayas - Spiritual Practice.

Ultimately Dennis, you must make the effort yourself and Realize the Self. Short of that, nothing can satisfy you and nothing should! If you say that you have no choice in what you do, that is fine as well. If you have no choice in anything whatsoever, and you have truly realized this and are at peace with that, then just relax and enjoy the show.

Either way Dennis, you win.

Love  
Harsha

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Message: 3

Date: Sat, 12 Aug 2000 09:46:32 -0400

From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 2

Dennis Waite wrote:

>

> I believe there is only one Truth and, even though this  
> is beyond words, I expect those in whom this truth has  
> been manifest to make more or less the same statements.  
> Not being expressible does not seem a licence for being  
> contradictory. I didn't mean that traditional advaita  
> was confusing per se, it becomes confusing only when  
> modern sages flatly contradict what it seems to be saying.

ok, this seems to be the essence of your quandary.  
and this being the case, and the way you've framed it,  
offers an extraordinary opportunity to clarify what  
seems to be one of the most popular misconceptions.

the issue here concerns relative truth vs Absolute Truth.  
it is Truth, as lao tzu pointed out, that cannot be formed  
into any idea. jnana deals directly and solely with Truth,  
and doesn't give a fig about [relative] truth. this is  
the key to attaining moksha. and it's also why--as greg  
alluded to--contradictions are inconsequential...simply  
because they're concerned with either 1) methodology for  
attaining moksha or 2) matters in/of the Play (brahman's  
leela): including the evolution of  
the soul, cosmology, fate vs free will, isvara, quantum  
physics, and whatever else occupies the Universal Mind  
manifesting in each individual [as necessary patterns  
and systems enabling the leela to function!]. \*however\*,  
these patterns and systems aren't the primal BEING  
(parabrahman); they're Its creative products, vitally  
mixed with Order and Chaos [as the \*master paradigm\*  
of Relativity (mulaprakrit)]. and with this inevitable  
archetypal set-up, \*literally anything\* is possible.  
and this finally ushers us into to the pure Mystery!  
as does its progenitor, the ineffable brahman Itself.

and it's the latter we're after. Its products in the  
Play are merely for our (brahman's!) entertainment.  
so if one sage is saying there is no free will, and  
another is saying there is--even emphatically--deep  
down they know that's not the real issue whatsoever!  
they're addressing a particular mindset: where--for  
example--if the ego believes in the illusion of  
itself, the illusion of freewill has to also exist.  
but this isn't either the Truth. it's a \*relative\*  
truth. so, all the trouble we manage to get ourselves

into is simply the result of the habit of our Mind that expects Absolute answers to Relative questions.

a jnani is exonerated from understanding or not the literally infinite permutations of relative truths. he's only concerned with the Absolute Truth, which is singular, trans-logical and omnipresent in the causal, attributeless nature of Being Itself; and however It happens to creatively manifest in Life--its Play--has nothing to do with its unfathomable essence. it's only the Play--with unimaginable combinations of relative possibilities!

this is not to say that relative truths are, in of themselves, unimportant--of course they possess a \*relatively\* important value...which relates to the given situation at hand. which leads us to the key to the solution of the whole problem: they have no \*absolutely\* important value. obviously this can be confusing FOR THE RELATIVE-BOUND MIND.

we [in our habit in worshipping the protocol of our relative-bound Mind] therefore intensely desire and even demand continuity and clarity in our lives. we also tend to think that advaita--or any non-dual philosophy--is the answer to this mandate. quite the contrary--it isn't an answer to \*anything\*! and this is what has to be understood!

the only thing that becomes clear in Self-realization is the fact that the Mind and its cause is rooted in unfathomable Mystery! and the jnani becomes relaxed alongside this otherwise maddening life-condition... completely at peace with it, because he's dwelling in full awareness within its everpresent \*substratum\*.

OM shaanthy

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Message: 4

Date: Sat, 12 Aug 2000 17:51:57 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: RE: what is the point of it all

Hi Patrick,

Yes, I remember we had 'exchanges' for a while and seem to recall that we agreed to disagree on certain issues!

I think perhaps the title of my post was a bit unfortunate in that it did indicate frustration and unhappiness with advaita, if not life itself. I am not actually unhappy with the fundamental precepts of the philosophy and I do agree with the way in which Direct Path teachers express it. My confusion was that the Upanishads etc. are treated by traditional advaitins as

unarguably authentic sources of wisdom, while modern sages say things which seem almost contradictory.

I don't think that either my (pure advaita) views or your materialistic ones lead to nihilism. Whether there is or is not a point to it (life) and irrespective of any ultimate reality of the world, it can be seen as a beautiful illusion to be simply enjoyed and marvelled at.

There is a series on UK TV at present which will appeal to you, called 'Brain Story', presented by Professor Susan Greenfield. It aims to show how everything about us can be explained by physical interactions in the brain. Watch out for it in Canada. (I've already written to the TV magazine letters page pointing out that consciousness can never be rationalised in this manner!)

Regards,

Dennis

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Message: 5

Date: Sat, 12 Aug 2000 17:52:01 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: What is the point - Part 3

What is the point - Part 3

Greg makes a very good point (sorry, couldn't resist it - I guess you must be as sick of it as I am about puns on my name!). I know Wayne says many times that contradictions, even from one teacher, are natural. Nisargaddatta says the same thing too. Why should I complain? I suppose it's the thing about pramaana. How can it be claimed so ardently that the sruti is (are?) incontrovertibly true, when a sage can (and does) say things which are contradictory?

I think I am happier with your second point. Since reality is beyond description, once someone achieves liberation (contradiction of course) they must be, by definition almost, beyond the contradictions of those teachings that were not instrumental in their liberation. I accept also that no teachers are contradictory about the core of Advaita.

I agree too with Ram. Contradictions clearly do arise from our ignorance. Also, we certainly do have to continue to act as though we had free will. Many of the discussions that we have relate only to intellectual ramblings and not to practical behaviour, don't they! I know we have had all of these discussions before under the headings of vyaavahaarika and paaramaarthika.

That also brings us to Sadananda's point. All of this stuff is in the realm of vyaavahaarika anyway so I guess that, yes, all is as meaningless as the rest ultimately so that whether it is contradictory is irrelevant. I'm not sure which statements you are referring to as giving you surprise at their assertiveness. I agree that the problem is self-ignorance and that self-knowledge is the solution but, as you say, this cannot be willed. You imply therefore that, since knowledge will not arise randomly, one has to 'make effort and study under proper guidance'. I'm not sure I agree with this. I have already said that I do not believe one can choose to do this.

It may well be that one's nature predisposes one to study Advaita. Mine does, so I will continue to do so. But I do not believe that this will help per se. Nisargadatta puts it very clearly when he says 'so long as there is an entity seeking liberation, he will never find it'. Also, I don't think you can use knowledge of chemistry or math as an analogy for Self-knowledge - the latter has nothing to do with acquired information, rather with complete transformation and, so I am led to believe, it occurs instantaneously, regardless of previous preparation. Your reference to the probability increasing proportional to one's level of commitment implies that you disagree with Nisargadatta's statement.

Also, I am not really happy with your anthropomorphic treatment of grace. Surely it is not meaningful to talk about 'being on good terms with God'? Consciousness is not a person (except that our precise trouble is that we think it is in our own case!) and I do not see that attributing human behaviour to it can be helpful. This is one of the main quibbles I have with Christianity and its wrath and retribution rubbish. God is as 'responsible' for the bad as it is for the good. (That should trigger a few objections!)

I have re-read my post several times now and cannot find the 'animal issue' to which you refer. I agree that animals have no will. Let's not introduce 'sin' - that's another contentious issue, I'm sure!

I think perhaps you reach the nub of the issue when you say that the problems are realities only within vyaavahaara and that when this is transcended all the concepts become equally meaningless. When the sage or the sruti talks about paths and freedom of will to choose paths and move towards enlightenment, or when a sage says something quite the opposite, all are talking about the unreality of vyaavahaara. You could say that, since the topic of discussion is unreal, then nothing that can be said is true so that contradiction is ok. Fine! But then it does make a bit of a nonsense to cite the sruti as an ultimate authority, doesn't it?

I like Robert's analogy of the steel, which either is, or isn't solid, depending on the instruments used to observe it. I wonder though whether it is a valid analogy. Could one say that, if life is looked at one way there is reincarnation; if looked at in a different way, there isn't? I like Nisargadatta's view that manifestation in the physical universe is only meaningful in terms of space and time and that, since this framework is conceptual, the so-called objects must themselves be concepts. (And he hadn't read Kant either!) 'Therefore', he says, 'understand firmly once and for all, that no conceptual object, although mistaken as a separate entity, could possibly have any kind of independent existence or personal volition. No one is born; no one dies. What is born is only a concept. There is no entity to be freed. Not understanding this fact constitutes the bondage of ignorance; apperception of it is the freedom of truth. Remember, truth is absolute correspondence with reality. It is the unshakeable knowledge of man's true nature. It is the total negation of entity-ness.'

Namaste,

Dennis

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Message: 7

Date: Sat, 12 Aug 2000 13:55:52 -0500

From: "Robert Watson" <niche@21stcentury.net>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 3

-----Original Message-----

From: Dennis Waite <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

To: advaitin@egroups.com <advaitin@egroups.com>

Date: Saturday, August 12, 2000 11:43 AM

Subject: [advaitin] What is the point - Part 3

[...]

>I like Robert's analogy of the steel, which either is, or isn't solid,  
>depending on the instruments used to observe it. I wonder though whether it  
>is a valid analogy. Could one say that, if life is looked at one way there  
>is reincarnation; if looked at in a different way, there isn't?

[...]

My point was that it's both solid and empty at the same time, depending on the context. In the absolute sense a piece of steel, like every object, is mostly empty space. That is the truth. But in the relative, immediate sense, you can still bash your head in with it, and that is certainly a fact of which we need to be aware, even though your head (and mine too, of course) also is mostly empty space.

And I'm not sure why you choose to quibble with rebirth particularity. From an absolute Vedantic perspective, you weren't even born this time, much less all the other times, especially in view of the fact that 'you' don't even exist! Instead of questioning rebirth, why not start a movement to abolish the celebration of birthdays? On the other hand if this suggestion seems silly, then why shouldn't any hypothetical prior births be counted either in or out on the same basis?

Robert.

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Message: 4

Date: Sun, 13 Aug 2000 18:33:43 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: What is the point - Part 4

I don't really want to open up another discussion of pramaana - I expect someone can refer me to some earlier archive on this - but my understanding is clearly deficient in this area. I was aware of the authority of the vedas referred to by Sadananda but I thought that agaama encompassed also the words of the sage. After all, despite all cries of objection from the fundamentalists, it seems obvious that words translated and commented on by all and sundry will lead to ambiguity if not occasional misrepresentation. The sage on the other hand is here now to answer questions and explain further until the point is fully understood. I am bound to say that, when it comes to the words of a realised sage or the words of one's favourite translation of the Upanishads or Brahmasutra (which is extremely difficult to understand anyway), I know which one I would go for! (I do acknowledge the objection that the sage in question just might not be enlightened.) He

can speak to this body-mind, aware of its precise needs and limitations; the scriptures, set in stone, can never do this.

I accept the point about not taking the words of a sage out of context. Although I did this in the post, the words did come from a complete dialogue so I don't think I have misunderstood what he was saying. Similar points are continually made in other discussions so that any opportunity for misunderstanding gets much reduced when one has read many. Surely, anyway the same argument must apply to the sruti? You cannot use the argument in only the one case. I can certainly agree that there is a danger of misunderstanding either the words (translated from Marathi or whatever) of Nisargadatta or the words (translated from Sanskrit) of ABC Upanishad. There is also a danger of misunderstanding the words of a living sage speaking to one directly. The big difference in the last case is that, by further discussion, he can correct that misunderstanding.

I agree that I do have some confusion about 'doing'. The original source of teaching I had on the subject was that 'only the guna act', the Self does nothing at all. I have also use the metaphor of the petrol in the car - the petrol enables the car to move but does not itself actually 'do' anything. Similarly, the Self enables things to happen but does not itself act. More recently, Francis Lucille has made statements to the effect that the Self can 'do' whatever it likes. Obviously, the Self cannot be limited in any way. Wayne Liquorman says, of course, that our problem is the belief that we, as body-mind mechanisms, are 'doers' and that, losing this sense of personal doership is what constitutes enlightenment. He says that all action is God acting through these body-minds. There is clearly some inconsistency here that I have still fully to clarify in my own mind. You imply a belief that Brahman does not act or have free will - this is surely a limitation?

You saw some contradiction in my statement about not having any choice but to wait for the random event of enlightenment. We cannot choose whether to wait or not. (Who would choose to wait if we had the choice?) But it is not random that we 'choose' to wait. As I have said, everything that we do can be traced to cause and effect over events in which we had no free will; which were themselves all traceable to prior unchosen events (all the way back to birth if we were able to remember all the minutiae). We do have a goal (enlightenment) but we can do nothing to hasten it. Our nature predisposes us to read scripture, indulge in these discussions etc. and we will continue helplessly so to do but it doesn't ultimately help. Was not Valmiki the oft-quoted example of this truth? Did not he acquire enlightenment without having studied anything or prepared himself other than by butchering a few people?

Your last statement (comments on Part 2) was 'I cannot wait for the random process to make me detach from the flow of apparently real things.' Does this mean that you DO believe that an individual can become enlightened?

Harsha, I wouldn't have said that I am looking to the 'outside' for consensus, except in so far as words spoken or written by a sage are necessarily outside in a sense. Surely the upanishads and the living sage both speak from direct knowledge of truth of the Self? Should they then not, in essence, agree? Also, I can accept that I have no choice, but that does not necessarily make me happy about it! :>(

Namaste,

Dennis

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Message: 5

Date: Sun, 13 Aug 2000 11:43:27 -0700

From: "R. Viswanathan" <RVis@earthlink.net>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 4

Hi!

So much has been written under this title. Some are questioning or enquiring and others are answering or responding. Is not the basic point the following?

The Upanishads and Vedas can be taken as axioms which are unquestionable. Then it is interpreting our questions and answers to avoid contradictions with these axioms. This interpreting comes from our variously developed minds, all of which are limited. However, if reading any of these great scriptures triggers something within us spontaneously that is the direction in which the truth is found for us. This spontaneous something and its trigger are not analyzable with our minds totally logically (although we can pretend to do that!). Is not this the real point?

-- Vis

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Message: 6

Date: Sun, 13 Aug 2000 17:41:57 -0400

From: Greg Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 3

Hi Dennis,

Forgive this message if it's a duplicate - I got an error message from eGroups.com about the message being unsendable because in HTML...

Yes, kids teased me about my name when I was young! It's OK, I'm not sick of it at all!

Thanks for raising some interesting points in a clear, candid way. This is really breathing some life into the list in these lazy summer months!

You seem to agree with most of the philosophical points that are raised by the correspondents here. But who do you see here claiming that shruti gives absolute truth? [addendum added before the re-send: in your "Part 4 message" you do deal with this point and I see where you're coming from on it] Certainly the direct-path teachings don't emphasize the authority or infallibility of shruti, though they do like to cite it because of its excellent and skillful pointing to the moon.... Again, if you feel an affinity with direct-path teachings, what's the problem if some other path

claims to be the absolutely True one? All orthodox paths say this at some point or another! It inspires faith in some aspirants! In others, it makes them run away, which is why Christianity isn't growing too fast these days, or maybe it's even shrinking. I think you'd get lots juicier answers from the ADVAITA-L list if you posed the same question about shruti there!!

Even then, part of the teaching even in formal advaita is that the teaching of formal advaita is also Maya....

There's another thing you say that I'd like to comment on:

Dennis:

Remember, truth is absolute correspondence with reality. It is the unshakeable knowledge of man's true nature. It is the total negation of entity-ness.

Back to Greg:

There are three statements here. The second two are the way various teachings in nondualism define truth.

But the first, the notion of correspondence with reality, is an old, shop-worn claim in Western philosophy. It's also called representationalism or the "picture theory" and is rife with problems. Thoughts and language are pictures, but there's supposedly something external to themselves that they are pictures of.

What is the evidence for correspondence? It actually contradicts the other two statements you gave above, and those other two are much more like what you see in the direct-path teachings. Correspondence introduces a subject/object dualism. I'm asking about this, because it's the impulse to believe that some ideas correspond with reality more than others do that introduces all the fear, feelings of separation, and doubt that one is on the right path. The fear that our thoughts might be pointing in the wrong direction. These are nice teachings in raja yoga and bhakti yoga, but in a yoga like jnana where the nature of thought itself comes under scrutiny, a notion like correspondence cannot stand. In nondualism, truth is usually characterized as the collapse of any dichotomy upon which correspondence could be based.

Once again, I wish to salute you for bringing up these important and fascinating topics in such an amiable, clear, and skillful manner!

Om!

--Greg

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Dear Nitin,

Thanks for these additional comments. Again very clear and I agree with all that you say. I like the idea of meditation as a preliminary device. Clearing the mind of its habitual junk is an obvious pre-requisite for seeing things more clearly but it does seem that meditation in itself does not lead anywhere. I cannot help wondering why, since you clearly read the posts to the list you have not posted these useful observations. I will attempt to bring the discussions on the list to a close now. I think enough has been said and to prolong things further would not be useful. Incidentally, I did mean (Atmananda) Krishnamenon and not J.

Krishnamurti. He was, so I am told, the originator of the term 'direct path' and was the teacher of Jean Klein, himself the teacher of Francis Lucille.

I look forward to reading your later comments on paths, together with the extract from the book (many thanks for this), and will get back to you afterwards (within a couple of days hopefully).

Best regards,  
Dennis

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Dr.Nitin Trasi [mailto:ntrasi@vsnl.com]

**Sent:** 15 August 2000 10:44

**To:** Dennis Waite

**Subject:** Response

Dear Dennis, August 14, 2000

I was reading your posting in the advaita list, and I certainly appreciated your questions and your responses better than most of the answers given by the others. I could not help writing some responses (for whatever they are worth) in brief to some of the points raised:

*nothing can be trusted.*

You are so right. That is the Buddha's dying words were "Be a light unto yourselves." There are several reasons (interpolations, misinterpretations, mistranslations, misprints, limitations of words and language, context in which said, etc. etc) why nothing, not even the *srutis*, need be taken as gospel.

The bottomline is that there are no individual selves. There is only the one Self or Consciousness. But there is an illusion of separation (or maya) which creates the impression (in the various body-minds) that they are separate, autonomous, individual selves. In a sense it could be said that the one Consciousness incarnates in the various body-minds – like the novelist in the various characters in his novel. The individual 'self' or 'soul' cannot reincarnate because it never existed in the first place.

Free will is an illusion linked to the idea of a separate self, and which will persist as long as this idea remains. Meditation and other devices are useful but only in a preliminary way, somewhat like making a child sit down before he can start studying. Whether anything is "done" or just "happens" is a matter of perception depending upon whether there is the idea of a separate self (which is the "doer") or not. Enlightenment is the intuitive insight of the above truth. Liberation is the process of deconditioning which results from Enlightenment. Ultimately Enlightenment is the result of a spiritual maturation which happens and which cannot be forced (just like physical and psychological maturation).

You are right. "Self-purification" is not a pre-condition. I have discussed this in the book.

In short, all that can be "done", or to be more accurate, all that can happen, is (as Nisargadatta Maharaj said) the understanding of the situation. (I have discussed this in the book too as a separate chapter entitled *What should 'I' 'do'?*)

In conclusion, the contradictions you see in the various sages words are only apparent, and also partly because they are speaking at different levels of reality appropriate to the occasion on which (and to whom) they are talking.

My book is in a different (scientific) style from Wayne's books, so I do not think he would have liked to publish it.

(BTW, When you refer to Krishna-menon I presume you mean J. Krishnamurti).

Best wishes,

Nitin Trasi

Homepage: <http://personal.vsnl.com/ntrasi>

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Message: 6

Date: Mon, 14 Aug 2000 06:14:15 -0700 (PDT)

From: Jaishankar Narayanan <jaishankar\_n@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 4

Dear Friends,

"Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk> wrote

"I don't really want to open up another discussion of pramaana - I expect someone can refer me to some earlier archive on this - but my understanding is clearly deficient in this area. I was aware of the authority of the vedas referred to by Sadananda but I thought that agama encompassed also the words of the sage. After all, despite all cries of objection from the fundamentalists, it seems obvious that words translated and commented on by all and sundry will lead to ambiguity if not occasional misrepresentation.

The sage on the other hand is here now to answer questions and explain further until the point is fully understood. I am bound to say that, when it comes to the words of a realised sage or the words of one's favourite translation of the Upanishads or Brahmasutra (which is extremely difficult to understand anyway), I know which one I would go for! (I do acknowledge the objection that the sage in question just might not be enlightened.)

He can speak to this body-mind, aware of its precise needs and limitations; the scriptures, set in stone, can never do this.

I accept the point about not taking the words of a sage out of context. Although I did this in the post, the words did come from a complete dialogue so I don't think I have misunderstood what he was saying. Similar points are continually made in other discussions so that any opportunity for misunderstanding gets much reduced when one has read many. Surely, anyway the same argument must apply to the sruti? You cannot use the argument in only the one case. I can certainly agree that there is a danger of misunderstanding either the words (translated from Marathi or whatever) of Nisargadatta or the words (translated from Sanskrit) of ABC Upanishad. There is also a danger of misunderstanding the words of a living sage speaking to one directly. The big difference in the last case is that, by further discussion, he can

correct that misunderstanding."

Jai: The important thing which has been missed here is whether the sage being discussed here is a sampradayaavit (The one who knows the tradition and hence knows the methodology of teaching) or not. Because even if a person has been accepted as a sage he/she may not be a proper teacher if he/she doesn't know how to teach. That is the reason why Shankara goes to the extent of saying "asampradayavit moorkhavat apekshaneeyaha" - "The one who doesn't know the traditional methodology of teaching should be shunned as though that person is a fool." But nowadays most Gurus are self appointed and they have not studied under any traditional Guru and so they make contradictory statements and manage to confuse others also.

If somebody makes a statement which is clearly contradictory to what the sruti says then we have to discard that person's teaching. Names don't matter when we are enquiring into the truth of oneself. Vyasa and Shankara dismiss the teachings of great acharyas like Kapila, Kanada, Gautama, Patanjali etc. when they contradict the sruti, by showing the fallacies in their thinking.

Also some people suggested that you study the books of certain Gurus by yourself. I don't think it is a very good idea. In the tradition we always say that one should not do the enquiry into the self by oneself, even though one might be a great sanskrit pandita. This is because even to understand a particular sentence of the Veda one needs to have the complete vision of the vedas and know what is said before and after. Otherwise it will look contradictory and confusing. Also the Vedas will act as a Pramana only if it is handled by a Guru who knows the tradition (sampradayavit). Otherwise they will become just another book of speculations.

In Modern Vedanta the vedas are not given the status of a pramana and the role of the traditional teacher is being questioned. This has created confusion and most seekers are waiting for some special atma-bliss-experience to dawn on them when every experience is nothing but atma. Atma is the invariable in all experience and we don't need any special experience. What we need is the proper understanding of the nature of all experiences. That will be gained by listening to a traditional teacher as a committed student.

with love and prayers,

Jaishankar

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Message: 10

Date: Sun, 13 Aug 2000 07:19:10 -0400

From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>

Subject: Re: What is the point - Part 4

Dennis Waite wrote:

>

> [...] I know Wayne says many

> times that contradictions, even from one teacher, are natural. Nisargaddata  
> says the same thing too. Why should I complain? I suppose it's the thing  
> about pramaana. How can it be claimed so ardently that the sruti is (are?)  
> incontrovertibly true, when a sage can (and does) say things which are  
> contradictory?

contradiction in fact can be embraced as a positive method to release ourselves from the chains of logic and reason. for example, the statement that maya is real yet unreal is clearly a self-contained contradiction. and one of my favorite contradictions is the zen koan: "A equals A, therefore A is not equal to A." why is such a contradiction being so clearly stated?

the thing is, what it is we're striving for is not a state of philosophy, but a state of Being. and the advantage in the method of embracing contradiction is to short-circuit the Mind's obsessive attachment to reason and its desire to formulate some systemic philosophy that can readily answer its myriad questions. in fact, there are really no end to the questions it can conjure--one answered, invariably leads us to another and another, ad infinitum. so the whole pursuit in/of the Mind is an existential detour and simultaneous dead-end.

>  
> I think perhaps you reach the nub of the issue when you say that the  
> problems are realities only within vyaavahaara and that when this is  
> transcended all the concepts become equally meaningless. When the sage or  
> the sruti talks about paths and freedom of will to choose paths and move  
> towards enlightenment, or when a sage says something quite the opposite,  
> all  
> are talking about the unreality of vyaavahaara. You could say that, since  
> the topic of discussion is unreal, then nothing that can be said is true so  
> that contradiction is ok. Fine! But then it does make a bit of a nonsense  
> to  
> cite the sruti as an ultimate authority, doesn't it?  
>

sruti isn't either beyond vyavahara or without contradiction. upanishads speak throughout the contradiction that there is a jiva that needs to apply its will in the various yogas to earn moksha on one hand and on the other say there is no jiva in existence apart from the One-without-a-Second [in brahman].

it depends on how we want to look at what's being said in a given context [in \*any\* of the sanctioned spiritual documents in \*any\* tradition]. if we grew up and were indoctrinated in one tradition--as i myself was trained in roman catholicism and even attended a catholic

school, yet i learned incredibly valuable lessons from this rigid orthodox approach, that preached such immaculate exclusivity [where everyone else in the world, \*including\* the protestant christians were all going to hell], became such an obvious blunder to me, that i was questioning it in 3rd grade and the nuns had no answers to my observations that is there were an All Merciful God, how could He allow so many souls to \*eternally\* suffer in hell because they were never given the opportunity to hear the teachings of Jesus [let alone the Roman Catholic interpretation!]....

therefore we have to soberly and onjectively consider that there are myriad possible paths and myriad possible teachers from any tradition or no tradition at all that can deliver one to one's source in the Self. it depends on one's proclivities and developed intellect. no-one has not only the right but neither the capacity to judge which path or teacher is the correct one for a given person. moreover, if the path or teacher appears 'wrong' either from a specific or general or even a universal \*relative\* perspective, then that 'wrong' journey itself had important lessons for the individual to learn.

this, in turn, raises further philosophical questions. as we can see, they run in ever wider and wider circles...ultimately taking us nowhere.

thus we are immersed in an unfathomable Mystery. in the course of our traversing it, the revelation dawns [via moksha--for this is the release from the intellect's dire need to have everything in Life clarified and categorized] that there's no possibility in ever conquering it! moreover, \*we do not WANT to conquer it!\* for the Mystery is the essence of the wonder and beauty of Being.

namaste

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 09:57:26 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: What is the Point - Part 5

I like Frank's description of relative versus absolute truth and do not disagree with any of this. I'm not sure that this is the answer to the dilemma however. Since the real truth cannot be spoken, everything that is spoken of by sage or scripture is ultimately untrue, whether it's referring to relative or absolute. Fine, but then no one can claim any one to be the true version, to which ultimate reference should be made. But this is exactly what traditionalists do. I agree with you Frank, but do they? R. Viswanathan makes exactly this point, wanting to regard the Upanishads and

Vedas as axioms that are unquestionable. Why should I do this when living sages do not? (Incidentally, Greg, your last post asked who on this list was claiming sruti as absolute truth - the answer occurred in the post prior to yours in the digest!)

Robert, I still think you are trying to push the steel metaphor too far. Steel is not mostly empty space in the absolute sense. This is still only a relative sense, that of being looked at under high magnification. We do not know what it looks like in an absolute sense; it is after all, like everything else, ultimately only Consciousness. I didn't want to quibble particularly with reincarnation; it is just one example that seemed a straightforward one to use. I'm possibly more concerned with the question of paths. Direct claims none is meaningful or can lead anywhere, whilst traditional has all of these different yogas. (Mind you, as I - body-mind - get increasingly older, the idea of abolishing birthdays sounds like quite a good one!)

Greg, I agree I would get some much plainer replies on the Advaita list. I wouldn't dare! (Anyway, I unsubscribed several months ago - the dry academic acceptance and discussion did not seem to me what advaita is really about at all. Mind you, the Non Duality Salon seems to go to the opposite extreme. Masses of chatty and friendly stuff but mostly inconsequential and I just can't keep up with reading it; afraid I may have to unsubscribe to that soon, too.) Also, I acknowledge that the teaching itself is part of maayaa.

I was interested in your arguments against the statements I made: Remember, truth is absolute correspondence with reality. It is the unshakeable knowledge of man's true nature. It is the total negation of entity-ness.

I'm not quite sure how to respond. Rueful, embarrassed, honoured or smug? You see those are not my statements at all; they are direct translations from Nisargadatta by Ramesh Balsekar. Certainly I found what you said interesting. I would not have thought that the first statement was anything to do with representationalism but the you are the philosopher and I must confess that I have lost patience with trying to read people like Daniel Dennett in the past. Perhaps you could email your comments to Wayne who could then ask Ramesh about what was meant?

Namaste,

Dennis

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Message: 3  
Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 10:26:30 -0400  
From: Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca>  
Subject: What is the point -- Part 4

Dear Dennis,

This would seem to be problem of such fundamental importance that scarcely anybody seems to have

addressed it. I would be very interested to know of any answers that have been offered in Advaita or in any other tradition. The only credible answer that I am aware of is due to Spinoza so let me sketch it briefly.

Spinoza is a determinist (he explicitly denies free will). In fact his determinism is more thoroughgoing than anything I have encountered in Advaita; it can be described as 'strong determinism' (Penrose), which is to say the idea that there is only one history of the universe which is logically possible. (Spinoza: 'Things could not have been brought into being by God in any order or in any manner other than that which has in fact obtained'. Mind you Spinoza's proof of this proposition does not stand up to modern standards of scrutiny.) God is the 'sole free cause' but he is only free in the sense that he is not conditioned by anything else. To say that God is bound by laws of logical necessity is probably not something that, say, Francis Lucille would disagree with but what is extraordinary about Spinoza's position is that logical necessity leaves no room for arbitrary behaviour -- free will!-- on God's part. (Note that this does not deny God's creativity but it does mean that this creativity is mathematical rather than artistic in nature. Also, the entire project of the Ethics is to show that human 'freedom, salvation or blessedness' consists in understanding the 'necessity of the divine nature'.)

As for the point of it all (i.e. life), Spinoza would have us believe that God's only 'motivation' is to manifest himself in every conceivable way:

'to those who ask why God did not create all men so that they are governed by reason, I give no answer but this ... that the laws of his nature are so vast as to suffice for the production of everything conceivable to an infinite intelligence'.

Regards,  
Patrick

Dennis wrote:

I agree that I do have some confusion about 'doing'. The original source of teaching I had on the subject was that 'only the guna act', the Self does nothing at all. I have also use the metaphor of the petrol in the car - the petrol enables the car to move but does not itself actually 'do' anything.

Similarly, the Self enables things to happen but does not itself act. More recently, Francis Lucille has made statements to the effect that the Self can 'do' whatever it likes. Obviously, the Self cannot be limited in any way. Wayne Liquorman says, of course, that our problem is the belief that we, as body-mind mechanisms, are 'doers' and that, losing this sense of personal doership is what constitutes enlightenment. He says that all action is God acting through these body-minds. There is clearly some inconsistency here that I have still fully to clarify in my own mind. You imply a belief that Brahman does not act or have free will - this is surely a limitation?

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Message: 4

Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 10:47:34 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: What is the Point - Part 5

Hi Dennis,

From this part 5 post, it sounds like you might not really have any questions! Maybe some answers however.... Are you at peace with the idea that different people make different claims? And that not all agree? Orthodox religionists in every tradition will tell you similar things about their scriptures. Their "direct path" counterparts in every tradition, on the other hand, will take the same utilitarian attitude towards the scriptures that is being talked about in this thread. Because of the multiplicity of rigid orthodox beliefs, if they were \*all\* true, then everybody would be going to somebody's orthodox hell!! Why the concern about one particular path?? Let them have their beliefs...

About the notion of truth as correspondence with reality - you said that the correspondence is a translation. I didn't \*think\* you were the first to say it :-)) but I was interested in what \*you\* meant by it. Have you thought about it? Lots of people say the same kind of thing, because it is

the most popular conception of truth. (There are other, non-representational and non-popular theories of truth.) Not a big deal at all. Sometimes it is said as upaya/expedient means to inspire people, and sometimes it's said because that's how the speaker thinks of the mind and the world.

Om!!

--Greg

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Message: 5

Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 11:03:07 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: What is the point -- Part 5

> I'm not sure that this is the answer to the  
>dilemma however. Since the real truth cannot be spoken, everything that is  
>spoken of by sage or scripture is ultimately untrue, whether it's referring  
>to relative or absolute. Fine, but then no one can claim any one to be the  
>>true version, to which ultimate reference should be made. But this is  
>exactly what traditionalists do. I agree with you Frank, but do they? R.  
>Viswanathan makes exactly this point, wanting to regard the Upanishads and  
>Vedas as axioms that are unquestionable. Why should I do this when living  
>sages do not?

Dennis Greetings.

Your questions are well taken. As I had in my first response you have already made conclusions and unless you 'unconclude' yourself, no one can answer you, since you have already answered yourself.

But leaving that aside, here are some points if you still are open and want to dwell on it.

First, we are not seeking answers that are in the realm that can be deduced by pratyaksha or anumaana - direct perception or logical deduction, we need to relay on some thing other than these too for the means of knowledge. This part I am sure you agree. For that Shabda is the only pramaana. Shabda include both shaastra, in this case Veda and also apta vaakya, words of wise, from your point say the living sages. Here Faith or Shradda is essential since we are dealing with entities beyond the grasp of intellect - Shankara said - shraddaa is 'shaastrasya guruvaakyasya satyabuddhavadharaNa' - Faith that the words of the teacher and the shaastra are true indeed'. This is actually a working hypothesis needed to proceed further in saadhana. - Hence shradda is part of saadhana chatushtayam - the four fold qualifications needed.

Therefore, as I said in my post - See why Vedanta? - if you have full faith in the teaching of the sage you believe in - then there is nothing to it and go ahead and follow - DO NOT QUESTION HIS WORDS EITHER -take his

statements as though they are 'Veda vaakya-s'. Follow and you will reach the destination. And that exactly what Nisargadatta Maharaj did - if you follow his life.

But As I recall, your mail started with the question - Why there is conflict between the words of the living sage and the scriptural statements. - Such a question does not and should not arise if one has full faith in the words of the sage one believes in. He is absolutely right and that is the end of it - But since such a question arose, at least to me, is an indication that there is a question of doubt since one finds a conflict between the sages words vs. the scriptures words.

In the case of doubt - the answer then it is better to take Veda as correct than the words of a particular sage. This is not just the traditionalist view - this is just practical and is used in Sciences as well as a basis. If a scientist makes a statement contradictory to the published theories of the past, no one is just going to jump in until the new theory is proved beyond any reasonable doubt. Once it is proved it becomes part of the knowledge or Veda for others to study and proceed - This is the scientific approach to any problem.

Vedas even if one does not want to accept that they are 'apourusheya' are only recordings of past scientists or sages who have confirmed the theories by their own experiences that it is indeed true. Hence they are the statements of sages only which have been time tested. Hence a doubt arose in your mind who is more correct, until one confirms by your own experiments who is right, the right way is to take the time tested teaching as more correct than the statements of a particular sage.

Now concerning the axiomatic statements - Veda-s are not axiomatic statements or declarations, but statements which are based on experiences of sages who have followed the path and confirmed by their own experiences - shR^it, anubhava and yukti are combined here - In ChaDigya, Uddalaka takes his son Swetaketu step by step in establishing the truth - He give several thought experiments for Swetaketu to perform and guides him in each step to lead to 'tat tvam asi swetaketu'.

Regarding reincarnation you asked - Krishna provides a definite answers in his discussions with Arjuna - coming from horses mouth as it were - particularly when Arjuna asks what happens to the yogi who dies without reaching his goal - See . Ch. 6.

Hence it is not the orthodox or traditionalists versus non-traditionalists views - it is the question of what is the ultimate authority in resolving - when there are doubts or conflicts between ones understanding of what living sage says versus what scriptures says. First to understand what scriptures says as Shree Jaishankara rightly pointed out that the teacher must have through grasp of the scriptural statements. Since it is not an objective science, the correct understanding of the scriptural is likely only when the teacher is taught by a proper teacher who himself has not only has the experience of the truth but through knowledge of the scriptures - Hence shruti's declaration that one should approach a teacher who is not only BrahmanishhTa but shrothria - one who is well versed in scriptures. - That is what 'sampradaaya' teacher means.

Bottom line - If you donot have any doubts about the statements of the

living sage that you have faith - there no question to ask - Just with that faith proceed and you will reach the goal he has pointed.  
If you do have doubt then only - scripture is a better source than any particular individual.

What is required ultimately is faith to proceed further and that is the bottom line.

This ends my discussion of why scripture is better pramaana - In my second posting on the Notes on Brahmasuutra I promised to address the 'anumaana Prakriya' - Role of logical inference and some aspects of this will be discussed there.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

---

Message: 6  
Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 11:48:32 -0400  
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>  
Subject: Re: Re: What is the point -- Part 5

Namaste Sadananda-ji,

You give a very good summary to Dennis's question about a sage vs. the scriptures:

Bottom line - If you do not have any doubts about the statements of the living sage that you have faith - there no question to ask - Just with that faith proceed and you will reach the goal he has pointed.  
If you do have doubt then only - scripture is a better source than any particular individual.

Perhaps Dennis has found that person. If not, I hope soon!

Om!

--Greg

---

Message: 8  
Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 12:52:38 -0400  
From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>  
Subject: Re: Re: What is the point -- Part 5

>  
>Perhaps Dennis has found that person. If not, I hope soon!  
>  
>



> Viswanathan makes exactly this point, wanting to regard the Upanishads and  
> Vedas as axioms that are unquestionable. Why should I do this when living  
> sages do not?

Lot of mention was made in the last few posts in this thread that the living sages do not agree with the upanishads and vedas. I wonder if some specific examples can be given for this. Who are these living sages that disagreed with the upanishads and where do they disagree?

>  
> Namaste,  
>  
> Dennis  
>

Regards  
Gummuluru Murthy

---

Message: 3  
Date: Wed, 16 Aug 2000 10:28:48 -0700 (PDT)  
From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

Greetings Patrick:

Good to see you and Dennis deserves the credit for your participation. The ideas expressed by Spinoza can be identified in the messages of Gita and the Upanishads. These thought processes have been floating coexisting in the minds of saints and sages across the globe and across the time. Sadaji has already pointed out that for a realized soul, there is no 'free-will' and he (she) accepts and sees no contradiction in everything that is happening in the world around him (her).

One of the most admired verse in Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 18, Verse 66) explains how this status can be achieved::

Sarvadharmaanparityajya maamekam sharanamvraja  
Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhyo mokshayishyaami maa shuchah

Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter.  
Be not grieved for  
I shall release thee from all evils. (Translation by  
Dr. Radhakrishnana, Bhagavad Gita, page 378).

Dr. Radhakrishnan sites this beautiful quotation from Ruysbroeck: "He only is fit to contemplate the Divine light who is the slave to nothing, not even to his virtues." With unreserved surrender to the Supreme, we will always attain total perfection. When we didn't reach the highest level of perfection, we should know that we didn't totally surrender our Ego!

This condensed verse replicates the philosophy of Spinoza as spelled by you. It is no wonder that the truth behind this verse is accepted by all the Vedanta schools - Advaita, Dvaita and Vishistadvaita but different explanations.

warmest regards,

Ram Chandran

--- Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca> wrote:  
> Dear Dennis,  
>  
> This would seem to be problem of such  
> fundamental importance that  
> scarcely anybody seems to have  
> addressed it. I would be very interested  
> to know of any answers that have been  
> offered in Advaita or in any  
> other tradition. The only credible  
> answer that I am aware of is due  
> to Spinoza so let me sketch it briefly.  
>  
> Spinoza is a determinist (he explicitly  
> denies free will).....

---

Message: 5  
Date: Wed, 16 Aug 2000 18:35:00 -0000  
From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>  
Subject: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

Dear Ram,

Thanks for welcoming me back. I am sure that many Advaitins who quite happily repudiate the idea of free will for contingent beings will balk at the idea of 'strong determinism' on the grounds that it deprives the Self of free will. Yet I would like to suggest that if strong determinism is granted -- so that there is a clear recognition that things could not possibly be other than they are -- then the 'unreserved surrender to the Supreme' that you mentioned is already achieved. So I am curious to know what you and other members of the list think about it. (As I said, I am not convinced by Spinoza's 'proof' but I suspect that the idea is true.)

Regards,

Patrick

---

Message: 6

Date: Wed, 16 Aug 2000 14:53:03 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

>Dear Ram,

>

>Thanks for welcoming me back. I am sure that many Advaitins  
>who quite happily repudiate the idea of free will for contingent  
>beings will balk at the idea of 'strong determinism' on the grounds  
>that it deprives the Self of free will. Yet I would like to suggest  
>that if strong determinism is granted -- so that there is a clear  
>recognition that things could not possibly be other than they are --  
>then the `unreserved surrender to the Supreme' that you mentioned is  
>already achieved. So I am curious to know what you and other members  
>of the list think about it. (As I said, I am not convinced by  
>Spinoza's 'proof' but I suspect that the idea is true.)

>

>Regards,

>

>Patrick

>

Patrick who has the free will - the aatma or the anaatma - From the aatma or consciousness or truth, what is free will and what does it do with it. From the anaatma or the mater reference, what does a will let alone free will means?

In the samsaari state or vyavahaara state only the free will operates since there is doer ship involved. As long I feel I am a doer there is doer and enjoyership and all problems belong to him. Using that free will he can sit for meditation on contemplate on the reality that he is beyond the free will! - Then the knowledge dawns on his that he is ' akartaaham abhoktaaham' I am neither doer not enjoyer - I am one without a second - beyond the concepts of wills and unwillis where cause and effect and hence time operatates - thus beyond the concept of time.

True surrendering is the very surrrendring of the ahankaara where wills operatate. That happens only once that is when the knowledge dawns. That is what Ram implies in Radhakrishan's statement. Until then one is only threatening to surrender but not really surrenders.

Hari Om!

Sadananda

---

Message: 7

Date: Wed, 16 Aug 2000 19:39:58 -0000

From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

Dear Sadananda,

you wrote:

> Patrick who has the free will - the aatma or the anaatma - From the

> aatma or consciousness or truth, what is free will and what does it  
> do with it. From the anaatma or the mater reference, what does a  
>will let alone free will means?

Please understand that my question was not about free will. However I  
thought it was appropriate to refer to it in passing since it bears  
directly on Dennis's statement (#5863)

> You imply a belief  
> that Brahman does not act or have free will - this is surely a  
>limitation?

So let me restate the question. Following the theoretical physicist  
Roger Penrose, let us define the term 'strong determinism' as the  
hypothesis that there is only one history of the universe which is  
logically possible. My question is whether Advaita has anything to say  
about this hypothesis.

Regards

Patrick

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Message: 1

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 07:16:53 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

>

>Please understand that my question was not about free will. However I  
>thought it was appropriate to refer to it in passing since it bears  
>directly on Dennis's statement (#5863)

Sorry Patrik for my misinterpretation.

>> You imply a belief  
>> that Brahman does not act or have free will - this is surely a  
>>limitation?

No - limitless cannot have any limitation. Action involves three aspects -  
actor, action and acting. When we say Rama killed RavaNa, Rama is  
different from RavaNa and both are different from killing. Hence the very  
implication of action one limits the other. Brahman does not act is  
similar to Brahman cannot move (achalam) - is that a limitation? He cannot  
move only because he is everywhere and there is no place where he is not  
for him to move. Any movement is only therefore apparent movement for  
those who see. Any action is also with in time bound or gets limited by

time. Brahman is beyond the realm of time and cause-effect limitations. It is our description of Brahman that he has no free will or he does not act etc. It is only an indicator to point to Him that any things that acts cannot not be him - just as 'neti' neti etc that he is not this and not this - Being not this is not a limitation and in fact it is the other way around.

My answer may not have a direct bearing on your question, I am only taking this chance to clarify based on my understanding.

>So let me restate the question. Following the theoretical physicist  
>Roger Penrose, let us define the term 'strong determinism' as the  
>hypothesis that there is only one history of the universe which is  
>logically possible. My question is whether Advaita has anything to say  
>about this hypothesis.

If I interpret the question - strong determination is a 'will' - I am not clear Penrose connection of strong determination to one history of the universe. In Advaita universe itself is a projection of the total mind, hence the history of the universe is as much a projection as the universe itself. At the absolute level there is no universe separate from Brahman to have a history. Once we talk about universe and creation one is already coming done to Iswara level or vyavahaara level. At that level Iswara being all powerful, there is no limitation for him to create a universe with one history. Since he has all the capacities that one can dream off, he can create more than one universe or universes with many histories. Just as I can dream many dream worlds each having its own history or histories - there is no limitation in my imaginations. So is Iswara. Advaita explains all this as part of vyavyahaara which is in the realm of time and space etc. It also goes beyond vyavahaara to claim that from the absolute point universe and its history are in the realm of cause-effect or time and are only apparent and not real.

I donot know if this is a direct answer but one can extract an answer from it.

Hari Om!  
Sadanadna

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Message: 2  
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 13:12:37 +0100  
From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>  
Subject: What is the point - conclusion

I will briefly comment on any further points made by the group and would like to make this my last post on the topic. I am most grateful to everyone who responded and humbly acknowledge the many wise observations that have been made. I feel that to prolong the discussion further would be counter-productive. After all, no firm conclusions can ever be reached and the purpose of the list is to provide stimulating and informed input hopefully to enable buddhi to exercise some discrimination and not allow manas free rein (reign?) over a mass of opinion. I feel that these aims have been achieved here - a perfect example of how such a list should operate!

Jaishankar's further elaboration of pramaana and the importance of sampradaaya was helpful. It is clear that only a sage who has studied the shruti can be qualified to interpret their content, given that this content is partly determined by the teaching tradition itself and the manner in which it was agreed to try to interpret reality for the mind of a seeker. I suppose the use of Sanskrit words is an example of this. It only makes sense to use those terms when both speaker and listener have encountered them in previous reading and teaching and have a clear understanding of what they mean. I prefer Sadananda's more liberal view, however, in respect of what to do when a sage contradicts the shruti. As long as one accepts that sage and follows his teaching, it is fine to ignore the shruti altogether and thus not encounter the contradictions. Fallacies in thinking cannot really apply when the material is beyond mind and logic anyway. However, if your nature is to regard the shruti as infallible and a sine qua non, then that is fine too.

Unfortunately, although I have accepted Francis Lucille as a living teacher, my mind still seeks to understand the traditional teachings too. I welcome Sadananda's posts on the Brahmasutras. I have long regarded this as something I should really make the effort to look at. We did once study the introductory paragraphs for some weeks (couple of hours a week) at my old school but did not progress further - and then I left. Please restrict to no more than 1 post per week though or I will never keep up!

I like Frank's point about embracing contradiction. Clearly this is a viable technique since Zen is so successful! It is certainly true that there is no end to questions from the mind, even when there is the certain knowledge that the truth is beyond the mind. Ridiculous, isn't it? There are certainly claims to many different paths (or to no path being possible, which I think Greg pointed out is still effectively a path). I conceded that, given the ineffable nature of things, any could be helpful but all are ultimately only thorns or boats to be discarded as merely temporarily useful metaphors.

Patrick has picked up my comment about 'doing'. I think that this is something we could treat as a new theme and I would be very interested to continue this dialogue - perhaps we could entitle it 'Doing - me or God' or something to differentiate it from the previous thread. You say that you have not encountered so strong a determinism as that of Spinoza in Advaita. But Ramesh has the metaphor of life and the universe being a huge painting on a wall, stretching to the left (= past) and right (future). Because we are so close to it, we can see very little but, if we could step back far enough, we could see the entire thing laid out irrevocably now. This must be about as hard as it gets! But as for God's free will, presumably if He doesn't like this painting, He can easily do another one!

I think I'm running out of questions on this topic now, Greg, which is one of the reasons for calling a halt. As indicated above, I think I am now happy with the contradictions. Yes, I agree with the statement that truth is reality \*within the context of discussions on Advaita\*. If you try to pin me down too much on what exactly I mean by this, I may flounder and escape by saying that the ultimate nature of these is beyond description or even conceptual understanding. They're only words after all!! (Tongue in cheek remark.)

Sadananda's further remarks on pramaana beautifully summarise all that has

been said on the relative status of the sage and the shruti and the ultimate need for shraddhaa. I am relieved that you do not consider the statements of the shruti to be axiomatic. Your reference to the explicit statements about reincarnation in the giitaa is useful. This was the traditional view to which I was referring and is precisely the sort of description which makes no sense to me, having taken on board the hard, Direct Path, definitions. However, less we all embark on further arguments about this, the giitaa is not strictly speaking shruti, is it?

Gummuluru asks me to explain the dilemma again. I ask that, bearing in mind what I have said above, if you are happy to discontinue this topic, let us do so now. I was not being disrespectful to either sage or shruti, merely pointing out again that reality is intrinsically beyond mind or intellect so no words can ever explain anything so must necessarily be untrue, however well they try.

I see that the discussion about Strong Determinism has begun now from Patrick's posting. I will not make any further comments on this for the moment other than the implied one when I made the original statements. How can God be 'absolute' if He has no free will?

Thanks again to all for an excellent discussion.

Namaste,

Dennis

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Message: 5  
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 02:18:51 -0400  
From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>  
Subject: Doing: me or God?

namaste dennis-

first of all, beautiful job on your inquiry/dissertation!

now, as Patrick has provoked--and a worthy observation:

> How can God be 'absolute' if He has no free will?

in short, and to get right to the guts of the matter: God, by definition, is \*not\* within the domain of the Absolute.

in other words, the Absolute doesn't support a "God" as we typically define Him (or technically Him/Her), since any conceivable definition must yet fall within the nature of Relativity.

similarly (and just as there can be no

free will if there is no jiva), there can neither be 'free will' if there is no [\*anthropomorphically conceived\* or thus from the Relative perspective the idea of an absolute] God.

i personally fully ascribe to there being a God in/of the Manifest World-- which had been variously referred to as isvara, hiranyagarba, avalokitesvara, jaweh or JHVH, allah, etc.--but It is not Absolute. how can it be? since the Absolute is unknowable, ineffable, attributeless [beyond even omniscience, omnipotence, etc--for these are relative attributes], how can the idea of God possibly exist within It?

so, the question becomes: does isvara have free will? i'm happy to say that i don't know. since, to my understanding, it can first of all be considered the 'executive head' of a world that is itself a mystery. and secondly happy to not know because it can be fun to sit around, discuss and philosophize on things like this... however, as i alluded to earlier, such matters have no bearing on what should \*really\* concern us: the nature of our everpresent Being in the Absolute brahman.

OM shaanthy

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Message: 7

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 10:04:16 -0400

From: Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Doing - me or God

Dear Dennis, Sadananda and all:

We all agree that human agency is illusory, that the gunas alone act. But how does it come to pass that the gunas act in one way rather than another?. If the 'divine will' (with apologies to Sadananda and Frank --- this phrase is useful and well sanctioned in other traditions so I propose to use it) is arbitrary and incomprehensible how is it possible for us to acquiesce or submit to it? In other words, if things are not to our liking and we believe

that Ishwara could have willed them to be otherwise is there any reason other than slavish obedience why we should not revolt against them?

Frank suggests that this is not an important question but it seems clear to me that it is.

Spinoza proposed a rather drastic solution to this problem: it is part of the perfection of God's creation that it is logically impossible for things to be other than they are. (In modern terms this is Penrose's 'strong determinism'.)

Note, Dennis, this is stronger than the painting metaphor (which might be called 'classical determinism')

because, in your presentation, the painting is not the only one which is logically possible.

And note that to say that strong determinism is a limitation on 'God's free will' doesn't

make sense unless an embargo on logically impossible behaviour is a limitation. Likewise

I would refute Sadananda's objection

> Since he has all the capacities that one can dream off,  
> he can create more than one universe or universes with many histories.

by pointing out that is not imposing a limitation on Iswhara to say that he only conceives

universes which are logically possible.

I also think that the suggestion here that

that there are opportunities for creation that Ishwara fails to avail himself of (by exercising his 'free will' and choosing to create one universe rather than another) must be wrong ---

surely \*this\* is a limitation on his creativity.

I hope this provides some food for thought.

Regards,

Patrick

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Message: 10

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 11:43:23 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Dennis, Patrick, Sadananda, frank, and others,

Welcome Patrick!

Had to join this fascinating discussion. I agree with frank's intuitions of God being construed as Isvara, Hiranyagarba, Avalokitesvara, Jaweh or JHVH, Allah, etc. And that this is a relative entitification. These are all characters, many are anthropomorphic. How could they not be within the relative?

As to whether God (construed this way) has free will -- this character lacks free will for the same reason we do. Any movement or action or thought associated with this divine character is again characterizable by the whirling of the gunas. This isn't to deny, however, that there are teachings whose efficacy depends on our human belief that God has free will! Just like there are teachings that depend on our belief that \*we\* have free will! These teachings are beautiful and profound and inspirational, and are part of the magnificent display. God, beliefs in God, seeking God, devotional actions towards God, are all part of God's wonderful display!!

Maybe I'm coming into this too late to know what the painting metaphor is, but Patrick mentioned that the painting metaphor of determinism allows for alternative paintings to exist, and is therefore not as strong as strong determinism. Is this the same one that Ramesh Balsekar talks about? The 50-mile-long painting that represents all of phenomenality, that is already set, but it is looked at from left to right, through time, so that there is the appearance of sequentiality and cause-effect? If so, then it's certainly strong enough. Going by the evidence within the painting, which is all the evidence there is - there is no evidence of the existence of another painting.

Maybe you could summarize the "logical impossibility" argument of Spinoza's. Does it depend on a particular definition of God?

It is a very useful way to characterize determinism as that description of phenomenality in which no two historical narratives can be true. No alternate histories. On the micro level, this translates to there being no true counterfactual statement, and no cause-effect relations. "No alternate history" means nothing can be/could have been different from the way it is now. Is-ness. Simultaneity. We can \*say\* things like "I would have liked to go to Cancun instead of Guadalajara," but upon analysis, this makes no real sense. It is an evocative statement, not pointing to any counterfactual state of affairs. Basically, in this kind of determinism, there are no woulda-coulda-shoulda's, no if-then's, no why-and-because's. A true intuitive understanding of this usually serves to calm the mind's seeking impulse to ask "why" questions about the way phenomenality is.

But in advaita it's not called determinism. The insight in advaita or non-dualism is not that entities are determined -- but rather that there are no separate entities. Nothing exists such that it could either have

free will or be determined. It is for *that* reason that it is said that there's no free will. But there's really no determinism either. About *what* would that statement be made?

Welcome again, Patrick! Nice to hear your interesting and sophisticated thoughts on these issues.

Om!

--Greg

Message: 12

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 16:38:43 -0000

From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Greg,

I am very pleased to have engaged your interest in this question and I look forward to your contributions.

> As to whether God (construed this way) has free will -- this character  
> lacks free will for the same reason we do. Any movement or action or  
> thought associated with this divine character is again characterizeable by  
> the whirling of the gunas.

OK so Iswhara is conditioned by the gunas. But surely the gunas are not free agents?

> Maybe I'm coming into this too late to know what the painting metaphor is,  
> but Patrick mentioned that the painting metaphor of determinism allows for  
> alternative paintings to exist, and is therefore not as strong as strong  
> determinism. Is this the same one that Ramesh Balsekar talks about? The  
> 50-mile-long painting that represents all of phenomenality, that is already  
> set, but it is looked at from left to right, through time, so that there is  
> the appearance of sequentiality and cause-effect? If so, then it's  
> certainly strong enough. Going by the evidence within the painting, which  
> is all the evidence there is - there is no evidence of the existence of  
> another painting.

Interesting point. We'll have to ask Dennis (it surely wasn't what he had in mind!)

> Maybe you could summarize the "logical impossibility" argument of Spinoza's. Does it depend on a particular definition of God?

Unfortunately I don't buy Spinoza's argument myself and I wouldn't be able to defend his metaphysics in open court, but to answer your questions in 100 words or less:

Spinoza's God is the totality of all that is, understood as an individual being ('the infinite and eternal being who is God or nature') apart from whom there are no other beings. (This doctrine is known as the 'uniqueness of substance'.) God is the sole free cause, beyond good and evil and wholly immanent. He is knowable to us through two attributes, thought and extension, and these are parallel so that whatever is known under one attribute can be translated to the other. Thus for Spinoza it is equally correct to say that God is the World (the extended thing) and God is consciousness (the thinking thing) and physics and logic are co-extensive. The argument for strong determinism ('Things could not have been brought into being by God in any order or in any manner other than that which has in fact obtained') is based on the perfection or maximality or uniqueness of God: if another universe is logically possible but not realized then God, the extended thing, is not all that he could be.

The idea that all things follow from the divine nature in an absolutely necessary way is central to his philosophy which he is brazen enough to cast as a way to salvation. Man's 'freedom, salvation or blessedness' lies in the constant and eternal love of God, and this 'intellectual love' is \*nothing other\* than the pleasure of understanding how individual things (and in particular our emotions) arise with inexorable logic from the 'necessity of the divine nature'.

I hope this helps.

Regards,

Patrick

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Message: 13

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 12:39:07 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Patrick worte:

>

>We all agree that human agency is

>illusory, that the gunas alone act.

>But how does it come to pass that

>the gunas act in one way rather than

>another?.

Since that one way includes all the one ways, in any particular way they act, the same question remains as to why did they act that way and not

another way. The question may cease only when the actions are random and unpredictable. We will come back to this but first a little clarification.

First let us be clear from Advaita point - Brahman is the absolute state beyond descriptions - one without a second. All discussions of wills and no-will actually at the next level - vyavahaara

Here we talk about Iswara, the creator, the Jagat, the universe, and jiiiva, the individual. We have already come down to next level and what we talk has no relevance at the Brahman state. Things get muddy if we keep changing these reference states- jump from Iswara to Brahman sometimes without realizing it - this is just for clarification.

When we say prakriti acts with its guna's behind, it acts as per the laws of nature established with the creation. Since there is the intelligence behind the prakriti propelling it to act, and the intelligent or intelligence being what it is, cannot act unintelligently - is that a limitation? No it is its glory. Hence creation is not a random process but well ordered or behaved thermodynamic system. Randomly typing somethings and expect to have an order in the results is not possible. That is why it is called creation rather than random process. Laws that are discovered in a corner of laboratory are universal and valid galaxies and galaxies away implies that the system is well behaved. Hence there is always a particular way, the way is propelled by the results of the previous action and the expectation of the results for the future. Only otherway is an unintelligent random way and that is washed out since intelligence is behind the prakriti with its Guna-s.

If the 'divine will'

>(with apologies to Sadananda and Frank  
>--- this phrase is useful and well  
>sanctioned in other traditions so I  
>propose to use it)  
>is arbitrary and incomprehensible how is  
>it possible for us to acquiesce or  
>submit  
>to it?

Divine will is O,K since we are now taking at the level of Iswara and not Brahman. No need for apology. At the Iswara level there is a divine will. It is sanctioned in the Advaita too.

In Ch. Up - bahunyaam prajaayeyeti - He wanted to become many and He became many - That was a willful action - 'nowill' 'no action' etc are at Brahman level as long as we donot get these concepts mixed up there is no problem.

Now 'divine will' is not random or arbitrary and incomprehensible either from Iswara point. He follows the laws laid down by himself. Just as there is no arbitrariness and inconsistencies in the laws governing our dream creations from dreamers point of view. Waker may have a different opinion or limited subject in the dream may have a different opinion about it. Creation being a creation, it is as I said has to be a well behaved system and cannot be arbitrary implying randomness. Otherwise the scientists will be out of jobs.

From our limited intellect, yes we may see arbitrariness but that is the limitation of our intellect and not the limitation of the Iswara or creation. Hence basis for your question is itself is invalid.

In other words, if things are not  
>to our liking and we believe  
>that Ishwara could have willed them to  
>be otherwise is there any reason other  
>than slavish obedience why we should not  
>revolt against them?

No need to be slave either - by all means revolt - Suppose I donot like 'gravitaional force'. I donot like to be slave to that force - so what do I do - I can not jump from the fourth floor just becuse I donot like the gravitaional force. Of course I can use my intelligence and try to undersand the laws governing the gravitation and make use of it to overcome it. Hence it is not slavish obedience to Iswara, but appreciation of His laws and use the very intelligence that He has given to do what I like. Revolt if you can and if that helps to conquer the laws you will. But then even that capacity to overcome are already there in the Iswara's creation. I wouldnot call it revolt any more but use of proper intelligence to arrive what you want - since such possibilities already exist in the Iswara creation. I would thank him for that.

>Frank suggests that this is not an  
>important question but it seems clear to  
>me that it is.

>Spinoza proposed a rather drastic  
>solution to this problem: it is part of  
>the  
>perfection of God's creation that it is  
>logically impossible for things to  
>be other than they are. (In modern terms  
>this is Penrose's 'strong determinism'.)

I donot know what Spinoza's theory - but based on what you wrote - I donot see any dramatics involved. A solution to any problem in the creation are part of the creation too. There is nothing absolutely man made - the possiblilites for man to make or in the above case the possibilities for any drastic solution is not out side the scope of creation - it all follows the laws of nature hence within the creation. I am missing the profundity of Spinaza's statement.

Likewise  
>I would refute Sadananda's objection  
>  
>> Since he has all the capacities that one can dream off,  
>> he can create more than one universe or universes with many histories.  
>  
>by pointing out that is not imposing a  
>limitation on Iswhara to say that he  
>only conceives  
>universes which are logically possible.

I donot imply exactly that - He being the cretor and system being a creation, to be qualified to be called as creation - it is not random and hence follows as a well behaved thermodynamic system - Logic is only from our level - Some time our intellect cannot apprehend what people call 'miracles' which does not seem to be logical - From large pedastal these

possibilities are also exist in the creation follows their own laws which are with in the system. From the total intelligence one can use your terminology that everything is logical since intelligence is behind it - otherwise it is only be illogical - then it is not a creation but random and no intelligence can be behind the illogical. This is a fundamental contradiction - intelligent doing unintelligent - not a limitation of Ishwara

>I also think that the suggestion here  
>that  
>that there are opportunities for  
>creation that Ishwara fails to avail  
>himself of (by exercising  
>his 'free will' and choosing to create  
>one universe rather than another) must  
>be wrong ---  
>surely \*this\* is a limitation on his  
>creativity.

How do you know what opportunities that he did not exercise. The point is all opportunities are with in the creation itself. If there are such possibilities that exists then he has created those possibilities and therefore they are within the system. Sitting inside the system one never think of any possibilities beyond the system and one goes out of the system then one discovers that there is no system to be outside or inside to concern about. This is the nature of the problem here.

I am not sure we are communicating on the same wave length - but I am sure we will merge even if we do not agree on the subject..

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

Message: 14  
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 09:51:15 -0700 (PDT)  
From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: What is the point -- Part 4

Dear Patrick:

Please take a moment to think and you will notice that your question has an implicit reference to freewill. The entire discussions on "strong determinism" is an intellectual exercise (including all our discussions) and according to Advaita that the nature of Brahman can not be described intellectually! All that we can say is (Vedic pramAna) that the Brahman only exists and He is beyond human perception.

The questions related to "strong determinism" and "random events" are based on human perceptions in the relative world (vyavahaara level of reality). In the absolute level (paramarthika level of reality), "strong determinism" become irrelevant! In the Vedantic framework, your question is implicitly equivalent to "Who Am I?" A short answer is I am

Brahman. When I know the Brahman, I know everything that I don't know.

Ishwara (God) is the human (intellectual perception or creation) of Brahman. For all humans who accept God at their freewill, Ishwara become omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal. With strong faith in God, Ishwara determines all outcomes without any uncertainty. Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam calls Ishwara as the "karma palam dataa." We can get a clearer understanding of the relationship between jiva and Ishwara from Bhagawad Gita: Chapter 2, Verse 47. As long as we bound us within space and time we have the "right" to act with freewill. However, our rights are limited with respect to only "action" and we don't control the outcome! The controller of the outcome is the Ishwara and the outcome becomes the 'prasad.' Alternatively, it is possible to declare that our actions are at our freewill but the outcomes are purely random.

To understand the essence of "Advaitic determinism," we should understand the above quoted verse from Bhagawad Gita in Karma Yoga (Chapter 2, Verse 47)

karmaNi eva adhikaaraste maa phaleshu gadaachana  
maa karma phala hetuH bhuh maa sanghaH astu akarmaNi

(The entire interpretation is based on Swami Dayananda Saraswati's lecture on Gita (2nd and 3rd October, 1999) in Washington Metropolitan. This is my understanding and if there are errors, they are mine. My sincere Pranams to Swamiji for his insights on Gita)

We only have the "right" to conduct the action and certainly we have no control over the results of the action. We should avoid using the "results" as the motivating force of our action and free our attachment to inaction. The facts will become crisp and clear if and only if we make efforts to understand this verse carefully. We are part of the Nature and we should understand our 'rights' and also our 'limitations.' Nature has given us the skill and power to conduct an action of our choice. We can use our skills to set up the goals for the action and should proceed to apply all our energy and skill to accomplish those goals. Our intelligence, energy and knowledge do not give us the authority over the results of the action. This human limitation is also a fact of life and we have no choice other than to accept the outcome. The results can be more, equal, less or even opposite to our expectations (goals). We have the right to conduct or not to conduct an action but we have no authority over the results. Any expression of expectation (prejudging the results) before completing an action develops an attitude that binds the action to the

results.

Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita emphasizes to Arjun that he has no rights (authority) over the consequences. Implicitly the Lord points out that He only has the authority over the results! The views of Karma Yoga expressed in this verse are certainly no different from modern management, political, scientific and sports experts. But the message of Gita is much more profound and precise. According to Gita, the humans have the "rights" on action (Karma) but 'right' comes along with the responsibility to maintain Dharma. The doer has the freedom over his/her Karma but he or she has to obey the Dharma established by his own mind.

warm regards,  
Ram Chandran

Some Reference to Penrose's hypotheses, discussions and related materials on Determination:

(1) A Book Review: "The Emperor's New Mind," by Roger Penrose, Oxford University Press, 1990 - Website: <http://www.friesian.com/penrose.htm>

(2) A Case for Free Will AND Determinism by Ben Best Website: <http://www.benbest.com/philo/freewill.html>

--- Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca> wrote:

Message: 15

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 14:08:39 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Hi Patrick,

You know, now that I see your summary of Spinoza's argument, I don't buy it either. Thanks for sharing it. The soundness of arguments depends on their definitions being true, and intuitive. What I'm not crazy about is Spinoza's definition of God...

You ask,

>>>>

OK so Iswhara is conditioned by the gunas. But surely the gunas are not free agents?

God is not conditioned by the gunas. God doesn't control the gunas (there are some teachings that say that God wields the gunas), and the gunas don't control God. Rather, God's actions \*just are\* actions of gunas. Whatever is attributed to God, whatever God is said to do, is actually guna-whirling.

And the gunas themselves are not free or unfree agents, nor do they control anything else. They just \*are\*.

Om!

--Greg

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Message: 16

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 14:20:46 -0400

From: "Naren Cl. Laurent" <Laurent\_Claude\_3@compuserve.com>

Subject: VML-8/17/00

HARI OM!

=====

De : ananta, INTERNET:sarada@global2000.net

VML-8/17/00

So long as there is desire or want, it is a sure sign that there is  
imperfection. A perfect, free being cannot have any desire. God  
cannot want anything. If He desires, He cannot be God. He will be  
imperfect. So all the talk about God desiring this and that, and  
becoming angry and pleased by turns is babies talk, but means  
nothing. Therefore it has been taught by all teachers, "Desire  
nothing, give up all desires and be perfectly satisfied."  
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"MAY YOU FIND HAPPINESS IN EACH DAY OF YOUR LIFE"

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Transm. by Naren

Shanti!

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Message: 17

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 11:55:34 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Vedanta and Mathematics - Some lessons!

There are many similarities between Vedanta and Mathematics:

Mathematics describes infinite and finite entities. It is subject to sets of separate axioms for the infinite and finite algebra. Finite and infinite algebra are different and they can't be interchanged. Any mixing up of these algebras can potentially yield misleading results. For example  $(a+b)$  is greater than  $a$  or  $b$  if  $a$  and  $b$  are positive and non zero. But  $(a+b) = \text{infinity}$  if  $a$  and/or  $b$  is infinite.

Vedanta explains Paramarthika (absolute) and Vyavahaara (relative) levels of realities. Vedanta is subject to sets of pramAnAs. Paramarthika reality and Vyavahaara realities can't be interchanged. Any mixing up of these realities can be potentially misleading. All perceptions and intellectual analysis is within the Vyavahaara level reality and they don't hold good at the Paramarthika level. All concepts and notions such as 'determinism,' 'freewill,' etc., are valid within the Vyavahaara reality. At the Paramarthika level of reality we are free from all notions and everything that remains is Brahman(Sarvam Brahman Mayam!)

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Message: 18

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 18:57:31 -0000

From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Ram, Sadananda and Greg,

Thank you for your replies. I'm pressed for time right now so I can only respond to Sadananda. (I think this is important since we are definitely talking at cross purposes.)

Two types of determinism (at least!) need to be distinguished:

(1) Classical Determinism (often associated with Laplace). According to Newtonian physics, a complete knowledge of the state of the universe at any instant together with the laws of physics is sufficient to determine the entire history of the universe (past and future). Newton and apparently Sadananda (you are in eminently good company) believe that the laws of physics are decided by the whim of the Creator, so that many different universes are logically possible.

(2) Strong Determinism (raised as a possibility by Penrose in the book "The Emperor's New Mind" but unfortunately not mentioned in the review that Ram has referred us to) says that there is only one logically consistent set of physical laws and constants and hence only one logically possible universe. (Spinoza's proposition that 'Things could not have been brought into being by God in any order or in any manner other than that which has in fact obtained' is an equivalent formulation in terms which are more familiar to members of the list.)

Personally I would very much like to be convinced of the truth of (2) but trying to settle this question in the current state of physical knowledge seems hopeless (although string theorists have been known to dabble with it).

Regards,

Patrick

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Message: 19

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 18:05:38 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Patrick,

Sorry to jump in, I know you were talking to Sada-ji...

You wrote:

Personally I would very much like to be convinced of the truth of (2) but trying to settle this question in the current state of physical knowledge seems hopeless (although string theorists have been known to dabble with it).

Have you read the Mandukya Upanishad, Nisargadatta, Ramesh Balsekar? Krishna Menon's ATMA DARSHAN will help a lot too. It's not really a scientific question, more a philosophical one. The choice between (1) and (2) is not a matter of predictability or empirical evidence. Even if you knew "in advance" every phenomenal outcome and every phenomenal description, in other words, if you were omniscient, it still wouldn't decide between (1) and (2). Because the question of whether there exists a history alternative to the present one is just like the question whether there exists a thought alternative to the current thought....

Om!

--Greg

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Message: 4

Date: Fri, 18 Aug 2000 08:22:37 -0400

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@anvil.nrl.navy.mil>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Patrick wrote:

>Two types of determinism (at least!) need to be distinguished:  
>  
>(1) Classical Determinism (often associated with Laplace). According  
>to Newtonian physics, a complete knowledge of the state of the  
>universe at any instant together with the laws of physics is  
>sufficient to determine the entire history of the universe (past and  
>future). Newton and apparently Sadananda (you are in eminently good  
>company) believe that the laws of physics are decided by the whim of  
>the Creator, so that many different universes are logically possible.

I was not aware of the two determinations. But my comments still stands. I donot imply that the laws at the whims of the creator in the sense that creator is different from creation. It cannot be, at least as per Vedanta. - Hence if one talks about creation with one or many histories, clasical or strong determination etc as for as Vedanta is concerned they are all not out side the system of investigation, explanation differ but that makes no difference. One logically consistent or many logically consistent sets - would it make difference as long as they are logical and self-consistent. Logicality and self-consistency itself are the fundamental laws and do they make it as the whims of the creator - Since that it is the part of the system deduced either clasical or strong determination - all Vedanta claims is that they should be logical and self-consistent - does that aspect come under 'whims of the creator' - I donot think so - That is what precisely I mean by logical system or laws of creation which are within the creation and again creator is not different from the system since for logical consistent system there is an intelligence involved. - Vedanata insists the intellegent cause and the material cause are one and the same - there is no Iswara separate from the system.

Hence I still donot see how specifically Strong Determination makes any difference from the totality.

Hari Om!  
Sadananda

Message: 5  
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 14:01:28 -0400  
From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>  
Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Patrick Kenny wrote:  
>  
> [...] ....if things are not  
> to our liking and we believe  
> that Ishwara could have willed them to  
> be otherwise is there any reason other  
> than slavish obedience why we should not  
> revolt against them?  
> Frank suggests that this is not an  
> important question but it seems clear to  
> me that it is.  
>

namaste

well, it has relative importance, and this in contrast to 'Absolute importance' --if i may put it this way for argument's sake [because 'Absolute importance' is an incongruency of terms! as ramji emphasized, the paramarthika (Absolute) and vyavaharika (Relative) levels cannot be intermixed]... that is, no adjectives or adjuncts can go with the Absolute--really has no consequential weight!

in other words, once the ineffable brahman fills the Heart, one's svabhavana (self feeling-essence) soars \*far\* beyond the joys and sorrows experienced in the mental ruminations of [what i'll call] 'ordinary awareness,' and the matter of worldly likes and/or dislikes are experienced as merely superficial playthings! yes. the world no longer has the intensity or gravity it formerly carried. therefore the questions of whether one should revolt are dependant upon whether any consequential problems are perceived to begin with! this is why i maintain the world is perfect \*as is\* and is indeed the product of a permanent, universal archetype in Relativity--which requires [in order to function]--the forces of light and darkness. this is why the sages and sruti have viewed the projection of brahman into Life as Leela (the Play).

OM shaanthy

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Message: 7

Date: Fri, 18 Aug 2000 10:26:15 -0400

From: Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Greg, Sadananda and Frank,

Since the question that I raised (whether it is logically possible for things to be other than they are)

is not one that Advaita has preoccupied itself with, I am not surprised that you do not generally consider it to be of great importance. When Sadananda writes

> Hence I still donot see how specifically Strong Determination makes any

> difference from the totality.

I understand him to mean that he personally doesn't find the question interesting. I would not presume to quarrel with this judgement but merely point out that my own personal experience has been that the question is enormously interesting. Again, when Frank writes

> once the ineffable brahman  
> fills the Heart, one's svabhavana (self  
> feeling-essence) soars \*far\* beyond the  
> joys and sorrows experienced in the mental  
> ruminations of [what i'll call] 'ordinary  
> awareness,' and the matter of worldly likes  
> and/or dislikes are experienced as merely  
> superficial playthings!

the only answer I can offer is that any personal experience that I have of the ineffable Brahman filling the heart came about as a result of wrapping my mind around the problem that I raised.

To keep you on your toes, Greg, I have to insist that the question of strong determinism \*is\* a scientific one (albeit not an empirical one). The whole project of string theory is to enumerate all possible sets of physical laws and constants (and hence all possible universes).

Regards,

Patrick

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Message: 8

Date: Fri, 18 Aug 2000 11:07:43 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Hey Patrick,

I'm there! Thanks for the info. I'm glad that scientists are researching this question. I agree with you, empirical research won't be the method!

May I ask, as this question seems to have spiritual significance to you, why not intensely undertake the investigation yourself? Why wait for the results of others' work? Aren't you investigating something even prior to what the string theorists are looking into? They've enumerated what they

take to be more than one set of laws. Aren't you looking into the question "Is possibility possible?" Go for it!!

Om!

--Greg

Message: 9

Date: Fri, 18 Aug 2000 11:36:38 -0400

From: Patrick Kenny <pkenny@crim.ca>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Dear Greg,

In case you are interested in a very well-written, non-mathematical introduction to string theory go to

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0393046885/metaprices/002-7030790-7412035>

A cursory perusal of this book will be enough to convince you that these problems are not going to be solved any time soon. This may not be a bad thing because it is not clear what our finest minds will do with their time if they ever do succeed in hammering out the Final Theory of Everything.

Regards,

Patrick

Message: 10

Date: Fri, 18 Aug 2000 11:48:13 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

God Bless them! Thanks for the link. Several people I know who are interested in Advaita are also interested in string theory. When/if scientists ever come up with a Final Theory of Everything, that's just what they'll have. A theory. Then what??

Regards,

--Greg

Message: 3

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 20:37:56 -0400  
From: "f. maiello" <egodust@digital.net>  
Subject: Re: Re: Doing - me or God

Patrick Kenny wrote:

> the only answer I can offer is that any  
> personal experience that I have of the  
> ineffable Brahman filling the heart came  
> about as a result of wrapping my  
> mind around the problem that I raised.  
>

namaste

yes, patrick, quite so. as i'm sure you're aware, this is part and parcel of the path of jnana, which primarily uses the Mind as the instrument leading to Self-discovery. (i'll elaborate on this, but first i'd like to make the following point.)

consider how virtually everyone experiences that 'brahman in the Heart' to one degree or another...but unawares they attribute it ordinarily to the by-product of a life condition and how they relate to it. that is, they interpret a given wave of pleasure or joy they might be feeling at a given time to a fulfillment of a desire in one way or another--which although has a component of relative truth to it, the real source of the joy being experienced is a leak--as it were--emanating from the Self Itself, having such an insignificant connection to the Mind, per se, as to be, from an overview perspective, comparatively irrelevant.

now, for one who's on the path of jnana, it becomes more and more evident that these 'leaks' or visitations into one's oceanic Self are precipitated specifically when the Mind is *\*not\** engaged in the relative spectrum. the path of jnana eventually reveals that it is a process of the logical Mind eventually having to exhaust its energy. in due course, over time, it starts coming closer and closer to reaching critical mass, whereupon it's ready to finally yield out of an unmistakable insight that it has been trapped in a vicious circle where questions answered breed the pattern of infinite questions to be answered. where, as greg mentioned, in the end they're only called theories anyway! viz. the so-called 'superstring theory' (or 'theory of everything,' formerly the 'unified field theory') that wants to tie in the 'general theory of relativity'

with 'quantum partical theory.'

this is why the esoteric teachings behind all religions implicate a state of no-Mind as a pre-requisite and simultaneous condition to that 'experience' of brahman in the Heart. therefore, as i've pointed out numerous times on our List, the philosophical/speculative Mind has to be finally relinquished...is the very culprit king janaka spoke of as "...the enemy to be dealt with summarily." this is what is referred to as manonasa (Mind destroyed) by the vedantins; mu-shin (no-Mind) by the zens; "having the mind of a child" by jesus; "be still and know that I am God" (where 'be still' refers to not the body obviously but the Mind) by the hebrews; "ain soph" (void of thought) by the cabalists; "islam" (i surrender my [thoughts]) by the sufis; "stopping the internal dialogue" by the toltec shamans; etc...

it's important to know that the subconscious goal we're all seeking has not to do with reaching a state of philosophy, but a state of Being. of course most philosophers recognize this, but they tend to get so captured by the process of speculation, thatt they forget what they're really striving to finally achieve!

in light of this, i'm neither implying that one's philosophical pursuit be abandoned at all. i'm only pointing out that the above observation should be considered and perhaps planted as a seed in back of one's mind--in the course of one's philosophical pursuit.

regards,  
frank

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Message: 2  
Date: Mon, 21 Aug 2000 13:14:23 +0100  
From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>  
Subject: Doing - me or God

I'll continue on the periphery of the discussion this time, I think, having already fallen behind since I've been away for a couple of days. Just a few passing observations.

All these Gods that are (necessarily) only part of vyavahaara: - Why do we need to even consider them? Are they not actually only our own invention,

and thus even more illusory than we are (if that is possible)? Isn't it all tantamount to trying to put the content of our dreams on some sort of scientific footing; as though I should expect that the characters in your dream will behave the same as the ones in mine? Sadananda, Greg, et al, are you saying that all of these gods actually exist (to the same degree that we exist)? Is there a separate Iswara, a God of the Christians, of the Muslims, etc. or are they all one and the same (illusory) God? Would we have to get involved in discussions of satkaaryavaada and all the rest in order for someone to be able to provide a 'simple' answer to this one?

Yes, Greg, Patrick - the painting metaphor I mentioned is the one given by Ramesh (my post at the time did say this). I like Greg's summary - there are no separate entities; therefore it is meaningless to talk about free will or determinism - simple isn't it!

Dennis

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Message: 3

Date: Mon, 21 Aug 2000 09:22:16 -0400

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Hi Dennis,

Let me try to give a short answer to your gods question, thought others will be much more helpful on the cultural side of the discussion. As I understand it from the Chinmaya Mission teachings, the traditional advaita vedanta teachings were not given right away, but only after years and years while the aspirant/youth/student had been diligently practicing karma and bhakti and other yogas. Jnana yoga and advaita textual study had not begun yet. So, in the earlier stages of one's Hindu education, it is not taught that God is a creation of man's mind. Explanations along these lines come only later. So it doesn't seem like a depressing or useless world at the time one is instructed about God. If the Jnana and advaita textual study are effective, then it will never seem like a pointless world to the student. The advaita texts and teachers are abundantly devotional. There is Joy in worshipping and giving thanks to the Lord! Maybe I'm misinformed here, but I'd always heard that in Hinduism (karma-kanda), the aspirant may understand the gods either way, as literal characters, or as aspects of the One. An advaitic understanding should not remove one's impulse to love the Lord. Actually, it removes the blocks and impediments so that the Lord is joyfully seen everywhere, as everything. And if there is a figure of the Lord on one's altar or temple, this is also very sweet and wonderful.

Let me ask - were you in the School of Practical Philosophy? The friends I know from the School tell me that there is no bhakti yoga there - mostly karma. Even the scriptural studies serve to develop karma yoga more than jnana yoga....

I've got to run here, need to get to work, but have you heard of the notion of "sublation"? Teachings about God, about the creation of the world, about cause and effect and other big questions are often given in stages,

each stage accounting for and sublating the prior. It is important to remember that the teachings are not designed to accurately and isomorphically mirror an external reality. Rather, they are to untwist the mind/intellect/emotional complex to get rid of impediments to seeing our true nature. It seems you are asking about the ACCURACY of teachings. That's not the point really. It is rather that they be EFFECTIVE.

You also ask whether the different religion's gods are truly different. Not sure if you are looking for philosophical or textual discussion here... How about these two statements:

God is One, but called by different names.

Also, in answer to the claims of unique divinity of the Christians' Christ:

If God can incarnate once (as Jesus),  
then why not more than once?

Regards,

--Greg

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Message: 4

Date: Mon, 21 Aug 2000 06:50:22 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Doing - me or God

Hari Om:

The shortest answer is that "God only exists!" But for whatever reasons, none of us possess this level of understanding. Why we lack this understanding at this time is the the big question and all answers that we construct can be rejected. All understandings explanations about this knowledge through intellectual means become illogical because, for every logic, there is a counter logic. One of the easy to road to get out of this mess is self-surrender to God to get the self-realization that the search is unnecessary!

We start with the journey of our life, we gather road maps, tour books, and take all the help that we can get for the journey. At the end, we found that we didn't move an inch nor we spent a second of time! This is part of our own 'leela' and consequently we do have the right to explain whatever that fits our illusory journey of our life exploring space and time!

regards,

Ram Chandran

Message: 7

Date: Mon, 21 Aug 2000 17:02:45 -0230 (NDT)

From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@morgan.ucs.mun.ca>

Subject: Spinoza and the upanishads (part 1)

namaste.

In the recent postings, Patrick Kenny brought up the philosophy of Spinoza and the strong determinism and asked how that is viewed in vedanta. In our Library, there is a book titled "Spinoza and the upanishads" and I thought I should summarize that book here, which may be relevant in this context.

Dr. M.S. Modak, former Registrar of Nagpur University and a former student of R.D. Ranade wrote his Ph.D. thesis in 1928 for the University of London on the topic "Spinoza and the upanishads: a comparative study". Nagpur Vidyapeeth Mudranalaya of Nagpur, India, published this thesis as a monograph with the same title. In the following paragraphs, I will try to present a brief summary of this monograph. I hope I will be able to bring out the essence of the book. Any errors in this summarization are mine and I hope I will be excused for those errors.

Undertaking a comparative study of Spinoza and vedanta is not to say that the argumentative development of the two systems of thought are identical. An immense gap of more than 2000 years separates the two systems. Their social and cultural environments are wide apart from each other. There is little to suggest that Spinoza was under any direct influence of the ancient Hindu thought. Nevertheless there are many similarities. Spinoza is compared to an Indian Rishi. Monier Williams writes "The Hindus were Spinozites more than two thousand years before the existence of Spinoza".

Modak goes into a detailed discussion of the difficulties comparing Spinoza and upanishads, the obscurity of upanishadic information and the wealth of information available on Spinoza. Then the monograph goes into taking specific topics and discussing how they were treated.

#### Ultimate Reality

The upanishads say the Self, Brahman, Atman as the ultimate reality. God is a necessary intermediate step in the process of our visualizing ultimate reality. Upanishadic manner of approach is psychological. By an analysis of the phenomenon of consciousness, the upanishads saw the ultimate reality transcending the wake-up, dream and deep-sleep consciousness. This fundamental idea of the unity of Consciousness is achieved not so much by explicit reason as by intuition.

For Spinoza, the approach is theo-logical. The infinite idea dei i.e. the infinite idea of God is the primary reality. This conception of the infinite idea of God was arrived at by reflective cognition which establishes a sort of unity and continuity in all our thinking without which no theory of knowledge is possible.

In determining the criterion of truth, Spinoza and the upanishadic thinkers argue in a strikingly similar way. The upanishads start with self as the highest ground of certitude, for though everything else

can be doubted, the doubter could not doubt himself. Spinoza says (with regard to sceptics who doubt the infinite idea of God) "If they affirm or doubt anything, they know not that they affirm or doubt it: they say that they know nothing, and say that they are ignorant of the fact that they know nothing; nor do they say this with certainty, for they fear to confess that they exist as long as they know nothing, to such an extent that they ought to remain silent, lest perchance they might suppose something which has the saviour of truth." Truth to Spinoza is its own certainty.

Also in upanishads, Self which is truth, is self-evident. No effort is needed for knowing the Self. It is needed only to remove the error of identifying the Self with the not-Self. According to shri Shankara, the process of knowing is not so much a creation as a discovery. This discovery will be imperfect if there is any taint clinging to the instrument of the mind.

Are the sayings dogmatic?

When the upanishads assert that the Self is the highest ground of certitude, and truth is its own criterion, they are laying down a doctrine which is transcendental and is not dogmatic. The existence of the Self is not inferred by any syllogistic process, but felt and recognized as a metaphysical fact. It is transcendental because it is pure Self-Consciousness which is beyond all limitations. It transcends our empirical knowledge. Intellectual knowledge will be insufficient to attain It. It is, however, not dogmatic since the upanishadic sages do not assert it as a dogma, but speak of It as intuitively perceived. The conviction that the Self could be attained by man is a common strong theme throughout all the upanishads and it is reasonable to infer, therefore, that the upanishadic sayings are the spiritual experiences of these sages and are not dogmatic utterances.

Spinoza also asserts that there is no external test for truth and that we must be content in the last resort with the clear and persistent witness of consciousness. The same question as before confronts us here also. Others consider Spinoza's doctrine is not necessarily transcendental or dogmatic. Spinoza would admit nothing supernatural in his system of thought. For Spinoza, intellect is a sufficient guide to the knowledge of reality. His intuition is not something extra-intellectual, but it is 'thoughtfulness matured to inspirations'. The infinite idea of God can be conceived intellectually. At that stage, intellect becomes intuition. The latter is not something different from the former.

The transcendental element in the conception of the Self is quite explicit in the upanishads. The Self cannot be reached by mere intellect. It could be grasped by intuition alone. That is not to say that intuition is opposed to intellect or reason. It is supersensuous and super-intellectual in its character.

Strong determinism

Strong determinism is inherent in Spinoza's philosophy. It is because the ultimate reality is God. However, in vedanta, the ultimate reality is not God, but the SELF. Thus in vedanta,

the strong determinism and free-will have a lower order of truth and in the ultimate reality, there is neither free-will nor strong determinism.

(to be continued)

Regards  
Gummuluru Murthy

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 22 Aug 2000 11:47:41 +0300

From: "Madhava K. Turumella" <madhava@memrbksa.com>

Subject: RE: Doing - me or God - we haven't arrived yet!

Greetings Dennis:

We need not necessarily consider the Gods and Goddess, because the teaching is that "Brahman alone is true, everything else is illusory". But are we ready! Are we ready to ignore the world just thus! Thinking that everything is brahman, are we ready to leave the job? are we ready to leave the comfortable home where we live? Though the teaching is crystal clear, we \*naturally\* behave as if every thing is separate!

Imagine, you go and stand in front of a great advaitic teacher, for example Shankaracharya, then what will you do? Don't you prostrate? Don't you talk to him with reverence? I don't know about you but I certainly do prostrate to Shankaracharya... Even for a wee bit of second I will not think of Shankaracharya is nothing but me, though it is Shankaracharya's own propagation that the essence of me and him is the same! I will hold that he is separate and I am separate as long as I breath, as long as I move in this physical world.

Though the teacher says "Brahman alone is true", we seem to perceive the Brahman with plurality, and we behave so. Actually, it is the question of behavior. We behave in front of elders. We behave in the eyes of society. We go as per the rules and regulations. We do all this because we are still living in the world. Same is the case, with Gods and Goddesses! I can see they are there, but then are they real? My teacher told me that it is my own mind which is projecting them! I learned that as my mind projects the images of my own father and mother and teacher, my mind also projects the Gods and Goddesses and miracles and dreams!

I have put this question to my teacher. I asked her: "if it was my own mind which is projecting then what shall I do? Shall I discard everything as illusory?" My teacher kept quite for some time, but then she asked me, can you discard me as your teacher? I replied "No way!". She questioned again "can you stop eating and sleeping with out feeling physically uncomfortable? can you stop thinking of what has happened yesterday, and what will happen tomorrow? can you stop visualizing at all?...." I am confused with all these questions. Anyway, finally she said that as long as you feel that you are limited in your capacity, you should not discard anything. You haven't arrived yet! Remember what Gita says "OmityEkAksharaM brahma vyAharan mAM anusmaran, yaH prayAti tyajan dEhaM sa yAti paramAM gatiM". Keep in your thoughts that everything is illusory, that bhavana (perception!) will keep you detached from the fruits of action. Keep acting because what you learned is not yet become an experience for you. If you stop behaving, just

because you got knowledge, one day your own knowledge that "Brahman alone is true" will drop you in a chaos. Unless there is manOnASa (destruction of mind-stuff) direct experience is not possible. ManOnAsa happens because of the detached action. Every action that is performed, with out any attachment to the fruit of action, will make you witness to that action. Since you witness the action, you will understand the essence of the action. But then after performing the action if you felt that you have to perform the same action again, then you are not witnessing the action but you are being dragged again by your own mind!

Pinch your hand --- do you feel the pain? Open your eyes --- do you see the world? Take a deep breath --- do you smell the fragrance of the air? Listen carefully - do you hear the sound of the universe? If your answer to any of these questions is: YES I DO? then there are Gods who are real. Your duty is to behave with them. Hari Om!

I remain yours,  
Madhava

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Message: 2

Date: Mon, 21 Aug 2000 21:24:24 +0200

From: "Miguel Angel Carrasco" <macf12@teleline.es>

Subject: History of the world

First let me say that I have been following with great interest some of the threads lately discussed here, particularly "What's the point" and "Doing - me or God". I must avow that I felt identified with Denis Waite's questions. I too have been troubled by the discrepancies between non-dual masters. Though I mostly follow Nisargadatta and Ramesh Balsekar, I also read other teachers and shruti. And their differences sometimes baffle me and put me in a position of having to choose, which I don't like. I still tend to think that if a statemet is true (for example "there are no real entities so there is no free will, no cause-effect, no reincarnation"), the opposite can't also be true even if stated by a great master. Maybe I'm being naive, but I still believe in only one truth, whatever it is. Otherwise I wouldn't be searching for it. I know that all "truths" are only conceptualizations, words spoken as pointers rather than as perfect representations of reality. But I think that if a pointer is reliable the opposite can't also be. Either there is reincarnation or there isn't. Either we have free will or we don't. Either effort is necessary or it isn't. Either the elements in phenomenality are determined or they aren't. So when advaita teachers hold diverging positions on these and other points some of them must be wrong or misleading. How is that possible if they're supposed to be realized and have shed all false ideas?

A particular point in which I have been finding some doubts is the nature of the world's history. I know

that the whole of phenomenality is a projection, a complex mental object projected on the screen of Consciousness. But is it a fixed picture or a moving picture?

Does the world really have a history? A past? Does it evolve? Or does it start when it is projected by the mind?

Ramesh Balsekar spoke about this in several occasions, with different interpretations, I think.

As has been described here already, he compared phenomenality with a 50-mile-long picture which we are unable to watch as a whole and only scene by scene, hence the feeling of the passing of time. Past, present and future are equally contained in the picture. So a fixed picture without even the appearance of movement in it, but with a history.

Other times he compares the world with a personal dream. As in a dream, people and objects appear before us, of different ages. Some are already old, some are young. But none of them has a past. Everything begins as it appears the moment the dream (=each body-mind) starts, suddenly, without history. And nothing ever existed before the first observer appeared. So the whole of history between the big bang and the appearance of the first animals simply did not exist, because there was no observer to watch it.

Still other times he (following Nisargadatta) compares the universe with a film, a movie, which we are watching as it is being projected. Here only the present is being shown. The past has already disappeared from the screen and the future is still to appear. So a moving picture, with the appearance of movement in it. Some watchers see a part of the history, others see another part.

Which of these interpretations is the best?  
Did any phenomenality exist (as projection) before the first animals appeared, or not?  
If not, then how could the the first animals appear, if there was no world yet?  
If yes, then whose projection was a world in which there was no observer?

Miguel-Angel

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Message: 3

Date: Tue, 22 Aug 2000 13:43:21 -0000

From: "Patrick Kenny" <pkenny@crim.ca>  
Subject: Re: Spinoza and the upanishads (part 1)

Dear Gummuluru,

Thank you for taking up this topic. (I do remember that you mentioned it previously but I was afraid that you might have given up on the idea.) I am very interested to see where this takes you so rather than engage you in discussion now I would like just like to flag a few points that might make for interesting discussions later. But first let me make it clear that my attitude to Spinoza is by no means uncritical: I do not regard his writings as 'inerrant' in the way that fundamentalist Christians and, dare I say, certain Advaitins regard their scriptures. In particular I find that Spinoza's account of God is incomplete for despite his constant talk of the love of God it is not clear a priori how his geometrically perfect God is lovable. I was led to study the Gita in order to find a way of putting a human face on Spinoza's God or, if you like, to understand how the yoga of devotion is possible in the absence of a personal God. I am quite confident that had Spinoza known of the literature about the Supreme Self (and especially the Gita rather than the Upanishads) he would have been quite happy to use the word atman instead of God (and God knows it would have saved him an awful lot of trouble with theologians Christians and Jewish --- as you probably know Christians have always condemned Spinoza as an atheist). So the first point I would question is this distinction:

> However, in vedanta, the  
> ultimate reality is not God, but the SELF

A second topic that might be discussed concerns the similarities and differences between Spinoza's 'intuitive knowledge of God' and unmediated mystical knowledge of the self. These two certainly seem to be very similar in their effects, but a distinguishing feature of Spinoza is his unwavering insistence on reason or rationality (so that intuitive knowledge is just a higher type of rationality, one which mathematicians rely on heavily).

As for this statement:

> Thus in vedanta,  
> the strong determinism and free-will have a lower order of  
> truth and in the ultimate reality, there is neither free-will  
> nor strong determinism.  
>

another consequence of Spinoza's rationalism is that he would not accept the distinction between absolute and relative levels of truth, although he does frequently insist that each thing can be viewed in two ways, namely as 'belonging to a particular time and place' or as 'being in God and following from the necessity of the divine nature'. Seen in the latter way, individual beings are 'modes of substance [God]' so that God alone acts (but Spinoza would insist that he acts according to deterministic necessity).

I'm looking forward to the next installment.

Regards,

Patrick

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Message: 5

Date: Tue, 22 Aug 2000 11:45:32 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: History of the world

Greetings Miguel:

Good to see you (after a long time interval!). As always you have good insights and you have kindled the silent observers.

I remember a Tamil Proverb which has the following meaning:

"All that we see, hear, touch, feel and analyze are false, the Truth is beyond what we see, hear, touch, feel and conceptualize."

This proverb explains all the contradictions that we can see, hear, touch, feel and discuss. Our problem is that we try to conceptualize 'that' which is beyond sight, sound, touch and thoughts. All 'that' we can say is 'that' is 'it.' Here I have no contradiction, but it is worthless for a limited mind. In other words, these contradictions just confirm our limitation in understanding. Back and back we want to come back to our old habit of conceptualizing "Truth" with no contradiction.

Then what is the solution for expelling contradictions? In Bhagavad Gita, the Self (Lord Krishna) descends and opens a dialog with the human (Arjuna) to remove Arjuna's imaginative contradictions. The entire Gita, SELF discusses all contradictions that originate from the Jiva and prescribes how to dispell them. Gita doesn't claim that this process (sadhana) of removal of contradictions is easy. Fundamentally, we need Shraddha (Belief with conviction and devotion) for removing all contradictions. Everything that you have discussed can be conveniently implanted inside the Gita framework and with contemplative thoughts within, we can resolve those contradictions. It is impossible for the seers of Upanishads or Shankara or Nisargadatta Maharaj or Balasekar or anyone else remove the contradictions that we created in our body,

mind and intellect. These contradictions will always stay as we perceive them through body, mind and intellect. Atman is not body, mind and intellect and consequently these contradictions have no binding on the Atman. Body, mind and intellect will perish along with the contradictions that are associated with them. The imperishable Atman is always free from all contradictions and is beyond body, mind and intellect.

In reality "Truth" and illusionary contradictions simultaneously exist and those who dwell in illusion can't see the Truth and vice versa. We always start with the right question, who am I? and it seems always proceed in the wrong direction. This is our fate!

regards,

Ram Chandran

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Message: 7

Date: Tue, 22 Aug 2000 23:46:08 EDT

From: rajuateam@aol.com

Subject: Doing-me or God?

Me or God?

Actually, neither. It is prakriti- which includes matter, body mind etc- that is the doer. This is the declaration of Vedanta - a declaration that objective scientists will readily embrace.

So what is a God to do?

If Prakriti through its manifested creatures is the actor in this Divine Play called life, then God ( as Ishwara) is its sole Director and God (as Brahman) is its supreme, truly detached, witness.

Where does that leave you and me?

Vedanta declares that "you" and "I" are mere notions created when that supreme consciousness gets identified with individual creatures. In the BMI Chart, the PFT, indicating ego, stands for a Purely Fictitious Thing! Individual doership is also a mere notion resulting from this superimposition and is not the truth.

This at least is my understanding. Realizing this as an experienced truth is the work of several lifetimes and is achieved only on the destruction of ego.

Hari Om!

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Message: 3

Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2000 07:53:38 -0700 (PDT)

From: Ram Chandran <ramvchandran@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Doing-me or God?

Hari Om:

Thanks Rajuji for the beautiful explanation using the BMI Chart. As Nirmalaji pointed out, many members may not be familiar with BMI and associated Vedantic Explanations. This subject was discussed earlier in the list and here is the reference:

<<http://www.escribe.com/culture/advaitin/m301.html>>

I strongly recommend those who are not familiar to read the above post with an excellent explanation from Sadanandaji from Mundaka Upanishad. It is good to see active participation from Chinmaya Mission members on this important issue. This forum is an excellent venue to feedback the benefits accrued by regularly attending the Chinmaya Mission Satsang.

warm regards,

Ram Chandran

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Message: 5

Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2000 22:06:04 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: RE: History of the world

Miguel, great to hear from you! You were one of the few remaining writers I was missing from the old Advaita-L list. I recall feeling a sympathy with many of your posts in the past and, now that my inclinations have moved even further in the direction of Nisargadatta and his followers, it seems inevitable that we have like thoughts on this subject.

However, reading your comments, I felt moved to try to respond. You say that, if a pointer is true, the opposite cannot also be. Obviously this sounds reasonable. But, accepting that reality is beyond the intellect, it must presumably also be beyond simple logic. Perhaps it is equivalent to thinking of a literal pointer in a two-dimensional world. If it is pointing North, we clearly cannot get to the desired destination by travelling South. But, if the space is three-dimensional and the surface is spherical...

There is also the problem of language not always necessarily referring to what we think it is. I watched the programme on TV last night about the brain and consciousness (mentioned a couple of times already). It referred

to Benjamin Libet's experiments about intentionality and motor action. Most people are probably familiar with these - they were done quite a long time ago. Basically, he monitors the subject's brain in that region responsible for initiating action (pressing a button). The subject is watching a clock on a computer screen. He is asked to press either button A or button B whenever he is ready and to note the time on the clock when he makes the conscious decision. The computer then records the time of the decision and the time when the brain starts to trigger the movement in the hand to press the button. The interesting thing is that the claimed decision to press a button always takes place after the brain starts to move the hand. This is supposed to prove that there is no such thing as free will.

This is fine, of course, from an advaita point of view. But is it fine from the man-in-the-street's viewpoint? Well, it makes no difference of course to his life, which will almost certainly carry on as before. It is regarded as an interesting curiosity and forgotten. Whether the experiment is actually telling what it appears to be is another matter. I know there have been several papers refuting the results and I did download something a few years back but I can't remember what they said - clearly I am not too bothered either! But the point I was getting around to making is that, even if this is actually what happens, it is still what we mean by the term free will really. i.e. the 'feeling' of having free will is that feeling that arises as a side effect in the brain from it initiating some action in (automatic) response to a combination of stimuli. Perhaps.

So we do have free will in one sense and do not have it in another. They can both be true. It merely depends upon the context in which it is being discussed. Exactly equivalent to talking about vyavahaara or paramaarthika.

On the subject of images on screens and so on, I too have noticed that there are contradictions in their use by different teachers, and sometimes by the same teacher on different occasions. I decided that I probably was happy with this because they were using a similar metaphor for slightly different purposes and/or trying to explain something to different listeners. The trouble with metaphors is that they are only trying to trigger an intuitive understanding based upon a very crude analogy, since the actual subject is beyond simple description. As soon as we try to take the analogy too far or use it in a slightly different way, it is in great danger of breaking down or, worse still, confusing or misleading. I think that, once the intuition has been gained, the metaphor should be discarded before this happens.

I say nothing about your fascinating question about whether animals appeared before humans etc. and await the comments of others with great interest.

Dennis

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Message: 6  
Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2000 22:06:03 +0100  
From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>  
Subject: RE: Doing - me or God - Madhava

I appreciate your comments about not 'discarding anything' until true understanding arrives. However, I do not see the Gods and Goddesses as you claim. Yes, there are occasions when I can feel wonder at the sights and other perceptions about me in the world. There have even been one or two occasions when I have felt unity with all of this. But I have seen no need to assign divinity to anything. Is it not simply wonder, mystery and ignorance that have caused man to invent gods to 'explain' what he does not understand?

Dennis

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Message: 7

Date: Wed, 23 Aug 2000 22:06:01 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: Doing - me or God

Just a brief reply to Greg's last post.

Yes, The organisation that I was in is the parent of the School of Practical Philosophy. In fact, although the emphasis is on karma yoga to begin with, and this remains a key element, it does become principally jnana later on. Strangely, though, after you have been there more than 10 years (don't remember exactly how long), they introduce some bhakti aspects. I found this very jarring at the time and did not cope well with it at all.

Yes, I'm quite happy with the concept of sublation. It's interesting that you mention it in connection with the previous comment about bhakti. The school justified the introduction on the grounds that the ego-ridden mind had to learn to recognise its lower status in the scheme of things and look to the Self with the right attitude of respect and awe. Whilst I appreciated this from the theoretical point of view, the actual practice seemed to go against the accepted truths of the teaching.

Dennis

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Message: 23

Date: Fri, 25 Aug 2000 23:45:42 -0000

From: "Vidyasankar Sundaresan" <vsundaresan@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: exchange of information with Advaita-L

The trouble with free will and determinism is that every view of them follows one or the other party line. One could argue for one or the other alternative, but one can't really have both, in a strong sense. So one opts for (free will) or is forced into (strong determinism) the weak acknowledgement of both, like the party line that you say Dennis took. So you see, even the weak acknowledgement of both is

open to reinterpretation in terms of either side. The only resolution that I can personally come up with is that the very debate is wrongly formulated. It is a mind-game, and the only way to resolve it is to stop playing the game. One only gets answers for the questions that one asks. If you ask the wrong question, there is not much chance of getting the right answer. Now this stance can be criticized as simply avoiding the issue, but then, that may well be deliberate. Is there any other solution space that has not been covered by the above?

> (1) Is the distinction between vyavahaara or paramaarthika made anywhere in the Upanishads or in the Gita?

See bRhadAraNyaka upanishad, 2. 4. 1-14 and 4. 5. 1-15. The two words are not used, but the distinction is there nonetheless.

> (2) Does this distinction exist anywhere outside of Advaita?

Madhyamaka Buddhism. And many Western philosophers have distinguished between "things as they are" and "things as they seem to be." Indeed, don't you think that philosophy only begins by recognizing that what is immediately observed may not be really real? Right there, one has this sort of distinction. Whether one resolves it in an idealistic way or a realistic way depends on other assumptions one makes.

Best wishes,  
Vidyasankar