

Two Standpoints of Cognition, Knowledge, Reality

A person sees a Tree and thinks he is seeing a Man.

There are two standpoints: the World-standpoint and the Mind-standpoint.

In the World standpoint, the Tree is Real.

In the Mind-standpoint, the Man is Real.

The Tree, though not identified as such in the mind-standpoint, is still the substratum cognition manifest (as vritti) and illumined in the mind.

What makes it the apparent man is the Adjoining of other imaginations and thoughts, so that the end conglomerate object (in the mind) appears as a Man.

This Man-appearance is real in the mind-standpoint since the object including of additional nama-rupa and thought vrittis added to the Tree-vritti in the mind has existence in the mind and indeed Consciousness illumines that object as a Man.

The knowledge "I am seeing a man at the distance" is Ignorance because it equates falsely an objective reality of the mind-standpoint as being the reality of the world-standpoint. Rather, right understanding would be "I am seeing the man-appearance in the mind because of nama-rupa (imagined) additions onto the cognition of the Tree that alone is real in the world." Thus the man is superimposed onto the Tree outside.

When the Ignorance is removed with knowledge, one has certainty that the object in the world seen is the Tree. The knower who seeks to assume the world-standpoint merges his mind-standpoint with it and sees in his cognition the substratum Tree. That is, his taking the world-standpoint nullifies the nama-rupa additions that only belong to the mind standpoint.

Now a question comes: is it possible to have the Man remain in the mind-standpoint even after the knowledge that the object in the world is a tree and not a man?

There are two differing approaches, possibly taken by opposing schools of thought.

1. Yes. For the man in the mind is corresponding to name-form additions to the substratum cognition of Tree, and these need not vanish upon attaining knowledge that the world-object is only a Tree and not the man in the mind. Only a partial set of thoughts constituting false-knowledge is removed, but that need not remove the name-form additions.

This is analogous to a child wearing a tiger costume in a play: the mother knows its her child and yet sees a tiger due to the costume addition. So the child is seen as a tiger in the play-standpoint (on account of real additions such as the costume) and known at the same time as the child in the "real

world"-standpoint.

2. No. Because when one sees the Man, one forgets the Tree; and when one sees the Tree, one no longer sees the Man. Knowledge of Tree illumines whatever one is seeing as that Tree; there is no question of separately adding name-form to the only real Tree-cognition to bring about an alternate Man-reality in the mind. Once you know the Tree, that alone is known as the object of cognition and all cognition is known as the Tree alone; no other separate identification remains. The mind-standpoint has merged with awareness of the Tree.

(Note: one who upholds the possibility of 1. is not necessarily negating the possibility also of merging awareness in the Tree, as referred to in 2. But he asserts that one can know the Tree-substratum even while being in the mind-standpoint where a Man-appearance remains in awareness, as distinct from and added onto the Tree cognition. It is because he also has realized the standpoint of nondual Reality (where such duality is negated) that he can say that the mind-standpoint is mithya in light of the higher standpoint.)

Let us translate the above scenario to the advaita setting.

There is Brahman the Reality. The "standpoint of Brahman" is called Paramarthika. In this standpoint, Brahman is pure Consciousness, advaitam.

There is also a vyavaharika standpoint in which the Reality is known as ishvara-jiva-jagat, that is based on name-form (or upadhi) identifications. The name-forms that manifest the manifoldness and plurality are said to be product of Maya. Why? So long as name-forms are identified separately and differently in any dualistic sense, an adjunct Power of Brahman (Maya) that projects the name-form universe must be affirmed (or we have to say that Ishvara=Brahman+Maya projects the nama-rupa).

Ignorance is the superimposing (adhyasa) of the multiplicity projected by Maya onto Brahman, the substratum Consciousness. This is the error of taking what is real in vyavaharika to be the paramarthika reality of Brahman.

Does Jnana eliminate the vyavaharika standpoint altogether or simply the error of the above superimposition?

There are two differing viewpoints.

1. The vyavaharika standpoint itself is only ignorance by way of superimposition. Jnana is the merging with the paramarthika standpoint where all dualistic consciousness (based on seer vs seen divide) is absent. The Self alone shines as pure Awareness.

2. Even if such realization of paramarthika is accepted as an outcome of either vichara or vichara+yoga, the jnani can return to the lower vyavaharika standpoint. Thus, jnana can exist in the jnani within the vyavaharika standpoint where the nama-rupa duality based on seer-seen divide is posited. This means the nama-rupa duality is not entirely adhyasa but rather it is mithya, anirvachaneeya, cannot be ascertained as absolutely real or absolutely unreal. Why?

The substratum Reality is nirguna Brahman in both standpoints, but in vyavaharika, the nama-rupa duality is added onto Brahman making it appear saguna. We say added and not superimposed, to emphasize that the duality is not *asat* for a jnani in vyavaharika; so long as he sees the duality, it is a real projection of the Maya of Brahman. He knows however that duality and its cause Maya are transcended/negated (*asat*) in the higher paramarthika standpoint and therefore *mithya* with reference to that.

Notes (taken from replies to others, lightly edited at a few places)

1.

“ so long as he [jnani] sees the duality”

Here, it should be obvious that the duality mentioned as being seen by the jnani is of the movie-appearance category (affirming cognition of nama-rupa multiplicity), sans the (ignorance) belief in its contents that the ajnani has. According to this strict viewpoint, even such a rudimentary acknowledgment of nama-rupa (seer-seen divide) dualistic appearance belongs to vyavaharika and corresponds to dualistic association of Maya in Brahman. The negation of such vyavaharika is not done by calling it *adhyasa* on paramarthika; rather it belongs to a lower level of ‘reality’ that is *mithya* from the standpoint of the Jnani in vyavaharika.

2.

When we say the seer-seen divide standpoint (or nama-rupa duality of cognition) is purely *adhyasa* on Brahman AND we say a jnani has such dualistic cognition, then the jnani's awareness is still subject to *adhyasa*. But this contradicts the assumption that the jnana negates *adhyasa* like the snake on the rope, therefore jnani is not a jnani!

To avoid this conundrum, the standard viewpoint says that nama-rupa ("jagat") is not simple *adhyasa* that necessarily vanishes on realization, rather it is posited in the non-absolute (vyavaharika, *mithya*, not *asat*) standpoint where Brahman can only be known as *Ishvara=Brahman+Maya*.

Or we have to say jnana being realization that Brahman alone IS and naught else, the seer-seen divide itself has vanished in jnana and there is no such separate individual entity called jnani - for "he" (the *adhyasa*-based ajnani) has merged in Brahman. It is only the ajnani (itself an *adhyasa*) who superimposes on Brahman the nama-rupa called jnani and imagines there is some retention of reflected i-awareness in that body-mind that belongs to the jnani and indulges in vyavahara even while having knowledge "I am All". In truth, the jnani is Brahman and jnana is a realization wherein *adhyasa* (or the nama-rupa snake) never was, is or will be.

The latter position seems a stretch to insist on as the only standpoint that constitutes truth. The "traditional" side (as I understand) accepts the paramarthika standpoint but does not negate absolutely (as being only *adhyasa*) the vyavaharika standpoint.

3.

Analogy for two-standpoint perspective: Consider "stone". There is a paramarthika standpoint where there is only Stone and naught else. (This should not be confused as "Duality exists but is not cognized or lost in some other higher Cognition". Duality is simply *asat* in paramarthika). There is a vyavaharika standpoint where the statue nama-rupa appearance is posited in the stone and (for the jnani) the adhishtana stone is manifest as Statue. The ajnani starts talking of the hands and eyes as distinct realities; the jnani sees only stone appearing as All. The statue-cognition for both jnani and ajnani is not simply due to adhyasa that has to vanish upon realizing I am seeing Stone only. It denotes a lower order of reality.

These analogies are not meant to learn $E=mc^2$ but to support the mananam for what we know from sravanam (like tattvamasi). I said stone & statue; the shastra may say water & foam or clay & pot. If needed one can provide further explanation; but otherwise there should be no confusion that we are not merely talking about reducing nama-rupa to Maya but rather indicating by Stone or Clay or Water the Brahman that is adhishtana for tat and tvam.

4.

On lower and higher order/standpoints of Reality, this is my understanding.

The paramarthika or turiya standpoint is the standpoint of Brahman in which there are no separate identifications of "tat" and "tvam", of "seer" and "seen", of a nama-rupa duality that is opposed to a sakshi. The other standpoint is vyavaharika which begins with the seer-seen duality as a fact of experience. When we say the jnani has realized the truth but has cognition of duality, that is still vyavaharika. What is this truth he has realized? That the tat and tvam/aham are nondifferent, simply denotations of Brahman. But it is still a lower standpoint so long as the cognition of tat and tvam as if distinct is admitted in any sense whatsoever. Maya is the intrinsic adjunct of Brahman in that standpoint.

It is like a waker explaining what happens in a dream. He says it is unitary nondual Consciousness (ie. himself as Dreamer) projecting the duality of seer-seen in the dream. In this standpoint, automatically the fundamental corollary is that the Dreamer has the capacity (or maya-shakti) to project the dream.

Is the Dreamer-dream duality standpoint *asat*? No. It is a factual description of manifest existence/experience to the waker.

But the waker jnani's highest advaitic knowledge points to something more fundamental than this description of Consciousness/Self as Dreamer of dream. The entire duality based on splitting Consciousness as "Dreamer dreaming dream" is negated from the standpoint of that Consciousness that alone IS. The effect is nondifferent from cause and all causality negated from the standpoint of the substratum Reality.

In both cases, Consciousness is the foundation, the sathya. In paramarthika, there is naught else but Consciousness; in vyavaharika, this Consciousness is realized as Dreamer having capacity to dream. The latter is not *asat* but it is mithya as it stands negated in the higher knowledge/standpoint.

5.

For the jnani in vyavaharika as well, there is only Consciousness or Brahman, the Reality of all. But alongside is admitted the reflected awareness and cognition of self and nama-rupa duality. This brings in Maya through which Brahman+Maya appears dual. We are therefore in Dreamer-dream standpoint. The jnani however has realized or knows the paramarthika standpoint of Brahman as well, hence may also speak or refer to this higher advaitic truth of Brahman.