37.

**SUBJECT/OBJECT**

"From within or from behind,
a light shines through us upon things
and makes us aware that we are nothing,
but the light is all."
- R.W. Emerson

"...music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
While the music lasts."
- T.S. Elliot

Be clear who is Subject and who or what is the object. This may sound a little academic, but stay with me here. This is key. Our language betrays us. Every time we speak, even when we speak of the Understanding, of All That Is, we do so by constructing sentences like this one which are pure idiocy. Look at what that sentence does: it sets up 'All That Is' as the object about which 'we,' the subject, are speaking. 'All That Is,' pure Subjectivity, That in which all objects arise and which as such cannot be
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an object of anything: and 'we,' body/mind organisms and as such human objects among other objects, usurping the role of subject. Completely inverted, but it is how our whole language and thought structure are constructed. With the Understanding, it is seen so clearly how ironic this is: that it is the streaming of this very Consciousness itself through these limited human objects which is what gives them the ability to erroneously think that they are separate consciousnesses; which is what allows these objects to arrogate for themselves the role of (pseudo)subject.

Sometimes, in the case of some body/mind objects, there is a moment on the way to the Understanding when there is a subtle but vital distinction to be made, and it can easily be missed. At some point in the intellectual understanding of the teaching, it becomes clear that all there is is Consciousness. If so, then there is nothing which is not Consciousness. If so, then even this which is realizing this is Consciousness. If one has been exposed to Advaitic teaching, in particular if one has read Nisargadatta Maharaj, or even if not, the phrase "I am That" will suddenly take on great significance.

Be clear who is Subject and who or what is the object. On the threshold of awakening, on the eve of the annihilation of the false self, the ego will seek to save itself by this subtle misdirection. "Of course, I understand and accept that I am not an individual self. But what I truly am is Consciousness, All That Is; I am That; I am God." One does not have to look far to find teachers who have gone down this road, convinced they have reached awakening, 'God Consciousness.'

There is, unavoidably, a subtleness that is sometimes lost
in the translation and transcription of Maharaj’s talks. The ancient Sanskrit phrase which parallels Maharaj’s “I Am That” is “Tat tvam asi.” Literally, “That thou art,” which preserves “That” as the subject: “That (subject) is what you (object) are.” Maharaj’s native Marathi has a similar language structure, and a truer translation of Maharaj’s sense could be, “That is what the ‘I’ is.”

“I am That:” there is a sense in which this is true, and in one in whom the Understanding has truly happened this can be said with impunity. (Although then there will be no need for it to be said, and little interest in doing so.) Then there is no longer any identification as the separate doer, the separate entity, the small self, the egoic “I.” But until then, and especially when one is advanced in the intellectual understanding of the teaching, there is a short circuit that can happen here. Do yourself a favor and don’t go there. I assure you, as long as there is an ‘I’ to say “I am That,” that ‘I’ is the ego. As Ramana Maharshi would say, “Wrong I!” Remove the word ‘am’ and the identification of the ‘I’ as a separate ego is deflated. “That is what the ‘I’ is,” gets the perspective right, keeps it clear who is Subject and who or what is the object.

There is nothing wrong, nothing amiss in all this. It is all the perfect unfolding of totality in Consciousness. All there is is Consciousness, all this happens in Consciousness, so it can be said that it is Consciousness itself which identifies as the body/mind organisms. Even the basic misperception, the usurpation of subjectivity by the object instruments, is not some wrong thing being done that needs to be corrected. The identification as an object is simply what is happening in Consciousness, and it results in what we are calling the dream. When awakening from the dream occurs in the case
of a body/mind object, there is the ceasing or the falling away of that identification as a pseudo-subject, and that too is simply what is happening in Consciousness.

When the Understanding occurs and there is that falling away of identification, then there is the end also to the whole subject/object distinction. It is seen that there is no relationship, no 'I and Thou,' for they are the same. 'I' as separate pseudo-subject has never existed: and 'Thou' is not Other, is who 'I' always already is.

The first teacher I heard talking about Advaita made a useful distinction. She is British, so at first I thought it was just a peculiarity since the British frequently use prepositions in a way which is different from the way they are used in America. (Or, "different to," as they would say.) But the distinction can be helpful in any case. As concepts, there is a difference between identifying 'as' and identifying 'with.' 'As' in this context is like an equals sign: when there is identification 'as' a body/mind object, you believe you are that body and mind. You identify yourself as being that body/mind. But identification 'with' is more like what you mean when you say you really identify with a friend who is going through some experience. You don't think you are your friend, but still you "can identify with that," as we say. There is an empathy there, a seeing things through the eyes of your friend.

In the dream, there is identification 'as' a body/mind organism. Almost all the dream characters think they are that particular body and mind, with their own separate consciousness and self. This is the usurping of the role of subject, identifying 'as.' When the Understanding occurs, this falls away and what remains is an identification 'with'
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a body/mind organism. You know this body/mind is not who you are: it is only an object in the Consciousness which the I is. But the body/mind organism continues to function, and there is an experiencing of life through the eyes of that body/mind organism. This is identifying 'with.'

Teachers of Advaita sometimes use the image of a chauffeur. Because he has access to a nice car and can drive it anywhere, the chauffeur can be deceived into thinking that it is his car (thus arrogating subjectivity.) With the Understanding, there is no chauffeur, only an owner/driver who is very aware of the different functions involved in owning a car and driving one.