

Words, Words, Words

Lord Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words

Our thinking, including the language we use to express our thoughts, is inherently dualistic. So communicating the non-dual reality of ourselves and the world presents a challenge. Most spiritual traditions have a special language. For example, the Shankaracharya uses Sanskrit and in Ouspensky's teaching there are special 'System words' – ordinary English words which are given a different meaning. But this does not solve the problem – *all* language is dualistic, and is based on a subject-object model of ourselves and the world. We think in terms of objects and speak in terms of objects. But even within the confines of this dualistic framework, problems arise. When two people talk about an object, do they mean the same thing? Unless the *experience* to which the words refer has been conveyed by the words, probably not. Unless we have experienced what the Shankaracharya means by *Sattva* or what Mr Ouspensky means by 'Conscience', any meaning we might ascribe to those words will be nothing like what the original speaker intended.

As Rupert explains, on the spiritual path words are used only to point towards the speaker's understanding. If they do not come from real understanding, they are of little value:

Q: I assume that you do not mean them [the words 'ever-present Consciousness' or 'Awareness'] as some sort of 'thing', an object or concept that can be grasped. If this is so, why use such terms as it seems to imply content when my understanding is there is only absolute emptiness, unspeakable, indefinable, indescribable and void of all content?

RS: The 'I' that is aware that 'I am aware', is itself both present and aware. Otherwise it would not be possible for 'I' to know that 'I am aware'. However, the 'I' that knows that 'I am' and that 'I am aware' is the same 'I' that is known to be both present and aware. In other words, in simply knowing that 'I am' and that 'I am aware', Awareness knows or is aware of itself. This is the most simple, obvious and ordinary fact of experience.

Awareness is not any kind of an object. However, such a statement is only partially true. It is true in response to the belief that Awareness may be an object. However, the statement that Awareness is not an object presupposes that there *are* such things as objects. There aren't! Nobody has ever found or experienced an object as such, that is, as it is normally conceived to be.

Likewise, the statement that Awareness is absolute emptiness is partially true. In fact, strictly speaking, it is a contradiction of terms. It would be truer to say that Awareness was relative emptiness, relative, that is, to the belief in the reality of 'fullness' or 'object-ness'. In relation to apparent objects Awareness can be said to be empty, that is, empty of all objective or observable qualities.

However, once it becomes clear that there are no objects, it no longer makes sense to say that Awareness has no objective qualities. In other words, it no longer makes sense to say that Awareness is empty for there is no longer a 'full-of-objects' or 'object-ness' with which to compare it.

Thus Awareness is beyond emptiness and fullness.

There is always only Awareness knowing and being itself and this is simply known as 'experience'. It is seamless and intimate and, there being nothing else present with which to compare it, it cannot rightfully be given a name. Hence the ancients, in their wisdom and humility, only went as

far as saying that it is 'not two', 'a-dvaita', knowing that to call it 'One', is to say one thing too much.

Unspeakable? If we truly think that Awareness is unspeakable we should remain silent.

Indefinable? Yes!

Indescribable? Yes!

Void of all content? Again, we are making reference to something called 'content' which Awareness is 'empty of'. What would such content be made of? If it was made of Awareness, Awareness would not be empty of it, so this content must be something other than Awareness. To presume such a substance is a mistake and only reinforces the duality that is implied by it.

Are we pointing to the same thing? Ultimately, I suspect so, but if we want to speak about these matters we must accept the limitations of language and use them [*words*] as skilfully and sensitively as possible. If we do not accept such limitations, we have to remain silent. If we continue to use language and yet always point to its limitations, we fall prey to the danger of hiding in an ivory tower of intellectual advaita absolutism which is one of the main refuges of the separate self in our era, at least in advaita circles.

By accepting the limitations of language, we understand that nothing we say is ultimately true and yet, at the same time, words that come from experiential understanding, rather than philosophical debate or belief, somehow have the capacity within them to evoke the understanding towards which they are pointing. In other words, words are more than pointers. They are missiles!

If they come from silence, they are pregnant with it. They don't simply point towards silence. They deliver it!

In other words, it is the understanding from which the words come rather than their 'advaita correctness', or otherwise, that designates them true or not.

[\[http://non-duality.rupertspira.com/read/words are more than pointers 215\]](http://non-duality.rupertspira.com/read/words%20are%20more%20than%20pointers%20215)

As children, we are taught how to manipulate words and string them together to convey meaning. When we learn a foreign language, we realise that words are just logical symbols or labels. Like mathematical symbols, we learn to use them to create logically correct statements or assertions based on fundamental assumptions or beliefs. Does that imply that what is being said is true? No – if the beliefs or axioms are untrue, any statement based on them will be equally untrue. For example, the statement: 'if you are a naughty boy you will go to hell' is based on a number of implicit beliefs. Its truth or otherwise is dependent on the truth of those beliefs. But suppose that a statement is made based on fundamental assumptions which are true, does understanding the logic behind such a statement imply real experiential understanding? No! The Shankaracharya gave this example:

The original Shankaracharya said once that those who are ignorant, and those whose *Prajna* (knowledge of truth as 'being') is not firmly established, keep on saying that everyone is the Absolute, without real knowledge of it. Their being is in darkness and they move towards darkness and not towards light. [H.H.Record 1989, 24th October]

As Wei Wu Wei points out, it is the structure and syntax of language that makes it difficult to express and communicate the true nature of reality:

From a practical point of view one of the chief hindrances to our understanding of the message of the Masters lies simply in the parts-of-speech used in delivering their teaching. In brief, nouns are used where the meaning can only be suggested by *verbs*. [Wei Wu Wei: *Open Secret*, ch 47]

In this dialogue with a Spanish person who works as a translator, Rupert explains how the real language of non-duality would be all verbs:

RS: You are saying that in Spanish, it is: 'In the beginning was the *verb*, ... and the *verb* became flesh'?¹

Q: *I'm just shaking, because that's what I learned, but I never understood it. Why did they call it the verb?*

RS: Yes. Well if I translate it into my language, it means this: that we normally think that there are objects – known objects, nouns – chairs, people, table, selves, a world. In fact, if we explore our experience we don't find objects or nouns; we find knowing. Not 'the known', a noun; we find 'knowing'.

Q: *It's the gerund of a verb.*

RS: Exactly. We could say that we don't find the seen object – we just know the experience of seeing. In other words, we don't find the noun; our experience is all verbs. In fact, the new language of non-duality would just be all verbs. There is 'seeing' and I am that. There is 'hearing' and I am that. Now what do seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking – what do they all have in common? And what is the fundamental verb that they all share? Knowing. Knowing or experiencing. The experience of seeing is known. The experience of hearing is known. They are all modulations of this primal verb called 'knowing', which is not actually a verb in the sense of being an activity, it is like a stationary verb which is pure being. But it's a 'being' which is made out of 'knowing'.

In the beginning, the very first thing, the primary experience, is pure knowing-being. And that becomes, or rather seems to become flesh. This knowing takes the form of seeing and seems to become the seen world, the object, the noun. In fact, it never *actually* becomes flesh; it always remains pure knowing-being. But this knowing-being vibrates within itself, takes the shape of being and seems to become an object. It takes the shape of hearing, and seems to become a sound. It takes the shape of touching and seems to become an object. But in fact it never really becomes any of those things. It remains pure, knowing-being – the verb only *seems* to become flesh. It doesn't really become flesh but the real substance of the flesh is spirit – pure knowing. That's what he meant.

Q: *Extraordinary. I'm a translator so I'm vibrating right now because we've lost a lot in translation, but I'm so grateful that in Spanish it remains 'the verb'.*

RS: Yes. You see the word is itself a vibration. It's made out of pure knowing. So the word – it's a verb, it's a modulation of hearing, it's a modulation of knowing. So all nouns, our experience of nouns, are really verbs. The seen object is made out of seeing, the heard word is made out of hearing. It's really a verb, and all verbs share one thing in common – knowing. That's the primary verb, which is not an activity so it's more like a stationary verb – hence being-knowing.

[4th December 2012. Extract: *The body of pure transparent knowing*]

¹ 'En el principio era el Verbo ... y el Verbo se hizo carne.' (In Spanish, verb = verbo, word = palabra.)

Contemplation

Instead of thinking of experience as a collection of objects or nouns, feel only in terms of verbs. Instead of thinking, 'I know such and such', feel, 'There is only knowing and I am that'. Instead of thinking, 'I love you', feel, 'There is only loving and I am that'. Instead of thinking, 'I see the tree', feel, 'There is only seeing and I am that'. [Rupert Spira]