



Deep Sleep

I've received several questions regarding sleep, waking, Turiya and Consciousness. Many have asked how do I not consider all Advaita and talk of the Unborn Mind just bull unless I am always aware, even in deep sleep. If I am not even aware in sleep, what proof is there that I exist eternally, after death? If sleep is the little sleep, and death the big one, without some sort of awareness of awareness, some sort of constant consciousness, is this all not a big joke?

In a sense, it is a big joke. The whole thing is a joke, both conscious existence and talking about it, as well as trying to go beyond or escape it.

On the other hand, you are already unconsciously aware you, as You, are totally beyond the joke, but not that you, as you, are the joke.

To go into this more deeply, see the [Question and Answer Blog](#) associated with this website.

There are two things to remember. Most everyone is lost in an "internal" imaginal space of constant thinking, memory and imaging. It has a "palpable presence" that some refer to as 'I Am'. That I Am and the imaginal entities give the void form.

When the I Am and imaginal space and its dreamlike entities evaporate, what is left is the Void. It is absent any image, thought sense of existence. With it gone

there is only formless oneness, yet within which you function as normal. The experience is of absolute quiet, absolute emptiness and formless oneness.

The other thing to remember is that you would never experience any of this if it were not for the body. The body has the states of consciousness, waking, dream and deep sleep as part of its imaginal existence. However, the waking consciousness is almost trivial, yet it is an expansion or triumph of the waking state that the ego wants to or thinks it will experience in enlightenment. But, the waking mind state is transient and unreal, as is dream and deep sleep. You are beyond that.

I received a question from a reader where that question, and the answer, should help you understand the whole game.

QUESTION:

Hi Ed, You said that you allow for crazy questions. Here's one that has been plaguing me for a over a decade. It would be nice to be rid of it. Here it is. While literally awake, Consciousness, Bliss, etc. are accessible. All of this however, seems to totally disappear when I am in a deep, dreamless sleep. Let me qualify.

When I am waking up from this dreamless sleep, I look at what I am rising from, still half in the sleep, and it seems that there is nothing there, the absence of even a flickering light of Awareness. Instead, there seems to be only a kind of dark blankness and I become afraid that this is what death truly is. Years ago when I was under anesthesia, I woke with the profound sense that what I was rising from is what death really is, a literal and absolute dead blankness.

If Awareness is always here and truly eternal, why would there not be some taste of Consciousness when I look at the deep sleep "state" while still half in it? Now I realize that Consciousness is not a "thing" to be remembered. That is why I emphasize being between the waking and sleep states when considering this issue. The egoic self feels afraid that formless awareness may after all, just be a product of the waking brain, of the unconscious mind and this perpetuates a fear of death that I would like to be free of.

Advaita writings talk all of the time about deep dreamless sleep as that of pure Consciousness. How do they know? If this nagging concern were to abate, I would have a quieter mind. No one I have ever talked to has been able to address this question. Is this going to be one of those unanswerable questions that are free?

ANSWER:

THIS IS THE CENTRAL QUESTION AND DILEMMA OF ALL JNANA TEACHINGS, ZEN, ADVAITA, ETC.

Not one in 10,000 gets this as the central problem.

Listen carefully.

This is what I first wrote when I lost identification with the body and I saw waking consciousness – I Am – come and go:

"I am That who is aware of the coming and going of I Am, of Consciousness."

"I am even before this knowledge."

"I have no attributes; I am before and beyond all attributes, including knowing and not knowing."

"I am Consciousness and the world are little things compared to me."

Your dilemma is that you still identify with waking consciousness and the body. Waking consciousness is trivial.

You are That who is aware of being, and then of not-being.

You are That who is aware of being, and then of not-being.

You are That who is aware of being, and then of not-being.

Being and Not Being arise in you. You are That who is aware of their coming and going. Feel that. Accept that.

As such, you are That who is beyond both.

This is the first liberation.

YOU are aware of the coming and going of Consciousness, of first being and then later, not being. Being, not being, being, not being. These states come to you--and then they go.

Can the waking mind be aware of the non-waking mind? When the waking mind is present, there is no sleep mind or dream.

An analogy would be a candle flame. If it is self-aware when burning, can the flame be aware of its absence? No.

The same with Consciousness. Can Consciousness be aware of the absence of Consciousness? No. No there is a knowledge that Consciousness, I Am, comes and goes.

On one hand the real you is that knowledge that beingness comes and goes. But In fact, you are even beyond that knowledge of immortality.

At this point, just feel the dark emptiness and see what happens. It is only the sleep state on the periphery of Consciousness. It will come and go as does waking mind.

Remember, the dark emptiness is still not you, it is a percept. But, when you know it, it has a welcoming nature.

The knowledge that you are not that which comes and goes is the first liberation. What you are is unknowable as an object. You are it. This is the beginning of your real practice after the disidentification with the body.

Next is to tease out all the extraneous added on stuff and find the Fundamental without adulteration. You already have this position, but you need to disidentify with all you are not.

As of now, just take the position of the witness of the coming and going and recognize you are even beyond the knowledge that you are beyond Consciousness. If you do not see this immediately, ponder it carefully, day after day until the knowledge comes.

Read closely what “Advaita writers” are actually saying. Read their exact words. Conscious sleep to them means only that the thinking mind is not working. Nothing more. The mind does not work in deep sleep. So, what they mean is having no mental workings while awake. This is what they mean by waking sleep. In fact though, once you get this before being and not being identification, you become aware of that which is always aware, namely You; it is just that waking consciousness is not there.

You have projected a meaning into what they say that they did not mean. This is not your fault, but theirs because they are not clear. Also, a lot of teachers don't understand this themselves and are vague.

This exchange continued as below until she had an awakening experience.

QUESTION:

Hi Ed,

Yesterday, I witnessed the coming and going of appearances for about ten hours. I saw that all objects are empty of inherent Being, are a reflection of mind and yet in a way, are themselves of Being, of Consciousness, because they are objects or reflections of Consciousness. I can generally embrace this, even though at times I can get a kind of ego rebellion and feel unpleasantly dead. I realize that this feeling is just another thought, an identification with mind and body, and will need to witness this too.

Anyway, here is my question. Although it is clear to me that the object world is a reflection of mind-body thoughts and perceptions, are there not objects or a world outside of the human mind-body that are also reflections of the one ultimate conscious reality? If I see a tree for instance, I can "see" that this appearance includes a product of thought and perception. However, if I tell another "person" about the tree, its appearance and location, it will be recognized by the other as the same tree.

So is there not an illusory reflection of Reality or Supreme Consciousness going on that is not an exclusive reflection of the human perceptual, thinking mind alone and that creates the appearance of a world? That is, is ultimate reality reflecting an illusory world as well as and including an illusory human thinking mind that also creates an image of a world, or is there only the human mind creating the dream of world?

If it's the later, I don't understand it, cannot reconcile the contradiction of the apparent consistency of the world even in light of the mere inferences of sensory perception. For me this makes it difficult to know how to address and live in this world even as a dream.

Thanks so much for being there. Being able to write to you is so helpful.

ANSWER:

Why are you doing this?

The question is only philosophy, asking epistemological and ontological opinions. This is only thinking. The question is bullcrappy. It is of no more value than asking whether the numbers 2 and 5 have some actual physical existence as a logical set somewhere in space-time.

All elements of Consciousness are illusion, including your question. There is no human. There is no human mind. There is no Cosmic mind or Absolute. These are just words. There is nothing behind them.

You are getting close, don't screw around "reconciling." What is there to reconcile in order to drink coffee at Starbucks?

What you are to do is investigate your experience, isolate unadulterated Consciousness and dwell there.

In any event, you can answer the question yourself and see what it does for you. Ask the question and then say, "Yes there is." Then ask and say, "No, there isn't." See whether either answer helps you in any way. Perhaps you just enjoy feeling perplexed.

Have you discovered what the dark denseness experience is yet?

QUESTION:

Hi Ed, I understand and see that what you said is so. I'll drop all this and go back to dwelling in reality, in true conscious awareness. I started already. I watched the dark emptiness for two hours when I woke up, but it remained dense. When I look at it right now, I sense it as an illusory thought form, but in this next moment, it is lighter and not truly dead. I still don't know. I will look at it through the evening and then again in the morning when the experience of the dense darkness is very strong.

Thank you for the wake up call. I am very grateful.

ANSWER:

The darkness is only sleep.

You are always aware of all three states, deep sleep, waking and dream. Everyone is always aware of the dream state. It is the constant movement of thought forms and images I call imaginal space.

You are aware of all three states at once. That You is beyond them and has no characteristic they have such as waking consciousness, time, space, objects, etc.

Please read [the new site](#)* very carefully. Most of your questions will be answered there.

* [NOTE: this is now The Advanced Teachings section of the WeAreSentience.com website.](#)

QUESTION:

Ed, I gasped when I read your response. After looking at the dense darkness for over an hour, I saw that it was of the mind, but did not grasp its nature. When you just said, "The darkness is only sleep", there was complete clarity. That's what I was seeing, a mind-based sleep state!! This clarity is liberating. Yet, I am also aware that I am beyond "this clarity". I am beyond this knowing, yet not separate from it. I am beyond being and not-being, beyond all concepts. I read the new site (see note above) twice and will continue to read it carefully. I am so very grateful for your guidance.

ANSWER:

Congratulations!

Don't lose it.

Practice. Deepen the understanding.

QUESTION:

Thanks Ed. New morning. The mind "does not work" in the deep sleep state, so there is the appearance of dense darkness. I am now aware of this as an appearance, aware that this is a mind state that comes and goes and that I am not it. I am beyond all arisings in the imaginal mind. I am aware of this state, yet "have no characteristic of it". In under one week, you saved me an additional ten years of searching, or maybe a lifetime. Thank you, thank you!

ANSWER:

Remember, all this is just concept and apprehension, and ultimately illusion. The perfect Absolute is not limited by knowledge or experience.

NEXT:

[Overview of Self-Inquiry](#)

[Hunting the I](#)

[Warning!](#)

[Readers' Questions and Answers About Practice](#)