

Hi Graham,

The Atmananda quote "*I am consciousness is the only actual experience anyone ever has: all else is superposition*" is certainly correct from the non-dual point of view. It is very difficult for most spiritual people to get their minds around the idea they are already experiencing what they are striving to experience, that they already are what they want to be, that they know what they think they don't know.

Graham: Concerning experience and knowledge: What can be added to this picture is that which allows consciousness to be aware of itself i.e., Consciousness seems to mould itself in the aspect of its object, and at the same time reveal itself, to itself.

Ram: Yes, consciousness has no form and can take the form of any object, subtle or gross.

Graham: So through the appearance of the object in me I know "I am consciousness."

Ram: If you mean that you are a someone other than consciousness and it is the presence of objects that lets you know you are consciousness, Vedanta would disagree. The point you seem to be making is called sristi-dristi vada. 'I see the world because it is there.' The world, the objects, illumine me. Vedanta is just the opposite. It is called dristi-sristi vada. The world is there because I see it." I illumine the world.

If you think about your experience of objects you might through inference realize that you have to be conscious to perceive them, but it is quite possible to know yourself as consciousness when objects are not present because consciousness is self evident. Nothing is needed to 'allow' consciousness to know itself. As you say in the first paragraph, "Consciousness seems to mould itself in the aspect of its object, and **at the same time reveal itself, to itself.**" Its self revelation takes place simultaneously with and independently of its revelation of objects.

Objects on the other hand are not self revealing. They cannot bring light to themselves or to something else because they have no light of their own. They are inert projections that seemingly shine because they reflect the light of consciousness. In a dream, for example, the sun shines on the other dream objects but the objects are not illumined by it. They are illumined by consciousness, the 'dream light.'

If a light is shining in a room it is not necessary to turn on a second light to see it because it is illumined by its own light. Consciousness is like a light bulb that was never created that shines endlessly without being connected to a source of electricity. It was shining before the universe came into being and it will continue to shine effortlessly once the universe has packed up and gone away. No object can see this light because it is subtler than all objects. Nonetheless it can be revealed to itself when it thinks it doesn't know itself by an amazing and peculiar object: Vedanta pramana. Vedanta reveals what is self revealing by removing ignorance of it.

Graham: The question would be: what of the object in itself?
As the cause-effect of "appearance in consciousness", it seems no description of it is possible, no attributes, etc.

Ram: Well you can describe it, because it is not non-existent. All objects have attributes or qualities. In Vedanta they are called saguna Brahman which means consciousness with form but they have a peculiar ontological status; they are mithya, apparently real. They don't actually exist (except as a projection) but they don't not exist either because they are experienced. A mirage looks like water but it isn't actually what it seems to be nor is it located where it seems to be. But we cannot say that the description is equal to what it describes. It is always an approximation, qualified by the point from which it is being viewed.

Graham And, here's the Vedanta heresy, can it not be said that it is neither conscious or unconscious?

Ram: Yes. If by 'it' you mean consciousness, the Self. It is that because of which what is conscious and what is unconscious...if such a distinction exists...is known. These categories do not exist in reality; they are just

useful concepts that help us make some sense out of this strange dream that we find ourselves in. Conscious is closer to who we are but it is not quite the correct word. As Atmananda correctly says, 'I am Consciousness.' Even objects, if they appear in Consciousness, can only be Consciousness because Consciousness is non-dual. This is why you are the world.

GRAHAM: And that ultimately, we are that?

Ram: Yes, indeed.

All the best,

Ram