

All Objects Obtain in the Self

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Bhima: Hi! Ted, good morning!

I've been listening to James for a few months and have read *The Essence of Enlightenment*. I am running into a problem with the "location of objects" teaching. When he teaches that objects can't exist independent of awareness, to arrive to that conclusion he says, "When you see a pen, where is it? It's in awareness and couldn't exist without it." I understand it up to here, but this teaching then seems to limit this understanding to only when the senses are in use. If the senses are taken out of the equation then the self knows itself but will not know the objects. In that scenario, now that there are no senses and no objects available to the self to know, then how are all objects still in the self? Maybe it's a moot point because the location of objects is important only as long as they are experienced. Please comment.

~ Bhima

Ted: Hi, Bhima. I understand your doubt completely, for upon my initial exposure to the teachings of Vedanta, I had the same doubt myself. The confusion is arising due to the erroneous equation of awareness with mental perception.

The mind itself – which is basically just the name we give to all the thought-waves arising in the portion of the limitless ocean of awareness accessible to the mind of the apparent person we take ourselves to be and subject to its functions of perceiving, integrating, discerning, deliberating, deciding and directing – is nothing more than an object existing within, illumined by and dependent on awareness. In other words, the perceptive capacity of the mind is not awareness-as-such. Perception is a subtle object existing within awareness, a function that the mind – which is also an object – performs when it is illumined and thereby lent sentiency by awareness. Awareness is the principle of intelligence-as-such, not the relative knowledge that occurs by virtue of the functions of the mind.

The Location of Objects teaching is used to illustrate the point that everything we perceive is dependent on our perception of it, and thus our entire experience of seemingly disparate objects is actually a seamless whole in the same way that all of the phenomena projected on a movie screen is nothing other than light or that all objects populating the dream world are nothing other than our own mind. At a macrocosmic level, the transactional reality that we inhabit physically as well as the subjective reality that we experience psychologically is what we might, in personified terms, refer to as *Isvara's* dream.

The most profound ramification of this understanding is that while the objects do appear within the perceptive scope of a mind illumined by awareness, the objects are not independent entities existing in awareness. Rather, the objects are awareness. That is, since conscious existence is the singular fundamental reality, it is the "substanceless substance" of which all objects are made as well as the "illumined field" in which they appear and are known as existent. Whether the "substanceless substance" (i.e. awareness) assumes an apparent form due to the conditioning

power of *maya*, which makes awareness appear to be something it isn't, or remains formless has no effect on the essential nature of awareness.

The most subtle manifestation of awareness is the Macrocosmic Causal Body, which is the unmanifest "pool of pure potentiality" whose fabric is the three *gunas*, the fundamental constituents that in innumerable combinations and permutations comprise each and every object in the manifest universe in both its subtle and gross, "inner" and "outer," aspects. The Macrocosmic Causal Body is the reservoir of the "ideas," or "archetypal blueprints," for all possible objects. In personified terms, we might refer to it as the mind of God.

Thus we can say that objects exist within three general contexts.

First, objects can exist within the transactional reality, which is the manifestation – both the tangible objects and such subtle phenomena as sound, flavor, etc. – that is available to all its inhabitants. This context is referred to as *Isvara-shrishti*, God's creation.

Second, objects can exist within the subjective reality, which is the realm of thought, emotion and sensation that is available only to the individual. The experience and interpretation of objects in this context is invariably colored by the individual's *guna*-rooted, *vasana*-based, *raga-dvesha*-influenced values, and therefore this context is referred to as *jiva-shrishti*, the individual's creation.

Third, objects can exist in a potential or an unmanifest "seed" state in the Macrocosmic Causal Body, which we might personify as "the mind of God."

All of these states, however, exist within the scope of limitless conscious existence (i.e. *satyam-jnanam-anantam brahma*), the self. Just as water is the content of all the waves formed out of it, so awareness is the content of all the objects "formed" of it. Thus whether manifest or unmanifest, all objects obtain within the self, whose essential nature is limitless conscious existence, the fundamental non-dual reality.

I hope that clarifies the issue.

~ All the best, Ted