

# Do I See the World Because It Is There?

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/295>

**Peter:** Hello, Mr. Swartz. I'm working my way through the audio files for free download at your website. I have also read your book (which I'll be rereading soon, once I get through the audio). From the information I have so far I think that, at least intellectually, I catch the drift of most of what you're saying and find I can readily identify with it. However, for now, I have three questions that I'd like to ask:

For "qualifications" you say that a *mumukshu* needs access to a qualified teacher. Given my life circumstances, short of winning the lottery, I doubt I'll ever be in a financial position to travel my own country, let alone the globe, to be in the company of a teacher of Vedanta. Therefore would, say, listening to your audio and watching your videos (and thinking around, working with the knowledge from them) be sufficient to meet this qualification on access to a qualified teacher?

**James:** Yes. The most important qualifications are burning desire and faith in the words of the scripture. Contact with a teacher does not necessarily mean physical contact. It turns out that the book, the website, the videos and email, telephone or Skype *satsang* is enough. Quite a few are set free each year without personal contact with me. This is so because in the end liberation is only knowledge, which is the removal of ignorance, which Vedanta does very well. Having said that, it is always good to have some kind of personal contact. It seems that the videos in conjunction with the book are the best. There is a hard drive with 110 hours of teaching for \$200 plus postage that is particularly helpful.

**Peter:** You say that objects exist only in awareness, consciousness (self). Does that mean that objects are inherently consciousness in their own right – because they are constituted of consciousness?

**James:** Yes. You only experience things in yourself, in awareness, not outside, although it seems as if you are experiencing things out there. I recommend Greg Goode's book *The Direct Path* for a series of exercises that demonstrate this fact.

**Peter:** I mean, does that mean that a tree or pen does actually have some consciousness (though not necessarily its own)? I likely also mean in a relative way. I wouldn't expect a tree or a pen to have a level of conscious awareness, particularly discriminative capacity, akin to that of a human.

**James:** All objects are made of consciousness, and they are divided into two categories: the sentient and the insentient. The insentient, minerals, for example, do not have subtle bodies – reflectors that make them seem to be conscious. They are just consciousness vibrating at a very dense, slow frequency. The sentient – trees, animals and humans – have subtle bodies, which

makes them seem to be conscious. Within the sentient category there are various degrees of sentiency depending on how complex the subtle body is. A human being is just the self with a subtle body under the spell of ignorance – the idea that it is conscious, limited and a doer.

**Peter:** In dealing with objects and where they are, you establish that an object can only be said to “there” if you are taking your reference point as being your own body. You then establish that the object in reality exists in your mind (in consciousness, awareness – which is the self) – so there is no distance between you and the object. You then draw a distinction between objects and consciousness, saying that objects depend on consciousness but consciousness does not depend on the object. To that point I think I follow the argument and am fine with it.

However, you then run an argument, coming from that, in which you say that the knowledge of the object is always true to the object. (You won’t see a cat if what is being seen is a pen.) So from this my question is, how does consciousness know what it is that it must be true to in the first place?

To me it sounds like objects have some inherent existential quality in their own right that predetermines what it is that consciousness will be true to in presenting the object.

(Another way of putting that would be to say that object-existence is in fact precursory to consciousness. And coming from there, that consciousness arises and reveals objects is just happenstance – the object exists anyway irrespective of whether consciousness is around or not. There is also a subtle suggestion that consciousness is to some extent dependent on the object, at least inasmuch as the object “sets the agenda” for what consciousness will present.) I hope I’ve expressed this well enough for you see what the question is – obviously I’m confused around this area/issue – I don’t even know how to frame this question properly.

**James:** Are objects there because I see them or do I see them because they are there? Are they created out of consciousness or does conscious arise out of them?

We start with the premise that reality is non-dual, pure consciousness. It is prior to all objects. In fact from its point of view all objects are made out of it and are completely dependent on it. However, there is an object made out of consciousness called the subtle body. It is like a mirror that bounces pure consciousness onto subjective objects (feelings, thoughts, experiences, memories, etc.). In it there are other objects, the senses, that further reflect the light of consciousness onto gross objects. The subtle body is not conscious, although it seems to be so. It is pure consciousness appearing as an experiencing, knowing entity. Its consciousness is borrowed, like the light of the moon is borrowed from the sun.

From the point of view of the subtle body, it certainly seems as if the objects exist prior to it. When the subtle body enters a physical body and subsequently appears as a baby, the world is already there. This is how it is for every living apparently conscious being. And because the apparently conscious being is born ignorant of the fact that it is not actually a conscious being but is pure consciousness, which exists prior to the creation of all objects, it weaves a web of interpretations of objects that it imagines is its life. We call this *jiva sristi*, the creation of the individual.

The world, which is already there from the subtle body’s point of view is, however, preceded by pure consciousness. By a particular power inherent in consciousness (*maya*, or the Big Bang if

you want the “scientific” metaphor) the world is extruded or created out of consciousness. This power is usually thought of as God, the Creator, in the West. Vedanta calls it *Isvara*, or *maya*. Consciousness cannot evolve out of matter, because matter is inert. The only other possibility is that matter evolves out of consciousness – which it does. So consciousness is actually prior to gross matter and the subtle body, a subtle inert reflective form of consciousness.

The subtle body is also created by *maya* and is, as I mentioned, not conscious. It seems to be conscious, however, owing to its reflective nature. When *maya* is operating, pure consciousness thinks it is a subtle body and imagines the objects that it experiences are “out there” somewhere. The illusion is so real that it almost never questions this assumption. But inquiry reveals the truth, i.e. that consciousness is prior to gross and subtle objects. “Inquiry” means the teachings of Vedanta.

Whatever existence the objects have is only consciousness reflected in them. They borrow their reality from consciousness and are never apart from them. They are only names and forms appearing in you, pure consciousness, just as waves are only the ocean appearing in a form. They are always only water. They are completely dependent on it. But the ocean, you, are always free of the object waves.

I hope that sorts it.

~ James