

My Existence Is Not Merely a Figment of Your Dream

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2016-06-04

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2748>

Ursula: Hello and *namaste*, Ted.

I just discovered your blog a few months ago and it has been such a great resource and source of encouragement on my non-dual path. Thank you very much for all that you do.

For some time I have noticed the connection between my inner environment and the outer world, how the comings and goings are related. Taking this a step further, recently I have been reflecting a lot on the idea of life being just a dream and that everything happens inside of me and has no independent reality of its own. I have begun to accept the truth of this, that the only reality is my pure, eternal being.

However, the only part I don't get about this perspective is that if all objects are just projections, that would mean other beings in my "dream" are unreal as well. I understand that we are all the same in essence; however, under *maya* we are individualized expressions. Surely you exist independently of me and don't only exist just as a figment of my dream to answer my question and then recede back into nothingness once you we cease contact! ☺

I hope I have explained my question alright.

Thank you and I look forward to reading your response.

~ Ursula

Ted: Hi, Ursula.

I'm happy to hear that the teachings have been helpful.

In response to your confusion, it is important to first clarify the fact that you are limitless conscious existence, or, as you put it, "pure, eternal being," and not the apparent individual person you seem to be. As limitless conscious existence, everything does happen inside of you – i.e. all objective phenomena, both subtle and gross, appear within the scope of your being – and nothing the mind perceives or conceives has independent reality of its own.

To be clear, however, this does not mean that everything is simply a projection of Ursula's mind.

Vedanta says there are three orders of reality.

Paramarthika satyam is absolute, non-objectifiable, non-dual awareness – i.e. limitless conscious existence. This is the only reality; it is the *adhishtanam*, or substrate, of the two apparent orders of reality.

The first of the two apparent orders of reality is *vyavaharika satyam*, the empirical or transactional reality, which is the surrounding world that is available to all minds within the apparent reality. This order is what Vedanta refers to as *Isvara-shrishti*, or "God's creation." It is the result of

maya's conditioning influence on *brahman*, or pure awareness.

The second apparent order of reality is *pratibhasika satyam*, the subjective reality, which is the apparent individual's *vasana*-based interpretation and evaluation of the empirical reality, which is available only to a particular mind. This order is what Vedanta calls *jiva-shrishti*, or the individual's creation. Though nothing tangible is created in this manner, the individual's projections do color her experience and thus "create" her world, so to speak.

Because empirical reality is the "first tier" projection from the "mind" of God, it has greater continuity than individual's subjective interpretations and evaluations, which is the "second tier" layering upon the initial projection. A more technical way of putting it is that *vyavaharika satyam* is the direct result of *maya's* influence on *brahman* (or *paramarthika satyam*), whereas *pratibhasika satyam* is the result of *avidya*, which is the self-ignorance that is the personalized effect of *maya* on the *jiva*, or the apparent individual's mind. However we put it, *Isvara's* power trumps that of the individual every time, and thus the empirical reality has more staying power, so to speak, than the thoughts and feelings that constitute the apparent individual's subjective experience.

I hope that helps clarify the issue.

~ *Namaste*, Ted