

# Still Trying to Make Sense of Metaphor

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**Ellen:** Hi, Ted. I'm still trying to understand the "light illuminating objects" metaphor. Here is what I have been trying to figure out.

As I was contemplating this last night, the apparent situation seemed to be that I was in my living room in one area of the house. As I got tired, I "knew" that when I went to my bedroom in another area of the house (that I could not physically see), my bed would be there.

I could not see the physical bed in the other room, because awareness was not shining on it (other than the image which appeared in "my mind" as a subtle object).

**Ted:** Actually, awareness was – and for that matter is always – shining on it. The portion of awareness "seeing" through the scope of the mind-body-sense mechanism referred to as Ellen, and thus conditioned by and limited to its perspective, however, was not privy to that portion of the illumined "field" of being.

**Ellen:** So when I am in the living room, doing the bed, which I cannot physically see exist?

**Ted:** Yes. The bed – as well as the apparent person you take yourself to be – is part of *Isvara's* creation (i.e. the manifest universe), the entirety of which obtains within you, limitless awareness.

**Ellen:** Is the bed existing outside of awareness and then coming into awareness when the light of awareness shines on it?

**Ted:** No object can exist outside of awareness, for awareness is existence itself and as such is the "field" of being upon which all objects depend for their existence. Hence there are no objects floating about in some ethereal realm waiting to be illumined. Due to the power of *maya*, ignorance, objects simply appear within the scope of awareness as apparent modifications of the very "substance-less substance" of which they are made, the very "light" of which they are apparent modifications similar to the way the images on a movie screen are nothing more than apparent modifications of the light that is their essential nature.

Moreover, awareness is always "shining." It never began "shining" nor will it ever cease "shining." "Shining" (i.e. existing, being) is its nature. It is self-dependent and self-luminous. It is like a light bulb that needs no source of power other than itself.

**Ellen:** Or does the bed not exist until awareness of *maya* simultaneously shines on it/apparently creates it?

**Ted:** Awareness of *maya* does not shine on the object. *Maya*, ignorance, apparently conditions awareness, and thus makes awareness appear to be the object.

**Ellen:** I am new at this kind of thinking, but will try to sort my thoughts out based on what I've read and tried to understand. Is this question related to the microcosmic and macrocosmic minds?

**Ted:** Yes, exactly. Your question is based on confusion about *Isvara sristi* (i.e. God's creation, or the projected manifestation arising out of the macrocosmic causal body) and *jiva sristi* (i.e. the apparent individual person's projected interpretation and evaluation of God's creation based on his *guna*-determined, *vasana*-influenced likes, dislikes, desires and fears).

**Ellen:** I think I understand that all is awareness and that ultimately there is no microcosmic or macrocosmic mind.

**Ted:** Yes, from the perspective of pure awareness, neither exists, for nothing exists other than awareness.

**Ellen:** However, this way of thinking or this description is a way of understanding the apparent reality and/or negating erroneous constructs.

**Ted:** Yes, it is a provisional distinction that allows us to analyze and ultimately negate the reality of apparent objects, and thus reveal pure awareness as the fundamental reality, which is the "light" in which all objects appear, until such time as one is able to understand the non-dual nature of reality and the essential non-separateness of apparent objects and pure awareness.

**Ellen:** So in the microcosmic reality, seeing seems to take place from a limited perspective (the viewpoint of this apparent person), although it is made of awareness, which is unlimited and non-dual. From that perspective, the bed exists as a thought if the thought arises, and then exists as a "physical" image if it appears within the field of vision. If the bed does not appear as a thought or "physical" visual perception then it does not exist, or exists in some kind of field of potential (is this part of *Isvara*?). Or does this have to do with something like, as I think I understood, the *jiva*'s microcosmic interpretation of the "world" that already exists, which is *Isvara* – existing in its own right, so to speak (although also not separate from awareness).

**Ted:** From *Isvara*'s perspective, there is no division between what you earlier referred to as the macrocosmic mind and the microcosmic mind. Both are essentially projections of *Isvara*, the macrocosmic causal body.

The macrocosmic causal body is what we might describe as the pool of pure potentiality. Its nature is *prakriti*, causal matter, which is characterized by the *gunas*, the three fundamental energies (i.e. *sattva*, harmony and knowledge; *rajas*, passion and activity; and *tamas*, dullness

and inertia) that are the essential ingredients that comprise all objective phenomena, and it contains the *vasanas*, which in this sense refers to the ideas or subtle “blueprints” of all possible objective phenomena, both gross (i.e. the five gross elements and the tangible items composed of them) and subtle (i.e. the five subtle elements: the thoughts, emotions, and sensations composed of them; and the *dharmas*: the collection of physical, psychological and ethical laws that govern the functioning of the apparent reality and maintain its overall balance, harmony and well-being).

The macrocosmic causal body is essentially pure awareness conditioned by *maya*, ignorance, and is personified as *Isvara* (i.e. God, the Creator). It is from the *vasanas* abiding within it that the manifest universe is projected. The manifest universe is thus referred to as *Isvara sristi*, God’s creation. The “outer,” tangible, aspect of the manifest universe is called *vyavaharika satyam*, the transactional reality. It is relatively eternal in that it, while the myriad objects appearing within it have a limited lifespan, the manifestation itself maintains an unbroken existence until the event of the cosmic dissolution.

The macrocosmic mind, which is the sum total of all subtle bodies, is projected out of the macrocosmic causal body. It is referred to in Sanskrit as *hiranyagarbha*, the “golden egg.” It is omniscient. In other words, it knows all relative knowledge, all the facts and figures pertaining to the condition of the apparent reality.

The microcosmic mind is the subtle body (i.e. composite of mind, intellect, ego and memory) associated with a particular mind-body-sense mechanism that constitutes an apparent individual person. The microcosmic mind therefore has only limited knowledge accrued from the limited experience it has enjoyed through the vehicle of the mind-body-sense mechanism with which it is associated. Moreover, the microcosmic mind is essentially run by the *vasanas* associated with it. Within this more personalized context, the *vasanas* are the impressions left on one’s psyche from one’s past experiences. These impressions are the basis of one’s preferences. Pleasant impressions lead to *ragas*, affinities and desires. Painful impressions lead to *dveshas*, aversions and fears. In turn, these *raga-dveshas*, likes and dislikes, influence one’s actions. One’s likes/desires prompt him to pursue certain objects, and one’s dislikes/fears prompt him to avoid others. These preferences also determine one’s values, and thus influence one’s interpretation and evaluation of objects and experiences that one encounters within the context of God’s creation, the manifest universe (i.e. the apparent reality). This “inner,” subtle, aspect of the manifestation is called *pratibhasika satyam*, the subjective reality. Since these interpretations and evaluations basically determine the quality of one’s experience, this subjective response to *Isvara sristi*, God’s creation, is referred to as *jiva sristi*, the apparent individual’s creation.

When we say that nothing exists outside of awareness, most people consider this assertion from the perspective of the apparent individual person they take themselves to be, and thus misinterpret this truth to mean that nothing exists outside the limited scope of knowledge available to the mind of that particular apparent person.

The truth is, however, that you are not the apparent individual person you seem to be. You are limitless awareness. You are the “light” in which the entire manifestation, including every apparent individual person, appears. You are the awareness that illumines all minds. It is within the context of this understanding that we say nothing exists outside of your awareness. In this sense, however, it is not really your awareness, for awareness is not an object known to or possessed by you. Awareness is you. You are awareness. Thus nothing exists outside of – or for

that matter is essentially anything other than – you.

**Ellen:** So I think I'm understanding that there is pure consciousness, wherein nothing other than itself exists, and this pure consciousness is, as the teachings say, limitless, whole, complete and non-dual, also not conceivable, perceivable or experienceable.

Then there is macrocosmic reality, or *Isvara* (I hope I'm somewhere in the ballpark here), which is the blend of awareness and *maya* (its own power of veiling/projecting). This seems to project the objective world that appears to be, as it is without the person/*jiva*'s interpretation.

Then there is the *jiva*'s perspective, which superimposes its own *guna-vasana*-influenced interpretation onto *Isvara*.

So on one "level" there is no me, no house, no bed, just pure awareness.

On another "level" the bed exists in the field of potentiality and remains dormant as a potential idea if not appearing in awareness as a thought or "physical object," and becomes apparent if appearing as a thought or physical object.

Then on another level, the *jiva* interprets the appearance as a bed as a result of its conditioning (while nothing exists other than pure consciousness), and wonders if it exists when it doesn't appear to be present in/as awareness.

**Ted:** Your description reflects sound understanding except for the bit about the bed existing only as a potential idea when not being directly observed by the apparent individual person. Hopefully, the explanation offered above concerning the nature of *Isvara sristi* has resolved this confusion. If, however, you mean that objects remain in a state of dormancy within the macrocosmic causal body until they are projected as a thought in the subtle body or as a tangible item within the gross body/*vyavaharika satyam*, all three of which are aspects of you, awareness, then you are correct.

**Ellen:** I know my thinking is a mess, but I wanted to do my best to think it through and to show my thinking to you as it is so that I can learn to think and understand more clearly and accurately.

After all of that, I still don't understand the "awareness as light illuminating objects" metaphor, because I don't understand where the objects are or if or how they exist before the light of awareness illuminates them. I feel like I'm asking the same question over again, but the understanding just hasn't clicked yet.

**Ted:** Awareness's illumination of the object and *maya*'s projection of it happen simultaneously. By itself, awareness can't do anything, because as has been previously explained, its limitless nature renders it incapable of acting. Neither by itself can *maya* do anything, because as causal matter it is inert. Hence it is only by means of the combination of the two – which are not actually two – that manifestation happens.

We refer to the apparent reality as a manifestation rather than creation, by the way, because nothing is actually created. Just as the idea of the snake is projected on the rope, due to

awareness's own inherent power of *maya*, a projection occurs upon or "within" awareness that makes awareness appear to be something other than what it is.

**Ellen:** Thank you so much for listening and for your patience in helping me to understand.

~ Sincerely, Ellen