

# Consciousness Doesn't Need Objects to Be Known

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Douglas:** Many thanks for your reply. Is the interdependence of consciousness and appearance another heresy?

**Ram:** I'm afraid so. There is a relationship, but they are not interdependent. By "interdependent" you mean that they depend on each other, I presume. Consciousness doesn't depend on anything. It stands alone. This is why you are free when you identify with consciousness. Appearance, the world of forms, however, depends on consciousness. It does not stand alone. So if you identify with a form – the body-mind entity – you are not free.

**Douglas:** It's as if phenomena look like consciousness from one side and appearance/form from the other. I'm thinking of the physics experiments where an electron behaves either like a wave or like a particle, depending on the experimental set-up.

**Ram:** Yes, in a way. Phenomena look like consciousness when you identify with consciousness because they are consciousness taking a shape. But when you are under the spell of *maya* they look like standalone forms. You're onto something here because the nature of an object, a form, does depend on the point from which you observe it. Liberation is seeing from consciousness's point of view.

**Douglas:** I think I understand well that the electron in itself is neither particle nor wave. We don't know what an electron really is. It seems to be indescribable except for its effects in consciousness. The most we could guess at is that the electron in-itself is really us. Weird science. 😊

**Ram:** Yes again. You can never determine the actual nature of anything in *maya*, the phenomenal universe, because nothing stands alone – everything depends on everything else. You can also not know objects, because they are just projections, they have no substance. And when you inquire deeply into any object it resolves into you, consciousness. The electron is me, but I am not the electron. If you think about the location of electrons you will have to conclude that they are only in your consciousness. Consciousness takes the shape of the electron-thought and "electron" is known. It can only be known as consciousness because it is consciousness. Consciousness is both the material and intelligent cause of the universe.

**Douglas:** Ramji, you say, "Consciousness's self-revelation takes place simultaneously with and independently of its revelation of objects – 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."

I understand the argument, but experience of both waking and dream states are always consciousness-aspect, never just consciousness. And in the state of deep sleep, the closest to pure, primordial consciousness, consciousness does not know itself.

**Ram:** Consciousness as the sleeper or waker or dreamer doesn't know itself, but consciousness certainly does know itself. It never ceases to know itself. It only seems not to. Its self-knowledge is independent of experience. You have to be consciousness to understand this.

**Douglas:** It seems that the self-revelation of consciousness happens through its revelation of an aspect of an unknowable in-itself object. It seems that whatever primordial consciousness may be, it needs an object for self-reflection; as you suggest, even the most rarefied of mental objects, the Vedanta *pramana*.

**Ram:** This outcome of this argument depends on the meaning of self-revelation. If the self is under the spell of apparent ignorance, that is, if it thinks it is limited and dependent it needs an object, like Vedanta, to strip off its ignorance about itself. It can also reveal itself indirectly through inference or through inquiry into its reflection in a pure subtle body.

You mentioned this idea in the first email. You can see that objects are not self-revealing through observation and you can infer that they need consciousness to be revealed. But this will not set you free, because the knowledge is indirect.

What Vedanta is trying to point out is that consciousness stands alone. It is self-shining. Scripture is clear on this issue. It says that consciousness existed before the creation of objects. This is also true during and after the creation. It is "prior" to the creation, not in time, because there is no time. Objects are just the projection of ignorance - which does not take time. But it is prior to it in the sense that without consciousness there are no objects. A pure mind can reflect consciousness, so in that sense consciousness can investigate itself when it is apparently under the spell of ignorance, as I mentioned above - if its investigation is guided by scripture.

When ignorance is removed it is very clear that consciousness is self-shining because you don't cease to be conscious when there are no objects or when the objects are negated by knowledge. The "snake in the rope" is an example of the first. It is called unconditioned superimposition. A mirage is an example of the second. It is called conditioned superimposition.

**Douglas:** Ramji, you also say, "Conscious is closer to who we are, but it is not quite correct."

This is getting closer to what I may be sensing, if I read your meaning correctly. What we are cannot be known except through the seeming duality of subject-object, consciousness-matter, and we are both that and not that...

**Ram:** You didn't read my meaning correctly. I'm saying it can be known indirectly through "the seeming duality of subject-object," but this kind of knowledge is indirect. Remember, the purpose of knowing consciousness is for *moksa*, freedom.

The knowledge needs to be direct for *moksa*. Direct knowledge is “I am consciousness.” Direct knowledge only arises when the objects have been negated. At this time you see that you stand alone, that nothing but you is needed to know you. As long as you rely on something other than yourself to know who you are, you are not free.

**Douglas:** There remains of course the matter of *nirvikalpa samadhi* about which I cannot speak, because I have no experience of it. You say that consciousness shines brightly, in itself, for itself.

**Ram:** It’s not an important *samadhi* for *moksa*, because you can’t get direct knowledge in it. Why? Because you’re not there “in it.” It’s useful for burning *vasanas* and indirectly knowing that when “you” are not there you don’t cease to exist. It is like deep sleep in that regard.

**Douglas:** Yet this state demolishes the world as we know it. Ramana says when the self appears, the world disappears. When the world appears, the self disappears (as self, but is present as world).

**Ram:** This statement of Ramana’s is very misleading. I don’t think that this is actually what Ramana said. If it is, it certainly needs to be explained. It is actually a statement about self-knowledge and self-ignorance. There is a similar verse in the *Gita*: “What’s day for a worldly person is night for a *jnani*, and what’s day for a *jnani* is night for a worldly person.”

It’s important not to think that “disappears” means a physical disappearance. It means that when you know you are consciousness your concept that you are something other than consciousness – which creates your “world” – is no longer taken to be real. And the second idea is that when you are identified with your personal “world” you don’t see yourself as consciousness.

**Douglas:** Thank you again, Ramji, for your time and input.

~ All the best, Douglas

**Ram:** You’re welcome.