

Are Objects “Out There”?

Ram (James Swartz)

2011-10-26

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/187>

Jason: Dear Ramji, my question is about the example of the glasses being in the awareness. I am convinced that they are, but there may be objections that I find hard to answer. It is easy to see that the glasses are in your awareness. If they were not, you would not be aware of them, right?

Ramji: Right.

Jason: However, it may be said that what makes you aware of the glasses is that you have an image (or if you prefer, a copy) of the glasses in the awareness, but that the actual glasses are “out there.” I would say that the glasses don’t have to be out there at all for them to appear in the awareness, because that is exactly what is happening in a dream. Then you experience the glasses in the same way as you would have done if you were awake, but they are definitely not “out there.”

James: The teaching that takes care of this problem is called *jiva/Isvara sristi*. When we say “out there,” what is our reference point? If the body is our point of reference, then the glasses are definitely “out there.” They are objectified when we use the body as our means of knowledge. If the self is our point of reference, then the glasses are “in” awareness. This does not mean that they are “in” awareness physically. Nothing is in awareness. It is non-dual and free of objects. When we say “in” we mean “within the scope of” awareness, which means they appear as projections in awareness. *Maya* makes awareness jump off itself, like a hologram, and appear to be something that it isn’t.

When you go to sleep the glasses are “not there” for you, the waking *jiva*. But they still exist as objects for the dreamer, which is also a *jiva*. The dreamer sees them as sitting on his nose or on a nearby table. And they exist as objects in *Isvara*’s creation whether you are dreaming about them or not. And both the waker and the dreamer are objects in *Isvara*’s creation. So they are “out there” with reference to you, awareness.

Jason: You may also say that this is a dualistic view, and then the question arises as to where the awareness is, where it begins and where it ends.

James: If it is just a “view,” a belief or an opinion, there is no way to resolve it. We don’t care if anyone believes it or not. We use this distinction to illumine the relationship between the individual and the total and awareness.

Jason: People may agree that the awareness is not the same thing as the body, but still claim that awareness is a function of the body (and that in the dream state it is hallucinating).

James: Yes, this is the belief of the materialists. It does not hold up under inquiry.

Jason: Is the solution to this to ask them to accept on faith (as one possible hypothesis) that reality is non-dual?

James: Yes, if you cannot demonstrate what non-duality means. The whole point of the “location of objects” teaching is to attack the view that non-duality implies some kind of change in one’s experience. It doesn’t, because you are always one with everything. It involves a different way of seeing reality. If a person is qualified and has faith in the teaching, you can work the means of knowledge on them and the vision of non-duality will happen. If they think Vedanta is just a belief system, a philosophy, nothing will happen. There is nothing spiritually wrong with perception, which is based on duality. But if you don’t inquire into it, you will find that relying on perception for your happiness is not the way to go, because nobody’s perception is free of the *vasanas*. They will distort it and you will suffer.

Jason: Of course it is possible to demonstrate that everything but the self is in a constant flux and consequently it cannot be relied upon. However, people may argue that even though things are changing, they may be very real anyway!

James: That’s right. Everyone thinks what they experience is real. If they didn’t they wouldn’t have problems.

Jason: Accepting non-duality on faith may be motivated on the same grounds as when a scientist accepts the possibility that a hypothesis may be true because this is necessary for him/her in order to make the necessary tests to verify or falsify it. And... Vedanta provides the means for making the necessary tests even though they make take some time!

James: Precisely. If you expose your mind to Vedanta the vision of non-duality will become your vision.

Jason: Am I on the right track here? Or have I missed something?

James: Right on track, Jason. I promote you to number-one disciple! Of course that is faint praise because there is only one disciple, reality being what it is.

Jason: I am presently “devouring” your DVDs! I have finished the Berlin course and have gone on to the the *Self Inquiry* in India. And I love it!

All the best to you, now and always.

James: Thanks.