

No Need to Prove Consciousness

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Seeker: Hello, Sundari.

There is a persistent doubt that keeps arising.

What is the evidence other than “it says so in scripture” that this immediate awareness that I am is eternal and non-dual?

The logic follows that it is the irreducible factor in reality, but what is the evidence that it is no more than subjective experience and that prior to birth and after death there is nothing.

I can't shake the gnawing ignorance that consciousness is a product of material existence.

I believe/feel it is as scripture says, i.e. matter arises from consciousness, but there isn't a proper understanding.

Any help is much appreciated

Sundari: There is a simple question you could ask yourself, which is, “How do I know what I know or think that I don't know?” That is, who is it that knows the one with doubts? How can consciousness be a product of inert material existence? It's just not logical.

If you examine the logic, you must see that before contacting any object, I, consciousness, and the object are (apparently) separate, but once in contact I say, “I am experiencing my child,” for instance. Consciousness is called consciousness when it is not in contact with an object. In contact with objects it is called “experience.” Experience is another name for consciousness. Experience is a relational status of consciousness. When a sound comes, I say I am experiencing sound. If discrete experiences are just experience itself appearing in many guises, separating myself from experience leaves me alone as I am. Standing in myself alone is called “liberation” (*moksa*). Separating myself from experience is called “discrimination” (*viveka*).

There is no need to prove I am conscious, because it is self-evident. Every object needs to be validated by consciousness, me, but consciousness itself requires no validation. There is no way I can know anything unless I am conscious. You can negate all objects but you can never negate the knower, because the knower must be there to negate anything. Consciousness proves the existence of everything. Since it is eternally existent, existence must be its intrinsic nature. There are not two or more existences. Scripture says it is non-dual. If consciousness is borrowed from some other source it will not last. We know it is the only “thing” that does last. Everything else, all objects, come and go. What is borrowed is non-essential. What is intrinsic is essential. Essential means that nothing exists without consciousness.

From our analysis of consciousness, we discover that it is existence, what is. If I ask if you have a doubt about whether you exist or if you are conscious you will never

answer in the affirmative. It is fair to say that nobody ever told you that you exist or that you are conscious. These facts do not need revelation, because they are self-evident. The trick is to understand what it means to be consciousness. Therein lies all the ignorance and all the teaching.

If we look at the modern scientific perspective, the difficulty it has understanding the origin of the universe is a good example of the argument against the non-dualists. The logical approach to non-duality as a means to explain the Creation, while useful, breaks down (from the *jiva* perspective) when it comes to the analysis of the cause of the universe. Deductive reasoning will only get you so far because the only means of knowledge available for it are the senses (perception and inference), which without self-knowledge are *mithya* and are stuck in *mithya*. The dualists who argue this point are not able to see that their means for knowing anything within *mithya* is faulty, flawed and limited to knowledge of objects alone. And there is no way the dualistic scientific, religious or secular views take *Maya* into account.

However, the scientific view can reason up to the point where it understands that there must be a moment when the Creation began – but it cannot tell us what happened at the point of creation or before it began. Quantum physics, the most advanced theory in physics to date, cannot go beyond the Big Bang, even though in essence it conclusively proves that objects exist only from the point of view of the observer, the body-mind. The reason for this is that non-duality – or a singularity, which is what science calls non-duality – is a state (it's not a state, but I use the term here advisedly) from which there is no information to reason. If it's non-dual, there are no objects, no time, and no experience. Non-dual means “nothing other than.” Science will be stuck at this point until it understands what consciousness is – which it won't, unless self-knowledge removes ignorance for the scientist. Science believes that consciousness is something we have, that it arose from the material world. It certainly does not believe it is who we are.

Think about it. There had to be something before the appearance of objects. Nothing comes from nothing, although science illogically tries to prove that consciousness comes from objects. If that is the case, where did the objects come from? What was there prior to the objects to make them manifest cannot be answered with the syllogisms of this kind of deductive reasoning. But there had to be something there before the appearance of objects, something that the Big Bang banged from. If we take clay as a good analogy – clay as it is, is just undifferentiated mud. But before the pot can appear, there must be clay. Clay is one thing, but when the potter creates a pot, it assumes a name and a form, and seems to become something else. I was a professional ceramic sculptress, and it never failed to amaze me how objects could appear from mud.

But the sculpture is not something else; nothing has been added to the clay other than name and form. The clay was there before, during and after the pot or sculpture appears. If we destroy the pot, we will see the five elements which make up the clay from which it came. And if we break it down further and look at its particles under a microscope, eventually we see “empty” space – which is not empty at all, because it is existence itself. We cannot get rid of the particles; they will dissolve back into the substratum and become clay again. As we know, matter = energy, and cannot be destroyed. Nor can consciousness.

Existence, consciousness, was there before the appearance of the Creation, during and “after” it is withdrawn back into consciousness at the end of the Creation cycle. We can never get rid of the substratum, existence. It is always present underpinning

and supporting all objects or they could not exist. If an object appears before you, consciousness appears before you in a different form. It may not be conscious, as it is only a reflection, but it is nonetheless consciousness – although consciousness is not it. It can only be consciousness because the nature of reality is non-dual consciousness. Only when *Maya* appears does a Creation appear in name and form, which (seems to) obscure existence, consciousness. Before that, there was only nameless, formless undifferentiated consciousness, with all powers present in it, including the power to obscure.

The materialists argue that there is no way to verify non-duality, which is true from the dualistic standpoint from which they look at it. If your epistemology for knowing anything is the senses, the only knowledge you can gain is through inference, based on perception, which is not capable of knowing or understanding consciousness, because it is an effect, the subject. The effect or subject cannot understand the cause, the object. Consciousness/existence is not an object of perception, because it is that which makes perception possible. You have fallen down an *Alice in Wonderland* rabbit hole in *mithya*, and I am sure if you look around you will find the Mad Hatter having a good laugh! Duality is pretty persuasive when we look at the world from the sensory perspective.

There is no way from within the Creation to understand non-duality. It is only through the Vedanta *pramana* that ignorance of the true nature of reality can be removed by self-knowledge. Even the scientist must agree that there is no evidence other than that gained by the senses that the Creation is anything more than an appearance, one that we take to be real. But it is not real; and as we know, “real” being defined by “that which is always present and unchanging,” which can only be ascribed to the consciousness supporting all objects, is the only constant factor.

No sense organ is capable of perceiving the substance of all objects, consciousness. The senses are only capable of perceiving the properties of objects (sound, colour, shape, texture, taste, smell) and not an actual existent object. Name and form may hide the true nature of existence, but it does not alter it. With the Vedanta *pramana* we can investigate the nature of reality through self-inquiry by analyzing the relationship between name, form and consciousness.

You can also arrive at the same conclusion by an analysis of the objects themselves. It should be easy to see that an object like a thought is made of consciousness. It is not so easy to see that the physical objects are made of consciousness. But as mentioned above, if we investigate matter scientifically, it breaks down into particles and space and the knower of particles and space, i.e. you, awareness. Material science cannot make the obvious connection of matter and awareness, because (as stated, but bears repeating) it relies on perception and inference as a means of knowledge. It does not realize that perception is an object known to consciousness in the form of the scientist and that perception is consciousness. *Maya* makes it seem as if consciousness is an object when it is actually the subject.

Maya also makes the individual *jiva* think that it is a unique entity, separate from all other entities and objects. But *jiva* is not what it seems either. *Jiva* is really awareness – appearing as matter. So the relationship between the three seemingly separate factors, *jiva*, *jagat*, *Isvara/Maya* (which creates the material world out of awareness), is pure consciousness/existence – you.

If you look at the Creation, where does it exist? Have you ever actually seen a Creation? No. You have only experienced the objects that appear to you at any

moment, and these objects are not separate from the thoughts that make them up. Creation is only an idea, a thought. When that thought appears in you, the mind imagines the totality of objects by inference, but those objects are never directly experienced. All that is directly experienced is you, awareness, and the properties of objects. The only issue left to resolve is whether or not awareness/consciousness or matter is primary. Which came first? When we use the word “first” we mean: Which stands alone? Does matter exist prior to consciousness so that we can still have matter without consciousness? No. You cannot separate an object from the consciousness of the object.

In other words, objects are not conscious. They do not know themselves or other objects. Consciousness is not conscious in the way we understand what it means to be conscious. *Isvara* associated with *Maya* is conscious (although it is not a *jiva*, or person) and is not modified by ignorance/*Maya* (the *gunas*). *Isvara* is conscious because with the appearance of *Maya* there is something for awareness to be to be conscious of, i.e. objects. Consciousness is “prior” to matter in the sense that matter depends on consciousness. Consciousness stands alone. It is the first “principle” out of which everything arises.

Finally, as we have established that you cannot get something out of nothing, so if matter depends on consciousness, it must come from consciousness. Therefore the effect (matter) is just an apparent transformation of the cause, awareness. It is not an actual transformation, because if it were, consciousness would have lost its limitless nature when it transformed into matter. It would have become limited, bound by time and space – and there would be no sentient objects and no movement possible in the Creation. Matter (subtle and gross objects) arise in you, awareness, which if you apply logic to our thinking, is actually your (unexamined) experience.

Even if science is grounded in consciousness, without self-knowledge it won't make any difference to existential suffering. Vedanta is a science of consciousness, but scientists (and intellectuals) invariably dismiss non-duality as spiritual nonsense. You can approach consciousness with the intellect, but you will only get to the doorway of self-knowledge and no further. *Isvara* is very strict about such things. You will not get through the door until the intellect has been trained to think differently and the mind has evolved to want different things or *Isvara* will not give you a pass.

To want different things, the mind must be purified. And to think differently, you need to be taught. To be taught, you need the right qualifications. Without qualifications, you will not get anywhere and dismiss non-duality. Recently a branch of science has evolved to a more enlightened approach regarding their “study” of consciousness, but even the most enlightened scientists still objectify consciousness and confuse the apparent reality, reflected awareness (*mithya*), with pure awareness (*satya*). Vedanta has no quarrel with science. However, the important thing to get is that understanding science is not necessary for *moksa*. My interest in science helped tremendously in my quest for self-knowledge, but it was not suitable for *moksa*, because science does not negate the doer and does not understand *Maya*, *Isvara*, the *dharma* field, the *gunas*. It takes this dream world to be a real world.

Science is only a suitable means of knowledge for objects. But how do you explain that to someone who thinks the Creation is real? Understanding science is useful only if it helps one understand the distinction between the real (that which is permanent and unchanging) and the apparently real (that which is not permanent

and always changing), and that everything in the apparent reality comes from *Isvara*, including scientific understandings. Unless scientific findings are understood from a non-dual perspective, they are not capable of making this distinction.

The problem with science is that it represents the mind's best effort to figure out the objective truth of the material reality, within the confines of the apparent reality. It cannot step outside of the apparent reality without self-knowledge. The only way to step out of *Maya/mithya* is with self-knowledge, there is no other way. And if you have no faith in the scripture, still believe objects are real and you need them to be happy, you remain in *mithya*.

Even if science approaches understanding consciousness, it is still attached to its epistemology, the senses. It is thus limited to interpretations or assumptions inherent in its methodology. Accordingly, at best it can only objectify consciousness. Science is all about measurement and proof, and consciousness is the only thing in reality that cannot be measured, because it is the subject and not the object. It can never jump over the fence (metaphorically speaking, because there is no fence, consciousness being all there is) and become an object, even though all objects subtle and gross arise from consciousness. The problem is understanding what it means to be consciousness instead of thinking that you (the mind) are conscious.

This is a long answer. I hope this helps!

~ Much love, Sundari