

Date: Tue, 9 Mar 2004 13:38:32 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Chittaranjanji,

>I think the futility arises from a lack of  
>common ground. For example, I can see the problem  
>arising already in our discussion due to the fact  
>that I am speaking of substance as it presents  
>itself within consciousness whereas you are  
>presenting arguments against a notion of substance  
>as a self-subsisting thing in the "outside world".  
>With your permission, I would like to suspend this  
>discussion for a few days until I come up with a  
>short prologue for this discussion

No problem, Chittaranjanji! We can suspend this discussion indefinitely. The list lately seems to be overheating with discussion of this month's 'happiness' topic, so this side-discussion is too much.

For your information, I reject not only material substance but any notion of substance as a self-subsisting entity \*other\* than consciousness. So the apple is indeed a cluster of perceptions in consciousness and nothing more. And the unity we perceive in the apple arises from the unity of consciousness, that is, of the seer, and not from some supposed unity inherent in that particular cluster of perceptions. In other words, any perceived unity is a reflection of the Self. Plato was onto something with his 'ideas', but he made the fatal mistake of locating the ideas somewhere other than the Self (he was not too clear about just where).

>Benjaminji, I have read Berkeley and Hume as also Kant  
>and I refer you to Kant's Critique wherein the substance  
>that was demolished by Berkeley and Hume ...

I studied Kant too. Remember, I was a philosophy major in college. I reject his 'noumenon' for the same reason I reject material substance, and with the loss of noumenal reality, his categories become irrelevant.

Bottom line: There is nothing other than consciousness. Any meaning you could give to 'substance' which I could accept would be little more than a synonym for 'consciousness'. And I prefer 'consciousness', because it is that which is immediately present, and is hence utterly unambiguous, at least until we start to try to fit it into our limited conceptual categories, whereas 'substance' is

quite vague and ambiguous and can lead to much misunderstanding.

Enough said for now! Let us happily resume the happiness discussion :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Tue, 9 Mar 2004 14:10:38 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Dennisji,

I missed your message when I replied to Chittaranjanji, or I would have answered there and saved a message. I do intend to discontinue the thread, per Chittaranjanji's request, and also because the list is overheating with happiness! :-)

You said:

>I think Sri Atmananda would explain it like this. We never  
>actually see objects, only their 'appearance' or supposed  
>attributes via our senses. The form of an object is  
>effectively only our seeing. This 'seeing' is what we see,  
>not any object. And this 'seeing' obviously cannot ever be  
>separate from us. Therefore we do not really see any 'thing'  
>at all - there are no objects. Nevertheless, since we  
>obviously do see, and what we see cannot be anything  
>separate, it must be our Self, the reality.

I cannot see how this differs one iota from my own views! The only difference is that Sri Atmananda expresses himself with the elegant Zen simplicity of a true master! I am still stuck at the philosopher level.

And regarding the multiple consciousness business ... I do NOT believe in them at the 'metaphysical' level (whatever that means). For example, I DO INDEED deduce from the unity of Brahman that there can be no multiple consciousnesses. The only problem for me is that PHENOMENOLOGICALLY these pesky multiple streams keep intruding on my vision, paradoxically by the apparent ABSENCE of YOUR consciousness in MINE. But then, Gregji will tell me that my sin is to use the words 'your' and 'mine', as though mere language could do anything. Perhaps these seemingly different streams of consciousness will coalesce into utter nonduality when I finally become realized. :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Tue, 9 Mar 2004 18:28:42 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Greg,

I said:

"...there can be no multiple consciousnesses. The only problem for me is that PHENOMENOLOGICALLY these pesky multiple streams [of consciousness] keep intruding on my vision, paradoxically by the apparent ABSENCE of YOUR consciousness in MINE. But then, Gregji will tell me that my sin is to use the words 'your' and 'mine', as though mere language could do anything."

And you said:

"Yeah, right! By all means, stick with your experience. Translation will not effect transformation."

I reply:

I was being a bit tongue in cheek with my last sentence. Of course, I am well aware of illusion, which is fundamental to Advaita. Illusion arises when the mind superimposes a false interpretation upon the immediate experience, thus seeing something that is not really there. The prime example is when it sees objects as being external to consciousness. The shapes and colors are indeed present in consciousness, but the interpretation of these shapes and colors as external to consciousness is the mind-imposed delusion. (Language forces me to say 'present in consciousness' even though the spatial connotation is not strictly correct, so don't ding me on that.)

The problem is that I do not think that my 'phenomenological' view of other streams of consciousness being distinct from mine arises from such an illusory interpretation. It seems to be the way it really is. Allow me to elaborate.

In the case of objects appearing external to my consciousness, I can understand that illusion in terms of a dream or a holographic projection. These examples give me vivid instances of how something that is only in consciousness can seem very much to be distinct from consciousness in an overpowering and almost magical way.

However, my gut impression that other streams of consciousness are

distinct from mine is not like this at all. (Notice that I say 'gut impression' and not 'belief', because I DO believe that the multiple streams reduce to Brahman, for reasons I gave earlier.) Now the problem is not that my mind is superimposing a false interpretation on the shapes and colors in my consciousness, as was the case with material objects. Rather, the problem now is that the shapes and colors which appear to you DO NOT appear to me. I see no way around this. It is not a snake on the rope situation; it is two different snakes (or so it seems).

This really is a rather difficult problem. With warm and sincere respect, O venerable debating partner, I think you underestimate the difficulty... :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Tue, 9 Mar 2004 20:56:39 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: advaitin Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

On 3/09/04 06:28 pm Benjamin ([orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)) wrote:  
Illusion arises when the mind superimposes a false interpretation upon the immediate experience, thus seeing something that is not really there.

===It's not like some seeings are "accurate" and others aren't. No seeing of objects, gross or subtle, is accurate. That is, no seeing reflects something that is "really there." For to really be there, something must be independent of consciousness.

Ben:

The prime example is when it sees objects as being external to consciousness. The shapes and colors are indeed present in consciousness but the interpretation of these shapes and colors as external to consciousness is the mind-imposed delusion.

===And the same goes for \*subtle\* objects, such as states, ideas, seeings, perceptions, lokas, koshas, devas, etc. Advaita doesn't embrace realism about subtle objects.

Ben:

The problem is that I do not think that my 'phenomenological' view of other streams of consciousness being distinct from mine arises from such an illusory interpretation. It seems to be the way it really is. Allow me to elaborate.

===It \*is\* based on a misunderstanding if it's a view you're defending. If there is more than one stream of consciousness, then at least one must be an object.

===Questions you don't seem to have explored, even in a reductio ad absurdum manner to investigate your phenomenological results. These questions serve to point up the implausibility of the stream-of-consciousness notion:

===1. Talking in stream-of-consciousness talk, what makes a stream of consciousness "your" stream of consciousness? What makes another one "Greg's"? "Ramana's"? What is the nature of the relationship between the s-o-c and the person? Have you settled that for yourself?

===2. You say it seems like there is more than one s-o-c. What is it that a stream of consciousness appears to?

===3. Does one s-o-c appear to another s-o-c? Or is there one Consciousness to which multiple s-o-c's appear?

===4. Ben is an object, not a subject. So Ben cannot "intuit/see" even \*one\* s-o-c, so what evidence is there that Ben intuits/sees another s-o-c?

===5. What makes a s-o-c different from a mind plus the ideas falsely purported to appear to a mind?

===In advaita, the mind never sees, but rather is a subtle object, part of the inert apparatus. To say that the "mind sees" would be another superimposition, (i) attributing things to the mind that happen at consciousness, and (ii) attributing to the supposed s-o-c that which happens to the mind (namely, the quality of appearing).

Ben:

However, my gut impression that other streams of consciousness are distinct from mine is not like this at all. (Notice that I say 'gut impression' and not 'belief', because I DO believe that the multiple streams reduce to Brahman, for reasons I gave earlier.)

===You get full advaita credit for this belief!! And I hope it dissolves into direct experience!

Ben:

Now the problem is not that my mind is superimposing a false interpretation on the shapes and colors in my consciousness, as was the case with material objects. Rather, the problem now is that the shapes and colors which appear to you DO NOT appear to me. I see no way around this.

===This is where the superimposition comes in. The superimposition is this, the attribution to Ben and Jerry (er, Greg) that which happens only at consciousness. Namely, "being appeared to" does not happen at the person. Nothing appears to Ben or to Greg. Ben and Greg are themselves appearances. Advaita teaches that appearances appear to consciousness, not to people.

Ben:

This really is a rather difficult problem. With warm and sincere respect, O venerable debating partner, I think you underestimate the difficulty... :-)

===No I don't - I know what a sticking point it can be! You're very earnest and energetic, and it's still there, in spite of lots of searching.

Hari Om!

--Greg

P.S. Should we be talking about happiness instead?

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 04:44:12 +0000 (GMT)  
From: S Venkatraman <[svenkat52@yahoo.com](mailto:svenkat52@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Benjamin,

BENJAMIN

For example, I DO INDEED deduce from the unity of Brahman that there can be no multiple consciousnesses. The only problem for me is that PHENOMENOLOGICALLY these pesky multiple streams keep intruding on my vision, paradoxically by the apparent ABSENCE of YOUR consciousness in MINE.

VENKAT - M

Almost an year back when we had our 'Consciousness is All' discussions, I offered you, if I remeber right, the example of dream state as a solution to this riddle. In my dream, both Benjamin and Venkat are two separate streams of conssciousness, subsumed within and non-different from the Dreamer's consciousness. The contents of Benjamin's consciousness are not accessible to Venkat in the dream and if in the dream Benjamin asked the question he is asking above, Venkat will have to wake up to be able to answer him.

A fresh attempt from an altogether different angle: If the apple that you see (mind you, you are now awake) is nothing but your own consciousness, then the Venkat who you see and interact with is also nothing but your own consciousness. You do not see Venkat's stream of consciousness but you extrapolate it in your consciousness from your own experience. So what you call as Venkat's stream of consciousness is nothing but your own stream of consciousness. Now the final question to be asked is, 'what you call as your own stream of consciousness, is it really yours?'. You yourself (I am here referring to the objective you) are an appearance in your consciousness, and because we commit the mistake of identifying the ultimate subject with the vyavaharic 'me', you wrongly claim the 'THE CONSCIOUSNESS' that you are able to access as your consciousness when in fact it is 'THE CONSCIOUSNESS'.

I hope you find the above helpful. It's a pity that you want to discontinue your discussion with Chittaranjan on the subject of Substance. Would request the moderators to schedule it for a future month. After all it is a discussion on 'Sat' aspect of Advaita.

pranams,  
Venkat – M

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 11:56:16 -0500  
From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Greg,

I'm going to pursue this a bit just to sharpen my wits. It's only an exercise, like jogging...

GREG:

It's not like some seeings are "accurate" and others aren't. No seeing of objects, gross or subtle, is accurate. That is, no seeing reflects something that is "really there." For to really be there, something must be independent of consciousness.

BEN:

I cannot accept any philosophy that denies that the raw shapes and colors (which we call perceptions) are present in consciousness. As I explained, the issue is what \*interpretation\* our mind imposes upon this raw material. The shapes and colors themselves are indistinguishable from what I call 'consciousness', though consciousness is surely not exhausted by these shapes and colors. Insofar as they are consciousness, one cannot speak of them as 'objects', as that very word implies something other than (or 'outside' of) consciousness. Our normal view of them as 'objects' is precisely the false interpretation of the mind I am talking about, which is just like the snake being superimposed on the rope.

So if by 'seeing' one means the raw shapes and colors, this cannot be denied or called inaccurate. But if by 'seeing' one means 'seeing them as objects', then this is indeed false. The word 'seeing' can be used in different ways.

And the words 'really there' are also ambiguous. The raw shapes and colors are 'really there' in the sense of 'present in consciousness'. However, they are not 'really there' the way this computer screen in front of me seems to be sitting on a table as a discrete object different from me. In the latter case, my mind has imposed that extra interpretation on my perceptions, whereby some are said to be 'me' and others are said to be 'not me', such that the illusion of space and discrete objects arises.

GREG:

And the same goes for \*subtle\* objects, such as states, ideas, seeings perceptions, lokas, koshas, devas, etc. Advaita doesn't embrace realism about subtle objects.

BEN:

Neither do I. I realize that my thoughts and feelings are no more different or distinct from my consciousness than the apparent objects of perception. I never said otherwise.

Anyhow, I was talking about how we commonly imagine material objects as entities entirely distinct from perception. These material objects are supposedly the cause of our perceptions. In that case, there are two entirely different entities: the perceptions and the material objects which supposedly cause the perceptions. In the case of thoughts and feelings, which are clearly in consciousness, the issue of an 'external' origin for them does not even arise. So the arguments used to disprove the existence of material objects are irrelevant when it comes to 'internal' mental objects.

However, even with mental manifestations such as thoughts and feelings, the objectifying tendency of the mind is so powerful that it may often \*think\* of them as objects distinct from consciousness, however paradoxical this may be. Indeed our own perceptions are generally treated this way. At least, this is my experience. My thoughts, feelings and perceptions often seem to be on some kind of screen in my mind that is somehow distinct from the witnessing consciousness. These are the 'subtle objects' to which you refer. This is of course absurd. How could consciousness bifurcate itself in this way? This is a clear example of illusion, but it is an entirely separate issue from the existence of material objects.

So, to repeat, arguments used to disprove matter are not applicable to this subtle objectification. In the case of subtle objectification, one needs only to realize that thoughts, feelings and perceptions by their very nature must be in consciousness, so that it is absurd to assume otherwise.

And even after clarifying one's thinking in this way, the issue of multiple streams of consciousness has in no way been addressed. The gross (material) or subtle (mental) objects which we have been discussing are all from the standpoint of one seeker, of one witness, of one 'stream of consciousness'. Just as the arguments used to disprove material objects are irrelevant to the apparent objectivity of mental objects for one particular witness, they are even more irrelevant to the question of whether other distinct witnesses exist. The arguments used to disprove matter start from the perceptions of one witness and compare those perceptions to dreams. That one witness might as well be dreaming the material objects. This has nothing to do with whether there are other completely different



dreamers dreaming whatever they are dreaming. To reduce different dreamers to one single consciousness (Brahman) requires entirely novel arguments.

GREG:

It *\*is\** based on a misunderstanding if it's a view you're defending. If there is more than one stream of consciousness, then at least one must be an object.

BEN:

This is more of the same. You are confusing two different meanings of the word 'object'. In one case, from the standpoint of a single witness, the perceptions are compared to a dream, so that the witness realizes that it is invalid to postulate material objects in some kind of physical space surrounding his consciousness, in which his consciousness occupies a small location. However, in the case of other streams of consciousness, there is no question of them being located somewhere else in that very physical space which has just been denied. So far I agree with you. The distinctness of the other streams arises not from their supposed location in a fictitious physical space but from the fact that other witness clearly have *\*different\** thoughts, feelings and perceptions. No assumptions about the location of the other streams is necessary. The apparent distinction of the different witnesses seems to remain regardless of whether we even consider their possible location in any kind of space.

GREG:

Talking in stream-of-consciousness talk, what makes a stream of consciousness "your" stream of consciousness? What makes another one "Greg's"?

BEN:

The difference is what I just said. One witness has one set of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, and the other witness has a completely different set. Even if they were having identical thoughts, feelings and perceptions, these would still be different. When two people view the same movie side by side, they may have nearly identical perceptions, but the witnesses remain distinct, each viewing its own 'carbon copy' of those similar perceptions. That is why your blind friend cannot enjoy the movie.

GREG:

You say it seems like there is more than one s-o-c. What is it that a stream of consciousness appears to?

BEN:

An ill-posed question. The SOC is simply a separate awareness, consisting of thoughts, feelings and perceptions. One cannot even say that it appears to itself, since this presupposes a subject and object within that particular SOC. Remember, I am entirely nondual within a given SOC, so please don't confuse the issue by implying that I might not be.

GREG:

Does one s-o-c appear to another s-o-c? Or is there one Consciousness to which multiple s-o-c's appear?

BEN:

More ill-posed questions just like the previous one. One SOC does not 'appear to' another SOC or even to itself, since this presupposes a distinction between witness and appearance. In any given SOC, the appearance and the witness of the appearance are identical.

But as I have often said, from a 'metaphysical' point of view, I do think that there must be one single Source of Reality, which must be Infinite Consciousness, and which is the substratum of the SOCs. This line of thinking is based on 'causation' and is entirely different from the phenomenological analysis of experience, which I use to refute material objects or the subject-object distinction within my own consciousness. How the SOCs could seem so different is therefore a profound mystery, but nothing you have said has shed any light on this issue. Indeed, I doubt that it can ever be 'explained'.

GREG:

Ben is an object, not a subject. So Ben cannot "intuit/see" even \*one\* s-o-c, so what evidence is there that Ben intuits/sees another s-o-c?

BEN:

Same confusion again. There is no subject-object distinction within the SOC labelled 'Ben'. The subject and objects, or witness and PFTs (perceptions, thoughts and feelings), are identical \*within\* that one SOC. And I certainly never said that I 'saw' another SOC. That is the whole point. It is precisely because the PFTs of the other SOC are utterly hidden from me that I think of the other SOC as a completely different SOC.

However, I do 'ascertain' or 'intuit' the existence of these other SOCs, because I cannot believe I am the only one. The phantasms of my waking state are coordinated with those of other SOCs. You may

argue that I am not justified is rejecting solipsism, but this would be a waste of time. I DO reject solipsism, and there is no reason to embrace solipsism, given any of my assumptions.

As they used to say back in the crazy 60s, 'SOC it to me baby!' :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 13:13:37 -0500  
From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Venkat-M-ji,

It is most heartening that you are faithfully following these messages, notwithstanding your reticence. I hope you realize that your contributions are as thoughtful and articulate as anybody's here...

You said:

"I offered you, if I remember right, the example of dream state as a solution to this riddle. In my dream, both Benjamin and Venkat are two separate streams of consciousness, subsumed within and non-different from the Dreamer's consciousness"

I reply:

My last message to Greg was rather long, so I must now be brief. As I see it, the dream people within my dreams are pure images with no consciousness of their own. They are like the images on a movie screen. To argue that they somehow 'inherit' their own consciousness by being within my consciousness does not seem correct to me. They are only images, no different from cartoons.

However, I believe that the images of people that I see in my waking state are associated with other streams of consciousness which are having similar images of me (and of the illusory world we both seem to see). The material objects such as body and world are denied but not the other streams of consciousness.

You said:

A fresh attempt from an altogether different angle: ... You do not

see Venkat's stream of consciousness but you extrapolate it in your consciousness from your own experience. So what you call as Venkat's stream of consciousness is nothing but your own stream of consciousness.

I reply:

Venkat, I have no doubt that you exist just as I do. You are not a figment of my imagination. Your thoughts, feelings and perceptions are just as real and valid as mine, and they are not mine.

You may wish to read the long message I just posted to Greg, where I emphasize that I am nondual within my own stream of consciousness. The material world is nothing but a projection of my imagination, just like a dream, and there is no difference between subject and object within my own stream.

The only problem is that your thoughts, feelings and perceptions do not manifest within my stream of consciousness, so I am forced to postulate different streams of consciousness.

And contrary to what Greg and you say, the fact that I use language such as 'my stream' or 'your stream' does not mean that I assume any kind of subject-object distinction as far as a given stream is concerned. Rather there are simply the different nondual streams, labelled by 'Greg', 'Ben' or 'Venkat'.

Yet as I have also said many times, I believe that these different streams must reduce to Brahman. I just don't see how. I think that the honest answer is that it is impossible for us to see how. The illusion of a material world can be explained in terms of the dream, but the ultimate identity of Ben-consciousness and Venkat-consciousness is an inexplicable mystery.

You said:

Because we commit the mistake of identifying the ultimate subject with the vyavaharic 'me', you wrongly claim the 'THE CONSCIOUSNESS' that you are able to access as your consciousness when in fact it is 'THE CONSCIOUSNESS'.

I reply:

To my understanding, 'vyavahara' is associated with the illusion of duality within 'my own consciousness', i.e. this consciousness that is present right now as I type these words. To see material or mental objects as distinct from this consciousness is duality. There

are no distinctions within this immediate consciousness; all the thoughts, feelings and perceptions present in this consciousness labelled 'Benjamin' are all subsumed under a single seer, which we might also call 'Benjamin' for lack of a better name.

So far so good. Now I would dearly like to extend this nonduality to your thoughts, feelings and perceptions, but I cannot. Your thoughts, feelings and perceptions are utterly hidden from me. I cannot say they are not hidden without lying. I will not commit perjury! I do not even know what you had for breakfast! :-)

Now, as last year, this discussion is beginning to get a bit redundant, and I am busier now than last year. If anybody has a brilliant fresh new argument, I will certainly consider it. Otherwise, I think I had better leave matters here, more or less.

Those following this discussion may wish to ponder the following suggestion. Perhaps realization or enlightenment can be obtained by eliminating duality within our own stream of consciousness. Perhaps this is all it takes. Perhaps we do not and should not be concerned with other conscious beings or whether they can be 'reduced' to us. Perhaps our 'job' in life is simply to take care of duality within the immediately present stream we call 'our own' and everything else will take care of itself.

And another thought: Perhaps phenomena such as telepathy and the like are manifestations of the breakdown of the wall separating different streams of consciousness. Perhaps as we become enlightened, the thoughts and feelings of others become our own, and the issue of different streams of consciousness simply disappears. Perhaps by insisting on the different streams, I am only being honest about my present unrealized state. In other words, there is no single correct answer to this question. It depends on who is asking it.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 19:07:17 -0000  
From: "Ram Chandran" <[RamChandran@advaitin.com](mailto:RamChandran@advaitin.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Sri Benjamin:

The first two paragraphs of your reply to Sri Venkat has motivated me for my response. Your first paragraph accurately presents the advaitic point of view beautifully. But in the second paragraph, suddenly the 'dreaming Benjamin' jumps up and claims that he is 'awakened!' Can you please verify whether you are still in the dream state or in the waking stage? When you resolve this puzzle, you may be able to recognize that there are no other streams of

consciousness except your own'

The purpose of the dream example is to illustrate why the waking state is a 'dream state' until we get awakened!

Warmest regards,

Ram Chandran

Note: King Janaka posed a puzzle to his ministers: He said, I had a dream where I was a begger. I want to know which one of the two - Janaka the king or the begger in Janaka's dream is REAL?

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 14:28:48 -0500

From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Ben.

I'll keep it shorter than it could go, cause I gotta go to lunch. Will get to the root of the issue as I see it.

BEN:

I cannot accept any philosophy that denies that the raw shapes and colors (which we call perceptions) are present in consciousness.

===Then you can't be a nondualist. If it really, really seems like they can be present, then there just might be an unexamined sense in which it seems like they can be absent. If it is absent, then what is the state of that color? Are you saying it's somewhere else, like waiting in the wings to pop onto stage again? This is a key that there's nothing there to which "present" can be attributed. This is because the color \*is\* consciousness. And consciousness itself is "presence." So no need to attribute "present" to colors or shapes. Think of normal everyday things that seem to be present. Like a student in class. Smith, present. Jones, absent. If all students were present all the time, there would be no need to deploy the concept and it would never have arisen.

===I think the difference between our approaches amounts to this -- in my approach (which follows Krishna Menon's), what can be said about physical objects also applies in an analogous way to what most people call subtle objects. This is the implosive move that Dennisji outlined to you yesterday. Subtle objects don't have spatial location, but they do (seem to) have other attributes. For example, if X doesn't take up any space and yet seems to arise and depart, then it can be called a subtle object. If there's RED one moment and BLUE the next, then these are subtle objects, ideas, arisings, whatever. They seem to appear \*to\* consciousness, until it is seen that this is impossible. But while it seems possible, it is a handy provisional designation to treat them as subtle objects.

I'm not sure what you call RED and BLUE. Consciousness, sure. Then why not stop there??

Ben:

The shapes and colors themselves are indistinguishable from what I call 'consciousness', though consciousness is surely not exhausted by these shapes and colors.

===If shapes and colors themselves are indistinguishable from what you call 'consciousness', then why not rest there? I would re-phrase this as "consciousness is indistinguishable from consciousness."

But you don't rest, because of the second claim. That surely consciousness is not exhausted by these shapes and colors. It's that you're taking them as objects. What do you mean by \*these\* shapes and colors? You might mean "the ones right now in your stream of consciousness." But where there's a "these," there's a "those," referring somewhere else. The specter of subtle objects is making itself felt again....

Ben:

Insofar as they are consciousness, one cannot speak of them as 'objects', as that very word implies something other than (or 'outside' of) consciousness.

===Then what is being referred to by the words RED and BLUE? If it's just consciousness (like Krishna Menon says all nouns point to), then that's it.

Ben:

So if by 'seeing' one means the raw shapes and colors, this cannot be denied or called inaccurate.

===It can be denied. Watch! Because exactly what makes them seem "raw" is what makes them a subtle object. It can arise and fall. If that's what it seems like, then you're talking about a subtle object. Until it doesn't seem like that anymore.

GREG:

It \*is\* based on a misunderstanding if it's a view you're defending. If there is more than one stream of consciousness, then at least one must be an object.

BEN:

This is more of the same. You are confusing two different meanings of the word 'object'.

===For utility's sake we can distinguish between gross and subtle objects, like when we're talking Berkeley talk. But that doesn't make too much sense if we look further into it. Because with respect to consciousness, all objects are the same, "objects of consciousness."

Ben:

In one case, from the standpoint of a single witness, the perceptions are compared to a dream, so that the witness realizes that it is invalid to postulate material objects in some kind of physical space surrounding his consciousness, in which his consciousness occupies a small location. However, in the case of other streams of consciousness, there is no question of them being located somewhere else in that very physical space which has just been denied.

===Then by what criterion are you distinguishing one "witness" from another?

BEN:

The difference is what I just said. One witness has one set of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, and the other witness has a completely different set.

===The witness starts to sound a lot like a "person." But the person is witnessed.

GREG:

You say it seems like there is more than one s-o-c. What is it that a stream of consciousness appears to?

BEN:

An ill-posed question. The SOC is simply a separate awareness, consisting of thoughts, feelings and perceptions.

===A very good question, because your SOC's are what most people would call subtle objects. This is what others have been alluding to as well in talking to you about this. The only plausible way to make sense of other SOC's is to individuate them by spatiotemporal cues. Like "the guy in the corner," vs. "me, sitting in this chair." Yet you have outlawed this move by a Berkeleian deconstruction of physical objects (i.e., other people) into thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. You must be fair too, and deconstruct Benjamin the same way. And voila, you are left with no separate people. Therefore, no basis upon which to posit alternative streams of consciousness. Because you wouldn't say that an idea can have an idea, would you?

Gotta go to lunch. Always nice talking with you!

--Greg

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 20:59:50 -0000

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@advaita.org.uk>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Benjaminji,

You said (with respect to my suggested Sri Atmananda statement): "I cannot see how this differs one iota from my own views!"



Sorry, that was precisely my point - I was merely indicating how what you said was supported by Sri Atmananda!

As for multiple consciousnesses, I appreciate your problem.

If you regard the feeling that each of us has as being an 'individual consciousness' to be caused by the particular set of identifications (i.e. with body, thoughts, feelings etc.), then the problem disappears. That which is 'doing the identifying' if you like is the background to all of that and it is this that we really are. And, of course, there is only one background. The arisings are simply the waves on the water. Why should one wave have 'cognisance of' the content of another wave?

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 16:28:15 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Greg,

This is an interesting discussion, but I'll just answer your first two paragraphs. I can't be writing a dissertation every 5 minutes!

BEN:

I cannot accept any philosophy that denies that the raw shapes and colors (which we call perceptions) are present in consciousness.

GREG: Then you can't be a nondualist. If it really, really seems like they can be present, then there just might be an unexamined sense in which it seems like they can be absent. If it is absent, then what is the state of that color? Are you saying it's somewhere else, like waiting in the wings to pop onto stage again? This is a key that there's nothing there to which "present" can be attributed. This is because the color *\*is\** consciousness. And consciousness itself is "presence." So no need to attribute "present" to colors or shapes. Think of normal everyday things that seem to be present. Like a student in class. Smith, present. Jones, absent. If all students were present all the time, there would be no need to deploy the concept and it would never have arisen.

BEN:

It is absurd to think of an unseen shape or color as 'waiting in the

wings'. This is a mere empty play on words, like the use of 'substance' as I was saying to Chittaranji. There is no entity called 'color' distinct and independent from my consciousness, which may or may not be present in my consciousness, and which goes somewhere else when not present in my consciousness. There is simply a manifestation which may be described in terms of shapes and colors. There is no difference between the conscious manifestation and the shapes and colors. They are identical. This is what you then go on to say. So what is the problem? You are the one who has concocted the strange idea that my words 'shapes and colors are present to consciousness' means that there are some entities distinct from consciousness which may or may not be present. I said no such thing.

And none of this has anything to do with different streams of consciousness. You are inventing some bizarre idea of a color existing when not present to my consciousness, but this is surely not what I mean by another stream of consciousness like mine. It sounds more like the Platonic idea of a color, but let's not go there!

GREG:

I think the difference between our approaches amounts to this -- in my approach (which follows Krishna Menon's), what can be said about physical objects also applies in an analogous way to what most people call subtle objects. This is the implosive move that Dennisji outlined to you yesterday. Subtle objects don't have spatial location, but they do (seem to) have other attributes. For example, if X doesn't take up any space and yet seems to arise and depart, then it can be called a subtle object. If there's RED one moment and BLUE the next, then these are subtle objects, ideas, arisings, whatever. They seem to appear \*to\* consciousness, until it is seen that this is impossible. But while it seems possible, it is a handy provisional designation to treat them as subtle objects. I'm not sure what you call RED and BLUE. Consciousness, sure. Then why not stop there??

BEN:

The subtle or mental objects (thoughts, feelings and perceptions) are identical to consciousness, within any given stream of consciousness. I said this clearly. As far as I am concerned, they do not appear \*to\* consciousness, as this would imply a distinction between the mental objects and the consciousness. Language forces me to say that they are \*in\* consciousness, but I don't like this either, because of the spatial connotations (and hence connotations of separation) which I expressly deny. When I say that a shape or color is in consciousness, I simply mean that my consciousness is presently manifesting as certain shapes and colors, and these are identical with the consciousness at that particular moment.

As I have said many times, I am thoroughly nondual within my own stream of consciousness. But the other streams still seem different, though the difference is not one of spatial separation. It is some kind of mysterious existential difference.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 16:43:20 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Dennis,

Let me try to answer you briefly, since what you say is probably close to the answer, if there is one.

DENNIS:

If you regard the feeling that each of us has as being an 'individual consciousness' to be caused by the particular set of identifications (i.e. with body, thoughts, feelings etc.), then the problem disappears. That which is 'doing the identifying' if you like is the background to all of that and it is this that we really are. And, of course, there is only one background. The arisings are simply the waves on the water. Why should one wave have 'cognisance of' the content of another wave?

MY REPLY:

First, please realize that I do not want to 'win' this argument. On the contrary, I would love a blinding revelation, like Paul on the road to Damascus, which shows me that the consciousness called 'Dennis' is identical to the consciousness called 'Benjamin'. Furthermore, I would like this revelation to be as clear as 'a fruit held in the palm of my hand' as Shankara says somewhere in the Vivekachudamani.

If one wave does not have cognizance of the content of another wave, then how can we identify the waves as the same cognizer? We agree that within a wave, the cognizer and content must be identified, or there would be an extra duality within each given wave, above and beyond the duality between waves. Now if the contents are different, and if cognizer is identical to contents, then this seems to make my point that the cognizers must also be distinct.

To repeat, I do not wish to win this argument; I wish to lose it. But the loss must be a blinding revelation which blows my mind. This is not some polite verbal game between educated gentleman. Who has time for that? :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 16:52:16 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

At 04:28 PM 3/10/2004 -0500, Benjamin wrote:

>As I have said many times, I am thoroughly nondual within my own  
>stream of consciousness. But the other streams still seem different,  
>though the difference is not one of spatial separation. It is some  
>kind of mysterious existential difference.

===There's a belief that you are "nondual within your own stream of consciousness."  
But you also have a notion of a duality of streams of consciousness. This is an idea of  
another stream. You are allowing streams to be separate in a way that you deny to  
automobiles and baseballs. Plus, you maybe a feeling of tension between these  
notions. But ideas and notions and allowances are merely consciousness.  
Consciousness! No problem!!

--Greg

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 16:56:14 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

At 04:43 PM 3/10/2004 -0500, Benjamin wrote:  
Now if the contents are different,  
>and if cognizer is identical to contents, then this seems to make my  
>point that the cognizers must also be distinct.

...

>To repeat, I do not wish to win this argument; I wish to lose it.

===Good! Then let's turn your argument on its head.

If all contents are consciousness, and consciousness cannot differ from consciousness,  
then contents cannot differ.

--Greg

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2004 19:15:06 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi again Greg,

Let's finish up real quick for today, and then let the issue lie quiet for awhile. I have an ending here that may satisfy you for the interim.

GREG:

You are allowing streams to be separate in a way that you deny to automobiles and baseballs...

BEN:

But the streams are an entirely different issue than automobiles and baseballs, for the reasons I gave at length earlier to day. Briefly, the automobiles and baseballs are dreamlike illusions within my consciousness, but the other streams are not. They are separate dreams in their own right, or so it seems to me. So the streams and automobiles cannot be naively equated.

GREG:

Let's turn your argument on its head. If all contents are consciousness and consciousness cannot differ from consciousness, then contents cannot differ.

BEN:

All contents are consciousness, but not necessarily the SAME consciousness, at least from the level of experience. Now metaphysically, I repeat that I agree that Brahman or the Source of Reality must be the same everywhere, but this does not seem to agree with my experience. That is the problem. I wish to have a vivid experience of this, and my thirst for experience is not necessarily an indication of my depraved spiritual nature. Remember what I said about Shankara saying that experience of Brahman is as real as some exotic South Indian fruit in the palm of your hand. Can some Keralan tell me which fruit the Acharya was referring too? :-)

MY TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO MAKE EVERYBODY HAPPY:

I've been rereading the 'Talks with Ramana' lately. To all sorts of questions, Sri Ramana always seems to reply, 'To whom does the question arise? Inquire.' I will assume that he might have said the same thing to my question, and I will diligently inquire and contemplate on it for a while. Specifically, I will inquire to whom the question arises, rather than what might constitute a logically satisfying answer. That might produce my sought-after revelation.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 2004 13:59:19 -0500

**From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>**

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Sunderji,

Thank you for that delicious information on Keralan fruits. It's nice to know someone other than Greg was reading that long exchange. Actually, Sridharji was too, as I see by his questions. I will briefly answer those, and then I will retire from this thread and hopefully it will die down. (These threads are a bit like throwing a match in a dry forest ... the match being the initial question.)

Namaste Sridharji,

First of all, that question on reconciling the apparent multiple jivas with the nondual Brahman was more theoretical than anything else. It is a fascinating question which, as an amateur philosopher, I keep coming back to. But I doubt the answer matters much to sadhana.

Now as to what you said.

>The stream of consciousness 'I' experience, is it my own?

>

>I suspect the phenomenon is more like radio waves out

>there being picked up by the antennae in a million

>different radio sets of different makes and sophistication?

This is not too different from the ocean and waves analogy, with the radio waves as the ocean and the ocean waves as the radios.

Such analogies are as good as any visual analogy can be, which is to say, not perfect! Any visual analogy will be described in terms of parts, in the normal vyaharik way. One might always ask, 'Are not the waves distinct and separated from each other?' Same for radios.

Just because there is 'one ocean' doesn't quite answer the question. The ocean is made of many drops of water, and I have no trouble imagining them separated from each other. Surely a drop of water in the Indian Ocean is different from one in the Atlantic.

Anyhow, I do not quite say that I 'own' a stream of consciousness. As I said to Greg, I am nondual within my own stream. There is no subject or object within the stream, just the stream. Seer and seen are indeed one within this stream called 'Benjamin', so there is no question of ownership. No external material entities either! Just images like a dream.

>I'd agree with this version of dream people except for

>the fact that these dream people sometimes do unexpected

>things to the dreamer very much like in the waking world?

Actually, I can believe that \*some\* dream people may correspond to some kind of real conscious beings. If Lord Krishna came to me in a dream and told me that I was going to die at such and such a time, you could be sure that I would be awake and paying attention when that time came!

Also, you are right that the dream world largely reflects the order of the waking world, but I have seen some interesting exceptions in my own dreams. Mostly, though, I think that dreams are a rehash of waking experience, where the ego tries to come to terms with those waking experiences. So I do realize that the waking and dreams states have some important differences, contrary to what some here have implied. However, in both cases there is only consciousness.

Hari Om!

Benjamin

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 15:01:28 -0000

From: "Dennis Waite" <[dwaite@advaita.org.uk](mailto:dwaite@advaita.org.uk)>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Benjamin,

Really enjoying the discussion between yourself and Greg - far more interesting that the happiness topic! Is it ok if I attempt to make it into

a coherent web-page discussion for my 'Key Issues' topics?

You said: "If one wave does not have cognizance of the content of another wave,  
then how can we identify the waves as the same cognizer? We agree that within a wave, the cognizer and content must be identified, or there would be an extra duality within each given wave, above and beyond the duality between waves. Now if the contents are different, and if cognizer is identical to contents, then this seems to make my point that the cognizers must also be distinct."

I would answer (acknowledging the limitations of the metaphor) that it is because you are not the individual wave, you are the entire ocean. The problem arises because you identify yourself with that limited set of water molecules that happen to be present in one little wave.

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 10:07:41 -0500

From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>

Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

At 03:01 PM 3/12/2004 +0000, Dennis Waite wrote:

>Hi Benjamin,

>

>Really enjoying the discussion between yourself and Greg - far more  
>interesting than the happiness topic! Is it ok if I attempt to make it into  
>a coherent web-page discussion for my 'Key Issues' topics?

===This would be a good idea - Benjamin's question is not that uncommon.

>You said: "If one wave does not have cognizance of the content of another  
>wave,  
>then how can we identify the waves as the same cognizer?"

===The cognizer is not the wave. The waves are seen, they aren't the seer. Cognition, or "seeing," is done by the ocean.

--Greg

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 11:45:19 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Dennis,

>Really enjoying the discussion between yourself and  
>Greg - far more interesting than the happiness topic!  
>Is it ok if I attempt to make it into a coherent web-page  
>discussion for my 'Key Issues' topics?

Oh no! In my last message in this thread, I said I wanted to let this topic die down for now so we could get back to 'happiness'. Of course you are welcome to use this discussion on your site, and I have complete faith in your editorial integrity and intelligence. But now I feel compelled to defend myself further. After all, I couldn't let Greg get the last word, could I? I'm all in favor of ego diminution, but you are asking for an auto-crucifixion! This violates my human rights. :-)

>I would answer (acknowledging the limitations of the metaphor)  
>that it is because you are not the individual wave, you are  
>the entire ocean. The problem arises because you identify  
>yourself with that limited set of water molecules that happen  
>to be present in one little wave.

I don't want to make TOO much of this topic. As I said yesterday, it is probably not directly relevant to sadhana; it seems more like a fascinating armchair discussion of the kind the Buddha objected to.

Nevertheless, I continue to think that my question is valid. If I am truly the nondual Brahman, then why am I not aware of all the perceptions, feelings and thoughts (PFT) of all conscious entities anywhere in any universe? (Leave aside the question of how confusing that might be.) The key property of any consciousness, it seems to me, is its unity. There is only ONE seer in any instance of consciousness. So if Brahman is the one seer that sees all, and if the seeing is not distinct from the seer (advaita), and if I am Brahman, then why do I not see whatever is seen by any conscious entity?

I don't consider this a question of identification. Whether I identify with my PFT or not, the fact remains that I am limited to my PFT, by which I mean the PFT that are immediately present as I type these words. (And don't ding me on using words like 'I' and 'my'. Language forces me to use such terminology to label the unitary, nondual stream of consciousness called 'Benjamin', which consists of very specific PFT at any given time.)

And guess what? I think what you said might be correct after all, in a way. I think that after we become realized and consciousness becomes purified and expands to infinity, we gradually become sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others in a telepathic way.



Has this not been the purported experience of sages? I think it must be the ego sense which erects walls in our consciousness and prevents awareness of the experience of others. (This is probably a good thing, insofar as I would want privacy from others as ignorant as myself, at least while I remain imperfect and ignorant.)

In conclusion, I think that we both have a valid point. The truth, as I see it so far, is that in some unfathomably mysterious way, the same nondual consciousness which is Brahman can somehow create (or manifest as) the illusion of multiple jivas within its own nondual awareness. These jivas are not distinct from the Consciousness which is Brahman, yet these jivas are not aware of each other's experiences. It seems like a total logical contradiction of the nondual nature of Brahman, but it must be accepted. I say so, because I am otherwise convinced that (i) all reality is consciousness, (ii) that any instance of consciousness is indistinguishable from the divine Source which is its essence and existential support, and (iii) this Source must be an infinite, nondual Consciousness in its own right. The paradox must be accepted as inexplicable from the point of view of the jiva.

The reason I spent so much time on this is because of my previous success reducing the apparent external material world to consciousness, which we all know about. This seems impossible and utterly self-contradictory to the dualist, yet it CAN be understood in terms of the dream analogy. No such analogy or understanding arises, as far as I can see, regarding the fundamental unity of jivas. I have read enough spiritual literature that I would have discovered it myself now. The ocean and waves analogy doesn't really satisfy me. I surrender and accept the paradox as inexplicable.

Then Greg said:

>The cognizer is not the wave. The waves are seen, they  
>aren't the seer. Cognition, or "seeing," is done by the ocean.

If there is ONE ocean (or consciousness) seeing (or being or manifesting as) all the waves, then how can different little bottled jivas seem to arise, whereby the contents of the consciousness of one jiva are not accessible to other jivas? This seems irreconcilable with the unitary, nondual nature of the ocean-consciousness. We are now just going around in circles in this discussion, but my point remains that the consciousness has somehow been fractured into jivas in an inexplicable way that utterly defies elementary logic. The dream analogy worked to eliminate matter, because it did not entail such a fracturing of consciousness. Alas that is not the case with this far more subtle question.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 12:09:13 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

At 11:45 AM 3/12/2004 -0500, Benjamin wrote:  
Then Greg said:

>>The cognizer is not the wave. The waves are seen, they  
>>aren't the seer. Cognition, or "seeing," is done by the ocean.  
>  
>If there is ONE ocean (or consciousness) seeing (or being or  
>manifesting as) all the waves, then how can different little bottled  
>jivas seem to arise, whereby the contents of the consciousness of one  
>jiva are not accessible to other jivas?

===That's because these waves seem to arise. If they didn't seem to you to arise, then this more subtle question would never come up. This "seeming" and this "arising" point to the lingering duality in what you've been calling Ben's stream of consciousness.

And have you considered your criterion of success on this? Total omniscience by Ben's S-O-C. That is, total access by Ben to all contents of all other sentient beings' S-O-C's, past present and future. If you had 99.999999% access, that wouldn't be good enough, and is not in principle different from what Ben's S-O-C has access to now (I mean the occasional clairvoyant insight.). No, it must be total to succeed on this criterion. But has that ever happened? Did Shankara know what I had for breakfast this morning? This is a sort of reductio ad absurdum for the S-O-C model.

--Greg

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 16:46:11 -0000  
From: "Krishna Prasad" <[krishp99@yahoo.com](mailto:krishp99@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hari OM!

Dear All,

"Dennis Waite" <[dwaite@a...](mailto:dwaite@a...)> wrote

I would answer (acknowledging the limitations of the metaphor)  
> that it is  
>> because you are not the individual wave, you are the entire  
ocean.

We are not even the entire Ocean but pure Water alone. Ocean only we

call Samashti, that is Iswara, but Water is BRAHMAN! (only a comparison to understand more clearly, does not mean that Ocean, Wave Water is that alone, even though it is!)

With Love & OM!

Krishna Prasad

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 18:25:36 -0000

From: "asridhar19" <[asridhar19@yahoo.com](mailto:asridhar19@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

--- In [advaitin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:advaitin@yahoogroups.com), "Dennis Waite" <[dwaite@a...](mailto:dwaite@a...)> wrote:

> Hi Benjamin,

>

> I would answer (acknowledging the limitations of the metaphor) that it is

> because you are not the individual wave, you are the entire ocean.

The

> problem arises because you identify yourself with that limited set of water

> molecules that happen to be present in one little wave.

>

> Best wishes,

>

> Dennis

Infact a swamiji gave a hilarious example. When you are running through the new york penn station (or Bombay VT would be a better example), you may find yourself muttering 'oh my god! what a crowd' !!! All the others put together somehow seem to form the crowd :)

Many thousand namaskarams to all advaitins  
Sridhar

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 15:51:58 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Gregji,

Oh my goodness! A response from Greg! How unexpected! :-)

>That's because these waves seem to arise. If they  
>didn't seem to you to arise, then this more subtle  
>question would never come up. This "seeming" and  
>this "arising" point to the lingering duality in what  
>you've been calling Ben's stream of consciousness.

OK, for clarity, let me reiterate what I think duality within my consciousness would be. Then nonduality can be understood in contrast to this. There are two levels of duality: gross and subtle.

The gross level is to see (and believe in) material objects outside of my consciousness. We both agree that we can forget about that.

The more subtle duality would be to see the contents of my consciousness, namely perceptions, thoughts and feelings (PFT), as objects. This means that I 'observe' them and they seem to be different from the seer. Thus there seems to be a seer and a seen, even as far as the 'internal' mental contents are concerned. This may seem paradoxical, but it is a fact of experience. Look at your perceptions. Even those perceptions seem to be 'other', seem to be objects, seem to be 'out there'. (The hypothetical matter from which they supposedly originate would be yet another other behind this other.)

Yet I know that the perceptions (and PFT in general) are simply consciousness. Their nature is sentience, awareness, consciousness, whatever you want to call it. I do not see how this can differ from the seer, which is also consciousness. I intuitively realize that there is just the consciousness. Hence, when the PFT appear as 'objects', this must be an illusion, some kind of holographic projection. As always, the dream analogy is very helpful.

In summary, there is no kind of duality related to my stream of consciousness, neither the gross one of external matter nor the subtle one of mental objects. There is just the consciousness, which I can intuitively realize to be a unity, without parts, without subject or object, a single seer projecting the illusion of a magical display. I think you would agree so far.

But you then use this realization to somehow 'unite' this nondual awareness with the same thing that is happening to others. (Let us avoid solipsism and simply accept that other instances of consciousness also arise, just like yours and mine, which we call 'people'.) This is the leap which seems totally illegitimate to me. It is all fine and well to collapse the dualities within my present awareness, but this gives me no right to merge my awareness like a siamese twin with another awareness called 'Greg' or 'Dennis'.

In the first case, illusory boundaries imagined by the conceptual mind are being removed within a single conscious experience that only \*seems\* to be bifurcated. In the second case, something is being \*added\* to the experience which is not present or manifest, namely the experience of another. The first case is removal of something that only seems to be there (the distinction between seer and seen); the second case is addition of something that is most definitely not

there, either as a reality or an illusion. It is one thing to remove the snake from the rope; it is another thing to see a either a rope or snake where there is only grass (or to see two snakes where there is only one).

So what do you mean by 'the waves seem to arise'? If by arise, you mean that they seem to be present as mental objects distinct from the seer, then I have answered that. If removal of this property of 'seeming to arise' means removal of the illusory distinction between seer and the seen mental objects, I have just answered that. One thing I know for sure: the waves of your consciousness do not arise in mine in any way whatsoever, not as illusions, not as apparent objects, and much less as an intrinsic nondual part of my consciousness, where seer and seen are realized to be one.

To make any progress, you are going to have to be much more precise and explicit about the waves 'seeming to arise'. And if it's anything along the lines of what I just said, you can expect my response to be the same! :-)

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 21:36:40 -0000  
From: "asridhar19" <[asridhar19@yahoo.com](mailto:asridhar19@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

>  
> Anyhow, I do not quite say that I 'own' a stream of consciousness.  
> As I said to Greg, I am nondual within my own stream. There is no  
> subject or object within the stream, just the stream. Seer and  
seen  
> are indeed one within this stream called 'Benjamin', so there is no  
> question of ownership. No external material entities either! Just  
> images like a dream.

>  
>  
>

Namaste Benjaminji

Since Gregji is keeping the thread alive, i thought let me make a quick buck of learning while there is an opportunity. I will ofcourse understand if you do not reply.

On the above excerpt, I was with you most of the way until it was spoiled by the phrase 'just images like in a dream'. If you see them there is a seer and a seen.

Or is it just the limitation of language ?

when you say there is just a stream there seems to be someone

observing the stream.

I earnestly hope i am not being obtuse. An understanding of this could help me understand your other contributions that much better. Many thousand namaskarams to all advaitins  
Sridhar

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 18:00:18 -0500

From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hey Benji,

You wrote:

>OK, for clarity, let me reiterate what I think duality within my  
>consciousness would be. Then nonduality can be understood in  
>contrast to this. There are two levels of duality: gross and subtle.

That right \*there\* is a pretty good duality! :-)

>The gross level is to see (and believe in) material objects outside  
>of my consciousness. We both agree that we can forget about that.

>

>The more subtle duality would be to see the contents of my  
>consciousness, namely perceptions, thoughts and feelings (PFT), as  
>objects.

A more subtle duality is to see them not as objects. Accompanying this is a belief that what you see is not objects.

>To make any progress, you are going to have to be much more precise  
>and explicit about the waves 'seeming to arise'.

===Actually, it was your message before that mentioned arising. You asked:

"then how can different little  
bottled jivas seem to arise?"

Perhaps this is a report from your experience. So what did \*you\* mean by "seem to arise"? Usually, things that seem to arise also seem to subside. Regardless if it's believed that they are essentially consciousness, there's a felt experience of coming and going. How's that not duality?

Also, in the PFT - if you discern a P from an F from a T - that's duality also.

--Greg

Messages are getting shorter...

Date: Sat, 13 Mar 2004 15:11:51 -0000

**From: ombhurbhuva <ombhurbhuva@eircom.net>**

Subject: Vishistadvaita Ontology

Hello Benjamin,

You're still locked into the conceivability thesis i.e. that it is inconceivable that anything should be without being a presentation to some consciousness or other. The Realist opposite number is that the world exists independently of our representations of it. It's not as though this can be proved but rather that it is the background for all intelligibility. It is to a degree a transcendental postulate. Sankara takes that short way with the Vijñanavadin saying you can't be eating your meal and then deny there was meal or eater thereof. ((note: I may give up on citation as nobody else is bothered. Perhaps a signal such as \*\*\* may be taken to mean 'now place the B.S.B. on your head --Q: Where does Sankara talk about anirvacanaya or is it a deep secret?))

As I was saying before I interrupted myself may I offer as intellectual ascesis the gnome - 'Everything I know is wrong'. (The alert will spot a self referential paradox in that) Just say no to everything!

Can we say no to consciousness? Distinguish between consciousness as given in individual states and consciousness as such. Is there an illicit move from states of awareness to general pure consciousness? The Mandukya Upanisad (\*\*\*) discusses modalities of consciousness but regards the Fourth as the underlying reality of the other three. It is thus a metaphysical entity, a postulate, the culmination of the mystical quest or what you will. Leave it out you (one) have not earned it.

As a postulate pure consciousness must be bedded in good grounds. Here come the pramana (V.P.\*\*\*). Advaita is a sort of ontological Realism. The object is taken to be known as it is with the caveat that our representations are restricted and may be erroneous. On this extraordinarily modest foundation scarcely offering any resistance to the frost heave of the analytical intelligence, you might surmise, the elegant edifice of Advaita is placed. (B.S.B.\*\*\*)

Best Wishes, Michael.

Date: Sat, 13 Mar 2004 16:00:05 -0000

**From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@advaita.org.uk>**

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Benjamin,

Sorry to 'force' you to continue this discussion when you wanted to let it lapse!

You said:

"Nevertheless, I continue to think that my question is valid. If I am truly the nondual Brahman, then why am I not aware of all the perceptions, feelings and thoughts (PFT) of all conscious entities anywhere in any universe? (Leave aside the question of how confusing that might be.) The key property of any consciousness, it seems to me, is its unity. There is only ONE seer in any instance of consciousness. So if Brahman is the one seer that sees all, and if the seeing is not distinct from the seer (advaita), and if I am Brahman, then why do I not see whatever is seen by any conscious entity?"

There are no 'other' conscious entities in the universe so how could you? In the context of the metaphor, it is the ocean that is the only consciousness. Any attempt to extend the metaphor to attempt an intellectually satisfying explanation is fraught with danger but here goes!

Imagine if you like that the ocean consciousness is focussed by the molecules in a wave to give the illusion of a localised and separate consciousness. That one ocean consciousness becomes locally identified with just those water molecules in each wave and seems to bring into existence something that is separate from all other waves. Clearly, this localised consciousness, whilst it believes itself to be only this wave and separate from all others, is not going to have 'objective knowledge' of the particular configuration of molecules in any other wave. In reality, however, this imagined state of affairs is false. The only consciousness is the

ocean and there are no separate waves. There is only water. In this knowledge, it is simply not meaningful to speak of molecule configurations 'belonging' to a particular wave.

Similarly, it does not make sense to talk of brahman as a 'seer'. There is nothing else to see. There is only brahman.

You go on to say as much yourself:

"In conclusion, I think that we both have a valid point. The truth, as I see it so far, is that in some unfathomably mysterious way, the same nondual consciousness which is Brahman can somehow create (or manifest as) the illusion of multiple jivas within its own nondual awareness. These jivas are not distinct from the Consciousness which is Brahman, yet these jivas are not aware of each other's experiences. It seems like a total logical contradiction of the nondual nature of Brahman, but it must be accepted."

We are back to the usual vyAvahArika versus pAramArthika discussion with some adhyAsa thrown in! The state you describe, or at least one with the more normal realist viewpoint, is the illusory state in which 'people' find themselves. They believe that the separation is real and all of their normal PFT activity supports this false belief. The truth of the matter cannot be appreciated until the false superimposition dissipates, when the problem dissolves. It is not that we then can read other people's minds etc. It is that we then know for a fact that there are no other minds to read, not even our own.

Apologies if none of these arguments are helping. I'm sure that we all appreciate your problem, though, so you do not need to keep repeating it! :) Probably most of us also actually still feel the same way and there may be an element of intellectual dishonesty in arguing otherwise. (Speaking for myself, here.) Nevertheless, perhaps that is what we must do if we are to make headway.

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Sat, 13 Mar 2004 15:23:14 -0500

From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste,

I guess I'll try another round at this, as briefly as I can.

First, let me say why I pursue these discussions. It is because I believe that Advaita CAN be understood to a considerable extent, using clear ideas. I wish to explore the utmost limits to which Advaita can be thus understood, before we start talking about 'incomprehensibility' and 'ineffability' and saying that we simply can't understand until we become fully realized. This is a worthwhile endeavor.

Now Sridharji said:

>it was spoilt by the phrase 'just images like in a dream'.  
>If you see them there is a seer and a seen.

and



>when you say there is just a stream there seems to be  
>someone observing the stream

Regarding the dream, the point is that after waking from the dream, we realize that the dream objects were not other than our consciousness, even though they seemed that way during the dream. In the dream, there seemed to be a seer and the seen. When we wake up, we realize that there was just consciousness, and not two entities (advaita). This is a classic analogy in Advaita.

The word 'see' is ambiguous. It can mean 'to see an object' or it can simply mean 'to be aware of shapes and colors in consciousness without interpreting them as objects other than consciousness'. In the former case, the mind adds an extra dualistic interpretation over and above what is actually present in consciousness.

What you say regarding the stream suggests to me where Greg's confusion is. I think he is having the same reaction to my terminology. I don't mean a stream (of consciousness) out there in front of me, as when I stand on the shore of a river. I simply mean an isolated flow of perceptions, feelings and thoughts (PFT), in which seer and seen are identical. This flow is isolated from other such streams that have different contents; these isolated streams are called 'people'.

Now on to Greg:

>That right \*there\* is a pretty good duality! :-)

I was talking about degrees of duality: the gross one of material objects and the subtle one of mental objects. It is no secret that within the realm of illusion there is apparent multiplicity. That is why Advaita contrasts its nonduality to this multiplicity. So finding apparent multiplicity within illusion is expected; it is the nature of illusion.

>A more subtle duality is to see them not as objects.  
>Accompanying this is a belief that what you see is not objects.

The manifestation of shapes and colors is undeniable. But this manifestation need not entail the belief that there is some kind of distinction between seer and seen in this manifestation. There is just the manifestation, also called 'consciousness'. To speak of this nondual manifestation as being yet a more subtle duality makes no sense to me. To call my eradication of belief in duality another belief also seems illegitimate. It prevents me from saying anything. Your words are meaningless to me. It sounds like a play on words. This gives philosophy a bad name. Of course, I may be wrong, but the burden on you is to clarify what you are saying.

>So what did \*you\* mean by "seem to arise"?

No sir, you are the one who first used the expression 'seem to arise' to try to explain where I am in error. You seem to imply that I observe the streams as objects, in some sense, however tenuous, when in fact I do not. Within my stream, I realize that seer and seen are the same. But I also realize that there are other nondual streams with different contents. I do not 'see' them in any way. Rather, I infer their existence from certain patterns within my own stream (perceptions of talking faces and so on), combined with the certainty, derived from the merest grain of humility, that I am not the only conscious being in existence.

>Also, in the PFT - if you discern a P from an F from a T -  
>that's duality also.

Go tell Swami Chinmayananda, who 'invented' the PFT scheme.

Actually, there are PFT even for the realized man. Ramana saw shapes and colors called people, trees, sky, etc. It is all a question of \*interpretation\*. These shapes and colors are realized to be not other than consciousness, just like the dream. Even in a dream, there are PFT. But whereas in the dream, we may believe that they are objects, and that there is a seer vs. a seen, upon awakening we realize that there was only the consciousness. But this does not obliterate the \*appearance\* of PFT. To think so it to apply nonduality in a misleading and formalistic way. Again, the shapes and colors manifest. The issue is how we interpret them. In other words, what does the mind \*add\* to the immediate shapes and colors (and feelings and even thoughts).

Then Michael returns to this discussion with

>You're still locked into the conceivability thesis i.e.  
>that it is inconceivable that anything should be without  
>being a presentation to some consciousness or other. The  
>Realist opposite number is that the world exists independently  
>of our representations of it. It's not as though this  
>can be proved but rather that it is the background for all  
>intelligibility. ... Sankara takes that short way  
>with the Vijnanavadin saying you can't be eating your meal  
>and then deny there was meal or eater thereof.

Having recently taken the trouble to inspect it carefully, I have now decided that Shankara actually makes my case in the infamous BSB II.2.28. He is just like Dr. Johnson, who naively tried to refute Berkeley by kicking a stone. I will quote Shankara's precise words from BSB (Brahma Sutra Bhashya) II.2.28 (Gambhirananda translation):

"How can a man's words be acceptable who while himself perceiving an external object through sense-contacts still says, 'I do not perceive, and that object does not exist', just as much as a man while eating and himself experiencing the satisfaction arising from that act might say, 'Neither do I eat, nor do I get any satisfaction'?"

Here Shankara acknowledges nothing but the \*experience\* of eating and the \*experience\* of satisfaction from eating. In no way does he postulate a world external to consciousness. The very words 'who while himself perceiving an external object through sense-contacts' is nothing but the 'esse est percipi' of Berkeley. The experience of eating is entirely within consciousness; it is nothing but the sense of taste, which is clearly within consciousness. The actual satisfaction of eating is, if possible, even more in consciousness.

Clearly, Shankara fails to understand the Vijnanavadin. He fails to see that they both agree. He thinks that the Vijnanavadin is denying the perception. Or else Shankara is being deceived by that subtle (and merely apparent) duality within consciousness, in which the perceptions themselves seem to be objects. As I explained before, the gross duality is to believe that the perceptions are caused by material objects utterly distinct from perception. This is the Newtonian and materialistic view. The subtle delusion is to see the very perceptions as objects, i.e. as other than the seer. This is actually how our normal state works. If we just look at our perceptions, they do seem to be other than the seer; they seem to be 'out there' like a holographic projection. There seems to be a distinction between seer and seen even within perception itself, and this is totally distinct from the issue of material objects as the imperceptible source of perception.

When Shankara talks about vyahavaharika, he evidently means the subtle duality whereby ordinary perception seems to manifest as seer and seen. The whole issue of Newtonian matter utterly distinct from consciousness is not even on his conceptual radar screen. If anything, this shows how utterly 'idealistic' he is that he cannot

even understand the gross materialistic dualism, only the subtle one where a bifurcation seems to occur \*within\* consciousness, thus implicitly confirming idealism by refusing to even consider any kind of 'outside'.

Finally Dennis joins in with:

>Any attempt to extend the metaphor to attempt an  
>intellectually satisfying explanation is fraught  
>with danger but here goes!

Yes, you are right that the ocean and waves analogy is quite misleading, unlike the dream analogy, which is extremely useful. The ocean and waves analogy presupposes ordinary dualistic discrimination, in which the different waves are perceived as distinct entities in space separated from each other. The word 'ocean' is nothing but a label to indicate the collection of waves. At best, this is a metaphor and not a serious example for intellectual discussion. The dream analogy, on the other hand, is a vivid example of how something that seems to be other (the dream-object) collapses into consciousness upon awakening. Here we have the actual experience upon awakening. Vivid indeed!

So I could dissect the ocean and waves analogy in light of what you and I have said, but I think you are smart enough to surmise where I would go, and it would be only a tedious exercise. Still I might just as well make a brief comment on this:

>Clearly, this localized consciousness, whilst it believes  
>itself to be only this wave and separate from all others,  
>is not going to have 'objective knowledge' of the  
>particular configuration of molecules in any other wave

The issue of whether or not I \*believe\* that I am or am not the contents of my consciousness has nothing to do with what contents actually manifest. That I cannot control, at least when I am awake.

Any such belief is a superimposition \*added\* by the mind to the shapes and colors which manifest spontaneously. As I have explained, all dualistic error is of this nature. For example, to see the contents of my awareness as other than consciousness is an interpretation superimposed by the mind upon those contents. But nothing I believe or do not believe affects those actual contents. My contents are my contents and yours are yours, regardless of how we interpret them. And the utter isolation between our respective contents remains. My consciousness has absolutely no access to yours, nor yours to mine.

>We are back to the usual vyAvahArika versus pAramArthika  
>discussion with some adhyAsa thrown in!

For me, vyAvahArika is the false interpretation of the contents of my consciousness as other than my consciousness ... the subtle duality mentioned above. pAramArthika is the elimination of that false interpretation. This has nothing to do with what actual contents are present in the streams labelled 'Benjamin' or 'Dennis', which we have been discussing. Specifically, it has nothing to do with whether I am aware of the contents of another stream. The distinction applies to each stream separately.

>It is not that we then can read other people's minds etc.  
>It is that we then know for a fact that there are no other  
>minds to read, not even our own.

This is Greg's thesis, and he later agrees with you. I repeat that it seems like a play on words to me. I can understand what it means to eliminate the distinction between seer and seen within my consciousness. But to try to talk in some nebulous way about the disappearance of even the contents, after eliminating the seer-seen distinction, is to talk like some kind of hyper-buddhist far more 'dangerous' than even what I accept. There is a limit to which we can make things disappear before we are just playing games. I'll have to get the authentic Brahminical moderators here to open files on both of you!

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Sat, 13 Mar 2004 15:50:30 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: advaitin Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

On 3/13/04 03:23 pm Benjamin ([orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)) wrote:

The word 'see' is ambiguous. It can mean 'to see an object' or it can simply mean 'to be aware of shapes and colors in consciousness without interpreting them as objects other than consciousness'.

===Yes, this is still duality. "To be aware of X" where X is red or square, is a subject/object dynamic. Even if the very next thought is "X is nothing other than consciousness."

Ben:

Go tell Swami Chinmayananda, who 'invented' the PFT scheme.

===And a good scheme it is, too. But it is a provisional one, a gauged teaching model.

Ben:

Ramana saw shapes and colors called people, trees, sky, etc. It is all a question of **interpretation**.

===This is an attribution, a way of speaking by in terms of the PFT model. Let's say you had lunch with Ramana and asked him, "Do you **really** see shapes and colors?" What would you say if he said, "Benjaminji, all I see is the Self."

- Greg

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 15:08:49 -0000  
From: "asridhar19" <[asridhar19@yahoo.com](mailto:asridhar19@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Benjaminji

--- In [advaitin@yahogroups.com](mailto:advaitin@yahogroups.com), Benjamin <[orion777ben@y...](mailto:orion777ben@y...)> wrote:

>

I wish to explore the utmost limits to which

> Advaita can be thus understood, before we start talking about  
> 'incomprehensibility' and 'ineffability' and saying that we simply  
> can't understand until we become fully realized. This is a  
> worthwhile endeavor.

>

It is a noble endeavour indeed. It also helps people like me progress with the help of other's understanding .

I somehow believe that there is a stage where the mind and intellect stop and the experience takes over . All our great sages and Rishis

have been able to provide pointers and directions to the goal. But Brahman will necessarily be beyond contemplation - achintya, achintyaM, aprameya etc ?

All that we can possibly conclude at an intellectual level is that ' it is not of the nature of untruth, it is not of the nature of being insentient, it is not of the nature of sorrow', .

I do not have the temerity to sit on judgment on your practise, but in general terms, I am not sure if 'exploring advaita (or any path for that matter) to its utmost limits' will not be counterproductive. The main goal is realizing one's true nature in the Self within - understanding the paths to that cannot be an end in itself?

A quick quote from 'Letters from Sri Ramansramam' - by Suri Nagamma, Page 439:

".... Bhagwan remarked as follows...

Ancients have said that the super abundance of book knowledge is the cause of the Rambling mind....

.... A Mumukshu ( a seeker of deliverance) should understand the essence of Sastras but should give up the reading of sastras as that is inimical to Dhyana ( meditation). It is like accepting the grain and discarding the Chaff. There are so many books and religions that one life is not nough to read all the books relating to even one religion. where then is time for practise?....."

Though the emphasis above is on book learning as a detriment, the same could apply to the intellects desire to get a analyse/ understand/ describe or get a complete understanding of one marga.

> The word 'see' is ambiguous. It can mean 'to see an object' or it  
> can simply mean 'to be aware of shapes and colors in consciousness  
> without interpreting them as objects other than consciousness'. In  
> the former case, the mind adds an extra dualistic interpretation  
over

> and above what is actually present in consciousness.

>

> What you say regarding the stream suggests to me where Greg's  
> confusion is. I think he is having the same reaction to my  
> terminology. I don't mean a stream (of consciousness) out there in  
> front of me, as when I stand on the shore of a river. I simply  
mean

> an isolated flow of perceptions, feelings and thoughts (PFT), in  
> which seer and seen are identical. This flow is isolated from  
other

> such streams that have different contents; these isolated streams  
are

> called 'people'.

I agree ' see'- need not be literally taken. It could apply equally well to hear, touch, smell, feel etc. I believe what you mean is that you are aware of ( not seeing it or hearing it etc.) a stream. It would still leave the question of 'who is it that is aware?'

> can make things disappear before we are just playing games. I'll  
> have to get the authentic Brahminical moderators here to open files  
> on both of you!

Now, that is a dire threat :). Like some of my vasanas you'll find me quickly disappearing if the threat materialises. However, like my vasanas, I'll slowly come in once I believe that I am all but forgotten. After all I do intend to learn more from advaita between my japa and meditation :).

I must thank you for your detailed and kind attempts to explain, hope it continues just that bit more... :)

> Hari Om!  
> Benjamin  
Many thousand namaskarams to all advaitins  
sridhar

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 15:14:22 -0000

**From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@advaita.org.uk>**

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Hi Benjamin,

In respect of your supposedly non-dual stream of consciousness (SOC), you say:

"The manifestation of shapes and colors is undeniable. But this manifestation need not entail the belief that there is some kind of distinction between seer and seen in this manifestation. There is just the manifestation, also called 'consciousness'. To speak of this nondual manifestation as being yet a more subtle duality makes no sense to me."

I still cannot see the logic of this. Surely if 'you' see a colour, this is duality? After all, if the colour you see is 'red', it is clearly not 'blue'.

And suppose you see a computer. No, I don't mean an external object computer, I accept that we both mean an internal 'set of perceptions' computer. If you start taking apart this perception, you will soon reach circuit boards and chips which, without the help of powerful microscopes etc., you will be unable further to perceive and understand. Now, I am not suggesting that a computer is as sophisticated and complex as a 'person' but the point I want to make is this. I do not see that your concept of 'other SOCs' is any different in dual/non-dual terms than that of the circuit board. There are 'things going on' in the circuit board of which you have no knowledge and there are 'things going on' in the 'other SOCs'. Why should you treat them any differently?

Ultimately it seems to come down to saying that, as long as there is a 'you' seeing and 'things' (real, subtle, SOCs or whatever) being seen, then you are still in the realm of duality. Your theory that there is only consciousness, that the perceptions are themselves non-different from this consciousness, is a subtle but objective theory. You are still avoiding the

bottom-line conclusion of Advaita.

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 19:24:05 +0400

**From: "Ranjeet Sankar" <thefinalsearch@yahoo.co.uk>**

Subject: Re: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Sridharji,

----- Original Message -----

**From: "asridhar19" <asridhar19@yahoo.com>**

> A quick quote from 'Letters from Sri Ramansramam' - by Suri Nagamma,

> Page 439:

>

> "... Bhagwan remarked as follows...

> Ancients have said that the super abundance of book knowledge is the

> cause of the Rambling mind....

> .... A Mumukshu ( a seeker of deliverance) should understand the

> essence of Sastras but should give up the reading of sastras as that

> is inimical to Dhyana ( meditation). It is like accepting the grain

> and discarding the Chaff. There are so many books and religions that

> one life is not nough to read all the books relating to even one

> religion. where then is time for practise?....."

>

> Though the emphasis above is on book learning as a deterrent, the

> same could apply to the intellects desire to get a analyse/

> understand/ describe or get a complete understanding of one marga.

-----

This is too much misleading. In my humble opinion, such quotes should not be reproduced in this list. Jumping into meditation and 'experiencing' bliss is not advaita. Such an erroneous understanding is the basis of the above quote. NidhidhyAsana should not be seen as an action to be practised. Learning the scriptures and relecting on it are essential steps in Vedanta. NidhidhyAsana is not even needed to the one in whom sravaNa or manana has done the job.

Hari Om

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 15:35:40 -0000

**From: "asridhar19" <asridhar19@yahoo.com>**

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste Ranjeetji

--- In advaitin@yahoogroups.com, "Ranjeet Sankar"

<thefinalsearch@y...> wrote:

> Namaste Sridharji,

>>

> This is too much misleading. In my humble opinion, such quotes should not be

> reproduced in this list.

It'll be difficult to decide which quotes of Bhagwan or swami chinmayandaji are appropriate for reproduction and which are not. Even stand alone, i believe, their quotes can never mislead a sincere reader. Of course if i have unintentionally given them a 'wrong' twist , i shall apologize unreservedly and exercise more caution going forward.

> Jumping into meditation and 'experiencing' bliss is  
> not advaita.

That is not the interpretation intended. My apologies if it appears so.

Such an erroneous understanding is the basis of the above

> quote. NidhidhyAsana should not be seen as an action to be practised.

I agree

> Learning the scriptures and reflecting on it are essential steps in Vedanta.

> NidhidhyAsana is not even needed to the one in whom sravana or manana has

> done the job.

>

I agree.

The point i was trying to make was that attachment to 'learning'/ 'writing'/ 'trying to gain complete understanding' are means to an end. To think of them as the end would be a pity.

> Hari Om

Many thousand namaskarams to all advaitins  
sridhar

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 12:13:04 -0500

**From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>**

Subject: Re: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Namaste,

I'll respond as briefly as possible, with an open mind and a sincere desire to learn something new. By the way, this thread has become terribly misnamed, so it will presumably be useless as an archived item. If Dennis does put some of it on his site, then it might not be in vain.



Greg:

>Yes, this is still duality. "To be aware of X" where X  
>is red or square, is a subject/object dynamic. Even if  
>the very next thought is "X is nothing other than consciousness."

Sorry, I simply disagree. In my experience, I can distinguish between discursive thought and intuitive awareness. In discursive thought, there is the ego sense and the contents of my consciousness appear as discrete objects other than that ego. In intuitive awareness, I can immediately realize that seer and seen are identical and unitary. In an instantaneous and holistic way ('flash of insight'), I realize that there is one undivided seer and that there is no distinction between seer and seen. The dream analogy then helps to understand and explain this further but is not absolutely necessary.

Now I will agree that even in the flash of intuitive awareness, some traces of discursive thought may remain. I may be dimly aware that 'this is a this' and 'that is a that'. But I still maintain that the intuitive awareness remains in the background, illuminating the whole picture as it were, including the discursive thought. It does seem to be the base of all consciousness.

Of course, this does not mean I am enlightened, since the intuitive awareness is faint and superficial in my case. Nevertheless it exists; it is present; it envelops and supports and illuminates the whole. I do believe that withdrawing into this intuitive awareness must be what Ramana meant by the 'I-I'. I believe that dwelling in this awareness as deeply and permanently as possible eventually leads to enlightenment. And dwelling in it even to the superficial degree that I am capable does seem to illuminate and purify my consciousness. This furthers my conviction that I am on the right track.

>Let's say you had lunch with Ramana and asked him, "Do you  
>\*really\* see shapes and colors?" What would you say  
>if he said, "Benjaminji, all I see is the Self."

The shapes and colors and Self are identical. That is the whole point of Advaita. Seer and seen are the same. There is no ultimate contradiction between the manifestation of shapes and colors and their identity with the seer. Once this identity is intuitively realized, the distinction between seer and seen disappears. All the problems arise with how we \*think\* about it ... which is why I am trying to think as clearly as I can.

It is only at the level of words that the identity of one seer and many seen seems paradoxical. But it can be intuitively realized in a flash of insight, and the dream analogy helps to clarify it further. It's not that hard. Surely there are not two seers when I contemplate my awareness. And in calm awareness, I can detect no difference between seer and seen. That's my testimony, your honor.

But I still maintain that all this happens in what, for lack of better terminology, I must call the stream of consciousness labelled 'Benjamin', or the 'B-stream', if you wish to sound technical. Otherwise, my flashes of insight would be simultaneous with yours, and vice versa. Indeed, let us forget about seekers such as me with superficial but hopefully promising flashes of insight. (I'll let you speak for yourself.) Let us consider the truly enlightened. The fact that some are enlightened and others are not is the clearest indication that one must discriminate between different streams of consciousness. Otherwise, all this talk about realization and enlightenment is ridiculous.

I'm still not very concise, am I?

Then Sridharji said:

>I somehow believe that there is a stage where the mind  
>and intellect stop and the experience takes over.

I believe that what I just said is consistent with this. Still, I continue to be motivated by the conviction that much of what the sages experienced can be 'explained' rather clearly, more so than most people realize. It is worth pursuing to the utmost, while being very cautious about error. It is a tightrope walk. And I am not just entertaining myself. These long answers are a lot of work for me.

Anyhow, others have of course said similar things. The 'clear and modern approach' to realization seems to have started with Ramana and Nisargadatta and Atmananda and others and is continuing today. What they said is really quite clear and explicit, though the Vivekachudmani is not bad either, and the Yoga Vasistha is even better, as far as clarity is concerned. (I'll admit that my beloved Buddhist scriptures often lack clarity!)

Regarding your quote, Ramana meant it to be taken in moderation. Otherwise he would not have written books himself, or even bothered talking to people. But there is no doubt that the wisdom of the books then needs to be applied in the seat of meditation and turned into experience.

Then Sir Dennis returned:

(Not 'Sri' but 'Sir'. You're from that island over the pond aren't you? :))

>I still cannot see the logic of this. Surely if 'you'  
>see a colour, this is duality? After all, if the colour  
>you see is 'red', it is clearly not 'blue'.

This seems to be basically Greg's point, so my answer would be similar (see above). I would only add, please do not be misled by language. Language forces me to state that 'I see a red path', regardless of whether I am in a state of intuitive awareness or discursive thought. And when I write these words, I am mostly in a

state of discursive thought. But I still have some memory of that flash of insight, and I am trying to put that into words as best I can.

>I do not see that your concept of 'other SOCs' is any different  
>in dual/non-dual terms than that of the circuit board. There are  
>'things going on' in the circuit board of which you have no  
>knowledge and there are 'things going on' in the 'other SOCs'.  
>Why should you treat them any differently?

Unlike Berkeley, who postulated God's consciousness to make the tree exist when no one was looking, I bravely assert that the tree does NOT exist when nobody is looking. There is no 'tree' distinct from the various perceptions in various streams of consciousness (SOCs). Same for the microscopic contents of circuit boards. However, our waking perceptions have a marvelous coherence such that, with some knowledge of the 'laws of nature', which are only 'laws of the behavior of perceptions', I can infer what perceptions might arise as I put the circuit board under the microscope, etc. ('Putting the circuit board under the microscope' is also nothing but a sequence of perceptions, etc.)

So within my own consciousness, nothing exists unless observed. And this observation is not different in any way from the consciousness, from the SOC. Only language forces a mere semantic difference. There is nothing existing but hidden in the minute contents of my perceptions; there are only the perceptions at any given moment. Your alleged unseen components of my perceptions simply do not exist in any sense; they are a contradiction in terms. So comparison to the existing but hidden content of other SOCs is invalid.

>Your theory that there is only consciousness, that the  
>perceptions are themselves non-different from this  
>consciousness, is a subtle but objective theory

Greg's assertion, and a mere assertion! I have also provided my assertions, with rather more discussion to back it up, in my humble opinion.

More importantly: Please consider whether my 'intuitive awareness', as discussed above, might not be the same as your nondual realization. Wouldn't that simplify things? Perhaps you misunderstood me, and we all really agree. (Well, I don't mean on the question of other SOCs but on whether I have some residual duality within my own when I claim that I don't.)

Final word: As I said, I don't think that whether or not we become realized depends on how this discussion turns out!

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 15:13:48 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Ramana on the Mind

Namaste,

Here is an excerpt on the mind from Ramana Maharshi's book 'Nan Yar' or 'Who am I?', available at

<http://www.hinduism.co.za/whoami.htm>

"If the mind, which is the instrument of knowledge and is the basis of all activity, subsides, the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases. Unless the illusory perception of the serpent in the rope ceases, the rope on which the illusion is formed is not perceived as such. Even so, unless the illusory nature of the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases, the vision of the true nature of the Self, on which the illusion is formed, is not obtained."

Notice that it is the \*mind\* which creates the ego sense and the subject-object duality. It is the mind that is the culprit. This is echoed at great length in many Advaitin scriptures, notably the Yoga Vasistha.

Notice also that he does not say that, upon quieting the mind, the perception of the world ceases. He chooses his words more carefully than that. He says that the perception of the world ceases 'as an objective reality', i.e. as something other than the seer. But the 'shapes and colors' are still present, of course, or he would simply have said that the perception of the world ceases. Of course, this does not occur, even for the jnani, unless he closes his eyes. It is the \*interpretation\* which has changed, the interpretation of an objective reality superimposed by the mind on the shapes and colors.

This is to be contrasted with those who, in recent discussions here, seem to think that any kind of perception of shapes and colors must be some kind of duality. To repeat, it is the perception of them as an objective reality, as objects, as something distinct from the seer, which is to be eliminated. It is the interpretation, contributed by our deluding mind. Leave the poor shapes and colors alone! They are innocent!

Please read the rest of Nan Yar. It is not long.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 21:02:52 -0000

From: ombhurbhuva <[ombhurbhuva@eircom.net](mailto:ombhurbhuva@eircom.net)>

Subject: Vishishtadvaita Ontology

Benjamin wrote:

"How can a man's words be acceptable who while himself perceiving an external object through sense-contacts still says, 'I do not perceive, and that object does not exist', just as much as a man while eating and himself experiencing the satisfaction arising from that act might say, 'Neither do I eat, nor do I get any satisfaction'?"

Here Shankara acknowledges nothing but the \*experience\* of eating and the \*experience\* of satisfaction from eating. In no way does he postulate a world external to consciousness. The very words 'who while himself perceiving an external object through sense-contacts' is nothing but the 'esse est percipi' of Berkeley. The experience of eating is entirely within consciousness; it is nothing but the sense of taste, which is clearly within consciousness. The actual satisfaction of eating is, if possible, even more in consciousness.

Hello Benjamin,

Your diligence in the defense of immaterialism and your capacity to wring agreement with your position from what seems self evidently a contrary view evokes awe. With no desire to change or cause you to modify your position but merely to place on the record my own interpretation of Sankara's position I offer you a further point from the locus classicus B.S.B. II.2.28. You appear to be able to draw everything from the single all encompassing stream of consciousness. Sankara demurs. "Therefore an object and its knowledge differ". He makes various points to support this of which the most interesting one is that a single perception may contain elements which cannot be delivered by the senses alone. In the mental act of considering the 'knowledge of a pot' and 'the knowledge of a cloth' the cloth and the pot may present themselves in sensation but 'knowledge' as a concept is an inner reflection. Is 'whiteness' as such delivered in sensation as in 'white cow' or 'milk'. If we put it in Platonic terms for a moment what causes us to 'carve nature at the joints' in precisely that manner. Why are not white cow shaped objects or white animals linked together for instance? Or milk pail shaped objects?

Similar divisions in the economy of the mind are noted in the distinction between "the seeing of a pot and the remembrance of a pot". The pot is the same in both cases but the action is different and the grounds for reliable reporting also differ.

How can the single stream of consciousness carry as inner cargo alone what is normally distinguished as mental modifications, sensations, memories, dreams, reflections etc.? "Moreover as regards two cognitions occurring successively, which vanish after self-revelation, there can be no logical apprehension of the one by the other. And in that case will be nullified all the assertions made in the Buddhist scriptures themselves about the difference among cognitions, momentariness and other attributes, individual characteristics, common characteristics, bequathing of tendency by one cognition to the other, true, false or mixed attributes arising from contact with nescience, as also about bondage, liberation, and so on.

Again if one admits a distinction between knowledge and knowledge, why should not one admit external objects such as a pillar, a wall and so on?"

The specific points made against the Vijnanavadin may not apply to you but the general one does I think hold - we make distinctions between inner and outer and indeed within inner and outer, why then not accept that this is a true reflection of reality and not an 'as if' we were making those distinctions. Why add another mental layer which is in effect espousing a realist epistemology in conjunction with an idealist ontology?

Best Wishes, Michael.

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 06:52:00 -0000

From: "Chittaranjan Naik" <[chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Ramana on the Mind

Namaste Benjaminji,

--- In [advaitin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:advaitin@yahoogroups.com), Benjamin <[orion777ben@y...](mailto:orion777ben@y...)> wrote:

> To repeat, it is the perception of them as an objective reality,  
> as objects, as something distinct from the seer, which is to be  
> eliminated.

You are right when you say that the perception of objects as something distinct from the seer is to be eliminated, but that doesn't make objects not objects. Objective reality doesn't mean that objects are existentially separate from the seer. An object is the object of directedness of the mind and senses. The mind and senses and the objects are all invoked from the seer and are existentially inseparable from the seer.

> It is the interpretation, contributed by our deluding mind.

The delusion is not the object, but the notion of existential independence of the object.

> Leave the poor shapes and colors alone! They are innocent!

So are objects. I think we should leave them alone too. In the logic of Nyaya and Mimamsa, shapes and colours are objects

Regards,  
Chittaranjan

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 13:21:42 +0530

From: [bhaskar.yr@in.abb.com](mailto:bhaskar.yr@in.abb.com)  
Subject: Re: Re: Ramana on the Mind

The mind and senses  
and the objects are all invoked from the seer and are existentially  
inseparable from the seer.

praNAms  
Hare Krishna

But it has to be noted advaita questioning the very existence of seer!! In  
gItA bhAshya shankara clearly says that the final pramANa indeed removes  
the very knowership (jnAtrutva) of Atman. If such is the state of final  
emancipation, where is the question of seer-seen relationship!!

Hari Hari Hari Bol!!!  
bhaskar

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 00:26:14 -0800 (PST)  
From: "R.S.MANI" <[r\\_s\\_mani@yahoo.com](mailto:r_s_mani@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: Ramana on the Mind

NAMASTE, Benjaminji, and all

Sri Benjaminji said

<<Notice also that he does not say that, upon quieting the mind, the  
perception of the world ceases. He chooses his words more carefully  
eyes. It is

<<the \*interpretation\* which has changed, the interpretation of an  
objective reality superimposed by the mind on the shapes and colors.

<< Leave the poor shapes and colors  
alone! They are innocent!>>>>

Well said. However, I may be permitted to put it as follows:

We subjectively project goodness and badness on the world of objects and then run  
after either to hug the objects or run away from the objects, all with the idea of

“getting” happiness. It is the projecting of “qualities” on the objects by the mind, that such and such thing is good for me or dear to me, or such and such thing is bad for me, by the mind on the objects, which must cease. However, such “ceasing” is very difficult to achieve by quietening the mind or controlling mind etc. I think it is in this context that Adi Shankaracharya said “Vishvam nija anthargatam”. All Objects have same qualities or of same nature, of Asti, Bhati, Priyam, Nama and Roopa, (existence, capable of being known, dear, name and shape/colour), but the mind projects additional qualities based on earlier notions and vasanas, and run after the world of objects or run away from the world of objects. So what must cease is this subjective reality, which we project on objects. One sees or perceives the world through his own drushty (eye) and add colors to it, based on the glasses he wear, i.e. his own notions, that is to say one creates his own world, which is different from the world the other person creates through his eyes (drushti). There is no problem by seeing the srushti as srushti; and not seeing it through one’s drushti, as one’s drushti is always contaminated by his earlier notions and vasanas, is the result of self knowledge. Quietening of the mind will not help in this direction. What is required is to “educate” the mind and seeing that the mind grows over and becomes indifferent to its projection of qualities on the objects.

In this connection, I quote below a paragraph appearing in the teaching of Sri Nisargadattaji on Ego; which also gives us some understanding with regard to the play of the mind.

“When is there an ego? The ego is there when you have a reaction, when you register and take delivery of whatever is being observed spontaneously. Only when you cling to the observation, then there is an ego. For example, you see some building material lying on the road. You think you know something about how to use that material and you start figuring out various possibilities... that way the thought process develops and ego starts. If you are nobody, you will not bother about the building material... you will just observe it and go on your way. Once it is out of sight it is out of mind. But, if instead, you receive delivery and cogitate over it, then ego will start.”

If one is successful to educate the mind to grow over i.e. to be indifferent to the qualities that the mind projects on the objects, then Ego will not raise its head.

It is my understanding and whether I am right in the eye of others I do not know. Perhaps my looking at the subject was through “my drushti” i.e. through my eye!

Respectful regards and Hari Om

Mani

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 08:28:05 -0000

From: "Chittaranjan Naik" <[chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Ramana on the Mind

Namaste Bhaskar Prabhiji,

--- In [advaitin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:advaitin@yahoogroups.com), [bhaskar.yr@i...](mailto:bhaskar.yr@i...) wrote:



- > But it has to be noted advaita questioning the very existence
- > of seer!! In gItA bhAshya shankara clearly says that the final
- > pramANa indeed removes the very knowership (jnAtrutva) of Atman.
- > If such is the state of final emancipation, where is the question
- > of seer-seen relationship!!

I think one has to be careful and take the context into account when interpreting such statements. The seeing of the seer is never in question even in the absence of the seer-seen relationship because the seeing of the seer can never be taken away. The seeing of the seer is the seer's essential nature. The seeing of the seer does not cease, but now there is no second entity for it to see.

Advaita does not question the existence of the seer, because the seer is itself "sat" or "existence".

The tripudi of the knower, known and knowledge doesn't exist in that state, and the knower, in so far as it seems to exist as a limited entity in the trifurcation, is what is negated. It is a negation of the limitedness to reveal the unlimited.

Pranams,  
Chittaranjan

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 15:06:45 +0530  
From: [bhaskar.yr@in.abb.com](mailto:bhaskar.yr@in.abb.com)  
Subject: Re: Re: Ramana on the Mind

praNAm prabhuji:  
Hare Krishna

CN prabhuji:

I think one has to be careful and take the context into account when interpreting such statements.

bhaskar:

Yes, the context is very clear in shankara's commentary prabhuji. Here shankara talking about shAstra pramANya, clearly writes that pramAtrutva (being a knower) is itself the figment of avidyA since it is sublated by shAstra as the final pramANa. The vijnAna Atman (the intellectual self..dont know exact english word) & paramAtman (the supreme self) are different born out of avidyA. Here shankara clearly says, the supreme brahman is entirely different from the embodied self which is fancied by avidyA. So shankara talking about the seer in the gIta is about vijnAna Atman who is doer & experiencer should not be anyway related with parabrahman.

CN prabhuji:

The seeing of the seer is never in question even in the absence of the seer-seen relationship because the seeing of the seer can never be taken away. The seeing of the seer is the seer's essential nature. The seeing of the seer does not cease, but now there is no second entity for it to see.

bhaskar:

Hope we are not getting confused with vijnAnAtman with shruti pratipAdya nirvishEsha sAkshi parabrahman.

Hari Hari Hari Bol!!!

bhaskar

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 07:33:13 -0500

From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>

Subject: was: Ramana; now realism

On 3/15/04 01:52 am "Chittaranjan Naik" ([chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)) wrote:

So are objects. I think we should leave them alone too. In the logic of Nyaya and Mimamsa, shapes and colours are objects

===Good point! Just because Benjamin doesn't believe they exist apart from consciousness doesn't mean they have escaped object-hood. For Benjamin, they are at least objects of reference.

And Benjaminji is a bit of a realist about colors, the way he speaks of the contents of a stream-of-consciousness. He asks why the contents (colors, etc.) in \*Greg's\* stream aren't available to be seen by Ben. The multi-observer criterion is a hallmark of realism. The ability of X to be seen by two observers is realism about X. It's also realism about the observers. Even if the observers are "streams of consciousness," then this entails realism about streams of consciousness.

It seems to me that the stream-of-consciousness model, if not sublatale, is not a fruitful avenue for investigation into This.

On the other hand, Consciousness -- as awareness, as Brahman -- is not the kind of thing one can be a metaphysical or epistemological realist about. It is not the kind of thing about which existence claims make any sense. If one must use the "e" word at all, then consciousness is Existence itself.

--Greg

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 12:46:51 -0000

From: "Chittaranjan Naik" <[chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Ramana on the Mind

Namaste Bhaskar Prabhuji,

I feel that I am saying the same thing that you are, but somewhere there seems to be a disconnect. What to do? Let me see if I can clarify what I'm saying.

--- In [advaitin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:advaitin@yahoogroups.com), [bhaskar.yr@i...](mailto:bhaskar.yr@i...) wrote:

>

> bhaskar:

>

> Yes, the context is very clear in shankara's commentary  
> prabhuji. Here shankara talking about shAstra pramANya,  
> clearly writes that pramAtrutva (being a knower) is itself  
> the figment of avidyA since it is sublated by shAstra as  
> the final pramANa.

Yes, I understand that the knower as the embodied one, in which the knowership is attributed to vijnana, is sublated in the final pramana.

> The vijnAna Atman (the intellectual self..dont know exact  
> english word) & paramAtman (the supreme self) are different  
> born out of avidyA.

The intellectual self is not the supreme Self because the intellectual self is bound by avidya and is embodied in the vijnanamayakosha.

> Here shankara clearly says, the supreme brahman is entirely  
> different from the embodied self which is fancied by  
> avidyA.

Yes, the Supreme Brahman is entirely different from the embodied self as fancied through avidya, but the entire difference points to difference and not to the essence. In other words, without the difference superimposed by avidya what remains is the essential nature of Atman that is pointed out by "That thou art".

> So shankara talking about the seer in the gIta is about vijnAna  
> Atman who is doer & experiencer should not be anyway related with  
> parabrahman.

Yes, the vijnana Atman - the Atman qualified by vijnana - is not the Brahman as Brahman is beyond the five koshas.

> CN:

>  
> The seeing of the seer is never in question even in the absence  
> of the seer-seen relationship because the seeing of the seer can  
> never be taken away. The seeing of the seer is the seer's  
> essential nature. The seeing of the seer does not cease, but  
> now there is no second entity for it to see.  
>  
> bhaskar:  
>  
> Hope we are not getting confused with vijnAnAtman with  
> shruti pratipAdya nirvishEsha sAkshi parabrahman.

The vijnanatman is seen. That seer which sees it is Brahman and its seeing never ceases.

But of course if you're asking whether I'm confused, the answer is in the affirmative because I am within maya and am not able to conceive the inconceivable. :-)

Pranams,  
Chittaranjan

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 14:59:13 -0000  
From: "Chittaranjan Naik" <[chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Re: was: Ramana; now realism

Namaste Gregji,

I agree with you that the streams of consciousness model is not a fruitful avenue for investigation into reality. The water is too turbid in the stream. The stream of consciousness is a magic weave. I believe it needs a lot of unweaving to reach the source where the weaver is weaving.

> "If one must use the "e" word at all, then consciousness  
> is Existence itself".

Yes Gregji, it is said that Sat (existence) and Chit (consciousness) are its essence.

Regards,  
Chittaranjan

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 11:10:00 -0500  
From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: To Michael

Namaste Michael,

- >Your diligence in the defense of immaterialism and
- >your capacity to wring agreement with your position
- >from what seems self evidently a contrary view evokes awe.

Regarding 'immaterialism', all I can say is, these Vedic types have believed that reality is fundamentally, nay entirely spiritual, for a LONG time. I call THAT 'immaterialism'.

Brahman = Consciousness = Reality.

Regarding what you said, I would say that both the sensation before conceptual reflection and the conceptual reflection upon that sensation are in consciousness. It's a process in awareness. Likewise for the seeing of the pot and the remembrance thereof. As for the unification of disparate concepts following successively in time, this must indeed be done at a given moment. It is no more mysterious than realizing that the parts of an apple cohere in their spatial contiguity within consciousness, despite any lack of underlying 'substance' for these parts to 'stick' in.

Consciousness is a unity (advaita) by nature, and the supreme manifestation of unity is to realize that all is Brahman and that there is no distinction between ego and world. There is just the consciousness. Any semblance of multiplicity or distinction is an illusory deviation from the intrinsic nature of consciousness. The distinction between consciousness and matter is only the grossest form of a whole sequence of false discriminations that begin with the I-thought (which is NOT the Self).

I also appreciate your diligence and backbone.

But I am addressing this message to you for another reason: to 'apologize' for something else having nothing to do with immaterialism. Well, apologize is not quite the right word, but you will understand as you read on.

Some months ago, we somehow got into a discussion of Sai Baba, and I got alarmed about all the bad reports on the web. You, as a devotee, got indignant, and I, as a rationalist, felt that the probability of something bad going on was uncomfortably high. A 'where there's too much smoke, there is probably fire' situation.

Since then, I have discovered that several extremely nice people at the satsanghs I attend are Sai Baba devotees. It has occurred to me how much they might be hurt by all this.

Furthermore, I have discovered through my reading how some emotionally troubled people can really believe events that never

occurred. For instance, they may have been abused by their parents when young, then suppressed it from their awareness, and much later they project it on to someone else, perhaps another father figure.

I don't want to indulge in too much psychobabble, and I am not exonerating Sai Baba. I simply don't know, and until one knows with certainty, one should think of the innocent who are hurt by rumour. It helps to know some actual people like this to fully understand the implications.

Hari Omn!  
Benjamin

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 12:03:06 -0500  
From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>  
Subject: Consciousness and Realism

Namaste,

In this message, I am also briefly answering some messages in the thread 'Ramana and the Mind'

Chittaranjanji said:

>Objective reality doesn't mean that objects are  
>existentially separate from the seer

Correct in a sense. As I have said several times in the past few days, there is the gross objectivity of (the belief in) inert and insentient matter supposedly 'outside' of consciousness, and then there is the subtle objectivity where even the perceptions in consciousness seem distinct from the seer. Both are dualistic illusions.

>The delusion is not the object, but the notion of existential  
>independence of the object.

If the object is not 'existentially independent' from the seer, then it is not an object, by definition, though it may appear that way.

>In the logic of Nyaya and Mimamsa, shapes and colours are objects.

I don't know or care what Nyaya and Mimamsa have to say. I am concerned with the pure nondual vision of Advaita.

Then Bhaskarji said:

>But it has to be noted advaita questioning the very  
>existence of seer!!

Both seer and seen disappear in the ultimate nondual realization according to Ramana and my Swamiji. Only the pure 'I' or 'Self' remains. In other words, one speaks of a 'seer' when there also seems to be a 'seen' distinct from the seer. If the 'seen' disappears, as a distinct reality, then so does seer. And as the earlier quote from Ramana said, the 'seen' is only a distinction imposed (like the snake) by the mind on the contents of consciousness (which are the rope). When seer and seen disappear, consciousness and its contents remain. What disappears is the apparent distinction between seer and seen. These collapse into a nondual consciousness.

Then Maniji said:

>We subjectively project goodness and badness on the  
>world of objects ...

I agree with everything you say, including of course the quote by Nisargadatta. I would only add that the projection of goodness and badness is a later stage, after the projection of objective reality. First one needs to see objects as such before one can project moral qualities on them.

Then Gregji said:

>Just because Benjamin doesn't believe they exist apart from  
>consciousness doesn't mean they have escaped object-hood.  
>For Benjamin, they are at least objects of reference.

Well, as I said, language forces me to refer to the contents of my consciousness in a referential way, even after I realize that there is no distinction between seer and seen in my consciousness. This is mere trivial semantics.

By the way, I see no discussion of my distinction between intuitive nondual awareness and discriminating conceptual consciousness. So you are simply repeating your own point of view without engaging in dialogue.

>The multi-observer criterion is a hallmark of realism.

Sure, if by 'realism' you mean the apparent existence of other consciousnesses than my own. However, 'realism' is normally reserved in philosophy for the view that matter exists distinct from consciousness, so you are blurring terminology in a way that is ill-advised and prone to confusion.

>It seems to me that the stream-of-consciousness model,  
>if not sublatale, is not a fruitful avenue for  
>investigation into This.

It may seem that way to you, but not to me. Mere statement of opinion isn't going to settle anything.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 12:50:25 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <[goode@DPW.COM](mailto:goode@DPW.COM)>  
Subject: Re: Consciousness and Realism

Hey Benjamin,

You're getting more concise all the time, now talking to three people in less space than you used to answer one!

Then Gregji said:

>By the way, I see no discussion of my distinction between intuitive  
>nondual awareness and discriminating conceptual consciousness. So  
>you are simply repeating your own point of view without engaging in  
>dialogue.

===intuitive nondual awareness and "discriminating conceptual consciousness."

===I'll be glad to talk to you about them. Say something about 'em. I can't see a basis for distinction, if you're speaking from the PFT model. If you explain all phenomena as PFT, then the phenomena themselves are inert arisings, and the elements of PFT cannot act upon each other. There can be no logical or causal relations among them, such as inferences. This is a point of view that I actually like a lot, in which the relations among the arisings are nothing more than arisings. If this is so, then a particular arising in consciousness loses its status as a premise, conclusion, insight, or intuition.

>>The multi-observer criterion is a hallmark of realism.

>

>Sure, if by 'realism' you mean the apparent existence of other  
>consciousnesses than my own.



===Yes, that's good enough. You know, nothing in consciousness is bona fide evidence that consciousness is "yours." Ownership of consciousness (i.e., Ben's consciousness) is not proved by any PFT. So maybe you infer ownership. Yet, inferences are inert and are just arisings accompanied by an arising that seems to say "this came from that." But no arising comes from another arising. So inference is as real as a Ford Mustang.

>However, 'realism' is normally reserved  
>in philosophy for the view that matter exists distinct from  
>consciousness, so you are blurring terminology in a way that is  
>ill-advised and prone to confusion.

===Definitions, yes, can mention consciousness or observers. And yet they can also include stuff other than material objects. Here's one from a printed dictionary of philosophy:

"Epistemological Realism seems the most relevant:

1. The theory that universals (essences, abstract concepts, general terms, relations) exist in reality independently of our consciousness—or of any consciousness. Universals exist in the external world even when not perceived. Opposite to NOMINALISM. For most realists, these externally objectively existing universals have more reality than the concrete, particular objects in which they are seen, or from which they are abstracted. 2. The theory that that which is known about a thing exists (in essential respects the same way) in the thing known and would exist without the knower."  
<http://tinyurl.com/2tkj4>

===Universals include "red." So, if you grant or suspect the existence of anything outside of your stream, then you are a realist in a weaker sense, even though you know that all streams and contents exist within Brahman.

>>It seems to me that the stream-of-consciousness model,  
>>if not sublatale, is not a fruitful avenue for  
>>investigation into This.

>

>It may seem that way to you, but not to me. Mere statement of  
>opinion isn't going to settle anything.

I agree with that. I bet that when the stream-idea loses its appeal, so will the notion of a personalized consciousness. And the main experiential puzzlement will come to a conclusion! "To whom does the puzzle occur?"

Hari Om!

--Greg

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 17:54:44 -0000

From: "Chittaranjan Naik" <[chittaranjan\\_naik@yahoo.com](mailto:chittaranjan_naik@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Consciousness and Realism

Namaste Benjaminji,

>> In the logic of Nyaya and Mimamsa, shapes and colours are  
>> objects.

>

> I don't know or care what Nyaya and Mimamsa have to say. I am  
> concerned with the pure nondual vision of Advaita.

Nyaya is the foundational structure for the judgments of logic.  
Mimamsa is the philosophy and hermeneutics of Vedanta. The crowning  
glory of Mimamsa is Advaita.

For one who's attained the nondual vision of Advaita, Nyaya and  
Mimamsa are not required. :-)

Warm regards,  
Chittaranjan

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 14:17:28 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Consciousness and Realism

Namaste Gregji,

>I'll be glad to talk to you about them [intuitive nondual  
>awareness vs. discriminating conceptual consciousness].  
>Say something about 'em. I can't see a basis for distinction,  
>if you're speaking from the PFT model.

I did say something about them, at great length, either yesterday or  
the day before. I'm not going to repeat the whole thing.

Briefly, duality or 'discriminating conceptual consciousness' is when  
one has the illusory sense of a distinction between seer and seen,  
whether this 'seen' be the gross object of matter or the subtle one  
of a perception that appears as distinct from the seer.

On the other hand, 'intuitive nondual awareness' is the flash of  
insight whereby one is aware of one's consciousness as a whole, and  
one immediately realizes that 'seer' and 'seen' are mere words

labelling the same consciousness. Hume had an experience something like this when he realized that the 'self' was not distinct from the contents of his consciousness, but he did not develop it into spiritual realization.

All of this takes place within ONE seeker's consciousness and has nothing to do with the question of other consciousnesses, whether they be seekers or not. Also, you never answered my point that to deny the existence of different consciousnesses makes a mockery of sadhana, for then we would all be as enlightened as Ramana.

>If you explain all phenomena as PFT, then the phenomena  
>themselves are inert arisings, and the elements of PFT  
>cannot act upon each other.

I reject this view of the PFT model. In no way are the PFT 'inert'. What do you mean by 'inert'? If you say that the PFT are inert in the sense of 'immobile' like a lump of clay, then that is clearly invalid. It is absurd to compare PFT to clay in any way whatsoever. And if you mean that they are inert in the sense of 'insentient', then that is equally invalid. The PFT are in consciousness; they are aspects of consciousness; they are items of sentience; in no way are they inert or insentient. How could a perception not be sentient? Since when is a red patch or a burning flame not sentient? They exist nowhere but in my awareness, therefore they have all the sentience of my awareness, and are in no way different from my awareness. Sentience and awareness mean the same thing. I know no other meaning of 'inert'.

The only meaningful issue regarding their 'objectivity' is when they seem to be the 'seen' as opposed to the 'seer'. As I explained before, this is an apparent bifurcation within consciousness, which therefore has nothing to do with insentience. Needless to say, consciousness cannot really be so bifurcated; it is only an illusion. Also, there is no question of the PFT 'acting on each other'. They are not discrete entities which could do this. They are merely aspect of consciousness, which is without parts, since seer and seen are identical. It is all an illusion, like the dream.

>You know, nothing in consciousness is bona  
>fide evidence that consciousness is "yours".

I have also already explained what is misleading about such a statement. I am not claiming that there is a 'Ben' over and above the stream of consciousness which could 'own' it. 'Ben' is simply a label to designate this stream and not another. A mere label does

not 'own' anything. Nothing is 'owning' anything.

Regarding 'realism', you cannot use Berkeleian arguments to deny other consciousnesses. Those arguments apply only to the appearance of matter within a given consciousness. This has nothing to do with the existence of other consciousnesses.

So to deny other consciousnesses, you must come up with totally novel arguments, which you have not. You first tried to argue that another consciousness is an 'object' in a sense similar to matter, which is absurd. Then you tried to claim that my intuitive nondual awareness, in which the apparent distinction between seer and seen (within my own consciousness) evaporates, still retains some kind of super-subtle objectivity, without making yourself at all clear.

Let me clarify what 'object' means. It means that from the point of view of a \*given\* seer, something in awareness is taken to be (believed to be) other than that seer. It is when there appears to be a distinction between seer and seen, from the point of view of some particular seer, and regarding only what is seen by that seer. This has nothing to do with other streams of consciousness, which are in no way present to that particular seer, either as illusions or in any other way. The concept of 'object' is illegitimate when applied to something that is utterly not within one's field of view. There is then no issue of something in awareness being taken as other than awareness, of the seen being taken as other than the seer. Such is the case with other streams of consciousness.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 15:05:18 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>  
Subject: Re: advaitin Re: Consciousness and Realism

Hello Benjaminni,

B:

Briefly, duality or 'discriminating conceptual consciousness' is when one has the illusory sense of a distinction between seer and seen, whether this 'seen' be the gross object of matter or the subtle one of a perception that appears as distinct from the seer.

On the other hand, 'intuitive nondual awareness' is the flash of insight whereby one is aware of one's consciousness as a whole, and one immediately realizes that 'seer' and 'seen' are mere words labelling the same consciousness. Hume had an experience something like this when he realized that the 'self' was not distinct from the contents of his consciousness, but he did not develop it into spiritual realization.

===OK, I see what you mean. I hope you can make good use of these two concepts, and get lots of instances of "intuitive nondual awareness."

>If you explain all phenomena as PFT, then the phenomena  
>themselves are inert arisings, and the elements of PFT  
>cannot act upon each other.

B:

I reject this view of the PFT model. In no way are the PFT 'inert'.  
What do you mean by 'inert'?

===By inert I mean that the PFT phenomena cannot truly act on each other. That they are seen and not seers. Do you ever see a thought see another thought? Do you see a thought cause another thought?

>You know, nothing in consciousness is bona  
>fide evidence that consciousness is "yours".

===I have also already explained what is misleading about such a statement. I am not claiming that there is a 'Ben' over and above the stream of consciousness which could 'own' it. 'Ben' is simply a label to designate this stream and not another. A mere label does not 'own' anything. Nothing is 'owning' anything.

===Aha! What do you mean by "this"? That is an indexical word, and depends upon some kind of contextual cue. This is also opposed to "that." But apart from the contents of PFT, where is the "that"?

B:

Regarding 'realism', you cannot use Berkeleian arguments to deny other consciousnesses.

===I would *\*never\** do such a thing! I would use something much better - Atmanandan agruments!

B:

So to deny other consciousnesses, you must come up with totally novel arguments, which you have not.

===I respect this call for novel arguments. Sorry I can't give you an argument that deflates the appeal of the notion of other consciousnesses! I've tried many things, some more than once :-)) and by now, they certainly aren't novel! I very much respect that multiple s-o-c's seem to be the case to you, and I respect your honesty in keeping with your experience and in not running ahead.

B:

You first tried to argue that another consciousness is an 'object' in a sense similar to matter, which is absurd.

===Not \*similar\* to matter. But \*entailing\* matter. I suspect but am not sure, that whatever it is that you use to distinguish one s-o-c from another might rely on some spatiotemporal criterion. How else would you distinguish more than one s-o-c?

===Here's an interesting point, interesting to me: let's say Ben \*does\* become aware of the contents another s-o-c. How would you know it? How do you know it's not already happening now? If Ben becomes aware of another set of contents, then by definition it \*is\* in Ben's s-o-c, or else Ben could not see it.

B:

Then you tried to claim that my intuitive nondual awareness, in which the apparent distinction between seer and seen (within my own consciousness) evaporates.

===Let me ask you: does this intuitive nondual awareness happen more than once? What about between times?

B:

still retains some kind of super-subtle objectivity, without making yourself at all clear.

===I'm not talking about how you speak of the intuitive nondual awareness episodes. I like that. What I'm talking about is how you speak of the s-o-c's as though s-o-c's were some kind of state of affairs. If there's more than one of them, then it's duality. And sometimes you speak of PFTs as though there's a container and contained relationship.

B:

There is then no issue of something in awareness being taken as other than awareness, of the seen being taken as other than the seer. Such is the case with other streams of consciousness.

===Then may you intuit fewer and fewer of them!!

Hari Om!

--Greg

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 19:38:50 -0500

From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Consciousness and Realism

Hi Greg,

I think it is worth pursuing this philosophical exercise a bit more,

since it really does force us to think about what we mean by 'object'. This is central to Advaita and should have some spiritual benefit to the apprentice jnana...

However, in all of your last message, the only part I consider really germane to the SOC (stream of consciousness) issue is this:

>>You first tried to argue that another consciousness is  
>>an 'object' in a sense similar to matter, which is absurd.

>Not \*similar\* to matter. But \*entailing\* matter. I  
>suspect but am not sure, that whatever it is that you  
>use to distinguish one s-o-c from another might rely  
>on some spatiotemporal criterion. How else would you  
>distinguish more than one s-o-c?

I have said many times that I agree that space and time are within consciousness. They are inherent in the perceptions themselves. They describe a 'global' aspect of how the perceptions manifest. Space and time are within consciousness; consciousness is not within space and time. By the way, this means that each of us carries our own copy of space and time. There is no one space and time, only the many copies in consciousness.

Therefore, the different SOC's cannot be distinguished by spatial separation, since they are not themselves in any kind of 'enveloping superspace'. I have said this many times, both when I started the discussion about a year ago and in more recent months. (Not that I am annoyed that anyone forgot, but I want you to realize that I am consistent in my views, unless I have a really good reason to change.)

What distinguished the SOC's is that the SEER is different in each one. This explains why I do not see the contents of your consciousness nor you mine.

And this is not inconsistent with what I have also said many times: that 'seer' and 'seen' are a false distinction within any given SOC. In other words, given the illusion of seer and seen within any set of SOC's, the SOC's can be distinguished by the fact that one seer is associated with one set of seen contents and another seer with another set. However, within any of these SOC's, the distinction between seer and see is an illusion, as within a dream. In other words, there are simply different dreamers.

To say that the seer-seen distinction is false does not mean that the seer and seen do not exist, but that they are not \*distinct\* within any SOC. Seer and seen are simply different words for the same consciousness.

But different seer-seen unities, otherwise called SOCs, do exist and are distinct, though not in any sense of spatial separation. That would entail a 'super-seer' looking at the SOCs as objects. That is evidently how you are thinking, or how you think that I think, but it does not correspond to how I actually think.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

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Message: 2

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 20:13:20 -0500  
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>  
Subject: Re: Re: Consciousness and Realism

At 07:38 PM 3/15/2004 -0500, Benjamin wrote:  
>I think it is worth pursuing this philosophical exercise a bit more,  
>since it really does force us to think about what we mean by  
>'object'. This is central to Advaita and should have some spiritual  
>benefit to the apprentice jnana...

I'll continue it off-list if you wish. Because like you said, very little new has been said on it here....

Hari Om!

--Greg

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 2004 14:37:41 -0500  
From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>  
Subject: Re: Consciousness and Realism

Namaste Greg,

>I'll continue it off-list if you wish. Because like you said,  
>very little new has been said on it here....

Thanks Greg. I think that's enough for now ... at least for me. I don't regret these exercises, because they sharpen wits and language skills and provide a philosophical workout. And I always learn something new about how others think.

I'm actually trying to take a more 'Olympian' or 'Himalayan' view of



things now. Rather than fighting and sweating it out in the mud and feeling that I must win, I wish to look down upon all these discussions as the mere play of the mind, like little currents and whirlpools of water playing on the surface of a lake. Hypnotizing but ultimately of little consequence.

Mostly I was hoping to be entertained by some mind-boggling revelation showing how other SOCs could not possible exist. That would have been fun! Though the resulting solipsism might have been kind of lonely. Maybe some day...

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 2004 20:06:39 -0000

**From: ombhurbhuva <ombhurbhuva@eircom.net>**

Subject: Vishistadvaita Ontology

Hello All,

A short speculative note on the thinking behind the preamble to the B.S.B. Superimposition has not come into the picture yet as a transcendental postulate.

\*\*\*\*\*

How do constraints ensure a creative solution? In poetry we artificially adopt a set of rules called prosody which give structure and by blocking the normal avenues of cliché or the first thing or the most direct thing that comes into your head, novelty is ensured.

Western philosophy has taken methodic doubt to heart and we have come to imagine that unless we lay waste to all previous systems and assumptions our chances of avoiding their taint is minimal.

Sankara does not do this. He takes it that there are subjects and objects.

This is a non-negotiable assumption. How could it be otherwise when the Vedas which are of non-human origin exist as an object. The wisdom mediated by the sages must be included in or act as the objective guarantee of truth.

When the oddness of how the object comes to be 'in' the subject strikes him (Sankara) he does not divert into the idealist stream. This apparent paradox must be resolved without, as it were, drawing everything into the subject.

The question may be put in various ways:

A: How is the object which is other than the subject (constraint) known when its otherness is not simply collapsed into the subject in the idealist way?

B: If all knowledge is really self-knowledge then how operating under that constraint can we still know the object as it really is, objectively, as it is said?

Put at its broadest - there is an object and it is known and is not reducible to my knowledge of it! The puzzle of how an object is 'in' the subject is a core issue which we first have to feel before we can even think about it. This should be the subject of another note.

Best Wishes, Michael.

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 2004 15:28:40 -0500

From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>

Subject: Re: advaitin Re: Consciousness and Realism

Hey Benjamin,

B:

Thanks Greg. I think that's enough for now ... at least for me. I don't regret these exercises, because they sharpen wits and language skills and provide a philosophical workout.

===This is true; this kind of talking and thinking is a skill, like learning Sanskrit or playing tennis. And I can see you are getting better at it! We can tune you up for the WAVES conference! I'll be your philosophy coach, stand in your corner holding a towel like Burgess Meredith to your Rocky. Woo, woo, woo, you can do it!

B:

Mostly I was hoping to be entertained by some mind-boggling revelation showing how other SOCs could not possible exist.

===Where there's one of them, there'll be two!

Here's wishing you well with your Himalayan view!

--Greg

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 2004 17:07:47 -0500

From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>

Subject: A Good Question

Namaste Michaelji

>The question may be put in various ways:

>

>A: How is the object which is other than the subject

>(constraint) known when its otherness is not simply

>collapsed into the subject in the idealist way?

>

>B: If all knowledge is really self-knowledge then how

>operating under that constraint can we still know the

>object as it really is, objectively, as it is said?

What!!! No answer? Not even a hint?

At least you recognize the question better than I thought you did.

I think it would be quite refreshing and fruitful if you took a stab at it. But please try to avoid sounding oracular, as you sometimes do. I don't know what to make of that...

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 2004 09:27:19 -0000  
From: "Dennis Waite" <[dwaite@advaita.org.uk](mailto:dwaite@advaita.org.uk)>  
Subject: RE: consciousness, objects and SOCs

Since I made my offer to summarise the brief exchange between Benjamin and Greg for the 'key issues' at my website, this discussion (which began as 'Vishishtadvaita Ontology') seems to have got out of hand, with many others chipping in and the subject heading metamorphosing. My extraction of the relevant bits now runs to 58 pages in MS Word! I now have serious doubts about fulfilling my offer.

Benjamin's post of Monday (ok, I am a bit behind as usual!) said:

"As I have said several times in the past few days, there is the gross objectivity of (the belief in) inert and insentient matter supposedly 'outside' of consciousness, and then there is the subtle objectivity where even the perceptions in consciousness seem distinct from the seer. Both are dualistic illusions."

And:

"When seer and seen disappear, consciousness and its contents remain. What disappears is the apparent distinction between seer and seen. These collapse into a nondual consciousness."

I don't think most Advaitins would have too much of a problem with any of that, though I am not too keen on the phrase 'consciousness and its contents' - it sounds too much like a bucket of things. Pedantically speaking, there is only consciousness.

But, to drag the conversation back to its original problem point, Benjamin, you say specifically, "What disappears is the apparent distinction between seer and seen". Once you believe that, I still do not understand how a supposed separate 'SOC' can be treated in any way differently. It is something that is perceived/conceived initially as something separate. Whether or not it has its own stuff going on inside it must be irrelevant - from the point of view of you, the perceiver of 'it', any such ideas are pure conjecture on your part, i.e. concepts, subtle objects in your mind. You have already further conceded that "there is the subtle objectivity where even the perceptions in consciousness seem distinct from the seer. Both are dualistic illusions".

Given that you are already saying these things yourself, why should the idea of separate SOCs still pose a problem?

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 2004 14:43:46 -0500

From: Benjamin <[orion777ben@yahoo.com](mailto:orion777ben@yahoo.com)>

Subject: Re: Consciousness, Objects and SOC's

Hi Dennis,

I read what you said about the SOC (Stream of Consciousness) discussion getting out of hand. You are probably right. You may post any part or no part of what I said on your site, as you see fit. I don't consider that you made any kind of promise to me.

I had hoped that thread would cease with my last message to Greg requesting such a termination. You probably didn't get a chance to read that far yet, so you didn't know.

Anyhow, you just said:

>But, to drag the conversation back to its original  
>problem point, Benjamin, you say specifically, "What  
>disappears is the apparent distinction between seer  
>and seen". Once you believe that, I still do not  
>understand how a supposed separate 'SOC' can be treated  
>in any way differently.

That whole discussion got way too tedious, as usual. Really, I was only pursuing it to try to understand what Greg was saying and to see if he really has a clear idea in his mind. It still seems to me that he does not. Now I must defend my own consistency instead! Such is the nature of philosophical discourse.

The issue is very simple to me. I agree that there is no difference between seer and seen, as far as my own PFT (Perceptions, Feelings and Thoughts) are concerned. Those are the PFT of which I am aware, the ones present right now as I type these words. Language forces me to say 'I am aware of them', as though there were a distinction between the I who is aware and the PFT of which I am aware. I agree that that distinction is false.

However, I also believe that simultaneously there are other PFT manifesting to other seers, such as you and Greg. These others seers are not located in the illusory space which is within my own PFT. Therefore, they are in no way objects to me, not even illusory objects. I don't know 'where' you are located or if it even makes sense to speak of anybody's awareness as having a 'location'. I suspect not.

But what I am sure of is that those other PFT are not within my awareness. Therefore they manifest to a different seer in some sense. And the apparent distinction between seer and seen is as illusory for him as mine is for me. This leads me to use the expression 'stream of consciousness' for this isolated but nondual awareness, for lack of a better expression.

Furthermore, I don't accept that either your consciousness or PFT (or Greg's) are objects \*to me\* in this sense. This seems to be the argument that you and Greg are trying to use. You are both hoping that by treating other SOC's as apparent objects similar to my own PFT, you can use a similar argument to negate any distinction between your consciousness and mine. This would help explain how we can all be the same Consciousness or Brahman.

Unfortunately, I do not accept any such argument. Your PFT are illusory objects TO YOU, and Greg's TO HIM. They are 'illusory objects' because there seems to be a distinction between seer and seen, as far as you and your PFT are concerned. I agree that that is an illusion, so in THAT sense ONLY objects do not exist. To be quite precise, YOUR apparent objects are not truly distinct from the seer called Dennis.

But this has NOTHING to do with either your consciousness or your objects being objects to me in a similar illusory sense. This is a misuse of the word 'object', as I see it. So the arguments used to reduce your objects to your consciousness CANNOT also be used to reduce the SOC called Dennis to MY consciousness in any way whatsoever.

The reason that you and Greg are confused, as I see it, is that you don't recognize a crucial difference between my PFT and other SOC's. My PFT are within (or rather identical to) my awareness but other SOC's are not. I have the option of seeing my PFT as objects (i.e as other than my consciousness) or as identical to my consciousness. The common dualistic illusion may make me think that they are distinct from my consciousness, even though I see them. Intuitive reflection shows me that they cannot be distinct, precisely because I see them. The apparent distinction is only an illusion. However, for this illusion to arise, I must FIRST be AWARE of them. I am in no way aware of your SOC nor Greg's, so the issue is utterly different as far as SOC's are concerned.

Sorry for my usual wordiness, but I am struggling to be clear.

All this is something that seems self-evident to me at some elementary level. Yet it seems irreconcilable with the unity of Brahman or Consciousness. Hence my perplexity. I won't pursue this further; I just wanted to be polite to you and make sure you

understood me.

Hari Om!  
Benjamin

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 2004 22:21:46 -0000

**From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@advaita.org.uk>**

Subject: Re: Consciousness, Objects and SOCs

Hi Benjamin,

My apologies - I did not see your post wishing to end this discussion until I had sent my last response. Thanks for replying anyway - though you did go on to repeat your position after I had already said that I understood what you were saying!

I will now also make my final post on the subject. (If I am to make a webpage out of all this, I need to tidy it up somehow with a conclusion!)

You do not know that I exist. (In fact I do not!) All that happens is that, periodically, you perceive images of letters on the screen of your VDU. These appear to make sense (perhaps) in your mind as concepts. The idea that these concepts originate from another SOC fit in with your view of the world. But everything that you know about 'me' is nothing more than impressions in your mind, which you have already decided are in fact non-separate from your own consciousness. You attribute a separate SOC to your imagined other person (Dennis) since you did not write these words yourself and probably do not agree with them. But your only contact with Dennis is through these arisings in your own consciousness. These arisings are essentially no different from the arisings due to a chair or a sensation of pain. How could they be since any knowledge of anything 'outside' can only come through your senses or through your thoughts or feelings?

You have already denied the existence of separate objects, admitting that they are only perceptions in your mind and that these are actually only 'your' consciousness. If you met 'me' in person, I would only be such an object, except that, unlike a chair, I might make (hopefully intelligible) sounds as well. The sight of me and the hearing of my words would only also be perceptions in your mind, no different in essence from the chair perception.

I don't believe that either Greg or myself ever suggested that 'our PFTs could be objects to you'. What is being suggested is that we \*as SOCs\* can only ever be objects to you. It is only your inference that there is something going on inside 'us' that is similar to what you perceive as PFTs going on inside yourself.

It is not something that can be argued through simply to an inescapable logical conclusion (obviously, otherwise you would be convinced by now!). It is more of an intuitive understanding that, in the final analysis, all of this 'appearance of PFTs' is happening within consciousness but that this consciousness is non-dual and, ultimately, the PFTs themselves are not other than the consciousness itself. In the end, there is only consciousness. At least that's as far as the mind can take it!

Best wishes,

Dennis

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 2004 18:11:48 -0500

**From: Benjamin <orion777ben@yahoo.com>**

Subject: OK Dennis!

Hi Dennis,

The name of this thread is to honor my commitment not to continue with the old one. And presumably we won't be able to make a new thread on the topic 'OK Dennis!' :-)

>Thanks for replying anyway - though you did go  
>on to repeat your position after I had already  
>said that I understood what you were saying!

All I wish to say is that the only thing I want from these discussions is mutual understanding. I don't want to win any arguments or convert anybody. Advaitins are above such nonsense. (Dualists may be another story! Oooops ... Am I being provocative?)

When I reread my messages, they sometimes seem a bit argumentative (in addition to being tedious). This is not my intention. All I wish is to clearly understand what others are saying. So when it seemed I was pressing you or Greg, it was only a bit of frustration over what seemed to me like a lack of clarity. Of course, that was only my opinion.

Well, one last word. Notwithstanding what you just said, I am quite convinced that you do exist in SOME sense. The real question, as I see it, is in WHAT sense. Again, just my opinion...

And I do agree that the only 'Dennis' in my actual awareness is a mere image. Still, I'm glad the real Dennis-consciousness exists in some sense.

Warm regards to the real Dennis-consciousness  
Benjamin