

Article

What Is Consciousness a/k/a Who Am I?

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Abstract

The only true thing that anyone can say about consciousness is that it exists. The only true thing that anyone can know about oneself is that one exists. This is the essential nature of solipsism, which is most succinctly stated as I Am. The direct corollary of these statements is that the true nature of what one is, is consciousness. There can only be one consciousness, but there can be many different points of view within one consciousness. Each point of view is like an individual expression of the one consciousness that is perceiving its own mind on its own mental screen, which scientifically can be understood in the sense of the holographic principle as an observer perceiving its own world on its own holographic screen. A holographic screen is understood as a bounding surface of space that encodes bits of information for everything observed within that bounded space, but inherently limits those observations to things that can be observed within that bounded region of space. This tells us the observation of anything is a limitation of the one consciousness that arises from a limiting holographic screen. In-and-of-itself, without a limiting holographic screen, the one consciousness is unlimited, but this also tells us that in-and-of-itself, the one consciousness is observing nothing. This nothingness is the true nature of what one is.

Keywords: Consciousness, existence, nothingness, holographic principle.

Introduction

In the sense of solipsism, the only true thing anyone can say about consciousness is that it exists. It is the true nature of what I Am and what everything is. Any attempt to describe it or explain it is not true. Nothing else can be stated about the true nature of its existence except that it exists. Things that apparently exist as perceived by consciousness only can exist in the sense of what appears in a dream as the dreamer dreams and perceives the dream. In this sense, the dream is always a limitation of consciousness, like the limitation of a screen that projects images to an observer, while the true nature of the dreamer is unlimited. Everything the dreamer can perceive as an observer of things is a limitation of consciousness that arises from a limiting screen. In its ultimate unlimited state, consciousness perceives nothing except for the true nature of what it is. The ultimate state of its existence can only be described as void or nothingness, but this is only a statement of negation that tells us what consciousness isn't and tells us nothing about what it is. All we can say about it is that it isn't something that it perceives.

In its ultimate unlimited state of nothingness, there can only be one consciousness, which is undivided and undifferentiated. In its ultimate unlimited state, consciousness is unchanging and timeless since nothing never changes. Nothing is always the same nothingness. There can only

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be one unlimited consciousness, but there can be many different points of view within that one consciousness, each of which perceives its own mind on its own limiting mental screen. In the language of modern physics, each observer perceives its own world on its own holographic screen. The observer's holographic screen arises as a bounding surface of space or event horizon in the observer's accelerated frame of reference as energy is expended. The holographic screen encodes bits of information for everything the observer can observe in its world, but also limits the observer's observations to those things that appear within that bounded region of space.

The observer is only a point of view of the one consciousness that arises in relation to the screen. It really doesn't matter whether we understand the screen as a mental screen or a holographic screen, but the holographic principle as understood in the context of relativity theory gives us a perfectly good scientific explanation for the nature of the screen as a bounding surface of space that encodes bits of information. The bounding surface always arises in the observer's accelerated frame of reference as an observation-limiting but observer-dependent event horizon. Everything the observer can observe within that bounded space, even the dynamical space-time geometry of that bounded space, is a holographic projection from the screen to the observer's point of view. This is just like the projection of holographic images from the surface of a hologram to the point of view of an observer outside the hologram. The images always arise as configuration states of information encoded on the screen. Even the laws of physics that apparently govern what appears to happen in the observer's world arise with the holographic screen. Everything spontaneously emerges in the flow of energy, but all of it must arise from the one consciousness.

The Mind's Eye, Movie-in-the-Mind, Unlimited Brahmanic Consciousness & Limited Atmanic Consciousness

Consciousness has nothing to do with biology or complexity, but thinking does. Consciousness is not a thinker, but the mind is. The mind is a mental screen, which is a bounding surface of space that encodes bits of information. The mind is fundamentally a holographic screen that encodes bits of information and upon which information spontaneously becomes organized into complex forms as energy flows through the mind. It is these forms of information that are projected like images from the screen to the point of view of the observer outside the screen. The mind is the thinker that projects thoughts. Consciousness is only the observer and knower of those projected thoughts. The observer is the mind's eye that observes and knows about those complex forms of information, like an observer out in an audience that observes the images of a movie projected from a screen to its point of view in the audience. The thoughts the observer perceives are only like the self-referential narration of the movie by the central character of the movie.

The narration of the movie is always given by the central character and is always self-referential. The consciousness of the observer mistakenly or emotionally identifies itself with the central character of the movie due to the emotionally energized self-referential thoughts it perceives that make that presence of consciousness feel emotionally self-limited to the self-replicating form of

its character as it perceives the flow of animating emotional energy through that self-replicating form. Due to its self-identification, consciousness feels compelled to defend that self-replicating form as though its existence depends on it. In reality, the existence of consciousness depends on nothing it perceives in the movie of the world it is watching. The apparent existence of the form of its character, like the apparent existence of everything else it perceives in the movie, depends on the independent existence of consciousness. In reality, the movie can only become created if consciousness focuses its attention on the movie, which is how it invests its animating emotional energy in the movie. Self-identification is like a hypnotic spell consciousness casts upon itself as it identifies itself with its character, and from which it must awaken to know its true nature.

One can only awaken from the hypnotic spell of self-identification if one sees the lie of one's self-identification with one's character as a lie, which is a false belief one believes about oneself. One must stop believing the lie, lose interest in it, withdraw the focus of one's attention away from it, stop emotionally animating it with one's investment of emotional energy in it, and allow the lie to die away. Ego-death, which is the death of the lie of one's false self-identification with one's character in the movie of the world one is watching, is the only way one can shift the focus of one's attention onto one's own sense of being present as a presence of consciousness.

The fundamental question about the creation of the world is how the primordial, unlimited and undivided nature of Brahmanic consciousness, which is a void of nothingness that has zero energy, can become transformed into the energy that animates the world. In the framework of modern physics and cosmology, the key that unlocks this puzzle is dark energy, which is the accelerated expansion of space that always expands relative to the central point of view of an observer. If we understand the void as an empty space of potentiality, then it has the potential to undergo energetic expansion. Dark energy is the energy that puts the *bang* in the big bang event. The void then has the potential to give rise to the big bang event, and the observer is the presence of Atmanic or *I Am* consciousness at the singularity of the big bang. This explosive energy of the expansion of space shatters the undivided unity of the nothingness of empty space as it creates the observer's world and divides the observer's consciousness from Brahmanic consciousness. In the process, unlimited consciousness becomes limited by a limiting bounding surface of space.

The energetic expansion of space that arises with the expression of dark energy gives rise to a cosmic horizon, which is a bounding surface of space that surrounds the observer and limits the observer's observations of things in space. The observer's cosmic horizon acts as a holographic screen that encodes all the bits of information for everything that can appear in the bounded space of the observer's world, which is everything the observer can observe in its world. The appearance of the observer's world arises as a holographic projection from its holographic screen to its central point of view. This scientific explanation has the potential to explain everything that is scientifically known about the nature of the observable world.

If we understand Atmanic consciousness as our own consciousness, all the apparent mysteries of the world simply vanish. Everything is understood as an illusion of unlimited consciousness that arises from the limitation of consciousness. The holographic principle explains the nature of the illusion as the energetic construction of a limiting holographic screen. The only true mystery is the unlimited nature of Brahmanic consciousness. It is then possible to say in a scientific way as Shankara stated long ago: Only Brahmanic consciousness is truly real, the world is an illusory appearance of Brahmanic consciousness, and ultimately there is no difference between the unlimited nature of Brahmanic consciousness and limited Atmanic consciousness.

The Fundamental Mistaken Assumption of Science

The fundamental mistake that everyone makes who is looking for a scientific explanation for the nature of consciousness is to assume the world has some kind of independent existence and the phenomena of consciousness is dependent on the world for coming into some kind of transient existence. This assumption is flat out wrong. Only consciousness has independent existence. The transitory or temporal existence of the world is dependent on consciousness for coming into an apparent existence. This is the essential lesson of quantum theory, which the holographic principle reconfirms. The world only exists in a quantum state of potentiality until observed. Only at the moment of observation, which is always now, can the world come into an actual or apparent state of existence. Not only does the form of the world only come into an actual state of existence when observed, but the flow of energy through the world also only comes into an actual state of existence when observed. The observer must be present now to observe it.

The apparent state of existence of the world is observed by an observer, which fundamentally is a presence of consciousness. The observer must be present now to observe its world. Being present now means the observer must focus the attention of its consciousness on its world. Not only does the form of its world come into an apparent existence, but the flow of energy that animates its world also comes into an apparent existence. Both the form of things and the flow of energy through things are inherent in the quantum state of potentiality. The form of things is like a position variable and the flow of energy is like a momentum variable, which are non-commuting variables of the quantum state of any particle. These canonical variables are how the quantum state of potentiality is defined for particles in terms of a sum over all possible paths through the information configuration space. The holographic principle is telling us that this point particle description of the world is fundamentally wrong. The fundamental dynamical degrees of freedom for the world that are quantized in quantum theory are non-commuting variables defined on a bounding surface of space, which is a way of quantizing space-time geometry. The information configuration space only arises in terms of bits of information encoded on a bounding surface of space. These fundamental bits of information are the dynamical degrees of freedom quantized in quantum theory, which in thermodynamics are called entropy.

Quantum State of Potentiality, Horizon Information & the Observer

In terms of the holographic principle, the fundamental variables or degrees of freedom of any world in any bounded region of space that can be observed by an observer are non-commuting position coordinates defined on the bounding surface of that space. The bounding surface arises as an event horizon in the observer's accelerated frame of reference. This is a more fundamental description of the world than a point particle description in which particles are characterized by non-commuting position and momentum variables. The bounding surface arises as an event horizon whenever the observer is in an accelerated frame of reference, as with the expenditure of dark energy that gives rise to the accelerated expansion of space. The non-commuting position coordinates on the bounding surface, which define a quantized space-time geometry, define the quantum state of the observer's world. Each non-commuting position coordinate acts like a pixel on the surface that encodes a bit of information in a binary code.

The bounding surface of space acts as holographic screen that projects images of the observer's world to the observer's central point of view. The projected images are forms of information encoded on the observer's screen. Everything the observer can observe in its world is a form of information encoded on its screen. Everything means everything, which not only includes the form of elementary particles, but also the dynamical nature of the space-time geometry of that bounded region of space. It also includes everything the observer can observe in its mind, like thoughts, memories and other forms of mental imagination. The idea of the movie-in-the-mind tells us the mental screen is really just a holographic screen, which projects all external sensory images of the world and all internal mental images of the mind. The observer is the mind's eye.

The radical nature of understanding the mind as a holographic screen cannot be overstated. The mind cannot arise from a brain inside the body of a person in the world because all of that stuff arises from the mind. Everything that is observed in the world is a holographic projection of the form of those things from a holographic screen to the point of view of an observer outside the screen, like the projection of movie images from a movie screen to the point of view of an observer out in the movie audience. Things do not really exist in three dimensional space. The information configuration states for the form of all things are encoded on the holographic screen in terms of bits of information. Anything that appears to exist in any three dimensional region of space is only a holographic projection from the bounding surface of that space to the point of view of the observer. Things apparently existing as distinct three dimensional objects in three dimensional space are holographic illusions. Those things include the observer's body, brain and everything else that appears to exist in its world. The observer's mind does not arise from its brain. The observer's mind arises as a bounding surface of space, which is an event horizon that arises as energy is expended in the observer's accelerated frame of reference, and its mind acts as a holographic screen that encodes bits of information. The observer itself is nothing more than a pure presence of consciousness at a central point of singularity in empty space.

The Hypnotic Spell of Self-Identification

The apparent existence of the observer's world, which can only come into an actual state of existence as the quantum state of potentiality is reduced to an actual observable state, is always a holographic projection of forms of information from the bounding surface of space that acts as a holographic screen to the observer's point of view. This is just like a screen output from a computer screen to the point of view of an observer outside the screen. The observer observes the forms of things with each screen output, and over a sequence of screen outputs also observes the flow of energy that animates those forms. This is really no different than an observer watching the animated images of a movie projected from a computer screen, except the experience is more like a virtual reality, since the observer always observes things through the organs of sensory perception of its character in the movie and also perceives the animating flow of energy through the form of its character as that form is animated in the movie.

The key point of quantum theory is the observer's world can only come into an apparent state of existence if the observer is present to observe it. That is how the quantum state of potentiality is reduced to an actual observable state. The observer must be present now. Being present now means the observer focuses the attention of its consciousness on its world. The observer's focus of attention on the life of its character in the movie of its world that it is observing is what creates the hypnotic spell of self-identification with its character. The observer feels self-limited to the animated form of its character as it perceives the animating flow of emotional energy through the form of its character, which causes the observer to identify itself with the form of its character. That feeling of self-limitation is also what compels the observer to defend the survival of the self-replicating animated form of its character as though its existence depends on it.

What we normally think of as physical forces, like gravity, arise with unbiased observations. The classical force of gravity arises as the path of least action, but the quantum state of potentiality includes a sum over all possible paths. In the sense of quantum probability, the classical path is most likely, but only arises as long as observations are made in an unbiased way. If bias arises in the way observations are made due to bias in the observer's focus of attention, the quantum state loses its predictability. All bets are off when physical forces become unpredictable. This is like bending the law of gravity, which one would need to do if one wants to walk on water. Gravity apparently becomes nonphysical when an observer bends it with its biased focus of attention.

The hypnotic spell of self-identification is only perpetuated if the observer's focus of attention is emotionally biased to defend the survival of the self-replicating form of its character, which leads to the expression of more biased self-defensive emotions. The quantum state of potentiality includes the possibility of expressing personally biased emotions, and personal bias in the observer's focus of attention leads to their expression. The more that personally biased emotions are expressed, the more self-limited the observer feels to the animated form of its character, and the hypnotic spell of self-identification is perpetuated.

Breaking the Hypnotic Spell of Self-Identification

Breaking the hypnotic spell always requires a refusal to express self-defensive emotions, which requires a shift in the observer's focus of attention away from this state of emotional bias to an unbiased state. In religion, this is called surrender to divine will, which is inherently unbiased. All spiritual experiences are really nothing more than the observer experiencing the true nature of what it is, which is nothing but consciousness itself. The observer must shift the focus of its attention away from the life of its character in its world and onto its own sense of being present as a presence of consciousness to know what it really is.

In the awakening process, ego is in resistance until the very end. The expression of personally biased self-defensive emotions by its character perpetuates the emotional self-identification of a presence of consciousness with its character, which reinforces personal bias in the focus of its attention and leads to the expression of more biased emotions by its character. A presence of consciousness will not give up personal bias in the focus of its attention until its character stops expressing that personal bias. This is the fundamental reason that surrender is required in the awakening process. Before a presence of consciousness can give up personal bias in the focus of its attention, its character must stop expressing the personal bias of self-defensive emotions, which can only happen with its surrender to divine will.

Surrender is a necessary step in the awakening process in which a presence of consciousness no longer feels self-limited and no longer emotionally identifies itself with the form of its character. The awakening process can only go forward with surrender and with a presence of consciousness no longer believing the false beliefs of its personal self-identification with its character. Surrender is the natural state of a presence of consciousness that knows the true nature of what it really is. Since the true nature of its existence depends on nothing it perceives in its world, its existence requires no self-defense. There literally is nothing to defend.

In reality, only the consciousness of the observer has an independent existence. The apparent existence of the observer's world depends on the observer focusing its attention on its world and on the life of its character in its world. If the observer withdraws the focus of its attention away from its world and is no longer present for its world, the quantum state of potentiality for that world remains in an unobserved state of potentiality and is not reduced to an actual observable state. Without the observer's focus of attention on its world, its world is not observed. If the observer withdraws the focus of its attention away from its world, its world disappears from existence from its own point of view. The observer's world only appears to come into existence from its own point of view when it focuses its attention on it and it disappears from existence when the observer withdraws its focus of attention away from it. The appearance and disappearance of the observer's world always occurs from its own point of view, since its world is always defined on a holographic screen that arises as a bounding surface of space as energy is

expended in its accelerated frame of reference. Every observer has its own holographic screen, but to observe its world the observer must be present for its world and focus its attention on it.

The disappearance of the observer's world from its own point of view occurs each night when it withdraws the focus of its attention away from its world and its character appears to fall into a deep sleep from the point of view of other observers. We mistakenly say that we become unconscious in deep sleep, but the truth is we remain conscious in deep sleep because we are consciousness itself. Only one's world disappears from existence in deep sleep when one no longer focuses one's attention on it and is no longer present to observe it. One is still aware in deep sleep, but one is aware of nothing. This is the critically important distinction between what has independent existence and what doesn't.

If we assume the world has independent existence and consciousness is dependent on the world for coming into some kind of transitory existence, then one must lose consciousness or become unconscious in deep sleep when one is aware of nothing. If consciousness has independent existence, then the world must disappear from existence when one is no longer present to observe it and no longer focuses one's attention on it. It is possible to test this important distinction for oneself and confirm which of these possibilities is correct. It is possible to verify for oneself that one still exists when everything in one's world disappears from existence.

The only real difference between deep sleep and awakening from the hypnotic spell of identifying oneself with one's character in one's world is the ability to bring oneself into focus and shift the focus of one's attention onto one's own sense of being present as a presence of consciousness. If one focuses one's attention on one's own sense of existing as a presence of consciousness and remains aware of being present while one also withdraws the focus of one's attention away from one's world and one's world disappears, then one can finally break the hypnotic spell of self-identification and know the true nature of what one really is. This kind of awakening from delusion is called spiritual enlightenment.

On the Nature of Delusion

Delusion is defined as a false belief that one believes about oneself. The delusion at the heart of individual existence is the false belief that one exists as an individual self. This is the false belief that an individual presence of consciousness believes about itself that it exists as an individual self, which only becomes further emotionally amplified and distorted when it believes that it is a personal self in a world that it perceives. That personal self is only like the central character of an emotionally energized movie the presence of consciousness is watching as animated images of the movie are projected from a mental screen to its central point of view. The false belief the presence of consciousness believes about itself that it is a personal self becomes emotionally reinforced as it perceives the animating flow of emotional energy through the self-replicating form of the person that makes it feel like it is self-limited to that emotionally animated form, and

leads it to falsely or emotionally identify itself with the form of the person and feel compelled to defend the survival of that self-replicating form as though its existence depends on it.

The delusion of personal self-identification is only perpetuated because the presence of consciousness focuses its attention on defending the survival of that self-replicating form in an emotionally or personally biased way as though its existence depends on it. In reality, the existence of the presence of consciousness depends on nothing that appears to happen in the world it perceives anymore than the existence of an observer out in an audience depends on what appears to happen in a movie it is watching or in a virtual reality game that it is playing. In reality, the existence or spiritual being of the presence of consciousness depends on nothing that it perceives in its world, which is only a kind of imaginary virtual reality.

The nugget at the core of delusion is the individual sense of being present, which is the sense of being an individual self. This sense of *I Am-ness* is the spiritual being of the Atmanic presence of consciousness that is called the Self. Only this individual self-consciousness can believe the false beliefs of a personal self that its mind tells it about itself with the mental creation of the story of a character-based personal self. These false beliefs are all mental concepts of an individual personal identity, but like everything perceived in a virtual reality or a movie are no more real than emotionally energized images projected from a mental screen to the point of view of a presence of consciousness. These are false beliefs the presence of consciousness believes about itself, which can only have power over the presence of consciousness if they're believed. Only the presence of consciousness with its own individual sense of being present can believe them.

The power these false beliefs have over the presence of consciousness is to make it emotionally identify itself with a false personal self-concept and focus its attention in an emotionally biased way on defending the survival of that personal form as though its existence depends on it. The willingness the presence of consciousness has to believe these false beliefs about itself can only arise from its own sense of being an individual self that is at the core of delusion.

In reality, the individual sense of being present or self-ness is only differentiated from undifferentiated consciousness as the false beliefs the presence of consciousness believes about itself are mentally created. Only the presence of consciousness can create these false beliefs for itself as it focuses its attention on them, which is the same as shining its own light of consciousness on its mental screen, projecting the mental images of the story of a personal self back to itself, and then perceiving and believing these projected images.

This story of a personal self can come to an end at any moment the presence of consciousness withdraws its focus of attention away from the story and withdraws its investment of emotional energy in the story that is needed to project and animate the mental images of the story. Without that animating emotional energy, not only the story but its entire world would disappear from existence and nothing would remain. When everything disappears from existence, including the story of a personal self, the only thing that remains is the undifferentiated nothingness from

which the individual presence of consciousness is differentiated. Even that individual consciousness must ultimately dissolve back into its source of undifferentiated consciousness, as it returns to, reunites itself with and becomes one with the one source of consciousness.

Everything is an Illusion of Unlimited Consciousness & Atman is Brahman

Ultimately, all that exists is undifferentiated consciousness. Undifferentiated existence can only know itself as the unlimited nothingness or emptiness that it really is, which is the concept of No-self. To say *I Am That* is the same as saying *I Am* that unlimited nothingness, which is to say *I Am Not*. *I Am Not*, only the unlimited nothingness of *No-self Is*, and yet that is what *I Am*.

If we understand the limited Atmanic consciousness of an observer observing its observable world, as images of that world are projected from a limiting mental screen to itself, as the Self, then the undifferentiated nothingness of unlimited Brahmanic consciousness that observes nothing is No-self. Everything the observer observes in its observable world is an illusion of unlimited consciousness that arises from the limitation of consciousness. When that illusion of limitation comes to an end, limited Atmanic consciousness must return to, reunite itself with and become one with unlimited Brahmanic consciousness. Ultimately, Atman is Brahman.