



The Quest for Reality

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Abstract

The world is not an objective reality, but a solipsistic fact. To put it quite simply, objects have no point of view. The subject alone has a point of view; hence there is no such thing as an objective world, let alone an objective reality. The world and its myriad of things might as well be a dream. Like a dream it arises in the morning as we wake up, and like a dream after waking, it disappears as we go to sleep. But surely, so we protest, the world must exist to all those who are still awake, which must be testimonial to the fact that the world is real and continues to exist when we go to sleep. Although a tempting inference, logically it is untenable, for this is a double premise. Indeed, one cannot have more than one point of view at one and the same time. What is it then that infuses the sense of reality into the imagery of the world and the dream? It can only be one 'thing': Consciousness. Consciousness is indeed the sine qua non of existence.

Consciousness emanates matter and not the other way round. Thus consciousness is to be seen as Primary Reality, while matter can only be regarded as relative, or indeed, 'parasitical' reality much as are the reflections in the water of a lake. However, the reflective power of consciousness is inherent unlike that of ordinary water, which receives its imagery from its surroundings. Anything that is intermittent cannot be regarded as real. Only something that remains constant and totally unaltered can qualify for reality status. So the prime question here is if consciousness meets these qualifications? In short, is consciousness continuous or intermittent? At first sight it definitely seems to be an intermittent phenomenon for we say of the man, for instance, who suffered a blow to his head and lies there motionless that he is unconscious. Yet when he regains consciousness, we realise that he was only unresponsive to the outside world.

But what about the consciousness of the man or woman we consider to be dead? Does it persist?

Doctor Moody had no doubt that 'life' continued after what we term death, that consciousness was not extinguished and that the individual, although discarnate, retained its identity and lived on in a different realm. His research was naturally heavily criticised. But then, in 1998, a book came on the market that contained a report on an NDE that fulfilled all the requirements of impeccable scientific observation, procedural reporting and indubitable substantiation. It describes Dr. Spetzler's daring operation on Pam Reynolds, which not only backs up Moody's observations but also puts to rest all the arguments about a spirit world where one's relations are encountered after death. It also shows that the senses of our body are not a primary function, but a secondary one, one that in fact is of a lesser quality than primary sensing.

From the evidence of this case we must infer that contrary to common perception, NDEs support the notion that consciousness exists separately from the brain and is non-intermittent and therefore alone qualifying for reality status. Consciousness is in fact the ground of all life which is inherent in consciousness. There can be no doubt that consciousness is not generated by the brain, but that it is the Ocean of Absolute Reality and Life in which we and all creation 'reflect'.

The Quest of Reality

Most of us take the world for real. It seems almost ridiculous to question this, after all we can't walk through walls, and we know that if we won't stay in the correct lane while driving, there is an

acute danger of a head-on collision. We know this from the history of traffic accidents. As a consequence, we generally respect the traffic rules. The laws of physics, in other words. We trust them implicitly.



We can observe them every day and all day long. Their regularity inspires us with confidence, and so our trust in the reality of the world is constantly reinforced. This trust is even more enhanced when we compare our daily waking experience with our nocturnal dreams. They are ethereal and fluid in comparison with the day's encounters. Every night they seem to take place in a different locality, while in waking we are mostly bound to one place and if we do move away from it, we trust that it will still be there in the same state we had left it when we return. And since we regularly find that it is as expected, our trust in the reality of the world is complete.

Not so with our dreams. There we only seldom return to the same place, and when we do, it is more of a feeling that we have been there before rather than a distinct physiological recognition of house and home.

It is for this reason that we consider dreams to be little more than virtual reality. By this we mean that although they feel real while dreaming, they vanish into thin air when we wake up from them. Often, we declare them to be absurd, and many of us consider them to be nothing more substantial than 'random' neuronal sparking off. But if we afford waking greater scrutiny, we find that it too requires neuronal sparking. In other words, dreaming and waking stand on common ground in this respect. Both states require a functioning brain. So, we must ask, is the difference between the two states merely in the order of its sparking? Put another way: is the dream due to 'random' sparking while waking is the result of 'controlled' sparking in the brain?

Although this is a rather crude distinction between the two states, it has some merit. For they both share intermittency of occurrence. It is here that we must pause and ask ourselves if something that is interrupted in its flow so abruptly and completely was worthy of reality status? Indeed, are we not obliged to attribute the same irreality status to waking as we do to dreaming, even though we feel that waking is of more palpable substance than our dreams? We are, for once we recall that dreams feel no less real while dreaming, we discover yet another common trait between the two states. We may struggle to concede yet concede we must. It gets worse for our habitual view of the world. It is not only as unreal as a dream after waking up from it, but it is also as personal as the dream. Indeed, the universe is a private affair. Put most succinctly: the world is not an objective reality, but a solipsistic fact. Again, we struggle to concede, yet concede we must. To put it quite simply: objects have no point of view. The subject alone has a point of view; hence there is no such thing as an objective world.

The world and its myriad of things might as well be a dream. Like a dream it arises in the morning as we wake up, and like a dream after waking, it disappears as we go to sleep. But surely, so we protest, the world must exist to all those who are still awake, which must be testimonial to the fact that the world is real and continues to exist when we go to sleep. Although a tempting inference, logically it is untenable, for this is a double premise. Indeed, one cannot have more than one point of view at one and the same time. Ergo, the world is a private projection in the same way as is the dream. Certainly, in the end the difference between dreaming and waking consists merely of the direction of their respective

projections: While the dream is an inward 'projection', waking is an outward screening. In order to afford this finding a closer look, let us go down to the lake for a moment where all this will explain itself. There we spot the glistening water wherein we discover a spectacular world of reflections. Let us assume that all we can see there is the water with its mirrored images. With that in view, we realise at once that the reflections in the water are representative of the world of waking as well as of the world of dreams. Both worlds are in need of that water, neither of them will come into existence without it.

So what does water stand for? It stands for that without which there is nothing, nothing, no think. In other words, it is the 'substance' that supports the stream of thoughts, which creates both dream and waking experience. Without thought there are no things. But what is it that carries the stream of thoughts? What is it that infuses the sense of reality into the imagery conjured up? It can only be one 'thing' Consciousness is indeed the sine qua non of existence. There are biologists who argue that consciousness arises from biological processes. Since such scholars assume that matter was created first with consciousness arising out of it, they must believe in an objective reality. In view of our previous argument, objectivism is logically untenable. Hence the process can be valid only in reverse: it is consciousness that emanates matter. It can hardly be any other way for without consciousness matter or anything else is non-existent. Thus consciousness is to be seen as Primary Reality, while matter can only be regarded as relative, or indeed, 'parasitical' reality, much as are the reflections in the water of our lake.

Of course, it has to be said that the water of our lake analogy is not the kind of water whose reflections are dependent on the surroundings of the lake. You will recall that I have stated that we were unable to see what it was around. By saying that was heralding the special quality of the water of our lake: unlike ordinary water it is capable of In short, for its play of light and shade, its colours and shapes it has no need of surrounding features such as of land, trees and houses, of people, ducks and geese. Its power of 'reflection' is inherent. I have maintained that it was consciousness that gave us the sense of reality. But I have also said that anything that is intermittent cannot be regarded as real. Only something that remains constant and essentially unaltered can qualify for reality status. So the prime question here is if consciousness meets these qualifications. In short, is consciousness continuous or intermittent?

At first sight it definitely seems to be an intermittent phenomenon for we say of the man, for instance, who suffered a blow to his head and lies there motionless that he is unconscious. Yet when he comes to himself, we realise that he was only unresponsive to the outside world. Now that he is aware of his surroundings again and knows who he was before he was knocked out, we must conclude that his consciousness remained continuous. In fact his condition is little different from the man who has fallen asleep and is able to relate his dreams when he wakes up again. The recall of his dreams is evidence that his consciousness remained intact. Resorting to our lake analogy for a moment, we might say that the

'water of consciousness' remained in its place. Had his 'lake' been drained, he would not have been able to regain self-awareness.

But what about the 'water of consciousness' of the man or woman we consider to be dead? Was their 'water of consciousness' drained? Until doctor Moody's book, "Life after Death", came along in 1975, the received perception of death was fairly uniform: it meant the end of existence, a break in human consciousness. Moody himself had no doubt that 'life' continued after what we term death, that consciousness was not extinguished and that the individual, although discarnate, retained its identity and lived on in a different realm.

His research was naturally heavily criticised. But then, in 1998, a book came on the market that contained a report on an NDE that fulfilled all the requirements of impeccable scientific observation, procedural reporting and indubitable substantiation. In other words the report was underpinned by the fact that there were numerous professionals at the scene of the NDE to witness the case. The book in question is called "Light and Death" by Michael Sabom, M.D. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49530. ISBN 0-310-21992-2).

The numerous professionals present, over twenty in all, consisted of doctors, nurses and medical technicians, all of whom attended Dr. Spetzler's daring operation on a basilar artery aneurism that was inaccessible along the usual pathways of operations. (Opus cit. 35) Understandably under such circumstances the "documentation far exceeds any recorded before and provides us with our most complete scientific glimpse yet into the near-death experience". (Opus cit. 38) Spetzler's highly original approach, requiring the draining and cooling of the patient's blood, known as hypothermic arrest was nicknamed 'stand still' by the attending doctors. And rightly so, for this procedure results in a complete shut down of all signs of life. In brief, during such an operation the body temperature is a mere 60 degrees Fahrenheit (15.55 C) while the lungs draw no breaths, the heartbeat is flat-lined and the EEG registers no brain waves at all.

In other words, as Sabom writes: "In everyday terms she would be dead." She was Pam Reynolds, a woman in her thirties whose life hung on a very thin thread, who was now in a state that would be classed by any medical standards as dead. Dead not just for minutes, but for over an hour. Yet, like Lazarus, she returned to life to everyone's relief and amazement. She returned safely and well to her reheating body. But even more amazingly, the story she had to relate backed up all the essential characteristics Moody had observed in the NDEs of his interviewees. Pam, like so many other

near-death patients travelled into the 'Elysian Fields' along a well-established route reported by Moody and many other authors on NDEs. "It was like a tunnel but it wasn't a tunnel", Pam recounted.

What is of no less interest to us here is the way Pam's crossing of the 'River Styx' began: She felt she was being pulled out of the top of her head and as she got further away from it she could see several things in the operating room when she was looking down. 'It was not like normal vision. It was brighter and more focused and clearer than normal vision.' (Ibid) Pam's report not only backed up Moody's observations but also put to rest all the arguments about a spirit world where one's relations are encountered after death. It also showed that the senses of our body are not a primary function, but a secondary one; one that in fact is of a lesser quality than primary sensing.

From such evidence we must infer that contrary to common perception NDEs support the notion that consciousness exists separately from the brain and is non-intermittent, so alone qualifying for reality status. It is in fact the ground of all life, which is inherent in consciousness.

Sceptics strenuously search for flaws in the report of Pam Reynolds' case. There are no flaws. Despite of this some will maintain that Pam had her transcendental experience of meeting her long deceased grandmother and uncle before her body was clinically dead, before her brainwaves ceased. This was not so. The end of her NDE 'trip' verifies this: "My grandmother didn't take me back through the tunnel...My uncle said he would do it...But then I got to the end of it and saw the thing, the body, I didn't want to get into...It was communicated to me that it was like jumping into a pool of iced water. ("Light and Death"; Michael Sabom M.D. page 40) and so it must have felt on her return to body-consciousness, for her drained blood was reinfused into her body before it reached the normal 37 degrees. It was in fact a mere 32 Celsius when Pam was de-instrumented and returned to waking consciousness. (Opus cit. page 46-7) Clearly, up to that point her body, the 'thing' she saw in her transcendental mode, was still clinically dead.

There can be no doubt that consciousness is not generated by the brain, but that it is the deathless Ocean of Absolute Reality and Life in which we and all creation 'reflect' at times in a world of waking, at times in the world of dreams and other times as etheric light beings in the realm of our ancestors from whence we reincarnate again and again until our karmic round comes to an end in the Void which is the Absolute, the Source of all there was, is and will be.