

## Name and Form

In the paper *The Laws of Nature – an Introduction* from April last year, we took a brief look at the Sanskrit saying: ‘*nama rupa, sat-chit-ananda*’. We saw that it is mind that gives experience its name, *nama*, and perception that gives experience its form, *rupa*. In Western culture we consider everything we perceive with our five senses to be made out of matter. So we can think of ‘name and form’ in the Vedantic tradition as being equivalent to ‘mind and matter’ in Western culture – in both cases, conceptualisations that hide the reality of our experience, *sat-chit-ananda* – Being, Consciousness (Knowing) and Peace. These ideas are explored in detail in the context of the purpose of art in Rupert’s essay [Nature’s Eternity](#).

But this time we’ll revisit the subject from the perspective of our ordinary, everyday experience, without the use of Sanskrit terms. Here is a detailed and thorough investigation from Rupert:

So, has anyone ever experienced the universe as it is conceived? We can bring this investigation much closer by taking any simple object such as the table in our room and ask the same questions about it:

There is a perception of the table. If there are several people in the room, there will be several perceptions of the table. From these perceptions we build a model of a ‘whole table’, ‘the thing in itself’ that is considered to be the sum total of all possible perceptions, that exists independently of its being perceived and cannot by definition ever be perceived in its imagined totality.

Has anyone ever experienced such a table? Have you ever experienced such a table? Could you? Could anyone?

The answer is obviously ‘No’. It is fundamental to see the truth of this simple and startling fact of experience: no one has ever or could ever experience an object, another, a world, a universe as it is normally considered to exist or conceived to be.

The universe as such is imagined. This is not a proof that such a universe does not exist, but it is a proof that there is no evidence that it does.

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So, it does not make sense to ask questions about a universe that we have never experienced. It is like asking questions about a pink elephant.

Having said that, asking questions about what we *seem* to experience is good because if we pursue them thoroughly, they lead us to what *is* experienced.

So let us now come closer to the truth of our experience:

Imagine an everyday occurrence such as walking into your kitchen, making a cup of tea and leaving again.

Our normal view is that we, as an entity located in and as the body, enter the kitchen which was there prior to our entering it, unexperienced so to speak. When we leave the kitchen, we imagine that it remains as it was prior to our entering it, that is, unexperienced.

Let us look more closely: the kitchen neither conceives nor perceives itself to be ‘a kitchen’. Both conceiving and perceiving are faculties of the mind.

Therefore, in the absence of mind, the kitchen cannot exist either as a concept or a percept.

So, when it is neither conceived or perceived, in what form could it exist? To exist it must have a form. However, in the absence of mind, that 'form' cannot be a perception, that is, it cannot be a sight, a sound, a smell, a sensation or a taste.

In other words, conception and perception are faculties or qualities of mind. They are not faculties of the kitchen. It is the mind that conceives of a 'kitchen' and gives 'it' its name and it is the mind that perceives and gives 'it' its form.

Now what is this 'it' independent of the mind? What are its qualities?

We have no doubt that when the 'kitchen' is experienced, there is *something* present. There is experience. In other words, whatever the 'kitchen' actually *is* in its own right, divested of those qualities of name and form that the mind superimposes upon 'it', is present. Whatever that is, it has no objective qualities, because all objective qualities are supplied by mind. In other words, whatever 'it' is, is both non-objective and present. That is, we can be sure that *Being* is present in the experience of the 'kitchen'.

The experience of the 'kitchen' is also, by definition, known, and as all-knowing takes place in Consciousness, we can also be sure that Consciousness is present in the experience of the 'kitchen'.

Thus we have arrived at the simple conclusion, drawn from our own experience, that Being and Consciousness are present in the experience of the 'thing in itself', whether that thing is a kitchen, a table or a universe.

We can also go further and observe from experience that the experience of the 'kitchen', and indeed all experience, is always only one experience, not two, and can therefore conclude that Being and Consciousness are one and the same.

In other words, what *it is* is made fundamentally out of Being/Consciousness.

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Now let us keep going.

This Being/Consciousness does not, in our experience, 'come into existence'. Nobody has ever or could ever experience the appearance of Being/Consciousness because Being/Consciousness would have to be 'there' present to witness and therefore claim such an appearance.

Moreover, if we look now at the 'me' that walks into the 'kitchen' we can explore it in exactly the same way that we previously explored the 'kitchen'. And if we do so we arrive at the same startling conclusion. That is, all the apparently objective qualities that we attribute to this 'me' are supplied by mind. They are not inherent in 'me'. The body does not know it is a body, let alone a 'me'. Only the mind says so.

In other words, if we divest 'me' of those qualities that are supplied by mind, that is, thinking, sensing and perceiving, we are left with the same experience of Being/Consciousness.

In other words, what *I am* is made fundamentally out of Being/Consciousness.

In other words, we have arrived at the fundamental equation of experience that *it* (the body, object, world, universe or other) *is what I am*.

Now Being/Consciousness is in our experience, which means in its own experience, ever-present. It cannot nor could it ever know its own absence.

So the fundamental substance of the body, object, world, universe or other is Being/Consciousness and the particular qualities that seem to differentiate different objects, bodies, worlds etc. from one another are supplied by mind.

However, in the absence of mind, there is no time or space, both of which turn out on investigation to be concepts.

Therefore, the body, object, world, universe or other cannot be said to have come *into* existence. From where would they have come? And at what time?

Rather we have seen from experience that the substance of the universe etc. is Being/Consciousness which is ever-present. And all apparent qualities of mind arise within this Being/Consciousness. There is nowhere outside of this Being/Consciousness from which they could have come. And the substance out of which this mind is made can only be the substance of Being/Consciousness, just as ice forming in water can only be made of whatever ingredients are present in the water.

The only thing that is present in Being/Consciousness is Being/Consciousness. Therefore, it is this very Being/Consciousness that takes the shape of the mind and from here appears as the multiplicity and diversity of bodies, people, objects, worlds, universes, particles, others etc.

However, in order for this apparent multiplicity and diversity to seem real the homogeneous, singular oneness of its real substance (Being/Consciousness) must be overlooked or forgotten.

In other words, the true nature of Being/Consciousness must be forgotten, denied, veiled or imagined non-existent, for objects, the world and others etc. to appear to come into existence.

In short the universe comes into existence (that is, it seems to take on its own separate reality) at the very moment that our true nature of Being/Consciousness is forgotten. And how is Being/Consciousness forgotten if it is ever-present and there is nothing in its experience besides itself?

The answer is that it never truly forgotten. However, it *seems* to be. It seems to forget or veil itself by taking the shape of mind and then, that apparent mind identifies the 'I' that is inherent in the Being/Consciousness with one little part of the totality, that is with a body.

In other words, Consciousness, as it were, forgets itself, forgets the Knowing of its own Being and rises instead as the dualising mind, in the form of the 'I' entity. At this moment, 'everything-I-am-not' springs into apparent existence as the universe, objects, others or world.

However, the 'I' entity and the universe, objects, others and world etc. are nothing but this very Being/Consciousness taking the shape of name (thinking) and form (perceiving) and seeming to be something other than itself.

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So to go back to the example of walking into the kitchen.... nobody walks into a kitchen in time and space ...

There is Being/Consciousness. It is this Being/Consciousness that takes the shape of a sensation called the body which a subsequent thought identifies as 'I.'

This Being/Consciousness takes the shape of the body, then the walls, then the floor, then the kitchen, then the kettle, then the water, then the tea ... on and on. And woven into this constantly seeming morphing of Being/Consciousness is a train of thought that conceptualises all this experience as 'me' a body, walking into a kitchen, that was always here, and makes a cup of tea in a kettle that exists along with everything else independent of its being known ...

But in fact there is just Being/Consciousness, that is, just 'I', always in the same place which is a placeless place, always at the same timeless now-ness, taking the shape of sensing, perceiving and thinking ... always only being itself, never giving birth to anything other than itself ... giving its own substance to every appearance. ...

So it is not that the universe, objects, others, the world etc. is not real. Every experience is real but its reality is that of Being/Consciousness. In other words: *It is what I am.*

[\[Rupert Spira: It is what I am\]](#)

So where does *Ananda*, peace, fit in? As Rupert explains:

At the heart of all experience is an open door. It is not a door that leads to a refuge that is apart from experience. It leads us so deeply into the heart of experience, that experience itself loses its familiar names and forms.

We realise that it was, in fact, these familiar names and forms that kept us apart from experience, that veiled the intimacy, the love, that is the natural condition of all experience. The mind simply cannot go through that door. It doesn't even know its whereabouts. It is safely hidden right at the heart of all experience.

At the heart of experience there is a fire that burns all we know, that turns all things into itself.

Offer everything to this fire.

This fire is the experience of peace and the happiness for which all things are destined and from which all things proceed.

It is that for which we have longed all our life and we find it here, shining at the heart of all experience.

[\[Presence Vol 1: Epilogue\]](#)

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*And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!*

[\[W Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream: Act V, Scene 1\]](#)