
From: Deepak Chopra [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 12, 2016 7:25 PM
To: Michael Shermer
Cc: Jennifer Shermer; Leonard Mlodinow
Subject: Clarity on my position re consciousness

Dear Michael

After your talk yesterday I realized that I have not made my position and that of eastern wisdom traditions clear re consciousness or else you have not understood it, so here is one last try

1 Consciousness is the knowing element in every experience--you know you are experiencing that which we as humans refer to as mind body universe.

2 Perceptual objects are experienced in consciousness/awareness. They are a process in consciousness. They are experienced as sense perceptions .

3 The brain including neural correlates and body are sense perceptions experienced in the same way as rocks and the moon , trees, stars etc.

4 Mental objects (a friend of mine calls them mobjects) such as thoughts feelings emotions etc are also experienced in consciousness/ awareness.You know you are experiencing thoughts emotions etc.

5 The mind/ body and universe are a unified process in consciousness--you need all 3 to have a "normal" human experience.

6 We can guess that other species are having an experience but have no idea re their mental or perceptual lives even though we can interact with them.

7 I have no idea what I "look " like to a bat or an insect with a hundred eyes or to a mosquito , even though I can feel a mosquito bite .

8 The common ground of all experience is awareness/ consciousness.

9 Awareness/ consciousness is not personal -perceptions emotions are both personal and shared.

10 When your body mind dies as a particular process the universe experienced by that particular body/ mind dies as well but impersonal awareness being formless remains.That which has no form is not in time .

11 The essential " you " is not body/mind/ universe but the awareness in which body/ mind / universe arise and subside in every moment as sensations, images, feelings , thoughts, and perceptions.

12 The body /mind / universe you experienced as an infant teenager etc are long dead as experiences. They are born and die in every moment.

13 Your never the same body/ mind but you know yourself as the same being (being/ awareness/ consciousness are the same ontologically in eastern wisdom traditions.

14 Where is memory ? The cellular basis of memory remains elusive although like every experience memory has neural correlates. I learnt how to ice skate as a 12 year old boy with a 12 year old body/ mind and the did not pick up ice skates again until I was 45 years old but had no problem remembering how to ice skate with a different body/mind/brain.

15 The goal of all meditative techniques (there are hundreds of variations) is to stop identifying with the personal ego mind and physical body and to experience the common ground of shared experience in awareness and so to awaken love compassion joy and equanimity (divine emotions). Anger / hostility/ fear/ guilt/ shame/ shame/ resentment are products of the fragmented mind.

16 Religion / Philosophy/ Theology / Science etc are systems of thought . Systems of thought create models of reality. Science is a very useful model for creating technology albeit with side effects-climate change , ecological devastation and mechanized death {including nuclear weapons which if in the hands of more primitive systems of thought -religious fanatics- could result in our extinction}

17 Reality perhaps can only be grasped when all ideologies are abandoned & body mind ego are all experiences are transcended and only formless being/ awareness remains.

18 Awareness/consciousness cannot be seen , heard, touched, tasted or smelled but without it none of those experiences would be possible .

19 Body/ mind / universe are human concepts in human awareness for an intermittent stream of sensations, images, feelings, thoughts, sense perceptions , that are known in consciousness/awareness and indeed modifications of awareness itself.

20 You started you lecture by saying you were a material monist but very quickly moved into dualistic metaphors.

21 You spent a lot of time debunking the paranormal - a subject that was not part of the conference where we were trying to figure out the normal .

22 I wished you had been there for Amanda Gefter's talk when she she brought up nothingness as the only invariant -- not even spacetime!

23 The task that now remains is --how does nothing give rise to everything & what exactly is it ?!

24 Finally it was great seeing you, Jennifer and baby

Vincent who is an angel ! (yes--that is meant metaphorically please)

With love and respect your friend

deepak



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