

THE AWARENESS PRINCIPLE

New Answers to Big Questions



Peter Wilberg

2008

Introductory questions:

Q. What is 'The Awareness Principle'?

A. The recognition that awareness is the ultimate and sole reality – that awareness is everything, and that everything in turn is a portion and expression of a universal awareness that *is* 'God'.

Note: 'The Awareness Principle' refines and clarifies understandings of the ultimate nature of reality stemming from traditional Indian religious philosophies and yogic practices - in particular the tradition of tantric philosophy known as 'Kashmir Shaivism'. It arose by re-addressing the 'big questions' from and out of which this and other spiritual traditions and teachings of the past arose. In this way The Awareness Principle constitutes an original spiritual teaching in its own right - offering 'new answers to big questions', and yet doing in a way free of attachment or confinement to the specific cultures, religions, languages and symbols of all past spiritual traditions and teachings.

The 'big questions':

Q. How do you know that *you* exist?

A. From an *awareness* of existing.

Q. How do you know your body exists?

A. From an *awareness* of that body.

Q. How do you know that anything is or exists at all?

A. From an *awareness* of things.

Note: this question is one of the oldest philosophical questions of all. This is the question of what comes 'first' - the 'objective' existence of things or a subjective *awareness* of them. Since we only have direct evidence of the existence of things through subjective awareness, it follows that awareness or subjectivity is more primordial than 'being' or 'existence'. The first principle of 'The Awareness Principle' is therefore that awareness as such *is* the 1st principle of the universe - the basis of all that is or exists.

Q. If we only know things through an awareness of them do they continue to exist when we are not aware of them?

A. No. This question carries with it the traditional Western assumption that awareness is something that 'we' possess as our private property. In reality each individual's awareness is an individualised portion and expression of a *universal awareness*. This universal awareness cannot cease to be aware of *anything* – for even the most seemingly insentient or inanimate 'things' are *also* individualised portions and expressions of it.

Q. Does that mean there is no such thing as an unaware or 'insentient' thing or 'object'?

A. Yes. There is no such thing that is merely an insentient 'object' of consciousness. Instead every 'thing' *is* a distinct awareness in itself, though the awareness that constitutes that being may be more or less differentiated, and refined. Thus the portion of the universal awareness that manifests as a molecule or mineral form is both more primordial and less differentiated than that of a vegetable, animal, human or trans-human being.

Q. Are you saying that the things we perceive as objects are sentient beings which are just as much aware of us as we are of them?

A. Yes, though they do not perceive us and other things in anything like the way we do. Thus what we perceive as a 'stone', 'tree', 'spider', 'cat', 'jellyfish', 'shark' etc. may not correspond in any way to the way in which they perceive each other - or human beings. What the human being perceives as 'a cat' – or any nameable 'object' - is a product of our specifically *human* mode of perceptual awareness. In reality there is no such thing as a 'tree' or 'cat' - only our specifically human way of perceiving the type or 'species' of awareness that constitutes any other being.

Q. So there are such things as existing 'beings' – independent of our awareness?

A. Yes, so long as we understand that (1) a 'being' is essentially nothing but a specific shape or pattern of awareness, and (2) that whilst beings exist independent of our awareness they are each shapes taken by a universal awareness.

Q. What is 'body awareness'?

A. Not an awareness produced by or belonging to the body but an awareness of the body.

Q. What is 'self-awareness'?

A. Not an awareness *belonging* to the self but an awareness *of* self. Any and every self is ultimately but the self-expression and self-recognition of the universal awareness we call 'God'.

Note: since our very knowledge that our self and our body 'are' or exist depends on an *awareness* of being and an *awareness* of body and self, it follows that that awareness cannot itself be the property of any self or the product of any body or body part, such as the brain. The 2nd principle of 'The Awareness Principle' is that awareness cannot – in *principle* – be reduced to the property or product of any being, body or self there is an awareness of.

Q. What is 'God' and in what way does 'God' exist?

A. 'God' is not some existing and supreme being that has or possesses 'awareness'. God *is* awareness – a *universal* awareness that individualises itself, and is therefore the source of all beings - understood as individualised portions and expressions of it.

Note: Since the existence of any things or being, including a supreme 'God-being', assumes an awareness of its existence, follows that awareness itself must be considered as having a more primordial reality than any being – including a supreme 'God-being' - that we are aware *of*. Thus it is that awareness alone – a universal awareness and not an awareness that is merely 'yours' or 'mine' – can be considered as the very essence of the *divine* - of 'God'.

Q. What is 'awareness' itself?

A. A broader and more spacious consciousness field or 'field consciousness' – ultimately a *universal* consciousness field of which every thing and being is an individualised portion and expression.

Q. What is the difference between 'awareness' and what we call 'consciousness' ?

Ordinary consciousness is not field consciousness but a purely *focal* consciousness – attached to whatever it is we happen to be currently experiencing or aware 'of'. As a field

consciousness however, awareness on the other hand, embraces every possible element or focus of our conscious experience - whilst at the same time remaining absolutely distinct from them.

Q. What is the value of awareness?

A. Awareness is *freedom* - for being distinct from all that we do, say and experience it frees us from identification with any element of our experience – mental, physical or emotional, and therefore at the same time allows us to freely choose the focus

Note: The *pure awareness* of a thing or thought, sensation or emotion, impulse or action *is not itself* a thing or thought, sensation or emotion, impulse or action. Hence by simply *recognising* that the awareness of a troubling thought or emotion, for example, is *not itself* a thought or emotion, it ceases to be troublesome. For just as empty space is distinct from every possible object in it, so its pure awareness distinct from all its possible contents – from everything we are or could be aware *of*. Awareness, like space, both *embraces and transcends* everything experienced within it. Indeed it is by sensing and identifying with the emptiness of the space around things and around our bodies that we can come to experience *space itself* as a space or field of *pure awareness*. Doing so enables us to fully feel, affirm all that we experience within that field – whilst at the same time remaining absolutely free from attachment to each and every element of that experience.

Q. What can explain the existence of awareness itself?

A. *Nothing* ('no-thing') can explain the existence of awareness, since any 'thing' or 'being' we might think of as a cause or explanation 'for' it already *assumes* an *awareness* of that thing or being.

Q. How does everything we experience come to be or exist in the first place?

A. As creative *expressions or manifestations* of potentialities latent within the universal awareness – in the same way that a work of art is not something 'caused' but an *expression* or manifestation of potentialities latent in the artist's 'soul'. What defines the artist as a 'being' is that soul – which consists of nothing but a set of unique qualities and potentialities *of awareness*.

Note 1 This viewpoint differs from the idea that the universe was 'created' by a supreme being. This view doesn't explain how that very 'God-being' itself came to be. And if we

believe that ‘God’ is a being separate and apart from the universe it created, we effectively turn God into just one being or entity among others in the universe.

Note 2 The Awareness Principle also differs from the scientific view that the universe – and with it time and space themselves – ‘began’ with a ‘Big Bang’. Since the very idea of time and space ‘beginning’ at some point *in* time or space is illogical *in principle*, it is certainly not provable by experiment.

Note 3 There are three basic models of how things came to be:

1. The standard ‘Creationist’ model, which assumes the existence of the Creator Being - but does not explain how this Being itself came to be.
2. The Big Bang model, which illogically talks about time as if it could be something that itself ‘began’ in time - and offers no explanation of how the Big Bang itself came to be.
3. The Creative Expressionist model. This understands all actual things as creative expressions of potential shapes and qualities of awareness. This model does not assume the existence of a Creator Being - or of any being – for it understands *beings themselves* as *expressions* of potential shapes and qualities of awareness.

Q. How exactly does awareness give expression to all that exists?

A. The problem with this question therefore, is that the scientific world-view is so ingrained in people that they can only conceive of this 'how' except in terms of some sort of *causal* explanation. On the other hand, they do not think of asking themselves, for example, exactly 'how' their awareness of something *expresses* itself in words, thought and speech. The Awareness Principle offers an *expressionist* model of creation of a sort quite different, in principle, to causal models. For expression - as in speech – is something we experience directly. The need to 'explain' the ‘how’ of expression through some hidden causal mechanism that we *don't* experience is a product of scientific brainwashing.

Q. What, ultimately, is ‘reality’?

A. Most people identify ‘reality’ solely with an awareness of *actuality* - with things that are actually present or existent. Yet the dimension of potentiality is no less real than the realm of the actual – indeed it is out of an awareness of the countless ever-changing potentials latent in each moment that all ‘real life’ actions and actualities emerge. Reality then does not consist ultimately of one ‘realm’ only, but of three

realms of awareness – awareness of things actual and present, awareness of potential shapes and forms of awareness ('beings', and a third realm which belongs to the essence of life itself. This is the realm of 'becoming' - the very process of actualisation or 'presencing' by which potentialities and possibilities latent in awareness become actual or present – by which they come-to-be or 'become'. Awareness alone and as such is ultimate reality – the three primary realms or dimensions of actuality or 'being', potentiality or 'non-being', and actualisation or 'becoming' being all dimensions of that ultimate reality - of awareness as such.

Q. What is 'life'?

A. Life is an innate drive towards 'actuality' or 'being' latent within all potentialities, and propelling them towards ever greater and fuller 'self-actualisation' – *not* in the sense of actualising some actual and already existing self or being, but in the sense of allowing potentialities of awareness to manifest and take shape as countless different 'beings' or 'selves'. In a nutshell then, life is an innate drive, will and power *to be* that *expresses* itself in all that is.

Q. What is 'the meaning of life'?

A. Life *is* expression. As such, it has the essential character of being a type of 'speech'. That means it is innately meaningful. The 'meaning' of life lies in the fact that every thing in our lives *has* an expressive meaning that *addresses us* in the same way that speech addressed to us does - calling for *awareness* and calling upon us also to *respond*.

Note: We can discover the meaning 'of' life only by being aware of how not just every word, but also every thing, person, situation, event and interaction *in* our lives – even the most seemingly insignificant or minor - *already* addresses and touches us in a meaningful way. This in turn allows us to come to *an awareness* of that meaning – not just the meaning it holds for us personally but its meaning for others, and also as an expression of universal truths. Yet we cannot find the meaning of life without also *living* life. That means accepting the *unconditional demand* that life places on us all – a demand not just to be aware of meaning in our lives but to *respond* to it – to respond to everything and everyone that addresses us in our lives, whether directly or indirectly. To do so requires the cultivation of a higher type of 'response-ability' – one that can only come from recognising both ourselves and every other being as a unique and therefore *uniquely*

meaningful expression of the divine-universal awareness we call ‘God’, with all its infinite creative potentialities *of* expression. We are unconditionally *called upon* to be aware of all that addresses us and to creatively and expressively *respond* to it precisely in order to give expression to those potentialities – and thus to ‘live’ and ‘be’. Yet since we can, at any time and in any situation, *choose* whether and to what degree we allow events and people and questions themselves to address and touch us, and since we can also choose whether and with what degree of awareness and commitment we resolve to *respond* to them, the *ultimate question* that life and all that is poses to us is, ultimately, a single *ethical* question rather than a philosophical question alone. This *single* ethical question is whether or not we *choose* to recognise and respond to all the *many* questions that life and other beings constantly raise in us or leave us with. For it is through *this* choice that we decide whether ‘to be or not to be’, ‘to live or not to live’ – and determine also the degree of meaning in our lives.

Q. What is ‘death’?

A. We have more than one life in which to face and answer this ultimate question of life, and there are more worlds than one in which we face it. Just as birth is a form of expression, so is death – our rebirth into the multi-dimensional universe or ‘multiverse’ of awareness, one not restricted to the dimensions and expressions of awareness we perceive as ‘matter’, ‘energy’, ‘space’ and ‘time’.

Q. What is the universe ultimately ‘made of’?

A. “We are such stuff as dreams are made on.” (Shakespeare) As our dream images and sensations give expression to felt shapes, patterns, colours, tones and textures of awareness, so do all things. The universe is made up of elemental qualities of awareness – what we perceive as light, for example, being a manifestation of the *light of awareness*.

Some counter-questions and answers:

Q. How can there be such a thing as ‘awareness’ without things to be aware of? Doesn’t this question allow us to argue with the same force that the existence of those things comes first – or at least is as fundamental as awareness of them? Furthermore, by implying that awareness itself ‘is’ or ‘exists’ does it not follow that the principle of ‘Being’ or ‘Existence’ is *more* fundamental than ‘The Awareness Principle’?

A. Whilst awareness is indeed *inseparable* from things we are aware of it is also absolutely distinct from them (in the same way that space is both inseparable and yet also distinct from everything in it). In addition however, awareness embraces not just things that actually are or exist – the realm of Being or Existence - but also everything that is not but could be, the entire realm of *potential* being or reality as well as actual being or ‘existence’. Since the very ‘being’ of awareness is of a sort that embraces and partakes of the entire realm or reality of potentiality or ‘non-being’ it is a more encompassing principle than The Being Principle.

Q. How did awareness itself begin or come to be?

A. Time, like space is a dimension of awareness. To think of awareness as having a beginning or end makes no more sense than to think of space as having a location ‘in’ space, or time as such having a beginning or end ‘in’ time. Awareness, like time, is not itself anything ‘temporal’ – having a beginning or end – but instead is essentially timeless or time-transcendent – the true meaning of ‘eternal’.

Q. Isn’t there a simpler answer to how we know that anything exists - because our brains give us a picture of things through information picked up from our senses?

A. If everything we perceive consists of pictures produced by the brain, how can the senses pick up information from them in the first place? The idea that our brain produces pictures of things from our sense organs is as illogical as saying that a camera produces photographs through the light reflected off things - and then saying that those things are actually nothing but photographs produced by the camera! Then again, since both our sense organs and the brain *itself* are something we only know about through our perception of them, how can they be used to explain perception *as such*? Sense-perception is itself a specific *mode* of awareness – a patterned awareness of sensory qualities such as colour, sound, shape, warmth, texture etc. That does not mean that perception is a property or product of our brains and sense organs - or that sense organs prove to us that things exist ‘out there’. For our brains and sense organs are themselves things we know about only because we can perceive them. Perception is no more something ‘caused’ or ‘explained’ by things we perceive (including our

brains and sense organs themselves) than can *dreaming* be caused or explained by some particular thing we dream of. Seeing, for example, cannot be explained by anything we see – including the eye.

Note: Brain science *tries* to replace an older philosophical view that everything we perceive is ‘all in the mind’ with a new belief that ‘it’s all in the brain’. It can only do so however, by ruling the *brain itself* out of the very picture of reality that it is supposed to create. For since the brain itself is something we can only know about through studying our perceptual picture of it – or graphic pictures of brain activity - brain science ends up explaining how we perceive *everything* through *one* particular thing that we perceive – the brain itself as we perceive it, directly or through instruments. Far from offering any credible ‘scientific’ explanation of perception then, brain science effectively implies that reality *is* ‘all in the mind’ – consisting solely of perceptual pictures of the world created by the brain – which necessarily includes our picture of the brain itself. In contrast, The Awareness Principle recognises that sense-perception is itself a mode of awareness, and that our perceptual world cannot - in principle – be caused or explained by anything that we perceive or are aware of *in* that world – including the brain. On the contrary, everything we perceive – including our sense organs - is a shape taken *by awareness* – one that in turn gives a specific form and character *to* the universal awareness. In the most general terms, The Awareness Principle states that *awareness is everything* – and that in turn *everything is an awareness* – a specific shape or pattern of awareness.

Q. Doesn’t physics tell us that behind all that we perceive with our senses are electromagnetic energies, and that it is from these our brain creates images of ‘things’?

A. Yes, but remember that our sensory awareness gives us no evidence whatsoever of the existence of these ‘energies’, which are not ‘things in themselves’ but abstract *concepts* used by physics to explain things. And since all the concepts of physics refer to mathematical *quantities* they cannot – in principle – explain our subjective awareness of any sensory *qualities* at all – for example our awareness of qualities of colour or sound, taste or texture, or even such basic sensory qualities such as light and darkness or warmth and coolness. Sensory qualities that we take for granted as real through ‘the evidence of our senses’ – colour for example - actually have no place in what physics conceives as ‘objective’ reality. That is because no evidence for their existence can ever be found except as qualities of *subjective* experiencing. The quantities that physics deal with are like sums of money on a bank balance. We can

use them to buy tangible things or order their production, but as mere numbers they cannot directly cause or create their sensory reality.

Q. If we don't perceive through our sense organs why do we have them at all?

A. We do not see or hear because we have eyes and ears and other sense organs. We have eyes, ears and other sense organs because we are seeing, hearing and perceiving beings. Our brain and bodily sense organs are but the outward perceived form or embodiment of the different modes and patterns of perceptual *awareness* that define us as human beings. The universal awareness is an *artist*. Just as a great portrait can show us the unique qualities of awareness or 'soul' revealed through a person's face and eyes, so is the human body as such and all its organs a fleshly portrait of the human soul – giving expression to the complex and sophisticated pattern of awareness that define us as a species of consciousness. We do not sense, think, feel, speak or perceive like human beings because we have brains. Instead the human brain and nervous system is a marvellous embodiment of the sophistication of human awareness, whether in the form of thought, feeling, speech or perception.

Q. Since what we see around us are things we can not only see or hear but touch, pick up and use in different ways, doesn't this tell us they are real material objects and not images in the mind or brain – let alone mere sensory shapes and forms of awareness?

A. All we know is that there are certain things which (unlike mental images or hallucinations) we can not only actually perceive (for example by seeing them) but also potentially perceive in other ways – for example by touching or tasting them. It is such things we regard as 'material' things. Yet that does not mean that 'matter' as such is any actual substance or 'thing'. Instead what we think or conceive of as 'material' and not merely 'mental' is anything there is an *awareness* of being able to perceive in more ways than one. A 'material' thing is any *actually* perceived thing that can also *potentially* be perceived through other sensory modes. 'Matter' is that awareness of *potential* modes of perception referred to in the question itself: for example the awareness that something we see or hear can also – potentially - be touched and felt.