

## A personal message about Brahman, the universe and you ...

It matters how you approach Brahman, how you understand what Brahman is. In traditional, orthodox teaching, you will encounter two main ways.

One says:

*"Brahman is that from which the origin, sustenance and dissolution of this world proceed."*  
~ Brahma Sutra I.1.2

The other says:

*"Prajnanam brahma"* Knowledge is Brahman  
~ Aitareya Upanishad 3.3

*"Brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati"* The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.  
~ Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.9

For awakening human beings like you and me, the second way is the all-important one: Brahman is the knower. Brahman is a person who has awakened to Brahman consciousness.

Why is it important? Because if you conceive of a Brahman "out there," you will never find Brahman, you will never realize Brahman, you will never BE Brahman. If you conceive of a Brahman that is distant in time and space (e.g., at the beginning of creation or beyond the subtlest strata of existence), you will not become Brahman.

*"Brahman includes everything and excludes nothing."*

It is impossible to approach Brahman from outside Brahman, from a vantage point that places yourself over here and Brahman over there. It is only possible to approach Brahman by finding Brahman as your own Self, discovering that the entire universe of Brahman, the Totality of everything that is and ever has been, is within yourself, IS yourself.

*"Ayam atma brahma"* "Atman and Brahman are the same." "The Self is Brahman."

*"Aham brahmasmi"* "I am Brahman."

"Whoever knows thus, 'I am Brahman,' becomes this all. ... Whoever worships another divinity (than his self) thinking that he is one and (Brahman) another, he knows not.

~ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

If you approach Brahman as other than or outside yourself, then you have made a Brahman that excludes you. To be Brahman, it must include everything. That is the fundamental fact about Brahman. *If you are not included, it is not Brahman.*

As Maharishi Mahesh Yogi says below, "there is no existence of Brahman other than the knower. ... Brahman is not valid without the knower." In a very real way, there is no Brahman until you yourself become Brahman by knowing yourself as Brahman.

That teaching has profound transformative power, as I have discovered in over fifty years of practice in my own life. When I was with Maharishi in 1972, I was struck by the one-pointedness of his emphasis on the knower as Brahman. He said:

*"Brahman does not exist as God exists, the Creator. Brahman is the knower of Brahman. Aham Brahmasmi.*

*I am Brahman, and That thou art. You are also Brahman, and That all this is. First person is Brahman, second person Brahman, third person Brahman, the entire whole thing is Brahman. This is the knower, who knows it. He is Brahman. The knower. It's the knower. It's the knower."*

Q: "And what would be the difference between Brahman and the absolute?"

*"There is a difference in Brahman and the absolute. See, the absolute IS, like the sap is.*

*The sap is. It's attributeless, there are no differences in the sap. Pink [as in the pink flowers] also comes from there, green [as in the green leaves] also comes from there. Round comes from there, flat comes from there. All these different attributes come from the attributeless sap. So sap is the absolute of all these expressions. Sap is the absolute life of all the relative lives.*

*So, absolute IS. [However,] there is NO existence of Brahman other than the knower.*

*Absolute is, whether one knows it or not. It is there. Its validity is not dependent on the knower. If someone recognizes or doesn't recognize, doesn't matter. Absolute has its validity whether someone knows it or not. But Brahman has no validity without the knower. It's a very great difference.*

*When the knower knows everything in terms of himself, then he is getting to be Brahman. And when he has actually known everything in terms of himself, then he is Brahman.*

*So Brahman is always in terms of, Brahman is there in terms of the knower. Absolute is there in terms of Being."*

Q: "Is God then the supreme personality of Brahman?"

*"No. We were distinguishing Brahman in terms of the knower. Knower is Brahman. If we take off the knower, there is no Brahman. The knower is Brahman."*

So we have these two versions:

Brahman is that from which the origin, sustenance and dissolution of this world proceed.

and

Brahman is the knower. There is no Brahman without a knower of Brahman. Brahman is a person who has awakened to Brahman consciousness.

Both versions are authoritative, so I cannot reject one and choose the other. I must assume both are true simultaneously, without contradiction. That can only mean, the emergence of the universe must be linked to the fact that ultimately, we will know Brahman.

The fact that souls appear, evolve and awaken to Brahman consciousness must be the fundamental reason for the universe to emerge. Thus, there can be no Brahman without a knower of Brahman, and simultaneously, Brahman is that from which the origin, sustenance and dissolution of this world proceed.

It may seem unimaginable because, as human beings, we experience time sequentially. We experience past, present and future. Time streams along in such a way, we are always confined to this present moment. Past and future are beyond our reach, experienced only as abstractions with no real existence other than memory and imagination.

But all time, past, present and future, together with eternal timelessness, co-exists simultaneously in Brahman. "God sees all things at a time, whereas man sees things one moment at a time."

There can be no Brahman without a knower of Brahman and simultaneously, Brahman is that from which the origin, sustenance and dissolution of this world proceed.

In our deepest heart, we feel this is so. It is the instinctive knowing behind the intuition that in some mysterious way, we are "the crown of creation," that each of us, somehow, is the center of the universe.

At first perhaps, it is only a narcissistic fantasy. Or it may be an abiding sense that the universe, the entire universe, “cares about me.” But then finally, it is a deep knowing, a direct seeing. Eventually, inevitably, you awaken to the reality that “I am everything. The entire universe is within me.”

And you know, you feel and you sense, you intuit, you see, this is why the universe arose. This is the reason, this is the culmination, this is the source, course and goal of everything. The Totality's knowing Itself through my awakening, through the awakening of ALL created beings is the fulfillment of creation.

Not so that I could live this unboundedness, but so ALL souls could eventually live it.

*“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”*

~ Romans 8:19

It's an impossible fortune. No one can deserve it. You know this when it arises within you. How could anyone deserve this? How can anyone deserve transcendental bliss? How can anyone deserve eternal, infinite freedom? How can anyone deserve the entire universe made of nectar?

There can be only one conclusion: “If I can have it, then it can only be that ALL beings will have it. That is the only way it makes sense.”

*“Brahma satyam jagat mithya, jivo brahmaiva naparah”*

Brahman is the only truth, the world is simultaneously both real *and* unreal, and ultimately all souls are Brahman.

~ Shankara

FOOTNOTE: In physics, John Wheeler's “delayed-choice gedanken experiment” has recently received widespread publicity since Andrew Truscott and colleagues at Australian National University successfully performed the experiment for the first time using massive particles (helium atoms).

The experiment shows that a later event appears to determine the past history of a photon or atom. The delayed-choice experiment sends the photon or atom through a beam splitter that functions similarly to a double slit interferometer. Then, AFTER the photon or atom has exited the splitter, a random chance generator decides whether or not to apply a second splitter.

If the second splitter is not applied, the photon or atom exits the first beam splitter as a particle. However, if the second splitter is applied, the photon or atom exits the sequence of splitters as a wave. That indicates that the photon or atom “decided” to behave as a wave as it transited the first beam splitter because the second splitter was GOING TO be applied in the future, even though the decision to apply the second splitter had not been made yet.

*“By simultaneously ensuring that only a single photon [or helium atom] is present in the interferometer at once, and that the decision of interferometer is relativistically separated from the photon's entry to the interferometer, it was unambiguously shown that Wheeler's supposition that such a choice affects the ‘past history’ of the photon was correct. ... In this picture, the choice of detection (delayed until after the photon has passed the first beamsplitter) is correlated with observing interference [wave behavior] or no interference [particle behavior] – and thus it seems that a future event (method of detection) causes the photon to decide its past.” ~ Andrew Truscott*

Although this may seem impossible, it nonetheless does suggest that attention (e.g., experimental observation) in the present can determine the past history of the physical world. It gives a “real-world” demonstration that how one sees the world in the present may determine how the universe manifests, even perhaps all the way back to the beginning.

~Essay by Jerry Freeman