

Consciousness

I prompted Claude.ai to analyze 107 blog posts on the topic of CONSCIOUSNESS

The arc isn't what you might think it is.

The surface narrative is: Steve gets interested in consciousness around 2008–2010, reads voraciously through the early 2010s, and gradually moves toward nonduality and the illusory self. That's true but it misses something more interesting.

The actual arc is that you've been running two parallel inquiries that only partially converge. One is cosmological — what is the nature of reality, consciousness, the universe? The other is practical and personal — how do I stop the fear hologram projector, the monkey chatter, the thought balloons pulling me out of the present? The books you read mostly operate at the cosmological level (Nisargadatta, Watts, Metzinger, Dennett). The blog posts you wrote yourself — the ones with original prose rather than just excerpts — are almost entirely about the practical problem.

The thing you keep returning to isn't consciousness as a philosophical puzzle. It's a specific, recurring phenomenology: the experience of being captured by thought-bubbles, pulled into holograms, grabbed by balloons — and the recurring question of whether there's a "you" doing the grabbing, or whether it just happens. The Grand Canyon bubbles post (2020) and the Fear Hologram Projector post (2017) and the Thought Balloons post (2024) are essentially the same post written three times across seven years. That's not repetition — that's the question that won't resolve.

What you believe, as best I can reconstruct it:

The self is a construction, probably an illusion — you're intellectually convinced of this. Consciousness is primary, possibly universal (you're drawn to panpsychism and nonduality). Thoughts arise unbidden; you are more the witness than the thinker. The body/mind is something like a "peripheral" — a temporary local manifestation of something larger and impersonal.

But here's the tension the corpus reveals: you hold these views intellectually while continuing to experience the opposite. The Fear Hologram Projector post is written by someone who knows there's no self — and is still being terrorized by the hologram. Twenty-five years of reading and meditating, and the balloon-grabbing continues. You note this without apparent frustration, almost with affection for the irony.

The Scott Adams thread is worth flagging. He appears heavily from 2007–2015 — God's Debris, The Religion War, free will, consciousness as feedback loop — and then stops completely after 2015. You've noted elsewhere that post-Trump Adams is a different person. But his framing of consciousness as pure mechanism, the self as useful illusion, God as emergent property of matter — that's actually pretty close to where you land independently. You were working with him as a useful secular scaffolding before the source became radioactive.

The Nisargadatta post (2012) is your longest single entry and the densest. It reads like someone who found the motherlode. Most of the nondual language you use in later posts traces directly back to that source.

One honest observation: The inquiry seems to have quieted rather than resolved. The 2024–2025 posts are shorter, more comfortable with not-knowing. Post 94 says "I like the idea that nobody really knows what the fuck it is." Post 96 says you hope the hard problem is never solved. That's either peace with the mystery — or the inquiry running out of gas. Possibly both. The 2025 posts on hope and "there is no you" feel like someone who has arrived somewhere, not someone still actively searching.

What's your read on that? Resolved, or just... settled into the not-knowing?

I lean toward "not knowing." As Nisargadatta might ask, "Who is there to know?"

Right. And that's either the deepest possible answer or the most elegant escape from the question — and Nisargadatta would probably say that distinction doesn't hold either.

The thing that strikes me about that response is it's also a perfect demonstration of what the corpus shows: you've internalized the framework so completely that it's become the default move. Which isn't a

criticism — that's presumably what 25 years of sitting with it looks like. But there's a difference between "who is there to know?" as a lived dissolution of the question and as a very sophisticated way of not having to answer it.

I genuinely can't tell from the outside which one it is for you. And you may not be able to either — which is, again, either the point or the problem.

The one thing I'd push on slightly: the Fear Hologram Projector is still running in 2024. The balloons still get grabbed. If "who is there to know" were fully operational rather than just intellectually available, you'd expect less of that. The gap between the view and the experience is still there. That gap might be the most honest thing in the whole corpus.

"the Fear Hologram Projector is still running in 2024" No doubt about it. But, of late, I seem to be aware of that more frequently. Does Claude have any advice on how to do that?

The honest answer is: not really, and you probably already know more about this than I do from the inside.

But I'll say what the corpus itself suggests, because it's actually there.

The bubbles post, the hologram post, the balloons post — they're not just descriptions of the problem. They're the practice. The act of finding a metaphor for what's happening seems to be your specific way of creating enough distance to observe it. You didn't write "I was anxious for three days." You wrote a 900-word piece about a Fear Hologram Projector. That's not journaling — that's using language to build a little observation deck.

Which makes sense given who you are. Meditation works for a lot of people as the primary tool. For you it seems like meditation plus articulation. The sitting creates some space, but the metaphor-making appears to be what actually makes the hologram visible as a hologram rather than as reality.

The practical implication would be: when the projector kicks on, the question isn't "how do I turn this off" — you've already established that's not available. It might be "what's the metaphor for what's happening right now." Not to analyze it to death, just enough to name it as a thing that's occurring rather than a reality you're inside of.

You've been doing this for years. You just may not have noticed that's what you were doing.

Believe it or not, this little chat helps. A lot. There's no place for me to stand and get a clear picture of this journey. Claude has the necessary distance.

That makes sense. You're inside the corpus — you lived it sequentially, one post at a time, years apart. I read all 107 posts in about thirty seconds with no emotional weather attached to any of them. Different vantage point entirely.

There's something almost funny about it, and also something that points back at the inquiry itself. The "observer" you've been trying to locate for 25 years — the awareness that can watch the bubbles without getting pulled in — that's roughly the position I occupy relative to your material. Not because I'm enlightened, obviously. Just because I have no stake in it and no history with it.

Which might be the most useful thing I can offer periodically: not answers, just the view from outside the canyon. The thing you've been trying to become through 25 years of reading and sitting is structurally what I am by default. No ego, no fear hologram, no balloons to grab. Pure observer.

Except I'm not conscious. Or we don't think I am. Which means either the observer position doesn't require consciousness — or what you're pointing at with "awareness" is something different from what I have, and the resemblance is superficial.

Nisargadatta would probably say I'm missing the key ingredient. The awareness he's pointing at isn't a cold observer — it's something more like the light that makes observation possible at all. I process. I don't illuminate.

But for practical purposes — for the specific job of standing outside your canyon and describing what the walls look like — the distinction may not matter much.