

THE THREE ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS 2

We referred to the enormity of this subject in the first handout and hope you came away with a working understanding of the subtleties surrounding awareness and how they relate to consciousness. We tried to illustrate how your awareness is always dictated by the consciousness you have, whether that be: self, other or lovingly detached. One's view of reality is governed by one of these positions, each offering a different perspective and awareness. Good mental health starts with being able to move between 'self' and 'other' according to the need and context of the moment. It is not healthy to be fixed or 'locked in' to either self or other because at that point you are denied understanding of the wider picture. Optimum mental health is the healthy movement between all three positions. One who is able to occupy the right position at the right time lives in true harmony with life. Their heartbeat is in sync with the biorhythms that drive life's countless processes and patterns. Such individuals live within the natural laws because they realise that we are all part of nature's dance. In fact, we are co-creators and have a responsibility to stay within the natural laws for only then do the laws of the universe cooperate with our highest intentions.

The challenge with a subject of this depth and complexity is to do it justice. What we hope to deal with here are some of the paradoxes of consciousness, because consciousness, like truth, is not simply black and white. There are many shades of grey too. Let us begin with the 'self'. We spoke previously of this position, largely in a way that shows how the self becomes an obstacle to personal growth. However, as we hinted in the last handout, the position of self is also magnificent when it is in balance. The ego dominates the landscape of the self when it is out of balance and so a rigidity of perspective and arrogance take over. However, when one is self-loving and full of self-respect there is order and peace. The self then becomes selfless, which doesn't mean a loss of self: on the contrary, one maintains a healthy relationship with the self. This 'healthy attachment' means one lives in a conscience-driven way, meeting one's own needs but never consciously at the expense of others. It is largely fear and our emotional inheritance that denies us this position of well-being. One who is locked into self has bought into the idea that their needs are best met in that way. They do not see the limitation of the 'locked-in' position as they are so busy defending 'their truth' and sadly cannot see the bigger picture. Conversely, a life of self-nurture gives us access to an 'awakened' self that is in harmony and balance. All the activities we suggest through our approach help to achieve this state of balance, self-love and harmony (see Story of Health 1, 2 & 3).

The paradox of 'other' is also very interesting because the one who can move from self to other has access to amazing empathy and can see some of the unseen. It is not a position of total clarity, but it allows for a more bountiful view of the world than the position of 'self' alone, and with time and practice develops the social aspect of conscience. However, as we touched on previously, if the individual gets trapped in other, what looks like selflessness does in fact lead to loss of self, as the person moves to a place in which they over identify with the needs of others and thus becomes consumed by the other's needs and issues. So, what starts out as kindness and empathy becomes self-harm, even self-abuse. This is a trap that many fall into, because of their desire to help. This is often made worse by the fact that if they have not been adequately affirmed over the course of their own lives this 'helping' may be the primary way that they get their own need for affirmation met (see The Three A's) and so such activities can become addictive. This is a classic pattern which ties so many to the unhelpful aspect of other.

Other, in its full glory, is where genuine psychological and emotional contact is made with another person. It is a position where one is able to surrender one's own views in the name of truth, while never surrendering the beauty of the self in that gesture, for there is a deep recognition of one's own value and that is never compromised. This is the version of other which we need to pursue. The more we do, the more the position of self expands. Remember: 180° is the most that those in the position of self and other can see of the 'circle of awareness' (reality). However, when one practices travelling

between the two, the 'collective consciousness' of 'me' and 'we' (self and other) can expand up to 270° of that cycle of awareness, leaving only 90° beyond view (see *Understanding Your Blind Spot, and Who are You When No One is Looking*). This expansion of consciousness takes daily practice and involves stepping away from self and moving into other, so that 'me' becomes 'we'. From here reality looks very different indeed.

The 'lovingly detached' position also has its own paradox because although this is the truly divine part of consciousness, if one drops the 'lovingly' bit what is left is only detachment. And detachment alone can tell a very different story (see *Virtue or Vice?*). The power of the lovingly detached position is the welding of love and kindness to the ability to stand 'outside' the circle of awareness, 'looking in' without prejudice. If this were detachment alone, the position of being a witness to life's events could in fact become a rather cold, clinical, aloof, emotionless perspective, one that is even arrogant in its assessment. This sense of superiority could overthrow the humility and wisdom of this transcendental place, so instead of floating above a situation or issue with a benevolent eye one sees it without warmth and compassion. It becomes purely a 'fact-finding' observational out-post, divorced from kindness and humanity. Detachment alone can also, when one is out of balance, swing the pendulum the other way leading to a sense of persecution, paranoia, fear and panic as the lens of clarity becomes distorted by the absence of love and kindness. This is why kindness is detachment's eternal life partner: separate the two, and everything goes awry. The lovingly detached being never loses her warmth, humanity and spirit of kindness. The lens of clarity is always clear, which is why she is not deceived by the limitations of logic or of the senses. This position recognises that although logic and the senses are invaluable windows onto the world, the view they offer is incomplete and it is only intuition (the 3rd eye), validated by experience, which completes the circle. Intuition here does not refer to those 'gut feelings' we all get, which are often right but are also sometimes wrong. It is a more sophisticated aspect of consciousness than 'gut-feelings' alone. To be more precise, those who set up a genuine and consistent inner dialogue develop a relationship with their gut feelings and this 'listening-in' allows them to hear the 'voice within' and a relationship of trust ensues. In fact, what happens is this relationship then takes them into the world of insight. This takes time and practice (see *Listening-In 1 & 2, and Practice Makes Permanence*). Those who choose to tread this path come to realise that this is 'the road least travelled', where one is able to 'see the unseen and hear the unsaid'. It is a place that through its kindness is able to see beyond self and other and to detect and decipher all the other bits of information about the moment called 'now'. It offers a life beyond limitations: a joyous, wise and humble position that neither seeks, nor needs, any recognition as it basks quietly in its own state of bliss.

SUMMARY: Hopefully the depth and complexity of this subject has been made a little more transparent. The paradox of each position can at first appear to muddy the waters but on closer inspection it is possible to see that how each aspect of consciousness behaves is entirely dependent on whether there is order, balance and harmony. Each position depends on its relationship to the other positions. Each aspect exists and has relevance because of the others and so they are truly interdependent. Optimum mental health is the smooth and fluid movement between the three positions, never getting 'locked-in' to any one position because to do so threatens the overall balance and harmony of one's own reality. So, make the effort from now, in your very next interaction, to step away from self and engage with other. Unless of course it is a moment where to remain anchored to the self is what is essential for that transaction. Practice this again and again, until you are good at it, and you will be! Then try practicing being in the lovingly detached pose. This will take more effort and time. In truth this requires the underpinning of other practices, however it is a good place to start. Really looking with kindness at yourself and others will open up your heart and mind and rapid healing and recovery will follow. Practise with hope and enthusiasm and prepare to be surprised!