

CONSCIOUSNESS

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Consciousness depends on certain conditions of bodily metabolism. It is affected especially by changes in the circulation and the effect of alterations in localised blood-supply in various areas of the central nervous system.

Consciousness means awareness—awareness of form, colour, scent, touch, taste, temperature; awareness of emptiness, fullness, want, contentment, fear, confidence, sorrow, joy, the whole gamut of emotions, painful or pleasant.

This awareness can be altered or modified; it can be made more acute, diminished or blurred, even abolished, by varying states of bodily activity. It is possible to speak of more or less distinct types of consciousness—the waking state, the dream state, the trance state, the hypnotic state, sleep, concussion, coma, and various drug-induced states.

Waking State

This is a condition of *active consciousness*. The individual is actively aware though the degree of awareness varies. Primarily the waking individual is aware of his immediate surroundings either in a contemplative way or in a more intense interpretive manner. One may be aware of the presence of another person or of the proximity of a tree or a bird as such. Again one may be intensely and minutely aware of a wealth of detail in relation to that person or tree or bird, giving expression to one's awareness intellectually in descriptive terms, scientific, poetical or everyday. This observation of detail in connection with the tree or the bird may further merge into an expanded consciousness of beauty, that inexpressible joy-giving reality inherent in line and pattern, in shade and tint, in feel and movement, in atmosphere, in living.

On the other hand waking consciousness may be limited or restricted to a small and narrow field, the subject in hand or, rather, in mind. The more concentrated the application the narrower the scope of awareness. It is possible to be so intent

that stimuli which would normally reach consciousness quite fail to do so. The front door bell, the telephone, a dog barking, even the voice of someone speaking in the room, just do not register or get through to conscious awareness. As far as the intently preoccupied individual is concerned they do not exist, however factual they may be to someone else in the same vicinity.

Waking consciousness on the other hand may be far-reaching and expansively imaginative. The author, the poet, the creative artist in any field, is conscious of many things quite outside the immediate surroundings. In imaginative thought he sees, he hears, he senses, he feels what is so real to his awareness that he can put it into words or on to score or canvas. There is an association here of passive perception and active interpretation of the impressions that have reached awareness with greater or less clarity and vividness.

- How do these varied impressions reach consciousness and whence do they derive? They are not in the immediate factual environment yet they are real and actual and must obviously have some source of origin within or without the individual who experiences them in terms of interest or emotion.

One source must be the subconscious mind, that vast storehouse of memories and impressions, in which is laid up faithfully and inexorably all experience, both since and prior to birth. The almost limitless content of this amazing repository is normally outside active consciousness but as occasion demands or in certain circumstances some of its content may be recalled or upsurge and arrive on the screen of active awareness.

It would seem necessary, however, to postulate a further source of impressions, especially in the experience of the artist or the seer, namely impressions received from without—supra-conscious, or extra-sensory, impressions reaching awareness by means of divine inspiration or other psychic channel of communication.

However, in the main active consciousness is related to immediate surroundings, to material things and bodily appetites.

Dream State

Dreams are for the most part a phenomenon of *passive consciousness*. There is no active control over the start of a dream. That is determined by subconscious activity getting through to dream-consciousness. This may be in response to some event or experience in the hours preceding sleep, or to some somatic stimulus from within the body or from outside the body, pressure of bed-clothes, contact with a hot water bottle and so on—a stimulus sufficient to start a chain of reaction in the subconscious and consequent dream-activity, but insufficient for waking from sleep.

Once the dream has started some element of active control may enter in, but usually this is feeble and the dream pursues its own sweet subconscious-directed way—throwing on to the screen of awareness a motley medley of fears and hopes, desires and ideas, and all with a fine disregard for time and space, codes and values adhered to in the waking state.

Trance State

This might be described as a state of altered awareness or *transposed consciousness*. The sphere of awareness is removed from the immediate environment or immediate circumstances, perhaps very far removed both in time and space.

There is a passive perception of persons, places or events,—factual persons, places and events—received with great clarity and vividness. The persons may be on the other side of the inhabited world, the places may never have been visited, the events may synchronise or may not even have as yet occurred by Greenwich time. Nevertheless the portrayal on the screen of awareness is one of great distinctness and accuracy of detail.

A similar state of passive receptivity may occur in relation to dreams which have significance and are different from the usual jumbled impressions experienced in normal physiological dreaming.

Just how this switch is brought about is not known. In some way or other, with or without deliberate psychic intent, an altered bio-physical state occurs in which access of ordinary impulses to the seat of awareness is cut off and passive perception of extra-corporeal or extra-sensory impressions becomes

possible. It is, of course, a moot point as to the exact location of the seat of consciousness. The integrity of the nervous system is obviously involved though its exact role in different states of consciousness is only partially understood.

While such an experience of expanded or extended consciousness is usually associated with the trance state or a particular type of dream state, there seems no reason why it should not be experienced also in the waking state. Indeed many such perceptive experiences have been recorded by persons who were fully awake at the time of reception, often not expecting anything of the sort to happen. The capacity for such supra-conscious perception might well be acquired by training and discipline as indeed has been the case down the ages when individual men and women have deliberately sought the spiritual realities and refused to be earth-bound by material things, which for all their apparent reality have but transient significance.

Hypnotic State

The hypnotised subject, as also the person in a state of hysteria, manifests a *detached consciousness*, being unaware of stimuli which normally reach consciousness such as a pin-prick, and being oblivious to the immediate environment. There is also the added and peculiar factor of suggestibility.

Impressions of various kinds can reach awareness merely by suggestion from without or from the individual subconscious with a resulting consciousness that has no factual or concrete basis. Under hypnosis a subject may leap from his chair under the suggestion that the seat is on fire or that he is sitting on an upturned drawing pin although neither of these contingencies is factual. He will feel the heat or the prick nevertheless and the reality of the awareness will produce prompt action.

The hysterical subject will be aware of some bodily state, paralysis of a limb, blindness, aphonia and so on although there is no actual injury or disease of the organs involved.

In these conditions the normal paths by which impressions reach consciousness from the environment or from the body itself must have been blocked. Some other avenue to conscious

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pelled to apply a cold cloth; no appetite, sleepless, burning heat all over body; throws covers all off the bed; "I feel no two days alike" "I am so fidgety". She got more *Sac. lac.*

May 3rd. Says she is well; plenty of *Sac. lac.*

June 20th. Loses her urine when coughing.

July 10th. The same symptom continues to bother her. *Puls. cm* finished cure and she remains well.

—*Health & You*, April '58

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awareness must have opened up along which suggested ideas and images can pass to give the impression of reality.

Sleep Concussion Coma

These three states, although brought about by different means, are all characterised by *suspended consciousness*. There is absence of awareness although to a greater or lesser degree the subject can be roused to consciousness by suitable stimulation or by recovery from the circulatory or toxic disturbance responsible for the condition. For the time being, however, the paths of communication are blocked so that stimuli which would normally reach awareness in the waking state fail to do so and the individual is blissfully unconscious of aught.

Many states of *altered consciousness*, including those already referred to, can be induced by drugs. This fact has been known from time immemorial and made use of down the ages for purposes of magic, of religious ritual, of escape from the boredom and monotony of terrestrial existence.

(To be continued)

—*Homœopathy*, Aug., '57