

CONSCIOUSNESS PART 4

Questions

In human experience 'being conscious' comes as a combination of a feeling of 'I' and the light or power of consciousness. This is true for the dim 'core consciousness' described by Damasio and it is true of what we feel when we remember ourselves. Accounts of enhanced or mystical states – our own and some from the literature – show it is also true for many higher states of consciousness. But these higher states have a magic which is missing from everyday experience.

Yet Dr Roles told us that "there is only one consciousness . . . everything is that consciousness." This raises all sorts of questions:

Can they – the exalted and the dim – really be the same consciousness? Is it just a question of degree?

Or is there pure and impure consciousness?

Or is it a question of point of view – very different for a realised man than for us.

What stands in our way from finding a higher level of consciousness and what can we do about it? We aim to spend most of the rest of this term on this, but it would be useful to have a general discussion now about how we see it for ourselves, just using our own words.

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Last term we studied the different ways, noting how much emphasis the Shankaracharya put on devotion. The importance of emotional awakening was also apparent last week in the System description of centres, where access to the Fourth Room depends on the emotional centre working with the right energy (hydrogen 12). This attracted quite a lot of interest, and it is worth taking it further:

If the emotional centre were to work with hydrogen 12, its work would be connected with the work of the higher emotional centre. In these cases where the work of the emotional centre reaches the intensity and speed of experience which is given by hydrogen 12, a temporary connection with the higher emotional centre takes place and man experiences new emotions hitherto entirely unknown to him, for the description of which he has neither words nor expressions. But in ordinary conditions the difference between the speed of our usual emotions and the speed of the higher emotional centre is so great that no connection can take place and we fail to hear within us the voices which are speaking *and calling to us* from the higher emotional centre. [P D Ouspensky, *Fifth Cosmological Lecture*]

There is an uncanny similarity in the way the Shankaracharya puts it:

Param-Atman is calling us all the time and although the individual (the *Jiva*) wants to go to the *Param-Atman*, yet the hindrance is only this, that the *Jiva* thinks "I am also something." The obstacle to union is separation in the heart. [*Record 27.9.75*]

The Shankaracharya called this union 'melting of the heart'. Dr Roles was very keen on the way 'melting of the heart' was described in an (at the time) anonymous pamphlet entitled 'The Alchemy of Happiness'. It is worth reading the whole of this¹, but here are some excerpts:

...all the wise ones have in some form or another given a method by which the individual can find that happiness for which the soul is seeking.

Sages and mystics have called this process alchemy. The stories of the Arabian Nights which symbolize mystical ideas, are full of the belief that there is a philosopher's stone which will turn metals into gold by a chemical process. For those who have the consciousness of reality gold stands for light or spiritual inspiration.

... As for the question of how this method of alchemy is practiced, the whole process was explained by the alchemists in a symbolic way. They said gold is made out of mercury. The nature of mercury is to be ever-moving, but by a certain process the mercury is first stilled, and once stilled it becomes silver; then the silver has to be melted, and the juice of a herb is poured on to the molten silver which is thereby turned into gold. This of course gives only an outline, but one can find detailed explanations of the whole process. Many childlike souls have tried to make gold by stilling mercury and melting silver, and they have tried to find the herb; but they were deluded, and they had better have worked and earned money.

The real interpretation of this process is that mercury represents the nature of the ever-restless mind. When by a method of concentration one has mastered the mind, one has taken the first step in the accomplishment of a sacred task... for stilling the mind a special method is necessary which is taught by the mystic.

...

When the mind is under perfect control and no longer restless, one can hold a thought at will as long as one wishes... The silver must be heated before it can melt, and with what? With that warmth which is the divine essence in the heart of man, which comes forth as love, tolerance, sympathy, service, humility, unselfishness... the love element. And when it glows in the heart, then the actions, the movements, the tone of the voice, the expression, all show that the heart is warm. The moment this happens a man really lives. He has unsealed the spring of happiness which overcomes all that is jarring and inharmonious, and the spring has established itself as a divine stream.

After the heart is warmed by the divine element which is love, the next stage is the herb, which is the love of God. But the love of God alone is not sufficient; knowledge of God is also necessary... When the juice of the herb of divine love is poured on the heart, warmed by the love of his fellow men, then that heart becomes the heart of gold, the heart that expresses what God would express. Man has not seen God, but man has then seen God in man, and when this happens, then verily everything that comes from such a man comes from God Himself.

¹ It was in fact written by Hazrat Inayat Khan and can be found on the internet at http://wahiduddin.net/mv2/VI/VI_1.htm.