

STUDIES IN CONSCIOUSNESS

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In our daily lives we are continually being made aware of consciousness that is different to ours and we are most painfully made aware of these differences when we end up in conflict with our fellow human beings, especially our loved ones. Even so, how much greater are these differences in our consciousness when compared with the consciousness of other entities in the everyday world around us and with those entities in the unseen world of which we are only vaguely aware of. And yet from this unseen realm we have been given our essential being and existence. When we look at a newborn child we say that it possesses the consciousness of an angel and is of pure innocence. Now even though the child has no self-consciousness there is great wisdom at work in its growth and development. Modern psychology states a remarkable fact in that a new born child learns more in its first year of life than it learns in the rest of its life. So what then is this marvellous consciousness operating here?

We can start from sense observation and observe the mineral world, the realm of lifeless objects. If we place before us a stone or a crystal it does not appear to have any sort of consciousness at all but we are told, by spiritual teachers, that all of creation has consciousness. The mineral kingdom has the consciousness of deep dreamless sleep. In the far distant past, Man passed through this state of being in his evolutionary journey in the period called the Saturn period. Today, man is only fully conscious of the mineral kingdom.

The next kingdom of nature that is discernible to our cognition is the plant kingdom. If one is able to place a growing plant next to a stone and contemplate on the differences one discerns qualities which can be describe as life verses non-life, growth and reproduction. This 'livingness' in the plant, which differentiates a plant from a stone, can be called the *life body* or the *etheric body*. Now some have said that as a plant responds positively in its growth to certain types of music and hence it also must be conscious of pain but spiritual teachers have told us that plants only have the consciousness of dreamless sleep. Reiki is a spiritual healing method which relies on the unconscious opening up of spiritual centres in the practitioner by means of powerful symbols. Healing forces can then be directed to another person in an unconsciousness manner and could be likened to the effect of music on plants. Mankind passed through this state in a previous period of his evolution called the Sun stage. This is also the state of consciousness entered into by mediums whereby they enter into a trance condition and allow other spiritual entities to use their bodies as vehicles of communication. Today, due to man's stage of evolution, this means of receiving spiritual communications is questionable because of its dangers and the unreliability of the information received. Man's consciousness of the etheric realm and other higher realms is only through inference by observation of the physical world of senses. Hence we cannot directly see the etheric body with every day perception but we can infer its existence from its effect on a plant

We then come to the animal kingdom and if we compare an animal with a plant we find the major differences are that an animal is able to experience consciousness, pain, sympathy and antipathy. This ability to experience these qualities is due to what can be called the astral or soul body. The animal goes about the world in a state of dreaming, acting not from out of self-consciousness but out of a highly developed instinct. Man passed through this state in a previous period of evolution called the moon stage. Whilst we sleep we experience a remnant of this stage in our dreams. Some individuals who channel or experience certain types of clairvoyant perception do so in this dreaming state of awareness, half being aware of entities and events speaking through them. In the past these were justified modes of spiritual perception

Finally we come to man, who with his crystal clear thinking, is able to self consciously direct himself within the world of senses. This ability to act out of himself is to due to his spirit, ego or 'I'. This principal was given to him only during this present earth stage where he became an

individual. Today, through his crystal clear thinking he is able to unlock the secrets of existence. Even though he does not directly experience higher realms, he is able, through his thinking to intimately know of them from information provided by spiritual seers.

Today, man can live in all the state of consciousness in varying degrees. We don't even need to be asleep to dream. Though we are physically awake we may daydream the day away whilst being physically awake and only occasionally rise to the crystal clear waking consciousness. In this state we are generally under the illusion of being fully awake in our everyday consciousness. How often are we aware of eating, travelling by train, getting dressed, talking to others, etc. If we all rose crystal clear awareness when we talk with each others we would not end up in as much conflict as we do. People in groups, such as in football crowds, or in mobs under the influence of nationalistic fervour, or under the influence of alcohol can be in a semi dreaming state and can commit the most horrendous crimes which they would not commit ordinarily on their own. On the other hand many fine and noble actions have been undertaken in a dreaming state as beneficent forces from the spiritual world have initiated these actions. A mother protecting her child no matter what the danger is to herself is an example of this.

In the past, under the influence of benevolent forces many noble actions were performed in a semi-dreaming state. Today, due to the nature of man's evolution, these positive subconscious influences are on the decline and only the negative hindering chaotic influences are gaining strength subconsciously within man and will continue to do so into the future. If one does not take up conscious self-development into one's own hands then a person may succumb to unconscious obsessive forces such as those of conflict, excessive sexuality, ambition, greed, power, etc. Past religious traditions which kept these lower impulses in check no longer have a strong hold on an individual and are not able to keep in check subconscious egotistical impulses whilst individuals continue to act out of a dreaming state. Sure these individuals may rationalise their actions which take on the appearance of conscious actions but the driving impulses for these actions originate in the subconsciousness depths of egotism. Who would have dreamed a few years ago that out of the most tolerant and accepting religions in the world that individuals would arise with the grossest egotistical impulses which cause death and division as has already been the case with religions in the past. In America, where in the name of preserving life so called Christian anti-abortionists have murdered doctors who performed the abortions. This type of violent action, in a state of semi-dreaming egotistical idealism, will not be uncommon in the future. The spiritual world now requires that man should take on a pathway of conscious self-development which requires self-directing crystal clear thinking and awareness. Even a few minutes a day spent on conscious development exercises will greatly help. This is one of the goals that have been set for man in Earth Evolution.

There are at least three higher stages of consciousness which man will attain in the future. These stages require that man becomes an active and conscious participant for him to achieve these stages whereas in the previous stages man did not actively develop these but they were essentially given to man by higher beings. The higher stages are known as ***Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition*** and can also be known by other various spiritual names which could equally be appropriate such as enlightenment, spiritual vision, cosmic consciousness, initiate consciousness, astral sight, bliss etc. Rudolf Steiner used his own terms as the previous terms could also encompass other states of spiritual experience in which the human being did not fully participate with his 'I' consciousness which is essential in the stages of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition.

In the higher unseen spiritual kingdoms above man, in the realm of the Angels or GODS, there are beings who possess and act out of the above stages of consciousness. Some characteristics of these beings acting out of these stages of consciousness are apparent in our daily lives in that they can appear as forces or impulses within human beings or they can appear as forces of nature. There are spiritual beings whose normal consciousness is at the stage of inspiration and are called folk spirits or archangels in western esoteric terminology. These beings give the national characteristics to each group of people under their charge. For instance the Italians are emotional and use expressive

hand gestures when they speak, the English have a 'stiff upper lip' and can be reserved, the Australian Aborigines are very communal, and Indians are very open and receptive to philosophical/religious views. These folk spirits work through the subconsciousness impulses of individuals within a people.

There are a number of exercises and methods which have been given to us for preparing ourselves for the stages of Imagination and beyond which are known as contemplation, concentration, awareness, devotion, meditation, etc and if undertaken in a ***balanced*** fashion will lead an individual along the path.

Imagination. In normal sense perception we have before us the object, our image of it, the concept and then a judgement. In 'Imagination' there is no physical object but only **image, concept** and '**I**'. This image actually consists of objectively refined feelings by which the spiritual world is able to manifest itself by clothing itself in these images but these are not visualisations as experienced by us in the physical sense world. Hence, simplistically put, we see blue in the physical world but in the stage of imagination we have the experience of blue without the external object. To complicate matters further these so called pictures can consist of colours, tones, heat and cold and taste and smell. If an individual is able to transform himself development then one can become conscious of spiritual beings manifesting themselves through these imaginations.

Inspiration. This stage can be likened to spiritual hearing and has as its elements **concept** and ego or '**I**'. One can say that one begins to hear the heart of things. One is within the qualities or functions of being but is not within the being itself. One can spiritual hear the growing of grass and one can perceive previous states of man's evolution and what he is destined to become in the future.

Intuition. This is where an individual becomes one with the object or merges with it and he is able to see into the true nature of things. Here one must be truly selfless. The individual must become strengthened to a high degree without losing himself in that being. The experience of our '**I**' is an example of an intuition but it appears as a vague experience. Yet even so when we turn our attention to our '**I**' we only have a vague dreamy experience of what we are because we have not sufficiently developed ourselves. From this region of consciousness our true '**I**' strongly participates in our marvellous growth in the first few years and explains the superhuman intelligence involved in our early development.

Now a man can attain to all the above three higher stages of consciousness in varying degrees. Generally he will initially pass through Imagination then Inspiration and then Intuition in an orderly manner although it is possible to start from intuition but nevertheless the spiritual student must eventually pass through the previous stages if he is to be useful to the world. In these three higher stages the true nature of the illusion of the physical appears to the spiritual student in its true form.

There are other stages of consciousness beyond the above three but they are generally beyond the grasp of ordinary human understanding except for the fact, that at these still higher stages of consciousness one can say, that in the very act of thinking or perceiving by the gods creation occurs at the same time.