

THE THREE ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

This is an enormous subject. Although we will present it in a synopsis format our hope is that we can still do it justice. Please don't make the mistake of thinking once you have read this you will have fully understood this topic because there is quite simply too much to understand straight away. Our hope is that you will better understand the different aspects of consciousness and thus be able to place yourself more clearly on the map of awareness, and as a result have the opportunity to choose where you want to be. So many of us are not driving our lives in the direction of our choice, we are being driven. Driven by our pasts, out-dated patterns, circumstances and most of all our fear and shame. It is time to choose... drive or be driven?

SELF – The first of the three aspects of consciousness is 'self'. This is a complex level of awareness, and it would be impossible to address all of its subtleties and intricacies here, however for the purposes of personal growth, the following comments will be invaluable. Most people are 'locked-in' to self, which is easily done as it takes no real effort. It is after all the position we all start from. We enter the world with little definition and are increasingly defined by our environment, particularly by the relationships that are closest to us. It is through that social contact and feedback that the sense of self is constructed. There is a debate to be had around whether this 'sense of self' is indeed one's 'self' at all! Given that the self is moulded by a largely conditional environment and given that we are so desperate to be loved and to belong, we would do just about anything to fit in, and in the main we do. So, can a version of the self, constructed under those conditions, be trusted to be a true reflection of self?... We would say no. This is in fact an acquired self, and not the authentic self (see Self Love, and Self Love ... Where has it Gone?). But this is a different subject and will take us away from the description of this piece of the jigsaw. The sense of self we do acquire, is the 'thing' most of us are busy protecting at any cost. The position of self, when out of balance, is one that is largely fixed, defensive, blinkered, aloof, shackled by prejudice, easy to anger and lost in its own point of view. It believes that the way it sees the world is how it is and this arrogance (which it is blind to) obscures the way forward. As a result of this position the self gets caught up in self-defeating cycles and victimhood. It blames everyone and everything for its demise, never taking responsibility for its own actions and circumstances. For the sake of accuracy, it should be said that when the self is balanced, whole, and in harmony it is filled with humility and wisdom and transcends the illusions generated by the ego. We will address this more fully later (see The Three Aspects of Consciousness 2).

OTHER – The second of the three aspects of consciousness is 'other'. Here, the position of other means stepping away from self and looking at self and reality from the other person's position. It is a position which recognises that reality cannot be viewed or fully understood by standing in one place. It is a standpoint that recognises that the position of self, offers us inconclusive 'evidence'. Quantum physics has helped us to understand that just by observing something, we are affecting it, so how can we hope to see the complete story without looking at what else is shaping the moment we call now? The position of other is a place of empathy. There is greater discrimination and humility applied from this position as our humanity begins assessing reality with care and consideration. The greater vision, warmth, sincerity and insight of this position offer valuable wisdom to the position of self. Other, at its most noble, is kind and regal in its concern for self, others and the planet; it values all life and all things. However, when it loses its way, it can also lose itself. It can become so preoccupied with 'other' that it neglects the importance of the self. This often looks like kindness, benevolence and care, which it is, but it is a dangerous place too: one of self-neglect. This can lead to a systematic dismantling of one's esteem, respect and regard for self ... Sound familiar? Good mental health is found in being able to move between the two positions and not being 'locked in' to either. Only then can there be true stability, strength and clarity. One is neither lost in the delusion of ego nor in the potential for self-neglect.

LOVINGLY DETACHED – This is the highest of the three positions. It is an awareness that completes the circle of reality. We know a circle is 360°. The position of self occupies approximately 90° of the circle of awareness (this can be extended through the practice of silent reflection and positive affirming activities). The position of other is also about 90° and it too can be extended as we increase our empathy, acts of kindness and balance between personal and social responsibility. However even with the potential for extending each position of awareness we would still only cover a maximum of 270° and that is a rare achievement indeed, as such a maximising of consciousness requires determined, single-minded endeavour over a significant period of time. So, for most, their view of reality is somewhere between 90° and 180° dependent on whether they are ‘locked in’ to one position or not. If they are not ‘locked in’ then they have access to the rest of the picture, but as we said earlier, to acquire such a position, it is simply not enough to read about this or to attend a workshop: it can only be achieved through practice. However, in order to practice it, it must first be understood....

To be lovingly detached is an amazing vantage point of love and pure kindness; it is a position without negative criticism. This does not mean it lacks judgement and discernment. On the contrary it has no shortage of either, it simply chooses kindness and love when ‘looking in’ because it knows the alternative is without benefit. This is a position of total benevolence and clarity. It stands outside both the position of self and other and so is able to assess clearly and honestly, without a hidden agenda. It is also able to see all the other factors that impact on any given moment of time, such as fear, the past, conditioning, social forces, self-image, and ignorance. The list goes on and on. The lovingly detached position sees it all as it is, not blinkered by the forces of prejudice, but its view is protected by the filters of kindness and love. This beautiful pairing (see Virtue or Vice?) immunises the spirit from any of the harshness and limitations of the other positions and gains the advantage of seeing what is missing from them. This position has been described by great cultures of the past as the ‘third eye’, the eye that sees that which the other two cannot. We think this is an accurate description, because one who is lovingly detached transcends the limitations of both logic and the senses. This is a point of view that recognises that logic and the senses can only take us so far down the road of truth and true awareness. So how is this position achieved? How can we become one who views reality from a 360° perspective? Is it even possible? The answer is practise (See: Routine is Power, All You Need to Know and Practice makes Permanence).

CONCLUSION – The practice we have to undertake is to repeatedly step away from seeing things only through our own eyes. We cannot possibly see and understand reality from that limited vantage point. We must strive to see the other’s point of view. Whatever relationships you are exposed to - mother, daughter, father, boss, colleague, carer, lover, friend etc. - practise seeing the world through the other person’s eyes. This takes regular effort, it is not a fleeting activity – if you try, really try, you will over time develop an empathy that will become advanced. This is the first step. Practise moving between the two positions, and they will inform one another, as they share their gifts and insights. It is only when you have truly mastered this that the third position will start to come more easily and naturally. You can then practise stepping away from ‘self and other’ and ‘look in’ from outside both positions. To do this theoretically is not a great challenge, but to really ‘step away’ and ‘look in’ is quite mind blowing as it introduces you to a reality and awareness that leaves you awe struck and genuinely grateful as you are able to fully appreciate life’s rich tapestry. Let us not encourage you to do any more at this point: this would be a mistake, as this is about doing less (see: Less is More). So, start by stepping away from self and looking kindly at others. Once this is done it gets easier to truly respect and look after the self and value others. This practice of self-nurture and social care moves one ever closer to the kind wisdom of the lovingly detached position.

There is much more to be said on this subject but for now we believe there is plenty of food for thought here ... Start practising this and enjoying the results!