

## Human Consciousness

We have a consciousness with great potential. It is possible to experience Creation in all its glory. Not everyone experiences that glory. Many people are only concerned with their own worries, desires or responsibilities. Our consciousness runs in its own circles. We are limiting ourselves without even knowing it. In this chapter human consciousness is approached in a number of ways. Most approaches we know; they are very 'close'. Others are perhaps unfamiliar, but we can 'feel into them'. That is how flexible our consciousness is.

### Three areas of experience

Human consciousness is not easy to define. For a long time the view was that human consciousness was rooted in thinking. Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am." We now know that human consciousness is far greater than mere thought. Your consciousness, your 'awareness' can also feel or sense. You are aware of the atmosphere in a room when several people are together. You are also aware of the emotions someone emanates when he becomes angry at you. You can also be conscious of your body. You feel a pressure in your stomach when you are nauseous. You *experience* that, you *feel* that. Then your mind wonders: "What did I eat?". So there are basically three areas where your consciousness can *be*, where it can be active or where you can have experiences.

1. Your consciousness can be *in* your **physical body**. You can feel it. You can move it. You feel it when you hurt yourself, or when you become ill. You feel it when you dance or do sports.
2. Your consciousness can also experience feelings or emotions. Some people or circumstances make you happy. Others make you anxious, angry or depressed. Your consciousness reacts to desires (attention, appetite or sex). Your consciousness responds to **feelings** and **emotions**.
3. Your consciousness can think. You can think about a problem or think about a desire. You can think of a solution and you can impel yourself into action. You can think about your life, about yesterday and tomorrow. You can even think about thinking itself.

In general, we can say that our consciousness is centred in thinking. There's the pilot, the captain of the ship, who decides on the response to physical and emotional signals and the thoughts we have. But, where *is* our consciousness? Is our consciousness exclusively contained within our thinking, and are our emotional and physical reactions, driven simply by our brain? Is our consciousness necessarily linked to the brain? The book *Eindeloos Bewustzijn (Endless Consciousness)* by Pim van Lommel describes many near-death experiences. In this book there are many examples of human consciousness in which there is perception without a functioning brain, even with absolutely no blood supply to the brain. Our consciousness is able to 'travel' to various levels of experience and observation.

There is so much more to say about our consciousness. Here are some other aspects.

- The experience of space and time is a fact. You simply cannot experience something that will happen tomorrow (time) and you cannot experience something which someone else (in a T-shirt on the south pole) experiences. You experience only what is happening at this moment in time and space. Our consciousness, when awake, is bound to our physical body in time and space.
- On many occasions your experiences are coloured by experiences from the past. If you experience something now which is very similar to an earlier event (that was very unpleasant) the experience will become more intense. You are not sure whether the treatment at the dentist will hurt just as much as last time. The drilling might not go as deeply, yet you sit with clenched fists in the chair. The past is constantly colouring your perception and consciousness but the feeling of fear is in the *now*.
- Where is your consciousness at night when you sleep? Then you also experience all kinds of things. If we dream, we still have a body. In some dreams you can rise above gravity and perform feats that in ordinary life would fail. Feelings in your dreams can sometimes be *very* intense. The emotions are enhanced. Sometimes a dream is so very nice that you actually want to remain in the dream and not wake up.

We can say that our dreams ‘happen’ to us. We cannot direct our dreams. During the day we can direct our consciousness. At night we can’t direct our consciousness. Where *is* our consciousness when we sleep? Is it still in our physical body, bound to time and space? Sometimes you are in other countries in your dream. Are you really there or are you dealing with reflections that you ‘stored’ somewhere?

We can roughly divide our personal consciousness into two parts. There is a section that we can control, where the “I” is the boss, and there is a section that we cannot control, that happens to us. When we sleep, our consciousness is in an ‘area’ we can’t control. If we are awake we have a ‘manageable’ consciousness; we can make conscious choices. But sometimes things happen in our lives that are uncontrollable. At unexpected moments some strong emotions can emerge. You can quickly become very angry or very anxious. This often happens when you are very tired. Psychologists often refer to the **self-conscious mind** and the **subconscious mind**.

The Self-conscious mind and the Subconscious mind

- The **self-conscious mind** is the personal consciousness, the **ego**. We realize who and where we are in our self-consciousness. We identify ourselves through the self-conscious mind: I am a man (or a woman), my name is John (or Mary); I am a child of so and so; I live and work there and there, I own this and that and my opinion is so and so. The self-conscious mind provides a framework; it gives structure, logic and name to our personality.

The self-conscious mind is directly linked to thinking. Even if you feel something (either emotions or sensations in your physical body) you immediately name that feeling. Self-consciousness looks at everything from the point of view from one person. Self-consciousness is the ego, the '**I consciousness**'.

- The **subconscious mind** is the consciousness that experiences our life in **sense impressions**. The subconscious mind is the *feminine* part of our consciousness. The self-conscious mind in this equation is the *masculine* part of our consciousness (Ch3). Both influence our actions and our well-being. The subconscious mind lives her own life, she feels, she reacts and reflects in feelings and emotions. The subconscious mind has her own intelligence and operates independently of the self-conscious mind. How these two relate to one another is a vast subject and this will be discussed in several chapters (Ch7 - Ch9 - Ch10 - Ch15).

The **subconscious mind** is a **reflective** mind. When you are asleep you are fully immersed in your subconscious mind. In your dreams you cannot control events. Very often you have dreams that reflect fragments of previous happenings. In your dreams you incorporate impressions from many earlier events (sometimes in strange combinations). You can also have dreams that are based on fantasy, desire, lust or fear. Most of the time your dreams have to do with your wishes, desires or fears from the previous days (or months). The subconscious mind processes and reflects what is happening to you on an emotional level.

The subconscious mind is active day and night. During the day you experience thousands of stimuli from your subconscious. You can suddenly become afraid or get a bad feeling about something. A certain person is capable of getting under your skin with a little remark, while another with a similar remark does not bother you at all. The subconscious is the feel factor in all events. It is the colour of your character. Your character determines how you 'are' in your feeling nature: whether you are hard or soft on yourself, afraid of something, or attracted to something. The subconscious mind is about your desires, your fears, your drive, your liveliness or your inertia. All this is determined by feelings and emotions that *are already present inside you*.

The **self-conscious** mind wants **order, structure, vision** and **plan**. It wants to control and to dominate. The **subconscious** mind reflects the feelings of the **past** in the **now**. The subconscious is the sum total of everything you've experienced previously (stored in feeling, in an emotional charge). The subconscious mind is the program of feeling that you carry with you. The subconscious mind actually determines your character. Your self-conscious mind has no overview of all that dwells within your subconscious mind.

Your life (inside yourself) is determined by the interplay between the self-conscious and subconscious minds. When your self-conscious mind wants to manifest something, it always needs to take into account the emotional setting of your subconscious mind to achieve that goal. If you *really* want something, the stimulus comes from a need or a desire, an emotion that

needs to be satisfied. If you never act, that can be caused by an underlying fear of failure or fear of showing yourself. Both come from an emotion that was already charged inside yourself. Your self-consciousness can set a goal but it has to take the program of your subconsciousness into account.

The subconscious mind is the 'storehouse' of all past events, saved as impressions of feelings. These feelings (emotions) come back when something happens that resembles a previous situation. Your self-consciousness, in most cases, follows the stimuli of your subconsciousness. The subconscious mind is responsible for your behaviour patterns, some of which may bother you, but you can't seem to eliminate them. In most cases the **self-conscious mind follows the subconscious mind**. Here are two examples.

- You want to get rid of a certain habit (e.g. smoking). You *know* that you should change. You know the steps you should take but you just don't do it. The desire is very strong but many outer circumstances help to maintain the habit. You repeat yourself endlessly. Your clear thinking, your rational mind says: "I want to change it in this manner". But your feelings, your mood (an emotion just below the surface), makes you do the same thing over and over again. You cannot exactly explain why you do it, but you feel the stimulus and you act.

- Paul is a manager at an IT company. He reached this position through great technical skills *and* great social skills. He can guide people in both *what* they are doing and *how* they are doing it. Monday morning he begins with a small pep talk to get everyone motivated and going. He can communicate with anyone. He knows the entire home situation of Jane, who runs the canteen, makes a comment about the new shoes of Marian, his secretary, and jokes about the latest developments on the Internet with the computer nerds. He is open, flexible and funny. He is happily married and has two smart kids. On a regular basis the family visits his parents in the province. His wife is often amazed about the childish way he acts on those occasions. And certainly when John-Peter, his younger brother is around she often has to intervene to prevent a real fight. On the way home she tries to talk about it but she can't reach him. He murmurs: "They can be so annoying." For years she knows that there are two Pauls: the one at home and work, and the one at his parents, in that 'setting' of yesterday. In his job Paul develops; he adapts. In the situation with his parents, he remains in the patterns of his childhood.

The self-conscious and subconscious minds are the two major consciousnesses that determine our lives and personal experiences. Yet there are two other forms of consciousness that play through our actions and our experiences: bodily awareness and pure awareness.

### Bodily Awareness

We can say that our self-conscious mind is about our actions within thinking, while our subconscious mind is about our actions and experiences within feelings and emotions. But what consciousness drives our physical body? Is there such a thing as bodily awareness?

If you speak intensively with someone and you are itchy somewhere, then your hand automatically goes to scratch the spot. If you suddenly fall, naturally your hands go forward. In both cases you did not act after a thought. You didn't think, "Let me scratch myself" or "I'll put my hands out to prevent falling". We can call this consciousness an instinctive consciousness. It responds to physical things without any prevailing thought or emotion. If you fall, you startle, but the act of stretching your hands out is not prompted by an emotion. It is a rapid physical response. The emotions associated with having fallen come afterwards.

When you take a long hike in the mountains, during the first half hour you must pay attention to your feet which have to adapt to walking on the uneven rocks. After an hour you don't think about your feet anymore and they will (in collaboration with your legs and the position of your pelvis) automatically find the ideal setting for your balance. The body has its own regulating (in this case 'looking for balance') consciousness.

We can also call this 'animal body awareness'. Animals also scratch and stretch their legs out when they fall. There is no thought or emotion involved. The body reacts, without a personal stimulus. The primary sexual desire is part of this animal body awareness that simply arises from the body. And what causes bodily functions? What regulates the digestive system? How does a wound heal? Is there a consciousness at work? Bodily consciousness reacts without personal input, i.e. it is **autonomous**.

## Awareness

There is a state of awareness outside our personal self-conscious mind. Everybody works with it, but we seldom realize it. This awareness is above the personality and is not coloured by what we need or want. Your self- and subconsciousness are your personal consciousnesses. Those *are yours*. Your awareness is an impersonal state of consciousness. It is colourless, neutral, just relaxed **awareness**.

Awareness 'knows'. Your awareness sometimes works *through* your personal self-consciousness. In life threatening situations (car accidents), where rapid decisions have to be made about life or death, the pure awareness 'speaks'. Afterwards you realize, "I just knew what I had to do, there was no reasoning in advance." Also when you have to make major decisions, which will affect the course of your life (partner, work, moving houses), often this awareness works. The state of pure awareness brings us to our **intuition**.

It can happen suddenly that you 'fall' into impersonal awareness. It may be a hushed moment on vacation or in nature. Everything falls into place and time seems to stand still. You watch everything as if you are not yourself. You feel connected to everything around you. Sometimes you're just in 'awareness' when you first wake up, when lying dozing on the couch and slowly the reality of the day comes back. Then you can choose to go back to just not being who you are (with all your responsibilities and your plans). Awareness 'is'; there's no hurry and no judgement.

Pure **awareness** is also called the **watcher**. Something inside yourself is watching everything that happens to you. Maybe you can recall a situation where you were mad at someone and swearing, and at the same time you 'see' yourself doing it? Something deep inside realizes what you are doing, but you *are* already doing it. When you're addicted to cigarettes and sweets you repeat your habitual actions. 'Somewhere in the background' you know it's not good for you but you do it anyway. You *see* yourself committing the act. Everybody has an observer, a watcher. Most of the time the watcher is far away, in the background. You are often completely absorbed by what happens to you and the reactions from your ego.

The watcher, pure awareness is always **in the moment**. Your subconsciousness reflects the *past* in the now and your self-consciousness tries to analyse and to plan the *future*. Your personal consciousnesses are engaged in the reflections of the past or in planning the future. Awareness experiences only the now, the moment. Your awareness (the watcher inside) has the ability to see every moment in your life from a place of peace and trust. It is the connection with your inner knowing, your intuition, your **Heart** and **Soul**.

#### The Soul and the Heart

It is not easy to describe the human Soul. Every man is a Soul. The Soul is our **Divine Essence**. During our lives the Soul can have experiences *through* our personality. The Soul is 'eternal' and exists above the circle of life and death (Ch9). The Soul works *through us* when we use our intuition or when we are inspired (the word inspiration comes from 'being in spirit'). We feel our Soul 'as our conscience speaks'. Because we are completely identified with our personality (our self- and subconscious minds) most of us are not in contact with our free, intuitive Soul-awareness. There is a direct connection between pure **awareness**, the **watcher** and the **Soul**.

Your **Heart** is directly connected to the universal truth of your Soul. Your Heart *feels* the truth. The Heart in this context is not the physical heart but a chakra, an energy centre in your body (Ch12). This is reflected in your sense of justice, the compassion you feel towards others and in the deep longing for peace and harmony. You feel the universal values of life (in which we are connected) via your Soul and your Heart. The value and the function of our Soul and our Heart will become more clear as the chapters unveil themselves.

#### The evolution of human consciousness

Our consciousness has been evolving over the centuries. What kind of consciousness did a caveman have? Was he aware of his thoughts as we are? Did he think and talk much at all? Was he just chatting away there at the entrance of his cave? Probably not. There were not many things to talk about. Probably he was much more connected to nature than we are. Not in a thinking way but in an intuitive, bodily-feeling way.

During the last few centuries the human mind developed a strong focus on thinking and mental understanding. The way we can understand the world around us is constantly evolving. We can see a growth, an acceleration in our ability to understand things. The development of the sciences, the media and information resources has contributed to this. The ability to think 'abstractly' is an achievement of great value. Concepts such as *energy*, *electricity* and *other dimensions* were not part of the everyday language 150 years ago. Human understanding is continually changing. This makes it possible now to look at ourselves and our consciousness in a more differentiated and analytical way.

In the following chapters the possibilities and impossibilities of human consciousness are described from a very large cosmic perspective. Every human being has a consciousness that is basically free and that moves within a cosmic structure that works with certain laws. These laws are universal; they are the same for everyone. Every man is a Soul, a Divine spark that has the ability to grow in consciousness, to grow in 'becoming aware' of his Divine Origin. If everyone would do this, the world would be very different. Everyone would be able to function more freely in his or her own consciousness. We all are very busy with ourselves. If we are able to live from free awareness, there is enough energy to help others. Not because we *want to do so*, but because we simply *can*. Insight into the structures and patterns in which our consciousness functions can help us to explore the possibility of free choice (Ch10).

## Summary

Our consciousness can have experiences in three areas: body, emotions and thinking. Thinking is the activity of the personal self-conscious mind. Our self-conscious mind gives us a name and identity. Emotions are processed in our personal subconscious mind, which senses the world around us and mirrors feelings and emotions from the past in the now. Your self-conscious mind (your personality, your ego) thinks it is in charge, but the activities of your subconscious mind determine to a large extent how you feel and how you act. The characteristics of the subconscious mind are the following:

- it experiences feelings and emotions
- it is a reflective consciousness
- it is programmed in the past
- it is always with you and it never sleeps
- it influences your thinking and your actions
- its programming determines your character

The activities of our subconscious mind result in repeating ourselves in our attitude towards life and our behaviour. A lot of energy and vitality is lost in this. How to manage this is the subject of many chapters (Ch9-Ch10-Ch11-Ch15-Ch18).

Our body has its own consciousness. It can react to physical movements without our personal input. On the maintenance level it works autonomously. We can 'sink' with our consciousness into bodily awareness (Ch10-Ch17-Ch20).

The self- and subconscious minds are our personal consciousnesses. There is another place, a free space from where we can fully 'watch' ourselves. We call this 'pure awareness'. From awareness you have the overview of your life. It is the connection with your inner knowing, your intuition, your Heart and Soul. This awareness is most of the time overpowered by the activities of the ego: the self-conscious mind that wants to control your life and the subconscious mind that responds to stimuli from the past. But every human being has a free choice to live from the free awareness.

Our Soul is our Divine Essence and is eternal.

Human consciousness can be divided into five levels:

Soul

Pure Awareness

Self-consciousness

Subconsciousness

Bodily Awareness

- The collaboration between our self- and subconscious minds determines to a large extent whether we feel happy or not (and on a deeper level it determines our health). In the following chapters the possibilities of our consciousness are described from the Gnosis, the esoteric knowledge of the universal laws. Some chapters bring new insights into the functioning of our self- and subconscious minds. At the end of every chapter these insights are brought back to practical proportions under the title: **Mapping consciousness**