

Unconsciousness

Nothing can be seen that will free you

Sense of what self is	Self = ego/mind * Self = stable entity over time * Complete separation from outer life and other “selves” * Self = body, traits, roles, history, beliefs * All of this completely unobserved
Awareness of ego	Identification with ego is absolute and unobserved
Relationship to time	Past and future feel real, are where attention often is * Impression of life as a flow over time * Present is seldom experienced
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Ceaseless mental activity, unobserved * Complete identification with thought (which appears “true”) * Deep in unrecognized belief systems * Discomfort with not-knowing * Thought is used to manage or avoid feelings, which distort into emotions (suffering)
Nature of emotional life	Emotions completely subject to mental activity/patterns * Impression of being at the mercy of life * Spontaneous feeling confused with thought-driven emotional reactivity * Constant roller coaster of intense emotions (fear, desire, anger, shame, envy, etc.)
Relationship between inner & outer life	Life happens “to” you * Constant attempt to gain control over life * Assumption that the way to improve inner state is to fix outer circumstances * At the mercy of conditioning (unobserved) * Blame or credit events and circumstances for how you are inside * Resistance, reactivity, and judgment are rampant, unnoticed, not seen as optional
Perception of choice	Seen to operate in realm of action/behavior, but not in thought or emotion * No sense of choice in whether to believe a thought * No sense of choice in how outer life affects or changes you
Primary focus/motivator	Fulfillment of desire, escape from pain * Fear and grasping * Wish for security * Constant vigilance * Self-maintenance and enhancement * Concern with personal features and outer circumstances
What appears real	Egoic self * Other selves * Experience * Mental and emotional activity * Belief * Time and things “in” time
Characteristic statement	“Life sucks” alternating with “Life rocks”

A Little Consciousness

Seeing becomes possible * Occasional flickers of consciousness

Sense of what self is	Continuing solid sense of self and separation from all, with occasional observation of this
Awareness of ego	Glimmers of awareness that there is an ego * Occasional witnessing of ego in action
Relationship to time	Recognition of power of past and future * Present seldom experienced
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Dawning awareness of how busy the mind is, and of its role in suffering * Continued ceaseless mental activity and identification with thoughts * Thoughts are “true” * Thoughts still used to manage or avoid feelings * Ongoing search for better (“truer”) beliefs
Nature of emotional life	Some awareness that emotional burden is outcome of thought patterns and conditioning
Relationship between inner & outer life	Beginning of awareness of how at the mercy you are of outer life developments * Conditioning expresses itself, largely unobserved * New conditioning occurs, largely unobserved
Perception of choice	Realization of some choice re: where attention is directed (e.g., on activity of ego-mind, on inner state versus outer life)
Primary focus/motivator	Same as with total unconsciousness (fulfillment of desire, escape from pain, enhancement of self) * Growing desire for equanimity and release from suffering, but with familiar wish to achieve that via control of life and self
What appears real	Same as with total unconsciousness (egoic self, other selves, experience, mental and emotional activity, belief, time and things “in” time)
Characteristic statement	“My ego is a creepy little bastard, and I can’t seem to get the upper hand.”

Increasing Episodes of Consciousness

More is seen

Sense of what self is	Growing observation of self as doer, thinker, feeler, reactor * Growing sense that there's something else here, watching
Awareness of ego	Growing awareness of predominance of ego and how it functions * Recognition of attachment, reactivity, identification, resistance, conditioning, as it manifests * Discomfort with what's seen (self-judgment, cringing, tendency to denial, attempts to "fix" or justify ego)
Relationship to time	Growing attunement to mechanics of fear, hope, regret, and the pull of unresolved issues from the past * Sense of being on a journey toward awakening
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Occasional awareness of thoughts-as-thoughts, and of their power over the emotional life * Growing desire for spiritual "knowledge" * Observation of the power of belief and its role in sustaining the ego * Beginning of the awareness of the option to believe (or not to believe) a thought * Beginning of the awareness that a thought is a <i>made</i> thing
Nature of emotional life	Early awareness of spontaneous feeling, and how thought reacts to that, and how thought causes emotion
Relationship between inner & outer life	Occasional experience of gap between outer and inner >>> peace, immersion in presence, sense of option in response, relaxation of appearance of causality * Conditioning sometimes observed in action (both old and new)
Perception of choice	Occasional observation, in the moment, of gap between thought and emotion, and the causal relationship between the two
Primary focus/motivator	Same as before (fulfillment of desire, escape from pain, enhancement of self), with additional focus on present moment and on inner life * Growing wish for inner peace (but reluctance to let go of other – fears, satisfactions, etc.)
What appears real	Much of the same continues feeling real (egoic self, other selves, mental and emotional activity, experience, belief, time and things in time), but now attention from within the "state" outside ego also feels real, in a way that's both more substantial and fleeting
Characteristic statement	"How can I get ecstatic experiences to occur, and how can I get them to last?"

Conscious Moments Occur Regularly

(but unconsciousness still predominates) * Still more becomes apparent

Sense of what self is	Softening sense of solid self * Growing awareness of our in-common humanity (more alike than different)
Awareness of ego	Increasing awareness of ego-in-action, with observation of how ego maintains itself and how “self” appears to benefit from ego maintenance * Better able to observe ego neutrally, without angst, avoidance, wish to change it
Relationship to time	Past and future increasingly seen as thoughts (i.e., not real) * Growing present-moment awareness
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Attunement to difference between thinking and attention * Recognition of the mind’s limited ability to access truth * Beliefs beginning to lose power * More able to observe thought without getting caught up in it, equating it with reality
Nature of emotional life	More able to stay with spontaneous feeling, without resistance or mental management of it * Emotions less volatile, seeming less to have a life of their own
Relationship between inner & outer life	Increasingly resistance gives way to acceptance * Reactivity is less automatic * Growing awareness that inner orientation plays a significant role in how life feels
Perception of choice	To believe a thought (or not) * To think or to attend * To be in the now or to be in the head * To resist or to accept * To allow circumstance to shape inner condition or to decline to * To stay with spontaneous feeling (or escape into the head)
Primary focus/motivator	Wanting to awaken, to be freed of torment
What appears real	Much of the same (egoic self, other selves, thought, experience, time), but the “higher” self is increasingly sensed, felt to be outside egoic impressions of reality
Characteristic statement	“I’m going to wake up if it kills me.”

Consciousness Predominates

(with lapses into unconsciousness) * Little is missed

Sense of what self is	Self and the now sometimes experienced as the same “thing” * Occasional loss of moorings, disorientation, fear (of “death”)
Awareness of ego	Ego acts up occasionally and is nearly always observed, when it does * Ego is taken less seriously (because less and less it seems to be what you <i>are</i>)
Relationship to time	Past and future lose their grip, as they are seen to be thoughts only, not “real” * More contentment with the present, just as it is
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Thought occurs less on its own, and less compulsively * Thought tends to be more practical than egoic * Diminishing inclination to use the mind to “know” the truth * Thought used less to manage or avoid feeling * Thought recognized more consistently as thought * Optional to believe a thought * Increasingly in not-knowing (sometimes comfortably, sometimes unnerved)
Nature of emotional life	Unresisted momentary feeling is the norm * Feeling is not managed by thought, causing emotion, so emotional life is very quiet * Feeling is brief (but may be strong), lasting about as long as what stirred it into being
Relationship between inner & outer life	Acceptance is the norm * Less inclination to blame life, to look to it for fulfillment * Reactivity only very occasional * Conditioning recognized; little new conditioning occurs
Perception of choice	Primary choice is seen: to identify with ego or with consciousness
Primary focus/motivator	Being in the now * Knowing reality
What appears real	What is happening now, what’s perceivable via senses, present-moment feeling
Characteristic statement	“Maybe it doesn’t matter so much if I ever wake up” (since increasingly, the present, as it is, is what seems real . . . and since the desire to awaken is recognized as a <i>thought</i>).

Pure, Stable Consciousness

All is seeing

Sense of what self is	No separate "I" * End of subject-object awareness * Self = all that is, the space in which everything occurs * Self = consciousness * Personality is readily assumed when needed but is not identified with and is not confused with reality * Dual awareness of being personality and space, form and formlessness
Awareness of ego	Ego seen as entirely artificial, unable to convince you of its reality, since consciousness does not waver, and identification with consciousness is complete
Relationship to time	Only now feels real * "Life" = now (only) * Past and future seen as thoughts only, never entered into as though reality * Ongoing stillness, rather than apparent movement ("through" time)
Orientation to thought & knowledge	Mind is quiet except when needed for something practical * Mind serves at the pleasure of consciousness * Thought never mistaken for reality * Comfort with not-knowing * Understanding (which comes via consciousness, not thought) continues to deepen
Nature of emotional life	Suffering has ended * Thought-generated emotion is a thing of the past * Feelings are fully allowed (so there is occasional pain, like grief) * Pain (because not resisted) does not persist and leaves no residue, no conditioning
Relationship between inner & outer life	No sense of being separate from present-moment life * Inner and outer are all one ("what's happening now") * No impulse to judge or resist (because not separate from what is) * You <i>are</i> what is * Inner state seldom affected by outer things
Perception of choice	Primary choice exercised is how wide or narrow to direct awareness (along the scale from a defined person to all-that-is, space itself)
Primary focus/motivator	What is (the now) * Concern for others
What appears real	Consciousness * The space in which all occurs
Characteristic statement	"This is what's happening."

Degrees of Consciousness: Overview

Consciousness is *Being* sensing itself in the encounter with momentary reality.

Unconsciousness is the norm for humankind. Life is lived entirely within the enclosed container of the narrowly-defined self. Nothing can be seen that will bring freedom.

Then, for some . . .

A catalyst occurs: a severe loss . . . a deep longing to know the truth . . . weariness of suffering . . . a vivid experience of beingness. The spiritual life begins. It has become possible to see, even with a small amount of consciousness.

With the growing willingness to *see*, without resistance or judgment or mental filters, the light of consciousness increases (gradually or abruptly), ebbs and flows, perhaps eventually becoming the predominant awareness.

It may be that at some point . . .

The walls of the the narrowly-defined self collapse. The shift to full wakefulness represents a *qualitative* shift (not just “more” consciousness), leaving pure, stable consciousness.

Keep in mind . . .

Each moment is simply itself, as it is, not necessarily indicative of a stable condition.

Consciousness doesn't necessarily develop in a strictly linear way, in the stages depicted.

Growing degrees of consciousness may occur gradually or abruptly, and may or may not endure.

- Jan Frazier www.JanFrazierTeachings.com

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