



The Nature of Knowing That We Know, by Duane Elgin

Â

The word "consciousness" literally means "that with which we know." It has also been termed the "knowing faculty". To live more consciously means to be more consciously aware, moment by moment, that we are present in all that we do. [...] When we do the countless things that make up our daily lives, we remember the being that is involved in those activities. We remember ourselves (and to "re-member" is to make whole; it is the opposite of "dis-memberment"). To live consciously is to move through life with conscious self-remembering. [â€]

We all have the ability to consciously know ourselves as we move through life. The capacity to "witness" the unfolding of our lives is not an ability that is remote or hidden from us. To the contrary, this is an experience that is so close, so intimate, and so ordinary, that we easily overlook its presence and significance. An old adage states: "It's a rare fish that knows it swims in water." Analogously, the challenge of living voluntarily is not in gaining access to the conscious experiencing of ourselves but rather consciously recognizing the presence of this experience, and then learning the skills of sustaining our opening to that experience. [â€]

Despite the utter simplicity of being consciously watchful of our lives, this is a demanding activity. At first it is a struggle to just occasionally remember ourselves moving through the daily routine. A brief moment of self-remembering is followed by an extended period where we are lost in the flow of thought and the demands of the exterior world. Yet with practice, we find that we can more easily remember ourselves -- while walking down the street, or while we are at home, at work, at play. We come to recognize, as direct experience, the nature of "knowing that we know". As our familiarity with this mode of perception increases, we get lost in thought and worldly activities less and less frequently. In turn, we experience our behavior in the world as more and more choiceful, or voluntary.

The conscious knowing of ourselves as we live our lives affords us insight into the workings of the ego. We are increasingly liberated from habitual and automated patterns of behavior, thought and feeling.

- By Duane Elgin, from "Voluntary Simplicity"
[<http://awakeningearth.org>]

Â

