



Institute for
the Awakened Mind

Eight States of Consciousness

By C. Maxwell Cade

1) Deep Sleep

Let us begin by meditating upon Deep Sleep. Where does our mind go when we are totally unconscious? Are our minds “switched on and off” by purely physical mechanisms? Or do we direct these changes? If we direct them, how do we wake up when we are totally unconscious in sleep?

2) Dreaming Sleep

We must clearly distinguish normal dreams from lucid dreams, in which we are aware of the fact that we are dreaming, and therefore aware of the existence of a separate waking state. Then we have purely “fantasy” dreams, and dreams which represent recurrent waking problems. Consider for a little while the difference between these two kinds of dreaming.

3) Waking State

Now consider waking, and particularly the difference between self-aware waking and non-self-aware waking. The difference between the kind of acute mindfulness told in the Zen stories, and the zombie-like state in which many of us spend much of our waking time.

4) Meditation

Now move on to meditation, and compare the great clarity and sharp awareness of your best meditation with the poor initiation offered by the waking state. Note, too, how the meditative state is often illuminated by the light of intuitive understanding.

5) State Five

Some of you will already have experienced State Five consciousness in the form of the so-called “afterglow” of meditation, when, for a few minutes (or occasionally longer) you go about your ordinary business with the same calmness and detachment that accompanies meditation. This seems to be the states in which the Saints, and many remarkable men like Einstein, existed. It contains many of the characteristics of the waking state and the meditative state, but is identical with neither or them.

6) Creativity

This is a level into which most people rise at least for a few brief spells, while others have longish spells or can even attain the level at will, when circumstances are right for the effort. It is a state in which the vast creative

knowledge of the unconscious is available for the creative solution of problems and for self-expression in creative forms. We may not be painters, sculptors or musicians, nor even technological inventors, but we have all, at same time or other, expressed ourselves rather well, in a letter, gardening, decorating, and especially in human relations. It is the condition in which we all rise out of ourselves just a little bit.

7) Psychedelia

This, according to Gowan, differs from creativity mainly in that one need only clearly see the problem, or the desired end, and the difficulties begin to melt away and the result is achieved. Like the 6th level, it is rather a level to which one rises more or less often, than one in which a person dwells. Yet a few do – see R. N. Bucke's list of the "illuminati" in Cosmic Consciousness.

8) Cosmic Consciousness

This superlative level is the same as the Psychedelia of Gowan, the Self-Actualization of Maslow, the Universal Mind of Troward, the Essence of Being of Zen, and a hundred names from as many different spiritual disciplines. It is one which is so far above our normal level that it is rather pointless to speculate. However, as Gowan and others have pointed out, in Level 8 those abilities which are intermittently attained in Levels 6 and 7 now become permanent.