We cannot help but be students of consciousness. The mind is ever present, rarely switching itself off, and should it decide to do so it lacks the means. The body invites depth and expansion, consciousness even more so.

R. D. Laing acknowledges that attending to the body, without attending to the mind, consciousness, and feelings, does not go far enough in addressing psychoemotional disturbance and conflict. Laing’s groundbreaking book on schizophrenia, *The Divided Self*, attracted many who recognized his insight as an essential contribution to the humanistic movement of the 1960s (Laing 1960/2010).

Have you noticed the majority of us, yoga teachers included, are mildly or otherwise, bipolar, intermittently psychotic, quietly schizophrenic, unknowingly or knowingly neurotic, or simply anxious? Mental and emotional conflict is common to the human condition. Our minds are subject to the contagion of conditioning. This observation, made many centuries ago, led to the development of yoga and its interest in the nature of consciousness and the conditioned mind.

The body houses consciousness and the mind. Consciousness implies so much more than being conscious. Consciousness is more expansive than a mind or a self. In the strictest sense, consciousness and the mind are not synonymous. There is a distinction between the mind and consciousness. The mind is

The body-self is not an inviolable stronghold against the corrosion of ontological doubts and uncertainties: it is not in itself a bulwark against psychosis.

—R. D. Laing (1960/2010)
within consciousness. Consciousness is the process through which a mind can refer to itself. Yoga’s interpretation of consciousness refers to an experience that includes deep awakening, expansion, lucidity, and dynamization. The mind is a part of consciousness and can focus on consciousness in order to change itself. Lucid, awakened consciousness contains the same activity as normal consciousness but puts it in a transcendent perspective.

Consciousness is grounded in the body. We need the body’s material sense from which to examine the nonmateriality of consciousness. Tissue engagement gives consciousness a point of reference. As the tension of tissue engagement disperses, consciousness itself can dissolve thought and conditioning. Dispersing tissue engagement disperses the tension of thought. We can work with the body while enabling the essence of consciousness.

The space of lucid consciousness can take or leave the mind’s contents. We experience the potential depth and breadth of consciousness within a setting of consciousness.

Yoga edits the contents of the mind within consciousness, inviting us to choose between negative and positive aspects and look at what is actually relevant within the hubris. We learn to recognize mental activity for what it is and, if necessary, modify or penetrate the behavior of thought. Consciously addressing consciousness makes space for incoming material. Mulling over mental activity can be fruitful or disturbing depending on how we perceive it.

Consciousness encompasses awareness and we are aware of consciousness. Awareness takes in all the activity within its field. Dynamic consciousness, on the other hand, has a penetrating intensity, an intensification of attention that passes through and beyond everything within its field.

Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows … The Self manifests through the organism; but there is always some part of the Self unmanifested; and always, as it seems, some power of organic expression held in abeyance or reserve. (James 1902/2018)

Dividing the indivisible

Antonio Damasio writes: “If ‘self-consciousness’ is taken to mean ‘consciousness with a sense of self,’ then all human consciousness is necessarily covered by the term—there is just no other kind of consciousness as far as I can see” (Damasio 2000). His statement is in accord with Krishnamurti’s subjective observation that there is only one consciousness. Consciousness is a continuum from below up, from above down, from a periphery to a center, or from a center to a periphery.

Evolutionary phases of consciousness are indivisible, and they are enfolded within one another. Exactly when and how each phase came about is unknown. Ancient phases of consciousness may have had a greater time span than more recent ego consciousness. Consciousness has taken the
time it needed to get from then to now, but stems from the same origin. The chemistry of behavior applies to ancient and current consciousness.

To understand behavior and experience, consciousness has been divided into layers, depths, and qualities. How experience arrives into consciousness is unknown, maybe because, pathology and trauma aside, consciousness and experience are indivisible, each having contributed to the unfoldment of the other. We are conscious of our experience and we experience consciousness. Experiences have stimulated the development of consciousness, and subsequent stages of consciousness have refined experience.

Consciousness and experience have driven each other, but yoga practitioners, through mindful experimentation, have separated experience from consciousness. We can observe experience from a lucid consciousness, but this too is the experience of observing one's experience, that is unless we enter a trance state and are unable to record the experience.

It is suggested that sensory information entered a primitive nervous system and stimulated the onset of a primordial consciousness that established an early self. Early consciousness thrived on sensory experience. A mind developed as consciousness unfolded, both grounded in the material base of a brain, supported by the body. Nonmaterial consciousness emanates from the material density of a body and brain. Living tissue is the material aspect of a self.

Tissue gives us substance and although immeasurably expressive is limited in expression compared to our minds, which are fluid, unbounded, unpredictable, and give us considerable potential for change. Mind and consciousness lack substance but are substantially present. The yoga experience
invites a less material body and a more material consciousness. In tandem with physics, yoga proposes consciousness as a subtle form of matter and matter as a condensation of consciousness. Consciousness has a density that can be divided.

Ancient and recent aspects of consciousness influence each other. We bring the subconscious with us. Deeper experiences invite speculation as to what channels have opened up, or why they were previously inaccessible. Freud saw the difficulty in giving the mind an anatomical structural basis. The physical brain provides a mind, but the mind is without physical structure. An anatomy of the mind is contrived but provides a working framework.

Eastern practice identifies elements of consciousness on its own terms—an undertaking that spanned centuries of personal inquiry. In the West, the more recent advent of psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and physics have categorized elements of the mind and consciousness from a different though complementary perspective. Consciousness and minds are of the same fabric.

We could accept one consciousness containing variable activity and leave it at that. But the mind’s drifting contents, its fixations, and the nature of consciousness present a variety of possibilities. Although seemingly indivisible, of the various elements identified some may be experienced. We are aware of consciousness, its contents, and aware of our material and nonmaterial self. We can also acknowledge various aspects of consciousness that have arisen out of sensation, out of one another, how they might resonate with our experience, and how their awakening contributes to our potential for change.

Dividing consciousness

Yoga suggests a consciousness beyond daily wakeful consciousness. Its totality is a force of nature. We have consciousness and consciousness has us. Consciousness can perceive itself in its raw state and we can use it to dissolve body–mind tension and conditioning.

According to Antonio Damasio, consciousness does depend most critically on brain regions that are evolutionarily older and are located in the depth of the brain rather than on its surface. The processes involved are anchored in ancient neural structures intimately associated with the regulation of life, rather than on the modern neural achievements of the neocortex which permit fine perception, language, and high reason. Consciousness arises from a deep and lower order. The light of consciousness is carefully hidden and venerably ancient (Damasio 2000).

The mind contains thought and consciousness contains the mind. Consciousness has involuntary roots. We didn’t do consciousness for it to evolve, although our actions contributed to its development. At its simplest consciousness can be divided from below up into an unconscious, subconscious, preconscious, and conscious.

Consciousness unfolded into an awareness of itself. In The Ever-Present Origin, Jean Gebser goes further, proposing various evolutionary phases of consciousness and suggesting they remain latent in us. Each
phase is not superseded by the next but remains enfolded within its predecessors. The inception of each phase is imprecise, but each is a next stage emerging from our primal heritage. We bring all phases into present-day consciousness and may be aware of their presence during experiences encountered in practice. When we are feeling consciousness, what kind of consciousness might we be feeling?

**Archaic consciousness**

This suggests a total innocence that supports our sense of oneness with all things. It suggests a harmonious, undisturbed, nondifferentiated relationship with the universe preceding our awakening into conscious awareness (Gebser 1949/1985). Archaic consciousness may arise in advanced meditative states.

**Magical consciousness**

Magical consciousness reflects an egoless, boundless state, comparable to modern-day trance. Magical man acts without knowing but begins to experience himself as a part of a group having a profound unity with the world and wonder of it (Gebser 1949/1985). The “wonder” experience of magical consciousness is common in group work.

**Mythical consciousness**

This phase is still defined by group identity before the complete consolidation of the separate self. We step out of nature and begin to become conscious of our individuality. We no longer merge with the universe as we awaken to the beginning of a self and discriminate between our own experience and group experience. “Mythical consciousness indicates the onset of imagination, an awareness of inner life, and the polarity between group and separative consciousness. This phase mirrors the merging of group and personal experience” (Gebser 1949/1985). It is as if we touch mythical consciousness as we come out of the vast unitive feel, during deep-tissue meditative states, and discriminate between our own experience and that of the group.

Archaic, magical, and mythical consciousness continue to feed our experience. Oneness with the group blending with our individuality is the common experience.
Mental consciousness

Man leaves the protection of the group to further develop his individuality. Georg Feuerstein, paraphrasing Jean Gebser, describes this stage as becoming fully crystallized during the period around the eras of the Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Socrates. Man develops a dualistic, “either/or” consciousness, with a strong individualistic sense of identity. The separative ego is reinforced during the stage between mythical and mental consciousness. Logic emerged around this period (Feuerstein 1974). Mental consciousness may provide us with the tools needed to choreograph the group dynamic as we guide them through deeper states.

Our observations and suggestions to groups may spring from mental consciousness fed by the deeper realms of archaic, magical, and mythical consciousness.

Spatial consciousness

As we separated ourselves from our environment and the group, we moved into spatial consciousness, which we mastered through thought. Spatial consciousness gave us the inner space within which we could develop discursive thought (Gebser 1949/1985). Our work moves us between the presence and absence of thought, between inner space and the condensation of thinking. Spatial consciousness acts as the essential door to the yoga experience and how to communicate it.

We access spatial consciousness as we give space to our experience and give time for appropriate decision making in teaching. Our work highlights the benefits of spatial consciousness, while acknowledging a tendency for it to fill itself with activity of its own making.

Extended consciousness

Extended consciousness can cover a large area of the external environment and peer deeply into our internal environment (Gebser 1949/1985). Extended consciousness can blend our external and internal environment simultaneously. We can feel an inner depth connecting to the outer world. Tuning into this connection feels like the beginning of the combined microcosmic and macrocosmic experience. We tune into extended consciousness as we guide others through current experience and underlying depth, while drawing attention to the bigger picture.

Integral consciousness

Integral consciousness is a consolidation of consciousesses that have unfolded from one another. Integral consciousness recognizes emotional fluency, personal responsiveness, reverence for all life, and the capacity for service and love. “We must submit to the difficult task of personally actualizing the essential features of the integral consciousness, such as self-knowledge, global thinking and social responsibility” (Feuerstein 1974).

Jean Gebser points out that integral consciousness is not identical to intelligence but is an intensification of consciousness rather than an expansion. Our work shows consciousness intensification as a
consequence of the sensation of expansion. Sensory expansion illuminates consciousness as the central feature of our experience.

Gebser wrote: “There is no so-called unconscious. There are only various modalities (or intensities) of consciousness; a one-dimensional Magical, a two-dimensional Mythical and a three-dimensional Mental consciousness. And there will also be an integral four-dimensional consciousness of the whole” (Gebser 1949/1985). Perhaps we pass through all four dimensions.

**Dynamic or pure consciousness**

Dynamic or pure consciousness might be described as an awakened unification of all categories, characterised by lucidity, the feeling of oneness, and an advanced state of self-aware consciousness devoid of mental, emotional, or sensory distractions. Pure consciousness is a term used by Krishnamacharya as recounted by his son (Desikachar & Krusche 2014). But the term *dynamic* can be used in reference to pure consciousness due to its sheer force. Dynamic consciousness appears to cut through everything within its field of awareness including its concept of itself. The additional intensification of dynamic consciousness gives an impression of pervading all things.

Philosopher William James may have referred to dynamic consciousness when he wrote:

"The fact is that mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content of its own. … as a rule, mystical states merely add supersensuous meaning to the ordinary outward data of consciousness. They are excitements like the emotions of love or ambition, [and they carry feelings] of vastness, of union, of safety, and of rest. (James 1902/2018)

Dynamic or pure consciousness feels as if it arises out of a spatial consciousness that gives space to everything within our experience. Spatial consciousness minimizes all experience within itself and produces a dynamically vital consciousness that cuts through all remaining activity. The result is a lucid force of emptiness, a powerfully flowing action without content or boundary.

**Dynamic consciousness is the incisive tool that cuts through the walls of conditioning and leads to transcendent experiences. Words do not come easily at this point and come from a distance. We may deliver a well-spaced word or two to acknowledge the experience and anchor a group.**

**Rational consciousness**

Georg Feuerstein observed that over the last several centuries consciousness has congealed and *rationalized*, a condition he describes as fatally imbalanced. We live by a rational consciousness which is deficient, corrupted (his perception), conditions our awareness, colors our perceptions, and is the antithesis of realization and the deeper yoga experience. Attending to rational consciousness, observing and penetrating its turbulence, is an essential aspect of our work.
As we immerse with groups it seems clear that spatial consciousness provides an essential aspect of the entire experience. Space within consciousness, and space around conscious experience, enables a lucid appreciation of all that we are, do, and share.

As sensation passes through awareness, look into your mind. Identify a spatial consciousness that contains your mind and is larger than the activity within it.

Minds

The terms mind and consciousness are interchangeable. The mind has been defined as the seat of consciousness, but consciousness represents the foundation for the mind. We refer to altered states of consciousness, not altered states of mind. We may have a state of mind in reference to mood, slant, or fixation. We might be in two minds or out of our minds.

As consciousness deepens and opens, it penetrates and opens the mind. Consciousness, the state of being aware, came first and is the medium through which we experience reality. The mind is the product of consciousness and is contained within the space of consciousness, and consciousness lies at the heart of the mind. The mind gives access to dynamic consciousness, and dynamic consciousness can penetrate the mind.

Consciousness is much more than our ego. It is even, according to yoga, much more than our minds. Scientists are beginning to ask the question, “How does mind give rise to consciousness?” Yoga would ask: “How does consciousness give rise to the mind?” (Iyengar 2005).

The mind is the tool of consciousness. We use our mind to turn our attention toward consciousness. The word mind comes from the old English word gemynnd for memory, arising from the Greek menos meaning intent or purpose, a derivative of mimneskeithai to recall or remember. The Sanskrit word manas means mind or sense. The Indo-European word minden means to remember, remind, notice, or turn one’s attention to. A mind is also defined as: that with which a person thinks; the incorporeal (nonmaterial) subject of the psychical faculties; mental or psychical; to attend to, give heed to; being; and to perceive, to have one’s attention caught by.

We can draw on several of these definitions. Memory – the mind is connected to the past. Thinking – the mind becomes the tool of thought (the antithesis of emptiness). The words think and remember have the same root. Thought therefore is based on past experience and cannot be relied upon for self-transcendence. To notice or turn one’s attention to is more positive. The mind cannot directly transcend itself, because its contents are the result of past experiences and expectations based on those experiences. But the mind can notice itself within consciousness and can be attentive to itself by directing consciousness. Change occurs in the act of noticing.

The mind and consciousness may attend to each other, but consciousness is the underlying predominant force.
Yogis attempted to transcend the mind and dynamize consciousness. The attentive mind can enter its conditioned aspects to reveal pure consciousness. Consciousness can then deliver a deeply present way of being that disperses all superfluous activity. Consciousness does the work.

Brains and minds

I cannot feel my brain but am aware of my mind and consciousness. However hard I think, I cannot feel my brain thinking. When teaching I am unaware of a brain. I know it is there but I cannot feel it. However deeply we go, I cannot feel the tissues of my brain as I can my skin or breath. Being unable to feel my brain in no way affects the quality of the work. Laing’s The Divided Self makes no reference to brain parts or chemistry, but directs attention to the possibilities that arise when people are listened to. Krishnamurti and Rajneesh made no reference to the neurological circuitry of consciousness; it was not their job. Their fundamental interest lay in drawing attention to the potential changes that come from examining the subjective nature of experience. The study of the brain is necessary but beyond our sensory experience. Understanding brain anatomy and physiology does not change the quality of consciousness as we work. Our focus is the nature of experience through attention, a science in itself.

Antonio Damasio writes: “It is nice to know a little bit about how the brain does its job, but it is not necessary at all to experience anything. It will be even nicer to know more about the brain but not because that will be helpful at all to experience the world” (Damasio 2000).

Divisions of the mind are more relevant to our experience, although conclusions remain hypothetical. There have been no
major breakthroughs in understanding the mind since Freud wrote in 1940:

We know two things concerning what we call our psyche or mental life: firstly, its bodily organ and scene of action, the brain, (or nervous system), and secondly, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be more fully explained by any kind of description. Everything that lies between these two terminal points is unknown to us and, so far as we are aware, there is no direct relation between them. If it existed, it would at most afford an exact localization of the processes of consciousness and could give us no help toward understanding them. (Freud in Lowen 1958)

The depth mind

Freud suggested states and divisions of mind still in use today. He proposed that while some aspects of the unconscious were unavailable to awareness, others were available within a preconscious mind, implying that the subconscious and conscious were linked preconsciously. The preconscious mind held repressed material that could be released into consciousness to be assimilated and processed. He wrote: “The state in which ideas existed before being made conscious is called by us repression, and we assert that the force which instituted the repression and maintains it is perceived as resistance during the work of analysis. Thus we obtain our concept of the unconscious from the theory of repression” (Freud 1927/1962).

Repressed material reflects a conditioned state of not wanting to feel, not knowing how to feel, and not realizing that more might be felt. There are endless patterns of conditioning, imposed by belief systems, culture, ideas on living, and personal history that lie outside the scope of psychoanalysis. These include the mind’s fundamental resistance to being and remaining quiet. The mind is distracted. Freud’s theory of repression is relevant as experience deepens.

As we go inward, through the tissues, into the mind and consciousness, forgotten or repressed experiences come to light. Non-material realities surface as a consequence of involuntary physical expansion. Georg Feuerstein writes: “Long before modern psychology, Patanjali invented the significant concept of the ‘depth mind,’ which he called smruti (literally ‘memory’). It is in the depth mind that the psychic residue of one’s actions and experiences is stored” (Feuerstein 2003).

Jean Gebser was dismissive of psychology, writing: “much that sails under the name of psychology is a lesser but nevertheless destructive demonology, for as long as phenomena remain unintelligible and unrecognized, their effect on us will be disruptive” (Gebser 1949/1985).

But Feuerstein points out that: “The depth mind is not simply a bottomless ditch into which the content of our self-expression is dumped. But is an active force, the nurturing ground that engenders new impulses towards self-expression” (Feuerstein 2003). He highlights the emergence of an insightfulness freed from the constraints of conditioned pattern- ing. The depth mind is active. Insight bubbles up from beneath the surface. People experience flashbacks, relive past events, and may have feelings of shame, fear, anger, or loss, often followed by a sense of deep self-forgiving, an aspect of emotional and spiritual healing.
The depth mind resonates with Freud’s preconscious and subconscious mind. Freud used an intellectual approach to understand psychoemotional pathology. His psychoanalytical technique was based on his understanding of depth psychology. Yoga, on the other hand, has had little interest in content. It has been more concerned with freeing us from repetitive conditioned activity, regardless of its source.

Selves

Consciousness and the mind enable a sense of self. A self is deeply rooted in consciousness but is not all of consciousness. Sense of self is imperative, otherwise we would just be consciousness, which is the yoga ideal and a place worth visiting, if only to say we have been there. There appears to be a variety of selves interwoven within consciousness.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines a self as:

• “That which in a person is really and intrinsically he.”

• “A permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness,” implying that our selves are subjected to consciousness. This may be so, but the self also imposes upon the deeper qualities of consciousness.

• “An assemblage of characteristics and dispositions which may be conceived as constituting one of various conflicting personalities within a human being,” acknowledging that things are far from simple.

A self is personal to its owner, we have a self. A self is the center of its own experience and subject to the pull of feelings and circumstances. We operate from a sense of self. Developmental psychologists suggest that we have developed a self by the time we are 18 months old, and perhaps even earlier. We develop a self. Selves are not implicit at birth (Kagan in Damasio 2000). The yoga experiment initially requires a clear, undiluted sense of self in order to accept the unaccustomed freedom that arises in tandem with spatial and dynamic consciousness.

Selfhood is a term used to denote having a self. The word hood from the Old English hode means protection, suggesting that selfhood is external, protective of something beneath it, an adornment hiding our truer selves. Selves may not run smoothly. Our sense of self relies on an identity resulting from and feeding a conditioned idea of who we are in our own eyes and who we appear to be in the eyes of others. Identity is essential and reinforced by achievements, work, interests, possessions, the confirmation of others, and relationships. We are aware of our identity, but often unaware of the extent of its conditioning. A deeper sense of self loosens a need to prop up our identity. We can transcend identification without abandoning our individuality. We can celebrate our identity without resorting to overidentification.

Various selves occupy individual consciousness and may follow us into practice. We might penetrate several selves as consciousness intensifies. What kinds of selves constitute a total sense of self? How many selves are we aware of as experience deepens? Some may be more obvious than others.
Chapter 4

When we cut through it all it may not matter. It is interesting to note the nature of selves that contribute to our conditioned and unconditioned experience.

*We work with groups of selves. Groups experience the self of the teacher. There is much more beneath the surface of a self.*

**False and true selves**

The false self is a camouflage, disguising, if and when necessary, our true feelings, opinions, and observations. We are aware of the convenience afforded by a false self. The false self is a consequence of socialization, expediency, politeness, the necessity to be less than honest, and wanting others to think well of us. The false self is built on the quality of the true self.

True selves represent an inner behavior not revealed to others. We are (usually) aware of our true self and its ambiguity, but may be less aware of the extent of its conditioning. True selves are opposed to our *true nature* which is unconditioned. A schism can develop between the true and false selves over “what people think.” Someone revealing all the content of her true self might find the world a lonely place.

Laing observed that “dividing the self” was a defensive maneuver aimed at preserving the true self while offering to the world an ambassador: the “false self.” “[Accordingly this painful process involves a split in a mind and a body, an identification with the mind and a split from the body” *(Clay 1996).*

The true self censors external behavior as we slip between what we do and do not show. Conditioning may be so well established in some people, they believe their false self in part to be their true self.

*Calming, softening, and opening together surrenders the false self, allowing the positive aspects of the true self to emerge. Ambiguities dissolve as altruistic feelings come to the foreground.*

**Large and small selves**

We are familiar with the large and small selves that conceptualize yoga, and can observe and refer to the ongoing exchange between them. The small self is the habituated, familiar self, while the large self implies an enlightened altruistic self with an invested interest in a universal picture. The large self engages a transcendent experience as a part of a perceived cosmic reality. The large self penetrates the conditioning imposed by the small, false, and true selves to reveal an uncluttered self with spiritual confidence. The larger self that we notice ourselves becoming is not separated from its immediate or worldly environment.

*We are not asking students to discover something they may be unaware of, but simply drawing attention to their inner witness, implicit since childhood, and suggesting they may use it coherently as a means for promoting a more enlightening experience. Dissolving impeding selves requires noticing and*
Dividing the indivisible

*passing through reactions and responses as they arise.*

> When lucid, calmly distinguish between your false and true, small and large selves.

**Deeper selves and consciousness**

The true, false, and small selves eclipse a pre-existent deeper self that emerges in fits and starts before sustaining itself for longer periods. Passing through tissue sensation takes us into, and through, superficial selves. Penetrating materiality penetrates nonmateriality. As the mind empties it awakens to deeper tissue sensations, and the sensations in turn deepen consciousness. Analysis and content are replaced by lucid space as the mind rests quietly within consciousness and within the body.

Consciousness is phased, each phase having evolved out of and still containing its precedent. The self as we know it has developed out of these phases. A deeper self is bathed in the less sullied original phases of consciousness. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio suggests that each developing phase of consciousness consolidates the evolution of a new self which forms a basis for the next evolving phase of consciousness, which in turn leads to the further development of a more evolved self, and so on.

Selves and consciousness have enabled each other. Both have relied on sensory input from the body. Damasio acknowledges that *attention* has been fundamental to this process. Consciousness and selves developed from attention to *something*. Our work uses sensation and mental content as objects of attention.

By *dropping down* into and beyond deeper sensations we reach a unified feeling, a *knowing* relationship, between the superficial selves and those buried by conditioning. Because we are conscious of *being* a self, consciousness and selfhood can be separated in awareness, we can observe how they feed each other. Attention to sensation and consciousness penetrates conditioning and draws us into deeper realms of experience. We can use the deeper extent of the self to penetrate and dissolve conditioned responses.

**Other selves**

Antonio Damasio proposes that there are other selves that correspond to parallel phases of consciousness. Some are available to conscious awareness and some are not. Three of these selves are described below.

**Protoself**

A protoself lies beneath conscious awareness, is unconditioned, and made up of neural patterns representing the state of the organism. The protoself is deeply enfolded within consciousness, has no powers of perception, and has no knowledge but may provide a primitive sense of self through sensation. It has been an essential factor in the development of consciousness.

**Core self**

A core self may be available to conscious awareness and is stimulated and generated
by an object, and is continuous in time. We might experience core consciousness as an awareness of being in time with time as we follow sensation. A core self resonates with Jean Gebser’s magical consciousness. It feels as if the mind touches a core self as it enters the deeper reaches of consciousness.

**Autobiographical self**

An autobiographical self is available to conscious awareness, is based on core self-experiences, and can be modified by further experience. The autobiographical self involves well-established behavior, has memory, and can anticipate the future. It holds personal history, grows with life experience, and can be conditioned but can also change to accommodate new experiences. An autobiographical self is synonymous with integral consciousness.

Interrelated phases of consciousness and selves appear to be loosely organized in layers or enfoldments reflecting their evolutionary hierarchy. They arise from one another, remain intimately continuous, and relate to the body sensations that contribute to our sense of self. We knowingly or unknowingly pass through these phases. The unification of all phases of consciousness and selves culminate in a private self which has a universal experience. The flow between them and their combined influence may manifest as light bulb moments, insights, or the more sustained experience of realization and knowing.

*We consciously or unconsciously connect with deeper aspects of consciousness.*

*It is unclear which aspects may come to awareness, hence the suggestion that there is only one consciousness. We might drop into an intensely private space, free from all considerations – a so-called universal experience.*

We might acknowledge phases of consciousness and interactive selves and mull over how we happen to be as we are. Enhancing spatial consciousness may be enough to get on with. Immediate experience can show a sensory, emotional, and intellectual self. We can tune into an attentive, quiet self, and may notice a vulnerable or visionary self. We might move between a playful, doubtful, anxious, excited self or observe a suspicious, expectant, impatient, creative, or loving self, all in passing. We may arrive at a self that is devoid of what we think of as our self.

**I am**

The ego is cited as the major impediment to progress. If Freud had not suggested an ego, we might not know that we had one, but we would know that we had our selves. Ego the Latin for *I am* or *the I*, was a term coined by Freud in the 1920s to denote our conscious experience of ourselves and ourselves in relation to the world. He acknowledged the ego as the essence of mental life. For Freud the ego represented the upper layer of consciousness experiencing itself as being separated from other minds. Our egos test the reality of our experience. In this respect, experience needs to be authentic. The developing ego has been the essential aspect of our progress, but due to its nature it also inhibits progress.