

Consciousness from Zombies to Angels: The Shadow and the Light of Knowing Who You Are by Christian De Quincey

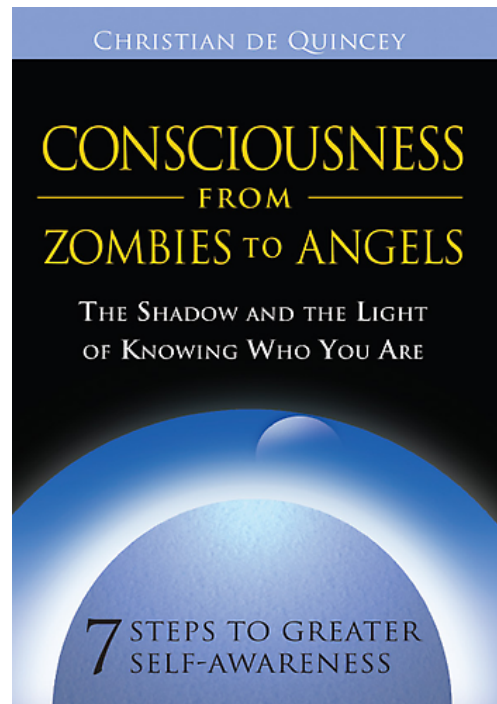
A user-friendly, step-by-step guide to understanding the mind.

** Presents a practical journey into understanding consciousness - philosophy's hardest problem, science's final frontier, and spirituality's deepest mystery*

** Offers 7 steps to transform your life using the shadow and the light of consciousness*

Consciousness from Zombies to Angels presents a practical, step-by-step "owner's guide" for the mind that sorts out philosophy's hardest problem, science's final frontier, and spirituality's deepest mystery - what consciousness is, how it works, and why it's important. Christian de Quincey presents seven simple steps for understanding consciousness and how it can lead to spiritual awareness: observe your language, identify the problem, learn how to look, recognize your patterns, know yourself, embrace your shadow, and practice transformation.

All of us exhibit both shadow and light, aspects of ourselves we fear and deny (our inner Zombies) as well as qualities we admire and want to radiate (our inner Angels). The key to a creative and fulfilled life is to integrate both. De Quincey reveals that the way to transformation is to accept ourselves exactly as we are - a work in progress.



Readers will learn

- the difference between "energy talk" and "consciousness talk";
- how the body affects the mind, and vice versa; and
- where to go for help to develop consciousness, heal emotions, or grow spiritually.

De Quincey shows how to

- recognise and break habits and patterns that run your life,
- how to find out who you really are, and
- why facing up to your darkest fears will liberate your brightest light as you learn to embrace all of your humanity and experience the power of transformation.

Christian De Quincey

Christian de Quincey, Ph.D., is a professor of philosophy and consciousness studies at John F. Kennedy University, USA; dean of consciousness studies at the University of Philosophical Research; founder of The Wisdom Academy, offering personal mentorships in consciousness and conscious evolution; and an international speaker on consciousness, cosmology, and spirituality. He is the author of the award-winning *Radical Nature* and *Radical Knowing* and a novel, *Deep Spirit*. He lives in Half Moon Bay, California.

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*Excerpt from Consciousness from Zombies to Angels by Christian De Quincey*

## Fishing for Consciousness

Consciousness, as we all know, is our most intimate reality - yet, paradoxically, once we think about it, it is also our deepest mystery. Like all experience - but even more so - consciousness is ineffable. As soon as we begin to talk about it, it slides from our grasp like a slippery fish. Yet, using the net of language, we will go fishing, and the promise of this book is that you will leave here with something to fry (or to throw back).

The task will not always be easy, but neither will it be uninteresting. It will challenge us to think, to question some of our deep assumptions about the nature of the world and ourselves. We will cover

well-worn ground as we survey different perspectives on consciousness. But we are also explorers, probing our own world of experience, of lived, related, consciousness. To give you an idea of the journey ahead, I'll begin with a couple of quotes from previous adventurers in the study of consciousness.

*Consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written about it. (Sutherland 1989)*

*Consciousness is a word worn smooth by a million tongues. Depending upon the figure of speech chosen it is a state of being, a substance, a process, a place, an epiphenomenon, an emergent aspect of matter, or the only true reality. (Miller 1972)*

I once compared trying to define consciousness like walking on an Escher stairway: if you keep walking down, you eventually end up where you started. If you try to define consciousness, sooner or later, you need to use the concept of consciousness to explain what you are explaining! It's a circular paradox, a tautology: Consciousness is . . . well . . . it's consciousness!

When I teach Consciousness Studies, often on the first day of class I ask the students what "consciousness" means to them. They call out, popcorn style, words that run the gamut from "being awake" and "it's who I am" to "nothingness."

After fifteen minutes the blackboard is littered with multiple, often contradictory, meanings. I point to the tangled word salad and say, "Take a look. This one simple word means so many different things to different people. No wonder we get confused when trying to talk about it."

Typically someone then asks me: "Well, how do you define consciousness."

"I don't," I respond. "Notice **I didn't ask you to define consciousness**. I specifically asked what it meant to you."

I then explain that I avoid offering a definition of consciousness for a couple of reasons. First, to define means to "**put a boundary around**" or "**to limit**" something. I think it is premature for us to decide in advance whether consciousness has any limits. Certainly, we learn from many of the world's great spiritual traditions that it is **infinite**, totally **free**, and **without constraint**. Second, definitions are statements of (presumed) objective fact. A dictionary definition is fixed and public. But **consciousness is not objective; it is subjective**. Furthermore, if you look up the definition of a word, it tends to carry authoritative weight, implying this is the correct or right meaning. But who decides?

I think defining consciousness, therefore, is a little arrogant. I don't assume that I have the one and only "right" meaning or that mine trumps yours. Not at all. However, if we wish to communicate, I do think it is important to be as clear as possible about the meaning we do use. And so I tell my students that I will spend the following class giving a presentation that clarifies what I mean when I use the word "consciousness." They don't have to agree with me, but it is important for them to understand what I mean.

And so it is here, too.

## **Consciousness**

If you can **feel** anything, or have **a point of view**, you have consciousness (which rules out zombies). You are **sentient**, experiencing the world from your own unique perspective. Consciousness, therefore, includes experience, subjectivity, interiority. It is **what-it-feels-like from "within."**

Besides the capacity for

- (1) **feeling**, and
- (2) **subjectivity**, consciousness what enables any body
- (3) **to know** anything (the source of knowledge);
- (4) **to be for** anything **or be about** anything else (the **source of intentionality**);
- (5) to **choose** anything (the **source of value**);
- (6) for anything **to have self-direction** (the source of **purpose**); and
- (7) to be **for itself** (to have intrinsic meaning).

That's what I mean when I use the term. In short, it is the **ground or context of** all mental or psychic

phenomena - such as feelings, sensations, perceptions, ideas, thoughts, desires, beliefs, wishes, intentions, and willing.

That's what it is. But it also gets its meaning in contrast to what it's not.

## Two Basic Meanings

I've noticed that whenever people discuss "consciousness," they often find themselves talking in circles because they mean quite different things. It's essentially **a difference between psychological and philosophical meanings.**

### **Psychological**

For some people, "consciousness" means more or less being **awake, alert, aroused, aware** - or, simply, **being conscious as distinct from being unconscious.** This is the psychological-psychoanalytic meaning as used in Freudian, Jungian, and many other psychologies. It is the kind of distinction we each encounter every morning - the difference between being asleep and waking up.

### **Philosophical**

But if this is what we mean by "consciousness," how then do we account for the **difference between a sleeping person and, say, a rock (or a dead person)?** It is not sufficient to say that both the sleeping person and the rock are unconscious in the same way. While **it is true that neither is awake,** it is **not true to say that both lack all psychic or sentient capacity.**

**The sleeping person is unconscious, but the rock is non-conscious.** The unconscious person's body still responds to stimuli, it still senses and feels - it still has a psychic life - but the rock does not.

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The book ***Reflexive Self-consciousness*** by Eugene Halliday is one of the texts which Christian de Quincey recommends for his students. It is full of the precision which imbues all of Eugene Halliday's writings and contributes a great deal to a clear understanding of this most rare subject. [Tutorial version here >>](#)