



Seat of Consciousness in Ancient Literature

Richard E. Lind

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For early civilizations, consciousness and the sense of self were experienced as located in the center of the body, most often near to or within the physical heart. Enlightenment was understood as the illumination of a transformed spiritual heart. Thus the mind of the body as a whole was represented by the heart-soul. In contrast, modern culture places consciousness within the brain, resulting in a mind/body dualism. This separation of mind and body has recently been emphasized as characteristic of the psychopathologies of the modern self. This volume explores the understanding and experience of consciousness in the earliest civilizations before about 500 BCE. Beginning with a description of ancient Western and Eastern heart-consciousness, the psychological and spiritual manifestations of the ancient mature heart-soul are summarized. Ancestor worship, lineage identity, primitive consciousness and the ways in which the external world was mirrored by the inner world provide additional clues about the experience of heart-consciousness. Finally, the work addresses the fundamental changes in the experience of consciousness that led to the mind/body dualism of today.

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