

ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUS SELF AND TIME DURING MEDITATION

Marc Wittmann (Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health)

ABSTRACT

Subjective time emerges through the existence of the self across time as an enduring and embodied entity. This relation is prominently disclosed in studies on altered states of consciousness such as in meditative states but also in everyday states of consciousness such as transiently being in states of boredom or flow. Mindfulness meditation, as the most frequently studied meditation technique in the West, stems from the Buddhist Theravada tradition, practiced traditionally as Vipassanā meditation and conceptualized in Western and secular contexts. Empirical research on meditation practice reveals quantitatively measured changes in the senses of self and time. Being mindful in every-day life is equivalent to being conscious of one's body states and feelings at a particular moment in time. Because the feeling of time is created through the embodied self, being mindful slows down the passage of time and it expands present moment awareness. A peak experience as reached in meditation states by experienced meditators can occur as culminating in 'selflessness' and 'timelessness' – a reported universal spiritual experience where time is not experienced at all and the self becomes one with the world.

KEYWORDS

Time Perception, Self, Altered States of Consciousness, Meditation, Timelessness