

The Science of Witnessing

*Reflections on the functioning of the self (nafs), the shadow, and reliance
on the Life Force*

*Some ideas based on the teachings of Robert Gibson
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There have always been schools of transformation operating behind the scenes of conventional life. These schools existed to free human beings from inner slavery and to awaken them to the responsibilities and joys of being fully human. Their teaching was based not on beliefs, but on principles that could be tested in everyday life. These teachings shed light on the unconscious assumptions that motivate most human behavior.

All of the many I's, most of the conditioning that makes up personality, much of what we consider our personal identity (personality, as contrasted with our essential self) is serving four basic motivations. Each motivation is determined by the wish to gain or avoid something that is believed to be good or bad, desirable or undesirable. The totality of these motivations, or urges, are called in some literature "the world" (dunya), or "mammon." We have the basic idea that the whole purpose of living is to be nondisturbed. The unconscious assumption that it is better to be undisturbed is the foundation of our inner slavery. These four basic motivations are:

1. The urge to gain pleasure and comfort, to escape all pain,
2. to gain attention, to avoid being ignored or rejected,
3. to gain approval, to escape disapproval,

4. to gain a sense of importance, to have control over other people, and to escape the sense of inferiority, or the inability to control others.

We have several strategies that we apply in order to actualize this imaginary “nondisturbed” state.

1. *To complain.* This hasn't worked so far.
2. *Feeling victimized and demanding our rights.* This hasn't worked so well, either.
3. *Trying to please people.* It sometimes works, but it creates inner havoc.
4. *Trying to believe and do as one is taught by authorities.* This opens the door to mass suggestibility.

As a private exercise we might write down our observations regarding:

- My ways of complaining.
- Ways I feel victimized.
- How I try to (manipulatively) please people.
- How do I play the game of pleasing authorities (for my own personal security and ends).

These are personal and for our own enlightenment, not with the idea that we are going to change what we observe, but simply at first to gain more objective information about ourselves.

These basic four motivations are further supported by:

GREED: Wanting more, better and different. No matter what one has, after a little while, even though at first delighted, one

grows weary of it, and one begins to take it for granted. One begins to accept that one is entitled to it, and wants more, better and different.

VANITY: All the false selves having a false picture of oneself, always being in the right, being a very wonderful person who is mistreated.

PRIDE: Defending that false picture of self. When we have believed something about ourselves to be true that was not true, there is a certain amount of vanity in us, and there is inevitably an effort to defend it. Vanity is having a false picture of oneself.

ENVY: Not just wanting what others may have, but wanting them not to have it.

RESENTMENT: Holding accounts against others, a simmering, almost unconscious anger, that cause us to withhold friendship, support, and love.

If one is governed by the shadow, if one is ruled by what one is not conscious of, then one is the last to know what everyone around us knows about us. One may hide the self (nafs), keep it under cover, and be blind to it, but it still distorts and contaminates our inner life. If one doesn't know the self, there is no hope of a transformation.

As we begin to observe ourselves we are faced with the pain of seeing how unconscious much of our lives may be. One "I" says, "What is the use, this doesn't change anything, it is just making it worse." Or we notice various and sundry thoughts racing through the mind that say things like this, "There isn't anything worthwhile in this." "Drop the whole thing." Some self-improving "I" comes along and says, "You're really a mess. This is terrible, I don't want to find out these things about me!" You may think you "should" do a great amount to change

yourself and this only adds to your state of inner conflict and internal stress.

Nevertheless simply observing all these “I’s” begins to open the possibility of fundamental change. While it may not be very pleasant at this moment, it definitely has value.

Awareness and The Life Force

The human being is essentially the Awareness Function of the Life Force. This awareness has two basic functions: *it decides what is true and what is valuable*. That information goes from awareness to the Life Force. The awareness evaluates, with feeling, any impression or sensation as being true or false.

The Life Force always does the appropriate thing for the information it receives from awareness and then the appropriate function takes place into the environment and that cycle is completed.

Impressions come into awareness, awareness has the job (attribute or function) to interpret every sensation or impression as to its validity of truth and its value. That is what goes to the Life Force which is the life principal no one can define. At a later date, we will take up some further study on the nature and the way the Life Force operates. In the meantime, we will leave it without further theories. We will observe what it does but we will not give it any attribute other than that it always does the appropriate thing for the information received.

When this is the state of existence, the I being identified with the false selves, the Life Force provides energy to the conditioning as though it were I. All human energy comes from the Life Force. It is all the Life Force energy. The false selves, the bits of conditioning, would, of course, wither away and not have any power nor any energy to express except that I identifies with them and they receive energy from the Life Force.

The way out is for I, the real awareness, to disidentify from all that one possesses; from all that one calls “my.” My opinion, my thoughts, my feelings, my attitude, my house, my everything; everything that one possesses because that which we possess we depend on and we depend on it to give us the ideals and we are very disappointed when it doesn't. We are disappointed when this ideal of the purpose of living of being nondisturbed is not achieved. When disappointed, we feel hurt, look for blame, and then we have anger, guilt, fear, insecurity and a host of the subdivisions of those very unpleasant damaging emotions. So the way out is for the awareness, I, to disidentify from all that one claims to possess, everything that one says “my” to.

*The Pattern of Expectation, Disappointment, Blame
operates something like this:*

EXPECTATION

(based on an illusory ideal)

DISAPPOINTMENT

HURT

SEEKING BLAME

ANGER, GUILT, FEAR, INSECURITY

STRESS

ADAPTATION

The stress leads to unusual cellular activity. unusual behavior: So keep track and you will begin to understand symptoms. As you

understand this and see the relationship, you will begin to realize that all symptoms are normal adaptations, the Life Force's way of restoring the body to health, to chemical balance and to natural tone instead of a state of stress. If you see this and understand it and are thankful for the adaptation, you will find that they are all gone very quickly.

Of two worlds: the manmade world and the real world.

In the real world there are ideas that give man an aid in knowing self, but there are not any imaginary ideals for you to live up to. As you have noticed, so far we have given ideas for study but no ideas or ideals to live up to. We are only trying to find out what makes up the self. We haven't said it should "do this" or "what to do." These are ideas for study.

Man functions mechanically when he is reactive and subject to manipulation by suggestion.

In so far as man functions as a machine, it is a perversion, because although man can choose to operate machines, he is not originally designed to be one.

When a man can be controlled by a suggestion, and you can find out from observing him that he has a certain very set opinion or viewpoint, and if you challenge that opinion or viewpoint, you will find that he is suddenly in a state of being mechanical, and you can easily control or manipulate him. If you can get him very interested in "security," you can threaten him with lack of security and put him in a panic state.

Certain "games" also control man.

The other aspect of the manmade world is the world of games. Games are very pervasive in the man-made world. Keep in mind, however, that not everything that we will refer to as a game is ordinarily referred to as a game in the manmade world. In fact, challenging these games is one good way to get yourself crucified.

1. The first great game is *RELIGIOSITY*. It buttresses the false self by setting up an external game of good and evil. In this game inner sincerity and integrity do not necessarily count. What matters is how one appears and performs. Religiosity is not real religion but man's ideas of building an organization around religion; building an institution and setting standards of good. Any particular person who subscribes to any particular man-invented theology finds that he has difficulty maintaining even the outward requirements of the theology and even more difficulty, if they are reasonably honest with observing the self, of keeping the inner state free of resentment, of judgment, of hypocrisy. It requires a considerable amount of justification in order to make one's behavior jibe with the idea of good. Most everyone feels in some way that they are bad and so they feel guilty. Religiosity plays into this sense of guilt and uses it as a means of control. It is fundamentally a form of idolatry that puts human formulations in the place of the Divine.

2. The next great game is *POLITICS & POLITICAL CORRECTNESS*. Politics is the manufactured consensus that tells us who is in or out. Political correctness develops out of the unexamined consensus and produces its own idea of orthodoxy and normalcy. The real enemies of humanity, the hidden greed, lies, the unconscious consumption, and concealed forces of control are not on the radar, except in the minds of a minority of relatively conscious people.

3. Gradually there has emerged another great game, *BIG BUSINESS*. Big business, by advertising, constantly suggests that there is something wrong with us, that we, for instance, are imperfect, or ugly, and need a product to remedy

this. Now, for instance, you may smell ugly so you will need endless amounts of deodorants. Your hair is probably ugly, so you will need the proper shampoos, hair sprays, coloring and even a wig to cover it up so you will then be pretty. We are constantly bombarded with suggestions that our cars are old and, therefore, ugly, that our homes are old and ugly, that our furniture is ugly, that our appliances are old and ugly and that we should all be buying new ones. So everyone begins to feel that they are ugly in some way. You probably weigh too much. You are too fat, so you are ugly and you should fit the ideal of being thin, or whatever. You must buy the the latest technological innovation, or you will feel innadequate. You will be looked down on and disapproved of, ignored and rejected as unsuccessful. You will be inferior so, of course, we spend great sums of money, obligate ourselves with great amounts of debts in order to be pretty and normal.

4. Then comes the ENTERTAINMENT DISTRACTION INDUSTRY as a great game. Celebrityhood is the new aristocracy. Culture is not something to aspire to, but culture is now what sells. If it doesn't sell it must not be very good. Culture is now pop or popular culture, not an elevating force, but a race to the bottom, appealing to our baser instincts. What the Corporate Distraction Industry shows us as "normal" becomes accepted as the model for "normal" human life. Human life for centuries was shaped by values, divine revelation, high culture, and the wisdom of elders. These were not always free of man-made distortions, but at least they weren't merely an appeal to the lowest common denominator.

How many times are we caught by the suggestion that we are abnormal, ugly, out of step, or, simply, inferior. How many times

are we caught by the suggestion, either from within or from without, that in some way or other we didn't fit the standard.

In other words, we are going to observe a different level of mechanical being. We will not stop doing those things we have been checking up on, because we are being acquainted with man and the world in which he lives; not with the idea of improving him to fit some ideal but of being conscious and being aware moment by moment of *what is* and we are being more observant of the fallacies of what ought to be, of imaginary ideals.

We are often in inner conflict, trying to change *what is* into some idea of what ought to be in the man-made world. In the man-made world we can change cars, houses, etc. We can make them fit our purposes, but when we start trying to make the human being into what he *ought to be*, we are meddling in the wrong area. These “oughts” may be based on illusion and lack of self-knowledge, and the means of changing the self may be originating in the false self, itself.

Wisdom teachings suggest that change, transformation is a natural process resulting from letting go of the contrivance of the false self, and surrendering to what is. The idea is this: The Life Force knows better than the ego, or false self, what can and should change. We must find out if this proposition is actually true.

So let's be aware of it when we are caught in the trap; not with condemning, not trying to justify it, but simply being aware of the state of *what is*.

Living as a Witness

As we gradually learn the art of living as a witness, no longer is it “I am doing this,” but I is observing the self (nafs) doing this. We begin to sense an entirely different sense of I. It is the beginning, and only the beginning, of a permanent state of awakened I-ness. “I” has been jumping from one that wants to complain to the one that wants to please, to the improver, to the blamer, back to the believer in authorities. There was no permanent I; it jumped all over. Now this subtle process of disidentifying and beginning to observe the self will not be possible 100% of the time, but it can be done considerably, and every moment that is spent on it is cumulative and it gradually weakens all of the false selves.

I is reporting to the Life Force. I has taken up its rightful position. The Prodigal Son has arisen from the hog pen in Egypt, which all the conditioning represents, and has started home.

As I simply observes the false selves without condemnation or justification. Gradually, the Life Force renders them inoperative, one by one.

We fall asleep again and again, but when I wakes up again, I merely says, “I am back on the job and reporting to the Life Force.” Now there will be a host of accusing false selves, the self-improving I's that say, “You ought to believe and do as you are told by your authorities” (a very large family of them because there have been many authorities). One says you ought to be different, and they will all accuse I for having gone to sleep from time to time, but I does not identify with them, does not accept their accusations or their condemning, and does not talk back to

them. It merely reports that there are accusing false selves saying that the observer never should have gone to sleep, and the Life Force renders them inoperative. One does not contend with these false selves. I is an observer and a reporter to the Life Force, and nothing else.

The function of the physical body is as an instrument of the expression of the Life Force. *I is awake and aware and reports.* If correct information goes to the Life Force from I, and the conditioning is disidentified from, the body undergoes a rejuvenation, the same as the awareness; it is a new person because it is no longer being used for imaginary purposes that never existed but which was reported by a false self in the name of I to the Life Force.

As we observe this, we will see how the body completely changes as I observes the selves and does not identify with them. The self owns houses, cars, opinions, bank accounts, viewpoints, and “rights.” But I only observes. I is a *function* of the Life Force and observes the self, and the Life Force renders inoperative those various bits of conditioning one by one. One does not have to judge, condemn, or justify the false selves. The Life Force knows what to do.

The function of everyday life is to bring about the play of the Life Force in awareness; to bring about the ever changing series of events that continually give us all the values and joys of living when we can report accurately. When we have been taken over by usurpers and they are talking in our name that function demonstrates very clearly that error is being reported to the Life Force, but it only accepts as fact everything that the awareness reports to it whether from a false self or an I. So we see very

excellent reasons for observing the false selves. They are speaking in your name to the Infinite Source of All Energy residing at the core of your being.

The Dynamics of Thought in the False Self

One of the greatest factors in building and sustaining the false I is the way we claim thoughts. John says, “My thoughts.” I observe *myself* claiming thoughts and I can observe *my* thoughts, I may not be able to observe anyone else's, but I can observe *my* thoughts because I am assigned to observe this earthling, this self.

Observing those thoughts, I see that “A” puts up a thought, then “B” puts up a counter thought, and this is called “thinking.” Basically they are set off by associations which push our emotional and mental switches. To observe thoughts is most interesting because they are set off by associations. When, for instance, “A” sets off one association, “B” sets off one that counteracts it. Someone says, “I am going to do this” from “A.” Then “B” says, “Yes, but this might happen if you do this.” And then “A” begins setting up another idea as it would have another thought and then “B” says, “Yes, but.” Or “B” originates an idea that we will do a lot of good and gain a lot of attention by giving a thousand dollars to the Boy Scouts. “A” says, “Yes, but if you do that, we can't get the boat and we do want the boat.” “B” says, “Yes, but if we get the boat we won't be able to give the thousand dollars and somebody might say that we were just showing off.” “A” says, “But it won't be showing off, it will be providing something for the family to enjoy, and I'm getting it all for the family.” We can listen to the justifications, so I will observe thoughts. The thoughts of “A,” the thoughts of “B” and the resultant contention going on between them until one can

overpower the other and talk in the name of I to report to the Life Force.

Now when I is effectively observing the argument of “A” and “B”, their story is intercepted by I. I is now the mediator between self and the Life Force. Before, I was hypnotized and the self (nafs) was speaking in the name of I directly to the Life Force. Now I is on the job and is the mediator who screens all the material that the self is rambling on about. So there begins to be an entirely different state of affairs. No longer can the self report directly to the Life Force because I has awakened from its hypnotic sleep and arose from among the dead ideas and is now reporting what is going on in the self.

When the awakened “I” is reporting to the Life Force, then one is obedient to one's nature. That is the greatest obedience there is and without obedience to one's nature, one is being disobedient to one's nature because one is *servicing Mammon and one is dependent upon every suggestion that offers pleasure and comfort or threatens pain.*

When we are servicing Mammon (the world, or *dunya*), the false self reports what it craves, and that's where the attention of the “false I” continually focuses. The false “I's” attention is all on the gain and loss issues of the four dualistic basic urges. It holds this out as the great treasure and it continually attempts to gain it. It uses every contention to both “A” and “B” to get it. The self is ever involved in war and it never attains the nondisturbed state, which remains forever somewhere out in the future.

The outward world is merely an outward expression in society of each individual's inner state. One sees that while one is identified with the false selves, one is bringing about all the things that the

false selves say they do not want. They want pleasure and comfort but they are doing everything possible to bring about conflict. They want attention but they do everything possible to cause one to be ignored. So as one observes this, one has a complete change in values.

We are not focusing on the values yet. I is merely observing the action of the self--all the many false selves, all the bits of conditioning. One is observing personality. As one observes this, this personality becomes rather passive. It is an object being observed. It is a thing that is being observed, much as one would look through a microscope to observe bacteria on a slide. It is purely an object or a thing.

Now, this is the beginning of awareness of self. The beginning of *self-awareness* is the beginning of *objective-awareness*. Now all of our lives we have been unconsciously subject to whatever was going on. We saw it as self. "I" was the subject and "how did this affect me?"

To present this from a woman's point of view, for instance, I observes Mary. I observes Mary being very upset because no one noticed her new dress. In the state of objective awareness I doesn't own a dress and I doesn't completely identify with Mary. I is observing Mary, but Mary identifies with a dress. Mary has a new dress and it is very lovely, according to Mary and possibly to everyone else. But nobody noticed it, or gave her a compliment, or gave her approval or attention, so she is very upset. But now, with "I" awake and witnessing, all of this does not get to the Life Force any more because I is observing this.

I might observe Mary making the children feel guilty. It is an excellent means of controlling. If she doesn't control, she feels inferior. If she controls, she feels pretty good. She is powerful now, she is important. The children look up to her and feel obligated to her. I may observe Mary making John feel obligated because she cooked a good dinner or because she cleaned up the house very well. One-half is serving mammon by *complaining, sticking up for rights and blaming*. The other half is trying to serve mammon by trying to *please everybody, by believing and doing as told by authorities*. They quote books and say, "You know this is what you should do," and "This is absolutely necessary." They try to please mammon, gain mammon, serve mammon, by *appearing to be special and different*. There is a war going on. This is called conflict. It is called inner conflict. It is called resistance. I observes these.

I observes the false selves serving an illusion called mammon, that instead of experiencing everyday existence and living, and instead of experiencing a more conscious state of being each and everyone is trying to serve an ideal of being nondisturbed, of gaining pleasure, gaining attention, approval and importance, being very upset if ignored or rejected, or having any pain, or being disapproved of, or finding it impossible to get everyone to do what they want them to when they want them to.

We may keep a journal: I observed this false self doing so and so.

This is to keep I awake. I is very weak. It has been hypnotized since shortly after birth and has not developed. It has remained weak and little. A personality based in these false selves has taken over and it has become very powerful. This personality is serving mammon; one side of it has *vanity* (a beautiful picture of itself as

being very holy, righteous and wonderful), and *pride* (looking down on others) is on the other side defending it. It is the only place they cooperate. Pride defends vanity! Vanity is of “B” and pride is of “A.”

I is an observer reporting to the Life Force that which is going on in the self in order that the self does not report in the name of I directly to the Life Force and set off all manner of unnecessary unpleasant situations that are destructive or disintegrating to the state of being.

To further aid our observation, we will consider some levels of consciousness and some levels of being. As we observe these, it may be possible to have an aim. An aim is not a goal. A goal is to arrive at a certain place to achieve a certain result. An aim is a direction. One aim, for instance, might be to develop our witnessing capacity, to be able to see differently than we typically seen in a state conditioned by the dualistic urges.

As we observe the self and begin to be acquainted with it, a false-self-serving “I” attempts very strongly to get I, the observer, to identify with it and start on a program of self-serving “improvement.”

But when one sees everything freely without identifying with anything, without having any expectation to compare it or judge it, one is seeing everything objectively, reporting to the Life Force, which then does what is needed or appropriate.

When I witnesses life, observing the interferences and distortions of the false-self, it reports to the Life Force “in the name of God.” Otherwise, the false selves do the reporting “in the name

of *me*,” me being that which compulsively seeks comfort, attention, approval, and control.

The false selves are hypnotists, and they have hypnotized I, kept it sound asleep, and that sleeping “I” reports to the Life Force whatever the hypnotists have to say.

As we continue our effort of I observing the self, we are beginning to find that the self is a very complicated and extensive non-entity. It has been made from bits and pieces and is in a habitual state of conflict. It is at war, “A” with “B,” “B” with “C,” and has a tremendous ability to hypnotize I. It is very cunning. It has been in charge of the house for a long time and it doesn't want to lose it. It recognizes that it has to work in the dark and it makes every effort to keep I from observing it.

It may even claim that it is acting in the name of Love—this is one of its greatest lies. Love is not the attribute of these false selves which demand approval, attention, and control. Love is the natural result of the unidentified “I” surrendering to the beneficent Life Force. The “I” which can objectively see what is, give consent to what is and be grateful in the moment for whatever there is to be grateful for, begins to enter the real world. All the teachers of wisdom tell us the real world is sustained by Love. It is for us to find out for ourselves.

Unless we can overcome our slavery to those urges that cause us to flee all immediate discomfort and difficulty, unless we can embrace the Truth as it is in the moment, we will forever be caught in the inner conflict between illusory expectation and reality. Only to the extent that we can disengage from our false

selves and their demands can we enter the real world of luminous grace and mercy.

The sciences of Wisdom are God's armies,
by which He strengthens the spirits of the initiates,
and purifies their knowledge from the adulteration of ignorance,
their justice from the adulteration of bias,
their generosity from the adulteration of ostentation,
and their forbearance from the adulteration of foolishness;
and brings near to them whatever was far from them
in their understanding of the hereafter;
and makes easy to them whatever was hard for them
in respect of obedience and energetic endeavor.

[Rumi, *Mathnawi* III: Prologue]