

The Awareness Within

by Paul Constant and Michael Casari

As spiritual seekers looking for our Source, most TAT Forum readers recognize or strongly suspect that we are more than simply a body. Seekers, if not most people, have the conviction or maybe a simple belief that they are something more real or profound than the lump of protoplasm seen in the mirror. The body tells us that we are hungry, but if we are fasting, the mind can override the body's repeated calls for food. If we are a marathon runner, and our muscles ache along the way, the mind's determination can overcome the body's call to stop running and rest. Thus, we may be forced to conclude that we are a "something" beyond the body that is far less tangible than the body. We find ourselves holding the belief that we are the mind, or a center of awareness located somewhere in the head, that has both the mind ("my" mind) and the body ("my" body).

In the mind, we generally find our existence as more real and alive. We identify with the mind, or our mental experience, and further identify the experience as the self or "I." We become totally involved and get carried away in what appear to be "our" thought processes and the drama of life. Very few people ever suspect or discover that a realm exists beyond the mind and mental experience.

"Mind stuff" consists of worded thoughts, thought pictures, memories, dreams, visualizations, and ultimately, our entire experience. With sufficient effort, we may be able to witness and catalog our thoughts. In Richard Rose's terminology, we can become a Process Observer. That is, we become someone who identifies -- not with the body or with the thoughts and emotions passing through the mind -- but with the awareness that is able to witness both the body and the thought processes that transpire in the mind. In essence, we become or find ourselves to be an awareness that is beyond both the body and the mundane mind as we know or conceive it.

The description of this condition pales in comparison to the sudden and stunning *realization that we are watching our thought processes*. Momentarily, we become an awareness that is far superior to our ordinary, day-to-day, way of being in the world. This change in perspective generally only comes after an intense period of meditation, often over many years, in which we attempt to examine our thoughts as the subject matter for meditation.

Those who find themselves suddenly able to witness their thought processes may revel in this newfound ability to "be the Watcher." They may mistakenly believe that the goal is to spend more and more time watching their thoughts until they become "self-aware" throughout all their waking hours. As desirable as this condition may seem, it is only a step along the way to the discovery of our true Essence.

What is the next step? What can or should we do once we recognize thought-forms as reflections, or objects, in our field of awareness? We have found that thoughts arrive, and if we are diligent, we can witness them as they pass before our awareness. We reside in or identify

with the awareness that witnesses thought. At some point, we will realize that thought is inescapable while we are in a human body. Even those who have Become, or entered into Union with the Absolute, return to a thinking mind, albeit with a vastly different perspective. Any sense of a personal self is left behind when entering the timelessness of the Absolute. Upon return to the mundane world, the mind again becomes active, and the thought processes come back to life with all their confusions, conundrums, and comparisons. Unfortunately, we have no alternative while living in this relative world of polar opposites.

Some people may further realize that they are aware, not only of their bodies and thoughts, but of their awareness itself. They become aware of awareness. This is not as simple as it sounds. On the contrary, it is an experience of some note that happens quite suddenly if we spend much time and effort in meditation. Yet, this realization -- this knowledge and conviction that we are aware of our awareness -- is not the final Answer.

We may ultimately find that it is not even “our” awareness. The question becomes, if we are watching our thoughts, who is doing the watching? If we are aware of our awareness, who or what is the anterior awareness? A new conundrum or koan comes into play for those who have the courage and conviction to continue their internal investigations.

To recap things a bit: we become aware of a part of us that witnesses experience, including the body, the emotions, and the thoughts. Then, we become aware that we are suddenly aware of the former awareness just mentioned -- we know we are watching, and we watch ourselves watching. We then wonder: how can two separate senses of awareness exist simultaneously? Are they separate individual entities, or merely two different aspects of the same, single Source?

In the book, *Psychology of the Observer*, Rose offers a symbolic view of this situation along with a possible explanation or solution to the dilemma. In a diagram labeled “Jacob’s Ladder,” we find an arrangement of polarities in the dualistic world, between which exists a tension that might be considered elemental to all movement and life. On the second level of this diagram, we find the polarity between the (mental) Process Observer and the Individual Consciousness of Awareness mentioned above. There is an associated tension between the horns of this paradox as well, which may provide the impetus and fuel to reach yet a higher level of awareness or being.

Rose argues that the struggle to know our true Source is the farthest possible reach for the mind. In fact, after enough intensity in that struggle, the seeker will suddenly find himself or herself in a realm that is beyond the body, the mind, and any verbal description. The real goal is to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that our true definition, our true nature, is that Singular Awareness that is beyond all, and That in which we are contained. We *are* Awareness, and Awareness is One, all pervading, all encompassing, and all-inclusive. The mind is left behind, and the awareness that we have come to understand and identify as our “self” becomes momentarily immersed in the Nothingness that encompasses All, a Oneness that is also an infinite multiplicity of Everythingness. The individual exists no longer; the drop of water has entered the ocean.

* * *

Unavoidably, the description of the above process is an oversimplification. It is an intellectual roadmap that must be fueled by inspiration, intuition, and determination. And this path is not the only path, but perhaps one that resonates with select seekers who have a desire to know their Source and a conviction that such attainment is possible. This desire, coupled with the frustration of not knowing, is a polarity that can provide the tension energy necessary to further the effort into realms not previously considered.

A unique individual mind-body vehicle carries each person along, or so it seems. Our task is to look under every rock in the search for definition. We will never know unless we make the effort, if under the next rock, or around the next corner, lay the key or tool that will enable us to look even more clearly within ourselves and to make the next step. We will find that each discovery can provide a new method that may lead us into the more subtle realms of self-discovery. The process should and will prove itself along the way.

In Richard Rose's Albigen System, a method is described that consists of a retreat from erroneous thinking by critical examination of our beliefs and thinking processes. Yet like all tools, techniques, or methods, it can only take us so far, and at some point, we will "run out of railroad tracks," as Rose used to say. We will find that our tools and techniques are aspects of the mental realm, and as such, cannot take us beyond the mental dimension. Ultimately, all we can do at this point is to continue our retreat from...everything, until we know for sure that the awareness within us is the Final Door through which we must pass, on our way to Truth and the Absolute.