

Working Within

by Bob Fergeson

"How then can we change being? By applying the knowledge of the Work through self-observation to ourselves. And remember that you do not change by being told what to do. You only change through seeing what you have to do when you realize what your being is like."

- Maurice Nicoll

Sooner or later the task of changing our being, of becoming, moves from simple mental learning through advice and association to the inner task of developing the intuition. How well this works is ultimately about how well we can hold tension and work within. The practical thing to 'do' then becomes the real time observation of our own attention. The work moves within, and is no longer about character building, a better personality, becoming charismatic or invisible. There are several ways to describe this simple trick of watching or chasing your attention: the experiments of Douglas Harding, which show how to look at what you are looking out of, learning to listen with the eyes, to listen with the attention, the two-way seeing or self-remembering of Gurdjieff and the double-pointed arrow of attention, one pointed within, one without, and the art of mindfulness. To be successful in these tricks, we must be able to relax for at least a second from constantly and unconsciously upholding our sense of self. This split second of seeing who or what we really are, is our slipping behind the mind or ego and seeing *through* it rather than *as* it. Now, if you have trouble practicing experiments of the type listed above, or are unable to catch the meaning behind them, why is this? What's blocking you?

The ego1-ego2 game is a great enemy in direct seeing. When the exercises are practiced, the ego-mind is rendered quiescent, if only for a split second, but long enough for one to be free from the mind's pressure to create, project and solve problems, drama, or conflicts, such as getting what you want, avoiding what you fear, etc. But in the next instant after the 'seeing' has ended, the mind will rise up and become active once more and the ego-self, largely through memory, will then lay claim to the credit of seeing, dragging us out of eternity and taking away any incentive to actually 'see' again. An insidious trick has just been played on us, for the ego, as ego1, has just laid claim to 'seeing', and places all blame for actions opposed to seeing on a fictitious character it creates and then uses as scapegoat: the hapless ego2. Thus, we are taken out of action and thrown back where we started: identified with the mind in time. Seeing is now relegated to memory only, for we are unconscious of the whole above trick. The ego has thus kept its throne, and we, as awareness, are back asleep.

If we get what's taking place in the above experiments (by *seeing* it, rather than mentally understanding it), then our intuition will know what to do next, knowing now what the attention is and how it moves from one view to another. Here's a test to see if we really do see this:

Look at a familiar object, say a tree out of your window, and watch the mind as it works. Observe how this mind associates the tree with names, memories, information, etc. Notice how it does this automatically, unquestioned. Now, practice two-way seeing, the listening attention, while looking at the tree. Allow yourself to look back at what you are looking out of, the aware

silence, and look forward or out at the object as well. Can you now look at the tree without 'knowing' what it is? Without knowing what you are, simply because you are? The mind is now silent and all is okay, for nothing is separate. No separation of things, no creating of things, is needed; no labeling or judging, qualifying or describing. You are not enlightened or ignorant, for you have no need to create yourself or 'be' anything.

Now, while still observing the tree, allow the mind to work, as it rises up and again starts the process of creating objects with characteristics, separating 'you' from the 'tree', and separating the tree from everything else, as the string of associated concepts stream forth. Can you see the difference between these two states? Can you see your attention move between these two views? Can you be honest about this? Does your heart have anything to say about value and meaning in relation to these two very different states?

If you can't 'do' the above experiment, or dismiss it as unimportant, what is blocking you? Why is your intuition being shut out, and thus not picking up on this? If you think the above is not important, or can't relate to it, and still insist on someone or some system telling you something practical to do as a spiritual exercise, or if you are honest and admit you just can't follow any of it, the reason lies within, in something blocking you. Perhaps an energy knot in the emotions, most likely hidden, unconscious, but active and alive. This knot blinds as well as binds you to it, keeping you unconscious, so as to maintain the status quo of the tension and energy system of knots known as 'you'.

If seeing still makes no sense, and you are at a loss as to practical method and the next move on your path, this then is what you can do: to become conscious of what is blocking your intuition. Perhaps going back through your life story with its accompanying emotions is in order, to free you of the energy knots that bind your attention. What needs to be done will be seen, if steps are taken to improve the intuition, clarify one's values, and to hold and increase the tension of questioning, of looking. Taking advice and direction from outside as an easy way out of the tension of having to develop one's own intuition ends in robbing one of the grace that comes from within.