

Gnostic Psychology – Notes 05 (Supplement)

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Self-Observation and the Doctrine of the Many

As we have said, in this work: a person's internal state is regarded as a multiplicity and is often spoken of in terms of "I's" or Egos in a person. Thus we need to begin to observe ourselves from the angle that we are not one but many, because this will allow us to work on our being. But if we remain under the conviction that we are one, then we will not be able to separate ourselves from ourselves (that is from the "I's" or Egos in us), since we will take everything in us: every thought, mood, feeling, impulse, desire, emotion, and so on, as ourselves (that is, as a single "I" or Self). Therefore, proper self-observation begins by dividing ourselves into two: an observing side and an observed side (also called the Division of Attention into **Observer and Observed**).

And unless we divide ourselves in this way (and struggle to make this division more and more distinct), we will never be able to shift from where we are psychologically. This is because we will always be taking everything that happens in us as ourselves: we will say "I" to it all, and so everything will then be "I" in us, and by identifying ourselves with everything that happens in ourselves (and taking it all as "I" or as ourselves), then everything will hide itself behind this illusion of "I" or Self and will continue to live in us. In fact, the whole crowd of people within us (the crowd of separate "I's") will have, as it were, equal rights and be equally protected by us, because we will be quite unable to distinguish them from one another, since we take them all as ourselves.

Proper Self-Observation and Understanding the Division of Attention

A person cannot begin to change until they are able (as the result of self-observation) to say something like: "*This is not Myself*" or "*This is an Ego*". **As soon as they can begin to say this internally to something they observe in themselves, then they begin to separate it from themselves.** In this way they begin to take the feeling of "I" or Self out of it and the result is that, eventually (and often only after a struggle), what was observed can be comprehended and eliminated. But this is impossible if a person think that what they have observed *is themselves*, since then it will still be "I" in them and then no separation will be possible: they will remain united with what they have observed, by taking it as Self (that is, as the Subject instead of as the Object), when it should be taken as an "I" or Ego in themselves.



Let us suppose a person notices that he is having negative thoughts about the work or about another person or some event that has happened, etc. If he takes these thoughts as his own (as himself, that is, as "I") and feels some discomfort about them, then he says to himself: "*I must really not think in this way*". This may have some result or it may not. But the point is that he is making a mistake: **the mistake of taking all that happens within him as himself, as Self.** If he observes himself properly, then he notices these thoughts not as himself but as coming from an "I" or Ego in him. Now he can recognize that this "I" or Ego is talking in him and communicating its thoughts to him through the intellectual center and trying to also stir up a particular kind of negative emotion in the emotional center, etc. But he does not, for a moment, take this negative "I" or Ego as himself, but sees it as something in him apart from himself. On the other hand, if he goes to sleep in himself (that is, if he stops being conscious of what is going on in him and which "I's" are taking control of his centers), then he falls under the power of that "I" or Ego and (becoming identified with it) he imagines that it is *he himself* who is thinking or feeling in that way. By doing this he strengthens the power of this "I" or Ego over him, **because whatever we identify with has power over us, and the more often we identify with something, the more we are slaves to it.**

The Power of Illusion and Sacrificing our False Image of Self

The illusion, therefore, that the human being has about himself (that he is one or that he has oneness of being) refers to a possibility. The human being *can* attain unity of being. He can reach true individuality. But, in order to realize this possibility, he must have a very strong desire for liberation and be willing to sacrifice everything, to risk everything, for the sake of this liberation.

One of the first and most important sacrifices we must make is the false image we have of ourselves, because it is precisely this illusion that stands in the way of the attainment of inner unity. Since as long as a person imagines he has something, he will not seek for it. Therefore, it is necessary to struggle with our false image of ourselves, not only because it puts us into false experiences, artificial emotions and often ridiculous situations, but because it stops all possibility of inner development.

What we have to understand, from all of this, is that **an illusion is something very real and definite in its effects**. The imagination is not merely “nothing but imagination” as is said, it is something very powerful indeed... **Mechanical imagination or fantasy is an actual force acting universally on mankind and keeping the human being in a state of psychological sleep or collective hypnotism**. Until a person begins to know what it is to *remember himself* (that is, to reach up to the third state of consciousness), the force that manifests itself as imagination or fantasy in the two lower states of consciousness acts against him.

The Starting Point of Changing our Being: Changing our Feeling of Self

Every person is, in himself, at a certain stage of himself, and no one can shift from this stage where he is in himself unless he sees very distinctly for himself that he is not one and the same person, but many different people and that to continue to think he is one is an illusion. This realization, this inner perception, changes a person's feeling of themselves. It changes (or begins to change) their feeling of Self, "I", or "Myself". **As long as a person lives in the illusion that he or she is one, that person has a wrong feeling of Self**, but he or she does not know this: nor do they know that because of this, not only is their life all wrong, and their interaction with others all wrong, but their own internal development is made impossible through this illusion.



This is why self-observation is so important to acquiring “Knowledge of Self”, since a person cannot change as long as they ascribe to themselves *oneness* of being and (through this illusion) will be totally blind to the fact that they are not the conscious origin of all that they think, feel, say, do, etc.

Proper self-observation will show us that we have practically no control of our thoughts and that we cannot even stop thinking if we try to do so. In our present state: thoughts of every kind come and go in the mind whether we wish them to be there or not. Of course, it is the same with our feelings, our moods, our words and our actions. But if we cannot confirm this through our own observations, then it will remain hidden from us by *the power of our own imagination* and the whole sense of Self, "I", or "Myself", and our relationship to our internal states, will be false.

If we believe we are one, then help cannot reach us. But when we see that many different people (and even some very unpleasant ones) exist in us and that we are by no means fully conscious and certainly do not have a single individual will, then (although this goes against our vanity and is painful to our pride) this is the starting-point of changing our being. Therefore, we must remember that **whosoever takes all their psychological processes as the functioning of a Unique, Individual and Permanent "I" is identified with all their errors: they have them so tied to themselves that they have lost the capacity to separate them from their Psyche**.