Gnostic Psychology – Notes 06 (Supplement)

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Self-Knowledge, Self-Observation, and How the Essence 'Falls Asleep'

We think that to know ourselves means to know our peculiarities, our desires, our tastes, our capacities, and our intentions, when in reality it means to know ourselves as machines. To know ourselves as machines means to know the structure of one's machine, its parts, the functions of the different parts, the conditions governing their work, and so on. We realize in a general way that we cannot know any machine without studying it, but we must remember this in relation to ourselves and we must study ourselves (our own machines) as machines. As we have said the means of self-study is self-observation. There is no other way and no one can do this work for us. We must do it ourselves. But before this we must learn how to observe.

The difficulties one has in observing the four mechanical manifestations (lying, mechanical imagination or fantasy, the expression of negative emotions, and unnecessary talking) will show a person their utter mechanicity, and the extreme difficulty of struggling against this mechanicalness without some kind of new knowledge and divine assistance. Even if a person has received certain material, they forget to use it, forget to observe themselves; in other words, they again 'fall asleep' psychologically and must be awakened. This 'falling asleep' we call "Identification" and it has certain definite features of its own which need special study.

"Identification" or "identifying" is a curious state in which the human being passes more than half of their life. We "identify" with everything: with what we say, what we feel, what we believe or do not believe, what we wish or do not wish, what attracts or repels us, etc. Everything absorbs us, and we cannot separate ourselves from the idea, the feeling, or the object that has absorbed us. **In the state of identification a person is incapable of looking impartially upon the object of their identification**.

It is difficult to find the smallest thing with which a person is unable to "identify". In this state, a person has even less control over his mechanical reactions than at any other time. All the mechanical manifestations of the personality *need identification*, because without identification they cannot exist... If a person could get rid of identification, then they could get rid of many useless and foolish manifestations.

The second sleep-producing state, akin to identification, is "Considering". Actually, "considering" is identifying with beings (including people) or things. "Internal Considering" is giving more importance to one's own opinions, feelings, etc., than those of others; whereas "External Considering" is giving importance to the opinions, feelings, etc., of others over one's own. Both "identifying" and "considering" must be observed very seriously. Only full knowledge of them can diminish their influence. If one cannot see them in oneself, one can easily see them in other people. But one must remember that one in no way differs from others. In this sense all people are equal.

The Personality as a Bad Secretary

Let's summarize what we are saying about the real and imaginary parts of the human being. Personality is the term that is applied to everything that we acquire. In the Gnostic Esoteric Work, the personality is sometimes compared to a bad secretary who is in the front office, occupied with all the ideas, concepts, preconceptions, opinions and prejudices. It has many dictionaries, encyclopedias of all types, reference books, etc., and is not in proper communication with the different Brains or centers of the human machine (that is to say, with the intellectual, motor, emotional, instinctive and sexual center).

The Ego uses its 'reference material' to translate the information it receives from the senses (impressions) into wrong internal states. The ego is expressed through the personality and its expressions are subjective: it says what others said, it narrates what others narrated, it explains what others explained...

The personality is formed during the first seven years of life. The personality is energetic, it is born through habits, customs, ideas, etc., during the first 7 years of infancy & childhood and is fortified with the experiences of life. **The "I" utilizes the personality as an instrument of action.** The personality is multiple and has many hidden undertones. The karma of previous existences is deposited in it, karma in the process of fulfillment or crystallization.

The Growth of the Personality and the Essence

Essence is the truth in the human being; personality is the false. But in proportion as personality grows, essence manifests itself less & less and it very often happens that essence stops growing at a very early age and grows no further. Often the essence of a grown-up human being (even that of a very intellectual and highly 'educated' person) stops on the level of a child of five or six. This means that everything we see in this person is, in reality, *not their own*. What is *their own* (their essence) is usually only manifested in their instincts and in their simplest emotions.

There are cases, however, when a person's essence grows in parallel with their personality. Such cases represent very rare exceptions especially in the circumstances of so-called 'cultured' life. Essence has more chances of development in people who live nearer to nature in difficult conditions of constant struggle and danger. But as a rule the personality of such people is not very developed. They have more of what is *their own*, but very little of what is *not their own*, that is to say, they lack education and instruction, they lack culture.

Culture creates personality and is at the same time the product and the result of personality. We do not realize that the whole of our life, everything we call civilization, all we call science, philosophy, art, and politics, is created by people's personality, that is, by what is *not their own* in them. The element that is *not one's own* (personality) differs from what is *one's own* (essence) by the fact that personality can be lost, altered, or taken away by artificial means...

Development is equally difficult for a cultured or an uncultured person. A cultured person lives far from nature, far from natural conditions of existence, in artificial conditions of life, developing their personality at the expense of their essence. A less cultured person, living in more normal and more natural conditions, develops their essence at the expense of their personality. A successful beginning of working upon oneself requires the happy balance of an equal development of both personality and essence. Such a balance will give the greatest assurance of success.

Activating the Essence and Making the Personality Passive (Part 1)

A very important moment in the work upon oneself is when a person begins to distinguish between their personality and their essence. A person's real individuality can only grow from their essence. It can be said that **a person's true individuality is their essence, grown up, mature**. But in order to enable essence to grow up, it is (first of all) necessary to weaken the constant pressure of personality upon it, because the obstacles to the growth of essence are contained in personality.

If we take an average 'cultured' human being, we shall see that in the vast majority of cases their personality is the active element in them while their essence is the passive element. The inner growth of a person cannot begin so long as this order of things remains unchanged. Personality must become passive and essence must become active.