



Psychological teachings on self-remembering

Three hundred years ago a disciple asked his master how he could come to the supersensual life and hear god speak. The master replied: “When you can throw yourself into that where no creature dwells, if only for a moment, then you will hear God speak.” The disciple asked him if that place was near or far away. The master answered: “It is *in you*. And if you can, for a time, cease from all your own thinking and willing, then you will hear the unspeakable words of god... if you can stand still from self-thinking and self-willing, and can stop the wheel of your imagination and senses.” (Jacob Boehme, *The Supersensual Life*)

This is a perfect parable that describes the true state of self-remembering. All work on oneself, including becoming a more conscious being, depends on self-remembering. Half a minute of true self-remembering every day is enough to start with, but it has to be done completely. We should not only contemplate remembering the self but actually do it, otherwise the impact on our being will fade away and be replaced by the many imprints of the external events of our day.

How do we know if we are applying self-remembering properly? We experience a clear feeling of force entering our self, as if something had opened up deep within us. This creates a liberating sense of spaciousness that does not occur in our everyday state of consciousness. It is found beyond our everyday life, our fears and daily worries, all the things and people we care about, our contacts and plans, and everything we see and hear through our five senses.

What makes you ‘you’?

Life is a series of events packed into our day. This includes personal and family events, local and national events and world events, all taking place simultaneously and acting upon us. Consider the many events you may routinely go through.

You are on your way to work and miss your train. You think about what savings you have and the cash in your wallet. You remember that your dishwasher is broken. You experience and see illness and despair. You witness the changes in season. You are aware of your own physical body or the shape of your face. All of these are sensual – our personal life experienced by our five senses through our physical body.

So is there any other life than our sensual life? Obviously we can never be without some sort of event impacting upon us, so we are clearly not free. This thought usually takes us a whole lifetime to grasp.

Have you ever noticed where you place your sense of 'I' or from where you derive your sense of self? Have you explored what kind of 'being' you have? This kind of self-enquiry is well worth pursuing because we begin to see how our level of being weaves a thread through the way life unfolds, and how it makes us go through the same series of events time and again. Without that level of knowing our self, we frequently think, "Why is that always happening to me?"

Applying the teachings

How then can the teachings of psychology help us untangle our own life and its events to better understand our being?

Self-observation has its limitations and can only take us to a certain point where reflections start fading out or the process becomes mechanical or habitual. At this point in our development the spark of meaning and longing has lost its gravitas. That's the time to embrace self-remembering.

If we are always thinking about the teachings and our inner work but are not applying what the work teaches us, without any attempt to self-remember, our inner continuity with the teachings is broken, and we easily slip back into the cycle of everyday life.

To truly remember oneself is a literal surrender of the self, in which we realise our helplessness. It is a conscious positive shock by which we sacrifice something we want to keep. This full and true surrender of oneself, even if it lasts only for a millisecond, is the highest form of sacrifice. But this can only happen if we allow higher influences to reach us, influences that do not belong to our ordinary created life but which constantly surround us in the form of the knowledge of transformation.

A wise Sufi wrote this 800 years ago:

Self-remembering is like coming to the surface of the sea and drawing in air. This air is miraculous and will last a whole day, even when one is at the bottom of the ocean.

Knowing is not enough

When we self-remember every day we gradually become aware of a continuity running through our life, and when we feel bereft without this continuity we have reached a point in our development, deep within our heart, which could be called the awakening of a living conscience.

Our understanding of the teachings is relative to our level of being. Simply to know is not to truly understand. But the knowledge of the teachings acts on our being and, if we put this into action, in time will give rise to true understanding. To achieve understanding through action means that we have to apply effort to connect our knowledge of the teachings with our awareness of our being. If knowledge and being are out of balance, or one has outgrown the other, we won't truly understand.

This only becomes meaningful to us if we pursue it from the perspective that there is a higher level of consciousness available to us, and one which we can realistically reach. The key is to understand that we have to 'be' in the teachings and in our external and internal life simultaneously. There should not be any contradiction. Some aspects of us belong to life; some belong to the universal teachings.

Perfect balance

These different parts of our divided self need to be put into the right place and order, and not simply seen as opposites. We need them both – the teachings and life – and by establishing a perfect balance we can use the force of both.

It's like two rooms in the same house opening up into each other. This house is you. You are not expected to cut yourself off from life and live in a monastery. Everything we can learn from the ancient teachings will help our day-to-day life and ultimately help us to attain our life aim.

Self-remembering shifts us into a different state of consciousness. We may at first find it hard to do certain things without falling back into our usual habits, but if we simultaneously remember ourselves, rest assured we will in time do them in quite a different way.

Practical self-remembering

Try this: repeat to yourself, "I am not me."

If you truly say that from the depth of your being, and really mean it, you may have a very strange feeling about who you are. You may have a sense of the dissolving of your personality for a second or two. The objective of most universal teachings is to isolate our personality so that our real essence can grow and flourish.

Say to yourself: “What is [add your name] up to?”

These exercises will create a degree of inner separation and an awareness that you are not just your acquired personality. We are more than the ever-changing figure, with all its contradictions, that life has built up deep within us. We assume this is our self by simply not knowing any better. Our true inner sense – our supersense – is revealed through the act of self-remembering.

“There is a necessity that we come to the point that we realize our own nothingness, but this is usually mercifully delayed and can’t be artificially realized. You cannot pretend to be nothing, and it is very painful to see a person pretending to be nothing. To remember yourself as you are now is not self-remembering. Self-remembering comes down from above and full self-remembering is a state of consciousness in which personality and all it pretends to be ceases to exist. In this process you become nobody, yet the fullness of this state, which is real bliss, makes you for the first time – somebody”. (M. Nicole)