

Below are some thoughts on observation mode or the silent witness. I wrote this a long time ago, but still has some value today both in terms of psychology and spirituality. The format is question and answer mode:

their normal inclination is to perform an intellectual analysis of what is transpiring.

You see, but you do not observe.

~ Sherlock Homes~

In addition, human beings despite thinking they are adept at observation both internally and externally are in fact notoriously poor at observation. This is not a matter of conjecture as scientific studies repeatedly demonstrate our poor capacity to observe external events and internal phenomena. What we develop into as adults are adults that operate on a very narrow frequency of observation. The world is metaphorically viewed with blinkers on, where anything that does not conform to our biases, beliefs, and ideas are readily dismissed. It is an extremely contracted and narrow view of the world and how we operate in it, where a mass of information is readily ignored to suit the individual identity that has accumulated over the years.

Even those people that society lauds as intellectual geniuses operate on this basis and have a very narrow worldview. Richard Dawkins and Germaine Greer come readily to mind, but there are plenty of others that fall into the same category. Most of these people's observations and analyses of the world are so flawed that one could drive a fleet of trucks through their arguments. It is not a matter of lack of intelligence; clearly, they have that in abundance. But they have settled on a very particular closed world view and would likely prefer damnation over the possibility that their fundamental arguments about life are based on false premises. Most people work on the same basis and that is partly why in the whole history of human kind there has never been any psychological or spiritual progress.

This closed world view is directly attributable to a lack of understanding of self. As many sages throughout history have pointed out, the remedy is to know thyself. I think many people on the planet understand this as an implicit golden rule. By the same token, I also think that the vast majority of people have little understanding as to how to go about knowing thyself. This isn't necessarily a deficit in ability as it is a learned facility that has become ingrained into our psyche over the course of our lifetime.

The other subtle implication of this mode of inquiry is that we tend to focus on what is observed and forget that is something that is doing the observation. This isn't to suggest that studying what is observed is not important, but it does suggest that the direct study of what is doing the observation is frequently overlooked. The net result being that we only

get a partial and filtered perspective of what is occurring in our lives.

Let us now try and understand the difference between observer mode and analysis mode by delving into what observation is.

Going back to the pen example, observation is simply the direct seeing of the object without all the typical analysis and deductive reasoning that follows. The term silent witness is sometimes used to convey this state of being. At the moment of observation before all the thoughts and emotional responses kick in you are the silent witness to the objects existence. You and the pen are in a state of potential as opposed to a state of definition. The pen does not necessarily have to be a pen, nor does a person necessarily should be the body/brain at this particular moment. These definitions are after-thoughts that occur after the direct observation.

This state of potential includes an arcane connection between perceived and perceiver where in that moment the boundaries are diffuse. In addition, even though a connection exists there is a refined detachment occurring. Unless the pen means a great deal to us, we do not have any great emotional response to it, nor do we incessantly ponder with thought after thought why the red pen isn't a blue pen. We are simultaneously connected but unattached and are aware of existence.

While there are degrees of observer states where at one end of the continuum phenomena such as out of body experiences occur and at the other end something like the pen example transpires it is not necessary to attempt to cultivate the more out there phenomena, e.g. out of body, astral projection etc. Indeed most, but not these phenomena are not an indication of observer mode as they often contain subtle identifications with thought and emotions.

What is important initially, irrespective of the degree of the observer state, is to be able to discern the difference between observer mode and analytical or emotional modes. The more we can meet the observer mode then the easier it becomes to allow it to flourish and blossom.

It takes time, patience and persistence to develop, however it is within everyone's capacity, since we naturally enter this state many times during the day. Hence it is not a question of developing a new ability, rather it is being able to recognize the moments that we naturally enter this state, becoming fully familiar with it and then not drifting off into the dreams of emotional and analytical states.

The short answer is the dissipation of fear which in turn allows the flowering of under-utilized potentials to flourish. In addition it is a way to create a bit of space from our normal mental processes so that we can better understand them and deal more effectively with life's challenges as they occur.

As mentioned previously it is useful to make a distinction between normal human functioning and natural human functioning. It is important to remember that they are not one and the same. Our normal *modus operandi* is based on fear in many subtle incarnations. In contrast, our natural state of being is one that is based on agape, flow and grace. This natural state rarely can shine through because covering it is a host of fears and it is these fears we operate on.

The term fear may conjure up a depiction of someone trembling in fear; someone so full of anxiety that they can barely function. However, what is implied using this term in the context of this book is that the fear is so pervasive that we rarely notice it. From our perspective, it does not appear that the clear majority of our lives is spent living in fear because we have become so accustomed to being fearful that it ends up feeling normal.

It is only when we begin to question the premises of our identity that we can begin to see that all of our most deeply held beliefs have their origins in some form of fear.

Again, the term *question* tends to denote some analytical framework for tearing things apart and getting to the root cause. While some analysis is useful in that it can consolidate, and integrate what is observed, the emphasis is always accentuated towards observation and not analysis.

The process then is of learning to observe with detachment or another way of stating it is learning to observe with the least amount of interference from ego as feasibly possible for any given situation. This mode of observation has the effect of becoming more in tune with what is occurring in the body/mind. As one learns to observe in this manner a peculiar thing begins to occur. We start to notice that not everything is as it seems.

In moments of anguish we might notice that the intensity of the anguish changes rather quickly. One moment it can appear in one location of the body and in another it may vary slightly. Sometimes the anguish will expand to other areas, other times it will contract and be localized.

One practical effect therefore is becoming more in tune with the processes that are occurring underneath the surface of our body/mind structure. The second practical effect is that when we can maintain the observation processes for long enough we notice that the anguish dissipates of its own accord. If we do not get caught up in the anguish and get stuck in a state of suffering the anguish will dissipate and change into something else. This will be true of any emotional state and will hold true for physical states like chronic pain.

We should remember that our body has had a lifetime of experiences teaching it to function in a certain way. These associations and patterns will not magically disappear overnight just by observing them. What must occur is that body and the brain should directly learn and integrate a new way of operating within the world. The composition of society is such that we are led to believe that immediate gratification is the be all and end all of life. When we begin to cultivate the process of observation our expectations are often inclined towards immediate relief from the situation: a sort of magic pill approach.

The reality is that one should expect to see slow and gradual results after a period of 6-12 months. Scientific studies tell us that for one person to become highly proficient at some endeavour it takes approximately 10 years of concerted effort and one should be aware that this also applies to spiritual matters. Observation is a technique and ability available to all, but like anything else it needs to be refined and brought more into the light of consciousness.

Once it becomes refined enough additional be

objectively from that perspective because we want to minimize the conjecture and rational interpretation and let the intuition stand on its own two feet. We need to change the mix of fear and desire that we normally operate on as much as possible and being in observer mode is an asset in this regard.

No, it does not. The term detachment is meant to imply that when we are in an observer state, we can monitor emotions, thoughts and sensations. The observer state does not experience these phenomena but rather is a witness to what is occurring in the body/brain organism.

A way to think of this is that when we are experiencing a thought, we are simultaneously aware that we are experiencing a thought. If we monitor and examine the awareness of the thought with due diligence we can clearly see that the awareness itself is unaffected by what is transpiring in the body/brain.

Our bodies however will continue to experience the full gamut of phenomenal experiences. Because our patterns of operating in the world have become so ingrained and operate on a narrow band of possibilities we become oblivious to other phenomena that are occurring with the organism that we call self. What then tends to happen is that a sort of broken record is played over and over again in our heads. It is akin to a robotic program that can only function in a certain way. Nearly every human being is closer to a robot in function than they like to believe.

The function of observing is a method to breakdown this programming and lead to an expansion in perception of overlooked phenomena. As this breaking down process continues we then are able to question many of our pre-conceived ideas about who we are. We gradually learn that there is another set of rules operating in the universe that are far more conducive to help us lead happier and more productive lives than what we were taught through conventional means.

The breakdown occurs because we are not attaching or investing our identity into any given situation. We are simply curious, silent witnesses, even though our bodies may be in great distress and emotional upheaval. The pull will always be to get back into the state of upheaval and distress and every time we do suffering naturally ensues.

A way to conceptualize this is to view yourself as a form of energy system. When we

encounter pain or things do not go our way, the energy is reinvested back into our false identity structures (ego). As the energy is reinvested the suffering is escalated further, usually via the mechanism and related thoughts and emotions that things should not be this way. It creates secondary and tertiary suffering that often is far greater than the original hurt or disappointment we may feel. Further it creates a feedback loop, where energy is constantly poured into these feelings and thoughts and it may often become larger than life and we feel overwhelmed or find ourselves in a state of despair.

Utilizing this same energy metaphor, when we observe ourselves with detachment, we are no longer reinvesting energy into the system. Instead we become observers of the energy and the energy can flow in a more natural manner. Rather than getting caught in a repetitive loop, the energy then can change into one thing to the next and to the next.

The practical effect on the body/brain is that once we have become accustomed to and adept at operating in this mode, then emotional states become unencumbered and allowed to change of their own accord. Rather than stewing for days, weeks, months in anger, we discover that anger can dissipate of its own accord in minutes or hours.

Not only is this process of dissipation central to optimal human functioning, it has the bonus of enabling a much more in touch state with our emotions and thoughts. They take on a richer texture, more nuances are revealed and over time we are able to distinguish various emotional phenomena more accurately.

So, no detachment in this context does not mean devoid of emotions, it means that emotions are not clung too and allowed to flow naturally and unencumbered by past psychological baggage. The full gamut of emotions will appear in life, enlightened, living to optimal human functioning or not. The difference is only in whether they can flow naturally or not, where when they flow naturally it can make an enormous difference to the quality of life experienced.



The Art of Observation

Infographic: 8 Life Skills



Consciously Selecting a
Life Partner