

THE SELF

Sometimes teachings come in bits and pieces that we don't understand until much later. Then one day, the proverbial light bulb goes off and we begin to pull together all those bits of knowledge. While reading "Self-Concept Versus Self" in A Course in Miracles, I began the pulling together.

The concept of self is formed externally. Everyone that we interact with contributes to our perception of self. Most particularly the people with whom we have intense emotional relationships literally rewire our brains. In a recently reviewed book called: *A General Theory of Love*, the authors state: "Who we are and who we become depends, in part, on whom we love." Thinking of your emotional bond to your parent, a friend or lover, you can see how your personality was formed and changed by the view of others. We become merely actors performing the roll expected of us. Thus, many people revert to their childhood interactions with their parents when they are around them once again. If we haven't a concept of how we should act, outside of the perception of others, we may continue in this roll for life. It is, however, merely our perceived view of what others think we are that affects our concept of self.

It is hard to face who we are. A recent activity that took place in a seminar, brought this to light. In the activity people were asked to express their thoughts on an aspect of themselves to another. Each person was also given the opportunity to state their thoughts to themselves in a mirror. Each of us found it easy to reveal ourselves eye to eye with another but when faced with our own image, we were having difficulty maintaining eye contact. I wondered at the time, if there was a part of me that was not being full honest with myself. I pondered what it was that I did not want to face in that mirror. Is there a deep, hidden, dark part of me that shatters my perception of who I am in that mirror? Later, I was reminded of a poem: *The Guy in the Glass*

*When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife,
whose judgement upon you must pass,
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your Life
Is the one staring back from the glass.*

Surely, the songwriter knew the importance of facing ourselves in the mirror and not letting our concept of self be formed by that of others. The opinion of others, be it good or bad will change. You may be a star today but tomorrow you are a "has been." This is not to say that you are bad, just that opinions are constantly changing. Your five minutes of fame are up. Their opinion today may be in the past tomorrow. An expression popped into mind: "Be patient, God isn't finished with me yet." To me this says we can't know who we are. We are still being formed moment by moment. *The Course in Miracles* reminds us that we can be interacting only with ourselves..

So look in the mirror, judge yourself and see if you can face who you are, BUT remember that tomorrow you have the opportunity to work on changing your image. Remember also, that what others think is not who you are at ALL times. When others form an image of you that you are uncomfortable fulfilling, then it is time for you to think: You don't know who I am because I am a work in progress.