

## **Follow the inner witness rather than the outer ones**

I feel a certain affection (awe?) for the notion of bearing witness -- so overlooked these days (compared to creativity, taking action, etc). I like the patience that bearing witness seems to evoke, the willingness to be present, the sense of honoring another, a close sister to compassion. It comes up in the way writers talk about writing -- recording events so accurately that you become a documentarian.

The question of inner and outer is a funny one. Off the top of my head, of course I agree the inner witness is better -- but sometimes, a friend or teacher can be a better witness than I myself can be. Maybe it depends on how close I'm willing to stand to my own thoughts, or maybe a friend can be the person who helps to awaken the inner witness (the Knowing that Eliza describes so well), or maybe the so-called outer is only outside depending on how I hold my relation to the world. My friend Glen has a talent for letting me talk until I'm able to find peace in what I'm saying (no matter how off the wall I sound) -- he's good at noticing a moment of clarity in the crazy talk.

At the same time, no matter how good the advice from a friend can be, it doesn't really help until I try it out for myself. I'm thinking about how tai chi can feel in a class versus on my own -- there's a delicious sense of the group's energetic support in a class, but I often learn more by practicing (faltering :) on my own. It's a funny thing to be such an outwardly directed thing, and then suddenly discover what it's like to have an inside.

## **Find the consciousness you had before you were born.**

OK, I suggested it, but I am having a hard time saying something about this one. Part of it is that I'm not sure that I'm inhabiting that mind very well right now, so I'm afraid anything I say will be making it up, or will turn into an object of grasping for me, that by saying anything I'll limit it in some silly way, etc. It's probably easier to start by talking about what it isn't.

This is awkward to say because I feel like I'm contradicting other reports (or maybe not -- I might be taking too limited a view of someone else's meaning), but I'll carry on for a bit with an eye to the slogan above. For me the meaning of this slogan goes quite beyond notions of a return to infancy or the uncarved block. It's not just conditioning influences that are at issue -- it is pointing at a knowing that does not require any notion of human embodiment (which includes an embodiment of distance, time and space), and it is also not something which is separate from these same conditioning influences, time, space, and distance. It isn't a super-mind, as Eliza points out, it's absolutely basic, but it's also completely outside experience.

It's such a weird thing, and I often wonder what it has to do with anything -- certainly, it doesn't seem to have much to do with the way I typically go about my day. And yet, lojong recommends this as one of its first slogans, almost a preparatory step to practicing the others. Provisionally, I think it means leaving room for this other way of being to come forward, to practice and enfold these issues.

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P.S. I'm also wondering if this slogan has a traditional meaning that a qualified teacher would be better able to discuss -- but in either case, one more thing that I like about this and all the lojong slogans is the

way they make me sort of stop in my tracks -- they help me see that my ordinary concepts and understandings don't quite fit the bill.

P.P.S. Also, I don't mean to say that noticing conditioning influences is unimportant, just that I don't think it's the only point of this particular slogan.