

OBJECTIVE VIEWING

Vision, Perception and Direct Reading

Path 1 – Open Class – Pre-Class Practice Guide

Sunday 21st June 2026

8:00pm BST | 9:00pm CEST | 4:00pm ET | 3:00pm CT | 1:00pm PT | 6:00am AEST (Mon)



"We very rarely see what we look at."

— G.I. Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, "The Two Rivers"

How much of what I see is actually there?

1. BEFORE THE CLASS: ONE DISTINCTION TO HOLD

“Our so-called thoughts are nothing more than these labels taken out of the cupboard.”

— G.I. Gurdjieff, Views from the Real World

Three things happen in any moment of visual experience. They are not the same thing.

Seeing is given. Light enters the eyes, images form. It happens whether or not any attention is present. It requires nothing.

Looking is chosen. The eyes and attention are directed together toward something. This is an act, even if a habitual and largely mechanical one.

Viewing is looking with presence. The eyes rest on something and attention receives it before the formatory apparatus closes around it with a label.

Most of ordinary life operates at the first level. The eyes see whilst the mind occupies itself elsewhere. The class on Sunday begins by noticing this gap.

2. PRE-CLASS EXERCISE ONE: THE FIXED POINT

Do this once before the class. It takes thirty seconds and requires nothing more than a garden, a pavement, or any outdoor surface.

THE EXERCISE

Find a small mark on the ground, preferably on grass: a speck of dirt, a small stone, anything less than a millimetre across. Fix your gaze entirely on it. Hold for thirty seconds without letting your eyes move.

Notice what happens in the periphery.

Then shake your head gently and look again normally.

The surrounding area will flatten. Texture and irregularity will disappear from the edges of your visual field. When you shake your head, everything returns.

What you saw in the periphery during those thirty seconds was not there. The brain generated a model of what should be present, based on earlier data and existing patterns. It was indistinguishable from normal perception until the head moved.

This is normal visual system operation, made visible by removing the condition that usually conceals it.

That observation is where Sunday's class begins.

3. PRE-CLASS EXERCISE TWO: SILENT VIEWING

“We do not see people objectively: we see them subjectively — that is, as we imagine or expect them to be.”

— Maurice Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries, Vol. 3

The formatory apparatus labels everything it encounters. Once a label is attached, the thing itself recedes. What is seen is the label, not the object.

This exercise interrupts that process directly.

THE EXERCISE

Look around the space you are in. Move your attention slowly from object to object.

For each thing the eyes rest on: look at it without naming it. See if the gaze can rest on the thing before the label arrives.

When a label appears — chair, window, wall, phone — notice it, and return the attention to the object itself, as if seeing it for the first time.

Do this for two to three minutes. Speed helps at first: move the eyes quickly enough that the labelling function cannot keep up. Then slow down and see if the gap can be held at lower speed.

The formatory apparatus will reassert quickly. This is expected. The practice is the noticing, not the suppression.

The same mechanism operates with people. Once a label has been attached to a person — through a single impression, a report from someone else, or long familiarity — subsequent encounters confirm the label rather than revealing the person.

“We see a man yesterday, not to-day. To-day we merely recognise him, just as we merely recognise everything else. We do not see things afresh.”

— Maurice Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries, Vol. 5

The Fixed Point exercise demonstrated the visual system generating false peripheral data. Silent Viewing demonstrates the same substitution in the labelling function. Both are the same mechanism at different levels.

4. WHAT TO BRING

After both exercises, notice what they produced. Bring that to the class.

- *Fixed Point: did the peripheral flattening occur? What did the return of normal vision feel like?*
- *Silent Viewing: how quickly did labels reassert? Was there any gap before they arrived?*
- *What do both exercises suggest about what you normally take to be ordinary seeing?*

There are no correct answers. The observation is the data.

CLASS DETAILS

Date: Sunday 21st June 2026

Time: 8:00pm BST | 9:00pm CEST | 4:00pm ET | 3:00pm CT | 1:00pm PT | 6:00am AEST (Mon)

Duration: 60 minutes

Platform: Zoom – link in your reminder email

Materials: martfotai.com/current-class

Check your local time at timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html

The class is 60 minutes. Three exercises, one teaching observation, one close. No prior knowledge required. Everything covered is directly verifiable during the session.

See you on Sunday 21st June.

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