

# 2006-12-04 Thinking

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thought, thinking, people, meditation, feel, peaceful, meditate, naturalist, idea, energy, obstacle, beliefs, deep, mind, tentacles, world, study, recurrent, mediated, kinds

## SPEAKERS

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For this exploration, you might imagine yourself to be a naturalist. Going into the wild

in order to

look carefully to study a particular creature of the wild not to think about other imagination fantasize about it, but to really look at it, sneak up on it quietly see how it functions how it works, what it does? What is it? Unknown creature as if you've never seen it before. Let's begin. If you can, as if it's a very first time ever you've discovered it. See if you can discover what is a thought. No Think about it. As you have a thought. study it look at it in amazement. Like a naturalist. What is a thought? Does it work? Some thoughts and more peripheral images. What's this phenomena of a thought? What is it an animal? What color are thoughts? What shape? What wait what texture how much energy is enough A thought behave when you look at it just being observed Thought thought is one kind of creature and thinking is a different kind of preacher. What's the difference between a thought and thinking? The phenomenon of thinking is more complex than just having a thought. What are some of the things that come into play come to bear are involved in thinking let yourself think freely whatever way your mind wants to think. Like a naturalist. Look at thinking what goes on there What's the energy level move you're thinking? He said very subtle, energy quiet and calm. Was it loud and aggressive, insistent? An isolated event or are there tentacles that go out from thinking into your muscles into your feelings, your emotions into your impulses, motivations desires back and observe the phenomenal thinking even if it is a little bit more observant because if you're outside or naturalist How is that different than the way you usually are with your thinking? With your usual relationship to thinking Have you inside of it is the you of who you are inside your thinking inside outside And then one final exploration if the thinking part of yourself of your being is only if it was only a very small part of who you are 1% 2% of your whole total functioning. Can you feel your way is there felt sense of the not 98% of who you are which is not thinking

without Thinking

Can you have a direct awareness of your great, great alive, the great functioning which is beyond and bigger and wider, more spacious than the thinking itself. At least a few of you. Were thinking a little bit so you can do that exercise. Those of you that have had any thoughts whatsoever. During this exercise, well Count your blessings. Here's some helpful hints from the Colorado division of wildlife. Colorado has been home to thoughts since their earliest ancestors evolved in North America. Today, increasing numbers of people routinely live and play in thoughts country. Learning about thoughts and being aware of their habits will help you fully appreciate these unique animals and the habitats in which they live. What to do if he made a thought there is no definite or definitive rule, but what to do if you meet a thought. Thought attacks are rare compared to the number of close encounters. However, if you do meet a thought before his time to leave an area, here are some suggestions. Remember, every situation is different with respect to the thought the terrain, the people and their activity. First, stay calm. If you see a thought, and it hasn't seen you calmly leave the area to stop Back away slowly while facing the thought. Give the thought plenty of room to escape. Wild thoughts rarely attack people unless they feel threatened or provoked. Speak softly this may reassure the thought that no harm is meant to it. The thought stands upright or moves closer, it may be trying to detect smells in the air. This isn't a sign of aggression. Once a thought identifies you, it may leave the area and try to intimidate you by or try to intimidate you by charging to within a few feet before the throws. Don't run or make any sudden movements. Running is likely to prompt a thought to get chased and you can't outrun a thought. If you have a big potentially life threatening situation with a thought. Or if an injury occurs, please contact the division of wildlife Monday through Friday 8am to five. So, I think anyone who is going to meditate, maybe mindfulness meditation has to, sooner or later grapple with thinking. And it's helpful to spend some time quality time observing and getting to know your thinking the way it is. I know sometimes it's possible in meditation to always be letting go of thoughts or turning away from them or being obsessed with them or, you know, why am I thinking again, or just kind of having all kinds of relationship to them that Do not involve studying them getting to know them better. And one of the principles of Michael's meditation is that we want to really understand well, what it is that occurs, rather than kind of dismissing it or turning away from it, especially those things which are the obstacles, those things that seem to make meditation difficult. You will actually turn towards the Kosovo called offsets obstacle, and get to know it as best as you can. As opposed to, you know, always pretending it's not there or just ignoring it and believe it if you can let go of the so called obstacle. If you find yourself letting go of it over and over and over again, and it keeps coming back. Then it's a high time that you actually turn actually study this phenomena, the obstacle, whatever it might be. And to some degree thinking is, is a common phenomena for most people. And a lot of people find it thinking is some way obstacle for meditation. It doesn't have to be the Meditation texts don't say it is. But often people relate to thinking in a way that they think of it as an obstacle. And so certainly once careful study what is thinking, also thinking is such a huge part of most human life. And for some people, it's the only thing going on really, in their life is thinking and they don't think don't think that's the case. But really, they just living in a very complex world of thinking of thoughts and beliefs and fantasies of stories of projections of transference is all about these words or thoughts or images that occur in the mind. And even though they might see someone out there, for some person

who we think they're relating to a person out there 99% of how they relate to that person just to the filter of their thoughts, or an event. There's events out there and that is occurring. 9% of what how we relate to the event is through the filter of our thoughts and ideas and stories, interpretations, judgments about that event. You know, we some people spend a lot of time thinking about the future. And the future is only a thought. It's not to me beyond just a thought. It's a kind of virtual reality, the original virtual realities thinking about the future. Someone yesterday said having expectation is a form of pre meditated resentment. premeditated resentments, I guess they did in your settings or setting yourself up. For isn't always the case. It was a nice, nice thing. or spending a lot of time thinking about the past. The past is, in some ways, a different kind of reality in the future. but not much. I mean, it's also mediated a cocktail To our thinking and our thoughts. And many of the ways that you relate to other people are to the filter certain kinds of thoughts. One of the little frequent teaching points made in our particular vipassana tradition involves a teacher. Some some person came to talk to a teacher about some problem that she was having apparently with her mother. So probably she's going on about difficulties with a mother and this and that, and the mother that and this. And, and then the teacher said, The thought of your mother is not your mother. And that kind of freed the woman up. The thought of your mother is not your mother. And certainly, mother. There's some biological, I guess, reality, someone being your mother but the mother It's not always your mother. Right? I mean, sometimes it's maybe a wife or a partner or daughter. There's all kinds of other roles, that mothering is kind of a role. And so that role belongs to a little bit to the world of thoughts and ideas. So who is this person? If you're not seeing the person to the idea of motherhood? So are you free of roles, thoughts, ideas? So we see the world very much through the filter of thoughts, we see ourselves to this filter thoughts. And the thoughts we have are consequential. Sometimes it can just flow to idly and have no consequence. But sometimes thoughts seemingly can have these tentacles. That's my word. I'm not sure that word language with tentacles net is kind of connected to other aspects of our being. So you can be sitting for example, meditation, minding your own Business very quietly, very peaceful. Things are serene and nice. And, and you know, maybe one of these cars guys by street here is a car. And that car reminds you of the car you had when you were 20. And you had this date, and that car and that person you went on that date with that person just screwed you over.

And suddenly you're fuming

your anger and your energy is here and you're awake. Because that person had done that 50 years ago as almost like it was today. And you were planning your business quietly. And this thought the idea arose, and that idea was somehow or other had a connection to your emotional life. And it's kind of fueled it turns it on. JACK you start off with a thought. The story I like to tell is that seven years Many years ago now, I was teaching a retreat. And there was a woman on the retreat who is known for some years. And all the time I noticed she was quite disturbed or upset, angry, a lot of self criticism, modest self loathing and struggling with struggling with it. And in one morning, we had an meditation session in the hall, just magical and it was just beautiful, was like 930 in the morning, beautiful morning light coming into them for light coming into the center. And the whole the whole meditation hall was really peaceful is felt that way and I felt really peaceful coming out meditation. And right after that meditation

session, I an interview with her and I rearranged into these nice little, very kind of I promote my play very peaceful monastic was a monastery was the retreat and so these monastic cells, you know, when monks play Have you had a bad mistake in just a little moment? It just was so delightful. I love that kind of monastic blood. And, and so I was sitting there in this nice little monastic room and I was feeling so peaceful and didn't say anything. And then she comes in and takes the chair opposite me and it was obvious that she was kind of in the same place. She was so peaceful, just smiling his radiant.

What's happened?

This is remarkable. This woman who have always noticed being so worked up. And as we sat there for quite a while just looking at each other, being present is just so delightful. The piece we both share this piece was so great. And I said something especially I'm not who's who broke the silence. But he kind of somehow acknowledged that this was pretty special. And then she said, But it wasn't this way yesterday. Yesterday I was concerned that I was

really having a hard time was it was too late.

Yesterday don't keep up with your head right now. But no, she was pulling these thoughts, these memories out. And those memories and thoughts were tied. And anyway, it was gone. It was really sad. It didn't it just quickly. She destroyed the piece by by reliving, reliving the past by thinking of those thoughts. And she felt compelled to tell me that it wasn't always the way it was. Now sometimes you want to be apologetic or something was you know, I don't know what's exactly what's behind her thinking. So our thoughts are consequential. Some thoughts can weigh us down. Some thoughts are too Then just drag on our wind drag on our minds on our energy that can constrain us, drain us of energy, you can feel these kind of things. And I have a four year old at home and he's kind of a must be a born actor. Maybe they all are at that age, but it just, it seems like to say something like, no, this whole body goes to the effect. Most of us, you know, we're kind of, we don't do so dramatically anymore. It's like much more common, but it's but you know, so it can be used to drain our energy and some energies can boost us up, we feel suddenly energized and you sit here again, it's very peaceful and quiet. Or maybe sitting here with physical discomfort and struggling with it. Can you send me something, some beautiful thoughts? The memory arises or beautiful fantasy arises. There's not a few people who've come on retreats and tell them told me something like I was having this beautiful fantasy series of any sexual fantasies. And I decided to go with it because I was a physically uncomfortable meditating. And it just needed a break. You know, they go off in Fantasyland and they suddenly to kind of lift them up out of their discomfort. Like praise and blame from other people can affect your energy level. Thoughts can do the same thing. Thoughts can create physical tension, there's tentacles that go down to her muscles. And you can see that and some people think really hard. Things have eyebrows been sharper, and sharper on the forehead. Are the jaws get all tense, shoulders of the neck you can feel with yourself. Maybe some of you Sometimes, not everyone has

the same kind of powerful, powerful connection to thinking in their behind their butt muscles. Some people have a very close connection, some people don't. But people have a close connection can also appeal and the muscle, I can see what sometimes muscles will kind of ignite my cheek and my shoulders, I feel sometimes in my eyes, sometimes it feels like almost like a muscle inside my skull and kind of sometimes feels like it's a little bit tight or pressure has a lot of energy for blood coursing through it. Sometimes, I finish kind of washed my mind kind of caught up in lots of lots of thinking. It just feels like somehow the structure in my brain is being be configured by all this thinking. And I said, Oh, no, I'm going to be hardwired now like this. And then I'll meditate for a while and just kind of calmed down and I said, Oh, thank God, it wasn't hardwired. Thank God. You know, it wasn't Frozen that way that we've been terrible. And it kind of all kind of settles out and relaxes. And then thinking is often connected to our beliefs. My guess is, the more the bigger impact a thought has on us. the more likely it is it's connected to some beliefs. And sometimes their beliefs that kind of recurrent are always going on because sometimes the subconscious beliefs that somehow are operating, we don't even see certain kind of thought that are operating. And so it's always there chattering away kind of reinforcing things. And some of those recurrent ongoing beliefs are energy drains in themselves. And some of them are kind of boosting, coping between sort of optimism and hope What happens in the thief In addition, sometimes as you drop down to some of the more subconscious areas with us on the surface thinking kind of quiets down. And it's a real surprise to discover some of the deeper belief systems and a belief or a deeper kind of thoughts that are operating, that are create the structure or the foundation for a lot of other kind of thoughts you might have. So, for example, you one, one, all kinds of kind of underlying kind of thought patterns might be there. But one thought pattern would be, for example, that the world is a threatening place. You know, some people kind of operate with that assumption, always and always kind of looking at their assumptions in this world, a dangerous place that had maybe some really difficult experiences growing up that given that idea that it's a threatening place, and so they're always on their guard. It's always their operating, that people might have the underlying idea that the world is a benign place a good place, or they might have the underlying idea. This world is here for You know, just you know, stay here is here to satisfy my whims and desires and wishes. And so what's in it for me kind of always the best what's going on so self referential, or underlying beliefs that I shouldn't I shouldn't be here. I don't deserve to be here, you know, this mistake somehow you know, some biological mistake it's the logical mistake somehow in all the other people's okay if it wouldn't be alive, but you know, I shouldn't be alive I shouldn't be here. And I've not met people who see a basically feel that way about themselves. And underlying beliefs, this there's a thought that's there, that somehow there and has a big impact on how we go around, go around. And some people have thoughts a feeling that they're unworthy, some people feel like they are super worthy, or some people feel all kinds of beliefs that operate that go on and these kinds of More subconscious kind of thoughts in all kinds of thoughts are sometimes never scrutinized, never looked at one relationship that people have to thinking is that every thought is believable. Somehow every thought is true. What would happen if you thought that what if he assumed that every thought was not leave it was just that every thought is a thought. It wasn't true or not true. It was just a thought. He opened up the bookstore and pulled out a book from the bookshelf. And you open it to a page and read a sentence. Just a sentence. You close and you put book back and walk out of the store. And

perhaps you know, maybe the book you got was a book on thermodynamics. And you can barely understand the sentence here, read through the sentence. Don't pick it up. do anything with it? Can you relate to your thought that way? Or is there a typical to it from you to the thought? You feel like oh, that's, I'm compelled to believe it, I'm compelled to go along with it. Some people seemingly believe inside their thinking, the world of who they are inside this world. That's where they live. They take up residence in their thinking, and how they orient themselves to the world to see the world and everything is through their ideas and thoughts and opinions and views. And it's completely baffling to imagine that it can be any other way. But is there another way? Is it possible to step out of your thinking, and then look at your thinking possible to get some objective distance from it was many years ago when I was in college, I was living in an apartment that had a doctor and to my two friends and the two friends in the living room, and they were having an animated conversation about something. And for some reason, I went out on the balcony and closed a sliding glass door. And I looked back into their living room, and I could see them having an animated conversation. But I couldn't hear work. And that was really amazing to watch this animated thing without any words. But I was out on the balcony looking in what's it like to step out on the balcony? You know, big party is busy and aquadome lots of noise. And you're kind of in the middle of the fray and it's difficult to be in socializing all these people you don't know whatever and, and then you step out of the document, close the door and you look back at the party. Very different relationship with a party rather than being in the middle of it. Can you do that for us? can you leave the party step out, you know, and kind of exit on the brand and look back and say, Oh, look at that, as opposed to being in it as opposed to being pushed around by them. You have a you have such a place, is there a place in your mind is there Vanda in your mind when you can step back and look as opposed to being in the middle of it. And I think that's one of the things that mindfulness is pointing to is that possibility of a way of being kind of awareness, which is not a meshed or entangled with thinking, but has managed to disentangle that from it. Not to be for or against thinking not to be opposed to it, but to be free of it. And being free of it. Not being pushed by it, not not believing every thought arises. Not getting into every thought that arises not chasing every thought that arises with another thought. Another idea

is a thought

See a thought is just a thought, a memory idea of the future idea of yourself this can be revolutionary to do this, because chances are pretty high that the sufferings of your life the most important or core deepest ways in which you suffer have stress as a Genesis in some kind of thought,

some kind of,

you know mental kind of activity that we are thinking or imaging or imagining. And if it has some close Genesis to it or some close connection to that if you have a different relationship to your thoughts, what happens to your suffering I think one of the things that can happen for some people when they meditate is that before you meditate, you can see like certain things, certain things are really



important. And then when you sit and meditate, things, relax, you get a whole different perspective on this issue. You know, it wasn't, it wasn't so important after all. One of the things, one of the ways I get caught sometimes is if I have a lot to do, you know, not enough time to do it in my mind kind of tight when that happens, and it might get packed tight and claustrophobic all the things I do,

then,

you know, it's important to get it all done, I'm done. It's gonna be bad, you know, things are gonna fall apart. And what I've learned is when I get worked up this way, I've learned that it's really helpful if I stop emitting. Take up 10 minutes. And after those 10 minutes I lost the time. I understand it's really amazing what happens the time suddenly, suddenly seems like a discovered more time. It's it's kind of it's counterintuitive, right? To take time off to meditate and stuff to do. So next time you really feel oppressed by time and you haven't had enough time to do it all. Sit down and meditate for 30 minutes. See what maybe changes your perspective on it. So, I've been talking on and on here, all these thoughts of mine. And, and what I'm trying to convey to you is what I said in the beginning is that I think it's really helpful for meditators to spend some time studying nominal thinking, exploring get to know as well and how it is for you. Each person is gonna be different. Which What's your relationship to your thinking? Some people hate the thoughts. Some people love them. Some people believe every thought they have. Some people always tell by their thoughts, all kinds of ways that people relate to the thinking. Is it possible in the best senses of the term? To have no relationship to your thoughts whatsoever? To be free in relation to your thoughts? Just like you would have no relationship to a bird that flies overhead there's the bird hardly notice it. The thought arises you don't pick it up you don't go for it. You don't let it influence you. Just kind of freaky to be of your thoughts and who wants You if you are not you're thinking or Who are you? If you don't have your thoughts to tell you that that's a good one. If you can't use your thinking, to tell you to tell yourself who you are, who are you and how are you going to know? Is there some way of knowing who you are? If you can't tell you tell yourself to can't have a sauce to tell you or an image or a vision, a visualization that shows you what do I do? I have this idea of you know, like severe and you want to somehow catch the mirror without your reflection upon it. You know, you try to get there fast enough. Now you go really fast and they're flexing with either the mirrors they're right sided. reflective mirrors. Yes, they are right. Sometimes it can be very hard to kind of catch yourself without having a thought that tells you that it's possible. It's not that not as difficult as the mirror thing, which I guess is impossible but and my suggestion is that if you can find some sense of yourself that is not mediated through your thoughts. You'll have access to a place that's peaceful. If you're going to mediate your life through your thinking, mind, I suspect that sooner or later, it's not going to be very peaceful. You're not going to have access to the deepest pieces possible. Study your thinking, get to know it. The way to work with obstacles is to get to know them really well. With a net sense, and this kind of practice, we are, in a sense a welcoming of the obstacles of great obstacle today. Now I get to study it, get to know it well, and that's the process of becoming free of it.

So

we have five minutes. And then Do any of you have anything you want to ask about this? In the comments. Silence You said you mentioned about wind is a recurring theme To turn around and look at that thought to face it,

when is it okay to

to continue focusing on the breath and when is it okay to to continue to get the analysis of where this thought is coming from? Good question.

There's no you know, really the right answer for your question. I think a lot of it has to do with again, your own understanding and exploration. You try different things, explore different ways. trial and error, sometimes you try, try ignoring it, this thing with a breath, seeing it for a while, other times, you might stop looking at the breath and look at the thinking and see what that's like, see what you can learn. But generally, it's a good generally good advice meditation is, is the first thing to do is just ignore to let go of it and come back to your breath. And just come back and come back. Like oh, and come back, click on come back and eventually things Generally will tend to calm down or quiet down on its own. If a thought is really strong or persistent or recurrent, and you get into thinking like, maybe you can't let go of it, or if you let go of it, it comes back right away pretty quickly,

then it's a sign that

something's going on that you haven't understood. So then you want to let go of your breath. Then bring your full attention on this thing, because it is a recurrent cycle is repetitive syndication that needs attention. And then, and then it's an art to know how long to pay attention to it, and how to pay attention such a way that you don't get pulled into its world of thinking. So use the word analysis and analysis which is a fine word to use. However, the word analysis for some people's mind suggests thinking about your thinking. And when we try to mindfulness is to look at it like from the veranda and try to understand the different elements, but not by thinking about it. But more this time and awareness, more that side of it.

I was aware when you were speaking

of a time of

having a very strong Thought and Feeling sort of attached to it that you go out to it that your mind is sort of pulled to it this way and I was thinking, no, no, no, it's not like that. It's more like the thought is attacking my mind. It's going the other direction that it's, it's I'm just sitting there minding my own



business and the thought comes instead of seeing it as something that I'm letting happen. So that was interesting.

Yeah, it's very interesting to change the perspectives. Like Listen, listen to things. So this world of thinking, as I said, is a very important one. And I would suggest that for some people, it's not everyone, you know relates to thinking as a major thing they do some people and more feeling people are kinesthetic people are different ways in which, you know, but, but, I want to say is a final word that for some people thinking, is traced the roots of break it down to the kind of the root to the heart or the kind of core area, subliminal, subconscious areas of thinking. It's really closely tied to really deep fundamental existential, personal, emotional, psychological issues, voices of suffering, and the exploration of thinking, for all the humor we can, we can use about accounting, thinking about Colorado division. A wildlife and all that, I think that they encounter with thinking and deep encounter with a deep careful looking and thinking very deep way, silently, quietly, really getting time to feel it. It's really helpful to do that with a lot of compassion to meet with you with a lot of self compassion, a lot of compassion, a lot of care a lot of kindness. And, you know, it's probably probably that place the, the places of thinking, the kind of core places of thinking and the foundation for it all probably have a tremendous need of our kindness or forgiveness or compassion

or to really be seen a net and healed.

So, certainly enjoy your thinking. laugh at it when it's appropriate. If you've never laughed at your own thinking, it's about time. But also, sometimes you know, it's Certainly not a laughing matter and then needed with your compassion. Thank you