

The Five Faculties Part II

Gil Fronsdal

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So I want to thank you for those of you who are here listening, both alive and perhaps are going to be listening to this after the fact and the recording. And I think what I'll do today is to continue with the theme that I started last week, last Sunday. But now I'll probably find some way of relating it to our new situation, that now that we have this COVID-19 kind of the event, the experience, the concern for it right in the middle of our lives, and probably in many of you as well, that it's something you're thinking about, especially those of you who might be living in places that are now quarantined areas or withers. You know, request for all kinds of limitations in our lives, or your self-imposed ideas of our being careful in staying home more, but also for everyone who is concerned about it. And as I talk about the topic maybe in relationship to the current virus and things that, for those of you who don't feel it directly relates to you or listen to this long in the future, you can probably relatively simply apply it to something else in your life, some other situation that's comparable. Because the current COVID-19 virus is just representative and important representative of the human condition and the dangers that are inherent in human conditions, the risks and that we're always going to be encountering sooner or later, every single one of us with sickness, old age, and death, and natural disasters, and social change, and all kinds of things that we can expect to come along with this human life.

And so Buddhist practice is not meant to help us avoid these things and just be protected in our own little, isolated practice. But rather, Buddhist practices, I would like to suggest, is meant to make us wise in the midst of all that, and so that we carry with us a degree of peacefulness, wisdom, presence of mind, mindfulness that we become as agents of benefit for the world, that we become the kind of person who is able to have the non-anxious presence that is reassuring for other people and support other people from not getting swept up in their anxieties and fears and greeds and all the things. That actually makes life much more

difficult for individuals and for society. So what we learn, what we're facing and practising with the COVID-19 is really the very thing I'd like to say that Buddhist practice was designed to address and really take seriously and find a way that is for the betterment and benefit of everyone. So the topic that I started last week is the five faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. And I referred last week to them as the five divine qualities or faculties, or the five divinities, I think I said.

And the reason to give that name is that the Pāli word for them is *indriya*, coming from the name of the Indian god, the time of the Buddha, the ruler of the gods back in his time. And so is Indra. And Indra was considered to be a friend of humans, a protector of humans, and also a friend of the Buddha, apparently. And so it's meant, I thought, of as a friendly support of a person, a being, or entity, that also it has a certain kind of controlling power, is a ruler of the gods. And so this idea of that which controls or rules or guides our lives, that which protects our lives, that which is our friend, is applied to these five human capacities that everyone has. And that to engage and utilize these capacities in a way that they are the ones that really can protect us, may guide us in a certain way and become our internal friends for living a wise and good life, and we carry those with us at all times.

And I think what's profound about this is that these are called, these are considered the faculties that come alive, and they're not quite identified as being me, myself, and mine. It's not the normal way in which we identify: This is who I am. In fact, the idea is not to take these as being my identity. This defines who I am, but rather to be faculties that we have that are almost like an alternative to basing lives in some narrow way on any kind of category of identification that human beings take, whether it's appropriate identification, healthy or whether it's an unhealthy identification that people do, that there is something else that supports us, and that also, not coincidentally, are universal human capacities, something we all share, and can really identify and see in each other, and supporting each other, and really, at the same time, maybe also all be inspired by each other. When these are going well and strong now, in talking about this, especially with this era of the COVID-19 virus, it occurs to me that it's a kind of a useful distinction, you know, tentative distinction to make between, as a human being, being a consumer and being a producer, that some people live their life more from the sense of being a consumer, a recipient. And one version, extreme version of that, a victim of life.

And so it's all about acquiring things, acquiring experiences, acquiring friendships, acquiring all kinds of social kind of niceties from the world around us. And it's all, in some sense, all about acquiring, having its things. And certainly we can be actively involved in going out to

acquire those things, but still about what the world can provide me. The other kind of end of that spectrum is to be a producer of our experience, producer of what's important for us. So rather than thinking that it's about the world providing us with what we need, it's about us being the producer in a sense of what we need, the producer of not necessarily the food we eat, one material comforts and many the things we need. But there's something very profound that we can be the producer from ourselves, so that rather than waiting for people to be our friends, we're the producer of friendship.

And we go out into the world to be friends to others, to be kind or supportive to others, rather than waiting for someone to love us, we love. Rather than waiting for someone to be generous to us, we're the one who's generous in a sense, we're the power, the producer, we're the actor of the very thing that some people want to receive from the world. We actually take the initiative to allow that to develop and grow in us. From a Buddhist point of view, this is a testi related but not complete, not equal distinction between doing things which are unwholesome and doing things which are wholesome. And now we let go of what is unwholesome and unhelpful, and we're engaged in producing, in evoking that which is wholesome, that which is good, that which is healthy for us and the world around us. And there is a kind of active engagement in something and doing things.

Now, when there's something happening in the world like this cold virus, that it's very easy to be afraid, and it's reasonable to have some fear, and I'm not going to belittle anybody's fear around this, or to say that anyone's wrong from being afraid. But the question is, how do we relate to both this condition? What's happening in society now with the risks involved with the virus and with our fear with it? Are we a consumer or a producer? Are we a victim or are we the supporter or the helper for ourselves in the world? It's easy with fear, an extreme fear, to collapse into the fear.

It's easy to have formed some kind of identity around fear about that involves some degree of self-pity or self-concern or a sense of helplessness or hopelessness that we collapse into and feel like someone is out there supposed to take care of us. Someone needs to know what to do, the government or something, and that I can't do anything. I have to just hunker down and hide. And I don't know all kinds of versions of being what I'm calling today a consumer. And instead of letting the fear be something we collapse into, or let the fear be the motivating influence, or the primary influence on what motivates us, our decisions, how we see the world and how we live in the world, it's possible through this text to engage in other motivation, another source inside of us which is the basis for our decisions, the way we are in the world, and our motivations, and to switch from something like fear, which can be debilitat-

ing, to actively engaging some other approach to being in the world from inside of ourselves is a big part of what Buddhist practice is, especially when we begin it.

And one of the important things for practitioners is that we could come from a place of practice. We can have faith, the first of the five faculties, the first of the five divine qualities. We can have strong confidence that there is another way of living. There is a way of living where we don't collapse into fear, or are debilitated by fear, or give in to fear. Or there is another way of living, other sources of motivation, so that even if we're afraid, we're really choosing to find, to look forward, to reflect about, and to act on other motivations, hopeful motivations which are wise and good and really supportive of us. So, for example, of the motivation to practice with fear so that we don't collapse in it, so that we relate to it in a wise way, that is an alternative to being with fear.

And to have confidence that's worthwhile, to have confidence that somehow being mindful and using mindfulness to kind of pull ourselves out from the collapse, sitting up straight, being wise and finding some other way of relating to it, to be free of it, to be equanimous, to be non-reactive, to be not. To find other sources of motivation besides that which is influenced by fear that is involved. That's to practise with it and to engage in practice with it is now? Where are the producers? We're the agent of change rather than the victim of the change that happens. And so to have faith that there is another possibility than being swept up in desire and greed, swept up in hate and hostility and blame, swept up in fear and terror and panic about these things. But to find another way.

One of the reasons for that is that most human beings are much wiser about and more capable of engaging and in responding to the dangers of our world if they're calm and wise and reflective and can think and are not blinded by fear and panic and all that. Now, certainly I know that in my life I've made mistakes where I got caught up in fear and then, in a hurry, I decided to do something that later I regretted that it was necessary or even caused harm because I came to a quick decision and acted on the fear rather than, you know, being calm. And I have had some experience, and I've known some dramatic stories from friends of mine who were able in dangerous situations to remain calm. And to their surprise, novel responses, very concrete responses to it, arose inside that diffused or saved them from the danger they were in because they were able to stay calm and present for the experience. So, you know, we can't. Of course, some of us will be afraid all kinds of situations. How do we avoid letting the fear be what, you know, motivates how we live without diminishing, without demeaning the fear or denying the fear is an important part of this practice.

And it begins by having faith that it's worthwhile to do that, having confidence there is an-

other way to live, and to start moving into this other way. It could be making a decision, a clear decision that how I want to live my life, how I want to orient my life, is from a mindfulness to really be mindful and present and calm in the midst of whatever difficulties it has. It could be deciding to base one's life on compassion or care for oneself and others rather than base the greed or fear, anger, or blame. To really make this a central focus like, This is worthwhile. This is how I want to live. And then to have real faith in that. This is worthwhile.

I don't want to live in a world that's defined by my fear, my anger, my greed. I want to live in a world that's to find the world that I live in, that I see and that I understand through the lens, through the eyes of my compassion, through the eyes of my wisdom and calm and mindfulness, my equanimity, my care for people, my friendliness. So to have faith in that, to have confidence in that, to have even conviction like this is what is important. It's hard, this. It can be very hard to come to that kind of faith because of the power of these other forces in us: the power of fear, the power of greed, the power of hate, the power of blame, the power of envy, the power of all these kinds of things that live in human beings as part of our human nature as well. And so the first faculty takes a while to develop, takes a while to really feel confidence that, Yes, there is another way, and this is the way I want to live, and I'll do what it takes to try to grow into that. It's not all or nothing, but we do it maybe in small steps. Some of us and we slowly grow and develop. Yet this is the direction I want to go.

For some people, it might be that the only time that really gets enacted is when they sit down to meditate, that in meditation they understand clearly, This is a time where I am not going to slip into my fear. This is the time I'm going to breathe deeply and relax, breathe through it. I'm going to find a stability, an inner strength, an equanimity, so that the fear doesn't get the upper hand. So once we have that confidence, then there's the second of the five divine qualities that we all have, which is *vīriya*. And *vīriya* is usually translated into English as effort or energy. It's a powerful word in Indian languages. It kind of means like a heroic effort, strong effort.

And I was told recently that in modern Indian languages, the shortening of *vīra* as v-i-r, I mean soldier. This does not mean that we have to be now, you know, samurai soldiers who go out, you know, into our life. But it does point to the idea that sometimes it's appropriate to engage a certain kind of bravery, or a certain kind of determination, or really kind of make a kind of strong effort to in practice. And, you know, in ordinary meditation maybe, whenever everything's life is good, that to have this message, that to be heroic, or be like a warrior, a little bit might seem overdone, is easy to misunderstand it and to get tense and strive in unhelpful ways. But in this current climate where there's a lot of fear around this virus and

I, and knowing even knowing how to work and how to be, and is it safe to, you know, the other day someone lovingly, I didn't even want to do an elbow tap for me. Usually someone I would hug. But with our shoes, we did a heel tap, you know. That was lovely, you know. It's kind of nice, and was kind of fun once and a half, you know.

But so in this kind of climate where we interfere or can be big, the content discussion about, you know, brave effort is relevant. You know, we have very strong forces inside of us, and to have the braveness or the courage or the confidence, Yes, I am going to practise with this no matter what. I'm not going to keep succumbing to the anger. I'm not going to keep succumbing to my fear. Again, I can't help to keep underscoring. This does not mean that we deny the fear or push it away. We take it into account. We simply don't put it centre stage to be the motivating force for us, and instead heroically, with strength, with conviction, I am going to really base my life on something which may be not seen, not even popular in the people my friendship, my circles. And that is, I am going to put my faith in equanimous presence, to be a calm presence from the middle of my experience.

I am going to put my faith in really being mindful of this, to pause just long enough to really look and see and recognize what it is, rather than going automatically into the expected behavior of anxiety, of worry, of anger, of complaining, you know, all kinds of other things that people do. And that takes effort to do that, to make that decision. It's not just something we do sitting, watching TV. It's something that we, you know, can't become passive. Then there is an active quality. That's why I used for today at least, you know, provisionally, the idea of we become a producer of effort, of engagement. How do we do this? And even in meditation, we have to make the effort to sit down to meditate. For some people, that's heroic. To figure out how to do that in our lives, there has to be strong conviction, and we make it takes a lot of effort to sit down and sit up straight and really be here.

And then once we do that, once we're there, then we have to know, Once I'm here, that particular effort. We don't have to keep making the effort to get to the cushion, to the chair. And so now, what's the effort that's needed now? And one of the forms of effort is mindfulness awareness, the third of these divine qualities. And now, in learning what mindfulness is, I think, at least for me, is a lifetime endeavor. I don't feel like I have come to the end of understanding all the ins and outs, all the qualities of mindfulness practice in particular. And part of the delight and joy for me of doing this practice is how it keeps opening up. I understand mindfulness, understand myself being mindful in new ways all the time.

And so whatever I say today, please don't take this as the final word, or This is what the only thing it is. But mindfulness is there is an engagement, there is an effort that's needed for

mindfulness. Initially, when we sit down to meditate or renew practice, when the practice has a momentum to it, the mindfulness becomes more and more something we allow for and don't want the producer for. But that's when it has momentum. But when the momentum is not there, we have to do a certain kind of effort to evoke it and we have to do it again. If the mind wanders off and we have to bring it back again, it takes some kind of effort. But what that effort is is part of the task to discover as we do practice. And meditation practice is kind of a laboratory where we're discovering what kind of effort do we need in order to be properly mindful, and in the circumstances, the current situation we're in, how I am today and now.

There are times when that effort, you know, needs to be strong and fierce. I've had situations where my mind was consumed by anxiety or anger or something like that, and I kept being swept away in it. And it took a fair amount of effort to keep coming back, keep showing up for it, keep showing up for it. And the other times where I made too much effort, I was trying too much, and I kind of overrode maybe the situation, and I had to learn to kind of not make effort. I had to learn to relax and be calm and just kind of be at ease and let go and kind of be much more receptive and allow the experience to come into mindfulness. So it all depends on what's going on in my mind, you know, what I do. But the idea that somehow there is some effort involved, even the effort to be receptive and allow the experience to come into awareness has some quality of effort, some quality of engagement that we're engaging.

And to learn how to do that engagement that's in harmony with the state they're in. If we're relaxed and it's time for receptive, relaxed awareness, how do we engage and come back to that, awaken it, recognize it so that it's in harmony with the very way that we want to be. One of things about mindfulness is interesting is all the things that are associated with it. All that's part of the richness of it, all the beliefs, attitudes that come along with how we're mindful. And it's hard to see how much extra stuff we bring along in our mindfulness, little attitudes, almost subconscious or unconscious attitudes towards it. So for example, if you're sitting quietly, and maybe it's something so simple as the room you're sitting in is warm, and so you're aware of heat in your body, and now just, you know, the atmospheric temperature against your skin, some place against your body, some place. So that warmth you're feeling is a present moment experience, and if you recognize and feel that warmth, you are mindful, you're aware. That's, you know, pretty simple.

But based on some of the ways I've practised in the past with being mindful of things, I've been capable of sitting there and clearly, you know, knowing that's warm, but having all kinds of little subconscious attitudes going along with it, like, I'm not really mindful because I'm

being mindful of the wrong thing, that somehow the warmth that's not really doesn't really count. What the only thing it counts is really some kind of zeroing in on breathing, and that's what the present moment really counts. Or a subtle attitude that is, I'm not really doing the practice the way it's supposed to be. I'm not really present because I have some unarticulated idea or just a policy idea that if I'm doing mindfulness, it's certainly not the right mindfulness, not what, you know, everyone else is doing or what it's really supposed to be like. So I don't know what it's really supposed to be like, but certainly if I'm doing it, I can't be doing the right way. So even though I'm aware of my warmth, I'm not really aware of it in the right way, and I don't know what the right way is. Or I might have the subtle attitude, Yes, I'm aware of the warmth, but I'm supposed to be really zeroed in, and there's some kind of magic or special kind of way that I really connect to it, and really becomes somehow dramatic and clear, and I get concentrated, and it has a clarity to it that's powerful and enlightening, and I'm just kind of with it. I don't quite even know how I'm supposed to connect better with it, but it certainly has to be with greater clarity than I have now.

So I don't know if this speaks to any of you. But this kind of is a kind of little attitude. But maybe there's other evoking ideas for you to reflect on yourself when what you bring along is a little bit extra with it all. And maybe a whole other attitude to have that's more useful is the attitude that, if it's a present moment experience like the warmth I'm feeling, that it's just right. Whatever way that I'm experiencing, I know it. That is being mindful. And as and you can maybe even say to yourself, rather than using a mental note of warmth, you can say to yourself, as you experience the warmth, you can say to yourself the word calmly, softly. You can say, Yes, just yes to the warmth. Oh, yes, this is how it is. As if, of course, this is mindfulness. This is my mindfulness, this moment. There's nothing wrong with it. There's nothing that has to be different. I don't have to do this any different. Yes, this is how it is now. Maybe it's a little bit vague, the feeling of warmth. Maybe it's no specific place in the body. Maybe it's not as clear as your mindfulness has been at other times, but yes, this is how it is now. Yes, and then you come back to this, yes, oh, yes, rather than some equivalent of, No, no, this is not right, nope, but yes.

And then building on that, this, yes, this is how it is now. This is how it's obvious now, the experience. It's not like a magic key of some subtlety. You have to go find just yes to the experience as it is now, this moment. It might change over time. That yes might help greater clarity. That yes might create a receptivity that allows you to experience it in a deeper way. And maybe some of the subtlety becomes more obvious. But we're not sitting there to have the subtlety or to have the clarity. We're sitting there just to be, yes, aware to the way we're

aware at this moment. We're there to experience, to enjoy, to really kind of almost like savour, almost like a value, how it is at this moment. Yes, for now, it's like this. Yes, for now it's like this. I don't know what it can be for the next moment, but the next moment will come. And then, yes, to this locus. Now it's like this. No, it's like this. So to keep coming back to that mindfulness is a powerful act. To really do it consciously and with some kind of appropriate effort is an alternative to succumbing to fear, succumbing to some of these unhealthy movements that we collapse into or identify with. We are beginning to use an ancient metaphor to blossom, be the lotus that blossoms out of the muddy water. We are stepping back and away from being entangled and caught up in our inner life in a way that's not useful. We're not denying the inner life. We're just stepping back to see it more clearly. And that makes all the difference. It allows us to begin, having come in, to have more choice in where we come from, more choice about the motivations and commitments and values that we feel are most important for us, how we want to live our life, that are an alternative to fear, for example, being caught, being motivated by the fear, by the anxiety.

So then the fourth divine quality inside of us is *samādhi*, usually translated into English as concentration. I think of *samādhi* can be defined or explained in different ways, but one of the meanings of it is when the awareness we have of the present moment is continuous through time. There is a stability and steadiness in the awareness that the awareness begins becoming really sense. We're beginning to become centred in the awareness through the awareness. So the awareness we have starts becoming encompassing or unified or whole because we're centered in the middle of it, as opposed, for example, centered in the middle of our thoughts and distractions and preoccupations and stories and our fears that we have. And so this *samādhi* is what allows us to really steady centring in the midst of our experience of what we're aware of, and to develop that steadiness and to settle into. It allows, over time, for all the distractions to kind of settle down, and the capacity for the mind to be at rest in what's sometimes called one-pointedness, to be at rest at the centre of our experience, which might be the breathing, might be something else, but really kind of at home or at ease and unified, composed on our experience.

And to do that, to have this continuity of awareness over time, to be centered on our experience, it takes effort, takes courage, takes commitment, takes conviction that it's valuable to do that, that it's valuable to come to a whole different, radical, when *samādhi* is strong, a radical, different experience of body and mind. Then the divided, the scattered, the fragmented experience of body and mind that can exist in, you know, when we're over-identified with our thoughts and stories and concepts and fears and greeds and all that kind of stuff.

And what feels really beautiful about *samādhī*, when it gets strong, is that it feels like we're aware. There's an integral feeling of wholeness that kind of like, Now I'm really whole. Now I'm really present with all of me in a rich and balanced way. And to come out of *samādhī*, or to carry with us that sense of wholeness into our life, is one of the great gifts of meditation. Some people will just identify very strongly that now I'm calm, and that calm is what now I can bring into my life. Other people will have a sense of wholeness and integrity, that they come into life in a much fuller way, that they're fully present, rather than kind of just partially present for their experiences and *samādhī*. That fullness allows for this idea of being a producer much more fully. But you can bring more of yourself into the production of your life, more of your who you are, into being friendly with people, into being compassionate and caring, into being equanimous and kind, into being wise, into kind of living in life in a way that you're an agent for living in a world that you want to live in, that you're happy to live in, that you feel like, This is oh, this is a good world. I'm not waiting for the world to be a good world and everyone else has to arrange for it. I am actually, in a certain kind of way, creating my world as I live in it.

And then the fifth divine quality is wisdom. And classically in Buddhism, the best, fullest forms of wisdom that we can experience and have, the wisest ways in which the mind can operate is a mind that's supported by mindfulness, or supported by all four of the first mental faculties or divine qualities. And in particular, it's supported by the wholeness or the fullness or stability of *samādhī*, of concentration. There's something about being able to be at rest in ourselves in a calm, full embodied kind of way that can make space and room for some of the creative forces of the mind to operate, to really be able to see wisely what's going on in our life. And the greater the wisdom is, the more we can wisely, we can use the choice that we have to make wise choices. The big part of our wisdom, the word that's translated as wisdom, it is discernment to be able to discern where the freedom is and where the entrapment is, the entanglement is. And as we go through our life, moment by moment, in the small details of our life and in the big details of our life, where's the freedom now and where's the entrapment?

It can be as simple as walking into one's kitchen and think, Where's the freedom now as I look for something to eat? I'm hungry. And perhaps with that question and that discernment that we don't go to the junk food that we might have there. And we realize, as I kind of feel gravitated towards the sweets, that I've already had plenty of today, we feel the entanglement and the loss of our stability, loss of our freedom, loss of something as we kind of collapse into that kind of approach. And we can see with discernment, with wisdom, where the freedom is. The

freedom is to say No to that. The freedom is to go get something healthy to eat. I'm hungry. Or it could be in the large issues of our life. Where is the freedom in that? Bigger decisions mean it could be. For some people, they might have the opportunity to see it when they are choosing a new job. Is this job the place where I am going to make the choices I make? Does this express my freedom or my entanglement with something? Or my entrapment in some values and ideas and fear of the future. Is this really the direction of what I want to support? Or where's the freedom? And what is it one of the values I want to live by and go by?

So then comes full circle, because once we have the wisdom and the discernment, we can see better our values and the basis of what we want to live by, the commitments we want to live by, what's most important for us, what we want to orient ourselves around. And then we come back to faith. We can then have a lot of faith in what we now newly discover for ourselves, and then we have faith. We apply effort. With effort, there's more greater mindfulness with it. Mindfulness grows. There's greater *samādhi*. With *samādhi*, there's then greater wisdom, and a wonderful spiral got that, you know, develops and develops over time until these five faculties really become powerful forces inside of us, you know, have their own momentum, and we feel that we're supported by them, and they are guiding us. And it's not really something we have to so actively engage in, but more allow for. And at that point in Buddhism, they're called something different. They're no longer called the five *indriyas*, the five divine qualities, but they are called the five powers. And that we've kind of awoken these powers that exist within us. And even though there are powers within us, there's still not something that we identify as being mine. They're certainly within us, in part, of who we are, but they're not to define what we are. That's very clear with the growing power of wisdom that we are. That, though, the movement towards excessive identification, this entanglement with identity, is not a movement towards freedom. And that the movement towards freedom is to disentangle ourselves from being trapped in identity and being defined by identity. So we're no longer being defined by what defines us. There's that kind of an interest in that's an interesting idea.

So the five divine qualities, how do they relate to a life that has inherent danger in it? That's become abundantly clear right now around the globe. In this now, I would say, kind of a shared experience for anyone who is connected to the news, is aware what's going on, that the whole globe is being thinking about and being concerned with the same thing. A particular virus called COVID-19, and the fact that we all share this particular concern and interest, gives a whole new opportunity to us, a whole new motivation perhaps for becoming practising with this circumstance. If we can practise wisely, engage the five faculties around this

current situation of this virus and what's happening in our society, then perhaps we are contributing to the welfare and well-being of all people everywhere that everyone's noticing and seeing. And if we are able to be a non-anxious presence, just that, that itself can be a phenomenal support for the people who are anxious.

I hope that during this period that all of you who are interested in this practice will be motivated or inspired or just delighted, happy in the opportunity to have a practice where you can begin exploring and discovering for yourself the possibilities of a non-anxious presence, even while you are anxious, that you base your life on that place inside of you which is not anxious, so that the non-anxious parts guide you in what you do rather than the anxious parts. I hope that you take good care of yourself. I hope that you care for yourself. And I hope that this practice and these teachings are a support as we go through this together. And finally, I'd like to say that, given that we're going to be doing more of this online programming, if you stay in touch with IMS website, probably on the What's New section of the website, we will have regular updates. Now, I hope for the different opportunities and scheduling of things that we're doing to support our now extensive online community. Thank you very much.