

Thoughts and Emotions (5 of 5) Aware But Not Defined

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Gil Fronsdal

It's important to see that there's an intimate connection between our thinking and our emotions, and our emotions and our thinking. And by seeing that connection, it's possible to find a degree of freedom. Also, by knowing and seeing carefully the relationships, the entanglements, and the influence of emotions on thoughts and thoughts on emotions, at some point, what becomes maybe strong is not the emotions and thinking, but our awareness of them.

I often think that thinking and emotions are where people get hooked, caught, stuck, and reactive. That's where it's very common to somehow, consciously or unconsciously, be defined by "Oh, this is who I am." Some people feel it's very important to be someone, like "This is who I am," and take a stand there. Some people are very afraid of being someone who takes a stand.

There is a third option: to calmly and peacefully be aware, present, grounded, and centered in the place where the light of awareness can shine. Where we can turn on the awareness and see what's there. See the emotions and the thoughts that we have. Maybe even see some of our entanglements with them. But to be aware of it from a peaceful place.

This is one of the possibilities through meditation: to become calmer than we usually are in daily life. And I carefully say the word "calmer" as opposed to some high standard of how calm we have to become. But to be calmer, more peaceful, and more settled than we usually are, so that we have different eyes to see. We have a different way of looking upon the world.

As we get quieter and stiller in meditation, where we are less caught in the world of thoughts and emotions, even the ones that are beneficial, then the eyes can see with greater clarity. We can see from a deeper place within, where we have contact with wisdom, understanding, perspectives, and attitudes that we're not going to have available when we're caught up in the thoughts and emotions, caught up in defining ourselves by them and thinking "This is who I am."

To have that new perspective, and from there, maybe think about our life and see what emotional connection there might be. But it's an emotional connection that has a very different feel to it – a very different attitude and effect – because it doesn't come from the contraction of definition, doesn't come from the hooks of reactivity. It's as if there's a wellspring or a vast spring within of wisdom, goodness, freedom, and peace that we can avail ourselves of when we are no longer so caught in the world of thinking and emotions.

That also allows us to think and have feelings from a very different perspective because many of the feelings and thoughts we have can be very much rooted in definition and seeing "This is who I am" and "This is about me."

The still, quiet place – the calm in the middle of the storm – is not you; it's not anyone else. Whether it's you or not, you don't have to think about those thoughts. You don't have to define yourself by them. You don't have to grab ahold of them and take a stand "This is who I am."

This freedom, this peacefulness, this calm in the middle of the storm is tremendously useful. It can allow a different kind of thinking that's not impatient, that's not reactive, that's not carrying with it many of the judgments, biases, and preconceived ideas we might have in the surface mind, which has been so conditioned and influenced by society and events. And the same thing with our emotions.

So a still, quiet place within, a calm in the storm, the awareness that is like a light bulb. When it is turned on, the light doesn't have preferences where the light lands. It lands on everything equally and just sees it, that's all.

I hope that this week on thinking and emotions has given you some new perspectives to look at and understand your life and yourself. Certainly, part of my hope was that it would provide new perspectives that would be freeing, new perspectives that would be useful to break out of the old perspectives that maybe are not so helpful. So I hope it worked somewhat for that. Thank you for this week.