

## Practice Notes: Watering Non-thinking

**Gil Fronsdal**

**April 09, 2025**

**Keywords:** vipassanā, mindfulness, awareness, attention, meditation, somatic experience, thinking mind, well-being, The Buddha, labyrinth

---

So then to say a few words about the practice. In our home, we have a garden, and we water the garden, and we have a faucet on the edge of the house that there's attached to it a V. So a pipe that attached to the faucet and then it goes out in the V and to the or the Y, it's more like a Y. And to that two sides of the Y you can put two hoses and so you can one hose goes to one side of the yard, the other hose goes to the other side of the yard. So if you want to water one side of the yard you turn it on that Y, so it goes into that direction, or the other one, you turn it the other direction, the valve, or you can have the valve right in the middle and the water can go into both hoses at the same time. So it's a, you know, it's kind of practical and nice.

So it's kind of like we have something like that in our minds. And in a sense, the water of our minds is our capacity to be aware, to have attention. And water, attention or awareness is not a neutral thing. It's almost like food. It's almost like fuel. It's almost like water that lets things grow.

And you want to be careful of what you allow to grow. Because if you spend a lot of time having all your attention pouring in to worry, chances are you're actually growing worry. Right. If you are pouring all your attention into, you know, desires, you're growing desire. And so you want to kind of, what we want to do is to kind of be able to be very discerning and careful what this fuel or this water of awareness is actually doing and where it's going.

So one approach in mindfulness practice is to turn the valve and so the awareness goes completely away from your thinking. So you're not giving it any attention, any heed, you're not focusing on it. Your mind might be thinking, but this life energy, this life form of energy called attention or awareness, it goes fully into the breathing or fully into the body. And you kind of turn the valve so you really trust that this is where your attention, where your focus, where your engagement is, is in this body. You don't need to think about anything or almost anything except for that. Let's stay here in the body.

Otherwise, you don't have to solve anything or plan anything or remember anything. You don't have to figure anything out with your mind. There's a danger that if you do so, you're actually feeding, watering the thinking mind, making it get stronger and stronger. And there's very tempting to getting involved in the thoughts because that's where the solution is going to be. That's where you're going to make yourself safe. That you're going to finally figure out the magic of how, you know, whatever, you're going to figure out the lottery ticket that's going to win, or it's the equivalent.

You have to keep thinking because where else are you going to get the answer? To the life's problems. But what it does is just kind of pulls us into that maze, the labyrinth of those world, and it's rare we could get out of it. It's not. And we're living in its own terms, and we don't realize how much we've lost ourselves in the logic or this world of thinking.

It's quite powerful to leave it alone, to trust that for the purpose of meditation, you don't have to think about almost anything, except maybe some of the practical details of the moment in the meditation itself, and to turn the water of awareness into something different than your thinking. Turn it into your body, into your breathing. So it kind of flows in there and fills it. The Buddha talked about filling ourselves with awareness, filling ourselves with well-being through how we direct our attention. So that's one whole choice.

Another choice around thinking, which is more the mindfulness way, is you want to acknowledge that you're thinking. But you want to find a way to acknowledge it from a vantage point where you're not in the labyrinth. You're not in the maze. You kind of step back and you say, oh, look at that. I'm thinking. So one of the ways we have in this *vipassanā* practice is to very quietly as softly and kindly, joyfully as you can, happy that you're able to recognize something, say the word thinking to yourself.

To acknowledge what you're doing. You might say gently a few times. And then for one or maybe two cycles of breathing and breathing out, just stay and observe and acknowledge and recognize that this is thinking. This is what's happening now. But you're doing it from the place where you're not in the thoughts. You're not thinking about thinking. Boy, am I thinking a lot. You're like, oh, this, you're taking it the backwards step. And from a distance, oh, that's thinking, thinking. And then observing it, feeling it, listening to it, anything but thinking about it.

The mind's eye, observe it, mind's ears, listen to it, just step back. And it might get quiet that way, but just stay there for the full cycle of breathing in and out. So, you know, you have a little bit of time, just really acknowledging it. Some people, as soon as they notice, they're thinking, jerk their mind back. Don't do that. Give yourself a full cycle of in and out to, oh,

this is thinking. I'm thinking. Thinking. And then turn the faucet in the direction of back into your breathing and enter that world, knowing that that's a good world during meditation.

If you're walking meditation, the full world of your, the somatic experience of your body, the legs moving. Just let that's where the water of attention flows and moves and saturates you. And watch, be careful. Watch and be careful that you can see the way you're seduced by thoughts. See the way that you give all this authority to your thinking. See the way in which you're fascinated by them or really want them or they seem like really that the lottery number is going to be right there if you just stay a little bit longer. So watch that, and then step back and thinking and then beginning again.

And you're not betraying your thinking mind to do this. It's going to be there for you when you need it. It'll be there. You have plenty of time to think. You've been thinking for a long, long time. And probably the returner in your investment is actually not that good. Okay. So maybe try meditation. Turn the valve so that your awareness flows into something which is not your thinking. So thank you.