

2007-06-09 Living In The Knowing

Fri, 7/31 7:25AM • 30:22

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

knowing, world, people, sense, thoughts, living, mindfulness, place, entangled, day, thinking, meditation, bit, activities, stay, mindfulness practice, emotions, experience, feel, stability

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So what I'm trying to convey is this idea that there can be this place of stability. And then one of the characteristics of this inner stability is knowing. And it's very much different than often a common tendency of the human mind is to be caught somehow or engaged or resisting somehow entangled with the world that's always changing the changing experience, whether it's change experience within or without. And in some way, it doesn't change very fast, and things persist for a long time. But still, we're engaged. There's a qualitative difference between being entangled, wrapped up in whatever is happening. And stepping back in a sense, and being the one who knows the knower sees it is aware of it. The it's a very interesting, I think, area of investigation in practice, is to investigate. Well, it's said this way through a question and the question is Where do you live? Where do you live? Where do you live? Where does your mind your awareness, your thoughts, your intentions, your concerns, where they usually abide. Now, some people usually, you know, where they really abide is in their thoughts. They live in the thoughts, the negotiating or thoughts or thinking and planning and wondering and fantasizing. And somehow their mind is kind of in their world of their thoughts, certain occupations, or thoughts, you know, occupations that require a lot, a lot of thinking. And the kind of that's where the mind could go and kind of you can kind of lose track of time lose track of the world around you struck with your body, because you're kind of in this world of thinking that you're so engaged in figuring things out. Or a person can be really worried about, you know, they have some, some important event that's gonna happen the next few days. And so there's a lot of preoccupation with the mind, thinking about that event planning it, or there can be past events, conversations that happen to maybe happen in ways that weren't very nice. And so you Do your viewing of them reliving them, we doing them chemically better coming up with better responses in the mind you kind of living it, it's so much that sometimes you can kind of lose yourself into extreme forms, you become absent minded or people even hardly notice other people because you're kind of so involved in this inner world. Sometimes people get entangled with their feelings, their emotions, that's kind of the way in which they kind of negotiate the world is through their emotions. And so they, they live in emotional being emotional body. And so, or sometimes it's in there. People live in the physical body around comfort and discomfort, and everything negotiate to the comfort and discomfort. Some people, the place they live most of the time where they kind of is in their relationships, always, always relating, always in the world of relationship houses relate, how am I relating to someone else? How are they relating to me? How do I get this relationship established, how to find a better relationship, how to find balance in the relationship. It's all about relationships. And that's what people live And, and when you do mindfulness, meditation, mindfulness practice, the sense we're trying to do is take up living quarters, in someplace else we're taking, returning to live in the knowing. So that is center of gravity, the center of beingness, a sense of presence, in a kind of very precise way, where so our sense of self is not connected to thoughts, feelings, body relationships, but our sense of self is connected to this place that knows. And this place of knows is qualitatively different than anything that is known. There's what's known, and there's that which knows. And it's interesting to somebody

who had the experience of being on the, on the edge between these two worlds, the edge between being entangled and Nothing tangled, but it was actually kind of knowing Oh, this is what's going on now. Now, it's sometimes you can pull yourself out for a moment. Oh, I'm thinking, clearly no, you're thinking, and then you can feel the gravitational force or the pull, back into the world of thinking. And sometimes the pull back game can be come along with all kinds of beliefs, both conscious and semi-conscious or unconscious beliefs that oh, this is the world that really counts. This is this is where I'm really gonna fix my problems. This is really important. This is you know, where I'm comfortable is the word unfamiliar. And so there's a strong pull back in to, you know, be living in thoughts living in feelings living in all these places. And so then if you step back, sometimes you can feel this kind of a place for me sometimes kind of a there's a kind of a tension between you know, oh, You know, I know it's healthier for me, it's no it's better to kind of come to a peaceful, peaceful place where there's knowing. But there's this pull back in who was pressured to go back into the untangled. If you watch that very interesting to watch that are interesting to watch and study. What is it? What's the difference between those two, physiologically, there's a difference between those two. Sometimes people will report that when they get pulled up into the world of thoughts again, that sometimes they feel disconnected to their body, or the sense of where their vitality or energy in their body shifts and changes. Or sometimes the tension in the body will shift and change that as people gets entangled, caught up in the world of thinking again, the body tightens up. Same thing with emotions, we're kind of resisting holding on to reactive emotions. It can be also shifts and changes in how we feel in our body. But we're able to kind of relax and be in that still plays the quiet place of knowing then a sense of the body Just a lot. And so it's it was a study, you know, what's the difference between it was the difference in the mind? Is the mind more at ease one way? Is it more tense one way? What's going on in the mind as a mind feel? And so the investigation, what is this going to look like? Is it I think a very useful one see the contrast. And the investigation itself is a strengthen it becomes a little bit more moving into the direction of living in the knowing, living with knowing, knowing what's going on.

Now one of the interesting that happens as we start living in the knowing more, knowing what's going on noticing the mindful what's going on, is that slowly perhaps over time, firstly, practice mindfulness learns to begin to know everything that goes on. So whatever goes on whatever experience you can have it human being becomes an object Knowing no matter what I remember how happy I felt, when I realized in my mindfulness meditation, that any experience that I could have, in theory, I could be mindful of. And that made me so happy. Because then I knew, at least, you know, I knew that I could, in theory, be free, liberated or free, in any experience that I was having anything was going on. Because you move back into the knowing and mindful, it's a place of freedom of safety. Peace, doesn't have to be dramatic. It's not like necessarily big liberation. But there's a place of freedom in that knowing. So as so at some point, you can really begin realizing you can include everything in the field of knowing and the knowing stays, in a sense kind of because they can have a peaceful place to survive in that place. Everything else is changing all around. I remember once doing doing a minute guided mindfulness meditation with a A woman who was had a lot of fear and, and she was a longtime Zen practitioner, so she had a fair amount of concentration could really stay focused on things. But you'd never really learn mindfulness. So she never actually looked at her fear. She just Jen you don't often not told to talk too much about emotions. So I asked her to feel her fear in your body. And it was kind of new to her so she went fell for fear in her body. And as she focused on it, because she had the ability to present their sensations that are connected to fear, the contraction that was there vanished faded away, and despite all the relaxed and then I asked her what happened to the fear and she got disoriented. So it will open your eyes if your eyes closed. You know. She couldn't believe that it disappeared. It was like you know, such For an idea that you could bring your attention to something, and they would disappear and she thought it was some kind of, you know sleight of hand or I don't know she didn't quite trust it with his ability to turn and bring attention to everything no matter what, sometimes that goes away some things

times, times things stay. But even though they stay you realize you're not living in their, you know, entangled or glued to it, but rather you're actually living in this place of stability. Have you ever been in a inside your car? When went through the carwash it can be a bit like that, you know, we feel safe, you feel secure, you know you feel dry. And you know it's kind of still quiet in your car. And it's kind of like a violent just outside the window. And, and but you are troubled by that but by all that it's so you know, you don't you're living in the water, you know, living outside and now stuff so you're staying in that queue in your car seat. So it's a little bit like that. It isn't that you're shut off from the world. But it's more like the opposite. It's more like all the windows and the convertibles down as you go through the carwash, but you don't get quite anyway. It's like you're so present, you're really there. There's extensive sense of real presence and connectedness and that kind of knowing. But still, he's also a sense of not being not being caught by things. So this, this tension, this midpoint, where you might have a choice to go back and forth is a very interesting place. And that's a place to really investigate and study what goes on there. If you can rest or stay very easily in the knowing and find some refuge there. That's nice. We're happy for you. But it might be that one of the more interesting places in the long term is to actually notice those those when you have the opportunity, the chance where you're kind of swaying back and forth. We can sit here, you can you can pull yourself out a little bit from being entangled and stuff And then you, you kind of see study that force back in which the claim was the poor was the beliefs was the emotions What's going on? That seems to be that pull back into be entangled again. Where do you live? So when, you know my sense of the day, you know, I told you the beginning was, it was always people coming and going all this change, you know, and there was stability, I kind of felt that I was just here all day it was kind of feeling you know, it was all people came and went and I was here, but I wasn't here all day. And that's kind of an interesting you know, that.

What happens is if you stay in the knowing, stay in the knowing and everything's changing, but if you include everything in the knowing nothing is excluded. that at some point, that which you think is yourself is taken up as an object known as so often you have me here is obviously Stuff that that I'm encountering in the world or stuff I'm experiencing and relating to and all this. And it's part some people are very good at being mindful of everything goes on. But they're not mindful of the eye, the self. That is being mindful. The self as being mindful is different than the knowing. Because itself, you know, is always ideas, your identity, your sense of agency, your sense of, you know, and sometimes that sense of self is never questioned. And sometimes that sense of self is a problematic sense of self. And all this stuff in kitchen hits, I think counters at some point, as you do the mindfulness practice, will learn to kind of begin questioning, investigating. Who is it that's experiencing all this stuff? And you might find things there. You might Find there is anxiety in that place that you call yourself, you might feel find this beliefs, you might find that there is something you're holding on to sometimes of bracing yourself against the world or reaching out to the world or some concepts of building something up or defending something. There's something there anything that anything anytime you have a sense of self, that idea of self. Chances are pretty good that if you turn around and look at it, you'll find something to felt sense some of something. If you do a careful mindfulness of it, that will also start seeing pure arising and passing see impermanence and changing. And then, well then where are you? So we find out we're not always here. Like I wasn't here all day. You know, always here but that's terrible. I mean, you should be here. All right. That's the whole point is be here. Present and grounded in the present moment. And this magic begins happening when you turn back and look and see, wait a minute, you don't have to believe this. You turn around and look and start seeing. You see, wait a minute, the anxiety or the emotions that I think to take myself, they're fleeting as well. They arise and pass the thoughts that I used to build up and claim my sense of self. They're fleeting arising and passing the beliefs, the you know, our consciousness, even that I thought was, that must really be who I am is also arising and passing. So then, then you realize, wait a minute, there's this great thing knowing that's going on. I know all these things, but even the knowing itself arises and passes with what it knows. And so there's this magic

there, this is that. Then you discover what I like to borrow the bar from the etymology of the word. You discover integrity and integrity in life. Apparently means untouchable that which can't be touched. And to realize that there's that the experiences of the world cannot touch that which is most essential in you, allows you to go through the world without being threatened by it without needing it to be a certain way so to support and build up your idea of who you are your sense of self isn't that there is an essential self in there. It's you know, solid to solid. It's more like you realize as magic as you go in and look, everything is that there's no place to land to take us to investigate this for me from a little different angle. If you meditate sooner or later, sometimes it's much later. You might have the experience of your thoughts coming down. And as you're thinking calm down, you might become aware of gaps between your thinking between your thoughts. And if you're aware of gaps between your thoughts, then you can ask yourself an interesting question. You can ask yourself, who are you? When you're not thinking, instance you can't think to answer the question. Because then you're thinking, what are you left with? Who are you? When you're not thinking? You're awake, you're aware, because you haven't gone unconscious when you don't think. But that's when you're not thinking you're not telling yourself who you are. Who are you?

Maybe it's a little bit like looking out into the world with your eyes, and then trying to use your eyes to look at your eyes. Without a mirror. You have these eyes they function well enough But you know, unless you borrow a mirror, you can't see them. So when you don't have your thoughts to tell you who you are, then who are you? You're still there. The idea, I think, is that a lot of there's a lot of freedom, a lot of peace, a lot of ease that's found in realizing that there's more to who you are than who you tell yourself to be. That there's an alternative way of being in the world is different than what you tell yourself is going on.

And closely connected to this alternative is a simple act of knowing. There's what's known, and there's knowing what's what's, what's going on. There's knowing what goes on. Staying without knowing. And, and trusting, coming back to it. And sometimes it feels like pulling yourself out of the mud, because you want to stay, then you're entangled. And sometimes it'll feel like a lotus, which grows up out of the mud and opens and awareness, you know, not in danger of being sold by the mind. It's connected to the world by know that, but you kind of blossom in awareness, the mind is really free and independent from it. Where do you live? That's the question. You might find it interesting to walk around for a few days and keep ask yourself, where am I living right now. So I hope that this talk made enough sense to enough of you. Sometimes I wonder if I these talks. If they you know, I couldn't go down. I couldn't go down to El Camino and Sequoia shopping center and just start talking to people like this. So hopefully, you know If it didn't make sense, you know, you're welcome to leave it behind here doesn't have to go with you. And so we have a few minutes. So anybody have any questions today at the practice today or comments about the day? ,

I'm kind of new to meditation. And I realized that you have been focusing on the breathing. And I've had some moments of kind of the quiet that comes when your thoughts kind of stop. But you talked a little bit about this woman with fear.

And she started to examine things inside of her. At what point do you kind of stop focusing on your breathing and start

examining and how do you

examine? Good question. So in our school hours kind of traditional practice the Mike was tradition. different teachers are different practitioners at different times will give different answers to that question.

Some people will say, or some people practice, very light commitment to the breath. As soon as something else becomes more predominant, they like over the breath in, attend to that thing, which is more predominant. Other people find it more useful to have a strong commitment to the breath. And really kind of emphasize staying with the breath the best they can, but only if something becomes really compelling. Will they leave, leave the breath and attend to something else that's going on. So and, you know, so there's kind of that range. You know how to use the breath. People have a light attention to the breath and to go strong one. And it depends a little bit. You might experiment different ways. People who are new to meditation, sometimes it's best to have a relatively strong commitment to the breath, because it's kind of hard to bring investigation. Do other experiences unless there's some stability first, and getting concentrated in the breath tends to be common stability. And once there's enough stability, then it'd be more productive to some point, open up the attention and focus on other things. Make sense? Thank you.

It's a comment, no question. But I normally when I come here is after considerable dealing with the Fred and fever of the busyness of the day and usually takes me somewhere between 15 to 20 minutes to sort of settle into the rhythm of meditation. Today, I came here after hiking in the mountains and bicycling down from skyline Boulevard to this place here is only took about five to 10 minutes to get into it. So you 15 to 20. So I take it that's probably normal mean, that that would be what you would expect. I suppose they normally they would take five minutes? Well, it just took it just seemed to take a it seemed to be much easier to get into the rhythm of

paying because you weren't involved in your normal activities that there may be a little more you're hiking and biking is kind of much more settling and anxiety producing the same ways,

right? So it's,

it's reassuring in a way it makes it seem like it isn't really quite as hard as it seems it is.

I'm sure that some people here in the room here you will say if it only takes them 20 minutes to get into the rhythm of it. That's pretty good.

Thank you. Give it to my

I'd like to ask a question about your your last talk as to where do I live?

Close enough

to know, if we are to know

where we are I know that we know each experience in connection with thoughts, feelings, what do you whatever isn't going to be a time when they will be some interaction between the two? And how do you how do we work interaction between the knowing knowing and the thought or the knowing and feeling in the knowing and whatever we are focusing on for whatever our primary focuses?

Can you give me some example with interaction might look like so I can understand you?

So I'm thinking if I'm, if I'm thinking about a problem, a work issue, and I'm there in thought trying to maneuver between What is what could be? And then I step back and see, I know this, but I have to go back. And

I say, Oh, another little bit about it in our interview today. I think that, that, especially initially, when people are learning mindfulness practice, there can be a divide where he or she feels like it used to be either or. And somehow the knowing of it kind of keeps you disengaged almost from the activities of the world. I think as mindfulness gets stronger mindfulness is something you carry along with you. And functioning in the world continues, doesn't stop thoughts, ideas, motivations, reactions, all sort of stuff. But there's a very clear awareness in the midst of it while you do it. So it's not it doesn't be either or the way I think that I'm understand you. And so with time it becomes something that's very dynamic. And so there's kind of People talk about stillness in inaction, stillness, the movement, or they talk about

the thoughts, motivations, Decisions, decisions, considerations, all the things that maybe you're involved in, can still continue very actively. And, you know, that's what's going on, you're very present for that experience. So there's an interaction design interaction, and it isn't like negotiating the two are talking to each other. But the knowing happens in the midst of all the others. And then I think as I told you, I used to work at the greens restaurant as a first order cook. And, and, you know, there was a, you know, you know, serving all these meals and all these factors over 200 meals in over two hours. You know, all these waiters always people kind of very fast, you know, and, and there's sometimes I feel very, very present very hard. hyper alert, very still, even though it was just amazing guys cooks in the kitchen spinning around and flipping this pasta and picking up the pizzas and doing this and that. And so it doesn't have to be one way or the other. Two can go together.

It doesn't have to be one way or the other. So can you help out the sense of the sense of self is there? How do you maneuver between? It's me doing it. But no, it It's just that I know, it's not me doing it. But there is this interaction. It's, it's smooth and it's efficient.

So the we knew one possible answer to your concern is that if they're suffering, in the sense of self, then it's Warren's paying more careful attention to if there's no suffering, if you notice a sudden Oh, sufferings obvious, maybe you don't have to it's maybe it's innocent enough. You know, I'm the one who has the itch, I don't ask you to scratch me here, or maybe, you know, I'm hungry to feed you, you know, that some sense, some sense of this, you know, some sense of, of, you know, of agency of a person here is a reasonable thing to have. And, and operate to operate along that is quite reasonable. But there's a feeling clinging to it. And so clinging is characterized by suffering. So the emphasis here today was in this knowing, but sometimes, sometimes it's very dynamic activity that can be very strong sense of knowing as well. But sometimes it's quite appropriate I feel, to in a sense, not have knowing be so predominant, but actually throw yourself into some activities, and kind of, in a sense, so if you're so did all kinds of activities in human life that are better done if you kind of just kind of just in a sense, abandon yourself to it. You You know, sports, for example, or certain enterprises or. And so one of the things I learned from Zen training was the value sometimes of just kind of being completely one with the with the activity of sweeping or chopping wood or whatever we were doing. And I just kind of completely engaged. The sense of knowing was very different than where it is from the mindfulness, but there's a stillness. It's almost like the merging can merge with the experience, as opposed to being somehow independent of it and watching all the changing stuff. And I think that as people get more mature, in practice, the hope is that they're able to kind of in the given a given situation, discern what's appropriate, what's useful, and then be able to kind of be fluid going back and forth. And you don't want to hold it I don't think it's useful to hold claim to mindfulness to knowing is that the be all end all the spiritual life. It's just a very useful tool strategy for helping to discover how to be free and when you're

free, then you can be fluid. Thank you. Does it make sense? Is it helpful? It is. That's what. So that's great. So it's nine o'clock. And I really appreciate a lot. Everybody comes in practicing these kinds of days. I love these kinds of days. And to have a day that's, you know, six in the morning to nine in the evening, I just love even more. I think it's something different can happen. When you give yourself give yourself over the whole day of doing practice like this than it is if we do it from nine to five or something. I think it does something very different to the mind to the inner life, to kind of abandon yourself or use a right word, but then give yourself over to spend a whole day practicing mindfulness practice meditation, where there isn't the kind of the usual activities of daily life that we're used to doing at home or at work that somehow impinge on the edges of it. And so that kind of the day is basically bracketed by sleep. Those of you who didn't do the Whole day. I'd encourage you someday to do this. Try it out. And in probably for at our center, we probably won't do it again until next June. So you can warm up, get used to the idea. So thank you very much, and are we tidy it up well enough. Great. So let's go home sleep