

THE POWER BEHIND WILLPOWER

Many colloquial expressions describe the way people reconnect to the possibilities inherent in what we do not know or have not thought. “Get a fresh start.” “Back to the drawing board.” “Open with a clean slate.” “Clear the decks.” “Use your imagination.” “Think like a child.”

We have a sense that there is always more beyond what is evident. Yet we have a paradoxical inclination to focus on the evident, to settle into the familiar whether we like it or not, and to avoid not knowing. We each have a compelling logic for our own frame of reference.

The exploration of a deeper logic that addresses the relationship between the known and the unknown allows for greater comfort with the unknown, comfort that is naturally suggested by our easy colloquialisms about it. For me, and for many colleagues, this deeper logic is embodied in three principles that are the heart of our hope for helping others. These principles are the essence of an understanding that opens people’s minds to the unlimited capacity to change, to experience peace of mind and stability, to set themselves free from the limits of their own prevailing thinking, to move gracefully between the unknown and the known as they paint the picture of their lives.

Mind, referring to the energy of all creation, is the word we use to express our deeply felt knowledge that creation is infinite and eternal -- that the formation and transformation of matter and energy is a universal fact of which we are a part but over which we have no personal control. Consciousness, referring to our capacity to be aware both of creation and of what is created, is the word we use to express our deeply felt knowledge that there is an intelligence, an order of things, beyond our intellect. Thought, referring to our capacity to use our minds to create an infinitely variable personal reality, is the word we use to express our individual ability to know life. These three principles combined refer to a universal creative dynamic that is constant. The only variable is what each person’s thinking leads him or her to see.

The principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought are linked to the idea of “empowerment” and thus often attached to familiar concepts of “taking control of one’s thinking” or “assertiveness” or “getting power over” one’s circumstances. Yet the “empowerment” that arises from these principles in action is of a much different quality. It is not effort or willpower. It is a sense of freedom *before* the thought of any particular activity or frame of reference is formed in our minds and impelled into action.

The fundamental power of the principles in motion, the spirit of life in the moment, is the formless energy from which ideas about empowerment -- or anything else -- are formed. It is the very ability to have and hold such ideas, the natural capacity of our individual minds to make things up and see them as real.

Willpower, exercising personal control, is thus a byproduct of this power, not an aspect of this power. It is a **use** of our minds -- just as apathy is a use of our minds, negativity is a use of our minds, positivity is a use of our minds, anger is a use of our minds, good will is a use of our minds. All the myriad life experiences we can ever know result from the creative activity of our own minds, which originates from the spiritual energy described by the principles.

Understanding these principles provides certainty that we can change our minds by allowing our thoughts to change, and knowledge that we can also use our minds to hold onto thoughts or to let them go. We are free to create anything. True empowerment is the simple fact of being alive.

This distinction is what separates pointing to the understanding of the principles from teaching theories, such as cognitive-behavioral techniques, or positive thinking -- or any conceptual framework -- as a way of “improving” thought. All theoretical teachings and methods are derived from the power of thought; they are thoughts or thought systems made up by people using their own ability to see the world and make sense of what they produce and see. They are after-the-fact of spiritual power.

For example, if theories were all we had to rely on, we would not be able to change our minds once we had formed a thought or learned someone else's thought. We would simply live within what appeared to be the boundaries of the external world -- the content of already formed thoughts and ideas -- and resign ourselves to it. Indeed, in some aspects of nearly everyone's life, that is how we do live. We fail to recognize that the same power we are using to remain restricted would allow us to move beyond our limitations, effortlessly, simply by relaxing our attachment to our thinking, thus freeing our minds from focus on a particular thought-content and tapping into the original creative power to bring new ideas to mind.

As a power, thought does not need improvement. It is a vehicle through which we create our life, a perfect, constant unfailing capacity of the human being. The *content* of thoughts, that which we produce from our own minds to fill our own lives, is infinitely variable and within our power to improve because of the nature of thought, not because of our own special efforts.

All efforts we do make to change already formed thought amount to doing battle with the past. Once we have cast a thought into the world, it is like casting a shadow. As long as we are using "willpower" -- i.e., "working on" our current or past thoughts -- we are grappling with our own shadows. Of course, the shadow cannot be erased. But it is nothing, just an apparition. When we move away from it, it changes.

To make the point more practical, let's say our thinking is like cooking. The ingredients of a certain recipe are all the thoughts combined to make that reality, that dish. If a recipe didn't turn out well, no cook would try to disassemble the completed dish, pull the ingredients back out individually and then try to figure out what was wrong with each ingredient and reconstitute the recipe. Common sense would say to throw the dish away, gather new ingredients, start fresh and see what you get. Those of us who have learned to cook by trial and error know that many a dish produces unpleasant results or must be discarded before we achieve something delicious. And those who are fortunate to experience true freedom of thought would say the same thing: many

an idea produces pain, is set aside or must be discarded before we find peace of mind and the insight to create ideas more often that are healthful and enjoyable.

Our “theories” about life are like recipes. We make them up and test them. We can test our theories about life by caring about our feeling state, just as we can test our recipes by caring about how things taste. Feelings are the way we “taste” our life. They are a reflection of our state of mind, of how our thinking is “cooking” our personal life experience. Feelings keep us safe and secure because they warn us before our thoughts take us too far in a direction we do not want to go. If our feelings are heading in the direction of stress, negativity, anger, despair, blame, fear, unhappiness, selfishness -- whatever we do not truly enjoy or find freeing and exhilarating -- then the recipe of thinking we’ve been cooking isn’t a good one. We can turn our backs on it just as easily as we toss a failed casserole into the garbage, wipe off the counter, and start again.

Truly seeing thought as a spiritual power releases the mind to create continually, unfettered by what has been created. Each moment of thought is a form suspended in time and space, like a drop of water suspended from a ledge, shimmering in its own perfection even as it is about to disappear into air as another drop forms.

Freedom is loving each drop without concern for what is reflected through it -- loving life itself for its infinite creative power and possibilities.

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