

Know Thy Self

Meditation Three: Mental Perception

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In this meditation exercise, we will explore the nature of our own mental body and mental perception.

This time you will need to have one simple object close at hand for viewing later. It does not matter what this object is. And as usual, you will need a room where you are assured of privacy and the ability to recline comfortably. The preferred physical posture for this meditation exercise is reclining, with your head slightly elevated above your chest, and your chest slightly elevated above your abdomen.

So, get comfortable in your reclining position and close your eyes . . .

(pause)

To begin, we will need to fully relax our physical body and disengage our awareness from bodily distractions.

Begin by shifting your awareness into both feet simultaneously and relax all the muscles in your feet. Now gently raise your awareness upward through your body and relax the muscles in each area as your awareness passes through it. First will be your ankles, then calves, thighs, hips and hands; then abdomen, lower back and forearms; then chest, upper back, upper arms and shoulders; then neck, jaw, scalp and finally, relax all of the muscles in your face.

(pause)

Now, with your body's muscles fully relaxed, turn your attention away from bodily concerns and focus upon my words.

My first word for your consideration is "warrior".

(pause)

In response to this word, your mind automatically generated a series of images, emotions and thoughts, all somehow related to the concept of "warrior". All of these arose spontaneously from your unintentional awareness and were rooted in your past experiences and in the thoughts you have integrated over the course of your life.

Your response to this word was unique in as much as the content of your own unintentional awareness reflects the unique circumstances of your life. A different person will experience somewhat different images, emotions and thoughts than you did.

Let's try that again but with a new word -- and this time, take note of what transpires as it occurs. The new word is "Elephant".

(pause)

As before, your unintentional awareness will have generated an image, or series of images, related to "Elephant". Using your intentional objective awareness, try to discern where these images came from. Do they come from a personal encounter with an Elephant? Or from a film about Elephants? Or from a book?

(pause)

Now, again using your intentional objective awareness, examine the emotions that accompany these images. How does the image of "Elephant" make you feel? Is this feeling related to your emotional state at the time when the image of "Elephant" was originally formed? For example, if the image comes from when you saw an Elephant at a zoo as a small child and you were having a pleasant day with your parents visiting the zoo, then odds are that the emotions that arise now, carry with them the imprint or flavor of that childhood happiness.

(pause)

Once again using your intentional objective awareness, examine the thoughts and ideas that arise in unison with the images and emotions in response to the word "Elephant". As before, try to discern the origin of these thoughts. Are they your own original thoughts or are they thoughts you've learned or heard from others?

(pause)

Overall, what percentage of your automatic response to the word "Elephant" comes from your own personal interaction with an Elephant and how much of it comes from second-hand sources such as things you've heard or read?

(pause)

In much the same way that the astral emotion-substance condenses around our character traits, thus giving form to the densest layer of our astral body, so too the mental thought-substance condenses around the ideas and thought patterns resident within our unintentional awareness and thus gives form to the densest layer of our mental body. Every thing and idea we encounter and thus perceive, passes through this dense layer of the mental body before affecting our intentional objective awareness.

The domain of the mental body is that of essential meaning. By this I mean the meaning that each thing manifests. This is different than the meaning that we give to things in our process of personalization and subjectification. That is a secondary or interpreted meaning, not an essential meaning.

Essential meaning is the mental materia which constitutes the mental realm itself, and it is **this** mental materia that is crystallized by the ideological content of our unintentional awareness into the densest level of our mental body. At its purest level of manifestation however, a human mental body perfectly reflects the essential meaning of its own Individuality or essential Self instead of the personalized content of the unintentional awareness.

The primary characteristic responsible for the structure and function of our mental body is that in the mental realm **similarity** is the basis of attraction. Opposite essential meanings have no power of attraction between each other, but similar essential meanings are inseparable. Thus the mental materia that is **similar to** the ideological content of our unintentional awareness crystallizes to form this dense layer of our mental body. And since it is this dense layer through which we perceive, the quality of our unintentional ideology dictates the objective quality of our perceptions. In other words, if the ideas that form the basis of how we perceive the world and ourselves are rife with self-hatred and self-doubt, then our experience of the world itself will be colored with the same bleak hues. Likewise, if they are filled with ideas of self-love and self-confidence, then our experience of the world will be bright and fulfilling.

The types of ideas that crystallize the mental body also dictate the types of essential meaning that our mental body automatically attracts and is attracted to. These are the ideas that are easiest for us to process, understand and sympathize with, and which affect us the most immediately. But we also encounter manifestations of essential meaning that we do not share similarity with and these, obviously, are the ideas that we have the most difficulty processing and understanding. Yet once we do process and understand them, these foreign ideas have the greatest power to change us utterly and absolutely by broadening our range of affinities within the mental realm.

The mental body is capable two basic approaches or techniques for the integration of essential meaning. The most common, default mode is ruled by the unintentional awareness and consists of modifying the essential meaning so that **it** fits within our own ideology. This prevents the encounter from significantly altering the ideological content of the unintentional awareness. Your automatic reaction to the words “warrior” and “Elephant” are examples of this mode in action.

You drew content from your unintentional awareness which limited your experience to the predictable and comfortable. You didn’t learn anything from your initial reaction and you were not in any way changed by the encounter.

The second mode of approach, ruled by the intentional awareness, is to open **yourself** to change and modification so that **you** achieve greater affinity with the manifest essential meaning you have encountered. This means setting aside your resistance to change and your inclination to subjectify, and instead, exercising your power to truly explore the essential meaning for what **it** is. In other words, to truly open yourself to an experience of its **essential** meaning.

One way we go about this is to think about an idea. When we do this with an open mind, free of assumptions and preconceptions, then the idea will exert its attractive force over us and draw illuminating thoughts into our awareness. This can be a long process of looking at the idea from every angle imaginable and letting the mind follow the meanings that reveal themselves. A brief example of this was your objective examination and analysis of your automatic response to the word “Elephant”.

The drawback of this method of thinking about something is that the process of thinking is itself influenced by the unintentional awareness. In other words, it occurs within the arena of our basic mind-set, that array of fundamental ideas which shape our every experience. Thus it is incapable of directly experiencing the essential meaning.

To directly perceive essential meaning is to experience it. Direct perception of essential meaning is never achieved through interpretation or through thinking. It is only achieved through becoming. By this I mean that you completely open yourself to being affected by the essential meaning. Thinking and interpretation come after direct perception and are not in any way a part of the act of perceiving.

When approached in this way, essential meaning opens itself to your awareness and shares itself with you, creating the deepest sort of mutual affinity or similarity. This experience of essential meaning increases your scope of affinities within the mental place and grants you easy access to a broader variety of essential meaning than before the experience. In other words, it increases your objective Understanding.

To illustrate, I will now guide you through a technique for experiencing the essential meaning contained within an abstract idea. The first step is best described by one of my favorite poets as “resting with the question”. This is a time during which you simply let the words which describe the idea float in your mind. You just sort of sit with them quietly and let them crystallize in your awareness. So, rest with the following words for a few moments:

“The Universe is infinite.”

(pause)

In order for a thing to be infinite, it must encompass all space, all time and all meaning. Imagine now that space stretches without end in all directions from where you are reclining.

(pause)

You are at the exact center point of this infinite expanse. No matter where you move, space still stretches infinitely in all directions from where you are.

(pause)

Now feel how time stretches infinitely behind you and ahead of you.

(pause)

You exist at the exact center point of time in a bubble of now-ness and time always stretches infinitely in both directions.

(pause)

And now feel the infinite variety of essential meaning that fills this infinite space and time. There is no end to the variety.

(pause)

Your own essential meaning exists in context with all of the infinite variety of essential meaning that surrounds you and no matter how you change, you are always surrounded by an infinite variety.

(pause)

Within this infinite Universe, no matter how much or how little space, time and meaning you yourself encompass, you are always at the exact center of space, time and meaning.

(pause)

This is true for each and every point in space, each and every moment of time and each and every bit of meaning, not just those that you occupy. There are an infinite number of centers in an infinite Universe.

(pause)

Now spread your awareness outward infinitely and become the whole. Feel yourself spatially infinite. Feel yourself temporally infinite. Feel yourself manifesting an infinite variety of essential meaning. **BE** the infinite Universe.

(long pause)

Now gently refocus on my voice and listen to my words. Even though I just led you through a series of conclusions rooted in the simple phrase “the Universe is infinite”, all of these conclusions are nonetheless inherent to the idea itself and naturally arise in your awareness when you open yourself to this idea without the inclusion of thinking and interpreting. In other words, given sufficient time and openness, you would have had much the same experience of the essential meaning on your own had I not been guiding you through its layers. Only in introducing you to the technique was my guidance necessary.

Essential meaning is manifest in *all* things, ideas being just one type of thing. To illustrate, I will now guide you through a technique for experiencing the essential meaning contained within an object. Specifically, the essential meaning manifest within the object you chose at the beginning of this meditation.

Please note that just by my mentioning your object, a series of events were initiated in your mind. In a flash of less than a second, you most likely pictured your object, experienced your usual emotional feelings about the object, and named or described your object.

However, in order to *directly* perceive your object's essential meaning, you must now leave all of that behind and use only your intentional objective awareness. If you start thinking about your object then you are not *perceiving*. Instead, you are thinking and interpreting and trying to shape its essential meaning. So keep this in mind as we proceed.

Now open your eyes and fix your gaze upon your chosen object. Set aside all of your thinking and feeling about the object and just observe objectively for a moment. Rest with it for a moment and let its objective details crystallize in your awareness.

(pause)

Now open your awareness to the object itself and objectively perceive how it affects your awareness.

(pause)

If you find your internal dialogue thinking about the object then let your go of your thinking and refocus your awareness upon simply perceiving.

(long pause)

Try to experience for a moment what it would feel like to *be* your object.

(pause)

Now let your mind think about your object and objectively observe the meaning that those thoughts express.

(pause)

To what degree and in what way do your thoughts express your *experience* of the object's essential meaning?

(pause)

Now objectively perceive your emotional responses to your object and ask yourself to what degree and in what way they express your experience of the object's essential meaning.

(pause)

Now objectively examine the physical details of your object and observe how they manifest and communicate the object's essential meaning.

(pause)

Now close your eyes again and turn your awareness inward. Take a few moments to review your direct encounters with essential meaning and examine the unique qualities of your experience with essential meaning that make its direct perception different than any other form of perception. Try to fix this difference in your mind so that you can recall how it feels in the future.

(long pause)

Focus again on the sound of my voice and gently return to a more normal state of awareness. Gently open your eyes, sit upright and reorient yourself while I say a few words in closing.

Our temporal mental body is the clothing of ideas and thought patterns through which we manifest our own essential meaning. When their formation is left to the whims of the unintentional awareness, they allow us only a partial or clouded expression of our essential meaning and a skewed perception of the objective Universe. On the other hand, when these foundational ideas and habits of thinking are examined and transformed by the intentional objective awareness, our self-expression then becomes clearer and more sure, and our perceptions begin to truly reveal the objective Universe to our understanding.

By intentionalizing our mental body we also gain the power to open our awareness to an infinite range of essential meaning. This is important because it is through the incorporation of ever-new types of essential meaning that the essential Self evolves and expands and ultimately comes to encompass the whole infinite Universe.

I suggest that over the coming days and weeks you use the faculties of your intentional-objective awareness and actively pursue the direct perception of essential meaning in your mundane life. Truly experience the essential meanings you encounter and savor each to its fullest. Use your awareness to spend time truly experiencing life within the miracle of your own mental body!

My best to you!