

Skillful Thought

Discussions of thought very often do not recognize the two sources from which it arises. One is the flow of automatic thought that operates just like the senses. We see something, for example, and an automatic flow of thought (memory, imagination etc.) arises as a result in the mind. Then there is the thought that we add consciously to that automatic flow in the present. When our thought in the present is wholesome it takes the automatic flow in a good direction, towards happiness. When it is unwholesome it takes it in a bad direction, towards unhappiness.

When the automatic is silent or empty then we have an empty canvas to paint on. Meditation practice helps us to see this process clearly and act appropriately. We do not get mixed up and see these two sources of thought as the same. We don't blindly believe or join in with the automatic; at the same time we see the importance of it, that if we are not careful it can make us suffer. We clearly see what is wholesome or unwholesome in our present experience, as defined by its result in happiness or unhappiness. We see the influence of present-moment thought, good or bad, on our own mind machine.

Ultimately we see the potential to replace automatic with present moment thought and take control of the mind. When we continue to take it in a wholesome direction we see the happiness that results. The present moment thought becomes more and more dominant until it takes over.

In contrast we see that we can never control the mind that goes in the unwholesome direction, we see that it takes on a life of its own.

I offer this for your reflection.

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