

YOUR THOUGHT IS NOT YOU

Our capacity to think exists already well before birth and our thinking accompanies us throughout our life, regardless of the level of consciousness that we have of it.

Our thinking just like our breathing, works automatically. However, we are given the opportunity to partially take control of it consciously, by occupying it, orienting it, soothing it, guiding it and, at best, managing it. And, like breathing, our thinking will be influenced by everything we experience, and especially by our emotions.

In the first years of our life, we learn to put words and images on our thoughts, and we end up doing a fusion between our thinking and language, even if thoughts excluding language still persist at a much lower level of awareness. Long before culture and education, the language we speak, will influence our way of thinking.

Our surroundings, our social environment, the events of our life, will be the breeding ground from which our thoughts will arise. The more rich and varied the milieu, the more our field of thinking can be enlarged.

And in the same way, over time, the changes in our lives, the experiences, the learning, will lead us to change and make evolve our ways of thinking and to keep a form of flexibility and openness. And this evolution remains very little related to our intentions.

When advancing in age, habits of thinking will develop. Each type of circumstance will correspond to a type of thoughts. And the more a type of circumstance will be repeated, the more the corresponding thoughts will become embedded in our minds. This will engender a kind of fidelity to our mental reactions, but it will also begin to limit the types of thoughts we use. When moving further into adulthood, getting out of the frame will start to get a little harder. And since thoughts are at the source of most of our behaviors, these latter will reflect this and they will also become more and more faithful to themselves and less and less diversified.

We will not necessarily notice it, and that may suit us, or at least, we will not necessarily see any problem with it, for, in most cases, it is relatively comfortable.

However, in the circumstances where our thoughts are coupled with painful emotions (fears, sadness, anger, mainly), this process can begin to operate in vicious circle and become similar to an addiction, from which it will become increasingly difficult to free oneself.

Thus shocks, wounds, tensions, mixed with habits of thinking, can lead to 'freezings', ruminations, obsessions, phobias, confusion, lassitude. As it will have developed, over time, and automatically, we will suffer from it, without having any control over these deleterious thoughts, if we do not learn to do so.

It will not be constant. This can happen as getting into a mood subsequently to an event that triggers it. The flexibility of youth makes it easy to get out of it like the reed that one bend and that stand up back straight. With age, however, the way of thinking will begin to stay in the most frequent mood patterns and these moods may in turn become more habitual or recurring, sometimes even becoming constant and influencing our character.

Thinking, if it is no longer sufficiently solicited by novelty, by unforeseen, by change, by motivation, by meaning; may begin to crystallize, shriveling up, and it will become increasingly difficult to control it.

Over the years, it will end up being the product of what we have always lived, and it will hardly be able anymore to evolve according to what we live and to what we may want to live in the future.

Our attention will therefore begin to diminish, we will live less and less in the present moment. Over time, we will have more and more difficulty making projects. The content of our thoughts will shrink more and more. Our memory will mainly concern the past (the less recent events). Our reflection will become limited. We will no longer be able to manage our daily life as before.

And that doesn't concern old age strictly speaking. These aspects infiltrate our life in adulthood as Freudian slips at the beginning, which will slowly, insidiously multiply over the years, over the decades. And it is precisely because we do not pay attention to it at first, and we do not understand what these tiny signs mean, that we let them as they are.

Even when it becomes more frequent, we worry a little, then we hear around us that, after all, the stress, the hectic life that we lead, or some sudden fatigue, the difficulties of life, the unpleasant events, the emotions, alone are responsible for an increased frequency of these snags, so that we consider them as temporary.

And it is true that there are ups and downs. But if nothing comes to interfere with this process, in the long term, this can only increase, faster for some, significantly less for the others, and only a minority has little to worry about, even at an advanced age.

The reverse process to the aging process is to try to get out of this tendency to inertia or stiffening: it is then necessary to constantly seek to get out of our comfort zone; which requires real will and efforts. The sooner we get conscious of this tendency of the evolution of our mental, the more we will have chances to be able to make evolve our thinking so as to keep his flexibility.

As with breathing, it is possible to learn how to better control thoughts, but it is not possible to control them constantly. It is therefore preferable to favor some automatisms of thoughts rather than others. This is developed in the article "Another look at dementia and at the preservation of youth" <http://sechangeroi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Dementiaandyouth01.htm>.

Getting conscious of our thoughts will not happen in a day. In the beginning, learning consist more of becoming conscious of our automatic thoughts after that they have generated automatic behaviors that are not necessarily adequate. And the more the learning progresses, the more often we will succeed in anticipating our reactions, then in being conscious of the inadequate thoughts at the moment they arise, until we'll eventually get able to prevent their arrival, not by preventing them from arising, but by thinking differently.

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An essential element to understand as soon as possible on our path, is that: our thinking does not define us. Understanding this gives the keys to make it evolve differently, to exercise it, to learn to guide it, to diversify it, to manage it, to use it correctly, and sometimes to refuse to believe what it is suggesting to us, and also to choose to reconsider an opinion without losing face.

Thinking is a tool, and considering it as such frees us from our beliefs and multiplies the potential of its use.

The problem is that it is with thinking that we have to understand that it is not ourself. Or at least, at the beginning, what observes the thinking (the self / our consciousness) can understand it, only by means of the thoughts, as long as it hasn't truly understood it or didn't prove it at the level of experience.

It's there the paradox, leading us to take ages before we understand it, and this, all the more so because we identify ourself with our thoughts.

And consciousness is the part of ourself that is beyond the body, the emotions and the mental; a kind of conductor that can handle everything. It is the seat of our true will. (see also on this topic the introduction to the second part of the article (in French - to come in English) on the management of thoughts and emotions :

<http://www.sechangerson.be/4Articles/Gestionpenseesetemotionspage9.htm#conscience2>

There is a quite simple way to learn how to un-identify ourself from our thoughts. When we are very angry, completely depressed, or inhabited by an intense fear; it is worth to write the thoughts related to the events that put us in this state. Then a few days later, when the emotion has left us, and we have returned to serenity or the problem is solved; it is then possible to re-read our writings, and to ask ourself if we still think the same. If so, it means that we have not quite recovered our serenity and that the problem is not completely solved. Otherwise, we will be astonished to see the big gap between what we wrote and what is present in our mind when we read it again.

For, apart from moments when we are inhabited by important emotions, we think utterly differently. And comparing the two ways of thinking related to different emotional circumstances, while we are ourself, in both cases; makes it possible to reveal that our thinking is not us.

Understanding that our thinking is not us, leads to understand that it can lead us down the garden path. Therefore, trusting fully our own thinking is fooling ourself.

Knowing that our thinking is not ourself, allows us to no longer rely totally on our thoughts, whatever our mood. And subsequently, it allows us to learn to cultivate the doubt about our own reasonings, judgments, opinions, decisions, beliefs etc.

When certainties begin to make way for doubts; it will not always be easy to acknowledge them in front of other people, any more than to make choices by ignoring their rightness.

But step by step, on the way, learning to go through these doubts and to find new answers to our questions will help us to find confidence.

And the certainties, the lack of concern and the arrogance of an untamed way of thinking will, step by step, make way for a peaceful confidence built on the strength of our convictions.

All our certainties will have to be questioned, and the doubts will have to infiltrate everywhere. This is not comfortable, especially at first, but we can learn to live it with more and more ease.

All our choices, all our decisions will become always filled with doubts. This is the price to pay to head towards a more just thinking that can go on evolving.

Pulling away from the speech of our thoughts will also make it possible to learn to connect with who we really are: what is hidden behind the thinking, and to learn to let our true self guide our thoughts.

A means of access consists in turning inward, passing through the body. This is what among others, the meditation is generally proposing.

Turning inward, joining our authentic being, makes then possible, intrinsically, to connect ourself to the whole, to others, to the world, to the universe, to greater than ourself.

It's not about connecting ourself in thoughts. All the opposite precisely. This connection happens elsewhere than in our thoughts, and can only be perceived when thoughts stop diverting us from it.

If we take the image of the TV, our natural thoughts work like video clips. They send us multiple messages, various, which overlap, interfere with each other, sometimes scrambling, often lacking clarity, or even, as if the device was receiving multiple channels at a time. When we succeed to calm thoughts and enter into meditation, we get a single channel, clear, limpid, and we are then truly connected to what grounds our existence.

Turning inward, allows to better understand the origin of our thoughts. In the first place, those that come from logic, equivalent in some way to what a software or even artificial intelligence can produce. Second, those coming from the body, influenced by emotions. Thirdly, those that come from the heart and allow us to open up our reality to much more than concrete, material life linked to our survival and

its limited rational aspect. And finally, fourth, those from elsewhere, including: intuition, inspiration, creativity, will, and probably many other aspects. These latter are the thoughts that, although seemingly similar to all others, and sometimes difficult to recognize, are permeated with serenity, confidence, enthusiasm, generosity, and are never very far from the concept of unconditional love.

The more we are able to live in reliance with this fourth mode of thinking (through the body, the heart, and without denying our reasonings), the more it becomes possible to lastingly manage all our thoughts, much more as a tool at our disposal rather than the reflection of our personality.

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from the website : <http://www.sechangersoi.be/EN/EN-home.htm>
page : <http://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Yourthinkingisnotyou.htm>

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