

Art of Being Human - Part 1

By
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What is it to "be human"? What separates us from the animal kingdom? What drives us, motivates, inspires us? What does "being human" mean?

In the contemplation of these words, "being human" we can first analyze their literal meaning. Through this analysis we can better understand our own meaning or the meaning we then give to the definition of a "human being."

First, we look at the word "being." Notice that this is a present tense word. We are not describing what we were in the past, and we are not describing what will be in the future. Nor are we describing what we are doing. The word describes what we are being, what is, right now, in the present moment. We are *being* human.

For many of us, the concept of "being" human is a strange or even foreign one. We are too busy "doing". We are doing this or doing that, going here or going there. Whether it's our work, our home, our relationships, our family or even when we're on our own, we have become largely a society of doers, oblivious to the fact that we are human beings, not human doings!

While it may be necessary to do the things we do, and it is most certainly essential to do the things that must be done, how we are being, while we do what we do, is a choice. We can choose our state of being, rather than our state of being *choosing* us. How many of us choose to be angry, upset or fearful? Who would really want to choose that? On the other hand, do you choose to be happy, peaceful or confident? Or do any of those states of being depend on external circumstances in order to arise in you? If so, are you *being* conscious or unconscious?

We have the freedom to choose whether to be "confident" or "fearful", "relaxed" or "tense", "loving" or "angry". In fact, I doubt any of us actually choose to be fearful, tense or angry. If we are feeling or exhibiting any of those states of being, it's more likely we are reacting, and that those reactions are leading to those limiting or constricted states of being.

Consider what will contribute to "doing" better? Being tense, or being relaxed? Being constricted, or being expansive? Now, consider what you do each day and ask yourself what state of being will best serve that act of doing? If taking the kids to school, are you being "rushed" or "busy", or are you being "calm" or "focused"? When entering a meeting are you being "anxious", or "relaxed"? When you wake up in the morning are you being "apprehensive", or "excited". Which of these states of being do you think best serve you in each of these instances?

There are many hundred states of being. Some are positive and expansive, such as being happy, being peaceful, being loving, being confident, etc. Others can be negative or constricting, such as being fearful, being angry, being worried, etc.

Take a moment, right now, and ask yourself, "what is my current state of being?" There is no right or wrong here, just observe the state of being that you are *feeling*, as if from a distance, without any reaction. Notice if the state is positive or negative.

It's easy to tell. Do you feel good or not so good? If you feel good, then the state is most likely positive. If not so good, the state is likely to be negative. Once you've identified if positive or negative, try to identify what it is that you are feeling. Is it excitement, joyful or calm, as examples of positive states, or is it tense, disappointed or sad which are examples of negative states?

As you observe the feeling, close your eyes and notice where, in your body, you sense that feeling. Perhaps it's in your head, your neck, your chest, your stomach, your abdomen, etc. Just observe and watch it. Is it moving? Is it expanding or contracting? Is it changing in intensity, color or any other way? By observing the feeling in this way, you may notice that it is constantly changing. This realization alone can be very liberating.

So, our state of being, in an unconscious state, is largely a manifestation of what is going on around us and is dictated by what just happened -- someone said something ... someone did something ... some experience just occurred ... you just got some unexpected news. You then have a thought about that, whether the thought is true or an assumption. This leads to an emotional response, causing a reaction that, in turn, gives rise to your state of being.

Sometimes what just happened ignites a thought about the future and suddenly fear or anxiety shows up. Perhaps even panic, as our state of being. Sometimes an event stirs up thoughts of the past and we become angry or disappointed. Perhaps we become enraged, as a state of being.

As you can see, the unconscious state of being has more to do with what was in the past or might be in the future, rather than what is, right now. These states might be better referred to as "pasting" or "futuring" rather than "being."

A negative state of being cannot exist when we are truly in the present -- "being present." Only in the present can we experience consciousness and those deeply expansive states of being that reside in the present. In the present is where we become conscious. As a conscious being, we are more likely to choose a state of being, usually positive or expansive, rather than negative or constricting, unless of course, we consciously feel we can be well served by adopting such a negative state, such as when an actor steps into such a state to prepare for a role.

Practicing presence on a daily basis is one of the oldest spiritual teachings and one that serves all areas of our lives. It serves us in being "in harmony" with others, it helps us being "joyful" at work, it facilitates us being "inspired" creatively and contributes greatly to us being "happy" and "successful" in general.

With practice we become better at consciously choosing our state of being. We find ourselves reacting less and, when things go wrong, we see that we return to a state of presence more rapidly, or to a positive state of being more readily. The knowledge that we can consciously choose our state of being is extremely freeing.

Our state of being is the frequency we transmit. Others on our frequency will resonate and be attracted to us, allowing that frequency to expand and become more powerful. You've heard the expression "misery loves company." Well, so does "positivity". Stop for a moment and consider how much of your frequency is positive, and how much is negative, for that will most likely be the reflection of your life experience. None of us is 100% one or the other, but which would you say has

been more dominant in you, until now? From now on, if you want to change your outer experiences, change your inner state of being!

Let's check again. What is your state of being, right now? Contemplate this question and see what answer surfaces. Check in throughout the day and see how well you are able to identify, and modify, your state of being.

First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.

Epictetus (50-138, Phrygian Philosopher)

This article is continued in Part 2.