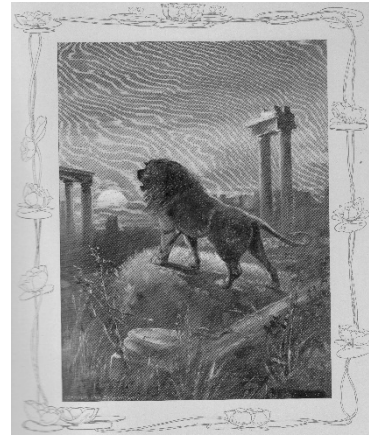


Is your mind a friend or a foe in the search for self-definition? **by Paul Constant**

Before diving into the question, it seems like a good idea to first define for ourselves what is meant by "mind." We can start with the dictionary, which defines it as: (1) *the element, part, substance, or process that reasons, thinks, feels, wills, perceives, or judges* or (2) *the totality of conscious and unconscious mental processes and activities*. But what is your own definition and experience of mind? Is it a concrete aspect of your being, or is it a collection of your ever-changing attributes? Where are the boundaries in you between body, mind, and spirit? It is tremendously beneficial to study ourselves and develop our own definition before deciding if the mind is a friend or foe in our search.



We have all experienced the benefits of applying our energy and focusing our mind on a difficult problem or endeavor. In many cases, a focused mind is a great tool for unleashing creativity and accomplishment. It is also a magnificent doubt machine, which is handy when evaluating spiritual teachers and spiritual systems. And a healthy balance of feeling-sense and productive thinking—which are key features of the mind—are far more powerful when combined, in contrast to using either of these alone.

Unfortunately, the mind also has an amazing capacity for self-delusion. We can construct elaborate rationalizations and beliefs for justifying our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Sadly, we will easily outwit ourselves if we don't remain on our toes by continuously using discernment and relentlessly watching our mind. Tragically, the mind can become our worst foe if we allow our addictions to descend into self-destruction, or the destruction of our relationships.

In conclusion, much wisdom comes from looking within ourselves in an attempt to uncover our inner obstacles and advantageous tools. We have to discover for ourselves how the mind can be both friend and foe. In fact, isn't this the very process of self-definition?