

Community Circles

Is There an “I” in Gratitude? with Rev. Chris Kell

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Gratitude arises whenever you start feeling God’s presence around you; then only gratitude is left. Then your whole energy becomes gratitude, then your whole being becomes a thanksgiving, it becomes a prayer — because nothing is missing, and the world is so perfect, and everything is as it should be...When the real gratitude upsurges in your being, you feel for the first time what prayer is, what love is. ~Osho

1. In Freud’s theory, the Id, or pleasure principle (Homer Simpson) is the part of the psyche that is totally unconscious and serves as the source of instinctual impulses and demands for immediate satisfaction of primitive needs. . . . The Ego, or reality principle (Marge Simpson), is that part of the personality which is experienced as being oneself, our image – that which we recognize as I, me and mine; ego is our face to the world. Superego, or morality principle (Lisa Simpson), is that part of the personality which influences self-observation, self-criticism, and other moral and reflective activities.

According to Angeles Arrien, we each have the ability to shift our awareness to one of “grateful seeing” — noticing first what is working in our lives before dwelling on our challenges and burdens, or on what we lack or desire but have not yet attained. She states that through conscious and sustained practice over a period of time, we can discover how gratefulness and all its related qualities—thankfulness, appreciation, compassion, generosity, grace, and so many other positive states—can become integrated and embodied in our lives.

This state of consciousness Arrien describes is only possible when the ego has reached the highest level of integration of the id and the superego with the Ego, when our sense of being has shifted from satisfying immature, primal urges and to a fully mature, conscious ego whose self-image is more about universal values and serving others.

How do we do that? The Ego's job is to contain and direct the passions, to satisfy the needs of the Id while being conscious of other people's needs. To do that we need a correspondingly fully developed ego.

How do we recognize/accept/integrate these three principles into a mature ego personality?

2. He (Osho) teaches that gratefulness simply means thankfulness; a thought that comes directly from the ego as an expression of thankfulness for the satisfaction of some known or unknown desire. We experience gratefulness because deep down we want something, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, and it has been given to us. Some desire has been

gratified whether we asked for it or not, so we feel an inner thankfulness, and we outwardly express this thought to the person who has fulfilled the desire.

On the other hand, Osho tells us:

Gratitude has neither outward nor inward object. It is not an expression directed to anybody, it does not come from a gratification of any desire, and it does not require any thought. Gratitude just is. It comes from the very source of our being. Gratitude is the greatest experience that we can have; gratitude not to anybody or anything in particular, simply gratitude for our whole existence and the glorious splendor that is everywhere.

Dictionary.com gives us the following definitions:

Grateful (adjective): warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received; thankful; expressing or actuated by gratitude

Gratitude (noun): the quality or feeling of being grateful or thankful

Osho's description of gratitude makes it sound more like a verb: gratitude is.

Do you agree with Osho's distinction between gratefulness and gratitude, or do you believe gratefulness and gratitude are the same?

3. Gregory Mitchell tells us the Ego is only a barrier to spiritual insight when it is weak and full of mental distortions and conflict – when it envelopes all the available attention so the inner being cannot function. The weaker the ego-strength, the less we will engage reality and the more we will flee to superstition, wishing rather than acting, and to giving free rein to our worst impulses.

A mature and fully developed ego, on the other hand, reaches a transpersonal perspective where the old barriers no longer confine us and the old fears no longer constrict or claim us. We have determined a truth within that includes all that is and we are no longer exclusively identified with the "I" self, the Ego.

How do you answer this question:

Are ego and gratitude mutually exclusive, or, is there room for both ego and gratitude on the spiritual path?

4. Eckhart Tolle tells us the ego always has to have an identity, an "I," and if we take away one image another will take its place. The content of the image, the ego's thought form, may change, but the structure of the ego does not. It is always about self-image or sense of being, satisfying our needs and desires.

The consistent practice of gratefulness leads to a deep state of gratitude, and in gratitude, the ego disappears all together. As we are filled with gratitude, the demands of the ego lessen and we turn our whole being towards the Divine.

These two statements seem to be contradictory. Are they?

If the ego needs an identity to exist, and then it disappears, who are we? Am I still me?