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## Ripples

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## Ripples

If we are near a small lake, pond, or even a pool, we can observe ripples as they appear on the surface from a variety of possible sources. A breeze might cause ripples that move in the direction of the blowing. Anything that affects the surface, whether a leaf or a tossed stone, will send ripples out in all directions from the disturbance. If there a fish near the surface, ripples will follow its movement, just as anything that moves on the surface will send out ripples proportionate to its size and speed.

If we choose to observe the surface of our consciousness by taking time to notice the ripples in our hearts that are caused by the thoughts and emotions affecting us, we will be able to distinguish the different causes and determine appropriate responses. Sometimes, for example, the equivalent of a stone is thrown into our environment and we are much disturbed, so that we cannot but notice. We can respond by taking the stone and throwing it at someone (anger) or we might choose to assess whether or not we have actually suffered damage, and let the ripples diminish before speaking or acting.

More often, the ripples within us are directional, so that by observation, we can learn, no matter what the cause, whether or not the movements are for us or against us, assisting us or hindering us, kindly or the opposite. A word that we read or hear might be like a leaf landing on water, of no consequence. Some words, on the other hand, are like a boat out on the water causing a wake that is quite noticeable. We can attend to the direction more than to the boat itself, and decide whether to stop the line of thoughts that are causing disruptive feelings or to participate more fully in those thoughts if they support our values, deepest desires, or chosen way of proceeding.

Some thoughts are readily accessible, as they are on the surface where we can immediately recognize what they are, and more easily discern their beneficial or detrimental direction. If we believe that our inner life is as important as our bodily life, and desire spiritual health as well as physical wellbeing, we will choose as much as possible to accept healthy thoughts and reject those that sicken us. If we are in doubt as to whether or not we have either a right or a responsibility to decide which thoughts to support and which to leave off thinking, we can ask the God of all creation: "Is this good for me, or not?" Our answer will most likely register within us as a quiet recognition of our value rather than as a sound from the heavens. Yes, we are responsible to ourselves for determining which thoughts are welcome and which are not.

Some patterns of thinking seem to move below the surface of our minds, so that the causes are harder to see, whether from some kind of "fish" or some other source. But these too will indicate a direction they are moving, if we choose to watch. The direction is all we need to know for us to make a rational, wise decision about whether to let the movement continue, or to resist. And one of the surest ways to resist is to pray for help to follow our deepest aspirations for being a whole person.

Some of the most helpful indications of the various movements taking place within our minds and hearts are ripples.