

**Tuesday, March 9**

**Internal Formations**

There is a term in Buddhist psychology that can be translated as “internal formations,” “fetters,” or “knots.” When we have a sensory input, depending on how we receive it, a knot may be tied in us. When someone speaks unkindly to us, if we understand and do not take his or her words to heart, we will not feel irritated at all, and no knot will be tied. But if we do not understand why we were spoken to that way and we become irritated, a knot will be tied in us. The absence of clear understanding is the basis for every knot,

... If we do not untie our knots when they form, they will grow tighter and stronger. Our conscious, reasoning mind knows that negative feelings such as anger, fear, and regret are not wholly acceptable to ourselves or society, so it finds ways to repress them into remote areas of our consciousness in order to forget them. Because we want to avoid suffering, we create defense mechanisms that deny the existence of these negative feelings and give the impression that we have peace within ourselves. But our internal formations are always looking for ways to manifest as destructive images, feelings, thoughts, words, or behavior.

The way to deal with unconscious internal formations is, first of all, to find ways to become aware of them.

*Thich Nhat Hanh, from **Peace is Every Step***