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Cultivating Seeds of Awakening; Paving Inroads to the Now

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Meditation is an art of simplicity. The simplicity of awareness meditation challenges the complexity of habits and conditionings geared to cultivation of the development of thoughts and their analysis. It is not that the thoughts and analysis are not fascinating and compelling as far as they can be; it is that thoughts and analysis can neither find nor can they resolve the human quests for happiness, kindness, belonging, or emotion, and the being with them that bring people to life as it is experienced in the moment. People stumble and struggle with the resistance to being in the present, and in so doing, come to habitually practice the moment to moment avoidance of their lives as they are. This may be in some measure a reflection of the wish for life to be problem free at all times, pleasant and never painful, with no obstacles to impede all other wishes.*

Such avoidant approaches seem to make sense as ways and methods for applying self-kindness, because the ego would have no challenges to its solidity if nothing ever got in our way. Following this path of indulgence of the small and compressed self at times may provide a sense of weight, density and matter to the human vulnerability we fear may be the truth about ourselves. Living with the results of this approach we are weighty and pulled to the earth with gravity, like rocks. And not every rock becomes someone's pet. Yet, if we are bound to behavior based on the belief that life should be problem free, will not some obstacles and problems eventually become threatening and initiate our internal response to and out of fear and anxiety? Flight, fight or freeze are the three most typical responses connected to habitual and conditioned belief, thought threat-sequences. First we organize unknown or unlabeled thoughts into beliefs about what life should be then build sets of responses and behaviors that become paired with them. +

This pairing becomes deeply imbedded into our consciousness in what might classically be likened to a less than recognized yet continuously operating organization of validated associations, response valences and triggers, that once enacted and maintained over multiple repetitions take on the mantle of verifiability; whose components are habituated clusters of thoughts which have combined with at times unpleasant physical sensations. These beliefs are compelled via enumerated repetitions outside of momentary awareness, to be known as truths. They are neither the truth about us, nor the truth about reality. Yet we can become caught up in their perceived power over us; and that power is the force of thoughts forms to eclipse experience. Ourselves, our experience, our moments are thus at times in the shadow of the object of thought. What is this process of unconscious power? 1

It could very well be a signal to action or the call for silence, rest and contemplation. In this sense of contemplation, it is a quiet and still apprehension of our experience devoid of thought and analysis, utilizing the capacities of resilience and recovery made possible despite anxiety, fear and hurt through the skillful use of awareness. Being aware we can be with the void, and even experience emptiness as a welcome alternative to excess, much like a period of solitude may be welcome after a period of intense socializing. And if the shadow of thought, and the protection from discomfort and solidity of belief compresses us from experience, awareness practice adds space, openness and widening of consciousness, allowing for more direct contact with experience. The breath then softens, the body then softens; as do our pressure, self-criticism and misperception. In a previous writing, this writer extended the consideration related to reifications that occur where thoughts become confused with realities. 2

The work involved in the commitment to a life of awareness (mindfulness) practice is then, established as a more sustaining labor of love, filtering through resistance to being with ourselves and the world as it is, by eventually, as Ezra Bayda states, making even the resistance itself, part of our observation in awareness. If we want to find freedom the moment is our seed. Eventually that seed grows into a beautiful tree. The cultivation of that seed is this breath at this moment. Like in cooking, attention is as vital at the beginning of the process and continues until the end. Each step integrates into the process. As it develops, so too does the practitioner. Working with the process, he/she expands the capacity for widening the container of awareness within which resistance, obstacles, and problems can be faced with self-compassion and equanimity. There is within the lifetime of practice opportunity to grow skills in self-kindness and clarity which grow from the seed of the breath of the formal meditation practice, into the tree of the practice, being with the self in kindness in daily life. Then the practice has expanded to include more of our lives, avoiding and turning away from less of our lives. Such an experience helps us build confidence in our innate intelligence and in so doing paves inroads to the now. What that amounts to is awakening every opportunity.

*Being Zen; Bringing Meditation to Life, Ezra Bayda, Shambhala Publications, 2003, Boston

+ The Mindful Way through Anxiety: Break Free from Chronic Worry and Reclaim your Life, Susan M. Orsillo, Ph.D., and Lizabeth Roemer, Ph.D., Guilford Press, 2011, New York

1 The Shadow of the Object; Psychoanalysis of the Unknown Thought, Christopher Bollas, Columbia University Press, 1987, New York

2 How Thoughts are not Facts, Ned David Bratspis, MA, LMFT, www.RelaxingOne.com,
12/15/2010, Gig Harbor, WA (web-published archives of RelaxingOne.com) Est.2008