

In Practice

The development of consciousness is connected to the direct experience of being, when it is not disrupted by discursive thought or encumbered by bundled emotional lacuna, the traces of habit and conditioning. The intention to find a release from habitual and conditional attachments prompts much curiosity about the mystique and attraction contemplative traditions from faraway lands may offer. In theory, they offer the promise of a secret treasure trove of truth. In practice, to keep that promise requires a labor of love, starting with the moment, and continuing on into conceptionless renewals, repetitions, whatever the obstacles.

One of the ways that beginning meditators struggle with this different approach to a relationship with thoughts and emotions is to conceptualize it (unwittingly slipping into patterns of discursiveness), into an imperative to, "stop thinking." This is a bit like taking in the power of the ocean by attempting to stop the waves; or to fathom the expanse of the universe by holding a ruler up to the sky.

Bringing awareness and presence in to practice is a task that meanders through the layers of habit and conditioning of the attention, training the attention non-judgmentally to be with the experience that can be recognized as unowned, knowable, and abiding, clearly and as is. Here is an apt description ... "we can see clearly what is. This clarity is able to perceive phenomena very directly. What usually hides it is the discursive activity of thoughts and emotions. As the chatter begins to dissipate clarity has an opportunity to arise."¹

In this ontology, clarity, higher consciousness, is uncovered as a potential beyond brief glimpse until natural means poetically transform acuity. Such skillful means accompany those who keep intent-in practice toward unity of purpose and process. Once the need for a dual or parallel universe dissolves, what is can be as it already is and for the moment apprehended. This closeness to process is germane to being in practice and is part of the repetition, renewal and obstacles being worked with as process, rather than as content. This shift from the content of thought to process of awareness is the means and the practice of contemplative work.

Using this method; this practice, every experience is our teacher. There is economy-for no experience (to which mindful and contemplative awareness is applied) is wasted. Each provides an opportunity for recognition to the constancy of change and impermanence. Then, kindness and compassion are paramount, skillful, and purposeful. The continuity of intention can be set to train, moment by moment in motion and imbalance. Discursive schemas and conditioning are perceived and met with loving kindness, acceptance, and the equanimity of a labor of love, in practice. This is useful to heal and be healed. "...When we experience intense emotions-conflict, confusion, excessive desire, hatred, or delusion-we become mindful of this emotional state. We create the aspiration to know, acknowledge, and absorb the disturbances of others through our own....this is one of the most immediate and practical ways that I know for bringing spiritual transmutation to the shadow experiences of our lives..."

² In this way we have used the experience, regardless of judgments of its quality to discover the common thread, to humanize what is, altruistically, in practice. This experiential closeness and ability to replicate the similarity, and oneness of the experience of one another is the plasma of compassion,

recently discovered in the laboratory as a phenomena attributed to the action of mirror “neurons,” the embodied potential for empathic transmutation of the potential created by a precious human birth.

In practice, this potential can be maintained via patience, remembrance, and purpose. The purposeful part of practice is often attributed to the recognition that kindness is an awareness-near skill that bonds to the consciousness of process when content has been attributed it’s interesting yet dualistic entrainment. Upon noticing, the distraction from practice this signals, remembering to begin anew to practice in peaceful abiding is a task at hand. Maintaining patience with this process, and allowing for the recognition that there is no one to blame, nothing to push away or to cling to, can be a basis for the skillful means of letting go, in practice.

While learning to be with the moment and to let go of it in order to welcome the next, is a foundation of peaceful abiding. The purpose of training in compassion is the labor of love that keeps one going-in practice. From the first experience with meditation, the challenge of the obstacle, shrouded in the unknown emergent detour of expectation, desire and judgment offers reflective associations, boredom and the quicksand of interpretation; peaceful abiding can be unstable in such an unwelcoming climate.

The pain and difficulty of such inhospitable circumstances seems a lot like the course that brought us to contemplative practice. It is then, part of transmuting these “givens,” to see the difficulty clearly, a moment at a time, and to find that which is in us that already is the medicine for it. Such is the discovery of who we are, once the layers of habit and conditioning have been dissolved in the light of compassion-in practice.

There is a softening of the breath, the body and the demand for the measurable acquisition. The emptying of expectation, desire and judgment leaves sacred space for kindness and its natural direction from inward to outward and across timeless momentum. It is suggested here that this same capacity for encountering the underlying capacity for kindness and compassion is the birthright of all humankind, waiting to be discovered. Darwin posed this idea over 100 years ago, that we can read in the faces of one another the most profound non conceptual understanding. Those who have reached beyond with his observation have replicated some significant foundations-in practice. Is it any wonder that now science has begun to discover that we are hardwired for altruistic behavior? 3

“If there is anything I have learned about men and women, it is that there is a deeper spirit of altruism than is ever evident. Just as the rivers we see are minor compared to the underground streams, so, too that idealism that is visible is minor compared to what people carry in their hearts unreleased or scarcely released. Humankind is waiting and longing for those who can accomplish the task of untying what is knotted, and bringing these underground waters to the surface.”4

The root of the practice of altruism as an aspiration whose eventual benefit is an awakened heart through the wisdom of patience and kindness is experienced –in practice. The work of the transmutation of and eventual development of consciousness in presence is undertaken as a labor of love-in practice....”Those desiring speedily to be A refuge for themselves and other beings, Should interchange the terms of ‘I’ and ‘other,’ And thus embrace a sacred mystery.” 5

To allow the sacred space to be cleared to develop compassion is to allow all phenomena to empty-in practice..." Meditate as follows: sit in the correct meditation posture and be as natural as possible. Remain in the present, focusing neither on the past nor future. Sitting like this, you see that is 'natural' not to be natural. Thoughts arise. The point is not to be victimized by these thoughts- simply let them pass and rest in the clear aspect of mind. In this way, you will eventually obtain insight; subsequently, you will develop this insight in a stable fashion and will maintain it even when engaged in other activities. At that point, the sense of the emptiness of phenomena will always be with you." 6

The farther the connection to intention and purpose can be carried (compassion), the farther the development of consciousness can be expanded, via the consistent effort applied in the practice of awareness..." As the ego level of I-ness is transcended...and the diversity which is a property of that level is dropped, then the impediments to experiencing a non-personal, encompassing consciousness begin to fall away. Higher consciousness is experienced, then, as 'above the personality, though the personality remains intact below to serve as its tool..." 7

In Practice, attentive, gradual, gentle, patient, accepting, non-judging, trusting, freshly simple, non-striving, allowing of being, discernment replaces self criticism and self-judgment. This, if considered from a developmental perspective is cultivated, as are most skills over a series of repetitions, in-practice. The stories that usually accompany us in "time," are either forward or behind the experience of life, which creates time as either past or future, the narrowing of perspective. ..."since mindfulness is about cultivation of moment-to-moment awareness through careful, systematic, and disciplined attending, it can seem at first as if what we are paying attention to-that is, the various possible objects of attention-is what is most important." 8 What we are developing however, is the attending itself, a shift from content to process awareness, which represents and actualizes an expanded and sacred space. Without being just another or specified achievement destination, it is a timeless access of the resource of liberation; we awaken amidst the cries of the world, an encompassing refuge..."Our own awareness has the capacity to free us, at least for one timeless moment, from the toxic elements of thought and emotion and the habit-driven suffering that usually arises from them when they are unmet, unexamined, and unwelcomed in awareness." 8

"Then one day I noticed walking slower...not because of age...but because I finally knew where I stood."9

Considered, gathered and presented with care,

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