

MEDITATION:  
 BEING WITH  
 THE BODY

by Doris W. Davis

As a non-authority on the subject of meditation I feel free to share with you some thoughts that come from recent personal experiences. These result from, and, hopefully, will contribute to a point of view about the body associated with the work of Ida P. Rolf and others in the growing field of the psychology of awareness.

If you are advanced in meditation my remarks may seem elementary and obvious to you, and if you are a beginner they may seem like absurd nonsense. Unfortunately I cannot guarantee that anything I say will make sense to anyone else -- in fact it frankly unsettles me to attempt to objectify such an intensely subjective field. I would not even try were I not convinced that you who read this are perfectly capable of recognising the familiarity of what I am saying. I write hoping that my experience will help recall you to your own.

I do not consider the phenomena which occur when one embraces the meditative attitude to be "mystical" or "mysterious". I consider them to be the natural results and extensions of very familiar processes. What is marvellous and wonderful is the realization -- it can be a surprise -- of the opening of the moment which allows us to see further into all the matter which surrounds us. There is no special time or place for this kind of reverence, because it is always appropriate, and never heavy.

What is Meditation?

Is it thought? Consideration? Concentration? Contemplation? Communion? Prayer? Is it a state of being? An act? A process? All of those, I think. I like to think of meditation as a highly refined form of play in which we discover that we both have and are an instrument capable of receiving, transmitting, creating, performing and transforming a special kind of music. In order to enjoy this experience one must cultivate a sensory-motor congruence. The achieve-

ment of this harmonious inner balance is a pleasurable activity, an effortless effort. Just as no musician, composer or conductor ever feels totally accomplished, there is no end to the possibilities of learning to learn oneself.

### Why meditate?

If we could see ourselves clearly "fitting in" to the so-called "outer world" of things, events and others we would not need to meditate, for we would feel we truly belonged to the whole picture. However most of us still experience ourselves as separate and apart -- something other than the rest. We still are caught up in a fractured pattern of confusing dualities: "outer" and "inner", "I" and "you", "past" and "future". If one needs to meditate at all it is to begin to re-experience wholeness. Certainly most of us want to believe that such a state exists, we can even accept it intellectually. But the practice of meditation -- an exercise -- can help one find the balance point within where duality no longer exists. When we meditate we learn to spend more and more time in the special space which is beyond the "push and pull" of perceptual dualities. Eventually this leads to an entirely new pattern of perception which we can apply more and more of the time. I have every reason to hope that in time what is seen in the "outer" sphere will be transformed by the inner experience. If this sounds "religious" play it over again -- it is not irreligious, but it is scientific as well for the meditative attitude or state is one which is experimentally demonstrable and repeatable.

### How do I begin?

Begin by remembering other beginnings. How do you begin something? Haven't you already begun -- long ago? Begin by allowing or permitting yourself to have a pleasurable experience entirely free from guilt. If you already know where your own beginning point is then begin there. If not, then perhaps I can suggest some preparations.

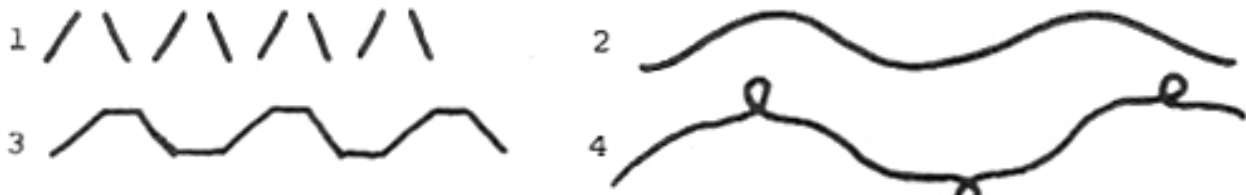
### Attitude

Try saying to yourself "I like myself just as I am right now." "I am all right here," or some other phrase which connotes self-acceptance in the present tense. If you are opening yourself to your feelings you may want to laugh, or cry, or yawn, or sweat or even shiver. If you have a feeling, then feel it until it is all gone. Then repeat the phrase until you can listen matter-of-factly. To like yourself just as you are right now does not mean that you have nowhere to grow, on the contrary, it means that you have simply come in contact with your own ground-zero, good ground to begin new growth.

### Breathing as a Beginning

When one places his attention on his breathing he is actually focussing upon the congruence of time and space as the body experiences it. Think about it. The act or process of breathing takes a space of time to complete. Within that space there is muscular sensation occurring: pressure, expansion, relative tension and relaxation, comfort or discomfort, ease or effort. What begin as physical sensations gradually shift over in awareness to sensations carrying positive or negative emotional charges. Because we are capable of a range of awareness we can choose to focus on various aspects of the experience of breathing. The "purely" muscular component can be separated out to provide a conscious information storage link to the concept of space: as size, shape, weight and primarily, gravity.

To test your awareness of breathing as a time-space continuity, ask yourself "What happens when breathing in CHANGES to breathing out? Is it simply an automatic occurrence, or can you make it a willed moment -- without effort -- of continuous flow. When we say "Begin with the breathing" we are really saying "Begin to round out the breathing, to experience a willed continuity with no blank spaces in-between." If you could draw a picture of these different possibilities, starting with ordinary "mid-range" breathing, the rounding out process might look like this.



Notice that the breathing is slower, and that something "happens" at the peaks and valleys. From time to time one experiences a release in the rib cage, something akin to a sigh or a yawn, totally spontaneous, but very welcome for it is a sure sign that the body is tuning in to itself. When one can enjoy the pleasure in this kind of release, he is ready to let go of other, more subtle kinds of investments -- those which are commonly referred to as "emotional" and "mental".

Always check yourself by asking if your breathing is becoming more effortless, and more pleasurable and free. If not, then forget the "technique". Do nothing special. Just monitor the breathing, and explore your own inclinations.

### Alignment: the foundation

Again, the advanced student will know what this means for him. If you tell a beginner to "make his spine straight" he

is apt to adapt a posture too rigid or uncomfortable to do him much good. The position should be upright but relaxed, comfortable, but not sleep-inducing. Actually a whole book could easily be written about "uprightness" and what that means and why it is important in meditation. I know people who have worked for years to master this simple reality. I for one can attest that alignment of the body is simple, but not easy. The reason for doing it is, again, pleasure: not the pleasure of active stimulation, but the relief of suddenly discovering that uprightness takes the least effort of all and feels like a great load has been removed from the legs, pelvis, back and neck.

### The Object of Meditation

After proper breathing and alignment have helped to make the mind - and body - feel light, the student is ready to begin the next phase. How long does the preparation take? There is no answer. A beginner may recognise these sensations right away -- an advanced student may suddenly rediscover newness in the preparatory stages. Obviously breathing and alignment can be refined ad-infinitum, and who is to say that they shouldn't be, or that one must "move on". One moves on when he feels he has exhausted those possibilities for that moment. Beginners get bored faster.

Meditation takes on a deeper aspect when one begins to concentrate on specific objects. These may be symbols or concrete objects. This is a critical point in meditation, for how does one determine what is an appropriate object? I have heard that one should have a teacher suggest the object. I have also heard that one should make his mind empty, and conversely, that one should not make his mind "blank". I have heard that one should not "do" anything, but let whatever occurs be done. I have also heard that one should begin with an object in mind, and I have heard the contrary, that one should let images arise. Obviously there are many conflicting reports, a plethora of "do's" and "dont's". But remember, you are not confused, you are here to enjoy this time. You are the discoverer. You are free to try anything that looks promising. The important thing it seems to me is setting a good direction for yourself. Where do you want to go with your "symphony". Meditation is learning to learn -- and since effortlessness produces a very subtle form of pleasure you can be sure that you are on the right track if the lightness is maintained in the body and the warm light of relaxation is felt in the neck, head and face.

Each time you meditate you may find it helpful to recapitulate the landmarks of your last session. If they are real and progressive you will find that you are establishing a "way" or a "path" for yourself. Each time you go a little

deeper and a little longer, but the way is familiar each time.

By patiently suspending your disbelief long enough -- possibly waiting through a period when nothing seems to be happening, and learning to let go of the anxiety of possible failure (!) -- eventually an object of some kind will occur to you. I hesitate to use the word "image" for that implies visual properties. Your symbol may have no visual properties. They may be auditory, or olfactory, or kinaesthetic, or a combination of several or all of these. I have found that it is important to be able to exercise some choice. Reserve the right to reject some symbols and to accept others. Learn to discriminate between a symbol which genuinely interests you, and one that merely seduces you. Again, at the risk of sounding dogmatic on a subject in which I am but an intermediate beginner, let me suggest that the best symbols for meditation may be those which do not carry emotional overtones, either positive or negative, but rather are objectively interesting in and of themselves.

#### Beyond the Object

As the objects of meditation appear to be nothing so much as expressive extensions of one's state of consciousness, one finds that with frequent practice the objects change according to that state. As physical health improves, for example, the objects of meditation have more vitality, and if I can take my own experience as any indication of a "universal" trend, they increasingly draw from material provided from all sense channels, without actually being "sensory" experiences. It is "as though" these experiences do not take place "in" the body at all. Does that mean that they take place "out" of the body? That hardly seems possible, at least as I understand the terms "in" and "out" at my present stage of development. I am very sure, however that these states are achieved WITH the body, and certainly by means of its wisdom.

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