

Christopher Ojeaga

ON THE SPIRIT OF MEDITATION

By

Christopher Ojeaga

Department of Spiritual Direction
St Albert the Great Major Seminary
Idowu-Offonran, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

Recent scientific research in the area of the psychology and physiology of the human mind and brain reveals astonishing facts about the wisdom and philosophy; spirit and practice of meditation. The discovery proved that the human mind respond to real and imaginary situations indifferently. The danger-detecting system of the brain automatically springs into action when activated either by real life situations or at prayer and meditation.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage the practice of meditation common to Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus, the Christ who transcended their immediate situations and sufferings through the wisdom, spirit, and philosophy of meditation. The philosophical dictum “Man know thyself” implies mindfulness, and conscious meditation on both internal and external stimuli. Following the meditative movements of the masters, one can avoid the dead – end of “staying inward” or self preservation by “moving outward” or sacrificing for others and for a mission.

Several methods of meditation can produce similar results. In this research, we shall adopt the archetypal meditation of Jesus in the garden of Olives, hours before his arrest, suffering, and death. His poise, calmness, peace of mind and internal balance were certainly results of his meditative stance taken prior to the actual events. It is my belief that meditation can bridge the gap between potentiality and actuality. Meditation can breeds peace through mental rehearsal and consciousness *examen*.

The profile of a philosopher as a “disinterested spectator/witness” is recommended as the vintage point for meditation, for

Agora: Journal of Philosophical & Theological Studies

the unbiased observation and analysis of the content of the mind, bodily sensation, nature, and the truths of religion.

Key Terms: Meditation, Spirituality, Awareness, Peace and Psychology.

Introduction:

The practice of Meditation has tremendous impacts on our body, mind, and spirit. Hence it is a subject for philosophy, science, and religion. Without meditation there could be no wisdom, no spirituality, no liberation, no freedom, or salvation; neither wholeness nor holiness is complete without the practice of meditation. The restorative power of meditation lies within and beyond each of us.¹ The human person is constantly pulled between past memories and future fantasies, (real or imagined) which deprive us of experiencing “the symphony of the now.”²

Meditation, awareness, and mindfulness help us in listening to the symphony of the moment, as well as in the processing and healings of painful past, current sufferings, and future anxiety. For that reason, the wisdom or philosophy (love of the wisdom) of meditation is crucial to unlock and restore “curative energy” to the body, mind, and spirit.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the spirit of meditation, the wisdom of the practice of meditation common to many faith traditions as remedy for pains and sufferings. Meditation has the panacea for our physical, psychological, and spiritual maladies because of its potential access to the conscious and unconscious self through its infinite connections to the secular and the sacred. To show that the wisdom of meditation transcends cultural and religious boundaries, we shall expand our discussions from the spirituality of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions to the Buddha-Zen, and Hindu-Africana religions and philosophies.

Meditation on Human Suffering

In one of my meditations on human suffering, following the guidelines of St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*³, I was struck by "the Contemplation of the Passion of Christ." Although the Gospels never left us detailed psychosomatic records on the sufferings of Jesus, we can provide a meditative profile of what happened (spiritually and psychologically) moments before his actual and physical suffering. Christ's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives⁴ is an infallible proof that physiologic changes occur (which affects our body, mind, and spirit) during prayers and meditations, and that the responses of the human body are largely undifferentiating between reality and imagination. The prayer (meditation) in the Garden has all the gamut of human emotional, physical, and spiritual overarching ingredients, to warrant using it as example for the practice of meditation and its potential for healing, wholeness, and holiness. It is also an excellent example of how we can spiritually connect with something within and beyond us in moments of fear, uncertainty, trials and tribulations.⁵ Furthermore, he shows that meditation is a means, a technique for dealing with fears, wonders, dangers, and threats to life (real or imagined), for seeking divine intervention, and for locating the centre of our being. As John of the Cross teaches, "God is the centre of the soul."⁶ These connections with something within or beyond us earmark the difference between Transcendental meditation and Christian meditation. While Transcendental meditation deals purely on human techniques for self improvement and self enhancement, Christian meditation on the other hand moves consciousness beyond self to the divine.⁷ This distinction is necessary because Christ in his meditation did not stop with the self, seeking how to prevent the imminent suffering or protect his life. Rather he embraced the passion for the sake of others as willed by the Father. Let us consider what happened within him; internally and externally as a result of his meditation and prayers.

Psychologically speaking Jesus in this meditation paid close attention and listened contemplatively to what is happening

and to what was about to happen within, about and around him. Like other masters of meditation, he was aware of his bodily sensations and feelings: advanced worries, fear of death, anxiety, and abandonment. The fact that he “*knew all that was to happen to him*” (John 18:4) increases the mental agony created by the impending danger which activated the defense mechanism, common to living organisms. In reaction to his meditative awareness, the *amygdala*, the danger-detecting system of the brain automatically springs into action. When the amygdale identifies a real or perceived threat to our survival, we (living beings) enter a state of autonomic arousal called “fight or flight” mode.⁸ Driven by the aggressive urge to defend self⁹, the autonomic nervous system pumps more adrenaline into the blood stream and excessive energy is channeled away from the digestive and cognitive areas to the large body muscles in readiness for a self-protective fight or flight. The cascade of psychological/emotional and physical/hormonal reactions is likened to riding/driving on high/passing gear, with a relative reduction in rational processing (by the shut-down of the neo-cortex). The temptation is to throw caution overboard and ride the raging rivers of emotional arousal down the precipice. Once the primordial instinct has been activated, the drive for self preservation, ego flight, and narcissistic defences can be deactivated only by deeper interiority and alignment of the true self, with something/someone above and beyond, that is, awakening to the divine.

Meditative movements

In the case of Jesus’ experience in the garden, he travelled as man to the depth of interior awareness, felt the full weight of human fears as he said “*my soul is sad even unto death*” and he sweated blood. Following the meditative movements common to most classical spiritualities, traditions and philosophies, the masters were never fixated “staying inward” but rather rose to the surface, and accomplish missions that transcend the self. In a similar way, Jesus’ meditation flows through the archetypal meditative practice: “moving inward, staying inward, and

moving outward”¹⁰ This practice of meditation involves the mobilization of faculties: thought, imagination, emotion, and desire for a personal reflection on the matter of the moment, such as the fear of death and annihilation. Unless a resolution or reconciliation is reached through divine mediation, meditation and mindfulness, the body language, the wisdom of the body will continue to experience and express an alarmed state of being; which is chaotic, uncomfortable, tumultuous, and dis-ease. The unconscious retains awareness of such emotions even when the conscious (conditioned) mind chooses to denial, repress, or over-express them. When we get down to the brass task, to the bottom and depth of our being, where “*deep is calling on deep*” (Ps. 42:7), we are left with two options: to “stay inward” and remain fixated there or to rise to the occasion “moving outward” and call for assistance. Before considering the second option, let us investigate in-depth what happens in meditation “staying inwards.”

To staying inward, we need prayerful awareness, mindfulness, and meditation; otherwise there would neither be ceasefire nor cessation of hostilities from the negative energies. The practice of meditation bring into being calmness, stillness, peace of mind, and internal balance, needed to shift our physiology to “neutral gear,” or else we will suffer exhaustion, due to *polyphasic*, multitasking activism, the kinds of busyness that Mingyur Rinpoche calls the hyperactivities of the “crazy monkey mind.”¹¹ We require a meditative stance to stay inward, to stay connected to the core of our being. As it is impossible to drive a car from high gear to reverse gear without a brief neutral rest, so it is to move from the height of emotional arousal (fight or flight mode) to submission or letting go without the neutral gear stimulated by meditation. A recent research on humans, who practiced meditation by Dr. R. Keith Wallace and Dr. Herbert Benson, proved that mental concentration increases the flow of blood to the brain and skin while at the same time decreases the flow to the muscles. This state-of-rest elicited by meditation was termed

Agora: Journal of Philosophical & Theological Studies

“relaxation response.”¹² This movement from high to low gears evolved millions of years ago. Scientists know that the fight or flight mode was developed to prepare the organism for action at the slightest hint of danger just as “the relaxation response evolved as a means of protecting the organism from burnout.”¹³

The surplus energy gained from a heightened emotional arousal to a state of low energy expenditure produces a feeling of warmth and rested mental alertness, desirable for the reverse journey back to the benign universe. Either we stay inward, close down in fear or move outward, opening up in love. As we move from red-alert to calm danger-free awareness, there is a shift in consciousness, and meditation becomes the pressure valve that let out the negative energies and also the mean to reach out for positive energies within and beyond.

Through meditation, awareness, and mindfulness, we can reach an internal balance point where the mind becomes still, as commanded in scriptures “*be still and know that I am God,*” (Ps. 46:10). In the state of stillness the physiology shifts into relaxation response, the negative conditioning circuits are derailed, and the mind is open to the formation of more productive habits.¹⁴ The physiology of relaxation response involves a drop in both the heart rate and blood pressure. Breathing rate and oxygen consumption decline due to the profound decrease in the need for energy. Doctors who study body-mind interactions also revealed that the physiology of relaxation response was diametrically opposite to that in fight or flight mode where breathing was faster and shallow, with sweaty palms, tensed muscles, dilated pupils and skin covered with goose bumps.¹⁵ That’s why, the spirit and wisdom of meditation and mindfulness demands the practice of slow, deep, rhythmic breathing, which allows the unfolding of a relaxation response, a requisite for the transformation from egocentric to hetero-centric;¹⁶ from selfish to selfless state of being.

Meditation and Emotional conversion

As already noted above, Jesus was aware of his negative

emotions, he stayed with them, reconciled and let go of them. This progression of his meditation is analogous to the spirit of meditation in Buddhist theology and philosophy. In his book *Peace Is Every Step* (1992), The Buddhist writer and meditation teacher, Thich Nhat Hahn outlined a five-step process for transforming negative emotions through the power of mindfulness, awareness, and meditation. Firstly, the one practicing meditation and mindfulness should “greet their negative emotions” of fear, anger, depression, sadness, or anxiety, rather than suppress the emotions, repress underground or deny and wish them away. Secondly, they should “shake hands” with the emotions and engage in a process of “calming down” the negative emotions, like a mother holding her crying baby, and thirdly “comforting and soothing the negative emotions.” The fourth and fifth steps involve “releasing, letting go of the emotions” with the smile of emotional equilibrium and inner balance necessary to “identify and change the conditioned,” distorted perception that created the negative emotions in the first place.¹⁷ There is a spiritual shift about one’s models of the self, of others, the universe, and of the divine as one move through negative emotions and distorted mindset to a state of peaceful and balance selfhood, adopting a non-distorting perception with a non-judgmental stance. Jesus may or may not had gone through all these (physiologic and spiritual) gear shifting but the fact remain that I am meditating, wondering and philosophizing as a student without the hindsight of divine perception enjoyed by Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, and the great masters of meditation.

Some critics may argue that Jesus was praying in the garden not practicing meditation. To this criticism, one might be justified to quote from the Roman Catholic Catechism which recognized and retained three major expression of prayer namely: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation.¹⁸ Meditation is defined over and above all as a quest, a seeking to understand the reality confronting us as well as *questioning* the how and why of religious faith, doctrines, and rituals, in view of adhering and responding to them accordingly.¹⁹ From this point of view, it is clear that

there are many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritualities and spiritual masters. The critics, who still argued whether Jesus was praying or meditating, should excuse me to combine the two, that Jesus was practicing prayer-meditation. This is the questing for divine interventions in life-threatening situations, as experienced by Jesus before, during, and after his prayerful meditation in the garden.

The “moving outward” completes the on-going cycle of the wisdom and spirit of meditation. It is coming again from the depth of the interiority of one’s life back to the surface, with the fruits of meditation. The result of the meditative dialogue between the true self and an inner teacher, (whoever that teacher maybe according to faith or philosophic traditions), is to be integrated into our mission in the world. If we think meditation apart from its outward orientation, we would often equate it with “staying inward.” The saving passion of Christ, teaches us that his meditative movement followed the classical meditative cycle of “moving inward,” “staying inward,” and “moving outward” again, after silencing the critics. The golden chain, *catena aurea* of the spirit of meditation is silencing and quieting both inner and outer critics.

How do we silence the critic? Of what use is it? I came across the answer with an appropriate correlation in the story of how the “First Principle” was written on the gate of Zen Temple in Kyoto. The masterpiece calligraphic writing was done with a mind free of distraction, only after the critical censor was silenced, following eighty-four attempts. The master Kosen had a “bold pupil” who never fails to criticize his works. Once the critic stepped outside for a few moments, Kosen thought: “Now is my chance to escape his keen eye,” and he wrote “The First Principle” of Zen²⁰ The wisdom from this story teaches us that creativity, freedom, and salvation happens when distractions: internal and external, “noises,” and voices which conditioned the mind are silenced. Meditation brings to our awareness the critics and content of the mind. It is a “microscope through which the mind can be observed and analyzed.”²¹ In conformity with most

schools of psychology, philosophy, spirituality, and religious traditions, Dr. Joan Borysenko, co-founder of the Mind/Body Clinic and teacher of meditation, understood and analyzed the human mind as four-part psychic instruments:

i. The conscious mind.

Like that of babies, it is the most basic consciousness we have through sense perception. The sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that our senses take in *just as it is*, without inner comments or value judgments about things and data. At this level, a black cat is a black cat. It is neither a sign nor a symbol of any mystery in Africa metaphysics.

ii. The unconscious mind.

Every experience is encoded and stored as impression within the nervous system. That is why we don't have to relearn to drive a car every time we get behind the wheel. However, the filing method of storing data at the unconscious level is selectively "sticky." New data "sticks" to the negative or positive compartments according to our values, schema and conditioning.²²

iii. The intellect

This is the capacity to reason, using data both from the conscious (sense perceptions) and unconscious (stored impressions) parts of the mind. The purest form of intellect is "thinking by choice" rather than being trapped in unbidden rumination over "what ifs" and "if onlys." The intellect functions properly at its zenith when it is sensing new perceptions and creating new meanings, unclouded by fear or doubt, unhindered by old schema or conditioning.

iv. The ego.

This is the collection of opinions that we have about ourselves. The identity, *persona* we have created for ourselves in order to feel safe and secure against our conditioned fears.

Personal growth requires first forming an ego, then understanding it, and finally transcending it.²³

Ego Role in Meditation

Since the ego is the judge, who is responsible for creating our unique sense of selfhood, it is important to understand its functions during meditation. The ego is also capable of linking conscious and unconscious facts with fictions. It can grab unfounded opinions, negative beliefs, and unproven perceptions which cut us off from an accurate view of life. But before much ado, let us first understand ego development, underdevelopment and malfunctioning. According to psychosocial and developmental theorists, the ego develops during childhood. At first the baby thinks that it is one with the mother, before beginning to develop the sense of a separate self. The developing ego often encounters a host of mixed messages that imprints positive and negative impressions on the mind. From childhood, “we are conditioned to equate security and pleasure with being good, and fear and danger with being bad.”²⁴ As a result the inner voice of critics or the “crazy monkey mind” is born in us. This socialization process begins the “shadow making process”. I am indebted to Robert A. Johnson, in his analysis of Jungian concepts for this insight.

Thus we “divide the self into ego and shadow because our culture insists that we behave in a particular manner.”²⁵ The shadow becomes the part of us, of our behavior or societal characteristics that are rejected, refused, and unaccepted or unacceptable. Our future behaviours and the thoughts that justify or condemn them are a complicated combination of responses to positive and negative corroboration of the shadow and inner critic. This is the origin of our inner dialogue about the good, bad and indifference. Following the counsel of Eastern theology, philosophy and psychology, the practice of meditation is to unmask the ego, to dismantle and break down its outdated walls as known as defense mechanisms or early maladaptive schema (EMS). A brief explanation of both concepts will be necessary here because of their influence on the ego and on the spirit of

meditation. They have the capacity to condition our enduring beliefs about self, others, the universe, and even the divine. Besides, unmasking the ego, it is the stated goal of Buddhist meditation “to help the person discover that face they had prior to birth.”²⁶ What I will like to call our pre-Adam self, before the fall of Adam. We all were created whole like babies born whole and innocent but socialization, civilizations, and cultures takes away our simplicity and replace it with complicity and sophistication. Therefore the wisdom of the spirit of meditation requires the willingness to power-down one’s defenses, distractions and cultural legacies while embarking on meditation. Since we cannot go to God with borrowed image, false self or masked personality, it is necessary to identify our schemas and defenses.

The concept of defense mechanisms (a Freudian term) is one of the most valuable contributions of psychoanalysts to the understanding of the human being. These mechanisms are “habitual, unconscious and at times even pathological mental process which the ego uses to face conflicts with external reality or/and internal affective reality.”²⁷ Self-defense is the oldest law in nature, it indicates self-protection against anything/person that threatens one’s life, vocation, values, or beliefs. On the other hand, a non-defensive person looks at the conflict and faces the problem *come what may*, as embodied by Jesus after his meditation and prayers in the garden.

The development of our early maladaptive schemas (EMS) begins earlier in life prior to the development of language. The body, like the psyche protects itself from negative stimulations; because primal wounds have domino effects and consequence across lifetime. In Erik Erikson illustration, we see how childhood wounding of the core self has a maladaptive ripple effect on the whole of one’s life span. He argued that the failure of a significant other to provide the child with a secure bond, dependable loving, and safety brings in its wake a damage to the core self. Resulting from our primal wounding, “trust gives way to mistrust, healthy autonomy to shame/doubt, initiative to guilt, industry to inferiority, identity to identity confusion, intimacy to

Agora: Journal of Philosophical & Theological Studies
isolation, generativity to stagnation, and integrity to despair.”²⁹

Both analyses are necessary if we are to come into the presence of divinity just the way we are, without masks or conditioning. The philosophic wisdom of the spirit of meditation is to help us to become aware of our here and now and of who we truly are and of our projected-ideal self. Without the awareness of our present bodily sensation, our mindsets, and spirit orientation, we will be operating from false selfhood. Through the spirit of meditation, we develop the ability to go back to our true self, the real self, the ideal self before ego defenses and social conditioning, before we eat the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. We acquire a baby’s mind where consciousness equates sense perception without prejudices, biases, comments or judgments. Only the child-like perception is uncontaminated, as discussed above, the other three parts of the mind are built up through experience, socialization, and conditioning.

Profile for Philosophy and Meditation

Although Jesus did not give us practical advice on the “how to meditate,” He did profiled the spiritual, psychological and philosophical dispositions for the practice of meditation that is still valid today as it was two thousand years ago when he uttered “*unless, you become like little children, you cannot see the Holy of holies*” and when he thanked the heavenly Father for “*revealing to babies what was hidden from the wise and learned*” (Matt.11:25). The question is how do we become like infants and babies? How do we go back to that pristine and immaculate period when we “witness” white as white and black as black, without misrepresenting, representing or symbolizing them for something else? Most teachers of meditation believe that it is through the practice of meditation that we can return to that innocent state of mind. Although meditation is the microscope through which we observe and analyze the mind, it also enables us to become aware of the workings and contents of the mind. To become like little children, we need to transcend the societal conditioning and limitation of the critic-ego. We need to develop

the ability to become aware of the nonjudgmental stance of the mind, that of the Witness, and of the philosopher.³⁰ We need to become philosophers. The philosopher's stance is not that of a mere witness but of a "disinterested spectator"³¹

The coinage of the term "Philosophy" is credited to the ancient Greek sage, Pythagoras of Samos. The philosopher, he said is the "lover of wisdom," derived from philosophy, the love of wisdom: *Philia* (love, friendship) + *Sophia* (wisdom).

Pythagoras classified people into three groups following the analogy of the Greek Olympic Games: (i) lovers of gain, (ii) lovers of honor, and (iii) lovers of wisdom, respectively. In Pythagorean analysis, "the lovers of gain" are the merchants, the club owners, the money-lenders and the *Baba Ijebu's* gamblers who facilitate gambling, buy and sell goods. The second types of people at the Olympic Games are the "lovers of honour," the athletes participating in the games, whose honour, victory, defeat, or failure heavily depended on the outcomes of the games. Their vested interest is likened to that of the merchants and money-sharks. The third category of people are the "lovers of wisdom," the philosophers, spectators, observers, the witness, the fans-one might call them, "the meditators". Although, spectators are all those who watches the games but not all spectators are meditators or philosophers. Some fans have vested interest like the athletes and merchants. Interest as inordinate attachment is capable of affecting our judgments, observations and emotions. The fans (*fan-atics*) are less likely to become philosophers because they are "interested spectators," who gambled their money or pride supporting preferred athletes whose victory or loses are directly or indirectly propositional to their association.

The philosophers on the other hand are "disinterested Spectators" who sit back and higher up the stadium as unbiased observers. The non-judgmental stance enables the philosopher to see the games, athletes, fans, merchants and other related phenomena from a vintage point. This type of impartial witnessing is the proper analogue of "the meditator." The ideal philosopher observes, meditates, contemplates and theorizes particular reality

in relation to the essence of the whole. Figuratively, the true philosopher sees the games within and beyond the stadium in view of the wider world. In the example of Jesus sited above, we see how he spiritualizes and philosophizes both horizontally and vertically as he situated his impending suffering and death in the context of the salvation of others, (despite himself), and the divine purpose.

This attitude of the philosopher, the unbiased observer and the impartial Witness enables one to be open to new discoveries, unlimited possibilities, and miracles during meditation. It is likened to coming empty minded before the Almighty for re-filling. It is the Socratic way of saying “*I don’t know*” in the presence of the all knowing Mystery. This sense of being a philosopher, a meditator, and a Witness is possible for everyone because it existed prior to experience and therefore not conditioned by any individual or collective shadows, unique experiences, faith, or philosophical tradition. At the heart of most spiritual traditions is “the recognition that there is an essential similarity in every human being; that the core of each of us consists of the same consciousness.”³² This inner core, the philosopher or inner Self is capable of participating in divine consciousness through meditation. The neutrality of the Self, of the disinterested philosophical spectator frees one from unnecessary encumbrance and liberates one for “moving outward” toward something greater than the self. This awareness of the philosopher, the inner core of Self is the essence of the spirit of meditation. It is when we identify this inner core, befriend it, and also recognize it in others that our meditation becomes therapeutic within and life giving in its outward movement (beyond the stadium) to embrace other beings unconditionally including human beings, other creations and the Creator.

Conclusion

The final meditative movement of Jesus led him from the garden to the cross putting up with pains, suffering, tribulations,

and humiliations with such equanimity and calmness that came from his philosopher's stance at the meditation in the garden of Gethsemane. As we contemplated the poise and emotional balance with which Jesus left the meditative space to meet his critics and persecutors, we would come to the realization that the awareness and control over his inner critics precede that of the external critics, persecutors, and distracters. Once the ego, the inner critic, or the crazy monkey mind is recognized, befriended, and assigned its proper place and function, the mind, the body, and spirit are liberated to embark on superior mission without impediments. Thus Jesus embraced his vocation with courage. In the words of Ambrose Redmoon, "courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." Human salvation was more important to Jesus than the fear of suffering and death.

Dr. J. Borysenko puts it beautifully well, "when we identify with that inner core, respecting and honouring them in others as well as ourselves, we experience healing in every area of life," wholeness, holiness, and, by extension, world peace. I have a felt sense that this is the philosophic spirit of meditation, the wisdom and rationale for meditation. The quest for peace is common to all faith traditions, psychologies, and philosophies, to gain inner peace, external peace, world peace, and eternal peace. For this reason Pope Francis says "we are united by our common humanity and a shared mission to care for society and creation."³³ The Pope, with most advocates of peace: Dalai Lama, Rabbi David Rosen, Imam Jamal Rahman, Ed. Bastian, *et al* recognized and emphasized the importance of the core self, the philosophical stance, our common humanity, and human fraternity as the fundamental basis for advancing peace within and for peace in the world. The Holy Father, Pope Francis synthesizes this unanimous sentiment when he affirmed that "all other differences must be subordinated to our common humanity."³⁴ It is our birthright to discover the inner peace, and through mindfulness, meditative living and to be aware of that peace in others, in creation, and in the Creator.

Endnotes

¹Meditation is one of the ten Techniques to achieve healing, outlined in Richard P. Johnson, *Body, Mind, Spirit: Tapping the Healing Power within You*, Mumbai: St. Paul Press, 2008, p. 163.

²Genjo Marinello Roshi, & Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares, (co-host) “*Sun-Buddha ; Moon- Buddha: A Zen Response to the Pandemic*,” on YouTube, April 3, 2020, accessed on June 12, 2020, <https://www/sdicompanions.online>

³By the term “Spiritual Exercises is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, vocal and mental prayer,” in George E. Ganss, ed. *Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, New York: Paulist Press, 1991. #1

⁴Luke 4, John 18-19, in The New Jerusalem Bible

⁵You can term it connecting with God, Yahweh, Allah, Self, Being, source of being or Nature depending on your faith/wisdom/meditative tradition.

⁶“Searching for the Beloved” in Janet K. Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*, New York: Paulist Press, 2000, p.97

⁷Michael Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2013, p.650

⁸Michael C. Luebbert, *Jesus the Heart Whisperer: Forgiveness, Resurrection, and the Birth of the Beatitudinal Self*, Omaha: Heartland Psychologists, LLC Publication, 2017, p. 173

⁹This self with a small s represents the ego, the judge who safeguards our personal identity and historical values with all the limitations of our attitudes and fears. See endnote xxv.

¹⁰Francis Dorff, O. Praem, “Meditative Writing” in Wicks, Robert J. ed. *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p.157.

¹¹Mingyur Rinpoche, “Calming the Mind: The Practice of Awareness Meditation,” on YouTube, Dec. 9, 2013, accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dG5yww8OGqo&list>

¹²Relaxation response is an innate, hypothalamic mechanism whereby the brain waves shift from an alert beta-rhythm to a relaxed alpha-rhythm. Cf. “The Science of Healing” in Joan Borysenko, *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*, New York:

Agora: Journal of Philosophical & Theological Studies
Bantam Books, 1987, p. 13.

¹³Ibid., p.14.

¹⁴Ibid., p.26.

¹⁵Ibid., p.14.

¹⁶Heterocentric (other-centered) state of being is where love for the other dominates and subordinates fear for oneself. See. William A. Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2004, p. 52.

¹⁷Thich Nhat Hahn, *Peace Is Every Step* (1992), quoted in Michael C. Luebbert, *Jesus the Heart Whisperer*: Ibid., p. 185

¹⁸The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, §§.2699-2707

¹⁹The Catholic definition of meditation is similar to the ancient concept of philosophy. "Philosophy in ancient times was a life and death matter; it was the soul's search for salvation," hence the oriental student of philosophy is seeking answers to the turbulent world in which he lives. See, "The Task of Philosophy" in Harold H. Titus & Marilyn S. Smith, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 6th. ed. New York: D. Van Nostrand Press, 1974, p. 4

²⁰F. D., O. Praem, "*Meditative Writing*." Ibid., p.153.

²¹"Mindfulness and the Discovery of the Self," in J. Borysenko, *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*. Ibid., p.98.

²¹The limit and scope of this paper do not allow an exhaustive analysis of these concepts; however, they will be briefly treated later on.

²³I quoted elaborately from Dr. Joan Borysenko's classification and analysis of the four parts of the human mind, because understanding the mind as a tool can free us from mind-jailers, mind-traps, and inner critics. Moreover, the spirit and wisdom of meditation cannot be achieved from an erroneous mindset.

²⁴Ibid., p. 100

²⁵"How the Shadow Originates" in Robert A. Johnson, *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of The Psyche*, New York: HarperCollins Press, 1991, p. 4

²⁶Michael C. Luebbert, *Jesus the Heart Whisperer*: Ibid., p.179

²⁷"Defence Mechanisms" in Cencini, A. & Manenti, A., *Psychology and Formation: Structures and Dynamics*, India: Pauline Press, 1986, p.347

²⁸The core self is our common humanity. It is the essential core of self whose nature is peace, whose expression is thought, and whose action is unconditional love. In similar words to that of Pope Francis, Dr. J. Borysenko advised “when we identify with that inner core, respecting and honouring them in others as well as ourselves, we experience healing in every area of life” and, by extension, peace in every corner of our globe. J. Borysenko. *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁹Eric Erikson, in Michael C. Luebbert, *Jesus the Heart Whisperer*: *Ibid.*, p.150

³⁰“The Witness,” as used by J. Borysenko, (*Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*. *Ibid.*, p.102.) is that part of our mind that watches and that is aware of thinking without judging. “Another name for the Witness is the Self, or the unconditioned mind.”The Self with a big S represents the part of the mind with unlimited potential, the part that existed before experiences, conditioning and formation of Schemas.

³¹The differentiation between “*Interested and Disinterested Spectators*” appeared in *A Journal of Philosophical Research and Cultural Criticism*, Sept 22, 2017, <https://flitcraft.medium.com/the-ancient-greek-sage-pythagoras-of-samos-credited-with-coining-the-term-philosophy-an-idiom-c70f27ee14bc>, accessed Feb. 22, 2021.

³²J. Borysenko, *Minding the Body*. *Ibid.*, p. 103

³³He said this when he delivered his speech on the occasion of receiving credentials from his Excellency Mr. Muyeba Chikonde accrediting him as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Zambia to the Holy See on Thursday, 19 may 2016, accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.zambiahc.org.uk/news_events/.

³⁴<https://zenit.org/articles/interview-rabbi-david-rosen-pope-francis-affirmed-all-differences-are-subordinate-to-our-common-humanity.>, accessed 18th June 2020.