

Said Don Juan to Carlos Castaneda, "Walk till you find the center of your power." My father-in-law did waterwitching all over the county and beyond. These are two instances of meditation as attention both on ["reflection"] and toward ["intention"], the twin dimensions of PHRON-PHREN-PHRN, the chief Gk. root for "meditation"--which reveals that what Don Juan did with cosmic vibes and Grandpa did with chthonic vibes, Willis does with audiovibes, the basal phonemes [called "roots"] of human speech....This thinksheet is a meditation on meditation-phonemes in their simplest forms, i.e. "roots" of English-Sanskrit-Greek-Latin [in general, I-E ("Indo-European")] speech: Etymology is a slippery business, more intuitive than scientific; but I am here as scientific as my philological powers permit. It's a balancing act between impoverishing skepticism and runaway fantasy; it's an attempt at learned [left-brain] imagination [right-brain] and is thus illustrative of a third dimension in meditation, viz. using the verba/nonverbal range of perception. [\*Final attention: Hebrew roots/words.]

1. POWER OF MIND, Adam Smith's meditation-report since he abandoned Wall St. and his books on money to find his way as "an astronaut of inner space," was the Oct/75 Book-of-the-Month selection: meditation is "in" big in population-sectors where calculation is at least emotionally "out": energy, at least in fantasy, is moving from the left [building] brain to the right [appreciating] brain, for good and ill, and the season of the guru has returned....My point: Wistful opening up to "meditation" is fundamentally a search for fresh, saving power in a world where the old "principalities" and powers" so threaten to undo us that almost no one is safe from paranoia. As in Gilbert Murray's Hellenistic "loss of nerve" Zeitgeist, our atmosphere pendulously moves us to cop-in, and we can pray that it will be in-toward-out [a recovery of the inner world without abandoning, Hindu-like, the world beyond our skin]. William Irwin Thompson's Lindisfarne [THE EDGE OF HISTORY, but especially PASSAGES ABOUT EARTH] promises to avoid two dichotomies, East/West (though he gnostically leans East) and inner/outer: "contained in our private discovery of 'how to be' is a new and marvelously unpredictable, cultural discovery of 'what to do'" [p.191, PASSAGES..., Harper/74].

2. What's TM, "the Science of Creative Intelligence," putting at the center of its pitch? Energy, more and new power for a pooped age. And the Christian gospel? "The power of a new-eternal life." Inevitable competition, Hindu-Christian Kulturkampf. Should be good for both East and West. The West has so neglected meditation that the general populace thinks it an Eastern monopoly: Adam Smith goes East, in geography and mentality, to prepare to write POWER OF MIND [+ some Western scientific, but no Western religious, explorations]. In spite of the history of the Eng. wd. "meditate," he tries to capture "meditation" to describe right-brain activity [leaving what wd. for the left brain? "reflection"?]. Adding the adjective "transcendental" to the n., as SCI does, is better; but then to claim the wd. "science" for the result--in the face of the wd. "transcendental"--is fraud.

3. The chief languages that concern us here are English and Greek, though I'll be alluding to others, esp. Sanskrit: linguistically, the East[i.e., Indian subcontinent]/West[i.e., Euramerica] does not exist. Beyond the thousand I-E languages which include all the above are languages of other mentalities, of which the most influential is the Sinic, beyond which within this category of other mentalities the shaman continues to rule consciousness where not also community, and linguistic explorations such as Levy-Bruehl's structuralism are in an early stage, not able to contribute much to global meditation about meditation. As for the Sinic, it includes my reference to Don Juan: the proto-Chinese ["Indians"!], it seems, were the first to reach the Western hemisphere.

English words for "meditate"

1. Webster's DICTIONARY OF SYNONYMS yields this under "meditate": "\*Ponder, muse, ruminate. ANALOGS: Contemplate, \*consider, study, weigh, revolve; reflect, reason, speculate, deliberate, \*think, cogitate; examine, inspect, \*scrutinize." [The \* indicates cross-reference to major articles.] Going to OED we find that the root is MED, to measure, mete, meter--a strictly left-brain activity when it get beyond 2x2!

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Meditate on the East's sneaky cooptation of the Eng. wd. 'meditate' for the opposite of its generic meaning! OED puts its first appearance at 1560 for "serious and sustained reflection or mental contemplation" [the "sustained" coming from what's added to the root to make the stem, viz., the Lat. frequentative "-itare"+]. The Skr. root MA ["measure"] is the simplest form, which in I-E gets developed as MN ["mind," and "mantra" (as putting you 'mind' on a sound) and "mandala" (as putting your 'mind' on a sight); so, re'mem'ber, 'men'tion, re'main, per'man'ent, 'mnemonic," 'memory," a'm-n'esia, 'man'ia]; and even MAR in 'mar'tyr and MER in 'mer'it ["measuring" worth]; and there's MON in 'mon'ument; and MAD (yes, 'mad," as repetitive raving) from MAN; and a whole new cluster with MATH (yes, 'math," measuring!) and MANTH [learning, as in necro'mancy"]; and even MIM in 'mim'ic ["measuring" to reduplicate]. Even more basic than the word-root MA with its derivative root-stems and stems is the sound 'M,' in Vedanta Hinduism the holiest sound--yes, 'OM"! Why? It gives your head more vibes than any other sound you can make inside your head, so it's the best sound for self-hypnosis, preparation for ego-suggestion [autosuggestion], and cps-reduction ["cycles per second" of brain waves] by en-trancement. Furthermore, it's deeper in the throat than "N" and so is more primitive, the sounds farther away from the teeth speaking of and to the depths, the super-important, gut-and-heaven realities: "mother" in 1,000 languages is "deeper" than "father."...Now, because one goes deeper into the Ground of Being with 'M," "meditate" comes to mean "to exercise the mind in (especially devotional) thought or contemplation" (OED). If MD means measuring for the center (so 'middle," 'midst," 'mediate"), then 'meditation' is centering--which is certainly what happens in the psychology of attention (and its pathology, viz. inability to center, to focus, to elide the extraneous). ['Med'icine is 'measuring' medicinals.] [And if 'med'dling is getting into a center where you're not wanted, then the stem MI-SC → MIX swims in whole new clusters to 'measure." ]...The LIFE-SITUATIONS behind all these roots+? ITERATION, REPETITION [...]: sea waves, butter-churning, fire-kindling by rubbing dry sticks together, drunkenness and insanity (both, because of mumbling repetition), kneading bread, wiping, a surging crowd [tumult], twirling (so, whirling dervishes!), shaking, turning around, wiping. Minor motifs are FLOW [ ]: wind, bay of water; and MOTIONLESSNESS [.]: desert, grave. How is meditation like these life-images? Meditate on each till the connection becomes clear in your upper coil and luminous in your lower coil.

So much for Eng. 'meditate." Now for its two most important synonyms, for our purpose, from the Web.Syn. list. (1) "Ponder" comes from 'weigh' and aims at comprehensivity--a problem looked at from all angles, a person or thing thought about in all relations. 'MEDITATE adds to ponder an implication of a definite directing or focusing of one's thought" toward understanding rather than toward problem-solving. Then Web.Syn. qts. 1Ti.4.13 KJV: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them"; but I have not included this vs. under our Greek words for 'meditate," for the KJV use here is archaic: the meaning is "Take care of these matters"--get busy, just about the opposite of our 'meditation"! (2) 'Muse" is "less intellectual," often implying "absorption as in a dream, a fancy, a remembrance, or the like." Aha! So here's our closest Eng. wd. for what, currently, folks under the Indus-Ganges influence mean by 'meditation," viz. an instrumental focusing toward unfocused awareness--whereas Eng. 'meditate" means the opposite, viz. an intentional focusing toward understanding. Now look at the full Web.Syn. list [above] and ask yourself, Which of the other wds. aim at what's left out in "meditate," "ponder," and "muse," vig. problem-solving? They will be definitely left-brain, non-meditational words. What, then, gives TM and other Indus-Ganges packagings their power is that they offer a way of consciousness that "transcends" our everyday problem-processing Western mentality. This, of course, is true of Western meditational, contemplative, prayer praxes; but people in our time have fallen out of the praxes and therefore out of awareness of their past and present existence. [I became acutely aware of this during my seven years of editing the devotional periodicals for the United Church of Christ.]

Greek words for "meditate"

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\* Same root as "ponder" [= "weigh"; therefore, from balancing weights, we get "poise" -- the philosopher's equanimity, fairness, "on the other hand"] .

1. As I was musing about those three Eng. wds. for meditation, it suddenly occurred to me that (1) if you draw a picture of the back of the human head, you could distribute L-to-R as follows: "ponder" is L-brain approaching center, "meditate" is just to the right of it, slightly into the R-brain, and "muse" is R-brain; (2) this is a Lat.-to-Gk. movement, for "ponder" is Latin, "meditate" is Latin with a root common with Greek, and our commonest association with "muse," though in another direction one may derive it from Lat., is Greek, viz. the Muses: it's common in Eng. for a series of synonyms to move thus from the L-brain-Lat. to the R-brain-Gk., as it's also common for this movement to be upward in the senses of abstraction and quality--or, if you please, downward in the sense of depth [e.g. "talk"-"conversation"-"dialog," which superimposes another pattern, viz. that the first member of such a series is often lowly A-S (Anglo-Saxon)]; (3) whereas the Greeks in their mythology had Apollo [life-light, understanding] and Prometheus [death-life because hubridic] as the +/- of the L-brain, their counterparts in the R-brain are the Muses [the creative arts] and Dionysos [the life-intending but hog-wild and therefore destructive-chaotic tendencies of the lower coil in manic-obsessive league with the R-brain]; (4) a "museum" [lit. in Gk., Muses-temple] is far more R-brain appreciative than L-brain analytic, a place where one "muses" without pragmatic focus, a place off-limits to work. I say all the above "suddenly" occurred to me in the Muses' sense of creative inspiration-revelation, for I have merely written down in this paragraph what, as a whole piece or given construct, woke me up this morning fifteen minutes ago, the paragraph having been written with my eyes as slits. By a universal human process, during the night by midbrain [Delgado's "through-puts"] was directing L/R-brain traffic on "muse," which was the wd. I fell asleep last night musing about--not analytically, but out of focus--an important consideration, for the morning product is analytical, proving that during last night my L-brain was doing its assignment without "consciousness"--a fact which embarrasses our Western tendency to coopt "consciousness" for L-brain work and demote the nonrational, the R-brain, into Freud's "subconscious" [which is one reason his pupil Jung substituted "unconscious," viz. to escape this crippling, Tiger-cage captivity]. The next paragraph continues on "muse" immediately after this paragraph, and contains "ponderings." [Root MU=silent-open mouth; therefore, 'mystery'!]

2. Milton, in his time known more as political analyst than as poet, speaks of "meditating the Muse," which is the best phrase I know of for the mid-consciousness on the boundary between sleep and awakesness, that land where my "mind" churns ever morning, the terrain meditational methods can occupy at will--by a mantra (e.g., TM), by repeating your own name aloud [preferably in a forest!] (Larry LeShan), by prayerful-contemplative diary-writing [e.g., Dorothy Day's continuous offerings in THE CATHOLIC WORKER--in the July-Augst/75 issue, about bathing her greatgranddaughter of resin + dirt from climbing a pine tree, and about three saints who responded variously to insects [as at Tivoli Dorothy sleeps on an unscreened porch and so must go to bed when it gets dark], and about the interface of Hudson-River beauty and slums-and-suffering ugliness, and about the Jesus Prayer, that Christian mantra that's an antidote in the very field where the poisonous weed is found. ["For me the Jesus prayer, used by the Russian pilgrim, is that remedy growing in the field...in the supernatural order and in the natural order....Joy lifts the heart out of fears and forebodings."], and about "why we pay local taxes and not the federal income tax" so much of which goes for war--and concludes she doesn't have time to meditate(!): 'One must have a quiet life, and have time to read slowly and thoughtfully, to do a [good book-] review. We do not have a quiet life here.'] So do two interfaces in Milton: His L-brain AREOPAGITICA [i.e., political analyses] with his R-brain PARADISE LOST and REGAINED, and his L-brain "L'Allegro" with his R-brain "Penseroso" [which yields us another Eng. wd. for meditation, viz. 'pensiveness'\*]. Thus Milton, and one as great, viz. Dorothy Day.

3. Now that I am fuller awake and less musing [a-musing, too?], here're the data on Greek words for meditation. I'll take care of the less important roots/stems/wds. first: (1) BUSSODOMEUO [not NT]="build in the deep," hency "brood" over something in the depths of one's soul, "ponder deeply" [BUSSOS=depth of the sea] (in Homer, always bad, because intense attention to the inner life without a trust beyond it produces

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\* I do not include MELETAO [KJC ITi.4.15: 'Meditate upon these things.'], for its meaning is 'Take care of,' not our 'meditate.'

anxiety ans [Sksp.] thus "sicklies o'ver native resolution (to act) with the pale cast of thought")....(2) PROSLEGOMAI [nt,NT]='answer," "reply," "say in addition, to oneself."... (3) CAKCHAINO [not NT]='make purple," so 'make dark and troublous' like a stormy sea, 'ponder deeply," "long," "desire,".... (4) EPIDOIAZO [not NT]='entertain doubts over," "turn over and over" in the mind.".... (5) Two, neither NT, on the stem SUNNO- ['meditate," "reflect upon," "make plans," "comprehend," "understand']: (a) -OS='worried," "nervous," "deep [wrapped] in thought," "thoughtful," "gloomy," "circumspect"; (b) -OIA='meditation," "anxiety," "remorse."... All\*other Greek words on meditation are on the root PHRN: (a) PHRONEO='be minded' either about [=reflection] or to [=purpose] (the two thrusts combining in wise action) "think," "set one's mind [be intent] on," "observe" [double meaning in ritual], "have an attitude toward," "be minded or disposed to" [freq. in NT, e.g. Phil.2.5]; (b) PHRONTIZO='be concerned about"; (c) PHRONTIS='care," "reflection" [in bad sense, 1Cl.7.2]; (d) PHRONTISTES='guardian," "protector," "curator," "procurator" [Pilate!], 'manager," "housekeeper [i.e., steward], "bailiff," but NT does not use 'meditator," "deep thinker" [sometimes derisive, e.g. for Socrates] on supernatural things, therefore [Xenophon et al] 'philosopher; (e)\*PHRONEMA='way of thinking," 'mind-set," "aspiration," "striving"; (f) PHRONIS='prudence," "wisdom"; (g) PHRONTIS=[in add. to "(c)," above] "thought," "attention" [as called], "speculation" [of Socrates et al], "heart's desire," "hypochondria," "power of mind," "authority," "office," "land-portion"; (H) PHRONESIS='way of thinking," "frame of mind," "understanding," "insight," "intelligence"; (h) PHRONIMOS='wisely," "shrewdly."....\*As mind=thought and as spirit=purpose, -MA meaning the result or product of.

But behind the English and Greek is I-E, whose closest well-understood lg. is Sanskrit; and behind early Christian thinking is primarily Hebrew....so here're the meditation roots in the two languages--including, in the case of Hebrew, the words:

Sanskrit roots for "meditate" (in order of Skr. alphabet)

While the following are all the roots, better study them in the context of "ROOTS: The Basic Life-Experiences as Sounded in Sanskrit" [thinksheet #677]. I derived the present list from my readings in Hindu meditation, checked against a comprehensive listing of Skr. roots....AN='breathe'; IS='seek'; UH='consider'; KAM='love'; CI(N)T='think'; DA='give'; DIV='play'; DHI='think'; DHYA='meditate'; NAND='rejoice'; PRACH='ask'; BUDH='wake," "know"; BRH='make great'; BHU='be," "become"; MAD='delight'; MAN='think'; MAH='be great," "be liberal" [in my opinion, all three are root-stems from the root MA, 'measure']; MUC='liberate' [cp. 'moksa," liberation]; YAT='strive'; YU='unite'; YUJ='join' [so 'yoga'/'yoke']; RAM='delight'; RAH='quit' or 'desert'; RUH='ascend' or 'grow'; LAKS='mark'; VID='see'; SAD and AS='sit'; SEV='attend upon'; STU='praise'; SMR='remember.' Then of course there's the "holy syllable" OM and the same mantra-use of certain other roots and root-stems [on which see #677]. Finally, to the group of "S" roots should be added these: SADH='accomplish' [as in Tagore's SADHANA, how to become a saint]; SAH='endure'; SUDH='purify'; SUBH='beautify'; SIDH='fulfil.'

Hebrew words for "meditate"

"Day-and-night" meditation is enjoined in OT by the use of both meditation-roots in Hebrew, HAG and SCH...So vb. HAGAH: in KJV trd. 6 times 'meditate," twice "study," twice "imagine," and 4 times each "speak" and "mourn"; the vb. means originally both "speak" and "mutter"; as transitive, the object being Torah, it's used in Joshua 1.8 and Pss.63.6 and 1.2--and for meditating on God's works, Pss.77.12 and [pl.] 143.5. N. HAGUTH ['meditation'], also HIGGAYON [Ps.19.14: "Let the meditation of my heart"]. ...So vb. SUACH: in KJV trd., for its only OT occurrence, 'meditate"; the vb. means originally "bow down," "muse"; Isaac in the field, Gen.24.63. And on the same root, the vb. SIACH, KJV-trd. "commune," "complain," "meditate," "pray," "speak," "talk [with]," "declare," "muse"; as n. SICHAH ['a bowing down," "musing"], see spectacular use in Ps.119 [vs.97 (Torah is 'my meditation all the day"); vv.15,23,48,78)].... And one more n. on HAG, viz. HAGIG='earnest meditation," Ps.5.1 ('Give ear, O Lord; consider my meditation.').