

# 這裡什麼都沒有！

## —初學者的參禪體驗

### Here Goes Nothing(ness)! —A Beginner's Reflection on Meditation

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When I received an email a couple of weeks ago announcing an upcoming one-day meditation retreat with Dharma Master Heng Chih, I felt a strange rush of excitement – a question formed in my mind and almost immediately, an answer followed. Should I do this? I am going to do this. I was a little surprised at myself; six months ago, I probably would have deleted the email without a second thought.

I have only recently started meditating and certainly never for a full day. For a long time, I was sure I was incapable of it. Although I've been interested in Buddhist thinking for a long time, read a lot of books, and even felt that I could apply many of the concepts and values to my own life, I was happy to take a pass on the whole meditation thing. Sitting still and trying not to think sounded excruciatingly boring... and for what? I wasn't sold on the idea that I would understand anything better if I meditated. I have other habits that could be considered meditative – writing in a journal, taking long walks – that seemed like all I needed to stay relatively grounded. I had a lot of respect for people who could meditate, but I figured that they were just constitutionally different from me, somehow. I had no idea what they were doing when they were sitting there. I was intimidated.

Then last fall, a friend of mine brought me to a meditation class in San Francisco. It was a friendly, welcoming environment, full of beginners. I realized that for most people, meditation probably did not involve being immediately whisked away into a transcendental state too sublime for words; rather, it was a constant process of watching the mind, struggling against the tide of thoughts, and struggling not to struggle, punctuated by moments of stillness.

I kept going to the class. I began meditating at home once in a while, and then, as part of a New Year's resolution, I attempted to meditate every morning before work. I was beginning to appreciate it in a different way. I was beginning to want more of it. So, when I got the announcement from DRBU, though I hesitated for days before actually registering, part of me knew right away that I would go.

Still, I was nervous. I was worried about pain in my body and boredom

幾個星期前收到一封電子郵件，通知即將有一個由恆持法師主持的一天禪坐班，此時心中湧動一股莫名的興奮。我的腦海裡閃過一個問題，但幾乎是立即就有了答案——我應該參加嗎？我要參加！我對自己有點驚訝，因為半年前我可能會不加思索地就刪了這個電子郵件。

我最近才開始打坐，而且從來沒有坐過一整天；很長的一段時間裡，我相信我是沒有這個能力的。雖然我對佛法感興趣很長一段時間，讀了很多書，甚至覺得可以在生活裡運用佛法的很多概念和價值觀，但我依然很不願意打坐。靜靜地坐在那裡，努力地什麼也不想，這聽起來是難忍的枯燥……究竟為了什麼呢？我不大相信那種說法，說如果打坐，我就能對事情更明白。我有其他類似打坐靜慮的習慣，例如寫日記、散步，這些是能讓我保持心平氣和的方式。我非常尊重能夠打坐的人，但我認為我們大概本質上是不同的。我不知道當他們坐在那裡的時候，他們是在做什麼？我其實是有點被他們嚇倒。

去年秋天，朋友帶我去參加一個在舊金山的打坐班。這是一個親切友善的環境，有很多初學者。我瞭解到對大多數人來說，打坐可能無法立即進入一個妙不可言的境界，但卻是一個持續不斷內觀的過程——抵抗思緒的浪潮，甚至要放下這個抵抗，過程間或出現寂靜的片刻。

我持續參加這個打坐班，在家也時不時地打打坐；甚至新年的新希望之一，是要在每天上班前要先打個坐。我開始以另一種方式欣賞打坐，開始想要瞭解更多一點。所以當收到了法界佛教大學的活動通知，雖然在報名前猶豫了幾天，但心裡面當時就知道：我會去的！

in my mind. I felt that I had to prepare. In the week leading up to the retreat, I tried to get more exercise. I rode my bike more. I did sit-ups. I meditated in my apartment for 45 minutes-- my longest sit ever. Sometimes, I tried to sit in the half lotus while just reading a book or talking on the phone.

The day before the retreat, I made an extra effort to be conscious of my mental states throughout the day and to catch any disturbances or stresses that might have arose while sitting. I rode my bike all over town, trying to tire myself out so I could go to bed early and wake up at an unholy hour the next day. I also memorized two short poems by Wallace Stevens. I was afraid I would find it impossible to focus on my breath and be plagued by a stream of mundane thoughts. In case of a boredom emergency, I planned to recite the poems to myself, which are very beautiful, very deep and also, I think, very Buddhist\*. At least I would be focusing on *something*.

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The retreat is now over and I am so glad I went. I did not feel bored at all, though I did think of the poems a few times, walking and sitting, throughout the day.

It was a great privilege to learn from Bhikshuni Heng Chih. After the first sit, she gave some instructions on meditation, focusing on the physicality of it and the connection between the body and mind. In reflecting on the experience, I can see that the mind-body connection is a good frame for articulating something that I began to understand while sitting all day.

One of the great paradoxes of Buddhism is that for all the teachings, the thousand-page sutras, the questioning and answering and listing and breaking down, the most essential elements cannot be communicated through language at all, but only experienced directly. The Buddha says this again and again, and Dharma Master Heng Chih also made this point in many different ways. As I sat there on Sunday, I began to understand that through the bodily sitting itself, we create conditions in which our mind can directly experience what cannot be articulated.

Take impermanence for example – it is a huge concept that is easily put into words, but rarely experienced fully. However, I was able to observe and experience a minor impermanence directly throughout the day. Thoughts came and went, returned, and left again. As Dharma Master Heng Chih put it, because I was trying to be like a cat at a mouse hole waiting to pounce on any thought that emerged, I was catching them earlier than usual and they were even more impermanent than usual. The same was true of my moods. I began the day feeling energized and excited. After lunch, I was calm and a little sleepy. At some point in the afternoon, I felt inexplicably lonely

但參加前，我還是很緊張。我擔心身體上的痛和心裡面的無聊，我覺得我必須有所準備。這次禪修班開始前的一個禮拜，我嚐試增加體能訓練——更常騎自行車，練習仰臥起坐。我在住的公寓裡打坐四十五分鐘，這是我有史以來坐最久的一次。有時讀書或者是打電話，我也趁機坐著練習單盤。

禪修班開始的前一天，我特別細心觀察自己精神狀態，希望排除打坐中間可能出現的干擾或壓力。我騎著自行車到處跑，讓自己疲勞一點，這樣就可以提早上床睡覺，第二天早早醒來。我還背了華萊士·史蒂文斯的兩首短詩，因為我怕自己不能專注於呼吸，而被妄想淹沒，如果真熬不住內心的無聊，我可以念念這些意境優美、含意深刻，而且（我自己認為）充滿佛理的詩，至少還有個可以集中精神的東西。

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禪修班結束了，我很高興自己去參加了。一整天的行香、坐香，我一點也不覺得無聊，雖然曾想過那兩首詩幾次。

能跟持法師學習是一個莫大的榮幸。在坐完第一支香後，持法師開示關於打坐身體方面的注意事項，以及身心之間的關聯。回想這次的經驗，身心之間的關聯是用來描述這次禪一收穫一個最佳的框架。

佛教偉大的道理之一，就是佛陀所有的教誨——千經與萬卷、問題與答案、概列與細分，最精要的部份是超言絕意的，只能通過直接體驗。佛陀一遍又一遍不斷重複告訴我們這個道理，持法師也以許多不同的方式提醒我們。當我那天坐在那裡的時候，我開始理解到通過身體的靜坐，我們的心才能直接去體驗那種超言絕意的精髓。

比如「無常」，這是許多我們經常擺在口頭上，卻很少深切體驗的眾多觀念之一。但是在這次的課程中，我有機會直接地觀察和體驗到它們——儘管是很細微。念頭來來去去，返回又離開。我試著按照持法師說的，像貓捕鼠似地觀照自己的念頭，結果我比平常更早捉住這些念頭，它們顯得比平時更無常。我的心情也是這樣。剛開始參加活動，我感到很興奮和充滿活力；午飯後，我變得平靜而有點昏昏欲睡；到了下午，有段時間我感到莫名的孤獨和遠離群眾；但是一個小時後，我又感

and disconnected from people; an hour later, I felt a deep sense of care and belonging. What changed? All day, I was in the same place, with the same people, doing basically the same thing. Even when our external conditions seem stable, impermanence is unceasing.

Then, there is the concept of suffering. By late afternoon, I was definitely experiencing some direct suffering in my knees, in my hips, and in my lower back. Dharma Master Heng Chih talked about pain as energy that can be transformed – but in order to do that, you have to actually work with it and focus on it, rather than avoid it. This was a very powerful tool for me. When my body began to hurt, I focused my attention on the place that hurt and was surprised to find how much movement and impermanence there was in the pain itself. First, it would seem like all the tension was in my left knee and my left knee only – but as I focused on my left knee, the pain seemed to break up, to move, and then it was in my lower back, so I would focus there. Then, it would move again and spread throughout my legs. I found that my breaths became long and deep of their own accord; if I intentionally tried to take shallow breaths, the pain got worse. My body seemed to know what to do all by itself. Now, I have never been a fan of pain, believe me, but I really appreciated the way that the physical strain in my body focused my mind. There was definitely no space for reciting poetry in those moments.

The Buddha taught that to not see suffering is suffering. No matter how content we may feel in a passing moment, we almost always have underlying anxieties, fears, or weaknesses. And we cannot forget that around the world, people are suffering in the deepest ways, constantly. We need to look at this pain, acknowledge it, and live our lives in awareness of its existence in order to take hold of the energy that is there and transform it.

Finally, there is bliss. There were many moments throughout the day – feeling the still presence of so many dedicated people, watching the sunlight stream through the stained glass windows in the Buddha Hall, listening to Dharma Master Heng Chih's teachings, or walking quietly in the cool spring air outside – where I was filled with a feeling of good fortune and gratitude for the opportunity to be there. In those moments, I felt both self-contained and connected to others, free, yet taken care of. It's hard to imagine more perfect conditions to try my hand at beholding, in the words of Wallace Stevens, "Nothing that is not there, and the nothing that is."

\*The poems, *The Snow Man* and *Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit*, are from a collection that was given to me by a poet friend. Though my experience with poetry is nearly as minimal as my experience with meditation, I am certain that these are great poems, and I highly recommend them. *The Snow Man* seems particularly Buddhist – it's such a powerful expression of suffering, patience, and emptiness.

到了濃濃的關懷和歸屬感。是什麼改變了？整整一天，我在同一個地方，和同樣的人在一起，基本上做同樣的事情。儘管我們的外在條件似乎穩定，無常卻從未間斷。

「痛苦」的概念又是如何呢？傍晚，我明確地感到膝蓋、臀部和腰部的疼痛。持法師提到疼痛是一個可以被轉換的能量，但為了做到這一點，你必須面對它，專注在這上面，而不是逃避它。這個方法對我非常受用。當我的身體開始痛，我就集中注意力在痛的地方；結果，我驚訝地發現疼痛本身是流動無常的。一開始，氣都積在左邊膝蓋，所以很不舒服；但當我專注在左膝，疼痛似乎分散了，然後移到腰部。我於是專注在那裡，然後它會再移動，蔓延到整條腿上。我也發現呼吸變長變深，如果我故意縮短呼吸，疼痛會加劇。我的身體似乎自己知道應該做什麼。我從來就不是一個喜歡疼痛的人，但是請相信我，我真的很感激身體的疼痛幫助我專心。在那些片刻，肯定是沒有背詩的餘地。

佛陀教導我們不要把痛苦的本身看作痛苦。無論此時覺得如何滿足，我們總有潛在的憂慮、恐懼或者軟弱；而且我們無法忘記，世界各地時時刻刻都有許多人正在受苦。我們要正視這種痛苦，承認它，並且在生活裡面瞭知它的存在，這樣才能抓住這個能量並且轉化它。

最後一個觀念是「幸福」。從開始到結束，這一天裡有這麼多的片刻——感覺許多精進行者沉穩的氣息，欣賞從佛殿彩繪玻璃窗流瀉滿室的陽光，聆聽持法師的教誨，或者只是靜靜在屋外涼爽的春天空氣中散步——我內心都充滿了幸運與感恩。在這些片刻裡，我既感到自我滿足，又能感受我與他人的鏈結——是既自由而又被照顧著。沒有再比現在更適合用華萊士·史蒂文斯的詩來表達眼前的一切：「沒什麼不在那裡，也沒有什麼在那裡。」

\*《雪人》和《越來越少的人，噢，野蠻精神》兩首詩，是摘自我的一個詩人朋友送給我的書。雖然我對詩歌的經驗和我對打坐的經驗幾乎是一樣地少，但我可以肯定這些是偉大的詩，所以我強烈推薦它們。《雪人》顯得尤有佛意，對痛苦、耐心和虛空有非常貼切的表達。