

# Mind-Ground Meditation: The Ancient Art of Learning by Subtraction

## 心地禪法：古老的簡約之道與藝術



A Talk Given by Professor Martin Verhoeven  
on September 19, 2008  
Chinese Translation by Angela Morelli

馬丁·維荷文教授講於2008年9月19日  
李佼 中譯



BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

This practice we are doing might more properly be called a science of inquiry and it is very old, having its origins deep in antiquity. We know this to be the case because the statues that we find going back one or two millennia before the Buddha have icons in this posture. The statue of the Vajrasana posture pre-dates the Buddha by 1,000 years or more. Nobody knows when it began. It's that old! Nevertheless, we have a pretty good idea of what this practice is all about because it has been handed down generation after generation.

I would say that meditation is the most fundamental and profound form of inquiry we as human beings can take up. It's the highest order of thinking we are capable of. And yet, at the same time, it's amazingly simple and straightforward. You needn't make any purchases and it requires no special equipment. You can do it using just what you came into the world with—well, you will also

我們現在練習的，可以稱作「探究式科學」，其方法非常古老，並可追溯到古典時期。之所以推斷其久遠，是因為出土的雕像年代，早於佛陀坐姿之前的一、兩千年。金剛坐的坐姿，在比佛陀時代早一千多年就有了，沒有人確切知道金剛坐起源於何時，總之就是非常古老！但是我們仍然可以對這種修行法門有很多了解，因為人們一代一代地將之傳承下來。

我認為這是人類最基本和最深奧的探究方式，也是可以達到的最高層次思維，同時這也是極其簡單直接的修行方式。你不需要添購任何東西，也不需要任何特殊裝備，只需用你與生俱來的東西來實踐這種修行。當然還是需要一些基本東西，比如衣服，因為雖然你是赤裸裸地來到這個

need some clothes, because, though you came into the world without clothes, here we don't do birthday suit meditation! But you did come with what the ancients call "your original face," and finding, or recovering, your 'original face' is the goal of meditation.

When I first came to the monastery, I asked my teacher: "How do you meditate? What do you do?" Of course I spoke very broken Chinese and he didn't speak English, but I don't think that is the reason I got the answer I did. He said, simply: "Do that!", and pointed to the statue. But when I tried to sit with my legs crossed like the statue's, I couldn't do it. I couldn't even get into a good half lotus, much less a full lotus. So what looked like a pretty simple thing at first—imitating the statue's posture—turned out to be quite difficult.

But within the statue itself, in the form in which it's been passed down, are embedded the techniques and the actual methodology of this practice. You don't really need to rely on the texts which explain it. All you need to do is study the statue well, look at it and start to connect with it, both within and without. Connect with the statue aesthetically, emotionally, and spiritually, and you will be able to enter into this practice. That is what's so remarkable. Texts may be lost, may be burned in a fire, but the statuary remains, and it functions as a model for the three aspects of meditation practice - body, breath, mind, and also Sila, Samadhi, Prajna.

Knowledge of this practice has come down to us in two modes. One is what we might call "the inspired embodied tradition," in which there is a passing on of knowledge from teacher to disciple. The disciple masters the practice, becomes a teacher and then passes the knowledge on to another, and another, over the course of thousands of years. And that inspired embodied tradition continues into the present, and should continue into the future.

Then there is what is called the received tradition. These are teachings which have been written down, one example of which is this text we are studying now, the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra*. So, what we are doing here is we are taking part in the inspired embodied tradition which I learned from my teacher, and which he learned from his teacher (and on and on, all the way back to antiquity), and, at the same time, we are combining it with the written tradition, thereby bringing them into relationship.

I should say now that meditation isn't just a sitting posture: it's a way of life. The texts clearly state that you don't have to sit to be in meditation. They also warn you that you will go astray if you get too attached to your sitting practice, seeing that alone as meditation, instead of seeing meditation as a way of life, and your everyday life as meditation. That's why we try to keep both dimensions in mind. The practice of sitting meditation isn't samadhi. It isn't dhyana. It isn't enlightenment. It's an exercise with which we discipline

世界，但我們這裡不提倡裸修。但你生來的時候，確實帶著古人所講的「本來面目」，而找到這個本來面目，正是禪修的根本目的。

當我第一次來到道場，我問師父：「坐禪怎麼坐？應該做什麼？」當然我的中文很糟糕，師父也不說英語，但我覺得這不是我得到以下這個答案的原因。師父的回答很簡單，他指著佛像說：「就那樣做！」但是當我嘗試照著那樣坐的時候，卻發現根本做不到。我連單盤都做不到，更別說雙盤了。所以模仿佛像那樣坐，看上去很簡單，結果卻非常困難。

雖然如此，但是在一代代流傳的過程中，佛像本身已經詮釋了這個法門的技巧和真正方法，並非絕對依賴文字來解釋。你只需要深入地去研究、觀察它，開始與它建立內在以及外在的聯繫，這包括審美層面、情感層面以及精神層面的聯繫，然後你就會慢慢進入這種修行法門，這正是不可思議處。經典可能會流失，可能會被焚毀，但是佛陀的塑像始終保留著，為修行者在坐禪的坐姿，呼吸以及念頭三方面，也可以說戒、定、慧三學提供最佳典範。

這種修行的知識，通過兩種方式流傳下來。一種是啟發式的身教，老師將知識傳遞給學生，學生掌握方法以後也成為老師，再把知識傳給下一個人，一個接著一個，持續幾千年流傳至今，當然還會繼續延續到將來。

第二種傳授的方式是接受式，禪修的知識以文字流傳下來，我們現在學習的經典《六祖壇經》就是一個例子。所以我們現在採用啟發式身教，也就是我所教的是我從上人那裡學到的，而上人又是從他老師那裡學的（如此追溯到最早）。同時又把啟發式身教和文字傳授相結合，讓兩種方式產生對話。

這裡應該說明，坐禪不是一種坐姿，而是一種生活方式。經典裡明確指出，坐禪不一定要坐著。經典也告誡我們，如果你對打坐太執著，你會迷失，你會誤以為只有坐在那兒才是坐禪，而不明白禪其實是一種生活方式，日常生活就是禪。這就是為什麼我們要牢記這兩點。修習打坐，並不是入定，不是禪那，也不是開悟；它是一種幫助自我規範的練習，也幫助我們在徹底轉化自己的過程中打下基礎。

坐禪的方法道理，千百年來（大概從佛陀時代開始）口耳相傳保存下來，沒有文字記錄。修行者尋師訪道，親身拜師學習、提問，這樣經過四、五百

ourselves and which helps us to get a foothold in a larger process of self-transformation.

Knowledge of this practice was passed along orally for hundreds of years—let's say from the time of the Buddha—without ever being written down. People went to a teacher whom they studied under and they asked him or her questions. And so for about four or five hundred years, there was no written record of the practice. The first written texts about meditation only began to appear in the century preceding the common era.

According to Buddhism the mind is not the brain, although it includes the brain. So we have to be careful here. One of the Chan questions is: Where is the mind? Well, where is it? I don't know! Those of you who have studied the *Shurangama Sutra* are aware that this is how the whole thing goes: The mind is inside of us. Ok, let's take a look. Not really quite there? Well, then maybe it's outside of us. Not really outside either? Or maybe it's inside of us and outside of us?

The mind seems to be, in modern parlance, a “distributed property.” This is an inquiry into something very basic. It centers on the most fundamental questions, the sort of questions a child might ask: “Who am I?” “Where did I come from?” “Where am I going?” “What is this all about?” “Was there something before I was born, is there something after I die, and what is the interval in between all about?”

Again, this line of inquiry approaches a science, perhaps an ‘inner’ science in that it is concerned with the observer, and his or her ‘field’; so it might be better termed a science of awakening. And they say that there are discoverable answers to those questions. These things are actually knowable, but they are only knowable by you directly, or as the Sixth Patriarch says, “by yourself, for yourself, in yourself.” They cannot be given to you by someone else. Nor is it a matter of faith.

The answers can be directly experienced and known immediately through this exercise of body, breathing, and mental discipline we call meditation. So in this kind of science you are both the scientist and the science experiment. Your own mind is your laboratory. And that makes doing this kind of science very inexpensive. You don't need to apply for any grants or funding. You have already got everything you need. All you need to do is learn and apply the right method. Learning alone is sterile; applying without learning is blind.

What's even more interesting: you don't need to take notes or compile data. Nor do you need to publish your findings to validate yourself. So actually this science is the exact opposite of all the other sciences. In all the other sciences you're accumulating data, running tests and building up a body of knowledge. But with the science of meditation practice it's the very opposite. Instead of adding and accumulating, you must subtract. You must empty. A text says:

*Learning consists in adding to one's stock day by day;  
The practice of Tao consists in “subtracting day by day,*

年，沒有留下任何關於坐禪的文字紀錄。最早的典籍記錄，是在公元前一世紀才開始出現。

佛教認為我們的心（精神世界）並不是大腦，雖然它包括大腦，這是我們要特別注意的。有個參禪的話頭是：「心在哪裡？」在哪兒呢？我不知道！學過《楞嚴經》的人知道這個徵心的過程：心在身內？好吧，想想看，好像又不是。也許在身外？卻又不在身體外。或許既在身內又在身外？

按照現代的講法，心彷彿是分布式的。這種「心在哪裡」的探究，是對一種非常基本原始的詰問，它圍繞在人類最根本的問題上，就像一個小孩子會問的：「我是誰？」「我從哪裡來？」「我會到哪裡？」「一切到底是為什麼？」「未生之前是什麼？死後是什麼？」「死生之間又是什麼？」，諸如此類的問題。

有些人將這種探索視為一種科學方法，一種「內在」科學，其中牽涉觀察者以及觀察者實地觀察的「對象」，所以將之稱為「開悟的科學」或許更為貼切；而這些探索的問題，也被認為是有方式解答的。這些問題的答案確實可知，但唯有通過自身直接的體驗來了知，就像六祖說的「自悟自證」，無法通過別人的傳授而獲得，或是透過信仰可解決的。

這必須直接透過身體、呼吸以及心智（參禪）的鍛煉，而契悟問題的答案。所以你是設計這項實驗的科學家，同時也是實驗的研究對象，你的心就是實驗室。這項實驗成本並不高，你也不用去申請補助或研究基金。你已經萬事俱備，只需依著正確的方法解行並進，因為有解無行的修行，只會開謊花而不結果；有行無解的修行，則是盲目危險的。

更有趣的是：你不需要撰寫實驗報告或是收集資料數據，也不需要發表研究成果來證明自己的發現。因此，這門科學事實上與所有其它的科學完全相反，因為它們都需要你去累積數據、進行測試，然後建構理論。坐禪的科學恰恰相反，與其增加、累積，你反而是必須減少、放空。正如經典上講的：

為學日益，為道日損。  
損之又損，以至於無為。  
無為，而無不為。

——《道德經》第四十八章



*Subtracting and yet again subtracting  
Till one has reached inactivity.  
But by this very inactivity  
—Everything can be activated. (chap. 48 Daodeqing)*

That's how you activate the higher faculty. That higher faculty is actually impeded by hyper-activity, so much doing, so the only way to reach it is through stillness and silence. You take away from what's there instead of adding to it. That's why the sitting posture we see in the statuary is a posture indicating stillness, quiet, calm, and receptivity.

Most of the time we are projecting our fantasies, fears and longings onto things. It's kind of like running a film. But this practice is the opposite. It entails reception rather than projection. You are shutting down the projective faculties. Your brain, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mind fall back into quiet receptivity. And when in your practice you reach a point of absolute, real stillness, then "everything manifests by itself." It is then that you receive the answer to those fundamental questions: "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" "Where am I going?"

It all sounds simple. But for most of us it will take many years and perhaps many lifetimes of practice to perfect, because there is no room for error. The margin of error here is zero. Your practice has to be so precise to get the proper result, that if you are just a little bit off, you will miss many key aspects. And here's what's really frustrating: if you desire to attain this result, you're off. If you think you've gotten it, you're off. If you fear you won't get it, you're off. And if you think there's something to get, you're also off. That is why it is said, "At the place of seeking nothing, there are no worries." Subtracting, and yet again subtracting, you unexpectedly arrive. So, as you can see, all of this is somewhat counter-intuitive from the point of view of everyday consciousness, but, nevertheless, it can be done. ❀

這才是開發你的高級功能。這高級功能，被過度活躍、種種造作的心理活動所障蔽，因此啟發它的唯一方式，就是虛、靜——除去已有的，不再去增加。這就是為什麼打坐的佛像透露的都是寂然、寧靜、淡定和接受。

大多時候，我們都是將自己的幻想、恐懼以及期待投射在事物上，就像播放電影似的。但是禪修正好相反，應該接受，而不是投射，修行者必須關閉這個投射的功用。你的大腦、眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、意，都要收攝為沉默的接受。如此修行一段時間，你會達到一個絕對、真實的平靜，然後「萬物自然顯現」。到那時候，你就知道「我是誰？」「我從何處來？」「我將去何處？」這些根本問題的答案。

聽起來很簡單，是吧？但對絕大多數人而言，這個過程需要很多年，甚至很多生的修行才能夠圓滿，因為這容不得一絲差錯，這個實驗結果的誤差值必須為零。你必須非常精準，才能修成正果，否則失之毫釐，差之千里。而這也是最令人頭痛的地方：因為如果你想有所得，就有了偏差；如果你覺得已經有所得，就有了偏差；如果你害怕無所得，就有了偏差；如果你覺得有什麼可得的，就有了偏差。這是為何古諺云：「到無求處便無憂。」你減之又減，損之又損，終有一天，自然水到渠成。所以你可以看到，這道理多少有些違反日常情理，但是儘管如此，還是可以做到的。❀

