

Philosophical meditation in the West

Patrizia Cipolletta¹

Abstract: How can we return to meditation in the West today? Descartes was the last person to meditate in the West, but after him, the gnoseology of his thought was all that prevailed, as well as the rift between subject and object: thinking, meditating, thus, became a form of reflection on something, which is an object detached from the subject who thinks. The philosophy of the twentieth century questioned the *cogito*, but it did not restore meditation. This is the task of philosophical practice. But how can we restore Western meditation? The essay attempts to demonstrate a way to meditate today, to allow emotions to live, to welcome them and allow them to mellow. It also shows how meditation is a continuous source of comparison for philosophical practitioners so they can preserve their humility as they perform their task, dismiss authority, and welcome the guest without the risk of manipulating him or her, by listening to the guest while also challenging their own preconceived ideas and past emotions.

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Introduction

The great period of rehabilitation of practical philosophy in the twentieth century (Riedel 1972/74) also allowed for the simultaneous rehabilitation of emotional life. This has opened the way for philosophical

¹University of Roma Tre, Agàpe Scuola di Filosofia, E-mail: patrizia.cipolletta@uniroma3.it

practices, but the rift between emotions and thought, which has been ongoing for centuries, still persists in our thoughts and actions.

Western philosophy has always viewed emotions with suspicion and interpreted them as an impediment to finding a universally valid truth. Plato considered passions a disease of the soul (Plato, *Timaeus*, 86b) and denigrated all art (Plato, *Republic*, X, 605d) that stimulated the emotions. He hoped that by focusing on ideas, one could sublimate singular emotions into ideas, which he considered the one truth, thereby stimulating the control of reason over the blind forces of the animal part of man. Later, with the emergence of modernity, Cartesian philosophy indicated the “*cogito*” as universal in all mankind and, therefore, established thought as detached from the emotional singularity of each person and emphasised the need to keep emotions at bay in knowledge, lest they pollute the neutral and universal subject of the sciences. Only after the collapse of the Hegelian system, as the failure of a science of the Whole, did the uniqueness of singularity begin to find traction; however, it was only after the first years of the twentieth century that emotions began to be examined. What should we do about emotions? In practical life, they are definitely a source of energy. Aristotle emphasised that emotions and feelings are constitutive elements of practical life, and indicated the “mean”, the right proportions as a virtue for one’s happiness and ethical life (Aristotle, 1105b 20-1106 a-b). From the very beginning, philosophical practices or philosophical consultancy have been involved in listening to singularities and their emotional lives. Freeing emotions, listening to them without suppressing them, which had happened with certain forms of Christianity and Stoicism, ushered in a new way of relating to emotional experiences. I began to think of a meditative philosophical practice when in the training of future philosophical consultants, I realised that conflicts easily arose between them and that associations of philosophical consultants had difficulty collaborating and establishing ethical relationships. Then again, many voluntary associations also show the same difficulties, not to mention workplaces and all the situations in which relationships between humans occur. This practice is now indispensable for me in the training of philosophical consultants and in associations that offer projects that require the collaboration of various experts in philosophical practices. Recently, we have also begun to test it out in group meetings in workplace environments and on any path of the inner journey.

A brief background to meditation in the West

Hadot retraced the spiritual exercises of the Stoics, revealing that meditation, μελέτω (Hadot, 2002 p. 30-31), is understood as a spiritual exercise used to order one's inner discourse. Naturally, the French scholar, a specialist in Greek philosophy, retrieves these ancient exercises, but he does not omit the references to Augustine and Descartes, because we cannot talk about a return to practicing spiritual exercises once again while overlooking the path the West has taken as regards thought (Hadot, 2002, pp. 280 ff.). It is always necessary to take a step back to see things from a greater distance and inherit the knowledge available to us from our great philosophical heritage. For this reason, before talking about philosophical meditation today, in the West, let us look for its thread in the tapestry of the past. What happened after Descartes, the father of modern philosophy? Why did meditation no longer have a place in philosophy?

The philosophical tradition of the seventeenth century followed Descartes' most obvious dictates: thought as the incontrovertible foundation of knowledge based on certainty and faith in the scientific and technical progress of man faced with nature, which was considered inanimate and nothing more than an object in his hands. He disregarded the fact that the philosopher had found these revelations in the meditative act. It was Augustine who opened up to inner dialogue as an account of his own life (Augustine, *Confessionum Libri XIII*). In the *Soliloquies* (Augustine, *Soliloquiorum Libri duo*), he had begun to dialogue with reason, whose main task at the beginning is to ask questions, to stimulate the journey with critical thinking. He knew Stoicism and the exercises of the Stoics and then departed from that philosophy (Augustine, *De beata Vita*), which he said had renounced happiness, because he believed that accepting *Logos* and death was not worthy of the name happiness. This is why the Plotinian way to the One, who for Augustine was the Christian God, was important. On this journey towards God, he discovered the dialogue with himself. His discovery of the *cogito*, therefore, had a different significance than that which it would assume in Cartesian thought, but it was from here that Descartes' meditative thought began. Certainly, the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola accustomed him to an imaginative practice (Hadot 2002, p.75 et seq.).

And we must remember that he was given dispensation due to health problems from spiritual practices early in the morning. So when all his classmates at La Flèche went downstairs to do their meditative exercises, he remained in his room meditating alone (Baillet 1972, vol. I, p. 28). He wrote notes in his little book, meditated on his own life, his own path, his expectations; he sought a path to the truth that for him was no longer God, thus he discovered meditation outside of a dialogue with God. He listened to himself, dialogued with himself. In this spiritual context, during his stay in Germany, Descartes experienced the night of dreams, which he related in the *Discourse on the Method*, a book in which he recounts his biography, and in which he talks about the discovery of the *cogito*, of the certainty upon which he could base universal knowledge, and he offers his text to the erudite public, which could also be – as he himself states – just a fairy tale (Descartes, vol. IV, p. 4). Then, once he had reached that certainty, or the *cogito* as a foundation, he ceased to meditate, but it would return in the night of dreams, he would even call them *Metaphysical Meditations*, which are, in fact, profound reflections on his meditation. This, in fact, led to the birth of reflection: once the distinction between subject and object was established in the Western world, one no longer meditates, but “reflects on...”, and he always reflected anew on his meditative path, perhaps he continued to meditate, he was captivated by that dizzying questioning that invalidates all certainties and creates the void. But the certainty of the *cogito* prevailed and Cartesianism was interested only in gnoseology. Meditation was disregarded. Husserl seemed to have taken an interest in Cartesian meditation, but he reflects on it, rather than meditates.

Heidegger tried, precisely with the rehabilitation of emotional life (Heidegger, 1986, pp. 134-140). He deconstructed the *cogito* and man as a species and he investigated the deep emotional tones that give rise to dizzy thoughts, but he became entangled, in the period when he wrote *Being and Time*, in a structural mode, which distanced him from the singularity that he, too, was. He arrived at a rehabilitation of practical philosophy but failed to reach philosophical practices because he wanted to do them with the masses, and along with them, he wished to arrive at the listening of being, of the φύσις, which we, too, are. His lessons from 1930 seem like meditative practices (Heidegger 1983, p. 133); he wants to bring all his students to meditate boredom. Not to meditate *on* boredom, but to

undertake meditations *of* boredom. In this case, meditation goes beyond the subject-object division, which is merely a Western, modern conception, and the complement of specification is both subjective and objective, almost as if boredom were speaking in mankind. Meditating boredom is listening to boredom and letting ourselves be guided by it. It is only by doing so that we can, in an instant, listen to the time that constitutes us beyond all objectivistic philosophies, beyond an intellectual culture like *Bildung*. We are content with simply having pointed to the inconspicuous state of affairs. [...] Through this pointing to the inconspicuous state of affairs we are, however, directed onto a path that leads us to that which is worthy of questioning. To follow a path that a thing has, of itself, already taken is [...] the essence of meditation (*Besinnen*). This means more than merely becoming conscious of something. We are not yet in meditation when we have consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) alone. Meditation is something more. It is the quiet, self-possessed surrender (*Gelassenheit*) to that which is worthy of questioning. Through meditation understood in this way, we actually arrive at the place where, without having experienced it and without having peered deeply into it, we have long been sojourning. In meditation, we gain entry to a place from which the space opens up that is traversed at any given time by all our doings and not-doings. (Heidegger 2000, pp. 63-65 [translation our own]).

However, he discovered that the experience of the moment in the world of technology is not possible, the leap that removes the distinction between subject and object does not occur, we continue to attribute boredom to the object and we do not discover it as the time/being that we are. He continued to investigate all emotional tones, from wonder, which had only been possible in Greece, to pain and to pity. In old age, he suffered due to all the illusions and experiences of his life, but he was silent in his writing, even in the *Black Notebooks*, where he showed no second thoughts. In his youth, he had already demonstrated the difference between the psychology of the unconscious and philosophy (Heidegger 1983, pp. 91-94); in old age, he suffered and turned to psychotherapy for help. In the Zollikon seminars (Heidegger 2018, p.106, pp. 614-616, p. 642) and in the exchange of letters with Medard Boss, he tried to deepen the closeness and distance between his thought and psychotherapy; he tried to meditate, but he did not start from himself, he did not talk about himself, what he was hiding and keeping silent, why he was afraid. Thus, he fell into the trap of

explaining himself, despite being accompanied by seeking and asking, but he did not question himself as an individual, did not talk about himself. On the other hand, Ernst Bloch, following another path, always kept his biography, the media and the narrative in mind (Bloch, p. 61-81).

Inheriting certain forgotten traits of meditation from the problems of the Western philosophical tradition, I thought it important at this time to restore this exercise, passing through Descartes and Heidegger. Of course, inheriting does not mean taking what a philosopher said in its entirety, but breaking up his thought, discarding what has taken a wrong turn, taking up a thread, which has perhaps been overlooked, bringing it to the fore and feeding it until it grows.

Why meditation today?

Modernity, as we have already mentioned, has generated a rift: on the one hand, the body, with emotions, passions and feelings, on the other, the mind, that something universal and equal in all mankind. Hadot states that as early as ancient Greece there was already this distinction that made the spiritual exercises of the Greeks (but I think this mainly refers to the Stoics) different from those of Buddhist meditation (Hadot, p. 271). However, it is undoubtedly in modernity that the body is manipulated, and emotions themselves are studied objectively, as an object that is alien to and detached from ourselves, which the mind observes as other than itself.

The malaise, the discomfort of this condition has been studied, once again objectively, as far as possible, in all possible modalities in the twentieth century: sociological, psychological, medical and ecological. We will leave the academics to deal with the problem of going beyond modernity, here we are talking about philosophical practices, which is definitely a way to practically go beyond the distinctions of modernity. This is why we listen to the trends of our time: most people fall into line in our world, no longer rise up and no longer ask radical questions. Increasingly rare is the wonder, too often mistaken for curiosity, which is the motivation for science. And it is again to Descartes that this confusion can be ascribed, when in *The Passions of the Soul* he speaks of wonder as a cold passion, which does not involve the body (Descartes, AT, vol. XI, p. 381); it is curiosity that leaves us cold and sets us in motion to find answers with the mind alone, wonder, ever since ancient times, was something shocking

in toto. As the Greeks teach us, wonder is dizzying, and our whole lives depend on it. People, even if they have dozed off in this consumer society, show discomfort. One feels the need to pull the plug on the excessive racing around of work and commitments. This explains the spread of mindfulness practices and relaxation practices, where people become accustomed to closing their eyes, disconnecting from the world, with the sole purpose of being able to deal with the rhythm that this type of society imposes on us. Some feel the need for something more. Thus, yoga is chosen both in the form of the simple practice to reconnect the body with the emotions, and in the form of a more spiritual meditation, with the aim of developing into an exercise in contemplation. In some cases, and increasingly, Buddhist meditation is chosen, which in some ways has a type of spirituality that is closer to Western philosophy today, because it has no gods to contemplate.

However, all these forms are far removed from our way of thinking. Meditation in ancient Greece certainly came from the East, but Western philosophy developed it in a particular way in connection with practical life in a way that it can be exercised in everyday life. It was definitely in connection with thought, even with the kind of thinking that later resulted in science. Those forms of meditation that arose and were preserved in the East do not have the opportunity to dialogue with our world. Although we have now exported science and technology all over the planet, with unlimited ecological damage, that kind of meditation, even in its deepest forms, has become just a pause for us, a parenthesis into which some of us decide to retire for a short time, only to then dive right back into our, in many ways, nefarious world. Only Western philosophy, and the practices that can spring from our own tradition, can open up new paths of thought and life. I think the discomfort felt today is due to the fact that philosophical thought has been dulled by predominant calculation. Is it possible to develop a way of thinking that does not objectify? Starting from Descartes, we think about something, which is an object, placed as external to ourselves by our own thinking, by our *cogito*. Twentieth-century thought tried to go beyond this subject-object distinction, but, in fact, it always does so with a mode of thought that inundates the mind. The entire philosophy of the past century has sent out luminous flares to show us the way, but, in my opinion, it has failed to go beyond modernity.

Is it possible to develop a way of thinking that fully involves the person that allows him or her to face the void, even if only for a moment?

One cannot speak of this only from an academic perspective, one must seek to discover if it is possible to go beyond modernity in the singularity we encounter in the world. This search mainly involves listening, we have no answers. Undoubtedly, my need for philosophical practices arose in the field of academic research and the realisation that we have not moved beyond modernity, but into a form of hyper-modernity. Man has indeed realised that he is not the master of nature, because he is now dominated by technology, which ploughs forward autonomously and has overtaken him. But he is also dominated by his curiosity, by emotional tones that help and direct the supremacy of technology. Thus, a philosophy of post-modernity, for us, could be a mode of ideology to preserve modernity to the nth power.

Some forms of meditation that are widespread today

As we have mentioned, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Western philosophy had already become aware that there was no revealed truth, nor a single truth. In some ways, a certain return to sophistry has arisen: it is true what this imposes, not only with the linguistic means with which the sophist urged their disciples to assert themselves and become powerful, but also with the means that technology makes available. Scepticism is now widespread. One certainly seeks truth in the singularity that we are. But in the academic sphere, this does not go beyond intellectual bickering and communication is heard only by the mind. Philosophy has become multiple and does not have a single answer. We are used to asking about curiosity and science, which ask questions and sooner or later the answer comes. Philosophy asks questions that cannot be answered: we must learn to remain in the question, which opens a *gap that cannot be bridged*. As mentioned above, Hadot, who was overly influenced by Cartesian and Christian philosophy, underlined that the difference between Eastern and Greco-Roman meditation lies in the fact that the latter has no ties with the body, rather it is merely a rational or imaginative exercise, at most intuitive. I do not know if this applies to the ancient world, before modernity. Indeed, we cannot know for sure if it was meditation without the body, carried out by a Christian community soaked in Platonism that was the well from which modernity later sprang. Perhaps we cannot read the exercises of the ancients without being clouded by the

lens of our modern eyes. Thus, I think of the Orphic exercises, so praised by Nietzsche to retrieve the bond with the body. I think also of the Socratic writings of Plato, which are quite distinct from his later works that follow a different, exclusively Platonic, path. Perhaps even the Greeks' later exercises did not have this detachment from the body, as happened after Descartes, who despite the objectification of the body and the consequent opening up to the possibility of manipulating it, in his writings and letters, allows the intensity of his corporeality and emotional tones to resonate. I think, then, that there are various ways of understanding the body: listening to the emotions, passions and feelings is also listening to the body.

Thus, we should seek a way to reinstate meditation in our world, by listening to our own tradition and the potential it may have. Let us then look at some forms of meditation that have spread from us.

Mindfulness is the westernised transposition of Buddhist practices. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who started this practice in the United States, is a biologist who became interested in yoga and Buddhist practices during a "Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program" in the medical field, examining the process with a scientific eye to try and find a way to blend of Western science and Buddhism. But it is evident that it has no connection with Western philosophy, it does not inherit anything from our philosophy. This does not mean denying the objective it set out to achieve in trying to reconnect mind, body and heart. For us, the problem is certainly much wider. How can meditation approach the deconstructive philosophy of the twentieth century? How is it possible to remain in the void of an unanswered question? How can one stay in the question? The question creates a void. Western meditation today must help us familiarise ourselves with the void. The indications provided by Buddhism are certainly of great help in understanding the possible ways of meditation that lead to the void. Their practices seek to deconstruct images that are harmful to the mind, as in some ways the Stoics had also done. The void is created by focusing on a geometric image and thereby mellowing or "decanting" the passions, in the same way as decanting a bottle of wine, will, over time, mellow and improve the wine. The critical spirit of Western philosophy, however, cannot be overlooked. A culture like Buddhism, as well as its practices, is so removed from our culture that limiting ourselves only to this practice would inevitably lead to a cultural "split personality". So, let us see how a Western philosophical meditation can be practiced.

Meditative Practice and Relational Ethics

Although there are no preparatory exercises for the body in Western meditation, the body is nevertheless involved. Even when we are silent, with our eyes closed, I believe that the body always takes part in the process because by listening to our emotional tones, we are connecting our body with our mind, which at that moment has fewer demands. In this way, one listens to one's emotions, without the censorship with which Christianity in the West has tried to stifle certain stirrings of the soul, which were perhaps considered dangerous for living in the company of others. In this listening, those excessive discussions about how to act are diminished, discussions that only affect the mind, and after which everything remains as before, one behaves differently from what was stated in the discussions.

Remaining for some time with your eyes closed in silence is a moment of solitude and recollection. The facilitator indicates the suggested emotion for you to listen to. A thread winds its way through our entire life path. We listen to the way we experienced things in childhood and adolescence, anger, for example, or rather how an irritation arose in us when confronted with things or people and how we reacted to this experience, how our habits arose to experience certain emotions. There is no biography written once and for all, rather, each time, we can pick up a singular emotional thread that runs throughout the fabric of our lives. In this way, we discover our habits, we listen to our past, until we get to how, for example, we experience anger today. It is a way to find the thread of our habits because emotions are structured into feelings (*Ge-fühlen*) and habitual reactions. In the second phase, you tell others about your common thread of emotion that you considered. We know that there is a vast distance between what is recounted and what has been meditated on in solitude, but communication is also a kind of liberation. The facilitator (philosophical consultant, expert in philosophical practices) does not have the truth, so he or she cannot give indications on how emotions should be experienced, which are the hinge between us and the world (Heidegger 1983, p.). That is why any emotion and any way you experience an emotion is acceptable. Not only do socially accepted emotions such as compassion or empathy find their place in this exercise, but also emotions such as anger

and envy. There are no emotions that make us guilty: even envy is an emotion like any other, indeed it has its own philosophical possibility (S. Petrosino, pp.105-155). By envying others, we understand that we are not everything, others may have what we desire or are as we would like to be. Envy can also illustrate what we could become or do but can also bring us to realise what we can never be: it is the signal of our limit.

We must shake off the sense of sin that has invaded certain emotions in the West but succeeded only in stifling them. Do not throw the baby out with the bathwater, and recover your inner thought, at its core, which is the relationship to the world and the body that we are. Every passion can be dangerous for human coexistence, if present in excess, even love for example. The practical philosopher can help bring all the passions on to the field and to play the game of passions. Every emotion can lead to fundamental philosophical questions, not just wonder. And “philosophical” passions can “decant” the excesses of other passions. The path we generally propose in the first phase involves meditations of emotions that seem to concern only ourselves. I say “seem”, because, at the beginning of the path, it seems that the emotions are only our own, but it is later revealed that emotion is always a relationship. They are not ours alone, they do not belong to us and we do not dominate them, and we are merely deluding ourselves if we think we can manage them. You do not meditate *on* emotion, you meditate *the* emotion, and you experience it and think about it simultaneously. Thus, in this first phase, we seek out the common thread in our own lives of emotions, such as desire, anger, fear, modesty, security and insecurity, love and friendship. In the second phase, we come to see the way in which we relate to others. Then, we meditate if, when and how I put myself in another person’s shoes, if I have difficulty putting myself in the shoes of some other people and when. One should not feel guilty if one feels envy or jealousy, because then one can also feel other emotions such as trust or cooperation. Each of us, by meditating the competitive drive we find in ourselves (we cannot deny it is there in all of us), we can listen to the extent to which it can be used for our benefit and when excessive competitiveness can be harmful to ourselves and others. For us, scholars of philosophy, a separate chapter on recognition and authority is required. Meditating the experience of these needs always leads to remarkable truths that amaze even those accustomed to readings of Hegel’s servant-master dialectic.

You always discover something else other than accumulated knowledge, listening to our guests enriches us with unexpected images. On this path, we always change the way we relate to others. Not only as regards those who follow the path with us, but we facilitators change ourselves every time.

What are the benefits? I become aware of my way of being and my limits, and I communicate to others those ways of being that could be an obstacle to living in the company of others. For example, my being touchy, or my need to be overly exuberant at times must find its limit so as not to hurt others. All desires and emotions are legitimate: it is the appropriate proportion, or “mean”, that must be found together in the group in which one operates. We must know ourselves and who we operate with, and in the light of frankness and sincerity, we should open a dialogue and find the mean of our emotions to establish an ethical relationship. Only in this way can we reach a “we”, which is not only formal.

The third path is the most dizzying, which takes us to philosophical questions, but not with the mind, with our existence, with all our emotions, until we reach the void. We meditate the freedom we have. We ask: Who am I? What always happens is we cannot find ourselves, which opens up the void. We meditate time, sadness and melancholy, and then return to everyday life and the meaning of our own life.

The facilitator does not always lead everyone to the void, in which emotions are “decanted” and one arrives at that question that has no answer. Often, guests stop before this point out of fear of the void. The philosophical practitioner must always respect the handholds his or her guests may try to grip on to and their fears of the void. Many cannot abandon themselves to emotion and try to control intellectually: they classify, generalise, reflect on emotion, but do not abandon themselves to emotions. We sow the seeds, which will perhaps blossom when the time is ripe. We facilitators can only listen and wait. Many of our guests believe that it is necessary to do these meditations once and for all: yet, they must be done again and again, because we cannot cage emotions once and for all, but we must allow them to roam free and always be predisposed to listen to them. I think that if you forget to regularly meditate, you go back to before: that gap that was opened is then closed and you return to your old habits.

Meditation in the training of Philosophical Consultants

I consider the experience of the void to be essential in the training of philosophical consultants. The philosophical consultant must have experienced the dizziness of the void at least once, experienced the void without the reassurance of handholds that these questions, which receive no answer, plunge us into – which is essential for us, and experienced in an essential way. In this way, we learn not to be afraid of the void, we learn to be in the void, and there is always a collaborator, a colleague, a guest who takes us back to the void. We do not possess the truth, we seek the truth and in listening, we search together, indeed we allow ourselves to be questioned by our guests. Our guest needs to understand this emotional tone of ours. By comparing ourselves with others, we do not risk feeling as if we are the possessor of truth and we know we can always be questioned and always feel the void of certainties, the lack of handholds. A good facilitator, a good philosophical consultant, must know how to be in a void: Western thought, in its critical and deconstructive expressions, has prepared the mind for the void, thus philosophical practices must prepare all our emotional tones for the void.

I always have to prepare the meditation the day before the exercise with my guests. I prepare it with my colleagues or collaborators. When I retrieve the thread of an emotional tone that I experienced during my life, I satisfy my need to remember and understand my finite, limited being. We must always welcome our limitations (Bennet-Vahle, pp. 251-259), smile at ourselves and openly tell others about our weaknesses, asking for their patience. In this way, I find the correct proportion or mean (in the sense of Aristotelian ethics), which varies each time, depending on the situation I am experiencing, which is new every time. This preparation will always make me aware of my limitations and I will never present myself as a guru.

During the meditative practice with guests, we are inevitably invested with a role: sometimes they attribute us with a role of authority, other times with prestige or charisma. We may appear to be mentors, or we could even be seen as someone who satisfies some guests' search for someone to direct their lives. Everyone yearns to be free, no one accepts impositions, yet everyone fears freedom, which is not "doing what you want": rather, freedom is a friend of the dizziness of the void. For this reason, very often I have noticed in our guests that, deep down, they would

prefer or would rather receive direction about what they have to do, they prefer veiled authority, rather than the risk of making their own choices. Other guests even want to start a fight to see if our proposal is stronger. Preparation for meditation does not indicate what I will then do during the meeting with my guests, but it allows me not to fall for the siren song that the guests themselves sing without them noticing, investing me with a level of authority that I do not have. At this point, I remember Heidegger's lines:

"Only so long as we are not understood does this dubious authority work for us, Yet if we are understood, then it will become apparent whether we are philosophizing or not. If we are not philosophizing, then this authority was never there in the first place. It will then become clear for the first time that philosophizing fundamentally belongs to each human being as something proper to them, that certain human beings merely can or must have the strange fate of being a spur for others, so that philosophizing awakens in them." (Heidegger 1995, p. 13).

The philosophical consultant assumes this task of arousing the fundamental questions that initiate thought. It is not an easy task to raise questions and retreat the same beaten path, without making progress, as modernity has taught us. Many of our students want to know what they should do, they would like us to show them a project in every single detail, to be reassured about what they should be doing as philosophical consultants. When I hear their request, I feel like I have got it all wrong. We do not have a method, we are the method: it is the openness to listening that we have achieved, it is having accepted the weight of freedom, it is our being in the void, which allows us to understand what needs to be done in a particular context: the timings involved in a philosophical practice are not decided by us, they simply happen. It is difficult to awaken to thought, the best way is surely simply to try to remain awake to thought. For this reason, after having met with guests, a period of supervision is necessary, like a chat with colleagues, to return us to our limits. Moreover, listening to others, to my guests, fills me with more memories and afterwards, I need to repeat my own meditation once again. Only in this way do I show myself as how I am at my core and thereby dismiss the role that my guests had involuntarily given me.

Post-meditation reflection must be done with others not because others control what we have done, but because they help us dismiss the role. Only in this way does the fundamental aspect of Western thought remain, which is also critical and does not like gurus. For us, it is extremely important that facilitators acquire the habit (*habitus*) of routinely turning meditation back to themselves in order to regain the humility required for this task again and again.

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