

MEDITATION

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I have now been in conversation with spirits and angels concerning reflection, to which I do not know whether men have paid sufficient attention. If they do attend to this they will find that there are more arcana in the doctrine of reflection than in any other whatsoever. [SD 733]

. . . when [man] is in affection for understanding, and through that comes into perception of truth, he is then in the thought of his spirit, which is meditation. [DLW 404:8]

Swedenborg meditated, and the Writings speak strongly in favor of this practice which is almost universal among religions. Yet many followers of his Writings often know nothing of meditation, misunderstanding it, or even consider it dangerous. We would like to correct misunderstandings in this area, for meditation is one of the keys to regeneration.

In terms of the Writings, meditation is basically a way of opening up, experiencing and learning from the internal. It is the direct opposite of preoccupation with the external, material existence or preoccupation with one's own proprium. The Writings give it a central place, even though this is not so apparent; because references to it are scattered, and described under different terms in different ways. Although some know little of it, the interior spiritual aspect of mind is relatively easy to open and enjoy. Having done so, the person finds the internal is a vast, subtle realm in itself with much to teach.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes meditation as,

profound and generally peaceful consideration of truths that are thought to have great importance in ordering and living one's life. Meditation is especially esteemed and practised regularly by persons who have dedicated their lives to religious pursuits.¹

This article goes on to give references to meditation in all the world's major religions. Even though the richest literature and detailing of what is to be found in meditation occurs in Buddhist and Hindu literature, it also has prominence in Christianity and

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¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1975, Vol. VI, p. 750.

Judaism. It is a simple art, available to everyone—a direct approach to the interior life. It is perhaps the extravagant faddish claims of some current groups and the public show of meditation as an occult experience² that frightens and puts some people off. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that Swedenborg practised meditation and that it may be understood in terms of the Writings. In the hands of others, under other names, it looks alien, yet it is not. Those who sit quietly in an empty church in silent prayer are essentially meditating. When the Writings say: “if a man would but reflect he would see . . .,” they are advocating meditation.

We will first examine what meditation is in its essentials, and dispose of some of the faddish claims. Then we will look at Swedenborg’s own approach and the very sensitive and illuminating things that the Writings have to say on the matter.

THE HEART OF MEDITATION

What essentially is meditation? Its heart is the suspension of normal thought to experience influx and the interior qualities of mind. This is its main method and purpose. In the *Intercourse of Soul and Body* it is made clear that all mental life is given us by influx. But in normal daily activity we tend to identify with this influx, and take it over, so to speak, as though we are the formers of all our thoughts and the makers of our existence. Thought arises and it is spoken or carried into action as though we make it so. In this direction also lies proprium, for the implication is that there is no God and no influx, only the individual acting from himself. Meditation temporarily suspends this identification and carrying into action so that the interior qualities of mental life can be experienced, so that the process of influx can be experienced. It should be immediately apparent that this is anti-proprium. Indeed, one of the major values of meditation is to lessen the influence of proprium.

Let us look more closely at an average meditation session. A man has chosen a quiet time of day to sit relaxed with gaze fixed on a point. For ten minutes or so he will suspend any mental efforts of his own. Everything comes down to the attention fixed on a point. Sensations come and go. The thought occurs that this is a foolish waste of time. The thought is not identified with and passes. Distracting noises occur which are also noted and

² *Time Magazine*, Oct. 13, 1975.

incorporated into the fixation on a point. After a period in which the mind busily tries to distract or get him up, even the inner life begins to calm down. Soon there is the influx of ideas as though stemming from the spot. These too are noticed but not identified with. He begins to feel calmer, as though he had entered a new peaceful world. The spot turns into images which he notes are correspondences of his inner state. He has been concerned about the quality of his ends for some days. This theme comes back as though he can now see and move within his ends. He still doesn't identify with process. It emerges and he can watch its emerging and what it has to show. For moments he can see where his ends tend. For moments he senses the Divine working through his ends. About ten minutes have passed and he calls himself out of meditation, feeling calm and relaxed, and a little more confident that something higher is working out through him. This would be a fairly average session of a religious person who has practised meditation for some while.

It might be considered much the same as silent prayer except for the fixed gaze. It is quite unlike simply thinking or just verbalizing a prayer. Both would tend to interfere with perceiving influx. The value of fixing the gaze is simple. The point of concentration keeps the mind at its task of watching inner processes. If the gaze wanders, the mind wanders and the delicate process of sensing influx is lost. All meditation methods use some point of focus; and, as we shall see later, the difference between different points of focus is slight.

There are basically two kinds of meditation which really join and become one. The *Britannica* definition and Swedenborg's main approach both stress an internal focus on some idea of supreme importance. For instance Swedenborg says, "One day I was meditating upon the creation of the universe" (TCR 76). The focus is on a particular content. The other form of meditation, just described, does not identify with any content. Instead its internal focus is on what is occurring now in mind in order to look at mental processes without any controls and without identifying with them, or being caught up in their trends. Actually, the two approaches become one. The first focuses on an assigned topic, *i.e.* the creation of the universe, and the second has as its topic the spontaneous operations of mind. People who have little or no experience with meditation tend to make the first approach into

merely thinking about and conjuring up one's scientific about the creation of the universe. This is just thought and not meditation. To meditate on the creation of the universe one would loosely hold that focus and watch what new understanding flows in. It is higher than just thinking about a topic. We don't recommend that those new to meditation use a topic like this; they should just let the focus be whatever is occurring now. This is the more fundamental approach which unmask inner processes. After becoming practised in this more fundamental kind of meditation, then one can meditate on a topic as Swedenborg did and not get involved in merely thinking. Meditation is essentially a pleasant, mild exploration and, as such, one of its hallmarks is new insight, new discovery, and a whole new basis of understanding. We can give an example. I had long pondered what was really meant by the New Church and had gathered a large file of references so diverse that they had left me even more confused. While I was meditating with no given inner focus, the solution came to me as though someone had posed a forceful question, "what one thing are the Writings always dealing with?!" It was as though I could see all the Writings as a vast panorama colored at every point with celestial hues all having the same meaning. I could see the answer was the regeneration of people. It is *New* because they are being made new, and *Church* because this is the essence of a church. I felt stunned and pleased. Here was a simple, obvious solution I had missed. But typically this kind of sudden creative solution comes in a quiet spontaneous reflection that follows much detailed work and gathering of information. One who merely thinks about a topic usually conjures all that was already known. After all the facts have been gathered and searched over, and one is still stuck, then meditation on that area of concern can open up sudden flashes of insight. Such meditation occurs even in sleep when the issues have become central to the life. We are stressing here the basic roots of meditation so the student doesn't fall into merely thinking and ennoble this by the term meditation. At its root meditation is letting the mind go, that the onlooker might watch the spontaneous panorama of delicate internal processes. It is decidedly internal learning. The religious person can much more easily experience the Divine in this state than he can in normal waking life (HH 147). It should be easy to see why. It is a relaxed, open, receptive state. The usual effects of

ten minutes of meditation are to feel relaxed, refreshed and a little less presumptuous about one's self or others. Having practised being open and receptive, one tends to remain that way.

Almost all schools and religions that use meditation advocate doing so only a few minutes a day. Even during major training, Transcendental Meditation still advocates only 20 minutes at a time, twice a day. Those who spend whole years practicing it are engaged in a heroic effort at religious development that isn't even recommended for most people. A few minutes a day, set aside to open to the interior qualities of experience, is sufficient. The only rule is to temporarily suspend control and identification with mental processes. It is not an effort at control. The effort at control undermines the process and produces a host of internal difficulties. To produce these difficulties one need only try to fix the mind on one idea or image. The usual experience is that it drifts away in a matter of seconds; the drift is noticed some time later, and the mind is called back, only to drift away again. Even this is a useful experience, for it tends to undermine the proprial idea that we are easily masters of ourself. Thoughts, images, feelings come and go. They are not identified with or carried to exteriors. The interior source of experience is watched. *All that the Writings say of the interior as against the exterior are aspects of what is found in meditation.* The interior, generative aspect of experience is opened and revealed to awareness. The mind is found to be endlessly creative and subtle. The aspect of the self that easily thinks and speaks in correspondences becomes apparent. The depths of discovery in this realm are, in my experience, apparently endless * just as Swedenborg said.

CONFLICTING GURUS ON HOW TO DO IT

Once the real goal and nature of the process are seen, the conflicting claims of this and that ancient school fall into place. How should one sit, in the *sazen* position of the Buddhists? The westerner soon finds this position is nearly impossible and painful for those not accustomed to it. The position is not important. Whatever serves the inner goal can be used. To lie down, with eyes closed, may cause many to fall asleep. Most sleep can't

* See also W. Van Dusen, *The Natural Depth in Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). One of the best contemporary works in this area is L. Le Shan, *How To Meditate* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).

be counted as meditation. There is too little consciousness in it! Comfort with calm alertness is needed. Any position that serves this is acceptable. Should eyes be open or closed? Either way. Whichever serves best for the individual, to engender a still attentiveness. Some schools claim the necessity of using a mantra which is usually a Sanskrit name or phrase given to the subject by a teacher. Endlessly and silently repeating the mantra serves to jam the verbal circuits. It is as though the mind badly needs something to focus on. The mantra gives a harmless, nondistracting inward focus. For those who want to try the same way, it will be found that counting the exhaled breaths up to ten and repeating will do the same thing, or simply counting each exhaled breath as one will do as well. The exhaled breath is identified with more than inhaled because we are more relaxed when exhaling. Various kinds of harmless, nondistracting focuses have been used; staring at an outward point, meditating on a part of the body (*i.e.*, center of the forehead, heart beat, tip of a finger, etc.), symbolic hand positions, dance gestures, *etc.* Although various schools argue for the wonder of their approach over others, anything that can be used as a still point of focus will work. In church, gazing at the altar will do as well. One finds the most used approach yields so much that it begins to appear superior to all others. A focus provides a center for mind. A still sameness of the focus is necessary. Most of our external experience is of the mind in flight from experience to experience. Meditation, on whatever chosen focus, is the opposite of this flight. We are so accustomed to flitting from one thing to another that some sort of focus is particularly useful at first. As one becomes accustomed to the inner qualities of experience, these later can become the center, and no other focus is necessary. The debates about how one sits, what master so and so does, mantras, various foci, kinds of breathing, *etc.*, are just debates which lead away from the core of the experience. Try the simplest focus, sitting comfortably gazing at a point, or any focus that works for you.

Meditation is a gentle, subtle exercise. Those who hope for strange visions and breath-taking experiences, like an exciting television program, are going to be disappointed. The greatest danger in the beginning is that one will be too impatient, expect too much, and find it a waste of time. *Until you have gotten a real sense of what the interior of human experience is like and seen processes in yourself given to you like influx, you haven't even*

gotten into it. The earliest efforts have a calm, relaxing effect and this is sufficient gain for the beginning. In fact, this is why it is being used to treat tension states. Later you will have experience of the internal and become accustomed to influx. Large, very intense experiences are given occasionally only to patient long-term seekers who have already learned a great deal about how the interior of mind operates. Also, when meditation is understood inwardly, then it becomes easier to meditate anywhere, any time, in the midst of work and even in the midst of stress. It is, after all, an inner perceptiveness, and this perceptiveness is possible any time.

The major effects of meditation, put in probable order of their appearance are the following:

- a) relaxation, calming, refreshing.
- b) struggles with what is one's own (proprium) and what is influx.
- c) drift into brief periods in which the inner opens, represents itself and then is cut off as the individual tries to seize and control this process.
- d) learning of the mind's endless creativity and readiness to represent itself, correspondences.
- e) physical changes such as lowered respiration, lowered blood pressure, change in brain waves.⁴
- f) a gradual spiritualizing of values.
- g) personal religious revelations.

I would stress that the later effects are not to be sought, because seeking impedes their appearance. One is seeking to enter and understand the inner life; that is all. It is sufficient if one simply learns how to relax. Meditation tends to affect the rest of the life. After a short acquaintance I can often guess if a person has meditated and for roughly how long. A peaceful centeredness to their life is what I look for. If nothing else, meditation provides a peaceful refuge. Some people tend to over-identify with their life difficulties, as though there is no other way to experience life. Meditation is a peaceful refuge away from the noises of the world, available for king and pauper alike, anywhere, any time, a refuge that gives perspective on the outer life.

⁴ R. Ornstein, *The Nature of Human Consciousness* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1973), pp. 255-274.

SWEDENBORG'S MEDITATION

The documents bearing on Swedenborg's experience give only a fragmented picture of his personal practice and experience. Yet the particular fragments can be interpreted to reveal a fairly coherent picture. There are really several interrelated processes which go under different names and yet are internally related. These are prayer (especially nonverbal and reflective prayer), reflection and meditation, the hypnogogic, trance state, and dreaming. Swedenborg knew so much of these states that I have said elsewhere that no modern literature yet compares with the depth of his discoveries.⁵ All of these states bear on the internal of experience. Except for dreams, modern psychology has simply not paid as much attention to these areas as he did. Although we will focus on his meditation, the account will have bearing on his experience with all of these states.

His earliest reference to meditation mentions minimal breathing while in prayer,

There was then shown to me certain species of respirations. . . . I was first accustomed thus to respire in my early childhood, when saying my morning and evening prayers, and occasionally afterwards, when exploring the harmonies of the lungs and heart, and especially when deeply engaged in writing the works that have been published. For a course of years I continually observed that there was a tacit respiration, scarcely perceptible, concerning which it was subsequently given me to reflect, and then to write. I was thus during many years, from the period of childhood, introduced into such respirations, especially by means of absorbing speculations . . . as otherwise the intense study of truth is scarcely possible. [SD 3464]

Anyone who thinks Swedenborg over-emphasizes the importance of respiration in meditation should see the equally great emphasis in Hindu Yoga. The lessened breathing is the resultant of an intense inward concentration; inward concentration cannot be strengthened simply by breathing less. Lessened oxygen consumption is one of the clear findings with meditation.⁶ Both the depth and frequency of breathing lessen. Although Swedenborg later wrote that breathing might stop, this is hardly likely. He was working alone and had no one to observe him. The implication that he was not aware of breathing is that his meditation was so intense it had passed over into trance where

⁵ W. Van Dusen, *The Presence of Other Worlds* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

⁶ Ornstein, *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, pp. 255-274.

there is a temporary loss of all outer awareness. There is only internal awareness. In this state he experienced a panorama of visions and experiences in heaven and hell. The fact that his breathing had gotten so low means that his inward concentration was extraordinary. Likely not one in a hundred people who concentrated in prayer would have the same experience. The meaning of this is probably an unusually powerful mind which is accustomed to concentration and unusually persistent in seeking out its ends. My guess is that his earliest experience was with meditation that had a specific inner content because it was associated with seeking answers in prayer.

Yet his comments on meditation in *Rational Psychology* show experience with what Naranjo[†] now calls concentrative meditation, described above as focusing on whatever comes.

. . . we are able to approach nearer and nearer to the pure intellect, doing this by means of universal ideas and a kind of passive potency; and this, in that we remove particular ideas, that is, withdraw the mind from terms and ideas that are broken, limited, and material, and at the same time, from desires and loves that are purely natural. Then the human intellect, being at rest from heterogenous throngs, as it were, and remaining only in its own ideas and those proper to the pure intellect, causes our mind to undergo no other changes, or to draw forth no other reasons save those that are concordant with the ideas of the pure intellect. In this way our intellect enjoys inmost repose and inmost delight; for this concurrence then appears as an influx of a certain light of intelligence which illuminates the whole sphere of thought, and, by a certain consensus, I know not whence, draws its whole mind together, and inmosty dictates that a thing is true or good, or that it is false or evil. In this way our intellect is perfected in judgment which grows mature . . . [R Psych. 154]

There is no question in my mind that this reflects considerable experience with meditation. It isn't the statement of someone just thinking about the subject. His phrase, "passive potency," is a perfect brief description of the state.

My impression is that Swedenborg began with and used meditation that focuses upon spiritual ideas most of his life. Yet, in the period of *Rational Psychology* and the *Journal of Dreams* he also used meditation as a passive potency, simply watching the internal described above. It would be inappropriate to say he used just meditation. It was part of a whole series of states he explored, all of which tend to make conscious the internal of experience.

[†] C. Naranjo and R. Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York: Viking, 1971).

Minimal breathing and the presence of trance states⁸ are signs that he went further than most everyone else could do. I would in general say that meditation is a mild, safe and sufficient introduction to these inner states. The advantage over the hypnogogic, trance, and dreams is that there is more consciousness and control. But, on the other hand, the intensity of the inner is in weaker traces than would be true of trance, for instance. But for most people's uses it is sufficient. Swedenborg's experience that these inner states later became more apparent in normal waking life is also the usual experience of those who practice meditation. It isn't that the internal finally finds its way into the external man. It was always there. The person who comes to see the internal begins to recognize it more easily in daily life.

MEDITATION IN THE WRITINGS

Meditation in the Writings is discussed principally through the terms *meditation* (*meditatio*) and *reflection* (*reflectio*). As used in the Writings *meditation* refers to the process itself of seeking inner wisdom while *reflection* is actual perception from that process. Meditation is used both negatively (those given to excess pious meditation may appear sorrowful in the other life, HH 360) and positively.

When a man is in the affection of understanding, and through this comes into the perception of truth, he is then in the thought of his spirit, which is meditation; which does indeed fall into the thought of the body, but the tacit thought, for it is above this, and views the things which are of the thought from the memory as beneath itself; for from these it either concludes or confirms. But the affection of truth itself is not apperceived otherwise than as an effort of the will from something pleasurable which is within the meditation as its life. . . . [DLW 404]

This is a beautiful description of the process. The process is primarily affectional (the affection of understanding) and from this comes perception of truth. This is the thought of the spirit. It is like thought of the body but it is tacit or subtle, as though above and looking down on memory as beneath it. But the affection of truth is barely apperceived as an effort of the will, a pleasure within meditation as its life. And, in another place the Writings say that man is aware of meditation but not how the soul produces these things (DP 34). In several ways they reiterate that this is

⁸ Tafel, *Documents II*, pp. 531f.

basically an internal affectional process in which man thinks from the affection which is of his love (DP 61). Once the basic process is understood, then it is possible to put the inner forces on spiritual matters. For instance, it is possible to let one's sins come into awareness like a series of memories which spontaneously appear and illustrate a trend like avarice. One can also reflect on ends or uses. In fact meditating on ends is an unusually powerful and life changing approach (DP 152, 296: 10). The Writings say that the Sabbath day is a day for meditating on salvation and eternal life (TCR 301). Meditation is even a process for communicating with spiritual worlds, for a meditating person may be seen wandering in the society of his own kind (HH 438, DP 296: 6). In a number of places, the Writings indicate that a man's meditation may affect spirits about him. Swedenborg speaks remarkably little of technique but rather describes the inner process, its qualities, and its uses.

The term *reflection* is used in several different senses. The highest and most central of these would be reflection that emerges out of meditation. In this sense it means a spiritual perception of the real truth given by influx from the Divine (SD 2221). This is a perception above ordinary thought, a perception of spirit. In a number of instances it is said that spirits don't know their situation unless it is given them to reflect on it (AC 5883). Basically all reflection is from the Divine by influx into man, though it is often perceived as his own (AC 5508). The process in meditation of attempting not to think, and not identifying with thought that emerges, tends to undo proprium and make more apparent reflection which is given, as against reflection as merely a product of one's own thought. For instance, in the example above, when the forceful question came to me regarding what the Writings always dealt with, I wasn't aware then that this would answer my question as to the real nature of the New Church. Self-directed thought has a sense of where it is going, whereas this higher thought emerges before there is an understanding of what is being dealt with. It is much more like being given a surprise. It is appropriate that this highest sense of reflection as spiritual truth given to a person should also extend downward and include all perception, even sense perception. After commenting that reflection has more arcana in it than any other matter Swedenborg goes on to say,

What reflection effects can be sufficiently evident to anyone, in that he perceives no sensation of his body or of its parts, neither does he know that he has sensation, unless he reflects upon that part of his body; he then perceives heat, cold, pressure, indeed he feels that which he first endures. [SD 733]

This higher perception of truth or awareness lies behind even ordinary awareness of sensations. The spirit sees through the eye. The spirit makes sight possible. The higher is the cause of the lower. Meditation, by deliberately attempting to become aware of the internal, leads to the perception of influx which is the basis of all life experience. In precisely this way the effort of meditation spiritualizes and turns around the values. Slowly and somewhat laboriously the new student of meditation begins to pick up little fragments of thoughts and perceptions given by influx. Gradually the meditator becomes accustomed to the experience of influx and it becomes apparent in his experience (not just from doctrinal teachings) that all mental life is given by influx. From this view, proprium, what is of one's own alone, looks more and more insubstantial and almost simply a falsity. Spiritual reflection has its own pleasures. An analogy might be of leisurely wandering in a beautiful new garden. Meditation and its companion reflection are acquired tastes. It may seem a mean beginning to spiritual experience to sit and stare at a point, but it takes a great deal to quieten the external mind so that the internal can begin to stand forth. Swedenborg's own concentration was far greater than others will achieve.

Meditation is one of the avenues to regeneration, although this may not be immediately apparent. In the first place it gives voice to the inner, it teaches of influx first hand and thereby helps undo proprium. By opening the internal it opens the way to spiritual perception. Many places in the Writings indicate that awareness of the internal or higher is the key to spiritual development.

Those with whom the internal, spiritual man has been opened into heaven to the Lord, are in the light of heaven, and in enlightenment from the Lord, and from this they are in intelligence and wisdom: They see truth because it is true, and perceive good because it is good. But those with whom the internal, spiritual man has been closed, do not know that there is an internal man, still less what the internal man is. . . . [HD 44]

Indeed, some will probably respond to this paper by saying it is not possible to become aware of the internal and will cite some passages from the Writings that seem to suggest this, *i.e.* AC 2557.

Yet, if these passages are examined they imply that the man who is not spiritual, who is only natural, has a closed internal. These people cannot be aware of the internal. To them it seems merely an unreliable fantasy. The internal can be opened and indeed become very clear and manifest (AC 1175, 1914, 5920). Basically it takes a passive potency, listening and looking, rather than thinking and making. The key to meditation is not the technique, which has been over-emphasized by current schools. A sincere fool could succeed with almost any technique. The key is in the quality and persistence of the search, in the person's real ends. No amount of artful mental manipulation will overcome foolish or base ends. All the teachings in the Writings about angelic guards on the sacredness of the Word, the angel with a flaming sword, have to do with the guarding of the internal similarly. The student, after making gains in meditation, usually tries to repeat exactly the setting, time, method of concentration, *etc.*, in the hopes of assaulting the internal in the same fruitful way each time. It is a hard lesson to learn that this is simply not possible. The subtlest and most covert maneuvering of the external man simply becomes an obstacle to his own effort. The external's impatience is met by the internal's eternal patience. Let anyone who thinks that any technique opens the internal to his own proprial control try and see how foolish this is. That is part of the heart of the lesson to be learned. Technique has some role, just as I might say one is more likely to have a spiritual experience sitting quietly in church than while arguing with a neighbor. But its role is limited to opening up the first possibility. The root meditative practice is the opposite of mental flightiness and presumption. I hope it is immensely clear that if there is any maneuvering in meditation it is to put down the external man, to make it possible for the internal to be felt, heard and seen. It is precisely because the internal acts so differently—much more clearly, truly and richly—that it begins to educate the dumb external person to the fact that he is dealing with something higher, that is within him and all people. The external must become subject to the internal,⁹ which it was made to serve.

Meditation is not for everyone. Some have spent a lifetime in self control. For them a passive potency raises an awesome specter of negative possibilities. I have never known meditation

⁹ AC 5077, 5125, 5128, 5786, 5947, 10272.

in myself or in hundreds of students that wasn't generally a higher experience than average living. Yet some will construe that a passive potency could leave one open to the forces of hell. We get back so much of what is expected that those with such fears perhaps should avoid the experience unless they work with an experienced teacher. But, for people who would like to experience the internal, it is possible, relatively easy, and rewarding. Personally, I don't see how much of what the Writings say of the internal can really be understood until it is experienced. As the Writings imply, there are many more arcana in this relatively simple experience that have not been touched upon here. Our aim was simply to return meditation to some understanding and respectability. For those who wonder what the further arcana could be, they begin with all that the Writings have to say of the difference between the internal and external man and lead towards regeneration. In the view of the Writings one could not argue that meditation is the only way of regeneration but, because of its direct lessons, it is one of the major ways.

SEMOPHONE

THE LINGUISTIC ATOM

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The following article, based on a study of Indo-European word origins entitled "semophonics," espouses a generally disputed premise that in the earliest language individual sounds were the

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