

## Contemplation

One of the Wisdom Arts™

Contemplation is well-known as a practice of thinkers and sages, found globally in spiritual and philosophical traditions down through the ages. Is contemplation something we all can do to enhance our life? Contemplation is what I've boldly named one of the Wisdom Arts™ in my forthcoming book. The purpose of contemplation is to discover what is obscure or hidden in the everyday and the ordinary as well as the extraordinary, including the life mysteries; and beyond that, to behold enchantment and wonderment.

Contemplate:

to consider deeply

on sacred ground

in the temple of your body-mind

and seek what is hidden

or obscure.

As children we find wonder naturally then often leave it behind as we move into adulthood with all the tasks and accountability of having to earn a living and often to take care of and support others.

During contemplation, full and deep consideration can be given to something, and even when that is contemplating life problems, an intent may be to remember the beauty and wonder in life.

Some dictionaries offer meditation and reflection as synonyms to contemplation, but I think there are explicit differences. For example, with meditation mostly the aim is to clear the mind rather than focus a concern, idea, or creative inception, which is the ground of contemplation. To contemplate seems to have more similarities with reflection, except for a key distinction of intent, which is explained below.

The intent of contemplative practice is evidenced in its etymology, so here is a brief but fascinating look at its origins and associative words.

## Contemplation: One of the Wisdom Arts™

“Contemplation” comes from the Latin *contemplatus*, meaning “to gaze attentively, observe; consider, contemplate,” and originally, “to mark out a space for observation, as an augur (a diviner, sage) does”. In Latin “contemplation” is made up of the prefix *com* + *templum*. *Templum* is Latin for “temple”, originally described as a “piece of ground consecrated for the taking of auguries”. I like the specific term “ground” rather than a building or another constructed space because ground opens up the idea of nature, Earth, living plants and creatures. “Augur” and “auguries” is from the Old French and means “the divination from the flight of birds”---how beautiful is that? “Divination” is from the Old French, meaning “discovering what is hidden or obscure”.

All this illuminates a fuller meaning of what it is to contemplate, and here is my version again:

Contemplate:  
to consider deeply  
on sacred ground  
in the temple of your body-mind  
and seek what is hidden  
or obscure.

This is an imaginal and embodied perspective highlighting the body-mind temple as sacred ground and the intent to seek what exists but is hidden, shows a difference between contemplation and reflection. It’s not a matter of semantics, but one of intent.

This perspective of contemplation sets an intent of honouring the self as magnanimous, and rather than reach some resolution, to unfold what you do not yet perceive or what may be a life mystery.

To practice contemplation then is a broadening and deepening of consciousness, sometimes evoking input of the unconscious, both creative and revelatory. The aids to contemplation are described in the forthcoming book, *Elderhood: Practicing the Wisdom Arts*.

Extract from *Elderhood: Practising the Wisdom Arts™*. Pre-order your advance copy [Here](#)

I’ve boldly named contemplation as one of the Wisdom Arts™, described in full in my forthcoming book, *Elderhood: Practicing the Wisdom Arts™*.

My understanding of contemplation is drawn from lived experience---now in the third stage of my life --and a long study of adult learning, consciousness, and the full human psyche.

A brief description of Contemplation first appeared in ‘Standing in the Fire’, D. E. Percy, October, 2020