

Full Presence Meditation® : The art of cultivating and sharing Human Warmth

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Summary of workshop on Full Presence and Human Warmth held in Paris on 24th and 25th February 2018. By H el ene Bourhis

«Full Presence Meditation allows us to discover within the embodied imprint of human warmth, before it expresses itself into the world. » Danis Bois

On 24th and 25th February 2018, Danis Bois gave a workshop on Full Presence Meditation® during which he presented his new concept of Human Warmth. The Full Presence Meditation® he advocates offers an innovative perspective on meditation. The objective at its core is the embodiment of our humanity to allow us to become more present to ourselves, to others and to the world. For Danis Bois, it is by developing our quality of presence that we can develop the Human Warmth that is so lacking in our world today.

The meditation offered in this workshop is intended for people of good or average health, meaning people who do not require medical or psychological treatments. It does however have a place within preventative health approaches and is helpful for people temporarily experiencing difficulties in their lives, though its full dimension is of particular significance for those seeking a path of personal growth and self-fulfilment.

Danis Bois begins the workshop by a quick summary of the scientific literature on meditation, from the point of view of neurophysiology (effects on cerebral structures and their plasticity); cognitive sciences (improvement of cognitive skills: attention, volition, perception, memory, awareness and reflection); and finally health (effects on pain, stress, anxiety and depression).

But beyond these fields, he clearly integrates Full Presence Meditation® within a search for well-being as described by Ryff and Keyes (1995): «... finding self-acceptance, having a positive outlook on one's own life, having positive relationships with others, having mastery on one's own life and environment, being able to take one's own decisions, having autonomy and finally giving meaning to one's life. »[\[1\]](#)

« Full Presence Meditation® touches the body in a place that lies below the affect, emotions and controlled thought and gives access to the sensitive chord of the human part of the body that carries well-being, plenitude, joy and human warmth». Danis Bois

The ethics of trust in human nature

To introduce the concept of Human Warmth, Danis Bois uses a quote from Mathieu Ricard's book *The Art of Meditation* : « Meditation is a practice that allows us to cultivate certain fundamental human qualities. »

To develop this theme, he presents four founding principles that invite us to develop trust in human nature and in human warmth as an inner impression and an expression into the world:

1. Becoming familiar with a fairer and clearer vision of things

« As it enriches our perceptual potential, Full Presence Meditation® allows us to assess the effects of external events on our own body and on our emotional, affective and mental life and, on the basis of our bodily experiencing, to draw sense and meaning and adjust our attitudes. » Danis Bois

We are invited to take a step back from our lives, to take our time and to withdraw from agitation to create the best conditions to allow us to reflect more analytically on our ways of being in life.

As humans, we repeatedly and legitimately question the sense we can give to our lives. This existential questioning often makes us waver between the reality of an unsatisfactory existence and the aspiration to an unreachable ideal. Between those, there is room for manoeuvre and it is that space that Full Presence Meditation® proposes to explore.

Meditation is a process of amplification of attitudes and sense-feelings that are usually neither perceived nor within reach of our awareness. To achieve this, we need to enlist our introspective mastery in order to observe and to probe ourselves. It is not simply about perceiving an external event, but about grasping what plays out within our bodies and is invited to appear in our field of consciousness.

2. Cultivating and developing dormant intrinsic qualities

« Full Presence Meditation® mobilizes what is greatest in man. » Danis Bois

This notion is based on humanist thought and converges with Rousseau for whom : « all is well that comes from the hands of nature. » Left in human hands, it seems that human nature has altered over time. We are learning that mankind has the means do better. Being part of nature, we too are animated by the desire to self-produce, however, according to Spinoza, sadness comes when external things prevent us from achieving the conatus^[1].

To speak of human nature is to speak of a universal essence that concerns each and every one of us. This universal essence tends towards beauty, the best and perfection within all of us, regardless of race, gender or culture. Rather than seeking *what is greater than mankind*, we need to turn our attention towards developing *what is greatest within mankind*. It is about actualizing our potential to connect with our human nature and it is by enriching our perception that we mobilize the potential of human nature. Within this notion, nature tends towards perfection, plasticity, growth and adaptation. In saying this, we further the thought of Rogers for whom : « Man has within him, since birth, a vital force that drives him to develop, evolve, and fulfill his needs»^[2].

3. Happiness naturally being within us, that is where we need to seek it

« Full Presence Meditation® allows the individual to access the locus of the 'Sensible'^[3] from which attitudes change: through exposure to the beauty within, we begin to resemble it in our ways of being and in our actions». Danis Bois

Central to the development of the inner happiness/external happiness dialectic is the idea that we have within our bodies a sensitive region devoid of any turbulence that, when we access it, reflects back true moments of inner happiness. This locus of the *Sensible* acts as a buffer against external affects.

Before setting off on a search for well-being, we should ask ourselves three questions: what is my deepest wish? What are the things I want to improve that only depend on me? What trust do I have in my own possibilities? Asking those questions at the beginning of this quest does not imply that there is an answer. It's just about launching a process that will gradually reveal clues towards individual answers. Though external help is sometimes precious to bring clarity, the most appropriate answer is our own.

To this end, meditation provides a setting for self-encounter. There we face our own thought and its creative impetus to reshape our points of view, representations and assumptions, and we connect with a force driving us to action, and even a desire to live life fully.

4. Most people wish for more human warmth in their lives

« To practise Full Presence Meditation® is of course to bring your attention to the present moment, but it is mostly about developing a relational dimension that is warmly human and worthy of our humanity. Full presence to self and others is the door to accessing human warmth. » Danis Bois

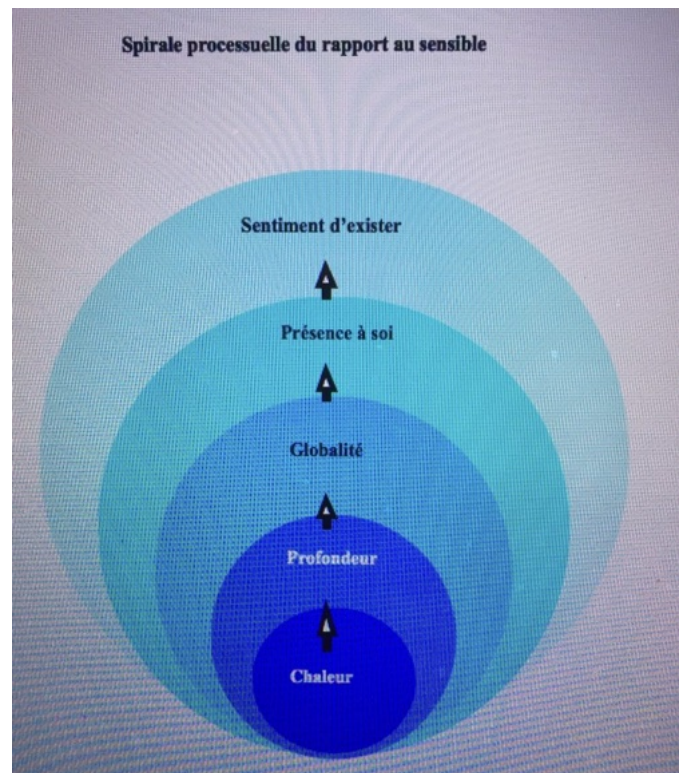
Faced with bad news, stress or an alarming situation, we have all experienced a sensation of coldness in our bodies and conversely, in an experience of kindness, the warming of our heart and our body. Warmth is associated with positive thoughts and attitudes and all that is linked to the biology of regeneration (such as oxytocine and endorphins).

The concept of Human Warmth originates from the tactile sensation of warmth felt by people when touched by warm hands and they discover the slow unfolding of movement within themselves. At that moment, people express their awareness of the dynamic process they feel within that enriches their ability to relate.

There is never enough human warmth and always too much affectivity. These two components are poorly differentiated for most people. Affectivity expresses itself through needing the other, to make up for what is missing, to be reassured and to exist. Human warmth is about being open to others without needing them.

The concept of Human Warmth as presented here reiterates the internal and external manifestations of the Processual Spiral of the Relationship to the *Sensible* through the discovery of inner organic feelings. The various sense-feelings described in this model are indeed manifestations that reflect Human Warmth leading to attitudes and behaviours that tend towards kindness, compassion, empathy, listening and optimism.

Processual Spiral of the Relationship to the *Sensible* and Manifestation of Human Warmth (Bois, 2007)



Full Presence Meditation®–Human Warmth–Danis Bois

Though it is necessary to journey back « from self towards self » to discover the human warmth inherent to life's movement, human warmth should not remain within the individual and singular sphere. The aim is first and foremost to manifest human warmth towards others.

The tenderness of a gaze, of touch and of simply being present can sometimes make a difference in the life of others, regardless of age, gender, color or culture. The need for human warmth, for attention and affection is within human nature as human beings are first and foremost beings of alterity as Lévinas tells us.

The process of Human Warmth is thus a movement from self towards self and from self towards others. The teachings inherent to the practice of Full Presence Meditation® emphasize an initial return to our presence to self in order to offer this presence to the other, to finally achieve a dual circulation called « actuative reciprocity » relating.

- ***Empathy, intersubjectivity and actuative reciprocity***

In the context of Full Presence Meditation®, communicating human warmth happens through this type of reciprocity. Essentially, actuative reciprocity brings together the notions of empathy and intersubjectivity as the starting point of the relationship.

Having considered the concept of empathy in its broadest aspects (cognitive, affective and psychical), we arrived at the empathy defined by Rogers, which is about welcoming the other through the combination of resonance and of the strategy of respect for the other. So it is a way of being with others that entails that putting ourselves in their place is certainly not having answers for them.

We then looked at intersubjectivity, which is an important phenomenological notion as it is founded on empathy as well as on corporeal grounding and lived experience. The more intimately we inhabit our bodies, the finer our awareness will be in perceiving ourselves as embodied beings. In this perspective, the body as lived depends on the way in which we inhabit it and on our attention to it. The body is all the more embodied that it is conscious of its own corporeality, and consequently originally open to the world.

In this light, the dimension of reciprocity on the mode of the *Sensible* begins to emerge. The same modalities apply : being corporeally self-aware, unifying body and mind, constructing a space that is embodied and gradually developing perception of oneself and of the other.

There are variants from the conventional definition of reciprocity : « the quality or state of being reciprocal », which relates to the world of the economics of solidarity and the dialectic of gifting. A more moral ethics of reciprocity also exists: « to treat others as we would like to be treated ».

It was the philosopher Buber who first raised the importance of reciprocity. For him it is a direct relationship that goes beyond the dimension of exchange. For Buber, the world of relating is a vast world that exists in three spheres: that of life with nature; that of life with man where the relationship to the absolute becomes possible and even manifested; and that of the communion with spiritual essences where the cradle of true life lies and where love is a cosmic radiation.

This vision of a wholistic relational dimension that associates empathy, intersubjectivity and reciprocity can be found in the concept of ‘actuating reciprocity’ of Danis Bois. To these aspects, he adds relating to oneself and others through the shared experience of the *Sensible*. This is made possible through the strong and intense body immersion that is perceived and conscious when in contact with the inner movement. It is in this relational atmosphere that the triple movement of Human Warmth reveals itself : towards oneself, from oneself to the other and from the other towards oneself.

- ***Human Warmth and kindness***

Danis Bois prefers the term Human Warmth or relating through human warmth to that of kindness. Though kindness is an expression of human warmth, in effect it often becomes a strategy to obtain the cooperation of others and thus create a benevolent climate that makes success certain. That is the reason why the strategy of kindness has become a benchmark in coaching. This being said, showing kindness towards self and others is essential to the quest for relationships built on human warmth.

In this perspective, being kind requires profound work and high standards for ourselves. It's about rekindling our humanity or more precisely activating our originally good, generous, dynamic and warm human nature.

Full Presence Meditation® helps to reveal the nuggets of human warmth that lie in a most often dormant place in the body. The path to experiencing within the qualities that express the presence of human warmth is limpidly simple. We experience during the meditation the link between a bodily sensation, a sense-feeling and a tendency to actualize changes in our attitudes.

From bodily experiencing to Human Warmth – a positive process of construction

1. Perceiving *warmth* echoes a sense of warm trust that influences our self-confidence, our trust in others and the other's towards us
2. Perceiving *depth* echoes a sense of consideration and engagement that influences our degree of interest, curiosity and motivation
3. Perceiving *wholeness* echoes a sense of unity, stability and solidity that influences our way of relating in daily life
4. Perceiving *presence to self* echoes a sense of self-existence that influences our quality of presence to others
5. Perceiving a *sense of existence* echoes a sense of autonomy that influences self-confidence in our actions

Knowing by contrast as a process of becoming aware of previous inner states

As we go deeper into the practice of meditation, the dimension of the process of 'knowing by contrast' reveals itself. In our process of discovery, we are invited to give value to the inner singular knowing that emerges from experiencing the *Sensible*. The encounter within bodily experiencing, from which an inner knowing arises, leads to new perspectives on previous behavioural patterns.

1. Experiencing *warmth* reveals the hitherto absence of a relationship to aliveness, source of doubt, mistrust and lack of confidence.
2. Experiencing *depth* reveals the hitherto superficial aspect of our ways of being.
3. Experiencing *wholeness* reveals a hitherto fragmented, disunified state and a lack of solidity.
4. Experiencing *presence to self* reveals our hitherto disconnection from self and others.
5. Experiencing a *sense of existence* reveals our hitherto lack of self-confidence.

A reversal of values regarding our relationship to the past then occurs. Conventional psychology usually invites us to explore the past in order to bring to light repressed trauma. In the context of the *Sensible*, the past seems to renew in the present in the form of new perceptions of inner states and tonalities that carry the hidden memory of an inner state, attitude or way of relating more than it does of an event.

Some examples of expressions that illustrate 'knowing by contrast' follow. Enriching perceptual potentialities leads to becoming aware of the previous state in contrast with the current one. So for example, at the moment of experiencing a « living body » : « I love to feel that my body is alive », the person becomes aware of a previous state. An unsuspected process of non-life is then recognised : « I didn't realise that I was in a process of non-life, of non-me ». In another example : at the moment when the person discovers a state of trust within, « This method has given me back a degree of self-trust », an awareness arises by contrast that until then, unexpectedly, there had been a feeling of uselessness: « Being perfect, otherwise I am useless... to not make mistake ».

'Knowing by contrast' examples

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| « I love to feel that my body is alive. » | « I didn't realise that I was in a process of non-life, of non-me. » |
| « Today I felt Life within me, it was a second birth. » | « I saw life as being outside of myself, around me but never in me. » |
| « I had tears running down my cheeks; they were not tears of sadness but tears of intense joy as it was so delicious. » | « I was desperate, deep inside. » |
| « Today I am becoming aware of the breadth of this work of construction, of solidity, of my capacity to adapt. » | « I didn't like the unpredictable. » |
| « This method has given me back a degree of self-trust. » | « Being perfect, otherwise I am useless... to not make mistake. » |

Filiation of Full Presence Meditation®

Generally speaking, meditation is associated with spirituality. For Kabat Zinn, *Mindfulness* is a renewed form of buddhist practice. Full Presence Meditation® does not claim to belong to any spiritual movement and fits within a spirituality of immanence – that is to say without belief in a God or in any dogma – which places our humanity at the centre of our growth process at the end of which we can discover the purest joy, the greatest plenitude and the highest intensity of Human Warmth. This can be achieved by enriching our perceptual abilities and developing full presence in a *Sensible* relationship to ourselves, to others and to the world.

Its grounding in phenomenology

« Full Presence considers the body as the locus of self-experience, from which we sense-experience ourselves and that we are alive. The degree of presence to self defines the depth of presence to the other. » Danis Bois

Being present is to be present to what is unfolding in the moment, as musicians do when discovering a score as they play it.

This meditation focusses on perception and advocates that perception precedes consciousness. The perceptual dimension of Full Presence lies in restoring a quality of presence to inner life and in particular to all the phenomena that appear in connection with the inner movement when it is perceived and conscious.

When directed towards bodily states and thought states, Full Presence allows us to grasp ourselves directly and in real time of action. The characteristic of perception is that it needs no

intermediary to become aware of the phenomena appearing in the experience. So with Full Presence, we are aware of what we perceive (it is not because we are aware that we perceive).

Through corporeal subjectivity, a ‘non-reflective thought’ activity occurs through a dynamic process of emergence that does not use the usual reflective pathways. Practicing this inner knowing during meditation gives us access to a form of sense-felt thought or thought sense-feeling.

So we need to take the time to feel our inner-body states, to gradually discover what is written deep within us – a tendency towards fulfillment.

- **Its humanist grounding**

« Perceiving the inner movement that is the very heart of Full Presence Meditation® is to contact this dynamic force that helps us to develop solutions to our problems». Danis Bois

Humans are intended to move, change and set themselves in motion. This idea was taken up by Rogers for whom « a same living principle animates the individual and the universe, thereby creating movement, along its own directional process [\[1\]](#) ». Any change process therefore implies the setting in motion of something. This being said, are we aware that we possess within the tangible and palpable manifestation of a life force? Perceiving the inner movement that is the heart of Full Presence Meditation® is to connect with this dynamic force that helps us to develop solutions to our problems.

The inner movement is described as a life force, a force for transformation that sets in motion the potentialities of our being.

- **Its grounding in the paradigm of the *Sensible***

« Full Presence Meditation® facilitates the encounter between living matter, inner movement and the subject who perceives him/herself in the act of perceiving, sensing and thinking. It is the premise to experiencing the human warmth intrinsic to life's movement ». Danis Bois

The notion of presence fills a relational space created by qualitative listening, kindness, and the clear will to learn from this way of relating. Establishing a relationship of presence happens in successive stages. Firstly the need to concentrate, then mobilizing a form of attention at the same time focussed and opened, and finally Full Presence that leads to a feeling of ‘flow’ when no effort of attention is required. It's total harmony. The relationship of presence to the Human Warmth that lies within the body in the locus of the *Sensible* derives from this. From this perspective, we are in the presence of a 9th sense, [\[2\]](#) or *sense of matter*, that represents the most subtle form of inner perception.

Full Presence Meditation® favours the access to the locus of the *Sensible* in an encounter between living matter, the inner movement and subjects who perceive themselves as perceiving, feeling and thinking. It is the premise to encountering the human warmth of life's movement. This warmth gives the sensation of a sun within that radiates towards others. It is important to develop this natural human warmth that we all carry within and calls to be shared with others.

Meditative practice example : how to cultivate the Human Warmth within

Atmosphere

Meditative practice takes central stage in the warm atmosphere created by the people taking part in this workshop. Several times during the day, we take part in guided meditations that are in a way the lived illustration of the philosophy of the *Sensible*

Silence as active support

« *When silence is inhabited by human presence, it becomes an active principle* » Danis Bois

The emphasis is on listening to the silence as the fundamental support of full presence. Listening to the silence gradually shifts from the objective sound background towards an inner, subjective atmosphere. We are then witness to a dynamic of transfer from listening to objective silence (the absence of external noises) to subjective silence (a qualitative relating).

And so the silence becomes a quality of presence. When silence is inhabited by human presence, it comes alive and we can then experience the presence of an inner movement that creates a profound, peaceful, calm and tranquil collective atmosphere that optimises each participant's own connection. It gives rise to the sense of sharing a common experience of depth and of human warmth that participants experience in their own way. This moving silence awakes the most intimate part of self, bringing to life positive and warm inner tonalities.

Immobility of the body's posture

«*The immobility of the posture – sitting comfortably and relaxed – participates in the quality of the collective and individual silence. It also expresses the will to step back from agitation and take time for oneself.* » Danis Bois

The posture of the body is important, particularly immobility combined with a relaxed body. Both are pre-requisites facilitating the emergence, embodiment and revelation of the inner movement. It also establishes a sense of individual and collective stability for those who experience it and become aware of it.

The instruction systematically given at the beginning of the meditation is : « each of you participates in the quality of the collective silence. » It means that the collective silence contributes to the quality of the individual silence and conversely, generating in this way a relational reciprocity between immobility and mobility, inside and outside. From this a sense and an awareness of wholeness and even totality follows, *the one being in the whole and the whole being in the one* animated by the same slow, whole and profound movement.

From bodily warmth to Human Warmth

We then turn inwards towards the thermal warmth of the body to distinguish warm and cold areas, and to feel how the warmth spreads in the course of the meditation. Finally this warmth radiates from the heart to the whole body. This happens when the inner movement is more

embodied and a warm feeling diffuses throughout the body triggering various organic sensations that are the starting point of Human Warmth.

Visual atmosphere : access to a suffused and restful coloring

The visual sense is also stimulated. Through closed eyelids we take note of the presence of a colored atmosphere, suffused and restful in the sense that closing our eyes is to turn inwards and cut ourselves off from external distraction. As we become accustomed to a most often blue luminosity – sometimes another colour appears – we notice the presence of a slow animation that fills our internal space and external space undifferentiatedly.

The thought that arises

After perceiving these sensations, a state of awakening manifests that gives access to the direct emergence of meaning in the form of non-reflective thought. Sometimes imaginary, metaphoric or symbolic, this form of thought provides a basis for reflection.

Conclusion

With the conscious perception of the inner movement, positive mental states appear that support the emergence of Human Warmth.

Being verbally guided in the meditation, we first observe a state of physical stability that echoes a mental stability.

We are then invited to perceive in real time states of consciousness that alter sequentially to allow *qualities of the mind* to emerge: being stable rather than unstable, relaxed rather than tense, peaceful rather than pre-occupied, calm rather than agitated, to finally reach a state of serenity and plenitude.

We then observe the *qualitites of the heart*: a state of warmth, softness, trust, kindness, happiness and joy.

When the qualities of the heart and of the mind combine, we directly witness in awareness the transition from one state towards another, which bathes us in an atmosphere of warmth, wholeness, self-presence and existence that are the many qualities of Human Warmth.

« We then learn to cultivate the human warmth at the core of human nature. To 'cultivate' is to dig in the depth and to stir the fertile soil of the living principle that sits as a seed in the human body. It is also adopting a certain discipline so that the seed of beauty and betterment takes root in our ways of being. Finally to cultivate is to practise meditation regularly in order to 'harvest' the fruits of human warmth. They are intimate sensations that turn into a sun for ourselves that radiates around us, as beauty, love, happiness, joy and motivation spread like a positive rumour: Mankind is thirsty for human warmth, it is the foundation to knowing how to live together. » Danis Bois

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[1] Translation from the French quoted text.

[2] According to Robert Schleip at the British Fascia Symposium 2018, we should add to the 7 recognised senses (the 5 exteroceptive senses, the vestibular sense and the proprioceptive sense) the 8th sense of interoception. We could then consider the *Sensible* to be our 9th sense.

[1] Term used by Spinoza to define the effort by which each thing strives to preserve its being. Man is by nature a living force and a movement of preservation.

[2] Translation from the French quoted text.

[3] 'The term *Sensible* as we use it refers to the Paradigm of the *Sensible* of Bois (2009). It is a form of body-mind sensibility manifesting through a particular quality of resonance that emerges from the embodied experience of the individual in conscious relationship with the unfolding of inner phenomena. The use of this meaning of the word is shown by the use of *italics* and an upper case *S*.'

[1] Translation from the French quoted text.