Title: Conversations
Subtitle: Za-Zen
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[Japanese : za, to sit down (from Middle Chinese dzua) + zen, silent med

zazen

Kodo Sawaki practicing zazenZazen is at the heart of Zen Buddhist pract
other meditation in that it uses no meditation object or concept to focus
first still the mind. Then after years of practice to reach a state of pure
that the mind can realize its own Buddha nature.

In Zen Buddhism, sitting meditation or zazen (Japanese: 座&#3110
concentration") is a meditative discipline practitioners perform to calm t
experience insight into the nature of existence. While the term originally
it is now commonly used to refer to practices in any posture, such as wa

During zazen, the hands are folded together into a simple mudra over the
one breathes from the hara (the center of gravity in the belly) and the ey
eyes being neither fully open nor shut so that the practioner is not distra
the same time is kept awake. (The latter practice has its origins in a sup
close their eyes during meditation are said to be in the hungry ghost cav
Keeping the eyes only half way closed keeps the practitioner from becom
distractions, but still allows light to come into the eyes to keep the prac

History and Tradition
Long periods of zazen, usually performed in groups at a zendo (meditatio
periods of kinhin (walking meditation). The beginning of a zazen period i
ringing a bell three times (shijosho), and the end of a round by ringing t
Before and after sitting on the zafu, zen practitioners perform a gassho
practitioners, and to the teacher.

In Japan, seated zazen is traditionally performed on a mat called a zabu
called a zafu. The common positions used to sit on the zafu are:

kekkafuza (full-lotus)
hankafuza (half-lotus)
Burmese (a cross-legged posture in which the ankles are placed together
seiza (a kneeling posture using a bench or zafu)
In addition, it is not uncommon for modern practitioners to sit zazen in a
behind the lower back to help maintain the natural curve of the spine.

Misconceptions about Zazen

To many in the West, zazen is an almost completely unfamiliar practice, for many misconceptions to spring up. One common misconception is that the shutting out of all worldly stimuli in order to reach some special, sup example, in the film Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the character Li Mu (李慕白) (played by Chow Yun Fat) describes reachi meditation which is "pure light". While the zazen experience is inherently practitioner, and such phenomena are not at all out of the question, such goal of zazen.

However, to many who practice zazen there is a direct correlation betwee focused state of mind and a relaxed body (Johanus Itten, Elements of Co in martial art activities as well as Chinese, Japanese, and even Western calligraphy, for these are Fine Arts. In these arts the medium is unifying "correct" therefore one has to begin with this "zanshin" state of being be art, so that the work is executed with an almost certain action. This proc and many mistakes that have to constantly be corrected in detail." Medit does not take on a dogmatic theological pantheon of worship, but instead foundation of a rational and natural inquiry into the reality of nature. En focused state of mind and a relaxed body that allows one to approximate nature. The arts in these cultures were often used as a way for perfectin meant to inflate the ego as a desire for greatness in the particular field Instead, it seems that they would use the practices to further their abilit certain truth about nature. It is important to note that Zazen holds medit evident and this has an interesting correlation to Western philosophy's a stemmed from RenÃ© Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy. It is a position in human culture, but it does not necessarily resolve the proble philosophy, however the practice is a cogent one and not to be misunder philosophy, it is a critical discipline.