

Lionel Coudron, more and more serene !

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By Pauline Lorenceau

A doctor, nutritionist, acupuncturist and yogatherapist, Dr Coudron is never short of good mood and projects... that are a relief! More of a philosopher than he seems, he gives us the keys to good health, the ones that give meaning to life and invites us to work on our body of sensations as much as on our mind.

Journal du Yoga You've just released a new book, why exactly?

Dr Lionel Coudron This book is radically oriented towards the philosophy of yoga. That is to say, the whole state of mind and the work that one can do on oneself without being a great technician of postures. It's an approach that also integrates benevolence and the latest knowledge of neuroscience. You know, originally, yoga is above all a philosophy in the etymological sense of the term: a love (philo) of wisdom (sophia) and a method of meditation as described in the Yoga Sutras.

JdY Isn't this approach to serenity what you want to implement in the yogatherapy project for the Orpéa-Clinéa group of clinics?

Dr L.C. Yes, absolutely, I was approached by this group that manages 500 EHPAD clinics (*accommodation establishments for dependent seniors*) around the world (psychiatric, follow-up care and rehabilitation). At the request of its director, in two of them, which specialize in cancerology, we set up an individual yogatherapy protocol, directly at the patient's bedside. This is a program of patient accompaniment, on doctor's prescription. We integrate the medical team, already composed of physiotherapist, psychologist, occupational therapist, psychomotor specialists...

JdY What will be your mission?

Dr L.C. The goal is indeed that of yoga, "*yogaschitta vritti nirodhah*", to bring the patient back to serenity. We start from the principle that by being "serene", the patient mobilizes his resources much better to heal or to endure the treatments. Giving the patient the means to better live what he or she is experiencing has become fundamental.

JdY How can the results of this approach be scientifically measured?

Dr L.C. In the case of oncology, for example, in order to best accompany the patient towards recovery or remission with his/her conventional treatments, we need to know how he/she is feeling. To do so, we can assess it according to 3 axes: the feeling of pain which is directly correlated to the capacity of acceptance, stress versus serenity, sleep disorders and fatigue versus vitality. Yogatherapy helps the patient in each of these areas, and this is crucial for his/her healing. For 20 years, studies have been validating these mechanisms. Several elements are advancing at the same time and end up making us say that yes, the state of the person, his/her acceptance of the disease are determining factors for his/her recovery.

JdY Determining the patient's psychic state?

Dr L.C. Yes, and this is the strength of yoga, the psychic state is correlated to his physical state. We are not in a psychotherapy which is limited to listening to the person. We have tools that work on the body. For example, a patient with a generalized anxiety that I have been following for a few years.

During our first meetings, she was tetanized, in a state of permanent panic, barely breathing. As long as she has this chest tightness, she won't be well. In a yoga posture, I bring her to work on a pleasant feeling. We are well aware that the psychic state is determining, and that to have a feeling of serenity, we need to feel relaxation in our body. Yoga is not only about restoring movement, it is also about bringing a feeling of fluidity in the body which is accompanied by a feeling of well-being.

JdY So you can have this feeling of well-being while you're sick?

Dr L.C. On certain pathologies, (such as chronic polyarthritis pain or people with generalized cancer), we are not going to be able to cure the person, but to bring them to live better with their body. When we are in an internal struggle, it triggers anger, fear, stupor, discouragement and even depression. Thérèse Brosse has clearly shown the appearance of these emotional states after mourning, states that accentuate pain. If I have back pain and I feel an injustice and I am in a state of revolt against my back, I will have even more pain and if I think that it is irremediable, I will get depressed... What yoga offers is to take into account this globality and to find a connection with the body.

JdY Aren't we in denial in the face of various sufferings or the degradation of our body?

Dr L.C. Of course, and this is where we can observe a shift in the notion of yoga, between an American vision and a more European one. We are not in a superman yoga, nor in a yoga where I can suspend my breathing for 6 months and defeat death. I am in a type of yoga for a human being who is moving towards the acceptance of his condition and his fragility, who is going to grow old and even disappear, and to make him feel as well as possible with his disorder, with his handicap.

JdY Yoga can also intervene before illness?

Dr L.C. In yogatherapy, we are more in contact with people who are suffering, therefore with a therapeutic goal, but yoga is also involved in prevention. As the second verse of the Yoga Sutras reminds us, "Yoga is the stopping of the agitation of the mind", thus arriving, for ourselves, to a real serenity. Beware, we must add to this the notion of emotional disturbances with all the disorders of the being that are reflected in the body: tightness of chest, clenched jaws, tight forehead ... Yoga speaks to us of calm for all the dimensions of the being, in its totality. If it reminds us that suffering is inherent to the human condition (II.3), it can also be avoided (II.16). We are certainly the fruit of our past, but today we can help to diminish and even avoid future suffering by becoming aware of it now!

JdY What do you think of the concept of energy?

Dr L.C. When we talk about energy, it is by simplification to avoid addressing all the mechanisms and circulation of the underlying fluids, as in the notion of acupuncture or nadi. Finally this notion of energy is very simple, it is what I feel in my body. And one of the objectives of yoga would be to circulate or recirculate energy. In order for this energy to circulate, I must not be in a state of tension caused by blocked emotions that will persist. The goal of yoga will be to reconnect my body to a state of calm, which will allow it to function normally. As we are not aware of our internal tensions, the first step is to make a small assessment of oneself, to observe oneself using several inputs. How do I feel in my body sensations? What is my emotional state? Angry, annoyed, tense... This exercise is theoretically simple, but in everyday life it becomes complicated because we are caught up in our actions! As shown in verses I.11, I.12 and I.13 of the Yoga Sutras you have to practice developing the witness. The final stage is when I am detached from myself and observe myself as an external object.

When I assess myself, I take a step back. As soon as I stop on my own functioning, I am observing myself and I detach myself. We can also assess our beliefs and feelings. I propose five questions: Am I calm? Do I feel safe? This question may seem insignificant when everything is going well... Am I confident? And do I accept and appreciate myself as I am? With my migraines, my stomach ache... my treatment. It is very simple, and when you've answered those five questions, you know where you stand. Once again, it's a difficult process, hampered by powerful emotions. Not to mention that it's a real job.

JdY Who's resisting?

Dr L.C. Doing this job is inherent to our condition. For 100,000 years, human beings have had this ability to become aware, to step back and see things independently of ourselves. This principle allows me to de-center myself. This idea is far from being revolutionary, the Yoga Sutras, the Greek philosophers already said so. But we still feel that we are in the very beginning of our evolution. We can see the violence and the level of emotional reaction nowadays, reason and calm are not yet the dominant values.

JdY In your book, you also give us a lot of practical exercises for meditation or simple stretching. But it's not always easy to do them on your own?

Dr L.C. Yes, that's why you can go to the website of the book: www.le-vrai-nom-du-bonheur.fr which is completely free and where you can download all the exercises of meditation, relaxation and visualisation.

TO READ

Le vrai nom du bonheur est la sérénité, by Dr. Lionel Coudron, Ed. Kero, 2018, 17 euros.

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TO GO FURTHER

Free meditation, relaxation and visualisation exercises, on www.le-vrai-nom-du-bonheur.fr