



# *Lectio Divina*

## Holistic Meditation for Enlightenment

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### What is the *Lectio Divina*?

Within Christian traditions, several meditative tools were developed throughout the centuries. Based upon the meditation of ancient Greek philosophy called *Anagōgē*, Christianity perfected spiritual methods for enlightenment and mystical union. The key figure for recycling Greek meditative techniques into Christianity was the Alexandrian philosopher Origen and his disciples, around the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. In the West, the most elaborated and successful meditation exercises were called *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading in Latin).

The *Lectio* is at the core of Western spirituality and Christian meditation. The *Lectio* consists of a combination of different spiritual exercises in a single one, divided in four stages. For centuries, European monasticism has practiced and preserved the *Lectio*—until today.

### The Method

Starting with a holy reading—usually a short, random portion of the Bible—, the meditator delves into the first stage, which is properly called *Lectio* (Reading). Traditionally the passage is read four times—or as many as needed—, and different meanings and aspects are grasped in every reading. The reading needs to be performed calmly and in depth, pausing at every word for a greater understanding and memorization.

The second stage is called *Meditatio* (Meditation). The meditator will ponder the reading and use it as a meditative tool. Either repeating the Biblical passage or mentally depicting it, the meditation goes on as far as the meditator wants, until the meaning of the Scripture has enabled one to transcend the present moment and get closer to the Divine.

The third stage is when the meditator is presented to the Divine—to which he is united thanks to the meditative stage. At this stage, called *Oratio* (Prayer), the meditator engages in a prayerful dialogue. Prayers can be of thanksgiving, request or praise, according to personal feelings. Prayer can be vocal or mental, even though monks would normally pray in silence.

The fourth and final stage is the climatic moment of the mystical union with the Divine. At this point, the *Contemplatio* (Contemplation) is offered, when the meditator just admires the different attributes of God that come to him at that moment. Normally, the beatitude of the *summum bonum* (absolute good) is acquired at this level. Once ended, the meditator will slowly return to the present moment through the awakening of his senses.

Even though the *Lectio Divina* is today practiced within the Catholic tradition, the core of the structure of the original *Anagōgē* is truly universal and it can be easily adapted to one's spiritual preferences. Any reading can be used, and the being contemplated in the mystical union can be whoever the meditator wishes—divine or not. In this guided session, a neutral, non-denominational textual fragment from a Greek philosopher will be used, and we will be focusing on the absolute good for the mystical union process.

### About Dr. Boaz

Dr. Boaz Vilallonga, Ph.D. is a research scholar at the Department of Classics of Columbia University. He obtained his doctorate in history of religion from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. Dr. Boaz studies the relationship between ancient religion and modernity. Besides his scholarly work, Dr. Boaz runs a spiritual coaching practice in New York City, where he helps people awaken the spiritual self and achieve a full, meaningful life. Proficient in ten languages, Dr. Boaz has had an intense spiritual journey, including Catholicism—a denomination in which he was clergy. Throughout his journey, Dr. Boaz has mastered ancient religious theory and practice that has shaped the way he understands religion and spirituality for 21<sup>st</sup>-century humankind. Among other meditation techniques, Dr. Boaz has practiced the *Lectio Divina* meditation for 10 years. He learnt this technique with monastic masters in Benedictine and Cistercian abbeys in Spain, France, Italy and Germany.