



Painting the Inner Sistine Chapel, by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Just as we need scaffolding to build a building, just as scaffolding was needed for Michelangelo and his apprentices to paint the frescos on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, so we need a certain kind of framework to bring us to the essence of this inner work, right at the edge of this in-breath, this out-breath, this body, this moment. But just as when the building is built, the ceiling completed, the scaffolding is no longer needed and comes down, never having been part

of the essence of the endeavor, simply a necessary and useful means for furthering it, so with meditation, the very scaffolding of instructions and framework is dismantled, dismantles itself really, and only the impalpable, wordless essence remains, that essence being wakefulness itself, beyond and underneath, "before" thinking even arises. What makes it interesting is that meditative scaffolding is needed in every moment, and by the same token, it needs to be dismantled in every moment, not later, at the end of some work, such as the Sistine Chapel, but moment by moment. This is accomplished by knowing that it is merely scaffolding, however necessary and important, and not being attached to it. Letting it be erected and dismantled moment by moment. [â€™] It is extremely important for us to know this and remember this from the very beginning of our encounter with meditation so as to not lose ourselves in, or find ourselves clinging to, the merely conceptual, to an ideal, or to a particular teacher or teaching or method or instruction, however enticing and satisfying any of that may be. The risk of unawareness in this domain is that we might build up a convincing story about meditation and how important it is for us and fall into that rather than realize the essence of who and what we actually are in the only moment we ever have to realize it, which is never some other moment. --Jon Kabat-Zinn, from "Coming To Our Senses"