

# Éric Baret: True Solitude and Survival

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, Éric. I am currently living through short but very intense moments of an enormous solitude. And I don't know how to face this moment of such great solitude. It's not as if I were sunken in a pit; it's a powerful existential experience. Thank you for giving me a bit of light.

[Éric Baret]: That solitude you speak of is an "object-solitude." There is always a sequence of noise. Any object that completes you momentarily will one day reveal itself as an absence. Because what completes us is not the object, but what we project onto it.

The only way to cross this experience of solitude is to discover true solitude. In reality, there is no one who is alone; nothing is separate. When you place the emphasis on objects—the presence of someone, a situation, a collective satisfaction—life is constantly going to question that imaginary security. And you will always find yourself in that absence of the object.

Take advantage of this difficulty to ask yourself: what is true solitude? It is the absence of the human. That's where you're going to find, to sense, a space of total non-solitude. But this requires you to return to the sensoriality of the body. The body does not know solitude; it is the psyche that knows it. The body is never separate from the environment: you feel cold, heat, comfort, health.

If you are truly present in the tactility of the body, you will very quickly see that the thought "I am alone" is just that: a thought. It's a representation. Were you thinking you weren't alone a while ago? And then the situation made that object that supposedly relieved you of solitude disappear. And now you feel alone? A two-year-old child in a room doesn't feel alone; they play with what's there. There's a chair, there's a book... they aren't alone because they aren't attached to that energy of the presence of the other.

Our problem is that we attach ourselves to objects, we attach ourselves to people. When life questions those situations—by the very law of life, which is disappearance—take advantage of that gift. Life removed a false presence, a false non-solitude, to lead you to find the true one, where there is no longer anyone alone because you aren't separate from the environment.

Look: Naturally, when you look at your neighbor, you feel that: their sadness, their fear. When you go out into the street, you feel the cold, you feel the heat. When you watch a TV show, you have an emotion. Life is pure emotion, pure tactile experience. It's the thought that says "I am alone." You cannot \*feel\* alone; you can only \*think\* yourself alone. Return to the body. Feel the contact of your buttocks with the chair, the thighs, the feet. Feel the texture of your clothes. Feel the sensitivity of the lips, the tongue, the eyes, the fingers, the shoulders, the hips... Surrender to this extraordinary experience of feeling.

In the end, life is feeling. It doesn't matter if the children have left, if the husband died, or if the dog disappeared... all of that is possible. It's not the problem. The drama of the person is that they base their happiness on their life, and their life is their car, their house, their husband, their children. All of that can be destroyed in an instant. That's why life puts you to the test: so you ask yourself: "What is true solitude?".

True solitude is the absence of a "me," of a past and a future. That's what you have to go towards, not intellectually, but through the most direct exploration: the feeling of the body. Because you will see that the body doesn't feel alone; one \*thinks\* oneself alone. When I return to the feeling of the body, there is no solitude possible in that feeling.

Surrender to that exploration without conceptualization, without intellectual reflection. Simply feel. Not the body you love or stop loving, not the body you see in the mirror, but the body you \*feel\*. Feeling is not an activity; it is what you are naturally, like when you go out into the street and don't make an effort to know if it's cold or hot. When you step on a nail, you don't make an effort to feel it. Sensation is the natural state of the body. Return to that sensation and you will see that you cannot feel alone, only think yourself alone.

Of course, when the thought returns—if you think of your husband whom you buried a month ago, of your children who have left—you will \*think\* yourself alone. But if you return to the feeling, you will see that solitude is not possible. From there will spring the depth of life.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you Éric, thank you very much.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, Éric. Do you hear me? A few months ago I had a serious accident. I've practiced many martial arts in my life and they were always my passion. During these three months, I had to learn to "lift the foot"

(decelerate)—something I had never done—not to train, simply to accept the state of my injured body, deeply injured. It was extremely liberating. I found a kind of welcoming of the situation with a lightness and simplicity that I didn't think possible.

Recently I had exams and they told me everything is fine, that I'm no longer injured. I felt relief, but when I returned to training, that in which I had always recognized myself—like that musician who isn't well if they don't play—that which was my evidence, no longer has the same meaning. I don't want to say "derisory," but it's as if training no longer makes sense if it's not in a kind of celebration of God. And when training, I realize that I am like an automaton repeating programs from 10, 20, or 30 years ago. I feel like a spectator. Would you have something to tell me about this lack of joy or passion? Even though I'm still functional, it's as if the excitement of youth is no longer there.

[Éric Baret]: I think this is also a grace. You sought yourself in the combat arts, and I can understand it: it's a fascinating discipline. Many people come to martial arts fleeing a difficult life, seeking to find a form of capability or power. There is all that imagery of superiority. When one is intelligent, one realizes it's pure imagery. Because, honestly, when you have someone in front of you with a machine gun, or when we receive a bomb, all your jumping kick training and your strangulations won't be of any use.

That you've let go of that romantic side is very important. It's true that an injury—I had a similar luck at the time—is an opportunity to let go of that imagery. What remains for you now is, indeed, celebration. Why do you do combat arts? Why not? Life is action. There is a depth in combat arts that you don't find in tennis or other bourgeois sports.

You do it now for the joy of doing it, for the joy of transmitting it, for the exploration of extreme sensitivity and the reading of situations. You realize more and more that as soon as there is premeditation, your opponent can read you. One becomes a serious fighter when one no longer premeditates anything, because at that moment you are unpredictable.

In Chinese arts, for example, what is called \*tui-shou\* (pushing hands)—which we also have in Okinawan Karate but differently—is precisely used to learn this. You touch the opponent's wrist and move together solely to learn how to read, to feel when the other wants something, wants to strike. His whole body anticipates that strike, and if you are well-trained, you can feel it: his arm tenses, his pupil contracts... all this decoding of the situation is part of human intelligence, but we are so conditioned that we need to re-appropriate it.

All the decoding of what you learned is necessary, but life is much more creative than our imageries. The real situation is always new. Progressively, if you no longer have expectations or hope for effectiveness—because that hope reduces your availability—waiting is replaced by listening. In listening, an extremely important transmission occurs. We learn a way of fighting, that of the teacher, but you don't have the same morphology or the same weight. Martial art in the real tradition is the art of \*total adaptation\*.

At the beginning one is forced to accumulate techniques and reflexes to discard other habits. Normally, if the opponent lifts his arm, the beginner lifts his knee looking at the sky and receives a kick below. Progressively, your vision teaches you that when someone lifts their arm, you see the arm but also the legs. All of that is part of the external learning to discard old habits. But then one must also discard what has been learned, because it doesn't hold up in an unexpected situation. As soon as there is an expectation or a desire for effectiveness, this reduces your availability.

But you achieved it! You let go of the romanticism, it's great. You let go of the imagery that it "serves" for something... because it can be useful, but frankly, those of us who know how to fight know what it is to receive hits. I prefer to go to the hospital before sending someone to the hospital. You have lost the egoic motor of combat. You no longer fight to survive, because why would my life be superior to the other's? That is a totally selfish concept. There can be circumstances where combat is part of life, but not because of thinking that my life is worth more.

It's a luck to have let go of that enormous imagery that is in these arts. Most people enter out of fear, out of a need for strength and survival. It takes a lot of luck and finding quality people who teach to pass beyond that and discover art as art.

I can give you another example, even if it doesn't fit the "exceptional" aggressive state. Recently, a month ago, there was a Jiu-Jitsu champion in Brazil who was pushed in a disco; he responded, the other pulled a revolver and killed him. And two or three years ago, a member of our friends the Gracies was also pushed in Brazil; he ran after the attacker, we caught him, and was killed by a revolver. That shows the limits of martial arts. So it's great to have left this imagery behind. Sometimes an accident is needed to achieve it. At that moment, look at it truly as a celebration. You could be doing something else, but you do this. One could dedicate oneself to singing or poetry.

Traditionally, martial arts were born to survive on the battlefield: inflicting the maximum damage on the other with the minimum damage to oneself. It's a military value. But real art—which is something recent in the tradition—only arises when you abandon those fantasies of survival and strength. Sooner or later, when you

are 95, all capability will leave you anyway. That's why those who don't have the luck of an accident have old age to help them become humble, to return to listening.

It's a wonderful practice, but it must be cleaned of fantasies. Yoga and martial arts share the same delusions: wanting to go "better," wanting to survive, to be "strong." At the beginning it's normal, but then you realize that the heart of life is weakness, availability, not strength or arrogance. Take advantage of this opportunity. Work without reason. There lies the heart of true practice.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you Eric.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening. I feel a particular sensation in my heart, a warmth that invades me and I don't know why. I wanted to ask you about the meaning of Bhairava, the name of your site. I also saw a page about the goddess Kali; I couldn't read it well, I felt like barriers, surely a fear. What is the symbolism of this goddess? Thank you.

[Éric Baret]: Regarding the name Bhairava, something had to be chosen somewhat arbitrarily. In the traditional sense, \*Bhairava\* represents the liberating form of consciousness. Consciousness is usually represented anthropomorphically in its aspects of creation, maintenance, and destruction (\*Brahmā\*, \*Viṣṇu\*, \*Śiva\*). \*Bhairava\* is one of the forms of \*Śiva\* in his destructive aspect: the destruction of attachment, destruction of fear, destruction of illusion. It is the destruction of everything that limits us.

The goddess \*Kālī\* is exactly the same. In Indian iconography, the god \*Śiva\* represents pure consciousness, and the \*Śakti\* (the goddess) represents that same consciousness from the viewpoint of space-time. It is said that \*Kālī\* appears when the order of the world tilts towards darkness. She appears on the battlefield to fight the demons.

There is a demon whose drops of blood, upon touching the ground, give birth to another demon. That's why \*Kālī\* stretches out her tongue to lick up all the drops of blood before they touch the ground, thus preventing darkness from being reborn. \*Kālī\* is not negative or violent in an objective destructive sense; she only destroys illusion: your image of yourself, fear, desire, anxiety, the image of the past and the future. That's why she is considered "auspicious" in the Indian tradition. It's like the night, which destroys the day; it's not a bad thing, it's simply the resorption of the manifested into the non-manifested. Don't be afraid of the names of the goddesses; they only destroy what is imaginary.

[Interlocutor]: I was struck by that representation of consciousness; it had an impact on my sensations. Perhaps it awakened a deep fear. I feel an inhibition to go... I don't know, towards the light? For example, I know my body loves yoga, I recently did a workshop, but there's like a force in me, perhaps a fear, that holds me back from launching fully into my path.

[Éric Baret]: There is no reason to "have to" do yoga. Why do you want to do it?

[Interlocutor]: Because I feel I need to harmonize my energies in my body, and there's a part of me that deliberately sabotages that harmony.

[Éric Baret]: What's important is precisely to feel, without commentary, that reluctance you have. When there is a fear, it doesn't matter "what" you're afraid of; what's important is the fear itself. If you have the luck to feel fear, you must feel it corporally: where is that fear? In the belly, in the chest, in the throat? Feel it, let it unfold in your body.

And if you feel something that sabotages what you imagine is positive, feel that sabotage without commentary. Know that there are no errors in life. You aren't here to rectify your life, nor to lift blockages, nor to achieve anything. You already achieved everything there was to achieve by the fact of being what you are. There is nothing to become.

So abandon that fantasy of "the light." Become intimate with that mechanism of sabotage, without judgment, and you will see that it progressively loses its necessity. If later you are made for yoga or something else, it will be fulfilled. But don't expect anything from it. Yoga is not to transform you, because there is nothing to transform: you are already perfect as you are. Yoga is an art of listening to help you see that perfection, not to convert you into something else. Don't believe what the magazines say about spiritual yoga or yoga of success; that is pure megalomania. Intimately feel that force that prevents you from doing what you think is right for you, simply as a sensation, without commentary.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, Eric. Could you speak to us about "letting go" (lâcher prise), about the abandonment of control in the face of emotion?

[Éric Baret]: We call "letting go" or "controlling" two concepts that we superimpose on reality. In reality, there can be no "letting go" because there is no possible

control. Control is an imaginary balance. You don't decide what you do; we are moved by something and then you act, but the action is created by that dynamics, it's not decided conceptually.

The progression of availability is not something one can decide or manufacture; it can only be observed. Action begins before intention. Benjamin Libet proved that the brain activity of movement activates before the zone of intention. You don't get up because you want to get up, but you want to get up because you're already getting up. The "decision" is an imaginary.

So the idea of letting go and controlling will abandon you, but it will be despite yourself. It's like a boxer training repetitions, but in real combat they act functionally: it's the opponent who decides what blow the boxer throws. The boxer submits to the opponent. Life is always an availability without commentary. Nothing is false in control and nothing is right in letting go; it's the situation that imposes itself organically. Driving a car at 200 mph requires control and letting go at the same time, according to the skid. Life is a skid at 200 mph: it cannot be anticipated.

[Interlocutor]: Can one have a spiritual awakening while taking antidepressants?

[Éric Baret]: The most important question is whether one can have a psychotic break *\*without\** antidepressants. In general, people with spiritual risks should take antidepressants, because "awakening" is often a form of imaginary, and returning to a functional reality is more important.

Antidepressants are tools of life, like modern food or computers. If a competent doctor prescribed them so that your brain works, there is no problem. Forget about that imaginary of "awakening." What remains is listening: discovering one's own functioning in a humble and intense way. Don't be afraid of lacking an imaginary illumination because of antidepressants. People who fall in love or have heartbreaks are much more "out" of reality and live much more vulnerable lives than those who take medication to be stable.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, Eric. When I was about 10 years old, my grandfather decided to commit suicide in my mother's house. He shot himself. This drama was hidden from me; they lied to me for decades. I feel that what I lived as a child, those impossible emotions, could not be lived because the truth was hidden from me. Now I'm 50 and I don't trust my feeling; I distrust my emotions and I find it hard to follow my intuition. I wonder if it makes sense to try to relive that emotion from that

period to release all that. How could I feel in my body now what I felt then to finally let it go?

[Éric Baret]: You know, if they hid your grandfather's death like that, there wasn't necessarily a repressed emotion. Maybe they told you he had gone fishing or some other story. It doesn't have to be traumatic. There is nothing dramatic in life: whether he committed suicide, was eaten by a fox, or hit by a car... in itself, the fact is neutral. I understand that in bourgeois families suicide was frowned upon and thus hidden, but why think of a trauma?

Maybe you felt an affective gap if you were very close to him, but don't think that affected you otherwise just because of the way he died. I remember my grandfather died of a heart attack. I was with my grandmother and mother, I was about 7 or 8 years old. My grandmother told me: "Your grandfather is dying, I don't want you to see this, go wait outside in the garden." Ten minutes later she came out and said: "My poor child, your grandfather has just died." It was a shock, of course, but not necessarily an irreparable drama.

I see no need to seek traumas. If you had nightmares or psychological evidence of a blockage, you could do therapy, but that's a matter for psychology. What's important for you is to see your current life. You say you have difficulties with emotions, but it's not about "trusting" them. When I'm afraid, I don't say "I trust my fear," I simply feel the fear in my body, in the throat. You don't have to be right or wrong to feel fear.

If someone is afraid of a mouse, it's a real fear for that person. What's important is the emotion, not the cause of the emotion. Forget the past. The past is dead, it's finished. Life is now. Be listening to your emotions today. Intimacy with life begins when you can feel envy, resentment, or agitation tactilely, sensorially. It's a tactile exploration that needs no memorization of the past or justifications. Don't look for traumas where there might be none.

If you need a therapist, look for a good one. A good psychologist is recognized because, when you leave the session, you feel like living, you feel life is easier. It doesn't matter if they are brilliant or say beautiful things; what matters is how you feel upon leaving. But don't think you "have" to be traumatized because your grandfather committed suicide.

[Interlocutor]: All right.

[Éric Baret]: Besides, two grandfathers... it's not that much.

[Interlocutor]: You're not a therapist, but I feel better. Thank you.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you as well.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, Eric. I wanted to ask you a question about sleep. Lately I wake up at night with a start and a feeling of panic. I feel my heart beating fast, my chest tight, my ribs closed... I feel exhausted. I was wondering how to accompany my nervous system in this that I'm living.

[Éric Baret]: It's difficult to respond in general. When there are these kinds of reactions at night, it usually means you perceive your whole life as something complex. You're intelligent, so see what is holding you back, because if not, it will come out at night. Eat little at night, watch what you eat, take a lukewarm shower (not cold) before sleeping. Stay away from television and news for now.

But beyond that, what you describe is that something has not yet been fully lived. In exploring, don't use any technique to go "better," because that only postpones the problem. You are condemned to be intimate with yourself. When you feel that pressure in the chest, feel it totally.

The most important thing is listening. See from instant to instant how you function. When there is an expectation, there is frustration. If you seek "tranquility" in a situation, you will end up disappointed because no situation can nourish real tranquility. Tranquility is not in situations; it's in the listening. When you discover this, all situations become sweeter.

Maybe tomorrow you'll be hit by a car or a bomb will fall; you don't have time to change your behavior or do a long therapy before that happens. So, what do you do when you don't have time? You surrender to intensity. Not to how you "should" be, but to how you are. Sitting in your chair, explore the body's feel without commenting. That is the only spiritual thing: feeling what is there, even if it's fear or anxiety. Feel it in the belly, in the plexus, in the back, in the jaws... It's a purely sensual way. Everything else is distraction. Enjoy that grace, that moment of intensity.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Good evening, can you hear me? My question has to do with practice. With time and practice there are fewer expectations, more ease in letting go. But in the professional field I find difficulties. There I see that there are goals to reach, objectives to meet, something to produce. That puts me in difficulty because they are my expectations, but my bosses also have them. I can't link what seems

simple the rest of the time with what happens at work.

[Éric Baret]: Don't seek to transfer the feeling that "there is nothing to achieve" to professional life. It's like when you play tennis or chess: there's nothing worse than a partner who doesn't want to win. The game is created by the dynamics, and the dynamics implies a winner and a loser. You have to play \*as if\* you wanted to win. That's why the great chess players always play against themselves: they play white, then they turn around and play black. When playing white, they want to win; when turning around to play black, they also want to win. That is very important, and it's called life.

When you tend to a garden, you kill the "weeds." It's not that the weeds are bad in themselves, it's a functionality. If tomorrow you have to go to war, you have to play war as if you wanted to win, out of respect for your comrades. It doesn't mean you hate the one in front of you, it means you're at war and you do what must be done.

In your work it's the same: your bosses ask for results and it's legitimate for the building to function. Do what imposes itself organically. If your bosses consider you aren't "bad" or competitive enough, maybe you have to change jobs. But the important thing is to be functional.

When you return home at night, whether you won or lost the professional chess match should be the same to you. You did what you could do. You aren't responsible for the quality of your competitors. Don't seek to "realize yourself" at work. In the office, play that you want to win out of respect for the environment, but in your inner heart, don't appropriate that ideology. At night, you won nothing psychologically. If you're free from comments and results, you're free. We play to win, but we know we lose nothing if we lose. It's a form of respect for the game of life.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you very much.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Eric, lately in my meditative practices I feel that something gets stuck at the level of the heart and chest. I feel there's something deep linked to that and I'd like to know your opinion.

[Éric Baret]: What is a "meditative practice" for you?

[Interlocutor]: Simply being attentive, in my daily life or in moments of immobility.

[Éric Baret]: Be careful with creating listening as an activity. Listening is not an activity; it's what we are naturally. Don't "do" anything, let reach. If you let reach, maybe some tension will appear. If it were a real heart problem, you'd have to go to the cardiologist, but generally what is felt in the heart area is the diaphragm.

From an external plane, the chest corresponds to the hands. If you have a tension in the chest (the sternum, the ribs), you have to evoke the sensation of the hands. Feel the heat of your hands. When the hands are ready, their irradiation penetrates the body, the shoulders relax through the hands... and you'll see how the chest area lets go.

But be careful: let it not be a "wanting to let go." Meditation must be spontaneous, natural. If you sit with an intention, that creates corporal tension. Meditation is doing nothing. Let the areas of the body appear on the surface of your attention: the lips, the eyes, the nostrils, the chest, the belly... Let happen what has to happen. The body is movement. What you feel as a tension is a movement that is blocked by the psyche. Feel that movement, let it dilate.

Little by little, the contact of the hands will cross the chest and everything will unfold. But don't do it so that it passes, but rather to know how your system functions.

[Interlocutor]: Agreed, thank you very much.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you.

[Interlocutor]: Hello, good evening. I wanted to thank you because you bring much stability with your words. I wanted to ask you: given that we usually have an imaginary about divinity, the idea that there is something "eternal and infinite"... is this idea not perhaps a form of violence for us? Just as in the body there are rigid areas that don't want to follow the movement, is seeking that eternal not a rigidity?

[Éric Baret]: Any idea is a security. When we have an idea, we protect ourselves from insecurity. It's normal: some believe in God, others in consciousness, in awakening... it's the need to have a security. For me, these things are necessary as long as they are there. Violence would be wanting to take away from someone a conviction they need.

Whatever you believe in, life is movement. A day comes when you no longer need beliefs: neither in God, nor in the future, nor in yourself. In that non-separation there is an intensity where beliefs are no longer necessary. You live with the objective reality of events. Beliefs come from fear. When fear decreases, the need to believe decreases.

One day you'll realize that everything that made you happy or unhappy was imaginary. Like the little girl who suffers when they take away her plastic doll. One day she realizes it was plastic. What was it that made her happy? The imaginary she placed in the plastic. Our "plastic dolls" are the husband, the car, the economic situation... it's always the imaginary that makes the world suffer. The one who realizes this no longer needs to believe.

You live in the observation of your functioning. I like that image of the person who looks at a seagull flying and is moved by realizing they can do nothing to retain it. That's true peace.

[Interlocutor]: All right, thank you Eric.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you as well.

[Interlocutor]: Thank you very much, Eric. We've reached the end of this talk. Thank you all for your presence.

[Éric Baret]: Thank you everyone.

[Interlocutor]: And tomorrow the seminar continues. Good night everyone.

[Éric Baret]: Good night.