

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

The way of action ... for wisdom in practice

D'instant en instant

(quarterly newsletter of encouragement to the daily practice of meditation of full attention)

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Meditation, an exercise inextricably “corporal” and spiritual

In the western tradition, the body is imagined through the restrictive body-object vision. Me and something else, my body. This is the body-tool, the body-instrument, trained and utilized like an object which has to be in shape, suitable for work or sports performances. In German the word *Körper* (etymology: Latin word corpus) coincides with the idea *the body the man “has”*.

During his journey in Japan (1937-1947), while practicing exercises like archery (Kyudo) and meditation called Zazen, Graf Dürckheim experiences that the body is put at the service of the inner transformation and inner life of the person that is on the Way. To designate the body Man “is”, le living-body, the German language uses the word Leib (etymology: the verb Leben, to live).

During my postgraduate studies (Superior Institute of Physiotherapy) I was given lectures about the objectified, dissected, fragmented body. I was never given one lesson on what Graf Dürckheim designates as being “the whole living-body in its entirety and unity”. *It is while under his teachings (1969-1988) that I experienced what we call life is not in the body. The body (Leib) is life, which from moment to moment, comes true in its individual form, understood as being someone”*.

The living-body is beyond the conceptual antagonism of body and soul, of body and mind.

The whole living body in its entirety and unity!

“Leib, the body I am, is from the view point of the person, neither a physical organism detachable from the subject, nor an instrument working more or less satisfactorily at the service of a profane Self. IchLeib, “I am body”, is the set of gesture and actions by which Man takes shape and, as such, fulfils himself or fails” (K.G. Dürckheim).

In the West, passing on Meditation, raises questions.

Indeed, when a Westerner practices meditation, he strives to acquire a know-how in order to accomplish an external realisation. For example: to increase his mental capacities (mind); an enhancement in productivity.

For a Japanese, the meditation transmitted for the past twenty-five centuries has value only if it fosters an inner transformation of the person that is exercising.

Inner transformation?

It is the person whom by his/her manner of being as a living-body, testifies that, by being in contact with his/her own essence, his/her true Nature, his/her essential being, the bearing point in life can be inner calm, serenity and inner peace.

Jacques Castermane

Meditation: From thought to presence

We rarely have experiences that are free from intellectual constructions. We do not live our life, we reason our life, we consider it based on beliefs and knowledges we cannot get rid of.

Our mind slips imperceptibly into all of our life's moments, and sitting in silence allows us to observe the degree of enslavement we have to our mind.

The principle of Zen is tied to the experience and, to do this, engages us in an exercise which defends the state of no-mind, the absence of mental activity. To refrain from thinking is what comes to mind like the necessity of absolute vacuity. Perhaps would it be good for us beginners (or advanced meditators?) on the Way, to lower this vertiginous demand to an achievable level for our simple practice.

When we sit, we obviously see all of the restrictions that our mind imposes to the way we interpret the present moment. There are the thoughts that place us outside of the present situation, and those that intervene between the situation as it presents itself and the way we would like for it to be. So, we are never really where we are, and if we think we are, it is with the desire to pursue a certain idea of our self, in the continuity of a story, refusing all of what can be random and unexpected.

This is how the mind works: to maintain an imaginary stability so essential to the ego. To think the situation, is to reduce it to a conditioning which narrows the way we perceive ourselves, perceive others and the world. It is also narrowing reality to a frame of reference which allows us to concede nothing, in terms of illusions and expectations. To think is to refuse life as it is, as it presents itself, it is to prefer a certain continuity, thus a certain security, and this is in no way daring, in no way new.

The non-mental is an effort on our self which consists in withdrawing from any personal conscience on the situation whatever it may be (conscience of being someone, of knowing something) and substituting to the word conscience the simple presence. It is the discovery of another type of relation to reality which will shatter our practice, the discovery of the intimacy of our self in the act of feeling and feeling our self at the heart of a situation. Perceiving reality and feeling our entire self, perceiving this reality. This is when we are given the chance to penetrate real life, as it appears, to deepen the essence, what will never be contained in knowledge, what flees as soon as we think we have seized it, like a "vanishing apparition". Would it not be right then that vacuity could appear, the absence of ego?

This encounter between the intimate self and reality requires a sustained perceptive acuity through the control of the stance. Practice offers a particular taste of surprise to what presents itself. There cannot be another capture of reality other than this one, and it is not restricted to the thought which limits itself to what it knows. During the sitting we are led to follow what we do not know.

We are not meditators because we sit on a cushion a few minutes every day, we are meditators when, while exercising this perceptive acuity, we are pushed in spite of ourselves toward "this possibility of seizing the essential", (according to Eric Baret's expression).

The non-mental is experimented in the simple presence, a set of actions which consist in letting ourselves feel and accept. The withdrawal of the ego does not leave emptiness, it gives way to a presence which resides in the unity of the experienced body and the situation, a perfectly consenting unity to the present moment that does not leaves any space to the mind.

The non-mental should not be a quest through meditation, it presents itself naturally when acceptance of the entire self appears in the present moment.

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