

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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Ancestral meditation or modern meditation?

(Jacques Castermane)

“In recently published books, I have read that meditation (the one which is provided at Dürckheim Centre), is “*ancestral meditation*” to which it might be better to prefer “*modern meditation*”. Modern, because based on scientific research works in the field of brain science! Modern because offering the possibility of being verified by *quantitative measures* (electroencephalogram, scanner, MRI, biochemical analyses, etc). (...)

It is clear that, today, the *quantitative* principle is playing an unceasingly important role in the field of human science, experimental medicine and cognitive science. However, it is legitimate to ask ourselves if this quantitative data is able to reveal what exclusively concerns the individual, *his intimate experience*?

In terms of inner life of the being, what counts far more than figures and graphs is the “sensation” which is the witness indicator of perception. The “*quality*” of experience is what counts. After half an hour of meditation, two questions arise: what do I feel? And how do I feel ? ” (1)

D.T. Suzuki, an erudite man and author of many books on Zen, who introduced Graf Dürckheim to many Zen masters upon his arrival in Japan (1937), would tell him that “the scientific study of meditation is absurd!” (2)

Why? “Because Zen approaches reality in a pre-rational manner”. This approach, which does not follow the paths of reason, neglects the rules of logic and is designated by the word *meditation*.

Meditation, mode of self knowledge, of the true self, of our real nature, of our essential being, is this exercise during which the person who is *meditating* is invited to see *life* through his *own subjective experience* of the present time. “Without being affected by a bistoury” says D.T. Suzuki. This bistoury which operates a fragmentation of the “WHOLE living body which we are in its unity” which in turn analyses, conceptualises, closes in an objective frame some divided elements. *To meditate?* Is to experience the WHOLE – which means: “I am” – which is other than the sum of its parts. To understand this, live this – adds D.T. Suzuki – is to heal from neurosis, psychosis and other analogue disorders.

(1) Excerpt from *Parce que c'est l'heure* (Jacques Castermane) published in October 2017 in the collective work: *Méditez avec nous* – Ed. Odile Jacob - p.215-216

(2) D.T. Suzuki {1870-1966} *Essais sur le bouddhisme zen* – Ed. Albin Michel and *Bouddhisme Zen et Psychanalyse* – PUF.

To practice zazen: the courage of living

(Dominique Durand)

Zazen dismantles the *I*, for we are placed in an unusual situation which forces us to uncover our own resources at the heart of the unexpected: to not intervene upon a fact, to receive instead of taking, to be surprised instead of judging, to understand each situation actively instead of imposing or ignoring, and to be able to taste in each of these changes the direct connection with the living body, because there is nothing else to avoid, to predict or to plan.

The body, clear of all unnecessary strength, the body no longer aiming toward a desire other than *what* is presented to it, mobilizing our attention in its entirety. Thus, a return to oneself is made, an intimate moment which is a pure act of being *here*, one which fulfils us.

It is out of this plenitude that the courage to endure the present appears, in how it can be tiresome, unbearable, exasperating or annihilating. Charged with this plenitude, the *I* can take the risk to be open to the four winds, it can take the risk to live: to leave the precautionary principle which is becoming stronger in our society and tends to make us think it can prevent from all dangers.

To risk this is to be exposed to a possible danger; to practice zazen is a potential danger for the *I*, as Dürckheim has emphasised: « Zazen is dangerous for the ego ». Indeed, how difficult it is for the *I* to sit being deprived of all possibility of intervening on the past, the present and the future, and all at once, in a paradoxical way, of feeling strong of this accepted vulnerability, because the experience of the living body, free of all avoidance strains, brings us back to this unspeakable bareness, calmly roots us in a bare attitude, humble and simple. This experience is one of a return to the original order.

How are we to assume our torments, if it is not by slipping in our body's quietness? The more we *are* calm in our body, the less we identify to our own singularity which is full of anguish. Calmness settles in self-abnegation, there is something totally anonymous and universal, whereas well-being is entirely personal.

Daring to trust the body's peacefulness is escaping the neurosis of avoidance which imprisons us in past experiences, in the fear of the future, preventing us from embracing life; while accepting life in its straightforwardness is letting our body offer what the *I* cannot: the absence of fear, of torment.

To sit in silence each day, is to recover our faith in calmness.

Between regret and hope, between renunciation and expectations, there is this moment of life to grasp, life without the fear of living.

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