

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

The way of action ... for wisdom in practice

D'Instant en instant

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Meditation, beyond meaning and nonsense

A time comes when our daily sitting is no longer an obligation but becomes an imperious necessity: to return to, to meet within our true self. In order to renew, to restore a contact with what is impossible to define.

When all enterprise is abandoned, all presumption of being at the start of anything, a precious moment arises during which the *I* ceases all activity and realizes that everything organizes itself according to a conjunction of factors that are beyond our comprehension. This is perhaps the key moment of our practice; this moment during which another form of comprehension appears. Without paraphrasing, Jacques Castermane calls this: the “undoable” ... to arrive at this tipping point where we are seized with the amazement of what happens, surprised with what appears. Perhaps, this necessity to sit is the plea we hear; what sailors name “the call for the high seas”. A moment when we become bigger than our self because we are no longer identified to what we do.

The *I* breaks loose from its moorings and realizes it does not sail into the wind, but gives way to the fairest manner which no longer depends on the *I*. When we realize we cannot do zazen, we cannot build immobility, we cannot elaborate the stance, that breathing cannot be done, then, something major happens. The enumerated phenomenons are not different, but it is way we perceive them that changes. To board on what cannot be done, to become what we cannot do, becomes the ultimate answer to the koan proposed by Dürckheim: “To subordinate our life to a meaning beyond all meaning”. Why a koan? Because it seems impossible to find meaning outside of the experience: the feeling of slipping in the undoable, feeling being moved by something other than the *I* and being surprised by it. That is, replacing the need to give meaning by the taste of living, investing entirely the intimacy with the living without looking for an understanding of what it is.

This way of considering meditation entirely shatters all preconceived ideas that consist in believing that the Way will give meaning to our existence. The need for meaning is merely the necessity for the *I* to find consistency faced with the nonsense of life's events. In fact, we are concerned by maintaining a certain degree of consistency in our lives, a certain balance preferably orchestrated in a positive way. All rupture in this project introduces nonsense. Waiting for zazen to maintain this stability is to look in the wrong direction. No consistency whatsoever is offered by this practice and it is the reason why, when we are subdued to long hours of sitting, we will say to ourselves: “what the hell am I doing here, this doesn't make any sense?” This remark is legitimate for the ego, the practice has no significance

for our intellect. All exercises that are proposed along the Way have an absurd trait for the *I*, we have to learn how to return to our true self at the heart of inconsistency, feel plenitude at the heart of precarity. “When in spite of material poverty, we feel rich, or full of power in spite of weakness, or when abandoned from all we experience a feeling of contact... becoming attentive to these divergencies is an important element on the Way” (K. G. Dürckheim).

This contact which Dürckheim mentions is fundamental. This closeness, even this union with what we allow to be present and which we normally consider absent: the unspeakable, precisely because we’ve given up on doing something or wanted to modify the course of things.

When the tension between our self and the activity under way fades, between our self and the simple practice, can then appear what makes us feel rich and strong: plenitude, order and unity. The meaning we wish to give a situation and the antagonism between meaning and nonsense no longer exist, plenitude then substitutes to the flaw provoked by the events of life.

The meaning to which Dürckheim invites us to subordinate our life requires that we allow ourselves to be worked by the “how” rather than by the “why”. The “why” looks for an external answer which the *I* wants to seize, in a dogmatic and definite way; the “how” opens on a process which we need to assume by ourselves and which leaves us in an interrogative mode, thus in an absence of meaning. We can sit on a “why” once and for all, a “how” maintains us in an activity which never ceases to accomplish. The “how” does not reassure us, it keeps us afloat in the living.

Jacques Castermane often says the following: “I breathe and I am not accountable for it”. This amounts to saying: “I live and I am not accountable for it”... “I see and I am not accountable for it...”. This assertion has an irrefutable, an indisputable trait, as if obvious, and impossible for us to question. This becomes as imperative as reality without proof of any sort. Returning to this obviousness, I breathe and I am not accountable for it, does not aim at making something of it, and most of all, of giving it meaning. What changes everything is the connexion we maintain with this obviousness, which means “how” are we going to renew the unknowable aspect of life. Which will be the contact we are going to establish with the unappropriate? Here is a creation to renew each day.

The compelling necessity which pushes us to practice every day is directly linked to this need to refine this contact with what underlies our life.

Feeling rich of this intimate contact with life is perhaps one of the major resources in which we will need to draw from, at the heart of the worldwide instability in which we are.

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