

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

The way of action ... for wisdom in practice

D'instant en instant

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The continuous and daily repetition of the same exercise

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Every day, for the past half century, I have renewed the same exercise: zazen.

The daily renewal of the same exercise can seem boring to those who do not practice this exercise. It is certainly the case when the word *repetition* leads, like a printer, to the addition of photocopies. But the dancer whom every day, renews the exercises on the ballet bar, the concert artist whom renews his scales every day, do not have the impression of becoming a tool-machine, which hour after hour will repeat the same identical piece.

In the artistic domain, the music Master alike the dance Master, imposes a continuous daily renewal of the same exercise. Just as he imposes - himself – the renewal of teaching the same exercise.

The practice of Kyudo (archery) can be summarized in eight actions made to nock and shoot an arrow. I will never forget the overwhelming emotion when, for the first time, I saw Master Satoshi Sagino shoot an arrow. It is impressive to see to what extent each gesture inhabits the present time, all the while being related to the previous one and to the next. More impressive still, is the way the Master is there; his verticality, his relaxation, the calm which seems to be at the foundation of his action.

While talking to Graf Dürckheim (which practiced Kyudo for over ten years in Japan) I admitted that the word « beauty » seemed poor to describe what I felt inside while taking part in the demonstration.

After a long moment of silence, Graf Dürckheim says: “*You are right. The “beauty” in question is naturally true, original. What is revealed, during this ritual which consists in shooting an arrow is beyond simple beauty; it is a question of a true living quality which cannot be artificial. It is what we call the pure gesture. A pure gesture can have two origins: the innate gesture and the perfectly mastered gesture. Master Sagino alike each of his disciples, had to learn the sequence composed of these eight gestures. Repetition allowed him to properly do what he had learned. The renewal of same exercise led him to master what he did well. It is a question of always renewing the same gestures in order to perfectly master what we already master. Then the Master is left to perfect his perfectly mastered technique. Until the experience during which it is no longer the I which shoots the arrow... - It is shot - ! To fall into the innate; to be immersed in what I call the experience of our essential nature.*”

Thus, this is the significance of a continuous daily renewal of the same exercise. That is why we underline the practice of Zazen, of archery, of Aikido, WITHOUT pursuing a goal. What is important is the inner attitude of the person practicing and consequently, in the first place, the person transmitting.

I do admit that I am sick of the meaningless words alleged in the context of commercialization of this trendy word: *meditation*. The mental representations through which each of us *thinks* to be able to answer the question: “*Why and how to meditate*”, places a veil over the value and the meaning of the exercises which have their origin in East and the Far-East. The richness of these exercises is revealed to those who daily renew the exercise. The only goal of the practice is the practice itself!

Which practice? The presence to “I Am”, the presence to the act of being in the present moment without losing ourselves in mental representations of “I am I”. Which necessitates the passage of the mental to the sensitive world.

“Meditation does not satisfy itself with its statement, it requires to be described; metaphysics for Descartes, poetry for Lamartine, transcendence for Kant, meditation is always something. The action zazen cannot be described.”* This last assertion opens up for us the very particular character of Zen, which has crossed 2500 years of history because it has allowed numerous generations to update (and not dogmatize) through experience, the essentially Human.

The Human does not belong to the secular, nor the spiritual. On what basis can we employ ourselves to restrain an activity which expands through the living, to the restricted frame of secularity?

What is touching on the Way and what touched Dürckheim himself, since he spoke of the universally human aspect of this practice, is the experience lived beyond the opposites, the experience of unity. To recommend a secular meditation, is to mislead the practitioner to believing he is not concerned by the spiritual. The expression “secular meditation” deprives the person of a process in which he can recognize his “natural I”, which is neither secular, nor spiritual. All definitions of meditation will lead to an aporia, so it seems necessary to conserve its elusive aspect.

The practice is a moment of recognition of the living operating in us, with which we learn to resonate with. A reserved attention of this recognition (which passes through the opening of the body and an exposure of our whole self) would remain a self-centred activity.

The experience, the one lived during meditation, is the result of a comprehension based on this resonance: we hear the outer and the inner self, a certain way of knowing and recognizing our participation to a whole in which existential and essential are not differentiated.

During a health congress, Dürckheim asks this question: “Sirs, if you hear me speak, what are you hearing? My mind, my body?”

Total silence. “Answer me. For you men of science, a third possibility cannot exist...” Someone says: “Your voice... It is something corporal, material.” ... “But what do you hear?” Someone has the courage to say: “You!” Exactly, answers Dürckheim, and adds: “The person is something else than what we would like to divide in two parts.”

This you, is a whole, and implies what is of our making and what is not.

The practice is at work in the direction of this union. It is what touches us in Masters, not what they say, but what they show by their way of being, this particular way of action of something more profound that is revealed. And who could be able to distinguish what in them is spiritual and what is secular?

How could the spiritual manifest itself if not through the transparency of the human being, and how could we not see through certain requirements that are born in the body, the “intentions of the sky”?

The person needs to realize that his existential presence is his own essence, it does not have another mode of expression of its deep nature. A pencil, is in its essence a pencil, only through the occurrence of what we call writing. The pencil itself does not exist; it is a concept.

What we call “secular” meditation has the risk of trapping one-self in a sort of self-sufficiency, leaving him aside from the mystery of what acts in him in silence: Life.

This YOU, this PERSON, which Dürckheim talks about, is the immediate revelation of a distinction between “I” and “Am”.

Let us not qualify meditation and reduce it to a defined frame whatever it may be, we would risk to condemn the human to an eternal quest of his missing part, precisely this part that is never missing.

* Antoine Marcel: “Recueil en mon ermitage”

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