

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

The way of action ... for wisdom in practice

D'Instant en instant

(Letter of encouragement to the practice of zazen)

Letter N° 87 – October 2020

« When practicing Zazen the body takes the shape of calm! »

This indication, which concluded letter N° 86, seems to interrogate readers of *D'Instant en Instant* newsletter.

If we hear the word “body” as being the sum of its material and organic elements, this indication is irrelevant. It can even seriously disturb our *understanding*, which is our intellectual capacity to comprehend, conceive, grasp what is intelligible, while ignoring the universal approach of reality through sensation. Our understanding, which is a mental process, is a means for our reasoned knowledge, in opposition with our intuitive and sensitive knowledge.

The indication given by Zen Master Hirano Roshi makes sense only if we hear the word “body” as *the sum of gestures and attitudes through which the human being takes shape, is and becomes what he really is, or misses his goal*. Hence, it is what Garf Dürckheim calls: the body Man IS, the living body (Leib in German) which should not be confused with the body Man HAS, the objectified body in anatomical and physiological laboratories (Körper in German).

Our inner life is interconnected to the living body. The living body (Leib) takes the shape of our inner experience.

Thus, for example, a person which lacks confidence will express this inner experience by being tense in his/her shoulders.

This is not a question of a cause and effect relation, which would imply duality between what we call the body and what we call our inner life. The Zen Master tells us that when we practice an exercise: *“the cause is the effect AND the effect is the cause”*.

Consequence? Any Westerner in the quest of meaning, who will engage in the practice of an Oriental exercise to nourish this pursuit, such as Yoga, Tai-Chi, Zazen, or Aikido, and other traditional, artistic or martial disciplines, will necessarily be confronted to an unusual approach of the “body”.

Here is the answer given to me by Archery Master Satoshi Sagino¹ when I asked him what difference there was in the quest engaged by the Western Man (who's understanding is based on philosophy, a credo, psychoanalysis or science) and the oriental man who engages on a path such as Yoga, Tai-Chi, Zazen or Aikido and other traditional, artistic and martial practices?

“The difference? It is, as my master Kenran Umeji Roshi (Graf Dürckheim’s master during his stay in Japan from 1937-1947) repeated endlessly, the confidence given in the practice of an exercise. The technique is the Way and the Way is the technique. In archery, as in Zazen, when there is inner freedom, non-desire, confidence, happiness, presence to the present moment, it can be seen! In archery, it can be seen in the way the student shoots the arrow. Through the exercise there is an immediate realisation.

To be open to others it is not a question of thinking of openness, or having a feeling of being open. It is a question of concretely opening oneself, of opening deeply, of always opening deeper and deeper. The exercise of opening is more important than a doctrine on openness (...)

To say “Take care of the technique and one day you will see you have improved on the inner level” is useless. If you separate what we call Man and technique you create an opposition, and later you cannot reunite what has been separated. The law of unity between Man and technique is true to all Arts. (...)

Interiority expresses itself in an exterior form through the shot done in this instant. This is why the technique is the Way, that is to say, a Way of internalization. The archery Master does not discourse about interiority. It is useless to speak about interiority. One has to follow the path with patience. By exercising regularly and moderately each and everyone can succeed. Determination is needed. Which is more than Will. Will is rooted in thoughts, determination engages the entirety of oneself, as well as the body”.

“When we practice Zazen, the body we ARE takes the shape of calm!”

If this experiential observation calls out and you feel the need to verify... simply: *Practice Zazen.*

Remember Hirano Roshi’s words: *“There are thousands of ways to meditate but only one way to practice Zazen!”*

Jacques Castermane

(1) *La Sagesse exercée* - Jacques Castermane – éd. Le Relié (pages 102 à 113).

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