

***Zazen OR mindfulness ?***



For each and every one to choose! However, knowingly if possible because the current amalgamation made between these two proposals is inappropriate.

Why? Because:

Zen is a path of **experience** and exercise!

Mindfulness is a path of **exercise** and experience!

“For a man on the Way, all begins with an experience!” wrote K.G. Dürckheim upon his return from Japan where, for over ten years, he immersed himself in the world of Zen.

The experience referred to here is not Oriental, nor Japanese, neither Buddhist, nor Christian, or secular. It is universally human. It is in the nature of every human being to be touched, moved by an experience, an inner experience, which *transforms* in a flash the person feeling, welcoming, without using mental reflexion.

Will give testimony and guarantee, a story, which is beyond Buddh-ism, Christian-ism, Hindu-ism, or Scient-ism.

It is Marcel Proust’s<sup>1</sup>:

*“And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. **An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at one the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory-this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Where did it come from? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it? (...) It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it.**”*

Each and every one of us holds in our memory a Proust madeleine. Remember! Ten years ago, while listening to Eric Satie’s *Gymnopédie*... during my last vacation at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, the sunset overwhelmed me... while running the Paris marathon, all of a sudden it was not I that was

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<sup>1</sup> Swann’s Way, In Search of Lost Time, Folio edition, p 44-45.

running but it was running... At the age of four, I was on the swing... last week in front of a Monet painting...!

This unexpected moment during which we no longer question ourselves about the meaning of life because what we are living, and what we are feeling makes sense. Experience at the origin of a stimulating vital force, of a peaceful inner calm, of a deep inner joy.

The question thus becomes: *how* to become the man, the woman, that was unveiled during this or that existential occurrence?

The answer to -how- when a Zen master is questioned, is immediate: “by practicing zazen” (or an exercise practiced in the spirit of Zen: Kyudo, Kendo, Chado<sup>2</sup>).

We do not practice zazen with the goal of building our future. We practice zazen in order to free our deep true nature trapped in the mundane I, the ego.

It is why we practice zazen without a goal. Because the goal is none other than what is right at the start of my existence: my true nature, my essential nature.

Thus, Zazen has nothing to do with the methods proposed in the realm of personal development, neither with meditative practices based on the use of the mind. These methods offer a “path of *exercise* and experience”. Zen offers a path of *experience* and exercise.

The list of the one hundred (100) benefits promised to those whom will engage in mindfulness meditation has nothing to do with meditation *without* an object of focus called zazen. Zazen has no other goal than the awakening of our innate potential which cannot be constructed with exercises.

Zazen? “*It is to be sitting (Za) like a baby lying in his cradle!*” (Michiko Nojiri- Chado Master).

Christian Bobin writes<sup>3</sup>: “*Babies are wise. The true knowledge lies in their eyes. (...) One of their great virtues is not to be blinded by knowledge. They see free of morality, free of pretension, free of philosophy, free of precaution. There is no distance between their eyes and God or angels. Or atoms in the air if we do not believe in God or angels. Babies are at a rice paper’s ply of truth.*”

Combined doctrines concerning a new concept of man, aims towards the absurd notion of... “*nothing but happiness!*” At the limit of an egotistic desire, nowadays we are flirting with the idea of accessing a version of an “augmented man”.

This arrogant vanity which is a promise of passing from an XXL ego to an XXXL ego, more than ever, sidelines our being is from its true nature, which is independent of sociological, psychoanalytical or scientific conditions.

The failure to hear the intentions of the being – what makes that each is what he becomes, and becomes what he is – is the cause of an individual uneasiness which converts to collective uneasiness.

Finally, and irretrievably, a truth which has its place in ancient Oriental wisdom traditions is the importance of the BODY on the path of experience and exercise.

The living body, *Leib*<sup>4</sup>, is the secret enclosure of the true Self.

It is the living body, *Leib* (not to be confused with the body-tool, mentally objectified, *Körper*).

Life is not inside a container designated as being the body. The living-body is life, which, from moment to moment, takes shape according to a certain order (Tao-Do) which is not under the responsibility of the I, which itself thinks that if he does nothing, nothing will be done.

Jacques Castermane

Translation from French: *Céline Jouenne*

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<sup>2</sup> The art of archery, the art of the sword, the art of the tea ceremony.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Bobin, *Le Plâtrier siffleur*, ed. Poésis, p11.

<sup>4</sup> The body-tool = *Körper* in German. The living-body in its globality and unity = *Leib* in German