

CENTRE DURCKHEIM
A Path step by step
Encouragement for daily practice

Lettre N°3 - September 2023

From the ordinary “body we have” to the extraordinary “body we are”

“The morning exercise called Zazen, is only a model to live our daily life differently. Thanks to the meditative attitude, we are able to pass from the encounter of the ordinary to the encounter of the extraordinary. We do not sit one hour each morning to find silence, or, as many will hope for, to acquire superior capacities.

It is a question of preparing ourselves to another state of being, in which we preserve the contact with the essential. Not only during the exercise of meditation, but in all actions”.

K.G. Durckheim

What do the terms “ordinary” and “extraordinary” mean?

The ordinary is our usual way of seeing things, of living everything through the mind, reasoning, and existential efficiency.

Nothing matters more than the good functioning of the body, which should be maintained in good health, at the service and at our disposal like a performing tool should be.

It is what K.G. Dürckheim calls the body we have, which “*refers to our health, to our existential capacity and good functioning.*”

The body seen as a simple machine, obviously inferior to the mind, is thus at the service of our human mental laws which will merely serve our rational vision of the world:

“If I practice Zazen regularly, this should happen... in 2 years I should be calmer...”

“I think, it would be better to improve myself, to better control my thoughts, my emotions, my sleep, my health... for a better efficiency in my work, my relations, my profane and spiritual life.”

An “ordinary” manner of practicing meditation would be of remaining with this vision of the objectified body, and seeing the exercise on the Way, only through goals to attain, control, or improving performance.

Practicing this way, I try and make the exercise fit my reasoning, without questioning ordinary conscience; I maintain myself under the dependence of the existential I (little self, profane I, fixative I... various names to designate this ego-centred conscience), which prevents me from tasting the contact with the Essence, the Being, my true nature, what I always am.

The exercise then becomes only a means to prolong my vision of things in an attitude considered as spiritual, but only emphasises the control of the mind, the ego on my practice.

“The I becomes fatal to man whom definitely and exclusively identifies with his positions, and particularly with his conception of reality: man is then fixed at a certain level of knowledge.... Man’s spiritual distress arises when, at a particular state of development, his true being is obsessed by his objective conscience... Let us have the courage to forget all of our theories to seriously consider what we are living, what we feel, in the present moment.” K. G. Dürckheim

How are we to discover, train and preserve this link to the essential and encounter the extraordinary Dürckheim mentions?

By questioning our way of seeing everything, of living, under the only vision of our ordinary conscience which makes everything it encounters, an object.

Reconnecting with this link to the essential, is most of all, passing from a vision of the “body we have”, to the living gesture of the “body we are”.

The body is not much, but it expresses the gesture of life.

The body is the shape through which is revealed, fulfils the living gesture of what we are.

The body is the shape through which our feeling of belonging to Life gives our existence meaning.

The “body we are” serves the laws of life and is no longer an object taking orders from the mind.

This perpetual flow of transformation which are the laws of Life (interdependence, change, difference, impermanence...) become alive when we take contact with our vital centre anew, centre called Hara in the traditional Japanese practice of an exercise on the way of Zen.

An attitude centred in Hara liberates us from a corporal attitude exclusively focused on the upper part of the body: attitude often tense, stiff, tied to the will, to the three mental traps: to acquire more, to know more, to gain more power.

To rediscover and develop Hara, is the return to a natural centre of gravity, centred in the pelvis, in the lower belly, which nourishes a fairer form, stance and breath; a way of being that is simpler and honest, more natural, in connexion with the laws of the living, comparable to how the baby is naturally.

In order to rediscover this link to “the ocean of life” that we are, it is necessary to set off on the journey of practice, and to renew a non-mental spiritual exercise which redirects us towards the sensitive consciousness of the living body.

It is the meaning of all exercises practiced, renewed, and repeated over and over again, every day on the Way of action of Zen: the chance of discovering an action freed from ego centred constraints imposed by the “body we have”.

“The body we are” is not something to be obtained, maintained, but a gesture which connects us to the perpetual flow of life “*in its perpetual movement of regeneration and in the thrust of creative transformation.*” K. G. D

The full attention to the body in action, the Gesture, is this sacred connexion to the extraordinary.

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