

CENTRE DURCKHEIM
A Path step by step
Encouragement for daily practice

Lettre N°5 - January 2024

About change...

2023 ...to 2024, the New Year is usually celebrated with joy and hope, best wishes, and resolutions... but for what changes?

At a collective level, consistent interrogations and expectations, fears and conflicts are still present, and, at an individual level, our good resolutions are often quickly obsolete, untenable, and fast forgotten.

To a participant coming frequently to see him and repeatedly annoyed by the outcome of events, the master says kindly:

“- Do not forget to be happy.

The participant, touched by the phrase, answers:

- Thank you for this wish.

The master replies firmly:

- It is not a wish but an instruction!”

In other words, stop wishing for things to be as you would like, and exercise being in accordance with what is, through discipline and practice.

On the Way of transformation of Zen, we are asked to seriously question ourselves on a true and radical change.

A change not inscribed in a defined duration, a precise form to attain or in the expectation of a more favourable existential situation, but in a process of continual and universal transformation.

To recognize and become conscious of this ongoing process at work in every human being and each living being, is what Zen proposes.

In the exercise of Zazen, this process of transformation to which we are invited to open to, and fully and consciously participate is called “passing”.

The passing is not inscribed in a duration but is timeless.

“BEING is not present in a durably acquired form, but in the incessant transformations of the form. As soon as we start promising to those exercising, good health or life success, it is no longer Zen...

.... Meditation should initially be the perception of opposites, in their sharpness. A premature effort towards harmony compromises the result of any transformation process. The perception, the respect, the differentiation, and integration of opposites are the conditions for a durable transformation.” K.G. Durckheim

Escape of opposites, preferences, premature efforts to attain harmony: these wishes, desires are traps preventing a true transformation.

Our way of practicing is thus dictated by the I want, I prefer, I hope, I imagine I should achieve this or that, and reinforces our ego-centred personality, maintaining us in a reasoned and reasonable practice, turned toward a defined, premeditated goal, of development of the I.

Hirano Roshi: *“There are one thousand ways to meditate, but there is only one way to practice zazen. We do not practice zazen with the mind.”*

And Jacques Castermans unceasingly questions us:

“To meditate to guarantee our need for security, to ensure comfort, to ensure a desire of permanence and other vain hopes, is really zazen?”

Am I trying to change myself, or accept, favour and free the transformation wanted by life itself?”

Is the meditation - Zazen - that I am practicing a break with my usual tense way of being, toward a progression in having, knowing, and controlling, all distinctive signs of the human mind, or is it a comeback to my true nature?

Are we participating in a process of stripping down or a process of accumulation?

Process of stripping down which necessitates no device nor addiction, and can naturally develop, express itself and bloom only if attentive to this perpetual and ephemeral transformation of the form “that I am”.

Not conscious OF this life that animates me and that is at my disposal, but rather BY this life which animates me, that I share with all living beings, and in front of which I silence all demands, in front of which I bow, attentive, in rhythm, at its service.

Za-zen can thus become this moment during which the usual I fades; I do not intervene, I do not seek anything else, I do not try to master, take control of the exercise according to my understanding.

Sitting worthily in HARA, the living gesture that I am is liberated little by little from the desires of the ego, and can reveal itself, take shape and metamorphose with the breath.

A gesture which is played by impermanence, and plays with impermanence, by the actions freed from the “contractions” of the I, renewing in a flow of life.

Za-zen can simply become, only be:

“Welcome being sitting”.

Entirely, corporally sitting, and allowing life to reveal itself in this simple gesture, to “*contemplate the body within the body*” (Bouddha). What a mystery!

“To be sitting, welcoming”.

No intervention, no refusal, no goal.

Taste, swallow, digest what is present from moment to moment, carried by the coming and going of the breath, in full attention, full participation to what is, perfectly immobile. Feeling that life manifests in this immobility, this corporal gesture, this opening of senses, this renewal of the breath.

To rediscover what K.G. Durckheim named “the Grand Life” is the true foundation and meaning of my existence.

2023...2024, April... May..., Monday... Tuesday, 8h30... 8h31, inspiration... expiration

Where does change truly occur?

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