

CENTRE DURCKHEIM
A Path step by step
Encouragement for daily practice

Lettre N°6 - March 2024

Vital efficiency



During a recent walk in the forest, I happened upon this sculpture, and these words from the artist:
“Nature is master in the art of teaching beauty and inner silence. The repertoire of shapes it offers is always so varied and most perfectly architected. To work with this repertoire forces me to observe rhythm, construction, and momentum, in all stems, flowers, and seeds. Purification and simplicity answer the laws of efficiency and serve them by revealing the most accomplished shape possible” A. Bernegger

Nature: Is countless, improbable and astonishing shapes; shapes which are sometimes of a rare complexity, and yet obey the laws of efficiency, that is: to develop the simplest and most direct way of being, to be able to live and survive in any environment, from the most favourable to the most hostile, and with an intelligence of adaptation and interdependence to the Whole, which often leaves us, humans, speechless.

With rare exceptions, we have forgotten as human beings, what vital efficiency should be. We develop a “mental efficiency” suitable for imprisoning us in what we think is good, profitable, useful, comfortable... for only one species: ours; and when it does not serve our own species, the efficiency is reduced to: “Me and only Me”. Consequently, we cut ourselves from the Whole, from life itself in all its shapes, changing and interdependent, this “vital efficiency” whose most accomplished form is straightforward: to serve life and its becoming.

This efficiency, related to the notion of simplicity of shape and gesture, immediately brings me back to the Way of Zen, which invites us to “cease avoiding the essential”.

To cease avoiding by rediscovering “what the body can” (cf. February’s Newsletter).

Question to Graf Durckheim: “Which position does the body have in the Way you propose?”

Answer: “The first place!”

In Zen, during the practice of an exercise, we engage repetition and renewing a gesture or a sequence of gestures, purging and simplifying the form and gesture.

This shows us how to open to the essential and how to avoid getting lost in the windings of the mind. Exercising, practicing is learning to act in the fairest way possible – shape, stance, rhythm, breathing – to be in accordance with the laws of the living being, which are alike to all living beings.

With the practice of an exercise, the body shows, proves, that a gesture that is learned and repeated, renewed, and perfectly mastered... becomes pure, simple, direct, and efficient again, such as the baby's pure gestures.

What the body can, is to open to the gesture in accordance with the universal forces (Hara), linked to the Whole, the flow of life, changing, in permanent interaction.

What the body can, is to connect me to the shape, the gestures paced by life itself.

What the body can, is to connect me to the undoable, what the I cannot do; "actions which transcend the capacities of what we call our will".

Before anything, we are living beings before becoming thinking beings.

By saying this, I not to regret progress or criticize the great intelligence Man is capable of. But it seems that in many fields, the craziness, distress, and coldness of our technological and rational world, has unrooted our being, generating an ungrounded creature.

If Man is, by nature, mother nature's child, he remains so throughout his existence, independently of the fact that he is also a thinking being.

The body, before being thought, named, studied, and lived as an object, is a field of conscience, action, and experience, and remains as such during our entire existence.

The practice on the Way of Zen encourages us to seriously question ourselves on this matter: is it wiser to consider the objectified body as a tool for our mind, or to consider the mind as a tool for our living body?

"The mind, a tool for our living body? You must be out of your mind, this is unthinkable!"

Yes, "unthinkable". But the possibility for an experience is truly real: the body, a field of conscience, is form, a gesture which connects us, from moment to moment to the source of life that we always are, our true nature, this experience, which is unknowable, will leave the mind speechless.

Whether we want it or not, whether we be conscious about it or not, we belong to Life itself, source and provision of our entire existence.

The living body, *Leib*, reminds Man that his completeness, his point of reference, his greatness, resides in his ability to realize he belongs to greater still, to become aware "that, as a wave, he is also ocean".

If the body serves the human mind to satisfy its desire of accumulation, performance and domination, the recognition and fulfilment of the living body will send us out to another role, often forgotten: a servant of life and its becoming.

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