

CENTRE DURCKHEIM
A Path step by step
Encouragement for daily practice

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Essence and existence

Inevitably, “Man lives his life within two dimensions” says K. G. Dürckheim, who also reminds us that the completeness of Man is accomplished “one foot in existence, one foot in essence”.

Existence is a part of doing, of our rational conscience, of our success in the world, and Essence is part of letting things be done, of the oceanic feeling, of our unchanging true nature which is independent of the circumstances. Both often oppose one another.

It is quite difficult imagining living in a human existence different than the one proposed by the I, which is solely invested in its own success as part of the world.

The possibility of a fulfilment named “the blooming of the being”, “the burgeoning of our true nature”, “the utmost human possibility”, is often not even contemplated.

The image of the wave and the Ocean, seemingly two different entities, but of same nature, is often used to describe the two aspects of existence, without which Man would not be complete, unified, soothed.

Most of the time, putting aside our deepness, we do not live but only satisfy ourselves managing our existence. “I have to” and “I need to” are perhaps the most frequent affirmations used on a daily basis.

“I have to”: be useful, profitable, and performing in all my activities, and “I need to” rationally organise my time, my energy to face my obligations and manage the multitude of things to do.

This way of leading our existence, under the sign of the obligation and control, is a life during which the human being can count only on himself, his will and his own power. Thus “I” am a vague isolated wandering throughout existence struggling, cut off from the nature of the Ocean, which carries me, animates me and relates me to all that is alive.

A few decades ago, Graf Dürckheim already spoke about our fascination for the Man of action: *“We say: he is a Man of action! It is very contemporary, however there is an excess in doing which eliminates our chance of becoming...”*

The compulsive need to do by ourselves, egocentric functioning, prevents us from relating to our true being and of feeling the laws of becoming that are specific to the human being that we are. Laws which maintain us on the path of transformation and constant maturing, of Living; laws that connect us to the depth of the Ocean.

What K. G. Dürckheim names “the chance of becoming” is realigning our human existence with “the Great Life”. It is not a question of opposing essence and existence, the two qualities of human life, but of reuniting them by rediscovering, while living our existence as wave, the link to the Ocean that we really are. *“What a mystery, I breathe, and the I is not responsible for anything!”*

As a human being, I can regain consciousness that my deep strengths, my true nature aren't my belongings, and are based on what cannot be done, "the undoable", what is already there before the affirmations "I have to" and "I need to".

This other way of being opens us to the source of what we are originally, impersonal development of life within us, independent of what we gain through efforts, which we like to name personal development.

We pass from the insatiable desire of egocentric possession to the immediate recognition of our completeness, a Being accomplishing under the individual form of a wave, connected to the Ocean again and again.

Thus, living is not just the accumulation of assets, knowledge or powers at our service, but an original gift always in action, in becoming, which exceeds the sole identification to this bulimic being of reason, the ego, which imprisons and freezes our true nature.

This chance of becoming speaks to us very concretely of another possibility of living our existence, in contact with an unwavering, immutable point of support which is our link to the Ocean, our essential nature, from which dawns and is nourished our individuality as a wave. In the language of the living body, this point of support is called Hara, vital centre of man.

"In Za-zen, I do not need to transform, but to recognize, accept, favour a natural transformation wanted by Life itself; thus, I give myself to what is given to me". J. Castermane.

When we practice an exercise on the way of zen, it is always a question of recognizing that an action is rooted in the undoable, the non-ego, sourced in the belly, the pelvis, the lower abdomen, centre of our vital strengths, of renewal, of "the constant transformation of the corporal form".

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