

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

D'instant en instant

Letter of encouragement to the practice of zazen

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Man is his body !

What is the place given to the body on the Path paved by K. G. Dürckheim?

*“The place I give to the body? This is its rightful place: **the first place!**”*

Graf Dürckheim is not the only one to underline the importance of the human being’s corporal identity, and the investment in practices or techniques allowing each one of us to live in a fairer and more integrated way.

Arnaud Desjardins: *“To achieve the free conscience of limitations, one must first accomplish a work on the body”*.

Eckhart Tolle: *“Do not fix your attention elsewhere than on the body when you look for the truth, for you will find it nowhere else”*.

André Comte-Sponville: *“The body! A little bit of organized matter, especially the one we are made of: that would be the object I am the subject of. But – if the soul and the body are one and the same thing – as Spinoza says, the body is its own subject; the I controls it, as much as it results from it”*.

Spinoza: *“If we oppose what we call the body to what we call the mind, it is because we do not have sufficient understanding of the body”*.

THE BODY!

Which body is it?

Usually we think and say: *I have a body*. As if the body were a - thing – possessed by the -I -.

Is it the *objectified*-body in the field of medical sciences; is it the *body-tool* engaged in employment; is it the *machine*-body to which Descartes refers comparing it to clocks; is it the *idealized*-body on magazine covers; is it the *tattooed*-body which prefers appearance to reality; is it the *divided*-body restricted to the craftsman’s hands, to the runners legs, to the trumpeter’s breath, to the conductor’s wrist or the body-builder’s shaped musculature?

Shortly after my arrival in Rütte, Graf Dürckheim made an embarrassing remark. *“It seems obvious that you show an extensive knowledge on what I call – **the body Man HAS** – but I must admit you still know nothing about what I call – **the body Man IS** -.*



After six years of study focused on the body considered as being the sum of its parts, I was completely disconcerted. To the point of immediately admitting that I did not understand the difference. Smiling, Graf Dürckheim answered *“It is normal that you do not understand, for there is nothing to be understood. All you need to do is to SEE what distinguishes what we designate as the word -Körper – in German and the word -Leib.”*

Graf Dürckheim held out his arm and invited me to look at his hand. *“Here is the hand I have! It is more than seventy years old and has the privilege of its age, of the arthritis in every articulation. You know better than I that a hand is composed of phalanges in prolongation of the palm, and is made up of bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins... but now look!”*

He then held out his hands, as can be seen on the image above, and said: *“What you see is an action that engages the living body that I am in its globality and unity. For the body we are, the hand is a prolongation of the arm.*

The hand? It is Man giving! The hand? It is Man receiving! The hand? It is Man touching, caressing, grabbing, embracing.”

Leib! Is also and fundamentally the body expressing and revealing the values of the being: inner calm, inner silence, serenity, confidence, the simple joy of being.

By thinking that I have a body (Körper), the man cuts himself off from his true self, his essential being. The basic exercises we practice here at the Centre, allow us to pass from the illusory idea: I have a body, to the immediate experience that: body I am. The *other part* of the therapy - the individual Leibtherapy sessions -, opens us up to the experience of a reality too often ignored, our own essence – it can change our way of seeing, practicing and teaching techniques like Yoga, Tai-Chi or martial arts originating from the Japanese tradition.

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