

CENTRE DURCKHEIM
A Path step by step
Encouragement for daily practice

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At the heart of Existence, the Essence

Vigilance is a natural state of attention in the living body and a presence to reality through sensation. Experiencing this open and inclusive attention does not require adding something to our existence: more sensations, stronger if possible, new experiences or different activities. This quest for always more nourishes Doing and Appearance at the surface of ourselves but remains empty in relation to the profound being that we are. Being is not something, Being is an action: it is what I do, live and feel as a person.

The term Person is very important to Dürckheim, who employs this word to qualify a human being becoming conscious of his true nature, of his belonging to the “Great Life”, and not only as an individual led by the existential I and its performances in the world: to have more, to know more, to do more.

Full sensorial attention to reality refines feeling and the taste of the true self, refreshes our relation to the ordinary of our daily lives, and gives a deeper, more intimate meaning to our existence.

Therefore, all along the day there is what I do and how I do it.

This “how” is the domain of Being: Am I rather tense or relaxed? Closed or Open? In rhythm or in a hurry?

What I am doing, and what does that do to me?

Am I in contact with what I feel?

Am I in a hurry to quickly move on to the next activity?

Am I always inwardly dependent on an external situation?

Many aspects of security and control in our existence are fantasies and take us further away from our depth, the true backbone of our existence – Being-, the inner source of independence, stability and strength of being oneself at the heart of mundane activities.

Hence Dürckheim’s recurring question: “*When will you cease fleeing from the essential?*” The essential? I am a living being carried by life and each of my gestures brings me closer to or moves me away from this depth.

To come back to what is essential, is to entrust oneself to the inner calm that awaits us at the heart of our existence. Is it right to live a life constantly worried, restless, anxious, tired of living in a headlong rush? To constantly live with the need of possession.

Letting go of the need to do, to control, to acquire, cannot be a voluntary action of the I.

“Letting go on the Way is to confide” Master Eckart would say.

The way of Zen invites us to place our attention on a fairer attitude - fair because in contact with what sustains us deeply, our essential being, - while being fully invested in our existential activities. This “fairness” is part of the corporal gesture, of sensation, of our way of being, of what I do and how I do it.

“To exercise is to develop the intuition of what is right” says Dürckheim, both during the practice of a specific exercise, and in our daily life experienced as an exercise, allowing us to feel that “the extraordinary hides in the ordinary”.

The specific exercise is to renew zazen every morning, an activity which, from an external point of view, can seem severe and strict, but which reveals, from an inner point of view, an astonishing inner life. To practice zazen is useless if it does not reveal an interiority rich with this truth: at last, I abandon myself to what does not depend on me, to the source of my humanity: “*what mystery - I breathe in... I breathe out... and I am responsible for nothing!*”

The exercise can also help refine, again and again, our relation to our Essence - what internally supports us – during our daily activities, by renewing our attention to what is simple, by the practice of the four dignified attitudes – walking, standing, sitting and lying – and discovering that “*an exercise that we constantly renew is no longer an exercise; it becomes a way of being in the world.*”

We renew an exercise, a gesture, to taste the Person that we become. A Person conscious of his or her completeness, of his or her unity with the essential being which carries and nourishes us, while also being conscious of belonging to Existence. “*A man who says he is spiritual and who is not in contact with matter can be doubted*” Dürckheim reminds us.

In Zen we do not multiply exercises but we renew always the same one; we place an ever-finer attention on the tiniest actions we carry out daily, to feel what moves us deep inside: the breath, the renewal of form and stance, the relationship to ourselves and to the world, continually renewed.

A gesture is unique, a creation of the moment, which constantly brings us back to the process of transformation willed by life and animated by the universal law of impermanence: everything changes all the time.

A natural law the ego refuses, always seeking to fix and acquire, in beliefs and postures. The breath, the founding vital gesture, undoable and uncontrollable, shows the way toward abandonment to the Great Life, the source of full confidence.

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