
The coming and going

With the coming and going begins our practice.
Dogen

We old people do not seek the truth.
All certainty is an unnecessary wound.
Paseando ante el Terramar- Joan Marga

By Antonio Taishin Arana, Artieda de Navarra (Spain), July 2024

During the sesshin, we share how to leave our shoes at the entrance to the dojo. As Éric Rommeluère says, it is not just a matter of taking off our shoes, but of delicately relearning the simplest of gestures. Gently placing our shoes, the left one to the left of the right one and the right one to the right of the left one. And with them, leaving behind our ideas, beliefs, readings, our most cherished opinions, our most beautiful hopes, the searches that can hurt us without us caring about it, it is very possible that they will be waiting for us on the way out.

'Sesshin' means touching one's own intimacy, or rather allowing oneself to be touched by it. Zen teaching is not a system of thought or a theory. It is an experimental understanding. An experience of fundamental unity, of non-separation. Simply here. In the now of the moment, forgetting oneself. *Shinjin datsuraku*, detachment, stripping away the body and mind. An intimate experience, a presence in the world that has been transmitted to us through the centuries. To understand this, Dogen tells us in *Yuibutsu yobutsu*: 'Only Buddha knows Buddha', total combustion, ask yourself where you come from, what you are, who you are, where you are going, how long you will last... Everything we attach ourselves to, everything that preoccupies us and occupies us from morning to night, has no existence of its own.

We have been able to get in touch with the coming and going of the heart.

And savour the farewell, the reflection on what nourishes us. Master Deshimaru used the term 'homeostasis' to refer to the proper self-regulation of the organism, which finds harmony and fluidity within itself. Harmony in the broad sense, harmony with the cosmic order. The normal condition of the body and mind.

Luc Boussard, in his book '*No es de ningún otro, sino de ti de qué se trata'* on Dogen's Yuibutsu yobutsu, writes in his comments on the first chapter that the essence of Zen, the essence of our practice, is ungraspable. It escapes words and reason. On the other hand, the practice itself, the method, can be clearly explained. The explanations of the posture and the breathing are absolutely precise. There is no mystery.

What about the attitude of the mind? Hyakujo says: *'When your mind wants to chase after anything, don't follow it, it will naturally stop chasing. When your mind gets stuck on something, let it go and it will naturally stop getting stuck.'* And Obaku: '*When a thought arises, leave it alone; even a thousand metres of rope could not catch it.'*

Zen masters have explained the attitude of the mind very well: do not let it wander, do not let it stagnate or coagulate. See and let thoughts pass like white clouds in the sky. See. The passing of white clouds does not disturb the heart of the pure sky, *tenshin.* Everything is light on the blue mountain. Coming and going between the movements of the mind and the zero point of consciousness.

How can we see and let go immediately when thoughts, emotions, opinions, beliefs, ideas, and delusions arise? It is not worth trying to change delusion into satori. Both are aspects of the same thing, of "reality as it is", of "it", of *immo*. Practising the Way means stripping oneself bare, surrendering oneself, disappearing before this reality.

A long time ago, a monk asked an old master: *'What should one do when hundreds of thousands of myriad things happen at once?'* The master replied: *'Maku kwanta, do not hinder them.' Yuibutsu yobutsu,* Dogen.

Coming and going. Returning and returning. Coming and going. Returning to presence. Return with affection and understanding to presence. To attention to the body-mind in unity with zazen. In this way, as Roland Yuno Rech tells us, we can return to the moment when thoughts arise, spring forth from the source, and to the normal condition before thoughts, to the place of pure joy, intimacy with the very nature of things, the cosmic order, the original condition.

The time in which zazen takes place is fluid and full, continuous, without beginning or end. Zazen does not begin and end with sitting practice. It is inexhaustible. The Way is this coming and going between daily life and the more intense practice of zazen. When we become intimate with this coming and going. When we have natural access to this source, each of our gestures, at every moment, whether sitting, lying down, or walking, reveals our own nature. Our states of mind have nothing to do with reality as it is, *immo*. We are not concerned with the result, and we do not fear failure. It is the coming and going between the world of *hishiryo* (a form of consciousness that depends neither on thought, *shiryo*, nor on non-thought, *fushiryo*, which goes beyond, *hi*) and the world of delusions. We let zazen do zazen, both in practice at the dojo and in everyday life at every moment. *'There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.'* Leonard Cohen – Anthem.

'To follow the Way, to walk in the ancient footsteps, is to practise the coming and going between delusion and awakening, the free spirit that dwells in nothing,' Luc Boussard. The spirit that does not coagulate, fluid, *unsui* – water cloud, and this is how the true spirit appears. *'Zazen is the last station of our life,'* says M Deshimaru.

This coming and going is fundamental, it goes from our heart to our little affairs and from our little affairs to our heart. Becoming familiar with the intimacy of this coming and going, allowing ourselves to be touched by it until we can accomplish it unconsciously, naturally and automatically, because all the virtues of zen escape our will, our power.

This coming and going leads to muting, to the silence of the ego, and from there springs forth the right action. We cannot manufacture our authenticity, our compassion, our freedom, our wisdom, our health, or even a slight relief. They will arise spontaneously from our living and sincere practice. They will arise in the field fertilised by the practice of the *paramita*, *shikantaza*, constancy, attention, energy, from our daily practice *(gyoji).*

To live this coming and going in a natural way requires the effort and commitment of a continuous practice and, at the same time, self-abandonment, 'surrendering to the strength of the other' with an attitude of total trust, surrendering to the true zazen, which will practise us. And once we are familiar with it, coming and going from the zero point of consciousness to our little affairs, again and again, again and again, over and over again.