

# CENTRE DURCKHEIM

*The way of action ... for wisdom in practice*

## *D'instant en instant*

*(quarterly newsletter of encouragement to the daily practice of meditation of full attention)*

Letter N° 75 – July 2018

(Jacques Castermane)

### ***Attention ! Attention ... Attention ! Attention ...Attention...Attention !***

Taking advantage of an encounter with a Zen Master, a westerner apparently very interested by the discipline asks the master what in his opinion is the most important aspect in Zazen meditation.

The master takes a slate and writes: “*Attention!*”

Wishing to know more the man dares to ask: “Yes, but can you say more?”

The master takes the slate again and writes “*Attention! Attention!*”

Slightly annoyed by this lack of explanation, the man having come from far away dares to insist: “I understand, however, could you be more explicit?”

Once more, the old man takes the slate and writes “*Attention! Attention! Attention!*”

When interested by meditation, it is a shame to confuse the words **attention** and **consciousness**. When I started practicing *meditation of full attention* (Achtzameit Meditation), which Graf Dürckheim presented to the Western man upon his return from Japan where he immersed himself in the world of Zen for ten years, he said:

*“When you practice Zazen meditation, you do not concentrate as a subject, on an object such as breathing. This way of practicing engages the conscience which objectivizes. It is the consciousness “of” something. In the use of conscience, there is I, number one, and something, number two, breathing. When we practice meditation of full attention we cannot allow ourselves to reify something that isn’t an object: the act of breathing.*

*It is why I invite you not to concentrate on something, but to feel: “Why! Right now - I breathe in -.... Why! Right now – I breathe out -...”*

Right at the start of this practical application I discovered what full attention concretely is, full sensation. Indeed, everything that is presented to the human being, likewise to the animal, is done through the senses not through thought. Zazen is to slip into feeling, the pure act of feeling.

This way of practicing immediately becomes what it should be for anyone interested in the word meditation: a disruption with the way to approach reality, a rupture with my usual way of thinking, a break with my usual way of doing.

When exercising full attention to “I breath in” ... at the present time”, I was able to make the difference between the experience of reality and the representations that I make of reality. In fact, when “I breath in”, an experience of the whole living body that I am in its unity, what I name “breath out” has no reality. The expression: “breath out” is a mental representation of reality and possibly of what it will be. What a soothing experience of not being mentally attached to the past, which is no more, and to the future which is not yet.

When persisting in the practice of full *attention*, I sometimes felt liberated from constant mental activity, proliferating independent thoughts, which prevent us from living the present moment.

Nevertheless, it did happen and still does, of wanting to “fix my attention”. Yet, it is impossible to fix the attention, a process of the living body (shared with the animal) which *flows... flows... like water from the stream flows... flows, like breathing flows*.

One morning, while in full attention – fluid attention – I was immersed in an unexpected and moving experience: “At this moment, I breath in, and the *I has nothing to do with it!*... I breath out and the *I has nothing to do with it!*”

The I! This word composed of one letter seems to be the one we say the most frequently throughout the day. (I think that; I believe that; I don’t like; I want, I am what I think I am; etc.)

This experience of “I have nothing to do with it” was not an observation, but a feeling, an interior experience; unexpected immersion within an inside sphere which is the domain of quietness. A quietness which is not the opposite of reactions such as agitation, nervousness, impatience, stress, but rather the total absence of mental, affective and physical reactions.

Speaking of this experience with Graf Dürckheim he says: “*In each human being there exists a dimension of reality which manifests itself through the experience of a quality of being: great inner peace. A quality of being which reveals the presence of this level of being which Zen masters designate as being the true nature of the human being. This experience allows you to conceive that man is not suffering from a lack of, he suffers from the ignorance of what is not lacking! The word meditation should be heard like the path of liberation from this ignorance.*”

You meditate? Do not be passive! Full attention is an effort which opens on the knowledge of our true nature. The word – Nature – designates what is created and flows... flows... like the breath flows.

*If the westerner perceives the dead-end in which his thoughts have driven him, he will recognize it is vain to try and withdraw from it by the means that have driven him there. Furthermore, if he renounces to the comfortable solution of escape, he will be obliged to listen to the voice of his essential being, elusive to the objective mind.*

*(K. G. Dürckheim)*

*Translation from French : Céline Jouenne*

# CENTRE DURCKHEIM

*The way of action ... for wisdom in practice*

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*(quarterly newsletter of encouragement to the daily practice of meditation of full attention)*

Letter N° 17 – July 2018

(Dominique Durand)

### ***Meditate, without expectation***

The practice gives us the opportunity to measure to what extent our expectations can create a distance with the reality of the moment. I am not referring to those unrealistic expectations, no, not at all, I am talking about these insidious expectations that invariably place us in a perspective of a before and an after, of more or less, of a beginning and an end; these expectations of an after that we wish better, of a solution that could come from the outside. I have seen myself wait for my children to be finished kindergarten to move on to primary school, then wait for the end of high school, because somehow it always seemed it would be better... after.

But there is this expectation which is far more pernicious and unrealistic, an expectation we have of ourselves which resides in the illusion of acquisition: a certain number of retreats, a certain number of meditations, should in our Cartesian logic, put an end to our existential problems. Here we are, ready to hope for the best for ourselves. However, there is an unexpected pitfall and our reaction is not as we hoped. And we are disappointed. We want to transpose our internal logic on the Way, and yet “meditation is not part of our ordinary conscience” (Jacques Castermane). So, to think that progress is not being made quickly enough, or, that we have once again “surrendered” to our thoughts, all of those considerations becomes redundant.

Deception works like a marker of the gap that you place between yourself and the practice, yourself and where... you would like to be. The bigger the gap, the larger risk of giving in to your disappointments and abandoning the practice because you are desperate of achieving the wonderful spiritual ideal you had promised yourself.

Thus, sit down with what you are, with your anger, your sorrow, your despair and take them into your practice, do not exclude them, they have their place, but perhaps not the one you are giving them. The more you make use of the dialectic, the farther you move away from Zen. Zen is the truth of the moment, as is, the moment as it is presented to you. Stop thinking Zen will suspend all of your reactions, and come back to the event of the present moment to determine that all of your emotional upheavals do not exclude the sensations that come to you, do not exclude the fact that you are breathing, that you are alive.

There is a time when the experience of living, the experience of “being” takes precedence over positive and negative affects and torments, without voiding them.

You will not come to an end with yourself using power, be patient with your I, for it is tenacious and rebellious; simply sit, at all costs, with your tears, your agitation and anger. You will see, zazen will master you, in spite of yourself. It is precisely our new relation to reality: “to make of your oppositions an endeavour to accomplish on the path” (Jacques Castermans).

The thinner the gap, the fewer the questions we have on life, on the reasons why we do this or that. True spiritual life where the I does not look for the image it has of itself.

When we stop being disappointed, we are truly in practice, because instead of projecting an illusion of a perfect I which places us in a lag, we let go of all pretentiousness and come back to our being, as we are. This cancels all forms of complaints and procrastination and commits us to immediate activity: to accept what is, see our self as is, and most of all “recognise the way we are here”. This activity of recognition prescribed by Dürckheim demands Truth from us.

This way of being here is accompanied by true immobility, not the one that awaits something, but true immobility without expectation, which places us outside of time passing-by, in a moment of eternity of the present time and in our essence. This non-expectation allows us to realize that in the midst of our conditioning resides our natural state.

A fruit bruised by hail remains a fruit in its essence. Would you say a bruised peach has lost its nature of peach?

*“Only man identified to human conscience which objectivizes all things, will consider an absolute opposite to him.”* (K.G.Dürckheim, 1972).

*Translation from French : Céline Jouenne*

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