

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)

Newsletter N° 71 – July 2017

“What difference is there between the Master and the disciple?”

When I asked him this question, Graf Dürckheim smiled. I then realized my question was motivated by fear. Fear of submissiveness, paternalism, authoritarianism. After a moment of silence, he answered *“The difference between what we call the Master and his disciple? There is none; they both follow the same path”*. Feeling reassured, I then heard him say *“Yes, both are on the same path. Yet, for the one we call the Master it is slightly more apparent...”*.

The way is the technique; the technique is the way

For whom practices meditation, the master exists only in regards to the one that commits to an unconditional quest: the awakening of the essence of the human being.

What, then, is our *essential nature*? Is it a pious imagination? Is it the content of a belief? A metaphysical speculation?

The master does not offer an instruction based on means of analytical thinking. The teaching is based on the fact that: *“the way is the technique”*. The master does not pass on theories but bears witness to his own experience; ceaselessly he will encourage the disciple to practice.

With regards to the technique, it is not only something one does (for example, to shoot an arrow). The technique shows one's being when he/she accomplishes the action. Thus, this observation translates what we call *mastery*: *“A master always possesses an infinite amount of inner life time!”*.

Master, I have a problem!

Convinced that what we call breathing is an important phenomenon in the practice of meditation, I take advantage of a conversation with Graf Dürckheim to let him know that during meditation *“I have serious problems with breathing”*. While laughing he answers *“I'm not sure you have problems with breathing; but one thing is most certain, breathing definitely has serious problems with you!”*.

An opportunity to remind me that the act of breathing is an intention of the being, an action that is innate, arising from our true nature and having nothing to do with our self.

Forty-five years later, every single day, I *adjust* my meditation practice in order for *natural* breathing to accomplish itself. It is by contemplating the simple ebbing and flowing of our breath that one becomes truly calm.

Jacques Castermane

To not pretend

With a bit of lucidity, we should admit to ourselves that we are often meditating, without really being present to what we are doing. We are pretending. No witnesses, however we know we are not there, we are betraying ourselves, or rather, we are betraying something that is bigger than us, we are letting “the one event, life...” pass-by (Dogen).

In these circumstances, to correct one-self does not only mean to come back to the present time, to the *here and now*, it is to answer with all of oneself to “life’s impulse that takes hold of us” (Graf Dürckheim).

In the act of meditation, the half turn taken towards the wall and our stance, prove our decision of change in attitude and assert our capacity to seize or be seized by the impulsion Dürckheim mentions.

To take responsibility for the half turn is an action that we must fully commit to: to turn one’s back on efficiency and image production; we do not seek meaning for why we are sitting there, nor for, what it is for. We decide to let the action in progress initiate us, introduce us to a new type of activity. We thus realize that the half turn underlines the crossover from an egocentric way of functioning to an active surrender. Each time we operate this half turn, we can time and again make this decision to avoid empty ritualization.

The stance is just as valuable. To correct the stance is not to act out an improved physical position, but is a way to operate now the act of living. It is an immediate immanence of living. Life falls upon us, clear of all moral and intellectual sense, it appears free of the “what is the reason for this?”, the stance agrees and accepts.

When we stop pretending, we start enjoying something other than the virtuality of thoughts, we start savouring life happening before us, immediately. It becomes difficult to move away from this reality. Being a disciple starts to make sense. What are we becoming a disciple of? Most certainly a master, a teacher, but quickly, or not so quickly, we realize we need to be in the service of what appears to be at the source of what is offered to us: life.

In an essay recently published, François Jullien dares to “ask if a new beginning is possible in life, without calling upon an Elsewhere and Hope” and if it is possible “not to repeat our life, but to resume it and truly start being”.

We can only be disconcerted by such an interrogation, which, one day or another has encouraged us to want to change our life: change jobs, find fresh energy in a love affair, sail towards new horizons.

Well, let us carry this boldness, not in a philosophical development, but in the immediate state of meditation: make a half turn and sit up straight.

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