

# 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° 76 – October 2018

Jacques Castermane

### ***If I was given the chance to understand!***

This exclamation defines the westerner's *mentality*.

*If I was given the chance to understand* why I need to be entirely still during zazen?

*If I was given the chance to understand* the difference between what Dürckheim called "the body Man "has" and what he named "the body Man "is"?"

*If I was given the chance to understand* why there is walking meditation (Kin Hin) between zazen sessions?

*If I was given the chance to understand* why I should practice zazen, then I could begin practicing!

The promoters of a so-called modern meditation, supposedly inspired by Buddhist meditation (considered as ancestral meditation), will answer these questions and many more.

With the guarantee of an imperious necessity for scientific objectivity.

This is what a research worker writes (1) : "*Today there are many studies on the brains of meditating monks' which show what happens when **we** meditate.*"

Wouldn't it be more objective, and therefore rational, to conclude that these researches show what happens when "**this**" monk meditates? Meditation is a field of individual experience. Like C.G. Jung wrote "**The** elephants does not exist; each time there is **an** elephant!" What the research worker obsessed with quantitative measures is overlooking (scanner, MRI scanner, ECG, etc.) is the *subjective personal experience*, the intimate inner experience of the person that is meditating.

Ancestral meditation has nothing to do with the comprehension in which the Western mind locks itself in.

Comprehension! This word defines the *intellectual* faculty to understand, conceive, grasp what is comprehensible. Comprehension is the means of our reasoned knowledge opposed to our sensitive and intuitive knowledge.

Last month, Hirano Roshi's visit to the Centre confirmed that Graf Dürckheim had fully integrated, after fifteen years of life in Japan, what he named the *Eastern spirit*; the key to the understanding of meditation introduced by Buddha twenty-five centuries ago.

Having barely arrived in Japan (1938) Graf Dürckheim, doctor in philosophy and psychology, tries to *understand* what Zen is, by grounding his comprehension on this Western characteristic. Until the day Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (2) tells him, with conviction, that it is impossible to realise what Zen is, bearing upon discursive thinking, on reason, on the mind – rationally. The only way to approach Zen is to submit to an *exercise*. A demand all the more surprising for the Westerner who hears that amongst the exercises suggested are, for instance, traditional archery (Kyudo), the art of fencing (Kendo), calligraphy (Shodo) or silent and non-objectified meditation (Zazen).

A certain degree of abnegation and humility were necessary for this professor not to remain trapped in an approach of reality as he was accustomed to, and to engage in a Way which is no more but a path of *exercise* and *experience* taught by a Master.

In the world of Zen it is said that: “the path is the technique; and the technique is the path”.

Hereafter is Hirano Roshi’s answer to a participant saying he did not understand the importance given to slow walking (very slow) practiced between sittings.

*“When walking slowly after zazen (Kin Hin) the attention given to the feet is important. Our way of walking is part of the important exercises in Zen. The people who have practiced a lot will be noticeable by the beauty and dignity of their way of walking. In our everyday life we must accomplish with seriousness and dedication what we are doing at that moment; each action, one by one, carefully and without rushing”.*

The zen master is not looking for a description of what is happening in the brain when he is walking slowly. He discovers, during the course of a practice renewed daily, that this exercise participates to the transformation of our-self; until the experience of the great calm emanates from our true nature, our own essence.

The Zen master’s answer will draw attention to the *inner experience* of the person on the Way.

To the thesis proficiently elaborated “about” meditation and the meditative exercises, Zen prefers the exercise of silent contemplation of what is within each human being before science, before psychoanalysis, before philosophy, before thought, before reasoning. What is before? At the origin of? At the beginning of our existence?

Very simple: the *unfeasible!* Which is not within the competence of “I think because I am a thinking being” but “I live because I am a living being”.

For instance, from moment to moment *I breath and I am not responsible for this action.*

If I was given the chance to understand!

I do not practice zazen meditation to understand something. I practice this exercise daily in order to let myself be seized by the unfeasible; the actions of the being which participate to the blooming of the human being, to the becoming of one-self.

I breath, therefore I am! I don’t mind what happens in the brain when I engage my attention to *IBreathInIBreathOutIBreathInIBreathOutIBreathInIBreathOutIBreathInIBreathOut...*

What I discover, what I feel and perceive and what continually surprises me, is that, during the course of this exercise, all in me becomes calm.

(1) Richard Davidson – researcher in neurosciences – University of Wisconsin – Madison.

(2) Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966) played an important role in the interest for Zen in the Western societies. It is this Zen scholar which introduced Graf Dürckheim to archery. Read preface of Eugen Herrigel: Zen in the art of archery (1953) Ed Dervy.

*Translation from French : Céline Jouenne*

# CENTRE DURCKHEIM

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Letter N° 18 – October 2018

Dominique Durand

### ***You meditate? Never cease training***

If there is something very difficult to translate in words, it is this specific consideration of reality, of the present situation, in its subtlety, without distance, without appointment. Every time, attitude testifies of what is no longer an attitude.

It is fresh, it is new, it is without intention. Persists only this intimacy with reality, so fine, translucent, delicate, subtle, that forces infinite respect.

This is the mark left by Hirano Katsufumi Rôshi, Soto Zen master, having come from Japan to Dürckheim Centre for a session of teaching.

More than a comprehension of words, his teaching forces us to update what is seen and felt.

The autumn breeze, the small flowers, Nature as it is... Hirano Rôshi's visit blew a breeze of simplicity over the Centre. No artifice, no pretention in the use of words. All examples used were references to Nature. Nature, is the perfect correlation with the cycles required by life, it is being guided into the thoughtless action of what creates the living. The trees do not resist, the violet does not know it is there, it simply coincides with its being there.

Training (it is the term used by Hirano Rôshi) consists in being led to this participation to the current of life and its multiple variations.

To abandon ownership of everything while staying entirely involved (in the sense "being touched"), leads to a ceaseless effort associated to the involvement employed during zazen. This forces us to pursue and deepen the fairness of expression of our true nature, what IS on its own, as is. We can find the source of this teaching in the Shôbôgenzô text written by Dôgen: "The fundamental teaching is transmitted thanks to sitting meditation, from heart to heart. Without preaching the Way with word of mouth, all that is needed is to show the right form."

What is exercised in this teaching is the degree of implication which is to “do nothing”. Excess of implication shows a desire, yet Nature is without desire, the lack of implication shows a withdrawal, yet Nature does not withdraw from a situation; it entirely assumes spring alike summer, autumn alike winter.

Hirano Rôshi testifies by the way he is, of this practice and its capacity to highlight the infinite respect for the moment of life that arrives as it is, with no other truth, an embrace of life as is. Life, as it is, happens upon us now. Respect, is an inner attitude which forces us to consider any action, as commonplace as can be, with the need to bow before the activity in progress.

There is no quest for anything, no meaning, just the celebration of the moment, with no confusion between celebration and sacralisation.

Each time we hear such teaching, we do not acquire further knowledge, but feel “obliged”, that is, confronted with the responsibility to welcome the natural and return to the original, to what is not of our making.

Masters do not demonstrate the logic of a path, they unveil a way of being. When they answer the question of a disciple, they do so by telling a story that will testify of an attitude in a situation. It is that, that will touch us deeply and bring us to an immediate experience through the exercise.

We need to show simplicity, “show the appropriate form”.

Hirano Rôshi says and repeats: “Never cease training”.

*Translation from French : Céline Jouenne*