

## 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° 72 – October 2017

#### ***The exercises provided at Centre Dürckheim*** (Jacques Castermane)

Zen is the Way of action prescribed by Graf Dürckheim upon his return from Japan (1947), in what it conceals of universally human. Zen admits having a goal: the awakening of the human being to his true nature (being what Dürckheim designates as our essential nature).

The teaching of Zen does not teach anything!

Nothing theoretical, nothing abstract, nothing speculative, nothing hypothetical. Zen is a teaching which does not make use of discursive or Cartesian concepts. Zen presents itself as a way of *experience* and *exercise*.

The exercise? For example, *meditation of full attention* (zazen).

To practice zazen is to abandon the desire of receiving teachings coming from the *outside*; zazen is being attentive to the lessons emerging from the *inside*.

The teaching is nothing other than what it is to *live* in accordance to the intention of what makes what lives...alive. What we refer to as the verb “being”.

Zen is nothing special; it is *seeing, smelling, tasting* life in its most authentic reality, as it is originally, as it were at the beginning (before the birth of ego).

Amongst the exercises Graf Dürckheim practiced in Japan, which he perceived as particularly important, there is a special attention given to the fundamental actions of our *living body* (Leib): the act of breathing, the act of walking, the body's fair form and stance, the rhythm distinctive to each activity performed in our daily life (Hara).

It is in these actions of the living body (Leib), that *is fulfilled* what we consider as our true nature, our own essence.

The experience? The experience of our true nature!

I cannot forget this moment during which the experience of “when “I” breath in... the “I” is not responsible for the action of breathing!”.

When we start to feel – from the inside -: “it is not “I” that is breathing”, there is no longer a separation from our true nature, and the mystery of “being” is revealed in this inner experience which is a tremendously soothing peace.

Do not waste your time. Practice! Becoming our being is a daily matter.

***Meditation! What are we to do with our thoughts?*** (Dominique Durand)

Our thoughts are, in more than one respect, the object of our preoccupations during our practice. On the one hand because they occupy the front of the scene and prevent us from really being present, but also because our desire to get rid of them becomes an additional preoccupation.

During the sitting our thoughts come and go as bees around their hive. Thoughts that may not be highly philosophical reflections, but simple daily concerns: what am I to do? Will I succeed... In this regard, it seems to be a dead-end situation and each of us will repeat this confession of failure: in spite of the practice, thoughts are always present.

So why do we renew the experience of connecting to sensations, since thoughts continue to emerge?

Is it not, in some way, playing Sisyphus and limiting the practice to short round-trips: I think – I feel, I feel – I think? A renewal, certainly, but how can one take on responsibility for this indication without giving-in to a fatalist attitude. How does one engage in a sincere revision of this instruction? For indeed, it is commitment that it is about. The change is not dependant on the number of hours spent practicing, but on the quality of the person's commitment during practice. So what kind of commitment is this about? Of this determination to become intimate with the "body we are".

Right at the beginning of the sitting there is a hiatus between the confusion of thoughts and the body's sensation of perfect immobility, bringing about and giving way to the expression of a calm, quiet and serene nature. It is now that the task needs to be done, feeling that the uprightness of our back is not only a matter of rectitude, that the weight on the zafu is not only an obvious quantity of bodily matter, that the entire body is not a mental appreciation of the body. To take time to confront the body, which simultaneously feels and is felt, realizing the act of being seated, the act of breathing. Realizing through sensation that the perfectly correct body stance contains nothing superfluous. This sobriety pushes us towards a simplification of our entire being. The experience of simplicity puts forward the way which takes root in a bodily form.

Our endeavour is to cultivate this approach, to come back to it, day after day, to be carried by the broadening knowledge of our own being. The perpetual interest given to this other way of learning, the space provided to the eloquent presence of the body will naturally keep us away from our thoughts. They will persist, but our concern with them will decline, another reality being unveiled. We thus no longer need to resist, our practice taking away the need for surveillance, which itself is obstacle to our surrender. Little by little, our attention is naturally directed towards this source of inspiration ever so vast compared to our "little reason".

The body produces an intuitive knowledge which does not suffer comparison with the restrictions and discriminations of our ordinary mind.

By reason of a consistent practice, the body becomes another form of thought, an awareness where senses and understanding are one and only. With time and experience, we may perhaps become more receptive to Marc Aurèle's words: "Remember that all things are only opinion, which solely depend on you. Suppress your opinion and open sea will unfold to you".

*Translation to English: Céline Jouenne*