

# CENTRE DURCKHEIM

Year of the 40th Anniversary

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

## ***D'instant en instant***

*(Letter of encouragement to the practice of zazen)*

Letter N° 96 – October 2021

### ***“A small shop specialized in a scarce commodity”***

During a stay in Japan (1980), Sôkô Morigana Roshi, abbot in Daishu-in temple in Kyoto, questions me, having learned I am running a meditation centre in France: where? What? Why? How?

Following my answers, he says:

*“If I understand well, you are running a small shop specialized in a scarce commodity, the spiritual experience”.*

To present Dürckheim Centre forty years after its inauguration by Graf Dürckheim, as being – *a small shop specialized in a scarce commodity* – backs up its destiny.

I find this denomination all the more justified and appropriate as we are living in a society which can't stop building *supermarkets, hypermarkets, superstores*.

Morigana Roshi added: *“We are living in a period during which, in the East like in the West, the great spiritual institutions will lose their influence to the profit of smaller communities which gather people drawn to – the spiritual exercise and the spiritual experience –”.*

The spiritual exercise?

I was 17 years old when I read Herrigel's book: *Zen in the Art of archery*. The first phrase I underlined and which accompanies me in my daily practice is *“To shoot an arrow well, one should not aim for the target but pay attention to the action, the gestures which will allow to nock the arrow and then release it!”*

The practice of Zazen has taught me it is the same when one wishes to *live well*.

It is important to pay attention to the action in which we are engaged in this instant. May it be sitting, standing, lying down or walking.

The zen master sees these different actions as being the noble attitudes of our attention. They are all the more so, given they reveal the undoable part of our vitality.

Here is what Graf Dürckheim writes about the spiritual path: *“In Japan there are specific exercises in the artistic domain, in the field of arts and crafts or martial arts. The expected outcome is not an achievement or an exterior performance, but the transformation of the person practicing. It is a question of awakening to our essential nature. Which reflects a certain inner being. What counts is what is felt, experienced by the one exercising. The fundamental principle underlying these practices is the death of the I which acts, in order to free, clear the way which opens on a deeper Self, our own essence. The integrated exercise is a path to be drawn by man himself, which will allow him to access, step-by-step, the Way through which his true Being is liberated”.*

To free our true Self! It is the Way drawn by Graf Dürckheim, a spiritual path which is not religious.

An exercise proposed by a Zen master seeks to the birth of the Being, of our true Self. Here after is an enlightened text by Shohaku Okumura Roshi, whom teaches Zazen in the United-States of America:

“To let our naked self be revealed”

*« We wear the clothing of professions such as doctor, lawyer, mechanic, priest, student, teacher. But when we sit facing the wall and let go of our thoughts, including comparing ourselves with others, we take off all this clothing. During Zazen I am not a Japanese Buddhist priest; I am neither Japanese nor American. During Zazen we are neither rich nor poor, neither Buddhist nor Christian. The terms “Japanese,” “American,” “Buddhist,” “Christian,” “man,” and “woman” are only relevant when we compare ourselves with others. When I compare myself with Americans, I am Japanese, but before I knew of people who weren’t Japanese, I didn’t know that I was Japanese. When we simply sit facing the wall in Zazen, we are neither deluded living beings nor enlightened buddhas; we are neither alive nor dead; we are just as we are. That is all. During Zazen we take off all of our clothing and become our naked self. »*

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Translation from French: *Céline Jouenne*

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