

## CENTRE DURCKHEIM

### *D'instant en instant*

*Letter of encouragement to the practice of zazen*

Letter N° 105 – August 2022

#### ***Practice for the inner Path***

It is what Graf Dürckheim offers to the Westerner upon his return from Japan in (1947). To what effect? To the discovery of One's Self! During the 16<sup>th</sup> Century a Chinese wiseman, *Wang Yangming*, proposes the key formula: “***awareness and action are one***”.

It is why Graf Dürckheim names the method he proposes the *Way of Action*.

When we are introduced to exercises which are rooted in the world of Zen, we need to differentiate the access to knowledge from the access to awareness.

#### ***Knowledge and awareness?***

The access to *knowledge* is based on the notion of studying, thinking, reflecting, learning something; it is a mental activity to which the body-tool can be associated.

*Awareness*, which is inseparable from action, is a phenomenal experience through the *field of conscience* which is the living-body in its globality and unity.

Zen master Jinen San distinguishes the *true truth* from the *truth within the concept*.

It is possible for me to *lecture* about the importance of breathing during the practice of zazen; but in this case I share a truth “*within the concept*”. However, when I practice zazen and - I *feel I Breathe In* – I am granted the awareness of the “*true truth*”.

This distinction between knowledge and awareness draws our attention on the fact that: “*There are thousands of ways to meditate but only one way to practice zazen*”. (Hirano Rôshi)

When we ask Jinen San why it is so difficult to experience the true truth, he answers: “*So difficult? Because we constantly think! It is a sort of habit we have; we think we must think everything. That is the problem. We try and approach things conceptually, mentally. It is the cause of many problems*”.

To the question, “is meditation the key?” he adds: “*It is the reason for meditation. But when we say “meditation” it would be fairer to say ZAZEN. When we say -meditation- it is often the practice within the concept. Zazen is out-of-concept. We use the same position (sitting) for zazen and to meditate, but the way of practicing is very different if we meditate or if we practice zazen*”.

**The need for a fair practice is also underlined by Graf Dürckheim:**

“The first condition of a fair practice is the comprehension of the signification of this -fair practice-. Zazen is not the exercise of a know-how at the service of a performance awaited by the world but an exercise for the inner path. The exercise of the -know how- is ended when the result is achieved. The exercise for – the inner path – begins only when we know how to execute what we have practiced. It consists in a perpetual repetition. When the technical aspect of the exercise is mastered, each repetition reflects the inner attitude of the one exercising; each error in the execution reflects a defective attitude. That is how the effort toward a pure execution becomes an endeavour of Man on himself”.

***Zazen is undoubtably a corporal exercise.***

In the West, the body is objectified as the sum of its components. The corporal exercise is most often considered as having to be exercised, that is, trained and treated like a machine which needs to be in good condition, flexible, vigorous, in order to function properly and without trouble. This way of thinking the body opens on the idea of a body man -HAS- (*Körper*, in German); the body-tool.

The involvement of the body in the practice of an inner path concerns the body man -IS- (*Leib*, in German).

*Leib! IchLeib!* We must hear by that, man in his entirety as a person, in the way to present himself, becomes true or fails to be. By his way of being as body, man testifies to which extent he is confident or suspicious, calm or agitated, open or resistant to the fact that he is .... Alive. The living body, is the breathing man. By his way of breathing, each testifies to which extent he is close to his true nature or if he's taken some distance with his essential nature.

“*Man having achieved spiritual maturity embodies a serene corporal shape*”. (K.G. Dürckheim)

“*When we practice zazen, le body takes the shape of calm*”. (Hirano Rôshi)

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Translation from French: *Céline Jouenne*

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