

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

D'instant en instant

Letter of encouragement to the practice of zazen

Lettre N° 111 – February 2023

The Way of transformation Daily life as Spiritual Exercise

“When one speaks of practice or exercise on the Way, it is necessary to always consider two aspects: In Japan, when Zen is the Way in question, there is the exercise done at a certain time of the day. For example, the meditative practice named zazen, practiced half-an-hour every morning. There is also the practice as part of our daily life: daily life as spiritual exercise.

Every action done during the day does not only possess an external meaning for the outside world. It also detains an inner meaning: the way it is accomplished. In this internal awareness, there is the possibility for man, to be and feel in contact with his essential being, his true human nature”. (K.G. Dürckheim)

Graf Dürckheim shares an anecdote which could be of interest for those who practice zazen; also, if we practice and teach an artistic, hand-crafted, or martial discipline which is rooted in Eastern or Far East traditions (Kyudo, Chado, Yoga, Tai-Chi, ...)

“In Japan, I'd been practicing Kyudo (archery) for two years under my master Kenran Umeji's vigilant eye, when he asks me – So Dürckheim, when do you practice? – It is not without pride that I answer I practice one hour each morning. I wasn't awaiting to be complimented but what he answered unsettled me: - In this case you still haven't understood anything about what we call the exercise on the Way, it needs to be practiced all day long-. Now I can say for sure that if I had answered that I practiced all day, he certainly would have said – Dürckheim you still have haven't understood anything about what we call the exercise on the Way, it needs to be practiced one hour every day!”

Practice one hour every day?

For example, zazen and the slow walk called Kin-Hin.

ZAZEN: to be sitting there, in the right stance (inner verticality), the right form (nor tense nor slouched but in the right rhythm of tension/relaxation like a living and breathing tissue) and,

absolutely immobile, exercising my full attention to the fact that, at the moment – I breathe In- ... and, at the moment -I Breathe Out- (and I am not responsible of anything).

KIN-HIN: Exactly the same exercise, but walking.

When we *learn* and exercise accompanied by a Zen master, a time comes when we discover the exercise we are learning, *teaches* us who we are. The discovery of, the experience of: “*Body I Am*”. And the Way to be as living body is the expression of my inner experience: calm or agitated... open or closed... confident or suspicious... patient or impatient.

Practice all day long?

We are not educated to seeing that an exterior action can also possess an inner meaning. For example, each morning I need to walk from my home to where my car is parked. If a person, who claims to be on the Way, walks these 100 steps with the only goal of arriving to the car, waists... 100 steps. On the contrary, I can consider this movement as being an exercise in the field of daily life. The act of walking is an opportunity to place myself in order internally.

How? By carrying out each step in the right corporal stance, the right form (nor tense nor slouched) and by walking at the rhythm which liberates me from the neurosis which consists in doing everything quickly. Where there is rhythm, there is life, where there is rhythm, I am in close contact with what we call the being, which makes everything ...what it IS, and become what it IS.

Our inner life is not only the reflection of our moods or our state of mind. On the Way of accomplishment to our true nature, our way of being as body testifies of our way of being as a *person*. Each gesture, each corporal attitude is an auto-representation of ourselves as a person. The expression “I am feeling fine” has a very profound meaning we ignore. It is the moment of the day during which we feel inner order, simply in order, because in contact with *our true nature*, which Graf Dürckheim names our essential being.

Jacques Castermane

Translation from French: *Céline Jouenne*

CENTRE DURCKHEIM

1015, rte des Reys de Saulce - 26270 Mirmande - Tel : (+ 33) 04 75 63 06 60

contact@centre-durckheim.com - <http://www.centre-durckheim.com>