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# Zen meditation and lockdown

## Workshop with Pascal-Olivier Kyosei Reynaud - Videoconferencing of April 12, 2020

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## The Dharma is the experience of the Masters that enlightens our own practice

1We have access to the wealth of over 2500 years of experience of people who have dedicated themselves to this Way. The human being is what he is, and the Masters, practitioners before us, have certainly encountered situations similar to confinement.

Even if, on practical level, there were differences, on the level of the meaning and the way of solving the problems of the existence, I think it was exactly the same.

But beware! We must not approach this intellectually only, but question ourselves with them and let their teachings enlighten our practice.

We can be touched by their words, by their way of explaining their experience and - in our turn - become one with the truth to which they open us.

## Confined or not, our life is made up of events

Confinement is an event in which our life is immersed, and the question becomes: "how can we continue the practice during this confinement?" To walk the Way is to see that every event of our life is an opportunity for awakening and liberation. Beyond that, there is no practice.

The very fact of being alive is our practice, our practice of being human.

The practice is not something external to ourselves that we should maintain or conquer. By the simple fact of living, we are totally in the practice. Zen does not separate us from life, it does not "add a layer of practice" to the fact of being alive. Simply, it allows us to enlighten our life, from our experience of meditation.

It will then be up to us to actualize what we live in the intimacy of the silent sitting throughout our day, by the quality of our attention and in our way of being.

## Living in non-separation

Life and practice are ONE, they are one thing. If we live them as two separate things, this gap also becomes the place of our practice. Understanding and overcoming this separation is also the place of our practice.

Everything that happens to us, and how we experience it, is our practice, whether we are confined or not. This is how we get out of this duality which is to imagine that the time of zazen would be outside of the rest of life, that there would be a time for external daily life and a time

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that we would call spirituality. If we see things this way, we maintain ourselves in a dualistic vision, of ourselves and of what we live. We maintain ourselves in separation, in lack, in struggle, in fear.

## Accept each situation and welcome yourself in the heart of each situation

The solution is to be open to the reality of non-separation, ultimately from everything. Otherwise, we will only maintain this dualistic questioning which leads to nothing but the reinforcement of an illusory attachment to an "I" that seeks to use a particular practice to liberate and to awaken.

When at every moment we live in unity, in non-separation, then everything that happens to us becomes a real opportunity to know ourselves and to awaken to who we really are.

Every circumstance of life, defeat or victory, is then lived as a teaching.

Everything is an opportunity to understand and deepen the dimension of one's existence on earth. This is the practice of the Way of Non-Separation.

## Master Dogen Zenji, the teaching of non-duality

Master Dogen (1200-1253) states in this passage from "*Shobogenzo Bendowa*" the reality of the union of practice and realization: "*Shushô ichi nyo*". We must therefore realize that the practice of meditation is not a practice that will lead us to awakening, but that it IS awakening, realization. And this, from the first zazen!

*"Supposing that practice and realization are not one, is the vision of people who have deviated from the Way; according to the Buddha's Dharma, they are one. Since the practice of realization takes place during practice, the practice of the beginner's mind is in itself the original complete realization".*

*(Dogen Zenji - Shobogenzo Bendowa)*

The practice of meditation is - in essence - the practice of non-duality, of non-separation. It is realized from the first sitting and at each sitting.

The practice is itself realization, because all human beings are originally Buddha, it is our true nature. This is what Zen Buddhism calls Buddha nature, and this is what Master Dogen completely realized and transmitted.

Therefore, his position is to say that we practice because we are awakened, because we are Buddha nature, and not to attain awakening or to obtain something we lack.

Master Dogen continues:

*"Even though this unfathomable Dharma is present in abundance in every person, it cannot be actualized without practice and it is not attained without realization".*

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*(Dogen Zenji - Shobogenzo Bendowa)*

It is the practice that actualizes the Buddha nature that we are.

## What do we do with all this? How do we do it?

The Dharma is “all well and good”, but the questions we ask ourselves in our daily lives are: “What can we do and how to do it?” Every day, we make choices, we make decisions. These choices lead to behaviours, actions, words, affirmations, negations. We are in movement and action, in constantly changing phenomena.

It is from this reality that one can draw the feeling of being in a completely different space, completely opposite to the practice of peaceful, silent and immobile meditation, in the dojo or at home.

Through the quality of our attention, we can see that duality is in our way of seeing and living each situation, and not in the situation itself.

How to be free and at peace in the heart of phenomena is the basis of the Buddha's teaching: how to go from samsara to nirvana.

Samsara is the place of our existence, life and death, and it is the place of our realization and awakening. There is no other place. We must accept this fact, and free ourselves from this dualistic vision, where there would be a perfect spiritual world and an ordinary everyday, imperfect world, in which it would be impossible to be at peace.

Samsara and nirvana, from the absolute point of view, are One. So is the reality of our lives.

The answer lies in overcoming all duality by achieving unity with everything, at each moment.

## A time for everything

In our daily lives, there is a time for everything. There is a time to do zazen, a time to act and to make choices, to make decisions. When we are not attached to its form, each moment is accepted as it is, each condition is lived as it is. This is the Way of Unity.

Our life is always realized in the here and now, and each here and now is as it is. In zazen, it is fully the realization of zazen. Walking is fully the action of walking; working is fully the action of working.

The realization of the Way is beyond immobility or movement; it is the reality of “each now” whatever the form it takes. The real world of our existence is always now.

This dimension of the unity of each action and spiritual realisation was already taught by the Chinese Master Baso Doitsu (*Mazu Daoyi, Ma-tsu Tao-yi, 709-788*). He was a Master Chan, heir of Master Daikan Enô (*Daijian Huineng, 638 - 713*) and was in the lineage at the origin of Rinzai Zen Buddhism:

*"Practicing the Way is not necessary. It is only necessary not to defile it. What does this mean? All types of goal-oriented fabrication and action that are based on the duality of birth and death"*

are defilement.

*If you wish to understand the Way directly, the ordinary mind is the Way.*

*What is the ordinary mind? It is the mind in which there is no fabrication, no judgment of value, no preference, no time or eternity, and no dualistic thoughts such as the common and the sacred."*

*(Baso Doitsu - Mazu Daoyi, Ma-tsu Tao-yi - 709-788).*

In one paragraph, everything is said.

Each existence is the living mirror where the luminous clarity of the awakening is reflected, free from all defilement.

I wish us to penetrate together these teachings and to be awakened by each situation, meeting, moment, event of our life, and to share this awakening as widely as possible.