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# Zen, ethics and ecology workshop

## Summary by Thierry Hoyois, spring camp 2019 in Grube Louise (Germany)

Before the camp Roland sent this orientation text to the Sangha teachers:

“During the preparation of the spring camp in Grube Louise (25th to 29th of May 2019), workshops will be held on the theme "Zen, Ethics and Ecology".

To begin our reflections, here is an orientation text that we invite you to meditate and complete. Please send us your additional thoughts on this subject.

We will use as base the Four Noble Truths and especially the Eightfold Path with the Six Paramita, by applying the principles of interdependence, responsibility and compassion to the foundations of ethics and ecology.

Perhaps we could consider appropriate ways to highlight the benefits of ethical behaviour at different levels of society so that people who have had little contact with Buddhist ethics can have new experiences through right action. This could lead them to focus on essential questions. What values should we teach our children, how and by whom, so that they perceive themselves and their actions in a great unity instead of isolating themselves and pursuing selfish goals?

We can also look at some concrete examples where selfish behaviour and ignorance have had harmful consequences for the environment in the past. Humanity forgets quickly and we should learn from these experiences.

We could also investigate how corporations, politicians, lobbyists, justify decisions that have harmful effects on the environment. By analysing them we learn to invalidate them and find arguments for more beneficial effects for the general public”.

Roland started the workshop with a presentation of the subject based on the Four Noble Truths, the basic teachings of the Buddha, as we can really see that these teachings are ecological teachings and that they also contain an explanation about the causes of the problems: greed and ignorance.

During several exchanges of point of views, we tried to analyze the situation. It was also an opportunity to mention some books dealing with the subject, such as Fred Vargas’s “Humanity in Danger” or Yuval Noah Harari’s works. We exchanged views on ongoing movements and on actions such as the one launched by the young Swedish Greta Thunberg.

Although they had differing assessments of the intensity and urgency of the climate situation, all participants shared the view that deep reflection but also action was needed to limit further damages to our environment.

A lively debate on the means of action also took place. It was decided to ask to all the camp participants what each of them was already doing and what each of them was planning to do in the future: our wishes for the planet. Thus everyone had the opportunity to put a suggestion in

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a box at the reception. These suggestions were collected on the last day of the workshop and a synthesis of them was made (which is the base of the summary below).

At the summer camp in Godinne, we already want to implement some of these suggestions: more “biological” products, less plastic waste etc.

A transcription of the five sessions of this workshop is underway and will be shared, as well as the notes of the workshop that will take place in Godinne in July.

And finally, during the sesshin kito our planet was mentioned in the intentions list.

### **Some results of the survey made at the 2019 spring camp in Grube Louise**

#### What we already do

- Practice zazen
- Responsible consumption
  - Organic food and/or local or regional food
  - Adopt a vegetarian diet, and if not, eat less meat
- Heat the rooms less and wear warmer clothing
  - Avoid buying synthetic clothing
  - Use second hand mobile phones
  - Low energy housing
- Avoid plastic packaging and bottles
  - Do not waste anything
  - Do not throw waste into nature
  - Use public transportation rather than a car
- Participate to climate action events
  - Do zazen during the Friday demonstrations
  - Support or adhere to ecological associations such as Greenpeace, WWF, NaBu etc.
  - Awaken interest for nature through excursions or photography
- Develop proto-orchards
  - Develop permaculture gardens
- Stimulate awareness of the situation and its consequences
  - Discuss urban traffic with local politicians
  - Elect “green”/ ecological parties
  - Initiate or sign petitions to preserve the environment

#### What we want to do in the future

- Choose ecology as subject in the dojo during kusen or workshops
  - Examine this subject with one’s entourage (family, friends, colleagues)
  - Work together with the Sangha on this project
  - To start a movement.

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- Decrease our consumption  
Avoid waste / Target: "Zero Waste"  
Use recyclable/glass containers  
Use soap, biodegradable cleaning products  
Increase awareness and participate in "food sharing" groups
  - Avoid travelling to distant destinations  
Take the bike  
Choose a hybrid car  
Encourage urban gardening
  - Buy "second hand" products  
Live without TV, computer and mobile phone  
Use LED lamps
  - Become politically active  
Stimulate awareness of the problem  
Aim more for motivation than morality
  - In sesshin/camp: avoid plastic waste, bring a bottle and a Bento-style container for the rest day picnic, give homemade cupcakes as fuse.
  - Write to Greta Thunberg and thank her for inspiring our workshop.