
How to approach repetitive tasks in daily life

By François Lanusé, workshop during Godinne's summer camp

This workshop was very lively, the great number of repetitive phenomena in our daily lives means that everyone is concerned by them, whether they be in our professional, family or social lives.

We quickly realised that repetitive acts were perceived in general as being boring and that they led to the development within us of a whole range of different things which allow us to swallow the bitter pill : for example thinking of other things – a situation that we know well during zazen! And proves dangerous when you're driving your car.

Yes, but when we do the housework, we can put some music on – that isn't dangerous! At this moment the discussion was very lively : and why don't we ask our Master to put music on during zazen?

But then if we realise that the different skilled means that we develop to avoid boredom don't definitively eliminate this boredom, we discover that these moments could become opportunities for enriching experience.

Without waiting for the return to everyday life to try out the different propositions we had suggested, the last day was devoted to experiencing repetitive action using clay as a support. With no other proposition than that of the description of a very simple repetitive gesture, all the people present were surprised to see appearing in their hands..... a pot . Not only did repetitive action make them competent, but it made them open up to the unexpected.

Even without a goal, simple concentration on a repetitive act totally absorbs attention, it's not necessary to add anything else. From the beginning of the exercise there was silence, concentrated on the same gesture endlessly duplicated, each instant is an opportunity to see that our breathing has become regular, that the notion of a length of time has dissolved, that we need nothing else, and that only being present to the moment is enough. We go to the end of each action with no other expectation. The present moment is fulfilment.