

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**SUMMER 7-DAY *SESSHIN* LECTURE: 1 PM**  
**Wednesday, July 28, 1965**  
**Lecture C**  
**Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco**

<sup>1</sup> Bodhisattva-mind, which is rather dualistic, but if you understand bodhisattva-mind in dualistic way, it is not right understanding. When you try to understand bodhisattva way by thinking or philosophical way, it is dualistic. Each school has its system of teaching, but Zen has no system of philosophy. Although we have—Sōtō school have—has *Shōbōgenzō*, that is not possible to understand [in] just [a] philosophical way. That is why when some scholar write something about *Shōbōgenzō*, he sub-[partial word]—he will submit what he wrote to some Zen master, you know. He does not announce, or he does not print before a Zen master check-up. This is—this point is pretty strict with our—in our schools because just philosophical understanding is not good enough as a work of Sōtō school. So we—we are pretty strict with this point.

Whenever you write something, strictly speaking, it should be checked up by some Zen master. And mutual understanding is wanted [between] scholar and Zen master. It is very difficult to tell just by reading. The mutual correspondence is wanted, or mutual, you know, "Hi, how are you?" [laughs]. This kind of friendship is necessary between Zen master and scholars. We have many scholars and Zen masters. And Zen masters and Zen scholars should be always, you know—must be quite intimate, and mutual understanding is wanted.

You cannot be both scholar and Zen master [laughs]. If it is possible it may be wonderful, but [laughs] we are not so capable. It can't be helped. If you want to read or understand—because it is necessary for a scholar to understand *Shōbōgenzō* and other culture too, or else, you know, his teaching will not work. So for scholar it is necessary to read many and many books and to understand Eastern culture and Western culture. This is necessary for—for us. And Zen master should devote himself to our own teaching and practice. But as both scholars' and masters' understanding is based on *Shōbōgenzō*, the mutual understanding will be easily attained.

Bodhisattva's way in other school is rather philosophical, and that is why they have their own system. But for Zen school, bodhisattva's way is—our practice itself is bodhisattva's way. Not philosophy, but our actual practice is bodhisattva's way. Or management of the monastery is itself bodhisattva's way.

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<sup>1</sup> It's possible that the opening words are missing on tape, but it sounds like Suzuki-rōshi was starting the lecture at this point.

As someone asked me last night,<sup>2</sup> how do—how is it possible to help others, or what is the right way to help others? To help others—the most important point in helping others [is] to actualize bodhisattva's way in its true sense. So you can actualize bodhisattva's way in your management of Zen Center, or in your management of a monastery or a temple. If you actualize his way, that is also *dāna-prajñāpāramitā*.<sup>3</sup> That is to help others, to give something, to give most valuable things to the society. If you actualize our way in your actual life, that is the most valuable contribution to the society. Even though you give something, if you give it, you know, something in wrong way [laughs] it will create more trouble. So just to give something is not our way. It was given—everything was treated in right way in bodhisattva's way.

So bodhisattva's way of helping others is not some moral code or some written conditions. To help others does not mean actually to give something or to lead someone in special way. So if you want to understand what is actual bodhisattva's way, you should practice our way. That is why Dōgen-zenji was particular to our everyday life. He was very, very particular because he thought it is impossible to express what does it mean by bodhisattva's way in word or in philosophy. Before he gave up philosophy, before he gave up art, or literature, or scientific approach, he had had pretty good understanding of science. Today we call it science, but at that time in Japan there is no idea of science. It was twelfth century. But he was—in this point he was wonderful person. He [laughs] —he understood—in his mind—he was very scientific mind, and he was—he understood philosophy of history and history—philosophy itself. And he had good knowledge of philosophy of religion as you started at—by—after Kant.

By the way, when we say science or philosophy, we mean pure science, pure philosophy, not philosophy under the authority of God or some particular belief. It is the same philosophy after you have had—after—since Renaissance. This is good points—good point—one of the good points of Buddhism. We, you know, we treat human being as human being. Religion is not some particular thing. Religion is to find—to find true meaning of human nature. We do not try to change human being to God. From beginning to end, we are human being. We should be human being. There is no need to be God [laughs]. Some religion, you know, treat us as a god.

Christian—in Christianity, I think it is impossible for you to be a god, the God. So for Christianity there is—Christian—there is no danger in this point [laughs]. Human being is always human being. I don't know after you die what you will become. What will become of you I don't know. You

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<sup>2</sup> SR-65-07-27-B.

<sup>3</sup> *dāna-pāramitā*: traditionally translated as "generosity," it is one of the six *pāramitās* (virtues or perfections) of a bodhisattva. Suzuki-rōshi probably added "*prajñā*" (wisdom) inadvertently.

go to heaven and [laughs] you—will you become a god or what? I don't know exactly. Maybe even though you go to heaven, you are human being and simple person, maybe. Unless you cannot be a god. Which [laughs]—which is it? Will you bec- [partial word]—do you—are you supposed to be a god when you go to heaven? Or still human being?

**Student A:** In Christianity?

*[Some discussion in audience ensues, mostly unclear:]*

**Student B:** Angels.

**Student C:** Angels.

**Student B:** Angels, say.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Angels.

**Student B:** Some think they're in-between. [Laughter.]

**Student D:** Neither one. Hee-hee.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Neither. Anyway, that is not our problem so much [laughs, laughter]. For us, you know, even though you become, you attain enlightenment, you are also human being, not—and "buddha" is another name for a human being. Buddha and human being is same nature, same quality—same one quality, strictly speaking. It does not mean you become buddha, or buddha devaluated [?] to human being. It is not so. Same quality. When you realize your nature, you are—true nature, you are called "buddha." And what is buddha-nature is the point.

In this point and—in your philosophy, Northrop<sup>4</sup> came to the nearly the same conclusion. It was—it was not so hard for philosophers to explain or to establish phil- [partial word]—authority of philosophy even over the religion. They thought they could understand religion in philosophical way, in scientific way. So they tried and tried and tried and discussed and discussed until almost all the religious—almost his own religious mind can accept his own philosophy. And conclusion was that the idea of God is not something better than human—idea of human being or less—or less than the idea of human being. Ideal—by ideal what he meant was the same idea we have, our true nature, that ideal is not better than human being or worse than human being. It is human nature itself, according to Northrop. This is very close, you know.

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<sup>4</sup> F. S. C. Northrop: 1893–1992. Professor of philosophy and jurisprudence at Yale University for 39 years. Suzuki-rōshi might have been referring to his *The Meeting of East and West* (1946). Northrop urged humanity to be "continuously aware of the freshness and the ineffable beauty and richness of the immediately apprehended" (*The Logic of the Sciences and the Humanities*).

So in this way he, you know, replaced idea of God for idea of human nature. In human nature, there is authority which is nothing bigger than—nothing stro- [partial word]—nothing better than human being, which is nothing—which is not worse than human being. The human being, human mind can control themselves and everything. This is what he meant by ideal. And idea of *Sein*<sup>5</sup> or *Soren* [?] is very close to our idea of bodhisattva's way.

To the—when we stand [at a] crossing point or fork [in the] road, which way to take? Here is our bodhisattva-mind, you know. Which is better? Which should we go? This "I" is not possible to explain, but anyway, we are always at the crossing or at the fork [in the] road, and we don't know what to do. As long as we have our true nature, when we are conscientious enough, we don't—we sometime wonder which way to take. That is bodhisattva's way. If we don't mind good or bad we will take, you know, either way. But for us it is rather difficult [laughs] to choose one of the two. When it is difficult, there is true nature. Because of the true nature—true nature makes us difficult to choose, you know. Here we have bodhisattva-mind. When we have difficulty in, you know, in ethical sense there is bodhisattva-mind. When you say, "I am no good," there is bodhisattva-mind. But we cannot explain why we have this kind of mind. It is impossible to explain why.

But anyway, we have this kind of mind. And this mind is very important. And we call it buddha-mind, which is impossible to explain why. This mind was accepted by your philosophers. And this mind is called by Northrop "ideal," and this ideal means buddha-nature in ourselves.

But philosophers found out in logical or in philosophical way what was our true nature. But no one bring it—no one had brought it in our practice. So that is why Zen—we have in—Buddhism has practice of zazen. To bring something which is inexplicable to actual practice is Zen—Zen practice. This is one of the eight—eight noble truths. That is why Zen is so important in our—in Buddhism. Without Zen the teaching of Buddha cannot be understood by us.

So anyway, in East and in West, the truth is always same, and we are coming to the same conclusion, I think. Although the way is different, but more and more your philosophy will become like *Shōbōgenzō*, and our way will become more and more scientific. And in this way I hope we will achieve something very good.

Now here in Zen Center we are practicing a very rigid way after the example of Japanese way, but it does not mean we are forcing our way to you. It does not mean so. But it will give you some suggestion, and it

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<sup>5</sup> Suzuki-rōshi may be referring to Northrop's use of *Sein* (Ger.), "being," as in Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.

takes, I think, pretty long time before you establish your own way. So for you, a pioneer [laughs] of Buddhism, it may be pretty difficult [laughs]. But if you have right understanding of our way, you can explain it, you know, why we have this kind of practice and why you should do this kind of practice. Then they will understand our way pretty well.

So the most important point is not to be one-sided. Practice and study is both important. But it is not possible for anyone to, you know, achieve many things. So, as I said, to have same cover, you know [laughs], is very important point. Cover should not be used. When you do something you should take off the cover [laughs]. If you want to boil something by cover [laughs], you will get it—into confusion. Cover is, you know—for us, cover—the cover is the *Shōbōgenzō*. This is perfect understanding of our way. But perfect understanding will not work [laughs]. It's too perfect [laughs]. So—but it will keep dust from [laughs] the pan, and if you put cover on your pan you can use it whenever you want to use your pan. So it is very important to have a cover to it.

Dōgen thought that, as he wrote, it is not the time to make them understand what is Buddhism in Japan right now. It is not. It was not possible. So he trained several [of] his disciples, and he prepared perfect cover [laughs], so that some day people may use the pan of Sōtō school. Before they use Sōtō way, it is—it was necessary for him to put cover to it. That is *Shōbōgenzō*. That is why Sōtō school exist after seven hundred years later. Still exist—Sōtō school still exist because of the cover he made [laughs]. If there is no—he—if he didn't prepare any cover to it, as we are human being, so it was impossible to keep his pure teaching always fresh and in use.

Everyone agreed in this point that his cover was the best cover, anyway. No dust [laughs] can enter the pan, it was so perfect cover. Everyone agree with that. So we have to understand—we have to have some Sōtō priest who can understand what is *Shōbōgenzō*. And there must be many Zen masters who is actually practicing zazen. But those who practice zazen will some make—will make some mistake, you know [laughs]. So we should, you know, have cover. Mis- [partial word]—by "mistake" I mean dust, you know [laughs, laughter]. Soon we will be dusty. There may be many and many misunderstanding of Zen. When we become—when we enter some astray [?] or dead end [laughs], we should find out what we are doing. That is *Shōbōgenzō*.

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Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (5/18/01).