

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Monday, August 15, 1966
August Sesshin Lecture
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco
Lecture A

Suzuki-rōshi: The second paragraph [of the *Genjō Kōan*]:

*That we move ourselves and understand all things is ignorance. That things advance and understand themselves is enlightenment. It is Buddha who understand ignorance. It is people who are ignorant of ignor- [partial word]—enlightenment. Further, there are those who are enlightened about enlightenment, and those who are ignorant of ignorance. [Recording stops.]*¹

Tape operator: Uh, what would you like me to say into the microphone? [Recording stops.]

Suzuki-rōshi: ... trace of enlightenment—enlightenment— ... trace of enlightenment—enlightenment— [Fragments only.]

²... among many instructions about how to sit: to keep your back straight, pull your chin, and about *mudrā* in your hand. The most important thing is, we say, to stop thinking or to keep your mind on your breathing. Dōgen-zenji says, "Think non-thinking. Think non-thinking." This is a very important point, and at the same time this is very difficult practice because your mind will be easily carried away. Sometime I—when you feel very good, but as soon as you feel you reached a certain stage, your mind will be carried away because you felt something [laughs], and your mind is not on your breathing any more [laughs]. So if you want to concentrated on your breathing, you should not mind even the state of mind you are in your practice.

So as Hīnayāna Buddhist—in Hīnayāna Buddhist practice, the best stage is the stage where you have no mental joy and physical joy even. The mental attachment or consciousness or joy is not so difficult to overcome, but it is the physical consciousness which is

¹ It sounds like the tape was re-recorded, at a later date, from this point onward with a different lecture. That is, the tape for a lecture originally on *Genjō Kōan* Paragraph 2 was later recorded over again with a different lecture. (Or the first part of the "... among many instructions" lecture was recorded over with Paragraph 2 of *Genjō Kōan*.)

² This is the earliest surviving part of the lecture, although the opening words are missing. In a contemporaneous recorded commentary, the tape operator stated that the opening sentence was approximately: "There are many ways to study Buddhism." That commentary is appended to the end of this lecture.

difficult to be free from it. Why we emphasize this point is because we have to live on each moment. We have to be ready. We—our mind should be absolutely free from everything spiritual and—spiritually and physically. And we should be ready for—we should be ready for responding to mental and physical stimulation which may come. And we should be—we should have power to react to everything which may come. When your mind is fortified with something, you feel—you yourself feel very safe [laughs], but actually it is not safe. Some stronger—you cannot protect yourself by preparing something. When you are ready to adjust yourself, you are—you have immense strength. But usually we always—by nature we try to fortify ourselves spiritually and mentally and—or physically. That is why we lose our freedom from our surrounding.

So in our practice, we sh- [partial word]—we open our mind and we just follow our living nature. We say, "Stop your mind." Why we say stop your mind is your mind stops your living activity. So [laughs] to stop your mind is to let your mind work. To stop, you know—your thinking faculty is usually stops your actual living faculties. So if you stop the faculty which stops your living faculty or nature, [it] means to let your mind work. Do you understand? When you think you stop or you limit your activity, when you do not think, or when you do not fortify yourself by your thinking faculty or rational faculty, your true nature will obtain the perfect freedom.

The clock is always moving: Short hand and long hand are all constantly, you know, moving. But when you think, "It is two o'clock" [laughs], clock stops. And when you prepare something in your—by your thinking, that—it means you fortify or you fortify yourself two or three miles ahead [laughs]. You think, "Now I'm all right [laughs]. I can sleep [laughs]." But that is not—that makes you uneasy more, you know. You try to be, you know—you try to feel safe, but actually at the same time you have a fear—fear of being destroyed the fortified front. So that makes you more [laughs] uneasy.

So thinking—you think so that you find out some conclusion and rest on that conclusion, but actually by thinking you make yourself more uneasy. But if you do not fortify yourself, you have no fear of being invaded. You are always welcome [welcoming] [laughs] your enemy. Whatever come you are ready. "Please come." [Laughs.] Then you have no fear. That is to stop thinking.

So not only to stop thinking but also we stop some emotional contrivance. When we sit we just sit, keeping our mind on breathing. We have to live, so we have to take breathing. So this is absolutely necessary for us. So we just sit and keeping our mind on our breathing. We do not prepare anything. We just sit. And here the important thing is to have conviction, to have selflessness. This is

most important thing. Without this conviction, you cannot stop your thinking, or you cannot stop your emotional activity. If you want to stop your emotional activity and thinking activity, you remain in your selflessness.

It is not attained, this selflessness, after you attain enlightenment. Before you practiced zazen, you fixed your mind in this truth which no one can deny it. We think we have self, but actually, as you know, there is no such thing as self. You think—usually people thinks, "I am here," but actually we do not exist here. This is the truth Buddha found out. Not by just—for his own truth, but as the truth for everyone. It is absolutely true. If you cannot deny it, you have to accept it [laughs]. If you cannot accept it, it's better not to practice zazen [laughs]. This much conviction is necessary. If you have some doubt in his teaching, you may study it until you accept it completely. But it will not take so long time before you accept his teaching: his teaching is so true.

So when you practice zazen, you have to be prepared to accept the truth as truth, and stop useless thinking and useless emotional activities which will not help you, and to live on each moment is how to practice zazen. On each moment we have to renew ourselves as the clock goes. We say in—in San- [partial word]—I am not—I don't know Sanskrit so well, but to attain—how to attain detachment is to watch or to gaze at something—*upekshā*, they say. *Upekshā* means to watch. To watch means to follow the reality—to follow the reality—to follow reality like clock goes. It does not go so fast, but it does not—it is not stopping. It is moving, but it doesn't go so fast.

But our mind [laughs]—in your practice because we are so accustomed to preparing something or making some useless effort to protect ourselves, so sometime our hand moves very fast and waiting [laughs]. You know, it is—I think you set your clock—alarm, and you think this is all right. It means you—you move your—you move the hand of the clock fast—six hours fast or ahead, or seven hour ahead [laughs], and you—you will feel very good. That is—that is all right, but usually we do something like this: You save a lot of money, and you feel very good. It is the—you want money when you want it. When you hungry, you have to buy something. That is why you have to have money. But you save a lot of money, and—and after all you become interested in saving money. It means you are, you know, moving your hands of the clock, and you feel very good. But actually it means you stop your clock. Clock is necessary because it goes as the sun goes.

If we want to live in its true sense, we have to live one moment after another moment. One breathing after another. This is exactly how we should live. Forgetting all about breathing and thinking something

wonderful [laughs] when you are practicing, its [it does not] make any sense. It is not how to live in this world. This kind of useless effort will be completely forgotten when we get accustomed to our practice in its true sense. It is very difficult for anyone to give others instructions one event—one thing after another. But if you know this secret, this secret will help in whatever you do. If you know—if you see what they do, you will find out how important it is to live on each moment.

In monastery, the most important teaching is *Dōjō daishuni ichini*.³ It means: *Dō* is "movement." *Jō* is "calmness" or "to stop activity." "Our activity should be with people." That is the most important teaching in monastery. You may think in big monastery there must be some rules to control people [laughs]. I thought, when I saw the notice in the monastery, "Oh, of course it is necessary to do things with people at the same time, or else they cannot control us," but the more you think about it, the more you will find out the mean—true meaning of it. It means selflessness. It means not to move your watch, your clock ahead of the time.

Dōgen-zenji, early in the spring, would watch the plum coming out in cold winter—cold morning. In Japan, you know, plum comes up in end of the January or February. Even the cold wind blowing over the icy field, it comes out. And Dōgen-zenji liked plum—Japanese plum very much. And he watched—he gazed at it, appreciating its beauty. He just, you know, watch it. That is *upekshā*. That is detachment.

Detachment means to live with people, with everything, with the beauty of the plum. That is detachment. It doesn't look like—the flower does not look like [it is] moving, but actually it is moving like a clock. It's moving. So it may fade away in two or three days. He may watch—he would watch every morning the same flower, and his mind follows as the plum goes. This is detachment. This is at the same time to appreciate flower, while attachment is to stop the plum. To attach to flower and stop its beauty it means to appreciate dead flower. If you want to appreciate living flower, you cannot be selfish. Your mind should be instead in the state of selflessness. You should be prepare for discouragement when the flower fade away.

This is how we stop our thinking in our practice. So "think non-thinking." Usually you will think "think thinking" [laughs]. Think thinking means "think-stopping." Think non-thinking means "think something actual, something real." But usually when we think, we think something which is dead. Nothing thinks. Everything just alike [alive?]. Only human being thinks without knowing what he is doing.

³ Japanese: *dōjō*: "temple, meditation hall"; *daishuni*: possibly from *daishu*, "all the monks in a temple," + *ni*; *ichini*: possibly from *ichi*, "one," + *ni*. See also lecture SR-69-08-18.

Human being is ac- [partial word]—really human being when he understand what is his thinking. Then thinking will work. But when we think without knowing what is thinking, we will be completely separated from reality. This is why we say stop your mind.

So in your practice, don't try to attain some particular stage in your practice. Of course, in your practice you will have many experiences, but those experiences is valuable—is not valuable—is valuable because it is some special experience. It is valuable because—it is valuable when you follow—when you catch the experience in its true sense with detachment, with full appreciation.

Experience is not valuable. When you catch it, appreciate it in its true sense, it is valuable. Do you understand? So you should not say I attained this stage [laughs]. This stage—some particular stage is not important. That you have attained that particular stage also is not important. The way you attained—the way you had that experience is important. That way may be the same way when you suffer, when you have disagreeable experience. Same way. So you may realize that. Which is valuable is not some stage or some particular experience, but the way how you have had that experience. According to Dōgen-zenji, we do not mind the loftiness of the teaching or beauty of the experience. But we should mind the way to attain the experience.

When you have zazen, zazen become zazen. When you have zazen, zazen makes sense. So when you become you yourself, zazen become true zazen. When you are omitted from zazen, zazen does not become zazen. Zazen is not to polish a tile [laughs]. Zazen is—excuse me, zazen is not some way to make tile a jewel. When you polish a tile, that is zazen. So your—how you polish it is the most important point. Whether it is tile or jewel is not the point. What kind of, you know, attainment you will have is not the point. Have you faced—confront the problem is the point. How to confront the problem in our practice is to open up ourselves and to see—to accept—accept things as it is, is the fundamental way. Do you understand?

So to think is very silly—silly [laughs]. It is as silly as to hitch a wagon to a star [laughs]. It is useless for a star to have stick [laughs]. But you feel very good when you have some stick. Brush [laughs] star, but it doesn't work. It's much better not to have anything, and just watch the star. It's very beautiful if you watch stars without anything. But when you start to brush the star [laughs], they are not beautiful anymore. But you may feel very good if you brush star [laughs]. It may be more—it—for you, you think it become more bright. But everyone will become sympathetic with you. "He is [1-3 words] [laughs, laughter]. What is he doing? Look very silly." So when you sit, you just sit. That's all. Don't forget the story [?]. Whatever you

do, this attitude is very, very important.

Then without attaining enlightenment, enlightenment will come to you. This is why we emphasize to stop thinking, and why we emphasize the way-seeking mind. Dōgen-zenji says you should attain enlightenment before you attain enlightenment [laughs]. Do you understand? Before you attain enlightenment [laughs]. It means way—conviction.

[Sighs.]

I think you have understood [laughs] why we say stop your mind. Think this point over and over and find out its true meaning.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (5/10/01).

Operator's Recorded Contemporaneous Commentary for Tape No. SR-66-08-15-A-D

This is a rather mixed-up lecture, with this lecture, which I've called on the back of the box "Number D"⁴—"Letter D"—starting on tape No. 1, marked tape No. 1, and ending on tape No. 2, starting on the end of Track 2 of tape No. 1 and ending on the end of Track 2 of tape No. 1—of—ending on the track—Track 2 of—*excuse me*—ending on Track 1—soo it's very complicated because the plastic reel is numbered 2, and it should be really Track 1. It's actually Track 1. Maybe I'll rewind it and leave it on—and then there'll be 1 on the other side—*uhh*—let's call it track Side 2, Track—or then that would be same as Track 2.

Well anyway, D ends on Track 2 of tape No. 2—begins on Track 2 of tape No. 1 (near the middle). *Uhh*. The first words of Lecture D were—are missing. *Uhh*. Just the sentence, "There are many ways to study Buddhism"—approximately that sentence—which is the beginning sentence of the lecture, which begins on Track 1, Lecture D.

The transition between tape No. 1 and tape No. 2—*uhh*, several minutes were lost: Four, three-four minutes, two-three minutes—in which he described how, when you turn your hands forward, or turn your hands so that there's a—thumb and forefinger are a parallel line—this turns your arm, and your arms are out from your body. This turns your arms out a little and opens your chest up at the top. And for the beginner—so the upper part of your lungs, right, and your shoulders are used—for the beginner this is important because he finds it difficult both to maintain good posture and to breathe deeply with the diaphragm, pushing everything down to make more room for your lungs. Later, he can both deep-breathe with the diaphragm pushing down to make more room for the lung and maintain good posture, which keeps the upper parts of his lungs functioning so the hand position isn't very important.

He does say, and I don't know if this was missed or not, that the little finger should touch the stomach if possible. And then the thumb and forefinger should be in a parallel line—parallel vertical line. However, for more extrovert-type people, and I don't think this was lost—it may be all right to turn it in so both little finger and even thumb more turned up somewhat touch the stomach, or toward the stomach so it's not a vertical parallel but at an angle—of course, still in line but not vertical. And for more introvert people it should be more open out.

Umm. I think that's the gist of what was missed between the two.

Sorry. Thank you. Goodbye.

⁴ This is probably Lecture A in the current numbering.