

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

The first day of the *sesshin* is almost finished. In the first day, I wanted you to establish a good posture. It is rather—it was not appropriate to give you some—something to work on intellectually, but as you have been physically worked so hard, so for a change I will give you some intellectual problems in Buddhism.

We are now coping with the problem of causality. This—I think Reverend Katagiri must have told you something about this, I think. But this problem is very big problem—so big that it covers all the area of Buddhist philosophy. The one of the philosophy which suggest us right understanding of causation is *Kegon Sūtra*. In *Kegon*, we have a famous statement in Japanese: *Ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*.¹ "Things are—things are one of many—things exist one of many, or many of one—as one of many, or many of one." The one—the understanding of "one of many" is rather mechanical understanding of existence. And "many of one," understanding of many—existent as many of one is teleological understanding of existence.² But both understanding will reduce to the one understanding which is eternal present.

Things as "one of many," which is mechanical understanding, is possible when you ignore—not "ignore," but when you—when you do not take the—when you do not take the truth of changing—dynamic changing of things out of consideration, then things exist as in "one of many." You are a part of it. But actually it is not so, but ignoring that, you are acting on each other, and you have actually no—you have no time to whole [?] special character when you are acting with each other. Actually you change—you changes—you change, and other things changes. But in the smallest particle of time, you exist mechanically as a one of many. You are a part of many, or one of the many.

But as I pointed out last time—no, no yesterday, it is not true because dynamic—as long as dynamic change is going on, on and on, we cannot—we have no time [laughs] to exist in "one of many." You are

¹ *Ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*: Literally, "One is all, all is one." Probably from Sōsan's *Shinjinmei*.

² A reference to Nishida Kitarō's "The Unity of Opposites," in *Kitarō Nishida: Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, Honolulu: East-West Press, 1958, p. 175: "To say: the world is 'from the one to the many,' is to give a teleological interpretation."

included—you are involved in—always involved in dynamic change of the world. So when you have full understanding of the "one of many," then you will find out really what you—what—how you exist is in eternal present. You are—you exist in eternal present. On this present—on this present you have future and—past and future connected with present. In this present, you have future and you have past. Future is the time which does not come yet, but it showed itself in present. The past is the time which passed already, but it doesn't—it hasn't passed yet, you know. Some connection is in present. So in this moment we have past and future.

So in static logic it is possible to say present include past and future, or past and future is connected with present. This is possible to say. But this point will be more clear to you when you apply the dialogical logic. Past—past is—past and future is one pair of opposites, you know. Past—past conform—confront future. Future confront past. So in dialogical logic, past and future is completely different idea. Past and future is confront with each other. But at the—at the same time, it conform with each other. Because—because of the idea of past, we—we will have idea of future. So it—actually it—past conforms future. Future conforms past. When this conformation take place, the actual meaning of past and future will be transcended. When this take place, past is not past anymore, future is not future anymore. And past and future will be involved in dynamic change of the world.

So anyway, Buddha's teaching that things changes, or his understanding of things in this world is—this world is the world of dynamic change is always true. And this truth is a key to solve those problems we—intellectual problems. Without this key, this contradiction cannot be solved. Whether there will be eternal dispute whether this world is world of—this world is going to some particular result, or this world—in this world many things just exist mechanically.

But because of his teaching, the world is the world of transiency. The world—and world of dynamic change. We can solve this problem. And conclusion is we live in eternal present. We can touch the eternal—eternity—eternal life, or else we have no time to touch the immortal life. Even though we are mortal—even though we are mechanical existence in one way, it is possible for us to touch to the eternal truth—eternal—eternity—eternal being. And we find ourselves as a immortal being. And we live in eternal present.

When we live in this eternal present, we have absolute freedom. Actually, when you understand this truth, your past cannot determine your present. Your future teleologically cannot determine your present. So you are—your way of life is quite free from teleological understanding and materialistic understanding of our life. This is how

you achieve the absolute freedom or vital freedom. This is how we acquire religious life in its true sense.

The teaching of causality—if you do something wrong, the result will be bad, you know, it is teleological understanding of life. But if you understand teleological understanding in Buddhist way—applying the truth this world is the world of dynamic change—you will not be caught by just future result. You have freedom from future life. And you will be free from your past life. But it does not mean to ignore the truth of causality. Believing in causality, we will be free from our past and future. This is Kegon—Kegon's "one and many." Things—"one is one of many; many is many of one." One is—"one of many" is mechanical understanding. The many is—"many of one" is teleological understanding.³ Understanding of many is—"many of one" is, you know, to believe in causality and to start our activity expecting some result.

So result comes first, and our present will be—not sacrificed, but comes next. This is the weak point of the teaching of causality, you know. If you believe in causality, you have no freedom, as determinism teach us—teaches us. You have no freedom because you will—your present will be determined by your past, and as long as you have some future idea, you will—you have no freedom. You have to sacrifice present for sake of future. But this is not a completely right understanding. So essence of Buddhist teaching is the teaching everything changes, and everything is—this world is world of dynamic change.

This morning⁴ we—I talked about several stock word of Buddhism and difference between Dōgen-zenji's way—way of using it and usual way of using it: "to put head upon a head," or "mistake over mistakes," or "ivy and vine over ivy and vine." "To put head on a head" means to exist in this world as a one of many. You know, there is many things [laughs], so we have to see many things. So we want many heads. One head is not enough [laughs]. But usually to put head over—upon a head is most ridiculous [laughs] thing. But for Dōgen it is not ridiculous because he has deeper understanding of life.

We say "one or many heads," but one or many is—fundamentally is not difference. You say sometime "one" and you say sometime "many," but one exist—one head you have is result of many [laughs]. Many end in one head like this. You have—you have many heads. Many things and many things result in one head.

³ Citing Nishida, *ibid.*, p. 175: "Saying: the world is 'from the many to the one,' means a causal and deterministic interpretation of the world; the world is seen from the past, and thought mechanically. To say: the world is 'from the one to the many,' is to give a teleological interpretation."

⁴ SR-66-08-15-C.

And one head—this one head will—you may understand this one head is many, because this head will—this one head, according to the teleological understanding of our life, this one head is mechanical understanding. This one head is result of many. But [in a] teleological understanding, this one head is—will—will be sacrificed for—for one. It means you go back to past from present [laughs]. Do you understand? It is rather difficult. Mechanically, you know, your head is result of many—many factors result [in] one head. But teleological understanding of head is, you know, opposite because the result come first and cause comes later, second. So this one head will result—will work—will be sacrificed as one of many and will result [in] one. It goes back to past. As Dōgen-zenji says, times go from future to past and sometime from past to future, he says [laughs], which [is] ridiculous, you may say. But it is quite true. It is the difference of your viewpoint you take.

Mechanically, you know, Buddha passed away 3,000 years ago, attaining oneness of the one truth, you know. But when we strive for Buddhism, Buddha's teachings—teaching come first and our effort comes next. It means Buddha is here and our, you know, effort comes later. So it means time goes back to Buddha from present to past because, you know, his attainment is—his teaching is here now. And to attain his teaching—his enlightenment, we strive for in various way. So our effort comes later. And teaching comes first. It means time comes—time pass from present to past. But if you have deeper understanding of the truth, you will not be surprised even though Dōgen-zenji said times elapse from present to past [laughs]. It is quite natural for us. And we are doing—some of us Buddhist doing this kind of thing—teaching first—Buddha first and our effort is next. This is not right way of studying Buddhism.

We should find out Buddha right here, you know. But it does not mean to sacrifice our life which we have present—which we have now. It means to live in eternal present without sacrificing anything, without appreciating this moment as an eternal present. In this way, we can believe—firmly believe in our teaching no matter whatever viewpoint you take, no matter what kind of view of life you have. As long as you have this truth, there is nothing to be astonished [about]. When you just understand teaching—many teachings intellectually, you will be astonished. You will be—you will have many difficulties in understanding—in accepting teachings. But if you have deeper understanding of reality, whatever they may say it is all right. You will—you can accept it.

So according to Buddhism or especially Zen, this world is world of contradiction. And in contradiction, we will find out—we will directly experience identity of the contradiction. We can identify, we can

accept the contradiction of the teaching, and we can appreciate the contradiction. Instead of confronting with each other, we—we will conform with each other as man and woman, you know [laughs]. We can, you know—if you confront—if man confront with [a woman], or if a woman confront with a man, you know, it is rather [laughs]—you will waste—your life is a waste of time. But if you conform yourself with man or with woman, you can identify yourself with—with another. This is how we live in this world. By conforming with each other, we can study Buddhism. There is no need to be critical, you know. If someone says something opposite to your understanding, it is—it will be the confirmation of your understanding. "Oh, that is—that is your understanding. I can understand why you understand the reality in that way." In this way, the life of confrontation will become life of conformation, and you will have absolute composure in your life. In difficulty, in problems, in various vine and [laughs] ivy of thought—the more the thought is complicated, the more you are composed—you will acquire the deeper conformation—composure of your mind. This is the secret of Buddhism. This is not just understanding. If you hear me, I think you will understand why we have man and woman, and why we have past and future, why we have freedom—we should have freedom, and we should have a tradition and many framework of society.

It is rather early, but I want to—I think I have finished what I wanted to talk about for this morning—this evening.

Thank you very much.

[Two short sentences or questions, possibly in Japanese.]

Do you have something to announce?

Student: No.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh. Tomorrow Bishop Sumi⁵ is coming, so I want all of you to attend his lecture and *sesshin*.

Thank you very much.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (8/02/01).

⁵ Togen Sumi: Formerly an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji, he succeeded Yamada Reirin as head of the Sōtō Zen School in America in 1965.