

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Friday, August 19, 1966
SESSHIN LECTURE: Friday Morning
Lecture A
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco

I think you must have tired out [laughing], but not yet. I know you are not tired out yet. Don't give up before you [are] actually tired. It is not so easy to be tired out. It is pretty difficult. Before you get tired out, it takes many and many years [laughter]. Don't worry.

You know, the Sixth—Sixth Patriarch—this Zen master¹ is the direct disciple of the Sixth Patriarch and who was very famous, but unfortunately he had not good disciple. But he became a teacher of the emperor. The emperor used to drive his cart when he was coming.² He was so learned and so virtuous person.

And I finished—I stopped his answer in halfway.³ So it may be better to start it from the beginning of his answer to the question given by the—given by a southern—southern—a monk who was born in southern country.

The master said: "If it is so, their understanding is not different from the—Senni-gedō's⁴ understanding."

About Senni-gedō, we discuss it already. Their understanding is the mind is something which is in their body and—which is permanent and which is holy and divine—which has holy and divine nature. Although everything changes, that mind does not change, and that mind is universal mind to everyone. To realize this mind is to realize the truth. That is their understanding: something similar to Buddhism but not quite—not quite the same. In Buddhism, body and mind is one. But in this school—in this Indian religion, people believe in permanency of the mind and eter- [partial word]—immortality of the mind while they believe in transiency of the material world. But their understanding of mind is also

¹ Nanyang Huizhong (Nan'yō Echū): 675–775. Disciple of the Sixth Chinese Patriarch, Dajian Huineng (Daikan Enō). He taught three Tang emperors: Tang Xuan Zong, Tang Zu Zong, and Tang Dai Zong, the latter of whom gave him the title "National Master" or "National Teacher" (Jap. Kokushi).

² Upon Echū's arrival at the imperial palace, the emperor helped pull Echū's carriage along with his own hands.

³ Suzuki-rōshi is continuing his translation and commentary on Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Sokushin-zebutsu," picking up where he left off in SR-66-08-18-B, midway through the exchange between Echū and a monk.

⁴ Senni-gedō (Jap.): Senni (Senika) + gedō (non-Buddhist). An Indian non-Buddhist school led by Senika in Shākyamuni Buddha's time. It held that the body is perishable, but one's divine nature (*atman*) was imperishable. Senika questions Shākyamuni Buddha in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* (*Flower Garland Sūtra*).

materialistic. This is—and—dualistic—dualism based on mechanic or materialism.

Buddha's understanding of mind and body is more—we call it inter— theory of interdependency. It is actually—and our logic is more dialectical. Zen [?] studied [started?] logic. We do not discuss something neglecting our consciousness. So Buddhism is very much psychological. And Buddhism is very—very much—some—someone may say Buddhism is the teaching of contradiction—absolute contradiction or unity of opposite, and we treat things as a unity of the opposite, as you see in teaching of Kegon or Tendai. In Tendai, as you know, they treat—they discuss things in three ways: materialistic, primitive poor understanding of existent being, and more advanced understanding is the understanding of nothing. The poor understanding of—mechanical understanding which is one or many, or one of many. Each existence is one of many, or each existence has its own character.

This kind of understanding will ending—will end when it—frailty [?] or ending—more advanced understanding of being. Actually "one of many," we say, but actually everything is changing. So "one of many," we say, but that is whether one or many. "Many," we say, but each one is changing. So we cannot—it is—it means nothing exist [laughs].

So more advanced view of life is nothing. It is more advanced understanding. Here we have to, you know, understanding of life— nothingness—to understand things as nothing and to understand things as something which has various character. But there is more advanced view of life—understanding which is the understanding of nothing and— nothingness, and view of existence and non-existent which overcome or transcend both view, and which use or apply two ways of understanding. It is true that nothing exist. This is true. Something exist. This is true. And if you insist on each of them, that is wrong view. This is more advanced understanding. This is Buddhism, actually. So we may say mind exist, you know, or mind does not exist. Both is true for us.

"If their understanding is like that—like this, their understanding does not different from the understanding of heretics—Indian heretics called Senni. The heretic says—

This is refutation of the former description.

—they say: 'There are divine being in our body. This nature or being knows—feels everything. And when our body perishes this divine being will get out of our body. It [is] like a people who live in burning house. The house is not constant, but the owner of the house is always constant.'

They can get out of the house. In this way they discuss our way but it is not—anyway, this is not right. It is difficult to know which is better. Almost—their understanding is almost same. We s- [partial word]—in Japanese we say *goji fogato*.⁵ It is difference of escaping from the front—50 steps or 100 steps [laughs]. It is all same, you know. I did not, you know—"I did not retreat or I did not run away as much as you did" [laughs, laughter]. It is nearly the same [laughs]. So it is difficult to know which is better.

Recently we see—I see many people—I see many people who are thinking for—seeking the way in this—in that way, and this tendency is very prevail now. And they get with five or three or 5,000 of people get together, and if there is someone pretty famous they call it a great teacher. And the great teacher pick up the Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch, and they put their own rendering to the original text. And they put some comment—they insert some comment—statement in original scripture—in the original scripture and skip the holy meaning—ignore the holy meaning. And they put their students in astray. It is bitter thing that Buddhism—Buddhist teaching fell into such circumstances—under such circumstances. True teaching is almost—is almost lost. If we think—if we think the buddha-nature is something which is to be known by—by thinking, by hearing, by seeing it, why [is it] that Vimalakīrti said, "True dharma is beyond our seeing or hearing or thinking? If you practice—if you take the meaning of true dharma in term of seeing or hearing or consciousness or thinking, this is the teaching of seeing or hearing or consciousness, and not true dharma."

The m- [partial word]—Vimalakīrti—why did he say so? Why did Vimalakīrti say so? Vimalakīrti is the famous lay Buddhist who lived in Buddha's time. This is all what he answered to the monk when the monk visited the teacher. And here Dōgen says:

This National Teacher [Echū] was a head disciple of the Sixth Patriarch. He is the teacher of human being and celestial being. You should take him as a good example of studying Buddhism. Knowing that this [Senni's] is heretical understanding, don't follow this kind of understanding of the teaching. In Sung Dynasty—in great Sung country—

It means China.

—there is no—no Zen master like—like that master. This National Teacher—after—after him there was no great teacher like him. But nowadays they think there are many great teachers—or more

⁵ Spelled phonetically only.

great teachers than him, like Rinzai⁶ or Tokusan—Tokusan.⁷ But this kind of people is the people who have—who we should pity—we should take pity. We should be regret[ful of] our poor understanding of—their poor understanding of the teaching.

This is next paragraph. This is rather—I think you—you must have understanding. Here he refer to the—he—the *Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*. His direct disciple [Echū] refer—refer to the *Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*. The *Sūtra of Sixth Patriarch*—at that time there were many copies, I think, and they are not—they seems they are not—it seems they are not the same. There must be various copies.

[*Aside.*] Yeah. Excuse me. Did he come? Oh. Is he here? Where?

[*Student.*] Over there.

Suzuki-rōshi: The *Sūtra of Huineng*—we—*Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* we use now is the books which was found in the cave. Still there is some doubt, strictly speaking. It was compiled [by] his disciple, not direct disciple. So the direct disciple Echū criticize the *Sūtra of Huineng*—*Huineng*.

And next paragraph—this is very difficult.

So-called-it transmitted teaching from Buddha to us is the teaching of "mind itself is buddha." Heretics or Hīnayāna Buddhist cannot see even in their dream. This is a teaching which was transmitted directly from Buddha to us. And buddhas—

He use it—"mind itself is buddha" as a vow [?] [laughs]. I don't what to think.

The buddhas and patriarchs, mind itself continuously—mind itself is buddha—buddha-mind [?], maybe [laughs]. "Mind itself is buddha": those are—there is four characters, but he use it as one word.

In Japan there is waterfall not so big as Niagara, but the waterfall is Kegon—called Kegon. Some philosopher—Japanese philosopher committed suicide in Kegon waterfall.⁸ Since then, we use name of the

⁶ Linji Yixuan (Rinzai Kigen): d. 867. Dharma successor of Huangbo Xiyun (Ōbaku Kiun); founder of Rinzai school of Zen.

⁷ Deshan Xuanjian (Tokusan Senkan): 782–865. Dharma successor of Longtan Chongxin (Ryūtan Sōshin).

⁸ Kegon Falls, in the Nikko region, is the highest waterfall in Japan. In 1893, Fujimura Misao, an eighteen-year-old student, committed "philosophical suicide" (*tetsugakuteki jisatsu*) by leaping from the top of Kegon Falls. In his suicide letter, he expressed his distress at attempts to use science to explain away the

fall, Kegon, as a verb [laughs]. He [laughs]—he Kegon [laughs, laughter]. He committed suicide [laughter]. He—he does same thing here [laughs, laughter]. All the buddhas [laughter]. Mind itself is buddha [laughs]. This is body [?] [laughs].

The teaching all the buddhas exhausted themselves [laughs]—exhausted themselves to it is [laughs] the teaching of—all buddha—buddha—all the mind—mind itself [is] buddha [laughs]. For this teaching all the buddhas suffered a lot [laughter]. They exhausted themselves. They exhausted all the mean—by all mean they tried to understand it, but [laughs] it was—they were not successful. But some day we will [laughs]—we will be [1 word]. We will be successful but not quite [?]. Almost we will be successful, but it does not mean it is beyond our reach. It is so simple, and it is ultimate truth, and truth near at hand, but it is so simple and so near at hand—actually within ourselves. So it is pretty difficult to see it—as difficult as to see our own face. The only way [is] to see into the mirror. But Dōgen-zenji says, it is not like to see into a mirror. "Don't think you can see into the mirror," but sometimes he says you should see into the mirror [laughter]. Both is true. You know, this is our teaching.

And they—by hearing they understood it. By practice they understood it. By enlightenment they got it. How they got it? They got it on the hundreds kinds of weeds. This buddha is on the hundreds of the weeds. All the bu- [partial word]—excuse me—all the buddha picked up this truth, this teaching from the one hundreds of the weeds. And at the same time they forgot the teaching on the hundreds of the—hundred—the kinds of weeds. You should not pick up, you know—if you pick up, that is not truth. You have to leave it [laughs].

Student: You have to what?

Suzuki-rōshi: Leave it. The truth is, you know, on the flower. You can see the truth on the flower—on various flower, but you shouldn't pick it up. When it is on the flower it is true, but if you pick it up from the flower, flower is not flower anymore, truth is not truth anymore [laughs]. So all the buddhas understood it, but they forget it. You know, this is always how we study Buddhism. This is important. When you say that—when you nod [?] like this—you know, when you have completely understood it, you know, you do not feel you understood it. You just [S.R. nods?] [laughs]. This is true understanding. When—if you work on—on it like you work on homework of [1-2 words] [laughs], that is not true understanding.

mysteries of the world. His death shocked the philosophically minded youth of late Meiji Japan (shortly before Suzuki-rōshi was born) and inflamed concerns about the apparent incompatibility of Western and Japanese modes of knowledge and tradition.

So they understood and forget it. This is our traditional truth but—however:

It is not like golden buddha of 15–16 feet high.⁹ It is kōan itself. There is no need to solve the kōan. There is no—there is kōan which does not expect realization—which does not expect disintegration.

This is, you know, [1 word] kōan—realization of kōan, he said. So disintegration is opposite of realization or revealing itself. So disintegration or—disintegration of kōan is also means "mind itself is buddha."

Those three worlds—past, present, future—but there is—it is not matter of coming or—coming in or coming out. "Only mind," you say, but it is not only mind. Mind is everything. "Mind is fence or wall," you say, but it is not this kind of mind. The mind—this mind is not something—something like water which is wanted when you make wall by mud. It is not matter of who create or not create.

It means, you know—things is always create without create, you know. It is dynamic change itself. Dynamic change or dynamic creation without creation. Determination without determine. It takes various form. This is Buddhist understanding of creation. So here it says no one created.

Sometime we study "mind itself is Buddha."

In Chinese it—it goes "itself mind is buddha." So "itself mind is buddha," we study it—"itself mind is buddha."

Sometime we study "mind itself is buddha." Sometime we study "buddha itself is mind." And sometime—in this way we study—oh, excuse me—sometime we study "is buddha [laughs] mind itself."

You know, change up the order—just change up order.¹⁰

This way of study is how we study mind itself. With this teaching we—with this teaching we teach—with this—with this teaching of mind itself [is] buddha teach mind itself [is] buddha [laughs]. Student is mind itself buddha. Teacher is mind itself buddha. And teaching we give is mind itself buddha—

He said.

⁹ A 16-ft golden body is the idealized image of Buddha (Nishijima and Cross, Vol. 1, p. 52).

¹⁰ That is, Dōgen works through five permutations on the title of the fascicle: SOKU-SHIN-ZE-BUTSU; SHIN-SOKU-BUTSU-ZE; BUTSU-SOKU-ZE-SHIN; SOKU-SHIN-BUTSU-ZE; and ZE-BUTSU-SHIN-SOKU.

This way of study is transmitted study from Buddha to us. In this way, mind itself—this teaching was correctly transmitted from Buddha—Buddha's time to our time. So-called-it transmitted mind is mind is everything. Everything is mind.

He repeat—he changes order—subject and object. Sugar is not, you know—sugar is sweet but all the sweet is not sugar, you know [laughs]. If you repeat—if you change the order of subject and object, it means complete identification. Same—if it is exactly the same, you can change the order. So there is no difference in one and many. This is his understanding, and this is true.

Therefore the ancient sage¹¹ said, "If you understand what is mind, the earth will become thicker by—there is no earth, no—there is no soil on the earth or there not a piece of soil on the earth."

If you say this is—if you—if it is possible to say "this is mind," you know—it is impossible, you know. There is no special things which is called mind. But if that is possible, there is no earth because you picked up all the earth. So [laughs] there is no earth anymore. There is nothing. You picked up everything if you call "this is mind," you know [laughs]. You owns everything. And if you say "this is mind," in its true sense nothing will be left for anyone. Everyone will be included [laughs, laughter] as his property [?]. So we say there is no earth—no soil on the earth.

If you recognize what is mind, heaven and earth will—will vanish, or it said heaven will fell down and earth will be broken—will burst out—earth will burst out. Or we say if you recognize the mind, the earth will be thicker—will become thicker by three inches [laughs].

That is extra, you know [laughs]. It is impossible to make the earth thicker by three inches [laughs]. So it is impossible to recognize some special thing as mind. Mind is some—mind itself is everything. So if you say I—I know what is mind, the earth will be thicker—will become thicker. Or if you pick up the earth, there—there is no earth or there is no universe even.

Ancient sage¹² said, "What is the essence—pure essence of mind? It is mountain, river, and earth. The moon—the sun, moon, and the stars." Now we know clearly that the "mind" means mountain and river and earth, sun and moon—sun, moon, and the stars. But if you advance in—if you are advanced in this understanding,

¹¹ Chang-ling Shou-tsuo (Chōrei Shutaku): otherwise unidentified.

¹² Guishan Lingyou (Isan Reiyū): 771–853. Dharma successor of Baizhang Huaihai (Hyakujō Ekai). The quotation is an exchange with his disciple Yangshan Huiji (Kyōzan Ejaku).

your understanding is not enough. If your understanding is not enough, your understanding is enough [laughs, laughter].

Do you understand? [Laughter.] If you make—if you are advanced in this understanding, your understanding is not enough. If your understanding is not enough, your understanding is enough or too much [laughs, laughter]. Anyway, understanding is not enough or too much.

So if you understand it correctly, mountain is mountain [laughs], earth is earth. That's all [laughs]. You shouldn't say any extra, you know, fancy—you should not put any extra fancy decoration [laughs]. Mountain is mountain. That's all. This is how we transmitted our teaching, he says.

There is mountain, river, and earth which is only mountain, river, and earth. There is mountain, river, and earth which is just mountain, river, and earth. There is no waves, there is no wind or smoke—no wind or mist. There is just the sun, moon, and the stars. There is no limit in what exist in this world. There is no mist. The mind which goes and come back in realm of birth and death is just coming back and coming—going—coming back and going. There is no delusion, there is no enlightenment. Mind of walls, fence, and bricks is fence, walls, and bricks. There is no dirt or no water—no soil or no water.

When, you know, when you say, "This is wall," wall is just wall. You should not say this is—consist of water and soil. When wall become—wall is in the position of wall. Before it is in the position of dirt and water. In just mechanical—materialistic understanding, you may say wall—dirt and water became a wall, but this is not right understanding. In right understanding, wall is wall [laughs], and water is water, dirt is dirt. And dirt include everything, water include everything, wall include everything. So they are the same.¹³

So there is no dirt or no water. When we say fence, wall, bricks, there is no dirt—no soil or water. Five element—four element or four aggregates—mind is just four elements, five aggregates. There is no horse or there is no monkey [laughs]. There is no chair. There is no whisk, you know.

Some, you know—when we take ceremony, we use, you know, whisk and chair [laughs]. Why he refer to this is, you know—*shidai-gong*¹⁴—we—we are—we say we are consist of four element—our body and mind is consist of mind and four elements. So—and we take, you know, ceremony on the chair with whisk [laughs]. So he says, "The four elements and five aggregates is just four elements and five aggregates." There is no horse

¹³ The rest of this lecture was transferred from SR-66-08-18C, as it appears to be the continuation of the lecture.

¹⁴ *shidai* (Jap.): the four elements (earth, water, fire, and wind)

for him to ride on, there is no mind like his mind which is like a monkey [laughs]. Monkey mind [laughs], you know—our mind are very curious. So we always [laughs, laughter] seeking for something with curiosity [laughs, laughter]. So he says there is no monkey. Or there is no horse to [laughs] ride on it. And no whisk or no chair for him.

Mind of whisk and—whisk and chair is just this mind—whisk and chair. The mind is extra, you know. Mind itself is buddha. It means thing itself—everything itself, and mind is extra. When we say mind, mind include everything. When we say whisk or chair, whisk or chair include everything. So there is nowhere—no place for mind [laughs]. No place for special mind.

When—whisk is—mind of whisk and chair is just whisk and chair. There is no bamboo or there is no wood. In this way, the teaching of mind itself buddha means non-duality.

This is famous word—non-duality. Zen—no attachment. Attachment is not only positive but also negative. There is negative attachment, and there is positive attachment. "I should not see such a thing": that is negative attachment [laughs, laughter]. "I want to see something good" [laughs, laughter]: this is positive attachment. So this kind of attachment is, you know, polluted mind.

So no duality—not "duality"—no polluted mind is mind itself [is] buddha. All the buddha is buddha of non-polluted buddha. Therefore "mind itself is buddha" means to arise way-seeking mind, and to practice our way, and to have bodhisattva-mind, and to attain enlightenment.

It does not mean natural buddha. It looks like very naturalist—naturally, but it is not so. It is, you know, when—if you want to see things as it is without any fancy idea, it is necessary for us to be capable of observing things as it is. If so, we have to have practice. We have to understand what it is—what is reality. We have to practice Mahāyāna way, and we have to attain nirvāna. This point is emphasized. This is the point.

There is no buddha who did not arise way-seeking mind, who did not practice our practice, who did not have bodhisattva-mind, who did not attain nirvāna. Who did not do so is not mind itself is buddha. Even though we become mind itself is buddha in a smallest particle of time, he is the mind itself is buddha. In a speck of dust if he arise way-seeking mind and practice our way, he is the mind itself is buddha. Even though he practice a myriad of kalpas of time, he is also mind itself is Buddha. Even though he arise way-seeking mind and practice it in one memory—in one minute he is mind itself is buddha. Even though he attain

enlightenment in a half or fifth of space—half fifth, you know, in the space he is the mind itself is Buddha.

If someone says—if it is necessary for him to practice our way for so long time, that is not the teaching of the mind itself is buddha. That he does not understand actually what does it mean by mind itself is buddha. He does not understand what is it—what does it mean. He did not learn thoroughly what mind itself is buddha. He does not have the right teacher.

And here we have the last of statement of the *Shushōgi* [*Shōbōgenzō* "Sokushin-zebutsu"]:

So-called-it "buddha" is Shākyamuni Buddha himself. Shākyamuni Buddha is mind itself is Buddha. Buddhas in past, present, and future. Buddhas past, present, and future. When he become Buddha, without exception he become Shākyamuni Buddha, and Shākyamuni Buddha is mind itself is Buddha.

This is—he [Dōgen] put the date here [at the end of the fascicle].

*In the first year of—May 25th in the first year of O-En-o.¹⁵
Written in— [tape ends].*

Tape operator: The last words before he started again that were lost in this transition are:

—and showed to the disciples.

"It is hard to translate, it is pretty difficult. I hope you understand—I hope you understood," I mean.

Suzuki-rōshi: I—I hope you have understood.

There is very interesting saying in Buddhism. Oh, I—I gave you this one already.¹⁶ [*Ikke-kaigoyō.*] "Each of the buds opens in five petals, and naturally result [in] one group." "Each of the buds open in five petals, and naturally results [in] one group." Five, you know—five is many. One is, you know, the one. One and many is the same. This is, you know, a kind of fancy expression. "Each of the buds opens in five petals, and naturally results [in] one thing." "Naturally results" means without any restriction. It opens by itself. When we see the buds open—open in five petals, we see the freedom. But when we see fruits, we will feel the restriction or destiny of the flowers who will reduce to one fruits, you

¹⁵ 1239.

¹⁶ SR-66-08-18-B.

know. Here is some idea of causality. But it opens naturally, and it results [in] one fruits. There is no restriction.

Here is another. Oh, excuse me. This one means, "The world of causality is world of creation." "World of causality is world of creation." There is no color of a pine—of older or younger, but bamboo has node of upper and lower [laughs]. Do you understand? There is no color of—is—my English is good enough? There is no color of pine of old—older or younger. You know, pine tree is all has same color. This is what oneness [is]. But bamboo has nodes of upper or lower. Bamboo has upper nodes and lower node. This is—this express also one and—relationship [of] one and many.

By poem—by reciting poem, we studied, you know, the truth—this kind of truth. It is maybe much better than to think if you repeat this kind of saying in Japanese: *Masuni jo nyo koko no iranaku*.¹⁷ [Laughs.] *Takani jo ryo shira*. It is a kind of proverb. Without knowing what does it mean we—people repeat it [laughs]. People at least knows those saying without knowing what does it mean exactly. But if you dig [into] the meaning of it, it is very, very deep. It covers all—almost all the philosophy: the philosophy of unity of duality or opposite, or absolute identity of the contradiction.

Thank you.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (6/12/01).

¹⁷ Both phrases are spelled phonetically only.