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Friday, August 19, 1966
SESSHIN LECTURE
Lecture C
Soko-ji Temple, San Francisco

This—this fascicle of [*Shōbōgenzō*] "Sokushin-zebutsu," "Mind Itself Is Buddha"—in this fascicle, he [Dōgen-zenji] is giving us instruction [on] what is our practice—what is transmitted way of practice from Buddha to us. "Mind itself is buddha" is—looks like a kind of statement, but as you have seen already, it is not a statement at all for him and for us too if we understand what he meant with it.

So forgetting all about what he said in *Shōbōgenzō*, I want to give you the idea of our practice—what is our practice. In his statement he says:

Mind is buddha—itself is buddha. And it [?] is buddha. And buddha is buddha.

"Mind and—itself" ["mind itself"] and "is buddha" is same thing. It is another name of our practice. Usually, if we say, "mind itself is buddha," it means whatever we think or whatever we do, that is our practice. But we have already seen that that is not true understanding. That is just intellectual, materialistic, and mechanical understanding of our practice. Our practice is a living being. It has lived for three thousand years, not only during from Buddha to us but also before Buddha and after we are dead, because it is being itself. So that is why each is Buddha—that what is is Buddha.

Mind—by "mind" he [Dōgen] does not mean our mental funct- [partial word]—our mind, which is supposed to have a mental function. By "mind" he means in which many things exist, and each existence exist as a one of many. That is what he meant by mind.

"Itself" means "things itself." Things itself is not just [what] we understand or just [what] we see—observe, or some image you have in your mind. [*Tape interrupted for unknown period—probably very brief.*] ... is something before we observe it, and which exist forever, and which has existed from endless beginning—endless beginning. This kind of mind—this kind of thing is things itself. So itself is and being is equal [?]. Being is true [?]. The Buddha is true [?], of course, but if you say "Buddha" you will have some fancy, you know, extra [laughs]—extra fancy idea about Buddha, so [laughs] Dōgen-zenji says, "Buddha is Buddha, that's all."

This is so-called-it, after all, non-attachment. So sometime we call this, "Our way is way of nothingness." "Way of nothingness" means "way of non-attachment." So actually this is practice itself. Without practice, we cannot have actual understanding of "mind itself is buddha."

Here is some precise topics in—as a reference to our understanding of the way. We have studied already *Blue Cliff Record* and model subject Number 29.¹ There is a story about Daizui² and some monk:

[MAIN SUBJECT]

Attention! A monk asked Daizui: "When the great thousand—thousand (universe) and—"

Excuse me.

"When the great thousand (universe) altogether and utterly perishes in the *kalpa* fire, is it doubtful (what will happen)? Does the self perish, or does it not perish?"

Daizui replied: "It perishes."

The monk said: "If so, following the universe will it perish?"

Daizui said: "It will follow on and perish."

This is the subject. And later, someone asked same Zen master:

"I heard you said self will perish when this earth perishes. Is it true or not? Does it perishes?" he asked.

He said—he answered: "It doesn't." ³

[Laughs, laughter.] He said. So the monk who asked him was very lost, because he said the self does not perish even though great universe perishes in conflagration—*kalpas* fire.⁴

¹ Suzuki-rōshi is reading from R.D.M. Shaw's translation of *The Blue Cliff Records* (London: Michael Joseph, 1961, p. 112).

² Dasui Fazhen (Daizui Hōshin): 878–963. Dharma successor of Guishan Da'an (Isan Daian). He also studied with Dongshan Liangjie (Tōzan Ryōkai) and Guishan Lingyou (Isan Reiyū). He appears in *Blue Cliff Records* 29 and in *Book of Serenity* 30 (the same case).

³ This is Daizui's answer in *Book of Serenity* 30.

⁴ Four *kalpas* are thought to succeed each other infinitely: the third *kalpa* cycle is one in which destruction or dissolution takes place. It is followed by the void. The *kalpa* fire refers to one of the elements (fire, water, and wind) that bring destruction.

But sometime they say [it] perishes—we say [it] perishes, and sometime we say do not perish. For someone who thinks it will perish, we will say it wouldn't [laughs, laughter]. For someone who thinks it wouldn't perish, we—we say it will [laughs, laughter], because he thinks, you know, in intellectual realm, whether this earth—whether our essence of mind or our true self will vanish or not. This is, you know, the cause of the trouble.

When we become attached to what we see or what you—what we think, there is problem. Without knowing what we see or what we think is just in term of thinking or word or name. It is just name—"great universe" or "self" or "*kalpa* fire." It is—they are not originally different. It is—they are the many names of one true existence.

Without self, there is no *kalpa* fire. Without earth there is no universe. Without man there is no earth. So originally it is—they are one of the many. We say "many," but even many does not exist in that way. Many is also some tentative conception of our idea—of our mind. It is just conception: "many." But actually there is nothing. What actually exist is something. Something exist [laughs], but not—no particular thing does not exist. Everything is just a name of one unknown being.

So, you may say, "It will perish; that's—that is all right. Originally it—it does not exist." You say your self-nature, but [laughs] your understa- [partial word]—that is just your understanding. So it doesn't actually exist. So before he say it perishes, it perishes. It doesn't exist, so it's all right even though he say it perishes. But it does not mean vacuity. Something exist, actually. Something—something unknown—something which has no name or no form or no color exist. So it will not perish. This is right.

So in this way, we attain non-attachment by repeating this kind of mental training. We will understand, in its true sense, what we mean by those words. And our practice is—our practice take place in the realm of true activity, not just a partial activity of thinking or doing something tentatively without, you know, using your—using all of your energy, without concentration. There is—in this way, you cannot have true experience of reality.

So what is transmitted way? The answer is to practice or to lead our way—to live and—to live in this world with people, with all the existence. As long as this universe exist, this is our transmitted way.

So we say our teaching exhaust all the means of attaining it. The—all the living being should exhaust themselves in this practice. And actually, whether they are aware of it or not, they are exhausting their

life to this fact [?]. But when you consciously do, that is our pleasure. But when you are not conscious of it, it is just—our life is just dream.

And if you try to get out of it, as I said last night,⁵ you will be drowned [laughs]. Or you will have more trouble, you know, because you try to escape from it. It is like a, you know, like a beetle which is caught by cobweb [laughs]. The more it struggles, the more it will be stuck to the cobweb. You will have more entanglement in your life as a beetle which is caught in cobweb. But if he—if it keeps still, you know, accepting the circumstance under which it is caught, then there may be some chance [laughs] to get out of it. Spider may think, "Oh, some leaf." [Laughing, laughter.] "Oh, this is some leaves. No good. Let me stay behind the tree." Then a butterfly may be, you know, saved. But if you try to get out of it, you will struggle more. And if the butterfly knows the scheme of the cobweb, they can, you know, enjoy it. It is like a hammock [laughs, laughter]. We should be wiser—wise enough to know how everything is, and how everything work, and how we should live. This is our practice. Then everything will help you. But if you have no right understanding of your life, you will just struggle. You will struggle just to exhaust yourself. This is our practice.

So in our practice, it is necessary to put ourselves in right situation, and to put—to arrange your surrounding in right order. This is maybe what Reverend Katagiri⁶ was talking about this morning. This is very very important point. I said to arrange, but it is not even to arrange. Things returning itself by necessity. There is some reason, when something exist in this world, so by necessity things exist in this world.

So according to the necessity—or to ignore the reason why things exist is to make useless struggle. Things are going in the current of dynamic change. This dynamic change sometime may be our plan. We make some plan of our life according to the—this dynamic change of the reality. Even [if] you have beautiful fancy plan of your life, if it doesn't accord with the dynamic change of universe, it [laughs]—it is just painted plan—[1-2 words] plan [laughs]. So, if I say so, our plan—there is no pleasure of creating things, but creative effort is there.

Actual practice is—because actual practice is both creative and—what should I say?—things are, on one hand, expressive. When it is expressive it is creative. It is—everything is free because everything is center of the world. It doesn't exist in its true sense as a one of many. One is many at the same time. When we realize this, to express itself or to create itself is to—to give your self in your true

⁵ Lecture SR-66-08-18B.

⁶ Dainin Katagiri-rōshi (1928-1990): Japanese Sōtō Zen master who was Suzuki-rōshi's close colleague in the early years of San Francisco Zen Center.

function: that is creativity. And it does not bound by some other thing. And it does not caused by your past experience. It is quite new event to you. It is one side of the reality, or one side of our practice.

On the other hand, it takes in the realm of dynamic change. So in the dynamic change there is no idea of time, even, or space, even. So it looks like things [are] going under some regulation. It looks like that because of your idea of time and idea of space. But what is idea of space? What is idea of time? Idea of time or space is the—just a shadow of dynamic change of reality. So here you have creativity and—I don't know what to say [laughs]. Please find out appropriate word: creativity and—not "formality" or—causality.⁷ Causality.

When we say "causality," it looks like, you know—you will have a kind of view of life like determinism. You will believe in your fate before your are born. But that kind of view of life [is] based on mechanical, material, poor, miserable understanding of life. Actually, such thing does not exist. There is no reason why we should be chained or we should be bound by such an illusion of time or space. Time is time of space; space is space of time. There is no [laughs], you know, time only. When we say "time," space follow. So some adjective is necessary. So you—it's better to say, "Time of space." [Laughs.] [1 word] of [1 word]. "Time-like space," or "space-like time" is more appropriate. And time-like space or space-like time is nothing but the dynamic change of our world, or dynamic determination of all existence. Without nothing to determine—who determines, it is automatic, you know, change of things.

Our practice is based on this kind of understanding. So we do not find any description in our practice, even though we are just observing some formality, but actually it is not so. People, you know, [are] ignoring the rules of things, or ignoring—try to ignore the causality or old-fashioned way of life. But no development, no life exist without their former life. Because you have former life, you have this life. Because you have parents, you are here. You cannot ignore your former life—former type of life. So development take place—your life is just, you know—[laughing] I forgot the most important part—I think you must have understood it. It doesn't come out [laughter]. This is how people, you know, suffering [laughter]. Anyway [laughter], you will—you have understood before I say something. It is very discouraging [laughter].

But anyway, if you do it with sincerity, if you devote yourself through-and-through what you are doing, there is the way. So thinking should follow our activity. So practice is first, thinking is next. Enlightenment is maybe third [laughs, laughter], or before practice. So this—in this way, we will go round and round and round. Practice, teaching,

⁷ It sounds like Suzuki-rōshi is settling on "causality" as an acceptable term.

enlightenment—where does it—do we go? Practice? Because you have attained enlightenment, you practice. You practice, so you have teaching, and the teaching will lead you [to] enlightenment and practice and teaching [and] enlightenment go round and round and round. You cannot say which is what. It is same thing [as asking], "Which is first—egg or hen?" It is simultaneous, actually.

This is, we say, *gyōji dōkan*.⁸ Actually, there is no teacher or no student. When I am talking, you have unders- [partial word]—you understand more than I say, you know. So you are teacher. Which is teacher? I don't know. But to me you are student. To you, I may be a, you know, boy disciple or boy teacher [laughing], who will be a great father to you some day. So we don't know which is—which is teacher, which is your father. We don't know.

So we say *ego-enden*.⁹ *Ego* is in- [partial word]—*ego* is intercourse or interrelationship, you know; countless relationship between. The relationship we have is very very complicated. Here you are student—to me you are student, you know. To your wife you are husband, and to your boy you are father. And there may be many and many relationship, actually. So we say—Dōgen-zenji says, "Ivy and vine over ivy and vine."¹⁰ So our practice looks like very simple, but the more you [are] attentive to our practice, the more you will find out the true meaning of—depth of the—our practice.

So in realm of formality, there are great creativity. It looks like quite simple, but it is not actually so. "Vine and ivy" is—if you take it in bad sense, it is, you know, entanglement of your life. But if you understand it, it is—it will encourage your creativity. It will encourage your freedom, even. It means you have various ways to go. It does not mean—because you have idea of self, you know, it is entanglement. But if you have no idea of self and follow around entanglement—accept the entanglement just as relationship between many things, and you are one of the many: if you have this kind of understanding, you have innumerable way of life on this moment.

This is the transmitted way from Buddha to us, and this is—in this way, actually, for—since human being appeared in this world, we are—

⁸ Phonetic only: spelling not verified. *Gyōji* means "constant practice."

⁹ *ego-enden* (Jap.): free mental penetration of two conceptions; a mind of non-attachment. *Ego* by itself means "mutual interpenetration" or "mutual interdependence" (as in the *Sandōkai*—see especially SR-70-06-03).

¹⁰ Suzuki-rōshi pronounced it "vein," but he is probably referring to a vine, as in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Kattō": "Branches or fruit are both dependent on and independent of vines and ivy" (revised from Yūhō Yokoi, *The Japanese-English Zen Buddhist Dictionary*, p. 108). See also SR-66-08-15C, SR-66-08-15D, and 66-08-18B.

we have lived in this way. This is fundamental understanding of our practice.

Thank you very much.

We have some five or six minutes more, so let's take ten minutes rest [laughs, laughter]. Thank you very much.

Tape operator: A—A—A. [*Tape stops.*] B—B—B. [*Tape stops.*] C—C—C. [*Tape ends.*]

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Bill Redican (8/3/01).