

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Saturday, April 22,¹ 1967
Sesshin Lecture B
San Francisco

² ... you have many things to do for yourself and for Zen Center. You —this *sesshin* was wonderfully done. This is, I think, very unusual. By usual mind this kind of thing cannot be fulfilled. I think this is because —it is because of your bodhisattva-mind, which is to do things for others or for your future descendant rather than for yourself. What you have in your mind is what should be done for your—for others or for your descendant. Although you are quite young, but still you have this mind.

I think that is why everything is going so well. But as I said in previous lecture, the most important thing to do for others is not to—is not to build something beautiful for others or to help them in some materialistic way or formal way, but to help others by giving true spirit of how to live in this world and true understanding of our life.

If we have true spirit of—true spirit to live in this world, there is no problem. But because of our superficial understanding of life, we have many problems and suffering. Of course, as long as we live or as long as we have this body, it is not possible to get out of suffering. So the point is how to change our suffering into joy of life—true joy of life. This is how to help others. Without this point we cannot help others in its true sense. If you have this understanding, whatever you do—alms giving, or kind words, or loving words—will work. And this is why we practice zazen too. So zazen is not some particular practice to attain something for ourselves, but [it is] to have true understanding of life and true spirit of—to acquire true spirit of life.

So we have to practice zazen just to practice zazen, as we live in this world without any particular reason why we live in this world. But if we understand that each one of us is a tentative form of the absolute being, and whatever we do is the activity of the absolute being which is not possible to be known by us completely, but something which we cannot doubt its existence. It exist but we do not know what it is completely. And this is the origin of our life or source of life. And it is also the life to which we resume after cessation of our activity. If there is something which we should believe in, this kind of absolute unknown being is the only one. There are many names—we call it by many names, but the "unknown absolute being" is one.

¹ The date is approximate. This lecture appears to be the last or one of the last of the *sesshin*, and it followed SR-67-04-22A on the original reel tape.

² The opening words were not recorded on tape.

So purpose of our practice is to get accustomed to live without being attached to many things but this unknown being. When we find our meaning in this way—meaning of life in this way, naturally we can help with each other. We will love with each other without forcing anything to others, keeping a harmonious way between us, and between other beings—animate and inanimate beings. We are all friends.

So true love should be based on this understanding, or else your love will become—will be selfish love. True love should not be selfish. Actually there is no selfish love. It looks like selfish, but it is not—there is no such love as selfish love. Even though love is not selfish, but when you have the idea of selfish—self which is not real, the love will become blind love without any understanding. So before we talk about love, or before we love others, we should make this point clear, and we should have the direct experience of zazen which is beyond thinking. When you can sit, when you can just sit, you have [are] in the position to love others in its true sense.

But on the other hand, idea of self—we cannot feel anything without idea—without feeling of self. When we feel something, there that feeling is the feeling of self. But true [1 word] having feeling of self or feeling of love, you will feel at the same time the absolute unknown being which is the other side of the feeling of self. So it looks like same, but actually it is not the same. The one selfish feeling is just selfish feeling without any possibility of being free from it. The other is although we have same feeling we have freedom from it at the same time. This is the difference, and this is actually how we live in this world.

Children does not know anything about Buddhism, but the way they live is exactly the same as Buddhist live in this world. They may be crying at some moment, next moment they are laughing [laughing]. We cannot do that. It is rather difficult for us, but for children it is not difficult at all—quite natural for them. But as a—we find it pretty difficult, but if you have, you know, some training like this, that is possible [laughs, laughter]. People may call you [1-2 words] [laughs, laughter], but actually he is not. That is his, you know, the—attainment. There is big difference. In—between master and disciple we have this kind of training all the time.

My teacher—Kishizawa Ian's³ teacher, Nishiari Bokusan⁴—oh, before I

³ Kishizawa Minpo Ian-zenji (1865-1955): Sōtō Zen master, leading interpreter of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, and third abbot of Antai-ji. He received dharma transmission from Nishiari Bokusan and succeeded Oka Sōtan and Genpo Kitano as official lecturer on the *Shōbōgenzō* at Eihei-ji. Suzuki-rōshi attended him at Eihei-ji monastery and later studied with him for many years.

⁴ Nishiari Bokusan (1821-1910): the most prominent Meiji scholar of the *Shōbōgenzō*. He was a teacher of both Oka Sōtan and Kishizawa Ian,

tell you this story, I must [laughs] say something about his life when he was quite young or before he become a priest. [He was] my teacher's teacher's teacher [laughs]—teacher's teacher's teacher. Grand, no—no—grandteacher. Grandteacher. He was a, you know, a kind of rascal [laughter] when he was young. He left Tōkyō for Kyōto because he had nothing to eat, or nowhere to stay. So he stayed [at] Kaizō-ji⁵ in Odarawa near Hakone Mountain. There, there was famous Geitan-zenji, and he invited the rascal to [go] upstairs. "Come and sleep here," he said. So, you know, he [was] rather surprised—unusual treatment or entertainment. For—so he thought it may be good idea to stay one or two days.

[Aside in Japanese, but not by Suzuki-rōshi:] Oh. **Ireshitan**.⁶ Oh.

So he stayed, but even when he wanted to go out, he didn't allow him to go out. "You should stay here." [Laughs.] So he—at last he became a priest [laughs, laughter]. The rascal change into a priest.

That priest was my master's—my teacher's teacher. When—before he [Nishiari Bokusan] passed away—five years before he passed away, when he wanted to make—give his disciples some lecture, he couldn't find out some paper [with a] commentary on it. So he called my teacher, "Where did you put my paper?" So he tried to find out and seek for it, but he couldn't find out. So my teacher's teacher was very angry with him. "You must have lost it! You must have thought that is just paper. Learned one as you, that commentary may be no good, just a paper—maybe just paper. But for me, that paper is very important. How I want it you may not understand it because you have too much [laughs, laughter] knowledge here. You may not understand it, but I want it badly." [Laughs, laughter.]

So, you know, not only my teacher, many disciples tried to find out, but no one could find out. But someone who were working in the kitchen said it was in box [laughs]. So my teacher took it and—took it to the teacher. And the teacher became more angry, you know. "You must have—where was it?" he asked. "It was in the box" [laughing, laughter ongoing]. "Who—who allowed you," you know, "to open that box?!" So, he—my teacher said, "I am sorry." "You always say, 'I am sorry.' Even though you say 'I am sorry,' you don't mean it."

And several months later, my teacher's teacher was, you know, crying. And so my teacher asked, "Why are you so sad?" You know, he said, "I am so short-tempered! [Laughs, laughter.] I am very sorry for myself and for you too." So since then, you know, my teacher almost,

eventually becoming abbot of Sōji-ji and head of the Sōtō-shū.

⁵ Possibly also known as Saijō-ji temple (Dōryōsan) in Odawara, one of the largest Sōtō temples in Japan.

⁶ Phonetic guess only. The spelling is not confirmed.

you know, forgot about his, you know, ego-centered attitude. So you may say this is just anger, but it is not so. They are very—their practice is always concentrated on selfish idea, ego. Until we can get rid of ego, we will have pretty difficult time. But after that, how you feel is—maybe you cannot imagine.

Today Arch—Bishop Sumi-rōshi⁷—Bishop Sumi-rōshi already arrived, and he may be waiting there. But he will not meet you today. But as it is impossible to enter Tassajara tomorrow, he will give us lecture in Sunday service from nine o'clock. So if you have time, please attend his lecture.

Source: Original City Center tape. Verbatim transcript by Diana Bartle and Bill Redican (7/16/01).

⁷ Sumi Togen: formerly an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji, he succeeded Yamada Reirin in 1965 as head of the Sōtō Zen School in America.