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[In]¹ Buddhist scripture, you know, there is a famous story. Water is same, but—water is, for human being, is water [laughs], and for celestial being—for celestial being it is jewel. And for fish it is their home. And for people in hell or hungry ghosts it is blood or maybe fire. If they want to drink it, the water change into fire. So they cannot drink it [laughs].

Same water [laughs, laughter], you know, looks like very different. But you may—you may say, you know, our understanding of—of water is right. It—it should not be "home" or "house" or "jewel" or "blood" or "fire." It should not be so. Water should be water.

But Dōgen-zenji says, you know: "Even though you say 'water is water,' it is not quite right." [Laughs.] It is not right. I think most people think water should be water, and that is right understanding of water. "It—it cannot be anything else. Water is something drink [laughs], not to live in it." Or, "It cannot be fire," you know. But he says that is not right—quite right. He doesn't say it is wrong, but he says, "Not quite right."

I think we practice zazen, you know, and this is right practice, and the attainment we will acquire is something right and perfect. But if you ask Dōgen-zenji, he may say, "Not quite." [Laughs.] This point should be—this is, maybe, good kōan for you to work on two more days or three more—two and a half days more.²

I don't know how to explain—or how to explain why, you know, the answer "Water is water" is not quite right. At least not much different if you say—if human beings say "Water is water," it is—it's not much difference from to say "Water is fire or blood or jewel." Not much difference. Don't you think so?

You know, it may be, you know, actually for angels, it may be actually jewel, you know. And he may—they may like it because it is beautiful. But we like it because it is cool—nice and cool and not tasty, but, you know, help our thirst. If so, to say "Water is jewel," there is some reason. And to say "Water is water" is also some reason. Not much difference. Buddhist has been explaining this point in various way. For an instance, teaching of selflessness, or teaching of interdependency—those teaching, or teaching of emptiness, you know. There are many teaching which will expl- [partial word]—intellectually explain why the answer "Water is water" is not perfect.

¹ The opening word(s) is/are missing on tape. The transcriber added "[In]."

² That is, for the remainder of the *sesshin*.

When we say "Water is water," we understand substantially, you know, here is water. But what we—we say water is maybe H₂O [laughs]. This is not actually—may not be actually water. So by—under some condition, you know, H₂O became liquid. But under some condition it may be a vapor, you know. So you cannot say "This is—here is water," because water is not constant. So it is changing, and because it exist under some condition, it is something which is—which exist the rules of interdependency or rules of causality. So because of the some reason, some cause, water just tentatively became water, that's all. So we cannot say "Water is water."

Tentatively, you know, for convenience sake, you can say "Water is water." But it is not always so. We—you may understand in this way. But when Dōgen-zenji says that is not complete answer, we should actually, you know, appreciate the water in its true sense. Water is something more than just water. It should not be a kind of, you know, drinking, you know—one of the drinking of many liquors.

When we drink water, water is everything to me, you know. And the whole world is water. Nothing exist besides water for me. When we drink water with this understanding and attitude, that is water, but that is, at the same time, it is more than water. So he says: "'Water is water,' that's right. But not quite."

This explains what is *shikantaza*. We say "just sit." "Just water" is like water. We should just sit. Or to "settle ourselves on ourselves." It means to become we ourselves, you know. We should not be anything else—something else. We should be just ourselves. And when we become just ourselves, "we" covers everything, "we" include everything. There is nothing else than—nothing else but you. That is *shikantaza*.

So by practice—so what we acquire is ourselves. To become ourselves, we—completely ourself—ourselves, we practice zazen. That is *shikantaza*. We have everything. We are fully satisfied with ourselves. And there is nothing to gain or nothing to attain. This is maybe very verbal [laughs] interpretation of—of true practice. Anyway, this kind of gratitude or joyful mind we sh- [partial word]—must have in our practice.

I understand—I think I understand why you practice zazen. But I—I think most of—and I think most of you are trying to seek for something—something true, something real because the world is, you know, too much unrealistic, and too many, you know—too many things is told. And we hear too many things which we cannot accept or believe in. So I think you are s- [partial word]—you seek for something true and real. And you don't seek for even something beautiful. Something beautiful is not—to you, I think, is not true or real, you know. It is very—it looks like beautiful [laughs], but actually you don't think—you don't think that is

really beautiful. Some—something, you know—it is just outlook of something. It is just ornament for someone who is not honest enough.

So justice doesn't mean anything, or beauty doesn't mean so much to you. Or some virtue, you know, doesn't mean so much—virtuous person. Mostly, you know, maybe—I forgot the word—hypocrist [hypocrite], you know. I think you feel in that way because so many beautiful things—so many things was told something like "true." And so many virtuous person appeared but who didn't convey you real, you know, gratitude. You couldn't trust him.

So what is real to you is big problem, I think, for you. What is real? [Laughs.] What do you—you know—you don't know. You don't have any person to trust, or any teaching to believe in to follow. I think that is most people nowadays, you know, have inner idea—in our mind, and this kind of feeling is universal feeling for many people.

That is why, I think, you came to Zen Center. Real reason is—that is the reason. But, you know, even though you came here, you know [laughs], I myself, you know, don't believe any special thing, you know [laughter]. I don't—I don't say "the water is water" or "water is jewel or blood or house or"—I don't say so, you know. But really, according to Dōgen-zenji, you know, this—water is something more than that. Our—we stick to righteousness or beauty or virtue, but there is something more than that.

So I can, you know—I don't feel so bad, you know, even though you seek for something. First of all I will tell you, you know, you are—it—it is not appropriate or it is not wise to seek for something like that. I noticed that you like trip, you know, very much [laughs]. Today Alaska, next day, India [laughs, laughter] and Tibet. I don't think that is wise too, you know. You are seeking for something—blood or jewel or something like that. But because we come to the time when we cannot believe in those things, we should, you know, change our way in seeking the truth. We have to change our way of trip. Instead of going to moon [laughs], you must make some other trip. I don't mean acid trip [laughs, laughter]. We have to change our way of trip. That is, you know, [as or what] Dōgen-zenji suggested. The trip he meant is something different.

Yesterday I—I talked about something about freedom. Real freedom is, you know, to feel freedom wearing robe—this kind of, you know, troublesome robe. Instead of, you know, [being] bothered by this busy life, we should wear this, you know, civilization without, you know, being bothered by it, without ignoring it, without being caught by it. So without going somewhere, without escaping it, we should—we should have composure, you know, in this busy life. You shouldn't laugh at people, you know, who are engaged in busy activity. We shouldn't laugh

at them. But—or we shouldn't follow them. As Ummon³ says: "Following wave and drive wave. Follow the wave and drive wave." It means that, you know, to follow the wave, and actually you should drive the wave.

Or Dōgen-zenji says: "We should be like a boatman." A boatman is on the boat, you know, but actually a boatman is carried by boat. But actually boatman is handling [laughs] the boat. This is how we live in this world. We know how, now, if I explain in this way, you feel as if you understood how [laughs] you live in this difficult world. But actually, even though you understand how, you know, like boatman, but it does not mean you are able to do it [laughs]. To do it is very difficult. That is actually why you practice zazen.

I, you know—yesterday I said, "However painful your legs are," you know, "you shouldn't move." I, you know—maybe some people understood in that way. But I—I talked about the confidence or determination to practice zazen should be like that, but there is no need, you know, for you to do it literally [laughs]. If—if it is too painful, I think you can change your posture [laughs, laughter]. But your determination should be like that—and should be also, you know. When I say "should be" is, you know, some—that is a good example, but it is not always—it is not necessary be so always.

When I say something, you know, you understand—like a "fish" or like a, you know, "angel"—you know, you understand it literally and rigidly. "This is house, our house. This is—this is WATER," [thumps table for emphasis at each word—especially at "WATER"], forgetting all about how human being feels. So even though you live in water like a fish, you know, you should know: "This is, for human being, something to drink. So we should be very careful not to be drunk by human being, like a small fish." [Laughs.] This kind of consideration is necessary. That means to have freedom from everything.

The secret of Sōtō Zen is, you know, just two words: "Not always so." Oh—oh—three words [laughs, laughter] in English. In Japanese, two words. "Not always so." This is secret of the teaching. If you understand thing in that way—you don't ignore, you know. "It may be so, but it is not always so." If you understand things in that way, and without being caught by words or rules, without too much pre-conceived idea, we should actually do something, and doing something, you should apply your teaching. Then, the teaching which was told by our ancient people—ancient masters, will help.

Actually, you know, to take something rigidly is laziness, you know [laughs], because, you know, you—because you under- [partial word]—because you want to understand it before you do something difficult

³ Yunmen Wenyan (Ummon Bun'en): 864-949. Chan master of Tang China.

[laughs]. So you—you are caught by some words. But if you are, you know, brave enough to accept your surrounding without saying which is right or wrong, then, you know, a teaching which was told to you will help.

If you are caught by teaching, you will have, you know, double problem: whether you should follow this teaching or whether you should go your own way. This is, you know—this problem is created by the teachings which was told—which was told.

So practice—practice first, and apply teaching. Then, you know, teaching will help you. So to—to seek for some good teaching like Buddhism [laughs], you know, is, you know, to seek for something good anyway. Whatever it may be is the "sightseeing people" [laughs]. You—even though you don't take a trip by car, but spiritually you are making sightseeing: "Oh, beautiful teaching! [Laughs, laughter.] This may be true teaching!"

We say *yusan-gansui*.⁴ *Yusan* means "to—with playful mind," you know, "to go to mountain or to go to river or ocean"—someplace where you can enjoy the view of things. *Yusan-gansui*. This is the danger of—danger for Zen practice. *Yusan-gansui*. Don't, you know—be careful so that you may not [be] involved in practice of *yusan-gansui*. It doesn't help at all [laughs]. It doesn't help. If you have right understanding of yourself and right understanding of practice, then *yusan-gansui* will help. But if you don't know the actual way of practice directly, whatever you study doesn't help at all.

Or we say: "You shouldn't be fooled by things." Foiled by things: Fooled by something beautiful. Fooled by something it looks like true [laughs]. Don't be involved in play game, you know. This is also [as, what] Dōgen-zenji suggested. You should trust Buddha, trust the dharma, and trust the sangha in its true sense because that is the—those are ultimate goal you will reach anyway. You shouldn't be fooled by things.

So we should practice zazen like someone who is almost—almost dying. For him nothing, you know, to rely on, nothing to depend on. When you reach this kind of situation, you will not be fooled by anything because you don't want anything, because you are dying, you know. Money [laughs] or wife? No [laughs]. No more wife, no more children. You have—you cannot be fooled by anything. But you may still want to know who you are, without fooling—being fooled by anything. That is why we put emphasis on the feeling of evanescence of—of life, so that you may not be fooled by anything.

⁴ *yusan* (sight-seeing); *-gan* (play); *sui* (water). Figuratively, "Go to the mountains and enjoy the sights; go to the water and play (i.e., do both sides)."

But most people, you know, not only always fooled by something, but fooled by himself [laughs]. Very silly, you know. Fooled by himself. When you are fooled by something else, you know, the damage will not be so big. But when you are fooled by yourself [laughs], it's fatal. No more medicine [laughs].

I think we should know whether we are fooled by ourselves or not. Here there are many students, but I think most of you are fooled by yourself [laughs]. Most of you are fooled by yourself: by your ability, by your beauty, you know, or by your ability, by your confidence, and by your outlook. It is all right, you know, to feel some resistance to this kind of way of life, but we should not—we shouldn't be lost in fight [laughs], in resistance. Do you understand? You know, if you involved in—deeply involved in resistance or fight, you will lose yourself. As you are human being, not so strong and very emotional—not much reason you have. It is—you will be easily lost. Even though you are young, you will be lost. You will lose your strength and you will lose your friend, lose your parents. You will lose everything. And you will feel lonely. And what will you do?

You lose your, you know, brightness of your eyes. You lose your confidence. [Laughs.] You are dead body. And no one will say, "Oh, I am sorry." No one say so [laughs]. Actually many people, you know, are lost, I think. Look at your face into the mirror—[see] if you are still alive or not.

If you don't change this kind of—this sightseeing practice, even though you practice zazen, it doesn't help at all. Do you understand? It doesn't help.

We have three—two and half day—oh, no—two—two days more, so let's practice hard, while we are still little bit alive.

Thank you very much.

Sources: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (9/28/00). Miyagawa Keishi-san kindly provided assistance with the translation of Japanese terms.