

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
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[I did not]¹ prepare for tonight lecture anything. So I want you to ask some questions, and I will answer for the question, as I have nothing in my mind right now. *Hai*.

Student A: Of the two types of meditation, the counting and the *shikantaza*—the counting—do you think that has more to do with ego purification?

Suzuki-rōshi: The counting—if you—it looks like different from—counting-breathing practice looks like different from the *shikantaza*. But actually, if you, you know, practice it, [there is] not much difference. Because purpose of counting-breathing practice is not, you know, to count. No, it is quite easy to count your breathing, you know, if you try to count, just count.

Why it is difficult is—you have to—you have to have right posture, and you have to make—and all parts of your body should participate in the practice of counting breathing. And your mind should follow the counting, and your arm, and *mudrā*, and legs, and spines, and, you know, muscles should join—participate [in] the counting-breathing practice. And it is more than concentration to—it is more than to be concentrated on your counting. Concentration usually means mental practice, you know, but counting-breathing practice is not just a mental practice but also physical practice too. Then not much difference between *shikantaza* and counting-breathing practice.

Shikantaza means to practice zazen with your whole body and mind—that is *shikantaza*. So maybe after you—you can practice counting-breathing practice pretty well, you can practice following-breathing practice—to just, you know, follow your breathing without counting. Your mind is always in—on breathing, and your physical practice is participate [in] the breathing. That is to follow the breathing. And *shikantaza*, you know, is more than that. You don't even try to follow your breathing. Maybe you can say more advanced practice. *Hai*.

Student B: What is the function of the ritual and monotonous chanting that preceded your talk?

Suzuki-rōshi: The rituals, you know, also—before you, you know—before you get accustomed to it, it may be, you know—it is not so natural to you, you know, especially for you, you know. You are not familiar with this kind of practice—bowing.

¹ Text in brackets was not on tape. It was added by transcriber.

So—but it is same thing with counting-breathing practice. To—to—and our way breathing may be—may be very unfamiliar with you. So unless you try, you know, pretty hard to take deeper breathing, it is—it may be difficult to have deeper breathing. And bow—bowing is also—may be difficult until you get accustomed to it. But to bow to Buddha, you know, means to attain selflessness. It means that when you get accustomed to—when you make bow thousands of time [laughs], you will lose your ego—ego. You will not much—you will not have too much ego. We understand in that way.

I don't know how you feel, but that is the reason why we practice bow. Even to put your hand together, it, you know, may be—you—when you do it for the first time, you feel funny, you know [laughs], blushful [bashful] feeling you may have. Maybe I—I cannot explain so well about it, you know. While you are doing over and over again, you will understand what it is. It is that kind of things. Through practice you will—through physical practice you will have spiritual freedom too. Okay? It may not be okay [laughs], but I cannot explain so well. *Hai*.

Student C: Rōshi, could you say something about the difference between the mission of Jesus Christ and that of the Buddha?

Suzuki-rōshi: Between what?

Student C: The missions of Jesus Christ and—the missions of Jesus Christ and the Buddha? Are they similar?

Suzuki-rōshi: What did—I don't—I couldn't follow you. The last part.

Student C: I was wondering if you could compare the messages of Jesus Christ and those of the Buddha. If you could—

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't know Christianity so—at all, you know, maybe. I have—I studied, you know, very [hard], you know, as a Buddhist. I was not Christian, so, you know, my understanding will be—will not be appropriate—good understanding of Christianity, because I am not—I don't believe in, you know, God or [laughs, laughter] some—so—

I have no—I have no position in—as a Christian, you know, so I'm afraid to say anything about Christianity because I don't know, you know. But I am just—as a Buddhist, I want to study our way, and I want to be very critical with Buddhism not with other religion. As we are Buddhist—if it is difficult for me to believe his teaching, I must have some doubt, and I must have some criticism, you know, about it—about Buddha's teaching. I have some, you know, right or—I don't feel so bad if I criticize Buddhism, as I should criticize me, you know.

But I don't want to criticize other religion which I don't know so well. And if I talk about—when I want—when I start to think about Christianity, you know, as a Buddhist I have big doubt or [about] how Christian people believe in God, you know. I don't understand so well. I can imagine, or I can guess, you know, how they believe in God. So I cannot compare Christianity to Buddhism.

And, of course some Buddhist—some teacher, Buddhist teacher, who was—who was once Christian, you know, can compare Buddhism to Christianity. Like Uchiyama-rōshi, who live in Kyōto, he was a—once he was Christian minister, and he converted to Buddhism. So he know—he knows both Christianity and Buddhism. I am sorry, I cannot [laughs], you know, answer.

Student C: I was thinking more of the figure of Christ than Christianity. When I said that, I was thinking more of the figure of Christ or—rather than Christianity. I don't think Christianity [4-8 words unclear].

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me, I don't want to say anything about Christianity, you know. I am completely blind [laughs, laughter].

Student D: Could you say something about the state of *samadhi* regarding our zazen practice?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Samādhi*? *Samādhi* is—mostly it is—it is understood [as] deep concentration, you know, of especially mind—that is *samādhi*. And—but Zen is not just *samādhi*. Zen is not a kind of state—state of mind. It is more than that. If we—if I try to explain about it, I have to tell you the history of Zen, starting from, you know, pre-Buddhistic practice, and Hinayāna practice, and Mahāyāna practice, and Zen practice.

The background of the practice—or understanding of practice is different, not the same. The other day I explained about sightseeing [laughs] zazen. There is many kinds of *samādhi*, you know. If you practice zazen to, you know, attain various—to practice various *samādhi*, that is a kind of sightseeing practice, you know.

The purpose of practice for us is to find the deep meaning in our everyday life, and in various being, to have complete—not—I cannot say "complete," but because I have no other word for that, I must say complete understanding of things. Not in term of comparison or dualistic sense. In another words, to live on each moment accepting things as it is. That is zazen practice. And to go beyond the comparative value of things.

This point may be interesting point for people who cannot accept the

old standard of appreciating or evaluating things. You know, wealth or fame, you know, is not so important thing for us, you know, when most people put great value—find great value in money or their happiness in its worldly sense.

Those, you know, standard of evaluating things belongs to comparative, you know, evaluation, we—which we do not think it is—it is—we rather, you know, put more emphasis on thing itself. And we do not try to evaluate things in its relative sense. Do you—what is your question?

Student E: Does the con- [partial word]—does—what is meant by truth in Zen?

Suzuki-rōshi: Truth? Truth for us—truth in its usual sense may be opposite of false or untruth. But [the] truth we mean is beyond right or wrong is for us truth or absolute. This is maybe—I don't know—but this is for almost all the—all people. This idea is very difficult to accept: truth which is not good or bad, not right or wrong. The truth is something which is beyond right or wrong.

So, you know, Buddhist does—do not talk about, you know, "this is right," or we don't say "this is right" or "that is wrong."

Student E: Would you consider it wrong to just—like, to just count to nine in your breathing practice?

Suzuki-rōshi: Just—

Student E: Like if you just counted one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—would that—like—in the—in a bigger sense that wouldn't be wrong, but like in a smaller sense that would—that—now that's something that would be wrong. Am I correct? [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Maybe [laughs] wrong. Maybe right, you know. Someone may say that is right, and someone may say that is not right, you know. Because people has some standpoint, you know, from standpoint it may be wrong. From the other standpoint, it may be right, you know.

So it means that it is not always right, you know, or always wrong. So, you know, if so, you know, which is [laughs]—without taking any viewpoint, you cannot say right or wrong. Without having some standard, you cannot say that is good or bad. So the standard we take, you know, belongs to us, not to thing itself. So if we, you know, forget all about standard, you cannot say good or bad. *Hai*.

Student F: Is it important for us as Zen Buddhists not to eat meat or fish? And if so, why?

Suzuki-rōshi: Zen Buddhist—because we didn't, especially in Asian time, they didn't eat fish or, you know, meat because it is directly related to the first precept of non-killing, you know. "Don't kill." Directly related to the precepts of not—don't kill. And it is the most brutal, you know, way of killing animals, you know. So we didn't.

But, you know, our, you know, feeling or emotional life is more complicated right now, you know. And even though we know that—even though we don't kill animal, to eat rice or vegetables may be the same thing. We understand that, so we don't know, you know, to eat meat or fish is so bad or not, you know, anyway—because anyway we have to kill something when we eat something.

So our understanding or our understanding of precepts, you know, changed little by little. And in China, you know, the Sixth Patriarch, you know, when he received the transmission from his master, he lived for a long time in fishing village. And he mixed—the people, you know, would eat fish, but he ate soup [?] [laughs]—soup and the fish. Fisherman must have eaten the meat, and he mixed his soup with rice and ate. That may be actually violence [violation?] of the precept.

So precepts, you know, according to the time and place, changed little by little. And especially in Zen precepts we take—we observed precepts [in a] more positive sense. Without saying "not to kill," we say "help," you know, "living being in some way." For an instance, to raise, you know, to be kind to animal, or to be—to help to raise vegetables. This is more positive way of observing the precepts of not to kill. The best way of observing the precepts of "not to kill" is not to kill buddha-nature is the highest way of observing precepts.

So to practice, you know, zazen and to have more meaningful life is the way to observe our precepts. So we don't understand precepts in term of fish or, you know, meat. But I think to—I'm sure meat is not so good food for us. I think so. If so, we should not eat meat so much. Not because it is violence [violation] of the precepts, but because of, you know, because fish or meat is appropriate food for us or not appropriate. *Hai.*

Student G: It says that you need faith, doubt, and determination. What kind of doubt?

Suzuki-rōshi: Doubt. Doubt means, you know, try to understand completely is doubt, you know—to accept teaching in its true sense. When you, you know, when you don't—when you find something difficult to believe in, you know, then you should, you know, try to

accept it until you can accept it. That is doubt.

Student G: Well, if you accept it but you have doubt or true [1 words] as to what you're seeing while you practice it—or what you are going [1-2 words]—

Suzuki-rōshi: Still—still that doubt should go on and on until you, you know, completely get over the doubt. That is a kind of—that is a way of studying our way. To continue doubt, that is very good practice. As a Buddhist it is good. The doubt should be very big and [laughs] and very wrong, you know. Then you—what you attain is greater.

Student H: Someone began as a student and doubted all rituals.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student H: How do you speak to him [SR laughs, laughter]? Would you ask him to do it and put his doubt aside? Or would you ask him to not do it and exercise his doubt?

Suzuki-rōshi: That's—that is just intellectual doubt, you know. I mean doubt [laughter], you know, physical doubt and everything [laughs, laughter]. "If you have doubt, why don't you try it? If that is true or not?" Okay? [Laughter.]

Some question?

Student I: Could you explain to us some of the ceremonies that are used in the Buddhist funeral service and what they mean, please?

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. In Buddhist funeral, you know, if he hasn't received precepts, we give precepts first of all. And then as a Buddhist, you know, we say farewell to them in some way, you know, in some traditional way. That's all, you know, but, you know, what we —

Student I: There is something in the service about forgiveness of sin.

Suzuki-rōshi: Sin?

Student I: Yes. [4-6 words.]² In the context of the service, could you explain that part?

Suzuki-rōshi: We, you know, before we accept, you know, precepts, we make confession, you know, and receive precepts, and become Buddhist. And as a Buddhist I—we say, you know, last words to them

² Possibly referring to "All your ancient twisted karma ... is now released."

or, you know, we, according to some traditional way, you know, as we say goodbye to our friend, we say goodbye to him. That is, you know, our Buddhist funeral service. And maybe we have to translate all those, you know, things into English, but which we haven't, you know, yet.

Student I: Do you believe that the person for whom the service is given is aware that you are giving it?

Suzuki-rōshi: That, you know, it—we understand in this way: That we, you know, observe service with some certain feeling means that he also have that same feeling, you know. It is not, you know—we say "that I am here means that he is there," you know. There is closely related—his being to our—to my being. That I am here means that you are there. That is very true, you know [laughs]. That I feel in some way means, you know, that you feel in the same way. Not exactly, may be—may not be exactly the same, but there must be some reason there is some difference between my feeling and your feeling. But there is some reason, and it is the law of causality.

That my feeling is different from your feeling does not mean we have quite different feeling completely. It should be so because if it is—if I think your feeling and my feeling are exactly the same, that is wrong understanding of the truth. It should be different, and why it is different is some reason of causality. So we don't mind, you know, even though my feeling is different from his feeling who is no more—who is supposed to be no more. But no—we say "no more," but it cannot be so. In some way he exists, and there is some reason why he is now different from me or from other people who is—who are alive.

So still we believe in, you know, even though he is in other world, maybe there must be some relationship [between] this world and to the other world. And that relationship is the law—still, you know, in the relationship of causality—cause and effect. So one is all and all is one, and in this sense we, you know, say farewell to everyone.

Student J: If—did the Buddha say that ego is—does not really exist—that it really exists is delusion, then what exactly is it, you know—the experience beyond death? I mean, what does it mean to be dead, or—

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh—yeah, you know—ego—ego—we say ego doesn't exist. We say so because you think ego exist, so we think—we put more emphasis on egolessness—egolessness. But both is true. Ego exist, but not in some substantial way, having some special nature, you know. So in this sense, ego doesn't exist. But, you know—but it exist. Very paradoxical, but it is so. Strictly speaking, in the smallest particle of time you exist there. But not always—you don't exist

always in that way. So we say egolessness. Exist but not always exist in the same way. That is what we mean. Okay? Yeah?

Student K: You mentioned that the chain of cause and effect in, you know, my present life—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student K: —then when I die this chain does not end, but it goes on and carries me through another world to a—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student K: —in a similar way [1-2 words].

Suzuki-rōshi: In time span it goes in that way, but in space span, you know, you—your existence is closely related to other existence. We understand in that way. So we say "egolessness," because we think we exist here—most people exist—understand we exist here in this way. And next life will be same person will [laughs], you know, with same character will exist, but I don't think so. We will change into something: not into cats or snake, but some change should take place on each one of us. So there is not much reason why we should stick to, you know, to our being³ literally in its substantial way.

Student L: In Buddhism, as I understand it, they teach that life and death are not opposites. Death is a part of life.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: And from what I've read, the Buddha had great composure in regard to his—

Suzuki-rōshi: Great—?

Student L: Composure.

Suzuki-rōshi: Composure. In birth and death?

Student L: Yeah.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yes.

Student L: So my question is, why does it seem that most living beings—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

³ "Being" used as a noun.

Student L: —try hard to extend life and to avoid death if death is—

Suzuki-rōshi: Another form of living?

Student L: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. That is, you know, how we exist, you know. That is also a kind of paradox, you know. So Buddhist—Buddhist—our teaching tell us not to, you know, not to be discriminative, you know, in birth and death [laughs].

Student L: But still as living beings we should—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes.

Student L: —try avoid death?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, try to. That is, you know—the "try to avoid" means to be—to continue our life, you know. So we—as long as we live in our ex- [partial word]—our life is continuous, you see? Or our idea of time is continuous. To live long is—in time span, we try to live long. We try to continue our life. That is our tendency. But at the same time, you know, we want to enjoy our life moment after moment.

When you go to the moon you may say, "Oh! The moon was wonderful place." [Laughs.] You say so. That is idea of discontinuity. You don't want to be discontinuous, but, you know, you don't want to live just—even the moon is so beautiful place, you don't want to live in the moon always. So when you appreciate your life in the moon, you have both desire to be continuous—continuously live.⁴ If so, you will not stay so long at the same place, because you want to continue your life. If you want to continue your life—even though you want to continue your life, you know, if you realize we are continually going some other place, that is also which you don't like. If it is something good you want to stay there for long time until you are really tired of it. That is, you know, idea of discontinuity.

So—but when we talk about our life, we are deeply involved in first of all, the idea of continuity. That is why you don't like death. But actually when you are—when you enjoy something very much, you are involved in idea of continuity—discontinuity. That you stay he- [partial word]—one place for a long time mean—is not possible, but that you want to live in this world forever means the idea of discontinuity. That you say, you know, this is quarter of nine, you know, that is idea of discontinuity.

⁴ Used as the verb "live," not the adjective.

So, you know, we are very selfish, you know—selfish—we are not—our feeling doesn't—is not so—what do you say? We—our emotional activity doesn't work so well, you know, so impartially. If we see one thing, we cannot see the other side. That is good, you know, but at the same time we should know the other side of the truth. Did I—yeah, I—

Student L: Then it has something to do with nonattachment somehow. We—if we live, if I understand it, *shikantaza*, we would appreciate it very much, but we would not try to hold on to it. Is that so?

Suzuki-rōshi: When we practice *shikantaza* we go back before this kind of feeling arise. Do you understand?

Student L: That would mean inactivity.

Suzuki-rōshi: Inactivity, and in our feeling we have no emotional attachment, or we have no feeling of no-thinking. If some thinking activity arise, we will be involved in, you know, some confusion.

Student L: So to say appreciation means thinking? Is that what—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, usually it is so. But when we say appreciation in its true sense, [we mean] detached from emotional things and thinking faculty. And to have direct experience of it is, you know, non-detachment [non-attachment?] or *shikantaza*.

Oh. Excuse me. Do you have some more questions? *Hai*.

Student M: Do you practice for me or Buddhism?

Suzuki-rōshi: To practice Buddhism for Buddhism is not to practice Buddhism in term of good or bad, or in term of "I like Buddhism," or "I don't like it." Whatever it is, if it is true, you know, we should study it and we should practice it. That is our spirit. [*Sentence finished. Tape turned over.*]

... you have—we should [gap in tape for 1-2 minutes] ... different. Having complete relativity way in term of reality is Buddhist way. So even though we understand things from various angle, and we—even though we have completely different understanding of life, as long as we are here in this world, we should, you know, extend or we should follow. But that relativity is based on, you know, non-duality of life. So we don't—that is at the same—you may say that is detachment. Detachment does not mean to cut off worldly desires.

Having worldly desires, you know, with right understanding of it, and knowing how to treat our desires—to live in this world is Buddhist way. But usually, you know, we have no idea of non-detachment [non-attachment?], and we will be enslaved by our desires and world of duality. That is why we have always—we should have—we should fight always. *Hai*.

Student N: You said that Buddhism is to live with our desires but not be ruled by them, if I understand you. Can you still say the vow, "I vow to put an end to them"?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student N: Wouldn't it be more accurate, if I'm standing here teaching, wouldn't it be more accurate that we vow—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student N: "I vow to understand them." [SR laughs, laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: You continue—it means that you continue this practice, you know, forever because it is—our desires are, you know, inexhaustible. If so we [laughs, laughter]—there is no end in our practice.

Student N: Should I even try to put an end to them?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student N: To our vows [?] I should try to put an end to them. But as I understand you, I should sort of make an effort to limit them, if I understand [3-4 words].

Suzuki-rōshi: No, we don't mean that. Moment after moment, we should make best effort to put an end to the desires [laughs]. But desires—because desires is endless, so our effort will—may be endless. That is why, you know, Buddhist exist forever. You know, if—you know, if we put an end to every desires, you know, there will not be any need for Buddhist to [laughs] practice our way.

Student N: Do you dream at night? [Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: [What] did you say?

Student N: Do you dream at night?

Suzuki-rōshi: I? [Laughter.] I don't remember so well, but—yes I do.

Student N: Dreams are a [1-2 words] [laughter]. Our dreams [2-3 words].

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, maybe. [Laughter.] But I don't remember so well, you know, because I don't—it is—maybe I have this kind of trouble always, so it is not so important to remember things one by—one after another, you know. I may laugh at me if I dream of something.

Student O: I was trying to ask of myself the question of birth and death. I see when one attains a certain consciousness, that birth and death are a daily process or of a "now" process. [2-3 sentences unclear.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh.

Student O: And I say I've seen a sleepless death of the body, because body is not there any more. You know, it sleeps.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh.

Student O: Is that an individual thing, and why is this—this [3-4 words]?

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student O: [4-6 words.]

Suzuki-rōshi: I—I often wonder why I don't, you know—why I am not afraid of going to sleep, you know [laughs]. If it is, you know, it is a kind of death, you know. I am not afraid of going to sleep, you know. I don't know why, but maybe I'm so sure tomorrow—that tomorrow morning I'll get up, you know.

Student O: So death is only a physical thing—a physical [1 word]. I was wondering if [8-12 words]. I guess—is the body a part of the mind?

Suzuki-rōshi: Body?

Student O: Is the body a manifestation of the mind?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, I—

Student O: Does the body come from the mind? The universal mind? [2-4 words.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Mmm. [Laughs, laughter.] I couldn't follow you completely, but—what is your point of question?

Student O: Oh. It's—I'm still talking about birth and death.

Suzuki-rōshi: Birth and death?

Student O: Yes. Duration of—

Suzuki-rōshi: Duration of.

Student O: Does [1-2 words?] clear things up when you talk about death? I—I think about death a lot. But, you know, like I [4-6 words] the longer I think of [4-6 words]. Birth and death are cycling and always options [?]. I—I guess I'm not phrasing this in the form of a question, but there is a question that I'm asking.

Suzuki-rōshi: Birth and death, you know—the—the most important point of problem of birth and death is, you know, the idea of self, you know.

Student O: Isn't talking about—speaking of death as this gentleman was speaking of it, in the sense saying the body is less than the mind? That it is a separate entity from the mind?

Suzuki-rōshi: We understand, you know, oneness of mind and body.

Student O: They are one?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. We don't understand "here is body, and mind is floating in the heaven and come [laughs] to my—our mind. And after death it will go out from our body and enter again into our body." We don't under- [partial word]—we have not—our understanding of mind and body is more than that. The—we put emphasis on the point that mind and body is one.

Student O: Umm. Question: What do you think of mirrors?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student O: What—what do think—do you look in the mirror a lot [laughter]? I was thinking that—I think—doesn't man's fear of death come from a fear of physical change? In other words, the body disappearing—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student O: —that's the only fear—

Suzuki-rōshi: Reincarnation.

Student O: —[2-4 words] death, that this thing we live in will disappear, and—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. That kind of thought exist in Buddhist thought too. But that is Buddha applied the teaching which—usually—usual people had at that time. But to help people, he applied the—he did not, you know, deny their understanding of life. But somehow he managed to, you know, to make them understand the point of Buddhism even though he applied various thought—various folk religion. But he did not lose his point always.

And later, you know, most Oriental people had been involved in their naïve [native?] folk religion. And that kind of religious understanding became more and more powerful and common. That is why Buddhist has that kind of—put emphasis on that kind of idea of reincarnation or something like that. But if you read *Shōbōgenzō*, he clarify this point completely. *Hai*.

Student P: Would it be correct to speak of a—that we have a human personality?

Suzuki-rōshi: Personality.

Student P: Human personality.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Personality, we say but it is not—personality may be not completely so, but some tendency which is caused by his physical, you know, condition or physical nature. This is a kind of materialistic, you know, philosophy, but it is true, I think. So even though you receive education, you know—a kind of education, it is almost impossible to change their character. If it is possible—I think if it is possible to change our physical, you know, condition completely, then our character will change too. That is true from materialistic viewpoint. But from idealistic viewpoint, you know, our thinking—our mind will change our physical body—physical function of our body. If we have healthy mind, our body will be healthy too. This is also true, but we cannot completely argue, you know, from materialistic viewpoint and idealistic viewpoint, because both is true.

Student P: Well, [2-4 words] asked was—you were speaking of idea of self. And yet it seems to me that all of us have a concern for expressing our unique [?] personalities—in place of our human personality. I don't mean my individual personality, but I mean somebody that's a version of the self being expressed in me. This is just—at this moment of time, it's a force.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Oh. Not as a self, but as a momentous [momentary], you know, impulse or something. Yeah, I think that is—that is all right, you know, but we usually, you know, without being aware of it, we are usually controlled by—by our preconceived idea or by our past experience. And so we should know that—this point also. Even though this is just expression of my, you know, my being⁵ right now, but it is not always so. If we understand this point, you know, we should train ourself more so that we can express ourselves fully, completely, without any—without being enslaved by something or bound by something. Only we are alert enough to, you know, to see ourselves, to check ourselves. We cannot easily accept ourselves, you know, so easy. That is why we—we are so strict with ourselves. *Hai.*

Student Q: It seems that in order to [8-10 words] always scheming.

Suzuki-rōshi: Always what?

Student Q: Always scheming—trying to find ways to snatch [8-10 words] or [6-8 words].

Suzuki-rōshi: No, I'm sorry. I couldn't follow you. Did you—

Student Q: If you couldn't hear, I—

Suzuki-rōshi: Will you make your question in short—put in some short way? Condense your question?

Student Q: Can zazen practice stop—

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me?

Student Q: Can zazen practice—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. Zazen practice.

Student Q: —get you to stop your grasping for attention?

Suzuki-rōshi: Zazen practice stop—I'm sorry. What—

Student R: Grasping.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student R: She's saying, "Can zazen practice initially stop grasping?"

Suzuki-rōshi: Grasping—

⁵ "Being" used as a noun.

A brief clamor of several students all talking at once: [Unclear.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Attention.

Student S: Desire for attention.

Student R: Will zazen stop this? [Said slowly and gravely.]
[Laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Attention. Stop? [Laughs.]

Student Q: It could be I just need to find more control, or can zazen practice eventually stop the greedy grasping [1-2 words] completely?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, you know, when you start our practice, you know, your effort should be, you know, concentrated on something—some particular thing—like counting breathing. But eventually, you know, that effort will be extended in many direction, and you will have deep, wide, strong mind. Then you can, you know—you will have some power or some ability or, you know, the ability—without trying you can do many things. But at first it is necessary for us to make some effort in right direction. As long as you know the direction of practice, that is all right. And one by one you make your effort, you know, in—with right direction. Without going this way, you know, you can go this way.

We—we say detachment, it is not so easy thing to [laughs]—to attain. We can talk about it, but not so easy. So the only way is to try to practice our way, starting from very simple way like counting breathing or following-breathing practice. Then, you know, even though you have various problem amidst [?] of the difficulty, if you can count your breathing perfectly, you know, you have already have power of controlling yourself or power of being free from objective world.

It is more than habit, you know, because you have some belief or power in it. Habit is just, you know, succession of our activity—our intentional activity. But zazen power is, you know—with always steady steps it is going with some direction or intention. But eventually that intentional part will vanish, you know, and the power will go by itself. That is complete detachment. As we—our—we are very selfish, and we are always, you know, [feeling] some tendency. So without some effort we cannot get out of it. Okay.

Student S: In yoga meditation, we're taught to relax the muscles and clear the breathing passages so—to help the meditation, which zazen seems to ignore completely [?].

Suzuki-rōshi: No, we don't. We don't. Yoga maybe put more emphasis on physical practice, you know, than our practice. I think yoga practice will help a lot if—but—if it is too much like zazen, you know, it will create some problem for you. So maybe we should be careful, anyway. *Hai*.

Student T: Could you explain that problem?

Suzuki-rōshi: Problem?

Student T: Yeah, the problem—could you share what could be the problem?

Suzuki-rōshi: That is, you know, some person, you know, for some person who is very difficult to sit in cross-legged position, you know. If you—if he force too much, then it will create some physical problem, maybe. And—

Student T: Yoga, then, can create a great deal of intake of energy—your forced-breathing exercises rather than just watching them. Can those energies taken in cause anything difficult for zazen?

Suzuki-rōshi: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

Student T: Also, another question on sleep. Can one practice zazen in sleep?

Suzuki-rōshi: In sleep? We don't say that is zazen practice, you know [laughs, laughter]. Maybe we say—but we say if you are really Zen student, way you sleep must be different from ordinal [ordinary] person [laughs].

Student T: Often I have seen an icon of the Buddha sleeping on his—not sleeping, or—laying on his right side.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student T: This is often described as a *parinirvāna*. I don't know what this is. Did he attain some kind of enlightenment lying on his side?

Suzuki-rōshi: That is, you know, how most Indian people say they sleeps, you know. This side down. There is—of course, if you think why, it is quite obvious, you know, why they do this way. And most people are, you know, right-handed.

Student T: Also it relieves the stress on the heart. This is not from—

this is not from Buddhism, but a woman who—part of her way is pure sleeping heart. And—

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh.

Student T: —she says that lying on the right side—the heart—there's no stress on the heart, or less stress on the heart, so that it can beat fully and regain strength during the night.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm. [Laughter.] I don't know, you know. I am not concerned so much about those things, you know. But, you know, if you, you know, sleep left-side-down, you don't feel so good, you know [laughter]. It's obvious, you know. Maybe—and—it is—it may be better to sleep, you know, this way [laughs, laughter]—south and north, you know, rather than east and west. We are very magnetic being also. Everything may be so.

So if you start to study this kind of thing, you know, we will have many things to study. But we will have some specialist, you know, and—who may suggest us many things. As much as we can, we should apply—we should follow their suggestion, I think.

Thank you very much.

Source: Original City Center tape transcribed verbatim by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (3/9/01).