Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
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San Francisco

Suzuki-rōshi: If you—if you have some question, I am happy to answer for the question. And in that way, if necessary, I will refer to the *Lotus Sūtra. Hai*.

Student A: What is "no outflows" mean in the *Lotus Sūtra*?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm? No?

Student A: "No outflows."

Suzuki-rōshi: No outflows. "No outflows" means, you know, by—because our practice is not, you know, sincere or not complete, there are many leakage [laughs] in your life and practice. That ["no outflows"] is the opposite of to have many leakage. It means mostly desires, you know: to let your desire, you know, as it goes this way, that way. That is leakage. And to control our desires [is] like to build a big leather [?] ball [?] without any leakage. That is "no outflow." It is more, you know, more *arhat* kind [of] practice: very, maybe, negative practice. Some other questions? *Hai*.

Student B: In the *Lotus Sūtra* they say the Buddha-seed arises from conditions.

Suzuki-rōshi: Buddha's what?

Student B: The Buddha-seed—

Suzuki-rōshi: Seed. Uh-huh.

Student B: —arises from conditions.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: Do you know what that means—what they mean there?

Suzuki-rōshi: What—conditions—seed—if you, you know, sew a seed, seed will be the cause of—because of the seed, of course, plants comes out. And it will have fruits—flower or fruits or branches. But without aid of rain or manure it will not, you know, grow. It means, you know, aid or things, you know, result by seed and by aid of something. I think you—your culture put more emphasis on aid. If aid is good, you know, result will be—you have good fruits. And how to improve the social condition is the most important point in your culture. But some other culture put

emphasis on seed more, maybe like Communism.

Student B: Could you explain that?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm? Explain it more?

Student B: I don't understand how Communism puts emphasis on the seed.

Suzuki-rōshi: You know, Communism is—I don't so well, so—I'm not Communist, so [laughs, laughter]—but in Soviet Union, you know, if you put emphasis on, you know—if you have some—some—whatever the study may be, sociology or anthropology or whatever it may be, if you put emphasis on aid, you know, the government will not accept your theory. But both—I think both is too one-sided, I think. Seed is important, and aid is also important.

In Communism, the social structure [is] nearly the—nearly the same to everyone. [It is] supposed to be, but actually I don't think so. Someone who has great power—great enough or strong enough to control people, they have more chance, although social structure looks like same [chance?]. So the aid is same to—equal to everyone, but there is some, you know, there should be some difference between people. Someone may be—may be a secretary, someone may be a just, you know, working by normal [?]. How—this kind of difference is original. If someone's seed, or someone has good seed, you know, he has that much chance. But in—in our society, we put more emphasis on how to—if we improve—if we improved politics or if we give people chance to develop, people may be happy. And we don't put emphasis on the difference of the—so—we don't put not much emphasis on who is more capable or who is not. We treat people in the same way.

So we sort of ignore the each one's—each one's original or each one's own ability. That is what I meant. *Hai*.

Student C: I don't understand the difference between the egg [*sic*: aid] and the seed—how you're using it.

Suzuki-rōshi: Seed?

Student C: The basic difference, you know, between the two things.

Suzuki-rōshi: Basic difference, you know—it is cause and affect. The, you know, relationship cause and affect is more seed, you know. If you sew a seed, you will have some certain kind of plants. That is seed. And seed and relationship—seed and fruit. The rain or, you know, wind or sunshine is not direct—is not real—is not seed, you know. Aid for seed—some factors, conditions which will make—which will help the relationship

between cause and affect. That is what I meant. In Buddhism we say *innen*:[1] *in* is seed, *en* is aid. And *in* and aid are—[both] seed and aid is necessary for something to go or something to result.

Student C: Is the egg like the condition? The egg is something that has met certain conditions—has grown somewhat?

Suzuki-rōshi: Aid is something to help, you know—to result something from seed [laughs].

Student D to Student C: Aid. "A-I-D."

Student C: Oh, I thought he said "E-G-G"—egg. [Laughs, laughter.]

Suzuki-rōshi: Excuse me [laughs]. You know, egg—for egg [laughs], the, you know, temperature of mother hen is aid [laughs, laughter]. Some other questions?

Student E: In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Buddha seems to make a distinction between nirvāna, or the stopping of pain, and complete perfect enlightenment—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student E: —which is also *tathāgata* [1 word].

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student E: Could you talk some about the difference between these two things?

Suzuki-rōshi: Nirvāna is more, you know—it is same kinds of words as "no leakage," you know. Extinction of all desire is nirvāna. No leakage, no outflow is nirvāna. And enlightenment or *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*[2] is enlightened stage more in a positive expression of same stage. But one is more Mahāyāna way, and the other is more Hīnayāna way. For an instance, *arhat*—before—*arhat* keeping various precepts and following Buddha's teaching, he may attain *arhat*. The practice of *arhat* is more passive and more negative. And the other is more active, you know, more positive—to have Buddha wisdom. And here there is many words for that. For an instance, we have term—or technical term like *issai-shu-*

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[1] *innen* (Jap.): "*In* is the inner and direct cause by which the result occurs, while *en* means the external and indirect one. According to the Buddhist doctrine, every action occurs in the harmony of both *in* and *en*" (Daitō Shuppansha, *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1965, pp. 129-130).

[2] *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (San.): the Buddha's or the highest enlightenment or wisdom.

chi.[3] *Issai-shu-chi* is "various wisdom." The difference between our wis-[partial word]—our knowledge and Buddha's knowledge is our knowledge is accumulation of, you know, various knowledge. Not much, you know, not much relationship between one knowledge and the other knowledge. Not much system between various knowledge we have, you know.

But Buddha's knowledge is one which include—each one of the knowledge include the other knowledge—that is *issai-shu-chi*. So if you pick up—if you understand Buddha's knowledge—one Buddha's knowledge, you know, about—for an instance, about human nature, then the other knowledge will be included. That kind of knowledge is buddha-knowledge. And that kind of way of observing things, or that kind of practice, is enlightenment. It looks like completely different approach, but it is just two ways of expression of one knowledge. *Hai*.

Student F [Bill Shurtleff]: In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the chapter "Duration of the Life of the Tathāgata," this—the chapter is preceded by a building-up —

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: —in which we learn that we're about to hear some very, very important truth.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: And after this chapter, it's emphasized again and again and again how important this truth is to keep in mind: the "Duration of the Life of the Tathāgata."

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: And in that chapter, the Tathāgata reveals that he actually attained enlightenment innumerable *kalpa*s before—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Bill: —and that he is only making an <u>appearance</u> of extinction, but in fact there is no—he was not enlightened as Shākyamuni and will not obtain extinction as Shākyamuni. Is this the same thing? Is this another way of saying what Dōgen says when he talks about all beings already being in enlightenment and manifesting their enlightenment from day to day—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

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[3] *issai-shu-chi* (Jap.): one of the three types of wisdom; the wisdom of the Buddha.

Student F: —or is this something else that is being said?

Suzuki-rōshi: It is same thing, you know. It is—if we say we are all—originally we are all enlightened people, you know, to attain enlightenment just to know what we have in our sleeve [does something with his sleeve] here. But although you have it, if you don't know that you have, you know, that is same as you don't have it. So this kind of idea—all of—all of us has buddha-nature. This kind of idea is more—although *Lotus Sūtra* has two side, but *Lotus Sūtra* put more emphasis on everyone has buddha-nature.

So if you practice hard enough or long enough you will attain enlightenment. But that attainment is not to have something to acquire something from others—from other source. Just to find out what we have is, you know, to attain enlightenment. And when Dōgen put emphasis on this point, he also put emphasis on real self, or essence of mind, or buddha-nature. Or he—he mostly use the word *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi,* which is something, you know, we have and something we attain by effort. It is both—it is both attainment, and it also something we have originally. When we say—when we translate it "supreme incomparable *bodhi,*" it is something—it sounds [like] something which we attain by our effort, but it is actually something which we have. So when he explain it, he says, "Wisdom seek for wisdom," and *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* is actually wisdom. "Wisdom seek for wisdom."

So wisdom we have seek for wisdom. That is actually what we are doing. Only when you discriminate your practice, you know, it looks like there is good practice or bad practice. By good—only by good practice you will attain enlightenment. That is more usual understanding. But according to Dōgen, whatever we do, that is actually—actually "wisdom seeking for wisdom."

But because you discriminate it, you know, because you are involved in some ego—Peter said ego [laughs] outside of—outside of itself. That is very good, you know, short and strong way of expressing ego, you know. Outs- [partial word]—true ego is buddha-mind. And ego outside of itself is projected ego, you know, of which you will discriminate, you know, good or bad. "Good practice" or "bad practice," you say. But that, you know, good practice or bad practice or ego is not true ego. Ego [laughs] outside of itself, you know, [is] projected ego. And you discriminate about projected ego as if there is some ego—as if there is good ego or bad ego. That is actually what we are doing. But <u>who</u> is doing that kind of—who project, you know, our ego objectively? Somebody is doing that. Someone is true ego which is always on your side, and which you cannot tell who he is or what he is.

To realize this p- [partial word]—if you realize this point clearly, you

know, we have originally buddha-nature, which is universal to everyone. Ego on your side is the same, you know. But only when it is projected there is difference between Ego 1 and Ego 2. Do you understand this point?

Student F: Could you give an example of Ego 1 and Ego 2?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] Your ego and my ego, you know [laughs, laughter]. You know, I have—I have big eg- [partial word]—small ego, and you have big ego [laughter]. We say so, you know, because I project my ego as if my ego is very small, you know, and you are [not] bold enough, you know, to say "my ego is big" because you are student, you know. Because I am teacher, you know, I must say my "ego is very small" [laughs, laughter]. But small ego or big ego is, you know, ego outside of itself. Ego is here on my side, not there. I said your eyes never can see themselves. It is not possible. That ego is, you know, true ego and big—big ego, maybe. *Hai*.

Student G: You said before that outflows have [are] in some sense related to desires.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student G: And it is said in Zen, a lot of times, that to do something fully—

Suzuki-rōshi: To do something fully.

Student G: To do something fully—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student G: —when doing something, to do it fully—that that is, sort of, one of the goals—something that we should want to do, and that we should do. Sometimes in our use of the word "passion," we sometimes refer to the kind of action that is done fully, and rapidly, and without hesitation. I wonder if you could, from a Zen point of view, explain the relationship between desire and passion?

Suzuki-rōshi: Passion and desire and full?

Student G: Maybe I could just ask the question what is passion?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Passion is, you know, when you are, you know, involved in or when you are caught by outside—things which looks like exist outside, you know, and to which your mind or strength or energy is directed. That is mostly—most likely passion or attachment. Actually, that kind of thing does not exist, you know, but you think as if something

exist in that way and if possible, you know, hopefully forever [laughs].

And you—that hope already will create something, you know, some passion or some desire. So what is necessary is—what we should do, or how we should act, or how we should do with things which looks like exist objectively is without, you know, being involved in—too much in the idea of being or substantial being. You should do it naturally, and that activity should be activity which you do in that moment. In that way, we continue our life that is perfect life. Next question may be, you know—actually, you know, to act in that way is possible or not will be the next question.

To answer this question, it is necessary for me to explain more on this point—on the other point, which is we say things does not exist forever, you know. Things exist just right on this moment, in this moment—does not mean to acknowledge things or to do things just for this moment because each moment—when you say "this moment," this moment has its own past and future.

So when you do it, you know, at that time if you do not try to make some excuse, or if you do not have preconceived idea, naturally you will accept—you will have feeling of past and future. And you will see some difficulty in your future—in the future of that moment. And you will see the past of that moment that is always included in each moment. Actually you cannot do, you know, things just for that moment, forgetting all about its past and future. Do you understand? You cannot do so, bec- [partial word]—when you do something, you know, without thinking or intuitively, you have to acknowledge its own past and future. And the past of this moment and past of yesterday may be the same, you know. I th- [partial word]—I understand it may be the same, and it <u>is</u> same maybe, but when we say "it is same" that is too far, you know. There is some logical jump in it, because each moment—the quality of each moment can- [partial word]—no one can say it is always same. Maybe different. We should accept this point too.

And strictly speaking it is not same. Because it is not same we have some chance to make some effort more or to improve our karma. If it is exactly the same, there is no chance for us to improve our life. So it is same, but it is not same. There is two side in the truth. So if we think past—my past is always same, even though we don't know our future—my future, but past was always same. That is not, you know, perfect understanding. Future is—cannot be same, and past also cannot be same.

Student H: Isn't it confusing if you use the word—if you use the words "past and future"? To me it's confusing, because to me the way you're using them it all sounds like the present.

Suzuki-rōshi: All sound like present. That's right, you know. You should understand in that way. Always present, you know. The different present. Maybe same, you know. There is some relationship—must be some relationship. But strictly speaking, you know, it is accumulation of smallest particle of time—smallest particle of present.

Student H: What do you mean when you said before, when you act in the present moment you consider the past and the future of that present moment.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student H: Do you mean there is some kind of thing or idea or concept or something that you consider? Or is it—or do you just consider the present moment? I mean, it sounds like [4-6 words]—

Suzuki-rōshi: Time doesn't exist, you know. Actually time doesn't exist, you know, but things exist. And things has some continuity, you know. So we say time exist. Instead of things we say time, you know. Time include many things. It is a kind of idea, not actual thing. It, you know—instead of saying "many things," we say "time." Time include everything. When we say this moment, it include many things. And the center of it is me, you know, right here.

Student H: Do we consider—I remember Dōgen talking somewhere about the fire—the wood burning becomes a log and becomes ashes. But when it's ashes we don't—do we—are we supposed to remember that it was a log or do we just consider it ashes? Or when it's a log we don't say, well [2-3 words]—

Suzuki-rōshi: Log has its future and past.

Student H: Do we consider them?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Its own past and future. But we cannot say log become ash [laughs]. It is so, you know. Because, you know, here is log—wood, and here is ash, you know. Usually you say "wood become ash," you know, but ash has its own past and future, you know, and this is independent. And ash has its own past and future. Two different thing.

Student H: In a practical way—I'm trying to be practical about it.

Suzuki-rōshi: In practical way it is so [laughs].

Student H: If I look at you and say you're my teacher—

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student H: If I look at you and I'm listening to your lecture trying to learn something, and if I say to myself, well in the past Rōshi has been a very good teacher and I've learned a lot—

Suzuki-rōshi: Past Rōshi is not present Rōshi.

Student H: —and now—and now—and now I'm looking at you, and if I remember that as the past, there's something wrong in that. I won't say wrong but there's a hang-up. I'm attached or caught to some other idea. But if I look at you, and I'm listening to you, and we're talking, and I just accept the now, and I don't know you as a teacher, I don't know that you're a Rōshi, I don't know anything, then you're just talking to me, I'm talking to you. That includes everything without having to know anything else.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, that is so. *[Sentence finished. Tape turned over.]* … understand something like me, you know. But this is just—maybe looks like logic, you know. But it is not just logic. Because we are liable to be—fall in one-sided view, contin- [partial word]—idea of continuity or idea of discontinuity. And actual being and continuous and discontinuous —that is true. Like time is continuous and discontinuous. I always say it is nine o'clock. When we say it is nine o'clock, you know, when we say so, it is—idea of time is discontinuity, you know: "nine o'clock." It is not going. But when we say time, it is something continue from this moment to the other.

So if you are too much involved in this kind of thinking, you know, you will lose everything. When we—I talk in this way, you know, more logically, you will not think in this way actually, but—but you are making this kind of, you know, mistake always when you think something objectively. So the important thing is to sit and to go beyond this kind of thinking mind. And when you act, when you do something without being involved in too much about objective world or scientific world or logical world, we should—you should do more intuitively, more freely, you know, without being involved in too much this kind of argument or too much idea of attachment. Okay?

That is what I mean. That is what I mean. "Just to sit" means don't be involved in good—idea of good practice or bad practice, how long it will take before we attain enlightenment, or what is enlightenment. You know, this kind of idea is result of thinking which is shadow of your own mind. Your mind is always on your side, watching everything, understanding everything, who—which—who knows everything, and who is able to know everything. And you should trust that, you know, kind of you. And you should prac- [partial word]—trust your practice too. And trust your intuition too. Then you will not make not much mistake.

Why you make mistake is because you make some excuse always: "Because I am Buddhist, we shouldn't," you know, "have any idea of good or bad," [laughs] you know. "Because I am Buddhist, Dōgen-zenji said live on this moment. So whatever I do it doesn't matter," you know. This is just excuse and just, you know, logic or argument, you know. But actually because you don't feel good when you do something wrong, you know, when you do something which is not real, which you don't accept completely, you make some excuse. That is why, maybe, many people study religion [laughs]—to make some excuse.

You know, in Japan in family system, you know, if someone—someone's son get married with someone—some, you know, some lady, she is their family, and the old couple may go to temple everyday—not everyday, once a week or so. And what the old couple will run from in temple is "You should do this kind of thing. You shouldn't do this kind of thing." And after and they come back, they apply the teaching for the, you know [laughs], for the wife of the son. You know, I—"Today I went to temple, and priest told me so-and-so. I think that is right [laughs]. He means that you are wrong [laughs]. What priest said was right, and what you do always is wrong." That doesn't make any sense [laughs]. To authorize his, you know, egoistic idea, people may study something. That is not how to study Buddhism.

We should trust our own, you know, feeling and our own intuition. Maybe more physical one rather than—rather than some idea or some thought or some moral code or precepts. *Hai.*

Student I: Sometimes I have been very aware of—that the moral faculty in me or the moral part of me. I'll be doing something and—

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah.

Student I: —Doug once expressed this to me as kind of a very gray feeling, and a little voice in the back of your head saying, "Why you stupid" or—or this is—"What are you doing? This is terrible. You—you're being very bad now."

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm

Student I: It's sort of a—

Suzuki-rōshi: Voice.

Student I: Yeah, a voice that when you're walking into the kitchen toward the bread box [laughter] begins as very small. Sometimes it's very small [laughter]. Sometimes it gets so big that it's actually screaming at you, "Stop!" [Laughter.] But there you go doing it anyway. It's very difficult to sit through experiences like this with any

composure [laughs, laughter].

Suzuki-rōshi: No composure [laughs].

Student I: I mean, except—except that the moral part of human being, because people have that thing in them that says, "This is right and this is wrong"—or I do. Most people do.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Most people, you know—I don't know what to say, but I don't know why is—why do we have that kind of feeling. But we know, you know, pretty well. We can trust ourselves pretty well without any teacher [laughs] maybe. But if you have teacher, you know, you will—you will not be fooled by anything, and you can put more faith in yourself—in your feeling. This is very—this kind of way of thinking or way of study is very different from other religion maybe, which put more emphasis on some moral code, or something you should do, or you shouldn't, or precepts. *Hai*.

Student J: Could you say something about mindfulness?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mindfulness?

Student J: Mindfulness on breathing?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, mindfulness—it is, you know—

Student J: Mindfulness on breathing.

Suzuki-rōshi: Breathing—mostly breathing—you cannot have good breathing unless you have good posture. And good breathing means, you know, to have, in zazen practice—to take inhaling and exhaling with your whole body and mind. Do you understand?

Student J: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: That is—that is good breathing, you know, so if you practice in this way, naturally your breathing will be deeper and deeper actually. That is good breathing. Mindfulness means to—to—to have—to obtain the oneness of mind and body. If you have oneness of mind and body, or if your mind pervade all—whole—all parts of your body, that minds pervades, you know—that mind is at the same time buddha-mind which include everything.

Student K: Rōshi?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai*.

Student K: If we find something that we feel helps us sit in that way,

maybe with some it's he breathes through the pores and in the skin. Someone else practices not moving any muscles—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student K: —some things that we experience—I experience something as being oneness of my mind and my body. Should we sort of use what seems to us by our experimentation? I mean, can we trust ourselves? I say to myself—just afterwards I say, "Oh, that was my whole mind and body. So that's something very good to do, and I should practice that."

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, if you have that feeling that is it, you know. And you—if you—if you think your practice is not good, and if you don't know why it is not good, you should think, you know, whether your mind is fully pervaded every part of your body or not. That is so-called it *shikantaza*. So *shikantaza*—background of *shikantaza* is the mind, which is always include everything, which is with all things which exist.

When I say "with all things," [I mean] all things we see, strictly speaking. There must be many things which we don't see—which we cannot see. But we feel as if we are seeing everything, you know. When we see the stars, you know, I—we feel as if we are seeing all the stars which exist. Maybe actually we are seeing it. But in that case, I don't—I am not talking about the stars which we don't see or which human being never reach. What I mean is, you know, things Buddhist talk about is mind and materialistic and spiritualistic being. We don't talk about just material or just spiritual.

This is one important point when you think, you know, but actually—or when you discuss something about Buddhism. But in your everyday life it doesn't make any sense. Why I have to argue this kind of thing is, you know—sometime our mind goes too far, you know, unnecessarily goes too far. So if we go too far this way, you know, we should go, you know, pretty far this way too. That is why I have to say more, you know—I have to argue, you know. Because you go this way too far, because you make too big mistake, so it is difficult to say, "That is mistake," you know. "Why it is mistake is such-and-such," you know. So it is necessary to make everything clear. But actually there is no need if you don't go too far, you know. If you just sit—if you are able to just sit without much—making much mistake, it is all right actually.

So it doesn't—you may think what I'm saying doesn't help you so much. Without realizing you are go—you are already went too far away, you know, from reality. So to pull you back to present, you know, I have to say many things, that's all.

So what I just said is—we must—Buddhists never talk about something just material or just spiritual.

Student L: How about in the sense of practicing on our bodies—you know, forgetting about—or rather practicing in a just-material way?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: Is that something Buddhists don't do—we shouldn't do?

Suzuki-rōshi: No. We don't do that, you know. "Just material" is already wrong. The one side is missing.

Student L: If I try and sit very still, without moving at all—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: —and counting my breath—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: —and disregarding whether or not my mind is moving—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: —just concentrating on my body not moving—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: —what mistake am I making?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, what mistake you are making at that time?

Student L: Am I neglecting something by concentrating just on the body—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student L: —if I forget?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, that mistake will be, you know, if you think, "This is—this is zazen," you know, "Zazen should be like this." If you say so—if you understand in that way, that is mistake. But if you just do that, you know, without much—without authorizing your practice too much, you know, just sit. Then there's no mistake there. Or if you think, you know, "I'm just—what I can do is just to sit. I don't understand his lecture [laughs]. This is," you know, "all what I can. So I may sit in this way." If you, you know, think in that way, that is also a mistake.

So what you should do is—with some understanding of Buddhist teaching

and what is reality and what is real practice, you should sit. Then you have actually no—not much things to think. Just to sit is enough. Mistake will happen if you go too far, forgetting what you are doing right now. When you eat you should eat, you know. When you sleep you should sleep. When you sit you should sit. But the true understanding of it is—you should understand it in—from various viewpoint.

Student M [Peter Schneider]: Rōshi, suppose someone says to us—you keep saying just to sit as if it were something that everyone does, you know.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Peter: They could say "just to sit"—that's going much too far.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Peter: That's some sort of extreme, that's some sort of abnormal behavior.

Suzuki-rōshi: Just to sit?

Peter: Yeah, "that's not natural," they would say.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Peter: Like suppose—I mean, like, if you're from America, and you're from somewhere very far away from California—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Peter: If they see a Zen Center student sitting, they think that's incredibly unnatural.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Peter: They would say that <u>that</u> balance is off, you know.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Peter: Like, "just to sit"—that's on the other side of one dualism, of being very active.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Peter: So to keep saying "just to sit," that's like for them saying—that's like saying "be very passive."

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Peter: They say that's not the American way [laughs, laughter].

Suzuki-rōshi: American way, you know [laughs].

Peter: No, what I'm trying to say is that—

Suzuki-rōshi: What is Zen, you know, what is American way, you know? That's, you know, just argument, you know. Doesn't much make sense. To me it is very natural, and to them it is not natural [laughs], you know. What is natural? So that is something which we cannot decide: which is natural or which is not natural. Just, you know, there is some mistake. Why I must say this kind of long talk is because we liable —we are liable to stick to one side. The—for Buddhist, the two major heresy is understanding of continuity and understanding of discontinuity. This is two major fault we make by thinking or by understanding—intellectual understanding. So intellectual understand cannot include this kind of opposite idea in one statement or in one practice.

So, you know, just to sit—that is why I have to explain what does it mean by "just to sit." When we say "just to sit," it include more, you know, actually. But why I don't say you can move, you know [laughs], is you may think "just to sit" means whatever you do that is "just to sit," and you will have completely different understanding of it. When I say "just to sit," you know, you should accept sitting posture as long as you practice zazen. When you eat you should eat, you know. We cannot do two things together. So we should do things most naturally as you can do. If we practice our way by group, you know, we cannot do different things. So when you sit you should sit. And you should be able to accept that. That is what I mean by "just to sit."

Most natural thing, you know—natural things is—most natural things has very strict rule in it, you know, or else you cannot be natural. When you —even though you think this is natural, but it may be most unnatural thing, you know, because you cannot survive so long in that way. Something wrong with the idea of naturalness. So naturalness itself has, you know—the other side of naturalness is very strict—has very strict sense of controlling things. Like, you know, you manage a ship, you know, or a car.

Student N: The word "natural" comes from nature, and nature is completely strict in that it does the same thing all of the time.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student N: The leaves fall off the tree, and the time the sun rises and sets.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student N: So to be natural is really, then, to be completely in form. "Form is form," and completely in nature—

Suzuki-rōshi: Aha, yeah.

Student N: That's what "naturally" means.

Suzuki-rōshi: I see. Yeah. That is, you know—so naturalness has, you know, two side: Looks like [sounds like he makes a gesture, laughs]. And when you do something like this, there's some reason. And that reason has some rules behind it. But we, you know, unnecessarily because of our thinking, you know, we push ourself—selves unnatural way. That is actually what human being does, you know, which—and which plants and animal doesn't.

Almost time. One more question, maybe? No question?

Student O: Rōshi, I'm firewatch tonight, and I was thinking about what Craig [Student I] was talking about—the bread box [laughter]. Craig was talking about this thing—going into the kitchen to the bread box. Well, that's what I always do when I'm firewatch [laughter].

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't understand what you said.

Student O: The bread box is in the kitchen where they put the leftover slices of bread from lunch.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student O: And—

Suzuki-rōshi: And—that is bread box. Okay.

Student O: Pardon?

Suzuki-rōshi: Okay.

Student O: Yes. And I wanted some advice from you about how to handle that sort of situation [laughs, laughter]. I know—I guess we're not supposed to eat between meals [laughter], but I have my heart set—all week I've been thinking [laughter] that I'm going to be the only one awake, and I can go in there and have my slice [?] [laughter].

Student P: Maybe not the only one! [Loud laughter.]?

Student O: How—if you were firewatch [laughter], how would you handle yourself [laughter]?

Suzuki-rōshi: You know, you should feel, you know, as if you are great Zen master [laughing, laughter]. "Oh, this is bread box" [laughs, laughter].

Student O: I'm going on vacation [?].

Suzuki-rōshi: Actually, you don't—you don't, you know—when you are student you eat, you know. When you become a teacher you don't. Or when you become *jisha*[4] you don't.

Student O: Don't what?

Suzuki-rōshi: Don't eat [laughter].

Student O: I thought that's what you would say [?].

Suzuki-rōshi: When you're just beginner or just, you know, student, you may—I think you will do it. That is naturalness [laughs, laughter]. When I was a, you know, little disciple of the—of my master's temple, I ate many things, and I steal many things from my master. But when I became a temple priest, you know—you know, naturally I didn't [laughs]. Not because I [laughs, laughter]—

Student P: Look how much you brought for all of us to [1 word] [laughter]—

Suzuki-rōshi: How—how did you feel?

Student O: I felt like a great Zen master [laughs, loud laughter].

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Say it to yourself, "I am a—the best student at Tassajara, and my future will be a great Zen master." [Laughs, laughter.]

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape transcribed by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (3/19/01).

[4] *jisha* (Jap.): attendant to a priest.