

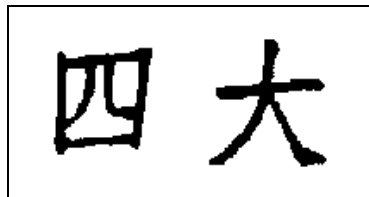
Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SANDŌKAI LECTURE VII
Saturday, June 13, 1970
Tassajara

[The following lines of the *Sandōkai* are discussed in this lecture:

Line 17 *Shidai no shō onozukara fukusu,*
Line 18 *ko no sono haha wo uru ga gotoshi.*
Line 19 *Hi wa nesshi kaze wa dōyō,*
Line 20 *mizu wa uruoi chi wa kengo.*

Line 17 The four elements resume their nature
Line 18 as a child has its mother.
Line 19 Fire is hot, wind blows,
Line 20 water wets, and earth is solid.]

Next—as we have big blackboard, I want to explain those characters. This is—those characters are, of course, Chinese characters, and—but Japanese people read those characters in—in Japanese, you know, without changing the order of characters. How we read those characters is—this is one word, *shidai*:



Shidai—*Shidai no*. We put here *no*.¹ *Shidai no shō onozukara fukusu*.
[Writing on blackboard.]



¹ *shi* (Jap.) "four" + *dai* (Jap.) "great." Japanese adds "*no*" as a possessive article ("of") to the Chinese characters.

Shidai no shō onozukara—we write here, you know, in *kana*—*fukusu*:



Ko no sono haha wo uru ga gotoshi. We read in this way, you know.

In Chinese:

[Line 17] *Shi dai sho ji fuku*
[Line 18] *nyo shi toku go bo.*
[Line 19] *Ka net su do yo,*
[Line 20] *sui su shi ken go.*

This is, you know, Chinese way of reading. But we—Japanese people read Chinese sentences like this:

[Line 17] *Shidai no shō onozukara fukusu,*
[Line 18] *ko no sono haha wo uru ga gotoshi.*
[Line 19] *Hi wa nesshi kaze wa dōyō,*
[Line 20] *mizu wa uruoi chi wa kengo.*

And we put *Shidai no*—*Shidai no shō*: "Nature of," you know, "of—of" is *no*. "Nature of four elements." *Onozukara*, "naturally." *Fukusu* or "resume."

And this [*gotoshi*] is "like." And this [*ko*] is a "child." This [*uru*] is "have" or "obtain." And "this" [*sono*] is that or his "mother" [*haha*].

[Line 18] *ko no sono haha wo uru ga gotoshi.*

The order of words is different from—Japanese order of words different from Chinese order of words, which is like—something like, you know, English. So, you know—so we call those words **tenyoha** [*okurigana*]² which is peculiar to Japanese language.

This [*no*] means, you know, "of." *Shidai no shō*. This [*shō*, "nature"] is, you know, subject and this [*no*, "of"] makes, you know, this word [*shidai*, "four elements"] adjective of this noun [*shō*, "nature"]. *Shidai no shō*. "Nature of four elements." *Onozukara* [*fukusu*]: "naturally resumed." *Ko no*—*ko no*—"like a child"—[*uru*] "get"—[*sono*] his—[*haha*] mother."

² Phonetically, S.R. said *tenyoha*. Derby MS gives *okurigana*.

And fire heat, the wind blow; and water wet, and earth is solid [taps something like the tatami with his hand].

So we read Chinese scripture in two ways: sometime in Japanese, you know, this kind of scripture we read in two ways. Sometime in Japanese like this, you know. Our eyes should go [laughs]—go back and forth like this—*Shidai no shō onozukara fukusu, ko no sono haha wo uru ga gotoshi*—we read. Up and down. Sometime, you know, this kind of—this word may be two [or] three lines ahead. So we—after reading two-three lines we have to come back [to] this [character]. Rather complicated, but we have been doing—we have been reading in that way when we read Chinese language and Chinese books.

Tonight I must explain from here [the blackboard]. *Shidai* is "four elements." Buddhists, you know, understand—Buddhists have the idea of elements. Elements of various being. We count four elements, you know, like fire, water, and wind, and earth. Wind, fire, water, [and earth]. So those four elements—nature, you know, this elements has its own nature. We shouldn't say so, but tentatively we think those four elements has its—their nature.

Fire—nature of fire is to make things, you know, perfect, you know, to—like you boil something, you know, by heating things, things will be more, you know, mixed up [blended?] or something—more perfect, anyway, we say "perfection."

And wind brings things mature, you know, wind. I don't know why, but [laughs] wind nature, you know, encourage things to be more mature. Little bit different from this, you know [compares characters for fire and wind].³ This [air]⁴ is more organic, you know, activity. This [fire]⁵ has more chemical, you know, activity.



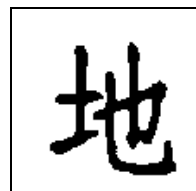
[FIRE



WIND



WATER



EARTH]

And this—water—nature of water is to contain things in it, you know. In water we [laughs]—wherever you go, there is water. So we rather think opposite way: Water contains everything, you know. Instead of

³ Derby, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

saying tree has, you know, in the bark of the tree there is water, we may say, but the water contains bark of the tree—leaves and everything. So water is something great, big being in which everything exist. We exist in water.

And nature of earth is to—solid nature is the element of earth. Earth does not mean "land"—but some solid nature of the material is earth.

So things, you know—we—if you—according to Buddhists, you know, things will be—if you divide things, you know, [into] smallest piece imaginable, you know, like—I don't know English term for that. Do you see? Yeah.

Student: Atomic?

SR: Yeah. Something like that.

Student: Molecule.

Yeah. More— Yeah, "atom," maybe. But, you know, that is not final, you know, final piece. That final piece [is] called *gokumi*. *Gokumi* is the smallest piece imaginable, you know. That final being is—consists of—has four—those four natures. So we say final atom is consists of those four elements. So this is—it is something like, you know, modern physics, you know. I—I ca- [partial word]—I don't know how to explain it, you know, because I don't know the proper words for that. Plus and minus and, you know, how final atom is consist of is plus [positive valence] and minus [negative valence]. And those are, you know, something like that.

And we—the str- [partial word]—it is strange enough to say—they have same idea, you know—you—modern physics, you know, thinks final being is—has no weight or no size, you know. It is just current.

We—we Buddhists think in that way. Those—although final being is consist of those—has those four natures, and accordingly we can say it con- [partial word]—final piece is—consists of—consist of four elements, but—but that is—that is not something solid being. When we reach to this, you know, nature of being, that is just, you know, emptiness, we say.

So, you know, when we come to this idea, we come to the idea of emptiness. It is not—those elements is not something which exist actually [as a] materialistic being. It is something, you know, which is not material, which is just energy. So we call it *ku* [*gokumi?*].

So this is four elements [points to fire, water, wind, and earth], but we [Buddhists] add one more. And we say five elements. Five [Four]

elements has, you know, add one more which is empty—empty nature. [Writes on board:⁶

Line 19 *Hi wa nesshi kaze wa dōyō,*
Line 20 *mizu wa uruoi chi wa kengo.*]

So that is empty—all empty [laughs].

Even though it is empty, you know, from emptiness those nature will be appear, you know, will come into being. And as soon as those four na- [partial word]—be- [partial word]—nature come into being, we form idea of elements or final piece. And the material is consist of those elements. That is Buddhistic understanding of being. So—

It looks like we are explaining—talking about some material, but when we come to this, you know, idea of elements, that element is not just material. It is both spiritual and material. And when thinking, you know, mind is also—when we come to this element, thinking mind is included. So we say it is empty.

So when we say "emptiness"—emptiness—the idea of emptiness include both material and spiritual. Or material and—mind and objects. Subjective world and objective world. And emptiness is final being to which we—our thinking mind cannot reach.

So, *Shidai no shō*—nature of—nature—those [four] nature—"nature of four elements naturally," you know, "in itself"—you can say "[are] empty" [writes on board], but here he⁷ says "resume to its own nature," you know. It means "come to emptiness."

[Line 18] Just like a children has his mother.

When, you know, there is children, there must be his mother, you know. Without children [laughs], there is no—without mother there is no children. That children is here means mother is here. That emptiness is here means four nature is here, you know. If four nature—even though four nature is there, that is nothing but tentative formation of the final emptiness. That is same thing as "a child has its—his own mother."

All those, you know, four sentence⁸—finally, you know, what does it mean is, you know, talking about, you know, independency of being. Although there is many, you know, elements, those elements originally

⁶ Derby, p. 4, added these two lines. Suzuki-rōshi was writing on the board, but there did not seem enough time to write out both lines fully.

⁷ Possibly Blyth ("the four elements return to their nature") or Masunaga ("end and beginning return to the source")—Line 17.

⁸ As used here, "lines."

—naturally co- [partial word]—resume to its nature. So although there is—there are many things, they are—each one of them are independent. And a child is independent, even though they have—he has his own mother. And fire is independent with its nature of heat; and wind is independent with its nature of moving; and water is independent with its nature of moisture; the earth is independent with its nature of solidness. So everything is independent, you know, it means. And this four sentences introduce, you know—follow the ten sentences which is talking about truth of independen- [partial word]—independency.

In this *Sandōkai*, you know, Sekitō-zenji—Sekitō-zenji—Sekitō explained the reality in two ways. Now he is explaining reality from the viewpoint of dependency. Four elements are independent, although it has its own source. A child is independent, although he has his mother. Fire is independent with its nature of heat. Water is independent with its nature of moisture. And earth is independent with its nature of solidness.

Here translation goes—I don't know whose translation it is:⁹

[Line 17] The characteristic of the four elements drew together.

Drew together. Characteristics of the four elements resume its self. "Resume its original nature," maybe, which is emptiness. And:

[Line 18] Like a child returning to its mother.

This is [laughs] rather poor, you know, translation maybe. "Like a child has its mother" is more accurate. That there is child means that there is mother, you know. That is what it means.

The heat of fire, the moving wind, the water wet, and the solid earth. It is better to put period here [Line 20, after "solid earth"¹⁰] and maybe "Like a child has its mother" [Line 18]. And heat—fire—element of fire has its nature of heat. The element of wind has its nature of moving. Or having fire—what [laughs]—I don't know how to say—the heat of fire, the moving wind—or "element of fire with its nature of heat, the element of wind with its nature of moving, the element of water with its nature of wet, the element of earth with its nature of solidness—are all independent," maybe. If you put period here [after "solid earth"] and—mis- [partial word]—[add to Line 17]

⁹ It appears to have been Reiho Masunaga's translation, but in this transcript the text is presented verbatim as recited by Suzuki-rōshi (i.e., often slightly modified from the Masunaga version). From Reiho Masunaga, *The Sōtō Approach to Zen*, Tōkyō: Layman Buddhist Society Press, 1958, pp. 185-187.

¹⁰ Derby, p. 6. Masunaga has a semicolon after "solid earth." Suzuki-rōshi prefers a full period.

"has its own nature," then maybe, you know, it is—it makes clear sense.

[Line 21] Eyes to see, sound to hear—

This is for next day, but I will repeat—I will read it—the connection, you know, so that you can understand this sentence better.

[Line 21] Eyes to see, sound to hear, and smells—
[Line 22] The sour and salty taste on the tongue.
[Line 23] But in each related things,
[Line 24] As leaves grow from roots,
[Line 25] End and beginning returns to the source.
[Line 26] "High" and "low" are used respectively:

And all those, you know [colons] [taps several times], better to put period here [after "respectively" etc.].

And—one, two, three, four, five, six—[Lines 21-26] those six sentences means the idea of, you know, understanding of independency. Things—things exist in two ways: one is independency, and the other is dependency or interrelated[ness]. But although they are interrelated, they are independent, you know. You—each one of you are independent, but you are related with each other. That is, you know— Even though you are related with each other, you are independent. So you can say both ways.

So this—all those sentences are expressing the idea of reality from the side of dependence—independence [corrected self]. *Mmm*.

So, you know—*mmm*—do you understand [laughs] what he means? Usually, you know, when we say "independent," you know [laughs], you have no idea of dependency. That is non-Buddhistic understanding. Buddhists, you know, always, think, you know— understand reality, you know. We know reality, you know, we understand things completely so we will not be mixed up. We will not be confused by saying "independency" or "dependency." If someone said, "Everything is independent," [we say], "Okay, yeah, that is so." And if some other person may say, "That is—things are interrelated," [we say], "Oh, that is okay." Both is okay. We just—we understand both side, so whatever you say, that is okay.

But if someone stick to some i- [partial word], you know, one-sided idea, you know, we may say "No!" [Laughs.] If you say everything is independent, "No!" If you stick to the idea [of] independency of the being, only, you know, stick to the idea of independency, I will say to him, "No! You are wrong." And if he stick to—if someone else stick to the idea of independency, you know, then we will say, "No! You are

wrong."

There is many kōans like this. "If the final karma," you know, "fire burned everything up, at that time whether buddha-nature [laughs] [will] still [be] there or not?"¹¹ That is question. And sometime he [the teacher] said, "Yes, it exist." Some other time, some monk came and asked him, "When the karma fire burned everything up, then what will become of the buddha-nature?" "It will not exist." [Laughs.] Both is true. People may ask him, you know, "Before you—then why did you say it will not—it will exist?" you know. Then he will get a big slap. "What are you talking about? Don't you understand what I mean?" you know. "'Buddha-nature will not exist' is right; 'will exist' is right." From the, you know, viewpoint of independency, you know, everything exist with its buddha-nature—even whatever happen to this world.

But even so, you know, nothing exist when we see from the viewpoint of utter darkness or absolute. Then nothing exist. That which exist is nothingness or darkness, in which maybe things will exist, but what you see or what you say about it is nothing. There is no way to explain things individually.

This is, you know, this is just intellectual, you know, explanation. But here we must have actual feeling. What kind of feeling you will have about things you see, you know—what kind of difference you have between, you know, from the understanding of usual person of just understanding of being, should be, you know, discussed more.

If we see things, you know, which happened in that—at that time, when we see, you will appreciate things which you see, and you will appreciate one by one everything. There you have pure gratitude. Even though you are seeing—observing one piece of flower—one—just one flower, that one flower include everything. It is not just flower; it is the absolute itself; it is Buddha himself. We see in that way. But at the same time, at that time we have, you know—that which exist is just flower, and no one to see or no—nothing to be seen. That which exist is just flower.

That is the feeling we have in our practice and in our everyday activity. Wherever you work, you have that kind of feeling: a continuity of that kind of refreshed, pure gratitude. So to see, you know, to treat things is to treat Buddha's equipment for us. We understand in this way.
[Sentence finished. Tape turned over.]

But when we memorize something, when we think about something, you know, in term of duality, we observe things, you know, intellectually and understand things intellectually. Even though we

¹¹ From *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 29.

understand intellectually, we do not stick to the idea. That understanding should be improved, you know, day by day by our pure thinking. And we do not stick to old, you know, old stump [laughs], you know, stump of the tree. We do not sit on the same stump [laughs] always.¹²

We say, "You cannot catch fish in the same place." Today [laughs] fortunately you could catch a big fish at some certain place, but tomorrow you should, you know, fish [in] some other place. Or, you know, we say, or we say, you know, "to cut [notch]—to cut a boat to remember, you know, where we are" [laughs, laughter]. We are, you know—boat is actually going, so even though you cut, you know, a boat to remember a place—something beautiful. "Oh! There was something beautiful. This—and we should remember that beautiful thing—flower." Even though you cut the boat, edge of the—what do you call the—

Several students: Channel. Railing.

Suzuki-rōshi: Rail? —maybe railing of the boat, you know, it doesn't help, because boat is going [laughs]. But we, you know, we usually do so, you know: "Oh! That was very good." And we cut the railing of the boat to remember something [laughs].

This kind of teaching suggest, you know, this kind of foolish, you know —our foolishness and what is actual Buddhist life. We should not wait here, you know, sitting [laughs] on the same stump all day. They will not come to the same place, with a gun, sitting on the stump [laughs]. It's very foolish [laughs]. Good example of, you know, thinking mind. Even though, you know—even [if] it is so, we should appreciate what you see right now. "Oh! That beautiful flower." You know, we should

¹² Referring to an ancient Chinese story from *The [Book of] Master Han Fei (Han Fei Zi or Han Fei Tzu)*, a collection of 50 works by Han Fei (c. 280–233 BCE), a legalist/realist philosopher influenced by Daoist thought:

The sage does not try to practice the ways of antiquity or to abide by a fixed standard, but examines the affairs of the age and takes what precautions are necessary. There was a farmer of Sung who tilled the land, and in his field was a stump. One day a rabbit, racing across the field, bumped into the stump, broke its neck, and died. Thereupon the farmer laid aside his plow and took up watch beside the stump, hoping that he would get another rabbit in the same way. But he got no more rabbits, and instead became the laughing stock of Sung. Those who think they can take the ways of ancient kings and use them to govern the people of today all belong in the category of stump-watchers!

(From "The Five Vermin," Sec. 49 of *Han Fei Tzu chi-shih*, in Burton Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*, NY: Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 96-97.)

This story is also mentioned in *Blue Cliff Records* 8 and 95.

appreciate. We should have full appreciation of it, but we should not cut the rail—railing of the boat.

Or we should not wait, you know, maybe, for her coming, sitting [laughs], standing at the same place. She may come by this time of the day, but [laughs] sometimes she may come, but sometimes she doesn't come. I have something like this experience. I would stand up, you know—I would wait for her coming [laughs], sitting [laughs]. Sometime she may come; sometime, you know, she may not. So, you know, if she come, we are lucky. If she doesn't, that's okay [laughs, laughter]. If she come, you know, you are lucky. If she doesn't [laughs], you shouldn't complain [laughs, laughter].

Do you have some question? *Hai.*

Student A [Reb Anderson]: Last week you said that if we understand our closeness, our dependence with other things, then we are independent.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Reb: Are we independent even if we don't understand this?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, it is so, but for you I don't know. You know, if you—even though you don't understand it, but if you admit this truth, you know, it is so. So you cannot—you will not stick to some idea—one—only one idea. Or you will not be so arrogant, you know. Independent and interdependent. So, if you, you know, if you don't have actual close feeling to others, but if you know this fact, even intellectually, you know, you will not make—you will not make so big mistake, I don't think.

It is so—actually it is so, but the point is you don't feel so, you know, you don't understand in that way. So we—here there is something which we—which is very important [holding up or pointing to something?]. This kind of, you know—when we talk about this way, it means that we talk about things as if I am completely enlightened person [laughs]. For enlightened person, this is very true, but for the people who is not enlightened, this is just talk, you know.

So when our practice follow this kind of understanding, that is true, you know, Buddhism. It should not be just intellectual understanding. But even, you know, [if] you practice hard, without this kind of understanding, your practice may be very, you know—it doesn't make much sense. Your practice is still involved in the idea of somethingness. *Hai.*

Student B: What's missing? You said that for an enlightened person

that's very true—

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: —and for an unenlightened person it's just talk.

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh.

Student B: What's missing—

Suzuki-rōshi: [Speaking simultaneously with student.] What is missing?

Student B: —for an unenlightened person?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. The practice is missing. Practice is missing. So only when you practice zazen hard, this is true. And even though, at the same time, even though you practice hard, you know, your practice will not be always complete, you know. So at that time, there is big gap between the truth and your actual understanding—understand- [partial word]—actually experience. It doesn't, you know, go together. Your intellectual understanding is high, but your practice may be low.

So just intellectual—to have intellectual understanding is easy, we say, but actual practice—emotional—and more emotional practice is difficult. To feel in that way is difficult. So we say intellectual—and to have—to destroy the understanding—intellectual understanding of something is easy, you know. Or to have understanding of nothingness is easy. Intellectually it is easy. But emotionally it is not so difficult [easy?]. We easily stick to something. So, you know, it is —we say to—it is—emotional, you know, difficulty is as hard as to split a lotus in two, you know. Even though you split in two, the strings [roots?] [laughs]—long string will follow and you cannot get rid of it. Still string is here.

But thinking, you know, difficulties—intellectual difficulty is as easy as break a stone in two. [Makes whacking noise.] Nothing left, you know.

Student C [Bill Shurtleff?]: Does that mean that if a person sees one person doing something to another person that's hurting the other person—let's say that I see someone doing something that's hurting another person.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student C: And I feel emotionally upset by that hurting [?]-that

actually I'm not seeing clearly and I'm not understanding what's happening.

Suzuki-rōshi: Actually, what is the point of the question?

Student C: The question is: The only reason that I'm upset when I see someone doing something that looks like it's hurting another person is that—

Suzuki-rōshi: You—when you doing helping something or someone else?

Student C: I see a situation in which it looks to me as if one person is hurting another person. And I become upset in that situation.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, I see.

Student C: The question is: Is that—I'm becoming upset because I'm not seeing the situation as it actually is, and that if I were seeing it as it actually is, I wouldn't be emotionally upset. That's my question.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh, I see. But that is very difficult question to answer, you know, because, you know, it is difficult to know whether one is helping the other with—in some appropriate way or not, you know? So if it is not appropriate, you will be upset, you know. At least you will worry, you know. When one is helping appropriate, you know, when you upset—sometimes that happens, you know. If, you know, you—if someone is helping your girlfriend in proper way [laughs], you may be—anyway you will be upset, you know. [Laughs, laughter.] That kind of thing happens pretty often, so it is very difficult [laughs, laughter] to answer.

Student C: Rōshi, my question is more that a person who really sees things clearly—is there no situation that would upset him emotionally?

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't think so, you know, emotionally, you know. But "upset" I say, or you say, but that feeling—there is big difference, you know, in that feeling too. Maybe Buddha will be upset, you know, easily—quite easily. But when he is upset, you know, even though he's upset he's not upset because—just because of him or because of his attachment or anything like that. And sometime he will be very angry [laughs], you know. Anger is al- [partial word]—allowed when that is Buddha's anger, you know, when he is angry when he should be angry. But that anger is not exactly the same anger we will have, usually. You know, that is, you know—if he is not upset when he should be upset, you know, that is also violence [violation] of the precepts. When he should be angry, he should be angry. He must be angry. That is how the difference between Mahāyāna precepts and

more, you know—that's a characteristic of Mahāyāna way of observing precepts.

We say it is—sometime anger may be like a sunset, you know. It is beautiful. Red. [Laughs.] It is—anyway, it—although it is red and, you know, bright and red, but, you know, even though it looks like anger, but it is actually a beauty. So there is, you know, that kind of difference. But so how—you know, if—if anger comes, you know, from purity like a lotus, it is good, I think. From pure mind. *Hai*.

Student D: Rōshi, I've observed that many times our emotions seem to be independent of our minds—of our intellectual understanding—and have a life of their own, a life outside that has nothing to do with the life of what you know or understand or in your mind.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student D: What is the source of emotion in the body or in our understanding? Where does that emotion—

Suzuki-rōshi: Emotion—

Student D: —come from?

Suzuki-rōshi: —you know, more—it is maybe mostly it comes from, you know, physical, you know, source, physical part of maybe, you know, physiological thing. And thinking is, you know, some mind which ignore, you know, those physical things—more universal, you know, river. We think—when we think, we think [as a] more universal river, ignoring each conditions and conditions—various conditions—or else we cannot think, you know. We—if we count various condition, you know, five, ten, or twenty, or more—one hundred conditions [laughs]—it is not possible to think.

So the characteristic of thinking mind is to ignore all the conditions and to follow the, you know, track of the thinking mind. So, you know, it doesn't fit. Thinking mind doesn't fit to the each, you know, case we meet—we face. So, you know, tendency of man is just to think and go on: Whatever it happens doesn't matter. [Makes humorous grunting noise, laughs.] "What are you talking about? We should do this!" you know. That is man's, you know, way. But women stick to various conditions and carefully observe various conditions and figure out what we should do one by one.

That is also true with our thinking mind and emotional feeling. So how to adjust is, you know, when we p- [partial word]—our actual practice is more physiological practice, not thinking mind. You know, ignoring all the conditions, just to sit on black cushion [taps cushion] is the

practice.

So there is similarity, you know, in thinking mind and emotional practice. When you practice zazen, we ignore almost all the conditions we have. Our—when we practice zazen, our emotional situation is—already emotionally we ignore things. Just like you think. So in zazen practice there is—it is easier to, you know, to practice emotional practice and thinking practice.

Student D: Rōshi?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai.*

Student D: What happens when the flame goes out?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm? Flames?

Student D: Yeah. You said the heat is independent and dependent and interdependent all at the same time. But sometimes it goes out completely.

Suzuki-rōshi: Goes—?

Student D: Turn it out—

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh.

Student D: —like on that lamp. And there's no flame at all. You know, it's none of these things, is it?

Suzuki-rōshi: But, yeah. That is [taps stick], you know, interesting questions—question—and they explain various way, you know. Heat—it does not mean just heat, you know. It is some element which exist in each piece of, you know, atom.

Student D: Can the flame go out in that little "each piece?"

Suzuki-rōshi: Flame nature, maybe, you may say. You know, flame nature fall and [laughs]—some people, you know, some people say, "In each *gokumi*—*gokumi* is last element or last piece of the material. In last piece of the material, which is the—which you cannot divide any more, you know, last piece. In that last piece, four, you know, elements is in it. Last element is—consist of four elements in same, you know, in same quantity. And when, you know, fire element, you know, becomes strong, by some chance, you know, it will be a fire, you know. But if fire nature is—become weak, and water nature become strong, then it—that will be something water[y], you know. They explain in that way. So, even though four elements are equally,

you know, exist in the last piece, you know, according to the situation, some element will become strong. That is one explanation.

And the other is, you know, according to the material, you know, in last piece, some piece will have stronger, you know, or more fire element—maybe 99 percent of fire element—then that will be fire, you know. Some school explain how fire exist and why—how fire, you know—why fire, you know, exist—why does it exist when we extinguish it?

Student D: That last little piece, then, will always have fire? It can never go away?

Suzuki-rōshi: No, not that—not all—that piece is not completely fire, but, you know, it include some other element but not strong enough, sometime, or not much enough. They explain each things in that way—why water is water, you know. Water does not mean this water [taps his cup], you know. Water nature. Some element [laughs]. Some water-like element. It is not exactly water we see. Do you understand?

Student D: I think I do. Water has a nature to flow, so it's more than just that [1-2 words inaudible].

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, but what they are talking about as water is not this water [tapping his cup of water]. Some, you know, some nature which exist in the last piece of element of things.

Student D: You can't lose that piece of water.

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student D: You can't lose that water.

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. [Laughs.]

Student E: Rōshi?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yeah.

Student E [Bill Shurtleff?]: Could I explain a little bit about how Western physics would say the same thing?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

That as a parti- [partial word]—as you get to the smallest particle, you can't tell when it turns into energy. There's a point at which it's no longer a particle, but it's also no longer energy. At the same time, you

can't tell when it behaves like a wave and when it behaves like a particle. It behaves—sometimes if you think of it as a wave, it behaves like a wave. But if you think of it as a particle, it behaves like a particle. And the same thing is true with a charge—we say "an electrical charge." It has charge and yet it doesn't have charge, like an atom has positively charged protons, negatively charged electrons, and neutrons. But these conditions are continually changing, mostly depending on your point of view. That might be something like that understanding.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Yeah. *Hai*.

Student F: Rōshi, I have some difficulty in listening to the lecture. For example, when I chant[ed] the *Sandōkai* when I knew nothing about what it meant, I was able to concentrate on my breathing and my voice coming from my *hara*. But now I start thinking of *san* meaning "many," and *dō* meaning something else. [Suzuki-rōshi and several students are laughing.] And I lose touch with my activity. And now I find myself thinking, when you were holding your cup, "It has four elements." [Laughter.]

And it creates difficulty. I know it's because I get attached to what you say—to the words and to the ideas that they are. And the dark, the *ri* side, is becoming—is, you know, the *ji* side and the *ri* side. The *ji* now, when I chant the *Sandōkai*, the intellectual, the bright side, is strong, and I don't enjoy chanting that *sūtra* any more. [Laughter.]

Student G [David Chadwick]: He lost his *ri*.

Student F: Could you—could you maybe give me some advice on how to avoid these kinds of difficulties?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah, you cannot avoid it. [Laughter.]

Student F: —or else maybe enjoy them?

Suzuki-rōshi: That is, you know, why I am telling you. You know, you have to polish your, you know, understanding.

Student F: Is it understanding? You know, when we get up in the morning—and we talked about it the other day, that we should just—you say, "Get up! Just get up! [Suzuki-rōshi laughs.] So this morning, when I woke up, I usually just get up. But then I heard—[loud laughter]—I started to think. I didn't get up right away. I waited until the [wake-up] bell came back across. It came once and then it came back, and then I started to think about what was said in the lecture, and I just gave up.

Suzuki-rōshi: That is not because of lecture, but—[laughing]. That is not my fault.

Student F: It's—my question is—it's sort of a question really—can we—is our practice to have subjective understanding with—can we have subjective understanding of our practice without having some kind of objective or right understanding, or do we have to balance them, have both of them? Can we practice Buddha's way without knowing Buddha's way intellectually?

Suzuki-rōshi: If you can, you are very lucky [laughs]. But, unfortunately, we cannot practice without intellectual understanding, I think. Yeah.

Student F: If we sit zazen and we have correct posture and we follow our breathing, do we have to have these kinds of concepts or ideas about Buddhism like the four elements and—

Suzuki-rōshi: No, no. At that time we should forget.

Student F: I mean, do we have to understand the ideas of Buddhism when we practice?

Suzuki-rōshi: You have to, you know, because you tend to think [about] things in that way. So we have to, you know, back and forth, we should polish up our understanding so that we cannot be intellectually mixed up. That is important, I think.

Oh! [Sees how late the time is. Laughter.] When I saw it last time it was—I had fifteen minutes. Your question was too good. [Laughs.]

Sources: Contemporaneous transcript by Marian Derby and City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (8/14/01).