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RIGHT CONCENTRATION
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...¹ were given about our practice referring to Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva? What is, you know, who is Avalokiteshvara? I don't mean a man or a woman [laughs]. He is, by the way—he's supposed to be a man who take sometime figure of a woman, you know. In disguise of a woman he help people. That is Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva. Sometime, you know, he has one thousand hands—one thousand hands—to help others. But, you know, if he is concentrated on one hand only, you know [laughs], 999 hands will be no use [laughs].

Our concentration does not mean to be concentrated on one thing, you know. Without, you know, trying to concentrate our mind, you know, without trying to concentrate, concentrated on something, we should be ready to be concentrated on something, you know. For an instance, if I am watching someone, you know, like this [laughs], my eyes is concentrated on one person like this. You know, I cannot see, you know, even it is necessary, it is difficult to change my concentration to others. We say "to do things one by one," but what it means is, you know, without [laughs]—ah, it may be difficult—maybe not to try to explain it so well [laughs]. Nature [of] it is difficult to explain. But look at my eyes, you know. This is eyes, you know, I am watching someone [laughs]. And this is my eyes, you know, when I practice zazen. I'm [not] watching anybody [laughs], but if someone move, I can catch him [laughs, laughter].

There is your—so—mmm—from old time, the main point of practice is to have clear, calm mind. In short, that is our practice, and that is our, maybe, faith, you know, belief. By "belief" we don't mean to believe in something. Our practice should not be something like fanatic, you know, practice. Or infatuation is not our practice, you know. Just, you know, to always to have calm, serene mind, whatever you do, you know. Even you eat something good, your mind should be very calm to be ready to appreciate, you know, the labor of making food and the effort of making, you know, dishes, and chopsticks, and, you know, bowls, and everything. And we, you know, we should appreciate each vegetables, you know—one by one—its own flavor. That is, you know, how we make food, you know, and how you eat food. So we don't put so much seasoning or flavor to food. We rather appreciate each, you know, food. That is, we say, "calorie." Calorie is not flavor. Flavor is, you know, something you put, you know, is

¹ The opening words were not recorded on tape.

flavor.

So, you know, to know someone is to sense someone's flavor. Flavor [laughs] is not smell [laughs] but something you feel from someone. And each one has some, you know, particular flavor—or not "flavor" [laughs]—personality from which many, you know, feelings comes out, and each one has each one's own flavor. Then we have, you know, good relationship with each other. We are really friendly with each other. To be friendly does not mean to occupy someone or to stick to someone, you know, or try not to lose your friend, but to have full appreciation of his or her own personality or flavor, you know.

So to appreciate things and people, we should be—our minds should be calm and pure or clear. So to have this kind of mind, we practice zazen. So when we practice zazen, we just—that is what do we mean by "just sit," "just sit," without not much gaining idea—to be you yourself—or to "settle oneself on oneself." ² That is, you know, our practice.

"Freedom," you say, but maybe freedom you mean and freedom we Zen Buddhists mean may not be exactly the same. Maybe same, but not exactly. For an instance, you know, to attain freedom [laughs] we cross our legs [laughs] and we keep our posture straight, and we keep our eyes in some certain way and we open our ears, you know, to everything, even without trying to open. Let our eyes open to everything. But there is some way to have this readiness, to have this openness, because or else by nature we are liable to be, you know, go extreme and to stick to something, losing, you know, our calmness of mind or mirror-like mind. So there must be some way, you know, to obtain this kind of calmness of your mind, of clearness of your mind. That is zazen practice.

So it does not mean—it looks like, you know, to force something physically, you know, some form physically on you and to create, you know, some special state of mind. Is maybe—you may think that is Zen practice, and you may think this kind of state of mind is, you know, Zen practice, you know: To have mirror-like mind is Zen practice. It is so, but [laughs]—but [laughs]—if you practice zazen, you know, to attain that kind of, you know, mirror-like mind, that is not already the practice we mean. There is slight difference. If you practice zazen to obtain, you know, a kind of state of mind, it is already art of Zen. Art of Zen.

² Suzuki-rōshi is quoting Dainin Katagiri-rōshi: "To settle the self on the self and let the flower of the life force bloom" [see, e.g., SR-71-01-03, Paragraph 2], who in turn was probably quoting or paraphrasing Dōgen or another teacher.

The difference between art of Zen and true Zen [laughs]—do you, do you—oh. What is the difference, do you think? Art of Zen and Zen. Actually, you have it, you know, when you do not try. Because you try to do something, you lose it. When you try to do something, you know, it means that you are concentrated on one hand of one thousand hand, you know [laughs]. You lose 999 hands. So that is why we say just to sit, you know. It does not mean, you know, to stop your mind altogether, you know, or to be concentrated on your breathing completely. It doesn't mean that. But it is a kind of, you know, help, you know, to have better practice. When you count your breathing, you don't think so much. You don't have so much gaining idea. Counting breathing doesn't mean much to you. So that is why, maybe, someone get bored about [laughs] counting breathing. "It doesn't mean anything." But when you think so, you know, your way of understanding of real practice is lost. Why we, you know, practice—why we try to be concentrated or let our mind go with breathing is not to be, you know, involved in some complicated practice in which you will lose yourself. So to have calmness of your mind, or pure mind, or open mind, we apply this kind of practice.

Art of Zen or, you know, is—I don't know so much about art, but art of Zen is, you know, skill of Zen or skill of practice. You know, to be like Zen master [laughs], you know, skillful Zen master who have big strength and who have good practice. It may be your, you know—some of you may practice zazen to be like someone like, you know, [Sōtan Ryosen] Tatsugami-rōshi, for an instance [laughs]. "Oh, I want to be like him. I must try hard," you know [laughs]. You are learning art of Zen [laughs, laughter]. You are not practicing true zazen [laughs]. That is how you [laughs] study art, you know: How to draw straight line [laughs] or how to, you know, to control your mind, that is art of Zen. But Zen is for everyone, you know, even though he cannot draw a straight line. If he can [in] any way draw a line, that is our Zen. And if that is very natural to a boy, even though it is not straight, it is beautiful [laughs]. Maybe that is, you know, art—or more than art so, you know, people like some work done by children rather than done by, you know, famous artist. There is some difference. I don't know how to explain it.

So whether you like [laughs] cross-legged position or not, or whether you can do it or not, if you know what is true zazen, you can do it. Somehow you will figure out if you watch Tatsugami-rōshi's practice carefully, with openness of your mind, then you learn something from it, or when your mind is based on gaining idea [laughs], what you learn is art of Zen, not true Zen.

So, you know, the most important thing in our practice is, you know, just, you know, follow our schedule and to do things with people

[laughs]. Again, you know, this is, you may say, "group practice" [laughs]. It is not so [laughs]. Group practice is quite different thing. It is a kind of art. You know, in wartime, when we are practicing zazen, some young people who were very much encouraged by, you know, militaristic, you know, mood of Japan told me that in the [*Sōtō-shū-kyōkai*-] *Shushōgi*,³ you know, it says, "To understand what is, you know, birth and death is main point of our practice." [Laughs.] "But even though we don't know anything about *Shushōgi*," you know, "I can die easily in [at the] front" [laughs]. That is group practice, I think, you know. Encouraged by trumpet and guns and war cry (WRAAA) [laughs, laughter], he is normal [?]. It is quite easy to die. That kind of practice is not our practice. We practice with people, you know, first of all. But goal of practice is to practice with mountain, and with river, and with trees, and with stones—with everything in the world, in the universe—and to find ourselves in this big cosmos. And in this big world we should intuitively know which way to go.

When, you know, your surrounding show some sign, you know, to go this way or that way, you should intuitively go this way or that way. Show a sign, you know. When they show some sign, we should intuitively follow it. I am very much interested in the word "show a sign." "Show," you know. "Sign" is something which is shown, you know, by something else to you, and even though you have no idea of following sign, you know, if some sign is shown, you will, you know, go that direction. This is the real practice Dōgen-zenji meant. If your practice does not go with everything, with—he doesn't say with your friend—with everything, it is not real practice.

How you can practice with everything is to have, you know, calmness of your mind. So how you, you know—so to come to Zen Center and practice our way is good, but you should not make a big mistake. Maybe you [laughs] already made a mistake [laughs, laughter], but you should know that you are making mistake. But [you say] "I cannot help coming here" [laughs], you know. Then your practice have quite different quality. Meaning is different. "You," in that case, means you which is involved in wrong idea, you know. That is you. So I think you have to accept it: "I am involved in wrong practice," you know. Then your practice include your wrong practice and "you," in that case, means you which includes some wrong practice.

But, you know, we should accept it, because it is there already. You cannot do anything about it. There is no need to try to get rid of it. But if you, you know, open your eyes, true eyes, and accept it, there there is real practice [laughs]. Do you understand? It is not matter of right or wrong, but how to accept frankly, with openness of your mind, what you are doing. That is most important point. Then you will

³ A book of excerpts from *Shōbōgenzō* by Rozan Takushū and Hōun Fugai.

accept "you" thinking something else in your practice, you know [laughs]. "Ah, something came over already." And you should accept that "you" too. You should not try to, you know, to be free from the images you have: "Oh! Here they come" [laughs, laughter]. That is, you know [laughs], this kind of eyes [laughs]. You are not watching any special thing. Someone is moving over there. "Oh, he is moving [laughs]." But if he stop moving [laughs], your eyes is, you know, same. In that way, if your practice include everything, that is, you know, one after another, if your real practice, if you do not lose some kind of, you may say, "state of mind," that is, you know, your practice.

So this is, you know—this kind of practice is a practice which is unknown to most of the people and which is very important for us—which is transmitted from Buddha to Bodhidharma and Dōgen-zenji. So our practice is not group practice or, you know—by means of, you know, people we practice, so it looks like group practice but it is not so, actually. Maybe group practice with everything in the world. Then [laughs] that is not group practice any more [laughs]. You know, group exist in big society: this group, or that group. That is group practice. Our practice is not, you know, Sōtō practice, you know. Rinzai, Sōtō, or Ōbaku, you know: That is group practice, but our practice is to practice with everything. If there is someone else, you know, we should include that person too. We should practice with that person. So our measure of practice is limitless—we should have ... *[Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.]* When we have this base, we have real freedom.

Each one of our being means [needs?] something. But when you measure or evaluate your value of being, you know, good or bad, or right or wrong, or black or white [laughs], that is, you know, comparative value. You will not have absolute value in your being. When you evaluate yourself by measure of limitless measure, each one of us is really will be settled on real self, you know. To be just you is enough, you know. Because you have short, you know, limited measure, you know, or a dualistic measure, you lose your value.

Hmm. Black one should be just black, white [laughs] one should be just white. That is enough, you know. What do you need more than that? Why do you need more than that? Because of your, you know, small measurement. We must know this point, and we should know what is real practice for human being and for everything. And for everything.

Thank you very much.

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