

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
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**Zen Mountain Center**

In—in my lecture, sometime I say everyone has buddha-nature, and whatever you do, that is, you know, Buddha's activity, I say. But on the other hand, I say you must follow the rule, and when you practice zazen you should practice in some certain way: Keep your spine straight, cross your legs, and pull your neck as if you are supporting something. And pull in your chin. There are many, you know, instructions.

So you will be confused when I say, you know—it looks like contradiction to say to rule—to put emphasis on rules and to follow our schedule. If it is—if whatever you do that is, you know, Buddha's activity, then why we must have rule? This kind of, you know, question you may have.

The other—the other day, I said long bamboo is Buddha—long Buddha. Short bamboo is short Buddha [laughs]. And my statement discouraged [laughs] some sincere students, didn't it? As if I am talking about something—as if I am encouraging some, you know, easy way. And—for an instance, you know the Sun-Faced Buddha and the Moon-Faced Buddha. When he is sick, he is Moon-Faced Buddha. When he is healthy he is the Sun-Faced Buddha. And when it is hot, we are hot—we should be hot Buddha. When it is cold, we should be cold Buddha. This kind of statement invite many misunderstanding.

When we talk like this, you know, "Sun-Faced Buddha," "the Moon-Faced Buddha," or "everyday is good day," or "everyone has buddha-nature," or "in our great activity, whatever we do, that is our great activity," or "nothing is too long or nothing is too short" [laughs]. Even though you recite, you know, *sūtra* with long, long voice [laughs]—it cannot be too long. It is—even though we say something, we hope it is not too short. If you say so, maybe someone who is practicing have to hit *mokugyo*—how to hit bell—will be discouraged. "Oh, Suzuki-rōshi doesn't care [laughs] how we hit *mokugyo*. Even though we hit it fast, he doesn't care." But it—it is not so.

From viewpoint—there is two completely different viewpoint. One is, you know, when we say everyone—everything has buddha-nature, nothing is great or nothing is small—too small. To lift up a [speck of] dust means to lift up whole universe. When we say in that way, it means that we—we are talking about our original nature from standpoint of the first principle. When we, you know, put emphasis on strict rule, at that time we put emphasis on actual practice. Practice is the way to attain to have direct experience of the first principle. Only when you prac- [partial word]—you put emphasis on your practice you will, you know, experience—you will have the direct experience of the first principle. But when, you know, we talk about by words, we cannot say both sides at once. When we talk about, you know,

the first principle, we—everything has buddha-nature period [laughs]. No words follow "Everything has buddha-nature."

But when you hear that, you know, you will understand—when—if everything has buddha-nature, "then" or "but"—"but" or "then" does not follow when we talk about the first principle. When you say "then" or "but," therefore your understanding of the first—the first principle is not anymore the first principle. If that is the first principle [then it is correct to say], "Everything has buddha-nature." Period.

Do—do you know the difference? You cannot say "therefore." If you say "therefore," that is not—it is, you know, the condition—"therefore"—a reason or excuse, you know, or something—for your lazy [laughs] practice. So it is not first principle any more. Everything has buddha-nature, period. No idea follows. No[t] any kind of idea comes up by that statement. So, "Everything has buddha-nature," someone say [thumps table]. Yes! When—only when you could say so, that is the first principle. You—you shouldn't say "therefore" [or] "but." That is the first principle.

But when we talk about actual practice you can say "therefore," [or] "that is why," you know, "even it is so," you can say so. That is the difference between first principle and the second principle. And if you confuse the first principle and second principle, you don't understand anything. You are always going, you know, round and round: no end [to] your confusion. You will be always confused. So when you practice you should be strictly involved in the rules. There there is the first principle, actually. Moment after moment there is first principle.

So even so, you know—I explained the other night, if we, you know, if we realize that our practice is lazy practice, then you—you may feel it—feel—you don't feel good. And this kind of mistake is happening every day, and we—we cannot enjoy our practice. What should we do? And what I said was that you realize your practice is not good. What mind, you know, found out your lazy practice? Your big mind found out your mistake. So if you find out the big mind which is working on your lazy practice—small-minded practice—then, at that point, at least your practice is good. So before you make some complaint, you should appreciate the big mind which appear in your mind. That was, you know, my answer.

It looks like [I said], "Whatever you do it is okay," but I don't mean that. Important point is, you know, only when big mind appear, the small mind, you know, will vanish—should vanish. You should not compare a big mind to a small mind. What I'm—what I mean is don't worry about your small mind when you have big mind.

How to continue your true practice based on the big mind is the point. That is the point. But I didn't—I did not mean even though you have lazy practice it is okay. That is big misunderstanding. It is not okay. But if I say so, it is

not okay. You will be discouraged if it is not—if I say it is not okay, so [laughs] your practice of—will be the continuous, you know, practice of "not okay." One after another, "not okay practice" will continue [laughs]. You feel in that way, but if you carefully, you know, think about it, the continuous, you know, practice of wrong practice is big-minded practice—continuous activity of big mind. If you understand in that way, that is, you know, true understanding of your practice.

In your big mind, small mind has some position—some place. Good and bad also has some place, some seat. We cannot ignore the small mind of wrong practice completely. There is some seat. That is big mind. The small mind—even though the mind is good, small mind does not allow for—for wrong mind or small mind to sit together. Even though it is good, you know, good practice, but small-minded good practice is not real practice. Big-minded good practice is really, really good practice. And it gives a seat for the good practice and bad practice. And you don't feel so bad about your bad practice. And you will not be arrogant with your good practice.

You don't like mostly sermon or lecture. Why you don't like is—when you—when someone give lecture, you know, someone will convince [you of] something, you know—convince you [of] something—something special. But Buddhist lecture do not, you know, force anything on you. What we want is to have, you know, big mind—to acknowledge things as they are, to clear your mind from various one-sided wrong understanding of things. That is, you know, the purpose of lecture.

Sometime, you know, we slap you or are angry with you. Someone may talk, but why they—someone become angry is to correct—to cut off your delusion, or to empty your mind. If someone stick to some one-sided view, it is pretty difficult to get rid of it for humans and for the creature[s] too. So [laughs] there must be, you know—we try various way. The purpose of why, you know, we do so is because we want to get rid of the wrong concrete idea in your mind—that's all. Do you understand? That is what I wanted to tell you tonight specially.

After making many lectures, almost every evening, I found out that you didn't—some of you didn't understand what I meant. Most people like Zen because Zen has no idea of things or no idea of good or bad, you know. That is why people like it [laughs]. But we are pretty strict with our practice—maybe very strict. Even though, you know, we are very strict, we do not seriously cope [?] with the problem in our practice—actual practice, which—we have always smile, you know, even though the way we practice is hard. You know that that is the second principle. It is something to help us. Even though, you know, your teacher is angry, you do not take it so seriously [laughing]. That is trouble [speaking more quietly] [laughter]. You know that that is the second principle, not first principle. So when I say something, mostly about rules, I say it with smiling, so you don't take it so seriously [laughs].

Do you have some questions? There must be many questions. *Hai*.

**Student A:** Rōshi, I thought that our eyes are focused [2-4 words unclear].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** I—I am sorry I couldn't follow it.

**Student A:** Shotaku [?] said our eyes should focus.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Eyes? Close?

**Student B:** Shotaku [?] said that we focus.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh, focus. Not [1 word unclear], you know, you are not gazing at anything. "Focus," we say, but it is—not to gaze but to, you know—focus some, maybe four feet ahead. At first it is difficult just to, you know, put focus on some area. Unless you see something, some beginner may put something four—three-four feet ahead. If there is nothing, they pick up, you know [laughs], edge of the *tatami*. That is easy, maybe, but that is not the best way. If you have something to watch it is easy, you know, to be concentrated, but you are—you should be—should be able to have [half?] focus, you know. Best for—maybe for you four feet or more feet ahead. Do you understand? *Hai*.

**Student B:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Hai*.

**Student B:** When you—can you say something about—about [1 word] or for us to [2-3 words] in our practice? How we can help each other?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh. *Hmm*. Best way to help others is, you know, to have good practice. If you have good practice, that is the best way to help others. That is very true. To help others is not different from to help themselves. But original, you know, this is again—again, you know, the first principle. There is no—you and others is not two. One. You see? That is the first principle. You should—even intellectually, this is the reality we should accept—ultimate reality.

You cannot—this kind of—the first principle is something which you cannot, you know, ignore. It is very true. But [laughs] it is true, but if I talk about for students who listen to me, looks like I am talking about something, you know, which you—something [that has] nothing to do with you. You may feel in that way.

Everything is one, you know. Even though I say so, it doesn't help you [laughs]. Even though I talk about Buddhist philosophy, it doesn't help. Your actual problem is always with you, and just philosophy—philosophical

understanding of Buddhism doesn't help. But the philosophy—Buddhist philosophy is so true that you cannot deny it. And it is so, you know, universal and so common, so it is not so interesting either. Maybe when you discuss something, when you have argument with some other people, it may be interesting [?], you know, because your philosophy is graceful [?]  
graceful [?] philosophy. So you will win anyway. So it maybe graceful [?]  
[laughing].

But it—it doesn't help you at all. So—but you cannot deny it, that's all. If that is so true, if that is the ultimate truth, why you have problem, you know? The actual questions start from that point. If we are Buddha—all Buddha—then why we hate each other? Why we have to kill animals? Real problem will start from that point.

So Buddhism, on the other hand, is the teaching of or about human—human nature. What is human being is Buddhist teaching. In comparison to, you know—when we have buddha-nature, why human being is like this is the first, you know, problem or question you will have. So to study Buddhism is to study ourselves. To study ourselves is to forget ourselves, like Dōgen-zenji says. To study Buddhism is—or to study the first principle is to study the second principle. To study the second principle is to—to practice second principle until you forget all about it, until you don't feel you have, you know, rules.

How you help others is—there is no special way to help others. Let them know our human nature, and let them know how we have problem. And to—to encourage people by your own practice, that is the best way to help people. You know, learning will not help. Almsgiving will not help. But when you follow, when you understand what is human being and what is the way for human beings to follow Buddhist way is, you know, how to help people. We should be concentrated on that point, and we shouldn't try to help people by giving something or by some special way. Okay? [Laughs.] Some question?

**Student C:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Hai.*

**Student C:** What does the woodworking mean above your door? "The Mahābodhisattva Zendō"?<sup>1</sup>

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mahābodhisattva Zendō?

**Student C:** The calligraphy above the—above the door?

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<sup>1</sup> In the early years of San Francisco Zen Center, the zendō itself was informally known as the "Mahābodhisattva Zendō."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh. Did you see it? Oh. Mahābodhisattva Zendō.  
Bodhisattva is the, you know—bodhisattva—you know "bodhisattva."

**Student C:** I mean the—the calligraphy above your door—your apartment door—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student C:** —the framed calligraphy there?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No, not [1-2 words]. Mahābodhisattva. I asked, you know, I send it to Japan—

**Student C:** No. I mean the—above your door.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh!

**Student C:** Above the door.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Above the door.<sup>2</sup> Oh, that is not "Mahābodhisattva Zendō."  
[Laughter.] That is—I am sorry—that is two characters, which is *Jo un*—"to glide cloud" or "to ride on cloud." *Jo un*, you know, is—it comes—it—Dōgen-zenji—in Dōgen-zenji's "Sansui-kyō"—"Sūtra of Mountain and River"—he says the water has life of riding cloud [laughs].<sup>3</sup> *Jo un no kudoku ari*.<sup>4</sup>

People thinks water is running, you know, flowing in the stream, but "Water has also," you know, "the merit of driving cloud." Cloud itself, it may be water [laughs]. It is—that is again his—when he says so it means also the first principle.

So if you—if you understand what is first principle, that will be a good help, you know, to release your body in our life. Even though we are like a water, always running in—only in valley or stream, but we should not complain. Water has also the virtue of being cloud, and water is everywhere. But when we are in the stream, when they in the stream, water may feel, you know, "Why you are running such a, you know—go by our stream? I wish I could be like a cloud." That is, you know, our complaint. But actually, water can be a cloud. If we don't limit our power, our power is [1-2 words unclear; said in a whisper]. So, that will be the [1 word].

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<sup>2</sup> The framed calligraphy of two Japanese characters hanging over the door to Suzuki-rōshi's former rooms on the second floor of City Center, San Francisco.

<sup>3</sup> "When human beings look at water, the only way we see it is as flowing ceaselessly. The flowing takes many forms ... ." Water "rises up to form clouds, and it comes down to form pools" (Eihei Dōgen, "Sansui-kyō," *Shōbōgenzō*; Nishijima and Cross, trans., Book 1, p. 174).

<sup>4</sup> *Jo* (ride); *un* (cloud); *no* (as—indicating that *jo un* and *kudoku* are the same); *kudoku* (merit); *ari* (there is). This is not an exact quote from the *Shōbōgenzō*; Suzuki-rōshi may be interpreting or simplifying the phrase.

Do you know *Lotus Sūtra*—how *Lotus Sūtra* started, do you know? *Lotus Sūtra* was recited by many people. We don't know exactly—no one knows exactly who compiled the sūtra, but while people, Buddhists, were reciting the sūtra, the sūtra became more and more famous. And they get together and recited that sūtra. At that time, temples were, you know, some place for the priests [to] practice their way—for the priests to study Buddhism. But for layman there is not much good place to have meeting. And people get together in cemetery, or in the temple yard they recited the sūtra.

The group of the people [were] making pilgrimage through—all through Indian villages. Once in a while, I don't know how many times a year, they visited some certain place, but they were—people were waiting for the group who recite sūtra to come. In that way *Lotus Sūtra* became very popular. That is—and that sūtra encouraged people ... [*Sentence was probably finished. First tape (of two) turned over here.*]

The more you know about human nature, the more you will be interested in the first principle. In this way you can, you know, encourage your practice. But if you confuse the first principle with the second principle, then—or if you rely on our teaching, you know, it doesn't help you so much. *Hai.*

**Student D:** Rōshi, what does it mean in practice when [6-10 words]?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Include what?

**Student D:** That sometimes we include both [2-4 words] in practice [2-3 words] between thought and [1-2 words].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Practice—zazen practice, first of all—zazen practice for us—what is the purpose of zazen practice? That is something I am talking about so many times. Perhaps, you know, why it is difficult for you to improve your understanding is you listen to our lecture day by day without learning—remembering what I said before, you know, without accepting clearly what I mean. So mind is always, you know—and moreover, I [laughs]—you don't have to remember what I say. It means [1-3 words]. But what I mean is, you know, if you, you know, when you listen to my lecture, and when you say "yes," that is the point. When you say yes, you accept it—"That's okay." And it means that your mind is open and your ears are open. Then, more and more, you will be able to understand the teaching. But you are much better than usual, you know, Japanese people. Japanese people, you know, when some teacher come and give lecture, he may say—they may say, "Oh, he is very good," you know, "he is very good lecturer. His sermon is so interesting." [Laughs.] So someone like me has very difficult time [laughs], because I cannot give any interesting lecture [laughs, laughter]. [Someone boos from audience. S.R. laughs.] *Hai.*

**Student E:** Rōshi, in the last lecture you talked about communication, and how it creates a better image for those people. Could you talk some more about how we create a better image of ourselves?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm.

**Student E:** In part to let it go.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Communication is—start by understanding—your own understanding about people. Even though you want them to understand you, you know, it is—unless you understand people, it is almost impossible. Don't you think so? Only when you understand people, they may understand you. So even though you do not say anything, if you understand people there is some communication. Winks [Blinks?] of your eyes—it is [laughing, laughter]. It is very difficult for me to do this. You—you see? That is, maybe, perfect communication.

**Student E:** I was asking—what I wanted to ask is how can we communicate better with ourselves? Not with other people.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh.

**Student E:** Sometimes we have difficulty defeating problems in ourselves, and we know that [4-6].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm. Oh, okay.

**Student E:** And—and the question is how we, you know, we cultivate these bad feelings—not to push them aside, but sort of cultivate them like, you know, [2-4 words] to other people—like we cultivate that relationship with people. But it seems that zazen is—I'm having the feeling that it helps somehow if I have bad feelings about myself [?].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. That is because of your hasty, you know—or, you know, you are not patient enough, you know. Anyway, it is impossible to have perfect understanding, to feel good about yourself. Whether you feel good or bad, you know, that is the communication. That is you. We cannot improve, you know, improve you instantaneously. Even though you stay at Tassajara three-four years, you will—it is difficult to accept your practice here. And it should be so. And if you try to accept yourself so easily, then there is something wrong with—with your practice.

In such case, you should, you know, think about the first principle. It is you that—you—it is you who feels bad, but you yourself is not bad, and your practice is not bad. But because you have to—because of your desire you feel bad—that's all [?]. Desire means, you know, to expect something which you cannot [have]—that is desire, the terminology of desire.

You have that kind of desire. As long as we know completely about this kind of desire—about this kind of desire, you cannot be patient enough to accept—your mind cannot be wide enough to accept your bad practice. I feel as if, you know, as if you are always trying to feel good, you know [laughs], always. But I am not, you know. I rather feel better when I don't feel good [laughter, laughs]. If I feel good, I—I think, "Oh, I must be careful." [Laughs, laughter.] "I shouldn't feel so good. It is a kind of idea—some selfish," you know, "selfishness in me," you know. "Oh no." You feel more—much more stable when you are not so happy [laughs].

**Student F:** [1 word] in another lecture you said we should try and be happy.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh. Happy, you know, happy, but, you know, happiness is not, you know, that kind of happiness. My happiness is to suffer with people or to enjoy with people. Maybe to suffer more than people and to enjoy less than people is real happiness. Even though we—I feel in that way, you know, as we are very selfish, you know, actually, maybe if I hope—if I try—if I am trying to feel less happy, then maybe they are equal.

If I, you know, if I think I divided watermelon—just I cut watermelon just, you know, quarters, you know—it is very difficult to be fair. And even though I think I took—I didn't take best one, maybe I—I have best one in my hand [laughs]. That is human nature. So only when we try, you know, not to take best one, maybe you can—you will be pretty fair with people.

So to know our human nature is very important. Without knowing what is hunger, what is selfishness, it is almost impossible to help others. When you know what is hunger, you know, what is thirst, what is love, how difficult it is to love some people, then, you know, you can help people. That is how we study the first principle. That is approach to the first principle. Even though you can explain about the first principle, like the great philosophers [laughs], you cannot help people. You will be a scholar, but you cannot help people.

**Student G [Niels Holm]:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Niels Holm:** What do you mean when you say "help people"? What kind of help do you mean? Define the word.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. That is, maybe, good question. If you know what is help, then you will know how you will help people. It is rather difficult to explain. But you may—you may understand, you know, how do you feel when you're helped by people. "Help people," I say, but strictly speaking to—or we say, "to save sentient beings, to save others." "To save" means to give perfect understanding of the problem of birth and death, or true meaning of our life, is, you know, how you help people. After knowing many

things, you know, you will come to difficult things [?]. So unless you don't have good understanding or good experience of our human life, meaning of life, you cannot help people. I say "help people," but "save people." Why we say "save people" is they are suffering; they are amidst [?] of the problem. That is true. Some other question? Could you say? *Hai*.

**Student H:** Rōshi, is the meaning of Buddhist practice to continually develop [?] our small mind? [4-6 words] the big mind continues in small mind.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You can say so. It is possible to say so when—because we are always involved in small mind. But big mind—without knowing what is big mind, it is suffering, you know. But if you know what is big mind, then even though your life is continuous practice of—continuous small-minded practice, and you feel in that way, but it will be—it will be quite different from usual suffering you may have. But right now, when—right now you understood what I am saying, you know. Maybe for the first time I—I used this kind of statement, you know, "continuous [laughs] practice—continuous small-minded practice." So it looks like in our practice there is no true joy or something like that. But if you know what is big mind—yesterday was it yesterday or Sunday?<sup>5</sup>—yeah—when you hear the bird, you know, you—you will find the mountain calmer than before. That kind of feeling. Continuous hearing of the bird is big mind—is our practice. If you understand what I mean, background is calmness of the deep, deep mountain. And you hear the bird, you know, and for the deep remoted mountain, bird is not—bird cannot disturb the mountain. But we hear the bird. Before, you feel as if bird is disturbing the calmness of the mountain. That is usual feeling we have. If small problem happen to your life, you will be very much, you know, discouraged or disturbed, but if you know the vastness of the big mind or buddha-mind, you know, that kind of problem is not problem. But we see the problem. There is big difference. Feeling your skin [?] accept the problem. Do you understand?

So anyway, you must have some feeling about—if possible you must have even a branch of the big mind. And on the—on the other hand you should be faithful to things happens in your life. Then you will not disturbed by the problem you have, and you will be encouraged—your practice will be encouraged—practice to appreciate the big mind will be encouraged. Okay?

Some questions? [2-3 words] is too late. [Laughter, laughs.] No question? *Hai*.

**Student I:** Rōshi, cutting apples in the kitchen is [4-6 words] or particularly zazen is that sometimes it's hard to [1-2 words] to acknowledge that a [2-4 words] isn't really bad, but they're really [1 word] a lot. Or—or—I can't understand what—what—what the practice means. I [3-4 words].

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<sup>5</sup> It was Sunday: SR-71-08-15.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm? [Laughs.] Pleasure is—pleasure is [1-2 words]—Will you please say it again?

**Student I:** If I'm cutting apples in the kitchen and eating—if I eat them, is—is that bad dharma? I mean, I think I ate [3-6 words].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah, you did. [1 words] bad. [Laughs.] Again, you know, when you realize it—as—as Buddha said, "I found out the carpenter who is making the house." [Laughs.] Do you understand what does it mean? I will find out the carpenter who is making the house—who found out—the carpenter who is making the house—who found out someone picking up, you know, small piece of apple—who found out someone eating apples. [Laughs.] Buddha found out a carpenter who is building your house. Did you understand?

**Student I:** [She may have responded, but it was not audible.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** To feel in that way is good, but I cannot say to—to eat, you know, apples while you are cutting is good, but I agree with you. But, you know, on the other hand, you should know that who found out. Big mind found out. Buddha found out. [Laughs.] That—oh!—you are [4-6 words as S.R. thumps on or with microphone]. Buddha is still alive in [laughs]—in your mind. He will help you. He will always help you.

So that is—I cannot say bad practice, but I am not—again, you know, I am not encouraging you to eat apples in the kitchen. This is the point, you know—some—something I want you to be very careful when you listen to my lecture. I may say "that is good," you know—that you have, you know, big mind always to see your self, basically, but sometime I—I just say, "That is good; that is not bad practice," I may say briefly instead of explaining, you know, carefully in that way. So you may think it is okay for us to eat, you know, in the kitchen while we are cooking, as many people do. It is okay, you know. "Before he said it is not okay, but this time he said okay." [Laughs.] So I want you to be very careful because it—it takes time if I explain, you know, things in such way. *Hai*.

**Student I:** [4-6 words] about if the Buddha knows [4-6 words] if the Buddha knew that one of the people did something wrong, but is it really something wrong? Is it—I mean, is it a true confession of something being wrong, or is it just something imposed by Buddha where we have [1-2 words] a rule. If the rule was you should eat in the kitchen while we're cooking, then we would feel bad if we didn't eat while we were cooking. [Laughter.] And is the—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Talks over student, who continues asking question.] That is just, you know, argument [laughs, laughter]. It doesn't make sense.

**Student I:** What doesn't make sense?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm? No—there could be any rules like that, you know. [Laughs.] You can create, for one or two days you can, you know, [1-2 words]. "If you work in kitchen you should eat." It will—that will last one hour or two hours. But that is not—cannot be rule, you know.

**Student I:** The reason I'm asking and what I don't understand to some extent is in this procession of rules [8-10 words] we have this idea of rules. If we didn't have an idea of rules—a rule about not eating—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Speaks over student.] You know, when you say so, that is already, you know, idea of absolute. In realm of absolute there is no rules. There could—cannot be any rules. You see? There is confusion: You confuse absolute and second [principle?]-second. Do you understand?

**Student I:** No.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No [as if he is echoing student].

**Student I:** I can understand why there is a rule about food, but—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You see—

**Student I:** —I don't understand how you separate—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No.

**Student I:** —[4-6 words].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** The—when we talk about things-as-it is, you know, like a scientist, that is the rule which belongs to—it is observation of the first principle. And when we accept our human nature and how to apply, how to have more organized life as a human being, you know, that rules is for—just for human being, not for trees or water or, you know, some chemical happening, but just for human being, which is so selfish. That is secondary rule—the rules for human being. So you shouldn't co- [partial word: compare?]-you shouldn't like—you shouldn't talk like you are like a cat or dog. You are worse than cat or dog. [Laughter.] Do you understand? [Laughs.] No.

**Student I:** [2-3 sentences.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** For an instance, in the city, you know?

**Student I:** You know, some place other than here, yes. [6-10 words.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah, that kind of life will not last. That is just bubbles [laughs]-you know, tentative bubble which cannot last. When our rules, our

way of life is not based on our human nature, it doesn't last, you know. As long as you are young it is maybe okay, but everyone is growing, you know, and world is changing day by day, and we cannot exist unless we know our human nature. I am not, you know—I have no special, you know, superimposed idea. That is what I am talking [about?], you know. I am not forcing you—on you anything. Just to understand what is human being, what is things-as-it-is. You see? That is the point of my talk. If we do not have so many students at Tassajara, we don't have to rules—have to have rules like this. As we must, you know, practice our way with many people here, so we must have some rules. Okay?

Rules is not something which we create, which someone—some special person create for sake of Buddhism or for sake of Zen or for sake of the leader to have, but something which we need. That is rule. So we can—we can change if it is not right, so we are improving our rules. Maybe we are spending too much time, you know, in discussion about our rules, you know. I feel in that way. But still, I appreciate your effort to establish some rules for us. You try to be very fair to everyone. So, on the other hand, our rules become more and more strict, you know, because we spent so much time in establishing your rules. After establishing some rules, you cannot [laughs]—cannot, you know, change it so soon. That is the nature of, you know, nature of precepts. Buddha didn't establish precepts. Disciples established precepts, in some [3-4 words] monastery [unclear]. Buddha said you shouldn't run away from the temple [1 word] when you are listening lecture. That is one precept. [Laughs, laughter.] For very good students there is no rule. Rule is necessary, but students make so many rules. That is, you know, projected, you know, rules, projected human nature. We need it, you know, not buddhas, or not universe, or not [1 word]. Whether this earth vanish from the universe, it is not big problem [laughs]. It is okay for the universe. If we want to protect this earth, maybe we should study more about how flying [?] planes [?] are going [laughs]. Then, you know, maybe our planet is just one of them. That kind of study is, you know, our study.

Before, I don't know why, you—you do not like rules, you know. There must be some good reason why you don't like it. But here I don't think so, because it is you who are creating rules, not me. Buddhist rules is not like that.

So that is why you have to have good understanding of the first principle compared—comparing to the second principle or human principle—human rules. Then—then, you know, you will find out why you have to have this kind of practice—the meaning of practice. Okay? Okay. Five more minutes. *Hai.*

**Student J:** [3-4 sentences.] Or tentatively, what can we rely on in ourselves—anything?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You—you should rely on your spirit of practice, you know. Before you rules—break rules, why don't you follow the rules? That is the point. After breaking rules, it is too late to discuss about that. It belongs to the past. So it can't be helped. Why don't you try not [to] break rules again? That is the point, you know. So to reflect upon what you have done is not so good way—not so good idea. I—even to think about what you are doing right now is not so good too. [*Sentence probably finished. Tape changed to second tape.*]

... Mm-hmm.

**Student K:** You say that creating some kind of rule or schedule for yourself or some [4-6 words] will not work. I'm asking you essentially how—how do you find out [3-4 words] adopt rules that we live with at Tassajara, or do we rely more on our good feeling about things?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You are still relying on rules, you know. When I came to San Francisco I had no rules for you to observe. I—I sit and practice zazen and recite sūtra when I wanted to, you know. People came. That's all. One after another they come, and [laughs] as you are so many—we have so many people now, and, you know, I must have rules. That's all. So it is too soon to worry about it [laughs]. Buddha will take care of everything. And if Buddhist rule is good, it will help, you know. This is why I became angry, you know [laughs], you know, to see someone who talk about Japanese way or Buddhist way or, you know— Actually, if you don't want Buddhist way, you know, why don't you have some other rules? You know, I think Buddhist way is pretty good, because they—from—if—after Buddha's time, Buddha—idea of Buddha's precepts is way of life, and the rules belongs to human being, not Buddha. Buddha has the first principle, but human being has second principle for themselves. So this kind of understanding is, you know, very suitable idea of rules.

So I want you to be very sincere, you know, with yourself, about your future too. You shouldn't depend on anything. Only thing you depend on is your zazen practice. Without saying anything, if you practice every day, then you will have students, you will have friends. That you may need some rules. "What time do you start zazen?" or something like that. That is enough. You don't have to worry about so many rules which we need at Tassajara. Okay?

So each—I want each student to practice our zazen wherever you are. That is—will be the best help for the people. And some more things happens, then case by case you should think about it, that's all. You will find out how to help—help people, especially when you have experience of practice at Tassajara. It will be a great, great help for you when you have your self. You shouldn't depend on Tassajara too much. All the, you know, confusion comes from that point, because you depend on Tassajara too much. Buddha said, you know, without depending on yourself, you know, how is it possible to depend [on] something else—or only thing you can depend on is you

yourself. That is very true. Only when you can depend on yourself you will be very kind. Something flowing over, you know, from you will help people, without trying to help people. If you depend on something special, then nothing will come out from you. If people ask question, "Read [3-4 words]," and if someone ask you what to do, "Oh, we have rules here, so why don't you read." In that way you cannot—you will not have any friends [laughter]. To me, you are trying to do so [laughs], you know, always trying to do so whenever you ask me question. I feel that you may be trying to establish something like Tassajara [laughs]. I have no idea of such, you know, estab-[partial word]—I have no such idea for you to establish anything like this. If Tassajara practice is good enough to be a good example of other group, maybe they may follow us, but we should not have any idea of to be a good example of others. Anyway we should make our best, that's all, you know. It cannot be more than that. If it is more than that, Tassajara is involved in wrong practice. It is not Buddhist practice.

[Sighs.] Tomorrow? What time? [Laughs.] [1 word] person? Not one person [?], right?

Thank you very much.

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Source: City Center transcript by Barry Eisenberg. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (9/26/00). Miyagawa Keishi-san kindly provided assistance with the translation of Japanese terms.