

Suffering comes from desires. Zazen leads to the strength to cut off the root of suffering. When we are free from our suffering we are called Buddhas. But our evil [?] desires are limitlessly deep. Hence it is impossible totally to cut off our human suffering.

For a while zazen will alleviate suffering, but zazen is not a complete remedy.

[Suzuki emphasizes improving oneself little by little rather than by trying to cut off one's suffering at a single stroke "A little fire is still fire. It is not necessary to have a big fire."] In this world we live by constant effort. Even though gains are small, the act of sincerely trying to improve little by little is salvation—a way to transcend the troubles e.g., desires, we could not have occasion to make efforts at improvement. So even [evil] desires are necessary [to the overall "scheme"]. The Buddhist way is the way of eternal effort. True eternity is not that which is contrasted with the momentary. True eternity is the eternal present.

Satisfaction with our present life is the true way of emancipation. "So-called wisdom is nothing but to be satisfied with what we have. That is Buddha's wisdom." We should not be mixed up or over-concerned with right-and-wrong actions, etc.

QUESTION PERIOD

"Bad" situations are not so bad; but "good" situations are dangerous. Bad situations have a bottom; [bad ones that look like] good ones are bottomless. In such "good" situations, you are in danger of floating down the river with a smile on your face!"

If you don't lose your composure, there is no bad situation.

If someone has lost his way [lost his self], it is very hard truly to help him. He can be aided, but the help is only temporary, e.g., by a kind listener when he is distressed." sometimes, we won't tell him the truth so as to temporarily help him."

Perhaps this is related to the culture of Japan, but, if you don't ask for others' help, there is a chance to be helped by others. [Suzuki emphasized the person making sincere efforts on his own behalf—not relying on others.]

Real help is more than merely improving the situation. A person

should determine the limits of his circumstances, and himself improve them.

What I am speaking about this evening is the right attitude towards religion. True religion does not add to one's helplessness. But you should not expect to gain from a religion—because it is not of things, i.e., worldly. For example, Buddha's wisdom does not produce anything. Wisdom sees the world and things as they are; but wisdom has no form or color. Hence wisdom is not something to rely on.

Our power is innate, so when we have wisdom, we have everything. Wisdom = right-seeing, and with right-seeing you will know what to do. Knowing what to do is your power. Using or having this power and wisdom, there are no bad situations. A bad situation is not unique to an individual. If someone else were there, he would be in a bad situation instead of you. So, a bad situation can be gotten out of.

[Suzuki was commenting on the efforts of the villagers to get his son to take an impressive wife.]

People get married to help each other. So if my boy marries a beautiful, healthy, rich woman, then he is not a Buddhist. My boy should marry someone whom he can help [lead a relation of mutual help]. So I told him he should marry a girl he likes (feels toward), even if the villagers think she is plain and dumb, etc. He should not consider appearances [i.e., the handsome priest of this handsome temple should have a handsome wife].

When we lose our way, we help those who don't need it, and ignore those who do. Right now I have to ignore them [mentally suffering ill] and go in the opposite direction. But some day I will have learned how to help them.

Many people are suffering and do not know it. We [who know it] are happy [lucky?].

This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript. It is not verbatim. No tape is available. The City Center transcript was entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. It was reformatted by Bill Redican (11/5/01).