

The first day of the sesshin is almost finished

Monday, August 15, 1966

Sesshin: Evening Lecture, Lecture D

Sokoji, San Francisco

The first day of the sesshin is almost finished. On the first day, I wanted you to establish good posture. It was not appropriate to give you something to work on intellectually, but you have physically worked hard, so for a change I will give you some intellectual problems in Buddhism.

We are now coping with the problem of causality. I think Reverend Katagiri must have told you something about this. This problem is a very big problem—so big that it covers all areas of Buddhist philosophy. One philosophy which suggests right understanding of causation is the Kegon Sutra. In Kegon we have a famous statement—in Japanese: *Ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*.¹ “Things exist as one of many, or many of one.” The understanding of “one of many” is a rather mechanical understanding of existence. And “many of one,” is a teleological understanding of existence.² But both understandings will reduce to one understanding which is the eternal present.

Things as “one of many,” which is mechanical understanding, is possible when you do not take the truth of dynamic changing of things into consideration; then things exist as “one of many.” You are a part of it. Actually it is not so, but ignores that you are acting on each other, and you have no time for whole special character when you are acting with each other. Actually you change and other things change. But in the smallest particle of time, you exist mechanically as one of many. You are a part of many, or one of the many.

But, as I pointed out yesterday, it is not true because as long as dynamic change is going on, on and on, we have no time [laughs] to exist as “one of many.” You are always involved in the dynamic changes of the world. So, when you have full understanding of “one of many,” then you will find out really that how you exist is in the eternal present. You exist in the eternal present. In this present you have the past and future connected with the present. In this present, you have future and you have past. Future is the time which has not come yet, but it showed itself in the present. The past is time which passed already, but it hasn't passed yet. It has some connection to the present. So in this moment we have the past and future.

So, in static logic it is possible to say the present includes the past and future, or the past and future are connected with the present. This is possible to say. But, this point will be more clear to you when you apply dialectical logic. Past and future are one pair of opposites. Past confronts future. Future confronts past. So in dialectical logic, past and future is a completely different idea. Past and future confront each other. But at the same time, they conform with each other. Because of the idea of past, we have the idea of future. So, actually past conforms with future. Future conforms with past. When this conformation takes place, the actual

meaning of past and future is transcended. When this takes place, the past is not past anymore, the future is not future anymore. And past and future are involved in the dynamic change of the world.

So anyway, Buddha's teaching that things change, or his understanding of the world of dynamic change, is always true. And this truth is a key to solving intellectual problems. Without this key, this contradiction cannot be solved. There would be an eternal dispute whether this world is heading to some particular result, or in this world many things just exist mechanically.

But because of his teaching, the world is the world of transiency—the world of dynamic change—we can solve this problem. The conclusion is that we live in the eternal present. We can touch eternal life; otherwise, we have no time to touch immortal life. Even though we are mortal, even though we have mechanical existence in one way, it is possible for us to touch eternal truth, eternal being. And, we find ourselves as an immortal being, and we live in the eternal present.

When we live in this eternal present, we have absolute freedom. Actually, when you understand this truth, your past cannot determine your present. Your future teleologically cannot determine your present. So, your way of life is quite free from teleological understanding and materialistic understanding of our life. This is how you achieve absolute freedom or vital freedom. This is how we acquire religious life in its true sense.

The teaching of causality—if you do something wrong, the result will be bad—that is a teleological understanding of life. But, if you understand teleological understanding in a Buddhist way—applying the truth that this world is a world of dynamic change—you will not be caught by a future result. You have freedom from future life. And, you will be free from your past life. But, it does not mean to ignore the truth of causality. Believing in causality, we will be free from our past and future. This is Keron's "one and many." Things—"one is one of many; many is many of one." One is—"one of many" is mechanical understanding. The many is—"many of one" is teleological understanding.³ Understanding of "many of one" is to believe in causality and to start our activity expecting some result.

So, the result comes first, and our present will be—not sacrificed, but comes next. This is the weak point of the teaching of causality. If you believe in causality, you have no freedom, as determinism teaches us. You have no freedom because your present is determined by your past, and as long as you have some future idea, you have no freedom. You have to sacrifice the present for the sake of the future. But, this is not a completely right understanding. So, the essence of Buddhist teaching is the teaching that everything changes, and this world is a world of dynamic change.

This morning⁴ I talked about several stock words of Buddhism and the difference between Dogen Zenji's way of using them and the usual way: "to put head upon a head," or "mistake over mistakes," or "ivy and vine over ivy and vine." "To put head on a head" means to exist in this world as one of many. There are many things [laughs], so we have to see many things. So

we want many heads. One head is not enough [laughs]. But, usually to put a head upon a head is a most ridiculous [laughs] thing. But, for Dogen it is not ridiculous because he has a deeper understanding of life.

We say “one or many heads,” but one or many fundamentally are not different. You say sometimes “one” and you say sometimes “many,” but the one head you have is a result of many [laughs]. Many end in one head like this. You have many heads. Many things result in one head.

And, you may understand this one head is many—this one head is mechanical understanding. This one head is the result of many. But, in a teleological understanding, this one head will be sacrificed for one. It means you go back to the past from the present [laughs]. Do you understand? It is rather difficult. Mechanically, your head is the result of many—many factors result in one head. But, the teleological understanding of head is opposite, because the result comes first and the cause comes later, second. So, this one head will be sacrificed as one of many and will result in one. It goes back to the past. As Dogen Zenji says, time goes from future to past and sometimes from past to future [laughs], which is ridiculous, you may say. But it is quite true. It is the difference of the viewpoint you take.

Mechanically, Buddha passed away 3,000 years ago, attaining oneness of the one truth. But, when we strive for Buddhism, Buddha's teachings come first and our effort comes next. It means Buddha is here and our effort comes later. So, it means time goes back to Buddha from the present to the past because his teaching is here now. And to attain his enlightenment, we strive in various ways. So, our effort comes later, and teaching comes first. It means time passes from present to past. But, if you have a deeper understanding of the truth, you will not be surprised even though Dogen Zenji said time elapses from present to past [laughs]. It is quite natural for us. And, some of us Buddhists are doing this kind of thing—teaching first—Buddha first, and our effort is next. This is not the right way of studying Buddhism.

We should find Buddha right here. It does not mean to sacrifice our life which we have now. It means to live in the eternal present without sacrificing anything—appreciating this moment as an eternal present. In this way, you can firmly believe in our teaching no matter what viewpoint you take, no matter what kind of view of life you have. As long as you have this truth, there is nothing to be astonished about. When you only understand many teachings intellectually, you will be astonished. You will have many difficulties in accepting teachings. But, if you have a deeper understanding of reality, whatever they may say it is all right. You can accept it.

So, according to Buddhism or especially Zen, this world is a world of contradiction. And in contradiction, we will directly experience the identity of the contradiction. We can accept the contradictions of the teaching, and we can appreciate the contradiction. Instead of confronting each other, we will conform with each other as men and women [laughs]. If a man confronts a woman, or if a woman confronts a man, [laughs] your life is a waste of time. But, if you conform with men or with women, you can identify with one another. This is how we live in this world. By conforming with each other, we can study Buddhism. There is no need to be critical. If

someone says something opposite to your understanding, it will be the confirmation of your understanding. "Oh, that is your understanding. I can understand why you understand reality in that way." In this way, the life of confrontation will become the life of conformation, and you will have absolute composure in your life. In difficulty, in problems, in various vines and [laughs] ivy of thought—the more the thought is complicated, the more you are composed. You will acquire a deeper composure of your mind. This is the secret of Buddhism. This is not just understanding. If you hear me, I think you will understand why we have men and women, and why we have past and future, why we have freedom. We should have freedom, and we should have a tradition and many frameworks of society.

It is rather early, but I think I have finished what I wanted to talk about for this evening.

Thank you very much.

Do you have something to announce?

Student: No.

SR: Oh. Tomorrow Bishop Sumi⁵ is coming, so I want all of you to attend his lecture and sesshin.

Thank you very much.

¹ Ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi: Literally, "One is all, all is one." Probably from Sōsan's Shinjinmei.

² A reference to Nishida Kitarō's "The Unity of Opposites," in Kitarō Nishida: Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness, Honolulu: East-West Press, 1958, p. 175: "To say: the world is 'from the one to the many,' is to give a teleological interpretation."

³ Citing Nishida, *ibid.*, p. 175: "Saying: the world is 'from the many to the one,' means a causal and deterministic interpretation of the world; the world is seen from the past, and thought mechanically. To say: the world is 'from the one to the many,' is to give a teleological interpretation."

⁴ SR-66-08-15-C.

⁵ Togen Sumi: Formerly an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji, he succeeded Yamada Reirin as head of the Sōtō Zen School in America in 1965.

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