

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Tuesday Morning, April 23, 1968
Tassajara
Lecture A

Because I was not well [?], I am sorry I couldn't join your practice so much. But you did very well, I think, and if—even though as a personal experience you cannot accept your practice, maybe that is not so big problem. We can—if you can accept yourself completely [laughs], then you are—you will not be in this world any more [laughs, laughter]. So that you have problem means you have—are still alive. That is our way [?]. And even though you make a trip to another world, same problem [laughs] you will have, as long as you have your body and mind. Things exist, you know, in that way. That is how things exist in this world.

When I was—the cold I experienced this time was pretty unusual one—unusual one for the cold we take—I took in America. The cold I have had in Japan was as bad as I had this time. High temperature and was feeling, you know, sleeping [or slipping] on some slope upside down [laughs]. Head is—head is down and feet is up. That is the feeling—that was the feeling I had when I had cold in Japan.

And as I was very careful recently, as I am trying to, you know, find out some way to help you, so I carefully experienced my bad feeling [laughs, laughter]. And I want to tell you some of them.

But first—first of all, I want to tell you about breathing. This time, instead of finding of my breathing difficult with some—what do you call it?—through our nose or throat, this time, you know, it—my nose and mouth is open—too open, you know. Like a bottle without cork [laughs]. So when I take medicine it comes out—comes in, you know, all at once. And when I exhale, you know, it comes out forcefully [?] so I cannot, you know, take normal breathing [laughs].

So I tried to, you know, I tried to make my throat—or make throat narrower, with tongue and bottom of my nose so that I can make a snore [makes snoring sound] [laughs]. In this way, I felt good. I thought at that time the life without a problem is like a, you know, breathing without any nose or mouth—without head [laughs]. The breathing will—may be very easy, but very, you know, unhappy feeling [laughs, laughter]. No feeling of breathing at all.

So—and my back ached pretty bad. So I could have—I could have been patient with it, but I tried many things. I put a stone on my back and tried to, you know—tried to make some substitute—substituted problem, you know [laughs]—the pain. Instead of, you know, unhappy feeling of pain, maybe some usual pain may be better. So I put stone here, and

having some pain on my back, you know, I—I couldn't forget my pain in my back, but I—it helped the unhappy feeling of my spine. When I did it, you know, I have no idea of zazen or anything. But later I thought, you know, zazen pain in your legs or body in your practice can be a—may be a stone on my back, you know. That is healthy, you know, normal problem. So if it is—whatever experience it is, if it is normal experience based on right understanding of life, you can accept the problem quite easily.

At San Francisco, I many times I told them that even though you do not—you feel you do not make any progress in your practice, and even though you have many problems in your practice, it may be better not to quit sitting because if you, you know, quit sitting you will not have the pain in your legs, but instead of the pain you will have another pain [laughs]. So this pain in your practice will be much better than the pain or problem—problems you will have in city life or in some other way.

"Everyday Mind Is Zen": This was very important kōan.¹ "Everyday Mind Is *Dao*." And this is, you know, pretty difficult. Maybe many people have misunderstanding about it. "Everyday Mind Is *Dao*." The everyday mind—first of all, we should know what is *dao* or true mind, and this is again the problem of true mind and everyday mind. *Dao* is something—the back something from which everyday mind arise. So, "Everyday mind is *dao*" means to find *dao* in everyday mind, everyday life. It looks like to put emphasis on everyday mind or dualistic mind. So, you may say: "Everyday mind—if everyday mind is true mind, whatever we do doesn't matter; that is *dao*. To sneak into some other's field and get sweet potato, or sweet melon, and, you know, eating in hot summer weather is *dao* [laughs]. Whatever you do, that is *dao*." In this way you may understand it.

But actually, what it means is to feel big mind in—through our everyday practice. This morning, when we were sitting, perhaps you could hear many birds singing, you know, in the sunny side of the mountain. In—in your practice to hear it, you know, you feel—what you feel or what you hear is not just bird. It is quite different bird when you hear, you know, in usual time. Instead of being disturbed by the bird, you will feel deeper feeling of your practice—deeper. If you do not, you know—if you do not hear anything, you know, it is like breathing without mouth or nose, you know [laughs]. No problem, but no feeling. Something—some—something which will come into your practice will deepen your feeling of practice.

But when you are involved in dualistic idea, you know: "What time we sit?" or "What bird we see?" [laughs], and more and more useless to sit in such a dark room instead of enjoying this beautiful sunshine at the foot of the mountain with bird [laughs]. The moment you hear the bird, usually, we will be involved in this kind of, you know, life. But when you hear the

¹ *Gateless Gate* 19.

bird in your sitting, without trying to hear it, you know, then your practice will be encouraged by the bird.

Every morning we hit our bell when we practice zazen. That will encourage our practice. But sometime it may be disturbance, but sometime, if—when your practice is filled with true spirit, it will encourage your deep feeling. That feeling is *dao* or everyday mind in its true sense.

There were—there are many stones, you know, in Tassajara Creek. Each stone has very mysterious strange shape, and which will tell us various things. Here Kumazawa-zenji² wrote something about stones, in Japanese. If you go to Soko-ji, I think you have—you must have seen it already: five virtue of stone. Even though you see stone, there is our practice. That is everyday mind. So everyday mind is not just—just a kind of mind which is always involved in dualistic sense.

In Japan, many people in springtime especially or in late autumn where—after heavy storm—after—or after big flood which will wash out everything in the creek so that anyone can see new stones. So after rain, we go to stone hunting. So if—suppose five people, with their lunch like picnic, started for the stone hunting, someone may go ahead of the people so that the rest of the pe- [partial word]—so that he can find out the best stone before the rest [laughs] of the people find out something good. But those people usually do not find out best stone [laughs]. Maybe the last one who is not so enthusiastic to find out anything [laughs, laughter], and listening to the bird, enjoying the steam, by chance he will find out best stone [laughs]. The eyes, you know, of the first one is so-called-it "chicken's eyes" [laughs]—it's called "chicken's eyes." Do you know the chicken? [Probably mimics chicken.] [Laughs, laughter.] Trying to find something good, you know. [Laughs, laughter.] Their mind is too little. So even though they try hard, they cannot find anything so good. Or if it is mind, we say "monkey mind." Monkey is so busy looking around [laughs, laughter]. With that busy mind, they cannot find out anything. Usual mind, you know, or everyday mind will [laughs]—will find something good.

But here Archbishop Kumazawa-zenji said, "It is—it is stones that with—with many strange mysterious shape, to speak out fluently the full meaning of the mystery of the truth—mystery of the truth." That is one [virtue of stone]. The second, you know, is; "We say strange, mysterious. But if you," you know, "seek for something mysterious and strange," you know, "you cannot find something mysterious and strange in its true sense. It is—people may say this is quite common, usual stone, but if it is stone though, it—it is stone through and through, it will speak out many things—many mysteries."

² Kumazawa Sogaku Taizen (1873–1968), 73rd chief abbot of Eihei-ji and 16th chief abbot of Sōji-ji.

And second, "It is stones which support whole earth from the deepest bottom of the earth, as a bone of mountains, with—in immeasurable sprit and bottomless composure." This is very beautiful, you know, words, but I cannot translate it so well. But I tried, you know.

The third one is: "It is a stone which never change its position in spite of the hardship of rain and wind, overcoming the hot and cold."

And next one: "It is stones, with its hard nature"—hard nature?—hard—hard nature—not "nature," but—

Student: Durable?

Suzuki-rōshi: —hard nature or—stone is hard, you know—nature of—not nature—instead of "nature" you will have some word.

Students: Quality?

Suzuki-rōshi: Quality. Ah. "—with its hard quality supporting. It is a stone which support a high buildings and beautiful pagoda as a foundation fulfilling the foundation—the duty [function] of foundation, with silent—with silent adding beauty—adding beauty to moun- [partial word]—to the mountain and carving, and to harmonize our mind is stone—is a stone."

This is what he—he wrote it last year, and last year he—he was 93. And here he says: "Eihei Taizen, 94."³ [Laughs.] People wonder why he wrote he is 94 when he was 93 [laughs, laughter]. And Kumazawa-rōshi—the arch- [partial word]—the bishop, you know—Bishop Yamada,⁴ who—whom you know, said here, "He like to boast his age." [Laughs, laughter.] So when he was actually 93, he said, "I am 94." Someone said it is quite common to—to add two or three more [years] after 100 years, you know [laughs, laughter]. There are many, you know, famous Zen masters who lived more than 100. But they, you know—we cannot exactly know how old they were [laughs, laughter]. May be more than 100, but how many more we don't know. And he—he says, you know, write like this, "Eihei Taizen, 94." And all of us thought he was 94. "Oh! He was very old." He was very happy to hear people admired him because of his old age.

And he—the Mount Fuji is, you know—is our—one of our pride, you know.

³ Taizen-zenji (1873–1968) died at the age of 95. According to these dates (from the *Zengaku Daijiten* dictionary), he was 94 in 1967, so Taizen apparently had the final say. The name Eihei ("eternal peace") is taken from the monastery Eihei-ji, where he was chief abbot.

⁴ Yamada Reirin: Head of the Sōtō Zen School in America from his arrival in Los Angeles in the summer of 1960, where he was head of Zenshu-ji from 1960 to 1964. In 1965 he was succeeded by Bishop Sumi Togen, then an instructor of monks at Sōji-ji. Yamada returned to Japan to become president of Komazawa University, Tōkyō, and later the 75th chief abbot of Eihei-ji.

And it lies just between Yamanashi Prefecture and Shizuoka Prefecture. So once there were—when they have big dispute whether a shrine which is located on the top of Mt. Fuji belongs to Shizuoka Prefecture or Yamanashi Prefecture. They had very big dispute [laughs].⁵ And at that time, the Archbishop [Taizen] visited the shrine, and he said, "Yamanashi Prefecture is the landlord of the Mt. Fuji," you know. "I support you as the abbot of Eihei-ji," he said to the—to the people who were there. So people worried about—about that statement very much because they were in terrible dispute, you know, and said to him, "If the people—if you go to Shizuoka Prefecture, what will you say to them?" [Laughing, laughter ongoing.] "That is quite easy," he said. "I will say the Shizuoka Prefecture is landlord of Mt. Fuji. I am—I am completely for your dispute, as the abbot of Eihei-ji." This is all right with me [?], he said to the people, you know, and people couldn't say anything. They were astonished, you know. He wouldn't change his attitude for them [?]. "Oh, it's all right. I should—I am say[ing] so." He is very humorous person.

With—with that kind of, you know, time [?] we should find out story. There this kind of story—he has this kind of story, and with this kind of story he helped people to adjust [?] themselves in some [1-2 words]. That is not so easy, you know. He must have thought, you know, that it is silly to, you know, to be involved in the problem to which side, you know, the shrine belongs to. It is very silly. So he was laughing at them. That is so-called-it "tongueless speech," you know. What he was speaking, you know, literally doesn't mean anything. But he just point out their wrong attitude—their small mind.

This is the Buddhist [1-3 words],⁶ which is pretty good, you know. Maybe too special, but I wish that you can [1-2 words]. Not only Zen but also for [1 word] of all schools of Buddhism.

[*Aside:*] Do you have the time?

Student: Right about now. I think we have 4 o'clock rehearsal.

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Thank you very much.

Source: City Center original tape. Verbatim transcript by Bill Redican (10/22/01).

⁵ The border of the two provinces runs right through the summit of Mt. Fuji.

⁶ Probably referring to Taizen's calligraphy. Sounds like a Japanese word—phonetically, "*maka-ju-e*."