

JULY 8, 1965

Rev. S. Suzuki's talk on Great Prajna Paramita Sutra

I want to still continue to speak about topsy-turvy views. When your understanding of life is based on some concrete concept of material or spiritual, this view is called topsy-turvy idea. When your understanding is based on your true nature or your true inmost request, this aspect is the right aspect. Dogen Zenji, founder of our sect (this is Dogen's picture he did himself), he says, "Practice should be established in our topsy-turvy idea. Practice should be established in our defilement or delusion. We should attain identity before we attain enlightenment." This is very subtle understanding of Zen. Usually we say enlightenment and your practice is quite different thing. After you practice zazen you will attain enlightenment. But Dogen Zenji said, "You should study your practice in your defilement." If your understanding of your life which is always dualistic, which is always based on the idea of right or wrong, good or bad—this is our usual understanding, how we live in this world. Wherever you go there is a problem, good or bad, right or wrong, but this problem itself is, if your understanding of the problem is right, it is the practice itself. Because of your poor understanding of the problem, you cannot establish your practice in defilement. You have problem now. You have many problems I think, and some of the problems is pretty hard to control. Why it is difficult to control your problem is your orientation of the practice is wrong. If your orientation of the practice is right, your problem itself is a kind of practice.

If you try to control yourself, and, by controlling yourself to attain enlightenment, this kind of practice, orientation of the practice, is wrong. Why you have—if you think why you have problem you will understand why you have problem is because your inmost request is working on your difficulty you have.

Because you want to live, you have problem. If you give up to live in this world, there is no problem. Because you want to remain, because you want to develop your life, there is problem. So problem itself is well orientated, and so, if you should have problem this understanding is right. If you think we should get out of the problem, this understanding is wrong. This is topsy-turvy view.

You may say it is impossible for me to accept this problem, but even though you think you cannot accept this problem right now you have accepted the problem. Because you have accepted the problem you suffer. It is not matter of accept problem or not accept problem. Problem is right there, and already well orientated, and your effort is always right. If you have this kind understanding of the problem, to have problem is to have right practice. The right practice is nothing more than to accept problem. That you have problem is that you have right practice too. This is right view or right understanding of practice. So he says the right practice should be where you have problem. Where you have problem there is right practice. And right enlightenment is where you have problem—to have problem is already enlightenment. There is no enlightenment without problem. There is no enlightenment without problem. The perfect enlightenment is something unintelligible, but the awareness of the enlightenment should be or is, actually is where you have problem. So he says, "Right practice should be in the problem, and right enlightenment should be before you attain enlightenment." It means in everyday life there is right practice and right enlightenment. If you seek enlightenment outside of everyday life, that is wrong attitude. Enlightenment is there, always, in your reach—not outside of your house. Enlightenment is in your house already. This is right practice and right awareness of enlightenment.

Dogen Zenji, Dogen Zen master rather emphasized enlightenment, rather emphasized awareness of the enlightenment than the concept of perfect enlightenment, the enlightenment which will be

attained when you suppress all the evil desires and thinking and emotional activity. This kind of enlightenment is not for everyone. The enlightenment for everybody should be awareness of the enlightenment. The awareness of enlightenment will be attained when you have right understanding of your problem, and when your effort has right orientation. But usually, when we have problem we like to escape from it. This is wrong, you know. It is impossible to escape from the problem. We should think why we have problem. Because we want to sustain our life, because we want to extend our life, that is why we have problem. So we should be rather grateful for having problems. This is right understanding, and right effort.

When you try to escape the problem you create many excuse, or you create many dualistic idea to escape from the problem, and to make some excuse to escape from this problem. You will create the idea of yourself and the idea of the problem. That you have problem is because you accepted the problem, because you have the problem. The problem is already a part of you, so actually there is no problem or there is no problem beside you, and there is no you beside problem. Problem and you are one. You create concept of I and concept of problem. So, it looks like it is possible. You know this is problem [Illustrating with two books]. This is I, so it is possible to escape from the problem. This is merely an excuse. It is possible, actually, but when you create the idea of you yourself and problem, you yourself decide the problem, the idea of problem, concept of problem beside you yourself. It looks like possible to escape from the problem, but actually it is not possible. This is so-called delusion, and this is just an excuse. So if you determined to accept your life, there is enlightenment and awareness of the enlightenment, and gratitude for your life, having your life.

You may say, "That is impossible!" This means your lack of understanding and lack of your determination, and lack of sincerity to live. But if you have this determination, you can think, and you can analyze and you can find out how to solve the problem. Only when you have completely accepted the problem, this kind of effort will work. But before you have this kind of understanding, even though you will try to escape from it, that is just a mere excuse. This point is very important, to live in this world.

Last night San Francisco Zen Center had a guest speaker, who is studying nuclear physics, and he said, "In science, in physics, we study matter, but the matter is quite different from our mind, and when we study matter we should clear our mind so that we can observe matter exactly as it is."

From scientific viewpoint, it should be so, or else, that is not science. If you do not know the truth, that matter and your mind is one, the science will not serve its own purpose. It should always help our life. But scientific truth should be always true and under some condition—it should be accepted as a truth under some conditions. What I think is true should be accepted as truth by you, too. This is science, but the conclusion science will give us will not help us if we do not know that matter and mind is one. Actually there is no matter without our mind. There is no mind without matter. The matter and I is actually the same. But science will give us some certain knowledge on the condition that matter and mind, is completely different. So, scientific knowledge can exist. Without this hypothetical, hypothesis, scientific research is not possible. To divide the mind and matter means to ignore the various conditions. But actually some scientific conclusion will be given when the other condition was ignored. You may say, when it is cold the water will freeze into ice. It is so, but actually, even if it is cold, inside of your room will not freeze, because there is some other conditions in your room. Only when the conditions all over the world... only when it is cold all over the world, water become ice. But actually such condition will not exist in this world. Somewhere it will be warm, somewhere it will be cold. So, the scientific truth is true only when the rest of the conditions was ignored. But actually it is not possible to ignore various conditions in our actual life. So, when science

serves our purpose the oneness of the all the conditions should be put into consideration. To put various conditions into consideration means to become one with the rest of existence. It means to become one with problem. Only when you become one with problem, the scientific knowledge will serve its own purpose. Because we can use the scientific knowledge under some conditions.

Not to escape from problem, but to get along with the problem. So, the attitude of science is not the same as the attitude of Buddhism, but if we understand what is science, what is Buddhism, then you can use the scientific knowledge. But when you are caught by the scientific knowledge, or when you use your scientific knowledge to get away from the problem, or to entertain some idle idea towards your life, science will make our life idle and the science will not serve its true purpose. So, it is necessary to understand what is the basic attitude towards our life. And basic attitude toward our life, is to accept our life and to become one with the surrounding. This is very important point. And this is why we practice zazen.

Last night he emphasized that in science I myself and the scientific truth is completely different. That he emphasized this point is not to mix up religion and science. He gave us the kind of warning. Science is some research based on dualistic idea. If so, we must be careful in using the scientific knowledge. That was his warning. When we take his statement in our consideration, when you use scientific knowledge the science will serve its own purpose. This is right understanding. From our viewpoint, scientific knowledge—although it is true, but it is a kind of delusion. But, true practice should be established in delusion. So he says, I am scientist, so to work in his laboratory is my practice. That is right. True practice should be established in delusion, knowing this is delusion. This is very important point. You should not try to escape from scientific truth or you should not abuse the science to make some excuse for escaping from the problem. This is very important point. The purpose of science is to give perfect interpretation to our life as much as possible. To give some interpretation of our life, as much as possible is purpose of science. But it is the interpretation of our life, not life itself. Our purpose is to accept our life, and use the scientific truth, because it gives us the clear interpretation of our life, within the possibility in the most perfect way possible. So, scientific truth will help us a lot, but we should know that it is not perfect. And perfect knowledge of our life already we have, but we don't know. It is difficult to give some interpretation of our life, so we should study science—not to escape from the difficulty we have. So, in our study, the most important point is self-confidence to live in this world, to survive in this world as a human being. This is most important point. Not as some supernatural being, but just as human being. This is the most important thing to practice right zazen, transmitted from Buddha to us.

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