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This lecture was the source for the chapter of *Not Always So* called "Wherever I Go, I Meet Myself" on p. 107.

Most of us, maybe, want to know what is self. This is a big problem. Why you have this problem is—I want to understand [laughs] why you have this problem. I'm trying to understand. And even though, it seems to me, even though you try to understand who are you, it is an endless trip, and you will never see your self.

You say to sit without thinking too much is difficult. Just to sit is difficult. But more difficult thing will be to try to think about your self [laughs]. This is much more difficult. To do it is maybe easy, but to have some conclusion to it is almost impossible, and you will continue it until you become crazy [laughs, laughter]. That is, when you don't know what to do with your self. Or when you don't know, when you find out it is impossible to know who you are, you become crazy.

Moreover, your culture is based on the idea of self and science and Christianity [laughs]. So those elements, idea of Christianity or sinful idea of Christianity or, idea of science, scientific-oriented mind, make your confusion greater. You try to always, when you sit—perhaps most of you sit to improve your zazen. That idea to improve is a very Christian-like idea and, at the same time, a scientific idea: to improve. You acknowledge some improvement of our culture or civilization. We understand our civilization has improved a lot. But when we say "scientific" in sense of science, or "improve," it means before you went to Japan by ship, now you go by airplane or jumbo [laughs] plane. That is improvement.

So when you say "some improvement," it includes the idea of value. And that is at the same time, the base of our framework of our society and economy. Now I understand you are rejecting that kind of idea of civilization. But you do not reject the idea of improvement. You still try to improve something.

And I think in Christianity all the improvements of civilization should be the end. When the Last (what do you call it?) Last Judgment—when you are judged, when what you have done is judged by God [laughs], you should go to hell [laughs, laughter]. You have made an atomic bomb, so you should go to [laughs] hell. You invented jumbo jet plane, so you should go [laughs, laughter] to hell. And when you go—that is the end of everything. So our society has some end. When we have end, you can say "improvement." You are improving our civilization just to go to hell [laughs]. That is improvement according to the Christian.

My friend George Hagiwara¹ has a very Christian-oriented mind. He criticizes always people, scientists, who are trying to go to the moon. Someday all of us must go to hell [laughs] by trying that kind of thing [laughs, laughter], he always says to me. At first I couldn't understand what he meant, actually. Now I have some clear understanding of how he feels. He believes in the Last Judgment of God.

What I am talking about is the idea of improvement, which we Buddhists do not have so much. Nowadays in Japan or in China, all the people are trying to improve their way of life. We are deeply involved in the idea of improvement of something—to improve something. This element, or idea of to practice—when you practice zazen, you maybe try to improve yourself, and you want to know yourself more, in a psychological way. That is why you are involved in—interested in psychology so much.

Psychology will tell you about your psychological things, but psychology will not tell you exactly who you are [laughs]. It is one of the many interpretations of your mind. One of the many. So if you go to a psychologist or psychiatrist, endlessly you will have new information about [laughs] you [laughs]. Endless. So as long as you are going, maybe you feel some release. You feel as if all the psychological burden you have, you will be released from the burden you carry by a psychologist, or by a psychiatrist. But, the way we understand [laughs] ourselves is quite different from that kind of understanding.

This morning I want to introduce Tōzan's famous saying. Tōzan,² the founder of Chinese Sōtō school, said, "Don't try to see yourself," maybe, objectively. Maybe we can say "scientific way." He didn't say so, but, "Don't try to see something which was given to you." In other words, don't try to see some information about you which is given to you by some objective truth. That is information.

He says the real you is quite different from the information you will have. Real you is not that kind of thing. "I go by myself my own way," he says [laughs]. "I go by myself in my own way. Wherever I see, I meet with myself. Wherever I go, I meet myself." [laughs] So, he rejects that kind of effort to try to be, try to cling to the information about yourself. But you should, he says, go alone with your legs. Or you should, in other words, you should practice our way with people. Whatever people may say [laughs], you should go your way, and you should practice with people.

¹ One of the Japanese-American members of the Soko-ji congregation. The Hagiwara family were, before WWII, caretakers of the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco. George's father was said to have been appointed by Emperor Meiji.

² Tōzan Ryōkai (Chin. Dongshan Liangjie or Tung-shan Liang-chieh, 807-869): Chan master of the Tang period.

This is another point. "With people" is another point. It means to meet yourself is to practice with people. To meet yourself. You will see yourself in someone's practice. If you see someone practicing hard, you will see yourself. You say, if you are impressed by someone's practice, "Oh, she is doing very well." That "she" is not she or you. Something more than that. "Oh, she is doing very well," [laughs]. What is "she"? After thinking for a while, "Oh, she is there [laughs], I am here." But when you are struck, when you are impressed by her practice, that "her" is not you or she. When you see it, when you're struck by it, that is actually the real you [laughs]. "You" is—tentatively I say "you," but that "you" is the pure experience of our practice. As long as you are trying to improve yourself [laughs], having some core idea of self, trying to improve yourself, that is wrong practice. That is not the practice we mean.

When you empty your mind, when you give up everything and just practice zazen with your open mind, whatever you see, that is to meet yourself. There there is "you," you which is beyond she or he or me. So as long as you are clinging to the idea of self and trying to improve your practice, trying to find out something, or to see an improved self, a better self, or to find a better practice, then your practice has gone astray. You have no time to reach the goal, so eventually you will be tired out, or you will say, "Zen is no good. [Laughs.] I practiced zazen for ten years, but I didn't [laughs] gain anything!" [Laughs, laughter.] But if you just come here and sit with sincere students and find yourself among them, then that is, if you continue in that way, our practice. That is our practice. And this kind of experience could be everywhere. As Tōzan said, "Wherever I go, I meet with myself." If he sees water, that is he himself. Even though he cannot see himself in the water, to see water is enough for him.

I don't want to criticize someone's religion, Christianity or anything, but if you do not understand the nature of the religion you believe in, you will be lost. Even though you are a very good Christian, you say you are a very good Christian, or—even though people say you are good Christian, but you will be lost if you don't understand how to be a good Christian. The teaching is good, but when you don't understand the real teaching, you will be lost. So actually for a Christian, if you go to church and do this or [laughs] you don't do this [probably making a gesture] [laughs, laughter]. I don't know this way or that way or [laughter]—that is enough [laughs]. There is complete liberation. You are saved at that time. Because you pray to God for something [laughs], you cannot save yourself. Actually, when you are already saved, you say you pray for His help [laughs]. That is why you cannot be a good Christian.

So how you understand yourself is not to understand yourself objectively or try to cling to the information from various sources. If people say you are crazy—"Okay, I am crazy." [Laughs.] If people say you are a bad student, "Okay, maybe so I am a bad student, but I am trying pretty hard." That is enough. In this way, when you continue or when you sit in that way,

accepting yourself and accepting everything with yourself, when you are involved in various silly problems, you should sit with the problems you have. You know, that is you at that time. When you try to get out of it, out of them, that is already wrong practice. If you cling to some idea created by you, like self or some objective world, you will be lost in the objective world which you created by your mind. You are creating one after another [laughs], so there is no end. Maybe there are many kinds of worlds, and you are creating. To create it may be very interesting—to see many things is very interesting, but you should not be lost in it.

Another side of our practice is we try to think and we try to act. We do not try to be like a stone. For us, our everyday life is our practice. Instead of being enslaved by thinking mind or imagination or emotional activity, we just think in its true sense. Thinking mind, thinking activity, comes out from true self, which includes everything.

Before we think in our practice, trees are thinking and birds are thinking and everything is thinking. And when they think, they grow—they sing. That is their thinking. There is no need for us to think [laughs], more than that. If you see things as it is, that is thinking. Already we are thinking. This kind of pure thinking is the thinking mind we have in our practice, so we have always freedom from ourselves too. And we can see things as it is. At the same time, we can think about things.

For us there is no truth or no falsehood because we have no particular standard for our thinking, standard to which we cling to. [*The preceding sentence was finished by Suzuki-rōshi, but the rest of the lecture was not recorded on tape. A handwritten note was enclosed with the original tape containing a summary of the missing conclusion:* Before you ask for *dokusan* with me, start your own practice. Stand on your own feet. Then I can help you. If you want to find out about yourself, maybe better to go to someone else. They will tell you many interesting things.]

Source: City Center transcript plus handwritten note enclosed with original tape. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Verbatim transcript checked against tape by Bill Redican 8/6/01. Lightly edited for readability by Gordon Geist (12/08/04).