

page 1

4 dec 71 lecture, dec sesshin, san francisco

baker-roshi

Baker-roshi

A story I've always liked is about Chuwantsu, one of the founders of Taoism in China. Or of course Laotse who supposedly ~~was~~ ^{wrote} the Tao Te Ching, and the most famous person who came after him is a man named Chwantsu. Actually I think maybe, I'm not sure who came after whom, but traditionally Chwantsu came after Laotse. And Chwantse's wife died and a friend came to his little house after hearing the news and Chwantse was behind the house, he found him behind the house, sitting banging on a bowl, and singing. And his friend said, how can you, after your wife just died, how can you sit there and bang on that bowl. And Chwantse said something like, well I lived a full life with her and she had a good life and now she's gone, and so. . . But I'm sure that every day he didn't bang on the bowl. ^{That was} ~~xx~~ some expression of his grief

And this morning I noticed even though we continued our sesshin, and continued our practice and our regular meal, we banged on the bowls a lot in breakfast this morning. There was quite a lot of noise of people dropping things and not picking things up quite right. So Suzuki-roshi who taught us so much steadiness, even when we ~~tried~~ ^{try} to follow his way, there's some. . . particularly today. . . no matter how we try all our life, there will always be some banging on the bowl. But of course we should still try as carefully as we can to continue Suzuki-roshi's practice. He's given us so much I'm sure we can.

The other day I went to his room to talk to him about something. I guess he asked if I would come every day and say good morning or something. Some days I hadn't come because he was so unwell that it was an effort for him to see people, ~~and~~ so I'd miss some days. And he asked that I should come anyway. ^{So} ~~and~~ I went and, so maybe 3 or 4 days ago I saw pretty clearly that he was getting less well, and he

SR
very very few days

2

was. . .at this point we had some brief conversation, and he was getting so he was unable to talk. And the questions I had about something, or he wanted to talk to me about, I really had to talk to his wife, Okusan. And I can't remember exactly how the conversation went but Okusan said he can't hear so well and its so difficult for him to talk now. So I turned to him and I said, where will I meet you? And he looked at me and he went (describing a circle with one hand and gasshoing hand). And I returned the bow.

So that's where we'll meet him. We'll meet him all the time.

I was going to talk about, because actually sesshin is five days and ther's five precepts I was going to talk about the five precepts, each day one.

And the first precept is #Do not take life."

Correct

Page 2
3

3

And . . .but before we can know what it means to not take life we have to know what life is. Do any of you actually know what your life is? We think, Buddhists think, if you don't practice zazen or don't have some kind of practice, you don't actually have your life. Without practice you are taking your own life. So if . . . the principle meaning of that precept is don't take your own life. And of course if your idea of life is an idea or some thinking about things or some plans for the future or past and not this, then you've taken your life. Suzuki-roshi, when he's talked about the precepts himself, he says actually there's one precept and it's this. And how we divide it into 10 or 16 or 8 or . . . is really not possible. There's only one precept.

I really don't have much to say. I hope we can keep before us in this sesshin this one precept. And as you practice zazen, and sesshins are pretty difficult even if you've been doing them a long time they're pretty difficult, who is it that's practicing zazen, and what is it that you feel ~~xxxx~~ while you're practicing zazen? Is that life? What is life?

Does anybody have any questions about anything?

4

(Student): Could you explain more about how not practicing is taking your own life?

Baker-roshi: Your life is. . .the more unconditioned your life is. . .not some specific limitation of. . .the more your life's/ nirvana and samsara are the same and nirvana means unconditioned. So the more you life is limited by conditions the more you don't have any life. So. . .of course your life finds its expression in conditions, as we banged o the bowls this morning during breakfast. But if we practice zazen, ~~is~~ we practice in sesshin like this, we can find some freedom from conditions.

never
(something about fully realizing. . .
Student: The meaning behind the words death as a part of life?)

Baker-roshi: I can't ever fully understand anything, but . . .life and death are not different. If you have some experience of life and practice. then death is not. . .it's not so difficult for Suzuki-roshi to say what he ~~said~~ said. It's ^{for} easy. . .I don't know, easy is not such a good word, but it's not so difficult to give up the conditioned things of our life. Each moment, you know, actually we're born out of emptiness. If you think you're born from ^{the} ~~an~~past cause, of course there's some connection between, but as Dogen Zengi said, ash is ash charcoal is charcoal. [^] ^{is} and ~~fixxxxxxxxixxxxxxxx~~ So charcoal ~~is~~ charcoal. And oaktree is oaktree. Oaktree is not just acorn or air or water. Oak tree is just oaktree. We can't find the causes. So each moment our life is based on death.

Student: Last week you said Sambogakaya Buddha. What is this Sambogakaya [?] ~~Buddha~~?

Baker-roshi: Suzuki-roshi is Sambhogakaya Buddha, or Dharmakaya Buddha ⁵
 Um, Buddhism has an elaborate ikonography of various Buddhas. And
 Hinayana Buddha or Theravadan Buddhism. . . or Southeast Asian Buddhism
 has the idea of . . . supposedly, from the Mahayana point of view. ~~xx id~~ ha
 Buddha as a man. And you worship Buddha as a man. And you practi
 to become Buddha in the way Buddha is a man. And Mahayana Buddhism
 says a Buddha couldn't arise if the potential for being a Buddha wasn'
 there. So Mahayana Buddhism worships or calls Buddha the potential
 for being a Buddha, or emptiness out of which we arise. So Buddha
 arises out of emptiness. Or Buddha arises out of the potential to be
 a Buddha.

So to give some form to this, or way we can experience it in our
 conditioned way, there are many Buddhas. The most cosmic Buddha for
 most of a
 Mahayana ~~xxxx~~ is Vairochana Buddha and he's Dharmakaya Buddha or con-
 sidered to be all things. And the Tibetan schools often call the
 most cosmic Buddha Vajdrasattva or Vajradattu. Same idea. But
 Vajdrasattva is perhaps in such deep contemplation that you can't
 even worship him, or you can't. . . there's no image of him. You don'
 disturb him with even making a form for him. They have that idea.

So to express this and express the aspects of this, compassion
 and various aspects.
 and wisdom, Mahayana has many kinds of Buddhas. Zen has gone back to
 the man Buddha. But in a little different way from the Hinayana or
 Theravadan way. Zen has gone back to the man by emphasizing the three
 bodies of Buddha, Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. So Vairochar
 Buddha would be a Dharmakaya Buddha. Nirvana you can say is the sam
 as Dharmakaya Buddha. But it's Mahayana still in the sense that it
 talks about the potential to be Buddha. It talks about it ~~xxxxxxx~~
 from the point of view of our own realization, our own potential to be
 Buddha. So there's not a progress from an ordinary human being, and
 you practice more and more and you become Buddha. But rather when

when you cut off conditioned things there's Dharmakaya Buddha. And maybe our slight experience of it, of emptiness or samadhi, is, maybe we can call Samboghakaya Buddha. So that's the overlap, that's the potential, that's the experience for us. And our activity in the world then is Nirmanakaya Buddha.

Student: As we grow up. . . we see a lot of our friends go into business (or something?) etcetera, and for some of ~~us~~ ^{them} it's like watching them die (or something unintelligible)? Is it possible to slowly die in that way. . . (something the study of Buddhism?)

Baker-roshi: I suppose so, sure. If you're not really studying Buddhism it's possible. Buddhism is a practice which. . . it isn't actually some thing. It's a practice which warns you. If you're a business man that is right livelihood. So the precepts, or the eightfold path, and the various rules about life are to warn us not to be caught by conditioned things. So, of course you can be anything, a businessman or whatever occupation, you know, but some occupations are more. . . "catch" you more than others. Suzuki-roshi always. . . one way of interpreting the precept don't intoxicate yourself, or don't alter or cloud your mind. Another way of looking at that from your own point of view is don't sell intoxicants. So if you're. . . as Suzuki-roshi always said, ^{so} don't sell Buddhism. Because if you push Buddhism as an intoxicant to excite people or something like that. . . so if you're maybe a liquor store dealer maybe it's more difficult, I don't know; liquor so I don't know.

But
Anyway, traditionally in Buddhism there are certain rules which say if you have this kind of life or if you do this kind of thing you're more likely to be caught by conditioned things than if you do something else. If you steal, you know, you're more likely to be caught by conditioned things if you try to take what other people have, you

8
together, you know. Maybe you're putting it back together when you eat. There's no answer for that kind, for your question. . . you just have to make some choice. There are many choices, you know. I know for a while I tried every time I saw broken glass on the sidewalk or street or a paper, I picked it up. And I was quite careful about it. But then. . . I did nothing pretty soon but pick up paper and broken glass, you know. And the city didn't even pay me. So. . . I had no other occupation. So I decided that it wouldn't work, you know, that I had to draw the line somewhere. So I decided for myself if there's broken glass in the street and it's going to give somebody a flat tire, I'll stop. But maybe if it's in the middle of a freeway and I'll probably get killed stopping in the middle of the freeway, I won't do it.

In some neighborhoods it's more difficult than others, you just have to look away, in some neighborhoods, because the whole neighborhood is broken glass or something. But anyway you have to just for yourself make some distinction. You can look into Buddhist texts, and there are many rules about the higher order of being, and how complicated and what line, and you. . . there's more demerits if you kill a cow rather than a blade of grass, and if you kill a human being, if you kill one that's not . . . who's not a developed human being or not a priest or something, it's not so bad as killing a priest, you know. . . and, I don't know. . . I can't make such distinctions. So for yourself you have to make some distinction about walking around. . . I mean, our whole society puts cement down on everything. My own, my way, I try to live in a way which might maybe in the long run will encourage people not to put so much cement down. But I can't do much about it, you know.

Student: could you tell us something about Roshi's burial? His funeral services?

Reverend-roshi: I went today to the funeral home with Suzuki-roshi and

Funeral

they will prepare. clean his body, or whatever they do. I've asked them not to use any particular cosmetics and things. And so starting from Monday, from 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., it will be possible at Martin and Brown, I guess that's the name of it, on Van Ness it's about, I think between Clay and Jackson, ^{maybe,} on Van Ness ... you'll be able to go and see him, and offer incense, and Sunday, next Sunday, a week from tomorrow, there will be a ceremony here in this building, at 10 o'clock for him.

Now traditionally in Japan the ceremonies are at night. Whether we will do an additional ceremony in the, at Saturday night, I don't know at this point. I'll have to discuss that with Suzuki-roshi's son Hoichi-san, when he comes. And then Monday after the ceremony here Suzuki-roshi will be cremated.

Student: Why is a sesshin given after a roshi's death in a monastery?

Taker-roshi: I don't know exactly if it's always done or only sometimes done. I know it is sometimes done. No reason except to express ... I think, anyway, no reason except to express your feeling and ... but there are services related to a 49-day period and so traditionally in Japan you have ceremonies at the end of a 49-day period and at various intervals during it, and occasionally, though I don't know how often, sesshin is done for 49-days. And that, I don't know all of the history about the 49 days. My mind is like a sieve, you know, and I read about these lists and hear about them over the years and I always forget everything. And so all the information about the 49 days most that I've been exposed to, I forget, unless I have something that makes me recall it. Primarily, at least in Tibetan Buddhism, and in Japanese Buddhism I'm not sure how conscious they are of this, but it's related to the 49 days in the Bardo in which there are 49 days of possible times when you can get various kinds of possible rebirth

funeral

Sesshin after death

and I guess the period extends 49 days, so there's . . . 49. This ¹⁰ morning we rang the bell 49 times. And we haven't made any decision yet but I think we may, since we have a . . . our ordinary life to go on with, and breakfast to have in the morning, we probably will not have a 49 day sesshin here. But we may have sitting every morning starting earlier, say, maybe we'll start at 3 a.m. for those who want to observe for Roshi for maybe 49 days. Right now I don't know.

Student: I don't understand about conditioned and unconditioned.

Baker-roshi: I don't either. The han you hear, clack clack clack, the han traditionally has written on the back of it something which in Japanese must sound. . . it ~~xxxxxxx~~ probably has some rhythm. . . but in English it roughly translates into: The problem of life and death is a serious one. And the problem of what conditioned and unconditioned is, is a serious one. But when you practice zazen more, you know, and your ordinary mind and thinking and activity which goes from cause to cause to cause begins to cease, you know. You'll have some idea of what unconditioned means.

Student: Is there such a thing as too much practice? Or would you say it's becoming aware that you're trying to practice.

Baker-roshi: What would you call too much practice?

Student: Perhaps getting compulsive about zazen.

Baker-roshi: Well, that's one reason we had breakfast this morning. Suzuki-roshi has always emphasized you should practice each moment as if you were in a sesshin. With that kind of awareness and attention. So zazen is just to help you and actually zazen is just to check up check up. When you find that your being in sesshin is not much different from ~~xxxx~~ everyday life your practice maybe is going along ok. But if you find to enter a sesshin is a big difference between your ordinary life then that shows you, that's checking up ^{for} you. It shows you that actually you're not practicing fully with some attention.

to what you're doing one thing at a time. . . just doing that one thing completely, without loose ends. And so your zazen checks up in that way. But if you think life is to just sit in zazen all day, that doesn't have any meaning, you know. Though there may be a time in each of our lives where a lot of zazen helps us. And certainly I think that all of us are so conditioned that to do zazen once a day or twice a day all your life, is not very much. It's pretty good to do at least once a day or twice a day, all your life. Not so hard to do.

Student: Sometimes I, I don't know, I more or less have begun zazen comparatively ~~fairly~~ recently. . . and it seem^{ed} like everytime I did zazen once in a day for 50 minutes or however long it is, there's a certain kind of mind feeling that's associated with it. And I notice, and this is also my first sesshin, and I notice that that feeling doesn't come . . . and I wonder if there's a particular reason for that or.

Baker-roshi: Doesn't come or does come?

Student: Doesn't come.

Baker-roshi: Oh. Well, the trouble with fine feelings is generally we look for them with an unfine mind. The problem is often your zazen . . . you may be having some really fine feeling which you don't even perceive, so. Or even the difficulty may be the fine feeling. The pain may be actually the fine feeling. So we don't actually think about whether it's good zazen or bad zazen, or fine feeling or not fine feeling. And if you get involved in that your practice stops pretty quickly. If you get involved in grasping, in wanting to have what some . . . then that's your ego at work, and the whole point is to let go of that kind of activity.

Student: (some thing like): It's not necessary^{ily wanting} to have that fine feeling. . . but an idea that I have that if I was really concentrating and so forth that that feeling would occur. That's not necessarily so

12

Baker-roshi: No, that's not necessarily so. When you don't notice much difference between fine feeling and not fine feeling, then, ok. So . . . anyway, ok.

A few days ago I told Suzuki-roshi that we would do this sesshin for him. And let's do it for him. ^{And} Let's make a real effort to practice with some clarity and awareness in our practice all the time. Thank you very much.

Tranac)