

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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by Justin Stone

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Good evening. I want you to know that this is not going to be an earth-shaking evening. It's just a casual visit and a chance to give you a few of my views on what constitutes the spiritual life and perhaps how you can integrate it into your everyday life. If anybody gets bored with what I am saying, he can get his money back at the door [laughter, since this talk is free of charge], so you are not taking any chances.

My view of what constitutes the spiritual life is perhaps different from what many people feel it is. In the first place, I don't think it can be confused with the moral and ethical life. I'm all for morality and I'm all for ethical conduct. But it is quite possible for somebody to treat others well and to live in a moral way without in any way being spiritual.

Spirituality, as far as I'm concerned, is being in accord with Reality and I don't mean the reality of having to pay your rent or something of that nature. As Guy [Kent] said, "Seijaku says that there can be serenity right in the midst of the activity." In Minnesota recently, at the T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Conference, I talked about merging sense with essence – merging sense with essence – that right in the world of the senses we can be aware of the essence.

This lesson first came home to me many years ago, probably in the early 1960's, when I was living up near Laksmanjula, in India at an Indian ashram. I was living with the Yogis, eating once a day, freezing, and meditating a great deal. And one day I suddenly remembered what a Zen priest had told me when I had lived at Chotoku-in in Kyoto, Japan. Ogata-san, the Zen priest there, got angry or annoyed with me one day and said, "Stone-san, anybody can be the small hermit. Be the big hermit." And there I was being the small hermit up in the Himalayan foothills, doing nothing but spiritual practice, and I couldn't care less what was happening in the world. And suddenly that came to me: "Be the big hermit, not the small hermit." And I thought, "I should be able to do this at 42nd and Broadway [in New York City]." And the next day I left.

Since then, more and more, it's become apparent to me that the merging of sense and essence is important. It isn't a case of, as Milarepa said, "Let's get away to the Himalayas where we can get away from all the disturbances." So often I hear people say, "Oh if I could only get away from the children or the office or this and that... then I could practice the spiritual life." But that isn't the way

that I see spirituality now. I see it from the standpoint of the big hermit. In the first place, from let's say the Zen standpoint, what is needed is nonattachment. And nonattachment, in Buddha's terms, really translates to void. Void doesn't mean nothingness, but it does mean recognizing the emptiness of things and recognizing that even our hardships, even our problems, are at heart empty.

Of course in true Zen practice there comes a feeling of non-duality, oneness of things. Zen people explain it this way: When the horse in Szechuan catches cold, the cow in Hunan sneezes. But this is not done by getting away, because the hermit who goes to the desert or to the mountains, as did the renunciate in Anatole Frances' *Thais*, carries his mind with him. The farther this man got away, the more he had sexual dreams and fantasies and everything. And you can't get away from it physically. There has to be a change in mind, a change in way of thinking.

Let me tell you a little story about what I mean by nonattachment, not being attached to things. It doesn't mean not caring and it doesn't mean indifference. There was a great Zen master who was dying. He was lying in bed and sitting next to him was his great disciple, the one who would be his successor when he died. And the disciple said to the master, "Get well quickly because we want you to give a talk on the Buddha's birthday." The master said, "Supposing I don't get well?" And the disciple said, "Well then we'll get somebody else." The master said, "Supposing you can't get someone else?" And the disciple countered, "Don't talk a lot of nonsense. Just turn around and go to sleep." Now, that may seem like a very callous conversation but underneath is a great love, a great love between these two, maybe greater than any other relationship could be. But, there was no attachment with it. When the master said, "Supposing I don't get well," and the disciple responded, "Then we'll get somebody else," it was a simple factual statement recognizing that people do pass on. But life goes on and there will be somebody else. This seems to me to be the key feature in defining a spiritual life and bringing it in into your own everyday life without having to get away to the Himalayan foothills.

Unless one recognizes impermanence and accords with it, there can be no happiness in this life. You know, "I have a beautiful wife, I am doing very well in business, I have a swimming pool, two lovely obedient children. Will my wife always be lovely, and will the children always be obedient, and will I always have the swimming pool and will I always be prosperous?" Life doesn't work like that. And yet, people tend to feel that if they can acquire a certain status, a certain way of life, that it will be permanent. Most people live as though they never expect to die. They live as though they are immortal, while knowing that they are not

immortal. We talk about fifteen years from now, and yet I might not wake up tomorrow morning. If I don't wake up tomorrow morning, that'll be no great loss. I had a good life, we'd say. But if you can recognize the impermanence and recognize that there is this possibility and not fight with it, then you can live every day as though it's your last day. And if you live every day as though it's your last day, it's going to be a very happy life. If someone told you that you have fifteen days to live, you'd probably make them fifteen very full days, unless you were worried about the stock market going down. So, this is the way we have to do it.

So the key to a happy life, it seems to me, is to recognize impermanence and to accord with it. And this is analogous to a situation very often described: You are a traveler who comes to an inn, and you settle down comfortably for the night. You have a good meal; you go to bed in a comfortable bed. But you know you are going to travel on the next morning. You don't get confused and feel that you're always going to be at the inn. Truthfully we are all travelers at an inn, ready to pass on, in one sense, the following day. Unless that impermanence is recognized, there's going to be suffering. A wife has a husband, and the husband becomes ill, and there's the threat that the husband might not live, and she is frantic. We have to ask from a psychological point of view: Is she frantic for him or is she frantic because of what she faces after he passes on (which is a different question that we won't deal with.) But she is distraught because he may pass on, yet it is in the nature of things to pass on.

The *Book of Changes*, the *I Ching*, says, "The only thing permanent is change." The person who looks in the mirror every day as he or she grows older, hoping that on this particular day he or she will look the way he or she looked twenty years ago, is trying to stop the flow of time. Some people try through operations. But that's not leading a very spiritual life. And without a spiritual background, or what I have called "The Growth of Certainty" in my book *Abandon Hope*, I don't care if you make a lot of money, become famous, earn all sorts of applause... yours is not going to be a fulfilling life.

When I was in the financial world, I came across many people of great wealth. And there were only two that I can remember who had any contentment at all. The first was a man named Gooding, who was the head of a very big brokerage firm and who managed to live that very difficult life, solving all problems and worries, and combining it with a very ardent Zen Buddhist life. He was a true Zen Buddhist. When he died, he left a half million dollars to the University of Chicago to set up a Department of Buddhism and he gave money to various other causes. He was able to integrate the spiritual life with the life he had.

I remember one particular incident involving a Japanese Roshi, a Zen master, who came to this country frequently and who needed money to help set up a center here. One time we were at dinner – Mr. Gooding, Roshi, and myself – and I thought very cleverly that I would bring the conversation around to where I could interest Gooding in making a donation to Roshi. I don't think that way anymore, but at that time I was scheming. I could rationalize, "Oh, it's not for my benefit," but the mind that is scheming and shrewd is not the straightforward mind. The straightforward mind is the spiritual mind. But as soon as I brought up the idea of an endowment, Roshi immediately saw what my aim was and he stopped and said, "Stone-san! This man has his teacher. He has had his awakening. That's it!" And when Roshi says, "That's it," that's it. You don't go on after that. It wasn't important that I speak about Roshi getting some money. Gooding had had an awakening and apparently it was a true awakening because he kept it the rest of his life without abandoning the worldly life he had made.

I don't think his death was a very difficult one for him because, being a Zen Buddhist, having had an awakening through the Zen meditation and so forth, having had a *satori* experience, perhaps *kensho*, which is the seeing of your own true nature, he was prepared to pass on at any time. As one Pope put it, "My bags are packed all the time." If you can live with your bags packed all the time, you're going to live much more fully than you would otherwise.

I hesitate to bring up this point because most people resent nonattachment and they resent impermanence. Whether you resent impermanence or not, two things are certain: one, you're going to die; and two, it's going to take a dollar twenty-five cents to get on a New York subway. You can be sure of both of those. The idea of impermanence must be at the start of the spiritual life. Of course many Indian scriptures, and scriptures from everywhere else, have spoken about this but they've spoken about it in different terms. One side of your life, the body, passes away and many people take literally these ideas and make more unhappiness for themselves. They draw up a blueprint for some other place where they and their loved ones will meet in this physical body and live through eternity together. My question to that is: Supposing that you die at the age of 103? Does it seem very fair that you're going to live through eternity in a body that is 103 years old? Then they'll make up something else to address this. That's not the true meaning of a spiritual outlook. But when there is the "Growth of Certainty" within you, then you know. And you begin to ally yourself with what is, not with individuality. This is the great difference between psychiatry/psychology and spiritual practice.

Psychology, or psychiatry, is trying to strengthen the ego so that you can face the world and the world's problems in a much better manner. Maybe it's necessary, I don't know. The problem with that is that in strengthening the ego, you're strengthening the self-clinging and it is the self-clinging which is the opposite of adapting to impermanence. Self-clinging is the very nature of suffering. "I... I... I... The universe revolves around me, and I must continue in this way. I must be prosperous. I... I... I..." Each statement starts with "I." This is quite different from the way that things may be seen. So, I'm a little skeptical of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and other things that may help but are a band-aid to allaying temporary suffering while creating conditions that will bring new suffering.

What do I mean by this? Some students once came to see me on the Monterey Peninsula. There was a T'ai Chi Chih teacher in Santa Clara who had called and asked if she could bring five pupils down to meet me. I have a little garden, and as always happens in a first conversation, somebody said, "What do you think of..." (– I call it transmigration –) "reincarnation," a bad term. I responded that I'd first have to ask, "What is it that reincarnates?" "Oh, the soul." And I said, "The soul, oh, the sole of my feet." But she didn't mean that. And I wasn't quite sure what she meant. But when she said, "reincarnation," I said, "Is this what you mean: There is a tree in the courtyard there. It's autumn. The leaves are falling. It is in the nature of things that leaves fall in autumn." One time I wrote a poem that said, "Suffer the leaves to fall in autumn." And Paul Reps crossed out the last two words and wrote back, "A little too preachy." So the poem was "Suffer the leaves to fall." So I said to the woman, "Do you mean that these leaves fall in autumn? Because these leaves will come back in the springtime." And she said, "Oh, but they won't be the same leaves." And I said, "Why identify with the leaves? Why not identify with the tree?" That is spirituality. That takes away the sting of death, or any other sting, if you can identify with the tree.

This means gradually seeing things in a more impersonal way – not seeing everything from the standpoint of, "Is this good for me? Is this bad for me? What is pleasurable? What is not pleasurable? I want to stay away from that." Life becomes a pleasure-pain syndrome. We want that which pleases us, and we want to stay away from that which displeases us. How about getting to the point where all peoples' sorrows are yours, all peoples' joys are yours? In fact, the joy of living...

Paul Reps said, "I feel the equal of every blade of grass." And when somebody asked Paul why he didn't have any children, it was a false assumption but very few people know it. Paul answered, "All children are my children." It's a very good answer.

Now, if you make that statement and really say it, it has deep meaning.

So I would say the starting point of the spiritual life must come from recognition of impermanence. In some disciplines, it is attained by finding that which is permanent. Those of you who have listened to music from India know that there is one instrument with a steady drone underneath – on just one note. Are most of you aware of that? Then, against that, the soloists improvise; it's almost like jazz in some ways. That steady instrument is the one thing that is unchanging, whereas teachers advise, "Know that one thing by which all things are known." That is what I mean by the "Growth of Certainty." Know that one thing. Don't imagine that one thing.

I thought very highly of Brother Lawrence but the idea of constantly imagining the presence of God – that isn't the word that he used – feeling the presence of God... One time when I was in an Indian ashram and in charge of a *satsang*, I talked about that and said, "Why do you have to imagine the presence of God? Every word you hear, everything you do, the air you breathe, the fact that your heart is beating, shows the presence of God, if you are so inclined to refer to God. You can refer to many other things. Why do you have to imagine it?" In my life, I believe that every word said to me is the word of God, and therefore it is very easy to fool me. I trust people and if somebody isn't honest with me, it's very easy to get away with it because I'll believe that person. So you don't have to *imagine* the presence of God. In the ashram, all around are signs that say, "Above all, find God." When I was in charge of the *satsang*, I said, "You're wasting your time. You can't find God. God is not an object. If God was an object, there would be a duality: here you were and here was God. Who was doing the searching? Everything that you do speaks of God, so how are you at all apart from God?" In other words, you recognize what is without trying to find something.

I have met many, in the course of my life (be it in Japan, Chinese cities, other places, and in the West), who had chosen to lead an isolated spiritual life (either as a monk, a nun, and so forth), who were very tortured because they were looking for God and they expected God to present himself in some sort of a vision or in some way. They became terribly disappointed if it didn't happen. And if it did happen, and they were at all wise, they knew this was the working of their own mind.

You may have visions, you may have apparitions, according to your background, the way that you have been brought up. If you are a Christian, there will be a Christian vision. If you're a Hindu, it might be Rama, it might be Krishna and so forth. There's validity to it – if you have a vision – but it is the product of your own mind.

So once again you come back to the cultivation of that mind. Cultivation strengthens the mind, and there are many ways it can be done.

In Zen, the idea is to get to a point where you recognize who and what you are Now. "I am Buddha, right here as I stand." But that's a concept, that's a statement which doesn't mean anything. To recognize who and what you are now, there's no search, there's no torture, nothing. Not many get to that point. On the other hand, classic yoga, which I think of as a path to perfection, is a way to complete perfection. It's a path of becoming, but nobody ever reaches complete perfection. So you're on an endless path which will strengthen the mind very greatly. It will make the mind one-pointed, but you will never reach an absolute goal.

Neither of these practices, contrary to most opinion, is meant to help you at all in your everyday life. In other words, "If I practice Yoga, I will make more money. I will get a better position. I'll find a better husband. I'll do this and that." Coincidentally, they may happen, but that certainly is not the purpose. Again, the purpose is always to find out who and what you are. That is the spiritual task. Who and what you are. You say, "I have a great many troubles and a lot of doubts." Who has these doubts? No matter how you state it, a teacher is going to bring it back to that point. You say, "I don't believe this. I'm an atheist." Who is the atheist? You say, "My name is so and so." What is that name? Again, you're coming back to who and what you are – which is the spiritual task.

If it is your calling it can be done in isolation, as I tried to do for quite some time. Or it can be done in the midst of the everyday life, in which in the world of the senses, you are aware of the essence. One good way to become aware of the essence in the midst of all this activity is, amidst certain troubles or over activity, to hold your breath briefly. Let your breath out and just listen – but listen from the inside, listen from the heart. What are you going to hear? It isn't important what you hear. I'm interested in the listening not in the hearing. So I'm in the midst of all this activity and I listen. This is a very good way and it's something that you can use, I believe, with quite some profit. If you are aware of essence, right in the midst of your troubles, then this "Growth of Certainty" will be there and you'll have no doubt about who and what you are.

There's a wonderful saying I often quote in the Buddhist Sutra, the *Lotus Sutra*, which really knocks me out: "From a state of emptiness..." People don't understand that it means from a state of nonattachment. "From a state of emptiness, man's body is a body filling the universe; man's voice is a voice pervading the universe; man's life is a life without limit." I want to repeat that because it's such a sublime statement. "From a state of emptiness, man's body

is a body filling the universe; man's voice is a voice pervading the universe; man's life is a life without limit." Wouldn't you call that a message of hope? If you understand that, you truly understand who and what you are.

But it can be put a different way. Tenko-san, a great man in Japan, founded something called Ittoen, which is entirely devoted to service. When Tenko-san was asked, "Who are you," he said, "A smooth breeze blowing over the water." He didn't answer it directly. He knew what he was – he was the smooth breeze blowing over the water. There was no hesitation in the answer at all. Who and what you are answers the problem. And in order to find out who and what you are, you must recognize and accord with impermanence. Whether you like it or don't like it, you will die. Whether you like it or don't like it, you may get sick.

One time, when I was working with a Japanese healing church and I did get ill, it was a recurring thing. One of the ministers of that church said to me, "The next time it comes, don't curse it; bless it." They look on illness as purification, and I believe our whole life is a purification. If you can look on your life as being impermanent and being a purification – there must be physical purification for there to be spiritual purification – if you can look on your life as temporary and a way of purification, you won't take the life too seriously. That was first told to me by my Indian teacher. There were others present and they were rather shocked. Somebody was talking about his problems, when my teacher said, "Don't take this life too seriously." There's a great deal behind that. He also said one time, " Don't make such bad karma next time."

So, let's take up the issue of karma because it has to do a great deal with the spiritual life. What is the meaning of the word karma? Karma means action in Sanskrit. So what we're really talking about are the fruits of karma, which some people call fate – except it's your personal fate. Karma is the same as this: You have a gun and you fire the gun. There is going to be a recoil. The stronger the charge, the greater the recoil. There is no way to fire a gun without recoil. You can subdue it and you can conceal it. You can roll up the window when your car motor is knocking but it's still knocking. It's a law of physics that states that every action must have an equal reaction. This is a spiritual law as well. W

When you do something with very negative motives, no matter how you rationalize it, you are piling up rather negative karma. And the fruits of that karma will be rather negative. How is this carried out? We live by what I call, and what the Indians call, *vashanas*. *Vashanas* are habit energies. And habit energies, of course, make our karma. What is a *vashana*? I get in the habit of doing the same thing over and over again; I get in the habit of reacting the same way over and over again. As people get older,

when they get very old, the *vashanas* usually lead their lives. They are pulled along by the nose by these habit energies.

Some of you have heard this story many times. One time in Los Angeles, years ago, I stayed in a place called the Kipling Hotel down on Third Street. And I stayed there because it was cheap and I didn't have much money to spend and you got two meals a day with your room. In those days it was about \$150 a month. I'm an early riser, so I got up early the first morning, walked by the desk and saw a very interesting sign which said, "Habit is the enemy of old age." I thought, "Well, well, that's really nice." So I went in the dining room and I sat down at a table. I was there very early so I was the first one in the dining room that seated about 150 people. I was just about to eat my breakfast when an older lady came in and stood right next to me. I looked at her and said, "Won't you join me?" She said, "You're sitting in my chair." I looked at the chair. I didn't see any name on the chair. I said, "Be my guest." I couldn't believe it. This woman couldn't eat her breakfast unless she ate it in that one chair. As she walked out, she walked right past the sign "Habit is the enemy of old age."

We tend to be pulled along by these habits, and these build up what are called tendencies that may pass through many lives. For instance, I have some great disappointments – I lose my money, my children die, I'm in disgrace – and I take a couple of drinks and I forget about it because I'm almost insensible. Now, next time I have a disappointment, I take a couple of drinks and it seems to help. I am building the *vashana*, the habit energy, of meeting disappointment by drinking, not by facing the problem. I am doing what the Zen man says is "beating the cart and not the horse." Zen people do not beat other people, but what he's saying is, if the horse and cart don't go, do you beat the horse or do you beat the cart? In this case you're beating the cart because the problem still remains. In fact, the problem will always remain if you keep saying, "Oh, I got myself in this fix. How do I get out of it? What do I do? What do I do?" Maybe you'll find some escape, maybe you won't.

You usually have one or two choices, and you really don't have to worry because you have to make the choice. I can sell the stock that is going down or I can hold it. You make the choice that way. But the usual reaction is to agonize over it and then, finally, we make an end to the problem. But that same problem is going to come back in a different guise. Unless we change ourselves, the problem is going to come back. I think that is obvious. So the idea is not to beat the cart, which is wrestling with a problem, but to look into ourselves. What is it that causes this problem? And that is beating the horse. This doesn't mean to tear yourself apart and go into self-condemnation and so forth. But it is finding out – from

this soil grows this tree, and from this soil grows this tree. When you plant a pumpkin seed, you'll get pumpkins. When you plant an apple seed, you'll get apples. And if you have made the ground such that the apple seed will sprout, and the apple seed is the problem and you do away with the apple, other apples are going to sprout. So, in the end, once again, it's finding out who and what you are and dealing with the problem from the standpoint of the ground from which the problem would spring up. Does everybody follow me on that?

I hope this doesn't sound like preaching. I'm just trying to give my idea of how to live the spiritual life in a way that makes it possible to live a happy and fulfilling life. And it can't be done if there's argument with impermanence. If you want to have your ego center strengthened, you can go six days a week to an analyst for a year and so forth. Your ego will probably be strengthened. Either that or your will be entirely broken down where you can't make any decision. But this will not take away the ground from which the problems come.

Here is a very minor problem that occurred just before I left California. I went in the bathroom and saw a spider spinning a web in a corner of the bathroom. I thought, "Haven't you learned by now that there's nothing flying around in the bathroom?" And then I thought, "This poor spider's going to starve to death." Should I see, from one spiritual standpoint, that this is his karma – to starve to death. Should I let everything go as it would go, and say that this is a natural course of events? But I didn't. I got him on a piece of paper, took him outside, and gave him a chance to survive. That was not really the spiritual response, but it was my response. It's the same story as the Chinese monk who, on a very rainy day, was walking along and saw a scorpion in a big puddle of water. And the scorpion was drowning. He immediately reached down and pulled the scorpion out, and as he did so, the scorpion bit him. Ow! He put the scorpion down and the scorpion turned right around and walked back into the water. Once again, the monk reached down, picked him out. Ow! And he put the scorpion down. A bystander watching this came over and said to the monk, "You fool. Don't you understand that every time you pick that scorpion up he is going to sting you?" And the monk said, "Yes, I do understand that. It's in his nature to sting me. But I also understand that it's in my nature to keep taking him out of the water." Here is a man who knows who and what he is, even if it's only a breeze blowing over the water.

I want to quote something that is written in one of Paul Rep's books. I could tell a long story about this but I won't. I'll just read the quotation. There's a man named Owori-san, a Japanese inventor and manufacturer of machinery automation. And he told

Paul, "I used to work very hard thinking and planning. Now, ideas come when I least expect them. If I need to know something, I ask. As soon as I ask, an answer comes. If it does not come, it is not for me at this time. It is as if a life-giver were speaking to me. This makes my work and my life very easy." Some people have discovered that if you ask, you'll get an answer. You may not get it in a way that you expected.

The spiritual life is not the moral or ethical life. I think many of us feel, for instance, that there are congressmen who are not entirely ethical. And there are some who probably are ethical. But this in no way means that they are spiritual. The fact that they act with ethics and that they are moral says nothing about them finding out who and what they are, recognizing impermanence, or leading a so-called "spiritual life." Most people equate a spiritual life with one in which they are doing certain spiritual practices. There is no doubt that spiritual practices help strengthen the mind, which of course decides the way that we're going to live our lives. If we are practicing Yoga in a modified form, as we do in the Western world, if we're practicing Zen, if we're practicing one of many other things, if we're doing certain things that a church tells us to do (prayer is very efficient as is meditation), we are following a spiritual practice while active in the everyday world. And this is very much to be desired.

However, following the spiritual practice by itself is not spirituality. The highest spirituality will come if we can integrate that spiritual practice into our everyday life. If we can merge sense, the life of the senses, with essence, right in the world of sense, we can live morally and ethically. We will if we are spiritually inclined and if we are aware of the essence, the unnameable, which sustains us, which is the life force, which is whatever we want to think of it as. And which is there all the time, very easy to become aware of it.

So by "spiritual life" I do not mean the ethical and moral life. (But I am certainly in favor of that.) By spiritual life I mean – that which accords with Reality. Reality is impermanence. That's one reality and we accord with it. Nonattachment is very important. Nonattachment does not mean indifference. It means recognizing the emptiness of the attachments. If I am attached to something, and I recognize the attachment, then usually the whole blow has been blunted. If we have attachments and don't recognize the attachments, we are going to suffer. And yet, our whole lives seem to be aimed at making new attachments, finding that which is pleasurable, making them habit forming so that we have the *vashanas*. And because we've done it before, we think about it and we want to do it again and again. Or if it's been unpleasant we

want to avoid it and stay away from it. Our life is this pleasure-pain continuum, and that in no way is the spiritual life.

This is a very delicate point: Spiritual life and the religious life are not the same thing. I'm all for both, and they *should* be the same thing, but usually they are not the same thing. If my religious life is to go to a church, a temple, whatever, and be told, "This is our dogma. This is what we believe. You go through us and you do what we tell you to do" – that may be the religious life but it is not the spiritual life. It is not finding out who and what you are. "Don't ask questions, just do this," and then you follow. The problem is this: We have many organized religions, and I've gone around the world living with various ones, and I've found that very often what they teach is contradictory. This one doesn't say the same as the other, not only as regards the creation myth, or something else, but as regards conduct. So you become puzzled.

My dear friend, Takahashi-san, the minister in the Tenrikyo Church in Japan, took me to Tenri City where they have a huge building that can accommodate 300,000 people. The hallway is as long as a football field. You can't believe how big that place is. I have great respect for the Tenrikyo people; they're my friends and Takahashi was like a brother to me. Anyway, he took me in and said, "There is such-and-such a place." (I won't use the name because it is holy to the Church.) And I said, "Oh, what is that?" "That is where the world was created." But that's the sixth place I've been to where the world was created. "That's the real one" Takahashi said, "It feels so good to save souls." And I said to him, "Takahashi-san, the guy across the street wants to save you!"

So it becomes puzzling: if this is the truth, how come they don't all have the same truth? The spiritual life is concerned with the true, not necessarily the true in concepts or in words, but living the true. Organized religious life has many other meanings to it, cultural and ethnic and everything else.

So, let's not confuse the spiritual with the religious. But, the truly spiritual person, the one who follows the spiritual practice, cannot help but be religious. But it is in his own way; nobody is telling him what to believe. He believes his inner experience. Whenever I would ask my teacher from India a question, for instance, I would have some experience that was quite astounding. One day I had an experience of panels of light that went onto infinity. And this was the universe right here, which led me to believe that all universes, all life, is right here now. They may be at different vibrations, but if we do certain practices we may raise our vibration to where we become aware of it. So I told him about this and asked, "Can this be true?" And his answer, every time, was, "Why should you doubt your own experience?" I wanted to say to him, "You should be a Zen teacher because that's a real Zen

answer." When you have the experience, then you believe. As they say, "The man who drinks the water knows whether it's hot or cold." You don't have to tell him.

In Zen, seeing with religious eyes means seeing with non-dual eyes. I remember the Zen Roshi saying, "Out there you must be a social human being. You must intermingle with others and act according to laws. In here you must see with religious eyes." And many of his students were puzzled as to what he meant. He meant that in here you see with non-dual eyes. The horse in Szechwan sneezes, and the cow in Hunan catches cold. Non-duality is a very difficult concept for people to get, and is of no value at all when it is a concept. Many people practice and reach (what I call) a vertical plane to where they have a great experience of oneness. Very often they get caught up in this experience to where they become useless in the world. They can't do anything. Then they go off to a monastery and become a hermit because they don't come back from it.

If everything is one, what is there to be done? The one who keeps up with his practice, then makes the circle and comes back to the ordinary life without a beard and robes, comes back to an ordinary life which is far from ordinary. The person is living the same way but isn't seeing things the same way. That is called *saigo* and *daigo*. I once wrote a piece about that. The vertical experience that takes you up to great heights, but which must then come down to the horizontal to where you integrate that experience, or "come back to the marketplace." You come back to where you're buying and selling in the marketplace, and yet you're bringing your spirituality with you. That is true spirituality. To have had the other-worldly experience and bring it back and to live it in this world. It is my feeling – and has been to a growing extent, ever since I remembered to "Be the big hermit, not the small hermit" – that the truly spiritual life is the one that integrates spiritual experience, spiritual discipline, into the everyday life. Do you follow me on that?

So often people say, "If I could just get away, if my children would leave me alone, then I could lead the spiritual life." But that isn't seeing it properly. If you can follow the disciplines you are learning, or whatever it is that you've been doing, and yet lead the everyday life, then you are merging sense with essence. I think that is true spirituality.

For those of you who are quite intellectually inclined and want something on a little deeper plane, I'm going to risk boring a few of you and reading from Da Hui, one of the greatest of the Zen Masters. A book I like very much is his *Swampland Flowers*. You know that flowers don't grow in swamps, and yet it's named *Swampland Flowers*. In it he is writing to laymen how to live the

spiritual life. It is quite deep – it's a little deeper than he normally talked about – when he says, "As for expedience..." (and by expedience he really means that nothing you put into words is ultimately true, but for the moment we have to do it this way) "with mind, there's no delusion or enlightenment." Oh, I thought there was a deluded mind *and* an enlightened mind. "With inherent nature, there's no turning toward or turning away. If you grasp your own self and your own mind as the ultimate, there must be some other thing and other people that do the opposite." You're setting up a duality.

Along these lines – I'm going to interrupt before I get to his last paragraph – a Zen temple person said to me, "You know Paul Reps? You're his friend? Can you get him to write something for our monthly journal?" I said, "I'll get him to write it but I'm not sure you'll want to print it. What would you like him to write?" "Well, ask him, what does he believe in?" I sent the note to Paul who wrote back, "What do I believe in? Nothing. If I believed in anything, there would be two." That's a real Zen answer. They didn't print it.

The last part of the Da Hui goes like this: "Right where the person stands he emits light and moves the earth shining through the ten directions. Those who see this light all realize acceptance of things as unborn." Of course if you're unborn, you can't die. He's talking to other people but I believe Da Hui's worth reading for those who want to read.

I'm going to conclude this part of the talk by reading something that knocks me out now as much now as it did when I first saw it. It's all about non-duality, knowing who and what you are. "From a state of emptiness, man..." You know it. It's called the *Song of the Dhyana*, that is, meditation. And it is written by Hakuin, perhaps the greatest, or least one of the two greatest, Zen teachers in the history of Japan. Hakuin says, "All things are primarily Buddhas. It is like water and ice. There is no ice apart from water. There are no Buddhas apart from beings. Not knowing how close the truth is to them, beings seek for it afar. What a pity. They are like those who, being in the midst of water, cry out for water, feeling thirst. Those who, for once listening to the dharma in all humility praise it and faithfully follow it, will be endowed with innumerable merits, but how much more so, when you turn your eyes within yourselves and have a glimpse into your self nature. You find that the self-nature is no nature, the truth permitting no idle sophistry. For you then open the gate leading to the oneness of cause and effect. Before you then lies a straight road of non-duality and non-trinity. When you come to understand that form is the form of the formless, your coming and going takes place nowhere else but where you are. When you understand that thought is the thought of

the thoughtless, your singing and dancing is no other than the voice of the dharma. How boundless is the sky of *samadhi*! How refreshingly bright is the moon of the four-fold wisdom! Being so, is there anything you lack? As the absolute presents itself before you, the place where you stand is the land of the lotus, and your person, the body of the Buddha." I wish I had written that.

I'm going to take time now for questions. I can usually tell after a talk that some people are bursting with questions and some really aren't interested and haven't thought very intensely at all about it.

Questioner: I was interested in your comment about letting go of ego, letting go of attachment.

Justin: Are you talking about where I say that psychoanalysis and so forth strengthen the ego?

Questioner: Right. I was wondering how early is spiritual practice appropriate for children?

Justin: It's a very good question, but it's in the psychological field, rather than otherwise. I don't think I can tell you at what age it would happen. For an exceptional child it might happen, let's say, at the age of nine or ten. And for somebody else it might not happen until that person became 21. But, when we are born we have no sense of "I," no sense of ego. We try to identify with everything in the world through biting it, through putting it in our mouths. If it tastes good, we know. Then, as we grow a little bit, we begin to identify with our parents. But that's all that we know; we don't know anything in the world around us. Psychology deals a good deal with, "At what age does this person become 'self conscious,'" that is, aware that I am a self as opposed to the others of the world.

In one sense that is the beginning of suffering. How often you've heard this? A mother and son move to a place and she says, "It's me and you against the world." This tends, particularly in the western cultures, to be emphasized. The ego, the "I" (the individuality or personality), isn't quite as important in, let's say, the Chinese and Japanese life as it is here. In India, where people are sincere, they tend to hear that they should identify with Brahmin, that the Atma and the Brahmin are one. But here, the beginning of self-consciousness is the beginning of the problem of self-attachment. And everything that we do tends to make that self-attachment grow. If we have an inferiority complex and we can't cope with others, it's a matter of self-clinging. We are suffering because we don't have this strong ego sense. And if, at a particular time in your life, you can't cope with society, you may find psychology very helpful in strengthening you to the point where you can work in the everyday world and cope with problems. But what the psychologist has done is strengthen the ego sense, or the attachment to self, which is the basis of suffering.

If there were no attachment to self, dying wouldn't be very much, would it? Can you be like the Zen man when somebody tried to kill him and say, "A snowflake in a raging fire." If you can think of your life as a snowflake in a raging fire, then you're not going to be too attached to it, to yourself.

It was St. John of the Cross that said, "In order to have everything, desire to have nothing." If you can negate the self, the Self will be huge. It will encompass everything. This is the true result of spiritual practice. When the "little self" is negated, the true Self grows to where it identifies with everything and we get to the point of "Man's voice is a voice pervading the universe, man's body is a body without limit." From the spiritual standpoint, self-attachment is going to have to give way to something bigger, something better. If it doesn't, invariably there will be suffering.

The best examples I've ever seen of it have occurred in Hollywood. When I was in the financial world I had an office in Beverly Hills and I came across many people in the movie industry. One woman had been beautiful, the idol of everybody. When she grew older, everybody dropped her and didn't care about her. So she compensated for that by drinking and pretty soon there were all sorts of problems. Her very strong self-image was suddenly so blunted because there was no longer the flattery of attention and applause. Her self-image suffered greatly. If there were no self-attachment, though, there would be no suffering. If you go to a psychologist who is trying to build your ego back up, he is rebuilding that very thing which has caused the problem: self-clinging. I would say that the age in which self-consciousness begins – that I am an individual as opposed to other individuals – that's where the problem occurs. And if by rare chance you live in a family or society where spiritual practice starts at a very early age, that won't present a problem. It's a very thoughtful question.

Questioner: If spirituality means being detached and understanding yourself as you are now and not setting up a duality, would you comment on our society today, which seems like its essence is duality, winning, competitiveness?

Justin: I think there's a fault with your question. Recognizing who and what you are has nothing to do with recognizing what you think you are today. I don't mean, "My name is John Jones and I'm an architect and I do this and that." By who and what you are, I'm talking about the identity that pervades the universe, the body that fills the universe. I'm talking about an identity that's quite different from the little personality you're talking about. That little personality will change greatly when that is understood. But I don't say to you what the psychoanalyst says – You have to understand what your capabilities and handicaps are and so forth. I'm saying to recognize, in just one sense, recognize the divinity within you.

Recognize what you really are and who you really are. The other problems will fall in line. The first one – the little one that you're talking about, the personality – is very temporary. It's just here for a short time. The other identity is not temporary at all. "The breeze blowing over the water" is not temporary. Do you see my point? You're asking about recognizing who and what I am as I am now. But I'm talking about recognizing yourself as something much greater. Where you stand, you are the body of the Buddha. To those who have not done spiritual practice at all, or who have not gotten it intuitively, that's hard to understand. That's why in *Abandon Hope*, a book that I've talked about, there comes a "Growth of Certainty" to where you know who and what you are. And you're going to act the way that you should act, which is in accordance with your nature. You're going to act that way no matter what the temptations for some of your actions.

Questioner: In Christianity, it's taught that by your own efforts you cannot know yourself or your true nature – except through Jesus Christ who assumes your sins. Is it incumbent in your way of thinking that the individual person is responsible to find his true nature?

Justin: In Japan, they speak about "other power religion" and "self power religion." Shodo Shinshu, Shin Buddhism is other power religion and Zen is self-power religion, "do it myself" religion. I don't want to comment on the efficacy of religion because in one sense all religions are good. At a certain level, they are very necessary. But at a certain level, you outgrow the necessity of being told that this is your doctrine. When they say "This is where the world is created, right here," you'd better believe it. It would be against many people's sensibilities to say that you must throw over your Church or your Church experience; that isn't the idea at all.

Perhaps you can go farther through great sincerity and devotion. Devotion, which cultures the heart, is known as *bhakti* in India. I think that more Indian people are *bhaktis* (that is, those who obtain their way through devotion) than any other way. It is in the Indian person's nature to be devotional. That's why Buddhism doesn't appeal very much to them; it's not devotional. As Paul Reps said to a devotional person, to one who talks about the duality of what I believe in: "I don't believe in anything because then there would be two." Which is better? Paul Reps is at a pretty advanced level, but he may've gone through that other level. To have great devotion in your religious or spiritual life is very, very satisfying. Cultivation and prayer can be a way to one-pointedness of mind which greatly strengthens the mind and which will greatly improve the life. So it's not useless at all.

Questioner: How is T'ai Chi Chih part of your spiritual life?

Justin: We'll be here all night! When I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is begin Rocking Motion. Every day I do the T'ai Chi Chih movements. Some days I also add Seijaku, advanced T'ai Chi Chih for those who have become very proficient. By the time I have finished that, I'm full of energy. It doesn't matter whether I've slept or not; I'm full of energy and I'm hungry. That good feeling, that energy, will stick with me for the rest of the day. Why is this so? Doing T'ai Chi Chih (which is not exercise) is a way to circulate the Chi (called *prana* in India), the vital force, the intrinsic energy, which has become stagnant. It also balances it, the same positive and negative factors we have in electricity. When the positive and negative are in balance, I feel good. My life tends to go smoothly. My body seems to be healthy and full of energy. If I go for a few days without doing T'ai Chi Chih, then I notice a difference in the energy level, that I don't feel quite as good.

That's at the beginning physical level, but T'ai Chi Chih very definitely affects karma and evolution. Carmen [Brocklehurst] can tell you about a little pamphlet she made available, *T'ai Chi Chih and Evolution*, which was taken from a talk I gave. Have you seen it? You get an entirely different view of T'ai Chi Chih when you do it. T'ai Chi Chih advances evolution very rapidly by cultivating the Chi, the life force, and balancing it. This tends to do away with the *vashanas*, the habit energies. And it tends to do away with illusions and delusions. There's no need for them. It seems to me to be the only way that you can get a high without coming down from the high. It has a very definite effect on your spiritual level, on your spirituality. From my standpoint, T'ai Chi Chih is true Zen practice. It is a moving meditation and true spiritual practice.

I see the changes that take place in people, and not just physical changes. So I assume that the changes are taking place in myself too. On the physical level, I took a test recently that I hadn't taken in many years. I'm 75 years of age now and I could do anything I could do 40 years ago. That's because of T'ai Chi Chih. I'm enjoying my life; I'm not getting tired talking to you; that's on the physical level.

The important thing is: what view do I have of the world, of life and so forth? T'ai Chi Chih cultivates that very rapidly.

I think one day most people will do T'ai Chi Chih because it is such an easy way. How difficult is it to do a simple movement? You could do that and yawn at the same time. T'ai Chi Chih teachers get the greatest benefits and they get the joy of teaching. The one thing I don't like is when T'ai Chi Chih teachers (and this doesn't happen very often) teach without practicing. "Don't do as I do; do as I say." A T'ai Chi Chih teacher who doesn't practice shouldn't be teaching.

Most people do it because of the joy and benefits they get. What is wonderful is that, after a while, they begin to get a glimpse of the deeper values. They begin to see what T'ai Chi Chih really is. I said to a group of Canadian teachers taking a Seijaku class, "If you want to know the truth, in my opinion, the one doing Seijaku and cultivating the Chi and balancing the Chi is evolving a thousand years every day." That is really *kundalini* practice or *shakti* practice in the same sense. If you ask those here who are teachers or students, I think you'll get the same answer. T'ai Chi Chih has greatly strengthened, in every way, the practice – in so many years of traveling around the orient and studying with teachers, practicing whether it is the small hermit or not. This all seems to consolidate itself through T'ai Chi Chih practice. I'm very grateful for that.

Questioner: Is physical reincarnation being in the small mind? And when you drop the body, is that the big Mind? Is simply coming back a habit? Is letting go merely a habitual situation or is it creating a problem that needs to be faced?

Justin: You're really asking "Is there such a thing as physical reincarnation?"

Questioner: Not really.

Justin: You're asking whether it creates a problem?

Questioner: What creates the cycle of delusion as opposed to reality?

Justin: It is part of reality. If we know through physics that every action must have an equal reaction, then every action of yours - or to be more accurate, every action of mind, the motivation of the action, that is the important thing, not the act – must have an equal reaction. I could accidentally kill something but if it wasn't my motive to kill it, there is a different reaction. It is the motivation... Buddha once said to somebody, "You might as well kill that fly because mentally you've already done it." If there must be an equal reaction to every action, then you've had many thoughts and actions in this life that haven't born fruit yet.

Questioner: Is that per day?

Justin: Per day, yes. But they have to bear fruit. Every firing of a gun has an equal recoil. That's what causes what is mistakenly called re-creation or reincarnation. This energy has to be dissipated, has to have the opposite effect. There are many subtleties about that. Is the one who comes back the same person? Do you necessarily come back as a human being? Do you remember anything? All these questions are what Paul Reps calls "verbal delusionary." Raising waves where there's no wind.

If you are convinced that every action must have an equal reaction, yes. Let's say you've done a terrible thing in cheating this person out of something. That must have retribution. That action

must have an equal reaction and there must be something to suffer that reaction. So logically from that standpoint it would seem that you would have to come back to do it. And when they talk of *moksha*, getting off the wheel of life and death, they are talking about the yogi building to the point where there are no more *vashanas*, no more habit energies. In fact, the tendency to react has been taken away entirely.

Questioner: Not only to react but the ability to raise the possibility?

Justin: That's right. No longer is there possibility. In Zen, they call this *moshim*, no mind. They don't mean that you're like a rock or something. But the reactionary tendency is not there. I'll tell you a little story about that and then it will be time for us to go.

A Zen monk is not supposed to consort with women, not to touch women, not to look or anything else. I'm talking in the strictist sense. So two monks were on a pilgrimage and they were walking along. They came to a very narrow body of water but it had been raining and the body of water had swollen. And there was a young woman who couldn't get across. So one monk came along, put her on his shoulder, walked through the water to the other side, put her down, and kept walking with his friend. They got about two or three miles away. He noticed the friend kept frowning and thinking. He said, "What's bothering you?" The friend said, "You know we're not supposed to touch women. We're not supposed to have anything to do with them." And the first monk said, "Are you still carrying that woman? I put her down three miles back."

This is very much the case here. The enlightened man does a certain action; he has to eat; he leans too far over in spite of what people think and he's going to fall off the balcony. But he has done away with that reactionary tendency. He is not making new karma. It doesn't mean he's not doing it. If somebody is starving and he can help, he will give him food. He does it but he leaves no trace, which is the epitome of Zen. He leaves no trace. He goes on. The monk put her down back there three miles away and never thought about it.

Questioner: No trace, no footprints.

Justin: Nothing, that's right. They say it's like the bird going through the air; it leaves no trace. And that is the height of *vairaga*, which is nonattachment. Nonattachment is not non-caring. It is not anything else except not getting attached to your actions or what is happening. It doesn't say don't do them. You'd better still make a living because you're going to have to pay your rent. And you'd better deal wisely in business. If you start cheating in business, getting very shrewd and thinking up an advantage to pay for things, that is not the spiritual mind. That is the shrewd mind. Yet, many people look up to the one who is shrewd. "He's very clever."

He managed to do that, and cheated these people out of that." They are not going to get many spiritual rewards with actions like that. And the spiritual life – whether it's carried on in the midst of activity or away from it – the spiritual life is the only thing that I think gives lasting rewards.

I hope you don't take this nonsense too seriously. I tried to throw out a few ideas about what I think the spiritual life is.

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