

“Is Everyone as Fake as Me?”

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Before we begin with the Question and Answer session, I would like to share an email exchange with a student of mine in Hawaii that came through early this morning:

“Student: Sensei, I have just a quick question. What happens after you realize you are a fake?”

Have you had a revelation? Please fill out what you are experiencing.

Student: Well, I was looking in the mirror this morning after I woke up and it was like my mind shifted and I just said wow... Life is really fake. Actually, I am really fake. I wonder if everyone is just as fake as me? I then went to breathe but could not because it too seemed fake... everything just seemed really artificial like I was living in a plastic world. This has never happened before so it was just very strange. The feeling was like eating a piece of steak with no taste expecting it to be luscious and juicy and great and it had no taste. Then everything after that was just tasteless and even almost formless. It was not a huge “oh my god” revelation but more like “shit, this is it?” This is what the training is about? That there is nothing really there, nothing at all? If so, I sure liked it before I realized it was fake. All day I have tried to shake the feeling and even though it is not as palpable now as it was this morning I still sense it there... Like it's just over my shoulder ready to smother me.”

OK. So today you might want to ask a question relating to the theme of the seminar in general, or something relating to this email that I just read to you.

We train and train, we sit and sit, we breathe and breathe, all the time thinking, “When will it happen, and what will happen? What will it be like?” And you hear the teachers all say that this is the wrong approach. Look out. The one who wants to know, is the one who gets kicked in the butt, the one who get’s revealed as being artificial, or fake. That can be a very disheartening discovery, because we have been cherishing, fondling, protecting, and supporting this fakery all our life. This is what we do in our society, everywhere in the world, from Eskimos to Hawaiians. It’s the same everywhere. It’s the nature of the human condition.

I heard the teacher Eckhart Tolle say one time on a tape, “Many people teach self improvement seminars. But I teach self diminishment seminars.” This I thought was very apt, and really quite to the point. Of course, usually the teacher doesn’t come right out and say, “You are a fake.” That doesn’t go down so well. In fact, in Aikido we have ranking systems, Ki and Dan tests, etc., you establish a relationship with what you think is a teacher, and as time goes on the teacher carries you along, encourages you, supports

you, takes care of you, pets you, loves you, feeds you. So what is the teacher feeding? Because at the same time that he is coddling you, he is teaching you something that is undercutting all of that. So there is a disconnection, or there should be, in your mind, when you are in this process. In other words there is this profound contradiction. On the one hand the teacher seems so supportive and nice, encouraging me, giving me these ranks, and telling me I'm the greatest. And on the other hand, what he's teaching me is that I am a fake, that I don't even exist in the way that I always thought I did. What a revolting development this is, what a revolting thing to discover. So somehow we have to come to terms with that, and the more we sit, the more we breathe, the more we look at the nature of things, just resting in looking, not thinking about or trying to figure out, but just sitting, the more chance there is for a resolution of some kind. And what might that be?

Whether you are sitting in meditation, or just sitting here now, or sitting on a park bench waiting for someone to come and meet you, or even sitting in a bar, it's always the same. We are just resting in this condition of awareness and that's it. We're not seeking anything, because we wouldn't know what to seek. The one who is not true is certainly not going to seek to discover it's own lack of truth. So any effort you make, believe it or not, is always in a direction away from what is, it's never in a direction to. That's why the Buddha said that awakening is turning around in the deepest seat of consciousness. Stop looking for your own benefit. Stop looking for your own awakening. You will never become awakened. The one who wants to wake up will not wake up. Awakening will occur, but it won't look like you think, or meet the stories you have heard. And it's not the same for every person. It's unique every time.

Everything is a projection out there. That's why we call it the "mirror universe." Everywhere you look, it's a mirror of you. In Sokushin no gyo we say "*to ho ka mi e mi ta me.*" This means "with the sharp sword of my will I penetrate the mirror universe..." which means to see the mirror, not the reflection in the mirror. When you look at a mirror, can you see the mirror? No, you see the reflection in the mirror. So next time you are looking in a mirror, look to see if you can see the mirror itself. This here is exactly the same thing. This life is a mirror, but it is a three dimensional mirror, so here it is even more difficult to see the mirror. You can't actually see the mirror with your eyes, but you can experience the mirror. We call this mirror "Mu" in Japanese, or the emptiness in which all form arises. When you first actually experience this, you may very well think something is fake, because this projection you are seeing comes from a false presumption of separation. The first time I saw this, I thought, "It's a Disney world." It may sound weird but I saw everything as a Disney-like fantasy existence. This may be different than other people's experience, but this is the way it appeared to me at the time. So what we are seeing here is how everything is a mirrored reflection, or in other words a reflecting back of a projection that we are sending out. You may think, when you look at me, that you see what I actually am. Well, you do in a sense, but there's the projected me you see, and then there's me.

George Bernard Shaw once said, "My tailor is the only man who truly knows me. He takes my measure every time he sees me." He means, of course, that his tailor is concerned with his current size, not a previous one. But most of us are not like that

tailor. We think, “Oh, I knew my friend yesterday, and so now today this is the same friend.” But it’s not the same friend at all. Generally, when we first see someone there is an instant of true recognition, but after that the screens come down and then we are just seeing our own screens, which are a projection of our own belief system.

In Aikido, learning to see through to the opponent’s true intention is very important. “What’s actually going on here? Is this guy actually separate from me, or not? If he is attacking me, he must be separate from me.” Maybe the opponent thinks he is separate, but maybe when Tohei Sensei sees him, or when you see him while in your true state of mind, there is no separation. And that’s why Aikido works only when there is true seeing, which means seeing that there is no separation. And until you are actually seeing, experiencing this world in this way, Aikido is actually not working on the highest level. Of course even from the first day of training, it works for you in some way. But there are levels and levels of that. And to gain entrance through the doors of those levels, you have to let go of something. At each level you have to leave something behind. And as you train you get to points where you are not so willing to let that go. “Wait a minute. OK, so it’s fake. I can see that, but I still like it!” Don’t you remember the scene about this in the movie, the *Matrix*? The guy is eating a steak and drinking a glass of wine and he says, “I don’t care if it is illusion. It tastes great!” So that’s us, folks. And of course enjoy. Enjoy, but see it for what it is.

Yeah. We have all of these judgments and rules about what ought to happen and what ought not to happen, what you ought to eat, where you ought to go, and what kind of relationships you are supposed to have. We do this to our children, we do this to our friends, we do this to our spouses, and yes we even do it to our teachers. We are constantly missing the point. It’s not about that. For every one of us, it’s waking up to what’s actually going on in this mirror-like process we call being human.

OK. That’s my introduction. Question and Answer?

Student: Tohei Sensei always said that mind and body coordination is a natural state of the human being. Why then does it take us so long to get into this natural state? If it is natural to us, why does it need years and years of training, and maybe most of us will never even get to the point of realizing this state? I am not sure, but I think if only a few people can reach that state, or recognize it, then is it real?

That’s a big question. You really have two questions there. Your first question comes out of curiosity, and the second question comes out of frustration.

The first question is, “Why is it so difficult, if it is our natural state?” Nobody ever said your natural state was easy to recognize. The ultimate questions, “Why did God make us? Why are we here? Why do we have to go through all of this suffering?” In India they have a unique way of looking at these questions. They call it “lila.” Lila means “play.” God’s lila. God’s play. So this is for fun. Why not? We don’t know. We cannot answer the questions. But we can notice, as we practice these practices that the teachers give us, the teachers that are having this experience of knowing. They say to us to do this and this and this and then you will get a glimpse of something real. Of the five levels of development the first level is noticing. In a sense, the person who wrote the

email I just read to you has had many years of training and first noticed probably twenty years ago. But this latest event is a new level of noticing. So there are levels and levels. He noticed something today, "Wow!" that he never noticed before. This kind of opening is always provided by recognition, noticing. "Oh, this is what I have been doing to stand in the way of my natural condition."

I mentioned several times in this seminar over the past weekend that every one of the blockages within us contains a tremendous amount of focused energy. And every time we think about some negative issue we have with someone, we pour more energy into it, and it stays and grows stronger, stealing more and more of our energy. Basically, everything is energy. But it is controlled and compartmentalized within mind. So when this issue, this way of acting, or this reactive process is instead accepted and embraced, admitted to and let go of, then all that energy is released. It's been felt, and that's all it wanted was to be felt completely. So once it's been felt and owned up to, then all of that energy that was bound up in it is released into our field of awareness.

Further, there are spontaneous awakenings, or spontaneous recognition of the way things are, which is what this person's email was describing this morning. And also there is a gradual awakening that happens through this process of attrition. Over time, these things we cling to are falling away, falling away. Of course, again over time, as the energy in our awareness becomes more and more, then this kind of spontaneous recognition happens more and more, until that is all your life is. You are just experiencing how things actually are all the time. But of course there is always more to learn. So you can never say, "I've got it." Whoever says, "I've got it," doesn't get it. Because there is nothing to get and there is no one to get it. It's just an experience.

There's seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. There's movement of energy in mind that we call thinking. And there's movement of energy in the body we call feeling. And that's it. Those three are all there is that makes up all experience in all of our lifetime. And it is all just a movement of energy. And yet, out of that we somehow build this tremendous construct called "my life" or "my self." We've built this huge edifice that we want to rely on, but there's no foundation. There's nothing under this. So you can imagine, when this begins to collapse like the World Trade Center, it can be very threatening. And then we have to ask, threatening to who? Do you want to wake up or not? Well, someone in there does. Well, we can't even say that "some one" does, but somehow there is this deep yearning to know what is going on here, and to be free of suffering. Of course for all of us, that freedom from suffering is the real, fundamental motivation. But all this time the ego is thinking, "If I can just get that, then I can use it to my benefit. Then I can become rich and famous, or get lots of students. Man, if I could just get that, then I would really sock it to 'em. OK, here's enlightenment, Aha!" So this is very dangerous, very dangerous. And of course, that guy who says that doesn't lie down and go away very easily. He is always here.

And then the second part of your question, that came out of your frustration with so much trying: "How come only a few people get this? Maybe it's not true."

Maybe there's no such thing. Maybe. Maybe. That's my answer. Find out. It's the only way you can get satisfaction. You hear about something that happened to someone,

somewhere? You can't know. You have to be there. You have to actually know directly. You can't know intellectually. You can't possibly know no matter what anybody says. You can only know by being there yourself, and then you can know. So that's why we call this awakening to what is happening now. There is no other moment but this.

So...maybe.

Sensei: Can we go back to the email for a moment? Is he really frustrated or is he relieved? I didn't get it because actually I can't imagine wanting to achieve this state of mind where everything is fake. So is he really sad, or frustrated, or threatened, or afraid? Or is he happy, relieved?

What do you say?

Student: I don't know. I can't understand how I feel listening to this email. But does this seeing help him feel better, or does it make him feel worse? I don't get it.

Yeah, it's not the kind of thing you really want to speculate about, is it? Because you can't imagine what it feels like to actually see what he saw. Plus, this is a story already, that he is telling about a way of seeing, and actually no one can believe it, because you can't imagine it. And the only reason I read it to you was to give you a flavor of what we always say, that it's not necessarily what you might imagine it to be.

In a sense, you know, waking up can be a very painful experience, because we have to let go of everything that we cherish, everything, even the good stuff. Everything has to go. And yet anything that has true value or use doesn't actually go anywhere, like your knowledge. For instance, you were taking me on the tour of Bamberg on Friday, which was for me very valuable and I appreciate that you took the time to share that with me. Now if you were completely enlightened you would still be able to do that. You might do it a little differently, but all that knowledge would still be there for you. It doesn't go anywhere. But the key is you have to give up your attachment to it. And remember that all of these personalities, all these talents, all these knowledge-holding aspects of what we call "self," are each little selves. I mean, this that we call our "self" is actually a village. It's a village that we are. And we have to let go of every single one of them. And, to make it even more complex, in this process it's often one of these selves that is trying to let go of the other ones, and keep itself in tact. It's the whole idea of self as a construct that is the problem.

For instance, what we call the superego is the one who is trying to get rid of all the bad guys and keep all the good guys on it's side. It's like a king that's trying to rearrange it's kingdom so it's got only good guys in there. Ah, Hitler. The superego is Hitler. Get rid of all the bad guys that I don't like, keep all the good guys, and have all the power, and then I will tell you exactly what each of you can do. So that's the Nazi in all of us. We have the Nazi right here in our throat. That's where the superego lives. And if you don't think so, then just look more closely. Don't you see yourself doing this all the time? You know, you have something you would like to do and this guy inside says, "No, that's not right. You can't do that. They won't like you if you do that." So you are manipulate-

able. That's what I meant yesterday when I said if you have these habitual reactions, then your own superego knows about them and manipulates you, tortures you, till you feel this terrible anxiety, this horrible puss inside your belly, instead of waaa, a sense of freedom and openness.

A teacher told me one time, "This is your opportunity to earn your fortune in self realization." Aikido. This is it. And if it is difficult for you, that's even better.

Student: So we should be grateful that it is so difficult?

Yeah. The people that I see that find it easy are people that don't really look very closely at anything. They just kind of think, "Oh yeah, I've got a lot of talent, things go along easily for me" and so on. So those people, maybe they have to wait awhile until they get smacked up side the head by something before they begin to pay attention. We can never say exactly what will open up for anyone at any time. But every single one of you is the one. That's for sure. There is nobody that doesn't qualify. There is nobody that doesn't count. There is nobody that isn't the Buddha. Every single one of you is the one. It has nothing to do with how you are shaped, what talents you have, how bright you are, what you may have done in previous incarnations, none of that. None of that. That's the fake part. That's what this person who wrote the email this morning is seeing. That's the plastic world. The things that everybody values so much, because you can earn a living, make money and get respect here in this world for those things. That's why we value them so much. It makes sense. But all of that fakery doesn't count when you get down to the real. You have to be able to see through it. This is what we call shoga. The plastic world he is talking about, that's all shoga. Yesterday we were talking about shoga and taiga. Everything, even his own self he saw in the mirror, that's all shoga.

Student: How do you let go of the attachment that you have for your children? Would you say that the love you have for your children is the taiga world?

Let me repeat what I understand you are asking. First of all, how to you let go of the attachment that you have for your children, and/or is this love that you have for your children part of the taiga world, and therefore it's OK to keep it?

What do you think? How do you feel about that?

Student: When I think about letting go, I think the hardest part is the attachment I feel for my children.

Yes, I think there may be a little confusion. Because you say, "How do I let go of the love I have for my children?" Who asked you to let go of that?

Student: I meant the attachment to them.

But you said it, as if they were the same. You did say attachment, but later you said love. Are those two the same?

Are we loving someone when we are attached to them, when we are clinging to them and can't let them go? How old are your children?

Student: Under twelve.

Yeah. Just wait till they are fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. That attachment will get stretched. I've had four of them and I love my children very much, but you do have to let them go. And it's very difficult to do that even on the physical level. "Empty nesters" wander around from room to room not knowing what to do without their children because their whole life got wrapped up in their children.

Of course, any one you know, you are in love with. Right? Not just your children. Love means this condition of present openness. It doesn't mean sex, it doesn't mean clinging, it doesn't mean needing, it doesn't mean taking advantage of, it doesn't mean any of that "one flesh" stuff that we sort of clump together to make what we think of as love. Love is being present in awareness. When you are talking to me, and I become distracted by something that I need to do later, then I am not loving you. Simple as that. Love is not a thing. It's not a noun. It's a verb. It's an active condition. When it is not present, it's not. When it's present, it is. And it doesn't matter whether we are in the physical vicinity of each other. My children are spread all over the place, but if I look to one of them in my mind, my whole body relaxes. I enjoy loving them. But on the other hand, if I am not seeing them, I don't think, "Oh, I miss them so much. I wish I could be with them." I won't say that I never did have that experience, but seeing the difference between attachment and love is really important.

So that answers I think your first question. And what was the second one?

Student: Is it part of the taiga world?

Yes. Is love part of the taiga world? Well, attachment certainly is not, because it has to be attached to some thing, a form, or an idea, or an experience. We can say that true love is true nature, true condition, and this is what Tohei Sensei calls taiga. We have this weird idea about sex and love having to go together. For instance, because of this we sometimes may wonder how to love a man? We call this homophobia. Homophobia is not a fear of homosexuality. It is a fear of intimacy, close love contact between males. Why can't we have a close relationship with a male? In other words, why can't you be in love when you are sitting with a man? Or can you only have love when you are sitting with a woman? That's nuts! You have male children. You have a father. Don't you sit with your father like this? With your son?

So again, this kind of confusion happens because we are not really clear about what love is, what it means to just be with another person. We are possessive and need to attach some physical aspect to this love. Can we be with another person like this without even saying anything? Most people chatter a lot, to avoid this intimacy. One of the exercises we do is, you have to listen to yourself talk. So whenever you speak, you have to listen to what you say, as if someone else were saying it. Try it some time. Try it today, at lunch. You'd be amazed at what comes out of your mouths. And more you train the more you end up doing that all the time anyway, so then when you say something really stupid, it's like a knife. Like, "How did that sneak out?!" But on the other hand you can't be constantly guarding yourself. I was just saying this morning how we have to be open to anything, to go for it, no matter what others may think. It's all right, stuff

happens. So what? So that's the challenge, to be completely free and not burdened by moralistic judgmental self-government. That's the challenge. No one can tell you the rules here. They don't come from the outside. You must discover for yourself, through the process. The true one is true. Even though other people might look at that one and see it as completely wrong. Never mind. The true one is true. That's it. It doesn't need any defense. It is what it is.

And it's worth whatever it costs.

Thank you very much.