

**Spain Spring Seminar Q & C**  
**May 15, 2011**  
**C. Curtis**

Good morning. I always like to hold these question and answer sessions because if you have a question, chances are that many other people, not only in this room but in other parts of the world, also have that same question. And as you may know, these recordings go on my website, and are transmitted around the world, and so not only can many people benefit, but even you can go back and listen to the podcast or read the transcript afterward, and maybe then remember something you forgot or understand something you didn't quite get. So therefore I want you to ask questions.

*Student: I would like to know your opinion about this current global moment in the societies of the world and how Aikido would be able to help.*

What's the problem?

*Student: No problem, although I just want to know your opinion of the difficulties we are experiencing right now in the world, and how Aikido can help. There are some problems currently.*

Well, I don't want to "play dumb" here. I know what you are talking about. What I meant by "what is the problem?" was "what is the problem with you, personally?" Because just to talk about it in a general objective sense might be to miss the point entirely. We live in our own world of experience, so we can only deal with whatever arises in our own life, in that world of our experience, and then we respond accordingly. If something is happening that is outside of our life, then we don't know about it. We might think that we do, because television, or newspaper, radio, or magazine convinces us that we know about it. This makes us think we know something that we may not actually know directly. Here it is important to understand the true meaning of "knowing."

Confucius said, "If you want to bring peace to the world, bring peace to your own country first. If you want to bring peace to your own country, bring peace to your own community first. If you want to bring peace to your community, bring peace to your family. And if you want to bring peace to your family, bring peace to yourself first." I always liked Confucius.

Is that OK for now?

*Student: Yes.*

*Student: How can we apply this search for experience to our daily life, our work, our family.*

I have to say, how can you escape this experience? This is all there is, is experience. It's not something else that you have to search for. If you just actually experience what's happening,

then for the first time, *iki tieru*, you will live your life completely. We don't live our life completely because we are always thinking it is somewhere else. We are always looking elsewhere. We are fish swimming in the ocean searching for water.

So what I am teaching here is the very nature of living here, now. Not something else. There is nothing else. This right here, right now, this is it. It doesn't get any better than this. So the question is always, "How deeply do I experience this moment?" It's very dangerous to think about it as an objective discussion, as a conception, an intellectual thought or idea. If you just sit down with me alone for five minutes, the problems are gone. Can you see?

So how does that work? This is not something that you can think about and come up with an answer. You just know. And that's the way it is, always, only we have doubt. So we don't allow ourselves to be full and complete as human beings. We might as well get it all. Just open. Take your chest and rip it open. Open your heart to everything that is happening in the moment.

That is the answer to your question. But you have to do it now, not later when you are at work. There is no later. And if you can do it now, then this now continues, never ceases. Just hang out. People ask me, "How could you meditate eight hours a day?" That's like saying, "How do you live eight hours a day?" It's crazy, and they ask only because they never noticed what their life is. When I am sitting in the morning, I am not doing something different that what I am doing right now. Doing. I mean not that I am doing something so much, but that I mean the experience is no different. So this is also true for you, not only me. Don't you think so?

Does that answer your question? More than you wanted, no?

*Student: Yes, Sensei.*

Next? Don't be selfish. I know you all have questions. I know it takes some courage to speak the question.

*Student: Sensei, I have two questions. First, when I practice meditation, how can I get that person that says, "Get up and go have some coffee," to be calm, to be quiet?*

What's his name?

*Student: It's me too. I am like Jekyll and Hyde.*

Oh, it's not just Jekyll & Hyde, it's a whole village. That's the nature of what we call the "dual" world. Whatever arises has an opposite. It's only natural. When you are breathing, you would rather be sleeping, and when you are sleeping, you feel that you should be breathing. I always say that you do whatever you want. You want to drink coffee? Coffee is good. Drink coffee. You want to breathe? Breathe. Don't breathe and think, "I wish I had some coffee." And don't drink coffee and think you should be breathing.

This other student here asked me the very same question at the last seminar. This is very

universal. We are all plagued by these many competing voices that pull us this way and that. And the more we engage with those voices and try to do something with them, the more entrenched we become and the more tightly that snarl of twine gets entwined, the more deluded we become, the more trapped we are. So that's why I always tell the students to just do what you want. You may think that doesn't answer the question, but it does. OK? Second question.

*Student: The more you live in the now and the less in the past and the future, does that mean that you live more intensely?*

When you are daydreaming about something, thinking of something in the past or imagining something in the future, what's happening now? You have no idea. You can't possibly know, because you are somewhere else. Right? It may be that you are driving a car and somehow the part of mind that takes care of that particular body action is able to continue driving even though your attention is not present. And then suddenly you wake up and think, "Oh, I'd better pay attention. I might have a wreck!" This is because you think that "you" are driving. But you are not driving, exactly. Actually there isn't a "one" that is driving. We think there is a "one" here that does everything. But it's not one, it is many, a village. And when you swim through that looking for the "I" please then bring that "I" to me and show it to me. You cannot find that.

Actually, to answer your question, if you are not in the present, you are not only not experiencing intensity, you are not experiencing your life at all. Do you realize that most people live their whole life, never experiencing their own life? What a way to cheat yourself. We are always busy trying to change our habits, to become "better" according to some cultural demand. But that's living in the past and the future, taking our orders from some amorphous cultural entity that we believe in. Just notice. Pay attention. Just hang out here, with me. And then, of course, it's very intense, because most people are not used to that. So if you begin to be really, as you say, "in the now," or in the present moment then your attention is here.

I think that answers your question.

*Student: You tell us to breathe each morning for one hour. Sometimes it's a big pleasure and sometimes you just can't do it. But you say now that if you don't want to, you shouldn't do it, but then again you say you should breathe each day. We discuss this, and we all have this experience of sometimes it's easy and sometimes very hard to breathe each morning. So should we do it or not?*

Certainly in the beginning of learning anything like surfing, driving a car, learning a language, or learning meditation, a certain amount of discipline is required. Right? If you don't study your lessons every day, you are never going to learn to speak English. If you don't paddle out into the surf and try every day, you won't learn to surf. In other words, the less often you go into whatever it is you are trying to learn, the longer it will take you to learn it. This is the rule, or the principle, with everything. That's why I say "Do what you want to do." Because if you don't really want to learn to speak English, then why force yourself? If you don't really want to learn

to surf for the love of it, but are doing it because you think the girls will like you better, then you are not going to do it anyway. It's too difficult. You can't do it for girls. Well, maybe some people do that, but you see what I mean. In other words, you can be driven to follow some sort of discipline because of some attachment to the teacher or the Aikido culture. But that is not a good reason to do anything, and it will never last for you if you do it that way. So when I say, "Do what you want to do," I mean to sit down and look at it closely and decide. "I will do this. I want to do this." And then you do it. And sometimes you fall off your horse. Sometimes you screw up. Then you pick yourself up and get back on the horse, without any self accusation, without any guilt. It's your life. You are a human being. You can do whatever you want. You can choose whatever you want. So please do what you want. Do you understand?

I know it's sometimes difficult when I teach this way. People wonder, "What does he mean that I can just do what I want?" So please understand what I mean by that. We all know, even the youngest member here knows, that certain things bring more preferable results, and certain other things, even though they might feel good or taste good, bring maybe not such good results. So of course, everyone is always balancing this. And there are different cultural pressures that cause you to be a little bit different about that than someone from another culture. If we go to a restaurant here, it's a different kind of food than what we have in other countries. This is because you are conditioned to make those choices.

Regular self-improvement practice is called "*keiko*" in Japanese. Getting up in the morning and breathing, going to work on time, driving within the laws of traffic, getting to the dojo early, training sincerely, everything that you do in the dual world, everything that you do in your life, is all *keiko*. But our true practice, may I suggest, is *shugyo*, not *keiko*. *Keiko* is fine. You have to do it. You have to participate. You have a body, you have a life. You have to have some money to eat, otherwise you cannot practice. But the practice is actually not *keiko*. The true practice is *shugyo*. *Shugyo* is the art of being completely present in attention in the moment. This is the practice that we are actually engaged in. If you will notice, everything in the *keiko* world, within Aikido and outside of Aikido, is designed to encourage us to practice *shugyo*, if you just look closely enough, if you just notice. And when you start to notice, you really do wonder, "What on earth have I been doing all of my life? What made me think that being successful would somehow awaken me to what's actually happening in my life?"

My profession is landscape. I have a landscape construction company, and landscape maintenance company, and a landscape design company combined. In the beginning I worked very hard to make my company and myself very well-known and successful, and certainly wealthy. And I was doing alright, but it just didn't seem to ever come together for me. And then, I remembered that we are supposed to enjoy living! I actually chose landscaping because I love it. From when I was a little boy, I loved it, playing in the garden underneath the plants, making the small roads, putting little trees and houses, etc. Everybody does that, I suppose, but I really loved that. So then I just started paying attention to enjoying my work, and suddenly I was very successful. Voila! This is true in every single moment for everybody. We just seem to be completely missing the point. We want so much to succeed, and that's understandable.

There is nothing in this world that comes to you as a result of achieving a strangle hold on it. The more you chase after something the further it flees. You cannot force a horse or a burro to come. But if you just turn around and walk, leading them, they will follow you. And of course, you cannot turn and walk while secretly hoping he will come. He won't come because it doesn't work like that. You are the boss. This is your world of experience, and everything that is in it is you. There is no "other." There is nothing else. Even your enemy is actually you. Now that's a weird thing to say, so you have to understand what I mean by that. If you go poke your enemy, he will say "Ouch." So I don't mean that he is you literally, physically. I mean that he is you actually.

Do you see this glass of water? Where does the seeing of this glass of water take place?

*Student: In the brain.*

OK, if you take that little brain and go to another room, do you still see it? No, you will not. You will remember seeing it, but you will no longer see it. So the glass of water is a very important part of this experience of seeing, not just your brain. So does it take place in the glass? No, because if I remove the glass, the experience also ceases. The experience requires the glass and the brain together somehow. We know that. But the question is, where does the seeing take place? Here? There? Both? Neither? Where?

*Student: Both?*

I think you are now just guessing. No. The answer is we cannot know where it takes place. Now, when does the seeing take place? When does it start? Careful. Another question is, where does the seeing come from, before it takes place, before you experience it? And where does it go after you are finished experiencing it?

*Student: I don't know.*

We don't know. So what do we say about something that we don't know where it takes place, we don't know when it takes place, we don't know where it came from before and we don't know where it goes after? It doesn't exist. We say that it doesn't exist. And folks, that's everything we experience in the relative world, including this body here. So we are really in trouble. We are really in a deluded condition. And fortunately there is a solution. Be present and don't worry.

Everyone thinks that "enlightenment" means falling upon the final secret, getting the ultimate answer in some way. But actually there is no such thing. Waking up means recognizing that there is no way to know such a thing, and living in the presence of that not knowing all the time, and being OK with it.

*Student: Often times I have trouble distinguishing when I am acting from my ego, reacting to something, or when I am acting truly, from the true being of the universe. Sometimes I can distinguish, but mostly I cannot distinguish.*

Who has trouble distinguishing that?

*Student: Me, the ego. Oh, I don't know.*

Who doesn't know? Can you see what you are doing there? Who wants to know this?

*Student: The mind, the ego.*

I don't want a label. I want you to show me who wants to know this. Stuck?

*Student: Yes.*

This is the answer to your question. Go in there and look and find that self, that "I", and show it to me. Go look, find the "I" and tell me what you see. Right now. Do it. Are you looking? Look now please. Just look and tell me what you see. Do you see anything there?

*Student: No.*

So who wants to know who is doing the right thing? That's like the cosmic joke, the dog chasing it's own tail. Just sit down and have a beer. It works much better.

OK, I think that's enough. Thank you very much.