

HKF Summer Seminar 2015 – Question & Answer
Sunday, June 28, 2015
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Good Morning everybody. We have been having a good time. Well, I have been having a good time. I hope you have been having a good time. And what I mean by a good time, is an opportunity to train on this kind of level with other people that feel that value, like I said last night, what I value, and others who want to practice it. And without you guys, it couldn't happen, you know? Not just without your bodies, but without your understanding and commitment to this practice, which is the most difficult to do. And yet, you seem willing to continue to do it, which I am very grateful for. So I just wanted to be able to say that without bursting into tears, as I did last night.

Probably one of the most difficult parts of this is the idea that everything just continues happening, not the idea, but the fact that everything just continues and continues and continues. And as a result, we are constantly wanting to adjust our relationship with time and space. If things seem to be less in our favor, or less going our way, then we want to change them, or we demand that they be changed so that we have an easier time of it.

So this group of young students comes to see a teacher, and they say, "We heard you are a good teacher. Could we practice with you?" And he said, "Sure, but let me just ask you a couple of questions first. Number one, are you willing to go where you've never been before and leave your comfort zone no matter the danger?" And they all say, "Yes, yes, we're willing." "OK, good," he says. "Number two, are you willing to let everyone else go first and you be the last?" And they all say, "Oh, absolutely, Sensei, yes. We're up for that." "OK, are you ready to train intensely, and not be lazy?" "Of course, we are ready." Now they figure they've got it, they are in there, because they said "yes" to everything. So he said, "OK, very good. Come on Tuesday, and I want to introduce you to my existing students." "OK, Sensei," they say, because now he is their Sensei.

So they come on Tuesday night, and he says to his students, "I want to introduce you to a new group, that wants to train with me, but before we proceed, let me ask you these three questions. First of all, would you like to go where you've never been before, and leave your comfort zone?" And they all said, "No, we would not like to do that." "Oh. Well would you like to train intensely, no matter what the cost?" "No, we would not like to do that." "Oh, well would you be willing to let everyone go before you and you be the last?" "Absolutely not, Sensei. We don't want that."

And he turned back and looked at the new students and said, "You see? If you train with me you're going to be worse off than you are now!"

I know you've heard that story before, but it is a very important story for us, relative to what I was talking about today. The fact that these older students of his answered like that means that they are very advanced. The ones that said they are not willing to do all

those things, this means that are very advanced. These new people would like the teacher to believe that they are very committed, but actually they are beginners, so they clearly have no idea. If you look in the mirror, and you think, "Eh, not too bad. I'm a pretty good person," you are screwed, brother. You are in deep trouble with yourself. When I first went to that three-year retreat, my teacher said, "For the first year, your task will be to learn that you are just as bad as you always suspected, so that we have something to work with." In other words, he wanted me to be like this group. He wanted me to admit what a human being really is. We spend our youth lying to ourselves, our parents supporting these lies, and often our teachers too. In school these days, all the teachers support that b.s., that you are just great, good enough, everybody is the same, everybody is great. We are actually a bunch of rascals. All of us are.

But, noticing that, admitting to that, owning that in your self, that's a big step and a huge relief. And then you can actually start practicing, and you can see what it is that stands in your way. And it is obvious to you every time you do it, and so you have some material to practice with.

So this is very important. And again this is a Hawaii Ki Federation seminar, so all the teachers are here, all the big shots are here. So it gives me a chance to talk to all of you who I don't get to see so often. And I know your students never tell you anything like this, right? So I take the opportunity to lecture you a little bit about this. And please forgive me if I overstep any bounds, or say anything rudely or seem to be careless about it. I try to be careful and you know I am sincere, and I really want you to understand this so that you can be relieved and have this experience, which is powerful and profound. And if not, all you do is hold yourself back, like that guy hitting his head against the wall because it feels so good when he stops. It's crazy what we do to ourselves. We torture your own selves, through our frustration and struggle and inability to accept the way things come down the pike, the way things happen. Sometimes we have to wait and then we get perspective. Then we look back and think, "Wow, is that how that happened? I never would have understood this, or never would have been free of this. But at the time it felt horrible, and I was resisting it." Whatever it is that is happening is OK.

So that's our practice, to be in the present moment, being vulnerable, vulnerable to whatever is happening, and open to it. And it's hard to do that when you are trying to be someone special. It just doesn't work. And even if you are someone that has some special qualities, like you can sing or dance really well, then you still mustn't think that that entitles you to something. Some people have the kind of personalities and the kind of bodies that can do Aikido and makes them a better teacher in the way of helping other people and so forth. They have these talents, as a number of you people do. But then some of you don't have those talents. You have plenty of other talents, maybe, but maybe you don't have those. But it doesn't mean that some of you are more entitled to some sort of special treatment than others. You know? I mean, I have to say, I am the Chief Instructor, and many of you require more than I do. I know that you don't know you are doing that. It's out of ignorance, perhaps. But you do. Not that what you

require is from me, personally, so much, but I see it happening. I mean, I am not making this stuff up. We are the group, and we are here in gratitude, and it's so much fun to do this practice. I am very grateful for it, as I said, but it has to be real. It has to be real practice.

Friday night and Saturday morning I gave you a whole philosophy about how this all works, but I just don't feel like that right now, so. I just felt more like saying this. I think it's more important that we come to terms with our own expectations, unreasonable expectations, and learn to live in gratitude. You know, if we could just be good, normal, caring human beings. We don't have to be something fantastic.

OK. So, did you have any questions?

Student: So according to what you just discussed, my feelings, that I sometimes am just overwhelmed with inadequacy, this is just as bad as someone who feels entitled, yes?

It is in fact that same thing.

Student: Yeah.

Sorry to have to say, but yeah, it's the other side of the same coin. We only want to look good because we have pride. And if we think we don't look good, or measure up, and that's a problem, that's because we have pride. It's pride.

Student: So that's another way of saying special.

Right. And it's not being grateful and it's certainly not being humble. It's just another way of being full of our selves. And when it's happening, we are accusing others of being full of them selves, always. When you feel that way, I'll bet that's what you are thinking. There is something that is in your way, that shouldn't be there.

Student: Right.

Yeah, very good question/observation.

Student: Is the feeling of being full of our selves, the know-it-all, versus feeling our inadequacies sort of trying to find the point between rough and smooth?

Yes, but not quite. When someone appears to be full of themselves, like always wanting to be right, always wanting to have the final word, and always wanting to be recognized as right and having the final word, that characteristic in us (and we all have that, not just some people), but when we are exhibiting that, it's the same character, which is why I am saying the other side of the same coin, as the one who feels inadequate. Because the motivation to be stuffy and righteous, or full of yourself, is in fact a feeling of inadequacy. That's why the Dalai Lama said, "I guess everybody here is unhappy, because all you talk about is trying to find happiness. That means you are unhappy." Right, so yeah, if you are always trying to be like "the guy" or "the girl" then yeah, that means that you have a deep sense of inadequacy. So what? Leave it go. That's why I

said, when I finished there, if we could just be like normal, kind hearted, socialized human beings, instead of all of this privilege stuff, entitlement stuff.

We feel entitled, we want to be considered important, because we secretly fear that we are not. We want to be validated. We require other people to validate us. Just recently we had a Ki Lecture, and that was about letting other people dictate who you are, believing everybody else's tale about it. And I said, if it is someone like me, and I travel all over the world and there are a lot of people that respect me because of my position, and if something were to happen and I would lose that position, and lose all the students, would that break my heart? Well, if it would break my heart, that means that I believe all these people, that they are right, that I am something special. I am entitled. And then when it gets taken away, ooo, owey, owey, miserable suffering. And there would be a cause, of course, that I could bitch about, blame it on, someone started a rumor about me, or something. Or maybe it was my fault and I did something and then "Oh, mea culpa, no, no, no, I wrecked my life and..." This is all in one bucket, right?

Student: My question, though is, does that feeling of inadequacy prevent you from being who you are supposed to be?

Are you saying that to me or her?

Student: To her. When I practice here, you know, I always feel that way.

Student: Well, I've been with my students, and when I am with my students, I think I am an OK instructor. But when I get here, I have been where a lot of the people here have been, right, and that's where I think I was drawing the line a lot of times. My students do think I am wonderful. They think I am great. They don't know the whole picture.

And we'd like to keep it that way!

Student: No, but seriously I've been where they have been.

It's like Shaner Sensei told me one time, when he was forming the Eastern Ki Federation. I said, "How is it going with the Eastern Ki Federation?" "Oh," he said, "I think I've got them fooled so far!" That was a joke, you know, but in some sense there is a part of us that thinks, since everyone have a little bit of a sense of inadequacy that can pop up here and there, and of course, once you recognize it and you own it and embrace it and take it in, "Yes I am that" and you don't have to be afraid to admit that, then it can be OK. Then, it has no power over you. It only has power over you when you are in denial about it, or not just denial but you innocently don't recognize it. You just don't know. Nobody ever pointed it out to you, and you never got that you were that way.

You know, I was an actor in the beginning. I went to professional acting school, and later as a professional I played Iago in Othello. This is an evil man, a rascal, a horrible man, causing mayhem through his lies and deceit. And I had to play that character. Well, when I first got cast in the role I thought, "How am I going to do this?!" What was I

thinking? And then, of course, I had to explore and discover that, in this situation, given the conditioning that he had, you and I would all do that too. But we don't think that, see? We watch the movie or the play and we think, "Oh, I would never do that." But it's because, we don't have that conditioning. We didn't get conditioned to that spot. But he did. So you have to find that in yourself. You condition yourself that way. Because otherwise it's fake, and you can't fake it. You have to experience that. That's the difference between, you know, good acting and bad acting. A lot of people are just faking it. It's a big job, and it can be painful finding these things out about your self. One day I was in the grocery store and I said something to the clerk, and I realized that it was a nasty thing that I had said, and that it was exactly what Iago would do. And I went, "Oh my god, I'm getting too close." And I got scared about it even. But I was very young.

Anyway, as an actor you have to realize that you are everything, that you are all of it. If you think you are not capable of something, then you are wrong. You have not looked closely enough. And that means that we might be exhibiting some of that thing that we don't think we are all of the time and not knowing it, simply because we don't recognize it. Do you see what I mean? And that ought to be a little scary to you.

Student: Sensei, can you comment on what is the element that is like...when you are giving a Ki Test, and the person is stable, and the next exercise you do is standing Kokyu dosa, and you are moving together. What is the element that is the same in both of those exercises? I mean in one the person is stable and you are exercising this element, and in the next you are moving together and you are exercising this element. I mean, other than extending Ki?

Other than extending Ki? Like there is something else? I wouldn't want to discount extending Ki. Look, the Four Basic Principles are Tohei Sensei's fundamental description of how to be with the world around you. Whether it's a regular Ki Test, or standing Kokyu Dosa, or Kokyu Dosa, or driving a car, it always doesn't matter what the exercise is, the challenge is always the same. Whether your wife is yelling at you, your boss is yelling at you, or you are yelling at someone else, no matter what challenge is happening to you in your life, on or off the mat, our responsibility is always the same. And that is to Keep One Point, or to Extend KI, or to Relax Completely, or Keep Weight Underside. Those are four ways of saying to experience mind/body unification. So that's our responsibility, that's our practice at all times.

Now the question is, and this is what we have been exploring for three days, what actually is One Point? There isn't any one point as such. There is no fixed entity, no fixed point anywhere in the whole universe. There is perspective, but from which you look is infinite and to which you look is also infinite. It occurs to me now, right at the moment here, that no matter what I say, in terms of pointing to the One Point, it's misleading, because there is nothing there. But it's an infinite possibility that, when we surrender to it, give ourselves over to that, become vulnerable in the present moment to this, we begin to have a different kind of experience and the people that are around us

and working with us in one way or another will also have a different kind of experience. That's what we have been exploring, and that's what we are working on when we practice a Ki Test or standing Kokyu Dojo, or waza, or whatever in the dojo.

Student: Yes, that is actually a very simple answer. However...but...I've noticed that, as I'm standing there being stable, I am not doing this. Or if I am working with someone and moving together with them, then I am not doing that either. We talked about it before, but I am seeing it more and more, and that when I take that exercise and think "I am doing it" it's very hard to achieve what we are really trying to achieve.

Yeah, impossible.

Student: Same thing, if I am trying not to be judgmental. Oh, I think I'll be non-judgmental today, and then I am criticizing myself every time I am judgmental, because I am not supposed to be judgmental. Then I am not quite doing the practice.

Yes, that's being judgmental. Yeah, see David about that. It is such a double bind, because all these things that we have been talking about earlier today, and then just now, regarding a feeling of inadequacy versus a feeling of superiority or specialness, all arise out of a mistaken notion of identity. That's why when we sit, we want to notice where is the source of the one who watches? What is the one that looks? It cannot be seen, of course, because if you could see it, then you would become the one who is looking. Do you see what I mean? Are you getting that, or did I lose you? It's subject/object. What is the ultimate subject? We call it "I." It exists. There is some kind of a source of awareness, some sort of source, the one who looks, let's say. But it's always the one who is looking, and can never see itself. It's impossible. So you can never know that. It can never know that, because it's always looking. So when it thinks it's doing something, because it's the ultimate subject, it objectifies everything. So when we look and we see that we can't find it anywhere, and if you take the time to actually experience that looking and not being able to find, then you have a kind of sense of loss. You are kind of lost, which is a good thing.

OK David, I can't say any more with you sitting there on edge like that. Do you have a question?

Student: No Sensei, you just answered my question.

OK, thank you very much.