

**Spain Spring Seminar – Question & Answer**  
**Sunday, May 24, 2015**  
**C. Curtis**

Good Morning, Buenos Dias. So today I taught you about the movement of the universe that we experience as the stream of living. Everybody already knows this, but the problem is that we make assumptions about how things are, based upon our senses. Or I should say, based on a partial use of our senses. When I sit on this chair, or put my hand on my knee, I feel it stop, and I hear it hit. So that tells me that my hand and my knee are separate. But then, when I look with all of my senses, then I see, “Oh, wait. It’s not separate. It’s my hand.” This is how it is with you and me, because I only include you as part of the picture, when instead of you are everything, everything. I experience everything, and this is the same for you. For every one of us it is the same. It is not that Tohei Sensei is different, or O’Sensei is different, or I am different. No. Everyone is the same. Of course we look different, we speak a different language, and we like different food and wine, right? But we know that’s a conditioning. If you were brought up on Maui, you would speak English, and you would probably like food more similar to what I am used to eating. In other words, it is just conditioning. Therefore it has no real value, ultimately. Don’t mistake, it has relative value, because we use things like culture and language, the study of history and the imagination of the future through which to expand our inclusiveness. For instance, our tendency is to take one side of an issue. Like GMO for instance. Do you know this? Genetically modified organisms. Actually, some aspects of GMO have saved the world already. Some other aspects of GMO can be a little scary. So if you land somewhere between saving the world and scary, even if you are right in the middle, you are still taking a position. And whenever you are in a position, there is someone in opposition to you. T

The study of Aikido is how to resolve this difficulty of the relative world. You are different than me, so we have some kind of conflict. It is implied in the difference, if I allow that, if you allow that. So the whole point is to be practicing Shugyo all the time. Sometimes we have pleasure. Sometimes we have pain. But we never have to suffer. Suffering is a reaction to the fear of losing pleasure, or a reaction to extensive pain. As in “This damn pain. I wish my headache would go away.” So this is causing suffering to your self. It’s not the fault of the pain. It’s your fault. You are the one who is suffering. You don’t have to suffer.

We are always looking to lessen the pain, and increase the pleasure. To some degree, in the tip of the iceberg, it seems that we can do this. We learn in our life that if we do things a certain way, they tend to cause less pain. Like driving too fast is maybe fun, but once you have a smash, then you begin to think, “I’d better drive more slowly, because that hurt.” So, relatively speaking, you are doing some controlling there. But actually, you cannot control this. Because some other crazy drunk person can drive down the street as you are driving perfectly correctly, and come and smash you and you have pain or you die. We call this maturity. As you mature as a human being, you begin to let go

of the dream of controlling your life. And you see that the Four Principle of Practice are describing the best way to live: Show up, open your mind and heart to whatever is happening (whether it's painful or pleasurable don't say no, embrace), and follow along whatever is happening with full attention. And then finally we accept whatever the result is, without complaining.

Yes, it is very difficult to do this. It takes lots and lots of practice. That's why I tell you that you have to sit every morning. Sit, sit, sit, so you can practice.

OK, that's my introduction. You may now ask me questions.

*Student: You have spoken about this stream. I would like to know that, within this stream, what is the best way to make a decision?*

What kind of decision do you mean?

*Student: Important decisions. Not what kind of car I am going to drive or those kinds of things.*

Like which girl friend to ask out, to ask to marry me? This is a big decision. Which college to go to? You know, Albert Einstein used to say. "People think that I arrive at my conclusions as a result of much thinking. I admit, that I am addicted to thinking. But anything of significance generally arrives as 3:00 AM in the morning. I wake up and Ah-Ha! I've got it!"

We think, "Should I do A or should I do B?" Do you know this American baseball coach named Yogi Berra? He was very famous for brilliant quotes. Yogi Berra says, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Which one? Take it! Yeah. It happens. We think we live our lives according to what we think. But our thinking is always after. We say, "Yes, I think I'll do that. That's the right thing." No, you were already going to do that thing. Do you see? It's an illusion. Even the scientists that do brain scans have discovered that first the decision is made, and then the conscious mind very soon after becomes aware of it, and immediately takes credit for it.

So this is a mistake. And this is what I am trying to say about just living life. You might say, why don't we just let life live us. Of course, the conscious, decision-making mind is very important. It is the thing, the gift that allows us to wake up from our dream, to enlighten, you know, to wake up, as long as we use it to choose to practice One Point. And this is only something that Tohei Sensei called it. It's the same in every practice, everywhere on earth, from time beginning to time ending. This is just one avenue for practicing this, but everybody who ever practiced, from Buddha to Jesus to whomever, whether they say it's love, agape, it's the same practice. So when St. Teresa of Avila or St. John of the Cross writes about this, or Meister Eckhart writes about this, they are just describing what I am describing. It's just this way of living, living life completely.

In Aikido we don't use words like "God." But we could. I don't choose to, because I want everyone to have a chance to practice whether they are Catholic, Islam, or

Buddhist. I don't care. Some day they will see, "Oh, this is what I was supposed to be practicing to begin with!" ...some day, if they practice enough.

Mother Teresa was being interviewed by Dan Rather, and he says to her, "So Mother Teresa, I understand that you pray a lot." And she says, "Oh yes, I pray all the time." "Oh, what do you do when you pray?" And she says, "Nothing." He says, "No, I mean what do you say?" And she says, "Nothing." "Well then, what are you doing?" "Listening." "Listening to what?" he says. "Listening to God." "Well then," he says, "what is God saying?" "Nothing." "Well, what is God doing?" "Listening."

This is what we are practicing. You know, we started out this morning by listening.

OK? Decisions take care of themselves. But you must be engaged completely, of course. We don't sit on the couch, open a beer, and say, "Well, yeah. He says life just takes care of itself." No. Pay attention. We pay complete attention. It takes skill, so you have to practice a lot.

*Student: I understand well what you are saying. But I have this kind of fear that keeps me from completely experiencing what you are asking. So my question is, how can we do this without any fear in our life?*

Fear of what?

*Student: What could happen if I allow the stream of life to take me. It is the fear of the unknown, of what might happen, of what's on the other side.*

The other side of what?

*Student: Just something that is unknown or unfamiliar. If I go there...?*

OK, I understand. So, if we are practicing Aikido, we usually know the kind of attack that is coming. A punch, kick, grab, hit. But we have also "Tsuzuki waza" where you don't know what they will do. Maybe in a demonstration a teacher may show this. So, if you don't know what attack is coming, and the attack comes, what do you do? You deal with it, as best you can. If you are a master, then you deal with it masterfully. If you are a beginner, you deal with it in a clumsy way. If you are a real beginner, maybe you even get punched in the face. But you deal with it, because you have no choice. Life comes to you. You will deal with it with as much skill as you have developed. What I am saying is that I want to encourage you to develop your capacity to move freely in the skill in any future moment, because you never know what is coming next, ever. There are people that refuse to even leave their house because they have this fear so much: agoraphobia. So this is this fear, but expanded.

Of course at some point in our life, particularly when we are younger, we are having some trepidation. And then we go to school, we join clubs, we hang out in gangs with other people, try to make money, all designed to make us more ready for that thing we don't know that's coming down the pike at us. Right? Those skills are important, of

course. They have life coaches now that will teach you all of those skills. But none of this takes away the fear. It just covers it. I sort of tell myself, "I have money, I have a Phd, I'll be all right now, or I have a big car now, no one can damage me." But this is only covering it.

This kind of practice is to see that we never have any control, and we never know what's coming, and it's fine! Can I tell them about you, Carlos?

*Carlos: Yes.*

Some time ago we were having a question and answer session like this, and Carlos was sitting in the audience and asked a question. And I already knew he was going to ask this question, because he is my student and I was paying attention to him. So, sure enough, he says, "I am completely lost and I don't know what to do about it." And I said, "I am completely lost too, except that I don't mind." Being completely lost means, "I don't know what's going to happen next." I am the same, only I don't care, I don't mind, it's OK. I see, this is the way it is, and it's good that it's this way. Because, if you could actually control things, then people would misuse each other with that control. I mean the evidence is there. That's why we have wars all over the world. People do anything. You know, we have to make an agreement. Let's not drop bombs on each other. Let's not make atomic bombs. Because even that ultimate atomic or hydrogen bomb, the act of dropping one, just comes from this small fear you are asking about. So we say, "So what, be natural, do nothing, don't worry be happy." Those are my teacher, Suzuki Sensei's, four principles.

Yeah. The answer to your question is not really an explanation in words, except of course you must sit. All of these things that I am talking about, each of us has to discover for ourselves. It's just "so what?" if I tell you. Maybe I'm crazy, in fact I kind of am. You have to find out for yourself. OK?

*Student: For me this fear is not being able to control, and at the same time that attempt to control keeps us from joining the flow of life. I feel that this attempt to control is what keeps us from entering this life.*

And what's the question?

*Student: It's just what I've noticed. For me there are two fears that stop us. One is the fear of death and the other is this fear of not being in control.*

I think this is one fear. Yeah, the fear of death is the ultimate loss of control. That's why, in the many schools of Buddhism, for instance, you spend years sitting studying your death, reflecting on death, because that's the ultimate loss of control. You actually can't decide when you die. Modern man has tried everything, and you still don't know when. You might eat perfect food, exercise every day, no smoking, no drinking, no whatever bad things there are, you don't do any of them. And then still, tomorrow, boom, you get hit by a truck. You die. You cannot control what happens. And it's OK. That's not bad news. That's the good news. I mean, if there is any bad news, it's that you have to

learn to pay attention, because that's hard to do. And even that is not bad news because it's fun to learn. It's fun to practice. You all enjoy it, right?

*Student: I used to practice here in Valencia, but now I have moved 700 miles away, and there is nothing there. My body is demanding this practice, and I want to do it. I want to practice. But work didn't allow me to. Now I have a good position at work, and I am getting settled, and I have some tatami mats, so I am looking for some push to find out how to continue this practice, maybe with others, but it doesn't have to be with others. I am just doing this for my own growth. I feel alone here and don't have a way to practice, and I don't have any advice.*

So what does your teacher tell you?

*Student: My teacher? He says I should teach others.*

So?

*Student: I didn't have a place, and it wasn't the time. Now it's starting to be the time.*

*His Teacher: Now we are starting to teach seminars in Cantabria, and we will have a lot of students. So we will see if we can organize something.*

*Student: At least it might be working with deaf people [this student is deaf].*

Yeah, and it might be a year or two. But that is a relatively short time. In the mean time, of course you put all of your attention to this, with the assistance and support of your teacher, you put your mind to finding the right place, getting the mats, and establishing a practice. And if you are sharing your heart, not just some information, with the people around you, you will find more and more people around you. And then at some point, we call that a "dojo."

OK? In the meantime, you sit every day, and whatever else you like. Maybe you cut bokken every day as a practice.

When I first married my wife, Lynn, at that point my business exploded, took off. So I went to see Suzuki Sensei and said, "My business and my new marriage won't allow me to practice like I was practicing. I have a new responsibility to my family. I have a new responsibility to my business." So he said, "Fine, stay in touch." So for two years I never taught or went to the dojo. Only just work and be with my family. But I sat every day during that time. And then two years later, I was having lunch with Suzuki Sensei, and he said, "OK, your time is up. It is time. You must come back and teach the Friday night class and practice with me now." And he was right. Things were OK then, and I could do that. So I came back to teach the practice on Friday night. And I have to say that several people said to me, "Your teaching is better now than before."

I am telling you, the key is sitting, sitting, sitting. Of course, practice in the dojo as much as you can. Of course build yourself new relationships in the community so that you have a place to practice. But for now, and after, sit every day. Of course I am saying

this to everyone, not just to him. We are all in this position. Only he is living it right now and expressing it.

*His Teacher: Now is his time to begin.*

OK?

*Student: I have been practicing for a little while. I practice in the dojo breathing and meditation, not too much.*

That's good. You wouldn't want to overdo it!

*Student: I understand that you are asking us to do more sitting, because, at some point, if you don't do it, you can't advance any more. How can we practice this meditation, knowing the form we have been taught, so that it really can be effective and show results?*

Do you think I didn't teach you correctly?

*Student: Not only it's necessary to know what to do, but also to experience what you are talking about?*

Yes, you experience by doing it.

*Student: I see a lot of people who know the practice, but what I see doesn't match what I think the result should be.*

Oh, the result. Oh, boy, result. Hmmm.

We don't like to make investments without being sure that we are going to get a return on that investment. And that's a good businessman. Make sure you don't make investments unless you are relatively sure you will get some return. And the more you practice doing that, in business, the better you get at that. But like everything else, you cannot control that, and you may lose everything, no matter how clever you are.

The danger is when we bring that kind of thinking to this kind of practice. So, when you think, "OK, Curtis says I should sit one hour every day. So there must be some result I am going to get from this that is worth me sitting one hour every day. Because it is a big job that he is asking me to do." Right? Everybody is thinking that. "I am not going to do that unless I am going to get some results. And they better look like this kind of result, not some other kind of result." Right? Admit it. You cannot take that kind of thinking to this kind of practice. We are not looking to the future. The practice is now. No matter how good you get at it, you are still practicing, and it is still now. As you become better at it, certainly you will become more skillful, as I said earlier. But skillful at what? Skillful at just being natural, just being here and experiencing this. There is no result. It's not like a relative thing. "Result" is a relative condition change, cause and effect. This is not cause and effect. The aspect of it that is cause and effect, that is relative, is the building of capacity or building of skill. But ultimately it is a mistake to look to the future when

something will be different than it is now. It won't be. And at every moment you are exactly as aware as you are. You can't be more than you are.

I mean, believe me, I am the least worthy of anybody to be....look what I am doing. How did this happen? I mean, I was a juvenile delinquent. I was and adult delinquent! I am not particularly bright in some ways. Just ask my wife. She says, "How can you still be such a jerk?!" Like, "Where is the result?!" No. Everybody is worthy, already, right now, just the way you are, for this. And, of course, I want you to experience this for yourself without any expectation. Because everything that you need and everything that you are is already right here. All I can tell you is sit, sit, sit. And don't be looking to check the result, like, "OK, I am doing one hour now....?"

OK? Are we together? So have a nice lunch.