

**Seminar in Valencia, Spain – Question & Answer  
With Christopher Curtis Sensei  
Sunday, June 5, 2016**

Good morning everyone. Buenos Dias. Many people think that, when I teach them how to use bokken or how to use jo, how to breath out and how to breath in, how to hit the bell, and how to do certain techniques, once you learn everything I have to teach you about all of these different techniques of practice and you can do all of them, then you are me, and you can go teach what I teach. But this is not the case. It is only incidental that I am teaching you all of those things. I have to have some form, some medium, and this is the one I chose.

Tohei Sensei told us many times, “When I teach you, I am teaching you use of mind.” *How to use mind*. It’s always a mistake to look at the physical and attempt to manipulate it with the hope of understanding the principles of what is actually occurring that causes the expression of these techniques in this particular way. Tohei Sensei’s, and hence our, main principle is “mind leads body.” For instance, everyone wants to become more calm. But you cannot make yourself calm by trying to be “tranquilo,” “calm.” It is not possible to do this. Calmness is a result or a side effect of a certain use of mind. When we look into, or query, or inquire into the nature of anything, another human being, an idea in physics, some engineering task, the meaning of some Flamenco music, or just plain using one of your senses, like listening, any time we engage ourselves completely in that active use of mind, of course we can become very calm. And the more calm we become, the more deeply connected we are with everything around us. Of course we will be more deeply connected with the task at hand, whatever that might be, but also more deeply connected and open to the possibilities arising from this task, even if the task happens to be a relationship.

So this is our practice. Whenever we are with another student and we are practicing together, we are connecting with them, and learning to see this movement or intention of the mind of your partner. And if you engage your partner in this way, you become very calm and have a mind of equanimity, so that you are not surprised or unduly disturbed by any action in or around you. So this is our practice, use of mind.

So, perhaps you would like to ask something relating to this, though it doesn’t have to be related to use of mind, but anything that you are working with in your practice.

*Student: When talking about mind, in my personal case, what I notice is that when you mention mind, I associate it with the head. And my head is full of*

*thoughts and the unconscious, which in reality dominates a large part of our life. A thought is a function of mind, or is the mind something else?*

Yes. (laughter) Let me ask you something. When you notice a thought, where does the one who notices that thought reside?

*Student: It's the one that is caught up in the thought.*

No, I am asking you where does that one reside? Where does it live? Where is the source of this? Is it in you somewhere?

*Student: Yes.*

Are you sure?

*Student: To me, that's the mind.*

What's the mind?

*Student: I mean the conscious mind.*

For who? Who is saying this about the mind?

*Student: I can't answer this question. That's why I am asking.*

OK, look right now. Look at who is watching. Look at who is thinking. Look at who is listening. Look at who is feeling. Look at who knows. Look there right now. What do you see? Listen to me. What do you see? Describe it to me.

*Student: When I am observing, I see you.*

No, no, who is the "I" who see's me? Describe "I" to me.

*Student: I am very tied to the thoughts. I identify with those thoughts. I have an image of myself.*

Yeah, yeah. Do you know why it is so difficult to answer this question? Can anybody answer this question? Oh, you can. I am ready.

*Student: Because we are looking inside for something that is not inside.*

No, no, you are not answering my question. You are giving me the answer that I am supposed to give. You are explaining to me the meaning of my question. You don't know the meaning of my question. You read that in a book. Don't give me that shit. You know I love you but I can't stand that.

*[A parade goes by in the street outside, ringing bells loudly.]*

No, I want you to answer. Look inside, look at yourself, the one who sees, the one who hears the bells. Describe that one to me. You can't do it because no one can do it. The answer as to why no one can do it, we have to be very careful with. You cannot be so facile as to say, "Well it means it's not really there," and bla, bla, because some people freak out about that. The truth is, the one who is looking cannot see what it is looking for because it doesn't realize it is looking to see itself. The eye needs a mirror to see the eye.

This is so difficult because mind is everything. Often we use "mind" in different ways. Sometimes, when we talk about "use of mind," we are talking about the direction of our attention. Sometimes we are talking about how much we include in our attention. We call this "awareness." But when we are talking about mind itself, everywhere, and nowhere that can be seen, we say "that's mind." If you can point and say, "That is mind," then that cannot very well be mind, because this you are pointing to is a part of everything. Everything is part of everything. And there is a center, which is here in the lower abdomen. This is the place from which we experience and interact with all of mind, so it is the center of mind, or sometimes we say "the center of the universe." This is the same thing here; mind and universe. But if we cut open our lower abdomen, there is nothing there to find. Just blood and guts. No center of mind. This is that which cannot be touched.

So we have to be careful how we talk about mind, because if we try to pin it down and define it, then, you know, it's like a bar of soap in the shower. It slips away from you. You cannot grasp it. But you accept and open to it and allow it to continue this expression of itself as long as you are alive. OK? Thank you for the question.

*Student: The word "hara," and the One Point, is it the same?*

No, no, no. Well, yes, yes, yes. Hara is the general area, but Tohei Sensei would say One Point is the very base of *hara*. Don't get too concerned about that. It's the very place from which you experience everything. When you have a deep feeling, which may be manifesting in your heart, or a thought seeming to come from the head, like when I am listening to you it is coming to my ears and my ears are here on my head, so these are all different aspects of mind. When you are walking barefoot on gravel, you feel it at the bottom of your feet. You don't feel it in the One Point. The One Point is the center of all of it. From this center, all is experienced. If you get too worried about exactly where it is, then you are thinking about something in the physical realm, and it is not that. Of course, the way our body is made, it's a perfect manifestation of the total nature of mind, the subconscious with all the layers, and the ground of being. The

human body is the perfect manifestation and form of this, what I speak of, in action. This “One Point,” as Tohei Sensei calls it, is the very center of this. OK?

*Student: I have a question. I don't really know how to put it.*

You always say that.

*Student: I have a hard time with the way the world is, with wars, to understand just how this Keeping One Point is going to affect these bigger things. I don't know if that means not taking sides, not protesting or speaking out. That's what I wanted to say.*

What exactly is the question you want to ask? I understand the subject. Everyone has this general problem. Let's face it. The reason they are having a war, is because each of those sides doesn't know what to do to make the world the way they think it should be. That's why I am asking you what is your exact question, because it sounds to me like you are asking me, “What do I do to make the world the way I want it to be, because the way it is disturbs me, and this is not acceptable to me?” Is that correct?

*Student: Is it only disturbing me?*

Is it only disturbing her? (Everyone says “No, us also!”)

Yes, everybody wants the world to be the way they want it. The ISIS, Daish, want the world to be the way they want it. If you think that you have the right to have the world the way you want it, then why should they not have that right?

It's just not quite what we think. That's why it is confusing for us. We make certain assumptions, and then based upon those assumptions, we have a question that has no answer. Well, it's not that the question has no answer. We have to look at the assumption that underlies or gives rise to this kind of question. I cannot tell you what you should do. Every situation is different. But I would like to remind you that everybody who is on any side of any conflict, whether it's in a family or in a country, a community or anywhere in the world, from their point of view, all they want is to get everybody else to see their point of view, and follow it. And if everybody would do that, then there would be peace!

So we really have to ask, “Is there something wrong, or not?” If not, it would mean that conflict is something that naturally arises when we have a relative or dualistic condition. And that would mean that there is a reason for this relative condition that gives rise to conflict. This is not heaven. This is earth. We come here. The deal is, it's a dual world. There is conflict. How do we grow and develop? Every time we are challenged by the other side of something, we have

a chance to grow. If we are never challenged, and there is no conflict, there is no growth.

So, wow! It gets more and more strange. If you look at this in this way, and then go read a newspaper or watch news on television from this perspective, it's insane. But on the other hand, it makes perfect sense. You can see. This guy thinks this, this other guy thinks that, and then there is a moderator in the middle who thinks he or she understands both sides. And none of them have a clue about what is actually happening. Because the grasping for what they want, and shunning what they don't want, blinds them to what is actually happening. To see what is actually happening, to look into it, instead of trying to manipulate, and control, and push and grab, to inquire and see would create calmness and equanimity.

So you and I, if we choose to Keep One Point, to see from the center, to see with equanimity and even mindedness, then we don't have to suffer...[a marching brass band passes by outside, obscuring all other sound] OK, let's just listen for a moment. It is some kind of Spanish band. What are we celebrating? It's from Easter? Easter was a while ago. They are still going? Lost in the streets since Easter?

OK, Rafa, dozo:

*Student: About the Ki Test, yesterday's topic: Whenever I take the test, the first thing that happens is rejection. I try to return to my One Point, and join with my partner.*

Do you have a question?

*Student: How can I get over this rejection?*

Come to more seminars. You know, this is *poco a poco*. We have to go little by little. We practice for years. I taught you how to do it this time, didn't I? Need I say more? Do that! You cannot do that? Then practice that until you can do it. Look, just open your self to this and realize that it is not something that you can manipulate within yourself. It's OK already. You are a stable being, if you just stop resisting being a stable being.

*Student: You said that calmness is the result of an action. That is what I understood. I see myself trying to calm myself, and that attempt creates conflict.*

It makes it worse.

*Student: Yes. I think I understood that true calmness is connecting with*

*everything from One Point. My question is, is my understanding correct, or not?*

Sure, good, correct. It's just that. OK?

*Student: Everything that is out there is everything that is in here. I need to connect with and include all people. But this is hard because they reject this. So I think that if I connect with them, they won't bring me calm. Is there any sense to this?*

This is a very complex issue, so we want to try to make it as simple as possible. We want to be careful that we don't think that connecting with other people involves getting something that we want, that makes us feel better. Should I say more? Got it?

Student: Yes. OK.

*Student: The fact that there is a syndrome where people are disconnected from their body, I find interesting, because I am always trying to connect with my body. [The marching band begins to pass by again] And now that understanding, or that attempt, is completely destroyed from being here in your seminar. The question is, how useful is it to think about first connecting with our body and then connecting with the world? It's like, you could say that it is good to first have an ego, before getting rid of it.*

So it sounds a little bit like you are trying to figure out what to do, and the fact that, when you come to this seminar, all the things you have been doing in the past get thrown out the door, you perceive as a kind of a problem, because you liked having those things and knowing what to do.

There is nothing, really, to figure out. The condition we are in at the end of a seminar like this, is as close to ideal as possible for you right now. We are all at different levels of development. For some of you this will be quite shallow, and for some of you it will be quite a deep experience. And the deeper the experience it is for you, the more lost you will feel, only because you are comparing it to the way you are used to living, the way you are used to interacting with the world. Once you begin to enter into, or begin to be taken over by a state of mind that completely realizes that it has no idea what's going to happen next, and completely realizes that as an individual you have no control whatsoever over what's going to happen next, and that's OK, then you are well on your way to freedom. Bondage is thinking you know what is, and taking a position there. And any position always has an opposite, so either within yourself or outside of yourself, you are creating a world of conflict. This is not the way. The only way is to accept that you do not run the world. You never have, you

never will, no one ever has, and no one ever will, least of all the Buddha or Jesu Cristo, who knew very well what I am saying. I am putting myself here in very nice company. This is what their message is, right, if you read it? So that's what all the hubbub is about.

*Student: Can you explain the meaning that we are not in charge of the world, that we don't run the world?*

This towel I am holding, somebody had to stitch it together, somebody had to make the thread, somebody had to deliver the raw material to the factory, someone had to grow the cotton, somebody had to put the irrigation system, clear the land, create the hybridized cotton. And each one of those people has family, ancestors. The cause that created this towel is so complex that it is indescribably infinite. Do you understand?

*Student: Yes.*

Thank you for saying that. The world is completely interdependent. There is no way to know, as any scientist will tell you, what exactly causes some result. All action in the world, has to do with creating a result, right? Moving, speaking, even driving a car. It's just to go there. So, in some sense, we do have some control. The problem is, that we cannot see the result, because the cause is too complex. For instance, every time a scientist comes up with a theory, they have to do a double blind study to prove this theory is correct. So, relatively speaking, it succeeds; relatively speaking, this causes that effect. But it is never so simple. And this scientist will tell you, "Do not depend on this," because this never stops. You can never know the full implications of anything. That's why, when people see GMO as a potential problem, the thing that frightens everybody about this is that they can see that there could be other, unplanned, things that might happen as a result. But what they don't see is that everything is like that. Not just GMO. At least in that situation there are some controls. Out here in the world? None! It's a mess. You never know what is going to happen.

So it is kind of comical the arguments people get into, the strong feelings, etc. We get passionate generally just because we have too narrow a view. We don't see that everything is interdependent upon everything else, and everything is infinite. So you cannot know anything. And no matter how much you know about any one thing, since there is an infinite amount to know about anything, that means that no matter how much you know about that thing, you know relatively nothing, because the possibilities are infinite. OK?

Thank you very much.