

**EKF Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shikki Seminar – Question & Answer  
With Christopher Curtis Sensei  
Sunday, January 15, 2017**

So, here we are after many hours of training. It seemed like it went by really fast. That's the thing about time, yes? "Time passes when you are having a good time," they say. And that's all that "*Masa katsu a gatsu kachi haya bi*" means. "True victory over self, is victory over time and space." When you are really in it, in your life, and not reflecting on it, not learning about something, but actually learning the thing itself, then there is a kind of direct flow that is happening in us. And with this freedom, this is how we learn at our highest capacity.

While we are in a seminar like this, and if we do this kind of practice, we are automatically much more open than in our everyday life. So I hope that means that you have retained more than 50%. There was a lot, this weekend. Part of the finishing up of the seminar is to remind ourselves that it is not complicated and there is not a lot of stuff to learn. It's really, really simple. It's just giving up the illusion of control in your life, and allowing the natural flow of experience to happen without interference from you, without you attempting to correct things, and make them just a little bit better than they already are. We learn to accept the way they are, and go with that.

OK. Do you have any questions about this subject?

*Student: How do you ask a great question?*

Well, if you like to cook the way I like to cook, and this is much to my wife's chagrin, but I like to make sauces. I will put sauce on anything...toast. To make a good sauce is an art. Mostly it involves patience, in allowing the sauce to cook itself down and intensify in flavor. You may keep adding ingredients, but you keep reducing it. Like, in the old days, people would cook soup for days. In fact, the soup was permanent. They ate it, and it was just always on the stove, and they would keep adding to it. It was like sourdough starter or something. Same thing. It lasts forever.

So this is how you ask a good question. That's how you come upon a good question. You have a notion in your mind of something that is intriguing you, some quest, some query. That's healthy, and you want to ask maybe a teacher about it. But if you just ask, then maybe the teacher might tell you that you need to boil it down a little bit more. Quite often people ask me questions that they haven't really considered what it is that they really want to know.

Also, another pet peave of mine is people ask me questions about other people.

This is often a problem that more advanced people have, since they are the ones who think they can't afford to sound like that don't know already. If you are going to ask me a question, make it personal. And make it cost you something to ask it. And don't be shy, because somebody else here, probably a lot of other people, have that same question, and they really appreciate you having the courage to ask, and you doing the work to get it down to where it is pithy and essential question that has to be asked. This allows me to answer it clearly. Sometimes I don't answer at all. Sometimes I give a direct, logical kind of answer. Sometimes I tell you a story. Sometimes I ask you to do an exercise. But it depends upon you, the nature of what you are asking, and what work you have done on that question ahead of time.

Does that answer your question?

*Student: Yes, thank you Sensei.*

*Student: I understand the concept of forgetting about the past, because we cannot change it, and not worrying about the future, because we cannot really influence it. But how do we deal with the chess players? They have to calculate their moves 60 or 70 or 200 moves ahead, because if they make just one mistake, everything will fall apart. And that is basically the purpose of their life, you know. Not just to play, either to win not.*

What do you really want to know? I don't play chess, so I don't really know what's going on with chess players. It seems like they would have to have all options available to them. They don't know what the other person will do. Isn't that so?

*Student: Yes.*

So how can they know what the other person is going to do? You have to have all options available. What's different in that than going into a business meeting? You have to have all options available. OK, so it's like teaching a seminar, for instance. Forget chess. I might be on the plane coming over here from Maui and have an idea that I want to teach something about how to cut bokken, and get really attached to that idea. And then I get over here, and nobody brought bokken. Fortunately you all did. I asked at breakfast if there were bokken. What if he had said "No, there are no bokken. You did not tell me you wanted that." Right? So, you have to be ready for anything in life. My wife says you hope for the best and prepare for the worst. That's basically it. You've got to be ready for anything.

You know, in the military say the best plans evaporate upon first meeting the

enemy, because they are only good to get you there. When you meet, you just have no idea what is going to happen. So this is a way of saying that, yes, you have to plan. Everybody in business knows that you have to plan. Well, even just flying here, you have to get to the airport on time. You do have to go along with all of these conventions in order to be a part of everything. But you also have to be ready, so that when you get to the airport and that plane gets cancelled you may have to spend one more night. You have to be ready for the plane to go down with Sully in the river. You have to be ready for whatever happens, even the ultimate. Right? So everyday we are ready for whatever. But it doesn't mean you have to think, "What are all the things that could happen? I've got to be ready for them." Maybe in a chess match you do, but maybe not. Maybe the masters are just ready for anything. I mean they have played chess so many times, they know all the possible moves and when you do D instead of E, then automatically I know to do F. That's part of my skill, my strategy, my experience.

Does that address your question?

*Student: Yes.*

That addresses the question you asked. I think you still have another question.

*Student: Yes. Chess was developed thousands of years ago, and to some extent, it was developed as a model of life, model of the world, with king, queen, soldiers, etc. So I was kind of trying to understand, if we impose a model of chess to our life, then we have to think what's going to happen, not in the next second, but at least in the next 10 or 20 minutes or hour. I know that I have a meeting at 12:30 right here across the street. I cannot influence if he gets in a car accident. I don't know.*

What is your question?

*Student: Well, if I let it go and do nothing, then my life would be worthless. But if I make an effort, then I am making an effort, and I am not supposed to make an effort, like holding bokken or practicing. I don't have to make an effort to do something. I just do it.*

OK, so you don't do "A" or "B." You do "C." That's why we have this seminar. [In the seminar, I taught that example "A" is fighting and trying to control, "B" is collapsing or giving up and ignoring, but "C" is connecting and moving together.]

*Student: Oh, I see. OK, thank you Sensei.*

*Student: Yesterday you mentioned about kaisho, gosho, and shugyo, and how*

*the definition and understanding of it evolved over time. I didn't have time to write it all down. Can you go over it again?*

Yes, I was talking about kaisho, gyosho, and sosho, OK? So Tohei Sensei used kaisho, gyosho, and sosho often as a teaching tool. Actually these three words in Japanese are referring to calligraphy practice, as kids practice in school. Like kaisho is capital printing, then gyosho might be the beginning level of some cursive writing, and then sosho would be very free style writing. So it is loosening up as the skill level progresses.

Shinichi Tohei Sensei says that kaisho is standard movement with form, gyosho is Ki movement with form, and sosho is ki movement with no form. So basic movement with form, kaisho. Ki movement with form, gyosho. Ki movement with no form, sosho. We often, in the past, have thought of this a little bit differently. There was still an emphasis on form in sosho. Whereas, Shinichi Sensei is referring to sosho as being like Koichi Tohei Sensei's movement in a demonstration, which was relatively free form. There is form, but it is like jazz. It's spontaneous. There is form there. You have to know all those riffs, all those movements and what to do with them.

When I am teaching a seminar, I am teaching sosho, even though my movement may not be that at all. But that is the style of my teaching. Which some people really like, and I suppose some people don't like. Some say it is hard for them to understand. But it is only hard to understand, because they are trying so hard to understand it. Don't try to understand it. Just enjoy it, you know? Like, jump in the river and let it take you where it takes you.

OK, that answers your question.

*Student: I have one little question for you, Sensei. You discussed the history of Aikido, Shanon Sensei and yourself, and where it's going in the future. In your seminar, "A," "B," and "C," to get to "C" takes a long time. It's a feeling. In the business of Aikido today, if you are looking towards the future, everything here is immediate. Everything from telephone to computer. But A, B, and C, the way you are teaching, takes a long time. And I don't know how the future is going to work in terms of the time to learn something like that. We used to be able to accept that this would take a long time. But now it doesn't work that way. People want C now. They don't want to know about A and B. They want C. And for this art, whether it's Ki training or the techniques, they take a while. It's intricate. We are all doing this for different reasons, but it takes a lot of damn time to get good at it. I watch you move, I watch everybody else move. And let's face it, when you see certain people move you are going "Damn that's good."*

*Right? Or the bokken, or the cut, or whatever.*

*I am going the long way about it, but how do we change, or do we change? To get A, B and C takes a long time. And what I am saying is the future is technology. Everybody wants an answer right now, and I don't know how Aikido fits in that future, if you get my drift. That's the best way I can say it.*

Thank you for the question. I would say that technology certainly has a large place in our lives, and definitely into the future. You say technology is the future. It's a tool that we will continue to use. It will get sharper and sharper and more refined as time goes on. We can't even imagine what will be happening in technology in 30, 40 or 50 years from now.

But, if you think about it, your family life, wife and kids and in my case grandchildren, yeah, we use tools, like iPhones and television sets and automobiles, which are all really fancy, technologically. But they are just tools. While we are driving in the car, with my family, it's the family that I care about. It's what we are sharing personally that matters. When we are at the dinner table, when we are in the home together, yeah, we might watch TV together, to watch a show, but even that is a kind of a sharing that my wife and I enjoy together. I've got the button, control freak that I am. And so I turn it to pause, so we can talk about what's happening. It's wonderful, this pause button! You know, before you couldn't do that.

So what I am saying is, the only way technology is going to impact Aikido is that our websites will get a little bit better and I probably won't have to use my iPhone for a recording device. It will all be taken care of some better way. When I first started doing these Q & A sessions, I didn't have my iPhone. I had a huge suitcase that we used to take around with me to record these talks, so every speaker would have the microphone and it all went into a computer and then into this suitcase. It's still sitting at home, unnecessary. So someday I am thinking this won't be even as big as an iPhone. It will be completely different.

But that doesn't effect our practice. Let's face it. OK, so you get born, you get older, and you die. You have only so many years of training, yourself. Me, same thing. The earlier you get started, the better off you are, if you are lucky. But you can't control that. I don't understand what you are worried about. Aikido is going to be constantly improving. We love each other. We will always be having this great relationship. It's just going to get better and better. Let's do it. And thank you for the wine last night!

*Student: Sensei, sometimes I have these eureka moments, where I feel like I am gaining a lot of understanding. And a lot of the times I feel like I am in my own*

*way, and I am stuck, and I am only able to get so unstuck or so out of my own way. So the question I have is, what can I learn from those moments, and what should I do when I am having these stuck moments? What can I get from them?*

What do you really want to know? OK. You know, it's all about noticing. Awareness. I don't know why, but sometimes we are just on it and getting it and in it, an other times I don't care if you are sitting in meditattion, your head is full of chalk and cotton and doesn't work. This is the way with everybody. It's just like bio-rhythms or something I guess.

Sometimes you are really obviously in your own way, because you are pissed off about something, or frustrated. So just notice that. If we could learn to just not ignore, to not be in ig-norance. Ignorance is just ignoring. The opposite of ignorance is noticing. Awareness. It's not being good. The opposite of ignorance is not being brilliant, I don't think so, unless that just refers to light. The light is on, you are noticing. You are in awareness. And so, whatever happens, you see it. That's enough. You don't have to do anything about it at all. You just have to notice. Noticing is everything. This over here is the universe waking up in this location [points to himself]. That over there [points to another person] is the universe waking up in that location. We just learn to allow it to happen. And the way we allow it to happen most effectively, is to be in awareness, to be awake to whatever is happening, to notice as much as possible what is happening in this developing mechanism.

So this noticing, this awareness, is really just Keeping One Point. And I think that is important, because that's immediate. That's genjo. You make that choice now. You have to be in One Point now. Some people might misunderstand what I am saying about awareness, or noticing, and mistake that to be thinking about or reflecting on or cogitating over what's happening. That's not what I am saying. I am not saying it is wrong, but even if you are contemplating something, notice that's what's happening. '

OK, so, is that OK?

*Student: Yes.*

*Student: I have a question about the "C" concept. You talked about how we learn this, and it is a very experiential thing to learn these concepts. And I liked the image you had about the cupcake. You can't really understand what a cupcake tastes like unless you actually each a cupcake. So I was curious what you would suggest that I could add to my practice, my study, to move closer to this C concept. A and B we do with the kaisho it seems? But we need to move more to the shugyo? What can be added to my practice to help me to*

*understand that?*

Who's your teacher?

*Student: Mayumi Case Sensei.*

Ah. Where is she. Oh, I see. There she is. Mayumi could you come up here please? Would you please instruct your student?

*Mayumi Case: You can never map it out. You can never figure it out. It will happen. It is happening to you already.*

Thank you. That is sufficient. That is a good answer. It might not satisfy you on all levels. But, consider it, and I think on a deep level, it will really satisfy you.

We all have the habit of over-thinking things. We want to try to figure stuff out. Like, "What does he really mean there? What is the best way for me to obtain this?" It's not exactly obtainable like that. It's not like getting a college education. It's not like buying a new car or becoming CEO. It's not the same mechanism. It's not the same dynamic that works here. We do have to wait for it to happen.

*Mayumi Case: He folds my hakama, and then option C is happening right there. He started doing C every time he folds my hakama about two months ago. It's always option C. I can guarantee.*

You should be up here, Mayumi. She is so brilliant, yeah? Thank you. OK? Yeah. You have no choice but to say "OK" now.

Anyone else?

*Student: So, Sensei, we were talking last night. I really loved what you said about Confucius. If you want to change the world, you go to the community and down from there, changing yourself first. But what I like was, then you said, "You will soon realize that you can't change yourself at all." But you know, I am also noticing in my history that the me now is completely different than I was like when I was a freshman in high school. And obviously I want to change more. I want to improve my connection. I want to get over anger problems. I want to improve myself more and more. But then there is also that hopelessness of you saying "You'll find that you can't change." So I think, "OK, should I just go sit in the corner?"*

Ok, good question. So, you understand Confucius says if you want to change the world, change your country first, change your community, change your family first, change your self first. First maybe we have to learn what it is that we mean by "change," and how does it take place? When you practice on yourself first,

then you don't go out there in the world and cause more trouble with your misunderstanding. First, screw yourself up, before you go screw somebody else up.

So when you are working on yourself, you are going to see that you, yourself, cannot cause change yourself. Yes, we do change. All of this changes. That's the name of the game. This is going to be changing here, changing all the time. Even at my age, it's still happening. It just goes on forever.

The trick is, the knack to right living, let's say, it learning to allow change to take place without getting in the way of change. It happens to me a lot that people are telling me their philosophy of what's the right way to change the world.

Particularly Aikido people love to tell me how the Aikido principles they use are so effectively changing the world. Well...blah, blah, blah. It just turns me upside down. Folks, you don't do anything but cause trouble. Look at the world out there. Don't you know that ISIS people are trying to change the world to the way they like it?! Is that what you want to do? Is that the kind of person you want to be? Is that an example you want to follow? Just because your idea, you think, is better than theirs? I'm sorry but that's not how it is. You are just like them. The world should be different and you know how it should be? What arrogance! What makes you think you know how the world ought to be? How could you possibly know such a thing?

If you take on the project of changing yourself first, then you learn right away. "Oh my God! The nature of this 'I am' is not at all what I thought it was." You know, you have to be a little bit humble about this. We practice, in Sokushin no gyo, the "*to ho ka me e mi ta me.*" "With the sharp sword of my will, I penetrate the mirror universe, and polish my character like a beautiful crystal ball." Now what is that mirror universe? What is that all about? It sounds like you are doing a lot. But actually you are just paying attention. You are just noticing. This is the sharp sword. The will is used to Keep One Point, to notice in the midst of chaos, so be aware and present in the midst of chaos. Not to "do something" exactly. So that's penetrating. And you are penetrating into that which is a mirror of you. When you look out there and you see something isn't right, that needs changing, that is you you are looking at. So change yourself.

OK. There is pain and there is pleasure. And you can't do anything about those. Your reaction to those, that you can do something about. That is suffering. You are afraid the pleasure will go away, so you cling to it. That's suffering. The terror that it might leave you. Your husband, your wife, your children, your family, your business, your car, your pretty silk shirt. Whatever it is. That's suffering. Trying to escape from pain, because you just had a new knee put in or



something else? I have lots of examples all over my body. Yeah, it's suffering. Don't try to escape. There is no escape. Accept. Accept everything. The way it is. It is a mirror that you are looking into.

*Student: So, if you think about it, a life around us is changed by the people who would like to change, and they are active. They do the horrible things we see in the world happening. So what about us? We can do nothing? Just observe, sitting, watching, trying to not suffer?*

I assume that you are them. I am not speaking to you folks like you are a separate genus, separate creatures. I am assuming you are the ones who go out there and make all of this trouble.

*Student: We do now, but our intention to improve ourself does not make trouble, but makes something good.*

OK, so she says that there are people out there changing the world. Is she just expected to sit and observe this? Well, first of all, I don't expect anything. I am not trying to tell you what to do. I offered you an example on Friday night, which I thought was really simple, and we pursued it throughout the weekend. It just sort of came up through my own explorations. But it is nothing new. I mean, it's what Tohei Sensei was teaching. I just thought, "Well, here is a really simple way to see it." We are always trying to find ways to share it with people that are simple and easy to see.

So, something happens, whether it's Iraq doing it to Iran, or the Palesinians doing it to Israel, or Russia doing it to us, or us doing it to Russia, or some other family doing it to my family, or my wife doing it to me. It is all the same thing. The principle is the same. Something happens and the other person, or the other side, attempts to change me in some way that I am not comfortable with, to force me to do something that I am not comfortable with. So I have these three ways to respond, or there are these three ways that we do respond.

We generally try to make a bigger bomb, and blow them up more thoroughly than they are blowing us up. That seems to be the stupidest way to do it, and the way that we still do it as a country and as a world. We mostly still think that's a really good idea. That's the way to do it. Get a bigger bomb, a bigger military force.

Or, then there is a whole group of us that believe it is better to sit around and pray to God and hope that something will happen, or basically ignore that anything is happening and wait around for things to get better. This is basically the same thing. It's just not doing anything and putting it all on someone else to do. "Oh, the government will take care of it." "Oh, God will take care of it."

What's the difference? Somebody else is going to take care of it for you.

Or, number three, I offered you C, which is to join together with the other person and find something new that neither of you can conceive of yet. For instance, you say you don't believe in GMO. Let's say I am a scientist and develop GMO. So I believe in GMO. I want to see GMO products everywhere. You want to see GMO nowhere. Right? So, that's not going to happen. And this is not going to happen. Because both of us are in the same room together, same world, same country, same community. So we have to sit down together and talk and find a third way. And again, everything comes in threes. We find a third way, and this is operating in C, this is connecting, and we find this third way that neither of us have ever even thought about. We can only discover it together. It is not available without us communicating. When we come together, and look at this together, we learn to care about each other. The one ingredient that was missing when we were fighting about it, or at odds with each other, was that we didn't really give a shit about the other person. We didn't care. I told you, Desmond Tutu said, "If you want peace, don't talk to your friends. Talk to your enemies." Because if you talk to your enemy you will see that they are you. You will recognize that it is a mirror, and then you will have this new world that you wanted. It will just be different than you thought.

So the most important thing in this is not GMO or not, but it's that you and I will then be friends, on the same side, together, supporting this new world. And that is what matters, not the rest of it.

OK? Yes?

*Student: So, I thought I really got that, like a while ago. And, um, I realize now that I've been causing all sorts of trouble, both A and B, while really dedicatedly thinking that I was doing C. I've been considering that taking all of these actions, working on myself, considering this access to greater community, doing all of this together, etc. was C. So I had a bit of a fall, found out that that is not what I have been doing at all. So, my question is, with C being the immediate experience, how do you recommend practicing C, considering the effects of everything that I have been building in fake C in the past? Like, how do I release everybody around me from this that I have done?*

Well, you know about the "12 Step Program" for alcoholics. This that you are speaking of is an addiction. Activism is an addiction, or can be, let's put it that way. Again, I am not saying that activism is wrong in itself. I mean, far be it from me to say any act is "wrong." Whatever you want to do you are going to do.

When you are a drunk, or let's say when you are misusing some substance,

some drug or something, then you can be a problem to people. But you don't realize it at the time, because you are drunk. And then, when you get sober suddenly, "Oh my God. I having been driving my wife or my friends nuts. I have been a real jerk." And so part of the program is that you go to them and say "I'm sorry. I am an alcoholic, and I didn't realize that I was hurting you in this way." I highly recommend this approach. It's so painful, so difficult. But do it selectively. In other words, only if you have actually caused some harm that you can see, that needs to be rectified in some way. Just go tell them. "I am addicted to activism." And they are going to ask you, "What do you see now then?" That will be good and challenging for you. It's not like you are going to get out of anything. You are just going to get in deeper. Your commitment will be much deeper, and much more direct, and much more costly, expensive, but, man, much more intimate and vulnerable. And I would suggest, much more successful in what matters, which is the love between two people, not the success or failure of your program.

OK? Thank you very much for everything.