

## Thirteen Rules for Instructors: #5

Friday, March 24, 2017

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Good evening everyone. Tonight, our discussion is addressing the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 13 Rules for Instructors. Since these don't each have a title, I will read you the 5<sup>th</sup> one from the original form.

*"The martial arts begin and end with courtesy, not in form alone, but in heart and mind as well. Respect the teacher who teaches you, and do not cease to be grateful, especially to the Founder who shows the way. He who neglects this should not be surprised if his students make light of him."*

And then Sayaka would you read it in Japanese please? (she reads) Thank you.

Now I will read the translation of the original Japanese into English, that Sayaka provided us with, and that I have edited into proper English.

*"The martial arts begin and end with respect. This should not be only in a visible form, but must come from your heart. Do not lose gratitude towards your teachers, especially the Founder who opened the way. Those who neglect this should know that they may be neglected by their own students as well."*

Of course, everyone in this culture of our dojo respects the Founder. By "the Founder," Sayaka reminded me that Tohei Sensei wrote this in such a way to show that he means O'Sensei, the original founder of Aikido. But of course, for us, the founder of our school is Koichi Tohei Sensei. And then for us also, the founder of our dojo is Shinichi Suzuki Sensei. So we have three founders that we want to honor. And it just happens that this year Suzuki Sensei would be 100 years old, if he was still living, and every year at this time we feel a little more drawn to honoring our teacher.

I really like the way it says that this is not just in form alone. Like I said, no one disrespects the founders, and I know that no one disrespects their own teachers. You know, Suzuki Sensei used to say to us, "You cannot know what the master means by what he or she says, until you reach the same level of development as the master." It's impossible to know what the teacher means (or in Suzuki Sensei's words, "the Master"). You know, the original teacher who brings this teaching to you has his or her own way of expressing it. The teacher that you train with for many years, if that is a different one, also has a way of expressing this to you. And if you train with this teacher for a long time, then you start to have that way of understanding. And so it is easy to think, "Oh, I've got it," because you have heard him say it a million times. I was just reading an interview with Suzuki Sensei that was published in a book some years ago, and I realized that I could have done the interview myself, because I knew everything he would say before he said it. But this doesn't mean I understood what he said at the time. I just memorized it, because he had said it so many times.

As you become more mature, then as you are sitting, or maybe not even sitting, at certain moments you just realize, “Oh that’s what he meant by that.” So when Tohei Sensei says, “Don’t do this in form only, but it must come from your heart,” well you might think that you do feel gratitude and Aloha to your teacher, but that is not what he means. It’s much deeper. What he is referring to is, for this to be true, it has to naturally bubble up in you.

I have to give you an example, (and please excuse me, Lynn, for using you as an example but I am going to do it.) She and Suzuki Sensei were very close from the start. The three of us were together on an airplane, Suzuki Sensei was sitting between us, Lynn was on the aisle, and I was sitting by the window. At some point, Suzuki Sensei needed something, I think a drink. I was his otomo and I felt it was my duty to get it for him and so I somehow arranged that he could have what he wanted. But I had to bother some flight attendant and make some trouble to get this done for him. Anyway, it was not too long and he needed a refill. And this time it just appeared in front of him. He jabbed me with his elbow and said, “You see? All this time you make so much trouble to get something for me. Lynn? She just does it naturally. She just naturally loves me.” He was trying to teach me about what otomo really means.

So really, when we are talking about respecting our teacher like this, or letting it come from your heart and not just the form, the otomo practice is a very high form of that practice. Learning to be with your teacher in very demanding situations where you are failing again and again in your duty, or being maybe less than complete, it’s very difficult to naturally have your heart flowing in gratitude towards your teacher. When you don’t feel very good, and you have to go take care of her or him, it can be very difficult. So that is your test. It is not when you feel most loving and supportive towards your teacher. That is not who you really are. Who you really are is when you are tired and sick and pissed off and would rather be somewhere else, then, then see how you feel towards your teacher when they tell you go do this right now. That’s who you are. That’s who we are. See?

You often don’t have the opportunity to notice this, unless you are practicing otomo, unless you are with the teacher a lot, you know? Lynn probably didn’t need to practice otomo with Suzuki Sensei. It was clearly just a natural kind of thing there. But in my case, I desperately needed to practice otomo, because I was the guy that was always pissed off because someone was expecting too much of me. That did happen, let me put it that way, but in addition, when I was even in a good mood and doing a reasonably job as otomo, it was the story about being in the airplane, I made a lot of noise about making sure that he got what he needed. And believe me, this was not on purpose. I just didn’t know any better. I didn’t know any other way to be in those days.

You cannot know what your teacher is talking about, until you are on the level of development where he or she is when they tell you this, when they say that. And every time I read this Rule #5 I remember that, because when you read this “not just visible form but from the heart” well, logically you think this is common sense. Everybody knows what that means. But are you doing it? Are you experiencing that? Is that your state of mind? Maybe not.

And then it goes on to say, “those who neglect this should know that they may be neglected by their own students.” Actually, in the literal translation it says “they will be neglected.” I changed it to “may” just to soften it a little bit. But Tohei Sensei said “if you neglect this, you definitely will be neglected by your own students.” Which is like saying that, however you are, it is obvious to everybody else. We don’t realize how transparent we are. What your deepest, truest feelings are, or I almost want to say “what your understanding of your teacher is,” is evident right here, written all over your face. In everything you do, it’s always present, who you are. You cannot fake that, as even the teacher cannot fake that. So if he or she is not honoring their teacher, if you don’t have that bubbling up of gratitude for your teacher, then there is no way you can pretend that you do.

Take it from me, because I am in this position of teacher now, and I see all forms of this all the time. Of course, I see genuine depths of gratitude as well, but I also see all the forms. There is nothing wrong with that. It just means that the level of development isn’t there yet, so that the student can’t yet actually experience that in relation to the teacher.

OK, so do you have any comments about this, or any points you would like to discuss? Any questions?

*Student: I am trying to formulate my question.*

Boiling it down?

*Student: Yes, boiling it down. I will ask it, maybe, roughly then. Sensei, there seems to be a point of transition that a person makes that allows them to learn from being wrong as well as being right, freely and in gratitude. I am told I am wrong and there is not a sense of regret, maybe a little bit, but more so a sense of thanksgiving to the teacher that, “Oh, it’s important to see these things. Thank you very much, Sensei.” What makes that happen, that transition?*

That’s a good question. Well, when I was on that airplane and Suzuki Sensei said that to me about Lynn, I was very resentful. It did not make me happy. I was not ready to learn from that failure. And, you know, I think that you have to begin to see that there is no such thing as failure and success, that those considerations are very, very shallow. And as you begin to consider, or as I always like to say, *notice*, on a deeper and deeper level, what you are really like, you see that transition from one state of mind to another, or from a limited view to a more awakened or inclusive or open view, happens as a result of input. You don’t “figure it out.” Something happens and you notice what you have been like. I guess what I am saying is that when you are ready, then you are grateful for that.

That may not be saying very much. “Oh, the answer to your question is, when you are ready, that transition happens.” But it is not like it happens overnight. It is a process that happens again and again. In my life, it’s still happening. Life is a huge construct. It includes so much from the past, in your subconscious mind, that you believe is a certain way. And then it is pointed out to you through circumstance, not usually by someone saying it directly. A teacher might do so, or maybe someone who cares for you might, but generally speaking it is circumstance, and you are ready, so you notice. “Oh!”

If you are not ready, and you notice, you will resent the noticing, and be in denial yourself. We are experiencing this on a national scale right at the moment. We have a really good example there. If you cannot accept what circumstances have revealed to you about yourself, then you will lash out at others, so you don't have to have that feeling. That feeling is very uncomfortable, in the beginning. As this transition happens, the feeling actually becomes quite welcome, that feeling, instead of a feeling of resentment, becomes a feeling of wonder, or "Wow! Amazing that I could have acted like this all these years, and didn't even see it until now."

I don't know about there being an actual, identifiable transition point. Maybe, if I was real clever I could think of what it is, but generally, in my case anyway, it's a process that is ongoing, and I still am learning from this noticing.

*Student: So could a big part of it be that growth doesn't necessarily happen from being right?*

Absolutely. Growth never actually happens from being right. If you think you are right, there is not going to be any growth there. Similarly, if you accuse yourself of being wrong, there is not going to be any growth there. Growth happens when you are open completely, and not taking credit for anything or blaming – just noticing. It's being a student, come on. A student of life, a student of sitting through your morning coffee, sitting through your time together, sitting through an office meeting. What's going on? It's all for you. It's all for you to wake up and take notice.

When you start out practicing, your level of development is very slow, because your skills are so paltry. As you develop through the years, it is going to start doing this (hand swoops up) and begin steeply increasing. So by the time you have practiced a lot, your learning curve is really steep. I don't think that's the right word, but yeah, the acceleration continues to increase to a higher and higher velocity. Life becomes much more intense when you can accept. The more you can accept, the more intense it becomes.

That is a good question, one I don't know how to answer, other than that.

*Student: I think you just answered by question.*

*Student: I was going to ask, when I look at my teachers, and then my teacher's teachers, I do see that they have some thoughts that I may not agree with. For example, "men that live beneath the earth" or "purple aura" kind of thing. It kind of makes me think that I need to pick and choose, you know, about the teaching. Is there some fallibility there?*

Well, let me just go to that example, which you made me think of when you said "men who live beneath the earth." I was, of course, very sure that I knew what was what, when I was younger, and so Suzuki Sensei's job was to shake me loose, a little bit, of my grip on my ego, my knowingness, my being somebody who knows.

He said to me one day, "Hey, did I ever tell you, do you know about the people who live down in the middle of the earth?" And I said, "Well what do you mean?" And he said, "Up at the north pole there is a big hole, and down inside I have heard that there is a whole civilization of

people who live there. Did you know that? And there are tropical plants, and mangoes, and people, very large people, are living down there.” I said, “Sensei, where did you hear that? That’s not true.” And he said, “Oh, really? How do you know?” “Well, I know because,” I said, “you can’t have mangoes, there’s no sun, it’s the middle of the earth, I mean, what are you talking about?” And he goes, “How do you know that is not true? Have you been there? Did you go look?” “No,” I said. “Then you don’t actually know, do you? You don’t know that that is not true.” I said, “Well, Sensei, it’s common sense. It’s not true.” “Oh, really? How do you know?”

I have told this story a number of times. I was actually saving it for the Suzuki Sensei celebration tomorrow night, but because of your question I just blurted it out here. And because it is so remarkable that he said that. I mean, I had to go home and sit when this happened. It really disturbed me that my teacher should think that there was a group of people living in the earth in a hole in the middle of the north pole. Absurd!

Of course, I talked to him about this later on, on several occasions. And he would just laugh, and say, “You just don’t need to know everything.” It doesn’t matter whether there is a group of people living inside the earth or not. It’s not relevant to you. Don’t think you have to know everything. Whatever comes up, be present and open for it. Whatever comes up in front of you. It doesn’t mean that you have to believe what everybody says. He said, “You don’t have to believe that. But don’t tell me that you know it is not true, because you have not been there and you do not know that.”

So this is what your question reminds me of. The teacher always has a purpose, even when you might think the teacher is crazy... I am not trying to tell you the teacher is perfect, because the way the student/teacher relationship works is like how earth works, how life works. It’s not about Shinichi Suzuki, the man, and Chris Curtis, the man. It’s about a student and a teacher, and the universe has much bigger “plans” than Suzuki and Curtis can possibly imagine, and a much wider view. And what’s happening between the teacher and the student is huge and profound, and it is way beyond either of your understandings. The teacher probably knows that, the student probably doesn’t. If the teacher knows this, then he or she can depend on this, or it’s OK. If you see me picking my nose, it’s OK. I don’t have to worry that you won’t respect me. I don’t have to be right all the time, in other words. I don’t have to be perfect, because it’s not about Chris Curtis. And if you think it is, then of course that narrows your view and makes it much more difficult for you to experience awakening. In fact, it makes it impossible, vis a vis the training.

This is actually a very good question for everybody, because everybody carries this question within. Everybody has this dilemma that hasn’t been answered within ourselves. And it is an appropriate question because that is what this Rule #5 is addressing. It’s addressing that part of ourselves that has been looking at a narrow view. And so you don’t want to limit your relationship in that way, to two persons. Those persons are there and we have to recognize that, with all their pimples and all their glories, but there is something much more going on, if you allow it to be. If you allow something larger to be happening, then it is happening. But of course, you have to be very open minded, and developed. You have to be on a higher level of

development to experience that with another human being, to let that other human being not be just another person, but “Oh, I see that what is happening is profound here.”

I know that you have each experienced this for yourself, on one occasion or another. We have that experience quite often in the classes. Maybe the teacher is giving a talk, and you have moments of lucidity, of clarity, of profound gratitude. Right? It just happens. But generally, that fades away. We forget that we had that moment. Or, we remember that we had it, fondly, but it ain't happening right now.

So of course, the more you practice with that teacher, the more chance there is of you getting it in this way, and not thinking that it is not about the other person, or even about you as a person. Something else is happening.

So when I talk about transmission, for instance with Suzuki Sensei, transmission can only happen between teacher and student when the avenue is open and things can move. So it is only happening when it is happening, and when it is not it is not. So if, as a student, you want to put yourself in the position as often as possible, so that there is a chance that some transmission can occur.

Again, transmission is not about this person and that person. It is not about this person transmitting something to that person. Don't think that. That is very narrow thinking, very shallow. It's not at all that. I remember when my first teacher said, “Everybody must be opened by somebody. Look at the Bible. John the Baptist had to baptize Jesus, he had to open him. This has a huge meaning in the New Testament. That is very important. For all of us, transmission has to occur. And it is not that it happens just once. It is a way of being. Once you are opened, you become more and more open. So you are more “baptized” every day, you are more profoundly experiencing transmission day after day. Suzuki Sensei is not even here any more, and yet I am experiencing this more than before, even when he was here. And this is in spite of Chris Curtis, not because of. OK? I make a fool of myself, just for you. Will you join me?

*Student: Sensei, you just mentioned that you are experiencing more and more, even without Suzuki Sensei here. Did I understand that correctly? Can you explain more?*

Probably not. I think it speaks for itself. I don't want to make something where there isn't something. I don't want to make something special out of that. I am just saying that when we honor Suzuki Sensei, as we are doing these days, right now, and will be doing tomorrow night more specifically celebrating his life, we are celebrating all of him, right? But what some people are celebrating and what I am celebrating might not be the same. It might be different. Certainly my sense of gratitude is pretty deep, because I am a really slow learner. I was quite clumsy emotionally and intellectually. Maybe not so much physically, but maybe that way too. Perhaps I didn't even recognize how clumsy I was. And so my experience with him took a long, long time. And therefore, my sense of gratitude is really, really strong, because only someone with his kind of patience and fortitude could have put up with my bullshit for so long and still have faith in me. He still supported me and still spoke to others about me more positively than anybody I knew, like a father would, you know, never give up on his son. And that was

profound for me. So maybe the way I feel about him is even a little different even from that perspective.

But that is about the relationship I had with him on a shallower level. That level was very important and meaningful to me, but that is not quite what I am talking about here, when I am speaking about this “transmission” in response to Glenn’s question. This really doesn’t have to do with some person. I am not sure I want to say more about that, because again, I don’t want to make something where there is not something.

Anybody else?

Somebody told me the other day, regarding that thing out about boiling down the question, “Usually I boil it down until it is gone, and don’t have any more question.” But I say there is always something there in that pan. If you take wine and boil it down to make a sauce and you forget it and it goes too far, there is still residue in the pan. I mean, there is always something left even when it is completely gone. And in the manner of the question, when you have really gone through it, then you know something. If you know that, you can express it. Is that what you were about to do?

*Student: No, but a good sauce, when you boil it down you get to share it with other people.*

That’s well put.

*Student: I noticed when you started out talking tonight, you very quickly started talking about Suzuki Sensei and otomo experience. And going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Rule, could you expand more about the teacher/student relationship and how that fits this rule?*

I think that most of us, when we are learning otomo, or practicing otomo, think of it as a physical thing. Like, we think that if we arrange things just right for the Sensei, and he doesn’t have any trouble, then we have done a good job as otomo. Or, if the Sensei enjoys himself and things don’t get clumsy, and you don’t fall all over yourself in front of him, and the bags get taken care of, etc. etc., that’s OK. Do you know what I mean?

However, you can be a very good otomo and still be a terrible otomo, because it’s not about that stuff. Of course, the form has to be there. You have to learn to do those things. But it doesn't mean that you are practicing otomo, just because you are doing all those things for the Sensei. (This is probably not what you wanted to hear, but this is, in fact, the case.) And it takes years of practicing otomo to realize that it is not really about those physical things only. You have to do that form, and it is good that you get skillful at it, and some are much more skillful than others, but....It’s like Suzuki Sensei said in this interview I just re-read, “I don’t really teach technique any more. You fellas, you can all do technique better than me. I do the hard training. I do side discipline training, Meditation, Ki Breathing, Sokushin no Gyo. Yes, with techniques it is easy, because you can memorize them and there you go. But that is as far as you can go with that. You can’t go any deeper. Unless you do side discipline training you cannot go deeper.”

So, the same thing is true with otomo practice. The form, the technique, is all of those things you learn to do when you practice otomo to make it work well, in terms of hotels and restaurants and baggage and water and all the things that you do. That's the form. Those are the techniques. Any fool can learn to do that stuff. Just put your mind to it and practice. So what? You haven't even approached otomo yet. That's not otomo yet. That's got to be done, but just like this Rule #5 says, it's not only about the form. It has to bubble up automatically from your heart. It has to be heartfelt. And when you open your heart to your teacher, that's when the transmission happens, and that's what the purpose of otomo practice is. To have that experience with another human being. And that is not easy. So you have to sit. And you have to breathe. You have to do the "hard practice," as Suzuki Sensei would say.

OK? Thank you very much.