

**HKF Weapons Intensive – Q & A**  
**Sunday, July 18, 2010**  
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Good morning. Someone just told me that the theme of this seminar has been *Sunyata/Shunya*. This is not an Aikido phrase, but just a phrase I sometimes use to help us understand how the kind of experience that Aikido describes and points to is not simply a relative experience. It's not somewhere between strong and weak, hard and soft. Sometimes we hear someone say, "Oh his Aikido is very hard," or "his Aikido is very soft." But this is kind of a misunderstanding. Finally, Aikido is not rough or smooth. That's why I use this *Shunyata/Shunya*. *Shunya* means full and *shunyata* means not full. This is a Sanskrit word from Zen or Buddhism. So it means empty/full, not full, not empty, both at the same time. Not far not near, not high not low, not good not bad. It includes everything. In other words, the wonderful thing about Tohei Sensei's teachings is inclusive they are. I don't mean that Tohei Sensei made the teachings inclusive. The Universe is without borders, without boundaries, without lines of distinction. So all the practice that Tohei Sensei gave us is a way to experience that non-separation, that non-judgment, that non-discrimination, but to experience all of our world of experience in every moment completely. Live life completely.

So again, in order to experience life this way, we have to show up, (on a gross level that might mean to be in the room, to come to class), but it is not just showing up physically, but when you are here, like right now, show up. In other words be present, open up. That's the second on, open to whatever it is that is happening. Open your heart, open your mind, open your body, all same thing, just open to what is happening. And then rest in it, experience it, serve it. It might require saying something, making a comment or asking something, or doing something for someone, carrying something somewhere, or providing someone with something they need. You don't know. We never know ahead of time what the next moment will require of us. But if you have shown up and you are open, then serving means you are a spontaneous response mechanism. You are a spontaneous response to whatever it is that is needed. You are just serving, serving, serving. Some people are more like that than other people, just naturally. Some people don't understand that, don't have it in their character. Other people tend to more naturally be that way. And once you are in this condition, this state, you are in the moment, you've shown up, you're open, and you're following everything along without thought, any kind of thinking or judgment, reservations, requirements of others or of yourself, then whatever happens you accept it. Whatever the result of that action, you accept it completely.

And then, as soon as that's done, as soon as you see the result, then you are showing up again right there, because that result is the beginning of another. It just keeps going. It is difficult to talk about it like this because it sounds like these things are neatly laid out sequentially and that's not how it is, of course. Everything is just constantly opening and opening, unfolding and unfolding. And as you all know, when you start trying to manipulate and control the situation, or when you have some fear, then you begin to try to change the way things are happening. If you have a desire to have things a certain

way, then you begin to try to get her or him to act a little differently. “Don’t you think you should do it this way, Sensei,” a few people say to me. Don’t you do this with your children, your spouses, your parents? Don’t you manipulate your parents? Come on, tell me the truth. You do.

*Student: Yes.*

Yeah, we do. We’re all experts at it. So, this is not what Aikido is all about. This is why Tohei Sensei said to Shinichi Sensei, “You don’t understand at all.” When Shinichi Sensei was getting better and better at performing *Kokyu Dosa*, but he still couldn’t move Tohei Sensei, this is what Tohei Sensei said to him. Similarly, when I was cutting *bokken* for fifteen years with Suzuki Sensei, and he was telling me “No, no, no,” for fifteen years, “You don’t understand, you’ve got to let go.” And I was getting very good at cutting that *bokken* by this time. I was good, let me tell you. I really could cut that bokken. But if he doesn’t tell you it’s OK, then it’s not it at all. And I finally cut one day and he said, “OK, that’s it. Now do it again.” And of course I couldn’t do it again. Because as soon as he told me “That’s it” then I felt I knew what it was, and that can’t be it.

That’s what it means, this *Shunyata/Shunya*. When I say it is non-relative, another way to say that is that it is not about you. It’s not about making you feel good about yourself. Sorry, it’s not about that. It’s not about making you feel bad either. It’s just not about that at all. And sometimes it’s pleasurable what comes up, and sometimes it’s painful what comes up. We cannot control that. But we can control, as I said the first night of this seminar, our response, or our reaction to that.

So I think that’s the theme of the seminar. “Shinichi Sensei, you don’t understand at all.” And Shinichi Sensei, I know would get the reference here, because he was the one who told me about that. It was very difficult for him at the time because he couldn’t see how to move forward. He was already at the top of his excellence in his understanding of *Kokyu Dosa*. But this is meaningless, this excellence, finally. It’s meaningful as a tool, once you understand. Then you have this great tool to use. Right? So it’s worth developing the tool, sharpening the knife. But no matter how sharp it is, if you are using the back of the knife, it doesn’t matter. You’ve got to turn the knife over and use the sharp side.

All right. Please ask me any questions you might have.

*Student: I said I was going to ask you for Aikido college tips, but instead I guess I am looking for how I can spread my knowledge. Because I want to live more relaxed, more full. But at the same time I want to spread it, you know, exude it so that everyone feels it and that everyone knows what it is. So how can I share it?*

Why do you want to spread it?

*Student: I just feel that it is such a great way of being.*

OK, that's great. So what is it that you want to share? What is it that you want to spread?

*Student: Just this idea of...*

Idea? Is it the idea that's so cool? Is it an idea that makes you feel the way you feel?

*Student: I guess the experience.*

Yeah. It's actually how you are. How could you not spread that? Wherever you go, you are there. It's not spreading an idea. It's not about an idea.

*Student: So it's just me being me?*

Ah, what a novel idea. That's great. That's what you do. You wake up each morning, and you be completely present every moment of your day. That's the only chance you have of sharing (if that's even possible) with another human being what you are experiencing. Now, they might notice something about the way you are and ask you, "How did you get like that? What's going on?" But I wouldn't say anything until then. Nobody notices? That's fine.

You know I have a life outside of Aikido too. I have a business and clients and so forth. I don't go to them and say, "You may notice that I do Aikido. Let me share that with you a little bit." No, I don't do that at all. They don't even know that I do Aikido. Whatever they attribute to the way I am, I have no idea, unless they ask me. Sometimes they ask, "What's going on here." But often they don't. In other words it's not about some special deal that you have to proselytize about. You get up in the morning, you sit, you rest in this experience. And then, as much as possible, all day long, in class, out on the soccer field, on a date, sleeping at night, whatever you are doing, you be in this experience. And you will find it very simple and straightforward and not easy at all. And hopefully that will inspire you to train more, to train deeper. And to require of the teacher that you end up with over there that he or she be doing that too, so that you don't get some yahoo that just wants to throw people around, which means he doesn't understand at all.

*Student: Sensei, this is more a commentary and not a question. I'd like some elaboration or clarification if possible. So I was exploring something like this while I was sitting, something like Shunyata/Shunya. I was just dwelling or resting in that. I was realizing, noticing that there is no such thing as tall in and of itself. We have to have short in order to see tall. So tall is empty of anything, and also completely connected to short. So we cannot have one without the other. And I was just going through this beautiful/ugly, good/evil, not intellectually, but just seeing that that is how it is. And then I got to awareness, and I started to think, "Well, I must have unawareness in order to appreciate awareness." And this kind of mislead me, this train of meditation on this subject. And so I became very appreciative of unawareness suddenly. You know, it's OK to be unaware. Otherwise I would never know what awareness is. I might be*

*aware, I just wouldn't know it. So that's what I mean by needing some elaboration. I don't know what to do with that. I don't know how to process that. That's as far as I got. Your comments, please.*

It's popular to refer to the unawakened state as being asleep, because the metaphor works so well. We know that when we are asleep, we are completely unaware of what's going on in the bedroom. We have to wake up to become aware. We are unaware when we are sleeping and we are aware when we are awake. So that's two conditions that rely upon each other.

This is a very esoteric subject. I am not even going to say that it is a good question. Because there's really nowhere to go with that without chasing your tail. Or, it begs the question of is there some non-dual, Absolute, entity. In order to know that, you would have to have a relative non-Absolute entity. And then the whole thing collapses. Absolute condition is not relative to the relative condition. It's not as opposed to. It includes relative. The word Absolute I don't like so much. I like Shunyat/shunya because it's so inclusive. There's nothing left out.

Any way that we speak about conditions is misleading. Jeff and I recently went to the Planetarium in New York City. Our universe isn't just big, it's bigger than we can conceive of. And our universe isn't just small, it's smaller than we can conceive of. We're on earth, we are in our own solar system, our solar system is in and confluence of other solar systems and all together those make up the Milky Way Galaxy. Do know how tiny the Milky Way Galaxy is, compared to everything? It's so tiny that it's inconceivable. When we say inconceivable, that's the same as infinite, unknowable, unapproachable. None of that means it's not there, or it's not here, but we can't approach it. There is no measure for that.

That's why I like Aikido. Because Aikido is about shaking someone's hand and forgetting about yourself for a moment, and connecting. And of course, God knows we are all self-obsessed. So just a moment of real connection with another human being means you forget what time it is, you forget where you are, and you forget who you are. You forget about yourself. You are only into of communicating or connecting with this other human being.

So I am not going to try to define awareness for you. Because any effort that I put into it would be relative and would therefore just tie you up in more knots, or tie us all up in more knots, which is not what I want to do. When we are simply caring about another human being, just opening to another human being, or even to a bird, to just the condition of the moment, then we forget all the relative. We forget that judgmental gauging of everything how to get ahead, how to be something special, how to be more which is limiting. In other words this is unlimited being. That's all. And that's available 24/7 right here right now. Just let go.

Is that enough?

*Student: Yes, Sensei.*

*Student: A bird just flew in and is sitting right behind you on the mat.*

Oh. He heard me.

*Student: The process of being on the mat, and now increasingly in the rest of my life, is this stripping away of everything that I thought I knew. And one of the things you said Friday was that we should practice when you least want to practice. So my question is, how do I make peace with my ego? Sometimes the harder I push on myself, or the more I see my flaws, the more the resistance just rises like a dragon. And then I don't practice. So how do I make progress enough, how do I allow myself to just be present. Because if I look too deeply, I turn away. So it's the razor's edge there, for me. I don't know if that's a question.*

Well, I think that maybe now is the time to ask the question, "Who wants to defeat the enemy, the ego?"

*Student: Probably another part of my ego?*

I think so. You said it. Each one of us is made of many, many parts. And depending on the circumstances, this part arises, or this part, or this part. It just keeps going on like that. There are some parts that tend to be less constructive, and those parts get support from other parts by doing a good sales job. Like when they include comfort of some kind, and more importantly when they include avoidance of pain, avoidance of stress, avoidance of scary stuff. Then they are really easy to accept. Because we all don't like stress and pain and don't like to be frightened. But unfortunately, guess what? The parts of us that need looking at, that are hidden, are hidden because they represent some discomfort. When something like that is rising up in you, when you wake up in the morning and there's a funny feeling there, that's the morning when you think, "I don't really have time for sitting this morning. I think I will just go have breakfast and go to the beach. Yeah, that's a great idea. I'll just do that." That's why I say that's the day to sit down. See, by the time you think that thought to skip sitting, it's already hidden from you. It's like a hidden push, and you see the manifestation in the water, but you don't see what made it, the tail of the shark, or whatever. So that's when you must sit. Because sitting in that condition, that's right there then. And it will come up. And then it won't be hidden anymore. Of course, it's going to involve maybe a little discomfort, maybe even some emotional pain, maybe some fear of having to transcend something, give up some way at looking at things.

In my case, in the old days in this life time, I avoided opening my heart to others because it frightened me. So I worked out a really nice way to just be closed off, and then I never had to look at that. But then, I always felt shitty, and I never got to know anybody in the way that I do now. And that's a big thing. I mean, in my life, it's still there. Still I have to work on this. Still I have to open more and more. There's no time you can say, "I've got it."

I gave a talk the other night about world-centric view versus ego-centric view. And one of the students said, "Well, Sensei, we all have a world-centric view here. So we're not so bad." Well, that's true. She was right. And more power to her. I mean I praised her up for that. But the point of the practice is not what you see about yourself and congratulate yourself on. The point of the practice is discovering what we don't see, and has not been revealed. And there's plenty there, plenty to work with. You never run out of material. It's a wonderful thing. As long as you keep eating and breathing that funding is there, so you can continue with your exploration.

Does that help?

*Student: Yesterday, while cutting the bamboo with the wooden sword, we became aware that many of us don't totally give ourselves to something or we hold back. What's a good way to work on really giving ourselves to something, not holding back?*

That's a good question. Walking is good, really walking. You know, I go walking in the morning, maybe for exercise. In the beginning, it was definitely for exercise. But then I realized, "Oh, this is actually walking." It's not only about exercise. It's living. It's like breathing. I mean pick anything, but walking is fine. Breathing is fine. Really breathe. You heard me describing this morning about breathing out and giving everything to the universe and breathing in with gratitude that you are alive. That's really breathing. Our problem is not that we get freaked out and can't cut bamboo with a *bokken*. Our problem is that we don't do anything completely. We always hold something in reserve. So start anywhere. Start now. Yeah.

We have all kinds of cultural conditioning, which prevents us from living life completely, from moving completely. You don't even need a *bokken*. You saw me cut a piece of bamboo yesterday with my hand. It's not about the *bokken*. It's about the state of mind. So yes, please practice living life completely in every moment and in every act that you do. And gradually you will let go more and more. And it really helps if you have someone like Suzuki Sensei around who is always like that, so you can keep getting reminded. Oh, wow!

OK? So this is enough. Thank you very much.