

**One Point Discussion**  
**Friday, July 29, 2011**  
**C. Curtis**

Good evening once again.

Tonight is the first of our four discussion groups on the Four Basic Principles of Tohei Sensei; Keep One Point, Relax Completely, Keep Weight Underside, Extend Ki. The first one, tonight, is the One Point in the lower abdomen.

Before I begin the discussion, first I'll read the *One Point in the Lower Abdomen* from the Ki Sayings book, or *Shokushu*:

*The Universe is a limitless circle with a limitless radius. This condensed becomes the One Point in the lower abdomen, which is the center of the Universe. Let us calm our mind in this One Point, and become one with, and send our Ki constantly to, the Universe.*

And then, I'd like to read one more *Shokushu*, number 17, which is *Reiseishin*, or Universal Mind:

*Human beings are blessed with a mind that is directly connected to the mind of the Universe. This is known as Reiseishin. The moon is clearly reflected in the water when the water is calm. In this same way, when our mind and body are unified and calm, our Reiseishin manifests itself completely. Once this happens, all suffering and wicked desires fall away, and the universal mind of love and protection for all things appears in us. Let us strive to realize Reiseishin.*

I wanted to read *Reiseishin* as well because in the *Shokushu* for One Point it talks about being one with the Universe and One Point being the center of the Universe.

We have a habit, as human beings, of seeing the object of our senses as being other than us, outside of us, and acting upon us. And so, because we see things that way, we tend to struggle. But our struggling is not limited to other people or things or events. We also struggle within ourselves in what we perceive to be our thoughts or our emotions, and even to some degree our senses. Generally when we perceive an insult or injustice, then we struggle to try to do something about that injustice or insult. So as long as there is self and other, or as long as there is something else, even if it is within us, our own thoughts, our own emotions, as long as there seems to be this separation between something we call a "self" and those things we perceive as other than that self, as long as there is that separation there is this struggle.

Many teachers through the centuries have given us various methods of dealing with this problem. No matter what the method that is offered, the idea is always to find a way to see the world in such a way that we don't struggle with it. Struggling basically means suffering. So the effort of all practice is to put an end to suffering. And if we put an end to our own suffering or struggle, then we tend to benefit others in the same way. We cause other people so suffer less, to struggle less.

In our case, we have decided to practice Aikido. And very specifically, we have decided to practice Tohei Sensei's *Shinshin Toitsu*, or Mind/Body Unified, Aikido. So what Tohei Sensei said about this, both when he was teaching before he passed away, and in the *Shokushu* and his other writings, is very important and provides big clues for us. It's not that there is something that we have to figure out. But it is very important that the kind of practice we do, actually leads to this relief of suffering, or struggle. Because if it doesn't do that, then why bother to practice? There are many more effective ways to become well known, or wealthy, or significant in some way in the world in which we live. Aikido doesn't lead to that in any way.

So our practice is, very simply put, to Keep One Point. In other words, I always say that One Point is the gateway between these two worlds that Tohei Sensei talks about; the small mind or relative self, relative mind, and what he calls absolute self or universal mind or *Reiseishin*. So this is the gateway, or the point where these two worlds connect. And it's not that there is some objective One Point. It's not like there is a "truth" that is the One Point, not like there is an object that is the One Point.

And it's not just a concept. One Point is our name for the way to experience this non-separation between personal and universal. So, as such, it becomes the center of our practice, the very backbone. In other words, if we are not experiencing One Point, which is this unification of the sense of personal and the sense of universal, then there is no way we can be experiencing *Reiseishin*. There is no way that we can have *Shinshin Toitsu*, Mind/body unification. There is no way that we can experience a world where there is no separation between self and other and therefore no struggle.

So it's just a different way of seeing things, a way of seeing things where we don't have to struggle with anything within us or anything we perceive as being other than us. We don't have to struggle. And the other wonderful thing about this is there is nothing to figure out. We don't have to be breaking our brains to try to figure out what this could possibly mean. All we have to do is let go and rest in this One Point.

It's such a gift. Everyone in the world is born with this connection, as we say. We are born with this condition. We are actually experiencing it all the time, but because

generally most people don't practice, then they don't recognize it. I don't know if this is familiar to you, but when I first heard Suzuki Sensei teaching about One Point, and then he helped me to experience it by guiding me a little bit, then finally when I did first experience it, it said "Oh, that!" And I think everybody knows what I mean by that. I had known it since I was very young. But I did not know about One Point, meaning I didn't really know what that meant. All I knew was like a resting place. But my capacity to rest in One Point was very small, or very short at the time. I was very easily distracted. So Suzuki Sensei said, "On, then you have to breathe one hour every day. So begin now." So of course you don't just jump into full-blown capacity to rest in One Point all day long. You have to practice. You have to start with Ki Meditation, Ki Breathing, coming to class all the time, and gradually we begin to build that capacity. The capacity is to, as I say, rest in this One Point, which is a kind of a peace, a kind of a joy even, a kind of ability to, no matter what arises in our life, within us or like I say apparently outside of us, experience it with equanimity.

Now, and this is a very important point, it doesn't mean that we are trying to put an end to our reactions to what arises. If you try to put an end to your reactions to what arises, you will struggle. Because immediately you are seeing them as separate from you and something you need to control. And as soon as you see that as a separation, you are in trouble. You are suffering again.

So the point is to just Keep One Point, just to learn to rest in One Point. No matter what comes up, allow it to come up, allow it to play through you, let it do its thing. The wonderful thing is, when you are experiencing One Point, the more capacity you have to do that, the more those things come up and then just disappear. It doesn't mean you don't get angry any more. You get very angry, but then it's gone. It just dissipates, dissolves.

But without this understanding of One Point, then we get caught up in an emotional reaction, as I said, to some injustice or insult, we build a story about that, and the story on the one hand distracts us from One Point, but also feeds on itself and continually builds this anxiety and uncomfortable feeling, a sense of separation, a sense of being someone special and so someone not being recognized and not being respected. This story feeds this emotion and of course causes more suffering for ourselves and others.

So, Keeping One Point doesn't mean that none of that stuff will happen. We have the habits. We have the conditioning. That shit is going to arise, I guarantee you, and maybe continue to. But that's OK, because I can Keep One Point. In other words, I can rest in this universal condition, this non-separation. So even though someone here is conditioned to believe that there is a separation, even when that is happening and I see

that it is happening and I am allowing it to happen, I can Keep One Point. I can experience it with a sense of peace and calmness and equanimity.

So, this is what we mean by Keep One Point.

Are there any comments or questions?

*Student: Sensei, for a long time the language of it confused me because, you know, in English, to "keep" something means to hold something. So I was looking for something to hold. And yet it's more like "let go - One Point." And when I experience it, it's more of a selflessness. I'm not doing anything. I can't keep One Point. One Point happens. So there were many years of struggling, until I realized that relaxing and resting in it, and not trying to find something that isn't there. Because it's not a "thing."*

So, shall we change the way we say it?

*Student: I'm just throwing that out. I don't know what we should call it.*

Well, as I've said before, these Four Basic Principles and the Shokushu, all of this was translated many years ago. I don't know who translated the Four Basic Principles, but someone with some knowledge of Japanese and some knowledge of English evidently sat down with Tohei Sensei and arrived at the translation. So that's one side of this, one thing that we need to recognize as to why they are said this way. But also, "Keep One Point," "Relax Completely," "Keep Weight Underside," "Extend Ki," these are like commands or commandments. And I think someone felt that, for the west, this is an effective way to express things, as actions, or things you need to do. And this is not to blame Tohei Sensei because he is not a native English speaker and he did not understand the implication of that. It's not said that way in Japanese. Ki o Dasu is just Ki Extends, right?

So it was two things. It was perhaps translated by someone who was very early in their training and had not yet had thirty or forty years of experience in One Point, or in the Four Basic Principles. And, number two, the age, being that it was in the early nineteen fifties, the time, the culture in which Aikido was being introduced, was perhaps a culture that wasn't yet open to the idea of allowing ourselves to experience things a little differently. Generally, these commandments are sort of religious based. They are sort of like things you would tell a monk to do, in order to be a good boy or good girl, to fulfill the commandments and go to heaven, to be true to your god.

So this is a big misunderstanding. And as you say, some people hear this when they first come to Aikido and they suffer for a number of years before it finally occurs to them,

though the teaching, and they are relieved of that. They realize, “Oh, I am going at this backwards.” So just let go. It is not something to hang on to.

And let’s face it, this is our habit in the world. We try to define things, make them as concrete as possible, so that we can get a hold of them, freeze them as a known thing, put into our library like we do in the iPad, and then move forward and get more and keep storing all of these things in our knowledge library and building up our fund of power and knowledge and skill. And in a way, that’s how we operate in the dual or relative world. But that doesn’t work in this kind of practice. Actually, to experience the kind of thing that I have been talking about tonight we have to let go of all of that kind of idea. Because all of that is based on self and other, separation.

So, yeah, I’m glad to hear that you are not struggling with that now, and you can just enjoy it.

*Student: And yet my mind still doubts that it can be that easy.*

Yes. What are the four aspects of mind?

***It’s so near that you can’t see it,***

***It’s so deep that you can’t fathom it,***

***It’s so fine that you can’t accept it,***

***It’s so simple that you can’t believe it.***

Those are the four aspects of mind, or some call them the four faults of mind. I didn’t make them up. They are old time. And this can be applied to One Point. Because, in a sense, experiencing One Point is knowing mind. But there is nothing to know. There is no “thing” to know. We can’t see it, we can’t fathom it, we can’t accept it, and we can’t believe it. It’s just too close to home. As we so often say, it’s like a fish swimming in water looking for water. It’s our very nature. I said, from birth you have been experiencing it. And yet we come to Aikido and we think we have a lot of work to do so we can learn to Keep One Point. Actually you just have to let go of all that nonsense that you have been building up and sort of get back to basics. Just basically be present.

*Student: Thank you.*

Thank you.

*Student: Sensei, when we say “move from our One Point,” like in movement, are we actually talking about a condition of mind before we move, or are we trying to move*

*from our center? You know in Rhythm Taiso I am trying think am I just moving from here or it is a condition of mind that makes me move from there? I am a little confused. Which is it?*

Yes.

*Student: Hai. So it's not like I am trying to move this around, right? It's my condition of mind before I move.*

What's the difference? "Mind and body are originally one, then two opposing forces appear, and the relative world is born." Those opposing forces, self and other, mind and body, experiencing thinking and moving, mental and physical, this is what causes all the suffering in the world, all the struggle. What you are bring up is, in itself, just a little struggle, self created. So that's why I say, "What's the difference?" There is nothing to figure out there. Of course, move from One Point. Of course, be in One Point 24/7 and see what happens.

*Student: Hai Sensei, thank you.*

OK.

*Student: Sensei, can Keep One Point and Just Notice be the same? In your book, Letting Go, you say "just notice, don't judge, don't criticize, don't analyze." Keep One Point means you have to come back every time mind is going. So just noticing should be the same?*

All right, let me ask you something. Please sit up straight. So please look to your One Point, notice your One Point, put your attention in the One Point. OK? Are you doing that? What do you see?

*Student: Presence.*

Yeah. So what happens right there? When I ask you, "What do you see?" you look and then...? What's the first thing that happens? What do you see?

*Student: Nothing.*

That's right. Nothing. We don't see anything. First we look, then we see nothing, then we panic, and then we think of an answer. Those are four steps. When we panic, we think of a way to label it, to get rid of it. You said "presence." But that's just a word. The value of our life is in our experience, not in our reflection on our experience, not in our knowing about our experience, but in the experience itself. The big mistake that we make is we put all our value in the knowing about the experience. Which makes us a

dead culture, and empty culture. So that's what I mean by "notice." It's the query itself, the looking, the noticing, that is the same as being in One Point. It's the looking itself. It's not the finding of an answer. Because there is no answer. It's just the noticing.

So in a sense, what you are saying is right. Just noticing is the same as resting in One Point. Because this resting in One Point is a very active condition. It's not a stuck or static thing. And what keeps it active is the continual open-mindedness, openness. As soon as we decide we know something, as soon as we label it, we close our mind to that and push it aside so that we can move on to the next thing. But our practice is to remain open, to have all possibilities open to us forever, in every moment.

*Student: That's why I must notice to see.*

Yes, and there's nothing to see, in the sense that there is nothing to gather and hold. It's just being in One Point. Does that help?

*Student: Well, I will have to spend some time on this.*

When we say just be in One Point, the danger is that we find it to be true, a truth. And as soon as we find something to be true, or the way to be, then we're screwed. We've killed it. As soon as it's true, it's dead. Because we have fixed it. So it's just a condition we experience in the moment, and this moment lasts forever. So we practice resting here in this moment in a completely open, equanimous condition, no matter what is going on in our mind/body or in the world around us. It can be very chaotic and crazy, but still. So this is what I mean by a different way of experiencing the world we live in. We are not really used to this, so we practice to learn. Like anything else, we practice. We have to be willing to do it, and we have to learn how to practice, and then we need to practice a lot to build up the capacity to actually experience life in a different way than we used to.

So everybody here pretty much knows this already. This is not like new news. Everybody knows this. But we come to the dojo, just like we sit down to meditate. It's not like you sit down to meditate to get some new information. You are not going to get any new information. Don't come to the dojo to get new information, a new clever way to say it, or a new clever way to move. No. That was the thing about Suzuki Sensei, he said this over and over again. He said, "I am going to repeat and repeat and repeat. The human mind is like a sieve, and most of what you put in falls through. So you have to keep putting and then it begins to stick to the sides and pretty soon it builds up." The key is repeat, repeat, repeat. So that's why we come to the dojo, not to hear me repeat it, but to repeat the exercise. Because when we are here, our attention is drawn towards One Point, and we are in a condition where we are less likely to fly off the

handle and become caught up in some story or some emotion or some weird idea. And if that does happen then a teacher or another student is likely to help you come back to One Point. So the dojo is a place where we experience this, a place where we practice this together. That's what these discussion groups are all about. That's why we come together. And granted I am very strongly guiding the discussion groups. You can ask whatever you want, of course, but I am sure you have noticed that every single answer comes back to the same place, over and over again. Because all we are doing is the same thing over and over again. We're learning to be in One Point and be OK with that, not require something else. Because the universe will provide way more than we could ever require, in the way of experience.

*Student: Sensei, I'm sitting here and I can see the four principles. I remember when I first came to the dojo, and I thought, "Oh, they have rules here." The four commandments. I came from a different style of Aikido and I thought, "Oh, they're really strict here." It's still kind of odd to look up there and see those. What I was just noticing now, and know it's structured this way, is that two of them are physical and two of the points are more like metaphysical. Can you explain why it is that way?*

OK. Which two are physical?

*Student: Well, I think two of them are sort of gross in nature, in that they are related to the body. At blush, the way I would read it, is that numbers two and three, Relax Completely and Keep Weight Underside, have to do with the gross, physical body. And Keeping One Point and Expending Ki are, as far as I am concerned, a little harder to grasp, more conceptual.*

Hmm. Interesting. So, if I want to relax completely, what should I do with my body? Wiggle? Lie my body down and go to sleep? Is there something that I should do with my body to relax completely?

*Student: Um, perhaps there is. Well, I guess all four of these are complementary, you know, they are inter-related.*

Here is the thing. I know what you are talking about. In fact, it use to me that M, B, B, M was written next to those four, Mind, Body, Body, Mind. So you are not the first one to have noticed this. It was so noticed that someone wrote them down like that up there. I made them paint it out. I made them take that away. And the reason is the same reason I answered David's question with a "yes," when he said, "Is Keeping One Point something I do with my mind or something I do with my body?"

*Student: Yes.*



Yeah, of course. You know, I suppose to be fair, I will say that someone asked Tohei Sensei about this one time and he said that basically he is trying to supply two mental approaches and two physical approaches, because that's the way we look at things when we first walk in the dojo. I'm sure you noticed that from early on.

*Student: Yes.*

And you would have noticed it even more if it said "M, B, B, M" next to it. You would have asked someone what that meant and they would have told you "Mind, Body, Body, Mind" and then you would have thought, "Oh, of course, I am right." But just like the very phrase "Keep One Point," the commandment nature of those phrases is misleading. It doesn't cause big problems for the first little while, someone might say. But that just means that you are not yet experiencing it, so what the heck's the difference. No. You are already experiencing it. I want you to recognize it from the beginning. And if you get into ideas about mind being separate from body, body does one thing and mind does another thing, those are all confused conceptions. They have nothing to do with how things actually are in our actual experience of living. They are just concepts. They are ideas. That's not how it really is. That's not how we live. And we are practicing finding a way to actually live without these separations, without these concepts, without struggling, without fighting with ourselves or with someone else, without that dichotomy of body/mind separation.

So I'd just as soon let that go, that M, B, B, M. OK?

*Student: Hai. Thank you.*

*Student: Sensei, could you talk about the concept during meditation class when you say "shuchuho," and it's like the gathering in or half, half, half, of One Point. Could you just talk about that in relationship to resting in the One Point, or the concept Keep One Point which now we might think One Point is Keeping, and we are aware of it?*

OK. What's the thing we like best?

*Student: Everything?*

Having everything. We like to have everything and then we can pick and choose. Nothing denied to us. And the thing that we really hate and fear most is death, or emptiness or having nothing, having it all taken away from us, like Job in the Bible.

*Student: Loss and impermanence, being impermanent.*

Completely empty or completely full, *Kakudaiho* and *Shuchuho*. When we breathe in,

the whole universe fills us. We have everything. We have life. There are two sides to every moment, life and death. When we breathe out, we lose everything, we give it all away, voluntarily. We are empty, gone, gone, gone. All voluntarily. And by doing this over and over again, it's kind of like the taking and sending exercise. It shocks the ego, The part of us that feels that there is a big difference between having everything and having nothing, the mind that is always seeking what it wants and trying to control life to get what it wants, and then trying to keep from becoming empty and having nothing and control life to have that happen – so avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. This is the ego mind, or this is the selfish mind that always tries to avoid pain and get pleasure. So by doing this exercise constantly, it's like constantly showing us that this condition of One Point continues the same, no matter what. There is no difference between *Shuchuho* and *Kakudaiho*. There is no difference between inhaling and exhaling. There is no difference between having nothing and having everything. So, in a kind of subliminal, subconscious way we are constantly reinforcing what we might call true value, where we are not seduced by relative value.

So this is my understanding of the purpose of both Ki Breathing and Ki Meditation, a slightly different technique, but the same purpose. Some like Ki Breathing better, some like Ki Meditation better, I like them both. In some sense, it's just the same.

*Student: Thank you.*

*Student: Sensei, it seems that, when we look at our world around us, there are a million things that need to be fixed. And everybody has their list of a million things that need to be fixed, whether it be yourself or the other person or the government or the schooling or whatever. And they can even be opposing things that need to be fixed in the opposite way. How does the nature of these things change when you reside in One Point? Is there nothing to be fixed any more, or do you just look at it in a different way?*

Mele, would you like to answer him?

*Student: No, but I like that question.*

Yeah, it's a good question, and I think everybody comes to that at some point. Early on in the training you have to deal with that. I'll say a couple of things about that. Number one, this comes out of a fundamental misconception of what it means to Keep One Point. Experiencing One Point does not mean crawling under a rock and ceasing to function in the world. Whatever you were doing before you will continue doing after, because it's whatever you are conditioned to work through. I started out by saying that the problem is when there is a perceived injustice or insult, we struggle with that. So how do we do when we struggle with things? How do you do in Aikido when you

struggle with your attacker?

*Student: You collide.*

Yeah, you end up in a big snarl of twine. It doesn't work to struggle. Everybody who trains Aikido knows that. So everybody who does Aikido knows the answer to your question. They don't stop attacking you. You just Keep One Point. So that instead of struggling with them, you do Aikido with them. You become One with them. They are no longer judged as an enemy. Likewise in daily life. They are no longer judged as incompetent or foolish or dangerous or bad or negative, any more than the person attacking you in the dojo is to be viewed that way. If you see anything in that way you will struggle, because it will seem as "other" as opposed to you. It will seem as an enemy and you will fight.

So yes, when we Keep One Point, we experience things differently. But it doesn't mean we cease to function. On the contrary. When we are in One Point in difficult or challenging situations, for the first time in our lives we are actually able to be effective in those situations, which we never were before. We didn't know it, but we just caused more trouble than we solved, because of all that struggle and negativity.

Peace is not a condition that happens only when there is no war or conflict. Peace is present always. Just like silence is not a condition that is only there when there is no noise. Silence is always here. We are distracted by the noise, so that we forget the silence, we don't hear it. But it's still here. It's by virtue of the silence that noise can be. It's by virtue of peace that conflict can arise. Being in One Point, residing in One Point, means residing in peace. So that in that negotiation, whether it be with your family, a loved one, or in business, or in politics, (god forbid that you should fall to that), no matter what the situation, even on a street corner, the less we struggle the more effective we are.

You may ask, "What does effective mean?" That's a whole other question that I will not address tonight.

Thank you very much everyone.