

Keep Weight Underside Discussion

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Good evening.

Tonight our subject of discussion is the third of the Four Basic Principles, *Keep Weight Underside*. As I mentioned before, and this is important enough to repeat, the Four Basic Principles are indeed four ways to look at mind/body unification, or to approach mind/body unification. But the Four Basic Principles are the same, no different. In other words, Tohei Sensei always emphasized that if you gain one, you gain them all. If you lose one, you lose them all. So it's not possible to be experiencing one of these four and not be experiencing the other three. If one is present, all are present. If one is not present, none of them are present. So in this sense, they are not different. These are different ways of expressing the experience itself, which is the same.

Maybe before I go further, let me read the Shokushu #7, which is *Living Calmness*:

In a natural state, the weight of objects is always underside. Therefore the physical expression of living calmness is that the weight of every part of our body is also underside. Like the calm, still surface of the water, that reflects the moon and a flying bird, true living calmness is the condition of our mind that reflects all things clearly. This is our original and natural state. By understanding these principles, we can acquire true living calmness.

On earth we have two forces, two natural laws, centrifugal and centripetal force, that balance each other. These allow us to be in our upright position as we move about planet earth. And with a little weight added to our feet, we can move around the planet moon, we found out. The moon requires weighted shoes because there is less centripetal force there. Centripetal force is the rule that a larger body always attracts a smaller body. We call this gravity. That is the common name for this.

Earth is a big ball, a large mass with a lot of weight, and we are quite small in comparison. So we are powerfully attracted to the earth, vis a vis gravity. And fortunately, there is also an opposing force, called centripetal force. Just like when a wheel is spinning, as the earth is spinning, everything is thrown away from the center. So that allows us to keep from being smashed flat against the surface of the planet. So we have these two forces operating.

But that is not enough. We also have a skeletal and muscular structure that, when it is in balance, our posture is in balance, we are able to sit or move about without experiencing either centrifugal or centripetal force. In other words, if we learn to sit or to move in balance, with our posture appropriate or correct, then we move beyond the relative condition of awareness of gravity and it's opposite, to living calmness. So this is what Tohei Sensei means when he says that truly experiencing weight underside is moving beyond a relative condition to something

that he calls “living calmness.”

I have the scroll on my wall that says, “Masa katsu a gatsu kachi haya bi.” This translated means “true victory over self is victory over time and space,” or “true victory over self allows us to move beyond time and space,” to transcend time and space experientially. So time and space is the ultimate relative consideration and such things as centrifugal and centripetal force fall under the aegis of relative world, right?

So the experience of a self, or some one that is at the center of all this, namely “me” or “I” is really woven right into the experience of time and space. Everybody knows when you are having a good time and you are fully engaged in something, like right now, you forget about time, you forget about where you are. Even sometimes you forget what time it is and have to rush off, because you “lost track of time.” You forgot completely. And when you forget about time and space you also forget about yourself. Or you can say it conversely; when you forget about yourself, when you are fully engaged in something, you tend to forget about time and space. Time and space, or relative thinking and a sense of separate self, are intricately involved with each other. They cannot be parsed apart, cannot be separated.

So just like with all four of the basic principles, Tohei Sensei has found a way to point to a kind of experience that transcends, if experienced completely, not just time and space but a sense of separate self, a sense of self-importance, an sense of being the center of ones importance in life, what matters most.

When we are fully engaged in something, it is whatever we are engaged in that matters most. The experience of it itself may be exhilarating and transforming, even if it is something as simple as weeding in the garden. It doesn't have to be something as lofty as painting a painting, but of course when you are so engaged this can happen as well. So everybody has something that they love to do, and do well, and that means that when they do it they lose a sense of themselves doing something.

This is a pretty simple and straightforward thing, this weight underside. In other words, as I described it, all we need to do is learn to sit or stand (or even in motion, but it is easier to start practicing by sitting) making sure that your weight is supported by the skeletal structure, so that you skeleton is in alignment and you are not using muscles to hold yourself up. Obviously, if you lean over forward, you are having to use your stomach muscles to keep your body from falling. So if you can find this balance point. If you are sitting on chairs as we are right now, our buttocks are against the chair, and our spine comes down and rests against the chair, so that chair supports us in that sense. But we experience this support at our One Point in our lower abdomen. In this way, we can experience Weight Underside from the top of our head, all the way down and it gathers and gathers down into our One Point. Our head rests on the top of our spine, our shoulders rest directly over our hips so that we can raise our shoulders and let them down and it is very comfortable. When we have this correct posture, then it is very easy to forget all about gravity and the aches and pains that come with getting older and experiencing

gravity more and more. And at the same time it is easy to forget about the self, and just experience the moment for what it is completely. This is Weight Underside.

Any questions or comments about Weight Underside?

Student: I think I just had that experience recently, doing the new Whole Body Meditation that you showed us in the seminar. I was sore from training and stuff, but sitting like that all of sudden I wasn't sore, because I could sit there for an hour. As soon as I moved, of course I became sore again. So is this Weight Underside?

What was aching?

Student: Oh, muscles, back, etc. But even the legs were not sore. All of a sudden there was no pain. When I had to get up to go to work, I didn't want to. I just wanted to stay there. So that's the experience of Weight Underside?

Is that your question?

Student: I guess it is.

Yes, again the Four Basic Principles are four ways to experience mind/body unification. When mind and body are unified, we don't have a sense of separation. When we are feeling aches and pains in our body, it's definitely becoming an object to us. "This damn body hurts." So in a sense you are losing, by practicing this "Mastery Meditation" or "Whole Body Meditation" that I showed you, we are losing that sense of separation, losing a sense of separate self. Automatically with that goes all the time and space concerns, which give pain in your body and so forth. You know, when you have pain in your body, that's when you really think about time, right? And that's when you really think about your self. And actually you are thinking about your body as an object. You think of your body as your self, and it tortures you, and you want to get up, you keep looking at the clock and wondering when is this over. But if you just engage completely in what is present, it puts an end to suffering. Suffering is a reaction to the pain. It's not the pain itself. But engaging completely in the moment, it puts an end to the reactivity, the suffering. And then the pain itself becomes, if not unnoticeable, at least bearable.

Student: I guess so, because even lying in bed I was very sore, but as soon as I sat correctly it went away. Thank you Sensei.

Student: Sensei, I've listened to years, of course, to everybody saying that the Four Basic Principles are four ways of saying the same thing, and Weight Underside has always been one of the more difficult ones for me to grasp fully. I mean, intellectually it is very easy to understand. Originally I thought it might be because in the other principles it seems like we do something. I know this is a trap, or mistake, because you don't "extend Ki" or you don't "relax completely." And I think when I first heard "weight is underside" it was confusing me just because I didn't have an action to do. It was too easy for weight just to be underside. I have gone past that, but it still is something that is not my fall-back or preferred principle.

You asked the other day is everybody has a favorite one, and I definitely do, and it has never been Weight Underside. So I was wondering if you could shed some light on some of my confusion here.

Well, we have a really big mountain on this island, and just about everywhere in the world someone is within reasonable distance to a big mountain. Even if you don't live right next to one, you have seen them before. Mountains are really important in this way. In meditation we often say, "Body like a mountain." Right? "Body like a mountain, breath like a breeze, mind like the sky." This how we sit. So think of Haleakala, our big mountain here. How much effort does it put into sitting there? Non-whatsoever. It just sits. That's why, as you say, adding the word "keep" to weight underside is clearly not what Tohei Sensei means when he says it. In fact, as he describes weight underside, he says, "If you do anything, it won't be weight underside." So he doesn't mean "keep." He means, be like the mountain. In some sense we might say, "recognize, patiently recognize or rest in this natural condition of weight underside, which is like a mountain." Again, if we sit in correct posture for a little while, and just contemplate that mountain there, that big huge Haleakala mountain, then all the little physical things that we identify with, in terms of being in our body, those things just drop away. And then there is just this huge sense of fullness and solidity and stability. And this fullness is very mobile. Even when we are doing *Shomenuchi kokyunage*, we still maintain this feeling, this experience of huge natural stability. This is what Tohei Sensei has named "Weight Underside."

So it's not as if we have to sit still. Even as we move about it continues. Because each molecule of our body, no matter what position it is in, has weight underside. Every little iota of the body is an experience for us. It's not a thing. The body is not a thing. The body is an experience. And, as I said before, when we are in posture, then the experience of what we call body, becomes like living calmness. It's a living, breathing experience of calm, full, stable, mountainous completion.

And if you think of it this way, I think you would really like Weight Underside. In fact I think you have experienced this already. You just don't identify it as weight underside.

Student: I agree. I think that is part of the problem I have had. And I have heard you make that same explanation a few times, and that was very helpful. I often say that you tell me the same thing many times, but I am just not ready to hear it every time.

Well, fortunately, for some reason, I am never able to remember what I said before, so it always seems like the first time to me.

Student: Personally I have also had this problem with "Keep Weight Underside." But actually this is more of a comment than anything. Thinking about the mountain, when you say it's completely effortless, I've always thought of this as, you have to do something. So was that kind of what you were saying earlier, that "keep" is kind of like saying we have to do something?

Yes, this is definitely is a kind of a problem, or a challenge. You know the expression is not

“Keep One Point” in Japanese. It is “Seika no I ten,” or “One Point in the Lower Abdomen.” There is in “keep” in Japanese. So if you can come up with a better word than “keep” I’ll give you twenty-five dollars. Of course, I have to agree with it.

We need another word for “keep.” I mean we could say “experience” weight underside. But that’s a little strange maybe. I mean, in the days when Tohei Sensei was first teaching people didn’t think of things in that way. I went over this before. In a sense, it’s like an injunction. “Keep One Point!” “Keep Weight Underside” “You do this and you’ll be happy!” So it’s sort of like a school teacher giving someone directions of what to do to succeed, which makes us all feel like there is something that I must do to keep one point, otherwise it will fly away from me. Well, yeah, there is something that you have to do. Pay attention. But it doesn’t take effort. Of course in some sense it does. In the beginning it takes a kind of effort, and if you don’t make that effort you will never get to effortlessness. But if you begin with effortless, and you have no attentive capacity to be in the experience of weight underside, then you may never notice it.

So, in a sense, we have to make a tremendous amount of effort to get to the place where we see that this is actually effortless. So the visualization of the mountain has been very useful to me. I can experience being a mountain, and this is the experience of weight underside. And of course, when weight is underside, as Tohei Sensei says in the *Shokushu*, when the mountain is just resting, it’s very still and very quiet. And that’s when your mind is very clear. So when you are experiencing Weight Underside, you have great clarity. You are able to clearly see what is happening in the moment. There are no ripples. When the ripples come you are starting to plan about the future once again. You are starting to try to figure something out. You are trying to make something of this, or trying to increase the experience in some way. “Keeping” One Point.

In this way what I have just expressed is a paradox. In Zen, they express it as being “carefully un-careful.” We have to work really hard to be effortless.

Student: I’ll keep practicing, Sensei.

Student: It’s more a comment than a question, I think. The word “keep” is not so much an issue to me, but the word “weight” is. In keeping weight underside, there is no weight. So to me I think possibly this is misleading to some people. Because when you are in living calmness you are not aware of weight. At least, I’m not aware of weight. So I don’t know what the question is here.

Will we end up throwing the Four Basic Principles out and re-writing them completely?

Yes, paradoxically, when weight is underside, weight disappears, as I described earlier. Right? And Tohei Sensei often uses this phrase as opposed to “Weight upper-side.” And it’s correlated with Keeping One Point, and when we become disturbed, emotionally or mentally or physically even, losing our posture, then our One Point comes up. At the same time our breath comes up. Our breath was deep and calm and then breath becomes very shallow and we are breathing just

high up in our chest. So to Tohei Sensei I think it is a similar image that when we are experiencing deep calmness or Weight Underside, and breathing deep in our belly, and our weight is definitely falling all on the underside of things, and we don't experience it as weight. It is just naturally stable. But when we become disturbed, we are clearly off or out of balance. When you are off balance, your weight is upper-side. When you become disturbed, you lose your balance and fall into things, and everything come upper-side like this. As I am acting this out now I am sort of exaggerating this, so you can see.

Student: Yeah, I can see you are talking about the opposites. That makes it really clear.

Yes. And for most human beings you can be out of balance or having weight upper-side and not have it be physically noticeable. So the more we sit and the more we experience Weight Underside, this sense of weightlessness, the more refined our perception of this becomes. So then even a subtle movement out of balance, a slight ripple, becomes a big thing. Right?

Student: Yes, thank you.

Student: Sensei, for me, Weight Underside, is related to relaxation of the muscles, and that was what I understood by Weight Underside. And it was related to breathing as well. So you breathe, you get relaxed, your weight goes underside, so it is something that is unconscious.

So what is your question?

Student: Well, you are telling us that we are not supposed to do anything to have the weight underside. But so if I am doing something, is this wrong?

What are you doing?

Student: You know, keeping my breathing in check, relaxing my muscles, trying to....

OK. I think I understand your question. If I tell you to relax right now, what do you do?

Student: Well you just do it.

What do you do?

Student: You just keep and eye on your breathing, and relax the muscles.

Keep and eye on breathing?

Student: Yes, just make sure that my breathing flows smoothly, and just relax the muscles that I feel are tense.

You can do that?

Student: Yes.

Hmmm. What do you think you are relaxing, your mind or your body?

Student: That's, uh, I don't know.

Usually if somebody is tense, if we just tell them "Relax, come on, relax!" They will be pretty well lost. But if we tell them "OK, with me, three deep breaths," by the time three deep breaths are done, you are relaxed. You did mention the breath. Breath is definitely the key to all Four Basic Principles. We breathe naturally, and when we emphasize that natural breathing, we become more relaxed, we become more Weight Underside, we Keep One Point more easily, we experience the Extension of Ki. We become clearer, calmer, and more at peace, the more our breath is relaxed and calm and at peace.

I am not sure that you had a direct question, but I think this concurs with what you are saying. I am just repeating it in a way to help clarify exactly how things operate. When we become disturbed, our breath becomes disturbed. So it stands to reason that we can learn to let our breath relax and be natural. I wouldn't say "control" our breath, because any effort to control it would probably make it more disturbed. But by taking a keep breath, and maybe even expressing "Ahhhhh" then automatically we become more relaxed. And then eventually when we learn to meditate deeply in the breath, then we can get completely relaxed. Not just a little relaxed, not just removing the surface tension in our body, which is from some shallow tension in our mind, but going very deeply into a state of living calmness or living relaxation where our mind is very, very calm, just barely rippling along....of course you don't want "flat-lined," this is when we die. But as close as we can get to that while living is the deepest most relaxed condition. And we are led there, all of us, each and every one of us, by and through the breath. Breath is the key. This is why we do so much breathing exercises. And also this is why I taught the Whole Body Meditation, which is based upon the breath, which I think everyone found very relaxing.

Student: You just answered by question.

What was it?

Student: Well, pretty close to what the last student asked. I was wondering about when I find my weight going upper-side it seems like an involuntary process. And it's something that I wanted to ask about what is the practical way to address that.

Yeah. Take a deep breath.

Student: Yeah, I see.

Well, the Four Basic Principles are Tohei Sensei's answer to that question. The practical way to address it is to Keep One Point, or Relax Completely, or Keep Weight Underside, or Extend Ki. When we are becoming disturbed, Shinichi Sensei tells us to Keep One Point. Tohei Sensei always said, "Keep One Point." But as we are discussing tonight, sometimes that can be a little misleading, when you think that you have to do something.

But we have learned that the breath is the key to all of this. So simply by going deeply into the

breath, all these things come about, all of these principles. We experience One Point. We experience Deep Relaxation, Weight Underside or weightlessness, and awareness of Ki throughout the whole universe.

And like I said, the more calm we become, the more sensitive we are to that, and so the more we get to experience that. It's not that "it" increases inside of us in some way. People like to think that they have developed very strong Ki. Baloney. That's self-congratulatory, self-aggrandizement. That's going in the opposite direction rapidly. No. It's just the calmer we are the more we get to experience what's already here. The whole universe is made of Ki. Just sit like a mountain. Heleakala knows. We just forget because we are so busy in our minds trying to figure out what's going on, what our future will be like.

Student: Thank you, Sensei.

Student: Sensei, I wanted to ask you again about not doing anything. We talk a lot from time to time about letting go, which in a sense is doing something, isn't it? If you have tension you let go of tension, and if you are preoccupied with something in the mind then you let go of that. That's what breathing deeply and calmly allows you to do. So I guess the question would be, don't we also get better at doing that, letting go of things, so that you can rest in your natural state?

Yes. As you experience more, you see that you don't really have any control over things. And worrying over them, gnashing of teeth and pulling of hair, doesn't really make things any better. In fact for you it makes them a lot worse, because you experience more suffering, more disturbance. So when we say "letting go" we mean basically letting go of doing. If you want to you can insist that letting go is doing something, but it is basically letting go of that whole idea. It's letting it naturally fall away, not trying to hold your own water in your hand. It takes a lot of effort to do that. You really have to squeeze tight to do that. So if you just take a deep breath and relax, the water will return to the lake. Um, yes I did something, I let go of squeezing my hands together. So, as I say, if we want to insist, yes we can say that there is something being done.

I always say that there is only one choice that we really have. And in this sense what I am saying is that there is really only one thing to do, and that is to Keep One Point or not. Or in other words, to be in a basic principle or not, to be present in awareness or not. That's the choice we have. And making that choice is something that we can practice "doing." That's why we meditate. When we are sitting in meditation, all we have to do is just follow the breath and everything is fine. And then what happens? Something comes along to distract us, a sound, a thought, a feeling, some pain. And then the wonderful thing is that sooner or later, and it might be two seconds, two minutes, two years, we suddenly go, "Oh, I was supposed to be meditating, I was supposed to be following the breath." Usually what we do is we say to ourselves, "Are you never going to learn this?! What is the matter with you?" But instead, we just return to following the breath. That's the choice. That's the one real choice. When we say "Oh" we are in a state of awakening, we are awake. And so with that awareness, that awakesness, we return

to the breath. And then of course we will become distracted again. And when we realize we are distracted, “Ah” and return to the breath. So that going and coming, going and coming, is like lifting weights. And you become stronger in the sense that your attention or your awareness, your capacity of awareness becomes larger and larger, so that you can more easily rest on the breath. In the beginning you may have a sensation that you are making some effort, because you keep falling off the breath, you keep falling out of awareness. And maybe even someday after you have been doing this many years, you may experience some morning when you wake up and it just doesn’t work. But still, even then, you see that you are constantly free to make that choice. Come back and follow the breath.

I don’t think we have to get caught up in the semantics of “doing” or “not doing.” Everyone knows what it means to return to the breath from a distraction, right? Is there anybody here that doesn’t know what I mean by that? Of course, you all practice this, so you all know. And I think everybody who is listening to this or reading it somewhere in the world, if you are practicing, then you understand. Even if you are not practicing, I think it would be pretty hard not to understand what I am referring to. You are paying attention to something, you become distracted, you realize you are distracted; you go back to paying attention. Very simple, that’s all. That’s all meditation is. That’s all we are doing.

One more thing I will say about that, that still is a dual struggle, in a sense, between being distracted and not being distracted. Ultimately there is no difference. But it’s not fair to say that to a beginner, because there’s a huge difference between being not awake and awake. Being distracted is like being asleep to what is happening in this moment of your life. But later, as you practice more, then there is awareness even when a thought comes along. You see the thought, but you don’t follow or feed it. But it doesn’t mean no thoughts arise. It doesn’t mean no sounds arise. It doesn’t mean no pain arises in your body, or that no feelings come up. It doesn’t mean you don’t care about anyone, that you don’t have any heartfelt feeling for people. Everything still is the same, but there is a constant awareness, so that struggle between A and B is gone, even though B continues to be present.

Right? Is this clear?

Student: Thank you, Sensei.

Thank you all very much.