

Read the text below and decide if you sympathize with Donald Shimoda's ideas

We are free...? (Part 1)

On the Jeff Sykes radio talk show, I saw a Donald Shimoda I had never seen before. The show began at 9:00 p.m. and went till midnight, from a room no bigger than a watchmaker's, lined about with dials and knobs and racks of tape-cartridge commercial spots.

Sykes opened by asking if there wasn't something illegal about flying around the country in an ancient airplane, taking people for rides.

The answer is no, there is nothing illegal about it, the planes are inspected as carefully as any jet transport. They are safer and stronger than most sheet-metal modern airplanes, and all that's needed is license and farmer's permission. But Shimoda didn't say that. "No one can stop us from doing what we want to do, Jeff," he said.

Now that is quite true, but it had none of the tact that is called for when you are talking with a radio audience that is wondering what is going on, these airplanes flying around. A minute after he said that, the call-director telephone began lighting up on Sykes' desk.

"We have a caller on line one," Sykes said. "Go ahead, ma'am. "

"Am I on the air?"

"Yes, ma'am, you are on the air and our guest is Mr. Donald Shimoda, the airplane flier. Go ahead, you are on the air."

"Well, I'd like to tell that fellow that not everybody gets to do what they want to do and that some people have to work for their living and hold down a little more responsibility than flying around with some carnival!"

"The people who work for a living are doing what they most want to do," Shimoda said. "Just as much as the people who play for a living . . . "

"Scripture says by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread, and in sorrow shalt thou eat of it."

"We're free to do that, too, if we want."

" 'Do your thing!' I get so tired of people like you saying do your thing, do your thing! You let everybody run wild, and they'll destroy the world. They are destroying the world right now. Look at what is happening to the green living things and the rivers and the oceans!"

She gave him fifty different openings to reply, and he ignored them all. "It's OK if the world is destroyed," he said. "There are a thousand million other worlds for us to create and choose from. As long as people want planets, there will be planets to live on."

That was hardly calculated to soothe the caller and I looked at Shimoda, astonished. He was speaking from his viewpoint of perspectives over lots of lifetimes, learnings only a master can expect to recall. The caller was naturally assuming that the discussion had to do with the reality of this one world, birth is the beginning and death is the end. He knew that. . . why did he ignore it?

"Everything's OK, is it?" the caller said into her telephone.

"There's no evil in this world, no sin going on all around us? That doesn't bother you, does it?"

"Nothing there to be bothered about, ma'am. We see just one little fleck of the whole that is life, and that one fleck is fake. Everything balances, and nobody suffers and nobody dies without their consent. Nobody does what they don't want to do. There is no good and there is no evil, outside of what makes us happy and what makes us unhappy"

None of it was making the lady on the phone any calmer. But she broke suddenly and said simply "How do you know all these things that you say? How do you know what you say is true?"

"I don't know they're true," he said. "I believe them because it's fun to believe them."

I narrowed my eyes. He could have said that he had tried it and it works . . . the healings, the miracles, the practical living that made his thinking true and workable. But he didn't say that. Why?

There was a reason. I held my eyes barely open, most of the room gray just a blurred fuzzy image of Shimoda leaning to talk into the microphone. He was saying all these things straight out, offering no choices, making no effort to help the poor listeners understand.

"Anybody who's ever mattered, anybody who's ever been happy, anybody who's ever given any gift into the world has been a divinely selfish soul, living for his own best interest. No exceptions."

It was a male caller next, while the evening fled by. "Selfish! Mister, do you know what the antichrist is?"

For a second Shimoda smiled and relaxed in his chair It was as if he knew the caller personally.

"Perhaps you could tell me," he said.

"Christ said that we have to live for our fellow man. Antichrist says be selfish, live for yourself and let other people go to hell."

"Or heaven, or wherever else they feel like going."

"You are dangerous, do you know that, mister? What if everybody listened to you and did just whatever they felt like doing? What do you think would happen then?"

"I think that this would probably be the happiest planet in this part of the galaxy," he said.

"Mister, I am not sure that I want my children to hear what you are saying."

"What is it that your children want to hear?"

"If we are all free to do whatever we want to do, then I'm free to come out in that field with my shotgun and blow your fool head off."

"Of course you're free to do that."

There was a heavy click on the line. Somewhere in town there was at least one angry man. The others, and the angry women too, were on the telephone; every button on the machine was lit and flashing.

It didn't have to go that way; he could have said the same things differently and ruffled no feathers at all.

Sifting, sifting back over me was the same feeling I had in Troy, when the crowd broke and surrounded him. It was time, it was clearly time for us to be moving along.

The handbook was no help, there in the studio.

*In order
to live free and happily,
you must sacrifice
boredom
It is not always an easy
sacrifice.*

(Richard Bach, *Illusions*)