

CASE 53

Hyakujō's Wild Duck



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Instruction:

The entire universe has never been hidden; the total activity reveals itself alone. Touching the way, there is no stagnation. Action by action, it possesses the activity which can leave the body. With each phrase there is no I. With each bit of consciousness there is the intention of killing (the delusions of) people. Just say, where did the ancients find rest and peace after all? To test, I cite this. Look!

Case:

When Great Master Ba and Hyakujō were walking together, they saw a wild duck fly past. Master Ba said, "What's that?" Hyakujō said, "A wild duck." Master Ba said, "Where did it go?" Hyakujō said, "It flew away." Master Ba twisted Hyakujō's nose. Hyakujō cried out in pain. Master Ba said, "Where has it ever flown away?"

Verse:

Wild ducks.

Do you know how many?

Baso sees it and talks about it together.

Exhausted is all talk on the sentiments of clouds on the mountains and the moon over the ocean.

Still he [Hyakujō] didn't understand and said, "It flew away."

He [Hyakujō] wanted to fly away.

But he [Master Ba] held him fast.

Speak! Speak!

Today we examine "Hyakujō's Wild Duck." You have heard any number of times about Hyakujō Oshō in koans like Case 2 of the *Gateless Gate* (Hyakujō's Fox) or "Sitting Along on Daiyū Peak" which is included in the *Blue Cliff Record*.

Hyakujō, an exceptional master, was dharma-successor to Baso Dōitsu Zenji, an

equally outstanding personage who reportedly had 331 Dharma successors. Among those many successors, Hyakujô and Nansen were particularly outstanding. It was Hyakujô who first established in the Zen sect the rules for practice known as "Hyakujô's Clean Rules" [Jpn.: *Hyakujô Shingî*]. These rules for temple procedure are the same prescriptions which Dôgen Zenji later adopted for his own temple. Up to Hyakujô's time there were evidently no such established rules of procedure; people simply gathered and practiced. Hyakujô organized procedure and established the basis of practice which is found in today's temples. It was also Hyakujô who made the famous declaration, "A day without work is a day without eating." Even when he was well on in years, Hyakujô would take the lead in *samu* or working meditation which often involved strenuous physical labor. His disciples, concerned about his health, asked that he stop doing *samu*, but Hyakujô would hear nothing of it. They finally hid his work tools and Hyakujô, left with nothing to do, shut himself up in his cottage. The monks presently discovered that he was no longer eating and this is evidently the source of his now famous statement. Today's koan takes place before Hyakujô's enlightenment.

On the Instruction:

The Instruction for each case is always focused on what transpires in the main Case while revealing the essence of Buddhism. Thus, the contents of the Instructions will vary greatly depending on the content of the cases, but all are speaking to us about the true fact. In today's case, Engo Zenji fashions his Instruction with his attention riveted on the wild duck which appears in the main case.

The entire universe has never been hidden; the total activity reveals itself alone. The first line seems to be speaking about two separate things but they are actually one and the same. Each and every phenomenon in the entire universe is the total revelation of the essential. Each and every phenomenon presents us directly with the activity of the true fact. There is the famous koan about Gutei's One Finger. Whatever Gutei Oshô was asked about the dharma, he would simply stick up a finger. A finger is one phenomenon in the entire universe. It could have been anything, but Gutei chose to stick up a finger. This is the total activity revealing itself and filling the entire universe. You must be able to see this. In today's koan, Gutei's finger takes the form of a duck.

If I use my fraction to explain the single finger, the finger is the numerator. But the phenomenal finger is at the same time the essential world itself which is zero and infinite. This empty and infinite world of the essential cannot be perceived by our five senses. Since it is totally empty, there is nothing that any one of the senses could apprehend. But if you think it does not exist, just examine your own consciousness. It is precisely because this mind or consciousness [Jpn.: *kokoro*] exists that I am able to speak now and you are able to hear me. But where is this mind? It cannot be seen or grasped since it lacks color, shape, weight, sex, place or any other identifiable quality. There is nowhere you can point to and say, "Here is mind." It cannot be sensed, located or perceived, but it is there just the same. That which cannot be perceived is called zero or empty. But this zero can do anything. It can speak and hear, stand up, sit down, sleep, eat and swallow. This is the aspect of "limitless" or "possessing limitless capabilities." This is the denominator of our fraction or the true fact. To grasp this

true fact is satori. Those who have yet to grasp this are known in Japanese as *bompu* ["ordinary persons"] and this is the situation for each one of us. Now a finger appears as the phenomenon to be placed in the numerator. However, underlying that finger (perhaps "underlying" is a poor choice of words but I use it for lack of a better expression) is the world which is infinite and absolute. That which is zero and limitless is known as "the limitless absolute." It is one. It is the universe itself without any dualistic opposition between self and other. To transcend the relative is the absolute. There is no dualistic opposition between subjective and objective. A single finger is the total manifestation of that world and it is only a matter of not being able to see this.

Touching the way, there is no stagnation. This essence which lacks shape or shadow possesses totally free activity. The world of phenomena, as opposed to the essential world, is known as "the way." To rephrase this line, no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the standpoint, the conditions or surroundings, it can flow naturally like water without the slightest snag or stagnation. Water is a good expression of our true nature, although the human heart is of course much more subtle. Flowing water, even should it encounter a big rock in its way, can flow right by without the slightest hindrance. This is the original state of our hearts, for each of us is intrinsically endowed with the ability to become one with his or her surroundings. This still has the ring of a dualistic division into spirit and surroundings, but actually they are one. Yasutani Roshi often used to say that if you make fifty thousand yen a month you need only live a "fifty-thousand yen a month" life and you won't find yourself short at the end of the month. If you earn a hundred thousand yen a month, you can spend a hundred thousand yen in that month. But if you try to live a hundred-thousand yen a month life when you only make fifty thousand you're naturally going to run into trouble. It is when we overreach ourselves that we get "bogged down," so to speak. But our true nature is one of never running into snags no matter what the time or occasion. From the essential standpoint, the entire universe cannot contain us and our total activity reveals itself. No matter where we are, we are totally free.

Action by action, it possesses the activity which leaves the body. "Leaves the body" means that the activity is not tied to the body, that each activity issues with total naturalness from within. Like a slippery eel which resists all attempts to catch it, our essential nature is able to act with total, unrestricted freedom.

With each phrase there is no I. The next lines are talking about an outstanding Zen master, in this case, Master Baso. Each one of his words or phrases is completely lacking in any consideration for private gain. His only wish is to somehow bring the other person to realization. There is no feeling of having to give the other a piece of one's mind or forcing one's opinions on the other. There is only the pure desire to bring about satori.

As the main case shows, Baso has not the slightest wish to force his own views upon others. There is no "I" or ego. This is what is meant in the case. "What's that?" "A wild duck." "Where did it go?" "It flew away." Then Baso suddenly twists Hyakujô's nose, but here again there is no anger or maliciousness intended whatsoever. He was acting out of the purest Bodhisattva compassion to somehow bring Hyakujô to an awareness of the fact.

With each bit of consciousness there is the intention of killing (the delusions

of) people. "Intention of killing" means that he wants to "kill" or do away with all of the concepts and delusions of the student. To "kill" in Zen always means to kill our concepts and ideas, all of the thoughts and feelings which issue from the delusion of some sort of basic standoff between subject and object. There is intrinsically neither subject nor object, as anyone who has realized Mu can attest to. The universe is an indivisible one. It is only our minds which create this false division into subject and object, a division which actually does not exist. This is human wisdom which is basically constructed upon this dualism. But everything that comes from this dualistic opposition is an error and must be "killed." To kill means that I also reveal in the same moment the world of no subject and no object. This is known as *Ninkū* [subject empty] and *Hokkū* [object empty]. All discriminating thoughts have their origin in this standoff between self and other, a standoff which has yet to take place at the time of birth. When a baby is hungry it just cries. But as the baby grows older it gradually attains wisdom and the feeling that there is a distinct self, separate and in opposition to the external world. This is the development of awareness.

Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden of Eden after having eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is probably the same thing, I feel. Human intelligence emerges from the opposition between subject and object. When we are born we are still in Paradise. With the growth of intelligence comes suffering which is tantamount to being driven from Paradise. Each word or phrase of the Zen master is an attempt to somehow make apparent the world of no distinctions. They are all said with the aim of jolting the student into the awareness that subject and object are totally empty. They all have the intention of "killing."

Just say, where did the ancients find rest and peace after all? To test, I cite this. Look! If that is so, are there any examples of this from the past? Where did the ancients reach their conclusion, the point where they attained ultimate and lasting peace of mind? Achieving essential peace of mind happens when we finally realize clearly that there is neither subject nor object. Up to that point we must seek with all our might, trying to find some truth or principle upon which we can base our lives. But when we truly realize we see that there is neither subject nor object. As Bukkō Kokushi proclaimed, "What joy! I and everything around me are empty." It is at this point that we achieve true peace. Keizan Zenji's *Zazen Yōjinki* [Zazen Cautions] starts out as follows:

"Zazen opens to clarity for us the heart ground and brings us to rest in the essential."

Here we have a most clear expression of the essence of Zen. In the main case we encounter an example of this and we are advised to look carefully.

On the Case:

When Great Master Ba and Hyakujō were walking together, they saw a wild duck fly past. Master Ba said, "What's that?" Hyakujō said, "A wild duck." Master Ba said, "Where did it go?" Hyakujō said, "It flew away." Since Hyakujō served as Baso's attendant for twenty years, he was with him, of course, on the day that these events occurred. The ancients were truly outstanding, never wasting their time on frivolous talk even on such an outing. Every chance occasion was an opportunity to cross swords in

dharma combat. The master took advantage of every chance meeting to bring the student to enlightenment. The student, on his part, used every chance to ask a question, all in an attempt to grasp somehow the real fact. When these two were walking out in the fields one day, a duck suddenly flew out from the thicket at their feet. Seeing this, Master Ba said, "What's that?"

This is a formidable question, just like the koan where the master stands stark still and cries out, "What's this?" Just at the moment when Baso was filled with the desire to somehow jolt his student into awareness of the empty and infinite essence, a duck bursts from the bushes. As phenomenon, a single duck – "What's that?"

"A wild duck," answers Hyakujō, presenting the plain fact most matter-of-factly. On the whole, when someone like Master Ba asks a question, you have to understand the spirit behind that question. A sharp-witted person would immediately sense it: "Ah, he's talking about the world of the denominator!" But Hyakujō sees only the phenomenal duck. Noticing this, Baso fires another volley: "Where did it go?" This, too, is a most formidable question. From the essential standpoint, there is no standoff between subject and object and thus, no coming or going. To speak in terms of coming and going is to see only the phenomenal world where it appears that there is actually such coming and going. To check on whether Hyakujō has clearly grasped the world where there is no coming and going, he asks this question: "Where did it go?"

Hyakujō says, "It flew away." Some Zen books find this answer to be surprisingly Zen-like in flavor. Most people would not settle for just "It flew away." They would want to say where it flew. But Hyakujō doesn't say where the duck flew, only that it flew away. Upon hearing this, however, Baso concluded that Hyakujō saw only the phenomenal duck. If he had seen the essential world of the denominator, he would have been familiar with the world where the duck, although it flies away, does not go anywhere. While flying away, it doesn't fly anywhere. There is a world where, although we spend our days in walking, we do not go anywhere. For those who do not know this world, Zen will always seem like a conundrum filled with deliberate contradictions; but this is not so. When we clearly grasp the world of the denominator we realize that, although we may indeed be walking from the phenomenal point of view, it is, from the essential standpoint, also perfectly natural that we are not walking at all. People who know nothing about Zen are apt to characterize it as a bunch of senseless riddles. Some people even get sick to their stomachs listening to what seems to them nothing more than nonsense. This is only to be expected, given that none of this can be understood with the logic of the phenomenal world. These people then conclude that Zen monks spend their time uttering senseless riddles and, whenever anything nonsensical appears in a conversation, they will call it a "Zen mondo." Actually, though, there is nothing quite as clear and direct as a Zen exchange, and once we have grasped the world of Zen all of these exchanges will be clarity itself. As it says in the *Gateless Gate* it will be "a clear and cloudless sky" [Verse of Case 30, *Mumonkan*].

Master Ba twisted Hyakujō's nose. Hyakujō cried out in pain. Master Ba said, "Where has it ever flown away?" Then Master Ba plays his trump card. He suddenly grabs Hyakujō's nose and twists it. "Ouch! Ouch!" Hyakujō cries out in pain.

Master Ba says, "You say it flew away, but it's right here! Ouch! Ouch! Isn't that the duck crying?"

The ancients were truly great. I doubt that there is a Zen master around today who could act so readily and forthrightly. The question remains on how Hyakujô responded to this. Hyakujô did attain a certain degree of realization at this point. There is the following story about what happened afterward:

The next day Master Ba ascended the rostrum and was about to deliver a sermon. Placed before the rostrum was the *haiseki* or "bowing mat." After the teisho it was the custom for the master to descend from the rostrum and perform bows. However, on this day as Master Ba prepared to ascend the rostrum and deliver a teisho, Hyakujô sprang up and began rolling up the bowing mat as if to say, "the teisho is finished."

Master Ba had no choice but to descend from the rostrum and return to his hut. Hyakujô sauntered after him. Master Ba turned to him and said, "Why did you roll up the bowing mat even though the teisho was not finished?" Hyakujô said, "It really hurt when you twisted my nose yesterday." Master Ba said, "At that time yesterday where did you have your attention?" Hyakujô said, "Today my nose doesn't hurt any more."

This defies common sense. Here we encounter the difference between a person who has encountered the essential world and one who has not. When one becomes able to give a reply like this, one is no longer speaking simply from the standpoint of common sense. Then Master Ba said, "You have deeply understood today's matter." This was his way of bestowing approval on his disciple's realization. In other words, Hyakujô had clearly realized the moment-to-moment fact. What happened yesterday is gone. "The mind which is gone cannot be obtained." Since what happened yesterday is gone already it no longer exists. "The future mind cannot be obtained." Since the future has not yet arrived it does not exist. There is only the here-and-now. This is what is meant by the fact of here today. But even as we say the word "present," before we finish saying it, the first part of the word is already in the past. There is no way we can hold onto the present moment; it slips through our fingers. We can split time into infinitely fine divisions but we cannot take hold of the present mind. Nevertheless, although I cannot grasp it, I grasp it nonetheless. This is what is meant by "the matter of right now."

I'm sure you all remember the famous story of how Tokusan went to pay a visit on Ryûtan. On his way there he found a small tea shop where snacks were sold. Since he was hungry he decided to buy a bean cake or some other small snack. The old woman running the shop asked him, "What are you carrying in the cart, Your Reverence?" He told her proudly, "They are the notes and commentaries on the Diamond Sutra." "Is that so?" the old woman said. "Then I would like to ask you a question. If you can answer it, I'll treat you to a bean cake. If not, I won't even let you buy one!"

"Ask me whatever you like," Tokusan said. The old woman said, "I hear that it is said in that sutra, 'The past mind cannot be caught; the present mind cannot be caught; the future mind cannot be caught.' With what mind are you going to eat the bean cake?"

How would you answer? The past mind can't be caught; the present mind can't be caught; the future mind can't be caught. But in the midst of not catching, it is caught in this way. Gulp! Ah, that's delicious! Isn't that a perfectly fine answer? If you try to figure it

out, you'll never succeed. But if you show the real fact, it's just as it is. Gulp! Mmmm, that's good!

Having received confirmation of his understanding, Hyakujô expressed his deep thanks to his master, returned to his own quarters and began to sob violently. He was no doubt beside himself with joy. One of the other monks living in the same quarters asked him why he was crying. Hyakujô told the monk to go and ask the Roshi. The monk went to Master Ba's cottage and told him that Hyakujô was crying loudly. "What has happened?" he wanted to know. "Is that so?" said Master Ba. "Well, go and ask Hyakujô." The monk returned to the monk's quarters only to find Hyakujô this time wildly laughing. More perplexed than ever, the monk said to Hyakujô, "A few minutes ago you were crying; now I find you laughing. What a strange fellow you are!" Hyakujô answered, "Before I was crying, now I'm laughing." This is the ever-present now. A few minutes ago I was crying, but that's over and gone. Now I'm laughing. There is only just this present moment.

But Hyakujô still had a way to go before he attained great enlightenment. This is an important matter to be aware of. Usually in Zen writings there is a clear distinction made between "great enlightenment" and "gaining some understanding." Although there is a flash of insight it is not total enlightenment. Hyakujô continued to practice under Master Ba. His great enlightenment came when Master Ba gave out a great shout. It is said that Hyakujô was deaf for three days following this. He probably didn't go physically deaf; perhaps his experience of the essential was so deep that nothing else reached his ears. With a really deep experience it often happens that the whole body is literally shaking and tingling for several days with the reverberations of that experience. With a true experience you are beside yourself with joy. Even though Hyakujô might not have gone totally deaf at the time, the experience was so deep that sounds just didn't reach his ears.

Often people haven't spoken about having "eighteen great enlightenments and small enlightenments beyond counting."¹ But according to Iida Tôin Roshi there can only be one great enlightenment. If one great enlightenment is followed by another, you can be sure, he says, that the first was not a genuine experience. At any rate, even granted that there was great enlightenment, there nevertheless follows the process of clearing away the leftover dregs of illusion. But to truly touch bottom is a one-time-only affair. In this case, although he had gone as far as he could, he had yet to truly touch bottom. As I mentioned, Iida Roshi felt that great enlightenment happens once and once only. Having gone halfway, it's now a matter of drilling onward and finally hitting bottom. To accomplish this process in one fell swoop is *daigo-tettei* which is a sudden 180-degree reorientation, although all too rare. If, say, you have made a 150-degree turn, you still have before you the task of advancing forward the other thirty degrees. It's safe to say that nowadays there is no real *daigo-tettei* at a single stroke.

As you work on koan after koan, your ideal is to reach that state of 180-degrees by the end of koan study. But even this is rather hard to come by these days. It would be ideal if, at the end of koan study, the student was free of all delusions, but the cases are all too frequent where this is not so.

¹ A phrase that seems to date back to Daie Sôkô Zenji (1089-1163), a famous master in the Rinzai School in China; Hakuin Zenji (1685-1768) in Japan applied it to himself.

If one can break thorough totally at the outset it is ideal, but if not, one must go through the koans and, having finished, continue to be strict with oneself, checking to see if one's realization is complete or not. It's a question of just how strictly you examine yourself. Those lacking in such severity towards themselves will give up at that point and settle for an incomplete experience. But those who refuse to settle for the status quo will continue to drive on until they reach full enlightenment. Even after achieving great enlightenment we must sweep away all traces of satori. There is truly no end to practice.

In this koan Hyakujô had "some understanding." It wasn't until later that he attained great enlightenment.

On the Verse:

Wild ducks. Do you know how many? Wild duck! That is actually all that needs to be said. Everything is finished right here. Just this. Wild duck! Whack! [Roshi strikes the rostrum with his stick.] How are they in any way different?

How many are there? "Ahead three three, behind three three"² could be an answer. The entire universe is filled. When you see the real wild duck, each individual phenomenon is the wild duck, a fact which Master Ba knew all too well. Thus the verse says: Baso sees it and talks about it together.

Exhausted is all talk on the sentiments of clouds on the mountains and the moon over the ocean. Baso said everything in an attempt to jolt Hyakujô into an awareness of the world of the wild duck, the world of the true self. He exhausted himself in his kindness, chewing the food beforehand with grandmotherly kindness to make it palatable.

Still he [Hyakujô] didn't understand and said, "It flew away." He [Hyakujô] wanted to fly away. But still Hyakujô did not understand. He attempted to fly away from the fact. It was not just the duck, even Hyakujô's own mind, which could not realize the fact right in front of him.

But he [Master Ba] held him fast. Speak! Speak! So Baso grabbed Hyakujô's nose. All right now, say something! What would you say? In a mischievous spirit Setchô says, "Speak! speak!" Engô adds his critical comment, "Don't make a wild duck cry!" Well, if a wild duck's cry won't do, what will you say?

² Case 35, *Hekiganroku*.