

CASE 82

Dairyū's Dharma Body



By Yamada Kōun

Instruction:

As for the line on the fishing pole, only those who have an eye truly know. As for the activity which is beyond the bounds, only the Zen adept can truly discriminate it. But tell me. What is the line on the fishing pole? What is the activity beyond the bounds? To test, I am citing this. Look!

Case:

A monk asked Dairyū, "The body of form is destroyed. What is the enduring Dharma body?" Dairyū said, "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo."

Verse:

He asks still not knowing.
Even in answering he does not know.
The moon is cold and the wind is high;
On the ancient crag the cold cypress tree.
How laughable---meeting a person who has accomplished the Way upon the road,
And responding with neither words or silence.
Holding a whip of white jade in his hand,
He pulverizes the jewel of the black dragon.
If he had not pulverized it, he would have increased the flaws.
The nation has a constitution.
Three thousand crimes against the Law.

On the Instruction:

As for the line on the fishing pole, only those who have an eye truly know. Although this koan appears to be rather simple at first glance, it's actually quite a tricky customer. Thus, it's important to grapple with it in all seriousness.

Seeing the line wiggle, the fish swims over and, if it doesn't watch out, will be hooked

up in no time. But those with an eye will discern this immediately. It has been a subject of heated discussion over the centuries whether this refers to the fisherman or the fish. I feel it could apply to both and not mar the original meaning of the Instruction. From the standpoint of the fisherman letting out the line, he must have an eye to see when it wriggles and immediately pull up. For a person with a true eye, he will know immediately when it has moved. From the standpoint of the fish, if it has a quick eye it will be very difficult to catch. It will not go so readily for the bait unless it's really hungry.

In this case, the one doing the fishing is the Zen master and the one about to be fished up is the Zen practitioner. The Zen master lets out a koan as bait to see how the practitioner will respond. An outstanding master will be able to discern the attainment of the practitioner in an instant. And if the eye of the practitioner is truly sharp, he or she will not be caught up so easily in the trap laid by the master. I should add here that this interpretation differs somewhat from that found in Yasutani Roshi's examination of this koan in his *Hekiganshû Dokugo* (Soliloquy on the Blue Cliff Record).

As for the activity beyond the bounds, only the Zen adept can truly discriminate it. "Beyond the bounds" means that activity which transcends the bounds of everyday logical thinking. Unless you have had a clear experience of the essential world, the true activity of enlightenment will not emerge. Most people are caught within the bounds of logical, two-dimensional thinking. Those who have the eye of enlightenment are not caught within this two-dimensional framework. Once again, "the activity beyond the bounds" can apply to both master and disciple. From the teacher's standpoint, he or she knows immediately where the student stands. From the student's standpoint, even should he or she act with the activity beyond the bounds, the outstanding Zen master will realize this immediately. In such a case we are talking about a duel between two perfectly matched swordsmen.

Just tell me. What is the line on the fishing pole? What is the activity beyond the bounds? To test, I am citing this. Look! Well, having spoken about the fishing line and this outstanding activity, what are concrete examples of this? Such an example will be given now in the Main Case and we are advised to look carefully.

On the Case:

A monk asked Dairyû, "The body of form is destroyed. What is the enduring Dharma body?" "The body of form" is our physical body which, according to Chinese tradition, will eventually die and be divided into the four elements. The ancients believed that everything in creation was composed of combinations of four basic elements which were earth, water, fire and wind. The same goes for the physical body. If it is cremated it returns to ashes. And if it is buried it will thereafter decompose into earth.

Buddhism, however, teaches us that there is an "indestructible Dharma body." The monk asks Dairyû, "What is the Dharma body which is never destroyed even when the physical

body is destroyed?"

This monk is still thinking of the physical body and the Dharma body as two separate entities. What is the enduring Dharma body? Recall once again the *Hannya-Shingyô Sutra*: "Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. Form is only emptiness, emptiness only form." The physical body, the sutra tells us, is emptiness itself. To realize the emptiness of all things is the very heart of Buddhism. The physical body *is* emptiness. They are not two. Since this monk had yet to realize this fact, he was still thinking in terms of an indestructible Dharma body existing in addition to the physical body and this is what led him to pose his question.

The Dharma body is empty. Zazen is the process of coming to a clear and unmistakable experience of emptiness. As I am always telling you, a koan always concerns itself with the world of emptiness (we make a division into the essential and phenomenal for the sake of explanation, although there is actually no distinction). This monk is still thinking conceptually in terms of some sort of Dharma body which exists separate from the physical body.

Dairyû said, "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo." Dairyû was Dairyû Chikô Zenji, a patriarch who lived on the mountain known as Dairyû (Great Dragon) on the banks of Dôtei Lake in the north of Teishû in Kônân [Chin.: *Hunan*] Province. He was fourteenth in Dharma succession from Bodhidharma and fourth in succession from Tokusan Zenji.

It was this Dairyû Chikô Zenji who answered in response to the monk's question: "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo". It is Dairyû's answer which is the real point of this koan. What does his answer have to do with the enduring Dharma body?

Yasutani Roshi does not give a clear reply to this, probably out of concerns that telling too much will do more harm than good. When I worked on this koan under Yasutani Roshi I was passed with the answer that appears in his book.

Among the *Miscellaneous Koans* which are given to the student following kensho there is the following: "If one tries to see me (the Buddha) through colors and voices, he cannot meet the Tathagata."

What is the Tathagata? It is the world of oneness. If I believe that there is a flower and an individual self observing the flower and that they are distinctly different from each other, I have yet to encounter the essential world. I am still unable to behold the Tathagata. Recall, also, the koan about "Kyôshô's Raindrops."¹ If I am still thinking in terms of a distinct self here listening to the raindrops out there, when I am asked by Kyôshô, "What is that?", I will be like the monk and answer, "The sound of the rain." In response to this, Kyôshô says, "Living beings, turned upside down, are deluded to themselves and pursue objects." To continue to pursue things as if they were outside of oneself is not the true path. It must

¹ Case 46 of this collection.

become one.

The Bodhisattva Kannon came to enlightenment upon hearing sounds. He is thus known as the one who "sees the sounds of the world" (Kanzeon). As long as we believe that there is a distinct self here listening to the sounds outside, there will be no Zen experience. For satori to occur there must be this experience of oneness.

It is customary to refer to the world of oneness as Buddha nature or Dharma nature or the true self or the true fact. But actually, I feel the expression "the world of oneness" is still insufficient. For example, there is my right hand and my left hand. So long as you see these as separate and distinct, you cannot understand Buddha. In order to realize that they are one, however, you must realize that both left and right are completely empty. If we were simply to take different things from the phenomenal world and line them up and attempt to logically conclude that they are one, we would never be able to do so. It is only when we realize that they are completely empty that we can for the first time say that they are one. Underlying the world of emptiness is the world of total emptiness. This is referred to in the *Hannya-Shingyô Sutra* as *kû*.

In this case, too, the enduring Dharma body is not anything in the phenomenal world. When we get right down to it, it is Buddha nature. So long as we can only see my right and left hands as completely separate entities, it is the body of form, just a part of my physical body. But from the standpoint of the life which they share, they are not two but one. It is possible to dissect the human body into all the individual parts such as the lungs, heart and liver. But from the standpoint of the life which they share, they are not separate at all.

Life has no form, shape or color. It is void. Mu practice is a matter of clearly grasping this world of oneness. Clearly grasping Mu is realizing this, not only in terms of the individual human body but in terms of the entire universe.

In Dairyû's case, when he spoke of the autumn foliage he was speaking in terms of color. But the quote from the *Diamond Sutra* above tells us that we are on the wrong trail if we are pursuing colors. The first group of Miscellaneous Koans are designed to help us come to a clear realization of the world of oneness. For example there are the koans: "Stop the sound of that distant temple bell," or "Stop that boat sailing by in the offing." If we were to make such an application in dokusan to these statements from Dairyû—the autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo—upon considering how you would express them at such a time, you might have an idea. Lately, however, I've come to feel that this in itself is not enough. What if it were simply a matter of explaining these words of Dairyû in terms of what I have said so far? In other words, in saying that we must not see viewer and viewed as two and that you yourself must melt into the color and sound? Then there are any number of poems from Japanese tradition which would express this very well. Here are two examples:

"Ah, ah!" is all I can say...Yoshinoyama at cherry-blossom time.

(Kore wa kore wa to bakari hana no yoshinoyama)

Oh Matsushima, Oh Matsushima, Matsushima!

(Matsuyama ya aa matsuyama ya matsuyama ya)

But what if we were to press on even further?

This brings us back again to the fraction which I often use in way of explanation in which the denominator is zero-infinite and the numerator (expressed with the Greek letter alpha) can be anything in the phenomenal world. I believe the Dharma-body spoken of in the koan is the zero-infinite denominator of our fraction. It would seem to me that the words of Dairyû ("The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo") could be inserted in the numerator. But what we are actually concerned with is that which transcends both numerator and denominator; in other words, the fraction $\langle\alpha/\infty\rangle$ as a whole. We are concerned with the fraction itself in its entirety.

In referring to these words of Dairyû in his teisho on this koan, Tenkei Zenji² asks: "Is this the body of color? Is this the Dharma body? Is this destroyed or not? How do you see this? Those with eyes should look now. No profound principles of Buddhism but rather a living word or phrase from everyday life." (Perhaps the same criticism could be leveled at my example of the fraction!)

Tenkei Zenji continues: "A phrase which transcends the Dharma body. The entire universe cannot hide it!"

At this point, I would ask all those who have been passed already on this koan in the dokusan room to do your very best to make this matter clear. There are any number of verses from Chinese tradition which are more than a match for Dairyû's words. Consider the following, for example:

The rain recedes and clouds congregate on the horizon.

The dawning is half here.

The myriad peaks are a painting with their green and knobby crags.

Or:

The wind blows across the blue sky and the floating clouds disappear.

The moon rises over the green hills, a single bright jewel.

I feel both of these verses are speaking about the same thing as Dairyû's words. But it would entirely miss the point if you have a picture of pretty scenery in your head. You could be completely one with that autumn foliage, and say, "Oh, what pretty leaves!" But, even this is not enough, I feel lately. Can you come up with a word or phrase which, as Tenkei Zenji says, transcends the Dharma body? What will you say? Please try to come up with an acceptable response for the dokusan room and thus deepen your appreciation of this koan.

² An illustrious Japanese master who lived from 1648-1735.

On the Verse:

He asks still not knowing. Even in answering he does not know. The monk who came and queried Dairyû had not considered the matter of the body of form and the Dharma body very deeply. He was approaching his master with a smattering of borrowed knowledge. Thus, from Dairyû's standpoint, the monk was truly asking while still not knowing. The monk was asking without knowing the slightest thing about his subject.

What about the second line of the verse? This is a different kind of "not knowing" than that in the first line. When Dairyû replied as he did, he was answering from a state of consciousness which completely transcends our ordinary everyday knowing and not knowing. Recall the first koan in this collection in which the Emperor Bu asks Bodhidharma, "Who is it that stands before me?" Bodhidharma answers, "I don't know." Dairyû's not knowing is exactly the same. It is an "I don't know" which completely transcends the body of form and the Dharma body.

Coming back once again to my fraction, we could say that the numerator is the body of color and the denominator is the Dharma body. But it is the fraction itself in its entirety which is this not knowing. It is "I don't know."

The moon is cold and the wind is high; on the ancient crag the cold cypress tree. The next two lines are an expression of Dairyû's own state of consciousness. It might seem as if he is lacking any human warmth. In reply to this, Iida Tôin Roshi says that, if this were Bashô, he would have said in the verse:

*On a withered branch
a crow is perched:
An autumn evening.³
(Kare eda ni
karasu tomari keri
aki no kure)*

How laughable---meeting a person who has accomplished the Way upon the road, and responding with neither words or silence. These lines have their source in Case 36 of the *Gateless Gate*:

Goso said, "If you meet a man on the path who has accomplished the Way, do not greet him with words or silence. Tell me, how will you greet him?"

The Verse says that Dairyû would have dismissed this question of Goso with a laugh: "Ha, ha! All this silly talk about meeting someone on the Way!" The line is thus said once again in praise of Dairyû.

This is diverging slightly from our subject but there are some people who say that it was not Goso but someone else who uttered the words in the above koan. For example,

³ Translation by Robert Aitken.

Yasutani Roshi says that it was Kyôgen, while Iida Tôin Roshi says that these are the words of Jôshû. Even if there are differences of opinion on who actually said this, the content of the words is the same. So it seems perfectly acceptable to me to take them as the words of Goso Hôen Zenji.

The koan is prodding us to answer from the standpoint which transcends both speaking and silence. And, as today's verse says, such a question would be completely laughable for a person like Dairyû. Why? Because Dairyû himself is speaking from the standpoint which totally transcends both form and emptiness when he answers, "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo."

He pulverizes the jewel of the black dragon. These last lines are quite interesting. In his teisho on this koan, Yasutani Roshi says, "It is a wonderful jewel without the slightest blemish. All thoughts and concepts are blemishes. Take up the whip of the true pure and clear Dharma body! The outstanding jewel of great enlightenment is important, but once it is attained it must be ground to powder." Yasutani Roshi sees the "jewel of the black dragon" as a reference to great enlightenment. He also sees the "whip of white jade" as being an outstanding jewel. In most interpretations, however, this is seen as referring to Dairyû's own reply, "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo."

The "jewel of the black dragon" refers to a jewel which a black dragon kept under its chin, which means that it was very rare and difficult to obtain. In fact, one would have to risk one's life to get it. (This phrase, "the jewel of the black dragon" is actually used traditionally to refer to anything which is difficult to obtain). In this case, it refers to the kensho experience. For we must risk our lives to obtain kensho. But here Dairyû has gone and completely pulverized that jewel. How did he do that? When he said, "The autumn foliage is like brocade; the waters of the valley well up like indigo." This is no other than the whip of white jade. With this whip he has completely pulverized the state of consciousness known as the enlightened consciousness.

If he had not pulverized it, he would have increased the flaws. We cannot continue to cling to the satori experience. If we fail to grind to powder the jewel of the black dragon, blemishes will eventually appear on it. If we remain forever in the world of emptiness we will be unable to act with true freedom. It is important to come to this experience, but we must go on and eventually throw away that experience. Only then can we become "the person of infinite leisure who has passed beyond all learning," to quote the first lines of the *Shôdôka*. It is a matter of returning to our original, completely ordinary self. When we get right down to it, that is the final goal of Zen practice: To become a human being in the true sense of the word. Along the way, we must at some point grasp our original self. Having once grasped it, however, we must put it away. It is only when we have, so to speak, pulverized the jewel of the black dragon that we become truly free.

Before we are truly free and before we have realized satori, we are prisoners of our own passions and suffer as a result. But having attained satori there is the danger that we will

now become tied down by that experience. It is only when we do away with both delusion and satori (i.e., pulverize the jewel) that we become truly free. When we are hungry, we eat. When we are cold we put on more clothes. When we are hot we take them off. This is what is meant by *mu-i* or not having to do anything special.

The nation has a constitution. Three thousand crimes against the Law. Every established nation has its constitution which includes laws on what we should not do. In the same way, Zen has its own laws. What is the constitution of Zen? It is the eye of satori, the true self. Seen from this standpoint, just about everything is a transgression! So long as there is even a trace of ego or "I" remaining, everything you bring up is a transgression. This is what is meant by the final line of the verse. In order to avoid those three-thousand transgressions, we must obliterate the ego, although it actually does not exist from the very beginning. The ego is a product of our own delusion. There is actually no separation into self and other. But our delusion constantly makes us see as two that which is actually one. It's a matter of curing this sickness and becoming truly healthy, although the number of truly healthy people is small indeed!

I imagine that sections of this koan were difficult for you to understand. As I mentioned just now, I hope that those of you who have already worked on this koan will come again with an answer to the dokusan room.