

CASE 49

Tôzan and the Memorial Service

By Yamada Kôun



Instruction:

However hard one may try,
It can never be depicted, it can never be drawn.
Fuke made a somersault, Ryûge exposed only half his body.
After all, what is the appearance of that One?

Case:

When Tôzan held a memorial service for Ungan before his portrait, he mentioned the episode with the portrait¹. A monk came forward and asked, "When Ungan said, 'Just this!' what did that mean?" Tôzan said, "At that time, I almost misunderstood my master's meaning." The monk said, "I wonder whether or not Ungan really knew that *it* is." Tôzan said, "If he did not know that *it* is, how could he say like that? If he knew that *it* is, how did he dare say like that?"

Verse:

"How could he say like that?"
In the fifth watch the cocks crow among the homes before dawn –
"How did he dare say like that?"
The thousand-year crane grows old with the pine tree in the clouds.
The jewel mirror is clear and bright,
It examines both essence (*shô*) and phenomena (*hen*).
The jade loom operates back and forth,
It sees the completion amid essence and phenomena (*kenchûtô*).
The wind of the School is superbly cruising, the regular footsteps continue forever.
Father and son change and pass through; their fame and radiance prevail all over.

¹ Tôzan was still a young monk under Ungan. One day, when he was leaving his master, he asked Ungan, "After your passing, if I am asked by someone whether I have your portrait, what should I answer?" Ungan remained silent for a while and then said, "Just this."

On the Instruction:

Among the characters translated here as “memorial service” in the title is the Chinese character “shin” which no doubt means an “image,” as the same character finds continued use in the modern Japanese word “shashin” meaning photograph. In my childhood people talked in terms of the “imperial portrait” (goshin’ei), which refers to a likeness of the Emperor and contains the same character “shin.” A portrait of the Emperor was hung up in a high place at the schools. Here it also refers to an image, and it evidently involves setting out an image of the departed person to perform a memorial service. We turn now to the Instruction.

However hard one may try,

It can never be depicted, it can never be drawn. No matter how skilled the artist, no matter how talented the writer, it can never be properly depicted. What is this talking about? It is about our true self, our true nature. Even the greatest artist in the world could never depict it.

Fuke made a somersault, Ryūge exposed only half his body.

After all, what is the appearance of that One? No matter how skilled the writer, he or she cannot truly describe our true self. No matter how accomplished the artist, he or she remains unable to depict it. These words are very similar to those in the Verse to Case 23 of the *Gateless Gate*.

It can't be described! It can't be pictured!

No doubt, the author of the *Gateless Gate* was referring to this Verse in the *Book of Equanimity* in writing his own verse. Old Man Banshō wrote the Instruction to today’s case and then added longer and shorter commentaries. Setchō Jūken Zenji gathered together the 100 cases comprising the *Blue Cliff Record*, after which Engo Zenji wrote Instructions as well as shorter comments, capping phrases and longer commentaries to create the form in which the work was bequeathed us. Wanshi Zenji, the compiler of the *Book of Equanimity*, lived about 100 years before Mumon Ekai, the compiler of the *Gateless Gate*. I believe Wanshi Zenji took an example from the *Blue Cliff Record* in creating the *Book of Equanimity*. Banshō Gyōshū Zenji (also known as Old Man Banshō <Banshō Rōjin>) played the same role in the compilation of the *Book of Equanimity* that Engo Zenji played in creation of the *Blue Cliff Record*. In his case too, he wrote Instructions as well as longer and shorter comments to the hundred cases compiled by Wanshi Zenji. Old Man Banshō was actually about twenty years older than Mumon Ekai (compiler of the *Gateless Gate*). This leads me to believe the Mumon Ekai, in writing his own verse to Case 23 in the *Gateless Gate*, was borrowing to some extent from this earlier verse by Old Man Banshō. We might also say that a difference of twenty years is no striking difference, but I still can’t help feeling that Mumon was referring to the words in today’s Instruction in writing his own verse to Case 23 of his koan collection.

As I just mentioned, the title “memorial service” is referring to a case of exhibiting an image and carrying out a memorial service. But the real meaning is exhibiting the “true

appearance,” the Buddha nature of that person. In other words, it’s not a matter of a portrait of the person painted on a canvas; it means holding a memorial service for that person’s true aspect or true self. And, as just mentioned, even the greatest artist in the world could never paint a portrait of that true self. If you read the *Record of Rinzai* you will understand that Fuke, who is mentioned in this Instruction, was very instrumental in propagating the dharma of Rinzai Zenji. Fuke was a dharma successor to Banzan Hōjaku Zenji, who is famous for his statement "Not One Thing in the Three Worlds". (sangai-muhō), which is Case 37 of the *Blue Cliff Record*. Fuke was evidently quite an eccentric. He is also known as the founder of the so-called “Fuke School” of Zen. His followers, dressed in monk’s robes and wearing large straw hats that cover their faces, are known as “kyomusō” (monks of emptiness) who play the bamboo flute (shakuhachi) as part of their practice, in the sense of saving all beings with their music. There is the following anecdote about Fuke in the *Record of Rinzai*.

One day Fuke went to town begging for a monk’s robe. When someone offered to provide them, he would refuse to accept them. Finally Rinzai told him that he had prepared for him a monk’s habit and presented him with a coffin. Fuke shouldered the coffin and started roaming the streets shouting: “Rinzai gave me these monk’s robes, I will go to the East Gate and die.” The town’s people fought with each other in order to arrive first at the East Gate and witness Fuke’s death. But arriving there, Fuke said: “I have changed my mind. I will die tomorrow at the South Gate.” After repeating the same procedure for three days there was no one left who believed him and followed him to see him die. He finally left the town alone and came outside of the North Gate. He entered into the coffin, and asked a passing traveler to nail it shut for him. When the news spread into the town, and people ran to open the coffin, they found it empty. Only the sound of the taku was heard, lingering in the empty sky.”

At any rate, Fuke’s master Banzan Hōjaku Zenji, when he was about to pass away, asked his assembly if there was anyone who had painted his portrait and was carrying it on his person. Among the assembled monks there were some who had actually painted such a portrait and who then produced them. But Banzan was not satisfied with the likenesses. Then Fuke came forward and said he could depict the master’s likeness. Banzan said, “Why do you not show it to me?” Fuke immediately turned a somersault and left. Here we have the complete manifestation of Buddha nature. This is what the Instruction is referring to. And now the section about Ryūge:

Ryūge is also mentioned in the *Eihei-kōsō-Hotsuganmon*, the text by Dōgen Zenji which we just recited before this teisho where it says:

Therefore, Ryūge said:

Those who in past lives were not enlightened will now be enlightened.

In this life, save the body which is the fruit of many lives.

Before buddhas were enlightened, they were the same as we.

Enlightened people of today are exactly as those of old.

This is the statement of Ryûge Koton Zenji, of whom there is evidently a half-length portrait. There were monks who praised that portrait. I believe it was Hôzu, the author of the work known as the *Sekimon-Rinkan-Roku* (Record of the Stone Gate in the Forest), who wrote the following verse in praise of Ryûge, which also appears in the commentary to Case 73 of the present collection:

*The sun rises across the mountains,
The moon is full at the door;
It's not that he has no body –
He doesn't want to show it all. (Cleary)*

This is what today's Instruction is referring to in saying that "Ryûge exposed only half his body" in his portrait. The Instruction seems to be asking us, "What sort of person is that, who can expose the entire body?" Ryûge is said to be exposing only half. From one standpoint you could say that it is only revealing the world of phenomena, because the essential world cannot be seen. From another standpoint, everything is revealed. For example, Zen master Gutei stuck up a finger. If you think this is only half, you are mistaken. It is the complete manifestation. The Instruction seems to be saying that everything presented is only half of the whole and wants to know how it is with a person who can present the whole. From one point of view it is true enough that all the matters in the Instruction are only half of the whole. But from another standpoint they are the complete manifestation of the whole. We turn now to the Main Case.

On the Case:

When Tôzan held a memorial service for Ungan before his portrait, he mentioned the episode with the portrait. Ungan was the master of Tôzan Gohon Daishi. This all happened after Tôzan had inherited his master's dharma and had taken over the direction of another temple. It happened when they were performing a memorial service before a portrait of his master Ungan. At that time he mentioned a certain incident in the past between him and his master regarding that portrait. This story also appears in the *Record of Tôzan* (Tôzan-Roku) as well as in the work known as the *Gotô-Egen*, which is a collection of biographies of Zen masters and of Zen history. It also appears in Old Man Banshō's commentary to this particular koan. Tôzan Zenji had basically finished his practice under Ungan and wanted now to go on pilgrimage to meet illustrious Zen personages of his time to engage in further arduous practice. As he was about to take leave of his master, Tôzan said, "After your death, if someone asks me if I can describe your likeness, how shall I reply?" In other words, if someone should come and ask me if I have a likeness of my master whose dharma I have inherited, what should I say in reply?

Ungan thought for a moment and said, "Just this is it." He is saying that "just this" is his likeness. Evidently Tôzan did not completely understand at that time and he sank into

thought for a while. Then Ungan said, “Kaijari” (respectful address of a monk). “You are in charge of this great matter; you must be most thoroughgoing.” In other words, you must be most thoroughgoing about this matter of “just this.” Just a rough understanding will not do. Tôzan still did not completely understand even after hearing this. He then departed on pilgrimage (angya). While crossing a bridge over a river, he happened to see his own reflection in the water. It was then that he suddenly realized complete enlightenment. He composed a poem celebrating his realization. It is the famous *Poem on Crossing the Water* (kasui no ge).

Just don't seek from others, or you'll be far estranged from Self.

I now go on alone; everywhere I meet It:

It now is me; I now am not It.,

One must understand in this way to merge with thusness.

When he says “don't seek from others” he means we should find it in ourselves. There are people working on Mu who come to me in dokusan but are still looking for Mu outside themselves. You have to grasp the one who is looking. To say “you'll be far estranged from Self” means just that, if you are still looking outside yourself.

When he says “everywhere I meet It,” he means his true self. This experience then formed the basis of Tôzan Zenji's *Five Ranks of the Particular and the Essential* (henshō-goi). Seeing things from the perspective of that work, you could see “It” as meaning the essential (shōi), which is the denominator of the fraction I am always citing. To say “everywhere I meet It” means that everywhere is the complete manifestation of the essential (shōi).

“It now is me.” “It” means his true self. It is simultaneously the one seen in the water as well as the true self. He is saying that the true self is no other than he himself. This occurred to him as he saw his reflection in the water. This might be seen as the stage of *hen-chū-shō* (the real in the apparent or essential in the phenomenal) or *shō-chū-hen* (the apparent in the real, phenomenal in the essential), although it is more likely the former. He realizes that he himself is the essential when he says, “It now is me.” That means, this physical body here is no other than It.

But then he says, “I now am not It.” In other words, even It has disappeared. This could be seen as the world of “I alone honored under heaven and on earth” (*tenjō tenge yuiga dokuson*). In other words, it is the world of *hen-chū-shi* (the real in the apparent or essential in the phenomenal).

“One must understand in this way to merge with thusness.” This is a phrase uttered after satori. In other words, this is the world of “just this.” Each single thing must merge with this thusness, this “just this.” In terms of the *Five Ranks*, I would like to see this as the stage of *ken-chū-tō* (achieving the universal among the particular). This all might be difficult to understand for those who have not yet practiced with the *Five Ranks* and met me with them in the dokusan room. You can let my words go in one ear and out the other for now. Tôzan Gohon Daishi, who composed this verse at that time, had finally come to full enlightenment and was

able to clear away any lingering doubts or concepts. It was this story that the monk was referring to in today's koan.

A monk came forward and asked, "When Ungan said, 'Just this!' what did that mean?" Tōzan said, "At that time, I almost misunderstood my master's meaning." The monk is referring to the story that was recounted above in my teisho and he wants to know what Ungan really meant with his "just this!" Unmon tells him that he was just short of misunderstanding his master's meaning at that time.

The monk said, "I wonder whether or not Ungan really knew that it is." The monk is asking whether Ungan really knew that "there is essential nature." To say such a thing already becomes a concept and "dirties" essential nature when you speak in terms of true self or essential nature. But he does not use such names.

Tōzan said, "If he did not know that it is, how could he say like that? If he knew that it is, how did he dare say like that?" In other words, if Ungan had not realized that world, how could he have said "just this?" It was because he had realized it that he was able to say what he did. The second part means that, if he still knew that it is, (i.e., if he was still clinging to an idea of there being something like satori or being enlightened), how could he have said it like he did? So the world of "just this" means coming to great enlightenment and then completely forgetting, completely wiping away any trace of that enlightenment. It is only then that you can truly say, "just this" (tada kore kore). Then there is "thusness" or "suchness" (jap, nyo-nyo). When you stand there is only standing. When you sit there is only sitting. When you are sad there is only sad, with nothing else sticking to it. Recall the words to today's Instruction: "After all, what is the appearance of that One?" What is the appearance of the person who has completely grasped the matter? In response, Ungan Zenji is produced in the koan.

On the Verse:

"How could he say like that?" This is referring to Tōzan's reply to the monk's question in the koan: "If he did not know that it is, how could he say like that?"

In the fifth watch the cocks crow among the homes before dawn –

The fifth watch means about 2 o'clock in the morning. It is the time just before dawn. And then the roosters crow, "cock-a-doodle-doo!" The dawn has come. It is "knowing that there is It." "Knowing there is that" (nako aru koto wo shiru), as in the monk's question. This is expressing the aspect of the matter made clear. This is in reference to Tōzan's reply: "If he did not know that it is, how could he say like that?" This is what is being referred to in this second line of the Verse.

But then comes the next line:

"How did he dare say like that?" This is said in reference to Tōzan's second reply: "If he knew that it is, how did he dare say like that?" We can see "it" here as referring to satori

to make the matter easier to understand. In that case, it means: If he were to remain sticking to some idea of “satori” the whole time, how could he speak in terms of “just this” (tada kore kore)? This is then expressed in the ensuing line:

The thousand-year crane grows old with the pine tree in the clouds. The crane is a symbol of long life in Oriental tradition. A “pine tree in the clouds” means a pine tree growing as high as the clouds. This is expressive of a very old and big pine tree. And roosting at the top of that huge pine tree is a very old crane, which is growing old with the pine. Old Man Banshō adds a capping phrase to this line of the verse: *The moon sets in the west*. The moon means enlightenment. This is expressing the state of consciousness in which satori or enlightenment has been completely forgotten, has completely disappeared. In modern language we might use the Japanese term “bokekitta” (literally, gone completely senile) to express this, although of course not in the ordinary sense of the term. It expresses how all dregs of satori have been eliminated and the mellowness of old age has appeared. This is said in praise and appreciation of Ungan.

The jewel mirror is clear and bright,

It examines both essence (shō) and phenomena (hen). This is said in praise of Tōzan Daishi. The “jewel mirror” reflects everything. There is the expression “when a foreigner comes, a foreigner is reflected; when a native comes, a native is reflected.” And when it reflects, essence and phenomena are completely clear. Essence is completely clear and revealed; phenomena are completely clear and revealed. This aspect must be present. As in other areas of life, Zen dislikes abstraction. It must be most concrete. This is what is meant by the expression “the jewel mirror is clear and bright.” For example, someone practicing Mu might come to me and say, “everything is Mu.” And then I will say, “show me that everything.” Just to say “everything is MU” is just a concept. So they are unable to reply to my challenge because what they are saying is still just a concept. It must be like things reflected in the mirror, just as it is.

The jade loom operates back and forth,

It sees the completion amid essence and phenomena (kenchūtō). There are some commentaries on this case that see the “jade loom” as referring to an exquisitely fine instrument. I prefer to see it as a container in which a jewel is placed. This container in which a jewel is placed is moving back and forth very freely in all directions. What is this referring to? It is nothing other than our own mind. And it moves freely amid essence and phenomena. This is *kenchūtō*, where the true fact is completely revealed. This is “just this” (tada kore kore). It is “thusness” (nyo-nyo). At the outset you might talk in terms of *shō* (essential) and *hen* (phenomenal) with the idea that has a general intellectual understanding. But these must become one and be able to move or “roll” freely. That is the true fact. For example, when I explain things in terms of my fraction, I make a division into numerator and denominator for the sake of explanation. But the real fact is the fraction itself, with no division. Each and every thing is the fraction itself. This is known here as *kenchūtō*. It is not true that phenomenal (hen)

and essential (shô) exist separately for themselves. It is just expressed that way for the sake of explanation. To repeat, the true fact is the fraction itself. It is just standing, sitting, eating, drinking.

The wind of the School is superbly cruising, the regular footsteps continue forever. The “wind of the School” means the approach of Ungan and Tôzan, the spirit of their particular school of Zen. The Verse says that spirit has flourished greatly. The Soto School of Zen has continued on until this day, although I have my doubts about the present Soto School. The “regular footsteps” means its own unique rules. That has been transmitted in each step, most intimately and closely.

Father and son change and pass through; their fame and radiance prevail all over. The words “father and son” refer to Ungan and his successor Tôzan. To “change and pass through” is a reference to the spirit of their school, which is free and lacking any obstructions. Their fame and radiance prevail everywhere in that freely active spirit and activity of their school. The radiance of their virtue shines brightly and is most abundant. These are words of the highest praise. As I often mention, the *Book of Serenity* is closer to the Soto School, which is also true about the approach of its authors Wanshi Zenji and Banshō Rôjin. Be that as it may, these words of the Verse praise Ungan and Tôzan to the skies.