

CASE 11

Unmon's Two Sicknesses



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Instruction:

A person without a body suffers from an illness. A person without hands prepares the medicine. A person without a mouth eats food. The person who does not receive is peaceful and happy. Just say. How does one treat an incurable illness?

Case:

Great Master Unmon said, "There are two sicknesses that prevent the light from penetrating. One sickness is where everything is unclear, and something seems to hang before you. Therefore, the light does not penetrate. One sickness is where you have realized that everything is void, but still you feel you are in a mist. Therefore the light does not penetrate thoroughly."

"About the Dharma Kaya, there are also two sicknesses. First, if you reach the Dharma, but fall and remain there, and do not extinguish your own opinion about it, that is one sickness. Second, if you think it is wrong to give up efforts after enlightenment, and minutely examine your own consciousness, and find there is no scar, that is a sickness."

Verse:

The myriad appearances,

Leaving things as they are.

Even to achieve liberation where there are no directions is still to cloud
your eyes.

Whose strength is it to sweep the garden before the gate?

Hidden in people's hearts, it naturally creates feelings.

The boat is placed down in the country ford, glistening with autumn's emerald green water.

The oars enter the reed flowers shining on the snow brightly.

Catching a fish as beautiful as silk, the old fisherman takes it to market:

Dancing on the wind, a single leaf bobs along the wave tops.

On the Instruction:

Since I have spoken about Great Master Unmon on many occasions already, I'm sure most of you are familiar with him. He was the founding patriarch of the Unmon School of Zen. It is believed that there were originally five schools of Zen: the Rinzai School, the Unmon School, the Hōgen School, the Soto School and the Igyō School. All of their founders were outstanding persons, so that each of the schools has its own spirit based on the personality of the founder. The Unmon School also has its own spirit that is unique to that school. Unmon had an extremely clear Dharma eye and was at the same time a master of language, able to express the essence of Zen with a few choice words or pithy phrases. Although all the Zen schools have their own spirit, it was Unmon in particular who had this unique ability to express the essence of Zen with just a single word at times.

Unmon first practiced under Bokushū. Bokushū had inherited the dharma of Ōbaku Kiun Zenji and was a brother in the dharma to Rinzai Zenji. When Rinzai was still a disciple of Ōbaku, he did not go to dokusan for three years. Bokushū asked him one day why he did not come to dokusan. Rinzai replied that he would not know what to say if he went. Bokushū said, "In that case I will tell you. When you go to dokusan ask the question, 'What is the ultimate truth of Buddhism?'"

Rinzai did what he was told and posed this question when he went to dokusan with Bokushū. After many trials Rinzai finally came to great enlightenment. Bokushū was a very exacting and stern master. It was to this Bokushū that Unmon came. Prior to this, Unmon had been engaged in research on the Buddhist precepts but could not come to true satisfaction in spite of himself. He realized that he had to open up his mind's eye and therefore came to Bokushū. Upon practicing under Bokushū, because Bokushū was a very stern master, if you asked him a question he would say something to the effect of "you useless good-for-nothing," and slam the door to his cottage shut. Unmon went a second time and was treated the same way. On his third attempt, his leg was still inside the door when Bokushū slammed it shut, breaking his leg. Unmon screamed in pain and at that moment came to great enlightenment.

After that he went to Seppō and eventually inherited Seppō's dharma. In his later years he moved to Unmon Mountain and remained there for the rest of his life. This is how he received the name Unmon. His actual Zen name was Daiji-un Kyōshin Daishi. The name he received from the reigning emperor was Kōmyō Zenji. The Chinese character "kyō" in Kyōshin, a character in rare use, is the same as in my first name Kyōzō. The shin in Kyōshin means "truth" and the name Kyōshin means to "rectify the truth." A Japanese Zen master had the name Kyōdō Zenji with the same character Kyō as in my name. When I was still practicing under Asahina Sōgen Roshi in Engakuji Temple, he gave me the same Zen name Kyōdō which means to rectify the Way. We then talked about this and that, and I learned that there was a Zen master with the same name who had lived in the Tokugawa period in Japan. To rectify the truth can be understood as correcting the intellectual concepts in our head. This brings to mind the time after the war when I moved with my family back from Manchuria to Japan. At that time there were all sorts of books in the used bookstores. It appears that the temples were short on funds and were forced to sell many of their books to the used book stores. Or maybe persons who had these books in their homes were forced to sell them under the circumstances. I found the book *Unmon Kōroku* (Extensive Record of Unmon) in the Iseido bookstore. It was a fine work bound in the Japanese style. I wanted to buy it, but it cost 20,000 yen, which would be equal to 200,000 yen today. At that time I didn't have enough money to buy it. But I couldn't get that book out of my mind. When I went a year later it had already been sold. Let us now proceed to the Instruction.

A person without a body suffers from an illness. "No body" also assumes "no mind." To clearly realize this fact is satori. When a healthy person is thoroughly engrossed in doing something, he has no consciousness of his body. He has forgotten for the moment that he has a body. That is certainly a state of no consciousness but this is different from what we are speaking about here. When he stops his work and returns to himself, he has a body. But a true state of "no-mind" cannot be understood other than in an experience of enlightenment. The content is completely empty. It is this person of no mind and no body who suffers from an illness. In Japan there is the religious organization known as *Seichō No Ie* (literally, *House or Place of Growth*). Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi, the founder of that organization, often used to say that there is essentially no physical body, a very penetrating view of things. He could therefore also say that there is no illness. To say that there is no illness because there is no body is certainly true in terms of logic. But this line says that "the person with no body suffers from an illness." The statement "no physical body" shows that Taniguchi Sensei had undoubtedly and clearly realized this aspect of our true essence. The word *ninkū* means realizing that the essence of the subject is empty. *Hokkū* means that all phenomena, including

the body, are empty. Body and mind are both empty. But even though they are empty, there is still a body. Although there is a body, it is empty. In the *Heart Sutra* this is stated as “form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form.” We have to clearly realize that the content is completely empty, and also to realize that, even though there is no content, it is nonetheless here as phenomena. It appears in this way. We do not even need the phrase “is no other than.” It is enough to say, “form/emptiness, emptiness/form.” From the phenomenal aspect there is sickness. This illness develops according to the law of causality. If you eat too much you will have a stomachache, no matter how enlightened you are. If you drink too much you will have a hangover the next day. But the content is empty. It’s important to grasp this in direct experience.

A person without hands mixes the medicine. Students who have just experienced kensho are given various difficult koans from the *Miscellaneous Koans* to work on after that experience. Among them is the koan “How is it that the man of great strength cannot lift his legs?” “Man of great strength” can be understood in various ways. For example, we can take it to be a sumo wrestler. Then it is saying that even such a strong person cannot lift up his legs. Although there are many ways of looking at this koan, the true view is to realize the world where, even though you move your legs, there is no movement whatsoever. But some people believe that this koan is referring to a certain transitory state of absorption where the strong man is not aware of his legs. This is an error and is insufficient as an understanding of this koan. Since any psychological state is a mental state, we do not know when it will suddenly change. Instead, it is a matter of clearly grasping the truth. The world of emptiness is not a concept. It is not a feeling. It is not a sentiment. It is a true fact. The question is whether you have clearly realized this fact or not. If it is still on the level of a feeling or a state of mind, who knows what state of mind you will be in tomorrow? It might be a completely different one. Our surface consciousness is changing constantly. However, the world of “not a single thing“ does not move at all. To state things bluntly, unless you have clearly realized this world, there is no worth in your practicing Zen.

A person without a mouth eats food. You might recall the koan with Jōshū in which he asks us to say something without moving lips, tongue and throat. This is speaking about the same thing. Although you are speaking at length, from the standpoint of the essential world, there is no movement of tongue and lips whatsoever.

The person who does not receive is peaceful and happy. Receiving is the seed of suffering. That goes for money or for fame or for social prestige. When we receive these things they become the seed of suffering. Actually, however, this “not receiving” is not a case of receiving in the phenomenal world. For example, if we chase after money because we feel we

don't have enough, that will become the seed of suffering. Actually we don't need that money. This would be "not receiving" perhaps. That might be one form of peace. But true peace is found in clearly realizing that there is no substance to that receiving. This what is actually meant by the person who does not receive. This is true from the standpoint of the true world. So, in order to be happy you must at some time realize that the content of your self and the content of the objective world is completely empty. At the same time you see phenomena appear as they are. You realize the fact that the phenomenal world and the essential world are completely one. There is no other way to true happiness than to realize this fact.

Just say. How does one treat an incurable illness? What medicine or prescription can we prepare to cure such an illness? There are various illnesses that are possible for those practicing Zen. This is what Unmon is talking about in the Main Case. Since the title of the koan is *Unmon's Two Sicknesses* we might assume that there are two illnesses, but from times of old it has been understood as referring to three illnesses.

On the Case:

Great Master Unmon said, "There are two sicknesses that prevent the light from penetrating." This says that there are two illnesses. But in the second part of the koan Unmon mentions two other illnesses that occur even when the light is complete. This would make a total of four. Actually, however, if we ask what illness Unmon is talking about, it is the matter of remaining in the world of dualistic opposition. There have been several conjectures from times of old about the meaning of the light not penetrating. Shigetsu Zenji of Japan's Tokugawa Period, for example, says that the light not penetrating means the root of all illusion existing from all time. But if we assume it has that meaning, it makes the rest of the koan difficult to understand. If we assume that the light is relative wisdom, the wisdom that we can depict in our minds, it might be all right to assume that this is the root of illusion. But I prefer to see the light here as referring to the light of our true self, the wisdom of the dharma body. Thus, if we say that the light does not penetrate, it means in other words that the experience of satori is not yet complete. The light of the true self is not thoroughgoing. First of all, in addition to not penetrating the essence of the self, it does not penetrate the essence of the universe. As a result, two illnesses occur.

One sickness is where everything is unclear, and something seems to hang before you. Wherever and whenever, the light is cut off and it is completely dark. This is being in the world of dualistic opposition. "Something seems to hang before you." We can't help thinking that there is an objective world in dualistic opposition to us. The objective

world of dualistic opposition is the worst illness. This is the world of everyday common sense. We can't help feeling that there is an objective world in opposition to us. What is the next illness?

One sickness is where you have realized that everything is void, but still you feel you are in a mist. Therefore the light does not penetrate thoroughly. To realize that both the subjective and the objective world are completely empty is no easy matter. In the usual kensho process, you first realize that you yourself are empty. This is known in Japanese as ninkū or subject as empty. You also realize that the objective world is zero. This is known as hokkū or objective world as empty. But this is actually quite difficult to realize clearly. In this koan it is stated in the reverse manner. You first realize that the objective world is empty. If the satori experience is clear, this is easy enough to accept, but if not, it is just a feeling. You have not actually come to the point of clearly realizing that it is zero and has no substance. Interestingly enough, recent research in theoretical physics is slowly closing in on this fact of emptiness. If we pursue research on matter we come to the level of subatomic particles. Having come to this level we cannot describe them completely either in terms of wave or particle. Matter, in addition to having the properties of particles, simultaneously has the properties of waves. The things that we think are here such as light have the properties of light particles and the properties of waves. If it is a wave then it has no real substance. But where did that wave come from? If we continue to pursue it, we move from the world of form to the world of no-form. As I often say, the day will come when physicists will be able to prove the fact of "form is emptiness" with mathematical formulas. The leading-edge discoveries of theoretical physics have been reported on lately in the newspaper and I feel it is important to pay careful attention to those developments. In Zen Buddhism we pursue the content of the subject from the inside. Physicists pursue it from the objective world. In the end they will wind up in the same place. I truly believe that this reality will be proven scientifically some day. In theoretical physics brilliant persons, geniuses in their field, use mathematics to establish their proofs, a very time-consuming process. In Zen, I'm glad to say, you don't have to use your head. Indeed, it's better not to! In fact, it's more a matter of emptying yourself. This is a strange and wonderful world. This perfect and wondrous world is being closed in on from both sides, spiritual practice and science. This is how I feel about these developments. As the koan says, we have clearly realized that the objective world is void, but one still has a feeling that there is something. That could be the self, or oneness, in saying that the universe is one. The ordinary world of common sense is constructed on the foundation of duality. That two have now become one. We can't help feeling that there is this oneness. This is also a sickness. In Buddhism we also speak in terms of Virochana Pure and Clear or the Absolute

Three Treasures. These are expressions of oneness. In Christianity we would speak in terms of God, perhaps. As the koan says, we can't help feeling that there is that one thing. But where is Virochana, Pure and Clear? If we say "up high in the sky," people will automatically raise their eyes upward and have the feeling that it must be somewhere up above. Brigitte D'Ortschy told me that, in the Western tradition, there is the legend of the fall from paradise. This is firmly imprinted on the souls of people in the West. There is then some instinctive feeling of wanting to leave the earth and move upward to heaven. In ballet, for example, the dancers stand on their toes. This is an expression of this desire to go upward, although it is impossible. Another example is the church steeples rising upward. This is also an expression of the concept of wanting to move upward to heaven. This is because it is hard for people to rid themselves of the idea of a fall from grace or heaven. In the Lord's Prayer people pray, "Our Father, Who art in Heaven." The word heaven has the dual meaning of the sky and heaven in a religious sense. But Jesus Christ does not talk like that. He never told people to look upward to find heaven. Instead, he said, "The Kingdom of God is within you" or "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Because Zen is given to irony, if asked the same question, a Zen person might say, "Under the earth." But in the true world there is neither up nor down. To say, as in the koan, that one can't help feeling there is something, is an example of feeling that there is something like oneness. This, too, is because the light has not penetrated completely.

Then Unmon continues:

About the Dharma Kaya, there are also two sicknesses. At this stage we have clearly realized that the subjective world and the objective world are empty. This can also be a source of illness.

First, if you reach the Dharma, but fall and remain there, and do not extinguish your own opinion about it, that is one sickness. In other words, you remain attached to that world of satori. This is an attachment to the dharma, an attachment to the truth. There is still a self attached to its views and its experience. One is attached to one's own experience. This is known as dharma attachment. One cannot forget this attachment to the dharma. As a result, we fall and remain in that world of satori. The world of satori is the denominator in my fraction. To grasp the world of the denominator is true satori. But if we stick to that world of satori while forgetting that the world of the numerator is the true fact, that is an illness.

Then comes the next part:

Second, if you think it is wrong to give up efforts after enlightenment, and minutely examine your own consciousness, and find there is no scar, that is a sickness. Even after you have realized it completely, you continue to make efforts and

examine your realization very carefully and find no scar, no blemish. You then say that it is complete and lacking nothing. But this is also an illness. You are still sticking to that completeness and flawlessness. That, too, must be forgotten. This is very difficult. I wonder how many persons have actually advanced to this stage. Perhaps there was only one, if even that, throughout history. When I read Jōshū's *Song of the Twelve Hours of the Day* that I quoted from in the previous teisho, I feel keenly the truth of Dōgen Zenji's statement that Jōshū is an "old Buddha." After all, he rid himself of all delusion, coming to complete enlightenment and then throwing away that enlightenment, even forgetting that ridding himself of enlightenment, even forgetting that forgetting! It is the state expressed in the phrase: "The Buddhas of the Three Worlds do not know of THAT." As long as there is still something in your head, it is not yet the real thing. I would like you all to become like that. When I give a lecture like this, it might seem as if I have already arrived at that state, but that is not true. I am making every possible effort to become like that.

On the Verse:

The myriad appearances,

Leaving things as they are. The "myriad appearances" means everything in the phenomenal world. Mountains are high, rivers are long. Leaving things as they are. The tall person is tall dharma body. The short person is short dharma body. There is the saying: Saved in the longness of the crane's legs, in the shortness of the duck's legs. Even "saved" or "salvation" is superfluous. It is just: The crane's legs are long, the duck's legs are short. This is "leaving things as they are."

Even to achieve liberation where there are no directions is still to cloud your eyes. To "achieve liberation where there are no directions" means to realize satori and then to throw away that satori to arrive at the world of not a single thing. But, as the verse says, even that is to cloud the eyes. If there is even a bit of a concept remaining about having been liberated, this is clouding the eyes. There is the phrase: "Even gold dust is a sickness of the eyes." Because it is gold it is precious, but if it enters your eyes it can cause illness. The world of emptiness is a world most people know nothing about. To arrive at a realization of that world is in itself no small feat. But if we become attached to that world, that will become an illness.

Who has the strength to sweep the garden before the gate? You can think of the garden as being your own mind. Sweeping the garden is sweeping the garden of your mind, ridding yourself of concepts and attachments one by one in fervent practice. Where do we find the strength to continue with that cleaning? It is not Buddha's strength or God's

strength. It comes from within you. How far upward can we raise ourselves? This is the power of self-reflection in which you minutely examine your own state of consciousness. There is the phrase. “Even the blue sky must receive a blow,” which is written on the *kyōsaku* on the altar. As long as we remain attached to the world of emptiness, it is not yet the real thing. The only power you have is the power that arises from your essential nature.

It is hidden in people’s hearts and naturally creates feelings. The “it” is something still remaining that is hidden in the thin membrane of the heart, and which “naturally creates feelings.” Although we may not plan to do so, we can’t help feeling that way. This is sung of in the next two lines of the verse.

The boat is laid down in the country ford, glistening with autumn’s emerald green water. We have already seen the phrase, “to achieve liberation where there are no directions.” This is the world of not a single thing, the world of “just this.” It is the world of “dharma body completely equal.” It is the world of “the ten-thousand things, one suchness.” You can think of it as what is expressed in these two lines.

A lonely river ford in autumn in the countryside. The water is beautiful, just like melted emeralds. To lay a boat down there means that you yourself are stuck there. You are remaining in that state of consciousness, unable to extricate yourself.

The oars enter the reed flowers shining on the snow brightly. There are the white reed flowers and the snow. White and white are mutually reflecting each other in brightness with not a single shadow. The oar is inserted there. This is the same as laying the boat down in the previous line.

It is important to transcend this state of consciousness. The state in which they have been transcended is expressed in the next lines of the verse:

Catching a fish as beautiful as silk, the old fisherman takes it to the market: Dancing on the wind, a single leaf travels along the wave tops. A fish glistening in the sun is caught. We could think of it as a fine fish for eating such as sea bream or a porgy. The old fisherman catches it on his line and puts it over his shoulder and sets off in his boat to the town to sell the fish.

The “single leaf” is the little boat that he is riding in to go and sell the fish. He lets the wind take his boat where it will. What does selling the fish refer to? It means when you have become truly happy. And when you are happy and the activity of wanting to extend that happiness has yet to appear, it is not yet the real thing. The two previous lines express an august state of consciousness, although you are still enjoying it by yourself. As long as it is only enjoying it on your own, it is of no use. This is the individualism of the religious person.

At any rate, even the poorest place is all right. It's important to sell the fish that you caught there. "Who will buy my fish?" he seems to be singing. When you savor these lines, they exude a lot of flavor.