

CASE 62

Beiko's "Enlightenment"



By Yamada Kōun

Instruction:

Bodhidharma's primary truth: Emperor Bu's head is bewildered;
Vimalakirti's Dharma gate of Not-Two: Manjusri's speech is too much.
Is there anyone who goes into thorough realization or not?

Case:

Beiko had a monk ask Kyōzan, "Do people these days need enlightenment or not?" Kyōzan said, "It is not that there is no enlightenment. Yet how can it be helped that it falls into the secondary class?"

The monk went back to Beiko and told him about it. Beiko deeply agreed.

Verse:

The secondary class distinguishes enlightenment, shattering delusion:
Smoothly your hands should throw away all nets and traps.
If your achievements are not exhausted, they turn out to be all thumbs.
You can hardly know Wisdom, since you cannot bite your own navel.
The rabbit is old¹, with the autumn dew weeping on the icy disk;
The birds are cold, while the jade trees are chilled in the dawn wind.
With his remark, Great Kyōzan distinguishes real and false;
Without any scars at all – how precious is the white jade!

On the Instruction:

Today is Easter, a most auspicious feast for Christians, I am told. I find it most interesting that I am delivering a teisho on this koan on this particular day, since this koan concerns the matter of satori. There are many Christians, especially Catholics, practicing at my zendo. This gives me an opportunity to reflect on many aspects of Christianity. My Christian students have shown me passages in the Bible that have a connection with Zen, so that my interest in Christianity has been growing gradually. I am a complete outsider concerning

¹ I.e., it is full moon.

Roman Catholic theology but have students who are experts in that field. Fr. René Neudiger, who was practicing here at our zendo, is evidently quite an authority. During our philosophy class in my days as a student at the First Higher School (pre-war Japanese school system), I remember hearing a lecture providing a profile on the famous Catholic theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. As many of you know, Thomas Aquinas developed an extremely minute philosophy that is evidently quite difficult to understand. At the time I was thinking of making my way slowly through his works. In more recent times, this Thomistic theology has experienced quite a development. I imagine critical views are also raised from the standpoint of Western philosophy. But I have yet to hear a critical appraisal of this Thomistic theology from a Buddhist standpoint and don't imagine there have been such attempts. It would be interesting to attempt such a critique but I must realize that I don't have the time for such things. I feel it would be especially interesting to illuminate Thomistic theology from the standpoint of the Zen satori experience. That might then make it possible for the first time to grasp a connecting point between Christianity and Buddhism, I feel. Today being Easter, some students brought me colored eggs in honor of the occasion. In that sense, to repeat, it's interesting that today's case deals with this matter of satori.

Bodhidharma's primary truth: Emperor Bu's head is bewildered; The matters that this line refers to appear originally in Case 1 of the *Blue Cliff Record*. Bodhidharma, upon arriving in China from India, traveled first to the kingdom of Liang (Japanese: Ryō), which was at that time evidently a flourishing nation. Bodhidharma traveled there on the invitation of its ruler, the Emperor Wu. The Emperor's first question was: "What is the highest meaning of the holy reality?"

The "holy reality," if we describe Buddhism in logical terms, is one of three categories: the profane reality (zokutei), the true reality (shintei) and the holy reality (shōtei). The profane reality means the reality of the ordinary world. In everyday language it means the truth of the phenomenal world. The true reality is the truth of the world of satori. The holy reality is that which transcends distinctions of profane reality and true reality. It is called the holy reality because it is supreme and unsurpassed. This is the import of the Emperor's question. What does Bodhidharma say in response?

Bodhidharma replied, "Clear and void, no holiness."

That means it is empty, like the autumn sky without a speck of cloud obstructing the view. There is no profane and no true and no holy. What a wonderful answer!

But the Emperor Wu could not understand. The words in today's Introduction "Emperor Bu's head is bewildered," indicate how the Emperor was at a loss on hearing this statement of Bodhidharma's. The Emperor had been assuming that the person seated in front of him was all-powerful. But here is Bodhidharma denying that and saying that there is not a speck of holiness.

The emperor said, "Who are you in front of me?"

He had been assuming that Bodhidharma was a holy master and wanted now to know

who he was.

Bodhidharma said, "I don't know."

This is really how it is. We may assume we know who we are. Because I have received the name Kyôzô Yamada, I might assume that there is someone named Kyôzô Yamada. But when I truly grasp my true self, it is not something that I can designate with a name. Who am I? I don't know. That's really how it is. That's the first point. We cannot grasp with words who we really are.

Vimalakirti's Dharma gate of Not-Two: Manjusri's speech is too much. This matter of the Dharma gate of Not-Two appears as Case 84 of the *Blue Cliff Record* and as Case 48 of the *Book of Equanimity*. Not-two means oneness. The Dharma gate of Not-Two means entering the way of oneness. There are some historians who doubt whether Vimalakirti, a layman, actually lived. He was evidently originally a very wealthy man. At any rate, he happened to be ill. It is said that, based on the appraisals of Shakyamuni Buddha's outstanding disciples, Vimalakirti's enlightenment experience was on the same level as that of the Buddha. Such a thing is possible, I believe. At any rate, Shakyamuni Buddha expressed the greatest respect for Vimalakirti. He then told his disciples to pay a sick call on the ailing Vimalakirti, but everyone refused, saying they were not worthy to do such a thing. Upon being questioned by the Buddha, it turned out that, in the past, they had all been roundly defeated by Vimalakirti. Finally the Buddha turned to the Bodhisattva Manjusri, the embodiment of enlightened wisdom and famous as the teacher of the seven Buddhas. Tradition has it that there were seven Buddhas prior to Shakyamuni Buddha. Of course there were actually much more, but the expression "seven Buddhas" has become standard. Perhaps because of that fact, Manjusri felt confident enough to pay a visit on Vimalakirti. Accompanied by a great entourage he went to pay a sick call on Vimalakirti. This is when the mondo (question and answer) commences and the discussion about the Dharma gate of Not-Two. Everyone present expressed his opinion in succession about the matter of the Dharma gate of Not-Two. Finally it was time for Manjusri to speak.

Manjusri said, "I see it like this: in all phenomena, there are neither words nor explanations, neither presentations nor knowledge; it is beyond all questions and answers. That is what I understand with 'to enter the Dharma-gate of Not-Two.'"

Then Manjusri wanted to know what Vimalakirti would say.

Then Manjusri asked Vimalakirti, "All of us have finished giving our explanations. Now you should give your explanation. What does it mean that the Bodhisattva enters the Dharma-gate of Not-Two?"

In the version of the koan appearing in the *Book of Equanimity* it says that "Vimalakirti remained silent." (*yuima mokunen tari*).

Entering not-two means the world of oneness. Manjusri has exhausted his wisdom in explaining it, but that is already saying too much. This is what this line of today's Instruction is referring to. He has fallen into speaking; he's blurted it out. What he said is all very fine, but in

doing so he has left a scratch on the true fact. In contrast, Vimalakirti's sitting still is truly wonderful. Other records refer to Vimalakirti's "thunderous silence."

Is there anyone who goes into thorough realization or not? In other words, how can we directly experience the world of satori, how can we enter that world. Is there such an entryway? We are now urged to examine closely the Main Case.

On the Case:

Beiko had a monk ask Kyōzan, "Do people these days need enlightenment or not?" We do not have that many clear records concerning the master Beiko. Bei (Chinese pronunciation: Mi), which is the character for "rice," was his family name, like Ryū (Liu or Lau) was the family name of Ryū Tetsuma. He was evidently the seventh child in his family and was thus known as Bei Shichirō or "Bei the Seventh Son." Because he sported a luxuriant beard, he was also known as Beiko, which means "Bei the Foreigner." Other names were "Beard of the Bei Family" or "Bei Oshō." Although there are many stories concerning him, it is said that he inherited the dharma of Isan. Some versions see him as the older dharma brother of Kyōzan and others as Kyōzan's younger brother in dharma, although it's not certain which version is true. It seems to be a fact, however, that he inherited Isan's dharma. Kyōzan also appears in today's koan.

The monk in today's koan, after various dharma exchanges with Beiko, was told to go to Kyōzan. Regarding the words "people these days," Yasutani Roshi says that it is not necessary to see this as referring simply to the people of those times. The question could be alternately posed: Do people need enlightenment or not? Dōgen Zenji, in his commentary on this koan as it appears in the *Shōbōgenzō*, praises the phrasing of this question. The original Chinese text includes the expression "karu," which Dōgen Zenji sees as a very interesting character to use. There are two possible ways of interpreting this question. The first is: Is there really such a thing as satori? The second is: Is satori necessary? Thus, a possible interpretation of the question is as follows: In order to achieve true peace of mind, is it necessary to borrow such a means as satori? Is the experience of satori necessary? Another possible translation is as follows: Is there really such a thing as satori among people? The word "karu" in the original has a very positive meaning in the sense of having, but a negative meaning in the sense of not having. In a word, it is having in not-having, and vice versa. You might consider such a statement strange. Consider the statement, "all beings by nature are Buddha." That means they are intrinsically enlightened. But if you then assume that it is not necessary to do anything, that is mistaken. There is definitely the matter of realizing it experientially and thus confirming it as a fact for yourself. The word "karu" in the original text is used in the sense of confirming one more time for yourself what has been true from the very beginning. This is the reason for saying "although there is there isn't, although there isn't there is." To repeat, it is said in the sense of: Is it necessary for human beings to "draw upon" or "borrow" the means of satori?

Kyôzan said, "It is not that there is no enlightenment. Yet how can it be helped that it falls into the secondary class?" When we examine this answer, one has the feeling that interpreting the question as "is there such a thing as satori?" is the easiest to understand. I imagine that is all right. When this discussion comes up, there are people who have been practicing zazen for quite some time already who ask whether there is such a thing as satori. To be frank, I also asked myself that question in the past. To ask such a question is proof that you have not experienced it. A more serious question for me is: How many people have truly experienced satori? Kyôzan says, "It is not that there is no enlightenment." In positive terms, he is saying that there is mostly certainly such a thing as enlightenment. In his teisho on this case, Yasutani Roshi says that people whose dharma eye is not clear tend to emphasize this interpretation of "not saying that there is no enlightenment." But precisely such an interpretation shows a lack of clarity on the matter. He says it is better to see these words of Kyôzan as clearly affirming that there is satori. And yet: How can it be helped that it falls into the secondary class? This could be seen as the main point in this koan. If you look at Yasutani Roshi's teisho on this koan, he says that even though we realize satori, concepts remain, which are known as the "form of satori" (gosô). That means that traces of satori are remaining. This is what is meant by "falling into the secondary class." You remain sticking to that experience of satori. There are such concepts remaining. That is how Yasutani Roshi sees it. That is perfectly fine as an interpretation, but I would like to view it on a slightly deeper level. Up to now, traces of satori have been remaining, which means ideas of having realized satori. That is certainly the case. I often give the example of someone in a room that is shut in on all four sides, so that he does not know of the existence of a world outside that room. This is our phenomenal world. But he reads various books or the sutras and comes to realize that there is a world outside the world in that room. He then begins practice to confirm that for himself. This would be the case of working on a koan in Zen practice, such as the koan Mu. The koan Mu can be seen as a kind of drill to bore through the wall made of pitch-black glass. Although he had not been aware of a world outside the room up to then, if he succeeds in creating even a pinhole he can determine beyond a doubt that there is such a world. Such an experience is usually known as kensho. He can then say, "Buddhas and patriarchs have not deceived me!" He has confirmed for himself what Buddha and Bodhidharma have been maintaining. He then continues his practice, which is a matter of widening that hole as he works on one koan after another. At the same time, the blackness of the glass gradually diminishes as the glass becomes clearer. As he continues his practice, the brightness of the glass increases until it becomes completely transparent and eventually disappears altogether. This is known as *daigo tettei* or complete enlightenment. Up to that point, no matter how clear the kensho experience was, it was still like looking through a pane of glass. But now the glass has disappeared completely. But even that is not enough. You have to realize that the glass never existed and that you had merely been dreaming a dream of black glass. This is also how Yasutani Roshi expresses it. Even though we speak in terms of the same experience of satori,

there are many gradations when it comes to the clarity and intensity of that experience. The person who has realized that there has never been any glass is described in the Zen phrase “returning home and sitting in peace” (*kika-onza*). It is like returning to your own home and sitting down comfortably in your chair. There is also the expression *moto no mokuami*, which in Zen terms means returning to your original, unadorned self. When you reach that stage, even satori disappears, in the sense that there is no consciousness of being enlightened. There is no difficult logic-chopping remaining. When you stand, there is just standing. When you sit, there is just sitting. The same goes for experiences such as tasting delicious food or seeing a pretty girl. You might ask if there has ever been such a person who has reached such a stage, and I can assert that there have been such persons. The other day I spoke about Jōshū and his *Songs of the Twelve Hours*. When you read those poems, you understand well that here is a person who has rid himself of all traces of enlightenment and returned to his original unadorned self. As for Kyōzan’s statement about falling into a second level, up to now I have considered this as meaning that there are still concepts mixed in when it comes to the stage of satori and have understood him as asking, “What can be done about such a state of affairs?” Interestingly enough, Dōgen Zenji takes up this koan in his *Shōbōgenzō*. This is found in the *Great Enlightenment* (Daigo) chapter of that work. Interested persons are advised to read his teisho on that koan. To sum it up briefly, Dōgen Zenji says that, although we are intrinsically enlightened, there is not a single person who is aware of that from birth. Thus, we must by all means practice. Why? Because we are deluded from birth, we must break through that illusion in enlightenment. Then the satori itself becomes delusion. This is what is meant by falling into the second level, which can’t be helped. There is the expression: In essence true dharma nature and originally a body of self nature (*honrai honposshō tennen jishōshin*). All patriarchs practiced to make clear that world and thus gain great peace of mind. But: how can it be helped that it falls into the secondary class? To be sure, there is satori. But saying that there is satori is already falling into the secondary class. That’s because we are thus recognizing illusion. But from the standpoint of the essential world, there is nothing at all. From the standpoint of the phenomenal world there is clearly illusion. What are we to do? This is how Dōgen Zenji views Kyōzan’s question in his commentary to this case in the *Shōbōgenzō*. Up to now I had been seeing this statement of Kyōzan’s as saying that we can’t help entering into concepts and thoughts, that it is very difficult for us to come to true purity, lacking in such concepts. But Dōgen Zenji takes another tack, presenting a problem of how to understand this. He states unequivocally that even the second level is satori. This is truly wonderful. He is presenting a sharp affirmation toward this problem, whether we are talking about a second level or a thousandth level. I feel this is truly the case, but also feel that it is quite difficult to come to that level. As I mentioned above, although this is our true essence, the Buddhas of the three worlds and the patriarchs all summoned up the spirit to practice and to realize the supreme way, thus achieving bodhi wisdom and entering nirvana. Dōgen says that the matters of practice and realization, in which the Buddhas of the three worlds summon up a spirit and

practice, are also satori. This is the natural mind. That is most certainly the case. I hope you will have a chance to read Dōgen Zenji's wonderful teisho on this case as found in the *Great Enlightenment* chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

On the Verse:

The secondary class distinguishes enlightenment, shattering delusion: The "secondary class" means making a distinction between illusion and satori, although it is intrinsically the original dharma nature. Why is that done? It is done to shatter delusion.

Smoothly your hands should throw away all nets and traps. That means releasing your hold on everything and throwing away all external means. It could also mean divesting yourself of all concepts. You should not cling to such concepts and ideas. Nets and traps are used here figuratively to mean all external means. You are still clinging to ideas of grasping the truth and are told to throw such ideas away. Otherwise you will remain unable to grasp the truth.

If your achievements are not exhausted, they turn out to be all thumbs. This means that, no matter how hard you practice, you can still make further progress along the way, there is still room for practice. To say that it will be "all thumbs" means that it will be for naught. Unless you grasp the real thing, it is not enough. These words translated here as "all thumbs" originally mean excess skin appearing between the big toe and the next toe on your foot. As a result it appears as if there are only four toes instead of five because the big toe and neighboring toe appear to have grown together. There is also an interpretation saying it means a case where one appears to have six fingers instead of five. At any rate, it refers to something that is unnecessary. You make valiant efforts with all your might and main, but if you do not reach the true place, it is as if in vain. What sort of wasted effort is this? Here it speaks in terms of excess skin on the toes, but I have the feeling it could mean something going to your head so that your "nose" gets longer, in the sense of being proud of our enlightenment. If you have truly exhausted all concepts, even those of being enlightened, then no excess skin will be attached. It is because you have not yet returned completely to your true homeland that you turn out to be all thumbs, in the sense of concepts remaining. If you make unnecessary statements and explanations about Zen, so that excess skin attaches, we get the following: You can hardly know Wisdom, since you cannot bite your own navel. This means you cannot know true wisdom. You have to come to the point of being able to say, "I don't know." This cannot be known with ordinary human knowledge. It is a great error to believe we can know everything with our knowledge and ordinary wisdom. It is like trying to bite your own navel. It is not possible. This means that we will regret it sorely.

The rabbit is old, with the autumn dew weeping on the icy disk; This line sings the state of consciousness of a person who has reached the level of satori, the ultimate world of one color (kōjō-issiki). In Oriental tradition, a rabbit lives on the moon pounding mochi rice. This line describes how the small new moon gradually becomes the full moon. It means the full

moon of autumn. The “icy disk” means the perfectly clear moon of an autumn night, shining brightly, with the autumn dew “weeping” on it, in the sense of it being so clear and bright. Here there are no human passions, as this is the ultimate pinnacle of satori. All egoistic feelings have disappeared, as have feelings of wanting to do this or that. The next line is saying basically the same thing.

The birds are cold, while the jade trees are chilled in the dawn wind. On Mt. Kunlun are located jade trees, in the sense of producing berries that look like jewels. We can also view it more simply as icicles on the trees, glistening brightly. The birds in those icy trees appear to be cold and an icy dawn wind is blowing. You might know the koan about the old woman burning down the hermitage, in which the hermit says: “An old tree grows on a cold rock in winter, nowhere is there any warmth.” Such a perfectly clear state of consciousness, lacking any human warmth, might seem to be good, but that cannot be the final goal. That comes in the next line.

With his remark, Great Kyôzan distinguishes real and false;

Without any scars at all – how precious is the white jade! In reply to the monk’s question about satori, Kyôzan said, “It is not that there is no enlightenment. Yet how can it be helped that it falls into the secondary class?” This is compared to white jade, lacking a single scratch. This line about the white jade is pointing to our own true self. This is the true self that Kyôzan has grasped.

The preceding lines are describing a condition of being at the top of a hundred foot pole. But you have to take a step from that pole. It is only when we reach the state of consciousness of Kyôzan that this is realized. In that state of consciousness there is not a single scratch or blemish. It is a state of consciousness like purest jade. I am unable to describe this sufficiently, but I feel it is closing in on the true essence of Zen. I would like you all to appreciate this fully and also hope you will give Dôgen Zenji’s *Great Enlightenment* chapter in the *Shôbôgenzô* a careful perusal, although it’s quite difficult to truly grasp.