

Whispers in the World, Footprints in the Desert

205 Classic Chinese Zen Koans with Translation and Commentary



Antón Bousquet

The seed of the Zen tradition was planted in Ancient China by the Indian Buddhist monk Bodhidharma, and then slowly spread throughout the whole of East Asia, before reaching the shores of every continent, inspiring countless people, and offering them a new outlook on themselves and their existence. Taking distance from the scriptures and dogmas that represent the pillars of major religions, including Buddhism itself, this tradition replaces faith with doubt, showing man the weaknesses of the foundations of the world he inhabits, the set of things surrounding him, and the heaps of concepts through which he perceives the truth of nature. This world may indeed conceal as much as it reveals. It may enslave as much as it can liberate. This is why the Zen tradition has conceived and preserved various means of guiding the inhabitants of this world toward liberation from its yoke, so that they would perceive the truth found beyond all words and concepts, beyond the walls formed by the things of the world. What is known as “koans,” or “public cases,” represent examples of such guidance.

Koans are short dialogues, statements, or stories that aim at shaking their audience to their core, causing its members to doubt words, to doubt the world in which they are found, and to doubt themselves, a prelude to a form of enlightenment, leading one to see the truth of all things. The present book presents the original text of the koans found in three major collections, the Gateless Barrier, the Blue Cliff Record, and the Book of Serenity, accompanied by Japanese and English translations, and a commentary on each case, simply meant to stimulate the imagination of the reader rather than to explain or provide answers to them. This book represents a doorway to the original text, inviting the reader to plunge himself into this rich tradition and let himself be transformed by these often puzzling texts.

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Antón Bousquet is an independent researcher specialized in the philosophy of language, the philosophy of religion, and comparative cultural studies. He holds a Master's degree in Linguistics from the University of Grenoble III in France and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Intercultural Studies from Fugen Catholic University in Taiwan. A former teacher of French as a foreign language, he has worked in different parts of Europe, the Middle-East, and Asia.

Printed by:



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205 Classic Chinese Zen Koans with Translation
and Commentary

Antón Bousquet

2024

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ISBN: 9798339691211 (Paperback)

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Abbreviations

CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (www.cbeta.org).
Ch	Chapter.
CTEXT	Chinese Text Project (ctext.org).
TBA	Translation by the author.
S	Simplified Chinese character.

Part I

Introduction

The history of mankind is often written as a long succession of struggles for power, land, riches, or the advancement of knowledge. The march of history is seen as almost always going forward, with man patiently furthering his mastery over nature, extending the reach of his rule over the entire tree of life formed by all the creatures roaming the seas, walking the earth, or flying through the sky. We now live an increasingly comfortable life, enjoying the fruits of the strenuous labor of dozens of generations that have transformed the existence of our kind, from primitive hunter-gatherers sheltered in caves carved by the rains and the tremors of the earth to elegantly clothed men proud of their rich heritage, using an extremely vast and rich palette of words to express all the content of our hearts, and some even freeing themselves from the smothering embrace of our planet, which keeps most things close to its rocky skin, to freely wander through the unfathomable depths of the cosmos, in search for a new world, seeking to sow the seeds of new trees of life in the confines of our universe. The march has indeed been long, and the progress undeniable, but this progress by the whole formed by mankind nonetheless does not equally concern all facets of man's existence. The whole of mankind may now be more resilient to the deadly whims of nature, that is, the rage of the earth, the attacks of other branches of life, or the fury of the sky, but is the heart of the men of the present day more at peace or satisfied than the one of our distant ancestors? What is the meaning and goal of this great march of history? When, one day, all mysteries of nature have been uncovered, and our descendants are free from the exhausting need to strive for their survival, what will they do then? One of the key peculiarities that differentiate man from other branches of life is his capacity to ask such a question, pondering the destiny of life itself, beyond the mere struggle to extend his days on earth and father an offspring.

The cave-dwellers who lived before the rise of the first civilization certainly already reflected on the question of the meaning of their existence, in the same manner as the men who stepped on the face of the moon while beholding our planet as a distant blue dot in the depths of space. The progress of man regarding this crucial question is nonetheless far less obvious than concerning technology, the earthly objects that surround us at all times. Studying the ancient traditions created by men who devoted the entirety of their existence to the liberation of the mind from the

anguish and frustrations tied to their earthly and worldly life, no matter whether it comes from the East or the West, from kings or beggars, from illiterate barbarians or learned children of ancient civilizations, one is bound to be struck by the relevance of their wisdom for the man of the present era. The vast majority of our neighbors and brethren, including ourselves, are indeed mere infants compared to many of the wise men of yore. Man now focuses his attention on what shines, the technological gadgets that occupy his mind, like a noisy and blinking toy amuses a babe in its crib, satisfied by the comfort they provide, leaving no time for him to consider the role they play in his existence or the meaning of his days on earth. The spiritual march of mankind is largely at a standstill, but fortunately, the earth still bears the traces of the footsteps of the ancient ones, and we only have to look down to learn from them.

Among the numerous traditions of the world that are worthy to be investigated and emulated by those seeking to suck the marrow out of life, to unearth and appropriate the most profound nature of our being, the so-called Zen tradition (禪 [chán] in Chinese, 禅 [zen] in Japanese) particularly stands out by the manner it offers mankind a spiritual path, a complete way of life, one that relies neither on any form of scriptures, holy or not, nor requires believing in a set of dogmas. It does not demand that one follow any authority, nor blind obedience to teachers. It is not a religion, nor a mere philosophy to be studied and learned. It rather is a path of liberation from the yoke of the delusions afflicting the men of the world, but this liberation does not represent an escape from the world or from one's earthly flesh. On the contrary, it points out the true face of man, revealing his own nature, as a creature made of earth, living inside a world built of innumerable things created by his mind from the oneness of nature, ultimately resting upon no-thing-ness, what being is beyond the frontiers of our world of made of countless things, the desert where there is not a single thing but where being shines in all its truth, visible when the mind ceases to arbitrarily cut out the oneness of nature into things. A doorway to this tradition, an entry point found in the world built with words and letters to lead men beyond its walls of things and into the great desert, can be found in the words of the Indian monk Bodhidharma, considered to have planted the first seed of the Zen tradition in China, which then slowly grew and

spread to neighboring empires, and finally reached the shores of the West during the last century:

Not depending on words and letters,

不立文字 [bù lì wén zì]

A special transmission outside the scriptures,

教外別傳 [jiào wài bié chuán]

Pointing directly to man' s mind,

直指人心 [zhí zhǐ rén xīn]

Seeing into one' s nature and attaining Buddhahood.

見性成佛 [jiàn xìng chéng fó]¹

This tradition, whose name is derived from a Sanskrit word designating contemplation or meditation (dhyāna ध्यान), is remarkable because of its simplicity, and the fact that it not merely refrains from exalting scriptures and dogmas, it rather encourages one to sow the seeds of doubt in the entire earth, in every part of the world. It is not a spiritual movement or a religion of the world. It is a practice of undermining the rigid foundations of our world, of shattering the frames of our mind, including those of the very religious tradition out of which it arose, Buddhism, so that we would realize that the horizon of our world is not the extent of all that is. A world is not an objective vision of the truth of the earth and the skies, but rather a lens through which we behold the incomprehensible whole of nature, cutting this unicity into a constellation of individual things that can be grasped by our feeble minds, allowing us to manipulate them. These things are nonetheless so familiar and so omnipresent that man has forgotten the fact that they are mere representations. He has grown oblivious to the true nature of all that *is* : the fact that there is no-thing outside of the frontiers of his world, not implying that the world is made of illusions or that the sky is empty, but rather meaning that beyond the limits of man' s world, there is only the gigantic, seamless whirlwind formed by the heavens, without any part standing out of the whole, without any instant distinguished from another, only

¹This sentence, often considered to represent the essence of Zen, is found in the “Essay concerning awakening” (悟性論 [wù xìng lùn]), attributed to Bodhidharma.

an unfathomable totality, including man himself, who is thus also no-thing-ness itself. When one keeps this true nature in the depths of his heart at all times, he will be able to live a life pervaded by the truth of being, one with the earth, life, the world, and the skies. Seeing the worries and desires afflicting men for what they are, no-thing, they pass right through him, without him taking hold of them, and thus rendering them powerless over him.

One who has seen what lies beyond the great citadel made of the innumerable things of the world nonetheless remembers where he comes from, his previous condition, as a slumbering prisoner of its walls, and he thus naturally feels his feet guided toward his brethren who are still slaves to these things, afflicted by the sickness of the man-made city. He has transcended the barriers of language and seen the truth that cannot be put into words, and he thus tries to share his vision with others. The ineffability of this truth precludes its teaching, but fortunately, there is another way. No-thing-ness, the great desert beyond the walls of things, cannot be brought inside the world, but one may guide other men to its threshold, pointing out the way to go, whispering between its walls, letting his voice be faintly heard by those calm enough to pay attention to it, a voice calling them out to discover the desert found beyond the walls, inside the walls, and within themselves. He may also directly point out the cracks in the rampart of the citadel of things, or expose the weakness of its foundations, leading the witness to realize that there is something beyond it, and something upon which it was built, something that preceded it. His work is to bring man's attention to the essence that lies beyond the representation, and this is true concerning the world, that is, the sum of all things and concepts created by the mind, but also concerning the earth, the self, the skies, and no-thing-ness itself. He unveils ways to show what is hidden by the mask of our self, our true face, and he discovers paths to show the sand that is found under the paved streets of the citadel of things, to show that the desert encompasses everything that is. His finger is raised upward and points out to the immensity of the skies, and even though many will still only watch the finger rather than what it points toward, this does not concern him, as he does what he is meant to do. Among the various means of similar guidance that arose from the Zen tradition, we find what is commonly known in English as "koans," the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese

word “gōng àn” (公案) meaning “public case.”

The concept of “public case” finds its roots in legal terminology, implying that it is a matter that is to be the subject of particular scrutiny, in an open manner, without secrecy, with every one of its aspects visible by all those willing to pay attention to it. Concretely, such public cases represent peculiar milestones for the man walking on the path, pieces of man’s world in the form of short dialogues, quotes, or statements that are meant to be pondered and become the source of a revelation, rendering the weaknesses and falsehood of the world manifest, impossible to ignore any longer, and ultimately becoming doorways leading man to peer at the no-thing-ness found beyond it. These cases are often accounts of peculiar encounters, pictures of instants of clarity taken from the daily lives of men devoted to the uncovering of their true nature, like the brief appearance of a beam of sunlight piercing through the clouds and illuminating the earth, inscribed on paper so that they may become beacons for those walking the same path. They escape definition because they are meant to show the deceitful nature of all the things of the world, especially words and letters. If one thinks that he understands a public case, or even that he understands the very concept of “public case,” he shows that he strays from the path. Man thinks that his mastery over words implies understanding and control over what they represent, but this is a mere delusion caused by their excessive familiarity with them, by the fact that man is plunged into a sea of things and words since his birth, and has never known anything else. Where there is certainty, the public case sows doubt. Where there is confidence, it brings perplexity. Where there is order, it brings chaos, thereby keeping man on his toes, always on the move, showing him that his world is a fleeting image and that the only thing that is absolutely true is no-thing-ness itself.

Public cases are therefore mere opportunities, rather than teachings. If one believes that there is any answer to them, he is mistaken. This is because answers exist only within the confines of the world of things, and these cases are meant to lead the one pondering them beyond its frontiers, where there are neither words nor things nor understanding nor answers. They recount the subtle ways masters played with their disciples, but they also often play with the reader, the one facing the pages, forcing him to

encounter something strange, to doubt himself, to doubt his understanding of the case, and even doubt the reason explaining its very presence among others cases collected as a book. The mere selection of a case indeed already speaks volumes about it, and it may sometimes represent a bait to catch those who are prone to lose themselves in vain speculations, endlessly roaming vast labyrinths of words and letters, failing to realize that what they are shown is the absurdity of such a quest for meaning. This is one of the great lessons of this tradition: the fact that the search for the meaning and meaningfulness of being is a mirage, and that man is meant to venture beyond the frontiers of meaning and meaningfulness. This is where all becomes clear, where there is no meaning to be found, and yet where all makes perfect sense, the no-thing-ness that represents everything.

The term “public case” nonetheless also implies the passing of a judgment. It may be the one of the master who decides whether or not the disciples pondering the case have been able to see through its words and glimpse at the no-thing-ness beyond them, or it may be the one of the reader, who is tempted to vainly determine its quality, its relevance, its usefulness, or its beauty, thereby showing himself to still be a slave to the world of things, thinking only in terms of oppositions, of “yes” and “no,” of “right” and “wrong.” Each word uttered in reaction to a case, even each gesture or facial expression, displays one’s relationship with the world, and there lies their remarkable power. It thus takes courage to decide to play the game offered by the public cases, not only reading them but letting one’s reactions to them be scrutinized by someone more skilled or more experienced on the path than us, a master of the way of the sky. It represents a first step, a humbling of one’s self, a prelude to the lifting up of the mask covering our face, preventing us from seeing our true nature, the forgetfulness of the “I” to rejoice in the “we,” the whole of being.

One may spend a lifetime contemplating a single public case, or he may navigate through numerous ones, letting them fleetingly pass through his mind. The result may be the same, and this for a very simple reason: they all point toward the same destination. They are mere doorways toward no-thing-ness, only differing in their surroundings, but this profusion is nonetheless far from superfluous. Men indeed occupy different parts of the world, and

each reacts in a unique manner to the countless things found in it. It is not in everyone's power to pass through every doorway out of the world of things. This is why they come in various shapes, colors, and styles, offering each man as many occasions to see the wonder beyond their thresholds, as many whispers resonating between the walls of different parts of the citadel of things, at various times of the day, the month, and the year. Some among those hearing these whispers will immediately find the way to the desert within themselves, while others will stay prisoners of the world until their last breath, but all nonetheless share the same nature, and even though some may be blind to it, they still are part of the same whole as all the others, one with them, their worries and fears being mere illusions, and their feet firmly anchored in the sand of the great desert, under the all-encompassing starry sky.

The present book represents a rather comprehensive compendium of public cases, gathering the three main collections of cases that were compiled in China in the centuries following the birth of the Zen tradition: the Gateless Barrier (無門關 [wú mén guān]), the Blue Cliff Record (碧巖錄 [bì yán lù]), and the Book of Serenity (從容錄 [cóng róng lù])² The order of these cases has also been rearranged to highlight the subtle differences between many cases that may appear similar or redundant, and also to show that such an ordering in itself may speak as much as the cases themselves. The reader is thus invited to discover by himself its peculiarity. The original classical Chinese text³ of each case is presented with its phonetic reading and notes explaining difficult or rare words and expressions. A Japanese version⁴ then follows,

²One should note that many of the cases found in the three collections are identical or very similar, explaining why the number of cases in the present book is inferior to the sum of the number of cases in the three collections. These collections also contain lengthy commentaries on each case, which are not included in the present book. Only the core text of the cases is here reproduced.

³The main source texts for the three books were taken from the CBETA electronic repository. The Gateless Barrier: 《禪宗無門關》。(CBETA) ; The Blue Cliff Record: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》。(CBETA) ; The Book of Serenity: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。(CBETA) ; Punctuation has been added to these texts, and several mistakes and typos have been corrected.

⁴The main sources for the Japanese translations are as follows. The Gateless Barrier and the Blue Cliff Record: 加藤咄堂。《碧巖錄大講座》。東京：平凡社，1939; The Book of Serenity: 神保如天。《從容錄通解》。東京：無我山房，1915。

which stays as close as possible to the Chinese text, allowing those more familiar with the Japanese Zen tradition to get closer to the original text without knowledge of the Chinese language. An English translation is then provided, one that reflects the interpretation of the author of the present book, while benefiting from the works of its predecessors, whose translations have been extensively consulted and often followed. Finally, a commentary on each case concludes each chapter. These commentaries are not meant to explain the case, and even less to give answers to the question they raise, as there are no answers to give, but rather represent meditations inspired by them, reflections representing the author's view on this cases, which may perhaps lead some of the readers to see them under a new light, once they have pondered the cases by themselves.

Following the path traced by the Zen monks of ancient China, from the world to no-thing-ness, passing by each case representing as many milestones upon it, we are invited to see each passing day as an opportunity for an appropriation of the truth of being, seeing it in the most mundane, most seemingly insignificant part of our world. These cases are grindstones upon which we may sharpen our minds. They are fine dust with which we may polish the surface of our eyes, so that we may then see the fissures present all around us, revealing what lies beyond the walls of our world, the great desert encompassing the citadel of things that we inhabit since our birth. Then, these cases will no longer be needed, as we will see what they point toward, right in front of our eyes as we wake up at the break of dawn. All the clouds hovering over our world will then dissipate, and the greatness of the heavens will appear to us in all its glory, without us seeing it as a collection of things, but rather as no-thing-ness itself, marvelously carrying the living throughout the seasons and the years, with our world taken in its whirlwind, turning and turning, until we forget who we are, and can feel the way of the sky pervading our bones, seeping into the depths of our mind, before we once again recover our memory, as if awaking from the sweetest dream, returning to our daily life, seemingly unchanged, but now finally knowing what we are.

The furigana pronunciation has often been modernized.

Part II

The Winter of No-thing-ness

When the morning dew turns into frost as it enters into contact with the cold embrace of the wind blowing over the grass, man recognizes the sign of the arrival of winter. All around him, the trees have been stripped of their luxuriant clothes, emerald first turned into amber, before finally becoming mere dust on the ground. As the nights grow longer and the silvery glow of the moon becomes more present in his life than the heavenly fire of the day, he understands that life itself is retreating from his land. The forests are now vast cemeteries filled with wooden graves, monuments to life appearing like as many emaciated hands reaching toward the sky, begging for relief, for warmth and light, so that life may once again rise out of this hardened soil.

The unforgiving lords of the sky now reign over his land. Frost, hail, snow, and darkness are their names. They have patiently conquered this part of the earth, meticulously covering man's world with a sumptuous but deadly vestment, a spotless drape of the purest white, shining like diamonds. The myriads of things that once irresistibly attracted man's eyes have now disappeared, leaving a remarkably elegant uniformity in their stead. There no longer are any roads or fences, ponds or fields, machines or constructions, only a white expanse extended to the horizon. All the things of the world are still there, but this world now appears empty, devoid of any thing. The emptiness of the winter thus reveals the nature of no-thing-ness, pervading all, the essence of all that *is*. Covering all things, the blanket of snow descending from the heavens thus reveals what underlies all things, the unicity of being, the very foundation upon which this world was built. By concealing all things, the winter reveals the nature of all things, the no-thing-ness at their heart.

As the living fight for food and struggle for warmth, the winter is when they are offered to be more acquainted with death. Withered plants, frozen carcasses being buried in snow, and creatures seeing their fatty garment growing thinner every day, and yet, what appears to be an end to life is also a new beginning. The seeds of a new generation are indeed safely sleeping inside the ground, ignorant of the harshness of the icy storms blowing above them, unscathed by the fierce battles waged on the snowy ground. Equally plunged in darkness, hiding in his earthly lair while hoping for the glorious return of the reign of the sun, man is also offered a

precious occasion to contemplate the nature of his world veiled in black velvet. Lying on his bed in the dark, perfectly aware of what surrounds him, he is struck by the realization of the fact that what now appears as one single thing is only divided by the light of the day passing through his eyes, awakening his mind. It is as if he stood outside in the snow, and let himself be buried by it, letting his own being be revealed to be one with all that *is*. He may cut off his arm as if he was snapping a branch, and it would not matter more, as he knows that all is no-thing-ness, and that things are mere illusions born out of his fertile mind. He thus learns from the barren landscape as much as from the luxuriant one. He is a polar bear lying down on the ice, largely indistinguishable from it. There is no longer life or death, clarity or obscurity, only a vision of what being is when there is no longer any thing in man's eyes.

The desolate, snowy expanse where no-thing can be discerned is both the beginning and the end. It is the starting point and the destination, the birthplace and the grave. It is the simplest of all, and yet also the hardest to comprehend. Fortunately, our forefathers have uncovered ways of guiding us to no-thing-ness, signs that are like the winter snowfalls enshrouding the world of things, veiling all things, revealing what no-thing is. Exposed to the eyes and the ears of the public, these stories and signs represent a doorway to the white desert, a whisper of invitation echoing throughout the world of things, but one that may nonetheless also expose this public to a judgment. One may indeed be found to be either wise or a fool as he reacts to these signs, but one who sees through them will not fear the verdict, knowing its origin and its extent.

Case 1 —Zhaozhou's No(thing) —趙州狗子

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 1. The text of this case is more complete than the version found in the Book of Serenity, case 18, which appears similar but whose meaning differs from the present case. The version found in the Book of Serenity is the 42nd case of the present collection.

【中】

zhào zhōu hé shàng yīn sēng wèn gǒu zǐ hái yǒu fó xìng yě wú zhōu
趙州和尚因僧問：「狗子還有佛性也無。」州
yún wú
云：「無」。

【日】

こ じょうしゅうおしょう ちな そう と く し
舉す。趙州和尚、因みに僧問う、「狗子に
かえ ぶっしょう あ ま な しゅういわ む
還って佛性有りや也た無しや。」州云く、「無。」

【E】

Zhaozhou was asked by a monk: “Dogs also have a Buddha nature,¹ no?” Zhaozhou answered: “No!”²

¹ The question of the Buddha-nature of animals is discussed in various scriptures and was the subject of interrogations and often vain debates.

² “No”: The Chinese original word (無 [wú]) can indicate both a negation and an absence. This case rests upon this dual meaning, with the answer pointing out to no-thing-ness itself, as the absolute absence of things of the mind, with a mind that must be cleared of all worldly thoughts.

The world is edified by the young generation, those recently born out of the womb and onto the bare earth but who have yet to see its nature. Enticed by the brilliant lights illuminating each one of its corners and the wide variety of strangely shaped objects found in it, they strive to ascend the heights of this world painstakingly built by the strengths of man's arms, yearning to encompass its fullness with their curious, inquisitive gaze, their wide opened eyes turned to what is farthest, the unreachable, their heart always wanting more. The servant of the world is a slave to his unquenchable thirst for knowledge and power. He treads upon the

earth with his feet. He climbs above the clouds and reaches for the deepest heavens. Even the whole of Life appears to submit to his absolute rule. His mind enfolds everything, every thing, and yet, it is as if he was blind to the foundation of all that *is*. Thus does the servant of the world seek wisdom from the men acquainted with the way, the masters of the world, those who are free from the invisible and yet often overwhelming burden placed by the world upon the shoulders of its slaves.

The considerate master nonetheless does not rule upon the diligent disciple. He is a master foremost because he knows where he stands and rules upon himself, upon his *self*, rather than serves it. He knows all too well the heart of the inquirer, seeing in it a reflection of what his own once was. He thus benevolently offers an answer to the torrent of questions gushing out of the mouth of the impatient disciple, unable to control this raging flow, with a deafening roar: “No!” Presented with the petitions of a throng of weak and hungry men desperately seeking nourishment, the king whose dominion lies beyond the frontier of the world burns their requests with a lightning bold, as swiftly as the blinking of an eye. He shuts their inclined ears with a thundering blast and binds their eyes with a blindfold made of the sturdiest cloth. They are surrounded by what they so desperately seek, drowning in what they so eagerly crave, and yet they continue to beg the man of the way for this very thing, as if all their senses were dulled. The key has always been in their hands, and yet, they still fail to perceive it. The gate has always been in front of their eyes, and still, they roam the world in search of it, distraught and lost. His heart filled with boundless compassion, the master then swiftly cuts off the chain of their delusions. He breaks the spell subjugating his sons with a violent outburst, this roar that shakes the very foundation of their world. It is more than a mere word. It pierces through this world meticulously built with words to point out the naked earth and the clear sky beyond it, a pure tone resounding through the air, slithering into the ears of men, in the hope of showing them the truth of the way, the way toward the nature of all things, showing them the Way itself, his kingdom, the place where not a single thing can be found, but upon which the myriad of things forming the world enduringly rests. The vociferous outcry of the master has jolted the clouds towering over the world, fracturing the icy vaults of the heavens, triggering a colossal deluge of snow rapidly

forming a canopy of white flakes covering all things, blurring the lines separating these things, leaving only a pristine blanket of light to be seen by the dwellers of the world. The myriad becomes one, and the one vanishes into nothingness, into no-thing-ness, a sublime display of the nature of being.

Case 2 —Vast And Empty, No Holiness — 廓然無聖

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 1. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 2.

【中】

舉。梁武帝問達磨大師：「如何是聖諦¹第一義。」磨云：「廓然無聖。」帝曰：「對朕²者誰。」磨云：「不識。」帝不契³，達磨遂渡江至魏。帝後舉問志公，志公云：「陛下還識此人否。」帝云：「不識。」志公云：「此是觀音大士，傳佛心印。」帝悔，遂遣使去請。志公云：「莫道陛下發使去取，闔⁴國人去，他亦不回。」

¹ 【聖諦】S:【圣諦】[shèng dì]: “the holy truth” / “the noble truth” / “the fundamental teaching of Buddhism.” A word created to translate the Sanskrit concept of Āryasatya (आर्यसत्य). Related with: 四聖諦 [sì shèng dì] “the four noble truths [of Buddhism].”

² 【朕】[zhèn]: First-person personal pronoun used by the emperor.

³ 【契】[qì]: “to match.”

⁴ 【闔】S:【闔】[hé]: “the entirety [of the country].”

【日】

こ りょう ぶ てい だるま だいし と いか
 舉す。梁の武帝、達磨大師に 問う、「如何な
 こ しょうたい だいいちぎ まいわ かくな むしょう てい
 るか 是れ 聖諦第一義。」磨云く、「廓然無聖。」帝
 いわ ちん たい もの た まいわ し
 云く、「朕に 對する 者は 誰ぞ。」磨云く、「識ら
 ていかな だるま つい こう わた ぎ いた
 ず。帝契わず。」達磨遂に 江を 渡って 魏に 至る。

てい のち こ し こう と し こういわ へいか
 帝、後に 擧して 志公に 問う。志公云く、「陛下
 は こ ひと し や ていいわ し
 還た 此の 人を 識る 否。」帝云く、「識らず。」志
 こういわ こ こ かんのだいし ぶつしんいん つた
 公云く、「此れは 是れ 観音大士、佛心印を 傳う。
 てい く つい つか つか ゆ しょう
 帝悔いて 遂に 使いを 遣わし 去きて 請ぜんと
 し こういわ へいか つか はつ ゆ むか
 す。」志公云く、「陛下、使いを 發し 去きて 取え
 もとより こうこく ひと ゆ かれ
 しめんとするは 莫道、闔國の 人去くも、佗は
 また かえ
 亦た 回らず。」

【E】

Emperor Wu of Liang asked Great Master Bodhidharma: "What is the highest meaning of the holy truth?" Bodhidharma replied: "Vast and empty, no holiness." The emperor said: "Who is now standing in front of the emperor?" Bodhidharma said: "No idea."¹ The emperor was not on the same level as him. Bodhidharma then crossed the Yangtse River and went to the kingdom of Wei. Later, the emperor asked Zhigong about this. Zhigong said: "Does Your Majesty know who this man is?" The emperor said: "No idea." Zhigong said: "He is the great Avalokitesvara, transmitting the seal of Buddha's mind!" The emperor felt regret, and then was about to send an emissary to invite Bodhidharma to come back to him. Zhigong said: "Your Majesty, it would be of no use to send an emissary to bring him back. Even if all the people in the country were to go for this task, he would not return."

¹ "No idea": Literally "I don't know," but here it also seems to express absolute ignorance, the casting away of all thoughts and knowledge, a meaning that can be better seen in the translation as "no idea."

The man exalted by the world as its supreme lord is instinctively tempted to see the power tied to his position as extending beyond the frontiers of this realm, a product of his hands and mind, as he considers that this world is a reflection of the truth

of the earth and the sky. Being called a son of heaven since infancy, one may consider himself to be holy, towering over a world populated by lowly plebs, and only seek what is seen as the rarest, the most precious, what is sanctified in the eyes of this world. The cloudy heights are nonetheless one with the shadowy depths. The artificial hierarchies of the world are only the fruit of man's self-importance. When an emperor of the world meets a true king, whose kingdom is no-thing-ness itself, he cannot fathom the heart of the one standing in front of him, and he despises him because of his seemingly lowly condition, seeing him as ignorant. The greatest offense given to a son of heaven may be to show him that the heavens have given birth to all things, are sheltering all things, and that these things are the heavens themselves. Vast and devoid of any thing is the celestial vault. Filled with light, adorned with myriads of radiant stars shining like rivers of diamonds throughout the velvety depths of space, and teeming with unceasing activity, it ultimately forms a whole that is only cut out into pieces by the sword of man's reason, giving birth to the illusions upon which he builds up his world. It is easy to guess the price of a pearl or a gold coin, but only the wise may perceive the essence of all things, the value of no-thing-ness, a priceless kingdom extended to the farthest limits, an invaluable speck of dust lost in the abyss. Vast and empty is the expanse forming the heavens. Outside of man's delusions, it is no-thing-ness itself, the place where there is no holy and profane, no emperor and no slave, no truth and falsehood, but only absolute clarity, no longer besmirched by the stain of knowledge.

The man sheltering only no-thing-ness in his heart has let go of all knowledge. Without possessing any thing, having peered beyond the walls of the world, the boundaries separating the self from the other have melted away. He no longer knows what fills up his eyes, what he touches or hears, as what perceives is one with what is perceived. Asked about who he is, he does not know, and naturally answers, without a trace of thought: "No idea."⁵ Where there is no thing, neither can there be any idea. The one standing in front of his eyes is himself, and the one seeing is the other, while all is as clear as the azure sky when the cold of the peak of the winter has cleared away all the cottony clouds, and all

⁵See: 久須本文雄. 《禅語入門》。東京：大法輪閣, 2000. p90 : 「不識は識一不識の分別意識を超越した高い次元の不識であります。」

that is left is a glaring, golden sun shining upon a carpet of white snow covering the entire land.

Like an empty shell, devoid of any pearl, the one having only no-thing-ness in his heart is nonchalantly dismissed by the lord of the world, utterly ignorant of the truth of the heavens. The stranger, the man of the way facing the lord of the world, brought a scroll from his homeland to show the most unvaluable thing found in his realm to this world: a blank scroll, virgin of any sign, devoid of any fragment of meaning, this was the gift of the foreign visitor, but exceedingly strange was it to the one seeing himself as a son of heaven, and it thus gave rise to anger and arrogance. The work of the skies nonetheless continuously shapes his heart, day after day. This work is the passing of time itself, with the celestial wheels unceasingly performing their revolutions, taking in their whirlwind the earth and the world built upon it. It leads men to realize their mistakes, to see their foolishness, if only they are ready to face the truth. Enlightened by the heavens, man is nonetheless condemned to accept the consequences of his past actions. Being is like a river perpetually flowing down the way of the sky, and no one can reverse its course. What is done cannot be changed, and there would be no point in doing so. The river ineluctably goes forward, carrying all those caught in its raging flow, taking them where they are meant to go, no matter whether they strive against or embrace it. Once no-thing-ness has penetrated deep into the heart of man, he feels in his bones that all that he seeks is within the reach of his hands, within sight. The man he hoped would return is himself, already right in front of him. The place he hoped to conquer is all around him, a desert where no-thing can be found, but where every thing truly *is*.

Case 3 — Entering The Fundamental Gate Of The Not-Two 一入不二法門

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 84. This case is also found in the Book of Serenity, case 48, with only minor differences⁶

⁶See Book of Serenity, case 48: 舉。維摩詰問文殊師利。何等是菩薩入不二法門文殊師利曰如我意者於一切法無言無說無示無識離諸問答是為入不二法門於是文殊師利問維摩詰言。我等各自說已仁者當說。何等是菩薩入不二法門維摩默然。

【中】

舉。維摩詰問文殊師利：「何等是菩薩入不二法門。」文殊曰：「如我意者，於一切法，無言無說，無示無識，離諸問答，是為入不二法門。」於是文殊師利問維摩詰：「我等各自說已。仁者當說，何等是菩薩入不二法門。」雪寶云：「維摩道什麼。」復云：「勘破了也。」

【日】

舉す。維摩詰、文殊師利に問う、「何等か是れ菩薩、不二の法門に入るとは。」文殊曰く、「我が意の如きは、一切の法に於て、無言無說、無示無識、諸の問答を離る。是を不二の法門に入ると爲す。」是に於て文殊師利、維摩詰に問う、「我等各自説き已る。仁者當に説くべし、何等か是れ菩薩、不二の法門に入るとはと。」雪寶云く、「維摩は什麼と道いしぞ。」復た云く、「勘破了せり。」

【E】

Vimalakirti asked Manjushri: “What does it mean when one says: ‘Bodhisattvas enter the Fundamental Gate¹ of Not-Two’?” Manjushri said: “For me, it means that concerning all things, there are neither (suitable) words nor explanations, neither presentations nor knowledge, and they escape all questions and answers. This is how I understand ‘to enter the

Fundamental Gate of Not-Two.’ ” Manjushri then asked Vimalakirti: “We each have given our own explanation. Now this gentleman should give us his explanation. What does it mean when one says: ‘the enlightened being enters the Fundamental Gate of Not-Two?’ ” (Xuedou said: “What did Vimalakirti say?” And again, he said: “Seen through!”)

¹ “Fundamental Gate” (法門 [fǎ mén]): Literally the “Dharma-Gate,” but the word “Dharma” (धर्म) in Sanskrit means something that is firmly established, and by extension, a law. In a Buddhist context, it also represents “things” and the fundamental order of the universe. This is why it has here been translated as “fundamental gate,” avoiding loanwords that only obscure the origin and essence of the term.

Weaved with earth and air is our body, but our mind has also been fashioned by eons of experiences made by life itself. Thus are we by our truest nature, our mostly deeply entrenched instincts, compelled to seek what we cannot reach, to see the invisible, to grasp the ethereal. When we are told: “this cannot be put into words,” we double our efforts to bring this ineffable into our world, neatly cutting it into a “thing,” brought within the reach of our incredibly arrogant but formidably human spirit. Still a prisoner of the lofty walls of things forming our world, one is tempted to ask: “What lies beyond them?” and the one who has thrown away his heart beyond these walls would then reply: “Nothing, no thing.” Such an answer would nonetheless be lacking in benevolence. The one who is intimate with no-thing-ness commonly feels the duty to guide the slaves to the world into it. Thus does he paint a caricature of it, using the crude paintbrush of the world, coarse words flung into the air, caught by the ears of the blind. The doorway to the foundation of nature is the realization that this foundation is not to be found in the world of men, but that it neither is something separated from it. If one dares to call the foundation of nature “the one,” the only thing that is found when the mind refrains from cutting out the oneness of nature into a multitude of pieces to grasp them, this is already a cutting out, as the existence of one thing implies a boundary, and therefore the presence of something lying beyond it, whereas no-thing-ness is boundless. It may be called the “not-two,” as an attempt to refrain from defining what escapes definition. The mind may thus go on and on to find the impossible, like a confused mouse trapped

in a maze, unable to see that it simply needs to jump out of it to experience freedom. To let himself be approached by it, man simply has to let go of words, let go of things, let go of the world into which he was thrown during his infancy. Neither “one” nor “not-two,” what is to be discovered is what lies in the interstice between these.⁷ Instead of always running to grasp things, the mind should continuously run to avoid growing attached to things, embracing uncertainty, cherishing indeterminacy, and playing with the world while always remaining aware of the no-thing-ness that represents the foundation of all things, stretching his attention between these realms, incarnating their harmony with his very being.

The poor caricature, painted with crude words, is a mere invitation, a timid first step. True guidance comes in the form of a helping hand, doing more than simply showing something, but rather bringing the uninitiated to behold the truth without any mediation. Where there is not a single thing, there is no contrast between the self and the other. What one says is said to oneself, and what one says is a meaningless wave, an insignificant tremor echoing through the ether flowing through the sky. The distinction between words and mere sounds fades away. The difference between speech and silence vanishes, and all that is left is no-thing-ness, as an ecstatic experience, overwhelming the senses, far from an empty abyss that would be devoid of activity. Indeed, it bustles, like a titanic, immeasurable display, forming a whole, a single image depicting nature from the most remote past until the most distant future, without any distinction between them. Passing through the threshold of no-thing-ness, one finds himself surrounded by the same environment. Nothing has changed, except for one thing: What is perceived is the whole rather than a gathering of parts, a unicity rather than a myriad of things, and even this unicity ultimately ceases to be grasped as a thing, when the last thing is finally released, and everything and no-thing appear clearly. When the newcomer has let go of everything, the words of guidance of the guide resonate through his mind like the song of the birds or the whisper of the wind sweeping the leafless branches of the winter forest, unhindered, as a gentle hand

⁷See: 神保如天. 《從容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p340 (Case 48): 「不二の法門とは不一不二の法門で一とも二とも定らぬ中道実相の法門を云ってゐるのである。」

delicately caressing our hairs. All questions have then lost their meaning, and no one expects an answer anymore. The guide tried to put the ineffable into words so that the novice could reach it with silence, and thus comes the time of silence.⁸

Case 4 —An Indian King Invites The Patriarch 一東印請祖

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 3.

【中】

舉。東印土國王請二十七祖 般若多羅齊 王問
曰：「何不看經。」祖云：「貧道入息不居陰界，¹ 出
息不涉² 眾緣。³ 常轉如是經，百千萬億卷。」

¹ 【陰界】[yīn jiè]: “the concealed world.”

² 【涉】[shè]: This word literally means “to wade across a body of water,” but it here means “to be involved” / “to be concerned with.”

³ 【眾緣】[zhòng yuán]: “the fate of all beings.”

【日】

ことういんどこくおうにじゅうななそはんにやたら
舉す。東印土の國王、二十七祖般若多羅を
しょうさいおうといわなんかんきん
請して齋す。王問うて曰く、「何ぞ看經せざ
そいわひんどうにゅうそくいんかいぎよしゅつそくしゅ
る。」祖云く、「貧道入息陰界に居せず、出息衆
えんわたるつねによぜきょうてんひやくじゅうまん
緣に涉らず、常に如是經を轉ずること百十萬
おくかん
億卷。」

【E】

A king of Eastern India invited the twenty-seventh patriarch, Prajnatara, and the king asked him: “Why don’t you read scriptures?” The patriarch said: “This humble man on

⁸See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。(Case 87): 「文殊有言道無言，維摩無言達無言。」

the way does not stay in the concealed world when breathing in, and he does not concern himself with all the things caught in the wheel of destiny when breathing out. Constantly, he recites the book of 'the things as they are,' written in hundreds, thousands, millions, or billions of volumes!"

Some silences speak volumes, and there are massive books whose content resonates because of their vacuity. The scriptures handed out by the ancients are the traces of the experiences of their lives. These traces may guide those having lost the way, but one should be wary of them replacing the unmediated experience of what they depict with the words of the world. One may describe with countless pages the feeling of the icy touch of snowflakes delicately dropping upon our bare skin, as the sun's rays promptly erode their intricate patterns, but this knowledge would be superseded in an instant by a direct experience of such contact. What is true of the marvelous gift of the cold season is all the truer concerning the very foundation of nature itself. The scriptures are not to be burned, that is, returned to the sky, or buried, that is, offered back to the earth, but they are equally not to be held on to too tightly. The glare of the lighthouse should not be mistaken for the expanse of land concealed by the cloak of the night.

If one is exhorted to recite the sacred texts of his forefathers, he may reply with boldness: "The words of holiness are buried in the innermost parts of my flesh! The most sacred truth is what surrounds us now! Just look!" We indeed are the book of life, incarnated, the product of countless eons of meticulous refining. Each letter forms an infinitely minute part of each leaving being occupying the thin layer of life between the face of the earth and the immensity of the sky. No one needs to read this book for it to be part of the world. We are its pages, as well as the styluses with which history is written in it. Our hands can shape the earth around us according to our aspirations. They can transform the appearance of our surroundings, as we give birth to ideas and fabricate objects that become extensions of our limbs and minds. This power exerted by man nonetheless soon takes hold of him, leading him to cease to perceive the unadulterated earth lying

under this world built up with his hands, to be blind to the heavens hidden by his accumulation of things. But thankfully, not all are caught in this redoubtable trap.

Asked to speak holy words, petitioned to expound the sacred works of language offered as an inheritance to the present generation, the humble man of the way offers in their stead something far more precious: himself, his own being, the perception of what it represents to live a life in harmony with the way, not simply blindly caught in its turbulent flow, but perceiving its raw nature and embracing it, knowing that he is the way himself. When a torrent of sensations is poured into his mind from the gates of his body, what he perceives is the entirety of the way, and when the cascade of his mind runs out of his body, through the movements of his limbs or those of his mouth, he is still a mere instrument of the way itself. Letting the ethereal fluid stored in the heavens running deep into his chest, he is offered a few more instants of life. Far from being oblivious to the incomparable preciousness of this immaterial gift, he does not lose himself in vain ponderings, in worldly musings. He rather takes advantage of this instant to fully appreciate the marvelous nature of being, the entirety of his senses interweaved with the innermost layers of his consciousness, letting the world of man disappear, forgotten, as if it never was, feeling the serpentine letters of the book of life being surreptitiously erased, his body slowly dissolved, leaving only a sweet numbness, a faint trace with vague contours, *mélange* of earth and world, self and other, subtle marriage of differences and identity. Then, letting the ethereal stream of life reverse its course, he expulses the celestial gift out of his bosom, filling up the air with his breath. Doing so, he does not let himself be enticed by the charm of the world around him. He does not let himself be inebriated by the remarkable power offered to him by his flesh upon the earth and the sky. Impassibly, he experiences this moment when the misty torrent of life departs from him, as a prelude, a rehearsal of his ineluctable death, the instant of the last breath, left in the hands of fate. Being the way itself, one does not care about the intricacies of its flow, sufficiently content with the mere perception of its mysterious nature.

Furthermore, the life of most dwellers of the land is paced by their breathing, as they leave their mark upon the face of the earth

and in the world of men. Each footprint, each mark of a tool left upon the ground, is a character of the story of life. The earth and the sky themselves are the book of the things *as they are*, a monumental volume, continuously being written. The discovery of the essence of being is easier when directly experienced rather than read about, through the accounts of the experiences of elders. To perceive things *as they are* is to experience them as more than mere things, but rather as instances of being itself, as reflections of ourselves, no different than us, and more importantly, not separate from us.

Case 5 —The Ordinary Mind Is The Way —平常是道

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 19.

【中】

nán quán yīn zhōu zhōu wèn rú hé shì dào quán yún píng cháng
南泉 因 趙州 問：「如何是道。」 泉 云：「平常
xīn shì dào zhōu yún huán kě qù xiàng fǒu quán yún nǐ
心是道。」 州 云：「還可趣向¹ 否。」 泉 云：「擬²
xiàng jí guāi zhōu yún bù nǐ zhēng zhī shì dào quán yún dào
向即乖³。」 州 云：「不擬爭知是道。」 泉 云：「道
bù shǔ zhī bù shǔ bù zhī zhī shì wàng jué bù zhī shì wú jì ruò zhēn
不屬知，不屬不知；知是妄覺，不知是無記。⁴ 若真
dá bù nǐ zhī dào yóu rú tài xū kuò rán dòng yuè qǐ kě qiáng shì fēi yě
達不擬之道，猶如太虛廓然洞豁，豈可強是非也。」
zhōu yú yán xià dùn wù
州 於言下頓悟。

¹ 【趣向】[qù xiàng]: “to direct [oneself] toward a particular goal.”

² 【擬】S: 【拟】[nǐ]: “to assess.” See case 25 (Book of Serenity, case 38), for a similar use.

³ 【乖】[guāi]: “to go against.”

⁴ 【無記】[wú jì]: “what falls outside of [worldly] knowledge.” This word is rich in meaning, and thus tricky to translate without losing this richness. One dictionary defines it as “(being) neither good nor evil” (From: 渡邊敏郎。《新和英大辞典第5版》。東京：研究社，2003.) The Koji'en dictionary, in addition to the aforementioned definition, indicates that it also means: “the fact that Shakyamuni Buddha refrained from replying to metaphysical questions regarding the eternal nature of the world” (「(仏) 釈尊が世界の永遠性などの形而上学的質問に対して答えなかったこと。無記答。三性さんしょうの一つ。善でも悪でもないもの。」) From: 新村出。《広辞苑第七版》。東京：岩波書店，2018.)

【日】

こ 擧なんせんす。南ち泉な因じょうみに 趙しゅう 州と 問いかう、「如何いなるか
こ 是どうれ 道ぜん。」泉い云わく、「平び常ょう 心しん是これ 道どう。」州しゅう 云いく、「還かえ
しゅうて 趣こう向いすべきや 否いなや。」泉せん云いく、「向むわんと 擬ぎ
すれば 即すなち 乖そく。」州しゅう 云うん、ぎ「擬いせざれば 爭いで
こ 是どうれ 道しなることを 知せんらん。」泉い云わく、「道どうは
ち 知ぞくにも 属ふせず、不ぞく知ちにも 属こせず、知もは 是しんれ 妄ふ
かく 覺ぎ、不しん知ふは 是ぎれ 無どう記た。若なし 眞たいに 不い疑ぎの 道かくに
た達ねんせば、猶とうお 太かつ虚しゅうの 廓ごん然かとして 洞しゅう豁ごんなるが
ごと如あし。豈しに 強ぜいて 是ひ非びすべけんや。」州、言とん下に
 頓悟す。

【E】

Zhaozhou asked Nanquan: "What is the way?" Nanquan said: "The ordinary mind is the way." Zhaozhou asked: "Can you set your mind in its direction?" Nanquan said: "If you try to assess it, you will find yourself opposed to it." Zhaozhou asked: "If I do not set my mind in its direction, how would I know it is the way?" Nanquan said: "The way is not found within worldly knowledge, and neither is it found outside of worldly knowledge. Worldly knowledge is a delusion arising from the senses, and what is outside of worldly knowledge is meaningless. If one really wants to reach the way that cannot be willfully followed, one should be like the immense, empty expanse of the heavens. One would not be able to affirm that is it either right or wrong." At these words, Zhaozhou experienced a deep enlightenment.

The most naïve questions are oftentimes the trickiest to answer, as when a child repeatedly seeks to know the reasons why

the state of the world is as it is. What is the way of the sky, the path taken by the whole of nature, the course of the heavens themselves, and all that they encompass, the essence of being itself? The one seeking to find it loses its trace, and by attempting to run toward it, it slips into darkness, like a skittish deer hiding behind the naked trees when the leafy vestment of the forest has decayed and returned to the ground. Being the root of the whole of being, the way is the exact opposite of the extra-ordinary. It is the most pervasive, the most common, both what we are and what surrounds us at all times. Being so ordinary, the foolish dwellers of the earth think of it as a mirage, the fruit of the musings of those building the loftiest strata of the world, structures made of seldom used words and obscure jargon, crafted by deluded people losing themselves each day in endless and fruitless thinking. It nonetheless can be found in any place, at any time. To perceive the most ordinary, one must first allow his own ordinariness to take its place in his own existence. Refraining from climbing the clouded summits of the world, and equally abstaining from digging the obscure abysses of the earth, the one letting himself be guided by his surroundings, forgetting himself and his self by impassibly heeding the songs of nature, will perceive the way by perceiving his own nature.

If one desires to turn himself toward the way, he is condemned to remain off the track. The way indeed knows no desire. It knows no self. Foremost, it does not know any thing, and neither does it ignore any thing. To seek something means that one believes that there is a rift between what seeks and what is to be sought. To be attached to worldly knowledge implies that one severs himself with the rapids of sensations poured into the body by the earth and the skies, and to be a prisoner of mere earthly sensations means that one cannot discern anything, living like a beast, slave to its instincts. One cannot stray from the way, but one can be blind to it, thinking that it is out of reach. To reach it demands no effort whatsoever, not the slightest hint of wisdom. It only requires facing one's own mind, when it ceases from desiring more, from holding on to things, from possessing and appropriating. The man of the way has cast away the "yes" and has discarded the "no." He leaves the "men of yes and no" to their futile battles for the conquest of the earth and the domination of the world. He lets these combatants inflate their own ego, building up barriers

standing between themselves and the realization of the nature of the way of the sky, while he contemplates the heavenly vaults as a mirror, and sees himself while beholding the surface of the ocean. The immense arms of the Milky Way are his limbs. The blazing sun and the pale moon are his eyes. The bulging seas are his tears, and the loftiest trees are the hairs covering his skin. The night is the blinking of his eyes, and the winters are his time of rest. The blinking stars are silvery freckles on his face, and the unfolding of the heavens is his own birth. Relinquishing his will, he gains all that he could ever have wished. Abandoning all things, he appropriates everything. Embracing ignorance, he perceives the truth, finding the extraordinary in the most common, living the most fulfilling life by cherishing everydayness, letting the marvelousness of the typical shine at each moment of his existence, treasuring the familiar, exulting the simple, endowed with the gift of feeling the presence of the way that embraces the whole, as the innermost essence of all that *is*.

Case 6 — Yangshan' s Mind And World — 仰山心境

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 32.

【中】

舉。仰山問僧：「甚處人。」僧云：「幽州人。」
 山云：「汝思彼中麼。」僧云：「常思。」山云：「能
 思是心，所思是境。彼中山河大地，樓臺殿閣，人
 畜等物，反思思底心。還有許多般¹麼。」僧云：「某
 甲²到這裏總不見有。」山云：「信位即是，人位
 未是。」僧云：「和尚莫別有指示否。」山云：「別
 有別無，即不中。據汝見處。只得一玄，得坐披衣，
 向後自看。」

¹ 【般】[bān]: “[things] like this” / “this sort [of things].”

² 【某甲】[mǒu jiǎ]: “this one,” used as an indirect pronoun.

【日】

こ きょうざん そう と いず ところ ひと
 擧す。仰山、僧に 問う、「甚れの 處の 人ぞ。」
そういわ ゆうしゅうじん さんいわ なんじ か うち おも
 僧云く、「幽州人。」山云く、「汝 彼の 中を 思う
そういわ つね おも さんいわ のう し これ
 や。」僧云く、「常に 思う。」山云く、「能思は 是
しん しよし これ きょう かれ うち さんが だいち ろうたいでん
 心、所思は 是 境、彼の中には 山河大地樓臺殿
かくじんちくとう もの し てい しん はんし かえ
 閤人畜等の 物あり。思底の 心を 反思せよ、還っ
そこばくはん そういわ それがし しゃり いた
 て 許多般ありや。」僧云く、「某甲這裏に 到って
そう あ こと み さんいわ しん い すなわ
 總に 有る 事を見ず。」山云く、「信位は 即ち
ぜ にん い いま ぜ そういわ おしょうべつ
 是、人位は 未だ 是ならず。」僧云く、「和尚別に
しじ な いな さんいわ べつ あ
 指示あること 莫しや 否や。」山云く、「別に 有り
べつ な すなわ あた なんじ けんじょ
 別に 無しというは 即ち 中らず、汝が 見處に
よ ただいちげん え とくぎ ひ え こうご みずか
 據らば 只一玄を 得たり。得坐披衣向後 自ら
み
 看よ。」

【E】

Yangshan asked a monk: "Where are you from?" The monk said: "From Yu Province." Yangshan said: "Do you think about that place?" The monk said: "I do, constantly." Yangshan said: "That which thinks is the mind, but that which is thought about is the world all around. In it, there are mountains, rivers, the great earth, towers and palaces, men, beasts, and all sorts of things. Reflect upon the mind that thinks. Are there many things there?" The monk said: "This monk¹ doesn't see anything here." Yangshan said: "You believe that it is the case, with your mind, but you have yet to embody it." The monk said: "Does this monk have any further advice?" Yangshan said: "If you say that there is or that there is not, you miss the point. You have some insight but have only gained one part of the mystery. Sitting down, putting clothes on, you will then see by yourself."

¹ “This monk”: An indirect way to express oneself in the first person, taking distance from one’s ego.

When we are asked where we come from, we are graciously offered an opportunity to examine what we are, our origin and our destination. We were born unto the earth, without us remembering this incomparable experience, but what were we before this event? Life forms a continuous chain, going back to its emergence in the shallows of the sea, without a single instant of interruption. Do we think about this mysterious birthplace of life, the appearance of the first link of this incredibly long and sturdy chain, and of what was there before that? Our horizon is nonetheless often limited to our immediate experience, and thus, endowed with a shallow mind, we simply state a worldly location as our answer to this most profound inquiry.

There are times for obscurity and times for clarity. The same hand that chastises should also offer a tender embrace, discerning when each is needed. If a man’s horizon is restricted to what the world gave him to see, it is foremost because he remains obstinately oblivious to the nature of these eyes with which he beholds this world into which he has been unwittingly thrown at birth. Unceasingly flowing through his eyes and into his mind, the bustling stream of the senses is seamlessly turned into the world occupying his thoughts. Mountains of things, neatly organized, chiseled into blocks with sharply defined contours, form this environment in which he spends his days. His birthplace bears a name, heard with the ears or seen with the eyes, and even he has been made into a thing, belonging to this gigantic mosaic, spread broadly through space and time. The guide then has one more question to offer to the fledgling: “Where are these things that form your world?”

Things are products of the world and, in turn, the world is a creation of the mind. What is experienced by the senses, the earth and all that is encompassed by the firmament, is a raw truth, but we do not experience it as a series of things. Only when the mind has performed its astonishingly complex and yet secretive work does the unicity of nature appear as a myriad of things, forming our world, things that can be grasped by the mind as well as touched with one’s fingertips. All things are thus mere illusions,

creations of man's fertile mind, many of which were handed over to us as an inheritance by our parents and neighbors. World and sky are tightly interlaced, like the most magnificent, intricately woven brocade, mingling fine threads of light and gold, with both inextricably bound to each other, forming an indistinguishable whole, sharing the same essence.

When the things of our world begin to be seen as such, as fruits of the prolific imagination and the dexterity of man, then can the nature of both the things and what they represent shine in the eyes of the novice. Things sprout out of what is not a thing, out of nothingness, out of no-thing-ness, and this is precisely the essence of nature, of the world created by man as well as the grandiose expanse enclosed by the skies. To see where we come from is to be familiar with no-thing-ness, not merely conceiving it with our consciousness, as it would then only become another thing of the world, but rather embodying it with one's flesh as much as one supports it with a clear mind, devoid of any attachment to the things belonging to this world. This impenetrable mystery can only be embraced by extensively decluttering the mind, by being mindful of the wondrous nature of the most fundamental acts that keep us part of life each day, realizing the preciousness of the miraculous present that is to be present for one more day above the earth. Sitting down, experiencing the weight of our own body, the ubiquitous downward pull of the earth upon our flesh, or putting on clothes, conscious of how they help us resist the relentless assaults of the frigid winds of the seasons when the sun retreats under the horizon for a large portion of the day, we may uncover the edge between world and earth, appropriating no-thing-ness without fleeing into an abyss, searching for an extinction of being. We then remain part of the world, and our environment is in every aspect similar to what it was before, but we are now endowed with a clearer mind, pervaded by no-thing-ness, as bright and crystalline as the azure sky itself, reflected in our dazzled eyes.

Case 7 —Dongshan's Place Without Grass —洞山無草

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 89.

舉。洞山 示眾云：「秋初夏末兄弟，或東或西。
 直須向萬里無寸草處去。」又云：「只如萬里無寸草
 處。作麼生去。」石霜 云：「出門便是草。」大陽
 云：「直道。不出門亦是草漫漫地。」

【日】

こ とうざん しゅ しめ いわ しゅしょ げまつ
 舉す。洞山、衆に 示して 云く、「秋初夏末
 ひんであるい ひが あるい にし じか すべか ばんり む
 兄弟或は 東し 或は 西す、直に 須らく 萬里無
 すんそう ところ むか さ またいわ ただばんり
 寸草の 處に 向って 去るべし。」又云く、「只萬里
 む すんそう ところ さもさん さ せきそういわ もん
 無寸草の 處 作麼生か 去らん。」石霜云く、「門を
 いず すなわ こ くさ たいよういわ じか い
 出れば 便ち 是れ 草。」大陽云く、「直に 道わ
 もん い また こ くさんまん ち
 ん 門を 出でざるも 亦是れ 草漫漫地。」

【E】

Dongshan instructed the assembly and said: "It is the beginning of autumn, the end of summer, and the brothers are about to scatter east or west. But they should all go straight to the place devoid of grass for ten thousand miles." And again, he said: "The place is devoid of grass for ten thousand miles, how are they going to get there?" Shishuang said: "Just out of the door, there is grass!" Dayang said: "I would even say: even when one has yet to go out of the door, grass is all around."

How fortunate are those receiving the guidance of an elder, someone ready to hand over the fruits of his tiresome days spent upon the earth, as part of the living. The gigantic heavenly wheels continue their endless revolutions, as the seasons seamlessly succeed to each other, taking man in their course, and when the time

of the gathering of men having taken advantage of the clemency of the summer gives place to their scattering as the sky grows darker, like minute grains of pollen being carried away from the flower by the breeze so that they can become the source of a new growth in the four corners of the earth, begins a solitary homecoming, propitious to introspection.

Before the departure, and the entrance into the season of obscurity, nonetheless comes the opportunity to contemplate what has been accomplished when brightness reigned over the world, and the luxuriant vegetation covered the dusty face of the earth. They are now surrounded by emerald trees and golden grasses. The elder presiding over the gathering nonetheless orders them not to return to the place from which they came, but rather to go back to their true home, the place out of which all beings ultimately come from. This place offers a stark contrast with what surrounds them now. It is a wasteland, a desolate region, where not a single blade of grass can be seen for as far as the eye can see. This desert, this place where no thing can be found, first appears rather unwelcoming, but it is foremost a place of clarity and freedom, from the grasses of delusions and worldly desires.⁹ Indeed, each blade of grass elegantly dancing with the breeze of our world is one more thing occupying the dismally cluttered mind of man, a thing of his world, obstructing the view of the crystalline, all-encompassing sky, carried on the way.

The eye of the diligent followers is nonetheless now wide open, after a long sleep. These men finally see the profusion of things forming their world for what they are, as mere products of their minds revealing a facet of the earth and the sky but concealing their most fundamental essence, which is no-thing-ness, pervading all. They distinctly see the place where they must return. If all things emerge as the result of the work of the mind, no-thing-ness can therefore only be reached within the mind itself, no matter what surrounds men, or where they are standing on the earth. The eye shows them that there is no opposition, no inside or outside, no seer and seen. The grasses, older than the trees, sprout inside the heart as well as upon the earth if one fosters their growth, grasping them as individual things, not letting them go. But the young men are now aware of their nature: they are like thick

⁹See: 神保如天. 《從容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p551 (Case 89).

lianas constraining their movements, but which fall apart as soon as one ceases to resist. The men reach the desolate place, without grass, without moving an inch of their bodies, without taking one step toward another part of the earth. They simply realized that grasses grew on every inch of their untidy world, but now see that, in fact, there is not a single blade of grass upon the entire earth, and they feel finally liberated by the serene contemplation of the unfathomable immensity and absolute peacefulness of the desert around them.

Those who have seen and dwelt in the desolate land are nonetheless not meant to see their flesh waste away in it. The vision offered to them by their new eye should be shared with those who are still asleep. One is compelled to awaken others, becoming a new link in the seemingly endless chain of transmission of this enlightenment, returning, treading upon the tall grasses, offering a helping hand, so that others may rise above these grasses and see the vast plains found beyond them.

Case 8 — The Staff Turns Into A Dragon — 拄杖化龍

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 60.

【中】

舉。雲門 以拄杖示眾云：「拄杖子化為龍，吞却乾坤¹ 了也。山河大地，甚處得來。」

¹ 【乾坤】[qián kūn]: “the sky and the earth” / “the universe.” A term originating from the “Book of changes” (易經).

【日】

こ うんもん しゅじょう もつ しゅ しめ いわ
 舉す。雲門、拄杖を 以て 衆に 示して 云く、
 しゅ じょう す か りゅう な けんこん のみこ おわ
 「拄 杖子化して 龍と 爲り、乾坤を 吞却み 了れ
 さんが だいち いずこ え き
 り。山河大地、甚處よりか 得來たる。」

【E】

Yunmen brandished his staff in front of the assembly and said: "This staff has turned into a dragon. It has swallowed up the heaven and the earth. Where do the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth come from?"

After life strenuously crawled upon the dry land from the shallow of the great ocean, conquering the entire earth, our distant ancestors then took refuge in the trees, attempting to escape the razor-sharp claws and fangs of other branches of the tree of life. Our thin, long arms and nimble, prehensile fingers are the legacy of this remote age when our distant forefathers became apes. Our hands are tailored to grasp the robust, wooden arms of the majestic kings of the forest, the branches that feed us with their succulent fruits. Boldly venturing out of the seclusion and safety of the forest, man made walking staffs out of these branches, to support his body while roaming the vast, grassy plains or climbing steep mountains. It represents the last thing that the man who has left everything behind holds on to, an artificial extension of his fleshy limbs, a seemingly worthless object that nonetheless occupies a great place in his heart, perhaps a remnant of his kind's bond to the trees, unwittingly paying homage to the shape of his hands, source of mankind's immense power over the earth.

The rise of man began with the abrupt emergence of things. The first one, the whole of being, appeared in his mind and then was cleaved into the heaven and earth, before the unicity of each one of these realms was itself shattered into innumerable pieces, the constellation of things that forms the nature surrounding him. The lofty man, the dweller of the heights of the world of things, has nonetheless risen so high that has lost touch with the ground, with the truth veiled by them. A new step in the evolution of his kind will thus involve a return to the source, a great collapse of things, like a reversal, a mending, following their incontrollable shattering. The heart of man must experience the crumbling of the walls of things enclosing him, witnessing the objects touched by his hands turn back into the great body of the earth, reclaimed by it to form a whole. He must see each star merging with the sun and the moon, the clouds and the winds, turning into the all-encompassing

sky. All the creatures roaming the seas, crawling upon the earth, or soaring through the air then naturally congregate, forming the body of life itself, a single living thing. Once this crumbling of the borders delimitating things has been completed, the realms themselves collapse, one into the other. Life is dissolved into earth, leaving the latter alone with the sky, before the two great ones then become indistinguishable from one another, becoming a single thing. The last thing then remains in his hand. He can do what he pleases with it. Shaped in his image, he can then see that this last thing is the self, the threshold to no-thing-ness, most difficult to let go. It has swallowed up the earth and the sky, like an insatiable dragon, but now appears as an insignificant stick of wood. It can be discarded, and it instantly vanishes as soon as the man lets go of it, having seen its nature. He then experiences the crumbling of his mind and body, having left every thing, and being no-thing.¹⁰

Not letting himself be conquered by no-thing-ness, as he refused to let himself be enslaved by the world of things, the man nonetheless seizes back the last thing. He grasps the staff firmly with his hand, squeezing so energetically that this dragon then throws up all the things that it had swallowed, once again giving birth to the earth and the sky, life and the world. Equipped with this mighty staff, he is in control of the earth and the world, the sky and the living, inebriated by his newfound freedom, lord of no-thing-ness, king of the world, and yet now chooses to serve the humblest, to value the worthless, to trample upon the precious.

Case 9 — The Place Without Cold Or Heat — 無寒暑處

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 43.

【中】

jū sēng wèn dòng shān hán shǔ dào lái rú hé huí bì shān
舉。僧問洞山：「寒暑到來，如何迴避。」山
yún hé bù xiàng wú hán shǔ chù qù sēng yún rú hé shì wú hán shǔ
云：「何不向無寒暑處去。」僧云：「如何是無寒暑

¹⁰See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「這則公案為雲門文偃拈拄杖，對僧眾開示自在的妙用。這種自在的妙用，意指山河大地與自身無差別，盡大地為沙門一隻眼，宇宙間的一切就是我。參禪者心中如有一物，則山河大地出現在眼前；參禪者心中如無一物，宇宙萬象纖毫不存。」

chù shān yún hán shí hán shā shé lì rè shí rè shā shé
 處。」山云：「寒時寒殺¹ 闍黎，² 熱時熱殺闍
 黎。」

¹ 【殺】[shā]: The word may be understood as meaning “to kill,” literally, but as interpreted by Wu Ping, a Chinese translator of the Blue Cliff Record, the word could also have been used figuratively, as expressing the idea that “when it is cold, the monk is extremely cold” (See: 「那地方寒冷的時候會冷得你受不了，炎熱的時候會熱得你吃不消。」From: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005: p480) This usage is well attested, and is similar to the use of the word 死 [sǐ] “to die,” in modern Chinese: 「冷死我」“It is extremely cold.” In the present case, this figurative use nonetheless does not imply that the monk would really “feel” the cold or the heat, but rather that he would become the cold and the heat themselves. In English, the literal sense is nonetheless clearer, and this is why this sentence has here been translated as “the cold kills this monk.” This case also echoes with the famous sentence of Zen master Linji: “If you see a Buddha, kill this Buddha” (「逢佛殺佛」[féng fó shā fó], From: 《臨濟錄》。(CBETA).

² 【闍黎】S: 【闍黎】[shé lí]: “a Buddhist teacher.” The transliteration of the Sanskrit word आचार्य [ācārya]. It may also be written 闍梨.

【日】

こ そう とうざん と かんしょとうらい いかに
 擧す。僧、洞山に 問う、「寒暑到來せば、如何か
 かい ひ さんいわ なん かんしょ な ところ ゆ
 廻避せん。」山云く、「何ぞ 寒暑無き 處に 去か
 そういわ いか こ かんしょ な ところ
 ざる。」僧云く、「如何なるか 是れ 寒暑無き 處。」
 さんいわ さむ とき そなた かんさつ あつ とき
 山云く、「寒き 時は 闍黎を 寒殺し、熱き 時は
 そなた ねっさつ
 闍黎を 熱殺す。」

【E】

A monk asked Dongshan: “When cold and heat come, how can one avoid them?” Dongshan said: “Why not go to a place where there is neither cold nor heat?” The monk said: “What is this place where there is neither cold nor heat?” Dongshan said: “When it is cold, the cold kills¹ this monk. When it is hot, the heat kills this monk.”

¹ “Kills”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Through the ages, our branch of the tree of life has learned to counteract the merciless assaults of the summer, with the fiery rays

of our blazing star burning our skin, as well as the redoubtable onslaught of the winter, with frigid winds robbing us of our strengths, threatening to bring to a halt the intricate piece of machinery formed by our body. We sweat when encountering sweltering heat, and shiver when facing bitter cold, but our innate defenses are often still too weak in front of the titanic forces of the sky. Where could one flee from the unstoppable rage of the sky? Should one bury his flesh deep into the dark entrails of the earth? The realm towering over the earth provides the air keeping us above it, and we are meant to dwell on the surface separating the earth from the sky.

In close contact with nature, one may nonetheless realize that the earth and the sky are neither hot nor cold. There is no summer, no winter, no fire and ice. These are indeed only found within the limits of man's world, within his mind, as he stubbornly cleaves his surroundings into endless series of opposite poles. The unique refuge from the heat and the cold assailing him is only accessible to the one ready to let go of his world, to forget the very words: "heat," and "cold," casting them in absolute oblivion. Retreating beyond the boundaries of his world, the great desert where not a single thing may be seen, where the ground is covered with immaculate snow and the sky engulfed in the thickest mist and no thing can be distinguished, there may relief be found from the dangers of nature. There may he liberate himself from the worries of the world.

To escape the world and its woes nonetheless does not negate the reality of the threat to the life of the living that it represents. Abiding in no-thing-ness, fully aware of its nature as the true home of life, the sun still may deplete the precious water oiling the machinery of his body. The icy winds may still strip him of his invaluable warmth, keeping the minuscule cogs animating his flesh in continuous motion. But this is where the strength of no-thing-ness gloriously shines, as its serene dweller has released all things, including any attachment to life and any fear of death, as the very boundary between these two states of earthly matter is itself a mere product of man's world and mind. In the place without cold or heat, one has already let death die.¹¹ One is no longer

¹¹See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。p478: 「【題解】這則公案是洞山良价借寒暑以示學人超脫生死之事。洞山良价以寒暑喻生

a living thing when he confidently steps into it, losing his very name, his “I.” Seen from the eyes of the world, he is killed by the mighty hand of the heavens, and the worldly witness the decaying of this man’s putrid flesh, slowly consumed by other living things, eager to ensure their own survival, and slowly brought back into the depths of the earth. When extreme cold enfolds the earth, he becomes cold itself. When blazing heat fills the sky, he becomes heat itself. To the one who has courageously stripped himself of his identity and fearlessly thrown his being into no-thing-ness, there is no longer death or life. He has embraced death and transcended life, and he thus does not flee, as there is not a single thing to flee from.

Familiar with the place without cold nor heat, and knowing it as his true birthplace, his original home, its dweller nonetheless does not necessarily stay in it forever. Letting himself be guided by the turbulent currents of the sea, letting himself be carried by the tumultuous winds, he covers his back with clothing when he shivers, and immerses his chest in a river when he sweats. He does not despise the mortal flesh but does not exalt it either. He does not cowardly flee from death, but neither does he heartily pursue life. He simply composedly walks on the way, living without surviving, existing while forgetting himself in the dazzling vastness of the world, keeping no-thing-ness, his genuine home and the source of all, always right in front of his eyes.

Case 10 —The Seamless Gravestone —無縫塔

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 18. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 85.

【中】

jǔ sù zōng huáng dì wèn zhōng guó shī bǎi nián hòu suǒ xū hé
舉。肅宗皇帝問忠國師：「百年後，所須何
wù guó shī yún yǔ lǎo sēng zuò gè wú fèng tǎ dì yuē qǐng shī
物。」國師云：「與老僧作箇無縫塔。」帝曰：「請師
tǎ yàng guó shī liáng jiǔ yún huì ma dì yún bú huì guó
塔樣。」國師良久云：「會麼。」帝云：「不會。」國

死，謂寒時安住於寒處，熱時安住於熱處，沒有分別，始得自由；即提示在生死中得解脫的妙處。」

shī yún wú yǒu fù fǎ dì zǐ dān yuán què ān cǐ shì qǐng zhào wèn
 師云：「吾有付法弟子 耽源，却諳¹ 此事，請詔問
 zhī guó shī qiān huà hòu dì zhào dān yuán wèn cǐ yì rú hé
 之。」國師遷化² 後，帝詔 耽源 問：「此意如何。」
 yuán yún xiāng zhī nán tán zhī běi xuě dòu zhuó yǔ yún dú
 源 云：「湘之南，潭之北。」 雪竇 著語云：「獨
 zhōng bù làng míng zhōng yǒu huáng jīn chōng yī guó xuě dòu zhuó yǔ
 掌不浪³ 鳴。」「中有黃金充一國。」 雪竇 著語
 yún shān xíng zhù zhàng zǐ wú yǐng shù xià hé tóng chuán xuě dòu zhuó
 云：「山形拄杖子。」「無影樹下合同船，」 雪竇 著
 yǔ yún hǎi yàn hé qīng liú lí diàn shàng wú zhī shí xuě dòu
 語⁴ 云：「海晏河清。」「瑠璃殿上無知識。」 雪竇
 zhuó yǔ yún niān liǎo yě
 著語云：「拈了也。」⁵

¹ 【諳】[ān]: “to be familiar with [a subject]” / “to be well-versed [about a subject].”

² 【遷化】[qiān huà]: “the death [of a monk].”

³ 【浪】[làng]: “unwillingly” / “without the intention of doing so.”

⁴ 【著語】[zhuó yǔ]: “a capping-phrase.” An interjection, meant to highlight a particular aspect of the case or to show one’s understanding of it to someone else, and perhaps also sometimes to sow the seed of doubt in the mind of the one hearing or reading it. A master may demand such capping-phrases from his disciple, to see whether his point of view on this case is deep or shallow.

⁵ 【拈了也】[niān liǎo yě]: This expression literally means “it has been picked up [with one’s fingers]” but it is here used idiomatically, marking Xuedou’s approval: “it has been grasped,” and thus there is nothing more to say.

【日】

こ しゆくそうこうていちゅうこくし と ひやくねん のち
 舉す。肅宗皇帝忠國師に 問う、「百年の 後、
 もと ところ なにぶつ こくし いわ ろうそう ため
 須むる 所は 何物ぞ。」國師云く、「老僧の 與に
 こ む ぼうとう つく ていいわ し どうよう こ
 箇の 無縫塔を 作れ。」帝曰く、「師の 塔様を 請う。」
 こくし しばらく いわ え ていいわ え
 國師良久して 云く、「會すや。」帝云く、「會せ
 こくし いわ わ ふ ぼう でし たんげん
 ず。」國師云く、「吾れに 付法の 弟子の 耽源な
 かえ こ こと さと こ め
 るものあり、却って 此の 事を 諳る。請う 詔し
 これ と こくし せんげ のち てい たんげん め
 て 之に 問え。」國師遷化の 後、帝、耽源に 詔し
 この い いかん と げんいわ しょう みなみ たん
 て、此意如何と 問う。源云く、「湘の 南、潭の
 きた せつちようじゃくご いわ どうかしょう みだ な
 北。」雪竇 著語して 云く、「獨掌 浪りに 鳴らず。
 なか おうごん あ いっこく み せつちようじゃくご
 中に 黄金有って 一國に 充つ。」雪竇 著語して

いわ さんぎょう しゅじょう す む えい じゅげ ごうどうせん
 云く、「山形の 拄杖 子。」「無影樹下の 合同船。」
せつちようじゃくご いわ うみ おだ こうが す
 雪竇 著語して 云く、「海は 晏やか 河は 清む。
るり てんじょう ちしき な せつちようじゃくご いわ ねん
 瑠璃殿上に 知識無し。」雪竇 著語して 云く、「拈じ
おわ
 了れり。」

【E】

Emperor Suzong asked Zhong, the national teacher: “After a hundred years, what should be done?” The National Teacher said: “Make a seamless gravestone for this old monk.” The emperor said: “I would like to ask the master, what sort of gravestone would that be?” The National Teacher, after a long pause, then said: “Do you understand?” The emperor said: “I don’t understand.” The National Teacher said: “I have a Dharma successor, Danyuan, who is well-versed in this matter, so he may be summoned and asked about this.” After the National Teacher passed away, the emperor called Danyuan and asked him: “What is the meaning of this.” Danyuan replied: “The south of the river, north of the lake. (Xuedou commented: ‘The one hand does not resound by mistake.’) In between there is gold, which fills the entire country. (Xuedou commented: ‘A staff, hewn from a mountain forest.’) Under the shadowless tree, all are in the same boat. (Xuedou added: ‘The sea is quiet; the river is clear.’) In the crystal palace, there is no one who knows.” (Xuedou commented: “It has been grasped.”)

A few dozen revolutions of our blue planet around the great luminary that offers us the day, a few dozen winters at most, such is the lifespan of a man. Men came before we were born, and others will follow after our death, until one day, the earth will ineluctably be engulfed in the flames of our dying star, unless we succeed in escaping this solid sphere that has given birth to life itself and has kept it close to its surface ever since, like an overly

protective mother. What will remain of our presence, and what trace will there then be of man's existence? Once our world inevitably crumbles into oblivion, nothing will remain of it, as without the mind, there are no things, but rather only nothingness. Questioned about how shall he be honored once he returns into death, as no-thing-ness, the initiated to the way may simply ask for a seamless gravestone. The seamless is that which has no limits, no boundaries, and ultimately no form.¹² How would one create such a mysterious structure? To be puzzled by it means to be blind to the nature of what is found right in front of one's eyes. What is not bounded is nature itself, the all-encompassing sky, as what has no limits, what engulfs all that is, and thus there can only be one of such things, demanding that even the very notion of this "one," as a thing, be forgotten.

Embracing the permanent return into no-thing-ness, the initiated to the way already feels each speck of earth forming his body being snatched by the breeze and carried to the sooty clouds of the dark season, or carried by the glacial rains into the obscure heart of the ground. He is already ashes, scattered throughout the land. He is the snowy peaks of the loftiest mountains and the silt at the bottom of the ocean. He is blazing lava sprouting out of the fiery, bloody wounds of the earth, and the piercing eyes of a bird migrating to the great north. This is his grave, and he is already in it, or already *it*. Do you understand? One should hope that you do not, as to understand is to grasp with the mind, to encircle with the tools of the world, but what it is is precisely the all-encompassing, that which cannot be encompassed by something else, but can only become familiar.

What is the seamless gravestone then? The south of the river, the north of the lake. Being mindful of the nature of the liquid of life forming most of our flesh, one should see how what is separated by the world forms a seamless whole when the boundaries erected by the mind of man have decayed. The crystalline, fresh river runs south, patiently descending toward the translucent, salty cloak of the planet, and once there, the insidious, continuous attacks of the luminous rays of the sun lift up some of its water into the air. It gathers in the heights to form monumental woolly masses guided

¹²See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p80: "Sin junturas quiere decir sin forma."

by vigorous gusts. When the blazing forces of the heavens collide with the icy strength of the earth, this watery ether condenses into rain, hail, or snow, sprayed unto the dry land, with life eagerly thirsting for it. It passes through the body of the living or is directly collected by the valleys, once again turning into rivers, completing the seemingly endless cycle, with the whole of the waters being continuously transformed, and yet always remaining the exact same element, part of a seamless whole, without the possibility of pinpointing the exact moment when these different steps occur.

Between the south of the river and the north of the lake, there is gold! This luminous treasure will only be discovered by one who is worthy, one who has been beyond north and south, who knows the place between nowhere and everywhere, familiar with the interstice between the water and vapor, rain and rivers. It fills the entire country, but cannot be seen with the eyes or grasped by the hands.

To envision the seamless gravestone is to see that the world itself is carried on an endless, turbulent stream, perfectly clear and pure, in a boat whose mast is the tree of life itself, casting no shadow upon mankind, as there is only brightness, a blinding light that chases away all distinctions, all contrast, leaving only perfect clarity. Where there is no distinction, there is no meaning. In a crystal palace, everything can be seen clearly, but nothing can be seen as a thing, different from what surrounds it. Knowledge therefore vanishes in such a crystalline abode, but this ignorance can free those inside its seamless walls, revealing to them the foundation, the ground, and the core of the experience of the nature of being, with their own being seamlessly being joined with the whole of being.

Case 11 —A Girl Leaves Her Meditation State 一女子出定

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 42.

【中】

shì zūn xī yīn wén shū zhì zhū fó jí chù zhí zhū fó gè huán
世尊 昔因 文殊 ¹ 至諸佛集處，值諸佛各還

běn chù wéi yǒu yī nǚ rén jìn bī fó zuò rù yú sān mèi wén shū nǎi
 本處，惟有一女人，近彼佛坐入於三昧，文殊 乃
 bái fó yún hé nǚ rén dé jìn fó zuò ér wǒ bù dé fó
 白佛² 云：「何女人得近佛坐，而我不得。」佛
 gào wén shū rǔ dàn jué cǐ nǚ lìng cóng sān mèi qǐ rǔ zì wèn zhī
 告 文殊：「汝但覺此女，令從三昧起，汝自問之。」
 wén shū rào nǚ rén sān zā míng zhǐ yí xià nǎi tuō zhì fàn tiān jìn
文殊 遶女人三匝，鳴指³ 一下，乃托至梵天，² 盡
 qí shén lì ér bù néng chū shì zūn yún jiǎ shǐ bǎi qiān wén shū yì chū
 其神力而不能出，世尊 云：「假使百千 文殊，亦出
 cǐ nǚ rén dìng bù dé xià fāng guò yī shí èr yì hé shā guó tǔ yǒu wǎng míng
 此女人定不得。下方過一十二億河沙國土，有 罔明
 pú sà néng chū cǐ nǚ rén dìng xū yǔ wǎng míng dà shì cóng dì yǒng chū
⁴ 菩薩能出此女人定。」須臾 罔明 大士從地湧出，
 lǐ bài shì zūn shì zūn chì wǎng míng què zhì nǚ rén qián míng zhǐ
 禮拜 世尊，世尊 勅⁵ 罔明。却至女人前。鳴指
 yí xià nǚ rén yú shì cóng dìng ér chū
 一下，女人於是從定而出。

¹ 【文殊】[wén shū]: Manjushri (मञ्जुश्री [Mañjuśrī] in Sanskrit, meaning: “the beautiful one with glory”) is the Bodhisattva of keen awareness, the embodiment of Prajñā Wisdom. In the Chinese tradition, his “seat” (bodhimāṇḍa in Sanskrit, 道場 [dào chāng] in Chinese) is said to be Mount Wutai (五台山), in the province of Shanxi (山西).

² 【白佛】[bái fó]: “to ask the Buddha.”

³ 【鳴指】S: 【鳴指】[míng zhǐ]: “to snap one’s finger [to make a noise].”

⁴ 【梵天】[fàn tiān]: In a Buddhist context it means “nirvana,” but it originally is a translation of the Sanskrit word “Brahmā” (ब्रह्मा) designating the Hindu creator god.

⁵ 【罔明】[wǎng míng]: The bodhisattva Jālinīprabhaḥ (जालिनीप्रभ). In this case, he seems to be considered less experienced than other bodhisattvas, having yet to free himself completely from the yoke of the world.

⁶ 【敕】[chì]: “imperial orders.”

【日】

こ せそん むかし ちな もんじゅ しょぶつ あつま
 擧す。世尊、昔、因みに 文殊、諸佛の 集る
 ところ いた しょぶつ おのおのほんじょ かえ あ
 處に 至って、諸佛 各 本處に 還るに 値う。
 た ひと によにん あ か ぶつ ざ ちか
 惟だ 一りの 女人有って、彼の 佛坐に 近づいて
 さんまい い もんじゅ すなわ ほとけ もう なん
 三昧に 入る。文殊 乃ち 佛に 白さく、「云何ぞ
 によにん ぶつ ざ ちか え わが え ぶつ
 女人は 佛坐に 近づくを 得て、我は 得ざる。」佛、
 もんじゅ つ なんじ た こ によ かく さんまい
文殊に 告ぐ、「汝 但だ 此の 女を 覺して 三昧よ
 た なんじ みず これ と もんじゅ
 り 起たしめて、汝 自から 之を 問え。」文殊、

によにん めぐ さんそう ゆび な いち げ
 女人を 遶ること 三匝、指を 鳴らすこと 一下し
 て、 乃ち 托して 梵天に 至って、其の 神力を
 盡すも 出だすこと 能わず。世尊云く、「假使い
 ひやくせん もんじゆ ま こ によにん じよう い
 百千の 文殊も 亦た 此の 女人を 定より 出だ
 すことを 得ず。下方一 十二億河沙の 國土を
 す もうみよう ぼさつ あ よ こ によにん じよう
 過ぎて、罔明 菩薩有り。能く 此の 女人を 定よ
 り 出ださん。」須臾に 罔明 大士、地より 湧出し
 て 世尊を 禮拜す。世尊、罔明に 敕す。却って
 によにん まえ いた ゆび な いち げ
 女人の 前に 至って 指を 鳴らすこと 一下す。
 によにんこ おい じよう い
 女人是に 於て 定より 出ず。

【E】

In the time of the World-honored one, Manjushri¹ went to the congregation of the Buddhas. When he arrived, the assembly was over, and each Buddha had returned to his original place. Only one girl remained, approaching the seat of enlightenment and entering Samadhi. ¹ Manjushri asked the Buddha: "How could this girl approach the seat of enlightenment, whereas I could not?" The Buddha said to Manjushri: "Cause her senses to awaken. Bring her out from Samadhi and ask her yourself." Manjushri walked in a circle around the girl three times, snapped his fingers, and even carried her to Brahma, exhausting his miraculous strength, but could not bring her out. The World-honored one said: "Even a hundred thousand Manjushris could not bring her out of her state of deep meditation, but below this place, past twelve hundred million lands, there is Wangming,² who can bring out her of her meditation. As soon as the World-honored one had spoken, Wangming sprang up from the earth and bowed to the World-honored one. The World-honored one instructed him, and he then went in front of the girl and snapped his fingers, and immediately, the girl came out from her state of deep

meditation.

¹ “Manjushri” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Wangming” : See note 5 of the Chinese text.

Men who have realized their familiarity with no-thing-ness are not severed from the world of those who have not. They roam its crowded streets and talk to strangers. They strenuously till the fields and eat the nourishing fruits of the earth, like every other member of their kind. They enjoy playful interactions with their peers, as much as pointing out the way to those unacquainted with it. Even when they are separated by an ocean, on the earth, the men of the way can congregate, joining their existence, experiencing a communion of the mind, by sitting together in the place where nothing can be found. There, there is no before or after, no sleeping or awakening, delusion or enlightenment. To distinguish these things implies that one already has stepped back into the world of things, surrounded by the masses of concepts created by the fertile minds of his fellows and the heaps of objects fabricated by their dexterous hands.

The reward of experience may thus lead to a decrease in certain abilities, rather than a progress. The hermit isolating himself in the desert for a considerable length of time comes to forget about the world and its ways. Having stripped himself of his own self for too long, he then lacks the familiarity with the world needed to properly interact with those who, often unwittingly, remain its diligent servants. Such a man may thus be unable to guide the newcomer to this desert back to the world where they all come from. For such a task, one would need to find someone who has yet to lose himself, to lose his self, being completely engulfed in the vast emptiness of the desert, someone sufficiently familiar with this place of no-thing-ness but who has yet to forget his way back to the great citadel of things.¹³ Joined together, droplets of water

¹³See: 山本玄峰. 《無門関提唱》。東京: 大法輪閣, 1994. : 「もう今度は出るとか出んとか、そういう区別もなくなってしまってるので文殊の本当の世界である。だから出るとか出んとかはお互いの相対の世界で、仏になるとか、修行で迷ってるとかもお互いの相対の世界にあることである。…しかし罔明ははじめでありますから、差別の世界があるから、出すとか出さんとかいう事がありますが、文殊の方は悟るとか悟らんとかいう世界をすんでしまって、いわゆる法身の立場であります。」

are indistinguishable from one another. They form an indistinct mass to the observer, but if a block of ice comes into contact with this mass, part of the water is swiftly turned into ice, leaving the liquid mass and becoming part of the frozen chunk. Likewise, the men still familiar with the world are those most capable of drawing out those who have lost themselves in the great desert, allowing them, in turn, to be told of the incomparable magnificence of their wasteland, of the grandiose nature of emptiness, before once again heading there, accompanied with a throng of newcomers who will discover this wondrous location, which even if it was to be populated by all the living things found on the face of the earth would still be preserved, as an infinite expanse where nothing can be found but where everything shows its most fundamental truth.

Case 12 —Where Would One Seek The Mind 一何處求心

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 37.

【中】

舉。 jǔ 盤山 pán shān 垂語云：「三界無法，何處求心。」
chuí yǔ yún sān jiè wú fǎ hé chù qiú xīn

¹ 【三界】[sān jiè]: “the three worlds.” The world of desire (欲界), the sensory world (色界), and the extra-sensory world (無色界). It may also designate the past, the present, and the future.

【日】

こ ばんざん すいご いわ さんがい むぼう いずこ
舉す。盤山垂語して云く、「三界無法、何處に
しん もと
か 心を求めん。」

【E】

Panshan, as he was giving instruction, said: “In the three worlds,¹ there is not even one thing. Where should one seek the mind?”

¹ See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Abruptly thrown into a world bustling with light, sounds, and things at birth, we nonetheless are at first utterly helpless to make sense of our surroundings, this hapless accumulation of vague impressions. What first enralls our naive heart and seizes our curious mind is desire, the very foundation of our self. We cry with all our strengths, without knowing what a cry is and what is its purpose, being solely guided by the most deeply engraved instinct, as our enduring in this strange world demands that other living things provide us with nourishment, willingly or unwittingly, often through the sacrifice of their very flesh, their body being consumed to foster the growth of our own. Desire then grows into different branches, with one calling us to perpetuate our kind, another to seek pleasure or power, or the inflation of our self, rarely satiated.

After desire, the young one discovers the realm of the senses, letting an unceasing flow penetrate his eyes, his ears, his nose, his tongue, and his skin, a flow then naturally turned into ten thousand things by his restless mind, without him having any awareness of this formidable work of classification and edification. The sounds and the light are replaced by words and letters, by objects and images, slowly leading him toward higher ground, farther away from his birthplace.

As winters succeed to winters, the young one is then initiated with the arts of the world, the crafts of the human mind, and a new parcel of the world is unveiled in front of him. A new stream bursts out within his heart, one not taking its source in the realms of the senses but rather within the realm of thought itself. He discovers and appropriates the abstract, the conceptual, creating and manipulating what cannot be seen or touched.

The three facets of man's world reveal countless things to him, but they nonetheless also by their light eclipse the foundation of all things. The things of his world are mere representations, useful illusions that lead to a delusion: the mistaken feeling that he understands being itself because he fathoms the being of beings and the things of his world, unconscious of the underlying truth hidden by these sky-high walls of things. Before man built up his world, there was not a single thing encompassed by the skies. There was no earth, no stars, not even the celestial vault itself, and the products of his nimble hands or the fruits of his rich imagination did not fundamentally transform the essence of nature. Only

in his mind do these exist as things, rather than as the whole of being.

Numerous upon the earth are the slaves to the world whose hearts know no peace, whose minds are relentlessly assailed by desire, worry, or fear, eating away their existence, shortening their days among the living. Some may even mutilate themselves, wounding their flesh, begging gods and men to offer them some desperately needed relief, to appease their troubled hearts. This is a direct product of the delusion induced by a mistaken view of the nature of the world. Searching to heal their mind, they should realize that the mind itself is a creation of the mind, an illusion invented and exploited by life itself for its own perpetuation. Seeking to soothe their heart, they should become aware of the fact that there is no heart, nor pain, nor anger, nor despair outside of man's world. At all times, man can liberate himself from the unbearable yoke placed over his shoulders, finally coming to the realization that he is the one stubbornly keeping it on his back. Releasing his burden, letting go of his possessions, he may then leisurely wander off, light as a silk thread raptured by a soft breeze, mingling with the snow dancing with sun rays, in the clear, white expanse of the heavens, where there is no mind nor heart, no anguish nor desire.

Case 13 —Luzu Faces The Wall 一魯祖面壁

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 23.

【中】

舉。魯祖 凡見僧來便面壁。南泉 聞云：「我
尋常向他道，空劫以前承當¹，佛未出世時會取，
尚不得一箇半箇。他恁麼，驢年去。」

¹ 【承當】S: 【承当】[chéng dāng]: “to take on.”

【日】

こ ろ そ およ そう きた み すなわ
舉す。魯祖凡そ 僧の 来るを 見れば 便ち
めんべき なんせん き いわ わ よのつね た むか
面壁す。南泉聞いて 云く、「我れ 尋常他に 向って

くうごう いぜん じょうとう ほとけいま しゅっせ とき
 空劫以前に 承 當せよ。佛 未だ 出世せざる 時に
ういしゅ い な いっ こ はん こ え た
 會取せよと 道うすら。尚お 一箇半箇を 得ず。他
いんも ろ ねん さ
 恁麼ならば 驢年にし 去らん。」

【E】

Whenever Luzu saw a monk coming, he immediately sat facing the wall. Nanquan heard about this and said: "I usually tell people to face what was before the eon of emptiness,¹ or to understand how it was before the Buddhas appeared in the world, and yet I have not found one successor, or even a half. Doing it in this manner, he will have to continue until the year of the donkey."²

¹ "The Eon of emptiness": One of the four eons (or kalpas) of Indian mythology: the kalpa of creation, the kalpa of existence, the kalpa of destruction, and the kalpa of emptiness.

² "The year of the donkey": There is no "year of the donkey" in the Chinese calendar. The expression here means endlessly.

For the man who is fully awake, his eye wide opened, constantly one with the way of the sky, encounters with other men are like stumbling upon a ball of lush mistletoe in a snowy forest filled with leafless trees or hearing the cries of a hatchling desperately striving for its life breaking the quietude of the earth. The voice of the stranger is like the whisper of the wind caressing naked branches, and the sight of his complexion is like the beholding of the firmament at the heart of the night. Dwelling in the simplest abode, he has no-thing to offer to the visitor, and this is the invaluable present that he bountifully displays to all those approaching his threshold. He has no-thing, without having a single thing. What he has not, he gives to the guest. What the guest brings with him, he smashes into the finest dust, before scattering it to the winds, leaving him naked, stripped of all his possessions. Thus do most visitors flee from this poor man, their hunger for knowledge and wisdom left unsatiated, complaining that the old fellow not only offered them nothing but also attempted to rob them of their most prized possessions.

Meeting a stranger or a friend, the old man impassively faces a wall. When the sun shines like the most radiant diamond, or when the heavens strike down his home with thunderbolts, he imperturbably faces the wall. Few take heed of this wall. They do not look at what the host is pointing toward with his nose. The wall is nothing and everything. It is the end and the beginning, an impasse and a doorway, leading to the place where everything is without price, and where not a single thing can be seen or felt. The men of the world of things are nonetheless blind to the immeasurable value of what lies beyond the horizon of this world, the inconceivable, what cannot be told about but only experienced. To show them the way more often than not demands that one guides them using the tools of the world to clear out the path, to pave the way, with words directly poured into their ears and letters flung into their eyes.

Silence is truer than the most eloquent words to depict the essence, but so used to the rustle and bustle of the world, its dwellers are deaf to its teaching. Some have taken a glimpse at what lies beyond the wall of things, have perceived that there is something and no-thing to be heard in silence, but they still need to hear about it with words. Finding another elder, the apprentice hears praises about the old man stubbornly facing the wall, telling how his practice is too deep to be fathomed by the world.¹⁴ This one then benevolently shows him the way, with his tongue and his quill: “You should face what was before the beginning of time. You should see you own self before you were born. Then you will clearly see what is beyond the wall.” Once again, even with such kind-hearted guidance, few will be those whose gaze succeeds in piercing the stone barrier in front of their eyes. For the guide, success or failure is nonetheless nonexistent. He inhabits the place where there is no beginning nor end, no winter or summer, no years or eons. He cannot even count the fingers upon his hands, and even less the number of the companions sharing with him his humble abode. He is nonetheless content, having forgotten all worries and fled all torments, having lost himself in this wall, which itself has become invisible.

¹⁴See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》。東京：無我山房, 1915. p182 (Case 23).

Case 14 —The Golden-Scaled Fish Passes Through The Net —透網金鱗

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 49. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 33.

【中】

舉。三聖問雪峯：「透網金鱗，¹ 未審以何為食。」峯云：「待汝出網來向汝道。」聖云：「一千五百人善知識，話頭² 也不識。」峯云：「老僧住持事繁。」³

¹ 【鱗】[lín]: “a scale” / “a scaled [animal].”

² 【話頭】[huà tóu]: “the critical phrase [of a public case].” It literally means “head of speech.” It designates a short phrase upon which the follower is invited by a master to meditate, a part of a public case, in particular. This use of such phrases became one of the characteristics of the Linji (臨濟) school of Zen, following the impulse of Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲, 1089-1163 A.D.). The Linji school was later associated with the practice of “inspecting the critical phrase” (看話) of public cases, causing it to be defined as the “Zen school of the inspection of the critical phrases” (看話禪), in contrast with the “Zen school of silent contemplation” (默照禪), the latter having known a considerable development in Japan following the work of Dogen (道元) in the 13th century.

³ 【事繁】[shì fán]: “to be busy with one’s duties” (事務繁忙).

【日】

こさんしょう せっぽう と あみ とお きんりん そ
 舉す。三聖、雪峰に 問う、「網を 透る 金鱗、未
 も なに もつ えさ な ぼういわ なんじ あみ
 審、何を 以てか 食と 爲す。」峰云く、「汝が 網を
 い き ま い しょういわ いっせん
 出で 來たるを 待って 道わん。」聖云く、「一千
 ごひゃくにん ぜん ちしき わとう も し
 五百人の 善知識なるに、話頭すら 也識らず。」
 ぼういわ ろうそう じゅうじ ことしげ
 峰云く、「老僧は 住持に 事繁し。」

【E】

Sansheng asked Xuefeng: “A golden-scaled one has passed through the net. I do not know what it will eat from now on” Xuefeng said: “When you have passed through the net, then

I will tell you.” Sansheng said: “A learned master with 1500 disciples, and he doesn’ t know how to argue.” Xuefeng said: “This old monk is busy being in charge of administrating the temple.”

To have been blessed with the revelation of the absolute, to have been awakened by the deafening silence and blinded by the ultimate absence, this is a joy that can dull one’ s reason as surely as the most intoxicating drink. The desire to forgo all things may embolden the one still attached to his own self, puffing up his pride, leading him to stain the purity of his vision with the filth of the world. Endowed with the awareness of the vacuity of the world, the one returning to it may be tempted to feel above it, and above its dwellers who have yet to share his experience.

Meeting one acquainted with the absolute, the proud returnee may lay traps to prove his worth, the superiority of his knowledge. Haughtily declaring that he is now a golden being, who has broken free from the seemingly impenetrable ramparts of the world, liberating himself from its unbearable yoke and now able to roam without hindrance in the great beyond, he impudently asks what is there for him to do now. With what should he now nourish this brilliant mind, this luminous body, which has experienced the most fundamental essence? The golden-scaled fish has slipped through a net, but unknowingly has jumped straight into another, whose grip is even tighter.

The one hearing these asinine questions, seeing these ludicrous baits for what they are, has better to do than to indulge in such infantile banter. Seeing the fish with its mouth wide open, shamelessly pouring out nonsense, he throws his bait in the gaping orifice, feeding him with something that appears sweet to his palate, but will sooner or later reveal itself to sting his entrails. In front of the boastful, the wise humiliates himself. In front of the weak, he shows himself strong.¹⁵ When he humbly asks, he

¹⁵See Wansong’ s preface on this case: “Weak when meeting the strong. Hard when encountering what is soft. When two hard things collide one into the other, there’ s got to be a wound. Then, tell me, how does one encounter

shall receive clear guidance. When he sees himself, he will see how much he has erred.

On the day when the adrift learner will truly embody the way of the sky, and not simply take a furtive glimpse at it, he will laugh at the memory of his own foolish words. Having immersed his whole self in the waters, he will see that there is neither fish nor net, neither inside nor outside. There is no food and no one fed. Then will he understand the wisdom of the humble servant, who agrees to waddle through the mud to bring others back to the clear waters, bathed with the incomparable brilliance of the sun, where there is only light and translucence. There, numbers are meaningless, and the worries of the world are nowhere to be seen. There is only the vastness of the limpid ocean, the peace of being carried by the tumultuous currents, one with them, ungraspable and unseen.

Case 15 —Not Abiding In Clarity 一不在明 白里

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 2.

【中】

舉。趙州示眾云：「『至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。』」¹
纔有語言，是揀擇，是明白。老僧不在明白裏。是
汝還護惜也無。」時有僧問：「既不在明白裏，護惜
箇什麼。」州云：「我亦不知。」僧云：「和尚既不
知，為什麼却道不在明白裏。」州云：「問事即得。
禮拜了退。」

¹ 【至道無難，唯嫌揀擇】[zhì dào wú nán, wéi xián jiǎn zé]: “the supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.” The opening verse of the poem “Faith in Mind,” 信心銘 [xìn xīn míng], attributed to the third patriarch of Zen, Sengcan (鑑智僧璨 [Jiànzhì Sēngcàn]). The poem continues as follows: 「至道無難，唯

the other?” Chinese original: 「逢強即弱。遇柔即剛。兩硬相擊。必有一傷。且道。如何迴互去。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》. CBETA (Case 33).

嫌揀擇。但莫憎愛，洞然明白。毫釐有差，天地懸隔。」“The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing. Neither love nor hate, and you will clearly understand. Be off by a hair, and there is a gap as wide as the one separating heaven from earth.”

【日】

こ じょうしゅう しゅ しめ いわ し どうかた
 擧す。趙 州、衆に 示して 云く、「至道難きこ
 な た けんじゃく さら わずか ご げん あ
 と 無し、唯だ 揀擇を 嫌う、と。纔かに 語言有れ
 こ けんじゃく こ めいはく ろうそう めいはく うち
 ば、是れ 揀擇、是れ 明白。老僧は 明白の 裏に
 あ こ なんじ は ごしゃく や とき そう
 在らず。是れ 汝 還た 護惜する 也無。」時に 僧
 あ と すで めいはく うち あ こ
 有り、問う、「既に 明白の 裏に 在らずんば、箇の
 なに ごしゃく しゅういわ わ またし
 什麼をか 護惜せん。」州 云く、「我れも 亦知らず。」
 そういわ おしょうすで し なにゆえ かえ
 僧云く、「和尚既に 知らずんば、爲什麼にか 却っ
 めいはく うち あ いう しゅういわ じ
 て 明白の 裏に 在らずと 道う。」州 云く、「事を
 と すなわ よ らいはい おわ しりぞ
 問うは 即ち 得し、禮拜し 了らば 退け。」

【E】

Zhaozhou, instructing the assembly, said: “The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes picking and choosing.¹ But as soon as there is language, there is picking and choosing, there is ‘understanding’ and clarity. This old monk does not abide in clarity. Do you cherish and hold on to this ‘clarity’ or not?” At that time, a monk asked: “You say you do not abide in clarity, so what would you cherish and hold on to then?” Zhaozhou said: “I don’t know, either.” The monk said: “If that monk does not know, then why do you say that you do not abide in clarity?” Zhaozhou said: “One asked for something and got something.² Now bow and withdraw.”

¹ “The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes picking and choosing”: A quote. See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “One has asked for something and has gotten something”: The original phrasing (問事即得) leaves ample space for interpretation. It can mean that he has gotten an answer, but the Chinese word 得 may also mean that he has succeeded in something. Here, it may perhaps mean succeeded in making the master fall into his trap.

The way that can be talked about is not the eternal way¹⁶. Where the will of man is manifested, the way cannot be perceived. The way of the sky embraces all that is, but man feels compelled to build towering walls of things around himself, concealing the magnificence of the heavens, as contrary to the celestial things, those forming his world can be seized and played with. They can be controlled and understood, scrupulously examined from all angles, thrown into a bright light, revealing each one of their most minute details as clearly as the day. These things veil the truth of the sky, but without them, he is utterly blind, experiencing a meaningless truth, thrown into a dark, bottomless pit, which may be the essence of being, but which he feels compelled to flee, to rather take refuge in the luminous illusions of the world, where falsehood and caricatures abound, but where the comfort of apparent meaningfulness can bring him contentment.

The deceitful clarity, or the meaningless truth, this is the choice presented to those who aspire to let themselves be shaped by the way of the sky. The wise knows that there is no point in choosing either. One should remain on the sharp edge separating hard truth from sweet delusion, language from silence, world from sky. To abide solely in one of them is an easy task, but to take upon oneself to brazenly go back and forth, to boldly step into the perilous mire for the benefit of others, this shows a mastery of the self, and its abandonment, a prerequisite to embracing the way. Explaining the ineffable, shedding light upon the abyss, what a ridiculous endeavor it is! And yet, a light-bearer of the way will accept to ridicule himself if it can save others. Encountering a bright student, overwhelmed by his newfound vision of his world but having yet to release the grip he exerts on his own self, he may even be humiliated by the one he intends to guide, but unknowingly to the foolish and arrogant pupil, one who has humbly abandoned his own self cannot be humiliated, as there is nothing left to humiliate anymore.

¹⁶Cf. The opening sentence of Laozi's *Dao De Jing*: "The way that can be spoken of is not the eternal, unchanging way. The name that can be named, is not the eternal, unchanging name." TBA. Original Chinese: 「道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。」 From: Original Chinese text from: 阿部吉雄。《新釈漢文大系〈7〉老子莊子上巻》。東京：明治書院，1966. p11 (Chapter 1).

When one dares to shed light upon the darkness, to bring words breaking the silence to pieces, contradiction is then easy to notice. As soon as one opens his mouth, inanity ineluctably echoes in the air, falling into the ears of the men of the world, but to the creatures of the wild, it is only a rumbling of the earth, a melody of life. Roaming the dusty, cluttered streets built by the hands of their fathers, two light-bearers, men of the way, may be seen running after shadows, like vivacious cats chasing their own tails. They are laughing loudly, knowing perfectly what they are doing, even if the onlookers consider them mad, as their voices rise to the loftiest heavens, resonating loudly across the earth. Like two stars colliding, this is the likelihood of such a pleasant encounter between two men of the way, and one should express gratitude to the heavens for being witness of such a rare event, a precious occasion to learn what one is destined to become. The wrinkled hand has pulled up the silky-smooth one of the novice, and they now stand upon the same ground. Both have gotten something, and both have lost every-thing. Something has been learned, and every-thing has been forgotten. A deep bow would be in order to conclude this frivolous play, as is the custom, but all the actors have vanished, and the stage has been cleared completely. After the long night, the dark season, nonetheless comes the grand rebirth of clarity, the triumphant return of the bright, and the unfolding of the play continues, without any interlude.

Case 16 — Baizhang' s Ducks 一百丈野鴨

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 53.

【中】

jǔ mǎ dà shī yǔ bǎi zhàng xíng cì jiàn yě yā zǐ fēi guò dà
 舉。馬大師與百丈行次，見野鴨子飛過。大
 shī yún shì shén me zhàng yún yě yā zǐ dà shī yún shén
 師云：「是什麼。」丈云：「野鴨子。」大師云：「什
 me chù qù yě zhàng yún fēi guò qù yě dà shī suì niǔ bǎi zhàng
 麼處去也。」丈云：「飛過去也。」大師遂扭百丈
 bí tóu zhàng zuò rěn tòng shēng dà shī yún hé céng fēi qù
 鼻頭，丈作忍痛聲，大師云：「何曾飛去。」

【日】

こ 擧す。馬ば 大師だいし、百ひゃく 丈じょう と 行い き し 次とき、野鴨かも 子こ の
と 飛す び 過み ぐ る を 見み る。大だいし 師いわ 云い く、「是こ れ 什なん 麼ゆ ぞ。」
じょう 丈いわ 云かも く、「野鴨だいし 子いわ。」大だいし 師いわ 云い く、「什いず 麼こ 處ゆ に 去ゆ く
じょう 丈いわ 云かも く、「飛と び 過す ぎ 去さ れ り。」大だいし 師いわ、遂つ に
ひゃく 百じょう 丈いわ の 鼻び 頭とう を 扭ひね る。丈じょう、忍にん 痛つう の 聲おと を 作な す。
 大だいし 師いわ 云い く、「何なん ぞ 曾かつ て 飛と び 去さ ら ん。」

【E】

As Great Master Ma was taking a walk with Baizhang, they saw a skein of wild ducks flying by. The Great Master said: "What is that?" Baizhang said: "A skein of wild ducks." The Great Master said: "Where did it go?"¹ Baizhang said: "It flew away." The Great Master then twisted the tip of Baizhang's nose, and Baizhang cried out in pain. The Great Master said: "Did it ever fly away?"

¹ "Where did it go?": The word "skein" has been added in the translation, so as to avoid being forced to use a plural pronoun, absent in the original Chinese, to designate what went away, preserving the ambiguity between the birds and the whole of nature, seemingly at the center of this case.

Arduous is the task of a guide to the way. The guide cannot simply take the hand of his protegee and lead him to it. The one guided must discover the path by himself, being only told how is he straying. The benevolent scout on the way will also place stumbling blocks on his course, testing his reactions and progress so that the novice would avoid more dangerous pitfalls. Seeing that one has yet to contemplate the purity of the empty sky, remaining a blind servant of the constellations of things, he must first lead him to realize his own predicament, his servitude to the world of men.

Strolling along a calm river whose shore is coated with fresh snow, as woolly clouds silently pass over the land, undisturbed by the affairs of the living, the pathfinder and his protegee are

beholding the magnificence of nature. A skein of ducks, frightened by the intrusion of these curious creatures into their territory, then suddenly takes flight, soaring above the trees, soon concealed by the long, leafless branches, like as many arms imploring the sky for the coming of the spring and the renewal of life. Then comes the bait; then is the trap laid by the guide, in the form of the simplest possible question, the earthliest use of the tools of the world: "What is it?"

Either truly blind or simply playing the game of the master, the protegee jumps head-long into the trap: "a skein of ducks." An all too natural answer, and yet one that betrays his condition as a slave to things. The product of eons of careful selection, his mind instinctually notices the animals moving around him, detaching them from their background, his eyes focused on them, transforming each one of them into a thing of the world, bearing a name and being associated with countless characteristics. Each duck may be seen as an assemblage of succulent pieces of meat, or as a potential pet. It is recognized by his quack, and the skein is separated between drakes and hens. Even each feather, and each strand of hair of each feather, may even become a thing itself, according to an endless decomposition, a progressive shattering and dissection of the whole of nature by the mind, into countless things. The ducks themselves by their flight certainly merely reply to their instinct, pushing them to flee the cold, to escape the fangs and the claws of the beasts roaming the land or the arrows and bullets of our brethren. What drives this flight? Fear of death, lust for food or flesh, the same instincts indelibly carved in the innermost parts of ourselves. To see these animals as food or danger is a fundamental ground of our own being, and yet the reaching of our very essence demands that one sees beyond the vision offered to us by our instinct, that we courageously conquer our own nature, so that we would be able to behold the magnificent truth of nature, veiled by these things.

Still caught in the trap, the novice is invited to go even deeper inside it by the guide: "Where did it go?," to which, once again, an obvious answer is given: "It flew away." The guide then takes the matter into his own hands, twisting the nose of this man who jumped into his snare, as he cries in pain. This pain brings him back to the earth, pointing out the fact that he is not a disembod-

ied mind, but also flesh and bones, with this dolorous experience awaking his most profound instinct, as he uncontrollably lets a strident sound rush out of his mouth. The ducks have bitten his nose, and the one bitten is now flying away, away from the delusions of the world, as things become clearer, until all things themselves vanish.

Each duck is part of the whole of life. Life itself is a part of the earth, encompassed by the sky, but when these are seen in their truth, there is only one thing that englobes all that is, and this is the way of the sky. This realization is the last step before the last thing itself fades away, together with the last remnants of the world, leaving no-thing. The landscape does not change at all. It now only shines in its truth, outside of the boundaries set out by men, not existing as mere things, but rather felt as a whole, before being experienced as no-thing-ness. Then, the fluttering of the wings is seamlessly woven together with the cry of pain and the voice of the master. The beak of the duck is felt on one's nose at all times, and the wintery scene unfolded in front of their eyes cannot be distinguished from the beauty of springtime. Boundaries have fallen, and even without having taken one more step, the protegee has reached his destination, having transcended his care for his own life and his fear of death, the frontier between the two having wasted away, enduringly freeing him from his instincts, showing him the ineffable truth of all things.

Case 17 —Fayan' s Hairbreadth 一法眼毫釐

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 17.

【中】

jǔ fǎ yǎn wèn xiū shān zhǔ háo lí yǒu chà tiān dì xuán
舉。法眼問脩山主：「『毫¹厘有差，天地懸
gé² 』³，rǔ zuò me shēng huì xiū yún háo lí yǒu chà tiān
隔² 』³，汝作麼生會。」脩云：「毫厘有差，天
dì xuán gé yǎn yún rèn me yòu zhēng dé xiū yún mǒu jiǎ
地懸隔。」眼云：「恁麼又爭得。」脩云：「某甲
zhī rú cǐ hé shàng yòu rú hé yǎn yún háo lí yǒu chà tiān dì
只如此，和尚又如何。」眼云：「毫厘有差，天地
xuán gé xiū biàn lǐ bài
懸隔。」脩便禮拜。

¹ 【毫】[háo]: “a hair” / “a very small [quantity].”

² 【懸隔】S: 【懸隔】[xuán gé]: “a great gap.”

³ A quote from the poem: “Faith in Mind” (信心銘 [xìn xīn míng]), attributed to the third patriarch of Zen, Sengcan (鑑智僧璨 [Jiànzhì Sēngcàn]). The context of this verse is as follows: 「至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。但莫憎愛，洞然明白。毫釐有差，天地懸隔。」 “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing. Neither love nor hate, and you will clearly understand. Be off by a hair, and there is a gap as wide as the one separating heaven from earth.”

【日】

こ ほうげん しゅざんしゅ と ごうり さ
 擧す。法眼、脩山主に 問う、「毫釐も 差あれ
 てんち はる へだ なんじ そもさえ え しゅ
 ば 天地懸かに 隔たる、汝 作麼生か 會す。」脩
 いわ ごうり さ てんち はる へだ め
 云く、「毫釐も 差あれば 天地懸かに 隔たる。」眼
 いわ いんも またいか え しゅいわ それがし
 云く、「恁麼ならば 又 爭でか 得ん。」脩云く、「某甲
 ただ か ごと おしょうまた いか め いわ ごうり
 只此くの 如し、和尚又如何ん。」眼云く、「毫釐も
 さ てんち はる へだ しゅう すなわ らい
 差あれば 天地懸かに 隔たる。」州、 便ち 禮
 はい
 拜す。

【E】

Fayan asked Xiushanzhu: “‘If there is only a hairsbreadth of difference, it is the distance between heaven and earth.’¹ How do you understand it?” Xiushanzhu said: “If there is only a hairsbreadth of difference, it is the distance between heaven and earth.” Fayan said: “If this is it, how would one get it?” Xiushanzhu said: “For this humble monk, this is it. How is it for the master?” Fayan said: “If there only is a hairsbreadth of difference, it is the distance between heaven and earth.” Xiushanzhu then made a deep bow.

¹ A quote, see note 3 of the Chinese text.

The great desert, the seemingly infinite expanse where uniformity reigns supreme and nothing can be distinguished, is the place where man loses all notions of distances, dimensions, or substance.

This inscrutable location may appear to the onlooker as having the breadth of a snowflake, or the one of an entire galaxy. It may seem to be covered with the darkest soot, or resplendent like the most intense brazier. There, to perceive the smallest interstice separating things is to lift up the veil covering the constellations of things forming the world, to chase away silence with noise, to eliminate plainness by introducing distinctions and contrasts. Having ceased to be a man of yes and no, of large and small, the widest chasm then inspires no fear in his heart, being considered in the same way as the most insignificant fissure. The silvery moon is indeed touching the tip of our noses, and our fingertips are licked by the flames of the sun. One step, and we cross rivers and oceans. One bite, and we swallow the entirety of life. Drinking a lake, we have not wet our lips, and the blinking of our eyes is enough for glorious civilizations to rise and fall. Where there are no things, there is neither gap nor absence. Oneness reigns, without distinction between ruler and ruled, the lord and his dominion.¹⁷

The lover of the desert nonetheless rarely spends all his days enjoying its serene quietude. Having experienced no-thing-ness indeed renders him more able to navigate the complexities of the citadel of things sheltering most of his kind. Seeing the nature of his brethren and piercing through their hearts with his gaze, he playfully interacts with them. Seeing himself in the eyes of one of them, he may decide to explore this strange mind in front of him, to attempt to draw out something from what appears to be an inexhaustible well of things. He then dares to ask if this man sees the difference between the breadth of his hair and the distance between heaven and earth. To acknowledge such a difference would be to stain the pristine blanket of snow offered by the heavens, to break an infinitely large panel of glass, first cleaved in two, but soon shattered into innumerable shards, which, in turn, then cut everything that crosses their paths. The ears and the tongue of the one to whom this is asked play with the world and with words, but his mind is still occupied by his true home, the place where nothing is found, and where everything *is*. His reply is therefore the one of a mirror: he reflects the image offered to him, refusing to be played, rather returning the present of the stranger to the one who gave it, simply repeating the question. Why such rudeness? To the one whose home is no-thing-ness, a thing offered is a burden

¹⁷See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p139 (Case 17).

placed upon his shoulder, an alienation from his beloved dwelling, a temptation to once again jump into the trap and find himself enslaved by the cluttered world of things. Refusing to interpret, to engage in argumentation, the question is heard as a mere sound rather than an assembly of words to be deciphered. It is heard as a piece of the earth and the sky rather than a thing of the world of man. He is himself boldly standing like a granite wall towering over the land, and this noise of the world simply reverberates upon its surface, falling back into the ears of the one who emitted it.

The dweller of the desert shares with this empty expanse its most fundamental nature. He is a mirror and a piece of glass, both letting light come through it and reflecting an image. Facing a neighbor, another one of its inhabitants, he not only sees himself but also hears the echo of each sound he produces bouncing again and again. The one attempting to explore the other then becomes the one who is investigated, but as they recognize what they are facing, all distinctions soon fade away. Having met this other self, the distinction between them vanishes, as the gap between them is now less than a hairbreadth, and they are now in communion. The countrymen return to their common homeland, hand in hand, mind in mind, having nothing left to prove, and nothing left to offer.

Case 18 —Dizang’ s Most Intimate —地藏親切

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 20.

【中】

jǔ dì zàng wèn fǎ yǎn shàng zuò hé wǎng yǎn yún yǐ
 舉。地藏問法眼：「上座何往。」眼云：「迤
 lǐ xíng jiǎo zàng yún xíng jiǎo shì zuò me shēng yǎn yún bù
 邐¹行脚。」藏云：「行脚事作麼生。」眼云：「不
 zhī zàng yún bù zhī zuì qīn qiè yǎn huò rán dà wù
 知。」藏云：「不知最親切。」²眼豁然大悟。

¹ 【迤邐】S: 【迤邐】[yǐ lǐ]: “meandering” / “winding.”

² 【親切】S: 【亲切】[qīn qiè]: “close and dear” / “familiar.”

【日】

こ 擧ちす。ち地ぞう藏ほう、げん法眼とにと問じょうざいづう、「ゆ上座あんぎゃ何ぞうくいにかあんぎゃ往ふちく。」
げん眼い云りく、「い迤あんぎゃ邐ぞうとしてい行ふち脚ぞうす。」い藏ふち云もく、「も行と脚との
じ事さ作も麼さん生げん。」い眼い云りく、「ふち不ぞう知い。」い藏ふち云もく、「ふち不も知と最とも
しん親せつ切げん。」い眼い、か瞎かつ然ねんとしてたい大ご悟ごす。

【E】

Dizang asked Fayan: "Where are you going, senior monk?"
 Fayan said: "I am on pilgrimage, wandering, guided by the winds." Dizang said: "Why are you doing this pilgrimage?"
 Fayan said: "I don't know." Dizang said: "Non-knowing is most intimate." Fayan suddenly attained great enlightenment.

Life is driven by an instinct of exploration, of wandering. This is what led it out of the womb of the sea, as it crawled onto the dry land, before covering the entirety of the earth and occupying the thin coat of air clothing our planet. Some creatures continue to search for greener pastures to satiate the hunger of their body, while others set themselves on a spiritual quest, seeking wisemen and exotic rituals, ascetics and new visions of their world. The destination of such a journey is nonetheless often a homecoming, a return to their roots, showing that what they sought always was within the reach of their trembling hands, within the scope of their inquisitive gaze. Stumbling upon a man of undeniable experience, the pilgrim will sooner or later have to be confronted with this question: "Where are you going?" Where are we all going, as a whole? This should be the answer that should be pondered. Together carried by the tender embrace of the arms of our pearly galaxy, we are all gently carried on the way of the sky. The clear-minded wanderer now sees this, as he spends nights enthralled by the glorious sight of these extended arms, painted with care in the celestial vault, with myriads of luminous dots illuminating the obsidian dome like rivers of diamonds, each representing a world of its own. He is now a pilgrim carried on the way, following the winds, having forgotten his own will on the road and given up his

self to be swallowed by the creatures roaming the mountains. The names of the countries he passed through have left his mind, and he has no notion of the duration of his wandering. Intrigued by this perplexing answer, this demonstration of his mastery of the pitfalls of the world, as he utters words that are right on the edge between earth and world, neither attempting to grasp a preconceived reality nor retreating into silence, the man of experience decides to dig a little deeper into the heart of the surprising traveler, suddenly throwing another question at him: “Why are you undertaking this pilgrimage?”

The words of the fool often echo with those of the wise. The former is often difficult to differentiate from the latter, and just like when the destination is found to be the starting point, the first words are often identical to the last, those uttered with great care after a lifetime of reflection and practice: “I do not know!” “No idea!” What changes is the mind at their source, and thus the same sentence may represent the pinnacle of the discovery of nature, or a crude display of one’s inanity. Hearing such an answer, one is nonetheless forced to face a more terrible danger than any of those encountered in the wilderness by the pilgrim. Presented with such ambiguity, one would be tempted to try to discern the wise from the fool, the one who knows from the ignorant, the proficient master from the novice. This would nonetheless be to stray and to fall into the pit, to cloak clarity with obscurity. When one ceases to shatter the whole of nature into pieces, the wise can no longer be discerned from the fool. The home then becomes the most exotic location, and the remote and strange lands are seen as familiar.

The end of the path of learning is the forgetfulness of what has been learned, completing the circle of existence. Thus is the pilgrim graciously offered a final remark: “Non-knowing is the most intimate.” When there is no longer an opposition between wise and fool, a contrast between staying and journeying, the home and the foreign, then can one finally realize that the home is where the heart takes its source, the place where knowledge has vanished, where only the whole is felt, before this whole, in turn, itself disappears, leaving only no-thing-ness in its stead. True intimacy is then discovered, as distances no longer have meaning, and we are not only close to the whole of nature, but rather are the whole of nature, with each thread of our being seamlessly weaved with all

that is .

Case 19 — Jiashan Brandishes The Sword — 夾山揮劍

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 68.

【中】

舉。僧問 夾山：「撥塵見佛時如何。」山 云：「直
須揮劍，若不揮劍漁父棲¹ 巢。」僧舉問 石霜：「撥
塵見佛時如何。」霜 云：「渠² 無國土，何處逢
渠。」僧迴舉似 夾山。山 上堂云：「門庭施設³ 不
如老僧。入理⁴ 深談猶較 石霜 百步。」

¹ 【棲】S:【栖】[qī]: “to perch” / “to stay.”

² 【渠】[qú]: The third-person pronoun: “he.”

³ 【門庭施設】[mén tíng shī shè]: Literally “the facilities of the front garden.” It here seems to mean “teaching methods.” The “front garden” indeed often designates a place where Zen is practiced, and the “facilities” are the skillful means used to teach disciples. (See: 「門庭施設，指師家接化學人所使用之方便機法。禪林中常說之第二義門即係權假施設，相對者，第一義門即入理深談。又「門庭之說」即指方便說。」From: 慈怡。《佛光大辭典》。北京图书馆出版社，2004. p3606)

⁴ 【入理】[rù lǐ]: “to enter the matter of the inner essence.” The word 理 [lǐ] can designate different things. In addition to the “inner essence,” it commonly designates “logic” or the works of the mind, such as the sciences, and also the idea of establishing things according to a particular form of order.

【日】

こ そう かっさん と ちり ばら ほとけ
舉す。僧、夾山に 問う、「塵を 撥って 佛を
み とき いかん さんいわ じか すべか けん ふる
見る 時如何。」山云く、「直に 須らく 劍を 揮う
も けん ふる ぎよふ す す
べし。若し 劍を 揮わずんば 漁父巢に 棲まん。」
そう こ せきそう と ちり ばら ほとけ み
僧、舉して 石霜に 問う、「塵を 撥って 佛を 見る
とき いかん そういわ かれ こくど な いず ところ
時如何。」霜云く、「渠に 國土無し、何れの 處に
かれ あ そう かえ かっさん こじ さん
か 渠に 逢わん。」僧、廻って 夾山に 舉似す。山、

じょうどう いわ もんてい しせつ ろうそう し
 上堂して 云く、「門庭の 施設は 老僧に 如かず、
 にゅうり しんだん な せきそう ひゃく ほ あた
 入理の 深談は 猶お 石霜の 百歩に 較れり。」

【E】

A monk asked Jiashan: “What if one sweeps away the dust¹ and sees the Buddha?” Jiashan said: “One must brandish the sword.² If one does not brandish the sword, the fisherman remains in a nest [of reeds].³ “The monk asked Shishuang about this: “What if one sweeps away the dust and sees the Buddha?” Shishuang said: “He has no country, so where would one stumble upon him?” The monk told this to Jiashan. Jiashan ascended the rostrum and said: “Concerning the facilities of the front garden,⁴ this old monk is ahead of Shishuang, but to enter the matter of the inner essence⁵ and for deep dialogues, Shishuang is one hundred steps ahead.”

¹ “The dust”: It often designates the things of the world, and its delusions.

² “The sword”: It is linked with man’s capacity to discern things, his mind acting like a sword that separates what is fundamentally one.

³ “The facilities of the front garden”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

⁴ “The inner essence”: See note 4 of the Chinese text.

The delusions and worries occupying our mind, and even the very things forming our world, may appear to be specks of dust on the spotless mirror displaying the truth of being.¹⁸ Once one has begun to see this enthralling image, he feels compelled to diligently scrub this dust, in the hope of being able to contemplate it in all its purity. Doing so, one nonetheless remains caught in the weeds of the world, like vines tightly entangled all around his body, leaving him unable to move and see. He then suddenly realizes that he is covered in dust up to his neck, and the more he sweeps it away, the more he is buried in it. He ceases to vainly strike the dust with the sword of his reason, his discerning mind that cuts all things into neat pieces, as the more he cuts, the more numerous are the things entrapping him, increasingly finer grains that invade the smallest

¹⁸ See the story of Huineng’s verse about the mirror and the dust in the first chapter of the “Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch” (六祖壇經).

interstice. The path toward freedom begins when he realizes that he is battling against windmills, against the winds and the seas, a futile enterprise. His sword must be brandished far above his head, pointed at the clear azure sky, once all the clouds have scattered,¹⁹ as an acknowledgment that reason is powerless against the all-encompassing realm. Offered to the heavens, thrown into the air, it is when it is abandoned that the dust begins to be carried away by the vigorous gusts occupying the lower heavens, when the reeds trapping the fisherman start to wither away, leaving the waters as clear as the celestial dome. His field of view finally unobstructed, he nonetheless finds himself lost, as what he beholds is not what he sought. The face of a god, the hand of a guide transcending man's nature, a holy one dwelling in a sanctified land, this is what he expected, but he now only sees nothing.

A celestial being is someone who abides in the heavens, in the essence of being, this glorious space heartily welcoming the being of all beings within its arms. To live in the heavens is to live in no-thing-ness, which is the foundation of the sky and all that it encompasses. This is the place where there is not a single thing, and thus there is no land where the celestial being may be stumbled upon, no object that could offer us a faithful image of him to behold. Abiding in no-thing-ness, he is nowhere to be found. He cannot be found, simply because he has never been out of sight. When one sweeps away the dust, he is the dust. When one polishes the mirror, he is the mirror, but man needs to open his eyes to his own nature.

The truth of being is embraced when the sweeper realizes that

¹⁹See the following story: "On the eve of his last battle at Minatogawa, Kusunoki Masashige asked the eminent Yuan dynasty Zen Master Mingji Chuzhun (Minki Soshun: 1264-1338), who had come to Japan and lived in both Kenchō-ji and Kennin-ji Temples: 'when thoughts of life and death occur one after another, what is one to do?' 'Cut off both heads and let your one sword rest icy against the sky,' he replied. With this, Masashige overcame life and death to become a man of the Great Death (daishi teinin)." From: Kusumoto Bun'yū; Ruymar, Michael D. (Tr). *Zengo Nyūmon — An Introduction to Zen Words and Phrases*. [unpublished manuscript]; Original Japanese: 「楠正成が湊川において戦死する前日に、わが国に來朝して、建長・建仁両寺に住した中国元の高僧明極楚俊禪師（一二六四—一三三八）に対して、生死の念がこもごも起こる時、どうすればよいですか。と尋ねましたところ、両頭を截断すれば、一剣天に倚って寒し。と答えています。これによって、正成は生死を超克して大死底の人となったのです。」 From: 久須本文雄。《禪語入門》。東京：大法輪閣，1982. p27.

there is no dust to be swept away, and that there is no mirror to clean. There is no one sweeping things, and nowhere where dust could accumulate. Then is no-thing-ness completely unveiled, with the vanishing of all things, even the very idea of no-thing-ness itself. Then, no encounter is needed, as there is no one to face, and yet, all has been fulfilled.

Part III

The Spring of the Self

When the first buds timidly pierce through the melting snow, as the first rays of dawn illuminate the countryside and the birds gently sing their songs of seduction and mirth, the eyes of man rejoice in this wondrous sight, feeling the relief he begged for to the heavens finally arriving, showing a faint smile on his face as he passes the threshold of his abode, admiring the glorious rise of life out the earth, the triumphant return of the spring.

The snowy garment enshrouding the earth has now been burnt by the fiery rays of the sun. Vast arrays of blades of grass inconspicuously emerge out of the depths, and legions of rodents venture out of their lair, while the trees are slowly painted with green dots, increasingly covering their nakedness. The man who has passed through the winter of no-thing-ness now sees the spectacle unfolding in front of his eye under a peculiar light, as things emerging out of no-thing-ness, the spring born out of the winter. He forgot himself in the darkness of the frigid months, but now, as he sees the buds, the birds, the wild flowers, and his brethren leisurely strolling on the country paths, the uniformity of the place where there is no-thing gives way to a splendid variety of things and beings, revealed through the brilliance of the day. Through encounters with others, it is also his own self that emerges out of the barren landscape of the winter. He is a shoot sprouting out of a branch that appeared dead but now reveals itself full of life. He is a person whose mind now cuts the oneness of nature into a collection of things and beings, who shapes no-thing-ness itself into things, who causes the desert to flourish into a lush meadow.

As the trees are now wrapped in a mantle of bright leaves, veiling their bark, their substance, their essence, so is man now putting on a mask concealing his true nature, one that allows him to become a full-fledged member of the world of men, to penetrate the great citadel edified by his kind, where he will find understanding, recognition, and meaning, at the price of a forgetfulness of his own true face. Exalted among men, rejoicing in the brotherly interactions, the dances, the conversations, eagerly playing his part in the great play of life, he celebrates the clemency of the heavens, the generosity of his world, without care, without worry, forgetting the revelation that was offered to him when he was dispossessed of every single thing.

The citadel is nonetheless more than a refuge of the deluded,

a place of forgetfulness and ignorance. Those who have kept the treasure of the winter in their heart, not letting the alluring forgetfulness sown in man by the springtime grow within themselves, indeed continually roam its paved streets, looking through the latticed windows, seeing the no-thing-ness underlying all things, ready to offer a sobering potion to those intoxicated by the illusions of the bright, and to cause them to once again contemplate their true face. Some of them crack the heavy mask covering their faces with a deafening shout, letting them once again see that there is something behind it and that the mask is not who they are. Others will convince them to take this mask off by themselves by ridiculing this instrument crafted by the hands of man, so poorly reflecting his glorious nature. Some will even let themselves be brought out of their citadel, into the great lake formed by the melting of the winter snow, seeing its wobbly surface offering them a vision of themselves, pointing out the falsehood of the mask and the truth of what is beyond it, a face of light, like the one of the stars, showing them what they are, with the distinction between their face and the stars themselves slowly fading away. And yet they still stand there on the face of the earth down below, protruding out of it, just like the minute shiny dots illuminating the celestial vault stand out of the darkness encompassing all that *is* .

Case 20 —No “Good” And “Evil” —不思善惡

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 23.

【中】

liù zǔ yīn míng shàng zuò chèn zhì dà yǔ líng zǔ jiàn míng zhì jí
 六祖因明上座趁至大庾嶺，祖見明至，即
 zhì yī bō yú shí shàng yún cǐ yī biǎo xìn kě lì zhēng yē rèn jūn
 擲¹衣鉢於石上云：「此衣表信，可力爭耶。任君
 jiāng qù míng suì jǔ zhī rú shān bù dòng chí chú sǒng lì
 將去。」明遂舉之，如山不動。踟躕²悚慄。³
 míng yuē wǒ lái qiú fǎ fēi wéi yī yě yuàn xíng zhě kāi shì zǔ
 明曰：「我來求法，非為衣也，願行者開示。」祖
 yún bù sī shàn bù sī è zhèng yǔ mó shí nà gè shì míng shàng
 云：「不思善，不思惡，正與麼⁴時，那箇是明上
 zuò běn lái miàn mù míng dāng xià dà wù biàn tǐ hàn liú qī lèi zuò
 座本來面目。」明當下大悟，遍體汗流，泣淚作
 lǐ wèn yuē shàng lái mì yǔ mì yì wài yǎn gèng yǒu yì zhī fǒu zǔ
 禮，問曰：「上來密語密意外，還更有意旨否。」祖
 yuē wǒ jīn wéi rǔ shuō zhě jí fēi mì yě rǔ ruò fǎn zhào zì jī
 曰：「我今為汝說者，⁵即非密也。汝若返照自己
 miàn mù mì què zài rǔ biān míng yún mǒu jiǎ suī zài huáng méi suí
 面目，密却在汝邊。」明云：「某甲雖在黃梅隨
 zhòng shí wèi xīng zì jī miàn mù jīn méng zhī shòu rù chù rú rén yǐn shuǐ
 眾，實未省自己面目，今蒙⁶指授入處，如人飲水，
 lěng nuǎn zì zhī jīn xíng zhě jí shì mǒu jiǎ shī yě zǔ yún rǔ ruò
 冷暖自知，今行者即是某甲師也。」祖云：「汝若
 rú shì zé wǔ yǔ rǔ tóng shī huáng méi shàn zì hù chí
 如是，則吾與汝同師黃梅。善自護持。」

1 【擲】[zhì]: “to put” / “to place” / “to throw.”

2 【踟躕】[chí chú]: “to waver” / “to hesitate”

3 【悚慄】S: 【悚栗】[sǒng lì]: “to shake in fear.”

4 【與麼】S: 【与么】[yǔ mǒ]: “[something] is like this” (modern Chinese: 猶這麼，如此).

5 【者】[zhě]: This word is not here used in its literal sense, meaning “person.” Associated with the particle “也” at the end of the sentence, the word 者 [zhě] is used as a conjunction linking the two parts of the sentence and expressing the fact that a judgment is stated. Here, this judgment concerns the fact that the head-monk Ming is mistaken concerning his belief that the patriarch’s teaching represents a secret. The following quote represents another example of such structure: 「今所謂慧空禪院者，褒之庐冢也。」(From: 宋・王安石《游褒禪山記》)

6 【蒙】S: 【濛】[méng]: “to receive [a favor].”

【日】

こ ろく そ ちな みょうじょうざ お だい ゆ れい
 擧す。六祖、因みに 明上座趁うて 大庾嶺に

いた そ みょう いた み すなわ えはつ
 至る。祖、明の 至るを 見て、 即ち 衣鉢を
 せきじょう なげう いわ こ え しん あら
 石上に 擲って 云く、「此の 衣は 信を 表わす、
 ちから あらそ きみ も さ まか
 力をもて 争うべけんや、君が 將ち 去るに 任す。」
 みょう つい これ あ やま ごと どう
 明、遂に 之を 擧ぐるに、山の 如くに 動ぜず。
 ちちゅうしょうりつ みょういわ われ きた ほう もと
 踟躕 悚 慄す。明 曰く、「我は 來って 法を 求む、
 え た あ ねが あんじゃ かいじ
 衣の 爲めにするに 非らず。願わくは 行者開示し
 そいわ ふ し ぜん ふ し あく しょう よ も
 たまえ。」祖云く、「不思善、不思惡、正 與麼の
 とき なこ こ みょうじょうざ ほんらい めんもく みょう とう
 時、那箇か 是れ 明 上座が 本來の 面目。」明、當
 げ たいご へんたいあせなが きゅうるい さいらい と
 下に 大悟し、遍体汗流る。泣 涙作禮し、問うて
 いわ じょうらい みつ ご みつ い ほか かえ さら い
 曰く、「上 來の 密語密意の 外、還って 更に 意
 し あ いな そいわ われ いま なんじ た
 旨有りや 否や。」祖曰く、「我、今 汝が 爲めに
 と もの すなわ みつ あら なんじ も じこ
 説く 者は、 即ち 密に 非ず。汝 若し 自己の
 めんもく へんしょう みつ かえ なんじ へん あ
 面目を 返照すれば、密は 却って 汝が 邊に 在ら
 みょういわ それがし おうばい あ しゅ したが
 ん。」明 云く、「某甲、黃梅に 在って 衆に 隨う
 いえど じつ ま じこ めんもく せい いま
 と 雖も、實に 未だ 自己の 面目を 省せず。今
 にっしょ し じゅ こうむ ひと みず の
 入處を 指授することを 蒙って、人の 水を 飲ん
 れいだん じ ち ごと いまあんじゃ すなわ こ
 で 冷暖自知するが 如し。今行者は 即ち 是れ
 それがし し そいわ なんじ も こ し
 某甲の 師なり。」祖云く、「汝 若し 是の 如くん
 すなわ われ なんじ おな おうばい し よ
 ば、則ち 吾、汝と 同じく 黃梅を 師とせん、善く
 みず ごじ
 自から 護持せよ。」

【E】

As the sixth patriarch was pursued by the head-monk Ming in the Dayu mountain range, he placed the bowl and robe¹ on a stone in the road and said: "This vestment is

just a symbol of faith. It is not something that can be fought about. Go ahead and take it.” When Ming tried to pick it up, it would not move and was as heavy as a mountain. Ashamed, trembling, he then said: “I came to ask for the Dharma, not for the robe! May the one walking begin to instruct me, please!” The patriarch said: “Do not think in terms of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ Right when you achieve this, then what will the Head-Monk Ming’s true face be?” With these words, Ming experienced a great enlightenment. Sweat covered his body. He cried and bowed, saying: “Besides these secret words and meanings that you have offered me, is there an even deeper teaching?” The patriarch replied: “What I have told you now is no secret at all. If you reflect and see your own true face,² the ‘secret’ will then be with you.” Ming said: “Even though this monk was part of Huangmei’s congregation, he in fact had yet to see his true face. Through your benevolent guidance, today I reached this place. It is like someone who drinks water and knows by himself whether it is warm or cold. Now, the one walking is this monk’s teacher.” The patriarch replied: “You may think this, but both you and I have Huangmei as our teacher. Just keep this good thing that you have gotten.”

¹ “The bowl and the robe”: The symbols of his authority as patriarch, transmitted to him by his predecessor.

² “Your own true face,” that is, one’s true nature.

Since its mysterious emergence in the watery entrails of the ocean, life has been unceasingly driven by the opposition between the self and the other, the inside and the outside, the subject and the object. Life indubitably forms a whole, but each living being experiences the world only through the flow of its own senses, perceiving it from a singular perspective, anchored to a body, and attached to a peculiar location on the earth and a time linked with the falling of the grains of sand of the celestial hourglass. The narrowness of this horizon, this permanently constrained landscape, kindles the fire of desire within the nerves or the minds of these beings, where the stream of the senses is turned into a world, either crude or complex, where meaning is built and sought. Survival, the perpetuation of their being, or pleasure, these are the

different facets of desire driving their existence, allowing them to pass on their most fundamental legacy, a portion of their very flesh, to a new generation. Being oblivious to the nature of being, which transcends all individuality, they ferociously strive against their brethren and cousins. They forcefully appropriate things and extinguish lives to get ahead of others and see their self being exalted among their peers, being rewarded with the bodies of the vanquished for their mercilessness, and with injections of pleasurable substances flowing through their flesh, contenting their minds. Such is the existence of the slave to life, of the bondservant to the world, the captive to the self.

Driven by his most deeply entrenched instincts, the root of life, the greedy thus may steal earthly creations and appropriate worldly ideas for his personal benefit, but there is one thing that cannot be forcefully taken from others, as it is an absence rather than a presence, an absence that is more precious than any possession. The poor of the earth, having no-thing, leaves the robber powerless and frustrated. Having completely let go of the world, having taken distance from all things, he does not even recognize life from death, and thus even the sharpest knife would not be enough to deprive him of his life. The most absolute poverty therefore surpasses the greatest wealth, granting absolute power by not being bound to the power of the world and the men obstinately wielding it. Fortunately, even the most envious dweller of the world, seized by an uncontrollable jealousy, seeing his self being humiliated by what he perceives to be the exaltation of another, his defeat at the great game of life, may still amend his ways, a prelude to the discovery of the way of the sky.

The man of the world beholds his own self in a mirror, but the man of the way only sees the clear sky itself, no mirror, no self, and no speck of dust of the world. To refrain from shattering the perfect unicity of the sky with the sword of reason, this is the first step. One must forget the words “yes” and “no,” “good” and “evil,” letting the sky be as it is, encompassing all that is in perfect seamlessness, without the slightest trace of separation. The last step is the collapse of the last wall, the one dividing the inside from the outside, the self and the other. Then can a true illumination occur, with the sky finally unobstructed by the things created by the mind of the living or left as an inheritance by the

dead. Then can one's true face be seen, not in a mirror, but rather in the whole of the heavens. Pervaded by this awareness, the springtime of his existence can then arrive. The great life can now begin, and the darkness of death can be left behind. White lilies sprouting from the melting snow. Blades of freshly grown grass covered in dew scintillating like innumerable emerald hairs in the light of the dawn, while a murmur of starlings elegantly hovers over a translucent river calmly carrying the ice of the winter to the salty womb of the sea, his own true face is this splendid scenery, seen in its totality rather than a mere aggregate of things, seen as the seamless whole where the living and the dead cannot be discerned from one another, where the earth is merged with the heavens, and the inside is harmoniously blended with the outside. This revelation was never concealed. It has always been readily apparent. He only had to open his eyes and let go of things to behold its vivifying truth.

Case 21 —There Is No Teacher —只是無師

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 11. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 53.

【中】

舉。黃檗示眾云：「汝等諸人，盡是噇¹酒糟
漢，恁麼行脚，何處有今日。²還知大唐國裏無禪
師麼。」時有僧出云：「只如諸方匡³徒領眾，又作
麼生。」檗云：「不道無禪，只是無師。」

¹ 【噇】S: 【噇】[chuáng]: “to eat” / “to drink.”

² 【今日】[jīn rì]: literally “today,” but here seemingly designating the realm hidden by the walls of things of the world, the “Nirvana” that is here and now, but which the men of the world fail to perceive.

³ 【匡】[kuāng]: “to rectify.” As it is used in this case, this word may be more precisely defined as “to instruct by pointing out the errors [of the disciples].”

【日】

こ おうばく しゅ しめ いわ なんじらしょにん
舉す。黄檗、衆に 示して 云く、「汝等諸人、
ことごと こ どうしゅそう おとこ いんも あんぎゃ
盡く 是れ 噇酒糟の 漢なり。恁麼に 行脚せば、

いずこ こんにち は だいとうこくうち ぜん し な
 何處にか 今日あらん。還た 大唐國裏に 禪師無き
 ことを 知るや。』時 僧あり 出でて 云く、「只だ
 諸方の 徒を 匡し 衆を 領いるが 如きは、又た
 作麼生。」槃云く、「禪無しとは 道ず、只是れ 師
 無し。」

【E】

Huangbo, instructing the assembly, said: “You are drinkers of lees, all of you! If you continue to peregrinate like this, where will the ‘today¹’ be? Do you even know that in this great empire of Tang, there is no Zen teacher?” At this moment, a monk came forward and said: “But everywhere there are people helping disciples and guiding congregations, what about them?” Huangbo said: “I do not say that there is no Zen, I only say that there is no teacher.”

¹ “Today,” that is, the realm of Nirvana, of the quenching of the self, which is here and now, within the reach of all beings, at all times.

Delving into gigantic piles of scrolls, or eagerly drinking the eloquent words uttered by others, all depicting their experiences, their journey of liberation from the delusions of the world, one may come to think that these tales represent genuine substitutes for such personal experiences. But to meticulously read a detailed map does not equal performing the journey in the land it describes, and likewise, the precious pieces of advice and benevolent guidance of the men of the way do not represent an enlightenment. The drinker of lees has yet to taste the sweetness of the wine and feel the inebriation that comes with the flowing of the fermented blood of the fruits of the earth through his veins, pervading the entirety of his flesh, but being ignorant, he fails to see that the lees differ from the wine.

The neophyte may nonetheless be seized by a thirst for a variety of experiences, seeking them by extensively wandering across

the earth, visiting the masters of what he considers his art. He guzzles their expertly crafted discourses and imitates their skillful behavior, but constantly standing in their shadow, the light of truth is concealed by what he sees as a source of illumination, seeing a brilliant halo surrounding these men, mistaking what conceals and dims the light for the source of radiance itself. He begs other men for the dregs, but every step he takes is in a lake of the most succulent elixir, graciously offered by nature itself. What he seeks is not to be found at another corner of the earth, drawn out of the voluble mouth of a teacher, or extracted out of a piece of worn-out parchment written by the lords of bygone eras. The luxuriant paradise he desperately yearns for is always right in front of him, waiting to be discovered, it is “today,” “here,” what is given to him to feel, first-hand, without any mediation whatsoever. One may write entire libraries describing in detail the delicate scent of a rose to someone deprived of the sense of olfaction from birth, but these mountains of words would be instantly superseded by a mere flash of the smell of the flower’s unique fragrance. This scent, this light, and this sound are here with us today. Yesterday is a haphazard heap of blurry memories, and the morrow is a dream, a fictitious product of our fertile imagination. Only the present is within the reach of our senses, and only it can show us the way.

Gulping the ocean whose waves are stirred up by the moon to the last drop, and swallowing the incandescent sun and the most distant stars until all that is left in the world is the most absolute darkness, this is how the newcomer to the way may discover the bliss of inebriation that comes with the great liberation. Growing together with the trees budding at the first signs of the spring, sprouting out of the earth at each instant, and giving fruits that feed the whole of life, this is what freedom is, freedom from the yoke of the self, the narrowness of one’s horizon. No matter how skilled and how willing a brother is to help, the blindfold placed over the eyes of each one of us during our infancy is too thick and tight to be removed by another. Only when the head shrinks into an insignificant speck of dust will it naturally fall down to the ground, with this speck of dust then carried by the air, indistinguishable from the ethereal substance forming the heavens.²⁰ and

²⁰See Yuanwu’s commentary on this case: “The more one seeks, the more he doesn’t see. The more one bears, the more he sinks down,” Chinese original:

thus the pilgrim often clumsily falls into the quicksand of words and illusions. There is nothing to be learned, and no piece of earth is more sacred than another. Every word ever uttered is a scripture, and every step is done onto hallow ground, if only one opens up his eyes and sees that he is in heaven and that this place is devoid of any thing. When all has been drunk to the last drop, nothing remains. What is left is no-thing. As soon as one opens up his mouth to ask, he becomes deaf, but when he finally embraces silence, he will then begin to hear the great answer. The way is the vanishing of words, and words mark the vanishing of the way.²¹ There is no teacher of the way of the sky but the way itself, right in front of us, as always. Heavily intoxicated by the medicine of the world, giving rise to the sweet illusion of the self, and inebriated by the most potent pharmakon of the earth and the sky, dispelling this delusion of the self through a sublime ecstasy from it, the counteracting and the interplay of both is what allows us to perceive the elation of the exposure to what “today” is.

Case 22 —The Great Talk About The Great Death 一大死大話

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 41. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 63.

【中】

舉。趙州問投子：「大死底人，却活時如何。」
 投子云：「不許夜行，投明¹須到。」

¹ 【投明】[tóu míng]: “the break of dawn.”

【日】

「愈尋愈不見。愈擔荷愈沒溺。」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》。CBETA (Case 11).

²¹See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p52: “El Zen es el fin del discurso. El discurso es el fin del Zen. El fin del discurso es el Zen. El fin del Zen es el discurso. El discurso del fin es el Zen. El discurso del Zen es el fin. El del es fin Zen discurso el. Zen del es el discurso fin el. etc. tec. cet. tce. ...”

こ じょうしゅう とう す と だいし てい ひと かえ
 擧す。趙 州、投子に 問う、「大死底の 人、却っ
 かつ とき いかん とう す いわ やこう ゆる
 て 活する 時如何。」投子云く、「夜行を 許さず、
 めい とう すべて いた
 明に 投じて 須らく 到るべし。」

【E】

Zhaozhou asked Touzi: “How it is when a man who has died the great death¹ comes back to life?” Touzi said: “One should not walk about in the night. The first rays of dawn shall soon come.”

¹ “The great death,” that is, the death of the ego, of the deluded self, prelude to a rebirth as an enlightened man.

As the unceasing turning of the gigantic celestial wheels continues, our home planet revolves around the great luminary that feeds life with its fiery splendor, bowing in front of this brilliant sphere and thereby marking the seamless succession of the seasons on its surface. The fall of the reddened foliage of the forests, exposing bare the crooked branches to the fresh zephyr, is a sign of death, the quenching of the fire of life, with the frigid winter leaving only haphazardly scattered embers standing out of the pristine white coat covering the earth. When man ceases to grasp the myriad of things both assisting and burdening him, they immediately drop to the ground, revealing his nakedness, and finally allowing him to see himself, without being covered by his possessions, belonging both to the earth and to the world. The abrupt fall of man, the total collapse of his world, occurring suddenly when his will to support it finally wavers, is a walk toward the great death, the winter of the mind, when all colors fade into pure darkness, and all shapes are veiled under a thick blanket of icy flakes poured down by wooly clouds.

Far from the end of one's being, the great death rather is the uncovering of its truth. Stripped away of all things, the only thing that remains is his self, and this represents a unique opportunity to let this last thing go as well. Only what one knows to be his possession may be given up, and thus the revelation of one's

bare face is a prerequisite to being free from the burden of one's own individuality, ceasing to be a mere beholder of the light, but realizing that one is light itself. Utter darkness then cannot be discerned from total brightness. The winter marries the summer, and life is one with death, tightly interweaved, one into the other. Having let go of all things, serenely abiding in indiscrimination, perfect light or complete obscurity, dispossessed of his self, the incomparable satisfaction that is felt is nonetheless impossible to share with others while one remains in this blissful state. Dwelling in the shadows, no one can see him, and thus his existence leaves no traces upon the lives of others.

The one who has survived the harshness of the winter is nonetheless called to educate the summer children so that they may also be prepared for it, embracing it without fear nor apprehension. The one who has experienced the death of the self is in the best position to point out the essence of life to the men who are unaware of its omnipresent nature. Composedly stepping out of the darkness, incarnating the first rays of the dawn, the dead man resurrects and boldly walks back into the lively streets filled with blinding light. He answers the naïve or malicious questions of the vagabonds, and points out the shadows with his finger, seldom noticed by them, inviting them to stretch their bodies and minds between light and shadow, the world of things and no-thing-ness, experiencing the contrast between these two mysterious poles of being, before letting this contrast also disappear into the infinite chasm out of which all things are born.

Case 23 — Everyone Has A Radiance — 人盡有光明在

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 86.

【中】

jǔ yún mén chuí yǔ yún rén rén jìn yǒu guāng míng zài kàn shí bú
 舉。雲門垂語云：「人人盡有光明在。看時不
 jiàn àn hūn hūn zuò me shēng shì zhū rén guāng míng zì dài yún chú kù sān
 見暗昏昏。作麼生是諸人光明。」自代云：「厨庫三
 mén yòu yún hǎo shì bù rú wú
 門。」又云：「好事不如無。」

【日】

こ うんもん すいご いわ にんにん ことごと
 舉す。雲門、垂語して 云く、「人人 盡く
こうみょう あ あ み とき み あんこんこん
 光明の 在る 有り。見る 時は 見えず 暗昏昏た
いかなる こ しょうにん こうみょう みずか かわ
 り。作麼生か 是れ 諸人の 光明。」自ら 代って
いわ ず く さんもん ま いわ こうじ な
 云く、「厨庫、三門。」又た 云く、「好事は 無き
し
 に 如かず。」

【E】

Yunmen, giving instruction, said: “Everyone has his own radiance. When you try to look [at it], you cannot see [it], only utter darkness. What is this radiance of man?” He himself replied: “The kitchen; the temple’s entrance gate.”¹ Again, he said: “No-thing is preferable to good things. “

¹ “The entrance gate”: Literally, “the three gates,” which are found at the entrance of Buddhist monasteries.

So bright and pervasive is the light of the world that it eclipses the light burning within the heart of man, the innermost lamp shining over his surroundings. Even when he succeeds in dimming the blinding glare of the things around him, he cannot see this source of brilliance, but rather only the scattered rays reflected on the earthly creations of man or nature. Attempting to shed light upon light, all that one would see would be uniformity, brightness equal to darkness in the absence of form or color. No matter where it shines, light nonetheless remains true to its nature. The source is no different than the destination, and as its glow is diffused all around, revealing the objects upon which it is reflected, it is seen as an image, something that is more than mere radiance, as it is light carrying a peculiar depiction of the world.

When one has perceived the nature of the light, seeing that the brilliance coming out of his own essence is the same as the one of the sun and the stars, the one pervading the serpentine rivers

covering the dry land while nourishing the leaves and the grasses near their shores, fostering their growth, then can one see his own true face, reflected in the countless objects of the world made by the hands of man, or by the various branches of the majestic tree of life. It is in what is closest to us that our own nature may be revealed most clearly. The door of our home separates the intimate from the open world or from the kitchen in which we prepare the food that sustains our body several times a day. It is in everydayness that the self may most certainly be found. It uncovers itself when one is least looking to observe it, coming close to the one whose mind is free from desire and ambition, one who lets the light of his self become a gentle glow, like the one of moon during the most obscure hours of the night, rather than a blazing sun that floods the earth with the most ardent flames, blinding those impudent and imprudent enough to behold its countenance. What is the light of the self, may one ask? It is the most insignificant object present in our life, or the most exalted possession of our kind. It is the dust covering the feet of the indigent, or the golden statue adorning the holiest of holies of a tribe. It is the cup in which we drink the liquid of life, or the clothes wrapped around our shoulders. Even in the experience of seeing or hearing the very words designating these things may one see manifestations of his most essential nature, emanation of his self, a radiation of the primordial nature of the whole of the earth and the skies.

To see one's own reflection in the vast heaps of things of the world may come as a seemingly insignificant and yet life-changing event, a profound revelation changing the course of one's existence, his whole outlook upon life itself and his own self. It may be the best thing in his life, the most precious gift offered to him by the world, and yet, it does not equal the extreme peacefulness that comes with the extinction of the last sparks of the self, the release of all things of the world. Better than even the best thing in this world, is to become no-thing-ness itself, what remains when all has been let go of. It is in its own annihilation, fused with everything else, that the self shines in its truth, when all appears unchanged, and yet no-thing is all that is perceived, with the golden sun and the silvery moon, the dark earth and the bright stars, all seen clearly and yet not a single thing being distinguished from another. The self then is fully one with the whole, and being itself ceases

to be a mere idea, to become a sensation, reaching from the very beginning of time until its end.

Case 24 —Medicine And Disease Strive Against Each Other —藥病相治

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 87.

【中】

jǔ 舉。 yún mén 雲門 shì zhòng yún 示眾云：「yào bìng xiāng zhì 藥病相治。¹ jìn dà dì shì yào 盡大地是藥，
nà gè shì zì jǐ 那箇是自己。」

¹ 【治】: “to control” / “to treat a disease.” Its use here emphasizes the fact that both medicine and disease interact with one another, forming two opposite but complementary poles.

【日】

こ 舉す。 うんもん 雲門、 しゅ 衆に しめ 示して いわ 云く、「やくびょう あいち 藥病 相治す。
じん だいち こ 盡大地是れ やく いずれ 藥。 こ 那箇か じこ 是れ 自己。」

【E】

Yunmen, instructing the assembly, said: “Medicine and disease strive against each other. The entire earth is a medicine. What is your self?”

Afflicted with a sickness, the mind or the body degrades, unable to perform what it is meant to do, impeded in its activities by an invisible weight, a burden that cannot simply be cast away by a mere act of volition or a movement of the limbs. Time, the work of the skies, is the most fundamental cure for every affliction, but for every sickness, there is also a medicine, a counterweight to the burden placed on one’s neck. The medicine strives against the disease, and the disease struggles against the medicine. They both

attempt to subdue one another, neutralizing each other's power, and when the battle finally ends, nothing remains of both, leaving only a healthy being after their passage.

A medicine is a potent substance, a weapon placed in the hands of man, one that he can use as he sees fit. Its nature is nonetheless tied to its use, as a medicine may often reveal itself to be a poison, like a poison may be found to become a medicine if expertly used. The line between the two is blurry, and the distinction is an arbitrary view of the mind, a thing of the world. Furthermore, to be attached to such a distinction is itself a disease.²²

For the man of the world, caught in the mire of things, wading through them all day long without even being conscious that this world is only a construction of mankind rather than the truth of nature, the self may be seen as a disease. It snatched up his mind and led him to believe himself to be an entity that stands out from the rest of the earth and the skies around him. All is cleaved between the inside and the outside, the self and the other, and to this condition afflicting him, contact and intimacy with the earth may be the surest remedy. Pitted against each other by the world, the self and the earth appear to be struggling to overcome the other. Eating the earth itself, letting it enter his body and his heart as he tears it apart piece by piece, he realizes that he is the great earth! It flows into his veins, and it forms the bones allowing him to rise above the ground and proudly stand to face the countenance of the fountainhead of fire adorning the firmament. His standing out from it is a mere illusion, a mirage skillfully painted by the world itself. Having swallowed the earth, the self appears to fade away, leaving place to what is formed by the union of both what swallows and what was swallowed. When the world collides with the earth, no-thing is left as a result of this encounter. The world, the self standing in it, and even the earth itself then cease to be, as things bearing names and tied to countless other things. No-thing-ness is then experienced, without separation between the self and the earth, between medicine and disease, between cure and poison.

²²See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。(Case 90)：「藥與病是相對的兩樣事物，轉指凡夫的相對二見。修行者能減除藥與病的妄想，才能算是真出家。」

For the dweller of no-thing-ness, the man of the earth who has erased all the lines of separation, a rejection of the self and the world, a denial of their existence and a denigration of the role they play in man's life may nonetheless also become a disease. To grasp no-thing-ness itself is no different than to clutch pieces of gold with his hands or to feverishly cherish ideas with his heart, horrified at the thought of letting them go. The remedy to this plague is then to cut out the wound, to cleave nothingness to let the world rise up again from the earth and let the self throne over it. The disease of one era is the cure of another, and the poison of one day is the medicine of the morrow. To stay healthy, man must remain on the move, not letting his body nor his mind rigidify, prey to the illusion that one is whole and free. To see oneself as healthy is already a sickness, but so is seeing oneself as afflicted. Embracing the medicine as poison, the poison as medicine, until one ceases to distinguish sickness from health, light and darkness, and rather equally embraces their distinction when it presents itself in front of his eyes as a manifestation of the course of nature, one may then realize that the substance has truly penetrated his self, infecting him with an authentic life, curing him with a true death.

Case 25 — Linji's True Man — 臨濟真人

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 38.

【中】

jǔ lín jì shì zhòng yún yǒu yì wú wèi zhēn rén chángxiàng rǔ děng
舉。臨濟示眾云：「有一無位真人，常向汝等
miàn mén chū rù chū xīn wèi zhèng jù zhě kàn kàn shí yǒu sēng wèn rú hé
面門出入。初心未證據者看看。」時有僧問：「如何
shì wú wèi zhēn rén jì xià chán chuáng qín zhù zhè sēng ní yì
是無位真人。」濟下禪床擒¹住這僧擬議。²
jì tuō kāi yún wú wèi zhēn rén shì shèn gān shǐ jué
濟托開云：「無位真人，是甚乾屎橛。」³

¹ 【擒】S: 【擒】[qín]: “to grab.”

² 【擬議】[nǐ yì]: “to ponder the meaning [of something], being unsure.”

³ 【乾屎橛】S: 【干屎橛】[gān shǐ jué]: a stick used to scrap excrements, found in latrines.

【目】

こ りんざい しゅ しめ いわ いち むい
 擧す。臨濟、衆に 示して 云く、「一無位の
しんにん つね なんじら めんもん むか しゅつにゆう
 真人あり、常に 汝等が 面門に 向って 出入す、
しょしん みしょう こ もの み み とし そう
 初心未證 據の 者は 看よ 看よ。」時に 僧ありて
と いか こ むい しんにん さい ぜんじょう
 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 無位の 真人。」濟、禪牀を
くだ さんじゅう こ そう ぎ ぎ さい たく ひらき
 下って 擒住す。この 僧擬議す。濟、托 開して
いわ むい しんにん こ なん かん し けつ
 云く、「無位の 真人是れ 甚の 乾屎橛ぞ。」

【E】

Linji, instructing the assembly, said: “There is a true man without position, constantly coming out and going in through the gates of your face .¹ Beginners who have yet to witness that, look!” At this moment, a monk asked: “What is the true man without position?” Linji descended from the rostrum and grabbed him. The monk was trying to understand the meaning of this, but Linji pushed him away and said: “Hey, true man without position, what a dry shit stick you are!”

¹ “The gates of your face,” that is, the senses.

A true man is a free man, liberated from the yoke that weighs down the shoulders of most of the living beings caught between earth and sky, the chains that bind him to a piece of earth, to a parcel of the world. It is someone who sees beyond the cramped horizon of his senses, someone who not only lets himself be shaped and built up by the ebbs and flows of the tumultuous and ever-flowing stream passing through his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin, but who rather lets it pass through, without resistance, without control, letting the turbulent currents of the earth and the sky flood his world to the brim before they return to their source. His mouth then utters this truth that has penetrated his being, and he impassively accompanies the stream as it continues its course. The true man no longer differentiates what comes in from what goes out. He is a person without position within the world, as he has become invisible to its inhabitants and is blind to its hierarchies.

Having retreated to the place where there are no kings nor beggars, no here and there, he is lost to the world but has finally found himself.²³

Stripped of the vestments he wore day and night since his infancy, rich in colorful patterns, intricately embroidered letters, and complex imagery, the true man then finds out that there is no flesh under it, no skin or bones. As soon as the last piece of clothing is thrown onto the ground, the fresh breeze of the spring-time blows away what remained, and all that is left is what is encompassed by the sky itself. Then comes a revelation: the true man is not a man at all, as he lacks what makes a living thing human.²⁴ Lacking a position, on the earth, in the world, or in the skies, he is the great tide of the senses itself, the great torrent that infiltrates the innermost parts of the living, occupying the mind of the inhabitants of the world.

In order to be appreciated, the truth must nonetheless be contrasted with falsehood. The true man only exists by his opposition to the inauthentic man, the slave to the world and to his own self. The true man thus benevolently leaves unostentatious traces of his passage through the world. He undermines its foundations, built on quicksand, edified on clouds. He shakes the fetters of the prisoner, attempting to awaken him as their sounds resonate through his cell, calling onto the true man hidden within the heart of the prisoner, so that he would manifest himself. The words of the true man sound harsh, because they disregard the values of the world, but they are a tender embrace of a lover of mankind, a liberator, pointing out the meaninglessness of the positions within the buildings produced by their hands and minds. He throws a rusty iron coin to the king, and bows with great reverence to the stray dog. His rebukes are taken for praises, and the one he loves is compared by him to a stick used to scrap excrement, stunning the simple, but nonetheless enlightening the one sufficiently curious about the

²³See: “The word ‘position’ (in ‘person of no position’) is often understood to mean our status in society. In this case, it also means our exact location in space and time.” From: Thich Nhat Hanh. *Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go waking up to who you are*. Parallax Press, 2007.

²⁴See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klause der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p197: „Und deshalb ist er auch der ‚wahre‘ Mensch, der freilich zugleich gar kein ‚Mensch‘ ist, weil es ihm an allen Eigenschaften fehlt, die einen Menschen zum Menschen machen.“

nature of the world and of his self.

Case 26 —Luoshan’ s “Coming To Be And Destruction” —羅山起滅

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 43.

【中】

jǔ 舉。luó shān 羅山 wèn 問 yán tóu 巖頭：「qǐ miè bù tíng shí rú hé 起滅不停時如何。」tóu 頭
duō 咄¹ yún 云：「shì shéi qǐ miè 是誰起滅。」

¹ 【咄】[duō]: an interjection expressing disapproval.

【日】

こ 舉す。らざん 羅山、がんとう 巖頭に と 問う、「き めつ ふ てい 起滅不停の とき 時
いか 如何ん。」とう 頭、とつ 咄して いわ 云く、「こ 是れ だれ 誰か き めつ 起滅す。」

【E】

Luoshan asked Yantou: “What if things¹ unceasingly come to being and are destroyed?” Yanto marked his disapproval, saying; “Who is it that causes things to come to being and be destroyed?”

¹ “What if things”: The original only mentions a process of coming to being and destruction, but neither the subject nor the object of these actions, leaving the sentence open to interpretation.

The eye of the man living a secluded existence within the citadel of things formed by the mind from the stream of his senses is continuously engulfed in the whirlwind of history, an unceasing succession of rises and falls of civilizations, of peoples, and even branches of the grandiose tree of life. New generations sprout out of the entrails of their parents, and the old are ineluctably replaced by the young, as lords and servants equally turn into ashes seeping

into the ground from which the flowers of the spring will proudly rise, facing the brilliance of our gilded star. Contemplating the inevitable decay of all that is born, the unavoidable collapse of all that is painstakingly and obstinately edified by the living, many are prone to despair, seized by the feeling of the vacuity of their existence that strangles them and causes the opening the vaults of their eyes, with ample tears then running down their cheeks and into the shadowy depths of the earth.

Far away from the high and sturdy ramparts of the citadel of things, in the seemingly infinite expanse of the great desert, where not a single thing is found but where truth is omnipresent, there may the quenching of all coming to being and destruction be witnessed.²⁵ The frontiers between life and death, one person and another, are arbitrary products of the mind. Each one of us was born out of a mother, formed by the mingling of the essence of our parents, without a clear and definite moment marking a separation between us and them. Life as a whole thus forms a continuous chain, a gigantic being, and even its inception cannot be pinpointed without some degree of arbitrariness. Life indeed is a mere peculiar bewitching of the earth, and the earth itself just an aspect of the skies, carried on the way.

The key to the total subjugation of suffering, and to the embracing of vacuity, instead of fearing it, thus comes with the awareness of the source of these things. Death and destruction are things we created, just like birth and edification. They are the result of the constricted nature of our worldview, focused on our lifespan and our own presence. Broadening our outlook, enlarging our horizon to reach the infinite, we can see that nothing emerges, and nothing is destroyed outside of our mind. What is embraced by the sky is only experiencing a sublime, enduring, and extensive mutation. The heavens breathe and continuously move. The stars revolve in their galaxies, but nothing is new around these countless suns, and all that ever was will forever continue to be, including ourselves, our true essence, unborn and indestructible.

²⁵ See this passage of the Heart Sutra: “All things have the form of emptiness. They neither emerge nor are destroyed. They are neither pure or impure. They do not increase nor decrease.” Original Chinese: 「諸法空相，不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減。」 From: 《般若波羅蜜多心經》。CBETA .

Case 27 —Deshan' s “Study Completed” —德山學畢

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 46.

【中】

舉。德山圓明大師示眾云：「及盡去也，直得
三世¹ 諸佛口掛壁上，猶有一人呵呵大笑，若識此
人參學事畢。」

¹ 【三界】[sān jiè]: “the three worlds.” This word usually designates the world of desire (欲界), the sensory world (色界), and the extra-sensory world (無色界). It may also designate the past, the present, and the future.

【日】

舉す。徳山圓明大師、衆に示して云く、「及盡し
去るや、直に得たり三世諸佛口壁上に掛くる
ことを。猶お一人有って呵呵大笑す。若し此の
人を識らば參學の事畢んぬ。」

【E】

Great Master Deshan Yuanming instructed his assembly and said: “If one reaches the end, one realizes right away that all the Buddhas in the three worlds¹ have stuck their mouths to the wall.² Yet there is still one man who is laughing loudly. If you know this man, you have completed your study.”

¹ “The three worlds”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Have stuck their mouths to the wall,” and thus are unable to speak.

Walking over the craggy face of our spherical planet, the traveler will never reach its end and may continue his journey until his frail, mortal body crumbles into dust, never stumbling upon

a wall or a chasm marking its frontier. Venturing into his world, exploring the realm of all the possibilities offered by the actions of his mind and limbs, the spiritually enclined may combine a work of discovery with one of edification for as long as he lives. He may unceasingly walk over the surface of the azure orb upon which we were all born, without ever reaching an end to it, but he may nonetheless discover a way to transcend this infinite course, by ascending to the skies, opening up a new dimension, like a rodent jumping out of a maze in which he was caught. The curious adventurer, pathfinder of the world, may thus realize that while there is no end to the creation and study of things, there still is the possibility of leaving behind things altogether, and thereby step out of the endless maze of the world, finding the boundary of what was thought to be and what appeared as boundless.

Language is the maze in which man is caught since his birth, one that offers him incomparable power, but yet also deceives him. Liberation from the delusions induced by language thus demands that one breaks free from this instrument of thought. This begins when the sweetest words lose their flavor, as their meaning appears increasingly detached from the raw experience of the realm of the senses, the earth, life, and the skies. There indeed comes a point when the ethereal torrents stirred up by the tongue and the stylus slowly turn into an indistinct cyclone of sounds and drawings, with their connection with the world, their meaning, being unwound, and man's bond with his self being unraveled. Then, even the words of the enlightened become noise, and the discourses of the awakened a mere babbling. This is when their mouths are sealed shut, stuck on the wall separating the world of things from nothingness, the great beyond that is nonetheless always with us, within us, the very ground upon which all that we know is edified.

One may nonetheless endlessly chase after shadows, or run toward rainbows, hoping to grasp them. One may forever bath himself in a sea of words, delighting himself in the infinite possibilities they offer, but the only end that can be reached is the end of things, the breaking of language, when meaning has been exhausted, leaving only vacuity, emptiness, in its stead. Then, when the mind is plunged into the most absolute silence, the complete absence of speech and words, this is when the wall falls, its collapse echoing through the depths of the ground, resonating in

the heights of the sky. The voluble tongue can then be swallowed in one gulp, and the worn-out stylus offered back to the earth, as one's studies are complete. No words are heard any longer, but a rumbling nonetheless becomes increasingly present, slipping through his ears, and shaking his bones. A burst of laughter is heard throughout the air, an expression of the perfect marriage of earth and sky embodied by man, as the muscles in his chest contract to expulse the heavenly ether, imparting this invisible wave with the imprint of his innermost emotions, one that pre-dates the construction of the most ancient parts of his world, the most illustrious words crafted by his distant ancestors. In his own laughter, he hears the echo of his true self, the core of his being, far from the convoluted discourses and the bitter disputes of the world. This laugh is itself an echo, resonating together with the first sound, the eternal clamor resulting from the birth of the skies themselves, continuously expending, the primordial explosion of which we are the sons, with our feeble voices being insignificant harmonics in the chorus of this song of the skies that accompanies those who have silenced all meaning to rejoice in meaninglessness, simply continuing to laugh, appearing mad to those who think they know.

Case 28 —The Wisdom In The Garland Sutra —嚴經智慧

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 67.

【中】

jǔ huá yán jīng yún wǒ jīn pǔ jiàn yī qiè zhòngshēng jù yǒu rú
 舉。《華嚴經》云：「我今普見一切眾生具有如
 lái zhì huì dé xiàng dàn yǐ wàng xiǎng zhí zhuó ér bù zhèng dé
 來智慧德相，¹ 但以妄想執著，而不證得。」

¹ 【德相】[dé xiāng]: “virtuous form.”

【日】

こ げごんきょう いわ われいま あまね いっさいしゅじょう
 舉す。華嚴經に云く、「我今普く一切衆生を
 み によらい ちえ とくしょう ぐゆう ただしもうそう しゅじゃく
 見るに、如來の智慧德相を具有す。但妄想執著を
 も しょうとく
 以って證得せず。」

【E】

The Garland Sutra says: “I now see all living beings everywhere, and I see that one each of them possesses the wisdom and the virtuous form of the Tathagata, but because of delusions and attachments, they fail to realize it.”

The virtue of the holy man is to be blind to holiness, to see the sacred intermingled with the profane and the most common interlaced with the extraordinary, by day as well as by night, standing on the peak of the world or in the deepest trench of the earth. To him, each budding leaf emerging out of the great body of life once the snow has melted and the warmth of our star once again floods the ground is a leaf of the most sacred scriptures, the wondrous book of life, written since the dawn of our planet. To him, the gilded parchments and ornamented scrolls venerated by the kings of the world are given the same respect as the ephemeral traces left by the birds’ feet on the wet sand of the ocean’s shores, brush-strokes of the living, testimonies of the enduring miracle of life. When presented with a piece of scripture, the pondering of the role it occupies within our world may teach us a more important lesson than what the scripture tells us with words. Let us contemplate this, asking ourselves why we were given these sentences to consider, and what does it tell us of our fathers who have made the effort to inscribe them and pass them through the ages so that we may partake of the experience it offered them.

Looking around us, throngs of men are busying themselves with the affairs of the world, while flocks of animals are striving to feed to survive and to perpetuate their own lives through the fathering of an offspring. The melodious songs of love and lust of the birds resound through the air, while the insects are crawling in search of the crumbs falling from the tables of our kind, all obeying the calling of their own nature, unostentatiously guided by the book of life itself, the script engraved into each one of their cells with the most minute and marvelously written letters. They know not of the existence of this scripture, but their flesh unknowingly follows its meticulous instructions, leading them to relentlessly labor for the endurance of life, as the heavenly wheels

continue their endless revolutions, and for the growth of its gigantic body, creating a wedge between earth and sky.

The virtue and wisdom of the awakened is to embrace the way, to accompany the flow of nature, seeing through it as through the clearest azure sky, in awe of its perfect harmony. All the creatures forming the entire tree of life follow their deeply entrenched instincts, diligently obeying the commands of the greatest book, but few do so with full awareness of the source and destination of these instincts, which goes beyond the horizon of their own existence. Even fewer knowingly subsume their life into the way of the sky itself, as they are still attached to this life, which they see as tied to the personal experience offered to them by their senses. Man and all the other branches of the tree of life face the same struggle, this blindness to their own condition, as their will to survive robs them of the authenticity of their being. There is nonetheless ample time for an awakening, as life goes on without interruption, with new generations uninterruptedly born out of the previous one, carrying on the torch of life through the revolutions of the innumerable celestial bodies, with death itself being only a delusion of the world, just like life itself. All is as it is, as it was, and will be, and wisdom consists in seeing this fact clearly.

Case 29 —Nanquan' s “Cats And Cows” —南泉白牯

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 69.

【中】

jǔ nán quán shì zhòng yún sān shì zhū fó bù zhī yǒu lí nú
舉。南泉示眾云：「三世¹ 諸佛不知有，狸奴²
bái gǔ què zhī yǒu
白牯³ 却知有。」

¹ 【三界】[sān jiè]: “the three worlds.” This word usually designates the world of desire (欲界), the sensory world (色界), and the extra-sensory world (無色界). It may also designate the past, the present, and the future.

² 【狸奴】S: 【狸奴】[lí nú]: “a cat.”

³ 【牯】[gǔ]: “a cow” or “a castrated bull.”

【日】

are his own words, and seldom seen are the deeds that would allow him to consider himself above them, to transcend his animality and to stand out, reaching another realm, as most of his existence is filled with vain speech and base behavior. He is nonetheless called to undertake the task of rising above all other living beings, leaving behind the trivialities of his world, the comfortable state of slumber to which he is so often accustomed, to open wide his eyes and behold what was there all along, but to which he had yet to awaken.

The awakened sees beyond the things of the world, and what lies beyond is so enthralling that he grows to ignore these things, to slowly become blind to the objects, persons, and ideas that are constantly passing in front of his eyes or through his mind, before he finally becomes oblivious to them. In contrast with him, the sleeping beast or the slumbering man lives an existence filled with the awareness of what *is*, what is found within his world. The dormant knows who he is, and that he is, caught between earth and sky, but the awakened first realizes that he does not know, and soon enough ceases to know even that. Standing out of the flat surface of the world, like from the page of a book, there is nothing to know. Knowledge cannot endure beyond this surface, and it vanishes without being noticed, as there no longer is any need for it. The very distinction between man and beast, awakened or dormant, being and non-being, then ceases to be.²⁶

As soon as one thinks he has understood it, it nonetheless instantly once again becomes out of reach. Knowledge makes its ineluctable return within the mind of man, and the lullaby of the world once more resounds in his attentive ears, weighing on his eyelids. The awakened and the slumbering man may perhaps be those who fail to know what being is, whereas the humble beasts filling the land, far from the cities edified by those proudly seeing themselves as above them, may be the only creatures that can experience a form of true being, letting themselves be completely engulfed in the raw experience of the earth and life, without superfluous reflection, without arrogance and without pride, being simply following the flow in which they are caught, never resisting, never questioning, simply going forward until they completely exhaust their strengths and succumb to their age or their wounds,

²⁶See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》。東京：無我山房, 1915. p451 (Case 69).

then peacefully reentering the sooty body of the earth.

Case 30 — Jinshan Inquires About Life — 進山問性

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 70.

【中】

jǔ 舉。jìn shān 進山 zhǔ wèn 主問 xiū shān 脩山 zhǔ yún 主云：「míng zhī shēng bù shēng xìng 明知生不生性，
wèi shén me 為甚麼，wèi shēng zhī suǒ liú 為生之所留。」xiū yún 脩云：「sūn bì jìng chéng zhú qù 筍畢竟成竹去。
rú jīn zuò miè 如今作箴¹ shǐ huán dé ma 使還得麼。」jìn yún 進云：「rǔ xiàng hòu zì wù qù 汝向後自悟去
zài 在。」xiū yún 脩云：「mǒu jiǎ zhī rú cǐ 某甲只如此。shàng zuò yì zhī rú hé 上座意旨如何。」jìn yún 進云：「zhè gè shì jiān yuàn fáng 這箇是監² 院房，nà gè shì diǎn zuò fáng 那箇是典座房。」xiū biàn lǐ 脩 便禮
bái 拜。

¹ 【箴】[miè]: “bamboo splints” (used to weave baskets).

² 【監】S: 【監】[jiān]: “a supervisor.”

【日】

こ 舉す。しんざんしゅ 進山主 しゅざんしゅ 脩山主に と 問うて いわ 云く、「あきら 明かに
しょう 生は ふしょう 不生の しょう 性なることを し 知らば、なん 甚麼と し 爲てか
しょう 生の ため 爲に と 留めらるるや。」しゅいわ 脩云く、「たかなひつきょうたけ 筍 畢竟 竹と
な 成り さ 去る、にょこん 如今 たけなは 箴と な 作して つか 使うこと かえ 還っ
え て しんいわ 得てんや。」なんじ こうご 進云く、「みずか 汝 向後 さと 自ら さ 悟り さ 去る
あ こと しゅいわ 在らん。」それがしただかく 脩云く、「ごと 某甲只此の じょうぎ 如し なこ 上座の
い し 意旨如何。」い かん 進云く、「しんいわ 這箇は しゃ こ 是れ こ 監院房、かんいんぼう 那箇は
こ 是れ てんぞ ぼう 典座房。しゅ 脩、すなわ 便ち らいはい 禮拜す。

【E】

Master Jinshan asked Master Xiushan: "When one has clearly understood the unborn nature of life, why does one still wish to remain part of life?" Xiushan said: "The bamboo shoot necessarily becomes a bamboo. But how would one make bamboo weaving strips out of a bamboo shoot?" Jinshan said: "You will realize it yourself at some point." Xiushan said: "One's opinion is just this. What is the head monk's opinion?" Jinshan said: "This is the temple steward's quarters, and that is the cooks' quarters." Xiushan made a deep bow.

The living appear to stand out so much from the rest of the earth that one easily forgets that the great fire of life is nothing but a peculiar manifestation of the substance of the earth, an astonishingly complex and marvelous phenomenon, and yet a perfectly natural one. Made of the same stardust, constructed with the same water and soot that have fallen down from the depths of space to collide with our home planet eons ago, the entirety of our flesh and the fabric of all branches of the tree of life is nothing but earth, splendidly organized, seemingly bewitched by the most mysterious spell, and yet, just like the splendid flower stands out by its pleasant fragrance and its vivid color from the stem and the roots of a plant, life is nothing but the flowers of the earth, the blossom of the rocky stem of the warm globe sheltering us amidst the vast, empty, frigid, and barren expanse of the cosmos. Seen under this light, life is the earth, unborn and immortal, and the earth is but stardust opening up a space and occupying it, part of the heavens themselves, whose fundamental nature nonetheless still escapes us.

Seeing clearly the unborn nature of life, perceiving death in life, life in death, and encompassing the earth, life, and the skies with a single glance, a single thought, being acquainted with their unicity, one should then become aware that his will to survive is an attachment to an illusion. It is to be akin to a flower attempting to resist the ineluctable passing of the seasons, blind to its own nature, which is to be the immortal earth, the infinite sky. Man is never born and will never die, because his essence already existed

at the inception of the universe, if there ever was one, and will perdure until its end, if it ever comes.

The flowers blossom during the spring and they wither when the sun begins to deny its warmth to the land. The blossoms of the earth, living beings, likewise see their appearance change with the turning of the heavenly wheels, the work of the skies, but their substance and essence remain unchanged. The sapling is no different in nature than the mature tree, and both are utterly useless in their essence. Indeed, only the men of the world have uses for things, whereas the earth and the sky just *are*, useless and without any ambition whatsoever. Seeing the nature of the tree of life thus implies seeing the tree in the sapling, the sapling in the tree, knowing that the distinction between the two is absent on the earth, and only present within the mind of man. In the same manner, the chamber of the novice is just a step away from the quarters of the abbot. Some may think that a gigantic gorge separates the two, a lifetime of effort and dedication, but this would be to be mistaken. There is just one little step to take to pass from one to the other, a step that may be quicker than the blinking of an eye. Once it is reached, one then sees that both rooms are identical, and that no-thing is found within them. The distinction was a mere hallucination.

Case 31 —Zhongyi' s Macaque —中邑獼猴

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 72.

【中】

舉。仰山問中邑：「如何是佛性義。」邑
 云：「我與爾說箇譬喻。如室有六窓中，安一獼猴。
¹ 外有人喚云狻狻。² 獼猴即應如是六窓俱喚俱
 應。」仰云：「只如獼猴睡時，又作麼生。」邑乃
 下禪床把住云：「狻狻，我與爾相見。」

¹ 【獼猴】S:【狻猴】[mí hóu]: “a macaque.”

² 【狻狻】[shēng shēng]: “an orangutan” (also written: 猩猩).

【日】

こ きやうざんちゆうゆう と いか こ
 擧す。仰山 中 邑に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 ぶつしょう ぎ ゆういわ われ なんじ ため こ ひゆ
 佛性の 義。」邑云く、「我 爾が 與に 箇の 譬喩を
 と しつ ろくそう あ うち いち みこう お そと
 説かん。室に 六窓有り 中に 一獼猴を 安く、外に
 ひと あ よ しょうしょう い みこう すなわ
 人有りて 喚んで 狴 狴と 云えば 獼猴 即ち
 おう こ ごと ろくそうとも よ とも おう
 應ず、是の 如く 六窓俱に 喚べば 俱に 應ずる
 ごと きやういわ ただ みこう ねむ とし ごと
 が 如し。」仰 云く、「只獼猴睡る 時の 如きは
 また さもさん ゆう すなわ ぜんじょう くだ はじゅう
 又作麼生。」邑 乃ち 禪牀を 下って 把住して
 いわ しょうしょうわれ なんじ しょうけん
 云く、「狴 狴我 爾と 相見せり。」

【E】

Yangshan asked Zhongyi: "What does 'Buddha-nature' mean?" Zhongyi said: "I will explain it to you using a metaphor. Suppose there is a room with six windows, and someone placed a macaque inside this room. Outside, someone is shouting: 'Monkey! Monkey!,' and the macaque reacts, in the same manner, no matter from which window it is called." Yangshan said: "Suppose the macaque is asleep, what then?" Zhongyi descended from his Zen seat, grasped Yangshan, and said: "Hey monkey! Me and you are facing each other right now!"

The most candid question may often reveal itself to be a bottomless pit, into which one may fall and lose himself. A child innocently enquiring about the most fundamental truth may unwittingly touch the weakest point of the giant constructs built by his forefathers, and cause them to collapse into ruins, even when he is ridiculed for his own weakness and ignorance. To know the truth, to be acquainted with the way of the sky, first demands that one beholds his true self. This self is like a creature imprisoned within the boundaries of the body, seeing the world through the openings formed by each one of the senses, the heart-king reigning

over a mind and body²⁷ When it is called through any of the openings, it reacts in the same manner. The nature of these apertures does not affect the response of this creature, as there is only one being inside, which remains true to its nature, regardless of the hustle and bustle found beyond the walls of its prison. But one day, it may nonetheless be suddenly awakened by a voice, realizing that all of this was nothing but a dream.

The realm of dreams is indeed where everything is possible, but where nothing is true. Life on the earth, on the other hand, is replete with constraints, ruled by an order, unalterable by the will of the living. It is true. Our distant ancestors, the apes and their predecessors, were solely ruled by their instincts, endowed with a primitive world distinguishing vaguely the self from the other but remaining ignorant of their own nature. This ape remains buried deep within our hearts, as we also obey the commands of our instincts, attached to our heart-king, seeing ourselves as the center of our monumental world, because we experience it through the windows of our body. Man is nonetheless more than an ape. He has been given a great gift by life itself: the ability to seek to perceive his own nature, to examine the creature imprisoned inside the walls, and to seek to identify the voice calling it from the outside. Man's self is a prisoner of his body, but his mind can nonetheless wander out of this cage, passing through its bars without hindrance. When he closes his eyes, bathed in absolute silence, retreating into the world of sleep, the flow of his senses passing through his body is almost reduced to naught. Another nonetheless emerges, a flow gushing out of the depths of his mind itself. Cut off from the earth, this world is still full of sensations, with visions harmoniously married with sounds, fragrances, tastes, and contact, with him unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, earth and world. Wielding the tremendous power of reason, the ground of his world shaken to its foundation by the realization of the deceitfulness of the senses, he may then become aware of the illusory nature of the cage and the creature inside it.

To see one's true face is to see the ape at the root of our being in the eyes of our parents and brethren. It is to hear its answer to our calling in the rumbling of the waves violently crashing onto the sandy shore. It is to realize that the ape is calling himself,

²⁷See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p467 (Case 72).

his voice merely echoing between the immense walls delimiting the heavens, creating a mirage, deceiving us into thinking that there is more than one creature, an inside and an outside. Slumbering, neither sleeping nor awake, neither fully on the earth nor in the world, during the twilight of consciousness, this is when “it” may be finally experienced.

Case 32 —Emperor Dongguang’ s Helmet Hood —光帝幘頭

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 97.

【中】

舉。同光帝謂興化曰：「寡人¹ 收得中原²
一寶。只是無人酬價。」³ 化云：「借陛下寶看。」
帝以兩手引幘頭⁴ 脚化云：「君王之寶誰敢酬價。」

¹ 【寡人】[guǎ rén]: a first-person pronoun used by the emperor and the nobility.

² 【中原】[zhōng yuán]: “the Central Plain.” The central part of ancient China, including Henan, western Shandong, southern Shanxi and Hebei.

³ 【酬價】S: 【酬价】[chóu jià]: “to set a price [on something].”

⁴ 【幘頭】[fú tóu]: A type of helmet hood with four straps used since the Tang dynasty. (See: 「朝服に用いた冠。唐の4脚の紐をつけた被り物を模したもの。」From: 新村出。《広辞苑第七版》。東京：岩波書店, 2018.)

【日】

こ どうこうてい きょうげ い いわ か
舉す。同光帝、興化に 謂って 云く、「寡
じんちゅうげん いっぱう おさ え ただ こ ひと あたい
人中原の 一寶を 収め 得たり。只是れ 人の 價を
むくい な けいわ へいか たから か み
酬る 無し。」化云く、「陛下の 寶を 借せ 看ん。」
ていりょうしゅ もつ ぼくとう きやく ひ けいわ くんのお
帝兩手を以て幘頭 脚を 引く。化云く、「君王の
たからだれ あえ あたい むく
寶誰か 敢て 價を 酬いん。」

【E】

Emperor Dongguang spoke to Xinghua saying: “I have received the first treasure of the Central Plain,¹ but no one

can set a price on it.” Xinghua said: “Your Majesty, please lend it to me so that I may look at it.” The emperor pulled the straps of his helmet hood with both hands. Xinghua said: “Who dares to set a price on the sovereign king’s treasure!”

¹ “The Central Plain” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

What is the most precious is priceless. It is what cannot be offered or snatched away, what is safe from the hands of the covetous and cannot be reproduced by the brush of a painter or the words of a poet. A dominion is defined by its borders, enclosing the land that is possessed and ruled by its lord, but even within the widest walls, an enclosure remains a boundary, a horizon to the eyes, and a frontier to the body. A rare treasure for a sovereign is the collapse of the walls surrounding what belongs to him, the collapse of the frontiers, expanding his view and offering a vision of the whole of the earth. Extended to the unexplored confines of the earth, the dominion of the ruler becomes meaningless. Possessing everything, he realizes that he possesses nothing. Then only does he become a genuine son of the heavens, born out of the marriage of earth and sky, holding the fiery sun and the ashy moon in his vigorous hands, with the scintillating constellations forming the jewels of the crown adorning his head.

When the walls fall down to the ground, the mind can finally reach the stars. When the shade of the rampart no longer veils the countenance of the unequaled sun, its light runs through the streets, slipping into the smallest cracks, chasing away the darkness to leave only clarity in their stead. Higher than the rest of the body, and alone endowed with eyes to see, the head is made to lead the whole body toward its destination and destiny. Likewise, the head of state who has been awakened by the light shining through the windows of his palace towering over the capital may guide his subjects toward the source of all radiance. The enlightened sovereign is a beacon for the people, fostering the prosperity of his land,²⁸ but he remains powerless to share his gift, to dispense the light he received directly into the eyes of his subjects. Only

²⁸See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klause der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p501: „Warum aber hat Hong-zhi eine solche Geschichte in seine

through his word and his acts may they perhaps also partake of his glorious vision, his invaluable gem, which is nowhere to be found on the earth.

To see gold in the mud, to hear the most pleasurable melody in the hustle and bustle of a marketplace, or to see one's own true face in the fresh flowers budding on old, crooked branches, this is one's first treasure. A gaze piercing through all barriers, seeing no high and low, no price nor worth, and an undiscerning ear welcoming all sounds equally, reacting to joyful songs in the same manner as to the most unnerving screech, this is the key to the kingdom of heaven, the place where there are no longer rulers or subjects, light or darkness, and not even a single thing. And yet, this is also the place where a son of heaven would rather spend his existence, far from riches and the throngs of greedy men obstinately chasing after them.

Case 33 —Xizhong's Wheels —奚仲造車

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 8.

【中】

yuè ān hé shàng wèn sēng xī zhōng zào chē yì bǎi fú niān
月庵和尚問僧：「奚仲¹造車²一百輻，拈
què liǎng tóu qù què zhóu míng shén me biān shì
却兩頭，去却軸，明甚麼邊事。」

¹ 【奚仲】[xī zhòng]: A legendary wheel maker of the mythical Xia dynasty (c. 2070 - 1600 B.C.), mentioned in several books, such as the "Classic of Mountains and Seas" (山海經).

² 【車】S: 【车】[chē]: "a wheel" / "a cart" / "a vehicle."

【日】

こ げつあんおしょう そう と けいちゅう くるま
擧す。月庵和尚、僧に 問う、「奚仲は 車を

Sammlung von „100 Beispielen der Alten“ aufgenommen? Ist sie so etwas wie ein politisches Manifest? Soll sie angeht - im Hintergrund noch eine andere, viel, viel ältere Stimme, die da sagt: „Solange nicht die Philosophen Könige werden oder die Könige zu Philosophen, wird es unter den Menschen kein Ende des Unheils geben!“ So der griechische Philosoph Platon (427 - 347 .u.Z.) an zentraler Stelle seines bekanntesten Buches, der Politeia - vgl. Platon (!) , S. 294."

つく いぎやくぶく りょうとう ねんきやく じく こきやく
 造ること 一百 輻。兩 頭を 拈却し、軸を 去却す。
なに へん こと あき
 甚麼邊の 事か 明らむ。」

【E】

Yue' an asked his fellow monks: "Xizhong¹ made two-wheeled carts, with a hundred spokes [between their two wheels]. Now, if you were to remove the hub uniting the spokes, what would then become apparent?"

¹ "Xizhong": See note 1 of the Chinese text.

If one observes a wooden cart driven on a road, the usefulness of this piece of machinery is readily apparent. It acts as a remarkably simple and yet incredibly effective countermeasure to the omnipresent downward pull of the earth, allowing man to rapidly transport things across its coarse surface with considerably less effort than if he were to carry them on his back or pull them with his bare hands. The inconspicuous perfection of the wheel, imitating the celestial wheels themselves, the heavenly mechanism, allows it to roll almost without friction on a flat road. We may marvel at the ingenuity of this invention, one of the most impactful for our kind, and one that came relatively late in our evolution, admiring its incomparable usefulness, and the primordial role it plays in our world.

The cart only functions when each one of the numerous pieces forming this complex assembly is at its place, and in a working condition. If the cart were to break down, irreparably damaged, this usefulness would then instantly vanish. This contraption would become a mere stumbling block on the path, a pile of rubbish, ready to be burned or thrown away. If, however, one were to first disassemble part of it; if one were to remove the hub holding the spokes and the axle together, most of the wheels would then fall apart, separated from one another. The mechanism would turn into a heap of wood, utterly useless. The disappearance of the use may nonetheless represent a unique occasion for a hidden facet of this thing to be revealed. Indeed, now that the function of this

piece of machinery has been obscured, the substance of the cart then becomes readily apparent. The cart is no more, but the materials out of which it was made now appear more clearly in the eyes of the observer. The wooden spokes are shown to be made of the dry cadavers of the pillars of the forest. Its iron nails are now seen as the crimson, powdery ore extracted from the dark body of the earth. No longer being a thing of the world, the elements that formed the cart now appear as the earth itself, showing us the oft-forgotten unicity of use and essence, of world and earth.

The world of man is nonetheless very much like the wooden cart, and the mind is what holds its pieces together. We gather the world and the earth. We continuously support the ten thousand things forming the world, and hold the entire earth over our shoulders, with both world and earth being extremities of the same object, the same thing, like the axle joining the wheels. The world is a gigantic piece of machinery held on by our mind, and when the vacuity of our self is unveiled, the entire mechanism falls apart. When the mind is clear, and all things are released, the world crumbles and all that is left is the whole of the earth itself, readily apparent. The essence of being is revealed when the use of the things of the world is concealed. What was obvious to the uncivilized, the naked ones living like animals on the bare earth, in close contact with it, must now be rediscovered by the educated sons of the world, the heirs of civilization. We can then enjoy the blessings of the world while partaking in the truth of the earth, seeing that they are one and the same, two facets of the same essence of being. We can then gain awareness of the decisive role played by our self in this playful tension between earth and world, a tension that sets in motion our existence, carrying us on the way of the sky, as the heavenly wheels continue their endless revolutions.

Case 34 —The Girl With The Two Souls —倩女離魂

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 35.

【中】

wǔ zǔ wèn sēng yún qiàn nǚ lí hún nà gè shì zhēn dǐ
五祖¹ 問僧云：「倩女離魂，² 那箇是真底。」³

¹ 【五祖法演】[wǔ zǔ fǎ yǎn]: (—1104 A.D.) Not to be mistaken with the fifth patriarch: 弘忍 [hóng rěn] (601—675 A.D.)

² 【倩女離魂】S: 【倩女离魂】[qiàn nǚ lí hún]: A short story found in the “Extensive Records of the Taiping Era” (太平廣記). A woman named Qianniang (倩娘), or Qiannü (倩女), fell in love with a man named Wang Zhou (王宙), but her father wanted her to marry someone else. Heartbroken, the couple decided to flee together to another province and lived there for 5 years. Wanting to see her family again, they nonetheless returned for a visit, but were shocked to see that Qianniang was still at her father’s house, heartbroken and alone for five years. The two Qianniang then once again became one.

³ 【底】[dǐ]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 的.

【日】

こ ご そ そう と いわ せいじょり こん
 擧す。五祖、僧に 問うて 云く、「倩女離魂、
 なこ こ しんてい
 那箇か 是れ 眞底。」

【E】

Wuzu asked his fellow monks: “Qiannü, the pretty girl, had her soul split in two. Which one of them was the true one?”

Our body is the gate through which we experience our environment, with our thoughts and our will allowing us to leave marks upon our world through the agency of our limbs and our mouth, offering us the possibility to ex-press ourselves, to pour out the content of our mind onto it. Our voice echoes widely throughout the air and slips into the ears of our neighbors, like a seal delicately imprinting their minds. Our hands shape the malleable mud, our tools carve the rigid rocks, and the warm touch of our skin triggers a cascade of emotions in those in close contact with us. If this gate were to be sealed shut, or if it crumbled under the unbearable weight of the years, what would remain of us? The growth of our self was fostered by the uninterrupted flow passing through this very gate. Our surroundings shaped our nature like a potter imparts a shape to a lump of clay. We are not merely thrown into our world, as things merely standing out from it. We rather are products of this world, and we are the world itself. Our self always

remains inextricably linked to it. The mind is one with the body, and the body is one with the world. Seemingly paradoxically, this nonetheless also implies that the destruction of our flesh does not signal the end of our self. Indeed, if the distinction between the self and the world is illusory, a mere hallucination, this means that one cannot vanish without the vanishing of the other. The death of the body of one man is not the death of the world of all men, and thus the self does not lose its essence with the ineluctable collapse of the body. It rather lives through the emergence of new generations, through the enduring of our branch of the tree of life.

The flux offered to us by our senses is nonetheless manifold. Each one of our eyes offers us a unique vision of our world, and yet the two perspectives represent a single environment. Joined together, these two perspectives even give us more than the sum of the two images they offer: they bring us a new dimension, the depths of the world in front of us, not found in either one of these images. Distinguishing the two points of view is a necessary preliminary step, but only when reunited do these points of view present a vision of the truth of the world.

Likewise, we split ourselves and shatter our world into innumerable pieces because these alone can be grasped by the mind, but only by piecing them back together afterward can we get a glance at the truth of being, out of reach by our reason. The truth is only experienced when one no longer sees the pieces nor the whole they form, when the self and the world are not merely one, but instead become none, no-thing, nothing, with each blade of grass covering the blossoming meadows becoming as many fingers, the birds soaring in the air becoming our eyes, and the alternation of the days and nights paced by the revolutions of the earth becoming our heartbeat.²⁹

²⁹See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "As long as you are attached to the dualistic concept of two Seis, you cannot grasp the true one. Which is the true one? What is the true Sei? As you know, when you have truly become one with Mu, you realize what Mu is. When you have really become one with Sei, you will see the true Sei easily."

Case 35 —Qinglin' s “Deadly Snake” —青 林死蛇

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 59.

【中】

舉。僧問 青林：「學人徑往時如何。」 林 云：「死
 蛇當大路。勸¹ 子莫當頭。」 僧云：「當頭時如何。」
 林 云：「喪² 子命根。」³ 僧云：「不當頭時如何。」
 林 云：「亦無迴避處。」 僧云：「正恁麼時如何。」
 林 云：「却失也。」 僧云：「未審向甚麼處去也。」
 林 云：「草深，無覓處。」 僧云：「和尚也須隄防⁴
 始得。」 林 拈掌云：「一等是箇毒氣。」

¹ 【勸】S:【劝】[quàn]: “to advise.”

² 【徑】S:【径】[jìng]: “a footpath.”

³ 【喪】S:【丧】[sàng]: “to lose” (something immaterial but important, such as one' s life or courage).

⁴ 【命根】[mìng gēn]: “the foundation upon which one' s life is based.”

⁵ 【隄防】[dī fáng]: “to be watchful [of something]” / “to guard against [something].”

【日】

こ そう せいりん と がくにんこみち ゆ とき
 舉す。僧、青林に 問う、「學人徑に 往く 時
 いかん りんいわ し じゃ たいろ あた なんじ すず とう
 如何。」林云く、「死蛇大路に 當る、子に 勸む 當
 とう なか そういわ とうとう とき いかん
 頭すること 莫れ。」僧云く、「當頭する 時如何。」
 りんいわ なんじ めいこん そう そういわ とうとう
 林云く、「子が 命根を 喪す。」僧云く、「當頭せざ
 とき いかん りんいわ またかい ひ ところ そう
 る 時如何。」林云く、「亦迴避するに 處なし。」僧
 いわ しょう いんも とき いかん りんいわ かへつ しつ
 云く、「正 恁麼の 時如何。」林云く、「却て 失せ
 そういわ み ぶか なん ところ むか さ
 り。」僧云く、「未審し 甚麼の 處に 向って 去る
 りんいわ くさぶか もとむ ところ そう
 や。」林云く、「草深くして 覓るに 處なし。」僧

いわ おしょう ま すべから ていぼう はじ え
 云く、「和尚も 也た 須く 隄防して 始めて 得べ
 し。」りん たなごころ 林 掌 ぶ を 拊して いわ 云く、「いっとう 一等に こ 是れ 箇の
 毒氣と。」どつき

【E】

A monk asked Qinglin: "How is it when a practitioner goes along the narrow path?" Qinglin said: "One will meet a deadly snake on the great road. The disciples are advised not to find themselves face to face with it." The monk said: "What if one comes face to face with it?" Qinglin said: "The disciple will lose the foundation of his life." The monk said: "What if one doesn't come face to face with it?" Qinglin said: "There is no place to escape from it." The monk said: "At that point, what then?" Qinglin said: "It vanishes." The monk said: "I don't know where it went." Qinglin said: "The grass is deep, and there is no place where it can be seen." The monk said: "The Master should also be watchful in order to get it." Qinglin clapped his hands and said: "This one is also highly poisonous!"

Leisurely strolling the wide plains, far away from the concrete mazes erected by his brethren, the wanderer is free, his will unrestrained, his course unobstructed. Spotting a stranger or a wild beast, he has ample time to retreat and avoid an unwanted encounter. The free life of the empty plains thus presents few challenges. It does not force him to strive and transcend his own limits, and he has no incentive to change his ways. The result is stagnation, a standstill of the self, with the experiences lived in the open land enriching his world each day that goes by, but failing to foster his own growth. Absolute freedom comes at the price of stasis. Without restraint, without boundaries, one is swimming in the air, unable to advance. It is through constraints, through hindrances, that one is able to find the support indispensable for progress to occur. It is when one cannot retreat, caught between

walls in front of what is feared the most, that one is compelled to face what he dreads, to throw his life into a battle, seeing himself being transformed by this event, as his cowardice vanishes and a courageous warrior emerges within his mind, seizing his body.

When the plains end and the wanderer decides to venture into the valley, seeing the freedom of the open country progressively vanish, a path begins to appear. Still given the choice to go forward or to turn back, he is now being channeled between mountain walls made of rock and dust, ascending toward the peak on an increasingly narrow trail, a demonstration of his desire to see himself be shaped by the earth, a sign of abandonment of the civilized life of the city. Far from other men, having relinquished his freedom to see the end of the road, he finally comes face to face with a deadly snake. The infinite wideness of the plain has now been progressively reduced to a handbreadth. The countless things visible in the open country have one by one been merged together, to leave only a single thing standing in front of the traveler. The deadly snake has swallowed the heavens whole. It has devoured the earth. It has feasted on the flesh of all creatures and drank up the ocean to the last drop. It is now all that is left of the world, the last thing, the most intimate friend and the harshest enemy, what can take one's life but also save it.

What is left when all the rest has been taken away is the self. It is also the master, and the world itself, which are one, as there is only one thing left. The self is nonetheless the most dangerous thing. It is the thing that one is most reluctant to let go of but also the most necessary to release. Facing the deadly snake, there is no place into which one could retreat, as there is no place beside it. It occupies the entirety of the universe. Furthermore, the wanderer has no weapons in his hands, as the crawling animal has swallowed them all. All that he can do is let himself be bitten, succumbing to its power, feeling the venom diffused through his veins and carrying it to the smallest vessels of his body, his consciousness numbed by the poison, accepting to see his life extinguished like an ember thrown into a freezing lake. At that point, the lake not only quenches the ember. As it vanishes, the ardent coal indeed takes the entire lake with it into the bottomless abyss. It opens a chasm where the last thing falls into oblivion, swallowing emptiness itself, leaving no-thing behind, not even death.

When death itself has been let go of, one may then finally awaken, no longer knowing if he is alive or dead. Encountering other men, other wanderers on the path, or in the vast open plains, he admonishes them as they roam through the tall grasses, to be watchful for the snake sneakily slithering between the dancing blades, unseen and unheard. If they encounter it, it will take their life, and may even rob them of death itself, leaving them with no-thing, but offering them everything.

Case 36 —Zhimen’ s Lotus —智門蓮花荷葉

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 21.

【中】

jǔ 舉。sēng wèn 僧問 zhì mén 智門：「lián huā wèi chū shuǐ shí rú hé 蓮花未出水時如何。」zhì mén 智門
yún 云：「lián huā 蓮花。」sēng yún 僧云：「chū shuǐ hòu rú hé 出水後如何。」mén yún 門云：「hé yè 荷
 葉。」

【日】

こ 舉す。僧、智門に と 問う、「れんげ ま 蓮花未だ みず 水を出で
とき ざる い 時如何。」智門云く、「れんげ 蓮花。」僧云く、「みず 水を出て
い 後如何。門云く、「かよう 荷葉。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhimen: “What is it when the lotus has not yet come out of the water?” Zhuimen said: “Lotus flowers.”

¹ The monk asked: “What is it after it has come out of the water?” Zhimen replied: “Lotus leaves.”

¹ “Lotus flowers”: The word here translated as “Lotus flowers” (蓮花) is also the name that designates the Lotus plant as a whole.

A primordial soup of various ingredients gathered by the currents of the ocean, stirred up by the moon itself as it raises the tides twice a day, with the sun imparting its warmth to it, with lightning bolts rearranging this mysterious mixture, this is how it seems that the first spark of life was kindled, triggering an uncontrollable cascade turning the rocky surface of our planet into a majestic tree almost magically driving a wedge between earth and sky, doing so without being separated from them, with life never really ceasing to be fully part of the lower realm, never reneging on its earthly nature. With each living being and each generation widely sowing the seeds source of its descendance, ensuring the perpetuation of life, the young sprouts out of the old, without an objective gap between each link of this fantastically lengthy chain going through the ages, covering the dry land and filling the seas. Profusely watered by the clouds and abundantly illuminated by the sun, the seeds buried in the muddy soil have hearkened the calling of the spring, and thus they with great effort pierce through the crust of the earth to rise toward the skies, while the fiery globe feeds the nascent plants with warmth and radiance. As the buds turn into colorful and fragrant flowers, they are considered by the world to have accomplished their destiny, to have reached the stage for which they were brought forth by life. With the flower's entrails exposed to the eyes of the living, its innermost, fragrant essence offered to the touch of the winds, it nonetheless did not fundamentally change in nature since it was but a seed patiently waiting in the hard frozen ground during the winter. It is as it always was, and will always be, even when the eyes of man will turn away from its withered petals and desiccated stem. The withered blossom then does not "return" to the earth: it always remained the earth itself, simply momentarily displaying another facet of its nature! The grains of pollen it offered to the winds to scatter and to the rains to sow represent the extension of its being, passing on the torch of its existence through time and space, another great revolution of the celestial wheels.

Man is likewise a mere lump of earth bewitched by life, never ceasing to be, never seeing his true nature irremediably annihilated by the work of the skies, the weight of the years eroding his flesh and bones. The infant born in darkness will one day be bathed in the brightest light, but his nature will not have been radically transformed, but rather only revealed and displayed for all eyes

to behold, including our own. To see a difference between the seed and the flower, the ignorant and the enlightened, is to live in the realm of appearances, to live in the instantaneous, rather than to see the truth of nature, beyond the surface separating the earth and life, beyond the boundary isolating the present from the past and the future, to instead see the entire course of the being of all beings in the most insignificant flower in the midst of the meadow, having completely forgotten the distinction between seed and flower, between oneself and a blade of grass, between the living and the dead, between the sooty earth and the azure sky. Enlightenment thus comes when one becomes blind, and when the one looking at the light sees the world around him but loses sight of himself.

Case 37 —Zhaozhou's Bridge—趙州石橋

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 52.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn zhào zhōu jiǔ xiǎng zhào zhōu shí qiáo dào lái zhī jiàn
 舉。僧問 趙州：「久響¹ 趙州石橋，到來只見
 lüè zhuó zhōu yún rǔ zhī jiàn lüè zhuó qiě bú jiàn shí qiáo sēng
 略約。」² 州 云：「汝只見略約，且不見石橋。」僧
 yún rú hé shì shí qiáo zhōu yún dù lú dù mǎ zhuó
 云：「如何是石橋。」 州 云：「渡驢渡馬約。」

¹ 【響】S:【响】[xiǎng]: “to echo” (here, concerning someone's fame).

² 【略約】[lüè zhuó]: “a small and rudimentary wooden bridge.”

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と ひさ じょうしゅう
 舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「久しく 趙 州の
 しゃっしょう した どうらい た りやくしゃく み
 石橋を 響うに、到來すれば 只だ 略 約を 見る
 しゅういわ なんじ た りやくしゃく み
 のみ。」州 云く、「汝は 只だ 略 約のみを 見て、
 さて しゃっしょう み そういわ いか こ
 且も 石橋は 見ず。」僧云く、「如何なるか 是れ
 しゃっしょう しゅういわ ろば わた うま わた
 石橋。」州 云く、「驢を 渡し 馬を 渡す。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “For a long time, the stone bridge of Zhaozhou¹ has echoed in my ears, but now that I have come here, what I see is a mere log bridge.” Zhaozhou said: “You just see a log bridge, but you don’t see the stone bridge.” The monk said: “What is the stone bridge?” Zhaozhou said: “It is a bridge that lets both horses and donkeys cross.”

¹ “Zhaozhou”: The name of the master comes from the name of the city of Zhaozhou, in the vicinity of which he taught. It is located in what is now Hebei province (河北省).

When the poor of the world, those who have let go of all their meager possessions and deserted the crowded streets to take refuge in the great wasteland, where no-thing can be found, stumble upon each other, their meeting is often rich in playfulness and humor. Their words make fun of the arbitrary order imposed by men, reversing the hierarchies, and they greet each other with what appears as insults but nonetheless brings smiles to their faces, as a testimony of their detachment from the affairs of the world, and from their own self. Fame, an expression of the hierarchies of the world, may be carried by the voices echoing through the air, resonating in the ears of the people, but to exalt someone is to tighten the chain binding him to the man-made foundations of their world, to put a thicker blindfold upon his eyes, preventing him from seeing his own face. Having nothing to lose, not even possessing “no-thing-ness” itself, the desert dweller stretches his body on the bare soil, beholding the emptiness of the heavens above. He humbles himself, his skin touching the earth, and welcomes with mirth the humbling words of a stranger. The derision of the visitor is like drinking the sweetest elixir, and his invectives like eating the most succulent treats. These utterances are a helping hand to him, keeping his self contained, preventing its puffing up, and thankful for these invaluable gifts, he swiftly returns the favor. He has been called a mere pile of rotten wood by the visitor, whereas the echoes of his fame had proclaimed him a monument made of the hardest granite, and thus he replies by assimilating his interlocutor to a donkey, stubborn and dull, only worthy to carry the burdens of the world. Some among the wisest of men nonetheless chose to ride donkeys instead of stallions or elephants,

humbling themselves while they were exalted by their followers, a sign of acquaintance with the nature of their own self.

Recognizing the unbreakable bond uniting them, the two men roaming the desert conclude their play by plunging themselves back into silence, only hearing the faint murmur of the sand swept away by the evening breeze. With the light of the world dimmed into obscurity, the donkey can no longer be distinguished from the stallion. The shabby, wooden footbridge now appears identical to the walkway made of robust slates of pristine marble. Even the sharply drawn skyline of the city has faded away, and it is now impossible to discern it from the vast and empty expanse of the great wasteland. A new dawn will nonetheless soon gloriously appear, once again shedding light on all things, and then the humble ones sleeping on the bare earth will head back to the city, to lead its inhabitants out of bondage, stripping them of their burden, and showing them the wealth of the poor, the riches of those who have nothing, accompanying them across the gigantic chasm, their bodies used as bridges so that they may discover what has always been concealed, right in front of their eyes.

Case 38 — One Arrow Through Three Gates — 一鏃破三關

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 56.

【中】

jǔ liáng chán kè wèn qīn shān yì zú pò sān guān shí rú hé
舉。良禪客問欽山：「一鏃¹ 破三關時如何。」
shān yún fàng chū guān zhōng zhǔ kàn liáng yún rèn me zé zhī
山云：「放出『關中主』看。」良云：「怎麼則知
guò bì gǎi shān yún gèng dài hé shí liáng yún hǎo jiàn fàng
過必改。」山云：「更待何時。」良云：「好箭放
bù zháo suǒ zài biàn chū shān yún qiě lái shé lí liáng
不著所在。」，便出。山云：「且來闍黎。」² 良
huí shǒu shān bǎ zhù yún yì zú pò sān guān jí qiě zhǐ shì
回首，山把住云：「『一鏃破三關』即且止，試
yǔ qīn shān fā jiàn kàn liáng nǐ yì shān dǎ qī bàng yún qiě
與欽山發箭看。」良擬議，山打七棒云：「且
tīng zhè hàn yí sān shí nián
聽³ 這漢疑三十年。」

¹ 【鏃】S:【鏃】[zú]: “an arrowhead.”

² 【闍黎】S:【闍黎】[shé lí]: “a Buddhist teacher.” The transliteration of the Sanskrit word आचार्य [ācārya]. It may also be written 闍梨.

³ 【聽】S:【听】[tīng]: “to allow.”

【目】

こ りょうぜんかく きんざん と いちぞく さん
 舉す。良 禪客、欽山に 問う、「一鏃もて 三
 かん やぶ とさ いかん さんいわ かんちゅう しゅ
 關を 破る 時、如何。」山云く、「關中の 主を
 ほうしゅつ み りょういわ さよう すなわ あやまち
 放出し 看よ。」良 云く、「恁麼ならば 則ち 過を
 し かなら あらた さんいわ さら いつ
 知りて 必ず 改めん。」山云く、「更に 何時をか
 ま りょういわ こうせんはな しょうい つ
 待たん。」良 云く、「好箭放つに 所在に 著かず
 すなわ いで さんいわ まず き そなた
 と。 便ち 出ず。」山云く、「且は 來たれ、闍黎。」
 りょう くび めぐ さん つかま いわ いちぞく
 良、首を 回らす。山、把住えて 云く、「一鏃も
 さんかん やぶ すなわ さ お ところ
 て 三關を 破ることは 即ち 且て 止く、試み
 きんざん ため や はつ み りょう ぎ ぎ
 に 欽山の 與に 箭を 發し 看よ。」良、疑議す。
 さん う しちぼう いわ まず まか こ
 山、打つこと 七棒して 云く、「且は 聽す、這の
 おとこうたが きんじゅうねん
 漢 疑うこと 三十年なるを。」

【E】

A Zen practitioner named Liang asked Jinshan: “What is it when one single arrow breaks through three barriers?” Jinshan said: “Drive out the master standing in the barriers, so that I may see him.” Liang said: “If so, I will acknowledge that I have strayed and will change.” Jinshan said: “Till when do you plan to wait?” Liang said: “A good arrow that cannot find where to be aimed,” and he then went out. Jinshan said: “Come back, teacher!” Liang turned his head, and then Jinshan grasped him and said: “Let’s put aside the story of the arrow that breaks through three barriers. Just shoot an arrow for Jinshan, so that he may see it.” Liang was still trying to understand what he meant, but Jinshan hit him

seven times with a stick and said: "I will allow this fellow to keep puzzling for thirty years."

The overcoming of the obstacles seen on his way is often the focus of the existence of the one striving for liberation from the delusions of the world. He tenaciously tries to shatter the barriers obstructing his progress with the sword of his reason. He boldly shoots arrows at them, without realizing that something else stands in the way, engulfing the arrows, absorbing the blows of the sword, before they reach their destination, bringing to naught his efforts. Our fiercest enemy, the greatest obstacle firmly standing in front of our destination, is our own self. When we clearly see our own nature, we may then see that the barriers are but a mirage, an illusion emerging from within ourselves. These barriers may be named greed, hatred, or delusion³⁰, or they may bear other names, but they all are made of the same material, and they equally vanish when light is shed upon them. When the one standing in the barriers has been shot, he takes down these barriers with him as his corpse falls down to the ground. Without the self, there is indeed no desire, no envy, and the truth can then shine, its light no longer encountering any interference, rushing through the firmament without the slightest impediment.

To see the barriers means that we are still caught in the mire of the world, still attached to our self. No matter what we throw at them, their presence is a testimony to our failure, a proof of our state of delusion. To proclaim that one has struck a serious blow at them is a sign that one has yet to know what the barriers are. The only arrow that is well shot is the one that disappears into thin air, lost in the emptiness of the sky, nowhere to be seen. This arrow breaks the sound barrier, and the deafening roar that then resonates throughout the earth and the sky is the one causing the complete collapse of all the walls, all the ramparts, all the gates, with them violently crashing down to the earth, before they are engulfed by it, leaving no trace behind. Such an arrow is nonetheless hard to spot as it flies through the air, and it is easy to be mistaken about its course and its target. One may be quick

³⁰That is, the "three poisons" affecting men according to Buddhism.

to proclaim that it missed, but caution should always be observed, because as soon as one thinks he has seen where the arrow has landed, he misses the target, and himself is found to be imprisoned in the most unbreakable coffin.

When the projectile has pierced the heart of the one standing in the way, the world as a whole is vaporized and scattered by the winds. The distinctions between hitting or missing, between one and three, between the man and the barrier, simply are no more. After this occurs, when one is called out by a brother, there is no longer anyone there to hearken to this call, and thus the body stands still, undisturbed by the innumerable sounds passing through the air and entering his ears. To hear something, or to turn one's head when called, is to still be attached to one's self.³¹ When there are no obstacles on the way, even the most violent blows of a bludgeon will not cause him to deviate from his course, and he will not even feel them. Even the passing of the years, the grand circumambulations of our planet around our radiant star, go unnoticed, as the mind is then like an ocean of the purest water, perfectly transparent. There is no longer any reflection, any wondering. One indeed cannot be puzzled by absolute clarity.

Case 39 —Yunmen's Treasure —云門一寶

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 62. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 92.

【中】

舉。雲門示眾云：「乾坤¹之內，宇宙之間，
中有一寶，祕在形山。」²「拈燈籠向佛殿裏，將
三門來燈籠上。」

¹ 【乾坤】[qián kūn]: “the sky and the earth” / “the universe.” A term originating from the “Book and Changes” (易經).

² A sentence quoted from the “Treasure Theory” (寶藏論), a work of a Buddhist philosopher of the Later Qin dynasty named Sēng Zhào (僧肇, 384-414).

³ 【形山】[xíng shān]: Literally “the shape of a mountain,” but in a Buddhist context

³¹ See: 「要真正參透『一鏃破三關』，胸中必須得沒有任何是非、得失，此外還得超出言句之外。巨良禪師的一回頭，表明他胸中還有是非、得失之心。」From: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005.

it also designates the human body. (See: 「即指肉身」. From: 丁福保. 《佛學大辭典》。佛陀教育基金會, 2004.)

【日】

こ うんもん しゅ しめ いわ けんこん うち
 舉す。雲門、衆に 示して 云く、「乾坤の 内、
 うちゅう あいだ なか いっぽう あ ぎょうざん ひざい
 宇宙の 間、中に 一寶有り、形山に 秘在す、と。
 どうろう とりあ ぶつでんうち むか さんもん
 燈籠を 拈げて 佛殿裏に 向い、 三門を
 もつ どうろう じょう き
 將て 燈籠 上に 來たらしむ。」

【E】

Yunmen, instructing the assembly, said: “‘Within heaven and earth, in the midst of the universe, there is one treasure hidden in a body, which is shaped like a mountain.’¹ You take up a lantern and go to the Buddha Hall; you take the three temple gates² and put them on the lantern.”

¹ A quote, see note 2 of the Chinese text.

² “The temple gate”: The gate is actually a set of three gates, also symbolizing three gates toward liberation.

Each one of us is the main character of the play of his existence, the actor and the window through which the stage is seen. Within the heavens and upon the earth, in the midst of the universe, we are the center point of all that is, the great mountain whose summit reaches to the highest sky, and whose base encompasses the entire earth. In the entrails of this mountain, the most magnificent jewel is buried, away from the greedy eyes of men and the blinding light of the world. The imposing mountain jealously guards it, cherishing it above all things, refusing to let it be carried away by those selfishly and mercilessly plundering its body. This treasure is our most prized possession, the wealth that we should defend with our life, ready to spill the blood of friends and foes alike to prevent its disappearance, but few even know of its existence, and even fewer are ready to leave the brightness of the heavens to discover what lies in this dark sanctuary in the innermost part of this great body.

On the peak of the great mountain, a beacon has nonetheless been lit since the dawn of time, and it outshines the brilliance of the sun and the scintillation of the more distant stars. This bonfire, our ego, reveals the world through its radiance, the ten thousand things that occupy our minds and fill up the earth. When the light of the day recedes and abandons its dominion to the darkness of the night, and when we finally decide to leave the world behind to penetrate the sanctuary with incomparable awe and wonder in our hearts, as this place is engulfed in shadows, we notice that our mere presence casts away the darkness and promptly chases away the quietude of this mysterious temple. The serenity of the dark is suddenly disturbed by the intrusion of our light, bringing with it the constellation of things we possess into this place where no-thingness previously reigned supreme. Struck with the realization of our profanation, of our imprudent violation of this shrine celebrating the dark itself, indiscrimination opposed to the clarity reigning in the world, we suddenly tear up the doors of the sanctuary to quench the fire we ignorantly introduced in it. As the flames are suffocated by the wooden panels, the shadows suddenly return and reconquer the hall, whose purpose becomes clear: it celebrates and incarnates emptiness itself, what does not belong to the world of things but rather transcends it. The shadows now enshroud every single thing, and soon enough, the dark once again exerts an absolute dominion over this shelter of the mind. There is no longer any light, nor any body. The mountain has been leveled, and the beacon has been doused by the rain. There is no earth nor heaven anymore, no center nor boundaries. There is no treasure to cling to, and no one is there who could cherish any wealth. The play has ended, with the closing of the black velvet drape, but the audience has already left, and is now nowhere to be found, while the actors have all vanished, and the stage has crumbled into dust. Nothingness is the jewel that then alone endures.

Case 40 — When I Do Not See — 吾不見時

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 94. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 88.

【中】

jǔ lèng yán jīng yún wú bú jiàn shí hé bú jiàn wú bú jiàn
舉。《楞嚴經》云：「吾不見時，何不見吾不見

zhǐ chù ruò jiàn bú jiàn zì rán fēi bǐ bú jiàn zhī xiàng ruò bú jiàn wú bú
 之處。若見不見，自然非彼不見之相；若不見吾不
 jiàn zhī dì zì rán fēi wù yún hé fēi rǔ
 見之地，¹ 自然非物，云何非汝。」

¹ 【轉語】S:【转语】[zhuǎn yǔ]: “a turning-word,” that is, a short-sentence or a word that is meant to trigger a deep enlightenment.

【日】

こ りょうごんきょう いわ わ み とぎ
 擧す。『楞嚴經』に 云く、「吾れ 見ざる 時、
 なん わ みず ところ み も みず み
 何ぞ 吾が 不見の 處を 見ざる。若し 不見を 見れ
 しぜん かれ みず そう ひ も わ
 ば、自然に 彼の 不見の 相に 非ず。若し 吾が
 みず ち み しぜん もの ひ いかん
 不見の 地を 見ざれば、自然に 物に 非ず。云何ぞ
 なんじ ひ
 汝に 非ざると。」

【E】

The Shurangama Sutra says: “When I don’ t see, why does the place that I do not see remain unseen? If one sees that it is unseen, then naturally it is not the aspect that he does not see. If one does not see the earth that I do not see, then naturally it is not a thing. Why is it not your self?”

If no one depicts with words what sight is and pours these descriptive words into his ears, the blind since birth will never realize the nature of his own condition. More pernicious than blindness is nonetheless an illusion, as it indeed presents an image of falsehood cunningly disguised as truth, and the observer is all too often easily duped, firmly convinced that he sees what *is*, whereas it remains concealed, along with the very fact that something remains unseen. When we attentively contemplate the wonders of nature illuminated by the great luminary steadily marking the pace of the days and the nights, we see the things upon which its light is reflected and diffused before it buries itself in the depths of our eyes, but unless we take a glance at its source, we do not see the

light itself. Likewise, our experience of the earth and the sky is mediated by our world, which shatters the unicity of all that *is* into a profusion of things. The role played by this inconspicuous mediation is nonetheless seldom known. We see nature through the lens of our world, cutting it out in pieces and assigning them names and properties, but the translucent nature of this lens renders it invisible to most. Only when the world's very foundations are shaken, only when the lens is cracked, does it suddenly make its entry into man's world itself. To see what we do not see, this is the first step toward an unmediated experience of the earth and the skies, a discovery of the truth of nature.

Consciousness of the blind spots of our mind nonetheless does not imply that we are necessarily able to be cured of our impairment. To know that the earth is concealed by the world is not an experience of the truth of the earth. Such an experience only comes when one lets go of the lens through which he perceives his world, sacrificing his intelligence, abandoning his grasping of the ten thousand things occupying the land around him and having a place inside his mind, so that the incomprehensible may be approached, without being seized with the hands or the tools of reason, but rather simply feeling the roughness of the whole, being carried by the current on the way of the sky, without desire nor will, having forgotten the difference between sight and blindness, light and shadows.

What is perceived when one perceives the limits of his perception is the edge between world and earth, the frontier between truth and falsehood, which is itself only a delusion, a product of our mind and our world. The truth of the earth always was, is, and will be right in front of our eyes. We merely failed to notice the distortion caused by the windows through which we observe it, the mosaic of translucent tiles, the great stained-glass picture of our world, giving us a biased image of it. When each tile is fused with its neighbors, and the panes are rendered as clear as the purest crystal, then the truth of the earth can shine in our eyes, with us finally seeing what we failed to see before. We no longer see the tiles. We forget every single "thing," up to the last one. The immense totality that we face then reverberates every ray of light into our eyes, and the last thing reveals itself to be none other than ourselves, as the extended, luminous arms of our

galaxy or the leaves delicately dancing with the winds, as we are now blind to every thing, seeing only everything.

Case 41 —Zhaozhou’ s Three Turning Words 一趙州三轉語

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 96.

【中】

舉。趙州示眾三轉語。¹（「金佛不度爐，木
 fó bú dù huǒ ní fó bú dù shuǐ zhēn fó nèi lǐ zuò
 佛不度火，泥佛不度水，真佛內裏坐。」）

¹ 【轉語】S:【转语】[zhuǎn yǔ]: “a turning-word,” that is, a short-sentence or a word that is meant to trigger a deep enlightenment. The text of the three turning words, here in parentheses, is not present in the original text.

【日】

こ じょうしゅう しゅ さんてん ご しめ
 舉す。趙州、衆に三轉語を示す。

【E】

Zhaozhou mentioned three turning words to the assembly.¹ (“The Buddha made of clay will not pass through water.” “The Buddha made of metal will not pass through a furnace.” “The Buddha made of wood will not pass through fire.” Followed by: “the true Buddha sits within.”)

¹ “Turning words” : See note 1 of the Chinese text

The day ineluctably folds into the night. The earth unceasingly turns around the glorious star illuminating our lives, and men stumble upon things and or they emerge as thoughts, sights, or words, which immediately and irremediably change the course of their existence. A turning word casually spit into the air by a passer-by or carefully whispered into one’ s ears by a mentor, this is enough to dispel the illusions that raptured his mind, to

shatter the rampart veiling a truth. The turning word itself turns, and it causes the mind to turn, without interruption. When the spinning stops, it then swiftly vanishes. When one has understood it, the high walls once again rise from the ground and he is once again blind, as if the heavenly wheels themselves were abruptly stopped in their course. One must keep turning and turning until the mind is numbed, until vision is blurred and there is no direction, no walls, and no mind. After that, one will become a lifelong pilgrim on the way.

The pilgrim on the way is then like a golden statue, reflecting the light poured upon him, offering it back graciously, naturally, without any thought. When the torrent of lava runs through his path, the statue has no eyes to watch for danger, and no skin to feel the incandescence of the brazier. It rolls straight into the blazing flow, without regard for the integrity of its form, as what is dead cannot die. The earth itself cannot be reclaimed by the earth. Melted by the unbearable heat, the statue loses its shape, succumbing to the great pull of the earth that flattens it, causing it to lie down on the planet's surface, spread widely, as if embracing the body of a beloved. The gold itself soon can no longer be spotted by the onlooker, and all that can be seen is a luminescent sea of crimson fire. The statue is no more, but its essence is left undisturbed. The gold remains as it was, having only shed its appearance to become one with the rest of the earth, seeing its ego be superseded by the whole, completely dissolved.

The pilgrim on the way is also like a wooden statue, carved out from the sturdy trunk of a pillar of the forest, grown patiently during decades of successions of winters and summers, profusely showered with light and bathed in the rains before being imparted with an unnatural shape with a chisel, ceasing to be mere wood and becoming an object of the world. Discarded by this world, ceasing to be a part of it, this statue is rolling down the path as a wildfire ravages the woods down below. It is worthless outside of this world, and its hands do not move to stop its fall and change its fate. What is dead cannot die, and it thus impassively advances into the flames, sharing the destiny of these majestic trees assaulted by the fire, stripped bare of their leaves, their bark charred, until they themselves become flame and ember, their substance turned into ashes, lifted up by the winds to join the loftiest

clouds, without a single thought, without a shred of tremor, or a hint of regret. The statue likewise burns and burns as it stands among the trees, becoming flame, turned into dark coal, and then into white ashes before the last traces of its existence disappear. Its essence nonetheless is left untouched by this event. The wood it is made of, reunion of the earthly and heavenly, the work of the sun and the labor of the soil, has only been returned to its sources, the ashes seeping into the ground and floating in the air. Dispossessed of its ego, no longer recognizable as a statue, it nonetheless remains, one with the realms above and below, without thinking about either, knowing no-thing.

The pilgrim on the way is also like a statue made of mud, rolling down the steep flank of a mountain, towards the river descending through the valley. Carrying everything caught in its translucent flow down to the great ocean, the stream welcomes the plunging of the statue into its flexible, watery body. It swiftly begins to knead the mud it is made of with its minute, invisible hands, softening it as the water infiltrates it. The mud soon becomes one with the water, becoming minuscules bits floating in the liquid as the statue is patiently dissolved, turned into the river itself, one with the whole of the waters enfolding the earth: the clouds hovering over the land, the rain dripping from the mountain top, and the river patiently carving the valley across the ages, running to the monumental ocean coating the face of our planet, forming a perfect cycle in harmony with the turning of the celestial wheels, the passing of the days and the seasons.

What is carried on the way is immutable, forever remaining the whole, and not a mere part of it. The essence is not the form, and the self is not what being is. Where no thought arises, there is no fear, no envy, no self, and no inside or outside.³² Turning away from the world, one may discover the truth hidden by its lights. There, there is no gold, no wood, nor mud. There is no form or material. There is no direction, no path to follow, and nobody to tread it. When the great death has been encountered; when one's form has been destroyed and one's essence scattered to the winds

³²It can be linked with the sentence "When no thoughts arise, then all things are without blame." 「一心不生，萬法無咎」(See: 有馬頼底. 《充実茶掛の禅語辞典》. 東京: 淡交社, 2016: 「一心生ぜざれば万法咎無しかんちそうさんしん 禅宗の三祖鑑智僧璨の著とされる『信うに自由であることをいつたものである。』」)

or dissolved in the great sea, then can the truth shine, where there are no eyes to see and no skin to feel, beyond all frontiers, only a sublime and indistinct whirlwind encompassing all that is.

Case 42 —Zhaozhou’ s Dog —趙州狗子

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 18. The text here is more complete than the one of the Gateless Barrier, case 1, but the meaning of the two cases are different.

【中】

sēng wèn zhào zhōu gǒu zǐ huán yǒu fó xìng yě wú zhōu yún yǒu
 僧問 趙州：「狗子還有佛性也無。」州云：「有。」
 sēng yún jì yǒu wèi shén me què zhuàng rù zhè gè pí dài wéi tā
 僧云：「既有，為甚麼却撞入¹ 這箇皮袋。」「為他
 zhī ér gù fàn yǒu yǒu sēng wèn gǒu zǐ huán yǒu fó xìng yě wú zhōu
 知而故犯。」又有僧問：「狗子還有佛性也無。」州
 yuē wú sēng yún yí qiè zhòngshēng jiē yǒu fó xìng gǒu zǐ wèi
 曰：「無。」僧云：「『一切眾生皆有佛性』，狗子為
 shén me què wú zhōu yún wéi yī yǒu yè shí zài
 什麼却無。」州云：「為伊有業識² 在。」

¹ 【撞入】[zhuàng rù]: “to creep into.”

² A quote from the “Nirvana Sutra” (大般涅槃經), chapter 7. The full sentence is as follows: 「一切眾生皆有佛性，以是性故，斷無量億諸煩惱結即得成於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提，除一闍提。」

³ 【業識】[yè shí]: “karmic consciousness.”

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と く し ぶっしょう あ
 舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「狗子に 佛性 有りや
 ま な しゅういわ う そういわ すで う
 也た 無しや。」州 云く、「有。」僧云く、「既に 有、
 なん し かえ しゃ こ ひ だい どうにゅう
 甚麼と 爲てか 却って 這箇の 皮袋に 撞入する
 しゅういわ た し ことさ おか ため
 や。」州 云く、「他の 知って 故らに 犯すが 爲な
 またそう あ と く し ぶっしょう あ ま
 り。」又僧有り 問う、「狗子に 佛性 有りや 也た
 な しゅういわ む そういわ いっさいしゅじょう みな ぶっしょう
 無しや。」州 云く、「無。」僧云く、「一切衆生 皆 佛性
 あ く し なん かえ な
 有りと、狗子什麼としてか 却って 無なる。」
 しゅういわ かれ ごっしき あ あ ため
 州 云く、「伊に 業識の 有り 在るが 爲なり。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “A dog has Buddha-nature, no?” Zhaozhou said: “It has”. The monk said: “If it has it, why did it creep into that skin bag?” Zhaozhou said: “Because it knows, and still chose to do it.” Another monk asked: “A dog has Buddha-nature, no?” Zhaozhou said: “No”. The monk said: “‘All living beings have Buddha-nature.’¹ Why doesn’t the dog have it?” Zhaozhou said: “Because it is in its karmic consciousness.”

¹ A quote, see note 1 of the Chinese text.

Man is keen on erecting gigantic structures upon quicksand, focusing his attention on the progress of his work rather than on the soundness of its foundation and its purpose. Built with words, his world rests upon a mire, ready to collapse at the weakest blow. His places of worship are often the shakiest ones, with “gods” and “saints” carved out from the earth, whose nature escapes him, and who are defined with other words crafted by themselves, with the edifice resting upon itself, suspended in the air in a circular fashion, defying reason. To every question regarding the nature of these things of the world, a resounding yes may be followed by an equally truthful no. What is envisioned, the target of this work of edification, is something that goes beyond words, that transcends all the “yes” and “no,” being and the absence of being. To show the way is to kick the cornerstone of this wobbly palace, to annihilate the realm of words, so that what is not made of words may be revealed and touched.

Quibbling with philosophers of the clouds, one may have the chance of seeing the vulnerability of their common ground, or he may lose the way and become another faithful and deluded servant of this giant tower that aims for the highest heaven. Nothing is set in stone, and nothing is written with indelible ink. When asked if this or that possesses a certain quality, the fool of the world, wise of the way, will answer with a simple “it has,” or “it is.” Wielding worlds, any answer can be justified with other words, if one is offered the opportunity to develop his thought. This “it” may nonetheless also englobe more than the narrow object envisioned

by the questioner. It *is* . “It” does not need a definition. “It” does not need to be known, and “it” is unbounded, encompassing the whole of being. This statement then echoes like an invocation, a vocal celebration of being itself, seen in the most insignificant thing, the subject of an interrogation by an inexperienced mouth.³³ This calling may perhaps fall on deaf ears, and the naïve inquirer will then ask once more.

Trying to use more words to shed light on what cannot be seen but only perceived with an open heart, the novice receives the reply to his argument: “It has not,” “It is not,” “No!” Absolute possession, complete presence, and pure being are contrasted with utter dispossession, total absence, and sheer non-being. This answer is like a hurricane sweeping the entire earth, depriving it of all the things present on its face. It cleans up the slate of the world, erasing every single character, plunging the air into utter silence. The young man was playing chess with his master, advancing the neatly aligned pieces on the chequered board, when suddenly, his adversary wipes them all out with a swipe of his arms, grabbing his collar and shaking him violently, desperately attempting to show him that he has no time to waste in futile games, and that the answers he seeks are all written in the heavens and the earth around him, but he is blind, his sight ruined by the proximity of the board and is familiarity with these figurines.

Offered a helpful hand, and then pushed away; given a word that sheds light, and then followed by one that casts him in darkness, the inquirer thus receives a precious insight, a valuable lesson. Puzzled by contradictions, with the seed of doubt sown deeply into his heart, it is the absurdity of the realm of words that is in fact pointed out, touched with a finger that threatens it, and it is now ready to crumble to the true ground. Absolute presence is the same as complete absence. Total brightness renders as blind as utter darkness. It is through the interplay of both that the truth may shine into his eyes. If you expect a “yes,” he will tell you “no,” and “no” if you expect a “yes,” keeping you wondering, preventing you from understanding, which is the death of wis-

³³See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Shôyôroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript] : “In other words, the phenomenal world is clearly revealed. That is the world of ‘U’ or ‘having.’ In this case, it means the entire universe, including Mu, perhaps. There is nothing except U (having). This is absolute U or having.”

dom.³⁴ When all hope of an answer has been abandoned, then will it present itself in front of your eyes, as clear as the day, as transparent as the night sky. Then you will see the earth through the eyes of a dog and feel the sea as a fish does. Then will all the branches of the tree of life be your own arms, and you will perceive its root, the deepest ground upon which your world was built, under its ruins, discovering there the highest heavens.

Case 43 —Huguo' s “Three Disgraces” — 護國三懨

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 28.

【中】

舉。僧問 護國：「鶴¹ 立枯松時如何。」國
云：「地下底一場懨懨。」² 僧云：「滴水滴凍³ 時如
何。」國云：「日出後一場懨懨。」僧云：「會昌沙
汰⁴ 時，護法善神⁵ 向甚麼處去也。」國云：「三
門頭兩箇一場懨懨。」

¹ 【鶴】S:【鶴】[hè]: “a crane.”

² 【懨懨】[mǒ luó]: A phonetic transcription of a Sanskrit word meaning “to be ashamed” (the original Sanskrit word could not be identified by the author of the present book).

³ 【滴水滴凍】[dī shuǐ dī dòng]: “one drop of water, one drop of ice.” In this “Zen word,” one may see the contrast between the immutability of the essence of water and the changeable states through which it passes. Are we not very similar?

⁴ 【會昌沙汰】S:【會昌沙汰】[huì chāng shā tài]: Designates a persecution of Buddhism that occurred in Huichang county (會昌) in Ganzhou, Jiangxi during the 9th century A.D.; 【沙汰】[shā tài]: “sorting out” / “elimination.” In Japanese, this word now means “affair” / “incident.”

⁵ 【護法善神】S:【護法善神】[hù fǎ shàn shén]: “the Benevolent Guardian Deities of the Dharma.”

【日】

こ そう ご かく と つる こしょう た とき
舉す。僧、護國に 問う、「鶴枯松に 立つ 時
い かん こくいわ ちか てい いちじょう も ら そう
如何。」國云く、「地下 底 一場の 懨懨。」僧

³⁴ See: 神保如天. 《從容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p147 (Case 18).

いわ てきすいてきとう とき いかん こくいわ ひい
 云く、「滴水滴凍の時如何。」國云く、「日出でて
 いちじょう も ら そういわ かいしょう さた とき ごほう ぜん
 一場の 懺懼。」僧云く、「會昌沙汰の時、護法善
 じん いづれ ところ むか さ こくいわ さんもん
 神甚麼の 處に 向って 去るや。」國云く、「三門
 とう りょう こ いちじょう も ら
 頭の 兩 箇、一場の 懺懼。」

【E】

A monk asked Huguo: “How about when a crane perches on a withered pine tree?” Huguo said: “It’s a disgrace for those on the ground.” The monk asked: “What about when drops of water are frozen one by one?” Huguo said: “It’s a disgrace once the sun has risen.” The monk asked: “At the time of the Huichang Persecution,¹ where did the Benevolent Guardian Deities² of the Dharma go?” Huguo said: “It is a disgrace for the two of them on both sides of the temple gate.”

¹ “Huichang persecution”: See note 4 of the Chinese text.

² “Guardian Deities”: See note 5 of the Chinese text.

How fortunate the man with none! To remain that way, he nonetheless needs to constantly offer back what he is given as he advances on the path. The man walking the path with caution and perseverance experiences the great ascent, the climbing of the lofty heights, where the leaf gives place to the needle, and ultimately where the rare trees are mere skeletons, stripped bare of their mantle of pointy appendixes. Rising above the clouds, this man resembles these wooden pillars, letting go of all things as if they were leaves during the fall, accepting to become a shell of his former self, feeling the frigid gusts pass around his emaciated body. Like a crane perched on a branch towering over the entire world, ready to leave the earth to soar in the loftiest heavens, his gaze is turned away from his brethren, from life itself. It is a disgrace for those down below, as the fruits of his lengthy and arduous journey are kept to himself, rather than shared with those who have yet to find the strength and the will to perform such a liberating ascent. Attached to what he has received on the peak, the gift then be-

comes a potent poison. Wanting to keep his insight, he becomes blind to what surrounds him, and to his own nature.

Furthermore, the individuals attached to their own self are like frozen drops of water. They are separated by the absence of warmth, this cold that does not fundamentally change their nature as water but is enough to deny them its fluidity. Frozen solid, they cannot be merged with others, and they see themselves as unique, standing out from the rest of the earth, neither belonging to the bulging ocean stirred up by the revolutions of the pale, silvery sphere passing through the night sky. During the day, when the blazing orb of fire gloriously rises above the horizon in a wondrous spectacle marrying bright, vivid colors with a grand display in the heavens, its fiery rays then gently touch these frozen drops, imparting them with heat. The men seeing themselves as standing out from the rest of nature are likewise illuminated by the insights discovered through their practice or the guidance of a brother. When one has received the marvelous present of illumination, the self should be released. The frozen drop should melt, letting the omnipresent downward pull of the earth spread it on the craggy face of the earth, where it will encounter other frozen drops, offering them its own warmth and contributing to their melting, with all becoming one, a lake or an ocean. Their nature has not changed. They always were water and always will be, but now, each drop has ceased to be, and there is only the vast body of water covering the planet. Refusing the light of the great luminary, or being reluctant to share its warmth with others, this would be a disgrace.

Walking the great path, many also come face to face with those who are blind to the way of the sky, who are angered by the vision of others following something that they cannot comprehend, seeing it as an attack on their world, a denial of their own values. With swords or chains, they impede their pilgrimage, even taking the lives of those who are blind to life and death. Their children nonetheless walk in their footsteps, continuing the peregrination they courageously undertook, climbing on the skulls and bones of their parents, while the gods impassively observe the destiny of the dwellers of the earth. Unmoved by the rivers of blood watering the soil, uninvolved with the affairs of men, and unsympathetic to the deafening cries of the survivors, the holy ones often fail to protect

the feeble, to be the guardians of the devout. This absence of compassion and action is also a disgrace. To remain idle, comfortably sitting in no-thing-ness, pure and holy, is to pervert the gift that one has been graciously offered, and to soil one's heart. The compassionate embracer of the way of the sky therefore does not fear plunging back into the mire of the world to bravely pull out the indigent. He does not dread the great leap, the return to the filthy streets where the needy desperately implores for help, leaving the tranquil heights behind, knowing that there is no difference between himself and them. They are him and he is them, and thus, as long as one remains down below, there should his home be.

Case 44 —Dongshan And The Memorial Service 一洞山供真

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 49.

【中】

jǔ dòng shān gòng yǎng yún yán zhēn cì suì jǔ qián miǎo zhēn huà
 舉。洞山 供養¹ 雲巖 真次遂舉前邈真² 話
 yǒu sāng wèn yún yán dào zhī zhè shì yì zhī rú hé shān
 有僧問：「雲巖 道：『祇³ 這是。』，意旨如何。」山
 yún wǒ dāng shí jī cuò huì xiān shī yì sāng yún wèi shěn yún yán huán
 云：「我當時幾錯會先師意。」僧云：「未審 雲巖 還
 zhī yǒu yě wú shān yún ruò bù zhī yǒu zhēng jiě rěn me dào ruò
 知有也無。」山 云：「若不知有，爭解恁麼道，若
 zhī yǒu zhēng kěn rěn me dào
 知有爭肯恁麼道。」

¹ 【供養】S: 【供養】[gòng yǎng]: “to make offerings [to the gods]” / “to perform a memorial service.”

² 【邈真】[miǎo zhēn]: “a portrait.” A reference to the following story: “Just before leaving, Tung-shan asked, ‘If, after many years, someone should ask if I am able to portray the Master’s likeness, how should I respond?’ After remaining quiet for a while, Yün-yen said, ‘Just this person.’” (Source: Powell, William F. *The Record of Tung-shan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. p9).

³ 【祇】[zhī]: “only,” equivalent to the modern Chinese 只 [zhī].

【日】

こ とうざん うんがん しん くよう つい つい
 舉す。洞山、雲巖の 眞を 供養する 次で、遂に
 さき しん ばく わ こ そう と うん
 前の 眞を 邈するの 話を 舉す。僧あり 問う、「雲

がんただ こ こ い い し いかん さんいわ われ
 巖祇これ 是れと 道う 意旨如何。」山云く、「我
 その かみ はとん あやま せんし い え そう
 當時 幾ど 過って 先師の 意を 會す。」僧
 いわ いぶか うんがんかえ あ し
 云く、「未審し 雲巖還って 有ることを 知るや
 ま な さんいわ も あ し
 也た 無しや。」山云く、「若し 有ることを 知ら
 いか いんも い げ も
 ずんば 争でか 恁麼に 道うことを 解せん、若し
 し いか あえ いんも い
 知ることあらば 争でか 肯て 恁麼に 道わん。」

【E】

When Dongshan held a memorial service for Yunyan, in front of his portrait, he mentioned the talk he had before with Yunyan about it.¹ A monk then asked: "When Yunyan said: 'It is just this!', what did he mean by that?" Dongshan said: "At that time, I almost misunderstood what the master meant." The monk said: "I wonder whether or not Yunyan really knew that 'it' is." Dongshan said: "If he did not know that it is, how could he say like that? But if he knew that it is, how did he dare say like that?"

¹ See Note 2 of the Chinese text.

Representation is always falsification. If you were asked to represent yourself, with words or a picture, so that those who have yet to be born would know who you were after you pass away, how would you do it? Some will inscribe their innermost hope, the ultimate lesson of their life, on a marble slate, while others would paint their own likeness on a white canvas, their face, what they perceive as the symbol of their individuality. One who has clearly seen his true face; one who has experienced the great death while the world considered him still living, will nonetheless only offer a succinct answer: "It is just this," perhaps extending his arms and opening up his hands as he utters this succinct explanation.

When one is unable to choose appropriate and eloquent words, and when he is incapable of selecting a boundary to his being, the

most opportune thing to do is to go at the root of the world itself, the foundation that is closest to the hard ground under it, farthest from the lofty speculations of metaphysicians, the “down to earth,” attached to what is experienced with the senses, touching his body. This foundation is the first word that emerged in the world, the one that designates anything and everything, without setting up frontiers between things, without arbitrarily delimitating what it shows: it is just “it,” a word that is meaningless when it is not linked with the senses or other words. It is the most ambiguous but also the most precise, alone able to represent the very ambivalence of nature, its absence of boundaries, its wondrously puzzling indecisiveness. The foundation of the world is indeed the same as the one of the earth and the skies. It is not a firmly established ground, but rather an abyss, a complete absence of ground, an open chasm engulfing all things, and where no thing can be found.³⁵ Impossible to describe, to put into words or to depict, it can just be pointed at, accompanied with a simple utterance: “It is this.”

When one has seen “it,” he sees that it is the best and only truthful representation of himself. Wherever he goes, he finds a pristine mirror, extended beyond his field of view. There is nothing besides it, and when this word is on the tip of his tongue, he holds the sky in his mouth, ready to swallow it whole, leaving only the great abyss, absolute no-thing-ness.³⁶

Only the one who has experienced “it,” has exhausted his self in “it,” will be apt to wield this verbal weapon without hurting himself. The sons of the world, its diligent servants, will be revulsed by the vulgarity of designating it with this inelegant and impersonal pronoun. The solitary dweller of the abyss, the hermit of the great desert, will nonetheless have no such apprehensions. Only the inhabitants of the world care about not dirtying themselves with the mud of their cluttered citadel. The lonely wanderer

³⁵See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klause der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p249: „Es gibt keinen Grund der Welt; anders gesagt, am Grund der Welt ist kein Grund - sondern ein Abgrund!“

³⁶See Wansong’ s comment: “I now go on alone. Everywhere, I have no choice but to meet ‘It.’ ‘It’ is now really me. I am not ‘it’ now. One must understand in like this to conform with thusness.” TBA. Original Chinese: “我今獨自往。處處得逢渠。渠今正是我。我今不是渠。應須怎麼會方得契如如。” From: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 49).

does not see the difference between mud and silk, life and death, this and that. Being “it,” perceiving only “it,” he feels no shame while guiding others, thoughtlessly delving into the dung pile as if he walked into a palace, displaying its wondrous nature with each one of his words, each one of his actions, never departing from “it.”

Case 45 —Caoshan’ s “True Dharma-Body” 一曹山法身

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 52.

【中】

舉。曹山問德尚座¹：「『佛真法身猶若虛空，應物現形，如水中月』，² 作麼生說箇應底道理。」德云：「如驢覷³ 井。」山云：「道即大曬⁴ 道只道得八成。」德云：「和尚又如何。」山云：「如井覷驢。」

¹ 【尚座】[shàng zuò]: “a senior monk.”

² A quote from the “Golden Light Sutra” (金光明經 in Chinese, “Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra” सुवर्णप्रभासोत्तमसूत्रेन्द्रराज in Sanskrit).

³ 【覷】[qù]: “to watch.”

⁴ 【曬】S: 【晒】[shài]: “to shed light [on something].”

【日】

舉す。曹山、徳尚座に問う、「佛の眞法身は猶お虚空の若し、物に應じて形を現ずることとは水中の月の如し。作麼生か箇の應ずる底の道理を説かん。」徳云く、「驢の井を覷るが如し。」山云く、「道うことは即ち大曬だ道う、只八成を道い得たり。」徳云く、「和尚亦如何。」山云く、「井の驢を覷るが如し。」

【E】

Caoshan asked Elder De: “ ‘The true Dharma-body of Buddha is like the emptiness of the sky. It manifests its form in accordance with things, just like the moon on water.’ ¹ How would one explain the principle of this corresponding?” De said: “It is like a donkey looking into a well.” Caoshan said: “This sheds ample light on the matter, but it says only eighty percent of it.” De said: “What would the Master say?” Caoshan said: “It is like a well looking at a donkey.”

¹ A quote. See note 2 of the Chinese text.

When the winter has passed and the pale, snowy vestment of the earth has thawed, finally quenching the thirst of the dry ground with pure, fresh water, the living finally dare to venture out of their lair to enjoy the pleasant warmth of the spring nights. Walking around a pond, whose water is perfectly still, impassive as its surface faces the constellations and galaxies unhurriedly passing through the celestial vault, the stroller suddenly notices the image of the glowing moon reflected upon it, appearing as a mirage, floating and timidly dancing. Water and sky face each other like two mirrors, with each one of them losing sight of whether they see themselves or the other, with both becoming one.

The walker stands above the water, under the sky. He quietly observes the reflection of the silvery orb, the luminary of the night, and compares it with its source. Prudently approaching further, his own image appears next to the one of the celestial body, and he is then struck by a realization: the illusory nature of his world, which is like this image offered to him by the pond to behold. The moon and himself, they are mere representations of the truth of nature, the foundation of all things. Our mind, our self, is an ethereal representation, a reflection of our essence, distorted by the movements of our reason. We see ourselves, the moon, and the stars in the face of the water, but there is only water there, a single mass, offering a vision to those above it but itself concealed by this image, with the water itself remaining unseen.

Attentively gazing at the reflection, this abyss where the infinity of the heavens is married with the depths of the earthly waters,

【日】

こ そう しゅざん と いか こ
 擧す。僧、首山に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 ほとけ さんいわ しんぶ ろ の あ こ ひ
 佛。」山云く、「新婦驢に 騎れば 阿家牽く。」

【E】

A monk asked Shoushan: “What is a Buddha?” Shoushan said: “A bride rides a donkey, and her mother-in-law leads it by the bridle.”¹

¹ A way to introduce the bride to the inhabitants of a village.

When one is asked about the fundamental essence of being, the most adequate answer would be to point out the scenery unfolded right in front of their eyes. Standing on a busy crossroad, they see a bride riding a donkey, and her mother-in-law leads it by the bridle. Impassively watching this, as one watches a stream of water running down towards the sea, forming an indistinguishable whole, the spectator’s mind is akin to the one of the animal: not letting a single thought arise, it simply calmly contemplates the work of the skies displayed in front of this man’s eyes, with the earth and the world built upon it being carried in their course.³⁹ The three living things lose their individuality, forming three limbs of the same body, which is the great earth itself, perfectly united with the heavens above.

The men of the world, watching this all too ordinary and yet potentially life-changing event, will volubly comment about the appropriateness of the conduct of each character in this scene of life. Seeing disorder, transgression of tradition, or strangeness in this perfectly harmonious display, they lose all hope to see who they themselves are, what unites them with all that falls within the reach of their gaze.⁴⁰ The bride may have ridden the old mother,

³⁹See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p431 (Case 65): 「三身即一」.

⁴⁰See: Yamada, Kou’un, *Shôyôroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “If you start chopping logic about how things being turned upside down or the like, Buddha is lost. Even things that appear to be wrong are just as they are.”

or the donkey may have been carried by both women, this would have been of no importance. The reality, the tangibility of what unfolds in front of their eyes is in itself a perfect manifestation of the truth of being, seen beyond the blinkers of our world. The wise spectator does not need to follow them to enjoy the festivities. Tonight is his wedding day. Tonight, he welcomes a daughter-in-law within his household. Tonight, he will graze the freshly grown grass in a luxuriant meadow, without an instant of reflection, only feeling the bliss of the peaceful contemplation of the truth passing in front of him at this very instant.

Case 47 — Baizhang' s Fox 一百丈野狐

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 2. A less complete version can be found in Book of Serenity, case 8.⁴¹

【中】

bǎi zhàng hé shàng fán cān cì yǒu yì lǎo rén cháng suí zhòng tīng fǎ zhòng
百丈和尚凡參次，有一老人，常隨眾聽法，眾
rén tuì lǎo rén yì tuì hū yí rì bú tuì shī suī wèn miàn qián lì
人退，老人亦退。忽一日不退，師遂問：「面前立
zhě fù shì hé rén lǎo rén yún nuò mǒu jiǎ fēi rén yě yú guò
者，復是何人。」老人云：「諾。某甲非人也。於過
qù jiā yè fó shí céng zhù cǐ shān yīn xué rén wèn dà xiū xíng dǐ rén
去迦葉佛時，曾住此山，因學人問：『大修行底人
huán luò yīn guǒ yě wú mǒu jiǎ duì yún bú luò yīn guǒ wǔ bǎi shēng
還落因果也無。』某甲對云：『不落因果。』五百生
duò yě hú shēn jīn qǐng hé shàng dài yì zhuǎn yǔ guì tuō yě hú suì
墮野狐身。今請和尚代一轉語，貴¹脫野狐。」遂
wèn dà xiū xíng dǐ rén huán luò yīn guǒ yě wú shī yún bú mèi²
問：「大修行底人還落因果也無。」師云：「不昧²
yīn guǒ lǎo rén yú yán xià dà wù zuò lǐ yún mǒu jiǎ yǐ tuō yě
因果。」老人於言下大悟，作禮云：「某甲已脫野
hú shēn zhù zài shān hòu gǎn gào hé shàng qǐ yī wáng sēng shì lì shī
狐身，住在山後，敢告和尚，乞依亡僧事例。」師
lǐng wú wéi nà bái chuí gào zhòng shí hòu sòng wáng sēng dà zhòng
令無維那³白槌⁴告眾：「食後送亡僧。」，大眾
yán yì yī zhòng jiē ān niè pán táng yòu wú rén bìng hé gù rú shì
言議：「一眾皆安，涅槃堂⁵又無人病，何故如是。」
shí hòu zhī jiàn shī lǐng zhòng zhì shān hòu yán xià yī zhàng tiāo chū yì sǐ yě
食後，只見師領眾，至山後巖下，以杖挑出一死野

⁴¹See Book of Serenity, case 8: 舉。百丈上堂。常有一老人。聽法隨眾散去。一日不去丈乃問立者何人老人云。某甲於過去迦葉佛時。曾住此山有學人問。大修行底人還落因果也無對他道不落因果墮野狐身五百生今請和尚代一轉語丈云。不昧因果老人於言下大悟。

hú nǎi yī huǒ zàng shī zhì wǎn shàng táng jǔ qián yīn yuán huáng bò biàn
 狐，乃依火葬。師至晚上堂，舉前因緣，黃蘗便
 wèn gǔ rén cuò zhǐ duì yī zhuǎn yǔ duò wǔ bǎi shēng yě hú shēn zhuǎn
 問：「古人錯祇⁶對一轉語，墮五百生野狐身；轉
 zhuǎn bù cuò hé zuò gè shén me shī yún jìn qián lái yǔ yī dào
 轉不錯，合作箇甚麼。」師云：「近前來，與伊道。」
 huáng bò suì jìn qián yǔ shī yī zhǎng shī pāi shǒu xiào yún jiāng wèi hú
 黃蘗遂近前，與師一掌，師拍手笑云：「將謂胡
 xū chì gèng yǒu chì xū hú
 鬚⁷赤，更有赤鬚胡。」

¹ 【貴】S:【貴】[guì]: (honorific) “your.”

² 【昧】[mèi]: “to conceal.”

³ 【維那】S:【維那】[wéi nà]: a position in a Buddhist temple. Someone in charge of managing the affairs of the temple. This word is a transliteration of the Sanskrit कर्मदान [karmadāna], literally meaning: “[the one who] gives things.”

⁴ 【白槌】[bái chuí]: variant of 白. In a Buddhist context, it designates the use of a white stick to mark the beginning or the end of a ritual.

⁵ 【涅槃堂】[niè pán táng]: “infirmary.” Literally “the Nirvana Hall.”

⁶ 【祇】[zhǐ] variant of 只, meaning “only.”

⁷ 【胡鬚】[hú xū]: “a beard.”

【日】

こ ひやくじょうおしょう およ さん つい いちろうじん
 舉す。百 丈和尚、凡そ 參の 次で、一老人
 あ つね しゅ したが ほう き しゅうじんしりぞ
 有り、常に 衆に 随って 法を 聴く。衆人 退けば
 ろうじん ま しりぞ たちま いちじつ しりぞ し つい
 老人も 亦た 退く。忽ち 一日 退かず。師遂に
 と めんぜん た もの ま こ なんびと ろうじん
 問う、「面前に 立つ 者は 復た 是れ 何人ぞ。」老人
 いわ だく それがし ひにん かこ かしょうぶつ とし
 云く、「諾、某甲は 非人なり。過去迦葉 佛の 時に
 お か こ やま じゅう ちな がくにん と
 於いて 曾つて 此の 山に 住す。因みに 學人問う、
 だい しゅぎょうてい ひと かえ いんが お ま
 大 修行底の 人、還って 因果に 落つるや 也た
 いな それがしこた いわ ふらくいんが ごひやくしょうや
 無や。某甲對えて 云く、不落因果と。五百 生野
 こしん だ いまこ おしょう いってん ご かわ たうと
 狐身に 墮す。今請う 和尚、一轉語を 代り、貴えに
 や こ だつ つい と だい しゅぎょうてい
 野狐を 脱せしめよ。」遂に 問う、「大 修行底の
 ひと かえ いんが お ま いな し
 人、還って 因果に 落つるや 也た 無や。」師
 いわ ふ まい いんが ろうじん ごんか お たいご
 云く、「不昧因果。」老人言下に 於いて 大悟し、
 さらい いわ それがし すで や こしん だつ
 作禮して 云く、「某甲、已に 野狐身を 脱して

さん ご じゅうざい あえ おしょう つ こ
 山後に 住 在す。敢て 和尚に 告ぐ、乞うらくは、
 もうそう じれい よ し ゆいの びやくつい
 亡僧の 事例に 依れ。」師、維那をして 白 槌し
 しゅ つ じぎご もうそう おく
 て 衆に 告げしむ、「食後に 亡僧を 送らん」と。
 だいしゅごん ぎ いっしゅ み やす ねはん どう ま
 大衆言議すらく、「一衆皆な 安く、涅槃堂に 又た
 ひと や な なに ゆえ か ごと
 人の 病む 無し。何が 故ぞ 是くの 如くなる」と。
 じぎご た し しゅ りょう さん ご がん か
 食後に 只だ 師の 衆を 領じて 山後の 巖下に
 いた つえ も いっし や こ ちょうしゅつ すなわ
 至り、杖を 以って 一死野狐を 挑 出して、乃ち
 かそう よ み し くれ いた じょうどう
 火葬に 依らしむるを見る。師、晩に 至って 上堂、
 まえ いんねん こ おうばく すなわ と こじんあやま
 前の 因縁を 擧す。黄檗 便ち 問う、「古人錯っ
 いってん ご したい ごひゃくしょう や こしん だ てん
 て 一轉語を 祇對し、五百 生野狐身に 墮す。轉
 てん あやま まさ こ なに な
 轉 錯らずんば、合に 箇の 甚麼にか 作るべき。」
 し いわ さんぜんらい かれ ため い おうばく
 師云く、「近前來。伊れが 與に 道わん。」黄檗、
 つい さんぜん し いっしょう あたえ し て う
 遂に 近前して 師に 一掌を 與う。師、手を 拍っ
 わら いわ まさ おも こしゅ しゃく さら
 て 笑って 云く、「將に 謂えり 胡鬚 赤と、更に
 しゃくしゅ こ あ
 赤 鬚胡有り。」

【E】

Once when Baizhang instructed his congregation, an old man was often there to hear the Dharma. Each time, when the congregation left, so did he. But one day, he remained there, and the teacher asked him: “The man standing in front of me now, who is he?” The old man replied: “Indeed, this one is not a man, but in the past, he was a man, at the time of Kashyapa Buddha. He lived on this mountain, and one student asked him: “Is a great practitioner still subject to the law of cause and effect?” This one replied to him: ‘He is not subject to the law of cause and effect.’ Then he became stuck in the body of a fox for five hundred rebirths. This

one now begs the master for a turning word, so that he may be freed from this fox body." He then asked: "Is a great practitioner still subject to the law of cause and effect?" The teacher said: "The law of cause and effect is not occulted." Hearing the words of Baizhang, the old man experienced a great enlightenment. He made a deep bow and said: "This one is now free from the fox's body. He will leave it in his dwelling place, behind this mountain. Please, he asks that a funeral be held for it, according to the rite of a monk's burial."

The next day, Baizhang gave an order through the chief monk, named Wu, to make an announcement: "After the meal, a funeral for a monk will be held," but members of the congregation said: "Everyone is well, and there is no one in the infirmary, so what is happening?" After the meal, Baizhang led the monks behind the mountain, at the foot of a cliff. He poked out the corpse of a wild fox with his staff, and then cremated the corpse according to the burial rite of a monk. On that evening, the teacher went to the hall and told them the aforementioned story about the law of cause and effect. At that point, Huangbo asked Baizhang: "Just because the man of the ancient era gave a wrong turning word, he was stuck into the body of a fox for five hundred rebirths. Now, if one would be asked many similar questions and always replied correctly, what would happen to him?" Baizhang said: "Let him come before me, and I will tell him." Huangbo went near Baizhang, and he then slapped the teacher's face with his hand. Baizhang clapped his hands and laughed, saying: "I thought the barbarian's beard was red, but now I have a red-bearded barbarian!"

To lose track of how many springs have passed since we took the first step of our journey, having climbed great mountains to raise ourselves above the world, up to the clouds, this may give us the impression that we are detached from the unforgiving power of the skies. The enormous wheels of the heavens continuously revolve, inconspicuously carrying the living throughout the vast

emptiness surrounding them, and the lofty ones often think of themselves as free from their work. Earth and sky nonetheless implacably and scrupulously follow the order set by the way of the sky itself, and as sons of the two realms, the living are ruled by these laws of nature. Through a long practice or as the result of an instantaneous enlightenment, one may free himself from the burden of the world, the yoke of things, achieving a perfect detachment from the arbitrariness of words and ideas, products of the mind. Ascending above the clouds of the world, descending below its foundations, one may be free from it, but even though he may delude himself into thinking that this would imply absolute freedom, this is only the ultimate mirage clouding the mind of the man on the way.

To depart from the world, to leave behind the great citadel of things edified by the sons of men since the advent of their kind, is to venture into the great desert, to step into the place where there is no "heat" nor "cold," no "good" or "evil," and even no "cause" and "consequence." There nonetheless lies a redoubtable trap for the explorer of the boundless wasteland, the place without things, and a great many have fallen into it. This place is indeed utterly devoid of things, as pure no-thing-ness, but it is not empty. The world and the desert are always one, with the difference between them being only the outlook that man has of them. The world is built of earth and it securely rests upon it, encompassed by the heavens at all times, no matter our state of mind. To venture into no-thing-ness is to see our surroundings as pure earth and sky rather than a heap of things, perceiving it as a seamless whole that is itself then released to leave only raw perception of this no-thing-ness. This nonetheless does not nullify the reality of the earth and the sky. To let go of the myriads of things to plunge into oneness indeed does not free us from the yoke of the laws of nature. To be voluntarily blind to the worldly concepts of "cause" and "consequences," seeing only the whole like a gigantic whirlwind, does not free us from causes and consequences themselves. In the land without "heat" or "cold," the wrath of the skies may still kill you, even though only those still dwelling in the world of things would perceive the distinction between life and death. Having crushed the chains of the world does not imply a mastery over the earth and the skies. We will not stop the heavenly wheels with our bare hands, but will rather be crushed by them, even

after a lifetime of practice, and even when we have gained absolute freedom from the yoke of things, having no-thing-ness as our home. We may be blind to “cause” and “consequence,” as things of the world, but we cannot occult the consequences themselves, and they are manifested on the earth and in the skies.

A key peculiarity of the life of the desert hermit, the dweller of no-thing-ness, is nonetheless his attitude toward the events filling up his existence. Caught in the great turbulence that comes from the revolutions of the heavenly wheels, he is like a ragdoll carried by a hurricane, with a smile on its face. He experiences causes and consequences in his flesh, but only perceives the whole chain that they form, without distinguishing them. His body is ineluctably eroded by their tumultuous flow, but he is neither born nor living nor dead. He is a man, a fox, a stone, or a star, nothing and everything. He dies each day at night and is resurrected at dawn, waking from the world of dreams and things, to once again immerse himself in the experience of no-thing-ness, running into the great desert, his true home.

Furthermore, the reach of the world stops at the frontier of the citadel of things, and thus, to be mistaken about the use of words and sentences, things of the world, is of no consequence upon the earth and the skies. One will not be able to call death upon himself with a roll of the tongue, but one may call for an executioner with mere words. Man is a creature standing between earth and world, a living thing that can deal with immaterial things, can construct towers within his mind that are based on clouds, but he also is an inhabitant of the earth, made of flesh and bones, able to interact with it. When provoked with words, or when one tries to entrap him, man can himself become an agent of the law of cause and consequence, becoming an instrument of the way itself, letting his hands be guided by the flow of nature, the work of the skies, rather than his own whims. His palm may strike the cheek of the one intending to strike him, offering a lesson on the consequences of one's actions, but when he meets someone who equally lets himself be used by the way of the sky, their palms will meet at the same instant, and laughter will resound throughout the air, as a celebration of the marvelous harmony of nature.

Case 48 —The Ancient Buddha Did Not Become A Buddha 一大通智勝

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 9.

【中】

xīng yáng ràng hé shàng yīn sēng wèn dà tōng zhì shèng fó shí jié zuò
興陽讓和尚因僧問：「大通智勝佛¹ 十劫² 坐
dào chǎng fó fǎ bú xiàn qián bù dé chéng fó dào shí rú hé ràng
道場，佛法不現前，不得成佛道時，如何。」讓
yuē qí wèn shén dì dāng sēng yún jì shì zuò dào chǎng wéi
曰：「其問甚諦當。」³ 僧云：「既是坐道場，為
shén me bù dé chéng fó dào ràng yuē wèi yī bù chéng fó
甚麼不得成佛道。」讓曰：「為伊不成佛。」

¹ 【大通智勝佛】[dà tōng zhì shèng fó]: “the Buddha of Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory.” A translation of the Sanskrit name: Mahābhijñā-jñānābhībhū (महाभिज्ञानाभिभू). This Buddha is said to have appeared eons ago and to have taught the Lotus Sutra, as recounted in the seventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra itself. (See: 「又作大通眾慧如來、大通慧如來。即出現於過去三千塵點劫以前，演說法華經之佛名。(正法華經卷四、大智度論卷三十二、法華經玄義卷一上、法華文句卷七下)」 From: 慈怡。《佛光大辭典》。北京圖書館出版社，2004.)

² 【劫】[jié]: An abbreviation of 劫波 [jié bō] “kalpa” / “eon.”

³ 【諦當】S: 【諦當】[dì dāng]: “to correspond” / “to be appropriate.”

【日】

こ こうよう じょうおしょう ちな そう と だいつう
舉す。興陽の 讓和尚、因みに 僧問う、「大通
ちしょうぶつ じっこう ざどうじょう ぶつぼう ふ げんぜん ふとくじょうぶつどう
智勝佛、十劫坐道場、佛法不現前、不得成 佛道の
とき いかん じょういわ そ もん はなは たいとう
時如何。」讓曰く、「其の 問 甚だ 諦當な
そういわ すで こ すわ どうじょう なん
り。」僧云く、「既に 是れ 坐 道場、甚麼として
ふとくじょうぶつどう じょういわ かれ ふじょうぶつ
か 不得成 佛道なる。」讓曰く、「伊が 不成 佛な
た
るが 爲めなり。」

【E】

A monk asked Xingyang: “The Buddha of Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory¹ sat in meditation for ten kalpas,² before the Dharma appeared, and yet he failed to become a Buddha. Why was that?” Xingyang replied: “The answer

is in the question.” The monk asked: “Since the Buddha sat in meditation [for so long], why did he fail to become a Buddha?” Xingyang said: “Because he did not ‘become’ a Buddha.”

¹ “The Buddha of Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Kalpas” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The way of the sky is shown to those who are not looking for it. The will of man frequently resists it, and thus the flow may appear troubled to the observer. One may practice for entire eons while eagerly waiting for a revelation, and it will come immediately to the indolent, who has only for an instant released his grip upon his own self and widely opened his heart to what surrounds him and what he himself is but failed to see until this point. To sit and wait is vain if one's mind is still reaching for things, attempting to attain and to gain something out of this practice. The revelation that comes is not a fundamental transformation of one's essence, the attainment of a new stage of his existence, but merely the realization of his true face, of what he has always been, even before his birth, and of what he will be after his death. It means to open his eyes to the plain truth of the earth and the skies, to the alluring delusions of the world as well as to the remarkable revealing power of this man-made realm. It is an act of appropriation of being, before one lets himself be dispossessed of all things, including the very notion of “being.”

The awakened is no different than any other man. He was once asleep, lulled by the melodious songs of the world, but his eyes are now opened, and he sees the way of the sky embracing all that is, without his nature having been subjected to the slightest change, plunged in the same exact surroundings as before. Bathed in the warm splendor of the day, having forgotten the enchanting dreams that come with the darkness of the night, there is no sleep nor awakening, no past and no future, no failure nor success. One has always been awake, and will forever remain so, and thus he never “became” awake. The brightness of the sun may appear to be concealed at dusk and to gloriously come back at dawn, but the radiant star of life never ceases to pour out its vivifying brilliance,

even for an instant. The night is a mirage, a lie of the world, an illusion of the mind, and we are all enlightened, even before we were pushed out of the womb and thrown onto the earth, into the world, and we will still remain pure light when we crawl back into the dark entrails of the earth when our strengths will be completely exhausted.

Case 49 —Qingshui Is Alone And Poor — 清稅孤貧

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 10.

【中】

cáo shān hé shàng yīn sēng wèn yún qīng shuì gū pín qī shī zhèn
曹山 和尚因僧問云：「清稅 孤貧，乞師賑
jì shān yún shuì shé lí shuì yīng nuò
濟。」¹ 山 云：「稅 闍梨。」² 稅 應：「諾。」
shān yuē qīng yuán bái jiā jiǔ sān zhān chí liǎo yóu dào wèi zhān chún
山 曰：「青原白家酒三盞，³ 喫了，猶道未沾唇。」

¹ 【賑濟】S:【賑濟】[zhèn jì]: “to give relief.”

² 【闍梨】S:【闍梨】[shé lí]: “a Buddhist teacher.” The transliteration of the Sanskrit word आचार्य [ācārya]. It may also be written: 闍黎.

³ 【盞】S:【盞】[zhǎn]: “a small cup.”

【日】

こ そうざんおしょう ちな そう と いわ せい
舉す。曹山和尚、因みに 曹問うて 云く、「清
ぜい こ ひん こ し しんさい さんいわ ぜいじゃ
稅孤貧、乞う 師、賑濟したまえ。」山云く、「稅闍
り ぜいおうだく さんいわ せいげんはっ け さけ さんさん
梨。」稅應諾す。山曰く、「清原白家の 酒、三盞
きつ おわ な い いま くちびる うるお
喫し 了って、猶お 道う 未だ 唇を 沾さずと。」

【E】

A monk named Qingshui asked of Caoshan: “Qingshui is alone and poor. Will you provide him some relief?” Caoshan said: “Teacher Qingshui!” Qingshui replied: “Yes.” Caoshan said: “This one has already drunk three cups of wine from the [famous] White House in Qingyuan, and still he is saying that he hasn’t wet his lips!”

It is all too natural for our eyes to be turned toward the most distant, to the farthest horizon, and thus one may easily forget to watch his own steps, what is in his immediate vicinity, within the reach of his other senses. One tends to notice what he lacks and the possessions of his neighbors, but also to be blind to what he stands upon. To be poor may either be seen as a blessing or a curse, depending on whether we are someone belonging to the world or to no-thing-ness. In the first case, it represents an impediment to one's existence, a denial of power and control over his life and the one of other men. Without riches, he cannot acquire goods and dominate others and is unable to convince them to devote their strengths and their efforts to his own needs and his luxuries. For the latter, on the other hand, to be poor is to be free from the yoke of things, to genuinely enjoy everything by possessing nothing, being completely blind to the boundaries delimitating them and to their bonds with their owner. To be alone may imply to be suffering from isolation, from ostracism from one's peers, lacking companionship or intimacy, and thus we feel hurt, our ego shriveled up, our self gravely wounded at its core. It may nonetheless also mean that one is not attached to his own individuality, proudly announcing that he is alone honored upon the earth, under the sky,⁴² with all beings forming a single being, the whole of the heavens. When hearing the man declaring himself to be poor and alone, arduous would it be to determine with certainty to which kind he belongs, a determination that is nonetheless itself superfluous, as one should hear both and neither in the same utterance.

You say you are poor and alone, but you fail to see that you are standing upon the greatest treasure that there is! You desperately beg for relief, but those to whom you ask do not have a single thing to give! The entire world is in your hands. The earth is your footstool, and the heavens are your umbrella. You hold on to myriads of things, and you outrageously dare to ask for more from

⁴² A reference to a sentence that Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed just after his birth, according to the Buddhist tradition: "above and under the heavens, I alone am honored." This quote appears in the *Dirgha Agama*, 長阿含經 in Chinese. The sentence in Chinese is as follows: 「天上天下，唯我獨尊」 [tiān shàng tiān xià, wéi wǒ dú zūn].

the ascetic desert dwellers, those sleeping on the dust, their way lit by sunrays and moonlight alone. How do you not cover your face in shame?

Again, you say you are poor and alone, seeing yourself as having reached liberation from the burden of possession, emancipation from the curse of attachment. You consider yourself to be an ascetic of the way, having refrained from gorging yourself on the wine of the world, whose name is “illusion” and that enraptures the mind of its inhabitants. And yet you are still ensnared in the vacuities of men, prisoner of the great citadel throning in the midst of the boundless desert, as you are now begging for something, no matter what it is! Your beard is stained with the crimson color of the fruit of the grape. Your lips are glowing with the moisture of the sweet, inebriating nectar, and yet you profess to be dying of thirst! How do you not cover your face in shame?

The one pronouncing the accusatory sentence may nonetheless be drunk with the poison of the world. He may fail to see the poor and lonely condition of the one facing him. As soon as he opens his mouth, the wine of the world rushes into his throat and flows into his veins, bringing him instantly back to the realm of the sweetest illusions, the land of the merry drunkards bursting into songs, who think of themselves as lords of the earth, kings of the heavens. Becoming intimate with silence, familiar with the darkness, one may then begin to hear the silence of the busiest marketplace of the great city, and see the darkness of the summer noon. One may finally begin to perceive the riches of the one who has none, the immeasurable wealth of the one who has given up everything, every thing. How fortunate the man with none!

Case 50 —Xuefeng’s “Turtle-Nosed Snake” —雪峰鰐鼻蛇

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 22. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 24.

【中】

jǔ xué fēng shì zhòng yún nán shān yǒu yī tiáo biē bí shé rǔ
舉。雪峰示眾云：「南山有一條鰐¹鼻蛇，汝
děng zhū rén qiè xū hǎo kàn cháng qīng yún jīn rì táng zhōng dà yǒu
等諸人，切須²好看。」長慶云：「今日堂中，大有

人喪身失命。」僧舉似玄沙。玄沙云：「須是稜
 xiōng shǐ dé suī rán rú cǐ wǒ jí bù rèn me sēng yún hé shàng
 兄始得。³ 雖然如此，我即不恁麼。」僧云：「和尚
 zuò me shēng xuán shā yún yòng nán shān zuò shén me yún mén yǐ
 作麼生。」玄沙云：「用南山作什麼。」雲門以
 zhǔ zhàng cuàn xiàng xuě fēng miàn qián zuò pà shì
 拄杖攬⁴向雪峯面前，作怕勢。

1 【鼈】S:【鼈】[biē]: “a freshwater soft-shelled turtle.” Variant of 鰌.

2 【切須】S:【切須】[qiè xū]: “must [do something].”

3 【始】[shǐ]: Here, this word is equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 才 [cái], meaning “just” / “only if.”

4 【攬】S:【攬】[cuān]: “to throw.”

【日】

こ せっぽう しゅ しめ いわ なんざん いちじょう
 擧す。雪峰、衆に示して云く、「南山に一條の
 べっぴ じゃ なんじらしょにん せつ すべか よ み
 鼈鼻蛇あり。汝等諸人、切に須らく好く看
 ちようけいいわ こんにち どうちゅう たしか ひと
 べし。」長慶云く、「今日、堂中にて大に人の
 そうしんつみょう あ そう げんしゃ こ じ げんしゃ
 喪身失命する有り。」僧、玄沙に擧似す。玄沙
 いわ すべか りようひん はじ よ かく
 云く、「須是らく稜兄にして始めて得し。此の
 ごと いえど わが すなわ いんも
 如くなりと 雖然も、我は即ち恁麼にせず。」
 そういわ おしやう さもさん げんしゃいわ なんざん もつ
 僧云く、「和尚作麼生。」玄沙云く、「南山を用て
 なに せ うんもん しゅじやう もつ せっぽう めんぜん
 什麼か作ん。」雲門拄杖を以て雪峰の面前に
 つきつ おそ しぐさ な
 攬向けて、怕るる勢を作す。

【E】

Xuefeng, instructing the assembly, said: “There’ s a turtle-nosed snake on the southern mountain. All of you should watch for it carefully!” Changching said: “Today, in the temple hall, there are many people who have been dispossessed from their bodies and have lost their lives!” A monk told this to Xuansha, and Xuansha said: “Only Elder Brother Leng¹ could say this. Nevertheless, me, I wouldn’ t say it like that.” The monk asked: “What would the master say, then?”

Xuansha replied; “What’ s the use of saying: ‘on the southern mountain’ ?” Yunmen threw his staff in front of Xuefeng and feigned being frightened.

¹ “Elder Brother Leng,” that is, Changching.

The greatest danger is the one that remains unknown until it is faced directly. One should therefore always remain watchful, no matter where he is, no matter whether he has retreated in the safety of his home or is wandering through tall grass. If we are told that the great danger should be expected there, with a precise description of what we will encounter, we should be doubly cautious. To believe that we know the nature of the threat and its location is indeed the surest way to be caught off guard. Such a description should thus be taken as a further warning, a subtle bait to test our attention. Being told that it comes in the form of a deadly snake, we should watch for a tongue. Being told that it is found in the south, we should expect it in the north as well. The eyes wide open, we observe our surroundings, without fear, eagerly waiting for the encounter that may change the course of our life, the danger that we will overcome, and thereby be born anew, having shed our old skin, crawling upon the face of the earth rather than attempting to reach out to the lofty heights of the world.

The greatest risk to one’ s life is to face death itself, but only someone who is attached to his own self will dread this encounter. One who possesses nothing cannot be robbed of what he has not. Only one who sees himself as standing out from the rest of what is encompassed by the heavens feels threatened by death, considering that he is an island of life in the midst of an ocean of death, without seeing that the island is made of the same earthly substance as the water, noticing only the appearance and being blind to its underlying foundation. Death may therefore be a discovery of the truth of nature, the collapse of the walls separating the self from the whole, the world from the skies. Hearing someone warn us of the presence of a serpent that may end our existence, as a being attached to his self, his words are like razor-sharp fangs piercing our eardrums. We feel the venom of truth injected in our bloodstream and numbness swiftly overtaking our body and

mind. Beholding the unicity of all that is, struck to our core by the animal's tail, shattering our heart, we feel the sweet embrace of death, the end of our life, the fading of our self. Dispossessed of our body, robbed of our life, all that is left of us is no-thing, a speck of dust caught into a raging storm.

The dead man nonetheless soon resurrects. The speck of dust is soon watered by the rain and is buried in the ground. It then reveals itself to be a seed, as a new life suddenly sprouts out of the ground, showered profusely with the ethereal gold descending from the fiery orb throning in the sky. The self returns, but it now sees its own face clearly. The plant all of a sudden turns into a serpent, prudently slithering upon the ground, ready to, in turn, rob others of their lives, depriving them of their illusions, bringing them into the obscure belly of the earth, far from the lights of the world. There is no longer any north, south, east, or west. The venomous snake is coiled around the entire planet. It hides inside every single object of the world. It is the walking staff of an elder and the toy of an infant. It is the tree bordering our garden and the chopsticks with which we eat our rice. Each thing is poisonous. The sea is filled with venom. The earth is a heap of toxic dust. Each instant, the living may be subdued by these dangers, seeing their life end, their world leveled to the ground, and then, they wander aimlessly in the great wasteland, unable to distinguish east from west, but nonetheless feel no fear, nor anguish, as they are the serpent. They are the tree of life. They are the gigantic earth. They are the majestic sky.

Case 51 — Sun-Face Buddha, Moon-Face Buddha 一日面佛月面佛

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 3. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 36.

【中】

jǔ mǎ dà shī bù ān yuàn zhǔ wèn hé shàng jìn rì zūn hòu
舉。馬 大師不安。院主問：「和尚近日尊候¹
rú hé dà shī yún rì miàn fó yuè miàn fó
如何。」大師云：「日面佛，月面佛。」²

¹ 【尊候】[zūn hòu]: A term of respect toward a superior: “In origin, 候 is a noun referring to the ‘state’ or ‘shape’ of things. Therefore, ‘zunhou’ 尊候 originally

course of the gilded star around which our planet revolves, forming the smallest of the heavenly wheels that we behold when our eyes are turned upward. Our life is also paced by these titanic circumambulations, and some members of our kind are given to live an existence lasting no longer than a veiling of the face of the moon, while others will not remember the number of solstices that they will have witnessed. In the same manner as the light of the two great luminaries hung in the firmament continuously shines, even when it is concealed from our eyes, the foundation of our being nonetheless remains forever unaffected. A day or a year, the distinction is of no importance outside of the vacuous debates occurring within the walls of man's world, as beyond these ramparts, there is no life nor death, no length nor intensity, but only the immutable essence that perdures, the great light that remains constant, even when the sky continuously displays a formidable parade of continuously changing characters skillfully playing with light and shadows, vivid colors and elaborate decorations. The one who has seen the light sees his own face while looking at the bright countenance of our star, as he beholds his own self while contemplating the gleam of the ashy sphere shining through the night.⁴³ Approaching the end of his days, he knows that his face will remain unchanged after his passing. It will forever remain on display for all eyes to see, above the highest clouds, and in the depths of a lake. In a cup of water or at the zenith in the sky, it will still brightly shine, chasing away all shadows and all apprehensions.

Case 52 — You Are Huichao 一汝是慧超

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 7.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn fǎ yǎn huì chāo zī hé shàng rǔ hé shì fó
 舉。僧問 法眼：「慧超 咨¹ 和尚，如何是佛。」
 fǎ yǎn yún rǔ shì huì chāo
法眼 云：「汝是 慧超。」

¹ 【咨】[zī]: “to consult.”

【日】

⁴³ See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p276 (Case 36).

こ そう ほうげん と えちよう おしょう と
 擧す。僧、法眼に 問う、「慧超、和尚に 咨う、
 いか こ ぶつ ほうげんいわ なんじ こ
 如何なるか 是れ 佛。」法眼云く、「汝は 是れ
 えちよう
 慧超。」

【E】

A monk asked Fayān: “Huichao wants to ask you: What is a Buddha?” Fayān said: “You are Huichao.”

We grope through the darkness, desperately searching for the ground of all things, stumbling on every obstacle, puzzled by our own helplessness and our lack of knowledge of what we so eagerly desire. Reaching for the hand of someone whose eyes are sufficiently sensitive to see the way clearly, illuminated by the faint gleam of the silvery arms of our galaxy, we are finally offered precious guidance, with the simplest of words: “What you seek, what you need, is to know yourself!” The seeker is a pilgrim passing through a steep and narrow valley, shouting with all his lungs, stirring up an invisible wave in the air with a resounding question: “Who am I?” The earth itself then answers, reflecting this wave back at its source, echoing repeatedly in his ears: “Who am I?” ... “Who am I?” ...⁴⁴ The question itself is its own answer.

The inquirer is himself what is sought. It is not to be found in front of him, as an object observed by a subject. It is not to be found within himself, as a subject facing a world of objects. The name he has been bestowed at birth designates the essential nature of all that is, and so do the names of all the things and people surrounding him. Finally equipped with such an awareness,

⁴⁴See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p39: “Buscas al Buddha y descubres que no hay Buddha alguno. Entonces te hallas solo tú mismo. Tu experiencia es tu realidad. Si no reconoces el Buddha que eres tú, nunca podrás encontrar ningún Buddha. ...Te sitúas en la cumbre de la montaña y gritas al valle: “¿Quién soy yo. E va e te responde: ¿uien soy yo ¿ quién soy yo ¿quién soy yo?” Pero tú no comprendes su respuesta, y continúas preguntando: “¿quién soy yo?” . La respuesta del valle es: tú eres la pregunta quién soy yo.”

every step he takes is then taken on hallowed ground, and every utterance he makes is a divine name. We, likewise, simply need to turn our gaze away from the alluring lights of the world, the deceitful illusions of the mind, and then our eyes will progressively grow accustomed to the dark. Everything will then slowly appear in a new light, one that is not kindled by the hands of our brethren, but rather pervades the entirety of the skies, with us then taking a glance at the true extent of our self, the infinite reach of our nature.

Case 53 —Picking From Inside, Pecking From Outside —學人啐請師啄

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 16.

【中】

舉。僧問 鏡清：「學人啐，¹ 請師啄。」² 清
云：「還得活也無。」 僧 云：「若不活，遭人怪笑。」
清 云：「也是草裏漢。」

¹ 【啐】[cuì]: An onomatopoeia that can mean “to spit” or “to sip,” but here expresses the idea of an unborn chick picking his shell from the inside.

² 【啄】[zhuó]: “to peck.” In this case, the hen pecks the outside of a shell to free the chick inside it.

【日】

こ そう きょうしょう と がくにんそつ こ し
舉す。僧、鏡 清に 問う、「學人啐す、請う 師
たく しょういわ は い え や
啄せよ。」清 云く、「還た 活くるを 得る 也無。」
しょういわ も い ひと あざわら
僧云く、「若し 活きずんば、人に 怪笑われん。」
しょういわ ま こ そうり かん
清 云く、「也た 是れ 草裏の 漢。」

【E】

A monk asked Jingqing: “This student is picking from inside the shell. Please, teacher, peck from outside!” Jingqing

said: “Will he still be alive or not?” The monk said: “If not alive, one would become a laughingstock.” Jingqing said: “This fellow is still stuck in the weeds!”

¹ “The weeds”: The weeds often symbolize the illusions of the world and attachments.

Generations after generations, people have been puzzled by the question of what comes first: the chicken or the egg? Only the one failing to see that they are one is perplexed by this. Life sprouts out of life, in a continuous chain, from a time when there were neither chicks nor eggs, up to the very first spark of life, itself born out of the mysterious union of earth and life, water and thunder. Having been meticulously selected by the ruthlessness of nature, the chick instinctively picks the inside of its fragile shell, yearning for freedom from its earthly enclosure separating it from the world. Such picking nonetheless only comes when the bird is sufficiently mature to resist the unforgiving harshness of the heavens and the earth. If the parent carelessly pecks the shell from the outside, not knowing the condition of the chick, it may occur too soon and threaten the life of the newborn. Inside or outside the shell, the creatures nonetheless do not ponder the appropriateness of their actions. They do not think, but rather only let themselves be guided by their own nature, which knows best, as the creatures who were poorly guided by their instincts perished, without leaving an offspring. Forcing an early birth, one will only cause a premature death.

The young desperately want to live, discovering everything the world has to offer, without realizing that this world is but another shell, an enclosure made of things that conceal the earth and the sky found beyond it, but contrary to the chick that is naturally eager to break its shell, the inhabitants of the realm of the living often spend the entirety of their decades-long existence without perceiving the presence of the pen enclosing them. Only at the time of their death will they return to the great earth, under the majestic sky, once again one with the whole of being. As long as there is an inside and an outside, someone who picks from the outside and someone who pecks from the inside, the truth is veiled, occulted by the light of the world. Guided by the vicissitudes of fate or someone who came back from the dead, one may

nonetheless break out the greater shell, causing the high rampart bordering the world to collapse, letting himself be crushed by its building blocks, impaled by the gigantic beak. Then will both life and death suddenly vanish into thin air. Neither living nor dead, the one who ventures out of the greater shell is dead to the world, but finally born onto the bare earth. He no longer hears the advice of the living and is blind to the guidance of the elders. Eggs and chickens are no more. There are no parents or children. No matter whether they were eloquent or crude, the words of the world have equally faded into silence, and all that can be heard is the deafening laughter of those who are neither living nor dead, the tall trees that have been stripped of all their leaves before the winter, appearing withered, already reclaimed by the earth, but the spring breeze now slips between their branches, and timidly, emerald buds emerge out of the tip of their extended arms, sign that life and death are one, only two faces of the same coin rotating endlessly in the air. Watching this scenery from the lowly grasses, the immature only sees the majesty of the tree, not realizing that he shares the same root with it. He himself is born out of the great body of the earth rather than out of the world. His life is a mere illusion, and his death a mirage. Once both sides have been experienced, then can the truth gloriously shine, and he then can see beyond life and death, inside and outside, child and parent.

Case 54 — Daisui' s “Kalpa Fire” — 大隋劫火

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 29. A longer and slightly different version of the case can be found in Book of Serenity, case 30.⁴⁵ The version from the Blue Cliff Record has nonetheless been preferred here.

【中】

舉。僧問大隋：「劫火¹洞然，²大千³俱壞，
未審這箇壞不壞。」隋云：「壞。」僧云：「恁麼
則隨他去也。」隋云：「隨他去。」

⁴⁵ See Book of Serenity, case 30: 舉。僧問大隋。劫火洞然大。千俱壞。未審這箇壞不壞隨云。壞僧云。恁麼則隨他去也隨云。隨他去僧問龍濟。劫火洞然大千俱壞。未審這箇壞不壞濟云。不壞僧云。為甚不壞濟云。為同大千。

¹ 【劫火】[jié huǒ]: “the Kalpa-Fire.” A great fire marking the end of the “kalpa of destruction” (壞劫), one of the four eons in Indian mythology.

² 【洞然】[dòng rán]: “to burn [with fire].”

³ 【大千】[dà qiān]: Abbreviation of 大千世界, the “thousand great worlds.”

【日】

こ　　そうだいずい　　と　　ごうか　とうねん　　だい
 擧す。僧大隋に　問う、「劫火洞然として、大
 せん　ぐ　　え　　そ　も　　しゃ　こ　　え　　え
 千俱に　壊す。未審、這箇は　壊するか　壊せざる
 ずい　いわ　　え　　そう　いわ　　いん　も　　すな　わ
 か。」隋云く、「壊す。」僧云く、「恁麼ならば　則ち
 それ　したが　　さ　　ずい　いわ　　それ　したが　　ゆ
 他に　隨い　去かん。」隋云く、「他に　隨い　去け。」

【E】

A monk asked Daisui: “When the Kalpa Fire is ignited, the thousand great [worlds] will be destroyed. I wonder whether ‘that’ will also be destroyed or not.” Daisui said: “Destroyed.” The monk said: “In that case, will ‘that’ be gone with the other?” Daisui said: “Gone with the other.”

At first folded onto itself, the sky then suddenly deployed its wings, marking the birth of our universe, continuing to extend its reach as swiftly as the light it contains runs to its edges, opening up a space within which all things may be, long before there were any eyes to witness this stupendous event. One day, these heavenly wings may perhaps once again be folded upon themselves, with the sky contracted at great speed, space itself compressed into a fiery sphere of light and earth, until it reaches the size of the smallest speck of dust. Then will the world of men ineluctably collapse. Then will the last traces of the earth itself be erased, turned into pure brilliance. The very essence of our flesh will without a doubt still be part of this glorious catastrophe. We were weaved with stardust and light, and our substance will survive the world, life, and the earth itself. Our bodies are made of what once was a blazing speck of dust that later became the seemingly infinite skies, and we should forever remain, even when the heavenly wings flutter

continuously through the ages, with myriads of cyclic movements of extension and folding.

When man's world is inevitably destroyed by the folding of the heavens or their tearing apart, the very notion of "destruction" will itself have been annihilated, as it exists only within the confines of his mind. The skies may be extended and folded. The earth may be kneaded back into pure light before it once again assumes its form as a sphere of incandescent dust in which a tree of life takes its roots, but nothing is created, and nothing disappears. The whole of nature continues its eternal dance, with the potential cyclic folding of the heavens simply being the greatest of the heavenly wheels, perpetually in motion, the beating heart of being. The underlying nature of the skies remains as immutable as it is inscrutable, and thus the essence of all that is, including ourselves, endures.

What would irremediably be crushed with the collapse of the world, when the memories of the last man would vanish into oblivion, would be the difference between things. Every instance of "this" will then be forgotten, while any occurrence of "that" will fade away. No-thing will remain, and everything will be gone with "it." The air will no longer be soiled by the utterances of such vulgar words. There will be no one who would vainly ask what "this" and "that" is, as there will be no thing, only being itself, invariably enduring, passing unscathed through the most ardent fire, slipping through the tiniest hole, indestructible but perfectly malleable, assuming every possible form, without any form being distinguishable. If you think that it means that "it" will remain intact, you would nonetheless be mistaken. "It" will be swept away completely, and nothing will remain of "it." Completely destroyed in the eyes of man, but perfectly intact when seen without the eyes, when perceived beyond the frontiers of the world, this is what we are, our face before we were born, before the heavens were opened, before there was any space where one could be, and before the flow of time was set into motion.

Case 55 — Huiji — That Is Me! — 惠寂是我

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 68.

舉。仰山問三聖：「汝名什麼。」聖云：「惠寂
¹。」仰山云：「惠寂是我。」聖云：「我名惠然
²。」仰山呵呵大笑。

¹ The full name of Yangshan is 仰山惠寂 [yǎng shān huì jì].

² The full name of Sansheng is 三聖慧然 [sān shèng huì rán].

【日】

舉す。仰山、三聖に問う、「汝の名は什麼ぞ。」
 聖云く、「惠寂。」仰山云く、「惠寂は是れ我な
 り。」聖云く、「我が名は慧然。」仰山、呵呵大笑す。

【E】

Yangshan asked Sansheng: “What is your name?” Sansheng said: “Huiji.” ¹ Yangshan said: “Huiji—that’s me!” Sansheng said: “My name is Huiran.” ² Yangshan laughed loudly.

¹ The full name of Yangshan is 仰山惠寂 [yǎng shān huì jì].

² The full name of Sansheng is 三聖慧然 [sān shèng huì rán].

Trying to know ourselves certainly should be one of the major undertakings of our lives. What defines who we are? Some will turn themselves toward the earth, stooping upon still waters to contemplate their face, the most visible part of their body, and whose features mark their individuality, differentiating them from the countless other men roaming the face of the earth. Others will unseal their mouth and expulse the air filling up their chest, swiftly moving their tongue and their lips to produce a sound that represents them within their world: their name, resonating throughout the air, falling into the ears of those facing them, invoking their presence within the mind of the other. Not completely unique but shared by sufficiently few individuals to avoid permanent ambiguity, this name is our property, but we also likewise belong to it.

When this name is dragged into the mud, we feel degraded in our hearts. When it is exalted above all others within our world, we are emboldened, standing proudly in our flesh, with goosebumps on our skin induced by exultation.

Names are nonetheless mere arbitrary signs, and a rose's fragrance would not change even if it was known by any other name. Likewise, a whim of fate may have led us to bear another appellation, without seeing the essence of our being profoundly modified by it. More than this, it very well may be that, likewise, our very self would be as arbitrary as our name, equally a mere product of our world, rather than an inherent aspect of nature itself. We are all figurines of flesh, lumps of earth bewitched by the fire of life, but the frontier between us on the one hand, and the rest of the earth and the sky on the other, is only defined by our mind. It is a thing of our world rather than an objective piece of the earth. The whole of life, the whole of the earth, and the whole of being may also be seen as a totality, without being decomposed into a series of parts. When all the myriads of things of the world have collapsed into one, then is this thing a faithful representation of being itself, of nature, with as little arbitrariness as the mind allows, as the very concept of "thing" does not exist outside of it.

When the truth of being is itself perceived in its totality, following the collapse of man's world, then every name is a word of truth, every utterance an invocation of the whole of being. Then, the barrier between the self and the other falls, as now, the only manifestation shining throughout the world is the essence pervading the entire earth and sky. Every face then becomes a pristine mirror. One's true nature is displayed in the celestial vault as well as in the waters coating the skin of our planet. We call ourselves out using the name of our neighbor, and we naturally turn our heads when hearing strange names thrown into the air. When those dwelling in this land, where only a single thing may be found and every name points at this thing, encounter each other, names resound like an echo in a vast and empty cave, located deep into the belly of the earth. Every name is then blended with others, forming a single wave going back and forth throughout the air, with every man hearing himself being called out, but knowing that there is no one to be called out, and all that can be heard is a deafening laughter, breaking the walls of the cave, soon causing

the collapse of the last thing, marking the advent of the age of no-thing-ness.

Case 56 —The Monk Shooting The Great Stag —僧問射麋

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 81.

【中】

舉。僧問 藥山：「平田淺草，麋¹ 鹿成群。如何
射得麋中麋。」 山 云：「看箭。」 僧放身便倒。 山
云：「侍者挖² 出這死漢。」 僧便走。 山 云：「弄
泥團漢，有什麼限。」 雪竇 拈云：「三步雖活，五
步須死。」 麋瞪³ 呿³

¹ 【麋】[zhǐ]: a kind of large deer. In all likelihood the so-called “père David” s deer,” native to China.

² 【挖】S: 【拖】[tuō]: “to drag.”

³ The meaning of this use of the three characters is open to interpretation. They may describe the “steps” mentioned in the case. See also the same type of use in the 169th case (Blue Cliff Record 88), in which two of the three characters are identical; 瞪 [dèng]: “to open (one’ s eyes) wide” / “to stare at”; 呿 [qū]: “to yawn” / “to remain with one’ s mouth open.”

【日】

こ そう やくさん と へいでんせんそう おおしか
舉す。僧、藥山に 問う、「平田淺草に、麋と
しか むれ な いかん おおしかちゅう おおしか い え
鹿と 群を 成す。如何か 麋 中の 麋を 射得ん。」
さんいわ や み そう み はな すなわ
山云く、「箭を 看よ。」 僧、身を 放って 便ち
たお さんいわ こ し かん ひきずりだ そう すなわ
倒る。山云く、「這の 死漢を 挖 出せ。」 僧、便ち
にげだ さんいわ でいだん ろう かん なん かぎ
走す。山云く、「泥團を 弄する 漢、什麼の 限り
あ せっちょうとりあ いわ さん ぼ かつ
か 有らん。」 雪竇 拈げて 云く、「三步は 活すと
いえど ご ぼ すべか し
雖も、五歩は 須らく 死すべし。」

【E】

A monk asked Yaoshan: “On the grassy plain, the great stag and the other deer form a herd. How may one shoot the greatest stag among the great stags?” Yaoshan said: “Look! An arrow!” The monk threw himself on the floor. Yaoshan said: “Attendant! Carry this dead fellow out of here.” The monk then left. Yaoshan said: “Until when will this fellow continue making mud balls?” (Xuedou mentioned this story and said: “Even though was alive for three steps, but certainly died with the fifth step.”) ¹

¹ See note 3 of the Chinese text about the three characters.

During the springtime, the verdant forest forms a thick, leafy garment enshrouding the earth, providing cover to the frightened beasts carefully avoiding the eyes of the hunter, fleeing from the attention and the sharpened arrows of the running intruders eager to wear their skin and feast upon their flesh. The great stag is the king of these creatures of the forest, but also the one that remains in the deepest, most concealed parts of the woodlands, the hardest to spot with the eyes and to take down with pointy projectiles of steel. When the herd is forced to venture out of their wooden shelter and enter into the grassy plains, exposed to the bloodthirsty eyes of the hunter, the great stag is protected by the rest of the deer, and these deer are themselves protected by the great stag. They indeed form a single creature, ready to take on those who intend to take their life.

The hunter thus lays a trap to catch his prey before he even has the chance to see it, but the old beasts are not so easily caught. They recognize the difference between a noose and the withered leaves, and they notice the arrowhead's glare before it is shot. This is precisely why they reached such an old age. Wanting so ardently to butcher the prey, the deerstalker is blind to the peculiar scenery in front of him. So possessed by his sanguinary desire, he fails to see that he himself is a prey, upon which others may feast. He is the great stag chasing after its own shadow, completely blind to the situation he is thrown into. When the string he pulled with his fingers is released, the arrow flies forward at great speed, with

its metallic tip ready to pierce the skin and go through the heart of its target. It is at this instant that the clouds are cleared from the air covering the plain, and that the azure firmament appears, with torrents of light suddenly flooding the land, brightly shining upon the sharpened weapon flying through the air, revealing its trajectory. It gets closer and closer, aimed at the hunter himself, and before he even grasps what is occurring, he is hit straight in his eye. With the resulting blindness nonetheless comes a revelation: the hardest creature to spot, and the trickiest to vanquish, is the self.

The lifeblood of the hunter is spilled abundantly over the ground. The life of the prey is fading away as the beast falls in the grasses. But even pierced with a sharp blade, the eye is now wide open. Passing through death, one gains life.⁴⁶ When the great stag is no more, the herd promptly scatters through the plains, and all that remains is the deserted landscape, the endless expanse of the emerald earth under the clear sapphire sky, without any thing standing out, only a seamlessly changing scenery, as the days fold into nights and the seasons succeed to one another, without any eye observing the grand marvel that is nature.

Inept hunters nonetheless continue to roam the vast plains. They impatiently shoot their arrows with poor aims, without ever hitting their target, and thus never realize what they are. They play their game, not seeing that they are the game that is being chased, the ones who are being played. They pretend to have made a kill, boasting of their successes to the elders, who are nonetheless not so easily duped, and these experienced men simply shake their heads, disappointed in their descendancy, seeing how far these children remain from being mature enough to lead a new generation. The time will nonetheless come. The living will one day die, and the dead will rise up, born anew onto the earth, ready to kill, ready to save, no longer seeing neither hunter nor prey, the self or the other.

⁴⁶A “Zen-phrase” : 「死中得活」 “Gaining life through death.”

Case 57 — Xiyuan' s Two “Wrong” — 連下兩錯

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 98.

【中】

舉。天平 和尚行脚時參 西院，常云：「莫道
 會佛法，覓箇舉話人也無。」一日 西院 遙見¹ 召²
 云：「從漪。」平 舉頭，西院 云：「錯。」平
 行三兩步，西院 又云：「錯。」平 近前。西院
 云：「適來³ 這兩錯，是 西院 錯，是上座錯。」平
 云：「從漪 錯。」西院 云：「錯。」平 休去，西院
 云：「且在這裏過夏，待共上座商量這兩『錯』。」
 平 當時便行。後住院，謂眾云：「我當初行脚時，
 被業風吹到 思明 長老處。連下兩錯，更留我過夏，
 待共我商量。我不道恁麼時錯，我發足向南方去時，
 早知道錯了也漪。」

¹ 【遙見】S: 【遙見】[yáo jiàn]: “to see from afar.”

² 【召】[zhào]: “to call together” / “to summon.”

³ 【適來】【适來】[shì lái]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese: 剛才, used to point out the fact that something just happened now.

【日】

こ てんびょうおしょうあんざや とき さいいん さん
 舉す。天平 和尚行脚しおりし 時、西院に 參ず。
 つね いわ ぶつぼう え もとより こ こわ
 常に 云く、「佛法を 會するは 莫道、箇の 舉話の
 ひと もと ま な いちじつ さいいんはる
 人を 覓むるも 也た 無しと。」一日、西院遙かに
 み め いわ じゅう い びょう あたま あ さいいん
 見て 召して 云く、「從漪。」平、頭を 舉ぐ。西院
 いわ しゃく びょう い さんりょう ぶ さいいん ま
 云く、「錯。」平、行くこと 三兩 歩す。西院又た

いわ しゃく びょう すすみよ さいいんいわ いましがた こ
 云く、「錯。」平、近前る。西院云く、「適來の 這の
 りょうしゃく こ さいいん しゃく こ じょうざ しゃく
 兩 錯、是れ 西院の 錯か、是れ 上座の 錯か。」
 びょういわ それがし しゃく さいいんいわ まちがえる びょう
 平 云く、「從滴の 錯なり。」西院云く、「錯。」平、
 つま さいいんいわ まず ここ お げ
 休去る。西院云く、「且は 這裏に 在いて 夏を
 すぐ まさ じょうざ こ りょうしゃく しょうりょう
 過せ。待に 上座と 這の 兩 錯を 商量せんと。」
 びょう たちま すなわ い のち じゅういん しゅ
 平、當時 便ち 行く。後に 住院して、衆に
 い いわ われそのかみ あんざや と き ごつぶう
 謂って 云く、「我當初、行脚しおりし 時、業風に
 ふ しみょうちやうろう ところ いた つづ
 吹かれて、思明 長老の 處に 到るや、連けざまに
 りょうしゃく くだ さら われ と げ すご
 兩 錯を下して、更に 我を 留めて 夏を 過し、
 まさ われ しょうりょう われ そ と き
 待に 我と 商量せんとせらる。我 恁麼の 時は
 しゃく おも われ なんぼう ほつそく さ
 錯と 道わざりしも、我南方に 發足し 去りし
 と き つと しゃく し おわ
 時には、早に 錯なることを 知道り 了れりと。」

【E】

Master Tianping was on a pilgrimage and visited Xiyuan, who was always saying: "Don't say you understand Buddhism. I have sought after someone able to talk about it, but didn't find any." One day, Xiyuan saw him from afar and called him: "Congyi!"¹ Tianping raised his head. Xiyuan said: "Wrong!" Tianping went on a few steps. Xiyuan once again said: "Wrong!" Tianping came in front of him. Xiyuan said: "These two 'Wrong' that I just said, do they mean that Xiyuan is wrong, or that it is the chief monk who is wrong?" Tianping said: "Congyi is wrong." Xiyuan said: "Wrong!" Tianping remained silent. Xiyuan said: "But stay here for the summer [retreat]! The chief monk will examine these two 'wrong' with you." Tianping nonetheless departed immediately. Later, once he became abbot of his own temple, he said to his assembly: "As I was on a pilgrimage, I was driven by the wind of fate and came to Elder Siming,² who twice told me: 'Wrong!', and furthermore, demanded that I stay for

the summer to discuss this matter with him. I did not acknowledge where I was wrong at the time, but when I was on my way down south, I quickly realized how wrong I was.”

The inexperienced young men seek understanding by wandering far from their homeland, peregrinating to encounter strange landscapes, being inevitably brought face to face with the unintelligible, being forced to encounter the most unfamiliar, in the hope of unearthing the secrets of his existence, of solving the puzzle of the meaning of their life. Chasing after a rainbow, an image of wonder that surpasses all that can be found around the place where he was born, deciphering the strange words of the foreigner, thinking that there lies the wisdom that has been denied to him from his infancy, the pilgrim waits for the words dispensed by the mountain hermit, like someone lost in the desert, his mouth crackled by thirst, begging for relief and his life.

When one is convinced to have found what he sought, it flees away. When he feels he has understood, he is immediately proven wrong. The man of the way recognizes the pilgrim from afar and does not need to see his face to know his name. Calling him out, he knows instantly if this one knows who he is, or not. The wanderer raises his head when hearing the name he has been bestowed at birth, the word invoking his presence within their common world. Thus is his ignorance displayed under the heavens, his innocence broadcast throughout the air, witnessed by all creatures of the mountain. A terrifying shout then loudly resounds throughout the valley and in the ears of the stunned visitor: “Wrong!” Puzzled by what seems like a rebuke, as he had yet to approach the host, he continues a few steps, before once again hearing the same roar of admonition.

When hearing words of disapproval echoing through our ears, we will tend to consider ourselves the object of such condemnation, even when their target is not explicitly mentioned. The pilgrim, failing to understand what wrong he has committed, will nonetheless easily confess that he is the one who has transgressed, submitting himself to the authority of his host, thinking that he will appreciate this gesture of goodwill. The wise of the way nonethe-

less sees through appearances, and once again, the same roar of reproach resounds in the air. Too naïve to understand, too proud to seek to know, the elder is simply dismissed as a joker or a madman, and the pilgrim is convinced that the truth he seeks is nowhere to be found on this peak. He thus continues his journey on his path.

Arduous it is for a man of the way to encounter someone seeing the same path. He is constantly surrounded by throngs of people standing on it with him, but they fail to see where they are. Captives of the world, slaves to their own selves, they have yet to encounter their own nature, to see their own true face, what remains when the mask and disguise of the world have fallen to the ground. When one sees it, he dies of shock, crumbling to ashes then swiftly carried by the winds, scattered beyond the ramparts of the great citadel, floating throughout the desolate wasteland. But then his life begins anew. Then does he finally know his true name, the only one to which he will from now on answer. One day, the pilgrim will realize that the opposition between right and wrong, the self and the other, is only a sign of his deception, a product of the mind, a thing of the world. Neither he nor the elder was wrong, and neither were they right. To examine the “wrong” is to attempt to seize a rainbow and see that it is only an image in our eyes. Where no one is, no one is right or wrong. Where there is no right or wrong, there can the truth shine in its integrity, without being stained by man’s fingers, like a block of jade extended to the end of the earth, without any scratch, without any dent, without any name.

Case 58 — Yangshan Thrusts His Hoe Into The Ground — 仰山插鍬

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 15.

【中】

jǔ guī shān wèn yǎng shān shén chù lái yǎng yún tián
舉。 為山 問 仰山：「甚處來。」 仰 云：「田
zhōng lái shān yún tián zhōng duō shǎo rén yǎng chā xià qiāo zi 1
中來。」 山 云：「田中多少人。」 仰 插下鍬子，¹
chā shǒu ér lì shān yún nán shān dà yǒu rén xié móu yǎng
叉手² 而立。 山 云：「南山大有人刈³ 茆。」⁴ 仰

nián qiāo zì biàn xíng

拈鋤子便行。

¹ 【鋤】S: 【鋤】[qiāo]: “a hoe.”² 【叉手】[chā shǒu]: “to clasp one’s hands together in front of one’s chest” (as a mark of respect).³ 【刈】[yì]: “to mow.”⁴ 【茆】[mǎo]: variant of 茅 [máo], a type of water plant, thatch, or Cogon grass.

【日】

こ いさん きょうざん と いづれ ところ
 擧す。為山、仰山に 問う、「甚麼の 處より
 きた きょういわ でんちゅう きた さんいわ たちゅう
 來る。」仰云く、「田中より 來る。」山云く、「田中
 たしょう ひと きょう しょう す さっげ しゅしゅ
 多少の 人ぞ。」仰、鋤子を 挿下して 叉手して
 た さんいわ なんざんおお ひと あ ちがい か
 立つ。山云く、「南山大いに 人有って 茆を 刈る。」
 きょう しょう す ねん すなわ ゆ
 仰、鋤子を 拈じて 便ち 行く。

【E】

Guishan asked Yangshan: “Where have you come from?” Yangshan said: “From the field.” Guishan said: “How many people are there in the field?” Yangshan thrust his hoe into the ground and stood with his hands clasped in front of his chest.¹ Guishan said: “There are a great number of people cutting thatch on the South Mountain.” Yangshan took up his hoe and left immediately.

¹ See note 2 of the Chinese text.

When two mountains face each other, one casts its shadow upon the other in the morning, while the other will reciprocate in the evening. When two men of the way encounter each other, they playfully throw words at each other, sharpened like spears, attempting to cause the other to retreat and trip down on the ground, without fear of any wound, as they are already dead, skeletons having risen from the mud. They perfectly know whence they came, the great body of the earth from which most of the world itself is formed. The walker of the way stands upon the bare ground, his

toes covered in dust. He cherishes the soil more than the riches of the capital. He lives in close contact with the essence, paying no attention to the vacuous illusions of men. His two feet firmly anchored in the freshly tilled ground, proudly standing, his entire body pointing to the highest heaven, he stands on the tip of a gigantic pole, far above the cities, towering over the creations of men. Above and under the heavens, he alone is honored.⁴⁷ He is the great mountain whose base encompasses the entire earth, the only thing that remains when all other things have been discarded. Nothing can be discerned from such lofty heights. No one is recognized from the summit of the earth. Everything is seen clearly, but nothing is identified, and one only enjoys the harmonious blending, the magnificence of the skies towering over the land.

Alone on the summit, the enlightened hermit's existence is serene. Content with having nothing, but overlooking everything, his life nonetheless exhibits a lack of compassion. He has finally found contentment and liberation by fleeing from the illusory world of men, taking refuge in the sober truth of no-thing-ness, having even let himself be entirely dispossessed of his individuality, but he thereby also abandoned those still prisoners of this cruel world, left behind those desperately looking for the way out of the cluttered and disorderly citadel of things, relief from the yoke overburdening their shoulders. The tallest sequoia pays no attention to the grass at its feet. Likewise, the desert hermit is safe from the weapons of men and the wrath of the sky, but the men of the world are being trampled by the soles of the ruthless, cut down and thrown into the fire for the benefit of the few.

Even the tallest mountain is nonetheless one day eroded by the rain and another then towers over it. The solitary hermit ineluctably stumbles upon another man of the way, even when he has fled to the end of the earth. The lofty is then humbled. The one who thought that he was no one, having abandoned his own self, will be once again invited to become someone, and to assume his role in the great play of the world, as a liberator, freeing the slaves of the world, breaking their chains with his staff and his hands, slashing the sturdy ropes binding them to the walls around them.

⁴⁷See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》。東京：無我山房, 1915. p123 (Case 15) : 「叉手して立った、天上天下唯我獨尊の様子、然し是れは亦向上の死漢たるにあらず。」

And when the city will only be populated by free men, those who have seen it from the unfathomable height of the summit of the great mountain, then the mountain will become one with the city. Its walls will fall, and a great landslide will bring the mountain into its street. The hermit will feel at home in the palace, and the king will retreat into a cliffside cave. Without attachment to either the world or to no-thing-ness, without cherishing the city or the mountain, there will only be playful dances and chants, long days of silent contemplation, and fraternal contacts. Seeing oneself in everything, seeing no-thing-ness in oneself, the poisons of the past will be diluted in the immensity of the ocean of compassion, and each blade of grass will be given time to grow into a majestic tree.

Case 59 — Yunyan Sweeps The Ground — 雲巖掃地

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 21.

【中】

舉。雲巖掃地次道吾云：「太區區¹生。」巖
 云：「須知有不區區者。」吾云：「恁麼則有第二
 月也。」巖提起掃帚²云：「這箇是第幾月。」吾
 便休去。玄沙云：「正是第二月。」雲門云：「奴
 見婢殷勤。」³

¹ 【區區】S: 【区区】[qū qū]: “small” / “trivial.”

² 【帚】S: 【帚】[zhǒu]: “a broom.”

³ 【殷勤】[yīn qín]: “[to do something] politely” / “[to do something] solicitously.”

【日】

舉す。雲巖掃地の次で、道吾云く、「太區區
 生。」巖云く、「須らく知るべし、區區たらざる
 者あることを。」吾云く、「恁麼ならば則ち第
 二月ありや。」巖、掃帚を提起して云く、「這

こ 箇こは だいいくげつ 是れ 第幾月ぞ。」 ご 吾 すなわ 便ち きゅう 休し さ 去る。玄 げん
しゃいわ 沙云く、「まさ 正に こ 是れ だい にげつ 第二月。」 うんもんいわ 雲門云く、「ぬ 奴は
ひ 婢を み 見て いんごん 殷勤。」

【E】

When Yunyan was sweeping the ground, Daowu said: "That's some exhausting work!" Yunyan said: "You should know that there is someone who is not doing exhausting work!" Daowu said: "If that's so, that would mean there is a second moon!" Yunyan held up his broom and said: "What number of moons is this?" Daowu remained silent. Xuansha said: "That is precisely the second moon." Yunmen said: "The servant greets the maid politely."

A duel between friends may be fiercer than one between foes, but when one has forgotten which is which, and nobody knows where the weapons are striking, death is in the air, and no one will be left standing.

The dwellers of no-thing-ness, those who have thrown away their own self like a worn-out garment, see themselves in the eyes of everyone, as there is only one thing in their lives, the pale moon that softly illuminates all that is, appearing in each puddle of water, each cup, each lake, as ten thousand celestial bodies, whereas they are all images of a unique source, its multiplicity being only an insidious illusion. Playing with these reflections, the experienced sometimes disguises himself, picking up rags on the ground to cover his nakedness, to pretend to once again be a man of the world, an individual facing others, bold and proud. He may then start a game, teasing his companions. All around him, men are tirelessly exhausting their strengths so that their world would pierce through higher clouds, creating things, with some industriously sweeping away the dust covering the ground, meticulously separating the world, clean and spotless, from the earth, covered in mud and sand, disorderly and untamed. Seeing through the vanity of their

intentions, beholding the vacuity of their prodigious efforts to polish the earth and veil it with objects made of the same earth, the player jokingly points out the tiring nature of these activities, deriding them while deliberately refraining from offering a helping hand. He cunningly lays a trap. He vigorously casts a wide net, ready to become a fisher of men, and one fish soon jumps in it, opening wide its mouth, ready to swallow a bait whole, or at least so it appears. It may seem that one is exhausting himself, but another is not! One does something while another watches, but who is who? To see more than one thing is to be a prisoner of the world, to fail to see the oneness of all that is. It is to contemplate a thousand reflections of the moon in bodies of water, while failing to recognize the unicity of their source. To assert that one is working while another is not is to see two moons, that is, to be caught in the realm of illusions and falsehood.

The workers of the world may nevertheless also be dwellers of no-thing-ness. They may know the game initiated by the player and be apt to take the lead and skillfully choose the next move. The sweeper may take his broom, and vigorously strike the ground with it, standing erect, confidently asking: “What number of moons is this?!” The one counting the moons in the water may be the one who is deluded about their source, and the one merely pointing them out may be very well aware of their illusory nature. What number of moons is this? He is alone. He is the moon itself, revolving around the axis of the broom, gloriously glowing throughout the world, his face displayed and seen on any surface of water. The game has now been played. The duel leaves no one standing, and all that remains is the silence of the night and the delicate figure of the silvery luminary, whose image is sprinkled throughout the world of men. The players are no more. There is no winner nor vanquished, no right nor wrong. The moon itself is soon veiled by the light of dawn. Its gentle glow is erased with a brush of gilded light, and then nothing remains of this springtime dream.

Case 60 —Guishan’ s “Karmic Consciousness” —滄山業識

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 37.

【中】

舉。 jǔ 滙山 guī shān 問 wèn 仰山 yǎng shān：「忽 hū 有人 yǒu rén 問 wèn：『一切 yí qiè 眾生 zhòngshēng 但 dàn 有 yǒu 業識 yè shí¹ 茫茫 máng máng²，無 wú 本 běn 可 kě 據 jù。』，子 zǐ 作 zuò 麼 me 生 shēng 驗 yàn。」仰 yǎng 云 yún：「若 ruò 有 yǒu 僧 sēng 來 lái 即 jí 召 zhào 云 yún：『某甲 mǒu jiǎ。』，僧 sēng 迴 huí 首 shǒu 乃 nǎi 云 yún：『是 shì 甚 shén 麼 me。』，待 dài 伊 yī 擬 nǐ 議 yì 向 xiàng 道 dào：『非 fēi 唯 wéi 業識 yè shí 茫茫 máng máng。亦 yì 乃 nǎi 無 wú 本 běn 可 kě 據 jù。』」滙 guī 云 yún：「善 shàn 哉 zāi。」

¹ 【業識】S: 【业识】[yè shí]: “karmic consciousness.”

² 【茫茫】[máng máng]: “vast and obscure.”

【日】

舉 こす。滙 い山、仰 き山に 問 とう、「忽 たちち 人 ひ有 ありて 一切 いっさい 衆生 しゅじょう 但 ただ 業識 ごっし 茫茫 ぼうぼう として 本 もとの 據 よる べき 無 なき ありやと 問 とわば 作 さ麼 ざ 生 さんか 驗 ころん。」仰 こ云 いく、「若 し 僧 そうの 來 きたること あらば 即 すなち 召 めして 云 いわん、是 これ 甚 なん麼 かれぞと。」彼 が 擬 ぎ議 ぎせんを 待 まって、向 むって 云 いわん、唯 ただ 業識 ごっし 茫茫 ぼうぼう たる の みに 非 あらず、亦 また 乃 すなち 本 もとの 據 よる べき なしと。滙 き云 いく、「善 よいかな。」

【E】

Guishan asked Yangshan: “Suppose a man says: ‘All living beings are tossed in a vast and obscure karmic consciousness, and have no foundation to rely upon.’ How would one check him?” Yangshan said: “If such a monk were to come, I would call out to him: ‘Sir!’ When he would turn his head, one would immediately say: ‘What is this?’ One would then wait for him to be puzzled and then say to him: ‘Not only is there a vast karmic consciousness, but also there is no foundation to rely upon.’” Guishan said: “Good.”

Easy it is for someone to carry the wealth painstakingly earned by his parents during all their lives, but the possession of these riches does not imply that he has earned them. The ignorant may carelessly repeat the truths heard in a preaching hall while slumbering, but the knowledge of this truth does not equal its understanding. Gold is proofed in fire, and man with words, questions that reveal whether what he carries indeed belongs to him.

Likewise, a child may joyfully run through the streets and proclaim that “no-thing-ness is the world; the world is no-thing-ness,” but will his behavior reflect this knowledge of the nature of being? All beings are unknowingly thrown into a vast and obscure world, where all actions are seen through the prisms of right and wrong, merit and sin, beneficial or harmful.⁴⁸ Each thought that is raised by his mind is captive of this world, whose ground appears occulted from his view. To rest upon the separating line between right and wrong, merit and sin, is child’s play. To the servant of the world, it appears as absolutely established, dependable. He just has to follow the right path, and he will be given his reward when death comes. This comfortable position is nonetheless only tenable when one does not investigate the nature of the ground, when one does not inquire of the solidity of the foundation of this world. Such an investigation would indeed reveal that this fortress is built upon quicksand. The cornerstone is turned, and all that is found is a bottomless chasm, a great abyss, where no-thing is found. We are thrown into a world, but there is no foundation to rely upon. No-thing-ness itself is its foundation.

Hearing the insightful proclamation, one may simply call out the one have uttered it: “Sir!” And when this man reacts by turning his head, without thought, without reflection nor delay, one would thereby point out the very foundation of the world, that is, what is there where no thought emerges, the primordial impulse, the instinct tied together with the work of the senses, the edge between the world and the abyss. To react and answer is to be still a prisoner of one’s self and of the world, to rely upon them,

⁴⁸See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Shōyōroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript] : “Recall the words in the Diamond Sutra: Dwelling nowhere, the mind should come forth. ... He is saying it is empty when he says there is nothing to rely on. It’s the same as form is emptiness, emptiness is form.”

uncontrollably, instinctively. Not answering would imply being dispossessed of one's humanity, ceasing to be part of the world, the vanishing of the self, not relying upon anything, depending only on no-thing-ness, which cannot be relied on.

The living are tossed in a vast and obscure world, erected upon a great abyss. When one neither dwells in the world nor the abyss, never resting, never remaining still, knowing that only through non-abiding may one remain in harmony with the way, then is the proclamation uttered in truthfulness. To rest on sure ground is to be caught in an illusion. To hesitate is to be blind. When one is not afraid to march in the great chasm, nor fears to stand for the “good” of the world, the two shores are then brought together. The foundation and the construction can no longer be distinguished from one another, with each one resting upon the other, finding a subtle and incomprehensible equilibrium.

Case 61 —Fayan's “By Boat Or By Land” —法眼舡陸

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 51.

【中】

jǔ 舉。fǎ yǎn 法眼 wèn 問 jué 覺 shàng zuò 上座：「chuán lái 舡來，lù lái 陸來。」jué 覺
yún 云：「chuán lái 舡來。」yǎn 眼 yún 云：「chuán zài shén me chù 舡在甚麼處。」jué 覺 yún 云：「chuán 舡
zài hé lǐ 在河裏。」jué 覺 tuì hòu 退後，yǎn 眼 què wèn bàng sāng yún 却問傍僧云：「ěr dào shì lái 爾道適來¹
zhè sāng 這僧，jù yǎn bú jù yǎn 具眼不具眼。」

¹ 【適來】[shì lái]: It expresses the fact that something just happened right now. Similar to the modern Chinese: 猶剛才。

【日】

こ 舉す。ほうげん 法眼、かくじょうざ 覺上座に と 問う、「こうらい 舡來か りくらい 陸來か。」
かくい 覺云く、「こうらい 舡來。」げんい 眼云く、「こう 舡甚麼の なん 處にか ところ 在る。」
かくい 覺云く、「こう 舡は かり 河裏にあり。」かく 覺 しりぞ 退いて のち 後、げん 眼

かえ ぼうそう と いわ なんじ い せきらい
 却こって 傍そう僧まなこに 問ぐうて 云まなこく、「爾ぐ 道え 適來の
 この 僧 眼を 具するや 眼を 具せざるや。」

【E】

Fayan asked Senior Monk Jue: “Arrived¹ by boat or by land?” Jue said: “By boat.” Fayan said: “Where is the boat?” Jue said: “The boat is on the river.” After Jue had withdrawn, Fayan asked a monk next to him: “You tell me, the monk who was here just now, did he have the eye or not?”

¹ The question seems to be deliberately direct, avoiding the use of personal pronouns.

The wise often appears as a fool, and even a well-trained eye will be incapable of ascertaining which is which. Interrogated by a cunning one, the wise replies with the same cunning. Presented with an ambiguous question, he becomes a mirror, reflecting what he is given, offering an image of uncertainty. A visitor may then be asked by his host: “By what means did this one arrive where he is now?” Words can be heard from different strata of the mind. They may occupy different planes of the world simultaneously, and when the traveler simply answers “By boat,” the earth and the world are found tightly interlaced, impossible to untangle. The boat may indeed be the earthly vehicle having carried his flesh to this part of the land, but it may also represent the help he received to reach this point in his life, this degree of insight into the world, or this clarity of vision of the way of the sky. “Where is this boat now?” He is then asked. “On the river,” is the obvious reply. By boat or by land, the distinction lies in the efforts demanded of the traveler.⁴⁹ On foot, it would seem that he would have relied on his own strength to get where he is now, but on a vehicle like a boat, it is clearer that it is the efforts of others forces or people that brought the vessel to its destination: the currents of the river, the winds occupying the sky, the knowledge of navigation of the captain, a great multitude of factors all coming together to carry him safely to this shore. Observed more closely, the distinction

⁴⁹ See: 神保如天. 《從容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p360 (Case 51).

may nonetheless not be as clear as it appears. The distinction between the self and the other indeed only exists within the mind of the living, and the walker equally depends on the rest of the whole of nature to reach his destination as the navigator. Other living beings must sacrifice their flesh to allow his limbs to be set into motion. The weather must be sufficiently clement, and the earth must allow itself to be trodden upon, otherwise the wanderer's journey is doomed to failure. Standing on a deck or walking in wooden sandals, passing over water or dust, he always remains carried on the way of the sky, having little control over his course, and with the whole ineluctably going where it is meant to.

Witnessing such a play unfold in front of his eyes, the spectator should thus be watchful of not being fooled, and he should ask himself: isn't he the one being played by the two actors? Aren't the ambiguities of their exchange a mere trap, leading him to lose himself in the determination of the depth of this conversation, and of the degree of insight of its protagonists? To have the eye of the man of the way is to see the light of noon at midnight, and the darkness of midnight at noon, without feeling compelled to determine which is which, as such distinction does not exist where he should be, the place with no high and low, no land nor river, no wise or fool. If you think he has the eye, you are blind, and if you think he does not, you are lost. To see without the eye, and to be blind to its presence or absence, this is an invaluable insight.

Case 62 —Dongshan Is Unwell —洞山不安

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 94.

【中】

舉。洞山不安。僧問：「和尚病，還有不病者麼。」山云：「有。」僧云：「不病者還看和尚否。」山云：「老僧看他有分。」¹僧云：「和尚看他時如何。」山云：「則不見有病。」

¹ 【有分】[yǒu fèn]: “one is destined to [do something]” (有缘分).

【日】

こ とうざん ふあん そう と おしょう や かえ
 擧す。洞山不安。僧問う、「和尚病む、還そつ
 や もの あ さんい わ あ そう
 て 病まざる 者有りや。」山云く、「有り。」僧
 い わ や もの かえ おしょう み そう
 云く、「病まざる 者は 還かえって 和尚を 看みるや
 い な さんい わ ろうそう た み ぶん あ そう
 否や。」山云く、「老僧他を 看みるに 分ぶん有り。」僧
 い わ おしょう た み とき い かん さんい わ す な わ
 云く、「和尚他を 看みる 時如何。」山云く、「則すなち
 や まい あ み
 病 有ることを 見ず。」

【E】

Dongshan was unwell. A monk asked: “The master is unwell. Is there anyone who is not sick?” Dongshan said: “There is.” The monk said: “Does the one who is not sick watch¹ over the master?” Dongshan said: “Fate compels this old monk to watch over that one.” The monk said: “How about when the master has watched that one?” Dongshan said: “Then this old monk no longer sees that there is a sickness.”

¹ Probably a play of words, based on the dual meaning of the word 看 [kàn], which means “to see” as well as “to watch over.” It can refer to the fact of seeing one’s own nature as well as taking care of the sick.

It is all too easy to lose oneself in the wonders created by the mind, to escape the harshness of the earth and take refuge in the oneiric products of our imagination, but our mind is bound to our body and not an ethereal thing transcending earth and sky. When this earthly body is burdened by sickness, we are promptly brought back to the realm of the senses, having to face pain and impairment. The sensations of pain and discomfort certainly are some of the most primordial elements of the animal mind. They arose out of random changes in the tree of life while our ancestors were still floating creatures in the heart of the ocean, but as they revealed themselves to be an extremely powerful mechanism through which danger could be avoided and survival improved, their perception slowly spread and developed among the living. Without the classification of all things as painful or not, pleasurable or not, we in

all likelihood would not have survived our infancy. The discomfort of an illness encourages us to seek treatment and renders us more cautious. The pain of a sickness teaches us to strive to avoid what caused it in the future. Our senses are tightly knitted together with the ground of our mind, and without thought, without hesitation, we react to any assault on our being, to the vicious attacks of minuscule forms of life that invade our bloodstream, feasting on our energy, exhausting our strengths, threatening to cause the gigantic piece of machinery formed by our body to collapse into ruin. But is there anyone who is not sick?

The human mind is a unique marvel of plasticity and ambivalence. Man may perceive the information offered by the senses, and then decide to transform this flow of perception, manipulating these sensations as he pleases, if he has learned the way to control them and sees his world with a sufficient degree of clarity. Afflicted by illness, the man of the way is like any other man. He experiences pain and has to bear the discomfort. A key difference is nonetheless that one who knows the nature of the world knows that these sensations are mere information, a command sent to our mind so that we would take steps to ensure our own survival, rather than a tangible property of the earth around us. The earth and the sky feel no pain. There is no illness outside of our mind. This realization opens up a new path for the living, allowing them to see beyond the horizon of their own survival and perpetuation. Fate indeed appears to call man to become more than a creature thoughtlessly responding to the commands of the senses, mindlessly reacting to the orders of his body, whose goal is only to prolong its life. More than survival, man is indeed endowed with the capacity to embrace the way of the sky, consciously releasing the illusion of the manifold nature of what the heavens enfold, ceasing to shatter its unity to turn it into a constellation of things that can be grasped by the mind. Then, life is no different than death, and one does not need to spend his days resisting the way itself, striving against death, which will nonetheless always come.

When one sees beyond the horizon of his own life, of his own self, and beholds the wholeness of the sky, one can then embrace death itself, not as a gloomy, nihilistic renunciation, but rather as the most wondrous feeling, the bliss of perfect communion with everything that is. The cries of the body may still be faintly heard

by his consciousness, but they are no longer heeded. The eyes contemplating the magnificent totality, the insignificant details are overlooked. Pain and discomfort are forgotten. The illness is of no consequence, as the barrier separating life from death has vanished into thin air. All that remains is a raw truth, perceived but not understood, experienced but not reflected upon, a sign of the remarkable health of the tree of life itself, still growing, still renewing itself, now conquering no-thing-ness itself!

Case 63 —The Barbarian Has No Beard — 胡子無鬚

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 4.

【中】

huò ǎn yuē xī tiān hú zǐ yīn shēn wú xū
或庵 曰：「西天¹ 胡子² 因甚無鬚。」³

¹ 【胡子】S: 【鬚子】[hú zǐ]: “barbarian” (may also mean “beard”).

² 【西天】[xī tiān]: “the Western Paradise” (in a Buddhist context) / “India.”

³ 【鬚】S: 【須】[xū]: “a beard.”

【日】

こ わくあんいわ さいてん こ す なん よ
舉す。或庵曰く、「西天の 胡子、甚に 困って
ひげ な
か 鬚無き。」

【E】

Huoan said: “Why hasn’t the barbarian from the Eastern Paradise¹ a beard?”

¹ “The barbarian from the Western Paradise”: That is, Bodhidharma, coming from India.

Block by block, word by word, our environment was built up by our forefathers. They painstakingly extracted the mud under their feet and cleaved the rocky soil to turn the earth into castles

and skyscrapers. They reflected lengthily upon their condition and the nature of the world around them, inscribing the fruit of their meticulous efforts of the mind in scrolls and books. They patiently assembled grunts and shouts into speech to pour out their thoughts into the air and the ears of their neighbors. Each generation now stands upon the countless corpses of those who came before, allowing them to reach higher ground, to see farther than anyone before. The names of some of the pioneers who opened up entire new parcels of our world still echo through the air, long after the collapse of the empires and civilizations that gave birth to them, and these new lands of the mind, the new domains of the intellect, are now naturally associated with their discoverers. Their wisdom is tied to their individuality, commonly expressed through their name but also through the depiction of their face, the outer mask that is seen when one speaks with someone. The world defines a man by the color of his eyes, the shape of his hair, or the length of his beard. His true self cannot be described with words nor painted with a brush, and thus men resort to this poor substitute, focusing on the face, often overlooking the truth that it veils.

The revelation of a truth oftentimes comes through the agency of the stranger. Incarnating the unfamiliar, he alone is able to break the blindness to the things that are the most familiar. Himself boldly venturing into the foreign, he is at all times confronted with something new, something peculiar, and thus in the best position to guide others to discover what is foreign to them. Coming from the other side of the earth, the pathfinder unites lands and peoples, demonstrating that all share a single nature, which simply waits to be unveiled. It is within and outside them, in their homeland and the foreign country, on the earth and in the skies. He is no prophet, nor is he a savior. He is nobody, no one, a man with no name, just a manifestation of the skies themselves, an inconspicuous whirlwind swiftly passing through the dusty alleys of an immense city, sweeping eons of dirt accumulated upon this world, finally revealing its original appearance to all those who spent their entire lives in this place, before disappearing, leaving only what he uncovered as a trace of his brief passage upon the earth.

Few are those who keep the revelation of the stranger in mind,

themselves sweeping away the fine dust of the world to keep a clear vision of their own nature, but the passage of the great whirlwind coming from the farthest part of the earth still resonates within the city. It changed it profoundly, albeit only appearing subtly different to the inquisitive eye. Each gust of wind is a turbulence, a remnant of the whirlwind stirred up by the tail of the invisible dragon that was born out of the setting sun. The tallest trees are his whiskers. The stars are freckles upon his skin, and mountain ranges the spikes protruding from his back. When one passes in front of a mirror, it appears, and its mark is indelibly etched on the faces of all our beloved. He is no one, and everyone. His face is our face, and a bottomless chasm, a black hole out of which no thing can emerge. To see him is to see our true nature, what is left when all that defines us has been eroded by the winds and the rains, with our hairs cut off, the color of our eyes and skin washed away, our facial features ground down, leaving only the emptiness of the skies found behind. Then, the east collapses into the west. One sees that the explorer never left his home. The barbarian we fear and the wiseman whose teachings we yearn for were always shown in the mirror, as a crystal-clear reflection of the heavens.

Case 64 — Ruiyan' s “Master!” — 巖喚主人

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 12.

【中】

ruì yán yàn 瑞巖彦¹ hé shàng měi rì zì huàn zhǔ rén gōng 和尚每日自喚主人公,² fù zì yīng nuò 復自應諾,
nǎi yún 乃云:
xīng xīng 「『惺惺³ zhé nuò 著』『喏。』
tā shí yì rì mò shòu rén mǎn 『他時異日莫受人瞞⁴
nuò nuò 』』『喏喏。』』

¹ 【瑞巖彦】[ruì yán yàn]: The last character (彦) is just an alternative name, left out of most translations.

² 【主人公】[zhǔ rén gōng]: “the main protagonist.”

³ 【惺惺】[xīng xīng]: describes a state of clarity of mind and wisdom.

⁴ 【瞞】S: 【瞞】[mán]: “obscuration.”

【日】

こ 舉ずいがんす。瑞巖げんおしょうの彦和尚、まいにち毎日 みずか自ら しゅじんこう主人公と
よ喚まび、みずか復た おうだく自ら すなわ應諾し、いわ乃ち 云く、「せいせい惺惺 じゃく著、

だく た じ い じつ ひと まん う なか だく
 喏。他時異日、人の 瞞を 受くること 莫れ、喏
 だく
 喏。」

【E】

Every day, Ruiyuan called out to himself: “Master!” and answered to himself: “Yes, sir!” And then added: “Be clear-headed!” Again, he answered: “Yes, sir!” “And then continued: “At all times, do not let your mind be obscured under the influence of men.” “Yes, sir! Yes, sir!”

If an event of perception is to occur, there must be a subject and an object, someone who perceives and something that is perceived. Animals are unique in this respect, as they are endowed with senses allowing them to treat portions of their environment as objects, as things separate from others and from the background formed by the earth and the skies. This branch of the majestic tree of life stands out from its other parts, and even more from the rest of nature, death itself, what is not living. Furthermore, it seems that only the paragon of animal, man, has been bestowed with the peculiar gift of consciousness, thanks to which he may consider his own self, his own being, as an object of reflection, pondering the essence of being itself. He alone can perceive the errors of his ways, and the shortcomings of his conduct. He alone can envision his destiny and see himself staying from the path leading him up to it. His remarkable ability, albeit seldom exploited to the fullest by a large portion of his kind, confers him the duty of admonishing himself so that he would not fall into the snares of the world.

Animals rose above the rest of life through their division of the whole of nature, using the knife of perception to cleave nature into earth and sky, and then to shatter each one of them into a myriad of things, to hold sway over these things, and to defend their life and perpetuate their kind. Man, in turn, rises above the rest of the animals by his perception of himself and of the mechanism by which he perceives, that is, by his insight concerning the nature of his own world. This should allow him to realize the true nature

of being, the relationship between his world and the whole that it represents. The man of the way himself perceives his perception as a mere skillful means, a tool for survival and propagation of life, but it also represents a subtle way to appear to step out of the whole of nature to better realize its nature as a whole. Man is an ego that is destined to proclaim the illusory nature of the ego. He is a paradoxical being, standing out of the whole of being by seeing what is not himself as an object, alone in ec-stasy, as he contemplates his own nature and mends the pieces shattered by his perception, until he sees only the tree of life growing between earth and sky, before these realms are themselves mended together, piece by piece, to reveal the whole that always was, is, and will be, seeing the essence beyond the things, the truth beyond the illusions of the world. Arduous it nonetheless is for man to keep these pieces together, and not let his mind shatter once more the creation into a million pieces. He must admonish himself, to not forget the illusory nature of his self, comically playing his part, treating himself as an object of rebukes, knowing that the character that admonishes is no less and no more illusory as his consciousness itself.⁵⁰

To be clear-headed is to see through one's own head, seeing that it does not exist. There is only one thing, and this thing is no-thing-ness, the great sky, perfectly clear and yet where nothing can be seen, only an unceasing tempest of light and sound, an undistinguishable totality, only veiled when one is tempted by the desire to survive and endure, forcing him to stand out from the rest and to sow disunity, plunging back into the world of gains and losses, life and death, pain and pleasure. One is nonetheless always capable of jumping out of the trap of the world, extending a helpful hand to himself, calling himself to caution, with this "self" englobing all that is.

Case 65 —The National Teacher's Three Callings —國師三喚

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 17.

⁵⁰See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "When Ruiyan calls 'Master!' you may think that the one who calls is his superficial 'I' and the master called to is his true essential nature. That is a misconception. The one calling Ruiyan and the one called are both Ruiyan's essential nature."

【中】

guó shī sān huàn shì zhě shì zhě sān yīng guó shī yún jiāng wèi wú gū
 國師三喚侍者，侍者三應，國師云：「將謂吾辜
 fù rǔ yuán lái què shì rǔ gū fù wú
 負¹ 汝，元來² 却是汝辜負吾。」

¹ 【辜負】S: 【辜負】 [gū fù]: “to let down” / “to disappoint.”

² 【元來】S: 【元來】 [yuán lái]: variant of 原來 [yuán lái], meaning “originally.”

【日】

こ こくし み じしゃ よ じしゃ み
 舉す。國師三たび 侍者を 喚ぶ。侍者三たび
 おう こくし いわ まさ おも われ なんじ こ ふ
 應ず。國師云く、「將に 謂えり、吾、汝に 辜負す
 がんらいかえ こ なんじ われ こ ふ
 と、元來却って 是れ 汝、吾に 辜負す。」

【E】

The National Teacher called his attendant three times, and three times his attendant reacted¹ to his calling. The National Teacher then said: “It may seem that I am disappointing you with all this calling, but in fact, it is you who are disappointing me!”

¹ “Reacted”: the original text does not indicate the nature of this reaction, which may have been a verbal reply, a gesture, or a mere movement.

The student of the world each day learns a new thing. He gathers the creations of mankind inside his mind, making a temple of knowledge with them. With each year that passes, new walls are built within it, enclosing him within a tower, as he feels proud of the extent of his possessions, the range of his understanding. But the embracer of the way, the lover of the desert, rather chooses the untrodden path, making his way out of the walls built by men. Each day, he merrily lets go of one thing, and with the passing of each new moon, it is entire rooms that are left to crumble, the last trace of them soon completely forgotten.⁵¹ One by one, he lets

⁵¹ See this sentence from Laozi's Dao De Jing: “In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired. In the pursuit of the way, every day something is lost.” Original Chinese: 「為學日益，為道日損。」. From: 阿部吉雄。《新釈漢文大系〈7〉老子莊子上巻》。東京：明治書院，1966. p86 (Chapter 48).

the things burdening him fall down to the ground as he calmly advances into the place devoid of any thing, leaving a trail behind him, showing his steady progress. Soon, his hands are empty. The yoke that weighed down his shoulder is now nowhere to be found. He walks on, naked, his skin stroked by the torrid gusts, scratched by the sand, scorched by the afternoon sun. Having nothing left on him to let go, he thus begins to let go of his self, shedding off his own skin, offering his body to the earth, having no longer need of his senses, as he knows that where he goes, there is nothing to be felt. Taking off his leathery costume allowing him to feel contact with the earth. Throwing away his eyes and his ears, as there no longer is anything he wishes to see and hear, he becomes a ghost of the desert, a disincarnated, ethereal shadow of the man, but this state of ec-stasy is precisely what allows a man to truly be, experiencing being beyond the boundaries of his skin, outside of the walls of the self, being the dune moved year by year by the winds, the moon glowing on the dark canvas of the night, or the drop of dew on a desiccated bone evaporating at the break of dawn.

When a voice resounds in the air near the city gate separating the world from the desert, calling for someone familiar with the great expanse where nothing is seen or heard, the only persons who answer are those who have yet to know this mysterious location, those who will have nothing to say of it. The desert dweller is an invisible gust of wind, an immaterial ray of light. His presence may be felt by the men of the world, but he himself does not heed their voice and pays no attention to their erratic gesticulations. In the vast, deserted plains facing the great walls, there are no questions, no reproach, and no pride. There is only one person, talking to himself in incomprehensible words, only one thing.⁵² If you hear a voice, you have yet to discover this place. If you try to discern right and wrong, clarity and obscurity, it means you have yet to let go of your burden. Every voice is your voice, and every sound calls upon you. You are alone, and there is nothing around you. The world is within the desert, and it is the desert. Your self is within the desert, and it is the desert, beautiful and empty, plain and mysterious, without limits nor end.

⁵²See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "When one thing or person manifests itself on the stage, there can be nothing else. Everything and every person is completely solitary."

Case 66 — Preaching Dharma From The Third Seat 一三座說法

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 25. This case is very similar to Book of Serenity, case 90, but here it is the third seat that is mentioned, while it is the second seat in the Book of Serenity.⁵³

【中】

yǎng shān hé shàng mèng jiàn wǎng mí lè suǒ ān dì sān zuò yǒu yī zūn
 仰山 和尚夢見往 彌勒 所安第三座，有一尊
 zhě bái chuí yún jīn rì dāng dì sān zuò shuō fǎ shān nǎi qǐ bái chuí
 者白槌¹ 云：「今日當第三座說法。」山 乃起 白槌
 yún mó hé yǎn fǎ lí sì jù jué bǎi fēi dì tīng dì tīng
 云：「摩訶衍法，² 離四句絕百非，³ 諦聽⁴ 諦聽。」

¹ 【白槌】[bái chuí]: In a Buddhist context, it designates the use of a white stick to mark the beginning or the end of a ritual.

² 【摩訶衍】S:【摩訶衍】[mó hé yǎn]: Abbreviation of 摩訶衍那 [mó hé yǎn na], transliteration of the Sanskrit “mahāyāna” (महायान) the “great vehicle [of Buddhism].”

³ 【四句百非】[sì jù bǎi fēi]: Yamada Kou’ un offers the following explanation concerning these “four phrases and hundred negations”: “the four phrases, seen in terms of Buddha-nature, for example, concern whether there is Buddha-nature or not. To say there is Buddha-nature is one phrase. To say there isn’ t is another. To say that there is and is not (i.e., that sometimes there is sometimes there isn’ t) is another phrase. And finally there may be neither having nor not having, which makes the fourth and final phrase. It is said that all arguments fall within these four categories and that is why they are known as the four phrases. However, each of these four phrases contains yet another four phrases. In the first phrase of having is contained that having, but also not-having, neither having nor not having, and both having and not-having. That gives us a total of sixteen. When we see this in terms of past, present and future, we must multiply by three, which gives us a total of forty-eight. In addition, we must think in terms of the forty-eight which have already occurred (past) and the forty-eight which have yet to occur (future) which then gives us a total of ninety-six. To this we now add the initial four phrases to obtain an even hundred. This is known as the ‘hundred negations.’” (From: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Hekiganroku* (*Blue Cliff Record*) [Unpublished manuscript])

⁴ 【諦聽】S:【諦听】[dì tīng]: “to listen carefully.”

【日】

こ きょうざんおしょう ゆめ みろく ところ ゆ だい
 舉す。仰山 和尚、夢に 彌勒の 所に 往いて 第
 さんざ あん み いっそんじゃ あ びやくつい
 三座に 安ぜらるるを 見る。一尊者有り、白槌し
 いわ こんにちだいさんざ せっぽう あた さん すなわ
 て 云く、「今日第三座の 説法に 當る。」山 乃ち

⁵³ See Book of Serenity, case 90: 舉。仰山夢往彌勒所。居第二座尊者白云。今日當第二座說法山乃起白椎云摩訶衍法 (此義文長) 離四句絕百非。謹白。

た 起びやくついって 白いわ 槌まして 云かく、「摩訶えん衍ほうの 法しは 四く句を
はな 離ひゃっぴれ 百ぜつ非たいちょうを 絶たいちょうす。諦み聽み、諦み聽み」というを 見る。

【E】

Yangshan dreamt that he went to Maitreya's abode, sitting in his third seat. A venerable one struck the gavel and said: "Today the one who sits in the third seat will preach the Dharma." Yangshan arose and, striking the gavel, said: "The Mahayana teaching goes beyond the Four Propositions and it transcends the Hundred Negations.¹ Listen carefully!"

¹ See note 3 of the Chinese text.

The teaching of a liar may surpass the one of a truthful man. A fleeting dream may offer us a clearer vision of the reality of the earth than years of life upon its face. Perhaps the best way to approach what slips away, and to perceive the unfathomable, is to go the other way, to flee what we are tempted to seek, and to embrace the illusion while we yearn for truth.

Spending a night in the land of dreams, appearing to leave our body weary of the toil of the daytime behind in our bed chamber, is a precious opportunity to peer beyond the frontier of our earthly horizon, to venture into a realm where our flesh cannot follow us, and where we are not bound by the laws of the skies that constrain so many aspects of our existence. In our dream, the theatre of our world, the vessel of our imagination and of our unconscious self, we can join together the past and future, experiencing the whole of time in our presence. We can feel without our senses, seemingly detached from our body, soaring like an eagle or swimming like a dolphin, radiating light more brightly than a star, or floating like a speck of dust caught in the spring breeze. Free from the boundaries tied to the earth and the skies, our body and our world, we may there envision our true nature, what we are when our individuality has been relinquished and when the hindrances on our way have all been cleared out. There, where nothing is impossible, where all things are illusions, may we finally be able to experience truth, and

ex-press it for all eyes to see, for all ears to hear. Sitting in front of the whole of the creation, on the peak of the great mountain whose foundation encompasses the entire earth, we then strike the gavel used to call for an assembly, with vigor and precision, stirring up a wave propagating throughout the entire world, shaking all its audience to its core, sweeping away the dust covering the whole surface of the earth. This sound echoes with the primordial wave that marked the great expansion of the skies themselves. It is a reply to it, honoring the experience of being, the joy of existence, and the realization of what the fundamental law of the skies is, something that can only be felt when the body and the self have been willingly left behind.

Listening carefully to the echo resonating throughout the skies, shaking the core of the earth, one should not need to hear anything else to know the fundamental law of the skies, the ground of all things. The dreamer nonetheless feels compelled to proclaim the inadequacy of the world, using the tools of the world itself. Wholeheartedly expulsing the air filling up his chest, letting his vocal cords be enthralled by this flow, his proclamation can be heard on the other side of the earth: “The fundamental law of the skies goes beyond all words and teachings. It cannot be seen with the eyes of the world!” If these words are understood, it means that one does not see what this law is. When the words will be heard as a chorus to the great sound, with all forming a single note echoing through the ages, without the slightest trace of meaning, a speck of understanding, then will the tune be heard. Then will the instrument, the heavens themselves, be seen and be heard, without player nor played, no seats and no one that would sit, no actor nor audience, but only being itself.

Case 67 —The Ox Passes The Window — 牛過窓櫺

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 38.

【中】

五祖曰：「譬如水牯牛¹ 過窓櫺，² 頭角四蹄都
guò liǎo yīn shén me wěi bā guò bù dé
過了，因甚麼尾巴過不得。」

¹ 【牯牛】[gǔ niú]: “a castrated ox.”

² 【窓櫺】[chuāng líng]: “a window’ s lattice.”

【日】

こ ご そ い わ た と す い こ ご ゆ う そ う れ い
 舉す。五祖曰く、「譬えば 水牯牛の 窓櫺を
 す ご と す か く し て い す す お わ
 過ぐるが 如き、頭角四蹄都べて 過ぎ 了るに、
 な に よ び は す え
 甚麼に 因ってか 尾巴過ぐることを 得ざる。」

【E】

Wuzu said: “For example, suppose an ox passes a latticed window. Its head, its horns, and its four hoofs all pass, but why can’ t the tail pass?”

Awakened by the chirping of the swallows joyfully flying around, we open up the drapes covering our window, and let a flood of light penetrate our chamber and our eyes, offering us a vision of the landscape surrounding our home. It may be a bucolic countryside, with meadows covered with wild flowers and tall grasses, or a brutal set of concrete towers with ant-like throngs of men walking around in the streets to edify further this monument to the glory of mankind, but what we behold is an assembly of things, seen through the lens of our eyes, the glass sheet of the window, with its lattice cutting further this vision into neat squares, concealing some of its elements. Our eyes do not directly grasp the world in front of us. We do not perceive it without mediation, but rather only construct an image of it, using the radiance of our star or the light emitted by fires kindled by men that bounces on this world, imparting this field of light with a pattern from which we infer the nature of our surroundings. Quite many men see this world, but fail to see their own seeing, and see that there are things that they do not see.

An ox suddenly begins to pass in front of the window of a man of the way, someone whose eyes are wide open, and who sees

through all things. The imposing body of the beast passes in front of him, but it never finishes to pass. Its tail passes through, again and again, but it never ends. It extends to the end of the world, and passes until the completion of time itself. When one sees the earth and the sky beyond things, their essence rather than their appearance, the whole rather than the thousands of parts cut out by the mind, then the line separating things is abolished and there is no head nor tail, no beast and no pasture. The scenery unfolded in front of his eyes is continuously moving, but there is nothing that begins nor ends, nothing to be seen and nothing that is concealed, only an indistinct, wondrous vision of an unadulterated truth.

Standing right next to the man of the way, a novice also watches the beast through the window. Its head and its four legs pass through, but strangely, its tail appears hidden by the lattice, and thus he does not see it, and knows not whether it passed or not, will pass or not, but he fails to fathom the role played by the lattice itself in this illusion. Too close to his eyes and too familiar, the lattice has become invisible to him, and what it veils remains unseen, without him seeing his own incapacity to see. He thus deludes himself.

We, those watching these two men while pondering the nature of their sight, are we nonetheless not standing upon a great trap, large enough for an ox to fall into? If we see the animal pass through, we fall into the trap. If we fail to see it pass through, we are caught by the snare. The tail is coiled tightly around our neck, threatening to strangle us and cause our death, relieving us of all our pains and delusions.⁵⁴ The greatest danger is nonetheless not in front of us, but rather behind our eyes. If one thinks a buffalo is something other than what it is, he is lost. Without thought, without reflection, simply letting the senses receive the seal of the earth, life, and the sky, as a single imprint applied in one instant, then will one see the window and himself through the eyes of the beast, through the point of view of the window's lattice, from the perspective of the grasses, from the eye of the sky, and all questions will find their answer.

⁵⁴See *Wumen's* verse on this case: "It passes through and falls into a pit. It turns back and is then destroyed. This tiny tail, how extraordinary it is!" Chinese original: 「過去墮坑塹回來却被壞者些尾巴子直是甚奇怪」, from: 《禪宗無門關》. CBETA (Case 38).

Part IV

The Summer of the World

When the wheat fields become a carpet of golden bristles covering the land, caressed by blazing gusts of air as the sky blinds those impudent enough to behold the radiant face of the sphere of fire generously feeding life with its brilliance, men water the cracked soil with their sweat while savoring the juicy fruits of their orchards, celebrating the flourishing of life, the overcoming of death.

Darkness are now rarely found in the land. The days are long, and the short nights are spent dreaming, without man paying any attention to them. His entire world is flooded with light, with every single thing exposed to the inquisitive gaze of its inhabitants, every detail clearly seen, and myriads of elements continuously catching their attention. Encircled by things, enwalled in this imposing citadel built by his kind, man nonetheless begins to think that the reach of his gaze represents the extent of all that is. So intricate and exquisitely crafted are the mosaics of things surrounding him from all parts that he forgets these are his own creations, the products of his mind and his hands.

Inebriated by the profusions of images found in his world, enthralled by its power, allowing man to create and represent, he builds it higher and climbs to new heights, without pondering his destination, the end of his relentless labor. He is nonetheless still blessed with luck, as no matter how high he climbs, there are men over there who have not let themselves be deceived by the revealing power of the summer brilliance, who see this gigantic edifice for what it is, a mere sign, an image veiling the luminous truth of the heavens, a rampart eclipsing the glorious sun so that its dwellers would not find themselves blinded by this truth, and would rather enjoy the wonder of sight, the beauty of the discerning of the myriad of things and the bliss of an act of creation. These kings of the world know its power and its dangers all too well. They honor this world and observe its innumerable pieces with a benevolent gaze, but contrary to most of those sleeping within its walls, they know upon what this world is built, and what lies beyond its borders. They thus skillfully make use of the flood of brilliance running down from the heavens into these angular streets, wielding this light to point out the minute cracks in the seemingly invulnerable ramparts forming the frame of their cherished citadel. The weaknesses of the world are revealed together with its strengths by the

summer sun, and when the eye of the uninitiated approaches these interstices, he is struck by the revelation of the artificial nature of his world. The images depicted by the mosaics now appear broken, and their deceitful nature suddenly becomes manifest.

Violently striking the pavement with his iron staff, the guide enlarges the cracks in the walls, letting the light shining beyond the walls shine through them, offering the spectator a glimpse at what may lie out there. This is when the truth of the world finally begins to be seen. Veiling the brilliance of the heavens, the walls allow one to be momentarily cured of the pernicious cecity affecting those who only know the radiant truth lying beyond them. When this shroud is blown away by the summer gusts, man then realizes that the blindness of the impudent observer of the sun is the purest vision of the truth of all the things of the world, the same that was experienced when contemplating the frozen landscapes of the winter. Everything was then covered in snow, and everything is now wrapped in absolute brilliance.

The eyes once again turned toward the brick walls, the paved streets, and the throngs of men hurriedly passing through them, the cecity then slowly fades away and the things of the world once again emerge in man's eyes. Every thing appears in its place, and yet, something has nonetheless irremediably been altered. He now sees the truth of the world around him, not only seeing the light reflected upon them but also the light that is at their heart, like a million images of a single sun. Thankful for this invaluable insight, the eyes are then closed, and a deep bow is conscientiously performed, while the discomfort of the summer heat is now but a distant memory and the heart rejoices without restraint.

Case 68 —The Dharma That Has Not Been Preached 一不為人說的法

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 28.

【中】

舉。南泉參百丈涅槃和尚。丈問：「從上
 zhū shèng huán yǒu bú wèi rén shuō dī fǎ ma quán yún yǒu zhàng
 諸聖，還有不為人說底法麼。」泉云：「有。」丈
 yún zuò me shēng shì bú wèi rén shuō dī fǎ quán yún bú shì xīn
 云：「作麼生是不為人說底法。」泉云：「不是心，
 bú shì fó bú shì wù zhàng yún shuō liǎo yě quán yún mǒu
 不是佛，不是物。」丈云：「說了也。」泉云：「某
 jiǎ zhī rěn me hé shàng zuò me shēng zhàng yún wǒ yòu bú shì dà shàn
 甲只恁麼，和尚作麼生。」丈云：「我又不是大善
 zhī shí zhēng zhī yǒu shuō bù shuō quán yún mǒu jiǎ bú huì zhàng
 知識，爭知有說不說。」泉云：「某甲不會。」丈
 yún wǒ tài shā wèi ěr shuō liǎo yě
 云：「我太殺¹ 為爾說了也。」

¹ 【太殺】[tài shā]: “too explicitly” / “too much.” The Japanese version uses the character 煞 instead, whose meaning is similar here. The same use can be seen in case 100.

【日】

舉す。南泉、百丈の涅槃和尚に參ず。丈問う、
 しょうじょう しょうせい は ひと ため と ところ
 「從上の諸聖、還た人の爲に説かざる底の
 ほう せんいわ あ じょういわ さもさん
 法ありや。」泉云く、「有り。」丈云く、「作麼生か
 こ ひと ため と ところ ほう せんいわ ふ
 是れ人の爲に説かざる底の法。」泉云く、「不
 ぜしん ふ ぜぶつ ふ ぜもつ じょういわ と おわ
 是心、不是佛、不是物。」丈云く、「説き了れり。」
 せんいわ それがし た いんも おしょう さもさん
 泉云く、「某甲は只だ恁麼、和尚は作麼生。」
 じょういわ わ ま こ だいぜん ちしき
 丈云く、「我れ又た是れ大善知識にあらず、
 いかで と と あ し
 争か説くと説かざると有ることを知らん。」
 せんいわ それがし え じょういわ わ はなは
 泉云く、「某甲會せず。」丈云く、「我れ太煞だ
 なんじ ため と おわ
 爾が爲に説き了れり。」

【E】

Nanquan went to visit Master Baizhang Niepan. Baizhang asked: “Is there any Dharma that has not been preached to men by the holy ones of the past?” Nanquan said: “There is.” Baizhang asked: “What is this Dharma that has never been preached to men?” Nanquan said: “It is not the mind, not a Buddha, not a thing.” Baizhang said: “It has already been said.” Nanquan said: “For this fellow here, it is only like that. How about the Master?” Baizhang said: “I am not a man endowed with great knowledge. How would I know whether it has already been said or not?” Nanquan said: “This fellow here does not understand.” Baizhang said: “I have already explained it too much for you!”

Playing with words as with swords, the men of experience point out with their tongue the weaknesses of the foundation of man's world, the absurdity of men's musings. The fundamental law of nature, the ground of being, is precisely what cannot be adequately represented within the world, with words and concepts. It is because the living cannot perceive the unadulterated truth of being that their mind was forced to devise ways of transforming this thing, this law, into a myriad of things that can be grasped by their senses and their reason.

One may then ask whether there is one thing, one fundamental law that has yet to be preached to men. The answer would come swiftly, thrown into the air without an instant of hesitation, a resounding yes! What has yet to be preached is not the mind. It is not to be found in the form of words and sentences, in speech, or scriptures. It is neither a person nor an idea. The world cannot contain it. It is therefore nowhere to be found within it, and its dwellers are thus condemned to remain ignorant of its existence.

What has yet to be preached is not the awakened one nor our true nature. It transcends the separation between the common and the holy, the deluded and the enlightened. These distinctions belong to man's world, and “it” stubbornly resists capture by the world.

What has yet to be preached is not a thing. It is not bounded, not a cut-out piece of the world that can be grasped by the mind and manipulated. It cannot be examined and judged. Any attempt at comprehending it is sure to fail.

The present discourse explaining what has yet to be preached nonetheless does not bring its audience closer to it, and it in itself does not shed light upon it. One may read a thousand volumes concerning the smell of a lily, but all this knowledge is immediately superseded by the briefest experience of smelling the sweet fragrance of this flower. What is to be learned within the world is that the world is an arbitrary construction made by men, filled with illusions, but that there is truth beyond its walls, raw and incomprehensible, which can nonetheless be experienced, without being defined and transformed into a thing of the world. Is there any fundamental law of nature or thing that has yet to be preached to men? An answer would be that there is not a single fundamental law or thing that has already been preached to men! The preaching they heard is not the truth of being but rather words disguised as this truth. Not a single thing is known to us, without the mask of falsehood overlaid by our world upon it. When all forms of preaching will have been forgotten, and all things will have been unlearned, then it will appear, and then our mouths will remain silent, our ears and our eyes will be wide open, our arms and palms extended, and only “it” will remain, like the summer sun bountifully illuminating the whole land, blinding the living with perfect clarity, offering them vivifying warmth causing them to leave behind their lair, their clothes, all the things burdening them, as they will no longer need anything else.

Case 69 —Zhizang’ s Head Is White, Hai’ s Head Is Black —藏頭白海頭黑

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 73. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 6.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn mǎ dà shī lí sì jù jué bǎi fēi¹ qīng shī
舉。僧問 馬 大師：「『離四句，絕百非¹』，請師
zhí zhī mǒu jiǎ xī lái yì mǎ shī yún wǒ jīn rì láo juàn bù néng
直指某甲西來意。」 馬 師云：「我今日勞倦，不能

wèi rǔ shuō wèn qǔ zhì zàng qù sēng wèn zhì zàng zàng yún hé
 為汝說，問取智藏去。」僧問智藏，藏云：「何
 bú wèn hé shàng sēng yún hé shàng jiào lái wèn zàng yún wǒ
 不問和尚。」僧云：「和尚教來問。」藏云：「我
 jīn rì tóu tòng bù néng wèi rǔ shuō wèn qǔ hǎi xiōng qù sēng wèn hǎi
 今日頭痛，不能為汝說。問取海兄去。」僧問海
 xiōng hǎi yún wǒ dào zhè lǐ què bù huì sēng jǔ sì mǎ dà shī
 兄。海云：「我到這裏却不會。」僧舉似馬大師，
 mǎ shī yún zàng tóu bái hǎi tóu hēi
 馬師云：「藏頭白，海頭黑。」

1 【離四句，絕百非】[lí sì jù , jué bǎi fēi]: See the note for the 66th case (The Gateless Barrier case 25 / The Book of Serenity case 6).

【日】

こ そう ば だいし と し く はな ひゃっぴ
 舉す。僧、馬大師に 問う、「四句を 離れ 百非を
 ぜつ こ し それがし せいらい い じきし ば
 絶して、請う 師、某甲に 西來意を 直指せよ。」馬
 し いわ われこんにち つかれ なんじ ため と
 師云く、「我今日、勞倦たり。汝が 爲に 説くこと
 あた ち ぞう とい と ゆ そう ち ぞう と
 能わす。智藏に 問取いに 去け。」僧、智藏に 問う。
 ぞういわ なん おしょう と そういわ おしょう
 藏云く、「何ぞ 和尚に 問わざる。」僧云く、「和尚、
 き と ぞういわ われこんにち ずつう
 來たり 問わしむ。」藏云く、「我今日、頭痛す。
 なんじ ため と あた かいひん と
 汝が 爲に 説くこと 能わす。海兄に 問取いに
 ゆ そう かいひん と かいいわ わ ここ
 去け。」僧、海兄に 問う。海云く、「我れ 這裏に
 いた かけ え そう ば だいし こじ
 到って 却って 會せず。」僧、馬大師に 舉似す。
 ば し いわ ぞうとう しろ かいとう くら
 馬師云く、「藏頭は 白く、海頭は 黒し。」

【E】

A monk asked Great Master Ma: “‘Going beyond the four propositions and transcending the hundred negations,’¹ please, master, explain to me plainly the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming from the West.” Master Ma said: “I am tired today; I can’t explain it to you. Go and ask Zhizang.” The monk asked Zhizang about it. Zhizang said: “Why don’t you ask the master?” The monk said: “The master told

me to ask you.” Zhizang said: “I have a headache today; I can’t explain it to you. Go and ask Brother Hai.” The monk asked Brother Hai about it. Hai said: “I lived thus far and still I don’t understand its meaning.” The monk mentioned this to Great Master Ma. The Great Master said: “Zhizang’s head is white, Hai’s head is black.”

¹ “The four propositions and transcending the hundred negations”: See the note for case 66 (Gateless Barrier case 25 / Book of Serenity case 6).

The young is eager for understanding, and enthusiastically delving into mountains of scrolls, swimming through rivers of letters, he should soon realize that what he seeks will not be found there. The words of the philosophers will not quench his thirst for clarity, and the preaching of the holy ones will not satiate his hunger for meaningfulness, but if he looks for the sun inside the walls of a library, he is doomed to waste his efforts. A revelation will only come when he flees the books and throws away the parchments, passing through the threshold of his world to venture into the open country, where the extent of the sky can be contemplated, rather than merely read about.

The simple nonetheless continues to ask for explanations about what goes beyond words and letters. Why did the pathfinders clear out the path in front of them, does he ask? What is the meaning of this? The masters have no explanation, as there is nothing to explain. They can only tell him to go on his way, to extensively roam the earth and explore the world, encountering men who have widely different walks of life, and have taken various sinuous paths to arrive where they are now. The journey itself is the destination. The road is a better teacher than the man standing at the end of the path, who will simply tell him: “I do not have the answer you seek.” What is the meaning of the pathfinder’s clearing out of the path? To this, one should perhaps answer: Is there anything that is not the meaning of the pathfinder’s clearing out of the path?⁵⁵ The answer is right in front of him at all times, at every single step of the great journey of life. There is only one meaning,

⁵⁵ See: Yamada, Kou’un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript], quoting Yasutani Haku’un: “Where is there anything which is not the meaning of the patriarch’s coming from the West?” Original Japanese:

encompassing the whole of the earth and the skies. If you look for it, it vanishes. If you abandon your quest to understand, then the light will appear in your eyes. Then, the day a newcomer to the way will ask you for the great meaning, you will tell him to ask another, sending him on a fool's errand, in the hope that his foolishness may become apparent to him on the way. Sent to the four corners of the earth, without an answer, he may realize the futility of his enterprise. He is like a fish begging for water from other fish in the ocean, complaining that it dies of thirst.

When the fool is getting used to receiving the same welcoming at each station of his pilgrimage in search for meaning, his host then recognizes the opportune time to strike, to break this debilitating lethargy that begins to take root in his heart, convincing him that they are just making a fool of him. Then comes an answer: "I lived thus far and still I don't understand its meaning." The brutal honesty offers a stark contrast with the behavior of his predecessors, who simply sent the pilgrim to his next destination. The absence of understanding nonetheless does not imply an absence of meaning. To understand is to grasp with one's reason, to force something into the mold of the world, expressing it with words and concepts. The aim is not to understand, but to incarnate, to follow the path cleared out in front of us and bring others to it. One is not destined to understand the pathfinder's journey, but to become the pathfinder himself, and to perform the same journey, going from east to west, from west to east, until one ceases to know where the sun rises and sets, ceases to perceive the contrast between the white brilliance of the day and black darkness of the night, living an existence transcending these oppositions, seeing their seamless unity, understanding nothing, but seeing no-thing, that is, everything.

Case 70 — Being Despised By Men 一若為人輕賤

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 97. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 58.

【中】

「西来意ならざるものがどこにあるかい。」From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript]

舉。《金剛經》云：「若為人輕賤，是人先世罪
 業，應墮惡道，¹ 以今世人輕賤故，先世罪業，則
 為消滅。」

¹ 【惡道】S: 【惡道】[è dào]: Designates three realms: the one of “hell” (地獄), the one of the “hungry ghosts” (餓鬼), and the one of “animals” (畜生).

【日】

舉す。『金剛經』に云く、「若し 人に 輕賤めら
 れなば、是の 人は 先世の 罪業ありて、應に 惡
 道に 墮すべきを、今世の 人の 輕賤むるを 以て
 の 故に、先世の 罪業は、則ち 爲に 消滅す。」

【E】

The Diamond Sutra says: “If one is despised by other men, it is because of the karma originated from the sins that one has committed while in a past world. If one falls into hell as a result of this karma originating from the sins that one has committed while living in a past world, the fact that one is despised by the men living in the present world will cause the extinction of this karma originating from one’s sins.”

The commoner strives for holiness, and the holy one battles to reach everydayness. When presented with a piece of scripture, the commoner of the world will plunge into the letters, seeing them as a holy truth, a precious gift that should be appropriated through the deciphering of its meaning and by making it part of his life. Ignorant of the vicissitudes of this piece of language that has been written down when vastly different empires ruled over the earth and that has seen them rise and fall before reaching his hand now, he nonetheless puts his trust in it. Product of a long tradition, accepted by a community as treasures shedding light on

the path to be taken, these words are heartily welcomed by the followers, with few of them pondering whether they are preserved for their truth, or seen as true because they were preserved. A holy one, when presented with a piece of scripture, will not even extend his hand to take it, already knowing the truth it expresses and not wanting to soil his hands with the falsehood it ineluctably carries with it, as all things of the world, which are muddied by its nature. A man of the way is nonetheless neither common nor holy. He does not abide in the sanctuary, nor dwells in the profane land. He carries the piece of scripture with him, but he sees beyond letters and words. He sees through the black ink and the white paper and beholds the whole of the earth in this fragment offered to him by the world. The fundamental truth is indeed to be found on this sheet of paper, but not in the form of ideas, but rather as a tangible manifestation of the earth itself, enfolded by the sky, with the summer sun consuming this parchment, imparting to it its golden tint, erasing with the passing of the years the sooty liquid coating it, causing this part of the world to crumble under the assault of the star. To read and understand the words inscribed upon this sheet of paper is to deviate from the path, but to fail to perceive the truth of this scripture is akin to opposing it.⁵⁶

The words of the scriptures are meant to guide the dwellers of the world, those bogged down in the mire of delusions, exhausting their strengths to avoid what they see as bad conduct. It teaches them the link between cause and consequence, which form a gigantic chain extending from the dawn of time until its dusk, with their life being only a minuscule part of it. They suffer the consequences of causes set into motion long before they were thrown onto the earth and first saw the light of the heavens, and their actions will echo throughout the future, affecting living beings that have yet to be born. Reassured by the comforting words of tradition, the pious man of the world take refuge in them, and these words accompany him throughout the hardships of his existence. Despised by the worldly for his disinterest in the affairs of the world, he takes pride in virtuous conduct and good merits. Such a life, al-

⁵⁶See Wansong's preface to this case: "To understand the meaning by basing oneself upon the scriptures is to be an enemy of the Buddhas of the three worlds; To deviate from the scriptures by a single word is to stray as much as if one spoke the words of demons." Chinese original: 「依經解義。三世佛冤。離經一字。返同魔說。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 58).

beit full of dignity, nonetheless misses the mark and remains an existence of slavery to the world rather than one in harmony with the way of the sky. The latter is indeed characterized by a release of the world, and a release by the world, with the man living such an existence roaming free on the earth, naked, stripped of all his possessions, even the ideas that once encumbered his mind. Never abiding anywhere, his hands empty and his mind as clear as the summer sky, he lives where there is no past, no present, and no future. There, there is no notion of cause and consequence, sin and virtue, pride or contempt. He is still caught in the whirlwind embraced by the skies, but it is perceived in its totality, through time and space, one speck of dust gathering infinity and eternity into one sole thing, which itself soon vanishes into no-thing-ness.⁵⁷

Case 71 —Zhaozhou Investigate The Old Lady —趙州勘婆

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 31. A less complete version of this case can be found in the Book of Serenity, case 10.⁵⁸

【中】

zhào zhōu yīn sēng wèn pó zǐ tái shān lù xiàng shén chù qù pó
趙州因僧問婆子：「臺山¹ 路向甚處去。」婆
yún mò zhí qù sēng cái xíng sān wǔ bù pó yún hǎo gè shī
云：「驀直² 去。」僧纔行三五步，婆云：「好箇師
sēng yòu rèn me qù hòu yǒu sēng jǔ sì zhōu zhōu yún dài wǒ
僧，又恁麼去。」後有僧舉似州，州云：「待我
qù yǔ ěr kǎn guò zhè pó zǐ míng rì biàn qù yì rú shì wèn pó yì
去與爾勘過這婆子。」明日便去，亦如是問，婆亦
rú shì dá zhōu guī wèi zhòng yuē tái shān pó zǐ wǒ yǔ ěr kǎn pò
如是答，州歸謂眾曰：「臺山婆子，我與爾勘破
liǎo yě
了也。」

¹ 【臺山】[tái shān]: Mount Tai, a famous location for pilgrimages, as it was said that visits to its temple gave wisdom to the pilgrims.

² 【驀直】S: 【驀直】[mò zhí]: “straight ahead.”

【日】

⁵⁷ See: 神保如天。《從容錄通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p397 (Case 58).

⁵⁸ See Book of Serenity, case 10: 舉。臺山路上有一婆子凡有僧問。臺山路向什麼處去婆云。驀直去僧纔行婆云。好箇阿師又恁麼去也僧舉似趙州州云。待。與勘過州亦如前問至來日上堂云。我為汝勘破婆子了也。

こ じょうしゅう ちな そう ば す と たいざん
 舉す。趙州、因みに 僧、婆子に 問う、「台山の
 みち いず ところ むか さ ば いわ まくじき
 路、甚れの 處に 向ってか 去る。」婆云く、「驀直に
 さ そうわず ゆ さん ご ぼ ば いわ こう
 し 去れ。」僧纔かに 行くこと 三五歩。婆云く、「好
 こ しそう ま いんも さ のち そう あ
 箇の 師僧、又た 恁麼にし 去る。」後に 僧有り
 しゅう こじ しゅういわ われ さ なんじ ため
 て 州に 舉似す。州云く、「我去って 爾が 與に
 こ ば す かん か ま みょうにち すなわ さ
 這の 婆子を 勘過するを 待て。」明日 便ち 去っ
 ま かく ごと と ば ま かく ごと
 て 亦た 是の 如く 問う、婆も 亦た 是の 如く
 こた しゅうかえ しゅ い いわ たいざん ば
 答う。州 歸って 衆に 謂って 曰く、「台山の 婆
 す われ なんじ ため かんば おわ
 子、吾、爾が 與に 勘破し 了れり。」

【E】

[As recounted by] Zhaozhou, a monk on a pilgrimage
 asked an old woman: "Which way is the road to Taishan?"
¹ The old woman said: "Go straight ahead." As the monk
 continued a few steps, she said: "Another one of these great
 monks, going that way again." A monk reported this to Zhaozhou,
 and Zhaozhou said: "Wait until I go and investigate this old
 woman." He departed the next day, asked the same question,
 and the old woman gave the same answer. Zhaozhou then
 told his congregation: "I have investigated that old woman."

¹ "Taishan": See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The bright ones are keen on pointing out the futility of the
 pilgrim's long journey in search for the holy, as they know that
 what they are seeking is what they already possess, and that they
 set themselves on a quest to find what has always been all around
 them. What is bright can nonetheless always be outshined by an-
 other source of light. The most imposing of the stars are all thrown
 into darkness by the brilliance of the sun, which is close, but even
 our glorious star knows to dim its brightness, to let others shine

and be seen. Where should the pilgrim go? Straight ahead! A perfect answer, no matter what is his destination. The very body of most animals has indeed been patiently shaped by eons of evolution, giving it an orientation, breaking the marvelous symmetry of the sphere of the cell, origin and building block of life, to establish an up and a down, a front and a back. Man cannot soar in the sky or swim into the deep on his own, and thus he is condemned to always simply go forward, where his eyes and his feet lead him. For the entirety of his life, he goes forward, always reaching his destination, but many will still feel the need for more direction, for guidance, being reassured by a benevolent soul standing on the path.

The good-hearted guide may point the way with his walking staff, but he may also strike him with the same hand, pointing out the futility of his journey, and his lack of clarity concerning the course of his own life. The commoner is easily disappointed by holy men, and he feels jubilation and pride in surpassing them in their understanding of holy matters, despite his condition, a life spent toiling for his daily sustenance rather than enjoying the possibility of engaging in spiritual practice. The way is nonetheless sweet as honey and simple as a babe. Bitterness and cunning run contrary to it, and show a lack of vision of the nature of life, an attachment to the contrast between “you” and “I.” The novice is naturally touched in his heart by the apparent acrimony of the guide, deriding him for his pilgrimage. Arriving at his destination, he feels compelled to ask if he has strayed from his path.

It is easy for the newcomer to be troubled, but the man of experience is like a massive boulder in a torrent of water, untroubled by the agitation around him, letting himself be eroded and carved by it. His mouth remains shut. He gives no answer. Hearing about this guide standing on the road, he does not believe in words and sets out on a weeks-long journey to see this person with his own eyes. Asking where is his intended destination, he obtains the same answer: straight ahead! And he is likewise sent off with the same bitterness and pride as the pilgrim. Meeting the latter, he simply acknowledges that he had the same experience as him. The pilgrim is now the one who is disappointed with the answer of the holy man, an answer which is a mere silence. He made such a long journey, just to hear the same words that he reported to his

host. What a waste of time!

Silence nonetheless may speak more clearly than the most eloquent words. By offering him a disappointing answer, the host snatches the staff in his hands and pokes him with it.⁵⁹ Why do you need an answer? The answer you seek is within this silence. It is this silence, one that silences all questions and answers, and shatters the barrier between the holy and the profane.⁶⁰ To spend weeks walking just to hear what one has already heard before, to see something that can be seen anywhere, this is precisely what the pilgrim has done by coming to the holy place. The host, without a word, simply showed him what his journey represents. The destination is not where the answer is found, and now the pilgrim finally hears what the silence of the old man contains. His journey was not vain, because he now sees the holiness of his home and of every part of the earth. He clearly sees the way to go, always straight ahead, and wholeheartedly gives thanks for the priceless guidance he received.

Case 72 — Shoushan' s Short Staff 一首山竹篴

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 43.

【中】

首山 和尚拈竹篴¹ 示眾云：「汝等諸人，若喚
zuò zhú bì zé chù bú huàn zuò zhú bì zé bèi rǔ zhū rén qiě dào
 作竹篴則觸，² 不喚作竹篴則背，³ 汝諸人且道：
huàn zuò shén me
 喚作甚麼。」

¹ 【竹篴】[zhú bì]: “a bamboo comb.”

² 【觸】S: 【觸】[chù]: Literally “[the sense of] touch.” One of the “six dusts” (六

⁵⁹ See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klause der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p54: “Zhao-zhou packt sich den Mönch, drückt ihm fast die Kehle zu, und lässt ihn los, stößt ihn von sich weg; tötet ihn, gibt seinen Erwartungen den Todesstoß und stößt ihn zugleich ins Leben hinein und hinaus.”

⁶⁰ See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. : “Se puede decir que hay dos clases de silencio: el que niega la palabra y el que lo afirma todo, incluida la palabra. El primero es el extremo opuesto de la contradicción palabra-silencio. El segundo es la resolución de esta contradicción.”

塵), corresponding to the “six roots” (六根) or six sensory “organs” of the Buddhist tradition (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind). It here designates the fact of being caught in the mire of worldly illusions, as the result of an attachment to the flow of the senses.

³ 【背】[bēi]: “to turn one’s back.” It here means to turn one’s back on the tangible reality of earthly things.

【日】

こ しゅざんおしょう しっぺい ねん しゅ しめ
 擧す。首山和尚、竹篋を 拈じて 衆に 示して
 いわ なんじらしょにん も よ しっぺい な
 云く、「汝等諸人、若し 喚んで 竹篋と 作さば
 すなわ ふ よ しっぺい な すなわ そむ
 則ち 觸る、喚んで 竹篋と 作さざれば 則ち 背く。
 なんじしょにん しば い よ なん な
 汝 諸人、且らく 道え、喚んで 甚麼とか 作さん。」

【E】

Shoushan held his short bamboo staff, showing it to the congregation, and said: “All of you! If you call this a short bamboo staff, you are caught [in the mire of worldly illusions]. If you do not call it a short bamboo staff, you turn your back [on its tangible, earthly nature]. Now, all of you, tell me: what would you call it?”

The mind violently rends the seamless celestial tapestry, the heavenly vault, into ten thousand pieces, in order to edify a world made of individual things. Contrary to the whole of the earth and the skies, these pieces of fabric of the universe can be seized and comprehended, stacked and transformed. Neat labels are stuck upon them, in the form of names and characteristics, and men can thereby evoke their presence by a mere mention of these words, considerably increasing the range of their power over things. Power over the world nonetheless does not equate to power over the earth and the skies, but man is easily deceived, and often fails to differentiate the sign from what it represents, and he mistakes the representations of the world for the tangibility of the earth.

If one holds a short bamboo staff in his hands, showing it to his fellows asking what it is, what shall a truthful answer be?

If they call it a short bamboo staff, this implies that they are incapable of seeing its true nature, as they reduce this seamless part of the earth to a thing, with clear but arbitrary boundaries. A few qualities of this object are equally arbitrarily selected out of countless possible others, all describing a facet of this thing. It is called a “staff” because of its shape and function, but it could just as well be called a “stick,” a “lever,” or a “wand.” It is called a “bamboo staff,” highlighting the origin of the material of which it is made of, but this designation could have been more precise, mentioning a particular species of bamboo used for its fabrication, or it may simply have been called a “corpse of a plant.” To use a name, to employ the tools of the world, is to caricature the truth of nature, to offer a simplified vision of it, one that can be understood by man’s simple mind. To say that it *is* a bamboo staff, that it is short or long, precious or cheap, beautiful or ugly, if one is convinced to thereby describe its truth, is to be caught in the mire of the delusions of the world, to play with toys, pretending to master the real thing. The danger here does not lie in the use of names and language, but rather in the blindness to the nature of language itself, in the fact that one may easily mistake the things of the world for the earth and the skies themselves.

Without the incomparable power of the mind to cut out the fabric of nature into things, man would be the prey and servant of all animals. What elevates man above them is his unique ability to manipulate these things with language, bestowing them names, to evoke and invoke their presence with a turn of the tongue or the stroke of a pen. Once he recognizes the imprecision and falsehood of calling it a “short bamboo staff,” he may decide to embrace the lie, the absurdity of the world, and call it a “long rose,” a “glass finger,” or a “bronze hair.” This would nonetheless be to turn back on the earthly nature of this object, to deny the fact that the world indeed partially succeeds in grasping certain properties of the earth, the tangible reality of the objects and materials that surround us. Arbitrariness is at the heart of the world and its names, but this does not mean that its representations are not grounded in the earth. The foundation of man’s world rests upon the earth, what can be felt with the senses, with few ambiguities or room for interpretation. If our world says that $1+1=2$, it is because we can see with our own eyes and verify with the touch of our hands that to be given one thing twice leaves you with two things,

and because these signs are conventionally used to designate such a sensory experience. Truth and falsehood, arbitrariness and factuality, are deeply intertwined in our world, and the remarkable power of this realm certainly resides in this ambiguity. The mind's formidable plasticity nonetheless allows us to employ the tools of the world while keeping their limitations in sight, standing on the edge between earth and world, incomprehensible truth and understandable illusion, rejecting neither, abiding nowhere, joining every-thing and no-thing.

If the man keeps silent, and refrains from observing it with the eye of the world, as a thing, what will he see? He will see nothing, no-thing, only the entirety of the skies, the unadulterated and unmediated truth of nature. This vision of truth nonetheless leaves him powerless, and he can do nothing with it. He cannot share it with his brethren, nor can he engrave it in his memory. If he calls it a "short bamboo staff," he accomplishes nothing that any other man could do and simply states the obvious. One who casually walks on the razor-sharp edge between earth and world, language and silence, truth and illusion, will neither talk nor keep silent. He will speak with his flesh, and silence the babbling of his brethren, swiftly raising his arm, vigorously striking each one of them, showing them what he holds in his hand, offering them unmediated contact with it, giving them a direct experience of its nature, in their very flesh, and they thereby find themselves touched by truth.

Case 73 —Luopu's Obedience —洛浦伏膺

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 35.

【中】

舉。洛浦參夾山，不禮拜當面而立。山云：「鷄
棲¹ 鳳巢，非其同類，出去。」浦云：「自遠趨風，
² 乞師一接。」山云：「目前無閤梨，³ 此間⁴ 無
老僧。」浦便喝。⁵ 山云：「住住且莫草草忽忽。
雲月是同，溪⁶ 山各異。截斷天下人舌頭。即不無

zhēng jiào wú shé rén jiě yǔ

爭教無舌人解語。】⁷ 浦 無語，山 便打。浦 從
 cǐ fú yīng
 此伏膺。⁸

¹ 【棲】S:【栖】[qī]: “to perch.”

² 【趨風】[qū fēng]: “to hurry, as if carried by the winds.”

³ 【闍梨】S:【闍梨】[shé lí]: “a Buddhist teacher.” A transliteration of the Sanskrit word आचार्य [ācārya]. It may also be written: 闍黎.

⁴ 【此間】S:【此間】[cǐ jiān]: “here” / “this place.”

⁵ 【喝】[hè]: This word here represents the sound of a shout. The meaning of such shout in the context of public cases is largely open to interpretation, and left to the reader to interpret, as it often represents a key point of the public cases in which it appears. The character also usually means “to drink,” but the second meaning, linked to the sound of a shout, is also well known. In English Zen texts, it is often known as a “Kaatz,” the Japanese pronunciation of the same character, which is probably closer to the original pronunciation of this word in the Chinese language of the time than the current Mandarin pronunciation ([hè]), as shown by the reconstruction of the Old Chinese pronunciation of this word by the Chinese linguist Zhengzhang Shangfang (郑张尚芳): [/*qha:d/] (See: 郑张尚芳。《上古音系》。上海: 上海教育出版社。2013. p350). For the English translation, the Mandarin pronunciation has nonetheless been followed, for reasons of coherence, as all proper names are transliterated from modern Mandarin Chinese. The founder of the Linji school of Zen, Línjì Yìxuán (臨濟義玄), often used such shouts toward his disciples.

⁶ 【溪】[xī]: “a small mountain stream.”

⁷ 【解語】S:【解語】[jiě yǔ]: “to be able to speak.”

⁸ 【伏膺】[fú yīng]: “to obey and serve someone with admiration.”

【日】

こ らくうら かっさん さん らいはい めん
 舉す。洛浦、夾山に 參ず、禮拜せずして 面に
 むか た さんいわ にわとり ほうそう す そ
 向って 立つ。山云く、「鶏 鳳巢に 棲む 其の
 どうるい あら い さ ほういわ とお ふう
 同類に 非ず、出で 去れ。」浦云く、「遠きより 風に
 はし こ し いっせつ さんいわ もくぜん しゃり
 趨る、乞う 師一接。」山云く、「目前に 闍梨なく
 こ こ ろうそう ほう すなわ かつ さんいわ やみ
 此間に 老僧なし。」浦、 便ち 喝す。山云く、「住ね
 やみ しば そうそうそうそう なか うんつき こ
 住ね 且らく 草草忽忽なること 莫れ。雲月是れ
 おなじ けいざん おのおのこと てんか にん ぜっとう せつだん
 同く 溪山 各 異なり。天下人の 舌頭を 截斷す
 すなわ な あら いか む ぜつじん
 ることは 即ち 無きに 非ず。争でか 無舌人を
 げご ほう む ご さん すなわ う
 して 解語せしめん。」浦、無語。山、 便ち 打つ。
 ほう こ ふくよう
 浦此れより 伏膺す。

【E】

Luopu came to visit Jiashan and, without bowing, stood face-to-face with him. Jiashan said: "A chicken perches in a phoenix' s nest. This one is not of the same sort. Go away!" Luopu said: "I have come from far away, riding on the winds. I beg you, Master, offer me some guidance." Jiashan said: "Before my eyes, there is no young master, and here, there is no old monk." Luopu shouted: "Khe!" ¹ Jiashan said: "Stop it, stop it. Don' t be so careless and hasty. The clouds and the moon are the same; The brooks in the valleys and the mountains are different from one another. One may cut off the tongues of the men living under the sky, but how would one make a tongueless man speak?" Luopu remained speechless, and Jiashan then hit him. From this moment on, Luopu started to obey Jiashan and to look up to him.

¹ "Khe" : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

When we pay a visit to a man enjoying an elevated position in the world, we feel the pressure to demonstrate our respect for the rules of this world, before we even open our mouths. We bow as a mark of deference or offer a sign honoring the other. One who sees the falsehood of the world, a man without position, does not consider others in terms of levels of inferiority or superiority, and thus may dispense with politeness, adopting the rudeness of the barbarian, the desert dweller, the one living far from civilization. In the city, there are the king and the slaves, the rich and the poor, the learned and the fool, but outside of these walls, where the mind is as clear as the azure sky and reason does not cut off the seamless heavenly vault into a myriad of pieces, the chicken cannot be distinguished from the phoenix, and the master appears no different as the novice.

The man of the desert nonetheless knows to follow the usage of the city when he ventures into it. To reside beyond the walls of the world does not imply that one despises the order established within it. The newcomer is often too zealous, hastily turning his back upon his past, too eager to welcome his future, impatient as he witnesses the unhurried turning of the heavenly wheels. He comes with the winds, guided by the sky itself, asking for things

from someone who has no-thing to offer, showing his naivete. One who lets himself be guided by the winds will nonetheless always be led where he needs to be, and thus he is welcomed with open arms, and with words of illumination. He is introduced to the great desert: "Before my eyes, there is no young master, and here, there is no old monk." In the place where there is no thing, its dwellers have no position. There are no palaces and wooden shacks, no lords nor servants, not even life and death! All live eternally there, and all are already dead, reclaimed by the insatiable ground. To describe it with words is nonetheless only to point out the way to go, rather than the destination he is meant to reach.

Venturing hastily into the great wasteland is unwise. It first demands maturity and clarity of mind. Thinking that he has exhausted the world and all words, the novice offers a deafening shout, intending to demonstrate that he also no longer needs the world, that he is now a man of the desert, having let go of all his earthly and worldly possessions. Laden with impatience, burdened with envy, the newcomer fails to see the yoke he attempts to carry beyond the walls of the world. Seeing that the clouds and the moon are a mere image, things above the earth that effortlessly pass through the sky each night, he genuinely believes that he can climb the mountains of the earth as easily as he goes down a valley by letting himself be carried by the flow of a river. Mastery over the world is different than control over the earth. Ideas and states of mind may be changed swiftly, with only the use of the will, but all the willpower of the world will not move mountains or carve out valleys. To live in the desert, one must first clearly see the nature of the world. To cease to rely on words, one must first learn to listen to what the tongueless man has to say. What he tells with silence encompasses more than all the volumes of all the libraries of the great city. What he has to say is only one thing, which is everything and no-thing, and he continuously tells everyone about it, every single instant of his existence, with all his body, with all his being, being the perfect incarnation of this thing, a bright sun illuminating the desert, a revelation of absolute limpidity, waving his arms and his hands, shaking up the newcomers, pulling them out to the desert, bringing them in contact with the earth and the sky, showing them their own faces in the face of the midnight moon. They will finally let go of their burden, let go of themselves and of their world, to rejoice in the vastness of the place where

there is only no-thing.

Case 74 —Yantou' s “Last Word” —巖頭末后句

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 51.

【中】

jǔ xuě fēng zhù ān shí yǒu liǎng sēng lái lǐ bài fēng jiàn lái
 舉。雪峯住庵時，有兩僧來禮拜。峯見來，
 yǐ shǒu tuō ān mén fàng shēn chū yún shì shén me sēng yì yún shì
 以手托庵門，¹ 放身出云：「是什麼。」僧亦云：「是
 shén me fēng dī tóu guī ān sēng hòu dào yán tóu tóu wèn shén
 什麼。」峯低頭² 歸庵。僧後到巖頭，頭問：「什
 me chù lái sēng yún líng nán lái tóu yún céng dào xuě fēng
 麼處來。」僧云：「嶺南來。」頭云：「曾到雪峯
 ma sēng yún céng dào tóu yún yǒu hé yán jù sēng jǔ qián
 麼。」僧云：「曾到。」頭云：「有何言句。」僧舉前
 huà tóu yún tā dào shén me sēng yún tā wú yǔ dī tóu guī
 話。頭云：「他道什麼。」僧云：「他無語，低頭歸
 ān tóu yún yī wǒ dāng chū huí bù xiàng tā dào mò hòu jù ruò
 庵。」頭云：「噫，我當初悔不向他道末後句，若
 xiàng yī dào tiān xià rén bù nài xuě lǎo hé³ sēng zhì xià mò zài
 向伊道，天下人不奈雪老何。」³ 僧至夏末，再
 jǔ qián huà qǐng yì tóu yún hé bù zǎo wèn sēng yún wèi
 舉前話請益。⁴ 頭云：「何不早問。」僧云：「未
 gǎn róng yì tóu yún xuě fēng suī yǔ wǒ tóng tiáo shēng bù yǔ
 敢容易。」頭云：「雪峯雖與我同條生，⁵ 不與
 wǒ tóng tiáo sǐ yào shí mò hòu jù zhī zhè shì
 我同條死；要識末後句，只這是。」

¹ 【托庵門】[tuō ān mén]: “to open the door of one’ s hermitage [by pushing it].”

² 【低頭】S: 【低頭】[dī tóu]: Literally, “to bow the head,” but here means “to yield.”

³ 【不奈雪老何】[bù nài xuě lǎo hé]: “[no one] could do anything to him”; 奈[nài]: “to be subjected [to something].”

⁴ 【請益】S: 【請益】[qǐng yì]: “to ask [a teacher] to once again repeat or explain something.”

⁵ 【同條生】[tóng tiáo shēng]: Literally “to be born on the same stem.”

【日】

こ せっぽう じゅうあん と き りょうそう あ き
 舉す。雪峰 住庵の 時、兩 僧有り、來たり
 らいはい ほう き み て もつ あんもん
 禮拜す。峰、來たるを 見て、手を 以て 庵門を

ひら み はな い いわ こ なん
 托き、身を 放って 出でて 云く、「是れ 什麼ぞ。」
 そう ま いわ こ なん ほう うなだれ あん
 僧も 亦た 云く、「是れ 什麼ぞ。」峰、低頭て 庵に
 かえ そう のち がんとう いた とう と いず こ
 歸る。僧、後に 巖頭に 到る。頭問う、「什麼處よ
 き そういわ れいなん き とう
 りか 來たる。」僧云く、「嶺南より 來たる。」頭
 いわ かつ せつぼう いた そういわ かつ
 云く、「曾て 雪峰に 到るや。」僧云く、「曾て
 いた とういわ なん ごんく あ そう ぜん
 到る。」頭云く、「何の 言句か 有りし。」僧、前
 せつ こ とういわ かれ なん い そう
 話を 擧す。頭云く、「他は 什麼とか 道いし。」僧
 いわ かれ ご な ていとう あん かえ とう
 云く、「他は 語無く、低頭て 庵に 歸れり。」頭
 いわ ああ われがのとき く かれ まつ ご く
 云く、「噫、我當初悔ゆらくは 他に 最後の 句を
 い も かれ い てんか
 道わざりしことを。若し 伊に 道わば、天下の
 ひと せつろう いかん そう げ まつ いた
 人、雪老を 奈何ともせず。」僧、夏末に 至り、
 ふたた ぜんせつ こ しんえき とういわ なん はや
 再び 前話を 擧して 請益す。頭云く、「何ぞ 早く
 と そういわ ま あえ きやすく とう
 問わざる。」僧云く、「未だ 敢て 容易せず。」頭
 いわ せつぼう われ おな えだ しょう いえど われ
 云く、「雪峰は 我と 同じ 條に 生ずと 雖も、我と
 おな えだ し まつご く し よう
 同じ 條に 死せず。最後の 句を 識らんと 要せ
 た こ これ
 ば、但だ 這れ 是なるのみ。」

【E】

When Xuefeng was living in a hermitage, two monks came to pay their respects. When Xuefeng saw them coming, he pushed the gate of his hermitage with his hands, got out, and said: "What is this?" The monks also said: "What is this?" Xuefeng hung his head and returned to his hermitage. Later, the monks came to Yantou. Yantou asked them: "Where have you come from?" The monks said: "From Lingnan." Yantou said: "Did you ever visit Xuefeng?" The monks said: "Yes, we visited him." Yantou said: "What did he say?" The monks told him about the aforementioned dialogue. Yantou

said: "What [else] did he say?" The monks said: "He did not say a word. He hung his head and returned inside his hermitage." Yantou said: "Ah, how I regret that at the time I did not tell him the last word! If I had told it to him, no one living under the sky would be able to do anything to him."¹ At the end of the summer, the monks once again mentioned the aforementioned conversation and asked him to explain its meaning. Yantou said: "Why didn't you ask me about it sooner?" The monk said: "We didn't dare to ask about it so casually." Yantou said: "Even though Xuefeng was born on the same stem as I,² he will nonetheless not die on the same stem. If you want to know the last word, it is just this."

¹ "To do anything to him" : See note 3 of the Chinese text.

² "The same stem" : See note 5 of the Chinese text.

Fencing with dull swords, the combat may begin at dawn and end after dusk, but no one either wins or loses it, and no one sees his life being brought to an end. Watching this exhibition of skills, the spectator may then ask: "What is this?" and the answer will echo throughout the skies, as if it searched for the limit of "this," without ever exhausting it. It encompasses the most remote past and the most distant future, what is within the reach of our hands and what has yet to be touched by a ray of light, but who will understand what cannot be fathomed? Most will see it as an object, what lies beyond the threshold of their self, without realizing that the door separating the inside from the outside is flimsy and easily opened. It is a mere symbol, an enclosure allowing us to appear to retreat from the rest, so that we would be able to grasp it as an object, different than us. But when the door is wide open, we may finally see that the whole is a mirror reflecting itself. The visitor in front of me is my own reflection, and when I dare to ask him "What is this?," all I hear is the echo of my own voice. One may nonetheless be disappointed in oneself. One may also feign disappointment. Only he will know the reason, but when there is only one person, one single thing under the heavens, everyone knows it equally, and no one knows about "it." To see someone coming back inside implies that one has yet to see "it." He never went out, and never came back.

To be perplexed by the beholding of the truth of things is perfectly natural, but nonetheless also an opportunity. Puzzled by what he sees, the newcomer thinks and seeks. His world is shaken, and parts of it crumble, exposing the faults of its foundations. His interrogation is then itself turned into a thing of the world, put into words, carried by the winds to the ears of men who once were also puzzled in the same manner. Expecting to obtain an answer dispelling the mystery, clarifying the darkness, he nonetheless only gets a more perplexing series of words: "I wish I would have told him the last word." Who is going to tell whom this last word? When it is uttered, there will not be anyone under the heavens who will be there to hear it. The last word is the last thing of the world, the result of the great collapse of this world, when the stars come together, interlaced with the sun and the moon to form a piece of fabric covering the entire celestial vault; when the mountain ranges throw themselves into the ocean, with all living beings merging their flesh to form a perfect sphere, the earth becoming a single thing, smooth, without up and down, east or west, an indistinguishable whole named the earth. Then, when the sky itself crashes into the earth, like two lovers fusing their bodies to engender a new being, the last thing is then born, which is identical to the first thing, what was at the primordial dawn of the world. The only thing that remains is the first and the last, whose name is also the first and the last word, the cornerstone of the world, the only block left standing when all has crumbled to the ground. The word is what first traces a line between here and there, the inside and the outside, the self and the other. It is the sharpest sword cutting out the fabric of the heavens: "this." The whole of being is gathered with the first utterance of this word, and dissolved when it is finally abandoned, thrown into no-thing-ness.

Case 75 —How Would One Speak (I) —作么生道 (一)

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 70.

【中】

jǔ guī shān wǔ fēng yún yán tóng shì lì bǎi zhàng bǎi zhàng
 舉。 為山， 五峯， 雲巖， 同侍立 百丈。 百丈
 wèn guī shān bìng què yān hóu chún wěn zuò me shēng dào guī shān yún què
 問 為山：「併却咽喉唇吻，作麼生道。」 為山 云：「却

qǐng hé shàng dào zhàng yún wǒ bù cí xiàng rǔ dào kǒng yǐ hòu sàng wǒ
 請和尚道。」丈云：「我不辭向汝道，恐已後喪我
 ér sūn
 兒孫。」

【日】

こ いさん ごぼう うんがん とも ひゃくじょう じりょう
 舉す。為山、五峰、雲巖、共に 百 丈に 侍立す。
 ひゃくじょう いさん と のど くち ふさ
 百 丈、為山に 問う、「咽喉と 唇吻を 併却いで、
 いかな い いさん いわ かえ こ おしょう
 作麼生か 道わん。」為山云く、「却って 請う、和尚
 い じょういわ われ なんじ い じ
 道え。」丈云く、「我は 汝に 道を 辞せざるも、
 い ご わ じそん うしな おそれ
 已後我が 兒孫を 喪わんことを 恐る。」

【E】

Guishan, Wufeng, and Yunyan were all attending upon Baizhang. Baizhang asked Guishan: "With both one's lips and throat closed, how would one speak?" Guishan said: "I would rather ask the Master to tell me." Baizhang said: "I would not refuse to tell you, but if I do it I fear I would lose my descendants."

The world is a vast ocean of words and letters, and man desperately or eagerly wades through it in search of meaning or pleasure. The air is almost continually stirred up by the lips and the throats of the living, with invisible waves reaching our ears to bring us sounds and speech. What this enormous mass of meaningful bits of language provides is an increased familiarity with this world in which language itself is contained, knowledge of what can be put into words and letters. In order to transmit one's personal vision of what lies beyond the boundaries of this world, the truth of the earth and the skies, one nonetheless needs to devise a new manner of communicating, forging signs that are not mere words and letters. Meaning needs to be transmitted without employing

speech or writing, as these are replete with lofty ideas, without ground. One must rather use signs that are as close as possible to the earth, meaningful expressions that are tightly intertwined with a direct experience, one intimately felt in one's flesh and bones, seen with the eyes, leaving no place to doubt of the experience itself but nonetheless leaving ample space for interpretation, refraining from explicitly stating its meaning. A slap in the face may speak louder and clearer than a long tirade shouted at someone. A slight movement of the hand may transmit more than a thousand volumes, incarnating a truth that cannot be accurately described with words. When one has seen his true nature, the essence of the heavens themselves, the interstice between the blocks of meaning forming our world, he is far from powerless to help others share his vision. He can give a hand, to pull up or push down, to embrace or to strike, shaking the disciple to his core, blurring the image of his world, disturbing the order to which he is familiar, thereby showing him that the rigid walls of his home hide something grander than his world. He just needs to let go of them, and they will crumble, revealing the light they for so long concealed. Another kind of teaching is nonetheless required to discover another kind of existence. A transmission without words and letters, directly from heart to heart, from the earth to the mind, outside of the tradition and the scriptures.⁶¹

There is nothing to teach but no-thing-ness, and no-thing-ness is not something to be taught. No-thing-ness may nonetheless be heard and be seen, and it may speak and manifest itself within man's world. One who has let go of his self becomes an instrument, a voice and a body through which such manifestation occurs, without reflection, without a shred of thought, all flowing naturally through his mouth, with the winds softly but steadily guiding his steps and his hands. His mouth may appear voluble, his throat like a torrent of air, but he does not utter a single word and he does not *mean* anything. He agitates the air engulfing the world, emitting soundwaves speedily propagated through the sky, one with the gigantic cyclone caused by the revolutions of the greatest celestial wheels, and these winds come and go through his

⁶¹ A sentence based on the famous quote of Bodhidharma, symbolizing the essence of the Zen practice, found in his "Essay Concerning Awakening" (悟性論). In Chinese, this sentence is: 「直指人心，見性成佛，教外別傳，不立文字。」.

mind, where there is no-thing.⁶² The dwellers of the world hear these sounds as a teaching, as words, part of their language, inviting and guiding them. The knavish disciple nonetheless fails to see that him and his interlocutor are dwelling in different realms, and he therefore plays with the words, because that is all he can hear. Inattentive, he does not read between the lines, or hears the silence between the words uttered, but it is there that he may find his true nature, the passage to escape the grip of the world, the doorway toward no-thing-ness. Eager for more words, the foolish disciple only narrows the gap between words and letters, reducing his chances to see what lies in between, or rather what is not there, no-thing.

Case 76 —How Would One Speak (Ii) —作 么生道（二）

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 71.

【中】

jǔ 舉。bǎi zhàng 百丈 fù wèn 復問 wǔ fēng 五峯：「bìng què yān hóu chún wěn 併却咽喉唇吻，zuò me 作麼
shēng dào 生道。」fēng yún 峯云：「hé shàng yě xū bìng què 和尚也須併却。」zhàng yún 丈云：「wú rén 無人
chù zhuó é wàng 處斫額望¹ rǔ 汝。」

¹ 【斫額望】[zhuó é wàng]: “to place one’s hand on his forehead and look at something far away.”

【日】

こ 舉す。ひやくじょう 百丈、ま 復た ごほう 五峰に と 問う、「のど 咽喉と
くち 唇吻とを ふさ 併却いで、さもさん 作麼生か い 道う。」ほういわ 峯云く、「おしょう 和尚も

⁶²See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “When we speak, our mouth is moving, to be sure. But from the standpoint of the essential, the world of emptiness, the mouth does not move a fraction of an inch. How can there be any movement when there is nothing at all that can move?” Original Japanese: 『元に戻って「口を開かず」に喋ってみろ』という。喋るときには肉体の口が動いていることは間違いありません。だが何も無いという側から見ると微動だもしていません。もともと何も無いから動くものがないのですから、その世界からみないと、この公案は解りません。』 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

ま すべか ふさ じょういわ ひと な ところ
 也た 須らく 併却ぐべし。」丈云く、「人無き 處に
しゃくがく なんじ のぞ
 斫額して 汝を 望まん。」

【E】

Baizhang once again asked Wufeng: “With both one’s lips and throat closed, how would one speak?” Wufeng said: “The Master should also keep them closed.” Baizhang said: “At that place where there is no one, I will shade my eyes with my hand and gaze at you from a far away.”

Like a parent attempting to patiently instruct an unruly toddler, incapable of understanding the benevolence of his progenitor and the necessity of such learning, the immature follower, when seeing the finger of the master pointing at the edges of the world, he then sees in it a sword directed to his heart, and the opportunity of a duel. Unsheathing his own weapon, he is ready to demonstrate his modest fencing skills, ready to slash the opponent and kill, failing to realize that he is likely to lose his life in the process. Young and witty, he strikes without after-thought, cutting off the finger in a gracious and rapid movement, and satisfied with his apparent prowess, he stands proudly in front of his opponent, thinking that his defeat is clear, but he is utterly blind to his own predicament, and fails to see that he only hurt himself by cutting off the finger rather than observe where did it point to.

Talking about silence, this is no easy task. The preaching of no-thing-ness, this is a feat worthy to be heard. Unfortunately, it is equally hard to find an ear worthy to receive such teaching. The words may be heard, and their meaning may be understood, and yet one may find himself completely oblivious of the destination they were made to guide to. One may keep silent to talk about silence, and do nothing to demonstrate the nature of nothingness, but only someone already familiar with nothingness would be able to perceive it, and a man in nothingness perceives no-thing. Without sparing any effort, the man who has climbed to the solitary peak and contemplated the extent of the skies, far above the smog

of the world, descends to help those who have yet to make this life-changing ascent. He sacrifices himself, because he has no need for his self. Thus does he soil his own mouth by uttering obnoxious words about silence, by depicting no-thing-ness with the brushes and colors of the world. Glad to see such a man wade through the mud and cover his flesh with filth, a member of his audience is quick to laugh at him, pointing out the hubris of his undertaking, the absurdity of his attempt at putting silence into words and depicting no-thing-ness: "You should keep your mouth closed, and your throat shut!" This wit and energy are still preferable to mere puzzling and incomprehension. This will to fight, to engage in a battle with the words of the master, is an immature and yet encouraging reaction, showing that one does not take the things of the world too seriously. It demonstrates an attachment to the self, a desire of the "I" to overcome the "you," but it also shows that one sees through the contradictions of the world, the weaknesses of its foundations, a first step toward its demolition and liberation from this golden cage.

To see a winner and a loser, a conqueror and a vanquished, implies that one has yet to hear the words that are spoken with the lips shut and the throat closed. The master shades his eyes with his hands to see the horizon of the place where there is no one, and he respectfully gazes upon the disciple from afar, his lofty abode near the radiance of the sun. In the great desert where there is no one and no thing, the smallest gap is nonetheless as great as the breadth of the earth and the skies. There, there is no novice or master, close or far, right or wrong, and thus this fencing match leaves no one standing. The certainties of the world disappear there, like a puff of smoke in a gust of wind. The only opponent is oneself, and once his heart has been pierced through and through, then silence reigns over the great plain, but the air is still replete with echoes of the truth of nature, transparent waves stirred up by the sky itself, which run in search for ears so that they would be heard and listened to, bouncing in the angular streets of the cluttered cities lying beyond the land where there is no one and no thing, a calling inviting the living to close their lips and open up their ears and eyes to the truth into which they are thrown, and incarnate themselves.

Case 77 —How Would One Speak (Iii) —作么生道（三）

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 72.

【中】

^{jǔ} 舉。^{bǎi zhàng} 百丈 ^{yòu wèn} 又問 ^{yún yán} 雲巖：「^{bìng què yān hóu chún wěn} 併却咽喉唇吻，^{zuò me} 作麼
^{shēng dào} 生道。」^{yán yún} 巖云：「^{hé shàng yǒu yě wèi} 和尚有也未。」^{zhàng yún} 丈云：「^{sàng wǒ ér sūn} 喪我兒孫。」

【日】

^こ 舉^す。^{ひやくじょう ま} 百 丈 ^{うんがん} 又^た 雲巖^と に ^{のど} 問^う、「^{くち} 咽喉と 唇吻と
^{ふさ} を ^{さもさん} 併^い 却^い で、^{がんにわ} 作麼生^{おしょう} か ^い 道^う。」^わ 巖云^く、「^も 和尚
^あ 有^や り ^{じょういわ} 也^わ 未^{じそん}。」^も 丈云^く、「^わ 我^が が ^{じそん} 兒孫^を を ^も 喪^え り。」

【E】

Baizhang said to Yunyan: “With both one’s lips and throat closed, how would one speak?” Yunyan said: “Could the Master also do it, or not?” Baizhang said: “I will now lose my descendants.”

If a man shouts in a deserted canyon, he would not be surprised to hear only the echo of his own voice. Inquiring about the way silence speaks, he will surely be invited to let silence reply instead of flooding the air with words. The echo reverberates upon the walls of the world, and his own words are thrown back at him, like a dagger bouncing on its target, hitting the one that threw it. The world failed to understand this voice of the desert pleading for silence. It saw a weapon of war in the words of the stranger to the world, not seeing that it rather was the scalpel of

a surgeon, attempting to precisely incise a growth suffocating and blinding the afflicted of the world, so that they would finally behold their true face. The blade strikes back its sender, but the one who abides where there is no life nor death cannot be hurt by such means. He will try, again and again, to allow the poor prisoners of the world to witness the wondrous truth, their common nature, never lacking patience, never exhausting his good-will, as for him the depths of time are no different than the blinking of an eye, and he does not value his own existence more than the one of a single ear of wheat patiently growing in the blazing summer sun before it feels the cold and deadly embrace of the sharpened scythe.

Alone in the great valley between the world and the desert, the instrument of the way still waits for an encounter. He tirelessly sows seeds deep into the ground of the city, in the hope of turning it into a luxuriant forest, but has yet to see a single seedling sprout out of the soil. His words are heeded by no one, and he has yet to find a worthy heir to which he would entrust the way to no-thing-ness and the responsibility to guide others to it. This fact nonetheless does not plunge him into despair, nor does it weaken his resoluteness, for he knows that life itself is but a gigantic tree rooted in the earth, extending its crooked arms into the sky, higher and higher with each passing year. He does not lament on the withering of a little shoot or the breaking of a twig. He does not cry over fallen leaves, nor is angered by the absence of fruit during a few summers. Indeed, he knows all too well that the tree itself will one day reach its destiny. The living will sooner or later listen to silence, understanding its speech, reading between the lines and deciphering the blank space between the letters. They will write upon the firmament with their tongue, and speak volumes with their eyes. It is of no consequence whether some arrive before others, as there is no one at their destination, only an all-encompassing whole, and not a single thing to which it could be opposed. There, caught in the gigantic whirlwind of the heavens, there is neither speech nor silence, but only silent speech, the speaking of silence, with no separation between both, and no parent nor children, only a continuous chain joining the most distant past and the most remote future, as presence.

Case 78 — Yaoshan Ascends The Rostrum — 藥山陞座

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 7.

【中】

舉。藥山久不陞座院主白云¹：「大眾久思示
誨。²請和尚為眾說法。」山令打鐘。眾方集山
陞座良久便下座歸方丈，主隨後問：「和尚適來許
為眾說法。」云：「何不垂一言。」山云：「經有經
師，論有論師。³爭怪得老僧。」

¹ 【白云】[bái yún]: “to say [something] so that one would understand.”

² 【示誨】S: 【示誨】[shì huì]: “to instruct.”

³ 【論師】S: 【論師】[lùn shī]: A monk who is well-versed in scholastic Buddhist philosophical treatises known as Shastras.

【日】

こ やくさんひさ しん ざ いんじゅう
舉す。 藥山久しく 陞座せず。 院主白し
て 曰く、 「大眾久しく 示誨を 思う、請う
和尚衆の 爲に 說法せよ。」山、鐘を 打せしむ。
衆方に 集る。山、陞座 良久、 便ち 下座して
方丈に 歸る。主、後に 随って 問う、「和尚適來
衆の 爲に 說法せんことを 許す、云何ぞ 一言を
垂れざる。」山云く、「經に 經師有り 論に 論師
有り、爭でか 老僧を 怪み 得ん。」

【E】

It had been a long time since Yaoshan did not ascend the rostrum. The temple steward pointed this out to him, saying: “The congregation has been hoping for instruction for

a long time. Please, Master, give the congregation a talk about the Dharma.” Yaoshan then had someone ring the bell. The congregation assembled. Yaoshan ascended the rostrum, sat there for a good while, and then he descended and returned to his room. The temple steward followed him and asked: “The master had just said that he would give the congregation a talk about the Dharma. Why didn’ t he utter a single word?” Yaoshan said: “For Sutras, there are Sutra specialists; for Shastras, there are Shastra¹ specialists. Why are you puzzled by this old monk?”

¹ “Shastra” : See note 3 of the Chinese text.

There are times when silence speaks more than words, and when to come empty-handed is the greatest gift that one could offer. If something is continually present, men quickly grow accustomed to it, and its precious nature is soon forgotten, before it finally becomes invisible. As the darkness of the night kindle a longing for the glorious return of the dawn, the unveiling of the radiant face of the sun, or as long days of thirst, walking in an arid wasteland in the torrid summer heat, causes the one afflicted by it to see under a new light the presence of a patch of luxuriant vegetation, a small oasis, where a mere glass of water appears more precious than a cup made of pure gold, a prolonged silence can likewise teach the value of a few simple words more efficiently than an entire lecture.⁶³

A master may cease to teach with words, and decide to teach by refraining from teaching, shutting his mouth, doing nothing. Assembling his community as it is customary, he ascends to his preaching seat and commands that the bell be rung, with the ears of his audience wide open, the disciples now eagerly waiting to receive his words of wisdom. But all that can be heard is the

⁶³See the comment of Huanglong Huinan (黃龍慧南) found in the text of this case: “The people of our time easily take the Dharma lightly. I would like to be like a farmer, who from time to time lets it be parched, causing it to wither and thirst. Then, when water is poured on it, it flourishes.” Original Chinese: 「蓋今之人。容易輕法者眾。欲如田夫時時乾之。令其枯渴。然後溉灌方得秀實也。」 From: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 7).

fading of the sound of the bell, with no one able to tell when it stops. The master's mouth remains sealed, and silence reigns over the hall. The instruction has nonetheless already begun.

By gathering his community, diverting its members from their daily duties and the affairs of the world and plunging them into absolute silence, inviting them to idleness, the master opens up a space. He shapes the living into an empty vessel, ready to receive a libation, to be filled with something poured out from above. More than ever, they crave speech and are hungry for words, ready to devour them, but these do not come. Some are simply puzzled by this waiting, feeling oppressed by this silence, as it amplifies the resounding of their own thoughts, some of which they wished would go away. Others may nonetheless be more perspicacious, and begin to understand the teachings that they are now generously offered. What better means is there to teach about what cannot be put into words than silence itself?⁶⁴ This is one thing, but this silence is an inexhaustible well out of which an entire ocean may be drawn. It shows them their incontrollable greed for words and their excessive reliance upon the arbitrary constructs of their world. Not listening to another man speaking, they are given the chance to hear their inner voice and to see where they stand. Robbed of their involvement in the affairs of the world, forced into a moment of idleness, they are shown that the most useful may arise from what appears the most useless. Doing nothing, hearing nothing, they are taught more intensely than ever before, and if properly hearkened, the subtle teaching of silence will remain with them until their last breath. Then, they will hear the preaching of the birds and the prayers of the winds. The bees will be their master, and they will follow the ants to learn some of their wisdom. The hearing of a single word will enduringly satiate their hunger for knowledge, and in an instant of silence, they will receive the teaching of a lifetime. Looking at the interstice between the letters of a manuscript, they will perceive the infinity of the skies, and heeding the silence between words, they will feel the extent of the entirety of time itself.

⁶⁴See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu -Aufzeichnungen aus der Klausur der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. : „Wittgensteins: ‘Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen. ‘“

Case 79 — Meeting On The Road Someone Acquainted With The Way 一路逢達道

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 36.

【中】

wǔ zǔ yuē lù féng dá dào rén bù jiāng yǔ mò duì qiě dào
五祖曰：「路逢達道人，¹ 不將語默對，且道：
jiāng shén me duì
將甚麼對。」

¹ 【達道】S:【达道】[dá dào]: “to be well-acquainted with the way” / “to have reached the way.”

【日】

こ ご そ い わ みち たつどう ひと あ
舉す。五祖曰く、「路に 達道の 人に 逢わば、
ご もく も たい しば い なに も
語默を 將って 對せず。且らく 道え、甚麼を 將っ
たい
てか 對せん。」

【E】

Wuzu said: “When on the road one meets a man keenly acquainted with the Way, he can neither face him with words nor remain silent. How will he face him?”

The way of the sky ineluctably carries all that *is* on the course of its destiny, no matter whether the living are aware of it or not, or whether they embrace or attempt to oppose it. A man keenly acquainted with the way is someone who sees this current carrying him through time and space, through the heavens, seeing through the walls of things formed by the world of men, beholding the extent of the skies and seeing them as no-thing-ness, the turbulent whirlwind that has no parts, no beginning nor end.

To face a man keenly acquainted with the way is to face the heavens themselves. How would one greet the blazing face of the

sun, or the pale arms of our immense galaxy, covering the celestial vault? No words would be fitting, and even a contact with the holiest scripture would stain his body. Silence, if it is merely the absence of words, is no more appropriate, as most things of the world are also greeted with silence, especially the most neglected ones. One should therefore welcome such a man without words or silence. One manner of doing so would be to express an intention with one's own body, such as an embrace or a slap on the face, an act that would bypass the world to express a bond upon the bare earth, something that is felt with the skin and seen with the eyes, without a hint of reflection or a syllable uttered.⁶⁵ Walking on the edge between earth and world, one may hope to be noticed, showing that one has perceived the truth of the world, its nature as a rampart veiling the nature of the way. This, however, would only be a demonstration of one's ignorance of the way of the sky.

The way is no-thing-ness, and no-thing-ness is the way. To be acquainted with the way of the sky is to realize that *he* is the way. It is a headlong plunge into no-thing-ness, without return, leaving behind every single thing, including his own body and his own self. A man of the world may perchance stumble upon such a man, but this man will not see the onlooker observing him. He will only see the way in his eyes, on his skin. He will hear its melodious sound in his voice, and feel its substance while shaking his hand. To properly greet such a man implies to be of one mind with him, that is, to have no mind. One must come empty-handed, not carrying a single thing over his shoulders or in his thoughts. Even the distinction between speech and silence must be left behind to appreciate the nature of the one facing him. A mirror facing a mirror, in which only the whole of the heavens is visible, this is how it looks when one meets a man of the way on the road of his life.

The man who has nothing will nonetheless not overlook the one who needs a helpful hand on the road. He offers this no-thing-ness to those bearing the world on their shoulders. The way itself may speak through his mouth and guide his steps, leading him to

⁶⁵See Wumen's verse on this case: "When on the road one meets a man keenly acquainted with the Way, he can neither face him with words nor remain silent. A fist hitting right on the cheek! If one understands, he does so right away." Chinese original: 「路逢達道人不將語默對攔腮劈面拳直下會便會」, from: 《禪宗無門關》。CBETA (Case 36).

point out the way to go, and the nature of one's predicament, if he is still an obedient and ignorant slave to the world, a blind servant of his own self, burdened with a million things. Looking at such fellows, the man of the way sees their destiny, their destination, which is, sooner or later, no-thing-ness itself.

Case 80 —The Sutra Of Perfect Enlightenment's Four Sentences 一覺經四節

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 45.

【中】

舉。《圓覺經》云：「居¹ 一切時不起妄念。於諸妄心亦不息滅。住妄想境不加了知。於無了知不辨² 真實。」

¹ 【居】[jū]: “to be [somewhere]” / “to exist” / “to abide.”

² 【辨】[biàn]: “to distinguish.”

【日】

舉す。圓覺經に云く、「一切時に居して妄念を起さず、諸の妄心に於いて亦息滅せず。妄念の境に住して了知を加えず、了知無きに於いて眞實を辨ぜず。」

【E】

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment says: “At all times, one should not cause delusive thoughts to emerge. When delusive thoughts have arisen in the mind, one does not extinguish them. Abiding in the realm of delusion, one does not gain knowledge, and when one has no knowledge, one does not distinguish the truth.”

Our world is replete with illusions. It has been built upon firm ground, the great body of the earth itself, but as its dwellers reached increasingly higher ground thanks to the efforts of their industrious forefathers and their own, they progressively began to lose contact with the earth, surrounded from all parts by the products of their labor. Enshrouded in the alluring illusions of the world every day of his life, these illusions get a firm grip on man's mind and give birth to delusions. He begins to think that his creations or those of his parents represent the truth of the earth and the sky, and that his mastery over this world gives him control over his destiny. Often unbeknownst to him, these delusions, and the whole of his world, are mere fruits of his mind. If he does not foster their growth, these delusions will nonetheless not sprout in front of him and seize his throat. The surest way to avoid being ensnared in such a manner is to unburden one's mind, to release the desire to climb up to the stratosphere of the world, eagerly seeking knowledge, unrestrainedly building up new, higher abodes where one would live a life of seclusion, severed from the crudeness of the earth and the sky. When desire is quenched, the heart is at peace, and delusions vanish like the early morning fog encountering the fiery rays of the summer sun.

Peace is nonetheless but a transient state. Thoughts almost ineluctably emerge out of nothingness, and delusions sprout from these thoughts. Delusions feed on resistance, as opposition fosters the gushing out of a torrent of new thoughts, as one strives to extinguish the fire by diverting a river of oil toward it. Simply ignored, by turning one's attention toward no-thing-ness itself, away from the world and its things, such fire quickly dies out. Doing nothing, nothing is thought about, and no-thing-ness begins to appear as the walls of the world begin to crumble under their own weight.

The mind of no-mind, the thoughtless heart in which there is no-thing, is then born when one ceases to be a dweller of the world, to be a nomad in the land of absolute absence, the great desert where one cannot distinguish winter from summer, night from day. A true wanderer, he does not abide there. He abides nowhere, and it is through this permanent exile and fleetingness,

this abandoning of certainty and the absolute, that he is born anew, finally seeing his true face, the one he had before he was first born onto the world.⁶⁶ The subtle wisdom that comes from the wandering transforms one's existence more profoundly than the towers of ink and paper found at the center of the greatest cities of the world. The knowledge of the one who has no-thing indeed cannot be taken from him, nor can it be forgotten. Surrounded by truth at all times, even seeing the truth of the things of the world, one no longer needs to distinguish truth from falsehood, the earth from the world, as he limpidly sees that they share the same nature, no-thing-ness itself.

One should nonetheless always question why he is tempted to read about what cannot be put into words. Offered a piece of holy scriptures, the wanderer will not abide by its meaning. He does not reject nor embrace it, treating it as a tumbleweed passing in front of his eyes, brought by the torrid summer winds that carry it away from his sight as swiftly as they caused it to cross his path. He sees the truth of these words, as he sees the truth of the paper upon which they are inscribed. As holy as the clouds passing over his head, or the mud under his feet, they are heeded, but not dwelt upon.

Case 81 —Fayan's "Substance And Name" —法眼質名

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 74.

【中】

舉。僧問 法眼：「承教有言：『從無住本立一切
法¹。』如何是無住本。」眼 云：「形興未質，名
起未名。」

¹ 【從無住本立一切法】[cóng wú zhù běn lì yí qiè fǎ]: A quote from the “Vimalakirti Sutra” (維摩經).

² 【形興未質，名起未名】[xíng xīng wèi zhì , míng qǐ wèi míng]: A sentence quoted

⁶⁶ Cf. the question uttered by Huineng to Ming concerning one's true face in the “Platform Sutra”: 李中華, 丁敏. 《新譯六祖壇經》. 台北: 三民書局, 2007 p27: 「不思善，不思惡，正與麼時，那個是明上座本來面目？」

from the “Treasure Theory” (寶藏論), a work of the Buddhist philosopher of the Later Qin dynasty named Sēng Zhào (僧肇, 384-414).

【日】

こ そ う ほうげん と うけたまわ きょう い
 擧す。僧、法眼に 問う、「承る 教に 言える
 あ むじゅう もと いっさい ほう りつ
 こと 有り 無住の 本より 一切の 法を 立すと、
 いか こ むじゅう もと め いわ かたち み
 如何なるか 是れ 無住の 本。」眼云く、「形は 未
 しつ おこ な み めい おこ
 質より 興り、名は 未名より 起る。」

【E】

A monk asked Fayān: “I have been taught that: ‘From the basis of non-abiding, all things are established.’¹ What is this ‘basis of non-abiding’?” Fayān said: “A form arises from what has no substance yet; a name comes from what has no name yet.”²

¹ “From the basis of non-abiding, all things are established”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “A form arises from what has no substance yet; a name comes from what has no name yet”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

If one is taught that he should not let his mind abide in a determined location, that is, not let his thought become calcified, rigid, to instead embrace a constant state of indeterminacy, unrestrainedly letting go of all things so that everything and no-thing may be perceived, will not he face a paradox? To accept such a teaching without reserve would indeed be a form of abiding, thereby contradicting its very purpose. Fortunately, awareness of this fact is key to a genuine understanding of this teaching, as a letting go of all things, even the teaching itself, and of even nothingness itself, which is the foundation of all things.

Man’s world is an astounding creation, like a tall flower standing in the midst of a vast, barren wasteland, whose presence appears highly incongruous, and whose origin is shrouded in mystery. It is also a great city made of countless building blocks assembled by

innumerable, industrious hands over many generations. Each one of these building blocks, these “things” of the world, came to be as the result of an act of creation, when the soil was watered and the mud imparted a unique shape, endowed with a meaning and a use. Without a continuous motion of the mind and the body, the world would soon cease to grow and swiftly crumble under its own weight. The world around us, with its giant skyscrapers made of concrete and its underground tunnels, its plastic trinkets and its pieces of machinery made of forged steel, it in its essence is made of the same substance as the rest of nature, including life and our very flesh. Even our ideas are incarnated as waves in the air, the motion of earthly matter floating over the ground, as letters inscribed on paper, or as a series of impulses within our brain. The mind and the limbs are caught in a race, with people often oblivious to the nature of the force that moves them. They fail to see the world as arising from the earth and resting upon it. They equally are unable to see the ground of the earth, the basis of all things. Seen directly, without the mediation of the world, without observing it through the prism of the millions of things formed by our hands and minds, the earth is indeed mere quicksand, something that cannot be grasped and cannot support anything steadily.

The ground of the earth, the ultimate foundation of our world, is no-thing-ness itself, a sandstorm formed and set into motion by the heavens themselves. Out of no-thing-ness, the things of the world arise through the agency of the mind and the hands of man. He then begins to see no-thing-ness itself as a thing, the whole of the skies and the earth within these heavens, and then forms individual things out of this whole. Continually thinking, his mind also assigns names to all these things that he forms out of the whole, completing their creation, making them true things of the world, which can be evoked and invoked by the mere mention of their name. This wondrous work of art collectively created by all animals, men in particular, nonetheless does not fundamentally transform the essence of what has been formed. The world remains based on no-thing-ness, and is no-thing-ness itself. All things arise out of it but also remain part of it. Their truth can only be seen outside of this world, when the parts vanish and leave only the whole in their stead, before this whole itself ceases to be perceived as a thing, and its nature shines in all its glory. Then, the truth is finally unveiled, and there is no longer any world to be seen, any

earth or sky, but only raw being, unadulterated and unmediated, without any certainty, without any abiding, as there is nothing that can abide somewhere, and nowhere where one could abide.

Case 82 — Juzhi Raises His Finger — 俱胝豎指

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 3. A less complete version can be found in the Blue Cliff Record, case 19, and the Book of Serenity, case 84. ⁶⁷

【中】

jù zhǐ hé shàng fán yǒu jié wèn wéi jǔ yì zhǐ hòu yǒu tóng zǐ
俱胝 和尚凡有詰問，¹ 唯舉一指。後有童子，
yīn wài rén wèn hé shàng shuō hé fǎ yào tóng zǐ yì shù zhǐ tóu zhǐ
因外人問：「和尚說何法要。」² 童子亦豎指頭。胝
wén suǒ yǐ rèn duàn qí zhǐ tóng zǐ fù tòng háo kū ér qù zhǐ fù zhào
聞，遂以刃斷其指，童子負痛號哭而去。胝 復召
zhǐ tóng zǐ huí shǒu zhǐ què shù qí zhǐ tóng zǐ hū rán lǐng wù zhǐ
之，童子迴首，胝 却豎起指，童子忽然領悟。胝
jiāng shùn shì wèi zhòng yuē wú dé tiān lóng yì zhǐ tóu chán yì shēng
將順世，³ 謂眾曰：「吾得 天龍 一指頭禪，一生
shòu yòng bù jìn yán qì shì miè
受用不盡。」言訖⁴ 示滅。

¹ 【詰問】S: 【詰問】[jié wèn]: “to ask questions” / “to interrogate.”

² 【法要】[fǎ yào]: “the essential teaching of Buddhism” (佛法的要義).

³ 【順世】S: 【順世】[shùn shì]: “the passing away of a monk.”

⁴ 【訖】S: 【訖】[qì]: “finished.”

【日】

こ ぐ ていおしょう およ さつもん た いっし
舉す。俱胝和尚、凡そ 詰問あれば 唯だ 一指を
こ のち どうじ ちな がいにん と おしょうなん
舉す。後に 童子あり、因みに 外人問う、「和尚何の
ほうよう と どうじ ま しとう たて てい
法要をか 説く。」童子も 亦た 指頭を 豎つ。胝、
き つい やいば も そ ゆび た どうじ ふ
聞いて 遂に 刃を 以って 其の 指を 斷つ。童子負
つうごうこく さ てい ま これ め どうじ こうべ
痛號哭して 去る。胝、復た 之を 召す。童子、首を

⁶⁷ See Blue Cliff Record, case 19 and the Book of Serenity, case 84: 「舉。俱胝和尚。凡有所問只豎一指。」

めぐ てい かえ ゆび じゅ き どうじ こつねん
廻らす。臍、却って 指を 竖起す。童子忽然として
りょう ご てい まさ じゅんせい しゅ い
領悟す。臍、將に 順世せんとして、衆に 謂って
いわ われ てんりゅういち しとう ぜん え いっしょうじゅよう
曰く、「吾、天龍一指頭の 禪を得て、一生 受用
ふ じん い おわ めつ しめ
不盡」と。言い 訖って 滅を 示す。

【E】

Whenever he was asked questions, Juzhi simply raised a finger. After a while, there was a boy who, when asked by people outside of the monastery: “What is the most essential element of the master’s preaching?,” also simply raised a finger. Juzhi heard about this, and then went on and cut off his finger. The boy cried because of the pain and began to run away. Juzhi then called him back and, when the boy turned his head toward him, Juzhi raised his own finger. Suddenly, the boy was enlightened. When Juzhi was about to depart from this world, he told his congregation: “I received the ‘one-finger Zen’ from Tianlong, and a whole life was not enough to exhaust it.” As he finished these words, he then passed away.

If there is only one thing, every single sign points toward it. Then, there is only the seemingly infinite expanse of the heavens above us. It is the vessel inside which the earth is contained, with the tree of life sprouting out of it, and the world around us built by one of its branches. What is the origin and the destination of our existence? What is the essence of our being? Why did the masters of yore travel to the other side of the earth? There is only one answer. Only one reply would accurately represent the truth, the one pointing out the only thing there is. It leads to the only truth, no-thing-ness itself, whereas lengthy sentences only lead men further into the mire of the world, confusing them with a profusion of things, creations of their mind, and convincing them that the sign is equal to what it points toward. They attentively observe the finger, but they do not realize that it is only meant to guide the eyes toward something greater, something with which

they are called to become intimate, their true face, their home, the light of being itself.

The finger is nonetheless more than a symbol. It may be seen as the foundation stone of the world. Long before our ancestors became what bears the name of "man," they indeed were tree-dwelling apes, meticulously selected by life itself for their elongated fingers allowing them to firmly seize branches and swing between them. As they finally stood erect to depart from the forests and wander through vast plains and grasslands, their hands were freed and they soon found new uses for them. Pairing their grunts and shouts or their facial expressions with the movements of their arms and hands, their upper limbs naturally became arrows of flesh and blood pointing at where the attention of their brethren should be. The finger thus became a pointing tool, a signifier designating a signified. Without a word, without a letter, the finger became one of the first signs of the world, before our branch of life came to be called mankind. From this foundation stone, the fleeting and arbitrary nature of the world nonetheless clearly be seen.

Raising a finger upward, a sign is invoked. A signifier points towards something. Should the fingertip be observed? The clouds passing over the head of those observing this sign at this instant, or perhaps the sun shining at its zenith? The truth is in the eye of the beholder. He is the one tracing the boundaries of what he thinks is designated. It may be anything, everything, or nothing. It entirely depends on the extent of the horizon of his mind. The finger may gather the entire world at its tip, representing its primordial essence, that is, a single thing that stands out of the whole of the skies, out of no-thing-ness itself, and points at it. It is a sign of ec-stasy, a standing out, so that the environment from which one stands out may finally be seen, with the distance necessary for it to be visible.

The child of the way nonetheless at first only sees a finger. He is perplexed by the silence around it and its cryptic nature. It is a joke, certainly, or perhaps a mark of laziness, a refusal to answer properly: with words, clear and simple, lighting the path to be followed. But the mistake does not escape the acute gaze of the one who first raised his finger, and still, without opening his mouth, without uttering a sound, a lesson is thus offered. A blade as sharp as his mind is in his hand, and with a swift blow,

the nimble finger of the child is irreversibly severed. Raising once more his finger in view of the boy, he sees the void left by this seemingly cruel deed, which is nonetheless an astounding display of compassion. He sees that even without a part of his body, he is the same being as before. Finally, he sees what the finger is pointing toward. The bloody finger on the ground points toward the same thing, and so does the wound on his hand. The void points to the void. The absence of thing points toward no-thingness, and the lines separating things have been cut off, triggering a flood of light engulfing the boy's world, illuminating his heart, showing him the truth of the sky.

Case 83 —Not The Wind, Nor The Flag — 非風非幡

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 29.

【中】

liù zǔ yīn fēng yáng chà fān yǒu èr sēng duì lùn yì yún fān dòng
六祖因風颺¹ 刹² 幡，有二僧對論，一云幡動
yì yún fēng dòng wǎng fù céng wèi qī lǐ zǔ yún bú shì fēng dòng bú
一云風動，往復曾未契理，³ 祖云：「不是風動，不
shì fān dòng rén zhě xīn dòng èr sēng sǒng rán⁴
是幡動，仁者心動。」二僧 悚然。⁴

¹ 【颺】S: 【颺】[yáng]: “to float because of the wind.”

² 【刹】S: 【刹】[chà]: the flag pole in front of a Buddhist temple.

³ 【契理】[qī lǐ]: “to agree” (when arguing about something).

⁴ 【悚然】[sǒng rán]: “to be frightened.”

【日】

こ ろく そ ちな かぜせっばん あ に そう あ
擧す。六祖、因みに 風刹幡を 颺ぐ。二僧有り、
たいろん ひとり いわ はたうご ひと いわ かぜ
對論す。一は 云く、「幡動く。」一りは 云く、「風
うご おうふく かつ ま り かな そ
動く」と。往復して 曾て 未だ 理に 契わす。祖
いわ こ かぜ うご こ はた うご
云く、「是れ 風の 動くにあらず、是れ 幡の 動く
にんしゃ こころうご に そう しょうぜん
にあらず、仁者の 心 動くのみ」と。二僧 悚然た
り。

【E】

The sixth patriarch was near a temple flag fluttering in the wind, and two monks were arguing about it, with one saying that the flag was moving, and the other saying that the wind was moving, arguing back and forth without settling the issue. The sixth patriarch then said: “It is not the wind, nor the flag. It is the gentlemen’s minds that are moving.” The two monks were stunned.

The winds constantly clean the earth of its dust. They scatter the wooly clouds and allow the fiery brilliance of the sun to be poured out into the world. They cannot be seen, and yet they are everywhere. They are fleeting and cannot be grasped by anyone, but they can level mountains and carry vast expanses of water to the highest peaks, if given enough time. During the night and the day, the winter or the summer, their soft embrace is felt in every corner of the earth, and the world constantly reacts to their whims. They are stirred up by the first rays of dawn or by the elegant beating of the wings of a butterfly. They are tamed by lofty buildings or by the coldness of the ocean. They have no beginning nor end, no origin nor destination. None can pinpoint their presence or their absence, as they are but an indistinguishable whole, enfolding the entirety of the face of our planet. They thus mirror the essence of the heavens themselves, and of the whole of being that they contain.

The winds are a whole, but they are also tightly intertwined with the earth that they enfold. A flag hung on the top of a pole flutters into the winds, its shape echoing their fleeting movements, while the pole itself dances, entranced by the mysterious forces of the heavens, imparting a particular rhythm to the ground itself, without anyone able to tell the extent of this reaction. The heavens and the earth are one and the same, the distinction between them being only the product of our minds, of our world. It is thus futile to track down causes and effects, as they are seamlessly joined. Only as a convenience do we rend the fabric of the heavens into fine strips that can be seized and sewn into new things according to

our inspiration, but this is a mere illusion. This fabric is impossible to tear apart, except in our imagination, in our own little world that does not represent the immutable truth of the earth and the sky.

The winds therefore do not move, and neither do the flag flutters. It is the mind that continuously causes thoughts to emerge, cutting out with the sword of perception the unicity of all that is, creating winds, flags, and poles, none of which are known outside of our cranium. To believe that the mind would therefore be the only source of motion in the universe, the prime mover of the cosmos, would nonetheless be to fall prey to a dangerous delusion. The indistinguishable tumult of the whole of being, of the entirety of the skies, occurs whether we are there to witness it or not, but without the activity of our perception and reason, there is only no-thing, as things only belong to our world. Our very minds nonetheless do not lie outside of the extent encompassed by the heavens. We, ourselves, are part of the whole of the earth, under the sky, and thus the movements of our minds only exist within our minds. They also are mere illusions, a means for us to attempt to understand what we are.

Observing the flag, a symbol of the teaching that is preached around it, one may thus find a doorway out of the world and into the truth of being, a hole into which the great abyss may be beheld, revealing the essence of all that is. Seeing the chaotic but harmonious fluttering of the fabric, it is the commotion of the entirety of the heavens that may be perceived, from the surface of the flag until the confines of the universe, without a hairbreadth of separation between the two. Clearly seeing the vacuity of the world, the man of the way will nonetheless fearlessly delve into it, staining his robe with its dust raised by the winds, and he will play with the things of the world, which he does not need, simply to benefit his brethren, in which he also sees his own true face.

Case 84 — This Mind Is Buddha — 即心即佛

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 30.

【中】

mǎ zǔ yīn dà méi wèn rú hé shì fó zǔ yún jí
馬祖 因 大梅 問：「如何是佛。」祖云：「即」

xīn shì fó

心是佛。」

¹ 【即】[jì]: “namely” / “that is”.

【日】

こ ば そ ちな だいばい と いか
 擧す。馬祖、因みに 大梅問う、「如何なるか
 こ ほとけ そ いわ そくしんそくぶつ
 是れ 佛。」祖云く、「即心即佛。」

【E】

Mazu was asked by Dahai: “What is Buddha?” Mazu said: “The mind is Buddha.”

If one asks about the fundamental essence of being, he is already on the wrong track. He is like a fool searching for a coin he lost inside his house outside in the street, solely because the clarity of the summer sun shining outside would appear to make this search easier. He inquires with words, but the answer he seeks falls outside the realm of words, and thus his undertaking is doomed from the start. This nonetheless does not imply that words are utterly useless. Another man, one who sees where the one straying should go can use words to lead him back to the right track, back to the threshold of his own home, where what he is looking for is located. Then, he will just have to cross this threshold and there will he be in a good position to find what he has lost.

Words are therefore a two-edged sword. The holiest words found in man’s world may indeed also be those that most absolutely betray the nature of what they designate. To utter the word “god” is to dirty one’s mouth and to insult the divine, as it reduces the incomprehensible glory of being to a vulgar thing of the world, labeled with an arbitrary name, associated with a web of equally arbitrarily defined properties, devised by man’s imagination rather than through experience.⁶⁸ To declare that one is awakened is to fall back to sleep and plunge into the realm of

⁶⁸See Wumen’s comment on this case: “Just uttering the word ‘Buddha’

dreams. To talk about the essential nature of being is to step into a dung pile, and afterward one inevitably needs arduous efforts to clean himself. One seeing through the clouds of the world, having the infinity of the heavens constantly in front of his eyes, is nonetheless ready to sacrifice himself, like a good shepherd walking through the mud to bring back the lost sheep to the path. He thus accepts to soil his mouth with a few vulgar words of guidance: "The essential nature of being is your mind." You are what you seek. You are only searching for your own nature, desperately trying to see your true face, not realizing that what you seek is all around you, inside you, and it is you, without any boundary between these. As with all words, meaning is in the eye of the beholder. You have to make sense of what you are offered by others, and a single word may be found to be an inexhaustible well of meaning.

Our essential nature is our mind. This may also mean that these concepts belong exclusively to our world, built by our mind, and that what is to be found does not lie inside of it. There is no "god," no "essential nature," outside of the realm of words and letters. This nonetheless does not imply a denial of what we intend to designate with these names, only that the name differs from what it points toward, and our mind can only grasp the name and concept linked with it, not the thing itself. Outside of our mind, there is neither any "mind" nor any "essential nature," and to become aware of this state of fact is the first step toward a form of liberation and an experience of this essential nature.

Someone well-acquainted with the world may therefore play with words, knowing their arbitrary and ambiguous nature, and thus also dispense meticulously crafted sentences to the newcomers, those still caught in the mire of the world, mistaking the finger for what it points toward. Deliberately offering perplexing words, he may cloud the minds of their recipients, thereby causing them to question their world itself, as it does not give them any clear answer. Perplexed by puzzles of words, he is stunned, speechless, forced to let the flow of his thoughts dwindle, and this is when

should be enough to make one feel the need to wash his mouth for three days! If he is such a man, just hearing someone utter 'mind is Buddha' will cause him to run away while covering his ears." Chinese original: 「爭知道說箇佛字三日漱口。若是箇漢。見說即心是佛。掩耳便走。」, from: 《禪宗無門關》。CBETA (Case 30).

he may begin to see the light piercing through the clouds of his mind.⁶⁹

Case 85 — Bodhidharma Gives Peace To A Mind 一達磨安心

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 41.

【中】

dá mó miàn bì èr zǔ lì xuě duàn bì yún dì zǐ xīn wèi
達磨面壁，二祖立雪斷臂¹ 云：「弟子心未
ān qī shī ān xīn mó yún jiāng xīn lái yǔ rǔ ān zǔ
安，乞師安心。」磨云：「將心來，與汝安。」祖
yún mì xīn liǎo bù kě dé mó yún wéi rǔ ān xīn jìng
云：「覓心了不可得。」磨云：「為汝安心竟。」²

¹ 【臂】[bì]: “an arm.”

² 【竟】[jìng]: “actually” / “indeed.”

【日】

こ だるま めんべき に そ ゆ き た ひじ た
舉す。達磨面壁す。二祖雪に 立つ。臂を 断っ
いわ でし こころい ま やす こ
て 云く、「弟子は 心 未だ 安からず、乞う 師
あんしん ま いわ しん も きた なんじ
安心せしめよ。」磨云く、「心を 將ち 來れ、汝が
た やす そ いわ しん もと つい
爲めに 安んぜん。」祖云く、「心を 覓むるに 了に
ふか とく ま いわ なんじ た あんしん おわ
不可得なり。」磨云く、「汝が 爲めに 安心し 竟ん
ぬ。」

【E】

Bodhidharma sat facing a wall, and the second patriarch stood outside in the snow. He severed his arm and said: “The mind of this disciple is not at peace. Master, please give peace

⁶⁹ See this answer of Mazu Daoyi concerning the meaning of “mind is Buddha,” where he answered: “to cause the infant to stop crying.” Original Chinese: 「僧問江西馬祖道一禪師：『和尚為甚麼說即心即佛？』師曰：『為止小兒啼。』」 From: 《景德傳燈錄卷第六》。CBETA .

to his mind.” Bodhidharma says: “If you bring me that mind, I will give it peace for you.” The patriarch said: “I seek to find my mind, but failed to find it.” Bodhidharma said: “I have already given peace to your mind.”

It is easy to let go of the things of the earth, what can be touched with the hands and seen with the eyes. One can cast them far away and never see them again. Even one's body parts may be cut off and abandoned, offered as a sacrifice, as a testimony to one's will to forgo the world and enter no-thing-ness, even when one has yet to discover the gate leading up to it. With a sharp blade in one hand, the man eager to follow the path may sever one of his arms to prove his determination and express the anguish holding sway over his mind, but how to let go of what cannot be touched by a blade or a hand? How can one get rid of what cannot be seen with the eyes?

To find peace of mind is the easiest and hardest. One may feel assailed by anxiety and despair, strangled and smothered by a dark force whose origin and goal are unknown to him. It seems that he has no control over himself or his emotions, being a slave to the whims of his heart, ignoring who manipulates it. Such a man is plunged into gloom because of the illusions pervading his world. So convinced of the reality of the fruits of the imagination of his brethren that he is ready to mutilate his body to appease the need he has for them and to be freed from them, failing to see that without his support and his faith in them, these illusions would vanish more quickly as droplets of water caught in the torrid gusts of the brightest months. He is a greedy treasure hunter digging the soil of a cave in search of gold and jewels, possessed by his desire and impatience, feverish because of the fear of being outpaced by another, frantically sweeping the soil and gazing in every corner, but once every inch of it has been dug, and once every part of it has been thoroughly examined, comes the inevitable realization: there is nothing there! He was mistaken, blinded by desire. Then, the excitement and fever give place to laughter. The tension is relaxed, and the mind is soothed: he was a fool.⁷⁰

⁷⁰See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished

One hoping for his mind to find peace should therefore first find his mind, his self. When his true face is seen, and he realizes that the anguish that had taken hold of his mind is the product of the same mind, he finds out that there is no longer any thing to let go of, and that nothing but himself can smother his mind. He was the cause of his own despair, and only he can cause his liberation. The gate toward no-thing-ness then appears in front of his eyes, as he lets go of his mind itself, ceasing to be a subject, a mind bewitching a body. Clarity penetrates the great cave, and there is nothing in it. Even the one seeking the treasure that the cave was supposed to conceal has vanished into thin air, and it is absolutely empty. There is no treasure nor hunter, no cave nor light, only the vast abyss, the infinite wall whose uniform image depicts no-thing, the white snow that covers the mountains and the valleys, leaving no-thing to be seen, only absolute clarity, perfect blindness, the most complete peacefulness.

Case 86 —Pilling Up Snow In A Silver Bowl —銀碗里盛雪

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 13.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn bā líng rú hé shì tí pó zōng bā líng
 舉。僧問 巴陵：「如何是提婆宗。」¹ 巴陵
 yún yín wǎn lǐ chéng xuě
 云：「銀碗裏盛² 雪。」

¹ 【提婆宗】[tí pó zōng]: “the Deva Sect.” Āryadeva, or Deva, was a disciple of Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamika school of Indian Buddhism. He was a Sri Lankan who lived in the third century A.D. He was known for his wisdom and often debated with non-Bhuddists but was later assassinated by them. The term Deva Sect is used in a Zen context to designate what is thought to represent the Indian ancestor of the Zen school, and thus Zen itself.

² 【盛】[chéng]: (of a vessel) “to contain” / “to bear.” Not to be mistaken with: 盛 [shèng], meaning “to flourish” / “to thrive.”

【日】

manuscript]: “We are all searching for truth and peace of mind outside ourselves, which is like hunting for a man on an uninhabited island. Once you have found out that the island is uninhabited, your desire to search for a man there will end.”

こ そう はりょう と いか こ だい
 擧す。僧、巴陵に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 提
 ばしゅう はりょういわ ぎんわん り ゆき も
 婆宗。」巴陵云く、「銀椀裏に 雪を 盛る。」

【E】

A monk asked Baling: “What is the Deva Sect?” Baling said: “Pilling up snow in a silver bowl.”

¹ “The Deva sect”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

When the radiant face of the sun is not visible long enough to warm the earth, and the waters of the ocean carried by the winds in the heavenly ether are chilled by this conspicuous absence, the clouds are turned into vast arrays of snowflakes softly gliding toward the ground and the seas. All around, they fall, without a destination, letting themselves be guided, until they touch the earth. Observing the mass of snowflakes as they fall, all around the cloudy sky, the nature of the snow is hard to perceive, and thus often ignored. When it slowly accumulates inside a vessel, then does it appear as snow. It can be touched and felt, its coldness numbing the fingers as it turns into water, the snowflakes crushed by the skin while emitting a faint whisper. Then is the snow intimately experienced.

Likewise, when one seeks to experience the truth of being, which pervades the entire world, the whole of the earth and the sky, and yet is seldom adequately approached, the easiest course is to find a vessel where this all-pervading nature can become more apparent, concentrated and easier to perceive. Patiently forged through generations from the metal that is closest in appearance and nature to what it is meant to contain and reveal, continuously hammered to impart it with an ideal shape by its users, this silver vessel is the tradition, the teaching and practice that guide men toward the way of the sky, helping them see the wonder that pervades all that is, and see one's true face in each snowflake or raindrop falling down from the heavens. The vessel is itself largely superfluous. It does not transform the nature of what is collected into it, but rather simply highlights it, bringing contrast between

its inside and outside, allowing the white snow to subtly stand out from the rest of the snow-covered landscape. Once the nature of the sky has been perceived, the vessel itself can be thrown away, or simply passed on to someone who has yet to come to this realization.

The subtle power of a silver bowl may also reveal another aspect of the nature of the snow. It is when it is deprived of the fire of our star, of the light of the gilded orb throning in the sky, that the gigantic mass of moisture elevated in the lofty storehouses by the winds is shattered into innumerable pieces, its unicity turned into a multiplicity, minuscule sculptures of ice, each imparted with a unique form, heavenly artworks offered to the earth and its dwellers. When these intricate works of art of nature touch the shining surface of the silver vessel, they suddenly melt, entering into contact with the warmth of the earth. These minute sculptures, things of the world, once again simply become the raw material out of which they were made. Each snowflake loses its uniqueness, its individuality, and they all merge into one another, becoming water, transparent and formless, almost invisible, indistinguishable from the metallic vessel in which it is contained. Here, the bowl is an instrument revealing the essence of the snowflakes, showing their original form, as the essence of the great ocean, without parts, but rather a whole. Man's eyes see the individual snowflakes, clouds, puddles, or lakes, but he often fails to perceive the essence of water, which is the essence of the earth itself. The same water forms the ocean, fills out the air enfolding the planet, and even forms the major part of his own body. Observing the melting of the snow inside the vessel, he should perceive that the myriad of things of his world is like these snowflakes, and that the tradition, his inheritance, is a vessel that can show him the essence of these things, unveiling the unicity of all that is, melting down the myriad into a single expanse, extended from the innermost part of his body until the confines of the heavens. Then the clarity of the snow flooded with the brightness of the sun will fill his eyes. The snow and the silver will be interlaced with one another, and even his hands will disappear, and all will be engulfed in a great avalanche, leaving only an immaculate white earth, bathed in an equally white radiance.

Case 87 —Yunmen’ s “One Appropriate Statement” —雲門對一說

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 14.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn yún mén rú hé shì yī dài shí jiào yún mén
 舉。僧問 雲門：「如何是一代時教。」 雲門
 yún duì yī shuō
 云：「對一說。」¹

¹ 【對一說】[duì yī shuō]: The phrasing of this sentence is rather unusual, and thus much ink has been used to explain it by translators and interpreters. The most widely accepted and accurate translation nonetheless seems to be “an appropriate statement,” the fact of saying something that represents a reply that matches another person’ s statement.

【日】

こ そう うんもん と いか こ いち
 舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 一
 だい じきょう うんもんいわ たいいっせつ
 代時教。」 雲門云く、「對一說。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is the teaching of the whole lifetime?” Yunmen said: “One appropriate statement.”

More difficult it is for a man to utter one word of truth than it is to faithfully depict the beauty of a wheat field a few days before the harvest, as the ears gracefully dance with the summer breeze and the sun’ s fiery rays add a golden hue to the grains that will soon sustain the bodies of an entire village. Man’ s words are crude, and his world is replete with falsehood and caricatures. His utterances may be laden with deep meaning and profound thoughts, but they may at best lead its recipients to the truth, rather than incarnate this truth. Words are a means to an end, and to mistake words for this end marks the end of meaning and the end of the usefulness of words. The teachings of the wisest men of the world are easily superseded by an instant of contact with

the truth of the earth and the skies, and it is so because truth does not belong to the world, which is a mere congregation of images, marrying truth with falsehood, the tangible and the imaginary, without means of asserting which is which.

One may therefore spend a lifetime exploring the vast meanders of the world, lofty towers of knowledge filled with sky-high stacks of manuscripts, rivers of sooty ink and fields of pearly white paper, and still fail to satiate his thirst for truth, dying without having drunk a single droplet of it. Wading through approximations, navigating through rough sketches and hasty depictions, he gains a broad view of the whole, but cannot see a single thing clearly, beholding its true essence. The teaching of a lifetime would be a single true word, one appropriate statement, a word that would become a gate through which he would be able to slip and escape the world of words and letters itself, break out from his tower of knowledge, to contemplate the truth of the sky with his own eyes rather than through the words of his forefathers and brethren. The teaching of a lifetime may be to point out the nature of words, the essence of the world itself, displaying its falsehood, and thereby demonstrating that there is something it points toward. The world is the most useful of things, and the most deceptive. To clearly see what words and the things of the world are is to realize that every single one of them may become such a gateway toward the truth of the sky. Each one of them is false, but each one of them is a door through which we may discover the truth of being, which is one, identical no matter through which door it is seen. Then, a single word may be enough to ponder until one's last breath, no matter which word it is.

There is therefore only one thing to be taught, one thing to be discovered. Every word leads to it, and every image depicts it. The entire world edified by the hands and the mind of man points toward it, even when its inhabitants cannot fathom its presence or nature. No word is appropriate, and no word is inappropriate. All things simply are as they are, and to see their nature is to see that there is only no-thing. Words may designate different things of the world, but beyond the limits of this world, there is only truth, which is no-thing-ness. Without words, there is no truth nor falsehood, only the truth of being, manifest and undeniable, and one simply has to follow any word until its end to find the

gate to no-thing-ness, and thoughtlessly plunge into the only truth there is. Man is at all times surrounded by such gates, unlocked, ready to be opened wide and passed through. The first word of a babe may be clearer in this respect than the verbose declaration of a philosopher, and a simple “yes” may roll up the drape that veiled the entirety of the firmament, whereas a mountain of letters may only further conceal the truth of the heavens.

Case 88 —Yunmen’s “One Upside-Down Statement” —雲門倒一說

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 15.

【中】

jǔ 舉。sēng wèn 僧問 yún mén 雲門：「bú shì mù qián jī 不是目前機，¹ yì fēi mù qián shì 亦非目前事
shí 時，rú hé 如何。」mén yún 門云：「dào yī shuō 倒一說。」²

¹ 【機】S: 【机】[jī]: “an activity of the mind.” Designates the subjective views of the mind, linked with the field of all the possibilities offered by imagination, in contrast with the objective reality of the material things in front of our eyes (事 [shì]), the earthly environment (境 [jìng]). The word is also directly related with the notion of “opportunity.” For other uses of this word, see case 108, case 112, and case 168.

² 【倒一說】[dào yī shuō]: “an upside-down statement.” The phrasing used here is rather unusual and ambiguous, and thus other interpretations are plausible. It presents a contrast with the 對一說 [duì yī shuō] (“an appropriate statement”) of the previous case.

【日】

こ 舉す。そう 僧、うんもん 雲門に と 問う、「こ 是れ もくぜん 目前の き 機にあ
ま らず、もくぜん 亦た じ 目前の ひ 事にも とき 非ざる いか 時は 如何。」
もんいわ 門云く、「とういっせつ 倒一說。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is it that’s not an activity [of the mind] in front of my eyes, nor a [material] thing in front of my eyes?” Yunmen said: “One upside-down statement.”

When digging a deep hole in the ground to ensnare the passerby, one should always expect to be pushed into it by someone more familiar with the environment surrounding this trap. Begging for something precious and rare, one is puzzled when handed an empty bag, but should not be, as he receives the gift of a lifetime, an invaluable treasure. Looking at the darkness inside it, he may see anything he desires, any thing that his mind can envision, even though there is only no-thing there.

In contrast with no-thing-ness, what stands in front of our eyes is our world, composed of a million things arrayed into an ordered structure, with houses, living things, tools or machines that we perceive as individual objects and manipulate with our hands or mention with the words on our tongue. They are the objects of the actions undertaken in our daily lives, created or destroyed, transported or bought, mended or given to use, while we are the subjects performing these activities through our will and with our bodies. Many of these things are made of earth, and their essence remains no matter what. They may be burned, crushed, or thrown away, but their substance remains part of the earth, even when they cease to be things of our world. Others are pure products of our minds, ideas and concepts. Even without substance, and unable to appear in front of our eyes, these immaterial things of our world can also be turned into objects through the use of language, put into words and signs that can be mentioned and grasped by the mind and represented upon the earth. The entire world thus is found to be an immense set of objects, on the earth and in the mind. Earth and world, matter and mind, come together to form the realm into which we are thrown at birth, observed and used by a subject: ourselves.

Man, as a subject thrown into a world of objects, is neither an activity of the mind nor a thing of the earth. He stands out of both world and earth, and yet represents the harmonious marriage of them both. He is nonetheless a mystery to himself. He beholds and holds a million things, a million objects found around him, and yet does not see his true face, and fails to grasp his own nature. He fathoms all things and yet remains unfathomable to himself. He may nonetheless turn toward himself the beam coming out of

the lamp of reason. He may represent his self with words, as a thing of the world, and thus begin to see himself as an object, shedding light upon his own nature. An upside-down statement, words describing the describer, the subject taking the place of the object, this may be a way to begin to see one's true face, but one is bound to be surprised by such a revelation. Indeed, to see oneself is to realize that it is just a mask hung over nothingness itself. Taken off, there is no-thing behind it, only the vastness of the heavens, without a single thing in it, and yet no different than how it appeared before. This is when the subject collapses into the object, and both vanish in a puff of smoke, leaving nothing in their stead. It is just an illusion, the sky protruding out of itself to observe its curvature, this is what the self is. One upside-down statement is all that is needed to come to such a realization, man putting his true face into a single word, seeing that it represents no-thing, just like any other, as there is none other.⁷¹

Case 89 —The Rhinoceros Fan —犀牛扇子

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 91. A less complete version of this case is found in the Book of Serenity, case 25.⁷²

【中】

舉。鹽官一日喚侍者：「與我將犀牛¹ 扇子來。」侍者云：「扇子破也。」官云：「扇子既破，還我犀牛兒來。」侍者無對。投子云：「不辭將出，恐頭角不全。」雪竇拈²云：「我要不全底頭角。」石霜云：「若還和尚即無也。」雪竇拈云：「犀牛兒猶在。」³資福畫一圓相，於中書一「牛」字。⁴雪竇拈云：「適來為什麼不將出。」保福

⁷¹See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。p194：「雲門文偃的回答是：修煉自己，做好準備，自己對自己說法，這就是「倒一說」。」

⁷²See Book of Serenity, case 25: 「舉。鹽官一日喚侍者。與我過犀牛扇子來者云扇子破也官云。扇子既破。還我犀牛兒來者無對資福畫一圓相。於中書一牛字。」

yún hé shàng nián zūn bié qǐng rén hǎo xuě dòu niǎn yún kě
 云：「和尚年尊，⁵ 別請人好。」雪竇拈云：「可
 xī láo ér wú gōng
 惜勞而無功。」

¹ 【犀牛】[xī niú]: “a rhinoceros”.

² 【拈】[niān]: Literally, “to grasp with the fingers.” It here seems to indicate that Xuedou has understood/grasped something here, and thus added an interjection. It may also be a mark of approval.

³ 【猶在】S: 【犹在】[yóu zài]: “to still be here.”

⁴ 【藁】[gǎo]: variant of 稟 [gǎo], meaning “a draft” / “a manuscript.” The Japanese version did not translate this word.

⁵ 【年尊】[nián zūn]: “to be of a certain age and respected.”

【日】

こ えん かん いちじつ じしゃ よ わ ため
 舉す。鹽官、一日、侍者を 喚ぶ、我が 與に
 さいぎゅう せんす も き じしゃ いわ せんす
 犀牛の 扇子を 將ち 來たれ。侍者云く、「扇子
 やぶ かんいわ せんす すで やぶ われ
 破れたり。」官云く、「扇子既に 破れたれば、我に
 さいぎゅうじ かえ き じしゃこたえ な とうす
 犀牛兒を 還し 來たれ。」侍者對ること 無し。投子
 いわ ひ い じ おそ
 云く、「將き 出だすことを 辞せざるも、恐らくは
 とうかく まった せつちょうとりあ いわ われ
 頭角 全からざらん。」雪竇 拈げて 云く、「我は
 まった てい とうかく ぼつ せきそういわ も
 全からざる 底の 頭角を 要す。」石霜云く、「若し
 おしょう かえ すなわ な せつちょうとりあ
 和尚に 還さば 即ち 無からん。」雪竇 拈げて
 いわ さいぎゅうじ な あ し ふく いちえんそう
 云く、「犀牛兒は 猶お 在り。」資福、一圓相を
 えが なか ひと ぎゅう じ か せつちょうとりあ
 畫き、中に 一つの 牛の 字を 書く。雪竇 拈げ
 いわ さきほど なにゆえ ひ い
 て 云く、「適來、爲什麼にか 將き 出ださざる。」
 ぼ ふくいわ おしょう としたか べつ ひと こ
 保福云く、「和尚は 年尊し、別に 人に 請えば
 よ せつちょうとりあ いわ お ろう
 好し。」雪竇 拈げて 云く、「惜しむべし、勞して
 こう な
 功無し。」

【E】

One day, Yanguan called his attendant: “Bring me the rhinoceros fan.” The attendant said: “The fan is broken.”

Yanguan said: "Since the fan is broken, bring me the rhinoceros himself." The attendant did not answer. Touzi said: "I wouldn't mind bringing it out, but I fear the horn on its head would not be complete." (Xuedou commented: "I want that incomplete horn.") Shishuang [commented on this episode and] said: "If I brought it back to the master, nothing would remain." (Xuedou commented: "The rhinoceros is still here.") Zifu drew a circle and wrote the ideogram for "ox," [forming the second half of the word "rhinoceros,"]¹ in it. (Xuedou commented: "Why didn't you bring it out sooner?") Baofu said: "The Master is venerable and advanced in years. It would be better for him to ask someone else." (Xuedou commented: "Such a shame! All these efforts have been spent, and yet they are fruitless!")

¹ The Chinese word 犀牛 [xī niú] means rhinoceros, while the character on the right side, 牛 [niú], means "ox" when used alone.

To see beyond words and letters, one must first see what they are, and realize what they conceal as well as what they reveal. They are the most powerful tools to illuminate the path in front of our eyes, but they also are a thick blindfold veiling the truth of the earth and the sky. A lens that magnifies but also deforms, or a beam of colored light that taints all that it touches, leading the observer to mistake the tint of the beam for the one of what it touches, this is what man's language and his world is. Playing with words and fiddling with letters, one may bring attention to their nature, and make their work apparent to the eyes of the beginner on the path. Highlighting the boundaries of signs, one is invited to look beyond these frontiers and see the truth that they attempt to represent, without relying upon the work of these signs. As a demonstration of such phenomenon, one may call for his brethren to bring him the hedgehog needle, and upon hearing that it is broken, he may ask for the hedgehog itself to be brought to him, leaving the one to who this order is given perplexed, forcing him to consider a new layer of meaning of the words he uses. This may go further, as he may indeed associate the breaking of the hedgehog needle with the breaking of its name itself, the hedgehog needle. In the same spirit, he may now ask for the hedge-

or the -hog themselves to be brought to him, the pieces of this broken needle, this shattered piece of the world. Asking for a fan made of sea—lion teeth, and being told that it would be of no use since the object is irreparably damaged, he shall ask for the sea—or the lion— themselves to be brought forth in front of his eyes so that he would witness with his own eyes the state of the object. A wedge is thereby driven between world and earth, between the sign and what it represents. The gaze of the audience is brought to the words themselves, and to their breaking down. Broken into two pieces, words can find themselves completely transformed, designating radically different things. Likewise, what if all the words we use simply represent the broken shards of the sky itself, the scattered pieces of the whole of nature?

If one brings the hog or the lion, he who asked for them will nonetheless still have no needle or fan. He will not even have the broken pieces of these objects, but what will he have then? When the nature of words is seen, he knows that what he has is everything. What he sought is right in front of him, and always has been.⁷³ He simply has to mend the pieces of the world, to fuse the countless shards made of things and words so that the image it gives of the truth of the sky will be as faithful as such an image can be. But he may also pick up one of these pieces and bring it close to his eye and see the whole of the earth and the sky through it. The hog may be seen through the hedge, and the lion may appear at the bottom of the transparent sea. The hedge—hog may pass through the eye of a needle, and the sea—lion seizes the fan from the hand of those inconvenienced by the sweltering heat of the bright season. These objects are always with us, even when we fail to notice their presence,⁷⁴ but once seen, they are our world,

⁷³Hakuin (白隱) may hint at the signifier/signified dichotomy in the following sentence: “Greedy gazing at the moon in the sky, he lost the pearl in the palm of his hand.” From: Cleary, Thomas. *Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record: Zen Comments by Hakuin and Tenkei*. Shambhala Publications, 2002. n.p. (The original Japanese text could not be found by the author).

⁷⁴Xuedou’s verse hints at the fact that the fan represents the true self: “One has used the rhinoceros fan for so long, but when asked about it, he knows absolutely nothing of it.” Chinese original: 「犀牛扇子用多時問著元來總不知」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》。CBETA (Case 91); Furthermore, Wansong’s preface to this case hints at a possible interpretation: “Lands and seas are boundless. Yet, they are not separated from what is right here. All the specks of dust of the world, throughout all the ages, they are all right here, right now!” Chinese original: 「剎海無涯。不離當處。塵劫前事。盡在而

our most precious thing, which we nonetheless are then eager to let go, to let go no-where, where there is no-thing.

The whole of the earth may then be seen in each grain of sand. To bring a single object made of it is to bring the entirety of the material realm. One is offered a needle, and nothing remains to be given. He possesses all that can be appropriated. One thing is enough to have everything, but to have no-thing is to rule the world and the earth. To perceive the subtle power of the world is nonetheless to see that it is not even necessary to be given a single thing to open up the door toward no-thing-ness itself, to find the way out of the mire of the world, the illusion of words and letters. A single word may invoke the presence of the whole of nature. One inscribes the word for lion on the mud with a wooden stick, and the lion is found there, brought to life and the earth with a stroke, with a single combined action of the hand and the mind, an instance of manifestation of the power of the world upon the earth. Encircled with a movement of the arm, the lion finds himself thrown into the vastness of the skies, which are represented by this sign, and thus brought into presence in this insignificant, limited portion of the earth.⁷⁵ The unfathomable is thus contained within a sign, forced to be here, represented within itself, the whole of the heavens. Such is the remarkable power of signs, but swiftly erased by the winds and the rain, soon nothing remains of the circle and the word inside it. The products of our thoughts and our hands are bound to fade away, eroded by the unstoppable turning of the heavenly wheels, the work of the skies, but these are mere tools, and what they represented forever remains. One only has to open up his eyes to contemplate the great lion and the all-encompassing sky. One may then realize that there is nothing broken, nothing to mend, nothing to be brought forth or searched for. There is only the vastness of the skies.

今。」 From: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 25).

⁷⁵See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript] relates it to another story: "Mazu once sent a letter to Qinshan which consisted solely of a circle drawn on the paper. Upon receiving the letter, Qinshan put a black dot of ink in the middle of the circle and sent it back. That's an interesting exchange! The circle is the world of emptiness. The dot is the world of phenomena; it is the ox." (This passage could not be located in the Japanese version).

Case 90 —Qingyuan' s “Price Of Rice” — 清源米價

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 5.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn qīng yuán rú hé shì fó fǎ dà yì yuán yún lú líng
 舉。僧問 清源：「如何是佛法大意。」源 云：「盧陵
mǐ zuò me jià
 米作麼價。」

【日】

こ そう せいげん と いか こ
 舉す。僧、清源に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
ぶつぼう たいい げんいわ ろりょう べいさ も あた
 佛法の 大意。」原云く、「盧陵の 米作麼の 價ぞ。」

【E】

A monk asked Qingyuan: “What is the great meaning of Buddhism?” Qingyuan said: “What is the price of rice in Luling?”

Man craves certainty. He is often desperate to find something solid, immutable, and secure to which he could hold on, as he beholds the turning of the celestial vault, with the earth carried through the cosmos, the tree of life rooted in the ground, and the world built on its branches, caught in a titanic flow, with his own strengths being negligible compared to the heavenly forces. He thus impassively lets himself be transported through time and space. In his mind, if there is one thing that should be constant, unadulterated through the vicissitudes of the great flow, it should be the most fundamental law of nature, the essence that pervades the universe, the frame holding the heavenly wheels in place and allowing their revolutions. Thus does he seek to comprehend the fundamental law of nature, the primordial essence pervading all

that is, but as it cannot be grasped with his hands, he is condemned to simply try to understand it with his reason. Turned into a word, transformed into a thing of the world, this fundamental law becomes fully part of it, and it is thus imparted with a quality shared by of all things of the world: arbitrariness. The meaning of a word is indeed largely determined by the one using it. When the rigid earth and the infinite sky are brought into man's world, they lose their absoluteness. They then become fleeting and transient, with blurry boundaries and a flexible substance. Thus introduced into man's realm, the fundamental law of nature ceases to be something secure, something that can be completely relied upon, a foundation upon which the tallest structures may be built and eternally stand.

The meaning of the fundamental law of nature therefore differs in nature from the fundamental law itself. This law is the basis upon which the celestial wheels rest. It is the way of the sky that sets the course of all that *is*, the absolute and all-pervading essence of all. When one tries to understand its "meaning," one nonetheless is bound to remain stuck within the boundaries of the world. Meaning is indeed a product of man's reason, a property of the things forming his world, produced by his mind and his hands, rather than something found upon the earth and the sky. Such meaning may be found, in the form of a heap of words carefully arrayed into an ordered structure, describing some of its aspects and depicting the role it may play in man's existence, but one should remain conscious of the fact that such meaning of the law does not share the immutable and secure nature of the law itself. There is no objective definition of it, no series of words faithfully representing its truth. It fluctuates constantly according to whom one asks, and to the unceasing revolutions of the heavenly wheels themselves, as one's opinion on the matter ineluctably changes with the flow of time. One may as well ask what is the price of rice in our hometown, and the answer will vary just as much. This meaning cannot be pinpointed. There is no precise or single answer, only a continuous flux, like a wobbling image of the moon and the stars on the surface of a lake. This uncertainty nonetheless does not negate the value of such a representation, and by watching it, one may find out which way one should look to observe the source of its radiance. One should only be aware of the difference between the image and its source, even though they both share the

same fundamental essence. Both are ruled by the same law, which governs the world as much as the earth and the skies themselves.

Case 91 — Xingyang' s Suparnin — 興陽妙翅

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 44.

【中】

舉。僧問 興陽剖 和尚：「娑竭¹ 出海乾坤²
靜，覲面³ 相呈事若。」何 師云：「妙翅鳥王⁴ 當
宇宙，箇中誰是出頭人。」僧云：「忽遇出頭時，又
作麼生。」陽 云：「似鶻⁵ 捉鳩⁶。君不覺，御樓前
驗⁷ 始知真。」僧云：「恁麼則叉手當胸退身三步。」
陽 云：「須彌座⁸ 下烏龜子，莫待重教點額痕。」

¹ 【娑竭羅龍王】[suō jié luó lóng wáng]: Sāgara (सागर) the dragon-king (龍王 [lóng wáng] in Chinese, “Nāgarāja” नागराज in Sanskrit), whose name means “ocean” in Sanskrit, is a protective deity of Buddhism presiding over the world’ s supply of rain, according to the “Avatamsaka Sūtra.”

² 【乾坤】[qián kūn]: “the sky and the earth” / “the universe.” A term originating from the “Book of Changes” (易經).

³ 【覲面】[dí miàn]: “to face someone.”

⁴ 【妙翅鳥王】[miào chì niǎo wáng]: the Suparnin (सुपर्णिन्) or Suparṇa, meaning “well-winged” in Sanskrit, also known as Garuḍa (Sanskrit: गरुड), are giant birds having extraordinary powers, whose wingspan would have been of dozens of kilometers, originating from Hindu mythology.

⁵ 【鶻】S: 【鶻】[hú]: “a falcon.”

⁶ 【鳩】S: 【鳩】[jiū]: “a turtledove.”

⁷ 【御樓前驗】: “an inspection before the balcony.” A reference to the following story taking place during the Warring States period (c. 475-221 B.C.): Lord Pinyuan (平原), the brother of the king of Zhao (趙), a man of great wealth, built a magnificent palace with a balcony that overlooked the main road of the city. One day, a crippled man was passing by, when a beautiful lady standing on the balcony saw him and laughed at him. The crippled man was offended and demanded her head. Lord Pinyuan instead presented the head of a prisoner as the head of the beautiful lady. His men nonetheless were not deceived and left him due to their disappointment. The lord then resigned himself to cut off the head of the lady so that his men and good fortune would return. (See: 「平原君。趙勝相趙惠文王及孝成王家起重樓。臨民家。民有蹙者。美人笑之。蹙者請美人之首。君諾而不行。賓客去半。君斬囚人代之。賓固不至。遂泉美人首。懸御樓前驗其真也。」 From: 《万松老人评唱天童觉和尚颂古从容庵录》。CBETA.)

⁸ 【須彌座】S: 【須彌座】[xū mí zuò]: “the Sumeru altar.” A pedestal shaped like Mount Sumeru on which a Buddha statue can be placed.

【日】

こ そう きょうようほうおしょう と しゃかつ かい
 擧す。僧、興陽和尚に 問う、「娑竭、海を
 い けんこんしず てきめんあいてい いかん
 出でて 乾坤靜かなり、靦面相呈すること 若何。」
 し いわ みょうじ どうおううちゅう あた こ うちだれ
 師云く、「妙翹鳥王宇宙に 當る、箇の 中誰か
 こ しゅつとう ひと そういわ たちまちしゅつとう あ ときまた
 是れ 出頭の 人。」僧云く、「忽 出頭に 遇う 時又
 さもさん よういわ こつ はと とら に
 作麼生。」陽云く、「鶻の 鳩を 捉うるに 似た
 きみさと ぎょうぜん けん はじ しん
 り、君覺らずんば 御樓前に 驗して 始めて 眞を
 し そういわ いんも しゃしゅ どうきょうたいしんさん
 知れ。」僧云く、「恁麼ならば 叉手 當胸 退身三
 ほ よういわ しゅみ ざか う き す かさ
 歩せん。」陽云く、「須彌座下の 烏龜子、重ねて
 ひたい てん あと ま なか
 額を 點して 痕せしむることを 待つこと 莫れ。」

【E】

A monk asked Master Pou of Xingyang: “Sagara, the dragon king, has emerged out of the ocean, and the heaven and earth went quiet. What will you do when you face him?” Master Ho said: “Suparnin, the king of the birds, absorbs the entire universe. Who can stick out his head from it?” The monk said: “But when one does stick out one’s head from it, what then?” Yang said: “It is like a falcon catching a pigeon. If this gentleman fails to realize it, he will learn the truth through an ‘inspection before the balcony.’”¹ The monk said: “If so, then I’ll clasp my hands before my chest and retreat three steps.” Yang said: “You black tortoise under the Sumeru altar. Don’t wait to once again be taught a lesson, being struck on the forehead and getting a scar!”

¹ “An inspection before the balcony”: See note 7 of the Chinese text.

The world we inhabit and contribute to construct every day is an ocean of things. We wade through it, or dive into its depths, and often lose sight of the beauty of the heavens above its surface, and of the shining presence of our star, whose luminous rays are

only seen in the shallows. Allured by this light, observing the images of the sun on the creases of the waves, like a thousand stars dancing in the sky, one may be guided to pass the planar threshold separating water from air, raising his eyes to the source of all brilliance, finally seeing the oneness of what appeared like a thousand things. The immense body of the ocean is then seen for what it is, a vast sea of illusions, a mass of liquid dreams, fleeting images and deceitful transparency, inviting the inattentive beings to the shadowy depths, where all that is seen are the fruits of our imagination. The majesty of the heavens is then finally revealed, and its emptiness and perfect clarity are unveiled and beheld. The gilded radiance of the sun and the silvery countenance of the moon attract the eyes and the flesh of the discoverer, more vigorously than the pull of the earth. He thus soars above the waters like a giant dragon, its head turned to the zenith, its tail waving and stirring up tempests that will sweep away all the dust of the dry land. Emboldened and proud, he feels stronger than all other creatures of the earth and the seas, more agile than the dolphin, and more impressive than the blue whale. No one would be able to bring him down from the heights he has attained, and even the earth and the sky themselves are now quiet.

Gaining awareness of the deceitful nature of the great ocean of things, one dispels the illusions of the world, but one may nonetheless still be blind to the most pervading, the most entrenched but the least visible of all illusions. Rising above a thousand things and beholding the emptiness that reigns above the surface of the ocean, it is easy to be oblivious to the presence of one last thing, one that he introduces into the vast emptiness of the skies: himself. He is the last thing that remains to be seen and left behind. He furiously moves through the clouds and the air, flying to the confines of the firmament, but no matter how fast he goes or for how long, this last thing is still with him, as much as before. The earth down below was troubled by the presence of things, but now the dragon troubles the heavens by his presence, bringing unclarity to the clear realm, throwing a thing into the place where there was no-thing, thereby failing to see no-thing-ness.

Still deluded by his own self, the great dragon then stumbles upon one greater than him, one who sees through the waters as well as through the air, one who is intimate with the ocean as well as

with the heavens, and more importantly, one who has succeeded in abandoning the last thing, playing with it rather than being played by it. The king of the birds stealthily swoops down on the dragon, holding it in its beak, like an insignificant earthworm, agitating its body but utterly powerless. Then comes the time for the great realization. When death is as clear as the summer sky in front of one's eyes, then the will to live appears as well. Feeling the impending extinction of the self, the self itself finally becomes the focus of his attention. The last thing is brought in front of his eyes, and he can see how he has yet to discover the essence of the sky, which is emptiness. Ceasing to resist, embracing his fate with contentment, he lets himself be swallowed whole, his life quenched, a spark falling into the sea. Clarity then returns to the heavens.

The heights of the sky may nonetheless be more obscure than the depths of the ocean. The sun may blind more completely than the darkest night. Fortunately, there is often someone ready to come down to help those in need, even if it is with seemingly harsh words or even with razor-sharp claws slashing through their skin. Seeing a creature agitating its body, wrestling with its self, he holds it down firmly, pressing it upon the earth. The one who wants freedom from the weight of the world should nevertheless first learn to carry this weight upon his shoulders, before casting it away, realizing that it is as light as a feather. It is indeed harder to relieve oneself of one's shoulders themselves than of the burden placed upon them. When it is done, there is nonetheless nothing left to carry, and genuine freedom is then displayed throughout the firmament.

Case 92 — Yanyang's "One Thing" — 嚴陽一物

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 57.

【中】

jǔ yán yáng zūn zhě wèn zhào zhōu yí wù bù jiāng lái shí rú hé
 舉。嚴陽尊者問趙州：「一物不將來時如何。」
 zhōu yún fàng xià zhōu yún yí wù bù jiāng lái fàng xià
 州云：「放下著。」嚴云：「一物不將來，放下
 gè shén me zhōu yún rèn me zé dān qǔ qù
 箇甚麼。」州云：「恁麼則擔取去。」

【日】

こ がんようそんじゃ じょうしゅう と いちもつ ふしょうらい
 擧す。巖陽尊者 趙州に 問う、「一物不將 來の
とき いかん しゅういわ ほうげじゃく がんにわ いちもつ ふしょうらい
 時如何。」州云く、「放下著。」巖云く、「一物不將 來
こ なに ほうげ しゅういわ いんも
 箇の 甚麼をか 放下せん。」州云く、「恁麼ならば
たんしゅ さ
 擔取し 去れ。」

【E】

The Venerable Yanyang asked Zhaozhou: “How is it when someone does not have a single thing?” Zhaozhou said: “Let it go.” Yanyang said: “He does not have a single thing, what could he let go?” Zhaozhou said: “If so, carry it around.”

A blind man may sit upon a pile of rare jewels and gold coins and still consider himself to be poor, as he tramples this hidden wealth, considering it to be mere gravel, a hindrance on his way. Those endowed with sight may nonetheless also be blind to the limitations of their sight. Similar to this is someone searching within the borders of the world for what does not belong to this world. Folly it is to feel compelled to use words to declare that one has gained freedom from words or to have no other means than to hold a sign in one's hands proclaiming that there is nothing to which one holds on. To let go of all of our earthly possessions is not enough, and nor it is sufficient to release all the things of the world to which our mind clings, such as the words uttered by our mouth or those resonating inside our head. All this work upon ourselves is vain if we still fail to see that what remains when all things have been abandoned, no-thing-ness, is itself a thing that occupies a place in our world, in our mind, and to which the man on the path may be the most intensely tempted to cling to, not even realizing that it is also a thing.⁷⁶ The man who has

⁷⁶See Wansong's preface on this case: “If that is not to ride an ox to look for an ox, then it is [like] to use a wedge to remove a wedge.” Chinese original: 「若非騎牛覓牛。便是以楔去楔。」From: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 57).

nothing is thus told: “Let it go!” To *have* nothing is to possess something. He opens up his mouth and a river of words gushes out of it, showing to his audience the mass of things concealed within his mind, thereby showing the extent of what possesses his mind. What should be let go of is no-thing-ness itself, as an object of thought, the target of one’s attention. As soon as a thought arises, no-thing-ness vanishes and we are thrown back into the world into which we were born, surrounded by things, and no-thing-ness being a mere word. To not have a single thing, one must learn not to have, but simply to be. No-thing-ness is not a place into which one could venture from somewhere outside of it. It rather is only what remains when the true nature of all things has been perceived; when the boundaries separating them have been shown to be a mere creation of our mind. It is when no-thing-ness itself is forgotten that one becomes no-thing-ness, rather than a being, a thing standing out of it. No-thing-ness cannot be seized or approached. One simply has to let himself be pervaded by it, to his core, until there is nothing left, not even no-thing-ness itself.

If one is blind to his own blindness, how would one nonetheless show it to him? To see his own not seeing, he needs to be confronted with the very frontiers of his world, to stumble upon something that does would not make sense unless he failed to see another dimension of his world. Asking what he should let go of, since he has nothing, he is told: “If so, carry it around,” thereby only increasing his perplexity. But this is precisely this puzzle-ment that offers him a chance to reconsider his own predicament. What is this thing that he should carry around if he carries nothing? This “nothing” is what he can’t let go of, as he fails to realize the place it occupies in his world, in his mind. A day, a year, or a lifetime may pass, but once this most inconspicuous thing is seen as clearly as the day and the fiery orb illuminating the earth, then can the grip finally be relaxed, and this thing fades into transparency. Nothing then remains, not even “no-thing.”

Case 93 — Luzu Does Not Understand 一魯祖不會

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 93.

舉。魯祖 問 南泉：「『摩尼珠¹ 人不識。如來
 藏² 裏親³ 收得。』如何是藏。」 泉 云：「王老師⁴
 與汝往來者是。」 祖 云：「不往來者。」 泉 云：「亦
 是藏。」 祖 云：「如何是珠。」 泉 召云：「師祖。」
 5 祖 應：「諾。」 泉 云：「去。汝不會我語。」

¹ 【摩尼珠】[mó ní zhū]: “the Mani Jewel.” From the Sanskrit “cintāmaṇi” (चिन्तामणि), a wish-fulfilling jewel first described in the Hindu tradition, and later becoming part of the Buddhist one. It commonly is used as a metaphor for one’s true nature, his Buddha nature.

² 【如來藏】[rú lái zàng]: “the Tathagata treasury.” Translation of the Sanskrit “Tathāgatagarbha” (तथागतगर्भ). In Mahayana Buddhism, it represents the doctrine that all sentient beings have within themselves the virtue and wisdom of the Tathagata, but that this fact is occulted by the various poisons affecting them.

³ 【親】S: 【亲】[qīn]: “in person.”

⁴ 【王老師】[wáng lǎo shī], that is, Nanquan himself.

⁵ 【師祖】[shī zǔ], that is, Luzu.

【日】

舉す。魯祖、南泉に 問う、「摩尼珠人識らず、
 如來藏裏に 親しく 收得す、如何なるか 是れ
 藏。」 泉云く、「王老師汝と 往來するもの 是。」
 祖云く、「往來せざる 者は。」 泉云く、「亦是れ
 藏。」 祖云く、「如何なるか 是れ 珠。」 泉召して
 云く、「師祖。」 祖、應諾す。 泉云く、「去れ、汝 我
 語を 會せず。」

【E】

Luzu¹ asked Nanquan: “ ‘People are not conscious of [the existence of] the Mani-Jewel.² I picked it up myself in the Tathagata treasury.’ ³ What is this treasury?” Nanquan said: “Master Wang discusses back and forth with you. That’s it.” Shizu said: “How about when there is no back and forth discussion?” Nanquan said: “That’s also the treasury.” Shizu

said: “What is the jewel?” Nanquan said: “Shizu!” Shizu said: “Yes!” Nanquan said: “Go! You don’ t understand my words.”

¹ “Luzu” : The name here seems to be the result of a scribal mistake, as it refers to another monk, absent from the rest of the dialogue. The name here should be Shizu.

² “The Mani Jewel” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

³ “The Tathagata treasury” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

In order for the eye to observe itself, it must be confronted with the perfect clarity of a surface that reflects all that it receives, without disturbance, having itself no image imprinted on it, letting itself simply represent what surrounds it, a rare occurrence. Likewise, seldom does a man encounter someone who has left behind his own face, his mask worn in the world of men, to show others his own true face, and the eye with which he beholds all things. The eye then shines like the most finely cut jewel, and through the depths of its reflections, it is the entirety of the world that appears, just as it is, as it was and will be, no different than before, but only now seen in radiant truth.

In the same manner, the jewel that we carry at all times with us is the prism through which we observe the earth and the skies. Each one of its thousand facets shows a thing of our world, dissecting the light of the heavens into as many rays forming an image marrying the truth of the skies with the mark of the jewels’ complex shape. The world-jewel nonetheless does more than simply let through the light of the heavens, the truth of the skies. It is a wondrous thing that brings to us all that we desire. The world indeed is a brocade of truth interweaved with fantasies, and the jewel allows us to invoke the presence of anything we wish into this world. We think of something, and it appears in our head, in our dreams, but this unlimited power is meant to guide us, so that we would liberate ourselves from the yoke of our wishes and fantasies, and see all that is, just as it is.⁷⁷

⁷⁷See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klausur der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p480: „die magische Perle der Wunscherfüllung, und zwar zwangsläufig, zu; besteht doch die magische Wirkung der Shunyata - nichts anderes ist mit der Perle gemeint - eben darin, dass sie uns von allen Wünschen befreit. ...”

Furthermore, the substance of the jewel behind our eyes is discovered when what surrounds it is seen as it is, when the treasury in which it is always stored finally becomes visible. This treasury encompasses the world and the earth. It embraces the entirety of the firmament. It is the place out of which all things arise, but in which not a single thing is found. It is impossible to see it, and yet it pervades all, and one cannot flee from it. When one passes through the crowded, filthy streets of the world, carrying his jewel and playing with things and words, his mind busying itself with the affairs of men, it remains present and all occurs within the invisible walls of this world. When, on the contrary, one seeks to flee the unceasing hustle and bustle of the world to take refuge in a deserted place, plunged in silence, fleeing people and their things, he is still surrounded by this treasury, still carrying the jewel within him. The treasury conceals the greatest treasure, but its presence is eclipsed by the brightness of the jewel illuminated by the light of the world. Only when the jewel is seen, seized, and thrown away may the nature of this space appear. What is the jewel? You! You should therefore go! Run away from this jewel whose light blinds you to its presence. Flee as far as you can from it, and then the true treasure will reveal itself, without anyone to see it, without anything to see, and nothing left to understand.

Case 94 —Bajiao' s Staff —芭蕉拄杖

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 44.

【中】

bā jiāo¹ hé shàng shì zhòng yún ěr yǒu zhǔ zhàng zǐ wǒ yǔ ěr zhǔ
芭蕉¹ 和尚示眾云：「爾有拄杖子，我與爾拄
zhàng zǐ ěr wú zhǔ zhàng zǐ wǒ duó ěr zhǔ zhàng zǐ
杖子；爾無拄杖子，我奪爾拄杖子。」

¹ 【芭蕉】[bā jiāo]: a 10th century Korean monk who settled in China, whose full name is 芭蕉慧清 [bā jiāo huì qīng]. He is not to be mistaken for the famous Japanese Zen poet Matsuo Bashō (松尾芭蕉, 1644 -1694).

【日】

こ ばしょうおしょう しゅ しめ いわ なんじ
舉す。芭蕉和尚、衆に 示して 云く、「爾に
しゅじょうす あ わ なんじ しゅじょうす あた なんじ
拄杖子有らば、我れ 爾に 拄杖子を 與えん。爾に

しゅじょう す な わ なんじ しゅじょう す うば
 拄杖子無くんば、我れ 爾が 拄杖子を 奪わん。」

【E】

Master Bajiao said to his congregation: “You have a staff? I will give the staff to you. You do not have staff? I will take the staff away from you.”

With our world appearing like an ancient fortress that has passed through the ages, without being damaged by the work of the skies and the hands of man, the idea that it stands secure, as something that can be absolutely relied upon, is deeply and durably entrenched in our minds. The pillars around us are monuments to certainty itself, and few will ever reflect about their foundations, and the nature of the soil upon which they stand. The servant of the way nonetheless is driven out of the great desert by torrid winds, and led to return to the great fortress to show its inhabitants the danger of their long-established habits, the weakness of their ways. His walking staff in hand, he confidently advances through the dusty streets, wading through the throng as if swimming through a translucent river, not seeing a populace of rich and poor, noble or commoner, virtuous or sinner, but rather only the flow of life, one with the earth and the sky. Arriving at the basis of the pillars supporting this fortress, he vigorously hits the ground with his wooden appendix, catching the attention of all gathered there as the sound of this striking loudly echoes throughout the air. What he holds in his hand is the pillar of the world, supporting the heavens.⁷⁸ It is the only thing that there is. It is a dragon who has swallowed the entire earth, all living beings, and the sky itself. It is also the weapon that will shatter the pillars of the fortress, and cause the world to crumble, exposing the wobbliness of its foundations to the eyes of all its inhabitants. Under the curious gaze of the people assembled there, he then opens up his

⁷⁸See Wumen's Verse concerning this case: "All the 'deep' and the 'shallow' are in one's hand. It supports the heavens and keeps the earth in place. Everywhere, it stirs up a wind of piety." Chinese original: 「諸方深與淺都在掌握中撐天并拄地隨處振宗風」, from: 《禪宗無門關》。CBETA (Case 44).

mouth to let a manifestation of the way flow out of it: “There is only one thing. If you think you have it, I will show you that you do not. If you think you do not have it, I will show you that you have.”

The dwellers of the fortress abide in their certainties, but the man of the way will show them that it is through non-abiding, plunging into uncertainty and indeterminacy, that they will finally be free from their delusions. If one considers himself to have seen the truth, it means that he still holds on to the thing we call truth, and thus remains a slave to the world of things. If one thinks that he has gained freedom from the delusions induced by the omnipresence of the things of the world, this means that he holds on to the thing called freedom, and thus is still a prisoner of the illusory world. When one goes beyond having and not-having, sight and blindness, freedom and slavery, passing through each but abiding in neither, neither embracing nor rejecting, then one will find out that the last thing becomes a hindrance rather than a help, an obstacle rather than support.⁷⁹ The grip on it can then be gently released. It is neither seized nor cast away, but only fiddled with, and then, there is no longer any audience, pillars, or fortress. There is no staff and no one to hold it. There is no longer a need for freedom, as there is no one to free. And yet nothing but the mind has been transformed, and being itself goes on its way.

Case 95 — This One Has Something To Say — 某甲話在

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 54.

【中】

jǔ yún mén wèn sēng jìn lí shén chù sēng yún xī chán
舉。雲門問僧：「近離甚處。」僧云：「西禪。」
mén yún xī chán jìn rì yǒu hé yán jù sēng zhǎn liǎng shǒu mén
門云：「西禪近日有何言句。」僧展兩手，門

⁷⁹See Wumen’s comment on this case: “It supports the one crossing a river when the bridge is broken. It accompanies the one returning to his village on a moonless night. If one calls it a walking staff, he enters hell as fast as an arrow.” Chinese original: 「扶過斷橋水。伴歸無月村。若喚作拄杖。入地獄如箭。」, from: 《禪宗無門關》。CBETA (Case 44).

dǎ yī zhǒng sēng yún mǒu jiǎ huà zài mén què zhǎn liǎng shǒu sēng wú
 打一掌。僧云：「某甲話在。」門 却展兩手。僧無
 yǔ mén biàn dǎ
 語，門 便打。

【日】

こ うんもん そう と ちか いずこ はな
 舉す。雲門、僧に 問う、「近ごろ 甚處を 離れ
 そういわ さいぜん もんいわ さいぜん さんじつ
 しや。」僧云く、「西禪。」門云く、「西禪には 近日
 なん ごんく あ そう りょうて の もん う
 何の 言句か 有る。」僧、兩手を 展ぶ。門、打つ
 ひらてうち そういわ それがし わ あ もん かえ
 こと 一掌す。僧云く、「某甲話在り。」門、却っ
 りょうて の そう ご な もん すなわ う
 て 兩手を 展ぶ。僧、語無し。門、 便ち 打つ。

【E】

Yunmen asked a monk: "Where have you come from?"
 The monk said: "Xichan." Yunmen said: "What words does
 Xichan say lately?" The monk stretched out his arms. Yun-
 men slapped him. The monk said: "This one has something
 to say." Yunmen then stretched out his own arms. The monk
 remained speechless. Yunmen then hit him.

Silence may speak more loudly than words. A gesture may be clearer than a lengthy scroll. It is easy to take refuge in one or the other, seeking a truth that is in the eye of the beholder, but more arduous and more rewarding it is to master the whole palette of expression discovered by mankind, combining the use of words, wordless signs, and silence, artfully playing with them, wittingly unsettling the opponent, disarming him and returning to his throat the blade that he carelessly unsheathed. Each technique presents its dangers and power, and this is why the one durably abiding in either one of them is condemned to fall into a delusion, blind to his own predicament. How would one learn of these dangers, and leap over the snares, constantly moving, never abiding anywhere?

Offered a pile of words in the form of a mundane question, one may be given something unexpected, something besides words, thereby forcing its recipient to depart, for an instant, from the realm of words to venture somewhere else, and consider what links these two shores of understanding. What is the meaning of being? A finger is raised. What teaching do you offer your followers? Outstretched arms. Observing such cryptic answers, one will then feel compelled to ask himself: "What is the meaning of this?" Here is the lesson, given without opening one's mouth. There is no inherent meaning. The one observing the gesture must construct it himself, and he will never be sure of what the person who made it intended, or even if there was any intention behind it. Hearing a chain of words meticulously weaved by an intelligent mind, the room for interpretation is rather limited. The meaning of each word always has somewhat blurry borders, but the men using it have established some degree of convention, agreeing on a set of definite meanings. The gestures share with words a common essence as signs, but a key difference is that they are here used for their ambiguity, the foggy nature of their contours. The outstretched arms may have a thousand meanings or none. They may designate the unity of the world with no-thing-ness, forming a single body, or they may be an invitation to pay notice to our surroundings, as if saying: "The answer that you seek, it is all around you. It is the earth and the sky itself, what you experience here and now." It may also simply be a simple bait, to leave the novice speechless, to confuse him so as to make him wonder and see the limits of his world, the end of language, the beginning of the truth of the earth. It may also interweave these meanings together, even including meaninglessness itself, like a golden thread in a silk vestment. What the audience discovers is that there is meaning beyond words, and that there is something beyond meaning.

Lost in words, puzzled with sentences, and confused by the encounter with the silent sign, the wordless gesture, the novice remains clueless, and when he is asked about the teaching he received, like a trained monkey, he simply outstretches his arms, ingeniously passing on a teaching whose truth he failed to perceive. How is one guided back to the earth, forced to descend from the heights of the world in which he is lost? A hard slap on the cheek! This is another sign, one delivered directly to the senses, shaking up his consciousness to its core, with the pain, surprise,

and humiliation forcing him to reconsider his behavior. Facing a master of the world, a lord of the earth, a man of the way, he attempts to justify himself, to drag the teacher into the heights or the mire of the world: “I have something to say about that!” Playfully jumping from world to earth, the master nonetheless is not caught off guard, and he drags back the disciple to the realm of the senses, the earth, appealing to his sense of sight by simply outstretching his arms, once again plunging the novice in utter amazement. This is what your teacher was showing you! What you still fail to see! With another slap, he received the seal of the hand of the teacher, imprinted on his reddened face. You sought a million answers, but just look, they are all there, in front of your eyes, all around you. It is just this.

Case 96 —The World-Honored One Ascends The Rostrum 一世尊升座

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 92. This case is identical to Book of Serenity, case 1.

【中】

舉。世尊 一日陞座，文殊 白槌云：「諦觀法
王法，法王法如是。」世尊 便下座。

【日】

こ せそん いちじつ ざ のぼ もんじゅ びやくつい
舉す。世尊、一日、座に 陞る。文殊、白槌し
いわ ほうおう ほう たいかん ほうおう ほう
て 云く、「法王の 法を 諦觀せよ、法王の 法は
こ ごと せそん すなわ ざ くだ
是の 如しと。」世尊、 便ち 座を 下る。

【E】

One day, the World-Honored One ascended to the rostrum. Manjushri struck the gavel and said: “Contemplate with great care the Dharma of the Dharma-King! The Dharma of the Dharma-King is like this.” The World-Honored One then descended from the rostrum.

What the people want may often differ from what the people need. Eager for instruction, men may need for it to be denied to them, allowing the tumultuous torrent of thoughts passing through their minds to dwindle, calmed by the work of time. Yearning for words of wisdom, they may need to be given silence, the opportunity to hear what is found inbetween such words. When the mouths are shut, the ears finally open, the melodious songs of nature are listened to, and the commands of the heavens can now be hearkened.

Some men thus want to become intimate with the way, seeing it with their own eyes, treading it with their bare feet. They call upon the heavens for a sign, someone to guide their steps, and then someone approaches, advancing slowly, walking on the bare earth as the clouds hover over his head and the sun floods them all with a river of brilliance that illuminates the innermost part of their eyes. He climbs to an elevated position to be equally seen by all, and the gaze of the people is focused upon his face. Then, the gavel is struck and a deafening sound suddenly breaks the silence that reigned until then upon this small part of the earth. An anomaly is heard, something that stands out of the silence. This wave going through the sky and into the ears of those gathered there attracts the attention of all, and it not only reveals the nature of the air through which it passes, or awakens the sense of hearing that was numbed by the absence of sound, but it also reveals the contrast between sound and silence. It represents a sign, whose meaning is left to the hearer to interpret, but even after it has faded into silence, silence itself is changed by its passage, heard with a new dimension. Striking the gavel, stirring up a great wave in the sky, it is the entirety of the heavens that is revealed by this sign, despite or perhaps thanks to its most rudimentary nature. Nothing else is needed in order for everything to be understood.⁸⁰

The envoy of the way nonetheless continues to face the crowd, impassively, without the faintest sound, without the slightest movement, with no sign whatsoever offered to them. A voice then

⁸⁰See Yuanwu's preface to this case: "One string is plucked, and the tune is recognized." Chinese original: 「動絃別曲。」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》. CBETA (Case 92).

resounds: “The teaching of the man of the way is like this!” And nothing more occurs. Silence and stillness reign upon the earth, as the winds sweep the earth with a faint murmur. The way is nowhere else than here and now. It is to be found within us, through the realization that there is no inside nor outside, no “us” and no “him.” The eyes of the guide are then found to be an abyss. His mouth is a bottomless canyon. All that it shows is nothing, an incarnation of the way, an embodiment of no-thing-ness itself, attracting others to it, in the same manner as the earth pulls down all that approaches it to its face. In the ocean of things of the world, he is an island of no-thing-ness, an anomaly that breaks the mundanity of the world. He shatters the thingness of the world, interrupting it with a moment where no-thing is displayed on the earth and in the skies. His presence is a testimony to the vacuity of the world and to the majesty of emptiness. He brings contrast to this world, revealing both the nature of the world and the nature of no-thing-ness. Through his presence, it is the nature of the whole of the earth and the skies that is once again revealed. He is the doorway through which the truth of being may be perceived and experienced, an exit point to leave the illusory world and discover the truth that it concealed. His coming was nonetheless superfluous, as everything could already be heard in the sound of the gavel. What the gavel revealed with a sound, he reveals with a sight, but both are mere reflections of the truth of the way. Nothing more is to be heard or seen, and thus does the envoy descend to join the crowd, letting himself be dissolved in it, leaving no-thing to be seen, and everything to be perceived.

Case 97 —The Bodhisattva Strikes The Lectern —大士揮案

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 67.

【中】

jǔ líóng wǔ dì qīng fù dà shì jiǎng jīn gōng jīng dà shì biàn yú
 舉。梁武帝請傅大士講金剛經。大士便於
 zuò shàng huī àn yí xià biàn xià zuò wǔ dì è rán zhì gōng
 座上，揮案¹一下，便下座。武帝愕然。²誌公
 wèn bì xià hái huì ma dì yún bú huì zhì gōng yún dà
 問：「陛下還會麼。」帝云：「不會。」誌公云：「大

shì jiǔng jīng jìng

士講經竟。」

¹ 【揮案】[huī àn]: “to strike a lectern.” This striking was probably done with a stick used as a pointer for reading, similar to the “yad” used in Jewish synagogues for the reading of scriptures.

² 【愕然】[è rán]: “to be stunned” / “to be amazed.”

【日】

こ りょう ぶ てい ふ だい し しょう こんごう きょう
 舉す。梁の武帝、傳大士を 請じて 金剛 經を
 こう だい し すなわ ざじょう おい つくえ はら
 講ぜしむ。大士 便ち 座上に 於て、案を 揮うこ
 ひとたび すなわ ざ くだ ぶ ていがくぜん
 と 一下して、 便ち 座を 下る。武帝愕然たり。
 し こう と へいか は え ていいわ え
 誌公問う、「陛下還た 會すや。」帝云く、「會せ
 し こう いわ だい し こう ぎょう おわ
 ず。」誌公云く、「大士講 經し 竟んぬ。」

【E】

The emperor Wu of Liang invited Bodhisattva Fu and asked him to give a talk on the Diamond Sutra. The Bodhisattva then ascended the rostrum, struck the lectern once, and descended. Emperor Wu was stunned. Zhigong asked him: “Did Your Majesty understand?” The emperor said: “I didn’t understand [anything].” Zhigong said: “The Bodhisattva has finished explaining the Sutra.”

For those exalted by the world, surrounded by riches and living their days in palaces covered in gold, furnished with the life work of the most skillful craftsmen, wearing majestic clothes that are the fruit of countless days of labor of the people they rule over, possessing all things one could wish for, it is easy to become blind to the nature of what these things are made of, and of the nature of what is seldom looked upon when the eye is constantly attracted to the earth, to these shiny possessions that keep one busy, that is, the all-encompassing heavens above. The emperor of the middle kingdom may be called the son of heaven, but a

peasant strenuously tilling his fields in the countryside has a more intimate contact with the sky, and he is in a better position to realize the essence of the all-encompassing realm, the truth of being. The son of heaven thus needs a more peculiar guidance, a more direct instruction.

How can one teach the scripture preaching that there is no reader and nothing to read, but rather only no-thing-ness? There is no-thing to teach, and no one to whom it could be taught. The words are there to point out the way to go, but they are powerless to bring someone there. But clearer than words is a direct display, an exhibition of no-thing-ness, one that may strike a chord and resonate through one's soul.⁸¹

Ascending to the rostrum, the guide from beyond the middle kingdom, one for whom there is no sons of the earth nor a son of heaven, is no-thing-ness incarnate. No-thing-ness is deaf and dumb. It is utterly devoid of words and concepts. It does not separate the self from the other, the inside from the outside. There is no meaning to the actions of the guide incarnating no-thing-ness because he embodies the place into which meaning cannot be brought. His appearance is nonetheless like the one of any other man. He seems to be a creature of the world like countless others, a thing belonging to this realm standing among innumerable other things. Those not endowed with a curious eye will fail to see what is shown to them. No-thing-ness is indeed not a place away from the world, and the world is not distant from no-thing-ness. Both are inextricably interweaved. The world is, in its essence, no-thing-ness, and no-thing-ness is the essence of the world. The mind creates the illusion of their separation, an illusion that allows us to reason and edify this world for our benefit, but when the foundation is hidden from man's sight, he forgets what his world is, and the place it occupies in his existence. He becomes oblivious to the truth of being, and loses sight of his destiny.

The guide then strikes the lectern, in a swift, precise movement. A sound echoes throughout the air, slowly fading into silence. This is the truth preached by the scriptures, brought directly to the eyes and the ears of the son of heaven. When does the movement start and end? When is the soundwave stirred up

⁸¹ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「自身也是一部活經卷。」

and when does it disappear? There is no absolute delimiting line for either. The arm was raised before the birth of the earth, and it has yet to end its course. The sound began with the unfolding of the heavens themselves, and it still faintly resonates into our ears, if we listen to it attentively enough. There is no beginning nor end, no sound nor silence, no movement nor stillness. This is the essence of the scripture. We create these things in order to attempt to understand no-thing-ness, to fathom the nature of being, but there is no-thing to understand, and no-thing-ness cannot be understood. When the arm of the guide is seen, and the sound heard, then there is nothing left, and he descends from the rostrum. Stunned, the son of heaven declares that he does not understand what has occurred. Simple or wise, they would have the same answer. To not understand is to be on the right track. To understand is to stray away, as it shows that one is still a prisoner of the delusion that there is something to be understood, or someone that can understand, while there is only no-thing. There is no-thing around, no-thing within. We are everything and no-thing, beautifully fused, indistinguishable, all sons of heaven and earth, builders of an illusory world, on top of which we proudly stand, gazing at the stars illuminating the summer sky, seeing our face in them.

Case 98 —The Man Of Great Strength — 大力量人

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 20.

【中】

sōng yuán hé shàng yún dà lì liàng rén yīn shén tái jiǎo bù qǐ yòu
松源 和尚云：「大力量人因甚擡¹ 脚不起。」又
yún kāi kǒu bú zài shé tóu shàng
云：「開口不在舌頭上。」

¹ 【擡】[tái]: variant of 抬 [tái], meaning: “to lift” / “to raise.”

【日】

こ しょうげんおしょういわ だいきりき りょう ひと な
擧す。松源和尚云く、「大力量の 人、甚んに
よ あし もた お またいわ くち
因ってか 脚を 擡げ 起こさざる。」又云く、「口を

ひら ぜっとう じょう あ
 開くこと 舌頭 上に 在らず。」

【E】

Songyuan asked: "Why can't the man of great strength lift up his legs?" And he also said: "Speech does not necessarily come from the tongue."

Strength is a measure of one's ability to act upon the earth or the world, a gradation associated with words marking the passing of arbitrary thresholds such as "little" or "great." It may find itself manifested upon the earth, but it belongs to the world. Beyond its boundaries, strength and weakness have no existence. An ant is strong when it lifts up a piece of leaf, and the sun's fiery rays are strong as well when they hit our skin damaged by the dry summer air. One who has been enlightened by the luminance of the heavens is someone who sees beyond the opposition between strength and weakness, beyond greatness and smallness. His strength resides in his ability to let himself be carried upon the way of the sky, without resistance, without hurry, without will. He lets the thoughts arising in his mind freely come and go without grasping them, like gentle oscillations on the surface of a lake undisturbed by the winds blowing throughout the sky, the tremors of the earth, or the hustle and bustle of the world. His strength is in his absence of use of strength, his going on with the flow of nature.

The strength of the enlightened is therefore concealed from the eyes of the world. For its inhabitants, he is weak and ridiculed. He himself declares his impotence to them: "I cannot even lift one of my legs." This statement of impotence to the world is nonetheless a pledge of fidelity and devotion to the way of the sky itself. To be unable to lift up one's leg is a manifestation of his abandonment of his own will. To the world, he is a fool and a liar, as they see him walking like any other man. He is the most truthful reflection of the heavens found in this deceitful world. When he moves, it is the way itself that moves his limbs. His mind is clear and still, and the mere idea of the lifting of a leg has been thrown into the

depths of his memory. All that he does is let himself be guided by nature itself, thus embodying the strength of the heavens as a whole, more powerful than the will of any living being.

Like any other dweller of the world, he is thus heard speaking by other men, with long chains of words heard from his direction as they slip into their ears. His hand dances with a quill, leaving trails of sooty ink on sheets of paper that are attentively read by others. And yet, his tongue remains still, and his arm does not move an inch. The speech that comes out of his mouth is not formed by his tongue nor constructed by his mind. The letters that are found upon his desk are not written by his hand nor conceived by his reason. He is a mere instrument, no different than the air or the ink. His actions are a mere natural reaction to his surroundings, without him letting his opinions or thoughts influence them. All that appears to come from him comes from the way itself, of which he is more than a part, but rather a doorway to its entirety, accessible to all those who find themselves in contact with him. His strength cannot be measured, and it can be shared with all, without it finding itself diminished or weakened. All are invited to partake in it, and all are destined to succeed in becoming beings of great strength.

Case 99 — A Ball On A Torrent Of Water — 急水上打球子

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 80.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州：「初生孩子，還具六識¹ 也無。」
趙州 云：「急水上打毬子。」僧復問 投子：「急水
上打毬子，意旨如何。」子 云：「念念不停流。」

¹ 【六識】[liù shí]: “the six consciousnesses,” tied to the six senses of Buddhist philosophy: the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile senses, in addition to consciousness.

【日】

こ 擧す。そう 僧、じょうしゅう 趙州に 問う、「うまれたて 初生の あか 孩子は は 還た
ろくしき 六識を ぐ 具する や 也無。」 趙州云く、「じょうしゅういわ 急水上 きゅうすいじょう 上に
ぎゅうす 毬子を う 打つ。 僧、 復た 投子に 問う、「きゅうすいじょう 急水上 きゅうすいじょう 上に
ぎゅうす 毬子を う 打つと、 意旨は いし 如何。」 子云く、「いかん 念念、 す 念念、 ねんねん 念念、
なが 流れを とど 停めず。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “Does a newborn infant already have the Six Forms of Consciousness¹ or not?” Zhaozhou said: “Throwing a ball on a torrent of water.” The monk also asked Touzi: “What does ‘throwing a ball on the swift current’ mean?” Touzi said: “The flow of thoughts unceasingly runs.”

¹ “The six forms of consciousness”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

An infant is born into the world when his senses are awakened, unleashing a manifold flow that seeps into his body, through his eyes, his ears, his nose, his tongue, and his skin, entering his mind and touching his consciousness. A man who has experienced the great death, the extinction of the self, is reborn into no-thing-ness but is not severed from the world of men, and from the realm of the senses. He is still very much human, far from a senseless piece of rock. He sees, feels, smells, hears, tastes, and thinks, with the torrent of the senses entering his mind just like in any other animal, but contrary to the infant, who eagerly drinks this flow and uses it to build up a world, turning the work of the senses into countless things, cutting off the seamless unity of nature into building blocks that he can grasp with his mind or his hands, the new-born into no-thing-ness, the one who has perceived the truth of the way of the sky, lets the torrent of the senses pass him through, not feeling compelled to make any use of it, letting it simply erode the pillars of his world day by day, year by year, until nothing is left of them.

To be reborn as a man of the way thus is to be a ball thrown on a torrent of water. A sphere is the most rudimentary shape,

the one most fitting to be easily carried by the flow. It has no up nor down, no left nor right, no limbs with which it could swim against the current or be caught on the shores. It simply floats, taken to its destination. From the point of view of this sphere, the waters on which it floats appear perfectly still, as it harmoniously moves with it. It is the world built on the shores and the land that appears in constant motion, without any point of view being truer than any other. A man acquainted with no-thing-ness knows that seemingly still waters may conceal strong currents⁸², and that, likewise, a violent torrent may appear like an expanse of still waters. Only when observed from either the flow or the shore does the distinction arise, but when one embodies no-thing-ness itself, there is no longer any particular point of view, as there is no self, no shore nor flow, only the unicity of all that is, no longer perceived as a “thing” itself.

To perceive one’s oneness with the way nonetheless does not occur through a severance from the flux of the senses, from a rejection of the world into which we were thrown at birth, but rather from the perception of the vacuous nature of what surrounds us. It nonetheless does not occur as a gloomy realization or a nihilistic vision, but rather as a glorious revelation of the unicity of all nature, with ourselves not being mere things caught on the flow of the way of the sky, but us being the way itself, the underlying essence of the world, life, the earth, and the sky. The senses are indeed a mere reflection of the earth and the sky, an imprint left by nature itself upon our malleable bodies. What enshrouds this truth of nature in a veil of shadows is the flow of our thoughts, unceasingly trying to cut the torrent running down the way, like someone trying to cut a river into pieces. This is what occurs when one tries to understand what the ball or the flow is, whereas he only has to thoughtlessly throw himself in the water, forgetting his limbs, letting go of his will, and then he will receive the answer he sought, letting it pass through his mind, and then letting it run away from him.

⁸²See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。p854：「靜中有動」。

Case 100 — Throughout The Entire Body, There Are Hands And Eyes 一通身是手眼

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 89. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 54.

【中】

舉。雲巖 問道吾：「大悲菩薩，¹ 用許多手
眼作什麼。」吾云：「如人夜半背手摸枕头。」巖
云：「我會也。」吾云：「汝作麼生會。」巖云：「遍
身是手眼。」吾云：「道即太殺道，² 只道得八
成。」巖云：「師兄作麼生。」吾云：「通身³ 是
手眼。」

¹ 【大悲菩薩】[dà bēi pú sà]: “the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion,” that is, Guānyīn (觀音), meaning “the one who perceives the sounds of the world.” She is a Bodhisattva associated with compassion, and the Chinese representation of Avalokiteśvara (अवलोकितेश्वर).

² 【太殺】S: 【太杀】[tài shā]: “too explicitly” / “too much.” The Japanese version uses the character 煞 instead, whose meaning is similar here. The same use can be seen in the 68th case.

³ 【遍身】[biàn shēn]: It designates the entire surface of the body, whereas 通身 [tōng shēn] also includes what is contained by the skin, the entirety of the flesh.

【日】

舉す。雲巖、道吾に 問う、「大悲菩薩は 許多の
手眼を 用いて、什麼をか 作す。」吾云く、「人の
夜半に 背手して 枕头を 摸るが 如し。」巖
云く、「我會せり。」吾云く、「汝 作麼生か 會す。」
巖云く、「遍身是れ 手眼なり。」吾云く、「道うこと
は 即ち 太煞だ 道うも、只だ 八成を 道い 得た
るのみ。」巖云く、「師兄は 作麼生。吾云く、「通
身是れ 手眼なり。」

【E】

Yunyan asked Daowu: "What does the Bodhisattva of the Great Compassion¹ use so many hands and eyes for?" Daowu said: "It is like a man in the middle of the night, reaching with his hand behind his head for his pillow." Yunyan said: "I understand." Daowu said: "How do you understand it?" Yunyan said: "All over the body, there are hands and eyes." Daowu said: "This describes it pretty well, but that says about eight-tenths of it." Yunyan said: "How would the Elder Brother describe it?" Daowu said: "Throughout the entire body, there are hands and eyes."

¹ "The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion" : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

To whom does the compassionate express his compassion, when he is alone, and who will be compassionate to him? To be compassionate is to see one's own face in the eyes of others, see through the illusory barrier that appears to separate the self from those in front of us, forgetting one's interest, as one knows that there is no one who could benefit from our actions. When these barriers have fallen, we nonetheless become blind, unable to grasp the things surrounding us. We are in utter darkness, as if we awakened from a dream in the heart of the night, disquieted, groping for our pillow in the hope of soon returning to the realm of dreams, where our sight will be restored, even if it is fed with pure illusions and falsehoods. The dream is nonetheless true blindness. The sight of the awakened is perfectly clear, but as he is plunged into the darkest hours of the night, the darkness that he beholds are only an image of the truth of the skies. The only thing that is there to reach is the doorway back to the land of slumber, the world of dreams. His senses are awake. The shadows and silence of the night seep into his mind. It is the emptiness that is the basis of nature itself that is revealed by the retreat of the gilded star under the surface of the earth. With no-thing to see, the other senses are put at the forefront of his consciousness. With no-thing to hear, taste, or smell, all that remains is his skin, his sense of touch, the raw contact with the earth that reminds him of his own nature. His entire body is a doorway into which an uninterrupted

flow passes to reach the depths of his mind. He is nothing but a sensor, a hole into which the flow of nature swirls. The awareness of this state of fact triggers a transformation, as he realizes that the light of the day usually dulls the fullness of his senses, concealing the richness of his own body. In each instant of our lives, we should stand in awe and ecstasy as we feel the flow entering our flesh from the entirety of the surface of our flesh, expressed in five different dimensions corresponding to our five senses. Aware that we are but an eye of nature, we then see all other sentient beings as nothing but different parts of the same body. The compassion we manifest toward them is simply a form of consideration for our own body, and thus we are at peace with all creatures.

Awareness of the nature of the senses can nonetheless come in gradation. To perceive the nature of one's bodily envelope may only be a prelude to a fuller realization of the nature of one's self. When the skin is slashed, the limbs maimed, or the flesh wounded, and one notices that the inside of the body is just as much a hole into which the flow of nature penetrates as the surface of the skin or the other senses, one is led to realize that his senses are more than a doorway separating the world from consciousness, and that there is no inside nor outside of the body. We are not beings covered in sensors offering us knowledge of the earth and the sky. We are mere sensors covering the body of the heavens themselves, with the entirety of our being being an act of perception. We are the eyes and the hands of the sky, and we are nothing outside of the great body that it forms. The sky itself is a gigantic eye observing itself. All that it sees is no-thing, sheer darkness, and yet it floods all that is with boundless compassion.⁸³

⁸³See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "The entire universe is an eye, in which case there is neither seeing nor being seen; there is no one who sees and nothing which is seen since they are completely one. The entire universe is an ear since it is totally one." Original Japanese: 「ここも全身・全宇宙はれ眼、全宇宙一つのマナコです。そうすると見る相手がない。見るものもない。なぜなら一つだから。そうすると見るということはない。私は見不到と言わないで、見なし・無見・あるいは非見と言いたいのです。次の「通身是れ耳、聞不及」も、いまのと同じく、全身が是れ耳、宇宙一杯の耳、ただ一つです。」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

Case 101 —The Substance And Use Of The Prajna Wisdom 一般若體用

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 90.

【中】

舉。僧問 智門：「如何是般若體。」¹ 門云：「蚌²
含明月。」僧云：「如何是般若用。」門云：「兔子
懷胎。」

¹ 【般若體】[bō rě tǐ]: “the substance of the Prajña Wisdom.” Composed of 般若 [bō rě] “Prajña Wisdom,” from the Sanskrit “Prajña” (प्रज्ञ). In a Buddhist context, it in particular designates the wisdom of non-discrimination (無分別智), given to those who are in a state of release of the ego (無我) and no-mind (無心); 體 [tǐ] “the body” / “the essence” / “the substance.” It can be seen as being in contrast with 用 [yòng], “the use,” but both are one when seen through the lens of non-discriminating wisdom, reflecting the truth of being.

² 【蚌】[bàng]: “mussel” / “clam.”

【日】

舉す。僧、智門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
般若の 體。門云く、「蚌、名月を 含む。」僧
云く、「如何なるか 是れ 般若の 用。」門云く、「兔
子懷胎す。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhimen: “What is the substance of the Prajna Wisdom?” ¹ Zhimen said: “The clam encompasses the bright moon.” ² The monk asked: “What is the use of the Prajna Wisdom?” Zhimen said: “A female rabbit carries a child in her womb.” ³

¹ “The Prajna Wisdom”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “The clam encompasses the bright moon”: A Chinese metaphor expressing how a pearl is formed.

³ “A female rabbit carries a child in her womb”: According to the Chinese tradition, the light of the moon can cause clams to grow pearls and female rabbits to become pregnant (Source: 明茅樗《新刻增集紀驗田家五行田家雜佔》，CBETA:「談叢：中秋無月則兔不孕，蚌不胎，蕎麥不實。兔望月而孕，蚌望月而胎，蕎麥得月則秀。」)

The wisdom of the world endows man with an understanding of the pieces of machinery formed by this world. To discover the essence of the heavens, the truth of being, demands that one lets go of such wisdom, abandoning the distinctions between things, a distinction that is the foundation of this realm built by the hands and the mind of our kind, without becoming mere stone, remaining a living creature, but one that carries death inside its body as much as life itself.

The soft glow illuminating the heavens and the earth, the silvery gleam of the moon, appears in every body of water found in the land once the day has folded into night, shining equally in the eyes of all the living, and yet it remains one, a single luminous body, a pearl adorning the heavens, immutably reigning over the night and the darkness enfolding the creation. To relinquish the wisdom of the world is to open up one's mind to this light from above, like a clam forgetting the dangers of the seas and the coasts, opening up its shell to let itself be pervaded by this gentle brilliance, letting the reflection of the celestial body appear on its own. This light is what is found beyond the things of the world, the essence of the heavens, what is seen when all things have been left behind: no-thing-ness itself.

When one is acquainted with the wisdom of the sky, and is familiar with the subtle mystery of the essence of being, beyond words and things, he may then let it become part of himself, as the center of his world, even though it always was and forever is the essence of all that is, whether sentient beings are aware of it or not. The light of the night abides inside the open shell, and little by little, the fleeting image of the moon becomes part of the clam's body, becoming a shiny pearl in the midst of its flesh. Welcoming no-thing-ness inside its world, no-thing-ness then takes root in this world. The foundation of all things appears inside the things themselves. The life growing amidst death becomes host to death itself, as the dead pearl becomes part of the living body of the clam. World and no-thing-ness become interlaced, inextricably bound to one another. The moon is encompassed by the shell, and the shell is enfolded in the radiance of the celestial body. The unicity of their nature becomes manifest, while they still appear

in their difference to the eyes of the world, as the sentient being plays with both, knowing they are one.

One may nonetheless wonder: if the substance of the heavenly wisdom is carried in one's midst, what is its use? The heavens know no difference between substance and use, as these only exist as things within man's world. The heavens have no use, as they have no substance, but are nothing but a vast emptiness, even though our eyes see them as filled with countless stars, clouds, or light. And yet, when the animal that we are gaze at the great abyss enfolding our world, this boundless sky, seeing that there is only no-thing-ness beyond the frontiers of our mind, only a totality, a whirlwind without head nor tail, without source nor destination, we are impregnated by no-thing-ness itself. It grows within us, becoming us, swallowing us from the inside, and then in turn becoming ready to give birth and swallow our world whole.

One who has accepted to host the essence of the heavens within himself, letting himself be transformed by it, thus carries life as much as death each instant of his existence, and he may feel compelled to share his gift with the world. Countless clams are arrayed on the craggy shores bordering the great ocean, and yet, few of them contain a precious pearl, image of the silvery luminary of the night. This hidden wealth will not be inherited directly by its offspring. Another pearl will have to be grown inside them, if they let themselves become the hosts of the heavenly radiance. The familiarity with no-thing-ness is indeed not transmitted by blood, but some may nonetheless perceive that there is no life nor death in no-thing-ness, as this is but an illusion of our world. The revelation of the truth of the skies may itself become living, sprouting out of the body impregnated by the heavens themselves, running swiftly throughout the world of men, offering them a vision of their own nature, a contact with no-thing-ness itself, at the root of all things. The wisdom of the heavens may therefore spread through the world, robbing those considering themselves wise of their certainties, clearing their mind as a blank page upon which no-thing is to be written, but only contemplated as it is. This creature will impregnate others, and soon, the world itself will be conquered by it. The moon will throne in the midst of the world, with its image reflected in the eyes of all its dwellers, all concealing in their midst a living pearl, while they themselves will be dead to the world,

and the world one with the heavens.

Case 102 —Baling’ s “Sharpest Sword” — 巴陵吹毛劍

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 100.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn bā líng rú hé shì chuī máo jiàn líng yún shān
 舉。僧問 巴陵：「如何是吹毛劍。」 陵 云：「珊
hú zhī zhī chēng zhè yuè
 瑚枝枝撐² 著月。」

¹ 【吹毛劍】[chuī máo jiàn]: This word literally means “the sword [that cuts as easily as it is] to blow a hair,” that is, something that effortlessly cuts out something that is one in two, and subsequently many things, like when a hair is cut by simply being left on the sharp edge of the blade.

² 【撐】S: 【撐】[chēng]: “to support.”

【日】

こ そう はりよう と いか こ すい
 舉す。僧、巴陵に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 吹
もうけん りょういわ さんご しし つき ささ
 毛劍。」 陵 云く、「珊瑚は 枝枝に 月を 撐著う。」

【E】

A monk asked Baling: “What is the blown hair sword?”

¹ Baling said: “Each branch of a coral supports the moon.”

¹ “The blown hair sword”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

A sword extended in the clear, azure sky, thus is the mind of man. Furiously agitated in the air, the one wielding it uses this sharp weapon of war to dissect the unicity of the heavens. He cuts the sun and the moon in pieces and separates the stars into constellations. He cleaves the clouds and slashes the winds and the rain. The blade turns oneness into a multitude. It transforms a solid block into a myriad of things, more numerous than the hairs growing upon our heads. As easily as a single strand of

hair is blown away by the gusts blowing over the earth, so does this sword cut the skies and what they contain into a world made of innumerable things. Man's accomplishments are nonetheless only an illusion. No matter how sharp is his sword, how acute the combination of his reason and perception, he is powerless to change the nature of the heavens. His sword cannot reach them, and only in his mind do the pieces forming his world exist as such. For him to discover this, he must nonetheless turn the weapon upon himself, shattering the mask covering his face, plunging deep into his flesh and spilling his blood over the earth. Only when the self is extinguished, that is, when death is not merely something around us but something we become one with, may the moon's face be unveiled in the heavens, and our true self appear.

Among the things of the world cut out by the sword of reason, we also find every living being, including ourselves. Thinking that we are different from others, we thus fail to perceive what life is. Life began in the ocean, as a bewitching of the earth, a wedge driven between earth and sky but marrying them both in a new form, spreading over sea and land through eons, generation after generation, before the gift of the sword of reason was offered to them. Each sentient being uses it to edify his world, cutting out the heavens in pieces, the moon into slices, easy to comprehend, easy to grasp. They form a single being passing through the ages, covering the earth, like a coral reef with countless branches extended toward the night sky, and in which the reflection of the whole moon may be observed. Each branch appears to possess and support the entirety of the luminary of the night, just as men consider themselves to be the center point of their world. But in the same manner, each branch also partakes of the entirety of the moon, just like each man partakes of the entirety of the essence of the heavens, the truth of being. When this truth is experienced, the truth of the image appears as clearly as what it represents. The reflection of the moon becomes one with the moon itself. The illusions of the world are merged with the truth of the sky. The branches of the coral reef uphold the heavens, just as the heavens support the earth and the life growing over it. The mind of man allows the heavens to be seen, and the moon is like the pupil of the skies, observing life on earth, with no distinction between seer and seen, between image and object, between the cluttered nature of our world and the serene emptiness of the skies.

Case 103 —Ruiyuan’ s “Fundamental, Everlasting Principle” —瑞巖常理

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 75.

【中】

舉。瑞巖 問 巖頭：「如何是本常理。」頭
 云：「動也。」巖 云：「動時如何。」頭 云：「不
 見本常理。」巖 佇思，¹ 頭 云：「肯即未脫根塵，
² 不肯即永沈³ 生死。」

¹ 【佇思】S:【仁思】[zhù sī]: “to ponder silently.”

² 【根塵】S:【根尘】[gēn chén]: “the roots and the dust [particles].” The “six roots” are the six sensory “organs” of Buddhism: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness. The “six dust [particles]” are what is perceived by the six senses: form, sound, smell, taste, touching sensation, and things of the mind.

³ 【沈】[chén]: “to be immersed.”

【日】

舉す。瑞巖、巖頭に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 本常の 理。」頭云く、「動ぜり。」巖云く、「動の
 時如何。」頭云く、「本常の 理を 見ず。」巖、佇
 思す。頭云く、「肯う 時は 即ち 未だ 根塵を
 脱せず、肯わざる 時は 永く 生死に 沈む。」

【E】

Ruiyuan asked Yantou: “What is the fundamental, everlasting principle?” Yantou said: “It has moved.” Ruiyuan said: “When it has moved, what then?” Yantou said: “You can’t see the fundamental, everlasting principle.” Ruiyuan pondered this silently. Yantou then said: “If one acknowledges it, he has not released the burden of the roots and their dust.¹ If one does not acknowledge it, he remains caught in the eternal flow of birth and death.”

¹ “The roots and their dust”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The inquisitive mind searching for the way of the sky is a cascade of thoughts, emerging and fading continuously, like waves whose crests and troughs unceasingly rise and fall. It constantly attempts to grasp something that keeps slipping away, and thus knows no peace. Trying to seize what does not belong to the earth, and to see what is not contained by the sky, one is condemned to fail and be left frustrated. Searching for the fundamental, everlasting principle of nature, the ground upon which the world itself stands but which escapes scrutiny, he sees its traces all over the things around him. He can almost see and touch it, but as soon as he approaches closer and it is about to be revealed to him, it moves away, always a step ahead of him, like a skittish deer spotted from far away in a dense forest, hiding in the shadows as soon as a leaf is trampled and the faintest sound echoes through the air. The fundamental principle then vanishes, completely invisible to the mind, leaving the inquirer perplexed and disappointed.

The fundamental essence of the heavens, likewise, presents such characteristics. It is the ground upon which the world is built, the vast and void, the place where there is not a single thing, and yet that supports all things, no-thing-ness itself. To try to grasp no-thing-ness with the mind is to attempt to transform no-thing into a thing, forcing the entirety of all that is into an exiguous box with a name attached to it, so that it would be easily seized and used. The grandest container can nonetheless not be contained. The all-encompassing heavens cannot be encompassed by the mind, but only caricatured. When such a caricature is crafted and grasped, man is tempted to see it as a sign of his mastery of no-thing-ness, but it rather only proclaims his blindness to the nature of his world, to the work of his mind, and to the nature of the thing he holds on to. He shows that he has yet to release the burden of his senses and his consciousness, and of the illusions associated with them.

The man who acknowledges familiarity with no-thing-ness is therefore deluded, but a man who does not acknowledge the nature of no-thing-ness is still caught in the fetters of the world, prisoner of life and death, right and wrong, presence and absence, instantaneity and eternity. No-thing-ness does not let itself be approached

and forcefully caught. To tame it, one must exhibit patience and release all willingness to use force. Ceasing to see the myriad of leaves forming the canopy of the forest, being blind to the wooden pillars supporting it, and ignoring the majestic creature reigning over it, this is when it will naturally approach the one standing on the path. One does not conquer no-thing-ness. One only lets himself be conquered by it. Then, he is not someone who perceives it, but rather becomes no-thing-ness itself, experiencing it rather than knowing about it. His mind pervaded by no-thing-ness, he nonetheless does not reject the world and its things.

Man's true destiny is therefore to be a bridge uniting the world and no-thing-ness, intimately familiar with both but abiding in neither. He conciliates the opposites and mends the wounds of the separation between things. He has his feet rooted deep in the ground, but his eyes are turned toward the heights. His body lives but his heart is dead, one with the earth and the sky around him. He incarnates the everlasting principle, always in motion, and yet utterly empty, dwelling in the world of men and interacting with its inhabitants and its creations, and yet equally a man whose heart belongs to the place where there is not a single thing, and where not a single action is performed. Reconciling world and no-thing-ness, he has nothing else to seek, nothing else to acknowledge.⁸⁴

Case 104 — Longtan's Eternal Resonance — 久響龍潭¹

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 28.

【中】

lóng tán yīn dé shān qǐng yì dī yè tán yún yè shēn
龍潭 因 德山 請益² 抵³ 夜， 潭 云：「夜深，
zǐ hé bú xià qù shān suì zhēn zhòng jiē lián ér chū jiàn wài miàn
子 何 不 下 去。」 山 遂 珍 重⁴ 揭 簾⁵ 而 出， 見 外 面
hēi què huí yún wài miàn hēi tán nǎi diǎn zhǐ zhú dù yǔ shān
黑， 却 回 云：「外 面 黑。」 潭 乃 點 紙 燭⁶ 度 與， 山

⁸⁴See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京：無我山房，1915. p481 (Case 75); And also: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klausur der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p390: „wo Nirvāna ist, da ist auch Samsāra, also unauförlliche Veränderung. Nun lässt sich die Sache aber auch umdrehen: Wo Samsāra ist, da ist auch Nirvāna, die Große Leere, die keine Veränderung kennt.”

擬接，潭 便吹滅，山 於此忽然有省，便作禮，
潭 云：「子見箇甚麼道理。」山 云：「某甲從今
 日去，不疑天下老和尚舌頭也。」至明日龍潭 陞
 堂云：「可中⁷ 有箇漢，牙如劍⁸ 樹，口似血盆，⁹
 一棒打不回頭，他時異日，向孤峯頂上立吾道在。」
山 遂取疏抄，¹⁰ 於法堂前將一炬火，提起云：「窮
 諸玄辨，¹¹ 若¹² 一毫致於太虛；竭¹³ 世樞機，似
 一滴投於巨壑。」¹⁴ 將疏抄便燒，於是禮辭。

¹ 【久響龍潭】[jiǔ xiǎng lóng tán]: The title of this case is rather unusual, in the sense that the link between the title and the subject of the case is far less obvious than in other cases. It literally means “Longtan’s eternal resonance.” It may perhaps designate the fame of Longtan, which echoes through the ages.

² 【請益】S: 【請益】[qǐng yì]: “to ask [a teacher] to repeat or explain something one more time.”

³ 【抵】[dǐ]: “to arrive at.”

⁴ 【珍重】[zhēn zhòng]: “to pay one’s respects” / “to respectfully give thanks.”

⁵ 【揭簾】[jiē lián]: “to push a hanging screen”; 揭 [jiē]: “to expose” / “to unmask.”

⁶ 【紙燭】[zhǐ zhú]: “a paper candle.” A type of candle made of twisted paper dipped in oil.

⁷ 【可中】[kě zhōng]: “it just so happens that” (modern Chinese: 正好).

⁸ 【劍樹】[jiàn shù]: “the sword tree.” A tree of swords seen in hell, as described in the chapter entitled “hell” of the sutra named “Dirgha Agama” (長阿含經・地獄品).

⁹ 【血盆】[xuè pén]: “a blood bowl.” Originally, this word designated a vessel made to receive the blood of sacrificial offerings, but later also designated the bloody, gaping mouth of a beast. This is the case here. (For another example of such use, see: 「有個山羊在那裏吃草，卻被大蟲看見，撲了過去…抱住山羊，張開血盆大口，羊頭吃在腹內。」 From: 《鏡花緣》. CTEXT, chapter 49.)

¹⁰ 【疏抄】[shū chāo] “commentaries.”

¹¹ 【窮諸玄辨】[qióng zhū xuán biàn]: “to exhaust oneself discerning the mysteries”; 窮 (S: 穷) [qióng]: “poor” / “destitute” / “to use up” / “to exhaust”; 辨 [biàn]: “to distinguish.”

¹² 【若】[ruò]: “to seem” / “like” / “as.”

¹³ 【竭世樞機】[jié shì shū jī]: “to exhaust [the knowledge] of the important men of the world”; 竭 [jié]: “to exhaust”; 樞機 (S: 枢机) [shū jī]: “a metaphor for ‘the key’ to something” / “a high-ranking official.”

¹⁴ 【壑】[hè]: “a ravine.”

【日】

こ りゅうたん ちな とくさんしんえき よる いた
 舉す。龍潭、因みに 徳山請益して 夜に 抵る。
 たんいわ よ ふ なんじんなん くだ さ さん
 潭云く、「夜深けぬ、子何ぞ 下り 去らざる。」山

つい ちんちょう れん かか い がいめん くら
 遂に 珍重して 簾を 掲げて 出ず。外面の 黒き
 み きやつかい いわ がいめんくら たん すなわ
 を 見て、却 回して 云く、「外面黒し。」潭 乃ち
 ししよく てん ど よ さんせつ ぎ たん すなわ
 紙燭を 點じて 度與す。山接せんと 擬す。潭 便ち
 すいめつ さんこ おい こつねん せい たん すなわ
 吹滅す。山此に 於て 忽然として 省あり。 便ち
 さい たんいわ なんじ こ なん どうり み
 作禮す。潭云く、「子 箇の 甚麼の 道理をか 見る。」
 さんいわ それがし こんにち さ てんか ろうおしょう
 山云く、「某甲、今日より 去って 天下の 老和尚の
 ぜつとう うたが みょうにち いた りゅうたんしんどう
 舌頭を 疑わず。」明日に 至って 龍潭陞堂して
 いわ こ うち こ かん あ げ けんじゅ ごと
 云く、「可の 中箇の 漢有り、牙は 劒樹の 如く、
 くち けつぽん に いちぼう う こうべ めぐ
 口は 血盆に 似て、一棒に 打てども 頭を 回ら
 た じ い じつ こ ぼう ちょうじょう むか わ
 さざれば、他時異日、孤峰 頂上に 向って 吾が
 どう りつ あ さんつい しょうしやう と はつとう
 道を 立する 在ん。」山遂に 疎抄を 取って、法堂
 ぜん おい いっ こか も ていき いわ もろもろ
 前に 於て 一炬火を 將って 提起して 云く、「諸の
 げんべん さわ いちごう たいきよ お ごと
 玄辨を 窮むるも、一毫を 太虚に 致くが 若く、
 よ すう き つく いってき こ がく どう
 世の 樞機を 竭すも、一滴を 巨壑に 投ずるに
 に しょうしやう も すなわ や ここ おい
 似たり。」疎抄を 將って 便ち 焼き、是に 於て
 らい じ
 禮辞す。

【E】

As Deshan had asked Longtan for more explanation [about a previously discussed matter],¹ the night came and Longtan said: "We are deep into the night. Why don't you go down [to your quarters]?" Deshan then took his leave, pushed the hanging screen, and went out. Seeing the darkness outside, he went back and said: "It is [really] dark outside!" Longtan then lit a candle and offered it to him. As Deshan was about to take it, Longtan blew it out. At that moment Deshan suddenly gained some insight and then bowed deeply. Longtan asked: "What insight has the disciple gained?" Deshan said:

“From this day on, this one will not doubt the [what is uttered by] the tongue of the Master under the heavens.” The next day, as he ascended the rostrum, Longtan said: “It just so happens that there is a man. His teeth are like the sword tree [seen in hell], his mouth is a blood bowl, [filled with blood, like the mouth of a ferocious beast]. If one strikes with a club, he doesn’ t even turn his head. At some point in the future, he will climb to the highest deserted peak and establish my way there.” After this, Deshan took all his commentaries, made a bonfire in front of the lecture hall, and said: “[Even if] one exhausts himself to discern the mysteries, it is like the finest strand of hair in the great heavenly void; One may strive to exhaust [the knowledge of] the most important men of the world, but it is like one drop of water thrown into the ocean.” He then burned his commentaries and took his leave.

¹ See Case 71 (The Gateless Barrier Case 31).

When words are exhausted, the flesh numbed by the strenuous works of the day, comes the time to face the darkness of the night. The sun has veiled its face under the farthest mountains, and the wild creatures have returned to their cozy lair. These long hours when the world is engulfed in shadows are the best time to face oneself, contemplating one’s true face. Flooded with light during the day, the eyes are observing countless things found in man’ s world, relentlessly solicited by the uninterrupted ballet unfolded in front of them, having no time for introspection. With only the faint glow of the silvery wheel turning over the earth, the arms of our galaxy, the night offers rest to the eyes. The footpaths are plunged in darkness, while the chambers of mankind are lit with candles and fires, like a desperate attempt at escaping the reign of the shadows, the obscurity of these hours. Man fears the dark, as it renders him powerless to notice the presence of danger, but perhaps also because he is ill-prepared to face the emptiness it represents. He thinks of himself as a creature of the world, safe within its sturdy walls made of immaterial things and earthly objects, and thus even when the bright sun itself has retreated to leave the earth to the dark, man clings on to his things, using the glow of a candle to keep them close, visible, and occupy his mind,

as if these things were old friends.

Someone of experience nonetheless knows that this is a vain escape, a childish refusal to face one's true face, and the essence of being. He therefore takes the candle away from the child and leads him to the threshold, where the light of the candle draws a line between the inside and the outside, the room where its light is diffused by the walls, illuminating it to the eyes of man, and the earth and the sky, too vast for its feeble radiance, too weak to be of any use as it cannot light much farther than the feet of the one holding it. Only the flame is visible outside, and its brilliance only plunges the earth and the sky into deeper darkness, eclipsing the gentle twinkling of the distant stars and the soft gleam of the moon. The child then says: "I cannot see anything out there!" and then, suddenly, the man of experience blows the candle out, with these words: "Now, do you see?"⁸⁵

When nothing is seen, when all things have been veiled in obscurity, concealed under a thick blanket of shadows, then man is compelled to face the bare truth of his existence. He stands in front of an infinite mirror and finally sees what is to be found at the root of all things. The light actually conceals their nature, showing their appearance but obscuring the essence. The world still lies out there, unchanged, only seen differently, experienced in its primordial truth rather than merely seen. The words are exhausted; the light has died out, but this is when the heavens appear, when they shine in all their glory, in all their purity, as an instance of perfection, a blank page extended until the confines of the world, a black pit into which all the dust covering men may be thrown and vanish, leaving only contentment and peace, a mind without thought, a heart without worry, completely empty, like a vessel ready to receive a sacred offering.

The child then becomes a man as he discovers his true face in the darkness of the night. His teeth are sharp daggers and his mouth is filled with the blood of all those who he brings to death, to the earth and the skies, away from the life of the dwellers of the world, robbing them of their illusions, crushing their possessions, cutting through their flesh until there is no-thing left in them, no-

⁸⁵See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "When Longtan blew out the candle, he was actually blowing out the darkness!"

thing left of them. The servants of the world attempt to strike him with clubs, but he does not even notice their blows, as his heart remains in the dark, where there are no things, not even pain or injury. Freed from the desire to see, embracing the dark as well as the bright, seeing the same in them, he spends his existence in the great desert, not even noticing the difference between day and night, light and darkness. He possesses no thing, not even no-thing-ness itself, and thus the remnants of his days of investigation and edification of the world are left behind, slowly crumbling, reclaimed by the earth as the heavenly wheels continue their revolutions. The towers of letters are left in ruins, eroded by the winds, and the seas of ink are evaporated by the heat of the summer sun. The hermit then forgets his own age, and even forgets whether he lives or is dead.

Case 105 —Cuiyan' s Eyebrows 一翠岩眉毛

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 8. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 71.

【中】

舉。翠岳 夏末示眾云：「一夏以來，為兄弟說
 話，看 翠岳 眉毛在麼。」 保福 云：「作賊人心
 虛。」¹ 長慶 云：「生也」 雲門 云：「關。」²

¹ 【心虛】[xīn xū]: Literally “one’ s heart is empty,” meaning “to have a guilty conscience.”

² 【關】S: 【关】[guān]: This word literally means “to close,” but it is here used idiomatically, meaning “to watch out.”

【日】

こ すいがん げまつ しゅ しめ いわ いちげ
 舉す。翠巖、夏末に 衆に 示して 云く、「一夏
 いらい きょうだい た はな み すいがん まゆげ
 以來、兄弟の 爲めに 説話す。看よ、翠巖が 眉毛
 あ ほ ふくいわ ぞく な ひと しんきょ
 在りや。」保福云く、「賊と 作す 人は 心虚なり。」
 ちょうけいいわ しょう うんもんいわ かん
 長慶云く、「生ぜり。」雲門云く、「關。」

【E】

At the end of summer, Cuiyan instructed the assembly, saying: “Since the beginning of the summer, I’ve preached to the brothers. Now Look! Are Cuiyan’s eyebrows still there?”

¹ Baofu said: “The robber feels guilty!” ² Changching said: “They have grown!” Yunmen said: “Watch out!” ³

¹ “Are Cuiyan’s eyebrows still there”: The loss of eyebrows was something associated with thieves and other criminals.

² “Watch out”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The summer is the bright season, when the fiery orb throning in the sky lingers for long hours over the horizon, slowly passing through the firmament and showering the earth and the seas with its radiance and its heat. The pleasant weather invites men to roam through the land and is propitious to fortuitous encounters. Assembled together with other men walking on the same path, they support each other, with those more advanced in years or endowed with more insight guiding their friends and fellows. Instructing the young, day after day, with volubility and patience, the elder is conscious that the tools of the world that he employs, his words, can only point out the way for them to go, but cannot bring them to the realization of the nature of the way itself. Furthermore, he begins to worry that perhaps his use of words may have been excessive, leading his followers to stray further away. He thus devises a test, asking a seemingly innocent question, but whose answer will nonetheless reveal where each one of them now stands: “Since the beginning of the summer, I’ve preached to the brothers, robbing them blind of all what they had. Now look at yourselves! Is there anything left?!”

The elder is guiding his followers to the place where not a single thing can be brought into, the place where not even one person can be found, and yet, which is also what represents the essence of all that is. It cannot be discovered with explanations and lengthy expositions. It cannot be drawn and pointed on any map. The way toward this place is nonetheless found everywhere, waiting to be unveiled at each instant. It simply demands that one releases all the things to which he holds on, including his own self, and the very idea of this place.

A first man answers the question of the elder, with these words: “The robber feels guilty!” He has done his best to take away all their things, and yet he still finds himself with empty pockets and an empty heart, entirely devoid of things. Soiling his hands with his deeds, and dirtying the air of the heavens with his breath laden with vacuous words and concepts, he feels guilty of not having found a better way to lead them where they are meant to be. A man embodying the way of the sky should not even need one word to enlighten the entire world. His path continues.⁸⁶

A second man then offers his answer: “The elder has not robbed us. On the contrary, he has brought us the most precious gift!” He has offered them the gift of no-thing-ness, a thing that fills up the entire universe, not leaving a single other thing left besides it.⁸⁷ Only one thing stands in front of this man’s eyes, and yet this is one too much!

Hearing the previous answer, a third man interjects with the words: “Watch out!” When you begin to count things, you show that you are still a slave to them. Long or short, present or absent, numerous or few, these are ideas of the world, having no existence on the earth and in the skies. This one has seen the trap laid by the elder, but he does not count how many have fallen in it. When no-thing-ness itself is still grasped as a thing, a piece of the world manipulated by the mind, freedom cannot be experienced, and the place where his true face can be seen remains unreachable to him.

A trap may nonetheless catch more than prey. The one laying it may indeed also find himself caught by it. If the followers count the things that they have left, they are trapped by the idea of calculating things. Furthermore, if they have anything to count, it means that the elder failed in his task of robbing them of all things, and that their summer retreat has been fruitless. To see it

⁸⁶See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p461 (Case 71): “It is said that in 49 years Shakyamuni didn’t teach one word. The eyebrows cover his whole face! but the three men are skilled, they ‘saw through’ the eyebrows!” TBA.

⁸⁷See: Yamada, Kou’un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “The eyebrows filling up the entire universe! They too are an embodiment of the essential nature.” Original Japanese: 「何処を見て言っているのか、この眉毛宇宙一杯の眉毛です、れもエッセンシャル・ネーチャーを見ながら生えとる生えとる心配するなと。」 From: 山田耕雲. 《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》. [Unpublished manuscript].

in such a manner would nonetheless also be falling into the same trap, and we should equally watch out! Only when the mouth is shut, and the mind does not raise a single thought, while being unafraid of letting torrents of words pass through the former and see geysers of thought arise and vanish within the latter, will the contradictions be resolved. Then will speech be one with silence, and thoughts will dance with no-thing-ness. The path will end at its beginning, completing the circle, with nothing lost, nothing gained, but everything in place, in the place where there is no thing.

Case 106 —The Discussion Has Fallen Into The Grass 一落草之談

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 34.

【中】

舉。仰山問僧：「近離甚處。」僧云：「廬山。」
¹ 山云：「曾遊五老峯²麼。」僧云：「不曾到。」
 山云：「闍黎不曾遊山。」雲門云：「此語皆為
 慈悲之故，有落草之談。」

¹ 【廬山】S: 【廬山】[lú shān]: a mountain in the modern province of Jiangxi (江西), famous for its beauty and its numerous monasteries.

² 【五老峰】[wǔ lǎo fēng]: “the Five Elders Peaks.” The five peaks are shaped like five old men standing side by side, hence the name. The famous poet Li Bái (李白) studied at the “White Deer Grotto Academy” (白鹿洞書院), which was located at the foot of the five peaks. He wrote about them in a poem entitled: “Climbing the Five Old Peaks of Mount Lushan” (登廬山五老峰).

【日】

舉す。仰山、僧に問う、「近ごろ甚處を離れ
 しゃ。」僧云く、「廬山。」山云く、「曾て五老峰に
 遊ぶや。」僧云く、「曾て到らず。」山云く、「闍黎は、
 曾て遊山せず。」雲門云く、「此の語、皆な慈悲の
 爲の故に、落草の談あり。」

【E】

Yangshan asked a monk: “Where have you come from?” The monk said: “Mount Lu.”¹ Yangshan said: “Have you already traveled to the Five Elders Peaks?”² The monk said: “I have never traveled there.” Yangshan said: “The young teacher never traveled to the mountains at all.” Yunmen said: “Because of too much compassion, this discussion has fallen into the grass.”³

¹ “Mount Lu” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “The Five Elders Peaks” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

³ “The grass” : Grass is associated with the illusions of the world, those who are deluded, or beginners in the practice of Zen.

What may appear like the most mundane question may reveal itself to be a cornucopia, out of which an entire mountain of things may be drawn, rendering any other question superfluous and redundant. When the hermit encounters someone on the narrow mountain path, he naturally asks: “Where do you come from?” The answer offered by the traveler will reveal where he now stands, whether he is a tree supporting the heavens or a mere blade of grass balanced by the summer breeze. His mouth opens up, and it lets out the words: “From the mountain over there.” The horizon of the blade of grass is as narrow as the path. It only sees what is in its immediate vicinity, the grassland. It has no idea of where it stands, contrary to the majestic pine tree growing on the mountaintop that oversees the plains and sees where heaven and earth are joined. Where do we come from? We are the last links of an incredibly long chain of living things. We arose from the bosom of our mother, who herself arose from hers. We come from a line of tree-dwelling apes, and before that were rodents burrowing in the belly of the earth. Before our ancestors stepped foot upon the dry land, we were fish swimming the muddy shallows, and even before that sea sponges feeding from the scraps of the ocean. Minuscule cells floating in the waters bathed with the radiance of the sun are our forefathers, and theirs were simple aggregates of the most rudimentary elements, almost magically bewitched, reproducing themselves with minute but crucial variations. Before life itself, our substance was the dust of the primordial conflagration, scattered throughout the skies as they were unfolded. Where

were we before that? Where are we now, beyond the façade offered by our world? Some are pure dwellers of this world, while others have in front of their eyes the place that was before the first thing emerged, before the emergence of this world, our true home.

The pilgrim is lost in the mountains, not knowing where he comes from and where he is destined to go. He roams throughout the earth in search of enlightenment, failing to realize that he is a prisoner of his world, and that wisdom is to be found in liberation from it, rather than on well-trodden paths on the earth. Peregrinations are fruitless if they do not lead to a clash of worlds, a collision between master and disciple, a contact between the trees of the great forest and the short blades of grass of the plains. But the discovery of the lost creature on the mountain path gives the hermit an occasion to demonstrate his benevolence, which is the wisdom of the man of the way, of one who sees beyond the appearance of all things. Coming down from the peak to greet him, the elder stoops to his height: “Have you visited the masters inhabiting this mountain from where you come?” He declares that he has not, and is thus given a gentle clarification concerning where he stands: “Then, you have never traveled the mountains at all!” He has aimlessly roamed the earth but remained comfortably seated in his world, failing to encounter other views of it, and thus has not received any insight from his peregrination. The mountain to conquer is not found upon the earth. The highest peak that he must reach is within his own heart. There will he be able to contemplate the nature of his world, seeing where he stands and contemplating the immensity of the heavens above, seeing that there is not a single thing outside of his world. He will then forget the way home, as he will realize that there is nowhere to call home anymore.⁸⁸ His home is the foundation of all things, and it is no-thing-ness itself, what remains when all things have disappeared, what was there before the first thing emerged. This is when the peaks will be leveled, and the trees won’ t be distinguished from the blades of grass. Having become a man of the heights, he will himself accompany others during their ascent, overwhelmed by compassion, not distinguishing the identity of the recipients of his benevolence,

⁸⁸See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p149: “No soy de aquí ni soy de allá, ni tengo edad, ni porvenir ... Abandona el apego a tu lugar de nacimiento y vuela alto como Kanzan hasta que se te olvide por completo el camino de regreso.”

as he is now blind to the lines separating the self from the other.

Case 107 —Three Three Before, Three Three Behind 一前三三后三三

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 35.

【中】

舉。文殊¹ 問 無著：「近離什麼處。」 無著
 云：「南方。」 殊 云：「南方佛法，如何住持。」 著
 云：「末法比丘，² 少奉³ 戒律。」 殊 云：「多少眾。」
 著 云：「或三百或五百。」 無著 問 文殊：「此間
 如何住持。」 殊 云：「凡聖同居，龍蛇混雜。」 著
 云：「多少眾。」 殊 云：「前三三，後三三。」⁴

¹ 【文殊】[wén shū]: Mañjuśrī (मञ्जुश्री [Mañjuśrī] in Sanskrit, meaning: “the Beautiful One with Glory”) is the Bodhisattva of keen awareness, the embodiment of Prajñā Wisdom. In the Chinese tradition, his “seat” (bodhimaṇḍa in Sanskrit / 道場 [dào cháng] in Chinese) is said to be Mount Wutai (五台山), in the province of Shanxi (山西).

² 【末法比丘】[mò fǎ bī qiū]: “monks who belong to an age of decline of Buddhism.”

³ 【奉】[fèng]: “to follow [religious precepts]” / “to revere” / “to believe in (a religion)”

⁴ 【前三三，後三三】[qián sān sān, hòu sān sān]: A deliberately grammatically incorrect sentence, literally meaning: “three three before, three three after” or “three three in front, three three behind,” whose incongruous nature represents the heart of this case.

【日】

こ もんじゅ むじゃく と ちか いず こ
 舉す。文殊、無著に 問う、「近ごろ 什麼處を
 はな むじゃくいわ なんぼう じゆいわ なんぼう
 離れしや。」 無著 云く、「南方。」 殊云く、「南方の
 ぶつぼう いか じゆうじ じゃくいわ まつぼう びく
 仏法、如何にか 住持する。」 著 云く、「末法の 比丘、
 かいいつ ほう まれ じゆいわ いくばく
 戒律を 奉ずるもの 少なり。」 殊云く、「多少の
 しゅ じゃくいわ あるい さん びやく あるい ごびやく むじゃく
 衆ぞ。」 著 云く、「或は 三 百、或は 五百。」 無著、

もんじゅ と こ こ いか じゅうじ じゅ
 文殊に 問う、「此間にては 如何にか 住持する。」殊
 いわ ぼんしょうどうきょ りゅうじゃこんざつ じゃくいわ いくばく
 云く、「凡聖同居、龍蛇混雜す。」著 云く、「多少の
 しゅ じゅいわ ぜんさんさん ごさんさん
 衆ぞ。」殊云く、「前三三、後三三。」

【E】

Manjushri asked Wuzhuo: "Where have you come from?" Wuzhuo answered: "From the south." Manjushri said: "How is Buddhism in the south maintained?" Wuzhuo said: "The monks belong to an age of decline of Buddhism, they only follow the precepts a little." Manjushri said: "How many people are there in the congregation?" Wuzhuo said: "Maybe three hundred [here], maybe five hundred [there]." Wuzhuo asked Manjushri: "How is it maintained here?" Manjushri said: "The holy and the commoner live together; dragons and snakes mingle with each other." Wuzhuo said: "How many are there in the congregation?" Manjushri said: "Three three before, three three behind."¹

¹ "Manjushri": See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² "Three three before, three three behind": See note 4 of the Chinese text.

One may spend an entire lifetime on the path and still fail to know where it leads, if one stands still rather than explore and advance, following those who have reached its destination. The way of the sky pervades the world of man. It is told about in voluminous manuscripts and is the subject of lengthy discussions. The fundamental law is reflected upon and more or less diligently followed in the land. But all this presence of the way within language and the broader world of man is futile if it does not lead its inhabitants to become aware of what lies beyond it, and upon what foundation it rests. A step in this direction is taken when one is shown the arbitrariness of words, the weakness of the basis of the world, and that one is not bound to obey its rules.

An elder coming from a remote past and a remote land asks someone standing still on the path: "Where have you come from?"

If he had seen his own face, the man standing still would not have known how to answer. He has never come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. There is only here and now, extended to the beginning and the end of time and space. There is no origin nor destination, only the way itself. There is no one who could come and go, and nowhere where he would be. A sound reverberates through the air in the form of a question, but it is only the sky whispering to itself, with an echo heard as this sound bounces through a mind. The sound propagated through the sky is nonetheless heard as speech within the walls of the world.

The man in need of guidance thus answers the elder: "From the south." Every place on earth may be found in the south of where one stands. Walking upon the watery and rocky orb that offers shelter to the tree of life, one is bound to reach any part of it if he is patient enough and continues his peregrination. A wonderful answer, a jewel, wonderfully ambiguous, shallow and deep, clever and stupid, perfectly embodying the unicity of the world with no-thing-ness. Had he stopped there, one may have thought that this man was not lost at all, but rather already went there and was on his way back to guide others.

The foreign elder then once again asks him: "How is the teaching of the fundamental law maintained in the south?" He then promptly answers: "The teaching's presence is in decline, and men only follow the precepts a little." The fundamental law does not need to be taught, only to be perceived. It pervades all that is, no matter whether men are there to notice it. To be focused on prosperity and decline, and to quantify respect for nature itself is to be blind to the essence of the law, to the basis of the world and the skies. To become intimate with this essence is to discover the place where nothing can be quantified, where there is no rise nor fall, no respect nor violation. The elder has the eye, and he intends to unveil the chains of this prisoner standing in front of him, who is blind to their presence. He thus decides to lead him further on his own path of computation and measure, to point out its absurdity, its insignificance in front of the majesty of the heavens and of the serenity of no-thing-ness itself: "How many people are there?" A vulgar question, to invite the one to whom it is addressed to realize the vacuity of his previous answers. Numbers are then thrown into the air: "Three hundred there, five

hundred there.” The end has been reached, absolute vacuity, but the realization has yet to come. This is when the novice is led to turn back, returning the questions to the elder, who is ready to show him the error of his ways.

The elder is thus questioned: “How is it maintained there?” and he rapidly answers, without an instant of reflection: “There, the holy lives together with the commoner; dragons and snakes mingle with each other.” He abides neither in the world nor in no-thing-ness, but rather lives between them both, joining them together, without letting the subtle nuance between them completely fade away. He plays with both, at times seeing them as one, at times distinguishing the contrast they offer, never being attached to either, not even being attached to his non-attachment itself. Snakes are dragons, and dragons are snakes, depending on one’s way of looking at them. Another question is given to him: “How many are there in the congregation?” and then, his world is shattered with a simple answer: “Three three before, three three behind.” The elder breaks the rules of language and thereby points out the nature of this tool of the world that controls the mind of his interlocutor. He refuses to calculate, to offer him a number that would only render the one hearing it more attached to useless quantification, a vain cutting out of the oneness of nature. The answer is meaningless, as those given to him before, but this one is far from useless, as here its meaninglessness is used as a tool to point out the place occupied by language in his world, and the limits of this tool. Here, it is not speech, but rather only a sound thrown into the air, which should be heard as such, a wave propagated throughout the heavens, representing the unity of the world and the skies, word and sound, mind and no-thing-ness. Gazing upon the stars, the gentle glow of our galaxy enfolding the earth from north to south, there may we perceive the meaninglessness of numbers, the vacuity of quantification, seeing the whole of being, realizing that it can neither be put into words or numbers, but only perceived as a totality, before letting it go, seeing beyond the light of the stars, beyond the darkness of space, the root of being itself.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ About the number, Hakuin said: “If you want to know this, refer to the number of last night’s stars, and the number of this morning’s raindrops.” From: Cleary, Thomas. *Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record: Zen Comments by Hakuin and Tenkei*. Shambhala Publications, 2002. n.p. (The original

Case 108 —The Activity Of The Iron Ox —鐵牛之機

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 38. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 29.

【中】

舉。風穴 在郢州衙內，¹ 上堂云：「祖師心
印，² 狀似鐵牛³ 之機。⁴ 去即印住，住即印破。
只如⁵ 不去不住，印即是，不印即是。」時有盧陂
長老，出問：「某甲有鐵牛之機，請師不搭⁶ 印。」
穴云：「慣釣鯨鯢⁷ 澄⁸ 巨浸，⁹ 却嗟¹⁰ 蛙步輾
泥沙。」陂 佇思，穴 喝云：「長老何不進語。」
陂 擬議。穴 打一拂子，穴 云：「還記得話頭麼。
試舉看。」陂 擬開口，穴 又打一拂子。牧主¹¹
云：「佛法與王法一般。」穴 云：「見箇什麼道理。」
牧主云：「當斷不斷，返招其亂。」穴 便下座。

¹ 【衙內】[yá nèi]: “child of an official” / “palace bodyguard.”

² 【心印】[xīn yìn]: “the mind-seal.” The symbolic seal certifying of the non-verbal transmission of the teaching.

³ 【鐵牛】S: 【铁牛】[tiě niú]: “the iron ox.” A massive ox statue made of iron and placed at the bottom of the Yellow River, under a bridge. It stood against the stream and was said to protect the area from flooding. It may have been also used as an anchor for a floating bridge.

⁴ 【機】S: 【机】[jī]: “activity” / “function.” This word is rather complex to define, as it possesses a variety of different meanings, including the one of “opportunity.” For other uses of this word, see case 88, case 112, and case 168.

⁵ 【只如】[zhǐ rú]: “it is like,” equivalent to the modern Chinese: 就像。

⁶ 【搭】[dā] “to apply [the seal].”

⁷ 【鯨鯢】S: 【鲸鲵】[jīng ní]: “a whale.”

⁸ 【澄】S: 【澈】[chéng]: “to clear.”

⁹ 【巨浸】[jù jìn]: “a great expanse of water” / “a great river.”

¹⁰ 【嗟】[jiē]: “alas!” Also pronounced [juē].

¹¹ 【牧主】[mù zhǔ]: “a government official” / “a magistrate.”

【日】

Japanese could not be located).

こ ふけつ えいしゅう が だい あ じょうどう
 擧す。風穴、郢州の 衙内に 在って 上堂し
 いわ そし しんいん てつぎゅう き に
 て 云く、「祖師の 心印、鐵牛の 機に 状似たり。
 さ すなわ いん じゅう じゅう すなわ いん
 去れば 即ち 印は 住し、住すれば 即ち 印は
 こわ た さ じゅう ごと いん
 破す。只だ 去らず 住せざるが 如きは、印するが
 すなわ ぜ いん すなわ ぜ と き ろ
 即ち 是か、印せざるが 即ち 是か。」時に 盧
 ひちようろう い と それがし てつぎゅう
 陂長老なるものあり、出でて 問う、「某甲、鐵牛の
 き こ し いん とう けついわ げい
 機あり、請う 師、印を 搭せざれ。」穴云く、「鯨
 げい つ きょうしん す な かえ
 鯢を 釣って 巨浸を 澄ましむるに 慣れて、却っ
 なげ あ ほ でいさ まろ ひ ちよし
 て 嗟く 蛙歩の 泥沙に 輾ぶことを。」陂、佇思す。
 けつ かつ いわ ちょうろう なん しん ご ひ
 穴、喝して 云く、「長老、何ぞ 進語せざる。」陂、
 ぎ ぎ けつ う いち ほつす けついわ は
 擬義す。穴、打つこと 一拂子。穴云く、「還た
 わとう き とく ところ こ み ひ くち
 話頭を 記得すや。試みに 擧し 看よ。」陂、口を
 ひら ほつ けつ ま う いち ほつす ぼくしゅ
 開かんと 擬す。穴又た 打つこと 一拂子。牧主
 いわ ぶつぼう おうぼう いっぱん けついわ こ
 云く、「仏法と 王法と 一般なり。」穴云く、「箇の
 なん どうり み ぼくしゅいわ まさ だん
 什麼の 道理をか 見る。」牧主云く、「當に 斷ずべ
 だん かえ そ らん まね けつ すなわ
 くして 斷ぜず、返って 其の 亂を 招く。」穴 便ち
 げざ
 下座す。

【E】

Fengxue went to the government office of the Ying Province. He entered the hall [and addressing the men gathered there,] said: "The nature of the mind-seal ¹ of the patriarch resembles the activity of the iron ox.² When it goes away, the [imprint of the] seal remains; when it remains there, the [imprint of the] seal is ruined. If [the seal] does not go away nor remains, should one apply the seal or not?" At that moment, Elder Lubei came forward and said: "This one has the activ-

ity of the iron ox. But please, Master, do not apply the seal [on me]." Fengxue said: "I am used to clearing up the great ocean by fishing whales. But, alas, now I am dealing with a frog wriggling about in the mud." Lubei stood there, thinking. Fengxue shouted "Khe!" and said: "Why doesn't the Elder say something more?" Lubei was puzzled. Fengxue hit him with his whisk and said: "Do you remember the subject of the discussion? Try to say something." Lupo was about to say something, but Fengxue hit him once more with his whisk. The Magistrate said: "Buddha's law and the King's law are of the same nature." Fengxue said: "What principle do you see in them?" The Magistrate said: "If you do not cut short when you should, you are inviting disorder." Fengxue then descended from the rostrum.

¹ "The heart-seal" : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

² "The iron ox" : See note 3 of the Chinese text.

What goes beyond words and letters cannot be taught with them. Awareness and familiarity with the fundamental law of nature, the essential nature of all that is, is not something that can be given from mouth to ear. To inherit it, one must first let the great flow carried on the way pervade his heart, softening it as the dry earth turned into malleable mud by a downpour. When the earth is mingled with water; when an experience of the essence of nature has penetrated man's heart, he is ready to receive the imprint of the great seal, letting himself be transformed by the teacher, who appears like a block of jade, hard and pure, carved by the flow itself.

When the seal is applied, it remains invisible, as if inexistent, as long as it remains in place. When it is taken away, the imprint appears, and it is then exposed to the element. The moisture is slowly taken away by the sun and the winds, and the mud solidifies into dry earth, compacted into rock and polished, until one day, when it now appears to be made of jade, a complementary image of the original seal, ready to itself leave its mark on a piece of clay.

The imprint of the seal on one's mind renders what it touches heavier than iron. Thanks to its works, the heart of the heir is

deeply anchored into the earth, unwavering and secure, tied to the essence of all things themselves. This heart is like a statue standing in the depths, unaffected by the raging currents passing it from all parts. His conscience is a bridge loosely bound to this anchor in the water. It embraces the flow, harmoniously floating with it, accompanying its rises and falls, never washed away, even by the most violent flood, always remaining one with it, at its surface, thanks to the inconspicuous work of the iron statue standing in the silt. The teaching allows one to be in harmony with the way of the sky, embracing its flow, but it also impedes its natural course. This anchor provides safety but it also prevents exploration and the discovery of the destination of this flow. To receive a teaching can allow us to stand over the shoulders of our fathers, but there comes a point in life when one must become more than a mere heir, when one must sever the link with his inheritance, cutting off the chain tied to the anchor, accepting to put an end to the standstill and let himself be carried toward the unknown.

When the master dangles the seal in front of the eyes of his followers, asking them who is ready to let it be applied upon them, he is nonetheless also like a fisherman with a fourfold hook at the end of a line, ready to catch them, and thereby teach them about the essence of all things. If one desires to receive the seal, he is unworthy of it. If one refuses to receive the seal, he is undeserving of it. Only someone who is blind to its nature may be fit to receive it, someone as soft as water itself, already one with the flow, and as hard as jade, one with the earth upon which the water runs. A seal of water imprinted upon water. A block of jade pressed against another. Nothing is gained, nothing is lost, and yet the essence is thereby manifested. The waters are troubled by the whales swimming in the depths, and the mud cannot be distinguished from the water. The whales cannot be discerned from the frogs, and one knows not if the seal is there or not.

When the knavish student is caught, with the hook in his mouth, as he is perplexed by the opposition between the presence or absence of the seal used as a bait, the wound renders him speechless, only causing him pain, and he only lets a loud cry resound in the preaching hall, thinking that he would thereby scare the one who caught him and cause him to let his catch go. Seeing the fish wriggle on the ground, the master then puts an end to its misery,

with a swift blow of his whisk. This is the seal that he deserves, imprinted upon his forehead, in the hope that he would realize where he stands. Playing in the mud with frogs, debating the beauty of the sky with an assembly of blind men, there nonetheless comes a point when the master's benevolence is leading others further astray rather than guiding them, and thus one should recognize the time when silence speaks more than words, and when the best lesson is to deprive the students of any instruction.

Case 109 — Zhaoqing Prepares Tea — 招慶煎茶

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 48.

【中】

舉。王太傅¹入招慶煎茶。時朗上座
與明招把鈔，²朗翻却茶鈔，太傅見，問上座：「茶
爐下是什麼。」朗云：「捧³爐神。」太傅云：「既是
捧爐神，為什麼翻却茶鈔。」朗云：「仕官⁴千日，
失在一朝。」太傅拂袖⁵便去。明招云：「朗上座
喫却招慶飯了，却去江外打野榧。」⁶朗云：「和尚
作麼生。」招云：「非人得其便。」⁷雪竇云：「當
時但踏倒茶爐。」

¹ 【太傅】[tài fù]: “a grand tutor” / “a tutor to the imperial family.”

² 【鈔】S: 【鈔】[diào]: “a kettle.”

³ 【捧】[pěng]: “to hold up with both hands.”

⁴ 【仕官】[shì guān]: “[to serve] as a government official.”

⁵ 【拂袖】[fú xiù]: “to give a flick of his sleeves” (expressing anger or contempt).

⁶ 【打野榧】[dǎ yě zhǐ]: This expression literally means “to hit a wild stump.” This appears to be an idiomatic expression originating from the Fuzhou region (福州), meaning “to gather people so that they would brawl,” here translated as “to pick a fight.” (See: 《佛光大辭典電子版》。佛光山文教基金會, 2007: p1933: 「禪林用語。榧，枯木之根。打野榧，即叩枯木根之意。原作打野堆，意指聚集眾人，成堆打鬧，係福州之諺語。…聯燈會要卷二十一悟明章已續一三六・三九五上）：「如福州諺曰：『打野堆』者，成堆打鬧也。今明招錄中作打野榧。後來圓悟碧巖集中解云：『野榧，乃山上燒不過底火柴頭。』」).

⁷ 【得其便】[dé qí biàn]: “to get an advantage” / “to get something [out of something]

else].” (See the expression: 兩得其便 “there are advantages to both sides,” or the following example: 「當初韓信懷才未遇，漢皇缺少大將，得其便。」 From: 明馮夢龍。《喻世明言》。CTEXT, chapter 31) .

【日】

こ おうたい ふ しょうけい はい ちゃ い とき
 擧す。王太傅、招慶に入りて茶を煎ず。時に
 ろうじょうざ みょうしょう ため ちょう と ろう さちょう
 朗上座、明招の與に銚を把る。朗、茶銚を
 くつがえ たい ふ み じょうざ と さ ろ か こ
 翻却す。太傅見て上座に問う、「茶爐下はれ
 なん ろういわ ぼう ろ じん たい ふ いわ すで
 什麼ぞ。」朗云く、「棒爐神。」太傅云く、「既に
 こ ぼう ろ じん なにゆえ さちょう くつがえ ろう
 是れ棒爐神、爲什麼にか茶銚を翻却す。」朗
 いわ しかん せん にち しつ いっちょう あ たい ふ そで
 云く、「仕官千日、失は一朝に在り。」太傅、袖を
 はら すなわ さ みょうしょういわ ろうじょうざ しょうけい
 拂って便ち去る。明招云く、「朗上座、招慶の
 くら おわ かえ こうがい ゆ たい
 を喫却い了るや、却って江外に去きて野檉を
 だ ろういわ おしょう さもさん しょういわ ひにん
 打す。」朗云く、「和尚は作麼生。」招云く、「非人、
 そ たより え せつしょういわ すぐさま た さ
 其の便を得たり。」雪竇云く、「當時但だ茶
 ろ けたお
 爐を踏倒さん。」

【E】

Minister Ou visited Zhaoqing Temple and agreed to drink tea. The senior monk Lang took up the kettle to serve Minzhao, but Lang overturned the kettle [over the tea hearth]. The minister saw this and asked the senior monk: “What is this, under the tea hearth?” Lang said: “Deities holding up the hearth.” The minister said: “If they are deities holding up the hearth, why did they overturn the kettle?” Lang said: “A thousand days of service, and all is lost in one morning.” The minister gave a flick of his sleeves and went out. Minzhao said: “Elder Lang has eaten Zhaoqing Temple’s food [for a long time], and yet he went beyond the river to pick a fight.” Lang said: “What would the Master have said?” Minzhao said: “The non-human got the advantage.” (Xuedou said:

“At that moment, I would have kicked over the tea hearth.”
)

¹ “Gave a flick of his sleeve” : See note 5 of the Chinese text.

² “To pick a fight” : See note 6 of the Chinese text.

The sparrows sing their songs of love and joy while soaring through the air, as the summer breeze plays with the jade-colored leaves of the oak bathed in sunlight, and the heart of men is uplifted by the temporary clemency of the skies. The builders of the world thus invite their neighbors to share with them a cup of the liquid of life, richly flavored with the fruits of the earth. When men congregate, the danger is nonetheless never far away. All too easy it is for a hermit to forget himself and abandon his self, rejoicing in perfect unity with the way of the sky, but as soon as others are present, the self makes a brutal return, ready to push away others to impose its presence, prone to humiliate what it sees as an opponent to exalt what it considers to be its own greatness. Harmony with the way is nonetheless demonstrated by the relinquishing of the self, unbound benevolence toward all beings, and an aptitude to lead the blind to see and embrace their own nature.

Men are droplets of water running down the earth after having fallen down from the heavens. Some of them spend eons seeping through the ground before reaching the depths of the sea, while others are swiftly hit by the fiery rays of the sun, vaporized, once again becoming one with the air filling up the heavens, invisible, dissolved in the whole. Such fire may also be found upon the earth. A good-hearted and skillful teacher is a bright torch in the cold darkness of the night, and by entering into contact with it, the student may see his ego vaporized as a minute droplet of water, becoming the heavens themselves, unseen, unfathomable, and ungraspable, no-thing-ness incarnate. Such an event is nonetheless not something to be planned or forced. Confidence in the work of the skies, the flow carried upon the way, implies that one should not be caught in the trap of the inquiry into causes and consequences, as these are mere things of the world, creations of the mind, while the truth of the skies is a seamless brocade forming a perfect sphere, without beginning nor end, without front nor back. But men are easily fooled by themselves, and they feel compelled

to search for reasons and causes, tempted to count the passing of time and measure the benevolence of their benefactors, showing their attachment to the vacuity of the world, instead of embracing the true emptiness of the skies, which is their essential nature.

When one has lifted up the veil covering up the true nature of the world and discovered the place where there is not a single thing, nor a single man, one is no longer disturbed by the agitation of this world, by the power plays and the clashes of egos, omnipresent in it. When he is the target of an offense, he remains impassive, as there is nothing to be shaken. He is an empty vessel, a cavity resonating throughout the sky when it is struck. But few will take care of observing this vessel, and they instead look for signs in the heavens, not hesitating to create what they would hope to see. Unable to see the seamlessness of the all-encompassing heavens, they build images representing what they see as the root of the order or disorder established within their world, deities that would be the cause of all the consequences unfolded in front of their eyes. The one attached to the purity of no-thing-ness itself would be offended by such crude representations, and he may be tempted to kick them down, crushing them with a hammer, but one who sees their nature knows that all things are empty, without any single thing being less empty than others, and thus he does not even see them as any different than the birds in the air or the clouds veiling the radiance of the sun.

Man's destiny is to discover what is found beyond his humanity, outside of his world, the realm of the non-human. This only occurs when his humanity itself is relinquished. Then can he join the celestial, not becoming a god or a holy man, but simply being what he was before his birth, before the inception of life, before the unfolding of the heavens. He may then observe the curious congregations of men, the poor displays of their ignorance of the way of the sky, with a compassionate eye, seeing in them the slow course of droplets of rain running in the valleys, ready to be turned into vapor and join him back in the sky, even though they are never truly separated from it.

Case 110 —Did You Get The Sword? —還 收得劍么

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 66.

【中】

舉。巖頭問僧：「什麼處來。」僧云：「西京來。」
 頭云：「黃巢¹過後，還收得劍麼。」僧云：「收
 得。」巖頭引頸²近前云：「因。」³僧云：「師頭
 落也。」巖頭呵呵大笑。僧後到雪峯，峯問：「什
 麼處來。」僧云：「巖頭來。」峯云：「有何言
 句。」僧舉前話，雪峯打三十棒趕出。

¹【黃巢】[Huáng Cháo]: The leader of a peasant uprising during the Tang dynasty. He is said to have received a sword from the heavens, bearing the following inscription: “the heavens give Huangchao this sword.” He was killed four years after (884 A.D.) having conquered the “Western Capital” (西京 [xī jīng], actual 西安 [xī ān]) in 880 A.D.

²【引頸】S:【引頸】[yǐn jǐng]: “to crane one’s neck” / “with one’s neck outstretched [in expectation].”

³【因】[huò]: Onomatopoeia expressing the sound of a boat’s ropes being pulled, and also used as an interjection expressing disapproval of commiseration, like the English word “tut.” The use here nonetheless appears to be purely onomatopoeic.

【日】

こ がんとう そう と いず こ き
 舉す。巖頭、僧に 問う、「什麼處よりか 來たる。」
 そういわ さいきょう き どういわ こうそう す
 僧云く、「西京より 來たる。」頭云く、「黃巢過ぎ
 のち は げん おさむとく そういわ おさむとく
 し 後、還た 劍を 收得せしや。」僧云く、「收得せ
 がんとう くび のばし ちかづ いわ か そう
 り。」巖頭、頸を 引し 近前きて 云く、「因。」僧
 いわ し あたま お がんとう かか たいしょう そう
 云く、「師の 頭 落ちたり。」巖頭、呵呵大笑す。僧、
 のち せっぽう いた ほう と いず こ き
 後に 雪峰に 到る。峰問う、「什麼處よりか 來た
 そういわ がんとう き ほういわ なん
 る。」僧云く、「巖頭より 來たる。」峰云く、「何の

言句か 有りし。」僧、前話を 擧す。雪峰、打つこ
と 三十棒して 趕い 出す。

【E】

Yantou asked a monk: “Where have you come from?” The monk said: “From the Western Capital.” Yantou said: “After Huangchao¹ passed away, did you get his sword?” The monk said: “I got it.” Yantou stuck out his neck as he went in front of the monk and said: “Khe!”² The monk said: “The teacher’s head has fallen.” Yantou laughed loudly. The monk later came to Xuefeng. Xuefeng asked: “Where have you come from?” The monk said: “From Yantou.” Xuefeng asked: “What words [did he say]?” The monk told him about the aforementioned conversation. Xuefeng gave him thirty blows with his stick and drove him out.

¹ “Huangchao”: See note 1 of the Chinese text

² “Ah!”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

The wanderer peregrinates in search of an illumination, failing to realize that he himself is a source of light traveling through the darkness, observing all that it illuminates, without seeing that he is the illumination that he seeks. Where does this wanderer come from? From the noisy streets of the capital of the world, the place where things are piled up to reach the sky, and where the bare earth has been entirely paved with the products of their own hands, concealing the rocky face of our planet. The dweller of the great citadel would need an extremely piercing eye to see what lies beyond its walls, or perhaps better stated, what does not lie beyond them. His heart thirsts for power and glory, for money and fame, ready to revolt against the order of nature itself, considering that his self is the center point of the creation, as it is through it that all his experiences occur.⁹⁰ The weapon of the rebel is

⁹⁰ See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p75: “La experiencia de la Iluminación implica el abandono del ego rebelde. El ego es siempre rebelde. Se niega a admitir la existencia de un poder superior a él.”

the sword, which can cut the heavens into pieces of the world, neatly stacked and arrayed according to his whims. What is not two is shattered by the blade, into innumerable pieces, becoming his prized possessions, and the lenses through which he beholds the earth and the skies. This weapon is the one shared by the commoner as well as the king, by the old and the young, the learned and the ignorant. It is the tool that gave rise to the world, used to edify it at each instant, but there is another, a rarer instrument, one that is not to be used to cut out the heavens, but rather to wield its power.

The sword that gives death and brings back to life is the one wielded by the one who has explored beyond the frontiers of the world of men, having made the great desert his home for a while, before a homecoming, to kill the deluded prisoners of this world, before offering them a helping hand so that they would rise from the earth, standing up from the grave, to soar into the heavens and see the unicity of the earth, the world, and the skies. The great death that comes with the sword is the one marking the vanishing of the self, turned to ashes and scattered to the winds. The resurrection is the rebirth of the mind, cleared of its illusions, empty of its self, without desire, without will, only an instrument of the way of the sky itself, an empty recipient used by it to quench the thirst of the prisoners.

Asked if he received the sword, the wanderer declares that this gift has indeed been bestowed to him, without understanding the nature of this weapon of life and death. His host then demands a demonstration of his use of this sword, sticking out his own neck in front of him, with a deafening shout inviting him to strike without delay: “Khe!” He has taken a leap from language to silence, without abandoning his willingness to teach the visitor a lesson. Still blind to its meaning, the wanderer tries to drag the host back into the realm of words, with a reply he without a doubt thought to be clever and that would be appreciated by his audience: “The teacher’s head has already fallen.” Hearing this poor demonstration of his swordsmanship, the teacher only replies with a loud laugh, showing him once again that words are not necessary to convey meaning. One who does not know where he comes from would nonetheless, unsurprisingly, not understand such a silent teaching, and thus would depart without any insight.

Recounting to other men of experience this encounter, he would be greeted with a stick, more fitting to such a student, incapable of being taught in silence, using subtlety and inconspicuous signs. Like a beast, he is taught with a club, a tool bringing the one lost in the realm of thoughts swiftly back to the earth, the realm of the senses, with his pain telling him of his foolishness. Blows of a stick may nonetheless show the benevolence of the teacher, perhaps more than indifference, and more than offering a lesson that he knew would pass far over the head of the one receiving it. If he were to come to us, how would we greet such a man? Having been driven out, he may still be continuing his journey, ready to knock on our door, and what then?

Case 111 —Dingzhou's "Blind Stick" — 烏白屈棒

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 75.

【中】

舉。僧從定州和尚會裏，¹來到烏白。烏白
問：「定州 法道，何似這裏。」僧云：「不別。」白
云：「若不別更轉彼中去。」便打。僧云：「棒頭有眼，
不得草草打人。」白云：「今日打著一箇也。」又
打三下。僧便出去。白云：「屈棒²元來有人喫
在。」僧轉身云：「爭奈³杓柄⁴在和尚手裏。」白
云：「汝若要，山僧回與汝。」僧近前奪白手中棒，
打白三下。白云：「屈棒，屈棒。」僧云：「有人
喫在。」白云：「草草打著箇漢。」僧便禮拜。白
云：「和尚却恁麼去也。」僧大笑而出。白云：「消
得⁵恁麼，消得恁麼。」

¹ 【會裏】[huì lǐ]: “the place where one met [someone else].”

² 【屈棒】[qū bàng]: “to hit someone with a stick unjustly”; 屈 [qū]: “bent” / “to

feel wronged.”

³ 【爭奈】[zhēng nài]: “to be helpless” / “what can [someone] do?”

⁴ 【杓柄】[sháo bǐng]: “the handle of a ladle.”

⁵ 【消得】[xiāo dé]: “it should be [like that].”

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう おしょう え り きた うきゅう
 擧す。僧、定 州 和尚の 會裏より 來りて 烏白に
 いた うきゅう と じょうしゅう ほうどう こ こ いかん
 到る。烏白 問う、「定 州の 法道、這裏と 何似。」
 そういわ べつ きゅういわ も べつ
 僧云く、「別ならず。」白 云く、「若し 別ならず
 さら かしこ てん さ すなわ う
 んば、更に 彼中に 轉じ 去れ。」 便ち 打つ。
 そういわ ほうどう め あ そうそう ひと う
 僧云く、「棒頭に 眼有り、草草に 人を 打つこ
 な か きゅういわ こんにち ひとり たじゃく
 と 不得れ。」白 云く、「今日、一箇を 打著せ
 ま う みたび そう すなわ い さ
 り。」又た 打つこと 三下す。僧 便ち 出で 去る。
 きゅういわ くつぼう なんと じん きつ あ なり
 白 云く、「屈棒を 元來人の 喫すること 有る 在。」
 そう み てん いわ いかん しゃくへい おしょう
 僧、身を 轉じて 云く、「爭奈せん 杓柄は 和尚の
 て うち あ きゅういわ なんじ も よう
 手の 裏に 在り。」白 云く、「汝 若し 要せば、
 さんそう なんじ かえ そうちか よ きゅう しゅちゅう
 山僧 汝に 回與さん。」僧近前って 白の 手中の
 ぼう うば きゅう う みたび きゅういわ くつ
 棒を 奪い、白を 打つこと 三下す。白 云く、「屈
 ぼう くつぼう そういわ ひと きつ あ
 棒、屈棒。」僧云く、「人の 喫すること 有る
 なり きゅういわ そうそう こ おとこ たじゃく そう
 在。」白 云く、「草草に 箇の 漢を 打著す。」僧、
 すなわ らいはい きゅういわ かえ いんも さ
 便ち 禮拜す。白 云く、「却って 恁麼にし 去れ
 そうたいしょう い きゅういわ いんも しょうとく
 り。」僧大笑して 出づ。白 云く、「恁麼を 消得す、
 いんも しょうとく
 恁麼を 消得す。」

【E】

A monk came to Wujiu after having visited Master Dingzhou.
 Wujiu asked: “What is the difference between Dingzhou’

s Dharma-way and the Dharma-way here?" The monk said: "No difference." Wujiu said: "If there is no difference, go back to him!" and then hit him. The monk said: "The top end of a stick has an eye. One should not hit a man so hastily." Wujiu said: "Today, I hit a man [who deserved it]," and he hit him three more times. The monk then went out. Wujiu said: "There is a man who deserves to eat a blind stick!" The monk turned and said: "What can I do, as the ladle handle is in your hand!" Wujiu said: "If you need it, this mountain-dwelling monk will give it back to you." The monk approached him, snatched the stick from his hand, and hit him three times. Wujiu said: "Blind stick, blind stick!" The monk said: "Here is a man who deserves to eat it!" Wujiu said: "I have hit a lad too hastily!" The monk then made a deep bow. Wujiu said: "Master, is that all right for you?" The monk laughed loudly and left. Wujiu said: "It should be like that! It should be like that!"

The way is riddled with traps and chasms, into which even the most well-traveled may fall. If one thinks that he knows the path, he falls. If one fails to know it, he falls. The pilgrim advances on this path, at his own pace, roaming the earth as the starry sky ineluctably turns, high above his head. When he arrives in a new land, encountering a new master, the reason for his coming may appear superfluous. Isn't the way found in front of one's eyes at all times, and even behind him? There is no difference between the way here and there. Why is the pilgrim wasting his time in useless peregrination then? Asking this very question means that one has already fallen into the trap. The way is the same here and there, so why distinguish the origin and the destination? There is no here and there outside of the mind. One may tell him to go back from whence he came if there is no difference, but he has never left and never arrived. He is a green leaf carried by the summer breeze, to the heights, to the horizon, and yet always on the way of the sky, perfectly one with it. Like a frog in a well, the one caught in the trap nonetheless fails to realize this, and even a thousand years inside it would not teach him what lies beyond the walls of this well.

Being called a master by others on a daily basis, one will be inevitably tempted to believe in the reality of such a pompous title. Exalted by followers, holding onto a walking staff, a symbol of authority, the tool of the man on the way and a weapon to bring back those who stray into the fold. Seeing a younger pilgrim on his earthly peregrination, the man caught in the mire of “here” and “there,” of “masters” and “disciples,” sees someone in need of his instruction, by the word or by the sword. He strikes the offending part of the pilgrim, a blow to the forehead, hoping to cause him to realize that such a journey was unnecessary, as what he seeks is here and now! It always was here and now. Passing a swift judgment, without knowing the mind of the opponent, it is nonetheless all too easy to get carried away and to assume culpability without proper knowledge. If one thinks he has understood the one standing in front of him, he surely will be proven wrong. But if one remains attached to rights and wrongs, he also fails to perceive the essence of the way.⁹¹ Thinking he is winning, he loses. Thinking he is losing, he loses. When thinking ceases, and perception is given the front stage, then the clouds of the mind are cleared, and the light of the heavens can shine in all its splendor.

The pilgrim may then boldly snatch the staff from the hands of the master, robbing him of his authority, and in turn strike his forehead, having seen him fall into the trap. He afterward extends the staff to him, allowing him to extract himself out of the mire. Each holds onto one end, and they playfully wrestle, embodying the way itself, without beginning nor end, without winner or loser, without master or disciple. The opposition plays with equality, with neither of them prevailing for long.⁹² This is how it should be! Playful combat, a ballet of life and death, heavy blows paired with deep bows, total blindness married with perfect clarity, a

⁹¹See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p114: “Vencer o ganar no es difícil. Lo difícil es realizar la Vía sin vencer ni ganar, sin que haya ganador ni vencido.”

⁹²See Yuanwu’s preface on this case: “The sharp-edged treasure sword is always right in front of us. It has the power to kill men and the power to bring men back to life. It is here and there. It can both give and take away. If one wants to brandish it, he may do so. If one wants to lay it down, he may do so. But tell me, how it is when one no longer distinguishes ‘host’ and ‘guest,’ when one ceases to care of who asks and who replies.” Chinese original: 「靈鋒寶劍。常露現前。亦能殺人亦能活人。在彼在此。同得同失。若要提持。一任提持。若要平展。一任平展。且道不落賓主。不拘回互時如何。」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》。CBETA (Case 75).

seamless alternation of extremes, exactly like the wondrous display offered to each one of us in the heavenly vault, with clarity steadily battling with obscurity, day after day, year after year, with the two elegantly blended one into the other, never stagnating, constantly moving and yet the most stable of the things of our world. Let us now join them, releasing all notions of gain and loss, right and wrong, skillful or inept, and courageously leap over the trap in front of us as we read these lines, beholding the harmony of nature as we experience it, here and now.

Case 112 —Did He Have The Eye? —還具眼么

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 76.

【中】

舉。丹霞問僧：「甚處來。」僧云：「山下來。」
 霞云：「喫飯了也未。」僧云：「喫飯了。」霞
 云：「將飯來與汝喫底人，還具眼麼。」僧無語。
 長慶問保福：「將飯與人喫，報恩有分，¹ 為什
 麼不具眼。」福云：「施者受者，二俱² 瞎漢。」
 長慶云：「盡其機來，³ 還成瞎否。」福云：「道
 我瞎得麼。」

¹ 【有分】[yǒu fèn]: “to be destined to [something].” Here, by the law of Karmic retribution.

² 【俱】[jù]: “together” / “alike.”

³ 【盡其機來】[jìn qí jī lái]: “to exhaust to the end this activity [of the mind].” 機 [jī] can mean “activity” or “function” of the mind, and is also related to the notion of “opportunity.” It is often opposed to the notion of “use” (用) or to “material things” (事). For other uses of this word, see case 88, case 108, and case 168. See also: 「盡其機來，就是盡機起用，所謂『大機大用』者是也。大機就是佛性，大用就是佛性的妙用。」From: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005: p819

【日】

こ たん か そう と いずこ き
 舉す。丹霞、僧に 問う、「甚處よりか 來たる。」
 そういわ さん ふもと き か いわ めし
 僧云く、「山の 下より 來たる。」霞云く、「飯を

喫し 了る 也未。」僧云く、「飯を 喫し 了れり。」
 霞云く、「飯を 將ち 來たりて 汝に 喫せしめし
 底の 人、還た 眼を 具せしや。」僧、語無し。長慶、
 保福に 問う、「飯を 人に 喫せしむるは、恩を
 報ゆるに 分有り。爲什麼にか 眼を 具せざる。」
 福云く、「施す 者と 受く 者と、二り 俱に 瞎
 漢なり。」長慶云く、「其の 機を 盡し 來たるに、
 還た 瞎と 成る 否。」云く、「我は 瞎す、と 道い
 て 得しきや。」

【E】

Danxia asked a monk: "Where have you come from?" The monk answered: "From the foot of the mountain." Danxia asked: "Have you eaten your meal?" The monk said: "Yes, I have eaten it." Danxia said: "The one who brought the meal and gave it to you, did he have the eye?" The monk remained speechless. Changching asked Baofu: "Surely, it is when one is called by [the law of Karmic] retribution to repay acts of kindness that one brings meals and gives them to people to eat. Why would this one not have the eye?" Baofu said: "The one who serves and the one who receives, both are blind lads." Changching said: "If one exhausts to the end this activity [of the mind], does he still remain blind, or not?" Baofu said: "Do you call me blind?"

Behind the most familiar, the most mundane, may lie a doorway opening up a passage toward the infinite, the extraordinary. Where do you come from? This question, heard almost systematically when we encounter a new face while we walk on the path of our life, is a great abyss. It is the heavens themselves, vast and

empty, sublime and unfathomable, the source and the destination of all that is.⁹³ One's walk of life may be revealed by the answer given to the stranger, but one will never be sure, and to draw a line between the fool and the wise, the novice and the master, is to still be caught in the mire of the world. Where do we come from? A man of the world will naturally state the name of his home province or city, as his mind is focused on words, things of the world. A man whose horizon goes beyond the walls made of things by the hands and the mind of man may offer a more lacunary answer, one that avoids drawing a sharp line between the "here" and "there," one that refrains from cutting out the seamless whole formed by all that is into neat little pieces, arbitrarily drawn, existing only in the mind: "I come from the foot of the mountain." This mountain has no name. It is not a thing of the world, but rather the whole of the earth itself.⁹⁴ We stand at the foot of countless mountains at this very moment, as this description fits the entirety of the dry land. There is no coming and going, and there is no source and destination, only here and now, extended to the confines of the earth and the sky, and to the most remote past and the most distant future. It may nonetheless also simply mean: "From this mountain, over there!" and one would never be able to tell for sure. The mind of the one standing in front of us forever remains a mystery, an impenetrable sea, which may be as shallow as a fingertip or as deep as the sky itself.

When two mirrors face each other, perfectly aligned, they will see an infinite depth in front of them, failing to distinguish the self from the other, depth and shallowness. When two men of the way discuss with one another, they play with the extremes, in the deep as well as in the shallows, blurring the line between them, not abiding anywhere for long. They, in turn, exalt foolishness and trample on wisdom. They crawl upon the ground to feel one with the stars, and they soar into the highest sky to embrace the earth. They see the whole in the most insignificant part, as if they entered into a doorway, and then they see the whole vanish in a puff of smoke, leaving no-thing in its stead, and then their eye is

⁹³See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。『「甚處來」，意指父母未生之前的地方。』

⁹⁴See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p115: " 'Del pie de la montaña.' Esto es como decir: 'Del planeta Tierra.' "

opened, an eye whose pupil is the sun itself, watching the earth, feeding the tree of life with its radiance, allowing it to grow toward the heavens.

When the eye is opened, the essence of all things becomes visible at all times. A meal is brought to you, and you see in it the living things sacrificed so that the intricate machinery of our mortal body may continue its activity for a little while longer, or the rain that watered their growth, as it was weaved together with the brilliance of our star to edify the substance of these nutritious plants. You see the stardust of which these plants were made, the depths of space from whence they came, and the unfolding of the heavens that they witnessed. You see that there is no-thing in front of you and that things are an illusion of the mind, without this representing a denial of the reality of the wondrous ballet of the heavens unfolded in front of your eyes. This eye sees the truth of being, with perfect clarity, but this also means that it is completely blind. It is blind to all things. It sees no-thing, not even no-thing-ness itself. There is no “you” and “I,” no one that sees and nothing to be seen, only the eye looking at itself, observing the great and sublime void.

Case 113 — All Sounds Are The Sound Of The Buddha — 一切聲是佛聲

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 79.

【中】

舉。僧問 投子：「一切聲是佛聲，是否。」 投子
云：「是。」 僧云：「和尚，莫屎沸碗 鳴聲。」¹
投子 便打。又問：「² 言及細語，³ 皆歸第一
義，是否。」 投子 云：「是。」 僧云：「喚和尚作一
頭驢得麼。」 投子 便打。

¹ 【屎沸鳴聲】[tún fèi míng shēng]: “the sound of a fart”; Composed of 屎 [tún], variant of 豚 “a small pig” / “bottom” / “rump”; 沸 [fèi]: “to boil” / “to be noisy” / “to be tumultuous”; 鳴聲 (S: 鳴聲) [míng shēng]: “a sound.”

² 【² 言】[cū]: variant of 麤 / 粗 [cū]: “vulgar words” / “coarse language.”

³ 【細語】S: 【細語】[xì yǔ]: “to speak with a low voice.”

【日】

舉^こす。僧^{そう}、投^{とう}子^すに 問^とう、「一切^{いっさい}の 聲^{おと}は 是^これ
 佛^{ぶつ}の 聲^{おと}と、是^ぜなり 否^や。」投^{とう}子^す云^{いわ}く、「是^ぜなり。」僧^{そう}
 云^{いわ}く、「和^{おしょう}尚^{とく}、尿^{ふつ}沸^{わん}碗^{みょう} 鳴^{しょう} 聲^{しやう}する こと 莫^{なか}れ。」投^{とう}
 子^す、便^{すなわ}ち 打^うつ。又^{また} 問^とう、「麤^そ言^{ごん}及^おび 細^{さい}語^ご、皆^{みな}
 第^{だい}一^{いち}義^ぎに 歸^きすと、是^ぜなり 否^や。」投^{とう}子^す云^{いわ}く、「是^ぜな
 り。」僧^{そう}云^{いわ}く、「和^{おしょう}尚^よを 喚^いんで 一^い頭^{っとう}の 驢^ろと 作^ばし
 て 得^よしきや。」投^{とう}子^す、便^{すなわ}ち 打^うつ。

【E】

A monk asked Touzi: “‘All sounds are the sound of the Buddha.’ Is it true or not?” Touzi said: “It is true.” The monk said: “Master, don’t fart around so loudly!” Touzi then hit him. He asked again: “‘Loudly uttered coarse words and delicately murmured phrases, they all return to the first principle.’ Is this true or not?” Touzi said: “It is true.” The monk said: “What if one were to call the master a donkey, what then?” Touzi then hit him.

When one’s hand strikes a bell with a hammer, this movement began at the very inception of the universe. Eons of revolutions of our galaxy were involved in its preparation, with the entirety of the heavens playing their part in it, until all elements converged, with the totality of the life of our bloodline, up to the first spark of life that miraculously bewitched the dead earth, pointing to this precise instant. When the metal is struck and it imparts the tremor seizing it to the air, its voice resounds throughout the sky, slowly fading away, but never completely disappearing, with no one able to tell when it stops and until what point can it be heard. Each noise resounding in our ears, each growl uttered by a beast, or each word pronounced by a man is also a note played by the way

of the sky itself, and we are all its instrument. There is no frontier between sounds and the commotion of the heavens, between voices and the bustling of the world. There is only the great whirlwind of the skies, without beginning nor end, without parts nor eras. Only within the walls of man's world are things separated between the elevated and the lowly, the noble and the vulgar, the fitting and the inappropriate.

Therefore, may one dare to say that it is true that all sounds are the voice of the essence of being? The answer should be a resounding "yes," one that shatters all doubt and destroys the very distinction between what "is" and what "is not," between truth and illusion.⁹⁵ Upon the earth and in the heavens, the crystalline purity of the sound of the temple bell is no different than a fart. To be a man of the way is nonetheless to be more than a rock or a cloud, permanently engulfed and abiding in no-thing-ness, outside of the walls of the world. It is to be a bridge between world and earth, between things and no-thing-ness, intimate with both but abiding in neither, playing with them without being attached or captured by them. Paying no attention to the order of the world, one may be tempted to deliberately provoke those attached to it, such as by loudly farting in the temple hall or insulting an elder. This would nonetheless not be a mark of one's liberation from the yoke of the world, of one's freedom from attachment to things. On the contrary, being amused by such a childish behavior only demonstrates one's nature as a slave to the world, a servant of its things. He is then only a slave who wrestles against his chains, battling against the order of the world, rather than simply letting go of the chains and releasing his grip upon this world.⁹⁶ One

⁹⁵See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "Here is a monk asking Touzi if all the sounds in the world are truly the voice of the Buddha. Touzi's answer, 'Right,' transcends all distinctions of difference and equality. Touzi speaks while observing the living fact. In this respect, his answer is the same as Zhaozhou's Mu." Original Japanese: 「今日の則は別に難しいところはありませんが、投子の素晴らしい力量を味わって下さい、趙州は「無」で、投子は「是」の一言で一切の分別妄想を断ち切ったわけです。便ち打つ、が素晴らしい。」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript] (The wording of the "official" translation differs significantly from the original text).

⁹⁶See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "To say that all sounds are the voice of the Buddha is to speak from the standpoint of the essential world. But the essential and phenomenal are actually one and the same. In the phenomenal there is distinction. There

who sees the essence of the skies does not feel compelled to rebel against the order of the world. He goes with its flow, accompanying it without thought and without will, letting his hand be guided by the sounds echoing through the air, the stick in his hand striking the temple bell when the assembly should congregate, and hitting the forehead of the fool when a torrent of thoughts is overwhelming his feeble mind, in hope that the sound produced by it would wake him up, dispelling the illusions that hold sway over him.

Case 114 —Linji's "Blind Donkey" —臨 際瞎驢

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 13.

【中】

舉。臨際將示滅。¹ 囑² 三聖：「吾遷化後，
不得滅却吾正法眼藏。」³ 聖云：「爭敢滅却和
尚正法眼藏。」際云：「忽有人問汝，作麼生對。」
聖便喝。際云：「誰知，⁴ 吾正法眼藏向這瞎驢
邊滅却。」

¹ 【示滅】S: 【示灭】[shì miè]: “the death of monk.”

² 【囑】S: 【嘱】[zhǔ]: “to exhort” / “to urge.”

³ 【正法眼藏】S: 【正法眼藏】[zhèng fǎ yǎn cáng]: “the treasury of the eye of the true Dharma.” It refers to the whole teaching of Buddhism (正法). It is the eye that illuminates the entirety of the heavens, and the storehouse that contains everything. According to the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha gave the treasury of the eye of the true Dharma to his disciple Kāśyapa (迦葉 [Jiā shè]), marking the beginning of the transmission “from heart to heart” of the teaching.

⁴ 【誰知】S: 【谁知】[shéi zhī]: “who would have thought.”

are things that we must say to our superiors as well as things that we must avoid saying out of respect. Otherwise, everything descends into a state of ‘bad equality.’ It’s all right to say that there are essentially no distinctions but we must never forget this aspect of the phenomenal.” Original Japanese: 「ここのところを昔からこう見えています。一切の声は仏声だとは本分の世界から言うことで、現象の世界からみるとアリアリと差別がある。目上の人に対しては言うてはならぬ言葉があるし、言うべき言葉もあって、礼儀を尽さねばならない。そうでないと結局は悪平等になる 平等は平等だけれども現象界のことを忘れての平等だ。」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

【日】

こ りんざいまさ めつ しめ さんしょう
 擧す。臨濟將に 滅を 示さんとして 三聖に
ぞく われ せんげ のち われ しょうぼうげんぞう めっきやく
 囑す。吾遷化の 後 吾 正法眼藏を 滅却す
え しょういわ いかで あえ おしょう
 ることを 得ざれ。聖 云く、「爭か 敢て 和尚の
しょうぼうげんぞう めっきやく ざいいわ たちま ひと あ
 正法眼藏を 滅却せん。」濟云く、「忽ち 人有り
なんじ と いか に こた しょう すなわ かつ
 汝に 問わば 作麼生か 對えん。」聖、 便ち 喝す。
ざいいわ だれ し われ しょうぼうげんぞう こ かつ ろ へん
 濟云く、「誰か 知らん 吾正法眼藏這の 瞎驢邊に
むか めっきやく
 向って 滅却することを。」

【E】

When Linji was about to die, he exhorted [his heir] Sansheng: “After my passing, do not destroy my treasury of the eye of the true Dharma.”¹ Sansheng said: “How would one dare to destroy the Master’s treasury of the eye of the true Dharma?” Linji said: “Suddenly someone asks you [about it], what will your answer be?” Sansheng immediately shouted: “Khe!” Linji said: “Who would have thought! My treasury of the eye of the true Dharma has been destroyed by this blind donkey!”

¹ “The treasury of the eye of the true Dharma”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

As soon as he is thrown into the world, an infant is offered things, and he accumulates them year after year as his body grows in strength and his intellect is sharpened with the grindstone of experience. He diligently orders these things and with them, he builds up a home into which he will abide for the rest of his life. Even those who have taken upon themselves the daunting task of unveiling the way of the sky make a sanctuary of their holy things, a treasury of insights into the essence of the heavens, replete with lofty towers of letters and massive fortresses of words and images, describing the sky while veiling it further by obstructing the view of

its inhabitant. So pervasive, and so familiar, these treasures come to replace what they represent. He considers that these things are the truth of the skies itself, rather than a mere instrument built to guide his eyes toward it. He holds the power to topple these towers of signs, but he is utterly impotent to move the smallest celestial wheel by the most minute increment.⁹⁷ He can edify or raze his world to its foundation, but he is a mere grain of sand on an immense shore in the heavens, without control over its whole, without significant influence.

When one has perceived the absolute vacuity of the world, the pernicious falsehood of the lofty towers of letters and the deep lakes of ink, he lets them go without a trace of regret and dispels all delusions with a resounding shout that shakes the earth and echoes throughout the heavens: “Khe!” This wave passing through the air vigorously washes away all the ink of the world. It wets and dissolves away the sky-high piles of books, leaving only crystal-clear waters reflecting the azure summer sky. When the great wave has passed, remnants of the world emerge, soaked to their core. The letters are legible but faded and blurred, pieces of the world inextricably merged with the earth, a harmonious blending of both realms, belonging to both and neither of them. This deafening shout comes when the power of the things of the world has been exhausted, but when it is the body itself that has exhausted its strengths, and the time to return to the earth gets closer, comes the moment to pass on this weapon piercing the ears and the minds.

But how can one transmit something that cannot be possessed? How to pass on something that cannot be seized? As life itself, which emerges through direct and deeply intimate contact between parents, the heavenly fire that burns through one’s world to reveal the heavenly vault is propagated through direct exposure. It may take a single day or a lifetime, depending on the nature of the soil upon which the ember is placed, but contact with the flame ignites what it touches, allowing it to spread further, through the earth and through the turns of the heavenly

⁹⁷See Wansong’s comment on this case: “Actually, this thing, it does not increase even when a thousand Buddhas appear in the world, and even when a thousand saints pass away, it does not decrease. How would Sansheng be able to cause it to flourish or to die out?” Chinese original: 「其實此事。千佛出世不增。千聖入滅不減。豈一三聖能興滅哉。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》. CBETA (Case 13).

wheels.

Someone who has seen the nature of the heavens then behaves like the heavens themselves, embracing its harmonious display. He is ever-changing, and yet of a perfect regularity. He is ungraspable and its depth cannot be assessed with the eyes or a voice. He is the all-seeing eye that sees nothing, not even itself, the treasury emptied entirely by the great wave. With a mind clear of all thought, as simple as the one of a donkey, and eyes plunged in absolute brightness, blind to all things, he becomes a blazing ember, ready to, in turn, ignite those with whom he would enter into contact. His tongue will make waves, stirring up the air, but he will not distinguish compliments from rebukes, words of edification and words of destruction.⁹⁸ No one will be able to be sure of what goes on between his ears, behind his eyes, as it cannot be seen nor heard, like the essence of the sky itself.

Case 115 — Attendant Kuo Offers Tea — 郭侍過茶

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 14.

【中】

舉。郭侍者問德山：「從上諸聖向什麼處去也。」山云：「作麼，作麼。」郭云：「勅¹ 點飛龍馬，² 跛³ 鼈⁴ 出頭來。」山便休去。來日山浴出，郭過茶與山。山撫郭背一下，郭云：「這老漢方始⁵ 瞥地。」⁶ 山又休去。

¹ 【勅】S:【敕】[chì]: “an imperial decree.”

² 【飛龍馬】: “a flying dragon-horse.” This can refer to a mythical beast or to an exceptionally fast horse.

³ 【跛】[bǒ]: “lame” / “crippled.”

⁴ 【鼈】S:【黿】[biē]: variant of 黿 [biē]: “a freshwater soft-shelled turtle.”

⁹⁸ See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Shōyōroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “What does ‘blind donkey’ mean? It means there are no thoughts or concepts in his head. All thoughts in your head must disappear completely.”

⁵ 【方始】[fāng shǐ]: used to refer to the fact that something just happened, like the modern Chinese: 猶才, 方才.

⁶ 【瞥地】[piē dì]: “suddenly.”

【日】

こ かく じしゃ とくさん と じじょう しょしょう いづれ
 舉す。廓侍者、徳山に 問う、「從上の 諸聖 什麼の
 ところ むか さ さんいわ そ も そ も
 處に 向って 去るや。」山云く、「作麼、作麼。」
 かくいわ ひりゅう め ちよくてん ばべつしゅつとうらい
 廓云く、「飛龍馬を 勅點すれば 跛鼈出頭 來。」
 さん すなわ きゅう さ らいじつ さん よく い かく
 山 便ち 休し 去る。來日、山、浴より 出づ。廓、
 さ すご さん あた さん かく はい ぶ
 茶を 過して 山に 與う。山、廓が 背を 撫する
 いちげ かくいわ こ ろうかんまさ はじ べつ
 こと 一下、廓云く、「這の 老漢方に 始めて 瞥
 ち さん また きゅう さ
 地。」山、又 休し 去る。

【E】

Attendant Kuo asked Deshan: “Where have all the saints of the past gone?” Deshan said: “What? What?” Kuo said: “A command was given for a horse flying like a dragon [to appear], and it is a crippled tortoise that comes!” Deshan then took his leave. The next day, when Deshan came out of the bath, Kuo served him tea. Deshan [gently] stroked Kuo’s back a little. Kuo said: “This old fellow, he just now finally begins [to understand]!” Again, Deshan took his leave.

Someone may stand still on the path for an entire lifetime, while a child may advance rapidly, disappearing beyond the horizon of the standing man in a fraction of his existence. When the old encounters the young, he will tend to presume a greater familiarity with the way on his part. After so many years of effort, it would seem natural that he would know more than one who has barely started! To open up one’s eyes nonetheless demands absolutely no effort. To see the way of the sky requires neither a

lengthy journey nor a formidable resilience. One only needs to perceive what is there at all times, everywhere, just as it is, no more no less. It only takes one step to climb on the top of the world and see the raw splendor of the heavens beyond its high walls, the absolute void, total no-thing-ness shown as an incomparable and immense display, a splendid swirling of forms and colors, perceived as a totality, without any distinction between forms and colors.

When the young man of the way meets the elder, the former may nonetheless respect the natural order of this world to which he is not attached, but with which he nonetheless remains in harmony. Without a thought, without any hint of reflection, he expresses his deference to this man greeting him like a son. As soon as he opens his mouth, the old man makes a fool of himself, as he asks: "Where have all the saints of the past gone?" There are no saints under the heavens, nor any profane person. Those who were here in the past remain here now. They are the industrious bees tasting the succulent nectar of the summer flowers, and the blades of fresh grass elegantly dancing with the breeze. They are here, as there is no other place where they could be. Their teachings can still be heard echoing in the air, if one listens attentively enough. What answer can be given to such words? Perhaps one that attempts to bring back the one lost in the lofty clouds of the world to the earth down below, making use of a word that can encompass the entirety of the heavens and what they contain: "What? What?" The answer is itself a question, wrapping the discussion around like a snake biting its own tail, forming a complete circle, without beginning nor end, like the sky itself. This word may point out the sum of all the illusions mentioned by the elder, these clouds that obscure his mind, or it may equally designate the entirety of all that is, the "here" and "now" extended to the confines of the heavens, space and time. It nonetheless takes a dweller of the earth, gazing at the naked sky rather than observing the products of the imagination of men, to recognize the depth of this seemingly rudimentary answer.

To a man of the world, the truth of the sky appears as foolish, too plain and simple to embody the essence of all that is. He expects the truth to be manifested as a conspicuous display in the celestial vault, a majestic stallion flying like a dragon, making it appear as clear as the day. Seeing it come to him in the form of a

crippled tortoise, he dismisses it without batting an eye, promptly returning to his lofty clouds where he confidently seeks enlightenment. Seeing that his benevolent words fell into a deaf ear, the young therefore attempts another way to show him no-thing-ness itself, by letting him hear the sound of silence, seeing a closed mouth that speaks wonders.

To make silence one's home is a first step. It is putting oneself in front of the door opened toward the essence of the heavens themselves. When one no longer needs words and letters to express his benevolence toward others, he unlocks this door and stands on the threshold, ready to open it. Seeing the elder approaching him with a relaxed face and a teapot in his hand, the young lad is pleased to see the old man offer him a cup of the liquid of life infused with the perfumed fruits of the earth, without any word uttered, seeing in this a beginning of an appropriation of silence, and of the language of the earth, one that uses the hands rather than the tongue. He therefore acknowledges this insight with a gentle stroke on his back, but the elder then opens his mouth, demonstrating that one can never be too sure of one's intention, and of the content of one's mind, as he uttered these words: "This old fellow now finally begins to understand!" The young man failed in his modest attempt to teach the elder, but his lesson is not in vain, as he teaches us right now how to embrace the order of the world, respecting its hierarchies, but likewise instructs us to use the tools of the world to try to guide others toward a revelation of the way of the sky.⁹⁹

Case 116 —Yangshan Points To Snow —仰 山指雪

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 26.

【中】

⁹⁹ See Wansong preface on this case: "At times, a cotton ball inside a piece of iron. At times, a hard stone inside a brocade. Using what is hard to overpower what is weak, this is in the order of things. When one encounters what is strong while he is weak, what happens then?" Chinese original: 「有時鐵裏綿團。有時錦包特石。以剛決柔則故是。逢強即弱事如何。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 14).

舉。仰山 指雪師子云：「還有過得此色者麼。」
 雲門 云：「當時便與推倒。」雪竇 云：「只解推
 倒，不解扶起。」

【日】

舉す。仰山、雪師子を 指して 云く、「還って
 此の 色を 過ぎ 得る 者有りや。」雲門云く、
 「當時 便ち 與めに 推到せん。」雪竇云く、「只
 推到を 解して 扶起を 解せず。」

【E】

Yangshan pointed to a snow lion¹ and said: “Is there any [color] that goes beyond this color?” Yunmen [heard of this question and] said: “At that time, one would have helped and knocked it over.” Xuedou [in turn, hearing of this reply,] said: “[this one] only knows how to knock it over, but not how to raise it up.”

¹ “A snow lion”: Usually interpreted to mean a statue of a lion covered with snow.

When the bright season comes and the earth is abundantly flooded with heavenly fire while life unrestrainedly sprouts out of the earth, the eyes of man feast on a seemingly infinite harvest of hues and shapes, vividly painted flowers, emerald leaves dancing together with golden ears of wheat, under the clear azure dome encompassing our planet. The summer is when the world shines and all things are exposed, in their differences, standing in contrast with each other.

At the other end of the celestial wheel marking the passing of the years, winter is the season when contrasts fade away, when the bright colors are washed away by the rain and the winds, with the

trees stripped of their delicate coat of leaves, the penumbrous sky veiled in woolly clouds, and the world and the earth equally covered with a blanket of white snow. The snow gently descending from the heavens conceals the earth and the world, thereby revealing the essence of the all-encompassing realm above them. It covers all things with light, the grass and the statues alike, softly erasing the lines demarcating these things. The icy flakes form bridges between all things, highlighting their unicity, displaying their shared essence to the man beholding this winter scenery. The earth and the sky become hardly distinguishable, and all that is seen is brightness, with only vague contours faintly standing out of the whole, traces of the world under this frigid but nonetheless wondrous canopy. The uniformity and purity of this porcelain landscape become a source of blindness to the one losing himself in it. The last color, the radiant whiteness, then disappears, and no colors are left, representing the last disappearance, after the retreat of all things into concealment. Nothing remains to be seen.

The alluring purity of the snowy blanket covering the earth and the world may nonetheless also reveal itself to hide a deep chasm into which one may easily fall and find himself trapped. Blind to all contrasts and all things, forgetting himself in the great void while failing to remember that he is a son of the earth and the world, he is in danger of himself becoming a mere statue, a dead thing, forever immobile and blind.¹⁰⁰ Abiding in blindness, in no-thing-ness, one loses his humanity, and he is unable to guide others on the path of liberation from the pernicious delusions of the world. Attached to indiscrimination, he soils the pristine blanket of snow, and once again becomes ensnared by illusions. This is when someone suddenly appears and knocks the snow-covered statue over, causing its rocky skin to be exposed to the eyes of the bewildered onlookers. The spell has been broken with a swift blow. The blanket of light has been violently rent, and the world under-

¹⁰⁰See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klause der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p133: „Wäre ich damals dabei gewesen, ich hätte ihn (den Löwen) sogleich mit umgestoßen!’ ... es Yang-shan (und mit ihm Yun-men) darum geht, seine Mönche aus der Verhaftung an etwas zu befreien, das sich in der Farbe Weiß symbolisiert. Und das ist - nicht der Dharmakāya, sondern eine bestimmte Einstellung zu ihm, nämlich sich in der Eintönigkeit der Großen Leere, in der Stille und ‚Reinheit’ des Nichts gleichsam häuslich einzurichten, um weiterer ‚Befleckung’ durch weltliches Tun für immer zu entgehen.”

neath once again appears, a contrast between light and darkness, the void and the thing. The observer who lost himself in no-thingness is suddenly brought back to the world, saved from the snare, shown that he should not abide anywhere, even in the place where there is not a single thing.

To bring back someone to the world is nonetheless easier than to guide someone out of it. The statue that has been knocked down could soon also become a trap, if it becomes the object of an attachment. The return of contrasts implies a return of the dangers of the world, its sneaky cohort of illusions. The man of the way does not abide in indiscrimination, nor does he dwell in the realm of contrasts between things. The statue must be raised, and one must patiently wait for the heavens to once again perform their wondrous work of concealment of the things of the world, revealing the essence of the heavens, no-thingness itself. There is no end to this path, as there is no beginning. A pulsing heart, a leaping grasshopper, a sun rising and falling daily, this is what this is about.

Case 117 —Yunmen’ s “White And Black” 一雲門白黑

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 40.

【中】

舉。雲門問乾峯：「請師答話。」峯云：「到老僧也未。」門云：「恁麼別某甲在遲也。」¹ 峯云：「恁麼那，恁麼那。」門云：「將謂侯白，² 更有侯黑。」

¹ 【恁麼別某甲在遲也】[nèn me bié mǒu jiǎ zài chí yě]: “if understood like this, this one (i.e. “I”) may have been [too] late.”

² 【侯白】[hóu bái]: Refers to a famous story of the time, in which the thief Marquis White is outsmarted by Marquise Black, another thief. The story is as follows: “There was a man named Marquis White in Fujian, who was good at tricking people, and was hated and feared by the people in all the surrounding villages, and no one dared to defy him. One day, he met a woman, Marquise Black, on the road. She stood by the well, pretending to have lost something. Marquis White asked her what she was doing. Marquise Black said: ‘Unfortunately, I have dropped my earrings into

the well. They are worth about one hundred taels of gold. If anyone can pick them out, I will share half of them as a token of my appreciation. Wouldn't you like to do this?' Marquis White pondered for a long time before he came up with an idea and said, 'You, a woman, have lost your earrings, so if you pick them out you must then give me half of them, or I will not give them to you.' So, she promised him that she would. Marquis White then took off his clothes, left them by the well, and then went down the well. When Marquise Black reckoned that Marquis White had reached the surface of the well, she carried off all Marquise Black's clothes, leaving him helpless, not knowing where to go. So nowadays Fujianese people refer to those who count on each other using this proverb: 'I am like Marquis White, and he is more like Marquise Black.' (See: 「閩有侯白，善陰中人以數，鄉里甚憎而畏之，莫敢與較。一日，遇女子侯黑於路，據井旁，佯若有所失。白怪而問焉。黑曰：“不幸墮洱於井，其直百金。有能取之，當分半以謝，夫子獨無意乎？”白良久，計曰：‘彼女子亡洱，得洱固可給而勿與。’因許之。脫衣井旁，繼而下。黑度白已至水，則盡取其衣，函去，莫知所塗。故今閩人呼相賣曰：‘我已侯白，伊更侯黑。’ From: 《淮海集》。CTEXT, chapter 25.)

【日】

こ うんもん けんぼう と し とうわ こ
 擧す。雲門、乾峰に 問う、「師の 答話を 請う。」
 ほういわ ろうそう いた またいまだ もんいわ いんも
 峰云く、「老僧に 到るや 也未しや。」門云く、「恁麼な
 すなわ それがしおそ あ ほういわ いんも な
 らば 則ち 某甲遅きに 在り。」峰云く、「恁麼那
 いんも な もんいわ まさ おも こうはく さら こう
 恁麼那。」門云く、「將に 謂えり 侯白と、更に 侯
 こく
 黒あり。」

【E】

Yunmen asked Qianfeng: “May one ask the Master for an answer?” Qianfeng said: “Have you reached the old monk or not?” Yunmen said: “If so, this monk may have been [too] late.” Qianfeng said: “Is that so? Is that so?” Yunmen said: “I thought Marquis White¹ [was here], but I realize that here is Marquise Black!”

¹ “Marquis White”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

When the bridge leading the man of the world to no-thing-ness has been built, and one finds himself going back and forth between the two shores, he may rob others blind of all their possessions, and cast these down into the bottomless abyss, letting them disappear into the void. When two robbers who possess nothing suddenly

face each other, their skills can then be displayed to their full extent.

To embrace the way of the sky is to become a stone skipping upon the waters, swiftly moving, laying low, on the surface between the water and the sky. If it becomes immobile, it without delay succumbs to the omnipresent pull of the earth, sinking to the depths, with the unique majesty of the heavens becoming increasingly difficult to perceive. To such a man, each thing of the world that he uses is a red-hot piece of metal thrown into his hands. It must be swiftly passed on or thrown away to avoid being destroyed by its incandescence. Words are like sharpened blades without handles. They can cut right through the illusions of the world, but if they are held on too tightly, they will cut through one's finger just as efficiently. Therefore, those who see the sky through the things of the world know how to play with these potent weapons, subverting the foundations of the man-made realm. With them, the answer may come before the question, or questions may be answered with other questions, as a refusal to determine a definite answer, one that would put an end to the dialogue, and cause them to both sink into the depths of the mire of determinacy, which is a perilous swamp of illusions.

From another point of view, the question does not need to be asked because there is only one possible question and one possible answer. They do not need to hear the question nor the answer, but neither are they scared to throw them into the air, letting them go freely, without keeping them to themselves. Their words may appear absurd or trivial, but one should hear them as more than mere things of the world. They are waves stirred up in the air, interfering with one another, merged and propagated throughout the heavens, a single sound, a unique note, reverberated, passing through the heart of men and the clouds above the earth, bringing them together. There is nothing to ask and nothing to answer, only no-thing.¹⁰¹ They thus play with sounds heavily laden with meaning, earth woven together with the world, offered to the sky. If one takes these words seriously, one would be mistaken. The words are without importance to them, as light as a feather, but

¹⁰¹See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Shôyôroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "It's rather strange to ask for an answer without having posed a question. In the essential world, there is no asking or answering. There is nothing to ask and nothing to answer."

they reveal the state of mind of those uttering them, and the harmonious play between those entering the dialogue is a sign that a resonance occurs between them, with two minds that are empty of things, throwing back what is offered to them immediately, as they do not need to grasp or possess anything, for they have no-thing, and are no-thing, and thus they let the men of the world try to determine truths, to win over their opponent, or to gain possession of riches. When they rob others, it is only to show them their nakedness, their true nature, usually concealed by the vestments or jewelry covering their body and clouding their mind. Underneath these things, there is no color, no value, only no-thing-ness, the heavens themselves.

Case 118 —Luopu' s End Was Approaching 一洛浦臨終

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 41.

【中】

jǔ luò pǔ lín zhōng shì zhòng yún jīn yǒu yī shì wèn ěr zhū rén
舉。洛浦臨終示眾云：「今有一事，問爾諸人。
zhè gè ruò shì jí tóu shàng ān tóu ruò bú shì jí zhǎn tóu mì huó shí shǒu
這箇若是即頭上安頭，若不是即斬頭覓活。」時首
zuò yún qīng shān cháng jǔ zú bái rì bù tiǎo dēng pǔ yún shì
座云：「青山常舉足。白日不挑燈。」浦云：「是
shén me shí jié zuò zhè gè shuō huà yǒu yàn cóng shàng zuò chū yún qù
甚麼時節。作這箇說話。」有彥從上座出云：「去
cǐ èr tú qǐng shī bú wèn pǔ yún wèi zài gēng dào
此二途，請師不問。」浦云：「未¹在，更道。」
cóng yún mǒu jiǎ dào bú jìn pǔ yún wǒ bù guǎn ěr dào jìn dào
從云：「某甲道不盡。」浦云：「我不管爾道盡道
bú jìn cóng yún mǒu jiǎ wú shì zhě zhī duì hé shàng zhī wǎn
不盡。」從云：「某甲無侍者祇對和尚。」²至晚
huàn cóng shàng zuò ěr jīn rì zhī duì shén yǒu lái yóu hé tǐ dé xiān
喚從上座：「爾今日祇對甚有來，³由合體得先
shī dào mù qián wú fǎ yì zài mù qián tā bú shì mù qián fǎ fēi
師道：『目前無法。意在目前，他不是目前法。非
ěr mù zhī suǒ dào nà jù shì bīn nà jù shì zhǔ ruò jiǎn dé chū
耳目之所。』到那句是賓，⁴那句是主。若揀得出，
fēn fù bō dai zi cóng yún bú huì pǔ yún pǔ yún rǔ hé
分付鉢袋子。」從云：「不會。」浦云：「汝合⁵
huì cóng yún shí bú huì pǔ yún kǔ zāi kǔ zāi
會。」從云：「實不會。」浦喝云：「苦哉，苦哉。」

sēng wèn hé shàng zūn yì rú hé pǔ yún cí zhōu bú zhào qīng
 僧問：「和尚尊意如何。」浦云：「慈舟不棹⁶ 清
 bō shàng jiàn xiá tú láo fàng mù é
 波⁷ 上。劍峽徒勞⁸ 放木鵝。」

¹ 【更】[gēng]: “to change.”

² 【某甲無侍者祇對和尚】[mǒu jiǎ wú shì zhě zhī duì hé shang]: “this one is unable to reply appropriately.” It literally means “This one is a master without [a useful] servant who could reply to him.”

³ 【有來】S: 【有來】[yǒu lái]: “already.”

⁴ 【賓】S: 【賓】[bīn]: (grammatical) “object”; 主 [zhǔ]: (grammatical) “subject.”

⁵ 【合】[hé]: old variant of 盒 [hé]: “fully” / “entirely.”

⁶ 【櫂】S: 【棹】[zhào]: “to row.”

⁷ 【清波】[qīng bō]: “a clear stream of water.”

⁸ 【徒勞】S: 【徒勞】[tú láo]: “a useless effort.”

【日】

こ らくほう りんじゅうしゅ しめ いわ いまいちじ
 舉す。洛浦 臨終衆に 示して 云く、「今一事あ
 なんじしょにん と しゃ こ も ぜ すなわ
 り 爾 諸人に 問う、「這箇若し 是といわば 即ち
 すじょうず あん も ふ ぜ すなわ こうべ き
 頭上頭を 安ず、若し 不是ならば 即ち 頭を 斬っ
 かつ もと と き しゅそ いわ せいざんつね あし
 て 活を 覓む。」時に 首座云く、「青山常に 足を
 あ はくじつとう かか ほういわ こ なん
 擧げ、白日燈を 挑げず。」浦云く、「是れ 甚麼の
 じせつ しゃ こ せつ わ な げんじょう じょうざ
 時節ぞ、這箇の 説話を 作す。」彦從 上座あり
 いで いわ こ にと き こ しと
 出て 云く、「此の 二途を 去って 請う 師問わざ
 ほういわ わ い つく い つく
 れ。」浦云く、「我が 道い 盡すと 道い 盡さざると
 かん じょういわ それがし じしゃ おしょう したい
 を 管せず。」從 云く、「某甲侍者の 和尚に 祇對す
 な ばん いた じょうじょうざ よ なんじごんにち
 る 無し。」晩に 到って 從上座を 喚ぶ。「爾 今日
 したい はなは らい ゆ まさ せんし どう たいとく
 祇對 甚だ 來由あり、合に 先師の 道を 體得す
 もくぜん ほう い もくぜん た
 べし。目前に 法なく、意目前にあり。他はこれ
 もくぜん ほう じもく いた ところ あら な
 目前の 法にあらず、耳目の 到る 所に 非ず。那
 く ひん な く しゅ も けんとく しゅつ
 句かこれ 實、那句かこれ 主、若し 揀得 出せ
 はったい す ぶん ぶ じょういわ ふ え ほう
 ば 鉢袋子を 分付せん。」從 云く、「不會。」浦

いわ なんじ え じょういわ じつ ふ え
 云く、「汝 會すべし。」從 云く、「實に 不會。」
 ほう かつ いわ く かな く かな そう
 浦、喝して 云く、「苦なる 哉、苦なる 哉。」僧
 と おしょう そん い いかん ほういわ じしょうせい は
 問う、「和尚の 尊意如何。」浦云く、「慈舟 清波の
 うえ さお けんこう いたずら もく が はな ろう
 上に 棹さず、劍峽 徒に 木鵲を 放つに 勞す。」

【E】

When Luopu's end was approaching, he addressed his congregation and said: "Today there is something I need to ask you all. If you say: 'it is so,' it is like putting another head on top of your own. If you say: 'it is not so,' it is like looking for life by cutting off your head." At that moment, the head monk said: "The green mountain always lifts up its legs; In the daylight, one has no need to carry a lantern." Luopu said: "What time is this to utter such a saying?" Yancong, a senior monk, stepped forward and said: "Besides going on these two paths, please, Master, do not ask [for something more]." Luopu said: "You're not there yet. Give another reply." Yancong said: "This one is unable to reply appropriately." Luopu said: "I don't care whether or not you can say it fully." Yancong said: "This one is helpless and has no answer to give to the Master." That evening, Luopu called Yancong to him and said: "What you answered today already had something [satisfactory] in it. It well fits with what our late master said: 'There are no things³ before the eyes, and yet meaning is found before the eyes. 'It' is not the thing before the eyes, and 'it' is not found within the reach of eyes and ears.' In this quote, which phrase is the object? Which phrase is the subject? If you can pick them out, I will transmit the bowl and the robe¹ to you." Yancong said: "I don't understand." Luopu said: "You can understand it fully." Genjo said: "I really don't understand." Luopu shouted a 'khe!' and said: "Alas! Alas!" A monk asked: "What is the venerable master trying to say?" Luopu said: "The boat of compassion is not rowed over clear waves. It is futile to release wooden geese down a precipitous gorge." ²

¹ "The robe": Literally "the bag."

² "To release wooden geese down a precipitous gorge": The wooden geese were used

to prevent collisions where visibility was low, such as when passing through serpentine gorges. They warned ships downstream of the presence of another ship.

When the time comes to breathe the last breath and let go of the fire of life itself, knowing that this is not an end, just as one's birth was not a beginning, this fire can be passed on like a blazing torch offered to someone who will need it to light up the path in front of the next generation. But among a throng of people, how does one find someone worthy of this fire, someone apt to guide others and not lead them astray? The dying master presents them a question, a trial by words, one that is both the simplest and the hardest to pass, a perfect assessment of one's relationship with the way of the sky itself: "Tell us all: is it so, or is it not so?" They are given the choice between death by drowning or by fire. If one says that "it is so," he is caught in the trap of baseless affirmation and imprudent determinacy. If one says that "it is not so," he is ensnared in the pit of blind denial and ungrounded assertion. Given the choice between two things of the world, one is nonetheless not condemned to choose either. When the eye is opened, they both appear as mere illusions occulting the sublime truth of the sky that shines behind them. It is by clearing the space in front of one's eye of all things that it may appear, as the bright torch that will someday be brought into the heart of the world, into the mind of all men, enlightening them all, igniting all things until they are turned to dust, scattered by the winds, spreading like a wildfire that engulfs the entirety of the land.

It is easy for the followers to see the trap and the snare, and they thus refrain from picking and choosing. To offer a pertinent answer is nonetheless another matter. They are all at the foot of the immense mountain encompassing the entire earth, carried on the way, always moving around our star, perpetually changing, and nothing they do will affect its course by more than a hair-breadth. They are all standing under the sky illuminated by the great luminary of the day, and therefore the modest flame that they carry with them is insignificant compared to the heavenly radiance. Whatever they say or do, whatever they choose or reject, "it" will remain as "it" is and as "it" should be. The two paths in front of them are but a mirage, caused by the fieriness of the

luminary illuminating their world, but their eyes are still dazzled by the light, and thus they have yet to find their way.

If they are to see “it,” they must first see the nature of the things in front of their eyes, see that these things emerged out of no-thing-ness and were laden with meaning to become things of their world, without nonetheless changing their essence. “It” lies beyond the appearance, beyond the thing, and yet “it” is no different than them. The only difference is that these things became objects of our attention, with us becoming the subjects of such attention. As soon as the opposition between subject and object arises out of no-thing-ness, “it” becomes concealed by the objects found in front of our eyes, retreating beyond the reach of our senses, until we cause the collapse of the object into the subject, the subject into the object, once again unveiling the underlying essence of all that is.

An appropriate answer to the question thus is one that breaks the spell causing man to see two different paths, whereas there is no choice, only the way of the sky itself. It may be the first word uttered by mankind, the foundation stone of his world, the great shout that means everything and nothing, incarnating into the air the innermost feeling overwhelming his heart, which he cannot put into words. If the master nonetheless stands among a throng of dwellers of the world who have yet to contemplate the purity of the heavens, he may only be given silence to hear, much to his despair. But one who has been consumed by the great fire and turned to ashes carried to the highest skies by the delicate hands of the winds will nonetheless not worry of the destiny of the fire that remains upon the earth, for he knows that it is futile to attempt to steer the great vessel carried upon the way of the sky. The fire may be reduced to the faintest spark for entire eons, and yet suddenly be fanned once again into a brazier that will burn the world to its foundation and clear out the view obscured by its walls, letting the celestial radiance suddenly flood the eyes of a new generation of men, with everything being as it should, and no-thing being at the center of “it” all.

wearing white clothes.”¹ Dongshan said: “Such a great man, so advanced in age, and still saying something like that...” Mishi said: “Then how about you?” Dongshan said: “A great house through generations, but for now at least, it has fallen and become insignificant.”

¹ “Uncle” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “White clothes,” that is, clothes worn by commoners.

Overjoyed by one’s liberation from the noose of the trapper, and speedily running through the grasses, it is easy to fall into a pit. One must then wait to be extracted from it by another human being, not knowing whether he will be greeted with a warm embrace or with a knife. If one has succeeded in stripping himself of the burden of the things of the world, but holds on tightly to the last thing that remains, it is as if he was back where he started. One must learn to let go, but also not to let this “letting go” itself become an object, a thing of the world, cherished and possessed. He must let go of “letting go” itself, throwing no-thing-ness itself into the deepest oblivion.

Leisurely strolling through the countryside on a sunny summer day, a man and his companion witness the passing of a white rabbit through a meadow, while countless industrious bees harvest the flower’s succulent gifts to make honey and insects are busy-ing themselves to collect what they need to feed their young. The branches of the trees, heavily laden with juicy fruits, are balanced by torrid winds, as the rays of the radiant star feed with its gilded light the emerald leaves covering them. Contemplating this extremely ordinary and yet sublime scenery, one of the men lets out a few words, joining the songs of the birds resonating through the air: “An excellent one!” What is excellent here? No one may read the mind of the one who has uttered these words. The truth is only in the eye of the beholder, and the audience is condemned to mere speculations. It may be the rabbit whose swiftness impressed the onlooker, or it may as well be the scenery as a whole, without distinction between the parts forming it. An excellent thing, because there is only one thing in the entire universe, and it is here and now, exposed to our perplexed gaze! There is no rabbit nor bees nor trees nor meadow, only the unfathomable totality of the

skies carried on the way, which itself in its essence is not even a “thing” at all, outside of the mind of man.

Interrogated further concerning what is it that he considers excellent here, the man, without a thought, replies with the words: “It is like a king clothed with white cotton!” His companion is appalled by these words. How could a man so advanced in years, so experienced in the art of avoiding falling into the traps of the world, still be caught comparing kings and commoners, the golden robes of royalty and the white cotton clothes of the plebs. He shamelessly uses words laden with arbitrary hierarchies, illusions of greatness and lowliness, as would any man of the world, without having for a single instant practiced the embracing of the way of the sky. He comes from a noble house, but alas, it has now fallen and become insignificant.

Hastily judging his fellow, the companion nonetheless fails to realize that he is the one caught in the trap he warns others about. When the king clothed with white cotton is mentioned, these words indeed do not intrinsically imply the validation of oppositions and hierarchies. The companion is the one associating the king with the high position in the world, and the cotton clothes as those worn by men of low status, not he who uttered these words. This is exactly the same situation as the one concerning what was excellent in front of their eyes. The delusions that he attributes to his companion are those holding sway over his mind, without him realizing this. He sees the one standing next to him as coming from a noble house, now fallen, not seeing that he himself holds on unto the oppositions between noble and commoner, high and low. Being so attached to the notion of not being attached, he stands still on the path, his eyes veiled by the towering walls of things of the world. But this fate may also befall us, if we do not pay close attention to the valuable lesson that this man failed to learn. What we see in the words of both men is also largely the product of our interpretation, a reflection of our mind as much as theirs, and thus we should consider the possibility that we may be mistaken and that the truth may completely differ from the vision we have of it. We should observe our judgments, seeing a reflection of ourselves in them, and see we also are but a fleeting illusion.

Case 120 —Mihu’ s “Enlightened Or Not” —米胡悟否

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 62.

【中】

舉。 jǔ 米胡 mǐ hú 令僧問 lìng sēng wèn 仰山 yǎng shān：「今時人還假悟否。」
shān yún 山云：「悟即不無，爭奈² wù jí bù wú 落第二頭何。」zhēng nài 僧迴
¹ jǔ sì 舉似 mǐ hú 米胡，hú shēn kěn zhī 胡深肯之。

¹ 【還假悟否】[huán jiǎ wù fǒu]: “[do people] borrow enlightenment or not?” It seems to imply that to be enlightened as a result of the reception of a teaching constitutes a mere “borrowing,” rather than a true appropriation, as a result of a direct and personal experience. The people of their time would therefore have been mistaken about what enlightenment really is. Yasutani interprets it as: “Do people these days need to attain enlightenment or not?” (See: 安谷白雲。《從容錄新裝版：禪の心髓》。東京：春秋社，2008. p347: 「『人間はどうしても悟らなければならないものですか』ということだ。」); 還 [hái]: It here means “actually”; 假 [jiǎ]: “to borrow.”

² 【爭奈】S: 【争奈】[zhēng nài]: “one is unable to avoid” / “to be helpless.”

【日】

舉す。米胡、僧をして 仰山に 問わしむ、「今時の
ひとかえ 人還って ご 悟を か 假るや いな 否や。」さんいわ 山云く、「ご 悟は すなわ 即ち
な 無きに あら 非ず、だい に とう 第二頭に おち 落ることを いかんせ 争奈何ん。」
そうかえ 僧廻って べい こ 米胡に こじ 舉似す。こ ふか 胡深く これ 之を うけが 肯う。

【E】

Mihu had a monk ask Yangshan: “The men of our time, do they borrow enlightenment [from others, not experiencing it themselves first-hand,] or not?” Yangshan said: “It is not that there is no enlightenment, but how can it be helped that it falls into the second class?” The monk went back to tell this to Mihu. Mihu deeply agreed.

When one lets the celestial light pass him through, having become one with the heavens themselves, he no longer has eyes with which he would see this light. The enlightened is burnt to ashes by this fire and nothing remains of him. He is the light itself, illuminating the world, but itself remains unnoticed. When this enlightenment itself becomes a thing of the world, seized by the minds of men, its light is extinguished and it becomes one more thing forming the walls veiling the sky.

If one is asked whether the men of our time are mistaken about enlightenment, having discovered it only by borrowing the experiences and knowledge of others, it means that he who asks this question already stands in the shadows, his eyes observing a contrast between bright and dark, the enlightened and the prisoner of delusions, or perhaps only feigns standing there, to teach someone a lesson, dangling a juicy bait in front of a gluttonous mouth. Hearing the word "enlightenment," one may cover his ears and hastily flee at the vulgarity of such an utterance. Hearing such profane discussion, he may nonetheless also remain impassive, letting the words enter his ears as mere sounds, or inoffensive means of guiding the people. He may even enter the discussion and let this word come out of his mouth without feeling himself soiled by it, as he stands in a place where there is no purity nor filthiness, no vulgarity or elegance. Neither abiding in the light nor in the shadows, and not even in the interstice joining them both, he is without concern, without worry, as he is filled with confidence: everything is always as it should, and all things share the same essence, the same home, where there is neither light nor dark, no enlightenment nor delusion.

It is nonetheless arduous for the prisoner of the world to get rid of his chains, as he sees them as the tools allowing him to live, prolongments of his limbs, and the foundation of his existence. To guide him, cunningness is a potent weapon. Entrapping the prisoner inside his cell, showing him the absurdity of his conduct, the narrowness of his worldview, he may realize his own condition, and feel the chains weighing on his body. Uttering a few simple words, one may shake up the walls holding a whole people prisoner: "How can we avoid that enlightenment falls into a second class?" How could the light of indiscrimination, which clears the mind of all things, be seen in terms of classes or layers? The absurdity

of the question only points out the ridicule of all argumentations concerning the presence and nature of such enlightenment. Pushing a vacuous discussion to its end, one may perhaps see that it should not be the subject of debates, of measures and assessments. This word, this skillful means offered to mankind, should only be like the northern star, a beacon guiding those advancing on a path whose destination they have yet to discover. It is of no use to them to endlessly debate the nature of this star. They only have to steadily follow its light, letting go of all the things burdening their shoulders, and then they may see themselves in its twinkling, forgetting themselves on the way.

Case 121 — Jiufeng's “Head And Tail” — 九峯頭尾

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 66.

【中】

舉。僧問 九峯：「如何是頭。」 峯 云：「開眼
 不覺曉。」 僧云：「如何是尾。」 峯 云：「不坐萬
 年床。」 僧云：「有頭無尾時如何。」 峯 云：「終是
 不貴。」 僧云：「有尾無頭時如何。」 峯 云：「雖飽
 無力。」¹ 僧云：「直得頭尾相稱² 時如何。」 峯
 云：「兒孫得力，室內不知。」

¹ 【雖飽無力】[suī bǎo wú lì]: “even though one is satiated, one has no strength.” It seems to imply that what was done is useless.

² 【相稱】[xiāng chèn]: “to match” / “to suit.”

【日】

舉す。僧、九峰に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 頭。」 峰云く、「眼を 開いて 曉を 覺えず。」 僧
 云く、「如何なるか 是れ 尾。」 峰云く、「萬年の

ゆか ざ そういわ ず あ び な とき いかん
 牀に 坐せず。」僧云く、「頭有って 尾無き 時如何。」
 ほういわ つい こ とうと そういわ び あ
 峰云く、「終に 是れ 貴からず。」僧云く、「尾有っ
 ず な とき いかん ほういわ あく いえど ちから
 て 頭無き 時如何。」峰云く、「飽と 雖も 力な
 そういわ じか ず び あいかな え とき
 し。」僧云く、「直に 頭尾相稱うことを 得る 時
 いかん ほういわ じそんちから え しつない し
 如何。」峰云く、「兒孫力を 得て 室内知らず。」

【E】

A monk asked Jiufeng: "What is the head?" Jiufeng said: "Opening the eyes and not perceiving the dawn." The monk said: "What is the tail?" Jiufeng said: "Not sitting on a ten thousand years old bed." The monk said: "What if there is a head, but no tail?" Jiufeng said: "After all, it is not valuable." The monk said: "What if there is a tail, but no head?" Jiufeng said: "Even though one is satiated, one has no strength." The monk said: "And when the head matches the tail?" Jiufeng said: "The descendants will gain strength, but it is not known in the room."

Each one of us is a body thrown onto the earth, under the sky, even before our birth. We are a link in a long, uninterrupted chain whose origin is lost. We are a whole, a totality that remains living only because the incredibly intricate piece of machinery animating it finds itself in perfect equilibrium, with each part at its place, playing the role assigned to it. Without the upper part of one's body, there is no perception, and without its lower part, no nutrition. Both depend upon one another, and there can be no life without their harmonious interplay. The eyes are used to seek one's sustenance, and the belly digests it to replenish the strengths exhausted during this search. Seeing only the whole, the role played by the different parts becomes unfathomable, but seeing only the parts, one loses sight of their integration and of how they form a harmonious totality that is more than the sum of these parts. Just

like the upper and lower parts, the contrast between the perception of the whole and the one of the parts is necessary to perceive the nature of the body, and this is also the case concerning other elements of nature, and even one's existence.

When one has been freed from the yoke of the world, one then becomes a dragon ready to swallow the earth and the sky. Its head soars into the air, but when it opens up its eye at the break of dawn, erect and turned toward the east, it does not perceive the dawn. It perceives no-thing, as there is nothing to be perceived when one is far above the walls of the world. Its heavy and strong tail rests upon the eons-old ground, the rocky earth, but the creature does not feel its firmness, nor the incredibly strong pull of the planet, jealously holding all things within its reach close to its craggy skin. The dragon feels no-thing, as there is nothing to be felt when one is far above the walls of the world.

When one has abandoned the world to take refuge into no-thing-ness, the great desert, he becomes a headless man, a mere body wriggling in the vast wasteland, perceiving nothing, feeling nothing, only enjoying the serenity of the place where there is no value nor meaning, no head nor tail, no earth and sky, no world nor no-thing-ness itself, as a thing, an object of thought. This nonetheless comes at a price: he is fulfilled, satiated, but is completely powerless, blind and impotent to move a single strand of hair upon the earth.

When one emerges out of no-thing-ness to become a dweller of the world, the great citadel of things, he, on the contrary, becomes a seemingly disembodied head, a mere spirit that haunts an immaterial realm, playing with words and concepts, but remains utterly severed from the true essence of the earth and the sky. He wields the powerful weapons of the world, but he is incapable of perceiving the fact that this power is exerted only in his world, and that he has lost touch with both the ground and the heights.

The dragon is thus called to become a bridge between the world of man and the earth and the sky. It is only when the head devours the tail that its own nature is revealed, as it forms a perfect circle, with no beginning nor end. Neither abiding in no-thing-ness nor in the world, but instead joining them both while keeping them at bay, it wields the strengths of the world, but its

mind is perfectly clear. It moves the earth and the sky, but it does not even know it. New links of the great chain emerge, new dragons, new circles linked to one another, carried upon the way of the sky, without anyone who can tell where it begins and where it ends, or whether their home is the bustling citadel of things, or the vast desert where no-thing is to be found.

Case 122 —Daowu' s “Taking Care Of The Sick” 一道吾看病

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 83.

【中】

舉。 jǔ 為山 guī shān 問 wèn 道吾 dào wú : 「甚麼處來。」 shén me chù lái 吾 wú 云 yún : 「看
 病來。」 bìng lái 山 shān 云 yún : 「有幾人病。」 yǒu jǐ rén bìng 吾 wú 云 yún : 「有病者不
 病者。」 bìng zhě 山 shān 云 yún : 「不病者莫是 bù bìng zhě mò shì 智 zhì 頭陀 tóu tuó¹ 麼。」 ma wú 吾
 云 yún : 「病與不病，總不干 bìng yǔ bù bìng zǒng bù gān 他事 tā shì。速道 sù dào，速道。」 sù dào 山
 云 yún : 「道得也沒交涉。」 dào dé yě méi jiāo shè³

¹ 【頭陀】S: 【头陀】[tóu tuó]: “an itinerant monk.” From the Sanskrit “dhūtaguṇa” (धृतगुण), which designates a set of ascetic practices of Buddhism; 智 [zhì]: Daowu' s full name was Daowu Yuanzhi (道吾圓智 [dào wú yuán zhì]).

² 【不干】[bù gān]: “to have nothing to do [with something].”

³ 【沒交涉】S: 【没交涉】[méi jiāo shè]: “to have no relationship [with something].”

【日】

舉す。為山、道吾に 問う、「甚麼の 處より
 来る。」吾云く、「看病し 来る。」山云く、「幾人
 有って 病む。」吾云く、「病者と 不病者と 有り。」
 山云く、「不病者は 是れ 智頭陀なること 莫し
 や。」吾云く、「病と 不病と 總に 他の 事に 干ら
 ず、速かに 道え。」山云く、「道い 得るも 也
 沒 交涉。」

【E】

Guishan asked Daowu: “Where have you come from?” Daowu said: “I come from taking care of the sick.” Guishan said: “How many people are sick?” Daowu said: “There are some who are sick and some who are not sick.” Guishan said: “The one who is not sick, it is the traveler named Zhi,¹ no?” Daowu said: “Sick or not sick, it has nothing to do with ‘that’ matter. Say it quickly! Say it quickly!” Guishan said: “Even if I could say it, it would have nothing to do [with ‘that.’]”

¹ “Zhi” : Daowu’ s full name was Daowu Yuanzhi (道吾圓智 [Dàowú Yuánzhì]).

To be a man of the way is to walk on the sharp edge of a cliff separating the world from no-thing-ness, the great citadel of things from the bottomless chasm, keeping both in sight at all times, choosing neither, embracing both. When a fellow is encountered on this narrow path, both feel compelled to wrestle with one another, playfully, but with their sharpened claws ready to strike, like tiger cubs observed in the mountains, with the onlooker unable to determine whether he witnesses a game between friends or a combat to death.

Both standing on the dagger-like edge of the summit of a mountain, reached after an ascent that took them considerable effort and patience, there is death on each side, either a fall on a heap of knives and swords on one side or a fall in a bottomless and dark pit on the other. The fangs are displayed, the claws are out, and one of the tigers attempts to push his opponent on the side of the blades, asking him: “Where have you come from?” To mention an earthly location, with the name it bears in man’ s world, would be to be impaled on a broad sword, destroying the unicity of the earth and cutting up the sky into neat but illusory pieces, having no reality outside of their world. The adversary nonetheless knows the game, and he deflects the blow with skill: “I do not busy myself with the trivial matters of the world, the cutting out of the earth and the sky. I am rather taking care of those who are prisoners of the illusions of the world.” Using words to avoid falling into the trap of words, this demands experience

and wit, whereas a novice may have stayed silent, afraid of cutting himself with the sharp pieces of metal.

The combat is nonetheless far from over. Another blow swiftly comes: “How many of those prisoners are there in the world?” Once again, he attempts to throw his enemy onto the daggers that split the body and the mind into pieces, that can be counted and grasped, denying its oneness. To count people is to fail to see that they are one with the sky itself, and that their individuality is merely an illusion of the world. Dodging the claws, but without fleeing away, an answer is given, with the protagonists once again not fearing to use the weapons of the world to escape from its overwhelming presence: “There are some who are prisoners and some who are not.” The reality of the world cannot be denied, as is its usefulness. Words are necessary to man. The work of the swords that cut out the heavens is what allows him to perceive the path upon which he walks, and that enables him to embrace the way, becoming neither a stone statue thrown into the abyss nor remaining a prisoner of the world. The world is indeed made of countable people and things, but he treats them like blades without handles, only wielded when necessary, and only seized with the softest grip, so as not to cut himself and bleed to death.

The attack failed, but the battle nonetheless continues: “The one who is a free man rather than a prisoner, is that you?” To see an opposition between the self and the other is to be caught in the illusions of the world. If he answers with a “yes,” he loses. If he answers with a “no,” he is defeated, fallen upon a blade, his body cleaved. The blow is nonetheless once again deflected: “Prisoner or not, it has nothing to do with ‘that’ matter.” Remaining on the edge, he wrestles the opponent and brings him to a lower ground, to the foundation of the world, its cornerstone, the first things that were built in it, that is, the most rudimentary words, those that may represent the totality of all that is, and no-thing-ness itself: “that,” without more details, without description, only a finger pointing to the whole of being. This is how it should be between men of the way. They appear to be engaged in a fierce battle, but they thereby support and guide each other, more securely standing upon the edge by balancing each other. They may indeed hang over each side with more confidence when they are together, as they know that a force will be there to counterbalance their ex-

cesses. They become one mind, one note resonating in the citadel and in the chasm, until they all collapse and no-thing remains.

Case 123 — Jiufeng Does Not Acknowledge — 九峯不肯

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 96.

【中】

舉。九峯在石霜作侍者。霜遷化後，眾
欲請堂中首座接續住持，峯不肯乃云：「待某甲
問過。若會先師意，如先師侍奉。」遂問：「先師
道：『休去，歇¹去，一念萬年去，寒灰枯木去，一
條白練²去。』³且道，明甚麼邊事。」座云：「明
一色邊事。」峯云：「恁麼則未會先師意在。」座
云：「爾不肯我，那裝香來。」座乃焚⁴香云：「我
若不會先師意，香煙起處脫去。」⁵不得言訖⁶便
坐脫，峯乃撫其背云：「坐脫立亡則不無，先師
意未夢見在。」

¹ 【歇】[xiē]: “to rest” / “to stop.”

² 【練】S: 【练】[liàn]: “white silk.”

³ A quote from a poem written by Shishuang Qingzhu (石霜慶諸 [shí shuāng qīng zhū]), “The Seven Completions” (七去). The quote mentions five of them. The complete poem is as follows: 「休去，歇去，冷湫湫地去，一念萬年去，寒灰枯木去，古廟香爐去，一條白練去。」 “Ceased completely; vanished completely; have become a tranquil marsh; one thought and ten thousand years have passed; withered trees have turned into vanishing cold ashes; have become a censer in an ancient temple; have turned into a stripe of white silk.”

⁴ 【焚】S: 【焚】[fén]: “to burn.”

⁵ 【坐脫】S: 【坐脫】[zuò tuō]: “to die in a seated posture.” Synonymous with 坐化 [zuò huà].

⁶ 【訖】S: 【讖】[qì]: “finished.”

【日】

こ きゅうほう せきそう あ じしゃ な そう
 擧す。九峰、石霜に 在って 侍者と 作る。霜
 せんげ のち しゅうどう ちゅう しゅそ しょう じゅうじ せつ
 遷化の後、衆堂 中の 首座を 請して 住持を 接
 そく ほう うけが すなわ いわ それがし
 續せしめんとす。峰 肯わず、乃ち 云く、「某甲が
 もん か ま も せんし い え せんし
 問過せんを 待て、若し 先師の 意を 會せば 先師の
 ごと じ ぶ つい と せんし い きゅう
 如くに 侍奉せん。」遂に 問う、「先師道く、休し
 さ かつ さ いちねんばんねん さ かんかいこばく
 去り、歇し 去り、一念萬年にし 去り、寒灰枯木に
 さ いちじょうびゃくれん さ しばら い なに
 し 去り、一條 白練にし 去ると、且く 道え 甚麼
 へん じ あか ざ いわ いっしきへん じ
 邊の 事を 明すや。」座云く、「一色邊の 事を
 あか ほういわ いんも すなわ ま せんし
 明す。」峰云く、「恁麼ならば 則ち 未だ 先師の
 い え ざ いわ われ なんじ うけが
 意を 會せざるあり。」座云く、「我 爾を 肯わざ
 こう よそお きた ざ すなわ こう た
 るや、香を 装い 來れ。」座 乃ち 香を 焚いて
 いわ われ も せんし い え こうえんおこ
 云く、「我若し 先師の 意を 會せずんば 香煙起る
 ところだつ さ え い おわ すなわ
 處脱し 去ることを 得じ。」言い 訖って 便ち
 ざ だつ ほう すなわ そ はい ぶ いわ ざ
 坐脱す。峰 乃ち 其の 背を 撫して 云く、「坐
 だつ りゅうぼう すなわ な せんし い
 脱 立亡は 則ち 無きにあらず、先師の 意は
 ま ゆめ み
 未だ 夢にだも 見ざるあり。」

【E】

Jiufeng was with Shishuang, serving as his attendant. After Shishuang passed away, the congregation wanted to ask the head monk to succeed him as the abbot of the temple, but Jiufeng would not acknowledge him, saying: "Wait until this monk asks him a question. If he understands the late master's teaching and intention, this one will serve him as he served the late master." So, he asked the head monk: "The late master said: 'ceased completely; vanished completely; one thought and ten thousand years have passed; withered trees have turned into vanishing cold ashes; have turned into

a stripe of white silk.’¹ Tell us, upon what matter does quote shed light?” The head monk said: “It sheds light upon the matter of the oneness of the sensory realm.” Jiufeng said: “If so, [the head monk] has yet to understand the master’s teaching and intention.” The head monk said: “You will not acknowledge me, so bring me some incense.” He lit the incense and said: “If I indeed have not understood the late master’s teaching and intention, would I [be able to] leave behind [my flesh] while the smoke of this incense rises?” As he had yet to finish speaking, he left [his flesh] behind while sitting [like during meditation]. Jiufeng gently stroked his back and said: “To leave behind one’s flesh while in sitting meditation, or to pass away while standing, this is not unheard of, but even in dreams, [the head monk] has not seen the master’s teaching and intention.”

¹ A quote. See note 3 of the Chinese text.

One can spend a lifetime drowning in a lake of ink and being buried under mountains of paper to understand the essence of the sky, but all this worldly knowledge may not bring him one step closer to it. The simple may just open up a window and be immediately consumed by the splendid vision offered to his eyes, and the essence of all that is may then appear as clearly as the dawn after a long and dark night. The blind is nonetheless seldom aware of the true nature of his infirmity. He may be told about the wonders of sight, and believe that his dreams, the fruits of his fertile imagination projected on his mind, and the truth of the heavens are one and the same, without any means of disproving his firmly held belief. This is why the task of choosing a leader is always arduous but critical. The blind may indeed lead the blind, and none of them may see the abyss in front of them all.

Even after being offered some guidance, one may nonetheless still fail to perceive the essence of the all-encompassing sky, and yet be more aware of the nature of the world than most of its inhabitants. The first step toward freedom from the chains of the world, the opaque walls of the imposing citadel painstakingly built by the hands and the mind of man, is indeed to clearly see

them and to gain awareness of one's condition, as a prisoner of its ramparts. Before we can see that no-thing-ness is the origin and the foundation of all things, of the world itself, we must first begin to see that the boundaries between the things in front of our eyes are arbitrarily drawn by our mind, or handed to us through tradition, by those who made these equally arbitrary decisions. Then, cracks may appear. The walls may begin to collapse, and the links of our chains may begin to be fused. This collapse is nonetheless not a mere crumbling, a disappearance. Everything that remains as it was. They now simply appear in their truth, as an emerging totality, with the contours fading away, and their unicity slowly being revealed to our astonished eyes. This collapse may continue, slowly engulfing the whole of life, with all living things appearing as a majestic tree whose seed emerged out of the ocean eons ago, with its roots deeply penetrating the earth, and its branches extended high into the heavens. Going further, it is this tree itself that begins to wither, as life collapses into death, becoming one with the earth. This is when the ultimate event occurs, when the earth itself vanishes completely, absorbed by the sky, as it becomes the only thing that remains in front of one's eyes. With only one thing that can be perceived, there is only thought in his mind, one that embraces the entirety of the heavens and their work, which is the unfolding of time itself. Without any other thing, the time taken by the blinking of an eye cannot be discerned from the one taken by the revolutions of our galaxy. Time itself is folded into a single instant, here and now. The totality of the skies can now be beheld. But this does not mean that its essence is truly seen, as one other thing nonetheless remains, standing in the way, one that is not in front of the face but rather behind it.

When the collapse of the world is complete, then there is only oneself, facing the clarity of the heavens in front of him. The last step to unveil the essence of being itself, the primordial foundation of the heavens, is then to let the self collapse into the heavens, letting it cease to appear as the last thing. This is when the veil is lifted, when the blindness ceases, together with the self. Only no-thing-ness then remains, except for the thinnest thread of white silk floating in the air, guided by the whole carried upon the way. This is the last remnant, the lifeline that will allow man to emerge out of no-thing-ness. Forever remaining in it, one would indeed

cease to be human and become a mere stone. He would not be able to guide others toward such a revelation. Engulfed in perfect equality, having seen the truth of the skies, he is then called to grab on the silk thread and pull himself back into the world of differences, the realm of contrast and meaning, the home of most men.¹⁰² Furthermore, he can now see that no-thing-ness is not a realm parallel to the world of man, or even one underlying it. No-thing-ness is the world, and the world is no-thing-ness. They are one and the same, even when one is blind to their shared nature. The flesh may endure or it may perish. It makes no difference, as does the pride puffing up one's mind, but our nature always remains unchanged. We are specks of dust floating in the sky. We are the sky observing the speck of dust that is the earth itself. We are a thing and no-thing, a beating heart, an emerging and fading wave, a string that gathers and keeps at bay, contradiction beautifully incarnated, running on the path, passing on the torch to a new generation, going no-where, embodying no-thing.

Case 124 —Deshan Came To Guishan —德山到潯山

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 4.

【中】

舉。德山到潯山，挾¹複子²於法堂上，從
 東過西，從西過東，顧視³云：「無，無。」便出。
 雪竇著語云：「勘破了也。」德山至門首，却
 云：「也不得草草。」便具威儀，⁴再入相見。潯山

¹⁰²See the commentary of Haku'un Yasutani (安谷白雲) on this case: "When one has a clear view of the inner sameness, then he can use this eye to look at the outer world of difference anew. This is called the 'wisdom of the mysterious observation,' the 'wisdom of the later attainment,' or 'the Dharma eye.' To realize only the aspect of equality is a kind of enlightenment sickness." TBA. 「内面の平等がはっきり見えたら、その眼でさらに表面の差別の世界を再び明確に見なおすのだ。それを妙観察智とも、後得智とも、法眼ともいうのだ。平等の一枚悟りは、一種の悟り病だ。」From: 安谷白雲。《從容錄新裝版：禪の心髓》。東京：春秋社，2008. p517 (Case 96).

zuò cì dé shān tí qǐ zuò jù yún hé shàng guī shān nǐ qǔ fú
 坐次，德山提起坐具⁵云：「和尚。」為山擬取拂
 zǐ dé shān biàn hè fú xiù ér chū xuě dòu zhuó yǔ yún kān pò
 子，德山便喝，拂袖而出。雪竇著語云：「勘破
 liǎo yě dé shān bèi què fǎ táng zhuó cǎo xié biàn xíng guī shān zhì
 了也。」德山背却法堂，著⁶草鞋便行。為山至
 wǎn wèn shǒu zuò shì lái xīn dào zài shén me chù shǒu zuò yún dāng
 晚，問首座：「適來⁷新到在什麼處。」首座云：「當
 shí bèi què fǎ táng zhuó cǎo xié chū qù yě guī shān yún cǐ zǐ yǐ
 時背却法堂，著草鞋出去也。」為山云：「此子已
 hòu xiàng gū fēng dǐng shàng pán jié cǎo ān hē fó mà zǔ qù zài」⁹
 後，向孤峯頂上，盤結草庵，呵⁸佛罵祖去在。」⁹
 xuě dòu zhuó yǔ yún xuě shàng jiā shuāng
雪竇著語云：「雪上加霜。」

¹ 【挾】S:【挟】[xié]: “to clasp under the arm.”

² 【褡子】[fù zǐ]: “a bundle carried by a monk during a pilgrimage.”

³ 【顧視】S:【顾视】[gù shì]: “to look while turning one’ s head.”

⁴ 【具威儀】: “to adorn formal clothing”; 威儀 (S: 威仪) [wēi yí]: “majestic appearance.”

⁵ 【坐具】[zuò jù]: “a sitting cloth.” Translation of the Sanskrit word “nisīdana” (निसीदन), transliterated as 尼師檀 [ní shī tán] in Chinese.

⁶ 【著】[zhuó]: “to wear.”

⁷ 【適來】S:【适来】[shì lái]: “just now.” Equivalent to the modern Chinese: 剛才.

⁸ 【呵】[hē]: “to scold”; 呵佛罵祖 (S: 呵佛骂祖) [hē fó mà zǔ]: “to scold the Buddhas and insult the Patriarchs.”

⁹ 【在】[zài]: It is here used as a particle emphasizing the fact that he will be in the place mentioned in the sentence. The Japanese version translates it as the particle ぞ [zo], emphasizing a statement.

【日】

こ とくさん いさん いた ふくす わきば
 舉す。德山、為山に 到る。褡子を 挾ん
 はっとう じょう ひがし にし わた にし ひがし
 て 法堂 上を、東より 西に 過り、西より 東に
 わた みわた む む い すなわ いで
 過り、顧視して 無、無と 云って 便ち 出ず。
 せつちようじゃくご いわ かんぱ おわ とくさん もん
 雪竇 著語して 云く、「勘破し 了れり。」德山、門
 しゅ いた かえ いわ ま そうそう
 首に 至り、却って 云く、「也た 草草にするは
 よ すなわ いざ ととの ふたた はい
 得からずと。」 便ち 威儀を 具え、再び 入って
 あい み いさん すわ とさ とくさん ざ ぐ ていき
 相見す。為山坐りおる 次、德山、坐具を 提起し
 いわ おしょう いさん ふくす と す とく
 て 云く、「和尚。」為山拂子を取らんと 擬。德
 さん すなわ かつ そで はら いで せつちようじゃくご
 山 便ち 喝して、袖を 拂って 出ず。雪竇 著語し

いわ かんば おわ とくさんはつとう せ をむ
 て 云く、「勘破し 了れり。」徳山法堂に 背却けて、
 わらじ は すなわ い いさん ばん いた
 草鞋を 著けて 便ち 行く。為山、晩に 至って
 しゅそ と さきほど しんいり いず こ あ
 首座に 問う、「適來の 新到、什麼處にか 在る。」
 しゅそ いわ そのかみ はつとう せ をむ わらじ は
 首座云く、「當時、法堂を 背却け、草鞋を 著け
 い さ いさん いわ あ おとこ い ご こ
 て 出で 去れり。」為山云く、「此の 子、已後孤
 ほう ちょうじょう お そうあん か ま ほとけ しか
 峰 頂上に 向いて 草庵を 盤結え、佛を 呵り
 そ ののし さ ぞ せつちょうじゃくご いわ ゆき
 祖を 罵り 去らん 在。」雪竇 著語して 云く、「雪の
 うえ しも くわ
 上に 霜を 加う。」

【E】

Deshan came to Guishan and, carrying his bundle under his arm, he stepped into the Dharma Hall, walking across it from east to west and from west to east, looking around as he said: “Nothing! Nothing!” and then he went out. (Xuedou commented: “Seen through!”) When Deshan got to the main entrance gate, he said: “Still, I can’t be so hasty.” So, he dressed formally and once again entered to meet Guishan. As Guishan was sitting, Deshan held up a sitting cloth and said: “Master!” Guishan was about to take his whisk when Deshan shouted: “Khe!” Then, he gave a flick of his sleeves and went out. (Xuedou commented: “Seen through!”) Turning his back on the Dharma Hall, Deshan put on his straw sandals and departed. That evening, Guishan asked the head monk: “The newcomer who was here a while ago, where is he?” The head monk said: “He soon turned his back on the Dharma Hall, put on his straw sandals, and left.” Guishan said: “One day, this lad will head out to the top of a deserted peak, build a grass hermitage, scolding the buddhas and insulting the patriarchs!” (Xuedou commented: “Piling up frost on top of snow.”)

The day of the great enlightenment may only represent the true beginning of one's journey on the path. The light clears away the delusions of the world, as the dawn chases away the shadows of the night, but light may conceal as well as it reveals, and an occultation may also be a source of revelation. The fiery summer sun that illuminates a clearing indeed plunges the forest surrounding it deeper into darkness, and likewise, a total eclipse of the gilded star marking the pace of our days by the silvery luminary of the night allows the contours of its flaming body to be observed with more detail. In the same way, when a man has reached the roof of the world, has climbed to the very top of the gigantic citadel of things, and let his eyes feast on the plain clarity of the skies, having perceived the essence of all that is, and seen the emptiness of all things, he may forget to open himself up to this light, letting it be more than a mere instrument of a revelation of what stands in front of his eyes but rather also let it seep profoundly into his flesh, up to the innermost parts of his bones and the core of his mind, letting the emptiness of his own self appear, thus showing him that it is an illusion, exposed by this light for what it is. Otherwise, drunk with his newfound power, inebriated by his sight of the essence of the skies, this man may feel emboldened rather than humbled, ready to provoke those dwelling at the foot of the mountain.

Running down to the temple, the man then rudely steps into the meditation hall, walking back and forth, looking around, without paying his respects to the abbot present inside, saying: "No-thing! No-thing!" before simply going out. He confidently announces to all those present that he has entered the door of the not-two. He has stepped into no-thing-ness and now sees that the things of the world are but a pernicious illusion, a mere fantasy of the mind. He makes use of a single word, basing his argument on the gestures of his body, showing that he knows of the vacuity of words, and thus decides to employ what is one of the most down-to-earth forms of expression, one that speaks without words, but also gives ample room for interpretation, leaving its meaning to be in large part constructed by the spectators of this performance. Saying "No-thing!" he may indeed also point out the fact that the meditation hall is indeed empty, with the monks busying themselves with other matters, perhaps a poke thrown at the abbot, who is like a shepherd letting his sheep wander around rather

than herding them on the path to their pasture. No one would nonetheless be able to prove such an interpretation, leaving the words open.

This entry into the hall was marked by a breaking of good manners, a rebellion against the order established within the world of men, as he saw the arbitrariness of the order together with the emptiness of the world itself. To reject or oppose this order nonetheless shows that one is still attached to it and that it still holds sway over one's mind. Freedom implies a release rather than a rejection, without fear nor disgust of abiding within this world and of following its order. Realizing this, and wanting to counterbalance his act of rebellion, the man thus adorns his formal vestments and once again enters the hall, paying his respects to the abbot, submitting to the order of the world, for a brief instant at least. He indeed continues with his teasing of the master, holding up a sitting cloth and calling upon him: "Master!" The meaning of this is once again left open, and any interpretation reveals as much the mind of the interpreter as the intention of the actor of this performance. The master nonetheless sees through his game, seemingly implying a deficiency in the leadership of his flock, and recognizing this arrogant man as one of his own, he reaches for his whisk, his shepherd's staff, to bring this straying lamb back to the earth, and to the fold. Seeing this, the man then simply lets out a deafening shout: "Khe!," thereby clearing away the air, shattering all ideas, as a last means of defense, because he has encountered someone unimpressed by his drunkenness on the sweet wine of enlightenment.

Returning to the peak, the man then has yet to take the last step. He stands at the heights, contemplating the foundation of the heavens, but he has lost touch with the earth. He is still attached to his self, and fails to see his own face in the eyes of all those he encounters. When he will see himself and the empty sky in all things, see no-thing-ness in every thing, he will then once again descend from his mountain, himself becoming a shepherd for a flock straying from the path. In his drunkenness, he may scold the buddhas and insult the patriarchs, seeing that these indeed also are empty things of the world, but one day he will see that he is frost piled up upon the snow. The anger will then be turned into impassiveness, and the arrogance will be transformed into

benevolence toward all that is. He will be both a man of the world and a dweller of the deserted peak, seeing that they are but two facets of the same thing, which in turn is no-thing.

Case 125 —Tiemo Came To Guishan —鐵磨到滄山

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 24. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 60.

【中】

舉。劉鐵磨到滄山。山云：「老特牛，¹ 汝來也。」磨云：「來日臺山² 大會齋，和尚還去麼。」滄山放身臥，磨便出去。

¹ 【特牛】[zì niú]: “a cow”; 特 [zì]: “female of domestic animals.”

² 【臺山】[tái shān]: More exactly, Mount Wutai (五台山), which is far away in the northern part of the country, in Shanxi Province.

【日】

舉す。劉鐵磨、滄山に到る。山云く、「老特牛、汝來たれり。」磨云く、「來日、臺山に大會齋あり、和尚還た去くや。」滄山身を放って臥す。磨便ち出で去る。

【E】

Liu Tiemo¹ came to Guishan. Guishan said: “Old cow, you have come!” Tiemo said: “Tomorrow, there will be a great feast at Taishan. Will you go there, Master?” Guishan lay down and stretched himself out. Tiemo then left.

¹ “Liu Tiemo”: A student of Guishan Lingyou. The name Tiemo means “iron grindstone.”

² “Taishan”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

Compassion is the weapon of the enlightened, while aggression is the one of the deluded, the slave to the world and to his ego. When the flesh encounters the iron blade, it is slashed when it resists it, but it may be left unscathed if it perfectly yields to its strength, absorbing the blow and thereby showing the inconspicuous force of softness, the hidden power of flexibility. What yields to all forces nonetheless cannot stand at all, and thus nothing can be edified with it, but conversely, what is perfectly rigid, unyielding, is shattered to pieces as soon as it encounters a significant force. To see the nature of the light filling up the skies, the essence of being, is to be able to complement and accompany what fate places upon our path. When stumbling upon a rock, he is water, and when thrown into water, he is a rock, becoming an instrument of the way, a source of balance.

When a harsh woman comes to see an old and experienced man of the way, ready to unsheathe her sword, ready to grind the opponent into a fine dust that will be scattered to the winds, forcefully ridding him of his delusions, she may be suddenly disarmed by a warm embrace, by kind words, a familiarity that betrays unbound compassion: "Old cow, you have come!" The iron woman nonetheless sees the sharp hook hidden in this expression of familiarity. The old facing the young; here versus there; coming versus going, these are pure creations of the world, of the mind of man. They are all on the same earth, under the same sky, all at the foot of the great mountain, whose peak is a wellspring of compassion, poured upon the entire land. She has seen the bait but has not swallowed it. She instead throws it back to where it comes from, declaring that she is not so easily fooled and sees through the shrewd words of the old man, all of this disguised as an invitation: "Tomorrow, there is a great feast on the peak of the great mountain of compassion at the other end of the earth, will you go there, master?" There is no old nor young, no iron nor flesh, no here and there, and thus time and space, distances and dates, are without the slightest importance. The great mountain is here. Tomorrow's feast has already begun, and the old man has already eaten his fill. The succulent food of enlightenment in his belly robs him of his strengths, and he now yields to the slumber overwhelming his body. He lies down upon the bare soil, letting the great and omnipresent pull of the earth bring him to the face of the planet, in a tender embrace, and he thus stretches out his

limbs, ready to rest, as his work has been accomplished.

They both fought without touching each other. They played with one another, both hearing the sound of the heavens resonating throughout the air, recognizing the familiar tune, dancing to it as a celebration of its truth. They will meet again, here and now, as there is nowhere else and no other time when this encounter could occur. One standing on the peak of the mountain, the other at its foot, they both whisper to each other, words of light, offering each other swords as soft as water, and giving each other stones to drink, with one having a smile on his face, and the other frowning eyebrows, but both incarnating the harmony of the heavens themselves.

Case 126 —Magu His Ring-Staff —麻谷振錫

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 31. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 16.

【中】

舉。麻谷持錫¹到章敬，遶禪床三匝，振錫²
 一下，卓然³而立。敬云：「是，是。」雪竇著
 語云：「錯。」麻谷又到南泉，遶禪床三匝，振
 錫一下，卓然而立。泉云：「不是，不是。」雪竇
 著語云：「錯。」麻谷當時⁴云：「章敬道是，和
 尚為什麼道不是。」泉云：「章敬即是，是汝不
 是。此是風力所轉，終成敗壞。」

¹ 【錫】S: 【錫】[xī]: Designates a 錫杖 [xī zhàng]. Literally “a tin stick,” that is, a Buddhist monk’s staff, with metal rings on its top.

² 【振錫】S: 【振錫】[zhèn xī]: “to shake one’s staff and its metal rings.”

³ 【卓然】[zhuó rán]: “in an outstanding manner” / “confidently” / “eminently.”

⁴ 【當時】[dāng shí]: The source text had 當時 [fù shí], but it seems erroneous.

【日】

こ まよく しゃく じ しょうけい いた ぜんしょう
 舉す。麻谷、錫を持して章敬に到る。禪床を

めぐ みめぐり しゃく ふる ひとたび たくぜん
 遶ること 三匝、錫を 振うこと 一下して、卓然と
 た けいいわ ぜ ぜ せつちようじゃくご
 して 立つ。敬云く、「是なり、是なり。」雪竇 著語し
 いわ あやま まよく ま なんせん いた ぜんしょう
 て 云く、「錯てり。」麻谷、又た 南泉に 到る。禪床を
 めぐ みめぐり しゃく ふる ひとたび たくぜん
 遶ること 三匝、錫を 振うこと 一下して、卓然と
 た せんいわ ふ ぜ ふ ぜ せつちようじゃくご
 して 立つ。泉云く、「不是、不是。」雪竇 著語して
 いわ あやま まよく すぐさまいわ しょうけい ぜ
 云く、「錯てり。」麻谷、當時云く、「章 敬は 是な
 い おしょう なにゆえ ふ ぜ い
 りと 道えり、和尚は 爲什麼にか 不是と 道う。」
 せんいわ しょうけい すなわ ぜ こ なんじ ふ
 泉云く、「章 敬は 即ち 是なり、是れ 汝は 不
 ぜ こ こ ふうりき てん ところ つい はいえ
 是。此れは 是れ 風力の 轉ずる 所、終に 敗壞を
 な
 成すなり。」

【E】

Magu, with his ring-staff¹ in hand, came to Zhaojing. He circled Zhaojing's meditation seat three times, shook the ring staff, and stood there, straight and confident. Zhaojing said: "Right! Right!" (Xuedou comments: "Wrong!") Magu then came to Nanquan. He circled Nanquan's meditation seat three times, shook the ring staff, and stood there, straight and confident. Nanquan said: "Not right! Not right!" (Xuedou comments: "Wrong!") Then, Magu said: "Master Zhaoqing said: 'Right! Right!' Why does the Master say: 'Not right! Not right!'?" Nanquan said: "In Zhaojing's case, he is right, but you are not right. This thing is just carried by the wind, and in the end, it will be brought to nothing."

¹ "Ring-staff": See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The great revelation of the essence of all things is like an extremely potent medicine. It may overcome the body of the weak, the mind of the feeble, who are not yet ready to wield this power. It

may thus become the source of a sickness, stirring up a fire within the mind that echoes throughout the flesh, a high fever that numbs one's reason and blurs his vision.¹⁰³ He is now awakened from the long slumber. The dawn has come, now that he has seen the radiance of the northern star around which the heavens appear to revolve, and brilliance pervades both the world and the sky. Above and under the heavens, he alone is honored.¹⁰⁴ A source of light nonetheless cannot see itself. It needs the eyes of others to attest to the intensity of its gleam, to be witnesses of the presence of the heavenly fire within it. The feverish man thus decides to visit his master.

Standing straight, full of confidence, he enters the preaching hall and faces the master, without proper greetings, in what appears to be a defiant behavior. His gaze piercing through the eyes of the bold follower, the master nonetheless sees the nature of the revelation reflected in his eyes. This is why he gives him his seal, approving of his conduct: "Right! Right!" But if the reader thinks that the follower is indeed right, he would be wrong. If he thinks that he is wrong, he would also be wrong, as there is no right and wrong where the light of the great revelation shines, and there is no-thing there.

The feverish man then continues to walk on the path, paying a visit to another master, in another part of the earth. He performs the exact same play as before in front of him, but this time he is rewarded with a scolding: "Wrong! Wrong!" If the reader thinks that the follower is wrong, he would be wrong as well. If he thinks that he is right, he would be wrong also. Right and wrong are mere sounds thrown into the air by the two masters. These sounds are not necessarily laden with meaning, part of the world. They may represent approval and disapproval, but they may also be like the ringing of a bell, a mere signal, an acknowledgment of the performance, of the presence of the visitor, without judging its quality, because the men ringing the bells dwell in a place where

¹⁰³See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p130 (Case 16): 「悟熱の高い麻谷。」

¹⁰⁴This refers to a sentence that Gautama Buddha proclaimed just after his birth, according to the Buddhist tradition: "Above and under the heavens, I alone am honored." This quote appears in the *Dīrgha Āgama*, 長阿含經 in Chinese. The sentence in Chinese is as follows: 「天上天下，唯我獨尊」[tiān shàng tiān xià, wéi wǒ dú zūn].

there is only sound passing through the air and the ears, and not a single word, nor a single thought.

There are nonetheless times when genuine praise should be given, as a helping hand offered to the lowly, pulling him up toward the heights of the sky, or even as a celebration of the accomplishment of someone who has opened the door that was in front of him since his birth, but whose threshold he until this moment failed to pass. There are other times when the one standing proudly on the peak should be humbled and shown that the depths are nonetheless never far away. The awakening is only a new birth rather than an end of the path. The unveiling of the heavens should not render one permanently blind to the things of the world, but rather always invite him to pass from one realm to the other constantly, never abiding anywhere, remaining on the move, without being attached to this movement itself. One may follow the winds or be guided by them, and the onlooker would not be able to discern which force is here at work, but in both cases, the traveler will arrive at his destination, which is the place where all winds are always going. Do you understand? If you do, you are wrong!

Case 127 — Zifu Draws A Circle — 資福畫圓

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 33.

【中】

舉。陳操 尚書¹ 看 資福。福 見來，便畫一圓
 xiàng cāo yún dì zǐ rèn me lái zǎo shì bù zhú biàn hé kuàng gèng
 相。操 云：「弟子怎麼來，早是不著便，² 何況更
 huà yì yuán xiàng fú biàn yǎn què fāng zhòng mén xuě dòu yún chén cāo
 畫一圓相。」福 便掩却方丈門。雪竇 云：「陳操
 zhī jù yì zhī yǎn
 只具一隻眼。」³

¹ 【尚書】S: 【尚書】[shàng shū]: “a high-ranking official” / “a government minister.”

² 【便】[biàn]: “to be beneficial.”

³ 【一隻眼】[yì zhī yǎn]: “an eye” / “excellent observation skills and insight that allow one to see into the essence of things.” (See: 「物事の本質を見抜くことのできるすぐれた観察力や見識。」From: 山口明穂。《東京：旺文社国語辞典第十一版》。東京：旺文社，2013.)

【日】

こ ちんそう しょうしょ し ふく まみ ふく き
 擧す。陳操 尚書、資福に 看ゆ。福、來たる
 み すなわ いちえんそう えが そういわ でし
 を 見て、 便ち 一圓相を 畫く。操云く、「弟子、
 かよう き すで たより え なん
 恁麼に 來たるすら、早是に 便を 著ざるに、何ぞ
 いわ さら いちえんそう えが ふく すなわ
 況んや 更に 一圓相を 畫くとは。」福、 便ち
 ほうじょう もん とご せつちょういわ ちんそう た
 方丈の 門を 掩却す。雪竇 云く、「陳操は 只だ
 いっせきがん ぐ
 一隻眼を 具すと。」

【E】

The imperial minister Chencao went to see Zifu. Seeing him coming, Zifu drew a circle. Chencao said: "It was already superfluous for this disciple to come here. Why do you draw a circle in addition to that?" Zifu then closed the door of his room. (Xuedou said: "Chencao has only one eye.")

To see through the colossal walls of things with which the world of men is built is a peculiar experience, a unique revelation of the wonder lying beyond them, of what is the ground and the essence of all things, including man himself. This is the great desert where there is not a single thing, whose light and heat dissolves the self as soon as it is stepped into, leaving only a fine thread that becomes the lifeline that will help him find his way back, when the need of it is felt, and allow the self to once again emerge out of no-thing-ness. The mind may nonetheless remain in no-thing-ness while the body still appears to stand in the midst of the world to the eyes of its inhabitants, and thus, the hermit having retreated in emptiness may receive visitors, who live their lives in another realm, still unaware of the essence of all things.

Sitting in ecstasy in his hermitage, the desert mind is brought out of no-thing-ness by the approaching visitor. The hermit then draws a circle in the air with his hand, tracing a line, wielding a sword, cutting out the unicity of the heavens to open up a window toward the world of men, allowing the things of this world to

emerge in front of his eyes and to be examined by his mind. The hermit indeed knows that any ecstasy must be transient, otherwise the forgetfulness of the self associated with the desert life would turn him into a stone pillar, dead earth, rather than a man. When the opportunity naturally arises, a brief return to the busy streets of the great citadel of things is in order, and it gives meaning to his life in the desert, offering a precious contrast, where each thing can shine in its unadulterated truth. His heart is once again beating vigorously, and he is ready to welcome the visitor with open arms, willing to guide him further on the path, inviting him to join him in the depths of the wasteland, where they will become one with the heavens, before forgetting all things, even themselves.

As soon as the opening of the window is complete, the host is nonetheless immediately scolded by his guest: "It was already superfluous of me to leave the place where there is no thing to come here and pay you a visit. Why do you draw a circle in addition to that?" Why depart from the bliss of no-thing-ness, the serenity of the dissolution of the self, to welcome someone in the messy and filthy streets of the citadel of things? One may be free from the blindness of the world and have let the radiance of the heavens pierce through his eyes and nonetheless suffer from a cecity to his own nature, failing to see that compassion is the last step, what should come as a result of the unveiling of the nature of the skies, as to help others is to honor the way itself, and it shows one's harmony with it. To extend a helping hand is indeed superfluous, and yet it is a testimony to one's forgetfulness of the self, a sign of humility, acceptance to once again bear the yoke of the world to relieve others and guide them toward the splendor that shines above, and toward the desert where not a single thing may be found, where emptiness holds sway of the mind and the flesh.¹⁰⁵

The guest thus has only one eye, the eye turned toward no-thing-ness, toward the power of the self that overcomes the bondage to the world. He is blind of the other eye, the one that should see the necessity of the world and the strength of the one ready to forget himself for the benefit of others, to free the prisoners of the world, as well as to guide back those lost in the disconcert-

¹⁰⁵ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「【題解】這則公案表明陳操只有自覺之眼，沒有覺他之眼。因為圓相正是「主客圓融」的大智（自利）大悲（利他）的象徵。」

ing emptiness of the great desert to the comforting seclusion of the citadel, showing them that both are one and that one cannot reject either of them without losing touch with the way of the sky.

The surest way to lose both eyes and become totally blind is nonetheless to play with swords, to wield the sharp instruments that slashes what forms a whole, that cuts out the seamless drape forming the celestial vault. One who sees the sky clearly knows that certainty and knowledge do not belong to the realm above. If one continues to think in terms of host and guest, of right and wrong, of enlightened and deluded, desert and citadel, world and no-thing-ness, he is bound to have his eyes split with the sword of reason, veiling the true nature of all that is.¹⁰⁶ One may stand on the open road under the heavens and still fail to see their radiance, while one who has shut his door and retreated into the walls of his hermitage, sitting with his eyes closed and letting the winds pass through his ears, may, on the contrary, see it perfectly clearly, beholding the entirety of the heavens in the faintest ray slipping through the most minute cracks of his walls. He teaches with silence, and instructs by closing his door, while those standing outside are puzzled, and this puzzling is precisely the gift of the hermit. Concealing himself, he reveals what the self is.

Case 128 —Nanquan' s Circle —南泉一圓相

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 69.

【中】

jǔ nán quán guī zōng má gǔ tóng qù lǐ bài zhōng guó shī
舉。南泉，歸宗，麻谷，同去禮拜忠國師。
zhì zhōng lù nán quán yú dì shàng huà yī yuán xiàng yún dào dé jí
至中路，南泉於地上畫一圓相¹云：「道得²即
qù guī zōng yú yuán xiàng zhōng zuò má gǔ biàn zuò nǚ rén bài quán
去。」歸宗於圓相中坐，麻谷便作女人拜。泉
yún rèn me zé bú qù yě guī zōng yún shì shén me xīn xíng
云：「恁麼則不去也。」歸宗云：「是什麼心行。」³

¹⁰⁶See Yuanwu' s Introduction on this case: "Is this a man of the way, or an ordinary man? If one can pass through this, and begin to know the place into which one falls, then he will know the 'it is so' and 'it is not so' of the ancients." Chinese original: 「是道人是常人。若向箇裏透得。始知落處。方知古人恁麼不恁麼。」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》. CBETA (Case 33).

¹ 【圓相】S:【圓相】[yuán xiàng]: Designates a circle drawn in the air or on a surface as part of a Zen practice. It is often considered to symbolize the unicity of the universe, and its complete, perfect nature.

² 【得】[dé]: “to succeed” / “to be able” / “to gain [something].”

³ 【心行】[xīn xíng]: In a Buddhist context, this word designates a mind that does not tarry on any thought, and always keeps going. (See: 「2. 佛教語。變動不居之心。心以流行於事相為作用。」 From: 《漢語大詞典》。上海辭書出版社, 2024 (Electronic Edition)).

【日】

こ なんせん き す まよく とも ゆ ちゅうこく
 擧す。南泉、歸宗、麻谷、同に 去きて 忠國
 し らいはい ちゅうろ いた なんせん ちじょう
 師を 禮拜せんとす。中路に 至り、南泉、地上に
 ひと えんそう えが いわ い え すなわ
 一つの 圓相を 畫いて 云く、「道い 得ば 即ち
 ゆ き す えんそう なか ざ まよく すなわ
 去かん。」歸宗、圓相の 中に 坐す。麻谷、 便ち
 によんはい な せんいわ いんも すなわ ゆ
 女人拜を 作す。泉云く、「恁麼ならば 則ち 去か
 き す いわ こ なん ふるまい
 じ。」歸宗云く、「是れ 什麼たる 心行ぞ。」

【E】

Nanquan, Guizong, and Magu went together to pay their respects to the National Teacher Zhong. On the way, Nanquan drew a circle¹ on the ground and said: “Say something appropriate, and we will go.” Guizong sat inside the circle. Mazu made an informal bow. Nanquan said: “If it is so, then let’s not go [any farther].” Guizong said: “Someone’s mind is coming and going!”²

¹ “Circle”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Someone’s mind is coming and going”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

The world is vast and wide, and the young is naturally tempted to explore its diversity. Seeking the way, he goes on a pilgrimage, visiting masters on the four corners of the earth, attentively listening to their teachings, patiently contemplating their rituals, and heartily chanting together with them, under the same sun, under the same moon, no matter where he is. Sooner or later, he nonetheless encounters a man of the way, with a heart overfilled

with compassion, ready to appear harsh and cruel for the sake of his brethren and sons. This man will scold the pilgrim, pointing out the fact that his roaming around the earth, his pilgrimage in the different parts of the world, represents a useless effort, a mis-directed expression of a yearning for communion with the way of the sky. The way is not to be found in a remote land, and the key to it will not be found in the preaching of a foreign teacher. It is with him at all times, everywhere, and thus he does not even need to take one step to unveil its secret. His strength should not be spent walking over the earth, but rather to let go of the burden of the things still placed over his shoulders, to let the walls around him crumble, so that the truth of all things may shine in his heart.

The man free from the yoke of the world is not attached to any thing. This also includes attachment to usefulness and to one's progression of the path. If one becomes obsessed with the rejection of pilgrimages, it is no better than to spend his days desperately wandering over the earth in search of an illumination of the heart. The gate always stands in front of us, and if once it is passed there no longer is any opposition between "here" and "there," the other side of the earth is as appropriate as one's hometown to embrace the way of the sky. There is therefore only a fine and blurry line between the deluded pilgrim and the enlightened man guided by the winds of the sky, the wings of the way. To discern which is which may be as tricky as it is futile, but it may also represent a valuable lesson, reminding all those present of where they stand.

A test may thus be used to determine whether a group of pilgrims should continue on their path, to their destination, or whether they should return from where they come from. One of the men then simply draws a circle on the ground and looks out for a reaction from his companions. The circle is the simplest and most perfect shape, a symbol of completeness, of an absence of beginning nor end, of the infinity of the path upon which men can walk all their lives. It represents the whole of the heavens, the celestial sphere in which the round earth endlessly turns and revolves, without cut, without interruption.

One of the companions then sits inside the circle. He is welcoming the embrace of the heavens, knowing that he is not merely contained by it, but that he is the circle itself, without birth nor death, without up nor down, right or left. No matter what he does,

his walk of life forms a circle, a continuous line folded upon itself, one whose end is its beginning, and where the most distant future is joined with the most distant path, a seamless rope.¹⁰⁷ Being the circle itself, there is nothing else besides it. It is the whole of being, without any opposition between subject and object, between pilgrim and the rest of the earth. He can sit, because he is already there, where he should be, and there is no other destination where he could be.

Another companion, watching this scene, then simply bows lightly toward the one sitting within the circle. A sign of approval, a mark of respect, without thought, without reflection, but he may as well have bowed toward the sun, toward the earth, or toward any thing of the world, as there is not a single thing that does not represent the circle, the way of the sky. There is no right nor wrong, simply a manifestation of the harmony between these men and the way itself, which they incarnate rather than study. If it is so, they have no need to go farther on their pilgrimage. They, here and now, have honored the master to whom they intended to pay homage. They thus declare that they will not go further, and yet, they continue on their way! Walking on the circle, there is indeed nowhere else to go. The fact that they intend to complete their pilgrimage or not is of no importance. They may walk on the same path without any destination, reaching the same milestones, with only one difference: the emptiness of their mind, the relinquishing of any desire to perform a precise journey, with a determined intent. Their feet are coming and going, but their mind is perfectly clear, free of all attachment, even attachment to non-attachment itself, and thus they head toward the master, having abandoned any idea of pilgrimage, but who knows what their state of mind will be when they take their next step. Nothing is written. They are always on the move, never abiding anywhere, and thus our own mind should be wary of trying to determine their course, to probe their intent. We should only join them on the path, with the circle in front of our eyes, the circle formed by the sky, becoming our

¹⁰⁷See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript] : "Standing, sitting, eating, talking... each one of these is our circle. You yourself may not realize it, but you' re actually drawing a circle the whole day long." Original Japanese: 「立ったら、坐ったり、食べたり、喋ったり…これみんな円相を描いているのです。自分では気がつかないけれども、朝から晩まで円相の丸出し、丸出しです。」From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

eye.

Case 129 —The Sudden Encounter With A Tiger 一忽逢大蟲

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 85.

【中】

舉。僧到 桐峯 庵主處，便問：「這裏忽逢大蟲¹
jǔ sēng dào tóng fēng ān zhǔ chù biàn wèn zhè lǐ hū féng dà chóng
 時，又作麼生。」庵主便作虎聲，僧便作怕勢，庵主
shí yòu zuò me shēng ān zhǔ biàn zuò hǔ shēng sēng biàn zuò pà shì ān zhǔ
 呵呵大笑。僧云：「這老賊。」庵主云：「爭奈何老僧
hē hē dà xiào sēng yún zhè lǎo zéi ān zhǔ yún zhēng nài lǎo sēng
 何。」僧休去。雪竇云：「是則是，兩箇惡賊，只
hé sēng xiū qù xuě dòu yún shì zé shì liǎng gè è zéi zhǐ
 解掩耳偷鈴。」²

¹ 【大蟲】S: 【大虫】[dà chóng]: “a tiger.” This word literally means “a large animal.” The character 蟲 at the time designated animals in general, and not only insects, as it generally does in modern Chinese.

² 【掩耳偷鈴】S: 【掩耳偷鈴】[yǎn ěr tōu líng]: This expression literally means “to cover one’s ears and steal the bell,” an idiomatic expression meaning “to fool oneself and others.”

【日】

舉す。僧、桐峰庵主の處に 到って 便ち 問う、
こ そう とうほうあんじゅ ところ いた すなわ と
 「這裏に 忽し 大虫に 逢わん 時、又た 作麼生。」
ここ も とら あ とき ま いかん
 庵主、 便ち 虎の 聲を 作す。僧 便ち 怕るる
あんじゅ すなわ とら おと はっ そう すなわ おそ
 勢を 作す。庵主、呵呵大笑す。僧云く、「箇の 老
しぐさ な あんじゅ かか たいしょう そういわ こ ろう
 賊。」庵主云く、「老僧を 争奈何せん。」僧、休し
ぞく あんじゅいわ ろうそう いかん そう きゅう
 去る。

【E】

A monk came to the hermit Tongfeng, and after a while, he asked: “When someone suddenly faces a tiger here, what

shall he do?" The hermit then roared like a tiger, and the monk pretended to be frightened. The hermit laughed loudly. The monk said: "You old robber!" The hermit said: "What will [the visitor] do to this old monk?" The monk then took his leave. (Xuedou said: "They are certainly right, but these two evil robbers only know how to fool themselves and others."¹ ")

¹ "Know how to fool themselves and others" : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The life of a man of the way is akin to the one of a flea. He inconspicuously leaps over all obstacles, making himself negligible, unnoticed to the great beings of the world. He jumps from earth to world, from world into no-thing-ness and back, never abiding long enough to see himself be attached to anything. He is an insect, as comfortable in the air as he is on the earth or under it. He walks over the seas and climbs the sky-scrappers built by the hands of man, enjoying the hot gusts of wind sweeping the fields when the summer is at its peak as well as the icy blanket of snow that covers the land during the winter. When a trap is laid in front of him, he simply performs another great leap, to another realm, hiding under the cover of the tall blades of grass.

When he encounters a fellow companion on the path and is presented with an impossible choice, he then knows that the best answer is to be found on the edge separating world and earth, allowing him not to cut himself with the sword of reason. When asked: "When someone suddenly faces a tiger, what shall he do?" He knows that to choose wise words would be to engage in a perilous conversation, as most possible answers would imply falling into the trap of the play of dualities, wielding the sword of reason to arbitrarily cut out the seamless celestial vault into things of the world, and then expose himself to being wounded by the sharp tongue of the one jousting with him. Brought into the world by the words of this fellow, the realm of ideas, he dodges the snare and attempts to bring the other back to the earth, to the realm of the senses, by simply roaring like a tiger. Sound is opposed to words. Raw imprints upon the senses are used to counteract metaphysical ideas. The roar indeed represents a sign, a warning, laden with meaning, but one that is sufficiently broad and blurry that it cannot be used to accuse the one emitting it of having endorsed a

particular idea, one that could be refuted with sharp arguments. The roar disarms the opponent, leaving him unable to slash his enemy. Incapable of thinking of a clever reply, to forcefully bring the lion into the realm of words, the man standing in front of the lion thus simply pretends to be frightened by the beast, acknowledging his own failure, but not seeing it as a defeat, as they both keep playing.

Seeing the frightened expression of his opponent, the lion's roar then turns into a burst of great laughter. He remains in the realm of the senses, the earth and the air, producing only sounds rather than words, things of the world, but still imparting this sound with meaning, even if it is one largely open to interpretation, vague. Laughter indeed is a mere sound, a thing of the earth, but one that is deeply linked with the world, as it connotes many possible ideas, and represents something more in contrast with the other sounds of nature such as the whisper of the winds, or the fluttering of a dove's wings. Neither impressive nor shameful, such display, such joust between men of the way represents a way of interacting with others while looking out for the dangers that can be encountered on the path. The mountain roads are indeed full of robbers, knife in hand, ready to cut the body into pieces and bring the living to death. To be dispossessed by the robber may nonetheless turn out to be a great revelation. How fortunate the man with none! Naked, penniless, exposed to the sun and the winds, this is when one may realize that he is the sky itself. Robbed of all his words, of the answers that he thinks are due to him, he may reconsider the value of the world itself, of these countless things that merely represent others, and that cut out what is one, caricaturing the perfection of nature to make it more easily grasped by our mind.

When encountering a tiger on the road, one should not be afraid of his open mouth. He should rather throw himself inside it, pressing his neck unto its fangs, letting his own blood fill up his belly, letting himself disappear, departing from life and returning into death, the place where there is not a single thing, knowing that he will then once again rise from the earth, and himself become the tiger that swallows the earth and the sky in one gulp.

Case 130 —The World-Honored One Points To The Ground 一世尊指地

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 4.

【中】

舉。世尊與眾行次以手指地云：「此處宜¹ 建
梵刹。」² 帝釋³ 將一莖草，插於地上云：「建梵
刹已竟。」世尊微笑。

¹ 【宜】[yí]: “proper” / “appropriate.”

² 【梵刹】S: 【梵刹】[fàn chà]: “a Buddhist temple/monastery.” Transliteration of the Sanskrit word “brahmacakṣetra” (ब्रह्मक्षेत्र), meaning “[a place] purified of defiling illusions” / “pure” / “quiet.”

³ 【帝釋】S: 【帝釋】[dì shì]: An abbreviation of 帝釋天 [dì shì tiān], that is, “Śakra” (शक्र), the lord god of the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, and a protector of Buddhism.

【日】

舉す。世尊衆と行く次で、手を以て地を
指して云く、「此處宜しく梵刹を建つべし。」
帝釋一莖草を將て地上に挿で云く、「梵刹を
建つること已に竟ぬ。」世尊微笑す。

【E】

When the World-Honored One was walking with his followers, he pointed to the ground with his finger and said: “This is a suitable place for edifying a temple.” Shakra¹ took a stalk of grass, stuck it in the ground, and said: “The temple has been built.” The World-Honored One smiled.

¹ “Shakra”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

When the mouth of the awakened is opened, it triggers a tempest of words and sounds that engulfs the whole of the heavens,

without anyone able to discern them. They are like the wind itself, felt everywhere, able to uproot the most robust and ancient tree, but remaining ungraspable and invisible, without parts, being only an indistinguishable whole. When he points to the ground with his finger, what is the boundary of what he designates? There is none. When he declares: "This is a suitable place for edifying a temple," his finger supports the whole of the heavens and it points toward the great mountain that encompasses the entire earth. The fitting place is anywhere, as there is no other place, and there is not a single portion of the earth or the sky that would not be fitting.¹⁰⁸ The finger is a ray of the sun, among countless others, but also the heavens themselves, as a whole, including the earth. It is the sky pointing at itself, like someone observing his own image in a mirror.

One of the followers accompanying the awakened then takes a stalk of grass and sticks it in the ground, saying: "The temple has been built." To perceive this truth, one must take a step back and observe the whole of the heavens. The fiery star appearing to circle around the earth as it floods it with brilliance has indeed been the driving force of life since its inception, and thus the ultimate source of our world. Its blazing rays feed the emerald beings covering the earth, which are relentlessly weaving together soil and water, air and light, to build up their stalks and extend new leaves that will further collect the celestial radiance, inflating the body of life and thereby driving a wedge between earth and sky. How insignificant are the temples built with carved stones by the hands of man compared to those edified by life itself? A single blade of grass is indeed a far more intricate and elegant work of art than all the greatest sanctuaries of the world, built to honor the heavenly. Our existence entirely rests upon the work of these emerald beings, and they thus represent the foundation of our world. Life is the supreme celebration of being, but one should nonetheless not delude himself and should see that all the things of the world, including the living, are nonetheless nothing but an illusion, a cutting out of the whole of nature into arbitrary parts, to which equally arbitrary names are also assigned.

¹⁰⁸See Wansong's preface on this case: "One speck of dust arises, the entire earth is embraced in it." Chinese original: 「一塵纔舉。大地全收。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》. CBETA (Case 4).

Pointing out the whole, the awakened invites the deluded to turn their gaze away from the things of the world, and its divisions. There is only one place, and there is only holy ground. There is no past nor future, no “here” and “there,” and this is why he counts among his followers witnessing this scene people having lived through different eras. This is why the celestial and the earthly, gods and men, are assembled together, as one being, with no sharp line traced by their gaze to separate the holy from the profane, men from gods, the living from the dead, the world from the sky.¹⁰⁹ The heavens themselves are the monumental temple of being, and the awakened are the flaming altars inside it, revealing its splendor to its bedazzled visitors, with their light never reaching its seemingly infinitely distant walls, showing only the magnificence of the harmonious, the greatness of the vast and void expanse in which there is not a single thing.

Case 131 —Yantou’ s Bow When Hearing A ‘Khee!’ —巖頭拜喝

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 22.

【中】

jǔ yán tóu dào dé shān kuà mén biàn wèn shì fán shì
舉。巖頭到德山，跨¹門便問：「是凡，是
shèng shān biàn hè tóu lǐ bài dòng shān wén yún ruò bù
聖。」山便喝，頭禮拜。洞山聞云：「若不
shì huò gōng dà nán chéng dāng tóu yún dòng shān lǎo hàn bù
是豁²公，大難承當。」頭云：「洞山老漢不
shí hào wù wǒ dāng shí yì shǒu tái yì shǒu nà
識好惡。我當時一手擡，一手捺。」³

¹ 【跨】[kuà]: “to stride over” / “to straddle”

² 【豁】[huò]: The use of Yantou Quanhuo’ s original name may be a play of word, as the character can mean “liberal-minded.” See also the word 豁達 (S: 豁达) [huò dá], meaning “magnanimous.”

³ 【捺】S: 【捺】[nà]: “to press down firmly.”

【日】

¹⁰⁹ See: 神保如天。《從容錄通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p29 (Case 4): 「此の一側は大小廣狹の二見を破し無限絶對の境界を日常座作進退の上に識得し活用せしめやうとの主意である。」

こ 擧あす。がんと巖頭とくさん、いた徳山もんにまたが到り、すなわ門すなわにかつ跨かつつてとう便らいち
と問こう、「は是はれぼん 凡しょうか 聖さんか。」すなわ山かつ、とう便らいち 喝らいす。はい頭とう、とうざん禮き拜いわす。も洞山こ聞かつこういて 云おく、「じょうとう若かたし 是とういれ 豁とうざん公とうざんにあら
ろうかんずんば 大こうあくいに 承し當わし 難そのからん。」いっしゅたい頭いっしゅ云いっしゅく、「なつ洞山
なつ老漢、好惡なつを 識なつらず。我なつれ 當なつ時 一なつ手擡 一なつ手
なつ捺。」

【E】

Yantou [Quanhua] came to Deshan. He stood astride the gate and asked: "Is this ordinary? is this holy?" Deshan then shouted: "Khe!" Yantou made a deep bow. [When he heard about this,] Dongshan said: "Had it not been the magnanimous Quanhua,¹ one would hardly have accepted [this answer]." [Hearing of this reply,] Yantou said: "Old Dongshan doesn't recognize good from bad. At that time, I raised up with one hand and pushed down with the other."

¹ "Quanhua": See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The world around us is a series of artificial boundaries traced by our hands and our minds, delimiting where a thing ends and where another begins. Each one of these things, the building blocks forming the gigantic citadel in which we spend our lives, is assigned sets of properties defining the place and the role it occupies within it. They bear names and adjectives, like labels defining their nature in relation to other things. So deeply entrenched in our minds are these lines that most dwellers of the world have been led to forget that they have no existence outside of our heads. Even when a gate and a fence separate two territories upon the earth, such separation is meaningless if it is not acknowledged and supported by a mind. Meaning does not belong to the earth or the sky, but rather only intrudes into these realms when they stand out of the world, like words and ideas incarnated as soundwaves in the air or characters etched on the earth.

To embrace the way of the sky is to stand astride all the gates separating the things of the world, opening them, pulling and pushing them, showing that we are the ones deciding to keep these gates as they are or not, to respect the differences between the spaces they delimitate. According to the order of the world, one side may be holy and the other profane. One side may belong to me while the other may belong to you. The winds nonetheless pass through them all. The sun's rays do not respect any of these frontiers, only men do so, because they submit themselves to this order into which they were thrown at birth, and that represents all that they know. And yet, it is the edification of the world that allows the revelation of its falsehood, and of the truth of the sky, as no-thing-ness. The contemplation of the illusory division suggested by the presence of the gate is what allows man to overcome this illusion and enter no-thing-ness with an awareness of what it stands in contrast to, before even this last contrast can itself be released and disappear into the great abyss. There is neither anything holy nor profane outside of the world, but one needs the capacity to discern the holy from the profane to perceive the fact that they are indeed one, and that all is no-thing-ness.

Is this holy? Is this profane? To give an answer therefore is to acknowledge that these are two different things. One may simply point toward the sky, saying: "This is holy! This is profane! This is me! This is you! This is what *is* ! This!" This would be to shatter the walls of the world by throwing its foundation stone at it. Another may follow another path, thinking that words are exhausted by this question and that they cannot be used to undermine the realm to which they belong. Shouting with all his breath, stirring up a wave echoing throughout the sky, one may hope to wield the power of the earth and summon the forces of the sky to cause the crumbling of the walls separating things. Is one method better than the other? Is one of the men enlightened and the other deluded? The snake bites its own tail, and a chasm opens up in front of the one who considers these questions. The wise may simply make a deep bow, directed to the only thing that remains in his mind, without raising a single thought, without right and wrong, without rise and fall.

Case 132 —Yangshan’ s “According To My Abilities” —仰山隨分

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 77.

【中】

舉。僧問 仰山：「和尚還識字否。」 山 云：「隨
 分。」¹ 僧乃右旋一匝² 云：「是甚麼字。」 山 於地
 上書箇十字。僧左旋一匝云：「是甚麼字。」 山 改
 十字作卐³ 字。僧畫一圓相，以兩手托，⁴ 如 修羅
⁵ 掌日月勢云：「是甚麼字。」 山 乃畫圓相，圍却
 卐字。僧乃作 樓至⁶ 勢。 山 云：「如是，如是。
 汝善護持。」

¹ 【隨分】S: 【隨分】[suí fèn]: “according to one’ s abilities.”

² 【旋】[xuàn]: “to turn around [something] / “to whirl.” Variant of 鑢 [xuàn]; 匝 [zā]: a measure word for “turns” / “circuits.”

³ 【卐】[wàn]: The swastika (स्वस्तिक) is an auspicious symbol of ancient Hinduism. In Buddhism, the swastika is one of the “thirty-two signs” of Buddha. It possesses a variety of meanings, including being a symbol of the cyclic nature of the universe, working like a wheel, and linked with the heavenly cycles.

⁴ 【托】[tuō]: “to support” / “to support with one’ s palm.”

⁵ 【修羅】S: 【修羅】[xiū luó]: “an Asura” (असुर). A kind of demi-god in Hindu mythology. Here, it refers to one member of the Eight Legions (Sanskrit: अष्टसेना [Aṣṭasenā]; Chinese: 八部衆 [bā bù zhòng]), beings in charge of protecting Buddhism.

⁶ 【作樓至勢】[zuò lóu zhì shì]: “to do the pose of Rucika”; 樓至 (S: 樓至): “rucika.” The last of a thousand Buddhas of the eon known as the “fortunate eon” (“Bhadra-kalpa” भद्रकल्प). He is known for his vigorous protection of Buddhism. A couple of statues representing Rucika can be found at the entrance of many Buddhist temples. The aforementioned pose thus probably is one that expresses the idea of vigor and strength.

【日】

舉す。僧、仰山に 問う、「和尚還って 字を 知る
 や 否や。」山云く、「分に 隨う。」僧 乃ち 右旋
 一匝して 云く、「是れ 甚麼の 字ぞ。」山、地上に
 於いて 箇の 十の 字を 書す。僧左旋一匝して

いわ こ なん じ さん じゅう じ あらた
 云く、「是れ 甚麼の 字ぞ。」山、十の 字を 改め
 まん じ な そういちえんそう えが りょうて
 て 卍の 字と 作す。僧一圓相を 畫いて 兩手
 もつ ささ しゅら じつげつ たなごころ いきおい ごと
 以て 托げて 修羅の 日月を 掌にする 勢の 如く
 いわ こ なん じ さん すなわ えん
 にして 云く、「是れ 甚麼の 字ぞ。」山 乃ち 圓
 そう えが まん じ いきやく そう すなわ る し
 相を 畫いて 卍の 字を 圍却す。僧 乃ち 樓至の
 いきおい な さんいわ によぜ によぜ なんじ よ ごじ
 勢を 作す。山云く、「如是如是、汝 善く 護持せ
 よ。」

【E】

A monk asked Yangshan: “Is the Master literate or not?” Yangshan said: “According to my abilities.” The monk then turned around once clockwise and said: “What ideogram is this?” Yangshan drew the ideogram for “ten” (十) [, shaped like a cross,] on the ground. The monk then turned himself around, once, counterclockwise, and said: “What ideogram is that?” Yangshan turned the “ten” (十) into a swastika (卍).¹ The monk then drew a circle [in the air] and lifted his two hands with his palms upward, like Asura² holding the sun and moon, and he said: “What ideogram is that?” Yangshan then drew a circle around the swastika, and the monk struck the pose of Rucika.³ Yangshan said: “Yes! Yes! Like that! Keep it with care.”

¹ “Swastika”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

² “Asura”: See note 5 of the Chinese text.

³ “Rucika”: See note 6 of the Chinese text.

All that we enjoy upon the earth has been a gift of the heavens, the result of the conjunction of a myriad of factors, the entirety of the flow of the sky since its unfolding pointing toward the bestowing of this gift to us, as a formidable and yet all too ordinary event bearing the name of fate. If we are able to wield a stylus like a sword to carve up the earth to leave the imprint of our world upon it, it is because we have been raised in this world by our relatives

and neighbors. They have introduced us into temples of things, made of words and letters, the work of their ancestors, allowing men to grasp with their hands and minds representations of what is out of their reach without such mediation. To be a master of the world is nonetheless to see how it is intertwined with the earth and the skies. The words we throw into the air, the characters we inscribe upon the ground, they are mere instances of meaningfulness, signification imparted upon pieces of earth and sky, but every single thing can bear such signification. Every single thing under the heavens may reveal itself to be a sign, pointing out to something else.

Standing upon the ground, turning around and sweeping the horizon with our gaze, we may thus gather to ourselves the ten directions, the entirety of the earth, from north to south, from east to west. We can become a living sign representing this realm, and observing our performance, another man may undertake the task of representing it, as a symbol, as an image, a character already found within the world since a long bygone era, which may be a cross: “+,” symbolizing the whole of the earth as two axes of the surface of the planet.

Then turning once again our body around, in the opposite direction, gazing at the celestial vault, as the sun and the moon, the planets and the stars perform their ancient, continuous round dance around the heavens, we gather the entirety of the skies to ourselves, embodying the all-encompassing realm with our flesh. Still assessing the nature of our play, the observer may then turn the cross into a swastika, “卐,” symbolizing the heavenly wheels, the circular course of the heavenly bodies performed each day in front of our eyes.

What comes next? What is greater than the all-compassing sky? It is the essence of the heavens themselves, what supports all that *is*. It is what cannot be encompassed, because it is not a thing: no-thing-ness itself, but as soon as one attempts to represent it, one only produces a caricature, a contradiction, a thing that represents what it is not.¹¹⁰ The alluring illusions of the world

¹¹⁰See Wansong’s preface on this case: “It is like a man trying to draw emptiness. The moment he lowers the brush, he makes a mistake.” Chinese original: 「如人畫空下筆即錯。」, from: 《萬松老人評唱天童覺和尚頌古從容庵錄》。CBETA (Case 77).

may nonetheless play their part in guiding its dwellers toward an experience of the unmediated truth, toward no-thing-ness itself. Falsehood may be wielded in the name of truth, so that falsehood and truth may collapse one into the other, leaving no-thing in their stead, as a vision of the essence of the heavens. We may thus trace a circle around the sky with our fingers, and place our hands to appear as if we supported the sun and the moon with our own strengths, symbolizing the foundation of the skies, what is not a thing, the place where no thing can be, but out of which all things arise, and to which they all belong. Watching this, the observer may thus draw a circle around the swastika, a crude and improper but nonetheless useful symbol of the place where there is not a single thing, no world nor earth, no signifier nor signified, no beginning nor end.

By seeking to represent the unfathomable, by researching the great character of the universe,¹¹¹ incarnating it with our own body, we may then perceive the interweaving of the world with the foundation of the heavens, see the no-thing-ness in each thing. We may also light up a beacon within the darkness of the world, allowing those who spend their lives in the shadowy depths to get a glimpse at the radiance of the sky, so that they may decide to undertake the journey upward and climb the high ramparts of the world, and so that they may themselves also experience no-thing-ness, once they have beheld what lies beyond them, and begin to see the same vision in each thing of the world, see that they are but empty shells of translucent glass veiling the heavenly splendor. They may then also realize the flowing nature of all that is, with one thing turning into another, life turned into death and back into life, a character progressively transformed, whose meaning is never rigidly determined, always in the eye of the beholder, fleeting like the heavens themselves.

Case 133 —The World-Honored Turns A Flower —世尊拈花

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 6.

【中】

¹¹¹See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p. 490 (Case 77).

shì zūn xī zài líng shān huì shàng niān huā shì zhòng shì shí zhòng jiē mò
 世尊 昔在靈山會上拈¹ 花示眾，是時眾皆默
 rán wéi jiāo yè zūn zhě pò yán wēi xiào shì zūn yún wú yǒu
 然，惟 迦葉 尊者破顏² 微笑。世尊 云：「吾有
 zhèng fǎ yǎn cáng niè pán miào xīn shí xiàng wú xiàng wēi miào fǎ mén bù lì
 正法眼藏，涅槃妙心，實相無相，微妙法門，不立
 wén zì jiāo wài bié zhuàn fù zhǔ mó hé jiāo yè
 文字，教外別傳，付囑³ 摩訶⁴ 迦葉。」

¹ 【拈】[niān]: “to grasp with the fingers” / “to fiddle with.”

² 【破顏】S: 【破顏】[pò yán]: “to smile faintly.”

³ 【付囑】[fù zhǔ]: “to confer.”

⁴ 【摩訶】S: 【摩訶】[mó hé]: transliteration of the Sanskrit word “mahā” (महा), meaning: “great.”

【日】

こ せそん むかし りょうぜん えじょう あ はな
 擧す。世尊、昔、靈山會上に 在って、花を
 ねん しゅ しめ こ としゆ み もくねん
 拈じて 衆に 示す。是の 時衆皆な 默然たり。
 た かしょうそんじや はがん みしょう せそん いわ われ
 惟だ 迦葉 尊者のみ 破顔微笑す。世尊云く、「吾に
 しょうぼうげんどう ねはんみょうしん じっそう む そう みみょう ほうもん あ
 正法 眼藏、涅槃妙 心、實相無相、微妙の 法門有り。
 ふりゅうもんじ きょう げ べつでん ま か かしょう ふぞく
 不立文字、教 外別傳、摩訶迦葉に 付囑す。」

【E】

When the World-Honored One was on Vulture Peak, he turned a flower in his fingers, showing it to his followers. At that time, everybody remained silent. Only the venerable Kashyapa let an inconspicuous smile appear on his face. The world-honored one said: “I have the eye of the true Dharma, the subtle mind of Nirvana, the true form of formlessness, the subtle Dharma-gate. It does not rely on words. It is another kind of transmission outside of the scriptures, given to Mahakashyapa.” ¹

¹ “Maha”: See note 3 of the Chinese text.

Ascending to the peak of the great mountain while the summer sun pours out its incomparable brilliance upon it, like a vivifying shower of light falling over the earth, slipping through our

eyes, revealing a magnificent scenery, countless flowers adorning the jade-colored carpet of grass worn by the earth. Their fragrance cannot be seen, and yet it pervades the air, reaching our nostrils, evoking the past moments when a similar impression was left upon our mind, causing us to reminisce, as we let a smile appear on our face, an expression of our pleasure of witnessing the beauty of nature.

These flowers are now wide open, their petals turned toward the fountainhead of heavenly fire, the source of their life, after having spent time and efforts to painstakingly extract themselves out of the ground and grown tall enough to be able to be reached by the celestial brightness. They will soon wither and return to the ground, while their seeds will be carried by the winds and give birth to their posterity, scattered around the valleys, and perhaps, in time, reaching the other side of the earth, while the heavenly wheels continue their endless revolutions, and man's world is caught in the elegant ballet of the seasons.

Men are also like flowers, one day in bloom, and withering away the next, but never disappearing completely and rather becoming the foundation for the growth of a new generation. The same is also true of his world, of the sum of all his knowledge and creations, as they are passed on, directly, through the work of the senses, rather than through a seed planted on the earth or in a womb. It may be from mouth to ear, in the form of speech, or from hand to eyes, in the form of writing, but how would one transmit his experience of what transcends words and letters? How would one pass on to an heir what is not a thing of the world, a vision of no-thing-ness itself? A way to transcend the world and the earth is to stand upon the edge gathering them and keeping them at bay, that is, to impart meaning to the earth without making use of words and letters and to speak words that are tightly interwoven with the essence of the earth and the sky.

One may pick up one flower dancing with the blades of grass with his fingers, thereby severing it from the great body of life, cutting it out from its roots. In this flower, it is the whole of life that can be contemplated, including mankind. This flower is the direct descendant of the first spark of life kindled in the ocean eons ago, when the earth itself was freshly formed by the nibble fingers of the cosmos, just as we are, without a single instant of

interruption between the present instant and this event of the remote past of our planet. The substance of this flower nonetheless predates this wondrous event. It originates from the very unfolding of the heavens, just like the substance of our bodies, made of stardust, made of light turned into earth. In this thing, it is the entirety of the cosmos that can be seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted. More than this, it is the true form of formlessness that can be experienced through it, if only one's eye is open to it. The subtle mind that extinguishes itself can see the true foundation of nature, having passed through the gate leading outside of man's world, to see the ground supporting it.

When the fingers turn the flower, as if it was caught in the whirlwind stirred up by the revolutions of the celestial wheels, the circle formed by the extended petals then becomes these wheels. The movement of the fingers imparts their force to the flower, the last cog in the machinery of the skies, and it sets up the largest wheels of the heavens into motion. There is no separation between the parts and the whole, and this whole is itself no-thing. Someone among the people assembled on the peak, looking at the turning of the flower, sees the flower for what it is, and an inconspicuous smile appears upon his face, a silent reaction, a sign of his vision, without words nor letters, and thus the heir stands out from the throng. The flower that will spread innumerable seeds, and give birth to countless descendants, pierces through the ground and is recognized from among the blades of grass, touched by the sun itself.

Case 134 — Zhaozhou Examines The Hermits 一州勘庵主

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 11.

【中】

zhào zhōu dào yì ān zhǔ chù wèn yǒu ma yǒu ma zhǔ shù
趙州 到一庵主處問：「有麼，有麼。」¹ 主豎
qǐ quán tóu zhōu yún shuǐ qiǎn bú shì bó chuán chù biàn xíng
起拳頭，州云：「水淺，不是泊² 舡處。」便行。
yòu dào yì ān zhǔ chù yún yǒu ma yǒu ma zhǔ yì shù qǐ quán tóu
又到一庵主處³ 云：「有麼，有麼」主亦豎起拳頭，
zhōu yún néng zòng néng duó néng shā néng huó biàn zuò lǐ
州云：「能縱⁴ 能奪，⁵ 能殺能活。」便作禮。

¹ 【麼】[ma]: Here, it is a particle marking a question, equivalent to the modern Chinese: 嗎 (S: 吗).

² 【泊】[bó]: “to anchor” / “to moor.”

³ 【又到一庵主處】[yòu dào yì ān zhǔ chù]: Some have interpreted this sentence as meaning that Zhaozhou returned to see the same hermit, but the use of the term “one hermit” (一庵主) for each visit would seem to support the idea that these are two different people. This may nonetheless also be a bait presented to the reader, to see if he will lose himself in vain interpretations!

⁴ 【縱】S: 【纵】[zòng]: “to release.”

⁵ 【奪】S: 【夺】[duó]: “to seize” / “to take away forcibly.”

【日】

こ じょうしゅう いちあんじゅ ところ いた と あ
 擧す。趙 州、一庵主の 處に 到って 問う、「有り
 あ しゅ けんとう じゅ き しゅういわ みずあそ
 や、有りや。」主、拳頭を 豎起す。州 云く、「水浅う
 こ ふね はく ところ すなわ ゆ
 して 是れ 舡を 泊する 處にあらず。」便ち 行く。
 ま いちあんじゅ ところ いた いわ あ あ
 又た 一庵主の 處に 到って 云く、「有りや、有り
 おも ま けんとう じゅ き しゅういわ のうじゅう のうだつ
 や。」主、亦た 拳頭を 豎起す。州 云く、「能縱 能奪、
 のうせつのうかつ すなわ さい らい
 能殺能活。」便ち 作禮す。

【E】

Zhaozhou went to a hermitage and asked the hermit living there: “Is there [something]? Is there [something]?” The hermit raised his fist. Zhaozhou replied: “The water is shallow. It is not a suitable place for a ship to stop.” And he then left. [Later, Zhaozhou] once again visited a hermit and asked: “Is there [something]? Is there [something]?” The hermit raised his fist. Zhaozhou said: “One knows how to release and how to catch. One knows how to kill and how to give life.” And he then made a deep bow.

When the mind is as clear as the azure summer sky, with all the clouds of the world passing through it silently, without hindrance, the body is like the surface of a lake under it, perfectly still, reflecting perfectly the clear condition reigning in the realm

above. Sky and water do not waver, no matter the size or the darkness of the clouds passing through, and the two can hardly be discerned from each other.

The man of the way, in his bountiful benevolence, his deeply entrenched nature leading him to guide others on the path, is nonetheless like a boatman with a long oar in hand, always inclined to use it to test the depth of the waters through which he passes, assuring that others would not be trapped in the silt, or that the ship's hull would not be pierced by rocks. Encountering a fisherman on a bridge, he asks him: "How deep are the waters here?" "About an arm's length," the fisherman replies. The boatman then declares: "The water is shallow. It is not a suitable place for a ship to stop," and he then departs. He little while later, he encounters another fisherman on another bridge and asks him the same question, getting the same answer. He then declares: "A boat may stop here. It may even sink in the depths of these waters, swallowed whole, and no-thing will remain of it." Testing the waters with a stick, or interrogating those standing in it, has no influence upon the water. It continues to run toward the great ocean after having descended from the clouds, without the slightest consideration for shallowness and depth, for clarity or muddiness, for purity or filthiness. It simply advances, no matter what, yielding to all obstacles and yet overcoming them. Likewise, a boat that has been stripped of all its cargo and all the unnecessary equipment carried on its deck does not need deep waters to navigate forward. Without fear or worry, the empty ship does not run aground. It safely reaches the mouth of the river, and then the captain can contemplate the beauty of the encounter between sea and sky, the clear world where nothing else can be seen on the horizon.

Running into someone while walking upon the path, one may also perform such a trial. Simply asking a pilgrim "What is it?" may be enough to let him reveal the nature of his mind. Knowing that the loftier the words, the emptier they are, a man of the way may offer an answer that stands in equilibrium on the edge between earth and world, with silence married with a gesture, an arm raised, carrying a meaning but one that does not impose itself upon the one to which it is destined. It rather represents a gift, a translucent piece of glass that reflects as much the image of the one

holding it as it lets light pass through it, gently diffusing it, only offering a blurry picture, in which the beholder will see what he wants to see. If the man raising his arm is doing so as a reflection of the perfect clarity of his mind, having emptied its content of all things, he will remain unphased by any answer that comes in reaction to it, knowing perfectly that it will simply be a reflection of the mind of the one standing in front of him as much as of his own. Approval or contempt, praise or rebuke, his arm remains as steady as a stone pillar, undisturbed by the fiercest assaults of the heavens. “What is it?” did he ask. It is no-thing. It is no-one, and thus there is no answer to give, and no one to whom it could be given. There is only one thing, and it can be found concealed in the fist of these men, one with the arm itself, and with all that surrounds it.

Case 135 — Deshan Carries His Bowl — 德山托鉢

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 13. This case is similar, but its wording is not identical, compared to the Book of Serenity, case 55.¹¹²

【中】

德山 一日托鉢下堂，見雪峯 問：「者老漢，
鐘未鳴鼓未響，托鉢向甚處去。」山 便回方丈。
峯 舉似巖頭，頭 云：「大，小德山 未會末後
句。」山 聞，令侍者喚巖頭 來，問曰：「汝不肯
老僧那。」巖頭 密啟¹ 其意，山 乃休去。明日
陞座，果與尋常不同。² 巖頭 至僧堂前，拊掌³
大笑云：「且喜⁴ 得老漢會末後句，他後天下人不
奈⁵ 伊何。⁶ 」

¹¹²See Book of Serenity, case 55: 「舉。雪峯在德山作飯頭一日飯遲。德山托鉢至法堂峯云。這老漢鐘未鳴鼓未響。托鉢向甚麼處去山便歸方丈峯舉似巖頭頭云。大小德山不會末後句山聞令侍者喚巖頭問。汝不肯老僧那巖遂啟其意山乃休去至明日陞座果與尋常不同巖撫掌笑云。且喜老漢會末後句他後天下人不奈伊何。」

- ¹ 【密啟】S: 【密啟】[mì qǐ]: “to admit [something] indirectly or in secret.”
² 【果與尋常不同】[guǒ yǔ xún cháng bù tóng]: “the outcome was different compared to what usually [happens]” The phrasing appears to be deliberately ambiguous. It avoids the mention of any use of verbal language, probably to imply that the lesson was a non-verbal one, but without saying it explicitly, letting a fruitful doubt arise.
³ 【拊掌】[fǔ zhǎng]: “to clap hands.”
⁴ 【且喜】[qiě xǐ]: “it is fortunate.”
⁵ 【不奈】[bù nài]: “to be unable [to do something]” / “to be helpless.”
⁶ 【伊何】[yī hé]: “to do something.” Similar to the modern Chinese: 為何 [wèi hé].

【日】

こ とくさん いちじつたくはつ どう くだ せっぽう
 舉す。徳山、一日托鉢して 堂に 下る。雪峰に
 こ ろうかん かね いま な く いま ひび
 「者の 老漢、鐘も 未だ 鳴らず 鼓も 未だ 響かざ
 たくはつ いず ところ むか さ
 るに、托鉢して 甚れの 處に 向って 去る。」と
 と さん すなわ ほうじょう かけ ほう がんとう
 問われて、山、 便ち 方丈に 回る。峰、巖頭に
 こじ とういわ だいしょう とくさん いま まつ ご く
 舉似す。頭云く、「大小の 徳山、未だ 末後の 句を
 え さん き じしゃ がんとう よ
 會せず。」山、聞いて 侍者をして 巖頭を 喚び
 きた と いわ なんじ ろうそう うけが
 來らしめて、問うて 云く、「汝、老僧を 肯わざ
 がんとう ひそか そ い もう さん すなわ
 るか。」巖頭、密に 其の 意を 啓す。山 乃ち
 きゅう さ みょうにちしん ぞ はた よのつね おな
 休し 去る。明日 陞座、果して 尋常と 同じから
 がんとう そうどうぜん いた たなごころ ふ たいしょう
 ず。巖頭、僧堂前に 至り、掌を 拊し、大笑して
 いわ しば よろこ え ろうかんまつ ご く
 云く、「且らく 喜び 得たり 老漢末後の 句を
 え たご てん か ひと かれ いかん
 會せしことを。他後天下の 人、伊を 奈何ともせ
 ず。」

【E】

One day, Deshan went down from the temple hall [to the dining room], holding his bowl. Seeing this, Xuefeng said: “Old man! The bell has not been rung, and the drum has not been beaten. Where are you going with your bowl?” Deshan then went back to his room. Xuefeng told Yantou about this. Yantou said: “The large and the small, Deshan has yet

to understand the final word.” Deshan heard of this, and he asked his attendant to invite Yantou to come to him. He said: “You are not approving this old monk[’s behavior]?” Yantou admitted this indirectly. Deshan then took his leave. The next day, Deshan ascended the rostrum, but his teaching was completely different than what it was usually. When Yantou arrived at the entrance of the temple hall [and saw this], he clapped his hands, laughing, and he said: “Marvelous that the old man understands the final word. After that, no man under the heavens can do anything to him.”

To live an existence in harmony with the way of the sky is to let ourselves be guided by it, impassively observing the signs offered to us and reacting accordingly, without will, without opposition. These signs may be given by the heavens themselves or by the hand of man, as elements of his world. When the temple bell is rung, it may be a sign, calling those within reach of its sound to assemble to share a meal, once the cooks have accomplished their duty and the food is ready to be served. One may nonetheless listen to other signs of nature, like the growling of one’s stomach, pleading for food to the mind and the ears, as the body needs to replenish its strengths exhausted after a day of labor, with the plow or with the quill, or the setting of the sun marking the end of the day. Seeing the day end, without the bell being rung, one may take his bowl and go to the dining hall, following the sign of nature rather than the one of the world, thereby creating a new sign sent to the cooks, without a word, making them understand that they are late and that people are waiting for their daily sustenance. This view may nonetheless also be mistaken! The meaning of such silent signs is always largely in the eye of the beholder, and one can never be sure of the original intention behind its creation, or even whether there was one or not. There lies the subtle power of the silent signs, which embrace ambiguity, reflecting the essence of nature itself better than any word, without sharp lines, but rather only a seamless marriage of shades and shapes.

If one still lets himself be unnerved by the contrasts between large and small, late or on-time, right or wrong, it implies that

one has yet to understand the last word. This last word is the last thing in the world to which one clings. One may spend a lifetime hearing people speak or reading books and yet still not discover it. You search for it, it flees away. You think that you have found it, and it vanishes in a puff of smoke, leaving no traces behind it. If one attempts to discern a difference, he becomes deaf to this word. It is what is heard when the boundaries between words and syllables have collapsed upon themselves, what is seen when the ink cannot be differentiated from the paper upon which it was spilt.¹¹³ To guide the uninitiated toward it, one may simply use words to sow the seed of the great doubt deep in the heart of man, causing him to lose himself in the search for clarity when presented with an intrinsically ambivalent discourse. Desperately trying to find what cannot be found, to put into words what transcends words, one may indeed soon realize the absurdity of this task, and then release the grip he had upon the world as a whole. The last word can then be any word. It is the one through which we realize the emptiness of all words and things of the world, the doorway through which no-thing-ness is uncovered. Once a man has done that, no one under the heavens can do anything to him, as he ceases to be someone, and there is no longer any thing around him. He sees through them all, and when he once again pays attention to these transparent things, it is without attachment, knowing of their illusory and yet incredibly useful nature. He embraces the ambivalent, and rejoices in ambiguity, expressing himself with few words, preferring to embody what he means, and to give meaning to each movement of his body, each expression of his face, becoming a reflection of the sky, like the still waters of a lake under the clear, blue sky, undisturbed by the passing of gigantic woolly clouds above it.

Case 136 —Nanquan Cuts A Cat In Half —南泉斬貓

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 14. The wording of this case is different in the Blue Cliff Record, cases 63 and 64, and Book of Serenity, case 9.¹¹⁴

¹¹³See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "The last word is that which is spoken without using lips and tongue. It has no meaning. It is nothing."

¹¹⁴See Blue Cliff Record, cases 63 and 64: 「【六三】舉。南泉一日東西兩堂爭貓兒南泉見遂提起云。道得即不斬眾無對泉斬貓兒為兩段。」; 「【六四】舉南

【中】

nán quán hé shàng yin dōng xī táng zhēng māo ér quán nǎi tí qǐ yún dà
 南泉和尚因東西堂爭貓兒，泉乃提起云：「大
 zhòng dào dé jí jiù dào bù dé jí zhān què yě zhòng wú duì quán
 眾道得¹ 即救，道不得即斬² 却也。」眾無對，泉
 suì zhān zhī wǎn zhào zhōu wài guī quán jǔ sì zhōu zhōu nǎi tuō
 遂斬之。晚，趙州外歸，泉舉似州，州乃脫
 lǚ ān tóu shàng ér chū quán yún zǐ ruò zài jí jiù dé māo ér
 履³ 安頭上而出。泉云：「子若在，即救得貓兒。」

¹ 【道得】[dào dé]: “to succeed to say something [showing some insight].”

² 【斬】S: 【斬】[zhān]: “to behead.”

³ 【履】[lǚ]: “a shoe.”

【日】

こ なんせんおしょう とうざい りょうどう みょうじ あらそ
 舉す。南泉和尚、東西の 兩堂が 猫兒を 争う
 ちな せん すなわ ていき いわ だいしゅ い
 に 因んで、泉 乃ち 提起して 云く、「大衆、道い
 え すなわ すく い え すなわ ざんきやく
 得ば 即ち 救わん、道い 得ずんば 即ち 斬却せ
 しゅ こた な せんつい これ き ばん
 ん。」衆、對うる 無し。泉遂に 之を 斬る。晩に
 じょうしゅう ほか かえ せん しゅう こじ しゅう すなわ
 趙州、外より 歸る。泉、州に 舉似す。州 乃ち
 くつ だっ ずじょう あん い せんいわ なんじ も
 履を 脱して 頭上に 安じて 出づ。泉云く、「子若し
 あ すなわ みょうじ すく え
 在りしなば、 即ち 猫兒を 救い 得たらん。」

【E】

Nanquan saw [the monks of] the eastern and western halls fighting over a cat. He seized the cat and said: “If the members of the congregation succeed in saying something [appropriate], they will save it. Otherwise, it will be cut in half!” No one answered. Nanquan then cut the cat in half. That evening, Zhaozhou came back from the outside, and Nanquan told him about this. Zhaozhou then took off his sandals,

泉復舉前話。問趙州州便脫草鞋。於頭上戴出南泉云。子若在。恰救得猫兒。」；and Book of Serenity, case 9: 「舉。南泉一日。東西兩堂爭猫兒南泉見遂提起云。道得即不斬眾無對泉斬却猫兒為兩段泉復舉前話問趙州州便脫草鞋。於頭上戴出泉云。子若在。恰救得猫兒。」

placed them on the top of his head, and departed. Nanguan said: "If the disciple had been there, he would have saved the cat."

It may appear to our eyes that the sun rises from the east and sets in the west each day, but the heavens know neither east nor west, no rising nor setting. The sun at all times shines upon the earth, as our planet revolves around it, while man is given the impression that he is the center of his world. To open up one's eye is to see the sun under the horizon, to see the sky from its own point of view, transcending the horizon of man's world. Men are nonetheless prone to form attachments to things as well as to beings. They almost ineluctably form tightly knitted groups according to the place they inhabit, to the land in which they were born, or to their belonging to a community of ideas, then seeing other groups as strangers, rivals, or even enemies, kindling strifes and conflicts that may lead to bitter fights, with words or with swords, as the results of arbitrary frontiers traced by their minds. The seamless unicity of the heavens and all that they encompass is shattered into a multitude of pieces with the knife of perception, the sword of reason, and man slowly begins to reorder these scattered pieces, replacing the order of nature with the hierarchies of his world, becoming himself slowly enclosed in the heaps of illusions that he created, becoming blind to the truth of the skies.

Strives between men and communities nonetheless also arise when they cease to let themselves be carried upon the way of the skies, in the flow of nature, to instead attempt to go against it, to express their own will to reach the place where they want to be rather than where they are destined to go. Possession and attachments represent obstacles on our path. The appearance of these begins with the identification of things as separate from the rest of nature, and it continues with the bestowing of names. We may grow fond of a wild creature for its beauty or its endearing behavior, domesticating it, bringing it into our household, with a name and its own living space. Bonds of love and affection are then patiently woven between the owner and the creature that is owned, rendering them both increasingly dependent upon one another.

When someone else witnesses such a relationship, jealousy may arise, triggering enmity and conflicts, as greed leads to more greed, attachments lead to more desire, while the things that can be possessed are limited, contrary to the unbound covetousness of man. What has been born by the blade shattering the heavens may nonetheless also be mended by it.

Seeing two people violently arguing for the possession of a pet is witnessing a misappropriation of the flow of nature, a going against the way of the sky, the result of a misguided view of their own place within it. Firmly seizing the animal, putting a sharpened blade on its back, one may then put an end to this fight, declaring that he will cut the creature in half if they do not release the animal, release their undue attachment to this living thing, and show that they have understood how they have strayed from the way. What they have done is to upend the order of nature. They are the ones who have cut the body of life itself into pieces, seeing the pet as different than themselves or their brethren, rather than a seamless part of the whole of life, and the whole of the skies. It is as if they put their shoes over their head, an inversion of the order of things, a perversion of their *raison d'être*. Seeing the crimson blood of the poor creature abundantly spilled on the ground, the fighting men may be remembered the death that will soon come for each one of them, shown that they are no different than the dead earth that they tread. Their mind is a pointed blade that can kill as efficiently as a sharp piece of steel, but contrary to it, it can also bring back to life, showing men with words and with silent signs that they are wasting their lives chasing after dangerous illusions, instead of embracing the way itself, which underlies and transcends both life and death, right and wrong, the self and the other.¹¹⁵ A blade may nonetheless be placed upon our own throat without us noticing it. If we lose ourselves in the consideration of whether the act of cutting the pet in half occurred or not, is right or wrong, arguing with our brethren like the men fighting over the pet itself, the blade already slashes our flesh, and death is in front of us. Let us therefore release the creature back to the wild. Let us forget ourselves in the place from which all things appeared, letting desire and attachments vanish, becoming one with our brethren, with all living things, with the earth and the sky, by

¹¹⁵ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「是金剛王寶劍的一斬，死貓活人的一斬。」

seeing that we are no-thing.

Case 137 —Kashyapa Knocks Down The Temple Pole —迦葉刹竿

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 22.

【中】

迦葉 因 阿難 問云：「世尊 傳金襴袈裟¹ 外，
別傳何物。」葉 喚云：「阿難。」難 應：「諾。」
葉 云：「倒却門前刹竿² 著。」

¹ 【金襴袈裟】S:【金襴袈裟】[jīn lán jiā shā]: The gold-colored robe of a Buddhist monk.

² 【刹竿】[shā gān]: The flagpole in front of a Buddhist temple.

【日】

こ かしょうちな あなん と いわ せそん
舉す。迦葉 因みに 阿難問うて 云く、「世尊、
さんらん けさ つとう ほか べつ なにもの つとう
金襴の 袈裟を 傳うる 外、別に 何物を か 傳う。」
しょう よ いわ あなん なん おうだく しょういわ
葉、喚んで 云く、「阿難」と。難、應諾す。 葉 云く、
もんぜん せつかん とうきやくじゃく
「門前の 刹竿を 倒却 著せよ。」

【E】

Ananda asked Kashyapa: “The World-Honored One gave you the gold-brocade robe [symbolizing Dharma succession]. Besides that, what did he give you?” Kashyapa said: “Ananda.” Ananda answered: “Yes.” Kashyapa said: “Now you can knock down the [preacher’s] flagpole at the main entrance.”

Easy it is to pass on a piece of earth to an heir. Whether it is a walking staff, a bowl, or a gilded robe, it goes directly from

hand to hand, passing through time as generations succeed to one another. One's state of mind, one's spiritual legacy, on the other hand, can take a lifetime to be passed on to a successor. For the embracer of the way, such a state of mind may be revealed through his words as well as his actions, showing whether or not he embodies the way of the sky with all his being. The essence of the skies is nonetheless neither a thing nor an idea, but rather no-thing, without even the slightest trace of any concept of no-thing-ness. To see the sky beyond the veil of the things of the world is to see that there is no-thing to pass on, and therefore one may be momentarily puzzled by such realization. It sows the seed of the great doubt in one's heart, and he will then ask himself: is there something more? There is no-thing, no more no less. A summer breeze sweeping the desert under the blinding radiance of the sun, a crystal-clear mind like a temple made of water, in which nothing can be hidden or stored. The greatest gift that one can give is to give no-thing, letting no-thing-ness pervade the mind of the one open to let it come to him. Then, it cannot be taken from him by anyone, as there is nothing to be taken, but he will be able to share it with others and pass on this intimacy with no-thing-ness to a new generation.

When one is then asked what is passed on to the heir, what is offered as an answer does not really matter. It may be a shout, elegant words, or one's name, but what is important is what the one answering embodies with his whole being. The answer itself is a mere soundwave propagated throughout the air, but it may reveal itself to be an echo of no-thing-ness, a note arising from emptiness and elevated into the heights of the sky. To the one whose ear is wide opened, it resonates with his own being, with the no-thing-ness at the core of his heart, striking a chord deep in his mind, revealing with unmistakable clarity their shared state of mind.¹¹⁶ When one can answer any question and react to any interaction without a trace of thought, naturally and effortlessly moving his tongue to speak or the rest of his body to act upon the earth, with the essence of the heavens themselves reflected through each one of his action, then the teaching without teacher has been passed on. The preaching of the old generation can then fade into

¹¹⁶See: 山本玄峰. 《無門関提唱》. 東京: 大法輪閣, 1994. : 『「阿難/」「ハイ/」単にこれだけなんですナ。その返事が如々に淡々としてできるようになれば、仏教のすべてはそこに伝わっておるといふ。それ以外の何物でもない。』

silence, before the one of the heirs begins. This preaching is like a fluttering flag hung high upon a pole overlooking the earth, perfectly following the unpredictable whims of the winds, constantly responding to its changes, one with the flow of the heavens, visible from afar by the men of the world, as a sign of the presence and nature of the celestial forces, inviting them to notice and observe them through his movements.

Case 138 —Two Monks Roll Up The Bamboo Screens 一二僧卷簾

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 26. This case is similar, but its wording is not identical, compared to the Book of Serenity, case 27.¹¹⁷

【中】

qīng líóng dà fǎ yǎn yīn sēng zhāi qián shàng cān yǎn yǐ shǒu zhī lián shí
清涼大法眼 因僧齋¹ 前上參，眼以手指簾，時
yǒu èr sēng tóng qù juǎn lián yǎn yuē yī dé yī shī
有二僧同去卷簾，眼曰：「一得，一失。」

¹ 【齋】[zhāi]: “a vegetarian meal served at a Buddhist monastery.”

【日】

こ せいりょう だいほうげん ちな そうさいぜん じょうさん
舉す。清涼の 大法眼、因みに 僧齋前に 上 參す。
げん て もつ れん さ とさ に そう あ おな
眼、手を 以て 簾を 指す。時に 二僧有り、同じ
さ れん ま げんいわ いっつくいっしつ
く 去って 簾を 巻く。眼曰く、「一得一失。」

【E】

Just before the monks took their meal, Fayān of Qingliang monastery was about to address the congregation. Fayān pointed to the bamboo screen. At this moment, two monks went together to roll it up. Fayān said: “One gain, one loss.”

¹¹⁷ See Book of Serenity, case 27: 「舉。法眼以手指簾時有二僧。同去捲簾眼云。一得一失。」

The versatility of man's fingers is a key to his incredible capacity to build upon a world that stands out from the rest of the earth and life. It is a tool allowing him to fashion the earth according to his will, but also to create other tools, considerably extending his sway over land and sea, as well as allowing him to reign upon the tree of life as a whole. Fingers nonetheless represent more than this: they are one of the foundation stones of his world itself. They are at the root of language, as a finger can be used to point out other things found upon the earth to bring attention to them, becoming a signifier designating a signified. The finger stands on the edge between earth and world, between meaningless tangibility and meaningful arbitrariness. It represents a faithful image of the marriage of the realms of nature, embodying the ambivalence of the way of the sky, as it shows without explicitly explaining, or even clearly determining what is shown. It represents the subtle wisdom of the man of the way, who wields the sword of reason but nonetheless refrains from cutting out the whole of nature, only pointing out with it. The meaning of the finger is always rather clear, as one simply has to observe what is to be found in the direction toward which it points, but the intention of the one pointing the thing out is always in great part veiled in obscurity, with the onlooker determining the boundary separating what is pointed at from the rest of the earth and the sky.

If a man of authority sitting down inside a building were to point his index finger at a window through which the bright summer sun was to shine, flooding the room with heat and light while blinding those inside it, those at his service would then naturally interpret this as a command for them to close the drapes and dim this overwhelming torrent of brilliance poured down from the heavens. They may nonetheless be mistaken. The finger may have pointed at the moon high in the sky or to a bird whose melodious song was reaching the ears of those present inside. Without further indication, without either a sign of approval or of rebuke following the closing of the drapes, there is no way to know whether they did what was expected of them or not. But if the man of authority embodies the way of the sky itself, his intent may have been to teach them about such subtlety, about the ever-ambivalent essence of the world, with certainty and absoluteness being absent from their mind. He may have been pointing out the foundation of their reason, the edge between earth and world, rather than any partic-

ular thing found on the earth or in the sky, teaching them without uttering a word, causing them to doubt their own capacity to interpret signs, shaking up the very foundation of their world and leading them to question the role it occupies in their life.

With one finger, one may thus reveal the essence of the sky, and with one finger, one may cause the heavenly radiance to be concealed, bringing darkness where light held sway. Every revelation nonetheless comes with a concealment. When the sun brightly shines upon the world, it casts long shadows and further obscures what is found in it. Conversely, every veiling comes with an enlightenment, as when our star retreats under the face of the earth, allowing the gentle twinkling of the more distant celestial bodies to illuminate the night and finally be seen by our eyes, after having been outshined during the day. Every gain comes with a loss, and every loss with a gain. Both are inextricably linked to one another, and it is useless to try to separate or count them. When the way of the sky is perceived, one no longer feels compelled to try to determine what is gained or lost, who gains and who loses, as the line separating them is created by our mind, an arbitrary frontier that does not reflect the continuous nature of the heavens.

Case 139 — The Tipping Of The Water Bottle 一趯倒淨瓶

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 40.

【中】

為山 和尚始在 百丈 會中充¹ 典座²， 百丈
 jiāng xuǎn dà wéi zhǔ rén nǎi qǐng tóng shǒu zuò duì zhòng xià yǔ³ chū gé⁴
 將選 大為 主人，乃請同首座，對眾下語³，出格⁴
 zhě kě wǎng bǎi zhàng suī niān jìng píng zhì dì shàng shè wèn⁵ yún bù
 者可往。百丈 遂拈淨瓶，置地上，設問⁵云：「不
 dé huàn zuò jìng píng rǔ huàn zuò shén me shǒu zuò nǎi yún bù kě huàn zuò
 得喚作淨瓶，汝喚作甚麼。」首座乃云：「不可喚作
 mù tú yě bǎi zhàng què wèn yú shān shān nǎi tì dǎo jìng
 木橛⁶也。」百丈 却問於 山。山 乃趯⁷倒淨
 píng ér qù bǎi zhàng xiào yún dì yī zuò lún què shān zǐ yě yīn
 瓶而去。百丈 笑云：「第一座輪却 山 子也。」因
 mìng zhī wéi kāi shān⁹
 命⁸之為開山。⁹

1 【充】[chōng]: “to assume [a work position]” / “to fulfill [a duty].”

2 【典座】[diǎn zuò]: “a monastery cook.”

3 【下語】S: 【下語】[xià yǔ]: “to make a declaration.”

4 【出格】[chū gé]: “to show oneself to be extremely qualified.”

5 【設問】S: 【設問】[shè wèn]: “to ask a question” / “to lay out a problem and ask for an answer.”

6 【木楔】[mù xiē]: “a wooden stick” / “a wooden shoe.” The second character is quite rare, and the exact nature of the object is not clear. (See: 「木楔: 即木椿、木棒、木棍、木屐」 From: 釋聖定。《禪宗無門闢譯注》。台北: 佛光, 1995. p161.)

7 【趂】[tī]: “to kick.” Similar to 踢 [tī].

8 【命】[mìng]: “to order” / “to command” / “to assign [someone to a position].”

9 【開山】S: 【開山】[kāi shān]: It literally means “to open a mountain,” but here means “to open a monastery.”

【日】

こ いさん おしょう はじ ひやくじょう えちゅう あ
 擧す。鴻山和尚、始め 百 丈の 會中に 在って
 てんぞ あ ひやくじょうまさ だい い しゅじん えら
 典座に 充たる。百 丈將に 大鴻の 主人を 選ばん
 すなわ しょう しゅそ おな しゅ たい
 とす。乃ち 請じて 首座と 同じく 衆に 對して
 あぎょ しゅつかく もの ゆ ベ ひやくじょうつい
 下語せしめ、出格の 者往く 可しと。百 丈遂に
 じんびん ねん ちじょう お もん もう
 淨瓶を 拈じて、地上に 置いて 問 を 設け
 いわ よ じんびん な
 て 云く、「 喚んで 淨瓶と 作す
 え なんじ よ なん な
 ことを 得ず、汝 喚んで 甚麼とか 作さん。」
 しゅそ すなわ いわ よ ぼく とつ な ベ
 首座 乃ち 云く、「喚んで 木楔 と 作す 可か
 ひやくじょうかえ さん と さん すなわ じん
 らず。」百 丈却って 山に 問う。山 乃ち 淨
 びん てきとう さ ひやくじょうわら いわ だい
 瓶を 趂倒して 去る。百 丈笑って 云く、「第
 いちざ さんす ゆきやく よ これ めい
 一座、山子に 輸却せらる」と。因って 之に 命じ
 かいさん な
 て 開山と 爲す。

【E】

[At the time,] Master Guishan lived in Baizhang's congregation, as a cook. Baizhang intended to choose someone who would be in charge of the Great Gui Mountain [monastery]. He called the head monk and the rest of the congregation,

telling them that the one who would show himself to be the most qualified by answering a question appropriately would [be appointed] and go there. Baizhang then picked up a water vase, placed it on the ground, and asked: "Without calling it a 'bottle,' what would you call it?" The head monk said: "No one can call it a wooden shoe." Baizhang asked Guishan for an answer. Guishan then tipped the bottle over with one of his feet and left. Baizhang laughed and said: "It is now Guishan's turn to take the head's seat." Because of this, Guishan was given charge of the new monastery.

It takes intelligence to master the use of words and letters. It takes wisdom to appropriate the use of silence, but only one who is able to walk on the thin frontier between the two can pretend to lead others toward an unveiling of their own true face. How does one speak with his mouth closed, or remain silent while a flow of words runs out of his throat? One can speak while silence reigns over the earth and the sky by becoming a living word, with each muscle in his body becoming a letter with which meaning can be expressed, without ascending into the cloudy heights of the world, without unnecessary reflection and pondering. A finger may then support the heavens or crush the entire earth. An inconspicuous smile may reveal an ocean of subtle wisdom, indicating that one's eye is open and pierces through all things, to see what is no-thing. One can also remain silent as his tongue pours out a flow of words, by letting it be guided by the way itself, rather than by his own will, emitting sounds rather than speech, even when they will be heard and recognized as such by his audience. With an empty heart, one may speak volumes without saying a single word, without letting meaning be restricted, determined, or defined, becoming simply an instrument of something greater than himself, becoming the voice of the heavens themselves.

A master may thus submit his followers to a trial of their ability to walk the edge between earth and world, asking them to call an object without using its name, such as a water jug placed upon the ground. One who is still a prisoner of the world, a slave to words and letters, may be puzzled by the incongruity of the

question. What else shall he call it? His mind only thinks in terms of words and concepts, and he thus cannot fathom why one would not use its name to designate it. If one calls it a wooden shoe or a spoon, it perturbs the order of the world, based on an agreement on the meaning of arbitrary sequences of sounds or characters. This is nonetheless precisely the point: to strike a blow at the foundation of this world, to see if there is any free man among his followers, someone whose mind would see without the use of words, and see the pernicious and illusory nature of the world itself, made of these countless words and concepts.

One whose eye is wide open and sees the light originating from beyond the walls of the world will nonetheless know what is expected of him, naturally, without thinking. He sees the ambiguity of the words of the master, the blurriness of the things of the world. To “call” indeed can mean to awaken or to attract one’s attention as well as to utter a name. His heart pervaded by no-thing-ness, his life having crossed the boundary separating it from death, he no longer separates the living from the dead, the object from the subject, the person from the thing, and he thus calls upon the jug as if it was one of his brethren sitting in meditation, pushing on his shoulder to bring him back to the world to attend to some pressing matter. He kicks the jug and spills its content upon the ground, revealing the emptiness forming its essence,¹¹⁸ which is also the essence of all that is. The task of a master is to awaken the sleeping prisoners of the world, causing the myriad of thoughts cluttering their minds to be spilled over the ground or evaporated into the air. When the disciple has shown that he can walk on the edge without stumbling, he is now ready to call others. But this may be a daunting task, one that will consume all his days until his last breath, and he may perhaps have been tricked by the old master, naturally answering his question, without reflection, and thereby accepting to succeed him and to carry his burden, but the worthy heir will not mind, because he has released his mind, having forgotten the difference between the weight of a feather and the one of an anvil, therefore impassively continuing to let himself

¹¹⁸Cf. this sentence from Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*: “One shapes clay into a vessel, but it is in the empty space formed by the vessel that it finds its usefulness.” Original Chinese: 「埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。」From: 阿部吉雄。《新釈漢文大系〈7〉老子莊子上卷》。東京：明治書院，1966. p28 (Chapter 11).

be guided by the way itself.

Case 140 —Xiangyan’ s “Man In The Tree” —香巖上樹

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 5.

【中】

xiāng yán hé shàng yún rú rén shàng shù kǒu xián shù zhī shǒu bù
香巖和尚云：「如人上樹，口銜¹ 樹枝，手不
pān zhī jiǎo bù tà shù shù xià yǒu rén wèn xī lái yì bú duì jí
攀² 枝，脚不踏樹，樹下有人問西來意³，不對即
wéi tā suǒ wèn ruò duì yòu sàng shēn shī mìng zhèng rèn me shí zuò me
違⁴ 他所問；若對，又喪身失命。正恁麼時，作麼
shēng duì
生對。」

¹ 【銜】S:【銜】[xián]: “to hold in the mouth.”

² 【攀】[pān]: “to climb” (by pulling oneself up).

³ 【西來意】[xī lái yì]: “the meaning of the coming from the West [of Bodhidharma].”

⁴ 【違】S:【违】[wéi]: “to disobey” / “to violate” / “to go against.”

【日】

こ きょうげんおしょういわ ひと じゅ のぼ ごと
擧す。香巖和尚云く、「人の 樹に 上るが 如し。
くち じゅし ふく て えだ よ あし じゅ
口は 樹枝を 啣み、手は 枝を 攀じず、脚は 樹を
ふ じゅげ ひと あ せいらい い と
踏まず。樹下に 人有って 西來意を 問わんに、
こた すなわ た しょうもん そむ も
對えずんば 即ち 他の 所問に 違く、若し
こた ま そうしん しつみょう しょう いんも とき
對うれば 又た 喪身 失命せん。正 恁麼の 時、
さもさん こた
作麼生か 對えん。」

【E】

Xiangyan said: “[One is] like a man in a tree, holding on a branch with his teeth, without his hands grasping any branch, his feet not resting on the tree, and under the tree, a man asks him about the meaning of the coming from the West.¹ If he does not answer, he is rude to the man who asked

him, but if he does answer, he falls and loses his life. When facing such a predicament, what should one do?"

¹ "The meaning of the coming from the West" : See note 3 of the Chinese text.

When one opens up his mouth to answer the questions of the newcomer on the path, he condemns himself to fall into the snare of the world, finding himself bound by long chains of words, themselves securely tied to others. These words necessarily represent a betrayal of the truth of the way that they are meant to describe, as this truth is precisely what goes beyond words, what is not a thing and cannot be unfolded within the confines of the world. As soon as the word "way" is heard, one should close up his ears, and then what it means may perhaps be heard. When the term "awakened" is inscribed on stone or paper, one should close up his eyes, and then what it designates may perhaps let itself be seen. Why not keep silent then? To remain silent would be to lack compassion, to remain insensitive to the plea of the newcomer, who is just like we were not so long ago, in need of guidance, in need of a helping hand to find the way. Like speech, silence can also only be transient. One is bound to sooner or later be compelled to speak, and no matter when it comes, man is sure to fall. Such a fall may nonetheless not be worse than standing upon the path.

The man who sees the path clearly thus has no-thing on his mind. He simply follows it, accompanying the flow carried on the way of the sky. He is not troubled as he faces certain death by falling into the pit of the world, and he does not hold on to his life when danger arises, for he knows that the line between life and death is an illusion, a pure thing of the world. His heart overwhelmed with love for the whole of being, not distinguishing the whole from the parts, he lets go of his grip upon his own self and lets his flesh fall into the abyss, but not without first offering a helping hand, guiding the slumbering men of the world toward an awakening to the nature of the way, to the essence shared by all that *is*. He takes others into his fall, who themselves offer their hand to other people, all forming a chain descending into the bottomless abyss.

As he falls, the compassionate can then realize that his sac-

rifice comes with a reward. Letting go of the last thing that prevented him from stumbling into the abyss, releasing the hands offered to others, he finally experiences absolute freedom, the absence of all attachments, as there is nothing to stop his fall, nothing that he could grab onto. There is not only no fear of death or desire to live, there is no up nor down, no east nor west, no earth nor sky, only no-thing. The fall becomes a dissolution, and there is nothing left that could fall, and nowhere where it could fall. This is when the insight comes: there is the answer to the great question, the only question. The answer comes when the question itself has been forgotten, and this answer is not even pondered, nor the subject of any comment.

Case 141 — A Non-Follower Asks The Buddha — 外道問佛

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 32.

【中】

世尊 因外道問：「不問有言，不問無言。」世尊
據¹ 座，外道讚歎云：「世尊大慈大悲，開我迷雲，
令我得入。」乃具禮² 而去。阿難 尋問佛：「外道
有何所證³，讚歎而去。」世尊 云：「如世良馬，
見鞭⁴ 影而行。」

¹ 【據】S:【据】[jù]: “to occupy.”

² 【具禮】[jù lǐ]: “to act according to the rules of politeness” / “to follow etiquette.”

³ 【證】S:【证】[zhèng]: “to attest” / “to prove” / “to confirm.”

⁴ 【鞭影】[biān yǐng]: “the shadow of a whip.”

【日】

こ せそん ちな げどう と う ごん と
舉す。世尊、因みに 外道問う、「有言を 問わ
むごん と せそん こ ざ げどう さんたん
ず、無言を 問わず。」世尊據座す。外道讚歎して
いわ せそん だいじだいひ わ めいうん ひら
云く、「世尊は 大慈大悲にして、我が 迷雲を 開き、

われ とくにゆう すなわ れい ぐ
 我をして 得入せしめたまう」と。乃ち 禮を 具し
 さ あ なん つ ほとけ と げどう なん
 て 去る。阿難尋いで 佛に 問う、「外道は 何の
 しょしょう あ さんたん さ せそん いわ よ
 所證 有ってか 讚歎して 去る。」世尊云く、「世の
 りょう め べんえい み ゆ ごと
 良馬の 鞭影を 見て 行くが 如し。」

【E】

A non-follower asked the world-honored one: "I do not ask [for an answer] using words, and I do not ask [for an answer] without using words." The world-honored one remained in his sitting position. The non-follower gave praise, saying: "The great compassion of the World-Honored One has cleared away the delusions clouding my mind, and allowed me to be granted access." He then saluted and took his leave. Ananda then sought the World-Honored One to ask him: "What [insight] did you acknowledge, for him to give such praise and then take his leave?" The World-Honored One replied: "Like a good horse, just seeing the shadow of the whip is enough to make him gallop."

The way of the sky is the course taken by all that is. It can be resisted by the will of man. It can be embraced and enthusiastically followed, but neither things nor men can stand outside of it. They may be unaware of its presence or ignorant of its nature, but they are ineluctably carried upon it by the flow of the skies, the turning of the celestial wheels. If one thinks that those not walking the same path as them on the earth are not carried by the same sky, he is merely blind to both where he stands and where are the others who he is quick to judge. Sometimes, it is by standing far away from a path that one can enjoy the most limpid view of it. The foreigner, with his eyes unacquainted with our land and our culture, may see our homeland more clearly than us, who have grown too accustomed to its peculiar nature. When a foreigner seeking to embrace the way of the sky encounters someone awakened to the essence of all that is, he is unburdened by the customs

of the land, the hierarchies of this part of the world, and considerations for his own position. He frankly asks for everything he desires, for the core of this land's wisdom, with few words and no restraint: "What is the answer to the question, neither answering with words nor with silence?" Both know that there is only one question to be asked, and only one answer. To put the question into words is to soil its pristine perfection. To answer with silence is to lack compassion and let others stray from the path. What is needed is a sign.

When the sun shines everywhere, a shadow may become clearer than the star itself, as its contour reveals something more than an ocean of light. It is through the sight of contrasts that meaning can be perceived. It is through difference that understanding arises. But how would one perceive what transcends contrasts, and how would one understand what goes beyond all differences? To be granted access to the place where there is no shadow nor light, no inside nor outside, no follower nor stranger, is to see through all contrasts and differences. It is to look at one's impassive face and to see in it the essence of all things, the deepest abyss and the vastest heavens in the reflection of one's eyes. It is to discern the infinite void of the cosmos in an opened mouth, and to contemplate the greatness of the earth in one's faintest smile. Each hair is a sequoia tree, each tear a gigantic lake, and each wrinkle a mountain range, with all of them seen as being a single face, his own, which is also an image of no-thing-ness itself. The sign may take any form. It may be a slight reshaping of the flow of light flooding the sky, the transformation of the image one gives of himself. It may be a sound thrown into the air and entering the ears of those standing nearby, or it may be the gentle touch of a hand upon one's shoulder. Its nature is by itself meaningless. The only meaning it possesses is to be a signal calling the one receiving it to go ahead and throw himself into this new realm that he discovers, but which always had been right in front of him. The myriad of things of the world then disappears. The millions of things cluttering the mind crumble to dust. The clouds of delusions are scattered by the wind stirred up by the guide, the man of the way. Because of his unbound compassion, he denied the visitor both words of illusions and the silence of indifference. He offered him an experience felt upon the earth, with his flesh, rather than a fantasy of the world built with words and letters, thereby

guiding him on the edge between earth and world, letting himself be cut by its sharpness, until no-thing remains of him, and he can see everything in nothing, the nothing in every thing.

Part V

The Fall of the Earth

When intense showers of rain carry the heat of the earth to the cold depths of the ocean, and the cloak of leaves clothing the forests is given an amber hue, the ineluctable decline of the reign of life upon the face of our planet becomes apparent. With the arrival of the fall, many creatures of the sky take flight to escape the cold tide that slowly approaches, engulfing the living and leaving many imprudent beings dead. The emerald carpet covering the earth grows more and more patchy, with fields turning into vast arrays of muddy puddles in which the remnants of the harvested crops are slowly decomposed. What appears to be an enfeeblement of life is nonetheless a time of learning for the sons of men, one during which they are offered to become more familiar with the earth itself, the ground of the world and the substance of their very flesh.

As the days grow shorter, man's gaze slowly turns away from the ethereal heights of the world, and from the brightness of the heavens. Shielding his clothes from the torrential rains poured out of anthracite clouds, his eyes stare at the roads of his world. There, he sees leaves, once nascent jewels of the spring, the splendid ornaments of the trees, now lying down in pieces in the mud, trampled by hordes of beasts and men, without the slightest regard for their incomparable sacrifice for the endurance of life as a whole. These leaves that turned the solar radiance into fruits and seeds are now devoid of any sign of life, ignored, being patiently devoured by the soil out of which they sprouted. Their sacrifice is nonetheless not in vain, and even in death, they may offer something to those who carry on the fire of life through another year.

As most dwellers of the great citadel only see the products of the hands of man around them, obnubilated by their functions, the uses they can have of them, they have grown oblivious to the truth of their substance, to the majestic body of the earth out of which they were shaped, like the countless objects occupying the stage of their lives. Some among those roaming this maze of stone, wood, and glass have nonetheless remained in close contact with the substance of the earth, this massive globe that tirelessly keeps their world and their bodies on its rocky face. They point toward the leaves littering the soil of their gardens, inviting all men to contemplate the amazing work of the fall, to listen to the teaching of this season. The fire of life that burned within these leaves has now been extinguished, but their earthly essence now shines for

all eyes to see. As they are turned to mud, one may realize that they never ceased to be mere earth. Seizing a sharp iron blade and slashing his arm open, the teacher of the masses of the citadel lets his blood flow onto the earth, soaking the decomposing leaves, as a reminder that we are likewise bound to be devoured by the ground, and that we also are mere bags of earth walking on the rest of the earth. Throwing a jug onto the ground, it is rendered useless, and then, as its function disappears, its earthly nature can be revealed, in the contours of its broken pieces. The teacher thus brings the slaves of the world back to the naked earth, forcing them to face the omnipresence of this substance forming the body of life and the foundations of man's world, with all things shown to share a common nature. The living thus fall down to the earth, wholeheartedly embracing the source and the destination of life, thankful for the knowledge offered to them by the turning of the heavenly wheels, immensely grateful for the efforts of the teachers who brought them closer to the earth, closer to themselves.

Case 142 —Sitting For A Long Time Makes One Tired 一坐久成勞

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 17.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn xiāng lín rú hé shì zǔ shī xī lái yì lín
 舉。僧問 香林：「如何是祖師西來意¹。」 林
yún zuò jiǔ chéng láo
 云：「坐久成勞。」

¹ 【西來意】[xī lái yì]: “the meaning of the coming from the West [of Bodhidharma].”

【日】

こ そうこうりん とい いか こ そし
 舉す。僧香林に 問ふ、「如何なるか 是れ 祖師
せいらい い りんいわ ざきゅうじょうろう
 西來意。」 林云く、「坐久 成 勞。」

【E】

A monk asked Xianglin: “What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”¹ Xianglin said: “Sitting for a long time makes one tired.”

¹ “The meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The sun rises from the east and then profusely illuminates our land all day long, before setting in the west, allowing our weary eyes to rest and the earth to cool down. Who can say why it is so? It would be pointless to answer this question, as it just reflects the state of the flow of the heavens. It is as it is. A man one with the way of the sky is like a celestial body, whose course is set by the totality of the heavenly mechanism, the flow of the skies. Like a leaf burnt by the sun that falls during the autumn and is carried away by the fresh winds, such a man lets himself be guided by the signs of the heavens or the earth, going east when the flow brings him there naturally, and coming back when the time has come. There is no reason explaining this that could be discovered,

because the absence of reason is precisely what represents the way of the sky itself. A clear azure sky, the still surface of a pond, with the breeze only disturbing it enough for the faintest distinction between the two realms to be revealed.

To perceive the essence of the sky, to understand why the sun rises from the east and sets in the west, one may begin to grow closer to the earth, the substance of the planet upon which he is born and which forms the flesh, the blood, and the bones of the body through which he experiences it. The substance of the earth is indeed, among all the things encompassed by the heavens, the one that is most intimately experienced. The omnipresent downward pull of the earth at all times keeps us close to its surface, providing a secure foundation upon which our world is built. Our very body evolved and was shaped in response to it, with our bones made to resist this pull and allow us to stand, to distance ourselves from the surface of the dry land and enjoy the fluidity of the air. To see beyond the boundaries of the body, man must first understand its nature, and see how earth, life, and the sky share the same essence, becoming aware of the fact that he is the earth and the sky themselves. Neither standing erect, that is, only in contact with the earth with the sole of his feet while his eyes are turned toward the stars, nor lying down with his skin in contact with the ground while embracing the gigantic body of the planet, the sitting man embodies the idea of a being who gathers earth and sky, who is one with the way, transcending the boundaries between all realms of nature.

When one sits cross-legged on the ground, his torso points toward the sky while his legs are parallel to the surface of the earth. Watching straight ahead, onto the horizon, the eyes contemplate the line separating the realm above from the one below, with the body of life slightly blurring up this line, with forests extended in the former and rooted in the latter. Sitting still in such position, one may begin to feel the passing of time becoming less noticeable, as if the heavenly wheels themselves retreated into the darkness. The body then grows increasingly numb, and one may begin to feel his mind detached from the body, as if it melted away to become one with the rest of the earth. As the flow of thoughts passing through the mind is dimmed by the numbing of the senses, the meditating mind may now become more and more oblivious of his

own world, releasing the grip he exerted upon all things. Mind and body internally collapse,¹¹⁹ and this is when the essence may begin to appear, when one has sat for so long that his bones begin to be ground to dust by the heavenly wheels.¹²⁰

Sitting alone is nevertheless useless by itself, if one is not inclined to rid himself of the chains binding his body to the illusions of the world. Sitting then simply wears out the body, and a lifetime may be spent in vain, as if one was attempting to create a mirror by polishing a ceramic tile.¹²¹ One will indeed not become a man of the way by simply sitting and waiting for a revelation to come to him, but rather only become a tired old man, having to answer the naive questions of others without himself knowing any answer, or even clearly understanding the question. The lesson of the sitting man can nonetheless also be learned by one who simply stands, walks, or lies down. The subtle wisdom is not a posture but rather a state of mind, a relationship with the whole of nature, where one embraces the way of the sky, forgetting about the past and the future, being oblivious to the condition of the body, simply experiencing the wonder of presence, the bliss of being, letting the body return to the earth in the blinking of an eye, a lifetime carried on the way, without fear, as there is no more death than there is life, as an autumn leaves reclaimed by the ground, that will become the substance of the leaves of the next spring, once again illuminated by the heavenly radiance.

Case 143 — Senior Monk Ding Asks Linji 一定上座問臨濟

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 32.

【中】

¹¹⁹Cf. the “Zen-phrase”: 「身心脫落」.

¹²⁰See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acanilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p76: “Mantente firme y siéntate en zazen hasta que se te desintegren los huesos.”

¹²¹Cf. the famous dialogue found in the “Records of the Zen Master Mazu Daoyi” concerning this metaphor (「磨瓦成鏡」): 「唐開元中。習定於衡嶽傳法院。遇讓和尚。知是法器。問曰。大德坐禪圖什麼。師曰。圖作佛。讓乃取一磚。於彼菴前磨。師曰。磨磚作麼。讓曰。磨作鏡。師曰。磨磚豈得成鏡。讓曰。磨磚既不成鏡。坐禪豈得成佛耶。」 From: 《江西馬祖道一禪師語錄》。CBETA .

舉。定上座問臨濟：「如何是佛法大意。」濟
 下禪床¹，擒²住，與一掌，便托開。定佇立³。
 傍僧云：「定上座何不禮拜。」定方禮拜，忽然大悟。

¹ 【禪床】S: 【禪床】[chán chuáng]: “a meditation seat.”

² 【擒】[qín]: “to grab.”

³ 【佇立】S: 【伫立】[zhù lì]: “to stand for a long time.”

【日】

舉す。定上座、臨濟に問う、「如何なるか
 是れ 仏法の 大意。」濟、禪床を下り、擒住んで
 一掌を 與え 便ち 托開す。定、佇立す。傍の
 僧云く、「定上座、何ぞ 禮拜せざる。」定、禮拜す
 るに 方って、忽然と 大悟す。

【E】

A senior monk named Ding asked Linji: “What is the fundamental meaning of Buddhism?” Linji came down from his seat, grabbed him firmly, gave him a slap, and pushed him away. Ding just stood there, stunned. A monk standing nearby said: “Why doesn’t the senior monk Ding make a deep bow?” Ding then made a deep bow and suddenly was greatly enlightened.

Man is the highest branch of the tree of life, unceasingly yearning to touch the sky, relentlessly building up his world with material objects and ethereal concepts, so that he may finally be able to sever his dependency upon the earth that gave birth to him. A life in the clouds rejoices his heart, stimulating his mind as his imagination runs wild and he sees his thoughts turned into things

of the world, given names, rarely concerned by the fact that these things are often pure fantasies, fruits of his mind, without ground or roots in the earth. He nonetheless at times seeks the deeper meaning of his existence, the essence of being itself, the fundamental truth of nature, but unable to contemplate the raw beauty of the skies, veiled by the profusion of things that he frantically hoards around him, he hopes to find it among his cluttered world, in the midst of his ideas.

Seeing that someone is lost in the clouds of the world, the man who knows that men are both earth and sky weaved into flesh will nonetheless extend a helpful hand into the heights, and then forcefully and brutally pull him back to the ground, so that he will become aware that the tangible realm of the senses may be a better teacher of the way of the sky than the misty peaks built by the minds of his ancestors. When the clouded mind utters metaphysical blabber, the one whose feet are firmly anchored into the ground grabs him firmly by the shoulders and gives him a vigorous slap on the face, before pushing him away, robbing him of his tongue, leaving him stunned. Lost in the cloudy summits of ideation, language, and imagination, he is suddenly brought back to the ground, to sensation, touch and pain, the foundation stones of man's world, direct contact with the tangible reality of the earth. This is where the fundamental essence of nature is to be experienced, rather than reflected upon. This is where the answer to the only question is to be found, imprinted upon his cheek, like the jade seal of the son of the heavens leaving a crimson trace on a pearly white sheet of paper. He is not meant to topple the world or reject it. He is not destined to abandon the legacy of his forefathers, as it is this world that allows him to gain awareness of the fundamental essence, but he is called to appropriate the earth as more than an environment, a background of his world. He is invited to delve into the soil, to cherish contact of the skin with all things, seeing himself in each one of them, feeling this shared essence that he can experience directly with the senses, more intimately and faithfully than through speech and writing. He will then be able to valiantly wield the sword that separates heaven from earth and cast it away into the bottomless chasm, so that the great collapse can finally occur. The heavens themselves will brutally crash unto the earth, leaving only no-thing in their stead, with no-thing understood, but everything perfectly

clear, including the compassion of the one who brought him back to the earth, with his violence finally perceived as the love of a grandmother for his descendants.

Case 144 —The Ten Thousand Things And I Form One Single Body —萬物與我一體

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 40. The wording is slightly different than the one in the Book of Serenity, case 91.¹²²

【中】

舉。陸亘大夫¹，與南泉語話次。陸云：「肇法師道：『天地與我同根，萬物與我一體』，²也甚奇怪。」南泉指庭前花，召大夫云：「時人見此一
株花，如夢相似。」

¹ 【大夫】[dà fū]: “a high-ranking official” (Pronounced [dài fū] in Taiwan).

² A quote from the “Treatise on the Unnamable Nirvana” (涅槃無名論) by the Qin dynasty Buddhist philosopher Seng Zhao (僧肇).

【日】

こ りくこう たいふ なんせん ごわ とき りく
舉す。陸亘大夫、南泉と語話せし次、陸
いわ じょう ぼうし い てんち われ どうこん ばんぶつ
云く、「肇法師道く、天地は我と同根、萬物は
われ いったい ま はなは きかい なんせん
我と一體と。也た甚だ奇怪なり。」南泉、
ていぜん はな さ たいふ め いわ こ
庭前の花を指して、大夫を召して云く、「此の
いっちゅう はな み ゆめ ごと に
一株の花を見ること、夢の如くに相似たり。」

【E】

One time, as Minister Lugen was talking with Nanquan, Lugen said: “Dharma-teacher Zhao said: ‘Heaven and earth

¹²² See Book of Serenity, case 91: 「舉。南泉因。陸亘大夫云。肇法師也甚奇特。解道。天地同根萬物一體。南泉指庭前牡丹云。大夫時人見此一株花。如夢相似。」

and I have the same root; the ten thousand things and I form one single body.’¹ How marvelous!” Nanquan pointed at a flower at the front of the garden, called to Lugen, and said: “The men of our time see this flower as if it was in a dream.”

¹ “Heaven and earth and I have the same root; the ten thousand things and I form one single body”: A quote. See note 2 of the Chinese text.

When a man has spent his entire life dreaming, he cannot fathom what reality represents. His consciousness numbed by the long slumbering, he is convinced that the fruits of his imagination, the products of his fantasies, are as tangible as the rocky ground upon which he lies down and sleeps. The one dreaming that he lives the life of a butterfly each night may after a while cease to discern the line separating the dream from reality, and he may wonder whether he is not a butterfly dreaming that it is a man.¹²³ The world of man, the sum of all the things present in his mind, through the lens of which he perceives his surroundings, is like a land of dreams, a caricature of the truth of the earth and the sky, one that can be grasped by his reason, contrary to the seamless totality of nature. Having grown from babe to man in such a slumbering state, lulled by the sweet tunes of the world, protected by the ramparts formed by the myriad of things found in it, he is oblivious to the difference between earth and world. Indeed, although these two realms are one, in the sense that they both share the same essence, no-thing-ness itself, the subtle wisdom of the way nonetheless allows a slight and yet important difference to be distinguished. The thing of the world, the sign, and what it represents on the earth or in the sky differ from one another. The finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself, even though they both represent parts of the totality of the heavens, only separated into different things by the sword of reason, within man’s world itself, within his mind. To gain awareness of such a subtle difference, one must be guided, out of the lofty world and onto the bare earth, with the tongue or with a finger.

¹²³ Cf. the famous story in which Zhuangzi dreams that he is a butterfly, and begins to fail to discern whether he is not a butterfly dreaming that it is Zhuangzi (「莊周夢蝶」): 「者莊周夢為胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻適志與！不知周也。俄然覺，則蓬蓬然周也。不知周之夢為胡蝶與，胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。顯示整段。」 From 《莊子·齊物論》(CTEXT).

The man of the world only understands what is found in the world. When he is presented with the idea that the heavens and the earth and him have the same root, and that the ten thousand things forming his world form one single body, he is intrigued, and interest is suddenly kindled. Is the boundary between the ten thousand things a mere creation of his mind, a shattering of the unicity of the heavens? What a marvelous idea for him! This is nonetheless only a first step, as this knowledge remains a pure ideation, a thing of the world itself, expressed with words.

The idea must now be released, and become the seed of an experience, a direct contact with what it represents. The finger is then pointed at a flower impassively collecting the waning celestial brilliance among the fallen leaves of an autumnal landscape, accompanied with words lamenting the fact that the men of this time see such a flower as if it was in a dream. The man sees the flowers, the trees, the clouds, and the sky, but he is blind to their nature. He perceives them as things, but not as what they truly are, outside of the ramparts of things forming his world: the great body of nature, the vast earth and the empty sky, which all sprout out of the same root, the place where there is not a single thing. He does not only resemble the flower, but he rather is the flower.¹²⁴ He is the tree, the cloud, and the sky, as these are the same thing, which is in fact no-thing.

Even when the earth and the sky are experienced in their essence, through the work of the senses rather than the one of reason, the woes of the slumbering state nonetheless continue to threaten the man who has discovered the way of the sky. He indeed may then be tempted to highlight the contrast between world and earth, between the representation and what it represents, but this would be to once again be allured by the realm of dreams, as such a distinction, while useful to progress on the path up to a certain point, can later reveal itself to be a stumbling block, a hindrance impeding a further advance. The ten thousand things form one body, and the world, the mind, is also one with the

¹²⁴See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "As long as you think, 'I am here and the flower is there,' the flower's reality cannot be understood." Original Japanese: 「自分がこちらにあって花が向こうにあって、自分が花を見ていると思っている限りにおいては花の実相は解りません。」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

earth and the sky.¹²⁵ The boundary between them is also an illusion, and the man of the way must always remain alert, in a state of permanent vigil, avoiding letting himself be conquered by his sleepiness and imprisoned in the land of dreams, and yet also refraining from seeing the dream as separate from reality, as they also are fundamentally one, sharing the same essence as all that is.¹²⁶

Case 145 — Close To Falling Prey To Delusions 一泊不迷己

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 46.

【中】

舉。鏡清問僧：「門外是什麼聲。」僧云：「雨滴聲。」清云：「眾生顛倒¹，迷己逐物。」僧云：「和尚作麼生。」清云：「泊不迷己²。」僧云：「泊不迷己，意旨如何。」清云：「出身猶可易，脫體³道應難。」

¹ 【顛倒】S: 【颠倒】[diān dǎo]: “to turn upside down” / “to be deranged” / “crazy.”

² 【泊不迷己】[jì bù mí jǐ]: “to encourage oneself, so as not to lose oneself in delusions” (See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「泊不迷己：砥礪自我，不使本心迷失。泊，浸潤；浸泡。」)

³ 【脫體】S: 【脱体】[tuō tǐ]: “to leave one’s body [behind].”

【日】

舉す。鏡清、僧に問う、「門外是れ 什麼の
おと そういわ あまだれ おと しょういわ しゅじょう
聲ぞ。」僧云く、「雨滴の 聲。」清云く、「衆生は
てんとう おのれ みうしな もの お そういわ おしょう
顛倒して、己を迷い 物を 逐う。」僧云く、「和尚は
いかん しょういわ かるう おのれ みうしな そう
作麼生。」清云く、「泊じて 己を 迷わず。」僧

¹²⁵ Cf. the “Zen-phrases”: 「万物一体」, and 「心境一如」.

¹²⁶ See: 神保如天。《從容録通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p561 (Case 91): 「覚夢一如、虚実待対…」

いわ かろう おのれ みうしな い し いかん
 云く、「泊じて 己を 迷わざるの 意旨如何。」
 しょういわ しゅっしん な やす さながら
 清 云く、「出身は 猶お 易かるべきも、脱體に
 い まさ かた
 道うは 應に 難かるべし。」

【E】

Jingqing asked a monk: “What is that sound outside?” The monk said: “The sound of raindrops.” Jingqing said: “Living beings live in an upside-down world, deluded by their pursuit of material things.” The monk said: “What about you, Master?” Jingqing said: “I was close to falling prey to such delusions, but I did not.” The monk said: “What does the Master mean: ‘I was close to falling prey to such delusions, but I did not’?” Jingqing said: “To break through [out of the world of delusions] may be easy, but to leave the substance behind to express [the essence] is something difficult to attain.”

As soon as a line is traced between the self and the other, the inside and the outside, one is already caught in the mire of the world.¹²⁷ But as illusory as it may be, such distinction is a tremendously powerful means, granting man the possibility to appear to stand out from the rest of nature, from the earth and the sky, with him able to contemplate some aspects of nature from the point of view of a platform of his own making, a world made of things that can elevate him and offer him a broader view of the whole of being, if only he succeeds in using this world for this purpose, rather than simply becoming a slave to the things composing it. The dweller of the world is in ec-stasy from the earth, standing out from it, while his feet remain more or less firmly on the ground. His observation platform is made of the creations of his mind, ready to crumble at the slightest commotion,

¹²⁷See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p202: “Le pone una trampa. Esta trampa es «fuera».”

the most insignificant trial, but it gives him a view from a higher ground, from the inside of his self, which allows him to watch the outside as an object, and see what other animals cannot see in their environment. Leaping on and off this platform, from the world to the earth and back again, this is how he can escape the entrapment experienced by the inhabitant of the world and the obliviousness of the dweller of the earth, joining the realms by incarnating their contrast as well as their shared essence, becoming a melodious note that echoes throughout the air, calling all the living to assemble and follow him on the way of the sky.

Turning one's ears toward the outside, one will hear whatever is already found underneath the surface of his mind. The continuous flow poured into these ears contains the entire content of the skies, presented to our mind, which will make of it what it wishes. It may hear the winds sweeping the amber leaves covering the soil, or it may listen to the gentle splashing of raindrops striking the tiles on the roof of our home, or the footsteps of those treading on the muddy path leading to it. But all of these are mere things of the world, pieces of nature carved by the mind. This mind chases after things of the earth like raindrops, but it overlooks the earth itself, which the world is made to reveal. The world is thus upside-down, the opposite of what it should be. It should be a tool for the discovery of the essence of the earth, but it rather becomes a veil that covers it, while offering a distorted representation of it, without this role being seen, entrapping the deluded slaves to the world.

Before the true value of the world can shine in the eyes of men, they nonetheless must first be able to break through its walls made of delusions. Such a task is relatively easy for someone who is determined to liberate himself. The earth that he seeks can be found at every footstep, at every glance, and he simply has let go of the things through which he is used to see it, and plunges himself into a direct, sensory experience of the tangible reality that not only surrounds him, but also represents the essence of his own being.

When the world is appropriated as a tool, and is not merely a force subjugating man while concealing the earth to his eyes, it then can become a source of enlightenment, not only for the self but for others, as this revelation also comes with the knowledge of the

illusory nature of the frontier between the two. This second task is considerably trickier, as it demands a capacity to express the essence of the earth into the heart of the world, without falling into the trap he warns others about. Meticulously choosing his words, and often paying great attention to the avoidance of uttering any words, even the wisest possible ones, he attentively but naturally expresses himself with his flesh, becoming what he wants to show the world and not simply telling them about it. *It* becomes what is heard on the outside as well as what echoes on the inside, breaking the barriers with his shout or his fingertip, and then the sounds of the outside are perceived anew. Rain ceases to be heard, the footsteps fade away, and all that is heard is the melody of being itself, the note struck at the inception of the universe and which echoes throughout the deepest heavens. The world then falls into place, close to the earth, perfectly intertwined with it.

Case 146 —The Six Can't Perceive It — 六不收

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 47.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn yún mén rú hé shì fǎ shēn mén yún liù
 舉。僧問 雲門：「如何是法身¹。」門 云：「六²
bù shōu
 不收。」

¹ 【法身】[fǎ shēn]: “the Dharma body.” Translation of the Sanskrit word “dharma-kāya” (धर्मकाय). One of the “three bodies” of a Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It may be seen as the essence of the whole of nature.

² 【六】[liù]: “the six.” It here seems to designate the “six roots” (六根), that is, the six senses of the Buddhist tradition: the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the touch-sensitive body parts, and consciousness, or perhaps the phenomena perceived by these senses, called the “six dusts” (六塵). The phrasing seems deliberately ambiguous, to allow other interpretations, or maybe even represents a bait for the reader, to see if he would submit to the temptation of overinterpreting such detail.

【日】

こ そう うんもん と いか こ ほつ
 舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 法
しん もんいわ ろくおさ
 身。」門云く、「六収まらず。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is the Dharma-body¹ ?”
Yunmen said: “The six can’ t perceive it.”

¹ “Dharma-body” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “The six” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The fundamental essence of being is the great body of the heavens, including all that is perceived by the senses.¹²⁸ It can be named a body because, like a living creature, it forms a whole whose nature cannot be fathomed when one only considers its parts. Cut into pieces by the knife of perception and the sword of reason, it becomes an empty shell, a dead thing, something other than what it was when it was whole. This whole can nonetheless not pass through the doors of our perception. One cannot squeeze a mountain range into a glass vial, and thus, any attempt to perceive the great body of the heavens is condemned to fail. It is so close and so far. We are this body, and so is every single thing that we experience. We have known it intimately since the very day of our birth onto the naked earth, but it nonetheless keeps escaping us. We attempt to grab it, but it constantly flees away. Since the essence cannot be grasped, we must therefore let ourselves be approached by it, be pervaded by it. It can be found within ourselves as much as outside our self, as we are the great body of the heavens, whose essence is without parts, but only an indivisible totality.

If the heavens cannot pass through the six gates of our mind, an experience of the celestial essence thus implies that the mind itself must be freed from the prison built around these gates. The mind cannot receive it, and thus it must offer itself to it. This demands that the mind ceases to rely entirely upon the flow passing through the gates of the senses to quench its thirst for meaning and significance. The frontiers between these gates have to be reduced to smithereens, letting the eyes hear the roar of the trembling earth, the skin sees the beauty of the twinkling stars, the ears smell the fragrance of the autumn breeze, the nose tastes the sweetness

¹²⁸ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。【題解】「六」指六根、六境、六大、六合等佛教用以概括諸法實相的基本法數（名相）

of the sun, the tongue touches the texture of the ocean, with his consciousness abandoning all efforts to organize and analyze these seemingly incoherent impressions. When the walls have fallen and the flow is scattered, what is then left of the self? What is it that stealthily slips out of the ruins? No-thing remains of it, and this is precisely when the essence shows itself.¹²⁹ It does not need to be sought outside of the realm of the senses. It shines into the sky when the cloak of illusions has been taken off, revealing that it stood by itself, with no-thing under it.

Case 147 —Yunmen’s “Sesame Flatbread” —云門糊餅

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 77. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 78.

【中】

舉。僧問 雲門：「如何是超佛越祖之談。」 門
云：「餬餅¹。」

¹【餬餅】S:【糊餅】[hú bǐng]: “sesame flatbread.” (See: 「胡麻所製之餅」From: 《佛光大辭典電子版》。佛光山文教基金會, 2007: p5344)

【日】

こ そう うんもん と いか こ
舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
ちょうぶつおつ そ たん もんいわ こびょう
超 佛越祖の 談。」門云く、「餬餅。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is meant by the sentence: ‘To transcend the Buddhas and to go beyond the patriarchs?’” Yunmen said: “Sesame flatbread.”¹

¹ “Sesame flatbread”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

¹²⁹See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。：「[法身]指的是捨棄自我、展現了「空」與「無我」的極至境界。... 如果落入言句之中，就恨難識得法身。」

When man is not busy with the affairs of the world, and he finally has time to begin to yearn for a deeper meaning of life, trying to uncover a reason for his existence and gain a vision of the nature of being itself. His gaze is then more often turned toward the unfathomable and ungraspable expanse of the heavens than toward the delimited and tangible earth. Seeking to transcend all boundaries found in front of his eyes, craving to know what lies beyond the most sacred, the most primordial, the most universal and pervasive of all things, he climbs the highest steps built by mankind. He visits those living on the highest peaks, to interrogate them and become the recipients of their wisdom. Asking what lies beyond the frontiers of the heavens, he is left perplexed by the answer: "A dry loaf of bread." The man on the highest peak may have the broadest view of the celestial vault, but he is also someone sitting upon the bare earth, enjoying great intimacy with it. He knows that the way to go may be found among the stars above, but that it is more easily discovered right in front of us all, in each speck of dust covering the rocky face of the earth, in every thing found in our world that can be experienced by the senses, touching them with our hands, seeing them with our eyes, tasting them with our mouth. The extraordinary, what transcends the everyday world, may be best accessed from the most ordinary, the most common. Food may nonetheless be seen as holding a special place in our lives, as it offers us a concrete representation of the essence of our existence. The loaf of bread that we hold in our hands is indeed the result of the sacrifice of dozens of ears of wheat patiently grown during the summer, bathed in sunlight and rain, sprouting out of the earth and weaved together with air, before they were harvested just before the coming of the fall. These living things will now feed the fire of life burning within our chest, the last link in an incredibly long chain, eons of evolution pointing to this instant, here and now. In this loaf, we may feel the whole of the earth and the sky, and gaze at what transcends them both.

The newcomer to the way is of course naïve in his questioning. He appears to foul the air with his worldly discourses, talking about what cannot be put into words, asking about what cannot be answered with language. Lost in the heights, he must be pulled

back to the earth, to what can be felt without mediation. When this foolish mouth speaks, it emits the stench of an open grave, and the one to whom the question was asked suddenly feels compelled to throw a large piece of dry bread inside it, filling this gaping, voluble, and foul mouth, ensuring that nothing more flows out of it.¹³⁰ The dry piece of bread is too dry to swallow, too large to spit out, and thus the novice suddenly gasps for breath. He is not only incapable to utter a single word anymore, but he also sees his own death approaching. If one wants to transcend all that is, he may do so by becoming no-thing, embracing the great death shown to him thanks to a piece of bread. He will then understand that there is nothing to transcend, as there is nothing there in the first place. He can swallow the earth whole and drink out the entirety of the heavens, holding them in his bosom, delving into an experience of what is neither earth nor life nor the skies, before he regurgitates them all, letting them once again take their place, as this experience leaves a profound, indelible trace on the very core of his being, leaving him not knowing whether he lives or is dead, whether he is here or there.

Case 148 — Realizing Suddenly The Cause Of Water — 忽悟水因

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 78.

【中】

舉。古有十六開士¹，於浴僧時，隨例入浴。忽悟水因。諸禪德²，作麼生會³。他道「妙觸宣明，成佛子住」。⁴也須七穿八穴始⁵得。

¹ 【開士】S: 【开士】[kāi shì]: another name for “bodhisattva.”

² 【禪德】S: 【禅德】[chán dé]: “Zen practitioners.”

³ 【諸禪德，作麼生會】[zhū chán dé zuò mó sheng huì]: It is Xuedou who speaks here.

⁴ A quote from the “Śūraṅgama Sūtra” (楞嚴經), chapter 5.

⁵ 【始】[shǐ]: “only then.”

【日】

¹³⁰ See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p497 (Case 78).

こ いにしえ じゅうろく かい じ あ よくそう とし
 擧す。古え 十六の 開士有り、浴僧の 時に、
れい したが にゅうよく はた すいいん さと しよ
 例に 随したがて 入浴するや、忽はたと 水因すいいんを 悟さとる。諸
ぜんとく いかに かれら みょうそく せんみょう じょうぶつ しじゅう
 禪徳、作麼生いかにか 他かれらの「妙觸みょうそく 宣明せんみょう、成じょうぶつ 佛子しじゅう住」
い え ま すべか しちせんはつけつ
 と 道いえるを 會えする。也また 須すべからく 七穿八穴しちせんはつけつして
はじ よ
 始めて 得し。

【E】

In an ancient era, there were sixteen bodhisattvas. When the monks took a bath, they entered the bath according to their custom. [In there,] they suddenly realized the cause of water. Now, you Zen practitioners, how do you understand this?¹ The bodhisattvas said: “A marvelous experience! Perfectly clear! We now abide [the dwelling place of] the children of Buddha.” Only by breaking through seven times and digging through eight times can you attain it too.

¹ Xuedou is the one speaking here.

A life in the world built by the hands and the minds of men is one surrounded with discreet things, sharp contours and countable objects, haphazardly arrayed according to their use and to the place they occupy in our existence. Seen as part of this world, men themselves come to be perceived as mere objects, standing out of a background we call the earth or nature. This all too natural behavior finds its roots at the emergence of the animal branch of the tree of life, as the birth of sensation led to the capacity to feel pain and fear for one's survival, and to experience pleasure and desire for food or a mate. This is why our mind carves out the continuous totality of the skies into a multitude of discreet things, which can become the target of our attention, singled out from the rest of nature according to a contour traced according to our needs. This is nonetheless merely a tool used for our survival and our perpetuation. It does not reflect our true nature, the essence that pervades all that is, enshrouded in the clouds of our perception, the phantasmagorias of our world.

The man of the world is thus a master of ten thousand things, but the enlightened, the man who has experienced the essence of being, seen his own true face, only knows and needs a single thing.¹³¹ Such illumination rarely comes from plunging into a bath of sooty ink or walking on a long road made of pearly white paper. It rather often comes as the result of exposure to the most ordinary elements found on the earth or in the sky, a conjunction of a sensation perfectly aligned with our yearning for the essence, revealing the whole cosmos through the narrowest door, a simple experience of a sound, a touch, a sight, a taste, or a smell. Such a sensation may also find itself perfectly corresponding to the sum of all the ideas we have concerning the essence, representing an embodiment of all our knowledge, expressed more clearly than in any sentence or book.

The earthly element that forms most of our body is also the locus where the first spark of life was itself kindled. It is what passes through our flesh in the most abundant quantity and represents an almost ideal doorway toward a realization of the fundamental nature of being. This element is, of course, water, the transparent fluid of life covering a large part of the earth. Entering a bathhouse, we may be exposed to different forms of it, something that attracts our attention to its nature. Heated by fire, the liquid is turned to steam pervading the air, but in contact with the earth or our skin, it quickly forms droplets condensed upon their surface. The invisible and continuous cloud of steam then becomes individual things, which can be counted and observed in their peculiarity, different from others. Their nature is nonetheless unchanged. This is only a trick of our mind, and it never ceases to be water. When one plunges into the bath or when the heat once again increases, these droplets once again become indistinguishable from the whole of the water, even though their nature has not changed at all. Paying close attention to the water of the sea, his sweat, or the clouds in the air, man may thus realize that he is a droplet of water just momentarily appearing distinct from the rest of the great body of water tightly enshrouding the earth. He is a mere wave on the ocean, transiently standing out before disappearing, and yet al-

¹³¹See Xuedou's verse concerning this case: "A man who understands things only needs one thing." Chinese original: 「了事衲僧消一箇」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》. CBETA (Case 78) (Concerning the translation of this passage, see: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北: 三民書局股份有限公司, 2005. p835, Case 83).

ways having the same nature. All things around him represent a single thing. The contours separating them are a mirage, as is their standing out. The ocean is not a pile of individual droplets but rather an indistinguishable totality. It is not a thing, but rather no-thing, indistinctiveness itself, and all that exists, man, his world, the earth, or the sky, shares the same nature as this ocean. The illumination that comes with the perception of the essence of all that *is* therefore not a liberation nor a purification, but rather the collapse of the difference between the prisoner and the open country beyond the walls of his prison, between the dust and the pristine surface of an infinite mirror.¹³²

Case 149 —What Is The Buddha With The Ten Bodies 一如何是十身調御

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 99.

【中】

舉。肅宗帝問忠國師：「如何是十身¹調御²。」
國師云：「檀越³踏毘盧⁴頂上行。」帝云：「寡人⁵不會。」
國師云：「莫認自己清淨法身⁶。」

¹ 【十身】[shí shēn]: “the ten bodies.” Ten types of bodies associated with Vairocana Buddha, which are described in the Buddhāvataṃsaka Sutra (華嚴經). The ten bodies are: The body of sentient beings (衆生身), the land’s body (国土身), the body of karmic retribution (業報身), the Śrāvaka-body (聲聞身), the pratyekabuddha-body (獨覺身), the bodhisattva-body (菩薩身), the tathāgata-body (如來身), the wisdom-body (智身), the dharma-body (法身), the body of emptiness (虛空身).

² 【調御】S: 【調御】[diào yù]: It designates the 調御丈夫 [diào yù zhàng fū], one of the ten appellations of a Buddha. This appellation comes from the Sanskrit “puruṣadāmyasārathi” (पुरुषदम्यसारथि). It means “someone who guides men,” as a farmer guiding his oxen.

³ 【檀越】[tán yuè]: “a benefactor” (A term used by layperson toward a monk).

⁴ 【毗盧】[pí lú]: “Vairocana [Buddha].” An abbreviation of 毗盧遮那 [pí lú zhē nà], transliteration of the Sanskrit “Vairocana” (वैरोचन). Vairocana is considered a “primordial Buddha,” the embodiment of the Buddhist concept of “emptiness.”

⁵ 【寡人】[guǎ rén]: “I.” A first-person pronoun used by the nobility.

⁶ 【法身】[fǎ shēn]: “the Dharma body.” A translation of the Sanskrit word “dharma-kāya” (धर्म काय). One of the “three bodies” of a Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It may be seen as the essence of the whole of nature.

¹³² See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p124: “La iluminación no purifica nada, ni libera de ninguna ilusión. Iluminación significa que no hay nada que purificar ni nada de lo que liberarse.”

【日】

こ しゆくそうてい ちゅうこく し と いか
 舉す。肅宗帝、忠國師に 問う、「如何なるか
 こ じっしん ちょうご こくし いわ だんのつ び る
 是れ 十身 調御。」國師云く、「檀越、毘盧の
 ちょうじょう ふ ゆ ていいわ か じん え こく
 頂上を 蹈み 行け。」帝云く、「寡人會せず。」國
 し いわ じこ せいじょうほっしん したた なか
 師云く、「自己の 清淨法身を 認むること 莫れ。」

【E】

Emperor Suzong asked the National Teacher Zhong: “What is the Buddha with the ten bodies, guiding all living beings?”

¹ The National Teacher said: “Sir! Step over the head of Vairocana² and continue!” The emperor said: “I don’t understand.” The National Teacher said: “Do not consider yourself to be the pure Dharma-body.” ³

¹ “The Buddha with the ten bodies”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Vairocana”: See note 4 of the Chinese text.

³ “Dharma-body”: See note 6 of the Chinese text.

Even when one sees himself as the son of the heavens, he is tempted to pay homage to what is found above him. His mind has separated the elevated from the lowly, the sacred from the profane, and all his thoughts are arrayed according to the order preestablished by his forefathers. The incomprehensible is represented by it with convoluted structures, defined with cryptic terms, all mingled with the fruits of men’s fertile imagination, inciting them to give attributes to what is not a thing, to name what cannot be fathomed, thereby reducing its mystery to a heap of obscure concepts. What is supposed to guide men out of the maze in which they are prisoners then represents one more obstacle on their paths. The celestial jewel illuminating man’s world has been covered with its mud, veiling its light, concealing the direction toward which its brilliance points. It nonetheless remains there, waiting to be rediscovered. The layers added with the passing of each year over the primordial concept pointing toward the truth of the earth and the sky, found beyond the frontiers of the world, can be peeled off

and discarded, revealing what these realms of nature were at their creation. Man then has a compass to navigate his world, fashioned by men to reveal the essence of all that is.

The compass is nonetheless not the thing toward which it points. Once the direction has been seen clearly, it can be discarded, having served its purpose. Likewise, the concepts describing the essence of all things must at some points be left behind, so that one may plunge himself into the truth of being, abandoning all things, stripping himself of all the burdens he has accumulated during his life in the world, to become an empty mind in the place where there is not a single thing. One must trample the sacred and forget the profane. One must step over the heads of the gods and the saints themselves, forgetting their existence, to transcend all concepts that tell us about what goes beyond all concepts. Even the holy and the heavenly must be forsaken if one is to reach his destination, and when it is done, this is when understanding fails, but when clarity nonetheless abounds.

To go beyond the holy and the profane, to transcend the world and the sky is to cease to understand, to become a fool for other men, ridiculed and despised. But this does not imply that the mere fact of not understanding or of being foolish for the worldly ones would be to perceive the essence of all that is, the great body formed by all things, which is itself no-thing. To incarnate the pure body of no-thing-ness is not merely to let go of the burdens of the world, but rather to become the irresistible force that steadily drives all things to the essence itself, to become the impassive guide that leads all living beings to the realization that no-thing-ness pervades all that is found in man's world, leads them to see their own true face, without need for reflection nor understanding. He becomes the light illuminating the world, revealing the nature of all things.

Case 150 — Zizhao's "Succession" — 子昭承嗣

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 64.

舉。子昭首座問法眼：「和尚開堂承嗣¹何人。」眼云：「地藏。」昭云：「太辜負²長慶先師。」眼云：「某甲不會長慶一轉語³。」昭云：「何不問。」眼云：「『萬象之中獨露身⁴』，意作麼生。」昭乃豎起拂子，眼云：「此是長慶處學得底⁵。」首座分上作麼生。」昭無語，眼云：「只如『萬象之中獨露身。』，是撥⁶萬象不撥萬象。」昭云：「不撥。」眼云：「兩箇。」參隨左右皆云：「撥萬象。」眼云：「『萬象之中獨露身』，⁷。」

1 【承嗣】[chéng sì]: “to be an heir [of someone else].”

2 【辜負】S: 【辜負】[gū fù]: “to let down” / “to disappoint.”

3 【轉語】S: 【转语】[zhuǎn yǔ]: “a turning-word,” that is, a short sentence or a word that is meant to trigger to deep enlightenment.

4 【身】[shēn]: “the body.” Here, it designates the entire substance of the universe, linked with the “dharma body.”

5 【底】[dǐ]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 的.

6 【撥】S: 【拨】[bō]: “to push aside with a limb or an object.”

7 【響】[nǐ]: Originally designates a type of ghost (鬼) who has experienced death, changing its nature, becoming a “nǐ” (響), as told in the “You Ming Lu” (幽冥錄), a medieval collection of tales. It here seems to be used onomatopoeically, but a link with the aforementioned meaning is also probable, perhaps even a way to call his interlocutors “demons” or “ghosts.”

【日】

舉す。子昭首座法眼に問う、「和尚開堂何人に承嗣するや。」眼云く、「地藏。」昭云く、「甚だ長慶先師に辜負す。」眼云く、「某甲長慶の一轉語を會せず。」昭云く、「何ぞ問わざる。」眼云く、「萬象之中獨露身、意作麼生。昭乃ち拂子を豎起す。」眼云く、「此は是れ長慶の

ところ がくとく てい しゅそぶんじょう さもさん しょう む
 處に 學得する 底なり、首座分上 作麼生。」昭、無
 ご げんいわ ただばんぞう しちゅうどくろ しん ごと
 語。眼云く、「只萬象之中 獨露身というが 如き
 こ ばんぞう ばら ばんぞう ばら
 は 是れ 萬象を 撥うか 萬象を 撥わざるか。」
 しょういわ ばら げんいわ りょうこ さんすい さゆう
 昭云く、「撥わず。」眼云く、「兩箇。參隨の 左右
 みなばら い げんいわ ばんぞう しちゅうどくろ しん にい
 皆撥うと 云う。」眼云く、「萬象之中 獨露身、響。」

【E】

Head Monk Zizhao asked Fayen: "The master has opened a new meditation hall, but whose heir is he?" Fayen said: "Dizang." Zizhao said: "The late master Changqing, [under whom the master first studied], must have been disappointed." Fayen said: "I still don't understand one of Changqing's turning words." Zizhao said: "Why don't you ask?" Fayen said: "'The one body¹ manifests itself in the myriads of phenomena,' what does it mean?" Zizhao then raised his whisk. Fayen said: "This is something you learned at Changqing's place, but what does the Head Monk think?" Zizhao did not utter a word. Fayen said: "When one says: 'The one body manifests itself in the myriads of phenomena,' is the myriads of phenomena swept away or not?" Zizhao said: "Not swept away." Fayen said: "Both." All those attending on both the right and the left side said: "Swept away." Fayen said: "'The one body manifests itself in the myriads of phenomena,' Nii!"²

¹ "One body": see note 4 of the Chinese text

² "Nii": See note 7 of the Chinese text.

Light is something that cannot be touched or grasped, but rather only received, poured into the eyes when they are opened and turned toward the source of brilliance, ready to welcome it. Likewise, enlightenment is antithetic to understanding, the grasping by the mind, and it only occurs when one has let go of the will to understand to let himself be embraced by an experience.

The one body of being manifests itself in the myriad of things found upon the earth, in the sky, and in man's world, but it cannot be understood with his reason. Even the mere realization of such manifestation itself seldom occurs, as these things are too familiar for their essence to be seen. The earthly objects around us represent such manifestations, even though our attention while observing them is so focused upon their use that it veils their essence. To the world, it is an instrument, helping in the accomplishment of something, but it is also a piece of the seamless whole of the earth, made of stardust wandering through the inscrutable depths of the cosmos since the unfolding of the heavens themselves. In it, one may see the entirety of the heavens and of what they contain. When I raise my whisk, it is the entirety of the earth that is raised, held in my hand, embraced by my mind, with the essence of this object being one with the essence of all that is.

The experience of the one body nonetheless cannot be passed on from generation to generation. Observing the way someone embodies the depths of his mind, the extent of his realization, one may perhaps perceive that one has seen through the use and pierced the essence, but this will always remain conjecture. The whisk or the finger may be raised by a monkey or by the wise man of the way, and both may appear indistinguishable from one another. One may feign victory as well as failure. The wise may choose to appear as a fool, and the knave may veil his idiocy in a cloak of silence as well as in one weaved with words borrowed from a mouth of gold. This is why a seemingly worried master relentlessly submits his followers to various trials. He presents them with choices, inviting them to jump into the trap of "yes" and "no," of "right" and "wrong," to see if they have taken a glimpse at what is hidden by the use of things, including words themselves. If one sees a difference between the earth and the world, between nothing-ness and the myriads of things, he has yet to perceive the one body. If one does not see the difference between the earth and the world, between no-thing-ness and the myriads of things, he is also mistaken. As long as there is something to be seen in one's mind, he is blind. The world and the earth are one, just like one cannot separate the use from the essence. When this unicity is felt rather than simply known, the worries concerning one's descendance vanish. Words fade into silence, but then a roar emerges out of the depths of the master's chest: "Ni!" This roar clears out both

the world and the earth. It sweeps away the myriads of things, but also no-thing-ness itself! A violent tempest is stirred up by this sound, and the mind then becomes a plain where all the desiccated leaves and the dust of the world are washed away by the downpours of the dark autumn clouds. The winter may come. The follower may be scattered, and life may retreat into the soil, invisible, but the spring will soon come. The way will one day once again be seen and embraced, and a worthy successor will emerge out of the people, like a flower piercing through a carpet of snow at the first sign of the arrival of the spring, the heavenly wheels continuing their endless revolutions, leading all things where they should be, and all creatures to their destiny, without the need for us to worry for it.

Case 151 —Yunmen’ s “Sound” And “Color” —雲門聲色

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 82.

【中】

jǔ yún mén shì zhòng yún wén shēng wù dào jiàn sè míng xīn —
 舉。雲門示眾云：「聞聲悟道，見色明心。—
 guān shì yīn pú sà jiāng qián lái mǎi hú bǐng fàng xià shǒu què shì mǎn tóu
 觀世音菩薩¹將錢來買餬餅，放下手却是饅頭。」

¹ 【觀世音菩薩】S: 【观世音菩萨】[guān shì yīn pú sà]: Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion or Goddess of Mercy. Literally “the Bodhisattva who perceives the sound of the world.”

【日】

こ うんもんしゅ しめ いわ もんしょう ごどう
 舉す。雲門衆に示して云く、「聞聲 悟道、
 けんきみょう しん かん ぜ おん ぼさつ せん も きた こびょう
 見色明 心、觀世音菩薩錢を 將ち 來って 餬餅を
 か て ほうげ かえ こ まんじゅう
 買う、手を 放下すれば 却って 是れ 饅頭。」

【E】

Yunmen instructed the congregation and said: “ ‘To be enlightened to [the existence of] the way through hearing a

sound, to clarify the mind through seeing color'—Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara¹ comes with some money to buy [cheap] sesame flatbread. He lets what is in his hands go, and now there are [nice] steamed buns instead."

¹ "Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara" : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The way of the sky has no beginning nor end. It can be found anywhere, at any time, and by anyone, but it often comes to the one who is not actively seeking it. The providence may indeed offer such a man signs, manifestations of the way revealing its presence and inviting him to follow the course it traces. If one lends his ears to the whisper of the earth or the murmur of the air, he may be able to discern the calling of nature itself, the melody of being resounding in the sky, resonating with his heart, unlocking the doors surrounding him and letting him perceive the whole that is heard through a single note, even if it is only for an instant. If one opens up his eyes to the colorful glow of the heavens, he may then find the capacity to observe the truth of nature, to get a glimpse at the primordial spark and the last flicker of the cosmos, visible in the seemingly most common sight, which nonetheless represents a wink of the celestial ones, a clue leading to the truth of being, offered to the one who is ready to embrace the way and become its instrument when he will return to lead the throngs of dwellers of the world. A sound may thus enlighten one's path, and a sight may be a deafening sound clearing up the mind of all the things occupying it. When all boundaries crumble, and one begins to see the sound of earth and to hear the colors of the sky, then one is ready to experience the truth of all that is, raw and unmediated, having become an empty vessel ready to receive the libation of the heavenly ones.

When the beaconing of the merciful ones has been heeded, and the signs of the celestial ones have been followed, one sees that the things that are valued by the servants of the world are worthless to the man of the way. They are coins used by the slaves to buy their freedom, but once they are liberated, they no longer have any need of them, as they freely roam upon the earth, fed directly by the tree of life, sleeping under the stars, without possessing any thing, without desire nor regret. Embracing poverty, letting go of all

things, one may appear to sacrifice his well-being and his self, but others may soon find out that the man with none may perhaps be the most fortunate of all.¹³³ He lets go of coins of gold and silver, and then finds something more precious than anything else, something that satiates all his needs, that satisfies all his desires, leaving him wanting nothing more. Being complete, fulfilled, while having no-thing, he will no longer grow hungry. He will never suffer from thirst. Death itself will have no grip upon him, as he is where there is neither life nor death. Without remembering the word “mercy,” he nonetheless embodies it when he is seen wandering through the busy streets filled with greed, lust, pain, and despair, without a thought offering to all the gift he received, extending his empty hands to offer the indigent all that he has, which is no-thing.

Case 152 — Linji’ s Great Enlightenment — 臨濟大悟

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 86.

【中】

舉。臨濟問黃蘗：「如何是佛法的的¹大意。」
蘗便打。如是三度²乃辭。³蘗見大愚，愚
問：「甚麼處來。」濟云：「黃蘗來。」愚云：「黃蘗
有何言句。」濟云：「某甲三問佛法的的大意。三
度喫棒⁴。不知有過無過。」愚云：「黃蘗怎麼。
老婆為爾得徹困⁵，更來問：『有過無過。』」濟於
言下大悟。

¹ 【的的】[dí dí]: “clear.”

² 【度】[dù]: “a number of times.”

³ 【辭】S: 【辞】[cí]: “to take one’ s leave.”

¹³³See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Shōyōroku (Book of Equanimity)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “It is only when you throw it all away that, for the first time, you can be ‘on the way to return home,’ as it says in the Introduction.”

⁴ 【喫】[chī]: variant of 吃 [chī]: “to eat.” Here used figuratively: “to receive blows.”

⁵ 【困】[kùn]: “to be exhausted” / “to be in pain.”

【日】

こ りんざい おうばく と いか こ
 舉す。臨濟、黄檗に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 ぶっぼうてきてき たいい ばく すなわ う こ ごと
 佛法的的の 大意。」檗 便ち 打つ。是の 如き
 み たび すなわ ばく じ たいぐ まみ ぐ
 こと 三度 乃ち 檗を 辭して 大愚に見ゆ。愚、
 と なん ところ き ざいいわ おうばく
 問う、「甚麼の 處より 來たる。」濟云く、「黄檗よ
 き ぐ いわ おうばくなん ごんく あ
 り 來たる。」愚云く、「黄檗何の 言句か 有り
 ざいいわ それがしみたぶっぼうてきてき たいい と
 し。」濟云く、「某甲三佛法的的の 大意を 問い
 み たびぼう きっ し とが あ とが な ぐ
 三度棒を 喫す、知らず 過有りや 過無しや。」愚
 いわ おうばく いんも ろうばなんじ ため てっこん
 云く、「黄檗恁麼に 老婆爾が 爲に 徹困なること
 え さら きた う か む か と ざい
 を 得たり。更に 來って 有過無過を 問う。」濟、
 ごんか たいご
 言下に 大悟す。

【E】

Linji asked Huangbo: “What is the clear meaning of Buddhism?” Huangbo then hit him. This happened three times before Linji took his leave. He then went to see Daigu, and Daigu asked: “Where have you come from?” Linji said: “I come from Huangbo.” Daigu said: “What did Huangbo say?” Linji said: “This one asked him three times what is the clear meaning of Buddhism, and got his stick three times, still not knowing: was a fault committed or not?” Daigu said: “Huangbo was like that, treating you [gently and patiently] like an old grandmother exhausting herself for you, and still you come here and ask: ‘Was a fault committed or not?’” With these words, Linji was greatly enlightened.

When the new follower desires to know where he is headed, he may inquire into the course taken by the great men of the way who have returned to the earth long ago. Even the most impressive master of the earth and the world, one who has guided entire generations toward a revelation of the way of the sky, began just as we all have, naively taking our first steps into the ancient forest formed by those who embody the union of earth and sky, like majestic and ancient trees. Seeing how these trees were once minuscule seeds carried by the wind to a fertile soil, we may thereby find inspiration for our own spiritual journey, our walk on the path.

When we first met a man of experience, a good-hearted guide who was ready to point the direction toward which we were destined to advance, he naturally asked where we came from. He thereby raised his walking staff and plunged it into our mind, testing the waters, seeing whether they are deep or shallow. This seemingly mundane question is a bottomless well out of which one may draw as much water as one desires. One who has yet to perceive the nature of the earth will instinctively answer by naming a location defined by the world of men, whether it be the dwelling place of a particular man, a village, or a peculiar part of the land. Another, one who has seen his true face, may nonetheless draw out an entire ocean out of this simple question, realizing that the origin is the destination, and that where he comes from includes the totality of the earth, the world, life, and the skies, the fullness of the past, present, and future, forming a totality rather than a sum of discontinuous elements.

The one using the names of the world is blind to the nature of the earth. One who seeks the fundamental truth with the same words is lost in the clouds, the misty heights far above the tangibility of the earth, a realm of imagination and illusion. Slumbering, forgetting himself in the land of dreams, such a man must be awakened, not with gentle words or a delicate touch of the hand, but rather with a sign that will show him the way to go, pointing out the earth, the reality with which he has grown too distant and oblivious. A blow of a hard, wooden stick, this is what the sleeper needs to be awakened and forgo the pleasures of dreams. Violently brought back to the earth, pushed from the cloudy heights to the naked, rocky ground, like a father pushing away his child from the road as a running horse advances toward him, threatening his life.

The sleeper may nonetheless be reluctant to leave his comfortable state of slumber, having forgotten the difference between dream and reality, the clouds and the earth. Several blows may be needed, but even then, some will not be awakened. Some may indeed first need to be led by the melodies of the world, with gentle words pointing out their going astray, their own condition, to which they are often blind. There is always a time for the stick and a time for the helping hand, and the union of them both is what is the most prone to bear fruit. When the stick appears for what it is, the earth itself, and mercy itself, this is when the dawn rises upon the mind of the novice and the clouds are scattered by the light and the warmth of the heavens. All shall one day, sooner or later, experience such an illumination, such an unveiling of the nature of the earth, being then given the task of passing on the staff to a new generation, allying the words and the stick, the world and the earth, while being grateful for what they themselves had received, contemplating the well-trodden path behind them.

Case 153 —Caoshan's "Being And Non-Being" —疎山有無

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 87.

【中】

舉。疎山到滄山便問：「承¹師有言：『有句
無句如藤²倚³樹。』忽然樹倒，藤枯句歸何處。」
滄山呵呵大笑，疎山云：「某甲四千里賣布單⁴
來。和尚何得⁵相弄⁶。」滄喚侍者取錢，還這上
座遂囑⁷云：「向後有獨眼龍，為子點破⁸去。」在
後到明昭舉前話，昭云：「滄山可謂頭正尾
正，只是不遇知音⁹。」疎復問：「樹倒，藤枯句
歸何處。」昭云：「更使滄山笑轉新。」疎於
言下有省¹⁰，乃云：「滄山元來笑裏有刀。」

¹ 【承】[chéng]: “to receive.” Here, in the sense of “to have heard.”

² 【藤】[téng]: variant of 藤 [téng], meaning “rattan” or “vine.”

³ 【倚】S: 【倚】[yǐ]: “to lean on” / “to rely upon.”

⁴ 【布單】S: 【布單】[bù dān]: “a sheet of cloth.” By extension, it seems to here designate the clothes of the monk.

⁵ 【何得】[hé dé]: “how could someone [do something].” Equivalent to the modern Chinese: 怎能 / 怎會.

⁶ 【相弄】[xiàng nòng]: “to make fun of [someone]” / “to tease.”

⁷ 【囑】S: 【囑】[zhù]: “to enjoin” / “to urge.”

⁸ 【點破】S: 【點破】[diǎn pò]: “to lay bare in a few words” / “to point out bluntly.”

⁹ 【知音】[zhī yīn]: Literally “someone who knows the sound,” meaning: “an intimate friend” / “a soul mate.” This term originates from the famous story of Bó Yá (伯牙), a musician dwelling and playing on a mountain, who befriended a humble woodcutter, Zhōng Zǐ Qī (鍾子期), who would always perfectly understand the emotions that the musician put in his melodies. After Zhōng Zǐ Qī’s death, Bó Yá broke his instrument and never played again. This story can be found in the Daoist classic “Liè zǐ” (列子).

¹⁰ 【有省】[yǒu xǐng]: “to gain an insight.”

【目】

こ うとざん いさん いた すなわ と うけたまわ
 擧す。疎山、瀉山に 到って 便ち 問う、「承る、
 し い あ うく む く ふじ き よ
 師言えること 有り、有句無句は 藤の 樹に 倚る
 ごと こつねん き たお ふじ か く
 が 如しと、忽然として 樹倒るれば 藤枯る、句
 なん ところ き いさん かか たいしょう そさん
 何の 處に 歸するや。」瀉山、呵呵大笑す。疎山
 いわ それがし よ せんり ふ たん う きた おしょう
 云く、「某甲四千里に 布單を 賣り 来る、和尚
 なん あいろう え き じしゃ よ
 何ぞ 相弄することを 得たる。」瀉、侍者を 喚ん
 せん と こ じょうざ かえ つい ぞく
 で 錢を 取って 這の 上座に 還せと。遂に 囑し
 いわ こうご どくがん りゅう あ し ため てん
 て 云く、「向後獨眼 龍 有って 子が 爲に 點
 ぱ さ あ のち めいしょう いた
 破し 去ること 在らん。」後に 明昭に 到りて
 ぜん わ こ しょういわ いさん ず ただ び
 前話を 擧す。昭云く、「瀉山をば 頭正しく 尾
 ただ いい ただ こ ちいん あ そ
 正しと 謂つべし、只是れ 知音に 遇わず。」疎
 また と き たお ふじ か く なん ところ
 復問う、「樹倒るれば 藤枯る、句は 何の 處に
 き しょういわ さら いさん わらいうた
 歸するや。」昭云く、「更に 瀉山をして 笑轉た
 あらた そ ごんか おい しょう あ すなわ
 新ならしむ。」疎、言下に 於て 省有り。 乃ち

いわ いざん がんらい しょうり かたな あ
 云く、「瀉山 元來 笑裏に 刀有り。」

【E】

Shushan came to Guishan and then asked: "Teacher, I have heard that you have said, 'Words of being and words of non-being are just like wisteria wound around a tree.' If suddenly the tree falls down and the wisteria withers, where will the words return to?" Guishan burst into laughter. Shushan said: "This one has made a journey of four thousand [Chinese] miles, and [even] sold [the pieces of] cloth [covering his body] to come here. Why does the Master make fun of him?" Guishan asked his attendant to bring some money, to reimburse the monk [for his travel expenses] and then said: "In the future, there will be a one-eyed dragon, who will allow the disciple to see through this matter." Later, Shushan went to Minzhao and told him about the aforementioned conversation. Minzhao said: "One may say that Guishan is right from start to finish, but he did not meet someone whose mind was in harmony with his' ." Shushan asked again: "If the tree falls down and the wisteria withers, where will the words return to?" Minzhao said: "It would make Guishan laugh again even more." Hearing this, Shushan gained some insight, and then said: "From the beginning, there was a sword in Guishan' s laughter."

Words are marvelous tools of representation. They can invoke the presence of a thing with a mere utterance or a scribble, considerably extending the power of the one wielding these instruments, as they can be symbolically grasped and manipulated in his mind. This power is nonetheless also derived from the contrast between what is represented by these words. If there is only one word, not even contrasted with silence, it thus designates everything and nothing and is largely useless. The power of words is manifested through the difference between them, and between what they designate. There cannot be any concept of "being" without a concept of "non-being." A "yes" is only meaningful

when a “no” is possible. Both are like wisteria wound around a tree, inextricably bound to one another, sharing a common fate.

As things belonging to the world of man, words nonetheless firstly rest upon life itself. Men support these words with the strength of their mind, their memory, and if they die, or simply decide to cease to be the pillars bearing this world upon their shoulders, it will then collapse without delay. This may occur when words have fulfilled their purpose, when man no longer has need of them, or no longer has need of any thing. When death comes, as the putrefaction of the body or as a state of mind where one has ceased to be attached to life itself, the tree then dies also, and the wisteria wound around it soon withers. The letters meticulously inscribed upon the earth by numerous generations of men remain, but their nature is transformed. They appear unchanged, their shape still recognizable upon the medium on which they were traced, but they have lost their meaning. Without the support of the mind of man, of his world, they are now mere drawings, traces without signification, no different than those left by the birds walking on the muddy soil showered with the autumn rains. Likewise, the spoken words, the songs, and the discourses of men then become mere sounds, devoid of signification, like the rumbling of the waves crashing upon the shore, or a thunderous laughter. The death of the body is a return to the earth, taking all the thoughts and ideas supported by it to the grave. The death of the self, on the other hand, may represent a discovery of the truth of the earth, as the earthly nature of things is all that is left to behold when all meaning has vanished, when the towers of signification of the world have crashed down to the ground. Then, all that is to be said will be heard in the laughter of the one who is no one. His laugh then becomes a tremendously powerful shockwave shattering the trees and cutting out the wisteria. It is a sword that cuts through being and no-thing-ness, presence and absence.¹³⁴ It deafens and blinds those exposed to this roar, leaving them only hearing no-thing, seeing no-thing, and yet they then enter into contact with the truth of the earth, the root of all things.

¹³⁴See: 神保如天. 《従容録通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p543 (Case 87).

Case 154 —The Bell And The Seven Pieces Of Clothing —鐘聲七條

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 16.

【中】

yún mén yuē shì jiè rěn me guǎng kuò yīn shēn xiàng zhōng shēng lǐ pī
雲門 曰：「世界恁麼廣闊，因甚向鐘聲裏披¹
qī tiáo
七條²。」

¹ 【披】[pī]: “to drape over one’s shoulders.”

² 【七條】S: 【七条】[qī tiáo]: “the seven pieces [of clothing worn by monks].”

【日】

こ うんもんいわ せかい いんも こうかつ なん
擧す。雲門曰く、「世界恁麼に 廣闊たり。甚に
よ しょうせいり むか しちじょう き
因ってか 鐘聲裏に 向って 七條を 披す。」

【E】

Yunmen asked: “The world is so vast, why do you answer a bell and put on the seven pieces of clothing [worn by monks]?” ¹

¹ “The seven pieces of clothing”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

More numerous are the stars adorning the heavens than the grains of sand scattered across the entire surface of the earth. Man’s world is a mere speck of dust caught in a monumental sandstorm, and we are only a minuscule particle carried upon it. And yet, we often aggrandize ourselves, considering some among us as the sons of heaven, or seeing ourselves as the center point around which the creation gravitates. The world around us, built by the arms and the brains of our predecessors, appears to rest on a secure foundation, established in remote eras, bringing order to the life of its inhabitants, constraining their actions as well as their thoughts. We naturally tend to obey this order whose building principles have long been forgotten, lost in the oblivion of history, without

questioning its soundness, seldom doubting the benefits it pretends to provide us. Like machines, most of us instinctively follow the signs offered to us by this world, responding to its callings, obeying its commands, rendering us servants of this world, rather than men wielding its power for our own profit.

When the bell is rung at the break of dawn, we put on our clothes, veiling our nakedness, our earthly nature, and we cover ourselves with pieces of clothing, imparted with meaning in this world, identifying us according to our position, to our wealth, to our gender, or to our faith. These pieces of cloth are the skin of the world into which we slip to show ourselves in its midst, our uniform, a symbol of our submission to its pre-established order. Once we have adorned this uniform of the world, we then answer the calling of the bell, inviting us to assemble to perform our duties, joining other men to accomplish a purpose set by others, perhaps even long before we were born onto the earth.

The period of obedience to the order of the world nonetheless only becomes meaningful when it is contrasted with a time of rebellion, a period when one refuses to submit himself to the world, when one begins to question its very foundations, seeing them as resting on a swamp. To perceive the value of the world, the greatness of the order that it fosters, one must first experience the raw nature of the earth, the realm where all is meaningless and yet all is clear, where there is not a single thing, and yet where everything can be perceived in its most genuine form. One should therefore learn to listen to the ringing of the bell without hearing anything in it, simply letting our inner ear resonate in unison with it, our mind completely empty of any thought, our body not even faintly responding to it. Remaining naked, immobile, feeling the minute vibrations of the air passing through our skin and our bones, it is the entirety of the heavens and the earth that may be heard in these impressions of our senses, and this without hearing a single thing. The ringing is perfectly intertwined with silence, just like the earth is tightly intertwined with the world, and one may thus hear them both without distinguishing them, welcoming this sensation of the truth of being. One may then once again heed the calling, listening to the sign, embodying the subtle alliance of the contrasting realms, like white flowers sprouting out a blanket of snow covering the soil showered with sunlight. One may awaken

to the truth by seeing the morning star or by hearing the ringing of a bell, and he will then see the earth through the things of the world and feel the world in each contact with the earth, neither submitting nor rebelling, simply playing with everything, attached to nothing.

Case 155 —Dongshan’ s “Three Pounds” 一洞山三斤

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 18. This case is identical to the Blue Cliff Record, Case 12.

【中】

dòng shān hé shàng yīn sēng wèn rú hé shì fó shān yún má
洞山 和尚因僧問：「如何是佛。」 山 云：「麻
sān jīn
三斤。」

【日】

こ どうざんおしょう ちな そうと いか
こ ぶつ さんいわ ま ざんざん
こ 舉す。洞山和尚、因みに 僧問う、如何なるか
是れ 佛。山云く、麻三斤。

【E】

A monk asked Dongshan: “What is Buddha?” Dongshan said: “Three pounds of flax.”

The greatest treasure we could ever find is at all times right in front of our noses. We search for it in the heights of the heavens, but we already have it. It is our birthright, our inheritance, and all that we have ever possessed. It cannot be taken away from us, and it will never decay or vanish. If we desperately search for it, it is only because of our blindness to its nature, but this blindness is nonetheless the first step toward a glorious revelation. One who

has always been endowed with the gift of sight will indeed seldom truly realize the true value of this kind of sensation, whereas one deprived of it for a long time will perceive it under a different light, seeing more than its use, and also taking a glimpse at its essence. When one is plunged into uttermost darkness, the faintest spark shines in all its glory and the nature of light is more visible than when showered with the heavenly fire of our star. Therefore, there is a time to explore the heights of the world, seeking to know the fundamental essence of being through the accounts of men of the past who inscribed the results of lifetimes of experiences on parchments and scrolls. Words may be deceitful, and further conceal the truth of the earth, but they are like a baptism, where one first immerses his flesh in water, severing himself from the sky and the air, retreating into the dark and watery body of the earth, before emerging out of it, opening wide his eyes and feeling the heavenly warmth upon his skin, its radiance entering his eyes, seen anew, as if it was the first time. The question of the essence belongs to the world, like all questions, and it is therefore natural for it to be expressed with words, as imperfect and caricatural as they may be. The answer to this question nonetheless does not belong to the world, but rather to the earth.

What is the fundamental essence of being? It is what we hold in our hands right now. It is also our very hands, the blood flowing into our veins, the eyes with which we contemplate our own flesh and the world around us. There is no difference between our hands and the arms of the galaxy gently glowing during the darkest hours of the night, when we have fled the fires kindled by men to chase away the shadows enfolding the earth. A single strand of hair may teach us more about the truth of being than the heavenly wheels continuously carrying the earth and our world. It is by sharpening the senses rather than through the accumulation of knowledge that we may come to such realization, focusing our attention upon the earthiness of the earth, the weight and tangibility of the objects we hold and touch, feeling the materiality of our own body intertwined with the work of our senses, with the contrast between the sensor and the sensed at times highlighted, at times blurred, and with our heart rejoicing in this contrast between contrasts and uniformity, between the distinguishable parts and the seamless whole. The revelation of the essence lies in the passage between blindness and sight, darkness and brightness, world and earth, with each being

necessary in order for the other to exist.

What is the fundamental essence of being then? Three pounds of flax. If one tries to dissect these words to determine their meaning, seeing them only as pieces of the world, it means that one is blind to the earth.¹³⁵ Vulgar calculation, quantification, and definitions are signs that one is caught in the snare of the world, and yet if one is afraid of them, he equally lives under the yoke of the world. The truth appears when one finds the unicity of the contrasts, unafraid of appropriating either side temporarily, dancing with the earth and the world. We hold these three pounds of flax in our hands, seeing them as a thing, associated with a precise value, a weight, a color, and quality. It is a thing of the world, but we also see it as the entirety of the earth and the sky, the seamless whole, without a trace of ideation in our mind, purely experiencing it with our senses, with no difference between the flax and the hands holding it, only the essence of all that is, revealed to us, here and now, without boundary nor any trace of thought, the answer offered to us, flax as smooth as a mirror, in which we see ourselves and the entirety of the sky.

Case 156 —Yunmen’ s “Shit-Stick” —雲門屎橛

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 21.

【中】

yún mén yīn sēng wèn rú hé shì fó mén yún gān shǐ jué¹
雲門 因僧問：「如何是佛。」門 云：「乾屎橛¹。」

¹ 【乾屎橛】[gān shǐ jué]: “a dry shit-stick.” Pieces of bamboo that were used to wipe feces.

【日】

¹³⁵ See Xuedou’ s verse concerning this case: “One who considers Dongshan according to the things he said or his own speculations is like a lame and blind turtle entering an empty vale.” Chinese original: 「展事投機見洞山跛鱉盲龜入空谷」, from: 《佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》. CBETA (Case 12).

こ うんもんちな そう と いか こ
 舉す。雲門因みに 僧問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 ぶつ もんいわ かん し けつ
 佛。」門云く、「乾屎橛。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is Buddha?” Yunmen answered him: “A dry shit-stick.¹”

¹ “Dry shit-stick” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

As long as one remains the main character of his own life, one will fail to see his true face. The main character must learn to retreat into the background, and bring the inconspicuous, the overlooked, to the front of the stage, letting it be exposed under the light of the great luminary, its nature finally considered, its details observed. The uses of the things of the world can then be set aside, so that the substance can be discovered. Through this consideration of the substance of things, one may notice that the frontier separating them from others is directly linked with their use. They all share the same essence, which pervades all and unites all that is. The differences between them are mere reflections of the role they play in the world. The rare and the precious are exalted, with the eyes of the audiences all pointed at them, while the lowly is ignored, and the foul is concealed, kept far from their sight. To walk on the path is nonetheless to uncover what is veiled by everydayness, to see things for what they are, on the earth, as much as for what they are used for, in the world of men. Thus, the eye of the man of the way inspects the dark corners of the world. It attentively and with an acute curiosity observes what would induce revulsion in others. It searches for the most common and pierces it with its glance to reveal its extraordinary nature, refusing to let himself be restrained by the arbitrary order of the world, the hierarchies established by men of yore, long returned to the earth and whose motivations have largely fallen into oblivion. There, the deceitfulness of the world may finally be revealed to him, without negating its incredible usefulness. The use may then be reconciled with the substance, both shining in their peculiarity, and yet also appearing in their unicity, like snow heaped in a silver bowl.

When the order of the world has been shown in all its arbitrariness through the observation of the lowly, the ignored, the disgusting, then the eye may be turned toward the self, toward the main character of our life. Our body may be seen as a living tube, through which a flow of water mingled with the bodies of other living things passes, part of it seeping through our organs, running into our blood, becoming the substance we are made of, continuously renewing our body, as parts of it having served their purpose being discarded, excreted. The excrement departing from our body is as much a part of us as any other. Each particle forming our flesh will one day be shed and returned to the earth, replaced by others, until the fire of life burning within our chest is finally quenched and the whole that we form decays and is consumed by other living things. Considered in our substance, as a thing of the earth, we are the excrement we deposit on the ground. There is no fundamental difference between it and us. The world has taught us that it is impure and even vulgar to simply mention it, but by seeing the lowest, the most unappreciated things of the world in their truth, it is the common essence of all things that may be revealed to our eyes, allowing us to see beyond the arbitrary hierarchies, the artificial oppositions. The decaying leaves on the ground of the fall are no different from the green buds appearing at the sign of the arrival of the spring, representing only a continuous flow of the substance of the heavens. Once this truth is perceived, the excrement may find its place in the temple hall, and the god may be honored by squatting down in front of it, offering ourselves to the divine nature pervading all things.

Case 157 —The Cypress Tree In Front Of The Garden 庭前柏樹

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 37. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 47.

【中】

zhào zhōu yīn sēng wèn rú hé shì zǔ shī xī lái yì¹ 。 zhōu
趙州 因僧問：「如何是祖師西來意¹ 。」 州
yún 云：「庭前柏樹子。」

¹ 【西來意】[xī lái yì]: “the meaning of the coming from the West [of Bodhidharma].”

【日】

こ じょうしゅう ちな そう と いか
 擧す。趙州、因みに 僧問う、「如何なるか
 こ そし にしらい い しゅういわ ていぜん はくじゅ し
 是れ 祖師西來の 意。」州 云く、「庭前の 柏樹子。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “What is the meaning of the coming to the West [of Bodhidharma]?”¹ Zhaozhou said: “The cypress tree in front of the garden.”

¹ “The meaning of the coming to the West”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Pulling on the thread of causes to each consequence is an appropriate manner to find the way out of the maze into which man is thrown soon after his birth. This thread does more than simply connect causes and consequences, and rather represents the work of the skies themselves, the flow carried upon the way itself. The consequence is one with the cause, without delimitation between them, only a continuum, and following it, one is bound to arrive at the source of being itself. He may then still be tempted to ask the question: why? To do so is nonetheless to mistake the things of the world for what they represent. Meaning only exists within the mind of man, and therefore there is no meaning outside of the one he creates or determines. When the torrential rains of the fall are poured upon high peaks, a river forms and hastily runs down toward the ocean, and there is no meaning to it. It simply lets itself be pulled down by the weight of the earth, taking the path of least resistance, until it reaches its destination. Likewise, the boar roams the forest littered with amber-colored acorns to feed, responding to its most primal instinct, without thinking of the reason why it does so. Its mind is as clear as the stillest lake. The man whose mind is one with the way of the sky behaves like the river and the creatures roaming the land. Responding naturally to the signs of the heavens as well as those of the world, he is a leaf carried by the wind, taken where he is fated to go, without searching for a purpose before taking the first step, and without trying to give meaning to each of his actions.

What is the meaning of “this” or “that”? The cypress tree in front of the garden. The tree has no purpose and no will. It was a seed that fell down from another tree found nearby or was carried in the beak of a bird or the hand of a man before taking root in this particular spot. Day after day, it witnessed the rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west. Year after year, it endured the passing of the seasons, the frost and the parching gusts of air, impassively growing, bearing fruit when the time comes and later giving birth to new trees. It sees no east nor west, no spring nor fall, and yet it is in perfect harmony with the heavenly wheels, having been shaped by them since time immemorial.¹³⁶ It is anchored deep into the earth. Its branches are extended towards the great luminary throning in the sky, and yet it knows not what they are, without this ignorance playing any part in its existence, as it simply continues to follow its nature. Thus is a life in harmony with the way of the sky, without purpose, and yet fruitful; without meaning, and yet attracting followers, guiding them to be one with the way itself.

Case 158 —Yunmen’s “Discussion Going Off The Tracks” 一雲門話墮

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 39.

【中】

yún mén yīn sēng wèn guāng míng jì zhào biàn hé shā yí
雲門 因僧問：「光明寂¹ 照遍² 河沙³ 。」一
jù wèi jué mén jù yuē qǐ bú shì zhāng zhuō xiù cái yǔ
句未絕，門 遽曰：「豈不是⁴ 張拙秀才⁵ 語。」
sēng yún shì mén yún huà duò yě hòu lái sǐ xīn niān
僧云：「是。」門 云：「話墮也。」後來 死心 拈
yún qiě dào nà lǐ shì zhě sēng huà duò chù
云：「且道：那裏是者僧話墮處。」

¹ 【寂】[jì]: “silently” / “calmly.”

² 【遍】[biàn]: “everywhere.”

³ 【河沙】[hé shā]: Literally, “the sand of the Ganges River.” The sand of the Ganges refers, in the “Diamond Sutra” (金剛經), to things that are immeasurable. It here designates the whole of the universe. One may note that the number of stars in the known universe is approximately in the same order of magnitude as all the grains of sand on all the shores of the earth.

⁴ 【豈不是】S: 【豈不是】[qǐ bú shì]: “is it not?”

¹³⁶ See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p335 (Case 47).

⁵ 【張拙秀才】[zhāng zhuō xiù cái]: A scholar and poet of the Song dynasty, whose dates of birth and death are unknown. The quote indeed comes from one of his works: the “Poem of the Way of Enlightenment” (悟道詩). The rest of the quoted sentence is as follows: 「光明寂照遍河沙，凡聖含靈共我家；一念不生全體現，六根才動被雲遮；斷除煩惱重增病，趣向真如亦是邪；隨順世緣無罣礙，涅槃生死等空花。」

【日】

こ うんもん ちな そう と こうみょうじゃくしょうへん が
 舉す。雲門、因みに 僧問う、「光明 寂 照 遍河
 しゃ いっく いま ぜつ もんにわ いわ あ
 沙。」一句未だ 絶せざるに 門遽かに 曰く、「豈に
 こ ちょうせつ しゅうさい ご そういわ ぜ
 是れ 張拙 秀才の 語にあらずや。」僧云く、「是。」
 もんいわ わ だ こうらい ししんねん いわ しば
 門云く、「話墮せり。」後來、死心拈じて 云く、「且ら
 い なり こ こ そう わ だ ところ
 く 道え、那裏か 是れ 者の 僧が 話墮の 處。」

【E】

A Zen student told Yunmen: “The radiance calmly illuminates the sand of the Ganges River.” ¹ Before the sentence was finished, Yunmen asked: “Aren’ t these the words of Zhang Zhuo Xiu Cai?” ² The monk answered: “They are, indeed.” Yunmen said: “You are sidetracked” Later, Sishin talked about this dialogue [to his students] and asked: “Tell me: at what point did this monk go off the track?”

¹ “Zhang Zhuo Xiu Cai”: See note 5 of the Chinese text 5.

To be a poet is to appropriate the world to reveal the truth of the earth and the sky. It is to craft verses that evoke strong feelings in its audience, not bringing them to the cloudy heights of the world, like the verbose discourse of the metaphysician, but rather pulling them back to the craggy face of the earth, to what can be felt with the senses rather than what is reflected upon with the mind. The elegantly composed verses of the poet are nonetheless mere empty shells if the one hearing them lacks the sensibility and the maturity necessary to link their words with a personal experience, incarnating the poem with his flesh, letting himself be guided by it on a journey upon the bare earth, under the

sky. The poem may then only offer such a man a false impression, leading him to consider himself to have understood it, whereas he has only grasped the meaning of its words, not realizing that the essence of poetry does not belong to the realm where meaning is found, the world, but rather where sensation takes its roots, the earth. Great attention should thus be paid when borrowing the verses crafted by more experienced men. Caution is in order when reading the accounts of the poetic experiences of the masters of bygone eras, and one should always remember that these words were only composed to invite us to live such experiences ourselves, and to incite us to bring our own life into words, into the world, so that it may serve as a beacon guiding others on the path, even generations that have yet to be born.¹³⁷

One may thus be considered to be side-tracked when speaking words borrowed from others, whether or not they are truly understood, but one may nonetheless also be seen as straying from the path by merely considering that words belong to a particular person. To see a rigid frontier separating the self from the other is to fail to see the truth of being, beyond the lens of the world, cutting the whole into a collection of things, a heap of pieces. To think that one can possess words, and that they are inextricably linked with the one who first uttered them is to be deluded, to be a slave to the things of the world, a prisoner of words and letters. Since the essence of the poetic is to be found upon the bare earth, where there is no thing, no word, and no self, how ridiculous it is to attribute to a person the merit of any array of words depicting an experience of the truth of the earth and the sky. Each poem, each verse, is composed by the way of the sky, seeping into the world through the agency of man, who is a mere instrument in its composition, rather than its source. And yet, the dweller of the world

¹³⁷See: 山本玄峰. 《無門関提唱》. 東京: 大法輪閣, 1994: 「『涅槃生死空華に等し』... 結局『光明寂照遍河沙』という言葉は内容は素晴らしい内容だが、それは張拙秀才が云うたという事になれば、云うた人は張拙秀才で自分とは関係がない。自分はそれのせいぜい文字上の、観念的な事だけしかわかってない、自分自身が本当にこの『光明寂照遍河沙』という、自分がそういう境界であって云うたのならば、これは古人が云った言葉であっても、その時には、自分の語となっておるから主体性がある。... これが非常に大事なことだ。趙州が『無』と云ったとか、雲門が『日々是好日』と云ったとか、そのようなことをいくら知っておっても、自分の境界になっておらなかつたら、いくら『無』と云ってもそれは趙州の無字であって、自分の無字ではないのじゃ。かつて黄檗禅師は『汝等諸人悉く是れ呑酒糟の漢』と。お前たちはみな酒の糟を食うておるような奴だ。』

should nonetheless prefer the personal experience rather than the account of the other, until he can directly perceive the fallacy of the opposition between the two.

The radiance calmly illuminates the entire universe, but few eyes are therefore able to clearly witness its faint but all-pervading glow. We are all bright torches shining through the darkness of the night, lighting the piece of the world in which we stand, but this brilliance that reveals the things in our vicinity also plunges into deeper darkness the faint glow of the heavens, the inconspicuous essence that is so omnipresent that it is seldom seen. It is only when this torch is extinguished that the calm radiance may appear, also leading to a fading away of all the frontiers separating the things found upon the earth and in the sky. Then, one may finally realize that he is the gentle glow of the heavens itself, pervading all, and yet seldom recognized.

Case 159 —Young Bodhisattvas, Come And Eat —菩薩子吃飯來

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 74.

【中】

舉。 金牛 和尚，每至齋¹ 時，自將飯桶，於僧
堂前作舞，呵呵大笑云：「菩薩子² 喫飯來。」 雪竇
云：「雖然如此，金牛不是好心³ 。」僧問 長慶：「古
人道：『菩薩子喫飯來。』意旨如何。」 慶 云：「大
似因齋慶讚⁴ 。」

¹ 【齋】[zhāi]: “a vegetarian meal served at a Buddhist monastery.”

² 【菩薩】[pú sà]: “boddhisattva.”

³ 【好心】[hǎo xīn]: “to show kindness” / “to act with good intentions.”

⁴ 【大似因齋慶讚】[dà sì yīn zhāi qīng zàn]: The use of the word 因 [yīn] here leaves some space for different interpretations. The thanksgiving that is mentioned is causally linked with the meal, but the nature of this relationship can be interpreted in different ways: “It is like giving thanks for the meal,” “... to the meal,” “... according to the meal,” (See the Japanese version), or “... when eating a meal” (See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。p186: 「就像用齋的時候唱讚歌。」)。 This ambiguity contributes to the beauty of this case.

【日】

こ きんぎゅうおしょう さいじ いた ごと みずか めし
 舉す。金牛和尚、齋時に 至る 毎に、自ら 飯
 びつ もつ そうどう まえ まい な かか たいしょう
 桶を 將て 僧堂の 前に 舞を 作し、呵呵大笑して
 いわ ぼさつ し めし きつ き せつちよういわ
 云く、「菩薩子、飯を 喫し 來たれと。」雪竇云く、
 こ ごと いえど きんぎゅう こ こうしん
 「此の 如くなりと 雖然も、金牛は 是れ 好心なら
 そう ちょうけい と こじん い ぼさつ し めし
 ず。」僧、長慶に 問う、「古人道く、菩薩子、飯を
 ぎつ き い し いかん けいいわ さい よ
 喫し 來たれとは、意旨如何。」慶云く、「齋に 因つ
 けいさん おお に
 て 慶讚するに 大いに 似たり。」

【E】

At the time of each meal, Master Jinniu would himself bring the rice bucket and, when at the entrance of the hall, he would dance there while laughing loudly and saying: "Young Bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice!" (Xuedou said: "Even though he behaved that way, Jinniu was not being kind.") A monk asked Changching: "A man of the old days said: 'Young Bodhisattvas, come and eat rice.' What does it mean?" Changching said: "It is like praising and giving thanks for the rice."¹

¹ "Like praising and giving thanks for the rice": See note 4 of the Chinese text.

Under the impulse of the brilliant star circling the azure dome encompassing the earth, marking the pace of the days, the seeds buried deep in the watery paddies patiently grow, unhurriedly emerging out of the soil as jade-colored shoots turned toward the source of heavenly radiance. In their midst, they themselves nurture the growth of the next generation of seeds, pearly white grains, light weaved with earth and air to form the building blocks of life itself, some of which will give birth to other ears, but many of which will rather satiate the hunger of the birds reigning in the sky or the one of the men who planted them and nurtured their growth.

Each day, man survives through the sacrifice of other living beings, while the one whose compassion toward them is boundless is condemned to perish, unless he would exclusively feed himself from the cadavers of those having naturally exhausted their strengths, something rather improbable. Each grain of rice we ingest is a few more instants of life offered to us upon the face of the earth, rather than under it. Each meal is another day contemplating the wonders of the heavens and the beauty of our world, confidently walking on the path, wholeheartedly embracing the way, eagerly trying to see our true face. This is why each meal should be a frightful event, a reminder of the terrible price paid by life itself, the great efforts of the dead sacrificed so that we may live. With each bite, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether we are worthy or not of this day we spend upon the earth. With each meal, we should perhaps make amends for our shortcomings and see a new resoluteness emerge within our heart, so that we would not let this sacrifice be wasted on trivialities and vain ambitions. When we enter the dining hall, and are greeted with praise by someone who has seen his own face, saying: "Come and eat your meal, oh you who are destined to become awakened ones!" We may feel ourselves humbled, considering our own shortcomings, hearing the sharpest rebuke in these sweet words of praise.

Consciousness of the sacrifice that results in our existence and our perduring upon the earth nonetheless does not preclude mirth associated with the extension of our days. The mind is like the way of the sky itself, able to harbor opposites in perfect harmony, to host the contradictory elements of the world, reconciling them while preserving their distinctiveness. Our heart may be filled with awe in front of the responsibility incumbent upon us, and yet it may also be replete with merriment and joy, as we contemplate our own being, the bliss of experiencing the present instant, here on earth, knowing that we shall soon be devoured by the ground. Our body may be dancing and mourning, while our lips may sing praises and bitter rebukes in unison. To truly honor the sacrifice of life performed for our perpetuation, one should nonetheless cease to see himself as standing out from the rest of life, or from the entirety of the heavens themselves. The awakening comes when remorse can no longer be distinguished from mirth, when the praises and the rebukes are embraced together and reconciled, leaving no trace behind, no-thing. The one who eats is then one with what

is eaten. The rice itself can be praised. One can give thanks to the bucket in which it is held, and one shall hear the reply that it gives, resonating like a drum when it has been emptied, as a celebration of the transcendence of life and death, a glorification of being itself.

Case 160 —What A Fox-Spirit —這野狐精

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 93.

【中】

舉。僧問 大光：「長慶道：『因齋慶讚¹』，意旨如何。」大光作舞。僧禮拜，光云：「見箇什麼便禮拜。」僧作舞，光云：「這野狐精²。」

¹ 【因齋慶讚】[yīn zhāi qīng zàn]: See the fourth note in the previous case, Blue Cliff Record 74.

² 【野狐精】[yě hú jīng]: “fox-spirit.” The term here refers to the so-called “Fox-Zen” (野狐禪), linked with the second case of the Gateless Barrier, in which a wild fox plays the central part. The fox-spirit here designates someone who imitates the behavior of a Zen master, without understanding it.

【日】

舉す。僧、大光に 問う、「長慶道く、齋に 因つて 慶讚すと。意旨如何。」大光、舞を 作す。僧、禮拜す。光云く、「箇の 什麼を 見てか、 便ち 禮拜する。」僧、舞を 作す。光云く、「這の 野狐精。」

【E】

A monk asked Daguang: “Changching said, ‘It is like praising and giving thanks for the rice’¹ What did he mean?” Daguang danced. The monk made a deep bow. Daguang said: “What did you see that makes you bow like that?” The monk danced. Daguang said: “What a fox spirit!”²

¹ See Blue Cliff Record Case 74.

² “Fox” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

Gratefulness is a state of mind, detached from any notion of cause and consequence. It can be reached without the need for one to direct it toward a precise thing. One can be grateful for a meal, because of a meal, or even toward a meal itself. It expresses the feeling that one is not necessarily deserving of his own condition, of the favors he enjoys, and it shows a willingness to give back what one has received, thereby contributing to the harmony of all that is. With no one to thank, and nothing to pay homage to, one may therefore express his gratitude with his limbs rather than with his tongue, with a dance rather than with words, avoiding the pitfalls of the world, inappropriate and deceitful language, and rather letting his entire body be a sign of mirth, one that is addressed to everyone and no one, one whose meaning is crystal-clear and yet cannot be pinpointed, exhibiting a property of the heavens themselves, being a reflection of their mysterious nature.

The man of the world is thus naturally perplexed by a display of speechless joy without identifiable cause or direction. He seeks an answer. He searches for an explanation, a reason that would justify such peculiar behavior, because he cannot envision the fact that there are no reasons for what does not belong to his world. The leaves dance with the wind, and the waves chant their endless mantra as they collide with the sand and the rocks of the shores, but there are no reasons explaining these performances, nor any audience toward which they would be directed. They just are. A man who lives on the edge separating the earth and the world may therefore let words flow out of his mouth, without thought, without calculation, words of gratitude that will be interpreted by those hearing them, with the interpreters endlessly losing themselves in vain debates, while they were only audible seeds thrown into the air, as an expression of the joy of simply being, here and now. True gratitude comes from a clear view of the nature of the heavens, being one with the ear of rice growing in the paddy field, one with the sun fostering its growth, one with the brethren eating the meal prepared with it, aware of their shared essence, aware that this consciousness is a mere illusion, an ec-stasy allowing us to see

that there is no-thing there, and thus only no-thing to be grateful for, and no-thing that can express gratitude.

Words are often difficult to interpret, and one can never be certain of sharing the same understanding as the one who uttered them. Signs expressed without words, such as with the body itself, are laden with an even greater range of meanings, which are even harder to ascertain, and this is also what makes the greatest strength of this kind of signs, as they embody the ambiguity inherent to the frontier separating earth from world, and the nature of man himself, torn apart between these two realms and yet reconciling them both. The danger of such earthly language is nonetheless that it is extremely easy to imitate, even without having the slightest idea of what it represents, and it would be almost impossible to point this mistake out without making use of words, the language of the world. One's practice may then be like the training of a parrot, mimicking a voice perfectly, without understanding a single word, without even knowing that they are more than a mere sound, more than a feeble tremor of the heavenly ether. This is why it would be cruel for a man of the way to remain silent while witnessing such foolishness. Such a man must courageously wade through the mud of the world, soiling his mouth with improper words, to allow others to see the great light, to cease to be monkeys on the earth and parrots in the sky, to rather be men, joining earth and world, gathering the ground and the heights, incarnating the harmony of these realms with their flesh and their mind.

Case 161 — As Small As A Grain Of Rice —如粟米粒大

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 5.

【中】

舉。雪峯示眾云：「盡大地撮¹來，如粟米²
粒大。拋³向面前，漆桶⁴不會。打鼓，普請看。」

¹ 【撮】[cuō]: “to pick with one's fingertips.”

² 【粟米】[sù mǐ]: “grain [of a crop].”

³ 【拋】S: 【抛】[pāo]: “to throw” / “to toss.”

⁴ 【漆桶】[qī tǒng]: “a [black] lacquer bucket.” By extension, also can designate delusions and attachments. (See: 新村出。《広辞苑第七版》。東京：岩波書店、2018: 「漆桶 しっ - つう (「うるしを入れた桶」の意から) 真っ黒で何も分からないこと。転じて、妄想や執着。また、仏法に暗い僧。」)

【日】

こ せっぼう しゅ しめ いわ じん だいち つま
 舉す。雪峰、衆に 示して 云く、「盡大地撮み
 あぐ あ わ つぶ ほど おお めんぜん ほうりだ
 来れば、粟米粒如の 大ききなり。面前に 抛向す
 しっつう え たいこ う ふしん
 も、漆桶にして 會せざらん。鼓を 打って 普請し
 み
 看よと。」

【E】

Xuefeng, instructing the assembly, said: “You pick up the entire earth with three fingers, and it’s the size of a grain of rice. Someone throws it in front of you, and it is as if it was in a black lacquer bucket, and one does not recognize it anymore. Beat the drum! Everyone, come to look for it!”

The difference between the sun and a grain of sand can only be determined by the mind. The large and the small, the light and the heavy, these are our creations, whereas the heavens know no size nor weight, only being as they are, without knowledge nor measure. Man is the measure of all things, and outside of his mind, there is only the immeasurable. Further than this, on the bare earth, when the frontiers of man’s world have been crossed, it is not only quantities and qualities that vanish, but even all things themselves, as such, as countable entities, graspable objects, as the contours defining them are traced by the blade of our perception and the knife of our reason. There is no part of the earth, and there is not even a whole that exists as such. The totality it forms is indeed not a “thing,” as “things” cannot pass the threshold leading out of our mind, out of our world. The grain of sand that we pick up with our fingers is not separated from what is around it. Invisible forces bind this grain of sand with all its surroundings,

up to the entirety of the heavens. It is not formed of particles clearly localized at one spot in the cosmos, nor can one trace an absolute boundary defining where it begins and where it ends, as its substance is like a wave progressively fading away, until we cannot perceive it, but leaving us unable to determine its end, forcing us to arbitrarily trace lines.

When we pick up a grain of sand with our fingers, we therefore pick up the entire earth, and we pull the totality of the heavens. Our eyes may only perceive a single grain of sand, but when the mind is clear of all things; when our heart is one with the way of the sky, we may see all that *is* through this minuscule piece of matter, see the whole rather than the parts, the earth and the sky rather than our world. Once it is seen clearly, then comes the realization of the vacuity of the whole of being, of the celestial realm and all that it encompasses. It indeed represents the last thing, the greatest object that can be fathomed, but such a thing remains like an individual grain of sand, that is, a mirage created by our mind, veiling the truth of being to render it graspable by our mind, but not reflecting its true nature. This is when the grain can be cast away in the darkness, and with it the entire earth and the sky. The last thing can be thrown into the chasm, so that no-thing will be seen, and everything will appear in its truth. Blindness to all things is indeed a prerequisite to the perception of the truth of being, the essence of the sky. The earth, the world, and the skies are left unchanged, not experiencing the slightest transformation, with every single thing of the world in its place, but with a blindfold upon his eyes, man can then perceive “no-thing” with his other senses, that is, what can be experienced but not recognized, what can snatch up one’s heart but cannot be put into words. One will nonetheless feel compelled to share this experience, and he will be eager to invite his brethren to share this newfound wealth that comes as the result of having thrown all things away. Speechless, without tongue nor lips, without words nor concepts, he can only trigger a wave in the air filling up the sky, vigorously beating the drum in front of him, with its thundering sound calling for all to come and look for it, to look for no-thing!

Case 162 — A Fence Of Peonies — 花藥欄

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 39.

【中】

舉。僧問 雲門：「如何是清淨法身¹。」門
jǔ sēng wèn yún mén rú hé shì qīng jìng fǎ shēn mén
 云：「花藥² 欄³。」僧云：「便怎麼去時如何。」門
yún huā yào lán sēng yún biàn rèn me qù shí rú hé mén
 云：「金毛獅子。」
yún jīn máo shī zi

¹ 【法身】[fǎ shēn]: “the Dharma body.” A translation of the Sanskrit word “dharma-kāya” (धर्मकाय). One of the “three bodies” of a Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It may be seen as the essence of the whole of nature.

² 【花藥】S: 【花药】[huā yào]: “Chinese peony” (*Paeonia lactiflora*).

³ 【欄】S: 【栏】[lán]: “a fence.”

【日】

舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
せいじょうぼっしん もんいわ か やくらん そういわ すなわ
 清淨 法身。」門云く、「花藥欄。」僧云く、「 便ち
さよう さ とき いかん もんいわ さんもう しし
 怎麼にし 去る 時、如何。」門云く、「金毛の 獅子。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is the pure Dharma-body?”¹ Yunmen said: “A fence of peonies”² The monk said: “What if one goes that way?” Yunmen said: “A golden-haired lion.”

¹ “Dharma-body”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “A fence of peonies”: It has been suggested that this fence was one surrounding latrines.

Since time immemorial, men have forged names to attempt to represent the foundation of being itself, sometimes seen as the first cause or the destiny of all that *is*, crafting idols to be made central parts of their world so that we all may finally have somewhere to direct our prayers, someone to address our petitions, or a direction to focus our attention when we desperately seek for the meaning of our existence or simply attempt to see our own nature. With great care, our forefathers carved up these idols, out of the most

elegant material, employing the most skilled artists, and yet the incredible beauty of these creations only serves to mask the ugly truth lying beyond them, their falsehood, deceiving the heart of man and preventing him from facing the truth he so desperately seeks.

What is the “pure essence of being” then? It is a fence of peonies circling a latrine. The flowers are a masterwork of nature and, likewise, the concept of this “essence” is a magnificently crafted creation of man exalted in the midst of his world, attracting the eyes of the passer-by and tingling their nose with a subtle fragrance that draws a smile upon their faces, as their eyes feast upon the palette of colors it displays for all to see. This performance seizing the senses of man and rejoicing his heart nonetheless also deceives him. It simply conceals the true nature of this place, which is adorned with flowers, but whose purpose and use is to receive the excretions of the dwellers of this part of the earth, the colorful living things only masking the soiled apparatus built for this purpose, and the delightful scent only covering the stench of the products of man’s willingness to extend their days upon the face of the earth. The holy creations of man, the concepts he forged with his tongue and his quill, are like this fence, separating the truth from a caricature of it, leading men to mistake one for the other. Truth is nonetheless not to be found in the sight of colors or the smelling of a fragrance, but rather within ourselves. Seeing our own nature indeed implies seeing what we are, in all our ugliness as well as in all our beauty, transcending both.¹³⁸ We should thus try to peer beyond the words, to pierce through the concepts, seeing through their deceitful nature. We should rather take refuge in a direct experience, realizing that we are what we seek, and that the most common of our daily activities are manifestations of it, the answer that we waited for so long. The latrine may then become our temple. Each excretion may be a mystical experience, revealing our own nature as we feel a part of ourselves offered back to the earth, showing us what we are, what all things

¹³⁸See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript] says: “But, recall the line from the sutra quoted above: ‘A person who takes colors to see the self or sounds to find the self is practicing a heretical way. That person will never be able to see the Tathagata.’” Original Japanese: 「しかし『色を以て我を見、音声を以て我を求むれば、この人は邪道を行ず、如来を見奉ること能わず』とお経にある通り」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

are, and then the horrible stench of this place concealed from the eyes of others will cease to be distinguishable from the delightful fragrance of the peonies. The ugliness of this solitary act, performed away from the gaze of our beloved ones, will then vanish, and this deed will appear as beautiful as the vividly colored fence, a celebration of life and being. The holy then merges with the profane, and the representation is one with what it designates. After such a realization, one may go out in the world with a clear mind, relieved in the latrine of all the things that burdened him, having seen his own face inside it. Having forgotten shame and impurity, he can then proudly return to join his brethren, like a golden-haired lion, fearless, shameless, and thoughtless, letting his roar resonate through the streets, sharing with a shout the truth he now embodies.

Case 163 —Heshan's "Beat The Drum" —禾山解打鼓

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 44.

【中】

舉。禾山垂語云：「習學謂之聞，絕學謂之隣。過此二者，是為真過。」僧出問：「如何是真過。」
山云：「解打鼓。」又問：「如何是真諦¹。」山云：「解打鼓。」又問：「即心即佛² 即不問，如何是非心非佛³。」山云：「解打鼓。」又問：「向上人來時如何接。」山云：「解打鼓。」

¹ 【真諦】S: 【真諦】[zhēn dì]: “the real essential truth,” opposed to the “common essential truth” (俗諦). Both are called “the two essential truths” (二諦). From the Sanskrit “Satya” (सत्य), meaning “truth.”

² See case 84 (case 30 of the Gateless Barrier), centered around this phrase.

³ See case 194 (case 33 of the Gateless Barrier), centered around this phrase.

【日】

こ さん すいご いわ しゅがく これ もん
舉す。禾山垂語して云く、「修學、之を聞と

い ぜつがく これ りん い こ ふた す
 謂い、絶學、之を 隣と 謂う。此の 二つを 過ぐる
 もの これ しん か な そう い と いか
 者、是を 眞過と 爲す。」僧出でて 問う、「如何な
 こ しん か さんいわ よ く う ま
 るか 是れ 眞過。」山云く、「解く 鼓を 打つ。」又た
 と いか こ しんたい さんいわ よ
 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 眞諦。」山云く、「解く
 く う ま と そくしんそくぶつ すなわ と
 鼓を 打つ。」又た 問う、「即心即佛は 即ち 問わ
 いか こ ひ しん ひ ぶつ さんいわ よ
 ず、如何なるか 是れ 非心非佛。」山云く、「解く
 く う ま と こうじょう ひと き とき
 鼓を 打つ。」又た 問う、「向上の 人來たる 時、
 いか せつ さんいわ よ く う
 如何にか 接する。」山云く、「解く 鼓を 打つ。」

【E】

Heshan, giving instruction, said: “To study and to learn, this may be called ‘hearing.’ To complete one’s study, this may be called ‘being close.’ When one has passed through these two, it can be considered a true passing.” A monk stepped forward and asked: “What is the ‘true passing’?” Heshan said: “Beat the drum!” He asked again: “What is the fundamental truth?” Heshan said: “Beat the drum!” He asked again: “I do not ask about [the sentence] ‘the mind is Buddha,’¹ but what does ‘neither mind nor Buddha’² mean?” Heshan said: “Beat the drum!” He asked once more: “When a man of advanced practice, on his way up [to Nirvana] comes here, how should he be received?” Heshan said: “Beat the drum!”

¹ See case 84 (case 30 of the Gateless Barrier), centered around this phrase.

² See case 194 (case 33 of the Gateless Barrier), centered around this phrase.

Our forefathers have already walked most of the path upon which we advance during the course of our lives. Their experiences have become the point of origin and the source of numerous parts of our world, as these experiences were turned into words and books, pointing out the way to go, so that we may not only catch up with

them but continue their endeavor, reaching places having yet to be discovered. Studying the knowledge of the world is hearing the voices of the past, warning us of dangers and inviting us to follow the clues they left to help us find the way. There nonetheless comes a point when this knowledge of the world teaches about the boundaries, the limitations of this very world. We must first realize the nature of this realm into which we were all thrown soon after our coming to life, realizing that what we see around us is largely a construction of our mind, a product of the work of our ancestors and brethren, showing us the appearance of things, but concealing their substance, which can only appear when one is ready to shatter these things, to crush them to smithereens. When the stick is in one's hand and he is ready to strike at the thing in front of it, he has completed his study. He then no longer has need of the knowledge of the world for his instruction, to guide him on the path. He stands upon the threshold of the world, ready to pass over, toward the unknown.

The call has been heeded, and the goal is clear. The things' substance is about to be unveiled. The mouth is closed, and the tongue stays still, while the hand firmly holds the instrument of this revelation. The arm moves swiftly, without the slightest trace of wavering, and it violently strikes the object in front of him, causing it to tremble while a loud rumble echoes throughout the air, reaching the ears of all those present in its vicinity. The thing reveals itself to be a drum, and what is heard is the sound of the emptiness at its heart. Skin and earth form its outer shell, but inside it, there is nothing, and the interaction between the trembling shell and this empty expanse is what gives birth to this sound passing through the sky, broadcasting the presence of nothingness itself in the midst of this thing. The drum is a thing of the world, bearing a name and having a use in it. It is also shaped with the earth, an animal hide stretched upon a vessel of wood or clay. Its core, and what gives it its property as an instrument used for calling others or striking awe in their heart is nonetheless the emptiness concealed by its outward appearance. Hearing this sound, one may hear the nature of all the other things that surround him. The sound of the drum allows him to gather all the things of the world to him.¹³⁹ The things themselves heed the

¹³⁹ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005。：「開示真正的解脫只在於領會此一包含所有事實而始終同一之『解打鼓』。或謂『解打

calling of the drum, and the drummer finally perceives the unicity of these things. Further than this, he realizes that they are all like the drum itself, a cloak clothing no-thing-ness itself, a skin covering an emptiness that pervades all that is, including himself.

The drummer is thus himself a drum, a skin that clothes emptiness itself, and now his voice resounds like its single note, as there is only one thing that he has to say. There is only silence, interrupted by the beating of the drum, calling for an assembly, ordering all the men of the world to come and hear what being is, through this wave resounding throughout the heavens and into their ears, into their minds. With his stick, he may begin to strike those who approach him, to make the emptiness inside them be heard and show them their own nature. A slap on the face and one's ego may then be shattered to pieces, leaving no-thing in its stead, and when every single thing of the world will have been shattered, when every man will have heard the sound of his heart, then they can all cross together, shedding their skin away, smashing the drums to dust, and finally enter the place where there is only no-thing, while the sound of the drum continues to echo into the future, ready to be heard by those who have yet to be born.

Case 164 —Zhaozhou's Robe —趙州布衫

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 45.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn zhào zhōu wàn fǎ guī yī yī guī hé chù zhōu
 舉。僧問 趙州：「萬法歸一，一歸何處。」 州
 yún wǒ zài qīng zhōu zuò yī lǐng bù shān zhòng qī jīn
 云：「我在青州作一領布衫，重七斤。」

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と まんぼう いち き
 舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「萬法は 一に 歸す、
 いち いずこ き しゅういわ わが せいしゅう
 一は 何處にか 歸する。」州 云く、「我 青州に
 あ いちりょう ふ さん つく おも ななきん
 在りて、一領の 布衫を 作る。重きこと 七斤。」

鼓」，即響在後面之意，亦即寓玄旨於言外之意。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “The ten thousand things come down to one. What does the one come down to?” Zhaozhou said: “When I was living in the Qing province, I made a robe, which weighed seven pounds.”

The way of the sky gave birth to life, to man, and to his world. This world began with a foundation stone, a single thing, then shattered into a myriad of pieces, the things that are now around us.¹⁴⁰ The man of the world furthers its edification, polishing these shards of the “one thing,” continuing to crush them into smaller pieces, then used to form a mosaic expressing the fruits of his experiences and his imagination. This work allows mankind to hold sway over the rest of life, and over portions of the earth and the sky, as man dodges all the assaults upon his life, ensures the appropriation of the resources he needs for the perpetuation of his kind, and develops his knowledge and mastery over nature itself.

The man of the way, on the other hand, walks backward on the path taken by the men of the world. He begins by mending the pieces of the earth and the sky. He discards the pernicious illusions made into things by his brethren, things that have no ground in the earth. He sees through the pieces, perceiving that they are but a broken image of the oneness of nature, and he thus industriously labors to reveal what is shared by all things, arraying the shards like a gigantic puzzle, showing how they all fit into one another, forming a single picture. Once all the pieces have found their place, and the whole image can finally be contemplated, then comes the inevitable question: what then? When there is only one thing in front of us, this is when the thingness of the thing can then be perceived. When the world has been reduced to its foundation

¹⁴⁰See this sentence from Laozi’ s *Dao De Jing*: “The way produced one; one produced two; two produced three; three produced the myriad of things. The ten thousand things leave behind them the Obscurity and go forward to embrace the Brightness as they are harmonized by the blending of their flux.” Original Chinese text: 「道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。」From: 阿部吉雄。《新釈漢文大系〈7〉老子莊子上巻》。東京：明治書院，1966. p78-79 (Chapter 42).

stone, the essence of the world can then be perceived, as well as the reason why it was laid in the first place. In order for this totality of the earth and the sky to be perceived, there nonetheless needs to be another thing. One may contemplate the entirety of the earth and the sky as a single thing, a single object, but he himself represents something even more primordial, something that reveals itself to be what supports the very foundation stone of the world: his self, the subject that observes the object. He is the source out of which the first thing arises. He is the wellspring of things, as well as the builder of the world. Without man, there is nothing to grasp, nothing to see, and nothing to perceive or understand. If he sees his own true face, he can see where he himself comes from, as clear as the air filling up the celestial vault. If someone then asks him what he saw, what is the ultimate source of all things, how will he answer? Rather than misusing words to talk about what cannot be described with words, he may simply appeal to one's personal experience of creation, of the witnessing of the emergence of a thing of the world.

When one creates something, a garment, for example, he first gathers fibers made of plants or the hairs of animals. He then cleans and turns them into thread, and weaves them into cloth, before cutting and sewing it to adapt it to the shape of a particular body. A new thing is created, in the world, but nothing has been created upon the earth. Man has only transformed elements found in nature. Feeling the end product in his hands, its heaviness represents the same weights as the one of the pieces of earth he used to create it. His creation is only the result of a skillful rearrangement, like many other things found in his world. The ten thousand things likewise all come down to one, without anything having been created outside of man's consciousness, but this one thing, encompassing the entirety of the skies, is in its substance not a creation of man. We only turned what was no-thing into a thing, assigning a label, a name, to what was already there before us. All things of the world indeed emerge out of no-thing-ness, including ourselves. We rose out of the place where there is not a single thing, and we then took upon ourselves the task of dividing the first thing into a myriad, often failing to see that we are the foundation of our own world. We are the first thing and the last, what stands out of the all-pervading no-thing-ness, the whole of being itself. Our bodies were patiently weaved by nature

like a garment, using air, earth, and water, and our consciousness emerged as the result of this extremely intricate work of art. We nonetheless remain a sack of air, earth, and water, and nothing new was created when we were born. We remain no-thing-ness incarnate, like any other thing of our world. Nothing emerged, and nothing disappeared. There is only no-thing-ness cloaked in a heavy cloth of illusions.

Case 165 —The Dust Dust Samadhi —塵塵三昧

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 50. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 99.

【中】

舉。僧問 雲門：「如何是塵塵三昧¹。」 門
jǔ sēng wèn yún mén rú hé shì chén chén sān mèi mén
yún bō lì fàn tǒng lǐ shuǐ
 云：「鉢裏飯，桶裏水。」

¹ 【塵塵三昧】[chén chén sān mèi]: “dust dust samadhi.” The dust refers to the things of the world, the objects of our perception and thought, and the attachments linked to them. The “dust dust samadhi” is an enlightenment triggered by an exposition to the dust of the world. The smallest and most insignificant thing around us may indeed become the source of a complete liberation from the yoke of the world.

【日】

舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 塵
じんざんまい もんいわ はつ なか めし つう なか みず
 塵三昧。」 門云く、「鉢の 裏の 飯、桶の 裏の 水。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is the dust-dust samadhi?”

¹ Yunmen said: “Rice in the bowl; water in the bucket.”

¹ “Dust-dust Samadhi”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Our body is a bottomless vessel with six openings through which a continuous flow passes as long as we are awake, the five

senses and our consciousness, while during our sleep our consciousness, our imagination, becomes the sole source of a similar torrent of haphazardly conflated feelings and thoughts. Each thing belonging to our world, from the tiniest speck of dust until the most gigantic star adorning the heavens, is susceptible to becoming the arrowhead that will pierce through our mind and break our perception of this world, revealing what was too familiar to us to be seen. Our life is paced by the use we make of the things around us. The dust covering the floor is swiftly swept away so that the pristine nature of the marble it is made of can be displayed for all to see. The cup is filled with water when one is thirsty, and put away once empty. The plate receives the meal when it is time to eat, and it is stored out of sight once one is satiated. We spend our days busying ourselves with the affairs of the world, often with strenuous work, for our survival and prosperity, with leisure and entertainments for our own pleasure, but we remain with few occasions to contemplate the nature of these things, to ponder their place in our existence as well as in the whole of nature. Each single one of these things nonetheless holds the potential to change our existence, to radically alter the course of our life, if only we seize the chance to attentively observe them, letting them speak to us, rather than simply be used by our hands.

Each impression left upon our senses by the things of the world thus is an occasion offered to us to perceive the truth of being. Each speck of dust leaving an imprint upon our body is the most potent medicine, the most powerful elixir, able to awaken one plunged into the deepest sleep, vigorously pulling him out of the land of illusions and throwing him into the naked truth of nature, into the brightest light that illuminates every corner of his heart and his world. Each thing around him is an opening through which he can be hurled headlong, no matter its size or what it is made of, and once he has passed through, he discovers that he is in the very same place, but that all is now seen under a new light. The world becomes more than a heap of things that can be useful to him. It also displays an inconspicuous and yet magnificently harmonious order, finally seen for the first time. The meal in the plate. The water in the cup. Such scenes of life represent the most natural things, things being where they should. Every single thing now appears in its place, with the rest of the universe pointing out to it, supporting it, and guiding it as it is carried upon the way of

the sky. Seeing the water in the bowl, one may then see how it got there, the rain poured by the clouds upon the snowy peaks of the mountains and turned into rivers before being diverted to a city and a maze of pipes, before falling into this glass vessel. One may also see where it will go, passing through our throat, becoming part of our flesh, before it runs down another set of tubes and then reaches the sea, and the work of the sun and the winds once again brings it up to form clouds. Seeing some rice in a bowl, one may see the radiance of our blazing star showering the muddy ground littered with seeds, soon sprouting out of the earth and extending their leaves toward the sky, as if thanking the source of their growth, before they are cut down with steel tools, deprived of their grains, cleaned and gathered before they are cooked with steam, finally brought unto the plate from which men will get their daily sustenance. Entering their belly, they will then be digested to feed the fire of life burning within their skin, while a large part of it will be offered back to the earth, fertilizing the soil and fostering the growth of the crops of the next seasons. When one is awake and the order of nature is clearly seen, all questions then vanish, and all thoughts are scattered like the morning mist after dawn. Each speck of dust becomes the celestial vault itself, and the largest celestial bodies appear no greater than a grain of sand, as they all represent the perfection of the order of nature, without any separation between them, like a whirlwind the size of the universe itself.

Case 166 —Fengxue’ s “Speck Of Dust” —風穴一塵

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 61. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 34.

【中】

jǔ fēng xué chuí yǔ yún ruò lì yì chén jiā guó xīng shèng bú
舉。風穴垂語云：「若立一塵，家國興盛；不
lì yì chén jiā guó sàng wáng xuě dòu niān zhǔ zhàng yún huán yǒu tóng shēng
立一塵，家國喪亡。」雪竇拈拄杖云：「還有同生
tóng sǐ dǐ nà sēng ma
同死底¹ 衲僧² 麼。」

¹ 【底】[dǐ]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 的.

² 【衲僧】[nà sēng]: “a monk.”

【日】

こ ふけつ すいご いわ も いちじん た
 擧す。風穴垂語して云く、「若し 一塵を 立つ
 か こくこうせい いちじん た か こくそう
 れば、家國興盛し、一塵を 立てざれば、家國喪
 ぼう せつちょうしゅじょう とりあ いわ は どうしょう どう
 亡す。」雪竇、拄杖を 拈げて云く、「還た 同生 同
 し てい のうそう
 死底の 衲僧ありや。」

【E】

Fengxue, giving instruction, said: “If one raises a speck of dust, one’s house and nation prosper. If one does not raise a speck of dust, one’s house and nation perish.” (Xuedou held up his staff and said: “Is there still any monk who lives and dies in accordance with this?”)

The world in which man is thrown at birth is the source of his power over earth and sky. In his youth, he is taught how to appropriate the innumerable things built by his forefathers, so that he would also in the future contribute to its edification. Tools are put in his hands and he is told: “The earth is your property! The sky is your birthright! Shape them according to your wishes!” He receives comprehensive instruction, teaching him to discern the boundaries between things, their names, and their use, without questioning their nature, without doubting the soundness of the foundation of this world. These things become all that he knows, his entire world, and it is through their use that he writes the story of his own existence, creating new things, undertaking new tasks, accomplishing what has never been done before for his house, his people, or his country. Lands and empires thus rise and prosper, through the discrimination between parts of the earth and the sky, allowing their use, and through the birth of new ideas, the creation of new objects, and the establishment of new institutions. The entirety of this world rests entirely on the cutting out of the whole of nature into arbitrary things, graspable by the hands and the mind of man. Without the dagger of perception, the sword

of reason, none of this would be possible. Without “this” and “that,” without “right” and “wrong,” man would live a life as the lilies in the grass, a quiet existence shaped by the work of the sky, without meaning, without pleasure nor pain. The incredibly powerful nature of our capacity to see the dune formed by the earth as individual grains of sand, to perceive the seamless whole as distinct things, nonetheless does not negate the arbitrary and illusory nature of such distinction. Our world rests upon falsehood, and even though our prosperity depends upon this productive illusion, the truth of nature can still occupy a prominent place in our existence.

If man were to live his life in the unmediated truth of the earth, perceiving the skies as they are, as a continuous whole without parts or things, he would not be able to make use of it. He cannot fathom nor grasp this whole, neither with his mind nor with his hands. He would then be condemned to idleness, to vain contemplation, and would soon return to the earth out of which he came, as he would not discern the food he needs for his survival from the rocky soil under his feet or the clouds passing over his head, and he would be utterly incapable of finding a mate with whom to father an offspring. If one does not discern what is one's own from what belongs to another, his house is bound to vanish from the face of the earth. If a nation does not distinguish friend from foe, gold from iron, it will promptly be conquered by its neighbors and perish. If man does not trace a line between life and death, he will swiftly cease to live, and there will be no one to contemplate the truth of the earth and the sky. This is the contradiction at the heart of man's existence, his need for the illusions of the world to exist so that he may break the spell of these illusions by returning to a perfect absence of discerning of the earth, thereby unveiling the nature of this existence. The tension between these two opposite conceptions is nonetheless what gives its uniqueness to man's life. He is not condemned to remain possessed by this duality. He may indeed embrace both and transcend them, reconciling life and death, illusion and truth, earth and world, by not being attached to any of them, even to non-attachment itself, letting himself be guided by the course of the skies, following his instincts while keeping a mind through which things appear and disappear freely, according to one's needs. One may then let himself be guided by what is found in his hand, not

needing to know whether it is a wooden staff or a serpent, a dead thing that comes out of life or a living thing that brings back to death, as all comes when it should.¹⁴¹

Case 167 —The Dharma-Body That Endures And Remain Intact 一堅固法身

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 82.

【中】

舉。僧問 大龍：「色身¹ 敗壞，如何是堅固法
身²。」龍云：「山花³ 開似錦⁴，澗⁵ 水湛⁶ 如
藍⁷。」

¹ 【色身】[sè shēn]: “the body tied with the senses.”

² 【法身】[fǎ shēn]: “the Dharma body.” A translation of the Sanskrit word “dharma-kāya” (धर्म काय). One of the “three bodies” of a Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It may be seen as the essence of the whole of nature.

³ 【山花】[shān huā]: “wild mountain flowers.” The term also designated a type of blue flower, used to die silk, whose exact nature is uncertain. It would seem that the present case referred to these particular flowers, offering a depiction of a landscape with different shades of blue, where the mountain finds itself undistinguishable from the water and the sky, like the case mentioning the snow piled in the silver bowl (銀碗裏盛雪 [yín wǎn lǐ shéng xuě], see case 86) and the white horse entering the field of white flowers (白馬入蘆花 [bái mǎ rù lú huā], a “capping word” in the commentaries of the same case). (See: 《漢語大詞典》。上海辭書出版社, 2024 (Electronic Edition): 「1. 山間野花。2. 植物名。」; See also: 唐段公路。《北戶錄·山花燕支》: 「山花，叢生。端州山嶠間多有之。其葉類藍。其花似蓼，抽穗長二三寸，作青白色。正月開。土人採含苞者賣之，用為燕支粉，或持染絹帛，其紅不下藍花。」)

⁴ 【錦】S: 【錦】[jǐn]: “a brocade” / “an embroidered work.”

⁵ 【澗】S: 【澗】[jiàn]: a variant of 澗 [jiàn], “a mountain stream.”

⁶ 【湛】[zhàn]: “deep” / “clear” (water).

⁷ 【藍】S: 【藍】[lán]: “indigo plant” / “blue.”

【日】

¹⁴¹ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005: 【題解】佛家認為一微塵是世界萬物構成的最小單位... 如果在它上面立一塵，則有山有河、有迷有悟、有染有淨、有佛有凡夫、有苦有樂，在差別相中得見森羅萬象的世界相。這在保守的野老們看來威足眉燈目，家國卻因此而興盛。反之，不立一塵，就沒有迷悟、染淨、苦樂的差別，是無差別平等寂靜的境地。四海平靜，波瀾不起。野老們只求妥協姑息，家國因此喪亡。立與不立，興盛與喪亡，正是同生同死之機。... 超越一切對立，無分別地對待出世與入世才是真正禪者的胸懷。」

こ そう だいりょう と しきしん はい え いか
 擧す。僧、大龍に 問う、「色身は 敗壞す、如何な
 こ けんご ほっしん りゅういわ さんか ひら にしき
 るか 是れ 堅固法身。」龍 云く、「山花開いて 錦に
 に かんすいたた あい ごと
 似たり、澗水湛えて 藍の 如し。」

【E】

A monk asked Dalong: “The body tied with the senses perishes. What is the Dharma-body¹ that endures and remains intact?” Dalong said: “The blue wild flowers of the mountains open up and form a brocade; the water of the mountain streams is like indigo.”

¹ “Dharma-body”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

What we look for in the heights of the world, in the depths of the sky, as it remains desperately out of our reach while we exhaust all our strength to attain it, is often rather to be found down below, upon the naked earth, right in front of our nose, ready to be picked up with our fingers. We see the eternal in the ever-changing ballet of the celestial bodies, bedazzled by its mysterious splendor, and we forget to notice the ground upon which we spent the entirety of our life, the rocky surface that represents the foundation of our world, even though it remains as it was since the tree of life was but an insignificant shoot emerging out of the ocean. The lofty concepts and the cryptic terms of the scholar and the priest attract the attention of the simple, but only bring him puzzlement and confusion if he truly pursues the truth of being. The genuine guide thus refuses to answer his questions while they abide in the heights. He brings him back to the ground, where things can be felt with the senses rather than merely talked or dreamed about. Metaphysics is abandoned, and poetry is wholeheartedly embraced. It is the language of the earth, words that appeal to the senses, without the need for reflection or interpretation. They are as clear as the day, as transparent as a mountain stream reflecting the sky painted with shades of indigo.

The words of the poet can soothe the anguish of those lost in the maze of incomprehension. Such men are worried about the

meaning of their existence, and dread the day when they will have to face death. They see the fire of life be extinguished from the body of their parents and witness the flesh of their progenitors being slowly worn out by the earth and the sky, until they are nothing but ashes and bones, and thus do they seek to hold on to something that will take their place, something that can be relied upon, forever, and that can become the subject of one's devotion. This imperishable body is nature itself, visible all around them. The wild flowers of the mountains open up and form a colorful brocade, an exquisitely weaved carpet covering the earth, with each flower, each fiber, impossible to distinguish but each one of them yet being part of a whole. At all times, flowers wither while others sprout out of the soil. The individual perishes, but the whole endures, and one may then realize that the individual is a mere illusion. Each cell in our body dies and is replaced, but we continue to exist. Each one of us dies, but mankind continues to build its history. Life itself may one day vanish, but the skies themselves will continue to be, carrying our immutable substance throughout time itself, without any clear line traced between life and death, earth and sky. When one sees that nothing perishes and nothing comes to being, but that only thoughts emerge and vanish, one may then let go of all need for a pillar upon which he could lean. This is when the whole of nature appears in its truth, as the eternal body, our own flesh, the sky itself.

Case 168 —The Ancient Buddha And The Pillar Intersect Each Other 一古佛露柱

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 83. This case is identical to the Book of Serenity, case 31.

【中】

jǔ yún mén shì zhòng yún gǔ fó yǔ lù zhù xiāng jiāo
 舉。雲門示眾云：「古佛¹與露柱²相交³，
 shì dì jī jī zì dài yún nán shān qǐ yún běi shān xià yǔ
 是第幾機⁴。」自代云：「南山起雲，北山下雨。」

¹ 【古佛】[gǔ fó]: “the ancient Buddha.” A Buddha before historical times.

² 【露柱】[lù zhù]: “the exposed pillar.” Exposed pillars refer to the columns on the front of the Dharma Hall of a temple. It may also symbolize an absence of passion, an impassiveness. (See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005. p185: 「露柱指法堂或佛殿外正面的圓柱。與瓦礫、燈籠等俱屬無生命之物，禪林用以表

示無情、非情等意。』)

³ 【相交】[xiāng jiāo]: “to intersect.”

⁴ 【機】S: 【机】[jī]: “an activity of the mind.” Designates the subjective views of the mind, linked with the range of all the possibilities offered by imagination, in contrast with the objective reality of the material things in front of our eyes (事 [shì]), the earthly environment (境 [jìng]). The word is also directly linked with the notion of “opportunity.” For other uses of this word, see case 88, case 108, and case 112.

【日】

こ うんもん しゅ しめ いわ こぶつ ろちゅう
 擧す。雲門、衆に 示して 云く、「古佛は 露柱と
 あい まじわ こ だいいく き みずか かわ いわ なんざん
 相 交る、是れ 第幾機ぞ。」自ら 代って 云く、「南山に
 くも お おくざん あめくだ
 雲起こり、北山に 雨下る。」

【E】

Yunmen, instructing the congregation, said: “The ancient Buddha¹ and the exposed pillar² intersect each other. What number of activities is that?” He replied on their behalf and said: “Clouds rise up over the South Mountain; rain falls on the North Mountain.”

¹ “The ancient Buddha”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “The exposed pillar”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

Where is the frontier between the ancient and the new, the earth and the world it supports, or between a living thing and its progenitor? The first spark of life kindled in the heart of the ocean when our planet was still young still ardently burns within our chest, continuously passing through the ages and spreading across the earth. We are the first and the last, the awakened of yore and the slumbering ones of the future, and more than this, we are the constellation of things around us, the ground beneath our feet and the air above our head, as any difference defining things is only the fruit of our deluded mind. The self is inextricably intertwined with its environment. The threads of the world are weaved into the fabric of the earth, and who can count them? To count things is to submit oneself to the illusions of the world, to the arbitrariness of man’s thoughts. One whose mind is clear sees both the fabric

and the threads, the whole and the parts, the earth and the world, knowing that they are two complementary perspectives upon all that *is*, with the perception of one being tied to the existence of the other, a contrast out of which meaning arises, but to which one should not be attached, knowing its illusory nature.

To separate the self from its environment thus is to break the single thread symbolizing nature itself, causing the emergence of causes separate from consequences, whereas they originally form a continuous totality. Before man explored the earth, there was no difference between north and south, east and west, up and down. It is his piercing gaze that traced a line, quartering the planet so that it may better be grasped by the mind. There were no clouds nor mountains, no rain nor rivers, and yet nature was exactly as it is now. When we see clouds rise up over the southern mountain, once the sun has heated the moisture pervading the earth and the surface of the ocean, and the winds have gathered it in the lofty layers of the sky, they open up their storehouses of water and pour out abundant rain, which falls upon the northern mountain, before running back to the sea to complete the cycle. Ignorant of the continuity of this course of water, one may be puzzled by the link between the clouds in the south and the water in the north, but this is only because he holds on to this arbitrary separation, unknown to nature itself. It is only when one sees the south in the north, the north in the south, that all may become suddenly clear, like clouds scattered by powerful currents of air, without anyone knowing where they went, because there is no “here” nor “there.” Likewise, it is when one ceases to hold on to the distinction between the self and environment, the world and the earth, that one’s true nature may finally appear, and all may begin to make sense, as one lets go of all traces of meaning. Then, there no longer is any activity under the heavens. The clouds pass, and the surface of the water remains perfectly still.

Case 169 — Three Sorts Of Sick Men — 三 種病人

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 88.

舉。玄沙示眾云：「諸方老宿¹，盡道接物²利生。忽遇三種病人來，作麼生接³。患盲者，拈錘⁴豎拂⁵，他又不見；患聾⁶者，語言三昧⁷，他又聞；患啞⁸者，教伊說，又說不得。且作麼生接。若接此人不得，佛法無靈驗。」僧請益雲門。雲門云：「汝禮拜著。」僧禮拜起。雲門以拄杖捏。僧退後，門云：「汝不是患盲。」復喚近前來，僧近前。門云：「汝不是患聾。」門乃云：「還會麼。」僧云：「不會。」門云：「汝不是患啞。」僧於此有省。瞪眊捏⁹

1 【老宿】[lǎo sù]: “an old master” / “a very experienced monk.”

2 【接物】[jiē wù]: “to be in contact with the material [realm].”

3 【接】[jiē]: “to attend [to someone].”

4 【錘】S:【錘】[chuí]: “a gavel.”

5 【拂】[fú]: “a whisk.”

6 【患聾者】[huàn lóng zhě]: “a deaf person.”

7 【三昧】[sān mèi]: “samadhi” / “enlightenment.”

8 【患啞者】[huàn yǎ zhě]: “a dumb person” (in the sense of being mute).

9 【瞪眊捏】: The meaning of this use of the three characters is open to interpretation. See also the same type of use in the 56th case (Blue Cliff Record 81), in which two of the three characters are identical; 瞪 [dèng]: “to open (one’ s eyes) wide” / “to stare at”; 眊 [qū]: “to yawn” / “to remain with one’ s mouth open.”; 捏 [zhì]: “to hit.”

【日】

ことごと い げんしゃ しゅ しめ いわ しょうぼう しょうしゅく
 舉す。玄沙、衆に 示して 云く、「諸方の 老宿は
 盡く 道う、『接物利生』と。忽し 三種の 病人の
 き あ いかん せつ めくら わずら
 來たるに 遇わば、作麼生か 接せん。盲を 患う
 もの つい と ぼつす た かれ ま み
 者は、錘を 拈り 拂を 豎つるも、他又た 見えず。
 つんぽ わずら もの ごげんさんまい かれ ま き
 聾を 患う 者は、語言三昧するも、他又た 聞こ
 おし わずら もの かれ いわ
 えず。啞を 患う 者は、伊をして 説わしむるも、
 ま い え さ いかん せつ も
 又た 説い 得ず。且て 作麼生か 接せん。若し

こ　　ひと　　せつ　　え　　ぶつぼう　　れいげん
 此の 人を 接し 得ずんば、佛法は 靈驗なしと。」
 そう　うんもん　しんえき　うんもんいわ　なんじらいはいせよ　そう
 僧、雲門に 請益す。雲門云く、「汝 禮拜著。」僧、
 らいはい　た　うんもん　しゅじょう　もつ　つ　そう　ひき
 禮拜して 起つ。雲門、拄杖を 以て 拄く。僧、退
 さが　もんいわ　なんじ　こ　めくら　わずら　ま
 後る。門云く、「汝は 是れ 盲を 患わず。」復た
 よ　す　す　さ　そう　すすみい　もんいわ　なんじ
 喚ぶ、近前み 來たれ。僧、近前づ。門云く、「汝は
 こ　つんば　わずら　もん　すなわ　いわ　は　え
 是れ 聾を 患わず。」門、乃ち 云く、「還た 會す
 そういわ　え　もんいわ　なんじ　こ　おし
 や。」僧云く、「會せず。」門云く、「汝は 是れ 啞を
 わずら　そうこ　おい　さと　あ
 患わず。僧此に 於て 省る 有り。」

【E】

Xuansha, instructing the congregation, said: "Every-
 where, the old masters are all saying that one should be in
 contact with the material [realm] for the benefit of life [as a
 whole].' If one unexpectedly encounters three men with dif-
 ferent sicknesses, how should one attend to them? The blind
 man, even if one takes up a gavel or raises a whisk, will not
 see anything. The deaf man, even if one offers him words of
 enlightenment, will not hear anything. The dumb man, even
 if one tells him to speak up, will not speak. How should one
 attend to them? If one is unable to attend to these people,
 Buddhism has no efficacy." A monk asked Yunmen for some
 guidance about this. Yunmen said: "Make a deep bow." The
 monk made a deep bow and then stood up straight. Yunmen
 used his staff to poke him. The monk stepped back. Yunmen
 said: "You are not blind!" Yunmen then asked the monk to
 come closer, and he came closer to him. Yunmen said: "You
 are not deaf!" He then said: "Now, do you understand?" The
 monk said: "No." Yunmen said: "You are not dumb!" At
 this moment, the monk got an insight.

To see through the use to perceive the essence is only a first

step, and to embrace the way of the sky is to become a beacon guiding others to it. Furthermore, the desire to retreat into no-thingness permanently is an expression of attachment to it, forming an impassable barrier standing in the way. One who has become no-thingness itself no longer has need of being attached to it. He can wade through the most cluttered streets of the world and still carry no-thing within his heart, letting himself be an instrument of the way of the sky, interacting with the material realm for the benefit of life as a whole, and even for the heavens themselves as a whole, without distinguishing life from death.

The men of the world are afflicted with a single disease, that can nonetheless take many forms: an obliviousness to their own nature. They live upon the earth, but they cannot see it. The sky is always present above their head, and yet they fail to perceive it as it is. Their senses receive the multifaceted flow of the world of things, and all that they experience are things themselves, objects neatly arrayed and well-defined ideas, without a place for doubt or uncertainty in their mind. They spend their life observing the world, but they cannot see it. Their days are paced with the hearing of countless sounds and voices, and yet they are deaf. Their mouths are like fluttering flags, constantly waving and emitting sounds, and yet they are dumb, incapable of uttering a single word. They live a life in the realm of representation, where all things are measured according to man's reason, according to the whims of his kind, whereas the earth and the sky remain largely unaffected by the relentless activity of his hands and mind. The disease afflicting them is nonetheless not one that affects their body and their senses. They are perfectly healthy in their flesh, ready to succeed in all of their endeavors. The locus of their affliction is merely their heart, upon which they nonetheless potentially may exert almost total control, only lacking the will to change, to open themselves up to the truth of the way.

Someone who is cured of the disease of obliviousness may nonetheless become a physician graciously helping the afflicted, offering them a helpful hand, even though the cure will have to be drawn from within themselves. The cure is indeed already in their own hands. Their eyes are ready to see, their ears ready to hear, and their mind ready to understand, but their perception is hindered by the profusion of things within the reach of their senses.

What sick men need is simply for one to point out the work of their own senses, showing them what their eyes see, what their ears hear, what their minds are thinking, showing them that these are things of the world, creations of their senses and their minds, rather than the truth of the way. Perceiving what the work of his senses and his mind is, man may then let go of all these things and discover the fundamental essence of his own body, with his senses finally unencumbered with the burden of the world, clear of all things, and everything perfectly clear. Then, his eyes will see, his ears will hear, and his mind will perceive the truth of the way of the sky. From someone blinded by things to someone blind to things, he will finally know no-thing, feel everything.¹⁴²

Case 170 —Nanyang’ s Water Jug —南陽 淨瓶

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 42.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn nán yáng zhōng guó shī rú hé shì běn shēn lú shè nà
舉。僧問 南陽忠 國師：「如何是本身 盧舍那
guó shī yún yǔ wǒ guò jìng píng lái sēng jiāng jìng píng dào guó shī
。」 國師云：「與我過淨瓶來。」 僧將淨瓶到國師
yún què ān jiù chǔ zhuó sēng fù wèn rú hé shì běn shēn lú shè nà
云：「却安舊處著。」 僧復問：「如何是本身 盧舍那。」
guó shī yún gǔ fó guò qù jiǔ yǐ
國師云：「古佛過去久矣²」

¹ 【盧舍那】[lú shè nà]: “Locana [Buddha].” The concept of Buddha is described by some scriptures as being manifested through three different “bodies”: Vairocana Buddha, Locana Buddha, and Sakyamuni Buddha. The name Locana is actually an abbreviation of Vairocana, and it represents the Saṃbhogakāya (संभोगकाय), or “body of enjoyment” in Sanskrit, 報身 [bào shēn], or “body of retribution” in Chinese. It represents the body of someone who has attained the absolute truth and achieved Buddhahood, thus displaying the wisdom of the Buddha (Not to be mistaken with Buddhacāna, a female Buddha).

² 【矣】[yǐ]: “a particle marking completion, similar to the modern Chinese 了 [le].

【日】

¹⁴²See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「… 禪宗有『無心地看』、『無心地聽』、『無心地說』的說法，這十分重要。『無心地看』、『無心地聽』、『無心地說』的無心，就是『空之心』。」

こ そう なんよう ちゅうこくし と いか
 擧す。僧、南陽の 忠 國師に 問う、「如何なる
 こ ほんしん るしゃ な こくし いわ わ ため
 か 是れ 本身の 盧舎那。」國師云く、「我が 與に
 じょうびょう すご きた そう じょうびょう もつ いた
 淨 瓶を 過し 來れ。」僧、淨 瓶を 將て 到る。
 こくし いわ かへつ きゅうしよ やすん そう ま
 國師云く、「却て 舊處に 安ぜよ。」僧、復た
 と いか こ ほんしん るしゃ な こくし
 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 本身の 盧舎那。」國師
 いわ こ ぶつ かこ ことひさ
 云く、「古佛過去する 事久し。」

【E】

A monk asked the National Teacher Zhong of Nanyang: “What is the essential body of Locana [Buddha]?”¹ The National Teacher said: “Pass me the water jug.” The monk then passed him the water jug. The National Teacher said: “Now, put it back where it was.” The monk asked once more: “What is the essential body of Locana [Buddha]?” National Teacher said: “The ancient Buddha is long gone.”

¹ “Locana”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

To search for the way of the sky is to seek to know oneself. The body of the heavens is one with our own flesh, with the earthly objects surrounding us right now. There is not a single place where it is not,¹⁴³ but it only shines in all its truth in the place where there is not a single thing. To discover such a place, one must first learn to pierce through the walls of the world, to shatter the things in front of us to reveal what they are made of. It is like a water jug made of clay baked in the heavenly fire. At first glance, it appears as a thing of the world, with a precise contour grasped by the eyes or the hands, bearing a unique name in the tongue of our fathers, and associated with a particular use, which may be to contain the liquid of life quenching our thirst, preventing it from being absorbed by the earth or evaporated in the sky. When one abandons the idea of the jug and sets away the various uses

¹⁴³ See: 神保如天。《從容録通解》。東京：無我山房，1915. p310 (Case 42).

that he can have of it, this is when one begins to see beyond the walls of the world. The jug then appears as the earth itself. Its substance is unveiled, as its contour fades away, revealing it to be one with the rest of the ground upon which it is placed, and with the hand that holds it. The jug is the entire earth, the fullness of the celestial vault, the whole of being, here and now. This is nonetheless not the truth of being itself, only a shell covering and concealing it. The sky is the last and grandest thing, but a thing nonetheless, one that must be peered into or broken in order for its content to appear, like a sealed water jug. The essence of the jug is in the empty space it opens up within its earthly enclosure. This emptiness is only noticed when one sees beyond the substance of the object, as well as beyond the use, passing through both the world and the earth, to reach the place where there is only nothing, what is left when the last thing has been discarded, when the whole has been released by the mind. This is when the truth of the skies is revealed, what pervades both the earth and the world, the ground of all things, something that nonetheless is seldom perceived.

The embodiment of truth is nonetheless not only to be found in the objects around us. Man's actions equally reflect the way of the sky. When someone asks another man to pass him the water jug, and he does so, one shows how things of the world like words can affect the earth, and how the activity of the earth may become the source of a revelation of the ground of both earth and world, leading men to the place where there is not a single thing, unveiling the fundamental truth. Even if one fails to become aware that he is already in this place, letting no-thing-ness itself slip away out of the reach of his mind, he still carries it within himself, and still embodies it himself. It never comes and never goes away. It is always there, everywhere, at all times, and thus one day he will see, and gorge himself on emptiness, satiating his thirst forever with the empty jug, never in need of anything else.

Case 171 —Dongshan's "Intimate Contact" —洞山常切

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 98.

jǔ 舉。sēng wèn 僧問。dòng shān 洞山：sān shēn 「三身¹ zhōng 中。nà shēn bú duò zhū shù 那身不墮諸數。」
shān yún 山云：wú cháng yú cǐ qiè 「吾常于此切² 。」

¹ 【三身】[sān shēn]: “the three bodies [of Buddha].” It represents three different aspects of Buddha: the “dharma body,” 法身 [fǎshēn] in Chinese and “dharmakāya” (धर्मकाय) in Sanskrit, associated with the tangible reality of the universe; the second is the “body of retribution,” 報身 [bào shēn] in Chinese, or “body of enjoyment,” saṃbhogakāya (संभोगकाय) in Sanskrit, and is associated with the enjoyment of reaping the reward of one’s spiritual practice; the third is the “transformation body,” 應身 [yīng shēn] in Chinese and “nirmāṇakāya” (निर्माणकाय) in Sanskrit, which represents the earthly incarnation of a Buddha, allowing them to interact with the world and to guide the deluded toward enlightenment.

² 【切】[qiè]: “to be close to [something].”

【日】

jǔ 舉す。sēng 僧、dòng shān 洞山に wèn 問う、「sān shēn 三身の zhōng 中那の nà shēn 身か
shù 諸數に duò 墮せざる。」shān yún 山云く、「wú 吾れ cháng 常に cǐ 此に
yú 于て qiè 切なり。」

【E】

A monk asked Dongshan: “Among the three bodies,¹ which one does not degenerate into a number [of parts]?” Dongshan said: “I am constantly in intimate contact with it.”

¹ “Three bodies”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

If there is only one single thing to be perceived, it is as if there was nothing. Our eyes may be plunged in the most absolute brightness or in total obscurity, it makes no difference, as long as there is no contrast between this thing and another, or between this thing and its absence. And yet, if there is any difference, if there is any contrast or opposition between one thing and another, it is the result of man’s perception and reason, the product of his world, as such differences do not exist as such outside of his mind. The skies are like a piece of embroidery whose threads are too fine to be distinguished, and only animals are endowed with senses that

rend it into pieces, with man alone able to finely cut these pieces further according to his will. This apparent contradiction between the incomprehensible uniformity of the truth of being, representing a single thing in the eyes of man but in its essence not even being a thing, and the graspable representation of this uniformity, shattered into pieces and thereby forming only a deformed image of it, is at the origin of the foundation of man's world, the realm of the ten thousand things, facing the continuous uniformity of the heavens. Without this world, without the manifold nature of our surroundings, we would be one with the whole of nature, but we would not be familiar with it. Something with which we are totally one cannot be observed by our eyes or considered by our minds. Just like contrast is necessary for something to be seen, distance is equally necessary to become intimate with something, implying a play between closeness and distance, knowledge and ignorance.

The shattering of the unicity of the skies is therefore the key that allows them to be seen and allows man to grow intimate with them. Standing inside the world of things and facing the unicity of the celestial vault, man can progressively learn the nature of the all-encompassing realm, whose arms are wrapped around the world itself. Studying each constellation, naming each star, and following their movements day after day, one becomes more intimate with the whole that they form. To understand the body, one should closely examine each blood vessel, each bone, and each organ, and only then will the whole that they form begin to make sense, its nature understood. Likewise, the great body of the heavens must first be appropriated in the realm built by the hands and the mind of man, with him having taken an appropriate distance from it, having observed it as an object of study. Then only can the illusory nature of such representations be pointed out, revealing that what has been shattered to be grasped by our mind can be mended, pieced back into a whole, which will then reveal itself in all its splendor as one remains endowed with the fruits of his study, the reward of the shattering itself. True intimacy can then be achieved, balancing one's attention between the world and the sky, the pieces and the whole, letting oneself at times stand out of it and at times letting his whole being be engulfed in the indistinguishable totality.

Case 172 —Langya’ s “Mountains And Rivers” —瑯琊山河

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 100.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn láng yá jué hé shàng qīng jìng běn rán yún
 舉。僧問 瑯琊覺 和尚：「『清淨本然』¹。云
hé hū shēng shān hé dà dì jué yún qīng jìng běn rán yún hé hū shēng
 何² 忽生山河大地。」 覺 云：「清淨本然云何忽生
shān hé dà dì
 山河大地。」

¹ 【清淨】S: 【清淨】[qīng jìng]: “to be pure” / “to be clear”; 本然 [běn rán]: “inherently” / “by nature” / “fundamentally”; An expression appearing to refer to the content of a philosophical treatise named “The Treasure Theory” (寶藏論), written by Jin Sēng Zhào (晉僧肇), a 4th c. A.D. Buddhist teacher. See note 1 of the next case (The Gateless Barrier, case 23) for more information.

² 【云何】[yún hé]: “how come” / “why.”

【日】

こ そう ろう や かくおしょう と しょうじょうほんねん
 舉す。僧、瑯琊の 覺和尚に 問う、「『清 淨 本然』。
いかな たちま さんが だいち しょう かくいわ しょうじょうほんねん
 云何ぞ 忽ち 山河大地を 生ず。」覺云く、「清 淨 本然
いかな たちま さんが だいち しょう
 云何ぞ 忽ち 山河大地を 生ず。」

【E】

A monk asked Master Jue of Langya: “‘Inherently pure and clear.’¹ How did the mountains, rivers, and the great earth as a whole suddenly come into being?” Jue said: “‘Inherently pure and clear.’ How did the mountains, rivers, and the great earth as a whole suddenly come into being?”

¹ “Inherently pure and clear”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Pure and clear is the ground of all things, the infinite abyss, which is the place where there is not a single thing. Impurity and opaqueness appear as soon as the first thing emerges out of it.

Things are born out of no-thing-ness, but how did they suddenly come to being? The substance of all things is the body of the heavens themselves, existing since they were themselves unfolded eons ago, and whose origin remains unfathomable, but this substance remained no-thing, an undistinguishable totality, without parts nor pieces, until a branch of the tree of life began to perceive it, as a subject in contact with an object, and began to cut it into pieces according to its needs, ensuring the survival and the thriving of the creatures forming this branch. The mountains and the rivers found upon the earth were always there, in their substance, but animals are the ones who began to single them out from the rest of what is encompassed by the heavens, and man is the one who bestowed them names, allowing him to invoke their presence in the mind of men with a slight movement of the tongue and the lips, or the stroke of a pen.

How did mountains and rivers come to being? As soon as one took a glance at them and saw them as something distinct from the rest of the earth and the sky, they became things for the living, and when they received a name, they became monuments inside the world of men. The inherently pure and clear nature of the fundamental ground was thereby muddied so that animals may strive for their survival and reproduction. It is this muddying of the clarity of no-thing-ness itself that paradoxically allows them to see what is around them. The dust of the world is what permits the emergence of contrast and meaning. This dust reveals the presence of the light pervading the sky but which is only visible when it is diffused by something opaque. The world of man thus soils the purity of no-thing-ness, but it is the medicine that cures him from the blindness that afflicted the living before its edification. The sun may be more clearly seen as a fleeting image on the surface of a lake than directly observed, its fiery radiance being too overwhelming to our eyes, and likewise, the world is what allows no-thing-ness to be perceived, through the soiling of its purity, the opacification of its perfect clarity.

Inherently pure and clear is the ground. How did the mountains and the rivers come to being? To ask such a question is by itself to soil this purity and to muddy this clarity, and so would any attempt at an answer. To perceive the ground, one should depart from the heights of the world and come down below, being atten-

tive to the work of the senses rather than to the functioning of the mind. The one asking the question only has to incline his ear toward the mountains themselves, and there he will hear the answer, in the form of an echo: Howdidthemountainscometobeing, Howdidthemountainscometobeing ... This voice of the mountain represents the harmonious unicity of the world and no-thing-ness, of language and the earth, as it is a soundwave running through the sky, a tangible phenomenon just like the mountains themselves, no-thing-ness itself when it is heard as a mere sound, meaningless, but it is also a sentence laden with meaning in the world, and it can also be heard as such. It exhibits the dual facet of every single thing, which are all things of the world, but also embody no-thing-ness itself. They come to be through the agency of the work of our mind, but they remain true to their essence, remaining the incomprehensible whole, that which is not a thing, inherently pure and clear.

Case 173 — Taking Distance From Language — 離却語言

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 24.

【中】

fēng xué hé shàng yīn sēng wèn yǔ mò shè lí wēi rú hé tōng
風穴和尚因僧問：「語默涉¹ 離微²，如何通
bú fàn xué yún cháng yì jiāng nán sān yuè lí zhè gū tí
不犯。」穴云：「長憶³ 江南三月裏，鷓鴣⁴ 啼⁵
chù bǎi huā xiāng
處百花香。」

¹ 【涉】[shè]: “to wade across a body of water” / “to be involved.”

² 【離微】[lí wēi]: A concept found in a Buddhist philosophical treatise named: “The Treasure Theory” (寶藏論), written by Jin Sēng Zhào (晉僧肇), a 4th c. A.D. Buddhist teacher. This treatise states that the nature of all living beings, that is, the fundamental state of life, is pure (清淨). This “originally pure” (本來清淨) life has two aspects. One is an inner, static “Li” [離], literally meaning “separation” or “departing.” The other is the external, dynamic “Wei” [微], literally meaning “minute” / “small.” The characteristic of “Li” is the fact that it does not rely on the external world, the “dusts” linked with sensory phenomena. In contrast, “Wei” refers to all dynamic, external activities, tied to the stream of the senses, the fine dust composed by the innumerable things of the world. These two attributes highlight the purity of the source of life of all living beings. Because it is not associated with external phenomena, nor does it involve inner thought, the state of “Li Wei” [離微] is “neither taking nor releasing, neither practicing nor learning... It is not captured by the three realms... It is equal and universal, absolute perfection.” (「非取非捨、非修非學...非三界所攝...平等普遍、一切圓滿。」) N.b: The present explanation largely

paraphrases the entry for 「離微」 in: 丁福保。《佛學大辭典》。佛陀教育基金會, 2004. For the original text of the treatise, see: 《晉僧肇法師寶藏論》。CBETA..

³ 【長憶】S: 【长忆】[cháng yì]: “to often think [about something].”

⁴ 【鷓鴣】S: 【鷓鴣】[zhè gū]: “a partridge.”

⁵ 【啼】S: 【啼】[tí]: “to crow” / “to hoot.”

【日】

こ ふけつ おしょう ちな そう と ご もく り
 舉す。風穴和尚因みに 僧問う、「語黙、離
 び わた いか つう ふぼん げつ
 微に 渉り、如何にせば 通じて 不犯なる。」穴
 いわ とこしな おも こうなん さんげつ うち しゃ こ な
 云く、「長えに 憶う 江南三月の 裏、鷓鴣啼く
 ところひゃっ かかんば
 處 百 花香し。」

【E】

A monk asked Fengxue: “Speaking or silent, wading across Nirvana and Samsara, nothingness and the world,¹ how can one go through without fault?” Fengxue observed: “I often remember the springtime, south of the [Yangze] river,² where the partridges sang, bathed in the fragrance of a myriad of flowers.”

¹ “Speaking or silent, wading across nirvana and samsara, nothingness and the world” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

² “South of the [Yangze] river,” that is, the region called “Jiangnan” (江南 [Jiāng nán]), meaning “south of the river.”

What is meant to guide often becomes what imprisons. The faith that originated as a response to the mystery of being and the incomprehension of the way man is meant to go, as an answer offered to those who are lost in their existence and seek to liberate themselves, appealing to the heavens for freedom from the yoke of the earth placed upon their shoulders, often ends up becoming a stumbling block upon their path, a hindrance preventing such liberation, as they see their suffering compounded with unbearable guilt for their transgressions and fear of punishment. To live such an existence is nonetheless a sign that one remains ignorant of the way of the sky, of the ground of being itself. Indeed, faults

and transgressions have no substance upon the earth, and no extension through the skies, either in time or in space. They are pure creations of the mind, things belonging to his world. Man is the source of his suffering, the spring from which he drinks what poisons him. The most noxious poison may nonetheless reveal itself to also be the most potent medicine, if one is endowed with the knowledge of its nature and its use. The world may also be a source of genuine guidance rather than something veiling the truth lying beyond it, and even more than this, it may also be something that reveals its splendor and allows it to be better seen, something that requires some distance, like a fish that can only realize the nature of water for the first time once he is taken out of it.

The words of the poet are a very efficient form of guidance given to the man who is lost in the world and afflicted by its woes. His words can convey feelings, fruits of a personal experience of the truth of the earth and the sky, which can be shared with another human being for his benefit. The jewels of the earth, the voice of the sky, entering the noisy and cluttered streets of the world, hold the power to cleanse them of all their dust, purifying the minds of men of their guilt and their transgressions, emptying their heads of heaps of things they have no need of. The words of the poet are like a helping hand taking men out of these crowded streets and out of the walls of their grimy city, showing them the simple beauty of the earth, the raw elegance of the living things populating the sea, the land, and the air, and the splendid harmony of the turning of the celestial wheels. Contemplating the autumn landscape at dusk, feeling the waning of life in the air as the brown, desiccated leaves litter the muddy ground and taint the air with the peculiar scent of the earth, the song of the robin resonates through his ears. This vision is meant to show him something rather than to tell him anything: the fact that in this landscape, representing the most unadulterated truth of the earth, there is no fault nor transgression, no merit nor sin. The robin stands upon the edge between earth and world, between speech and silence, as he sings for his brethren and his future mate, without words nor silence, a song neither meaningful nor meaningless, wielding signs whose signification is largely left undetermined, seeing the mountains and the rivers as things standing out of the rest of the earth and the sky, and yet not calling them with any name. The bird incarnates harmony between earth and world, enjoying the benefit it provides

him, for his survival and perpetuation, while not letting itself be burdened with a profusion of things of the world, nor losing himself in interrogations and perplexity concerning where should he go. He is like the river itself, running towards its destiny, advancing upon the way, without hesitation nor worry. Man nonetheless enjoys a power unrivaled in the animal world. Indeed, he alone can gain an awareness of his own condition, first as a prisoner, a slave of the world, and then as a free man, once he has let go of his burden, adopting the conduct of the robin instinctively singing its autumn song but also endowed with the knowledge given to him, fruit of the countless experiences of his brethren and ancestors, discerning the truth of the earth from the falsehood of the world, thereby being at home in both realms, and alone able to perceive that they are one single thing, which is itself no-thing, no-thing-ness itself.

Case 174 —The Empty-Headed Lad —掠虚頭漢

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 10.

【中】

舉。 jǔ 睦州 mù zhōu 問僧 wèn sēng：「近離甚處。」 jìn lí shén chù 僧便喝。 sēng biàn hè 州 zhōu
 云：「老僧被汝一喝。」 yún lǎo sēng bèi rǔ yí hè 僧又喝。 sēng yòu hè 州 zhōu 云：「三喝四
 喝後作麼生。」 hè hòu zuò me shēng 僧無語。 sēng wú yǔ 州 zhōu 便打云：「這掠¹ 虚頭
 漢。」 hàn

¹ 【掠】[lüè]: “to take by force” / “to sweep.”

【日】

舉す。睦州、僧に 問う、「近ごろ 甚處を 離れ
 しゃ。」僧 便ち 喝す。州 云く、「老僧 汝に
 一喝せらる。」僧又た 喝す。州 云く、「三喝四喝の

のち そもさん そう む ご しゅう すなわ う いわ こ
 後作麼生。」僧無語。州 便ち 打って 云く、「この
 りゃっきょうどう かん
 掠虚頭の 漢。」

【E】

Muzhou asked a monk: “Where have you come from?” The monk then shouted: “Khe!” Muzhou said: “This old monk has been shouted at with a ‘Khe!’ by you.” The monk once more shouted: “Khe!” Muzhou said: “One shouts a ‘Khe!’ three or four times, and then what?” The monk did not utter a word. Muzhou then hit him saying: “This lad’s head is completely empty!”

When the wise commonly appears as a fool in the eyes of the world, the fool easily considers himself to be wise, but who can tell who is the fool and who is the wise? Both may behave in the exact same manner, adopt the same gestures, and utter the same words. One may mimic the other, and those in their presence would never be able to ascertain which one is a genuine wise man, which one is a mere trained monkey. They may try to probe the mind of these men with tricky questions, laying traps in front of them, and attentively observing their reactions, trying to discern signs of intelligence or clues of stupidity. The certainty of their beliefs concerning the nature of these men may increase as a result, but they may always be found to have been the foolish ones, tricked by someone wiser than them. Replying to questions with silence is the most ambiguous possible answer, the one whose meaning can englobe anything or everything. It may represent a denial of the question’s value, as well as be an acknowledgment of one’s ignorance. It may be an instantiation of no-thing-ness itself, an attempt to bring the one lost in the maze of the world back to the great, empty plains of the great wasteland, chasing away metaphysics with the faint whisper of the wind heard in the stead of words, or it may as well be the reaction of someone whose head is empty, not because the mind has let go of all attachment and has become acquainted with no-thing-ness but rather because it

simply was an empty vessel from the start, without realization nor awareness. To perceive that one is no-thing-ness is indeed different than to be empty-headed. It is to release all things, the entirety of the wealth of the world that one has appropriated, rather than to be a destitute man who never had anything in the first place, and who leaves robbers empty-handed, whereas the wise offers them all that he has.

The one whose head is always empty is no more than the beasts roaming the sea, the land, and the air. The one whose head is constantly cluttered with the things of the world is a slave to it, blind to his own nature and to what binds him with what surrounds him. The wise knows when to wield the tools of the world, and when to drop them unto the ground, leaving his hands and mind empty. He walks the fine edge separating the world from the earth, the realm of things and no-thing-ness, playing with them both while seeing that they are one and the same. Seeing some men lost in the vast labyrinth of things of the world, he offers words of guidance, praises in the form of reproof, reproof in the form of praises, showing others that this world is illusion, falsehood, and confusion. Clarity and purity are not to be found within its walls, and thus he undermines its foundations, pointing out the way to go, inviting them to pass its frontiers to behold of the truth of the sky. But in turn, when he is the recipient of poorly chosen words, the audience of a pitiful spectacle performed with an unskilled mouth, he cuts out this performance with a thundering roar: “Khe!” He triggers a hurricane that blows away all the useless things of the world, all the poorly crafted assemblies of words, clearing the mind of those finding themselves on its path, robbing them of all their possessions, all the illusions to which they desperately held on. It blows the men of the world out of it and violently throws them upon the naked earth, leaving them stunned and speechless. Witness of such a feat, such a true mastery of the way, the fool may attempt to imitate the roar of the tiger, being a kitten trying to topple the pillars of the world with its mewling, biting the hands that want to feed him. He will nonetheless one day grow in strength and wisdom, and his roar will then also resound throughout the world, causing it to grow silent, and making its inhabitants listen to the delicate whisper of the leaves elegantly rolling upon the earth as they are guided by the celestial forces.

Case 175 —The Chin Rest And The Meditation Mat —禪板蒲團

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 20. A more complete version can be found in the Book of Serenity, case 80.¹⁴⁴

【中】

舉。龍牙問翠微：「如何是祖師西來意。」微云：「與我過禪板¹來。」牙過禪板與翠微，微接得，便打。牙云：「打即任打，要且無祖師西來意²。」牙又問臨濟：「如何是祖師西來意。」濟云：「與我過蒲團來。」牙取蒲團過與臨濟。濟接得，便打牙云：「打即任打，要且無祖師西來意。」

¹ 【禪板】[chán bǎn]: “a chin rest” (used during meditation).

² 【西來意】[xī lái yì]: “the meaning of the coming from the West [of Bodhidharma].”

【日】

こ りゅうげ すいび と いか こ
 舉す。龍牙、翠微に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 そし せいらい い び いわ わ ため ぜんばん も
 祖師西來意。」微云く、「我が 與に 禪板を 過ち
 き げ ぜんばん わた すいび あた び
 來たれ。」牙、禪板を 過して 翠微に 與う。微、
 うけ と すなわ う げ いわ う
 接得りて 便ち 打つ。牙云く、「打つことは
 すなわ う まか よう か そし せいらい い な
 便ち 打つに 任すも 要且つ 祖師西來意無し。」
 げ ま りんざい と いか こ そし
 牙、又た 臨濟に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ 祖師
 せいらい い ざい いわ わ ため ふ とん も き
 西來意。」濟云く、「我が 與に 蒲團を 過ち 來た

¹⁴⁴ See Book of Serenity, case 80: 「舉。龍牙問翠微。如何是祖師西來意微云。與我過禪板來牙取禪板與翠微微接得便打牙云。打即任打。要且無祖師西來意又問臨濟。如何是祖師西來意濟云。與我將蒲團來牙取蒲團與臨濟濟接得便打牙云。打即任打。要且無祖師意牙後住院。僧問。和尚當年問翠微臨濟祖意。二尊宿明也未牙云。明即明矣。要且無祖師意。」

れ。」^げ牙、^{ふ とん}蒲團を^と取^{りんざい}って臨濟に^{わた}過^{ざい}與^{うけ}す。濟、接^と得^{すなわ}りて^う便^{げ いわ}ち打^うつ。牙云く、「打^{すなわ}つことは^う便^うち打^{まか}つに^{よう か}任^{そし}すも^{せいらい い}要^な且^なつ 祖師西來意無し。」

【E】

Longya asked Cuiwei: “What is the meaning of the patriarch’ s coming from the west?” Cuiwei said: “Bring me a chin rest.” ¹ Longya brought one and gave it to him. Cuiwei took it and hit him [with it]. Longya said: “One may hit as much as he pleases, but there is no meaning to the patriarch’ s coming from the West!” Longya also asked Linji: “What is the meaning of the patriarch’ s coming from the west?” Linji said: “Bring me a meditation mat.” Longya took a meditation mat and gave it to Linji. Linji took it and then hit him [with it]. Longya said: “One may hit as much as he pleases, but there is no meaning to the patriarch’ s coming from the West!”

¹ “Chin rest” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

How puzzling it is for the newcomer to discover the path that he has treaded since his birth but that he only now begins to discover. Having lived an existence centered around the worship of the idols of the world, which are largely considered the most meaningful parts of it, he cannot fathom that the most precious of all things, the source of the clearest enlightenment, may be utterly devoid of meaning. Meaning indeed belongs to the world, and it is the world’ s treasure. What is found outside of it is meaningless, valueless, and useless. This nonetheless does not negate the fact that what is found beyond the boundaries of the world represents the fundamental essence of all that is, and seems to represent the destiny that man is called to appropriate. The masters of bygone eras pointed out the way, which is to be found equally in the North, the South, the East, and the West. The glow of the faintest star is enough to light the path at night, and the blazing fire of the sun is no more efficient to guide those searching for it. These

masters did not merely use one part of their body to guide the men of the world, such as their tongue or the tip of their finger, but rather showed them the way with their whole flesh, with their entire being, by walking, sitting, lying down, or standing. They spoke and kept silent, gave gentle embraces and violently struck down, according to the needs of those found around them, responding without thinking to what the heavens blew toward them, with many failing to perceive this guidance, too busy looking at the finger to see what it pointed toward.

When one asks for the meaning of the way, he thus shows that he is still a prisoner of the world, someone who only sees the earth through the lens of the things created by the minds of men. The way is meaningless, and this meaninglessness is what can liberate him from the yoke of the world, shattering the chains binding his hands and feet, vaporizing the blindfold covering his eyes. Meaning is what obscures the truth of the earth and the sky. This truth becomes perceptible only when one enters into direct contact with it, having abandoned his quest for meaning, letting himself be approached by nature rather than trying to explain it. He only has to observe the master sitting cross-legged upon the ground, incarnating a link between earth and sky, meaning and meaninglessness, by his very existence, in order for his eyes to see the celestial radiance pervading all things. If he still bothers him with meaningless chatter about his search for meaningfulness, he can then order him to bring him a sitting mat and then hit him with it, a sign of his lack of practice that leads him astray, into the heights of the world, trapped in futile discussions. The pain is there to remind him that he is made of flesh, and that the foundation stone of the world is this pain that teaches him about life and death, what he is destined to do by the innermost and most ancient instincts of animal life itself. For the embracer of the way, the mats and the other instruments meant to support their body and alleviate the pain of sitting meditation are reminders of their attachment to their body, to their life, as they fear pain and seek pleasure, still waiting to soak their whole being in the truth of meaninglessness, of no-thing-ness, where there is no life and death, no master nor disciple, no east nor west, no right nor wrong. It is now your turn! Take this book and hit yourself with it,¹⁴⁵ that

¹⁴⁵See: Villalba, Dokusho. *Hekiganroku. Crónicas del Acantilado Azul*. Miraguano Ediciones. 1994. p92: "Dame el libro que tienes entre tus manos

you may feel this pain in your bones, opening up your eyes to see your own true face, and contemplating its meaninglessness, without fear, despair, or desire.

Case 176 —Baofu's “Summit Of The Peak Of Wonder” —保福妙峰頂

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 23.

【中】

jǔ bǎo fú cháng qīng yóu shān cì fú yǐ shǒu zhǐ yún zhǐ
 舉。保福，長慶遊山次。福以手指云：「只
zhè lǐ biàn shì miào fēng dǐng qīng yún shì zé shì kě xǐ xǔ
 這裏便是妙峯頂。」慶云：「是則是，可惜許¹。」
xuě dòu zhuó yǔ yún jīn rì gòng zhè hàn yóu shān tú gè shén me
 雪竇著語云：「今日共這漢遊山，圖²箇什麼。」
fù yún bǎi qiān nián hòu bù dào wú zhǐ shì shǎo hòu jǔ sì jìng qīng
 復云：「百千年後不道無，只是少。」後舉似鏡清。
qīng yún ruò bú shì sūn gōng biàn jiàn dú lóu biàn yě
 清云：「若不是孫公，便見髑髏³遍野⁴。」

¹ 【許】S:【许】[xǔ]: “somewhat.”

² 【圖】S:【图】[tú]: “to intend.”

³ 【髑髏】S:【髑髅】[dú lóu]: “a skull.”

⁴ 【遍野】[biàn yě]: “everywhere.”

【日】

こ ほ ふく ちょうけい やま あそ とき ふく て
 舉す。保福と長慶と、山に遊びし次、福、手を
もつ さ いわ だ こ こ すなわ こ
 以て指して云く、「只だ這裏こそは便ち是れ
みょうほう ちょう けいいわ ぜ すなわ ぜ
 妙峰頂。」慶云く、「是なることは則ち是なる
おしむべし せつちょうじゃくご いわ こんにち こ おとこ
 も、可惜許。雪竇著語して云く、「今日この漢と
とも さん あそ こ なに はか ま
 共に山に遊ばば、箇の什麼をか圖らん。」復た
いわ ひやくせんねん ご な い た こ
 云く、「百千年後も無しとは道わず、只だ是れ
まれ のち ぎょうしょう し め しょういわ も
 少なり。」後に鏡清に舉似す。清云く、「若し

y permítete que te lo arroje a tu honorable rostro.”

leaving only his bones upon the earth, being dead to the world, one with the heavens. The peak is thus littered with the skeletons of those who have considered it to be their ultimate destination, the place they were meant to reach and which marked the end of their journey, the completion of their life. These men are lost indeed. Not because they have forgotten themselves, but rather because they are oblivious to the fate of others. They would not have reached the peak without the selfless efforts spent by a multitude of other men, who did not let themselves be annihilated in the blissful contemplation of the emptiness above but rather abandoned the fruit of their own struggle and agreed to descend back to the world, so as to take their brethren by the hand and lead them on their journey.¹⁴⁶

When compassion overcomes the desire for unity with the essence of the heavens, then the bones suddenly rise up from the ground. The dead come back to life, and the skeletons are once again covered with flesh, soaked in blood. The finger then points out toward the peak, as the mouth declares: “Just here is the Peak of Wonder!” It is on the horizon. It is right under his feet,¹⁴⁷ and it is within his heart. Some will abandon it, while others will carry it within themselves, as they return to the world down below, for the sake of their brethren. There, they will once again point their finger toward the heights, toward the destiny of all the living, which will nonetheless not be the end of their path, but only a milestone. Eons from now, when every sentient being will have made countless ascents and descents, the great mountain will find itself leveled by the multitude of feet having treaded the various paths leading to its peak. Then, there will no longer be any height nor abyss, no peak nor valley. The earth itself will lose its name,

¹⁴⁶See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「真空無相即真空妙用，得道之人必須去濟度眾生。所以長慶慧稜說，『你這樣說，對倒是對，可惜還不完美。』」

¹⁴⁷See: Yamada, Kou'un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “‘Right here is the summit of Myō Peak.’ I used to think that he was pointing to a nearby mountaintop when he said this, but I have come to feel more and more that he was pointing not to a distant spot, but to the ground directly beneath him, saying that right here is the summit of Myō mountain.” Original Japanese: 「私は以前には山頂をこう指して、只這裏便ち是れ妙峰頂とやったと思っていたが、その後よくよく考えてみると、それでは遠くを見ていることになる。そのように遠くではなくて、むしろ手を下にこうやって（足許を指す）、這裏便ち是れ妙峰頂!、とやったんじゃないかと思う。」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

and the stars will vanish from the sky. There will no longer be any life or death, no ascent nor any path, only clarity and obscurity perfectly married to each other, and no-thing to be perceived.

Case 177 — Entering Directly With The Staff Across The Shoulders 一橫擔直入

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 25.

【中】

舉。蓮花峯庵主，拈拄杖示眾云：「古人到這裏，
為什麼不肯¹住。」眾無語。自代云：「為他途路不
得力²。」復云：「畢竟如何。」又自代云：「柳標³
橫擔⁴不顧人，直入千峯萬峯去。」

¹ 【肯】[kěn]: “to be ready [to do something]” / “to be willing.”

² 【為他途路不得力】[wèi tā tú lù bù dé lì]: “because ‘it’ did not gain strength while on the road [there].”

³ 【柳標】[zhì lì]: “a wooden staff” The first character is quite rare, and its exact meaning is unclear. It probably describes the sort of wood this kind of staff was made of.

⁴ 【橫擔】S: 【橫担】[héng dān]: “to carry [something] across one’s shoulders.”

【日】

こ れんげ ほうあんじゅ しゅじょう ねん しゅ しめ
舉す。蓮華峰庵主、拄杖を 拈じて 衆に 示して
いわ こじん ここ いた なにゆえ じゅう
云く、「古人這裏に 到って、為什麼にか 住するこ
かえん しゅ む ご みずか かわ いわ かれ
と 肯ぜざる。」眾、無語。自ら 代って 云く、「他の
とろ ちから え ため ま いわ ひつきょう
途路に 力を 得ざりしが 爲なり。」復た 云く、「畢竟
いかん ま みずか かわ いわ しりつよこ にな
如何。」又た 自ら 代って 云く、「柳標横に 擔っ
ひと かえり じき せんほうまんほう はい さ
て 人を 顧みず、直に 千峰萬峰に 入り 去る。」

【E】

The hermit of Lotus Peak took up his staff and showed it to the congregation, saying: “When the ancient ones reached

this point, why wouldn't they abide there?" The congregation did not utter a word. He himself answered on their behalf, saying: "Because 'it' did not gain strength while on the road [there]." Again, he said: "After all, how is it?" Once more, he himself answered on their behalf, saying: "With the wooden staff across the shoulders, paying other people no heed, one goes straight into the thousand and ten thousand peaks!"

To embrace the way is to let oneself be attracted outside of his home, accepting to depart from the familiar, the intimate, to venture into the unknown, the uncertain,¹⁴⁸ advancing while having left behind most of what one held dear, simply holding on to his walking staff, as if it was the last thing to be found upon the earth, using its rigidity to support his own flesh and resist the downward pull of the planet, impeding his ascent, away from the world of men. The staff is held perpendicular to the horizon, to the face of the earth itself, showing its nature as a tool of resistance to its omnipresent force, an ally of the life that attempts to gain freedom from the realms above and below.

The way is indeed full of obstacles, replete with stumbling blocks, but the journey allows the traveler to let himself be dispossessed by the earth and the sky. What burdens him progressively falls down to the ground and is left behind, leaving him less and less dependent upon the assistance of the walking staff, feeling lighter day by day. His own self does not gain strength while on the road. On the contrary, IT is eroded by the gravel under his feet and the dusty winds blowing upon his skin, increasingly becoming no-thing, a shadow passing upon the earth.

One day, the road nonetheless appears to end. The ascent has led him to the highest peak, and he then suddenly realizes

¹⁴⁸See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: "'On the way' [toji] is the opposite of 'at home' [kasha, or 'in one' s own house']. If you leave your home and go somewhere else, you are 'on the way.'" Original Japanese: 「途路は途ということだが、途路と家舎ということがある。自分の家のこと、その家を出て外に行く途中のことを途路と言い」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

that he is alone there, and that he is surrounded by the most absolute emptiness. The stars twinkle during the clear nights, and the sun tans his skin during the day, without the tiniest spot of shade to escape the heavenly fire, but he sees only no-thing, having forgotten his eyes on the road, simply rejoicing in the numbing of his senses and his reason, leaving him at peace, feeling the autumn breeze gently embracing him, showing him the true essence of the heavens around him. He then slowly grows familiar with no-thingness itself. He lets his self be pierced through the heavenly radiance and carried away by the soft but vigorous hands of the mountain winds. The staff that supported his ascent now has no one to hold it, and it thus falls down to the ground, having served its purpose.

When the traveler has forgotten himself in the empty landscape of the high peak, on the top of the earth, facing the immensity of the skies, nonetheless comes a realization: when the self has been reduced to naught, all that is left is the sight of the others, the multitude of dwellers of the world down below, those on the way to the peak, struggling on the road, in desperate need of support and guidance. The peak then ceases to appear as the end of the way. It now shows itself as a new beginning, the locus of a rebirth of the traveler, who has made the world his home, made the earth his world, and made others his own and his own self. Born anew, he then picks up the staff lying on the ground, and boldly holds it across his shoulders, becoming the support of the staff that once supported him, letting it parallel to the earth, in such a position that it would appear like a hindrance rather than a help. Ignoring the apparent folly of his appearance in the eyes of the world, he then runs straight into the ten thousand things forming this world, ready to crash against them, to clear away the path, casting every stumbling block away, while he lets his flesh penetrate the earth itself, becoming the peak to which the children of the future will ascend, where they will receive the revelation of their own nature, before they themselves become thousands of other peaks adorning the face of the earth, under the clear starry sky, without boundaries between them, forming the whole of the earth, like waves standing out of the sea, appearing and disappearing, without names, without memories of them, and yet perfectly representing the truth of all that is.

Case 178 —Zhaozhou's "Giant Radishes" —趙州大蘿卜頭

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 30.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州：「承聞¹ 和尚親² 見 南泉，是
否。」 州 云：「鎮州出大蘿蔔頭³ 。」

¹ 【承聞】[chéng wén]: “to have heard.”

² 【親】S: 【亲】[qīng or qīn]: “in person.”

³ 【蘿蔔頭】S: 【萝卜头】[luó bo tóu]: “a radish head.”

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と うけたまわ き おしょうした
舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「承り 聞く、和尚親し
なんせん まみ ぜ しゅういわ ちんしゅう
く 南泉に 見ゆと、是なりや。」 州 云く、「鎮州に
だい ち ふ どう い
大蘿蔔頭を 出だす。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “One has heard that the Master personally met Nanquan. Is it true or not?” Zhaozhou replied: “The province of Zhen produces giant radishes.” ¹

¹ “Radishes”: It would seem that the province of Zhen was famous for its large radishes. This province was also the region where Zhaozhou's monastery was located.

To live in the world is to cleave the heavens with the sword of reason at each instant. The truth is thereby separated from falsehood. The great is set apart from the small, the renowned from the unknown, with man nonetheless remaining blind to the origin and the nature of such distinctions. He sees them as inherent properties of what surrounds him, failing to perceive the role played by his perception and his reason in such a carving of the perfection of what is encompassed by the heavens. He therefore

obstinately pursues what has value in the eye of this world, wanting to climb the ladders leading to its top, and seeks the company of those acquainted with the architects who determine the way it will continue to be constructed, and so engulfed in the affairs of this world, he does not notice how shaky is its ground, and how weak are its foundations.

One may nonetheless be valued by a world without caring for it, or without even being acquainted with its activity. One may enjoy fame among men, and be praised for one's position among them, without even being present in this world, preferring the solitary retreats in the mountains or staying among the needy, but only caring for their guidance, impassively leading them out of the mire of the ten thousand things from which they strenuously try to extract themselves. When one who has yet to perceive the fallacy of the oppositions through which he sees the earth and the sky inquires about them, asking a famous wise man who sees through them all, whose gaze pierces through all things and reveals the essence of being itself, he only receives a perplexing answer: "This province is famous for producing giant radishes." Asking about the world, he is brought to the earth, his nose in the dark, fertile soil, his eyes made to contemplate what comes out of it, painstakingly grown after months of attentive nurturing, its seed carefully planted by the hand of the farmer, its roots diligently watered by the clouds, its leaves profusely fed with the heavenly fire, and now ready to be cooked and ingested, becoming the source of our continuing existence, our perduring upon the luxuriant face of the earth. Giant or small, famous or unknown, this is of no incidence upon our life. If any attention should be paid, it should be to this fruit of the earth, which is the whole of life, the whole of the earth, the entirety of being, held in our hands, without any frontier between it and our body. Any other answer would be a straying away, to show oneself as empty-headed, no more intelligent than a radish. And yet, this radish also represents the truth of being itself, what man is called to realize, the fact that this product of the earth is in perfect harmony with the way of the sky, having no will, no mind, being no-thing-ness itself. Enlightenment is in our hands, and it is our hands. It is the radish growing in the soil, the leaves falling at the end of the summer, the raindrops striking the tiles of our roof, the grains of rice in our bowl. These have no name, no fame, and they are not valued by the world, and

yet they incarnate the ultimate truth, and can teach more than the most renowned scholar, guiding him to his original home, where he will be at peace.

Case 179 —Changsha Walks In The Mountain 一長沙游山

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 36.

【中】

jǔ 舉。cháng shā 長沙 yí rì yóu shān 一日遊山，guī zhì mén shǒu 歸至門首。shǒu zuò wèn 首座問：hé 和
shàng shén me chù qù lái 尚什麼處去來。」shā yún 沙云：yóu shān lái 「遊山來。」shǒu zuò yún 首座云：dào 到
shén me chù lái 什麼處來。」shā yún 沙云：shǐ suí fāng cǎo 「始隨芳草¹ 去，qù yòu zhú luò huā 又逐落花
huí 回。」zuò yún 座云：dà sì chūn yì 「大似春意² 。」shā yún 沙云：yě shèng qiū lù 「也勝秋露³
dī fú qú 滴芙蕖⁴ 。」xuě dòu zhuó yǔ yún 雪竇著語云：xiè dá huà 「謝答話。」

¹ 【芳草】[fāng cǎo]: “scented grass.”

² 【春意】[chūn yì]: “the beginning of spring.” It may also, in other contexts, mean “thoughts of love.”

³ 【秋露】[qiū lù]: “the autumn dew.”

⁴ 【芙蕖】[fú qú]: “a lotus flower.”

【日】

こ 舉す。ちょう さ 長沙、いちじつ ゆさん 一日遊山して、かえ 歸って 門首に
いた 至る。しゅそ と 首座問う、「おしょう いず こ 和尚什麼處にか 去き 來きたたれ
さいわ る。」ゆさん 沙云く、「き 遊山し 來きたる。」しゅそ いわ 首座云く、「いず 什麼
こ 處にか 到きたり 來きたれる。」さいわ 沙云く、「はじ 始めは 芳
そう 草にしたが に 隨ゆって 去まき、又らっか た 落お花を 逐かえって 回まる。」
ざ いわ 座云く、「おお 大しゅん いいに 春 意に 似さいわたり。」ま 沙云く、「あき ばいう 也ふ きょた 秋 梅 雨 の 芙 蕖したた に 滴まさるに 勝せつちようじゃくごれり。」
いわ 雪竇 著語し
とうわ て 云く、「しゃ 答話を 謝す。」

【E】

One day, Changsha went for a walk in the mountains, and when he returned to the gate, the head monk said: "Where does the Master come from?" Changsha said: "From having a walk in the mountains." The head monk said: "How far did you go?" Changsha said: "First, I went following the scented grass, and then came back guided by the falling flowers." The head monk said: "It looks very much like a spring mood." Changsha said: "It's better than the autumn dew dripping on the lotus flower." (Xuedou commented: "One is grateful for that answer.")

Temples and monasteries appear to be places where the way of the sky is to be found, as those eager to discover it are seen flocking to them, leaving behind their earthly possessions, their families and beloved, their former beliefs and their ideas, to let themselves be shaped by the teachings preached within their walls and the practice followed within their halls. This appearance is nonetheless deceitful. These places are no closer nor farther than any other places in man's world. Their worth does not reside in the beauty of their roofs or the intricacy of the ornaments of the temples. The statues are valueless, and the libraries are just piles of meaningless scribbles on the earth. What shines within these dark places of the world is the body of those who have seen the truth of the earth and the sky, pierced through all the walls of the world with their eyes, witnesses of the no-thing-ness that is the ground of all that is, and more importantly, have taken upon themselves the duty of leading others to the realization of the way itself. How heavy is the burden of these men, and yet they consider it as light as a dove's feather. They are condemned to plunge themselves daily into the mire of the futility of the disciples, of the pettiness of their brethren, and of the ingratitude of the recipients of their selfless assistance. They are seen as the pillars of these temples and monasteries, but few are those who can discern what gives them this strength and this resilience. The disciples indeed are often blind to the source of the power of the men of the way, to the spring out of which they draw their zeal and vigor: the

earth itself, which they see every day, but which they have yet to discover.

The man of the way is one with the earth and the world. He incarnates their unity, and through his agency, one can flow into the other. The words that come out of his mouth have the scent of the spring flowers, the brightness of the summer sun, the rich palette of colors of the autumn leaves, the complex sound of the winter snow trampled by our feet. His speech brings the worldly to the earth, appealing to the senses of those lost in their thoughts with verses and poetic imagery. Furthermore, each step he takes upon the earth, each movement of his flesh, are laden with the most profound meaning that can be found within the world. He brings the world itself to the earth, expressing himself with his body, matter itself. He plays with words as well as with flowers. He is at home in the world as well as upon the earth, not letting himself be absorbed and blinded by either of them.

When the burden of the world begins to weigh him down, he then escapes and seeks refuge upon the earth, escaping the temple's hall, fleeing the walls of the monastery to stroll in the mountains, enjoying a solitary retreat under the limpid sky, bathed in the fragrance of life, his eyes feasting upon the vivid display all around him, as his ears are filled with the delicate whisper of the leaves and the melodious tunes of the birds. Those who have yet to perceive the strife between earth and world, the necessity of unceasingly leaping between both to prevent their enslavement and blinding, will nonetheless let a foul torrent come out of their mouth, bitter words of rebuke addressed to the master returning from his mountainous exploration, seeing that the central pillar of the congregation prefers to spend time wandering in nature rather than to attend to the need of his flock, ignorant of the titanic effort deployed by this pillar of the world. Hearing these hurtful words, the master nonetheless does not let himself be dragged into the mire of the world. Only gentle, poetic words then come out of his mouth, reflections of the clarity of his mind, deflecting the insidious assaults and pointing out the way itself, all around them, within the reach of all the disciples, at all times, if only they opened themselves up to the signs of the earth and the sky.

Case 180 — Nice Snow-Flakes 一好雪片片

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 42.

【中】

舉。龐居士¹ 辭藥山，山命十人禪客，相
 送至門首。居士指空中雪云：「好雪片片，不落
 別處。」時有全禪客云：「落在什麼處。」士打一
 掌。全云：「居士也不得草草²。」士云：「汝恁
 麼稱禪客，閻老子³ 未放汝在。」全云：「居士
 作麼生。」士又打一掌云：「眼見如盲，口說如啞。」
 雪竇別云：「初問處但握雪團便打。」

¹ 【居士】[jū shì]: A title used for a person who was virtuous and talented but lived in seclusion and did not hold an official position.

² 【草草】[cǎo cǎo]: “carelessly” / “hastily.”

³ 【閻老子】[yán lǎo zǐ]: designates the Great King of Hell who judges the dead, 閻羅王 [yán luó wáng] in Chinese, यमराज [Yamarāja] in Sanskrit. In Japan, he is called 閻魔大王 (えんまだいおう, [enmadaio]).

【日】

舉す。龐居士、藥山を 辞す。山、十人の 禪客に
 命じて 相送りて 門首に 至らしむ。居士、空中の
 雪を 指さして 云く、「好雪、片片別處に 落ち
 ず。」時に 全禪客 有り、云く、「什麼處にか 落在す
 る。」士 打つこと 一掌。全云く、「居士也た 草草な
 ることを 得ざれ。」士云く、「汝 恁麼に 禪客と
 稱すれば、閻老子未だ 汝を 放さざる 在。」全
 云く、「居士は 作麼生。」士又た 打つこと 一掌。
 云く、「眼は 見るも 盲の 如く、口は 説うも 啞の

ごと せっちょうべつ いわ しょもん ところ た せつ
 如し。] 雪寶 別して 云く、「初問の 處に 但だ 雪
 だん にぎ すなわ う
 團を 握って 便ち 打たん。」

【E】

The venerable Pang was leaving Yaoshan. Yaoshan then ordered ten of his students of Zen to see Pang off at the temple gate. Pang pointed to the falling snow in the air and said: “Nice snowflakes! They don’ t fall on any other place.” At this moment, a student named Quan said: “Where do they fall?” The venerable gave him a slap. Quan said: “Venerable, don’ t be so hasty.” The venerable said: “[You behave] like this and you call yourself a student of Zen! The old Yama¹ [, the King of Hell,] will never release you!” Quan said: “What about the venerable?” Pang slapped him once more and said: “These eyes see as much as a blind man! This mouth speaks as well as the one of a dumb man!” (Xuedou added: “At the first question, I immediately would have made a snowball and threw it at him!”)

¹ “Old Yama” : See note 3 of the Chinese text.

Once the leafy garment of the forest has fallen to the ground and has taken its dark tint, soaked by the rains and the mud, the trees are left in their nakedness, exposed to the icy embrace of the sky. The scrawny branches welcome the first snowflakes delicately gliding down from the loftiest clouds, leaving their cold imprint upon the land. These cottony bits of clouds are all unique. Without will nor any plan, they let themselves be brought to the place assigned to them by the commotion of the totality of the heavens,¹⁴⁹ by the turning of the whole celestial mechanism, with the entire course of the sky involved in the determination of its trajectory and its destination.

¹⁴⁹ See: 吳平。《新譯碧巖集》。台北：三民書局股份有限公司，2005：「龐居士說雪片『不落別處』，這是說的大道自然，不用計較、心慮，所以落在哪裡都一樣，就沒有此處、彼處的分別。」

The snowflakes do not fall in any other place. They are here, now, and this instant will never occur again. These snowflakes will never again take the same path and fall in front of our eyes. If we consider that they may have fallen somewhere else, and at another time, this means that we are blind, deceived by the illusions inhabiting our mind, forming the world in which we spend our days. Indeed, if one sees this landscape for what it is, there is no other place, no other time, only here and now. To oppose the “here” and “there” is to be a prisoner of the world, incapable of perceiving the seamless essence of the skies, the nature of the snow. These snowflakes in front of our eyes, they are the whole of the earth, the totality of the skies, without origin nor destination, without maker nor destroyer. They are the all-pervading truth, unadulterated, unbounded.

If someone considers that this snowfall only occurs “here,” he thus deserves to be firmly grasped by the shoulders and vigorously slapped, so that the sleeper would awaken to the nature of being, and see what lies under the carpet of illusions covering his world. Through pain and astonishment, he is extracted from this world and thrown unto the naked earth, commanded to observe it attentively, with an empty mind, free from thoughts and things having no ground in the truth of the way of the sky. Gathering snowflakes and turning them into a ball, the guide throws it to the faces of the lost ones, letting the snow melt down their neck, letting them feel how the individual snowflakes are now frigid water warmed by their skin. What was once an array of snowflakes now forms an indistinguishable whole, which cannot even be separated from their own body, having become part of themselves. This water is the same as the one pervading their flesh, as the drops of rain that allowed the trees to grow, and as the rivers and the sea in which they plunge their bodies, before this water is carried to the clouds to once again become snow. The uniqueness of the snowflake thus is revealed to be only a veil concealing its true nature, just like the things of the world are veiling the seamless truth of the skies. We may cut the year into seasons, and discern the snowflake from the ocean, but this is but an arbitrary mirage of our own making, aimed at allowing us to partly grasp the unfathomable, to become masters over a small portion of nature. One who appropriates the whole truth of the skies would nonetheless be blind and see only no-thing. His mouth would not utter a word, only meaning-

less sounds mingled with silence. Awakened and blind, sleeping and having visions, both states are nonetheless themselves like the snow and the water, only complementary facets of a single truth.

Case 181 —Life Or Death 一生耶死耶

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 55.

【中】

舉。道吾與漸源至一家弔慰¹。源拍棺²
 云：「生邪³，死邪。」吾云：「生也不道，死也
 不道。」源云：「為什麼不道。」吾云：「不道，
 不道。」回至中路，源云：「和尚快與某甲道，若
 不道，打和尚去也。」吾云：「打即任打，道即
 不道。」源便打。後道吾遷化⁴，源到石霜，
 舉似前話。霜云：「生也不道，死也不道。」源
 云：「為什麼不道。」霜云：「不道，不道。」源
 於言⁵下有省。源一日將鋤子，於法堂上，從東
 過西，從西過東。霜云：「作什麼。」源云：「覓
 先師靈骨⁶。」霜云：「洪波浩渺⁷，白浪滔天⁸
 ，覓什麼先師靈骨。」雪竇著語云：「蒼天⁹，蒼
 天。」源云：「正好著力¹⁰。」太原孚云：「先師
 靈骨猶在。」

1 【弔慰】S: 【吊慰】[diào wèi]: “to offer condolences.”

2 【棺】[guān]: “a coffin.”

3 【邪】[yé]: A final particle expression exclamation or interrogation, similar to 耶 [yé].

4 【遷化】: [qiān huà] “the death [of a monk].”

5 【鋤】S: 【锹】[qiāo]: “a hoe.”

6 【靈骨】S: 【灵骨】[líng gǔ]: “the bones [of a venerable person].”

7 【浩渺】[hào miǎo]: “vast” / “extended.”

⁸ 【滔天】[tāo tiān]: “[a liquid] filling up the sky”; 滔 [tāo]: “to overflow.”

⁹ 【蒼天】S: 【蒼天】[cāng tiān]: “the firmament.”

¹⁰ 【正好著力】[zhèng hǎo zhuó lì]: An idiomatic phrase meaning “thank you for your teaching.” It literally means: “[you] have spent your strengths.”

【日】

こ どう ご ぜんげん あるいえ いた ちょうい げん
 擧す。道吾、漸源と 一家に 至って 弔慰す。源、
 かん う いわ せい し われいわ せい
 棺を 拍って 云く、「生か 死か。」吾云く、「生と
 い し い げんいわ なにゆえ
 も 道わじ、死とも 道わじ。」源云く、「爲什麼に
 い われいわ い い かい
 か 道わざる。」吾云く、「道わじ、道わじ。」回り
 ちゅうろ いた げんいわ おしょう すみや それがし
 て 中路に 至り、源云く、「和尚 快かに 某甲が
 ため い も い おしょう う さ
 與に 道え。若し 道わずんば、和尚を 打ち 去ら
 われいわ う すなわ う まか
 ん。」吾云く、「打つことは 便ち 打つに 任すも、
 い すなわ い げん すなわ う のち
 道うことは 即ち 道わじ。」源 便ち 打つ。後に
 どう ご せんげ げん せきそう いた ぜんせつ こじ
 道吾遷化す。現、石霜に 到って、前話を 擧似す。
 そういわ せい い し い げん
 霜云く、「生とも 道わじ、死とも 道わじ。」源
 いわ なにゆえ い そういわ い
 云く、「爲什麼にか 道わざる。」霜云く、「道わじ、
 い げん げんか せい あ げん いちじつ くわ も
 道わじ。」源、言下に 省有り。源、一日鍬子を 將っ
 はっとう じょう ひがし にし わた にし ひがし
 て 法堂 上を 東より 西に 過り、西より 東に
 わた そういわ なに な げんいわ せんし
 過る。霜云く、「什麼をか 作す。」源云く、「先師の
 れいこつ もと そういわ こうはこうびょう はくろうとうてん
 靈骨を 覓む。」霜云く、「洪波浩渺、白浪滔天、
 なん せんし れいこつ もと せつちようじゃくご
 什麼の 先師の 靈骨をか 覓めん。」雪竇 著語して
 いわ そうてん そうてん げんいわ まさ よ ちから
 云く、「蒼天、蒼天。」源云く、「正に 好し、力を
 つく たいげん ふ いわ せんし れいこつ な
 著くるに。」太原の 孚云く、「先師の 靈骨、猶お
 あ
 在り。」

Daowu and Jianyuan came to a house to offer condolences. Jianyuan tapped on the coffin and said: "Life or death?" Daowu said: "I won't say 'life,' and I won't say 'death'!" Jianyuan said: "Why won't you?" Daowu said: "I won't say! I won't say!" On the way back Jianyuan said: "Master, please tell it now to this one here! If you don't say it, this one here will hit the Master." Daowu said: "If you want to hit me, hit me, but I will not say it." Jianyuan then hit him.

After a while, Daowu passed away. Jianyuan went to Shishuang and told him about the aforementioned conversation. Shishuang said: "I won't say 'life,' and I won't say 'death.'" Jianyuan said: "Why don't you?" Shishuang said: "I won't say! I won't say!" Hearing these words, Jianyuan gained an insight.

One day, Jianyuan took a hoe, entered the meditation hall, and walked from east to west and from west to east. Shishuang said: "What is this one doing?" Jianyuan said: "I am looking for the sacred bones of the late master." Shishuang said: "Giant waves extending to the horizon! White billows reaching up to the heavens! What kind of sacred bones of the late master is this one looking for?!" (Xuedou commented: "Heavens! heavens!") Jianyuan said: "One has put in just the right amount of effort." Taiyuanfu said: "The sacred bones of the late master are still there."

Life is like fire, a grand bewitching of the earth, a superb chain-reaction that propagates itself on the surface of the planet, unabatedly passing through the ages, like a wildfire, at times fanned by the wind and at others quenched by the rain, always in harmony with the forces reigning over the sky. Inflamed or consumed, burning or reduced to ashes, the earth experiences transformations, but it nonetheless remains faithful to its nature, and nothing is created, nothing destroyed. So is life as well. The complex piece of machinery animating our flesh emerges out of the one of our parents and one day it simply breaks down, with the innumerable elements forming it collapsing. Our body nonetheless remains. Our flesh is absorbed by other living things and by

the soil, our bones are buried in the dust, but one cannot trace a clear, objective line between us and the rest of the earth and the sky. The contrast between life and death is only a practical distinction, tied to the use people have for other dwellers of their common world. When the essence is seen, one then realizes that he never was born and that he will never die. He already was here when the heavens themselves were unfolded, and he will remain when they will collapse upon themselves, even though he may not answer if called upon.¹⁵⁰

When the cadaver of an old friend is about to be buried or burnt, therefore comes an appropriate time to ask him, while tapping on the coffin: “Life or death?” The resulting silence speaks more truly than any possible word. This is life. This is death. This is both and neither. It is the opportunity to transcend all oppositions and let oneself be dissolved in the heavens, ceasing to be a thing of the world, to simply become no more and no less than the way of the sky itself, which he always was already. One who has only taken a glance at the weaknesses of the foundations of the world he inhabits and has yet to appropriate the edge between earth and world will then perceive the words “life” and “death” as a trap, a chain preventing his liberation from the yoke of deceitful words and concepts. He will then refuse to answer the question and will even shudder at the mere utterance of such vulgar words. Doing so, he nonetheless only demonstrates the power that these words hold over him. The man of the way fears nothing, because he embodies no-thing. He juggles with words like with red-hot iron balls, never letting himself be dictated his conduct by the arbitrariness of the world, but neither fearing to obey it if he is led to it. One may thus loudly declare: “The cadaver of my friend is very much alive! I myself am dead!” He who is already dead indeed has no fear for his own life, and thus boldly leaps over all the pitfalls created by the sons of men, wielding the tools created to deceive and using them to shatter the fetters of the prisoners. He uses words as if they were daggers and swords, piercing through

¹⁵⁰See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript] : “Yamamoto Gempō Rōshi, whenever anyone died, would say, ‘He was not born, neither did he ever die. He is gone nowhere, he is right here. Don’t ask him, he will not answer.’ ” Original Japanese: 「山本玄峰老師が人が亡くなった時に『生れもせねば死にもせぬ、どこへも行かぬここにおる、問うてくれるな物は言わぬぞ』」 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

all delusions, rending the veil covering the firmament, revealing its magnificence to all the dwellers of the world.

Once the body of the old friend has been cremated, the blind among his acquaintances may nonetheless hold on to the pieces of bones left behind, seeing in them what remains of the deceased, but those whose eyes are open then immediately trample them with their feet, crushing them to dust, scattering them to the winds and throwing them in the sea, for they know that their friend is the giant waves extending to the horizon, the white billows reaching up to the heavens! These are the sacred relics of the masters of yore that should be honored. Prostrating toward the earth, toward the sky, toward oneself, one pays homage to all that was, is, and will be, and he sees the eyes of his friend in the sun and the moon, his arms in the autumn breeze chilling his skin, his flesh in the earth under his feet, seeing also himself in these eyes, knowing that as there is no life nor death, there is no “me” and “you.”

Case 182 —What Is The Language Used By The Tathagata —作么生是如來語

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 95.

【中】

舉。長慶有時云：「寧¹說阿羅漢²有三毒³，不說如來有二種語。不道如來無語，只是無二種語。」保福云：「作麼生是如來語。」慶云：「聾人爭得聞。」保福云：「情知⁴爾向第二頭道⁵。」慶云：「作麼生是如來語。」保福云：「喫茶去。」

¹ 【寧】S: 【宁】[nìng]: “if one would.” Pronounced [níng] in Taiwan.

² 【阿羅漢】S: 【阿罗汉】[ā luó hàn]: “an arhat.” A man who is free of “the three poisons”: covetousness, anger, and folly.”

³ 【三毒】[sān dú]: “the three poisons” In Buddhism, the three poisons are: covetousness, anger, and folly.

⁴ 【情知】[qíng zhī]: “to clearly know.”

⁵ 【爾向第二頭道】[ěr xiàng dì èr tóu dào]: “you speak oriented toward the second extremity.”

【日】

こ 舉あす。ちょうけい 長慶あ 有ときる むし 時あら云かんく、「寧さんろ 阿羅漢いに 三
どく 毒あ有いりと 説いうも、如によらい來にに 二に種しゅの 語ご有ありと 説いわ
によらい ず。如によらい來にに 語ご無なしとは 道いわたず、只こだ 是にれ 二
しゅ 種ごの 語な無ほし。」保福ふく云いわく、「作いかに麼こ生によらいか 是にれ 如によらい來にの
ことば 語けい。」慶い云まく、「聾し人なん 爭じか 聞だくを 得いん。」保福
云いわく、「情けいに 知いかにれり、爾こが 第によらい二ことば頭ほに 向ふくいて 道ふくう
を。」慶い云きく、「作き麼こ生こか 是にれ 如によらい來にの 語ふく。」保福
云いく、「喫茶去。」

【E】

One day, Changching said: "Even if one says that an arhat¹ still has 'the three poisons'² '[affecting his mind], one should not say that the Tathagata has two sorts of language. I do not say that the Tathagata does not use language, but only say that he does not have two kinds of language." Baofu said: "What is the language [used] by the Tathagata?" Changching said: "How can a deaf man hear?" Baofu said: "It is now clear that you speak oriented toward the second extremity." Changching said: "What is the language [used by] the Tathagata?" Baofu said: "Have some tea."

¹ "Arhat": See note 2 of the Chinese text.

² "The Three Poisons": See note 3 of the Chinese text.

One may say that the awakened is asleep, or that the sun is dark, but one should not say that the man who is one with the way of the sky, coming *as he is*, without artifice nor exhibiting any falsehood but rather embodying the ineffable truth with his entire being, has two sorts of language.

To embrace apparent contradictions is indeed to break free from the smothering constraints of the world, to show that we do

not consider ourselves forced to abide by its arbitrary rules, to respect its imperfect order and to submit to its deceitful representations. It exposes the inconspicuous cracks in the foundations upon which man has built every single thing surrounding him for all eyes to see, but at the same time, it may represent an endorsement of the falsehood of this world, of the mirages ensnaring its inhabitants. The contradictory sentences coming out of his mouth may indeed confuse and lead astray those who have yet to perceive the nature of their predicament, their condition as slaves of things, servants of the world of men. There is therefore another, more genuine way to lead the deluded out of their mental prison.

The one who comes *as he is* does not need to make use of the falsehood of the world of men. He is the way of the sky, and he does not need to utter a single word to lead mankind toward its destiny. His mouth may open, his lips may move, and sounds may come out as a result, but he does not have anything to say, anything to teach. He has nothing, not even no-thing-ness itself, and this is what his face shows to the world, even to the blind, and it is what his speech demonstrates, understood clearly, even by the deaf. With a mind pure and clear, he does not participate in the vain quarrels of words that enthrall the intellectuals and the scholars. He does not see the extremities, the opposite poles striving against one another, but rather only seizes the whole and throws it away into the bottomless abyss. His existence is very down to earth, his eyes turned toward what is in front of him, without any trace of reflection. He is a drop in the flow of a river, impossible to trace, following the contours of the earth as it let itself be carried by its downward pull, heading toward the immensity of the ocean.

Only the child feels compelled to play games when encountering someone, eager to test his nature and the limits of his mind or his flesh. The old man has played enough of these games, and he sees through the eyes of the one standing in front of him, and sees himself in them. The words he uses are thus plain, without traps or tricks. His intelligence is concealed under a thick cloak of benevolence, and he thus appears simple in the eyes of the learned. He is the muddy field after the harvest, letting itself be trampled by the feet of the men of the world, receiving their imprint, impassively welcoming their influence, but he is also a magpie roaming

the countryside as well as the streets of the large city, robbing men of the things they do not need, and offering others things to them in their stead, things that they do not necessarily need either, but that are meant to divert their attention from the futile facets of the world, the endless arguments based on illusory oppositions, and to make them notice the truth of the earth in the most common things. Pouring a cup of boiling water in front of them, soaking tea leaves inside it, offering a wondrous display of the essence of life dissolved in the transparent liquid, with steam rising up the air before joining the clouds high above their heads. This delicious concoction runs down their throats, rejoicing their palate and warming their bellies, and if they let themselves be penetrated by this experience, they will see the way more clearly than through a thousand years of meticulous arguing and passionate debates.

Case 183 — Dizang Plants Rice — 地藏種田

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 12.

【中】

jǔ 舉。dì zàng wèn 地藏問xiū shān zhǔ 脩山主：「shén chù lái 甚處來。」xiū yún 脩云：「nán fāng lái 南方來。」zàng yún 藏云：「nán fāng jìn rì fó fǎ rú hé 南方近日佛法如何。」xiū yún 脩云：「liáng hào hào 量浩浩¹。」dì zàng yún 地藏云：「zhēng rú 爭如² wǒ zhè lǐ zhòng tián bó 我這裏種田博³ 飯喫。」xiū yún 脩云：「zhēng nài 爭奈⁴ sān jiè 三界⁵ 何。」zàng yún 藏云：「ěr huàn 爾喚甚麼作三界。」

¹ 【浩浩】[hào hào]: “torrential [floods].”

² 【爭如】S: 【爭如】[zhēng rú]: “how can it be compared [to something else].”

³ 【博】[bó]: “to provide plenty [of something].”

⁴ 【爭奈】S: 【爭奈】[zhēng nài]: “what can [something] do?”

⁵ 【三界】[sān jiè]: “the three worlds.” Usually designates the world of desire (欲界), the sensory world (色界), and the extra-sensory world (無色界). It may also designate the past, the present, and the future.

【日】

こ 舉す。ち ぞう 地藏、しゅざんしゅ 脩山主に と 問う、「いず 甚れの ところ 處より
きた 来る。」しゅいわ 脩云く、「なんぼう 南方より きた 来る。」ぞういわ 藏云く、「なんぼう 南方

きんじつぶっぽう いか しゅいわ しょうりょうこうこう ち ぞう
 近日佛法如何ん。」脩云く、「商量 浩浩地。」藏
 いわ いかで し わ しゃ り でん う はん
 云く、「争か 如かん 我が 這裏、田を 種え 飯を
 まい きつ しゅいわ さんがい いかん
 搏めて 喫せんには。」脩云く、「三界を 争奈何せ
 ぞういわ なんじ なに よ さんがい な
 ん。」藏云く、「爾、甚麼を 喚んでか 三界と 作す。」

【E】

Dizang asked Xiushanzhu: "Where have you come from?"
 Xiushanzhu said: "From the South." Dizang said: "How is
 Buddhism in the South these days?" Xiushanzhu said: "There
 is a torrent of discussions." Dizang said: "How could that
 match my planting of the rice fields here, which provide us
 with plenty of food to eat?" Xiushanzhu said: "What can
 that do for the three worlds¹ then?" Dizang said: "What do
 you call 'the three worlds'?"

¹ "The three worlds": See note 5 of the Chinese text.

The towers reaching for the sky and the serpentine alleys of
 the cities are the channels through which a turbulent torrent of
 words and letters is constantly flowing, soaking the minds of men
 with a profusion of thoughts and images, shaping their being and
 causing them to believe that this flood in which they are plunged
 is all that there is. They do not see the tiny and yet piercing
 radiance of Polaris standing out of the darkness of the night sky,
 but rather see "the north." They are oblivious to the setting
 sun, to the innumerable brushstrokes painting the heavens with
 harmonious shades mingling gold, silver, emerald, sapphire, and
 ruby in a marvelous display offered graciously to their eyes, but
 rather simply see "the west." More serious than this, many are
 unable to distinguish the signifier from the signified, the world
 from the earth and the sky that it represents. They endlessly
 talk concerning the ground of being, the fundamental essence of
 all that is, and genuinely believe that they are dealing with this
 ground, this essence itself, whereas they are merely playing with
 signs, ignorant of what they were meant to represent when they

were forged by men more experienced than them, acquainted with the truth underlying these words. They live in a world cleaved in multiple ways. They oppose the past to the future, searching in the words of those who enjoyed fame in distant eras the key to ensuring a bright future for themselves and their beloved, and leave their own traces upon parchment and tablets, hoping that the future ones will recognize their wisdom and be inspired by their walk of life. They highlight the contrast between death and life, thinking that their being is transient, that they were created and born at a specific point in time and that their days are counted, thinking that they will soon face annihilation and thus must make the most of their precious instants in this world. They see the lost ones as failing at their existence, contrary to the saved, those who have climbed the heights of the world, and seen what lies beyond it, but this worldview is only the fruit of their mind, and they fail to experience the truth of their presence, of their being, of their condition, which is not tied to any contrast or opposition, but rather only to an experience.

It is when the past collapses together with the future that the present can appear in its truth. When life and death both disappear, the truth of being can then be revealed, and these vulgar concepts can be forgotten. When the darkness becomes one with the light; when knowledge is married with ignorance, then there is no enlightenment nor delusion, only existence, as one is endowed with the awareness of the essence of being. When all words and concepts have been blown away by the tempest stirred up in the loftiest heaven; when the skyscrapers have been toppled to the ground and the streets emptied of all the things cluttering them, then the essence of our existence naturally comes to the forefront. The fundamental ground of being appears in the most basic needs of our flesh and our mind. The growling of our belly reminds us that we live through the ingestion of other living things, themselves brought out of the earth thanks to the rains poured out from the clouds and the light of the sun. Obeying the signs of our body and the instincts carved in the deepest parts of our mind, having no-thing else in mind, what was thought in the towers of words and the rivers of ink may finally be unveiled in our eyes, and we may realize that it was always there. The earth is the most skilled teacher. The skies are the most patient instructors. One only needs to empty his mind and let himself be filled by them, and all

will be clear.

Case 184 —Yunmen’ s “Mount Sumeru” —雲門須彌

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 19.

【中】

舉。僧問 雲門：「不起一念，還有過也。」無門
云：「須彌山¹。」

¹ 【須彌】S: 【須弥】[xū mí]: “Mount Meru” (मेरु) / “Sumeru.” A sacred mountain in the Buddhist and Jain traditions, considered to represent the center of the world. It often symbolizes the whole of the earth.

【日】

こ そう うんもん と ふ き いちねんかえ とが
舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「不起一念還って 過
ありや 也た 無しや。」門云く、「須彌山。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “If not a single thought arises, is there still any [possibility of a] fault?” Yunmen said: “Mount Sumeru.” ¹

¹ “Mount Sumeru” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The existence of transgression implies that there are boundaries that delimitate the way to go and what falls outside of it, and that these frontiers are perceived by the eyes of men, with their minds identifying this contrast and determining where these frontiers are located. A fault also implies the existence of willpower, as he who has no control over his destiny cannot be blamed for where the turning of the celestial wheels brings him. The dry leaves falling down from the trees when the summer ends cannot be seen

as being guilty of any transgression, even if the wind carries them within a sanctuary that is meant to remain immaculate and free of such intrusions of nature. Likewise, the feeble-minded is not considered responsible for his inability to submit to the order of the world of men, as his mind cannot comprehend the consequences of his actions.

When men will have deserted the world built by their forefathers, leaving behind the countless things that they shaped from the earth and produced with the work of their minds, to lay the foundation of a new form of existence, in which not a single thought will be raised, every single one of their steps will then be taken in the right direction, without them even considering it as right. Each sound they will hear will pass through their skin and their bones, entering their mind freely, before slowly fading away, not leaving any lasting impression. They will not dwell in villages or cities, but rather only see the entirety of the earth and the sky. Without boundaries, without thought, the earth is a single immense mountain whose base encompasses all that is, and whose summit reaches the highest sky. Even the loftiest gusts of wind would not be able to blow over it, and the rain would not penetrate its surface, as it englobes everything.¹⁵¹ When there is only one thing, it is as if there was only no-thing. There is no right nor wrong, no here and there, no yes and no, only the undivided whole, a giant sphere of jade, perfect and pristine.

When the great mountain has been seen with his own eyes by the pilgrim on the way, the unceasing chatter of those still searching for it then appears as attempts to scratch the jade sphere, to break the whole of the earth like a marble under one's foot. As soon as their mouth opens up, it is the whole mountain that should be thrown inside it, shutting up this noisy instrument, silencing this futile blabbering.¹⁵² When there is no space left, when everything is filled to the brim and nothing else can be perceived, it is as if there was nothing, as if one was plunged into the most total

¹⁵¹ See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p155 (Case 19).

¹⁵² See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Cong-Rong-Lu - Aufzeichnungen aus der Klausur der Gelassenheit: Die 100 Kōan des Shōyōroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2008. p99: „Yun-men aber stopft mit seinem ‚Berg Sumeru! ‘diesem Großmaul die ganze Welt in den offenen Mund und setzt zugleich dem Topf der Leerheit den einzig passenden Deckel auf: die Welt als Ganzes, als die Gesamtheit alles Seienden.“

emptiness. Then may the fact that the whole is no-thing and that no-thing is the whole finally be realized. The whole of the earth is the emptiness of the skies, and man is both and neither.

Case 185 — Xuansha Reaches The Province — 玄沙到縣

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 81.

【中】

舉。玄沙 到蒲田縣。百戲迎之。次日問 小塘
zhǎng lǎo 長老：「zuó rì xǔ duō xuān náo 昨日許多喧鬧。xiàng shén me chù qù yě 向甚麼處去也。」xiǎo táng tí 小塘 提
qǐ jiǎ shā 起袈裟¹ jiǎo shā yún 角沙云：「liào tiāo 顙挑 méi jiāo shè 沒交涉²。」

¹ 【袈裟】[jiā shā]: “the robe of a monk.”

² 【顙挑無交涉】[liào tiāo méi jiāo shè]: The meaning of the word 顙挑 [liào tiāo] is unclear. It probably intensifies the expression 無交涉, meaning “no connection.” Yasutani Haku'un defines it as “something distant” (「顙挑ははるかにへだたることだ。」 See: 安谷白雲。《從容錄新裝版：禪の心髓》。東京：春秋社，2008. p440.)

【日】

舉す。玄沙蒲田縣に 至る、百戲して 之を
むか 迎う。じじつ 次日 しょうとう 小塘 ちょうろう 長老に と 問う、「さきじつ きょた 昨日許多の
けんのう なん 喧鬧なん 甚麼の ところ 處に むか 向って さ 去るや。」しょうとう 小塘 ていさ 袈裟角を
しゃいわ 提起す。りょうと ちつこうしょう 沙云く、「顙挑沒交涉。」

【E】

Xuansha came to Putian county. There were various kinds of entertainment to welcome him. The next day, he asked Elder Xiaotang: “All the revelry of yesterday, where has it gone?” Xiaotang held out the corner of his monastic robe. Xuansha said: “Completely unrelated!”

The course of our lives is an adventure, a long path upon which numerous encounters are made, with people, with landscapes, with objects and events, all of them leaving traces on our memory, some swiftly swept away by the passing of time, while others remain deeply engraved there until our world crumbles into oblivion. One cannot know in advance how such traces will be according to the nature of such events. Indeed, the loud clamor and the vivid displays of the greatest celebrations may belong to the former kind, forgotten as soon as they end, while a quiet, solitary day of contemplation in the desert may leave an indelible trace, and become an indestructible monument in one's mind, cherished for the rest of his existence. Man is nonetheless always threatened to fall prey to nostalgia. The cherishing of memories may then become a stumbling block hindering his progress on the path. With the eyes turned toward the past or the future, one may forget that he only lives in the present. He has no impact on the past, and if he does not act here and now, he will not shape the future either. A man who knows his own nature, who clearly sees his own predicament, observes his own feet and what is here and now rather than let his gaze lose itself in the horizon. He seizes the corner of his garment, feeling the earth that he is made of and that he carries with him at all times. He is aware that he is plunged into pure presence, grasping every opportunity to experience its fullness, his senses acutely attuned to the inconspicuous signs offered by what is here around him. What is gone is gone, and he lets all things go their own way, refraining from getting attached to them, even the most pleasurable moment, even the most enjoyable things and people. Each blade of grass next to his feet is dancing with the breeze in celebration of being itself, and all the birds in the air sing joyful tunes in honor of their shared presence on the earth, under the sky. The revelry never ceases, as the entirety of the earth and the sky represents a constant celebration, an eternal festival performed in celebration of its existence, of its presence.

To let oneself be pervaded by presence nonetheless does not mean to be blind to the past and not to envision the future. It rather means that one accurately perceives the fullness of the work of the skies, the entirety of space and time, without chopping it out in a series of discontinuous moments and places. From the very unfolding of the heavens until their folding back, if it ever occurs, they indeed form a continuum, with every single element perma-

nently bound to every other, throughout the entirety of time. The separation into causes and consequences is only a mirage created by the mind so that it may seem to grasp the ungraspable and understand the ineffable. The delimitation between what is here and now and what is gone is equally arbitrary. The songs of yesterday may still ring into our ears, and the corners of our garment may still wave under the impulse of the dances of the last moon, if we succeed in breaking down the walls bounding our presence, letting us feel the way of the sky, throughout time and space, rather than simply exhume memories and cherish traces of the past. The connection between all things will then be clear, as there will not be any thing anymore, only the seamlessness of the skies, the whole of time and space, perceived with the senses, as the present.

Case 186 — Linji Draws A Line — 臨濟一畫

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 95.

【中】

jǔ lín jì wèn yuàn zhǔ shēn chù lái zhǔ yún zhōu zhōng tiào¹
 舉。臨濟問院主：「甚處來。」主云：「州中糶¹
 huáng mǐ lái jì yún tiào dé jìn ma zhǔ yún tiào dé jìn
 黃米來。」濟云：「糶得盡麼。」主云：「糶得盡。」
 jì yǐ zhǔ zhàng yī huà yún huán tiào dé zhè gè ma zhǔ biàn hè jì
 濟以拄杖一畫云：「還糶得這箇麼。」主便喝，濟
 biàn dǎ cì diǎn zuò zhì jǔ qián huà zuò yún yuàn zhǔ bú huì hé
 便打次。典座至，舉前話座云：「院主不會和
 shàng yì jì yún ěr yòu zuò me shēng zuò biàn lǐ bài jì
 尚意。」濟云：「爾又作麼生。」座便禮拜，濟
 yì dǎ
 亦打。

¹ 【糶】S:【祟】[tiào]: “to sell grain.”

【日】

こ りんざい いんじゅ と なん ところ
 舉す。臨濟、院主に問う、「甚麼の處よりか
 き しゅいわ しゅうちゅう こうべい う きた
 來たる。」主云く、「州中に黄米を糶り來る。」
 ざいいわ ちょうとく つく しゅいわ ちょうとく
 濟云く、「糶得し盡すや。」主云く、「糶得し
 つく ざい しゅじょう もつ いっかく いわ かえ
 盡す。」濟拄杖を以て一畫して云く、「還って

しゃ こ ちょうとく しゅ すなわ かつ ざい すなわ
 這箇を 糶 得せんや。主 便ち 喝す。濟 便ち
 う つい てんぞ いた ぜん わ こ ぞ いわ いんじゅ
 打つ。次に 典座至る、前話を 擧す。座云く、「院主
 おしょう い え ざいいわ なんじまた さもさん
 和尚の 意を 會せず。」濟云く、「爾 又作麼生。」
 ざ すなわ らいはい ざいまた う
 座 便ち 禮拜す。濟亦打つ。

【E】

Linji asked the temple steward: "Where have you come from?" The temple steward said: "From selling brown rice in the province." Linji said: "Did you sell all of it?" The steward said: "I sold all of it." Linji drew a line with his staff and said: "Have you sold this too?" The steward then shouted: "Khe!" Linji then hit him. Later, the monk in charge of the meals came, and Linji told him about the aforementioned conversation. The monk said: "The steward didn't understand the Master's intention." Linji said: "How about you?" The monk made a deep bow. Linji hit him as well.

When we encounter another human being and let a precisely controlled flow of words pass through our mouths and ears, attempting to leave an imprint in the other's mind as we let ourselves receive the seal of their being, we are nonetheless always facing the possibility of misunderstandings, of a misalignment between what we talk about and what is understood by the other, and we are never able to ascertain the extent of such gap, such distance between us. One may speak of the essence of one's being with the same words as one would speak of the daily affairs of the world: "Where do you come from?" "Where are you going?" These may be taken as mere inquiries into one's location in the world of men, but may as well be understood as triggers for the search for one's true nature, and one's destiny. The marvelous versatility of both words and our mind furthermore allows us to embrace both sides, and to bring them together with our speech, letting the world reflect the earth, and the earth reflect the world.

The most mundane action may then become the source of an experience of appropriation of one's fundamental nature. The world may become a passage guiding man toward the truth of the earth, the realm where everything is tangible and real, and yet where there is not a single "thing" existing as such, as a "thing" belongs to man's world, bits cut out from the seamless whole of the earth and the sky.

One who has passed through the gate discovered within man's world and experienced the seamlessness of the earth then should feel compelled to share this life-changing encounter with his fellow dwellers of the world, who have yet to share his vision of this truth. Talking with them about the affairs of the world, he subtly guides them to this gate, causing them to realize that they often speak of different things. The misalignment between their words is then made more and more obvious, impossible to ignore. Counting things of the world, playing the game of the possession and appropriation of these things, the man of the world is forced to be confronted with the arbitrariness of the rules of this game and of the very nature of these things by the master of earth and world, the one who is at home in both realms and in neither, always leaping between them, always on the move to avoid being blinded by familiarity. The things that he trades, acquires, or creates, they indeed exist as pieces of the earth, but the line delimitating these things is a pure invention of his perception and his mind. The grain of rice in his hand is only a "grain" in his world, and when he picks it up, it is the entire earth that he seizes. On the bare earth, there is no grain, no sack, no harvest, only the whole earth and sky, as a single thing, which is itself no-thing. Taking his staff and drawing a line upon the earth, the master of earth and world can then show the arbitrariness of all the lines drawn inside the world, exposing their illusory nature. A peculiar event may then occur: the alignment between what is said by the master and what is understood by the man of the world, a realization of the nature of the earth, finally revealed to him. The deceitful nature of the world being exposed may then be acknowledged by embracing the language of the earth, the signs standing in equilibrium between the two realms, with him shouting with all his might, producing a roar that means nothing and everything, a blank seal that marks the mind of those hearing it, without this trace being a clear image, only a signal, like the blow of a staff upon one's forehead,

a sign of disapproval together with an acknowledgment of one's progress, an embracing of the ambiguity that incarnates the true nature of the relationship between earth and world, and the true nature of man. If one thinks he has understood, he deserves a blow to punish him. If one thinks that he does not understand, he deserves a blow to reward him. When the staff will have cleared any conception of any intention or meaning, then the ultimate blow will cause his death, the annihilation of his self, and then he will return to the earth, one with the grains of rice buried in the soil, which shall soon feed the children of the next summer.

Case 187 — Zhaozhou's "Go Wash The Bowl" — 趙州洗鉢

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 7. A less complete version can be found in the Book of Serenity, case 39.¹⁵³

【中】

趙州 因僧問：「某甲乍¹ 入叢林²，乞師指示。」州云：「喫粥了也未。」僧云：「喫粥了也。」州云：「洗鉢盂去。」其僧有省。

¹ 【乍】[zhà]: “just [now]” / “suddenly” / “abruptly.”

² 【叢林】S:【丛林】[cóng lín]: “the forest” / “the jungle.” In a Zen context, designates the community of practitioners, monks, and monasteries, with the trees being the pillars of the community, and the blades of grass the newcomers or the deluded, who have yet to grow.

【日】

こ じょうしゅうちな そうと それがし さにゅうそうりん
 擧す。趙州因みに僧問う、「某甲、乍入叢林、
 こ し しじ しゅういわ きっしゆく おわ いま
 乞う師指示せよ。」州云く、「喫粥し了るや未だ
 そういわ きっしやく おわ しゅういわ はつう
 しや。」僧云く、「喫粥し了る。」州云く、「鉢盂を
 あら さ そ そうせい あ
 洗い去れ。」其の僧省有り。

¹⁵³ The Book of Serenity, case 39: 「擧。僧問趙州。學人乍入叢林乞。師指示州云。喫粥了也未僧云。喫了州云。洗鉢盂去。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “This one has just entered the monastery.¹ Please, teacher, offer him some instruction!” Zhaozhou asked: “Has he eaten his rice gruel?” The monk replied: “He has eaten his gruel.” Zhaozhou said: “Then he better go and wash the bowl.” Thereupon, the monk gained some insight.

¹ “The monastery” : Literally, “the forest.” See note 2 of the Chinese text.

When one feels the vacuity of the world seeping into the innermost part of his self, struck by the absence of meaning of this gigantic assembly of things and signs, dazzled by the absence of questioning of his brethren living an existence whose sole purpose is the flattering of the self, the pursuit of pleasure or power, then can the first step be taken. He identifies the sickness afflicting him, the locus of the disease infecting his mind: it is his home, his world, this place into which he was thrown at birth and through which he experiences all that is within the reach of his senses. It now appears so vain, so empty, that he becomes desperate to fill this void in his heart, and so he decides to depart from his home, to travel the land in search of wisdom and guidance, to unveil the meaning of his existence, to quench his thirst of significance. He thus seeks the company of men who also severed themselves from their home, from their families, from the affairs of the world, so that they would support each other on the path they set themselves to walk upon.

With an earnest but cluttered mind, the novice therefore begs for instruction when he finally encounters someone who seems to embody the meaningful life that he seeks. He expects to hear life-changing words of wisdom that will enthrall his heart and reveal a new world to him, such as by reading secret knowledge stealthily passed on through the ages, too precious to be shared with the world as a whole, considering himself now worthy of partaking in this hidden treasure. The answer he receives is nonetheless more puzzling than anything he prepared himself for, and it comes in the form of a question: “Have you eaten your meal?” After an instinctive nod, then comes the instruction, the first milestone

on the path: “Then, go wash your bowl.” The newcomer hoped to be the recipient of some arcane wisdom, a jewel of the world, chiseled in language, carved into words, immaterial things and thoughts that would only be imaging in his mind, but accurately perceiving the great experience of the man in front of him, without doubting for a single instant of his familiarity with the truth he seeks, he realizes what is pointed out to him. What he needs, the path on which he walks, does not lead one away from the earth and to the heights of the world. On the contrary, it brings down the learned, the men of the heights, to once again experience the bare earth with the eyes of an infant, letting him be soaked by an experience of the most common things, such as the satisfaction of the most fundamental instinct and need of the living: feeding. Such an essential activity is nonetheless far from purely earthly. It represents a savant blend of earth and world, with the substance of the earth being associated with the use of things of the world. The food, made of earth that was transformed by life, is prepared according to the culture of his people, his world handed over by his ancestors, and it is eaten using vessels and utensils allying earthly substance with worldly use. In the daily activities of all the men of the world therefore lies the truth of being itself, the subtle wisdom that can only be perceived through a direct experience. Without thought, without hesitation nor desire, the accomplishment of one’s daily duties, performed naturally, letting one’s limbs be guided by the course of the entirety of the heavens and the earth around him, he finally gains some insight, seeing that the vacuity of the world that perplexed him and incited him to undertake his initiatic journey is now contrasted with the blissful void of his heart, as he has let go of all things. The meaning he sought now itself appears vain, as he knows that the truth cannot be experienced where meaning can be found. The bowl that he washes represents all that he needs to know. He can see his true face in it, and as an inconspicuous smile is perceived upon his face, he now sees the way, everywhere he looks.

Case 188 —Dongshan’s “Three Beatings” —洞山三頓

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 15.

【中】

yún mén yīn dòng shān cān cì mén wèn yuē jìn lí shén chù
 雲門 因 洞山 參次， 門 問曰：「近離甚處。」
 shān yún chá dù mén yuē xià zài shén chù shān yún hú
 山 云：「查渡。」 門 曰：「夏在甚處。」 山 云：「湖
 nán bào cí mén yuē jǐ shí lí bǐ shān yún bā yuē
 南報慈。」 門 曰：「幾時離彼。」 山 云：「八月
 èr shí wǔ mén yuē fàng rǔ sān dùn bàng shān zhì míng rì què
 二十五。」 門 曰：「放汝三頓棒。」 山 至明日却
 shàng wèn xún zuó rì méng hé shàng fàng sān dùn bàng bù zhī guò zài shén me
 上問訊：「昨日蒙¹ 和尚放三頓棒，不知過在甚麼
 chù mén yuē fàn dai zi jiāng xī hú nán biàn rèn me qù shān²
 處。」 門 曰：「飯袋子，江西湖南，便恁麼去山²
 yú cǐ dà wù
 。」於此大悟。

¹ 【蒙】[méng]: “to receive [a favor].”

² 【去山】[qù shān]: Literally “to go to a mountain.” Here, the mountain designates monasteries.

【日】

こ うんもん ちな どうざん さん つい もん
 舉す。雲門、因みに 洞山の 参ずる 次で、門、
 と いわ さん り いず ところ さんいわ さ
 問うて 曰く、「近離甚れの 處ぞ。」山云く、「查
 と もんいわ げ いず ところ あ さん
 渡。」門曰く、「夏、甚れの 處にか 在る。」山
 いわ こなん ほうじ もんいわ いくとき かしこ
 云く、「湖南の 報慈。」門曰く、「幾時か 彼を
 はな さんいわ はちがつ にじゅう ご もんいわ なんじ
 離る。」山云く、「八月二十五。」門曰く、「汝に
 さんとん ぼう ゆる さん みょうにち いた かえ
 三頓の 棒を 放す。」山、明日に 至って 却って
 のぼ もんじん さくじつ おしょう さんとん ぼう ゆる
 上って 問訊す、「昨日、和尚の 三頓の 棒を 放す
 こうむ し とが いずれ ところ あ もん
 ことを 蒙る、知らず 過甚麼の 處にか 在る。」問
 いわ はんたい す こうせい こなん すなわ いんも さ
 曰く、「飯袋子、江西湖南、 便ち 恁麼にし 去る
 さん ここ おい たいご
 か。」山、此に 於て 大悟す。

【E】

Dongshan went to pay Yunmen a visit. Yunmen asked him: “Where do you come from?” Dongshan said: “From

[the village of] Chadu.” Yunmen asked: “Where did you spend the summer?” Dongshan replied: “The temple of Baoci, south of the lake.”¹ Yunmen asked: “When did you leave there?” Dongshan answered: “The twenty-fifth of the eighth moon.” Yunmen said: “This one will go without three beatings² with a stick [even though he deserves them].” The next day, Dongshan asked Yunmen: “Yesterday, the Master did a favor to this one by not giving him three beatings, but he does not know where he erred.” Yunmen said: “A mere rice bag, that’s what he is! Wandering around the country and going from one monastery to another.” At these words, Dongshan was greatly enlightened.

¹ “South of the lake,” that is, the Hunan province (湖南), which means “south of the lake.”

² “Beatings”: The original word 頓 [dùn] designates series of blows, and not blows themselves. The case thus mentions three “beatings” and not just three blows with a stick.

An experienced traveler may spend his entire life roaming the earth and yet fail to perceive its nature. He may have met innumerable people, having extensively exchanged words with them, engaged in deep conversation, and yet still be blind to the nature of man. Covering a large ground, he is condemned to stay in the shallows, and has no time to venture into the depths of the ground of being itself. Such a thing indeed takes ample time and demands that one lets go of his dreams of exotic encounters, concealed knowledge, and god-like masters who would bestow upon him something sacred, something that would satiate the hunger seizing the core of his soul.

One who is familiar with the land will be able to name every village he passed through. He will remember the names of his hosts and be able to share countless stories of his lengthy peregrinations. Asked where he comes from, he will simply give what appears to be a factual answer, the last station of his wandering, but as he faces someone who is more than a mere dweller of the world, someone who also sees clearly the essence of all that is, the truth of the earth behind the veil of the world of things, places, people, and names, he finally may receive some instruction, some guidance.

Sometimes, the one lost in the maze of the world can be brought to the earth with the tangible might of the earth, cutting out the futile discussions and debates with a swift blow of a wooden stick, with the pain felt in his flesh interrupting the train of his thought and bringing attention to the work of the senses, to his own body, and to the rest of the earth and the sky around him. The threat of the stick may nonetheless sometimes be as efficient as the blows themselves, if one's mind is sufficiently eager to seek the reason behind this threat; if one is sufficiently active in the world of thought to unveil the nature of his own erring. Unceasingly thinking, roaming the labyrinth of reasons and concepts haphazardly heaped in his mind, he may perchance discover the nature of his wandering, see that he has merely touched the surface of the earth, but has yet to penetrate it, to plunge his flesh in its dark and cold body, forgetting himself in it, becoming one with it. He will then realize that he is a mere bag of food, consuming the life of other beings so that he would remain above the face of the earth, whereas he should rather try to discover what lies under it, letting the earthly bag he himself forms be cut open and its content thrown into the obscure chasm, leaving no trace behind.

Once one has been acquainted with the truth of the earth, he may remain still or walk the roads until his knees are worn out, it will make no difference to him, as he will have realized that he is the earth itself, but he will then pass on the torch that he has received, offering its flame to all those he encounters, accompanied with blows of his walking staff, given to all, the worthy and the undeserving, with the brightest seeing the path clearly at the instant the staff is raised.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴See Wumen's commentary on this case: "The three beatings of Dongshan, where they deserved or not? If one says that they were deserved, then the blades of grass, the trees, and the entire forest should be beaten with a stick. If one says that they were not deserved, then Yunmen was telling a lie. If the one to whom one is speaking understands this, he and Dongshan breathe through the same mouth." Chinese original: 「洞山三頓棒合喫不合喫。若道合喫。草木叢林皆合喫棒。若道不合喫。雲門又成誑語。向者裏明得。方與洞山出一口氣。」, from: 《禪宗無門關》。CBETA (Case 15).

Part VI

The Return of the Winter of No-thing-ness

When the planet has completed its revolution around the luminous orb and the fallen leaves are buried in fresh snow, the myriads of things of the world once again are veiled in a cloak of uniformity, their contours disappearing, letting the oneness of nature once again be revealed through this remarkable gift of the winter.

The end joins the beginning, and man realizes that both are illusions of his mind. There are no seasons, no years, and no things, only a sublime totality, an unfathomable whirlwind encompassing the entirety of the heavens, continuously in motion, and yet with nothing created nor destroyed. Men nonetheless grow and wither, even though the whole of life passes through time no matter what. The child grows into an adult, and then, when the winter of his life comes, his skin and bones worn out, he lets himself be devoured by the dark body of the earth. The fool receives the instruction of the wise, and his mind blooms like a flower before all his efforts are brought to naught as his body ineluctably crumbles under the weight of the passing years. The one whose eyes are truly open nonetheless rejoices in this fateful end, knowing it to be a mere prelude to a glorious rebirth that will soon come. Plunging himself into no-thing-ness with a bright smile on his face, he is now familiar with its truth, and he feels no attachment whatsoever to this place where there is no heat nor cold, no life nor death, no fool nor wise. For he now has become aware of the nature of all things. He has learned the lessons of the guides he encountered on the way that brought him here, and he now knows that no-thing-ness is not somewhere that is to be reached or attained, but that it is merely the truth of being itself, the ground and the essence of all the things forming his world. He therefore feels no need to flee the crowded and filthy streets of the great citadel and is not compelled to seek refuge in the great desert beyond its walls, as he now sees the emptiness that reigns within it, the void that supports all these things. Everywhere, anytime, he is at home, without abiding there for a single instant. He is now like the heavens themselves, perfectly constant but perpetually in motion.

The instinct of the man keeping no-thing-ness in front of his eyes at all times then guides his footsteps as he roams among the throng of men utterly blind to it. The wondrous gift he has received from others who were offered this realization before him, he

will now bestow to them. Without a thing on his mind, without a trace of worry in his heart, he begins to point out the glorious teaching of the winter, bringing attention to the immaculate carpet of snow covering all things, revealing that there is only nothing. With his tongue, his hands, and his entire flesh, he brings attention to the vacuity of distinctions, to the falsehood of discernment, products of the mind rather than objective truth. He invites men to throw themselves into the abyss, like men dying of thirst plunging into fresh waters, so that their anguish would vanish, their needs fulfilled. Then, they will themselves be reborn out of these waters, seeing the earth and the sky under a new light, perceiving the life in the desolate landscape of the winter, seeing the beauty of their vacuous world, with everything in its place, and no-thing reigning everywhere.

Case 189 — Qianfeng's “One Road” — 乾峯一路

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 48. The version in Book of Serenity, case 61, contains one additional sentence: 「會麼會麼。」 “Do you understand? Do you understand?”

【中】

乾峯和尚因僧問：「十方¹ 薄伽梵²，一路
涅槃門，未審路頭在甚麼處。」峯拈起拄杖，劃
一劃云：「在者裏。」後僧請益雲門，門拈起扇
子云：「扇子踣跳³，上三十三天，築⁴著帝釋⁵
鼻孔。東海鯉魚⁶打一棒，雨似盆傾⁷。」

¹ 【十方】[shí fāng]: “the ten directions.” In a Buddhist context, it designates the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west), the four ordinal directions (northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest), and the zenith and nadir. It often symbolizes the whole of the universe.

² 【薄伽梵】[bó qié fàn]: From the Sanskrit “bhagavān” (भगवान्), meaning “fortunate,” which by extension came to signify “lord.” It here designates Śākyamuni Buddha.

³ 【跳踣】[bó tiào]: “to jump.”

⁴ 【築】S: 【筑】[zhù]: “to ram” / “to hit.” Pronounced [zhú] in Taiwan.

⁵ 【帝釋天】S: 【帝釋天】[dì shì tiān]: Śakra (शक्र), the lord god of the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, and a protector of Buddhism.

⁶ 【東海鯉魚】[dōng hǎi lǐ yú]: “the Carp of the Eastern Sea.” A traditional story of a carp that successfully jumps over a gate named the Dragon Gate, after several attempts and when many others had failed. It then soars to the heavens and is transformed into a dragon. This story encourages perseverance. The story can be found in “The Records of Sanqin”(三秦記・鯉魚跳龍門).

⁷ 【傾】S: 【倾】[qīng]: “to overturn” / “to pour out.”

【日】

こ けんぼうおしょう ちな そうと じっぽう ば がばん
舉す。乾峰和尚、因みに 僧問う、「十方薄伽梵、
いちろ ねはん もん いぶか ろとう いずれ ところ あ
一路涅槃門。未審し 路頭甚麼の 處にか 在る。」
ほう しゅじょう ねん き かくいっかく いわ しゃり
峰、拄杖を 拈起して 劃一劃して 云く、「者裏に
あ のち そう うんもん しんえき もん せんず ねん
在り。」後に 僧、雲門に 請益す。門、扇子を 拈
き いわ せんすばちよう さんじゅうさんてん のぼ
起して 云く、「扇子踣跳して 三十三天に 上り、

ていしゃく びこう ちくじゃく とうかい りぎょう う
 帝釋の 鼻孔を 築著す。東海の 鯉魚、打つこと
 いちぼう あめぼん かたむ に
 一棒すれば、雨盆を 傾くに 似たり。]

【E】

A monk asked Qianfeng: "All the Buddhas in the ten directions,¹ they are on the one road to the doors of Nirvana. Does one know where this road begins?" Qianfeng picked up and raised his staff, drew a line² in the air with it, and said: "Here it is." Later, this monk asked Yunmen for some guidance [to understand this matter] Yunmen took up a fan and said: "This fan will jump up to the thirty-third heaven and poke the nostrils of Shakra³ [the lord of the heavens]. It is like the 'Carp of the Eastern Sea'⁵ [that becomes a dragon soaring in the sky and] that, with its tail, tips over [the clouds like a bowl, causing] rain to spill [over the earth]."

¹ "The ten directions": See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² "A line," that is, also the Chinese character for the number "one" (一).

³ "Shakra": See note 5 of the Chinese text.

⁴ "The Carp of the Eastern Sea": See note 6 of the Chinese text.

Strenuously and obstinately, as empires rose and fell across the planet, men carved the face of the earth with stones and steel, plows and picks, machines and explosives, to appropriate the dry land and create channels through which people and goods would flow without impediment, crossing swamps and rivers, passing through mountains and over gorges, painting the country with vast arrays of intersecting lines linking cities and villages, becoming the overflowing veins and arteries allowing civilization to endure and prosper. These are tools of the world of man, utterly useless to the other branches of the tree of life. The birds navigate freely in the air, knowing no earthly boundaries, and the tiger runs through the forest according to its instinct, only avoiding the solid obstacles standing in its way. So used to following these arteries of his world, man sees the course of his own life and the path he is destined to take as resembling such roads covering the earth. He expects to be given a detailed map or precise directions by the

elder offering him instruction, a clear destination, with milestones to reach on the way there. Where will he find the truth of his own being? Where will he contemplate his true face?

The body of the trees only appears when all its leaves have fallen to the ground, when the icy winds sweep the earth and the world's activity is considerably reduced, with men retreating inside their cozy home. Likewise, the truth of one's being can only appear once man lets the ten thousand things encumbering his mind fall into the abyss, the place where not a single thing can be perceived, while his hands may remain full. Using things without seeing them as things, the guide can raise his staff and trace a line in the sky, saying: "This is the gate! This is the road! It is right in front of you, and always was! Just open up your eyes." The slumbering man of the world is nonetheless so accustomed to the sweetness of the land of dreams that he may be incapable of finding the strength to open his eyes.

The dreamer, the prisoner of the illusions of the world, firmly believes in the solidity of its foundations, and thus does not see himself able to disrupt its order, or even simply to refuse to be subject to it. What he does not see is that this order is the dream he is dreaming, and that simply by opening up his eyes, its spell would be instantaneously broken, revealing the illusory nature of all that he previously saw and held dear. The landscape in front of him would not change, but he would see no-thing, only the unmediated truth of being, which is no-thing-ness itself. Given such realization, he may return to the world to show others his vision, now being a master of the world, someone who can do anything, who plays with the greatest things as a child manipulates his toys, as he perceives their illusory nature, and he knows that illusions are the most easily controlled and transformed. The fan in his hand may then jump to the highest heaven and poke the nostrils of the heavenly lord. He may turn the carp swimming in his pond into the most fearful dragon soaring in the sky, tipping over the clouds and causing abundant rain to flood the fields down below. Once one has seen his own true face, nothing is impossible, and all possible things are merely no-thing. The path then becomes a crevasse, but one no longer worries, as he is already where he is supposed to be.

Case 190 —What Does Not Picking And Choosing Mean —如何是不揀擇

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 57.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州：「『至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。』」¹ 如何是不揀擇。」州云：「天上天下，唯我獨尊。」² 僧云：「此猶是揀擇。」州云：「田廩奴³，什麼處是揀擇。」僧無語。

¹ 【至道無難，唯嫌揀擇】[zhì dào wú nán, wéi xián jiǎn zé]: “the supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.” The opening verse of the poem “Faith in Mind,” 信心銘 [xìn xīn míng], attributed to the third patriarch of Zen, Sengcan (鑑智僧璨 [Jiàn zhì Sēng càn]). The poem continues as follows: 「至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。但莫憎愛，洞然明白。毫釐有差，天地懸隔。」 “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing. Neither love nor hate, and you will clearly understand. Be off by a hair, and there is a gap as wide as the one separating heaven from earth.”

² 【天上天下，唯我獨尊】[tiān shàng tiān xià, wéi wǒ dú zūn]: “above and under the heavens, I alone am honored.” A sentence that Gautama Buddha proclaimed just after his birth, according to the Buddhist tradition. This quote appears in the “Dīrgha Āgama,” 長阿含經 in Chinese.

³ 【田廩奴】[tián shè nú]: Literally, “a slave in a rural village,” here meaning “a yokel.”

【日】

舉す。僧、趙州に問う、「至道は難きこと無し、唯だ揀擇を嫌うと。如何なるか是れ不揀擇。」州云く、「天上天下、唯我獨尊。」僧云く、「此れは猶お是れ揀擇。」州云く、「田廩奴、什麼處か是れ揀擇。」僧、語無し。

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.’¹ What does ‘not picking and choosing’ mean?” Zhaozhou said: “Above

the heavens and under the heavens I am the only one, alone and honored.”² The monk said: “That is still picking and choosing.” Zhaozhou said: “Stupid yokel! Where is the picking and choosing?” The monk remained silent.

¹ “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Above the heavens and under the heavens I am the only one, alone and honored” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The skies encompass all that is: the world, life, and the earth that supports them. They are the vessel of being, the foundation of every single thing, but they themselves are carried upon a precise course. They are like a marble running down a track, and this track is the way of the sky, the course of nature, the destiny of being itself. To perceive it is the easiest and the hardest. It simply demands that one refrain from picking and choosing. What may appear to be a trivial behavior may nonetheless represent the foundation of man's world. Its edification indeed begins when his mind decides to separate the flow of one's perception into different things. The sun is set apart from the rest of the heavens due to the contrast it offers and to the sharpness of its contour. The prey running through the grasses is likewise distinguished from the rest of the earth, so that it may be caught and prolong one's existence by being ingested. By picking elements from the whole of the heavens and setting them aside, man therefore constructs his world, choosing where to draw the lines separating things, like a gigantic puzzle in which he spends his days and his nights.

To refrain from picking and choosing, so as to perceive the way of the sky, thus represents a distancing from the world, a repudiation of one of his most ancient and entrenched instincts. It is to let all things drift away from us once we have released the grip we had upon them, until there is but one thing left, ourselves. One may then declare seemingly preposterous words, that nonetheless exhibit the dissolution of the self into the whole of being: “Above the heavens and under the heavens I am the only one, alone and honored!” When there is only one thing, this thing becomes more than a mere thing, it becomes everything. It is the utmost manifestation of being itself, what surpasses the heavens and the earth, the result of the collapse of the world unto the ground of being,

unveiling what is not a thing, what carries the heavens themselves: the way of the sky.

Appearances may nonetheless be deceiving. The snowy white plains under the sky filled with wooly clouds may hide a profusion of things, while a torrent of words and an explosion of signs may have the emptiest of mind as their source, one that is entirely devoid of any trace of picking and choosing. The tongue and the lips may be guided by the way itself, in an instinctual response to an encounter with someone in need of guidance. These words depart from his mouth without having been the object of a reflection, and without leaving any imprint upon his mind, being released into the air, and on the contrary, one may stay silent as a grave and have a mind bustling with thoughts and ideas, picking and choosing, holding on to words as to a treasure, not realizing that it then becomes a poison veiling his eyes to the way of the sky.

Case 191 —The Pitfall Of The People Of Our Time —時人窠窟

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 58.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州：「『至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。』¹ 是
 時人窠窟² 否。」 州 云：「曾有人問我，直得³ 五
 年分疎⁴ 不下。」

¹ 【至道無難，唯嫌揀擇】[zhì dào wú nán, wéi xián jiǎn zé]: “the supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.” The opening verse of the poem “Faith in Mind,” 信心銘 [xìn xīn míng], attributed to the third patriarch of Zen, Sengcan (鑑智僧璨 [Jiàn zhì Sēng càn]). The poem continues as follows: 「至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。但莫憎愛，洞然明白。毫釐有差，天地懸隔。」 “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing. Neither love nor hate, and you will clearly understand. Be off by a hair, and there is a gap as wide as the one separating heaven from earth.”

² 【窠窟】[kē kū]: “a pitfall.”

³ 【直得】[zhí dé]: “after [this duration].”

⁴ 【疎】[shū]: variant of 疏 [shū]: “to clear away obstruction.”

【日】

こ 擧す。そう 僧、じょうしゅう 趙州に 問う、と 「し どう 至道は かた 難きこと
な 無し、た 唯だ けんじゃく 揀擇を きら 嫌うと。こ 是れ じじん 時人の かつ 窠窟な
しゅういわ りや。」しゅう 州云く、かつ 「ひと 曾て わが 人の と 我に あ 問う 有り、
つい 直得に ご ねん 五年 とき 分 あかしきれざる 疎不下なり。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “ ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.’¹ Isn’t that the pitfall of the people of our time?” Zhaozhou said: “Once, someone asked me that, but even after five years, I still can’t discern it clearly.”

¹ “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The selfless helper guiding men to the supreme way must often face the ingratitude of those who do not understand his actions. When this guide talks about no-thing-ness and the illusory nature of the world within this same world, using language and other things belonging to it, they see such behavior as full of contradictions and are prompt to accuse their benefactor of falling prey to its illusions. It is in the nature of the men of the world to play its games, constantly attempting to humble others and to exalt themselves, with the aim of climbing the hierarchy of men, to enjoy prestige and be recognized as wise, powerful, or excellent. The man of the way nonetheless does not play these immature games. He does not let his heart be disturbed by the constant agitation of the world and the insatiable ambitions of its inhabitants. He simply acts according to his true nature, having let his own self fall down to the ground, offering his hand to those in need, without paying attention to their insults, but rather taking them where they are meant to go, sometimes gently, sometimes vigorously.

To guide those bogged down in the mire of the world, the guide must therefore muddy his robe, letting himself appear soiled

by it, but this appearance is deceiving, as the one who has abandoned his self, thrown out his robe upon the earth, is not there anymore, as such, and thus there is no place where the mud would stick, no person who would be soiled by wading through the mire. When one's mind is clear of all thoughts, no contradiction remains. Words and ideas flow naturally, in and out, emerging and disappearing, without anyone there to be attached to them. He may pick a sentence among thousands to lead those hearing it to abandon any notion of picking and choosing, repeating it hundreds of times, and yet never let it dwell in his heart, rather embodying it with all his being. To be attached to non-attachment is itself a form of attachment, and perhaps the most dangerous and the most difficult to free oneself from. The best remedy to such woe may be to feign to embrace a thing of the world, to appear to pick and choose a series of words that best represent the way to go, the path leading out of the mire of the world, the place where one would not be attached to anything, including attachment itself, as there, there would be nothing to be attached to. Such a place is nonetheless not one that is to be found in the world or even upon the earth. It rather is one's true nature, which is what is left when all the clutter of the world, all the things found on the earth and in the heavens have been let go of. One may then have his hands firmly holding on to things of the earth and one's mouth constantly repeating ideas and words of the world, and yet remain blind to their nature as things, using them without thinking about them, the mind then becoming a valley through which a river emerges and flows when the celestial storehouses pour out rain upon the land.

When the guide is questioned concerning the apparent contradiction between his words calling to refrain from picking and choosing and his actions that appear to do such a thing, he does not feel the poke. He does not hear any attempt at overcoming him, but rather shamelessly pours out the content of his heart for all to see, and what they behold is no-thing. The lost ones see themselves surrounded by pitfalls, and by oppositions between the past and the future, what is picked and what is left behind, but the guide earnestly declares that he is blind to these things. He cannot discern truth from falsehood, the coherent from the contradictory, as his mind is like a frozen sea under a clear winter sky, with light and wind freely occupying it, passing and going,

without anything standing out, without him discerning anything. Being so, the world then fades away, and the earth can no longer be distinguished from the skies. This is when one becomes one with them, embodying the way, with no-thing else left.

Case 192 — As Soon As One Uses Language 一才有語言

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 59.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州：「『至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。』」¹ 纔
有語言是揀擇，和尚如何為人。」 州 云：「何不引
盡這語。」 僧云：「某甲只念到這裏。」 州 云：「只
這『至道無難，唯嫌揀擇』。」

¹ 【至道無難，唯嫌揀擇】[zhì dào wú nán, wéi xián jiǎn zé]: “the supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing.” The opening verse of the poem “Faith in Mind,” 信心銘 [xìn xīn míng], attributed to the third patriarch of Zen, Sengcan (鑑智僧璨 [Jiàn zhì Sēng càn]). The poem continues as follows: 「至道無難，唯嫌揀擇。但莫憎愛，洞然明白。毫釐有差，天地懸隔。」 “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing. Neither love nor hate, and you will clearly understand. Be off by a hair, and there is a gap as wide as the one separating heaven from earth.”

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と し どう かた
舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「至道は 難きこと
な た けんじゃく きら わずか ご げん あ こ
無し、唯だ 揀擇を 嫌う。纔に 語言有るや、是れ
けんじゃく おしょう いか ひと おし
揀擇なりと。和尚は 如何に 人に 爲うるや。」
しゅういわ なん こ ご ひ つく
州 云く、「什麼ぞ この 語を 引き 盡さざる。」
そういわ それがし た ここ ねん いた
僧云く、「某甲は 只だ 這裏に 念じ 到るのみ。」
しゅういわ た こ し どう かた な
州 云く、「只だ これぞ 至道は 難きこと 無し、
た けんじゃく きら
唯だ 揀擇を 嫌う。」

【E】

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “ ‘The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes picking and choosing.’¹ But as soon as one uses language, it is already an action of ‘picking and choosing.’ Then how can the Master [do something] for other people?” Zhaozhou said: “Why don’ t you quote the sentence to the end?” The monk said: “This one just had this much in mind.” Zhaozhou said: “It is just: ‘The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes picking and choosing.’”

¹ “The supreme Way is not difficult; it simply dislikes picking and choosing” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

Once one’ s destination has been reached, the walking staff that supported the body of the traveler and helped him probe the solidity of the ground in front of him can and should be thrown away, or at least handed over to someone who still has need of it. Such is the work of the tongue and the fruits of thought. Language is what supports the world of man, for the better and the worst, placing him in a unique position among living things, allowing him to distance himself from the bare reality of the earth and the sky, retreating in abstraction and observing the tangible realm as an object, but also often concealing the truth of the earth and the sky, and leading him to believe that his own creations, the things of his world like words, concepts, and tales, represent the unmediated truth of all that is, as he deludes himself to be a master of the heavens, since he holds sway over the words he uses.

The use of one’ s tongue therefore does not preclude a deep familiarity with what lies beyond the frontiers of man’ s world, the limits of language. One may be a man of peace and nonetheless be skilled in the art of war, in the use of the sharpest sword. The blows of his sword do not cut out the seamless whole of the heavens so that its pieces would be more easily manipulated and observed by his eyes. They rather clear away the world of all its things. They scatter the pieces that are the result of the shattering of the whole of the earth by our forefathers and brethren, letting them be engulfed in the dark and cold depths, like glowing embers thrown into the cracks of a glacier, immediately extinguished and never

to be seen again. When he wields the works of language crafted by another, he simply carries it through the world, showing it to its dwellers, pointing out the glimpse of truth that may be distinguished in it. He does not feel compelled to shatter this shard of the sky further but simply becomes its diligent guardian. He does not add a single word of his own making to it, and neither does he subtract any. He is a vessel of words, a storehouse of things, but one that is always widely open, letting these things be freely brought to him or be taken away, leaving them intact, with not even a fingerprint left from him. This is how one can dwell in the world without cutting out the continuous totality of the skies, without picking and choosing, either embracing the whole or carrying the most beautiful and faithful pieces already found inside the world, those guiding men toward the place where all pieces have been mended, fused back together into the whole of the skies, before this whole itself collapses and shows itself to be no-thing.

One who has yet to open up his eyes to the nature of the pieces of the world nonetheless does not act in such a manner. He unrestrainedly investigates each piece that he receives, shattering them further into smaller chunks, dissecting them, talking about them, reflecting upon their nature and their substance, adding his contribution to them, gluing them together with other things, making what he considers to be something clearer, something more truthful. His mind is replete with such pieces, haphazardly accumulated, and the gift of the man of the way, the shard that represents the direction that leads outside of the world itself, is not appreciated nor understood. The direction remains unnoticed, as he is too busy talking about the arrow to pay attention to where it points. Only when he hears that the supreme way is not difficult, that it simply dislikes picking and choosing, and decides not to hold on to it, not to try to investigate it, but only lets himself be pervaded by its truth, without feeling compelled to add or subtract anything from it, can this sentence then shape his being, and show him the way of the sky.

Case 193 —It Is Not The Mind, Not Buddha, [And Not A Thing] —不是心佛

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 27.

【中】

nán quán hé shàng yīn sēng wèn yún huán yǒu bù yǔ rén shuō dì fǎ
南泉和尚因僧問云：「還有不與人說底¹ 法
麼。」 quán yún yǒu sēng yún rú hé shì bù yǔ rén shuō dì
泉云：「有。」僧云：「如何是不與人說底
法。」 quán yún bú shì xīn bú shì fó bú shì wù
泉云：「不是心，不是佛，不是物。」

¹ 【底】[di]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 的.

【日】

こ なんせんおしょう ちな そう と いわ かえ
舉す。南泉和尚、因みに 僧問うて 云く、「還っ
ひと ため と てい ほう あ せん
て 人の 與に 説かざる 底の 法有りや。」泉
いわ あ そういわ いか こ ひと
云く、「有り。」僧云く、「如何なるか 是れ 人の
ため と てい ほう せんいわ ふ ぜ しん ふ
與に 説かざる 底の 法。」泉云く、「不是心。不
ぜ ぶつ ふ ぜ もつ
是佛。不是物。」

【E】

A monk asked Nanquan: “Is there still a teaching that no man has ever taught before?” Nanquan said: “There is.” The monk asked: “What is the teaching that no man has ever taught before?” Nanquan replied: “It is not the mind, it is not Buddha, it is not a thing.”

The work of the teacher is to initiate its students to new things, new ideas, new behavior, so that he can share his inner world with them, allowing the knowledge stored within his mind to become part of them, familiar to them, and useful to them. Man

receives the uniqueness of his body from his parents, the result of the mingling of their essence, patiently interweaved as the result of a formidable process that emerged through meticulous selection across the ages, since the tree of life itself was nothing but a seed. His parents and neighbors nonetheless possess another heritage, one that is not passed on through the flesh, but rather through years-long teaching, introducing the newborn to their world, built with signs, words, images, and actions, rooted in their mind but extended upon the earth and all its inhabitants. The extensive learning undertaken by the young dwellers of the world slowly but ineluctably fills up their minds with innumerable things, which offer them knowledge of how to make sense of the continuous flow coming from their senses, helping them interpret their surroundings, offering them a vision of themselves, the earth, life, the skies, and the world itself that was to a great extent fashioned by the long chain formed by his ancestors. There nonetheless remains a teaching that no man has ever taught before.

Knowledge of the self can be passed on to the disciple, through a guidance in relationship with his experience, his embodiment. The mind of man is indeed no different than the one of any other, and thus words can convey what was learned through contemplation, reflection, or meditation concerning the nature of the self. When it is seen clearly as a thing of the world, explained in detail with the most precise and vivid words of one's language, then can the last teaching be passed on, the one leading the student to cease to be attached to his own self, letting it drift away like a piece of wood snatched by the tide. Then, the essence of nature itself can appear and be taught.

Once the self is perceived and released, what is left is what is not the self, what it faced before its release, the environment around it, that is, the all-encompassing heavens and the earth within them. In the heavens, man tends to search for the answers to his most essential questions, seeing in them gods and spirits, men having transcended the boundaries of their own kind and liberated themselves from the yoke of the world and the chains of the earth, having become ethereal beings, having left their flesh behind them. The fantasy is thus mingled with the experience of the sky, and taught to the inhabitants of the world. But this coexistence, far from being an impediment, on the contrary, represents

a strength of this teaching, an instance of marriage of truth and falsehood, imagination and direct experience, and it offers a way to not let oneself ensnared by both. When the teaching of truth comes together with illusions, this renders the student more eager to release the grip he has upon the heavens as a whole, as he realizes that holding on to the truth may be more noxious than being surrounded by falsehood. Once the things of the sky married with the fantasies of the world are understood for what they are, they can then be thrown away, letting the world crumble and the sky fall upon its ruins.

What then remains is the earth itself, the tangible things that are experienced directly by the senses. The teacher only needs to point them out or bring them to his students for them to be discovered. His wise words, fruits of the work of generations of learned men, allow them to know everything about them, their essence, their use, or their origin. Once the flow of the senses has passed through the sieve of reason, has been dissected to reveal its most fundamental elements, the teacher can then show that being does not depend upon this work of the senses. Reducing to naught this flow of the senses, plunging the students in the deepest sensory deprivation, severing them from any contact with the earth, then comes the end of what he can teach, and the beginning of the way that they must tread without him. Once the self has been left behind; once the world and the skies have been cast away and one has severed himself from the earth itself, no-thing remains, and yet it is in this no-thing-ness that the ground of one's existence may finally appear, revealed and not taught, felt rather than discussed, the absolute clearing that has never been put into words, never been brought into the world of man.

Case 194 —Neither “Mind” Nor “Buddha” —非心非佛

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 33.

【中】

mǎ zǔ yīn sēng wèn rú hé shì fó zǔ yuē fēi xīn fēi
馬祖 因僧問：「如何是佛。」祖 曰：「非心非
 fó
 佛。」

【日】

こ ば そ ちな そう と いか こ
 舉す。馬祖、因みに 僧問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 ほとけ そ いわ ひ しん ひ ぶつ
 佛。」祖曰く、「非心非佛。」

【E】

A monk asked Mazu: “What is Buddha?” Mazu said: “Neither ‘mind’ nor ‘Buddha.’”

Words are the building blocks of our world. Without them, we may perceive the things present around us, but we would be almost entirely incapable of reflecting upon them, or of sharing our experiences and knowledge with other men. We would be mere thoughtless animals, living an existence ruled by our primal instincts, without consideration for the nature of our being, without the possibility of retreating in abstraction and seeing the earth and the sky from a distance, as we would be fully immersed in them. Handed over to us as the legacy of our fathers, these words are defined through their relationship with others, as they all form an intricate web covering the major part of the earth and the sky, but also can describe the fruit of one’s imagination, things that do not exist outside of our minds. With this power, thus comes some danger, as the imaginary can find itself inextricably linked with the tangible, what can be experienced by the senses, rendering men incapable of discerning one from the other. The words and concepts crafted by men therefore have to be put to the test, passed in the fire of experience, to see if they truly reflect a piece of the earth or the sky, or are mere creations of the mind.

Even the most formidable words created by mankind will nonetheless always remain mere tools guiding the mind toward the truth of what these words represent. They are mere arrows pointing toward a target, and thus one should be careful to not lose oneself in the contemplation of the body and head of these instruments, forgetting to observe what they indicate, their destination. In this respect, the most essential words and concepts are

certainly also those for which the trial by the fire of experience is the trickiest, as these essential things are indeed those that pervade our being to its core, and thus are the hardest to perceive directly with the senses, as objects, as they are the essence of our own being. One's head cannot observe itself without seeing its own representation in a mirror, and likewise, the truth of being cannot be perceived as an object as long as one remains something that *is*. Words and concepts thus guide man this far, but there comes a point where the building blocks become mere stumbling blocks hindering his advance on the way. The very words of "self" and "truth of being" become things that obscure the path, a mist that conceals. This is when one can realize that the truth of being is not the "truth of being," that the truth differs from its designation, its representation in the mind of man. This implies that, at some point, one must let go of any notion of "truth of being," forgetting these pernicious words and releasing the entire web connecting them to the rest of the world of man, the myriad of words and things, like a fishing net thrown into the depths when one has taken the last meal of his life. Only then may this truth perhaps come to the one who has emptied his mind like a silver bowl, waiting for the essence of the heavens to fall down and fill it to the brim, like the most pristine snow, rendering the bowl indistinguishable from this heavenly gift.

Case 195 — Knowledge Is Not The Way — 智不是道

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 34.

【中】

nán quán yún xīn bú shì fó zhì bú shì dào
南泉 云：「心不是佛，智不是道。」

【日】

こ なんせんいわ しん こ ほとけ ち
こ どう
擧す。南泉云く、「心は 是れ 佛にあらず、智は
是れ 道にあらず。」

【E】

Nanquan said: “The mind is not Buddha. Knowledge is not the way.”

The various meanings of each word we use are inextricably tied to the context in which it is used. The same sentence may thus be true when uttered by one person, at one point in time, and be false when pronounced by another, in another situation. The words offered to us by men whose gaze pierce through the nature of words to see the essence of what they represent are thus intended to help us share this vision of unmediated truth rather than incarnate such a truth. For the newcomer on the path, the clearest guidance is given in terms of definitions of how things are: “It is like this!” “The mind is the essence of all being.” Once the words have seeped into one’s mind, been appropriated, and have become part of oneself, this is when the time comes for this newly established knowledge, this part of this world, to be shaken to its foundations, so as to show that while this first step invites him to further progress, he must now realize the limits of any representation, the inherent falsehood of words. This is when the man of the way takes away the support he previously offered, the verbal walking staff that supported the legs of the student who had trouble advancing on his own. He thus negates what he previously stated: “The mind is not the essence of being,” thereby inevitably causing the student to doubt what he knows, of himself, and of the nature of the way of the sky he attempts to unveil.

If one thinks he has understood, he strays, and the way is plunged further into darkness. The way of the sky is not the “essence of being.” It is not akin to the “self,” and no form of knowledge will adequately incarnate it. Once the gate has been seen, and once one has perceived the fact that it leads outside of the walls of things forming man’s world, both the affirmation and the negation can be abandoned. The contradictions can be resolved through annihilation, the canceling out of the opposites, leaving in their stead only a single word, a single thing. Then, the last word that remains absorbs the entirety of the sky. Its utterance summons the whole of being to our mind, placing the earth

itself in our hand, and this is when one can realize that when there is only one thing left, it becomes utterly superfluous, completely useless, as what is represented by it is what we are, what there is, here and now, the experience through which we go through at this instant and forever.¹⁵⁵ The last thing can thus be discarded, thrown into oblivion, allowing us to embrace the way of the sky, without mediation, without signs, beholding its perfect clarity, indistinguishable from the most total obscurity, as all oppositions have been resolved, and the very concept of “meaning” has been dissolved.

Case 196 —Every Day Is A Good Day 一日 日は好日

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 6.

【中】

jǔ yún mén chuí yǔ yún shí wǔ rì yǐ qián bú wèn nǚ shí
 舉。雲門垂語云：「十五日¹已前，不問汝；十
 wǔ rì yǐ hòu dào jiāng yí jù lái。」zì dài yún rì rì shì hǎo rì
 五日已後，道將一句來。」自代云：「日日是好日。」

¹ 【十五日】[shí wǔ rì]: The 15th day of the month, that is, the day of the full moon, according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

【日】

cōu ōn mǎn suí gō iwā jū yō gō ni chī i zēn
 舉す。雲門垂語して云く、「十五日已前は
 nā n jī tō jū yō gō ni chī i gō i tō i i mō
 汝に問わず、十五日已後、一句を道い將ち
 kī tō mī zū kō kaw iwa ni chī ni cō cō u jō
 來れ。」自ら代って云く、「日日是れ好日。」

【E】

¹⁵⁵See: Yamada, Kou' un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “From the essential point of view, when we say ‘Buddha,’ the whole universe is Buddha. Nothing remains outside of Buddha. When we say ‘mind,’ the whole universe is mind. Nothing remains outside of it. It is the same with ‘knowing’ and ‘Way.’ From the Zen point of view, the words Buddha, mind, knowing, and Way are nothing other than Mu, the sound of one hand clapping, just sitting or counting breaths.”

Yunmen, giving instruction, said: "This one does not ask you about before the fifteenth day;¹ Tell him a phrase about after the fifteenth day." He answered himself on behalf of the monks and said: "Every day is a good day."

¹ "Fifteenth day" : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

The celestial mechanism is continuously in motion as life flourishes upon the earth, witnessing the day ineluctably fold into the night, the veiling of the moon and its reappearance, the succession of the seasons. This mechanism originally possessed no gears. Each wheel is in its essence perfectly smooth, and each transition completely seamless, and as man cannot fathom its magnificence in its entirety, he carved notches on them with the chisel of reason to quantify their movement, to keep track of them, that is, to understand and appropriate them. Man thus counts the days, the months, and the years, pushing away the boundaries of his presence, as his world and his words allow him to keep traces of the past and to project himself in the future, using a timeline of his own making, having transformed the permanence of the present into a series of rigidly spaced notches etched on the path of the heavens.

The carving of the gears of time nonetheless only follows the great shattering of the unicity of the heavens into the myriad of things of the world of man. The fabric of the firmament is rent into innumerable strips. The sun is extracted out of the whole of the sky, and so is the moon, the earth, and every single thing found upon its rocky face. Once this great quantification was accomplished, new divisions were then produced by the calculating mind of man. All things began to be sorted into good or bad, sacred or common, precious or worthless. The path trodden by the one whose life is devoted to the embracing of the way of the sky nonetheless takes him in the opposite direction as the one taken by most of mankind throughout its history. He indeed was born in the world of the myriad of things, but he knows that these things are not the way of the sky, are not the essence of the heavens themselves, and he therefore set himself on a journey backward, to behold what there was before the mind of his fathers chiseled countless notches on the celestial wheels, before they rent the fabric

of the sky to create the things of their world. He therefore sews back the fabric of the sky, and fuses the things of the world so that they once again form a seamless whole, but he does so effortlessly, simply dropping all the things to which he was attached, the tools and the riches of the world, and he then sees the wheels once again become perfectly smooth, pristinely polished, and the firmament like a drape covering the entirety of all that is.

Once the past and the future are released and all that is left is pure presence, and once all the things of the world are let down to the ground together with all the arbitrary oppositions and subjective contrasts between them, then every single day is a good day, every single day is a sacred feast, the most precious moment of one's existence, as there is simply no other. Then, he will cease to wonder what difference the unveiling of the full moon makes. He will forget the road home and be oblivious to the end of the summer. His mind will be draped by the fullness of the heavens, leaving no thing to be seen, and seeing no-thing. He is at home where he is, here and now, and the brethren with him are like images of himself in a mirror, with a good time shared with them at all times.

Case 197 —Complete Exposure Of The Substance To The Golden Wind 一體露金鳳

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 27.

【中】

舉。僧問 雲門：「樹凋葉落時如何。」 雲門
yún mén tī lù jīn fēng
 云：「體¹ 露金風² 。」

¹ 【體】S: 【体】[tǐ]: “body” / “substance.”

² 【金風】S: 【金風】[jīn fēng]: Literally “the golden wind,” designating the autumn wind (秋風). In the Daoist tradition, each season is associated with an element: wood for the spring, fire for the summer, gold for the autumn, and water for the winter.

【日】

こ そう うんもん と きしほ は お とき
 舉す。僧、雲門に 問う、「樹凋み 葉落つる 時、
いかん うんもんいわ たい ろ きんぷう
 如何。」 雲門云く、「體露金風。」

【E】

A monk asked Yunmen: “What is it when the tree withers and the leaves fall?” Yunmen answered: “Complete exposure of the substance¹ to the golden wind.”²

¹ “The substance” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “The golden wind” : See note 2 of the Chinese text.

Seldom do we let ourselves be exposed to the sky and to the eyes of men. We cover our skin with cloth, fur, or wool, firstly to protect ourselves from the unforgiving forces of the sky, the icy winds and the rain of the winter that rob us of our precious warmth, threatening to irremediably extinguish the fire of life ardently burning within us. We also wrap ourselves in elegant garments to veil our nakedness from the eyes of men, being reluctant to let the appearance of our flesh be seen and judged, feeling safer with the protection and concealment of this soft armor we carry each day of our life. Likewise, our true face is kept hidden behind a mask composed of ten thousand pieces, the things forming the world around us, which are like the shroud of leaves covering the branches of the trees, intercepting the radiance of the sun, blocking the winds blowing over the earth. Without this emerald canopy, the tree would not have grown to this height and reached this age. It would have remained a seed buried into the muddy ground, just like man would be no more than the plants covering the face of the earth if his world never was edified to its current elevation thanks to the innumerable things he industriously created with his mind and hands. What is veiled is nonetheless sooner or later bound to be discovered. The mask cannot be kept upon one's face forever, otherwise this face would never be seen. The tree must shed its leaves when the time comes, so that they may be renewed. The meaning of all things is revealed through contrast. The realization of the presence of something implies a period of absence, allowing its nature to be seen, and fortunately, the heavens themselves continuously work to perform such a pacing of the alternation between presence and absence, concealment and unveiling, death and rebirth.

When the fall comes, the emerald canopy of the forest turns into amber. The dry leaves, having taken the color of the sun

whose light they absorbed during the summer, now fall down to the ground and become part of it as they are torn by feet, hoofs, and the torrential rains. The tree then finds itself exposed to the autumn wind, having shed its armor, having laid bare its nature for all eyes to see. When the icy winds of winter embrace it, it appears withered, without life, becoming one with the rest of the dead earth, subjugated by the heavenly forces, conquered by the flowing ether filling out the sky. When man lets go of the ten thousand things forming his world, this is when his nature is exposed, and when he becomes one with the earth and the sky. He lets go of his life and embraces the great death, and through this experience, he overcomes all fear and all desire, and enters no-thing-ness itself. This withering of life is nonetheless only temporary. This death is only transient, the prelude to a rebirth, a reappropriation of the world, in which the one who is reborn will proclaim the truth of his enlightenment, and incarnate death itself among the living, becoming a monument to no-thing-ness at the heart of the world of the ten thousand things, like the tree during the spring, when the gigantic solar wheel has completed its revolution.

Case 198 —Yunmen’ s “Two Diseases” — 雲門兩病

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 11.

【中】

舉。雲門大師云：「光不透脫，有兩般病。一
切處不明，面前有物，是一。透得一切法空，隱隱
地似有箇物相似，亦是光不透脫。又法身¹ 亦有兩
般病，得到法身，為法執不忘，已見猶存，墮在法
身邊，是一。直饒² 透得，放過即不可，子細點檢
將來，有甚麼氣息³，亦是病。」

¹ 【法身】[fǎ shēn]: “the Dharma body.” A translation of the Sanskrit word “dharma-kāya” (धर्म काय). One of the “three bodies” of a Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It may be seen as the essence of the whole of nature.

² 【直饒】[zhí ráo]: “even if.”

³ 【有甚麼氣息】[yǒu shén me qì xī]: An idiomatic expression that here means “to say that one has no flaws.” (See 安谷白雲。《從容錄新裝版：禪の心髓》。東京：春秋社，2008. p68: 「氣息とは、ここではキズということだ。」)。

【日】

こ うんもん だいし いわ ひか とうだつ
 擧す。雲門大師云く、「光り 透脱せざれば
 りょうはん やまい あ いっさいじょめい めんぜんもの
 兩般の 病有り。一切處明ならず 面前物ある、
 こ ひと いっさい ぼうくう とうとく おんのんち
 是れ 一つ。一切の 法空を 透得するも 隱隱地に
 こ もの あ に あいに また こ ひかりとうだつ
 箇の 物有るに 似て 相似たり。亦是れ 光透脱せ
 また ぼっしん また りょうはん やまい ぼつ
 ざるなり。又 法身にも 亦 兩般の 病あり。法
 しん いた え ぼっしゅうぼう こけん な
 身に 到ることを 得るも 法執忘ぜず、己見猶お
 そん ため ぼっしんへん だざい こ ひと たとい
 存するが 爲に 法身邊に 墮在す、是れ 一つ。直饒
 とうとく ぼう か すなわ ふか しさい
 透得するも 放過せば 即ち 不可なり。子細に
 てんけん も きた なん きそく あ
 點檢し 將ち 來れば 甚麼の 氣息か 有らんと
 い また こ やまい
 云う、亦是れ 病なり。」

【E】

Great Master Yunmen said: “When the light does not go through [a man], there are two diseases. Everywhere, there is no clarity, [even though] there are things before [this man]: this is one [disease]. Once it has penetrated and one has realized the emptiness of all things, somehow one feels as if there were still something there, meaning that the light has not yet gone through. Moreover, there are also two diseases concerning the Dharma-body.¹ One has reached the Dharma-body, but one remains attached to the Dharma, unable to forget this attachment, and keeping his own views, therefore falling down, being merely alongside the Dharma-body: this is one disease. If it has gone through completely, one cannot simply let go. One will proceed with a careful examination, considering that he has no flaws:² this is also a disease.”

¹ “Dharma-body”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

² “Considering that he has no flaws”: See note 3 in the Chinese text.

The penumbra of the morning twilight offers man an occasion to distinguish the things around him from one another, after the receding of the darkness of the night and the time of blindness associated with it. The uniformity of the obscurity of the night is then cleaved by minute rays of light, and one thing then slowly becomes opposed to another, or to its absence. These rays penetrate our eyes and seep into our minds to reveal to us the world in which we stand, what was already there during the last hours, but there is for now only a play of shadows, no clarity, no perception of the essence of these things.

As the sun raises its countenance over the horizon, the world is then flooded with brilliance, our eyes soaked in perfect enlightenment. The clarity of this world increases until the shadows are chased away, almost completely, before colors fade into absolute radiance and forms are veiled in an impenetrable cloak of light. When all things are seen with perfect clarity, one realizes that such clarity is no different than utter darkness, as one sees nothing, and perceives that there is only no-thing. The light pervades one's being, and the great body of nature appears in its fullness, in its unicity, and in its emptiness. Light is all there is. One does not see the light, but he is also light itself. This is nonetheless not the end of his experience, the destination of his long journey. To see that all is no-thing-ness and to perceive the no-thing-ness in all things is indeed still to let something remain between him and the light: "no-thing-ness" itself, the last thing to which one is tempted to hold on.

When the light of being passes through us as we have let go of our own self, then there is no one left to think about "no-thing-ness," and this very idea vanishes away into the air. If we see "no-thing-ness" itself, we are still afflicted by the disease of the men of the world. We have climbed the high peak, but are now refusing to let it go. We still see a contrast between the world and no-thing-ness, and see "no-thing-ness" as a thing of the world, an idea occupying our mind. The light goes through when there is nothing that can resist its passage, not even the very idea of "no-thing-ness." When this ultimate idea is burned away by the light itself, this is when it becomes clear that there never was no

sickness or health. There is no cure because there is no disease, and thus neither is there anyone who is either sick or healthy. But if you think all of this is now understood, you are still afflicted by a disease.

Case 199 — Take A Step Further While On The Pole — 竿頭進步

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 46. A more complete version can be found in the Book of Serenity, case 79.¹⁵⁶

【中】

石霜和尚云：「百尺竿頭如何進步。」又古德云：「百尺竿頭坐底¹ 人，雖然得入未為真；百尺竿頭須進步，十方世界² 現全身。」

¹ 【底】[dǐ]: Equivalent to the modern Chinese particle 的。

² 【十方世界】[shí fāng shì jiè]: “the worlds of the ten directions.” The term “ten directions” 十方 [shí fāng] designates the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west), the four ordinal directions (northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest), and the zenith and nadir. The expression “the worlds of the ten directions” here means “the entirety of the universe.”

【日】

舉す。石霜和尚曰く、「百尺竿頭、如何が歩を進めん。」又た古德云く、「百尺竿頭に坐する底の人は、得入すと雖然も、未だ真と爲さず。百尺竿頭に須らく歩を進めて、十方世界に全身を現すべし」と。

【E】

¹⁵⁶ See Book of Serenity, case 79: 「舉。長沙令僧問會和尚。未見南泉時如何會良久僧云。見後如何會云。不可別有也僧迴舉似沙沙云。百尺竿頭坐底人雖然得入未為真百尺竿頭須進步十方世界是全身僧云。百尺竿頭如何進步沙云。朗州山澧州水僧云。不會沙云。四海五湖王化裏。」

Shishuang said: “[Once] one is on the top of a hundred-foot pole, what should be done?”¹ [concerning this,] Gude said: “Even though the one who sits on the top of a hundred-foot pole has begun to enter, he is not truly there. From the hundred-foot pole, one should take a step further and let one’s body appear in the worlds of the ten directions.”²

¹ “What should be done”: The word used here can also mean “to progress” and “to step further.” The different meanings are all intertwined here.

² “The ten directions of the world”: See note 2 of the Chinese text.

The learned of the world meticulously accumulates knowledge, appropriating vast storehouses of things built by others, so that he would climb the steps of its wisdom, reaching increasingly higher levels in its hierarchy, enlarging the horizon encompassed by his gaze and the reach of his body. There is nonetheless no end to his ascent, as new things can always be envisioned, fabricated, and mastered, seemingly bringing him closer to the sky, and yet when he beholds the celestial vault, it appears no different as it was when he first opened up his eyes while standing on the bare earth down below, on the foundations of his world.

When the learned finally perceives the vacuity of his enterprise, seeing himself as a Sisyphus dragging new things to the top of the world without them fundamentally altering his horizon, his view of the truth of the earth and the sky, he may then realize that far from bringing him a revelation of the essence of all that is, of the ground of the skies, the things he holds on to and upon which he stands rather conceal what he seeks, and restrain his freedom. Letting them go one by one, he witnesses their fall into the bottomless depths, beyond the frontiers of his world. Columns after columns are toppled into oblivion, and sky-high heaps crumble, engulfed in the dark body of the earth itself, never to be seen again. This goes on and on, until his horizon is clear, and he is bathed in the brightness of the stars, contemplating the vast emptiness all around him, as he stands on the top of a narrow pillar reaching the loftiest clouds.

To reach the heights and to behold the clarity of the heavens once the world ceases to be a hindrance, a thick drape veiling its

beauty, is to be enlightened with the celestial radiance, to contemplate the great emptiness that represents the ground of all that is. This formidable outlook upon nature nonetheless may appear to him to be the result of his ascent to the lofty heights. He may then grow more attached to this pillar than to any other of the things of the world that he willingly let go of. It becomes a beam stuck in his eye, but whose presence he does not notice, as he is focused on the speck in the eyes of those down below. Some may remain indefinitely on the top of this throne of the world, this enlightened height, forgetting about the woes of the world, the pains of those still on their way up, enjoying his solitary retreat in the vast emptiness of the sky, ignoring the last thing upon which he stands.

Someone whose eye is sufficiently open will nonetheless realize his blindness to the last thing. He will feel the beam piercing through his eye, even if he cannot see it, and he will then decide to take the final step, letting go of the last thing, the pillar itself, understanding that it implies letting go of one's own life, one's own self, thoughtlessly hurling one's flesh and one's mind into the depths, the bottomless abyss where there is no-thing, so that he may enjoy the freedom of the winds, the liberty of the sky, able to attend to those lost inside the cluttered streets of the world below, embracing them like the winter breeze, waking them up and carrying them to the loftiest clouds and beyond, so that all would see the purity of the sky, the marvelous perfection of the vast empty expanse above and below, in every direction.¹⁵⁷

Case 200 — Doulüyue's Three Barriers — 兜率三關

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 47.

【中】

¹⁵⁷See Wumen's verse on this case: "Making the eye on the forehead blind, one clings to the mark on the scale; Throwing away body and life, one blind person leads many blind people." Translation from: Yamada, Kou'un, *Mumonkan (Gateless Gate)* [Unpublished manuscript]. Chinese original: 「瞎却頂門眼錯認定盤星拚身能捨命一盲引眾盲」, from: 《禪宗無門關》. CBETA (Case 46).

dóu lǜ yuè hé shàng shè sān guān wèn xué zhě bō cǎo cān xuán
 兜率悅和尚設三關問學者：「撥¹ 草參玄²，
 zhǐ tú jiàn xìng jí jīn shàng rén xìng zài shén chù shí dé zì xìng fāng
 只圖³ 見性，即今⁴ 上人，性在甚處。識得自性，方
 tuō shēng sǐ yǎn guāng luò shí zuò me shēng tuō tuō dé shēng sǐ biàn zhī qù
 脫生死，眼光落時，作麼生脫。脫得生死，便知去
 chù sì dà fēn lí xiàng shén chù qù
 處，四大分離，向甚處去。」

¹ 【撥】S: 【拨】[bō]: “to push aside with a limb or an object” / “to wade through.”

² 【參玄】S: 【参玄】[cān xuán]: Literally, “to participate to the mystery,” meaning “to engage in Zen practice.”

³ 【圖】S: 【图】[tú]: “to intend” / “to seek.”

⁴ 【即今】[jí jīn]: “now.”

【日】

こ と そつ えつ おしょう さん かん もう がくしゃ
 擧す。兜率悅和尚、三關を 設けて 學者に
 と はっそうさんげん た けんしょう はか そつこんしょうにん
 問う、「撥草參玄は 只だ 見性を 圖る。即今上人の
 しょう いず ところ あ じしょう しきとく
 性、甚れの 處にか 在る。」「自性を 識得すれば
 まさ しょうじ だつ がんこう お とき さもさん だつ
 方に 生死を 脱す、眼光落つる 時作麼生か 脱せ
 しょうじ だつとく すなわ きょしょ し
 ん。」「生死を 脱得すれば 便ち 去處を 知る、
 し だい ぶんり いず ところ むか さ
 四大分離して 甚れの 處に 向ってか 去る。」

【E】

Doulüyue set up three barriers and asked some students: “Wading through the tall grasses to participate in the mystery [of Zen practice], the only goal is to see one’s own [true] nature. Now, those coming up here now, [tell me] where is this [true] nature? When one has realized his own [true] nature, he is then free from birth and death. When the light going through one’s eyes is dimmed [and one’s flesh decays], how will he free himself? If one frees himself from birth and death, he should know where he goes. [His body] decomposes into the four elements. Where is he going?”

The novice wades through the tall grasses to participate in the mystery that occurs in the mountains where those seeking to know themselves congregate and support each other on the path. This path is nonetheless one without a beginning or end. It has no borders nor center, and each step that is taken is in the right direction. There is only a single gate leading up to it: the one that is here and now. When one passes through this gate and perceives the nature of the path, he may see that he himself is one with it. He is the tall grasses as well as the tallest trees throning upon the peak. The only hindrance to his liberation is the illusion that he is a subject contemplating objects around him, and this illusion begins to be dispelled when the subject also becomes an object, when one examines his own nature in contrast with the rest of the things surrounding him. He may then notice how such contrast is itself the fruit of his mind, painted with the brush of his reason. Each blade of grass grows while collecting the rays of the radiant star above the earth, and then withers as its decomposed substance becomes the ground out of which another will soon sprout, with the grassland remaining intact, passing through time as a whole, sharing roots and soil, fed with the same celestial brilliance. When man sees that he is a blade of grass; that he is the grassland, the earth, and the sky, he then sees that the line between life and death is as illusory as the one between the self and the other. His flesh may rot and be absorbed by the earth, but it remains the same in its essence, and it will be part of generations upon generations of new living beings. He will be the grass of the morrow, the seeds of the next winter, the birds of another year, the men of a future civilization, up until the sky itself is folded back into the tiniest spark or dissolved in emptiness.

One who sees his own nature will therefore feel no anguish when considering the day when the light going through his eyes will be dimmed and his flesh decay. He is free, because he is free of his self, which is what constrained him and caused him to fear the dusk of his existence, not realizing that another dawn soon comes, and that the heavenly brilliance may be veiled for a little while, but that it always emerges back out of the horizon, and never ceased to be. The way he will take is clear. He will be the soil and the winds, the rain and what sprouts out of the ground. He will remain here and be there. There will be no place where he is not. He is no-thing and every thing, nowhere and everywhere, now and

forever, having realized that being is indivisible, a compact whole carried upon the way of the sky, one that is not even perceivable as a thing, or as no-thing. It simply is.

Case 201 —Shoushan's Three Phrases — 首山三句

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 76.

【中】

舉。首山示眾云：「第一句薦¹得，與佛祖為師。第二句薦得，與人天為師。第三句薦得，自救不了。」僧云：「和尚是第幾句薦得。」山云：「月落三更² 穿市過。」

¹ 【薦】[jiàn]: “to attain” / “to reach.”

² 【三更】[sān gēng]: “the third of the five night watch periods,” that is, around the middle of the night.

【日】

舉す。首山衆に示して云く、「第一句に薦得すれば、佛祖の與に師と爲る、第二句に薦得すれば、人天の與に師と爲る、第三句に薦得すれば、自救不了。」僧云く、「和尚は是れ第幾句に薦得するや。」山云く、「月落て三更、市を穿て過ぐ。」

【E】

Shoushan instructed the congregation and said: “If one attains the first verse, he will be a teacher of buddhas and patriarchs. If one attains the second verse, he will be a teacher of the heavens and mankind. If one attains the third verse, he

won't be able to save even himself." A monk asked: "Which verse did the Master attain?" Shoushan said: "The moon is set and, at midnight, I walk through the city."

The learned teacher beholds the world from its highest point and considers himself as enjoying the best possible view of it. He remains in the cloudy heights and instructs those reigning over this world, who have for long deserted the earth and who remain as the dust blown over it by the winds, and the clouds themselves. To teach is to be convinced that one knows, and therefore the teacher stands the farthest from the way of the sky. The one teaching both the heavenly ones and the kings of the earth stands in the loftiest palaces, but he is the lowest of the low, the shameless and proud, blinded by the delusions he diligently cultivates day after day and scatters in the four corners of the world through his mouth and his pen.

The humble teacher nonetheless does not dwell forever among the loftiest clouds. He one day hastily descends from the heights to roam through the bright but grimy streets of the world and to mingle with the commoners, the men of the world. There, he gathers the heavens and the world, seeing them as a single thing, seeing the heavenly nature of the world and the worldly nature of the heavens, blurring the horizon, with the tall glass structures built by the hands of men standing like pristine mirrors perfectly blending with the azure dome and the wooly clouds, almost indistinguishable from them. His voice resounds through the alleys and the marketplace, and runs to the heights as well as into the depths, and he preaches to both heaven and mankind concerning this revelation, ceasing to discern them, treating them not only as equals but as identical.

The teacher of heavens and mankind may nonetheless at one point see through his own words and perceive their vacuity. He may see his preaching as vain, and his writings as deceitful. More importantly, this may cause him to doubt his own position, and the validity of his work. He cannot save others, and he cannot even save himself, but the unsettling revelation soon is superseded by contentment. Indeed, the source of all illusions now appears

crystal-clear. The spring of deceit does not stand in front of him, but he rather is this spring, which he promptly covers with the earth and fills out with the sky. Where there is no knowledge, there is no teacher. Where there is no self, there is no savior nor anyone to save. When the sun and the moon have set, and the streets are enshrouded with shadows, one may roam throughout the city, without distinguishing anything. Everything is at its place, as it was at noon, with the gilded star profusely pouring out its blazing rays over the earth, but now there is only no-thing to be seen, and when one has let this darkness pervade his one being, there is no one left there, and the streets are empty, perfectly pure and clear, and there is no longer any teacher and student, and even numbers are forgotten, revealed to be mere reflections of no-thing-ness.

Case 202 —Sitting Alone On The Great Hero Peak —獨坐大雄峰

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 26.

【中】

jǔ sēng wèn bǎi zhàng rú hé shì qí tè shì zhàng yún dú
 舉。僧問百丈：「如何是奇特事。」丈云：「獨
 zuò dà xióng fēng sēng lǐ bài zhàng biàn dǎ
 坐大雄峰¹。」僧禮拜，丈便打。

¹ 【大雄峰】[dà xióng fēng]: “the Great Hero Peak,” that is, the place where Baizhang’s monastery was located.

【日】

こ そう ひやくじょう と いか こ
 舉す。僧、百丈に問う、「如何なるか 是れ
 きとく じ じょういわ ひと たいゆうほう ぞ そう
 奇特の事。」丈云く、「獨り大雄峰に坐す。」僧、
 らいはい じょう すなわ う
 禮拜す。丈、便ち打つ。

【E】

A monk asked Baizhang: “What is something extraordinary?” Baizhang said: “Sitting alone on the Great Hero Peak!”¹ The monk made a deep bow. Baizhang then hit him.

¹ “Great Hero Peak”: See note 1 of the Chinese text.

When the extraordinary becomes familiar, it surreptitiously turns into the ordinary, and conversely, when the familiarity with the ordinary is suddenly broken and one sees it under a new light, it may finally reveal its extraordinary nature. For the man engulfed daily in the affairs of the world, among throngs of people running through its labyrinthine alleys, to find oneself sitting alone on a mountain peak may be a peculiar experience, while the mountain hermit living the same experience each day may, on the contrary, be bedazzled by the visit of the most ordinary man, and be touched by the most inept question.

There is nonetheless a crucial difference between a man of the way and one of the world, as the former does not need to climb to a solitary peak to free himself from the smothering presence of the ten thousand things of the world, preventing the perception of the extraordinariness of the ordinary. He is the great mountain whose basis encompasses the entire earth. He alone is honored above and under the heavens, but he is also no one, having seen that he is the earth and the sky. The visitor who approaches him is now alone on the great mountain, sitting upon it and contemplating its infinite nature, the horizon of being itself, but he does not realize it, seeing the mountain in the form of a man, addressing it as if it belonged to the world, whereas it is the earth itself.

The unrefined visitor thus attempts to honor his host, bowing deeply toward him, but only receives a blow of a stick as his reward for his humility, plunging him into uncertainty and causing him to ponder his predicament. This blow may nonetheless be like a rock running down a mountain and hitting a tree down below, a natural occurrence, without purpose or meaning. It may also be seen as a rebuke, as the visitor failed to see the mountain and instead bowed toward the man, whereas his all-encompassing nature would imply that he should have bowed toward the east and the west, the north and the south, toward the heavens and toward the earth, and he would then have paid his respect in an appropriate manner.

To see only the man is to be deluded. To see only the great mountain is to lack compassion for the inhabitants of the world. To see both the man and the great mountain is to fall into the trap of attempting to cleave what is an indivisible whole. This

may be the purpose of the blow inflicted to the visitor: it is meant to be the final dot closing all arguments, the broom that sweeps away all the dust covering the earth, the fire burning down to ashes all the things occupying the mind, leaving nothing in their stead.¹⁵⁸ Then, one stops wondering about rebukes and rewards, the peculiar and the extraordinary, the mountain and the world, as even the separation between the host and the visitor fades away, and nothing is left standing, everything has been leveled, and only clarity remains.

Case 203 —Zhaozhou’ s Four Doors —趙州四門

Source: The Blue Cliff Record Case 9.

【中】

舉。僧問 趙州¹ : 「如何是趙州」 州 云: 「東
門, 西門, 南門, 北門。」

¹ 【趙州】S: 【趙州】[zhào zhōu]: The name of the master comes from the name of the city of Zhao zhou, in the vicinity of which he taught. It is located in what is now Hebei province (河北省).

【日】

こ そう じょうしゅう と いか こ
舉す。僧、趙 州に 問う、「如何なるか 是れ
じょうしゅう しゅういわ とうもん さいもん なんもん きたもん
趙 州。」 州 云く、「東門、西門、南門、北門。」

【E】

¹⁵⁸See: Yamada, Kou’ un, *Hekiganroku (Blue Cliff Record)* [Unpublished manuscript]: “Why did Baizhang hit the monk? Some people interpret the action as meaning, ‘Not yet good enough!’ Others interpret it to mean, ‘That bow is wonderful.’ Or it may have been a blow to wipe out all things, to conclude the entire koan.” Original Japanese: 『どこを、なぜ打ったのか。「まだ、いかん」と打たれたのか、「その拝すばらしいぞ」と打たれたのか、その辺は人によってそれぞれに見られる。あるいは一切をお掃除するという意味で打たれたのかも知れない。そうだとすると公案円成ということになる訳だが、これ等はそれぞれの人の力量で見るほかはない。』 From: 山田耕雲。《碧岩集提唱山田耕雲》。[Unpublished manuscript].

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “What is Zhaozhou?”¹ Zhaozhou said: “The east gate, the west gate, the south gate, the north gate.”

¹ “Zhaozhou” : See note 1 of the Chinese text.

A man resembles a citadel, with high walls separating what is inside it from the outside, the open country, where there are no boundaries. A series of gates nonetheless allow exchanges between the citadel and what lies beyond its walls, which can be closed at will, and these gates allow its ruler to keep control over what goes in and out of it. In the case of man, his senses likewise allow impressions to be left upon his mind by his surroundings and enable him to express himself and leave his mark upon the world around him.

When the gates are shut during the night, the inhabitants of the citadel then feel safe, protected by the robustness of its walls, knowing that it remains impregnable and that the dangers of the open land cannot reach them while they are sound asleep.¹⁵⁹ This safety nonetheless comes at a price. They are protected, but also severed from the riches and wonders found together with the threats and dangers lurking beyond the walls. The citadel thus opens itself up at dawn, when what threatens it can be discerned from what may be to its benefit. It is itself defined by this control exerted upon exchanges, seeing the inside wall as the locus of civilization, as opposed to the lawless open land, where men are akin to beasts. The same can be said of man himself, whose mind is the locus of his reason and his world, edified across the ages by his ancestors and handed over to him as a legacy. Outside of his mind, there is only the raw nature of the earth and the skies, the branches of the tree of life that let themselves be shaped by the land, without the use of reason, without submitting the flux of their senses to their capacity to reflect upon things.

¹⁵⁹ See: Roloff, Dietrich. *Bi-Yan-Lu: Aufzeichnungen vor smaragdener Felswand - Die 100 Kōan des Hekiganroku*. Windpferd Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2013. p114 (Case 9): „Für die Einwohner bedeutete ein offenes Tor Ausgang ins Freie, die Möglichkeit zum Aufbruch in die Weite ringsherum. Und ein geschlossenes Tor bedeutete Sicherheit, Schutz vor Räubern und Feinden, Schutz gegen das Andringen von Gefahr.”

Man is thus proud of his civilization, of his world, and he cherishes its high walls and narrow gates. Open to the east, the west, the north, and the south, he nonetheless fails to pay attention to what is above and below, to the heavens and the earth. His senses are turned toward the horizon, toward what stands between earth and sky, that is, life and man's world, and seldom does he take time to behold the celestial vault or plunge his bare hands into the fertile ground to experience its nature. If he does so, he may nonetheless become aware of the weakness of his world, of the inanity of living a life protected from the truth of the open land, severed from contact with nature. Once he loses the will to hold on to the bricks forming the walls and to the iron plates forming the gates, these immediately fall down to the ground. Then, the opposition between the inside and the outside ceases to exist. The citadel becomes a ruin, a monument of a fallen world, while the winds conquer its streets, and its inhabitants discover the fullness of the earth and the sky. A man who lets himself be transformed by the open land, by direct contact with the earth and the sky, then ceases to be a man, and rather becomes the wind itself, a celestial force, passing through the ruins of the citadel as well as sweeping the great desert around it. Then, there is no barbarian or civilized man. There is only the earth and the sky, with eyes everywhere to observe them, which are yet themselves nowhere to be seen.

Case 204 —Caoshan's Fulfilment Of Filial Piety 曹山孝滿

Source: The Book of Serenity Case 73.

【中】

舉。僧問 曹山：「靈衣不掛¹ 時如何。」 山
 yún cáo shān jīn rì xiào mǎn sēng yún xiào mǎn hòu rú hé shān
 云：「曹山 今日孝滿。」 僧云：「孝滿後如何。」 山
 yún cáo shān ài diān jiǔ² 。

¹ 【靈衣不掛】[líng yī bú guà]: Literally “not hanging one's mourning clothes.” It here means “to leave off one's mourning clothes.”

² 【顛酒】S: 【顛酒】[diān jiǔ]: “to get really drunk.”

【日】

こ 擧いす。そう 僧さん、そう 曹山さんに と 問とう、「れい い か 靈衣掛けざる とき 時
い如何。かん。」さん 山云く、「そう 曹山さん今日こんにち孝こう満まん。」そう 僧云く、「い 孝
まん 満のちの い後如何。かん。」さん 山云く、「い 曹山さん顛てん酒しゅを あい 愛す。」

【E】

A monk asked Caoshan: "When one leaves off his mourning clothes, what then?" Caoshan said: "Today, Caoshan has fulfilled filial piety." The monk said: "When one has fulfilled piety, what then?" Caoshan said: "Caoshan loves to get drunk."

The world into which we are thrown at birth nurtures our growth, as we let ourselves be shaped by it, diligently following its guidance, patiently obeying its rules, submitting to its order so that we may enjoy the privileges it offers to its inhabitants, who rule over every other branch of the tree of life. When one is fully grown into an adult, having appropriated this world to his benefit, he may nonetheless grow increasingly rebellious to the idea of letting himself be constrained by its rigid structures and its unjust hierarchies. He observes the nature of this world, made of a complex web of oppositions and contrasts between things: the parent versus the children, the living versus the dead, the obedient versus the rebellious. When he is struck by the realization that these oppositions are products of this world built by the minds of the men that came before him, he then sees that the fears and worries afflicting him daily are not warranted. They indeed represent the order of the world, but not the order of the underlying realms, the earth and the skies, the place where all is one, where no contrast remains and there is only absolute truth and perfect clarity. For long years, he wore the mourning clothes of the world, symbols of his submission to its order, of his recognition of the opposition between life and death, parent and child, but these now feel as

heavy as they are cumbersome. They weigh him down and constrain his movement. More than this, they now appear laughable, the garments of a clown, and thus are suddenly taken off and left upon the ground when he is struck by this realization.

Freedom is then enjoyed, as filial piety has been fulfilled. Death is no longer feared but embraced, as life itself is left behind. Children are no more, and it is as if there never were any parents. The order of his world collapses, as all the oppositions keeping it together fade away. Standing free, but among ruins, there is only one question left for him: what then? Naked, experiencing for the first time the freshness of the heavenly zephyr upon his bare skin, oneness with the all-encompassing skies, he is unwilling to wear something else, even the golden robe of the heavenly ones.¹⁶⁰ With all worries and constraints behind him, he no longer fears the ingestion of the strongest poison, the transgression of the commandments. He delves headlong into the sea of wine that surrounds him, letting inebriation seize his mind and direct his heart. With drunkenness, the last barriers suddenly crumble. His vision becomes blurred, as his senses are speaking to him more loudly than ever, but without clarity or coherence. The things around him all appear as one giant, indistinct object, as the line separating what thinks from what is thought about becomes increasingly hard to discern. He no longer seeks freedom, nor truth. He simply lets himself be carried upon the way of the sky, having abandoned all desire, having ceased to hold on any thing, letting the waves of wine transport him wherever they go.

Case 205 —Who Is He? —他是阿誰

Source: The Gateless Barrier Case 45.

【中】

dōng shān yǎn shī zǔ yuē shì jiā mí lè yóu shì
東山演師 祖¹ 曰：「釋迦²，彌勒³ 猶是
tā nǚ qiě dào tā shì ā shuí
他奴，且道：他是阿誰⁴。」

¹ 【祖】[zǔ]: “[spiritual] forefather” / “[spiritual] ancestor.”

² 【釋迦】S: 【释迦】[shì jiā]: An abbreviation of 釋迦牟尼 [shì jiā móu ní], Śākyamuni Buddha.

¹⁶⁰ See: 神保如天. 《從容錄通解》. 東京: 無我山房, 1915. p471 (Case 73).

³ 【彌勒】S: 【弥勒】[mí lè]: Maitreya (मैत्रेय), the future Bodhisattva, who is to come after Śākyamuni Buddha

⁴ 【阿誰】S: 【阿谁】[ā shuí]: “who.”

【日】

こ とうざんえん し そ いわ しゃ か みろく な こ
 擧す。東山演師祖曰く、「釋迦彌勒は 猶お 是れ
 た ぬ しば い た こ あ た
 他の 奴。且らく 道え、他は 是れ 阿誰ぞ。」

【E】

Yanshi of Dongshan, [our spiritual] forefather, said: “Shakya [the Buddha of the present era] and Maitreya [the Buddha of the future era] are both his servants. Who is he?”

There comes a point when all questions become futile and are heard as the most obnoxious noise, when every word is like a mud ball thrown unto an immense carpet made of the finest white silk. This is when one may discover that by opening wide the gates of his senses, the noise may fade away, having nowhere where it can be reverberated. When one stops to play with the mud, the winds dry and sweep away its stains. When one ceases to reminisce the past and envision the future, then the present can finally appear, and reveal itself to be all that there is. This is when the mask may fall and one's true face be finally seen.

When the past collapses into the future, and the heavenly ones fall down to the earth, the truth of being is then experienced as pure presence. The faces become one, and the earthly can no longer be distinguished from the heavenly. The wise is akin to the fool, and the fool to the wise. One's progress on the path then becomes meaningless, as he realizes that there is no one there, not even a path. There is nowhere to reach, no track to follow, only the way of the sky itself, which is everywhere, just waiting to be seen and embraced, once one lets go of the delusion causing him to believe that he stands outside of it. The ec-stasy of selfhood, the sweet illusion of observing the world as a subject in front of

countless objects, can then give place to the bliss of selflessness, the truth of one's dissolution into the sky, which always was the essence of his being. Then, there no longer are subjects and objects, no servants and no one to be served. The constellation of eyes scattered across the earth then gently vanishes, while the heavens reveal themselves to be the eye of being, the seer merged with what is seen, the mirror sphere observing itself, seeing that there is no-thing there.



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