

CASE 8

Hyakujô's Fox

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Instruction:

If you depend on the foot of the “gen” character and have it in your mind, you will enter hell like an arrow. If even a drop of fox saliva comes in your mouth, you will be unable to spit it out for thirty years. This is not because the Western sky is cool and severe, but only because the karma of the fool is heavy. Have there ever been any cases in the past of such an error being committed?

Case:

Whenever Hyakujô lectured in the hall, there was always an old man there who heard the dharma and left when the others left. One day he did not leave. Hyakujô asked, “Who are you standing before me?” The old man said, “In the past, at the time of Kashyapa Buddha, I lived on this mountain. There was a monk who asked, “Does a person who has completed the great training fall into cause-and-effect or not?” In response I said, “He does not fall into cause-and-effect,” and was reborn five hundred lives in the body of a fox. Now I ask Your Reverence to say a turning word for me. Hyakujô said, “He does not darken cause-and-effect.” At these words, the old man attained great enlightenment.

Verse:

**A foot of water, a yard of wave.
 Five hundred lives, there's nothing to be done.
 As ever, it will enter a nest of entanglements.
 Ha, ha, ha!
 If you are light and free, you will not stop my babbling.
 The sacred songs and shrine dances naturally create the tune.
 Clapping hands and singing songs.**

On the Instruction:

This koan is also Case Two of the *Gateless Gate*, and I imagine you have heard or read it several times already. However, the way the koan is handled in the *Book of Serenity* is somewhat different from the *Gateless Gate*.

If you depend on the foot of the “gen” character and have it in your mind, you will enter hell like an arrow. The Chinese character *gen*, which means “origin,” is

created by taking the character for “one” and the character “otsu” and combining them to create a new character. The character “otsu” is considered to be the foot of the character for “gen.” It was common in former times to speak of the “foot of the character gen” when one meant “one.” What is this first line of the Instruction saying? If you write the character for “one” and have an image of oneness in your mind, you will fall into hell as swiftly as an arrow. (skipped one line as repetitious: Paul) In Buddhism there is frequent use of the character for “one”. Examples are “one mind” (jap, *isshin*) or “one dharma” (*ippô*). There is also the saying “the ten-thousand things return to the one” or the term “one suchness” (*ichinyô*). At any rate, use of the character for “one” is very frequent in Buddhism. Not only within Buddhism, but in Oriental thought in general, use of the character for “one” is very frequent. Consider, for example, the following saying: “When a single leaf falls, we know it is autumn all around.” When a single leaf falls from the tree, you immediately say, “Ah, it’s autumn!” The entire universe is autumn, simply in watching a single leaf fall. There is also the saying, “In the one, all things are run through.” The fact that use of the character for “one” is very frequent in Chinese culture means that people of the east, even if they have not had a clear realization of enlightenment and have not clearly grasped the world of oneness, nevertheless have an instinctive feeling for that world of oneness. I believe this is a very important treasure. In fact, I believe that the greatest gift the East can make to humanity is the gift of the world of oneness. If you ask why, we notice that, in the West, it is the world of duality that forms the basis. Western philosophy is based on the idea of a subject and object. This makes things very difficult. But there is really a world of oneness. This is a very important matter. As I am always saying, regarding the “I” that I use in referring to myself, you can say that I have a right hand and a left hand. Seeing things from that vantage point, they are two. There is a dualistic opposition between left and right. Built on this basis is the civilization that we are all enjoying. However, from the standpoint of “my life,” these two hands are living the same single life. There is no left or right involved. I just used the example of my own body to explain this, but the same thing can be said about the entire universe. When my life pervades the entire universe, in Zen we speak in terms of “Mu” or “the sound of a single hand.” It is a matter of grasping this in actual experience. Zazen is a matter of grasping the single life that pervades the entire universe. What words can we use in referring to that life? Usually we use words like Buddha or God to refer to it. This is not an area for me to consider, and I leave it up to the Catholic priests in our midst to consider this matter. However, when “oneness” or “one” becomes simply a concept, we fall straight into hell, the Instruction tells us. If it is just a concept, everything is false. If we have a concept of oneness in our minds, we fall straight into hell. In other words, the world becomes a world of dualistic opposition. This is hell.

If even a drop of fox saliva comes in your mouth, you will be unable to spit it out for thirty years.

“Fox” is used here in the sense of something that is false or a fake. We already heard in the Main Case about the old man being born as a fox for five hundred lives. If we have even a slight concept in our minds, it will not be possible to get rid of it, even after thirty years. That’s frightening. It will prove difficult to get rid of those concepts. Zazen is a matter of realizing for yourself directly in experience and not via concepts.

This is not because the Western sky is cool and severe, but only because the karma of the fool is heavy. “Western sky” is a reference to India, which is where Buddhism originally came from. It is not because Buddhism is cool and severe. It is only because the karma of the fool is heavy. It is because the karma of the thoughts and concepts of a fool is heavy.

Have there ever been any cases in the past of such an error being committed? We proceed now to the Main Case.

On the Case:

Whenever Hyakujô lectured in the hall, there was always an old man there who heard the dharma and left when the others left. Hyakujô is outstanding among Zen masters of the past. He was a disciple of Baso. The encounter between master and disciple in the koan about the wild duck is famous. As you might remember, Hyakujô came to enlightenment when his nose was twisted by Baso. There is also the famous statement: "Sitting alone on Daiyu Peak." Hyakujô is also famous for being the first to establish rules of conduct for Zen monks. Up to then there had been no rules and there was evidently some confusion about proper order. Feeling this situation to be unacceptable, Hyakujô came up with definite rules of conduct. These are known as "Hyakujô's Clean Rules." They still form the basis of conduct in the Soto School, for example, although no doubt some amendments and additions were made with time. There is also the famous saying of Hyakujô: "A day without work is a day without eating." Even when Hyakujô was quite old, he would still go out to the fields every day and work together with the monks. Feeling that their master was too old for such work, the monks asked Hyakujô if it were not time to stop working, but Hyakujô would hear nothing of it. Then the monks conferred with each other and decided to hide their master's tools so that he could not work. The next day, when Hyakujô went out to work with the others, he discovered that his tools were missing. He immediately returned to his room and shut the door, not saying anything to anyone. He also refused to eat. The monks had no choice but to beg his forgiveness and give his tools back again. After that they never attempted to hide his tools again. I feel that Hyakujô is a very outstanding Zen master. In old times in Japan, people also had very little to eat and life was hard. Dôgen Zenji tells us that poverty and not having too many things is a very precious circumstance in practicing the way. There is the famous saying *hingakudô* (studying the Way in poverty). Nowadays, however, there are some temples that have become very wealthy. The price of the land that they own has risen enormously, and they charge immense sums to perform funerals. This would have been unthinkable in former times. In very busy times, some temples are performing three or four funerals a day. Considering how much they make from performing a single funeral service, if there are several services in a day, that amounts to quite a sum! And when they become so busy with funerals, there will be little time left for practice. Hyakujô did not want to be a parasite on society. As long as it was possible for him to cultivate his own food, he wanted to devote whatever was left to society. Temples in those days were different from those today. The monks would cultivate and eat their own food. As a rule, the food that was eaten at the temples was cultivated by the monks in the temple. That means the monks themselves were involved in production. It was Hyakujô's opinion that one had to be involved in the production process to be worthy to eat the food. In that sense he was a very strict master.

Whenever Hyakujô would preach the dharma in the Zen hall, an old man would be there every time, standing in the corner and listening in silence. When the assembly left the hall and returned to their quarters, the old man would also leave. This continued for a while. One day, however, the old man remained in the hall after the others had left.

Hyakujô asked, "Who are you standing before me?" The old man said, "In the past, at the time of Kashyapa Buddha, I lived on this mountain." In the *Gateless Gate* the story is presented in somewhat more detail:

The old man replied, "Indeed, I am not a human being. In the past, in the time of Kashyapa Buddha, I lived on this mountain (as a Zen priest)."

Let us continue now with the story as it appears in the *Book of Serenity*:

There was a monk who asked, "Does a person who has completed the great training fall into cause-and-effect or not?" In response I said, "He does not fall into cause-and-effect," and was reborn five hundred lives in the body of a fox." A person who has completed the great training means a person who has practiced and come to great enlightenment. The monk in former times was asking whether a person who has experienced great enlightenment is under the control of causality. As you know, the phenomenal world comes into existence through the law of cause and effect. The person here is

one who has realized the essential world. It is a person who has clearly realized the world of Mu, where there is not one thing. The man was asking: “Is a person who is not dwelling in the world of phenomena and who has clearly grasped the essential world also subject to the law of cause and effect?” In response, the Hyakujô of former times said, “He does not fall into cause-and-effect.” Such an accomplished person does not come under the control of cause and effect. We must clearly investigate what is wrong in this reply. For giving false teaching, the former monk fell for five hundred lives in the body of a fox. It is not that he was made a fox, but that he became a fox for five hundred lives. That does not mean five hundred years, but five hundred lives. He was reborn as a fox again and again. He was unable to do anything about it and didn’t know why it had happened.

Now I ask Your Reverence to say a turning word for me. Hyakujô said, “He does not darken cause-and-effect.” At these words, the old man attained great enlightenment. A “turning word” means a word or phrase that “turns” illusion into enlightenment. He is asking Hyakujô what he would have said in his place in response to the question of the monk in that past time.

Then Hyakujô said, “He does not darken cause-and-effect.” In other words, cause-and-effect exist quite clearly and cannot be darkened in the least. Upon hearing this, the old man came to great enlightenment on the spot. The story ends here in the account given in the *Book of Equanimity*. In the *Gateless Gate*, however, the account continues:

Upon hearing this, the old man immediately became deeply enlightened. Making his bows, he said, “I have now been released from the body of the fox and will be behind the mountain. I dare to make a request of the Master. Please perform my funeral as you would for a deceased priest.”

Then he disappeared. To continue the story:

The master had the Ino strike the gavel and announce to the monks that after the meal there would be a funeral service for a deceased priest. The monks wondered, saying, “All are healthy. No one is sick in the infirmary. What’s this all about?” After the meal, the master led the monks to the foot of a rock behind the mountain and with his staff poked out the dead body of a fox. He then performed the ceremony of cremation.

The story then continues later that evening:

That evening the master ascended the rostrum in the hall and told the monks the whole story. Ôbaku thereupon asked, “The man of old missed the turning word and fell to the state of a fox for 500 lives. Suppose every time he answered he made no mistakes, what would happen then?” The master said, “Just come nearer and I’ll tell you.” Ôbaku then went up to the master and slapped him. The master clapped his hands and, laughing aloud, said, “I thought the barbarian’s beard was red, but here is a barbarian with a red beard!”

Zen monks of old were sometimes quite rough in their manner! Most people would become angry upon being slapped. But Hyakujô laughed loudly and was overjoyed. I thought that I was the only one who had realized this world, but now I see that you have realized it too. I had been thinking that above and below the heavens, I alone am honored, but now I realize that you are the same!

The commentary by Old Man Banshō to this case in the *Book of Equanimity* has an interesting passage that is similar to the koan in the *Gateless Gate*.

“I knew foxes’ beards were red—here’s another red-bearded fox!”

What does this mean? As I am always telling you, the true fact is that each single phenomenon has two aspects. In reference to our bodies, on the one hand there is the body that appears in the phenomenal world. At the same time, there is the aspect of nothing at all. I often make use of a fraction to explain this. The denominator is a zero containing the symbol for infinity. This indicates how the essence of all things is zero and infinite. If you are wondering if such a thing is possible, please consider your own mind. The mind is zero and cannot be grasped. But the mind can do anything. This is why I refer to it as zero. This world and the phenomenal world that is the numerator of the fraction are the two aspects. In actual

fact, however, these two aspects are one from the very beginning. For the sake of explanation we make a division into the two aspects of numerator and denominator. The question in the koan is whether a completely enlightened person falls into cause-and-effect or not. The reply “he does not fall into cause-and-effect” is seen from the viewpoint of the denominator of our fraction, which is zero and infinite. Because the world of the denominator is zero, there is nothing that comes under the control of the law of causality. But this is only half of the matter. And because it was only half, he became a fox. The reply of Hyakujô that cause-and-effect are not darkened, that cause-and-effect are clearly existent, is referring to the world of phenomena. If we ask why he returned to the original person, it is only when the two aspects are combined that it becomes the single reality. Up to now it had been only half of the whole, but from the very start they have been one. The true self is neither just the denominator nor simply the numerator. They are one. We could say that the entire fraction itself is the actual fact. So it was in realizing the truth that he returned to his original form of a man.

Masaharu Taniguchi, the founder of the religious organization *Seicho-No-Ie (House of Growth)*, was a most outstanding individual. Shortly before the birth of my daughter, I remember going with my wife to listen to a talk by Taniguchi Sensei. He clearly had had a kind of kensho experience. His way of expressing the reality that he had experienced was to say that there is essentially no body. There is his saying: “The three worlds (past, present, future) are only a manifestation of mind.” This original is found in the *Diamond Sutra*. It says that the three worlds are the world of all phenomena and that they are a manifestation of mind. Here is not falling into cause-and-effect, which denies the aspect of phenomena. Taniguchi Sensei evidently came to very clear experience of that world. And for that reason, he tended to cling to that one aspect. If you ask me, that is what he is saying when he says there is no body. He said that, because there is essentially no body, there is essentially no sickness. This is true. In our essential nature there is no illness. Thus, we need no medicine. But we can speak in terms of both mental illness and physical illness. Neuroses, for example, are cured mostly by psychological methods. The teaching of Taniguchi Sensei says that the three worlds are all the manifestation of mind. Thus, if we can change the mind, the circumstances in the phenomenal world will also change. And if we ask how we can change the mind, Taniguchi Sensei speaks about the view of divine thoughts (*shinsôkan*). If you believe that your essential nature is perfect, you realize that you are a child of God. This is how his reasoning runs. However, if I may be allowed to make a little critique, although there are many cases of illnesses that can be healed from the spiritual aspect, I really wonder if cancer, for example, can be cured with prayer. There is no such method at our present level of understanding. When it gets down to it, we have no recourse but to use scientific methods to combat the illness. The cases by which cancer is cured by our way of thinking are very few, I would imagine. And then there is the question of whether it was really a case of cancer or not. Also very rare are the cases in which cancer is naturally healed. There are evidently cases where something has the power in our body to resist cancer and cause natural healing. But since this is in a very close connection with the psychological state, although there are some cases, they remain very rare. No matter how much we pray and think of your essential wholeness, we will remain unable to make our noses even one millimeter longer. Even though you might think your facial features are imperfect, no matter how much you pray, your nose is not going to get any longer or shorter as a result. On the one hand, it is true that medicine is not needed. But how do we eat our food? If there is really no body, then we shouldn't need to eat. Taniguchi Sensei had, in my opinion, a very clear experience of the aspect of not falling into cause-and-effect. On the one hand, I can't help admiring him greatly. I could consider him to be a religious genius. He was particularly gifted as a writer. His book *The Truth of Reality of Life (Seimei No Jisso)* has been translated into English and German and there are many adherents to this religion around the world. The basis of his teaching is that all teachings return to the same single teaching, that all teachings are one. That is not false. He also underwent many practices himself. In former times there was the religious group known as the *Daihonkyô* (Teaching of the Great Basis) and that is where I met him. He wore a tattered

robe that he held together with a rope. He also carried out extensive research on Buddhist scriptures. As mentioned, he evidently came to a spontaneous experience. That is a case of someone coming to realization on their own without the aid of a teacher. In most cases, you have to follow the instructions of a true teacher and continue practice. In his case, however, because he was a religious genius, he came on his own to an experience of not falling into cause-and-effect. And this led in turn to the creation of a new religion. This, at any rate, is how I view matters. I am much indebted to him for his help in the past and consider him to be an outstanding person. Although I have no major differences of opinion, when it comes to the basic matter I make so bold as to say what I have said above. Since this subject of not falling into cause-and-effect came up, I have taken the time to talk about him.

On the Verse:

A foot of water, a yard of wave. This means that a foot of water will become a yard of wave. In other words, if even a tiny amount of conceptual thought is mixed in, that will become the cause for something completely different from the truth. In the art of archery in Japan there is the saying, “a tenth of an inch becomes forty-eight feet.” In other words, if there is even the slightest inaccuracy in aiming the bow, your shot will stray very far from the target. There is also the saying in the *Shinjinmei*: “If there is even a hairsbreadth of difference, it is like the difference between heaven and earth.” This is referring to the same thing.

Five hundred lives, there’s nothing to be done. Because he made a mistake in his answer, he took the form of a fox for five hundred lives, and nothing could be done about it. In this case, he became a man. As I mentioned just now, we cannot make our nose even a little bit longer by praying. In the fifty or seventy years we spend in this world, we cannot change our physical structure. It is not only the causality of the present world, but the causality from the distant past becoming a single stream that makes us appear as we are now. So if you ask whether your nose will absolutely not become longer, it may actually become longer. But it will be difficult in the present world. Although there is now cosmetic surgery. But if you earnestly pray that your nose will become longer, it will no doubt become so in the next life or the one after that. It was generally believed that the Japanese were short as a people. Nowadays, however, they seem to be growing bigger. That could be because of a desire on the part of the parents and also on our own part to become taller, so that it actually occurs. We cannot ignore the element of time.

Not falling, not obscuring—questioning and answering. They discuss this and that about not falling into causality and not obscuring causality. You could say that this teisho that I am delivering now is a case of questioning and answering. The word in the original Chinese means weighing things on a scale in doing business. When a question comes, you respond to it. This is what is meant here. So long as we do not get away from thought, we will remain unable to grasp the true fact. In the Verse to this koan in the *Gateless Gate* there is the following line:

*Not obscuring, not falling,
A thousand mistakes, ten thousand mistakes.*

As ever, it will enter a nest of entanglements. The nest of entanglements means our concepts and thoughts. Words are necessarily accompanied by concepts.

Ha, ha, ha! He suddenly bursts out laughing. “Have you understood?” he seems to be asking. Just this laughing is the true fact itself.

If you are light and free, you will not stop my babbling.

If you can become free of concepts and thoughts so that your body becomes light and free, then what I am saying is just liking the babbling and cooing of a baby. It has no logical meaning.

The sacred songs and shrine dances naturally create the tune.

Singing and dancing at the shrine festival seem to have a meaning, but then again none at all.

Clapping hands and singing songs. This expresses the perfect freedom in which there is nothing clouding the mind. It means coming to that perfect peace of mind. If we have nothing clouding our mind, then free activity will gradually become possible.