

CASE 74

**Hôgen's "Form and Name"**

By Yamada Kôun



*Instruction:*

Wealth contains ten thousand virtues;  
Swept away, there is not a speck of dust.  
Away from all forms, corresponding to all dharmas;  
Taking a step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole,  
Perfecting the entire body in the world of ten directions.  
Tell me, from where does one get this?

*Case:*

A monk asked Hôgen, "I hear that a sutra says, 'From the basis of non-abiding all dharmas are established.' What is this basis of non-abiding?" Hôgen said, "Form arises from what has no substance yet; name comes from what has no name yet."

*Verse:*

No traces, no tidings.  
The white clouds have no roots;  
What color is the pure wind?  
[The clouds are] spread away over the heavenly canopy – [yet] there is no mind;  
[The pure wind] holds the earthly palaquins – it is powerful.  
Clarifying the thousand ancient depths,  
Manufacturing the models of ten thousand phenomena.  
If the way of the great land and small dust is understood,  
[Bodhisattva] Samantabhadra<sup>1</sup> is everywhere;  
If the gate of the tower is opened,  
Each head is [Bodhisattva] Maitreya<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Jpn.: *Fugen-Bosatsu*.

<sup>2</sup> Jpn.: *Miroku-Bosatsu*.

***On the Instruction:***

As I've mentioned several times before, the *Book of Equanimity* contains copious references to books and events of former times, making it sometimes quite difficult to understand. Harada Roshi evidently was often vexed by this characteristic of the work. I can well understand his feelings! Today's case also contains such references, but due to considerations of time, I will simply proceed without becoming too bogged down in details.

Wealth contains ten thousand virtues;

Swept away, there is not a speck of dust. These words are originally found in the preface to the *Kegon (Hua-yen) Sutra*. The first line means that all virtue is found in the body. It means that we human beings, indeed all living beings, are invested with complete virtue. There is also the saying from the text *Shariraimon*: "The body of Shakyamuni-Tathagatha fully invested with all virtue." Seen from the standpoint of our true reality, each of us is fully invested with all virtue. This is known as Buddha nature. We are invested with all virtue and preserve that virtue. In that sense, we are all endlessly wealthy, and all things emerge from this. Even though you may be physically poor, essentially you possess all virtue, for if you work, any amount of wealth can emerge. But the Introduction continues: Swept away, there is not a speck of dust. This means that the content is completely empty. The literal meaning is that there is not a single thread available to make the smallest article of clothing, because it is completely empty. This is the same as "form is emptiness." From one viewpoint, there is not a single thing, but from another angle it is invested with all virtue. This is the human being.

Away from all forms, corresponding to all dharmas. "Dharma" is used here in the sense of things or phenomena. In other words, although it is completely removed from all forms, it is completely one with each single thing. This is the same as "emptiness is form." Just where there is not a single thing there is form, there is color. There is also the saying "actual form as no form" (jissō-musō). If we speak in order about the matters here, we can say that *Mu* is true form. Although there is not a single thing, the phenomenal world extends out clearly. Although the phenomenal world extends out clearly, the content is completely empty. If you consider it in terms of your own mind, you will have at least an intellectual understanding, at least as far as you yourself are concerned. Mind has no form or shape. Even if you are asked to produce your mind, you cannot do it. But the mind is capable of anything. It "contains ten thousand virtues." It can listen, it can speak, it can see, it can think, it can imagine. But at the same time it is empty, for there is nothing you can produce when asked to show the mind. The same can be said about life. Life possesses limitless capabilities. But nevertheless I cannot show or produce life for perusal. I can only show my body, which has form or color. That is the element of form. But life is empty. We should not however assume that they are two different things. When we say "form is emptiness," we are apt to think that there are two different things that somehow equal each other, as if joined with an equal sign. But they are truly one

and the same. This is our true reality.

Taking a step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole,

Perfecting the entire body in the world of ten directions. The “top of a hundred-foot pole” means the ultimate of the world of satori. If you practice Mu fervently, you realize the world of emptiness where there is not a single thing. This is the “top of a hundred-foot pole” where you are alone in the entire universe. Even if you wanted to aid others, there are no others to save. It is like being on a desert island. If you remain in that world it is not possible to save all beings. You must take a step away from that world and return to the ordinary world. You realize that you and the entire universe are one. This is the meaning of the second line: Perfecting the entire body in the world of ten directions. It is only then that you can say, “Above the earth and below the heavens, I alone am honored! (*tenjō-tenge yuiga dokuson*).” In the world of satori, there is no heaven and earth. It is only when you enter again into the world of phenomena that you can truly realize that you and the universe are one. This second line contains the two elements of emptiness and form. If we describe it in terms of my fraction, we make a temporary division into numerator and denominator for the sake of explanation, although that is actually fiddling with concepts. The true fact is the fraction itself, comprising both numerator and denominator. I often draw a circle around the entire fraction to emphasize this. The fraction itself is the true self. This is what is being said in this line about “perfecting the entire body in the world of ten directions.”

Tell me, from where does one get this? You might think it is talking about some principle or idea, but it’s actually talking about the world of emptiness. It’s a matter of whether you grasp this or not, if you understand it or not. Where do you obtain it? An example will now be given and we are asked to look carefully. This directs our attention to the Main Case.

### ***On the Case:***

A monk asked Hōgen, “I hear that a sutra says, ‘From the basis of non-abiding all dharmas are established.’” All the koans in this collection begin with the character “kosu” (not translated here), which means “Attention! I am holding up (this case) before your eyes for your perusal.” One day, a monk called on Hōgen. Hōgen Oshō is the monk for whom I feel a great affinity, because his way of seeing things fits my own view. In the history of Zen in China we speak in terms of the “five houses and seven schools.” There were originally five schools of Zen: Soto, Rinzai, Unmon, Igyō, and Hōgen. Hōgen, the founder of the Hōgen School, is a truly outstanding Zen master who takes the stage in many of the koans in the *Book of Equanimity* and the *Blue Cliff Record*. I am so fond of him that I would like at some time to focus solely on the cases in which he appears. At any rate, as mentioned, a monk came to call on this Hōgen Oshō and posed the following question: “I hear that a sutra says, ‘From the basis of non-abiding all dharmas are established.’” This expression “all dharmas” (jpn. *issai no hō*) appears in many koans. You can think of it as meaning Buddhism itself. But “dharma” also has the meaning of all phenomena. The reason is that all phenomena arise as the result of

the law of causation. Thus, the phenomena that appear as the result of that law are also known as dharma. Because the same word is used to refer to this law and also to the phenomena arising from that law of causation, when the word appears, you have to be able to distinguish the meaning. In the present case, “all dharmas” means all phenomena. The “basis of non-abiding” (mujûhon) means that there is no place where it abides. This is the basis. This is the same as the matter of mind I mentioned above, or the matter of life. There is nothing at all. It means that there is no place where mind abides. You can say the same thing about life. This is known as “non-abiding.” Some people might believe that the organ of the heart is where life abides, but that’s not true. For, life is found in the extremities such as the hands and feet. But that does not mean that there is a fixed place where life is found, something like an abode. That is why we say “non-abiding.” In the *Hua-yen* (Kegon) Sutra, there is the passage that says, “Dwelling nowhere the mind should come forth.” Masaharu Taniguchi, the founder of the religious organization *Seichô-No-Ie*, says that all things arise out of nothing. If we say it like that, you might think there are two things: nothingness and that which arises from it. But that is not the case. All things have two aspects. From one standpoint they are empty, and from another standpoint they have form. But because that is difficult to understand, for the sake of explanation he says that all things arise from nothing. This “non-abiding” is the same as the “dwelling nowhere the mind should come forth” found in the *Kegon Sutra*. Although there is nothing at all, the mind comes forth as “happy, sad, angry,” etc. But we do not know the source of those feelings, because it is empty. This is the same as the “non-abiding” in today’s koan: “From the basis of non-abiding all dharmas are established.”

The monk then asks:

“What is the basis of non-abiding?”

Hôgen said, “Form arises from what has no substance yet; name comes from what has no name yet.” These words are actually the words of the famous Jô-Hôshi, who wrote the text known as the *Hôzôron* (Treatise of the Dharma Treasury). He was an extremely learned man and a disciple of Xuánzàng Sānzàng (jpn. Gensô Sanzô), I believe. At any rate, he possessed great literary gifts, so that the reigning emperor desired to make him his secretary. But Jô-Hôshi refused, whereupon he was sentenced to death. The rulers used very violent methods back then.

Jô-Hôshi asked the emperor for a one-week stay of sentence, during which time he wrote the *Hôzôron*, which is still read and studied today. As a matter of fact, I found and purchased a hand-written copy of the text, which I still have today. When Yasutani Roshi happened to see it he was much in admiration of my find. That text contains the words that Hôgen says: “Form arises from what has no substance yet; name comes from what has no name yet.”

But if you say it in that way, as I mentioned above in connection with Taniguchi Sensei, you might assume there are two different things. To say “from what has no substance yet” means emptiness. Actually, I take issue with Jô-Hôshi for his use of the word “arises from”

(okoru). I would prefer to say, “form is no other than no-substance, name is no other than no-name.” Everything has a name, but actually there is nothing you can attach a name to, because it is empty. It is attaching a name to where there is nothing. Your original self is empty and has no name. For the sake of convenience we attach a name, such as my name Yamada Kyōzō. But my true essence is empty. There is the Japanese saying *Nanashi No Gonbei* (Mr. Unknown or Mr. No-Name). Your true essence is zero; there is nothing that a name can be attached to. There are three koans in this connection that come to mind. The first is Case 7 in the *Blue Cliff Record*.

*A monk asked Hōgen, "I, Echō, ask you, Master. What is Buddha?"*

*Hōgen said, "You are Echō."*

People tend to understand this koan as saying, “You are asking about Buddha, but you, Echō, are Buddha.” I prefer to see it as just “You are Echō”, just that speaking. That is the complete manifestation. There is no name!

The next koan is Case 68 in the *Blue Cliff Record*:

*Kyōzan asked Sanshō, "What's your name?"*

*Sanshō said, "Ejaku."*

*Kyōzan said, "Ejaku -- that's me."*

*Sanshō said, "My name is Enen."*

*Kyōzan laughed loudly.*

Sanshō was known as the sole successor of Rinzai Zenji. After the death of his master, Sanshō went on pilgrimage (angya) to meet with illustrious master and polish his understanding in Zen exchanges. During that time he paid a visit on Kyōzan, who was the older of the two. Kyōzan posed the first question: “What’s your name?”

Sanshō answered, “Ejaku.”

But Ejaku was actually Kyōzan’s name. So Kyōzan said, “Ejaku – that’s me.”

Thereupon Sanshō countered with, “In that case, my name is Enen.”

Kyōzan laughed uproariously. He must have been very pleased with this answer, for it showed that Sanshō was precisely on his wavelength. From the standpoint of the essential world, you can attach any name—Ejaku or Enen—and it’s OK. But upon returning to the world of phenomena, Ejaku is Ejaku and Enen is Enen. It’s just like counting from one to ten.

The other koan I want to examine is Chapter 39 of the *Transmission of the Light* (Denkōroku), which concerns Ungo Dōjō Zenji, also known as Kōkaku Daishi. When Ungo happened to call upon his master Tōzan Gohon Daishi, Tōzan asked him, “What is your name?” He answered, “Dōyō.”

He said his real name. He produced his name in the phenomenal world.

Tōzan then said, “Say it from beyond.”

In other words, speak from the pinnacle of satori.

Dōyō said, “If I speak from beyond, I cannot say that I am Dōyō.”

He is saying that there is essentially no name.

Tôzan then said, “That is the same answer I gave when I was with Ungan.”

Ungo Dôjô Zenji eventually inherited the dharma of Tôzan Gohon Zenji. What these koans are trying to say is that our true nature is empty and cannot be named. It is for the sake of convenience that we attach a name. I would like you all to realize this empty self. In the saying “form is emptiness, emptiness is form” we find the essence of Buddhism. Most people do not concretely grasp this world of emptiness. Although they might think they can do it intellectually, they do not grasp it concretely. There is no other way than to experience the pain in your legs from sitting and to eliminate your false self.

***On the Verse:***

No traces, no tidings.

The white clouds have no roots;

What color is the pure wind? The words “no traces, no tidings” reveal the world of not a single thing, the world of emptiness. Because it is empty, there is no way that tidings could be conveyed. When the poem says, “the white clouds have no roots” it’s talking about phenomena, which means that they are essentially empty. Just like white clouds, they scatter in the wind. The pure wind blows freshly, a gentle breeze that you can feel on your skin. But the wind has no color. To say that it has no color means that it is empty.

[The clouds are] spread away over the heavenly canopy – [yet] there is no mind. The clouds in the heavens have no roots and scatter in the breeze. It is not because there is mind, but because it is empty. Although they are empty, they scatter. It is not that they strive to scatter that they do so. They are “spread away over the heavenly canopy” and have no will of their own. So they dance and scatter in the wind. This is an expression of the phenomenal and the essential world. Although it is empty:

[The pure wind] holds the earthly palaquins – it is powerful. The “earthly palaquins” means the earth itself. It is holding the earth in the midst of emptiness. It is truly amazing. It might seem that because there is nothing holding it, the earth would fall down, but it does not. What is holding it then? Emptiness is holding it. This is how the poet sees things. The physicist would say that it is due to the law of gravity that it does not fall, although that is already intellectual. Although it is completely empty, it is powerful enough to hold the great earth.

Clarifying the thousand ancient depths,

Manufacturing the models of ten thousand phenomena. The “thousand ancient depths” is said from the viewpoint of unlimited time. This is the origin of the ancient depths. What is the true foundation of time? The poet says that this has been clarified. When you realize satori you also clarify and realize this. What do you realize? You realize that there is only this moment now. There is only this moment. That is the thousand ancient depths. The rest is just intellectualizing. The second line about “models of ten thousand phenomena” is the aspect of space. It means all phenomena in the worlds in the ten directions. It is the rule that

sees to their aspect. It arises from the “basis of non-abiding.” Where does it come from?

If the way of the great land and small dust is understood,

[Bodhisattva] Samantabhadra is everywhere; If you clearly realize the essence of both the great land and the small dust, you realize that Bodhisattva Samantabhadra is everywhere. In other words, at any time and any place it is the perfect and flawless Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The two characters Fugen used to express the name Samantabhadra in Sino-Japanese have separate meanings. “Fu” expresses how it extends out over the entire universe. “Gen” expresses how it is extremely soft, following its environment just like the water of the river flows without any effort. In this poem, however, it is saying that each blade of grass and each tree is no other than Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

If the gate of the tower is opened,

Each head is [Bodhisattva] Maitreya. It means that, everywhere and at all times, it is perfect and complete. This line about the gate of the tower evidently has its source in the *Hua-yen Sutra*. In that story Maitreya advances and pays a visit on the tower, paying his respects and snapping his fingers, where upon the gate opens and the three thousand worlds are revealed, each of which is Maitreya Bodhisattva. This is what is being referred to here in this line of the Verse. To open the gate of the tower is to open the gate of the mind. It means to truly realize and grasp your own true self, the true universe. Then you realize that “each head is Maitreya.” You realize that there is nothing missing. I would like you all to realize just how outstanding a Zen master Hôgen Zenji is.