



## Shoyoroku, Case #62: Yang-shan's No Enlightenment

Teisho given by Kenneth Morgareidge Sensei

Mountain Sesshin 2011

*Mihu of Jingzhao had a monastic ask Yangshan, "Can people these days depend on enlightenment?"*

*Yangshan said, "It's not that there is no enlightenment, but how can we deal with falling into the secondary?"*

*The monastic returned and reported this to Mihu, who then approved Yangshan.*

Yangshan and Mihu are close contemporaries and it was quite the thing in ancient China for masters to check up on each other. The encounters did not always happen face to face; sometimes they took place at a distance, as in the present case. Mihu sends a monastic to check out Yangshan, "Can people these days depend on enlightenment?" Can we depend on enlightenment? Well, that "depends" on how you see enlightenment, doesn't it?

Why do we sit? Why do we go to the center or come to this mountain? Ultimately all beings seek realization of who and what they are. Humans, animals, birds, fish, even rocks and trees, seek the way. This question of who and what we are can be fully conscious, or it can be so disguised and misread that there is no recognition whatever. When that drive for realization or enlightenment comes strongly into consciousness, we call it Bodhicitta, the mind that seeks the way.

Everyone in this zendo experiences Bodhicitta; otherwise you wouldn't be here. Actually everyone who walks in the door of the temple on a Tuesday evening experiences it. It can be a deep and persistent longing that literally forces one into seeking the way. Or it may be felt only as a mild curiosity; what is this Zen stuff about anyway? But it is there.

*Can people these days depend on enlightenment?*

Can anyone depend on enlightenment? What is it to depend on enlightenment? Can anybody define enlightenment in twenty-five words or less, or Buddha for that matter? You can certainly find massive definitions of these terms in any reference work on Buddhism. But as Yuan-wu, the commentator of the Blue Cliff Record, likes to point out, such things have nothing to do with it.

But Yangshan replies,

*It's not that there is no enlightenment, but how can we deal with falling into the secondary?*

Is Yangshan dancing around the issue? He doesn't say yes, he doesn't say no. In case #11 in the Blue Cliff Record:

*Huang-po (Obaku) addressed his assembled monks and said, "You are all eaters of brewer's lees... Don't you know that in all the land of T'ang, there is no Zen teacher?"*

*A monk stepped forward and said, "But surely there are those in all regions who reform monks and govern assemblies of disciples."*

*Huang-po said, "I didn't say there is no Zen, only that there is no teacher of Zen."*

No Zen teachers, nothing to grab onto, nowhere to hang your hat, nobody to tell you what's what. We have to find it out for ourselves. But can we say that there is no enlightenment, no Zen? The ultimate reality is beyond notions of real and unreal, existence and non-existence, yes and no. Can you say that there is no Mu? We cannot deny the ultimate reality, nor can we affirm it. The Tao does not belong to yes or no, to being or non-being, existence or non-existence, neither to knowing nor to not-knowing. Is there such a thing as enlightenment? I won't say.

*"It's not that there is no enlightenment, but how can we deal with falling into the secondary?"*

Yangshan redirects the questioner and us to the real question: "...how can we deal with falling into the secondary?" Falling into the secondary is usually thought of as getting caught up in concepts like Buddha nature, enlightenment, ground of being, fundamental reality, and on and on. If we consider enlightenment as some thing

to be defined, talked about or speculated upon, we are missing it by a thousand miles. If we look for some kind of goal, a distant abstraction, a condition to be attained or achieved, then we are leaning on the air. If we think of enlightenment at all we are very likely in trouble.

If there is a secondary or a second principle to worry about, I suppose there must be a primary, a first principle lying around somewhere. What would that be?

In Case #1 of the Blue Cliff Record:

*The Emperor Liang asked Bodhidharma, "What is the first principle of the holy teaching?" Bodhidharma said, "Vast emptiness, nothing holy."*

We chant in the Heart Sutra:

*Dharmas here are empty, all are the primal void, none are born or die, nor are they stained or pure, nor do they wax or wane. So in emptiness no form, no feeling thought or choice, nor is there consciousness. No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, or what the mind takes hold of nor even act of sensing.*

So the first principle is...what? Vast emptiness, Buddha nature, dharmakaya, the void, nothing holy, not a cloud in the empty sky? The sutras, the scriptures all say the same thing in countless ways. But ultimately it's impossible to put into words, concepts, ideas, or metaphor.

In case #8 in the Denkoroku, Vasumitra to Buddhanandi:

*The Eighth Ancestor, Buddhanandi, met the Seventh Ancestor, Vasumitra and said, "I have come to discuss the real fact with you."*

*Vasumitra said, "Good sir, if you discuss, it is not the real fact; the real fact is not discussion. If you intend to discuss, it cannot be a discussion of the real fact."*

Keizan's commentary reads, "So long as any sense of defining or even expressing truth intervenes, the principle of Unborn Nature cannot be clarified, and we will remain confused, even if we are disciples of an Awakened One."

Bodhidharma said, "In the realm of the inexplicable dharma, not speaking a single word is called the principle of not speaking falsely."

So there it is. If you talk or think about it, it isn't the Tao. If it is the Tao, you can't talk or think about it. If you speak of it, it is not the fact. If it is the fact you cannot speak of it. Is there something out there that is totally beyond human thought, language, concepts or imaginings? Even if your answer is to sit silently, there is some little bit of thought, of intention.

But if that is the case, how relevant is it to our own lives

and practice? You can't see, hear, think, imagine, talk, smell, taste, or touch it. So what are we trying to do in our practice? Why do we sit for hours or days on end? What are we looking for? What are we depending on?

*"...how can we deal with falling into the secondary?"*

Our discursive human mind simply does not want to give up, and will fight tooth and nail to retain its dominance. One may have any number of genuine insights, even profound ones. But almost instantly the discriminating mind will grab it. Aha, so that's it! Now I understand! We think that after every sesshin, don't we? And again we are caught in the net of speculations, ideas and all the rest of the ego/self. And the direct experience, the peace that passeth all understanding, is lost, buried under tons of stuff.

Is this falling into the secondary necessarily always bad? But what choice is there? The secondary is all we have. Without this relative world there is no practice, no practitioners, no enlightenment, no love, no compassion, no Bodhisattva. Falling into the secondary is inevitable. It's how we live and function in time, space and karma. It's not something to be afraid of.

Without this relative world there is no practice, no practitioners, no enlightenment, no love, no compassion, no Bodhisattva. Falling into the secondary is inevitable. It's how we live and function in time, space and karma. It's not something to be afraid of.

If you practice Mu or zazen as something outside yourself, or something that you do, you are in the secondary. If you wash dishes as something separate, a chore to get done, if you change a tire, run a vacuum cleaner, eat, type, as stuff that you do, you are in the secondary. Or are you?

In Transmission #9 in the Denkoroku:

*The Ninth Ancestor, Buddhmitra heard Buddhanandi say, "You are more intimate with mind than to your parents, incomparably more intimate. Your speech is one with your intrinsic mind. Your actions are one with the Way...you must realize that you are neither one with Mind nor separate from Mind."*

Bodhidharma says, "Vast emptiness, nothing holy." Is he falling into the secondary? A monk asks Chao-chou the meaning of the ancestor coming from the west, and Chao-chou says, "The oak tree in the garden." Is that a first principle, the second, the third? What about Yangshan, "How can we deal with falling into the secondary?" What number is that?

Not one with mind, not separate from mind. Is the tree one with the tree? Is the tree separate from the tree? Does the tree fall into the secondary? Does the question make any sense? Only a tree can experience a tree. Only the sky can experience the sky. Only enlightenment can experience enlightenment. When you look up to the sky, what are you? When you hear the wind in the trees, when you see the sun and shadow in the zendo what are you? Can you ever escape your true nature?

How do we deal with falling into the secondary? Fall into it! Really fall into it. Let go and dive into it, lose yourself in it, drown in it, disappear into it. Fall into this moment here and now, fall into this infinite here, this eternal now. Live it, die it, practice it. Let go of notions of self, other, existence, non-existence, and especially let go of any nonsense about primary and secondary, or about principles. Walking, just walk. Sitting, just sit. Speaking, just speak. And then where are you? What are you? Primary, secondary, tertiary, numbers become a non-issue.

*The monastic returned and reported this to Jingzhao (Mihu) who then approved Yangshan.*

Mihu approved. Does he now fall into the secondary? What did he approve? Was it Yangshan's answer or Yangshan's question? And what do you approve? Do you approve of your zazen or disapprove? Do you approve of this talk or not? Well, knock it off!

Can we depend on enlightenment? Can we depend on the practice? That is the only thing we can depend on, the practice of this moment. And if practice and enlightenment are not separate, then there you are. To depend on enlightenment is to depend on our ultimate Buddha nature. And that is everywhere. It is the trees, the sky, the place you sit, this very mountain, your own zazen, peaceful, distracted, happy or sad. How can you not depend on it? It's all there is.

Together with all beings, we realize the Way. 

## Secondary Things

*by Emily Bettencourt written after Mountain Sesshin*

wind blows  
breathe  
bird sings  
listen  
foot falls on gravel  
sun heats  
sweat trickles  
fly drones  
round, round  
foot sleeps  
wind blows  
breathe  
mountain sage  
bows

*Photo by Emily Bettencourt*



## Vows

Three years ago I sat down at my kitchen table and wrote the following words:

“All my life I have done everything I was told is required for the pursuit of happiness: school, career, marriage, children, etc. Now that I am in my forties, I find myself holding a glass of seawater. I would feel more fortunate if the glass was empty – for the seawater continues to tempt me to drink it to quench my thirst. I know now that to continue to drink from this glass will perpetuate my suffering.”

At that time I knew very little about the Way uncovered by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. I only knew that the path I was currently traveling was a prescription for more suffering. One month later I entered the doors of the Zen Center for the first time. And, after several years of practice at this Center, I now know without any doubt the path that I must follow. -- *Craig Moseley*

## ZC Blue Mountain Success Stories

For the first time, the ZC Blue Mountain sesshin was held for one week, instead of a long weekend. It offered the option of full-time or half-time attendance. Ken Sensei taught the first part of the week and Peggy Sensei taught the latter. All leaders who stayed and camped the full week were doing a tap dance to keep things running smoothly. The dance would have made Sammy Davis proud!

Following the sesshin a workday was held and much was accomplished. The pictures below tell it all.

More gratitude than can be expressed goes out to Becky for her grace and the use of her beautiful property.



*The clouds come and go,  
providing a rest for all  
the moon viewers*

*--Basho*



Photo credits:

*Sesshin: E. Bettencourt  
& M. Tabor*

*Workday: B.  
Wethington*



## Sangha News

### All-Sangha Workday October 15

The All-Sangha Workday will tackle three important projects.

First, the Paragon Theatre has purchased 100 auditorium seats for their new performance space at 28th Avenue and Larimer Street. Paragon's manager is extremely excited to locate these comfortable, excellently conditioned antique seats. This profitable transaction will help the Center's operating accounts. Dennis Tesar will organize the dismantling of the seats so that the buyer can pick them up and transport them during the first week in November. Please bring tools to help with this project. Dennis expects to accomplish this work in half a day.

Second, Mark Minor, our esteemed wood restoration expert, will supervise the continuing project to recondition the outside oak wood on the south doors of the building. Both doors on the west end are done. If he can assemble the requisite scaffolding, Mark wants to tackle the panels above the west and east doors. But the east doors themselves need attention. You will find the camaraderie of the "door people" and the satisfaction of the finished product very gratifying. Here too, we'll ask you to bring tools. In the past, the door projects have required the better part of a day.

Third, there's going to be continuing work to clean up after the renovation of August and September. The grounds and landscaping have taken a beating. It's all but certain that we'll have more cleaning and organizing inside to prepare the temple for the October sesshin.

Somebody tried to attribute the following to Ben Franklin ... or some anonymous northern European Reformationist. But I really think it has Buddhist origins:

"Many hands make light work!" Join the fun on October 15th!

## Welcome New Members

Paulo Gurevitz Cunha – Information Technologist/Database Engineer

Adriana Lisboa Gurevitz – Writer and Translator

Alexander Wilson – Nursing Assistant

## Calendar Highlights

Intro. to Zen Seminar	Oct. 1-2
<b>Sesshin</b>	<b>Oct. 22-29</b>
<b>Shosan</b>	<b>Oct. 29</b>
Board of Directors Meeting	Nov. 7
<b>Sesshin Applic. Deadline</b>	<b>Nov. 11</b>
<b>Sangha Meeting</b>	<b>Nov. 13</b>
Repentance Ceremony	Nov. 15
Ceremony of Aid	Nov. 17
Samu	Nov. 19
Ceremony of Gratitude	Nov. 24
Precepts Ceremony	Nov. 27
<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>	<b>Dec. 3-10</b>
<b>Buddha's Enlightenment Cer.</b>	<b>Dec. 10</b>
Center Closed	Dec. 19-30
New Year's Eve. Zazen	Dec. 31

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Zen Center of Denver

3101 W 31st Ave.

Denver CO 80211

303.455.1500

<http://www.zencenterofdenver.org>