

11 YUNMEN'S "TWO SICKNESSES"

INTRODUCTION

A bodyless man suffers illness; a handless man compounds medicine; a mouthless man ingests it; a senseless man is well. But tell me, how do you treat a mortal disease?

CASE

Great Master Yunmen said, "When the light does not penetrate freely, there are two kinds of sickness.

"One is when all places are not clear and there is something before you.

"Having penetrated the emptiness of all things, subtly it seems like there is something—this too is the light not penetrating freely. "Also, the Dharma-body has two kinds of sickness: one is when you manage to reach the Dharma-body, but because your clinging to Dharma is not forgotten, your sense of self still remains, and you fall into the realm of the Dharma-body.

"Even if you can pass through, if you let go, that won't do. Examine carefully, (to think) 'What breath is there?'—this too is sickness."

COMMENTARY

Master Jianfeng of Yuezhou was a successor of Dongshan Wuben. While he was traveling around, Yunmen saw this teacher, as well as Caoshan and Sushan. This public case came from a preceding one: Jianfeng said to his congregation, "The Dharma-body has three kinds of illness and two kinds of light; you must pass through them all one by one and realize furthermore that there is still an opening going beyond." Yunmen came forward from the assembly and said, "Why does the man inside the hermitage not know what is outside the hermitage?" Jianfeng laughed aloud; Yunmen said, "This is still what the student doubts." Jianfeng said, "What is going on in your mind?" Yunmen said, "I want the teacher to comprehend thoroughly." Jianfeng said, "Only thus can one sit in peace." Yunmen said, "Yes, yes."

Jianfeng said the Dharma-body has three kinds of illness, Yunmen said the Dharma-body has two kinds of illness. When I was traveling, everywhere they were discussing this, saying that the three illnesses are 'going away before arrival,' 'attachment after arrival,' and 'penetrating through having no basis to rely on.' Now the two illnesses spoken of here just omit going away before arrival; the latter two are clearly much the same.

Master Foyan said, "Searching for a donkey while riding on a donkey is one illness; after getting on the donkey, not being willing to get down is also an illness." This just omits the last kind. Teachers give prescriptions in accordance with the disease for a certain time, each employing appropriate techniques. The two kinds of light and the two kinds of illness when the light doesn't penetrate freely are no different.

Now as for 'when everywhere is not illumined and there is something in front of you is one illness,' Dongshan said, "Clearly she sees her face—there is no other reality; but unavoidably she mistakes the reflection for the head." If you have the eye to settle heaven and earth, and are most thoroughgoing, without letting so much as a thread slip out, only then will you attain somewhat.

Also he said, 'penetrating the emptiness of all things, subtly there seems to be something; this too is because the light does not penetrate freely.' As Guishan said, "When there is nothing that can strike the feelings, the view is still in the objective." The Heroic March Scripture says, "Even if you extinguish all perception and discernment and keep to inner hidden tranquility, this is still a reflection of discrimination of conceptual objects." Nanyuan Huiyong said, "Before, I was like walking in the light of a lamp." Thus it is said, 'this too is the light not penetrating freely.' According to the fundamental way of the Dongshan succession, if you're still, you sink into stagnant water, if you move, you are limited to the present. Thus, when going outward, do not react; when going inward, do not dwell in emptiness. Outwardly not pursuing ramifications, inwardly not abiding in trance, naturally you will get beyond the three sicknesses and two lights all at once. After that, putting penetrating or not penetrating to one side, examine carefully: 'what breath is there?'—this too is an illness. How can you rest easy? Ask Tiantong to take your pulse: he says,

VERSE

The dense web of myriad forms is so precipitous;

***Passing through beyond location blocks the eyes.
Sweeping out his garden—who has the strength?
Hidden in a person's heart, it naturally produces feelings.
A boat crosses a rustic ford, wet with autumn's aquamarine,
Sailing into the reed flowers shining on the snow, bright.
With a bolt of silk, an old fisherman takes it to market;
Floating in the wind, a single leaf travels on the waves.***

COMMENTARY

The Statements of Truth Scripture says, "The myriad forms and multitude of appearances are the impressions of a single truth." The one is many, the many are one; that is this, nothing else. Let them be high and precipitous, an enormous mass; one does not pull weeds in a wild field. The clear ground after all misleads people—even if you can pass through beyond location, this is just what blocks the eye. The Complete Enlightenment Scripture says, "Illusory states of mind are not annihilated, either." Dongshan said, "The peasant sadly cuts the spiritual roots of the auspicious grass."

Why sweep the garden and empty all things? When Yunmen said, "When everywhere is not clear and there is something before you, this is one sickness," he was not telling you to get rid of illusory objects, annihilate illusory mind, and seek some other place of transcendence. The Third Patriarch said, "The six senses are not bad—instead they are the same as true enlightenment." Together with the Complete Enlightenment Scripture's "Knowing illusion, one is detached; without employing any technique one detaches from illusions, without any process; then one sees doing, stopping, letting be, and extinction," it is like rubbing the back of a clay mannikin with diamond.

Tiantong also said, "Hidden in a person's heart, it naturally produces feelings." This versifies 'subtly it seems like something is there.' This is precisely the subtle four kinds of illness described in the Complete Enlightenment Scripture: "Knowing self, aware of self, subtly continuing, like life." That is why Puque said, "the great compassionate World Honored One quickly explained the illnesses of meditation." "A boat crosses a rustic ford, wet with autumn's aquamarine." This versifies reaching the Dharma-body, mooring the boat on the deep still waters of the clear source: Sushan called the Dharma-body a dead wood post—this is a real donkey-tethering stake.

Even if you get as far as setting the boat in motion, still you can't avoid rowing into the brightness of the white reed flowers reflecting the snow. At this point, "Even though the pure light shines in your eyes, it seems you have missed your home; even turning around in pure clarity, after all you get bogged down in that state." This versifies 'Even if you can penetrate, it won't do to let it go.' Here Yunmen has said it all, Tiantong has versified thoroughly.

Afterwards it is necessary to see Yunmen's essential meaning and Tiantong's eye; here is where the gain or loss is figured. What is Yunmen's essential meaning? Didn't you see how he said, "Examining carefully, 'what breath is there?'—this too is an illness." Yunmen just points out the sickness but doesn't tell how to cure it. What is Tiantong's eye? He tells Yunmen's cure: "With a bolt of silk, an old fisherman takes it to market; floating in the wind, a single leaf travels on the waves." Yunmen's meaning is entering the market place extending his hands, not avoiding the wind and waves: it could be said that with his own sickness cured, he pities others' sickness. This is the heart of Vimalakirti. But do you know? With many sicknesses you learn about medicine, but only if you get results may you dare to pass on the prescription.

ADDED SAYINGS: CASE

When the light does not penetrate freely there are two kinds of sickness—Do you feel your mouth dry up and your tongue shrivel?

One is when all places are not clear and there is something before you— Seeing ghosts in broad daylight—isn't it an illusion?

Having penetrated the emptiness of all things, subtly it seems like there is something—It's already gripped your chest—why bother to shut your throat?

Also, the Dharma-body has two kinds of sickness—Disasters don't happen alone.

One is when you manage to reach the Dharma body, but because your clinging to Dharma is not forgotten your sense of self still remains and you fall into the realm of the Dharma body—Not only false idols, even a close relative.

Even if you can pass through, if you let go, that won't do—Nursing sickness, the body dies.

Examining carefully, 'what breath is there?'—this too is sickness— Before the doctor has left the house, convulsions break out.

ADDED SAYINGS: VERSE

The dense web of myriad forms is so precipitous—Let them be—how can they hinder you? If you know them, they're not enemies.

Passing through beyond location blocks the eyes—Adding a flapper to a flail.

Sweeping out his garden—who has the strength?

Sweeping away tracks makes traces—the more you hide, the more it's revealed.

Hidden in a person's heart, it naturally produces feelings—Suspicion in the mind makes ghosts in the dark.

A boat crosses a rustic ford—Submerged in stagnant water.

Sailing into the reed flowers—The stationary bank misleads people.

An old fisherman takes a bolt of silk to market—He puts down his capital, hoping for profit.

Floating in the wind, a leaf travels on the wares—Finding the wonder along with the flow.