

Zen Koans

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What to answer

Pupil: "In Zen this very mind is Buddha. Is this correct?"
Teacher: "If I say yes, you will think that you understand without understanding. If I say no, I would be contradicting a fact which many understand quite well."

Wash the bowl

Pupil: "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me."
Teacher: "Have you eaten your rice porridge?"
Pupil: "I have eaten."
Teacher: "Then you had better wash your bowl."

Three calls

Teacher: "Pupil."
Pupil: "Yes."
Teacher: "Pupil."
Pupil: "Yes."
Teacher: "Pupil."
Pupil: "Yes."
Teacher: "I ought to apologize to you for all this calling, but really you ought to apologize to me."

Not the wind, not the flag

Two monks are arguing about a flag.

First monk: "The flag is moving."

Second monk: "The wind is moving."

Teacher: "Not the wind, not the flag; the mind is moving."

Three pounds of flax

Teacher is weighing some flax.

Pupil: "What is Buddha?"

Teacher: "This flax weighs three pounds."

How to call a short staff?

Teacher shows his short staff to his pupils: "If you call this a short staff, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. Now what do you wish to call this?"

A cup of tea

The teacher received a monk who came to inquire about Zen. Teacher served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The monk watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself.

Monk: "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

Teacher: "Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

The stone in mind

Two monks are arguing about subjectivity and objectivity.

Teacher: "There is a big stone. Do you consider it to be inside or outside your mind?"

One monk: "From the Buddhist viewpoint, everything is an objectification of mind, so I would say that the stone is inside my mind."

Teacher: "Your head must feel very heavy, if you are carrying a stone like that in your mind."

Prvo načelo

Učitelja so vprašali: "Kaj je prvo načelo?"
Odgovoril je: "Če bi vam povedal, bi postalo drugo načelo."

Dekle in luža

Učitelj in učenec sta šla po blatni cesti. Naletela sta na ljubko dekle v svilenem kimonu, ki ni vedelo, kako bi prišlo čez lužo. "Pridi, dekle," je rekel učitelj, jo dvignil in prenesel čez blatno mlakužo. Učenec ni spregovoril, dokler nista pod večer prispela do hrama. Tedaj se ni mogel več zadržati: "Mi redovniki se ne dotikamo žensk. Zakaj si tisto storil?" "Dekle sem pustil tam," je odgovoril učitelj, "ali jo ti še vedno nosiš?"

Ti nisi jaz

Učitelj se je s prijateljem sprehajal ob reki: "Kako božansko se ribe v vodi radostijo življenja!" "Ti nisi riba," mu je oporekal prijatelj, "kako torej veš, da se ribe veselijo življenja?" "Ti nisi jaz," mu je odvrnil učitelj, "kako torej veš, da jaz ne vem, da se ribe veselijo življenja?"

Goska v steklenici

Visoki uradnik je vprašal učitelja: "V davnih časih je živel človek, ki je imel gosko v steklenici. Rasla je, dokler ni mogla več ven; človek ni hotel razbiti steklenice niti poškodovati goske - kako bi jo ti spravil ven?" Mojster je vzkliknil: "O, uradnik!" Uradnik je odgovoril: "Da?" "No, pa je zunaj," je rekel mojster.