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The Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra of the Inconceivable Liberation Scriptures, translation by Kumarajiva, the fifth chapter:

The Consolation of the Invalid

Then the Buddha said to the crown prince, Manjusri, "Manjusri, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Manjusri replied, "Lord, it is difficult to attend upon the Licchavi Vimalakirti. He is gifted with marvelous eloquence concerning the law of the profound. He is extremely skilled in full expression and in the reconciliation of dichotomies. His eloquence is inexorable and no one can resist his imperturbable intellect. He accomplishes all the activities of the Bodhisattvas. He penetrates all the secret mysteries of the Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas. He is skilled in civilizing all the abodes of devils. He plays with the real superknowledges. He is consummate in wisdom and liberative technique. He has attained the supreme excellence of the indivisible non-dual sphere of the ultimate realm. He is skilled in teaching the Dharma with its infinite modalities within the uniform ultimate. He has thoroughly integrated his realization with skill in liberative technique. He has attained decisiveness with regard to all questions. Thus, although he cannot be withstood by someone of my feeble defenses, still, sustained by the race of the Buddha, I will go to him and will converse with him as well as I can."

Thereupon in that assembly, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the Sakras, the Brahmans, the Lokapalas, and the gods and goddesses, all had this thought; "Surely the conversations of the young prince Manjusri and that good man will result in a profound teaching of the Dharma."

Thus, eight thousand Bodhisattvas, five hundred disciples, a great number of Sakras, Brahmans,

Lokapalas and many hundreds of thousands of gods and goddesses, all followed the crown prince Manjusri to listen to the Dharma. Thereby disciples, Sakras, Brahmans, Lokapalas, gods and goddesses, entered the great city of Vaisali.

Meanwhile, the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought to himself, "Manjusri, the crown prince, is coming here with numerous attendants. Now, may this house be transformed into emptiness!"

Then magically his house became empty. Even the doorkeeper disappeared. And, except for the invalid's couch upon which Vimalakirti himself was lying, no bed or couch or seat could be seen anywhere.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti saw the crown prince Manjusri and addressed him thus: "Manjusri! Welcome, Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are, without any coming. You appear, without any seeing. You are heard without any hearing."

Manjusri declared, "Householder, it is as you say. Who comes, finally comes not. Who goes, finally goes not. Why? Who comes is not known to come who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen. Good sir, is your condition tolerable? Is it livable? Are your physical elements not disturbed? Is your sickness diminishing? Is it not increasing? The Buddha asks about you- if you have slight trouble, slight discomfort, slight sickness, if your distress is light, if you are cared for, strong, at ease, without self-reproach and if you are living in touch with the supreme happiness."

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness. For example, Manjusri, when the only son of a merchant is sick both his parents become sick on account of the sickness of their son. And the parents will suffer as long as that only son does not recover from his sickness. Just so, Manjusri, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if

each were his only child. He becomes sick when they are sick and is cured when they are cured. You asked me, Manjusri, whence comes my sickness; the sicknesses of the bodhisattvas arise from great compassion.”

Manjusri: “Householder, why is your house empty, why have you no servants? Vimalakirti: Manjusri, all Buddha-fields are also empty. Manjusri: What makes them empty?”

Vimalakirti: “They are empty because of emptiness.”

Manjusri: “What is “empty: about emptiness”?”

Vimalakirti: “Constructions are empty, because of emptiness.”

Manjusri: “Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?”

Vimalakirti: “Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness.”

Manjusri: “Householder, where should emptiness be sought?”

Vimalakirti: “Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.”

Manjusri: “Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?”

Vimalakirti: “They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathagathas.”

Manjusri: “Where should the liberation of the Tathagathas be sought?”

Vimalakirti: “It should be sought in the prime mental activity of all living beings. Manjusri, you ask me why I am without servants, but all Maras and opponents are my servants. Why? The Maras advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The heterodox opponents advocate convictions, and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all Maras and opponents are my servants.”

Manjusri: “Householder, of what sort is your sickness?”

Vimalakirti: “It is immaterial and invisible.”

Manjusri: “Is it physical or mental?”

Vimalakirti: “It is not physical, since the body is insubstantial in itself. It is not mental since the nature of the mind is like illusion.”

Manjusri: “Householder, which of the four main elements is disturbed: earth, water, fire, or air?”

Vimalakirti: “Manjusri, I am sick only because the elements of living beings are disturbed by sicknesses.”

Manjusri: “Householder, how should a bodhisattva console another bodhisattva who is sick?”

Vimalakirti: “He should tell him that the body is impermanent, but should not exhort him to renunciation or disgust. He should tell him that the body is miserable, but should not encourage him to find solace in liberation; that the body is selfless, but that living beings should be developed; that the body is peaceful, but not to seek any ultimate calm. He should urge him to confess his evil deeds, but not for the sake of absolutions. He should encourage his empathy for all living beings on account of his own sickness, his remembrance of suffering experienced from beginningless time, and his consciousness of working for the welfare of living beings. He should encourage him not to be distressed, but to manifest the roots of virtue, to maintain the primal purity and the lack of craving and thus to always strive to become the king of healers, who can cure all sicknesses. Thus should a bodhisattva console a sick bodhisattva, in such a way as to make him happy.”

Vimalakirti is sick and in bed. The Buddha asks many Bodhisattvas and disciples to go and visit him but all of the Bodhisattvas have past experiences with Vimalakirti warning and teaching them so all of them used these experiences as reasons to not go, saying that they were too unripe and unskillful to visit Vimalakirti. Everyone turned him down so the Buddha asked the Bodhisattva of the greatest wisdom, Manjusri to go visit in the Buddha's place. This is this chapter, “Consolation of the Invalid”.

Starting with the first chapter, The Purification of the Buddha Field, the second chapter, the Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Techniques, the third chapter, The Disciples Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti and the fourth chapter, The Reluctance of the Bodhisattvas, we now come to the fifth chapter, The Consolation of the Invalid.

Up until this point in the sutra, although the sutra is about Vimalakirti he has not yet appeared even once. All the many Bodhisattvas and all the many disciples have come into the story in telling encounters with Vimalakirti but Vimalakirti himself has never directly taught the truth.

Up until this time, the advanced and excellent wisdom and way of Vimalakirti was taught through stories of his encounters with the various disciples and

Bodhisattvas, but in this chapter we actually meet Vimalakirti for the first time. Vimalakirti, himself, appears. Finally, Vimalakirti himself teaches the truth. With Manjusri Bodhisattva he teaches the deepest truths of the Mahayana, as they talk about them, one after the next.

Those who translated this sutra in the olden days called the sections up to this section the Introductory Section. This chapter of the Consolation of the Invalid begins the section of the Correct Truth. The entire sutra is divided up in this way, although, of course, the basic teaching of the whole sutra is the Dharma Gate of the “not two”. This teaching of the “not two” has already been brought in again and again. The teaching of the not two is not something new being brought in, but it is the first time that Vimalakirti himself has been appearing to teach as the main person teaching the truth. Because of this it is considered the central part of the whole sutra.

Since none of the Buddha’s disciples or Bodhisattvas wanted to go to visit Vimalakirti finally Manjusri ended up going. When the Buddha requests Manjusri to go, Manjusri answers, *“That man Vimalakirti, I am not one who can sufficiently meet him, his state of mind is so advanced and superior. Vimalakirti knows the truth and has realized it so deeply, with an essence so profound. The words he teaches are round and complete and never one sided and his teaching is round beyond words and phrases, free and unlimited. He is superior and advanced in everything he does and for me to go visit him is very, very difficult, but if the Buddha requests me to do so, in accordance with that wish, and with the help of your power, then I will go to visit him.”* For the first time Manjusri says he will go visit Vimalakirti.

Manjusri receives his wish and goes to visit Vimalakirti. For each of us as an individual, living and working in this world, there is a way of working as an individual and also as something beyond being solely an individual. There is a greater power beyond us, in accordance to which we live. There is a place like that. There is something that goes beyond our own individuality.

While I apologize for speaking in this way, when going to America and Europe and India, it is clear that in Zen there are no boundaries. Wherever there are people who want to realize the truth within, I go there, and teach the truth. This is what Mumon Roshi was always saying, that he wanted to go wherever there were people who wanted to know this truth and teach it to them, and this is still alive in my mind. I actually feel this very same way. Probably if he was alive right now he would do this, he would function like this. I sometimes feel this strongly. In something beyond the smaller individual will and ability, I find that Grace. I feel how it is not my merit that is working but the merit of my teacher, Mumon Roshi. I

often directly perceive it this way. In that which goes beyond our own small personal way of being, we find our truly huge and great functioning.

Manjusri Bodhisattva, in response to the wishes of the Buddha was going to see Vimalakirti. Many disciples and Bodhisattvas and heavenly beings heard that Manjusri and Vimalakirti were going to meet, and that Manjusri was going to visit Vimalakirti. That encounter was such a wonderful thing to imagine, knowing that the truth would be taught and manifested there, that everyone who even thought about it wanted to be there too. Even if they had not wanted to go to Vimalakirti prior to that, if Manjusri Bodhisattva was going they also wanted to be included in the grace of such a meeting. Everyone had this same thought, so it was not Manjusri Bodhisattva who went there alone. When he went to Vaisali a big long line of disciples and Bodhisattvas and guardians of the four heavens and heavenly beings followed him as well. There were 84,000 in the assembly and they all headed together with Manjusri to Vimalakirti’s place in Vaisali. Using his supernatural powers, Vimalakirti saw them all heading his way.

Vimalakirti considered this meeting very important. He used his supernatural powers to get rid of everything in his room, every single thing in the room was gone, of course, the furniture, and all of the servants, all of the objects, cows and horses and everything in his big house were gone and only a small room was left. Every thing in that room was also gone and only a bed with him lying down on it was left. Vimalakirti welcomed Manjusri, Bodhisattva of greatest wisdom, with a sense of great importance and did not want anything to interfere with their meeting, so he got rid of everything.

In later days we have the tea ceremony of wabi and sabi. This way of tea ceremony, with its spare hermitage-like tea room and simple garden was, begun by Tea Master Rikyu. He did long years of practice and zazen and from his deep power of vow he taught that the first priority in the training of tea is to intimately study the Dharma. He taught this himself and he was always creating in context of how it is in the zendo, and also that the tea garden should maintain the simplicity of a Zen temple garden.

This is Rikyu’s own way of teaching and it was this very hut of Vimalakirti, which was the model for Rikyu’s teahouse. When Vimalakirti took everything out of his house, leaving only one bed where he laid, this way of being is a way of expressing one’s own life. The tearoom is usually the size of four and one half tatami mats and outside of the tea room there is a small simple garden. The four and one half mat room is the size taken from the Vimalakirti Sutra; the small simple garden comes from the teaching in the Lotus sutra. The room in which Vimalakirti lived was a square, four and one half tatami sized room and

this is the same as the word for what a head priest of a temple is called. It is a little larger than nine feet square, with the addition of the tokonoma and a wooden board; this is just the size of four and one half tatami mats.

Manjusri went with many disciples and heavenly beings to visit Vimalakirti. In his house, in his small room, there was not one single thing, only Vimalakirti resting alone. There was incense burning and he was waiting for the guests. This is the tearoom. No matter what wonderful tea utensils there are, they are put away and only a single flower is offered to the Buddha. Incense is also offered and nothing else is in the room. This is the rule for the host, to create a room where no random thoughts can enter. It is the clear mind of the host that prepares this room.

At the tearoom the guests first clean their hands at the tsukubai (rock basin with water in it) in the garden. They purify their mouth and they purify their mind. Then they enter the tearoom. Rikyu has written "The small garden is the path in from the floating transient world, don't bring in the dust from the mist of that world." In this way Rikyu has written. When we enter the small tea garden we are no longer in that world of dualistic values of good and bad, win and lose. This is the world where everything is equal, a different world. It is the pure world of the Buddha is how we must receive it. From this comes the origin of the simple tea garden. Once we enter that garden's world we put aside all thoughts from the everyday world. That is the purified mind of the guest.

Once we enter the tearoom there are only the calligraphy scroll and the flowers to be seen, with the sound of the boiling teakettle, like wind in the pines. The wonderful fragrance of the incense greets our nose and we taste the delicious tea, with these our mind and body are purified and this is the tea path of wabi and sabi. All of our six senses and their roots are purified; the qualities of harmony, respect, clarity and serenity are realized. The room of Vimalakirti was what inspired this way of tea. The room of Vimalakirti was pure and so was his heart and his mind, with this purity he received the representative from the Buddha, Manjusri Bodhisattva. Manjusri did not add in the slightest thought, in accordance with the mind of the Buddha he encountered Vimalakirti. With a truly clear and pure mind he arrived at the room of Vimalakirti.

Immediately as he entered the room, without any hesitation, Vimalakirti said, "*Manjusri! Welcome! Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are without any coming! You appear, without any seeing. You are heard without any hearing!*" *You have come without any sense of arriving.*"

That matter of course, natural state of mind is how you have come. You have come with a natural and innocent mind to visit; this is how Vimalakirti welcomes Manjusri.

This is how it is for all of us, when someone comes to visit we welcome them and tell them we are glad they came, "You've come such a long way in your busy life, thank you so much for coming!" The host always welcomes the arriving guest; this is regular courtesy. Nevertheless these were not only words of Vimalakirti. These are words expressing clearly the way of the "Not two", revealed brilliantly. "You are very welcome! There you are without any coming! You appear, without any seeing. "

He is saying that Manjusri came with a form of no coming and no seeing. He adds two negations; this is the empty minded way, which is so hard to put into words. Our world of seeing and not seeing, of coming and no coming, that world of dualism which we are always living in, he puts that world aside.

It does not have to be so difficult. When we live in the world of the zendo and do zazen, then align our mind all day long; we don't wake up in the morning wondering if we should get up or not. A bell rings and we wake up accordingly, we go to the Hondo not worrying and wondering if we should go there or not. If the Hondo bell sounds, we follow the sangha and go there. We don't get into thinking any idea of "shall I chant or not chant?" and we naturally sit zazen when the bell and clappers go. We don't think about each moment of "now we enter zazen, now we finish zazen". When the dining room bell goes, we just follow the leading person into the dining room. Without any confusion we go to the hondo at the sound of the drum and to the kitchen at the bell and to samu when the clappers sound. We are not thinking about each activity, and in this way our true mind moves easily and freely. If we are not careful we might mistakenly think that the bell for meals, the drum and the clappers is using us.

Rather than always thinking about each and everything we do, "Should I do this, Should I do that?", the way people so often do, in comparison, this is much more empty minded and free. Our state of mind is one of entrusting; there is nothing to be confused by and our action is freely born from clear mind. Here we live the daily life of not two and this is what Vimalakirti meant when he said, "You are very welcome! There you are without any coming! You appear, without any seeing. "

This is the actualization, and one who has not walked this cannot manifest this expression. This is the manifestation of empty mindedness.

Then Manjusri responds without a hesitation, *“Householder it is as you say. Who comes, finally comes not, who goes, finally goes not. Why? Who comes is not known to come. Who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen.”* This is how Manjusri answered him. The words may seem difficult to understand intellectually but in terms of our way of being what is said here is a matter of course.

Dogen Zenji in writing the Shobogenzo, in the Scroll on Being-time [Uji], writes about being and time. We see deeply within the context of being, what our life actually is. We dig to that point and then without fail we will come to the same place. To exist always relates to there being time. Existence and time are not something that can be separated; they are originally one and the same.

In our practical daily world we perceive time as something flowing by and around us, but this is a mental understanding and not the way it really is. Our life energy, just as it is, is time. We mentally understand time as being something that flows from a past through a present, on to a future. We also have a vow and a hope and plans that come to be, and this makes us see it as a future that then flows into a present then into a past. This opposite way of flow can also be seen, but these are all mental ideas of time and not the thing itself, not the living thing. We have to directly encounter that time which flows from now to now. From now to now, from now to now, from one now to the next now. Every instant it is born and transforms, this time. This is our actuality of being alive.

In the Mumonkan we have a case with Master Tozan. Tozan Shusho Zenji. When he first came from his own home country to meet the Master Unmon was a young 32 or 33 years old, and Master Unmon was already a well-ripened 88 or 89. Master Unmon and the monk Tozan were like grandfather and grandson. Unmon Daishi asked him from where he had come and he answered, “Yes, I came from Sado, Master”.

“And where were you residing during the last training period?”

“At Konan at the temple of Hozuji.”

“When did you leave Hozuji?”

“It was August 25th.”

Then Master Unmon said “I give you 60 blows with my stick!”

That night Tozan could not sleep, all nightlong he thought and wondered why he Unmon had done that, why did he have to hit him? Where was his mistake? He laid down but he couldn't get to sleep and then it was dawn and he just couldn't sit still, so he went to see Master Unmon one more time.

“You gave me 60 blows with your stick-but where was my mistake?” Unmon's answer was severe, “Have you

been prowling around like that from Kozei to Konan with such a casual attitude?”

At this Tozan saw his gap-filled, distracted mind for the first time. For the first time he realized the mind which is not caught on externals, and is free and alive.

Joshu lived until 120, a very long life, and when he first met Master Nansen, Joshu was only 19. Nansen was very tired that day after returning from cutting weeds at samu and he was resting when Joshu came in. He asked Joshu from where he had come and Joshu answered, “Soshu no Zuizoin.”

Nansen asked him if he prayed well to the Jizo bodhisattva there and Joshu Jushin Osho answered without any hesitation, “No I didn't pray at Zuizo, but now I am paying my respects to a reclining Buddha.”

Nansen got up and asked him with whom he was now training, if he had a teacher. Joshu answered, “In this cold season, Teacher please take good care of your health. Congratulations”, and he prostrated to him. Nansen was on the contrary, gobbled up by Joshu. Joshu already had this advanced and excellent vow power, and sharp sight even at 19. This is a big difference from Tozan's first meeting with Unmon.

In the Surangama Sutra, Shuryo Gongyo, it is the words of the Buddha's disciples that were collected. Shaie Koku hashi no koun went to the place of the Buddha, “Today is the anniversary of my father's death and I want to invite the Buddha and all of his disciples to a meal I would like to offer. Please come to my castle at noon. In this way he made the invitation.

At that time there was invitation from another house as well and the Buddha divided up the disciples evenly and half went to each house. But Ananda Sonja, the attendant to the Buddha was not there, where had he gone, the Buddha asked. “This morning he went out for takuhatsu and is not back yet.”

The Buddha thought this was very strange and put his supernatural powers to use. He found where Ananda was, that he had been out on takuhatsu in town and had been seduced by and was now with Matoga, a witch. He had been led to the house of the devil and he was just about to be tangled in the seduction of the daughter of Matoga. This was the challenging situation he was facing at that very moment. Immediately he called Ananda back with his supernatural powers. When the Buddha then spoke to Ananda these are the words of the Surungama Sutra, the Shuryo Gongyo.

In the monastery this sutra is chanted daily for two weeks of the month. All of the people in training are

encouraged by this to not look away from their main focus and to keep their eyes on what is necessary for society and not be pulled into a side path, to practice correctly.

In this sutra the Buddha teaches, "When unseeing, why do you not see the unseeing? If you see the unseeing, it is no longer unseeing." Of course these original words are from India, and they are translated roughly and words that are hard to understand, but what is being said is this, does the world exist because I see it or do I see a world because it exists? If we say that a world exists because I exist, then it is solipsism. If we say that matter is the only reality, that is materialism, and if we say that the ultimate reality lies in a realm transcending the material, in consciousness, that is idealism.

Zen is not materialism nor is it idealism. That which is being seen, and that which is seeing it, are one, a perfectly matched whole. In this the actuality is manifested, the world, as it is, is me. The world is me, and I am the world. There is no separation between me and the world as is proposed by both idealism and materialism. The world and I are not separate; there is no such division. When I don't see the world, where am I? When I see the world, where I am is clear, but if I don't see it, then where am I? Where does the world go? If "I" don't see the world, there is no "I". This is the state of mind of zazen, the actuality, the world of Buddha Nature, and this is Buddha Nature and our original face.

In the Surungama Sutra the Buddha says, "When unseeing, why do you not see the unseeing", meaning; when I enter samadhi, if you say you can see it, you are looking at something else not my state of mind of samadhi. If you say you have seen something that is my samadhi, that is dualistic, so that is not my samadhi. That is only imagination and not the thing itself.

"If you do not see the unseeing, it is not an object. "

If you say don't see anything of my samadhi, with essence but not seeing, if you realize that state of mind, only then is it the world of not two. If you want to truly know my world of samadhi, then you have to become that state of mind as well. If you enter that state of mind where there is no self and no other present, then we are simultaneously in the same world. And if you don't enter it in this way, then you cannot say that you have seen my samadhi.

"Why isn't it yourself?" To say it a different way, this "world" and this "me", that state of mind that does not get caught on either of these, is the Buddha Nature. This is not something that you can announce as This is Buddha Nature, because then it is only mental understanding. My samadhi state, where there is no self nor other, if you say you can see it; it is

only an understanding about it, and not the thing itself. To know it directly, you have to enter samadhi too, and then there is no self, no person nor you and nothing to be attached to at all. That is your true Buddha Nature and essence, where there is no small you, where there is no world and no self. This place of no speck whatsoever remaining to be attached to - realize that completely, discover that. Because there is a "me" we think there is a "world". Even if we see the actual living energy, because we see the phenomena, and mistakenly think, "that is real", we get seduced. To realize the place of no self and no world, this is the deepest truth of the entirely pure entirely white ox under the blue sky.

The Sixth Patriarch said of this "From the origin there is no single thing" there is no way to be deluded even if we want to be. There is no one to be deluded. This is how the Buddha speaks to Ananda in the Surangama Sutra.

Realize this completely and totally. While seeing and encountering completely, to have no sense of the other's form or existence whatsoever. To not be attached, yet to still be encountering. This is not a mental understanding but to be meeting in the very midst of samadhi. This is what Vimalakirti was saying when he welcomed Manjusri, "Manjusri! Welcome, Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are, without any coming. You appear, without any seeing. You are heard without any hearing."

Then Manjusri answered, "*Householder, it is as you say. Who comes finally comes not. Who goes, finally goes not. Why? Who comes is not known to come. Who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen.*"

The past, present, and future is not the way they were meeting, rather in now-now-now-here-here-here, at this very time at this very moment this is where we meet our truth for the first time ever. To meet where there is another but with no sense of an other. Becoming them completely, we manifest the moment like a mirror in which there is nothing to be reflected. No past, present or future, no arriving or seeing, just this very instant - appearing, manifesting and gone. There is no place to insert a single hair only that true encounter.

"In all the boundless realms of space not a single hair can be inserted." Our true state of mind of zazen is told of here.

Vimalakirti said "*Manjusri! Welcome, Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are, without any coming. You appear, without any seeing. You are heard without any hearing.*"

Manjusri then answered, "*Householder, it is as you say. Who comes finally comes not. Who goes, finally goes not.*"

Why? Who comes is not known to come. Who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen."

When called to simply answer "yes", to answer and respond immediately, the true encountering of two mirrors with no speck in them whatsoever. This is where the actuality is.

First they do greetings and express the non-two. They then enter into the center of the visit. "*Vimalakirti! You are sick? Can you endure it? Is it a sickness you can endure or is it a sickness you cannot endure? Is the cure working? Does it not get better at all? This is what the Buddha wants to know about and so he asked me to come and visit you.*"

In this way the Buddha's expression and fundamental point for this visit is expressed. "*The Buddha is very concerned about you and so he asked me to come. The Buddha's mind is truly in grief over your suffering and illness. The Buddha wanted his mind relayed to you.*"

Then Manjusri asks about his sickness, why did you get sick? Is this sickness something you have had for a long time, from when? Is it a long time that you have had this sickness and can you treat it? How will it get better? Manjusri asked about the essence of the sickness here.

Next we have the response of Vimalakirti, as he says, "*Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness.*"

These are very famous words. He is saying that which is also written in the Lotus Sutra, "A Buddha appears in the world to open the treasury of the truth, to indicate its meaning, to cause sentient beings to see into it, to cause sentient beings to enter it and abide in it." The flowering of Buddhism and its essence is expressed here. Having an Absolute God or Buddha in the heavens, one who is saving others and giving good people entrance into heaven, while sending evil people into hell, is not Buddhism. Buddhism is that which takes away pain and suffering and delusion without preference, as if we are doing it for our own child. We would do anything we can to help them become healthy in mind and body. This is the starting point of Buddhism.

And so Vimalakirti says, "*Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness.*"

Vimalakirti himself is not sick, that which gave birth to his illness is sentient beings and not he himself. In

accordance with that he has become sick. Because sentient beings are ill, Vimalakirti became sick, not because he himself is deluded and confused, but because he is not in some other world. He is understanding of, and existing right along with, the suffering deluded, "*Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness.*"

He tells the reason for the sickness. If we ask what is the source of that sickness and delusion, he tells us that it is ignorance. Ignorance is what is without brightness and wisdom, our living only from basic instincts and desires. This is human's most deeply rooted, basic delusion.

People live with desires and instincts as long as they are alive. From those instincts we seek things to eat, we want to stay alive, and these are beyond any idea about good and bad, but come from human's most basic wish to be alive. It is just like when we are very thirsty and we long intensely for a drink of water. We instinctually continue to seek for these needs. But if we get attached to those things which we need, our instincts then become the base of everything we do and they turn into deep suffering. That attached suffering is what then causes a deluded life of confusion and indecision.

Greed and fulfillment become a cycle and get stuck onto everything we do. This is what is called attached desire, just like when we are so thirsty we can't drink enough water and don't feel satisfied no matter how much we drink, it is this kind of extreme, intense desire. The Buddha taught that this is the source of great pain and suffering. That humans have physical, sexual desires is the law of the survival of the species. It is a natural instinct with which we are all endowed. All living things are endowed with this basic instinct to stay alive. But this desire can become something for our own ego and self-satisfaction and when it becomes blind desire, physical love can hurt others hearts and even make us take others lives, bringing great confusion.

There is also our intense wish to stay alive forever, to want to live as long as possible. In a very real way to keep our life going is an instinct, but if we refuse to allow death to naturally take its course this can be also be a huge attachment that makes us move and act meaninglessly.

When people have to endure intense poverty they may become violent and extreme. Our world's challenges including food shortages and energy consumption, these desires have to be regarded as the source of so much of our military and economic strife.

The Buddha taught that even if we are wealthy we need to take care of the elderly, otherwise, from there will come ruin. If having money, having many possessions, having plenty to eat, we eat something good all by ourselves; this will also bring ruin.

In the time of the Buddha as well, India was in an agricultural era and Madara country and Kosara country were the centers. Already a system of economics was in place. While there was commerce and trade, there were still many who were impoverished and chronically starving. There were also great merchants and landowners who lived in luxury from morning until night. The Buddha saw this problem clearly and knew that to be simply ignoring others difficulties was not the way, instead people had to help and support each other or it would be the ruin of the country. If this is ignored and one only preserves oneself there will be ruin come without fail. Buddha preached this with great compassion.

When the wish for things to be more abundant, more long lasting, comes from the continuation of an ego-centered place, it is a desire from an unawakened mind and becomes pointless and meaningless. For this reason, this unawakened and unaligned development goes into competition and becomes nihilistic. This is a backwards affect and this is what the Buddha was speaking against. To be without a true goal in your development, to give effort only to what is egoistic is the desire to produce and this is the same as trying to aggrandize yourself.

We end up wanting to increase our own success, in order to increase our possessions and status. We then ignore others and damage and injure the various expressions of life energy everywhere. Progress without meaning is the result of this. This is the place where the world and life's blending is missing something, is unaligned. Because the truth of all things being in flux and transient is not understood, in this case, the truth is darkened and this intense attachment is followed. In Buddhism this is called "mumyo" or original darkness. If we can awaken to the fact that all things are transient and nothing is fixed, then we can realize we will also decay and that there is no such thing as permanent progress. The self-satisfying desires will be recognized as something which have no meaning or real future.

We can then realize that our pain and suffering is something we accrued from our desires and ignorance, that these are the truest source of all suffering. Our intense attachment is from this deep ignorance and increases all of our attachments even further. This is the pain of society, which comes from a lack of awakening, we want to somehow resolve this, and this is why Vimalakirti has become ill. Society's pain is terrible in this way and from this Vimalakirti has become sick.

"Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness."

Of course he is not saying that it is sentient beings that first began this suffering. Nevertheless it is in accordance with the suffering of sentient beings that Vimalakirti has become sick. He is sick because of the illness of sentient beings and the source of that is dark ignorance and severe attachment. The source of Vimalakirti's sickness is the illness of society. Manjusri asked from where this sickness came and these are the words of Vimalakirti. "Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness."

Next Manjusri asked about the length of the sickness. Have you been sick for a long time? When will you be better? Vimalakirti answers, "*Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would be free of sickness.*"

All sickness has to do with the question of birth and death. This is truly the same with the four vows. There is no limit to the sickness of the Bodhisattva. If they were sick from their own causes then they could end it themselves but since their sickness is from that of all suffering beings, because sentient beings get sick, Bodhisattvas get sick. If sentient beings get better so do Bodhisattvas. Because the source is the mumyo (deep ignorance) the solution is not easy. It has no start and no finish. It goes on and on and no matter how much liberating there is; there is still more to do, so it goes on endlessly. Bodhisattvas are not stopping at enlightenment and sitting down on it. Some are happy in their enlightened state and stay there but the Mahayana Bodhisattvas do not acknowledge that. Of course they work on their inner awakening but they don't sit down on it and if there is one person still sick in this world they also are not yet liberated.

Even if they are not liberated yet, they will do everything to bring all beings to the other shore with their continually intensifying deep vow power. "Even if I am not liberated yet I will first liberate all others" This great deep vow is for doing this.

Bodhisattvas are those who dive right into the world of life and death and the revolving of the wheel of karma of sentient beings. These who willingly dive into that sphere are called Bodhisattvas. This state of mind is called Bodaishin.

In the mumyo is found our own pain and if we don't know this pain we can't know others pain

and so Bodhisattvas are also in the world of life and death. They can then come to know the pain of all others. In order to liberate others the Bodhisattvas have to know the pain and affliction of great attachment and life and death. If sentient beings are sick the Bodhisattvas have to be sick too.

“For example, Manjusri, when the only son of a merchant is sick both his parents become sick on account of the sickness of their son. And, the parents will suffer as long as that only son does not recover from his sickness. Just so, Manjusri, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if each were his only child. He becomes sick when they are sick and is cured when they are cured.”

Bodhisattvas are the same, even if there is only one child of a rich man if the child gets sick, the parents also get sick in both body and heart. If the child gets better the parents are relieved and so happy that they are also relieved of their pain. Because Bodhisattvas love all people like their only child it is the same. The Buddha said that he sees all beings as his own children. This is in the sutras, how the Buddha never sat down long enough for his seat to get warm, not even once. He tirelessly continued, always teaching the truth like a parent with their child, like the Buddha with his only son. If sentient beings get sick then Bodhisattvas will get sick too and if sentient beings get well then Bodhisattvas have a relieved mind and are no longer sick.

Manjusri asks next what kind of sickness it is *“Good sir, is your condition tolerable? Is it livable? Are your physical elements not disturbed? Is your sickness diminishing? Is it not increasing? The Buddha asks about you-if you have slight trouble, slight discomfort, slight sickness, if your distress is light, if you are cared for, strong, at ease, without self reproach and if you are living in touch with the supreme happiness.”*

Vimalakirti says, *“You asked me, Manjusri, whence comes my sickness; the sicknesses of the bodhisattvas arise from great compassion.”*

Manjusri asks from what the sickness comes and Vimalakirti says that a Bodhisattvas sickness comes from Compassion. He has already said it comes from the suffering of sentient beings but this is not the direct source. It is not the core and true source. He is only speaking of the karmic affiliation to sickness. The true source is that compassion which is in the heart, vowing that we have to save every person from suffering, from ego and from its ideas of good and bad with that dualistic thinking. Bodhisattvas vow to do anything possible to liberate people, living from this great compassion. Mumyo, blind behavior, intense attachment - these cause sentient beings' sickness. Because Bodhisattvas do not have these they have no reason to get sick but because they

love their children, all sentient beings, they get sick from their source compassion. This is their true nature. This great compassion fills each person, as if each is their only child and they want to resolve their pain and this is coming from their great compassion.

Buddhism is a religion of wisdom and this great wisdom will always bring forth compassion. This is in the same way that the great sun's light always gives warmth; there is no light without warmth. This then makes the earth warm and abundant. Emotion without wisdom will drown us. We all have this compassion to begin with. Yet wisdom without passion is not true compassion, it is cold. Wisdom always has compassion with it or it is not complete wisdom. Great wisdom and Great Love are not separate things, to truly know means to truly love.

It is said the Buddha saw the morning star and realized deep satori. The Buddha held a great doubt within and like those who had come before him, the ascetic teachers of the philosophy of knowing not knowing, he did six years of ascetic training as well. He dug deeply into his own life energy and doing that he became the state of mind of a clear blue sky or a deep water source, clear and bright. He became like a fire that has completely burned down to silent ash, free of any ego whatsoever. He became transparent and empty like a clear mirror. Serene and still in awareness, but taut to the fullest, present in that state of mind with not a single random thought. This pure awareness was what saw the morning star without any thinking and immediately that awareness was realized directly.

This was not that mind of not thinking anything that was pierced through. With the purity of mind of that moment the Buddha was feeling directly that he was shining. That morning star - at the same moment he realized that star he realized his clear true mind. He realized that mind which became one with the morning star, they matched perfectly to where he couldn't tell if he was the star or the star was him. That which perceived was the source of his awareness and it was to this that he awakened. After the six years of emptiness he realized the great radiance of all things and his truly Seeing Eye was opened.

He realized that all of the ten thousand things were his own life energy and that there is no separation between self and another, or between self and the whole universe. He realized the single Seeing Eye and this direct perception is the Buddha's Dharma. The truest wisdom was realized, that he and the world are one. He realized that there is not separation and from there we can love all beings with no distance between, and this is compassion.

It is said that from the Buddha Nature we forget our small self and love others. This is true compassion,

compassion that cannot help but love all beings. It is love that is the eternal existence, and what moves this world and all beings. Love is the greatest, all embracing power. To see the world as one being of self and world, this is wisdom. These two, compassion and wisdom, are the content of the Buddhas awakening and the central point of Buddhism.

The Buddha's enlightenment was an awakening to the truth that all beings are born with the very same clear mind, without exception. The Buddha awakened to this truly magnificent nature that is in each and every person. This true nature is equal in all people; this wisdom that is equal in all people is the essence of the truth that makes the Dharma.

Near Okayama there is the Seto Inland Sea, a quiet, enclosed sea, in which there is an island, called Nakashima. On this island is located Aisei-en, where people with Hansen's disease have a hospital. My master, Yamada Mumon, went there for fifty years continuously, in both spring and autumn every year. In those days 2000 people were admitted there and all those patients arrived before the discovery of Promine. Before Promine people were sent there from all parts of Japan when they were discovered to have Hansen's disease. After they began using Promine there was no more Hansen's bacteria to be found anywhere in Japan. Today it is no longer even considered to be a contagious disease, and has been taken off that list. It is now considered to be just like any other sickness.

Yet, the Hansen's sickness has been challenging underdeveloped societies and economically disadvantaged countries for many centuries, and was always a source of great fear. While it has been dropped from the list of contagious diseases today, in former times, it was considered a disease that could be passed by touch. If someone were to touch the skin of someone with Hansen's disease it was feared to be a very contagious.

This is a sickness with symptoms that are manifested externally in an extreme way, with fingertips falling off, ears and noses and lips and hands and legs falling off, eyes going blind and hair falling out. It manifests in such a way that you don't even want to look at the people suffering with the disease, they are so ugly. Even if the sickness is cured these side affects are still incurable. It is even said to be a karmic sickness and to be caused by sins of a past life. Hansen's disease was that kind of a disease and people who were brought to this hospital were never left.

They would never return to the outside alive. They all came to this island to die. One person who went there wrote a poem,

"My wife and child, having to separate from them, What could be more sad in this world?"

Today this Hansen's disease virus is no longer to be found anywhere in Japan. This poem was from the hospital in which Masako Ogawa worked. While he was still alive she had to separate from a most precious husband, and to leave behind a child who also had to separate from his loving parent. The patient is then taken into the hospital, a truly violent disease. If only this sickness could disappear from the face of the earth! This is the voice that speaks this poem.

In another poem it is written about how the police come when a person who has been pronounced sick with Hansen's disease is clearly proven to have the sickness and then they are led to the island. "It will spread to your wife and your children. It will cause terrible problems for all of your neighbors too. If you go to the island there are splendid doctors and everyone has the same illness so you needn't be ashamed. There are many things to do there so you won't be bored. Let's go to that island!"

Finally they convince them to go and the truck comes, holding on to the edge of the door of the truck, still resisting, crying "No! No! I don't want to leave my family and go off by myself. No! I don't want to throw away my family and go there and hide and be hidden! I don't want to go there! Let me die here." They resist and refuse and are forcefully comforted and convinced and finally they are brought to this island.

Everyone who comes here arrives in the pits of despair and every single person who comes here considers suicide at least once. They can never return to the house in which they were born. They can never go back to society. For their whole life they have to stay hidden on this island until they die. This is the decision they have been forced to make. It is as if they have been dropped into the deepest black dark valley.

People who visit to this island all make the same remarks, "What a wonderful beautiful island this is"; they all say this about this island. In the quiet Seto Inland Sea, it is a jewel, with its truly exceptional scenery and the ocean is so beautiful! The sandy beaches are so beautiful! The pine trees here are so beautiful! The trees are so interesting and it is so bright here, full of flowers blooming, fruits are growing and small birds are singing, what a wonderful place to be able to live and be cared for! Everyone who comes here is so fortunate. This is what people say when they come for a short sightseeing trip.

"We who have been gripped by this terrible illness and sent away to this island, how can we see the scenery here as beautiful? In the very darkest pit of despair and in the blackest valley of a lifetime, how

can we notice the scenery?" Everyone who comes here suffers in that way. But as one year, three years, five and ten years pass, reading various books and hearing peoples' stories, then telling oneself again and again and again that nothing can be done about this illness, finally one accepts it and becomes resigned.

Then the surroundings can come into focus, we notice the excellent doctors and fine hospital with its deeply respected experts who come to take care of the sick from morning till night. And those young nurses how about them? They wrap our wounds and wipe away our infected pus every day. Their parents are angry toward them and tell them not to work at this hospital, but they go against their parents' wishes, no matter what they have to work at that hospital. They feel so bad for the situation of the people there they have to do something; it is with this kind of passion that they come to the hospital.

"If you go there you will get the same sickness, no one will have you for a wife-and don't ever come home to this house again! We are cutting off everything with you."

But the nurses say it doesn't matter. We can't think only about our own happiness and turn our backs on this suffering. Young girls, the nurses all have an interest in a deeper way of being, cleaning the wounds, giving injections to the swollen elbow stumps, bathing the infected limbs, giving the patients' baths.

In the olden days we would have had to become beggars and live on a straw mat in front of a temple or shrine, we would have had no way to live but today thanks to the country we are provided with everything. We are given a place to live, food, and clothing - all of our needs are taken care of. We are missing nothing and then there are movies and dancing which we can do thanks to gifts from people outside of the island.

We may feel unnoticed by society but God and Buddha have remembered us! Thank you thank you! Then for the first time their inner eye opens and they can see, "What a beautiful island this is! What an exquisite ocean! What fine pine trees! What a pretty beach, what bright trees! And many patients can walk around the island freely and see which flowers are now blooming and the trees and the rocks. There is the plum tree and here the dandelions are just coming out! There was a violet out today and all of this comforts us. We thought it was a hell but it is a heaven and we are thankful to live here every day.

These are the words of the patients that are left behind. Bearing the terrible reality of everyday life, the reality that they have been given, somehow getting through each day, all of their wisdom feels

gone and they fall into hell. People in society see them and are fearful, they isolate them and are prejudiced toward them, thereby losing their wisdom. Yet right in society, there are people who think of them and how it would be so terrible to be sick like that. They cannot ignore their plight, even giving them their lives, the doctors and the nurses and people of great good will. From this kind of mind surges forth great love and one after another those manifestations of love naturally open the firmly closed doors of the patients.

The newly open patients realize their wisdom and feel the grace with which they have been blessed. While they may be rejected in society, yet they have so many blessings on the island that their wisdom is awakened too. They love the flowers and trees and stones there, as their minds open wider and wider.

As the Buddha has said, their original wisdom is awakened and then all things and all humans receive their great deep love. Vimalakirti who has awakened to the great Prajna Wisdom was all the more so right in the middle of society's pain, right along with the suffering confused people. He had the clear and deep vow that they must be helped and then naturally this great expression arises. He is sick with all of the sentient beings because he is not in a separate world but ailing with everyone and joining with their suffering.

Manjusri: "Householder, why is your house empty, why have you no servants?"

Vimalakirti: "Manjusri, all Buddha-fields are also empty."

Manjusri: "What makes them empty?"

Vimalakirti: "They are empty because of emptiness."

Manjusri: "What is 'empty' about emptiness?"

Manjusri went to visit Vimalakirti as the representative of the Buddha, asking about his condition. While telling him about the Buddha's heartfelt sympathy and concern, he asked about the source of the illness. Vimalakirti tells him that the source of his illness is sentient beings and the compassion that cares so much about them. The illness of sentient beings and that of Vimalakirti are not the slightest bit different, in essence they are one and the same. Sentient beings and Vimalakirti are not separate in their existence. The suffering of sentient beings and the suffering of the bodhisattva are one and the same suffering.

In this way he teaches the truth of the not-two. Then Manjusri looks around and there is nothing whatsoever in the room, in the four and one half tatami mat room there is only one bed. In the room there is not one piece of furniture or any thing, no servant nor attendant nor helper just one Vimalakirti. Manjusri asks, "*why is this room completely empty? Why is there no attendant? There*

is no thing and not one person and no one to care for you! Why is that?"

Vimalakirti answers him. *"In all of the Buddha fields there is only emptiness."*

Eisai Zenji says in his poem the Kozen Koku Kura,
Oh! Great all embracing Mind!

It is impossible to measure the height of the heavens, yet the Mind is above the heavens.

It is impossible to measure the thickness of the earth, yet the Mind is below the earth.

The sun and the moon shine with a great radiance yet the Mind is the source of that radiance.

Within the Mind, the four seasons open in their sequence,

Within the Mind the sun and the moon move.

Oh! Great all embracing Mind!

Eisai Zenji wrote it this way and if we look at this world through the eye of truth, this true eye, this eye of wisdom, then this world is within our huge Self.

Manjusri: "Householder, why is your house empty, why have you no servants?"

Vimalakirti: "Manjusri, all Buddha-fields are also empty."

Manjusri: "What makes them empty?"

Vimalakirti: "They are empty because of emptiness."

Manjusri: "What is 'empty' about emptiness?"

Indian philosophy says that in the center of our world there is one very tall mountain, Mt Sumeru. This is in the center and in each of the four directions there is a country. Our place is in the southern country, Embushu. In this country there is one sun and one moon. Today we think of our place as being in one galaxy. In the olden days one world of a sun and a moon was called a small chiliocosm. The Himalayas soaring in the North at that time may also have been considered the center of the chiliocosm, inspiring this philosophy. If there are one thousand of these small chiliocosms put together it is a middle chiliocosm. If there are one thousand of these middle chiliocosms put together then there is one great chiliocosm. If there are one thousand of these great chiliocosms put together then we have one thousand great chiliocosms. Three of these and it is three thousand great chiliocosms.

The three thousand worlds. This is also considered one Buddha Land, or Buddha field, in which there is one Buddha. When it is said that all of the worlds of all the Buddhas are empty, it comes from this. There are infinite Buddha Lands, One billion Buddha fields, a very far distance, to the west there is the Pure Land that is Amida's Buddha Land. If we were to send up one rocket into the universe, or get into a space shuttle, it would take many hundreds, many thousands of years to arrive there. This is not a country we can easily get to by travel, yet if we chant

Namu Amida Butsu (the name of Amida Buddha), it is said we can arrive there in one instant. This is a possibility because when our mind is empty, there is no time and distance there. If we put time and distance in our mind, we will be infinitely unable to be liberated. Because it is empty we can realize the merit in one chanting of the Buddha's name. "If we are deluded it takes ten million years, but if we realize satori then it is as close as our own body"

So if we are deluded even in ten million years we cannot reach it, we will never be liberated, but if we are enlightened it is right where we are. In this way Indian philosophy has a huge cosmology. Buddha fields are all empty.

Manjusri asks Vimalakirti, "What makes them empty?"

Vimalakirti: "They are empty because of emptiness."

Manjusri: "What is 'empty' about emptiness?"

"They are empty because they are empty. There is no need to explain and nothing else to be said but that." This is how Vimalakirti answered.

Then Manjusri asked, *"Why is emptiness empty?"*

About 350 years ago there was a great Zen Master named Bankei Zenji. He taught about Prajna Wisdom, that wisdom of emptiness is not something that the Buddha and Bodhidharma have made or invented. When people are born they all have this mind of wisdom, this originally pure mind that has no beginning and so it has no end. This is the world where all grasses trees and beings are one Dharma. It is a mind that is already realized and from the origin there is neither delusion nor any enlightenment. But, what is already there as enlightenment, we put a circumstance on it. If we say there is no such thing, we cut that away. If we say it is a Buddha then it is the Buddha perspective. If we say there are sentient beings then it is the sentient being perspective. The how shall we hold our Mind? Any way that we attempt to hold our Mind is all a lie. It is all lies and explanations and adjectives. If we put dualism on it, it becomes something else again. No name, no form, not "mu" and not "u", no word can cover it and that is why we can only use a word which includes emptiness or negating. So Buddha is said to be: one empty mind, empty of form, empty of mind moments, of no rank. To get rid of all definitions and ideas about it, the quality of emptiness is added to everything that is describing it. There has always been no way to say it, so it is called Mind. But if there had not been a word "Mind", there would never have been any way to say it. To praise nothing at all perfectly, this is how wonderfully the Heart Sutra is written, it says it all and covers it all. If we imagine there is some great Mind somewhere - that is already a delusion. If we look at it really closely and carefully we see that there is only that one word of emptiness, or void, with which it can be expressed."

In this kind way Bankei Zenji taught us, and this is exactly what Manjusri is asking, "Why is emptiness empty - emptiness is empty because it is." If we cross over into explanations, it comes out like this.

Manjusri: "Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?"

Vimalakirti: "Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness."

Manjusri: "Householder, where should emptiness be sought?"

Within dualism, to not be in dualism, to not be in good and bad, to not have random thinking about various things. Is it "u" or "mu" or good or bad? Do not compare and look at things in a relative way, instead to take away all of those limits and specifications. One has to go beyond all of human's ideas and knowledge, to go beyond all of that to the universe's great life energy and become one with it. Then for the first time we can say that it is without dualism and not caught in the relative. Then for the first time we can become that place that Rinzai is describing by saying,

Within dualism, to not be in dualism, to not be in good and bad, to not have random thinking about various things. Is it "u" or "mu" or good or bad? Not to compare and look at things in a relative way; instead take away all of those limits and specifications. One has to go beyond all human ideas and knowledge, go beyond all of that to the universe's great life energy and become one with it. Then for the first time we can say that it is without dualism and not caught in the relative. Then for the first time we can become that place that Rinzai is describing by saying, "The Dharma body is that clean pure light in one moment of mind, the Bliss body is the undifferentiated light in a moment of mind, and the Transformation body is the indiscriminating light in a moment of mind."

In our Mind when we do not think anything at all we become like a baby's open innocent mind, in fact we have that without ever losing it. If we understand that it is, in itself the Dharma body, we can see everything that we encounter as equal. We can see everything without dualism. This is Bliss body and that which sees each phenomena without any discrimination that the Transformation body.

This pure mind with no dualism or discrimination, if we actually know that as our true mind then everything we see and hear is pure and equal. All existing things are equal and pure. If we let go of mind, all is nothing, and there is nothing separated from no mind. All things are our mind and our mind is all existence. If we let go of all existence there is no purity and if we let go of all existence there is no such thing as impurity. If we separate from everything there is not mind without everything else. If we

separate from emptiness there is no existence and if we separate from existence there is no emptiness. All existence is empty and emptiness is all existence.

People who play the piano will play well for the first time when they can forget about their fingers. If they are always aware of their fingers and the notes and music and always aware of this and that, they cannot freely move their fingers. To forget them is to have them, and not have them. That is moving them in the best way; so to have them is to not have them.

Marathon runners have to forget about their feet or they cannot run well. If they start thinking about their feet they get injured or slow down. To have feet but to forget them - to have them is to not have them. When a person can forget their body completely they are most healthy. If we are always looking at ads for stomach problems our stomachs are probably bad. To forget our body is to have a body, while having one to not have one, is to have one.

Manjusri: "Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?"

Vimalakirti: "Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness."

Manjusri: "Householder, where should emptiness be sought?"

Vimalakirti: "Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions."

As Vimalakirti says, while we have fingers, if we are not discriminative in our perception of them, that is emptiness. To have a body but not be aware of it is emptiness. In all of our encounters, expressing and functioning without falling into discriminative thinking, this is emptiness. Vimalakirti in his four and one half tatami mat room with just one bed, with all of his things put outside, not putting things and people in there. Only this is one person's life there. This is our great life energy, as it is, with no conditions on it. This is life as life itself, surging forth and filling the whole universe. We are always trying to decorate and explain and that is which is trying to express something that is our big mistake. Vimalakirti took all of that away and, without any dualism, expressed emptiness.

In tea ceremony the four and one half tatami mat room is used for four or five guests but in the small four and one half mat room of Vimalakirti the 840000 Bodhisattvas all fit in. While this is physically impossible it is our wisdom that makes the impossible possible. The tearoom as well, although it is a room for four or five people, when one person after the next enters continually, we allow the next person and the next person in and more than 84000, or even infinite people can enter.

But, if one person holds on to their seat this doesn't work. If we give it to the next and the next person there is an endless and countless possibility for people

to enter there. This is Vimalakirti expressing human life's pure manifestation.

Manjusri then continues asking, since he still doesn't really get it, he asks if it can really be understood.

Manjusri: "Householder, where should emptiness be sought?"

Vimalakirti: "Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions."

Vimalakirti says being dualistic is also emptiness. It is said that humans are thinking legs. We cannot live without thinking anything at all. There is a collection of Master Takuan Zenji's letters to the feudal lord of Tajima; this book is called "The Unfettered Mind".

"If we are told to not be moved around in our mind and told to become empty minded and empty of any form, people can become insensitive and dull but it is not about this."

Here Vimalakirti is saying also that true emptiness is to not about imagining an idea of emptiness. If we say it is to have our ki in all directions, speaking for kendo, that means that we are not to not be caught on our hands nor on the hands of the opponent, to not be caught on the ken, (stick), of the opponent nor on our own ken. It means to not have our mind caught anywhere yet to have our mind in all the ten directions so we can move accordingly and freely. It is often said that flowing water does not stagnate and does not freeze. If our mind stays flowing like flowing water it stays healthy. If our thoughts and ideas are not stuck anywhere it is as if we have them while not having them, like water always springing forth. Then, to have them is to not have them and there discrimination is also emptiness - lively and dualistically aware. To this Vimalakirti says, "Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions."

In the time of the Buddha there were 62 varieties of religions and philosophies and since they all looked for the truth outside of oneself they were called those of the false paths. The Buddha disagreed with all of them. In this way the Buddha's teaching was of emptiness. Empty mindedness and the void, dualism and emptiness, here we have a relative and dualistic mind still being held on to, not yet dropped.

Next Manjusri asks, "*Householder, where should emptiness be sought?*" Vimalakirti answers "*Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.*"

In this way, if we look at it from the point of view of Manjusri it was a response beyond his imagination.

In the olden days there was a priest named Mujaku. He climbed a sacred mountain because he wanted to meet Manjusri. Mujaku previously had gone to the south for pilgrimage and since he wanted to meet a living Manjusri he had come to this mountain Godaisan but he didn't meet anyone like that. When he met someone on the mountain he was glad to ask his help and when he told him his purpose for traveling, the man took him to a certain temple. There he was given a kind of cup that was a very unusual cup for those times, with a drink that he had never had before, so delicious and so wonderful. As the evening set in he looked up at the sky and an old person appeared.

This koan then began.

He was asked, "Where are you from?"

"I have come from the south?"

"How is the Buddhism in the south?"

"Well, they are mainly observing some precepts and that is about all."

Contradictory to what you would expect, Mujaku then asked,

"There are some places with 300 or 500 monks training, but at this temple what kind of Buddhism is being taught? What is the training like here?"

"Snakes and dragons are all mixed up together, sand and gold are all combined."

"Is that so, that is strange!"

"How many are there?"

"There are 33 before, and at the end, 33."

This was an impossible to comprehend answer.

He was told he could not stay overnight and when he gave his thanks and departed a young child went with him to show him the path.

"That elder person said, 'before 33 and after 33' - how many are there?"

The young child said, "Priest!"

"Yes!"

"How many are there?"

As he heard this he realized this was not your regular child.

"What temple is this?"

And as the child pointed to the gate, Mujaku turned his head and there was no more child, no temple nor any old person.

"That old person was probably Manjusri" he thought, and it is written that he stayed at Mt Godai for a long time and did training.

This mondo is found in the Blue Cliff Records as a koan [#35], Manjusri is the manifestation of Prajna wisdom, the manifestation of emptiness. This is a koan between Mujaku, who represents the awareness of differences and Manjusri who is the manifestation of our basic true wisdom and

emptiness. It is a discussion between these two. To “observe the precepts”, and “to have 300 or 500”, these are expressions of the world of differences. But the “Snakes and dragons are all mixed up together, sand and gold are all combined.” these are expressions of all of the worlds of emptiness beyond walls, the breaking down of all barriers. “33 before and 33 after” is where numbers cannot reach, the wisdom beyond numbers, the basic Prajna wisdom. These meet as these two meet, the 62 convictions are the same as this. But in living, both this wisdom of differences and basic wisdom are necessary. To understand good and bad, this and that, to make these clear and to observe the truth and peace, is the right way to do things. But these ideas about good and bad, and right and wrong also have to be forgotten sometimes so we can meet in that place as well.

In my case also, although I am at the physical age of 62, while it is true that I am that age, in my life I don't stay aware of that age. Forgetting myself and teaching all of the students here, that is my truth. While teaching them to go beyond mental understanding, there are those who go deep quickly and those who are shallow still, new and old timers, but all together they work and dig into the world of the Buddha. This is the world of the Buddha's teaching: Manjusri: *“Householder, where should emptiness be sought?”* Vimalakirti: *“Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.”* We find it within differentiation. There is no equality outside of differentiation. People are all mixed up together and to be aware of this is very important. Amida Nyorai said all sentient beings, old people, young people, splendid people, dangerous people, there is no difference in them, all the people mixed up together are the world of emptiness, just as God bestows rain on both the good and the evil.

Manjusri: “Householder, where should emptiness be sought?”

Vimalakirti: “Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.”

Manjusri: “Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?”

Vimalakirti: “They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathagathas.”

Once a monk asked Master Joshu, “All the ten thousand things return to the One, where does the One return to?”

All existence in this whole world returns to the absolute One, but to where does this One return? Everything is Amida Butsu's Oneness and to this it all returns, to the true oneness of the Dharma Ocean. If we say it in a Zen way, all of the ten thousand things are returning to the one Mind. Today's science would say all things return to energy. Up to this point, if you

open your mouth you will understand it without fail. Anyone can say this and does, so it seems easy to understand. But really, where, after all, is this One that it returns to? This monk was seeking seriously and to this degree.

It is all too possible that we can end up like Daito Kokushi who said that for thirty years he was stuck in a wild fox's cave. All things return to this One but if we sit down on that One or on that mu and don't have any way of moving on, that is like all bus drivers will stop at just one stop. That is nihilistic death and destruction. All things return to the One, where is that one? If we do a little zazen we know how all things return to One, but where does that one go? We have to find out where that one goes or we will be turning our backs on society. This monk's question is sharp and cannot be answered lightly.

Joshu answered this question, “When I was in Seishu I had a jacket made and it used three pounds of flax.” Seishu was Joshu's home country. He said that he had gone to his home country and had a jacket made and it was only 700 grams, very light and warm. Can it be said that Master Joshu answered honestly or that he did not answer honestly? There almost seems to be no connection between the question and the answer.

It is said that our mind is our action, that Buddha Nature is our functioning. As Master Rinzai put it, when it meets our eyes it is seeing, when it meets our ears it is hearing, when it meets our mouth it is tasting, when it meets our hands it becomes carrying and when it meets our feet it becomes walking.” To work brightly and swiftly is our true mind and our original mind is empty and void, but if we just stop there we are destroyed. If all of the things return to one if it is only a “one” of intellectual understanding, it doesn't work. To die completely is the way of Zen and is this realization. Then that one that all returns to is realized. That is the one that is many, and the many that is one, and this has to be experienced not just explained with words.

Of course if all people return to God it has to be an experience of that God not just an idea. If all things return to One it has to be that actual One, the Buddha nature. If all returns to energy, if all phenomena return to energy and are born and transform and return, this is also an expression of it. If all things return to the one, it has to be our everyday activity and not just a “one” in our imagination.

All people are for One, One is for all people. This way of looking at it is the truth of society. It has to be received as that. God and Buddha or some absolute is not what we return to, but all people are one person and one person is all people and in each person an absolute worth is realized and found. This is where

the truth of Buddhism is found. In this person there is an absolute worth and path, this is Zen.

Joshu said, to this monk who asked about all things returning to One, that of course One returns to all things. He didn't ignore that but he did not sit down on it either. Of course all things returning to the One is his experience and he also knew that it was what gives life to all things in our everyday world, this ONE, beyond all explanations. This is the point of Joshu.

"I was in Seishu and had a jacket made, it took 3 lbs of flax." Manjusri: *"Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?"* Vimalakirti: *"They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathagathas."* Joshu is not into that kind of an explanation but rather into the actuality of the question. "I was in Seishu and had a jacket made, warm and light it only took 3 lbs of flax."

The truth of that One is the truth of all things. This is what gives radiance to our every day life and this is also the truth of Joshu. All explanations and words and intellectualisation are thrown away and there is Zen's vivid living state of mind. This clear and full state of mind is the state of mind of Joshu.

Manjusri: "Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?"

Vimalakirti: "They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathagathas."

Manjusri: "Where should the liberation of the Tathagathas be sought?"

Vimalakirti: "It should be sought in the prime mental activity of all living beings. Manjusri, you ask me why I am without servants, but all Maras and opponents are my servants. Why? The Maras advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The heterodox opponents advocate convictions, and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all Maras and opponents are my servants."

In this world all of the devil and the heretic, these are my attendants, so I don't need a particular attendant. This is Vimalakirti. The true emptiness is expressed in this, to be the teacher of all the heretical ways is how a true teacher has to be, to truly express emptiness. *"Manjusri, you ask me why I am without servants, but all Maras and opponents are my servants. Why? The Maras advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The heterodox opponents advocate convictions, and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all Maras and opponents are my servants."*

Vimalakirti earlier in the story had said to Subhuti that he should not teach people to be caught on Buddhism. He said that to not be caught on anything at all is Buddhism. If the teacher goes to hell, will you go to hell with him? Do you have that much freedom

and clear seeing? If not, you cannot say you know "mu". It cannot be some special way of seeing or being caught on an idea about a heretical view. It is empty, so it has to be free from everything, like that lotus which blooms in the mud with nothing sticking to it, not a single drop of mud. This is where true emptiness is, not found in some special idea of a state of mind.

While dwelling right in the very midst of devils and heretics to not be colored by them, and then the devils and the heretics are clarified of themselves. If we stay away from them and are afraid of them, then that is being caught on our small mind and not the true Mahayana way. To not even be afraid of devils and heretics is how Vimalakirti has already taught this.

Once he went to see Gisei Bodhisattva when a devil had taken on the form of the heavenly god Taishaku and appeared there. Gisei Bodhisattva's mind was confused by this. Vimalakirti arrived and said that he should not think that the apparition is the heavenly god Taishoku but know that it is the devil. This devil wants to bring 10 000 lovely young girls who will do everything for you. They will clean and take care of all of your personal needs; Gisei Bodhisattva was astounded when Vimalakirti told him. Vimalakirti said to the form of the heavenly god Taishoku that he, Vimalakirti, would receive all of the thousands of girls and the devil was so afraid he couldn't even run away. Vimalakirti took all the girls and taught them well and guided them and helped them understand the true way. They didn't want to go back to the place of the devil because their minds became so clear. This is the actual power of Vimalakirti. Vimalakirti has them all around so he needs no attendant; all of the existence in the whole world is his attendant.

Concerning all of the dying and living in the whole world, those who look for pleasure and then drown in that pleasure, or those who seduce others, are called devils if they are considered not able to be liberated. This is not the way of a Bodhisattva. The heretics seek many ways of seeing and get drowned in that, but Bodhisattvas, even if there are many ways of seeing differently, they don't drown. Life and death's form are also nirvana; this is the true way of life of the Bodhisattva. For Vimalakirti there is no dying nor is he limiting himself to a nirvana. He is free in the not-two.

The mondo between them continues, *"What is your sickness like?"* Manjusri asks him and to this Vimalakirti answers, *"There is no form and it is invisible."*

His own sickness has no form. This means that his illness is empty and that is because it is the sickness of all beings. It has no actual substance nor form to it. It is not an actual sickness because there is not any real sickness from the origin.

As Master Rinzai says, "In this five foot lump of red flesh there is a true person of no rank always coming in and out of the orifices. If you haven't seen it yet, see it now!"

Our state of mind is not separated from our body, yet while it is together with it, it also goes beyond it. That is where we have a huge great mind that is not limited by our physical body. We must awaken to this great huge mind.

"The true dharma has no form yet it extends in all ten directions." The rule of all and everything, the true mind, has not one single thing from the origin. Our true nature also is that mind in which there is not a single thing, and when we realize that, we can become the flowers, the moon, the birds, everything that is manifested is the manifestation of our mind. It transforms into everything, but if we are caught on our ego we cannot know this freedom. The sickness of all sentient beings is my sickness because beings get caught on a body and mind, the sentient beings get sick but for Vimalakirti there is not any limit on his mind and his true state of mind is one with that of all beings and this is from his deep compassion. *"The true dharma has no form yet it extends in all the ten directions."*

"In all of the three worlds, all of the people are my children, in all of the three realms, everywhere is my home." When we see all of every sentient being our compassion becomes that illness, this is why it has no form.

For those who do not awaken to that true mind, and for those who do, that form of sickness is very different. "It is immaterial and invisible."

Vimalakirti's illness is a sickness that is from all sentient beings sickness. It is not because his stomach is sick or intestines or physical body hurts, it is not of that variety of ailment. A doctor can cure some parts of our physical sickness, but even if they can do that, they cannot cure Vimalakirti's illness. Monju asks again "Is the sickness one with your body-mind?"

Is your body feeling bad or is it from your state of mind? Which is it? Vimalakirti says that it is not of his body nor is it of his mind.

The idea of thinking of them as separate is already a division in awareness, a mistake. The body and mind are not two, our body and our mind being together is our truth. When we try to think of this in our head it has no resolution. By moving our body and using it, only then can we understand it. The 6th Patriarch says "From the origin there is no thing, where can dust alight?" That which is from the origin empty, that where there is no small self, if we can realize that directly, it is enlightenment.

When the Buddha was 35 he realized satori and from that time on he turned the Dharma wheel and many people were enlightened. Finally he entered Nirvana under the great tree yet he never thought that he was born or died or taught or that he was about to die by the river, because there was nothing in his mind at all. For all of those years it just moved his body, no death, nor birth, just this way of seeing things. The body is not sick nor is just his mind sick, the body and mind as one whole that forgets the body and forgets the thinking and moves as one.

Next Manjusri continues the questioning *"Householder, which of the four main elements is disturbed: earth, water, fire, or air?"* Vimalakirti: *"Manjusri, I am sick only because the elements of living beings are disturbed by sicknesses."*

"No elements, no color or form, not seeking birth nor death and entering so many different worlds but because all is empty nothing is sought." It is like a mirror that reflects everything but nothing is left in that mirror, everything is always changing in the mirror but nothing ever remains.

These elements are said to make up the universe in philosophy and these are also the four elements that are said to make up the body. The bones are made of earth, the blood and lymph are the element of water, our body heat is fire and our breath is air. In this way the basic elements make us up and Manjusri asks where is the problem? Putting it simply it is as if he is asking if his knees are bad or blood is bad or if he has an imbalance in his temperature.

Vimalakirti answered that each of those has no problem but I am sick because of the disharmony of all sentient beings. The sickness is not from those elements. It cannot be separated from them but the balance within them is broken down so there is sickness. Sickness also comes from karmic affiliation with sickness, which may ripen, or not. For example, there is always a cold virus potential in our body but usually if we are doing well then it does not express itself as a cold, but if we get rundown and the conditions are severe, the balance breaks down and the virus brings forth the symptoms of a cold. We then become unable to deal with severe temperatures and appear to have a cold. There is no real sickness but there is a lack of balance, this is how Vimalakirti answers.

And Rinzai says, "If you have a moment of doubt, that is being moved around by the earth element. If we get caught on feelings and confused emotionally that is being moved around by the water element." This is so because these four elements that make up our subjective self are all like phantoms. All things are made up of karmic affiliation and when that karmic affiliation is no longer happening they then

separate. This is water when we get angry, and when furious it is fire and if we get fuzzy because of happiness it is the wind element. If we see it this way our mind's true base is seen clearly, we are not moved around by the elements or the subjective mind, rather we use them freely. This is what Rinzai is pointing out.

That which is hearing this talk is something with no form nor substance and this is what moves and uses this body. That which is not caught on this body is

truly free. Even birth and death - if we are not caught on those we are truly free. If we see sickness from here, then when we have a sickness our wisdom can deepen. It is better to not be sick, but if we do get sick, then not to get caught on it, not to be afraid of it, instead realize it clearly and let it bring forth our wisdom.

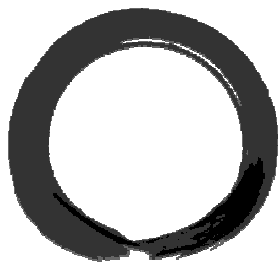
Sogenji Sesshin Schedule 2002

July	4-10	Osesshin	Sept	7-11	Kosesshin	Nov	3-7	Kosesshin
	15-21	Kosesshin		16-20	Kosesshin		13-19	Osesshin
	26-30	Kosesshin		24-30	Osesshin		24-28	Kosesshin
Aug	6-10	Kosesshin	Oct	5-11	Kosesshin	Dec	4-10	Rohatsu
	17-23	Kosesshin		16-22	Osesshin		15-21	Osesshin
	28-9/3	Kosesshin		25-29	Kosesshin		24-28	Kosesshin

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