

TWO STORIES ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

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

Source: <http://www.avani-mehta.com/2008/07/11/is-your-cup-empty-a-zen-koan>

Some elders once came to Abbot Anthony, and there was with them also Abbot Joseph. Wishing to test them, Abbot Anthony brought the conversation around to the Holy Scriptures. And he began from the youngest to ask them the meaning of this or that text.

Each one replied as best he could, but Abbot Anthony said to them: You have not got it yet.

After them all he asked Abbot Joseph: What about you? What do you say this text means? Abbot Joseph replied: I know not!

Then Abbot Anthony said: Truly Abbot Joseph alone has found the way, for he replies that he knows not.

Source: Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century* (New York: New Directions, 1960), 52.

Questions for discussion:

1. How are these stories similar?
2. How are they different?
3. How do these stories help you think about your own teaching?