

## Shinji Shobogenzo Book 3, Case 49.

Written by News Administrator  
Tuesday, 30 July 2013 17:16 -

---

### Koan Commentaries

Master Shakkyo Ezo asked Master Seido Chizo: *Do you know how to grasp space or not?*

Master Seido said: *I know how to grasp space.*

Master Shakkyo said: *How do you grasp it?*

Master Seido made a gesture of grasping the air with his hand.

Master Shakkyo said: *You don't know how to grasp space!*

## Shinji Shobogenzo Book 3, Case 49.

Written by News Administrator  
Tuesday, 30 July 2013 17:16 -

---

Master Seido said: *Elder brother monk. □ How do you do it?*

Master Shakkyo grasped Master Seido's nose and pulled it.

Master Seido was hurt and cried out in a loud voice: *It is very rude to pull someone else's nose.*  
□ *However I have become free of all things and matter at once.*

Master Shakkyo said: *You should grasp space directly like this.*

### Commentary by Nishijima

Buddhism has a clear philosophy, and Buddhists often discuss philosophical matters. In this story the two masters discussed space. To grasp space, Master Seido grasped the air with this hand.

This behavior suggests that space is not only a concept, but real. To grasp space, our action should also be real. Master Shakkyo's method was even more direct; he pulled Master Seido's nose. And on becoming the object of this violent act, Master Seido realized what space is.

This story also teaches that Buddhist theory is not just concept; it points to reality here and now.

### **Commentary by John Fraser**

The immediate meaning of the story appears to be that Seido has an intellectual understanding of space, unrelated to his actual experience. Shakkyo's vigorous action brings him back.

We can also see this as being about emptiness. The 'ku' in 'koku' [space] is the same 'ku' [emptiness] as we encounter in the heart Sutra. A point is being made about space and emptiness; their relationship, and a world re-envisioned by that relationship.

We carelessly imagine the space between us as dead space; the permanently dead space between the precariously alive things. But if both 'space' and 'things' are empty, then the distinction disappears, and the whole fabric of the world becomes dynamically alive. And so, there is no 'space'. We can call this Indra's Net, or Interdependence, or the body of the Buddha. But if we do, we should expect to get our nose pulled.

## Shinji Shobogenzo Book 3, Case 49.

Written by News Administrator  
Tuesday, 30 July 2013 17:16 -

---