

## Open Access: 3 koans

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Appeared first 2011-02-02 at <http://jasonpriem.org/2011/02/open-access-3-koans/>.  
Currently (2015-07-18) available at <http://jasonpriem.org/blog/>

### 1.

The teacher was sitting one day beneath a cherry tree, regarding the birds as they ate its fruit. A student approached the teacher and spoke: “Master, I am afraid that if [I make my research notes open](#), others will steal my good ideas.”

Instead of answering the student, the master turned and cursed the cherry tree: “You foolish tree! You labor to produce sweet cherries, only to have them stolen by these birds!”

The student was surprised at his teacher’s lack of wisdom, and rose to correct him: “But Master, surely you see that in taking the cherries, the birds also spread the tree’s seeds!”

At that moment the student was enlightened.

### 2.

Once, a student travelled a long way to speak with the teacher. “Teacher,” the student said, “I have heard your teachings and made all I create freely accessible to all. What is more, I have given it a [non-commercial license](#), to ensure it will not be abused by evil, for-profit companies.”

The teacher responded, “go to the well in the middle of this town, draw out a cup of water, and bring it back here.” The student was surprised at this request, but followed the teacher’s instructions.

When the student returned, the teacher asked, “while you were waiting to draw water, what did you see?”

The student replied, “I saw a farmer getting water to give his livestock, a baker getting water to make bread, and a shopkeeper getting water to wash her windows. All three were prosperous and happy.”

“Very good,” said the teacher. “Now, taste the water. Does it slake your thirst, or not?” The student tasted the water, and was enlightened.

### 3.

Once two students were in the midst of an argument as they sat down to eat with the teacher.

One student said, “I believe that true openness means [copyleft](#): we must require anyone using our work to make it it freely available in turn.” The second student disagreed, saying, “No, openness is about making things easy to share and reuse; we should embrace the [least restrictive licenses available](#).”

Before the argument could continue, the teacher interrupted. “Students,” the teacher asked, “you see this pot of good food in front of us. Before we eat, I am curious: should it be called soup, or stew?”

“Master, it is stew,” answered the first student. “No,” retorted the second, “this is too thin; it is soup.” The master said nothing, so the students continued to argue over this; neither wanted to admit to being wrong in front of the teacher.

After some time, the first student turned and said, “Master, I do not think we can agree on this matter. Soup or stew, it is food, and we are all very hungry; may we at least serve the food and eat, that we may argue with our bellies full?”

Upon saying this, the student was enlightened.