

# Great Doubt: Getting Stuck & Breaking Through The Real Koan

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*Raising my head to look about,* 舉頭看見日初圓  
*I saw that the sun has always been round.*  
*...And ever since then have been joyful.* ...直至如今常快活  
(Luohan [Lo-han/Rakan 羅漢; c.866-928] ZD 247-48 rev.)

*Ever since seeing peach blossoms,* 自從一見桃花後、  
*I have never doubted again.* 直至如今更不疑。  
(Lingyun [Ling-yün/Reiun 靈雲; 9<sup>th</sup> c.] EV 6-7 rev.)

*Ever since being kicked by master Ma[zu],* 自從一喫馬師踢、  
*I have not stopped laughing!* 直至如今笑不休。  
(See SB 77; 馬錄 83)

Where do such statements come from? How are they possible? This retreat will be a chance for you to discover where – in yourself – such statements arise. And why they are not only possible but necessary.

During the retreat I will present a short text from one of the leading Chinese masters of the Ming Dynasty known as Boshan [Po-shan/Hakusan 博山; 1575-1630]: *Exhortations for Those Unable to Arouse the Doubt*.

Doubt? Like other religions, Buddhism encourages faith, trust. Doubt is usually considered a defilement or poison, along with greed, hatred, ignorance, and pride. Indeed, such doubt is to be avoided: doubt as mere skepticism, a lack of trust, or a hesitant attitude that keeps you from entering the Way.

That is nothing like the Doubt spoken of in Zen Buddhism. There is good reason it is called **Great** Doubt. In an introductory section to his text, Boshan briefly describes the barrier (also called the great matter) of life-and-death, the Doubt [疑情; literally “doubt sensation”] that arises from it, how this fundamental religious question differs from ordinary doubt and skepticism, and its final congealing into the Doubt Block[疑團] or Great Doubt[大疑]:

In Zen practice, the essential point is to arouse Doubt. What is this Doubt? For example, when you are born, where do you come from? You cannot help but remain in doubt about this. When you die, where do you go? Again, you cannot help but remain in doubt. Since you cannot pierce this barrier of life-and-death, suddenly the Doubt will coalesce right before your eyes. Try to put it down, you cannot; try to push it away, you cannot. Eventually this Doubt Block will be broken through and you’ll realize what a worthless notion is life-and-death – ha! As the old worthies said: “Great Doubt, Great Awakening; small doubt, small awakening; no doubt, no awakening.”

做工夫。貴在起疑情。何謂疑情。如生不知何來。不得不疑來處。死不知何去。不得不疑去處。生死關竅不破。則疑情頓發。結在眉睫上。放亦不下。趁亦不去。忽朝樸破疑團。生死二字是甚麼閑家具。噫。古德云。大疑大悟。小疑小悟。不疑不悟。 [X 63, 756a]

Far from a lack of trust or faith, Great Doubt can only arise **from** Great Trust. Great Trust grounds and supports us; Great

Doubt keeps us on the path, leads us all the way through. Great Trust is the conviction, based on experience, that there is a way; Great Doubt provides the fuel to go all the way: “Fully trust, you’ll fully doubt; fully doubt, you’ll fully Awaken.” [信有十分、疑有十分。疑有十分、悟有十分。ZKS 45; T 48, 1099a; cf. MK 36] This doubt is an intense wonder, a healthy curiosity that opens us. Is it not fear – a lack of trust, which is a denial of our doubt – that blinds and binds us?

But why focus on doubt – isn’t Great Trust alone enough? Yes, it is! All we need do is trust **completely**. Then, **whatever** we encounter, there can be no doubt, no hesitation. Now, who here has this kind of trust? Anyone?

You have just answered your own question. Great Trust is indeed enough. Yet, as Boshan said and you just confirmed, doubt cannot be avoided. For your very self is split, within and without. To put it bluntly, you don’t simply **have** this split; you **are** this split. Self comes into being split: with faith – and with doubt. **See your self**: right here, the basis of Buddhism is discovered under your feet.

Unlike ordinary doubt, which can cause wavering and a loss of focus, Great Doubt solidifies and gathers focus. The Chinese Zen layman Suan [素菴; late 13<sup>th</sup> c.]:

Nowadays, those who devote themselves to Zen practice are few. Once a koan is taken up, [most people] find their minds trapped by the twin demons of torpor and scattering. They don’t realize that Doubt vanquishes [falling into] torpor and [mental]

scattering. If Trust is firm, Doubt will be firm; once Doubt is firm, torpor and scattering will naturally vanish.

近來篤志參禪者少。纔參箇話頭、便被昏散二魔纏縛、不知昏散與疑情正相對治。信心重則疑情必重。疑情重則昏散自無。

[ZKS 60; T 48, 1099c; cf. MK 43-44]

The lecture title “Great Doubt: Getting Stuck & Breaking Through The Real Koan” refers to arousing this Great Doubt and having it resolved, once and for all. Whether such language is used or not, this can be considered the foundation, the heart, of Zen practice, and the unique – the distinctive and defining – character of Zen Buddhism. As Boshan declared: “In Zen practice, the essential point is to arouse Doubt.” As we will see, this is true of both Rinzai and Sôtô Zen.

In a word, our actual doubt, this intense wonder and healthy curiosity, becomes the way through. Rather than denying it, the Zen Buddhist approach is: “So, you have doubt? Then doubt away – take that doubt all the way!” This is consummate Great Trust at work. What else do you need? Going through your own Great Doubt is the way to really put it to rest, once and for all.

Perhaps Great Doubt can be considered an essential element of any religious practice – without it, why practice? It’s clearly central to Buddhism: look at the life of Gotama (Skt.: Gautama) Buddha, his great renunciation or leaving home, his struggle and Awakening. Through it all, his quest to resolve it is unmistakable.

Monk: Zen masters since of old have said that Great Awakening proceeds from Great Doubt [literally “At the bottom of Great Doubt lies Great Awakening”大疑の下に大悟あり]. You don’t use this Great Doubt in your teaching. Why?

Bankei: Long ago, when Nanyue went to the sixth patriarch and was asked, “What is it that’s just come?” he was totally bewildered. His Doubt about it lasted for eight long years. Finally he was able to respond, “Whatever I say would miss the mark.” Now that’s really Great Doubt and Great Awakening!

Suppose you lost your only surplice, the one you were given when you became a monk, and you were unable to find it no matter how hard you looked. You’d search and search without letup. You’d be unable to stop searching for even an instant. That would be real doubt!

People nowadays say they need to have doubt because people in the past did. So they cultivate a doubt. But that’s merely an imitation of a doubt, not a real one, so the day never comes when they arrive at a real resolution. It’s as if you were to go off looking for something you hadn’t really lost, pretending you had. [*Unborn* 129-30 rev.; 盤珪 137]

Japanese Zen master Bankei[盤珪 1622-93] is not criticizing Great Doubt – he himself was spurred on by it since childhood. He **is** criticizing unnatural, forced, contrived, made-up doubt based on someone else’s words or experience. Bankei is right.

Bankei mentions the story of Nanyue’s [Nan-yüeh/Nangaku 南嶽; 677-744] encounter with the sixth patriarch of Chinese

Zen. (Nanyue is pivotal in Zen Buddhism as a disciple of the sixth patriarch and as the teacher of Mazu [Ma-tsu/Baso 馬祖; 709-788].) When asked where he had come from, Nanyue responded: “From Mount Song.” Then the sixth patriarch challenged: “What is it that’s just come?”[什麼物恁麼來] This served as the catalyst for Nanyue’s Great Doubt. [See *EV* 62]

Once you recognize this great matter of life-and-death under your own feet, Great Doubt is not far behind. Otherwise, Zen practice stagnates and various problems arise. Although formally sitting in meditation, minds go round and round the same old circles, or become attached to states of stillness, clarity, and so on. It has always been so. It was so 300 or 400 years ago in China and Japan: as we will see, Boshan described it in his work *Exhortations for Those Unable to Arouse the Doubt*, as did Bankei, and many others. Failure to realize one’s own Great Doubt continues today in Zen groups around the world. I trust you see the significance of our theme, and will forgive me for stubbornly focusing on it. It is **just what is needed**.

What is this Great Doubt? First of all, as Bankei just made clear, it’s not something you have to create, think up – or be given. Great Doubt is the most natural thing in this world.

Frankly, I wonder how you avoid it. Stop running from it and it’s manifest; open your eye and it can’t be avoided, as Boshan suggested. At first, it may feel like a bowling ball in the pit of your stomach.

In the beginning I quoted a Zen monk who sang in his

enlightenment poem of “*Raising my head to look about, I saw that the sun has always been round. ...And ever since then have been joyful.*” Earlier in that very poem he stated clearly where he was before Awakening:

*The Doubt Block within me  
like a large wicker basket.*

心裏癡[疑]團若栲栳

Great Doubt can arise anytime, anywhere – if we let it: “*I just don’t know what to do with myself.*” Dionne Warwick and Dusty Springfield sang this Burt Bacharach-Hal David hit when I was growing up in the early 1960s. You know how to do all kinds of things, don’t you? **Do you know what to do with your self?**

What drives some to work themselves to the bone, while others try and shirk as much work as possible? What drives some to seek more and more material comfort, while others are driven to give up all they have? What drives some into relationships that they then destroy, while others refuse to have real relationships at all? Could any of this be a reaction to that doubt, or perhaps a desperate escape from it? What is that boundless quandary that wells up in all of us on occasion, despite – or in light of – our apparent firm grasp of our self and our situation? Always just out of reach, yet never far away. What if we no longer push it away but instead embrace it with an open heart and mind?

There are as many entrances to Great Doubt as there are

people. Simply inquire into what's under your own feet, at the heart of it all. What's there? Realizing this is what zazen meditation is all about. What drives us to love others – yet keeps us separate from them, keeps us from loving fully? Who is this one that comes to life precariously poised between life-and-death? Here is the great matter of life-and-death, the only real koan there is.

More concretely: this doubt might first arise as a kind of intuition. It comes down to the fact that **I don't know** – who I am, where I come from, what is real, and so on.

Or it may first arise as a deep-seated sensation, emotion or feeling. It comes down to feeling **I'm not at peace**, I cannot come fully to rest with myself or with others; something's not right.

Or it may first arise as a problem of will or volition. I sense that no matter what, **I can't seem to get free**, as if I'm banging up against the wall of myself. For example, however much I try to do what is good and right, I fail.

However it may first arise, it's essential to properly direct and focus the doubt. Otherwise the doubt may be clear and solidify for a while, but then it fades again into the background. It remains inconclusive, indecisive. It will never be fully resolved that way. It needs to come to its own end, its own conclusion. This is the function of a real koan, and the value of working with authentic guides who have gone through it themselves.

Zen masters such as Dahui [Ta-hui/Daie 大慧; 1089-1163],

who championed sustained koan introspection or koan inquiry to arouse Great Doubt, speak of “The thousand doubts, the ten thousand doubts – just One [Great] Doubt.”[千疑万疑只是一疑] Such statements are easy to misunderstand. From the outside, it may sound like taking that wicker basket and filling it with all of your doubts. You will never arrive at the Great Doubt that way. The direction is into the source of your actual doubt, rather than out to an endless increase or proliferation of possible doubts. There is nothing more concrete and immediate, more pressing and urgent, more total and all encompassing than this Great Doubt. Eventually you are the Great Doubt, and the Great Doubt is you. In this light, our ordinary doubts are quite abstract, aren't they?

In sustained practice allow yourself to settle into this Doubt, this **genuine hunger**, rather than escaping into false hungers and phony satisfactions. If it first arises as a kind of intuition – that you do not know – then inquire with your whole being: Who is it? What is it? The Hindu sage Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) used “Who am I?” To return to Boshan: who comes into being at birth, who dies at death? Better yet: right now who is reading this? Who is actually behind it all? Unless that's clear, nothing is clear, is it? For Bankei, this question naturally arose from childhood in terms of what, where, is my intrinsic, bright virtue[明德]? The sixth patriarch challenged with the question: “What is it that's just come?” In more traditional Zen terms, “What is your original face?” Or “All things return to one; where does this one return to?”

Whatever form it takes, the point is for the question to come to encompass all – beginning with oneself.

If it first arises more as a feeling – that you are not at peace – then inquire directly into who it is that is not at peace. This challenge was the beginning of the Zen tradition in China. (See *Barrier*, case 41) Another way of expressing it: “How can I avoid cold and heat?” As a koan, the question is not just about coolness and warmth, but rather the entire dualistic complex that self is trapped in. Another way of expressing it: “I am so poor. Master, please enrich me.” The questioner was not begging for material wealth – he was a homeless monk. (These last two questions, by the way, were asked of the co-founders of the Sôtô Zen tradition. Their superb answers continue inspiring us to this day.)

If it first arises more as a problem of will, see into Shitou’s [Shih-t’ou/Sekitô 石頭; 700-791] challenge: “As you are will not do; not as you are will not do. Either way, nothing will do. Now what?” [恁麼也不得。不恁麼也不得。恁麼不恁麼總不得。子作麼生。 Cf. 馬錄 107-08; X 69, 5a; SB 81] In more traditional Zen terms, “Both speech and silence are relative; how can we be free?” Again, the question must come to include the whole dualistic complex that self is, not just the matter of speech or silence. More simply, see into the question: “Right here and now, what is lacking?”

Don’t have time for such Doubt? How much of your life – and your practice – is spent avoiding, denying it? Genuine Zen practice naturally awakens, fosters, encourages this Doubt

and helps you pour yourself completely into it so that it can be truly resolved once and for all. Nothing strange or unnatural. Look and see: after all, Great Doubt is what self really is. **Not** inquiring into this is what is really strange and unnatural, isn't it? Thus your lingering discontent, your hunger that cannot be assuaged no matter how many relationships you go into and out of. Thus your misplaced pride about how many years you've sat zazen or how many koans you've passed. This Doubt is the precious gift each one of us was given upon entering the world. Unwrap it and see your self!

Great Doubt cannot be an object of awareness; it is much more real and immediate than that. As a mere object of awareness, it degenerates into endless speculative questions **about** it – what Bankei and others warned against. **Let it be what it really is.** No need to contrive, don't get “caught in another man's tub,” as Bankei put it. (*Unborn* 133)

As we will see in *Exhortations for Those Unable to Arouse the Doubt*, Boshan repeatedly drives home the fact that if Great Doubt is not allowed to arise, Zen practice sinks into an unhealthy “sickness.” An escape into calm and clear mind states, insights, so-called enlightenment experiences that self assumes will solve all its problems – all the while leaving the fundamental self-delusion untouched. See for yourself: such states and experiences are a part of the *dis-ease*. Open yourself up to your own Great Doubt and you can avoid such problems. There's no room for such delusions here.

Now, how do you actually arouse Great Doubt? Zazen

meditation is a most helpful entrance. In sustained zazen, gather all your energy into one. [*Demonstrates*]

This is a samadhi or concentrated oneness that's completely natural, calm, attentive and focused, yet open. It is a constant energy that nothing can stop. Thus the value of sustained zazen and a retreat like this. Ego-self's endless escapades, escapes, vicious cycles, are rendered powerless, at least for now. Be aware if they return.

In Japanese Sôtô Zen the focus is spoken of as “[untainted, uncontrived] just sitting,” *shikan-taza* [只管打坐]. Not mere sitting in blankness or clarity. Dôgen [道元; 1200-1253], the father of Japanese Sôtô Zen, struggled with this Doubt since his youth, and had it resolved through a decisive Awakening he described as “body-mind fallen off,” *shinjin-datsuraku* [身心脱落]. He even states in his work, *Bendôwa* [辨道話]: “With this, the one great matter of my entire life was resolved.”[一生参学の大事ここにをはりぬ] Where is Sôtô Zen today?

Just sitting **is** enough – **if it is thoroughgoing**. There can be no thought of doubt, let alone awakening. Sitting itself **is** Great Doubt Awakening, the *genjô-kôan* manifest. [*Demonstrates*] Do you see how pure, how simple – and how difficult, how uncompromising – just sitting really is? By the way, Boshan, who focused in his *Exhortations* on the necessity of arousing this Doubt, was one of the leading Sôtô [Caodong/Ts'ao-tung 曹洞] masters of Ming China.

Whether just sitting or working with a koan, **all** is naturally fused into one. [*Demonstrates*] One...concrete...whole. In this

way, the entire self-complex, what Dôgen called body-mind, naturally becomes stuck (as the title of this lecture suggests). Frozen. All comes to a stop – in a most sublime, marvelous manner. Hakuin[白隠; 1686-1769], the reviver of Rinzai Zen in Japan, described it: “Like sitting in an ice cave ten thousand miles thick.”[万里の氷層に坐する思い; *Barrier* 289 rev.; cf. *HPMC* 25; *HaYa* 118; 遠羅 118] In traditional Buddhist terms, there is no “outflow” – or inflow. Yet everything is there – **crystal clear** – in a manner impossible for ordinary consciousness. For it is not objectified, not turned into something as an object of consciousness. Here is the entrance to realized Zen practice, to body-mind **fallen off**. A moment ago I asked where is Sôtô Zen today; the same must be asked of Rinzai Zen.

Echoing the Sôtô master Boshan’s introductory remarks, Rinzai master Hakuin said:

To all intents and purposes, Zen practice makes as its essential the resolution of the Doubt Block. Thus it is said, “At the bottom of Great Doubt lies Great Awakening. If you doubt fully you will awaken fully.” [大疑ノ下ニ大悟アリ、疑ガヒ十分アレバ悟り十分有リト。] [HaYa 144 rev.; 遠羅 489]

Once Great Doubt is aroused and maintained, there is little danger of abiding in static oneness or of getting attached to mystic experiences. The resolution of this Great Doubt is not a matter of **self breaking into** and abiding in a state of

oneness, or **breaking out of** limits such as space and time. Rather, **the very doubt and separation that self is, is broken through**. This is body-mind fallen off. The separation and doubt that self is, is gone! This is where genuine love arises. This is where genuine Zen statements, including the ones I opened with, naturally arise. And where another kind of practice naturally begins.

Don't sit there waiting for something to happen. Such practice is criticized as "awaiting-enlightenment." [待悟] If you're waiting for something, you're not giving yourself fully to practice, are you? You're actually abiding in a state of ignorance, "binding yourself without a rope." [無繩自縛; cf. *RL* 139]

Give yourself in all sincerity, then you can't help but realize this Doubt. Don't waste time thinking: "Maybe I don't have that kind of doubt, I need more doubt, I need his doubt." Simply remain open to what's in your own heart, under your own feet. Don't avoid it; instead, embrace it. That's all you need.

What about this Doubt in ordinary life, in relations with others – won't it interfere? If it's real, you will find it's **just what is needed**. Relations with others are transformed: embracing and seeing through our own doubt, we can truly open up, make room, and respond to the real need of the other. We can love the other for who they really are – not for what we need them to be. At peace ourselves, we can truly be with others, supporting and being supported by them. See for

yourself.

To sum up: naturally rouse this Great Doubt with your own living koan, or a traditional koan. After all, koan and doubt are not two separate things:

Question: Practicing under teachers, some of them say to focus on the koan and some say to doubt the koan. Are these the same or different?

Answer: As soon as you focus on the koan, doubt arises – why separate them? [They are the same.] Focus on the koan and doubt will immediately arise. Continue investigating, and when your efforts reach their limit, you'll naturally Awaken.

問。學人參求知識。或令提箇話頭。或令疑箇話頭。同耶別耶。答。纔舉話頭。當下便疑。豈有二理。一念提起。疑情即現。覆去翻來精研推究。功深力極。自得了悟。 [Cf. ZKS 146; T 48, 1105a; MK 82]

Just sitting itself can be your *genjō-kōan*, the manifest koan. Then during one-on-one we can see what's what.

Or if right now you're in great pain, then that'll do – **just don't separate from it**. Instead, enter it: who is suffering? Right there is the end of the self that suffers.

Rejoice! Where you are right now is right where you need to be. You couldn't be in a better situation. You don't need another thing. As mentioned, someone struggling with this 1,100 years ago in China once begged: "I am so poor; master, please enrich me." What was the response? The master called out the monk's name. The monk replied: "Yes?" The master

responded: “You’ve just had three glasses of vintage Chateau Margaux – how can you say your lips are dry?”

Okay, maybe I revised that last quote about rice wine a bit. But I trust you get the point. Now dive in and taste it yourself!

## Retreat Lectures

In the introductory lecture we looked into the Great Doubt and how to arouse it. Just as Boshan, Bankei, and others responded to their situations, we must do the same. Finding Boshan's *Exhortations for Those Unable to Arouse the Doubt* most appropriate, I present it here. The preface written by a lay disciple in 1611 states it is "truly a lifeboat for this degenerate age, a direct path for beginner's mind. Surely beneficial in the present day, it will be a great aid in the future as well." [正末世舟杭。初心徑路。豈但有益於今日。亦有補於將來。 X 63, 755b] If Boshan's *Exhortations* speak to you, take it to heart. If not, then just continue your practice.

In an introductory section already quoted, Boshan briefly described this Doubt. Seeing the practice in Zen circles nowadays, it bears repeating. The first sentence alone is priceless:

In Zen practice, the essential point is to arouse Doubt. What is this Doubt? For example, when you are born, where do you come from? You cannot help but remain in doubt about this. When you die, where do you go? Again, you cannot help but remain in doubt. Since you cannot pierce this barrier of life-and-death, suddenly the Doubt will coalesce right before your eyes. Try to put it down, you cannot; try to push it away, you cannot. Eventually this Doubt Block will be broken through and you'll realize what a worthless notion is life-and-death – ha! As the old worthies said:

“Great Doubt, Great Awakening; small doubt, small awakening;  
no doubt, no awakening.”

Boshan and others such as Hanshan [Han-shan/Kanzan 憨山;1546-1623; see *PZ* 85-6] emphasize two main entrances to this Doubt: not knowing where we came from at birth and where we will go to at death.

Once we open up, however, we realize that we don't really know **anything** – we don't even know where we really are right now. **Here** Great Doubt manifests.

Otherwise you may be preoccupied only with the first and last moments of birth and death, or get lost in morbid notions of past or future lives, heaven and hell, and so on. Start where you actually are, with your present experience – not some concept or theory, or someone else's words or experience. Then you won't go astray.

Boshan does not go into detail here, but the doubt at first may be vague and unfocused. No problem. With all the wonder and curiosity that you have, open up to the fact that you don't know. In proper and sustained zazen, let this doubt clearly manifest. Driven by the genuine need to know, calmly but constantly inquire. Proceed so that this doubt encompasses all. When this comes to a head, it congeals, solidifies into the Doubt Block[疑團], also called the Great Doubt Block[大疑團] or simply Great Doubt[大疑]. This broken through is Great Awakening, body-mind fallen off.

Developing powers of calm and clear observation, of single-

minded concentration, and of direct perception (without discursive thought) can be most helpful. In the Great Doubt Block, however, all activities of consciousness have come to a halt. Hakuin often described his own experience: “All the workings of mind – thought, consciousness, emotions – hung suspended...”(*RAH* 250) “Ordinary mental processes, consciousness, and emotions all ceased to function.” (*HPMC* 25) At this point simply continue on in Great Trust to the very end.

Such may suffice as a brief “blueprint” for arousing and breaking through the Great Doubt. Now forget all such distinctions and dive right in!

In India and China, in the past and the present, of all the worthies who spread this light, none did anything more than simply resolve this one Doubt. The thousand doubts, the ten thousand doubts are just this one Doubt. Resolve this Doubt and no doubt remains.

西天此土。古今知識。發揚此段光明。莫不只是一箇決疑而已。

千疑萬疑。只是一疑。決此疑者。更無餘疑。

[Gaofeng Yuanmiao 高峰原妙; 1238-1295 in *Bus* 373 rev.: X 70, 707a]

This Doubt is another name for what is most pressing and urgent. Once you acknowledge this pressing and urgent matter of life-and-death as your own, the Doubt will arise of its own accord. If you continue to doubt, then quite naturally the time and conditions will arrive. If you idle away your time without

making efforts and merely wait for enlightenment, the day will never come.

疑之一字。切之別名耳。總是生死心切。便自起疑。疑來疑去。  
自然有箇時節。若泛泛過日。不實用心。待他自[日?]悟。決無此理。  
[Zongbao 宗寶;1600-1661; Boshan Dharma heir, in X 72, 743b]

It is all a matter of raising or failing to raise this Doubt Block.  
It must be understood that this Doubt Block is like a pair of wings that advances you along the way.

[Hakuin in *HaYa* 146 rev.;遠羅 157]

## *Exhortations For Those Unable To Arouse The Doubt*

By the Chinese Master Boshan (1575-1630)

博山和尚參禪警語卷下 示疑情發不起警語

*[Numbers and Titles for the ten sections have been provided.]*

### **1. The Disease of Intellect**

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may seek intellectual understanding through the written word. Stringing together with a single thread the various phrases and teachings of Buddhas and patriarchs, you stamp them all with one seal. If a koan[公案] is brought up, you are quick to give your interpretation. Unable to arouse your own Doubt concerning the koan[話頭], you don't like it when someone probes you with

serious questions. All this is simply your wavering mind[生滅心]; it is not Zen.

You may respond at once to questions by raising a finger or showing a fist. Taking up ink brush you promptly pen a verse to show off, hoping to guide[參究] unwitting students to your level. Fascinated with all this, you refer to it as the gate of enlightenment. You don't realize that such karmic consciousness[識心] is precisely what prevents this Doubt from arising. If only you would straight off see the error of your ways, then you should once and for all let go of all and seek out a good teacher or Dharma friend[善知識] to help you find an entrance. If not, your wavering mind will prevail, you'll become as if demon-possessed, and release will be very difficult.

### Commentary

The exact circumstances under which Boshan presented these *Exhortations* are unclear. The point, however, is what they say to us here and now.

It is quite natural for Boshan to begin with the problem of mistaking mere intellectual understanding for realization. Who here has not made that mistake? The term “wavering mind,” at the end of the first paragraph and which he repeats often, is literally “arising-ceasing mind”[生滅心]: the restless, samsaric mind of life-and-death. In the present context, instead of putting the wavering mind to rest, you end up using it to spin intellectual interpretations; a subtle sleight of hand to veil the precipitous doubt underfoot.

The second paragraph points out the foolish imitation that results: raising a finger (see *Barrier* case three) or fist,

composing Zen-like poetry without having resolved the great matter, and so on. In some Zen circles nowadays, declaring “Don’t know!” has become the same kind of blind imitation – mouthing someone else’s words in a way that actually prevents real doubt from arising. As we will see, Boshan repeatedly condemns such “performance Zen.” Another critic in the late Ming Dynasty, the scholar Qian Qianyi [錢謙益; 1582-1664], stated:

Present-day Chan [Zen] is not Chan. It is no more than beating and shouting... The demonstration in the dharma hall is like actors ascending the stage; paying homage and offering certification of enlightenment are similar to a drama acted out by little boys... They boast to each other about the number of their followers, the extent of their fame, and the wealth of their profits and patronage.

[ED 159-60 rev.]

Any better today? Let go of everything you’ve accumulated over the years, all the pop-Zen you’ve read, your intellectual understanding and so on, and honestly recognize: I don’t **really** know anything. One drop of **this** is better than a truckload of someone else’s garbage – especially mine! [*Laughter*]

Is your zazen firmly established, or is it still something your wavering mind goes into and out of? Are you still detoured from your Doubt by intellectual sleight of hand? Be patient, but not lax, properly focused on the matter at hand.

Inquire in all sincerity. Look at the opening of that enlightenment poem about the sun having always been round – how different is it from your own situation?

<i>Around the seventh year of Xiantong era [c. 866]</i>	咸通七載初參道
<i>[I was born and soon] began to inquire into the Way.</i>	
<i>Wherever I went I met with words</i>	到處逢言不識言
<i>but couldn't understand them.</i>	
<i>The Doubt Block within me</i>	心裏癡團若栲栳
<i>like a large wicker basket.</i>	
<i>For three springs [years] I found no joy</i>	三春不樂止林泉
<i>even stopping among wooded streams...</i>	

Did the author pontificate about the words and phrases, the koans and commentaries he met with everywhere? He recognized he couldn't really understand them. Thus he sincerely searched and was eventually able to have a genuine Dharma encounter, which he details in his poem, climaxing in:

<i>...My Doubt Block shattered</i>	駭散癡團猶狽落
<i>and fell with a crash!</i>	
<i>Raising my head to look about</i>	舉頭看見日初圓
<i>I saw that the sun has always been round.</i>	
<i>After that I went wandering –</i>	從茲躑躑以碣碣
<i>clump-clump, clack-clack.</i>	
<i>And ever since then</i>	直至如今常快活
<i>have been joyful.</i>	

*Belly now full*

只聞肚裏飽膨脝

*having eaten my fill.*

*I no longer go in search*

更不東西去持鉢

*begging bowl in hand.*

[ZD 247-8 rev.; T 51, 288c]

The author of this poem was Luohan [Lo-han/Rakan 羅漢; c.866-928]. His disciple Fayan [Fa-yen/Hôgen 法眼; 885-958] became founder of the Zen school that bears his name. When they met at Luohan's monastery, he asked Fayan why he was not out on pilgrimage. Fayan: "I don't know." The master: "Not knowing is most intimate!"[不知最親切] With this, Fayan broke through.

Don't be afraid of really not knowing! It is the entrance. But don't dwell in it either. This is the theme of the second section.

## 2. The Disease of Quiet Meditation

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may develop an aversion to the world of conditions. Thus you escape to a quiet place and sink into zazen meditation. Empowered by this, you find it quite fascinating. When you have to get up and do something, however, you dislike it. This too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

Sitting long in zazen, sunk in quietness; within this mystic darkness the senses fuse, objects and opposition disappear. But even if you enter *dhyâna*-absorption[禪定] without mind movement, it's no different from the hinayana [小乘: "small vehicle" of self-enlightenment]. Any contact with the world and you feel uneasy with your loss of freedom: hearing sounds or seeing sights, you're gripped by fear. Frightened, you become as if

demon-possessed and commit evil acts. In the end, you waste a lifetime of practice in vain. All because from the first, you failed to arouse this Doubt – thus you did not seek out a true guide or trust one. Instead, you stubbornly sit self-satisfied in your quiet hole. Even if you meet a good teacher or Dharma friend, if you don't immediately recognize your error, innumerable Buddhas may appear and preach the Dharma but they won't be able to save you.

### Commentary

In this second section, Boshan turns to the disease of (attachment to) quiet meditation. If you think you've gotten beyond the disease of intellectual entanglement mentioned in section one, then this will likely shake you from your slumber.

The crux of this section (and the following two sections) warns against seeking shelter from the storm in the apparently peaceful cave of dead stillness. Is your zazen an escape from problems, within or without? Such is not Zen; it is the death of Zen. Great Doubt is not a matter of blotting out our actual problems; it opens us up to them, even as it directs us to their source.

Boshan speaks ill of "hinayana" attainment. This derogatory term is often used in Zen to refer to **anyone** attached to self-serving states. It is not a sectarian criticism of non-"mahayana" ("great vehicle" which saves all) schools of Buddhism. Still, Boshan cannot escape criticism here. I trust he will humbly bow to political correctness.

At any rate, the precious point he makes is that even such

profound meditative states can be tempting escapes. Beware! As mentioned in the introductory lecture: genuine “just sitting” is enough – **if it goes all the way.**

If it doesn't, you may end up losing your temper when something intrudes on the peaceful state you cultivated while sitting. Far from peaceful, your wavering mind ends up more frightened and frustrated than before, becoming what Boshan called demon-possessed. Honest with yourself, how can genuine doubt **not** arise?

In comments on the first section, I mentioned a brief blueprint for breaking through the Great Doubt. Although it may be useful, it is just a blueprint. What actually arises in your practice? Present **that** in one-on-one – not what you **think** should arise. Otherwise you are likely covering over concerns that are there and need to be acknowledged. This leads to the third section.

### **3. The Disease of Suppression**

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may suppress emotions and discriminating consciousness so that no delusions can arise, then dwell in this apparently calm and lucid state. But you fail to thoroughly break through the root-source of consciousness and instead dwell on its immaculateness. Even though you may practice and understand everything from within this apparently pure and lucid state, once you encounter someone who points out your failure, then emotions and discriminating consciousness pop up like a gourd that was pushed under water. This too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

And all because from the time you first took up a koan you failed to arouse this Doubt. Even if you could suppress all delusions so that they no longer arise, it would be like trying to press down the grass with a stone [delusions will just grow around it]. And if you fail to do so, when in contact with the world of conditions, karmic consciousness will be stirred up. Even if you do actually cut off and put a stop to all karmic consciousness, that is falling into the heretical path of dead emptiness. Then in the immaculate state that is produced, you convince yourself you've attained sainthood or enlightenment. Continue in this way and you will become arrogant; attached to this state, you will become as if demon-possessed. Entangled in the world, deluding others with your ignorance, you end up committing serious offenses, betray the trust others have in the Dharma, and obstruct the path of Awakening.

### **Commentary**

These are exhortations or admonishments – stern warnings – and Boshan reaches his stride toward the end of this third section. They must have been relevant for the people around him. I trust they are relevant for you too.

In the present context, discriminating consciousness and karmic consciousness (already mentioned in section one) are basically the same delusion. As long as the delusive nature of all such consciousness – and thus the great matter of life-and-death – is not decisively broken through, there is a great temptation to try and cut oneself off from it and deny it.

The point of this section is simple but profound: such suppression doesn't work. The very attempt is an activity of

deluded consciousness. No attempt to resolve it within the framework of consciousness will work. On the other hand, in Great Doubt all activities of consciousness naturally come to an end of their own accord. They are not suppressed.

About forty years ago my Dharma Granddad Zenkei Shibayama stated:

Often I come across people who just naively believe that Samadhi in art, or no-mind in expert skill, is the same as that of Zen because of their superficial resemblance. According to them there can naturally be dancing Zen, painting Zen, piano-playing Zen, or laboring Zen. This is an extremely careless misunderstanding. They have failed to see the basic difference between Zen and psychological absorption in an art or skill.

[*Barrier*, 75]

There certainly is genuine Zen action. From where does it arise? – That is the point. It is not merely a matter of mental state, psychological absorption, or suppression. A crucial concern for us as we work this out in work, and play, in the world. Alone with a crying baby – or a dying loved one – what do you do?

#### **4. The Disease of Emptiness**

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may come to regard the physical and mental worlds as utterly emptied, with nothing at all to cling to and nothing to hold onto. Unable to discern your own body

and mind or the world around you, denying inner and outer, you make everything into one emptiness. Then you believe this emptying to be Zen, and the one who emptied it all to be a Buddha. You imagine the four postures of going, staying, sitting, and reclining are done within emptiness. This too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

Continuing in this way, you end up in false emptiness, sunk in dark ignorance. Attached to it, you become as if demon-possessed and proclaim you've attained enlightenment. All because you fail to realize that what you're doing has nothing to do with true Zen inquiry. If you genuinely inquire, with one koan you'd arouse this Doubt and wield it as a razor-sharp sword – whoever comes in contact with its blade will be annihilated. Otherwise, even though you may reach a state of emptiness where no thoughts arise, it is still ignorance and far from final.

### Commentary

Don't get attached, even to "emptiness"! From the outside, it may sound like nonsense: If there's nothing, how can you be attached? And yet, that's exactly what can happen. Through proper practice and lifestyle, it is fairly easy to get free from most attachments. You can even get quite skillful at it. Then you abide for a while in your pretty little hole, stinking up the place.

This will not do. One real koan, properly applied, will do. Now, what will **you** do: Spend the rest of your life wavering between the plague of endless doubts and the futility of dead emptiness or once and for all break through your Great Doubt? Dahui, mentioned in the introductory lecture, stated: "this

very lack of anywhere to get a grip is the time to let go of your body and your life.” (*SF* 12 rev.)

Firm in Great Trust and motivated by Great Doubt, in sustained practice let it all go. Don't even abide in any “emptiness” that remains. Boshan clears the way by sealing off every possible escape.

### **5. The Disease of Speculation**

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may end up speculating with your karmic consciousness over the koans of old, sloppily scratching the surface. Then you declare it to be the whole truth, or at least half, as absolute, as relative, this as lord and that as vassal, unity attained[兼帶], clear and simple words, and so on, all the while praising yourself for your superior understanding. Even if you could interpret and explain away each and every one, spewing out the words of old as your own, this too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

You don't realize that you're merely taking the words and phrases of old and chewing them like balled-up cotton thread, unable to either swallow them or spit them out. How can such things create paths of liberation for others? How can they lead others to genuine insight? On the other hand, if you arouse this Doubt and throw yourself into it, then without waiting until the end of your life, karmic consciousness will cease of its own accord and entangling interpretations will naturally be put to rest.

### **Commentary**

This fifth section on attachment to speculation is similar to the first one on intellectual attachment. Chewing gum Zen: in

mouth and mind it tastes good for a moment – maybe even blow a couple of bubbles with it – but soon loses its taste. Cotton candy Zen: it dissolves without satisfying our real hunger.

A number of Zen terms are mentioned here. These expressions were obviously bandied about – chewed on momentarily then summarily spat out – in Boshan’s time. For example, “unity attained” is the fifth of the *Five Ranks* [五位] of Dongshan Liangjie [Tung-shan Liang-chieh/Tozan Ryôkai 洞山良价; 807-869]. A profound poetic expression of Zen by the co-founder of the Sôtô tradition. How tempting to speculate on and dumbly repeat such living expressions! And with it the life is gone. Boshan’s attitude toward such speculation and Zen-talk is crystal clear.

Tell me, how do you express it here and now? In the introductory lecture I mentioned the koan about both speech and silence being relative; how then can we be free? Without resorting to Zen rhetoric, how do you express it? [*Silence*]

*And when two lovers woo,*

*They still say “I love you.”*

*On that you can rely.*

[“As Time Goes By” lyrics by Herman Hupfeld featured in 1942 film *Casablanca*]

Once karmic consciousness comes to an end, do all our other entanglements also cease just like that? Let me make it relevant for present purposes: If Awakening is total and

immediate, why is practice endless? The sun rises at a certain moment, and with it day breaks and all is clearly illumined; the snow and ice, however, take time to break up and melt. A baby is born at a certain moment, though it may take years to walk, talk, and help others. (see *Zongmi* [Tsong-mi/Shûmitsu; 宗密; 780-841] 153)

Similarly, genuine Awakening is by nature immediate, total and complete; working it out in this world, in every aspect of our actions, speech, and thought is another matter. There is practice to arouse and break through the Great Doubt; there is also practice afterward. Don't neglect either one, or confuse one with the other.

Dahui was fond of stating: "Just get to the root, don't worry about the branches." (*SF* 2, 45, 109). In the present context: Get to the root now; in time the branches will flower. Practice must culminate in Awakening – and be endless. How does practice culminate in Awakening? And how is it endless? Mere speculation will not do. Wumen [Wu-men/Mumon 無門; 1183-1260], in comments on the first case of his *Gateless Barrier*, stated: "With your whole body, arouse this one Doubt Block." [通身起箇疑團]

## 6. The Disease of Spirits

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may conclude: "Body and mind are dependent on the confluence of fleeting conditions. However, within all of this there is one thing that comes and goes, free in both motion and rest, without form or substance. Shining from

the sense organs. Spread out, it fills the universe; gathered in, not a dust mote remains!” With such an understanding you fail to even try and arouse this Doubt or to truly inquire, presuming instead that you have completed the great matter. This too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

You fail to realize that what you are doing is not breaking through the samsaric mind of life-and-death[生死心] at all, but instead delighting in such understanding – self-deluded playing with spirits. When the last light of your eyes falls to the ground [death comes], you’ll lose your precious hold. Then you’ll be dragged about by your so-called spirits and have to repay your karmic debts. If you’re able to accrue plenty of good karma, you may be reborn into the realm of humans or gods. Then facing death again, you’ll find yourself crying: “The Buddha Dharma has no saving power!” Slandering the Buddha Dharma like this, you’ll fall into the hell of hungry ghosts – and heaven knows how long you’ll take to get out of that. You better find a true Dharma friend and inquire into this with them, for your complacent spirit will be of no help here.

### Commentary

In this section on the disease of (believing in) spirits, Boshan plays on the believers’ fears in order to rouse them to truly practice. Enamored with their speculations, the mental constructs are objectified, turned into something – what Boshan calls spirits. Then the believer is possessed, trapped by them in endless confusion.

What delusions remain for you? Give yourself fully and **see through now**. Then work even harder to disperse any entanglements that remain.

## 7. The Disease of Acting Out

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may think: "Eyes see, ears hear, the tongue speaks, the nose smells odors, hands grasp, feet run. All this is the true nature of the spiritual self!" You then conclude that you're enlightened and go about eyeballing people, bending an ear, pointing at this and kicking at that, thinking it's all the personification of Buddha Dharma. But this too is simply your wavering mind; it is not Zen.

Of old, such nonsense has been compared to temporary insanity, or likened to sitting in the master's formal chair with a frightening scowl frozen on your face. What good will all that do when you're facing death? Even worse are those who transmit this stuff to the next generation and accept offerings from the faithful without the least bit of shame. If someone asks about the Dharma, they yell or let out a big laugh. They have never truly inquired themselves, so they cannot cut through their samsaric life-root. In such a situation, even countless good deeds become the handiwork of the devil. And all because they fail to recognize that where they have reached is far from final.

### Commentary

Here Boshan returns to the disease of imitating Zen actions. He lashes out at this corruption in later sections as well. Such performance-Zen must have been rampant – unlike here and now! [*Laughter*]

In sections six and seven, Boshan mentioned:

Body and mind are dependent on the confluence of fleeting

conditions. However, within all of this there is one thing that comes and goes, free in both motion and rest, without form or substance. Shining from the sense organs. Spread out, it fills the universe; gathered in, not a dust mote remains!

Eyes see, ears hear, the tongue speaks, the nose smells odors, hands grasp, feet run. All this is the true nature of the spiritual self!

Such statements must have been popular at the time, and Boshan criticized them severely. However, they seem to have been cobbled together from statements found in classic Zen texts, such as *The Record of Linji*[Rinzai] – the recorded sayings of the father of Rinzai Zen:

Followers of the Way, mind is without form and pervades the ten directions.

“In the eye it is called seeing, in the ear it is called hearing.

In the nose it smells odors, in the mouth it holds converse.

In the hands it grasps and seizes, in the feet it runs and carries.”

Fundamentally it is one pure radiance; divided it becomes the six harmoniously united spheres of sense. If the mind is void, wherever you are, you are emancipated. [RL 165 rev.]

Followers of the Way, if you wish to be dharma, just have no doubts. “Spread out, it fills the entire dharma realm; gathered in, the smallest hair cannot stand upon it.” Distinctly and radiantly

shining alone, it has never lacked anything.

[*RL* 287]

Where is the difference? Don't seek it in the words!

### **8. The Disease of Asceticism**

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may become obsessed with a goal, preoccupied with achieving liberation, even undergo ascetic extremes. Not seeking warmth in winter or shade in summer. Asked for a piece of clothing, you give away your whole wardrobe. Content with freezing to death, you assume it to be liberation. Asked for food, you go without eating. Content with starving to death, you assume it to be liberation. It takes many forms but, generally speaking, comes from an intention to achieve and conquer. Thus you end up deceiving the unwitting, who take you for a living Buddha or bodhisattva and give all they can as offerings. People don't realize that this is abusing the Buddhist precepts and that all such acts are harmful.

Others, as Dharma practice, burn part of their bodies in sacrificial offerings, constantly worship the Buddha and confess their faults. From the worldly viewpoint, this is certainly virtuous. As far as true religious inquiry goes, however, it is quite meaningless. As has been said since of old: "Never get attached to Dharma-expressions." Worshipping the Buddha is one such Dharma-expression, as is confession. All good things of the Buddha Dharma are so. I am not saying to dispense with them, but to do them with singleness of mind, thus to nourish the roots of all that is good. When your Dharma eye opens, you will see: sweeping away the burnt incense offerings is itself Buddha work.

## Commentary

Especially during retreat, such practices may help purify and prepare. But they should not be mistaken for the Way. Even such noble acts can be corrupted by ego-self. Yes, sitting in meditation as well. Needless to say, it will not do to prematurely abandon such practices for “anything goes” self-indulgence either, as the last two sections below will show. “Obsessed with a goal [such as enlightenment], preoccupied with achieving liberation” is also not the Way – as Boshan states in the opening of this section.

This is true of the Great Doubt as well:

They [eyeless priests] tell practicers that unless they can raise the Great Doubt Block and then break through it, there can't be any progress in Zen. Instead of teaching them to live by the unborn Buddha-mind, they start by forcing them to raise this Doubt Block any way they can. People who don't have a doubt are now saddled with one. They've turned their Buddha-minds into Doubt Blocks. It's absolutely wrong. [Unborn 57 rev.; 盤珪 35]

Bankei is absolutely right. This is not Great Doubt at all. It's Great Doubt gone awry – turned into a goal that self then tries to achieve. Great Doubt-Great Awakening is right under your own feet! Thus Boshan ends this section not with some superhuman, ascetic feat, but rather with the humble, everyday act of clearing away ash. See for yourself: with eye open, there's not a thing to achieve or to let go. Great Doubt,

not to mention Great Awakening – as well as Bankei’s “teaching them to live by the unborn Buddha-mind” – all are like last night’s dream.

### **9. The Disease of Self-indulgence**

If you’re unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may fall into self-indulgent and wild ways. Meeting others, you sing, dance, and carry on. By the river and under trees you recite poetry, prattle and laugh. Swaggering about busy places regardless of others, you convince yourself that you’ve resolved the great matter. When you see a worthy teacher open a meditation hall, establish rules for the sangha, do zazen, chant the name of the Buddha and other virtuous acts, you let out a scornful laugh and curse him. Since you’re unable to truly practice, you disturb others who are. Not knowing how to truly recite the sutras, worship or confess your faults, you hinder others who can. Unable to truly inquire, you interrupt those who do. You can’t open your own meditation hall, so you interfere with those who have. Unable to give a real Dharma talk, you interrupt those who do. Seeing a worthy teacher present a Dharma talk in front of a large congregation, you think up complicated questions and indulge in silly exchanges, giving a Zen shout or a slap. The worthy teacher recognizes such things as no more than ghostly spirits playing games. If he does not indulge you, however, you spread groundless rumors: “He doesn’t understand the Dharma principle – what a pity!”

This is your wavering mind obsessed; if you continue this way, you will fall into demonic paths and commit serious offenses. Once your good karma is exhausted, you’ll fall into the hell of incessant suffering. “Even good intentions have bad results.” Alas!

## Commentary

In this section Boshan chillingly portrays those who try to deny their *dis-ease* by indulging in pathetic antics, parading around as accomplished men and women. Sobering words for all of us.

We are coming to the end of this retreat. Such sustained practice is precious indeed. But real practice is not something we sometimes **do** – for example, during intensive retreat, or in daily practice. To be what it really is, it must come to be what we **are**. Then it is naturally forgotten.

### 10. The Disease of Putting on Airs

If you're unable to arouse the Doubt when practicing Zen, you may feel annoyed by the restrictions of the sangha. Some may want to go deep in the mountains where there's no one around. For a while they may be satisfied there, closing eyes and unifying mind with legs in full lotus and hands in grateful prayer. After a few months or years, however, they find themselves lost. Others, after sitting only a few days, turn to reading books and composing poetry. Self-indulgent, they shut the door and doze off. From a distance they seem dignified, but up close their decadence knows no bounds. Others are like juvenile delinquents greedily sneaking around, neither knowing shame nor fearing karmic retribution. Putting on airs and speaking as if they knew, they deceive the unwitting: "I met a great teacher! He transmitted the Dharma to me!" and so on. They herd the unwitting into their flock, then keep company with them or even make them their disciples. They act Zen-like and those under them follow suit.

Unaware of their errors, they do not even know to reflect on themselves or feel regret, to seek out a worthy teacher or Dharma friend. Reckless and arrogant, they spread terrible lies. They are really pitiful. Recently some have grown weary of the sangha and now seek out their own living quarters. It should send shivers up their spines!

If you are to genuinely seek the Way, I trust you'll drop such notions. Then you can inquire together with others in the sangha, and work together to keep an eye on things. Even if you cannot realize the Way, at least you will not fall into such corrupt paths. Practicing the Way, you must beware of these dangers.

### **Commentary**

In this final section Boshan continues with examples of costume-Zen, its excesses and shortcomings.

It can be a great temptation today as well to go off alone into nature and practice free of artificial restrictions. But unless your determination is solid and clear, you will likely go astray.

Three essentials are commonly mentioned for Zen practice: 1. Great Trust [大信根; literally "Great Root of Trust"], 2. Great Determination [大憤志], 3. Great Doubt. For this audience, I think a proper presentation of Great Trust and Great Doubt is enough. Great Determination can too easily turn into misguided and destructive willpower, as Boshan suggested in section eight on the disease of asceticism. Chinese Zen master Gaofeng Yuanmiao of the 13<sup>th</sup> century likened Great Determination to "the passion that possesses you when, on meeting the enemy who slew your father, you instantly want

to cut him in two with your sword.” (*ZD* 246)

The last paragraph underlines the value of practice together, supporting and being supported by each other. The final line warns us to beware of dangers. The term here translated as “beware” is the same Chinese character for the “Exhortations” in the title. Boshan ends by reminding us to exhort or admonish ourselves.

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I trust that during this retreat you have come up against whatever keeps you from total immersion. Continue the work we have earnestly begun here: see into it, work through it, then let it go. Throw yourself into daily life as you have thrown yourself into practice here.

As mentioned in the introductory lecture, if your doubt is real, far from interfering with your daily life, it will be just what is needed. Embracing your own doubt you can open up to others, make room for them, respond directly to their real needs. In this way, relations with others can be transformed. Here, the Zen Buddhist tradition – and me as one poor representative – still has much room to learn and grow. Thank you for your precious participation and for listening so intently.

## ABBREVIATIONS (in order of appearance)

*ZD* = *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen*

by Isshū Miura, Ruth Fuller Sasaki (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966).

rev. = revised.

*EV* = *Entangling Vines: Zen Koans of the Shūmon Kattōshū* translated by Thomas Yūhō

Kirchner (Kyoto: Tenryū-ji Institute for Philosophy and Religion, 2004).

*SB* = *Sun Face Buddha: The Teachings of Ma-tsu and the Hung-chou School of Ch'an*

Translated by Cheng Chien Bhikshu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1992).

馬録 = 『馬祖の語録』 入矢義高編 (京都: 禪文化研究所, 1984)。

*X* = 卍新纂續藏經 (CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Normalized Version).

*ZKS* = 『禪関策進』 禪の語録 19、藤吉慈海 (東京: 筑摩書房, 1970)。

*T* = 大正新脩大藏經 (CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Normalized Version).

*MK* = *Meditating With Koans* translated by J. C. Cleary (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1992).

*Unborn* = *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei* translated by Norman

Waddell (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984).

盤珪 = 『盤珪禪師全集』 赤尾龍治 (東京: 大藏出版, 1976)。

*Barrier* = *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan [Gateless Barrier]* by Zenkei Shibayama (New

York: Harper & Row, 1974).

*HPMC* = *Hakuin's Precious Mirror Cave* translated by Norman Waddell (Berkeley:

Counterpoint, 2009).

*HaYa* = *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings* translated by Philip B. Yampolsky (New

York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

遠羅 = 『遠羅天釜』 白隱慧鶴, 芳澤勝弘訳注 (京都: 禪文化研究所, 2001)。

*RL* = *The Record of Linji* translated by Ruth Fuller Sasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawaii

Press, 2009).

*PZ* = *The Practice of Zen* by Chang Chen-chi (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

*RAH* = *The Religious Art of Zen Master Hakuin* by Katsuhiko Yoshizawa (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009).

*Bus* = “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation” by Robert E. Buswell, Jr. in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* edited by Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

*ED* = *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China* by Jiang Wu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

*SF* = *Swampland Flowers: The Letters and Lectures of Zen Master Ta Hui* translated by Christopher Cleary (New York: Grove Press, 1977).

*Zongmi* = *Zongmi on Chan* by Jeffrey Lyle Broughton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

## TECHNICAL NOTES

Revised version of lectures given in 2010 during retreats in the USA, Japan, and throughout Europe.

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Boshan [“Mount Bo” 博山] is actually the name of the mountain where Boshan was active; like many masters, he came to be known as such. He is also known as Wuyi Yuanlai [無異元來] and Dayi [大巖]. He left home in his teens and took up Tiantai [天台] study and practice. Later his Zen master was Wuming Huijing [無明慧經 1548-1618; see *ED* 95-6], a severe teacher who

persistently rejected Boshan's initial insights and realizations. Boshan eventually broke through watching a man climb a tree. He then studied the precepts before finally teaching at Mount Bo. Several major Dharma heirs are listed for Boshan.

A lay disciple of Boshan wrote a preface dated 1611 for the larger work of which this *Exhortations* forms one part: Chinese, Korean, and Japanese editions have been published.

The Chinese text, along with *kokuyaku*[國譯] used for this translation: 『國譯禪宗叢書』第參卷(東京: 國譯禪宗叢書刊行會, 1921). Cf. 卍新纂續藏經 X63n1257\_p0762c09(00) – X63n1257\_p0764a14(03). Text critique and other materials in Japanese related to Boshan can be found in articles by Yûkei Hasebe [長谷部 幽蹊], Institute for Zen Studies, Aichi Gakuin University.

An English translation of short excerpts from Boshan's *Exhortations* was published back in 1959 in *The Practice of Zen* by Chang Chen-chi (see *PZ*) pp. 72-73. More recently, Sheng Yen's *Attaining the Way: A Guide to the Practice of Chan Buddhism* (Boston: Shambhala, 2006) includes excerpts translated by Guogu (Jimmy Yu), pp. 19-22.