

Leonardo Anfolisi Reiyo Ekai



ZEN NAIKAN

L'antica alchimia dell'energia
dei monaci zen rinzai

- Con 21 esercizi della tradizione -



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E D I T O R E

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EDITORE

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Zen master Leonardo Anfoli Reiyo Ekai

ZEN NAIKAN

The ancient alchemy of energy

of Rinzai Zen monks

With 21 Traditional Exercises



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EDITORE

Publisher's preface

By publishing this text, unique in its kind for precision and clarity, I had a long conversation with the author. A feature of this book is to reveal the techniques taught by Master Hakuin Ekaku and to explain their use.

Maestro Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyo Ekai has an encyclopaedic knowledge of these topics but also very practical, that is aimed at precise and - he himself stressed - definitive results; for a Zen Master, satori is such a result.

A work of this kind towards the Zen Rinzai initiatory tradition is truly unique and very precious, and could define a dynamic practice of Zen which, in reality, has been seen and transmitted in its thousand-year history. For the modern practitioner it could be difficult to contextualize Master Hakuin's work and understand if it is possible to make some use of it, applying its techniques. Moreover, some of these techniques are clearly intertwined with already known yoga techniques of the tantric tradition; because of this, the reader may not understand their usefulness in the Zen environment and how, instead, the Zen approach deals with them differently.

Being a passionate practitioner myself, I had the precious opportunity to ask Maestro Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyo Ekai for some essential

specifications regarding the techniques: this made me understand, once again, how personal the relationship with practice can be and how must pass by oral transmission from Teacher to Student. Nonetheless this book is a unique gift for those who practice alone even if, I want to reiterate my thoughts, I would recommend participating in one of the workshops organized by the Master.

The fact of relating to the Master is already in itself an unavoidable koan for anyone who wants to face Zen, or himself, in a completely radical way; it is a very simple, direct but personal relationship in which one acts in a field of living sharing. Much of the initiatory knowledge related to these techniques can only be transmitted directly during the meetings and cannot be recorded or published.

Rocco Fontana

The author

Leonardo Anfolsi was trained by Master Engaku Taino under the aegis of Master Taishitsu Yamada Mumon, the most beloved Buddhist Master in contemporary Japan and Dean of the Hanazono Imperial University, who ritually received Leonardo Anfolsi when he was a young monk.

The XXII Gomo Tulku Sonam Rinchen was recognized as a Master by the Tibetan Lama. In fact, he was also trained in the secret teachings of Tibetan Buddhist Masters such as Kalu Rimpoche (1905-1989), Chögyal Namkhai Norbu R., Nyoshul Kenpo R. (1932-1999), and the Bonpo Master Tenzin Namdak R.. He received the six Naropa Yoga - which he practiced assiduously - from HH the Dalai Lama in Dharmasala in 1990, receiving complete instructions.

He teaches meditation and Buddhism in American and Italian schools and holds conferences and workshops on the Zen-naikan technique which he borrowed from the tradition of his own Zen lineage. He has carried out institutional activities for UBI, the Italian Buddhist Union, under whose aegis he is organizing the Mumonji Project.

His debut as a writer took place with a spiritual autobiography in an ironic key (Bananananda 1989), a best seller edited and published by Franco Battiato, L'Ottava Edizioni (republished by Fontana Editore); he

shared that necklace with the nobel prize winner Natsume Soseki, with texts from the Sufi scriptural tradition and Gurdjieff's classics. He continues his work as a writer with texts on Buddhism and Zen, and as a lecturer throughout the world, being appreciated for the cheerful note and erudition of his speeches.

He directs the international journal of operational alchemy Nitrogeno and the related project collaborating with Fontana Editore.

He collaborates with artists and entrepreneurs by training them and working in that same field as a publicist, an example of which is Opera Unica, written together with Marco Bagnoli, Alessandro Magini and the curator Sergio Risaliti, Mondadori Arte Electa 2016. He participated in 2007 as a multimedia artist in the exhibition space dedicated to the celebration of Joseph Beuys for the 52nd Venice Biennale.

He has been trained since the eighties as an expert in naturopathy, a task that connects to that of Minister of Worship. In the nineties he was called to direct the therapeutic section of the Bolognese Naturist Association, the most followed, articulated and advanced natural life structure in Europe at the time, a pioneering reality for those times which consecrated various protagonists of physical culture, Yoga, philosophy and medicine today.

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Introduction

“When one learns to be quiet and simple, without torments, the ancestral energy spontaneously conforms to this, producing an integral and pervading qi-energy[1]. If this energy is kept inside how could I get sick? The point is to keep this qi-energy within, pervading and supporting the entire body[2] so that between the 360 points and 84,000 pores there is not the width of a hair without it. Know that this is the secret to preserving life.” - Hakuin zenji

Zen naikan brings to its practitioner harmonious well-being, continuous joy, the firmest aid to healing, and encourages the highest spiritual attainment.

Zen naikan is a gift that comes from Zen Buddhism of the Rinzai school, from monks and lay people dedicated to the realization of the strength of the spirit, mind, energy and body.

While technological prostheses external to us are developed due to the materialistic mentality, zen naikan encourages us to make ourselves ardor, strength, source knowledge and freedom.

Historically, Naikan Zen had various sources within the Rinzai stream and we still have examples of this dynamic Zen teaching in China today; the word naikan was specifically used by Master Hakuin Ekaku, only three centuries ago, to define a method of energy cultivation associated with a new concept of dynamic meditation practice suitable both for laymen, who carry out an active life in society, and for monks practitioners.

At the age of eighteen, in 1977, I had the honor of being welcomed in sanzen - in the secret room where the koans are debated - by Maestro Luigi Mario Engaku Taino in the zenshinji temple, and so I was welcomed two years later in sanzen also by Master Yamada Mumon; it

was precisely in this place that I had the clear experience of what the strength of the dantien could be made manifest in an eighty-year-old man, who had been ill since his youth. Everyone remembers Master Mumon for his inexhaustible energy, despite having only one functioning lung, and how much power he expressed with his ki-tentai, that is with the expression of his qi[3].

It is certainly thanks to the strength that Master Mumon knew how to manifest, as well as to his human qualities and his open-mindedness, that he became both the regent of the Rinzai school in Japan (Rinzai shu), the dean of the Hanazono Imperial University[4] as well as who - facts in my eyes more important - to be the first Zen Master to dialogue with the West and with the Christian world, but also capable of welcoming those first Westerners who asked to enter monastic training; and all this while Master Mumon became a celebrated calligrapher as well as a reference for the contemporary Japanese secular world.

By practicing and studying the Zen methods of both the Rinzai school (línjì), and the Soto school (caodong), as well as vajrayana and dzogchen, I began to appreciate the ingenuity of Hakuin, who was able to read subliminal teachings in the traditional Mahayana sutras codified in a dense network of symbols; on this theme the reader can, for example, consult the third part of the Orategama, where a profound meaning of the title Lotus Sutra is mentioned and where, in a letter, he transmits this teaching to a nun of the nichiren school. Hakuin certainly practiced meditations which greatly stimulated not only his vitality but also his ingenuity.

This is the destiny of our book, to offer today's practitioners those methods, well commented and explained in their application, presenting an operational introduction with appropriate techniques taken from both the Chinese and Japanese tradition of Zen, a propaedeutic and possible further developments that respect the impulse given by Hakuin; Hakuin's teaching, in certain cases, is complete in its development, but often it seems just sketchy, certainly hoping that the intensity of the Zen monks devoted to the intuitive asceticism typical of the Rinzai, would have achieved complete understanding without delay.

The naikan - historically - appears to have three qualities:

facilitate the understanding of Zen practice for both monks and lay people,

heal the monks from the zen disease - zenbyo - which manifests itself in the rising of heat and in the sinking of the water element,

stretch, heal and ease existence.

We emphasize again that, from what Hakuin narrates, the naikan was also taught to laymen, a fact which encourages us not to want to keep a secret in this book that not even Hakuin wanted to hide but, as the Dalai

Lama advised us[5], to offer to those who are ready the opportunity to develop themselves.

A better ourselves is a better world.

The contents of this book, over the course of two years, have come to excite and amaze me. The most important thing is to keep reading, always, even if you don't understand; it is better to have patience and make use of the exercises, so that you can gradually penetrate the secret hidden in this teaching. It's worth it; in this regard I promise that, helped by my advanced students, I will answer all your questions online.

Zen naikan - practiced by Chinese and Japanese Zen monks - is a form of yogic asceticism:

of the mind, since it works together with visualizations and the breath,

of energy, going to stimulate the flow of emotional/nervous/pranic energy and of the respiratory/bioelectrical/qi force,

of the body, given that it uses particular movements and breathing, thus allowing the development of Bioelectric and Stem Strength. To explain using terms already familiar to many, zen naikan summarizes the

essence of yoga working with the five prāṇas, and the essence of qigong, working with jing and qi to achieve shen[6].

The adjective staminal defines the germinal and constitutive principle of living organisms of every kingdom, from plants to animals, up to man; the etymology Staminal evokes in its radicals derived from the Greek and Latin language something structural and ancestral, evoking the concepts of standing, supporting structure, fulcrum and thread. The stem cell can really be considered a primordial fulcrum, a structure or the thread of the fabric of life, just as the bioelectric voltage is a fulcrum and is, in its flow, the energetic thread that underlies life and our well-being by moving every function in the cell, tissue and organ.

We add that the latest scientific research regarding the extrapyramidal nervous system, the enteric nervous system, epigenetics and the formulation of the concept of resilience only reconfirm, according to the contemporary scientific approach, the correctness of the principles that inform the ancient naikan method.

We can certainly say that naikan develops our immune capacity - that is adaptogenic - and that it is a technique of rapid use with which it is possible to realize those tangible facts commonly defined as miracles of which I have witnessed every day of my life; certainly these experiences serve to encourage us but they must in no way distract us from inner research but, rather, feed it by opening us to wonder in an innocent and responsible way.

We need to reflect on this to understand where we are, what time we live in, and how we all need - sooner or later - to make sure of the mystery and how its action breathes into our daily lives. In other times - no better or worse than today - this perception was inherent in mankind although humanity was more naive and more instinctive.

Zen monks of former times were taught - as standard procedure - that states of ecstasy or the manifestation of powers or even thoughts were makyo, i.e. demons; so he cut himself short to avoid the most dangerous and serious errors, while today such a statement could be undue therefore exaggerated and even guilty, precisely today when the inability to generate ecstasy or psychic and magnetic force can expose us to all those diseases given by a crowded, very complex time and where, unlike in the past, everything would be monitored, fast and maniacally under-control.

This error is not understood by those who still retain the instinctual strength of our ancestors but who have been ensnared by the new scientific religion, which allows them to identify themselves in a freer, literate and cultured world, as evident to the senses and free from fideistic obscurantism of the past; but since science, like religion, is a mass phenomenon, for most it is a standardized experience of identity that has nothing to do with the high ideals of truly more open and possibility minded minds; this is how we adhere en masse to that need for identity which forces us to apply our faith on discoveries, assumptions and theories, the same ones that tomorrow will be rejected as unfounded if not silly or, moreover, criminal.

This is how the mandate of seekers of famous truth, both religious and scientific, betrays itself; from the point of view of Zen, on the other hand, disinterest in truth is definitive. Buddhism works with reality, and reality must only be recognized by adhering to what it is as it is, therefore on a level that is both pre-verbal and usable at the same time; this happens in silence, listening and rediscovering the place where all knowledge springs, the moment rarely reached by both religious and scientific genius in its flashes of glory, and rarely recognized, as pure genius beyond the expectations of historical time. Buddhism generally has this unique possibility: it does not allow anyone to challenge the truth, nor any idea that can come close to such a theorem. And this remains an immovable principle even if in every century someone has tried to negotiate the extremes. Even Amidist Buddhism, which is salvific, is a method and in these terms it expresses itself towards the fideles who, therefore, are also co-responsible for this salvation through a method, a concept completely alien to monotheistic religions. For Zen in particular, the well-applied method places us in the realization which, however, takes place only when we abandon ourselves to the evidence of reality.

And the evidence - which Buddhism considers innate - precedes every concept, it is the silence itself of meditation; thanks to this, Buddhism teaches us to see everything by understanding it as it is, in a naked and silent way, without the intrusion of ideation-idealism-ideology. Actual Buddhism is an innate religion that does not wait for the revelations of anyone; a religion from which quantum physics or other religions can be understood and certainly admired, without however Buddhism being able to be understood by those who do not train themselves in that extreme, unexpected and continuous form of freedom called meditation, and in meeting those unplaceable individuals and abysmal called Masters.

The naikan we are talking about in this introductory document is not the naikan conceived by Yoshimoto Ishin - which we certainly respect - but it is the alchemical training taught for millennia in the Rinzai school of Zen, clearly found in the teaching of the fifth Chinese patriarch Hóngrěn, and then, at the time of Rinzai and – by his evident will or that of his descendants – represented in the figure of Master Pǔhuà; we can recognize this continuum in two historical moments of great influence of the Rinzai school on the warrior caste and, finally, in Hakuin Ekaku. Of this last Master, true cornerstone of the Japanese Rinzai tradition, we report the two texts relating to the naikan; in more recent times we find the naikan in Kōno Daikei and in Kawaguchi Ekai. The latter was Yamada Mumon Roshi's Master, in turn Master of Engaku Taino and therefore mine. So this teaching comes directly to us in an uninterrupted line from Master Hakuin Ekaku, who rediscovered it thanks to his irrepressible erudition.

Among the main studies on the topics listed above, relating to the Rinzai school, there are the research carried out by prestigious scholars at the Hanazono University - directed for a long time by Mumon Roshi - and also studies and texts in Western languages[7].

A note on the transliteration of Chinese or Japanese names. We have chosen:

to use the pinyin transliteration – the typical academic one in use today – for the names of people, places or dharmas, in the text I wrote,

to leave the transliteration from the Chinese that was used in the Yasenkanna and in the Itsumadegusa translated by us from English, respectively, by Waddel and Legget, and by Yampolsky, who put the better known names in the common de-accentuated version, and the lesser known ones in Wade-Giles (e.g. Chuang Tzu, Chih-i),

to often use the term zen also to say chán, thus simplifying the discourse, as is also common in academic essays on the subject.

Note:

[1] The production of the strongest and best qi - thanks to the integrity of the ancestral energy (jing) - is due in this case to the dynamic stillness induced by meditation, in which satori is realized. Hakuin specifies that the term meditation should be understood not only as quietism or mere mental practice (zazen + koan = rikan), but also with an active life and thanks to the power that Zen yogic meditation has to "distill the elixir" (naikan) and therefore to bring into play the innate potential of the practitioner.

[2] The energy maintained in every point and pore of the body is not an aleatory way of saying, but is the subject of exercise 19.

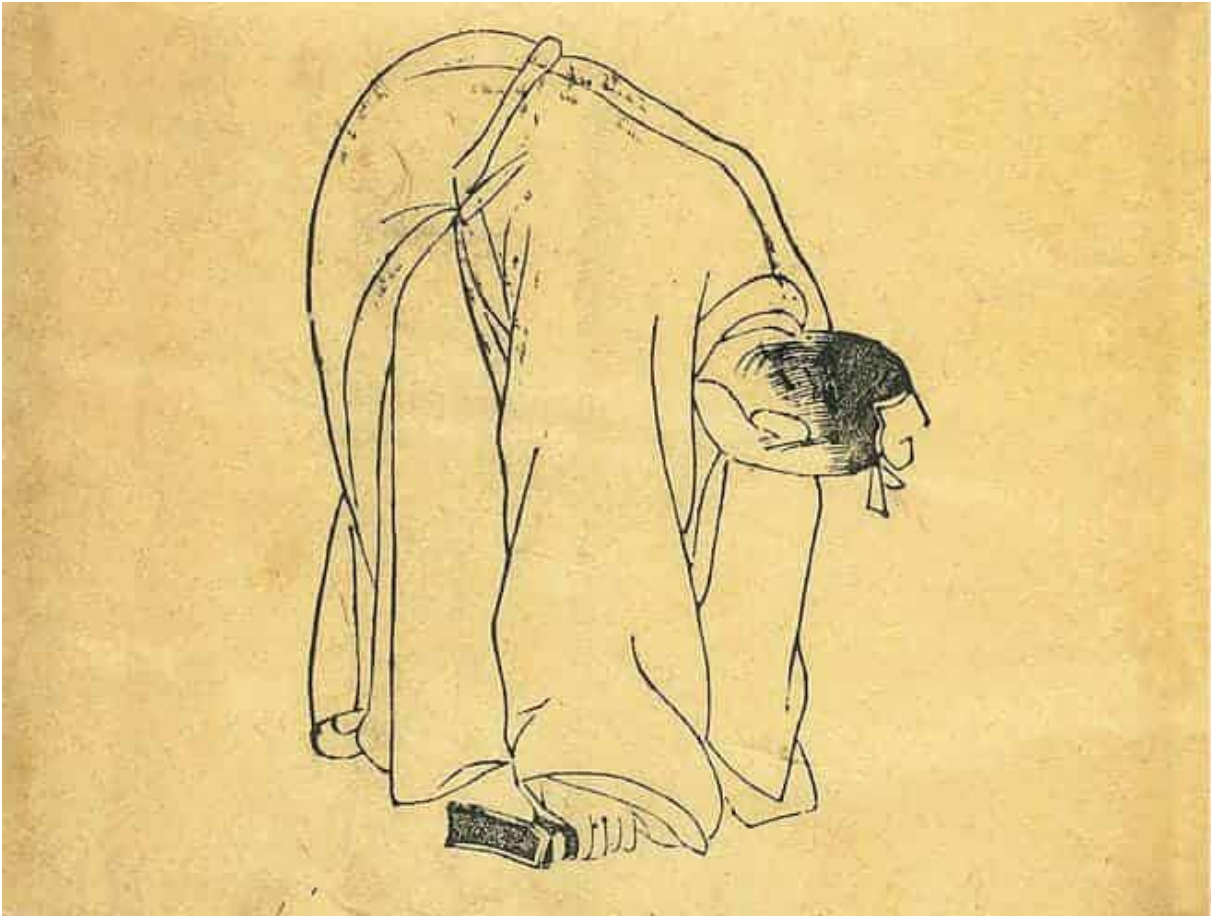
[3] Bioelectrical energy is called "qi" in Chinese while this same ideogram is read "ki" in Japanese

[4] Yamada Mumon completely dissociated himself from the hypernationalist ideology of one of his Masters, Seise'tsu Ghenshō, in unsuspecting times; but this did not curb the enthusiasm of the usual detractor who, knowing nothing of the reserved way in which the Japanese express dissent, did not even inform himself of the fact that Master Mumon was considered by many in Japan as a pacifist and antagonist.

[5] See the chapter on the Eighth Source

[6] Jing = genetic and nutritional force / qi = bioelectric force / shen = spiritual power. According to yoga, prāṇa is the energy that innervates the system by reaching the dense body through the imagination (psychosoma) and endocrine secretions; we can define the level of pranic energy as biomagnetic. Qi, on the other hand, is the energy which, according to Chinese tradition, flows on the body surface and in the internal tissues, binding itself to the "functions" of the various organs; therefore the qi is already anchored to the dense body, which swells with bioelectric force like the wind sails it. Later we will specify the nature of these two levels of energy, at the end of the text there is an attachment which explains these two levels of energy.

[Z] Akizuki Ryūmin, Yanagida Seizan, Iriya Yoshitaka, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Paul Demiéville, Gregory and Daniel Getz, T. Griffith Foulk, Peter Gregory, Chi-chiang Huang and Ding-hwa Hsieh, Whalen Lai, Lewis Lancaster, Trevor Legget, Miriam Levering, Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Morten Schlütter, Philip Boas Yampolsky, Burton Watson.



What do I practice?

Naikan practice notes

The practice of zen naikan serves to increase and clarify the flow of energy, as well as to facilitate the learning of the meditative practice and therefore encourage us in the search for awakening.

Zen naikan therefore means Internal Alchemy: we cannot apply scientific ideology to this practice which is at the same time science/religion/art, something that the scientific mentality cannot understand.

The first advice is to turn away from the prevailing scientific ideology - which has now become the superstition of this time - the second is to overcome the superstitions of the past that have the form of religious conflict and use all that is meditation and prayer to evolve in perception of universal energy and eternity.

The meditation and prayer that we already know how to do are good, if we learn to do them better or learn others it is even better, because in this way our experiences are broadened.

Everyone should introduce their religion but above all their creativity into their practice of Zen Naikan.

Naikan Zen teachers have traditional training according to the Rinzai Zen school, but those who receive Naikan Zen teaching must feel free to integrate it with their own research and culture.

Essential first parts of teaching naikan

Ligament of the Diaphragm-uddhyana banda (empty suspensory apnea) > “Vaso”-kumbaka (full luminous apnea): two yoga techniques that we mention in the text and to which we refer.

The Ligament of the Diaphragm consists of creating a vacuum by pulling the belly in as much as possible during exhalation. Maintaining that position and breathing state, the muscles of the perineum also contract and the chin rests on the sternum. To catch your breath, all you have to do is suddenly abandon your belly, so you can breathe effortlessly again.

The Vaso, on the other hand, happens after we have inhaled and lowered the diaphragm, at the same time the muscles of the perineum contract and, only the first few times, the technique is facilitated by placing the chin on the sternum. You can find these exercises on youtube.

When the reader deems it appropriate, we will specify other additional techniques during our webinars or retreats. For now, that's enough and it's fine. Always being natural with the breath, just at the moment when we tend to shape it with exercise; well, this can and must be done but always respecting it and taking the natural, spontaneous pauses

between one breath and another and, when necessary, breathing normally before resuming the exercise.

Forget. A fundamental aspect of Zen is the art of forgetting. Abandon ourselves to the Zero/Emptiness allows us to stay, welcome and move in accordance with our being, without concepts or preconceptions. Everything happens in the present. The art of forgetting does not mean forgetting about things that have happened, or – as some theorize – about enlightenment, but it means BEING in the present so that our mind – instead of ruminating – can remain in a creative space/ dynamic where he can remember or act with as little effort as possible. Even while acting or speaking.

Try daily to enter a stand-by state when you don't have something specific to do, so while you are waiting for the bus or on the train, you let your mind "go", which means leaving it in a state of rest;

extend this empty/neutral state of mind more and more while doing things, starting with tidying up the house or washing the dishes, and then,

extend it even to thought and learn to reason each time returning to the void/neutral; you will find that you will acquire in lucidity and creativity, until, literally, you will be able to reason from this state of emptiness/neutral.

Accept the challenge/impact. Many people who consider themselves "spiritual" think that anyone who is a little harsher towards them is a bad person, and they think the same thing about life when there is ferment and strength and therefore challenge in it. According to Zen and Zen Naikan all these are extremely interesting circumstances without which we would live like coelenterates.

Physical fatigue and muscular activity are essential for well-being, especially for those who work as employees. Moreover, all martial arts are useful (taichi, qigong, boxing) but extreme sports are even better, first of all mountaineering, which train us to that particular type of attention and speed, as well as victory over fears, of which we need to survive and then live in the world.

However, it is useful to do some daily physical exercise, for example push-ups or the exercise called plank are excellent, if anything with the addition of abs and other similar exercises that you can find everywhere. The seven pieces of brocade or the yoga sun salutation are also excellent.

Another trick to get back into the habit of moving and enjoying physical exercises is to dance to music that we particularly like and that inebriates us. Whoever gives up on impact is only because they have not understood its importance, and that it is the rule that conditions

our entire existence on every level, so much so that Heraclitus taught us that the mother of all things is war. It is better to realize this clearly before falling into the trap of saying - but without having sufficient strength - everything is harmony; everyone is able to say this, to see the other fact more stringent and immediate, and to admit its consequences, is much, much harder. Moreover, what for an ordinary person is trauma, for the trained person is a calm challenge in which victory is taken for granted, regardless of the suffering and the contingent result.

Only a fool becomes violent because he plays extreme sports or weak because he lives comfortably.

Reflexology. We also find the impact in Foot and Ear Reflexology, given that when a point is painful, it really hurts us and we have to impact with the pain while finding the right pressure to get rid of it. Treating the endocrine glands truly empowers us in a sensitive and ever more remarkable way. The following points are to be found on a good reflexology map:

back

pineal

pituitary gland

thyroid

adrenals

pancreas

gonads

Ritsu zen: standing meditation: when standing, tilt your pubis a little forward and let your arms go to the sides with your shoulders and neck back, bend your knees slightly.

Fingers almost together: in the standing meditation / ritsu zen position, the fingers are almost together at the height of the dantien or diaphragm. In this position the flow of the small celestial circulation is spontaneously activated, a movement of energy explained in this text.

Start the qi exercises in an exploratory and curious way: optionally, the exercises preceding the 7th must be explored with

curiosity trying to understand their meaning and starting with those that intrigue us the most with the very important promise never to stop experimenting with others and then others.

Freight-lift breathing: which is the 8th exercise, or Prano-Embryonic Breathing III. Its other name "Ascending/Descending Embryo Breathing" shows why we have called it a freight elevator. It is easy to practice having a very simple visualization and going on the trust of sensing energies, which is the founding key of zen naikan.

Exercises for the sick. The disease should not be a stable condition. Anyone with a disease, or even just mild back pain or neuralgia, receives the maximum benefit from the exercises just outlined. Before proceeding further it is better that he is sure of what he has achieved and if he can do more. Anyone who has any doubts or is interested in receiving healing can contact us at @zennaikan on Facebook, even privately; if you don't have facebook, you can contact us atcontactesterni@gmail.com.

Breathing of the small celestial circulation or 7th exercise: Qi-Embryonic Breathing II or the Embryonic Breathing of the qi enhanced by visualization of embryonic strengthening for the activation of the circulation rises or falls passing/starting again from the tandien setting in motion the small circulation. Generally: forward men / backward women.

Meditation: at this point it would be inevitable to start practicing sitting meditation, possibly assiduously but always exploring and having fun, as the practice of sitting meditation in turn encourages the circulation of qi in an orderly and complete way.

Meditation begins by opening the senses wide open and letting self-perception collapse, disappearing into eternity. During meditation it would also be natural to practice the 10th and 11th exercise - which are the heart on the hands and the heat in the abdomen which are the first two exercises given by Master Hakuin, extracted from the Yasenkanna/Itsumadegusa.

Meditation helps us get in touch with our true essence. The direct and naked perception of reality and therefore of Eternity is outside of any concept expressing our true essence. We are all a manifestation of Eternity, of this splendor that has taken the form of each of us, of every living being and of every form we see in nature.

Remembering that we are a manifestation of Eternity, as well as Eternity itself, helps us to always feel at home and also to relate to the true nature of other people and other manifestations (animals, plants, minerals) in a continuous dialogue that it can be silent or occur with information transfer. To learn this method you need to rest your eyes and let colors, shapes, images emerge; developing this ability is a complex exercise that we teach in our retreats.

Smiling at the internal organs. This excellent exercise should be taken in all its simplicity deriving from the intuition that there is an intelligent spirit of our internal organs which are therefore real entities with which we can come into contact. In fact, the practitioner will be able to ascertain the fact that one or two organs will not initially want to respond to their smile. In some cases they will respond to our smile after a while, in other cases we will have to insist on several sessions, in still other cases it happens that we really have to do something to change our condition with herbs, medicines, reflexological techniques, otherwise that certain organ will not smile at all. If there are more than two organs that don't smile at us, it's better that after a few sessions, if we don't receive a positive response from them, we decide to book a medical visit. Nothing alarming, but it's better to actively prevent than cure.

Elixir So. This exercise by Master Hakuin Ekaku, which is the 18th in the text, we begin to implement it happily after we have practiced it about 6/10 times. Then a wondrous realm opens up in our experience.

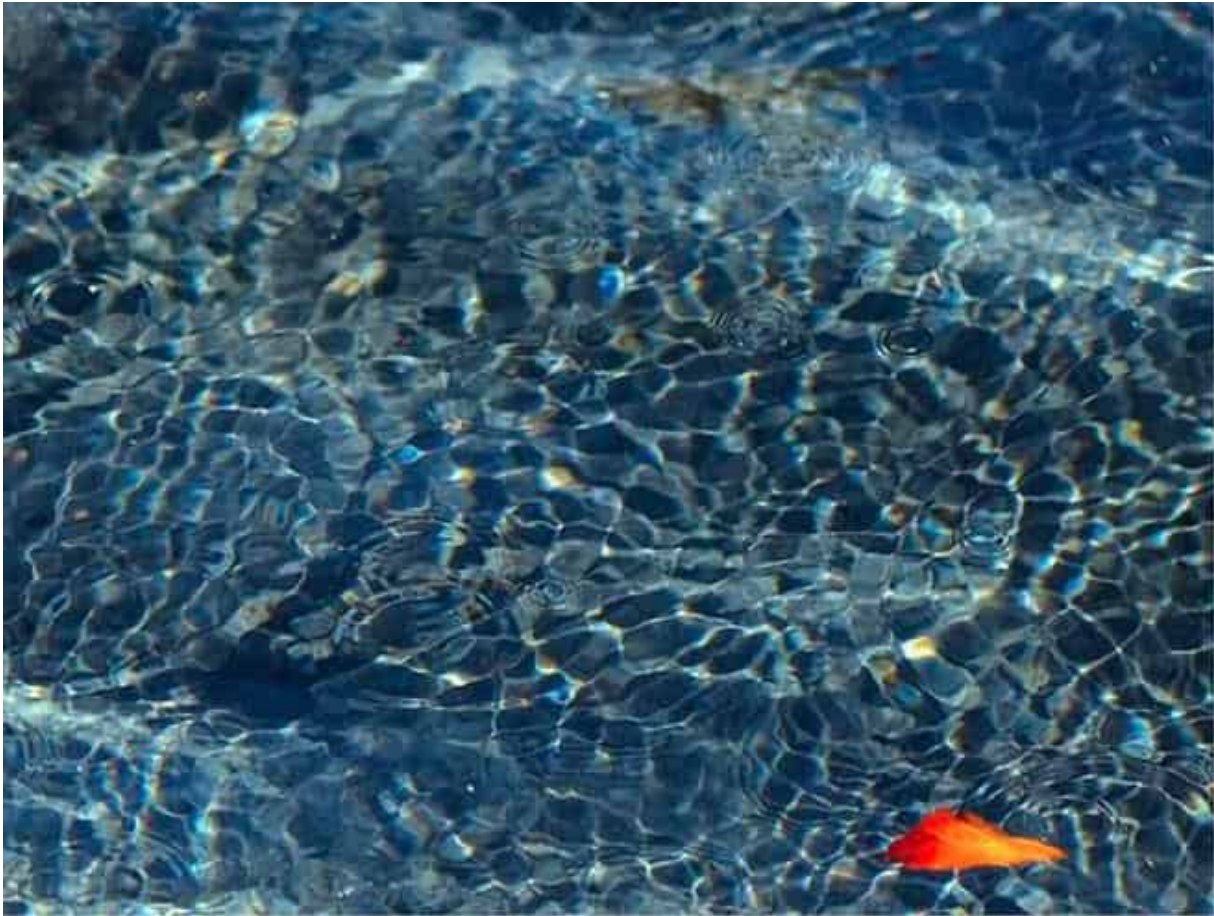
All of Master Hakuin's other exercises must certainly be explored with fun and curiosity, then profit will not be lacking.

Feeding the dantien by walking: it is an exercise not explained in the text, but useful after experimenting with the previous exercises; it consists of taking energy from the universe and bringing it to the dantien. It is easy to do this while walking, as in the movement of the step one can clearly feel the contribution of

energy and how it can lift the foot and leg or move the whole step starting from the back and buttocks. Actually when this ability is activated it is due to the ignition of the extended kikai dantien, which you can see in an image of the book as well as in the explanation of Zong Qi. This too is an exercise, together with many others, specified in all its points and prepared in our retreats thanks to other exercises. However, given that it is a very useful exercise, we thought it necessary to mention it in these lines to help those who are ready and can already understand it.

12th/15th/19th Exercise, or the exercise of breathing through the pores. The most remarkable and unexpected result we realize is when we are able to practice this exercise at will. When we realize this we have achieved all of the previous ones as well as we have the best access to the inner warmth. During the retreats we accompany it with other preparatory exercises.

21st: Mu. Those who already practice the koan Mu according to the teachings of the Rinzai school of Zen will receive an exceptional stimulus thanks to the last exercise taught by Master Hakuin Ekaku.



The Eight Springs

The presence of Taoist alchemy in Zen

For 18th century practitioners, Master Hakuin's naikan served to heal from qi energy diseases, derived from ascetic obsession and from the extreme tests that monks inflicted on themselves by meditating for a long time without any understanding of their emotional and energetic movements, but with courage indomitable under the scoldings of surly

masters; therefore the naikan was conceived by Hakuin as a form of energy gnosis which was corrective of Japanese Zen practice, which had become dull and consuming.

Furthermore, Master Hakuin Ekaku advocated a Zen training of doing, something that he traced, thanks to his careful historical studies, in the teaching of Master Da Hui, the very Master who annoyed Dogen because of his obsessive use of koans.

For today's Zen practitioners, naikan techniques are used to approach the practice of zazen and that of the koan without misunderstandings, while for outsiders it is an excellent approach to sitting meditation as well as the active one thought of by Hakuin. For everyone, the naikan is the best practice to stay healthy in a difficult historical moment, where, moreover, the teaching of medicine and the advertising of some pharmaceutical multinationals tend to undermine faith in the natural human capacity for immunity, resilience and recovery.

The origin and the tantric-magical afflatus of the dharani practiced during the daily o-kyo ritual of the Zen monks – that is, the singing of the sutras – is already clear; if we read, for example, the translation of the Daihishu, or of the Se Son Myo So Gu - in Sanskrit Samantamukha Parivarta - or the translation of the Prayer on the Occasion of the Offering to the Hungry Spirits[1] of food, it becomes evident how the content of this text is tantric[2], or aimed at the evocation of archetypes. Furthermore, thanks to the translation by A. Stein and his staff of the scrolls found in the Gobi desert at the Dunhuang oasis, we have come to know of profound connections between Chinese Zen and Tibetan Tantrism and Dzogchen, where the chán was referred to as

Heshang Moheyan, i.e. the Mahayana elders. It is now known that some Tibetan dzogchen lineages have embraced Chán teachings; probably the semdé approach of dzogchen would derive from those, as some Tibetan methods have certainly penetrated the chán. In fact, on closer inspection, we see how typical in dzogchen is the visionary penetration of the substance of reality, an approach that we find identical in the teaching of the fifth ch'an patriarch Hóngrěn; I discussed it with Prof. Paul Harrison, professor at Stanford[3], who was also surprised by the strangeness of the citation by the fifth Ch'an patriarch of the Amitayus Sutra[4] as a basic text for the practice of Zen in China. We will discuss it shortly.

To conclude the discourse we must add that the Ch'an teaching, like almost all the other branches of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, was repeatedly absorbed and - apparently - re-proposed, by the Tiantai school. The tientai school was the ideal heir of the Indian monastic universities where every Buddhist path was practiced with the different methods, commentaries and reference sutras. The same happened in Japan, given that the tientai - tendei in Japanese - formed all the founders of the various Buddhist schools, then of Zen, shingon, nichiren, jodo, who were all tendei monks in the beginning. Among these we have Eisai, Dogen, Kobo Daishi, Nichiren and Honen, just to name the best known.

I stress again the fact that all of them were Tendai monks from the beginning, and only after Zen, Nichiren, Jodo, etc., because this undeniable fact allows us to recognize once again the factual historical connection of Zen with the practice of ritualistic, esoteric and yogic, yet always practiced with an essential and hermitic approach, which has always been the specific note of Zen, that afflatus that made exceptional individuals such as Eisai and Dogen fall in love with it. We will deal with

it soon, seeing how from its origin - in the Kamakura period - Japanese Zen was direct, sharp and inevitably magical.

I understand that this is difficult to digest for those who have been educated in contemporary Japan and who do not have complete historical knowledge, and this even more so if they have trained under the guidance of a Zen master adhering to a certain positivist and reductionist mentality, who has conquered also many prelates in hyper-technological Japan.

Anyone who studies the history of Buddhism and that of ideas knows well that the reductionist-materialistic mentality is only a fatal reaction to the degeneration of monotheistic fideism, while magical idealism is - at the same time - the involution and/or synthesis of capable thinking of gnosis, or of the highest psychic ability of mankind, capable of breaking down and reconstructing knowledge through archetypes.

The next step is, in this context, the complete penetration into the fabric of reality, a fact that can be achieved by a few individuals devoted to this and which, once again, is not a result but the eternal and entire legacy hidden in mankind.

The facts just described, plus the vicissitudes and techniques I will discuss will make you understand why an intelligent, cultured man with a future of sure success like the abbot Kawaguchi Ekai, at the end of the 19th century, decided instead to go on a pilgrimage in India, Tibet and Nepal to go in search of roots prior to Zen, so not in China. He

returned to Japan and helped, together with Kōno Daikei, the healing of Mumon Yamada, a young monk suffering from tuberculosis but destined to become the very incarnation of Rinzai Zen in 20th-century Japan.

As I said, I had the honor of being ritually received in sanzen by Master Mumon Yamada who poured into me the strength of a no longer existing world and who encouraged me to work with the koan series, in which I was instructed in all the details together with other brave companions from Engaku Taino, Luigi Mario, trained under the guidance of Mumon himself.

Engaku Taino encouraged me to study the history and methods of the Zen tradition and the koan-enigmas left by the old Masters, and so did all of us who followed his teaching, both monks and nuns, and laymen.

I stop here inviting the reader to follow the story of the naikan in the next chapter, where I will tell how there is documented historical evidence of the practice of this inner-alchemy since the times of Bodhidharma, how it came to the fifth patriarch Hóngrěn and, then, up to the time of Rinzai; thanks to the teaching on energy given to the samurai and practiced by the Tendai and Yamabushi hermits, we can assert that Hakuin - in the eighteenth century - simply rediscovered it, handing it down with erudition, experience and great skill.

For his part, sensibly in my opinion, Master Engaku Taino added exercises such as yoga and taichi to the practice of zen rikan, he

encouraged those who meditate to practice sports, especially extreme mountaineering, and furthermore he disseminated a practice of self-healing, transmitted to him by the zen monk Inoue Muhen, who uses the breath.

This shows us how it is inevitable to find what is needed in order to better train the students, provided that we realize how the teaching can degenerate, and so the energy of the practitioner.

Now I would like to share what was told to me by Imei Emmyo Miyamoto, the current abbot of Shoinji, the Temple of the Shadow of the Pine, that is the temple on the sea personally founded by Hakuin Ekaku in Hara, not far from Mount Fujiyama.

Abbot Emmyo insisted with great fervor on what Hakuin says in the Yasenkanna and which I reported at the beginning of the book just below his image; the abbot - who demonstrates Master Engaku Taino about fifteen years younger than his age - wanted to be more precise and specified to me that the whole body system is strengthened only when the circulation in the dantien is accelerated and, I would use these terms , dynamically compacted.

The dantien becomes elastic and, by igniting the kikai dantien - in particular the larger kikai-receptive that goes from the groin to the chest - the flow of exchange between the surrounding energy and the human dantien intensifies; this ignition is perceived more and more, over time, as a pulsation of the whole system. It is then that, as Hakuin

says, every cell in the body is filled with qi-energy. This experience is certainly enhanced by the practice of the koan Mu, the practice of which in conjunction with the naikan we talk about in the chapter dealing with the techniques taught by Hakuin.

So from the texts of Hakuin and from the documents and oral transmissions coming from the Zen lineages it is essential to extract and develop the protocol adhering to our times, to ensure that these naikan techniques - as well as giving health and fullness - act as a shortcut for Westerners in practice of Zen, so that they achieve absorption in samadhi/zanmai being immersed in a dynamic life full of challenges, and where, above all, one navigates "by sight".

Note:

[\[1\] Daitez Teitaro Suzuki attempted to retranslate from Chinese, back into Sanskrit, some sentences of the text, whose evocative meaning is clear \[Respect to all the Benenandanti-Che-Guardano-quiggiù! Om!\] which uses, in fact, typical terms of mantras:](#)

“Namah sarva-tathagatavalokite! Om!

Sambala, sambala! Hum!

Namah surupaya tathagataya!

Tadyatha,

Om, suru[paya], surupaya, surupaya, suru[paya], svaha!

Namah samantabuddhanam, vam!"

[2] This ritual is very similar to the rite of offering the relative body contained in the ritual celebrated - often in long solitary retreats - by the Tibetan yogi-exorcists chöd-pa (Tib. gcod).

[3] Paul Harrison is the professor of religious studies at Stanford University. Educated in his native New Zealand and Australia, he specialized in Buddhist literature and history, particularly that of the Mahāyāna, and in the study of Buddhist manuscripts in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan.

[4] Volume XLIX of The Sacred Books of the East series, Oxford, 1894. See note 3 on page 29.



The First Spring: the mysterious hermit Bodhidharma

Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of the chán/zen school, taught some gymnastic-yogic techniques to the monks of the old Shaolin temple, then located in a marshy area. It seems that the exercises were simply gymnastic and useful for strengthening the monks - as Lujong is practiced for Tibetan monks - and that only centuries later did Bodhidharma's exercises become that wing chung, conceived by the

nun Wu Mei, a gymnastic-martial technique desired to increase vitality; wing chung in fact means eternal spring. This technique, increasingly becoming martial, will then be defined as xingyiquan, taijiquan, or baguazhang or, more generally, as wu shu. Later the style called Shaolin would have been invented, derived from a temple that later took the name of the old monastery that housed Bodhidharma, and therefore those disciplines that had become famous such as kung fu and qi gong would have been formulated.

Obviously, in this brief discussion, we will speak of Bodhidharma only with regard to the subject of our exposition, the naikan.

A text was attributed to Bodhidharma, the Yi Gin Ching i.e. the Book of Muscular Development and for centuries the cultivation techniques taught were called wai dan or weitan, i.e. external (cinnabar) alchemy, which would mean laboratory alchemy but in this case physical alchemy because tendon-muscular.

Twelve centuries later Hakuin will call his method - on the contrary - naikan; in Chinese it would have sounded like Neidan, or internal alchemy as yoga-psycho-energetic.

The discussion between Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu of Liang is very famous, as a mandarin, to befriend the emperor who liked to pose as a monk in retreat, wanted to introduce him to a real hermit, just removed from his cave. And he took it badly. When the emperor described his bodhisattvic commitment to having monks ordained and monasteries

founded, he was faced with the hermitic frown of Bodhidharma who did not let him pass one: the monasteries? The monks? What are they for from the point of view of eternity-satori? Do they have any absolute, i.e. dharmic, value? No.

Obvious. But the emperor was offended and Bodhidharma was finally able to return to his favorite activity, looking at the wall in a dark cave. I emphasize dark, then we'll see why.

It is documented that a century or two before Bodhidharma a certain Gunabhadra was in China who, a hermit and traveler like him, expressed himself with paradoxical phrases. In truth, what we find written among the Dunhcan scrolls and other documents and inscriptions tells us contradictory things about Gunabhadra; even if the latter was an invented character and - much less probable - Bodhidharma was too, it remains that this apparently crazy attitude is the product of the teaching of a hermit who uses additional shocks to awaken the Pupil, a propaedeutic which is the product of the mind of one who lives long and alone in fullness, contemplating the days, the trees, the butterflies, the river, the clouds and seeing it all from within the cave of the deepest inner absorption.

On the theme of the cave, I will have something to add in this chapter, in a note, and in the next chapter on Hóngrěn.

It seems that the Indian monk Gunabhadra also centered his teaching on meditation but relying on the scriptural authority of the Lankavatara

Sutra, which he translated into Chinese: from this took place the Lankavatara school, leng kia tsung, which was in this way the forerunner of the chán . However, the Lankavatara was for centuries a favorite Sutra of the chán Masters, and Hui ke, the second chán Patriarch, was also a descendant of the leng kia tsung.

We quote Gunabhadra, again from a text found in the Dunhuang oasis:

“Buddha is not Buddha and therefore does not save beings. It is sentient beings who impose distinctions and therefore believe that Buddha saves beings; so they do not realize this mind and have no stability in this.”

It's still:

“Can you penetrate a vase? Can you enter a column? Can you enter the fire? Can you cross a mountain? And, tell me, would you penetrate mentally or physically? Well, the leaves of a tree can preach the Dharma, a vase can preach the Dharma. This stick can teach the Dharma, a room can teach the Dharma, and so can earth, water, fire, air. This mound of earth, this wood, this tile or this stone can teach the Dharma. What is this?”

These lines of proto-zen, ancestral, almost screamed, are of the utmost importance for understanding both zen metaphysics and naikan zen with its concept of energy; and finally they are useful for understanding

the relationship between zen propaedeutics and the cultivation of this energy, given that in this sentence there is a continuous shift between a communication protocol based on common facts and objects - although perceived from the state of awakening - a communication protocol based on the use of symbols, and a last protocol based on an expression that is as sudden as - at least at first sight - paradoxical. On this basis, a sense of the use of energy (qi/prāṇa) in Zen is recognizable, as well as that very particular specificity concerning the activation of the will (joriki) and the consequent metaphysical power (kensho) in the Zen practitioner.

Now we can quote a text formerly attributed to Bodhidharma[1]. The theme is energy development techniques and, in this case, visionary; these are conceived in light of the realization of innate and sudden enlightenment, typical of the Ch'an vision.

On the question of the development and consummation of the vision we will see in the next chapter what the fifth Chinese patriarch, Hóngrěn, therefore the fifth descendant of Bodhidharma, tells us.

“When you first step into the Way, your awareness cannot focus. But you shouldn't doubt that all the scenes that appear are actually from your mind and nowhere else. If, as in a dream, you see a light brighter than the sun, then suddenly all that is left of your attachments dissolves and the nature of reality is revealed. This event will be the basis of enlightenment. But it is something that you alone experience and therefore know, but which you will not be able to explain to others. But if you could, while walking, standing, sitting, or while lying in a quiet place, see a light, which is neither dim nor strong, you shouldn't talk about it with others

and you shouldn't focus on it. It is the light of your own original nature. Or if you happen to see, while walking, standing or sitting, or lying still in a nocturnal darkness[2], that everything appears as if it were illuminated by the light of day, do not be surprised. It is your own mind about to reveal itself."

Note:

[1] Translated in 1987 by the expert sinologist Bill Porter Red Pine from a text copied by woodcut during the Qing (Manchu) dynasty. I believe that these pages are original because they relate to what is already found in other texts of the Tang dynasty. On this text and on that of Gunabhadra I find interesting, although incomplete, the critical opinion of Alan Cole in his Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism, University of California Press 2009. How are his theories based but, also, they collide with the scrolls found in Dunhuang. On the basis of what I am demonstrating, it can be seen that the invention of the Ch'an lineage and teaching is an undeniable and habitual fact, but that this has not, however, invalidated the existence of a Dharma taught and lived since ancient times in the School of Meditation., Dharma that has matured over the centuries and also been exchanged with others. Moreover, the follies of Zen are more than intelligible on the basis of a superior logic; I have already written on this subject by defining three protocols of human communication.

[2] Anyone familiar with the oriental art of encrypting teachings can see how - by comparing this further step added to a similar previous sentence - here a particular technique is specified to be practiced in the

dark and in a state of immobility. The result is the appearance of a diffused light, in which particular experiences as well as scenes can manifest themselves, thus constituting an instruction known in the Tibetan dzogchen tradition as mannagdé (snsr upadesha) or, more precisely, yang thig. This will be explained further on in the text.



祖弘忍大師

The Second Source: The Fifth Patriarch Hóngrěn and the Secret of Zen Meditation Contained in the Meditation Sutra

Before the advent of the sixth patriarch Huìnéng, his predecessor Hóngrěn defined himself as a very cautious figure and distant from the clamor of the world; in fact the succession was a chaos that lasted several centuries between two different tendencies, the Southern Ch'an

led by Huìnéng[1] and the Northern one by Shénxiù, a teaching - the latter - which was then absorbed by the Tiantai school, and for many verses more comparable to the caodong teaching, i.e. soto. The Dharma of the fifth patriarch Hóngrěn was a Northern Zen with still a strong Indian imprint, a Zen in my opinion that needs to be explored carefully to understand a founding root of this Buddhist approach, a root that is even before the zazen-koan-mondō scheme -hua tou[2], or the typical formula that the history of Zen has presented to us over the centuries, precisely, from Huìnéng onwards.

Zen has always been considered as the School of Meditation and being that even the fifth patriarch agreed with this address, perhaps it is important to understand what this meditation was. And this is where the jaw drops.

By his direct, public assertion, seated meditation of the Zen school must be practiced precisely following the Sutra on Contemplation of Buddha Amitayus, of which I report the first moment relating to instruction in meditative practice, which I will comment shortly.

Second part and ninth chapter of the Sutra

Buddha then replied, “You and all beings should make it your sole aim, with one-pointed mind, to perceive the eastern quarters. Of course, you will ask how this perception is formed. Now I will explain it to you. All beings, unless impaired from birth, have sight, and they all see the setting sun. You should sit properly, look in the western direction, thus preparing your thought for a meditation that brings you closer to the sun; cause your mind to be fixed firmly upon it so that you have a motionless and unhesitating perception by a concentration of mind solely placed on the setting sun, as it is about to disappear but still appears as a red suspended drum.

After you have thus contemplated the sun, let its image remain clear and well fixed, both with your eyes closed and open. This is the Perception of the Sun, which is the first meditation”[3].

Before going into the history of the connection between the Zen tradition and that of the pure land, which is inspired by this sutra, I would like to underline the consideration that Hóngrěn has for this practice which is recommended here as the most essential Zen meditation.

I think this information can make us better understand, once again, a true essence related to birth, but also to an everlasting essence of Zen.

Let us return to what was said about the transition from Hóngrěn to Huìnéng, the fifth and sixth patriarch. As already mentioned in the previous note, the historical sources available to us today are controversial as to whether the patriarchate was conferred or recognized on Huìnéng or Shénxiù. The fact is that the Altar Sutra is the only text in Chinese that was accepted in the Chinese Buddhist tripitaka, that is, in the collection of sacred Buddhist Mahayana texts. However if - as also appears in the Altar Sutra - Huìnéng represented the continuity of the chán for the following centuries, we can see the philosophical turning point of all this where, in his teaching, enlightenment is achieved mysteriously, certainly not gradually; both because it is innate, and because it occurs in an eternal instant that happens in a person's life on a certain day, it is true, but not because of an ascetic effort or an accumulation of favorable conditions. Hence, according to Huìnéng, dhyana does not produce prajna, and that this was placed at the foundation of Zen with the practice of zazen, silent, naked, open meditation.

To the difference felt and desired by the sixth patriarch Huìnéng on the basis of his understanding of the Diamond Sutra, were added the methodological variables devised by his descendants. All of them wanted to make the concept of Prajna-not-produced even more strongly so that it was understood by the Chinese mentality, precisely because the fact of enlightenment-not-dependent-on-the-practice-of-meditation was apparently not immediately perceptible in the operational approach that reached the fifth patriarch. Nonetheless, the practice of meditation, as intended by Hóngrěn, reminds us of something.

Various techniques called sun-gazing, phosphenism, etc. have recently been published on the internet, which teach how to stimulate the brain and the hypothalamus, and therefore new endocrine secretions, thanks to the contemplation of light or, preferably, sunlight[4], exercises that arouse my concern, such as the various attempts to feed on light. In truth, even with a continued stay in the dark this effect can be generated, which would explain why Bodhidharma meditated in a cave and with his face against the wall.

How can I afford such speculations? This could be asked by those who are not aware of the latest archaeological and historical discoveries, and those who do not know the specific Persian, Tibetan and Indian teachings; but above all the now acclaimed fact of a historical and methodological connection between Chinese Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism or, let us be more precise, between Zen and dzogchen, as reported by the scrolls found in the Dunhuang oasis in the desert of Gobi[5].

Since the day of the discovery, first the orientalist and sinologist Stein, and then Kvaerne, with their respective teams, have begun to translate, roll after roll, Buddhist, Manichaeic, Taoist, Nestorian and Confucian texts; striking was the fact that these texts were found in a Buddhist context, as if comparison with other religions were normal.

Not only that, even the Tibetan sources document a history of these interweavings that lasted for centuries; entire lineages of dzogchen,

from the council of Samye onwards, have been penetrated by the hansen moheyan doctrine, i.e. by the oshang mahayana, the elderly mahayana masters; the etymogenesis of this word, although not yet completely clear, by now we know that it concerns Zen.

Intuitively, the Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci compared the Chinese term tsochán (= seated meditation) to dzogchen[6], due to a simple assonance; certainly an undue etymological equation, but also the demonstration that Tucci had intuited or, perhaps, already knew something.

The fact is that in the practice of dzogchen the sector defined as mannagdé (snc upadesha) also contains a set of practices of concentration on sunlight.

At the same time, the semdé sector of dzogchen teaching contains the practice of sitting meditation as it is precisely taught in the northern school of Chinese Zen.

Furthermore. The connection between the Ch'an school and the pure land school is a fact that dates back in time and not only, as has been thought until recently, related to the Sung period, where the two schools shared the worship of Buddha Amitabha but, apparently, much older. Moreover, the third Zen school - besides Rinzai and Soto - present today in Japan, the obaku school, contains the cult of Amitabha in its teaching.

Every side consideration that we add seems to always go in the same direction.

The two archetypal Buddhas Amitayus and Amitabha are etymologically related, the first to Life and the second to Light, thus defining themselves as two hypostases of the solar-illuminative archetype; it seems to me that the first is related to the evocation of the vitalistic power, defined in Japanese as joriki, the second to the saving power defined as tariki. Joriki is an early but important moment in the development of the Zen practitioner and means the development of will, character strength and life energy, while tariki has to do with the devotional opening to the soteriological function of Buddha Amitabha, called in Chinese Amitufo and in Japanese Amida.

Somehow Amitabha has to do with the awakened nature that is innate in all beings, which must certainly be ritualized or recognized before being realized; if it is true that the commoner cannot understand how he can already be Buddha, he can nevertheless understand that Buddha will save him even if he is not a shin of a saint. In this sense that is why it is customary to invoke Amitabha to be reborn in the Pure Land of the West, even if the priests of this cult let leak the very congruous, even if apparently romantic, fact that the entrance to the Pure Land is suspended in the drop of dew waiting on the leaf of grass for the first ray of sunshine.

Amitayus, on the other hand, is the object of worship particularly in Tibet, as a deity who gives long life, I myself received several times the initiation of this deity according to different lineages, as well as I received it from Amitabha, particularly linked to the practice of po-wa , or great transfer, one of the six yogas of Naropa[7] and, curiously, also related to Avalokiteshvara (T. Chenrezig) both emanating from the Dewachen (snc. Sukhavati) heaven.

I fondly remember my visit to a Ch'an temple in San Francisco's Chinatown, where zazen, the classic Zen seated meditation, was practiced, and during the meditative walk, between sessions, a praise was sung to the saving power of Amitabha's vow and it was explained how this was implanted as an eternal seed in us. The practitioners of this cult, many of them laymen, were endowed with a very comforting sweetness. Likewise, I recall with pleasure my visit to the main temple in Japan of the Jodo-Shinsu, the Hongagnji in Kyoto, where I chatted amiably with an elderly practitioner, as well as with pleasure I recall the chanting of the sutras at the butsudan - the family shrine - of a group of amidists where I was invited to officiate, despite being a monk of the Zen school.

I would add that around and in the temples of the obaku school, where the cult of Amida is practiced within the daily discipline of Zen, there is an air of peace unique in the world.

Elsewhere I summarized the meaning of the Zen discipline as follows:

Notoriously Zen is:

Kyoge betsuden: a living communion without the need for doctrines,

Furyu monji...so beyond the canonical scriptures,

Jikishi ninshin... who aiming directly at the heart,

Kensho jobutsu... self-reveals directly the nature of my enlightened being (Buddha).

All this informs the practice that in Zen it has three precise and indispensable purposes:

Joriki, or the development of concentration given by meditation, the influence of the Masters and the strength of character.

Kensho-godo, or realization of awakening-Kensho as peak of original experience and finally as original reality-Satori without return.

Mujodo no taigen, or full realization of Satori as daily life.

Precisely this dry and very essential presentation, beyond what is explained there, wants us to understand the quality of the Zen spirit, the same quality that we find in it from the very beginning thanks to the silent and ascetic figure of Bodhidharma.

Note:

[1] From the end of the 8th century Huìnéng was accepted as the Sixth Patriarch by all the Chán schools, and thus all the current schools go back to his two putative heirs, Nányuè Huáiràng and Qīngyuán Xīngsī. Yet neither of these Masters is mentioned as his heir in the older writings; yet Shénhuì's campaign was so successful that it became an implicit obligation to claim descent from Huìnéng. Three other pupils continued as many lineages descended from the sixth patriarch: Shénhuì, Nányáng Huìzōng, Yǒngjiā Xuánjué. We also add three other self-styled descendants - but in this case of the fifth Hóngrěn patriarch - who would be Faru, Xuanze and, known to all, Shénxiù, all in competition with Huìnéng. Seeing this, one understands how lineages were negotiated in China and often rewritten according to the needs of posterity; I have already explained how these facts invalidate neither the meaning nor the scope of the Chinese Zen teaching.

[2] The Mondō is the ritualization of meetings with the master where we ask him, often in public; conversely, koans are questions asked by

the Master to the Student who must give an answer, privately. The hua tou is instead the very root of the koan, where the practitioner brings with him the sentence of a sutra or a question, for example "Who is it that..." walks, drinks, etc., thus creating with ever greater subtlety the "great doubt".

[3] The Contemplation Sutra of Buddha Amitayus, called the Meditation Sutra, is considered one of the canonical sutras by all Pure Land schools, while the other sutras are the Sukhavati-vyuha and the Abbreviated Sukhavati-vyuha. The first translation into English was by J. Takakusu and was published as Volume XLIX of The Sacred Books of the East series (Oxford, 1894) which has been republished by Dover Publications. This source was also deservedly cited by Leonardo Arena in Anthology of Ch'an Buddhism, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1994 Milan

[4] These exercises must be practiced with extreme caution and for a very limited time to avoid serious consequences.

[5] See, The International Dunhuang Project and in particular, derived from the analysis of these scrolls, the ch'an studies of Yanagida Seizan, Iriya Yoshitaka and Tanaka Ryōshō; in particular of the latter we have the study-guide Tonko zenshū bunken no kenkyū, or "Studies on Documents Concerning Zen from Dunhuang".

[6] The Religions of Tibet, Giuseppe Tucci, Mediterranean Editions, Rome 1983.

[7] The six yogas of Naropa (T. Naro-cho-yung or the six dharmas of Naropa) are a group of Indo-Tibetan initiatory techniques transmitted within the kargyupa lineage. However the guiding technique of inner heat (T. dumo), is practiced in a simplified but always incisive way in the ruxan and semzin teachings of the Tibetan dzogchen lineages and is also taught by Hakuin - although retranslated from the pranic energy sphere to that of qi - with the Elixir So technique. In this same text, however, I also expound the technique of inner warmth, dumo, as given in the dzogchen tradition.



The Third Source: The Zhenzhou Pǔhuà Light Body and the Fuke School

During the Tang dynasty, Línjì Yìxuán (... – 867) – or Rinzai – in a climate of imperial antipathy, found himself managing very crowded monasteries, where people of all origins and wealth often went to survive the famine; this is where a typical term that Rinzai often used comes from: monks-bags-of-rice. Being a stern man and having a difficult task to perform, Rinzai impressed everyone with his frown and

even allowed himself on various occasions to be standoffish with the imperial dignitaries.

At night, however, his laughter kept the neighborhood awake, it is said, for many leagues.

Over the centuries, the Rinzai school began to specify itself as the koan school that emphasized sudden enlightenment, while the Soto school specified itself as the silent practice school more focused on innate enlightenment, although both cultivated both aspects of awakening.

When Zhenzhou Pǔhuà appears in the text *Línjì Lù* (jap. Rinzai Roku), he immediately assumes that function of illuminating variable which in the rest of the text is instead of Rinzai, which in those instants fades into the background. And here Pǔhuà lies down at the entrance to the temple to nibble on vegetables and when Rinzai says contemptuously just like donkeys these bray unrepentant[1]. Or twice at a dinner offered by a wealthy benefactor, after a discussion with Rinzai, Pǔhuà kicks the table overturning food and furnishings. Nota Bene: there hadn't been sixty-eight or Hollywood filmography, then, and any strange behavior was considered insane and immediately ostracized. Up to the story of the one-piece suit that we report below.

Therefore, from Rinzai's respect for Pǔhuà, it can be deduced that he was an important companion of Rinzai and that he had the task of determining an important variable in the story, of creating an additional shock, a fact relating to the imponderable and therefore to

the awakening, emerging from the narration in an emblematic way, in the direct expression that belongs to the enlightened individual.

In fact, the ghost of Pūhuà reached Japan in the 19th century, in a moment that saw the foundation of a sub-school of rinzai-shu which was a bit secular and a bit hermitic, called the fuke school, since in Japanese this is how the name Pūhuà reads: Fu-ke.

This school sprouted from the Rinzai line of Tōfuku-ji temple - a temple that was founded by Takuan Soho - in the 18th century, until it reached the 19th century; curious is the fact that Takuan Soho constitutes the fifth source of the naikan.

The monk-priests of the fuke school - the komusō - are essentially yamabushi, i.e. mountain hermits, who practice a musical meditation called suizen, or blowing meditation; they play honkyoku melodies, i.e. relating to the breaking of individuality in the whole, with a bamboo cane flute, which gives off a deep, low and plaintive sound.

Playing this instrument causes a powerful lowering of the diaphragm, creating an immediate vase effect, if we call that the effect of meditation when practiced for a long time, as well as of a breathing technique known in Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism as kumbhaka.

The creation in the navel area of the vessel, or the alchemical flask-athanor, is a prerequisite of exceptional importance, both for the suizen and for the naikan. As an idea it resembles that of recharging the dantien, even if the vase (swadishtan/nabi) pertains to the prāṇa, while the dantien to the qi. We'll talk more about that shortly.

Let us add that, by virtue of what has been said about the contemplation of sunlight with regard to the fifth patriarch Hóngrěn, the baskets carried on the head by the shakuachi komusō players are not accidental, and that they were not only used to isolate themselves but, above all, to leave filter and refract the sunlight so that it could be contemplated by the players of this instrument perfectly suited to evoke the deepest breath.

To introduce the character, here is the account of how Pǔhuà received progeny from his Master: “When Panshan Baoji, the Master of Pǔhuà, was too old, he said to the monks, “Is there anyone among you who can capture my semblance?”

Many monks made a memorial portrait of Panshan, but none was to his liking.

The monk Pǔhuà stepped forward and said, “I really can draw.”

Panshan said, “Oh yeah? Why don't you show me?”

Zhenzhou Pǔhuà somersaulted, turned around and went out.

Seriously Panshan said, "One day, that guy will teach the whole universe with his madness!" thus designating him as his descendant.

After saying these words, Panshan died.

The account of the manifestation of the light body of Zhenzhou Pǔhuà:

“One day Pǔhuà, strolling through the streets, asked every citizen he met for a one-piece suit. Many - thinking of a long Chinese dress - offered him one in his size, but Pǔhuà politely rejected them all with a bow, shaking his head and sighing.

Línjì [Rinzai] told the temple administrator to prepare a coffin, and when Pǔhuà returned, the Master greeted him thus: "I have had a beautiful one-piece garment prepared for you." Pǔhuà, happy, shouldered the coffin and went about the streets shouting, “Rinzai made me a beautiful one-piece garment. I'm going to the Eastern Gate to leave this existence.” All the citizens flocked to see what the Master was about to do.

“Well, no... I would say no”. Pǔhuà thought about it aloud “Not today”, and turned on his heel “...But tomorrow - by the Gods - I will really go to the Southern Gate to leave this existence. Here you are!” But after doing the same thing for three days no one believed him anymore. On the fourth day, not a single person followed him, so Pǔhuà went outside the city walls with his beautiful coffin and finally asked a passerby to nail its lid with him inside. The passer-by complied but, frightened, he called the guards in a loud voice and so the news spread around the city, and people ran to open the coffin... But Pǔhuà was no longer there. His body was gone. Only the ringing of his bell could be heard which seemed to come from space, above the heads of the crowd; in the sky the jingle kept ringing and echoing, but farther and farther and farther away. To which everyone saluted Master Zhenzhou Pǔhuà's passing with a bow”[2].

It is incredible to note how this story of Master Zhenzhou Pǔhuà's passing has been under everyone's eyes until today and that no one has ever considered that it was about the realization of the Body of Light, a well-known theme in the Tibetan tradition and in Taoist shamanism. About the Tibetan tradition we read from the biography of Drugpa Kunley, another mad saint like Zhenzhou Pǔhuà, that he instructed and followed the liberation of an elderly lay practitioner who manifested the body of light - or rainbow - with the same effect of echo in space, as narrated by the sound of the bell of Pǔhuà which comes from everywhere.

Note:

[1] In this way Zhenzhou Pǔhuà shows that he is beyond the rules, but Rinzai indirectly reproaches all the monks by showing them - rebuking Pǔhuà - that they must not repeat the same thing; he can, as awakened, therefore without breaking any rule or vow, in fact while reproaching him Rinzai lets him do it.

[2] I have slightly fictionalized these two biographical stories relating to Pǔhuà, without changing their meaning in any way, just to make the spare but evocative style of the Chinese original usable.



The Fourth Source: The Kamakura Era or the First Martial Variable

China, especially through the mediation of Korea, had been present in Japan for centuries well before Buddhism arrived there. Taoism and Confucianism were already part of the civilization and culture of the rising sun and formed the background for the cult of the emperor and national destiny.

Buddhism, as always, fascinated by the enormous variety of methodological directions, by the always fascinating and elusive philosophies, by the iconography and by the literature. But the most important aspect that stamped Buddhism in Japan was the strength of character of its ascetics plus the meeting with the request for magic by the people and the authorities, to which the ascetics responded in terms of healing, divination, exorcism and development of perceptual skills.

When the first Zen masters arrived in Japan, the samurai soon understood that this teaching could be a source of strength and fighting skills, as well as opening up in them a deep inner space for research that passed through the war and that did not demand from them a even the slightest understanding of what he was not given to understand. Zen, to put it bluntly, was the only form of Buddhism that did not reproach the samurai; in fact, the Zen teaching requires the warrior to be – him! - dead, and therefore only therefore allows him to kill other warriors in a cruel game which, however, has no hatred, but which results in a unique flowering of courage and strength.

Perfectly related to the warrior way of budo, there is a philosophical but also operational principle of Zen practice defined as Mu Shin[1] which centers both the sense of meditation and that of perfect action, an intuition generically translated in Buddhism with the term emptiness or emptiness , in Japanese ku.

The famous samurai Myamoto Musashi states the following in his chapter The Book of Emptiness (Ku), contained in the Book of Five Rings: “Emptiness is called ku, emptiness is that which we cannot know. Yet the void does not mean that we are faced with 'nothing'. Those who know the 'peak' also know the void[2]. Often when people have not understood and therefore are empty of understanding, they think that is the ku, but it is their reasoning that is illusory.

(...) The good is in the void. When a neophyte practices, he thinks he has discovered the true way, whether it has been glimpsed in the world or in religion, but only when he takes the path completely sincerely, only then, illusions fall and reality is definitively revealed. And behold, on the day when the purpose is fulfilled, only then will one understand the meaning of ku.”

As has been said, the Buddhism of the Chinese Masters was difficult and almost incomprehensible to the illiterate samurai. After decades of effort, and notes of understanding each other, Chinese masters began to develop topics for koan questions and teachings that would be intelligible to these rugged men-of-war. The Chinese language reads the same ideograms with other sounds that are read very well in Japanese too, but certain concepts typical of Buddhism had to be made natural, since in fact they are much more so than most philosophical ideas or any other religious assumption of the East or of the West. Buddhism would have no frills, as it looks naked at reality and welcomes it for what it is but, nevertheless, Buddhism expresses itself through the methods useful for developing understanding and remaining in that vibrant but silent state from which the realization of awakening gushes

.

The values felt by the samurai were courage, lack of fear of death, pride and absolute dedication, and the Chinese Masters began to dialogue through these values, and to use the sense of embarrassment, which is a particular note of the Japanese mentality, to create a number of facilitated explanations and unsettling koan-paradoxes useful for the realization of the spiritual treasure.

How to metaphorically explain the importance of emptiness to a warrior? Certainly thanks to the guard of sword fighting, because the blow can only enter if the opponent's guard opens. And when does it happen? When the opponent inhales.

The bamboo is empty, the sky is empty, the sack is empty, yet they are useful precisely because they are all empty, and when they are full of things or phenomena, the flight of birds or clothing and food, they are full only because at the same time they are empty.

When the opponent inhales he has a moment of hesitation, it's inevitable, and that's where you can enter with the blow, then what is full enters what is empty.

That's why the samurai remain motionless on guard, they make their post waiting even for hours, like a cat and mouse, waiting for the first one to inhale, and thus have his moment of hesitation.

In the Zen mentality we can say that hesitating is like the devil for Christians.

When we hesitate, we lose the great doubt - if we are neophytes - or the eternity that we have glimpsed, and we become vulnerable to the small, pathetic doubts dictated by our uncertainty as small entities lost... in eternity.

In combat there is another possibility, even more subtle and successful, and it concerns the warrior's inner emptiness which enters the adversary's emptiness even more effectively, moving and cutting without resistance, quickly and deeply.

This in battle is difficult to implement, especially when danger surrounds the warrior and it is enough for the blade of his sword to plant itself once in the opponent's body to leave the warrior unarmed and at the mercy of the enemies, while trying to remove the blade from the body of the enemy. For this reason each blow must be measured and also passing, because it must strike flowing from one contact to another without landing, whether the blows have been parried or held, or whether they have struck the enemy; seamless.

Fencing with the Japanese sword, unlike the western saber, imposes a millimeter calculation of the measures, both in the guard and in the distance that separates the contenders. While with the Western saber, calculating the distance wrong, one is wounded, probably grazed or slightly touched by the tip, if the measurements are wrong, in Japanese

fencing one is hit by one of the four vertical slashes and, almost certainly, killed on the spot.

In Japanese fencing you don't try to strike the opponent by exchanging horizontal blows, rapier, looking for the gap in his guard, but the duelists are incumbent on each other to immediately deliver a decisive blow.

We have seen how what has thickness can wait for the optimal conditions to enter through an empty passage, and here we are still in the physical dimension, among material phenomena; but there is also the possibility of passing through the void thanks to the void itself, a possibility brought about by a great concentration and a great intimacy with everything. But what about those who manage to enter, empty, into what is often, or directly into what makes physical resistance? My personal experience is that then the perception of time changes, and that it can also happen in a movement that lasts a few hundredths of a second. At one point you pass through your opponent's guard as if it didn't even exist.

And it is in this eternal instant that we go beyond time, yet physically passing through, within time, and this is how, precisely at the moment when we should fear for our lives, instead everything resets and we pass unharmed.

I want to mention the experience of Omori Roshi, a contemporary master of Zen, as well as calligraphy and swordsmanship. One day, at

the end of a very intense martial meditation retreat, during which sacred texts are repeated screaming for days, he begins to perceive himself differently than usual; while he rests at the end with the other participants, for fun, he takes a stick and pretends sword blows in slow motion; raising the sword has a new emotion. As he raises his sword, according to his own words, all the world rises and when the sword falls, all the world descends. Strange, right? But the practical result of this experience will be even more unpredictable.

From that day Omori, who was the Master of the Imperial Guard, with every blow he will deal to one of his pupils during sporting combat, even though the blow is blocked by the appropriate mask and cuirass, will see the pupil crush to the ground due to the terrible blow , as if it were given by an enormous hand and arm, as if an unbearable weight pressed it towards the ground.

In this sense, when such an overcoming of human limits occurs, as it can be said that the satori of Zen practice can be achieved, the same can also be said of an art such as that of the sword, when this is cultivated as a way of spirit.

We have two documents, the Hoomeishu - the Collection of the Phoenix Song - in the archives of the Kenninji temple, and the Undaigendan - the Speeches of the Cloud Throne - from the archive of the Nanzenji temple, which report the same koans adapted to the warrior and Japanese mind, traced back as early as the year 815, the year in which the dialogue between the empress Tachibana, wife of the emperor Saga, and the Chinese Zen master Giku took place.

So the koans written for the samurai were used from the dawn of Zen in Japan, then they were systematized in the sixteenth century and finally, after the work of Hakuin and his contemporaries and descendants, Zen having now entered the culture, they were forgotten.

In all this story what happened to the soto school? To tell the truth, several Soto Masters showed themselves capable of responding to the koan that anyone who wanted to ask them, after all Dogen, the founder of Japanese Soto Zen, practiced the koan for a long time and also taught them, and made their use continue in the school I know that, still for four generations after him, he used them.

From Shonan-katto-roku, a text that collects many koans of the Kamakura period, I will now quote three koans that can give an idea of the style of Zen of the samurai, the ninth, thirty-third and fifty-fourth koans [3].

The first koan deals with the case of a monk who carried away a statue of Bodhisattva Jizo, which could not pass through the door and which weighed three hundred kilos, during the devastating war of 1331, in which they used to burn even temples.

The two koan questions documented in the text are:

Are not you all men of immense strength? Try it, so load a three hundred kilo Jizo on your back! How do you get a five-metre statue through a two-and-a-half-high door? speak!

The second koan tells of a feral cat who became a kind of ghostly golem that terrorizes the population, a vampire who penetrates the collective unconscious by embodying uncertainties and fears.

Then, in 1505, the Zen Master Yakkoku drew the effigy of the cat in his temple and promised Katsu with a scream to kill it: "As I drew it, so I will kill it with a katsu, so that fear vanishes from people's hearts" . He screamed as he simultaneously tore up the effigy. On the same day a woodcutter heard a cry in the woods and revived the huge dead cat.

The two koans of the case ask:

Why rip a drawing screaming Kuatsu?. Does it kill a really living monster?

That cat-demon is roaming, enraged, among the people at this moment, bewitching and killing. Kill him immediately with a kuatsu, demonstrate now.

The third koan concerns the fact that, as I said, all the founders of the different schools of Japanese Buddhism were monks of the university school of Buddhism, the Tendai; because of this they were able to organize rituals for the benefit of those who needed support. In this case it was a noblewoman who was about to give birth and who asked for the intervention of Eisai, the proto-founder of the Rinzai school in Japan. He performed all the fire ritual [4] precisely, as prescribed in the Tendai or Shingon schools, and indeed the noblewoman had a perfect birth.

The fact is that two centuries later the nephew of the same nobleman presents himself to a descendant of Eisai - who, however, knew nothing of the fire ritual - and makes the same request.

The latter does not lose heart and instead of performing a ritual according to the precise ritualistic canons of other schools, he performs a goma ritual in a Zen version; he lights the precious sacrificial sticks of sandalwood and Aquilaria, inhales the smoke of the sacrifice, and shouts "I'm leaving easy! I leave easy! I leave very easy!" getting a perfect birth.

Here are the questions:

Say: what is goma really?

Leaving aside childbirth for the moment, are the goma of the esoteric schools and Zen goma the same thing or two different things?

If the same thing is wrong and if two different things is wrong, come forward and say what is right.

Suppose someone asks you right now to pray for a happy birth, what would you do?

As can be understood, they are three koans, like many others of that period, based on the strength and expression of this. In the last one we see how the theme of magic is addressed, and how this can be interpreted in a completely Zen way.

This koan highlights the importance or transformative power of the scream, which is also an essential part of koan training, as well as of Zen naikan.

It is no coincidence that I have placed the characters Mu Shin at the beginning of the chapter to designate a formula often used as characters of consecration and healing used by Zen monks: No Mind.

Thus, here is how calligraphy is employed as a direct graphic expression of an archetype, and here is howling as an audible expression of this, since Zen does not use mediations.

Note:

[1] China. Wu Shin. Zen's major contribution to the samurai way is expressed in the concept mushin no shin (the mind of mindlessness). With this dowry the warrior 'empties' his mind and becomes immune to any external influence. This expression refers to a mind that is always active, flexible and capable of acting without letting itself be hindered by obstacles that would be fatal for a swordsman. An essential prerequisite is the achievement of a mental state that goes beyond simple physical technique, a faculty that could be defined as spiritual power or sixth sense. The swordsman who fails to develop this skill will never achieve mastery. The samurai must transcend mere technique. Donn F. Draeger, Robert W. Smith, Asian Fighting Arts, Kodhansa International, Tokyo, 1981.

[2] Here peak means satori (enlightenment). Of course, by realizing satori one really knows the meaning of emptiness; and in fact, immediately afterwards, he repeats the concept.

[3] Samurai Zen, Trevor Legget, ed. Astrolabio Ubaldini, Rome 2004.

[4] [snscrib. ahoma, jap. rubber.](#)



The Fifth Source: Takuan Sōhō or the Second Martial Variable

Takuan Sōhō (1573 – 1645) was born into a family of mountain farmers, near Izushi. He entered a temple of the Jodo school – of the Pure Land – as a monk and began practicing Rinzai Zen at the age of fourteen thanks to Shun-oku Soen.

He became abbot of the Daitokuji temple in Kyoto and, returning from a period of exile, became a friend of the new shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa whose esteem and protection he gained and, thanks to whose support, he founded the Tōkaiji temple in Edo. Takuan's most important work, the Fudōchi shinmyōroku, is dedicated to the art of the sword, understood as a spiritual path. It is said that he was the master of the most famous samurai of the time: Musashi Miyamoto, to whom he taught double sword fighting. A calligrapher, painter and tea master, he invented takuan, a way of fermenting radish into a particularly nutritious protein snack.

Now I comment on a famous text by Takuan, for the benefit of those who practice martial arts with a spiritual intent.

Taia

“Do you want to get All This?

While walking, stopping, sitting or lying down,

while you converse or remain silent,

while you take tea or eat rice,

you must never neglect to practice,

your eye must always turn immediately to the goal

and you must continually search deeply, both going and coming.

Only then should you look straight into things.

The months and years will pass

and it will seem to you that a light suddenly appears in the dark.

You will receive wisdom without any Master revealing it to you

and you will find yourself possessing uncanny abilities to do things never attempted before.

This last detail does not deviate from what is ordinary,

yet it transcends it.

Giving it a name I call this "Taia".

My comment

Do you want to get All This?

Not doing wu wei is a concept that has greatly intrigued spiritual seekers but which, fundamentally, is not a concept.

Wu wei is an experience thanks to which we are simply and spontaneously expanded in life, expanded in understanding the perfection of everything that happens, even when something annoys us and contravenes our wishes.

In the practice of Rinzai Zen you don't invent mawkish allocutions such as meditation which is useless because not-doing is already part of life and if you are truly practicing it is perfectly contained even in the broadest, or strongest, or most diligent effort.

Breathing is useless from the point of view of wu wei, since not-doing works by itself, since the universe never does anything, while everything happens by itself.

So All This is the legacy of each of us.

Perhaps achieving would sound better than achieving but, nevertheless, it is really nice to use this verb that is so egoic - as some anemic spiritualist would define it - but which is nevertheless an active verb, which denotes a result, a purpose, a precise direction. In fact, Zen has no mediation, you don't have time to ask about it and the Zen Master has already put the key in your hand. But what is "All This"? I believe that it is the perception of the innate face, and it is therefore realizing-from-which-place-you-are-looking-at the spectacle of the world, and it is also realizing that that place is also the creator of all that we perceive and even of what we cannot perceive. Everything changes and everything is motionless. It is practiced by looking at the trees, but realizing that they are alive and that they look at us with our own eye wide open from eternity.

While walking, stopping, sitting or lying down, while conversing or remaining silent, while having tea or eating rice,

And this, All This, must always be achieved, continuously, beyond any opposing force, because there are, in reality, no reasons for not realizing satori: for its part, satori has always awaited us. In a sense we enlighten through all things, for enlightenment-as-concern disappears the moment we join, that is, we are all things in the movement of all things. Only in this way enlightenment does not exist or satori is overcome in the Tataghatagarba, that is, in the original enlightenment; but before this understanding it behooves us to be a little more careful in saying approximate things that can be taken as true. While conversing you can

only get lost in listening and uttering words that have no echo, or that are only an echo.

...you must never neglect to practice, your eye must always turn immediately to the goal and you must continually search deeply, both going and coming.

This discourse would seem to refer to the formation of the great doubt, given that great doubt = great satori, even if the great doubt would be a passing moment, given that the great doubt must become a great inclusion of everything that finally matches with our gaze/eye /face. Otherwise a common doubt is of no use but remains only an obsessive torment about something. Instead, in a niveous silence produced by meditation, the great existential question finally manifests itself, yes, but which carries within it the very silence of its own answer, the solution of satori.

To go means to go out, to come means to enter, and this concerns in the terminology used by Rinzai the fact that when we meditate we enter the perception of the Universe $0 = 1$, while when we have finished the meditation and get up we go out into the experience of the Universe as $\infty = n$ (the complete formula is $0 = 1 = \infty = n$). Thus: while meditating we are in the universe but through the witness that is in ourselves, while in action it is the whole universe that bears witness to our state of dynamic absorption in/with everything.

Only then should you look straight into things.

Only in this way does it mean that one ends up looking at everything from within; the Pure Witness, or the one who watches from us – after the first discovery

it turns out to be what he is watching in eternal amazement. The funny thing is, you don't do it on purpose. A great silence has invaded - since a beginningless time - every perception, as it always has.

Without doing it on purpose in not doing it, without doing it on purpose in letting it be as it is.

The months and years will pass and it will seem to you that a light suddenly appears in the dark. You will receive wisdom without any Master having revealed it to you and you will find yourself possessing mysterious abilities to do things never attempted before.

This makes no sense to comment on it, when it happens it's wonderful. Some people are born with this ability, others develop it. Some will only achieve it in certain activities that reconcile them with a certain emotional state, such as knitting, playing the guitar. While for those who are more determined, Taia will make itself manifest both in extreme situations as well as in the more everyday ones, both physically and intellectually.

This last detail does not deviate from what is ordinary, yet it transcends it. Giving him a name I call this Taia.

It is very ordinary, because it transcends everything; but it is not an opinion, a scientific discovery or a theological concept, it is just what it is, finally recognized from within. Instead of trusting or not trusting a method, a master, or circumstances, we allow ourselves to discover this ordinariness.

The mountains have not been mountains for quite a while, we tried to perceive them in a metaphysical way, we felt their powerful call, the call of the spiritual elsewhere; then, however, they go back to being our friendly mountains, just keep quiet by accepting eternity. Therefore every being is a Buddha beyond any doubt and beyond our preferences, expectations or concerns to make it so.



Miyamoto Musashi 宮本武蔵;

Miyamoto, 1584 - Higo, June 13, 1645

Taiaki

"The Annals of the Sword Taia"

by Takuan Soho

“It is assumed that because I am a

martial arts artist no

fight to win or lose.

I don't worry about strength and weakness.

I am unflappable.

The enemy does not notice me, nor I him.

Penetrating into a dimension where heaven and earth

are not yet distinct,

where Yin and Yang have not yet arrived,

I get an effect right away.

The man who knows uses the sword, but does not kill.

I am the man who knows how to use the sword to give life to others.

Who kills when necessary.

Who gives life when needed.

That when he kills he does it with absolute concentration,

like when he gives life.

Without thinking about good or bad

he is able to see good and evil.

Walk on water

it's like walking on dry land

and walk on dry land

it's like walking on water.

Yet these will not be mistaken,

nor blend in with anyone in the world.

Do you want to get All This?

While walking, stopping, sitting or lying down,

while you converse or remain silent,

while you take tea or eat rice,

you must never neglect to practice,

your eye must always turn

immediately to the goal

and you must always search hard,

both going and coming.

Only then should you look straight into things.

The months and years will pass

and it will seem to you that a light

suddenly appear in the dark.

You will receive wisdom

without any Master revealing it to you

and you will find that you possess mysterious abilities

in doing things never attempted before.

This last detail does not deviate from what is ordinary,

yet it transcends it.

Giving it a name I call this 'Taia'

All men are equipped with the Taia sword.

Those who understand this are feared

even from Mara the Tempter,

but those to whom this concept is obscure

they are overwhelmed by the talkers.

Two men who will compete to the sword

and they both have Taia's knowledge

they will never finish their meeting;

like when Shakyamuni holds the flower

and Kashyapa smiles enigmatically.

Distinguish weight differences with the naked eye

it is an example of common intelligence.

A man who understood this

he will never let you see the tip of the sword.

This is the essence of speed.

not even lightning is equal to it.

It disappears before the wind that,

fast, moves the storm.

If you don't understand, you will be embarrassed

and the edge of the sword will be spoiled.

This is not discovered either through mere impressions

nor for theoretical knowledge.

This cannot be communicated with words and speeches,

you don't learn it from any doctrine.

This is the law of special transmission

that goes beyond ordinary learning.

There are no pre-established rules

for this great ability to manifest itself.

It is ordinary action yet contrary action;

not even heaven can determine it.

What then is the nature of this ability?

When a house doesn't have a Pai Che painting[1]

it's like it has no ghosts

If a man is tested

and came to this principle

he will be able to control everything in the world with the sword alone.

The Taia sword does not tolerate negligence.”

Note:

[1] Pai Che is a mythological animal similar to the chimera: it is an animal with the body of a cow and the head of a man that represents the projective creativity of the mind. The paintings depicting Pai Che were placed at the entrance of the house so that he would feed on ghosts, dreams and misfortunes, thus discharging them. In this context, an Immutable Mind does not need a lucky charm.



The Sixth Source: Hakuin Ekaku and Internal Alchemy

Since we will deal with Hakuin in the chapters that will contain his two works, *Yasenkanna* and *Orategama*, and that, thanks to these, the Master will be able to present himself at his best, we now have to present him biographically and make the necessary preliminary considerations on the understanding of his entire system . Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1769) was also known as Zen Master Shinki

Dokumyō 神機独妙禅師 and also as National Master Shōshū 正宗國師, and regarded as the Reviver 中興の祖 chūkō no so of the Rinzai school, where the lineage which descends from him is the principal. We owe Hakuin the discovery of internal alchemy (Chinese neidan – Japanese naikan) in the Zen tradition, a very ancient legacy, according to what we have explained by quoting the historical sources in the past chapters. Hakuin was born into a samurai family and died in Hara at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The thing that may interest us is that despite having achieved satori, enlightenment, he ended up enormously stressed by the too extreme ascetic practice he had practiced up to then. Because of this, after every possible attempt by doctors, he sought the advice of the hermit Hakuyu.

It is from these antecedents that the meaning of the two texts that we propose is fulfilled. Hakuin only became famous after his death. Of him remain the reputation of scholar, writer, painter and calligrapher. In addition, he wrote a comment that we could define as humorous to the Heart Sutra, which says a lot about the style of this character.

He heavily opposed the teaching of Bankei Yotaku - the Dharma of the Unborn - reproaching the lack of intensity of the method, which was actually very evolved but not suited to the mentality of human beings, always in need of justly conquering and winning their prize.

Indeed, as predicted by Hakuin, Bankei's line ended upon his death. Despite this, Bankei is celebrated in Japan to this day, where every anniversary is marked, with collective celebrations and rituals, even by the line of descendants of Hakuin.

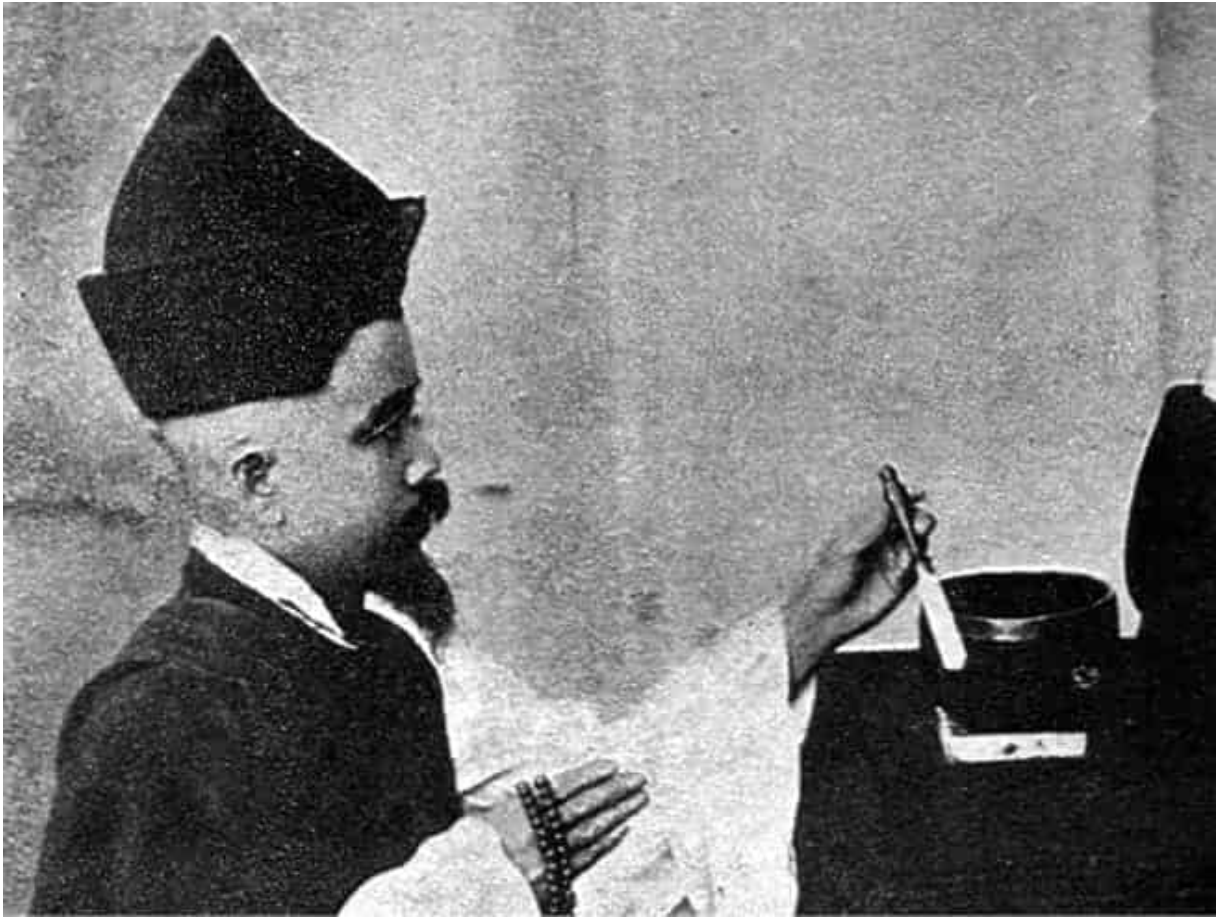
I want to report and comment on some considerations by Juhn Y. Ahn in his *Zen and the Art of Nourishing Life - Labor, Exhaustion, and the Malady of Meditation*[1]. In his *Yasenkanna* and other writings, Zen master Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769) uses two seemingly contradictory analogies to discuss the art of nourishing life (*yōjō*). First he states that the vital energy (*ki*) must be kept stored in the field of cinnabar (*dantien*); but from another point of view he affirms that this energy must be circulated by engaging in daily work, otherwise it will stagnate. A similar tension can be seen in the texts of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714) or in his well-known *Manual of Nourishment of Life*, the *Yōjōkun*. Although Shigehisa Kuriyama pointed to the industrious revolution and what he calls stagnation anxiety, which manifested itself throughout the Tokugawa era in the population of all walks of life, as a possible cause of such tension, this article will suggest a fundamental redefinition of the concept of work (*rō*) and, more specifically, considering certain typical practices of this period as a contributing factor motivating this development. Work, therefore, be it meditation or reading, must demonstrate a sense of self-mastery in order to be truly work, and to fail in this purpose would be to fall exhausted (*rō*), or into what Hakuin prefers to call *The Illness from Meditation* (*zenbyō*).

I leave this theme and others to consider for the reader, who refers me to the reading of the texts easily found on the net, in particular if he carries out intellectual work - as Hakuin did - which added, today, to the use of electronic calculators, wi-fi and the bombardment derived from telephony repeaters, constitutes a very tough challenge and must be won without delay; it is a challenge to be overcome in part with some technical cleverness, and then with the right meditative and energetic training, added to the necessary physical activity.

Elsewhere I will take the opportunity to list the practical solutions such as the various training sessions useful for the purpose, in the meantime allow me to point out that, for those who carry out intellectual work, it is very useful to have the ultramarine blue-indigo-violet colors around them, as well as visualize these colors and even get sprayed with them thanks to colored lamps. At least in this way you get rid of the tension of studying and so you are less attacked by sources of electromagnetic pollution.

Note:

[\[1\] Juhn Ahn is Assistant Professor in the Department and Center for the Study of Religion and in the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. The article is taken from the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 35/2: 177-229© 2008 Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture.](#)



The Seventh Spring: Kawaguchi Ekai - Kōno Daikei - Yamada Mumon. Internal Alchemy from the Meiji Era

Out of his disgust with the religious world and despite his luminous spiritual practice, Kawaguchi Ekai, then a young Japanese Tendai Buddhist hermit, set out on a fragmented pilgrimage to Tibet, India and Nepal to seek out the sources of the most ancient teachings and

mahayana sutras. He went to Nepal four times, in 1899, 1903, 1905 and 1913[1], and twice to Tibet, traveling from 1900 to 1902, and from 1913 to 1915. He did not know a word of Tibetan, nor of Hindi, as well as being very poor, having refused every subsidy offered to him by Japanese patrons. He became friends with Western orientalists, Tibetologists, lamas, shamans and esotericists. Back in Japan he helped heal a young monk suffering from tuberculosis, a man destined to become the very embodiment of Rinzai Zen in 20th century Japan, Yamada Mumon Roshi.

Arriving in Nepal, he fell in love with the Tibetologist Sarat Chandra Das, who also carried out espionage for the British, and soon began to study the local Newari and Vajrayana Buddhism. In the initial image we can see him with the Tibetan lama hat, while he sings the sutras in Japanese style, ritually playing a vertical bell.

In our narration, Kawaguchi Ekai represents the trait d'union between Hakuin's research and what new Mumon Yamada, who was a descendant of both, brought to the Rinzai school. Kawaguchi Ekai had a certain notoriety due to his asceticism and university teaching at the Taisho University [2], thus becoming one of the forerunners of Tibetological studies in Japan; his academic teaching was influenced by his direct experience of techniques of Tibetan esoteric Buddhism, the assiduous practice of which tired the young Mumon, but which also increased in him that exceptional strength, already created with Zen asceticism, which allowed him to live despite the illness.

The young Mumon, while attending the University of Toyo, resided at the Kawaguchi Ekai temple - the Monastery of the Snowy Mountain in

Nezu, near Tokyo - when he was now in his eighties; every morning Mumon looked after the temple, performed the rituals, then went to class, to return to study and then practice until late at night, only to wake up a few hours later, under the stimulus and severe supervision of Ekai's older brother, Hanzui[3]. Ekai had been a convinced vegetarian for decades and followed a precise diet by feeding on certain foods taken with a very precise timing; an extremely disciplined man he was, like all ascetics of the time, demanding towards his students and determined at any cost in obtaining from them at least the result of total dedication and intensity in practice.

At a certain moment, shortness of breath, swollen lymph nodes and a nefarious medical diagnosis encouraged Mumon to leave the monastery and return to his native country. Mumon's older brother, ended up dying of the same disease although his symptoms were far less severe; it was then that Mumon realized he was being crossed by an unusual current, and he understood it precisely in those days when he weighed thirty-seven kilos. Showing him her brother's ashes, the heartbroken mother asked Mumon not to cry so as not to weaken further.

Considering the severity of the symptoms but, nevertheless, the strength that pervaded him, Mumon understood that the practice under Kawaguchi's direction had given an exceptional result. The latter had taught him respiratory and esoteric practices, as well as following him in the practice of zazen; on this basis the time had come for Mumon to recover his health.

It was during this period that Mumon decided to meet another well-known healing monk, Kōno Daikei, priest of the Konchi-in temple in

Nagoya, who became his second Master. Mumon, in his autobiography, recounts that this meeting reminded him of Hakuin's meeting with the hermit Hakuyu, who taught the patriarch the practice of naikan.

Like many Zen monks, as a boy Mumon suspected that a monk who devoted himself to healing must surely deviate somewhat from the Zen line of behavior; often this kind of opinion, in the Japanese mentality, gets confused by taking definitive meanings and becoming an absolute assumption without any attention to the nuances, the meaning of the terms and the possible variables. Moreover, Kōno Daikei had a decidedly over the top behavior and an intriguing prophetic attitude; he was now famous and forced to escape the exorbitant number of patients, often terminally ill, continuously brought to the temple.

When he first met Mumon, Daikei addressed him thus: "Any priest or monk who gets sick and continues to stay sick is a false ascetic!" And then: "Your disease will not last any longer". And he nodded to him showing him three fingers. When Mumon looked at him doubtfully, and Daikei: "Don't you understand, sucker? I say that in three months you will be healed! Your internal organs are powerful, can you see it? They are the ones who are sending the disease out, and because of this, the lymph nodes get inflamed and swollen in your neck."

After three months of healing through energy, prayer, breathing and visualizations, having obtained the desired result, Daikei wanted to make sure that young Mumon knew what to do. With him he agreed that at the moment he could not continue his monastic training, but that he should devote himself to academic religious studies and then later resume his exercise with zazen and koan.

From that moment Mumon's health improved more and more, leading him to live up to eighty-eight years, he who seemed destined for a certain death. His vitality and cheerfulness were proverbial, and I can attest to the power with which he delivered the koan Mu during sanzen.

Mumon embodied the legacy of Hakuin Ekaku, detectable in the photos that portray him, with that strange grimace of the mouth, due to the arching of the tongue upwards, capable of closing the bioelectrical circuit that flows in the head.

Note:

[1] Three Years in Tibet, Kawaguchi Ekai, Theosophist Office, Madras 1909 <https://goo.gl/W8zdmW>

[2] New Mahāyāna Buddhism for a Post-modern World, Ryōmin Akizuki, Jain Publishing Company, Fremont CA 1990.

[3] My Spiritual Home, Autobiography by Yamada Mumon Roshi.



The Eighth Source: the Naikan of Strength found in You

Where does the naikan come from these days? It certainly returns in an unexpected but necessary way, as we need it more than ever. It may be precisely the naikan that brings the metaphysical essence back to all similar systems that are on the market today and that have been emptied to be conveniently sold.

Let's pay attention, these days, the gymnastic practice of yoga is increasingly affirming itself, probably because many carry out clerical jobs, and because we all need daily physical movement, to avoid the annoyances of too prolonged exposure to radiation from cell phones, and wi-fi routers; all forms of serious pollution that government organizations have already informed us about[1]; elsewhere we will deal better with this delicate matter[2].

Here, this already explains a lot about "where we are" and what problems we will increasingly find ourselves facing.

As has been said, the naikan is really precious, it was once used to heal those monks from excessive asceticism who would not have been saved even by the best doctor, today it will be used to enhance our resilience, to recreate our immune response.

The teaching of the Dharma is changing, as it has ceaselessly changed over the centuries. Buddhism is in history precisely to demonstrate how in civilization and religions, there is no evolution, nor is there a need for a traditionalist hold fast, but that continuous updating is necessary, so that practitioners of new times and worlds can approach the teaching, understanding it. The opposite of this is a museum or exotic Buddhism, based on the evocation of obsolete, if not counterproductive forms, precisely those forms that recall obsessive characters, those who adore proclamations and good intentions, who dress up in silky robes and who they love to be chased.

Following the aforementioned need to reconfigure the method, it is convenient for everyone to perceive the dependence on foreign religious hierarchies - Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese - as a problem, given the cultural distance and the inevitable misunderstandings, of which I have also witnessed.

The circumstance, in this sense, was more evident in person. Luigi Mario Engaku Taino, as I have already said, practiced with Master Yamada Mumon for several years, during which he also performed the function of personal attendant - a task which is considered as further training - until he obtained the consent to teach the series of koans and to the foundation of a temple; Yamada Mumon himself witnessed the founding of the Zenshinji Temple, which he named as the Temple of the Heart of Zen, just outside Orvieto, Italy.

Almost immediately, envy and doubts began in this regard, silenced by the authoritativeness of Yamada Mumon's choice, who knew well the qualities of Maestro Luigi Mario, who had carried out his training with such intensity as to be an example to the novices thanks to the strength of his practice.

Mumon Roshi knew and appreciated the West and even the Christian religion, as well as understood the level of humanity and the personality of each student, a somewhat mythologized but completely unusual ability among Eastern Masters. When I met Master Mumon, I saw an old man as steady as a rock and vital as a tiger.

But a few years later Master Mumon's health began to deteriorate; upon his death someone, without delay, uncritically collected the various slanders directed against Zenshinji's pupils, slanders of which we already knew the existence and origin.

Instead of understanding what happened, those who were responsible for it preferred to listen to those who - being of their own nationality - were seen as more credible only for this fact of identity.

Since this happened under the eyes of the incredulous pupils, the response of the Taino Master and his pupils took place with dignity, and the decision was not long in coming, which was unanimous in continuing the practice of the true Dharma without the aegis of a similar ecclesiastical patriarchate, by now seen as incompetent. Since then there have been signs of friendship from other brothers of the Master, including Sodo Harada Roshi, who has always been a friend of Zenshinji.

For my part I do not claim to be without error or even to hold definitive opinions on the matter, nor to hold a more sublime realization, but I assert a very simple right, which comes to me from four decades of practice, human experience and teaching in the West . Moreover, this would be the meaning that in Chinese Buddhism was transmitted with the term oshang, elder, which later became the word roso and then roshi in Japan. Provided that seniority is not a mere value, but

something alive that is recognized in the person, assuming that one has the eye to see it.

But this is yet another discussion.

It is typical of the Rinzai tradition that the Pupil, engaged in an enveloping as well as fatal asceticism, is called to roar his power in front of his Master; therefore in Rinzai Zen it is implicit that whoever begins the path of freedom is immediately responsible for it in deeds, and demonstrating his strength in this sense.

And so, I write this very short chapter to invite everyone to take their own responsibilities, to be a further source of the tradition of naikan as well as of Zen. In general, no one wonders what part he has in the tradition and therefore in the transmission of a lineage, because we generally consider ourselves too distant, culturally and chronologically, to be decisive in any way, and therefore out of habit we would like to be mere users.

But that can't be the case.

Both the teacher and the learner are both responsible.

And this is a consideration that I also owe to Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, from whom I received the six yogas of Naropa - Naro cho yung - which is considered a very secret teaching according to the Tibetan tradition, but which I had the honor of receiving completely from him, with even the comments and the possibility of being followed, receiving precise answers. If I'm not mistaken it was 1990 and I was in McLeod Ganj, Himachal Pradesh, India, at the Namgyal monastery.

On that occasion the Dalai Lama also gave us the instructions of a seventh yoga, now lost for centuries but recently rediscovered: the trojung, or the yoga of the pervasion of consciousness.

Dumo yoga - also called internal heat yoga - which is the main one among the six aforementioned yogas, requires a particular training in which a lot of bliss is produced, but which can also be risky, as the yogas of the body can certainly be risky. illusory and ejection of consciousness.

But despite this, the Dalai Lama himself insisted that the titles of the texts useful for practicing these top secret Tibetan yogas were known, and that these texts were shared among all.

I believe that Naikan Zen is much less dangerous, though equally powerful, and that it certainly should be prepared for our use, for us contemporaries.

For this reason I will extract the teaching of naikan from the writings of Hakuin Ekaku, the Yasenkanna and the Orategama, but also I will go on to expose the further articulations and refinements of a method that works today.

I encourage those who are interested to start their daily practice by following these pages and then, if they feel like it, to contact me or, if this is not possible or if they prefer to do otherwise, to contact anyone who can add more, or better explain the exercises I am showing here. . He can be a good yoga or qigong master, that is, someone who really does what he says and can prove it; this implies that you don't need a famous name, but someone really capable.

A true initiate who reads this book can understand it from beginning to end without difficulty.

I spoke of the dumo yoga - the yoga of internal heat - because it is a technique that is more than adjacent to the naikan, I would even say that it is a part of it or, better, a continuation of it, in the sense that it could be considered as a more precise form of the practice of Elixir So, taught by Hakuin in the Yasenkanna, even if the practice of Elixir So - on the basis of a good experience of joriki [3] - can be considered perfect in itself.

As happened to me with the Dalai Lama, I have had the good fortune to meet Masters devoid of jealousy, who always put the practitioner's benefit first; well, they too have shown me great kindness by teaching me the most secret practices of their traditions, probably because they saw in me the necessary seriousness and the desire to realize what was given to me.

Some of these teachers are originally from Japan, some from Tibet, China or India, while others are Western; yes, even Westerners, because many individuals have found the innate keys to knowledge within themselves. Every generation is born particularly gifted people who have specific gifts or legacies. I have to admit that they found me, given my natural laziness.

This system is called zen because it arises from the school where I am a minister of worship, as well as a teacher, and it is called naikan for the same reason, given that Hakuin, an unrivaled genius for culture, intuition and humour, reconstructed and proposed it; then sometimes I define this system as yoga to make its meaning understandable to most but, also, thus committing myself to giving complete meaning to the ancient word yoga which by now means Indian gymnastics for most. Perhaps few know how Patanjali or Gheranda placed meditation as the origin, core and result of their systems.

A true yogi is always a dhyana yogi, which is a zen monk, since dhyana has been transliterated into Chinese just as chán, i.e. zen, meditation, and since dharana-dhyana-samadhi are principles of both the tantric and zen traditions .

I reiterate that it is the classics of the yoga tradition itself, and all in chorus - whether texts of the shamkya or tantra tradition - to underline that yoga is, as the first and definitive instance, meditation. For me the naikan, described with scant skill by Hakuin, is the perfect trace of an essential and powerful method that needs to be recomposed; to this outline, and to what comes to me through the Rinzai teaching that I have practiced for decades, I would like to add all those techniques that are evidently contained therein, the descriptions useful for the experience and understanding of contemporaries, so that build a complete system, which seems to me more interesting than carrying a prestigious name but leaving an unusable method to get dusty in the museum of spirituality. I want to be polemical to the core: how many books of alchemy or Taoism can we buy and read without understanding anything or a little more, yet feeling called by them, and then piling them up in our library without having any product, except that of reading from time to time didactic nonsense statements based on crucibles, circulations, decoctions, coobations, magpie bridges and mysterious passages?

My answer is: Let's respectfully update Hakuin Ekaku's commitment by fulfilling it today as best we can, and encouraging posterity to continue this work with dedication and earnestness.

Once again I thank my Masters and I carry in my heart the commitment to recognize and always give back to knowledge the life that is its own. I hope this feeling is shared by those who are reading me, or who decide to activate it from now on. The first step on this path of responsibility is

to understand well, in order to practice well. I ask and pray to give this chance to all who are ready for so much light.

Note:

[\[1\] California Medical Association: Parents For Safe Technology.](#)

[\[4\] Beware: ten real dangers lurking in your daily life, Anfolsi and Bardin, Fontana Editore, Borgo Valsugana 2019.](#)

[\[3\] Joriki is the inner volitional power that can be realized in a huge power capable of transforming reality, while Tariki is the power of saving blessing.](#)



How breathing works in daily life and during zazen

By breathing during zazen we mean that particular functioning of the breath that is noted in long-standing practitioners: the ribcage does not move, and even the abdomen can stop showing any signs of movement.

A prepared observer, looking at the meditating subject, feels not only a lack of movement of respiratory rhythm but also a sort of very vivid magnetic compactness which gives an impression of strong dynamism,

as if the subject could suddenly make a movement very rapidly despite the impression of suspension and immobility that surrounds it.

This is the final effect of a path that has already been dealt with in the traditional teachings on sitting meditation, being the result of a precise asceticism or of a particular predisposition; the product should not be confused with asceticism and its methods, since when the result is obtained, one learns to let go. If you don't learn this at every step, you end up adding up an unnecessary amount of toil and compulsion which is not true discipline but which is strangely considered a sign of high spirituality by many gullible people.

Therefore the breath must be left natural, it must not be forced in any way and, moreover, its movements must not even be read critically. If the breath is rougher than usual, you will practice meditation with it and slowly it will calm down without forcing it.

So how will we initially modify the breath, without straining it, to improve and empower it?

We will educate him indirectly, as we do with a child: rather than filming a very young child, it is better to use a technique of distraction or gentle dissuasion.

In the same way, since the breath is too connected to the sympathetic-parasympathetic balance, to the relationship between emotion and logic,

as well as to the blood, indirect techniques will be used to condition it and thanks to this our veto power can then be used only when necessary therefore in a really incisive way, for example during intense physical activity or during apnea.

We must consider that some people are already ready to meditate as they already have perfect breathing even without realizing it. To these it is good to immediately propose advanced cultivation methods in order to perfect the relationship between thought, meditative absorption and physicality.

It is important to reach as soon as possible a good mental stability in the practice, so as not to depend anymore on any artifice, but if the zazen position is not sufficient to facilitate the luminous state of the breath, these five preliminary works are valid:

The easing of the chronic contraction of the diaphragm/solar plexus area,

The contraction and relaxation of the abdominal muscles,

Any strengthening of other muscles,

The work on the mind and the will,

The increase in rooting in the abdomen and on the feet.

In the first case there are a number of exercises and manipulations that work directly on the muscle or on its reflex zones, for example you can use tuina, shiatsu or foot reflexology. The diaphragm muscle is a flattened dome-shaped muscle, convex superiorly, which separates the thoracic from the abdominal cavity.

Modern psychosomatic studies underline the importance of relaxation of the diaphragm and frontal muscles, considered muscles capable of influencing the general state of well-being of the whole organism and in particular of the nervous system.

In the second case, the exercise of the ligament of the diaphragm [1], which has always been used for this purpose throughout Asia, is the best. To carry it out at its best, the supervision of an instructor would be necessary.

In the third case we could contemplate the need to strengthen some muscles such as those of the neck or back, such as the rhomboid and the levator scapulae, the muscles of the abdomen or chest: this in case there is such an imbalance in the masses and in the use of these, it needs to be strengthened or in the event that a neophyte practitioner is weakened by age, illness or a sedentary life. To simplify what has been said, it is

enough for me to recommend to everyone the common push-ups on the arms – possibly facilitated by the knees resting on the ground – or the exercise called plank.

Always and in any case for those who practice sitting meditation it is recommended to walk a lot, but no more than five kilometers a day, if you want to sit comfortably.

In the fourth case we consider that the body is strongly conditioned by the mind: a well-concentrated will can relax a muscle visualizing that this is happening and wanting to feel the liberating impression.

The fastest way to accomplish this is to visualize the act of volition as a beam of white light that focuses on the particular muscle, but also refreshes the whole body from it. When the breath is perceived as luminous, the effects are very interesting: one can breathe visualizing a cloud of fresh energy that enters and leaves the belly during meditation and during activities from the feet; these exercises are techniques used in the naikan training of zen.

Hakuin - through the voice of the hermit Hakuyu - explains to us that visualizations are Zen methods like any other: visualization, I might add, escapes from the practitioner any wishful thinking about anti-metaphysical Zen, allows him to overcome that reductionist idealism that sees us as so many reasoning steaks who, sitting in zazen, must reach mental emptiness.

As far as the will is concerned, the only quick way to strengthen it are the circumstances of life, in the face of which it is impossible to be lukewarm, or the extreme circumstances expressly accepted or created: in the face of extreme circumstances we are forced to be sincere and to apply all our will and strength in a moment. Obviously a Zen Buddhist will not give the word sincerity the same meaning given to it by Freudian psychoanalysis, where only instinct has the prerogative of corresponding to the truth of the human being and where the unconscious is magmatic, virtually omnipotent and crushing.

In the fifth case it is a question of increasing the effect of a position which naturally leads us to abandon the weight of the body on the abdomen, in the sitting position, which compacts the abdominal muscles in a useful way for meditation: in this case it is enough to arch a little the lumbar area more by moving backwards and tilting forward and down the hips and buttocks. This effect is achieved by using a wedge (white) which is placed like a wedge under the seat cushion (light grey) so that the knees rest on the carpet cushion (dark grey), as shown in the image.



In fact, correct breathing in the practice of zazen would not be produced thanks to a particular attention on the breath, as we have just explained, but on the basis of a relaxed and immobile position, thanks to an improvement in the mental state, in the bioelectric flow and in the quality of the blood.

We have already said it: the maturation of breathing is above all the product of a process rather than an ingredient of this, created with a direct exercise. In Japan they have the idea that by being in the position of zazen sooner or later you will understand it, but this presupposes a very intense application which is not common for the mentality of Western neophytes.

It is therefore more useful to say that:

it is enough to remain motionless as much as possible without effort, rather letting oneself go and being happy with it,

that it may be useful to correct oneself according to the five preparatory works,

that it is enough to breathe comfortably letting the belly become a place that collects both the physical weight of the abandonment of the masses and the confluence of energy. Nothing else; everything else must be understood with experience and, in any case, we invite you to read the chapter on the position and practice of zazen.

If the training is annoying then you have to forget it and take a step back, talking about it with the Master.

A delicate downward push of the diaphragm must not enlarge the shape of the belly: reclining with the buttocks, on a sufficiently high seat-cushion, this downward descent is facilitated, increased by that certain curvature of the lumbar area mentioned above.

I think that proposing a breathing system connected to a certain study of respiratory physiology is something intriguing, for some, but too theoretical: besides this, wanting to be useful to those who read me, I don't see the point of submitting advice that works for me now how torturing for a neophyte, in fact the study of the details is not always a good adviser where a lot works and for real, gradually, with experience.

For those interested in more technical explanations on breathing during meditation, I can define some useful details regarding the muscles involved as well as the possible phases and potentials. Contrary to what one might believe, the breathing muscles and in particular the diaphragm are stressed during almost every movement we perform. Walking, sitting, scratching, drinking are gestures that also move and condition the diaphragm muscle, the muscles of the abdomen, ribcage and neck. This is a first factor that can help us understand the importance of immobility during zazen: in fact, thanks to immobility a very particular effect is obtained, which emanates beyond breathing, in the functioning of the endocrine glands, in nerve transmission and in the circulation.

Given the twist of the discussion, we have deliberately not mentioned the effect that immobility has on the mind, precisely because this effect is the most evident and detectable by anyone, as well as the main one.

In physiology manuals four types of breathing are considered according to the areas that are involved: intercostal, diaphragmatic, abdominal and

through accessory muscles. The area that interests us is obviously the abdominal one, even considering that all the other muscles, however, participate in breathing.

If we maintain the verticality and strength of our presence and let the zazen position be relaxed, grounding ourselves on the knees and weighing down on the muscles of the lower abdomen (rectus abdominis - external oblique), and therefore gently stretching them, we have an immediate effect of relaxation of the diaphragm, i.e. in the pit of the stomach. From this we can obtain a certain suspension of chest breathing if we remain relaxed by letting go of thoughts and considerations.

Curiously, if we wanted to think compulsively, we will be forced to wrinkle this distension of the lower abdomen; if we worry, we would end up raising and lowering the rib cage while breathing, that is, moving the muscles in order to decontract the latter, especially the diaphragm, to be able to breathe more easily. It is a common idea to believe that if you don't breathe deeply there can't be a good exchange of oxygen in the blood, but this has been proven to be valid only for those who do not know the cultivation techniques we are dealing with.

The Taoist Masters define the extremely relaxed breathing of meditation with the term embryonic, a topic we must certainly deal with.

Note:

[1] Uddhyana bandha is an important yoga technique.



Attention on the breath and the western mind

Zazen Susokkan and other introductory techniques

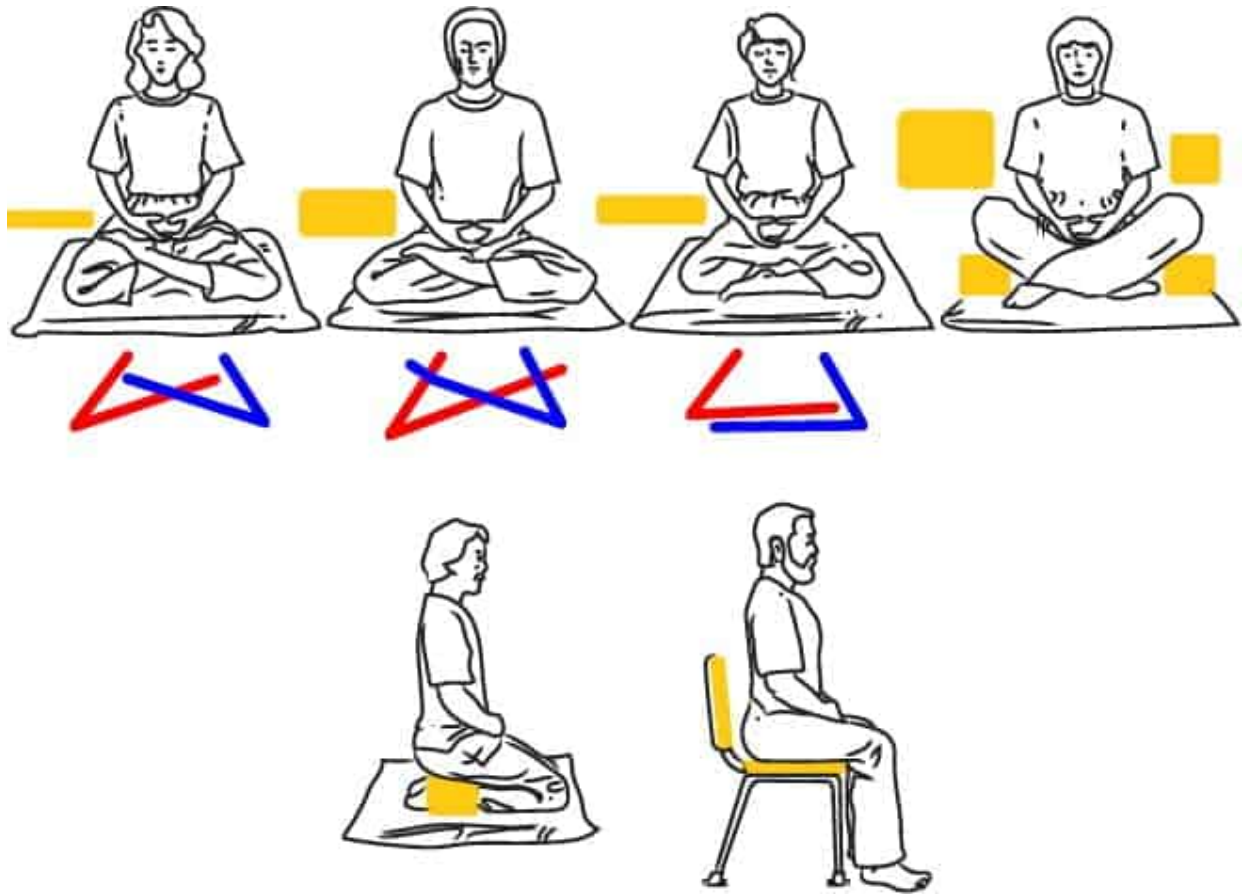
1st exercise - Zazen

It is common in the Zen tradition to instruct the neophyte to perfect his meditation sufficiently before starting koan practice, which can take on average five to six months to a few years. The position is taught, some cunning practice is taught to breathe with the abdomen more and more avoiding moving the ribcage, the advice is given to take five inspirations in which the air is held in the belly and then let go slowly and without make too much noise. Another useful technique for freeing the diaphragm consists in dividing the exhalation into various strokes, exhaling rhythmically and a little forcefully, making the diaphragm sway with each single exhalation stroke, possibly performed with the mouth.

Seated Zen meditation, zazen, corresponds to the sense of the Sanskrit word dhyana, exercise of absorption, that moment first started with dharani, i.e. with a concentration, which will then become, after a good exercise of absorption, samadhi or achieved absorption, a state that is often described in Buddhist sutras in an apparently vague, but in reality simple way, as expressing something truly central to Buddhism; for example it is said that the Buddha, returning from begging, washes his feet, hands, eats and then sits down placing his attention in front of him. In this attention there is the continuation of dhyana which is samadhi, the deepening of absorption. This sinking reaches the state of liberation, where all references jump and one melts into eternity. To realize this it is right, when sitting in meditation, to assume a courageous and inspired position, as if we were to break the waves with our chest or write a beautiful poem. This is the attitude that I will mention again in a moment.

When meditating, the first thing to do is to let the senses expand; listen for all the sounds, the smells, the tactile impressions, for example the air on the face, the right hand under the left, and also the tastes, for example the taste that changes in the glottis. Listening does not mean following, reasoning about it, discussing it to oneself, or anything else. Listening is listening in a boundless way, like when instead of devouring a bar of chocolate we learn to bite a fragment and let that delight penetrate us for a long time. After sometime we will start to enjoy meditation and seek again and again this return to our eternity.

Here are six different ways to sit in meditation that correspond to different physical abilities and habits. If you cannot do certain positions described here you can do others, since each of these positions is perfect in itself and leads to the same result. Meditating is done or, better, it happens, with the mind, so if you have some handicap and you can't even stand up straight, know that you can still meditate through a firm meditative attitude, which derives from a profound exploration of one's different states of absorption; in this case, since the bodily support makes it difficult for us to practice, we bypass it in intent, i.e. in absorption in the state of meditation.



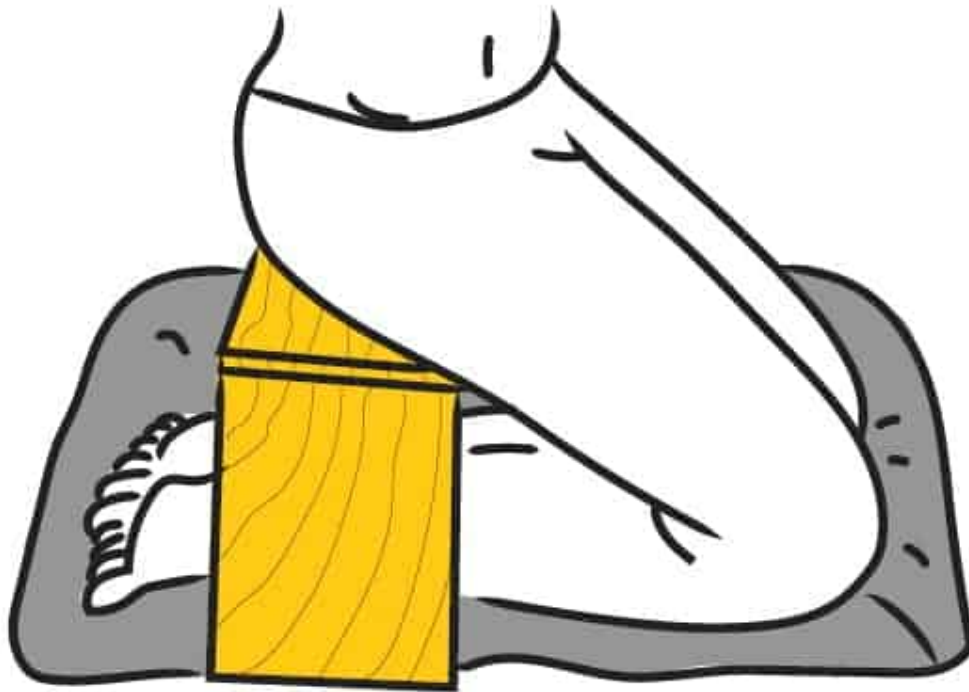
We should understand the meaning of what the meditation position is, what it is for. If we sat like the lady at the top left - the so-called complete lotus - our back would be pushed to straighten automatically by bringing out the buttocks, flexing the lumbar area and freeing the belly in such a way as to allow us to breathe better in depth, in fact , in the belly; therefore whatever position you decide to use, the effect is that of having your back completely straight and your shoulders open, your lumbar area slightly flexed by bringing your buttocks backwards – as samurai or ballet dancers do – and you unload the weight on the pillows. In the top right image the lady is with her legs crossed using the highest pillow, but also two mini-pillows that support the legs-knees-pelvis.

On the left below, the gentleman with the mustache sits on a wooden bench, which allows him to sit without fatigue - unless he suffers from circulation in his legs - otherwise he is left sitting on the chair, which is fine, and of which we must always remember the three necessities:

to keep the back straight,

without leaning back if possible, e

to choose a suitably low chair, with which the lumbar area can easily flex when we put our feet on the ground.



All these tricks are used to sit comfortably even for more than twenty minutes; I have advanced age meditation students who have amazed me by their ability, over time, to improve their position more and more, to the point of remaining blissfully crossed-legged in meditation even for up to forty minutes; those same people at first couldn't stand in the easiest position even for five minutes.

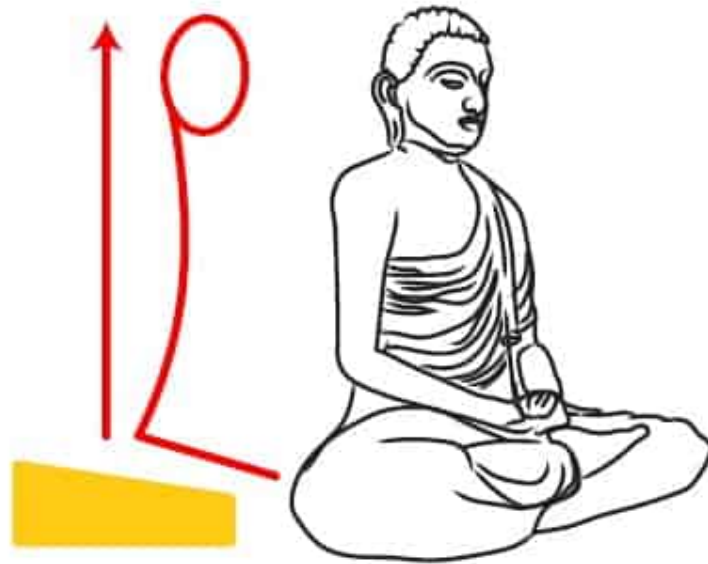


The sense of stability that Buddha statues convey is given by their posture, and they have been specially sculpted or cast to convey this serene strength; to explain this stability I put a screw fixed in a yellow table so that it is evident how in the meditation position the screw (the trunk) stands and holds itself up on the yellow table (the pelvis - the crossed legs + the cushion) or perpendicularly compared to the ground. This is the secret, but it must be done without too much effort, gradually; meanwhile over time the position and the impression of stability just mentioned improve more and more, making it easier with the cushions and giving the legs a little slope.

Here is the fundamental structure of sitting in meditation: the shoulders should be kept wide, the spine extended upwards as if a hook were pulling it from the top of the head towards the sky.

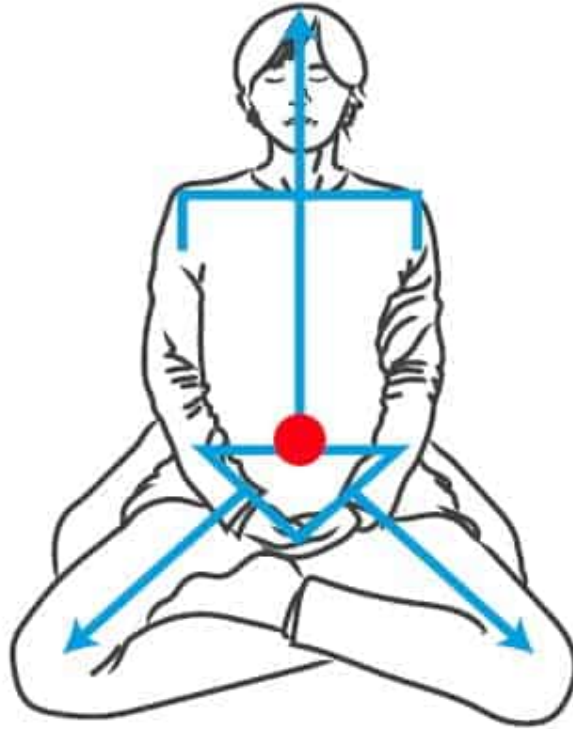


The base is made up of a triangle which has the pelvis in its entirety and the two knees as vertices. That yellow disc represents the support of the vertex of this triangle, or a cushion capable of optimally supporting our pelvis.



The extension of the spine and the slightly indented chin are shown together with the slight flexion of the lumbar area which, by opening the back and shoulders, has a very important effect on meditation.

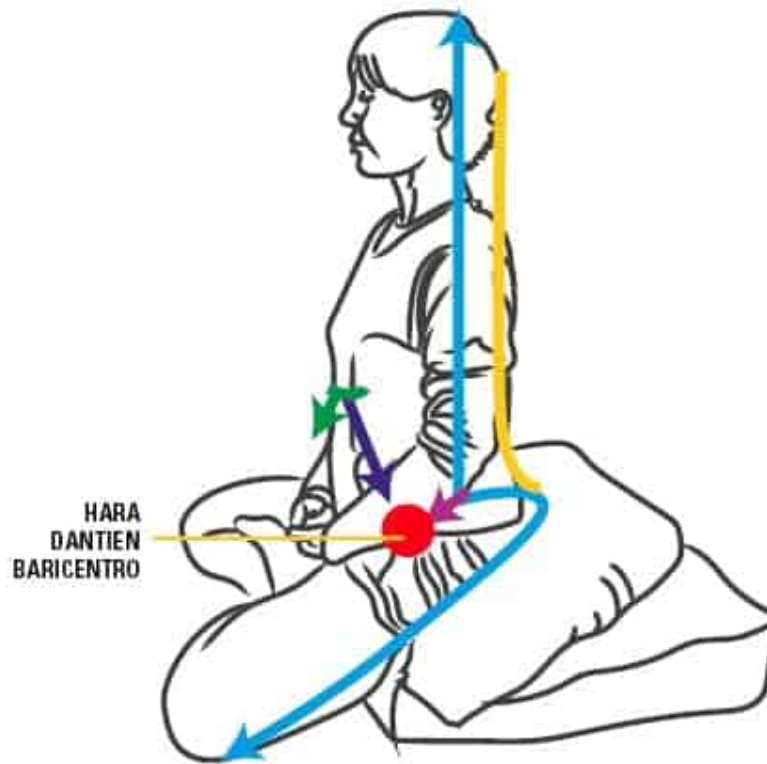
The pelvis and shoulders form a supporting structure that keeps everything else in symmetry and balance. The spine does something similar, but being vertical it performs a more dynamic function that we will discover with experience and that takes us beyond mere physical experience. Meanwhile, note the red dot that defines the body's center of gravity, a physical place that corresponds to the hara of Japanese meditators, the dantien of Chinese meditators and the swadishtana chakra of Indian meditators. From this centre, which also corresponds to the enteric nervous system, a new sensation of pleasantness in meditation and in daily life will develop over time, as well as a sense of strength, presence and warmth.



Here we have the last image that needs to be understood well, so you will come back to it several times, just as sometimes it is better for you to go back - for example every month - to this whole sequence to correct the position.

Again you can see that we have highlighted the center of gravity by adding some arrows that reach for it. Meanwhile, the back arrow derives from the pressure of the physical structure given by the base created by the legs + pelvis and by the fact that you are extending your spine

upwards (vertical line), which in this context has an unexpected effect that you will understand better and better in the time.



Then the blue arrow shows us how maintaining this position brings the buttocks back and the belly out – as we have said samurai or ballet dancers do – and thus allowing us to breathe by lowering the diaphragm more easily. To tell the truth, pushing the belly out like this may seem annoying to some but it is absolutely positive because in this way we can experience how a wrong physical attitude - that is, never relaxing the belly - can allow us to maintain wrong eating, breathing, and above all an unnatural contraction of the muscles as well as of the colon, or even to keep in the stomach the air we should get rid of.

Letting go of the diaphragm in its natural form has nothing to do with whether or not you have belly fat, it doesn't increase or decrease it. The green crescent and arrow represent the diaphragm moving down and pushing down; the blue arrow tells us that this push has an effect on breathing.

They have always known in the East that by moving the diaphragm with each breath an electric wave invests the viscera and nourishes them, and that the battery of this current is three fingers below the navel, internally. It is always the center of gravity that has been talked about and of which we have mentioned the different names.

Thanks to this battery we restore ourselves very quickly and our body learns to collaborate with energy and with the mind, giving us back an excellent ability to adapt to sudden changes in temperature and those of life.



2nd exercise - Susokkan

Another useful practice can be that of susokkan, the practice of counting the breath. The susokkan is convenient for those who think too much, as it involves listening neither forced nor concentrated to the comings and goings of the breath. While mentally repeating the numbers, inhale and exhale through slightly parted lips and leave the chest as motionless as possible.

The mechanics of counting is to mentally count the first part of the number while exhaling and the second part of the same number while inhaling, i.e.:

(expi.) Uuuuuuuu... (inspi.) noooooo

(expi.) Duuuuuuu... (inspi.) eeeeeee

(expi.) treeeeee... (inspi.) eeeeeee

(expi.) quuuuuuu... (inspi.) ttrooooo

...until...

(expi.) Diiiiiiiii... (inspi.) iiiiiiiii

...and then it starts all over again...

(expi.) Uuuuuuuu... (inspi.) noooooo... And so on.

However, we must consider that a Western student can be annoyed by this technique, feeling the breath control as an annoying or useless coercion. It is up to the student to understand if it is appropriate to use this method or if it is better to let go in the opening of one's own absorption or possibly maintaining the concentration on hara by bringing the strength of the heart to it as in exercise 10.

Another practice is to listen to the breath, which is called anapanasati; eventually you can listen to its coming and going, but without applying a count but rather a clear self-perception of presence. During this phase, sooner or later we will slip into an oceanic feeling of amazement, the scent of an important change to be experienced. In reality, every fixation must be resolved in life but it is also important to feel victory from the very first steps. Anyone who manages to do something well right away can be happy: let's leave the necessary humility to the professional monks, to meditation to re-establish the naked truth of feeling, to the busy layman the jubilation of an honest achievement.

The Westerner's disagreement with himself is a state of mind incomprehensible to Eastern Masters who, at best; they understand it as a sort of hyper-complexity easily scratched by a certain roughness, by an epic presentation of the Master and by that oceanic, but dry and disconsolate exoticism that is so reminiscent of Zen.

One thing little considered by most, however, is that in some ways the sharp mind of the modern Westerner can be an exceptional and unique tool.

The funniest gimmick I've ever heard proposed by an Eastern Master was that of a well-known Master based in America, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, who proposed to his students to do like Rinzai, that is, laugh out loud every morning!

The useful exercises for the Westerner lead the practitioner to perceive the life that is in everything and to ensure that this is reflected in the life of one's thought. Thus the Westerner can perceive the proteic movement of the mind that forms images and expectations and recognize it in his life, that is, recognizing every object of experience and every act of his in the vibrant and empty essence that is his own.

He can feel the cat, the glass, the watch, the water, the triangle, he must perceive the movement that memory makes in remembering the dear face of his friend or the sound of lightning, and feel the living thrill.

He can finally hear the sound of every thought, perceive it as a colour, as a flowering of his being and no longer as a dry typographical impression printed in letters, words and sentences. This dialogue-brain nightmare can end forever.

Instead of demystifying thoughts, or elevating them, or sublimating them, the modern practitioner learns to perceive them alive, vibrant in their quality and therefore, thanks to this, naked and silent. It doesn't work the other way around for a Westerner who is a little cultured, thoughtful and curious; it can only happen like this before making one's mind like a wall, because the Westerner must immediately see that wall shine. In summary: the life of thought and the recognition of the power of thought leads to the recognition of what it thinks.

In addition to this there is a further dynamic which is different and increased in Westerners: in the Chinese tradition it is said that the

increase in Qi leads to the creation of Shen, which for Westerners is almost completely reversed and which, coincidentally, it is also for Hakuin, given what he wants to achieve from the naikan techniques.

Even some Chinese masters of Qi gong have noticed it: it is not possible for a Westerner to compact energy (Qi) to the maximum and make it flow maximally with the hope of realizing being (Shen). Even if my translation of the two terms Qi and Shen is here summary, the substance does not change.

In general, it is impossible for a Westerner to perceive as energy what he perceives as mystery or consciousness, and therefore in general it is not possible for him to reach the Whole (Shen) through energy (Qi): for energy there are vitamins, for the mystery you get on your knees and pray, a synthesis is rare in the West.

The Western mentality is commonly conditioned by two thousand years of transcendence, that is, of a split between the physical world, here, and the metaphysical world, there: this is what ultimately evokes that fateful split of knowledge into science and mysticism that informed culture western and therefore planetary.

The traditional monastic training of Zen leads to compacting the will, faith, strength, courage and assertion of one's freedom in the individual.

That natural faith which allows the Eastern to evoke and invoke every force in itself must be reconstituted in the Western thanks to its most efficient tool: the mind, this time experienced as a mystery of feeling/power/quality rather than cultivated as cogitation/calculation/amount.



Understand the dantien

Compress Force

When we get out of bed after a period of convalescence we are forced to compress force or pump force, and it is then that to get up, we must contract our stomach and breath in a sort of forced inspiration. If for an instant the reader tries to get up from his chair with such an effort, he can feel that contraction of the lower abdominal muscles which is the summoning mechanism of physical strength: Uhn!. It is in this way that the breath, the electricity and the muscular tension are able to concentrate their work to carry out a gesture that is too tiring or very delicate.

In fact, exhaling during athletic effort is a healthy type of habit, when we perform gymnastic movements or in any case not too tiring movements: we know well that there are gestures that lead us to exhale, others to inhale, and how exhaling completely the inhalation is both spontaneous and complete and re-oxygenating.

This, however, which is already a different breathing rhythm from the normal one, can be a first phase of adaptation to a much greater effort where the breath is broken, an experience of the athletes we have already mentioned.

Breath can be broken either by running or by lifting a weight several times. If we take soccer players for example, we see how they catch their breath as soon as the game starts, it's as if they were already ready to enter that sphere of effort, what researchers call ergotropic syndrome. Even if they may be out of breath, their breathing is still established in the belly: in this case the fatigue is no longer poured all over the lungs as it is for a beginner, but is electrically dissolved on the belly and on the heart, on the endocrine glands and on the muscles, therefore on the body's immediate ability to react to the stressful phenomenon of the opponent's attack or the ball in the opponent's area.

It can also happen, when the break of breath has not been complete, that you need to yawn to loosen the diaphragm more.

The break of breath in a soccer player certainly lasts an hour and a half as well as, to a lesser extent, it lasts his life.

Now let's take movement exercises with weights as an example: the trainer will certainly advise us to breathe and above all to exhale abundantly while working with weights or machines. And yet he himself, lifting the maximum bearable weight, will be forced to pump force into a sort of apnea by pushing the breath down towards the abdomen, gnashing his teeth and saying Uhn!.

In fact bodybuilders call their physical activity pumping strength and it is precisely when they go into this apnea that the stress on the muscle

occurs which makes it grow in strength and mass: nothing to do with an orderly and complete breath.

Talking to an expert who has known several world champions of bodybuilding, I got the idea that their increasingly extreme performances that strain the physical forms in paroxysmal ways, as well as by economic or hedonistic factors, are above all dictated by the great sense of well-being given by the use of the breath during training and the strengthening of the body's electrical meridians which, at the same time, pump with their exercises and which increasingly bury under a mass of muscles, which forces them to pump even more. Observing this mechanics made me understand the laws of effort connected to zazen which I will specify later.

In the dynamics of breath compression, the vocal cords have a great importance by opening, maximizing breathing, or closing, against each other, to allow us to compress the breath during effort. In this sense, the vocal cords not only have the function of phonation or dam of our breath, but they have a real power to compress it with their movement: this is why particular sounds are spontaneously emitted during effort.

Breath compression is also functional for dissolving conditions of mental or energy overload: those who get very angry compress their breath and therefore speak in a choked voice, which, according to the latest research, prevents them from migraines and even strokes; when you can't stop laughing, a rhythmic compression of the breath takes place which releases a long-term accumulated muscle tension. Crying and laughing are the product of a compression, just as every gesture of

attention, firmness or that implies sincerity or intensity starts from a compression.

The physical compression of the breath pertains to the breath of light which is a state of compression that is continued and stabilized in the stillness and bliss of zazen.

Aiming at a target, giving sincere thanks, expressing a feeling firmly, serving tea or pouring wine, we gently compress the breath: the natural gesture of energy, attention, sincerity, liberation that most defines the practice of zazen.

Dantien or Hara

We will clarify in an experimental way the meaning of these two terms.

The terms hara, dantien, kikai dantien, tantien, dantien, etc., are almost synonymous and define, with different shades of meaning, a center of accumulation of energy in the lower part of the abdomen.

There is no need to look for this area by following an anatomy atlas, when we can simply observe ourselves as a living entity, perceive this area by listening to it sitting cross-legged, bending forward and placing our hands on the floor in front of us. It is said that the hara is below the navel, however this internal presence must be noted with particular attention, a naked and precise attention.

To define this attention, the Chinese bring together two characters that mean cave-cave or strong impression of empty space, which defines the right sensation that does not depend on perceiving something but, in an optimal state of health, an empty fullness.

Hara is a center of gravity with respect to our body, but not only for weight, but also for energy.

By focusing on the area below the navel, maintaining a forward leaning position, we can perceive an elastic ball that is inside our belly. That elasticity, which does not correspond to any precise organ, constitutes the physical reality of hara: we must instead listen to the energetic reality of hara at the moment of compression of the breath - we have just explained it - that is, when under effort, getting up after a convalescence or lifting a weight, we are forced to compress the breath down.

So in the already mentioned listening position let's try to compress the breath: Uhn!

Thus we find hara, or the dantien.

We use hara without knowing it. Taoist yoga practitioners identify the type of energy related to the dantien with the term Qi, the energy that flows in the small or large celestial circulation circuit, an energy that is evoked from the top of the head as a manifestation of the descending energy, the celestial shen, and which also comes from food and ancestral heritage, the jing, and which also comes from the earth through the feet, and which ultimately accumulates in hara; for Indian yoga practitioners, hara is not exactly the evadishtana or swadisthana chakra, but rather resembles the plexus generically defined - in Sanskrit and Urdu - as nabhi, a sphere surrounding the navel.

The location of the nabhi, in turn, would resemble that of the cikai dantien according to the Japanese tradition, but in reality, prāṇa and Qi are two different energy levels, albeit adjacent and intertwined.

The simplest ways to perceive Hara are with special movements-breathing-concentrations that I teach during the workshops or with the attention placed for a long time on the energetic fact of the exhalation, a flow of bioelectromagnetic nourishing energy which strengthens the viscera with each exhalation.

Otherwise the only direct experience of hara that we can have is during a long meditation or when this body battery of ours is very charged with energy and we manage to keep it there; this generally only happens during adolescence, or when someone has a heroic and enthusiastic life, and it is then that we feel the belly jerk with its own, involuntary movements.

It is an impression similar to when you slap a pumpkin, a watermelon or a basketball, you feel the area literally jolt as if it were rejecting the received solicitation outward, vibrating, as if it were bouncing and trembling.

Pregnant women have their energy and attention entirely placed in the hara, an area that can jump with the same response just said, while keeping the fetus comfortable.

Finally, the most certain result, although requiring gradual training, is achieved by practicing that breathing through the pores which we will explain later.

Those who assiduously practice meditation can have the experience of the movement of hara even in old age: generally the non-practicing or neophyte person considers the luxuriant fullness of energy a bit annoying - today I feel nervous - and often dissipates it with a bath heat, or getting tired by losing physiological fluids, a reason that does not make it easy to experience this form of fullness and the related symptom. This is also the reason for the release of the diaphragm/solar-plexus area, which we have already discussed.

So apart from this uncommon experience, how does one perceive the energetic reality of hara?

In the meditation position the attention and the impression of body weight are dropped - in experience they correspond - under the navel area, inside the body, in an undefined area that we perceive as a kind of unmeasurable bubble .

The more it fills with energy, the less measurable the impression we have of this spherical area. This is the strange metaphysical power of hara.

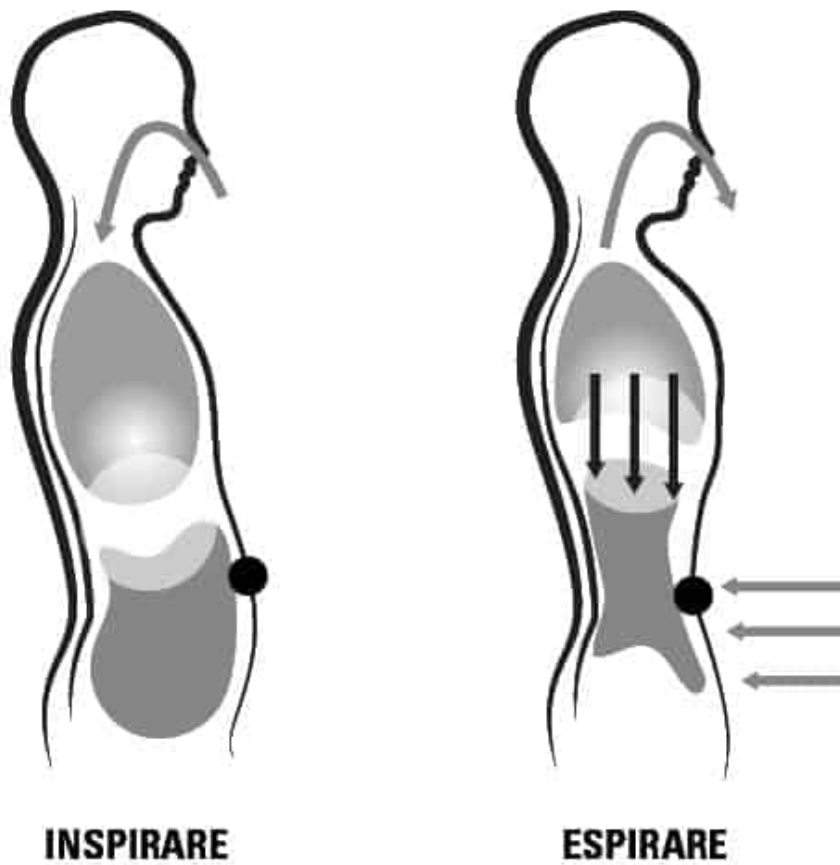
In fact, a Formula One racer, even if he doesn't know it, the precise instant he feels fear dissipates it in hara; whenever we hear a sound that is too annoying we transfer it from the ears to the hara; when we need to draw strength quickly we compress the breath into hara and from this we let it explode in a gesture or a scream while from the adrenal glands, at an incredible speed, adrenaline radiates everywhere; if we are cold we compress the breath in the hara, we charge it with bioelectric force and we make it circulate, heating ourselves in every area where the blood circulates.

Hara works as an energy accumulator, as an organ of transformation of this, as a pump in recalling and emanating it. Whatever work we do and whatever our habits, we make use of hara; but to determine a good meditative absorption we need our energy, that this is not dispersed and that it is treasured also thanks to an intelligent way of living, and to determine a good functioning of hara we need to meditate in a natural and simple way, therefore to learn we need - as we have seen - to assume a facilitating position.

In general, thanks to their attention to hara, practitioners are balanced, strong and long-lived and thanks to this force they can engage in their businesses by consuming more of it than the average person but, at the same time, making it circulate more and always regenerating it.

Naikan exercises to enhance the perception of dantien/hara

Apart from some breathing tricks, there are specific traditional chán exercises to strengthen hara: one exercise for the body, one for speech and one for the mind. In all three of these Chinese exercises the thumb is included in the two clenched fists and the fists are held with the back on the thighs, in the groin crease, as well as remaining concentrated on the hara.



3rd exercise - Body exercise.

Let your breath slow down naturally:

as you inhale, visualize the breath going beyond the lungs and breaking through to the hara;

while exhaling a finer golden current continues to radiate hara;

both while inhaling and while exhaling one must think that a subtle current fills the hara and so, little by little, this energy will be felt more and more strongly;

after inhaling, one can also hold the breath for a while while the energy of the breath fills the belly with spiral movements around the navel (which can be seen from above following the direction of the clock hands).



4th exercise - Exercise of the word.

During a comfortable breath hold, a syllable ending with the letter M is pronounced mentally seven times, slowly,

one remains more and more intimately listening, with only the right ear, to the resonance. For this purpose, the right hand is cupped over

the right ear.



5th exercise - Exercise of the mind.

Inhale, effortlessly hold the breath in hara;

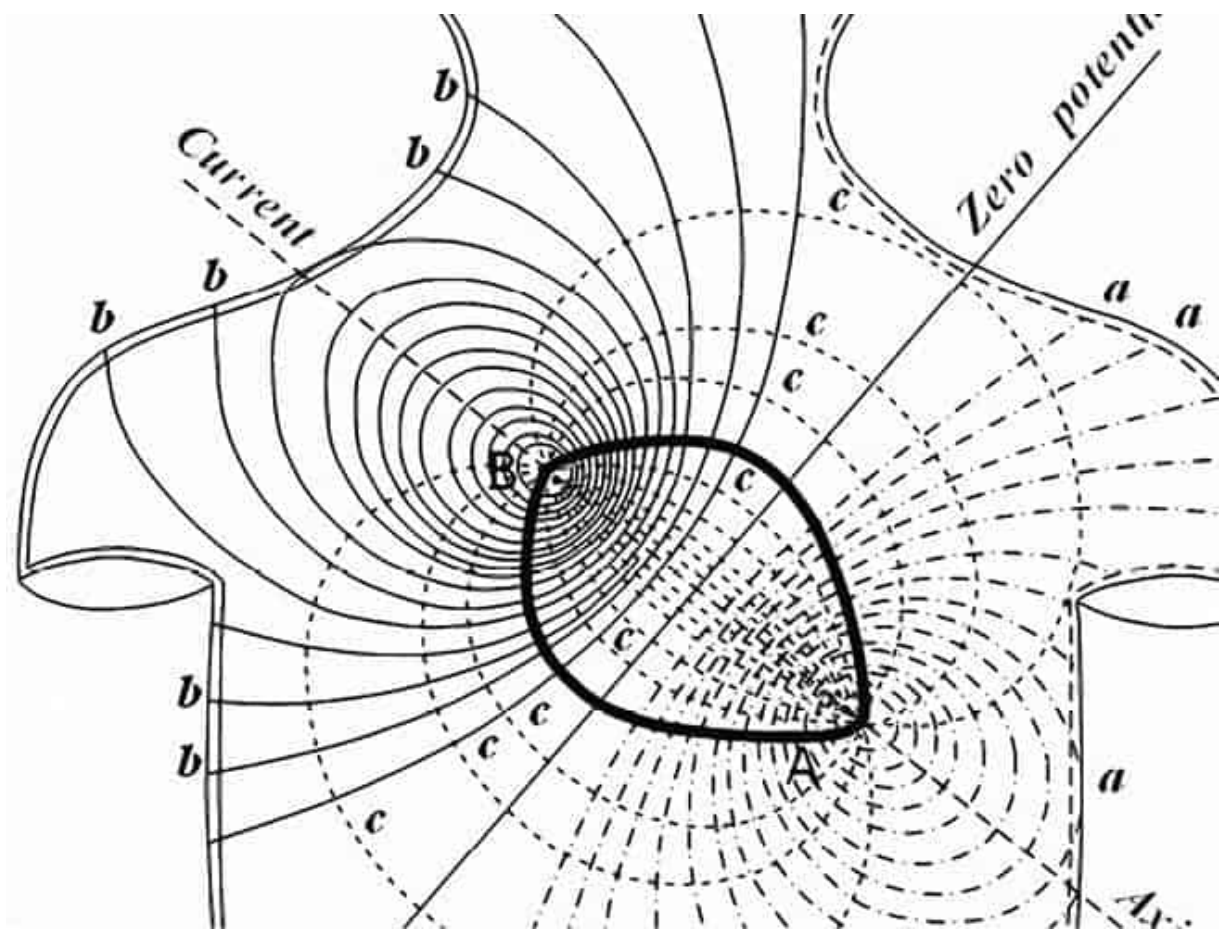
release it from the nose letting it out slowly while opening the hands as if letting something go;

with the gesture of opening your hands worries, unease, anxieties go away;

and when you are ready you say: "I am very, very worthy of merit, honor (touch navel), respect and joy (diaphragm)."

Every time we pronounce the word honor we touch - with the middle finger of the right hand with the fingers together - the navel.

Every time, at the word joy we feel the diaphragm (the pit of the stomach) drop downwards.

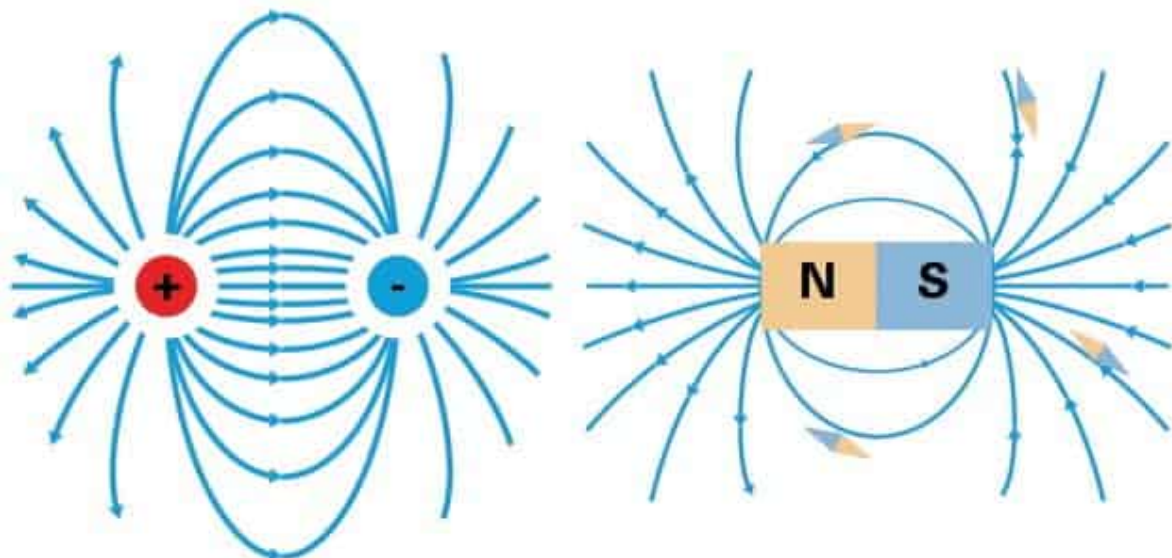


The question of energy

Bioelectromagnetism

I think it is important to have some metaphysical intuition of energy, but it is also good to have it adherent to reality, that is, in an experiential way, ours, so that it can be useful to us right away. We will use the explanation that is most popular, that of contemporary science; it is not the truth, but only an explanation that can be shared in the habit of most.

There are properties that are common to magnetic and electric fields, while there are others that differentiate them, and this will be useful for us to understand in order to understand two universal forces that are part of our system.



The qualities that magnetic fields and electric charges have in common are:

they are both force fields, i.e. fields that describe the effects of a force;

both can be described by field lines that we see at the bottom of the images;

there are two types of electric charge (but in two distinct bodies), just as there are two types of magnetic poles (but in the same body).

poles of the same type repel each other and of different types attract each other, this applies to both magnetic fields and electric charges;

a discharged conductor can be electrified by a charged body, just as a steel bar can be magnetized by a magnet.



Perhaps the difference - between the two forces - that is more useful to consider for our purposes are the opposing ideas of field and charge, because:

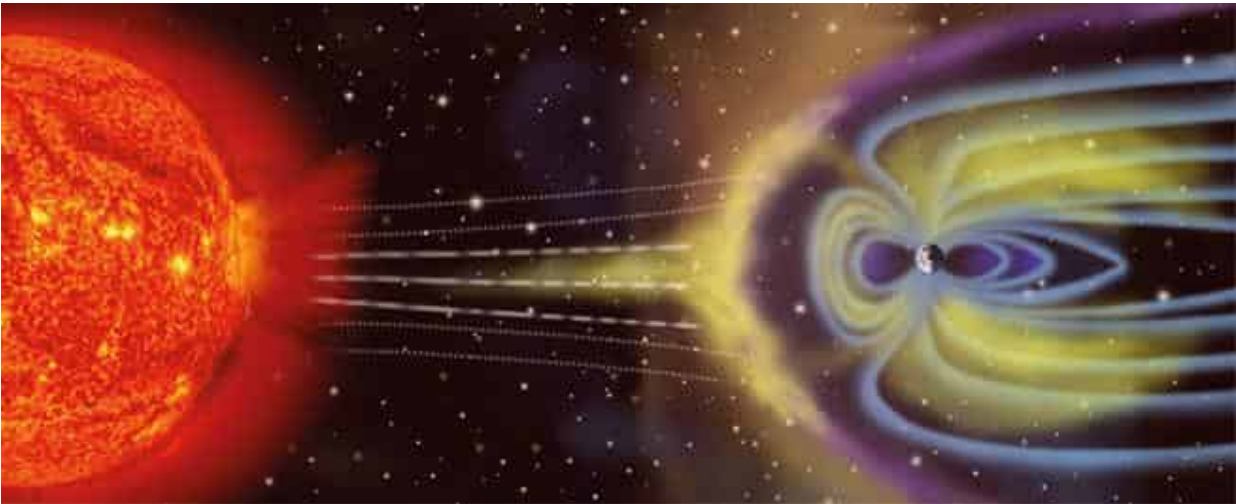
magnetism presupposes an area of influence in common between two parts which therefore attract each other creating an energetic whole (or in the magnet this is already manifest with the bipolarity) while,

electricity is active in an immediate passage of force from one part to another in which the electric charge changes and the result is - again - an attraction (in this case temporary) but, above all, a passage, a shock.

So we have a potential difference which in the case of magnetism manifests itself in a polarity, while in electricity it shows itself as a discharge, a passage. In fact: because the first image immediately makes us think of electricity,



while the second to magnetism?



I don't think I have anything else to add to explain why I would define prāṇa of a magnetic nature and Qi of an electrical nature, even if, once again, we must say that the functions of these two energies are intertwined and even confused, even more when they are more specific and specialized. In this sense, the reader can obtain further clarification from the appropriate attachment which at the end of the book deals with the theme of here and prāṇa.

Well, now that we have clearly defined a difference between electricity and magnetism, and therefore a very brief one between Qi and prāṇa, having to bring it back to the functioning of the human system, we must realize that - at least at the first level of learning - these two forces are completely confused in it, creating an energy function that supports everything that circulates in it.

At a higher level of naikan learning, the distinction we have created will be useful to us, given that the reader will want to experience the passage of energy in his body according to the two above-mentioned modalities, and since he will be able to perceive in his body two different types of reactions.



Electricity and Magnetism in Human Systems

Humans don't know what electricity is but, they loosely define and measure it since, however, electricity manifests itself as a potential difference or ddp.

Potential difference means that from pole A to pole B of any oblong object we can already calculate a charge difference, which denotes a passage of electricity and/or magnetism, even if this is minimal; each object, depending on the material that composes it, has its own conductivity or the ability to transmit more or less electricity. Well, there is even a potential difference between the cytosol[1] and the other cells that surround it, and it is measured in about 70 mV (millivolts), a circumstance which made the researchers say that, if the electricity of many cells of a certain tissue, this could already be enough to electrocute the entire human system.

Yet the fact remains that being able to define what electricity is something still impossible and that, probably, we will never succeed.

I believe that materialism and fideism are exaggerated approaches to every question and that it would be more functional to face everything from the widest possible viewpoint; I believe that this view is given by the silence of meditation, since it is precisely during meditation that individual ideas and opinions are reset, and a power - unknown to most - of penetration of questions arises.

But the most relevant aspect would be that this penetration is devoid of any theoretical foundation, in such a way as to sever in the human mind the continuous systemic paroxysm that wants at any cost to collect demonstrations to satisfy theories, instead of collecting facts in order to understand the facts themselves.

I suppose that the facts must be collected silently, without raising any interpretative barrier, otherwise we risk escaping precisely the most unexpected facts, i.e. those imponderable and difficult to organize according to our preconceptions. That's what else meditation can do.

Moving from philosophy to epistemology, the reflection of the Nobel Prize in Physics David Bohm seems to me appropriate: "in order to have something new, an entire generation of physicists must die".

Luigi Galvani from Bologna was the first scientist who, in the eighteenth century, demonstrated the ability of biological tissues to elicit electrical phenomena thanks to experimentation on the gastrocnemius muscle of a frog. Galvani highlighted the fact that the muscle of a frog can be moved as it is crossed by an electric current.

To be clear, the scientific precedent that made the idea of a literary character like Frankenstein possible was galvanism, a term relating to the theory of electrochemistry we have just talked about.

Frankenstein or the modern Prometheus was written for fun by Mary A. Shelley, wife of the famous poet and also a writer and poet, about a century after Galvani's discoveries. It was a competition between poets proposed by Byron, who asked all participants to invent a ghost story; this digression aims to show how the story of Frankenstein's adventures marked a very particular historical moment, a moment in which, in the collective dream, there was a sincere curiosity towards electricity, felt as a force close to the gift of life .

Almost simultaneously with the invention of Frankenstein, Cesare Mattei was born, the one who will found the first pharmaceutical multinational which was a factory of homeopathic remedies; this new medicine was called Electrohomeopathy by Count Mattei and really used the vital power to electrically charge the basic plant substances, extracted with the spagyric method, and finally the homeopathic remedies that derived from them, thanks to a current of natural origin but directed with the use of the will.

What we have told, citing these historical facts, is the intuition of a connection between electricity and life to give the reader arguments and openings.

To begin our discussion, we begin by agreeing on a fact; the brain, although it is commonly considered by scientists as the origin of the ability to think, is on the contrary - for Zen practitioners - like the electric switchboard is to electricity, that is, how a thing is in relation to what really moves it.

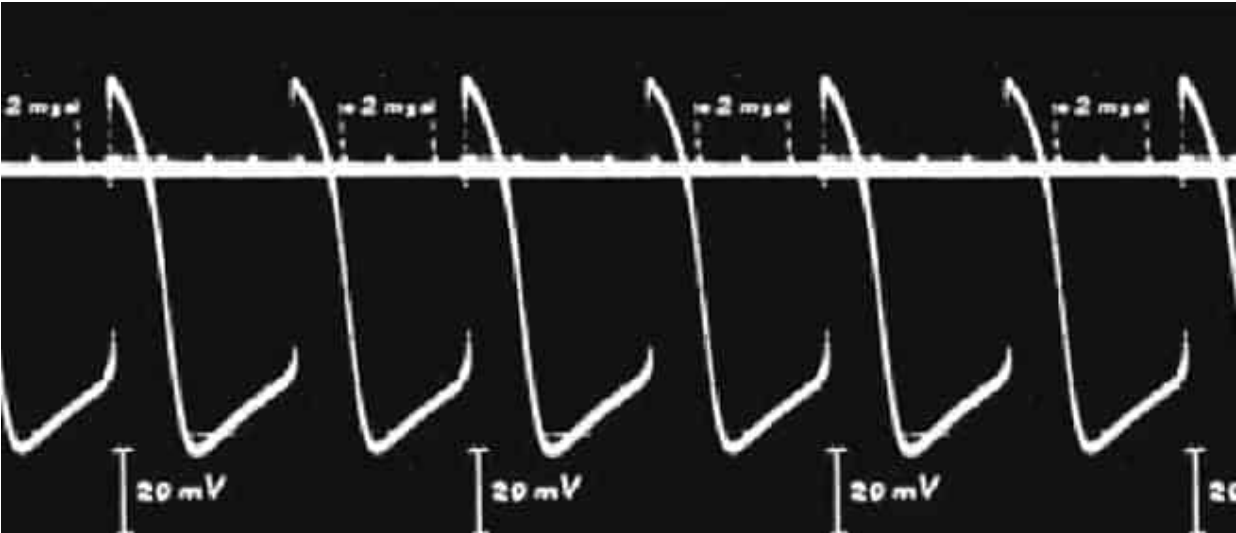
This is not the final truth but it is the experiential point of view of those who practice meditation.

But how dare Zen monks put their mouth on these scientific things?

Well, the novelty is this: there are no scientific things as there are no Zen things either. They are all just descriptions. The task of Zen is to reach with meditation and satori that place where discursive logic cannot reach, but from which one can start again to make a new use of it.

Scientific research has now clarified once and for all that the human nervous system works thanks to electrical discharges that are generated in a special atmosphere saturated with nitric oxide, i.e. NO [2]. In saying this, we have said of the cerebral, neurological aspect of the mind, precisely where electricity seems to be the living medium to the metaphysical realm, both in its directly electrical and in its magnetic aspect, which links cerebral functions to the vaster mind or to the entire universe; but the latter is my explanation. And for me this binding already exists, it's just that every single individual can become aware of it to a lesser or greater extent, to the point of realizing this infinite relationship in itself, even beyond all the phenomena that derive from it.

The awakened state of consciousness, as well as all the derived experiences, are erroneously considered by science as peaks or as momentary altered states of consciousness, when instead they are the inheritance of the human being, according to what Buddhism and Taoism affirm. Consequently, all the training we are dealing with pertains precisely to this reality which, in the practitioner of Zen Naikan, is destined to become increasingly evident.



Oscilloscope recording of action potentials emitted from the sinoatrial node of the rabbit heart

The reader will have already guessed or known how living beings in general are made of cells, which need the appropriate magnetism to function optimally. This can be explained according to science according to two principles:

cells are strongly influenced by magnetism and electricity, as their membranes and other internal structures are equipped with electric charges and actual passages of current and magnetism;

chemical and enzymatic reactions are also strongly influenced by magnetism; they occur everywhere in our body in immense quantities being at the basis of vital phenomena and of our very existence; these reactions are based on electronic interaction and the exchange, sharing or transfer of electrons from one atom to another and from one molecule to another.

In the presence of magnetic fields of the right type and intensity, the electrons inside the atoms which make up the molecules which in turn make up living cells, arrange themselves in a suitable way to favor the chemical reactions we need for physiological functions; therefore we need magnetism to coordinate and align the cells, to accelerate and favor chemical reactions, as well as to optimize the functioning of the enzymes which, among other things, govern the digestion of nutrients and the disposal of toxins and biological waste.

Today, even more, setting natural magnetism in motion allows us to restore our bioelectromagnetic field influenced and weakened by electromagnetic pollution such as that of mobile phones, computers, TVs, radios, household appliances such as microwave ovens, civil/ industrial plants, radio/telephone/internet/tv repeater antennas, high voltage cables.

Our living system is very sensitive to magnetic fields and the magnetic effect reaches every cell of the body due to the highly pervasive character of magnetism as the whole body is pervaded by electricity and magnetic fields are present in every organ, tissue, cell . Moreover, our body produces very minute crystals, almost microscopic, of a substance called biogenic magnetite, or biogenic microcrystals, with a magnetic action.

Effects on the composition of the blood, caused by the concentration of iron in hemoglobin, are recorded in red blood cells and thanks to the ESR[3], due to the exposure of the body to a constant magnetic field which - by now it is clear - causes changes biochemists.

Precise qualitative and quantitative effects of magnetic fields on tissue and cellular metabolism have been detected, as well as an interaction between the functions of the central nervous system and external magnetic fields; in fact a magnetic field can exert a direct influence on the diencephalon, which is the back part of the brain that controls the endocrine system, and on the forebrain. Just as a magnetic field can generate suffering and disease, in the same way, it can have a therapeutic effect, mainly by enhancing our system and therefore mainly with an inhibitory effect against the possible development of a disease.

The use of electricity and magnetism for curative or initiatory purposes has been documented since the remotest antiquity. In ancient Greece and Egypt Thales, Theophrastus and Pliny described the electrostatic properties of the fossil resin, while Scribonius Largus, doctor of the Emperor Tiberius, testifies that electricity - in particular that of torpedoes - can be used to cure various conditions such as body aches, gout and headaches.

Electricity and magnetism have a powerful connection to life. Several animals have electric organs, which Darwin considered evolutionary errors as in his time the meaning of bioelectricity and biomagnetism was still unexplored. The geomagnetic field is used by many animals, including deer, cows, dogs, turtles, some birds and many fish for orientation in migration, hunting or for any movement. The same seems

to be true for us humans, thanks to a protein in the retina similar to that of many mammals and insects, which would allow us to use the surrounding magnetism for perceptual functions on proportions and distances.

And we come to the fact that has most amazed those who research in the field of the relationship between bioelectromagnetism and life: the magnetic field of the human heart can extend for 3 meters outside the body.

Until today it had not been possible to measure the magnetic component of the electrical activity of the heart and, I would like to say, perhaps it wasn't even needed. Today, through technologies such as the SQUID[4], cardiac magnetism can be observed, extending from 1.5 to 3 meters outside the body.

Among the energy meridians that have been measured experimentally, the most intense is the heart meridian as it generates a clearly detectable ElectroMagnetic Field (EMF). Well the EMF of the heart, of toroidal shape, is 5000 times more powerful than that of the brain.

This EMF is generated inside the cell nucleus, in the chromosomes, and permeates every cell of the organism. From this we understand how each organ of the body emits its own EMF of different intensity and frequency depending on the type of organ, while all these EMFs are synchronized by the field of the Heart.

The communication of each cell with the heart is fundamental and concerns the nano-electromagnetism which from the DNA of each cell and from the enteric or metasympathetic nervous system - the abdominal brain which produces large quantities of serotonin - play a fundamental role in the management of information within of our electromagnetic biofield and, what is more obvious than mysterious, in the interaction with the systems of others.

To summarize what has just been said, I repeat that in our system, which is a quantum engineering masterpiece where everything is connected through magnetism, there are two main places of evident electromagnetic generation, one slight but precise, the brain, which works like a circuit electronic, and a more intense one, the heart, dynamic and pounding, just like an engine, and that there is a relationship between these radiating organs and every single cell of our system.

Now let's add one more discovery, to better describe - from a scientific point of view - which bonds connect our emotional frequencies and the wider ones that are collective or even planetary.

For travel outside the earth's atmosphere, NASA has equipped the spacecraft with special electromagnetic generation devices, this because the resonance frequency of the waveguide between the earth's crust and the ionosphere, the so-called frequency or Schumann resonance[5], is now considered fundamental for the psychophysical balance of the

human being. In fact, without this frequency, the human biological complex becomes unbalanced and risks falling ill. We owe Ermanno Tufano the identification of electromagnetic generation activity in human DNA when mechanically stimulated and subjected to 7 Hz signals, i.e. a frequency that is in resonance with the geomagnetic field.

Furthermore, the aforementioned interaction is also shown in the opposite direction, as indicated by the instruments of the two geostationary satellites of NASA GOES-8 and GOES-10, which on 11 September 2001, at 9:00 in the morning, fifteen minutes after the collapse of the first tower of the World Trade Center, they detected a considerable increase in the activity of the Earth's magnetosphere. Subsequently, at the Princeton University and the Heart Math Institute, the analysis of satellite data compared with those of other historical periods and other events of similar global significance, seems to demonstrate the connection of these mass events to the earth's frequency/pulse .

Note:

[\[1\] The cytosol is the liquid contained in the cell therefore within the cell membrane.](#)

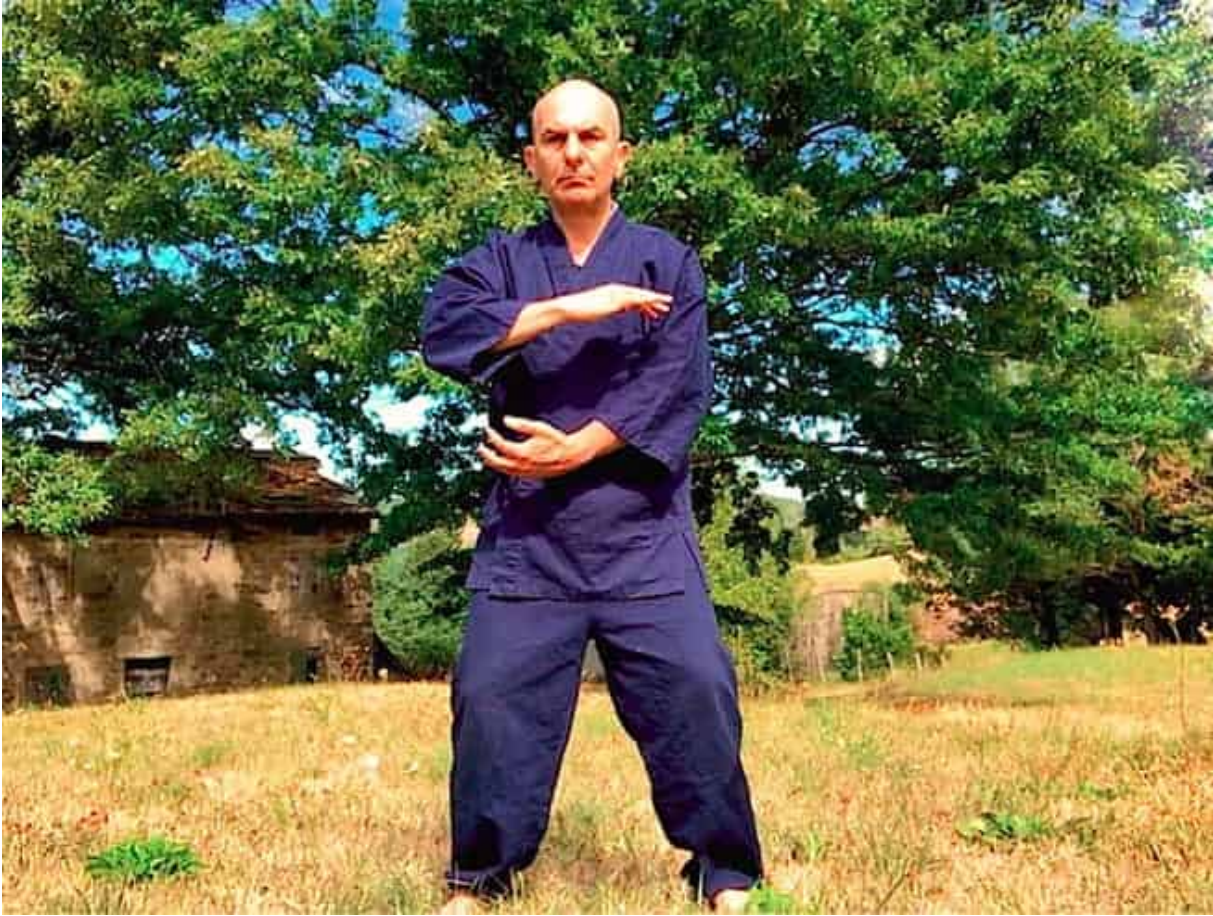
[\[2\] Nitric oxide \(NO\) is produced in living organisms from the semi-essential amino acid L-arginine, thanks to the catalytic action of the enzyme nitric oxide synthetase. Generated almost ubiquitously in the human body, NO modulates a very important series of biological](#)

functions at the level of almost all organs and systems. See: Ignarro LJ, Nitric oxide: a unique endogenous signaling molecule in vascular biology. The Nobel Prize 1998 Medicine/Physiology Lecture. 1988.

[3] ESR erythrocyte sedimentation rate.

[4] SQUID is a superconductive quantum interference device, a machine capable of measuring the amount of iron in the blood with maximum precision through a magnetic biopsy, thus managing to "read" the percentage in organs such as the brain and heart.

[5] This discovery was hypothesized by Nikola Tesla in the last years of the 1800s, but was finally verified experimentally and made public by Schuman only in 1952, after which it was well verified due to the revolutionary implications that derive from it.



Zen discipline and the practice of Naikan as an endotropic syndrome of adaptation

What we are going to consider on energy has a direct bearing on breathing since the breath of light, as we have written, determines a particular energetic configuration in the practitioner's body, similar to that of the athlete during a long-term athletic performance.

The metaphysical intuition of energy is pure Zen: this is demonstrated to us not only by Hakuin and the hermit Hakuun but also by many Masters of the past. Let's not get confused: if in other times the metaphysical intuition of energy was not publicly celebrated or proclaimed by Zen Masters it was because the metaphysical vision of reality was already inherent in the Chinese or Japanese culture of the time. Unlike today: and I emphasize this.

If Zen has distanced itself from esoteric Buddhism by constituting a separate school, it is only because in Zen what is esoteric is the mind in its immediate mystery, and this much before all the contents of the mind itself, a fact that is much emphasized in the zen, since it constitutes its spirit.

Energy must not distract us from what makes it be every moment, but inevitably energy must be cultivated.

Being Shakyamuni Buddha an extremely pragmatic individual, he felt the need to create an immediate ascetic praxis in order to bring his monks to awakening: I did not say that he had a philosophical idea about the immediacy or gradualness of the path, I only say that in his opinion there shouldn't have been too many filters between the asceticism, life and realization of the monk.

However Buddha picked up the idea of those times on energy, to which Buddhism had to adapt, moreover responding to the enormous

pressure generated by caste duties, and thus responding to both instances with a monasticism full of vows and commitments.

In the Indian world we talk about prāṇa and apana with great wealth of details regarding numerous internal functions of the organism: prāṇa that move functions and that connect to humors and organs up to reaching transpersonal synchronies. All the explanation that goes from Ahamkara through the gunas to the tattwas or mahabhūtas [1] - the five constituent elements - is complex and rooted in the perception of a metaphysical world. According to the Chinese mentality, on the other hand, energy in living things is produced in some way from the bottom up, that is, let's say, from the sensitive world to the metaphysical one, like the lines of the Yi Jing hexagrams.

Ancestral vitality, the jing, that genetic force that comes to us from our ancestors, from physical, emotional and subtle food, is like fuel that is consumed over the years and is only minimally renewed. The primary function of the jing is to form the famous Qi: this force is subtle, but not entirely metaphysical because it flows through the function of the organs thanks to the meridians. Thanks to these meridians, as electricity flowing in the nervous system, physiological dynamism, strength and protection are produced.

Physiological dynamism - breath, circulation, organ function and coordinated movement.

Dynamism of strength - creative ability, courage and brute strength.

Protective dynamis - biomagnetism in/around the connective-muscle-tendon tissue.

The metaphysical function of Qi is to activate and recall, thanks to consciousness, the force that responds to it from above, the shen, the door open to celestial influences and to the mystery of being. A well-trained Qi facilitates the fulfillment of the shen in mortal life of men up to the eventual conquest of long life or immortality.

Meditating is for Taoists: "allowing the shen to dwell in man permanently while the Qi remains in balance and circulates powerfully".

Eventually the Indian and Chinese systems come together when they deal with the way in which the being meets the human energy system and this synthesis between systems is the theme of the famous Kalachakra Tantra where Indian, Persian, Chinese and Greek medicine find a theoretical synthesis. It is curious to consider how, in any case, the idea of the fullness of being in a man is recognizable by these different cultures in a completely equal way. We have the example of the application of the theory of Qi in the most advanced Shaolin monks who are ch'an monks, ie Zen.

Let us now consider the practical application of energy in the asceticism and in the daily life of a Zen practitioner by comparing ourselves with the western idea of effort and stressor phenomenon.

When a stressor phenomenon takes place with a generalized or localized action on the organism, the famous "stress" is created. What is Stress? More broadly it can be defined as a general adaptation syndrome. Which consists of a:

alarm reaction:

shock i.e. state of passivity in which the body is hit but does not react,

countershock i.e. general activation of the response, and then of one:

postreactive resistance stage producing the ergotropic syndrome of high functional readiness which eventually degenerates into a

exhaustion phase due to prolonged exposure to the stressor agent where the adaptation achieved in phase two is not maintained and is destined to gradually weaken.

With regard to a strengthening of the organism and of the individual, it can be considered that: if the second phase, stimulated by a stressful phenomenon of non-fatal intensity, lasts for a long time so that the organism can preserve itself continuously enough in even a minimal syndrome of adaptation, here we have obtained to some extent a strengthening: technically this strengthening and resistance is called resilience.

If this possibility is not understood and is not implemented then the individual's reactive system is not trained but, moreover, phase one of alarm lasts longer and without utility often generating over time an existential alarm psychism which manifests itself as a phobia , dissatisfaction or depression.

This shows us how the fear of stress is increasingly unfounded, or how it is nowadays more attributable to the amount of stimuli and information than to their incisiveness.

In general we can consider the sense of encirclement and tiredness experienced by those who feel stressed as a weakened alarm reaction in phase one and a hypoadaptive reaction in phase two.

The three phases can also extend over several days: in the event that, due to a wrongly timed workout, phase three of exhaustion occurs on

the day of the competition or performance, you have burn out, i.e. you end up burnt out in strength.

Overadaptation means that more than enough strength is summoned in stage two of resistance.

Hypoadaptation means that the changes that accompany muscle fatigue show an adaptation that is not entirely sufficient.

This is why it is said that the right duration and intensity of physical effort and the right subsequent recovery time allow it to be repeated, increasing strength, resilience, determination, satisfaction and general well-being. A poor understanding of these needs produces a hypoadaptation which can become continuous and therefore psychological.

This is what concerns an ordinary person: but we know very well that a person who practices meditation assiduously can no longer be considered such for many reasons.

The fundamental reason is that a meditator cultivates a continued endotropic syndrome with a rather significant or abnormal overadaptation.

Nor is it ergotropic because it is somehow self-produced or, better to say, it is the result of an acceptance and cultivation of an endogenous state, which is strengthened by a sense of expansion and communion with the whole.

Living on a level of stronger stimulations is something that many adrenaline-pumped billionaires practice, inventing everything in order to live dangerously: now cocaine, drugs or extreme sports are no longer enough, they have come to throw themselves periodically, without a parachute, into the sea to obtain as continuous an adrenaline boost as possible.

The point is that the truly highest level of stimulation is recorded in the context of the will, that is, the effective donation of oneself: no danger can equal such an intimate and transmutative emotion.

This experience focuses on an emotion that is not only physical or electrical, but rather on an integral thinking/feeling/willing because it is naturally integrated.

For this reason I spoke of a possibility of strengthening resilience and the endotropic syndrome, precisely because they are a living experience for the practitioner and for the neophyte an explanation for certain hardships of asceticism which are not to be seen as self-coercion or hazing, but as an energizing self-imposed ordeal: perhaps the only way to begin to explore what it means for each of us to live fully.

Removing the importance of the peak - meditation is useless (!) - be it adaptation syndrome or satori, does not mean taking a truer or simpler path but on the contrary denying ourselves the fundamental stimulus that leads us to the fullest experience and true or, at best, it can only be a Zen marketing gimmick.

If the intensity, and the flowering of it, is not understandable to a neophyte, I think it should be hoarded and explained precisely by an older practitioner: it is important.

For a boxer the peak moment is when he is in the ring fighting, for a meditation practitioner the peak moment is always, as well as during the meditation session. Every moment the senses live enlarged in the endotropic syndrome.

Beyond unexpected athletic performances that have been told to me by my students who have been practicing meditation for some time, the endotropic syndrome is something livable in all simplicity, in our daily experience, if we have taken the trouble to have cultivated it sufficiently and that you have created anchors to evoke their effect at will.

A classic now heard many times, it occurred during medical visits, in the emergency room or after clinical tests, when one of my students was asked "How is it possible that you are standing?" Or "...What are

you breathing?" but also "isn't he screaming in pain?". It happened that some of my students arrived on foot or by driving to the emergency room and that they left healed after the intervention of the medical staff after one or two hours, signing the release form.

In one case a student had lost a liter of blood due to a very serious ulcer but could speak calmly even standing up; he told me that the paramedical staff questioned him stunned, however asking him to lie down on the couch. They were even more astounded when they learned that his superpower depended on meditation.

The potency that we have defined as endotropic is that something an intelligent person feels in the presence of a long-standing practitioner, feels that they are a remarkable man or woman there, even if they do not appear successful from the point of view of the exclusivity of this world at the drift.

Note:

[\[1\] Preparatory structures derived from the shamkya or tantra traditions which became typical in the teaching of yoga and ayurveda.](#)



The 5 Energy Levels including Qi and Prāṇa

Having to better define energy, based on tradition and my experience, I recognized five different functional levels.

Among these five levels we also have Qi and Prāṇa, which it is good to consider to create a distinction that is useful for our initial practice of

zen-naikan.

Therefore, first of all, let's create a synthetic distinction between Qi and Prāṇa that is useful for our purposes, knowing full well that they are overlapping systems in many ways and that any description we will use will not give us the presumption of challenging the truth, but only the luck of having a code to guide us.

Qi

Bioelectrical aether energy.

Emotions: formality and pragmatism.

Circulatory > Respiratory system.

Qi meridians (chin. tcheu).

Points = hsue.

Scroll > connective physical body/organs.

Activate the functions of the organs thanks to the imagination of the swipec.

Main circulation: forwards then backwards, flowing along the du mai and ren mai meridians.

Concentration through eyes and movements

Praṇa

Psycho magnetic astral energy.

Feelings: ritualism and mysticism.

Nervous system > Respiratory.

Subtle channels (sncr. nadi).

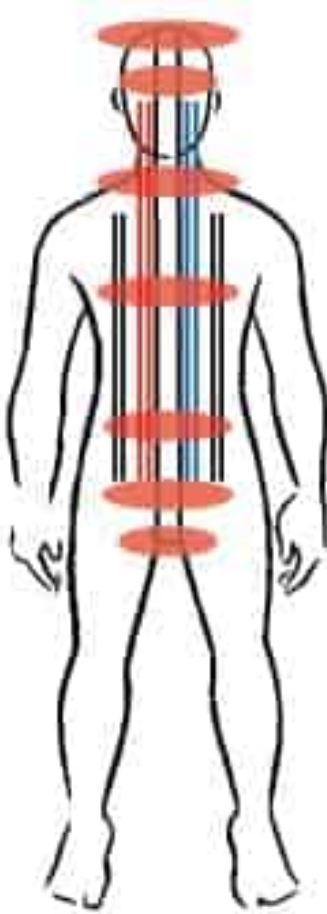
Psychic plexus = Chakra.

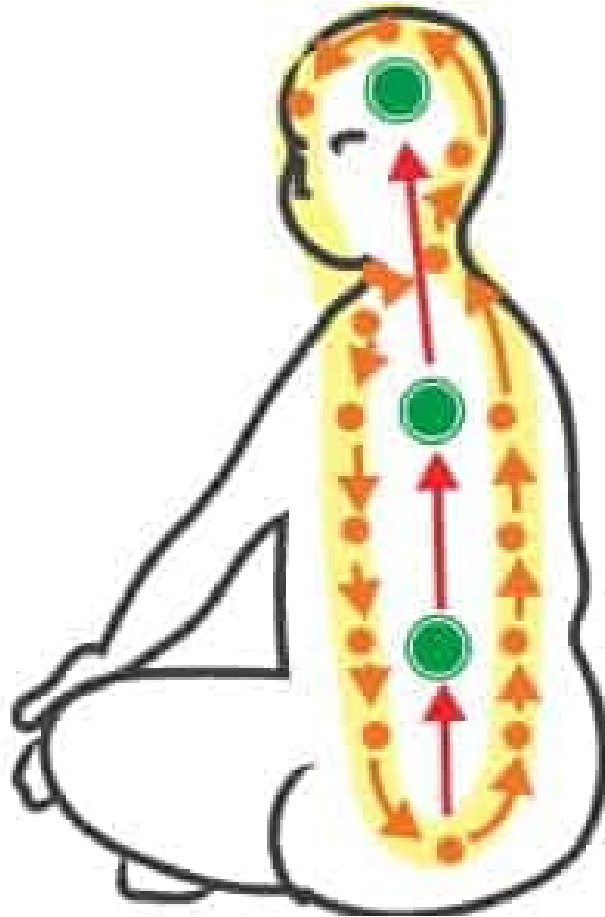
Scrolling > pranic subtle body Prāṇomaya Kośa.

Activate the psychic plexuses thanks to visualizations etc.

Main circulation: up or down the central channel (avaduta).

Concentration through breath positions visualization.





We could simplify the subject by saying that Qi is the energy that affects muscle mass and organ functions, while Prāṇa is based more on consciousness and intentions, as well as the nervous system. As we have said, they are two different conceptions of energy even if they intersect to the point of confusion; in fact, whoever knows one of the two systems better will consider what I say about it completely incomplete, and will give a more extensive meaning to the principles he knows best, collecting in that system and in those principles all the comparisons that correspond with other systems.

A typical American - or commercial - mistake is to think that there could be a gymnastics for the chakras, that the chakras have a definitive and valid color for each use[1], and that they are directly connected to the internal organs, when instead they can be only compared - indirectly - only to the endocrine glands. Of course, we can call our perceptions whatever we like - basically what matters is having a functioning reference system - but perhaps it can be useful to know what was really said about Qi and Prāṇa, at the time and in the places where those concepts were invented and they were enriched with references.

So let's leave the New Age or personal systemisations for a moment and consider how the concept of Qi can be operationally extended to include the function of Prāṇa, while the concept of Prāṇa would not seem to go down to the grossest meanings nor to certain specificities of Qi . Prāṇa derives its vision from the shamkya or tantric traditions, both of which are now known to the masses in the West simply as yoga.

Qi is one body with the functions of the different internal organs of the human body; note well, that I said organ-functions, given that for the Chinese mind, in fact, if one said organ as we understand it, it would be a dead organ, such as for example that of a slaughtered animal or in an anatomy atlas.

In fact, on closer inspection, our organ is a so-called abstraction that corresponds to a concept of map that is more than established for us, for better or for worse, but unknown in most other cultures.

What is the working relationship between Qi and Prāṇa?

Chinese pragmatism has its limits, but in this case it follows and marks the path of experience, given that the exercise of Qi facilitates any other further acquisition, precisely because Qi can be evoked immediately and directly as long as one insists and wants to empathize with the most immediate movement of energy by listening to it with attention and participation.

Therefore it is important with the Qi to listen to the movement quantitatively rather than qualitatively the energy itself, which would be more a prerogative of access to the perception of Prāṇa.

Starting from Qi, our system undergoes a rooting that strengthens it and prepares us for greater balance and attention in understanding the movements and functions of Prāṇa; in fact the practice with Prāṇa is historically contained also in that of Qi. In an image just shown of Qi in the human system, in fact, we see within the vertical wheel movement of Qi (ren mai / du mai), also a vertical movement that we could decipher as movement of Prāṇa. As already mentioned, it goes up and down along the main channel and this corresponds both to the Indian yogic method and to the later Chinese qi-system, where a vertical movement of energy is described in the middle of the wheel movement. This movement, in the Indian system, would also go along the two lateral respiratory channels - which together with the central channel form the triple fulcrum of all the pranic movement - and finally along all the others. I take this opportunity to define that when - in Tibet or India - it is said in the traditional instructions to bring the Prāṇa and fix it in the central channel, this should not be taken literally; the true meaning

is that the whole energy system finds its natural fulcrum, during deep meditation or well-performed activity, in the three aforementioned channels which constitute the true trident (scscr. trishula) symbolic of the God of Yoga Shiva. So in the Chinese system, the vertical channel which is drawn internally to the main - wheel - movement of the Qi, designates a function completely identical to that of the central channel avaduta typical of the Indian shamkya and tantra descriptions. According to the Chinese, the central qi-channel would connect the three dantien, which we list here according to the Chinese tradition with their respective external landmarks:

shang dantian - between the eyes (point off jindan meridian);

zhong dantian - in the center of the chest (VC17 shanzhong);

xia dan tien - two fingers below the navel (VC6 qihai);

However, let us remember that Hakuin's system does not have precisely these references:

superior dantien jindan as in the system just explained;

median dantien at the level of spleen/stomach function as kikai dantien activity that reverberates on the deep dantien finally constituting its dynamic surface; in this case VC17 represents the highest point of the kikai dantien dynamic;

deep dantien, the containing dantien where the Qi energy connected with renal function oozes;

Listening to the movement of Qi inevitably means being able to direct it more and more. More and more one listens actively, therefore more and more one is able to move the Qi with ease. When you learn to move Qi, being able to do it in all circumstances becomes very simple and completely natural. The next stage consists in knowing how to send it to someone by contact and then, third stage, through space.

To feel the movement of Qi energy, all you need to do is want to feel it and not find excuses like "well, it will be the wind..." or "what I feel is just self-conditioning". We have the example of where western medicine is going to understand where the superstition of the placebo effect can lead, with which an enormous quantity of perceptible or usable phenomena - however mysterious they are - manage to remain unheard of due to the scientific superstition.

If we have decided to avoid as much as possible the quantity of prostheses and "medications" that science will make available to us and we want to discover the energetic mystery of ourselves, first of all we

will have to get used to feeling how a hand can, by waving, send energy, an energy capable even of penetrating our dense physical body and of supplying the channels present in that area[2].

In fact, with acupuncture needles we are able to obtain a targeted, penetrating and strong effect, compared to what we could do now by moving a hand up and down; but this last effect is of great importance because we control it, and therefore we can multiply it and also decide to improve it qualitatively.

How is it possible – for a scientific-positivist-reductionist-materialist mind – that an energy expressed by a human will can penetrate a dense body and reach specific organs, positively conditioning their function?

This question answers itself and demonstrates all the superstition contained in any theoretical assumption, where a maximum system is created to include a perfectly ordered description of the universe, but based on only one point of view. Anyone who is not capable of perceiving a paralyzing nightmare in this attitude must not make us waste time in useless discussions.

In the practice of naikan, as taught by Hakuin Ekaku, Qi and Prāṇa are mixed since automatically with the practice of zazen - seated meditation - the small celestial circulation develops and therefore the circulation of Qi and that, at that point, with breaths that are implemented with the relative ligaments and held, together with visualizations, one directly accesses the two main functions of Prāṇa in

meditation, the creation of bliss and the facilitation of meditative absorption so that this occurs at will.

Satori, awakening, is not something we can predict or gradually bring about, nor can we say that by meditating we will become enlightened, since there is no direct causal link between meditation and enlightenment, since enlightenment is beyond time.

But it happens, and so we do meditation and enlightenment based on what we eternally are.

Something must be added here given that the custom of throwing the baby out with the bathwater on various topics has now become established in Japan, which is why Hakuin also had to mobilize in this regard. Let us look at this scene - going back to the makio topic again - where a Master scolds a monk about his lingering in bliss, where the problem is not the bliss but the attachment to it as if it motivates his existence and as if the enlightenment was a state of blissful suspension; but what happens is that in the minds of all the monks, who will one day be teachers themselves, there will forever be the idea that bliss is wrong if not immoral, a makio, that is, a demon of practice.

In my opinion, many Japanese rigidities inherent in the practice of Zen are based on this misunderstanding, being that the competitive, militaristic, gregarious and perfectionist spirit of the Japanese people easily leads them to stiffen patterns of behavior and opinions regarding concepts expressed in Buddhism for millennia.

As I explain in another chapter, such a mental pattern severed relations between Japan and the Rinzai line of Italian descent after the death of Master Yamada Mumon who had approved it; the dispute occurred due to the incautious application of the most radical Japanese mentality by an exponent of the Rinzai-shu institution of the rising sun, completely incapable of seeing the differences as stimuli, but fixated on considering them as deviations.

Japanese rigidity has a fascinating side for me, given that dedication remains a wonderful gift in my mind, but it is that in the current way of life, the ability to meet new needs and communication methods is needed, just to start sharing the sense of what the realization of satori is. This was also the work of Hakuin when he allowed lay people to attend the temple to meditate, and the sanzen room to solve the koans, and such was Yamada Mumon's commitment that in his desire to dialogue with the West, he managed to understand the values and desires to be able to translate the Dharma effectively, accepting Western women into monastic practice as well; beyond that Master Mumon was able to understand what better there could be in the Western mind than the Japanese one, which both he and Master Sodo Harada clearly expressed. The certainty, in Hakuin, of basing the teaching of the naikan on an already established practice of zazen, does not even lead him to consider explaining better that it is a matter of a subtle body where the Elixir So moves, in the beatific practice that he teaches; the fact that the practice takes place in a subtle body seems automatic, given that by now the monk has already meditated so intensely and for so long, that the related subtle body is already ready and more than activated.

Note:

[1] I recognize the usefulness of the description of the chakras - albeit non-traditional - in the context of radionics studies and experiments, given the results produced. This too is a variation of the traditional use of a principle, which can only make sense when this variation proves to be operationally effective.

[2] We always remember that to exchange energy with someone we have to enter their system, which implies that we always have to ask for permission and that sometimes it is only given in words. Healing is a complex subject. At least we should not deceive ourselves and be acute, implacable, possibility-based observers and never aligned with the superstitions of the time. To learn how to help the healing of others, one can only first develop the ability to mobilize energy in a conspicuous way, with clear, stable, tangible results and on various levels.

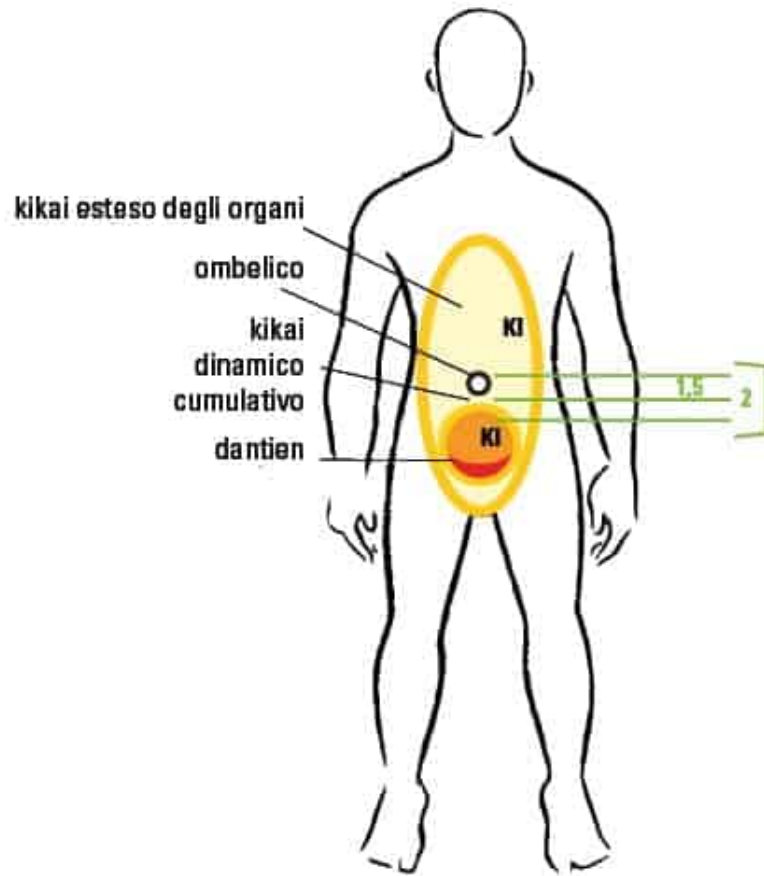


Exercises to Enhance the Perception of Qi and its Harmonic Mobilization

Let us return for a moment to the experiential description of dantien and Qi.

The dantien is not easy to perceive until a very particular listening is carried out; being an energy organ it does not have a physical consistency or a limited form in space that can be materially perceived to say here it is, however the activation of the dantien can create external physical forms that concern the anatomy of the place where it manifests itself - below the navel - and where a particularly, unusually elastic consistency can be found. But unlike nerve plexuses - which when healthy are not perceived - and chakras which are perceptible due to their radiance when we manage to focus on that sensation, well, the dantien has the characteristic of being empty and at the same time dynamic.

Qi, for its part, has the characteristic of inflating the places where it passes with vitality and, in effect, fills the meridians by flowing through them where, reaching the points (hsue = cavity) it fills them one by one before passing on and reaching all the others on the same meridian, and beyond.



Therefore, what we must be able to perceive is an empty but extremely dynamic, active sensation, in fact the energy that is somehow recalled in the dantien flows on its surface - both internal and external - designating the dantien (or dantien) as a battery dynamic that is not recharged by accumulation like that of a razor or a computer, but in which the dynamis is maintained over time. The dynamo movement is not maintained, therefore, due to a quantity of permanent charge, but thanks to a habit of perceiving the part, therefore also of making body weight and attention fall on it but above all - more important - thanks to the relationship that the dantien maintains with all the other parts of our system and also with the outside world, therefore also with the actions we carry out...

Hakuin considers the kikai to be the breathing center where Qi radiation accumulates during exhalation, located an inch and a half below the navel. The dantien, the center of strength, is instead located two inches below the navel, let's listen to it: The kikai is the treasure house where vital energy is accumulated and nourished; the dantien is the castle of the city, where the divine elixir is distilled and where the cycle of life is preserved. A man of ancient times said: "The reason why the great rivers and seas achieved supremacy over hundreds of other streams is that they had the virtue of being lower than the others.[1] From the very beginning, the oceans have geographically occupied a lower position than all other waters; therefore they receive all these waters without increasing or decreasing." The kikai is located in the body in a position lower than the five internal organs, and is constantly collecting the true energy. Eventually the divine elixir is perfected, and one attains the status of an immortal. The dantien is located in three places in the body, but the one I am referring to is the low dantien. The kikai and dantien are both placed below the navel; in reality they are one, although they have two names. The dantien is located two inches below the navel, while the kikai is only an inch and a half below it, and it is in this area that the real energy always accumulates.

Note:

[\[1\] Lao Tzu, 66.](#)

嬰兒現形圖

他日雲飛方見真人朝上帝

滂麓今已化飛龍
 變現神通不可窮
 一朝跳出珠光外
 漫身直到紫微宮

神水溶液
 沈澁根株
 內外無塵
 長養聖胎

夫凝結之真
 孕結胎之子
 傳其精交氣
 精其氣和
 其神隨神大
 小俱得甚矣



氣穴法名無盡處
 歲世於寂寂包空
 我問空中誰氏子
 他云是你主人翁

衍化生財
 抱懷守確
 結締若存
 念茲在茲

此時丹契更須悉母情嬰兒

How the embryo of ourselves breathes

According to the Dongyuan Jing text, our embryonic being breathes like this:

“There are two breaths, the internal breath, NeiQi, and the external breath, WaiQi. That which, when dispersed, is like a cloud of smoke, and

which, when gathered, is like a mane of hair, which is visible on the skin, which has the five colors, green, red, yellow, black and white, this is the external breath. Ah! [1] The (internal) breath of man comes out of the Field of Cinnabar, his breath is deep, what he nourishes is far away, what he emits is thick; in insignificant men the (internal) breath comes out of the liver and the diaphragm: they breathe like monkeys, and blow like rats.

There is a further question that can give us curious information on the uniqueness of this breathing practice: in these pages we talk about breaking the breath of athletes, now let's look at what happens in the regulation of body temperature.

A team of doctors has carried out studies with the Tibetan government in exile in McLeod Ganj, regarding the case of some practitioners of Mystical Heat Yoga, the famous *dumo* of Tibetan practitioners, of which we have already spoken. Usually, to warm up, an increase in metabolism is triggered so that heat is already produced in the physiological processes.

Instead, *dumo* practitioners lower the threshold of metabolism and energy consumption to produce the heat they need, something completely incomprehensible to modern physiology considering that these practitioners are covered in a single cotton cloth between the snow and the frost.

Obviously this contradiction is deliberately intentional, this would show the mystical capacity of these practitioners: the fact is that the practice of dumo develops precisely from that same type of abdominal concentration which is also typical in the Zen practitioner and which we have just mentioned.

However, we must consider that the practice of inner heat arrived in Tibet from the plain of the Ganges where the climate is very mild and where therefore it will have been used for other functions: in fact the first function of this practice would be the development of bliss and also the compaction of one respiratory state and consciousness which is extremely facilitated by abdominal concentration.

This is the importance of preparatory exercises for heat, such as uddhyana bandha and then kumbaka bandha, or the ligament of the diaphragm and the vessel which, finally, is realized as an innate respiratory state[2].

When embryonic respiration is mentioned in the classics, we want to refer to the breath of one of our supposed spiritual fetuses; in truth, as we have seen, this breathing would be activated by itself during the practice of sitting zazen meditation, or thanks to kumbaka, i.e. the practice of the vase. The meaning of the citation of a possible spiritual fetus is that with the movement of the suitable energy, the immediate opening towards the shen would be produced; in Zen philosophy this is turned upside down since it is sitting in meditation that everything blossoms by itself, but this theorem is demonstrated in practice since it is not produced using thought - as happens in many Mahayana schools -

but thanks to a meditation position. And this is precisely the taste of Zen.

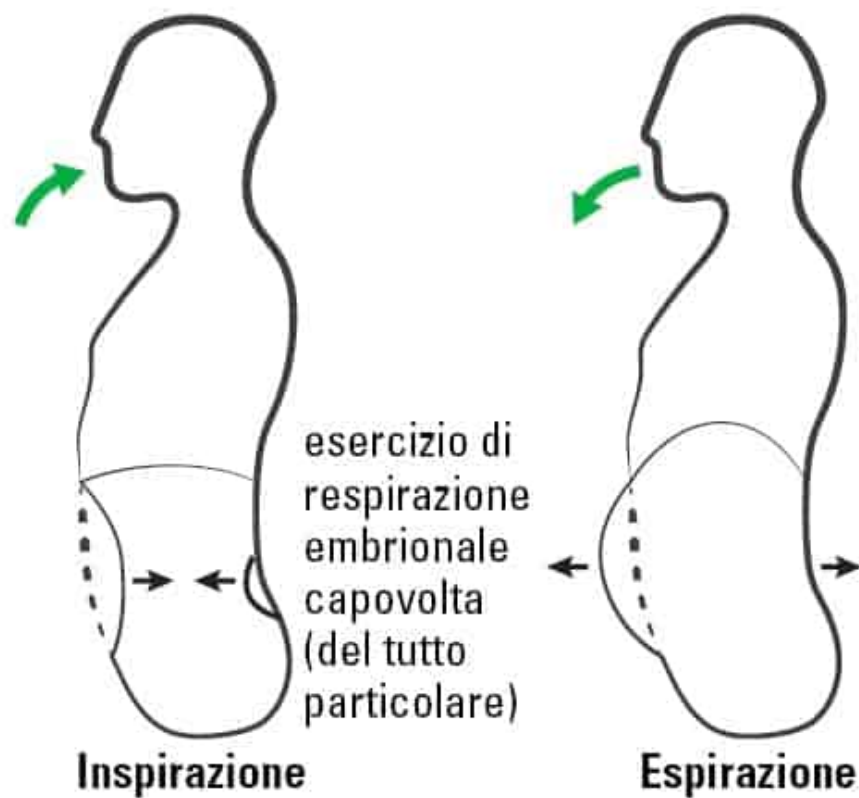
Moreover, in the description of many modern texts it is narrated of an inverse embryonic respiration during which one should contract areas that actually expand during inhalation. The mystery is soon solved, it is a slight contraction useful in certain qi gong exercises which does not force the respiratory movement; as is often the case, certain techniques are described roughly - and with some risk - just to make it clear to newbies that they are not ready yet.

It is important to know that in the ancient Chinese language the word relationship does not exist and that interactions between people are actually interactions between roles. For example, the younger brother will not dare to contradict the older brother.

Note:

[\[1\] During our meetings we will have the opportunity to explain this technique.](#)

[\[2\] sncscrib. sahaja kumbaka or innate vessel retention.](#)

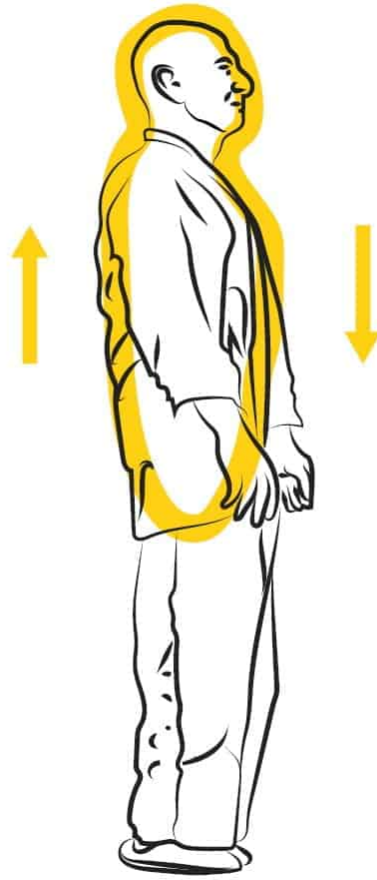


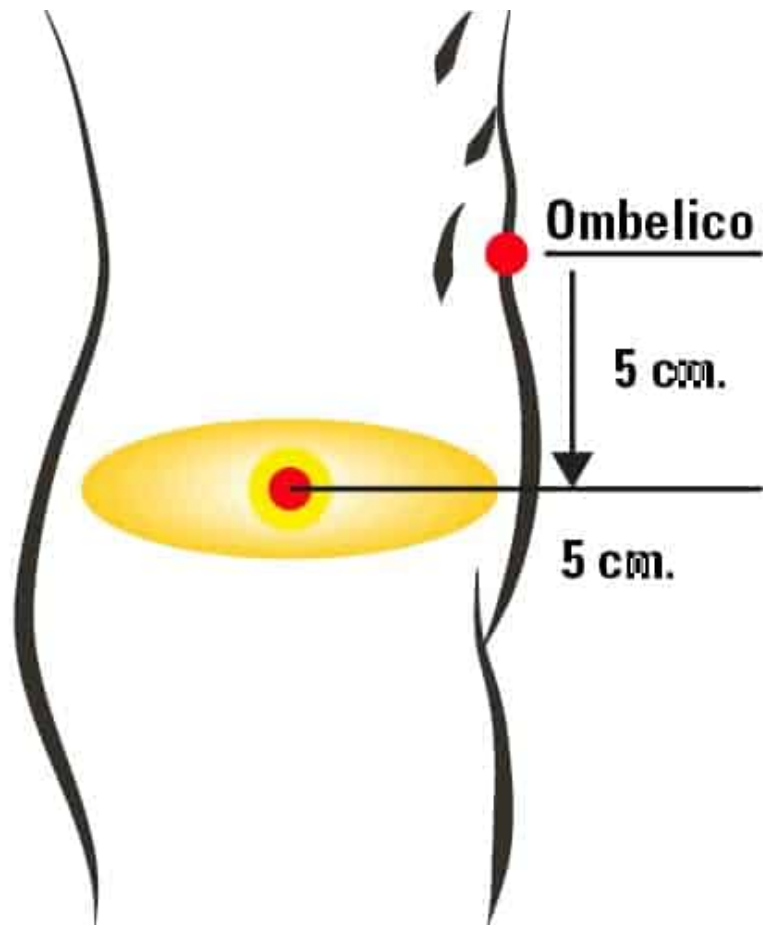
embryonic respiration

First of all, it is good to understand what embryonic breathing means, given that it is a term used in many practices of the Chinese tradition and that everyone has their own opinion, in some cases confusing the reader with the geek intent on maintaining the oral tradition but, in reality, to force him to attend paid courses.

From what can be deduced from the various classics and related commentaries, there is postnatal breathing, therefore completely similar, at least at the beginning, to that of seated meditation. Then we have an embryonic strengthening exercise where breathing follows a precise visualization to increase the so-called small celestial circulation. We'll call this exercise embryonic circulation boosting.

And therefore, as the last type of embryonic breathing, we have a particular technique, which has often been unnecessarily underlined, which consists in the reverse movement of normal embryonic breathing, but only because certain techniques of Chinese energy gymnastics require that particular breathing during movements which by themselves they compress the breath.





6th exercise.

Qi-Embryonic Respiration I

Primary pattern of Qi embryonic respiration

Normal abdominal breathing is natural and involves only paying attention to releasing the lower abdomen as you inhale. The descent of the diaphragm downwards - which the first few times is felt as forced - expands the lungs, and this is also a fundamental rule in seated meditation. Thus the breaths are deep, slow and intense having their energetic fulcrum in the dantian; the lungs expand and subsequently compress starting from the diaphragm and therefore from the abdomen and not from the chest which remains a passive part of the process. In certain exercises, the inhalation emphasizes the slight push out of the perineal area, which is between the genitals and anus, or rather where the huiyin acupuncture point, CV1 (Renmai), is located; while in the exhalation it is contracted slightly.

In addition to this simple process, one begins to visualize with each exhalation that the more physical energy of the breath - therefore oxygen - becomes something more subtle, like an irradiation that descends through the diaphragm to reach the dantien, spraying all the viscera but above all by filling the dantien, which voraciously engulfs this energy with a right-handed movement. Thus this can be seen as a current radiating from the lungs downwards through the diaphragm, golden in color, being attracted by a clockwise moving vortex in the dantien, to nourish it and to give strength and joy to all the internal organs.

So:

you inhale and the air enters;

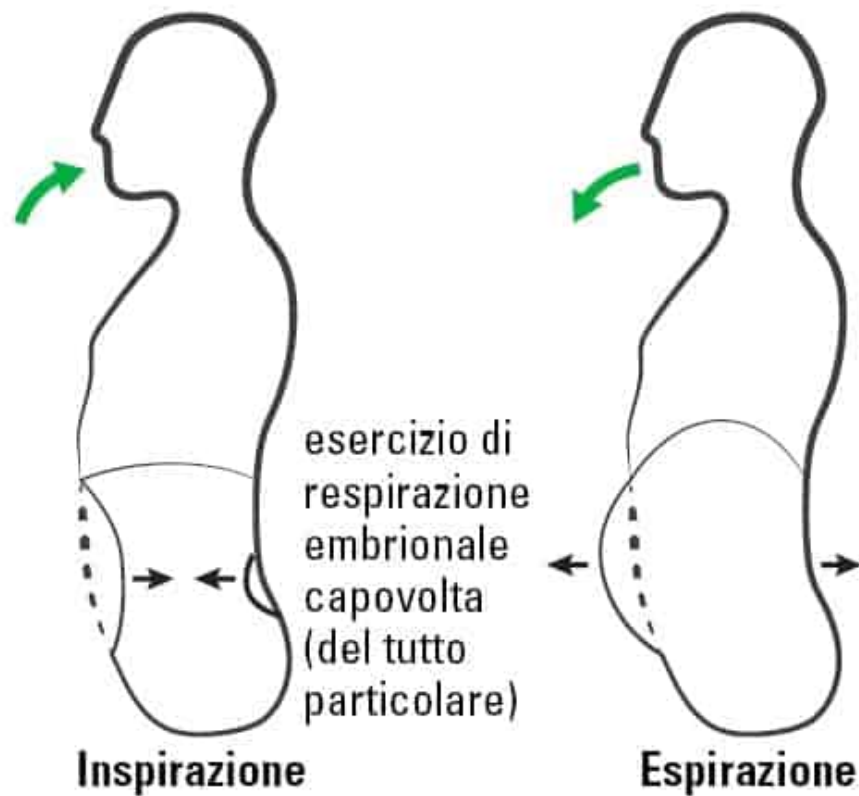
there is a slight hold in which the diaphragm is lowered a little;

the physical breath is exhaled while the subtle one descends as golden radiation and is captured by the swirling movement of the dantien in a clockwise direction;

a slight withholding just to enjoy the sensation of joyful fullness;

inhale again and so on.

Everything is done carefully and without forcing your breath



7th exercise.

Qi-Embryonic Respiration II

***Embryonic Qi Breathing enhanced by visualization -
embryonic empowerment for activation of
circulation***

This breathing is a little more complex because it implies a visualization of the flow of Qi which involves the use of a pure act of listening which must be confused with a pure act of will. Here the clear division with the mentality and with the materialistic expectation is determined.

This is typically the women's movement:

Inhale by making the perception of breath flow from the nose to the top of the head along the forehead, nape, neck, shoulders, back up to the coccyx;

and then it passes into the perineum (short held);

to go back with the beginning of the exhalation from the front up to the nose, from which - in fact - the last part of the exhalation comes out, purifying our system;

very short, joyful restrained;

the cycle starts again.

For men the movement is usually in reverse, so:

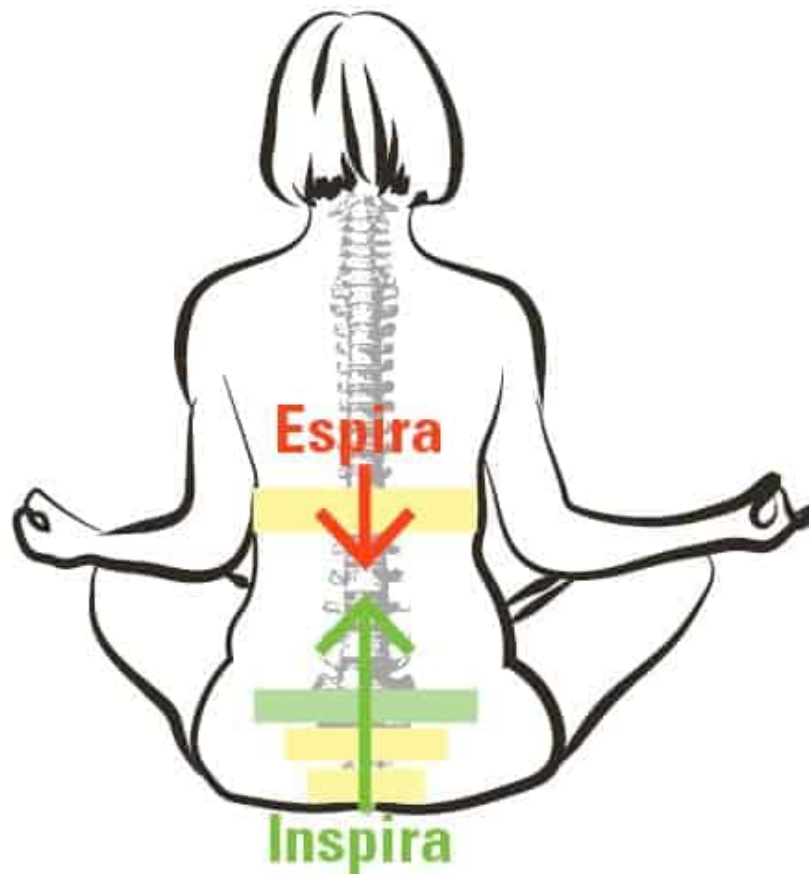
Breathing in is like swallowing the breath downwards;

at the perineum there is a moment of restraint;

exhaling one passes with the flow behind the back, on the nape, on the top of the head to exhale the last part of the breath through the nose;

very brief, blissfully restrained;

the cycle begins again.



8th exercise.

Prano-Embryonic Respiration III

Ascending/Descending Embryo Respiration

According to the Taoist tradition, breathing before birth, i.e. embryonic or pre-natal, is what we are going to practice now, while post-natal breathing is that of the 6th exercise.

This upward and downward movement of the energy is very easy to visualize/feel, so much so that often, point-blank, I propose it as the first exercise without saying anything else. However, from a technical point of view, we have brought an energetic-pranic, vertical movement into the energy-qi-body space, circular, ie without using the central channel or the chakras.

The exercise can be described as a lift movement from the basal center to the navel on inhalation and exhalation. That's all.

But the striking thing is when, by practicing the exercise, at a certain point, one really perceives an ascending and then descending movement of energy which cross-sections all the space of our body-qi and of our dense-body in the area of the belly.

Practicing this exercise, when nothing else is said, just imagine any sensation of energy that is wave, tingling, vibration, which moves to the rhythm of the breath as described.



9th exercise.

Prano-Embryonic Respiration IV

Pranic Embryonic Breathing

I learned various versions of this technique which consists in sending, with each breath, prāṇa along the central axis of the subtle pranic body, to irrigate the centers and strengthen their function.

First of all, it must be considered that the pranic body (bio-magnetic) can light up by visualizing it in detail or, simply, by carrying out physical and meditative activity while remaining very centered and present. To explain: when a boxer learns to perceive his pranic body – even if this happens in an unconscious way – it becomes very, very fast, and it just so happens that in extreme circumstances the practitioners can react with more force and effect, even without training that can justify such capabilities.

The technique. The subtle body is visualized: light, translucent and iridescent; it is crossed by internal channels, also transparent, of which the main one - with a diameter like the tip of the little finger - runs from the perineal area to the top of the head, where it opens and widens throughout.

It is in this channel that the technique is developed:

one trains for a few minutes to contract the perineal muscles, which are between the genitals and the anus, until one succeeds quite precisely, and then one contracts thinking that this is the impulse to move the pranic energy towards the 'high across the channel;

at the same time we inhale and, from the perineal base, we perceive the luminous breath of prāṇa rising through the channel to light up each center and make it radiate;

therefore: 2) under the navel (same area as the dantien), 3) in the navel, 4) in the heart, 5) on the throat, 6) between the eyes, 7) on the sinciput, a radiation from the centers themselves manifests itself , as if each center were a small radiating solar entity;

this visualization of irradiation of the centers remains unchanged, even when the luminous current returns to the base with the exhalation, during which every form of impure energy that is stagnant in our system is discharged through the perineum area as smoky mist and up until the system is cleaned up.

In this sense, it is interesting to perceive with closed eyes the individual colors that manifest themselves during this purification.

This exercise, in the yogic field, is called Shakti Chalana.



Master Hakuin's exercises taken from Yasenkanna and Orategama

At the end of this book the reader will find two traditional texts written by Master Hakuin, Yasenkanna and Orategama, from which we report and comment on all the exercises.



10th exercise.

The heart placed low on the hands

Again, Abbot Hakuun says, "I always keep my heart down so that it fills my abdomen."

Again... Hakuun says in the Yasekanna: "Long ago Dogen, the Zen patriarch founder of the Eihei-ji temple made the crossing to China and paid reverence before the teacher Nyojo (Ju-ching) on Mount Tendo (Tien-t' a G)."

The master said to him, "O Dogen, at the time of sitting meditation, put your heart on the palm of your left hand."

There are different levels of realization of this fundamental practice which appears trivial in its simplicity, but which has very powerful implications.



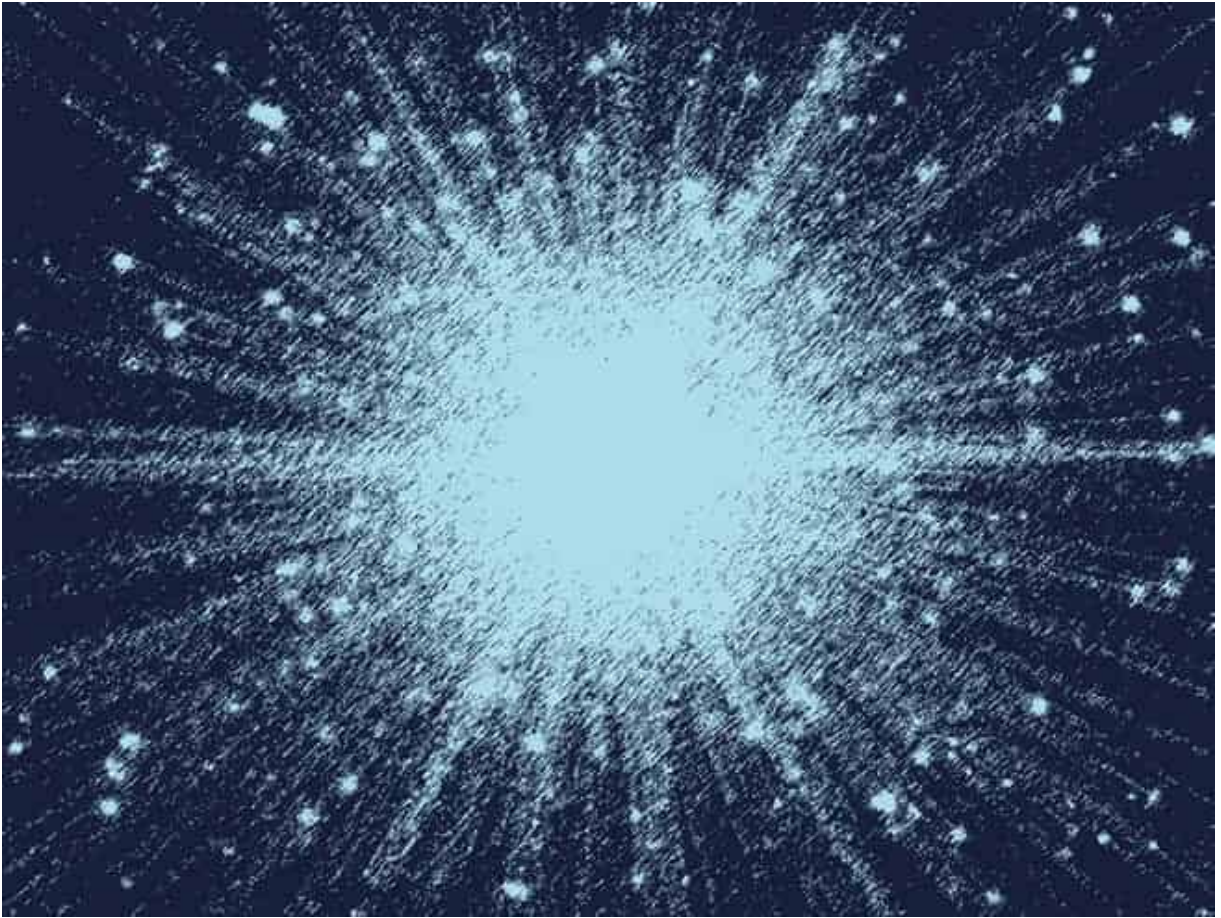
11th exercise.

The heat in the abdomen

"In man energy is, in truth, only one. When it goes down to the dantien, the Yang reacts, and the initiation of the reaction in the Yang form can be confirmed by a sensation of warmth."

“When you want to experience the fullness for which Yin is transformed into Yang, it is enough to reach the production of heat in the abdomen.”

The importance of the practice of Elixir So and Inner Heat is reaffirmed.

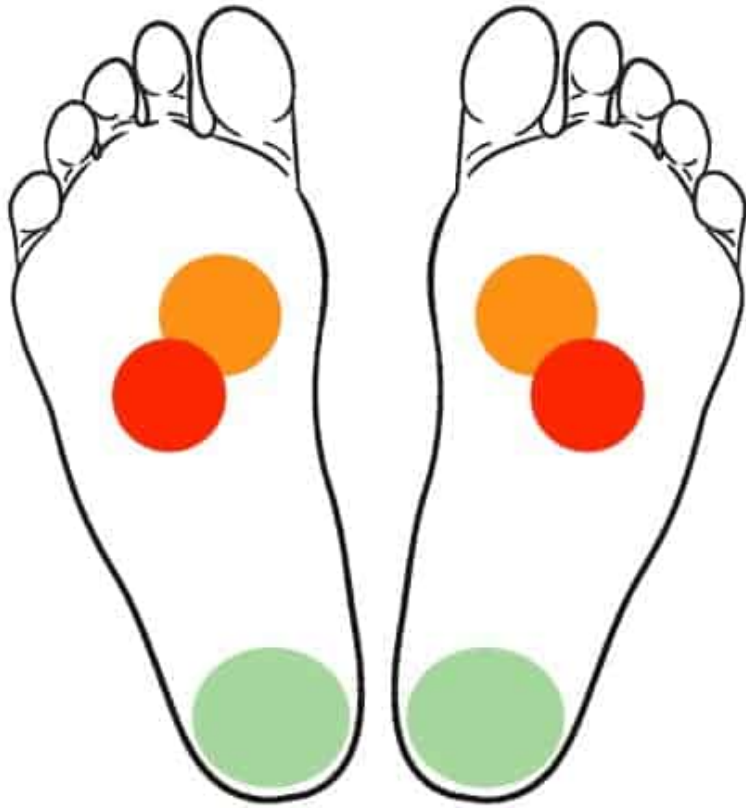


12th exercise.

***The pervading energy originating from the breath
through the 84,000 Pores***

“When one learns to be quiet and simple, without torments, the ancestral energy spontaneously conforms to this, producing an integral and pervading qi-energy. If this energy is kept inside how could I get sick? The point is to keep this qi-energy within, pervading and supporting the entire body so that between the 360 points and 84,000 pores there is not the width of a hair without it. Know that this is the secret to preserving life.”

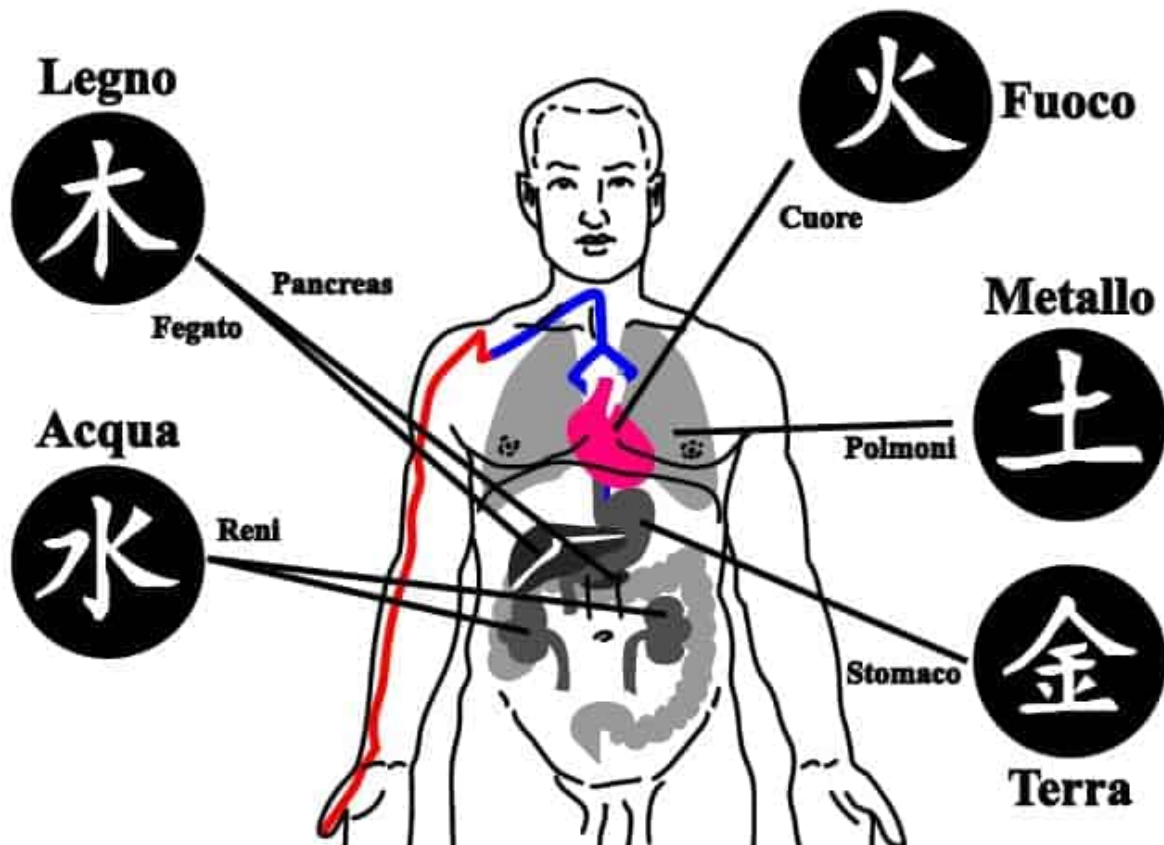
As we have already considered in the notes on the first pages, the production of the best Qi - thanks to the integrity of the ancestral energy (jing) - is due in this case to the dynamic stillness induced by meditation, in which - finally - satori is achieved. Hakuin specifies that the term meditation should be understood not only as quietism or mere mental practice (zazen + koan = rikan), but also with an active life and thanks to the power that Zen yogic meditation (naikan) has to distill the elixir and therefore to bring into play the innate potential of the practitioner. The energy maintained in every point and pore of the body is not a random way of saying, but it is the subject of exercise 19 where you actually learn to breathe through your pores.



13th exercise.

Down in the soles of the feet

“The real man breathes with his heels, the ordinary man breathes with his throat. And again... the Buddha himself reminds us that keeping the heart down on the soles of the feet heals a hundred and one ailments.”



14th exercise.

The secret alchemical liquid that comes from the lungs

“Mencius also speaks of free energy in man; just this must be brought to the dantien in the sea-of-energy at the navel wheel and concentrated there below. For months and years protect it and keep it together, feed it and make it perfect. One morning, that alchemist's crucible will suddenly be transcended because in all directions and in everything, there will be circulating the one great elixir. Then, in the end, you will awaken to true immortality as a great Sennin, one who is begotten like heaven and earth, and who never dies like the space element never dies.”

“This is the season of 'completion' in the alchemy of the Tan elixir. Why, I wonder, does man cling to such little psychic powers as riding the wind and flying over the mists, penetrating the earth, walking on water and churning the ocean when he can produce the butter-elixir So and transmute the clay into real, bright gold?”

“A wise man said that “The elixir Tan is the dantien itself located below the navel. The secret alchemical liquid is that which comes from the lungs, which must be taken and returned to dantien.” Such is the teaching, that the “liquid metal” is the circulation of the Tan.”

To carry out this technique, which we have already explained as embryonic breathing, it is useful to prepare yourself well by practicing the pranayama techniques called uddhyana banda, ujjiai and kumbaka, used for millennia for the same purpose.



15th exercise.

The 84,000 pores and the stopping of breathing

“Don't eat until you're hungry, and stop before you're satisfied. Take a walk until the exercise makes your stomach empty, and when it is empty go into a room. Sit silently in the meditation position and count the

outgoing and incoming breaths. Count from one to ten, from ten to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, when the body will become still and the heart serene like a clear sky.

"If this practice is prolonged, the breath will come to a standstill. When it remains suspended it will become a vaporous exhalation which will rise from the 84,000 pores as mist. You will find that every disease you have ever had is removed and every obstacle eliminated. Now, like a blind man who sees the light for the first time, you will no longer need to ask another what the Way is."

If we look closely, here Hakuin is dealing with the result of the practice of zazen, of sitting meditation. I find it much more important to find this stop, rather than hoping by sitting for hours on end to automatically shove deep meditation absorption into the practitioners' skull, particularly if the practitioners are Western; why that absorption happens, without having to force ourselves, if we understand the result.

We've already introduced the theme of the breath of light, so we'll assume there's nothing more to add. On the fact of the balance between the breath of the two nostrils and how to position the tongue to facilitate this reference to our public meetings of Zen naikan, otherwise this text becomes an encyclopedia.



16th exercise.

The dantien of the heart

“Lock yourself in a private room where there is a comfortable bed already heated with a pillow about three inches high. Stretch well and lying on your back close your eyes and confine the heart energy within your chest.”

Place a goose feather on your nose and make your breath so slow that it no longer moves the feather and after three hundred breaths like this, when your ears hear nothing and your eyes see nothing, hot and cold will no longer exist, and the wasp and scorpion stings will no longer be able to poison you. Life will be extended to 360 years and you will approach the mental and physiological status of immortals.”

Given the spiritual context, we cannot compare this practice to autogenic training, but evidently to the Pratyahara of the tantric tradition, to which Hakuin reasonably returns to encourage the practitioner to let go, to a relaxation which, in some cases, appears more necessary than energetic tension .

The latter, however vital, is sometimes not enough to distract certain characters from a tormenting sense of duty. After all, sensory deprivation experiments have demonstrated the need for these moments of high detachment.



17th exercise.

The Lotus symbol

“Since the lotus that blooms in water withers when it approaches fire, fire is the dreaded enemy of the lotus. But the lotus that blossoms in the midst

of the flames becomes more and more beautiful and fragrant as the fire approaches."

"But if you fearlessly persevere amidst everyday sense objects, and engage in pure and one-pointed meditation without making mistakes, you will be like the man who successfully delivered the hundreds of golden ryo, despite the turmoil that surrounded. As you boldly and courageously set out on your journey, and proceed without stopping for a single minute, you will experience immense joy, as if you suddenly understood the origin of your mind and crushed and destroyed the root of birth and death. It will be as if the empty sky disappeared and the iron mountains collapsed. You will be like the lotus blossoming in the flames, whose color and fragrance intensify as the flames approach. Why should it be like this?"

"Because the real fire is the lotus, and the real lotus is the fire."

"And again... "The power of wisdom that comes from practicing meditation in the world of desire is like the lotus that comes out of fire; it can never be destroyed." Again, Yung-chia does not mean that one must necessarily be shipwrecked in the world of five wishes. What it says is that even if one is in the midst of the five desires and sense objects, one must be controlled by a mind receptive to purity, just as the lotus is untainted by the mud from which it flowers.

"Finally... A man who continues his practice avoiding from the beginning the objects of the five senses, no matter how well versed he may be in the doctrine of emptiness of self and things, and no matter how much

understanding he may develop on the Path: when he gives up stillness and enters the midst of activity is like a water spirit that has lost its water,[1] or a monkey with no trees to climb. Most of its energy is lost, and it is just like the lotus that suddenly withers when faced with fire."

In various points Hakuin deals with the relationship between fire and water, not only in symbolic terms, but thus representing the moods, their position, function, movement and alternation. Here we are dealing above all with the possibility of a dynamic Zen discipline and not segregated from the challenges of existence. But we also want to clarify the fact that attention must be overcome in keeping the upper part of the body cool, from the throat to the top of the head (where the lotus is), attention which ceases after the first phase of the practice, given that the heat beatific now arises everywhere and is purely metaphysical although clearly perceptible.

Note:

[\[1\] Hakuin uses the term kenka \[clam and shrimp\]. I do not take it to be a colloquial term for kappa, or water goblin, although the text indicates that it refers to this. The kappa has a cavity filled with water on its head. It loses its powers if there is no water. See Karaki, ed., zenke goroku shu, p. 337.](#)



18th exercise.

The Elixir So

“Elixir So is a method a practitioner should use when in his meditation the four great elements are manifesting out of harmony and the body and mind are fatigued. Let him visualize placed on the crown of his head that

celestial ointment So, also called butter or ambrosia, solidified in the shape and size of a duck's egg, radiant with light, most pure and sublime in color and fragrance."

"May he feel the exquisite essence and aroma of the ointment melt and flow down seeping through his head, permeating his body flowing downwards, slowly coming to wash out his shoulders and elbows, passing first to the sides of his chest and into his chest, illuminating the lungs, diaphragm, liver, stomach and internal organs, back and spine, nourishing all bones and down to the hips. "

"This is how all the old sicknesses, blockages and pains in the five main organs and six viscera follow the heart-mind downwards: if you practice diligently you will hear a sound of water flowing downwards. Thus this energy flows throughout the body, providing a nourishing heat that reaches the legs and continues to the soles of the feet."

"So the lower part of the body becomes hot, and he is saturated with that heat. Then let him do this meditation: that the abundance of the elixir, having permeated the whole body and having reached the feet, begins to fill it more densely, accumulating in the lower part of his body as if it were an alembic."

"So he will want to feel himself sitting soaked, inside and out, up to the navel in a warm decoction of rare and fragrant medicinal herbs prepared by an expert alchemist. Then you will feel the elixir So gently begin to distill within you increasing the radiance of body and mind."

“When this meditation is repeated there will be psychic experiences of a sudden, indescribable fragrance felt in the nose, a delicate and exquisite feeling in the body. Mind and body become harmonized surpassing even the fullness of youth. Accumulations of toxins and blockages are cleared away, the organs are pacified and the skin noticeably begins to glow.”

**The three secret keys
of Zen Naikan Comment**



19th exercise.

The first secret key of the whole Naikan system: The exercise of breathing through the pores

We quote Master Hakuin's quote again:

“When one learns to be quiet and simple, without torments, the ancestral energy spontaneously conforms to this, producing an integral and pervading qi-energy. If this energy is kept inside how could I get sick? The point is to keep this qi-energy within, pervading and supporting the entire body so that between the 360 points and 84,000 pores there is not the width of a hair without it. Know that this is the secret to preserving life.”

Hakuin zenji

If we read this explanation incorrectly, it will be easy for us to believe that for some hidden reason or that thanks to some very secret technique we can suddenly keep the Qi inside our body; something that, due to the very nature of Qi, will appear unlikely. So? The answer is in the dynamics of the movement of Qi, therefore it is hidden in its vitality, or in the fact that this movement must continuously renew itself or, better to say, can draw from other higher or deeper sources. In reality that highest source is the power of the breath, when understood in its subtlety, while the deepest power comes from terrestrial magnetism and celestial electricity.

Some trees are ever-green due to their internal stem power, and this is how Qi energy behaves in humans. Trees have a movement of hormones - auxins - which allows them to issue orders regarding growth and order, even though they don't have a centralized brain or a

beating heart; still for science there is the mystery of how the sap can go up those trees taller than ten meters.

Where does the sorting of the tree-system start from? From light, and the chlorophyll synthesis is there to prove it; using a computer metaphor we could say that the tree does not need hardware in this, as everything already works at the online software level, or rather by the universal mind (Alaya Uijnana) turned towards the tree. And part of the chlorophyll synthesis is the breath of the tree, i.e. its exchange of oxygen with the outside with the consequent release of carbon dioxide, as well as in its breath the magnetic force it receives from the earth, and the electric light stimulus coming from the sun as well as from other planets through the atmosphere. The vegetable world also has a special relationship with the stars and the earth through dew, and its circulation inside the flask of the biosphere.

Light is breath for the tree, therefore, and Qi works in human beings not too differently.

In central Asia they collect the so-called star water, leaving a basin of rain water exposed on those moonless nights that have some particular astrological interest.

Exercise 19 consists, more and more, of exercising the ability to widen the subtle breath from the lungs to the whole area of the skin, that is, to breathe through the pores. Naturally, during inhalation we take in air

and therefore oxygen into the lungs and then, with exhalation, we emit carbon dioxide and other things into the environment.

It has already been said that, in the exhalation, something else also happens; it happens that exhaling a passage of bioelectric energy is activated through the diaphragm and solar plexus which reaches all the viscera, revitalizing them. Both in qi gong and in yoga there are techniques which take care of this fact and which use it for the benefit of the practitioners We now use this same force emanating from the exhalation, as we use the fact that the same energy always enters with the inhalation through the pores, into our system.

But this exercise must be done, done, done. Daily basis.

Generally, within a maximum of fifteen times one starts to have the first net experiences of bio-electricity. The preliminary attention consists in rubbing the hands vigorously everywhere on the surface of the body. At first the breathing exercise is carried out through the palms of our hands, through the pores of which we practice breathing in and out the bioelectric energy while, obviously, the physical breath continues to take place through the lungs. First we breathe through the palms and then with the whole hand. In the next phase, by now, we will be able to access the precise sensation of perspiring with each inhalation and exhalation through the entire body surface. If we charge our perception with attention, shortly thereafter, we really facilitate this in/out energy exchange.

I like to add the following, for the use of Rinzai Zen practitioners developing the koan way and who are engaged with the koan Mu[2].

This exercise involves the activation of a force that is much more intimate than that of particular chakras, crucibles or magpie bridges, meridians or points. Using the words of Yoga everything happens directly in Shashrara or in Hiranyagarbha [3] or, for the Chinese, in the Shen.

It is movement without movement. Exhaling the breath that is Mu is released, yet outside there is already MU welcoming Mu, and when we reabsorb MU we make MU return to where it already is anyway. I repeat: this moment should be practiced only for the purpose of responding to the koan completely, since it allows us to understand the force of the explosion of this sound, where it comes from and how it is expressed completely and in total peace. After answering the koan Mu a sanzen we should not feel let down or unable to speak, or pant like bulls, since the power of that sound almost produces itself. Some may be helped in training by first breathing through the left hand, the right and then the left and right legs, then all four together. And then moving on to the whole body. Beyond that, the practice of Mu through the pores matures our meditative experience by extending the breadth of our perception. The result is the realization of the koan Mu; being a kensho koan we can certainly have a real experience thanks to the intensity of our practice and the guidance of an experienced and compassionate Dharma Teacher. In this case compassionate means that he does not allow us to take things too easy or allow us to consume any experience of Mu.

Although here Mu, sanzen and zazen are seen in the perspective of a method, this should not confuse the reader and rather inspire him to live on the strength of his own experience as well as to benefit from the advice given to him. Immediacy and not complexity is the basis of true practice. Sooner or later Satori will take care of our practice and the unfolding of the face. This, which is called the breath of the Dragon, passes through us as if, in reality, there were neither inside nor outside.

Sensing the maximum presence or radiance of this force is something we would have already practiced. It is important to feel its power and also how far our breath can reach. Thus we begin to breathe with the distant galaxies and we join the sky losing the measure of this force. Yet, still, nothing moves. With this moment the Mu is certainly realized and the answer to the koan matures meeting after meeting with the Master in the secret room, in sanzen.

Note:

[\[2\] The Koans of Enlightenment - The MU of Joshu and the ancient Kensho Koans of Rinzai Zen - understanding_preparatory_practice, Dharma Master Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyō Ekai, Fontana Editore, Borgo Valsugana, 2018](#)

[\[3\] Inner and at the same time cosmic places of realization ecstasy.](#)



20th exercise.

***The second secret key of the entire Naikan system:
Inner warmth***

After all, the Elixir So would be a complete technique in itself, but I think it is worth saying something about the equivalent Tibetan technique.

In reality the dumo, the inner heat, is according to the Tibetan tantric teaching, contained in a series of yoga - which is already mentioned in this book - and is also a practice linked to the cult of certain tantric deities such as Vajra Yogini, Kalachakra , Hevajra or Chakra Samvara. The yogas that contain this technique, which constitutes its fulcrum, are for example the six dharmas of Naropa, the six yogas of Naropa, the four yogas of Niguma. All this concerns tantric practice, which it is good to remember - given the confusion that exists in the West - which has little to do with sexuality, except for a minimal and targeted part, as well as deriving from the ascetic practice already carried out intensively and long.

As regards the practice of dzogchen, a teaching that we have seen historically linked to Zen, we have a practice of dumo which simply serves to raise bliss and to enhance the state of kumbaka, or vase, therefore the ability to meditate in any situation . This capacity becomes essential for carrying out the practice of upadesha, which we have already talked about and which we will highlight in a special chapter dedicated to the realization of Zen naikan and even of the body of light.

According to the dzogchen teaching, the dumo is contained in the ruxan, that is, in the preliminary practices for the cycle of mannagdé teachings (upadesha); it is a rather simple technique but it must be carried out continuously and reconfirmed.

I add that if you do it you can get exceptional benefits. Personally, I also practiced it in the practice of overcoming pain. Having to face numerous dental operations and, like everyone else, suffering from the perforation of the dentist's drill, I wanted to overcome this common condition among human beings by managing to produce - scientists would say - a large quantity of endorphinic secretion. The secret was precisely this technique that allowed me - with the help of a little acupuncture - to realize this pain-relieving ability after a few operations. In the penultimate phase, I no longer felt any pain during the operation, but an annoying neuralgia started immediately afterwards and lasted about an hour.

Finally I didn't need to use the needles anymore, since the ecstasy immediately procured by the concentration with the practice of the dumo, made me enter a state of bliss that I can compare to the purr of a cat, even amplified. We can say that the sound of the dentist's drill was the mantra that activated my state of blissful absorption. The Technique consists, to begin with, in the visualization of the three channel system, a central one from below the navel comes and pops open on top of the head; the other two descend from the nostrils down the chest and belly, then grafting under the navel in the central channel. Our entire system has no flesh or bones, but is transparent, translucent, iridescent, alive, and the channels themselves are transparent.

At the base of the channel, at the level of the swadishtana chakra, or the dantien, there is a small bottle in the shape of the channel, designed to hold the spark of bliss.

Inside it is the spark - symbol of the maturational/blood/maternal constituent - which, when you inhale, is kindled, given that the breath descends through the nostrils through the lateral channels reaching the belly and thus giving oxygen to the flame of the spark.

This little flame rises through the central channel to reach the head, where the fertilizing/staminal/paternal constituent is located, but it reaches there refreshing from the whole, therefore abandoning its hot quality already at the level of the solar plexus, and continuing to rise as radiation which becomes refreshing in the throat; for this purpose, the first few times you can keep a mint candy in your mouth.

At the level of the heart it is a light and very pleasant warmth.

As it ascends, this radiation dissolves all the psychosomatic nodes, the granthis, and therefore reaches the white constituent in the upper area of the skull, where there would be the brain as well as the lotus with a thousand petals, the seventh and last chakra inside our system.

From here drips a liquid defined as fresh as yoghurt and oily as mercury which descends drop by drop into the central channel; slowly this liquid comes to the spark which has now increased in strength and, reaching it, creates a sizzle which is very important for our purposes.

This reaction between the white and the red constituent triggers in our ancestral memory the innate bliss which now becomes active.

Like a cloud of vapor this bliss leaves the channel and rises, passes through and descends throughout our system, in what we may now term a body of bliss. And in fact it fills every cell of our body with bliss.

At this point the activity of the thousand petalled lotus increases and thus the production of ecstasy/ecstasy. Of course we can also increase it by evoking a divinity/archetype or a master, but above all we can remain in this state wherever we are.

When we need to activate the pain relief portal, if we have practiced enough, just stay focused on the thousand-petalled lotus.

A physical demonstration of our achievement is that according to Ayurvedic pulseology, i.e. thanks to a doctor who knows how to read pulses according to the Ayurvedic technique, it can be seen in the moment of greatest bliss, that the pulse is formed in small knots that pass by fluctuating; these are precisely defined as lotus flowers, and in the claim of devotional Hinduism they constitute a sign of enlightenment.

Regarding the origin of the practice of dumo we see how the yoga that activates the kundalini energy according to the guidelines of the Natha Sampradaya, and of the Tibetan Vajrayana, derives from the mahasiddhas who were active in India in the Middle Ages. The kundalini yoga practices were part of the teachings of these Mahasiddhas, flowing both into Tibetan Buddhist practices and into the various darshanas of the Hindu, Nepal and Kashmir traditions. The Chandali yoga of these Mahasiddhas took shape in the various forms of Yoga mentioned above, therefore also in the gTummo rnal byor, the dumo. Besides the curious fact that Buddhist and Hindu tantrism have the same origin, and that therefore there have never been declared Hindu or Buddhist siddhas, another curious question concerns the real reason for the practice of dumo which, coming from the Ganges valley certainly could not concern the production of heat which was and remains a significant issue in Tibet.



21st exercise.

The third secret key of the whole naikan system: The practice of the koan MU and the IQ

I cannot stress enough that the genuine practice of introspection is absolutely essential and cannot be overlooked. The authentic practice of introspection (naikan) consists in [this contemplation]:

the area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the Mu of Chao-chou. What principle can this Mu have?

the area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is my original face. Where can the nostrils be in this original face?

the area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the Pure Land of my mind. What can this Pure Land be adorned with?

the area below the navel to the loins and soles is the Amida Buddha in my body. What truth can this Amida profess?

the area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the village where I was born. What news can come from this native village!?

I refer you to another text[4] for an understanding of this technique, which I deem especially useful for those who practice the koan Mu. Hakuin wanted to divert the monks from an obsessive practice of the koan, bringing Qi back to the lower part of the body. I point out that

even in this technique the explanation of the technique of the Breathing Exercise from All Pores (ex. 19) and from the feet (ex. 13) is hidden.

I find it helpful to understand how it works; it is evident that this technique wants to evoke - thanks to precise sensations associated with devotion and visualizations - the same bliss of the Elixir So (ex. 18) thanks to a heating of the lower areas of the body with consequent cooling of the higher ones, as also sought to do with the milder exercise of placing the heart on the palms of the hands joined in the lap during meditation (ex. 10).

Note:

[\[4\] The Koans of Enlightenment - The MU of Joshu and the ancient Kensho Koans of Rinzai Zen understanding practice and propaedeutics, Dharma Master Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyō Ekai, Fontana Editore, Borgo Valsugana, 2019. This text can only be bought by those who have received the koans ritually.](#)



Spiritual realisation

The Satori

The search for spiritual enlightenment, the victory over fears, as well as overcoming anxiety and stress, are themes that belong to men of every century and of every place.

The highest spiritual realization corresponds to an enlightenment that allows us to live in everyday life as natural human beings who nevertheless have tasted and therefore realized eternity; the accomplished, the enlightened, are not ghostly spirits detached from real life while, at the same time, the so-called real life is not a dreary Monday morning, but it is the place where we put what we really are at stake; therefore real life is spiritual life, and every metaphysical question, in the final analysis, proves real precisely in the facts of everyday life.

It is important to understand that enlightenment is not directly related to physical health, i.e. an enlightened individual may actually be ill, as physical decay is part of the reality of this world; however it is necessary for those who begin a spiritual journey to coordinate their energies and intentions for their own well-being and that of others, today more than ever.

This, of course, also has a metaphysical meaning which is superior to human contingencies, that is, which overcomes the barrier of the visible, but none the less it also has its tangible manifestation. So even if healing isn't directly related to enlightenment, it would be smart if we could develop ourselves in our humanity and heal ourselves as well as fulfill ourselves spiritually. And it would be wonderful to connect these two levels, given that these historical times ask us for it with an insistence that, let me tell you, borders on survival.

Man is a unity in his being, being moreover connected with his time and his culture. To make everything even more fascinating is the fact that enlightenment is an experience that cannot be relegated to the religious sphere or to just one of the religions; it is history that teaches us how enlightenment is also achieved by people without any religious experience and how, even by religious people, it is always achieved unexpectedly, when every attempt, hope, sanctity and know-how are abandoned. In fact, enlightenment is not produced by a cause, but is the complete realization of an innate state, a state that precedes our birth and which is related to the eternity from which we are born into the material world, and of which the material world is just one aspect.

Let me explain better what I mean by innate; one cannot intend to meditate for five years in order to expect to reach enlightenment, say, in the fourth year and three hundred and sixtieth day, because enlightenment is not produced with waiting, nor with desire - whether it is presumption or hope - neither with renunciation or with activism; this is because enlightenment belongs not to time, but to eternity. Belonging to eternity, enlightenment does not happen, because happening means that, over time, something happens as a consequence of something else that precedes it; but time-duration made up of hours and minutes is not eternity.

How do we know when we enter eternity? There isn't a signal, it's that we learn to recognize that snow-white silence, that emptiness of meditation or prayer, as the root of every more powerful and higher feeling, even though it remains a moment that has no references, a sort of wonderful bewilderment in which we feel immersed in the whole and completely alive.

Buddhism is certainly a religion filled with a free and profound gnosis, where no one can take hold of a revealed concept - because there are none - and say it is The Truth; but what's worse, Buddhism does not have the copyright of enlightenment.

In other religions enlightenment is called in a different way or is understood as confluent in other mystical states, or it is an experience fragmented into different concepts, perhaps linked to as many experiences. Being curious and associating with other curious people, experts in different religions and spiritual approaches, I enjoyed with my priest, theologian and hermit friends, both Christian, Hindu, Bon, Sufi and Jewish to explore the boundaries of different experiences and descriptions of these, finally managing to find in their respective religions similar concepts and principles, even if not equal.

I add more. Although Zen shouldn't concern a fixed doctrine but concern a spiritual intuition, we often hear discussions about questions of method or ecclesiastical politics. Although the latter is a very little Zen theme in every century many have felt obliged to represent this or

that school towards the emperor or even other religions or schools of Buddhism and, what is even more strange today, this mentality seems re-emerge precisely in the West due to a strange attitude of missionaryism-inversely.

I now want to touch on a few points which are commonly a source of confusion. However, I admit that in this review of mine there are some opinions of mine which - although adhering to tradition and history - want to reveal the living realities of the tradition and not the temporal representation, thus messing up opinions that are now more than crystallized, even if they are felt as traditional .

The dress, the rituals, the customs. In Buddhism they are called methods, they are very important, useful, they work if well understood and implemented, but they are not the Dharma per se and they are not, nor do they certainly represent, any truth.

I understand that there are teachings – including Buddhists – which take a different orientation and which take ethical or ritual questions as essential, but this is not the Zen approach.

So - for those who don't understand - there would even be left-wing and right-wing Zen. And we talk about it because the question of identity is not secondary to understanding what awakening is and, therefore, to achieving it if we start meditating.

Let's start from the fact that, given the majestic freedom that one breathes in Zen, it is easy to fall into the misunderstanding that whoever practices Zen can completely adhere to some ideology-theory-modus; which thing is for Zen Buddhism painful therefore stupid, therefore let's even say heretical, given that retaining an idea of identity is not only aleatory but useless, being only a contingent and limited fact, a necessary semblance, a comfortable sheath to make us understandable to most and to exist in a form.

For Buddhism, identity is not bad, but it is only a dress; we could never say that the jacket we wear is ourselves, while our true identity is realized only by those who widen their eyes in enlightenment, when they discover that identity is a NON-identity that transcends even ethnicity and type.

In this state of openness we are everything, everyone; in this state of reality suddenly even feelings and emotions appear to us as clothes, necessary, colourful, fascinating, wonderfully interactive: but they are not our real identity.

Not even religion should be an identity, therefore Buddhism - especially Zen Buddhism - is not; it is not an identity even if one proudly defines oneself as a Buddhist, even if one may cheer for a football team, intensely love a woman, work hard in marketing or sales, or one may find oneself defending one's freedom and the lives of one's dear with a weapon in hand; Zen without hypocrisy admits all of this in assonance with a sensitive existence that takes us whole.

However, on closer inspection, no one is actually a doctor, no one is a communist, no one is a scientist and no one is homosexual; I cited these categories as an example, to reiterate that no one IS something but that from the NON-point of view of awakening and freedom DOES, that therefore someone works as a doctor or does scientific research, someone is interested in communism or he pleads its usefulness, someone experiences homosexuality or lives homosexuality, or something else if he prefers it and feels it his own. That's all, actually.

Unless we still need a single truth that frees us from sin except from an unconscious that was supposedly magmatic, sprawling and omnivorous.

Lighting, therefore, not only does not refer to a dogma, but above all it is a living and timeless experience. Enlightenment, satori, is the understanding of eternity, therefore of those divine plans that we call that only out of ignorance, or out of the need to believe that someone up there is planning something enormous and incomprehensible which, in reality, it could already just be our breath. Perceived timeless, though; always found, forever, in our step, in our gaze and before any narration.

Since eternity is found in silence, eternity can recognize us thanks to the silence we experience even while we are talking or while we are crossing the street in city traffic.

It's just a matter of practice and practice.



The Signs of Realization of the naikan and The Body of Light

"It may very well be that if you plumb this mystery to the end you never have to close your eyes in death."

Hakuin Ekaku – Yasenkanna

Certainly the realization of zen naikan is the same as zen, so it is satori.

Satori is an immovable state of awakening; this does not imply always being in a peak or in an altered state, but it means always remaining absorbed - even if one doesn't want to - in the mystery of being/identity which, according to Jungian psychology, would mean having overcome the collective unconscious, that is, that shadow which submerges us and which is one with the collective mind and which captures us with compulsory belonging, an extremely subtle and persuasive spell.

These are obviously theoretical explanations. Instead, to have my personal experience, I invite the reader elsewhere [1], while to have his own, I encourage him to practice meditation.

Going into history we discover that satori - one of the aspects of which is the sudden explosiveness of the peak that designates it - is also part of the experience of people or practitioners who have never had anything to do with Zen.

I recall the experience of a famous Tibetan lama more than a century ago, Shardza Tashi Ghyaltsen[2]. One day he was struck by his master unexpectedly, flat, with a ritual sword; the lama, a boy at the time, fainted but, recovering, realized that from that fateful moment he would forever see the world in another way; what he believed to be internal and the external world had reunited forever.

As has already been said, the outburst often experienced during sudden enlightenment is only the experiential part of satori anchored in the conventional perception of time, even when time is outdated. But satori in reality has been waiting for us for a time without beginning in the mystery of our identity which, precisely in satori, reveals itself, but also since satori is the naked and simple daily life of the meditator. From here, however, to not giving any meaning to sudden enlightenment, it seems to me to be a typical Japanese exaggerated stance.

Sometimes both schools of Zen, trying to differentiate themselves, risk ridicule, and famous Buddhist theorists hide behind a finger in order to maintain the name and the importance of their position. In general, Rinzai monks are derided for their competitiveness which will lead them to chase the hare forever, even while praising their awakening, while Soto monks are derided because they sleep sitting on the cushion instead of really meditating, that is, even in the challenge of circumstances and thoughts. But what competitiveness really means and what to meditate on really cannot be understood.

Having said that, we should now remind ourselves of the emblematic figure of Zhenzhou Pǔhuà. As I have already explained, did Rinzai - or his descendants - have even had a reason to quote him and have him make the light body? Even if they had invented it, why would they have invented it?

Or was it all a grand inventive manipulation to receive imperial funding and the credit of the pious? The latter is the theory of some contemporary scholars. But this has already been discussed.

Few have bothered to collect the strange presence of Zhenzhou Pǔhuà in the Rinzai Roku; in the light of what I have found and what the reader can analyze in this text, the vague theory of the Zen-invention cannot be considered tout court, but only as a voice that makes up the complete mosaic of what we know about the history of Zen in China.

I have already spoken of the teaching of Bodhidharma - also certainly attributed but sincere - of the teaching of meditation of Hóngrěn and - finally - of Hakuin Ekaku. All arguments which, when added to the various preparatory texts that have settled over the centuries, leave no hope of being denied.

Zen is an awakening tool of the most precise and points precisely towards a fulfillment of human destiny which can be incomprehensible, if not completely rash, for an academic.

When I went to visit Lungtog Tenpai Gnyma, the abbot of Dolanji Temple in Solan (HP India) in 1990, he kindly took me to a private room and showed me a relic which he said was meant to be touched by those with sufficient merit to benefit from it.

Inside a jar, which we would buy with instant coffee inside, were the contents of hair, nails and iridescent spheres - they looked like balls of mistletoe - which gave a particular sense to contact.



I asked the abbot what they were, and he informed me that they were the remains of a Master who had reabsorbed himself in the primordial light, but he specified that not everyone leaves these slags or relics. I must add that only today as I'm writing this chapter did I find an image of that jar on the web and, unexpectedly, these are indeed the remnants of Shardza Tashi Ghyaltsen's light body, whose satori I just wrote about.

I already knew about this phenomenon, which is part of the stories of many native Tibetans; moreover, it seems that the phenomenon of the

reabsorption of the body into light once had something like ten thousand spectators, given that the invading Chinese seized the opportunity to demonstrate to the uncivilized Tibetans that this phenomenon was instead a magic trick of prestidigitation used by the pre-cut to eat off the toil of the people. Mal took it because the old man really resolved his body into light, with the usual luminous effects such as the explosion of rainbows of a thousand shapes, the corpuscular fog, the prolonged harmonic sounds - to me they seemed like an electronic organ register that composed together flute and lute - but also because the event was followed live by the numerous witnesses who had crowded together; all this despite the systems designed to unmask any possible trick [3].

Receiving teaching from the traditional texts with the related lung wang and tri[4], I noticed that the phenomenon of transfiguration was considered, which made me remember Mount Tabor, where it is said that Jesus transfigured his body into light. This eventuality is considered in the texts, where it is even explained what happens and what must be done to obtain or contain this effect. If the practitioner continues in the direction of transfiguration and transcends the form, his body is found after eight days with his clothes closed and placed on the ground, but with nothing left inside.

I have heard that whoever arrives before this phase can still find something that fills their clothes, although by now the body is no longer visible or barely visible. In other cases, as has been said, one gets the impression that the presence of the transfiguring person is suspended in space.

In concluding the matter of light bodies or rainbow bodies, we may consider an even more startling factor than has already been said; it often happens that in the period of about eight days in which the cellular density of the body is maturing and returning to light, someone, a family member or a devotee, wants to touch the body in transformation, even if it is something not welcome and also, in general, formally prohibited. It is a pedantic form of devotion that has the intent of having remains to serve as a relic.

When the body is touched, a striking fact is highlighted; we have the recognizable remains of someone, with their face, but reduced, usually by a lot, depending on when the process of reabsorption was interrupted. Also in this case, in monasteries and temples, there are examples of these phenomena, although these remains of advanced practitioners are not flaunted, except on particular occasions, or preserved as relics; although it is a rare fact, someone is lucky enough to be invited to contemplate them. A further fact that could demonstrate the veracity of these mysterious facts is that they have been examined by Japanese universities that have studied both the phenomenon of light bodies and that of ringtsels. The latter are pearls that remain after the cremation of practitioners' corpses. In this case the surprising fact is that there is something precise in the midst of their ashes, something that has been seen to derive, in shape, color and weight, from the type of practice carried out by the practitioner. So whoever has played a certain tantric deity throughout his life, specializing in yoga related to this, will produce spherical ringtsels with certain nuances, while if he practiced the vinaya and other forms of rituals, his ringtsels will be, for example, flat .

Making the due considerations - and having discussed it with expert masters - I would like to say that in the event that the process of

reabsorption into the light has been interrupted, it goes without saying that the practitioner has in any case already realized himself, and that this manifestation is only like a seal, mostly useful to those who see it with their own eyes and thus are encouraged in practice, and certainly not a Further Super-Enlightenment. I have already associated the teachings attributed to both Bodhidharma and Hóngrěn with this embodiment.

Here is the photo of a "body of light": this nun is Tasha Lamo, mother of Lokgar Rinpoche, who is one of the Tulkus residing at the Nyingmapa monastery in Katok. On the right here are the remnants of the process of returning to the light, as the process has been interrupted. The body on the right is only 50 cm high.



Note:

[\[1\] Rinzai Zen Manual, Leonardo Anfolisi Reijo Ekai, Fontana Editore, Borgo Valsugana 2019.](#)

[\[2\] Heart Drops of Dharmakaya - Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition, Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen, commented by Lama Tenzin Namdak Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY, 1993.](#)

[3] Lama Chogyall Namkhai Norbu told me that this incident was reported to him by a relative who was pro-Maoist at the time; these, during the heartfelt story never stopped crying and asking forgiveness for his blindness.

[4] Lung = breath transmission / wang = ritual empowerment / tri = technical explanations.



Yasenkanna

From translations by Trevor Leggett and Norman Waddell

Edited by Leonardo Anfolsi Reiyo Ekai

Introduction by the Translator-Editor

Talk on a Night Ferry, was written by Master Hakuin to recount his suffering from Zen illness and the discovery of the naikan instructions thanks to the yamabushi ascetic Hakuyu.

Zen disease is in fact the title of the fourth chapter of a more substantial book, the Itsumadegusa, a sort of autobiography by Hakuin himself, published with the author still alive. We followed and compared Leggett's and Waddell's translations; the rationale followed by both was to leave the best-known names in the usual Western phonetic form, but to generally follow the Wade-Giles transliteration; for example. Chuang Tzu, Mencius, but also T'ai-pai Tao-jen.

This book contains the version of the Yasenkanna that I mentioned, but a version of the Yasenkanna posthumous was also published, which contains the preface Hunger and cold, the Master of the Hermitage of Poverty, mimicking that of the Dokugo Shingyō, Antidote for the Heart, the commentary on the Heart Sutra written by Hakuin.

Prologue

Long ago Wu Ch'i-ch'u said to the master Shih-t'ai: "To refine the elixir it is necessary to gather the vital energy. To gather vital energy it is necessary to concentrate the mind. When the mind is focused on the ocean of life energy, or on the flask of elixir located an inch below the navel, the life energy gathers right there. When the life energy is gathered in the elixir flask, the elixir is distilled. When the elixir is produced, the physical structure is strong and stable. When the physical structure is strong and stable, the spirit is whole and nurtured. When the spirit is whole and nurtured, a long life is assured."

These are words of true wisdom.

A lay practitioner who visited me insisted several times on learning about this matter. "Very well," I told him, "I will tell you the basics of Naikan Inner Contemplation."

When I wholeheartedly entered the Way, I vowed to practice with heroic faith and an indomitable spirit. Suddenly, after only three years of strenuous effort, there came a night when all my old doubts completely melted away by the root. The old root of birth and death karma was completely uprooted.

I thought to myself: "The Way cannot be far away. Strange that the ancients spoke of twenty or thirty years, while I...". After a few months lost in dancing for joy, I looked at my life and realized that the spheres of activity and stillness were not in harmony at all; I found that, despite my belief to the contrary, I was not free to take a thing or leave it. I thought, "Let me boldly immerse myself in spiritual practice again, and once again throw my life into it." Teeth clenched and eyes dazzled, I tried to free myself even from food and sleep. Before a month had passed, the fire of the heart rose to the head, the lungs were burning, but the legs felt as if frozen in ice, there was a crackling sound in the ears, like a creek in a valley, courage was lacking and I was shaking fear for no reason. I felt spiritually exhausted, dreaming night and day, my armpits always wet with sweat and my eyes filled with tears. I tried everything by consulting famous Masters, surgeons and doctors, but all their advice was absolutely useless.

The meeting with Master Hakuyu

It was then, after a long fruitless search, that someone said to me: "In the mountains of the place called White River, far outside the capital, there is one who lives in the heights, known as Master Hakuyu." He is believed to be over two hundred years old, and lives there several miles from human habitation. He doesn't like to see people, and if someone looks for him he hides. Men do not know whether to think of him as a wise man or a fool, but those who live in the village think him a Sennin, one of the immortals of the mountain. It is said that he was once the teacher of Ishikawa Jozan, deeply versed in the science of the stars and in medical knowledge; occasionally, to some visitor who introduced himself with the requisite respect, he granted a word which, when subsequently considered, proved to be of great benefit.

So, in mid-January 1710, I packed some things for the journey, left Mino and crossed the Black Valley finally arriving at the village of the White River. I left my bundle at a tea shop, where I asked for directions to the Hakuyu hermitage. A villager directed me to a mountain river that could be seen at a considerable distance. I followed the river seen in the distance to a remote mountain valley. Continuing on for a couple of miles the river disappeared, there was no path and I didn't know what to do; unable to continue, I stopped in consternation. Without resources, I sat down on a stone and with my eyes closed and palms together I repeated a sutra. Miraculously I heard a very distant sound of ax blows; following that sound, going into shrubs and thick vegetation, I reached a woodcutter. The old woodcutter pointed to me above the

horizon, far in the mists of the mountain, a small yellowish-white spot, now hidden and now revealed by the movement of the mist: "That is the curtain of reeds that hangs before Master Hakuyu's cave".

Immediately I gathered my clothes and began the climb, now on steep rocks, now making my way through the mountain shrubs; my snow- and ice-soaked sandals were frozen, and my clothes were wet with mist and dew. Continuing the effort, the sweat flowed in streams; gradually I climbed up to the balcony of the curtain of rushes. The exquisite purity of the landscape and a deafening silence made me feel that I had left the world of men. It was just like that, and then a sense of dread shook my heart and soul, and I found myself shivering as if I were naked. I rested for a while on a rock, and counted my breaths a hundred times. Then I stood up, tidied my dress, and walked on in awe. Indistinctly I saw Master Hakuyu's form through the curtain of rushes, sitting in a meditation posture with his eyes closed. His long hair fell to his knees, his beautiful complexion was full and luminous. A quilted cloth covered him and his seat was a bed of soft straw. The cave was very small, barely six feet square, and there was no food of any kind, but on a low table three books: the Middle Doctrine, the classic of Lao Tzu, and the Diamond Cutter Sutra. After having presented myself ritually, I formulated my request for help, detailing it with the symptoms and the course of my illness. He opened his eyes, looked at me sharply and said, "I'm just an ordinary man who lives off everything and completely unaware. In the mountains I collect chestnuts as food and I sleep in the company of the docile deer. What can someone like me know? I'm just sorry that your journey in search of a wise hermit must have been in vain...".

Again I humbly repeated my reverence and request. He then gently took my pulse, made a careful examination of my condition and inspected

the bodily orifices.

It was then that his slender fingers with long nails stroked his forehead in a gesture of concern for my case and sympathy: "Ah, my poor friend! Your condition is truly pitiful! By meditating on the truth too hard, you lost the rhythm of increasing spiritual strength, and this eventually led to a painful illness. And it's something very difficult to cure, this "Zen disease" of yours, isn't it? Though the wise men of medicine inquire about your case and bring into play all their skill with the needle, cauterization and medicines, yet they have been and never will be of any help. You have been weakened by excessive concentration on the truth, the ri-kan, and (unless you engage in inner contemplation, the Naikan) you can never heal. There is a saying that you "go up by the same earth you fell on," and the naikan method would be a striking example of this principle in your case.

I said: "Have the grace enough to brief me on the secret of the naikan, and I will practice it intensively in the monastery."

He frowned, assumed a solemn attitude and began to speak slowly: "Yes, you are a sincere seeker of truth! That being the case, I will pass on to you a little of what I in turn received a long, long time ago. It is the secret that is called "sustaining life", and those who know it are very few. If you practice it without abandoning it, surely you will see its prodigious effect, and it may very well be that if you plumb this mystery to the end you will never have to close your eyes in death. "The great Way, the Tao, divides itself into the two principles Yin and Yang, from whose harmonic fusion men and things were born. In man the primary energy Ki moves silently within, so that the five organ-functions

arrange themselves and the pulse lives. The Ki-that-sustains-energy and the blood-that-nourishes move in a waxing and waning circulation of about fifty cycles in the course of a day and a night. The lungs, metallic in nature, are female and are located above the diaphragm; the liver, fiery in nature, is masculine, and is deep below the diaphragm. The fire-heart is the sun, the great Yang which commands its opposite, and the water-kidneys are the great Yin which occupies the lower place, opposing it at the level of the aforementioned complementary organ. In the five organ-functions dwell the seven deities, Which are seven since the spleen-pancreas function and the kidneys have two each.”

“The energy of exhalation has a motion that goes from the heart to the lungs, and that of inspiration comes to the kidneys and then to the liver. With each exhalation the pulse current advances three inches - you can check this on your arm using your inch measurement - and with each inhalation it advances another three. There are, say, thirteen thousand five hundred breaths in the space of a day and a night, and the pulse circuits the body fifty times. The fire element is light and optimistic, always inclined to ascend; water is heavy and always tends downwards.”

“If you don't know these things, your efforts at concentration lose their rhythm and the will becomes agitated; then the heart-fire, flaring up, strikes the metal of the lungs which is set on fire and unbalanced. Since the mother metal (lungs) suffers, the water child (kidneys) decays and dies. Parent and child are harmed, all five organs are afflicted, and the six auxiliaries oppressed. The elements, losing their harmony, produce a hundred and one diseases. Against this condition made chronic no remedy has any more power and although every art of medicine can be used, in the end nothing is achieved”.

What does it mean to "sustain life"

“Sustaining life” is in fact like ruling a kingdom. The splendid lord, the wise ruler, always sets his heart on those who are his subjects; the dull lord, the ordinary ruler, lets his heart go as high as it will with his fire. But when the heart flutters in one of its usual whims, even the great nobles become arrogant and the officers claim to enjoy special favors, and none of them ever looks down on the misery of the masses. In the countryside the peasants are starving, the land is languishing, people are dying. Wisdom and virtue hide, and the masses are resentful. The nobles become independent and rebellious, and conflicts arise with the barbarians on the border. The people are reduced to their last legs: the pulse of life in the country becomes slow, and finally dies out. But when the sovereign concentrates his heart downward, then the great nobles control their ostentation, the lesser officers perform their duties, and the toil of the people never goes unrewarded. The peasants have abundant harvests and their women have plenty of clothes and jewels; many sages are attracted to the service of the ruler, the followers are dutiful and obedient, the people are prosperous and therefore the country is strong. No one at home conspires to overthrow authority, and no enemy attacks the borders, the country does not remember the drums of war and the people need not handle guns. It is so also with the human body: the perfect man keeps the lower regions always filled with this energy of the heart; when the energy of the heart is thus filled below, the seven evils find no place within and the assaults from without find no weakness. Then the body is vigorous and strong and the spirit-of-the-heart healthy. So the mouth never knows the taste of medicines, sweet or bitter, the body never has to submit to the pain of cauterization and the needle. The ordinary man, on the other hand,

keeps the energy of the heart always hovering upwards and when it then rises as it wills, the fire (of the heart) on the left overwhelms the metal (of the lungs) on the right, the senses diminish and decline , and the six auxiliaries are oppressed and lose their harmony. Therefore Shitsuen (Chuang Tsu) says: "The real man breathes with his heels, the ordinary man breathes with his throat." Kyoshun (Hsu Chun) says: «When the Qi is in the lower region, the breath is long; when it is in the upper region, the breath is contracted.' Joyoshi (Shang Yang) says: «In man, energy is, in truth, only one. When it goes down to the dantien, the Yang reacts, and the onset of the reaction in the Yang form can be confirmed by a warm sensation. When one wants to experience the fullness through which Yin is transformed into Yang, it is enough to arrive at the production of heat in the abdomen”.

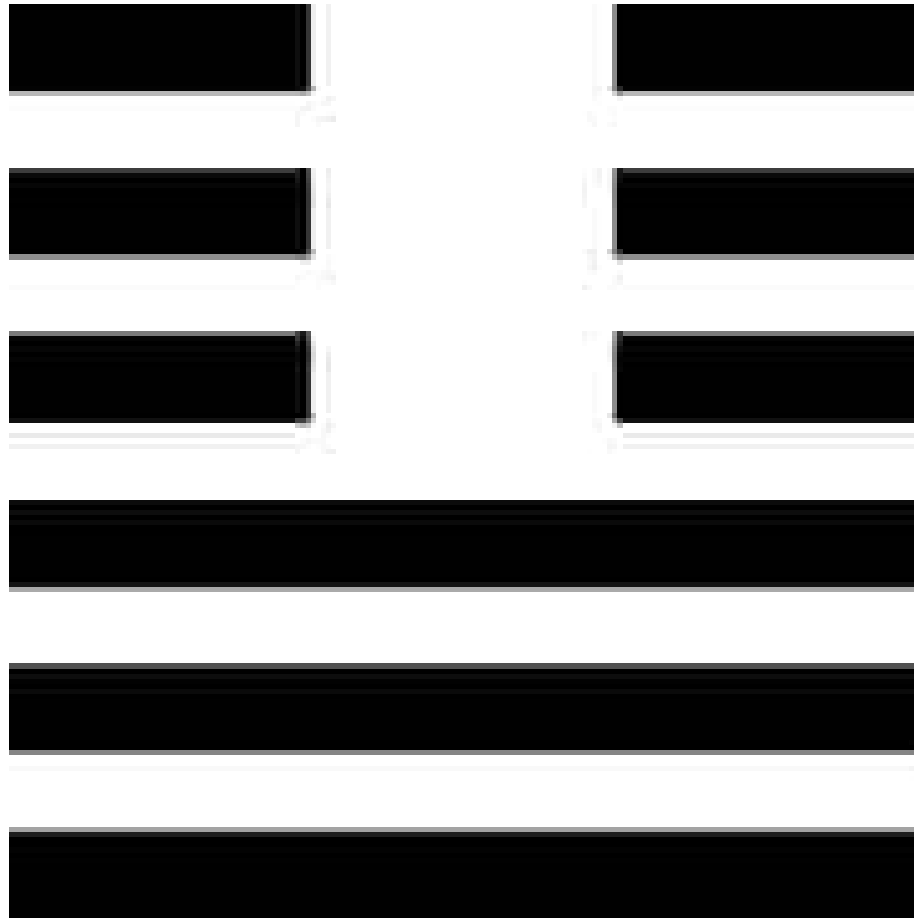
"The golden rule for 'sustaining life', in summary, is that the upper regions should always be cool and the lower regions warm."

“The pulses have twelve branches to listen to which correspond to the twelve months of the year and the twelve periods of the day.”



Hexagram 23

So also the Book of Changes has its six seasons, whose uninterrupted cycle of change creates the year. In this system, when five Yins are above and one Yang is held below, the divination is 'Thunder Returning to the Earth'. The reference is to the depths of winter, and this is what is meant by the real man's breath from his heels.



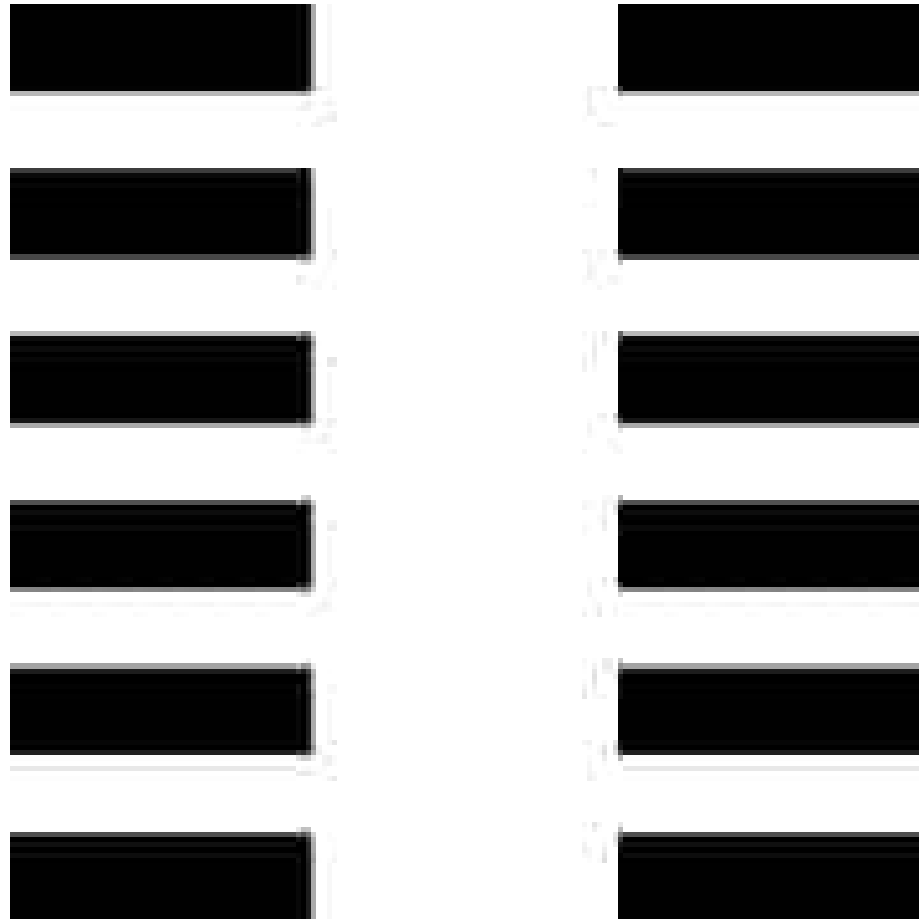
Hexagram 11

When the three Yangs are in the lower position and the three Yins in the upper position, this is called "Earth and Heaven in harmony". It is the season of the new year, in which everything is imbued with life-giving energy, and in which plants receive the impulse of spring to blossom. This symbolizes the perfect man's "holding down the energy" to fill the nether regions, and when this is achieved the man is filled with heroic vigor.



Hexagram 2

“But when the five Yins are below and one Yang remains above, that is 'Mount and Earth stripped', the season of September. When it manifests itself in nature, garden and forest lose their colors and all plants wither and decay. The breath that ordinary man has in his throat is its symbol. In the human body, this is a withering and hardening of the structure, with the teeth becoming sore and falling out.



Hexagram 2

Of this condition, the life-prolonging books say that the six Yangs are all exhausted; in other words the man who is only Yin is near death; what must be known is just this: the central principle is to bring the vital energy down to fill the lower regions.

The remedies to sustain life and achieve immortality

In ancient times Tokeisho (Wu Chi-ch'u) purified himself before appearing before the teacher Seqidai (Shih-t'ai), to ask him the secret of the distillation of the tan elixir. The teacher said: "I have the secret of the great mystical elixir, but there can be no transmission except to a person of superior merit." Even in ancient times, when Koseishi (Kuang Ch'eng) transmitted it to the Yellow Emperor, the Emperor had to practice a purification for twenty-one days in order to be worthy enough to receive it. Apart from the great Tao there is no elixir, and without the elixir there can be no great Tao.

“Now, in Buddhism there is a five-stage purification: when you free yourself from the six cravings and manage to abandon the operation of the five senses, you will darkly perceive the filling of the vital-energy in you, which is as difficult as it is important to stand out. This is what the Taoist Taihaku (T'ai-pai Tao-jen) meant when he said: «to recombine the vital energy that originates and circulates in me with the primary energy of heaven and earth from which it derives».

“Mencius also speaks of free energy in man; this must be brought to the dantien into the sea of energy at the navel wheel and concentrated there below. For months and years protect it and keep it together, feed it and make it perfect. One morning, that alchemist's crucible will

suddenly be transcended because in all directions and in everything, there will be circulating the one great elixir.



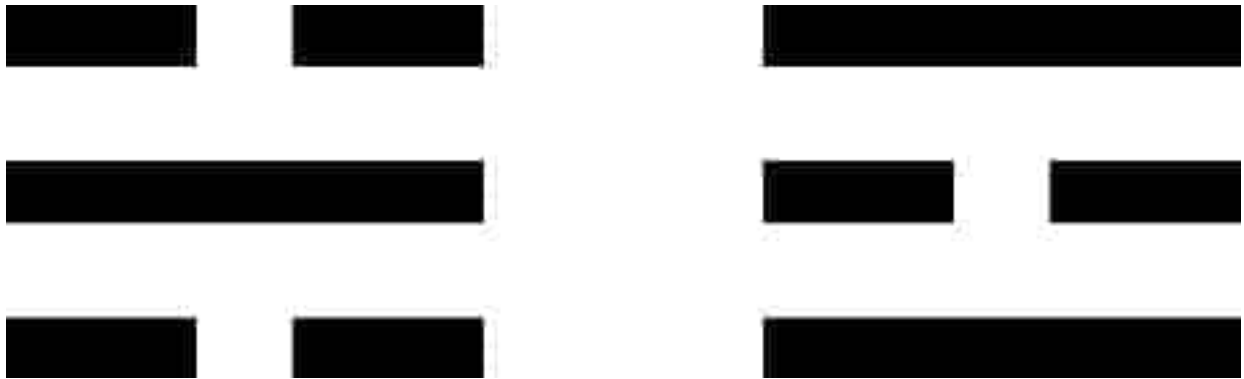
Hexagram 63

Then, in the end, you will awaken to true immortality as a great Sennin, one who is begotten like heaven and earth, and who never dies like the space element never dies. In the alchemy of the Tan elixir this is the season of 'completion'. Why, I wonder, does man cling to such little

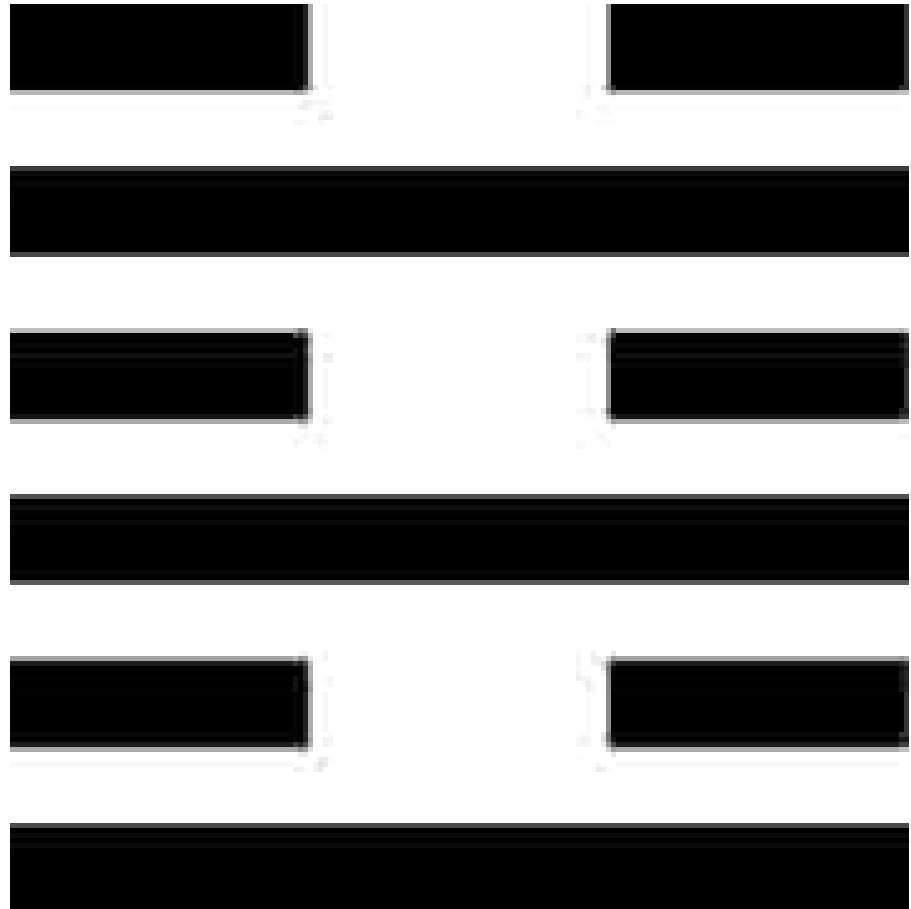
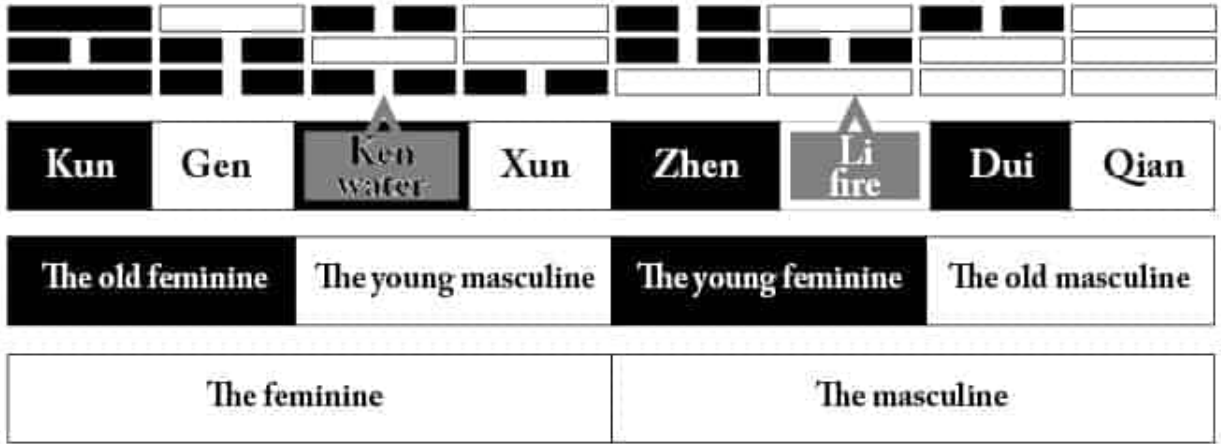
psychic powers as riding the wind and flying over the mists, penetrating the earth, walking on water and churning the ocean when he can produce the butter-elixir So and transmute the clay into real, bright gold? A wise man said: “The elixir Tan is the dantien itself located below the navel. The secret alchemical liquid is the one that comes from the lungs, which must be taken - as energy - and returned to the dantien». Such is the teaching, that the «liquid metal» is the circulation of the Tan”.

Bringing the mind-heart back to the womb

I said, “Reverently I listen. Given my condition I have to leave my zen concentration for some time, and cure myself with these naikan practices. But I have one fear: could it be that Rishisai (Li Shih-ts'ai) condemns this procedure as falling into pure inertia? If the fire of the heart is kept down and the mind is one-pointed, with such a cooling method, won't the Ki and blood become stagnant?”



Hakuyu smiled and replied: “Absolutely not. Doesn't Rishisai say that the nature of fire is to flare up and therefore should be kept down and regulated, while the nature of water is to sink down and therefore should be made to rise?”



Hexagram 63

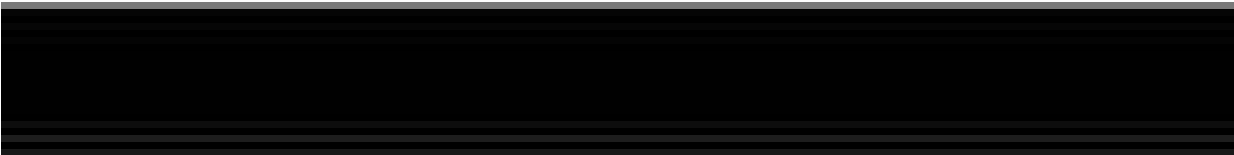
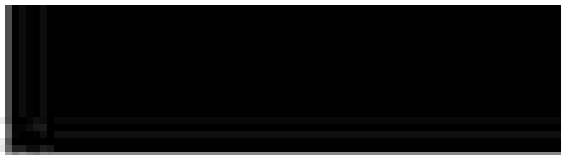
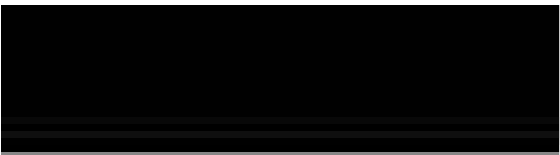
Ascending water and descending fire, this mingling is what he calls "amalgam". When they mix then the hexagram "After Consummation" is made manifest; when they do not mix, the divination is "Before Consummation."



Hexagram 64

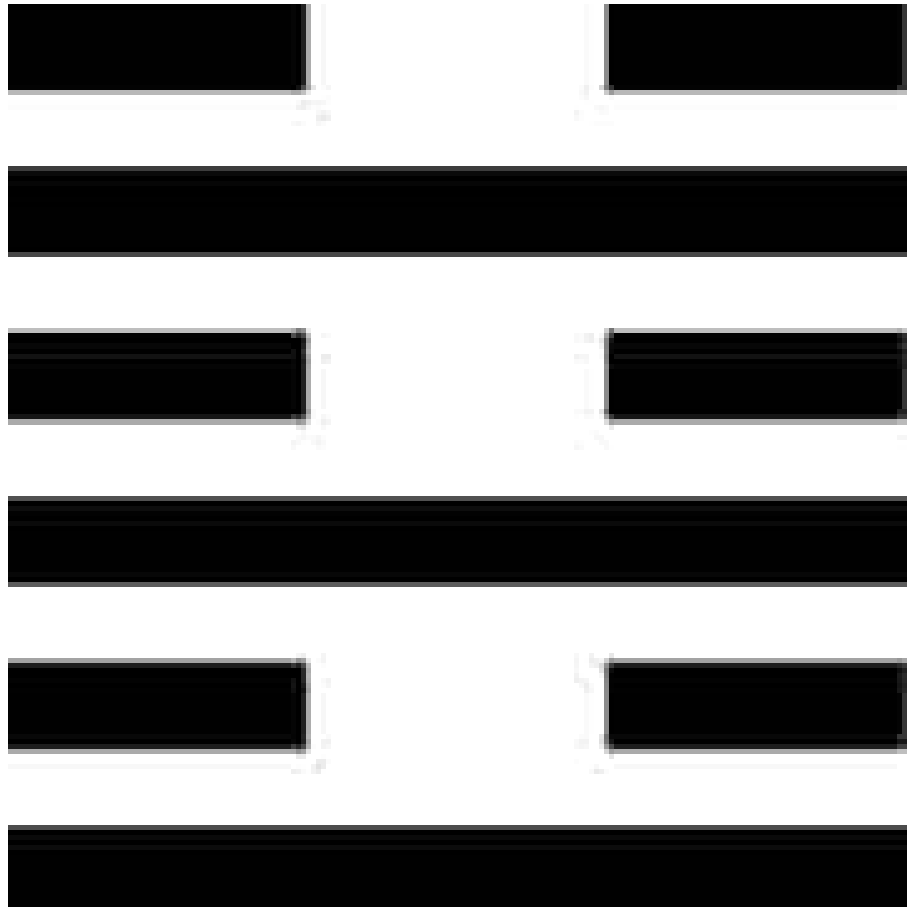
This "merging" means life, not death, and the former is a hexagram of life. The Rishisai School condemns the so-called "freezing and sinking of heart fire in pure inertia" in order to keep students from falling into error if they use the methods of the Tankei School (Tan-hsi) where too much emphasis is placed on cultivation of the Yin.

"Fire tends to behave in human beings in two different ways: as a prince and as a minister. The fire prince rules the upper body peacefully, while the fire minister rules the lower body dynamically. The fire-prince is the master of the heart, the fire-minister is active as his dignitary. The minister-fire is itself dual, for it is found in the kidneys and liver. The liver is compared to thunder and the kidneys to dragons. Thus it is said "as long as the dragons remain in the bottom of the sea, the thunder will not break out and when the dragons do not soar the thunder is hidden in the depths of the marshes".



Lake trigram

Sea and marshes are both watery in nature, this is the secret of preventing the fire-minister's tendency to grow. Again it is said: «when the heart is exhausted, in that emptiness the fire flares up; therefore when there is emptiness, the fiery energy is brought down and amalgamated with that of the kidneys - and this is the remedy.' It is the way to Consummation.



Hexagram 63



Hexagram 64

“My young friend, you have developed your painful diseases from the unnatural rising of the fire-heart upwards. If you do not bring your heart down you will never heal, even though you learn and practice all human and divine healing remedies. Perhaps you see me as a sort of Taoist hermit and think that my teaching is far from Buddhism, but this is

instead the purest Zen. One day, when you break through into waking reality, you'll smile as you remember what I've told you, and you'll see how laughable some preconceptions are.

Non-contemplation

This contemplation is Zen right contemplation since it operates in non-contemplation (mu-kan). Contemplation focused on many ideas is wrong contemplation. So far your contemplation has been fragmented (ta-kan), that is, it has been turned exaggeratedly and for too long to many questions (koan), and so you have contracted this disease. So isn't it right to cure it with non-contemplation? If you now control the fire of the heart and the will and place it in the dantien and down right to the soles of the feet, your chest will become cool by itself, without a thought of calculation, without a single tumult. This is true contemplation, pure contemplation! Don't call it "giving up your Zen concentration," for the Buddha himself reminds us that keeping the heart down on the soles of the feet heals a hundred and one ailments. Also, the Sutra commentaries on the scriptures mention the use of ambrosia So in the treatment of mental exhaustion.

“The classic Tendai meditation from the text «Great Concentration and Intuition» which is called «Arrest and Contemplation» deals in detail with diseases and their causes, and describes the methods of treatment; describes twelve different ways of breathing to cure various forms of disease and prescribes visualization of a bean at the level of the navel. The main point is always that the heart-fire has to be brought down and held to the dantien and then down to the soles of the feet, and this not only cures disease but greatly aids Zen contemplation. In the Tendai system there are in fact two forms of arrest: one is through the control of associations, and the other is the clarity of the Truth. The

latter is full contemplation of reality, while the former exalts above all keeping the mind and vitality in the dantien. If the student practices it, he will find it very useful.

How to cultivate mental energy

Long ago Dogen, the founding Zen patriarch of Eihejei Temple, made the crossing to China and paid reverence before the teacher Nyojo (Juching) on Mount Tendo (Tien-t'ung). The master said to him, "O Dogen, at the time of sitting meditation, put your heart on the palm of your left hand." This is basically what the Tendai master means by his 'Arrest'. This is reported in one of his works on the subject of how he taught the secret to a sick brother, and how he saved him from death.

“Again, Abbot Hakuun says, “I always keep my heart low, so that it fills my abdomen. Teaching students, working or receiving visitors or entertaining guests, reciting sutras and doing everything else, I never stopped doing it. Now, in my old age, the virtue of this practice is clearly evident». Well said! This is based on the phrase that appears in the *Somon* (Nei-ching-su-wen), the classic of medicine: "When you are quiet and simple and free from torment, the ancestral energy spontaneously conforms to this producing a whole and pervading Ki . If this energy is kept inside how could I get sick?»[1]. The point is to keep this Ki within, pervading and supporting the entire body so that in the three hundred and sixty joints and eighty-four thousand pores there is not the breadth of a hair without it. Know that this is the secret to preserving life.

Master Ho (Peng Tsu), who lived eight hundred years, speaks of a method of harmonizing the spirit and directing Ki: «Lock yourself in a

private room where there is a comfortable bed already heated with a pillow about seven centimeters high and half. Stretch well and lying on your back close your eyes and confine the heart energy within your chest. Place a goose feather on your nose and make your breathing so slow that it doesn't move the feather anymore, and after three hundred breaths like this, when your ears hear nothing and your eyes see nothing hot and cold will be no more, and the wasp and scorpion stings will no longer be able to poison you. Life will be extended to three hundred and sixty years, and you will approach the mental and physiological status of the immortals."

"I am adding these instructions to you. The great mystical poet Sotoba (Su Tung P'o) says: "Do not eat until you are hungry, and stop before you are satisfied. Take a walk until the exercise makes your stomach empty, and when it is empty enter a room. Sit silently in the meditation position and count the outgoing and incoming breaths. Count from one to ten, from ten to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, when the body will become still and the heart serene like a clear sky. If this practice is prolonged, the breath will come to a standstill. When it remains suspended it will become a vaporous exhalation which will rise from the eighty-four thousand pores like mist. You will find that every disease you have ever had is removed, and every obstacle eliminated. Now, like a blind man who sees the light for the first time, you will no longer need to ask another what the Way is."

"The only thing necessary is to cut short the worldly talk, and build the basic Ki. Thus it is said: "He who would feed the power of the eyes always keeps them closed, he who would feed the power of the ears is never impatient to hear, he who would feed the heart-energy is always silent."

Note:

[\[1\] Quotation of a saying by Master Po-yün set as a paradigm by Hakuin Ekaku in the introduction of the Yasenkanna.](#)

The complete exposition of the circulation/distillation method of the “So” elixir

I asked, "I heard a moment ago of a particular use of the elixir So...".

Hakuju replied, “Yes, the elixir So. It is a method that a practitioner should use when in his meditation the four great elements manifest out of harmony, and the body and mind are fatigued. Let him visualize, placed on the crown of his head, that celestial ointment So, also called butter or ambrosia, solidified in the shape and size of a duck's egg, radiant with light, most pure and sublime in color and fragrance. Let him feel the exquisite essence and aroma of the ointment melt and flow down seeping through his head, permeating his body flowing downwards, slowly coming to wash out his shoulders and elbows, passing first to the sides of his chest and into his chest, illuminating the lungs, diaphragm, liver, stomach and internal organs, back and spine, nourishing all bones and down to the hips. This is how all the old sicknesses, blockages and pains in the five main organs and six viscera follow the heart-mind going downwards: if you practice assiduously you will hear a sound of water flowing downwards. Thus this energy flows throughout the body, providing a nourishing heat that reaches the legs and continues to the soles of the feet. Thus the lower part of the body becomes warm, and he is saturated with that heat. Then let him do this meditation: that the abundance of the elixir, having permeated the whole body and having reached the feet, begins to fill it more densely, accumulating in the lower part of his body as happens when the elixir circulates in the alembic. At this point the practitioner will

perceive that the circulation of the elixir So, with delicate movement, distills more and more going up and down in the alembic, distilling itself in it, thus increasing the radiance of body and mind. When this meditation is repeated there will be psychic experiences of a sudden, indescribable fragrance felt in the nose, a delicate and exquisite sensation in the body. Mind and body become harmonized surpassing even the fullness of youth. Accumulations of toxins and blockages are cleared away, the organs are soothed and the skin noticeably begins to glow.

“If the practice is continued without interruption, what disease will not be cured, what power will not be acquired, what perfection will not be attained, what Way will not be completed? The result depends only on how and how much the student applies himself in practice.

“As a boy I was much sicker than you, so that the doctors dropped the case, and I grabbed at a hundred gimmicks. Not finding any art that could help me, I sincerely prayed to the Gods of heaven and earth and invoked the help of the divine Sennin and by their grace the secret of So butter unexpectedly came to me. My joy was indescribable and I practiced it continuously so that the time began to elude me but already from the first month most of my chronic diseases were eliminated, and since then I have felt only light and peace in my body and mind: I do not consider the months nor do I keep track of the years, the thoughts of the world have become few, old habits and passions seem forgotten.

“I don't know how old I am. For about thirty years I wandered alone in the mountains of Wakasu. No one in the world knew me anymore.

When I look back it's just like Koryan's dream: you know, the one in which the traveler dreams the events of a lifetime in half an hour... Now, alone, in these mountains, I set this body free. Only a couple of cloths cover me yet in the harshest winter, when the cloth curls up with the cold, my body doesn't suffer from the cold and I don't feel any shivers. The grains run out and sometimes there is no food for many months, yet I do not feel hungry or cold. What is this but the power of the naikan? The secret I've given you is something you'll never finish probing. Beyond that, what should I tell you?". He closed his eyes and sat in silence. I respectfully bid my farewells with teary eyes.

Last farewell to Master Hakuyu

I was slowly descending the steps to the cave entrance as the last rays of the sun were brushing the tops of the trees. I began to notice the sound of footsteps echoing in the mountain and valley. Fearfully I turned back. I saw that Master Hakuyu had left the rock cave and was following me. I waited for him amazed and when he reached me he said: "In these pathless mountains you can easily get lost so I decided to guide your steps". With his large wooden clogs and thin, gnarled stick he trampled steep rocks and cliffs, lightly, as if it were level ground; talking and laughing he showed me the way. Descending for two or three miles the horizon changed, at the foot of the mountain began the slope that led to an adjacent valley. Pointing to the course of a stream, Master Hakuyu said to me: "Follow its course and you will arrive safely at the valley of the White River" and suddenly he left me. For a while I stood like a tree watching the master return to his retreat, his stride like that of an ancient hero. Thus, lightly, he escaped from the world, ascending the mountain as if he had wings. A strong desire and a fear seized me: being sincere I must say that until the end of my days I regretted not having been able to follow such a man. I returned meditative, I was already inwardly relieved.



Hakuin Ekaku

Orategama

From the translation by Philip B. Yampolski.

Edited by Andrea Maria Vaccarezza Shoghen.

ORATEGAMA I

[1]

Letter in Reply to His Excellency Nabeshima[2] Governor of Settsu Province, Delivered in the Care of a Close Servant

Yesterday I received your letter, which came to me from afar. It must have been a great relief for you to have successfully completed the task of entertaining the Korean delegation[3]. Thank you for your interest in my health: I'm fine as always, and you don't have to worry about me. I was very pleased to know that you are putting great effort into meditating on the koans,[4] both in your active and in your calm moments. I completely agree with you, as well as with the other topics you address in the letter. You cannot imagine how happy I am with the results you have achieved.

If the motivation is not right, Zen practitioners find themselves potentially stuck in both the activity and stillness approaches to koan meditation. They fall into a state of severe depression and become unstable; fire rises to the heart, the metallic element in the lungs[5] withdraws painfully, overall health deteriorates, and they frequently develop a disease that is difficult to cure. However, if they manage to enhance and perfect the authentic practice of introspection[6], they will find themselves in line with the secret methods for definitive nourishment:[7] their body and their mind will become strong, their

energy immense, and they will quickly attain enlightenment in all things.

Buddha Shakamuni explained the details of this point in the Agamas[8]. Master Chihi-i of Mount T'ien-t'ai has gathered the importance of these teachings and kindly made them available to us in his Mo-ho Chihi-kuan[9]. The fundamental point that emerges from this text is that, whether while reading certain parts of the sacred teachings or while examining the principles of the Dharma, whether sitting for a long time without lying down or engaging in walking practices during the six parts of the day, one must make sure that the breath fills the space between the navel and the loins[10]. Even if one is beset by worldly affairs, or tied to guests who require special attention, the source of strength two inches below the navel must be filled naturally with the vital breath, and one must never allow let this fade away. This space should feel bouncy and round, something like a new, unused ball. If a person is able to acquire this kind of concentration on the breath, he can sit in meditation all day without ever getting tired; he will be able to recite the sutras from morning to night without being exhausted; he will be able to write all day without any problem; he will be able to talk all day without collapsing from fatigue.

Even if you practice good deeds day after day, there will be no symptoms of sluggishness; for the capacity of his mind will gradually grow more and more, and great will be his energy. On the hottest days of summer he won't sweat or need a fan; on the coldest nights of the deepest winter he will not need to wear socks (tabi) or keep warm. If he lived to be 100, his teeth would remain healthy and strong. Provided he does not become negligent in his practices, he could reach a very old age. If a man becomes proficient in this method, what Way cannot be

perfected, what precepts cannot be kept, what samadhi cannot be attained, what virtue cannot be realised?

If, on the other hand, you do not become an advanced practitioner of these ancient techniques, if you have not made your own the essential parts of authentic practice, if you recklessly pursue your ideal of awakening, you will drown in unhealthy fatigue and remain entangled in useless thoughts. Thus the chest and the breathing mechanism will be blocked, a fire will arise in the heart, the legs will feel as if they were immersed in ice and snow, the ears will be filled with thundering sounds like the echo of a waterfall in a deep valley. The lungs will shrink, the fluids in the body will dry up, and eventually you will be afflicted with a disease that is very difficult to cure. It will really be difficult for you to be able to stay alive. And all this only because you don't know the correct path from authentic practice. A very unfortunate thing!

The Mo-ho Chih-kuan talks about preliminary and empty tranquillization[11]. The method of introspection that I describe here represents the foundations of this preliminary tranquillisation[12]. When I was young the content of my koan meditation was very poor. I was convinced that the Buddha Way was the absolute tranquility of the source of the mind. So I despised activity and adored quiet. I was always looking for a dark and dreary place to engage in dead meditation sessions[13].

The daily and worldly affairs piled up on my chest, and a fire built up in my heart. I was not able to unconditionally enter the active practice of Zen. My manners became irascible and fears assailed me. Both mind

and body felt weak all the time, sweat poured out of his armpits incessantly, and his eyes were always filled with tears. My mind was in a constant state of depression, and I was not making any progress towards the benefits that come from studying Buddhism.

But then I was lucky enough to receive the instructions of a good teacher[14]. The secret methods of introspection were handed down to me, and for three years I devoted myself diligently to their practice. The serious illness from which I was suffering, which I had hitherto found so difficult to cure, gradually disappeared like frost and snow melting under the morning rays of the sun. The problems with those repulsive koans - koans that were hard to believe, hard to penetrate, hard to unravel, hard to get into - koans that hitherto were impossible for me to sink my teeth into, now disappeared with the disappearance of the disease.

Although I'm in my 70s, my energy is now ten times greater than it was in my 30s or 40s. My mind and body are strong, and I never feel like I have to lie down to rest. If I wanted to I would have no difficulty in not sleeping for two, three or even seven days, without suffering any debilitation of my mental strength. I am surrounded by three hundred very demanding students, even five hundred, and although I lecture on scriptures or collections of Masters' sayings for thirty - even fifty - days in a row, I do not feel exhausted. I am quite convinced that all this is due to the power gained by practicing this method of introspection.

Initially the emphasis should be placed on body care. So, during your introspection practice, without your looking for it and almost unconsciously, you will get - I can't tell you how many times - the

benefits of experiencing enlightenment. It is essential that you neither despise nor cling to the world of activity as well as the quietistic one, and that you continue your practice diligently.

You may occasionally feel like you're getting nowhere with practice in the midst of activity, when the quietistic approach brings unexpected results. However rest assured that those using the quietistic approach cannot hope to enter meditation in the midst of activity. Were the one using this approach to step into the dust and confusion of the world of activity, he would also completely lose the normal understanding he assumed he had achieved. Drained of all energy, he will find himself inferior to any mediocre and untalented person. The most trivial matters will unsettle him, senseless cowardice will afflict his mind, and he will often behave harshly and crudely. What achievement can such a man be said to have achieved?

Zen Master Ta-hui[15] said that meditation in the midst of activity is incomparably superior to the quietistic approach. Po-shan[16] said that if one does not practice meditation in the activity, one does something akin to attempting to cross a narrow mountain ridge like a sheep's skull with a load of one hundred and twenty pounds on one's back. I'm not trying to convince you to abandon quietistic meditation completely and specifically look for an area of activity to take your practice to. The thing most worthy of respect is a pure koan meditation that does not know and is not aware of the two aspects, the quietistic and the active. That is why it has been said that the really practicing monk[17] walks without knowing he is walking, and sits without knowing he is sitting.

To penetrate into the depths of one's true nature, and to gain useful energy at all times, nothing can beat meditation in the midst of activity. Suppose you have several hundred gold ryo and you want to hire someone to guard you. A candidate closes the room, seals the door and sits down in front of it. True, he does not allow coins to be stolen, but the method he adopts does not portray him as a man of great energy. It would be more appropriate to compare his practice with that of the Hinayana followers, who are striving only for their own enlightenment.

Now suppose there is another candidate. He is ordered to take these coins and deliver them to that place, despite the fact that the road he has to travel is infested with thieves and evil men who swarm like wasps and ants. Boldly strap a great sword to his side, clasp the hem of his cassock, and fasten the gold to the point of a club; he immediately sets off and delivers the coins to the prearranged place, without having had any problems with thieves, not even once. Such a man should certainly be commended as a noble being who, without the slightest sign of fear, acts with honesty and courage. His behavior can be compared to that of the perfect bodhisattva, who - while striving for his own enlightenment - helps all sentient beings by guiding them.

The several hundred gold ryo that has been written about represent the great determination to put into practice the authentic, decisive and irrepressible meditation practice. The thieves and evil men, who swarm like wasps and ants, represent the illusions of the five desires[18], the ten bonds[19], the five desires[20] and the eight errors[21]; that man symbolizes the superior man, who has practiced true Zen and has reached the perfect goal. Such a place refers to the treasure place of immense peaceful Nirvana, endowed with the four virtues of permanence, peace, Self and purity. For these reasons it is said that the

monk who authentically practices Zen must continue his activity in the midst of the phenomenal world.

The Hinayanas of yore are often discredited. Yet today's people can hardly attain the ability to see the Way they possessed, nor equal the brilliance of their wisdom and virtue. The direction of their practice was wrong, because they only appreciated places of solitude and quiet, they knew nothing of the dignity of the bodhisattvas, and they were unable to do anything to enter the land of the Buddha: it was only for this reason that the Tathagata[22] compared them to wild foxes oozing pus, and that Vimalakirti[23] poured contempt upon them as if they burned up shoots and rotted the seeds. The Third Patriarch said: "If one wants to acquire true intimacy with enlightenment, one must not avoid objects of the senses"[24]. He did not mean that one must delight in sense objects, but - as the wings of a water bird do not get wet when immersed in water - one must create a mind which carries on without interruption a true meditation on the koans, without clinging to or rejecting the objects of the senses. A person who fanatically avoids sense objects and is afraid of the eight winds[25] which stimulate the passions, unconsciously falls into the hole of the Hinayana, and will never be able to attain the Buddha Way.

Yung-chia said, "The power of wisdom that comes from practicing meditation in the world of desire is like the lotus that comes out of fire; it can never be destroyed"[26]. Again, Yung-chia does not mean that one must necessarily be shipwrecked in the world of five wishes. What it says is that even if one is in the midst of the five desires and sense objects, one must be controlled by a mind receptive to purity, just as the lotus is untainted by the mud from which it flowers.

Furthermore, even if you lived in a forest or wilderness, if you ate only one meal a day, and practiced the Way both day and night, it would still be difficult to dedicate yourself to purity in your works. So imagine how much more difficult it is for someone who lives with his wife and relatives in the midst of the dust and turmoil of this busy life. But if you don't have the eye to look into your own nature, you won't have the slightest chance of being ready to teach. This is why Bodhidharma said: "If you wish to realize the Buddha Way, you must first look within your nature"[27].

If you suddenly realize the wisdom of the true reality of everything of the One Vehicle[28], the sense objects will be Zen meditation[29] and the five desires themselves will be the One Vehicle. For this reason words and silence, movement and stillness are all present in Zen meditation. When this state is attained, it is very different from that of a person quietly practicing among forests or mountains, and the state he attains is as different as the heavens are from the earth. When Yung-chia speaks of the lotus facing the flames, he is not here praising the rare man in this world who practices Buddhism. [He is saying that any place is the world of Zen meditation]. Yung-chia penetrated the hidden meaning of the Tendai teaching that "truths themselves are one." He cleaned up the practice of shikan in infinitesimal detail, and in his biography the four dignities[30] are praised as always containing within them dhyana contemplation[31]. His commentary is very short, but by no means should it be taken lightly. When he says that dhyana contemplation is always contained in the four dignities, he is speaking of the state of understanding in which they are united. The four dignities are none other than dhyana contemplation, and dhyana contemplation is none other than the four dignities. When [Vimalakirti] [32] says that the bodhisattva, without establishing a place for meditation, practices in the midst of daily activities, he is talking about the same thing.

Since the lotus that blooms in water withers when it approaches fire, fire is the dreaded enemy of the lotus. But the lotus that blossoms in the midst of the flames becomes more and more beautiful and fragrant as the fire approaches.

A man who continues his practice avoiding from the beginning the objects of the five senses, no matter how well versed he may be in the doctrine of emptiness of self and things, and no matter how much understanding he may develop on the Way: when he gives up stillness and enters into the midst of activity he is like a water goblin who has lost his water[33], or a monkey with no trees to climb. Most of its energy is lost, and it is just like the lotus that suddenly withers when faced with fire.

But if you fearlessly persevere amidst everyday sense objects, and engage in pure and one-pointed meditation without making mistakes, you will be like the man who successfully delivered the hundreds of golden ryo despite the turmoil around him. . As you boldly and courageously set out on your journey, and proceed without stopping for a single minute, you will experience immense joy, as if you suddenly understood the origin of your mind and crushed and destroyed the root of birth and death. It will be as if the empty sky disappeared and the iron mountains collapsed. You will be like the lotus blossoming in the flames, whose color and fragrance intensify as the flames approach. Why should it be like this? Because the real fire is the lotus, and the real lotus is the fire.

I cannot stress enough that the genuine practice of introspection is absolutely essential and cannot be overlooked. The authentic practice of introspection (naikan) consists in [this contemplation]:

“The area below the navel[34] down to the loins and soles of the feet is the Mu of Chao-chou[35]. What principle can this Mu have?

The area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is my original face[36]. Where can the nostrils be in this original face?

The area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the Pure Land of my mind. What can this Pure Land be adorned with?

The area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the Amida Buddha in my body. What truth can this Amida profess?

The area below the navel to the loins and soles of the feet is the village where I was born. What news can come from this native village!”[37].

If at every opportunity, while coughing or eating, while waving his arms, asleep or awake, the practiser achieves all that he decides, and achieves all that he sets himself to achieve, and, demonstrating great and indomitable determination, proceeds unceasingly, he will

transcend the emotions and feelings of everyday life. His heart will be filled with an extraordinary purity and clarity, as if he were standing on a thin layer of ice that stretches for thousands of miles. Even if he enters the middle of a battlefield, or if he participates in a feast with songs, dances and amusements, it would be as if he were in a silent and lonely place. His immense ability, like that of Yun-men[38] with his royal pride, will appear unseen.

At this time all Buddhas and sentient beings will be like illusions, “birth, death and Nirvana like last night's dream”[39]. This man will look across heaven and hell; the worlds of Buddha and the palaces of demons will crumble. It will blind the True Eye of the Buddha and the Patriarchs. It will expound the innumerable teachings and the mysterious principle in all its ramifications as its content. It will benefit all sentient beings, and it will go through countless kalpas without getting tired. For an infinite time he will spread the teachings of Buddhism without making a single mistake. It will make clear [a bodhisattva's] many activities and give birth to a teaching of great influence. Having fastened to his arm the supernatural talisman which snatches life from death[40], he will make the claws and teeth of the Dharma Cave[41] resound in his own mouth, he will blow out the brains of monks everywhere, he will pull out his nails and eliminate the blocks[42]. Without the slightest human feeling it will cause an insurmountably wretched sucker[43], stupid and careless, to become a person[44] or even half a person, with teeth as sharp as the sword trees of hell, and a mouth as wide open as a platter of blood. Thus he will repay his deep obligation to the Buddhas and Patriarchs. The state he has attained will be recognized as the cause of the Buddha kingdom or the dignities of a bodhisattva. He will be a great man, excellent among ordinary people, who will have achieved his important goal.

There are stupid, careless, baldheads who sit in a calm, stolid and inaccessible place and believe that the state of mind produced in this atmosphere includes seeing into one's own nature. They think that refining and perfecting purity is enough, but they never dream of reaching the state [of the person described above]. People of this sort spend all day practicing non-action, and end up having practiced action all the time; they spend all day practicing non-producing, and instead they end up practicing producing all the time. Why? Because their vision in the Way is not clear, because they cannot see the truth of the nature of the Dharma.

What a pity that they spend this one birth as human beings in vain, a birth that is so difficult to obtain. They are like blind tortoises wandering endlessly in empty valleys, demons who guard the wood used for coffins. The fact that they return to their old abodes, unamended by the suffering of the three negative ways,[45] is because their practice was misdirected, and from the beginning they never truly observed their own nature. They have used up the strength of their minds in vain, and in the end they have not been able to obtain any benefit. All of this is really unfortunate.

In the past there were men like Ippen Shonin[46] of the Ji sect, who hung a gong around his neck and, while chanting the Buddha's name, shouted: "Once you enter the three evil ways, you can never go back!" . He traveled, spreading his message from the far east, Dewa in Oshu province, to the far west, in the remotest areas of Hakata Bay in Tsukushi province[47]. Finally he went to visit the founder of the temple of Yura[48], and from there he was reborn in the Pure Land[49]. Isn't this a splendid example, worthy of respect?

When we consider the human condition as a whole, we see people who lack the necessary merits to be born in heaven, but at the same time do not possess negative karma to send them to the three realms of evil, and thus end up being born in this degenerate world. . Among them, numerous emperors, ministers, wealthy men, and lay Buddhists have accumulated considerable good karma in past lives; however, although their works were of a superior nature, they were not sufficient to permit a rebirth in heaven. Thus they were born into wealthy families, surrounded themselves with ministers and concubines, amassed wealth and treasures, and - without distinction - showed no sympathy for poor people, nor were they inclined to reward their servants. All they engendered was a heart attached to luxury. But today's negative works and causes translate tomorrow into deadly deeds and suffering. There are numerous instances of people who came into this world with a considerable amount of merit, but then recklessly chased after aimless glory, generating a heavy load of evil, and therefore destined to be born again in negative ways. I repeat, do not abandon the essential points of introspection, but train and nurture them. The authentic practice of introspection is the most important ingredient in nourishing one's health. This corresponds to the fundamental alchemical principles of the hermits. These were born with Buddha Sakamuni; later they were precisely described by Chih-i of the Tendai school in his *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. In my middle age I learned them from the Taoist teacher Hakuyu[50]. Hakuyu lived in a cave in Shirakawa in Yamashiro Province. He is said to have lived for two hundred and forty years, and the locals called him the hermit Hakuyu. It appears that he was Ishikawa Jozan's teacher when he was elderly[51].

Hakuyu used to say that the technique for nourishing the body is basically this: [52] it is essential to always keep the upper parts of the body cool, and the lower ones warm. You must know that to nourish the body it is essential that the vital energy fills the lower parts. Very often

people say that the divine elixir is the distillation of the five elements, but they are unaware of the fact that the five elements - water, fire, wood, metal and earth - are associated with the five sense organs: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. How does one put these five organs together to distill the divine elixir? For this we have the law of the five non-outgoings: when the eye thoughtlessly does not see, when the ear thoughtlessly does not hear, when the tongue thoughtlessly does not taste, when the body thoughtlessly hears, when the consciousness thoughtlessly does not think, then the turgid primary energy builds up right before your eyes. This is the vast physical energy mentioned by Mencius[53]. If you attract this energy and concentrate it in the space below the navel, if you distill it over the years, protect it to the maximum and nourish it constantly, before you know it the saucepan of the elixir will tip over and the entire universe will become one. mass of this circulating elixir. Then you will realize the fact that you yourself are a divine sage of true immortality, one who was not born before the heavens and earth were formed, and who will not die after the empty space has disappeared.[54] Now you can curdle the ocean into lumps and turn the earth into gold. For this reason it is said: "The circulation of a drop of this elixir can change metal into gold"[55]. Po Yu-ch'an[56] said: "The essential thing to nourish life is to strengthen the physical structure. The secret to strengthening the physical structure is to focus the spirit. When the spirit is concentrated, energy accumulates. When energy builds up, the elixir is formed. When the elixir is formed, the physical structure becomes firm. When the physical structure is firm, the spirit is strengthened".

But above all we must understand that this elixir is absolutely not external to one's body. For example, there are fields of jewels and fields of millet. Jewel fields produce jewels, millet fields produce crops. In man there are kikai and dantien. The kikai is the treasure house where vital energy is stored and nourished; the dantien is the castle of the city,

where the divine elixir is distilled and where the cycle of life is preserved. A man of ancient times said: "The reason why the great rivers and seas attained supremacy over hundreds of other streams is that they had the virtue of being lower than the rest"[57]. From the very beginning, the oceans have geographically occupied a lower position than all other waters; for this they receive all these waters without increasing or decreasing. The kikai is located in the body in a position lower than the five internal organs, and is constantly collecting the true energy. Eventually the divine elixir is perfected, and one attains the status of an immortal.

The dantien is located in three places in the body, but the one I am referring to is the low dantien. The kikai and dantien are both placed below the navel; in reality they are one, although they have two names. The dantien is located two inches below the navel, while the kikai is only an index and a half below it, and it is in this area that the real energy always accumulates. When body and mind are in harmony, it is said that, even at the age of one hundred, hair never turns white, teeth remain healthy, vision is clearer than ever, and abilities acquire luster. This is the effectiveness of nourishing the primary energy and bringing the divine elixir to maturity. There is no age limit that one cannot reach; it just depends on how effectively the energy is fed. The enlightened doctors of yore administered cures before a disease manifested itself, and allowed people to control the mind and feed the energy. Quack doctors, on the other hand, work the other way around. After the disease appears, they try to cure it with acupuncture, moxa treatment and swallowing preparations, and as a result many of their patients are lost.

Generally speaking, substance, energy and spirit are the pillars of the human body. The enlightened man keeps his energy and does not waste

it. The art of nurturing life can be compared to the techniques of governing a country. The spirit represents the prince, the substance the ministers and the energy the people. When the people are loved and cared for, then the country is mighty; when energy is held, then the body is powerful. When the people are in turmoil, the nation is destroyed; when the energy is depleted, the body dies. Thus the wise governor always directs his efforts to the common people, while the inept governor allows the wealthy classes to have their way. When the wealthy classes have their way, the nine ministers demand special privileges, the hundred functionaries[58] revel in their authority, and none give a thought to the poverty and suffering of the common people. Unreliable ministers rob and loot, tyrannical officials cheat and pocket money. Although wheat is plentiful in the fields, many in the country are dying of hunger. The wise and the virtuous hide, and the people are indignant and enraged. Eventually ordinary citizens are reduced to poverty, and the survival of the nation is threatened. But when attention is paid to the common people, when their labors are not ignored, then the people are enriched and the nation becomes strong. No one violates the laws, and no other country will attempt to attack the borders.

The human body works just like that. The enlightened man causes the breath to accumulate completely underneath. So there is no room for the seven misfortunes[59], and the four evils[60] cannot attack from the outside. The circulatory organs function efficiently, and the heart and mind are overflowing with health. This way the body does not need to know the pain of acupuncture and moxa treatment. He will be like the people of a mighty country who don't know the sound of war drums.

Long ago Ch'i Po[61] answered the Yellow Emperor's questions: "When the desiring mind is empty, true energy is in tune. If the substance and the spirit are kept inside, where can the disease come from?". But men today do not follow this advice. From the moment of birth to the moment of death they do not keep the mind-as-master (shushin) within themselves. They don't even know what this mind-as-teacher is, that's why they are like ignorant dogs and horses that run around all day just because they have legs. Dangerous ignorance indeed! For don't military experts say, "Surprise and anguish arise because the mind-as-teacher is not held firmly"? [62] But when the mind-as-teacher is kept within oneself, the anguish and fear are not voluntarily produced. Whenever a person is without mind-as-teacher, it is as if he were dead, or at least there is no assurance that he will not fall into recklessness and depravity.

To better illustrate the point: suppose there is an old house, owned by an old, decrepit, exhausted, poor, starving woman. No one will enter this house thoughtlessly as long as there is a master. But as soon as the owner disappears, thieves will slip inside, beggars will sleep in it, foxes and rabbits will chase each other along the floors, hungry badgers will throw themselves inside to hide. During the day idle spirits[63] will howl, during the night wild demons[64]. The house will become a gathering place for countless strange and evil beings. The same thing happens to the human body.

To the mind that is master of true meditation, the space below the navel is firm as if a huge rock were planted in it, and when this mental function is in its full potency, no illusory thoughts can enter, no discriminatory ideas can exist. . "The heavens and the earth are one finger; all things are a horse"[65]. This great hero [who is master of true meditation], solemn as a mountain, vast as the seas, tirelessly

practices all good works day after day, so that there is no room for even a Buddha or a Patriarch to insinuate himself into the his hand, and nothing for an evil demon to test the waters for. Day after day he carries out good works without getting tired. Truly he can be considered one who has repaid his obligations to the Buddha.

But if this person were suddenly attacked by negative circumstances or attracted by delusional actions, the mind-as-meditation master would be lost even before he discovered them. This is said in the passage: “When a thought arises suddenly it is known as ignorance”[66]. The demons of passions will swarm like wasps; supernatural beings will chase each other like ants. [The body composed of] the four elements will [will be] like a decrepit house seen in a nightmare; [the mind made up of] the five skandhas[67] will [will be] like an unreal hovel. Everything will suddenly change and become a dwelling place for demons. The shape of things is constantly changing. In all kingdoms, how many tens of thousands of births and deaths occur in one day!

Though a gentleman may appear to have retired from his official duties, internally his mind is confronted with the aberrations of a Yaksha[68]. Each time the mind will suffer more agony than that produced by the battle of Yashima[69]; the heart will be constantly more anguished than the world was during the wars of the nine kingdoms[70]. It will be like the burning down of the millionaire's house in the parable[71]. “Let's say this is the endless sinking in the karmic sea of birth and death. Unless a person in this condition steps aboard the raft of true meditation and hoists the sail of indomitable perseverance, he will be drawn into the raging waves of consciousness and emotion. How then will he be able to transcend the dark rays of malodorous fumes and poisonous vapors, and reach the other shore of the four virtues?[72]

What deep sadness! Man is endowed with the wisdom and form of the Buddha. There is nothing he lacks. Each person is possessed by this jewel which is the nature of the Buddha, and for all eternity radiates an immense and pure luminosity. But while they dwell in that very land of the pure dharma nature of Buddha Birushana (Vairocana), within which this world is the light of Nirvana, men, because their wisdom eye has been blinded, confuse this realm with the ordinary evil world and mistakenly think it is populated by sentient beings. In this birth as human beings, which is so difficult to obtain, they waste their time wandering around like ignorant horses and oxen. Without distinction they extinguish the light and wander in the realms of the three painful and negative existences, and suffer the sadness of the six forms of rebirth[73]. They cling to the unchanging eternal calm of the true land of Buddha Birushana, and in their fear and delusion they weep in pain, believing it to be eternal hell. They take pride in their trivial, purposeless, and meaningless ideas, reveling in the miserable and prejudicial learning that has entered their mouths and ears. They don't believe in Buddhism, they haven't listened to the True Law, they end their days in a crazy way, and they haven't been able to keep even for a single moment the mind that is the master of authentic meditation. Even more reprehensible is that they revolve for eternal kalpas in the spirals of their own evil deeds. And, scarier still, what they get is only the bitter fruit of the long nights of birth and death.

The Emperors who ruled from the Engi period to the Tenryaku period, and who are revered as the three wise men, were also burned by the fierce flames of hell. When they saw Nichizo Shonin of Sho's cave, they told him that because they had been guilty of extreme bullying as rulers of a small country, they had fallen into a place like this[74]. Fujiwara no Toshiyuki was excellent in both Chinese and Japanese, was renowned

for his calligraphy, and copied the Lotus Sutra about two hundred times, but as he was unfamiliar with authentic meditation, he fell into hell and had to go to Ki no Tomonori to beg help[75]. Minamoto no Yoshiie, of whom it is said that no warrior equal existed in Japan, subdued the numerous enemies of the court, facilitated the Emperor's interests, and, where the spells of the high priests of Nara and Kyoto failed, silenced the Emperor's troubles just by swinging his bow. But even such a man had to kneel at Emma's court[76]. Tada no Mitsunaka, while ill, was taken by a messenger from Emma to undergo the sight of the dark regions. Returning to this world, he was so terrified that he immediately entered the Rokkaku-do, became a monk, and was so assiduous in invoking the Buddha's name that the sweat and tears he shed dripped right onto the carpet on which he sat.[77] .

King Chuang-hsiang of Ch-in[78], who routed as many as six countries, conquered the four seas, and who was feared even in the lands where the eight barbarian tribes dwelt, fell into the realm of hungry demons and underwent his sufferings . Emperor Wu of Chou[79] suffered the punishment of the iron bridge. Po Ch'i of Ch'in[80], who was known in the world as an extremely evil one, sank into the hell of Excrement and Filth. Later, in the early days of the Hung-wu [1368-1398] Ming era, at a place known as San-mao kuan in Wu-shan Province, lightning struck a foot-long white centipede, and it is reported that on his back was written the name Po Ch'i. From this one can understand how difficult it is to escape the force of negative karma.

Don't say that worldly affairs and daily pressures don't give you time to study Zen under a master, and that the bustle of everyday life makes it difficult for you to continue your meditation. Everyone must understand that for the genuinely practicing monk there are no worldly interests or concerns. Suppose a man accidentally drops two or three

gold pieces in a crowded street teeming with people. Does he perhaps forget about the coins because all eyes are on him? Does he perhaps stop to look for them only because this could create some disturbance? Most people would push others off the road, not stopping until they've retrieved the coins with their own hands. It is not that people who neglect the study of Zen because the pressure of worldly circumstances is too great, or interrupt their meditation because they are preoccupied with worldly affairs, value two or three bits of gold more than the unsurpassable and mysterious way of the Buddhas? A person who concentrates solely on meditation in the midst of the pressures and worries of daily life will be like the man who has dropped gold coins, and who devotes all of himself to looking for them. Who wouldn't be happy for such a person?

That's why Myocho[81] said:

"Watch the horses compete at the Kamo Racecourse;

To and fro they run – that too is sitting in meditation."

The Priest of Shinju-an[82] explains it this way: "Don't read the sutras, practice meditation; do not pass the broom, practice meditation; don't plant tea seeds, practice meditation; don't ride a horse, practice meditation." This is the mentality of the men of the past towards the authentic application of Zen. Shojū Rojin[83] always said: "The man who practices meditation without interruption, even if he is in a street facing violence and murders, even if he enters a room full of groans and

pain, even if he attends sumo matches at the theater, even if he attends an event of music and dance, is not distracted or preoccupied with trifles, but conscientiously fixes his mind on his koan, walks along determinedly and does not lose ground. Even if a terrible Asura demon grabbed him by the arm and made him make countless turns in the immense chiliocosm[84], his authentic meditation would not be interrupted even for an instant. Whoever continues on this path without interruption can be called a monk who practices authentic Zen. In every situation keep a serene expression on your face, fix your eyes, and never for a moment worry about human affairs". This sentence is really worthy of respect. We also do not find in the military laws the indication "Fight and cultivate the fields; this is by far the safest method"? Studying Zen is the same thing. Meditation is the authentic practice of combat; introspection is the ultimate cultivation. They are what two wings are to a bird; what two wheels are to a cart.

I have already written about the fundamentals of introspection in my Yasenkanna, a book dedicated to the use of all Zen monks everywhere. I don't know exactly how many were cured of Zen sickness by reading what I wrote there, but I do know of eight or nine, seriously ill and near death, who recovered simply by following the directions. Students, practice the method of introspection and complete your study of Zen, and from this you perfect your initial aspirations. Of what use is it to awaken to the fundamental points of the Five Houses and Seven Schools[85] and then die young? Even if you managed to live eight hundred years by the powers of introspection as P'eng Tsu[86] did, if you didn't have the eyes to look deep into your nature, you would be nothing more than an aged demon guarding corpses . What's good about that? If you think that meditating in dead sittings and silent enlightenment[87] are enough, you are wasting your whole life in error, and you are transgressing immensely against the Buddha Way. Not only do you stand against the Buddha Way, but you also reject the secular

world in the same way. Why? If the various lords and high officials neglected court visits and turned away from government duties to practice dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, if the soldiers neglected their skills as archers and coachmen, forgetting the martial arts, to practice a dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, if the merchants closed their shops and destroyed the abacus to practice dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, if the peasants threw away their plow and hoe, and stopped cultivating to practice a dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, if the craftsmen threw away their measures and abandoned their hatchets and axes to practice dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, the country would collapse and the people would collapse from exhaustion. Bandits would grow everywhere and the nation would be in terrible danger. People then, in anger and resentment, would feel safe saying that Zen is an evil and nefarious thing.

But it should be known that in the days when the ancient monasteries flourished, ancient sages such as Nan-Yueh, Ma-tsu, P'o-chang, Huang-po, Lin-chi, Kuei tsung, Ma-yu, Hsing-hun, Pan -shan, Chiu-feng, Tsi-tsang[88] and others hoisted stones, hauled earth, carried water, cut wood, and grew vegetables. When the drums dictated the working times, they sought to progress in the middle of their business. That's why Po-chang used to say, "A day without work, a day without eating." This practice is known as meditation in the midst of activity, the uninterrupted practice of me sitting in meditation. This style of Zen practice no longer exists today.

I do not mean, however, that sitting in meditation is to be despised, or contemplation condemned. Of all the scholars, the men of wisdom of the past and of today, there is not one who has perfected the Way of the Buddha without relying on Zen meditation. The three fundamentals –

precepts, meditation and wisdom – have always been the very core of Buddhism. Who would dare to take them lightly? But if anyone attempted to approach men of this caliber, such as the great Zen sages mentioned above, men who transcend sect and rank, while they were engaged in authentic, unsurpassed, immense Zen meditation, there would have been an explosion. in the sky, and the stars would leap across the skies.

How can anyone with the eye of a sheep, or the wisdom of a fox or a badger, expect to judge men like that? But even if one could attain Buddhahood or one where great enlightenment was attained by means of dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment, all the lords, high attendants and ordinary people would be so busy with the many responsibilities of business. at home who would hardly find a moment to meditate with concentration. What they do then is declare themselves ill, and neglecting their commitments and responsibilities for family matters, they lock themselves in a room for several days, lock the door, arrange the pillows, light the stick of incense and sit up . But then, since they are exhausted by daily worries, they meditate for one minute and sleep for a hundred, and during that minute of meditation they try to carry out, their mind is tormented by innumerable illusions. As soon as they have oriented their gaze, clenched their jaws, clenched their fists, adjusted their position and finally begin to meditate, ten thousand negative questions start chasing each other in their minds. So they are frowning, and before one knows it they are already yelling: “Our official commitments interfere with the practice of the Way; our careers prevent Zen meditation. It would be better to resign from office, abandon contracts, go to some place in front of the sea or among the trees, where there is peace, silence and no one around, and there on our own practice dhyana contemplation, and escape from 'endless cycle of suffering'. How wrong is this approach!

Under normal circumstances, serving a master means that you eat the master's food, put on the clothes obtained from him, tie the sash he gave you, and carry a sword received from him. You don't have to collect water from a distant place. The food you eat you don't have to grow your own; you don't have to sew the clothes you wear. For your whole body depends in every part on the goodness of your lord. And why then people, when they grow up and reach their thirties or forties, when they should help their lord govern, when their talents should surpass those of a minister of state, when they should find that their master is another Yao or Shun[89], and that people benefit as those who lived under these ancient kings, when they really should repay their obligations, instead touch the rosary hidden in their sleeves, surreptitiously chant the Buddha's name, appear exhausted from work and neglect their duties, and have no intention of repaying their debts to their master? Instead they claim to be ill and attempt to withdraw from all responsibility. Even if ambitions of this kind are supported by a painful improvement in secluded places for some years, and even if something is achieved where thoughts seem interrupted and passions eliminated, these desires only result in sickening the internal organs and producing so much fear in the mind that the lungs will explode with terror at the sound of a rat leaping.

If such a person were a general or even just a private, how could he fulfill his duties in an emergency? Suppose he was called upon in case of serious danger to the country, and asked to reinforce and defend some strategic gate. To see the enemy troops rushing forward like waves, the banners thick as clouds, to hear the cannon fire roll like thunder, the castanets and bells ringing so loud they fell mountains, to see the bare spears and halberds as sharp as ice, he would be so terrified that he couldn't even swallow food or water. He would tremble

so much that he could not hold the reins in his hand, and trying to get into the saddle, he would tremble and fall off his horse. And he would eventually be captured by private soldiers. Why would this happen? This is the result of several years of practicing dead sitting meditations and silent illuminations. Wouldn't great heroes like Kumagai and Hirayama[90] have similarly trembled if they had pursued this sort of Zen practice?

For this reason the Patriarchs of great compassion have been so good as to point out the correct way for genuine meditation and uninterrupted sitting meditation. If all mastered this authentic meditation, the lords in their presence at court and in the conduct of governmental affairs, the warriors in applying their bow and charioteer skills, the peasants in tilling, sowing and harvesting, the craftsmen in their measure and cutting, women in yarn and weaving, this would suddenly accord with the Zen meditation of the various Patriarchs. This is why the Sutra says: "The needs of life and the production of goods are not in conflict with Authentic Reality"[91]. If you don't practice this authentic meditation it is as if you were sleeping in an empty hole abandoned by some old yew. How sad today's people who "abandon this Way as if it were a pile of rubbish"[92].

Voting themselves to the dark valley where self and things are empty, they believe this is the ultimate Zen. From day to day they frown and frown, and are nothing but dead silkworms in their cocoon. They are as far removed from the meaning of the words of the Patriarchs as smoke and wandering clouds can be. They dodge Buddhist scriptures like a lame mouse from a cat; they flee the Collections of the Patriarchs[93] as blind rabbits fear the roar of the tiger. They are completely unaware that all this will sink into the ancient hole of the Hinayanas, which is a bogus Nirvana. For this reason Shuo[94] uttered this lament:

“For three years I lived in a fox den.

That people today are under a spell is only to be expected.’

In the past, Seng-chao[95] condemned such people: “The confused fish got caught in the dam; the sick bird lives among the rushes. They know a little relief, but of true peace they know nothing.

For the true hero who has plumbed the mysteries, understanding depends only on the degree he has reached in penetrating the principle and in the quality of his looking into the Way. Who tells you to choose between remaining a layman and becoming a monk? Who advocates the virtues of living in the city or in the mountain forests? In the past there were famous laymen such as Prime Minister Kuang-mei[96], Minister Lu Keng[97], Minister President Chen Ts'ao[98] tu-wei Li Tsun-hsu[99], Yang Ta-nien[100], Chang Wu-chin[101], and others who peered into their own nature as clearly as if they were looking at the palm of their hand, or as if the mysteries were rising directly from their lungs. They walked on the bottom of the sea of Buddhism, drank from the poisonous waves of the rivers of Zen. So illustrious was their wisdom, so vast was their understanding that the spirits fled in fear, and the savage demons hid in frustration. Each of these men served the Imperial Government, and brought peace to the country. Who can understand their depth?

Chang Wu-chin rose to become Prime Minister and the highest official in the government. His skills as a minister of state were excellent: princes trusted him, ministers revered him, the army respected him, the people wished him well. The sky sent down an immense rain; the Emperor rewarded him with a title. He lived nearly a hundred years, and the benefits he brought were evident everywhere. During the autumn harvest people rejoiced as in the days of Yao; men thrived in a world of peace as in the time of Shun. On the one hand it compensated the obligations to its prince, on the other it made Buddhism grow. He was truly one of the great men of the world. This is why it was said: "Chang Wu-chin perfected the Way as a layman, Yang Ta-nien studied Zen earning a salary." Isn't that a story that will be told for millennia?

Was there ever a limit for men like Su Tung-p'o[102], Huang Lung Shi[103], Chang Tzu-ch'eng[104], Chang T'ien-chue[105], Kuo Kung-p'u[106] and many others that I have never heard? All of these men possessed much deeper insight than that of ordinary monks. Yet they were always present in the management of government affairs, met with the elites of many nations, mingled with nobles of the highest rank, attended musical, religious and military events, engaged in ceremonial competitions, but not for a moment did they lose their confidence with the Way, and finally realized the essential teachings of Zen. Isn't that the miracle of true meditation and uninterrupted sitting? Was this not the profound repayment of their obligations to the Buddha Way? Isn't this the beautiful dignity of Zen? Indeed the heavens are as different from the earth as these men are from those starving fools in the mountains, thinking that dead sitting meditation and silent enlightenment are enough and that Zen consists of the source of the mind in tranquillity. Are not such men like the people who not only fail to catch the hare before their eyes, but also lose the falcon?

Why? Not only do they fail to look into their own nature, but they also neglect their obligations to their masters. How unfortunate! It must be understood that the quality of the result depends on the degree of perseverance. If in your meditation you have the vitality of a man fighting alone against ten thousand, do you have to choose between being a monk or a layman? If you say that seeing the Way can only be accomplished by monks, does that mean that all hope is lost among the parents of the people, for those in service to others and for children? Even if you are a monk, if your practice in the Way is not intense, if your aspiration is not pure, how can you be different from a layman? And again, even if you are a layman, if your aspiration is profound and your conduct is wise, is there any difference from being a monk? For this it was said:

"If the Way is sunk in the depths of the mind,

It is good not to go to the Yoshino Mountains" [107].

What is this authentic meditation? It is doing everything: coughing, eating, flapping, movement, stillness, speech, action, evil and good, prosperity and shame, gain and loss, right and wrong in one koan. Make the space below the navel as if a piece of iron were hammered into it, regard the shogun as the most worthy object of reverence, the various ministers and high assistants as the many Bodhisattvas in the world, engaged in the same work as you. Consider the various daimyos, both great and small, who assist the lord and live far away, such as the great Hinayana disciples such as Sariputra and Maudgalyayana[108]. Considering the multitudes of ordinary people as sentient beings

worthy of salvation, as children to us and for whom special benevolence is to be felt...

Change your skirts and shirts into the monks' seven or nine striped robes; turn your two-edged sword into your resting bench. Make your saddle your cushion; make the mountains, rivers and the great earth the great basis for meditation; make the entire universe your meditation cave. Think of the mechanisms of Yin and Yang as two grain meals a day; heaven, hell, pure earths, and this world as impure as your spleen, stomach, intestines, and gallbladder; the three hundred pieces of ceremonial music such as the reading and recitation of sutras in the morning and evening. Think of the countless millions of Sumeru Mountains fused into your spine, and all court ceremonies and military engagements as the mysterious workings of bodhisattvas' endless good deeds. Bringing out the courageous mind that comes from faith, combine it with the genuine practice of introspection. Thus, standing up or sitting, moving or standing still, "at every moment try to understand whether you have lost [authentic meditation] or not"[109]. This is the true practice of sages past and present. Tzu Ssu[110] said: "Do not deviate from the Way by even the slightest deviation. What one can deviate from cannot be called the Way"[111]. In Li-jen's chapter of the analecta we find: "In times of haste he clings to her [virtue]; in times of danger he clings to her [virtue]"[112]. This teaches that [authentic meditation] is not lost even for a moment. This Way can be called the Authentic Way of the Middle Doctrine. This True Way is what the Lotus Sutra describes when it says, "This Sutra is difficult to possess. If one appreciated it even for a moment, I and all the Buddhas would rejoice"[113]. Here the Lotus Sutra speaks of the vital importance of authentic meditation.

You have to become aware that meditation is the thing that indicates your original aspect. Carrying on the true practice of looking into one's own nature, overcoming the great question of birth and death and closing the True Eye of the Buddha and the Patriarchs, is by no means an easy thing to do. Inserting the essential between the two states, the active and the passive, and staying in a position that allows you to move in any direction, with the authentic principle of pure, intense and convinced meditation before your eyes, allows you to obtain a state of mind in which, even when surrounded by a crowd of people, one is alone in a field that stretches for thousands of miles. From time to time you have to reach that level of understanding described by Elder P'ang, where you are "deaf in both ears, and blind in both eyes"[114]. This is the moment when the great real doubt is there before your eyes. And if at that moment you continued in your efforts without losing ground, it would be as if a thin sheet of ice suddenly cracked, as if a jade tower collapsed, and you would experience a great feeling of joy that you have never experienced before. for forty years.

If anyone wants to have proof of the authenticity of looking into his own nature, or verifying the quality of the power he has obtained, let him first read with deep respect the verses of Fu Ta-Shi[115]. Why? A man of ancient times said, "Those who have not yet attained understanding should apply themselves to the meaning rather than to the verses themselves. Those who have attained understanding should apply themselves to the verses rather than the meaning."

The verses say:

"Empty handed, but holding a hoe;

On foot, albeit riding a water buffalo.

When the man crossed the bridge,

It is the bridge that flows and it is the water that is motionless”[116].

Another verse says:

“The stone lantern dances in the column;

The Buddha Hall escapes from the temple gate”[117].

It's still:

“When the oxen of Huai-chou eat the grain,

The stomach of I-chou horses is full” [118].

It's still:

"When Mr. Chang drinks wine, Mr. Li gets drunk.

If you wish to know the basic meaning,

Turn south and look at Ursa Major"[119].

This is a verse from Han-Shan:

"On the green mountain white waves rise;

At the bottom of the well, red dust comes up" [120].

If a man has looked into his own nature, the meaning of these verses is as clear as looking into the palm of his hand. If you don't understand them, don't say you have looked into your own nature. And even if you can penetrate these verses precisely, don't think that it is enough. Abandon them and go to Su-shan's koan The Memorial Tower, or Nan-

ch'uan's Death, Ch'ien-feng's Three Kinds of Illness, Wu-tsu's The Water Buffalo Passing Through the Window , a In the morning we look at each other; we meet in the evening. Who am I? by Shuho and commentary by Enjo Kokushi The koan of the cypress in the garden – therein lies the bandit's skill[121]. If you have passed these koans without the slightest doubt, then you can be regarded as one whose ability to look into his own nature is the same as that of the Buddha and the Patriarchs. Without any reservations you can call yourselves heroes who have mastered the mysteries.

Because that's how it is? Applying yourself to Zen under a Master means making a vow to clarify the minds of Buddhas and Patriarchs. If this mind has already been made clear once, what can still be unclear in the words of the Buddhas and Patriarchs? If these words are still not understandable to you, then you have yet to realize the mind of Buddhas and Patriarchs. For this reason the Sutra of the Seven Wise Women[122] says: “The Buddha said: My disciples and great arhats cannot understand this meaning. Only the group of great bodhisattvas can understand this.” What does this meaning mean? It is the essential, hidden, for enlightenment, handed down from India to Japan through numerous Patriarchs. To make people awaken to what this meaning is, they have left us these koans, which are so difficult to solve. For this reason the Priest of Shinju-an[123] said: “The five hundred arhats of Tendai put on their monks' robes and went out among the people. Their supernatural powers and wondrous activities are their interest. The wonderful Law that even Buddhas and Patriarchs fail to convey is far beyond their means”. Ikkyu was in the seventh generation in Japan after Hsi-keng[124] and his wisdom was great, as we have seen. The Zen technique was still to be introduced in Ikkyu's time, and it must be highly respected.

But fools nowadays don't understand. One often hears packs of careless, bald-headed idiots, who can't tell a jewel from a stone, say things like, "Our real mind is itself the Buddha. What is there to do after we have solved the koans? If the mind is pure, then the Pure Land is pure. What is the use of studying the Collections of the Patriarchs?". People like that are really poor, heretical idiots who have yet to achieve everything, but they say they have achieved everything, they have yet to achieve enlightenment, which they say they have achieved. If you try to understand what they arbitrarily mean by mind, it is alaya consciousness[125], that cesspool of stupidity and ignorance. Completely mistaken, they recognize a thief and yet mistake him for a child. They take their mistakes and pass them on to others, and claim this is the mysterious Way handed down by the Patriarchs. They see someone really and hard engaged in the practice of Zen under a master, and they say, "Hmm...he doesn't understand the direct pointer to perfect and sudden wisdom; only has the ability of a Hinayana follower; mah... he does not understand the highest Zen, he is only in the class of the Sravakas"[126]. But if you check what they mean by direct pointing to perfect and sudden wisdom, you will find that it is the basic ignorance so much condemned in the Surangama Sutra. Their abilities, when compared to what they call Hinayani and Sravaka, are really inferior, like the earth to the heavens. They sit on the scholars who have obtained wisdom for themselves, and thoughtlessly point out their own achievements. Really, this is ridiculous!

Then there are some other guys who argue: Let's take the koan of Mil or Let's use the koan The Cypress in the Garden. In their delusion they think that this place inaccessible to their efforts is the Way of Zen, but they believe they have penetrated its deepest meaning. These people are evil, and suffer from the great disease of Zen, which is very difficult to cure. This fatal evil, made from error after error, all derives from an illusory discrimination.

The hero who truly applies himself to Zen is nothing like these. Studying and re-studying, he has reached the place where no further study is required. He has exhausted his reason, he has reached the end of words and ingenuity, he has reached out his hand to the abyss, he has returned from the realm of the dead, and then he was able to attain peace, where the Ka is shouted[127] .

It is a terrible thing to see someone with a mind tormented by ignorance and illusions about birth and death[128] approaching these koans, so difficult to understand and solve, just like this Great Question[129] which breaks bones and leads to death, and hear him talk about it in all sorts of ways. My old master Shoju used to frown and say, "The Buddha always sternly warned against preaching on the true form of the Dharma while having a preoccupied mind from birth and death." Even monks floating like clouds and water, eight or nine out of ten, will cry out like madmen who have not the slightest doubt about the fundamental meaning of any of the seventeen hundred koans they have solved.

There are many who, although they have no knowledge or understanding, have no doubts in their minds and talk like this. If you challenge them with one of these koans, some will raise their fist, some will shout kuatsu, but most of them will just punch the floor[130]. If you press them just a little, you will find that they just haven't been able to look into their own nature, have learned nothing and are just illiterate men, arrogant and without ideas of their own. From which teacher did they learn this terrible and bizarre behavior? They go around screaming their ignominies for a few years, and finally they

disappear, leaving no trace. Did they go to India, or maybe China? Or maybe they turned into a kite[131] or a mat? I can't keep count of the number of people like this I've met in my life. Their lighting wouldn't even work as a medicine to cure a cavity.

It is very unfortunate that these people, who are natural leaders and who are blessed with innate superior talents and who, had they expended their energies in applying themselves to the mysteries and devoted themselves to accumulating virtues, could have been great comfort trees for the world, as were Ma-tsu, Shih-t'ou, Lin-chi and Te-shan[132], should have learned the aforementioned illusory but functional ideas - even if without real purpose - when young, and would still have the motivation to reach the goal[133]. Now, when they see people who sincerely put their energies into applying themselves to Zen, they laugh out loud and say: "You haven't stopped the mind that rushes to search yet." This kind of shoddy thinking, which comes just to recognize the dark cave of blank, neutral alaya consciousness, could even be thought by a crow hunter, if he would only spend a few days thinking about it. It is obvious that they are repeating something that has been learned elsewhere! They are monks now beyond the reach of both the compassion of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs. Though initially believed for a while, these stupid, inept, and careless plebeians slowly become unacceptable even to the laity, and are eventually shunned by temple-goers and priests. How and where they end up is not known; this seems to be what has become the pilgrimage of monks these days.

How is true enlightenment achieved? In the busy circle of worldly affairs, in the confusion of daily problems, amid the seven ups and downs and eight upheavals[134], behave as a man of valor would when surrounded by a group of enemies. Mount your steed, raise your spear

and, showing your brave spirit, prepare your mind to attack, destroy and annihilate the enemy. Be a man who always keeps with him the unsurpassed luster of true and uninterrupted meditation, one who no longer needs to demonstrate his activity, but who has reached a state of mind which has extinguished both body and mind, and has made it all an empty cave. At that moment, if one lets no fear arise and proceeds with utmost determination, one will suddenly be endowed with immense power. At every moment of your application to Zen, fight against worldly illusions and problems, overcome the dark demon of sleep, attack the concepts of active and passive, order and disorder, right and wrong, hate and love and do battle with all things of the material world. As you proceed with true meditation and fiercely striving, true enlightenment will unexpectedly come.

Pradhanasura Bodhisattva[135] violated the precepts and found no means for repentance. His mind was tortured with pain and anguish. Suddenly, alone, he was inspired to take the great vow[136] and, sitting silently in meditation, he battled his pain and anguish. And suddenly he realized the understanding of birthlessness.

The Zen master Yun-men, when he was in the place of the old monk of Mu-chou[137], broke his left leg, and from there he had a great enlightenment. I Ch'an-shih of Meng-shan[138] suffered from continuous diarrhea, day and night, until his body was completely debilitated and he was on the verge of death. At that moment he made the great vow and sat in intense meditation, fighting against his disease. After some time his intestines made a loud noise a few times, and then the disease disappeared. Daien [Hokan] Kokushi[139] went to visit Yozan Roshi[140] of Shotaku[141] temple in Hanazono to talk about his understanding of Zen. Yozan cursed him, struck him and drove him away. One very hot day Gudo, in a rage, reached a bamboo plantation

and meditated without a rag on. At night great swarms of mosquitoes surrounded him and filled his skin with bites. Fighting the unbearable itch, he grit his teeth, clenched his fists and just sat like crazy. He almost lost consciousness several times, but at one point, unexpectedly, he experienced great enlightenment.

The Buddha underwent a very painful practice in the Himalayas for six years until he was skin and bones, and the reeds pierced his belly up to his elbows. Hui-k'o[142] cut his arm to the elbow and penetrated into the depths of his original essence. Hsuan-sha[143], while descending from Mount Hsiang-ku[144] in tears, stumbled and broke his leg, and at that instant he penetrated the essence of the teaching. Lin-chi was being beaten by his master Huang-po and suddenly woke up.

The ones described above are examples from the past and present day. There has never been a Buddha, a Patriarch or a sage who has not looked into his own nature. If, as seems to be the custom these days, you rely on the trivial understanding that everyone foolishly has in their hearts, and think that the knowledge and discrimination of the Big Question to which you have arrived by yourself is sufficient, you will never in your life be able to break the evil web of illusion. Insignificant knowledge is an impediment to enlightenment, and this is what these people possess.

In the Middle Ages, when the Zen sect was flourishing, samurai and high officials wholly devoted to authentic meditation, when they had a day off from their official duties, would mount their horses and, accompanied by seven or eight robust soldiers, gallop towards crowded

places, as Ryogoku and Asakusa may be today[145]. Their goal was to test the quality and validity of their meditation amidst the activity.

In the past Ninagawa Shinuemon[146] attained great enlightenment while involved in battle. Ota Dokan[147] composed some waka poems while being held down by an enemy on the battlefield. My old master Shoji, when his village was overrun by great packs of wolves, sat for seven nights in different cemeteries. The wolves were there to sniff his neck and ears, and he did this to test the validity of true meditation, continuous and uninterrupted.

Shoku Shonin[148] of Mount Shosha used to lament thus: "If worldly thoughts are strong, those on the Way are weak; if thoughts on the Way are strong, worldly thoughts are weak." I would be the first to admit that all these boring words of mine, difficult to read and also difficult to understand, continued as if my "worldly thoughts were intense". But I am in the descending phase of my life, close to exhaling my last breath. What is missing from my life? Should I wag my tail and beg for mercy? I have no special favors to ask of anyone, nor do I need to claim fame amidst the waves of the world. I could probably put some effort into making a connection with the Way, in pursuing what is known as a vow to study all Buddhist teachings everywhere[149], in the future help the group in some way[150] in their requests of knowledge about Buddhism. There is a saying that it is easy to find a thousand soldiers, but it is very difficult to single out one general. If there is even a small part of my writings that you can make your own, if your teacher's intimacy with the Way can be improved and its application to Zen brought to fruition, then that influence will surely be felt by others around him. If those around him are touched by this influence, then it will surely spread to all the inhabitants of the city. And if the whole city is affected, then it will spread to the whole province. Why does it work

like this? This is so because one man's mind is the mind of all men. Eventually that influence will touch the whole nation; above it will serve the moral example set by the governor, and below it will benefit the common people. If this were to happen, what could be better than for this influence to extend to the entire universe?

[To help in] this has been my humble aspiration throughout my life. Were it not so, what vanity would have prompted me to write all night by the light of a single lamp, rubbing my tired old eyes, writing and rewriting this endless and unsolicited letter so that I could send it to you? If you think what I have written has any value, do not throw it away, but read it, and do so very carefully. If you agree with introspection techniques as a means of nurturing life, both body and mind will be healthy and you will soon attain the reward of Zen meditation and the bliss of reaching the state of shouting "Ka".

Another wish of mine is that through the effectiveness of this introspection you achieve a long life like that of Takenouchi no Sukunle or Urashima[151]. I hope you will render service in government administration and compassionately look after the common people; that you will protect Buddhism; that you will assure the delight of a continuous joy to the Law and to meditation, and you will obtain the definitive teaching. All this is the little hope that I always keep in mind.

In my later years I have come to the conclusion that performing authentic meditation is particularly an asset to the warrior class. A warrior must be physically strong from start to finish. The strictest punctiliousness and decorum are required in the performance of one's duties and in relations with others. His hair must be styled properly, his

clothing in the strictest order, and his swords strapped to his side. With this precise and proper bearing, genuine meditation comes forward with overflowing splendour. Mounted on a sturdy horse, this warrior can ride towards countless hordes of enemies as if riding in a lonely place. The valiant and fearless expression on his face reflects the practice of unparalleled, authentic and uninterrupted sitting meditation. Meditating in this way, the warrior can get in a month what a monk needs a year for; in three days he can achieve benefits for which a monk needs a hundred days.

Sadly nowadays, since they lack this determination or have not been educated enough, these men ride large horses which might have names like Ikezumi or Surusumi[152]. Carrying tremendous loads of ignorance and delusion on their backs, they ride heedlessly with stern demeanor. Isn't that sad? Passing by this vital place, they say: "We have official assignments. While we are engaged in our duties we have no time to sit in meditation." Their mental situation is like that of a man looking for water in the middle of the ocean.

The Ssu-shih-erh chang ching [the Sutra of Forty-two Chapters] says: "Man faces twenty dangers. It is difficult to be rich and calm like the Way!"[153].

As is true! There are innumerable people, noble and commoner, who possess wealth and fame, but if you search all over the world, you will not find one who dreads the painful cycle of their next rebirth, or seeks a way to escape it. It is time to fix in yourself the state of mind that conforms to the Buddha's teachings. What good can come from

accumulating wealth after wealth, never knowing how to say enough?
From seeking fame greater than one has, without being satiated with it?

Only you, my lord, see that wealth is like a flower in the air, that fame is but an illusion. You have always wisely devoted your thoughts to the unsurpassable Great Way. You have already called me three times in my rough hut, just as long ago Liu Pei called Chu-ko Liang three times in his humble cottage[154]. Liu Pei wanted to unite the Three Kingdoms; you try to overcome the three worlds. The intention is the same, but how different the aspiration! Long ago Chu-ko Liang abandoned his plow and risked his life to answer three times. How can I deny these feeble words to repay your three visits? In wondering what principle of the Law to write to you about, I can only hope that you will strengthen and enlarge your noble spirit, that at once you will be able to penetrate the Great Question of our teaching, and that you will experience the great ecstasy of awakening joy. . For these reasons I have continued to write you these rather inadequate lines.

The Big Question of our teaching cannot, of course, be put into words, but if you keep the essence of your Zen practice without error, you will awaken to the Big Question of your own free will. Your messenger returned in such haste the other day that I did not have time to answer you then. It was definitely an inexcusable rudeness on my part. Luckily Kisen[155] announced to me that he was returning from Ihara. Excited by the possibility, I asked him to wait until I finish the letter. I spent the night without sleep, writing from dusk to dawn, and though I have written about five hundred lines, I have not yet expressed all that I want to communicate to you. I'm so old that my memory skills are failing me: I finally find myself writing what I had already written at the beginning. I've made all sorts of mistakes in my sentences, but there's no time to read it all over, so I'm going to seal it up and give it to Kisen for delivery.

It's a bit like sending you a chicken in a basket from C'hu, and saying it's a phoenix from Tan Shan[156].

After looking at the letter, please burn it so that the contents are not disseminated. However, if you find something in it that you can use, I could prepare a nice copy to send you. Otherwise have some copies made by your scribes, and distribute them to your young and talented servants, as well as to Wada Kunikata[157] and his group. Read it carefully from time to time, you have free time, when you gather some of the most faithful servants, such as Tsutsumi and Nakazawa[158], as well as many of the senior ministers and physicists. Have them sit around you, and have them listen to what I have written. You yourself, sitting on your cushion, sometimes listening, sometimes falling asleep, will serve to nourish the feeling for the Way. If half a day's idleness can be thus enjoyed, an atmosphere of delight in the Law and joy in meditation will of itself manifest itself. There will be no need to envy the pleasures of the Four Deva Kings and the heavens of the thirty-three devas, nor the warrior realms of the heavens of Yama and Tusita[159]. How much less [will be] then the lurid and sumptuous feasts, the frivolous and extravagant debaucheries, the monstrous and cruel sports of the world of men, where the ears are conquered by the eight sounds[160] and the eyes are blinded by all those dances. How useful, indeed, even considering these things!

Pay attention to what I have written, and if any of your servants near or in the neighboring areas appear to be suitable for instruction, if well guided, they will comply with the bodhisattva vow to seek enlightenment and to bring teaching to all the beings. Out of the midst of the dust of the world will arise a marvelous excellent master - whom I do not know - who, mounted on horseback, with sword at his side, will

ride everywhere and will continually turn the unsurpassed wheel of the Law of all the Buddhas.

They say behind a strong general there are no weak soldiers. So brave soldiers like Kilyapa, Ananda, Sariputra and Piiqa[161], starting with Tamura and Nomura[162], will appear numerous under your banners. Then whatever may happen in the world, the general and his troops, motivated by the one great and genuine energy, even if they were a hundred men against ten thousand, will be unaware of any birth until now. How then can there be such a thing as death? They will push forward as if they were going to pierce the hardest stone. Their stillness will be like that of a noble mountain, their speed like that of a roaring typhoon. Nothing they will face will not fall before them; nothing they touch will not fall apart. Even if they were in the midst of a terrible turmoil like the Hogen and Heiji wars, it would be as if they were standing in a vast plain with no people around. This is what we call the vital spirit and goal of a truly great man.

When the benevolence of the lord and the Law are handed down together, the soldiers are well looked after. Who would be sorry to lay down their life for their lord? If the fear of birth and death is no longer present, what need is there to seek Nirvana? All ten directions disappear before the eyes; in a single thought the three epochs are understood[163]. This is due to the power of authentic meditation. At such a time the warriors are full of respect, the people feel united, the prince acts with benevolence, the ministers are motivated by the truth. The peasants have enough grain, the women enough cloth; all, above and below, have love for the Way. The country is at peace and will live for ten thousand generations without decay. This is the best man and the heavens can do. Is there any difference between the person who is ordained as a monk while pursuing administrative affairs and the

bodhisattva who carries out his work of salvation in the capacity of an administrative officer?

With the deepest respect,

Written by the old heretic

Who sits under the Sala tree.

Summer, twenty-sixth day of the fifth month

Of Enkyo's Fifth Year (June 20, 1748)

Note:

[\[1\] The exact meaning of the title remains unknown, it appears to be the name of Hakuin's favorite teapot. We have left the transliteration from the original English text, the one used by Yampolsky, who left the better known names in the usual form following Western phonetics, and who instead followed the Wade-Giles transliteration for the lesser known ones; for example. Chuang Tzu, but also Chih-i.](#)

[2] It is presumably Nabeshima Naotsume (1701-1749), governor of Settsu at the time of this letter (1748).

[3] A Korean delegation arrived in the spring of 1748. They were entertained with equestrian essays, military essays and so on, and we can infer that Nabeshima attended this reception.

[4] Kufi. This term is used to mean intense meditation on a koan.

[5] Fire and metal are associated with the heart and lungs, respectively.

[6] Naikan. While this term has multiple technical meanings, particularly in Tendai Buddhism, Hakuin appears to use it precisely in terms of contemplation or insight that generates therapeutic benefits. But it sometimes appears that the term refers to the practice of meditation in the midst of activities of daily living, a practice strongly advocated by Hakuin.

[7] What are the secret methods for ultimate nourishment is not explained precisely. Hakuin may be referring to something like the soft butter pill described later in the text (cf. Orategama II, below, pp. 84-85).

[8] Hinayana scriptures.

[9] Chih-i (Chikaj, 538-597) was the founder of the T'ien-t'ai (Tendai) school in China. The Mo-ho chih-kuan is one of his major works.

[10] Hakuin uses the technical terms kikai and dantien. The kikai is considered the breath center, and is located an inch and a half below the navel. The dantien, the center of strength, is located two inches below the navel.

[11] The Mo-ho chih-kuan speaks of three types of chih (shi), or the three tranquillizations. The visions are established in contrast to the three kuan (kan): the empty one, the provisional one and the middle one. The two terms are conflated to form the chih-kuan (shikan) in the title of the work.

[12] It is not clear why the introspection described here represents the fundamentals of interim tranquillization. Hakuin doesn't help us understand.

[13] Shixa. Sit in silent meditation. In this work Hakuin attacks this form of meditation, which he associates with Mokusho Zen, the Zen of silent enlightenment.

[14] The hermit Hakuyu.

[15] Ta-hui Tsung-kao (daie Soko, 1089-1163). Famous Master Lin-chi (Rinzai) of the Sung period. This quote is a paraphrase of a saying in a letter from Ta-hui shu, T47. P.918c.

[16] Po-shan (Hakusan), otherwise known as Wu-i Yuan-lai (Hakusan Genrai, 1575-1630). Master of the Ts'ao-t'ung (Soto) school of the Ming period.

[17] Shinso sanzen no nossu, a monk genuinely engaged in Zen practice under a master. Sanzen indicates the koan interview, in which the monk presents himself before the master in indicated times to demonstrate the level of understanding achieved on the koan he is facing in meditation.

[18] Desire, anger, laziness, excitability, doubt

[19] The ten bonds that block man, which do not allow him to escape from birth and death and reach Nirvana. They are: lack of modesty, lack of conscience, envy, greed, shyness, laziness, absent-mindedness, concentration, anger and reserve.

[20] Wealth, sex, food, fame, sleep.

[21] The Madhyamika's eight incorrect views: birth, death, past, future, sameness, diversity, destruction, eternity.

[22] Title or appellation of a Buddha in his manifestation in this world. The term is defined in many ways.

[23] A famous Buddhist layman. The Vimalakirti Sutra, often quoted by Hakuin, interests him.

[24] Quote from Hsin-hsin ming (T51, p. 457b) by the Third Patriarch Seng-ts'an (Sozan). Hakuin does not quote it precisely.

[25] The eight winds that move the passions: prosperity, loss, slander, praise, derision, pain, pleasure.

[26] Quotation from Cheng-tao ko (T51, p. 461a) by Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh (Yoka Genkaku, 665-713).

[27] Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch in China. This passage is found in the Hsueh-mo lun, a work attributed to Bodhidharma but of later origin (Shoshitsu rokumon, T48, p. 373c).

[28] Reference to Mahayana Buddhism.

[29] Zenjo. zen is dhyana; jo is samadhi. Fairly imprecise term which covers the whole area of meditation, but which includes by implication the definitive meditative state.

[30] The four forms of behavior that command respect—dignity in walking, posture, sitting, and lying down—often associated with a bodhisattva. The implication is that dignity pervades all activity. In Hakuin's works, these dignities are often mentioned.

[31] Zenkan. Contemplate the authentic principle while sitting in meditation. The term is not used often in Zen writings.

[32] The text says that bodhisattva. The context makes it clear that it is Vimalakirti, although the following passage is not a direct quotation from the Vimalakirti Sutra. See Karaki Junzo, ed., zenke goroku shu (Nihon no shiso, 10 [Tokyo, 1969], p. 337).

[33] Hakuin uses the term kenka [clam and shrimp]. I do not take it to be a colloquial term for kappa, or water goblin, although the text indicates that it refers to this. The kappa has a cavity filled with water on its head. It loses its powers if there is no water. See Karaki, ed., zenke goroku shu, p. 337.

[34] Literally the area below the navel, kikai and dantien.

[35] Reference to the famous Mu koan by Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen (Joshu Jushin, 778-897), usually the first to be addressed by the Zen student. See Introduction, fn. 22.

[36] The "original face" refers to the important koan: "Without thinking of good, without thinking of evil, just at this moment, what was your original face before your mother and father were born?". See Philip Yampolsky, The Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra (New York, 1967), p. 110.

[37] A similar passage, without the mention of Chao-chou's Mu, is found in the preface to Hakuin's Yaseu kanna (HOZ5, 343-44).

[38] Yun-men Wen-yen (Ummon Ben'en, 864-949). Renowned monk of the Five Dynasties and founder of the Yun-men (Ummon) school.

[39] Quotation from Yuan-chueh ching.(T17, p. 915a).

[40] Datsumyo no shimpu. Metaphor for attained spiritual power. See ZD, pp. 58, 279.

[41] Hokkutsu no soige. The Dharma Cave is the place of meditation. The claws and teeth are the powers he has attained and which will help others in their spiritual quest. See “Orategama zokushu”, below, p. 142; ZD, pp. 58, 278.

[42] Kugi or nuki ketsu or ubau. Another expression for rendering assistance to others in achieving enlightenment.

[43] Donkatsukan. Here it is used in a positive sense. A splendid disciple.

[44] In other words, if he fails to father a disciple, he will make every effort to father someone, even if his talents are not complete.

[45] Hell realms, hungry spirits, animals.

[46] Ippen (1239-1289). Evangelist, whose school is also known as the Ji sect. He was a devotee of Amida Buddha and one of the pioneers of Pure Land Buddhism.

[47] From one part of Japan to the other.

[48] The reference is to Shinchu Kakushin (1207-1298), a Zen monk who studied in China and returned to found the Hatto school. His temple, now known as Kokoku-ji, is located in Yura, today in Wakayama Prefecture.

[49] The meaning here is that there he decided that he would be reborn in the Pure Land. Ippen died elsewhere.

[50] Hakuyu's veracity was recently established. See Ito Kazuo, Hakuyushi no hito to sho, zen bunka, no. 6 (November 1956), pp. 40-48.

[51] Ishikawa Jozan (1583-1672). Warrior and poet of the early Tokugawa period.

[52] The next passage summarizes the essential points of Hakuin's Yasenkanna.

[53] Mencius, 2A, 2, II.

[54] The implication seems to be that you will be one with the heavens, the earth and empty space.

[55] Quotation from T'sung-mi's Yuan-chueh ching ta-shu (ZZI, 14, 2, 134b). Hakuin uses the passage quite out of context. The next line reads: "One affirmation of the Authentic Principle, and the profane is transformed into the sacred."

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[57] Lao Tzu, 66.

[58] The entire body of the bureaucracy.

[59]. Joy, anger, pain, pleasure, love, hate, desire.

[60] The four elements: earth, water, fire, wind.

[61] Legendary physician, minister of the Yellow Emperor and one of the founders of the medical arts. The source of the following quote is not identified.

[62] Unidentified source. The reference is to Chinese works of military strategy.

[63] Kanjin. Spirits that no longer have people making sacrifices for them.

[64] Yaki. They have no relatives who give them funerals.

[65] Chuang Tzu, 2, 4.

[66] From Ta-ch'eng ch'-hsin lun (T32, p. 577c). When one does not understand the principle of equality of Authentic Reality suddenly discriminating thoughts are activated and ignorance arises.

[67] The five components that form the universe: form and matter, sensations, perceptions, psychic constructions, consciousness. Each

individual is made up of an ever-changing combination of these components.

[68] Violent demons, often depicted as eating human flesh.

[69] Battle of the 19th day of the second month of 1185, in which Minamoto defeated Taira forces at Yashima in Sanuki province.

[70] The Nine Kingdoms of the War of the States period of China, circa 481-221 BCE.

[71] In the Lotus Sutra.

[72] Abidance, Peace, Self, and Purity, as described in the Nirvana Sutra.

[73] Hell realms, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, man and devas.

[74] This story is found in several variants: in the biographies of Nichizo in the Genko shakusho, 9 and in the Honcho koso den, 48 and in the Jikkinsho (cf. Okada Minoru, Jikkinsho shinshaku [Tokyo, 1930], pp. 236-38). In the Jikkinsho version the story refers exclusively to Emperor Daigo. Here Hakuin refers to the three emperors: Daigo,

Sujaku and Murakami. The Engi and Tenryaku eras cover the years 901-956. Nichizo (Dec. 985) is a famous Shingon monk, associated with Mount Ontake, To-ji in Kyoto and Muro-ji in Nara. Sho Cave is located in the meanders of Mount Ontake. It is said that Nichizo died and went to hell, where he met the emperor, who was suffering the pains of bullying for having exiled Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). The Genko shakusho and the Honcho koso den report unidentified ministers in place of the emperor. It is then said that Nichizo came back to life and lived to be over a hundred years old.

[75] Part of this story is found in Uji shui monogatari 8 (Kokushi taikai, 18, pp. 147-52). Fujiwara no Toshiyuki (c. Dec. 905) and Ki no Tomonori (d. 905) were both popular poets of the Heian period.

[76] Emma is the Lord of the Underworld. This story is found in Zen Taiheiki, 38 (Zoku Teikoku bunko, 10 [Tokyo, 1898], 1030-1033) in a somewhat different form. Minamoto no Yoshiie (1041-1108) extracts an evil demon from Emperor Horikawa by beating his elbow. The priests of Nara and Kyoto had managed to cure the emperor's illness, but he was later threatened by an evil demon. There is no mention here of Yoshiie's journey to the underworld. Hakuin refers to Yoshiie by his popular epithet Hachiman-dono.

[77] The source of this story has not been found. Tada no Mitsunaka (or Manju, 912-997) is also known as Minamoto no Mitsunaka. He was a famous military leader of the Heian period. The Rokkaku-do is a temple in Kyoto.

[78] Chuang-hsian (Dec. 247 BC). Title of the recognized father of the founder of the Ch'in dynasty.

[79] Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou dynasty is known for his persecution of Buddhism.

[80] Po Ch'i (Dec. 258 BC). Famous general of the Ch'in dynasty, remembered for his cruelty. The source of this story is not found.

[81] Shuho Myocho (1282-1338). More commonly known by his posthumous title, Daito Kokushi. He was the founder of Daikoku-ji in Kyoto.

[82] Ikkyu Sojun (1396-1481). Famous Rinzai priest, remembered for his extravagance. Shinju-an is a dependent temple on the grounds of Daitoku-ji.

[83] Dokyo Etan (1642-1721). Hakuin's master. He is known as "the elder of the hermitage of Shoju" (Shoju Rojin).

[84] A Billion Buddha Worlds in Tendai Cosmology.

[85] The divisions of the Zen school in China.

[86] Legendary figure, said to have lived over eight hundred years.

[87] Koza mokusho. The term is ancient, and denotes Zen practice without the use of koans, although the term itself predates the use of koans in Chinese Zen. For a treatment see Introduction, p. 26.

[88] All Chinese Zen Masters: Nan-yueh Huai-jang (Nangaku Ejo, 677-744), Ma-tsu Tao-i (Baso Doitsu, 709-788), Po-chang Huai-hai (Hyakujo Ekai, 720-814), Huang-po Hsi-yun (Obaku Kiun, dec. ca. 850), Lin-chi I-hsuan (Rinzai Gigen, dec. 866), Kuei-tsung Chih-ch'ang (Kisu Chijo, nd), Ma-yu Pao-ch'e (Mayoku Hotetsu, nd), Hsing-hua Ts'un-chiang (Koke Zonsho, 830-888), P'an-shan Pao-chi (Banzan Hoshaku, 720-814), Chiu-feng Tao-ch'ien (Kyuho Doken, n.d.) and Ti-tsang (Jizo), different name for Lo-han Kuci-ch'en (Rakan Keishin, 867-928).

[89] Legendary wise rulers in ancient China.

[90] Kumagai Naozane (1141-1208) and Hirayana Sueshige (nd), warrior heroes of the Kamakura period.

[91] Lotus Sutra (T9, p. 50a): Hakuin does not quote precisely.

[92] Verse from Tu Fu's Song of Poverty.

[93] The goroku, or collection of sayings of Zen masters. Usually collected by students, from the T'ang period onwards they have formed a significant part of Zen literature in China and Japan.

[94] Shoho Myocho (Daito Kokushi).

[95] Seng-chao (374-414). Famous Master of Madhyamika Philosophy. The following quotation is from the mid-eighth-century Pao-ts'ang lun (T45, p. 144a), falsely attributed to Seng-chao.

[96] P'ei-Hsiu (797-870). Famous T'ang official, disciple of Huang-po. Kuang-mei is the stage name.

[97] Lu Keng (764-834). An officer whose name appears frequently in historical Zen documents.

[98] T'ang officer who became the heir of Ch'en Tsun-su (Chin Sonshuku, 780-877?). It is mentioned in the Ching-te ch'huan-teng lu, 12.

[99] Li Tsun-hsu (Dec. 1038). Eminent official who helped in the collection of Zen stories. Tu-wei is an official title.

[100] Yang I (968-1024). Ta-nien is her stage name. Famous man of letters.

[101] Chang Shang-ying (1043-1121). Prime Minister and celebrated layman. Wu-chin is his Buddhist name.

[102] Su Tung-p'o (1037-1101). Famous Sung poet.

[103] Huang Lu-chih (1045-1105). Sung poet, more commonly known as Huang T'ing-chien.

[104] Chang Chiu-ch'eng (1092-1159). Tzu-ch'eng is the stage name.

[105] T'ien-chueh is the stage name of Chang Shang-ying (Wu-chin), mentioned above. Hakuin spelled "T'ien-lo" wrong, and referred to him as another person.

[106] Kuo Hsiang-cheng (nd). Sung poet and prisoner. Kung-p'u is the stage name.

[107] The source of this verse is not identified.

[108] Two of the Buddha's major disciples. The former was renowned for his wisdom, the latter for supernatural powers.

[109] This quote appears later (p. 80), and is attributed to Ta-hui Tsung-kao (Daie Soko, 1089-1161).

[110] Grandson of Confucius. Hakuin writes "Confucius" wrong.

[111] Doctrine of the Medium, I, 2.

[112] analecta 4, 5.

[113] T9, p. 34b.

[114] The layman P'ang. Devoted Zen practitioner of the T'ang dynasty. The quotation is not found in his writings (P'ang chu-shih yu-lu, ZZ2, 25, I, 28-41).

[115] Fu Ta-shih (497-569). Prominent lay Buddhist, also known as Shan-hui Ta-shih.

[116] Shan-hui ta-shih yu-lu, ZZ2, 25, I, 13a.

[117] This verse is found in Hakuin's Kaian koku go, 3 (HOZ3, 141). The original source is not found.

[118] This verse, attributed to Tu Shun (557-640) is found in Shih-shuang Ch'uyuan ch'an-shih yu-lu, ZZ2, 25, I, 93a.

[119] The first line is found in the Ts'ung-jung lu (T48, p. 248a) and other works. The other lines were not found.

[120] This verse is not contained in the Ch'uan T'ang shih. However we find it in the Japanese version of Han-shan's poems, attributed to Shih-te. See Kanzan-shi (Kyoto, Ogaware Hyoe, 1759, 2, 73a). Here the lines are reversed, and Hakuin's version has other minor differences.

[121] The first four of these koans, quoted with famous T'ang monks, can conveniently be found in Fujita Genro, ed., Katto-shu (Zudokko [Kyoto, 1957], I, 152, 196, 121-22 respectively). Shuho's (Myocho, Daito Kokushi) koan is misquoted in this version of Hakuin's text. The original is found in Daito Kokushi goroku, T81, p. 244th. Honnu Enjo Kokushi is the posthumous name of Kanzan Egen (1277-1360), the founder of Myoshin-ji in Kyoto.

[122] It is difficult to determine which work Hakuin is referring to. The phrase occurs frequently in Mahayana texts. Later in the text (cf. Orategama III, fn. 24) Hakuin repeats the quotation, presumably attributing it to the Lotus Sutra.

[123] Ikkyu Sojun. Mentioned earlier.

[124] Hsi-keng (Sokko) is the pseudonym of Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu (Kido Chigu. 1185-1269), the master of Nampo Jomyo (Daio Kokushi, 1235-1309), from whose lineage Hakuin descends.

[125] The octave, or store consciousness, of the One Consciousness (Vijnamatra) school of Buddhism. While Hakuin accepts the classification of eight types of consciousness proposed by this school, he continually stresses the need to overcome it.

[126] A Sravaka is a Hinayana disciple who is striving for or who has attained Nirvana. Mahayana Buddhism considers this Nirvana incomplete.

[127] Kaji ichige: refers to the scream emitted at the moment of enlightenment. Ka is said to be the sound made while exhausted at the oars of a boat. The expression is often used by Hakuin.

[128] In this way Hakuin designates those who have ideological opinions, be they philosophical, social, political or concerning knowledge in an ontological sense, i.e. epistemology in its true meaning, today robbed by scientistic ideology through materialism and reductionism . Ironically, atheism itself responds with equal ferocity to a fideistic transcendent ideal where metaphysical intuition merges with the supernatural. This reactivity can reach dogmatic paroxysm in affirmations such as science is not democratic, worthy of those who - with regard to the categories of thought - only produce confusion between human inventions and facts, and also on the construction of syllogisms useful for formulating a realistic thought, that is, silent and open as well as adhering to reality. This science is filled with the need for truth that is in careless people adherents of the mass Christian religion.

[129] Daiji is reality as such realized in Buddhism. It is not truth, it is not conceptual, it is pure factual reality, with no conception that concerns it, seen by the eye that creates it and recognizes it in the same silent gesture.

[130] Typical answers given in the private conversation with the Master; kuatsu is the sound of a scream, and it is not translatable. Punching the floor really hurts and is off target.

[131] Yampolsky translates as kite, specifying in the footnote that he refers to the bird [and not the kite - NdT].

[132] Ma-tsu and Lin-chi appeared earlier. Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien (Sekito Kisen, 700-790) and Te-shan Hsuan-chien (Tokusan Senkan, 780 or 782-865) are other famous Zen Masters of the T'ang period.

[133] Ideas are useful only to be used, and therefore surpassed, in the shining real daily life of realized meditation. Those who can't make it, but still have the living effect of meditation on them, believe they have arrived and do not realize that they are still producing - albeit silently - conceptual certainties and therefore mock those who sincerely seek. Something similar happens when someone says to me: "But how? Don't you see that what you are saying is also a concept?", demonstrating that you don't understand that my criticism comes from a non-zen-foundation to attack an ideology, that is, something that a Zen master can use but to which he is not given stick; if this were the case, the Dharma of the Zen school would have no (non-) foundation and would be subjected to any ideology that - comfortably - felt like changing it to make it better, more modern, more social, authoritative or even authoritarian, therefore more adherent to the times or the ongoing war. The method can certainly be changed, not the empty and bright foundation. It's just impossible. If this happened we could define it as an experimental method, impressionism, real socialism, but not Zen;

and it doesn't work to say that all of this would be relative, because Zen is not a container.

[134] Probably Hakuin is referring here to the eight inverted visions (viparyaya). They are defined in many ways and include deluded thoughts, opinions about the concepts of pleasure, pain, permanence, self, and so on.

[135] Based on a passage from the Cheng-tao ko (T48, p. 396c).

[136] The great vow is the determination to practice Buddhism.

[137] We are referring here to Ch'en Tsun-su (Chin Sonshuku, 780?-877?), who pounded the gate on Yun-men's leg, breaking it, but thereby giving him enlightenment. See ZD, p. 160.

[138] Te-i Ch'an-shih (Tokui zenji, nd). Monk of the Yuan Dynasty. He is also known as Meng-shan, after the mountain on whose slopes he lived.

[139] Posthumous title of Gudo Toshoku (1577-1661), a famous priest in the Hakuin line.

[140] Yozan Keichu (1560-1625).

[141] A secondary temple within the Myoshin-ji complex in western Kyoto.

[142] Hui-k'o (Eka). The Second Zen Patriarch in China.

[143] Hsuan-sha Shih-pei (Gensha Shibi, 835-908). Another famous T'ang monk.

[144] Another name for Mount Hsueh-feng in Fukien Province.

[145] Crowded slums in Edo at the time of Hakuin.

[146] Ninagawa Chikamasa (Dec. 1447). Ikkyu's lay disciple.

[147] Ota Dokan (1432-1486). Warrior who first built a castle in Edo.

[148] Shoku Shonin (910-1007). Renowned monk who resided on Mount Shosha in Harima province.

[149] Third of the Four Great Vows of Buddhism. The others are: everywhere to save all sentient beings, everywhere to eliminate all passions, the vow just seen in the text and the vow to attain the unsurpassable Buddha Way.

[150] Presumably a group of men close to His Excellency Nabeshima. The term used is angō, the summer retreat for meditation and study.

[151] Both are legendary for their age.

[152] Famous horses given by Minamoto No Yoritomo (1147-1199) to his retainers during the battle of Uji-gawa in 1184. Ikesumi was given to Sasaki Takatsuna (nd) and Surusumi to Kajiwara Kagesue (1162-1200).

[153] I do not find this passage in the text of the Taisho.

[154] Liu Pei (162-223) consulted the advice of Chu-ko Liang (181-234), who agreed to serve him, and provided him with tremendous assistance in his attempt to reunify the country.

[155] Unidentified.

[156] Making something poor appear of great value.

[157] Unidentified.

[158] Unidentified.

[159] Heavens in the world of desire, where beings are still subject to the cycle of birth and death.

[160] Of the eight musical scales.

[161] Among the great disciples of the Buddha.

[162] Unidentified. Presumably a samurai in the service of His Excellency Nabeshima.

[163] Past, present and future.

ORATEGAMA II

Letter to a sick monk who lives far away

It is always good to have letters and news from you, and it is with pleasure that I received your kind letter with its refreshing scent of the field, thanks to the kindness of Kin zenjin[1]. I was saying that I would visit you, in the hope that your practice will continue without hesitation and that perhaps you have reached the joy of the state in which the Ka is shouted. Then the news came to me that you have not been well at all since last summer, that you have gone into the sick-room and have been living in constant anxiety about your health. But now Kin zenjin tells me that things are not so bad, and that in the last two or three days you have been able to access the meditation hall. You can well imagine how happy this makes me.

No matter how sick a monk may be, sickness is something that must be left to the lay world. The monk must be concerned only with the crucial question, namely, with continuing his authentic meditation. When a person is suffering from an illness it is essential that they continue a constant practice, and there must be no concern for any adversity they may encounter in the future. No form of idleness can be tolerated, and you must convince yourself that this is indeed the most crucial period, and that in no way must you succumb to heedlessness.

Thirty years ago my old master Shoju Rojin[2] said to a sick monk: “In this world there is nothing as sad and painful as sickness for those who are sensitive[3]. Uncertain as they are, they continually think about events from the past or wonder about the future. They complain about the good qualities of those who care for them, they resent not hearing from old friends who live far away. They regret not having achieved fame in their life, and dread the pain of the long nights that will follow their death. They think of their native village, and regret not having wings to carry them there. They pray to the gods and get furious that they don't get an immediate answer. When they lie flat with their eyes closed they appear to be resting in peace, despite a terrible battle burning in their chests and in their minds they suffer more than the beings who have fallen into the evil three dimensions. They confuse a slight malaise with a serious illness. If they are so beaten down by disease before they die, who knows how they will be reduced in the afterlife. If memories were medicine and could be used for recovery, I would be happy to come and help them indulge in them. But the real memories are excruciating: the fire in the heart flares upward, the metal in the lungs painfully disintegrates, the bodily fluids dry up, and cold and fevers attack the body relentlessly. The sweat increases more and more, until it becomes difficult to hold the vital roots. These people spend their lives in useless idleness, and their deluded minds transform minor ailments into serious illnesses. Such people are not killed by disease, but are actually eaten up by deluded thoughts. Deluded thoughts are indeed more terrifying than tigers and wolves. These beasts cannot pass through gates and fences, but the wolves of deluded thoughts can climb from the floor of meditation places and wreak havoc on the monk's robes. Some sick people weep pathetically, complaining that no one is cursed with the same woes as they are. They were born men, such a difficult status to attain, and they also earned the venerable a calling as a monk, and yet they did not accumulate the virtues of sitting in meditation, nor did they see the light of the Buddha. They shed tears of lamentation, feeling sorry that all was lost, and though

they try to win our sympathy, they are but unenlightened monks solely through their own laziness and carelessness.

For effective meditation nothing is better than practicing when you are ill. The sages of the past hid between peaks and valleys, hid their places among the safety of deep mountains with the aim of keeping away the affairs of the world, separating themselves from daily duties, and dedicating themselves to a very concentrated practice of the Way. But when you are sick, there is no need to hide in valleys and mountains. After all, the sick monk avoids the duties of going out for alms and temple work. He doesn't have to wait for other monks or entertain guests; he is spared the noisy gatherings of reading and idle chatter. He knows nothing of the difficulties of running a monastery, nor does he see the wavy extravagances of daily life. Whether he lives or dies depends on the will of heaven; his hunger and colds are the responsibility of the person treating them. Like a cat or a dog depending on circumstances, he doesn't need to understand things or make decisions. All he has to do is willingly sit on his cushion and worry only about making sure he doesn't lose his true meditation. Seeing that birth and death are but illusion, and casting aside all thoughts of good and evil, of this evil world and Pure Land, he turns to that place where a fleeting thought [of distinction between good and evil] has not yet arisen, and which multifaceted activities fail to reach. If he occasionally investigates this principle, and turns genuine meditation into the crucial question, he will suddenly transcend the limits of birth and death and leap over the limits of enlightenment and illusion.

Reaching the true body of the indestructible Diamond[4], is he not therefore a true immortal, who neither ages nor dies? Does he not deeply think that he was born into the world of men? Isn't this the

dignity of the monk with the shaved head? Isn't this the wonderful miracle of the Buddha Way? For a man who has really practiced Zen, good fortune and bad luck, success and shame, causes for and against, are all fodder for the karma that leads to Buddhahood. For the weak and slothful, worldly affairs make a malaise no bigger than a mustard seed an insurmountable obstacle, which eventually becomes the work of karma. By putting forward all sorts of excuses, such as not feeling prajna near, they really get away from prajna, which is not elsewhere really [5], and plant and cultivate the main karmic obstacles. There is nothing so pathetic as placing one's entire life in error for reasons like these. Since ancient times there have been several occasions when men have succeeded in destroying the ball of doubt[6] while suffering from serious illnesses.

Some time ago, an old priest developed a tumor so serious that his back split open like a white watermelon slashed open. There was nothing to do but apply hot potions on the awful wound, and force him to eat. He did not allow people to come near him, and lay alone and in agony with his eyes closed. One day, two or three of his monk friends visited him to console him. A doctor was present at the time who, cutting away the wounded flesh, said: "If I put medicine on the patch tonight it will probably be much more painful. It is very unfortunate that such a tumor has appeared on your body and caused you so much pain all these days. But from today new flesh will form, and you can expect a return to your health." The doctor was trying to relieve his patient's pain in this way.

The priest opened his eyes, looking around as if awakened from a deep sleep. "You have all been very kind to come and see me. Now I want to tell you something that I can no longer hide. Everyone come closer. This bad disease of mine has been an honored excellent teacher. Thanks to

this tumor I have recognized the mistakes of the last twenty years, and now I have the joy of having fulfilled the vow I made about forty years ago. Before I got sick, I thought that my enlightenment didn't lack anything, I thought I had reached a level where my practice no longer needed anything. Abandoning this practice, I shamelessly accepted offerings and behaved incorrectly and haughtily. Then suddenly I became very ill. It was as if my head and hands and feet were boiling, and my bones and tendons were falling apart. I was on the verge of losing consciousness and there seemed to be some kind of blockage in my heart. I felt the tortures of hell imperceptibly take shape, and enlightenment and understanding had escaped who knows where. I could not muster even a small part of my strength, and only deluded thoughts and pain remained. How terrible it was! Who could have envied me, since I was about to die in this suffering and pain?

Realizing that my life could not be saved in any way, I determined to practice authentic meditation. Without knowing whether pain or meditation had triumphed, I decided to launch my attack at the extreme limits of my abilities. I exerted a stiff and intense determination, and fearlessly advanced. Once or twice I wavered in my sufferings, but quickly made up my mind and carried on without hesitation. Convinced that the time would come when I would win the battle, I forgot night and day, sleep and waking. And finally an immense illumination shone before me. In the last two weeks my mind was cleared of the fog and clouds of delusions and sorrows; I felt nothing but great peace. Including the authentic principles of the non-duality of being born and dying; I transcended the distinction between Buddha and evil. I penetrated the secret principles of the one and indestructible Diamond. From today - no matter what misfortunes or obstacles may be in front of me - I realize that there is nothing that can stop my enlightenment. I hope everyone else, when it comes to this moment, isn't addicted to trivial understanding, behaving like me when I was fine. I cannot repeat

enough how vital it is that true meditation is not abandoned when you are well. Today has its own virtues: may everything be as lucky as today! All things considered, hasn't this cancer above all things been a very good teacher to me? However, when I think of what offerings I might make or what prayers to sing, I can't help but feel a feeling of regret at parting with my slowly healing tumor." When he finished speaking, his face broke into a smile. This is the story I heard from the monks who treated him back then.

There is another story I have heard about a certain Dharma master of the Shingon Shugendo[7] school. Desperately ill with typhus, he lay in bed moaning nonstop day and night. Hearing his lament, a cheeky chap among his disciples jokingly commented, "The priest is not one's ordinary self. His words don't sound like they usually do when he scolds us. Hear how he groans and moans!"

Even the priest laughed: "Attention young disciples! Three days ago my moaning sounded like I was suffering from Moaning Hell. Today however it is the mysterious sound of the Supreme Dharma. If you make fun of me, you will be punished like those who insult the True Law."

The young monk then asked, "Is it possible to attain Buddhahood as fast as turning a hand?"

The priest replied, "That is why the Buddha spent three infinite kalpas to attain Nirvana for slothful sentient beings, and why he prayed for the

bravest of them to do likewise, Buddhahood can be attained in an instant.

In the past sickness gave me pains difficult to bear, and gradually these dark afflictions stirred up the fear of pain about my forthcoming birth, and I wept all night long with sorrow for my deeds in this present life. But then I changed my view, I entered the contemplation of the non-duality [of me and] the Buddha Birushana (Vairocana). I closed my eyes, gritted my teeth and continued my contemplation. A wonderful thing indeed! The pains disappeared as if they had been swept and washed away. My body, which had been prostrated by pain, now appeared as the Seal of the Yoga Mystery Treasure[8]. I unknowingly attained the True Form of the indestructible Diamond. This moaning voice became one with the Great Dharani of the Three Mysteries[9]. The bed on which I lay became the original great place [of Enlightenment] of Buddha Birushana. The great mandala of the thousand qualities of the hundred worlds[10] shone majestically before my eyes. What joy I felt! I fulfilled my wishes in the place where sentient and non-sentient beings attain the Way simultaneously; where trees, grass and lands all attain Buddhahood.”

It was certainly not something that the young monks could understand by simply listening to these words, but they shed tears of joy, saying that they would tell of the happiness they encountered on this auspicious day. Later, thanks to his own experiences, the priest achieved unsurpassed breakthroughs in Buddhism.

Even in the foreign land there were many such men: Chu-hung[11] was badly burned and Meng-shan[12] contracted dysentery, yet both of

them made great progress in the Way due to their ailments. Yet you monks complain of minor illnesses and make a bad show of yourself. Why should you be inferior to the sages of the past? Right now, if death looked you in the eye, if you engaged in true meditation and died auspiciously, you would surely be included among the true descendants of the Buddha and the Patriarchs. This does not mean that you have to wait until you are seriously ill to start your Zen practice and meditation. But even people who are not in the best of health, if they resist laziness day and night and use attentions like the monks mentioned above, all of them will be successful in practicing the Way. In any case, there is nothing more important and crucial than genuine meditation, nothing more worthy of veneration. Those who have yet to attain enlightenment should introduce themselves to a teacher and, above all else, make a point of applying themselves and practicing. Once the decision has been reached, it is essential that you never detach yourself from authentic meditation whatever you are doing during the day.

The Zen Master Ta-hiu said: "At any moment check whether you have lost authentic meditation or not"[13]. This is a generous description of authentic meditation as practiced by all sages of the past. This has been the true practice, unchanged from the remotest antiquity. It has been called Direct Mind, Buddha Nature, Bodhi, Nirvana, the Real Man without Qualities[14]. This Real Man never had, before or after the kalpa of emptiness, the slightest sign of illness or the slightest symptom of even a cold. In the Lotus Sutra he is honored as the Ancient Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote kalpas. What Nan-yueh, in his Sui-i yuan hsing[15], explained by saying "In the past on Vulture Peak was called the Lotus; now in the western lands he is called Amida; in this degenerate time he is known as Kannon", refers precisely to this Real Man. If you make offerings to him, if you venerate him, if you prostrate yourself to him and do not lose him, what disease cannot be cured, what Path cannot be walked? Under Buddha's Law even a sick

old woman or an emaciated man, if they practice true meditation without stopping, can become a strong, healthy person without any infirmity.

But even if a man has a body seven or eight feet tall, even if he possesses the wisdom of Sariputra and the eloquence of Purna, even if he can give teachings on the Three Sutras and the Five Shastras[16], even if he has penetrated the meaning deeper than the teachings of the Five Houses and Seven Schools, even if its strength is sufficient to raise the tripod at the Court of Chou[17], even if its eyes can see the farthest corners of the universe, if it does not practice this authentic meditation will be nothing more than a putrid and bloated corpse. Use caution! Meditation is not something to be taken lightly. The Great Question of authentic meditation is really hard to own, really hard to keep. The most pathetic thing about this debauched age is that everyone is in constant pursuit of fame and profit. There are those whose hearts have turned to the Way, but only for a vulgar exposition of things. It is difficult to find someone who has really decided to practice authentic meditation. Really, if you were looking for someone determined on uninterrupted authentic meditation, you would be hard-pressed to find him among a thousand or even ten thousand people.

At the age of thirteen I came to believe in the goodness of Zen teaching. At sixteen I dissolved the face I received from my mother. At nineteen I left home to become a monk, and at thirty-five I joined this temple[18]. I am now almost sixty-five years old. For about forty years I put aside all worldly affairs, cut my ties with the world, and devoted myself solely to defending my practice. Finally, five or six years ago, I was aware that I had reached that state where I could pursue the practice of true and authentic meditation uninterruptedly. It is absurd to even attempt to further Zen practice and meditation when one is self-righteously

flattering benefactors and temple residents, and when one is greedily seeking fame and profit. Often Zen Masters, as well as their disciples, transform continued abundance into a life of luxury, and the wealth of the temple gives the style to the teaching. They think that eloquence and a witty tongue count as wisdom, they regard fine food and rich clothing as equal to the Buddha Way, they transform pride and beauty into moral qualities, and they take the faith exhibited by others as an indication that they themselves have attained the Dharma.

But saddest of all, they make one's human body, such a hard thing to obtain, a slave to one's pursuit of fame, and then bury the unsurpassed Buddha mind under a dusty pile of illusions. For this invitation, or other offering ceremony, they dress themselves adorned in out of place silk robes, and preach contemptuously about the difficulty of attaining the doctrines of Zen Buddhism, even if they do not understand them themselves. When dealing with uneducated laymen they come up with the eloquence of K'ung-ming or Tzu-fang[19]. In skilfully obtaining money offerings which represent major labors for part of the population, they seem to have attained the miraculous powers of a Maudgalyayana or a Sariputra. Seeking to temporarily steal fame and profit they neither believe in karma nor fear its return. When the time comes to die, and the lonely flame flickers when they are halfway between life and death, they weep and lament; the seven errors and the eight disturbances[20] assail them. Driven insane, with no place to put their hands or feet, they die such an agonizing death that their disciples and followers cannot even look at them. Make no mistake! With people behaving this way today, what Zen practitioner, no matter what province he comes from and no matter who he was before, could attain the state of a Buddha or a Patriarch? Due to a series of strange circumstances people have come to this sad place for the summer meditation session. Is there any reason why I should teach them harmful teachings? I am an old monk who lives in a dilapidated building

and who knows nothing of the world, but I don't turn Buddhadharmā into something sweet and simple.

In any case, there is nothing worse for the practitioner than to hold his body in high esteem, to deem it of value and to accord it honor. One year when many wolves were ravaging the village at the foot of the mountain, I went for seven nights to meditate in the nearby cemetery. I did this to test whether or not I could practice true uninterrupted meditation while surrounded by wolves sniffing at my ears and throat. Even if surrounded by snakes or water spirits, a man, once he decides to do something, must be determined not to let what he started interrupted. No matter how sick or hungry he may be, he has to endure; no matter how much wind and rain it can get, it has to hold up. Even if he enters the heart of the flame, or sinks into streams of icy water, he must open the eye that the Buddha and the Patriarchs have opened, attain the state that the Buddha and the Patriarchs have attained, penetrate the ultimate meaning of the teaching, and see the fundamental principle. He has to blow off the heads of Zen monks everywhere, tear out nails and knock down blocks, and then compensate the Buddhas and Patriarchs with his own deep efforts.

If you unremittingly and unrestrainedly devote your efforts to realizing the [Four] Precepts, where can a disease have room to manifest itself? If you take up the practice of the Patriarchs and never ignore it, even if you suffer the hardships of people like Hsuan-sha and Tz'u-ming[21], you will be revered to a great extent. But if you are superficial you will become false practitioners. By false I mean the one who has cheating in his soul. There is no one who consciously wishes to transform his flawless body into a scam, but if you don't follow the examples of the ancient Masters properly, if you don't perfect the mind that seeks the Way, and instead talk about zen to gain reverence of others, even if you

possess only a little knowledge of yourself, you will become a splendid con. If you think that being careful in your conduct and guarding your thoughts is not enough, then you had better starve in some distant land, or freeze to death in the depths of the mountains. Gold is still gold even if covered with straw. The gods will honor you with joined hands, the dragon kings will protect a true descendant of Buddhas and Patriarchs with bowed heads. You may stoop to flattery and amass goods and riches, have thousands of priests attend your funerals, display the trappings of the seven treasures, hang ensigns and canopies that strike the eye, and erect a place for practice that awes the mind, though Emma , wide-eyed in anger and ox-headed devils, banishing iron whips, will await you and your lot will be bitter indeed.

These and other things were told to two or three bedside monks from eight in the evening until three in the morning, and they were so enraptured that it seemed only an instant had passed. They wept in gratitude, and his words stuck in their minds, and their skin broke out in cold sweat. Later, and every time I got sick, I thought about what he had told us, and my heart filled with shame, and my ailments didn't seem so serious after all. Probably the gist of what I have written will be of some small help to those in the sickroom. What I have described is the cure that old Shojū commonly dispensed, indeed a unique one-ingredient pill, effective in reducing fever.

There is yet another very effective remedy for debilitated people. Its properties for healing vital shortness of breath are particularly wonderful. It neutralizes a rush of blood to the head, warms the legs, settles the intestines, enlivens the eyes, increases good wisdom, and is also effective in eliminating all negative thoughts. The recipe for one serving of this soft butter pill is as follows: one part of “the real appearance of all things”, one part each of “the self and all things” and

“understanding that they are false”, three parts of "immediate realization of Nirvana", two parts of "desirelessness", two or three parts of "non-duality of stillness and activity", one and a half parts of pumpkin skin and one part of "eliminating all illusions". Let these seven ingredients rest in the juice of patience overnight, dry in the shade and then make a pulp. Season with a drop of Prajnaparamita[22], then make balls the size of a goose egg and place it so that it can fit on your head[23]. Practitioners who are now starting their own study need not worry about the properties of the medicine nor the doses used, but simply contemplate the fact that a buttery object the size of a goose egg and delicately scented is now on their head. When a sick person wants to use this medicine he should place a good pillow, keep his back straight, fix his eyes and sit in a correct position. He should then slowly adjust his position, and begin to meditate.

After repeating the words three times: “Among the fundamental things to save for life, nourishing the breath is unparalleled. When the breath fails, the body dies; when the people are oppressed, the nation collapses” it is possible to continue with the meditation. Those[24] who have this buttery goose egg on their head experience a strange sensation when the whole head becomes moist. Gradually this feeling begins to flow down: shoulders, elbows, chest, diaphragm, lungs, liver, stomach, spine and buttocks become moist. At this time all that is accumulated in the chest, loins and constipations all flow away, like water flowing naturally downwards. This sensation is felt throughout the body, and circulates moving downwards, warming the legs, until it reaches the soles of the feet, where it stops. The practitioner must now repeat the same contemplation. The flow that penetrates downwards is absorbed and accumulates until it permeates the body with heat, as a good doctor collects healthy herbs, brews them and pours the mixture into the bath. The practitioner feels that his body, from the navel down, is permeated by this mood. When this meditation is practiced, since it is

induced solely by mental activity, the sense of smell perceives exotic smells, the touch becomes wonderfully sensitive, and the mind and body are in harmony. Suddenly the accumulated evils dissolve, the stomach and intestines harmonize, the skin becomes luminous, and the energies increase. If this meditation is brought to maturity with consciousness, what disease cannot be cured, what magical art cannot be produced? This is indeed the secret method of maintaining health, this is the wonderful art of longevity.

This treatment was first devised by Buddha Shakamuni. In the Middle Ages it came to Chi-i of the Tendai school, who used it extensively as a cure for extreme exhaustion. His eldest brother Ch'en Ch'in[25] was saved from the claws of death by this, yet in this degenerate age we rarely hear of this miraculous method. How sad that people today rarely know about these methods. In my middle age I learned it from the hermit Hakuyu, who asserted that the speed of its effectiveness depended only on how busy the practically was. If one is not slothful one can attain a very long life. Don't say that Kokurin[26] has gone senile and is teaching old women's Zen[27]. If you only knew him, you'd clap loudly and let your hair down. Why? "Unless you have seen riots, you do not know the virtues of an honest minister; unless you have accumulated riches, you do not know the determination of an honest man"[28].

Note:

[\[1\] Not identified.](#)

[2] Most of this letter, with the exception of the concluding pages, is a quote that Hakuin attributes to his Master Shoju Rojin. The text says an old monk, but the context indicates that it refers to Shoju.

[3] The wording used is chie no aru hito [men of wisdom]; here, however, it is used to mean the tendency to irritability caused by sensitivity to someone's lot.

[4] Qualifier of the Buddha's body.

[5] All men are by nature endowed with prajna, or wisdom.

[6] Gidan. The term indicates the accumulated tensions and doubts which, if torn apart, lead to awakening.

[7] Mountain ascetics, who emphasized austerity and discipline.

[8] Correspondence between action, word and thought. Here and below we find typical terms of the Shingon School to express samadhi.

[9] The Mystery of Yoga comprises the three mysteries of body, mouth and mind.

[10] Here Hakuin combines the Shingon Buddhist mandala, which is a figurative representation of the cosmos, with the Tendai Buddhist term the thousand qualities of the hundred worlds. Used together, these terms indicate that the true form of all things appeared before the sick priest's eyes. More recent texts, however, change the wording to the Great Mandala of the Four Part Circle.

[11] Yun-ch'i Chu-hung (Unsei Shuko, 1535-1615). Ming monk who combined the teachings of Pure Land and Zen. Hakuin assaults him in his writings.

[12] Te-i Ch'an-shih. Met previously.

[13] See Orategama I.

[14] Mui no shinnin. The term originates from Lin-chi Lu (T47, p. 496c).

[15] Nan-yueh Hui-ssu (Nangaku Eshi, 515-577). The Second Tendai Patriarch and teacher of Chih-i. This particular activity has not been identified.

[16] These groupings are several; one cannot pinpoint which ones Hakuin has in mind.

[17] An ancient ordeal in use.

[18] Shoju-an Temple in Iiyama.

[19] K'ung-ming is Chu-ko Liang, met previously; Tzu-fang is Chancháng Liang (died AD 187), a celebrated adviser, noted for his eloquence.

[20] Hakuin probably refers to the seven or eight false visions mentioned above.

[21] Hsuan-sha appeared previously. Tz'u-ming (Jimyo) is the posthumous title of Shih-shuang Ch'u-yuan (Sekiso Soen, 986-1039), an important early Sung period Zen monk.

[22] The highest of the six paramitas, or perfections. They are: charity, keeping the commandments, patience, perseverance, meditation and wisdom (prajna).

[23] It is not that this pill of soft butter actually exists, but that the practitioner is required to imagine that it is resting on the head, and to meditate on this fact.

[24] The remaining text of this paragraph closely follows that of the Yasen kanna (HOZ5, 361).

[25] This story is unidentified.

[26] The name of the forest where Hakuin Temple was located, Shoin-ji. Here Hakuin uses it to mean himself.

[27] Zen stuff. An elderly woman frequently appears in Zen stories, most often with very useful abilities. It is also used in a disparaging sense, as in this case.

[28] In other words, unless you have tried this method you cannot know its validity.

ORATEGAMA II

Letter from Zen Master Hakuin in response to an elderly religious of the Hokke sect [Nichiren]

The twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month of Enkyo 4 (December 26, 1747).

This fall, when I gave my readings on the Lotus Sutra, I said that outside the mind there is no Lotus Sutra, and outside the Lotus Sutra there is no mind. Thinking how strange this statement was, you wrote to ask me to explain the principle stated and point you to any relevant material. This letter will largely focus on the meaning of what I have said, and I ask you to read and then re-read what I write, in the hope that it proves to your satisfaction.

In fact, I usually say: outside the mind there is no Lotus Sutra, and outside the Lotus Sutra there is no mind. Beyond the ten states of existence there is no mind, and outside the ten states of existence[1] there is no Lotus Sutra. This is the absolute and definitive principle. Not only I, but also all the Tathagatas of the three periods[2], and all educated sages wherever they are, when they have attained the ultimate understanding, all have preached in the same way. To this end, the essential intention of the text of the Lotus Sutra is beautifully expressed. There are eighty-four thousand other gateways to Buddhism, but they are all provisional teachings and can only be seen

as expedients. In attaining this goal, all sentient beings and all the Tathagatas of the three existences, the mountains, the rivers, the great Earth, and the Lotus Sutra itself, all reveal the Dharma principle that all things are a non-dual unity that it represents the true appearance of all things. This is the fundamental principle of Buddhism. We indeed have the 5418 Tripitaka texts detailing the mysterious unlimited meaning expounded by Buddha Shakyamuni. We have different methods: immediate, gradual, esoteric, and indefinite. But their essential principle is contained in the eight books of the Lotus Sutra. The ultimate meaning of the 64,360 randomly written characters of the Lotus Sutra is condensed into the five characters in its title: Myoho rengo kyo. These five characters are summarized in the two characters Myoho [Wonderful Law] and the two characters Myoho lead back to the single mind. If someone asks where this single word – mind – returns: “the rabbit with the horns and the furry turtle meet at the mountain that is not there”[3]. What is the actual meaning? “If you want to know the mind of the mourner in the middle of spring, you must arrive at the moment when the needle stops and words cannot be spoken”[4].

This Single Mind, derived from the two Myoho characters mentioned above, when it stretches it includes all the Dharma worlds of the ten directions, and when it contracts it returns to its nature of thoughtlessness and mindlessness. Accordingly things have been preached such as out of mind nothing exists, in the three worlds there is One Mind only, and the appearance of all things. Reaching this fundamental place is called the Lotus Sutra, or the Buddha of Infinite Life[5]; in Zen it is called the Original Face, by the Shingons it is called as the Solar Disc of the Intrinsic Nature of the Letter A[6], by the Ritsu[7] it is defined as the Simple and Intangible Form of the Precepts. It must be understood by all that they are but different names for the One Mind.

Some may ask, "What evidence do we have that the five Myoho Renge Kyo characters connect to the source of the One Mind?" These five characters, as they are, can immediately be used as evidence, which can be readily validated. Why? Myoho Renge Kyo is a title that sings the praises of the mysterious virtues of the One Mind. It is composed of words which indicate and reveal the intrinsic character of the One Mind, with which all men are innately endowed.

To be more specific, look at calligraphy and painting. Or rather, when someone says that someone is a genius at playing the biwa or koto, if we simply ask him in what exactly aspect that genius manifests itself, no matter how eloquent or skilled in speech he may be: he will never be able to explain it with words. We cannot teach an uninherited talent to the child we hold dear. But as soon as this mysterious point is touched, it works unconsciously, emerging from some unknown place. So is the mysterious nature of the mind with which all people are endowed.

As you read this letter you may smile, or scoff at it, but is this not a strange thing, endless as the thread taken from the spinning wheel, manifesting its activity without a trace of error in anyone you meet? But if you ask yourself what it is that operates freely in this way, and you look within yourself for it, you will find that it has neither voice nor smell. Not only that, it is empty and leaves no traces, and if you imagine it to be something like wood, or stone, that is free and detached, it will change without ever stopping. As soon as you affirm that it is in living, you will see that it is not there; if you then say that it is in non-living, you will find that it is not there either. This place, where words and speeches fail to make their way, this open and solid point, is tentatively

called the Wonderful Law (Myoho). The Lotus (rengo), although having its roots in the mud, is not at all dirty with mud, and this does not mean that it loses the admirable fragrance for which it is revered. When it comes to flowering, it blooms beautifully. The Wonderful Law of the Buddha's mind in sentient beings does not become tarnished or attenuated, and similarly it does not become purer or intensified in a Buddha. In the Buddha, in ordinary man as well as in all sentient beings, there is no difference. Being engulfed in the mud of the five wishes is exactly like the lotus root being engulfed in mud.

As a result of his research, on the foothills of the Himalayas, the Buddha discovered the nature of mind that has been inherent in us since beginningless time. He proclaimed in his noble voice: "How wonderful! All sentient beings have been assigned the knowledgeable and virtuous characteristics of the Tathagata..."[8]. He advocated sudden and gradual teaching, and partial and complete doctrines of the various sutras, and himself became Master of the three worlds. When it is worshiped by Brahma and Sakra[9], it is like when the lotus emerges from the mud and opens up all its beauty. Just as the color and fragrance of the lotus are inherent in it already when it is in the mud, and show themselves when it blossoms out of the surface of the marsh, similarly when the Buddha spoke of the Dharma quoting quantities as numerous as the grains of sand of the Ganges , was referring to something that was already inside, not something that came from outside. From the point of view of the common man, he spoke of the appearance of Buddha-nature itself, with which we are all undoubtedly endowed; from the point of view of sentient beings, as soon as the solemn declaration of becoming a Buddha has been made, the Wonderful Law of One Mind neither intensifies nor subsides. Just like the lotus: both when it is in the mud and later when the flowers bloom scattered in the summer, it does not undergo any substantial change of any kind. Then he tentatively compared the lotus plant to the Wonderful Law of One Mind. Isn't this

irrefutable proof that the Buddha's mind, which all people are endowed with, was called the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law?

Note:

[1] The Ten States, from Hell to Buddha.

[2] Past, present, future, as mentioned above (Orategama I).

[3] We find this phrase in Kaian koku go, I (HOZ3, 57) also by Hakuin. Chinese origin is not identified.

[4] This phrase comes from Kaian koku go, I (HOZ3, 57). Everything is like spring, but the wife doesn't share the mood. She is worried about her absent husband, and stops - enraptured by thoughts - the needle held motionless.

[5] Muryoju Butsu. Another name of Amida.

[6] A-ji fusho. The letter A in Sanskrit is the foundation of all language, and therefore the foundation of all things. Since the letter A exists by

nature and is not produced, it follows that everyone's body exists unborn from the beginning.

[7] The Vinaya school which emphasized the precepts.

[8] Avatamsaka Sutra (T9, p. 6242). For a discussion of the consequences of this sentence, see ZD, pp. 253-55.

[9] Here gods in the world of desire.

A broader discussion of Qi and prāṇa

Useful for Advanced Level Three Practitioners

The Qi

For a basic distinction between qi and prāṇa go to the chapter The Five Energy Levels.

This brief discussion on qi will be useful for seminar developments in the practice of naikan.

Xian Tian Qi - prenatal qi (also Jing of the Earlier Heaven) is the sum of all the Qi inherited from the parents at conception thanks to the fusion of the paternal Jing with the maternal Jing, with the addition of our individual Shen.

From the Jing the...

Yuan Qi - (original or ancestral Qi) located in the kidneys. Then in the kidneys is deposited the power of genetic transmission (Jing of the Kidneys) plus the call of the individuality into existence.

Hou Tian Qi - postnatal or posterior sky qi: it is the energy that comes from breathing both through the lungs and the skin, but also with the digestion of food (Gu Qi) and through the five sense organs, from sounds and noises, smells, touch and skin perceptions, light and heat as well as speech and thoughts.

The Kidneys are the root of the anterior sky and the Spleen is the root of the posterior sky.

The anterior sky supports the postnatal Qi, the posterior sky nourishes the ancestral Qi.

The Qi of the anterior sky (Yuan Qi) is stored in the kidneys, while the Qi taken from food essentially depends on the functionality of the Spleen and Stomach.

Other distinctions are:

Kong Qi - (Qi of the air-Yang Qi) is the Qi that is collected by inhaling and therefore can be associated with oxygen.

Zong Qi - (Pectoral/essential collection Qi): it is a Qi that can nourish the Heart and Lungs better and better, if we concentrate it with the will by practicing the zen naikan, in particular when we

cultivate the extended kikai dantien or the organs. The area of the chest where Zong Qi (summed with Gu Qi) collects is called the Sea of Qi whose focal point is the Shan Zhong CV17 point in the center of the breastbone, between the nipples. Zong Ki is controlled in acupuncture through this point.

Zhen Qi - (true Qi): it is bio/electro/magnetism and it is the Qi on which we mainly go to work with zen naikan; it is determined when the Zong Qi is transformed into Zhen Qi which circulates in the channels and nourishes the organs as well as heals them, thanks to its division into Wei Qi and Ying Qi, whose importance I emphasize for the practice of Zen naikan by giving them a number.

Wei Qi - (defensive or protective Qi): protects the body from attacks by external pathogenic factors such as Wind, Cold, Heat and Humidity. It also warms, humidifies and partially nourishes the skin and muscles, regulates the opening and closing of the pores and therefore regulates perspiration and through it the body temperature. It circulates outside the body in the main channels during the day and inside the organs at night.

Ying Qi - (Nourishing Qi): nourishes the internal organs and the body as a whole; flows in blood vessels with blood and meridians. It is this Qi that is activated when a needle is inserted into an acupuncture point.

Zhong Qi - (Central Qi): is another way to define Stomach and Spleen Qi or Posterior Sky Qi derived from foods. That is, it is Zhen Qi specifically of the Stomach and Spleen.

Zheng Qi - (Qi correct): general term indicating the types of Qi that protect the body, used in relation to and opposition to pathogenic factors (Xie Qi). It includes Wei Qi, but also Ying Qi and Kidney Jing. The result of the zen naikan practice is visible thanks to this Qi and its empowering and reordering function. In the classic Neijing Suwen it is said that: "If you have sufficient and abundant Zheng Qi, you will surely be able to repel pathogens and, secondly, if they have already entered you will be able to counter them easily. If you get sick, it is a sign of a certain weakness of Zheng Qi".

The Prana

For a basic distinction between prāṇa and qi go to the chapter The Five Energy Levels.

This brief discussion on the prāṇas will be useful for us for the subsequent developments of the practice of naikan, as there are some techniques that I teach in the workshops which presuppose a minimum of knowledge of the forces involved, and since we will practice these prāṇas by distinguishing them, to strengthen their dynamics.

Praṇa is made up of the five vayus, or the five vital airs.

Nei Ṛg veda vāyu, the deity of the wind, is the progenitor of all beings being the breath that purifies and instills life.

In the Upaniṣads the breath of vāyu finally becomes prāna, the energy that is expressed in the breath, in the system of nādīs in which the prāṇa flows as well as in the different physical thicknesses, i.e. the subtle bodies enveloping each individual.

The covering above and penetrating the annamaya kośa physical body is called prānomaya kośa and functions as the electrical or, better, magnetic system of the first body by directing the energy into different sectors with different locations and functions.

The vāyu is divided in the body into five great areas (pancha maha vāyu):

Prāṇa apāna vyāna udāna samāna

The vayus, or the prāṇas, appear since the rituals described in the Vedic texts dating back to around 2000-1400 BC, being the tools of the brahmana to purify the initiating with these words: "I strike you for the prāṇa, the apāna and the vyāna"[1] to then become the constituent elements of the most important ritual that yoga will borrow from the Upaniṣad, pranāgnihotra, or the sacrifice of breathing. Submitting the breath of the breath to the control of the mind is the fundamental sacrifice that is made to the divine part of our body.

Let us examine the Prāṇas or Vayu specifically:

Prāṇa - It is related to inspiration. It moves between the nose and the mouth but its locations are also the heart center, the navel and the big toes. Its main function is the absorption of energy and the regulation of all the other blows: it is therefore the force that

enters the body. He is responsible for coughing, sneezing, hiccups, belching. It breaks down food into its finer elements (rāsa).

Apāna - Moves in the lower body (below the navel) and is associated with exhalation. Its main locations are the anus, the genital organs, the thighs, the knees and the kneecaps in particular, the stomach, the navel, the hips. Its main functions are excretion and elimination: it is the downward and outward moving force. All excretory functions are associated with apana: elimination of gas, sweat, ejaculation, childbirth, menstruation, defecation and urination. It also makes the eyelids open.

Udāna - Moves in the throat permeating the whole head also creating facial expressions. Its particular locations are the joints of the legs and arms and it produces phonation and swallowing: it is the force that unites us to the outside world through intellect and emotions. It activates the senses through their organs and causes yawning.

Samāna - Moves between the diaphragm and the navel and is associated with the nutrition and growth of the body. It has the function of absorbing and assimilating flavours, i.e. the subtle components of food and is therefore responsible for digestion: it is the creative force which activates the heart and produces hunger and thirst.

Vyāna - Pervades the whole body and is associated with circulation and all things taking-giving. It is located between the ears and eyes, on the sides of the neck, on the ankles and generally on the back of the body. It synchronizes the other vāyus: it is the unifying force of our system. It governs the circulatory system and through it the muscles and joints and is responsible for posture, movement and coordination. Finally it decomposes the physical body at death.

The Yoga Yājñavalkya, the Bhavanopanisad as well as the Kalachakra Tantra also describe other 5 secondary Vāyus called Nāga Kūrma, Kṛkara, Devadatta and Dhanamjaya. In all these energies, ten in number, are called the ten shaktis.

Note:

[\[1\] Cankhayāna Crauta Sūtra.](#)

Lexicon

Buddhism (Buddhadharma) - Asian religion born in present-day Nepal two thousand five hundred years ago and spread throughout Asia for two millennia. Now it is asserting itself in the West, guaranteeing the traditions and culture it conquers, as well as the survival and guarantee of freedom of worship for other religions.

Dantien/tanden - Energetic (bio-electrical) center of gravity of the human body. The first term is in Chinese, the second in Japanese. In other cases it designates three different centres, the upper dantien in the head, the middle dantien in the heart or at the level of the solar plexus and the lower dantien below the navel.

Dharma - Has the sense of reality, of teaching, but can also mean (usually written in lower case) phenomena or a phenomenon seen from the (NOT) point of view of the meditative state and awakening

Hara - It is a further synonym in Japanese language of the previous entry. It is from this term that the word harakiri is generated.

Lineages - They are the dynastic lines of descent of the Masters of the different schools of Buddhism and even of the individual lines of the same. All lines of Buddhist teaching derive from Buddha Shakyamuni himself, the historical founder of the Buddhist religion.

Zen mastery - Mastery in Zen Buddhism derives from the ancient concept of kalyanamithra (Tib. geshé) - which means "spiritual friend" - translated into Chinese as Hoshang - elder - giving this concept a more hierarchical sense but always along the same lines meritocratic relating to attendance at meditation practice and the sangha, the community.

In the Rinzai school, the masters are formed thanks to meditation and the practice of the koan, even if the founding fact of mastery remains the realization of satori and recognition by one's Master.

Zen-disease - Zenbyō is that profound annoyance which manifests itself with a general impoverishment of energies and organ functions and in a sense of defeat which finally becomes depression. The Zen-disease is incurable by medical art because it occurs at such a level of volitional and energetic power that, when fatally, it cracks, the general state can only worsen more and more.

Naikan (Chinese Neidan) - It is the subject of this text. It is a spiritual but also energetic and physical practice typical of the Rinzai tradition of Zen Buddhism, a method and practice that has

developed over the centuries with eight main sources and with the contribution of many practitioners. However, the very fitting name "naikan" was invented now after two thousand years of practice in Chinese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese temples. The text also outlines a relationship between Rinzai Zen Buddhism and the practice of Tibetan dzogchen, attested in documents and found in the teachings of both traditions.

Obaku (Chinese Huang Po) - He is the Master of Rinzai (Chinese Línjì) whose name refers to a Zen Buddhism completely related to the cult of the pure land and otherwise similar to Rinzai. In Japan, the obaku school is institutionally linked to the rinzai school.

Qi/Ki - Taoist yoga practitioners identify the type of energy related to the dantien with the term qi, the energy that flows in the small or large celestial circulation circuit, an energy that is evoked from the top of the head as a manifestation of descending energy, the celestial shen, and which also derives from food and ancestral inheritance, the jing, and which also comes from the earth through the feet, and which ultimately accumulates in hara; for Indian yoga practitioners, hara is not exactly the evadishtana or swadisthana chakra, but rather resembles the plexus generically defined - in Sanskrit and Urdu - as nabhi, a sphere surrounding the navel.

The location of the nabhi, in turn, would resemble that of the cikai dantien according to the Japanese tradition, but in reality, prāṇa and qi are two different energy levels, albeit adjacent and intertwined.

The metaphysical function of qi is to activate and recall, thanks to consciousness, the force that responds to it from above, the Shen, the door open to the mystery of being. A well-trained qi facilitates the fulfillment of the Shen in the mortal life of men up to the eventual conquest of long life or immortality.

Meditation is for Taoists: allowing the Shen to dwell in man permanently while the qi remains in balance and circulates powerfully.

Eventually the Indian and Chinese systems come together when they deal with the way in which the being meets the human energy system and this synthesis between systems is the theme of the famous Kalachakra Tantra where Indian, Persian, Chinese and Greek medicine find a theoretical synthesis.

It is curious to consider how, in any case, the idea of the fullness of being in a man is recognizable by these different cultures in a completely equal way.

We have the example of the application of the theory of qi in the more advanced shaolin monks who are ch'an monks, ie zen.

Jing - See entry Ki

Joriki vs Tariki Joriki - It is the inner volitional power that can realize a huge power capable of transforming reality, while Tariki is the power of saving blessing.

Ki/Qi(Jing + Shen) - See previous entries

Kikai-Dantien/dantien - “The kikai and dantien are both located below the navel; in reality they are one, although they have two names. The dantien is located two inches below the navel, while the kikai is only an index and a half below it, and it is in this area that the real energy always accumulates.

Master Hakuin Ekaku.

In summary it can be said that the kikai is considered the breath center, while the dantien is the force center, located two inches below the navel.

Rinzai - Rinzai Ghigen cin. Línjì Yìxuán (- 867) also Lin-chi - He was the founder of the Rinzai school, which bears his same name, the best known and most widespread Zen school in Asia.

Rikan (Chin. Weidan) - From Hakuin onwards, rikan means all the practice that is not naikan, therefore zazen, koan, sutra chants and mundo.

Schools of Buddhism and Zen schools - In Vietnam, Korea and Japan, for centuries, the lineages of Buddhist schools have continued, generally, formed in China according to the guidelines of philosophy and study, ethics, esotericism and immediacy meditative (zen). Each of these schools has further subdivisions that depend on the founders and on ideas regarding the preparatory methods used; in particular in zen there are three addresses, the rinzai which also uses the koan-questions and conceives sudden enlightenment, the soto where seated meditation is the root of everything and more importance is given to innate enlightenment, the obaku, where alongside the typical Zen practices there is also the devotion to Buddha Amitabha and his vow of universal salvation which, however, are conceived in a Zen key. So we speak of Zen school, of line - for example of Daitokuji, and of the lineage of this or that master who trained in Daitokuji.

Shen - See entry Ki

Sutra - They are Buddhist texts that collect both what Buddha said during his life, and what other inspired writers have thought of adding to update his teaching and to generate the various schools of the Mahayana.

Soto/Caodong - It is the most popular school of Zen Buddhism in Japan at the moment, where it was founded by Dogen (1200 - 1253), who was a pupil and friend of Eisai - a Rinzai Master - but who did not appreciate the Master's teaching Chinese Da Hui. School originally from China is made to descend from the Zen of the North.

Satori - Means "enlightenment" in Zen, a fully integrated state of awakening, as opposed to "kensho" which is simply a peak of the meditative experience.

Zen - It is defined as a "school of meditation", and is part of the generic Mahayana branch. Characteristic of Zen is turning more to experience than to the scriptures, more to meditation than to the elaboration of experience, more to the disruptive act than to renunciation. Zen is:

- Kyoge betsuden... a living communion without the need for doctrines,

- Furyu monji... therefore beyond the canonical scriptures,

- Jikishi ninshin... which aiming directly at the heart,

- Kensho jobutsu... self-reveals directly the nature of my enlightened being (Buddha).



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*Zen Master Engaku Taino
Zen Master Reiyo Ekai*

How to realize Enlightenment Here & Now
through an active experience of Life



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