

**SECRETS
OF THE
BLUE CLIFF
RECORD**

Zen Comments by
Hakuin and Tenkei



TRANSLATED BY
THOMAS CLEARY

“Authentic traditions of commentary have been hard to find—until this fluidly translated work, which includes commentaries by two of the greatest Zen masters of early modern Japan . . . their words shine light on this deep and extraordinary work.”

—*Tricycle*

“These commentaries make the challenges of the Zen masters available to the spiritually courageous among us.”

—*Bodhi Tree Book Review*

ABOUT THE BOOK

The *Blue Cliff Record* is a classic text of Zen Buddhism, designed to assist in the activation of dormant human potential. The core of this extraordinary work is a collection of one hundred traditional citations and stories, selected for their ability to bring about insight and enlightenment. These vignettes are known as *gongan* in Chinese and *koan* in Japanese.

Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record is a fresh translation featuring newly translated commentary from two of the greatest Zen masters of early modern Japan, Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768) of the Rinzai sect of Zen and Tenkei Denson (1648–1735) of the Soto sect of Zen. This translation and commentary on the *Blue Cliff Record* sheds new light on the meaning of this central Zen text.

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S_ECRETS OF THE B_LUE C_LIFF R_ECORD

Zen Comments by Hakuin and Tenkei

Translated by Thomas Cleary



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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The *Blue Cliff Record* is a classic text of Zen Buddhism, specially designed to assist in the activation of dormant human potential. The core of this extraordinary work is a collection of one hundred traditional citations and stories, selected by one of the greatest masters for their Zen impact on the mind. These vignettes, known as *gongan* in Chinese and *koan* in Japanese and English, are intended to foster specific perceptions and insights whose absorption in experience enable the mind to work in a more coherent and comprehensive manner than conventional education can produce.

Japanese Zen tradition speaks of seventeen hundred koans to represent the totality of Zen lore. In reality there are far more than seventeen hundred classical koans extant, as well as a cumulative body of commentary on more than one thousand of them. The reputation of the *Blue Cliff Record* as an unrivaled classic in its field was thus established in a most rigorous atmosphere of spiritual inquiry.

In its total spectrum of Zen teachings, the *Blue Cliff Record* contains some of the most popular koans as well as some of the most obscure, with pragmatic comments and explanations by two of the greatest expositors of Zen.

The *Blue Cliff Record* was so popular in China from the time of its first publication in the twelfth century that it was temporarily suppressed in the next generation because people memorized it and repeated its sayings as slogans instead of absorbing the living Zen meanings. Several versions continued to exist in manuscript nonetheless, and a new, emended edition was published in the fourteenth century.

In Japan, where it has been a tool of Zen study for more than seven hundred years, the *Blue Cliff Record* is traditionally called the foremost book of Zen. By far the greatest number of secondary commentaries on the *Blue Cliff Record* as a total text were composed in Japan over the last few centuries.

The complete text of the *Blue Cliff Record*, translated from the original Chinese, has now been available in English for nearly a quarter of a century. In spite of the difficulties inherent in a work like the *Blue Cliff Record*, and in spite of the ready availability of less disconcerting approaches to religion, psychology, and spirituality, the Western audience of this remarkable Zen classic continues to grow.

In the years since the *Blue Cliff Record* has been available in English, many other traditional Zen texts have also been translated. A considerable context for this classic has thus been established, but authentic commentarial traditions on the text of the *Blue Cliff Record* itself have hitherto been unavailable to the public, indeed unavailable even to the majority of specialists in the field.

The present volume addresses this gap in the East-West transmission of Zen lore with commentaries on the *Blue Cliff Record* by two of the greatest Zen masters of early modern Japan, Hakuin Ekaku of the Rinzai sect of Zen (1685–1768) and Tenkei Denson of the Soto sect of Zen (1648–1735).

Hakuin and Tenkei were two of the outstanding figures in the reformation of Zen in Japan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through their writing and teaching, both of them contributed to the revitalization of near-senile Zen, each one emitting a brilliant burst of energy with a residual force of uncommon power.

The koans forming the core of the *Blue Cliff Record* were originally selected by the great Chinese Zen master Hsueh-tou (980–1052; pronounced Setcho in Japanese) and compiled into a collection with an illustrative verse for each example. This work was then taken up by another great Zen master, Yuan-wu (1063–1135; pronounced Engo in Japanese), who added his own introductions and commentaries to both the original koans and Hsueh-tou's verses. The final product of these efforts was the *Blue Cliff Record*, which has remained a monumental classic of Zen even up to the present day.

In the Buddhist lands of eastern Asia, Zen has often been regarded as the most subtle and sophisticated of all schools of Buddhism, and the classics of Zen, intended to affect the mind at an uncommonly deep level, are among the most challenging literature ever produced by any culture. The mere language of the Zen

classics, normally a mixture of classical, literary, technical, and colloquial Chinese, has always posed a truly formidable barrier, even to native speakers. The unconventional nature of Zen perceptions and perspectives, moreover, renders their descriptions intrinsically unpredictable to pedestrian thinking.

In view of the difficulties of understanding the guiding classics of Zen on every level, there is special value in the commentaries of Japanese masters, coming as they did from a milieu very different from that of the Chinese homeland of Zen. Because they were obliged to overcome significant linguistic and cultural barriers in addition to more general psychological and spiritual barriers in the process of unlocking the classic, the Japanese masters had to interpret the literal meaning of the text in light of Zen meaning. The products of this effort make it easier to absorb useful lessons and derive practical value from what might otherwise be an obscure mystery.

The commentaries of Hakuin and Tenkei are of particular worth in the elucidation of the *Blue Cliff Record*, not just because of the renown and historical importance of these two Zen masters, and not just because of the rare scholarship they bring to the task, but especially because of their penetrating Zen perceptions. The question of Zen meaning, rather than literary criticism or academic analysis, is the crux of their task as expositors.

In a certain sense the commentaries of Hakuin and Tenkei are complementary, illustrating as they do both the Rinzai and Soto sects of Japanese Zen. Since the divergence of these sects in recent centuries, there is no better opportunity to convene representations of their teachings than in the comments of the greatest of modern Rinzai and Soto masters on the same monumental classic of Zen, the unrivaled *Blue Cliff Record*.

The original text of the *Blue Cliff Record* runs to more than 550 pages in the complete English translation. Hakuin's commentary runs nearly 900 pages in the original; Tenkei's is more than 1000 pages. The sheer bulk and complexity of the material would make it virtually inaccessible if translated in full, so this presentation is focused on elucidation of the main components of the classic, namely the introductions, the koans, and the verses.

The renditions of these central elements of the *Blue Cliff Record* are not just reproductions of those in the complete translation of the classic but are intended to further elucidate this deep and difficult text with interpretative paraphrase and alternative readings. This is actually necessitated to some degree by technical factors, including the extensive use of literary allusion in the original, and the need to preserve ambiguities adequate to support the differences in the readings, interpretations, and applications of the two expositors.

As Hakuin and Tenkei delivered their lectures in colloquial Japanese, the names of the Chinese Zen masters are here spelled in their Japanese pronunciations. This expedient also has the advantage of relative ease, as names rendered in the comparative simplicity of Japanese phonetics tend to pose less difficulties to English speakers than do the Chinese originals. Standard romanization of Japanese, accordingly, is less complex and less opaque than any system of romanizing Chinese.

The commentaries of Hakuin were originally compiled from talks he gave on the *Blue Cliff Record* over a period of more than thirty years, from the age of forty-eight to the age of eighty-two. During this time he is said to have lectured on the entire text fourteen times. From these talks an unnamed associate compiled this *Secret Commentary on the Blue Cliff Record*.

This extraordinary treasure of Zen was kept concealed by the compiler until his death, after which a copy was made by a lay devotee. Some of Hakuin's comments are missing, including those on the introduction to the first koan and those on the sixteenth through the twentieth chapters. In a number of cases Hakuin's comments on the verses focus entirely on capping phrases and do not explicitly touch on the verse itself.

The lacunae in the received text of Hakuin's commentary would be reason enough to supplement its presentation with the meticulous expositions of Zen Master Tenkei, but the pairing of these two modern giants has a deeper purpose and a greater effect than textual emendation. More than literary and scholarly, the complementarity of these commentaries embodies and expresses crucial information about the range of Zen methods and about the specializations of the Rinzai and Soto schools of Zen. In this sense,

the commingling of these treasuries of Zen teaching produces more than the sum of their parts.

1

THE HIGHEST MEANING OF THE HOLY TRUTHS

INTRODUCTION

Seeing smoke beyond a mountain, you know there's a fire; seeing horns beyond a fence, you know there's an ox. Understanding the other three corners when one is brought up, weighing precisely at a glance, is everyday food and drink of Zennists.

When one cuts off all streams of thought, one is free to appear in the east and disappear in the west, to rebel or conform, to go through the world or to rise above it, free to give and to take away. But say, at just such a time, whose actions are these?

[TENKEI] From *seeing smoke* to *weighing precisely at a glance* refers to a learner's insight emerging appropriate to the opportunity of the situation. The point is that to see the exact weight of an object the moment it is put on the scale is an ordinary matter for a Zennist, nothing unusual at all. From *when one cuts off* to *free to give and to take away* expresses a teacher's dealings with students. To *appear in the east and disappear in the west* may be viewed in terms of the so-called six kinds of quakes. While this image was originally a representation of Buddha's pointing to the character of reality, in this context the six quakes mean "not an atom is established": sweeping clean and not admitting any mundane influences, now acting conventionally, now countering convention, free in all ways, uninhibited, giving and taking away freely, dealing with each situation in a lively manner. These are called the tactics of Zen teachership. *At just such a time*—Who has mastered these functions? Bodhidharma's method here is like this, so look!

EXAMPLE

The emperor of southern China asked the great master Bodhidharma, “What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?”

Bodhidharma said, “Empty, without holiness.”

The emperor asked, “Who is facing me?”

Bodhidharma replied, “Don’t know.”

The emperor did not understand. After this Bodhidharma crossed the river into northern China.

Later the emperor brought this up to Master Shi and asked him about it.

Master Shi said, “Did Your Majesty recognize that person?” The emperor said, “No.”

Master Shi said, “He is the embodiment of compassion, transmitting the seal of the enlightened mind.”

Feeling regretful, the emperor wanted to send an ambassador to invite Bodhidharma back.

Master Shi told him, “Don’t say you’re going to send someone to fetch him back. Even if everyone in the country went after him, he still wouldn’t return.”

[HAKUIN] Since Bodhidharma came from India, the emperor thought he might perform wonders, like producing fire from water or something of that sort, but: *Who is facing me?* Interpreting words literally, the emperor wonders who this is in his presence. At least that’s better than pretending he knows! *He crossed the river*—Bodhidharma got out of there heavy of heart, “stirring up a pure breeze with every step.” As for *Master Shi*, he is a guy who, same as Bodhidharma, makes a show of reaching out to help. *He is the embodiment of compassion*—Already he’s set to entrap him! Everything, meadows, mountains, and all, is *the embodiment of compassion!*

[TENKEI] Since Bodhidharma first told him there was no merit in his pious deeds, the emperor had been idle and suffering from ennui; so now he brings up the truth of the middle way wherein the absolute and the ordinary are nondual, considered the most subtle ultimate mystery of Buddhism, and inquires about it. *Bodhidharma said, “Empty—”* The cosmic void is empty; not a particle can stand in it.

There's no such thing as ordinary or holy. *Who is facing me?* The emperor doesn't understand Bodhidharma's answer; he grabs onto the words and merely tries to rationalize: "Aren't you a holy man? You can't tell me there is no ordinary or holy!" *Don't know*—"I am not a knower." This is entirely the same as *empty, without holiness*. Ultimately, Bodhidharma does not know Bodhidharma, the emperor does not know the emperor. When they meet, they do not know each other. Even Shakyamuni Buddha and Vairochana Buddha do not actually know. This is the face of Zen. "Do you know this person?" This is someone Zenists have to get close to. *He is the embodiment of compassion*—Master Shi acts the part of the godparent giving a name, but even so, is *the seal of the enlightened mind* something that can be transmitted, or is it ungraspable? Grab your nose and find out.

VERSE

The holy truths are empty—how should one discern the point?
Who is in my presence? After all he says he doesn't know.
Henceforth he crossed the river in the dark,
But how could he avoid making brambles grow?
Even if everyone in the whole country pursued him, he wouldn't
come back;
Throughout the ages, he's remembered in vain.
Give up remembrance—what end is there to the pure wind
circling the earth?

[SETCHO] *The poet looked around and said, "Is there a Zen master here?" Then he himself said, "There is. Call him to wash my feet."*

[HAKUIN] *The holy truths are empty*—When asked about the highest meaning, he answered that it is empty, without holiness, making a horrifying mixture of ghee and poison: swallow this, and it will cure sickness.

[TENKEI] Setcho first takes the point of the question and the point of the answer to summarize the whole koan before poking into it. This is a standard form of recitals of ancient stories.

[HAKUIN] *How to discern the point?* Even the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, and even the Zen masters over the ages, cannot shoot this black star. How do you shoot it?

[TENKEI] The point of *the holy truths are empty* is something that everyone has to discern personally. How do you discern it?

[HAKUIN] *Who is in my presence?* Here is Setcho's poison drum.

[TENKEI] *Henceforth he crossed the river in the dark*—The word "dark" is extremely subtle. It does not simply mean that in olden times the Zen master crossed over the river because the emperor did not understand; it's also the same today: the moment you start thinking thus and so, already the Zen master has *crossed the river in the dark*, so far gone you can't tell where he is.

[HAKUIN] *How could he avoid making brambles grow?* He got away all right, but that is precisely why there has been a lot of fuss ever since; the Five Houses, Seven Schools, and Twenty-four Lineages all made a commotion on this account.

[TENKEI] What can you do? Ever since he *crossed the river*, the sayings *empty, no holiness* and *don't know* have become thorny brambles for gatherings of those who try to figure them out with their consciousness on feelings and objects.

[HAKUIN] *Even if everyone in the whole country pursued him, he wouldn't come back*—He's pulled it off again today, just as Master Shi said. Bringing this up here is Setcho's kindness, handling a dead snake so that it comes alive.

[TENKEI] The underlying idea is this: Is the living Bodhidharma in everyone's self something that goes or comes back? Originally it pervades the universe, with no coming or going.

[HAKUIN] *Throughout the ages, he's remembered in vain.* Just remembering is no use.

[TENKEI] If Zennists pursue the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India, all the more this Bodhidharma won't come back.

[HAKUIN] "Give up remembrance"—Cut off wandering thoughts.

[TENKEI] Be sure not to mull regretfully. What about the matter right where you stand?

[HAKUIN] *What end is there to the pure wind circling the earth?* That Bodhidharma is everywhere, visible in everything.

[TENKEI] Throughout all time, there has never been a change in that pure wind, whether before or after Bodhidharma came from India to China; it is the natural beauty of *simply being so*. Without the slightest warm breath of Buddhism or Zennism, the *pure wind* whistles. How refreshing! He says this so that learners will not get bogged down in the notion that there is nothing outside of everyday affairs.

[HAKUIN] *Is there a Zen master here? Is Bodhidharma there? Have to clean house! Call him to wash my feet*—You can't talk like this unless you have passed through the final transcendental impasse; this comes out of the same mold as Rinzai's "treasure of perception of truth buried with a blind donkey." Clever talkers who say that there's no need for Shakyamuni or Maitreya Buddha if you've seen your self cannot approach this. The *Blue Cliff Record* came back to life by this one saying, *Call him to wash my feet*. If you can see this saying in the palm of your hand, you will master the *Blue Cliff Record*.

[TENKEI] Is Bodhidharma to wash Setcho's feet, or is Setcho to wash Bodhidharma's feet? In any case, you cannot know this unless you look with your own true eye wide open. This is Setcho's "living wave on the river of Zen," his perception of the transcendental transformational mechanism of the teaching of the source.

2

THE SUPREME WAY IS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY

INTRODUCTION

The universe contracts, the sun, moon, and stars go black; even if blows of the cane shower like rain, and shouts thunder, this still does not measure up to the business of the transcendent methodology of Zen. Even the Buddhas of past, present, and future can only know for themselves; even the Zen masters through the ages have been unable to bring it up entirely. The entire Buddhist canon cannot explain it thoroughly; even Zennists with clear eyes cannot save themselves completely. When you get to this point, how do you ask for instruction? Even to speak the word *Buddha* is dragging in the mud soaking wet; even to say the word *Zen* is a total embarrassment. More-developed people who have studied for a long time do not need to wait for it to be said; as for younger students who are just beginning, they should investigate thoroughly.

[HAKUIN] *The universe contracts*—The billion worlds of the universe are bubbles on an ocean; from the perspective of one's own light, they have not so much as a firefly's glow. *Even the Buddhas of past, present, and future*—The subtle point of this Zen teaching cannot be explained, or even spoken. It can only be known for oneself; no one can do it for you. *Unable to bring it up entirely*—There's no way to do it. *Cannot explain it thoroughly*—It's not in the 5,048 scrolls of the Buddhist canon.

[TENKEI] The universe is too narrow to contain it, the sun, moon, and stars are too dark to illuminate it; what realm is this? This is how it is with the realm of the transcendental supreme path pointed out in Zen; this is where even the caning of Tokusan and the shouting of Rinzai cannot reach, what the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history could not bring up entirely, what the

entire Buddhist canon cannot explain, where even Zennists with clear eyes cannot open their mouths. How do you ask for instruction about it? Even if you say “Buddha” or “Zen master,” this is already secondary, even tertiary, shameful for Zennists.

EXAMPLE

Joshu said, “ ‘The supreme way has no difficulty, it just rejects discrimination.’ As soon as there are words spoken, ‘This is discrimination,’ ‘This is clarity.’ I do not remain within clarity; do you preserve anything?”

Then a monk asked, “Since you do not remain within clarity, what do you preserve?” Joshu said, “I don’t know either.”

The monk said, “Since you don’t know, why do you say you are not in clarity?”

Joshu said, “You’ve posed the question; now you can go.”

[HAKUIN] My teacher Shoju Rojin often used this device. There is a special meaning in Joshu’s citation of the *Song of Trusting the Heart*, something really tremendous; illuminating the heavens and the earth, the supreme way with no difficulty is extremely hard to pass through, difficult to penetrate.

[TENKEI] The way implies passage; it means that asses pass, horses pass, all beings equally pass without obstruction. But what is the supreme way spoken of here? Humans and angels are vertical, animals are horizontal, mountains are high, oceans are wide; east, west, south, north, the highway to the capital, the unique straight open road to the ultimate, the single path to the gate of nirvana taken by the blessed ones of the ten directions; there is no other way at all.

[HAKUIN] *It just rejects discrimination*—It is said that one shouldn’t consider this ephemeral body to be Buddha, but discriminations like “delusion,” “enlightenment,” and “sentient beings” are wrong. *As soon as there are words spoken*—whether “right” or “wrong.” How about before any words are spoken: on what basis is there *this discrimination* whereby dual states like grasping and rejecting, hating and loving, immediately arise?

[TENKEI] Even if you say “three pounds of flax” or “a piece of dry crap,” already this is discrimination. Discrimination means subjective conceptualizations of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, Buddhas and ordinary mortals, the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle. Therefore such discriminatory thinking implies not knowing the one straight supreme way.

[HAKUIN] *I do not remain within clarity*—He can surpass the caning and shouting of Tokusan and Rinzai, but “not preserving” already is falling into words. How so? When the golden dragon does not stay in the cold pond, the path of speech ends, the course of mind vanishes.

[TENKEI] Clarity refers to the realm of enlightenment. Old Joshu does not remain within delusion or enlightenment, ordinary or holy. *Do you preserve anything* is a teacher’s “fishing word.” He talks about not remaining in clarity as a place where there are no traces, speaking of it as if there actually were something there, showing a seam to hook a student’s gap. This is what is called a Zen master’s manipulation of emptiness.

[HAKUIN] *Since you do not remain within clarity*—If you abide in clarity, you need to preserve it, but if you do not remain in clarity, there’s nothing to preserve, is there? *Since you don’t know*—Here we can see this monk has no eyes. *Why do you say you do not remain in clarity*—Greedy gazing at the moon in the sky, he loses the pearl in the palm of his hand. *You’ve posed the question*—Isn’t that just like Joshu! “You’re a persistent fellow! When you’ve had enough fooling around, scram!” This is scary verbal Zen: “Setting his strategy in motion from within his tent, he assures victory a thousand miles away.”

[TENKEI] “You’ve posed your questions, now back off and stop.” No Zennist in the world could deal with this, because Joshu is not calculating.

VERSE

“The supreme way has no difficulty”—the words are straight, the speech is straight.

One has many kinds, two have no duality.

At the horizon, the sun rises and the moon sets;
Before the balustrade, the mountains deepen and the water
chills.

When consciousness ends in the skull, how can joy exist?

The dragon howl in the withered tree has not evaporated.

Difficult, difficult: discrimination or clarity—you see yourself.

[HAKUIN] *The supreme way has no difficulty*—Each time it is brought up it is new. Do the 5,000-odd scrolls of the canon contain talk like this? *The words are straight, the speech is straight*—These words are cold! Here *the supreme way without difficulty* shines even more brightly. The straightforward aim of *the supreme way without difficulty* is a solid iron wall, where even “*bodhi*” and “*nirvana*” are entrapment in definitions, which even the Zen masters throughout history could not bring up in its entirety, where there is no delusion or enlightenment, no ordinary or holy. *The words are straight, the speech is straight* refers to complete perfection, uniquely sublime. There is nothing else; it is nothing but pure content. *One has many kinds*—If you treat *one has many kinds, two has no duality* in a theoretical or speculative manner, you are nowhere near. If you actually realize *the supreme way has no difficulty*, then you will also realize this. *Two has no duality*—I’ll leave it at “everything is one.” The duality of nonduality has no duality. Now the verse is actually finished; these two lines convey both mystical and rational understanding.

[TENKEI] If you postulate oneness, yet humans stand upright while animals stand on all fours, willows are green while flowers are red, all throughout the world; so you cannot say it is all one. Then again, if you postulate duality, still there is only one ultimate reality, the blessed ones of the ten directions all take the road to the door of nirvana, and all things return to one; so you cannot say they are dualistic. In any case, the point is that we are talking about the great way that is beyond all mundane measurements.

[HAKUIN] *At the horizon, the sun rises and the moon sets*—Setcho’s extra work; if you see it as present actuality, you’ve missed it. The totality of the point of the words and the point of the speech is manifest. *Before the balustrade, the mountains deepen and the*

water chills—If you can absorb this, the root of birth and death will be cut off, yet there are flowers in spring and foliage in autumn, everything total reality.

[TENKEI] These two lines say that this is the supreme way, that too is the supreme way, everywhere is the path, everything is total reality. What obstruction could there be? Yet you can't reach it by swallowing the notion of nothingness.

[HAKUIN] *When consciousness ends in the skull, how can joy exist?*—It is imperative to work your way to this realm once; the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history all went to work from here.

[TENKEI] When your immediate state is like a dead skull, without a dot of joy-consciousness, you have reached the limit of what cultivated practice can achieve.

[HAKUIN] *The dragon howl in the withered tree has not evaporated*—The hollering in the Himalayas, and the teaching of Buddha's whole lifetime, were expounded from here, called out from the realm of the experience of the Great Death. At the point where you come to life from within death, you arrive at the time when "light and dark are paired."

[TENKEI] The supreme way beyond, which is only reached when you come back to life, is extremely difficult to attain, so it is *difficult, difficult*. It is exceptionally difficult, not easy to reach. Why is it hard? *Discrimination . . . clarity—you see yourself*. What is discrimination? What is clarity? Every individual must try to see. Ultimately how do you understand where you are? This supreme way can't be anywhere else.

[HAKUIN] This *difficult, difficult* is cold! As for *discrimination or clarity*, the true connoisseurs are rare. The choice is yours.

3

[SUN FACE BUDDHA, MOON FACE BUDDHA](#)

INTRODUCTION

One device, one state, one word, one phrase—the aim for the moment is for there to be a place to enter, but this is still gouging a wound in healthy flesh; it can become a nest or a den. When the great function manifests, it does not keep to rules—the aim for the moment is knowledge of the existence of the transcendental, which covers heaven and earth but cannot be grasped. When *thus* will do, and *not thus* will do too, this is too diffuse. When *thus* won't do, and *not thus* won't do either, this is too isolated. Without getting involved in this dualism, what is correct?

[HAKUIN] *The aim for the moment is for there to be a place to enter—Just exclude nonentry, that's enough; there's nothing else. A place to enter means an entryway for a learner. Gouging a wound in healthy flesh—To help enlighten someone is ultimately to gouge a wound in healthy flesh, like embroidering fine silk. It can become a nest or a den—for students, that is, who are like foxes going into their dens. When the great function manifests—that is, the great function of a master Zen teacher. It does not keep to rules—People who have attained the transcendental are exceptional. The transcendental is the bit transmitted by the Buddhas and Zen masters. Covers heaven and earth—Yet there are none who truly realize it even when it is poured on their heads. Cannot be grasped—The transcendental cannot be grasped by people. Thus will do—When you attain the transcendental, you can use it freely; you can dismantle, and you can also construct. Too diffuse—Real students are as careful and attentive as if they were carrying an open jar of oil so as to prevent any from spilling, like pounding rice cakes in a crystal jar. Thus won't do—This is dismantling; when keeping*

precepts, fasting, scripture reading, and ritual prostrations are all swept away, then what? *Too isolated*—Killing Buddhas, slaying Zen masters; this is not within reach. *Without getting involved in . . . dualism*—beyond the aforementioned two alternatives.

[TENKEI] *One device, one state* refers to the constructive approach of dialogue between teacher and student, meaning activity intended to show a learner a way of entry. However, from the perspective of the fundamental way, this is gouging a wound in healthy flesh, leading into a badger's den. *When the great function manifests* refers to the dismantling approach; the transcendental envelops the universe, without any gaps, yet cannot be grasped, for it is too lofty. *Thus will do*—This refers to the aforementioned constructive approach, which takes in both favorable and adverse circumstances. *Too diffuse* means too imperceptible. *Thus won't do*—This refers to the aforementioned dismantling approach, wherein both the favorable and the adverse are swept away. This is, however, *too isolated*, meaning that it is too strict. *Without getting involved*—The aforementioned behaviors all fall into dualism; how can you avoid falling into this dualism?

EXAMPLE

Great master Ba was unwell. The superintendent of the temple asked, "How is your health these days?"

The great master said, "Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha."

[HAKUIN] There'll be a lot of fatalities if people take a view of emptiness to be the Sun Face Buddha. When I asked my teacher Shojū Rojin about this example, he told me to see through the next example. There's a very good reason for this.

[TENKEI] *Sun Face*—Long or short? What realm is this? It is not to be understood as a carving, a sculpture, or an icon. Joshu called it an oak tree, Ummon called it a piece of dry crap. In the *Scripture of Buddha Names* it says that Sun Face Buddha lives for eighteen hundred years, while Moon Face Buddha enters extinction after a day and a night. But what about your own Sun Face Buddha, Moon

Face Buddha? Is it something long or something short? How do you understand it? Set your eyes on the absolutely inextricable within yourself.

VERSE

Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha;
Who were the ancient emperors?
For twenty years I have suffered;
How many times have I gone down for you into the blue
dragon's cave!
This distress is worth reporting;
Clear-eyed Zennists should not slight it.

[HAKUIN] *Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha*—Even the Buddhas of all times and the gods in the heavens tip their hats; it is truly incommunicable. *Who were the ancient emperors?* The kingdoms of Chin and Chu lose their wealth. This is the *crème* of the *Blue Cliff Record*, but most people misconstrue it. The message of great master Ummon is herein; at this point Setcho's subtle point is fully versified.

[TENKEI] The point is that once one has broken through one's own ignorance and sees from the original perspective of Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha, who were the ancient emperors but a bunch of vagabonds? It wasn't easy for Setcho to be able to say this; it took him *twenty years of suffering*.

[HAKUIN] *Twenty years*—Where did this line about the ancient emperors come from? Beads of sweat from struggling. *This distress is worth reporting*—Who would you tell of the one great matter worth reporting? There is no one to tell. *Clear-eyed Zennists*—Since it took twenty years of struggle, don't casually interpret it in a crude and cursory manner.

[TENKEI] Setcho labored and struggled so much for the sake of clarifying his own Sun Face Buddha, like stealing a jewel from under the jaws of a jet black dragon, mindless of mortal danger. Because he entered successfully into the spiritual lairs of terribly incisive Zen

masters, enduring so much hardship, he was able to call even the sage emperors of old into question. So clear-eyed Zennists should not regard it lightly, but pay close attention. He seems to suggest there is something to tell, and yet he does not say it: this is the gap that a teacher leaves.

4

BUNDLE AND ALL

INTRODUCTION

Under the blue sky, in the bright sunlight, you don't have to point out the east or define the west anymore; but under the conditions of a particular time, it is still necessary to give medicine according to the illness. But tell me, is it better to let go or to hold still?

[HAKUIN] *Under the blue sky, in the bright sunlight*—Referring to Tokusan, this is the homeland of the fundamental; Tokusan spewed forth from here, effacing everything, right in the middle of the absolute state illuminating everything from the heaven of neither perception nor nonperception down to the bottom of hell. *Point out the east or define the west*—There's no more need to make a fuss about enlightenment or meditation, so don't go around advertising them all over the place.

[TENKEI] This is the transcendental fundamental ground, the message of Zen; when you get here, why should you *point out the east or define the west*? This covertly applies to Tokusan.

[HAKUIN] *Under the conditions of a particular time*—Even so, when the time is right (this applies to Isan) the fundamental is not enough, so both subject and object are retained. *Give medicine according to the illness*—“Read scriptures,” “Meditate,” and so on; if one does not know how to take the pulse of the ailing, one cannot be a teacher. Springing out into the relative state, one compounds medicines.

[TENKEI] Remedies are given in accordance with the ailments of learners. What does that mean? Those whose views are too high are lowered, those who are too low are raised. Adjustments are made according to what is appropriate; this is how mature adepts prescribe remedies.

[HAKUIN] *Is it better to let go or to hold still?* Causal conditions of a particular time, blue sky and bright sun; rubble radiates light, the universe loses its color.

[TENKEI] When teacher and student meet, is acceptance to be given or withheld?

EXAMPLE

Tokusan went to Isan. Carrying his bundle with him into the teaching hall, he crossed back and forth east to west and west to east. Looking around, he said, “Nothing, nothing,” and immediately went out. *Setcho added the comment, “Exposed!”*

When Tokusan reached the monastery gate, he said, “Still, it won’t do to be hasty.” So he went back to meet with Isan properly. As Isan sat there, Tokusan held up his sitting mat and said, “Teacher . . .” Isan reached for his fly whisk. Tokusan immediately shouted and strode out brusquely. *Setcho added the comment, “Exposed!”* Tokusan turned his back on the teaching hall, put on his straw sandals, and left at once.

That evening Isan asked the assembly leader, “Where is the newcomer who was here earlier?”

The assembly leader said, “At that time he turned his back on the teaching hall, put on his sandals, and went away.”

Isan said, “Hereafter this lad will build a grass hut on the summit of a solitary peak and scold Buddhas and revile Zen masters.” *Setcho added the comment, “He adds frost on top of snow.”*

[HAKUIN] *Tokusan went to Isan—*He went all over probing five-flavor Zen. *Carrying his bundle with him—*He’ll even walk around in the bellies of the Buddhas of all times with those dirty shoes on; as far as Tokusan is concerned, even Shakyamuni and Maitreya are tailwinds. *Crossed back and forth—*Too slick! What a nerve! *With “Nothing, nothing,” he went out—*He had brought the cosmic “personal arrival at Dragon Pond.” *“Exposed!”* This is the great work of the Ummon school of Zen. It is not an easy thing to say; he

exposes Tokusan's ability. There is something important in this: twenty years of work after enlightenment.

[TENKEI] Has he exposed Tokusan, or has he exposed Isan? How do *you* do the exposing? This is called the hidden ploy of a Zen teacher. Since it is easier to distinguish dragons from snakes than it is to fool a Zennist, therefore a Zennist with a device is to be seen through before its deployment. Setcho's exposure is such that even if a thousand Buddhas showed up at once he would thoroughly expose them all. This is Setcho's Zen eye.

[HAKUIN] *When Tokusan got to the monastery gate, he said, "Still, it won't do to be hasty."* He set out to meet Isan; it would be regrettable to leave without having thoroughly discussed the conditions of the mountains and clouds, the ocean and the moon; that would be somehow unsatisfying. *He held up his sitting mat and said—*This refers to when Tokusan was about to bow.

[TENKEI] Everywhere they say, "Is it right to bow or not to bow?" This sort of interpretation is false.

[HAKUIN] *Isan reached for his fly whisk—*Just like a great general, he is not flustered and doesn't show the tip of his blade. The I-Gyo school of Zen was taught from here: the Way is in the blink of an eye. *Tokusan . . . shouted and left.* He won't let himself get caught. This is very skillful; there is something important here. "*Exposed!*" Even though Tokusan shouted, he's been seen through. *He turned his back on the teaching hall . . . and left—*He took off like the whole universe was the size of a grapefruit. *Where is the newcomer who was just here—*He knows Tokusan left. He has no use for the newcomer; he's watching the assembly leader. *Hereafter this lad will build a grass hut on the summit of a solitary peak—*He comes on unusually strong, so he still has a ways to go yet . . . There is something scary about the I-Gyo school of Zen. This saying is the eye of this koan. It is on account of this saying that Setcho said, "Exposed." I wouldn't look at it as Isan giving Tokusan a prediction; this is what is called leaving a word or half a phrase with which to establish Buddhism. *He will scold Buddhas and revile Zen masters.* Swallowing the Buddhas of the universe, raising clouds and showering rain, he will be invincible.

VERSE

Once exposed, twice exposed;
Adding frost to snow, there's been a dangerous fall.
The general of the flying cavalry enters the enemy camp; How
many could regain their safety?
Hurrying past, he is not let go;
Atop a solitary peak, he sits in the weeds. Tsk!

[HAKUIN] *A dangerous fall*—Tokusan skillfully executed a dangerous maneuver, acting independently. *A dangerous fall* means becoming to tally dangerous. *A dangerous fall* is the eye of the *Blue Cliff Record*. Isan, Tokusan, and Setcho have all together fallen into this danger. There is a lot of meaning in the word “fall.” Sozan’s three falls are “wearing fur and horns,” which is called “falling into types;” “not cutting off sound and form,” which is called “following falling;” and “not accepting food,” which is called the “falling of nobility.”

[TENKEI] This line, *a dangerous fall*, is there because there are many who “fall at the peak” of transcendence and become deluded by enlightenment. To begin with, Tokusan originally “fell” from a mile-high precipice, so his action was always extremely aloof.

[HAKUIN] *The general of the flying cavalry enters the enemy camp*—This refers to Tokusan’s saying, “Nothing, nothing” and then going back for a meeting so as not to be hasty. Tokusan cut in deeply. *How many could regain their safety?* When Tokusan strode out as Isan reached for his whisk, this was like a cavalry general getting out of the enemy’s camp.

[TENKEI] *Hurrying past, he is not let go*—Isan was also an experienced general, so he did not let him go but captured him without effort. How did he trap him?

[HAKUIN] *On the summit of a solitary peak*—In the realm where “there is not an inch of grass for ten thousand miles,” the summit is right where “the grass is deep.” Setcho calls the realm where there is not an inch of grass *sitting in the weeds*. And Tokusan did as Isan predicted.

[TENKEI] If potential does not leave a fixed position, it will fall into an ocean of poison. This is also called the stagnant water of transcendence. The *summit of a solitary peak* is the place where “there is not an inch of grass,” so why does Setcho say *in the weeds*? Here is the meaning of Sekiso’s saying, “Even without going out the door, the weeds are everywhere.” This is where he is seated in the weeds; this is the function of *not letting go*.

[HAKUIN] *Tsk!* Fool! There is also significance in this.

[TENKEI] Oh, poor Tokusan; too bad his nest in the realm of enlightenment still remains!

5

A GRAIN OF RICE

INTRODUCTION

Whoever would uphold the teaching of Zen must be exceptionally spiritual, with the ability to kill people without blinking an eye; only thus can one make Buddhas on the spot. This is why illumination and action are simultaneous, closing and opening are equally taught, principle and phenomena are not separate, the temporary and the true are carried out in parallel. The primary is set aside to establish secondary doctrinal approaches, for if all complications were immediately cut off, it would be impossible for beginners to focus. Yesterday it was so, but it was unavoidable; today too it is so, and fault fills the sky. Someone with clear eyes cannot be fooled one bit. Otherwise, lying in the mouth of a tiger is unavoidably fatal.

[HAKUIN] The method of opening up the little secret that brings ordinary mortals to the state of sublime awakening involves *killing without blinking an eye*. To do this, you have to remove the covers from your eyes. An example of this is a poem National Teacher Hatto used to recite to people: “Even the roots of the new grasses are not firm; marry and sleep with your wife, man, before the moon has set.”

[TENKEI] Generally speaking, to uphold the Zen teaching of the source of the buddha-mind requires a very exceptional expert, someone who, on becoming a teacher, has the guts of a powerful man who can *kill people without blinking an eye*, enabling students to attain Buddhahood on the spot.

[HAKUIN] *Illumination and action are simultaneous*—In the activity of exceptionally spiritual people there is no gap between enlightened perception and sensitive application; they operate simultaneously. *Closing and opening are equally taught*—Holding still and letting go are both mastered. *Principle and phenomena are not separate*—

Mind empty, there are no forms; all is swept clear. *Temporary and true are carried out in parallel*—Bring up the temporary, and there is the true; bring up the true, and there is the temporary; they work in parallel.

[TENKEI] These refer to methods of dealing with learners.

[HAKUIN] *The primary is set aside*—to give beginners a hand. *To establish secondary doctrinal approaches*—They are established without any basis. Examples are retreats, lectures, and koans. *If all complications are cut off*—The willows are green, the flowers are red. *Impossible to focus*—no place to grab hold.

[TENKEI] In the realm of Zen transcendence, there is nothing to explain under the bright sun in the blue sky, but expedients are set up, descending into secondary doctrinal approaches, when it is unavoidable. This is like an expert at chess showing a weaker opponent his moves one by one, to let him survive. When all is voided and nothing is admitted, beginners cannot focus on this.

EXAMPLE

Seppo said to a group, “Pick up the whole world in your fingers, and it’s as big as a grain of rice. Toss it in front of you; if you’re in the dark, not understanding, beat the drum to muster everyone to look.”

[HAKUIN] This is a choice selection from the record of Seppo’s sayings. Seppo was beyond even Tokusan, and this saying was enough to fluster even his great disciples like Hofuku, Chokey, and Ummon. The level of Seppo’s school was exceptional.

[TENKEI] Pay attention to what skill is used to pick up the world. When right and wrong, gain and loss, and all discriminatory thinking is stopped, then the whole universe is not even big enough to pick up with three fingers; it’s the size of a grain of rice. To assess this using emotional consciousness is to take a small view, like looking at something inside a tea bag.

[HAKUIN] *Toss it in front of you*—Toss what? *Muster everyone to look*—Get together as if you were looking for a lost child.

[TENKEI] Get together and inquire, he says, without tipping his hand, as if there were actually something there. This koan is often misinterpreted to represent the merging of the great and the small, or the one and the many. That is very wrong.

VERSE

Ox head vanishes, horse head comes back;
In the mirror of Zen, no dust at all.
He beats the drum to have you look, but you don't see;
When spring arrives, for whom do the flowers bloom?

[HAKUIN] Some say *Ox head vanishes, horse head comes back* is like the line “mind operates following myriad objects,” while the line *no dust in the mirror of Zen* is like the line “the place of operation is truly recondite.” Others say “It is all nothing but restrictive explanation.”

[TENKEI] Having been told by Seppo that they should muster everyone to look if they do not understand, if all the seekers in the world would really sweat over the effort to look, it might appear like an ox head, or like a horse head, but the real point would be lost in these temporary visions, and so the great meaning of the koan would be lost. Seppo and Setcho say this with one voice: as long as learners cannot see in a flash, they must be sure not to glance aside.

[HAKUIN] *In the mirror of Zen, no dust at all.* It is imperative to see this saying clearly. The mirror of Zen is perfectly clear, having been wiped totally clean. *You don't see*—You don't see because it's too clear! As ever, no one penetrates. *For whom do the flowers bloom in spring*—Don't say “this too is the matter at hand,” or something like that! The fields and mountains are all abloom, blossoming as if to inspire folk songs, blossoming as if to show people.

[TENKEI] The point is that everyone should see with open eyes. The words “bloom for whom” constitute the eye of this whole verse.

6

A GOOD DAY

EXAMPLE

Ummon said, “I don’t ask you about before the fifteenth day; try to make a statement about after the fifteenth day.”

He himself replied, “Every day is a good day.”

[HAKUIN] This saying is cold; it has no explanation. It is hard to penetrate, hard to understand.

[TENKEI] Before the fifteenth of the month, there is the bright sun in the blue sky, with nothing to ask and nothing to say; after the fifteenth, too, there is also the bright sun in the blue sky, with nothing to ask and nothing to say. Even so, if that were all there is to it, our heritage would end, the way of Zen would be destroyed; this is what is meant by the expressions “the stagnant water of transcendence,” “keeping to the green of the odd grasses on a cold cliff,” “sitting fixedly in the white clouds, so that the source is not subtle.” When he therefore comes down from that fundamental position to make a statement, then both before and after the fifteenth of the month there is something to ask and something to say. Explanations for beginners are unlimited; that is why Ummon utters this saying today. Ultimately, what is not being asked? What statement are we supposed to come up with? Look at it this way, and the underlying intent of the koan is clear without anything’s being said. This is like a woman calling her maid for no reason, except to let her husband hear her voice—it is merely the gap a Zen teacher sets up to help people. Here not even the entire Buddhist canon could explain: *before the fifteenth day* cuts off a thousand differences and myriad distinctions; *after the fifteenth day* also cuts off a thousand differences and myriad distinctions. Even if a thousand Buddhas showed up here, they still wouldn’t be able to see. *Every day*—Today

is a fine day, yesterday the fog cleared and it was also a fine day;
how is it for you?

VERSE

Throwing away one, he picks up seven:
Above, below, in the four directions, none can match.
Placidly walking along, he treads down the sound of the flowing
stream;
His relaxed gaze descries the tracks of flying birds.
Grasses grow thick, mists overhang;
'Round Subhuti's cliff, the flowers make a mess.
Voidness is lamentable. Don't make a move.
If you move, you get thirty blows.

[HAKUIN] *Throwing away one*—If you can see Ummon's saying, you should get this. A needle comes out wherever it's touched. If you think this refers to the eighth consciousness, you're greatly mistaken. *I don't ask you about before the fifteenth day, . . . Every day is a good day.* This is truly hard to penetrate, hard to unlock. This is the kind of technique by which Ummon used to turn out enlightened people; having thoroughly absorbed that, Setcho's versification *throwing away one* is like turning over a bolt of brocade to show how the back is also splendidly flowery.

[TENKEI] This line refers to *I don't ask you about before the fifteenth day*, meaning getting rid of everything so that even one does not stand, not holding on to anything, not grasping or dwelling. *He picks up seven*—When picking up *try to make a statement about after the fifteenth day* there is total freedom, nothing to be abandoned at all, including the infinite millions of plants and trees, even shards and pebbles. The point to focus on, ultimately, is what *one* this is that is thrown away, and what *seven* this is that is brought up. In any case, even “getting rid,” there is nothing missing; and even “picking up,” there is nothing extra. The state of someone who has actually gotten to be this way is *unmatched above, below, and in the four directions.*

[HAKUIN] *Above, below, in the four directions, none can match.* This praises Ummon's saying, as well as the preceding line, unconsciously adding a footnote. This saying is like an enormous sword against the sky; therefore it can cut through people's emotional interpretations and break up the clichés people take refuge in. Even the mirror of wisdom loses its light; the path of verbal expression ends.

[TENKEI] This is also referred to by the saying "In the heavens above and on the earth below, I alone am the sole honored one." These first two lines of the verse epitomize the great meaning of the koan: the whole scene, in all its myriad forms, the grasses and trees, the humans and beasts, clearly and completely reveal your own personal style, in a unique individual perspective. When you have actually attained to this, you attain "absorption in frolic" in this heap of sound and form.

[HAKUIN] *Grasses grow thick . . . placidly walking along . . . relaxed gaze*—From the point of view of *throwing away one*, even this is a mess of weeds inside the cave of knowledge of essential equality.

[TENKEI] The expressions "treading down" and "describing" are Setcho's literary play. When mention is made of frolicking in the midst of sound and form, people might take it to be nothing more than unconcerned equanimity, so the poet says *the grasses grow thick*, all at once covering everything, obliterating all tracks and traces, so you can't tell where anyone is, overturning the previous two lines. Then you may think that the realm of Subhuti, who attained absorption in meditation concentration, absorption in voidness, is therefore correct, but it's not. Why? When Setcho says that the shower of celestial flowers and quaking of the earth are messy, you might think that the utterly formless body of empty space is right, but that is not so either. Listen: Setcho says *Voidness is lamentable*, and so he rejects it; but if you think he means everything is wrong and nothing can be known, yet he says *Don't make a move*—Don't sleep with your eyes open under the bright sun in the clear sky, since you should be able to see if you look.

[HAKUIN] *Don't make a move. If you move, you get thirty blows.* You'd have to move if someone told you this! This saying is like when a naughty child keeps crying, so in exasperation the mother

says, “Be sure to keep crying all day. If you stop crying for even a little while, I won’t give you anything to eat; I’ll chase you out of the house, and make you real uncomfortable!” If you want to know the underlying meaning of Setcho’s *thirty blows*, then ask this child. Ha, ha!

7

[ASKING ABOUT BUDDHA](#)

INTRODUCTION

The unvoiced statement is not transmitted, even by the sages; if you have never seen it personally, it's as if worlds away. Even if you discern it before it is voiced and cut off the tongues of everyone on earth, you are still not naturally quick. That is why it is said, "Even the sky cannot cover it, even the earth cannot support it, even space cannot contain it, even the sun and moon cannot illuminate it." When you are independently worthy of honor where there is no Buddha, only then are you getting somewhere; if not, then penetrate through on the tip of a hair to release great illumination and be free and autonomous in all things—then whatever comes to hand is It. But tell me, what do you attain to be so extraordinary? Does everyone understand? No one recognizes the sweating horses of the past; they only want to emphasize the achievement crowning the age. Setting aside the matter of the present for the moment, what about Setcho's koan?

[HAKUIN] *Independently worthy of honor where there is no Buddha*—"In the heavens above and on earth below, I alone am the sole honored one": this is also called Mighty Vairochana, the Great Sun Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, and the Buddha of Inconceivable Light.

[TENKEI] If you know yourself to be the independent honored one, then for the first time you attain a little realization.

[HAKUIN] *No one recognizes the sweating horses of the past*—The achievements of the sweating horses must come to the notice of the commanding general, lest they be for naught. *Setting aside the matter of the present*—The pillars are vertical, the door sill is horizontal.

EXAMPLE

E-cho asked Hogen, “E-cho asks the teacher, What is Buddha?”
Hogen said, “You are E-cho.”

[HAKUIN] *E-cho asks the teacher*—E-cho comes with a hidden device; the answer is in the question. *You are E-cho*. Face-to-face, he doesn’t conceal it: “You are E-cho”; views of Buddha and views of Dharma have been atomized. This is why they say that in Hogen’s school the slightest slip is fatal.

[TENKEI] Set your sights high! “You are you! Don’t be spun around by the word ‘Buddha’!” Look outside the words! There is no calculation, no arrangement.

VERSE

In the river country the spring wind hasn’t stirred;
Deep in the flowers, partridges are calling.
When the waves at the triple floodgate are high, fish become
dragons,
Yet fools still scoop evening pond water.

[HAKUIN] *In the river country the spring wind hasn’t stirred*—The scene of the partridges calling even in the midst of a total burial in a landslide is such that if you can see the first two lines of this verse you can see the koan itself.

[TENKEI] If you have eyes, look! If you have ears, listen! Is there any mystic principle of Buddhism herein? It’s no more than “you are you.” This is *the statement* of the fundamental; there is no seam or gap. It is a statement in which “the words are straight to the point, the speech is straight to the point.”

[HAKUIN] *Fish become dragons*—They’ve already become dragons.

[TENKEI] This refers to the state of E-cho, who has experientially realized this “statement of the fundamental.” If people still try to

assess this “statement” conceptually and emotionally, *fools still scoop evening pond water.*

[HAKUIN] Don't just stand there watching; get going!

8

EYEBROWS

INTRODUCTION

If you understand, you can make use of it on the road, like a dragon finding water, like a tiger in the mountains. If you don't understand, then conventional truth prevails, like a ram getting stuck in a fence, like standing by a stump waiting for a rabbit. Sometimes a statement is like a lion crouching on the ground; sometimes a statement is like a diamond sword. Sometimes a statement silences everyone; sometimes a statement goes along with the waves.

If you make use of it on the road, when you meet a connoisseur you distinguish what is appropriate to the occasion; discerning the acceptable from the faulty, you witness enlightenment together. If, however, conventional truth prevails, with a single eye you cut off the ten directions and become inaccessible. That is why it is said that when the great function appears it does not keep to a fixed rule; sometimes a blade of grass is turned into the beatified body of Buddha, sometimes the beatified body of Buddha is turned into a blade of grass. But tell me, what principle does this depend upon?

[HAKUIN] *If you understand*—the essence of Zen, that is. *You can make use of it on the road*—Seeking higher enlightenment while teaching those of lesser understanding constitutes provisions for the road all the way until the teaching is completely fulfilled. Even saying this is not just for the sake of others; when it comes to the “returning within departure” to educate learners, it is like being a dragon in water, a tiger in the mountains. *Standing by a stump waiting for a rabbit*—It's like imagining radiant light will emerge if you keep standing by the old stump of “forms are not forms.” *Like a lion crouching on the ground*—You can't get near or it'll bite: absolutely merciless! *Like a diamond sword*—This refers to the present koan;

whatever touches it is cut in two. *When you meet a connoisseur*—like the four great elders in the koan. *Discerning the acceptable from the faulty*—good and bad, right and wrong. *If . . . conventional truth prevails*—This refers to students, if they are so foolish as to stop at awakening and make this their bias. *With a single eye*—the teacher seeing with certainty. *Cut off the ten directions*—not giving out a single drop. *Become inaccessible*—dealing with others from a point of inaccessibility. *Does not keep to a fixed rule*—When you think it's the present, it's the beyond; when you think it's Buddhahood, it's mania. *What principle does this depend upon?* Where does this freedom come from? Sweeping away, holding steady.

EXAMPLE

At the end of a summer retreat, Suigan said to the group, "I've been speaking for you brethren all summer; look—are my eyebrows still there?"

Hofuku said, "A man who commits robbery has cowardice in his heart."

Chokey said, "Grown!"

Ummon said, "Barrier."

[HAKUIN] *Look—are my eyebrows still there?* Asking if his eyebrows have fallen out, he hangs out a sheep head but sells dog meat.

[TENKEI] Isn't that annoying? What if I asked you if my nose is on; what would you say? Is there anyone who could say he doesn't know whether or not his nose or his eyebrows are there? This much is obvious, but in this case when he asks whether his eyebrows are still there, you lose the whole intent of the koan when you rationalize it this way or that in the context of Buddhist doctrine. This is something you cannot know until you are free of the stink of religion and have transcended convention. Why? The statement that the entire Buddhist canon cannot fully explain is a transcendental device surpassing the caning of Tokusan and the shouting of Rinzai.

[HAKUIN] *A man who commits robbery has cowardice in his heart.* Hofuku's ability is such that even Tokusan and Rinzai fall back three

thousand miles.

[TENKEI] Hofuku cuts off Suigan's footsteps. Those who know each other are cool. *Chokei said, "Grown."* Grown where? In front of your noses? *Ummon said, "Barrier."* This barrier is not one that can be crossed when the cock crows and the dogs bark; even the thousand Buddhas and ten thousand Zen masters cannot get through it. It is a silver mountain, an iron wall.

VERSE

Suigan's instruction has never had a reply.
The word "barrier" answers back.
Lose money and suffer punishment.
Decrepit old Hofuku—censure or praise do not apply.
Talkative Suigan is clearly a robber.
A white jade without flaw;
Who can distinguish true from false?
Chokei knows—the eyebrows have grown.

[TENKEI] *Suigan*—There has never been anyone who could respond accurately to the line *Are my eyebrows still there?* Even the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history cannot respond to this line. Even the caning of Tokusan and the shouting of Rinzai cannot reach it. Only Ummon's *Barrier* is the most appropriate, so *the word "barrier" answers back. Lose money—Who loses money?* From Setcho's point of view, even Ummon's saying *Barrier* already stank of "Buddhism." Whenever you try to give an explanation for what fundamentally cannot be explained in words, it is all *losing money and suffering punishment*. "Losing money" for the sake of students, they fill the skies with their crimes of Dharma slander, so Suigan, Hofuku, Chokei, and indeed even the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history too all *lose money, suffer punishment. Decrepit old Hofuku*, rundown but still pretentious, said *A man who commits robbery has cowardice in his heart*, but does this censure or praise Suigan? Does this censure or praise oneself? Or does this censure or praise Chokei? Does it censure or praise

Ummon? Since no Zennist can actually see, *censure or praise do not apply*. Talkative Suigan, saying something or other loquaciously, *is clearly a robber*, but what has he stolen? Look and see! This line, too, is like a flawless gem, but since nobody discerns it and discovers it, *who can distinguish true from false?* This having been said, *Chokei knows*—He knows the line, so *the eyebrows have grown*. Have they grown on your nose? Have they grown in the hollow of your throat? Or have they grown right where you stand? The idea is to see the real point.

9

JOSHU'S FOUR GATES

INTRODUCTION

When a clear mirror is set up, the beautiful and the ugly are spontaneously distinguished. With a sharp sword in hand, killing and giving life depend on the time. When a native goes, a foreigner comes; when a foreigner comes, a native goes. Life is found within death, death is found within life. Now tell me, when you get to this point, then what? Without the eye to penetrate barriers and a place to turn yourself around, here you will be obviously helpless. Now tell me, what is the eye to penetrate barriers? What is a place to turn yourself around?

[HAKUIN] *When a clear mirror is set up*—This means viewing as clearly as a clean crystal mirror reflects.

[TENKEI] A teacher with clear eyes distinguishes good and bad in students like the spontaneous distinction of a clear mirror.

[HAKUIN] *Killing and giving life depend on the time.* As far as killing goes, it's like "there's no me here, and no you there."

[TENKEI] As if wielding a razor-sharp sword, an enlightened teacher can kill or give life freely and independently according to the needs of the time.

[HAKUIN] *When a native goes, a foreigner comes*—Lively and active without dwelling on anything, the clear mirror lets demons come and lets Buddhas come, omitting none.

[TENKEI] Both teacher and student are brought up together; the one who goes and comes is the student, the one who causes the going and coming is the teacher. *Life is found within death, death is found within life* has the same meaning.

[HAKUIN] *Without the eye to penetrate barriers*—If your vision does not penetrate freely, there are things in front of your eyes.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “What is Joshu?”

Joshu said, “East Gate, West Gate, South Gate, North Gate.”

[HAKUIN] *What is Joshu?* This is a question testing the host, holding up “to liken it to a thing would miss the mark” to pose a question. “Be it a mountain, be it a river, whatever it is, try to say!” *Joshu said, “East Gate, West Gate—”* He threw the monk clear out of the ring! This old guy is cold!

[TENKEI] Even if you say the gates are open in the four quarters and the eight directions, with no barrier at all, so “horses can pass through and oxen can pass through too,” concealing nothing, this may be like the proverbial blind guide who cannot see where he’s walking. But humans stand upright, animals stand horizontally: whoever wants to go through the four gates of *just so*, go on through!

VERSE

The devices presented in the words come directly on.
The adamantine eye is totally free of dust.
East, West, South, North, the gates face each other;
An endless round of hammer blows could not smash them open.

[HAKUIN] *The devices presented in the words—*This monk came with a sword between his eyes and his nose.

[TENKEI] Teacher and student both have their devices, so Joshu and the monk are both mentioned in this one line. The second line refers to Joshu’s state, wherein not even a particle can exist. It is like a clear mirror on its stand.

[HAKUIN] *The adamantine eye—*On the day you see essential nature, you open this eye. Joshu’s eye illuminates the four quarters, without shadow or cloud.

[TENKEI] *East, West—*How can you get through? Go through these gates!

[HAKUIN] He hurls the adamantine eye, hard as a diamond, but the four quarters and eight directions are as if locked, making it impossible to penetrate. This is extremely subtle. Shall we call it a detail of the Ummon school, or shall we call it Setcho's subtle point?

[TENKEI] *An endless round*—Even the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, and the Zennists of the whole world, can never open them, no matter how much they strike them and pound on them.

[HAKUIN] The hammer itself is none other than the adamantine eye, so pounding with it won't open.

10

THIEVING PHONY

INTRODUCTION

Yes, yes; no, no—in disputation, each occupies a pivotal position. That is why it is said, “If you turn upward, even the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Maitreya, the bodhisattvas Manjushri and Samantabhadra, the thousand saints and myriad sages, and all the Zen masters in the world gasp and fall silent. If you turn downward, then even worms, maggots, and all that crawls, every living being, each radiates a great light and every one stands tall like a mile-high wall.” Suppose you neither turn upward nor downward; how do you deal? If there is a principle, go by the principle; if there is no principle, go by example.

[TENKEI] Yes, yes—Here, if ordinary mortals and sages, or teachers and students, engage in a dispute about the teaching, *every one stands tall like a mile-high wall*, acting on seeing the opportunity, according to the needs of the time, working flexibly. *If you turn upward*—This means action so strict that there is no way to get one’s teeth into it, and nothing can be said. *If you turn downward*—This means causing even bugs, dirt, wood, and rubble to radiate great light, making each stand tall like a mile-high wall. One gets them to radiate great light directly, for example, as in “if purity is fundamental, how does it suddenly create” and “the god of fire comes looking for fire!”

[HAKUIN] Everyone is Amida Buddha! Everyone is a living Buddha, leaping lively!

[TENKEI] *If there is a principle*—If it is explained in the canon, then follow that; otherwise, better act according to an example. Luckily Bokushu’s behavior ably enacts the state where one turns neither upward nor downward, so take a look!

EXAMPLE

Bokushu asked a monk, “Where have you just come from?”

The monk shouted.

Bokushu said, “I’ve been shouted at by you.”

The monk shouted again.

Bokushu said, “After three or four shouts, then what?”

The monk said nothing.

Bokushu hit him, saying, “You thieving phony!”

[HAKUIN] *After three or four shouts*—He gradually brought him to a pitfall; an expert commander is unique.

[TENKEI] *You thieving phony!* He shamed him, calling him an outsider with no guts but a high opinion of himself.

VERSE

Two shouts and a third shout;
Adepts are expert at strategic change.
If you call that riding the tiger’s head,
Both would be blind.
Who is blind?
I bring it out for all to see.

[HAKUIN] *Two shouts and a third shout*—Though this monk has no choice but to act, he remains silent; what about that? There is flavor in this silence, and Setcho appreciates it.

[TENKEI] The *two shouts* refers to the monk shouting twice; the *third shout* refers to Bokushu’s saying, *After three or four shouts, then what?* Bringing these up together, the poet has brought up the entire koan in this one line.

[HAKUIN] *Adepts are expert at strategic change.* One might change to “the woman burning the hermitage,” or to “Rinzai breaking summer retreat,” and yet one would not attain to this *saying nothing*. This monk is scary!

[TENKEI] The monk wrapped up tight, but then it is, after all, wrapping up where it's best to wrap up that characterizes a Zennist—he's no ordinary man, so the poet says, *Adepts are expert at strategic change*.

[HAKUIN] *If you call that riding the tiger's head*—No matter how far you may press with shouts, it's no use.

[TENKEI] According to Engo, if you think of this monk's action as successfully riding the tiger's head, both teacher and student in conversation are blind. In my opinion, if Bokushu thought of this monk's action as successfully riding the tiger's head, then Bokushu and this monk would both be blind.

[HAKUIN] *Who is blind?* A marvelous composition! Ha, ha! Setcho's skill from here on cannot be explained. His words transcend the previous considerations.

[TENKEI] From here on is a wave of Setcho's river of Zen. Up until now, saying that both would be blind, Setcho has feigned ignorance to pose a question to everyone. Everyone has a pair of eyes under his eyebrows; Shakyamuni Buddha had a pair, Bodhidharma had a pair too, no different. So who is blind? Everyone can see when they open their eyes—nothing is obscure, so *I bring it out for all to see*. People, if you have eyes, see! Don't miss it!

11

GOBBLERS OF DREGS

INTRODUCTION

The great capacity of Buddhas and Zen masters is entirely under his control; the lifeline of humanity and divinity is totally subject to his direction. With a casual statement, even a single word, he startles the crowd and stirs the masses; with a single device, even a single object, he smashes chains and knocks off fetters. Meeting transcendental potential, he brings up transcendental matters. Now tell me, who has ever been like this?

[HAKUIN] *The great capacity of Buddhas and Zen masters*—This is even beyond the power of Buddhas and the power of Zen masters. The great capacity and great function of Buddhas and Zen masters comes after passing through the brambles, after having attained the claws and fangs of the cave of Zen.

EXAMPLE

Obaku said to a crowd, “You are all gobblers of dregs. If you go on like this, where will you have Today? Do you know that there are no Zen teachers in all of China?”

Then a monk came forward and said, “Then what about those who order followers and lead communities all over the place?”

Obaku said, “I don’t say there’s no Zen, just that there are no teachers.”

[HAKUIN] This statement of Obaku’s is poison in the water; who-ever drinks it dies. I misunderstood this for twenty years; don’t take it lightly.

[TENKEI] *Gobblers of dregs*—Everywhere they say that people who consume writings and sayings are gobblers of dregs, but Daie explained that if writings were dregs, then “the oak tree in the yard” and “three pounds of flax” would also be dregs. So it cannot be seen as limited to writings and sayings. From the perspective of the Zen eye, even practice is gobbling dregs, even travel for study is gobbling dregs, even talk about doing meditation or reading scripture is all involvement in writings and sayings. Therefore even to speak of enlightenment and delusion, views of Buddha or views of Dharma, is all gobbling dregs.

[HAKUIN] *Where will you have Today*—Where do you think you’ll find this place?

[TENKEI] *Today* means the time when the great task is complete. *Do you know there are no Zen teachers in all of China?* What is a teacher in the context of Zen? Is there such a thing? Is there not? Look in your nostrils.

[HAKUIN] *I don’t say there’s no Zen*—This saying is hard to penetrate; it is in the same mold as “he still has habit-ridden consciousness.” It is an extremely subtle saying: the path of language ends.

[TENKEI] *It’s just that there are no teachers.* Knowledgeable words come from the mouths of those in the know.

VERSE

Cold, severe, his solitary mien does not take pride in itself;
Solemnly dwelling in the sea of the world, he distinguishes
dragons and snakes.
Even the emperor of China was treated lightly;
Thrice he personally ran afoul of those claws and fangs.

[HAKUIN] *Cold, severe, his solitary mien does not take pride in itself*
—There was no Obaku before Obaku. A natural man has no pretense or put-on. It’s all in the words “not take pride in self.”

[TENKEI] Without any of the warmth of institutionalized Buddhism, Obaku’s natural teacherless solitary way is spontaneously lofty even

though he does not take pride in himself. This does not apply only to Obaku; everyone has a natural essence that has no teacher. This is where you express yourself.

[HAKUIN] *Solemnly dwelling in the sea of the world, he distinguishes dragons and snakes.* Seeing with absolute certainty, he rips out Zen monks' livers alive.

[TENKEI] Today Obaku activates the natural teacherless way; the dragons and snakes of the entire universe, the whole earth, and the four seas determine the falsehood or authenticity of the teaching masters. False teaching means false paths among the ranks of the Buddhists and Zennists, those that seek outside of mind. Authentic teaching refers to those who have relinquished everything, even the mysterious and profound principles of Buddhism, gain and loss, right and wrong. It is necessary to have the Zen eye like this.

[HAKUIN] *Even the emperor of China was treated lightly*—when he tried to get a bit contentious.

[TENKEI] Obaku was not afraid even of emperors; as a matter of fact, he actually slapped one. This is mysticism beyond convention, wherein emperors on high are not seen as noble, while common people below are not seen as lowly, for the ordinary and the holy and the high and the low are not established at all. This is the way of naturalness, which has no teacher.

[HAKUIN] *Thrice he personally ran afoul of those claws and fangs.* He got gored. Commentary says twice; the *Comprehensive Chronicle* says three times.

[TENKEI] Obaku slapped the emperor twice. Here it says three times; this is Setcho's poetic license. Generally they say "thrice" refers to three slaps in response to three questions about seeking without obsession with Buddha, seeking without obsession with Doctrine, and seeking without obsession with Congregation. This interpretation is made for the sake of fitting in with this verse; there is no absolute need for particular numbers.

12

THREE POUNDS OF FLAX

INTRODUCTION

The killing sword, the life-giving sword—this was the standard of ancient times and is also crucial for today. Talk about killing, and you don't harm a hair; talk about life giving, and you perish. So it is said, "The pathway beyond has not been communicated by the sages; students toil over forms like monkeys grabbing at reflections." Now tell me: since it is not communicated, how come there are so many complicated koans?

[HAKUIN] *The killing sword, the life-giving sword*—There's no one here at all; not even the whiskers of an ant remain: this is none other than the life-giving sword.

[TENKEI] In the hands of a teacher it is employed according to the occasion.

[HAKUIN] *Talk about killing*—The Great Death is easy; whether enlivening or killing, if you kill opinionated rationalization there is an immediate revival. *Talk about life giving*—Enlivening is difficult; activating subtle wisdom and subtle function from total mindlessness is called enlivening. The heart of nirvana is easy to clarify; knowledge of differentiation is hard to understand. *You perish*—Lose your body and mind, and right then and there you are a living Buddha.

[TENKEI] *Talk about killing* is not killing. *Talk about life giving* cannot be called life giving either. It's not a matter of talking about killing and enlivening conceptually. This is why an ancient said that if you go around seeking within killing and enlivening, that won't work at all.

[HAKUIN] *So it is said*—This is a saying of Banzan. You realize this after you have attained freedom to kill or to enliven. *Not*

communicated by the sages—It can only be known for oneself. It is unknown even to one's parents, unknown even to one's children.

[TENKEI] If it's uncommunicated, what about when there are all sorts of complications? Let those with eyes see! Observe what happens in this koan, which is not in the words at all.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Tozan, "What is Buddha?"

Tozan said, "Three pounds of flax."

[HAKUIN] *Three pounds of flax*—This is the mastery Tozan attained through Ummon's threescore blows.

[TENKEI] This *three pounds of flax* is three pounds however you weigh it; the reading never varies. Each one of you, weigh it yourself! This is the great meaning of the koan: it is the same everywhere in the universe; the reading has been computed, so don't miscalculate it! What is the weight?

VERSE

The sun rushes, the moon hurries.
Has there ever been carelessness in a good response?
To see Tozan as laying out facts according to the situation
Is like a lame tortoise or a blind turtle gone into an empty valley.
Flowering groves, multicolored forests;
Bamboo of the southlands, wood of the northlands.
So I think of Chokey and Officer Riku;
He could say he should laugh, not cry.
Ha!

[HAKUIN] *The sun rushes*—This versifies *three pounds of flax*.

[TENKEI] This brings out the great meaning of the koan. Everyone open your eyes and look! The sun rises, the moon sets; whichever way you twist this *three pounds of flax*, the reading of the weight is

the same. If you wonder about it, the sun is already setting and you have no time, so see directly! The words “rushes” and “hurries” are the eyes of the whole verse.

[TENKEI] *A good response*—This reply *three pounds of flax* is not a slapdash answer but a response of transcendental kindness. *To see Tozan as laying out facts*—If you get involved in the verbal expression and view Tozan’s intention through your subjective calculations and assumptions, after all you will be unable to see, *like a lame tortoise or a blind turtle gone into an empty valley*. It is useless; when will you ever get out?

[TENKEI] *Flowering groves . . . bamboo of the southlands*—The whole earth is *three pounds of flax*. Let those with eyes see! It’s because of the calculations of emotional conscious that you cannot see. Even though Setcho has gone down into the mud and water for everyone, no one understands, so *I think of Chokei and Officer Riku*—Another case where the basic meaning was missed because it was viewed in terms of laying out facts in accord with the situation; Chokei would have laughed, Officer Riku would have cried.

[HAKUIN] This is a saying that one can neither praise nor censure, a saying of such refinement that it “kills off your thieving mind.” Even if you penetrate the examples of Suigan’s “eyebrows” and the “ox passing through the window screen,” you still won’t get this saying. Even the Buddhas and Zen masters cannot figure it out. This is the famous sword of Setcho’s school; it is a saying to which even great masters like Ummon and Gensha could only bow. Don’t regard it lightly!

[TENKEI] *Ha!* If you don’t understand even after all this talk, that is laughable. Setcho implies that his lengthy discussion is also laughable; he has turned the whole verse around and thrown it over onto the Other Side. Other Side? What “Other Side”? Other Side of what? Try to find your nose! This is a living wave of Setcho’s river of Zen.

13

SNOW IN A SILVER BOWL

INTRODUCTION

Though clouds freeze over the great plains, the whole world is not hidden. When snow covers white flowers, it's hard to distinguish the outlines. Its coldness is cold as ice and snow; its fineness is as fine as rice powder. Its depths are hard for even Buddhas' eyes to peer into; its secrets are impossible for demons and outsiders to fathom. Leaving aside for the moment understanding three corners when one is raised, how do you speak so as to silence every tongue? And tell me, whose business is this?

[HAKUIN] *When snow covers white flowers*—He has turned out the nondual equality of every individual and the Buddhas of past, present, and future; the totality is the whole body of Vairochana Buddha. *It's hard to distinguish the outlines.* They are distinct, but while the full moon is bright as can be, it's hard to tell which is the snow and which are the flowers.

[TENKEI] The transcendental realm of uniformity represented by Setcho must be seen with eyes able to distinguish differences.

[HAKUIN] *Its coldness is cold as ice and snow*—From the point of view of Buddha, it's all Buddha: one Buddha, one body; everywhere is Buddha. *Its depths are hard for even Buddhas' eyes*—Even Buddhas and Zen masters can hardly see what the intrinsic essential nature is like. *Its secrets are impossible for demons and outsiders*—The aforementioned state is so recondite that even a needle for silk can't penetrate. *How do you speak*—How do you silence even Zennists who have gotten through the brambles?

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Haryo, “What is the Deva school?”

He said, “A silver bowl full of snow.”

[HAKUIN] This first question is the marrow of the Ummon school; the answer is in the question. This is a spontaneous question self-answered. That’s what I call having guts! *What is the Deva school?* An iron hammerhead without a hole is thrown right at your face. Each time it is brought up it is new.

[TENKEI] The Deva school means the Buddha-Mind school, the school of the enlightened mind. See what its source is.

[HAKUIN] *A silver bowl full of snow.* Since olden times people have misconstrued this, mistakenly saying that Haryo’s answer refers to the doctrine of indiscriminate nondual equality in which demons and Buddhas are the same. This is different from the Soto Zen saying “a silver bowl full of snow, a white heron hidden in the moonlight.” Haryo was of the Ummon school of Zen—the lightning of their razor-sharp sword flashes cold in the scabbard; cinnabar sand is scattered on stairs of lapis lazuli.

[TENKEI] This is uniform transcendence, wherein the world is nonetheless not hidden. You cannot discern this unless you have the eye to distinguish differences. Ultimately the whole universe should be seen as the school of the enlightened mind.

VERSE

Old Haryo is truly distinct; he’s able to say “a silver bowl filled with snow.”

The ninety-six kinds of outsiders must know for themselves.

If you don’t know, ask the moon in the sky.

The Deva school, the Deva school—

Beneath the banner of victory, there rises a pure breeze.

[HAKUIN] Many are the rank and file, but great generals like Haryo are rare.

[TENKEI] Haryo is a skillful speaker by nature, so every word, every phrase, is truly distinct. Distinct in what respect? The words are straight to the point, the speech is straight to the point. The Buddha-Mind? First of all, what is distinct about him is *he's able to say "a silver bowl. . ."* Setcho praises this to the skies as a world-class saying, then puts the onus on you. As far as this saying is concerned, even the *ninety-six kinds of outsiders* will find something in it to agree with, so they *must know for themselves*. If that doesn't work, he says *ask the moon in the sky*. But no matter how much you ask the moon, it's no use, so Setcho himself tells you: *the Deva school, the Deva school*. As he calls repeatedly, immediately there is a cool clear breeze under the banner of victory. "Cut off your heads and sever your arms to apologize for your mistakes. Everyone individually try to rouse a cool clear breeze." Setcho himself takes up the banner of victory and acts with his whole being, vanquishing *outsiders* who seek outside of mind; he has brought out that which apologizes for mistakes and repents of former errors. If there is anyone who repents of error, then the Deva school flourishes, meaning that the way of Zen is in action.

14

AN APPROPRIATE STATEMENT

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, “What are the whole lifetime teachings?”
Ummon said, “An appropriate statement.”

[TENKEI] *The whole lifetime teachings*—Buddha’s forty-nine years of teaching are all wrapped up in this question. This monk is extraordinary.

[HAKUIN] He doesn’t even mention the gradual or the immediate.

[TENKEI] *An appropriate statement*—Appropriate to what? This is not appropriateness in a relativistic sense, not appropriateness relative to existence, not appropriateness relative to nonexistence, not appropriateness relative to opportunity, not appropriateness relative to mentality, not appropriateness relative to ordinary or holy. If you then think it might be appropriateness in the sense of the absolute considered ultimate by the schools of doctrine, yet it is not so. What is it? Even if you say that every word and every line of the whole canon of Buddha’s lifetime teaching is an appropriate statement, that still won’t pass. Even if we say it is *an appropriate statement* of the very essence in which you cannot find an inch of ground on the whole earth, this too is a misinterpretation.

VERSE

An appropriate statement—totally inaccessible.
He refits a handle in a holeless iron hammer.
Under the Jambu Tree I’m laughing out loud;
Last night the black dragon had a horn wrenched off.

Exceptional, exceptional—Ummon found a handle.

[TENKEI] *An appropriate statement*—This reply is like a precipice a mile high. It is also like a battle line manned by a million soldiers: unapproachable. Therefore Setcho can hardly praise it enough, calling it utterly inaccessible. Even a thousand Buddhas and myriad Zen masters cannot approach, he says; much less can you penetrate. It is not something high like Mount Fuji. Everybody, see what your own self is! Where not a letter or line applies, where there's no place to pull it apart, it is simply too inaccessible, like a wall ten miles high, like a million-man army, with no place for your calculating conceptualizations. This is not received from Shakyamuni Buddha or Bodhidharma the Zen founder; where there is originally no superiority or inferiority, not insisting on literary formulations, communicated distinctly outside doctrine; that is the face of Zen.

[HAKUIN] Inaccessible beyond compare, this saying is horrendously stern.

[TENKEI] *A holeless iron hammer*—This monk's question, thrust forth, without an opening for comparison and conceptualization, is simply an iron hammer, so Ummon refits it, so to speak, with the handle *an appropriate statement*. Cutting through nails and shearing iron, he leaves no room for you to probe into. Now Setcho stands under the Jambu Tree beyond the human world and laughs. What is so funny? *Last night*—Seeing this monk as like a black dragon tied up by the reply *an appropriate statement* and getting its horns snapped off, Setcho splits his guts. *Exceptional, exceptional*—Hey, there's something unusual here! What? *Ummon found a handle*. Ummon got hold of one of the horns of the black dragon, wrenched off last night. Where is the other one? It couldn't be anywhere else—it is stuck in your nose, so everyone should try to find it.

15

AN UPSIDE-DOWN STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The sword that kills, the sword that gives life—the standard of ancient times, it is essential for the present. But tell me, right now, what is the killing sword, or the life-giving sword?

[HAKUIN] *The sword that kills*—Appearing in a flash, it cannot be separated; this thing is all over the place! *The standard of ancient times*—All the Buddhas of all times attain truth by mastering the killing sword.

[TENKEI] Wielding this freely is the standard of ancient times and is essential in the present. What sort of methods are referred to in this way? Look at this koan of Ummon, and check out how killing and enlivening freely works.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, “If not for the present potential and if not for the present phenomena, what is it?”

Ummon said, “An upside-down statement.”

[HAKUIN] *The present potential* refers to the clergy and the lay folk, men and women, and so on. *The present phenomena* means the appearances of things, solidity of substance, myriad forms, the whole spectrum of concrete phenomena. To pose this question he had to be an adept Zen master; that is why the answer, too, is so strict.

[TENKEI] *The present potential* refers to mental functioning in relation to objects; *the present phenomena* refers to the objects

appearing before us. See what is neither mind nor object; it is clear without saying. To begin with, this monk saw through the nonexistence of things outside of mind, the emptiness of all things, then came to Ummon with his simplistic view of enlightenment and pretended to ask about something else, concealing his point. Ummon ably saw this and said *An upside-down statement*. “Your question is an inverted statement: the present potential is the present potential, the present phenomena are the present phenomena; so what? There’s nothing wrong with things just as they are; why turn it all upside down?” Breaking through this monk’s simplistic satori bias, his view where everything is void, Ummon tosses it over onto the other side. This is Ummon’s method of mounting a bandit’s horse to chase the bandit down. For example, “green mountains fill the eyes” and “the mountains as ever, the rivers as ever” are phrases for overturning the bias of satori.

VERSE

An upside-down statement—he divides a token.
Dying together, living together, he gives you certainty.
The eighty-four thousand disciples of Buddha were not worthy successors;
Thirty-three Zen masters entered the tiger’s den.
Distinctly outstanding—the moon in the churning rushing water.

[HAKUIN] *He divides a token*. Since olden times this has been interpreted to mean that this monk and Ummon have the same perception, like the two halves of a token, like one seal stamped on two sheets of paper. That is ridiculous. Setcho must have been delighted composing this line: when *an upside-down statement* is clearly seen by way of these words *divides a token*, all seventeen hundred koans crumble.

[TENKEI] *Dying together, living together*—Living together refers to each individual awakening to this matter; dying together refers to overturning the bias of satori. *The eighty-four thousand disciples*—Why weren’t they worthy successors? All those who cling to verbal

expressions fail to understand. *Thirty-three Zen masters*—Twenty-eight from India and six from China understood the source outside the words; they are just like Ummon, no disparity between them, all foxes in the same cave, says Setcho. In my opinion, this means that you cannot know Ummon's fundamental intent unless you understand outside the words, without getting hung up on writings and sayings. *Distinctly outstanding*—Again Setcho rouses a wave of the Zen river: *distinctly outstanding*, there is something exceptionally important here, something unusual. What is it? *The moon in the churning rushing water*. If you get mired in the verbal expression and come up with intellectual interpretations, you are like a monkey grabbing for the reflection of the moon in water—it won't work! In my opinion, even talking about the thirty-three Zen patriarchs is grabbing for the reflection of the moon. And even the Buddhas of all times, to say nothing of the Zen patriarchs, are also reflections of the moon in water; breaking through the bias of satori, he turned the whole verse around and tossed it onto the other side. This is Setcho's Zen eye, the so-called capacity to kill Buddhas and slay Zen masters. In general, Setcho's verses on ancient koans leave something unresolved at the end like this.

16

THE MAN IN THE WEEDS

INTRODUCTION

The Way has no byroads; one who stands on it is alone and inaccessible. The Truth is not seeing or hearing; words and thoughts are far from it. If you can pass through the forest of thorns, untie the bonds of Buddhas and Zen masters, and attain the realm of inner peace, then the gods will have no way to offer flowers and outsiders will find no opening through which to spy; you work all day without ever working, talk all day without ever talking. Then you can freely and independently exercise devices to break in and break out, using the sword that kills and gives life. But even if you can manage this, you still should realize that in the context of provisional expedients there is such a thing as uplifting with one hand while suppressing with the other. Yet that only amounts to a little bit—the fundamental matter is still out of range. What is the fundamental matter?

[TENKEI] The great Way of the Buddhas and Zen masters is open in all directions, with never a false path. Here every individual must see what it is like; your standpoint will be independent and inaccessible. This being so, the Truth is not seeing or hearing; it is beyond speech and thought. Ultimately conceptualization cannot reach it, so it is not realized without effort. If you can pass through all sorts of comparisons and conceptualizations, wiping out all bondage to views of Buddha and views of Dharma, eliminating such things as fasting and sitting up without sleeping on account of bondage to the verbal teachings of the Buddhas, reaching the realm of inner peace, then there are no tracks or traces anywhere. Inner peace means peacefulness within oneself, inwardly knowing what others do not know, an intimate, secret realm invisible even to Buddhas and Zen masters. When you have reached this state, *the gods have no way*

to offer flowers. In the case of Buddha's disciple Subhuti, since the traces of absorption in emptiness still remained, "the heavens showered flowers and the earth quaked," as even the celestials saw through it. When you attain the state we are talking about now, however, neither the gods nor the heretics nor the celestial devil can espy you. Now whatever you do, it is in a state of complete effortlessness. Effortless action means acting and speaking with the realization that it is originally not seeing or hearing, nor is it speech or thought. Thus even if you call it being completely uninhibited, free to kill or enliven, this is still within the domain of temporary expedients, raising and lowering relative to potential. That's fine if you know what is appropriate for each occasion, but it still isn't up to the fundamental matter of Zen.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Kyosho, "I am breaking out of my shell; please break in."

Kyosho said, "Will you survive?"

The monk said, "If I don't survive, I'll be a laughingstock."

Kyosho said, "You're still in the weeds."

[TENKEI] *Please break in*—This monk presented a bit of perception to pose a question. *Will you survive?* He tested the monk's stand. *If I don't survive*—"Break in and see whether I die or live. If I fail to survive, going around with a dead face, I'll be the laughingstock of everyone." This monk could not have said this if he were gutless. *You're still in the weeds.* Kyosho breaks through this monk's view with his wicked skill, but even as he says this Kyosho himself is already another *man in the weeds*. Indeed, even the Buddhas of all times are *in the weeds*, the Zen masters throughout history are also *in the weeds*. However, there is a knotty complexity *in the weeds*.

VERSE

The ancient Buddhas had a family style;
Responsive preaching comes to detraction.
Chick and mother hen don't know each other;
Who is it breaking out and in together?
He awakens at the break-in, but is still in a shell.
Again he gets hit;
All the Zennists in the world name and describe it in vain.

[TENKEI] *The ancient Buddhas*—Ever since Buddha appeared in the world, every Zen teacher has had a manner of dealing with people in response to potential. *Responsive preaching*—When teacher and student meet, they tear each other down; that is why Kyosho's responsive preaching to this monk consisted of tearing him down like this. Where is the tearing down? *Will you survive? You're . . . in the weeds.* These sayings tear down and break through. *Chick and mother hen*—Even if the chick is breaking out of the shell, he cannot make the mother hen break in. Even if the mother is breaking in, she cannot make the chick break out. When they are unaware of each other, then what? *Who is it*—This word “who” is the eye of the whole verse; *who* brings about the breaking out and break-in? In any case, if you have the will, this promise remains good. It's a matter of breaking out and breaking in at the same time; this is spontaneous accord. The matching potential of teacher and student is entirely like this.

He awakens at the break-in—When Kyosho breaks in with the question *Will you survive*, the monk awakens with the realization that *if I don't survive, I'll be a laughingstock.* This is an instance of breaking out and breaking in at the same time. Nevertheless, Setcho can distinguish black and white in the flash of a spark, so he can see through this monk still lingering in awakening itself and falling at the peak—thus he says the monk is *still in a shell.* Kyosho, in the manner of a true master, didn't approve of the monk on this point; immediately he put him down as *being in the weeds.* This method of knocking the monk down and not letting him hold anything in his hands, “driving off the plowman's ox and taking away the hungry man's food,” enabled him to overturn his satori bias, so the verse

says *Again he gets hit*. At this point, it is not only this monk but almost everyone in the whole world who remains in this shell of satori bias and has no way to turn around. So, *all the Zennists in the world name and describe it in vain*. In reality, even the Buddha's emergence in the world, Bodhidharma's coming from India, and the responses to situations illustrated in the seventeen hundred koans are all naming and describing in vain. Even to say satori or awakening is naming and describing in vain, and so is speaking of confusion, illusion, or delusion, or the Five Ranks, Four Shouts, Three Mysteries, and Four Options. These are all *naming and describing it in vain*. This treatment of Setcho's is also *naming and describing it in vain*. This is Setcho's Zen eye turning everything around.

17

THE MEANING OF THE COMING FROM THE WEST

INTRODUCTION

Only if you can cut through nails and shear through iron can you be a genuine Zen master; if you duck arrows and shrink from swords, how can you be a competent adept? Leaving aside for now the point where not even a needle can penetrate, what about when foaming waves fill the skies?

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Korin, “What is the meaning of the Zen founder’s coming from the West?”

Korin said, “Sitting long becomes tiring.”

[TENKEI] *Sitting long*—If you sit for a long time, your legs hurt. There’s nothing special; our eyes are horizontal, our noses are vertical. Everybody knows it, but they don’t realize it, so he has simply let everyone know they breathe through their noses. In the “here” of *sitting long*, is there any Zen founder’s meaning? If you call it a reply about the meaning of the Zen founder’s coming from the West, it’s a sack of loofah skins, a worn-out loincloth.

VERSE

One, two, a thousand, a myriad;
Strip off the blinders, unload the saddle bags.
Turning left, turning right, following up behind;

Shiko had to hit Iron Grindstone Ryu.

[TENKEI] *One, two*—Setcho sees into Korin's ultimate point and sets forth his own perception, expressing it in verse on the flip side of this koan. *One, two, a thousand, a myriad*—Everybody gets tired if they sit for a long time; their backsides ache. The eyes are horizontal, the nose is vertical; everyone knows this, but if you actually know you know it, then views of Buddha and Dharma, the blinders and baggage of emergence in the world and coming from the West, are not there at all, for you are in a state of liberty. Why are they called blinders and baggage? Simply because people are unaware of what everyone knows, like the fact that their noses are straight; therefore things that are originally nonexistent become burdens encumbering them. Setcho begins his verse with his own perception; the third and fourth lines are the usual Zen wave.

Turning left, turning right, following up behind—People who spin around on words and sayings, getting nowhere, are spun around by things. That goes without saying, but as a matter of fact even people who have successfully passed through, like the nun Iron Grinder Ryu, are not approved: the Zen master Shiko hit her. Setcho uses this cane to say he'll never give approval, striking a blow. If you ask why one who is not spun around also gets hit, this is a method of overturning satori bias and throwing it onto the other side.

18

THE SEAMLESS MONUMENT

EXAMPLE

The emperor of China asked National Teacher Chu, “What will you need after you die?”

The national teacher said, “Make me a seamless monument.”

The emperor said, “Please tell me what the monument would be like.”

The national teacher was silent for a long while. Then he said, “Understand?”

The emperor said, “I don’t understand.”

The national teacher said, “I have a disciple to whom I have imparted the teaching, named Tangen. He is an expert in this matter. Please ask him.”

After the national teacher had passed on, the emperor summoned Tangen and asked him what this meant.

Tangen said, “South of Sho, north of Tan—therein is gold enough for the whole country. Under the shadowless tree is the communal ferryboat; up in the crystal palace, there is none who knows.”

[TENKEI] *Make a seamless monument*—Look and see what this is. *Please tell me*—How do you want your order? *South of Sho*—Throughout the ten directions, there is no fixed location. Nevertheless, being given no choice, he reveals a little bit, calling it *south of Sho, north of Tan*. Everything is the seamless monument. *Therein is gold*—What is it that everyone has neither too much nor too little of? If we have to give it a name, it is real wisdom. *Under the shadowless tree*—What is the occasion? All realms of being are riding together; everyone is on the ark. First of all he decks out a boat like this that does not get stuck in the present moment and quietly rides it over to get a peek into the crystal palace; he finds no

one familiar, but then it is logical that no one would know, for it is where even Buddhas and Zen masters cannot know, where there is no recognition even on meeting. But even so, it is not something far away; it is simply the place the whole world has never concealed, where there is no company anymore, where there is no sound and no scent.

[SETCHO] *South of Sho, north of Tan*—One hand doesn't clap for nothing!

[TENKEI] It is something everyone knows. What is it? Your eyes are horizontal, your nose is vertical. It is because the emperor didn't realize what everyone knows that Tangen told him what everyone knows. There's nothing strange about it.

[SETCHO] *Therein is gold enough for the whole country*—A rough-hewn staff.

[TENKEI] The place where the hatchet of Buddhas and Zen masters does not hit, the staff that is *as is*, can be put to endless use. The eyes are horizontal, the nose is vertical: this is the seamless monument, eh?

[SETCHO] *Under the shadowless tree is the communal ferryboat*—When the sea is calm, the rivers are clear.

[TENKEI] When the world is at peace, those above and those below do not stay in those positions. They drink from wells they dig, they eat from fields they cultivate. The quality of an ideal society under enlightened leadership is a communal ferryboat under a shadowless tree.

[SETCHO] *Up in the crystal palace, there is none who knows*—He has finished raising it up!

[TENKEI] Tangen raised up the whole seamless tower, to the point where the construction is finished. Everyone, open your eyes and look!

VERSE

The seamless monument—it is hard to see.
A clear pool does not contain a blue dragon's coils.
Layers upon layers, shadows upon shadows—

Throughout all time it's shown to humankind.

[TENKEI] *The seamless monument*—First of all, do you want to see this seamless monument? It is very hard to see. With this he has versified the koan completely, but since Setcho is so compassionate he goes on to say *a clear pool*. Many people interpret the stagnant water of the national teacher's silence as the seamless monument, but that's not where it's at; there are no dragons in stagnant water. Well then, you might wonder where it is, so Setcho has perfected it to show you. Take a good look! *Layers upon layers*—It is enormous, a little here, a little there, all over the place. Indeed, it casts *shadows upon shadows*. The whole world never hides it; can't you see it now? *Throughout all time*—There's nowhere to hide it anywhere; open your eyes and look; don't try to imagine what it must be like.

19

[FINGERTIP ZEN](#)

INTRODUCTION

When a single particle is picked up, the whole earth is contained in it. When a single flower blossoms, the world begins. But what about before a particle is picked up, before a flower blossoms? This is why it is said, “It is like cutting a skein of thread—when one strand is cut, all are cut. It is like dyeing a skein of thread—when one strand is dyed, all are dyed.” Right now, at this very moment, if you can cut off complications and bring forth the treasure in yourself, responding at all levels without mistaking the context, it will become manifest in every case. Otherwise, look into the following text.

[TENKEI] *Cut* does not mean rejecting something that is actually there. Look closely at the aftermath of myriad cogitations and conceptualizations. They are originally nonexistent; knowing this is *cutting*. This is called the decisive mind, or the diamond sword.

EXAMPLE

Whenever Master Gutei was asked a question, he would just raise a finger.

[TENKEI] Who would ever visit him, anyhow? His tactic is bold, trying to silence everyone in the world with one finger. There shouldn't even be time to lift a finger; whatever meets the eyes is already complete.

VERSE

For responsive teaching I deeply admire old Gutei;
Since the universe has been emptied, who else is there?
Having cast a float of driftwood onto the sea,
In the night waves together we take in blind turtles.

[TENKEI] *For responsive teaching*—What does Setcho admire? The fact that Gutei does not preach about Buddha, does not preach about Dharma, does not preach about mind, does not preach about nature, does not preach about delusion, does not preach about enlightenment, and does not preach about mysticism or marvels: his responsive teaching by simply raising a finger is very good. Why? *Since the universe has been emptied*—There is nothing at all; there is fundamentally no one on earth to be saved, no one in the world who is starving. That is the reason for Setcho's admiration. Now then, the third and fourth lines are like the previous cases. All the talk and explanation of the countless Buddhas and Zen masters for the purpose of liberating people is so much labor achieving nothing, without a medicine bag for treating blind turtles. Why? A Buddha is merely a messenger, a Zen master is merely a gatekeeper; with his usual Zen wave, Setcho wipes out mundane institutionalized Buddhism and breaks through the biases of cultivation and realization.

20

THE MEDITATION BRACE

INTRODUCTION

Heaped into mountains, up against walls—if you stop to think about it, arresting your potential, you'll suffer bitter cramp. On the other hand, suppose someone comes forth and overturns the ocean, kicks over the polar mountain, scatters the clouds with shouts and shatters the sky, and silences everyone with a single device, a single object, allowing you no way to approach—tell me, who has ever been this way?

[TENKEI] *Heaped into mountains, up against walls*—What is all this stuff? There's so much you trip over it, but how do you find out what it is? If you don't know what all this stuff is, and you *stop to think about it*, going around inquiring everywhere, you'll just trouble yourself. *On the other hand*—Someone who is alive and has *overturned the ocean and shattered the sky will silence everyone* with the tactics of a true teacher. Who is like this?

EXAMPLE

Ryuge asked Suibi, “What is the meaning of the Zen founder's coming from the West?”

Suibi said, “Pass me the meditation brace.” Ryuge passed the meditation brace to Suibi. Suibi took it and hit him with it.

Ryuge said, “Hit me if you will, but there is no meaning of the founder's coming from the West.” Ryuge also asked Rinzai, “What is the meaning of the Zen founder's coming from the West?”

Rinzai said, “Pass me the cushion.” Suibi passed the cushion to Rinzai. Rinzai took it and hit him with it.

Ryuge said, “Hit me if you will, but there is no meaning of the founder’s coming from the West.”

[TENKEI] *There is no meaning*—“Bodhidharma didn’t come to China, the second patriarch didn’t go to India”: strike if you will, but there has never been any Zen founder’s meaning. If you say there is, it’s a broken loofah-skin drum, which won’t keep the beat. The overall meaning of this koan is checking and testing after having attained satori.

VERSE

The dragon of Mount Dragon Tusk has no eyes;
When has stagnant water ever activated the ancient way?
If you cannot use the meditation brace and cushion,
Just hand them over to me.

[TENKEI] *Mount Dragon Tusk*—This refers to Ryuge [whose name means “dragon tusk”] in his dealings with the two elder masters. Setcho says *the dragon has no eyes*, but does he say this by way of censure or by way of praise? This does not seem to be an ordinary dragon; Setcho sees this clearly. *Stagnant water*—While Ryuge put the ancient way into practice for them, the two elders sat calmly in the stagnant water of transcendence; see how they do not activate the ancient way of devices and objects of Buddhist teaching and Zen methods. *If you cannot use the meditation brace and cushion*—He hands them over when Suibi and Rinzai ask for them, so he has not been able to employ the brace and cushion. Setcho is a witness to this. *Just hand them over*—The brace and cushion Ryuge isn’t using should not be handed over to anyone else like Suibi and Rinzai. Why? Even if you give them to someone else, they are just a device and an object, with no meaning of the coming from the West, no matter how much you beat and flail, so give them to me, Setcho. Even though you have ably seen Ryuge’s fundamental meaning,

that's not the end of the matter, and people might fear that even if Setcho takes them up he too might use them to beat and flail, so he opens up afterward and produces another verse to reveal something of the underlying intent. Both verses should be read together. This verse is widely misunderstood on account of discrimination without insight, resulting in the notion of sectarian differences. They miss Setcho's basic meaning because they engage in discussion without knowing that all worlds in the ten directions are the mind of Buddha and the work of Buddha, with no self and no other.

VERSE II

This old guy hasn't ended it yet, so he composes another verse.
Even if they've been handed to me, still why rely on them?
Sitting and leaning shouldn't be considered continuing the lamp
of Zen.
It's worth replying: the evening clouds, gathering, haven't quite
closed;
The mountains in the distance are endless, layers on layers of
blue.

[TENKEI] *This old guy*—Setcho's reference to himself. *Ended*—cleared up your doubts and shown Ryuge's fundamental intent. *Handed to me*—If Ryuge didn't need the meditation brace and cushion and handed them over to me, even if I got them what would I do with them? What do you think? There's no particular use for them. *Sitting and leaning*—There is no perpetuating the lamp of Zen Buddhism; you just sit on the cushion, lean on the brace, and rest. As for the state where you respond in this way, *it's worth replying*; when the evening clouds have half gathered in the mountains, where the peaks range in layer upon layer of blue, in the evening fog and morning mist, the scenery is inexpressible. This is indeed interesting. Is there any fervor of Zen or Buddhism here? This is a function of Setcho's perception of Ryuge's ultimate meaning: no coming to China, no going to India. Here things like striking or beating, methods employing a device and an object, are not cool.

21

LOTUS BLOSSOMS

INTRODUCTION

Setting up the banner of the teaching and establishing the message of Zen is adding flowers to brocade. When you strip off the blinders and unload the baggage, it is the time of universal peace. If you can understand a statement outside of patterns, then you can understand the other three corners when one is brought up. Otherwise, if you are not yet thus, as before humbly listen to this treatment.

[TENKEI] *Setting up the banner of the teaching*—The activation of the Zen vehicle of the Buddha-Mind ever since there have been Buddhas and Zen masters has been adding flowers to brocade; the tactics of a Zen teacher are constructed methods. In terms of the student, and in the immediacy of the interaction between teacher and student, *stripping off the blinders* is the time of peace in one's own land. This refers to both teacher and student together. *If you can understand*—Zenists who can distinguish differentiation are able to understand the other three corners when one corner is brought up—that goes without saying; if you cannot, then look at this koan about emerging and not emerging.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Chimon, “How is it when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?”

Chimon said, “Lotus blossom.”

The monk asked, “What about after it has emerged from the water?”

Chimon said, “Lotus leaves.”

[TENKEI] *When the lotus flower has not yet emerged*—How is it when the eye is not open? *After it has emerged*—How about after the eye is open? The replies *Lotus blossom* and *Lotus leaves* are no different at all. These answers have meaning outside of conventional patterns, using words to block this monk’s involvement in the dualism of emerging and not emerging.

VERSE

Lotus blossom, lotus leaves—he reports for you to know.
How can emergence from the water compare to before emerging?
Ask of the elders north of the river and south of the river too;
One doubt follows another.

[TENKEI] *Emergence from the water*—Which is better, emergence or before emerging? Which is it? Here Setcho cannot tell people, so you all have to find out for yourselves. It is like a mute who has had a dream and cannot speak of it to anyone. What would you say? If what Setcho has said does not solve it for you, then *ask of the elders north and south of the river*; inquire of the Zen worthies everywhere to get to know. *One doubt*—For three lifetimes, sixty aeons, the feeling of doubt will never stop, he says, in order to get you to know that there is a meaning outside the conventional patterns. This is Setcho’s help for people, penetrating to the root.

22

THE TURTLE-NOSED SNAKE

INTRODUCTION

It is so vast there is nothing outside, yet it is as minute as an atom. Whether to capture or release is not up to another; whether to shut down or open up is up to oneself. If you want to dissolve sticking points and unfasten bonds, you must obliterate tracks and silence voices. Everyone occupies the essential crossing; each individual stands alone. Tell me, whose state is this?

[TENKEI] *Vast . . . minute*—What is this? Here, when a Zen master employs this, *whether to capture or release is not up to another*, now opening up, now shutting down, it is all up to oneself, as one works freely. But what do you do when you are like this? You get rid of students' hangups and don't let them hold on to anything. The quintessential point is to *obliterate tracks and silence voices*, so that they cannot make a move. *Everyone*—Unless students also occupy the essential crossing of Buddhas and Zen masters, *each individual* coming to life, they cannot chime into mystic conversation beyond conventional patterns.

EXAMPLE

Seppo said, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake. Every one of you should take a good look."

Chokei said, "A lot of people in this auditorium will die today."

A monk cited this to Gensha, who said, "Only Chokei could say something like that. Even so, I differ."

The monk said, "What do you mean?"

Gensha said, “What’s the use of South Mountain?”

Ummon threw his cane down in front of Seppo and made a gesture of fright.

[TENKEI] *Turtle-nosed snake*—This is borrowing a name to enable people to discuss this matter. Hyakujo called it a tiger; Joshu called it going to drink tea; Shiko called it a dog; Rinzai called it the true human with no status; Baso called it Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha; Tozan called it a three-foot head with a two-inch neck; Ummon called it a dry piece of crap; Tozan called it three pounds of flax. It is called forth at will, sometimes as a staff or a cane, sometimes as a bamboo stick. Referring to everyone’s own mind in innumerable various ways is just for the purpose of activating students’ potentiality, no other reason, so when Seppo says there’s a turtle-nosed snake on South Mountain, the idea is to look and see what it is. *Chokei said*—All the people on earth, having been bitten by Seppo, are unable to lift their heads; all of them have died on account of the snake. This is an act of going with the flow. *What’s the use of South Mountain?* He overturned this side and threw it over onto the other side; not only is the *snake* not needed, even *South Mountain* has no use. *Ummon threw down his cane*—Making a gesture of fright as if the cane were a snake, this is Ummon’s method of handling the snake.

VERSE

Elephant Bone Cliff is so high no one reaches it;
Those who arrive must be expert snake handlers.
Chokei and Gensha cannot do anything—
How many lose their lives?
Ummon knows—he parts the weeds again;
South, north, east, west, there’s no place to search.
Suddenly he thrusts out his cane;
Thrown in front of Seppo, it opens wide its mouth.
The gaping mouth is like a flash of lightning;
By the time you raise your eyebrows you don’t see.

Now it's hidden here on this mountain;
Let those who come each observe expedient means.
Look right at your feet!

[TENKEI] *Elephant Bone Cliff*—First the place is used symbolically to praise the sharpness of Seppo's mind and the loftiness of his character. He is praised to the heavens; anyone who would arrive here has to be an expert snake handler, so observe. *Chokei and Gensha*—Even the likes of these two couldn't do anything, he says, first distinguishing the relative expertise in snake handling among the three great elders, even though none of them were right or wrong. If even Chokei and Gensha were helpless, how about others! *How many lose their lives?* The entire earth has become littered with dead people. Nevertheless *Ummon knows*—He knows where this snake is. He *parts the weeds again* looking for the snake, but it's neither here nor there. *South, north*—No track or trace can be found, but then it is only logical that it be inscrutable. *Suddenly*—See it? What has suddenly shown its face is this snake that has been there on the cane all along; look! *Thrown in front*—Opening its mouth, it swallows even Seppo; even as you look it is so lightning quick that its traces cannot be discerned. So when even Setcho *raises his eyebrows* to look, it's nowhere to be seen. So where is this snake? Is it among the three ranks of saints, the ten ranks of sages, or the two states of equivalent or sublime enlightenment? Is it among the disciples or the enlightening beings? Is it among the arhats or individual illuminates? Is it in the hells or among the antigods? Where is it, anyway? Is it in your nostrils? In any case, that snake is *hidden here on this mountain*. Setcho has stored it on the mountain where he lives, so if you want to see it Setcho will use expedient means to show it to you, so open your eyes and get a good look! Shouting, Setcho says *Look right at your feet!* See where you are and watch where you're going!

23

THE SUMMIT OF THE MYSTIC PEAK

INTRODUCTION

Jade is tested with fire, gold is tested with a stone, a sword is tested with a hair, water is tested with a staff. In Zen schools, people are tested by a single word, a single phrase, a single act, a single state, a single exit, a single entry, a single greeting, a single reply, in order to see whether they are deep or shallow, in order to see whether they are facing forward or backward. But tell me, how do you make the test?

EXAMPLE

As Hofuku and Chokey were roaming in the mountains, Hofuku pointed and said, "Right here is the summit of the mystic peak."

Chokey said, "So it is. What a pity!"

Setcho remarked, "What is the purpose of roaming the mountains with these guys today?" He also said, "I don't say there will be none after a hundred or a thousand years, only that they will be few."

Later this anecdote was cited to Kyosho. He said, "If not for Chokey, you'd have seen skulls covering the fields."

[TENKEI] First of all, as Hofuku and Chokey were out rambling in the mountains, Hofuku tested Chokey to see whether he was facing forward or backward. *Right here*—This mountain is so high there is nothing above it, so wide there is nothing beyond it; profoundly calm, it is not moved by the blowing of the eight winds. The summit of the peak is right under your feet; it is surely no other peak. Everyone's *right here* is the *summit of the mystic peak*. Even if you say the peak

of the whole universe is unknowable, this, too is falling into the weeds. *So it is*—Chokei spontaneously knows what the other is getting at; “Yes, so it is, all right; too bad!” What a pity that Hofuku fell into the weeds! Too bad the peak has been revealed! *What is the purpose*—Setcho’s remark seems to put down both Hofuku and Chokei, but it does neither; so where is the point? *What is the purpose* of each individual? Turn back to your self and see. *If not for Chokei*—If Chokei hadn’t been there to reply to Hofuku, no one else could have known where he was and brought him to life. In saying *So it is*, he seemed dead, but with *What a pity!* he came to life. Chokei was a man of Hofuku’s house, so he naturally knew what he was getting at, matching his rhythm at every beat. Without this saying of Chokei in response to Hofuku, everyone would die supine on level ground.

VERSE

On the solitary summit of the mystic peak, the weeds are wild.
Clearly it is brought up, to be imparted to whom?
If not for Chokei’s discerning the real point,
Skulls would litter the ground, but how many would know?

[TENKEI] *The solitary summit*—When Hofuku pointed out that the unsurpassed, supremely great peak of wonder is, unfortunately, just *right here*, he fell into wild weeds on level ground. Even so, Hofuku brought it up clearly; but to whom did he impart it? In fact, Chokei was well able to discern the real point; if he hadn’t discerned it, everyone on earth would die in the weeds. Even so, how many would realize it? They would be few; perhaps only Setcho alone, no one else.

24

THE IRON GRINDSTONE

INTRODUCTION

When you stand on the summit of the highest peak, demons and outsiders cannot know you; when you walk on the floor of the deepest ocean, even the Buddha's eyes cannot see you. Even if your perception is swift as a shooting star and your action is like lightning, you still do not escape the fate of the sacred tortoise dragging its tail. When you get here, what is proper?

[HAKUIN] *When you stand on the summit of the highest peak*—This is the way it is with everyone who attains the transcendental and glimpses the peak of wonder. *Demons and outsiders cannot know you*—None can lay a hand on you: not the devil, not the heretics, not even the Buddha. “The gods find no road on which to strew flowers.” *When you walk on the floor of the deepest ocean*—At times the very room you are in at present is itself the floor of the deepest ocean, whose waves flood the skies. *Even the Buddha's eyes cannot see you*—not even with a magnifying glass. *Even if your perception is swift as a shooting star*—In the presence of a Zen master as described above, even a sharp mind *does not escape the fate of the sacred tortoise dragging its tail*. A trail is left, so one cannot avoid tipping one's hand. *What is proper?* How do you avoid dragging your tail, leaving a trail?

[TENKEI] *Highest . . . deepest*—This is that place in every single individual where no influence can enter, where even the eyes of Buddhas and the eyes of demons cannot reach. Ultimately there is no need for *the summit of the peak* or *the bottom of the ocean*; the point is to work freely beyond the ranks of Buddhas and Zen masters. This implicitly includes the actions of Isan and Iron Grindstone Ryu, which is beyond the reach even of Zennists with

eyes like shooting stars and minds like lightning. So when you get there, then what? If you don't know, observe the states of the two elders in the koan.

EXAMPLE

Iron Grindstone Ryu went to Isan. Isan said, "Old cow, you've come!"

She said, "Tomorrow there's a great communal feast on Mount Tai—are you going?"

Isan lay down. Iron Grindstone Ryu then left.

[HAKUIN] This is a meeting of adepts, in which there are no more views of Buddha or opinions of Dharma. *Are you going?* They travel together; here there are no tracks. *Isan lay down*—as might be expected, the slow collapse of a great general.

[TENKEI] *Old cow, you've come!* There is an echo in the words. Of what? There is an echo of "going into action among different kinds." *Tomorrow*—Are you going to the open feast on Five Peaks Mountain? This is simply a meeting of adepts; it is not Zen, it is not Tao. It is unobstructed action, moving when poked, rolling when pressed. When he *lay down*, then she *left*. What realm is this? It is where "cats and cows know."

VERSE

She rode an iron horse into the double fortress;
An edict came down reporting the six nations cleared.
Still holding the golden whip, she questioned a soldier who'd
come back;
In the depths of the night, who goes together walking the royal
road?

[HAKUIN] *She rode an iron horse*—Riding a swift steed, she rode right into a heavily fortified castle; this refers to how Iron Grindstone Ryu was at Isan's. After considerable exertion, having broken

through ten thousand miles of barriers, finally you come to the time when *the six nations are cleared*. *An edict came down*—When Isan said *You've come*, there was no guest or host; they were like two mirrors reflecting each other, so that one could not tell them apart. This is the time of great peace. *Still holding the golden whip*—Although the Iron Grindstone's military was thwarted without doing battle, her sharpness of mind hadn't stopped; her question *Are you going to the feast tomorrow?* is like the way a general remains heroic after peace is attained, asking returning soldiers if there is any iniquity anywhere. The returning soldiers are people coming back after a war is over; iniquity means clamor. *In the depths of the night, who goes together*—There is no more clamor, the battle lines have quietly been withdrawn; if there is no one coming or going, expediency is moot; no one knows the point of the meeting of Isan and the Iron Grindstone.

[TENKEI] First the Iron Grindstone galloped into Isan's castle to score a victory like a good warrior, but when the "edict" *You've come* was pronounced, the six nations were cleared and pacified; all raised the voice of the song of halcyon. Even so, being an old general used to warfare, even where perfect peace was completely established, she thought there might still be a fight here, so wielding her golden whip she called to Isan, a soldier who'd come back. Nevertheless Isan, sitting peacefully in halcyon in his own lifetime, had no enemy in his line of fire, so he immediately left without a trace. On the *royal road*, furthermore, since it's *in the depths of the night*, there are no officials coming and going, and it is perfectly quiet. This is the "place of special interest," the realm of Buddhas and Zen masters into which no one can spy, where there is no companionship whatsoever.

25

THE HERMIT'S STAFF

INTRODUCTION

If potential does not leave a static position, it falls into a sea of poison. If words do not startle the crowd, they fall into current convention. If you can distinguish black and white in the light of a spark, and can decide between killing and enlivening in a lightning flash, then you can cut off the ten directions and be completely inaccessible. Do you know there is such a time?

[HAKUIN] The entirety of this introduction applies to the example. *Potential* is what appears before being expressed in words; the *static position* is the cave of satori. To realize that “there is no bodhisattvahood to seek, no ordinary beings to save” is to be a burned sprout, a spoiled seed. This is leaving the absolute state inwardly experienced. *It falls into a sea of poison.* The sea of poison refers to false views. *If words do not startle the crowd*—This refers to words that would chill even Shakyamuni and Bodhidharma, spoken after having removed the tiara of satori, destroying the sea of poison. *They fall into current convention*—They get stuck in intellectual interpretations and emotional perceptions. *In the light of a spark*—When you pass through the hard-to-resolve and the hard-to-penetrate, you can discern the skills of students. *Cut off the ten directions*—Why travel to China or India? Even the Buddhas and Zen masters cannot approach.

[TENKEI] If you realize an awakening but do not eliminate leaking of views, you stick to the absolute stasis of transcendence in the realm of satori, which is to *fall into a sea of poison*. This is not the dwelling place of a Zennist: if you do not leave this, your words will not startle the crowd; without means of startling the heavens and shaking the earth, you are useless. But if you can instantly tell the difference

between *black and white, killing and enlivening*, you can *cut off the ten directions*. Do you know there can be such a time? If not, look at this koan and find out.

EXAMPLE

The hermit of Lotus Flower Peak held his staff up to a group and said, “When the ancients got here, why wouldn’t they stay?” No one spoke, so he himself answered, “Because they did not gain power on the road.” He also said, “What about the ultimate?” Again he himself replied, “With my staff across my shoulder, minding no one, I go straight into the myriad peaks.”

[HAKUIN] This hermit was a spiritual descendant of Ummon; this instruction of his applies to people of all capacities—higher, middling, and lesser. The tone of transcendence does not give out anything at all, but he will speak for the sake of the middling and the lesser among you. This example is a nine-tailed fox, which cannot be seen for sure. *The hermit held up his staff*—Many people tend to want to sit their butts down in the absolute state. *When the ancients got here*—These words are very strange! *Why wouldn’t they stay?* What is the hermit blabbering absent-mindedly about? Why would they stay? They did not stay in the realms of Buddhas or in the realms of demons either; they would go through anywhere, be it heaven or hell. *They did not gain power on the road*. Getting lost in differentiations is unproductive, so it won’t do! Proceed toward complete illumination of the four knowledges; the flowers and the scarlet foliage are both splendid indeed! From the point of view of people who *can put it to use on the road*, the absolute state is not even halfway along; the capital city is still far away. In regard to the sayings *because they did not gain power on the road* and *staff across my shoulder, minding no one*, unless you can distinguish black and white in a flash, you can’t know what the hermit means. *He also said, “What about the ultimate?”* That’s not enough; what about the bottom line? *I go straight into the myriad peaks*. “When you climb a mountain, you should go to the top; when you dive into

the ocean, you should reach the bottom.” If we have to label it, this refers to the four universal commitments.

[TENKEI] Why have the Buddhas and Zen masters since time immemorial not stopped at *this staff*? Once you recognize the staff, if you dwell on it, that’s wrong. Therefore they did not stay. But he poses a challenge—*why*—then answers himself *Because they did not gain power on the road*, meaning that they did not rely upon the power of the staff but stood independently and walked independently. The *road* is set up because reference is made to *the staff*: the real point of reference is the realm of freedom wherein one ultimately does not rely upon this staff. *He also said, “What about the ultimate?”* This is what it’s like not to stay anywhere. What about the domain of absolute certainty? *Again he himself replied—*This is a traveler on the Great Way totally unobstructed by anything at all, without a track or a trace anywhere in the ten directions.

VERSE

Dust and sand in his eyes, dirt in his ears,
He won’t stay in the myriad peaks.
The falling flowers and flowing waters are very extensive—
Take a quick look—who knows where he’s gone?

[HAKUIN] *Dust and sand in his eyes*—This refers to the hermit’s innocent stolidity even with ashes on his head and dirt on his face. The very substance of holding the staff up to the group is a rustic mallet with eyes that have never seen, eyes and nose full of sand. *He won’t stay in the myriad peaks*—He’s neither in the realm of Buddhas nor in the realm of demons; when you perfect knowledge of all kinds, if this is not visible to you then neither is the hermit. *The falling flowers and flowing waters*—Is he among the falling flowers? Is he by the flowing water? It cannot be known where the hermit is, or where he’s going. *Take a quick look*—Even the supernatural devil, the most evil one, cannot discern the hermit’s whereabouts, even with a magnifying glass.

[TENKEI] Watery eyes, runny nose, ultimately not even washing his feet, like an imbecile, like an idiot: though completely without ability, an unburdened wayfarer is in a state where there are no Buddhas to resort to above, and no self below. First the hermit is described, then such a person's behavior: *he won't stay in the myriad peaks*; having no track or trace, his whereabouts is unknowable. Well then, if you look to see whether he is in the profusion of falling flowers of the present moment, he is not; then if you think he's beside the flowing water, he's not there either. Wondering, if you *take a quick look*, you cannot find where he is, either in the present or in eternity. He's like a flash of lightning or a spark struck from flint: even Setcho cannot see him. This is the realm of the hermit who *won't stay in the myriad peaks*.

26

THE PEAK OF GREAT VALOR

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Hyakujo, “What is the special thing?”
Hyakujo said, “Sitting alone on the Peak of Great Valor.”
The monk bowed, whereupon Hyakujo hit him.

[HAKUIN] This is a question to test a master. This monk had laid hold of the great matter of Zen. *The special thing*—He asks about the essence of Zen; what is supremely valuable? This monk is a rascal; even if Hyakujo answers “Buddhahood” or “Zen mastery,” the monk is planning to toss it right back at him. *Sitting alone on the Peak of Great Valor*—Splendid! *The monk bowed*—He’s a bad guy; the monk used Hyakujo for a seat. *Hyakujo hit him*—The bit transmitted Zen master—to—Zen master can’t be done without a beating.

[TENKEI] The monk is presenting his view in his words. Anyway, what *is* special in Zen? What is not? Every individual must discern. *Sitting alone*—It was carried by this monk, but aren’t all of your activities special?

VERSE

The celestial colt gallops in the realm of Zen mastery.
In teaching methods, opening and closing are not the same track.
He retains the ability to change opportunely in a flash.
How laughable that someone comes to grab the tiger’s whiskers!

[HAKUIN] *The celestial colt gallops in the realm of Zen mastery.* This refers to the battlefield of spiritual encounter, where the Buddhas gather. Fine steeds who have broken through the bottom of satori not only gallop down the highway, they also gallop over narrow, winding mountain roads. Hyakujo, too, throwing himself into the melee of spiritual encounter, gallops east and west chasing students down, operating independently. This is just to somehow develop someone who can carry on the great work transmitted by the Zen masters. The celestial colt refers to Hyakujo. *In teaching methods, opening and closing are not the same track.* Springing into the arena of projecting constructed teaching methods, closing and opening freely, he chases students around. The closing and opening of the door of teaching methods means that the Zen masters throughout history have differed in their methods; imitating others is no use. *He retains the ability to change opportunely in a flash.* This refers to Hyakujo springing into action immediately at just the right moment. When two master swordsmen face off, they can see all the ins and outs of one another's aims and maneuvers, something hardly discernible from outside. *How laughable that someone comes to grab the tiger's whiskers!* This monk is a side-splitting laugh!

[TENKEI] When Hyakujo exercises his great potential and great function at the same time, he gallops freely in the ranks of the Buddhas and Zen masters, like a divine horse running in flight. But when teacher and student interact in the context of temporarily projected teaching methods, working freely holding still and letting go, opening up and closing down, his way of working is not in the same rut as run-of-the-mill teachers; it is exceptionally outstanding timely action. This is in praise of Hyakujo. Now then, this monk's action of bowing properly indicates that he is a lively fellow who is unobstructed at every turn and *retains the ability to change opportunely in a flash*, so he *comes to grab the tiger's whiskers*, and does quite well at it too, but when Setcho submits this to a close examination, it's a belly laugh. What's so funny? This monk was still unable to "ride the tiger's head"; this is unspeakably funny. So how do you ride the tiger's head? This is Setcho's opening, not admitting complete perfection: that's the living eye of a Zen master.

27

THE BODY EXPOSED IN THE AUTUMN WIND

INTRODUCTION

Giving ten answers to one question, understanding the other three corners when one is mentioned, releasing a hawk on seeing a rabbit, using the wind to fan the fire, not sparing one's eyebrows—all this aside for the moment, what about when entering a tiger's lair?

[HAKUIN] *Giving ten answers to one question*—An enlightened and intelligent teaching master discerns the potentialities of whoever comes, dealing with other people after having obtained an infinite wealth of truth, at once telling all about the conditions of the oceans and the mountains, the wind and the moon. *Understanding the other three corners when one is mentioned*—First perception, then action; one does not release a hawk to catch a lark or a crane, one acts on the basis of one's perception of each individual. *Using the wind to fan the fire*—Having expertly raised a sail, one needs no more exertion, dealing with people using expedient means freely. *Not sparing one's eyebrows*—leaving aside teachers who educate people . . . *What about when entering a tiger's lair?* This is dying and being reborn along with students, when students enter a tiger's lair.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, "When the tree withers and the leaves fall, then what?"

Ummon said, "The body is exposed in the autumn wind."

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Ummon*—How is it when matured by frost and withering? He covertly presents literary color: "I do not ask about

Buddhahood or Zen mastery: what is this?” Throwing blinding-powder at him, he tried to take Ummon. He saw the whole world uniformly in terms of the realm where subject and object are transcended and your skin is shed. Absurd!

[TENKEI] What season is this? This monk was perceptive to pose this question. When the flowers blossom in the spring sun, what time is this? When trees wither, what time is this? When eating and drinking, what time is it? What time is this very day? Take a look! If we have to label the time in question, let’s say it is when the *tree* of complications, including institutionalized Zen and Buddhism, *withers*, the time when “the vine withers and the tree falls.”

[HAKUIN] *Ummon said, The body is exposed in the autumn wind.* The whole thing is right here at hand, flowers and foliage and all. When the dragon howls, clouds rise; when the tiger roars, wind kicks up. In a contest where the outcome could not be predicted, he came through in the clutch. Even in the light you cannot see his trail, yet it has never been concealed anywhere in the world.

[TENKEI] Is this mysterious? Is it marvelous? Is it mind? Is it an object? What realm is this? This is a reply that fits like the lid of a box, occupying the essential bridge, not letting ordinary or holy pass, not changing at all. This is a statement that contains the universe. It might also be expressed as “the sole body in myriad forms.” Here, if you try to figure, that’s already the end of the Zen heritage!

VERSE

Since the question has the source, the answer is also in the same place.

The three statements should be distinguished; one arrow soars into the sky.

Over the great plains, cold winds wail; in the endless sky, scattered showers drizzle.

Haven’t you seen the traveler at Shaolin, sitting long, yet to return?

Remaining quietly on Mount Bear Ears, one gathering.

[HAKUIN] *Since the question has the source*—It has in it the Zen teaching of Ummon, being ornery as it is. *The answer is also in the same place*—like the clapper hitting the bell.

[TENKEI] This monk's question was perceptive, and so was the answer likewise.

[HAKUIN] *The three statements should be distinguished*—Ummon normally included three statements in one; you should discern them.

[TENKEI] This answer is a “statement that contains the universe,” an answer “fitting like box and lid,” but which of the three statements is this?

[HAKUIN] *One arrow soars into the sky*—Setcho's way of distinguishing them is shooting right through *the body is exposed in the autumn wind* with one arrow.

[TENKEI] Did you see? Did you hear? It leaves no tracks; its trail is indiscernible! The versification is complete herewith, but Setcho has extra ability, so he gives a detailed exposition to enable you to see.

[HAKUIN] *Over the great plains, cold winds*—This is another example of Setcho's extra talent; this is marvelously expressive! In the desolation of the autumn plains, cold wind howls. The design is exquisite!

[TENKEI] Here there are no useless labels like Zen or Buddhism. It has nothing to do with the ordinary or the holy. It is manifestly exposed throughout all time, without any gap anywhere, clearly evident, grandly revealed, there when you open your eyes; throughout sky and earth, the body is exposed to the autumn wind, the whole world has never concealed it.

[HAKUIN] *Haven't you seen the traveler at Shaolin, sitting long*—These words are so terrifying that Setcho's poisonous breath is not a whit less potent than Ummon's guts. The reference is to Bodhidharma, who sat for nine years with his face to a wall. *Remaining quietly on Mount Bear Ears*—Who can reach the state described above? The very substance of the Zen founder's facing a wall at Shaolin is itself the time and the state of *the tree withering and the leaves falling*. That old man who remained sitting as long as nine years on Bear Ears Mountain is exceptional. Why mention Bodhidharma? It is where there is no Buddha or Zen master: “When

the skin is shed completely, there is only one reality.” This is the very substance of “the body exposed in the golden wind.”

[TENKEI] Setcho is referring to the eternal unchanging living Bodhidharma, who neither comes nor goes, who has been living on this mountain from before the beginning of time, urging everyone to open their eyes and see.

28

NOT MIND OR BUDDHA

EXAMPLE

Nansen called on Master Hyakujo Nirvana. Hyakujo asked, “Have the sages since time immemorial had a teaching they didn’t tell anyone?”

Nansen said, “Yes.”

Hyakujo said, “What is the teaching they didn’t tell anyone?”

Nansen said, “It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not a thing.”

Hyakujo said, “You said it!”

Nansen said, “That’s all I know; what about you?”

Hyakujo said, “I’m not a great teacher either—how would I know whether it has been told or not?”

Nansen said, “I don’t understand.”

Hyakujo said, “I’ve already told you too much.”

[HAKUJIN] This example is not to be taken lightly. *Hyakujo asked—* This question is like a deadly poison. *A teaching they didn’t tell anyone*—that is, something that cannot be explained to others. *Nansen said, “Yes.”* Truth comes out of a convict’s mouth. “Yes” is cold. It was in order to say what he would later say that he drew his bow, keeping a reserve force of a million troops in his chest; when you confront an opponent in chess, it is impossible to conceal your moves. *What has not been told to anyone*—It rings out through the mountains and the valleys. The first arrow was still light; the second arrow struck deep. *Nansen said, “It is not mind, . . . it is not a thing.”* He came up with a bunch of nonsense. No kind of arrow can penetrate an iron shield! *You said it!* “Then you’ve already said it”; he tried to deliver the coup de grâce. Singing and clapping accompany each other. *Nansen said, “That’s all I know”*—He grabs the other’s whistling arrow and shoots it right back. *I am not a great teacher*

either—He is completely unruffled. Indeed, it's like looking at a precious sword from heaven. But everyone's a bunch of thieves. *How would I know whether it's been told or not?* The teaching that's been told and the untold teaching are the fangs of a man-eating lion. *Nansen said, "I don't understand."* Cornering him with "I have no idea," he changed his strategy. In an encounter between skilled sumo wrestlers, wind follows the tiger, clouds follow the dragon. *I've already told you too much.* This has been an extraordinary, inconceivable conversation, but there is nothing quite as splendid as this last statement. Is it the same as Seppo's "My office involves a lot of work," or is it different? Gold molds an iron mountain range.

[TENKEI] What teaching have the Buddhas and Zen masters never told anyone? You must return to yourself to see. Ultimately the unspoken is inaccessible, where even Buddha didn't say a word, to which even Bodhidharma couldn't point. Eyes horizontal, nose vertical: it is what no one can do anything about, not even the sages from time immemorial. *It is not mind*—Is this something that descended from heaven? Is it something that welled up from earth? Every individual ought to look and see. *Hyakujo said, "You said it!"* What a pity, a regrettable footnote, eh! *Nansen said, "That's all I know"*—Knowing how to change and get through, Nansen tosses a question back at Hyakujo. *Hyakujo said, "I am not a great teacher"*—He quietly prepared a way to escape. *Nansen said, "I don't understand."* Does he understand but say he doesn't, or does he really not understand? This is a bit of a difficult spot. *Hyakujo said, "I've already told you too much."* What did he tell him? Do you know?

VERSE

Zen masters and Buddhas never helped people;
Seekers past and present run as if racing.
When a clear mirror is set up, the range of images is distinct.
Each one faces south to see the northern dipper.
The dipper handle hangs down; there is no place to look for it.
One may take up the nostrils but lose the mouth.

[HAKUIN] *Zen masters and Buddhas never helped people*—The Zen masters of India and China are represented as having helped people become liberated, yet here it says they never helped people; why is that? If I were to pamper you, I would say that the dialogue between Nansen and Hyakujo is summed up in the expression “talking all day without speaking.” Have the sages since time immemorial had a teaching they didn’t tell anyone? Answering Yes to this scary first question was gutsy. This sense is versified in the first line; shall we call it “never having said a single word, having no doctrine to give people,” no Buddha teaching and no people being taught? *Seekers past and present run as if racing.* The meaning of the statement that “the Buddhas of all times never say a word” cannot be known unless you run. For the sake of the truth, run even through a wilderness infested with lurking tigers. *When a clear mirror is set up, the range of images is distinct.* In front of a Zennist, “when a foreigner comes, a foreigner is reflected.” This is in high praise of both Nansen and Hyakujo. If you see this meeting as equality, it is differentiated; if you see it as differentiation, it is equality. Mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers; there is differentiation within equality, and there is equality within differentiation. *Each one faces south and sees the northern dipper.* When you see essential nature, you are free like this. *The dipper handle hangs down; there is no place to look for it.* It is clear where the dipper handle hangs, but the meeting between Nansen and Hyakujo is quite inscrutable. *One may take up the nostrils but lose the mouth.* In the meeting of Nansen and Hyakujo, if you think the nose has been grasped, the mouth opens—there is no way to express it. The dipper handle is an interesting thing: just when you think it’s in front of you, it’s suddenly behind you.

[TENKEI] The thing that Zen masters and Buddhas never did for others is sheer inaccessibility, where there is neither enlightenment nor delusion. It is naturally so, not cultivated. It is originally complete. There is no doctrine that can help people. The whole koan is versified in this one line. Without knowing that it is like this, *seekers past and present* have lost themselves and gone around asking about transcendence and accommodation, about Buddhas and Zen masters. Not knowing that every individual is complete is certainly painful, something that flusters and confuses people, sending them

scurrying around helter-skelter. Why? *When a clear mirror is set up*—Right and wrong, long and short, mountains, rivers, and earth are clearly visible when set before the mirror. Even so, concerning the fact that *the range of images is distinct*, when you produce all sorts of different views and obscure all things with discriminatory comparisons, it is because you don't know they are reflections in a mirror. As long as you see delusion and enlightenment, right and wrong, ordinary people and saints, myriad forms and dimensions, as simply reflections of the distinction of the array of images, then there's nothing the matter—it is simply a matter of seeing your face clearly, with eyes horizontal and nose vertical. At that time, *each one faces south*. Know that there is no losing sight of it whichever way you turn. It is because of not knowing this that *seekers past and present run as if racing*. Having said this much, Setcho twists it around and says *The dipper handle hangs down*, thus raising a wave: Look! Does the tail point to the west? To the east? Is it in the heavens? Is it on earth? Open your eyes and look! This having been said, there is no place to look: the trail is unknowable; you surely cannot know it. If you seek to see, *one may take up the nostrils but lose the mouth*. In any case you will lose whatever you get, so don't grasp at all, and yet do not reject either. Ultimately, do not move, do not turn around—*just this is It*.

29

THE AEONIC FIRE

INTRODUCTION

When fish swim in it, water becomes turbid; when birds fly past, feathers drop. Lucidly distinguishing host and guest, clearly differentiating black and white, is just like a mirror on its stand, or a bright jewel in the hand—the native appears, the alien shows up, manifest in the voice, apparent in the look.

[HAKUIN] *When fish swim in it, water becomes turbid*—A teacher discerns the potentials of all comers. *Lucidly distinguishing host and guest*—When you clearly understand your own essential nature, you can discern the capabilities of teachers and students and see whether they are in the state of a host or in the state of a guest. *Clearly differentiating black and white*—This means there is no misperception of good and evil. *Manifest in the voice, apparent in the look*—The adept sees everything before a single word is spoken.

[TENKEI] A Zen teacher sees through the standpoint of a student, clearly distinguishing guest and host, black and white, like a mirror on its stand, reflecting both the native and the alien, missing nothing, seeing through people's hearts and guts by the evidence of what they say and the appearances they put on. Therefore in the presence of an enlightened teacher there can be no secrets.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Daizui, “When the universe is destroyed in the fire ending the aeon, will *this* be destroyed or not?”

Daizui said, “Destroyed.”

The monk said, “Then it goes along with that?”
Daizui said, “It goes along with that.”

[HAKUIN] When fire erupts from uninterrupted hell, the entire universe is burned up. *Will this be destroyed*—“This” pervades the skies above and the earth below. *Daizui said, “Destroyed.”* This disposal of the matter, cutting it off and letting it go with *Destroyed*, is utterly beyond description. The very act of spitting this out was cold. This *Destroyed* is not in the Buddhist scriptures; hereby mountains, rivers, hells, and heavens are all entirely shattered. *The monk said, “Then it goes along with that?”* This monk missed the point; what a dither he’s in! “You mean *this* is destroyed along with myriad things?” In other words, does It go along with transient mundane phenomena? This monk is like a dog chasing a clod. *Daizui said, “It goes along with that.”* The more you look up to it the higher it is; the more you bore into it the harder it is. No need for inquiries into enlightenment or delusion; it goes along with fire, it goes along with water. *That* refers to the universe. This is a terrifying saying; the ancients appreciated it too.

[TENKEI] In all koans, the first thing to look at is the standpoint of the teacher. As for *this*, each individual must see what it is. Is it something destructible? Is it something indestructible? Is it something created? Is it something that passes away? Is it something that exists? Is it something that does not exist? Ultimately it is not something that is destroyed, nor is it something that is not destroyed—whether it is said to be destroyed or not destroyed, in either case you have a way out.

VERSE

Posing a question in the light of the aeonic fire,
The Zen monk was still stuck at a dual barrier.
Touchingly, for a single statement, “it goes along with that,”
He traveled intently back and forth ten thousand miles alone.

[HAKUIN] *Posing a question in the light of the aeonic fire*—He posed his question at the point where the universe burned up. This line has a way out, which everyone must personally discern. *The Zen monk was still stuck at a dual barrier.* He is stuck at the dual barrier of *destroyed* and *not destroyed*, but look at your own basis. When you shoot through this dual barrier with one arrow, the world becomes wider.

[TENKEI] The underlying meaning is that the fire that consumes the universe at the end of an aeon is already upon you all, so everyone should urgently make a thorough investigation; if you waste time hanging around, you'll lose your life.

30

BIG RADISHES

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “I have heard you met Nansen in person. Is it true?”

Joshu said, “Chin province produces a giant radish.”

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Joshu*—This is a question testing the host. The question implies that there is originally nothing to seek. *Is it true that you met Nansen in person?* Asking about something that is known, he plans to give him a beating if he says yes, and also give him a beating if he says no. He’s trying to see Joshu’s level of skill. *Joshu said, “Chin province produces a giant radish.”* Did he meet Nansen? Did he not meet him? He’s a cold old monk—there’s no way to handle him.

[TENKEI] This monk was one with eyes. Apparently he was checking out the message personally communicated from Nansen to Joshu. *Chin province produces a giant radish.* What the heck is this? Here, if you speak of personal meeting, this is already dualism.

VERSE

Chin province produces a giant radish;
Zennists everywhere take an example.
If you only know the perennial,
How can you distinguish the white of the swan and the black of
the crow?
Thief, thief—he’s snatched a Zennist’s nostrils!

[HAKUIN] *Chin province produces a giant radish*—The main idea of the verse is in making this saying represent the totality of everything. *Zennists everywhere take an example.* Hearing of good sayings, people try to imitate them, even making them into verses and poems, but even so there is no one who really takes an example. Now, at present, having gotten a rough understanding, if you consider Joshu's answer a good saying and think all you have to do is name the famous produce of various regions, you cannot even get a sip off the surface of the soup of the giant radish of Chin province. *If you only know the perennial*—Past and present, people can't even distinguish the white of the swan from the black of the crow. *How can you distinguish the white of the swan and the black of the crow?* If you want to know the flavor of the giant radish of Chin province, get to know the root basis of the white of the swan and the black of the crow. The white of the swan and the black of the crow is where total potential comes out. *Thief, thief*—This is cold! This is a supernatural life-taking talisman. All possessions are stolen away. *He's snatched a Zennist's nostrils!* The old thief Joshu twisted this monk's nose.

[TENKEI] Everyone takes this saying as a supreme model from which to take an example, but since ancient times they only know it as a supreme example and do not know why it is a supreme example. Their inability to discern what everyone knows is miserable. Cranes are white, crows are black, eyes are horizontal, noses are vertical—everyone knows this. It is not received and not given, not straightened out for us by the Buddhas or Zen masters; even knowing this, they really don't know. This versifies the whole koan: *If you only know* and *How can you distinguish* are the eyes of this verse. Then Setcho again rouses a wave of the Zen river, saying *Thief, thief.* Are the Buddhas of past, present, and future thieves? Is it the Zen masters throughout history who are thieves? Is it Joshu? Or is Setcho himself a thief? In any case, Zennists' nostrils have been snatched. Your nostrils too have been snatched off! And not only your nose—if you don't watch out, you'll have your eyes switched on you. Don't let that happen! Where did the theft occur? Causing something unknown to be discerned in some way is a great theft; when you discern, that is the switch. It is naturally different from the beginning.

31

CARRYING THE RINGED STAFF

INTRODUCTION

Stir, and images appear; become aware, and ice forms. Then again, even if you don't stir and don't become aware, you can't stay out of a wild fox cave. Penetrate thoroughly, trust completely, so there is no blinding obstruction at all, and you will be like a dragon in the water, like a tiger in the mountains. Let go, and even rubble radiates light; hold still, and even gold loses its luster. The koans of the ancients were unavoidably indirect, but tell me, what do they discuss?

[HAKUIN] This introduction is a classic, telling how Zen has been practiced past and present. Overall there are three stages. When a single thought stirs, images of myriad forms appear. The problem before seeing essential nature is that when a thought arises in the midst of nondiscriminatory knowledge, when you think of men, images of men appear in your mind, and when you think of women, the images of women occur to you, like the moon reflected in water. These two phrases come from Elder Li's *Discourse on the Flower Ornament Scripture*. In this context, both movement and awareness mean something wrong. When a thought stirs, when a thought comes to awareness, then you lose sight of the original substance of being as is. This "awareness" is false consciousness, not genuine awakeness. *Become aware, and ice forms*—Becoming aware means that where not a single thought arises it is like walking over ice, like a single expanse of crystal. When you determine that it is foolish when a thought stirs, the present thought disappears; after that is thorough clarity. *Even if you don't stir and don't become aware, you can't stay out*—Even if no images are reflected, no ice forms, and you do not think of good or bad, if you hold on to the state of not stirring and not becoming aware, *you can't stay out of a wild fox cave* and will not

reach the realm of vast expanse where the overwhelming doubt has ceased. It's fine to be unburdened, but to give that recognition is to enter the wild fox cave, where there is no Buddha and no heaven. *Penetrate thoroughly, trust completely*—penetrating the stories that are hard to penetrate, and realizing them truly. So *there is no blinding obstruction at all*—You can see even the whiskers of an ant. *A dragon in the water, . . . a tiger in the mountains*—If you understand, you are free and independent; movement and awareness are both functions applied on the road. Entering the realm of demons, you walk over the demons' heads; among ordinary people, you walk over ordinary people's heads. *Let go, and even rubble radiates light*—When you ease up and let go of the absolute, then from the highest heaven above to the lowest hell below even horse manure and weasel droppings radiate light. *Hold still, and even gold loses its luster*—Buddhas and Zen masters beg for their lives; they can't even show their faces.

[TENKEI] Here, the moment you stir, a shadow appears; as soon as you notice, ice forms, making an obstruction. Furthermore, *even if you don't stir and don't become aware, you can't stay out of a wild fox cave*. This is a summary of the obstacles students face. If you *penetrate thoroughly*, penetrating the matter of your own self and trusting completely, without any obstacles, you are *like a dragon in the water*, lively, free, uninhibited, competent, and versatile, independent and autonomous wherever you may be.

EXAMPLE

Mayoku came to Shokei with his ringed staff in hand, circled the meditation seat thrice, planted his staff with a flourish, and stood tall. Shokei said, "Right, right."

Setcho commented, "Mistake!"

Mayoku also went to Nansen, circled the meditation seat thrice, planted his staff with a flourish, and stood tall.

Nansen said, "Wrong, wrong."

Setcho commented, "Mistake!"

Mayoku then said, "Shokei said 'right'—why do you say 'wrong'?"

Nansen said, “Shokei himself is right; it’s you that’s wrong. This is whirled about by the wind and eventually disintegrates.”

[HAKUIN] *Stood tall*—“Walking alone under the blue sky.” *Shokei said, “Right, right*”—One hand upholds, spreading flowers on top of brocade. *Mistake*—This immense sword against the sky cannot be praised enough. This *mistake* is rarely applicable. *Wrong, wrong*—Another immense sword against the sky. *Mistake* cannot be praised enough; a snake swallows a turtle nose. *Mayoku then said*—Making himself a hostage, Mayoku played the fool in order to see Nansen. He’s got nerves of steel! *Shokei himself is right*—This is not approval. It is a shrewd reply. When let go, both are released; in defeat, all lose. This much has to be said; the eye that distinguishes dragons and snakes sees straight. *This is whirled about by the wind*—Don’t you think Mayoku knows this much? All that walking around brandishing a staff was his being blown about by the wind, you see.

[TENKEI] Mayoku acted quite Zen-like in the manner of the Enlightened Overnight Guest, but did he really match up or not? Each of you must see distinctly. To begin with, Mayoku acted out this strategy because he too had some perception. *Shokei said, “Right, right.”* Does he really agree, or not? The sword that kills, the sword that gives life: this is where you die or live. *Setcho commented “Mistake!”* Is it Shokei’s mistake? Mayoku’s mistake? Whose mistake is it? We’ll find out in the verse. *Nansen said, “Wrong.”* Does he disagree, or does he agree? This too is where you die or live. *Mayoku then said*—Putting on his cap of partial understanding (“Shokei approved me”), he carried it around with him, so when he was then told *wrong*, unfortunately his flaw suddenly came out. *Shokei himself is right*—He completely takes away what Mayoku was dwelling on. *This is whirled by the wind*—Mayoku came wearing stocks giving evidence of his crime, so Nansen settled the case according to the facts.

VERSE

This *mistake*, that *mistake*—be sure not to omit them!

Then the waves grow calm on the four seas,
The hundred rivers return to the ocean tide.
The standard of the ancient rod is higher than the twelve gates;
Each gate has a road, empty and desolate.
Not desolate—the adept should seek medicine for no disease.

[HAKUIN] *This* mistake, *that* mistake—These *mistakes* are the eyes of this example, wonder drugs that cure the disease of Buddhas and the disease of Zen masters. *Be sure not to omit them*—Don't shelve them! You must by all means penetrate these two *mistakes*. When you penetrate them, *the waves grow calm on the four seas*, with nary a breeze blowing, a time of unruffled serenity. *The hundred rivers return to the ocean tide*. There is no blockage or stagnation. *The standard of the ancient rod is higher*—The point of brandishing the ringed staff, the intent of Mayoku's uninhibited stride, treads upon even the twelve gates of heaven. After this the high standard of carrying the ringed staff is expressed, the sinew and bones of the verse. *The standard of the ancient rod is higher* refers to the dignified air of brandishing the ringed staff and standing tall. The ancient rod is the staff; it is called an ancient rod because it is not something that has only now been obtained. The *twelve gates* of the abode of Indra, emperor of gods, are after all the *twelve gates* of the senses and sense data. Each gate is a highway; see that road where there are no labels of ordinary or holy. *Each gate has a road, empty and desolate*. The twelve gates are wide open in all directions, but even though there is a road, there is no one on it, so it is empty and desolate. The point of the loftiness of the way of the ancient rod is empty infinity; desolation means being thoroughly cleared, so that there are no such things as life and death, delusion and enlightenment, Buddhas and bodhisattvas. That, however, falls into the cave of the twin void of person and phenomena, so Setcho finally turns around with *not desolate*: this is medicine for no disease.

[TENKEI] *This* mistake, *that* mistake—This koan is a long one, so Setcho brings it up by skewering it on these two *mistakes*. Even though Shokei says “right,” it's a mistake; even though Nansen says “wrong,” it's a mistake. Indeed, even if the Buddha shows up, it's a mistake; even if the founder of Zen shows up, it's a mistake. A

thousand mistakes, ten thousand mistakes—since everything is a *mistake*, everyone thinks this means everything is to be abandoned, but *be sure not to omit them*: make sure you don't throw them away, Setcho stipulates, because then the four seas are clear and calm, long is long, short is short, with no give and take at all. If you can see this, you will be at peace within yourself. A breeze every five days, a rain shower every ten, clear wind and bright moon, nothing to grasp, nothing to reject, originally there is great peace; so even if Mayoku doesn't stiffly show off his Zen device, you ought to give that ringed staff he carries a shake yourself! Pure wind gusting, when you've clearly penetrated the twelve golden rings, in each of the twelve gates there is a way out, a living road through the skies, unobstructed in all directions. *Desolate* means silent, quiet, without any obstruction at all. There is no state more alive than this, but then people would complacently fixate on unconcern, so rousing a wave he turns around and says *not desolate*; here there is a place that is not that way, so a complete adept, even though an individual without sickness, should seek medicine for no sickness, because attainment only comes after having evolved beyond the other side. The *medicine for no disease* with which he terminated convention and tossed it into the beyond is not in the medical texts. It is a medicine that not even Buddhas or Zen masters can dispense.

32

STANDING THERE

INTRODUCTION

When the ten directions are cut off, a thousand eyes open at once. When a single statement interrupts all currents, myriad impulses cease. Is there anyone who will die the same and be born the same? If you cannot clear up the matter at hand, here is a trailer of the ancients.

[HAKUIN] *When the ten directions are cut off*—Teachers don't give out so much as a drop; even if students get furious at them, they pay it no mind. *A thousand eyes open at once*—The ten directions are seen all at once; grasping this precipitous point, students suddenly awaken. *When a single statement interrupts all currents*—Instruction beyond conventional patterns cuts the roots of hell, and cuts the root of Buddhahood; Rinzai produced Elder Jo with his horrendous skill. *Is there anyone who will die the same and be born the same?* It takes a Rinzai to comprehend this point and actively function in the manner mentioned above. *The matter at hand*—Although the matter at hand has never been obscured, because students cannot clear it up, there is no choice but to put out a trailer. The pillars being vertical and the sills being horizontal are both included in *the matter at hand*: no need to carry the burden of your self; as long as you are clear, *the matter at hand* will be like something reflected in a mirror.

EXAMPLE

Elder Jo asked Rinzai, "What is the great meaning of Buddha's teaching?"

Getting off his meditation seat, Rinzai grabbed Jo and gave him a slap, then pushed him away. Jo stood there motionless.

A monk standing by said, “Elder Jo, why don’t you bow?”

Just as Jo bowed, suddenly he was greatly enlightened.

[HAKUIN] This is an example of Rinzai management. *Rinzai grabbed Jo*—Cut through with a single statement, and myriad impulses cease; it is necessary to break up everything, even satori, so Rinzai grabbed him with his left hand and slapped him with his right hand. *Jo stood there motionless*. He stood there unaffected, as if nothing had happened. Splendid! This state manifested because of the power of stability deriving from long-term practice of meditation. This is where the waves of the ocean of learning evaporate overnight; let him stand there till tomorrow. *A monk standing by said*—This was a perceptive monk, one of Rinzai’s associates. *Suddenly Jo was greatly enlightened*. He simply revived; there is no odor of satori here.

[TENKEI] *Rinzai gave Jo a slap*—What “great meaning of Buddha’s teaching” would you talk about *here*? *Jo stood there*—A complete blank, he stood there unaffected, whereupon a bystander suggested that he bow and be done, to close the matter; it’s not that he had not had a vision of enlightenment, it’s just that his awkwardness was spoiling the party. Just as he bowed at this suggestion, somehow he suddenly awakened, they say.

VERSE

Obaku’s whole potential follows in his footsteps;
Brought forth, why should it remain at ease?
The great spirit lifted its hand without much ado,
Splitting Flower Mountain’s ten million layers.

[HAKUIN] *Obaku’s whole potential follows in his footsteps*—Obaku’s great potential and great function were perpetuated intact by Rinzai alone. *Brought forth, why should it remain at ease?* Bringing forth the whole potential, today Jo’s handling is not easygoing. *The great spirit*

lifted its hand without much ado—God hoisted earth to fashion the mountains; the holes left afterward became the lakes. *Splitting Flower Mountain's ten million layers*—The flowery stage of theatrical heroics has collapsed, everywhere is broken down. Even Flower Mountain isn't worth a pinch. Great penetration, great awakening.

[TENKEI] Rinzai has now managed to follow up completely on the trail of Obaku's great potential and great function, and he puts them into action; why should that necessarily be something easygoing and relaxed? This is the deliberate operation of potential and function beyond religion and beyond convention, coming forth directly and entering in directly, without the slightest gap. What is that? Today his technique of breaking up the elder's sense of doubt, using a single device and a single object to cause him to wake up fully, is a genuine continuation of Obaku's great potential and great function. Praising Rinzai to the heavens in this way, Setcho likens his awesome power to the force of the great spirit splitting Flower Mountain.

33

THE SYMBOL OF THE CIRCLE

INTRODUCTION

He can't tell east from west or north from south, all through the day and all through the night, but can you say he is asleep? Sometimes his eyes are like comets, but can you say he is awake? Sometimes he calls south north, but is this mindfulness or mindlessness? Is this a wayfarer or an ordinary person? If you can penetrate here, you will know the ultimate point. Only then can you tell whether the ancients were thus or not. Now tell me, what time is this?

[HAKUIN] *He can't tell east from west or north from south*—One who has seen essential nature and realized great awakening goes into the home mountains of the fundamental and seems to know nothing, as the fundamental in oneself makes no distinction between east and west. Gaining entry and abiding there, one does not know mountain from river, or north from south; the season where winter and summer are not divided is the time when the root of life is about to be severed; undifferentiated equanimity beyond this is mistaken equanimity, because it is not functional. *All through the day*—There is no matter at all. *Can you say he is asleep?* The time when the life root is severed cannot be called slumber or sleepiness. *Sometimes his eyes are like comets*—sometimes a thousand eyes open, swift as comets. *Can you say he is awake?* That is, clear and sharp. *Sometimes he calls south north*—Churning the Yangtze River into butter, emerging from the realm of Buddhas, entering into the realm of demons, he is independent and free. *Is this a wayfarer or an ordinary person?* Is it a Buddha or an ordinary mortal?

EXAMPLE

Ministry president Chin So went to see Shifuku. Seeing him coming, Shifuku drew a circle. Chin So said, “I’ve already missed the point just coming here like this—how much more so to go on and draw a circle!” Shifuku immediately shut the door of his room.

Setcho commented, “Chin So only had one eye.”

[HAKUIN] The use of circular symbols is called silent discourse, or attainment through objects. *To go on and draw a circle*—Here Chin So turns the spear around, planning to chase Shifuku into the circle. *Shifuku immediately shut the door of his room*. Well, well, how splendid! Now even the ministry president will be stupefied in an awkward suspense. *Chin So only had one eye*. Is this criticism? Is this praise? Everyone should make an effort to see.

[TENKEI] *Drew a circle*—What is this? What is this all about? *I’ve already missed the point*—What point is that? Look into this. Seen from the fundamental way, for the ministry president even to come this far misses the point; how much more so things like that. He put his Zen potential to work, indicating nonacceptance. *Shut*—Shifuku took refuge in his room and shut the door. This could only be done by someone with the eye on the forehead, and the pair of eyes perfectly clear. *Setcho commented*—Because the ministry president had Zen potential, he *only had one eye*.

VERSE

Round, round, the pearls go round, ringing like hanging jades,
Borne on horses, carried on asses, loaded on iron ships,
Imparted to unconcerned travelers of mountains and seas.

When fishing for a tortoise, down goes a cage trap.

Setcho added, “No Zen monk in the world can hop out.”

[HAKUIN] The roundness and reverberation of the pearl versify the circle. The whole world is one. All conscious beings, both male and female, are perfect jewels. This is called the infinity of

interdependent relations, absorption in the precious mirror, and absorption in interaction. Do not understand this line in terms of the realm of the absolute in itself: he just tossed this little bit in front of the ministry president; everywhere is full of gems, even this place right here, full of gems. If you honor Buddha, Buddha honors you. It is clear everywhere, evident in everything; this room itself is a violet gold Buddha of Infinite Light. *Borne on horses, carried on asses, loaded on iron ships*—These are actually Setcho's circles. Whether by sea or by highway, they are gems just the same, but they cannot be loaded on ordinary boats; they have to be iron ships. This means that you cannot absorb them without having once arrived at the state of total darkness and cut through the field of your storage consciousness, because there is even more than can be loaded on horses, oxen, and boats. *Imparted to unconcerned travelers of mountains and seas*—This treasure is rarely handed over to those who have not completely exhausted views of Buddha and views of Dharma. This unconcern is not the unconcern of simply being as you are at the moment—it has to be unconcern that is attained by having broken through myriad locks, reducing your bones to powder and atomizing your body, passing through what is hard to penetrate and hard to resolve. Buddhas and Zen masters realize the equivalent of true enlightenment through attainment of this unconcern: it is not easily imparted to someone with intellectual views and interpretations like the ministry president. *When fishing for a tortoise, down goes a cage trap*. This circle is for the purpose of fishing out someone really genuine. *No Zen monk in the world can hop out*. Even the Buddhas of past, present, and future, and the Zen masters throughout history, cannot jump out of this circle.

[TENKEI] First of all, Shifuku drew a perfect circle as if it were something unusual, but Setcho doesn't think it so rare. There are a lot of them in the I-Gyo branch of Zen, as many as ninety-seven; but at Setcho's place there are even more, *borne on horses*: loaded on horses and hauled by oxen on land, loaded on sturdy iron ships and loaded on rafts on the seas, filling everywhere, in vast quantities. The ministry president's courteous refusal to accept was excessively deferential. Who should they be given to? Better given to unconcerned travelers of mountains and seas. What would they do

with them? Use them to catch giant tortoises, or perhaps make them into headgear for horses? Or then again, because they're round, might they also be suitable for nose rings for oxen? They can be used for anything freely, but that is only known to unconcerned travelers of mountains and seas, *fast asleep*, giant tortoises beyond teachers and beyond standards. But they can only be employed by such as use their own essential nature in everyday activities without being self-conscious of it, and are free from any odor of Buddhism or Zen. This is the state of unconcern represented by Shifuku in taking refuge in his room. To someone like the ministry president, with something in his gut and pride in his understanding, it would have been reasonable for Shifuku to have shut his door without having given anything, much less a fresh fish. This is what I call Setcho's method of breaking the circle. *Setcho added*, overturning the confines of unconcern, "*No Zen monk in the world*"—This circle turns into a cliché for Zen monks, a nest from which they cannot get out. Can any of you leap out and put it to use? How?

34

FIVE ELDERS PEAK

EXAMPLE

Gyozan asked a monk, “Where have you just come from?”

The monk said, “Cottage Mountain.”

Gyozan said, “Did you visit Five Elders Peak?”

The monk said, “I never got there.”

Gyozan said, “You never traveled the mountain.”

Ummon remarked, “This talk was all a conversation in the weeds for the sake of compassion.”

[HAKUIN] This example is a difficult case with a number of significant details; the I-Gyo Zen message is quite hard to interpret. Thus even Master Goso described the teaching of this school as “a broken tablet lying across an ancient road.” *Where have you just come from?* This is an ordinary question, but if you therefore think it’s the usual, you’re mistaken. *Cottage Mountain*—This is also called Kuang’s Cottage, or Kuang’s Hermitage, because the hermit Doctor Kuang lived in retirement on this mountain in ancient times. *Did you visit Five Elders Peak?* If you went to Cottage Mountain, did you visit its Five Elders Peak? *I never got there.* He doesn’t even reveal his shadow. *You never traveled the mountain.* Among the outward manifestations of the I-Gyo school of Zen, the ancients appreciated this saying. That is why Ummon made such a remark, leaking quite a bit; even the canes of Rinzai and Tokusan cannot match. Why is there such significance in it? You must make the effort to see for yourself—explanation by pictures won’t work. *Ummon remarked, “This talk was all for compassion.”* Ummon drips blood; how can any comment about going into the weeds or getting out of the weeds be inserted? *A conversation in the weeds* means he came down to a secondary level of potential to speak.

[TENKEI] First off, even with an apparently ordinary question, a teaching master tests whether students have their feet on the real ground or not. The point is, right now what place is this? Check and find out where you are. When the monk said he had been at Cottage Mountain, he was being straightforward; when Gyozan asked him if he had been to Five Elders Peak, he was being very compassionate. What place is this? Where are you right now? The monk said he had never been there; unfortunately he missed what was right in front of him; apparently he didn't hear. He didn't realize it's the great matter right at his feet. When Gyozan told him he had never even traveled the mountain, he was attentively trying once again to help the man. "Traveling the mountain" means passing through formal Buddhism and no longer establishing views of Buddha or views of Dharma. There is no such thing as roaming the mountains and enjoying the rivers in the context of formal Buddhism. As for Ummon's remark, this is known as his method of lifting up and putting down, where one can censure and praise independently according to the situation.

VERSE

Out of the weeds, into the weeds—who knows how to search?
The white clouds pile in layers, the red sun is clear and bright.
Looking to the left, no flaws; looking to the right, already old.
Haven't you read of the Cold Mountain man, who went early on
—
Ten years he couldn't return, finally forgot the road on which he
came.

[HAKUIN] *Out of the weeds, into the weeds*—This versifies Gyozan's *You never traveled the mountain* and Ummon's *conversation in the weeds*. Their fit could not be expressed even in Japanese song or linked verse. If we analyze them, *out of the weeds* refers to external application and "letting go," while *into the weeds* refers to internal application and "holding still." *Who knows how to search?* Even Shakyamuni and Bodhidharma cannot know this conversation in the weeds. The versification of the koan is complete in these two lines.

The white clouds pile in layers—The scenery of Cottage Mountain, the realm of Ummon and Gyozan, is indescribable: seeming to rain, seeming to shine, the white clouds are piled layer upon layer, the totality of being is evident at hand. This is the realm of great mindlessness. Nevertheless, these two lines are very thorny. In addition, it also looks like *out of the weeds* is where the *white clouds pile in layers*. If you suppose it must be dark, *the red sun is clear and bright*. Having swept away the state of being in the weeds, if you think the result must be mindlessness, *the red sun is clear and bright*. *Looking to the left, no flaws*—Indeed, when you look at Gyozan, you see no flaws; his saying *You've never traveled the mountain* is also splendid. *Looking to the right, already old*—When you look at Ummon, too, he is flawless; his saying *conversation in the weeds* is also splendid. *Old* means mature. *The Cold Mountain man*—Not only the Cold Mountain man, everyone is a buddha; think deeply on this. *Went early on*—This means right away transcending everything and entering directly into the ground of the fundamental, the eternal completeness of reality. *Ten years he couldn't return*—When you enter the realm of Buddhahood, there is no returning, because the boundaries of inside and outside, coming and going, are no longer binding. *Ten* represents the end of enumeration; this *couldn't return* too has no measurement. There is a Zen message herein. *Finally forgot the road on which he came*—From the point of view of one who has forgotten the road on which he came, one is free to regard it in whatever way, even as *never having traveled the mountain*.

[TENKEI] Ummon says he is in the weeds, but Gyozan was able to get out of the weeds and go into the weeds as well, having mastered both holding still and letting go. In this way Setcho produced his versification from the interior of the koan. This first line is the sinew and bones of the whole verse. Who knows how to search out this point? Is there anyone who can? Setcho does not expect to find anyone in the monasteries, so for the sake of all people he tells us that we may clear our ears and hear. *The white clouds*—“Grasses grow luxuriously, mists overhanging,” “occupying the essential bridge and not letting either ordinary or holy pass,” “holding still without a trace”; these are methods of getting out of the weeds. *The red sun*

—“The whole world has never hidden it,” “dying together and being reborn together,” “trailing mud and dripping water”; these are methods of letting go and going into the weeds. What’s more, *looking to the left, no flaws*—Flawless as a clear jewel, spiritual light distinctly bright, even rubble radiates light; this is the realm of mastery of leaving the weeds and entering the weeds. Furthermore, *looking to the right, already old*—completely helpless, as if a dunce or an ignoramus, so that none can tell anything about him, whether he is an ordinary man or a sage, a wayfarer or a common man. Even so, this is not all about others; when you attain mastery of leaving and entering the weeds, and you can put it to use, it is that which is right at your feet, all of you, right where you are. This reminds Setcho of something: *Haven’t you read of the Cold Mountain man, who went early on*—Going where? To the human world? To the mountains? In any case, *for ten years he couldn’t return*—Ten years means a long time. Return where? Return to the human world? Return to the mountains? The words “early on” and “finally forgot” are Setcho’s substitute eyes. How are they substitute eyes? While he says *early on*, there is no coming and going, it is completely beyond coming and going; at the time of *finally forgetting*, there is no duality between the human world and the mountains, and the present time itself is eternity.

35

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

INTRODUCTION

In determining dragons and snakes, differentiating gems and stones, distinguishing black and white, and settling uncertainty, without an eye on your forehead and a talisman at your side, time and again you will mistake what you're dealing with. Right now, seeing and hearing are not obscured, sound and form are unadulterated reality, but tell me—is it black, or is it white? Is it crooked, or is it straight? When you get here, how do you distinguish?

[HAKUIN] *In determining dragons and snakes*—having become a teaching master at the stage of receiving students from the point of view of the eye to distinguish realities. *Distinguishing black and white and settling uncertainty*—distinguishing true and false and settling the doubts of students. *An eye on your forehead*—the claws and fangs of the lair of truth, part of what goes into being a teaching master. *You will mistake what you're dealing with*—You won't be able to handle people successfully. *Right now, seeing and hearing are not obscured*—Leaving all that aside for the moment, right now in seeing and hearing, ten suns shine at once, filling the ears, filling the eyes. *Sound and form are unadulterated reality*—When you don't get trapped in sound and form, it is purest gold. *Not obscured* and *unadulterated reality* refer to direct seeing and direct hearing; not knowing this state is called pollution in the spirit religion of Shinto.

[TENKEI] *Determining dragons and snakes* refers to the accuracy of perception of a teaching master, who acts on thorough perception of the mind of the student. On the part of the student as well, it is necessary to distinguish black and white, cut through nails and shear iron, settle uncertainties and doubts, and have an *eye on the forehead*, otherwise one will miss the point in spite of the teacher's

perceptive action, *time and again*. *Right now* you hear with your ears, see with your eyes: there's nothing abnormal; this means *sound and form are unadulterated reality* where there is no obscurity at all. But how do you see it? Black? White? Straight? Crooked? When you get here, then what? How can you tell? This is the teaser; if you cannot discern, take a look at this koan.

EXAMPLE

Manjushri asked Mujaku, "Where have you just come from?"

Mujaku said, "The south."

Manjushri asked, "How is Buddhism being maintained in the south?"

Mujaku said, "Few mendicants observe the precepts in this age of deterioration."

Manjushri asked, "How many are in the congregations?"

Mujaku said, "Some three hundred, some five hundred." Then Mujaku asked Manjushri, "How is it being maintained here?"

Manjushri said, "The ordinary and the holy live together, snakes and dragons mix." Mujaku said, "How many are in the congregations?"

Manjushri said, "Three by three in front, three by three in back."

[HAKUIN] *Manjushri* was appearing in the guise of an old man. *How is Buddhism being maintained?* How is it going? When Mujaku said *Few mendicants observe the precepts in this age of deterioration*, he must have blurted it out involuntarily. From the point of view of someone with clear eyes, this saying is cold. *Mujaku asked Manjushri*—Not knowing it was Manjushri, he asked his question with a pretentious casualness. *The ordinary and the holy live together*—The false and the true are one suchness, the real and the illusory are one monolith; there is no boundary between them. Most people mention *three by three in front, three by three in back*, but the Zen message is here. *Three by three in front, three by three in back*—Three times three is nine, two times nine is eighteen; is that what it

means? If you want to know this, refer to the number of last night's stars, and the number of this morning's raindrops.

[TENKEI] First the usual: *Where have you come from?* Mujaku said *The south*—He's a dullard. *How is Buddhism being maintained*—This is a probe. *The ordinary and the holy live together*—Who are these people? Even if you say all in the ten directions are in the same congregation, there is no other person at all, ordinary and holy and false and true are all in one, so you cannot analyze it, that is falling into verbal understanding. It's simply *ordinary and holy live together*, you see. *How many are in the congregations?* With figures like three, five, and eighteen, the count doesn't tally. *Three by three in front, three by three in back*—Add up these figures, all of you. Whether you count from above or below, the number doesn't differ. Even so, how come there's too much and not enough?

VERSE

The twists and turns of the thousand peaks are blue as indigo;
Who says Manjushri was engaged in conversation?
Laughable how many the people on the clear cool mountain;
Three by three in front and three by three in back.

[HAKUIN] *The twists and turns of the thousand peaks*—This refers to the scenery of Mount Wutai; the one said to have been encountered here was not the real Manjushri. The totality is one living Manjushri, who cannot be located by the wrong kind of equanimity in which there is no enlightenment, no delusion, no sainthood, and no nirvana. This is just a single clear jewel, without subject or object of perception. *Who says Manjushri was engaged in conversation?* At just such a time, what "Manjushri" is there? At this time, if you meet the living Manjushri, you lose your life. To say that Mujaku met Manjushri is an affectation. As far as being *engaged in conversation* is concerned, Mujaku missed it. *Laughable how many the people on the clear cool mountain*—The clear cool mountain is Mount Wutai. Asking how many people there are on the mountain is laughable.

This laugh is identical to the smile of Kashyapa: the whole universe quaked.

[TENKEI] The twisting and turning of the thousand peaks depicts Mount Wutai. On this scenic mountain, past or present, there is no Manjushri at all, and yet there is nothing that is not Manjushri. The only thing there is the morning mist and the evening fog: what realm is this? It is an interesting scene in which there is not a speck of a notion of Buddha or a notion of Dharma; above there is nothing to resort to, below one is detached even from one's own body. This line is the eye of the whole verse; in this place, *who says*—Who says he met Manjushri and had a conversation? The likes of Setcho wouldn't look even if the real Manjushri showed up; even if as many Buddhas as grains of sand in the Ganges River were to appear all at once, he wouldn't so much as turn to see them, for there is nothing to resort to. So when it comes to something like engaging in conversation, he's a hopeless case who can't even get rid of notions of Buddha and Dharma; Setcho pointed out the flaw in Mujaku's state and swept it away. The words "who says" are aptly put, but Setcho still finds something funny. It is laughable that Mujaku did not know the answer *three by three in front, three by three in back* and therefore asked the question. And not only Mujaku: it is laughable that the students in the Zen congregations of today do not know this self-evident thing. Let me ask you all: in laughing this way, is Setcho counted among the *three by three in front and three by three in back*? And what about you yourselves: are you people outside this number? Insofar as the whole universe is one, there is no other person. Even so, unless you have passed beyond the ranks of Buddhas and Zen masters to be "by yourself the sole honored one in the heavens above and the earth below," you do not know this laugh. Why? Even if you say "where even the Buddhas of past, present, and future hang up their mouths on the wall, there is still one person laughing out loud," this is still funny. There is a sword in the laugh: here's where you live or die.

36

ROAMING THE MOUNTAINS

EXAMPLE

Chosha went roaming the mountains one day. On returning, when he came to the gate the congregation leader said, “Where have you been, Master?”

Chosha said, “Roaming the mountains.”

The congregation leader said, “Where did you go?”

Chosha said, “First I followed the fragrant grasses on the way out, then I came back pursuing the falling flowers.”

The congregation leader said, “How very much like the sense of spring.”

Chosha said, “It even surpasses the autumn dew dripping on the lotuses.”

Setcho added the words, “Thank you for your answer.”

[HAKUIN] *First I followed the fragrant grasses on the way out—*Driven by enthusiasm, drawn by the fragrant grasses, he goes, forgetting himself. This is splendid: it cannot be labeled the transcendental or the immanent, the present or the beyond. *Then I came back pursuing the falling flowers—*When the fun was over he came back, and when returning he also forgot himself in the falling flowers. *How very much like the sense of spring—*He held up a 150-pound hammer before him: “How peaceful and pleasant it must be!” *It even surpasses the autumn dew—*It even surpasses the desolate scenery of autumn, this without any odor of Buddhism. *Setcho added—*The assembly leader couldn’t say anything, so Setcho speaks in his behalf; the realm of Chosha is splendid, beyond any description as the present moment or the beyond, Buddhism or worldly reality, even in poetry or song. Setcho could not refrain from joining him.

[TENKEI] Roaming the mountains requires free time. In the context of Zen, so-called roaming the mountains and enjoying the waters refers to the state of those who have done their task and transcended Buddhas and Zen masters. *Roaming the mountains* does not just mean literally going up in the mountains; all the activity and repose of such a person, day and night, is *roaming the mountains*. The general meaning of the koan can be seen as all about *roaming the mountains*. When the congregation leader asks the master where he's been, there is an echo in his words, trying to examine Chosha's footprints. *First I followed*—roaming the mountains without impediment, without fixation anywhere, beyond emotional objectification of comparative judgments. *Like spring*—How peaceful the sense you express, like the sense of spring, he says, with the underlying meaning that there still seems to be some warmth somewhere. *Surpasses autumn*—No there isn't. Don't you know it is a pure, cool state of mind, without the slightest breath of warmth? Since the congregation leader lacked this ability, Setcho bunged up the gap and expressed thanks for Chosha's final words, even though it was the congregation leader himself who should have said thanks.

VERSE

The whole earth is clear of dust; whose eyes do not open?
First he followed the fragrant grasses out,
Then pursued the falling flowers back.
A weary crane circles a winter tree,
A mad monkey cries on an ancient terrace.
Chosha's infinite meaning—tsk!

[HAKUIN] *The whole earth is clear of dust*—The example and the verse are both dripping with blood, thrusting things in front of your face to show you. There is nary a taste of the realm of Buddha or the realm of demons; the totality is the whole body of Vairochana. *First he followed the fragrant grasses out*—The real point of Zen cannot be broken open even by a golden hammer; it is originally free of

dust. *A weary crane*—This is a comment on the preceding lines; while there is really nothing to which this state can be likened, he thought at least he could say this much. *A mad monkey cries on an ancient terrace*. It is somehow heartrending too, you know! *Chosha's infinite meaning*—Even with all this said, Chosha's unlimited meaning cannot be fully expressed in words.

[TENKEI] *The whole earth*—Surely no one has swept up for Chosha's ramble in the mountains today, but the whole earth is entirely free of dust. Free, untrammled, independent, coming and going without impediment: this is the original scenery. What is the season today? What day is it? Although there is no dust at all, referring to the overall meaning of the koan, yet people are unable to travel back and forth freely, impeding themselves by conceiving all sorts of rationalizations and calculations: delusion and enlightenment, ordinary and holy. Originally there is no "dust," or defilement; when people realize this, *whose eyes do not open?* When the eye on your forehead is clear, there is no obstruction at all; even upsets and downfalls are your light. Now when Chosha went roaming the mountains today, *first he followed the fragrant grasses out*—what an immaculate, unimpeded realm this is! There are no tracks, either coming or going, no comparing objects of emotions. When Setcho looks at this Chosha from the left-hand side, he looks like *a weary crane* worn out from flight, standing on a leafless withered tree in winter. Then when he looks from the right, he appears like *a mad monkey* or an ignorant ape screeching on a desolate ancient terrace. Be it notions of Buddha or notions of Dharma, reasoning or figuring, there is not a speck of warmth; unimpeded effortless activity is a realm of clean simplicity. This having been said, Setcho feels he has talked too much and leaked excessively, so he suddenly switches around, saying *Chosha's infinite meaning*—Even a tongue vast enough to hang the universe on could not fully express it; even if the polar mountain were a pen and the oceans were ink, writing for a million aeons, there is an infinite meaning that still cannot be fully written out. Now he says he will tell us: *Tsk!* "Mercy! I've said what I oughtn't have said; I shouldn't have said so much! Even the Buddhas have to shut up at

Setcho's *tsk*; this is what even the Zen masters over the generations could never bring out completely.

INTRODUCTION

When the action is like lightning, it is futile to stand there thinking; when thunder booms in the sky, it is too late to cover your ears. To fly the red banner of victory overhead and whirl twin swords behind the ears, you need discernment of eye and familiarity of hand. Some lower their heads and stand there thinking, trying to figure conceptually; they don't realize they are seeing innumerable ghosts in front of their skulls. Now tell me, without getting trapped in the conceptual faculty, without getting stuck in gain and loss, if something is brought up to awaken you, how do you respond?

[HAKUIN] This case is excellent, so Setcho versifies it with appreciation. At a glance, it seems like it is hardly worth three cents, but this introduction is better than the whole Buddhist canon. *When action is like lightning*—The action of teaching masters dealing with seekers is swift even when their eyes are asleep, not showing any gaps or seams, not readily tipping their hands. *It is futile to stand there thinking*—Students mull over intellectual interpretations and subjective conceptualizations. *When thunder booms in the sky*—A single saying from a teaching master can take away someone's root of life, taking away "Buddha" and taking away "enlightenment." *It is too late to cover your ears*—On account of the immediacy of the moment, there's no time. *Overhead*—Adept commanders fly the red banner of victory over the heads of students, who are doomed and cannot face it. *Behind the ears*—a dagger through the liver. *Discernment of eye and familiarity of hand*—You have to see buddha-nature completely while you are alive and hold the life root of the Buddhas as surely as you grip something in your hand, otherwise you cannot work in the way described above. *Skulls*—

They see countless ghosts that wander out from their skulls. *Without getting trapped in the conceptual faculty*—Mind, intellect, consciousness, and feelings all inactivated. *Without getting stuck in gain and loss*—Not getting hung up on right and wrong and gain and loss like “this is Buddha,” “this is the ordinary mortal.”

[TENKEI] When an adept teaching master performs cometlike or lightninglike actions in the context of spiritual encounter, if the student stands there thinking, holding back potential, it is a waste of effort. And when it is just like thunder overhead, students trying to cover their ears have no place to flee. At the critical point, you have to have accurate discernment and expert skill; if you hesitate and debate, you lose your life. *Some lower their heads and stand there thinking*, but they are what we call totally dead. *Now tell me, without getting trapped in the conceptual faculty, without getting stuck in gain and loss*, relinquishing everything, if a Zen teaching master of the above description were there bringing something up to awaken you, how would you respond? Banzan’s saying is this way, so look!

EXAMPLE

Banzan said, “There are no things in the world—where would you seek the mind?”

[HAKUIN] This example is especially excellent, so Setcho brings it out with a verse far surpassing the whole Buddhist canon. This introduction is cold. It is a killer of Zennists. Everyone in the world understands “The triplex world is only mind, myriad things are only consciousness,” so that’s why the introduction is this way. That’s also why Setcho selected this saying to begin with: at a glance it seems trifling, but it is a pearl in a worn-out cloth pouch; those who know do recognize it is a treasure. Somehow it seems that no one really understands this saying.

[TENKEI] When it is said that there are no things, one might shrink back, thinking it means there is nothing at all, but what is this right in front of you? *Seek the mind*—What are sensation, perception, consciousness, and cognition? Let every one of you get hold of your

own self and look: is it nothing that says there is no thing, or is it something that springs forth saying there is some thing? Analyze the verse carefully.

VERSE

No things in the world—where to seek mind?
White clouds make a canopy, flowing springs a lute—
One tune, two tunes, no one understands.
When the rain's passed, in the evening ponds the autumn
water's deep.

[HAKUIN] *No things in the world*—How many people lose their lives to this saying? It is like a poison drum that kills all who hear it beat. It is more terrible than the turtle-nosed snake of South Mountain. Setcho's meaning is in this line; the subsequent lines all come from this. *White clouds make a canopy*—This is what *no things in the world* is like. *Flowing springs make a lute*—The preceding phrase and this phrase are both descriptions of the state of Banzan. *One tune, two tunes, no one understands*. Even though the music fills the ears, no one is listening. No matter how many tunes are played, no one understands. Therefore Setcho thought he too would add a line of song. What did he sing? *When the rain's passed, in the evening ponds the autumn water's deep*. Those ponds where the water is cool are the secret melody of *no things in the world*.

[TENKEI] First the koan is brought up, but if it is only said that there are no things at all, then people might cling to the notion that there is no Buddha and no Dharma, thinking that to be correct. Therefore Setcho discusses mindless mind and thingless things, the *white clouds* and so on, which represent functions of having attained the reality of no reality, making the clouds into a canopy and the streams into a lute, calling sky earth and calling obedience opposition; this is the ability to employ things freely and independently. Even so, *one tune, two tunes*—When the white clouds and flowing water form a tune by the subtleties of their interplay, will a connoisseur nod in understanding? Too bad there are no connoisseurs. In any case, in

order to hear this, you must be able to sleep in peace in the very midst of sound and form. Hardly expecting anyone to understand the tune anyway, Setcho changes key to let you hear: *when the rain's passed*—What is this? To get the point, you must hear this with your eyes.

INTRODUCTION

The gradual method counters the constant to merge with the Way, up, down, and all around in the midst of a bustling marketplace. The sudden method does not leave a trace; even the sages cannot lay hold of it. If neither gradual nor sudden is set up, then what? For a quick person, a single word; for a quick horse, a single blow of the crop. At just such a time, who is adept?

[HAKUIN] *The gradual method*—Expedient teachings, seeking above while teaching below, are for dealing with those of middling and lesser faculties. *Counters the constant to merge with the Way*—Realization on one's own without a teacher before the prehistoric Buddha, realization on one's own without a teacher after the prehistoric Buddha, drinking water and spontaneously knowing whether it is cool or warm: these are norms for Zen folk. *Up, down, and all around*—untrammelled and free, with all sorts of methods to respond to the potentialities of those with middling and lesser faculties. *The sudden method*—expounded from the perspective of the transcendental crux of Zen, inaccessible to those of middling and lesser faculties *does not leave a trace*—no trace of Buddha, no trace of demons either, no sign of any trail shows at all. Rinzai and Tokusan are examples of this, but *even the sages cannot lay hold of it*; if you stop here, that's not right.

[TENKEI] All living beings have buddha-nature, so there is nothing to expound; to nevertheless give all sorts of explanations to help people according to their potential is to counter the constant to merge with the Way. The sudden method does not set up anything whatsoever; not transmitted by the sages, it cuts off everything and does not let the ordinary or the holy pass. Adding a word where

there is nothing to say, applying stimulus where no urging is needed, is transcendental strategy, used in this case to rescue the elder. Who is adept? Look at Fuketsu carrying out the imperative.

EXAMPLE

Fuketsu gave a lecture at a government headquarters. He said, “The seal of the Zen mind may be described as like the workings of the iron ox—when it is removed, the impression remains; when it is left there, the impression is ruined. What if it is neither removed nor left remaining—is it right to seal or not to seal?”

At that time an elder named Rohi came out and asked, “I have the workings of the iron ox and ask the teacher not to impress the seal.”

Fuketsu said, “Accustomed to scouring the seas fishing for whales, I regret to find instead a frog crawling in the mud.”

Rohi stood there thinking. Fuketsu shouted and said, “Why don’t you speak further, Elder?”

Rohi hesitated, searching for something to say. Fuketsu hit him with a fly whisk. Fuketsu said, “Do you remember the words? Try to quote them.” As Rohi was about to open his mouth, Fuketsu hit him again.

The governor said, “The law of Buddhism is the same as the law of kings.”

Fuketsu said, “What principle do you see?”

The governor said, “When you don’t stop what should be stopped, you wind up inviting chaos.”

Fuketsu thereupon got off the dais.

[HAKUIN] *The seal of the Zen mind may be described as like the workings of the iron ox—*The seal of the enlightened mind communicated through Zen is stable and sure.

[TENKEI] The seal of mind means determining good and bad and so on. It is like impressing a seal: whenever the seal is stamped, there is no confusion wherever you go. Referring to this as the workings of the iron ox means that it is hard for you to approach.

[HAKUIN] *When it is removed, the impression remains*—Letting go and setting up, holding still and sweeping clean, when you go off into the weeds, you hold this back.

[TENKEI] All forms are impressions of the one mind; there can be nowhere to escape. This is where *the impression remains*.

[HAKUIN] *When it is left there, the impression is ruined*—Wrapping up and rolling out, if you dwell fixated upon the solitary peak of thoughtless mindlessness, it is destroyed.

[TENKEI] When you try to head for it, you stumble past; when you try to pin it down, there is no way to get a grip on it. Ultimately it cannot be grasped or abandoned, this mind seal that fundamentally neither goes nor stays.

[HAKUIN] *What if it is neither removed nor left remaining*, if you neither let go nor hold still, *is it right to seal or not?* Does the seal leave its mark or not? What move will you make? This is a searching question, to get you to come out and say something.

[TENKEI] If it is something that neither goes nor stays, is it right to impress the seal or not impress the seal? This is a gap left by a teaching master, opening a hole to let people see there is no right or not right removing or leaving.

[HAKUIN] *I ask the teacher not to impress the seal*. I don't need the stamp of a teacher, so I'll thank you to lay off.

[TENKEI] He comes riding on the words, not knowing that there is ultimately no such thing as sealing or not sealing. That is why Fuketsu quipped sarcastically that he had caught a frog in the mud.

[HAKUIN] This too is Fuketsu's independent mastery of teaching. *Rohi stood there thinking*. He was finally stumped. *Fuketsu hit him with a fly whisk*—wanting to see if he might still be alive. *Why don't you speak further?* You won't get away with silence! *Fuketsu said, "Do you remember"*—He is thoroughly ridiculed by Fuketsu. *Fuketsu hit him again*—because he wanted to get him to mount the iron ox. *What principle do you see?* No one's allowed to talk without reason, not even the governor. *When you don't stop what should be stopped*—Civil government too finds out what is to be corrected and allows what is permissible; without rigorous investigation it is impossible to make final judgments.

VERSE

Catching Rohi, he mounts him on the iron ox;
The spear and armor of the three profundities are never easily
opposed.
The tidal waters by the castle of the king of Chu
Have had their flow reversed at a shout.

[HAKUIN] *Catching Rohi, he mounts him on the iron ox*—Using the workings of the iron ox as bait, he hooked Rohi and landed him, mounting him on the iron ox to enable him to attain great living freedom. *The spear and armor of the three profundities*—One who has the seven tools of Rinzai Zen, all the accoutrements of a great general, is never easily opposed, and does not act rashly as one exerting all one's might to catch a rabbit.

[TENKEI] Today Fuketsu has chased out the iron ox, referring to the seal of the Zen mind, and having caught the elder alive has mounted him on the back of the ox. Whatever he may do, however, can only be successful if Rohi himself is able to mount and dismount the ox. Even so, Fuketsu has perfected the power of nondeception, and he is equipped with the armor and helmet of the three profundities of Rinzai Zen.

[HAKUIN] *The tidal waters by the castle of the king of Chu*—The headquarters of the governor in this story was in the ancient kingdom of Chu. Not only the governor and the elder: for everyone in the world the waters all return to the source. *Have had their flow reversed at a shout*—The third and fourth lines say how Fuketsu was a completely mature successor of Rinzai Zen.

[TENKEI] In a spiritual confrontation not entered into lightly on the spur of the moment, his awesome force may be likened to reversing the tidal waters with a shout. Not only did he holler and press the elder with the demand that he speak further and the question of whether he remembered the words; even the billowing waters of the tide are reversed by the force of this shout. This praises to the skies, but in reality, while he does have such a lofty appearance, there's no big deal, just the likes of this elder. The underlying meaning is the

criticism that it is an expedient with simplex potential and simplex perspective.

INTRODUCTION

One who can take action on the road is like a tiger in the mountains; one immersed in worldly convention is like a monkey in a cage. If you want to know the meaning of buddha-nature, observe the conditions of the time. If you want to refine pure gold, you need the furnace and bellows of an adept. Now tell me, how do you test one whose great function is actually operative?

[HAKUIN] *One who can take action on the road*—In the first stage, meditation in the midst of daily activities, those who do not know how to apply it on the way cannot handle satori even if they realize satori. If they work for the salvation of others based on the four universal vows, unconsciously they themselves will make progress toward the complete illumination of the four knowledges. *A tiger in the mountains*—As long as the realm of living beings is not exhausted, their hearts are not satisfied. *Immersed in worldly convention*—If you do not meet someone better, a little bit of satori degenerates into a worldly convention. Putting it to use on the road is important. *A monkey in a cage*—This refers to the cave of satori. A little bit of satori interferes with things. *If you want to know the meaning of buddha-nature*—In the second stage, though everyone is endowed with it, in the absence of cooperating causes no one sees the essential nature. However, when the work ripens, it comes to life from there. As for putting it to use on the road, an ancient said, “If you find it, then you put it to use on the road; if not, you get immersed in worldly convention.” “Home” means the fundamental, “on the road” means helping others to liberation. Even if you occupy the fundamental state of the absolute, if you do not clarify the great matter beyond, you fall into a sea of poison. This is not the original

will of the bodhisattvas of the complete all-at-once teaching, who seek above while educating below, but rather it is in the category of the Two Vehicles. The reality is that this is the teaching of nondwelling, not grasping realization in the absolute state, naturally conforming to the four qualities of the nirvana of the realized ones. Because of this, in our school we get the seal of recognition after satori and sit alone in the rank of Buddhas and Zen masters, silencing everyone on earth. The sixth grand master of Zen said, “If you keep a speck of enlightenment, that is not as good as your former illusion.” *If you want to refine pure gold*—getting rid of the rust of “emptiness of self” and “emptiness of phenomena.” National Teacher Bukko said, “Honing a sword for a thousand days is not as good as refining iron for one day.” *You need the furnace and bellows of an adept*—Although the gold is originally there in nature, it does not become pure gold without refinement. Similarly, although students are endowed with buddha-nature, it does not mature if they do not meet a teaching master. *One whose great function is actually operative*—Acting contrary, acting docile, unfathomable even to the gods; the cosmos is a bubble in the ocean, all the saints and sages are a flash of lightning.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, “What is the pure body of reality?”

Ummon said, “A flowering hedge.”

The monk said, “What if one goes right on that way?”

Ummon said, “A golden-haired lion.”

[HAKUIN] This monk was a guy who knew Ummon’s tricks. *The pure body of reality* is unclouded and not shrouded in mist. *A flowering hedge* is a long sword against the sky; don’t take it to be a chrysanthemum hedge or something simple like that. Here is where the moon and flowers are. *What if one goes right on that way?* He cornered Ummon to try to get a look at him; “How would it be to do as you say?” *A golden-haired lion*—The tune of Ummon’s Zen is like the ancestor of all kings, like the milk of a lion.

[TENKEI] This monk asked his question with some insight. In the Ummon school of Zen there is mention of two kinds of sickness in the body of reality; the question is, what is the pure body of reality without these sicknesses? *A flowering hedge* is a hedge of flowers. What is right in front of you? Open your eyes and look! *What if one goes right on that way?* This monk is an adept, so he does not get into figuring and calculating but asks what it would be like to understand in that way right off the bat. *A golden-haired lion*—Is this approval or disapproval? Is it praise or censure? Let everyone try to discern.

VERSE

A flowering hedge; don't be fatheaded!
The marks are on the balance arm, not in the scale pan.
"So that's it!" misses the point;
The golden-haired lion—everyone look!

[HAKUIN] The admonition *don't be fatheaded* put after *a flowering hedge* means don't take the flowering hedge itself to be the pure body of reality; that would be too airy-fairy. If the flowering hedge itself were the pure body of reality, then you'd mistake squashes and eggplants for the pure body of reality too. Don't do something sneaky like mix sugar into poison. *The marks are on the balance arm, not in the scale pan.* The "scale pan" refers to the verbal expression; Ummon's meaning is not in the flowering hedge. *"So that's it!" misses the point*—What the monk said was somehow clueless, nonsensical. *The golden-haired lion—everyone look!* Is it a dog, or is it a lion? People all must see according to their individual ability.

[TENKEI] Asking what is expressed by the words "flowering hedge," see where the meaning lies: *the marks are on the balance arm.* First Setcho takes up the whole koan, and because this one phrase of Ummon's has never fallen into the realm of verbal statement, Setcho gives some basic fodder and says *don't be fatheaded*: don't get bigheaded and bolt it down without chewing it, or listen to it without taking it to heart. Even having said this, since people won't

understand, Setcho has both attainment and nonattainment die out completely, and becoming the master therein he sets out a trailer for people, saying *The marks are on the balance arm*; Ummon's meaning is not here but on the Other Side. What is the Other Side? Where is it? You must discern clearly. In this vein, the very first phrase has finished the versification, but this monk, in his affected air of having understood (*so that's it!*), acts like someone swallowing a date whole without chewing it. That *misses the point*: the monk had his say, but it was useless and without reason. Setcho puts him down in this sense, and yet, since Ummon gave the name *golden-haired lion, everyone look*, did Ummon agree with him, or did he not agree? Let everyone discern what is beyond. Is it a dog, or is it a lion? It's not on the outside, you know! Even so, there is also a time when the golden lion turns into a dog. Ultimately, did Ummon agree with this monk or not? When he said *a golden-haired lion*, this is Ummon's method of raising and lowering freely. The words "everyone look" are the eye of the whole verse, helping people kindly.

40

A FLOWER

INTRODUCTION

Cease, desist, and an iron tree blossoms. Has this happened to anyone? Has it? A clever lad loses his profits; even if uninhibited one cannot escape being taken in tow. But tell me, where is the mix-up?

[HAKUIN] *Cease, desist*—When you manage to cease and desist, having severed the root of life through bone-breaking effort, the central pillar wrestles with its base. Letting go of right and wrong, gain and loss, cease and desist with No, No, No. Shoju Rojin took my strength away with this koan; I get gooseflesh all over every time I look at it. I realized insight into it three times before finally attaining perfect peace! It is truly the gate of the tiger cage of the *Blue Cliff Record*, difficult to get through; if you genuinely penetrate it, then the seventeen hundred koans are giant cookies! *An iron tree blossoms*—When these blossoms open, the whole universe is perfumed with their fragrance. This tree is also called the rootless tree. *Has this happened*—Is there anyone who is like an iron tree blossoming? *A clever lad loses his profits*—This points to the grandee, without saying so; the fellow happened to goof. *Even if uninhibited*—Even a Zennist who has attained great freedom *cannot escape being taken in tow*: when encountering a genuine Zen master like Nansen, he gets the nose of his satori twisted.

[TENKEI] When students have finished their task and can cease and desist from everything, *an iron tree blossoms*. Not planted in the scenery of the here and now, it is not an ordinary tree. Everyone should experience this season; is there any such person right now? Even if you claim there is, *a clever lad loses his profits*: you have still missed an opportunity. *Even if uninhibited*—That's useless in the presence of a teaching master with the Zen eye of the source. *But*

tell me—Where is the misstatement that gets someone taken in tow? Look at this koan. The reason why the clever one loses is because of giving free play to his cleverness. This is lifting up to throw down, implying reference to the grandee, who *even if uninhibited cannot escape being taken in tow* by Nansen with his true eye.

EXAMPLE

As the grandee Riku Ko was conversing with Nansen, he said, “Dharma Master Chao says, ‘Heaven and earth and I have the same root; myriad things and I are one body’—that is quite marvelous.”

Nansen pointed to a flower in the garden and said to the grandee, “People today see this flower as if they were dreaming.”

[HAKUIN] The biography of Dharma Master Chao is in the *Stories of Eminent Monks of the Six Dynasties*. Of his four treatises, the grandee quoted from the treatise *Wisdom Has No Knowledge*, which says *Heaven and earth and I have the same root; myriad things and I are one body*: the same one buddha-nature, without the slightest gap. *That is quite marvelous*. What a surprise! Outrageous! When the grandee had seen essential nature through his own efforts, he found that the Dharma master’s words exactly matched what was in his own heart, so he presented it as his own understanding. *Nansen pointed to a flower*—Don’t misunderstand this to mean that the universe and all things are one, having no real substance. *People today see this flower as if they were dreaming*—This is what is called a commonplace, a very familiar saying; like a poison drum, like lion milk.

[TENKEI] *Heaven and earth and I have the same root*—Same as what root? *Myriad things and I are one body*—One with what body? Look and see! *That is quite marvelous*—The grandee thought this saying is wondrously inconceivable. *Nansen pointed to a flower*—This is an expression of this side to point out a flaw; the grandee was keeping to the noumenal ground of reality, sitting fast asleep on top of a pole in the realm of satori. Not only the grandee: everyone of today is also like this. Therefore they are as if dreaming and have

not really awakened. Pointing this out is a method of waking them up and making them retreat to the Other Side, advance a step beyond the top of the pole, causing them to sever the root of life. In doctrinal Buddhism, the grandee's view is called noumenal obstruction. It is also called the dead place where the six senses function interchangeably. It is the realm of complacency. This is the flaw pointed out.

VERSE

Perception and cognition are not single units;
Mountains and rivers are not viewed in a mirror.
When the moon's gone down in the frosty sky, the night half
over,
With whom will it cast a reflection, cold in the clear pool?

[HAKUIN] *Perception and cognition are not single units*—They are not separate entities. *Mountains and rivers are not viewed in a mirror.* The knowledge that is like a vast round mirror has no subject or object. *When the moon's gone down in the frosty sky*—This refers to a state like total darkness. *With whom will it cast a reflection, cold in the clear pool?* There is no subject reflecting and no object reflected.

[TENKEI] *Perception and cognition* are not a simplex monolith either. The six senses have never been one and the same. We see with our eyes, hear with our ears; with the six senses in their normal states, mountains are naturally mountains, rivers are naturally rivers, without any interference. This points out the flaw in the grandee's viewpoint, tossing it over onto the Other Side. This is called the time when the precious mirror is shattered. It is also called the time when you take a step forward from the top of the pole. It is also called the little bit of difficulty. Not knowing this, *when the moon's gone down in the frosty sky*, in the middle of the night, when not only the grandee but everyone of today as well is fast asleep and having dreams, *with whom will it cast a reflection?* There is no one who wakes up to view the midnight scenery; they're all dreaming, so with whom can it be

appreciated? Probably only me, says Setcho. *With whom* is the eye of the verse—here it means that this is something you cannot know unless you yourself wake up by yourself and see. The *frosty sky* refers to the sleeping place of noumenon. Using the word “reflection” following “moon” and using the word “cold” following “frosty sky” are examples of Setcho’s literary genius; these two lines are arrayed as if nonchalantly, but their inner message is exactly the same as Nansen’s.

41

ONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED THE GREAT DEATH

INTRODUCTION

Where yes and no are intertwined, even sages cannot know; when opposition and harmony shift freely, even Buddhas cannot distinguish. When you are unattached to society and transcend its norms, manifesting capacities of extraordinary magnitude, walking on thin ice, running on sword blades, then you are like a unicorn's horn, like a lotus blossoming in fire. Then only when you see people who transcend convention do you know they are on the same path. Who is an expert?

[HAKUIN] *A unicorn's horn* means beyond standard conventions; *a lotus blossoming in fire* is incomparably auspicious.

[TENKEI] *Where yes and no are intertwined* refers to inconceivable transcendental conduct. In terms of adepts, *walking on thin ice*, that is, walking unobstructed to where it is dangerous and difficult of access, is like *a unicorn's horn*, extremely rare and hard to find. *Only when you see people who transcend convention* do you know they are connoisseurs on the same path; this refers to both elders in this koan.

EXAMPLE

Joshu asked Toshi, "When one who has experienced the great death returns to life, then what?"

Toshi said, "It is not permitted to go at night; one must get there in daylight."

[HAKUIN] *One who has experienced the great death*—A cold question, this has a meaning outside the words. This is great death far from delusion, and far from enlightenment too. *It is not permitted to go at night; one must get there in daylight.* It is forbidden to go at night; if there is something to attend to, go after dawn.

[TENKEI] *One who has experienced the great death* means someone who has set aside everything, even the mysteries and wonders of Buddhism, affirmation and negation, gain and loss, and managed to become as if dead. However, to remain in that state is to get fixated on mindlessness, falling into a nonfunctional state of indifference, so one must come back to life, not keeping that state but tossing it into emptiness, thus neither grasping nor rejecting everything, attaining the realm of absorption in living. Therefore Joshu poses the question about one who has experienced the great death: in any case one is useless unless one comes to life, but how do you do it? It is not that Joshu posed this question because he didn't know that Toshi basically had no afflictions of dying or reviving. Joshu today is not alive; he just poses a dead question, creating a discussion for the sake of later students, a strategy to help others. *It is not permitted to go at night*—Don't try to find your way by night, wandering around disoriented; go by day, he says, implying that while it is not that there is no such thing as coming back to life after the great death, still, talking about dying and reviving is not yet reaching the original unaffected state but trudging along midway, so it is work in progress.

VERSE

In living is an eye that's yet the same as dying.
Why use antiserum to test an adept?
Even the ancient Buddhas, they say, never arrived;
Who knows who can scatter dust and sand?

[HAKUIN] *In living is an eye that's yet the same as dying*—Whereas he should have said, "In dying there's an eye that's yet the same as living," he turned it around. *Why use antiserum to test an adept?*

Antiserum is something that vitiates a drug. The great death is an antiserum; it isn't necessary to use an antiserum like this to check an adept like Toshi. Toshi already understands. *Even the ancient Buddhas, they say, never arrived*—They say that not even the ancient Buddhas have arrived at the destination beyond. *Who knows who can scatter dust and sand?* Since it is a place where even the ancient Buddhas have never reached, he throws a grenade of blinding-powder.

[TENKEI] *In living*—First, although Joshu has the eye of life, today he poses a question like a dead man for the sake of others. In Setcho's view of that question, he used the antiserum's opposing duality of dying and living to perform a test, but Toshi is after all an adept, transcendently healthy, with no dying or living to avoid or take to. Joshu needn't make that test, he says, but since that state of transcendental health in which there is nothing to avoid or take to has never been reached even by the ancient Buddhas, *Who knows who*—the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history don't know they have all been dealing with garbage and dust. Setcho himself says here he doesn't know, nobody knows; setting this out like this is Setcho's turnabout. *Dust and sand* means that all the potential points of perception such as dying and reviving, views of Buddha and views of Dharma, extraordinary mysteries and marvels, are all garbage and dust in the eyes. The meaning is that no one understands this and realizes that there is a sound state beyond this. According to my own interpretation, *in living is an eye that's yet the same as dying* means that Joshu speaks of life within death, but even if he has eyes in life he is still a dead guy. Whoever is subject to dying and living is sick, so it is odd that Joshu uses the forbidden and the recommended things of living and dying to test the fundamentally healthy Toshi. Why? Because even the *ancient Buddha Toshi never arrived*—Even though he's supposedly alive, yet he's still not there, he's still trudging along the night road, not the highway, so he's not given approval. From that point of view, *who knows who*—the Buddhas of all times, the Zen masters throughout history, and all the Zen practitioners in the world too, cannot escape hauling garbage and dust into their eyes, he says. Setcho says he too doesn't know after all, dropping it like this with the meaning that

here people have to know for themselves and realize for themselves,
for nothing else will work.

42

[NICE SNOW](#)

INTRODUCTION

Even a simple presentation drips water and drags mud; the cooperation of inquiry and response is a silver mountain and an iron wall. If you try to discuss it, you see ghosts in front of your skull; if you seek it in thought, you sit on a mountain of darkness. The clear bright sun lights up the sky, the whistling pure wind circles the earth; but tell me—did the ancients have any obscurities?

[HAKUIN] *Simple presentation* does not rely on Buddhist doctrine, does not rely on worldly things, does not rely on the present time, does not rely on the other side, but brings out the Zen message without compromise, in a completely independent manner. *Drips water and drags mud*—When you look at it, dragging mud and dripping water is itself *simple presentation*, and *simple presentation* is itself dragging mud and dripping water. As for *the cooperation of inquiry and response*, this refers to the mutual harmony in a spiritual encounter between adepts. *Any obscurities*—There is an obscurity in the koan under consideration here, inviting your attention.

[TENKEI] A Zen teaching master presents the matter simply and independently without falling into existence or nonexistence. Even if teacher and student have a give-and-take discussion, it is like a *silver mountain and an iron wall*, still inaccessible. Here, if you try to discuss the matter, *you see ghosts in front of your skull*: you are the living dead. In particular, if you try to pursue it in thought limited to subjective conceptions, already you have fallen into hell. *The clear bright sun*—It's right in front of your nose; nothing is hidden. Don't you see? Did even the ancients mislabel it in spite of its being so clear? First look at the Zen student's misstatement today.

EXAMPLE

When Layman Ho took leave of Yakusan, Yakusan had ten Zen students see him to the gate. The layman pointed to the snow in the air and said, "Fine snowflakes; they don't fall elsewhere."

At the time, a Zen student named Zen said, "Where do they fall?"

The layman slapped him.

Zen said, "Even a layman shouldn't be crude."

The layman said, "The likes of you call yourself a Zen student? The king of death hasn't let you off."

Zen said, "How about you, Layman?"

The layman slapped him again and said, "Your eyes see as if blind, your mouth speaks as if dumb."

Setcho said as an alternative, "At the first question, I'd have made a snowball and struck!"

[HAKUIN] *When Layman Ho took leave of Yakusan—An old tiger leaves the southern mountains; in China there was Layman Ho, in India there was Vimalakirti—both were cold! Layman Ho originally studied Confucianism, but in his youth he understood the toil of materialism and determined to seek absolute truth. Calling on Zen Master Sekito, he asked, "When one is not a companion to myriad things, then what?" He was a Zen successor of Baso. Yakusan had ten Zen students see him to the gate—He was treated with the honor given to a great master. The layman pointed to the snow in the air and said—Here is where the obscurity is. Fine snowflakes; they don't fall elsewhere. No one can see this saying clearly. A Zen student named Zen—He understood a little bit. Where do they fall? He intends to pin it down. Shouldn't be crude—Don't be rash; I have my reasons, too! The king of death hasn't let you off. The eye that distinguishes dragons from snakes is accurate. Your eyes see as if blind—The Zen student is fast asleep. At the first question—At the point where he said, Fine snowflakes; they don't fall elsewhere, he should have plastered him with a snowball. This is Setcho's fearsome pit of black fire; if you can see fully, you will see through the hearts of Layman Ho and Setcho both.*

[TENKEI] *Where do they fall?* This challenge was most appropriate in that situation, but he had nothing beyond convention to follow the layman.

VERSE

A snowball hit, a snowball hit;
Old Ho's machinations have no grip.
In heaven above, on earth below, they don't know themselves;
In the eyes, in the ears, absolutely clean.
Cleanness absolute, even the founder of Zen couldn't
differentiate.

[HAKUIN] *A snowball hit*—This first line thoroughly versifies the total being of Layman Ho. *Old Ho's machinations have no grip*. Even Buddhas and Zen masters can hardly see into old Ho's machinations. Why? A snowball hit, a snowball hit. *In heaven above, on earth below, they don't know themselves*—Even Buddhas and Zen masters can hardly discern the intrinsic being of the snowball hit, much less anyone else! *In the eyes, in the ears, absolutely clean*—This is the reality of “eyes seeing as if blind, mouth speaking as if dumb.” *Cleanness absolute*—Clean indeed, absolutely clean beyond anything.

[TENKEI] The layman's *fine snowflakes* affirms uniform emptiness, the view where “the green mountains are totally void of dust, true emptiness passes the test.” “Fine snow” means uniformity. Setcho has unconventional moves, so he proposes to make balls of the snow of the Zen lineage of Baso and hit the layman in the face with them one after another. If he were to carry out such an order, even someone as perceptive and adaptable as old Ho would be unable to get a grip and would have nothing to hold on to, leaving him in suspense, with nothing to do. This is the perception that points out the flaw in uniformity; methodology like this is beyond the ken of anyone *in heaven above and on earth below*. Such a state is *in the eyes, in the ears, absolutely clean*: seeing pure and simple, hearing pure and simple, clean and uncomplicated, without adding the

garbage in achievement of uniformity or dust and sand like *fine snowflakes*. Anyway, the absolute cleanness of this place where there is no dust and sand is imperceptible and inaccessible even to the eyes of Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma the founder of Zen. So saying, Setcho leaves it at that, in his usual manner, a wave of the river of Zen adding no flavor at all.

43

NO COLD OR HEAT

INTRODUCTION

The statement that settles the universe is followed for ten thousand ages; the ability to catch tigers and rhinos is incomprehensible even to sages. With no further obscuration at all, the total potential appears equally in all situations. If you want to understand the hammer and tongs of transcendence, you need the forge and bellows of an adept. But tell me, since ancient times, has there been such a manner of teaching or not?

[HAKUIN] There is no particular one statement that settles the universe. There is only one statement. This whole place in its entirety is the statement that settles the universe. It pervades the heights of the heavens above and the depths of the earth below. *Followed for ten thousand ages*—This refers to the eternally unchanging path that the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history have taught from this one statement. *The ability to catch tigers and rhinos*—This little secret is such that the application of these claws and fangs to any Zennist is like a landslide on a dead man. *With no further obscuration at all*—When something is reflected in a mirror, it is not clouded over. *The total potential appears equally in all situations*—When the great function appears, it does not keep to routine standards; where one stands is reality, and where one sits is reality too. *The hammer and tongs of transcendence*—the Zen vehicle of transcendence, the stories that are difficult to penetrate and difficult to unlock.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Tozan, “When cold and heat come, how does one avoid them?”

Tozan said, “Why not go to where there is no cold or heat?”

The monk said, “How is it where there is no cold or heat?”

Tozan said, “When it’s cold, it kills you with cold; when it’s hot, it kills you with heat.”

[HAKUIN] If you see Tozan by means of this example, you may consider him foremost among the Five Houses and Seven Sects of Zen. Even Ummon looks clumsy by comparison. This monk is cold; he tried to see an example of how Tozan would respond. *Why not go to where there is no cold or heat?* This most leisurely exchange is utterly indescribable; fishing around, Tozan ripped off this monk’s household goods with a huge rake. *The monk asked, “How is it where . . .”* He conceives an interpretation following the words, not realizing he’s been given a method of changing his bones. *When it’s cold, it kills you with cold*—It’s a pearl that lights up the night, presented along with a tray and all. Even Ummon and Rinzai would be flabbergasted by this saying; one can only sing its praises.

[TENKEI] The twin roads of life and death are what students suffer over; this question refers to them as cold and heat. *Where there is no cold or heat*—where there is no flavor, where there is no room for a blow of a cane or a shout. This is a direct indication of the beyond. It is not a place where there is or is not cold or heat, but the monk missed it right off the bat, and so he asks again. *When it’s cold, it kills you with cold*—When it’s cold, it’s extremely cold; when it’s hot, it’s extremely hot. Are you cold or hot? Is there anything there? Is there nothing there? Get a grip and find out!

VERSE

He reaches out, but it’s still inaccessible.
Why must absolute and relative be in an arrangement?
The ancient palace of crystal glows in the moonlight;
A sneaky dog goes up the stairs for naught.

[HAKUIN] *He reaches out, but it's still inaccessible.* The saying *When it's cold, it kills you with cold; when it's hot, it kills you with heat* is quite inaccessible. *Why must absolute and relative be in an arrangement?* The absolute and the relative were not made by anyone; they are inherent everywhere in everything, since before the separation of heaven and earth, not added on besides. The realm of light and darkness everywhere paired is natural. *The ancient palace of crystal glows in the moonlight*—Tozan's sharpness of intellect is so splendid it's like the moon shining on an ancient palace made of jewels. *A sneaky dog*—This refers to going around rationalizing this way and that.

[TENKEI] Tozan's reaching out today for people is a point at which not only this monk but all Zen monks in the world have a hard time making progress. But even though it is like an inaccessible precipice, still it's not on the other side of the mountains—it's in your food, it's in your drink, it's in every step you take. That in itself is where your calculations and comparisons do not reach, where there's no arrangement in terms of absolute and relative, so *why must absolute and relative be in an arrangement?* Setcho makes it clear that where Tozan is directly pointing, even to speak of absolute and relative already turns into a route of interpretation, so don't make an issue of arranging. Anyway, to express Tozan's own state, *the ancient palace of crystal*—clear in all ways, without a dot of the dust and dirt of the notion of Buddha and the notion of religion, the transcendental realm of untrammelled freedom where the totality becomes manifestly evident. Not realizing this, the monk came after the words *a sneaky dog*, as if trying to grab the reflection of the moon. His failure to grasp Tozan's real meaning outside the words was unfortunate, says the verse, pointing out the monk's flaw with the expression *for naught*.

44

KNOWING HOW TO BEAT A DRUM

EXAMPLE

Wasan said, “Cultivating study is called listening, ending study is called nearness; going beyond these two is really going beyond.”

A monk came up and asked, “What is real going beyond?”

Wasan said, “Knowing how to beat a drum.”

The monk then asked, “What is absolute truth?”

Wasan said, “Knowing how to beat a drum.”

He then asked, “I do not question ‘mind itself is Buddha’—what about ‘not mind, not Buddha’?”

Wasan said, “Knowing how to beat a drum.”

Then he asked, “When transcendent people come, how do you deal with them?”

Wasan said, “Knowing how to beat a drum.”

[HAKUIN] Wasan’s initial saying originally comes from the *Jewel Treasury Treatise*, but when Wasan brings it up here there is a special significance. *Cultivating study is called listening*—Trying to hear the sound of one hand clapping is cultivating study. There is birth and death, so one seeks nirvana. This is inside the world. *Listening* means hearing and believing; hearing of birth and death and nirvana and believing in them is called the stage of listening. *Ending study is called nearness*—Even realizing that birth and death itself is nirvana, actually hearing the sound of one hand clapping, and finishing the work of Zen study, this place is not the real true state, so it is referred to as ended. This is beyond the world. Neither rejecting birth and death nor seeking nirvana is ending study. Having penetrated the true nature of reality as is, having realized that life and death itself is nirvana, this world itself is the land of silent light, there is nothing to say, so it is called ending study. Because the

stage of ending study is near enlightenment, it is called nearness. *Going beyond these two is really going beyond.* This means transcending these two. If you remain there in realization obtained in the absolute state, this is the nest of the two vehicles of individual liberation; to go beyond these you use the four universal commitments. *Wasan said, "Knowing how to beat a drum."* Aply beating the giant drum: is this real going beyond, or what? *What is absolute truth?* The realm transcending "all appearances are not characteristics" and transcending *real going beyond.* *Wasan said, "Knowing how to beat a drum."* He's firm in his skill, steel biting iron, pacifying the whole world with a single sword. *What about "not mind, not buddha"?* If it's not mind or buddha, it's not worth asking about. *Knowing how to beat a drum*—an iron mountain range molded of pure gold. *How do you deal with transcendent people?* Nothing can be said to transcendent people. *Knowing how to beat a drum*—an iron flute without holes, tossed right in front of the face.

[TENKEI] *Knowing how to beat a drum* is a transcendent, inconceivable door of teaching, where even the tests of Buddhas and Zen masters cannot reach, in the food, in the drink, just as is.

VERSE

One hauled rock, another carried dirt;
To shoot the bolt you need a ten-ton crossbow.
Seppo once rolled some balls,
But how can that compare to Wasan's ability to beat the drum?
I announce for your information, that you shouldn't be crude;
The sweet is sweet, and the bitter is bitter.

[HAKUIN] *One hauled rock*—All Zen masters reveal their own style in dealing with people on the basis of the fundamental concern. *Another carried dirt*—This was a teacher who wouldn't let newcomers introduce themselves until they had first hauled three loads of earth. *To shoot the bolt*—You need a *ten-ton crossbow* to shoot the black star. *Seppo once rolled some balls*—Even this is, after all, a ten-ton crossbow; one does not roll them out too readily.

How can that compare to Wasan's ability to beat the drum? Does that mean knowing how to beat the drum is cold, while rolling balls is nothing at all? How about it? If you talk about better and worse, even in knowing how to beat the drum there are a number of issues. I announce for your information—He calls everyone's attention. You shouldn't be crude—Don't be sticky. The sweet is sweet, the bitter is bitter. If you get this, there's something in it so scary that even knowing how to beat a drum you still get the shivers.

[TENKEI] Sweet? Bitter? You'll know when you taste and see. Don't mistake the flavor.

45

JOSHU'S CLOTH SHIRT

INTRODUCTION

One speaks when necessary, unmatched in all the world; one goes when appropriate, with complete capacity not deferring. Like sparks struck from flint, like a flash of lightning, a raging fire in the wind, a rushing stream crossing blades, when the tongs and hammer of transcendence are raised, there is no escaping losing your point and becoming tongue-tied. To allow for a pathway, I cite this koan.

[HAKUIN] *One speaks when necessary*—One who has passed through the brambles is able to speak where nothing can be said. Who knows how many people can be reached with this saying about the shirt—if you sit there where the path of words ends and the course of mind dies out, this is called the hell of mired perception. *Unmatched in all the world*—There are no two suns in the sky, only one person in the world. *With complete capacity not deferring*—Even to Buddhas and Zen masters, one with complete capacity does not defer. No need for reserve or salutation: with a blow of the cane or a shout, one does not defer to a teacher. *Like sparks struck from flint*—Eyes cannot reach it. *Raging fire . . . rushing stream*—These images refer to quick action. *No escaping*—In the presence of a Zen teacher as described above, who knows how many the wounded and dead; you can only shut up and say nothing. *To allow for a pathway*—It won't do to leave it at that, so for your sake here's a something on the secondary level of meaning.

[TENKEI] When Zen masters speak, they utter incomparable sayings. When they act, their whole capacity functions, put to use without deferring to anyone. That is *like sparks* and so on, in that there is not a hair's-breadth gap; when Zen masters take up the tongs and hammer of transcendence, if students hesitate they lose

their lives, and so *there is no escaping losing your point and becoming tongue-tied.*

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “Myriad things return to one; where does the one return?”

Joshu said, “When I was in Sei province I made a cloth shirt. It weighed seven pounds.”

[HAKUIN] This is called a wrapping-up question, asking about the ultimate point where everything is included. *Myriad things return to one*—The root source is ultimately one, the reality realm of one mind, immutable and unshakable. *When I was in Sei province I made a cloth shirt. It weighed seven pounds.* Is this where myriad things return, indeed? Joshu turns where it is impossible to turn, moves where it is impossible to move.

[TENKEI] This monk presented his capacity in his words: all things are made by one mind, so ultimately they are reduced to one mind; to what is this one mind ultimately reduced? This monk is one of those whose view is hardened at the point of radiant awareness; having a spot of satori, he took the Zen master to task with it. Yet that old Joshu said in a leisurely, relaxed manner, *When I was in Sei province I made a cloth shirt. It weighed seven pounds.* The shoulders are terribly uncomfortable, it’s so heavy. Do you consider this Buddhism? Do you consider it the Zen Way? Do you think it is the ultimate resort of the one? This is Joshu’s living tactic of turning freely beyond Buddhas and Zen masters where answer is impossible.

VERSE

Wrapping it all up, he pressed the venerable old awl.
How many know the weight of the seven-pound shirt?
Now it’s cast into West Lake;

With whom is the clear breeze of unburdening shared?

[HAKUIN] *Wrapping it all up, he pressed the venerable old awl.* Wrapping up *where does the one return and myriad things* into one bundle, he confronted Joshu. *How many know the weight of the seven-pound shirt?* People will probably not recognize how stalwart Joshu was in responding with a cloth shirt weighing seven pounds without any fuss or bother at all. *Now it's cast into West Lake—* Setcho too has worked for a long time and worn out his own old clothes. *With whom is the clear breeze of unburdening shared?* Having unloaded the heavy cargo of the shirt, with whom is the savor of this cool breeze to be shared?

[TENKEI] *Wrapping it all up—*Weaving all things into just one, he presses the issue of where the one winds up. *He pressed the venerable old awl—*The monk presses Joshu, who is completely free of any residual metallic taste of Buddhism or the Zen Way, and whose point is blunted. Since Joshu is an adept Zen general, the monk didn't succeed. What he didn't get was *the seven-pound shirt*. And it is not only this monk: there is no one in the world who knows. Thus Setcho raises the koan upward, but then again turns around and says *Now it's cast into West Lake—*This monk's view of all things returning to one, needless to say, but even Joshu's seven-pound shirt, too, somehow seem to be hiding something, so Setcho throws it down on West Lake below the mountain where he lives, showing a realm of untrammelled freedom with a wave of his hand. If there's anything else, it's only the clear breeze on the journey back. Even this ungraspable clear breeze, whispering invisibly, is something one would like to share with someone who aspires to it. Is there any giving or taking this? Is it something that can be gotten? Is it something that can be given? Does it belong to Setcho? Whose house has no bright moon or clear breeze? Fundamentally there couldn't be any giving or taking, you know! This is the eye to turn this side around and throw it onto the other side. The third and fourth lines of this verse have no rival in quality in any era, ancient or modern.

46

THE SOUND OF RAINDROPS

INTRODUCTION

Completion at a single stroke transcends ordinary and holy; breaking down with a single word removes bondage and dissolves attachments. For the moment leaving aside being like walking on ice, like running over sword blades, sitting in heaps of sound and form, walking on top of sound and form, wondrous function free, what about when going off instantly?

[HAKUIN] *Completion at a single stroke* refers to the Zen masters' method of helping people by which sharp students penetrate at their words, the final transcendental stroke after hundreds and thousands of refinements. *Transcends ordinary and holy*—It's beyond their capacity. *Breaking down with a single word*—using a statement like “the saying of the oak tree has the potential to rob you” to break down the seventeen hundred koans and the whole Buddhist canon. *Removes bondage and dissolves attachments*—dissolves and removes the sticky snares of the emptiness of ego and the emptiness of elements. *Walking on ice* is the function of a Zen practitioner who is alive. *Sitting in heaps of sound and form* means not getting excited, even at a party. There is nothing in the world outside sound and form; even hells and heavens come from these two. If you can master this sphere, you gain great freedom, serene and peaceful indeed. Zen practitioners have to be able to sleep in peace in the midst of sound and form. *Going off instantly*—How is it when transcending right to the stage of Buddhahood instantly, without making use of expedients?

[TENKEI] The methods with which teaching masters deal with students get them beyond Buddhas and Zen masters at a single stroke, settling this matter with half a phrase, freeing them from

bondage. That state is like *walking on ice*, subtle function without inhibition. This is the state of a teaching master; leaving this aside for the moment, what about the student's potential function taking off immediately at the single stroke of a saying? This introduction is put with the forty-eighth case in one text; it can also be here.

EXAMPLE

Kyosho asked a monk, "What is that sound outside?"

The monk said, "The sound of raindrops."

Kyosho said, "Ordinary people are upside-down, losing themselves in pursuit of things." The monk said, "What about you?"

Kyosho said, "Getting to not losing self."

The monk said, "What is the meaning of getting to not losing self?"

Kyosho said, "Emerging can be relatively easy; total expression must be hard."

[HAKUIN] *Kyosho asked a monk, "What is that sound outside?"* Kyosho was always fond of using this question; it contains the temporal and the true, the flowers and the moon. *The sound of raindrops*—Splash, splash; herein there is the present moment and there is the other side, with temporal and true, perception and function, included together. *Ordinary people are upside-down*—that is to say, in spite of the fact that speech itself, mountains, rivers, earth, and space in the ten directions are one single buddha-nature. The *Flower Ornament Scripture* says, "Having lost their real nature, they pursue objects in front of them." *Getting to not losing self*—Whoops, almost got lost there; what luck! *Emerging can be relatively easy; total expression must be hard*. Getting out of the mire of views is easy, but comprehensive expression is hard.

[TENKEI] Kyosho's question about the sound outside is a probe, a filter, to check this monk's standpoint. *The sound of raindrops*—It would be fine to be thus through and through; as long as this monk knows through and through what he knows, that is fine, but this monk had a view to start with, that all things are creations of mind, that nothing else existed at that moment but the sound of raindrops.

Ordinary people—Kyosho saw through this monk’s view and told him that this was after all lingering in satori and loss of self. *What about you?* “The sound of rain is simply the sound of rain. Whatever it may be, it is all the marvelous function of mind. This is how I see it; what about you?” *Getting to*—Close! Make sure not to slip! There are many misinterpretations of this point. *Emerging*—It is easy to relinquish everything, sound and form, right and wrong, to realize an untrammled state of personal freedom, but *total expression*, saying it all without falling into verbal understanding of objects or intellectual understanding of mind, freeing it from the mold, is something that is hard to do. Ultimately the message is to detach from the totality without moving from there; this is Kyosho’s penetrating help for people.

VERSE

In the empty hall, the sound of raindrops; even an expert can hardly reply.
If you say he turned the flow back, that’s still not understanding.
Understanding, not understanding—
On North Mountain, on South Mountain, more and more
downpour.

[HAKUIN] *In the empty hall, the sound of raindrops* has never ceased for a moment; the uniform sound of raindrops before time, within time, pervading heaven and earth; monkeys howl, foxes cry. *Even an expert can hardly reply*—Even someone with enlightened perception can hardly respond to it. *If you say he turned back the flow*—What is it that hears the sound of rain itself? Directing this question to your own essential nature might be called turning back the flow, but don’t get stuck there. Even Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma the founder of Zen couldn’t call it anything else but the sound of rain. *That’s still not understanding*—If you speak of listening to your own essence, then self and object form an opposition. *Understanding, not understanding*—Cut off both; don’t divide them; it’s neither here nor there. *Downpour*—Drenching from head to foot.

[TENKEI] The *empty hall* Setcho has placed in front here is the “empty hall” without traffic, profoundly peaceful, without any notions of Buddha or notions of Dharma occurring. Anyway, if you say *the sound of raindrops* in this hall is the sound of raindrops, that is to have been blocked off by external objects. If you say it is not the sound of raindrops, you fall into internal mental rationalizations. Ultimately it is not understood verbally, nor is it mental understanding. What do you call the unaffected, unimpeded sound of raindrops with mind and objects both shed? This state is unknown even to all-around adepts as long as they get into that duality. If you say such a state is reducing all things to one mind, as before, this is not understanding, because it is prying into where there is nowhere to pry. Then what should we do? Setcho tells us. *Understanding, not understanding*—Do you understand? Do you not understand? *South Mountain*—This is the line that throws it over onto the Other Side, the completely immovable point. Whether you understand or not, don’t go out in this pouring rain. And whether you understand or not, don’t stir, because endings are followed by new beginnings, now as ever, with never a pause and never a break.

47

[NOT CONTAINED BY SIX](#)

INTRODUCTION

What does the sky say? The four seasons go on there. What does the earth say? Myriad beings are born there. The substance can be seen in the operation of the four seasons, the action can be seen in the birth of myriad beings, but where can a Zen practitioner be seen? Detached from speech and activity, can you discern?

[HAKUIN] *What does the sky say?* These words are from the *Analects* of Confucius. Here they mean it is clear everywhere, in everything, and is not in words. *The substance can be seen*—Where the four seasons go on, see the whole body of Buddha right there in everyone. There is no gap at all. *Where myriad beings are born*—The evolution of myriad beings constitutes the function of the Great Way; you bump into it everywhere, there is nowhere to escape. *The action can be seen*—the function clearly distinct before your eyes. *Where can a Zen practitioner be seen*—that is, the substance and action of a Zennist who has passed through the transcendental. *Detached from speech and activity*—Look into the silence.

[TENKEI] In the operation of the four seasons, you should see the subtle substance whereby it happens that way; in the birth of myriad beings you should see the subtle function whereby it occurs thus. How do you discern?

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, “What is the body of reality?”
Ummon said, “Not contained in six.”

[HAKUIN] When there are so many things to ask about, to presume to ask about the body of reality is scary. *Not contained in six*—The six fields of sense data cannot be misconstrued as contained within the six organs of sense.

[TENKEI] It's *not contained in six*: it doesn't fit the number six. What number is it contained in? What number could match it? See if you can get the figures to add up on your own.

VERSE

One, two, three, four, five, six—even the founder of Zen couldn't count up;
He claimed to have imparted it to a successor at Shaolin,
Then rolled up his robe and said he'd return to India.
India is vast, nowhere to search;
Last night he came back to lodge on this peak.

[HAKUIN] *One, two, three, four, five, six*—This verse is thoroughly exceptional; there's not one surpassing this in all of Setcho's works. If you can recognize *not contained in six*, then you can recognize this too. *Even the founder of Zen couldn't count up*—Not only the founder of Zen: even the incarnation of compassion with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes can't either. *He claimed to have imparted it to a successor at Shaolin*. If you see this in terms of what cannot be counted up, there is no teaching to impart and none to receive. So it is untrue to say that it was imparted to a disciple; see the body of reality itself! *Then rolled up his robe and said he'd return to India*—This too is false talk, since there is no coming or going. *India is vast, nowhere to search*—He's not even in India; even if you part the weeds and deliberate, you won't find anyone like Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen. *Last night he came back to lodge on this peak*. Forever calm in the immediate present, last night he slept under the eaves on this mountain peak. This line is extremely fine.

[TENKEI] Since Ummon said it is not contained in six, Setcho uses Zen arithmetic to calculate; it is not contained in one, not contained

in two . . . no matter how high the count, three, four, five, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, even if you count for as many aeons as there are atoms in the universe, there is still a remainder. This is called the number that is more than enough but less than sufficient. It is a figure that fundamentally tallies perfectly. Everyone knows this, so why can't they get it to tally? See if you can tally it up. Of course you can't. *Even the founder of Zen*—In any case, here even the founder of Zen can't figure the number even with an abacus. This being so, can it be claimed that this thing is imparted? Everyone says this, anyway, but that doesn't mean anything. There's something even more worthless: *rolling up his robe, he said he'd return to India*. The words "claimed" and "said" should be viewed as having the same meaning. It is conventionally said that Bodhidharma returned to India, but Setcho doesn't think so. Even though it is a baseless claim everyone makes, Setcho himself takes a look just in case there might be something to it. He finds that *India is vast*, so there's no way to tell where Bodhidharma might be. But then if you think he seems to be nowhere at all, *last night* he lodged on this mountain where I live. There's no knowing whether there's any presence worth seeking, so the more you try to make the count tally, the less likely it is to add up. So set aside your adding machines and try to get the number tally right where you are. There is no particular reason why it shouldn't add up.

48

MAKING TEA

EXAMPLE

When Minister Oh went into Shokei, they were making tea. At the time Elder Ro was holding the kettle for Myosho. Ro turned the kettle over. Seeing this, the minister asked the elder, "What is under the tea stove?"

Ro said, "The stove-supporting spirit."

The minister said, "Since it is the stove-supporting spirit, why overturn the teakettle?"

Ro said, "One may serve in office for a thousand days, then lose it all one morning."

The minister abruptly walked out. Myosho said to Elder Ro, "Eating the food here, you go off to the other side of the river noisily gathering charred wood."

Ro said, "What about you, master?"

Myosho said, "The nonhuman gets the advantage."

Setcho remarked, "At that time I would have simply kicked over the tea stove."

[HAKUIN] Minister Oh was a spiritual heir of Zen Master Chokei. Chokei was the master of Shokei temple. This was a gathering of adepts: Myosho was a spiritual heir of Razan, and Elder Ro was a spiritual heir of Chokei. *The nonhuman gets the advantage.* A poltergeist got in. The *Vimalakirti Sutra* says, in the book on observing beings, "When people are afraid, nonhuman beings can take advantage of them." *At that time I would have simply kicked over the tea stove.* When the minister said, *Since it is the stove-supporting spirit, why turn over the teakettle,* Setcho would have kicked the brazier over. There is particular significance in this; it is not just a matter of strewing ashes all over the place. This is the food

and drink of Setcho's own house; the more you see it, the more flavorful it is.

[TENKEI] There is an echo in the words "stove-supporting spirit." Somehow you must have one too, he implies; this is the elder's perception. *One may serve in office for a thousand days*—This is where he ran outside. This statement is addressed to people like grandees. Even if you work for a thousand days, if you make a mistake you can be dismissed from office in one morning. This is a problematic saying, offensive to the grandee. *Noisily gathering charred wood* means making a ruckus. What this says is that eating food provided by other people and yet veering from the right road off onto an outside path, making a ruckus like a bunch of rustics gathering together collecting charcoal, is a worthless fuss. *The nonhuman gets the advantage*. That is not a human being, but it has gotten the advantage, he pointed out. A totally vague answer, with no positive action. Myosho's underlying meaning is "What is this? Don't think it strange." This is made clear in the verse.

VERSE

The oncoming question produced a force; the device in response was not clever.

Too bad the one-eyed dragon never showed his fangs and claws.

If the fangs and claws opened, they'd make clouds and thunder.

How many times are waves of adverse currents experienced?

[HAKUIN] *The oncoming question produced a force*—The minister's treatment, *What is under the tea stove*, is like the legendary character who swung his ax creating a force removing a speck of plaster from someone's nose, indescribable action. *The device in response was not clever*. Elder Ro's responsive action has no subtlety. *Too bad the one-eyed dragon*—Although the saying *The nonhuman gets the advantage* was indeed cold, unfortunately the "dragon" Myosho has only one eye. *Never showed his fangs and claws*—He is indeed a dragon, of course, but his saying *The*

nonhuman gets the advantage has no life in it. *If the fangs and claws opened*—Setcho’s strategic device of kicking over the brazier is the opening of his own fangs and claws. Without the claws and fangs of the cave of Dharma, a Zen community cannot be governed. Sozan’s memorial tower, Nansen’s passing away, Kembo’s three kinds of sickness, Goso’s ox going through a window lattice, Enkan’s rhinoceros, Nansen’s flower: these koans are all called fangs and claws of the cave of Dharma. *They’d make clouds and thunder*—If the fangs and claws opened, they’d produce clouds and thunder; cold indeed! The whole universe crumbles! *How many times are waves of adverse currents experienced?* This one is not the only event that is like reversing the waves of the four great oceans; Setcho has gone through such experiences untold times. There’s something you hadn’t thought of, you know! If you come on with kicking over a tea stove, “fools still scoop pond water in the fields.”

[TENKEI] The grandee’s question was skillful. Any sort of connoisseur ought to have had skillful technique, but what could be done for lack of cleverness of the *device in response*, the action of the elder, which didn’t work and could not be relied upon. Now the one-eyed dragon Myosho could not but take over in his stead on that account, but sadly he had no claws and fangs, not managing to act lively and free outside convention, grabbing the clouds and grabbing the fog. Here if I strategically performed the act of kicking over the tea stove, claws and fangs would open directly with the action of a live dragon, producing clouds and fog and thunder and lightning. Then the living water of the *waves of adverse currents* billowing and frothing, flooding the skies, shaking heaven and earth with astonishment, tumbling present and past, would never be interrupted. Too bad, he says. This is a wake-up call for all the world. Setcho’s transcendental liveliness is an example of a wave that points out the limitation of the here and now; it is also an example of the Ummon tradition’s statement that cuts off all currents.

49

PASSING THROUGH THE NET

INTRODUCTION

Penetrating the gaps, one snatches the drum and captures the flag; fortified and entrenched, one inspects the front and oversees the rear. Mounting a tiger's head and taking the tiger by the tail is not yet adept; disappearing in one form and reappearing in another is not yet extraordinary. Now tell me, when someone beyond measure shows up, then what?

[HAKUIN] *Penetrating the gaps* refers to the penetrating, perceptive, independent action of a Zen master. *Fortified and entrenched* means accumulating spiritual wealth to establish a supply. *Inspecting the front and overseeing the rear* means watching the ten directions. *Mounting a tiger's head and taking the tiger by the tail* means taming even a tigerlike student, completing the whole process from beginning to end. *Disappearing in one form and reappearing in another*—The function of the capacity of immediacy is an ephemera, a lightning flash. *Not yet extraordinary*—Even that is not the real thing.

EXAMPLE

Sansho asked Seppo, "What does a golden fish that has passed through the net eat?"

Seppo said, "I'll tell you when you come out of the net."

Sansho said, "The teacher of fifteen hundred people, and you don't even know a saying?"

Seppo said, "I have a lot of work to do on the job."

[HAKUIN] *Sansho asked Seppo*—This is a question presenting an understanding, a question making temporary use of a phenomenon. An encounter as plain as this is rare. Sansho associated with Rinzai for seventeen years. *What does a golden fish that has passed through the net eat?* The implication is that after having passed beyond everything there is nothing to eat, so please offer any delicacy you might have. *Seppo said, "I'll tell you when you come out of the net."* Sansho having turned himself into a golden fish, Seppo cast a net over him. An immeasurably great general, he's got cold courage. "I'll tell you when you've gotten out of the net of glibness, since you're not out yet." *Sansho said, "The teacher of fifteen hundred people—"* He casts a net wide as the skies over Seppo's head, an exceptional maneuver. *And you don't even know a saying*—You don't even know how to say anything. *I have a lot of work to do on the job.* "I have a lot of duties, so I may have been impolite; please excuse me." This is even bigger in scope than the words of a teacher of fifteen hundred: this is Seppo's coldness, which deserves to be called splendid; indeed, if you do not know this, you cannot be said to have passed through the net.

[TENKEI] *Passed through the net*—Not staying in the stagnancy of the spiritual water of the river of Zen, not using simplistic devices and objects like the cane and the shout, not needing to consume any of the sayings or statements of Zen or Buddhism, is there anything else to eat? This is making use of a thing to present an understanding. *When you get out*—"The understanding you present is sure Zen-like, but the mental activity in your state of perception is after all a huge net covering you, so emerge from that net and throw it off; then I'll tell you." He stroked him down from the top of his head; this is the naturalness of an adept Zen master. Sansho, furthermore, was also an adept, so where nothing could be done he said, *teacher of fifteen hundred*, implying that Seppo didn't seem to know what to say. "I'm asking about food," he says, in a retort that leaps beyond even the immense net of Seppo, which is like the vast net of heaven. *I have a lot of work*—"Since I'm in charge of this temple, there are all sorts of different matters to attend to, so I don't know anything about

religious conversation, just a handful of chores.” This is an interchange of adepts, without a trace of Buddhist dogmatics.

VERSE

The golden fish that's passed through the net
Shouldn't be said to linger in the water.
He shakes the heavens and sweeps the earth,
Waves his mane and wags his tail.
When a thousand whales spout, huge waves fly;
At a single peal of thunder, pure wind gusts.
Pure wind gusts—how many in heaven and earth know?

[HAKUIN] *The golden fish that's passed through the net*—Even if Sansho is a golden fish that's passed through the net, he is not the kind of person to linger in the water. The versification is complete in the first two lines. *Shouldn't be said to linger in the water*—Don't say he's in stagnant water. *He shakes the heavens and sweeps the earth*—This refers to the force of “You don't even know a saying.” *Waves his mane and wags his tail*—neither netted nor stuck. *A thousand whales*—This refers to the tremendous force of the words “the teacher of fifteen hundred.” *At a single peal of thunder, pure wind gusts*. This versifies Seppo's saying that he has a lot of work to do. *How many in heaven and earth know?* There probably aren't many who know where the pure wind arises.

[TENKEI] People might think that Seppo said what he did because Sansho was lingering in the water of idealism in the bias of satori even having passed through the net, unable to detach from it, thus imposing a judgment of superiority and inferiority on this case, so Setcho says *The golden fish that has passed through the net should not be said to linger in the water*. Be sure not to say something like that. He is not lingering in the river of Zen or the ocean of Buddhism; the golden fish is alive, so it isn't like that. The action “not lingering in the water” shakes the universe, as he *waves his mane*, independent and free, leaping with life, wagging his tail, rousing clouds and fog, and grasping the mist, his force like a thousand whales spouting,

speaking out with the force of tremendous waves, sweeping the heavens with *teacher of fifteen hundred, and you don't know a saying*, confronting Seppo with this. The reply to this, *I have a lot of work*, is a *single peal of thunder*, whereat a pure wind without any smell of Buddhism or Zen arises, and the force of the golden fish also subsides, becoming equally serene. Coming back with *pure wind gusts*, it is not a wind that stinks of views of Buddha or notions of Dharma but a gust of clear, pure, refreshing wind; here is where the wind rises: does anyone know? *In heaven and earth—Who knows?* Saying something like this and leaving it at that is the style of the Ummon tradition of Zen.

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CONCENTRATION ON EVERY ATOM

INTRODUCTION

Going beyond stages, transcending expedients, in response to every potential, each statement is fitting. Unless you go through the door of great liberation and attain great freedom of action, how can you judge the Buddhas and Zen masters and show the way to the source? And tell me, when cutting through directly at the moment of opportunity, opposing or agreeing strategically, how can you utter a statement to get out?

[HAKUIN] *Going beyond stages*—going beyond the stages of the three sages and ten saints. *Transcending expedients*—The Buddha's lifetime teachings were just expedients to foster knowledge of self. When you transcend the Buddha's expedients, *in response to every potential, each statement is fitting*. Response to the potentials of seekers is like an expert physician dispensing medicines according to the illnesses. *The door of great liberation*—Concentration in every atom is a door of great liberation when you break through the net of satori and pass through the impenetrable. *Great freedom of action* means mastering wily methods of dealing with students. *Judge the Buddhas and Zen masters*—This means leading the Buddhas and Zen masters about in such a way as to even up the scales; this has the meaning of being equals, and it also can be seen in the sense of censure and praise. *Show the way*—This means to settle doubts and distinguish beautiful from ugly. *Cutting through directly at the moment of opportunity*—When you can do this, then you are able to oppose or agree strategically. *A statement to get out*—This means a statement of liberation, a way of self-transformation, staying neither in the realm of Buddhas nor in the realm of demons.

[TENKEI] When Zen teaching masters go beyond graduated steps and stages, transcend expedient methods, and act independently with lively freedom, in an interchange between teacher and student *each statement is fitting in response to every potential*. For action like this, *unless you go through the door of great liberation* and are complete in both substance and function, you cannot exemplify the teachings of the Buddhas and Zen masters or be a guide for the vehicle to the source.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, “What is concentration on every atom?”

Ummon said, “Food in the bowl, water in the pail.”

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Ummon*—The folks at Ummon’s school were all a scary lot; this question too is cold. *Concentration on every atom*—The book on Chief in Goodness in the *Flower Ornament Scripture* says, “Entering concentration on a single atom, one attains concentration on all atoms, without that atom expanding.” Concentration on every atom means entering into the six fields of sense objects without being concerned with the six fields of sense objects, working things out according to the situation, men cultivating themselves as men, women cultivating themselves as women, everyone just as they are attaining the knowledge and vision of Buddha. Just get to know your self clearly, and in the course of your daily activities, unobstructed by anything in the senses or objects, one nature pervades all natures, one truth contains all things, one moon is reflected in all waters, the reflected moons in all waters are contained in one moon. Concentration means correct reception; correct reception means nongrasping. The pillars are vertical, the sills are horizontal: this is concentration on every atom.

[TENKEI] The question is about the normal affairs of Zen practitioners, completely immutable in the light of daily activities. This monk has some perception; he’s a sharp one. *Food in the bowl*—This is an answer that the whole world has never hidden. Have a bite, have a sip! It’s completely immutable.

VERSE

“Food in the bowl, water in the pail”—
The talkative teacher could hardly open his mouth.
The North Star and South Star don’t change positions;
White waves flooding the skies arise on even ground.
Trying doesn’t apply, stopping does not stop,
Each one’s a rich kid with no britches.

[HAKUIN] *Food in the bowl, water in the pail*—Although this line cites Ummon’s saying, it is not an imitation; “each time it is brought up, each time it is new,” as it is said. When you get this, Ummon’s guts are Setcho’s guts, and Setcho’s guts are Ummon’s guts. *The talkative teacher can hardly open his mouth.* Even the most eloquent philosopher could neither praise nor blame this *food in the bowl, water in the pail*. Even if one’s whole body were a mouth, one still could not capture it in words. *The North Star and South Star don’t change positions*—North of here is Mount Fuji, south of here are the pine barrens of Miho; their individual concentrations never change. *White waves flooding the skies arise on even ground.* Within *food in the bowl, water in the pail* there is the majesty of *the North Star and South Star*, and there are also *white waves flooding the skies*. *Trying doesn’t apply*—If you try to understand the inexpressible *water in the pail* by guesswork and cogitation, you are far, far away. *Stopping does not stop*—This means meditation work is not continuous. *Rich kid with no britches*—Everyone is originally a well-dressed scion of a rich family, but everyone has become destitute. The point is that if you try to guess the meaning of this koan, that is disgraceful. Having no britches means pauperhood. The meaning is that while everyone is heir to a rich family and independently running the family business, by struggling in various ways, trying what is inapplicable, failing to stop what is to be stopped, they lose the family business and call poverty upon themselves.

[TENKEI] *Food in the bowl, water in the pail* is one of Ummon’s wonderfully unique sayings, so Setcho quotes it here, but this saying is both extremely difficult and very easy. To see whether it is hard or

easy for you, try eating and drinking. Here *the talkative teacher can hardly open his mouth*—Setcho cuts off a thousand distinctions and doesn't let any influence in, holding completely still. When it comes to that which is inexpressible in terms of difficulty or ease, if you have eyes you will already have seen through it. But if this is all that is said, those of lesser potential will swallow it whole without chewing, so Setcho opens his hands to tell them: *the North Star and South Star don't change positions*. The eyes are horizontal, the nose is vertical; standing up and sitting down, sleeping and rising, there is nothing else at all, there is nothing unusual or different. When you get here, if you say that this *concentration on every atom* is what is right at your feet, you then get into unconcern and swallow it whole without chewing, so Setcho rouses the usual wave, shifting around and saying *white waves flooding the skies arise on even ground*. At this time, what do you do? Here, if you try, it *doesn't apply*—If you try to understand, you don't understand, so even if you try to stop, you still can't stop. Unable either to go forward or withdraw, if you go on throwing away and picking up, well then everyone may be heirs to a rich family, but without the adornment of *concentration on every atom* they are destitute, unable to appear in public. It is sad that the spirit of poverty does not leave people, who are thus paupers sleeping in the weeds unable to use their own family treasure.

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GOING BACK INSIDE WITH LOWERED HEAD

INTRODUCTION

As soon as there is affirmation and negation you lose your mind in a flurry, but without descent into stages, there is no way of seeking. So tell me, is it right to let go, or is it right to hold still? Here, the slightest interpretation is still stuck in verbal explanation; if you still get involved in devices and objects, all of it is dependency. Even if you immediately arrive at a state of independent liberation, you are still ten thousand miles away. Can you get there? If not, for the moment just understand this koan at hand.

[HAKUIN] *As soon as there is affirmation and negation*—This refers to subtle affirmation and negation. When you pass through the impenetrable, you emerge into a state where there is no affirmation or denial, no gain or loss. *You lose your mind in a flurry*—When exposed to the impenetrable stories of Zen, you lose your mind. *Without descent into stages*—To realize the “true human being without position” is to be a solitary illuminate, or a follower of Buddha’s teaching; what you’re supposed to do is pass through and beyond both the realm of Buddhas and the realm of demons. Another way of interpreting this is that in the realm of original purity, there are no such things as stages; not only devils and heretics, but even Buddhas and Zen masters, cannot gain access either by letting go or by holding still. *The slightest interpretation*, an air of satori, *is still stuck in verbal explanation*. Even if you think you won’t get stuck, you are still stuck in verbal explanation. *If you still get involved in devices and objects*—If you get bogged down in one device or one object, you depend on words and stick to sayings, not independently liberated and unable to act on your own. *Even if you immediately arrive at a state of independent liberation*—Independent liberation is

when there are no Buddhas above, no sentient beings below, just one person in the universe. *You are still ten thousand miles away*—far from the state of the Buddhas and Zen masters. *Understand this koan at hand*—Unless you have passed through the impenetrable, you will not be able to understand this koan.

[TENKEI] Whenever you make subjective discriminations, affirming and negating, you lose your mind and are ineffective. If you then have no stages to go by, this is the ungraspable realm of the fundamental where you don't rely on anything, but on the part of a teacher is this holding still or is it letting go? What about it? When you get to this point, if you have any interpretation stuck on verbal explanation of devices and objects, this is dependency, the realm of hungry ghosts. Even the realm of totally independent liberation is myriad miles from home. This is how hard it is to reach this state. Have you reached it? If not, look at this koan at hand.

EXAMPLE

When Seppo was living in a hut, two monks came to pay respects. Seeing them coming, Seppo pushed open the door of the hut, popped out, and said, "What is it?"

A monk also said, "What is it?"

Seppo hung his head and went back inside. The monk later went to Ganto.

Ganto asked, "Where have you come from?"

The monk said, "South of the Range."

Ganto asked, "Did you ever go to Seppo?"

The monk said, "Yes."

Ganto said, "What did he have to say?"

The monk recited the foregoing story.

Ganto asked, "What did he say?"

The monk said, "He said nothing. He hung his head and went back inside."

Ganto said, "Ah, too bad I didn't tell him the last word. Had I told him, no one could do anything to Seppo."

At the end of the summer, the monk brought up the story again and asked for more help. Ganto said, "Why didn't you ask before?"

The monk said, "I didn't dare be casual."

Ganto said, "Though Seppo is born of the same lineage as me, he does not die in the same lineage as me. If you want to know the last word, just this is it."

[HAKUIN] *Two monks came to pay respects. Why pay respects? Seppo pushed open the door of the hut—Here you can see Seppo's visage; he seems in rather good spirits, doesn't he, in spite of the fact that a tiger may show up. What is it? This is like a gun fired in front of a deaf man. Anyway, it's outstanding. A monk also said, "What is it?" The monk just spoke out of stupefaction; there's nothing profound in it, he's just astonished. Seppo hung his head and went back inside. If you want to understand this koan, first look into this going back inside the hut. Ganto asked, "Did you ever go to Seppo?" Did you see the real Seppo? He hung his head and went back inside. He got away! Too bad I didn't tell him the last word. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to tell Seppo the last word. He was born of the same lineage as me but doesn't die in the same lineage as me. When it comes to Seppo's great exercise of potential, the likes of Ganto can hardly match it, he implies. This is Ganto's special chest pain, a serious matter in Zen. Just this is it. The Sutra of the Seven Wise Women says, "My disciples who are great arhats do not understand this principle; only great bodhisattvas can understand it." While this device is communicated from Zen master to Zen master, from Buddha to Buddha, Ganto is the first to name it the last word. This is the sinews and bones of Buddhism.*

[TENKEI] *When Seppo popped out, was this holding still or letting go? If you are not such a person, you will find it hard to distinguish. When the monk also said, "What is it?" was this the same or different? It resembles, but is not the same. When Seppo hung his head, what state is that? Ganto's question Where have you come from? is a point worth paying attention to. But the monk didn't notice: he just responded with where he had been, South of the Range. Did you ever go to Seppo? Regrettably this monk didn't wake up right away; Ganto tries to help him again. What did he have to say? Here*

there is no idling away the time. *What did he say?* Ganto is so compassionate that he helps the man kindly over and over again. *Too bad I didn't tell him the last word.* "Had I told him the last word, he wouldn't have deadpanned like this." But does Seppo really not know? *Though born of the same lineage*—Although both Seppo and Ganto were both spiritual successors of Tokusan, Ganto doesn't deadpan, he says. *If you want to know the last word, just this is it is the last word.* I, Tenkei, remark, "Not like it at all." Not like what? Not like Buddha? Not like an ordinary mortal? Not like a cat or a rat? It's something like nothing whatsoever, whether human or divine or animal, green or red.

VERSE

The last word is spoken for you,
The times of light and darkness pair by pair:
Born of the same lineage, they know each other;
Not dying of the same lineage, they're totally separate.
What is totally separate,
Even Buddha and Bodhidharma have yet to discern.
South, north, east, west, let us return
And view the snow on the thousand crags together deep in the
night.

[HAKUIN] *The last word* is the final battle that determines a Zen practitioner's mettle. *Light and darkness pair by pair* means both light and both dark. Both are alien substances that cannot be rationalized, like tigers with horns and oxen without horns. Just when you think it's light, it's dark; just when you think it's dark, it's light. This is Setcho's own personal secret. *Born of the same lineage*—Do you think these two lines would please Ganto? *Not dying of the same lineage, they're totally separate.* I really had a hard time when I was confronted with this line. *What is totally separate*—It is different, not without reason. *Even Buddha and Bodhidharma have yet to discern*—Even Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma the founder of Zen can hardly perceive what is totally separate. *South, north,*

east, west, let us return—The jig’s up! Let everyone from whatever land, east, west, south, or north, go back home, because this little bit of *not dying of the same lineage* is altogether unmanageable. *And view the snow on the thousand crags together deep in the night*—This too is a totally separate realm, but if you call it the extreme of uniformity, or the immediate present, you’re wrong.

[TENKEI] *The last word is spoken for you*—Setcho himself is going to tell you the last word, so listen. *Light and dark*—What time is this? It’s the matter at hand, not beyond the middle of your brows; in this way he versifies the whole thing all at once. What comes after are Setcho’s footnotes to help people. Everywhere people see this in terms of the line of the *Union of Difference and Sameness* that says, “There is darkness in light, there is light in darkness,” but this is wrong. Setcho’s usage is simply a play on a saying of Razan, that’s all. This is not something for Zen practitioners to say openly, but “both light” means *so*, or concession, or letting go; cats and cows know it’s there, rubble radiates light. “Both dark” means *not so*, or taking away, referring to holding still; the Buddhas of all times don’t know it’s there, gold loses its luster, neither ordinary nor holy can pass. Thus when we speak of “both light,” we have made something of nothing; whereas when we speak of “both dark,” we seem to make nothing of something. But is there something or nothing? Open your eyes and see what is right in front of your eyes. Ultimately *light and darkness pair by pair* is completely immutable. *Born of the same lineage*—This is the time of “both light,” when there is no other and the whole earth is the same one homeland. So Seppo knows the final word too, as does Ganto; everyone knows it, even the cats and the cows. This is the time when even rubble radiates light. *Not dying of the same lineage*—This is the time of “both dark,” the technique of sweeping clear, cutting off the thousand distinctions and not letting ordinary or holy pass, where the Buddhas of all times do not know it is, and true gold loses its color. This is the time of the total separateness of “both dark.” Referring once more to this totally separate transcendental state, he says *even Buddha and Bodhidharma have yet to discern*, not being in the know.

South, north—Setcho takes everyone in the world by the hand and says “let’s go home,” because there’s a bit of a nice realm. What

place is that? *Deep in the night*—Is this light? Is this dark? Where light and dark are not separate, late on a snowy night, where you can't tell the valleys from the peaks, valleys and peaks a single expanse, where there is no way to get through, the whole entirety is a fine realm. Let's go back to this state, he says. What state is this? Where shall we return? It's not over there, but it's not over here either; rousing his usual wave, Setcho speaks of the last word that is totally without any root to rely on, then leaves it there, pointing out the flaw in uniformity and throwing it over to the other side. It's not this, not that—there's nothing like it at all.

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THE STONE BRIDGE OF JOSHU

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “Long have I heard of the stone bridge of Joshu, but now that I’ve gotten here, I see only a simple log bridge.”

Joshu said, “You just see the log bridge; you don’t see the stone bridge.”

The monk asked, “What is the stone bridge?”

Joshu said, “It lets asses cross, it lets horses cross.”

[HAKUIN] This monk had some potential; this is a question testing the host. This monk tried to test Joshu’s ability. *I see only a simple log bridge*—He remarks that it is just a single log, a flimsy bridge. “When you hear about it, it is as weighty as nine cauldrons; after seeing, it is as light as a single hair.” *You see the log bridge, not the stone bridge*—All you can see with those eyes of yours is a little log bridge; the stone bridge isn’t visible to you. *The monk asked, “What is the stone bridge?”* This is what is called a dog chasing a clod. *It lets asses cross, it lets horses cross.* Lay folk as well as clergy, the cat as well as the ladle, you might say. What is the principle of *letting asses cross, . . . letting horses cross?* Whatever you say, you lose your life and get bogged down. Joshu’s Zen is lip Zen—his whole body is a mouth. This is so-called verbal *samadhi*.

[TENKEI] To begin with, the monk came up with a question diminishing the other’s authority. When Joshu told him he only saw a log bridge, not the stone bridge, these were fishing words to hook the monk. *It lets asses cross, it lets horses cross*—Animate and inanimate beings cross over at the same time, without hindrance. “If you want to cross the stone bridge,” he says in effect, “go ahead,” inviting the monk onto the highway of true normalcy. Too bad the

monk didn't realize it. There is also an echo in the words; here is where everyone gets out.

VERSE

Not made inaccessible, in that his path is lofty;
One goes into the ocean looking to hook a giant tortoise.
His contemporary the Elder of Pouring Stream is worth a laugh;
Though able to say "whistling arrow," his effort was in vain.

[HAKUIN] *Not made inaccessible, in that his path is lofty.* He doesn't seem inaccessible, but in his apparently casual conversation there is a cold craftiness. *One goes into the ocean looking to hook a giant tortoise.* Shrimp and minnows have nothing to do with Joshu's fishing. *His contemporary the Elder of Pouring Stream is worth a laugh.* There's a resemblance on the surface, but the substantial nature is different. *Though able to say "whistling arrow," his effort was in vain.* The elder's saying "whistling arrow" resembles Joshu's "lets asses cross, lets horses cross," but when you compare them, it's lost labor.

[TENKEI] In his everyday work, Joshu didn't use Zen devices, just ordinary interchanges, but his way was paradoxically lofty. Therefore it is not easy to take to it. There is no rationalization in terms of Buddhism or mysticism, just normal activity, but it's still like a mile-high wall. *One goes into the ocean*—When using such methodology to go "fishing," it would be to catch a living Zen practitioner like a giant tortoise undefiled by views of Buddha or Dharma. In this connection, something comes to mind *worth a laugh*, something hilariously funny: a contemporary of Joshu, known as the Elder of the Pouring Stream, knew how to tell a monk who used the image of the pouring stream to ask about his state "swift as a whistling arrow," but from Joshu's perspective this is a waste of effort, entirely useless. It seems similar but is not; "swift as a whistling arrow" still stinks of doctrine.

INTRODUCTION

When the whole world does not hide it, the complete capacity stands out alone. When one does not linger on the road, each experience has a potential way out. When there is no subjectivity in statements, at every point there is the intent to kill. Now tell me, ultimately where did the ancients rest?

[HAKUIN] *When the whole world does not hide it*—The whole world is revealed, even down to the tiniest insect. *The complete capacity stands out alone*—stark naked by land and by sea. *When one does not linger on the road*—One who has maximum potential actually functioning can enter the realm of Buddhas as well as the realm of demons without getting stuck. *Each experience has a potential way out*—With every move you make there is a way to get out. *When there is no subjectivity in statements*—Whatever is uttered for the sake of others, be it a single word or half a phrase, is not useless talk. *Rest* means pass through to freedom from birth and death.

[TENKEI] When the Zen potential passes through to liberation, the totality becomes evident as something that has never been hidden. As for the state of someone who actualizes this in practice, *one does not linger on the road* but has a way out with every move, being thoroughly independent. Therefore when teacher and student interact, no subjectivity enters into the picture; at every point there are devices to kill. Why? Because Zen practitioners cannot come to life if they have not died. This includes Baso's method of trying to kill Hyakujo in today's koan.

EXAMPLE

As the great master Baso was walking along with Hyakujo, they saw wild ducks fly past. The great master said, "What is that?"

Hyakujo said, "Wild ducks."

The great master said, "Where have they gone?"

Hyakujo said, "Flown away."

The great master then grabbed Hyakujo's nose and twisted it. Hyakujo cried out in pain. The great master said, "When was this 'flown away'?"

[HAKUIN] *As great master Baso was walking along with Hyakujo—*The scene of the great master's efforts for others is unveiled throughout the world. *They saw wild ducks—*Just when one would hope something would happen, they saw some ducks. *What is that?* The great master must know. *Hyakujo said, "Wild ducks."* "The straightforward mind is the site of enlightenment." This is the same as "What is that sound outside? The sound of raindrops." *Flown away—*Where have they flown off to? Whoops! Damn! Got away! *When was this "flown away"?* Baso's whole body is fallen in the weeds.

[TENKEI] When the great master said *What is that?* there was an echo in his words. *Wild ducks—*It's a pity he misheard. *Where—*Great master Baso actually sees, but he's confronting Hyakujo in order to help him. That doesn't work, however, and Hyakujo says *Flown away*, missing the point again and again, unable to see. *Grabbed his nose and twisted it—*Whereas Hyakujo was going to let it go at flying away, Baso held fast. This is called a Zen practitioner's reviving method of soul recovery. *Cried out in pain—*When he said, "Ouch!" his pulse seemed to appear somewhat. After all, there is nothing outside of knowing that what is painful hurts and knowing that what itches itches. This pain, which has not been received from Buddhas or Zen masters or Baso either, exists in oneself. Now you know the "ducks" whose essential being has never moved. *When was this "flown away"?* Where have they flown off to? Do you know the wild ducks on your nose? Pressed in this way, he now realized what he had known all along, therefore he had an insight.

VERSE

Wild ducks—who knows how many?
Seeing the approach, Baso had a conversation,
Telling all about the clouds on the mountains and the moon over
the sea.
Still not understanding, flying off instead,
As he tried to fly away, in the end he was held still.
Speak, speak!

[HAKUIN] *Wild ducks*—The “wild ducks” are Buddha, “Buddha” is the wild ducks. *Who knows how many?* Here, there, and everywhere, they are innumerable. *Seeing the approach, Baso*—He had a conversation with Hyakujo after having seen into the depths of his mind. *Telling all about the clouds on the mountains and the moon over the sea*—He poured out his heart and guts. This line comes from the poetry of Zengetsu. *Still not understanding, flying off instead*—Even though Baso told everything, Hyakujo didn’t understand; it was he who flew away, not the ducks. *As he tried to fly away*—Baso grabbed him by the nose just as he was about to fly off. *Speak, speak!*—This is the marrow of the Ummon school. This is an outstanding piece of work on the part of Setcho.

[TENKEI] Are these wild ducks many or few? How many know? Probably not many. Today there are only Baso and Hyakujo who have been able to discuss the matter this way. But even though he opened up and told all about his recollections of the mountains and seas, Hyakujo still didn’t understand and instead spoke of flying away. Seeing Hyakujo about to fly off, just at the point of danger where he was about to take flight, Baso held him still. By now Setcho has settled the case according to the facts, so then with his usual wave he turns around and says *Speak, speak!* Right at this very moment, say something besides “Ouch.” Cutting off abruptly with this challenge is Setcho’s way of helping people, turning and shifting freely where there is no way forward or backward. This is a wave of the river of Zen, with which Setcho helps people out of benevolent concern.

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EXTENDING BOTH HANDS

INTRODUCTION

Penetrating beyond birth and death, setting devices to work, casually shearing iron and cutting nails, everywhere covering heaven and earth—whose practice is this?

[HAKUIN] This praises Ummon's operation of devices. Meditating, reciting scriptures, and cultivating myriad practices are all for *penetrating beyond birth and death*. *Setting devices to work* means activating devices that even the Buddha and the founders of Zen could hardly attain, instructing apart from theoretical knowledge. *Casually shearing iron and cutting nails* means that a Zen teacher as described above snatches away any satori you may have and cuts off any understanding you may attain, pressing again and again to probe and scrutinize. *Covering heaven and earth* means driving out heaven and earth and all worlds in the ten directions.

[TENKEI] Zen teaching masters first penetrate birth and death and pass through to liberation, then activate the devices of the Buddhas and Zen founders. Because this is a state of unimpeded freedom, when they act on the moment in an interchange between teacher and student, even a casual word or phrase is so sharp it is as if it can cut through nails and shear through iron, so the whole business covers sky and earth, without in any way boiling down to an arrangement.

EXAMPLE

Ummon asked a monk, "Where have you just come from?"

The monk said, "Saizen."

Ummon said, "What are they saying at Saizen these days?"

The monk extended his hands.

Ummon gave him a slap.

The monk said, "I'm still talking."

Ummon then extended his hands.

The monk said nothing. Ummon hit him.

[HAKUIN] *Where have you just come from?* is a probe; watch out! *The monk extended his hands.* This monk is no ordinary man; he's a tough guy. Nevertheless, *Ummon gave him a slap.* Indeed, this is why he is called Ummon the Emperor! *The monk said, "I'm still talking":* "I have something to say too." This monk is a prejudiced guy. *Ummon then extended his hands.* Amazing! Surely one like him cannot be found even among the seventeen hundred Zen masters in the *Transmission of the Lamp.*

[TENKEI] *Where have you just come from?* There's an echo in the words; first he checked the monk's standpoint. *Saizen*—He just answered as is. *What are they saying at Saizen these days?* He tested him again. *The monk extended his hands.* This monk is undeniably a tough customer, with the means to test Ummon right back. *Ummon gave him a slap.* This is a method of distinguishing black and white in a flash, where there's not even time to blink an eye. *I'm still talking*—"No matter how much you hit me, I'm still talking." This is the action of a Zennist accustomed to battle. *Ummon then extended his hands.* Is this the same? Is it different? This monk's standpoint is not yet clear, so he suddenly lets go to see how he'll respond. *The monk said nothing.* Far away as sky from earth, he appears similar but is not the same. His tail is showing. *Ummon hit him.* This is Ummon's method of disapproval, taking the tiger's head and the tiger's tail at the same time, because the royal law of Ummon is strict.

VERSE

Taking the tiger's head and the tiger's tail at the same time,

That stern majesty extends throughout all regions.
At the final question, he didn't know—how very dangerous!
Setcho says, "I've given up a move."

[HAKUIN] *Taking the tiger's head and the tiger's tail at the same time*—Ummon pins this tigerlike monk by the head and tail and doesn't let him move at all. *That stern majesty extends throughout all regions* praises Ummon: everyone is affected by his influence. *At the final question, he didn't know—how very dangerous!* "The final question" refers to Ummon's extending his hands, while "he who didn't know" was the monk as he said nothing. This final question of Ummon's is extremely dangerous. *Setcho says, "I've given up a move."* This is the secret of the Ummon school inherited by Setcho. There is no explanation.

[TENKEI] Setcho versifies the whole process of the koan in the first line, saying that the powerful wind, that is, the stern influence, of Ummon's transcendental enlightened virtue, which took the tiger by the head and tail at once, is coldest in the world, and that is why his methods today are like this. He praises Ummon to the skies; since the influence of his character is so intense that it is hardly accessible, here Setcho himself emphasizes how dangerous Ummon's methods are. Using the first two lines to pose a question to people, he says that it is reasonable that Ummon's inaccessible methods are not visible to everyone. Accordingly, Setcho lets up and leaves out a move, implying that if anyone has a good move, you should make it here and come back to life!

INTRODUCTION

Secure, stable total reality is experienced on the spot; entering the flow to transform things is undertaken directly. Cutting off confusion in a flash, unapproachable when mounting a tiger's head and taking the tiger by the tail—leaving this aside for the moment, is there a way to help people by letting out a pathway?

[HAKUIN] *Secure, stable total reality* refers to inner experience, or holding still, the realm where verbal explanation cannot reach. The state of secure stability is itself total reality, pure unalloyed gold. *Experienced on the spot*—Without changing your activities, every step you take is the fundamental; long things are long bodies of reality, short things are short bodies of reality. *Entering the flow to transform things*—Even grinding something in a mortar is a sermon replete with all manner of eloquence and nuance; everything everywhere is transformed into the scenery of the fundamental ground. *Undertaken directly*—It is taken up as “What is this?” as the manner of the original state. The foregoing represented seeking above; what follows represents teaching those below. *In a flash*—This refers to application for others, pinning them down and holding them fast at the drop of a hat. *Mounting a tiger's head and taking the tiger by the tail*—This refers to training students. *Unapproachable* means out of your depth, beyond your reach, something you can't get your teeth into. *Letting out a pathway*—Since it's hard to approach, how do you back off and explain from a secondary point of view?

[TENKEI] The transcendental state of secure stability is originally hidden within ourselves; where complete reality is uniquely manifest, immediately present, and completely immutable, students should

realize on the spot. Now then, when it comes to *entering the flow to transform things*, subtly responding to myriad conditions, not getting trapped in any state of existence, taking up the responsibility directly, this refers to the activity proper to a Zen practitioner. What comes after refers to the function of a teaching master helping others. When teachers act according to the potential of the moment in encounters with students, they cut off students' confusions in a flash, not admitting either the ordinary or the holy, so they are inaccessible, taking tigers by the head and tail at once, never tipping their hands. This is the primary point; is there any such thing as temporarily setting this aside and *letting out a pathway*, or opening up a shortcut, in order to help people?

EXAMPLE

Dogo and Zengen went to a home to make a condolence call. Zengen hit the coffin and said, "Alive? Dead?"

Dogo said, "Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either."

Zengen said, "Why won't you say?"

Dogo said, "I won't say. I won't say."

As they were returning, halfway back Zengen said, "Master, tell me at once, or I'll hit you."

Dogo said, "Hit me all you want, but I still won't say."

Zengen then hit him.

After that Dogo passed on. Zengen went to Sekiso and related the foregoing story.

Sekiso said, "Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either."

Zengen said, "Why won't you say?"

Sekiso said, "I won't say, I won't say."

At these words Zengen had an insight.

One day Zengen went to the teaching auditorium carrying a hoe and crossed back and forth east to west and west to east.

Sekiso said, "What are you doing?"

Zengen said, "I'm looking for relics of our late teacher."

Sekiso said, "Enormous waves roll far and wide, foaming billows flood the skies—what relics of the late teacher are you looking for?"

Setcho commented, "Heavens! Heavens!"

Zengen said, "This is just what to work on!"

Taigen Fu said, "The late teacher's relics are still there."

[HAKUIN] *Alive? Dead?*—Buddha spoke of not being born and not passing away; what about you? *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either.* He presents a pearl that lights the night, along with a tray and all. This is a good saying. If it were up to me, I'd say, "Are you alive or dead?" *Why won't you say?* The fool, he thought the teacher wouldn't say because he was keeping it a secret. *I won't say, I won't say.* How does this compare to the story of the seven sagacious women in the forest of corpses, where one of the women points to a corpse and says, "Here is the corpse; where has the person gone?" *Tell me at once*—The words "at once" indicate a hurry, being in a rush. What a complete idiot; why doesn't he investigate the question of life and death himself? Right here and now, are you alive or dead? What a bunch of hopeless cathedral-pigeon shit! *Hit me all you want*—There is a poison drum herein, great kindness and great compassion. *Zengen then hit him*—because he got angry thinking the teacher was being unkind and not compassionate. *Sekiso also said, "Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either."* He is extremely kind. "Gentlemen have the same manners everywhere." *Why won't you say?* His crude mentality has not changed. *I won't say, I won't say.* Maximum potential with maximum function, he presents a pearl that lights the night, tray and all. *At these words Zengen had an insight.* Space dissolves. At last: how nice! "An insight" means just a little bit. You have to revive from total darkness. Doubt is to be produced from such a point.

I'm looking for relics of our late teacher. A golden dragon does not remain in a frigid pond. *Enormous waves roll far and wide*—This is the *Heavens! Heavens!* Oh, pity! This saying is a mirror within the *Blue Cliff Record.* *This is just what to work on!* Indeed, I'm doing my part to help. *The late teacher's relics are still there.* This is said in place of Zengen's "This is just what I should work on." This saying is so cold it makes your hair stand on end. It's a good remark; I certainly won't overlook it. This is my own dragging mud and dripping water; "the ocean spirit knows its value but not its price."

[TENKEI] *Alive, I won't say*—What is this? See why not. This seems to be like what Zengen is saying, but it is completely different. He runs on words and statements, very far off the mark. Why not say? When you have seen what this is ultimately all about, it has no life to be considered alive and no death to be considered dead. What is this? *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either*. This is the eye of the koan. *Hit me all you want*—He redoubles his kindness, refusing to say, even if he is struck or beaten. *Zengen went to Sekiso and related the foregoing story*. Is this cited here on the basis of the *Transmission of the Lamp*? There is some resemblance. According to the *Five Lamps Merged in the Source*, Zengen went to Sekiso and asked for a saying. Sekiso said, “Didn’t our late teacher say, *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either*?” Zengen bowed. This was after Zengen had attained enlightenment; he went to apologize for what had happened in the past, and also to present his vision and understanding for confirmation of enlightenment. It is not true that he attained enlightenment with Sekiso. *Enormous waves*—“I don’t have a corpse like that here,” he says, rousing a wave on even ground, pointing out the flaw in Zengen’s satori bias, seeing how thoroughly he had penetrated to the ground of reality. Zengen had in fact succeeded in penetrating through, so *foaming billows*, he declares, are just where to focus effort, thus responding in the manner of already enlightened people who are not turned about in the vein of other’s words. *Setcho commented, “Heavens!”* “It’s sad that Zengen doesn’t show up here.” This is Setcho’s help for others. *Taigen* —“Zengen’s act of looking for the late teacher’s relics is quite reasonable; the late teacher’s relics are still there.” This is Taigen’s method of helping others. Setcho and Taigen’s comments are both for the sake of others, one by lifting up and one by taking down.

VERSE

Rabbits and horses have horns; oxen and rams are hornless.
Nary a hair, nary a wisp; massive as giant mountains.
The golden relics are still present now;
With foaming waves flooding the skies, where can they be put?

There's no place to put them;
They've been lost, even on the way back west with one shoe.

[HAKUIN] *Rabbits and horses have horns*—The first line directly embodies *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either*, versifying the realm unconnected with life and death or being and nonbeing. The next line is an explanatory note on the first. *Nary a hair, nary a wisp*—If you think there's nothing . . . *massive as giant mountains*. Setcho composed this verse very thoughtfully, yet when you look you see the tail is showing. *Oxen and rams are hornless*. Consider that when you understand this line you will understand *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either*. *Nary a hair, nary a wisp*—At the stage of negation, all is swept away, so not even so much as a single atom exists. *Massive as giant mountains*—Then just when you think there's nothing, in front of you and behind you is full, massive as giant mountains. *The golden relics*—Here, there, and everywhere are all golden relics. *With foaming waves flooding the skies, where can they be put?* Just as Sekiso said, there's nowhere to keep them. *They've been lost, even on the way back west with one shoe*. The allusion to a story about Bodhidharma's being seen on the way back to India with one shoe is made here simply for the purpose of expressing loss. The losing is the eye of Zen.

[TENKEI] Opening up the inexpressible, Setcho says *Rabbits and horses have horns*—As long as it has what it shouldn't, it can't be called a rabbit or a horse, so what is it? It cannot be said to be alive and cannot be said to be dead. *Oxen and rams are hornless*—Since it hasn't got what it should have, it can't be called an ox or a ram either, so what is it? It can't be called living, but it can't be called dead either. *Nary a hair*—What is clear in a mirror has no traces at all; what is it? It can't be called life and can't be called death. *Massive as giant mountains*—But if you think there's nothing, “the whole world has never hidden” . . . what? I wouldn't say it is alive, yet I wouldn't say it is dead. Setcho has expressed the overall meaning of the koan in these lines, producing it in verse showing the whole thing, so you can see it like a pearl.

Then he goes on to say *The golden relics are still present now; with foaming waves flooding the skies, where can they be put?* He

settles the case according to the facts. These lines are unique, done with great artistry; here, as Setcho observes, while it appears that the relics are totally there, yet with foaming waves flooding the skies there is nowhere to keep them. There's nothing to it. Why should the ocean retain a corpse? There is no trace. *There's no place to put them.* There's no knowing where they are. Moreover, when it comes to this lost article, they say that Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen, went back west to India and that the relics were lost at that time, but did they exist before Bodhidharma or not? Do they exist, or are they nonexistent? *Alive, I won't say; dead, I won't say either.* Look for the late teacher's relics right where you are, every one of you. Ultimately Setcho's meaning is that Bodhidharma didn't come from India to China while alive and didn't return to India from China and die. Every individual's nostrils are the relics of the late master, not in the grip of even the Buddhas and Zen founders. As long as you know this, you will not be fooled by apparitions of coming from the West or returning to the West. Setcho uses the occasion of this koan to help people with thoroughgoing kindness. The saying about rabbits and horses and oxen and rams appears in certain treatises and scriptures, but Setcho's usage definitely employs the sense of a saying of Nansen's. If you say mind itself is Buddha, rabbits and horses have horns; if you say it is not mind and not Buddha, then oxen and rams have no horns. Both birth and death are originally nonexistent things, but if you speak of birth, it seems to exist; but even birth is unborn birth, something that doesn't exist seeming as if it did exist, like the horns of rabbits and horses. And speaking of death, it cannot exist if there is no birth; and if you speak of death, it seems like something that exists ceases to be, like oxen and rams having no horns, even the annihilation being nonannihilating annihilation. Ultimately it is neither existent nor nonexistent, yet it is both existent and empty, neither one nor different, apart from the four propositions of logic, beyond the hundred negations, the realm of total immutability.

Also, the expression "rabbits and horses have horns," refers to what is meant by "putting a head on top of your head." The expression "oxen and rams have no horns" means the same thing as "cutting off your head in order to live." Also, Dogen's saying "I thought there was fundamentally not a single thing; who would have

known the whole world has never concealed it” has the exact same meaning as the *relics of our late teacher* being *nary a hair, nary a wisp* and, not to be considered nothing, being *massive as giant mountains*, being the relics that have never been concealed anywhere in the whole world.

INTRODUCTION

The Buddhas never appeared in the world, and there is no doctrine to give anyone; the founder of Zen never came from the West, and never passed on communication by mind. Since people of the time do not understand, they seek externally, unaware that the one great matter right where they are cannot be grasped even by a thousand saints. Right now, where can you find seeing, unseeing, hearing, unhearing, speaking, unspeaking, knowing, unknowing? If you are as yet unable to realize this clearly, then understand within a cave of complications.

[HAKUIN] *The Buddhas never appeared in the world*—From here to *do not understand* sweeps everything away; every one of you should strive to get to know your self. Just because even the Buddhas of all times cannot show their faces, that doesn't mean you are all right just as you are. *And there is no doctrine to give anyone*—The *Flower Ornament Scripture* says, "The Buddhas do not appear in the world, and they have no nirvana either." Tokusan said, "Our school has no verbal expression, and no doctrine to give people." A verse on the *Lotus Sutra* says, "The Buddhas didn't appear in the world, Bodhidharma didn't come from the West; the truth of Buddhism is everywhere, but the mouth won't open to discuss the mystery." *Never passed on communication by mind*—All here in this room, including both men and women, are burnished gold Amida Buddhas; there is no transmission of communication by mind. *Cannot be grasped*—The distinct communication outside of doctrine does not set up literary formulations; even the notion that Buddha never spoke a word all comes from here. *Seeing unseeing hearing unhearing*—The totality is the true aspect of real being as is. There is not a single

monk or layman, man or woman here; look and see what your perception and cognition are. When you can see this, then you can clearly perceive *seeing unseeing* and *hearing unhearing*. The *cave of complications* here refers to this koan.

[TENKEI] Before the Buddhas appeared in the world, there was no Dharma to preach to people; before Bodhidharma had come from the West, there was no mind-to-mind communication. Fools who don't know this search externally, calling that doctrinal studies and Zen studies, going to excess. People like that imagine that the one great matter *right where they are* somehow exists separately, but that's not so: it is just a matter of not stumbling or tripping up in the light of daily activities, not eating with your nose; this is what is called the great matter. It is not outside, just standing, sitting, reclining, rising, beyond the reach even of Buddhas and Zen masters; your activity cannot be grasped even by a thousand saints. Right now as you see and hear, know and not know, where did this come from? Everyone is a great sage who knows bitter from sweet. This having been said, if you still don't realize it clearly, then turn to the koan for understanding.

EXAMPLE

Zennist Ryo asked Kinzan, "How is it when one arrow breaks through three barriers?"

Kinzan said, "Bring out the master within the barriers."

Ryo said, "Then I must change once I know my error."

Kinzan said, "What are you waiting for?"

Ryo said, "A good shot, but it missed," and set off to leave.

Kinzan said, "Wait a minute!"

As Ryo turned his head, Kinzan held him fast and said, "Leaving aside for the moment this business of breaking through three barriers with one arrow, let's see you shoot an arrow."

Ryo hesitated. Kinzan hit him seven times and said, "Now let this fellow wonder another thirty years."

[HAKUIN] Ryo was a Zen master himself, a cold battle commander, a man who thoroughly understands the methods of Ummon and Kembo. Therefore his first question is cold. *One arrow*—This one arrow is used to shoot through birth and death. *Three barriers*—The body of reality, transcendental insight, and liberation. *Bring out the master within the barriers*. Who is the archer? Try to say! *Then I must change once I know my error*. “Let me amend my blunder.” These words are cold. *Kinzan said, “What are you waiting for?”* When are you going to change? *A good shot, but it missed*—He says he let off a good shot, but Kinzan didn’t even know where it came down, so it was a useless shot. Splendid, splendid! If he had wrapped it up at this point, even Kinzan would be busted. *Wait a minute!* If he can be called back, he’s useless. *Ryo turned his head*—Huh? What? Here he was at the point of leaving, having the other guy clean up afterward, but then he turned his head anyway. *Kinzan held him fast and said*—From here Zennist Ryo is going to be forced to change his tune. *Let’s see you shoot an arrow*—Here’s where he’s got to shoot Kinzan. *Ryo hesitated*. It’s not that he couldn’t keep up his end, but he suddenly choked. He was playing chess on an equal footing, but he made a wrong move. This is what Setcho means in the verse by “The trail of the arrow is clear indeed.” This is a splendid hesitation; it wouldn’t matter to him even if Kinzan stomped his foot in anger and frustration. *Kinzan hit him seven times and said, “Now let this fellow wonder another thirty years.”* This is a blind beating given by Kinzan; it may be that Kinzan will be wondering about Ryo’s hesitation for thirty years!

[TENKEI] *One arrow breaks through three barriers* is generally interpreted to refer to Zen devices like the three roads or the three mysteries or the three essentials and three expressions, or even the Taoist idea of the “three barriers” of the eyes, ears, and mouth. These are all attempts to make a literal interpretation of the passage, truly pitiful. Here Zennist Ryo is simply presenting his own understanding, using the metaphor of a military formation to pose a question. In military terms, the inside battle formation, the outside battle formation, and the middle battle formation are called the three barriers. So Zennist Ryo asked how it is when this triplex battlefront is taken with a single arrow shot. This is the act of an archer of

untold power, a top commander of a whole region. Bravo! A sharp question! A Zen practitioner ought to be like this. *Bring out the master*—If you have broken through the three barriers, you will have shot down the chief commander, so bring him before me right now so I can see him. Also, even if you break through the three barriers, if you fail to shoot down the chief commander, you’ve wasted your arrow to no avail; now come see the chief commander that Kinzan is going to bring forth, so make sure to shoot him down: be careful not to waste your arrow. There are two ways of reading this. *Once I know my error*—My failure to shoot down the chief commander is all my fault, so I have to change. He makes his move in a quiet, relaxed way, intending to see how the battlefield negotiations go. *What are you waiting for?* As a lone soldier he rushes in to press him, telling him not to back off at the critical moment in a closely contested battle. *Good shot, but it missed*—“I thought I’d show the great general a good shot; too bad it was off target and missed,” he said, rolling up his banner and withdrawing his battle line. *Wait a minute!* He called him back, implying that the contest wasn’t finished, the winner and loser had not been determined. *Turned his head*—When he looked back, Kinzan grabbed him and held him fast, saying, “Right now try to shoot me right in the center,” not letting him say yes or no. *Ryo hesitated*. He was dozing and couldn’t do it. *Kinzan hit him seven times*—After all he settles what wasn’t clear.

VERSE

I bring out the master of the barriers for you;
Those who would shoot should not be careless.
Take an eye and the ears will go deaf;
Reject an ear and the eyes go blind.
Admirable, one arrow breaking through three barriers—
Right on target, distinctly clear, the trail of the arrow.
Don’t you see?
Gensha had a saying:
“The great adept is the primal ancestor of mind.”

[HAKUIN] This verse is one of the top five in this whole book; don't regard it lightly. *Those who would shoot should not be careless.* Even Zen teachers and Zen monks should be careful not to look in confusion and miss seeing the target. Don't think it's easy. *Take an eye and the ears will go deaf*—When you see with your eyes, your ears are inattentive. *Reject an ear and the eyes go blind*—You have to know where “the phoenix gets out of the golden net, the crane escapes from the cage.” Do not misinterpret the master of the barriers as something like withdrawal of the senses. *Admirable, one arrow breaking through three barriers*—Ryo is quite admirable. *Right on target, distinctly clear, the trail of the arrow*—After breaking through the three barriers, there is an arrowhead that hits the target every time, without a single miss, but nobody knows. *The great adept is the primal ancestor of mind.* This is where you actually break through the three barriers.

[TENKEI] Requested by Kinzan to bring forth the master of the barriers, Zennist Ryo can't manage to do it, so now Setcho will bring the master forth for both the Zennist and everyone else as well, he says, urging us to go see the chief commander within the barriers. Also, Kinzan showed the master within the barriers when he came out and told the Zennist to see him. When this koan is cited here, there are these two meanings. So, since the chief commander, the master within the barriers, cannot be shot carelessly, *those who would shoot*, practitioners of Zen who intend to take up the bow and let off a shot, should be sure not to carelessly waste their arrows. Take careful aim and shoot accurately so you won't miss; paying no attention to the rank and file, just shoot down the commander. To describe that manner of shooting, Setcho mixes together a verse of Kiso's and the saying of Kinzan, as follows. *Take an eye*—If you grasp the eyes you lose the ears, if you grasp the ears you lose the use of the eyes. If you insist on the former you lose the latter, if you insist on the latter you lose the former. So it's no good to grasp, yet it's no good to reject either. In any case, what you must do is use the absolutely immutable arrow point beyond affirmation and negation and gain and loss, and shoot down the chief commander within the barriers. This is the absolute subject; if there is any grasping or

rejecting, the arrow point flies astray and misses the target. These are Setcho's archery instructions.

Admirable—Zennist Ryo's breaking through three barriers all at once with just one arrow is shooting power worthy of the chief commander of a whole region. Setcho thinks this is admirable, but *right on target, distinctly clear*—Just as the Dharma has been clear ever since there have been Buddhas and Zen masters, there is a trajectory for the arrow to follow, but unfortunately Zennist Ryo missed the intended meaning of the chief commander inside the barriers. The so-called *trail of the arrow* refers to the eighty-four thousand teachings of the Buddhas and the seventeen hundred koans of the Zen masters. In all these cases the trail of the arrow is clear. Each of you set your sights and shoot, careful not to waste any arrows. The expression *right on target* is added to emphasize a sure hit. Up to this point has been instruction in archery and horsemanship for Zen practitioners; as for the seal of approval of archery, there's something of great importance here, so without grudging, Setcho tells everyone. *Don't you see? Gensha had a saying*—If Zen practitioners think that mind is the ultimate principle, it is a descendant. As ever, *the great adept is primal*—Mind is said to be the descendant, but does this mean one somehow flies back to the primordial? Or does one reach it without moving? How does one become the primal ancestor of mind? Here, taking bow and arrow in hand, Setcho unstintingly helps people.

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NONDISCRIMINATION

INTRODUCTION

Before you have penetrated, it seems like a silver mountain, an iron wall. Once you have penetrated, it turns out your own self is the iron wall, the silver mountain. If there are people who ask, “So what?” I would just say to them, “If you can manifest a potential here and perceive a state, then occupying the essential bridge and not letting ordinary or holy pass would not be beyond you. Otherwise, see what the ancients were like.”

[HAKUIN] *Before you have penetrated*—before you have penetrated the sound of one hand clapping, that is. According to the *Five Lamps Merged in the Source*, Zen Master Hakuun said, “A single word or half a phrase uttered by the ancients, before you have managed to penetrate, is like bumping into an iron wall. Then once you have seen through, your self is the iron wall. Right now, how do you penetrate?” He also said, “Iron wall, iron wall.” *It turns out your own self is the iron wall*. The totality of your self is the sound of one hand clapping; Buddhas and Zen masters have never been involved. *If you can manifest a potential here*—that is, manifest a potential at the iron wall, the fundamental potential inherent in every individual, that which hears. *Perceive a state*—This is no different from glimpsing the *Lotus Sutra’s* “just right there.” Talkative fellow! *Occupying the essential bridge*—Authentic orientation is like this. *Not letting ordinary or holy pass*—The gods find no pathway on which to strew flowers. *Not beyond you*—This is nothing extraordinary; it is inborn in everyone.

[TENKEI] *Before you have penetrated*—As a seeker, as long as you have not penetrated this barrier, koans like “three pounds of flax” and “a piece of dry crap” are as inaccessible as a silver mountain or an

iron wall, but if you penetrate successfully, your self is actually the silver mountain, the iron wall. So in spite of the fact that even Buddhas and Zen masters can hardly lay a hand on it, this is an all-important matter, so if anyone asked me about it, I would tell them to show some potential and perspective here. For Zen practitioners like this, it is nothing at all extraordinary to occupy the essential bridge and not let ordinary or holy pass. For those who are not like this, learn from the example of the ancient Joshu, as in the following koan.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “If ‘the supreme way has no difficulty, it just rejects discrimination,’ then what is nondiscrimination?”

Joshu said, “ ‘In the heavens and on earth, only I alone am noble.’ ”

The monk said, “This is still discrimination.”

Joshu said, “Oaf! Where is the discrimination?”

The monk said nothing.

[HAKUIN] This monk was not an ordinary one; no matter what Joshu said, he was planning to say that’s still discrimination. *The supreme way has no difficulty, it just rejects*—This is an indication of everyday food and drink, having seen through the presence of the most important matter since the Buddha and the founder of Zen; if you see yourself as ordinary and another as holy, you have not even dreamed of the living reality of the Zen teaching from which this statement derives. *In the heavens and on earth, only I alone am noble*. There is no explanation. Is this discrimination? Is this nondiscrimination? East, west, south, north, a single mass of iron. The saying *In the heavens and on earth, only I am noble* is what Buddha said when he was first born, but it should not be viewed literally; all the teachings of Buddha’s whole lifetime, and the essential issues of the Zen masters too, are all included in this one statement. *The monk said, “This is still discrimination.”* He thinks so because he takes the “I” of “only I” to mean the personal self, the self

as contrasted to others. *Oaf!* “You bumpkin!” Joshu was unable to restrain his indignation, so one of his usual great sayings didn’t come out. Even so, this is very scary.

[TENKEI] The words “alone noble” are an iron stake. As a matter of fact, this is also your own treasure, you know! Every individual, each one, is alone noble, no other. There is no discrimination at all. *This is still*—“Why, that’s still discriminating between mortals and Buddhas, noble and base,” says the monk, spinning around in the flow of words. *Oaf!* “You imbecile; where is the discrimination?” He uses a wedge to remove a wedge. How so? This monk thought discrimination is a bad thing, so he felt it must be better to avoid discrimination by all means. Where is the discrimination? What is it? Using a wedge to remove a wedge is Joshu’s method of revival.

VERSE

Deep as an ocean, steady as a mountain:
A mosquito sports in a gale,
An ant tries to shake an iron pillar.
Discrimination, discrimination—a cloth drum under the eaves.

[HAKUIN] It is Joshu who is *deep as an ocean*. The monk is a *mosquito sporting in a gale*, his saying, “This is still discrimination” being like playing in a fierce wind. *Discrimination, discrimination*—This refers to the monk’s going around asking about discrimination. *A cloth drum under the eaves*—What a strange thing hanging there! What is it? A cloth drum, from a reference in an old story, refers to a drum made with cloth, which makes no sound. Then does a *cloth drum under the eaves* refer to making no sound? Does it mean something foolish? Does it mean something useless? Not at all. In any case, you must look into it closely to know.

[TENKEI] Joshu’s inconceivable, immutable sphere is deep as an ocean and high as a mountain; as such it is inviolable, so not only this monk, but no one in the whole world can fully fathom it. The monk’s pressing the issue further in spite of that was like a mosquito sporting in the wind, like an ant trying to shake an iron pillar—it was

totally beyond his power. Where Joshu is cannot be moved ever, even with a lever. It is simply a holeless iron hammerhead. *Discrimination*—In this line Setcho has joined the monk's discrimination with Joshu's discrimination. This monk carries around "discrimination" as something bad, but if he knew Joshu's discrimination, he would be uniquely noble in the heavens above and on earth below. So this discrimination is the *samadhi* of intrinsic self, the treasure that everyone has, he implies, directly bringing it to life. In any case, living or dying is up to the individual: if you discriminate like this monk, that is like responding to questions with a cloth drum, no matter how much you beat it, nothing you can hear will come out of it. Retreat into yourself and see; asking about it won't work. What is discrimination? Focus your eyes and look! Every individual is a unique noble Buddha.

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COULDN'T EXPLAIN FOR FIVE YEARS

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “ ‘The supreme Way is without difficulty, it just rejects discrimination’—isn’t this a cliché for people these days?”

Joshu said, “Once someone asked me, and I simply couldn’t give an explanation for five years.”

[HAKUIN] This monk said something clever; “Isn’t ‘the supreme Way is without difficulty’ a cliché for people of the time?” Whenever something is established as “right,” that won’t do. *A cliché for people these days*—The expression “people these days” subtly alludes to Joshu himself: “Isn’t this where people these days snooze?” This monk is unusually audacious. *Once someone asked me, and I simply couldn’t give an explanation for five years.* “Someone once asked me that, but even now I can’t think of an answer.”

[TENKEI] *Someone once asked me*—Is this making it into a cliché? Is it not making it into a cliché? It’s an iron hammerhead without a hole. When Joshu says, “Oh, that business? Someone asked me before, and I couldn’t deal with it for as much as five years,” this is his living methodology of using a wedge to remove a wedge.

VERSE

An elephant trumpets, a lion roars;
Flavorless talk blocks people’s mouths.
South, north, east, west,
The sun soars, the moon courses.

[HAKUIN] Joshu's simple statement is like an elephant trumpeting, like a lion roaring: the brains of a hundred animals burst. *Flavorless talk* is an expression of Tozan Sho. Sweet and sour are not distinguished, and it is hard to sink your teeth into it, so it is called a flavorless saying that blocks people's mouths. If you sink your teeth into it and chew it thoroughly, then the finest flavor can be tasted. To say that it *blocks people's mouths* means that it makes everyone gasp for breath and fall silent. *South, north, east, west*—This is Setcho's ace in the hole. *The sun soars, the moon courses*—The sun and moon course through the four quarters; heaven, earth, and space tumble seven times and collapse eight times.

[TENKEI] Considering the powerful force of Joshu's answer, it may be likened to a bull elephant standing tall in all its majesty, or to the power of the golden lion that bursts the brains of a hundred animals. In any case, this statement is flavorless, neither bitter nor sweet; it blocks the mouths of everyone in the world so they cannot swallow it, yet neither can they spit it out. At this point there is nothing to say, so to describe it Setcho simply says *south, north*—this is the presence of the matter that has been there all along; everyone focus on it at once and look! Before the Buddha appeared in the world, *south, north, east, west*, and before the founder of Zen came from the West *the sun soars, the moon courses*. This is called the koan of the presence of the matter that is everywhere always, without separation between self and other. Today it is still thus; there is no change, no difference. People should value time and not be negligent; don't miss it right where you are. The sun is swift, the moon is fast; let every individual understand through personal recognition; it's the tip of your own nose. This is called the grip that is not transmitted by Buddhas or Zen masters, and it is also called the life pulse or lifeline of Zen practitioners. It is unavoidable to dwell on this; right now, unsheath your eyes and look! Is it in the west? Is it in the east? The sun is swift, the moon is fast, time flies like an arrow; so focus your eyes quickly and look!

INTRODUCTION

Encompassing heaven and earth, transcending holy and ordinary, pointing out the subtle mind of nirvana on the hundred weeds, determining the pulse of Zen practitioners in the jungle of shields and spears—tell me, due to whose power can one be this way?

[HAKUIN] *Encompassing heaven and earth*—From the heaven of neither perception nor nonperception above to the pits of hell below, all is just one single *Lotus Sutra*. *Transcending holy and ordinary*—These two phrases refer to the expanded potential of Zen masters. *Pointing out the subtle mind of nirvana on the hundred weeds*—References in koans to holding up a fist, or picking up a blade of grass, are none other than this. *Shields and spears*—Drawing them out onto the field of spiritual encounter, bombarding them with impenetrables, Zen teachers change seekers' dispositions. *Determining the pulse of Zen practitioners* refers to the final crucial issue, the life-taking spiritual talisman. *Due to whose power*—Thanks to whom?

[TENKEI] When Zen teaching masters act on observation of potentials, they encompass heaven and earth, letting nary a thread or hair leak out, passing beyond the head of Vairochana, the Primordial Cosmic Buddha, unhindered and free. Thus they *point out the subtle mind of nirvana on the hundred weeds*, exposing the totality, stabilizing the life root of Zen practitioners on the field of spiritual encounter with *shields and spears*, or an interaction of devices and perspectives, getting them to know this matter.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “ ‘The supreme Way has no difficulty, it just rejects discrimination’—as soon as there are words spoken, this is discrimination.’ How do you help people, teacher?”

Joshu said, “Why not quote this saying fully?”

The monk said, “I only remember to this point.”

Joshu said, “It’s just this: ‘The supreme Way has no difficulty, it just rejects discrimination.’”

[HAKUIN] Consider this monk to have been deceived by the words “only rejects discrimination.” *As soon as there are words spoken* you are already involved in discrimination. *How do you help people, teacher?* If you can’t open your mouth, how can you teach others? *Joshu said, “Why not quote this saying fully?”* “There’s still more of the saying; why don’t you say it all?” What an extraordinary, wonderful, amazingly great teacher! *I only remember up to this point*—He’s a tough guy. *Joshu said, “It’s just this: ‘The supreme way has no difficulty’ ”*—This flavor can be known only to those who have had the experience of dealing with students.

[TENKEI] How does a teacher help others without words? This monk posed a question on seeing a gap, but his question was nevertheless a product of subjective discriminatory mental activity. *Why not quote the saying in full?* “There’s an ending to that saying: why not come out with all of it?” He tried pressing the monk quietly. *I only remember*—“I just recall this; I have no use for the rest.” He bends everything to fit his subjective conceptions. *The supreme Way*—“If you want brevity, best just say this much.” This answer was outside the monk’s expectations; Joshu’s way of helping people without running afoul of the point sees the problem of the monk’s clinging to *as soon as there are words spoken*, responding in such a way as to break it down. This is called the methodology of giving medicine according to the illness.

VERSE

Water cannot wet, wind cannot penetrate.
A tiger walks, a dragon runs;
Ghosts howl, spirits cry.
His head is three feet long—I wonder who it is?
Answering without words, he stands on one foot.

[HAKUIN] *Water cannot wet* the saying “It’s just this: ‘The Supreme Way has no difficulty, it just rejects discrimination.’ ” *Wind cannot penetrate*—Even a golden hammer cannot break it open. *A tiger walks, a dragon runs*—Terrifying! *Ghosts howl, spirits cry* when they run into *The supreme way is without difficulty. His head is three feet long*—There’s no way to express what *the supreme Way without difficulty* is like. *Answering without words, he stands on one foot.* This saying is extremely poisonous.

[TENKEI] When you take a good look at Joshu’s gapless action, you see that even water cannot wet it, even wind cannot penetrate it: it’s an iron hammerhead without a hole. He acts according to the situation, his majesty like a tiger or a dragon in motion, transforming freely. Because he is like this, when they encounter this awe-inspiring presence, not only people like this monk but even the ghosts in the fields and the roaming spirits cry and howl; no one is not afraid. Thus having versified the koan’s overall meaning, Setcho goes on to say *His head is three feet long*—Do you know this? Is this ordinary? Is this holy? Is this a Buddha? Is it an ordinary mortal? In any case, this is an extraordinary being, a one-legged man of unusual appearance answering without words. This is Setcho’s portrait of Joshu; neither a Buddha nor a Zen master, what does he resemble? Don’t say you’ve met, thinking this is the real image of Joshu. Every individual *answers without words*. Look here: it’s no one else! Don’t bump your head!

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[A STAFF TURNS INTO A DRAGON](#)

INTRODUCTION

Buddhas and ordinary mortals are originally no different; where is the distinction between mountains, rivers, and oneself? How then does there come to be duality? If you can put a saying into effect and occupy the essential pass, it still won't do to let go. If you don't let go, the whole earth is worth grasping. But where does one put a saying into effect?

[HAKUIN] *Buddhas and ordinary mortals are originally no different* —“Mind, Buddha, and living beings; these three have no difference.” Everyone here, male or female, is a burnished gold Amida Buddha. *Where is the distinction between mountains, rivers, and oneself?* Fundamentally they are one entity, without any gap between them, not even room to insert a needle. *How then does there come to be duality?* How can original nonduality turn into self and mountains and rivers, love and hate, right and wrong, the cat and the ladle? *Put a saying into effect*—break down an impenetrable saying, pass through totally, and apply it fluently in action. *Occupy the essential pass*—Even if you sit on the heads of the Buddhas . . . *It won't do to let go*—If you are negligent, you're the same old wooden Amida.

[TENKEI] Seeing all sorts of distinctions where there is originally no disparity is called grasping reflections. Originally mind, Buddha, and ordinary mortals are not different; but even if you put this into effect and occupy the essential pass of Buddhas and Zen masters, if you let go of the sayings of the Buddhas and Zen masters, that won't do. This makes it sound like there is something there, but that is not so at all. It is simply that all living beings as well as Buddhas, both hell and paradise, are all merely reflected images, not even enough to grab hold of. How about when a saying is put into action effectively?

EXAMPLE

Ummon showed his staff to a group and said, “The staff has turned into a dragon and swallowed the universe. Where can you find the mountains, rivers, and earth?”

[HAKUIN] This example is extremely important, but there have been many misinterpretations of it since olden times. This is the ancient tune of the Ummon school. Even I explained it mistakenly three times; this is my explanation this time. *Where can you find the mountains, rivers, and earth?* When you have returned everything to self, you lose what you have and are at a loss for a place to stand.

[TENKEI] The whole universe has been swallowed—where are the mountains, rivers, and earth found? Also, though the universe has been swallowed, the mountains, rivers, and earth are still there, just as they are; whence did it come to be this way? Is this after all the ultimate point of this koan of Ummon? Here if you say the staff has turned into a dragon you’re blind, but if you say the staff is just a staff, the universe and the world are just as they are, and there is no such thing as a staff turning into a dragon and swallowing the universe, then you are dead in the domain of unconcern, without the independently manifest potential of Ummon. So anyway, is there such a thing? Is there not? What about it? In this way Ummon pressed people to try to say. Ummon’s help for people is ultimately not in the existence or nonexistence of the staff.

VERSE

The staff swallows the universe;
He talks for naught of peach blossoms traveling on the waves.
Success is not about grabbing the clouds and seizing the fog;
Why must failure mean losing courage and spirit?
It’s all settled—did you hear?
Just be free and at ease, stop any further confusion.

Seventy-two blows is still getting off easy;
It's hard to let you go with a hundred and fifty.

*Setcho suddenly picked up his staff and descended from the dais;
the whole assembly scattered at once.*

[HAKUIN] *The staff swallows the universe*—The staff itself directly swallows the universe; here in the verse the words “turns into a dragon” are omitted. Setcho, being the reviver of the Ummon school of Zen, has thoroughly absorbed the lessons of his spiritual ancestor. *He talks for naught of peach blossoms traveling on the waves.* It's not about the staff or the dragon or swallowing or spitting out; that is “talking for naught.” *Success is not about grabbing the clouds*—There is no such thing as turning into a dragon. From the perspective of the staff directly swallowing the universe, there's no need to turn into a dragon and grab the clouds and fog to fly; even those who have passed through the three tiers of locks are not live dragons. *Why must failure mean losing courage and spirit?* Even if you are knocked down by the waves and get busted up, that is not real; you are not one who has experienced the great death. Even those who have passed the three tiers cannot make it; how much less beginning bodhisattvas. *It's all settled*—With that, the matter has been cleared up for now. *Did you hear the foregoing citation? Just be free and at ease*—Stop being so sticky; be clean and untrammled. *Seventy-two blows is still getting off easy*—For someone like this, not even a hundred and fifty blows of the staff would be enough, but for today, well, I'll let him off with seventy-two blows. This phrase should be read with the next one. Much has been said about these two phrases, but it is not worth taking seriously. *Setcho suddenly picked up his staff*—I would comment on Setcho's device: “He spent thirty ingots of gold reserves on a nickel-and-dime lottery.”

[TENKEI] Applying Ummon's saying progressively, Setcho has the unvarnished staff itself, just as it is, swallow the whole universe. So Ummon's reference to transformation into a dragon is roundabout, remote, and unnecessary, because even if it successfully became a living dragon, it still couldn't grab the clouds and seize the fog; there is nothing unusual about it at all. And even a so-called failure doesn't

lose courage or spirit. Ultimately there is no question of transformation or nontransformation: every individual is entirely without gain or loss. This is Setcho seeing through Ummon's gap, then applying the saying creatively in producing the verse, but ultimately even to say this is odious, distracting, noisy, so put it all away; it's not even worth an "Oh" or "I see." *It's all settled*—Having put this koan to use, he puts it away here. But did you hear? Didn't you hear? Whether or not you heard, *just be free and at ease*, says Setcho, unable to restrain himself from adding another footnote. In any event, people should directly abandon all subjective discrimination and calculating comparison, to become clean and clear, avoiding *further confusion*, making sure not to be spun around by things in confusion, as in reality there is nothing different at all. *Seventy-two blows*—This should be read back from the last line. What it means is that not only confusion, of course, but even the realm of freedom and ease will at some point be disallowed by Setcho. Even though a strictly forbidding hundred and fifty blows are warranted, at the moment he's easing off, giving just seventy-two for now. So saying, Setcho picked up his staff and got down from the dais. Setcho's finish is lonely: seeing this, the audience all ran away. Setcho's acting like this was extreme kindness in trying to help others.

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[ONE PARTICLE](#)

INTRODUCTION

To set up the banner of the teaching and establish the Zen message is a matter for a genuine Zen master; to determine dragons and snakes and distinguish the initiate from the naive requires expert knowledge. Leaving aside for the moment matters of discussing killing and giving life on the edge of a sword and discerning what is right for the situation on the end of a staff, tell me—how do you discuss in a single statement the matter of occupying the heartland alone?

[HAKUIN] *To set up the banner of the teaching* is the aim of the saints and sages in all walks of life, and the purpose of all Zen masters; without commitment to the welfare of others, you fall into hell. *Establish the message of Zen*—The message of Zen is defined according to individual needs. An ancient said that even if you understand your self the message of Zen is difficult to understand, not showing students a model. *To determine dragons and snakes and distinguish the initiate from the naive* means determining who has arrived and who has not, distinguishing whether people are fakers or phonies. *Expert knowledge* refers to discerning perception of realities. *Discussing killing and giving life on the edge of a sword* refers to the living pure Zen of the impenetrables, the tactics of immediacy. *Discerning what is right for the situation on the end of a staff* means using harsh methods to discern the right and wrong of the mentalities of all comers. *A single statement of the matter of occupying the heartland alone*—is the absolute state, where not a single phenomenon is established, where there is nary a glimpse of the shadows of Buddhas or Zen masters.

[TENKEI] To begin with, when Zen teaching masters set up the banner of the teaching to bring out the message of Zen, the school of the Buddha-Mind, this is an edifice, a construction, a secondary aim. Observing the qualities and needs of students through these devices and perspectives is something adepts do, of course, but leaving this aside for the moment, how does one discuss *occupying the heartland alone*, the realm of serene peace of mind? The introduction concludes this way because the main intent of the koan is in the clearing operation of not establishing a single particle.

EXAMPLE

Fuketsu said, “If you establish a single particle, the nation flourishes; if you do not establish a single particle, the nation perishes.”

Setcho held up his staff and said, “Are there any Zen practitioners who live the same life and die the same death?”

[HAKUIN] This example is a very instructive exposition of the transcendental bit communicated by the Zen founders. *If you establish a single particle*, if expressed literally, means the establishment of a potential from the realm of the infinity of the absolute, but I myself would not say so. I would say that if you establish a single particle the nation flourishes, if you do not establish a single particle the nation perishes. If you go a step further from here, you will be able to see the kindness of Fuketsu’s saying and the meaning of Setcho’s picking it up and playing with it. *The nation flourishes*—Spreading flowers on brocade, manifesting a diamond world on a hair tip. *If you do not establish a single particle*—In the fundamental, not a single atom is established, all is swept clear, in a flash. *The nation perishes*—Even the existence of satori and the existence of the next life are an iron mountain range molded of gold. *Setcho held up his staff*—He held it up for all the world to see that between the two operations of construction and demolition, Setcho is constructing. *Are there any Zen practitioners who live the same life and die the same death?* This is extending the hands, seeking people on the sword’s edge.

[TENKEI] *If you establish a single particle* refers to objectification of doctrines and regulations. So to discuss the contents of Buddhism by establishing secondary constructions distinguishing teacher and student, ordinary and sage, may be a state of letting go in which *the nation flourishes*, but authentic Zennists, like old rustics, frown in revulsion. Why? They dislike it for stinking of religion. However, among the students of present times, there are many who in turning away from this do not abide by normal standards, preferring to caper and frolic about. *If you do not establish*—When holding still, sweeping everything clear and not establishing even a single atom, you reach the noumenal knowledge of ultimate reality, a realm of serene peace of mind, where the old rustics sing hallelujah. First bringing up both sides together, *Setcho held up his staff*: whatever Fuketsu’s intention may have been, Setcho trails mud and drips water, discussing killing and giving life on the edge of a sword, discerning what is appropriate for the situation on the end of a staff, descending into a secondary construction, asking if there are any in the assembly who can act as host and as guest and can carry on a dialogue with him. With this call he comes down to help people on the basis of Fuketsu’s saying. To *live the same life and die the same death* means the same thing as “trailing mud and dripping water.”

VERSE

Even if the old rustics frown,
For now the plan is for the nation to establish a strong
foundation;
Where are the crafty ministers and fierce generals now?
The pure wind that reaches myriad miles is known only to
oneself.

[HAKUIN] *Even if the old rustics frown*—Indifferent to frowning or rejoicing, he has established the conditions of a buddha-land and the manners of bodhisattvas; indifferent to unrefined understanding, he has only brandished these claws and fangs. *For now the plan is for the nation to establish a strong foundation*—Leaving other people to

their own devices, for now I will chew through the impenetrables and establish the founding work of great peace, setting up the causal conditions of a buddha-land, absorbing everything in the course of Zen study. *Where are the crafty ministers and fierce generals now?* The implication is that there is no one with the ability to know this bit. The eye is in the third and fourth lines. *The pure wind that reaches myriad miles is known only to oneself.* To know this, one must know cold and warmth for oneself; there's no choice but solo performance, for this point cannot be communicated even from father to son.

[TENKEI] According to Fuketsu, if objectification of doctrine is established, old rustics frown in revulsion, but even so Setcho gives up the heavy for the light and says that no matter how much the old rustics may weep, today he is descending into a secondary construction, trailing mud and dripping water to help others, applying the saying to even the uneven. That is to say, *for now* he intends to set up a strong foundation for the peace of the nation. That cannot be done without finding crafty ministers and generals with tactical skills, courage, and ferocity. If such people could be found, he would live the same life and die the same death to deal with them, raising the voice of the song of peace in chorus, but where are Zen practitioners like that today, he calls. *The pure wind that reaches myriad miles*—Even though Setcho ungrudgingly trails mud and drips water, tumbling into the weeds to look for people, there is not a single expert who can chime in, so there is only knowing for oneself. The pure wind of the flourishing of the nation blows myriad miles very easily, but unfortunately no one knows; this line is Setcho's expression of lament.

INTRODUCTION

Activating uncontrived subtle functions by means of teacherless knowledge, being an unsolicited friend in a higher sense by means of objectless compassion, able to kill and to give life with a single statement, able to release and to capture with a single device—tell me, who has ever been this way?

[HAKUIN] An infant knows how to suck the breast—this is teacherless knowledge. Also, great knowledge is teacherless knowledge, spontaneously experienced after having cut through the field of the storage consciousness. Teacherless knowledge is cognition like a vast perfect mirror, while uncontrived subtle functions refer to the three knowledges of conditionality, emptiness, and the middle. The *Lotus Sutra* mentions all-knowledge, buddha-knowledge, natural knowledge, and teacherless knowledge. The *Mystic Eulogies* commentary says, “All-knowledge is the knowledge derived from contemplation of emptiness. It is common to all three vehicles. Buddha-knowledge is the knowledge derived from contemplation of existing things. It is unique to Buddhas. When these two kinds of knowledge are developed by spontaneous awareness, they are called natural knowledge. Insofar as they do not depend on other conditions, they are called teacherless knowledge. Sometimes the essence of knowledge is called natural knowledge, while the features of knowledge are referred to as teacherless or untaught knowledge.”

Activating uncontrived subtle functions means to be uncontrived and innocent, passing through the impenetrables, and after that the pestle is straight while the ladle is curved. In the midst of all things, the mind dwells nowhere, acting without contrivance, uncontrived yet

active, hence the term “subtle function.” *Objectless compassion* means that there are no mortals to rescue, so you activate kindness and compassion mindless of subject and object. According to the school of objective description, there are three kinds of compassion. One is compassion focused on ordinary mortals, arousing compassion on seeing all living beings. This is minor compassion. Second is compassion focused on elements, considering all living beings to be composed of five clusters of elements, thus developing compassion based on belief in the five clusters. This is middling compassion. The third is objectless compassion, which is arousing compassion forgetful of the sense of subject and object. This is the compassion of the Great Vehicle. This appears in the book on pure practice in the *Nirvana Scripture*. An *unsolicited friend in a higher sense* is one who without being asked to do so willingly volunteers to live the same life and die the same death out of compassion. The *Flower Ornament Scripture* says, “You should first enable all mortals to attain unexcelled enlightenment and remainderless nirvana, and then after that realize complete Buddhahood. Why? No one asked you to make this resolve; you yourself are being an unsolicited friend of all living beings.” The chapter on buddha-lands in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* says, “Though mortals do not request it, befriend them and give them peace.” Sengzhao comments, “True friends do not wait to be asked, just as a kind mother goes to her infant.”

[TENKEI] *Teacherless knowledge*—The Buddhas of all times do not know it exists; this knowledge is called teacherless knowledge in Zen. When guides use this knowledge to carry out uncontrived operations, using objectless universal compassion to deal with people for their benefit, they freely kill students and bring them to life with a single saying. So when they set a device into action, they hold still or let go according to the needs of the time. This is what the strategy of a guide is like, but whose domain is this? The methods of Ummon in this koan are like this.

EXAMPLE

Ummon said, “In heaven and earth, in time and space, there is a treasure inside, hidden in the mountain of form. Take the lamp into the Buddha shrine; bring the gateway on the lamp.”

[HAKUIN] This example is on a par with the whole hundred examples. It sets forth a night-lighting pearl, tray and all. Its mystic device outside the words is inconceivable. All subtle functions are present herein. This path has been thrown away like dirt by people of today. The first sentence of Ummon’s saying is a passage from the *Treatises of Sengzhao*, while the second sentence is Ummon’s living state. There is something very important in this example; those with insight will know it when they have arrived. The *treasure inside* is also called the wish-fulfilling jewel, and it is also called the nonbirth of the letter A, the True Word Sect’s Nonproduction of the Letter A, the Sect of Devotion’s Inconceivable Buddha. *Hidden in the mountain of form*—in the mountain of form, the five clusters, unknown to oneself. *Take the lamp into the Buddha shrine*—Noumenon and phenomena are not two, reality and illusion are as one. *Bring the gateway on the lamp*—Last night the mortar got inside the lamp and danced.

[TENKEI] *Take the lamp into the Buddha shrine, bring the gateway on the lamp.* What time is this? What realm is this? Is there such a thing? Is there not? In the light of your daily activities, what time is it? Maybe the time when an eight-cornered mortar flies through the sky, as a Zen footnote would put it.

VERSE

Look, look—
Who holds the fishing pole on the ancient shore?
Clouds roll on, the water is boundless.
The pale flowers in the moonlight, you see for yourself.

[HAKUIN] *Look, look*—These two words epitomize the totality of Ummon’s instruction, and this whole verse describes Ummon’s instruction. *Who holds the fishing pole*—It takes an Ummon to hook

a golden fish with such a transcendental message; it's not something that people like little clams can even attempt. *Clouds roll on*—Depicting the scenery on the ancient shore, these words are misunderstood by many. Scary! *The water is boundless*—drinking up all this poison water, that is. *The pale flowers in the moonlight*—This depicts Ummon's instruction as though drawing it in a picture; by any reckoning, this distinction is hard to see.

[TENKEI] *Look, look!*—To begin with, since Ummon's helping others by overturning the Buddhas and Zen masters is a transcendental technique, so the lines "take the lamp" and "bring the gateway" won't do because they are moldy faces of sitting meditation contemplation methods, unseeing eyes sleeping in the state of Buddhas and Zen masters. So don't make an understanding of raising your eyebrows and blinking your eyes; see surely with living eyes: what time is this? These words "look, look" are the eye of the whole verse; what comes after is a verse describing Ummon's help for people today. *The ancient shore*—Holding a fishing pole on an ancient shore where there are no people, it seems Ummon is fishing for someone like a golden fish or a giant tortoise. Anyway, here's what the scenery of Ummon's fishing pier, the ancient embankment, is like: *clouds roll on*, trailing in a jumble so you can't see an inch in front of you. If you don't watch out here, you might get lost on the false path of uniformity, so don't take a wrong step—look, look! And not only that, *the water is boundless*, so you can't see where is where at all. If you don't watch out here, you'll sink completely and drown, so everyone look, look! These warnings of Setcho's are ways of helping people lest they get into no-thing-ness, the ancient shore where there are no people. *The pale flowers in the moonlight*—Where the moonlight is reflected in the pale reed flowers, the scenery of uniform transcendence, is an important state, so everyone look, look—if you haven't the eye to discern differences you'll be useless; this is a point every individual ought to set eyes on. This whole verse breaks down the cliché of no-thing. It clearly reveals the intention of Ummon, his method of waking people up to the completeness of every single individual person.

63

KILLING A CAT

INTRODUCTION

What cannot be reached by way of concepts is just right to bring to attention; what cannot be reached by verbal explanation requires quick focus of the eyes. If lightning flashes and comets fly, then it is possible to overturn lakes and topple mountains. Is there no one in the crowd who can discern?

[HAKUIN] *What cannot be reached by way of concepts* is where judgments or mental dispositions do not apply; Nansen's killing a cat cannot be reached by way of concepts or verbal explanation. This is *just right to bring to attention*: keep it under your arm. *What cannot be reached by verbal explanation*, activity that cannot be handled, *requires quick focus of the eyes*. If you apply uninterrupted effort to the point where the path of speech ends and the course of mind dies out, then the pagoda of the Temple of the East can be seen inside an earthenware mortar. *If lightning flashes and comets fly* and so on refers to active function; with effort comes relief. When *it is possible to overturn lakes and topple mountains*, overturning sky and earth, you will know heaven to be below hell and hell to be above heaven; you will realize the time when your whole potential is completely activated and the waves of the ocean of learning go dry in one night.

[TENKEI] *What cannot be reached by way of concepts* is where Zen practitioners drive themselves relentlessly. *What cannot be reached by verbal explanation* students have to see very clearly. *If lightning flashes*—Are there any who can deal with living methodology that leaves no gaps?

EXAMPLE

At Nansen's one day the residents of the east and west halls were fighting over a cat. Seeing this, Nansen picked it up and said, "If you can speak effectively, I won't kill it." No one responded. Nansen cut the cat in two.

[HAKUIN] This example deals with the ailment of chest-swelling in students. *The residents of the east and west halls*, idlers in Nansen's community, were arguing about buddha-nature. *Seeing this, Nansen* did what? Nansen is another one fishing on the ancient shore. It's to find people, you know! *Nansen cut the cat in two*. Depending on the situation, he'd have no choice but to cut down Beelzebub his own damn self.

[TENKEI] Traditional explanations of *fighting over a cat* are extremely stupid, a bunch of fantastic argument. If this really happened, how could they be followers of Nansen? Why would Nansen necessarily act imperatively in such a way toward people like that? Some say that a cat came into the auditorium when Nansen was lecturing and he picked it right up; this is fine, but if you look at it this way, the word "fighting" would be superfluous, and this is dubious. Here Zennists have one great straight explanation: ever since Nansen first uttered the saying "The Buddhas of all times don't know it exists," this had been discussed over and over in the Zen communities everywhere. On this day, these residents were arguing over the existence or nonexistence of buddha-nature in terms of a cat that happened to be there, so Nansen couldn't help but carry out this imperative. As for *cutting the cat*, what state is this? Pleasant indeed! If you haven't passed through and beyond the states of Buddhas and Zen masters, this action is inscrutable to you. And as the old illuminate Dogen said, "Cutting into two is easy to see, but cutting into one is invisible even to Setcho." He also said, "It isn't cutting through a cat, it's cutting through 'Buddha.'" Could there be such a thing in the ranks of Buddhas and Zen masters? Could there not? What tactic is this? I, Tenkei, add the comment, "The clear wind is cold and severe." I would also say, "The lamps and pillars gently laugh." A poem by National Teacher Daito on this says, "When the cat is picked up, one, two, three; then when it's cut, a holeless iron hammerhead." Even

this, on examination, is still a juvenile statement. Were I to reverse this, I'd say slash and toss it away; when you strip off the cat's skin, it's the skin of a thief.

VERSE

The residents of both halls were incompetent Zennists;
Stirring up smoke and dust, they were helpless to cope.
Luckily they had Nansen there who could uphold order,
One knife cutting in two pieces, no matter if lopsided.

[HAKUIN] *Incompetent Zennists* are ineffective; *stirring up smoke and dust*, they get into a clash of wills about what to say, in spite of the fact that they will not get there by stirring up the dust of emotionalized consciousness. As for the ability to *uphold order*, this is the little bit communicated by Buddhas and Zen masters. *One knife cutting in two pieces, no matter if lopsided* is not concerned with right or wrong; even the wits of the libertine will do.

[TENKEI] Setcho doesn't lose his life to others' words; he sweeps away *the residents of both halls*, he declares both sides incompetent. These residents of both halls kept arguing back and forth about the existence or nonexistence of buddha-nature, stirring up smoke and dust without end, unable to come to any resolution. At this point luckily Nansen carried out the imperative for them. How was it executed? One knife cutting into, without regard to whether the head or the tail might be longer or shorter, cutting right through and throwing it out. Do you know this? It is where there is no connection to ordinary or holy, existence or nonexistence. What is this method? What is this realm? Focus your eyes on it at once and look.

64

STRAW SANDALS

EXAMPLE

Nansen recounted the preceding story to Joshu. Joshu immediately doffed his straw sandals, put them on his head, and left. Nansen said, “If you had been here, you could have saved the cat.”

[TENKEI] When Joshu *doffed his straw sandals*, what state was this? I, Tenkei, would remark, “Where there’s no style is also stylish; for the moment he lets out a pathway for you.” A lot of people try to figure out the part where Joshu puts his sandals on his head, but would you not doubt if Joshu had put on a bandanna and left? Or would you still doubt? In any case, without the eye on the forehead you cannot know this. *If you had been here*—Oh, dear! Nansen has the head of a dragon but the tail of a snake. Is it really so? Is there any saying whether he would have saved the cat or not?

VERSE

The case completed, he consults Joshu,
Freely roaming at leisure in the capital city.
The straw sandals on the head, no one understands;
On getting back home, then there is rest.

[HAKUIN] *The case completed, he questions Joshu*—First he did all he could, then he also consulted Joshu. *Freely roaming at leisure in the capital city*—Nansen and Joshu are citizens of the capital city, so they roam the mountains and enjoy the waters. *On getting back home, then there is rest*. When you get to your own bed, then you can rest.

[TENKEI] *The case completed*—Having cut through the argument of the residents of the two halls, settling the issue with certainty, completing the case in court, he asked Joshu about the ultimate point of the story. That situation was like *freely roaming at leisure in the capital city*: Nansen's royal capital was completely peaceful and orderly, with nothing going on outside, just free time to enjoy, spending the days roaming the mountains and viewing the waters. That enjoyment is the enjoyment of having cut through all this business about the cat. Such is the leisure in Nansen's capital city; those in other places who view it as the realm of Joshu are incorrect. In Joshu's case, since he was already an adept, he got the point and quietly slipped off his straw sandals, put them on his head, and walked out. Here there is no one in the world who understands, so Setcho gently takes you all by the hand and leads you on. *Getting back home, then there is rest*—As long as you are seeking outside, one way or another, that will not solve anything, so let everyone return home, stop everything, and see how that is. Joshu's state is not special at all; this is obvious, even if he did doff his sandals and put them on his head at that time. Where is *home*? It is not *the capital city*, which is the domain of flourishing in the world. So then where is it? It is where there is no establishment of Buddhism or Zennism. That's right at your feet, every one of you!

65

[A HINDU QUESTIONS BUDDHA](#)

INTRODUCTION

Manifestation without form fills all space, it is so expansive; response without minding extends over lands and seas without any trouble. Understanding three corners when one is raised, judging grains and ounces at a glance, even to rain down blows of the staff and shout like booming thunder, still does not amount to the activity of one who goes beyond. So what about one who goes beyond?

[HAKUIN] *Manifestation without form fills all space, it is so expansive*—This is called the whole body of the Buddhas, the relic of the real body, and also the adamantine realm of reality; it has no measurements, because it is formless. *Response without minding* is the function of the reality body acting as is, drinking tea when there is tea, eating when there is food, forms not impeding formlessness, and formlessness not impeding forms. *Extends over lands and seas without trouble*—It pervades the cosmos but doesn't get in the way at all, because of mindlessness. *Understanding three when one is raised*—Those with potential for sudden enlightenment, people who are brilliant and sharp, understand infinite teachings in one voice. *Judging grains and ounces at a glance* means to see someone's level of competence at a glance.

[TENKEI] When what manifests without form becomes manifest, so vast that it fills all of space in the ten directions, what is this? What about unminding response to infinite oceans of lands; what state is this? Implicitly including the Buddha, the state specified above cannot be reached even by lively Zenists who understand three when one is raised, who like Tokusan rain down blows of the staff, or who like Rinzai shout like thunder. So what about that transcendental activity; what is it like?

EXAMPLE

A Hindu questioned Buddha, “I do not ask about the spoken, I do not ask about the unspoken.”

Buddha kept his peace. The Hindu said in praise, “The World Honored One’s great kindness and great compassion have parted the clouds of my confusion and enabled me to penetrate.”

After the Hindu had gone, Ananda asked Buddha, “What did the Hindu realize, that he said he had penetrated?”

Buddha said, “Like a good horse, he goes on seeing the shadow of the whip.”

[HAKUIN] This Hindu had gone beyond the ninety-six kinds of learned opinion current in his time and had pursued his search as far as the basis of differentiation, the duality of existence and nonexistence, getting close to the fundamental absolute. This is a question of the Brahmin ascetic Long Nails, who subsequently became a disciple of Buddha named Maha-Kushila. *I do not ask about the spoken, I do not ask about the unspoken.* Neither yes nor no, neither ordinary mortal nor bodhisattva; having come to know as far as the place where affirmation and negation are one continuum, here he got stuck. The *Buddha kept his peace*. The chilling shine of the razor-sharp sword is cold, even inside the scabbard. This keeping peace is often misperceived. Although it is written as “a good while” because it is hard to describe the point where the Buddha, having listened to the Hindu’s question, just stands there for the moment, at this point there is not even a word for “a while,” much less any news of *the spoken* or *the unspoken*. From his very first sermon to his last lecture, the Buddha totally *kept his peace* throughout. Therefore to label this particular situation alone as Buddha keeping his peace is to slander the Buddha. Master Engo made a good comment here when he said, “Don’t slander the World Honored One.” A long time ago there was an illiterate monk to whom a rich old nun gave a donation to get him to deliver a sermon. Being ignorant, the monk had no choice but to keep his peace and remain silent. The old nun suddenly had a great awakening. *Parted the*

clouds of my illusion—Breaking through the very bottom of that which has nothing to do with existence or nonexistence, he arrived at the realm of the Real. *Enabled me to penetrate*—If the Hindu had approved of the Buddha's silence per se, he wouldn't have spoken this way. Since when does a good horse bother with the shadow of the whip? *Ananda asked Buddha*—It's quite reasonable that a bystander wouldn't get the point. *A good horse goes on seeing the shadow of the whip*. The eye that determines dragons and snakes is accurate. The shadow of the whip is seen in the silence of keeping peace. This is not a metaphor; if you take it for a metaphor, then the silence isn't worth half a penny.

[TENKEI] *Not asking about the spoken or the unspoken* is cutting off both existence and nonexistence and not accepting annihilation or eternity. The Hindu came up with this to try to stump the Buddha. This begins with taking responsibility; if he hadn't been this intrepid, he wouldn't have been able to penetrate. When *Buddha kept his peace*, he was dispensing medicine after having profoundly discerned the potential of the visitor. The Hindu, acting in a manner contrary to what one might have expected, praised the Buddha. Potential suddenly activated is pleasantly refreshing indeed! Everyone look at this: even if one has been confused for a thousand lifetimes over myriad aeons, it can all be rendered insignificant by a straightforward clarity that overturns it in an instant of thought. If you go ahead thinking you're confused, that's confusion. Ultimately it only takes an instantaneous insight to suddenly awaken. In spite of this fact, in various places they misinterpret and talk about supposed conditions of former lives; all that is a bunch of nonsense. *What did the Hindu realize*—Ananda began by asking a question from the perspective of a cultivated view. *Like a good horse* the Hindu flew right off; can Ananda fly off too, I wonder?

VERSE

The wheel of potential hadn't turned;
If it turned it would go two ways.
The moment a clear mirror is set on a stand,

It distinguishes beauty and ugliness.
Beauty and ugliness distinct, the clouds of confusion part.
Where does compassion produce pollution?
I'm reminded of a good horse seeing the shadow of the whip,
Gone a thousand miles in pursuit of the wind, called back.
If he can be called back, I'll snap my fingers thrice.

[HAKUIN] *The wheel of potential hadn't turned*—The Hindu kept focused on one point, unchanging. *If it turned it would go two ways*, falling into either being or nonbeing. The first and second lines are all about the Hindu. *The moment a clear mirror is set on a stand*—The Buddha's silence, keeping his peace, was a mirror polished to perfect clarity reflecting the entire universe, so the Hindu's understanding suddenly slipped away. The web of myriad forms is in the clear mirror. *It distinguishes beauty and ugliness*. At Buddha's silence, the Hindu saw the difference between right and wrong. *The clouds of confusion part*—When the clouds of confusion parted where there is neither subject nor object of perception, the green of the willows and the red of the flowers stood out distinctly in all their variety. *Where does compassion produce pollution?* There is no pollution in the true reality of compassion. *I'm reminded of a good horse*—Having absorbed this point, he is reminded of the enlightenment of the Hindu, and says there is no one sharp enough to go at the sight of the shadow of the whip. *Gone a thousand miles in pursuit of the wind, called back*—In pursuit of the wind refers to the horse; what follows is hard to penetrate, hard to unlock; at the slightest hint of this whip, it's off with the wind! *If he can be called back, I'll snap my fingers thrice*. Using his claws, he allows no approach. This is Setcho's subtlety, the spirit of the Ummon school.

[TENKEI] *The wheel of potential*—Not asking about the spoken or unspoken, he did not move the wheel of his own spiritual potential at all; at the point where there is ultimately no road, he held still and asked about it. Why? Because *if it moved*, potential would either turn one-sidedly toward existence or it would turn one-sidedly toward nonexistence, inevitably running to gain and loss, slipping off into a maze. The Hindu in this story, however, did not get into existence or nonexistence and did not spin his spiritual potential around at all.

This describes the state of the Hindu visitor; the Buddha met with him having clearly perceived this, just like *a clear mirror*, the whole world unveiled, a revelation of the totality. In this immediacy *beauty and ugliness* are at once distinct, so the Hindu was able to penetrate. As for that distinction of beauty and ugliness, when he opened his eyes and saw myriad forms as images reflected in the clear mirror of his own self, he realized there is no separate analysis. At this time, *where does compassion produce pollution?* Everywhere in the ten directions is entirely free of pollution, there being no garbage like existence and nonexistence, gain and loss. Realizing this to be the door of great liberation, he gained entry. So when Ananda asked him about it, the Buddha said the Hindu was *like a good horse*, Setcho recalls, hinting he's wondering whether there might also be someone like this in his own congregation. If there is a good horse that can fly off a thousand miles chasing the wind, he says he will call him back. In any event, once one has flown into the realm of the great compassion of the Buddha, obstacles will not inhibit freedom, so if Setcho can call him back by calling to him as if there were some matter, what will Setcho do if he can actually be called back? Setcho poses this question to himself and says that even if one can fly off a thousand miles, horseplay in the realm of great compassion is a dead end in terms of Buddhist liberation, which is foul; he just snaps his fingers thrice. Here Setcho is an expert rider on a mount that doesn't dirty its hooves in the domain of the Buddha, the usual subtlety of spin.

66

GETTING THE SWORD

INTRODUCTION

Meeting a situation head-on and setting a pitfall for a tiger, attacking from the front and from the side, laying out strategy to capture a bandit, adapting in light and adapting in darkness, letting both go or gathering both in, knowing how to handle a dead snake—these are matters for adepts.

[HAKUIN] *Meeting a situation head-on*—In direct confrontations, there are situations where you kill someone before even drawing a sword. *Attacking from the front and from the side* means either making a direct frontal assault or attacking from the side, in either case removing the dregs of satori. *Adapting in light and adapting in darkness* means letting go and holding still. *Letting both go or gathering both in* means that both host and guest are let go at the same time when letting go and are gathered in at the same time when gathering in.

[TENKEI] *Meeting a situation*—When teaching masters act in order to make a specific revelation appropriate to a situation, they bring it out face-to-face, holding forth directly; and they also stealthily come up with expedients from the side, seeing how people's minds work, all strategy for capturing bandits. *Adapting in light and adapting in dark* and *letting both go or gathering both* are all methods of handling a dead snake to revive it. This implies having the methods to vitalize the monk in this koan.

EXAMPLE

Ganto asked a monk, "Where are you coming from?"

The monk said, "From the Western Capital."

Ganto said, "After the rebel Ko So passed through there, did you pick up his sword?"

The monk said, "I did."

Ganto approached with his neck outstretched and hollered, "Yaa!"

The monk said, "The master's head has fallen." Ganto roared with laughter.

Later the monk went to Seppo. Seppo asked him, "Where are you coming from?"

The monk said, "From Ganto."

Seppo asked, "What did he say?" The monk told the foregoing story. Seppo hit him thirty blows with his staff and drove him out.

[HAKUIN] *After Ko So passed through*—Ko So found a special sword and got the idea to start a rebellion. This was very much in the news at that time, so that's why Ganto framed his question this way. *Did you pick up his sword? Did you get the sword? The monk said, "I did."* Useless fellow! *Ganto approached with his neck outstretched and hollered, "Yaa!" "Go ahead and kill me!"* Even though the monk was a good-for-nothing, Ganto decided to try him out. *The master's head has fallen.* Fool! Idiot! Should have laughed here instead! *Ganto roared with laughter.* Was he jeering at the monk, or is there a subtler significance? This is a cold laugh! *Seppo hit him thirty blows*—What about this action? Very lenient indeed.

[TENKEI] *The Western Capital* is a frank reply. Ko So made the Western Capital his headquarters, so Ganto asked the monk if he too had brought a sharp sword like the one Ko So obtained from heaven. Recognizing the sword of knowledge that everyone has means decisive certitude with precise accuracy. If you are told this very day your eyes are horizontal and your nose is vertical, so be just as you are, you may think it sounds reasonable, but you are not really sure, so you revert to wondering whether there might not be something else; this is what is called a blunt sword. *The monk said, "I did."* Uh, oh! He's faking it! *Yaa!* "If you have it, come roaring up and cut off my head!" *The master's head has fallen.* A blunt sword won't cut through bone. This monk failed to make the kill. *Roared*

with laughter—Is this approval? Is this disapproval? There is a sword in the smile. *Later the monk went to Seppo* with a look of self-congratulation on his face. *Thirty blows*—Let's hope this monk can tell pain from itch.

VERSE

He picked up the sword after the rebel had passed;
One has to be an adept to recognize the roar of laughter.
Thirty blows of the mountain cane is still getting off lightly;
To take the advantage is to lose the advantage.

[HAKUIN] *Ko So* was a salt merchant who started a rebellion in the 870s, conquered Chang-an, and occupied it as his headquarters. According to legend, something fell from the sky; when he looked, he saw it was a sword. He claimed this sword had been given to him by heaven. *The roar of laughter* of Ganto cannot be understood by anyone but a connoisseur. *Thirty blows of the mountain cane is still getting off lightly*—Seppo's thirty blows was a bargain. *To take the advantage*—This monk thought he had taken Ganto's head, but instead he got his own head taken.

[TENKEI] The point of the teaching master's conversation is brought out in the first line. As for Ganto's *roar of laughter*, it takes someone sharp like Seppo to understand it. Implied in this is the question of whether there is anyone present who understands. This monk told Seppo the story of his meeting with Ganto without understanding it to begin with, so he got a beating, which at thirty strokes Setcho says was still getting off easy, for if it had been up to Setcho, he would have beaten him to death. Now when Setcho speaks this strictly, what do you think? The fact is, people, *to take the advantage is to lose the advantage*; as soon as you think you've gained, already that's a loss. Here, drop everything and see how it is when there is not a single thing in your chest; then you may finally come to a realization.

67

EXPOUNDING A SCRIPTURE

EXAMPLE

The Martial Emperor of southern China requested the great master Fu to lecture on the *Diamond Cutter Scripture*. The great master shook the lectern once, then got down from the dais. The emperor was flabbergasted.

Master Shi asked, “Does Your Majesty understand?”

The emperor said, “No.”

Master Shi said, “The great master has delivered his lecture on the scripture.”

[HAKUIN] When the great master shook the lectern, it was a brilliant act. *The great master has delivered his lecture on the scripture* is a flaccid statement, not worth taking seriously; and yet there is no other possible answer either.

[TENKEI] *The great master shook the lectern*—Did you all hear? If you have ears, hear! *The emperor was flabbergasted*, wondering what this unfamiliar lecture was all about. *The great master has delivered his lecture on the scripture*. With Master Shi’s help, he’s looking a bit better.

VERSE

Not resting this body by the Twin Trees,
Instead he stirs up dust in southern China.
Were it not for old Master Shi at that time,
He too would have left the country in haste.

[HAKUIN] This verse is the secret of Setcho's house; don't take it lightly. *Not resting this body by the Twin Trees*—Whereas he should be keeping to the fundamental, having withdrawn to the Twin Trees, he does not do so. *Instead he stirs up dust in southern China*—He made a mess with his “lecturing on the scripture” and “shaking the lectern.” *Were it not for old Master Shi at that time*—If Master Shi hadn't been there, the soup would have been spoiled. *He too would have left the country in haste*—Like Bodhidharma [in example 1], he would have fled southern China.

[TENKEI] Setcho's overall meaning is transcendental, so when great master Fu comes to the imperial capital to lecture on a scripture instead of staying home in peace, Setcho calls that stirring up dust, an unbecoming state of affairs, lamentable in that respect. *Were it not for Master Shi*—Luckily Master Shi was there to help out; otherwise there would have been a serious situation, like when Bodhidharma fled southern China by night to go north. Fortunately for great master Fu, Master Shi was able to rescue him somewhat. Now, when we speak of Master Shi or great master Fu, who are these people? The real point of reference is not someone else, you know! Do you know who it is? And what was great master Fu about to lose, and what did Master Shi salvage? Anyone who knows this will also know how setcho helps people.

INTRODUCTION

Overturning the polestar and flipping the axis of Earth, capturing tigers and rhinos, distinguishing dragons and snakes, it takes a lively individual to be able to match saying for saying and respond act for act. Who has ever been this way?

[HAKUIN] This introduction says that the methods of Zen masters transcend the ordinary. *Overturning the polestar*, flinging off the gates of the sky, scattering the sun, moon, stars, and planets, the great work of Zen is like having a fortified watchtower at the door to heaven. *Capturing tigers and rhinos* is possible when you have mastered the claws and fangs of the cave of the Dharma, the life-taking spiritual talisman. To *match saying for saying* is like two arrows meeting in midair. To *respond act for act* is to discern the potential of an oncomer at a mere brush of sleeves. How can you determine hit or miss when your bow is broken and your arrows used up?

[TENKEI] When adepts employ their maximum potential to the full in their actions, they stompright through the polestar and the axis of Earth, determine dragons and snakes, and capture tigers, all without the slightest disturbance; this is how it is with the interactions of adepts who are fully alive. Even so, when it comes to matching saying for saying and responding act for act without a miss, right now whose state is this? See how the meeting of Gyozan and Sansho is precisely like this.

EXAMPLE

Gyozan asked Sansho, “What is your name?”

Sansho said, “Ejaku.”

Gyozan said, “Ejaku is me.”

Sansho said, “My name is Enen.”

Gyozan roared with laughter.

[HAKUIN] This example is an interchange of guest and host. It is unusual among the hundred examples; even if you are a long-time practitioner, if you get confused you can't hear. *What is your name?* This is holding still. *Sansho said, “Ejaku.”* Holding still, he won't let it be said it is not Ejaku. *Ejaku is me.* This is letting go. *Sansho said, “My name is Enen.”* “If you're Ejaku, then I'm Enen!”

[TENKEI] Gyozan did not ask Sansho *What is your name* because he didn't know. He raised the question on purpose, even though he knew, in order to test the other's penetration. This is a method of letting go. *Ejaku*—Because Sansho was an adept, he didn't say his own name but pretended to be drunk on tea and tossed out a substitute. This too is letting go. *Ejaku is me.* “What you said is my name,” said Gyozan, suddenly holding still. *Enen*—“Then I'm Enen,” said Sansho, suddenly wrapping it all up, also a method of holding still. Observe the action in an interchange of adepts: there is nothing about Buddhism in it; it is the realm of “after enlightenment being the same as before enlightenment,” a completely inviolable state. *Gyozan roared with laughter.* Throughout all time the pure wind is severely cold. What a pleasant laugh! This is the eye of Zen, the handle of Zen practitioners.

VERSE

Both gather in, both let go—which is fundamental?
Riding a tiger always demands absolute competence.
When the laughter ends, who knows where it's gone?
It will only stir the wind of lament for all time.

[HAKUIN] *Both gather in, both let go—which is fundamental?* They took turns occupying the fundamental and extending their hands, obliterating both guest and host, so that there was no trace of relativism in the relative and no trace of absolutism in the absolute, relative and absolute interchanging, letting go and gathering in both total. This is how it should be in Zen schools. A meeting of guest and host as above should be called the fundamental essential. *Riding a tiger always demands absolute competence.* As long as you are deliberately trying and thinking about it, you can't do it. Effortlessness is required to break a tigerlike student. *When the laughter ends, who knows*—The whereabouts of Gyozan's big laugh is unknowable. *It will only stir the wind of lament for all time.* When you have reached the state beyond effort, there will be no one to recognize it through the ages. Most of them, lacking the power of Zen study, will just scratch their heads and sigh.

[TENKEI] What is an interchange of adepts like? They can hold still, and they can let go too. It can't be done without flexible methods of taking tigers by the head and tail at once. Anyway, in order to acquire such technique, which is a strategy of transcendence that is difficult to master, first you have to have graduated from all formal Buddhist practices to reach the state of unimpeded penetrating liberation, unfettered and free. Today Gyozan and Sansho are such people, so they had mastered such methodology, but *when the laughter ends*, where is the Gyozan of yore? On investigation, Setcho does not see anyone who is like Gyozan. Nobody knows where he is. Everyone in the world deadpans; no one knows where this laughter ends up, so *it will only stir the wind of lament for all time.* The two words "who knows" in *when the laughter ends, who knows* and the words "stir the wind of lament for all time" are the eyes of the whole verse.

INTRODUCTION

With no place to sink in your teeth, the mind seal of Zen masters is like the works of an iron ox. Having passed through a forest of thorns, a Zen practitioner is like a snowflake on a red-hot furnace. Leaving aside piercing and penetrating on level ground for now, when you do not fall into conditions, then what?

[HAKUIN] The *mind seal of Zen masters like the works of an iron ox* is understood when you row past where “when consciousness in the skull is exhausted, how can joy stand,” which is hard to get a bite on; past “the sound of one hand clapping,” which is hard to sink your teeth into; past the point where intellectual understanding does not reach. *Having passed through a forest of thorns, a Zen practitioner, after having passed through the impenetrables and incomprehensibles, is like a snowflake on a red-hot furnace, with no news of “the present time” or “the other side,” leaving no tracks or trail at all. Piercing and penetrating on level ground*—When you have become as described above, then for the first time you become piercing and penetrating, but leaving this aside for now, can you avoid being subject to myriad conditions?

[TENKEI] The transcendental message of Zen has no opening to sink in your teeth and work out an intellectual interpretation. The mind seal of Zen masters cannot be reached by trying, so the conduct of Zen practitioners who have passed through and are free of the forest of thorns in the ranks of Buddhas and Zen masters is *like a snowflake on a red-hot furnace*, totally without tracks or traces, yet they do not even linger here. Leaving aside those who have the techniques to penetrate everything, what about unimpeded independent action that is not subject to conditioning?

EXAMPLE

Nansen, Kiso, and Mayoku went together to pay respects to National Teacher Chu. Halfway there, Nansen drew a circle on the road and said, “If you can speak, we’ll go on.”

Kiso sat in the circle. Mayoku curtsied.

Nansen said, “Then let’s not go.”

Kiso said, “What’s going on in your mind?”

[HAKUIN] *Nansen, Kiso, and Mayoku* were all spiritual successors of Baso, each of them outstanding. *National Teacher Chu* was National Teacher Echu, a successor of the Sixth Grand Master of Zen. *Nansen drew a circle on the road*—Whether they go or not, he’s got to take a piss. *If you can speak, we’ll go on.* If you can say something appropriate, we’ll go on to the National Teacher’s place. *Then let’s not go.* In that case, the trip is off. Absorb this, because it is very important! *What’s going on in your mind? What’s going on in your mind, to talk of going or not going?*

[TENKEI] The use of circular figures in Zen dialogues began with National Teacher Chu; now Nansen is using this to test the other two elders. *Kiso sat in the circle.* This was an act of individual responsibility. *Mayoku curtsied.* This was a maneuver with no gap at all. *Nansen said, “Then let’s not go.”* Was this agreement or disagreement? “Even as you call it *thus* it has already changed.” This is a method of breaking through the circle, a device beyond the water and mud, transcending Buddhas and Zen masters, an act to take away the food of the hungry, a fluid method of pulling out the nails and stakes from the ultimate state where there is no leakage. Elsewhere it is said that they didn’t need to go to the National Teacher’s place because they had finished employing adaptations of the circle, but this is incorrect. *What is going on in your mind?* Having seen through Nansen’s point, Kiso says that since there is no impediment anywhere, what is going on in his mind to be talking about going or not going?

VERSE

When an expert archer shoots a monkey,
Circling the tree, how very direct!
A thousand, ten thousand—who has ever hit the mark?
Calling them together, he beckons them, “Come, let’s go back,”
Stopping the climb on the road of Zen.
And yet I say, the road of Zen is level and even; why stop
climbing?

[HAKUIN] This verse is absolutely marvelous in its fine phrasing, versifying the spin of the three men in two lines. The wheel of potential spins freely in all three of them. *Circling the tree, how very direct*—When the monkey goes around a tree, the arrow also goes around. Why call a circling arrow direct? While the circling is a separate matter, the point is that the aim of the arrow is not off. *A thousand, ten thousand*—Although there have been many skilled archers past and present, *who has ever hit the mark?* No one could hit the target like Kiso and Mayoku. Kiso’s sitting was like setting up the polar mountain; Mayoku’s curtsy could not be matched even by the most beautiful woman. *Stopping the climb on the road of Zen*—since it is where even Buddhas and Zen masters cannot climb. The road of Zen refers to the way to National Teacher Chu. *The road of Zen is level and even*—This truth is equal, having no high or low; why not go, since the road is so even?

[TENKEI] The three elders’ treatment of the circle seems roundabout, but they do not miss the mark, just as when a great archer shot a magical arrow that circled around a tree to hit a monkey on the other side. It seems roundabout, but the way the three hit the target was quite direct, not wasting a shot. All three elders were expert archers. This is a fine example of how Setcho puts a spin on an ancient story. Anyway, while Zennists have discussed this circle this way and that throughout history, *who has ever hit the mark?* There’s no one with the ability to get the point, except for these three elders today, with their marvelous techniques of archery, carrying on an unprecedented discussion. Nansen, however, pulled out halfway along, *calling them together*, saying *Then let’s not go*, calling them back. But even though he says he’s

giving up the ascent to National Teacher Chu's place, there is still somewhere that he cannot hold still, so Setcho goes on to say, based on Nansen's turning point, that the road of Zen is level and even, nowhere inaccessible, unimpeded by mountains and rivers, apparently an easy trip: so why stop climbing? In any case, just set foot on the road of Zen and you will find there is nothing difficult. Indeed, you don't even have to set foot on it, because it is right under your feet wherever you are! Everyone, open your eyes and look! This informs everyone that the living road of Zen is right at their feet. The word "why" is Setcho's help for others.

70

MOUTH SHUT (I)

INTRODUCTION

A quick person only needs a single word, a swift horse only needs one stroke of the crop. Ten thousand years are one moment, one moment is ten thousand years. If you want to become acquainted with direct perception, it is before mention is made. But tell me, before any mention is made, how can you search for it?

[HAKUIN] *A quick person only needs a single word—A sharp student gains understanding at a single word of a teacher. A swift horse only needs one stroke of the crop—when both teacher and student are adepts. Ten thousand years are one moment—The totality of time is not apart from the immediate moment. The first moment continues from before birth, the single moment in which ordinary mortals become Buddhas. If you want to become acquainted with direct perception, it is before mention is made.* If you want to know the root source of Buddhas and Zen masters, it is prior to language.

[TENKEI] When a single word is spoken to sharp people, comprehending one statement, they transcend millions, without hesitation. When a good horse is hit a single stroke of the crop, it races a thousand miles. There is no long or short, just one moment that is immeasurable aeons long; the present is eternity, eternity is the present, with no separation at all. Even a hundred million billion aeons are understood in a single moment. And if you want to know the state of transcendental direct perception without stirring, understand before a single statement is uttered.

EXAMPLE

Isan, Goho, and Ungan were all standing by Hyakujo. Hyakujo asked Isan, “How would you speak with your mouth shut?”

Isan said, “I ask you to speak instead, Teacher.”

Hyakujo said, “It’s not that I refuse to tell you, but I’m afraid that afterward I’d be bereft of descendants.”

[HAKUIN] *Isan said, “I ask you to speak instead, Teacher.”* Since the teacher is the teacher, the disciple is the disciple; let the teacher speak without concern for others. A filial son does not use his father’s money. *I’m afraid that afterward I’d be bereft of descendants*—No doubt about it, there’s a reason he cannot say.

[TENKEI] *I ask you to speak instead, Teacher.* This is Isan’s way of turning around. Bravo! A sharp move, worthy of a commander of a whole region. Like a tiger with horns, he is hard to get close to, standing like a wall a mile high. *It’s not that I refuse*—If one sweeps away too much, there won’t be any descendants, says Hyakujo, divulging quite a bit. This is his spin for the sake of others. This is also called a half-agreeing and half-disagreeing answer.

VERSE

He asks the teacher to speak instead;
Sprouting horns, the tiger emerges from the wild weeds.
On the ten continents, flowers fade and fall when spring ends;
Over the coral forest, the sun is dazzling bright.

[HAKUIN] *Sprouting horns, the tiger*—Already a tiger, he even sprouted horns; he’s not one to be trifled with. The words “emerges from the wild weeds” are subtle. *On the ten continents, flowers fade and fall when spring ends*—How splendid his *asking the teacher to speak instead*; this is already the realm where the skin is shed completely. *Over the coral forest, the sun is dazzling bright*. Without compare in heaven or the human world, the morning sun shines in a forest of coral trees, splendid beyond description.

[TENKEI] The force of Isan's reply is like a tiger with horns emerging from the bush; no one can get near, it is so forbidding. The first two lines versify the overall meaning of the koan; after that, Setcho shows his extra talent with *the ten continents*. If Isan's life beyond were to be described metaphorically, not only the flowers of the present but even the flowers of the realms of the immortals fade and fall, and as they blossom and fall, flourish and fade, *over the coral forest* the full bright light of Isan's basic wisdom is like the dazzling brilliance of interreflected sunlight, covering the sky and covering the earth. In the last two lines, Setcho sees through Hyakujo's half agreement and half disagreement and means to point out the flaw in satori bias by suggesting that even though the state represented by the sun over the coral forest is very interesting indeed, nevertheless in Zen if potential does not leave a static position it is the same as an ocean of poison, so that must be overturned or else you're not on the genuine path. This is Setcho's usual wave; students should familiarize themselves with it thoroughly.

71

MOUTH SHUT (II)

EXAMPLE

Hyakujo also asked Goho, “How would you speak with your mouth shut?”

Goho said, “You should shut up too, Teacher.”

Hyakujo said, “I look to you where there are no people.”

[HAKUIN] *How would you speak*—Each time it is brought up it is new. *You should shut up too*—He borrows water to offer flowers. *I look to you where there are no people*. Most reasonable! If he’s too strict, he won’t have any attendants at all. A breeze stirs below a cliff, a tiger plays with its cub.

[TENKEI] Goho turned around and cut off Hyakujo’s tongue. Setcho refers to this act as watching the strategy on the front lines; Engo calls it an immediate cutoff, a sharp maneuver. *Where there are no people*—“If I can’t find the right person, I’ll call for you.” This is a reply that half approves and half disapproves.

VERSE

“Let the teacher shut up too”—
He watches the strategy on the front lines,
Making people always remember a great general;
Over the myriad-mile horizon a lone kingfisher soars.

[HAKUIN] *He watches the strategy on the front lines*—Goho ably saw through Hyakujo’s battle formation. *Making people always remember a great general*—The great general is compared to Goho. *Over the myriad-mile horizon a lone kingfisher soars*. Hyakujo’s saying was

like a lone kingfisher soaring over a myriad-mile horizon, and so was Goho's saying.

[TENKEI] In cutting off Hyakujo's tongue, Goho's force was like a lone rider with a single lance galloping freely in and out of the battle lines in a confrontation between two armies, a valiant knight with the intelligent strategy of a fierce general. In this he reminds people of a great commander of old: Hyakujo's question was like a lone kingfisher soaring through the sky; one like that great commander would have shot down even an eagle or a hawk on the horizon with a single arrow, but Goho lacked this technique and missed the shot, regrettably letting the bird fly off. In this connection, Setcho recalls how a great commander of old used to hit the target every single time, implying that if Goho had been like that, he would not have missed his shot, letting the prey get away. This is putting a subtle spin on an old story, because there is no wave against the current.

72

MOUTH SHUT (III)

EXAMPLE

Hyakujo also asked Ungan, “How would you speak with your mouth closed?”

Ungan said, “Can you, Teacher?”

Hyakujo said, “I’m bereft of descendants.”

[HAKUIN] *Can you, Teacher?* For his part, does the teacher have lips? *I’m bereft of descendants.* “At that rate, I’ve lost my posterity.” If the upbringing of the son is not as good as the father, he says, the family fortunes will decline in one generation.

[TENKEI] *Can you, Teacher?* means “Do you have anything to say with your mouth closed or not?” The implication is that he surely has nothing to say. Unfortunately, he bit the dust on level ground. *I’m bereft of descendants.* “Then I have no posterity.” The fact that Hyakujo said nothing more than this indicates a reply of complete disapproval.

VERSE

Can the teacher, or not?
The golden lion isn’t crouching on the ground.
In twos and threes they travel the ancient road;
Hyakujo snapped his fingers in vain.

[HAKUIN] *The golden lion*—Too bad; even though he’s a lion cub, he doesn’t even know how to sit. The image of “not crouching on the ground” implies he hasn’t got his claws and fangs yet; the *Treatise on the Huayen* says, “When a lion sits it crouches, the very picture of

power.” *In twos and threes*—Everyone walks the ancient highway; remaining in the cave of “appearances are not characteristics” is an ailment that can only be dispelled by the impenetrable koans. *Hyakujo snapped his fingers in vain*. Snapping the fingers is equivalent to clucking the tongue and calling someone useless, referring to Hyakujo’s saying he was bereft of descendants.

[TENKEI] *Can the teacher*—Ungan turned the tables around and tested Hyakujo. As for Ungan’s state, although he was indeed a golden lion, regrettably he lacked the force to crouch and leap. Because of this, he just “travels the ancient road in twos and threes,” having no fresh and new way of life, no somersaulting action. That is why Hyakujo *snapped his fingers in vain*; even though Ungan’s been alerted, he still doesn’t change his disposition. Today Setcho speaks of Hyakujo and Ungan with lament, saying that a finger snap is useless for someone who really won’t wake up.

73

PERMUTATIONS OF ASSERTION AND DENIAL

INTRODUCTION

Expounding the teaching has no exposition and no indication; listening to the teaching has no hearing and no attainment. Since explanation has no exposition nor indication, how does it compare to not explaining? Since listening has no hearing and no attainment, how does that compare to not listening? If there is no explanation and no listening, that is getting somewhere. As for you people listening to me speaking here now, how do you escape this problem? Let those with barrier-penetrating perception take a look.

[HAKUIN] True explanation of the teaching is communication of mind by mind. The critical matter here is to get people to know cool and warmth themselves, without dispensing a single drop, driving off the plowman's ox, taking away the hungry man's food. *No exposition and no indication*—The *Vimalakirti Sutra* says, "Vimalakirti said to Maudgalyayana, 'Explanation of the teaching has no exposition and no indication, while listening to the teaching has no hearing and no attainment.'" Sengzhao's commentary says, "No exposition does not mean not speaking, it means the ability to refrain from reifying what is said, so that one can speak all day without ever having spoken, and to refrain from reifying what is heard, so that one can hear all day without ever having heard." Buddha said, "I am like a frog, while you are tadpoles born from the frog's mouth. Even without being given milk, the tadpoles grow into frogs, croaking. Similarly, you are developing the spiritual body by means of my teaching." Do not misunderstand *no exposition and no indication*; you have to develop familiarity with the teaching by learning.

Listening to the teaching—Genuine listening to the teaching is not to be learned from someone else; whatever comes in through the

door is not the family treasure. “On Subhuti’s cliff, the weeds are a mess.” *No hearing and no attainment*—Hearing in an unhearing state is real true listening to the teaching. *Since explanation has no exposition, how does that compare to not explaining?* Following up on the passage from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, he took it away; if there is no exposition, it would be better not to explain. *Since listening has no hearing* it’s better not to listen, he says. This is the unhearing hearing of Kashyapa. Even if Kannon is said to have entered *samadhi* from hearing, pondering, and practicing, the point of *samadhi* is no hearing no explanation, you know. *If there is no explanation and no listening*—He puts a spin on the foregoing passage. *Speaking here*—Powerful, virtually overflowing “no hearing no explanation” fills everywhere. *Escape this problem*—That is, the problem of talking like this now and hearing like this now, in spite of the fact that there is no exposition and no hearing; the fox and the badger cannot conceal their true forms. *Barrier-penetrating perception*—Find out about someone who has heard the sound of one hand clapping and attained the realm of reality.

[TENKEI] When you are not trapped in assertion and denial and are not mixed up in affirmation and negation, what do you hear? Here where there is no explanation and no hearing, look at this koan with the eye to penetrate barriers.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked the great master Baso, “Please indicate to me the meaning of Zen apart from all permutations of assertion and denial.”

Baso said, “I’m tired today and can’t explain it to you. Go ask Chizo.”

The monk asked Chizo. Chizo said, “Why don’t you ask the teacher?”

The monk said, “The teacher told me to ask you.”

Chizo said, “I have a headache today and can’t explain it to you. Go ask Hyakujo.”

The monk asked Hyakujo. Hyakujo said, “When I come to this point, I don’t understand.”

The monk related all this to Master Baso. Baso said, “Chizo’s head is white, Hyakujo’s head is black.”

[HAKUIN] *Apart from all permutations of assertion and denial—detached from words and speech, leaving aside all “thus” and “so.” I’m tired today—He’s like a water spirit raining sweet dew. I wouldn’t misconstrue these words to mean he neither explained nor did not explain. If you say he explained, the arrow has flown past; if you say he didn’t explain, you won’t get to see the sky by digging into the earth. Chizo was also a Zen master. He told the monk to go ask Hyakujo because he was enlightened. This is like a killing by an expert swordsman, where the victim is unaware he’s been cut through. Chizo’s head is white, Hyakujo’s head is black. A parent whose children make rain is even more so; there are situations where it is hard to tell which is which. Eight ounces, after all, is half a pound.*

[TENKEI] In asking for a direct indication of the meaning of Zen apart from all permutations of logic, this monk’s insight is not profound, and yet he came up with a difficult question. *I’m tired today—This is a thoroughgoing effort to help the other person. Here there is no principle of Buddhist doctrine or mystic marvel; let those with ears hear! Why don’t you ask the teacher?* First he sneaked a poke at him to see how he’d respond. *I have a headache today—This too is a thoroughgoing effort to help the man; if only the monk would notice! The monk asked Hyakujo. Dunce! He still doesn’t get it! When I come to this point, I don’t understand.* The three elders spoke as one, kindly helping out, but regrettably the monk doesn’t notice. *Chizo’s head is white, Hyakujo’s head is black.* There are many misinterpretations of this current. All literalistic interpretations are wrong. This line is a kindly effort to help, penetrating bones and marrow, a distinguished favor impossible to repay even by bone-crushing labors. The statement is simply that Chizo’s head is white, Hyakujo’s head is black, familiar words from a familiar speaker, no different from saying “drinking tea and eating rice.” Even so, it is wrong to speak this way if one has merely swallowed it whole without chewing. When you actually do manage to see, then it is so.

VERSE

Chizo's head is white, Hyakujo's head is black;
Even clear-eyed Zennists cannot understand.
Baso tramples everyone in the world to death;
Even Rinzai is still no pickpocket.
Apart from the tetralemma, beyond the hundred negations,
In the heavens and the human world, only I know.

[HAKUIN] *Chizo's head is white, Hyakujo's head is black*—This is cold. It is not possible to fathom it with the small insight and small vision of disciples of the Two Vehicles. If you understand it in a vague or haphazard way, you will fall into hell. *Even clear-eyed Zennists cannot understand*—Even extraordinary people cannot understand the point. *Baso tramples everyone in the world to death*—Everyone in the world is trampled to death by this saying *Chizo's head is white, Hyakujo's head is black. Even Rinzai is still no pickpocket*. Compared with Baso's great thievery, Rinzai is still a novice. *In the heavens and the human world, only I know*—In this matter, one has to know cool and warmth for oneself. As for the "I" in "I know," is this Setcho's own "I," or does it refer to each and every individual? RSVP.

[TENKEI] This koan is complex, and it is hard to pursue each point, so the koan is summed up in the first line with *Chizo's head is white, Hyakujo's head is black*. This is the point that even Buddhas and Zen masters do not know and cannot attain; needless to say your calculations and conceptualizations cannot reach it. This is the secret of Zennists and spiritual immortalists. It is also called the subtlety that cannot be transmitted even from father to son, so *even clear-eyed Zennists cannot understand*, much less others, who lose their lives to a single statement and cannot be effective. As for the details of that, *Baso tramples everyone in the world to death*. They can't hold up their heads, none of them. This is great master Baso's implementation of the great function of his great potential. Techniques like this switch people's eyeballs in broad daylight, like a genuine pickpocket. Seppo called Rinzai a pickpocket, stealing in

broad daylight, but his predecessor Baso was the real pickpocket. *Apart from the tetralemma*—Rousing a wave as usual, he's going to ask his audience what they make of this. *In the heavens*—Perhaps even the Buddhas of past, present, and future, as well as the generations of Zen masters throughout history, are unable to understand. The solitary saints and self-illuminates of the ten directions do not know of it; only Setcho knows this, he says, using the same strategy as the three masters in the koan, presenting his ability in a phrase, clarifying the source outside the words, making an effort for others that penetrates bones and marrow. But does this mean that Setcho knows and you don't?

74

[THE RICE PAIL](#)

INTRODUCTION

When a razor-sharp sword is wielded horizontally, it cuts through the nest of complications before it. When a clear mirror is hung up high, it draws the seal of the cosmic Buddha from a phrase. In a state of inner peace, one dresses and eats; when it comes to the realm of sporting spiritual powers, how does one maintain focus on it? Do you understand?

[HAKUIN] With your own fine sword at your side, before even leaving your room you have cut away the totality of myriad forms, even down to an ant's whiskers. The nest of complications includes the complications of confusion, the complications of enlightenment, the complications of Buddhist doctrines, and the complications of Zen records. The clear mirror is *samadhi* like a precious mirror; the clear mirror itself is the sharp sword. Drawing out the seal of the cosmic Buddha refers to what in Zen is called the mind seal. A state of inner peace is where even Buddhas and Zen masters do not know, the place where water cannot wet and wind cannot blow in. As for dressing and eating, is this the razor-sharp sword? Is it the clear mirror? Is it the seal of the cosmic Buddha? The realm of sporting spiritual powers is simultaneous arrival in the absolute and the relative, the realm of great freedom of spiritual capacities, sometimes entering into the domain of Buddhas, sometimes entering into the domain of demons. How does one maintain focus on it? How does one distract oneself from it!

[TENKEI] When Zen teaching masters act according to the occasion, they wield a precious sword, razor sharp, breaking up students' nests of complications. Sometimes they also enter absorption in the precious mirror and express the mind seal of the cosmic Buddha in a

single statement or a single saying. This is the genuine living methodology of a teaching master, but even so, in the realm of inner peace within oneself there are not so many things, just putting on clothes when cold, eating and drinking when hungry. But where you sport spiritual powers as specified above, how will you go forward? In any case you will not be able to stand still, so if you haven't solved the matter, look at what is written below.

EXAMPLE

Every day at lunchtime, Master Kin-gyu used to personally do a dance with the rice pail in front of the monastic hall, laughing and saying, "Come eat, little bodhisattvas!"

Setcho remarked, "Even so, Kin-gyu was not being good-hearted."

A monk asked Chokei, "An ancient said, 'Come eat, little bodhisattvas!' What does that mean?"

Chokei said, "Sure seems like celebration on the occasion of a meal."

[HAKUIN] *Come eat, little bodhisattvas!* Even if you have to sell your swords and saddles, you bodhisattvas, come and eat! *Setcho remarked, "Even so—"* This remark is scary; in what respect is he not being good-hearted? *Sure seems like celebration on the occasion of a meal.* This saying is hard to believe and hard to understand; the vein of the words is so fine it's as though it had been sifted through a silk mesh. It is a life-taking spiritual talisman!

[TENKEI] In other places they call this the giant meal table of the successors of Baso. There's something to that, but there is no one on earth who does not sit at this table. Nevertheless, there is no one who really knows how to eat the food, so no matter how fine a table of treats Kin-gyu has set out today, yet there seem to be no customers to partake of it. Even so, he sure is a genial host. When Zen teaching masters act for the benefit of others this way, it is just because people don't know they know what they know and so go seeking outwardly; so Kin-gyu had no choice but to dance and laugh for twenty years and tell people not to eat rice through their noses,

showing them what they already knew. This was Kin-gyu's extremely kind help for others. When Setcho remarks that he was *not being good-hearted*, he means it is a fine tea party, but don't drink too much irresponsibly and get poisoned. It's important *how* you drink. *Sure seems like celebration*—Celebrating what? Is it because the meal is your favorite dish? No, it's a celebration to let you know the way to eat with your mouth.

VERSE

Laughing aloud in the shadow of the white clouds,
Bringing it with both hands he gives it to others.
If they had been cubs of the golden lion,
They'd have seen the warp three thousand miles away.

[HAKUIN] *Laughing aloud in the shadow of the white clouds*—Is it a ghost? Is it a spirit? Eerie! *White clouds* refers to the appearance of cumulus clouds piled high; this line versifies Kin-gyu's lesson. *Bringing it with both hands he gives it to others*—He acted wholeheartedly toward the entire community, presenting a night-lighting pearl, tray and all. *They'd have seen the warp three thousand miles away*—When you pass through the impenetrables, you are in the know wherever you are.

[TENKEI] *White clouds*—With a wooden pail full of white rice like puffy clouds, laughing out loud, is this a happy laugh, or is it a wry laugh? You try to discern! Anyhow, though Kin-gyu is *bringing it with both hands*, there seems to be no one to receive it. It could also be said that Setcho too is *bringing it with both hands*, but what has he brought to give out? And then there is the question of whether they were fed for free or whether there is some special mysterious marvel. If they were lionlike Zennists, they would understand the source outside of words, discern a warp from far away, and see what Kin-gyu's point comes down to, with distinct clarity; but if they seek it in words and statements, they will fall back three thousand miles, finding it inaccessible. As for Kin-gyu's so-called warp, where did he go awry? The point is that we should see that he has performed all

these complicated skills where there is fundamentally nothing to be said.

75

UNJUST BEATING

INTRODUCTION

The precious sword with the spiritual point is always presently manifest, able to kill people and able to bring people life. It is there and it is here, the same in winning or losing. If you need to brandish it upright, go ahead and brandish it upright; if you need to extend it out flat, go ahead and extend it out flat. But tell me, when not confined to being guest or host, when not constrained to interchange, then what?

[HAKUIN] *The precious sword with the spiritual point* is a weird sword; it cuts down Buddhas and Zen masters, cuts through confusion and understanding. The spiritual, subtle, inconceivable precious sword is inherent in every individual. *Always presently manifest* means that it is right in front of your nose night and day. *Able to kill people and able to bring people to life*—This sword first kills; then when you understand, the great function becomes manifest. *It is there and it is here* in darkness and in light. *The same in winning or losing*—Understanding is total winning, not understanding is total losing; sometimes both guest and host win, and sometimes they both lose. *If you need to brandish it upright*, holding it straight overhead, *go ahead and brandish it upright* as you will; this is also called the long sword against the sky. *If you need to extend it out flat*, letting go, wielding it aslant, *go ahead and extend it out flat*, explaining the coarse and the fine. *When not confined to being guest or host, when not constrained to interchange*—This is when you are not bound by the ropes of “guest and host” or “interchange of relative and absolute” set up by people of ancient times.

[TENKEI] The precious sword of transcendence, the essence of Zen, with its point of spiritual subtlety, is always manifest before us, but when an adept uses it, it can kill people and can also bring people life; whether to kill or to give life is in the hands of the individual, who is free and independent. Function like this is *there* and also *here*, employed in turn by both teacher and student, same in death and same in life, holding still and letting go, acting according to the needs of the time. But what about when not confined to being guest or host, how about the interaction of adepts?

EXAMPLE

A monk came to Ukyu from the congregation of the master of Joshu. Ukyu asked him, “How does the spiritual path of Joshu compare to here?”

The monk said, “Not different.”

Ukyu said, “If it’s not different, then you should go back there,” and hit him.

The monk said, “The staff has eyes—don’t hit people in haste.”

Ukyu said, “I’ve hit one today,” and hit him three more times.

The monk then left.

Ukyu said, “An unjust beating, but there’s someone taking it.”

The monk turned around and said, “What can I do—the handle is in your hands.”

Ukyu said, “If you want, I’ll turn it over to you.”

The monk went up to Ukyu, snatched the staff out of his hands, and hit him three times.

Ukyu said, “Unjust beating, unjust beating.”

The monk said, “Still there’s someone taking it.”

Ukyu said, “I hit this guy in haste.”

The monk then bowed.

Ukyu said, “You still act this way?”

The monk laughed and left.

Ukyu said, “So this is what it amounts to.”

[HAKUIN] This is an unusual example, even in the context of the *Blue Cliff Record*. The master Joshu in this story was Zen Master Sekizo. Ukyu was a successor of Baso. *How does it compare to here* is an impatient manner of questioning.

[TENKEI] First is a test.

[HAKUIN] *Not different* seems lukewarm, but it's a forbidding reply.

[TENKEI] In all the space of the entire universe, what different thing could there be, says the monk, giving every indication of being a Zen monk with some insight.

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, "If it's not different, you should go back there."* "Get lost, go back to Joshu!" This is awesome ability; he kills the man without blinking an eye.

[TENKEI] "It was no use for you to have come here," he said, and with that hit him.

[HAKUIN] *The staff has eyes*—"Don't lash out rashly; open your eyes to strike. I wouldn't blindly fether and beat," he says, a tough monk not to be taken lightly.

[TENKEI] "It's not going to do any good flailing around like that. Ukyu is making too much fuss. Let's skip the blind beating, please!" This is truly efficient work.

[HAKUIN] *I've hit one today* means something to the effect of "I finally got one! It was worth lashing out!" *And hit him three more times*—He's spirited!

[TENKEI] "Look at this guy: I've roused out a smart one. How happy I am!" And with that he hits him three more times.

[HAKUIN] *The monk then left*. Each individual stands on the pivotal point; this monk limped away empty-handed. Up to this point was letting go, but what a strange monk: getting beaten, he went away dejected. If that were the end of it, you couldn't see this monk. He's like Zennist Ryo [in example 56].

[TENKEI] Seeing the opportunity, he acted; a good strategy.

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, "An unjust beating, but there's someone taking it."* In order to see this monk thoroughly, he said there is someone who leaves on taking an unwarranted beating. After this both gather in.

[TENKEI] "Unreasonable beating it may be, but someone like you is going to get it!"

[HAKUIN] *What can I do—the handle is in your hand.* “I can’t dish out all I want because you won’t hand me the ladle.”

[TENKEI] “If it were in my hands, I’d come at you with it.”

[HAKUIN] *If you want, I’ll turn it over to you.* “If you need the staff, I’ll give it to you; can you use it well?” He is as magnanimous as the ocean is vast, handing a ladder to a burglar. *The monk came up and snatched the staff from Ukyu’s hands—*A fearsome fellow, he snatches the brigand’s spear to kill the brigand. But tell me, what is the logic of this? Don’t misinterpret it as imitation of harsh methods.

[TENKEI] “In matters of humaneness, one does not defer to others.” This is effective work.

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, “Unjust beating, unjust beating.”* Tell me, is he saying the monk’s use of the staff was unjust, or is he referring to himself?

[TENKEI] *The monk said, “Still there’s someone taking it.”* An effective answer! Is he talking about taking it himself, or does he mean Ukyu is taking it? This monk even snatched the master’s words: “This beating is for someone like you.”

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, “I hit this guy in haste.”* “What with hitting this monk before, now getting hit myself, and so forth and so on . . .” Here is Ukyu’s subtlety. Splendid! Magnificent!

[TENKEI] “I acted rashly earlier; I’m sorry,” he says, coming on a little less intensely.

[HAKUIN] *The monk then bowed.* This is not good-hearted. It’s an obnoxious bow.

[TENKEI] He is not good-heartedly agreeing; this is also depressurized battlefield negotiation, a fine strategy.

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, “You still act this way?”* Ukyu tried poking him again.

[TENKEI] “Is that all you can do? Compared with just now, you’ve sure faded away!”

[HAKUIN] *The monk laughed and left.* “I won’t fall for that trick.”

[TENKEI] This is the act of an adept who does not die at a phrase.

[HAKUIN] *Ukyu said, “So this is what it amounts to.”* He says the guy was effective, but still there’s some disapproval there. Without these words, Ukyu himself would have been ineffective.

[TENKEI] “Going to leave it at that?” With this he wrapped up the koan. He seemed to put him down a bit, but in any case Ukyu’s tail was dragging, regrettably!

VERSE

Summoning is easy, sending away is hard;
Observe the exchanging thrusts in detail.
The rock of ages, though solid, will still crumble;
The depths of the oceans must instantly evaporate.
Old Ukyu, old Ukyu—how many are equal?
Giving another the handle was very much without reason.

[HAKUIN] *Summoning is easy*—It’s easy to get involved, but it’s crucial to finish. However, Ukyu had already sent away before having called. Ukyu is free to summon or to send away. *Sending away is hard*—It’s difficult to finish up in the end and clean up afterward. Here Setcho is praising Ukyu’s awesome courage in handing over his staff to another, lying down in a tiger’s mouth to search for someone. *Observe the exchanging thrusts in detail*—You can’t find any flaw in the actions of either one. *The rock of ages, though solid, will still crumble*—The spear thrusts of both men were enough to shatter even the rock of ages, solid as it is. *The depths of the oceans must instantly evaporate*. With the actions of these two men, even the oceans, deep as they are, instantly evaporate. *Old Ukyu, old Ukyu*—The repetition of his name signifies intensive praise. *How many are equal?* Not many. *Giving another the handle was very much without reason*. This is praise that puts down; “Nonsense,” he says.

[TENKEI] *Summoning is easy, sending away is hard*—Setcho is so compassionate that he uses a standard proverb to help people. *Summoning* is letting go, *sending away* is holding still, but it is not correct to apply this to each element of the koan; it’s just that the interaction of the two elders shows ability to summon and ability to send away. This methodology should not be looked upon lightly; it is extremely difficult interaction, so it should be observed in detail,

Setcho confides, a model for Zen monks. Anyway, to describe the two elders' thrusts back and forth, *the rock of ages*, durable as it is, must crumble sometime, but even then these thrusts will be inexhaustible; and *the oceans*, deep as they are, may evaporate at once, but these thrusts will still be unfathomable. This exchange of thrusts has no end, for ever and ever; let everyone observe in detail. Having versified the overall meaning of the koan, finally Setcho calls repeatedly *How many are equal?* This methodology is unheard of in past generations, action rare in any time. Even so, *giving another the handle*, handing the staff over to the monk, was indeed without reason. If this monk had roused thunder on dry ground, even Ukyu would have been unable to cope with it; in view of that fact, he employed a dangerous method. Had it been Setcho, he wouldn't have let it out of his own hands; admitting neither a statement of affirmation nor a statement of negation, he would have given him a beating. This is Setcho's living strategy to help others by not letting go, the usual wave.

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[HAVE YOU EATEN?](#)

INTRODUCTION

Fine as rice flour, cold as ice and frost, it fills the universe, apart from light and beyond darkness. The lowest of places, on examination, has a surplus; the highest of places, when leveled, has a deficit. Holding still and letting go are both right here, but is there a way out?

[HAKUIN] *Fine as rice flour* refers to the basic endowment of every individual. In terms of magnitude, it fills the universe; in terms of minuteness, it retracts into a snail's horn. One day Isan asked his disciples, "Meet me outside of sound and form." Gyozan offered the saying, "See what doesn't see." Isan said, "Fine as rice flour." *Cold as ice and frost*—Cold and warm, large and small, are all part of the scenery of the original ground. *Apart from light and beyond darkness*—It is manifest when there is light, and it is manifest when there is darkness too; ultimately it is beyond light and darkness. *The lowest of places, on examination, has a surplus*—Undiminished even in ordinary mortals, the wisdom and virtues of Buddhas are abundant even in the mediocre and the inferior. *The highest of places, when leveled, has a deficit*—There is not more even in Buddhas. *Right here*—In your grip. This example is crucial among the hundred examples, a model for all time, utterly unique, extremely difficult to penetrate and hard to understand. The vein of its words is very fine; the little ineffable secret is unfamiliar to anyone past or present. Chokei and Hofuku can be called outstanding heroes of Seppo's school. Setcho's verse manages to bring out the whole substance of the matter, without revealing the point of his thrust.

[TENKEI] *Fine as rice flour*—What is this? Filling the entire universe, it is something interesting all right, but what is it? Inscrutable, ungraspable; so when Zen teaching masters act on it, they may hold

still or let go, changing freely according to circumstances. And for your part, how will you get out? The monk in the koan today couldn't get out; take a look.

EXAMPLE

Tanka asked a monk, "Where did you come from?"

The monk said, "From down the mountain."

Tanka said, "Have you eaten yet?"

The monk said, "I have."

Tanka said, "Was the one who brought you the food perceptive?"

The monk said nothing.

Chokei asked Hofuku, "Giving someone food is a way of requiting a favor; why wouldn't that be perceptive?"

Hofuku said, "Both giver and receiver are blind."

Chokei said, "If they used all their potential, would they still be blind?"

Hofuku said, "Can you say I'm blind?"

[HAKUIN] Tanka asked a monk where he came from, leisurely casting a hook. *Down the mountain*—This guy is not ordinary. *Have you eaten yet?* He asked this because he realized he was a tough guy. *I have.* Here's a guy who wouldn't get caught in a net or a trap; the truth comes out of the convict's mouth. *Who gave you the food*—Does anyone who gives food to the likes of you have eyes? These words are extremely important. In Seppo's school, there was the discussion between Chokei and Hofuku, evaluating this strictly. The question of being perceptive is the sinew and bone. Beating the bush is for rousting the snakes. And to preach to people blind as you are means that I myself am blind! *The monk said nothing.* He was doing all right up to the point where he said he had eaten; now he has registered grief. *Chokei asked Hofuku*—From here it's a double koan. Chokei came on intending to haul Hofuku into a pit of blazing fire if he found the slightest chink. A horned tiger comes out of the bush. *Why wouldn't that be perceptive?* In other words, why did Tanka ask about being perceptive? *Giver and receiver are both blind.*

Don't misunderstand these words. In a transaction between two people, sayings like this don't come out without perception like ten suns illumining everything. *If they used all their potential*, that is, the potential of giving and receiving, from the point of view of living use of potential, *would they still be blind?* Therein are the sinews and bones; it is essential to discern deep and shallow. *Can you say I'm blind?* Hofuku said, "I have answered you with my eyes wide open; if you say something like that, are you implying I'm blind too?" Chokey and Hofuku are merely discussing relative degrees of closeness in words; that's why this point is not at all easy to perceive.

[TENKEI] *Where did you come from?* First is a test. *Down the mountain*—First the monk said something that seemed Zen-like, trying to act aloof in the snobbish manner of a nominal boss, but he seems not to understand. *Have you eaten yet?* Had breakfast yet? This is a second test. *I have.* So! Now you can see what he's after. *Who gave you the food*—Whoever fed the likes of you must be blind! *Chokey asked* a question in a credulous mood. *Giver and receiver* are both blind bunglers; it's a wasted meal. A pleasant response. *If they used all their potential*—Even if they have no impulsion to give or receive, and the giver, receiver, and gift are all empty, are they still blind? *Can you say I'm blind?* I just said that they are both blind if they have any such impulsion at all; do you say I am blind too? With this response he has tapered off compared with his previous forcefulness.

VERSE

Using full potential, not becoming blind—
Holding an ox head feeding it hay.
The twenty-eight and six patriarchs of Zen—
Their precious vessel, brought forth, becomes a mistake.
The mistake is serious; there is nowhere to search.
In the heavens and the human world they sink alike into
oblivion.

[HAKUIN] *Using full potential, not becoming blind*—This line is absolutely marvelous.

[TENKEI] The dialogue of Chokei and Hofuku is cited here in one line, abbreviated and combined; *using full potential* refers to Chokei, while *not becoming blind* refers to Hofuku. Expressing the underlying meaning of the reference to perceptivity, the poem never mentions Tanka; but even so, in expressing the points of these two elders it naturally expresses Tanka's basic intent. This is a marvelous technique, natural creativity emerging from effective insight. The main meaning of this whole verse is all about eating with knowledge of how to eat.

[HAKUIN] *Holding an ox head feeding it hay*—According to the *Major Treatise on Perfect Insight*, in ancient times a man was offering a sacrifice to a spirit. A bystander held an ox head and fed it hay. The man making the sacrifice said, "How can the head of an ox eat hay?" The bystander said, "How can the spirit eat the offering?" The anecdote is of a dead ox.

[TENKEI] This describes the dialogue between Chokei and Hofuku; there seems to be an attempt at force-feeding, but in any case one does not eat unless one has an appetite, so Tanka's fundamental intention in just saying *Was the one who brought you the food perceptive* and leaving it at that was to show outside the words how he was waiting for the other's appetite to emerge naturally. Thus the discussion between Chokei and Hofuku about using full potential or not, or being perceptive or not, even if it refers to the emptiness of giver, receiver, and gift, is useless; not only does it trouble oneself, it even troubles the Buddhas and Zen patriarchs, because . . .

[HAKUIN] *Their precious vessel, brought forth*—Although it is an important bit that goes beyond the cave of the Two Vehicles, *using full potential, not becoming blind* after all turns out to be a mistake, because it is leftover imagination.

[TENKEI] Even if they bring their begging bowls, since they don't know how to eat, it turns out to be a mistake. And this mistake is extremely profound, he says.

[HAKUIN] *The mistake is serious*—This mistake is very profound. *There is nowhere to search*. It cannot be reached by the mediocre or the inferior; the depth of the mistake cannot be found out.

[TENKEI] Where is this mistake just now? Quickly focus your eyes and see.

[HAKUIN] *In the heavens and the human world they sink alike into oblivion.* It is lamentable to fail to see and sink into oblivion in the cave of formless equality.

[TENKEI] Neither knowing nor not knowing gets beyond this mistake. The whole world sinks into oblivion. Not knowing how to eat is just because you produce views of Buddha and views of Dharma, plying the chopsticks of discriminatory thinking. Not knowing this is a shameful thing. In any case, the thing to do is to abandon everything in order to eat, says Setcho, taking up the chopsticks, teaching us not to eat through our noses.

INTRODUCTION

Turning upward, one can take everyone on earth in tow, like a falcon catching a pigeon. Turning downward, one is under the control of others, like a turtle hiding in its shell. Here if someone comes forth and says there is originally no upward or downward, so why turn, I would say I knew you were living in a ghost cave. So tell me, how do you distinguish black from white? (silence) If there is a rule, go by the rule; if there is no rule, go by the example.

[HAKUIN] *Turning upward*—Transmitting the little bit, being equipped with claws and fangs, is called turning upward. After you get to know that state, you are independent and free, like a falcon catching a pigeon, a peerless, incomparable guide to the source, working to help others.

[TENKEI] When Zen teaching masters turn upward and hold still, they take everyone in the world in tow as firmly as a falcon seizing a dove.

[HAKUIN] *Turning downward*—If they do not know the little bit, everyone seizes upon satori, and to that extent is vulnerable to manipulation by others. Even if you stomp through false imaginations and realize all saints and sages are like flashes of lightning, this is grasping satori. *Like a turtle hiding in its shell*—Having gone into the cave of emptiness of self and things, one is not free.

[TENKEI] When Zen teaching masters turn downward and trail mud and drip water in a state of letting go, they are in thrall to others, not completing their personal salvation, not achieving final resolution. Spiritual benefactors use themselves deliberately, turning upward and turning downward, in the manner described.

[HAKUIN] *No upward or downward*—This is called the universal sovereignty of immutable wisdom. *I knew you were living in a ghost cave*—If you say there is no up or down, you are in the cave of negating the forms of all forms.

[TENKEI] If someone said there is fundamentally no up or down, I would say that is acting like a hungry ghost, vain, conceited nonsense.

[HAKUIN] *Distinguish black from white*—Naive amateurism won't do, if you want to acquire the wits to make a living.

[TENKEI] So how do you discern black and white, folks?

[HAKUIN] *If there is a rule, go by the rule*—In matters where there is an established provision that has stood the test of time, go by the provision. Where there is no provision, do the best you can following precedent.

[TENKEI] So first observe the roles of the ancients.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Ummon, "What is talk beyond Buddhas and Zen masters?"

Ummon said, "A piece of cake."

[HAKUIN] *Talk beyond Buddhas and Zen masters*—The realm where verbal explanation cannot reach, transcending the realm of buddhas and the realm of Zen masters.

[TENKEI] This monk has asked all about everything: Zen, Buddhism, turning upward to transcendence, turning downward in accommodation; wondering what it is all about, he figured out this way of approach. It's a bold question, anyhow.

[HAKUIN] *A piece of cake*. I can do nothing but praise. How fluent!

[TENKEI] Is the cake tart or sweet? Take a bite and see, every one of you. I don't think you'll be able to say what it tastes like; be sure not to swallow it whole as talk transcending Buddhas and Zen masters.

VERSE

Transcendent talk is questioned by Zennists especially often;
The gap slips open—see?
With the cake stuffed, that's still not the end;
Even now there's confusion all over the world.

[HAKUIN] *Transcendent talk is questioned by Zennists especially often*—Talk of great things leads to festive spirits, somehow or other wanting to soar to the heights; for that reason there are many who ask about what is beyond Buddhas and Zen masters.

[TENKEI] It is not only this monk: a lot of people ask this question everywhere.

[HAKUIN] *The gap slips open*—This monk's got an open seam; do you all see?

[TENKEI] Today this monk opens his big mouth, and his gap slips open; does everyone see? Ummon sure does.

[HAKUIN] *With the cake stuffed in*—Stuffing means closing a gap. When the cake is applied to the open seam, this koan becomes an unending annoyance.

[TENKEI] He shut this monk's mouth, but that wasn't the end of it; wondering what the connection might be, people got further and further away from solving it, so there is confusion all over the world even now. What a shame that is!

[HAKUIN] *Even now there's confusion all over the world.* With the cake stuck in the gap, complications have arisen here and there. Why do complications arise? Because of not having penetrated impenetrable talk.

[TENKEI] Many Zennists get stuck here, interpreting the words literally, trying to figure them out, and therefore they cannot solve it. Some understand it as a piece of cake. Some understand it to represent the symbolism of the circle. Some understand it as transcending Buddhas and Zen masters. All of them are mistaken. Won't you have a bite, says Setcho, offering a dish.

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[AWAKENED PEOPLE BATHE](#)

EXAMPLE

In ancient times there were sixteen awakened people who suddenly realized the basis of water when they went into the bath. How do you understand their saying, “Subtle feeling reveals illumination, perfecting the abode of offspring of Buddha”? Thorough penetration is still required to do so.

[HAKUIN] This story appears in the *Heroic Progress Scripture*. If the whole passage of the scripture were quoted, that would fall into theoretical knowledge and turn away from the Zen meaning. Therefore only the part about suddenly realizing the basis of water is cited. It is a mistake to see what Setcho has cited here in terms of the idea of the scripture; as it is said, if you know how to handle a dead snake, you can bring it to life. *Suddenly realized the basis of water*—Water and self, self and water. Water is as a seed; mortals and buddhas, wrong and right, are all as one. The so-called basis of water refers to the data of feeling; because of the water there is feeling, so it is called the basis of water. It is also called the basis of water because the use of water is the basis of washing the body. *Subtle feeling reveals illumination*—The manifestation of the ungraspable totality of water, dirt, and body is called subtle feeling revealing illumination. Manifestation comes from the conjunction of feeler and felt. Subtle feeling reveals illumination: when you focus on this observation until the feeling of data has ended, subtle feeling appears and you attain acceptance of nonorigination. This is called the abode of offspring of Buddha. *Perfecting the abode of offspring of Buddha* means development of true transcendence. “Abode” implies maintenance. The *Heroic Progress Scripture* says, “The abode of offspring of Buddha transcends all existences.” *Thorough*

penetration is required to do so—Here is the great power of Setcho; without these words it would have been a doctrinal interpretation. Subtle feeling revealing illumination, perfecting the abode of offspring of Buddha, is unfettered and free like this because of having come to know the place where there are no gaps.

[TENKEI] If you understand this directly, then going to bed, getting up, and so on is all subtle feeling revealing illumination. What about it? Subtle feeling means revealing illumination; revealing illumination means making manifest. As for offspring of Buddha, in the contexts of the *Lotus* and *Flower Ornament* scriptures this term means bodhisattvas of the first stage, but it differs here and there. Of course, in doctrinal terms it is complicated, but in Zen terms an offspring of Buddha means an ordinary person with great faith attaining enlightenment on the spot. In doctrinal schools, the expression “abiding in the stage of Buddhahood” also makes it seem like mortals and Buddhas are in different ranks, in different groups, but what ground is that under your behind? Is it the ground of ordinary mortals? Is it the ground of Buddhas? Or is it borrowed ground? *Thorough penetration is still required*—This realm of subtle feeling cannot be realized by a warm pat of the hand; you have to reduce your bones to powder and shatter your body to smithereens to master it. If you don’t go all the way, you can’t get it.

VERSE

It takes one Zennist who’s finished the work,
Stretching out on the bench and lying down.
In a dream there’s been talk of realizing complete communion;
Having washed with fragrant water, a spit right in the face.

[HAKUIN] *It takes one Zennist who’s finished the work*—“It takes one” is dirty. It can also be read as having erased a one-sided monolithic satori that has been a tremendous release. Also, a certain Zen master says it means having gone one’s merry way alone. This line is strangely worded. *Stretching out on the bench and lying down*—This describes a Zennist who has digested the One. How

pleasant; when you make space your house, it's springtime sleeping alone with the polar mountain as your pillow. *In a dream there's been talk of realizing complete communion*—From here on refers to the case of the awakened people in the story; an inquisition made in a dream is messy and sordid. If you don't see the third and fourth line, you can't know the One. *Having washed with fragrant water, a spit right in the face*—Spit right in the face of such filthy folks as talk about “complete communion” and whatnot.

[TENKEI] *It takes one Zennist who's finished the work*—The story says that sixteen awakened people realized enlightenment at once in ancient times, but now even one is to be desired. Setcho is shedding tears of blood for the sake of others, but it is a perceptive versification, implying that here, where you don't see if you're heedless, what can you manage to finish? If you have finished, *stretch out on the bench and lie down*; there is nothing to cling to above, there is no self below, and there is neither delusion nor enlightenment. Eating when hungry, sleeping when tired, without a single thing on your mind, this is the realm of great comfort. From the perspective of this effortless state, even if you speak of complete communion, it is nonsensical dream talk, of no use at all. Leaving aside the so-called attainment of absorption in the basis of water, even if Zen practitioners were drenched in an ocean of fragrant water and washed completely clean, Setcho would still spit right in their faces for their foulness. In Zen, even satori or “enlightenment” is contamination. The solution is to rip it apart. This is Setcho's vivifying strategy for helping people, setting out a line of scripture and then waking up those who snooze on the scripture, directly enabling them to become free and untrammled.

79

ALL SOUNDS

INTRODUCTION

When the great function manifests, it does not keep to standard rules, capturing alive without exerting superfluous effort. But tell me, who has ever been this way?

[HAKUIN] *When the great function manifests*—The tactics of a Zen teacher, be they contrary or conforming, are unfathomable even to the gods. A monk asked Master Unkei, “When the great function manifests and does not keep to standard rules, then what?” Unkei got up and circled his meditation seat once. *It does not keep to standard rules*—Not like this, not like that. *Capturing alive*—Maybe seizing someone by the nose, or grabbing someone by the ear. *Without exerting superfluous effort*—There is no contrived effort made.

[TENKEI] The transcendental function of Zen, with maximum function of maximum potential, captures alive when the moment is right, not expending any effort even in cutting off students’ tongues, lively and free, without hindrance. But whose tactics are these? Who acts this way? Observe Toshi’s method today.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Toshi, “Is it true that ‘All sounds are the voice of Buddha’?”

Toshi said, “Yes.”

The monk said, “Don’t fart.”

Toshi hit him.

Another question was, “Is it true that ‘Coarse words and fine speech all end up in ultimate truth?’”

Toshi said, “Yes.”

The monk said, “Can I call you an ass?”

Toshi hit him.

[HAKUIN] *All sounds are the voice of Buddha.* This is a passage from a verse in the twentieth chapter of the *Nirvana Scripture*. “Even water fowl and forest groves remembrance Buddha and remembrance Dharma.”

[TENKEI] This is cooked up from the *Scripture on the Questions of the God Brahma*; “If you were to say this, what would I say?” He poses the question with a conceptual trap, but Toshi saw right through it.

[HAKUIN] Yes—His acceptance without the slightest fuss is quite easygoing.

[TENKEI] “Of course, that’s right,” he says, letting go; this is a hook to fish out any further sayings the monk has prepared, a trap to fell a tiger.

[HAKUIN] *Don’t fart.* He boldly took the bait and swallowed the hook. “What you say sounds like farting.” A tyrant’s dog barks at a benevolent king.

[TENKEI] Taking the hook, he tells the teacher not to talk like farting, because the stench is unbearable. He twisted it around just as he had planned, but then . . .

[HAKUIN] *Toshi hit him.* “Capturing him alive without expending superfluous effort.”

[TENKEI] “That sure won’t do”; this is where he settles the case according to the facts.

[HAKUIN] *Coarse words and fine speech*—Disregarding danger and destruction, he asks another question; an extraordinary monk. *All end up in ultimate truth*—the ultimate truth of the holy truths and teachings of Buddha, that is. In the *Five Lamps Merged in the Source*, these two questions are asked by two different monks.

[TENKEI] This is also concocted from a passage of the *Nirvana Scripture*.

[HAKUIN] *Toshi said, “Yes.”* Cornered him again.

[TENKEI] As before.

[HAKUIN] *Can I call you an ass?* This is the view of false equality.

[TENKEI] “If noble and base, high and low, good and bad, right and wrong, all wind up in ultimate truth, I guess it doesn’t matter if I call the teacher an ass,” he flung back dismissively. *Toshi hit him.* At that rate, there’s no preventing this beating.

VERSE

Toshi, Toshi—his wheel of potential’s unhindered.
Releasing one, he gets two; same there, same here.
Pitiful the endless people playing in the tide
Who in the end fall into the tide and die.
If they suddenly came to life,
The hundred rivers would reverse their flow with a roar.

[HAKUIN] *His wheel of potential’s unhindered*—Untrammeled and free, unimpeded by anything.

[TENKEI] The reading “unhindered” is inappropriate; the character for “obstruction” should be the character for “rock-topped hill,” which is similar in construction, and has the meaning of steepness. There are references for this in the *Classic of Songs* and elsewhere. As for the meaning, the point is that Toshi’s sphere of operation was the reality of everyday life, without blithe inaccessibility or sharpness.

[HAKUIN] *Releasing one, he gets two*—Letting out the one word “yes,” he scored a victory in two places.

[TENKEI] He used the one word “yes” successfully twice and struck a blow twice; his methods were *same there, same here*.

[HAKUIN] *Same there, same here*—He said “yes” twice and also struck a blow twice, the same before and after.

[TENKEI] He acted the same way in both situations, but this action is something every one of you should actually see with minute precision. Having finished eulogizing Toshi’s everyday activity all at once, from here on Setcho laments students of the present time, likening them to this monk.

[HAKUIN] *Pitiful the endless people playing in the tide*—There are a lot of people who make waves by saying things like “fart,” but that’s pathetic.

[TENKEI] It’s not only this monk; in the present time as well there are endless numbers of people full of vain conceit like this, just empty-headedly studying Zen; the way they go around saying things like “Seen through!” and “What about it?” may be likened to people playing in the tide, swimming in the ocean.

[HAKUIN] *Who in the end fall into the tide and die*—When a water sprite gets washed away down the river, it’s because of treating the water with contempt.

[TENKEI] Like the monk in this koan, even if you claim to be studying the Way, if you are merely conceited and have no inner substance, you die in the tide of the river of Zen, the ocean of Buddhism, a lamentable thing indeed. Setcho’s merciful warning, lamenting the current crowd, is a kind effort to help others.

[HAKUIN] *If they suddenly came to life*—When one suddenly revives from the cave of negation of the forms of all forms . . .

[TENKEI] This monk is already gone; is there anyone right now who will come out of the tide and live? If there is . . .

[HAKUIN] *The hundred rivers would reverse their flow with a roar*—This is news of the living. Setcho’s skill is to be found here, but no one appreciates it.

[TENKEI] One would reverse the flow of a thousand rivers, ten thousand streams, with a rushing roar, becoming a live golden dragon. I wonder if any living dragons will come flying out of this crowd, says Setcho; if so, they will shake the mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees, and overthrow the meditation seat; even the likes of Toshi and Setcho will fall back three thousand miles. Too bad there is no one like that, says Setcho, in a kindly lament for the purpose of helping others.

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ON RUSHING WATER

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Joshu, “Does a newborn infant also have six consciousnesses?”

Joshu said, “A ball tossed on rushing water.”

The monk went on to ask Toshi, “What is the meaning of ‘a ball tossed on rushing water’?”

Toshi said, “Moment-to-moment nonstop flow.”

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Joshu*—This is a question to discern the host. He was planning to overthrow Joshu. If it were me, I’d give him a slap. *Does a newborn infant also have six consciousnesses?* This first question must be examined closely at the outset. Although none of the examples in the *Blue Cliff Record* are fatuous, this one is particularly outstanding, so even the ancients over the generations have misperceived it. Setcho used his truth-discerning eye to select this one from among the seventeen hundred koans; it lets us know how incomparably Joshu and Toshi penetrated the depths. With this example, you’ll have to give up your religion. This monk was a scary guy who tried to catch Joshu. *A ball tossed on rushing water*—Swifter than a spark, Joshu’s answer is amazing. That’s because he has a lot of breasts producing sweet and sour at will. There is no explanation for this; it cannot be praised enough; it is verbal *samadhi*. *The monk went on to ask Toshi*—Having gotten stumped trying to outwit Joshu, he came after Toshi. *Moment-to-moment nonstop flow*—Amazing answer! Is there subtle inconceivable spiritual joy and meditative delight in this?

[TENKEI] *A newborn infant* has no discriminatory grasping and rejection of good or bad, long or short, right or wrong, and so on; does such a one have six consciousnesses or not? This monk

misconstrues the state of the mindless wayfarer, comparing it to that of a newborn infant. This monk thinks that mindlessness means the ears are as though deaf, the eyes are as though blind, the six senses and six sense fields are cut off, and one becomes like a stone Buddha, as if one had burrowed into a hole. Anyway, concluding that it means annihilating the mind, he asks if the six consciousnesses are still there or what. *A ball tossed on rushing water*—It is like a ball tossed on fast-flowing water; see how it flows right away, no one knows where. Focus quickly! Is there any creation, maintenance, change, and destruction taking place herein? Are there any comings and goings of the six consciousnesses taking place herein? Is it something that comes into being or passes away? Is it something that begins or ends? Is there good in it? Is there evil in it? Open your eyes and look directly. What is it that is seeing right now? Take a look. This is Joshu's underlying meaning. "Subtly responding to myriad conditions without falling into any existences, mind repeatedly activated in relation to objects": this is the realm of mindlessness.

VERSE

Inactivation of the six consciousnesses presents a question:
The adepts both discerned where it comes from.
A ball tossed on boundless rushing water—
It doesn't stay where it lands; who can watch?

[HAKUIN] *Inactivation of the six consciousnesses presents a question*—The monk posed a question regarding the state where the six consciousnesses are inactive, trying to pin Joshu down, a frightful fellow. There is a reason why Setcho tosses this out here.

[TENKEI] To begin with this monk misapprehends the state of unminding, assuming it is enough to be in a state wherein all perception and cognition are inoperative, mind and consciousness are both shut off, leaving only an uncanny sense of luminosity.

[HAKUIN] *The adepts both discerned where it comes from*—Both Joshu and Toshi anticipated the other's move and didn't budge.

[TENKEI] Both elders saw through the monk's approach and gave him just the right answers.

[HAKUIN] *A ball tossed on boundless rushing water*—Although Setcho appreciates the line about rushing water, the subtlety is in *moment-to-moment* and *rushing*. *It doesn't stay where it lands*—Where the ball lands on endless rushing water cannot be known. Does it linger? Is it unceasing? Does it go straight? Does it twist and bend?

[TENKEI] Nobody knows how to see what *a ball tossed on rushing water, moment-to-moment nonstop flow* comes down to. Do you want to see right now? Focus your eyes quickly and look: what is it arising and passing away, starting and stopping? See directly what the two elders were getting at. This is what Ganto meant by saying, "Tsk! Whose starting and stopping is it?" In the boundlessness of active consciousness, this is seen as the transcendental living water of the river of Zen, the eye of Zennists. The words "who can watch" are Setcho's thoroughgoing help for people.

81

[THE ELK OF ELKS](#)

INTRODUCTION

Capturing the flag and stealing the drum, one cannot be found out even by a thousand sages. Cutting through confusion and error, one cannot be reached by myriad devices. This is not miraculous action of supernatural powers, nor is it basically being as is. Now tell me, based on what does one get to be so extraordinary?

[HAKUIN] *Capturing the flag and stealing the drum*—The great function of a Zen teacher takes away the intellectual interpretations of students; being sovereign in respect to all things, independent in the midst of things, whatever satori anyone comes up with, the Zen teacher knocks it down. *Cannot be found out even by a thousand sages*—One cannot be discovered to be on the way of Buddhas or the way of demons. *Cannot be reached by myriad devices*—This is not reached even by those of the highest potential, even Buddhas, Zen masters, devils, and philosophers. *This is not miraculous action of supernatural powers*—Miraculous action of supernatural powers does not compare to the state described above. Miraculous action of supernatural powers is attained even by spiritual immortalists, ghosts, and spirits. As for basically being as is, ordinary people also get that. This alone requires you to be sovereign in respect to all things, independent in the midst of things. *Based on what*—How many times must one cry, how many times must one rejoice, to accomplish this marvel.

[TENKEI] When the great versatility of a Zen teacher becomes manifest, breaking the battle line of an opponent, even the eyes of Buddhas and Patriarchs cannot reach. When one acts sternly to cut through the confusions and errors of students, *one cannot be reached by myriad devices*; no stratagem or dodge will work. This is

not miraculous action of supernatural powers, nor is it basically being as is, not something that is originally there; so how does one get to be that way? If you don't know, look at the behavior of Yakusan in today's koan, because that's the way it is.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Yakusan, "In shallow grasses on a level field, elk and deer form a herd; how can one shoot the elk of elks?"

Yakusan said, "Watch the arrow!"

The monk let himself collapse. Yakusan said, "Attendant, drag this dead guy out!"

The monk then ran off. Yakusan said, "What end will there be to folks fooling with mud balls?"

Setcho commented, "Though he was still alive at three steps, by five steps he had to die."

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Yakusan*—This is a question to test the host, a question to present understanding. This is quite a monk. This dialogue took place when Yakusan was living in Level Field Temple. *In shallow grass on a level field, elk and deer form a herd*—It's a good hunting ground, with a herd of three hundred to five hundred. *The elk of elks*—This is the king of the elks. *Watch the arrow!* You have to look quickly to see where the arrow lands. *The monk let himself collapse*. He lay down in a flash. That's ok, all right, but still there is this gap. *Attendant, drag this dead guy out!* The account has been settled; no one but Yakusan could have uttered these words. "Gotcha," so to speak. *The monk then ran off*. A superb act, leaving without further ado, unwilling to be of any trouble. *Folks fooling with mud balls*—This is the coup de grâce. You misapprehend the monk with these words; if it were as this says, Setcho's comment would be unnecessary. There's more to this than meets the eye! This saying is cold; few can appreciate it. *Setcho commented*—This saying fell into disuse for a long time; I myself stumbled past it three times. "Even if he lives for three steps, he can't stay alive as far as five steps." Does this refer to the monk? Does it refer to you? Does it refer to

Yakusan? There's no way to explain. It sealed in everything, even the rain and the wind.

[TENKEI] First this monk uses concrete things to represent the activation of his own potential and the application of potential to attainment of reality itself, and he also intends to test old Yakusan. Drawing immediately, Yakusan said *Watch the arrow!* This is an extraordinary act of an adept Zen teacher. Letting himself collapse, the monk becomes the master, acting out the hitting of the target; he seems adept at first but after all has been counterfeiting. Seeing this, Yakusan called his attendant to drag the monk out, acting according to the imperative as a means of not letting go. This is the second test. When the monk then immediately ran off, which he did to gain life in the midst of death, this too was counterfeit. Yakusan took him to task severely, calling him a good-for-nothing playing with mud. The monk would have done well to get five steps away, but there was no way he could survive.

VERSE

The elk of elks—you take a look.
An arrow shot, and he runs three steps;
If he had survived five steps,
He'd have formed a herd and chased the tiger.
Accurate sight has always been given to hunters.

Setcho raised his voice and said, "Watch the arrow!"

[HAKUIN] *The elk of elks*—Observe carefully whether this monk is an adept or not. *You take a look*—This is like the example of Ryuge (example 20); his shortcoming was ably discerned. *An arrow shot*—This is where Yakusan said, "Watch the arrow!" *He runs three steps*—This is where the monk let himself collapse. *If he had survived five steps*—If he had done something here . . . *Accurate sight has always been given to hunters*. This refers to shooting with accurate aim; "hunter" refers to Yakusan, who has the sharpness of eye to say, "What end will there be to folks fooling with mud balls."

[TENKEI] What is the elk of elks like? Here you must see for yourself. How do you see it? Setcho brings up this monk's question at the outset, urging people to look quickly; your horns are no different. Anyway, today Yakusan looses an arrow, immediately drawing and shooting; acting in a flash, he didn't waste a shot. With that, the monk let himself collapse, and Yakusan called his attendant to haul him off, whereat the monk ran three steps but was certain to die by five steps. If he had survived beyond five steps, he would have become a lively fellow able to chase even fierce tigers away. In that case, even the likes of Yakusan and Setcho would retreat three thousand miles. And this does not apply only to the monk here; Setcho alerts his congregation, suggesting he would hope that such a lively fellow would emerge. The words "form a herd" refer to the congregation of the time, and to the students of the present day, but that doesn't mean you should also make a fuss doing imitations; it won't do to be empty-headed. No matter how much confusion there is, *accurate sight has always been given to hunters*: there is a hunter called Yakusan, from whose sight none can escape. Setcho too is unrelenting; in Yakusan's stead today he shouts, "Watch the arrow!" Right now everyone turn your attention to the arrow Setcho has drawn, he says, leaving the end unsaid. This is Setcho's usual wave, thoroughgoing help for others.

82

THE PHYSICAL BODY

INTRODUCTION

The fishing line is only known to perceptives; a device outside convention is only mastered by adepts. But tell me, what is the fishing line, what is a device outside convention?

[HAKUIN] *The fishing line*—The probing pole of a teaching master, the lifeline of Buddhas and Zen masters, involves strategic methods of operation; in trying to turn toward it you turn away. *Only known to perceptives*—If you do not have accurate knowledge and insight, how can you see it; only a thoroughly polished Zennist can understand. *A device outside convention*—Transcending Zen, going beyond the masters, teachers use devices outside convention to test the measure of students' strength.

[TENKEI] The actions of Zen teaching masters may not make waves, but they naturally have a distinct intent; this is the way it is for perceptive Zennists. As for transcendental mystic devices outside of conventional patterns, it is adepts who master them. But how do you see?

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Dairyu, “The physical body decomposes; what is the immutable reality body?”

Dairyu said, “The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the valley streams brim blue as indigo.”

[HAKUIN] This monk viewed the physical body and the reality body as two entities; this is differentiation without equality, while if they are

viewed as one entity, that is equality without differentiation. Unless you have actually arrived here personally, there's no point even talking about it. Is this monk perceptive or not? At first he seems unperceptive, and yet he's got guts. *The physical body decomposes*—Even this saying comes to life when a Zennist handles it. *The mountain flowers bloom like brocade*—What is this? What about in a storm? When a sweet flavor comes out like this, you're a Zennist. *The valley streams are brimming*—What about when the waters dry up and the mountains collapse?

[TENKEI] This monk is a dunce who does not know how to question a Zen teacher. Even doctrinalists would find a view like this a laugh; this monk is a dullard, not even qualified to be a professor. *Mountain flowers bloom*—Is this the reality body, or is it the physical body? Does it decompose or not? What state is this? Let those who have eyes see: this is a living word of normalcy without Buddhist or mystic rationales, a statement beyond the reality body, never concealed throughout the world.

VERSE

Asked without knowing, answered without understanding:
Moon cold, wind high, on the ancient cliff, frigid juniper.
It's worth a laugh, meeting a masterful wayfarer on the road,
Not responding with either speech or silence.
A white jade whip is used to smash a black pearl;
Were it not shattered, it would be more flawed.
The nation has a code of laws, with three thousand kinds of
crime.

[HAKUIN] *Asked without knowing*—The mountain flowers blooming are inexpressibly delicious; that is why Setcho spewed out these two lines first. This is the same as “How should one discern the point?” [verse on example 1]. Neither Engo nor all the Zen masters in the land can improve upon Dairyu's answer; even Setcho can't match up. Because the example is intimate, the verse too is intimate; Setcho's spilling his guts from the first line is his family style.

Answered without understanding—Is it the physical body? Is it the reality body? No way of telling. *Moon cold, wind high*—This refers to the uncontestable candor, the inaccessibility of the two-line answer. He added this because he thought the first line wouldn't be enough. *On the ancient cliff, frigid juniper*—It cannot be depicted in pictures or in poetry. The versification is complete here. *It's worth a laugh, meeting a masterful wayfarer on the road*—This is a saying of Kyogen. Someone in the know would laugh in acknowledgement of the reasonableness of Kyogen's so saying. A verse by Zen Master Kyogen says, "Clear and direct, without extra baggage, traveling alone independent, if you meet a masterful wayfarer on the road, do not respond with speech or silence." *Not responding with either speech or silence*—Speech can fit the bill, and so can silence. *A white jade whip is used*—This means the staff. *Smash a black pearl*—The state of realization that the whole universe is one single luminous jewel is completely shattered. *The nation has a code of laws*—This saying will be appreciated by few after a hundred years. Without these words Setcho would be full of flaws. *With three thousand kinds of crime*—There are three thousand regulations.

[TENKEI] *Asked without knowing*—This monk's question is not unencumbered; it is the question of someone without perception who does not know how to talk like a Zennist; even with Dairyu's kind response, the dunce was *answered*, but *without his understanding*. The two phrases of this line represent the monk; then, explaining the answer, Setcho says *moon cold . . . ancient cliff . . .*, an interesting, pleasing taste indeed! Every one of you open your eyes and see! Prick up your ears and hear! An ineffable scene; does it decompose or not? Would you call it the physical body or the body of reality? Let every individual one of you set eyes on it and see. Engo called this a flute without holes, Ummon called it a flowering hedge; here there is no warmth of Buddhism or Zennism at all, just a realm of pure freedom. Zennists refer to this as transcendental mystic talk outside convention, or as the subtle message of the essential absolute; in reference to this Setcho says *It's worth a laugh*, delightful, that is, not being within speech or silence at all.

Anyway, Dairyu's method is like suddenly smashing the black pearl this monk has brought with him kept so carefully packed. This

is helping people transcendently, not letting them hold on to anything, when it is appropriate to put the Zen imperative into effect to cut off the ten directions. This is called a statement passing through the body of reality. The reason Setcho uses the expression “white jade whip” here instead of the staff is to alert people to the fact that Setcho does not stink of religion; it is white jade without any warmth. If the pearl were not smashed, the monk would have kept it secretly treasured; that would have increased its flaw, rendering it useless. In that case, *the nation has a code of laws*, all of which would have been violated at once. But Dairyu saved the day, confronting the situation and immediately smashing the pearl. If Zen teachers do not have this technique, they have no way to requite their debt to Buddha, a great offense of dishonor; luckily the technique used today is unprecedented, implies Setcho, administering the nation’s code of law, acting as the judge, handing out rewards and punishments according to the law without exception, helping others in a truly profound and intimate way. Even so, the line *it’s worth a laugh* won’t do. If you ask me, from the point of view of the clear, clean, inexpressible scene of *moon cold . . .*, Setcho finds something hilarious. *Not responding with speech or silence* is funny. Look at Dairyu’s saying today; could it be called speech? Could it be called silence? What’s wrong with speech and silence? The answer is *taking the white jade whip and smashing the black pearl*.

EXAMPLE

Ummon said to a crowd, “The ancient Buddhas mix with the open pillars—what level of mental activity is this?”

He himself said in their behalf, “Clouds gather on the mountains to the south, rain falls on the mountains to the north.”

[HAKUIN] *The ancient Buddhas mix with the open pillars—Did you see the mortar wrestle with the idol? Mixing means associating together and studying together. What level of mental activity is this? Where does the mixing take place? Clouds gather on the mountains to the south—In this bout, when clouds gather in the mountains to the south, it rains in the mountains to the north. Don’t misunderstand this as present actuality; not even the wind can get in. Rain falls on the mountains to the north—Even water cannot wet. The twenty-eight Zen patriarchs of India and six Zen patriarchs of China are all here.*

[TENKEI] *The ancient Buddhas—Are they ancient Buddhas of the past? Ancient Buddhas of the present? Clouds gather on the mountains to the south, rain falls on the mountains to the north. Is this the time when the ancient Buddhas mix with the open pillars? What realm is this? Where clouds and rain meet, the answer cannot be cut open; it cannot be reached trying to figure it out by subjective thinking.*

 VERSE

Clouds over the mountains to the south,

Rain in the mountains to the north;
The Zen patriarchs are seen face-to-face.
In Korea they've gone up in the hall;
In China they haven't beaten the drum.
Happiness in misery, misery in happiness;
Who says gold is like ordure?

[HAKUIN] *Clouds over the mountains to the south*—This is welcome; he has tossed out the Zen message of the Ummon school right in front of your eyes. *The Zen patriarchs are seen face-to-face*—when you see Ummon's saying mentioned above. *In Korea they've gone up in the hall*—This is a line showing Setcho's living potential; the logic of it cannot be explained. *Happiness in misery*—Setcho's ability is comparable to Ummon's. *Who says gold is like ordure?* This means not distinguishing carefully.

[TENKEI] *Clouds over the mountains to the south*—This reiterates the koan. Is this the time when the ancient Buddhas mix with the open pillars? Here it's not only the ancient Buddhas and the open pillars; from Setcho's perspective, the Zen patriarchs of India and China, the Buddhas of all times and the Zen masters throughout history, including the arhats and the solitary illuminates, are all mixing right before our eyes: what time is this? It's a merging without front or back, a mixing of clouds and rain, he says, calling people's attention; from there he turns around with *Korea* and *China*; which one is earlier, which is later? Is there really such a thing? Is there not? In any case, the rhythm won't match. If Zennists want to know this, *in Korea they've gone up in the hall; in China they haven't beaten the drum*. Whichever way it is beat, the rhythm won't be off! Listen to the rhythm that has no speed or direction!

Having thus explained mind and environment as one, from here Setcho switches to something about mundane social mixing he remembers in this connection: *happiness within misery, misery within happiness*. In any event, any associations formed inevitably dissolve, so to hasten parting on meeting is *happiness within misery*. And even to be on friendly terms for a whole lifetime is *misery within happiness*. Look at it this way: *Who says gold is like ordure?* Observe those who in spite of friendly relations eventually part ways

on account of desire for profit and competition for profit. Although they say the way of the world is that those who meet must part, it's not beyond misery and happiness; and even if you say mind and environment are as one, misery and happiness crisscross. Thus Setcho has made a final thrust; this is the eye of a Zen teaching master who does not allow lingering in the realm of the ultimate principle where there is no road. This is a living expression of Zen, a way of helping people by not letting them gang up, just casually mentioning social customs; is there any principle of Buddhist mysticism here? This is a method of freedom in the pivotal place, withdrawing from the other side to act here. This is Setcho's thoroughgoing help for others, to get them to know the intimate state without movement in the essence itself, friendly association without gathering or dispersing, without joining or parting.

84

NONDUALITY

INTRODUCTION

Even if you say yes, yes cannot affirm anything; even if you say no, no cannot deny anything. When yes and no are left behind and gain and loss are both forgotten, you are clean and naked, free and at ease. Now tell me, what is before you and behind you? If a Zen monk comes forth and says, “Before us is the Buddha shrine and the main gateway; behind us is the dormitory and the abbot’s room,” tell me, does this person have eyes or not? If you can judge this individual accurately, I will admit that you have seen the ancients in person.

[HAKUIN] *Even if you say yes, yes cannot affirm anything*—All things are ungraspable; even “yes” does not work as affirmation. One who has *seen the ancients in person* is someone who has met Vimalakirti and Manjushri.

[TENKEI] *Even if you say yes*—Originally there is no “yes” and no “no”; let go of all assertion and denial, gain and loss, and see. *Clean and naked*—A clean, unpolluted realm, the transcendental conduct of Zennists is like this. But what is the context? If a sharp Zen monk simply says it like it is, does the person saying so have eyes or not? If you can discern this, you will also know where Vimalakirti and Manjushri are.

EXAMPLE

Vimalakirti asked Manjushri, “What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the teaching of nonduality?”

Manjushri said, “In my opinion, making no verbalization or representation of anything at all, leaving behind all dialogue, is entry into the teaching of nonduality.”

Now Manjushri asked Vimalakirti, “We have each spoken; now it’s your turn. What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the teaching of nonduality?”

Setcho said, “What did Vimalakirti say?” He also said, “Exposed!”

[HAKUIN] *Vimalakirti asked Manjushri—“When you meet a swordsman on the road, show him your sword.” What is entry into the teaching of nonduality?* This is the teaching of the Mahayana, the most important point. “The dotard goes into the weeds without reason.” *Manjushri said—*Truth comes out of a convict’s mouth; knowing words come from the mouth of one who knows. *No verbalization—*There’s nothing to say about the actuality of having quickly settled all accounts. *No representation—*There is no savior and no one to save. He scatters pearls in an agate dish. *Leaving behind all dialogue—*This is adding mud to dirt. *We have each spoken—*This refers to the thirty-two bodhisattvas in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*. *Setcho said—*He is averse to referring to Vimalakirti’s silence as silence, yet if he does not say it people will accept silence, so he spoke as if he were hard of hearing. The razor-sharp sword never moved. *Exposed—*Vimalakirti’s heart.

[TENKEI] *Setcho said—*This is Setcho’s method of staying alive by not steeping in stagnant water. Manjushri has expounded all the way to the ultimate principle, where there is no way to go further, and turns freely at the point where language ends; this is the eye of a Zennist, the function of a Zen teacher. “Turn” does not mean running off somewhere else; the underlying meaning is that there is no difference, as in the earlier image of a rhythm that never goes off no matter which way it is beat. It’s just a matter of rousing students; otherwise, if it were left at an exposition up to the point where there is nowhere further to go, students would be trapped in intellectual interpretation, remaining stagnant. That is why speaking out in this manner is a life-giving strategy to help others. As Engo says in his commentary, you can’t know this until you have relinquished your

root of life. *Exposed*—What does Setcho expose here? Pick it up and look! It can be known if you lay hold of it and see.

VERSE

Tsk! Old Vimalakirti—
Suffering an empty affliction out of compassion for the living,
He lay ill in Vaisali, his whole body withered.
The teacher of seven Buddhas came
To the single room, repeatedly swept,
To ask about the way to nonduality.
At the time he tried to knock him over,
But he didn't fall;
The golden lion has no place to look.

[HAKUIN] *Tsk! Old Vimalakirti*—He exposes Vimalakirti as a thieving rascal. *His whole body withered*—Nothing but skin and bones. *The single room, repeatedly swept*—Swept clean of intellectual interpretations and false imaginations. *At the time he tried to knock him over*—When Manjushri told him it was his turn to speak, Vimalakirti was outdrawn. *But he didn't fall*—There is something scary about Vimalakirti's silence; he can't be pushed over. *The golden lion has nowhere to look*. The state of silence is invisible even to Manjushri riding on a golden lion.

[TENKEI] *Tsk!*—Setcho's meaning is that Vimalakirti's illness is for the purpose of liberating people, but there's no reason for it, since originally there is no one to liberate, no one who is hungry. Thus Vimalakirti was *suffering an empty affliction out of compassion for the living*, making a headache of people's lumbago, which seems futile to Setcho. The force of the opening *Tsk!* is like a diamond sword; this word "empty" is the residual force of the *tsk!* This one *tsk!* is the eye of the whole verse. Anyway, *he lay ill*, his whole body skin and bones, bent over double, an unbearable sight. In this connection, he dragged in the Buddha, for it was Buddha who sent Manjushri, teacher of seven Buddhas, to ask after Vimalakirti's illness. Even though Vimalakirti was quite worn out with sickness, he

considered Manjushri a special guest and “repeatedly swept” the “single room,” cleaning out everything. Having extended this welcome, Vimalakirti met with Manjushri, then was questioned by Manjushri. At that time Vimalakirti kept his mouth shut, says Setcho, finishing the whole thing off with the force of the one *tsk*; then he turns the key and reveals his own basic perception, that *he didn't fall*. This is applied with crystal clarity: where is it that he doesn't fall? Even *the golden lion has nowhere to look*; even if the mountains, rivers, and earth all became Manjushri and made a search, they wouldn't discover what this comes down to. Leaving it at that, not saying the final ending, is Setcho's thoroughgoing help for others; it means the same thing as “What did he say?”

85

[A TIGER'S ROAR](#)

INTRODUCTION

To hold the world fast without the slightest leak, so all the people in the world lose their points and become tongue-tied—this is the true imperative for a Zennist. To radiate light from the crown of the head, shining through the four quarters—this is the adamantine eye of a Zennist. Turning iron into gold, turning gold into iron, now capturing, now releasing—this is the staff of a Zennist. To cut off the tongues of everyone on earth so they cannot spout off and must retreat three thousand miles—this is the mettle of a Zennist. Now tell me, ultimately who is it that is not this way at all?

[HAKUIN] *To hold the world fast* means to grasp the ten directions of the past, future, and present in the palm of your hand, without letting so much as an atom escape your grip. *The adamantine eye* refers to thoroughly refined perceptivity. *Turning iron into gold* means explaining that ordinary mortals themselves are relics of the embodiment of reality. *Turning gold into iron* means explaining how unfortunately people turn true being as is into hell. *Not this way at all* refers to someone who has transcended the Zennist described above.

[TENKEI] *To hold the world fast* refers to the Zen method of transcendence, holding the objective material world and the personal psychophysical world fast, putting the absolute imperative into effect, omitting nothing. *Lose their points* means that people cannot deal with the actions of a Zen teaching master.

To radiate light from the crown of the head, shining through the four quarters, and turn iron into gold, picking up the whole earth and turning it into yellow gold, the tactics of Zennists, holding still and letting go, are all on the staff, autonomous and independent.

EXAMPLE

A monk went to the abode of the Hermit of Pawlonia Peak and immediately asked, “What would you do if you suddenly encountered a tiger here?”

The hermit immediately roared like a tiger.

The monk made a gesture of fright.

The hermit laughed out loud.

The monk said, “You old thief!”

The hermit said, “What can you do about me?”

The monk gave up.

Setcho said, “This is all right, OK, but both were bad thieves; they only knew how to cover their ears to steal a bell.”

[HAKUIN] This hermit was one of the four hermits succeeding to Rinzai. Being a hermit here means he lived in the mountains. *If you suddenly encountered a tiger here*—in these fearsome mountains. In posing this question, the monk was making himself out to be a tiger. *The monk made a gesture of fright.* An expert knows the appropriate moment to change strategically. *The hermit laughed out loud.* Up to here both guest and host were doing fine; hereafter there is no life. *You old thief!* Rather than speak in this vein, he should have acted. *What can you do about me?* You call me a thief, but . . . *The monk gave up.* If he had left it at the laughter, Setcho wouldn’t be intervening; but he had a dragon’s head but a snake’s tail. *Cover their ears to steal a bell*—They are lousy thieves.

[TENKEI] This monk came on like a tiger with this question to test the hermit. He does seem to be an adept; at first there seemed to be something to the monk. *Roared like a tiger*—The hermit immediately acted like a tiger. This roar also seems like the real thing. *The monk made a gesture of fright* as though he had encountered a tiger. This too seemed very much like the real thing indeed. *Laughed aloud*—Is this the roar of a ferocious tiger? It seems to be, somehow. . . . *You old thief!* What did this monk find that he says the hermit stole? *What can you do*—This is an irrelevant remark; what does it apply to? *Gave up*—A total fake. *Setcho said*—What wretched idiots they were

not to realize they were being observed from the side. Their tricks have been exposed; what a laugh! This is censure.

VERSE

If you don't grab it when you see it,
You'll think about it a thousand miles away.
Fine stripes, but still no claws or fangs.
Have you not read of the sudden encounter on Mount Dayu?
Immense roar and radiance both shake the earth.
Stalwarts, do you see—
Taking a tiger by the tail and grabbing the tiger's whiskers.

[HAKUIN] *If you don't grab it when you see it*—This is where he said, “What can you do about me,” where the both of them stumbled past the place where they should have gone. *You'll think about it a thousand miles away*—The documentation is presented too late. *Fine stripes*—Both seemed to be fine tigers, but *still no claws or fangs*—They do not have the life-taking spiritual talisman. *Have you not read*—Will you not listen to an example from the past? *On Mount Dayu*—Now *that* was a magnificent tiger! *Immense roar and radiance*—The tiger's roar reached far and wide, moving the heavens and shaking the earth, evident to all in the world. *Taking a tiger by the tail and grabbing the tiger's whiskers*—The interaction between Hyakujo and Obaku, to which allusion is made here, completed the whole process from beginning to end.

[TENKEI] *When you see it*—For Zennists there is something to see in the interaction of guest and host; acting on perception of the situational potential is the real thing. Otherwise, every word and every phrase that is spoken misses the mark by myriad miles and therefore is of no use. See how both guest and host today are just playing with shadows no end. Even so, today's meeting has *fine stripes*, resembling the coat of a fierce tiger, splendid action indeed, and yet in spite of that it has *no claws or fangs* in that it lacks the complete potential of a fierce tiger. If a tiger has no claws or fangs, it is useless as a blind cat. You people too should check your own

selves and distinguish between the false and the true, observing carefully, Setcho implies, helping others kindly. In this connection Setcho recalls an old story—*have you not read*: take a look at the meeting between Hyakujo and Obaku on Mount Dayu; there was the genuine total potential of a fierce tiger bounding. That act of roaring like a tiger, the immense tiger roar, shook the very heavens and earth, a truly heroic act. Now, what about the *stalwarts* in the present audience of Setcho; have you seen this tiger bound? If you have, you'll *take the tiger by the tail*. Actually in Setcho's audience too, someone might leap forth with an immense tiger roar shaking heaven and earth, taking the tiger's head and the tiger's tail at the same time; come on! This is Setcho's thoroughgoing effort to help people. When the characters for grabbing the tiger's whiskers are read as stroking the tiger's whiskers, that means that stories of the ancients become the talk of the present time.

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THE KITCHEN PANTRY AND THE MAIN GATEWAY

INTRODUCTION

Holding the world still does not allow any leaks; cutting off all streams does not leave a drop. As soon as you open your mouth you're wrong; to try to deliberate is to miss the point. Now tell me, what is the barrier-penetrating eye?

[HAKUIN] *Cutting off all streams* means severing the root of birth and death.

[TENKEI] The transcendental application of the Zen message cuts off all streams and does not let either ordinary or holy pass; here you're mistaken the moment you open your mouth, so after all what does one do?

EXAMPLE

Ummon said, "Everyone has a light. When you look, you don't see it, so it is obscure. What is your light?"

He answered himself, "The kitchen pantry and the main gateway."

He also said, "A good thing can't match nothing."

[HAKUIN] This example is a crucial pass within the *Blue Cliff Record*; no explanation is needed. *Everyone has a light*. I don't accept any of the interpretations at all. Don't understand it as inherent in everyone. *When you look, you don't see*—As soon as you try to see it you can't. *What is your light?* Your eyebrows lie horizontally over your eyes; a pitch black mountain range runs through the night. *The kitchen pantry and the main gateway*—These words are very poisonous, fatal even in the air. *A good thing can't match nothing*.

How terrifying! Even to speak of becoming a Buddhist or joining a congregation is being a busybody; trying to sweep everything away is a misunderstanding. He shaves steel from the tip of a needle.

[TENKEI] The light that everyone has is not something like the luminous curl of white hair between Buddha's eyebrows in scriptural imagery. Simply not eating with your nose is everyone's light. Ummon's statement seems grandiose, but from the perspective of one who knows, it's quite funny. *When you look*—When you try to look at it, you've stumbled past it. *What is*—Try to tell it like it is. Ummon spoke like this for twenty years, but no one understood, so . . . *He answered himself*—All of space in the ten directions, the entire cosmos, is your own light. *He also said*, "A good thing can't match nothing." He quietly wrapped it all up.

VERSE

Spontaneous shining ranges an individual light,
Opening a route for you.
When the flowers fall, the tree has no shadow;
When you look, who does not see?
Seeing, not seeing—
Riding an ox backward into the Buddha shrine.

[HAKUIN] *Spontaneous shining ranges an individual light*—Within intrinsic luminosity are ranged men and women, clerics and lay folk, mountains, rivers, and earth; but fundamentally it is a solitary light. *Opening a route for you*—Opening how? Through the kitchen pantry and the main gate? Or through good things not comparing to no thing? *When you look, who doesn't see?* There's no one who doesn't see; the cherries are cherries, the apricots are apricots. *Seeing, not seeing*—This versifies "A good thing can't match nothing." *Riding an ox backward into the Buddha shrine*—One who has reached the realm of seeing without views is independent and free.

[TENKEI] *Spontaneous shining*—The first two lines have versified the saying *kitchen pantry and the main gateway*, because today all people are unaware that they themselves have a light, so Ummon

says the individual light is clearly evident. The entire universe is your own light; everyone open your eyes and look. Thus he quietly opened a route. Then again, lest people understand in the shadows of the light, *when the flowers fall*, when the sun and moon have set and the whole earth is an endless expanse of darkness, how will you see? This has versified the second answer. Even so, here too, *when you look*, light is light, dark is dark: no one cannot see this. Light and darkness are fundamentally one's own light pervading the universe; do you see, or don't you see? This is what is referred to as the time of light and dark in pairs, where both seeing and not seeing are swept away. Therefore, lest people linger in nothingness on the supposition that there are ultimately no such things as light and darkness, seeing and not seeing, Setcho switches here to *ride backward*; what state is this? What time is this? Let every one of you individually open your eyes and look, he says, abruptly letting it go at that. This is Setcho's revival, switching in order to help others, turning around in the midst of unclarity, so as to enable people to avoid keeping to a dead-end road.

INTRODUCTION

Folks with clear eyes have no nest—sometimes on the summit of the solitary peak, the weeds boundless, sometimes in the midst of the bustling marketplace naked and free. Suddenly they appear like an angry titan with three heads and six arms; suddenly as Sun Face and Moon Face they radiate light of all-embracing compassion. They manifest all embodiments in a single particle and mix with mud and water to deal with people according to their type. When they release the transcendental opening, even the eyes of Buddha cannot see them; even if all the sages appeared they would have to fall back three thousand miles. Is there anyone with the same attainment and same realization?

[HAKUIN] *Folks with clear eyes have no nest*—People in whom the great function is actually manifest are unfathomable even to the gods, whether they act unconventionally or conventionally. When you pass through the impenetrables, there is no lingering; the whole universe is your guts. *Sometimes on the summit of the solitary peak*—This refers to holding still, the absolute state, where human tracks do not reach, where even birds cannot go through. “Eyes gazing at the cloudy sky, one swallows the Buddhas of all times.” There is holding still in letting go, and there is letting go in holding still. *The weeds boundless*—Light and dark are not two. Though away from home, you are not on the road. In front of the Buddha shrine and the Dharma hall, the weeds are ten feet deep. *In the midst of the bustling marketplace*—This refers to letting go, the relative state. Though on the road, you are not away from home. Chatterboxes of the present time are like so. This is entering the marketplace to

reach out. *Naked and free*—This is the realm of holding still, the absolute state.

Suddenly like an angry titan—A Zen teacher showers blows of the staff like rain, hollers like thunder booming, presenting various appearances of anger in order to teach students. *Sun Face and Moon Face*—Also emanating the light of great compassion, acting gently, is the benefit of mercy. *Manifest all embodiments in a single particle*—When a single finger is raised, the thirty-two responsive embodiments of universal compassion and the hundred million emanated bodies of Buddha help people according to type, in conformity with their faculties. Adapting to types is the secondary level of meaning, doing the same things as ordinary mortals in order to integrate them into a field of enlightenment. *Mix with mud and water*—This means taking various approaches, even talking of hell. *Release the transcendental opening*—As when Bodhidharma brought Zen to China. *Even the eyes of Buddha cannot see them*—Much less the devil!

[TENKEI] The fact that Zennists with clear eyes have no nests means that just when you think they're on top of a solitary peak they have fallen into the weeds, and just when you think they've fallen into the weeds in a noisy marketplace they're in an effortless realm of freedom. This is a general outline of the activity of Zen teaching masters. In adapting to the needs of the time, they are like angry titans when they hold still transcendently; yet they also are like Sun Face and Moon Face, adopting the pure visage of the moon, harmonizing the light with the world, methodically letting go by way of the secondary meaning. Then again, when they function fully, opening up the transcendental opening, not trapped in either holding still or letting go, they cannot be espied even by the eyes of Buddhas or devils; even the sages and adepts fall back three thousand miles, unable to keep up. Are there any Zennists who have similarly attained and similarly realized the functions stipulated above?

EXAMPLE

Ummon said, “Medicine and disease quell each other. The whole earth is medicine; what is your self?”

[HAKUIN] There is no example more elevated than this one; how many past and present have misunderstood it! *Medicine and disease quell each other*—This may be viewed as the fundamental, plain and simple, revealing the countenance; there should be neither medicine nor self. *The whole earth is medicine*—Medicine is the whole earth; is it self, is it what? Directly pointing to the human mind, the whole world is medicine; Buddha is here. *What is your self?* If the whole earth is medicine, where can you point to as being your self? Everything is only medicine. Right where medicine and illness quell each other, the whole universe is all your self.

[TENKEI] The sages and ancient Buddhas all had prescriptions for practice and realization. To those who were trapped in the notion of existence, they gave the medicine of nonexistence; to those who were trapped in the notion of nonexistence, they gave the medicine of existence. They measured out eighty-four thousand medicines to treat the eighty-four thousand illnesses of ordinary mortals, but Ummon’s prescription today is special. If the whole earth is medicine, what illness does it cure? Where is your self? Right at this very moment, what is this? It is all medicine! Naturally complete without cultivation, what practice or realization would you talk about?

VERSE

The whole earth is medicine;
How have ancients and moderns been so mistaken?
The car is not made behind closed doors;
Coursing the road, it is naturally quiet and open.
Wrong, wrong!
Even if your nose is up high as the sky, you’ll still be taken in
tow.

[HAKUIN] *The whole earth is medicine*—Setcho has tossed it out beyond the mutual quelling of medicine and disease; he goes to

great lengths to versify the whole koan in one line. This is trailing mud quite a bit.

[TENKEI] As the koan says, medicine and illness quell each other; not only are the sages and ancient Buddhas included, needless to say, Ummon himself is also therein.

[HAKUIN] *How have ancients and moderns been so mistaken?* This point is hard to understand, hard to penetrate; don't misperceive it. It is a big mistake to take it as a fixed doctrine. Students past and present have mistakenly taken the statement that the whole earth is medicine to be medicine itself.

[TENKEI] If the whole earth is medicine, that is not the sort of prescription given by quacks, like taking a pulse; when it is said that the whole earth is medicine, people jump to conclusions and swallow it whole, so the prescriptions of the saints and sages of past and present are all wrong. The words "ancients and moderns" include Ummon too; this is how Setcho cuts off Ummon's footsteps. This verse is the result of thoroughly penetrating insight. But since people could hardly approach if he left it at such a transcendental reduction, Setcho lets up a bit in his following statement.

[HAKUIN] *The car is not made behind closed doors*—This line and the next expose the koan in verse. Not making the car behind closed doors means fitting the bill without deliberate cultivation; even without contrivance there is natural harmony wherever you go.

[TENKEI] Here with me there is no need for cultivation or realization; there is simply natural fundamental completeness without any cultivation. There has never been any need for stagnant practices like sitting meditation and contemplation of phenomena according to the teachings of the sages. Why? Because . . .

[HAKUIN] *Coursing the road, it is naturally quiet and open*—When you get through the lock, you pass freely, in natural harmony on the way, wherever you may go. These two lines expose the medicine and disease in verse.

[TENKEI] Turning freely without obstruction, east, west, south, north, not getting stuck on anything whether going along with the flow or going against it, just being spontaneously serene and empty, fully aware. Having opened up transcendental action to let you know about it, then Setcho switches, lest you linger here.

[HAKUIN] *Wrong, wrong!* Oh, dear! Said too much!

[TENKEI] What was said before was wrong, what was said afterward was wrong too; indeed, even the Buddhas of all times, the Zen masters throughout history, and the old teachers all over the land are all wrong, Setcho says, sweeping all away. In this way Setcho has taken in tow even Ummon, whose nose is stuck up to the sky, having swallowed the Buddhas and Zen founders. If you want to understand this, study another thirty years, he says. Why so? He abruptly leaves it at that; this is a switching line.

[HAKUIN] *Even if your nose is up high as the sky, you'll still be taken in tow.* When your nose is stuck up from having experienced satori, you are taken in tow; the rope is this story of medicine and illness quelling each other. Also, this is a device of nonacceptance; high as Ummon's nose was, he was taken in tow by Setcho.

INTRODUCTION

Methods set up for teaching temporarily break two into three, thus and so; profound talk entering into noumenon requires total penetration. Knocking and checking according to the situation, smashing the golden chains and their lock of mystery, acting on the imperative to sweep away all tracks and traces, tell me, where is the obscurity? I bring this up for those who have the eye on the forehead.

[HAKUIN] *Methods set up for teaching* are provisional methods for dealing with people for their benefit. *Break two into three, thus and so*—One thing is variously broken down, handled according to what is best for the situation, all for the sake of helping people. *Profound talk entering into noumenon* is the main gate of the fundamental endowment of true being as is. *Total penetration* means investigating minutely to achieve complete penetration and mastery. *Knocking and checking* refer to the staff and the shout, or to knocking down fixations and checking flaws. *The golden chains and their lock of mystery*—Shattering the stink of satori, ordinary sentiments and views of holiness, brings people relief. *Acting on the imperative*—Three thousand blows in the morning, eight hundred blows at night; this is the order of Zen. *Sweep away all tracks and traces* means “killing Buddhas and Patriarchs.”

[TENKEI] This introduction goes with the eighty-ninth example, and the introduction to the eighty-ninth example goes with this koan. Although there is no proof, I am certainly not mistaken.

EXAMPLE

Gensha said, “The old adepts everywhere all talk of guiding and helping people. Suppose you encountered people with three kinds of handicap; how would you deal with them? Those who suffer from blindness wouldn’t be able to see you raise a gavel or hold up a whisk. Those who suffer from deafness wouldn’t be able to hear you preach. Those who suffer from muteness wouldn’t be able to speak if you tried to get them to speak. So how do you deal with them? Buddhism has no spiritual effect if it cannot treat such people.”

A monk asked Ummon for help with this. Ummon said, “Bow!”

The monk bowed and rose. Ummon poked at him with his staff; the monk backed away.

Ummon said, “You’re not blind.”

Then he told the monk to come closer, and the monk did so; Ummon said, “You’re not deaf.”

Ummon then said, “Understand?”

The monk said, “No.”

Ummon said, “You’re not mute.”

At this point the monk had an insight.

[HAKUIN] Gensha’s address is so scary your hair stands on end. When one dog howls a falsehood, ten thousand dogs howl it as truth. *Those who suffer from blindness* do not see the Buddhas above; even if a hundred thousand Manjushris were to come forth, that would be decorating in the dark. *Those who suffer from deafness* wouldn’t hear even if all the Buddhas numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges River were to expound the teaching. *Wouldn’t be able to speak*—Speech is not on the tongue. *Buddhism has no spiritual effect*—This is a long sword against the sky. *Bow!* Holding an ox head trying to feed it hay, he says “bow if you want to hear.” This is strange. *The monk bowed and rose.* Stupid idiot! *Ummon said, “You’re not blind.”* Ummon was lenient; if it were me, what then? If he said “ouch,” then I’d explain. *At this point the monk had an insight.* How can teaching this way get the job done?

[TENKEI] When it is said that ultimately for all three types there is neither suffering nor not suffering, treating nor not treating, you cannot know this unless you see all the way through. *Ummon poked*

—This is a footnote added on seeing Gensha’s gap. Here it is clarified on the basis of not suffering, but originally both suffering and not suffering are the same basic meaning; this is assistance for others in which the rhythm is the same no matter which way it is beat. It is pointing out where you are not subject to the examinations of Buddhas or Zen masters, having nothing to do with treating nor not treating. Therefore Ummon sets aside the three kinds of handicaps, tells the monk to bow, and also pokes at him with his staff. The monk pulled back, not wanting to get poked, so Ummon says, “So you’re not suffering from blindness—you can relax!” The rest of the koan has the same meaning. This monk was no ordinary person; in the end he apprehended the gap left by Gensha.

VERSE

Blind, deaf, mute—
In darkness, no adjustment to potentialities.
In the heavens, on the earth,
Laughable, lamentable.
The sharpest eye cannot discern the true form;
How can the keenest ear recognize the mysterious tune?
How can that match sitting alone at an empty window?
Leaves fall, flowers bloom, each in its own time.

Setcho added, “Do you understand or not? An iron hammerhead with no hole.”

[HAKUIN] *Blind, deaf, mute*—The whole koan is cited in one phrase; if you study it genuinely, there is no other instruction. *In darkness, no adjustment to potentialities*—Intellectual understanding and subjective conceptualization do not reach. *In the heavens, on the earth*—Nothing compares, no praise is adequate. *Laughable, lamentable*—In the eyes of one who has absorbed this point, it cannot be expressed in any way at all. One laughs at being mute without being mute, being blind without being blind; one laments not being blind yet being blind, not being mute yet being mute. *The*

mysterious tune is subtle harmony. The keenest eye can see the tip of a down hair a hundred paces away; the keenest ear can hear ants fighting on the other side of a mountain. *How can that match sitting alone*—“The parent doesn’t know, the child doesn’t know.” Scary! You yourself don’t know yourself. *Leaves fall, flowers bloom*—These words are in a tug-of-war with the three kinds of handicap; even the Buddhas lose their lives. *Setcho added, “Do you understand or not?”* Because the aforementioned state is too precarious. *An iron hammerhead with no hole*—of no use whatsoever: Setcho’s lone lance.

[TENKEI] *Blind, deaf, mute*—Bringing up the main body of the koan, Setcho says that at bottom this is *darkness*, without adaptation to potentials according to situational needs, a realm of unhindered freedom in which one is not subject to the prophecies of Buddhas or Zen masters. This does not refer to someone else, you know; every individual is like this, not subject to the prophecies of Buddhas or Zen masters. So *in the heavens, on the earth*, even if people are unaware of this and remain half asleep, their eyes are horizontal and their noses are vertical; there’s nothing so pleasant as that which cannot be forcibly changed by anyone. *Laughable, lamentable*—The laughable thing, not knowing what you know in everyday activities, is also lamentable, he says, and as he laughs and cries he recalls something: *The sharpest eye*—Even eyesight clear enough to see a down hair a thousand miles away cannot distinguish the true form of *that*. Blue, yellow, red, white: you know yet do not know. As for the keenest ear, even an ear keen enough to hear ants fighting on the other side of a mountain cannot hear the mysterious message of *that*. Even if you know all the notes of the musical scales, that’s of no use here. Ultimately you should not deliberately want to see the actuality of knowing without knowing, hearing without hearing; intellectual interpretation is entirely inapplicable.

How can that match—no one for company, just sitting at an empty window onto a desolate void, eating when hungry, sleeping when tired, sitting by the fire when cold. Springtime in spring, summertime in summer, adapting to the four seasons, spending the time without any worry; here where there is nothing to discern and no need to know, how can the keenest eye and the keenest ear match that? He

explained as far as the ultimate principle beyond which there is nowhere to go, here where all is swept away, and both suffering and not suffering, as well as adaptation to potentials according to situations, are all obliterated, but if he left it at that people would swallow it whole without chewing and remain fixated in nothingness, so he quickly switches his approach: *Setcho added, "Do you understand"*—This is a challenge to everyone. *An iron hammerhead with no hole*—What state is this? Look quickly: if you hesitate, you'll miss it! What about this holeless iron hammerhead, which cannot be reached by comparison or qualification; did it fall from the sky? Did it spring up from the earth? All the people in the world could not budge it; they couldn't even move it with a lever, implies Setcho, seeing through the koan's open hole and putting another peg in it. This is an upward wave of the Zen river, a switchabout for revival.

INTRODUCTION

Even if your whole body were eyes, you still couldn't see it. Even if your whole body were ears, you still couldn't hear it. Even if your whole body were a mouth, you still couldn't say it. Even if your whole body were mind, you still couldn't perceive it. Leaving aside the whole body for the moment, without eyes how would you see? Without ears, how would you hear? Without a mouth, how would you speak? Without a mind, how would you perceive? If you can unfurl a pathway here, you'll be a fellow student with the ancient Buddhas. But leaving aside study for the moment, tell me from whom you study.

[HAKUIN] *Even if your whole body were eyes, you still couldn't see it.* There is a place you can't see even if your whole body is eyes; even with the keenest vision you cannot discern its true form. What fills the eyes is not form; you see an eye-ful without seeing. Above, below, the four quarters, and the ten directions: everything in the universe is one single whole body. *Even if your whole body were ears, you still couldn't hear it.* Mountains, rivers, and earth are all my ears. What fills the ears is originally not sound; you hear an ear-ful without hearing. In your heart you do not hear anything impure. Even the keenest ear cannot hear distinctly. *Even if your whole body were a mouth, you still couldn't say it.* Even the most eloquent speaker cannot explain it. *Even if your whole body were mind, you still couldn't perceive it.* Even if you have a full-length, head-to-foot mind mirror, you cannot reflect this, so no judgment is possible. *Without eyes, how do you see?* There is no seeing the mountains, rivers, and earth; having no eyes and having no ears is true seeing and hearing. *Unfurl a pathway*—If you have absorbed it, when you are able to go

into action where there are no eyes, ears, mouth, or body, then you will be independent and free. *You'll be a fellow student with the ancient Buddhas*—Walking hand in hand with the Buddhas of all times, you hear with the same eye and see with the same ear. *Tell me*—Who did the ancient Buddhas study from? Study perceptively from the same source.

EXAMPLE

Ungan asked Dogo, “What does the bodhisattva of great compassion use so many hands and eyes for?”

Dogo said, “Like someone reaching back for a pillow in the middle of the night.”

Ungan said, “I understand.”

Dogo said, “How do you understand?”

Ungan said, “All over the body are hands and eyes.”

Dogo said, “You’ve said quite a bit, but you’ve only expressed eighty percent.”

Ungan said, “What about you?”

Dogo said, “Throughout the body are hands and eyes.”

[HAKUIN] *The bodhisattva of great compassion* has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes.

Reaching back for a pillow in the middle of the night—When you scoop up water, the moon is in your hands. It’s like groping for a pillow while dreaming at night. Since the whole body all throughout is hands and eyes, Dogo’s answer was lax. *I understand*. He’s sunk in a deep pit. *All over the body are hands and eyes*. It’s an apparition! *You’ve only expressed eighty percent*—It’s not thoroughgoing. *Throughout the body are hands and eyes*—The elbow doesn’t bend outward.

[TENKEI] It’s probably wrong to say that Dogo was questioned by Ungan about this, but in either case there’s no compromise to the principle. The way this koan is handled elsewhere, they just literally interpret *all over the body* and *throughout the body*, distinguishing near and far on that basis, but this is quite wrong. They interpret this

way because they cannot see what there is to see. Dogo's statement *You've said quite a bit, but you've only expressed eighty percent* is the sinew and bone of this koan. It is the eye of a Zen teaching master switching a state of potential, a strategy for revival, turning freely.

VERSE

All over the body, right? Throughout the body, right?
Bringing it up is still a hundred thousand miles away.
Spreading its wings, the roc soars over the clouds of the six
compounds,
Propelling the wind to churn the waters of the four oceans.
What speck of dust suddenly arises? What wisp of hair hasn't
stopped?
Do you not see—
The pearls of the net drape a pattern, reflections multiplied in
each other.
Where do the hands and eyes on the staff come from?
Tsk!

[HAKUIN] *All over the body, right? Throughout the body, right?* This distinction is hard to see, because there is a subtle obscurity. Gudo's view was that *all over* and *throughout* are a hundred thousand miles apart; this reading was for the rescue of a dead snake. Daigu read it to mean that both *all over the body* and *throughout the body* are incorrect. Setcho's intention is neither to prefer Ungan nor to reject Dogo. This verse is absolutely unique; if you can see it clearly, then with all Zen sayings you will be like a dragon finding water. *Bringing it up is still a hundred thousand miles away.* When idlers bring it up, it serves no useful purpose. They are a hundred thousand miles away from those who have absorbed the structure. *Spreading its wings, the roc soars over the clouds of the six compounds*—This line and the next on propelling the wind versify Ungan and Dogo's application of potential. *What speck of dust suddenly arises?* In the eyes of a Zennist, even the soaring of the roc is like a speck of dust rising.

Here Setcho has spread his own wings. *What wisp of hair hasn't stopped?* This amounts to saying that dust is blown about by the slightest breeze. This is the pure content of the *Blue Cliff Record*, the guts of Zen study. *Do you not see*—He calls the attention of the crowd. *The pearls of the net drape a pattern, reflections multiplied in each other*—(Hakuin held up his whisk and said,) The pearls of the net are from a story about the heavens. In each hair of this whisk are 808 streets; Kyoto and Osaka, heaven and hell, are all reflections multiplied in each other. *The hands and eyes on the staff*—the great potential and function emerging from the bit of infinite interreflections in the network of pearls, the Buddhas of all times and the great work of the Zen masters. *Tsk!* For Setcho, this won't do.

[TENKEI] Not only for those who use calculating emotional consciousness to interpret the sayings of the two elders literally this way and that, but even for the two elders themselves speaking this way, Setcho says *bringing it up* is just being irrelevant. The implication is that we should not die there at the sayings but proceed upward and onward. Pointing out the flaw even in the two elders is the great meaning of the koan, same as the statement “You've only expressed eighty percent.” This is also called the switching eye of a Zen teaching master, and it is Setcho's thoroughgoing effort to help others by reviving those who have died there at the sayings this way. Now then, speaking of the marvels of the two elders' application of potential, it is indeed majestic, like the golden-winged king of birds *spreading its wings* and drumming the waters of the four oceans to seize a dragon and swallow it. Even so, from the perspective of the vast extent of the hands and eyes of great compassion, things like that are like a *speck of dust* rising in the immense sky, like a wisp of hair blown by the wind unceasingly, something extremely indistinct, something you can't get at. Alternately uplifting and putting down this way is the subtlety of Setcho's switching. Even so, that doesn't mean it's difficult. *Do you not see?* Haven't you seen *the pearls of the net*, the universe wherein there is no obstruction between things is these hands and eyes. Herein there is no far or near, no great or small; what can be said about it? Bringing in something said before, he informs you that every single individual's hands and eyes are perfectly complete. But just because Setcho speaks in these terms,

don't you people bend a weeping face to academic *Huayen* studies. And don't look up or turn around thinking it refers to the emperor of the gods.

Where do the hands and eyes on the staff come from? We need not even mention the staff and the shout of Rinzai and Tokusan; even the staff of the blind is hands and eyes. How does it get to be this way? If you recognize the staff and know what it is, then you will also understand the talk about the hands and eyes; but where do they come from in each individual person? Abruptly cutting off his connection and pushing away, and also realizing that to go unconsciously into a long discussion like a scholar would create complications, Setcho says *Tsk*, "phooey," implying that he has indulged for too long a time, like a professor making footnotes. Pointing out his own flaw, he swept it all away. This is a progressive reviving expression to avoid dying at his phrases, a switching wave, the meaning of *expressing eighty percent*, Setcho's Zen eye.

INTRODUCTION

The one expression prior to voicing is not transmitted by a thousand sages. The single thread before the eyes is always unbroken. Clean and naked, untrammeled and free, hair disheveled but ears alert—what about this?

[HAKUIN] *The one expression prior to voicing*—The actuality of seeing essential nature is not transmitted by the thousand sages, because prior to mention, prior to distinction of black and white, is the state of self-enlightenment and self-realization. *The single thread before the eyes*—The one expression prior to voicing is hanging in front of everyone’s face, distinctly clear. What is this single thread? It continues unbroken twenty-four hours a day. “Thread” refers to continuity; extended, it encompasses the universe, and yet there’s not so much as an ant’s whisker to it. *Clean and naked, untrammeled and free*—When you cross the barrier, you are clean and naked, untrammeled and free; these expressions are comments on the preceding two statements. Even in the midst of all ways of life, even in the midst of desires and pressures, one is still clean and naked, untrammeled and free. *Hair disheveled*—In the *Latter Record of Setcho* it is recorded that a monk asked, “What is Buddha?” Setcho answered, “Hair disheveled but ears alert.”

[TENKEI] This introduction may have some lacunae. Furthermore, it appears twice near the end, which is suspicious. It has no application to the present koan.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Chimon, “What is the substance of wisdom?”
Chimon said, “An oyster swallows the bright moon.”
The monk asked, “What is the function of wisdom?”
Chimon said, “A rabbit gets pregnant.”

[HAKUIN] See example 21. This example is the handle of Zen. *The substance of wisdom* refers to the fundamental. *An oyster swallows the bright moon*. He answered with the function; the jet black pearl shines brilliantly. *What is the function of wisdom?* This too is an iron hammerhead with no hole. *A rabbit gets pregnant*. He answered with the substance; the shoots of an iron tree bear blossoms of coral.

[TENKEI] *An oyster swallows the bright moon*. This is an expression containing the universe, *here*, where box and lid fit perfectly; if you try to figure it out based on the literal expression, you are out of touch and cannot reach it, for it is inaccessible that way. The same is true of *A rabbit gets pregnant*. Here I cite a story of Joshu and Daiwa. Joshu asked Daiwa, “What is the substance of wisdom?” Daiwa said, “Wisdom has what as its substance.” Joshu roared with laughter. The next day, as they were sweeping the yard, Daiwa asked Joshu, “What is the substance of wisdom?” Joshu put down his broom and roared with laughter. Ultimately wisdom is real knowledge; it has no substance or function at all. Every one of you should just see it based on your own self: is there such a thing as the substance of mind? Is there such a thing as the function of mind? What are they? Take a look!

VERSE

One empty stillness, beyond speech and feeling;
From this humans and deities see the Offspring of Emptiness.
The oyster swallows the dark rabbit’s deepest meaning;
Given to Zennists, it makes them fight.

[TENKEI] *One empty stillness beyond speech and feeling*—When you attain oneness, clear emptiness, and still silence, it is beyond

what words can say, beyond objects and senses. This line expresses the total substance of wisdom; if you don't get this far you can't see this koan. Praising the way both replies put an end to the road of speech, he cut them with one blade and threw them out. This is not anything external; it is in everyone, a state when all six senses are empty and silent, inwardly and outwardly clear as crystal, fundamentally without verbal expression or object of feeling, profoundly calm and happy, a state without compare. Each and every individual is inviolable; this is the manifestation of your light. Here, would you call it the substance of wisdom? Would you call it the function of wisdom? Setcho speaks on the basis of having actually seen Chimon's fundamental meaning.

[HAKUIN] *From this humans and deities see the Offspring of Emptiness*—This refers to the cognition of wisdom. One tends to regard true emptiness without form, beyond saying and feeling, as wisdom itself, so this is to break down that understanding. If you consider this enlightenment, “On the cliff of the Offspring of Emptiness, the weeds are a mess,” you know! Because it is hard to understand and hard to penetrate, therefore calamity arises and you start talking about the substance and function of wisdom, getting into clichés.

[TENKEI] Because Buddha's disciple Subhuti, “Offspring of Emptiness,” actually attained the aforementioned substance and function, he was praised by humans and deities. Even so, this is still in the realm of cultivation and realization, where the birds bring offerings of flowers. The words “from this see” are Setcho's play; so even though you speak of profound emptiness and stillness, it is no good to fall into the views of humans and deities. If the light does not penetrate, there are two kinds of affliction; this is not where a Zennist should be.

[HAKUIN] *The oyster swallows the dark rabbit's deepest meaning*—The deepest meaning is what transcends the offspring of emptiness and goes beyond conventional rules; *deepest* means inconceivable. The *dark rabbit* is a different name for the moon.

[TENKEI] Even though the ancient's meaning is not in words at all, first let it be known that the dark rabbit is a different name for the moon. The first answer is alluded to in a way that includes the

second answer. These answers of Chimon's, being very profound, have an inexpressibly interesting deep meaning, but . . .

[HAKUIN] *Given to Zennists, it makes them fight.* Fighting means discussion, which is to enable people to reach the deepest wellspring of truth. You have to be a Zennist for this; mediocrities aren't up to it.

[TENKEI] Since it is given to Zennists studying the Way for them to discuss in spiritual encounters, let every individual Zennist evaluate this meaning and find out what it is. Cutting off and not saying the end is Setcho's thoroughgoing effort to help people by reviving them and getting them to live. As long as you are discussing how to know the meaning, you won't get anywhere; set everything aside and see directly.

INTRODUCTION

To transcend emotion, detach from views, remove bonds, and dissolve sticking points, bring up the Zen methods of progressive transcendence, and support the treasury of eyes of truth, one must respond equally in all directions, every facet crystal clear, to directly reach such a state. But tell me, are there any who share the same attainment, the same realization, the same death, and the same life?

[HAKUIN] *To transcend emotion and detach from views* means to transcend emotional assessments and subjective thinking, and detach from opinionation and intellectual interpretation. *Remove bonds and dissolve sticking points*—*Bonds* refers to attachment to doctrines; *sticking points* refers to habits from the past. Followers of the Two Vehicles are bound by the emptiness of phenomena; ordinary people are stuck in afflictions. *Such a state*—This refers to the state of complete peace, and also the state of having great perception. *Share the same attainment, the same realization*—This alludes to the four people in the story. How could there be none? If they would just make the effort, everyone would share the same attainment and same realization.

[TENKEI] The Zen strategy of progressive transcendence transcends emotional consciousness, leaves behind intellectual opinions, resolves the sticking and binding of Buddhas and Patriarchs, brings up the supreme spiritual vehicle of the buddha-mind, and supports the treasury of eyes of true teaching. In this context, without the crystal-clear teaching of adepts who manifest their whole body throughout the world, the aforementioned function cannot be realized. There are few who share the same attainment and the same realization as such people, but observe the unprecedented

action of this koan's four elders and Setcho as they die the same death and live the same life together.

EXAMPLE

One day Enkan called to his attendant, "Bring me my rhinoceros horn fan."

The attendant said, "The fan is broken."

Enkan said, "If the fan is broken, then bring me back the rhinoceros."

The attendant had no reply.

Toshi said, "I do not refuse to bring it out, but I'm afraid the horn will be incomplete."

Setcho commented, "I want an incomplete horn."

Sekiso said, "If I return it to the master, then I won't have one."

Setcho commented, "The rhino is still there."

Shifuku drew a circle and wrote the root word for *rhino* inside.

Setcho commented, "Why didn't you bring it out before?"

Hofuku said, "The master is elderly and should ask someone else."

Setcho commented, "What a pity to have worked hard without accomplishing anything."

[HAKUIN] Enkan is just beating the bushes to scare the snakes. The rhinoceros horn fan is a fan with a handle made from rhinoceros horn. There is no example quite like this in the whole *Blue Cliff Record*. It is on an even higher level than the story about the end of summer retreat. *The fan is broken*. The naive realist, he stumbled past. Greedily gazing at the moon in the sky, he lost the pearl in the palm of his hand. *If the fan is broken*—Redoubled effort to help the man. *The attendant had no reply*. He's been lifted onto a swift horse, but he doesn't know how to ride. *Toshi said, "I do not refuse to bring it out, but I'm afraid the horn will be incomplete."* I'm not averse to getting it out, but it's completely broken, with neither head nor tail. *I want an incomplete horn*. That incompleteness is just what I'm looking for. *If I return it to the master, then I won't have one*. This is

something that cannot be given or taken. There's only one way out: there's nothing to be given. *The rhino is still there.* No matter how much you return it, after all it's still there. *Drew a circle with the word rhino inside*—The manner of the I-Gyo school of Zen is easygoing. Even so, adding flowers to brocade, this is a special springtime. *Why didn't you bring it out before?* Then why didn't you bring it out before? This refers to the drawing of the circle and writing the root for rhino inside. *The master is elderly and should ask someone else.* Enkan is getting on in years and has become feeble with age; he should request another attendant. Is this the rhinoceros? The mode of Seppo's school is cold indeed! *What a pity to have worked hard without accomplishing anything.* It's all a waste of time. Among all of them, this saying has a subtlety to it; if you absorb its essence, you will master the *Blue Cliff Record!* One line settles heaven and earth.

[TENKEI] *One day Enkan called to his attendant*—Although this matter is not in words, to test the spirit and strategy of students it is unavoidable to express principles in words. Thus Enkan calls his attendant today in order to test his ability to face up to a situation and take appropriate action. *The fan is broken.* The attendant thinks it's really about the fan and doesn't know his own function. It's a pity he misheard. *If it's broken*—Even if the fan is useless, do you know where the fan is at? This is a second test, but what can be done: the attendant had no reply. *No reply*—Looks like the attendant's not going to be able to do any fanning; too bad. *Toshi*—This is a reply in place of the attendant. The implication, referring to the fan, is how can there be any give and take here? *I want*—That's what I want; bring it here! Setcho implies that this is what Enkan might have said; all of his comments here are on behalf of Enkan. *Sekiso*—“If I return it to the master, then I'll have none.” The underlying meaning is “how can there be any give or take here?” *Setcho*—No matter how you try to return it, it is not something that can be returned. *Shifuku*—“Do you mean this fan?” Somehow the pattern of the fan is similar. *Why didn't you bring it out before?* If you had that much, why didn't you bring it out earlier? You're too late, he says, taking the other in tow. *Hofuku*—“The master is old, and a dullard like myself cannot serve as your attendant; please ask someone else.” Here Hofuku is not being good-hearted; he means that he is not taking the master's test.

Setcho—“Then for you to have worked all these years without achieving success was a waste of effort. What a pity!” This breakthrough substitute saying of *Setcho*’s includes both censure and praise, but where is the censure and praise?

VERSE

The rhinoceros fan has long been in use,
But when questioned, actually no one knows.
The boundless pure breeze and the horn,
Just like clouds and rain when gone are hard to pursue.

Setcho added, “If you want the pure breeze to return and the horn to regrow, let Zennists each make a statement: I ask you, since the fan is broken, return the rhinoceros to me.”

A monk then came out and said, “Let the congregation go meditate in the hall.”

Setcho shouted and said, “I cast my hook fishing for whales, but what I caught was a frog.” Then he got off the chair.

[HAKUIN] *The rhinoceros fan has long been in use—Your own rhinoceros fan has long been employed. Setcho still hadn’t awakened from a dream when he wrote this. When I speak this way it shatters! In the hand it grips, in the feet it walks; since the aeon of emptiness there has been no one who has not used this. When questioned, actually no one knows—If you ask what kind of thing it is, no one knows. Buddhas and Zen masters become enlightened not knowing; ordinary people become confused not knowing. The boundless pure breeze and the horn—Being a fan, it stirs a refreshing breeze; being a rhinoceros, it has a horn. This is everyday activities, anger and joy. Just like clouds and rain when gone are hard to pursue—As when a shower has passed and the clouds and the lightning vanish without a trace, so are the actions of the four masters in the koan. Setcho added—These words were added to the second edition of the record of Setcho. Return the rhinoceros to me—The single grain that has come down from the time of Kashyapa,*

the first patriarch of Zen, may be worked out in five or ten different ways, but Setcho doesn't like any of them. *Let the congregation go meditate in the hall.* "Go back to the communal hall," he says. Though he has some spunk, it's not elegant. The intent is there but the expression doesn't make it.

[TENKEI] *The rhinoceros fan*—This refreshing fan has been used by everyone twenty-four hours a day, ever since there have been Buddhas and Zen masters. However, because people use it without being aware of it, *when questioned, actually no one knows*; not only the attendant but also the four elders did not know where it is, says Setcho, sweeping all away. Why doesn't anyone know what this fan is? Do you know, he challenges you, implying that you probably don't, and that is why Setcho unbegrudgingly tells you: *The boundless pure breeze*—Do you see the fan? If you get to know it, there is a timeless, boundless pure breeze, clean and clear, and the horn of the rhinoceros stands revealed in its imposing grandeur right before your very eyes. Don't try to imagine what it must be like. That horn stands tall and sharp; it is a refreshing, reviving fan. *Just like*—Not only the attendant but the four elders as well were all too late; as if chasing the evening rain or the morning clouds as they fly away, they just can't make it, they can't get hold of the fan. Detaching completely, this is sporting with the unsoilable fan. *Setcho*—Wanting to discuss the fan once more, even though he has just finished saying that the pure breeze and the horn when gone are impossible to pursue, he challenges people to speak up on how to bring them back. *A monk then*—This monk's tactic to take the teacher's authority away seems at a glance to be somewhat perceptive, but Setcho sees that it is a contrived imitation, so he *shouted and said* he was fishing for whales but caught a frog, holding him fast. This is Setcho's method of not letting go. This monk after all was defeated. What can you do: the earth is wide, real people are few, and rarely is one encountered.

INTRODUCTION

One who can discern the tune as soon as the strings are made to vibrate is hard to find even in a thousand years. By releasing a hawk on seeing a rabbit, even the swiftest one is caught at once. As for summing up all spoken words in a single statement, concentrating the whole universe into a single particle, dying the same death and living the same life, penetrating everything everywhere, is there anyone who can stand witness?

[HAKUIN] *One who can discern the tune as soon as the strings are made to vibrate*—A connoisseur, like one who can tell on hearing a single word that the posterity of Ummon still exists, knows what melody is to be played the moment the performer begins tuning. Such a connoisseur is *hard to find even in a thousand years*. *Releasing a hawk on seeing a rabbit*—Whatever sort of student comes, they are treated accordingly, seen at a glance. *Even the swiftest one is caught at once*—When dealing with those who are outstanding, perception and action are simultaneous. *Summing up all spoken words*—Under certain circumstances, Buddha's forty-nine years of sermons are all packed up as perfect insight. *Concentrating the whole universe*—Holding the whole universe on a finger, from here you discern the tune as soon as the strings vibrate. Even from the perspective of the first stage of meditation, the earth is like a mustard seed. *Dying the same death and living the same life*—as other connoisseurs, that is. *Penetrating everything everywhere*—independent and free. *Is there anyone who can stand witness*—The implication is that Manjushri is the one for the job.

[TENKEI] Few indeed are those sharp enough to discern the tune immediately as soon as an adept Zen teacher acts. Means of dealing

with such sharp folks are like releasing a hawk on seeing a rabbit. Sometimes they employ tactics of transcendence, *summing up all spoken words*, holding both this side and the other side still, getting out of range of affirmations and denials. Who is such an adept who dies the same death and lives the same life? This alludes to Manjushri's action.

EXAMPLE

One day Buddha took the high seat. Manjushri struck the gavel and said, "Clearly behold the teaching of the master of teaching; the teaching of the master of teaching is thus."

The Buddha got down from the seat at once.

[HAKUIN] *One day Buddha took the high seat*, and Manjushri struck the gavel to inform the audience that there was something important here, before the Buddha had spoken a single word. The scene in the *Diamond Scripture* where just as the Buddha had taken his seat Subhuti said, "Wonderful, World Honored One!" *Clearly behold the teaching of the master of teaching*—When we behold the profound wellspring of the teaching clearly, Buddha and Manjushri are two mirrors facing each other. *The teaching of the master of teaching is thus*—The matter of ultimate importance is perceived before it's triggered. *The Buddha got down from the seat at once*. Ah, magnificent, splendid, met with once in a thousand years!

[TENKEI] The action of taking the high seat does not mean there is anything to teach; it is inexpressible. Manjushri saw where it was at, so he said *clearly behold*, telling the audience to hear correctly: the teaching of the master of teaching is entirely like this, with nothing whatsoever to explain. The Buddha immediately got down from the seat because if you try to take the advantage, instead you don't get it.

VERSE

In the assembled ranks of sages, an adept would know
The teaching of the master of teaching isn't like this.
Had there been a fluent interpreter in the group,
What need for Manjushri to strike the gavel?

[HAKUIN] *In the assembled ranks of sages, an adept would know—* What would an adept know? An adept would know that *the teaching of the master of teaching isn't like this*. In prying off Manjushri's striking the gavel and Buddha's getting down from the seat as *not like this*, the power of Setcho's pen is enormously weighty. Everyone takes Buddhism to be this sort of thing; he doesn't like that, so he disapproves. *A fluent interpreter* means someone who is sharp. If someone with sharp eyes had seen through him before Buddha had uttered a word, *what need for Manjushri to strike the gavel?* There would have been no reason to trouble Manjushri.

[TENKEI] *Ranks of sages—*The members of the audience of eighty thousand on Spiritual Mountain, including Manjushri, Samantabhadra, and other great bodhisattvas, arhats, and solitary illuminates, were each sages, but it stands to reason that there's not a single one who knows this point. It's something you can't know unless you're an adept. How do you know? This is a challenge to the present audience. But when I speak of "knowing," what is it that it knows? *The teaching of the master of teaching—*There is no one who knows that taking the high seat today is not so. The word "not" is the eye of Setcho's whole verse, the diamond sword. So Buddha's taking the high seat and Manjushri's striking the gavel are completely different from the direction of the master of teaching; they are secondary, tertiary. All at once he points out the flaw. Had there been a sharp, fluent interpreter in the group who could discern the directive of the master of teaching before he took the high seat, then *what need* would there have been—Buddha wouldn't have taken the high seat, so of course Manjushri wouldn't have needed to strike the gavel.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Taiko, “When Chokei said, ‘Celebration on the occasion of a meal,’ what did that mean?”

Taiko did a dance. The monk bowed.

Taiko said, “What did you see, that you bow?”

The monk did a dance.

Taiko said, “You wild fox sprite!”

[HAKUIN] *A monk asked Taiko*—This is a question to test the host. This monk has violently poisonous guts; his question is not easy. *Celebration on the occasion of a meal*—This appears in the seventy-fourth example; it refers to preaching and recitations after a meal, a ceremony of dedication of thanks. *Taiko did a dance*. A wily adept indeed. *Taiko said, “What did you see—”* When you kill someone, you have to see the blood. *You wild fox sprite!* “You thief!” This is like the shout of Tokusan and Rinzai.

[TENKEI] *Taiko did a dance*. Is this the same as Kin-gyu’s dance? Is it different? Taiko and Kin-gyu are no different as dancers. *The monk bowed*. He’s jumping to conclusions; he won’t be able to continue in the end. *What did you see*—Taiko quietly poked him. *The monk did a dance*. He faked it. *You wild fox sprite!* “You apparition,” he says, seeing all the way through him, brushing him off all at once. This is helping the person by not allowing emotional interpretations.

VERSE

The first arrow was still light; the second arrow went deep.

Who says yellow leaves are yellow gold?
If the waves of the river of Zen were alike,
Endless ordinary people would get bogged down.

[HAKUIN] *The first arrow was light; the second arrow went deep.* At first Taiko's dance was still light; after that, his calling the other a wild fox sprite was profoundly poisonous. *Who says yellow leaves are yellow gold?* Setcho speaks this way to counter approval of the dance as right; yellow leaves are not yellow gold, you know! *If the waves of the river of Zen were alike*—If methods of dealing with students were all the same . . . *Endless ordinary people would get bogged down*—What is learned from imitation is a portent of the destruction and demise of Buddhism.

[TENKEI] *The first arrow*—Taiko's dancing was still tolerable, but the arrow-shot "You wild fox sprite" pierced your heart and guts, penetrating deeply. This arrow carries the barb of the unerring succession of Zen patriarchs in India and China, the transcendental claws and fangs, including both temporal and true, both perception and action. Having praised to the skies, from this point there is a switch. *Who says*—The dance of Taiko and Kin-gyu, the beating and shouting of Tokusan and Rinzai, the sayings and koans of the Zen masters: all of these are temporarily set up, as it were yellow leaves presented as gold to stop a child crying, not actually real gold. Thus he sweeps it all away. The words "who says" constitute the subtle expression that switches; here is where Setcho helps others. *If the waves of the river of Zen were alike*—If they had faked it on the bank of the river where Buddha died, putting on a dance like this monk or something . . . *Endless ordinary people would get bogged down*—Everyone in the world would be dead, so make sure not to hoke up imitations; everyone, breathe through your nose.

94

NOT SEEING

INTRODUCTION

The unvoiced statement is not transmitted by a thousand sages; the thread before our eyes is ever unbroken. Clean and naked, bare and untrammelled, the white ox on open ground. Eyes alert, ears alert, the golden-haired lion; leaving this aside for the moment, tell me—what is the white ox on open ground?

[HAKUIN] *The unvoiced statement*—This should be read along with example 90. Prior to activation of the intellect yet clear before the eyes, the actual experience of hearing the sound of one hand clapping is where you lose your head and your life. *Not transmitted by a thousand sages*—The state of self-awakening cannot be taught or transmitted. Nowadays there are those who try to teach it; that's stupid. *The thread before our eyes*—The thread means a little bit; on returning to life, it becomes this little bit. *Ever unbroken*—From before the creation till after the end of the world, it is completely airtight; there's not a gap, all the way down to the bottom of hell. *Clean and naked* refers to the fully cultivated being, something pure. *The white ox on open ground* is the *Lotus Sutra* unveiled. The ordinary mortal is a black ox in the darkness. *Eyes alert, ears alert* depicts keenness. *The golden-haired lion* refers to Manjushri.

[TENKEI] The open ground refers to the stage of Buddhahood; the white ox refers to the realm of the body of reality. As mentioned before, this introduction appears in three places; here too I dare say it is not appropriate.

EXAMPLE

The *Shurangama Sutra* says, “When I don’t see, why don’t you see my not seeing? If you see not seeing, that is naturally not characteristic of not seeing. If you don’t see my not seeing, naturally it is not a thing; how could it not be you?”

[HAKUIN] This is a question posed to the Buddha by Ananda. Why don’t you see my not seeing anything? If you know the meaning of citing this passage, then you can see both this passage and the verse. People past and present have been greatly mistaken about this point. Open your eyes wide to see. *If you see not seeing, that is naturally not characteristic of not seeing.* If you can see it, it can’t be called not seeing. There is no sign of not seeing because it is not seen. *If you do not see my not seeing*—If you say you see not seeing, that is as if there were still some not seeing to see; if you do not even see not seeing, what is this? Thus next he says it is naturally not a thing. *Naturally it is not a thing*—He shaves flesh from a heron’s leg. All things may be seen by the eyes, but not seeing is not a thing. It’s not a green thing, it’s not a red thing. *How could it not be you?* Because it is not a thing, it must be your own awakened mind. The realm that is not a thing is your true vision; true vision is your essential nature. That’s the message.

[TENKEI] The eye of this recital by Setcho, and its function as a koan, is in this one statement alone: *How could it not be you?* The point is that of all the myriad things, none is not you. You are you, I am I. One can only know oneself. That’s what this means.

VERSE

The whole elephant and the whole ox blind no differently.
All along adepts have been naming and describing.
If you want to see the Buddha right now,
Every atom of every land is halfway there.

[HAKUIN] *The whole elephant and the whole ox blind no differently.*
In the presence of this example, both the whole elephant and the

whole ox are cataracts blinding the eyes, no different from dust. The whole elephant comes from a story about a king who had a group of blind men feel an elephant; it refers to inability to see things. The whole ox comes from a story about a butcher and refers to the ability to see things well. Arriving at the subtlety of seeing and arriving at the subtlety of not seeing are both no different from blinding cataracts. *All along adepts have been naming and describing.* When it comes to this great matter, even in the great congregation on Spiritual Mountain nobody can know. Setcho sets it forth with open eyes: there is nothing but naming and describing, rumor and gossip. Even the adepts of India and the Far East merely name and describe the fact of the fundamental endowment and do not know its reality, he implies. Naming means labeling, describing means trying to make a likeness. *Every atom of every land is halfway there*—Everything, but everything, is halfway there. If you can penetrate this final line successfully, you know the meaning of the whole *Shurangama Sutra*. When one is done, the other is done.

[TENKEI] Setcho has produced this versification from the perspective of Zen; even if an adept has truly seen the whole body of the elephant, that is still a cataract in the eye. Therefore the thousand Buddhas and myriad Zen masters, as well as all the Zen practitioners in the world, have only found out how hard it is to name it; not one of them has actually proved it. If you construct interpretations of seeing and not seeing, that's even more irrelevant; you'll never get there that way. Even true seeing is like this, Setcho says, sweeping it all away, a switchover to help others by not admitting emotional or intellectual interpretations.

Having finished the versification thus, Setcho has talent left over, so in order to enable people to see Buddha directly he says if you want to see focus your eyes quickly. Don't go seeking and figuring, saying things like every leaf is a Shakyamuni Buddha, so is every particle of every land, and so forth. If you do say so, *every atom of every land* is halfway. What about that other half? Leaving it at that, Setcho chases you forward for your own sake, telling you to make the effort to see right now, see directly through without falling into the weeds of location and distance, seeing and not seeing.

INTRODUCTION

Where there is Buddha, do not stay; if you remain fixated there, you will sprout horns. Where there is no Buddha, quickly run past; if you do not run past, weeds will grow ten feet high. Even if you are clean and naked, bare and untrammelled, with no mental activity outside of things, and no things outside of mental activity, you are still not beyond standing by a stump waiting for a rabbit to run into it. Now tell me, without being like any of this, how would you act?

[HAKUIN] *Where there is Buddha, do not stay—Where there is Buddha* means conception of views of Buddha and views of Dharma, the cave of satori. *If you remain fixated there, you will sprout horns.* Unable to be unaffected when in contact with things, you wear a mangy coat of fur and sprout horns. *Where there is no Buddha, run quickly past*—It won't do to remain in the cave of "appearances are not characteristics"; get out of there quickly! *Weeds will grow ten feet high*—Without a road in or out, it turns into false conception. *No mental activity outside of things*—Even when you arrive at nonduality of noumenon and phenomena, oneness of things and self, where there are no ordinary people outside of Buddha, and no Buddha outside of ordinary people . . . *Standing by a stump waiting for a rabbit to run into it*—You cannot make a move on account of ignorance.

[TENKEI] *Where there is Buddha*, if you become fixated, the horns of practice and realization sprout; this is not the right state. Where there is no Buddha, the weeds grow in boundless profusion in front of the teaching hall; this is not right either. *Clean and naked*—Even the state of mindlessness, where both mind and objects are cut off, where there are no concrete appearances of myriad different

objects, and no ethereal luminous mental activity either, is still not the way to be. Then how should you act? Observe the methods of the two elders in today's koan.

EXAMPLE

Chokei once said, "It is preferable to say that saints have the three poisons rather than say that the Buddha has two kinds of speech. I do not say the Buddha has no speech, just not two kinds of speech."

Hofuku said, "What is the Buddha's speech?"

Chokei said, "How can a deaf man hear?"

Hofuku said, "I knew you were talking to the second head."

Chokei said, "What is Buddha's speech?"

Hofuku said, "Go drink tea."

[HAKUIN] *It is preferable to say that saints have the three poisons—The three poisons are crude basic afflictions. Rather than say that Buddha has two kinds of speech—The sages of past and present seeing the teachings of Buddha in terms of five periods and eight doctrines were all mistaken because they did not understand the source of the Buddha's teachings. The whole substance is the manifestation of reality, pure and simple; he does not draw two bows, there is only the teaching of the One Vehicle, with no two kinds of speech. The point of the koan is seeing through this, not saying a single word, not expounding a single doctrine. This is one of the hardest to penetrate of all the examples in the *Blue Cliff Record*; it is the tune of Seppo's school, a saying based on penetrating insight into the uttermost depths of the Zen of the Buddhas and the Zen of the masters. How can a deaf man hear? Someone whose ears aren't open can't hear it. This saying is quite eccentric; no one understands it. I knew you were talking to the second head. In other words, he's fallen into the weeds. There is an important issue here. Go drink tea. In a meeting of free spirits, no one is taken advantage of. Setcho admires this line, but I admire the line How can a deaf man hear?*

[TENKEI] *No two kinds of speech*—From the Buddha’s first lecture in the Deer Park until his final demise by the Hiranyavati River, his diamond sword was one and one alone. What this means is that all sounds and voices, even the speeches of heretical philosophers, are no different. Pick up all speech and see: fundamentally there is nothing, no good or bad, no right or wrong. So what is real and true cannot be expressed in words. *Hofuku said*—“Isn’t this perhaps a mistaken conclusion, to the effect that ‘there is only one vehicle’?” This is a thoughtful challenge. *How can a deaf man hear?* “A deaf man like you can’t hear it”; this has the Zen potential of the breath of a Zennist, but even so, he was already far removed before he even spoke. *Second head*—Oh, dear! Chokei has two heads! Why? Because there is a distinction between what hears and what does not hear, so there are two heads. This is Hofuku’s switchover saying to give life, the eye of an adept Zen master. *Go drink tea*. You don’t seem to be quite awake yet, so go have some tea and wake up. Here there are no mystic wonders of Buddhism; it is a switching expression. There are many misinterpretations of this point current in various places.

VERSE

Head number one or number two—
A reclining dragon does not look to still water.
In the negation, waves settle with the moon;
In the affirmation, waves rise without wind.
Zennist Chokei, Zennist Chokei—
You’ve failed to pass the dragon gate.

[HAKUIN] *Head number one or number two*—Which do you say is the first head, which the second head? *A reclining dragon does not look to still water*. To speak of the first head and second head is all the stagnant water of theoretical understanding. *In the negation, waves settle with the moon*—When you are free by yourself on your own, since it is the stagnant water of solitary release with nothing to do, it is of no benefit to others. *In the affirmation, waves rise without*

wind. The reviving aspect of *go drink tea*, the poison saying of *not two kinds*, Hofuku's statement *I knew Zennist Chokey*—Hofuku's remark that he was understanding on the secondary level was returning tit for tat, fists and feet. Even so, it's not that there are no first and second, or primary and secondary; it's a subtle question. *You've failed to pass the dragon gate*. A failing mark doesn't matter; real gold is still real gold even when pulverized. This line refers to the fact that Chokey wasn't able to soar beyond at mention of the second head; Setcho says this because he sees a little bit of a gap.

[TENKEI] *Heads*—This is a literary method of inverse phrasing. To begin with, most people mistakenly figure that Hofuku's state is one head and Chokey's is the other, but if you search in the realm of first and second you miss the point entirely and cannot see the dragon. Why? *A reclining dragon*—From the very beginning a live dragon does not dwell in the stagnant water of concepts of first and second. Shall I tell you where that dragon is? First, *in the negation*; this means profound calmness. Even if it is an azure pond a thousand or ten thousand fathoms deep, a live dragon will not live there. If you consider this place correct, you are making a living in stagnant water; you are not a dragon at all! Then again, *in the affirmation* gigantic billows extend far and wide, foaming breakers flood the skies; the living water of progressive transcendence, hardly accessible to anyone at all, is precisely where dragons live. Since Hofuku's technique today is this way, the implication is, all of you should make sure you don't take to stagnant water with verbal interpretation. Having explained the overall idea of the koan, finally Setcho sets forth a pair of eyes: *Zennist Chokey*—calling twice, he says *you failed*. Even the great Chokey, although he was a live dragon who had passed through the dragon gate, regrettably got a failing mark when confronted by Hofuku today. This is Setcho's reviving line, making the switchover at the place where there is fundamentally no gain or loss. The point is to alert his hearers to the question of how to avoid this failure; this is Setcho's effort to help people.

EXAMPLE

Joshu uttered three pivotal sayings.

[TENKEI] *Pivotal* means adaptable; speaking with a spin according to people's potential is called a pivotal saying.

VERSE (1)

*A clay buddha does not pass through water.
Spiritual light illumines heaven and earth;
If standing in the snow were not stopped,
Who would not contrive an imitation?*

[HAKUIN] *A clay buddha does not pass through water.* This line illumines the heavens and lights up the earth, without any gap at all. *Spiritual light illumines heaven and earth*—Thoroughly illumining everything, this refers to the light of the clay buddha; it doesn't refer only to the second Zen patriarch of ancient times, whose name was Spiritual Light. *If standing in the snow were not stopped*—The second Zen patriarch stood in the snow and suffered bitterly in search of truth, but if you do not know how to stop and rest, you'll vainly imagine there is virtue in ascetic exercises like eating just once a day, sitting for long periods without lying down, burning incense on your head, and burning your fingers. *Who would not contrive an imitation?* There would be nothing but people who take cultivated imitation for the Way of Buddha.

[TENKEI] *A clay buddha* will dissolve if it passes through water. Everyone knows this. Setcho comments, *Spiritual light illumines heaven and earth.* Is this the light of the clay buddha? Is it the light of

original nature? Here, if all people just knew what they knew, they would be completely uninhibited and free as they see and hear, walk, stand, sit, and recline; so illumining the whole universe with no problem, it is your light. Using the expression “spiritual light” here, Setcho recalls something about the second Zen patriarch, who was given this name: *Standing in the snow*—The second Zen patriarch stood in the snow and cut off his arm, suffering bitter pains in quest of the teaching, but when he stopped and came to a complete rest, there was nothing at all, nothing to get from Bodhidharma, nothing discovered on his own; it’s just a matter of knowing what one has known all along. So if you do not cease and desist, stop and rest, but just make up imitations, undergoing pain and suffering thinking this is urgency in quest of truth . . . *Who would not contrive an imitation?* Everyone would imitate this, thinking that it can be attained if one just suffers pains like the exercises of ascetic cultists, perhaps imitating practices like living in the mountains or not lying down, burning incense into their scalps, burning their fingers, all making a living contriving imitations. The implication is that Zen is not like this; the lifeline of Zen is distinctly clear. The words “if not stopped” are the marrow of Buddhas and Zen masters, the eye of progressive transcendence. But progressive transcendence does not mean something far off: the eyes are horizontal, the nose is vertical, the completely unshakable state; there is no such thing as suffering pains in quest of truth. In any case, just be there and see; illumining everywhere in the ten directions unobstructed, the entire totality is your great light.

VERSE (11)

A gold Buddha does not pass through a furnace.
Someone comes calling on Shiko:
Several words on the sign—
Where is there no clear breeze?

[HAKUIN] *A gold buddha does not pass through a furnace.* If you master this, you will be like a dragon finding water, come what may. Because there is no way to convey the innermost sense of these words, the story of Master Shiko is cited. *Someone comes calling on Shiko: several words on the sign*—Shiko had a sign on his gate warning of a “dog” that will bite off your head, tear out your belly, and chew off your legs. *A gold Buddha does not pass through a furnace* is even colder than the spirit of Shiko’s haphazard sign with a few words scribbled on it. *Where is there no clear breeze?* Once you return to life after having been bitten to death by that dog, the clear breeze is cold here, there, and everywhere.

[TENKEI] *A gold buddha*—First Setcho cites the pivotal saying; the next line is a comment. *Someone comes*—This means you can’t get in for free here; unless you have been through the transcendental forge and bellows of an adept, unless the cold has penetrated your bones, you cannot know. *The sign*—was on Shiko’s door. If you can explain this freely, you will have the living potential and function to chomp through everyone in the world, so . . . *Clear breeze*—Everywhere the clear breeze is cold; the lively state of the Zennist will be refreshing. At this point you will realize for the first time that a *gold Buddha does not pass through a furnace*, for when it does it melts. If you don’t get the words on the sign, you won’t understand this pivotal saying either; it will be out of reach. Because Joshu uses ordinary language here, lest people assume there is nothing special, the verse indicates that in this ordinary statement there lies a transcendental issue of Zen that is virtually inaccessible and difficult to perceive.

VERSE (III)

A wood buddha does not pass through fire.
I always think of the Oven Breaker—
Only when his staff suddenly struck
Was turning from self realized.

[HAKUIN] *A wood buddha does not pass through fire.* Hard to penetrate, hard to understand; whenever I hear it, it’s dear to my

heart. *I always think of the Oven Breaker*—In connection with this he thinks of the story of the Oven Breaker, who broke a sacrificial oven and liberated the spirit from it. *Only when his staff suddenly struck*—He broke the oven with his staff. *Was turning from self realized*—This is a fine expression, uniquely subtle, Setcho's favorite blade. Is the breaking turning from self? Would refraining from breaking be turning from self? Is this the *self* of the four qualities of buddha-nature: permanent, pure, blissful, self? Or is Setcho talking about himself?

[TENKEI] *A wood buddha*—Bringing it up, in connection with this pivotal saying Setcho *always thinks* about the Oven Breaker, because *when his staff suddenly struck*, the oven broke down all at once, returning to original nature. Thus it was then that it was realized that to try to preserve a body compounded of elements and experience everything through that is to have turned away from the intrinsic self. If there is any attainment based on things, that is a cave for hungry ghosts haunting the bush. If you release the spirit of the stove compounded of elements, letting go of everything all at once, when you neither grasp nor reject, then you will know that the four gross elements and five clusters are fundamentally empty. Thus having no conceptual mental images of objects of senses, for the first time you will know that a wood buddha does not pass through fire, for when it does it burns up.

INTRODUCTION

If you take up one and let one go, you are not yet an adept; even to understand three corners when one is raised is still contrary to the essence of Zen. If you can get sky and earth to change at once, without rejoinder from the four quarters, thunder rumbling, lightning racing, clouds rolling, rain rushing, overturning lakes and toppling mountains, like a pitcher pouring, a bowl emptying, you have still not even managed to bring up half. Is there anyone who can spin the polestar and shift the axis of earth?

[HAKUIN] *If you take up one and let one go*—If you bring up the present time but let go of the other side, this is not light and dark in pairs; unless you reach the rank of arrival in both absolute and relative, you cannot get rid of this affliction. This example requires this introduction; if you see this example clearly, then the five thousand plus scrolls of the canon radiate great light. There is no explanation besides this. Whether taking up or letting go, if one is not independent one cannot be called an adept Zen master. *Without rejoinder from the four quarters* means that everyone falls silent and no one answers back. *Thunder rumbling*—Even if you work as vigorously as described in these images, you still won't manage to bring up half of the message of Zen.

[TENKEI] *If you take up one and let one go*—This refers to fabricated sin and virtue; if you take up virtue and dismiss sin, that is like taking up sweet melon and rejecting bitter melon. This is a matter of expedient method, not the business of an adept. Even if you understand three corners when one is brought up, for a Zen master that is sluggish. Even the employment of a device with an object is

still half the matter; what about the vivifying methodology of one who is free, able to spin the polestar and the axis of earth?

EXAMPLE

The *Diamond Scripture* says, “If one is scorned and reviled by others, this individual has done wrong in previous ages and should fall into states of misery. Because of the scorn and revilement of people in the present age, the wrongs of previous ages dissolve.”

[HAKUIN] This example has been misunderstood by many people past and present. Even the commentary is wrong. There is something of significance here, you know; no more can be said about it. Everyone should look at it closely some day. Never mind the capping phrases; people don’t know why Setcho brought this example up here. If you know this, you know the great work of the Ummon school. Even the commentary does not evince knowledge of this; instead, the commentary gets in the way, and Setcho’s intention is obscured.

[TENKEI] In bringing out this passage, Setcho breaks up the cave of scholasticism, sets forth the Zen eye, and versifies the great meaning of the scripture.

VERSE

The bright pearl in the palm
Is awarded to the accomplished.
If neither alien nor native comes,
It has no skills at all.
If one has no skills,
The devil loses the way.
Gautama, Gautama—
Do you recognize me or not?
Completely exposed!

[HAKUIN] *The bright pearl in the palm*—No one recognizes the bright pearl that's been set out. *Is awarded to the accomplished*—If you have deeply rooted faith and refine yourself thoroughly, you obtain this pearl. *If neither alien nor native comes*—Even if Buddhas show up, they are not reflected; even if Zen masters show up, they are not reflected; when neither enlightenment nor illusion is reflected, then what? Is there accomplishment? Is there no accomplishment? Is there reward? Is there no reward? *It has no skills at all*—The simple actuality of neither alien nor native appearing; there are no miracles and no powers. *If one has no skills*—Filling the realm of devils and filling the realm of Buddhas, this actuality has neither miraculousness nor virtue. *The devil loses the way*—Cultists and devils have no way to spy. *Gautama, Gautama—Do you know me or not?* “In the past you must have heard of me; now see me too.” If you want to know who this is, it is the one without skills.

[TENKEI] *The bright pearl*—The first two lines have fully expressed the efficacy of the koan. The idea is that this bright pearl, which every individual has, is not obtained from someone else; it is originally in you, radiating light and shaking the earth. However, people turn away from this bright pearl, obscuring its light on account of things, as if they have actually lost the pearl. Therefore Setcho says metaphorically that if people can absorb this scripture and realize the stage of Buddhahood, based on the spiritual efficacy of that accomplishment they will be given this bright jewel. When this bright jewel is put to use, it is clear who is alien and who is native; all things become manifest within it, a completely spiritual light without obscurity. This completes the versification of the great meaning of the scroll of scripture in hand, the bright pearl of nonduality of adamant insight. Even so, the foregoing is all in the realm of achievement, so Setcho raises the usual wave and makes a switch. *Neither alien nor native*—There is neither alien nor native; there is no skillful scheming about what is to be rewarded and what is to be punished. Is this realm an accomplishment? Is it evildoing? There is simply no track, trail, or trace, not a breath: therefore even the gods find no road to strew flowers on; where there are no skills, even the devil loses the way and cannot spy. Indeed, it is not only cultists and devils who cannot spy; this is where even Buddhas and Zen masters

cannot see. So saying, Setcho has smashed the cave of scholasticism; then he points to himself: *Gautama, Gautama—Do you recognize me or not?* Do you know Setcho? Maybe his state is inaccessible even to Buddhas and Patriarchs, but have you searched it out? This is a thoroughgoing effort to help others. *Exposed—*What has been exposed? Is it that Setcho has exposed Setcho and all of you have exposed yourselves? What about it, huh? This is a vivifying expression of Zen, with which Setcho spins the polestar and shifts the axis of earth.

INTRODUCTION

Gathering the causes, forming the results, consummating the beginning and consummating the ending, face-to-face nothing has been kept private, but fundamentally there has been no explanation. If someone were to come forth and say, “We’ve been asking for instruction all summer long; why have you not explained?” I will tell you when you have awakened. But tell me, is this avoiding direct confrontation, or is there some particular merit to it?

[HAKUIN] *Gathering the causes, forming the results*—beginning a lecture, ending a lecture; planting seeds, taking in crops. *Consummating the beginning and . . . end*—This is fulfillment from beginning to end. *Face-to-face nothing has been kept private*—This means face-to-face with the Zen folk; it also means Zen folk face-to-face with each other. *There has been no explanation*—Not a single word! *If someone were to come forth*—If someone spirited came forth insistent . . . *Is this avoiding direct confrontation*—Is no explanation given out of desire to avoid the issue? *Or is there some particular merit to it*—Or is there some particular significance?

[TENKEI] Penetrating equally from beginning to end, putting the true imperative into effect without admitting any subjectivity, is the function of a master teacher, but in Zen there is fundamentally nothing to say by way of explanation. This being the case, if someone should suddenly say reprovingly, “Why don’t you give an explanation?” I would say, “I’ll tell you when you’ve awakened.” But is this refusal to speak on account of a taboo, or is there some other, better reason for not speaking?

EXAMPLE

When Master Tenpei was on pilgrimage, he called on Sai-in. He used to say, “Don’t say you understand Buddhism; I can’t find anyone who can cite a saying.”

One day, seeing him in the distance, Sai-in called to Tenpei. When Tenpei looked up, Sai-in said, “Mistake!”

Tenpei took two or three steps. Again Sai-in said, “Mistake!”

Tenpei came closer. Sai-in said, “Were these two mistakes just now my mistakes or your mistakes?”

Tenpei said, “My mistakes.”

Sai-in said, “Mistake!”

Tenpei gave up.

Sai-in said, “Just stay here for the summer so I can discuss these two mistakes with you.”

Tenpei left right then and there.

Later, when Tenpei was living in a temple, he said to the congregation, “When I was first going on pilgrimage, I was blown by the wind of events to the abode of Sai-in. Twice in a row he declared a mistake, and he tried to keep me there for the summer so he could discuss this with me. I do not say I was mistaken then; when I set out on pilgrimage I already knew it was mistaken.”

[HAKUIN] *I can’t find anyone who can cite a saying.* “I’m all alone; I can’t find anyone to talk to,” he declares, talking like an eager beaver. *Sai-in called to Tenpei*—trying to hook him. *Tenpei looked up*—As it turns out, he took the hook. *Mistake!* This “mistake” is extremely difficult to see, a long sword against the sky, cold penetrating to the bones. *Tenpei took two or three steps.* You would think he’d have a way to answer, at this rate, but the mud underfoot was too deep. *Tenpei came closer.* His feet have not yet touched ground. *These two mistakes just now*—These are a nuisance past and present! When you kill someone, you have to see blood. *Were they my mistakes or your mistakes?* When a woman calls her maid repeatedly for no apparent reason, it is just to let her husband hear her voice. *My mistakes.* What a disgraceful thing to say! Just what the hell do you mean by that? *Sai-in said, “Mistake!”* Wielding the razor-sharp sword sideways, he completely fulfills the absolute

imperative. *Tenpei gave up*. His bow is broken, his arrows are all gone, and yet his view of himself is not yet forgotten. *Just stay here for the summer*—extra kindness. *Discuss these two mistakes*—Because I'll rip you to pieces with these two mistakes. *Tenpei left right then and there*. He left in disagreement. *I already knew it was mistaken*—Before I had even gone on pilgrimage I knew it was a mistake, he says, not affirming such a thing.

[TENKEI] *He used to say, "Don't say you understand Buddhism"*—"There's not even anyone who can quote a saying; except me." This is big talk, but the eye here is in Sai-in's two "mistakes." *Tenpei looked up*—He has fallen into the secondary and the tertiary. *Tenpei took two or three steps*. He doesn't know how to act directly. Why? Because Tenpei hasn't gotten out of the cave of intellectual knowledge. *Tenpei came closer*. Totally in the dark, a senseless maneuver. *My mistakes*. A complete zero, a total failure, he misses the point entirely. *Tenpei gave up*. He doesn't seem to be able to see the final point. *I don't say I was mistaken then*—He appears to have the spirit of a Zennist who doesn't accept the judgments of others, but actually he is not. *When I set out on pilgrimage I already knew it was mistaken*—It's awfully late for Tenpei to be talking like this. It's a total loss; it seems futile.

VERSE

Followers of Zen like to be flippant;
Having studied a bellyful, they cannot apply it.
Lamentable, laughable, is old Tenpei,
Saying after all he regretted pilgrimage at the outset:
Mistake, mistake—
In Sai-in's gust of clarity, he melted down at once.
*If a Zen practitioner were to suddenly come out and say,
"Mistake," how is my mistake comparable to Tenpei's mistake?*

[HAKUIN] *Followers of Zen like to be flippant*—Talking big without any real enlightenment, they are all a flippant bunch. *Having studied a bellyful, they cannot apply it*. Even your bellyful of prize "Zen" is

useless in the presence of an adept with enlightened perception; it is lamentable, laughable. *Saying after all he regretted pilgrimage at the outset*—What is both pitiful and ridiculous is Tenpei’s regretting having gone on pilgrimage to begin with, being unable to apply it practically. *Mistake, mistake*—Cold words. *In Sai-in’s gust of clarity*—If Tenpei dodges it, Sai-in’s gust of clarity will die out. Is this praise? Is this censure? Examine closely. *If a Zen practitioner were to suddenly come out and say, “Mistake”*—If someone were to say that what Setcho says is mistaken . . . *How does Setcho’s mistake compare to Tenpei’s mistake?* They’re a thousand miles apart, you know!

[TENKEI] *Followers of Zen*—Setcho is using Tenpei as an example to admonish the empty-headed Zennists of the present time; followers of Zen all prize partial knowledge, he says, as you can see by considering the case of Tenpei. *A bellyful*—Even if he may have some perception, when challenged by someone with clear eyes he is stymied, so he cannot apply what he knows. Therefore . . . *Lamentable, laughable*—To have some perception yet be unable to apply it is a pitiful thing. Indeed, even if you can use it, to obtain a bellyful of superficial Zen is ridiculous. Not only that . . . *Saying after all*—Crying and laughing, Setcho makes an effort to help people by pointing out that this is paying attention after the fact. Don’t hear this as necessarily referring only to Tenpei! Setcho suggests that the people in his audience probably won’t be able to apply it either. When people are going to go on pilgrimage, traveling to learn, they have to have the perceptions for pilgrimage. This is an admonition for the present audience. Having finished this, Setcho switches as usual, with an act of transcendence: *Mistake, mistake*—This is like killing a man with a sword in a flash, not something you can figure out. If you get the point directly, you will be lively and free. If you understand Setcho’s pair of “mistakes” here . . . *In Sai-in’s gust of clarity*—Sai-in’s two “mistakes” were like a gust of clear wind, wherein the mistakes of the whole world abruptly melted down, already resolved. Pay attention to the expression “at once.” Not realizing this, Tenpei didn’t know it was too late to say something about it after he was living in a temple. *If a Zen practitioner were to . . . come forth and say, “Mistake”*—If someone were to say that what

Setcho is saying is also mistaken, he would ask how Setcho's mistake compares with Tenpei's mistake; which one is right? Each of you must discern. A silver mountain, an iron wall, unshakable even if everyone in the world leaned on it; if you want to know this point, he implies "study for thirty more years," letting it go at that. Discussing the "mistakes" in this way, Setcho's aim is to use a wedge to remove a wedge, an unconventional technique.

INTRODUCTION

When a dragon howls, mist gathers; when a tiger roars, wind rises. In the transmudane design of Zen, gold and jade complement one another; in all-around strategy, arrow points meet. The whole world unconcealed, far and near equally revealed, past and present clearly discerned—tell me, whose state is this?

[HAKUIN] *When a dragon howls, mist gathers*—As the spiritual influence of a Zen master operates on a high level, superior people with all-around competence respond to it like an echo. *The transmudane design of Zen*—The subtle call of the transmudane design of Zen for helping people is like the harmony of musical instruments complementing one another. *All-around strategy*—With the tactics of all-around adepts in activating potential, the matching of devices is like two arrows hitting each other head-on in midair. *The whole world unconcealed*—This is revelation without concealment. *Far and near equally revealed, past and present clearly discerned*—These lines can be viewed as footnotes to *the whole world unconcealed*. *Whose state is this?* People like the National Teacher and Setcho.

[TENKEI] *When a dragon howls*—The interaction of wind and clouds is a natural effect; this alludes to the natural interaction of teacher and student between the emperor and the national teacher. *The transmudane design of Zen*—When a single word is spoken, it rings like gold, vibrates like jade; this is the strategy of one with all-around competence. *Arrow points meet*—When teacher and student meet each other, the action is targeted at the state of potential, so *the whole world is unconcealed*, in that the whole substance is manifest in the action.

EXAMPLE

The emperor of China asked National Teacher Echu, “What is the Ten-Bodied Tamer?”

The National Teacher said, “Patron, walk on Vairochana’s head.”

The emperor said, “I don’t understand.”

The National Teacher said, “Don’t approve your own pure reality body.”

[HAKUIN] *The Ten-Bodied Tamer*—The *Flower Ornament Scripture* speaks of ten bodies merging three worlds: the body of living beings, the body of lands, the body of consequences, the body of disciples, the body of solitary illuminates, the body of enlightening beings, the body of fully realized Buddhas, the body of knowledge, the body of reality, and the body of space. It also says that Buddha inherently has ten embodiments: embodiment as an enlightening being, embodiment of commitments, embodiment of emanations, embodiment of empowerment, embodiment of beatification, embodiment of force, embodiment of mental creations, embodiment of virtues, embodiment of reality, and embodiment of knowledge. There are also ten kinds of Buddha. The term “Tamer” is one of the ten epithets of Buddhas. *Walk on Vairochana’s head*. Walk on the head of Vairochana, the reality body. The National Teacher takes him by the hand up to the top of the highest mountain and breaks the emperor’s attachment, like a hawk pouncing on prey, in communion with the source and master of exposition.

[TENKEI] *Patron*—He pointed out that one’s own self is the reality body. *Don’t approve*—This is the National Teacher’s indulgent footnote on the preceding. Part of the technique of setting up teachings according to potentials, even “reality body” is a label stuck on afterward.

VERSE

“Teacher of a nation” is also a forced name;
Echu alone may flaunt his good fame.
In China he helped a real emperor,
Having him walk on Vairochana’s head.
He smashed the golden bones with an iron mallet;
What more is there between sky and earth?
The lands and seas of the universe are sunk in stillness by
night;
I don’t know who goes into the blue dragon’s cave.

[HAKUIN] *“Teacher of a nation” is also a forced name*—This is absolute praise. As Chuang-tzu says, the perfect human has no name. *Echu alone can flaunt his good fame*—Even among the national teachers, the only one worthy of the name national teacher was National Teacher Echu. *He smashed the golden bones with an iron mallet*—He smashes the golden bones of the emperor’s Ten-Bodied Tamer. *What more is there between sky and earth?* The very smashing itself. *The lands and seas of the universe are sunk in stillness by night*—When you get here, it is absolutely pitch black, as in the depths of the night; this is the realm where not a single particle is established, not a single thing. *I don’t know who goes into*—The foregoing words are pearls under the jaws of a sea dragon; you sure can’t get them if you stay on dry land. You can only get them by undergoing terrors and hardships untold times; just make the effort mindless of losing your body and life.

[TENKEI] Fundamentally, is there any such thing as a national teacher? Is there any such thing as an emperor? The term “national teacher” is a label attached in order to force praise on someone. Echu is not the only one this way; let every one of you examine and see: there’s no name to give a mask. Here Echu alone is admitted to be the most perfect, the most noble, transcendent of all the national teachers, with spiritual virtues valued throughout the country, reputation resounding to the skies. This is like a line of praise on a portrait of the National Teacher Echu, praising him to the skies. If you want to know the reason why, it is because he was able to *help a real emperor*. *Having him walk* should not under any circumstances

be understood by anyone to refer to someone else, you know! Everyone can be like this, every single individual.

Having finished the eulogy here, Setcho goes on to versify the line *Don't approve your own reality body*. The National Teacher's action was like shattering even the golden bones of Buddha, sweeping them away entirely so that nothing remains. Free and at ease, having cut off the heads of the enjoyment and projection Buddhas, this is the perception passing through the reality body. In speaking of this, the verse continues, *The lands and seas of the universe are sunk in stillness by night*; here, in this state, mountains, rivers, and the whole earth are still and clear all at once, profound calm and quiet, a realm of thorough lucidity. Here there is no "reality body," and no "self" either. But if it is said that there are certainly no ranks of ordinary or holy or noble or base established, then people will think that the mind without thought is correct, hanging their heads in voidness, biting the dust in glossy, ghostly mindlessness. Therefore Setcho switches here: *I don't know* whether there may be none who take the pearls from under the jaw of the jet black dragon and use them freely, without inhibition. Setcho says *I don't know who* while pointing to himself, challenging everyone, showing lively, liberated, uninhibited exercise of potential. This is a thoroughgoing effort to help others, a transcendental living expression of potential not keeping to a fixed state. So don't think it means keeping your eyes closed. What about your daily activities: whose doings are these? Every step you take as you go about your business is a walkabout in the cave of the blue dragon! The point is that every one of you should see where you are.

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THE RAZOR-SHARP SWORD

INTRODUCTION

I've been making noise all summer, creating complications, just about tripping up all the monks in the land. Now as the diamond sword cuts directly, I finally realize my hundred-fold incompetence. But what is the diamond sword? Open your eyes and I'll show you the point.

[HAKUIN] *The diamond sword* refers to the final impenetrable barrier; it *cuts directly* through all complications. When you cut through, you experience genuine effortless, seeing the scenery of the fundamental ground without knowing anything or understanding anything. This too is a view.

[TENKEI] *All summer*—Making noise means talking a lot; all summer he has been making complications, tripping up monks from all over. *The diamond sword*—Having cut off the aforementioned complications with an indestructible sharp sword, as Engo sees with accurate perception, he *finally realizes* that his lectures on the hundred koans were all incorrect.

EXAMPLE

A monk asked Haryo, "What is the razor-sharp sword?"

Haryo said, "Each branch of coral supports the moon."

[HAKUIN] *The razor-sharp sword* cuts through Buddhas and patriarchs, cuts through delusion and enlightenment, cuts through all complications. *Each branch of coral*—There's no explaining this. Right now, right here, is *each branch of coral supporting the moon*,

you know! Coral trees are beautiful in themselves; all the more when bathed in moonlight.

[TENKEI] This is the sharp sword with which everyone is originally equipped, the sword that is the traditional heirloom of Zen. *Each branch of coral*—This is where all currents are cut off, where your figuring and comparing cannot reach. For the details, see the verse.

VERSE

When it is necessary to settle dissatisfaction,
The great adept seems inept.
Sometimes on the finger, sometimes in the palm,
Leaning against the sky, shining on the snow,
Even the greatest smith cannot hone it,
Even the finest craftsman will never be done polishing it.
Distinctly different—
Each branch of coral supports the moon.

[HAKUIN] *When it is necessary to settle dissatisfaction*—Even asking about the razor-sharp sword is because there is dissatisfaction. Buddhas are dissatisfied, Zen masters are dissatisfied, whatever comes up in heaven or hell is all dissatisfaction; the great guides of humanity and the angels vow to settle the grievances of all living beings. *The great adept seems inept*—This is a slogan from Lao-tzu. Doing things too skillfully seems inept; Haryo's answer is so ingenious that there is no issue of adeptness or ineptness. *Sometimes on the finger, sometimes in the palm*—Since everyone is equipped with this razor-sharp sword, sometimes it appears on a fingertip, sometimes it appears in the palm of the hand, manifesting variously, appearing and disappearing freely. *Leaning against the sky, shining on the snow*—When you draw it, the cold shine of this glittering sword lights up the snow. *Even the greatest smith cannot hone it*—Even a great smith cannot grind this sword. *Even the finest craftsman will never be done polishing it*. If you keep on rubbing and wiping it diligently time and time again, never stopping, that's wasted work. *Distinctly different*—This sword is not an ordinary one; it is

completely distinct. This saying in particular makes “heaven” into counterfeit currency. *Each branch of coral supports the moon*. This is not Setcho’s coral, nor is it the coral of Zengetsu, from whose poetry this line is borrowed.

[TENKEI] Perceiving dissatisfaction in the monk’s question and wishing to settle it, Haryo wielded the sword so sharp it splits a hair blown against its razorlike edge, an heirloom of the house of Ummon, but it was so mysteriously subtle, so inconceivable, that paradoxically the great adept seemed inept, seeming to talk about something irrelevant. Setcho has praised the subtlety of the sword, and Engo has also commented that it instantly takes people’s heads unawares. As for its keen swift action, just when it seems to appear on the tip of a finger, it also appears in the palm of the hand. If it seems that the whole body is the sword, *leaning against the sky*, the long sword shines with a piercing, chilling light, shining cold on the snow. If you want to see this precious sword, see directly; if you wander around unaware that everyone uses it day and night, lively and freely, Setcho finds that distressing. This precious sword is not to be made even by the most expert craftsman, because that is in the realm of cultivation, whereas the sword basically does not enter into the forge of the Buddhas and Zen masters. It is not produced by polishing and whetting, because the rust of Buddhas and ordinary beings does not adhere to it. It is the sharp sword that is originally there, the natural spiritual power, says Setcho; then he goes on to turn the key of transcendence with *distinctly different*. This sharp sword is completely different from an ordinary sword. The way it is used is also distinct from the manner of an ordinary martial artist. Why? Everyone is inherently equipped with this precious sword, which does not show its back, this precious sword whose quality is not lost to a connoisseur even though it has no famous maker’s label. It is swift as a flash of lightning; hesitate, and you lose your life. This is a subtle technique of handling a dead snake to make it come alive, an expression without compare, occupying the heartland alone without peer, a unique precious sword. This is what is distinctly different. As for the poem of Zengetsu, it is a dead snake, a counterfeit coin, serving no useful purpose.

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