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KOAN ZEN FROM THE INSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Buddhism begins, historically speaking, with the awakening of Shakyamuni Buddha. Zen Buddhism is considered the school or teaching that eschews all else and makes this self-awakening its prime concern and focus. The Zen koan[公案] has been hailed as the exemplary teaching “method” and a superlative contribution to religious practice.

The gradual spread and extensive use of formalized koan, however, have also been considered proof of Zen’s *decline* from the “golden age” of spontaneous mondô[問答; lit. “question and answer”] out of which koan originated. And what of the present koan system in use at Rinzai monasteries throughout Japan and in some Western Zen centers? Is it the crowning glory of the Zen school, as some contend, or a kind of corruption necessary to keep Zen alive? Or is such formalization and ossification the deathblow to an already comatose

tradition? To what extent are koan an *im-mediate* (ie, un-mediated) expression of awakening, a unique and superlative religious heritage, an invaluable contribution to humankind? And to what extent are they hollow shells, mere echoes of distant greatness? These are some questions I'd like to discuss with you.

Koan can be explained and interpreted in many ways. I will introduce four related dimensions of the koan: *problem, challenge, probe, expression*. Interweaving traditional accounts with modern Japanese commentary, we will briefly examine the Zen understanding of Shakyamuni Buddha, and the legendary encounter between Bodhidharma and the second patriarch of Chinese Zen. This will give a sense of the koan as what I call problem-challenge. Next we will look at the words and deeds attributed to some Chinese monks from the late Tang Dynasty (618-907) on, to get a sense of koan as probe-expression. Then we will turn our attention to Japanese Zen, centering on the Edo Period (1603-1867) master Hakuin. Brief autobiographical essays of twentieth century Zen laymen D. T. Suzuki and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu can give us a glimpse of the inner workings of modern-day Japanese Zen practice, thus avoiding some problems of historicity.¹ Finally, we will look at some criticisms of koan practice, then consider its possible role in a contemporary international setting—like this one.

I think it will become clear as we go along that each person's struggle and awakening profoundly affect the subsequent teaching methods they adopt. But we should also be aware that it works the other way around: Each person's social-historical context, their experience and learning before awakening, can have a strong influence on the way they understand, interpret, and express that awakening (ie, awakening does not occur in a vacuum).

The real purpose of these lectures, however, will be to prompt each of us, myself included, to examine our own understanding of Zen and the koan, and perhaps even come away with deeper, fresher insight into

the koan and its relation to our own life-practice (be it formal Zen practice or just life). I look forward to going into more detail and learning from all of you during the discussions.

For my basic approach, let me briefly quote the twentieth century Japanese Zen thinker and layman Keiji Nishitani. In the opening to his work, *Religion and Nothingness*, he says of religion and the religious quest:

....we cannot understand what religion is from the outside. The religious quest alone is the key to understanding it; there is no other way. This is the most important point to be made regarding the essence of religion.²

This applies not only to religion in general, but certainly to Buddhism and Zen, perhaps most emphatically to the koan. Replace “religion” with “koan” in Nishitani’s quote and we have:

....we cannot understand what *a koan* is from the outside. The religious quest alone is the key to understanding it; there is no other way. This is the most important point to be made regarding the essence of *a koan*.

To put it bluntly, koan reduced to mere objects of academic study, puzzles or repartee, “to impress an interlocutor, to gain the upper hand,”³ are, in effect, no longer living koan at all. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

Nishitani goes on to state that the question “What is religion?” can only truly be asked, let alone answered, when the question has been deepened to the extent that it gets turned around, *turned inside out*. That is, only when the questioning deepens to include the very questioner himself—when the question of what religion is for transforms

into the question of what *I* am for—does one enter the realm of the religious: “When we come to doubt the meaning of our existence in this way, when we have become a question to ourselves, the religious quest awakens within us.”⁴

KOAN AS PROBLEM-CHALLENGE

With this in mind, if we first grasp the koan as our own living problem, the rest follows naturally. To do this, let’s look at the Zen Buddhist understanding of Shakyamuni. If Shakyamuni is mentioned in a Zen context, the legend of his “flower sermon” often comes to mind. This is found in case six of the classic Chinese koan collection popularly known as the *Mumonkan* [Ch.: *Wu-mên kuan* 無門関; *Gateless Barrier*, first published around 1229]. Before a huge congregation awaiting his enlightening words, Shakyamuni, without uttering a word, raises a flower that he happens to have in his hand. As is clear from their faces, everyone is waiting, perhaps thinking, “Nice flower, now how about some enlightening words?” Only Mahakashapa “hears” Shakyamuni’s eloquent sermon, and thus receives the “Dharma transmission.”⁵

We’ll look more at this legend, which is also an important koan, below. But now I’d like to go back one step further to how Shakyamuni got there in the first place. That is, what was Shakyamuni’s “koan”? What *drove* Shakyamuni to leave home and family—everything—to undergo severe austerities, finally to sit under the Bodhi tree? What was his *problem*? How do we understand this? Traditionally of course, it’s not spoken of as a “koan” at all. It’s expressed as *dukkha* in Pali, the suffering or *dis-ease* of illness, aging, death, and ultimately life itself; *samsara*, or *shôji* [生死] in Japanese. In a word, I would say Shakyamuni came to the shattering realization that we human beings cannot come completely to rest in our be-ing, however we may be—whether monarch or mendicant.

According to the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, Shakyamuni expressed his awak-

ening this way: “How wonderful! All sentient beings are endowed with the great wisdom and virtuous characteristics of the Tathâgata!” But again, how did he awaken—what were the circumstances before his awakening? In the U.S. in 1958, D. T. Suzuki had a discussion with Shin’ichi Hisamatsu; there Suzuki said (in Japanese):

Look at Shakyamuni’s practice: first he had a dualistic understanding, so he got nowhere with it, then he tried austerities, but because he was still concentrating on a goal he ran into a dead end. Finally he had no choice but to struggle on within the doubt block[疑団] or great doubt[大疑]: “What do I do?!”[どうしていいか]. People afterwards have said that Shakyamuni then thought, “This time if I don’t break through I won’t get up from this seat.” But we really don’t know whether Shakyamuni actually sat with such a thought as to break through or not. He just sat with this “What do I do?!”—We can see that as an historical fact or we can see it from the fact of our own religious experience[心理的経過]. Just sitting like this for one week is what is now called a *sesshin*. And then with the self-presentation of the great doubt[大疑現前], Shakyamuni saw the light of the morning star (and awakened).⁶

Looking at his autobiographical essay “Early Memories,” we can see that this is Suzuki’s own story—he’s interpreting Shakyamuni in light of his own experience. In the above conversation with Hisamatsu, Suzuki even says that “we can see it from the fact of our own religious experience.” (The Japanese expression that I’ve freely rendered in this context as “religious experience” literally refers to something like “psychological processes.”)

However we speak of it though, Suzuki’s interpretation certainly lacks

scholarly objectivity. But such “objectivity” carries its own presuppositions, its own agenda, which can cause one to completely miss the point here, as Nishitani’s opening statement about the religious quest shows. What, after all, does it mean to grasp a koan “objectively”?

To offer a thoroughly “subjective” interpretation, the twentieth century Zen master Sōgen Omori wrote the following in an article (in Japanese) on koan Zen:

To grasp the true self, one must confront the contradiction that this self is, and, how should I put it, confront the despair over this life filled with hardship—directly confront this life which is none other than the suffering that Shakyamuni spoke of; thus one comes to know the limits of being human....[All koan are]nothing but living accounts of people of old who gave all they had to seek this true self.⁷

He concludes the article: “The value of a koan can only be known when one has tasted suffering unto death by struggling with the koan.”

As with all living koan, Shakyamuni’s “koan” cannot remain just a *problem* though—to take effect it must finally become an ultimate *challenge*, then a positive *probe* and *expression*. We could say that for Suzuki, Shakyamuni’s *problem*, traditionally spoken of as the inevitable disease of *dukkha* or *samsara*, finally became exacerbated into the self-imposed *challenge*: “What do I do?!” For Suzuki, Shakyamuni had gotten to the point where there was no longer any way, any method to follow. Legend has it that Shakyamuni had already mastered great austerities, but all to no avail because he realized that the problem was still with him. Suzuki sees this final “What do I do?!” coming from out of the very depths of Shakyamuni’s being as a kind of final, self-imposed *challenge*, as his “great doubt.”

And after Shakyamuni's awakening, we can see his (again self-imposed) *probe* as "What do I do?"—now in a completely different sense of just to pass away peacefully having realized final calm and extinction, or "descend the mountain" out of compassion for others. (Tradition has it, of course, that he decided on the latter.) Then, his positive *expression* can be seen in all his subsequent activities, from his flower sermon to "preaching for forty-nine years yet never uttering a word." We will return to koan as probe-expression below.

Let me now turn from these admittedly roughshod interpretations about the life of Shakyamuni to the tradition of Zen proper. Case forty-one of the above-mentioned *Mumonkan* koan collection gives this legendary account of the encounter between the first patriarch of Chinese Zen, Bodhidharma, and the person who went on to become the second patriarch:

Bodhidharma sat in zazen facing the wall. The second patriarch, who had been standing in the snow, cut off his arm and said, "Your disciple is not yet at peace. I beg you, my teacher, please give me peace." Bodhidharma said, "Bring your self forth, then you shall have peace!" [After some time] the second patriarch said, "I have searched for my self and I am, finally, unattainable." Bodhidharma said, "Now you have thoroughly found peace!"⁸

This account provides us not only with the beginnings of the Zen tradition, but with the heart and soul of koan study. The twentieth century Zen master Zenkei Shibayama emphasizes its importance not only for Zen or religious practice, but for the pursuit of truth: "This koan, though it looks simple, deals with the most serious and important point in truth-seeking."⁹

What's the problem here? The disciple states: "I am not at peace!"

What a succinct statement of the problem! What's the challenge? Shakyamuni's challenge to himself was, according to Suzuki, "What do I do?!" Here it's precisely articulated in words attributed to Bodhidharma, the father of Zen: "Bring yourself forth, then you shall have peace!"

The second patriarch has been grasped by the problem, but he hasn't plumbed it to its depths, thus his desperate plea. Bodhidharma, with his challenge, is attempting to help the second patriarch plumb the depths. For only then can it be resolved. Like Shakyamuni, the second patriarch had already done all that he possibly could: supposedly he had already mastered the Taoist and Confucian classics, and even gained some insight from Buddhist study. But I am not at peace! (What do I do?!) Bring yourself forth, then you shall have peace! In other words, only by exhausting oneself in this search can one find peace. This is the "short-cut method" of Zen, Bodhidharma's "direct pointing"[直指].

Shibayama, further commenting on this koan, states:

By making this search one may finally be led to the realization that every effort is in vain. True peace of mind, however, can be obtained only when one is awakened to the stark-naked fact that every effort is ultimately in vain. Seek, struggle, and despair! He who has never wept all night in struggle and despair will not know the happiness of satori.

Shibayama goes on to mention the struggles of Lin-chi[Rinzai] and Hakuin, two Zen masters we will soon meet. He then offers a personal confession and ends with some precious advice:

Master Lin-chi[Rinzai] was described as "the monk of pure, singlehearted discipline" for three years. Later he spoke of those training days of his own: "Years ago, when I was not enlightened, I was in sheer darkness altogether.

er.” Master Hakuin said, “I felt as if I were sitting in an ice cave ten thousand miles thick.” I[Shibayama]myself shall never forget the spiritual struggle I had in sheer darkness for nearly three years. I would declare that what is most important and invaluable in Zen training is this experience of dark nights that one goes through with his whole being.¹⁰

These views are not limited to modern laymen and interpreters like Nishitani or Suzuki, nor to more traditional Zen masters like Omori or Shibayama, nor even to men of old like Hakuin or Lin-chi: much of the Zen tradition speaks with one voice here. Indeed, who in this world cannot hear similar cries echoing in the depths of their own heart? Kitarô Nishida, the twentieth century Japanese philosopher and Zen layman, once wrote, “...if even for a moment we stop and seriously ponder this world we live in, or seriously try to live our life, we must inevitably arrive at such a doubt.”¹¹

The importance of this koan for the Zen tradition cannot be overestimated. Again, it not only provides us with the beginnings, albeit legendary, of the Zen tradition, but with the heart of koan study. And it does this without mentioning any means or method whatsoever, apart from the *problem*, and the *challenge* to exhaust oneself in this search! In this core legend of the Zen tradition, Bodhidharma does not even suggest sitting in zazen. What does he suggest? “Bring yourself forth, then you shall have peace!”

In other words, it is the second patriarch’s being gripped by the *problem*, and Bodhidharma’s *challenge* that are essential here. To the extent that we are gripped by such a problem ourselves, and take this challenge seriously, it ceases to be an old legend and can become, for us, a living koan. And if we take this challenge all the way to the end in actual practice, we can realize that, indeed, I am unattainable: *there*

is no self to bring forth.

Thus, while koan-as-problem is the core entrance, mere awareness of the problem, however acute, is not enough. Only when it is plumbed to the depths does the “answer” emerge; only when I plumb myself to the depths do “I” emerge as the “answer.” This is koan as formulated compassionate *challenge* to help someone plumb the depths of the *problem* and thus awaken. All koan can serve as this fundamental problem-challenge: Shakyamuni’s “What do I do?!” Bodhidharma’s “Bring yourself forth!” the sixth patriarch’s “Who is it that thus comes?” Lin-chi’s “Speak, speak!” Not to mention typical koan such as [What is] Chao-chou’s “*Wu*” (Jôshû’s “*Mu*”) or Hakuin’s [What is] the sound of the single hand.” Ultimately speaking though, almost anything can become a koan—if we take it far enough. On the other hand, any traditional koan such as “*Wu*” or “The sound of the single hand” cannot begin to work as a living koan until it is grasped—and we are grasped by it.

Problem, challenge, probe, and expression: Rather than defining the koan, these four facets reveal different dimensions. Every koan, at least potentially, has these four dimensions—and probably more. Certain koan reveal certain dimensions more clearly though, as we shall see.

A LITTLE HISTORY, A PINCH OF LAW

The Master [Mu-chou] saw a monk coming toward him and said, “It’s a genjôkôan [現／見成公案: obvious case], but I release you from thirty blows!”¹²

It is well known that the word koan [公案] is a juridical term referring to a public case [公府の案牘]. But why was such a term used? The Chinese master Chung-fêng Ming-pên [Chûhō Myôhon 中峰明本; 1263-1323] is often quoted: He compares koan to legal cases used as precedents in public law courts; just as someone in the secular world, if he could

not settle something for himself, would go to the local magistrate to have it settled, so the Zen student would go to a master, who would settle it “on the basis of the koans.”¹³ But again, what does a religious quest have to do with questions of legal authority? Why was such a term used? The legal connection is invariably mentioned in studies on the subject, but the reasons for it are unclear.

We can speculate: Perhaps it was one way of shaking Buddhism free from its scholastic bent and bringing it into the Chinese vernacular. Making accusations, threatening (and occasionally even carrying out!) actual punishments (“twenty blows” “thirty blows” “shackled in cangue and chains” etc.) was certainly an effective way of making the master’s verdict strike home. (Perhaps in a similar way the Buddhist concept of sense gates was transformed into the very concrete “barrier gate” through which one could not pass without the proper legal documents.) Perhaps as the movement away from sutra-reliance in Zen Buddhism leaned too far, these public record mondô—dynamic exchanges between living people—came to replace the sutras as a kind of authoritative written document.

At any rate, Chinese law in the Tang Dynasty was largely composed of legal prescriptions which served as models. Since the emperor and his representatives were considered responsible to Heaven for disturbances on earth, punishment was a way of restoring the cosmic equilibrium. No appeal was possible for a precedent set by an earlier case, and the very occurrence of a legal case was deemed a disturbance, so punishment was usually the outcome. Further, citizens had an obligation to denounce wrongdoers to the magistrate’s office, which served as the court on certain days of the month. There was no civil law as we know it, and if no section of the legal code covered a certain case, there was always the convenient catchall section: Things which ought not to be done!¹⁴ This legal system should be kept in mind as we survey some examples of “koan” usage attributed to early masters.

Mu-chou [Bokujū 睦州; aka (also known as) Ch'ên Tsun-su; Chin Son-shuku 陳尊宿; 780?-877?] was a disciple of Huang-po Hsi-yün [Obaku Kiun 黃蘗希運; d. 850?]. According to *The Ching-tê Transmission of the Flame* [*Ching-tê Ch'uan-têng Lu; Keitoku Dentôroku* 景德傳燈錄; compiled in 1004], Mu-chou was an outstanding example of a master who metes out such punishment. Later we will see what a pivotal role he played:

[Master Mu-chou said,] “Ever since I came to preside here, I have not seen one man free from attachment. Why don't you come forward?” A monk then came up to him. The Master said, “My supervisor is not here, so you had better go outside the gate and give yourself twenty blows.” The monk protested: “Where is my mistake?” The Master said, “You have added a lock to your cangue [ie, portable pillory worn by criminals].”¹⁵

The monk apparently did no more than approach the master—he didn't even open his mouth—yet he was rejected in this perfunctory manner. Why? You might think that Mu-chou refused even to *challenge* the monk. But perhaps Mu-chou's entire approach should be taken as one great challenge to our very way of being—a challenge to examine oneself from the ground up, so to speak.

Let's return to the example quoted earlier: “The Master [Mu-chou] saw a monk coming toward him and said, ‘It's a genjôkôan [現／見成公案; obvious case/ie, your crime is obvious], but I release you from thirty blows!’”

This is considered the earliest usage of the term genjôkôan, and one of the earliest usages of the term koan as well. (But here it's like O. J. Simpson walking into the courtroom to begin hearings and Judge Ito slams down his gavel and declares “Guilty!” Or bowing before entering the *sanzen* room to have a formal interview, but the master is al-

ready ringing his bell to indicate the interview is over and snarling, “Get outta” here!”) One very effective way of *challenging* the student to get down to the *problem*, isn’t it? And a gripping challenge it must have been in light of the legal connotations! Imagine a monk who has left the world of dust to seek the pure Dharma, but upon approaching the master he’s treated like a common criminal!

Case ten of the classic Chinese koan collection published in 1129, *The Blue Cliff Record*, enshrines Mu-chou with this encounter—where he gives the monk just enough rope to hang himself:

Mu-chou asked a monk, “Where have you just come from?” The monk immediately shouted “Ho!” [“Kaaa!” or “Katsu!”]. Mu-chou said, “I’ve been shouted at by you once.” Again the monk shouted. Mu-chou said, “After three or four shouts, then what?” The monk had nothing to say. Mu-chou then hit him and said, “What a thieving phoney you are!”¹⁶

There are many other such examples in the brief chapter of *The Ching-tê Transmission of the Flame* devoted to Mu-chou: “Go away and give yourself blows!” “I will release you from thirty blows. Give them to yourself and get out of here.” “Carry a cangue, present a statement of your crime, and get out of here by yourself.” “First I will rebuke your crime with a written statement, and then I will grant you blows.”

If we grasp the koan/genjôkôan as problem-challenge, and see the effective use of the juridical analogy, such classic Tang mondô aren’t so strange or incomprehensible after all. Given the social-historical context, perhaps they were quite a natural and effective challenge at the time—a true genjôkôan.

Lin-chi I-hsüan [Rinzai Gigen 臨濟義玄; d.866] is much more well known than Mu-chou, so I won’t repeat his story here.¹⁷ Let me introduce just

one event in the life of Lin-chi, to see what the twentieth century layman Hisamatsu does with it:

The head monk went up to Lin-chi and said, "How many years have you been here?" When Lin-chi told him he had been there three years, the head monk said, "Three years? Why don't you go to the Master and ask him for instruction?" Lin-chi replied, "I don't know what to ask. What should I ask about?"

Hisamatsu explicates:

Now, what about this? I am sure we could think of any number of things to ask. To us, it seems inconceivable that someone engrossed for three whole years in practice-samadhi would have nothing to ask about. But what is the ultimate question? Buddhism asks ultimate questions and gives ultimate answers. What about you? Right at this moment, what should you ask? How many people know *how* to ask? Do such people even exist? Can *you* ask a question, the answer to which, if received, will resolve your fundamental problem once and for all? If the question remains merely in our heads, it cannot become an ultimate question which will clarify for us the essence of the "special transmission apart from the scriptures." Here is where the significance of the Great Doubt Block comes in. To ask the ultimate question—there is nothing else beyond that.¹⁸

While some commentators emphasize Lin-chi's "faith," Hisamatsu's emphasis on one's own ultimate problem-question makes perfect sense when seen in light of his own religious struggle. (See footnote 1 for

Hisamatsu's autobiographical essay.)

By the way, do you know who that perceptive and considerate head monk was, the one who directed Lin-chi to question the master? Mu-chou! Earlier we saw him as the mature master refusing monks even a place to find footing. That view needs to be tempered: Here he's urging Lin-chi to go ask the master, Huang-po (Obaku), and it is through such a pursuit that Lin-chi finally is able to awaken. Let's turn now to that event as a classic illustration of...

KOAN AS PROBE-EXPRESSION

Mu-chou suggests that Lin-chi go to the master, Huang-po, and ask about the essential meaning of the Buddha Dharma. Lin-chi does as he's told, but each time he asks, the master just hits him. Lin-chi despairs after getting struck repeatedly. Finally, and again through the intervention of the head monk Mu-chou, he visits Kao-an Ta-yü [Kôan Daigu 高安大愚; nd]:

Lin-chi: "Whenever I went to inquire about the essential meaning of the Buddha Dharma, all he[Huang-po] would do is give me a good, sound beating. I have no idea where my fault is that he had to hit me so.

Ta-yü [*challenges*]: "What! Huang-po was so kind in caring for your troubles, and now you have the nerve to come to me and ask whether you were at fault or not?!"

Lin-chi awakens [and spontaneously *expresses* it]: "Ah! Is that all there is to Huang-po's Buddha Dharma?!"

Ta-yü [*probes*]: "Why, you bed-wetting little brat! You just showed up here, and now you're boasting that there's not much to Huang-po's Buddha Dharma. What exactly have you seen? Speak, speak!"

Lin-chi [again *expressing* it] gives Ta-yü a couple of good

pokes in the rib...¹⁹

For those of you not familiar with Lin-chi[Rinzai]: He later became famous for his shout “Ho!” [“Kaaa!” or “Katsu!”] which he freely dispensed, depending on the seeker and circumstances, as problem, challenge, probe, expression. According to *The Record of Lin-chi*, he emphasized the need to attain “true insight” [真正見解] for oneself, the term “koan” does not appear in his *Record*, and when similar terms do appear, Lin-chi is invariably condemning blind attachment to them: “seize upon words from the mouths of old masters”; “clambering after the worthless contrivances of the men of old”; “turn to words and phrases and from them create your understanding”; “inscribe the words of some old dead guy in a great big notebook, wrap it up in four or five squares of cloth, and won’t let anyone look at it...Blind idiots! What kind of juice are you looking for in such dried-up bones!”²⁰ This is Lin-chi [Rinzai], the father of so-called Rinzai or *koan* Zen.

Let’s look at an account of the life of Te-shan Hsüan-chien [Tokusan Senkan 德山宣鑑; 780-865] for another classic example of probe-expression. He was a great scholar of *The Diamond Sutra*. When he heard about a gang of renegade monks in the south spreading the heretical teaching of “direct pointing,” he decided to go and put a stop to it. On the way, however, he is accosted by an old woman selling fried rice cakes, but is unable to answer her question. Thus he falls into deep doubt. Summoning up his courage, he visits one of these heretic masters, Lung-t’an Ch’ung-hsin [Ryôtan Sûshin/Ryûtan Sôshin; 龍潭崇信; nd]. He becomes completely absorbed in his encounter with the master. Finally night falls. Reluctantly Te-shan takes leave of the master, but it is pitch dark outside and he returns to the master. (Imagine Te-shan’s state of being.) The master hands Te-shan a lit candle—but then abruptly blows it out! With this wondrous *challenge* Te-shan awakens, then prostrates himself before the master, who *probes*: “What did you see

that you bow so?" Te-shan *expresses* his brand-new self: "From now on, I will never doubt the words of the great Zen masters!" (Just a few days ago he was intent on destroying this band of heretics!) The next day he gives further *expression* by burning his precious commentaries on *The Diamond Sutra* with these words:

Even though you thoroughly master the various and sundry profundities, it is all like a single hair in the vastness of space! To exhaustively study all important worldly affairs is like throwing a drop of water into an immense gorge!²¹

Later Te-shan became known for accosting people with his stick: "If you speak—thirty blows; and if you can't—thirty blows just the same!" This was his statement of the problem-challenge, and also a probe, and a positive expression of his own. As you may already know, Lin-chi's shout and Te-shan's stick came to be identified as quintessential expressions of the "golden age" of Tang Zen.

We've just heard some famous koan which, according to the Zen tradition, can be traced back to records of *spontaneous, original mondô* (challenge and response; probe and expression). Let's look at the next step in the development of koan, where previously stated koan are taken up and used (reused), even commented on, as compassionate means.

OLD-CASE KOAN AS A TOOL

Yün-mên Wên-yen [Ummon Bun'en 雲門文偃; d.949] and his awakening encounter is well known, so let me just briefly repeat it here in an early version:

Yün-mên goes to the master's door. The master: "Who is it?" "It is me, Yün-mên." The master blocks the en-

trance[and challenges]: “Why do you keep coming?”
Yün-mên: “I am not clear about myself!” The master: “Old
drill in a rut[ie, utterly useless thing]!” pushes Yün-mên
out and slams the door[breaking his leg in later descrip-
tions]. In this way Yün-mên awakens.²²

Guess who that old master was? Mu-chou.

Yün-mên was one of the first masters to take up statements of earlier masters and use them as challenges, often adding his own alternate answers and comments as well. While he thus may be considered responsible for the beginning of the end of the golden age of Zen, he was also keenly aware of the dangers of blind imitation and trenchantly spoke out against it. To cite a classic example where he first mentions two masters that we have already met: the stick-wielding Te-shan—Yün-mên’s Dharma grandfather, and Mu-chou—under whom Yün-mên was awakened:

Haven’t you heard that the instant Te-shan saw a monk enter the gate, he took up his stick and drove him away?
And Mu-chou, seeing a monk come in through the gate, said:
“It’s a genjôkôan [obvious case], but I release you from thirty blows!”

Yün-mên then criticizes blind adherence to the sayings, the “koan,” of others, much as Lin-chi had done. (It seems clear that “koan” were often misappropriated from the very start):

And how should one deal with the rest? With this bunch of windbags who gulp down other people’s pus and slobber, can recall heaps of rubbish, and display their donkey lips and horse mouths everywhere, boasting: “I can ask

questions in five or ten alternate ways”? Even if they ask questions all day, with answers taking them into the night, they will never see anything, not even in a dream....

Then, however, Yün-mên himself goes on to cite koan—“entangling vine” statements of others, and tells how to work with them as one’s own problem:

The old men definitely had some words[葛藤; lit. “entangling vines”]which could be of help. For instance[my teacher]Hsuëh-fêng said: “The whole world is nothing but you.” Master Chia-shan said: “Get hold of me on the tips of the hundred grasses, and recognize the emperor in the bustling marketplace.” Master Lo-p’u said: “The moment a single speck of dust arises, the whole world is contained in it. On[the tip of]a single lion’s hair the whole body is manifest.”

Try to get a firm hold[on these sayings], pondering them from all angles—and after days or years an entrance will open by itself. This matter does not allow anyone to step in for you; it is nothing but each person’s very own mission....²³

The gradual transformation from spontaneous mondô-exchanges to the systematic use of “old-case” koan is usually attributed to the fact that more and more people not yet fully gripped by the problem—like the second patriarch was said to have been—were seeking out Zen masters. Thus, the masters used these cases as a means to help the inquirer get down to the problem at hand. The stellar rise of this cryptic “Zen school” to a position of preeminence in China is not just a matter of religious fervor, however. Social, historical, ritual, and insti-

tutional considerations cannot be ignored.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND TENSIONS

By the time of Fên-yang Shan-chao[Fun'yô Zenshō 汾陽善昭; 947-1024], sixth generation of the Lin-chi line, koan had reached a level of development and refinement where koan collections were being made and commented on. Fên-yang is said to have collected three hundred koan, including one hundred old cases to which he added his own verse-comments, one hundred cases of his own with his answers appended, and a final one hundred old cases with his alternate answers. This collection became, according to Ruth Fuller Sasaki, “the models for later literary productions of a similar kind.”²⁴

This movement, as you can imagine, was fraught with tensions from its inception. The danger of creating more “vines” to cling to and get attached to, may have been outweighed by the compassionate desire to help others come to this awakening any way they could. This tension within the Zen schools reached a bizarre denouement of sorts with Ta-hui Tsung-kao[Daie Sôkô; 大慧宗杲; 1089-1163], and Dôgen Kigen [1200-1253]: Ta-hui, the father of k'an-hua ch'an[看話禪; “introspecting-the-koan Zen”], is said to have destroyed his own teacher's *Blue Cliff Record* koan collection; meanwhile Dôgen, considered the father of “non-koan” Sôtô Zen in Japan, supposedly spent his last night in China hand-copying it! Whatever the historical facts, these legends clearly warn us against oversimplification of a complex and difficult problem for the Zen schools.

Since I have already given some sense of the koan as probe and positive expression, I will not dwell on Dôgen, although some of his writings are classic examples of this genre. For those interested in this aspect of Dôgen, see Hee-Jin Kim's “The Reason of Words and Letters: Dôgen and Kôan Language.” Here he examines language as non-

dual “expression” [道得] without falling into the “traps and nets of words and letters.”²⁵

Apart from his literary expressions, however, Dôgen’s *embodied* expression of zazen as dropped off body and mind, can be considered his “short-cut method,” his “direct pointing.” Taking it as anything less than one great genjôkôan, I think, fails to do it justice.

Recent scholarship has helped to show how some of the black-and-white divisions in Zen history (us vs. the unenlightened) are more the result of social-historical pressures and sectarian rivalries than matters of actual religious substance or “authenticity.” The north-south, gradual-immediate debate centering on the figure of the sixth patriarch, and the conflict attributed to Hung-chih [Wanshi; 1091-1157] and Ta-hui concerning quiet sitting and active introspection of the koan, are examples. One way of putting the danger that lies behind the rhetoric and name-calling: Sôtô practice has a tendency to center on probe-expression while glossing over problem-challenge; Rinzai practice, on the other hand, can and at times does over-emphasize koan as problem-challenge and neglects the aspects of probe-expression. As we will see below, the modern koan system was one way of responding to this short-coming in Rinzai Zen without relinquishing its primary focus on awakening.

Before moving on to Japanese Zen, let’s take a peek at the “mature” koan practice that gradually developed in China. Although put in the mouth of the Tang master Huang-po (the teacher of Lin-chi and Mu-chou), the work that this excerpt is taken from, *Whips to Drive You Through the Zen Barrier* [*Ch’an-kuan Ts’ê-chin; Zenkan Sakushin* 禪関策進], was not published until 1600:

If you are for real, you will contemplate the public cases, the koan. [For example:] A monk asked Chao-chou, “Does a dog have buddha-nature or not?” Chao-chou said, “*Wu*”

["*Mu*"; "No, it doesn't"]. Contemplate this word "*Wu*" twenty-four hours a day. Study it from morning to night. Continually reflect on yourself, mobilize your energy, and hold onto this word "*Wu*" whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, whether you are dressing or eating or going to the toilet. After long days and years, you will be "*Wu*" through and through: unexpectedly, the mind-flower will suddenly bloom, and you will awaken to the devices of the buddhas and patriarchs....

Chu-hung, the compiler of *Whips to Drive You Through the Zen Barrier*, appends this comment: "This [lesson given by Huang-po] is the starting point for [the practice in] later generations of working on koan...."²⁶

The following section on Ta-hui from the same work is remarkable for its similarity; it seems the basic message has become firmly established, perhaps entrenched or ensconced is a better word:

[Ta-hui:] Just thoroughly investigate the problem yourself at all times. When false thoughts arise, do not try to use mind to stop them. Just introspect the koan. Whether you are walking or sitting, continue to thoroughly investigate. Keep on and on investigating. When there is no flavor, no interest, this is a good time: do not abandon it. Suddenly the mind-flower comes to light, and shines on all worlds in the ten directions.²⁷

Certainly a far cry from Mu-chou's pronouncements and *genjôkôan*.

KOAN ZEN IN JAPAN: AN INTRODUCTION

Japanese Zen, for the most part, faithfully followed, and occasionally developed, this koan tradition. However, there were language

problems for the early Japanese Zen monks during their sojourn in China, and for Chinese immigrant masters in Japan. This resulted in an increased emphasis on interviews with the master that were both *private* and *written*[筆談]. There are even reports of Chinese émigré masters requiring monks to prove their ability in composing Chinese verse before accepting them as students. These conditions naturally made the tradition more solidified and fixed, and also more literal and literary.

This tendency can be attributed not only to linguistic problems, but to the Japanese penchant for preserving tradition. There were exceptions, however: Bassui Tokushō[拔隊得勝; 1327-1387], Ikkyū Sōjun[一休宗純; 1394-1481], and Bankei Yōtaku[盤珪永琢; 1622-1693] are a few outstanding examples of Japanese Zen masters who dared to be independent of the institutional traditions which sought to preserve Zen but often stifled it.²⁸

One interesting adaptation to contemporary needs was the so-called Kamakura koan of the thirteenth century. These were koan composed supposedly on the spot by Chinese émigré masters (for example, Lan-hsi Tao-lung[Rankei Dōryū 蘭溪道隆; 1213-1278]) for people of the samurai class, who often had little time or inclination to master the entire corpus of Chinese Zen literature. These beginning koan were given in writing or through an interpreter, and were directly connected to the samurai's situation. One example: "Surrounded by a hundred enemies; how do you win without fighting or surrendering?" A few strands of this kind of samurai-koan practice continued up into the nineteenth century, partly through the efforts of Kogetsu Zensai[古月禪材; 1667-1751], a contemporary of Hakuin. This line of "samurai Zen" is said to have finally died out at the turn of this century.²⁹

Another significant contribution to the growing corpus of koan collections and commentaries was the exceptional capping phrases or appended verses[著語/下語] of Daitō Kokushi[大燈国師; aka Shūhō Myōchō;

1282-1338]. These capping phrases came to play an important role in modern koan Zen, as we shall see. As we've already seen, this practice of writing down one's own words as comments on old cases was already done by Fên-yang in China approximately three hundred years earlier. Similar to Fên-yang's three-part collection, in Japan there were three-part collections which centered on *The Blue Cliff Record*, with other koan to be done before and after. This seemed to be the koan curriculum in the Otôkan[応燈関]line, to which Daitô Kokushi belonged and which Hakuin helped revive in the eighteenth century. *The Record of Lin-chi* and the *Mumonkan (Gateless Barrier)* were used in other lines.³⁰

The so-called "purple robe incident" is one example of the sectarian rivalry and political machinations that went on under the guise of institutional Zen: When the Tokugawa shogunate strengthened its control of religious affairs in the early seventeenth century, a priest of the Nanzenji branch of Rinzai Zen[Sûden Ishin; 1569-1633], drafted ordinances regulating monastic life. This priest had also served as diplomatic advisor to the shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu (d. 1616). Low and behold, different regulations were drawn up for different Rinzai branches, and Nanzenji was put at the top while the Daitokuji and Myôshinji branches, which had close connections with the imperial court, were given especially severe directives. Daitokuji regulations included:

The chief priest must complete thirty years of Zen training under an eminent master, solve the 1,700 koan, travel to all high-ranking priests for instruction, be capable of conducting both clerical and secular affairs, and have his name forwarded to the shogunate for approval.³¹

This was done partly to increase shogunate control by wresting the emperor's privilege to confer the purple robe on chief priests.

In 1628 Takuan Sôhō [澤庵宗彭; 1573-1645], a leading Daitokuji priest, drafted a rebuttal which stated correctly that 1,700 koan refers not to a specific number of koan but to the number of masters mentioned in *The Ching-tê Transmission of the Flame*. Takuan mentions a number of renowned Japanese Zen masters and declares that none of them were known to have solved 1,700; for example, Daitô Kokushi is said to have mastered only 180. And thirty years training was unrealistic. (One need only think of the approximate life expectancy in seventeenth century Japan.) Takuan again mentions a number of outstanding Japanese Zen masters, and concludes that none of them spent thirty years training. As a result, Takuan was sent into exile for three years and Emperor Go-Mizunô [1596-1680; ruled 1612-1629] abdicated.

The misconception that koan have not played a significant role in Sôtô Zen practice has been largely rectified by recent research into Dôgen's writings in the thirteenth century. That koan practice flourished in Sôtô Zen at least into the *sixteenth* century, however, is not so well known. In spite of efforts to eliminate koan practice by Keizan Jôkin (1268-1325), fourth patriarch of Sôtô Zen, it did indeed continue and develop for a few hundred years. And a rich tradition it was, although koan were not used in the same manner as in Rinzai Zen; true to its convictions, Sôtô practice used koan more as probe and expression than as problem and challenge.

Koan "answer" books for both Sôtô and Rinzai have existed for centuries. My emphasis on beginning with the koan as problem clearly shows what my attitude will be toward such "answers": unless they come from out of oneself they're not worth a thing. But to indicate the slightly different "flavor" within different lineages and schools, let me paraphrase the set "answers" to just the first koan of one case: the "flower sermon" mentioned in the beginning of these talks, also known as "Shakyamuni Holds Up a Flower" [*Mumonkan (Gateless Barrier)*, case 6; *Jûsoku Shôbôgenzô* 十則正法眼藏, case 1].

Unlike in Rinzai Zen, where the disciple is made to struggle and come out with his own answer, in Sôtô Zen, again true to its convictions, the master may freely instruct—*initiate*—the disciple in the correct answer. The Ryôan line of Sôtô Zen, from Ryôan Emyô (1337-1411), emphasizes Zen action [*kikan* 機関; see below] rather than words. So, the traditional answer to “What is Shakyamuni’s holding up a flower?” is to walk innocently like a small child.

The Sekioku line of Sôtô Zen, from Sekioku Shinryô (1345-1423), emphasizes the essential meaning or principle [*richi* 理致; see below]. The traditional answer to “What is Shakyamuni’s holding up a flower?” is to state: “The meaning is within the person holding the flower, not within the flower itself.”³²

For the Takujû line (described below) of Rinzai Zen, the answer to “What is Shakyamuni’s holding up a flower?” is to silently raise the *nyoi* [short wooden stick always in front of the master during formal interviews]; this is the flower, and the action is meant to express great compassion.

While much can be gleaned from poring over written accounts, it’s remarkable how the details of koan practice right up to recent times have remained vague and inconsistent. This is partly because the earlier koan “*public cases*” came to be considered a kind of private, secret and esoteric oral teaching. Bits and pieces can be gathered; for example, the threefold “classification” of koan into *richi*, *kikan*, *kôjô* [向上] is mentioned in the writings of early Japanese masters such as Nampo Jômyô [南浦紹明; 1235-1309, aka Daiô Kokushi]—the teacher of Daitô Kokushi, and Enni Ben’en [圓爾辯圓; 1201-1280, aka Shôichi Kokushi]—the founder of Tôfukuji. The source of such three-fold classifications, however, can probably be traced back to Chinese Zen.³³

The further “classification” of koan, however, is attributed to Hakuin in the eighteenth century. What was this “classification”? First of all, I use the word with hesitation: it’s far from a systematic classifying.

Many koan can be included in more than one class, there are differing interpretations of these divisions and their significance, and in practice they are not gone through strictly in this order either. With this proviso, here are the four basic groupings:

1. *hosshin*[法身 lit. Dharma body; Skt.: *dharma-kāya*]: These are basic koan to wrestle with the problem and achieve a breakthrough into nonduality. They include such koan as Chao-chou's "Wu" [*Mumonkan* (*M*), case 1]; Hakuin's "Sound of the single hand"; the sixth patriarch's "Without thinking good or evil, show me your original face" [*M*, case 23]; Yun-men's answer to what is Buddha: "A dry piece of shit!" [*M*, case 21] etc. These *hosshin* koan are also sometimes called *richi*[理致; essential meaning or principle].

2. *kikan*[機関 Zen activity]: The twentieth century master Sōnin Kajitani explained the need for these koan in an article on the koan system, where he wrote: "Even though you may have penetrated the *hosshin*, that does not necessarily mean that you can function freely in the world of discrimination[ie, duality]." ³⁴ Thus these *kikan* are used to bring the realization of nonduality into action. *Kikan* koan include: Nan-ch'üan's "Cutting the cat" [*M*, case 14]; Chao-chou's answer to the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west: "The oak tree in the garden" [*M*, case 37]; Yun-men's answer to the question where the activity of all the Buddhas comes from: "East mountain walks on water" [*Shūmon Kattō-shū* 宗門葛藤集; *A Collection of Entangling Vines from the Zen School*—a koan collection compiled in Japan, case 57].

3. *gonsen*[言詮 investigating through words]: Once one has broken through the *hosshin*, then brought one's realization forth and clearly expressed it through the *kikan*, one must now give it expression in words. Verbal expression had been a deadly trap; now it must be mastered and put to use. (Capping phrases should also be seen in this light.) Examples of *gonsen*: Yun-men's answer to his own question: "Every day is a fine day" [*The Blue Cliff Record*, case 6]; Chao-chou's an-

swer to a new monk's request for instruction: "Go wash your bowls" [*M*, case 7]; Fêng-hsüeh's answer for how to express it beyond speech or silence,[quoting from a poem]: "Ah, how I remember South Lake in spring, The partridges crying and the flowers fragrant" [*M*, case 24].

4. *nantô*[難透 difficult to penetrate]: The English rendering says it all. Examples: Wu-tsu's "A water buffalo's horns, head, and body have passed through the window. Why can't it's tail pass through?" [*M*, case 38]; "The old woman burns down the hermitage" [*Shûmon Kattô-shû*, case 162]; "Mondô on Nan-ch'üan's death" [*Shûmon Kattô-shû*, case 282]; "Po-chang and the fox" [*M*, 2]; Ts'ui-yen's "All summer long I've been talking to you monks; look and see if I have any eyebrows left." [Talking too much was believed to make one's eyebrows fall out.] Pao-fu commented on this, "The thief's heart is cowardly." Ch'ang-ching added, "Grown." Yun-men "sealed the case" with his renowned, "Barrier!" [*The Blue Cliff Record*, case 8].

As mentioned, these are far from systematic classifications: Chao-chou's "Go wash your bowls" can be both a *kikan*[Zen activity] and a *gonsen*[investigating through words]; Yun-men's "A dry piece of shit!" can be both a *hosshin*[Dharma body] and a *gonsen*[investigating through words].

There are many other groups of koan, including the five ranks of Tung-shan, the ten precepts, and the *kôjô*[向上 non-attachment], which are sometimes classified as a kind of koan and sometimes simply a description of koan in general in the sense that one continues to transcend one's attainment without attaching to it. There's also a final barrier[末後の牢関/の一句/の句], which I'll return to in a moment. Examples of this final barrier: "Express *The Record of Lin-chi* in one word!"; Po-yün's[Hakuin 白雲; 1025-1072]statement to Wu-tsu Fa-yen[Goso Hôen 五祖法演; 1024?-1104]: "Several monks came from another mountain; all attain satori and give good sermons; when asked about the koan they answer clearly; when commenting on Zen stories they do well. Still, I

think they lack something.” (This is also considered a typical *nantō*[difficult to penetrate]and *kōjō*[non-attachment]koan.)³⁵

By viewing the koan as problem, challenge, probe, and expression, one of the things I am trying to reveal is a bit more of the inner dynamics; so, for example I make little of the difference between *kikan*[Zen activity]and *gonsen*[investigating through words]; they’re both *expression*. I am also trying to clarify the sense in which there are “two sides” of the koan; as problem—from the side of the struggling practitioner; and as positive expression—from the side of awakening. There are many other possible ways of viewing koan; I look forward to your input.

HAKUIN’S LIFE: PUTTING SOME SKIN ON THE BONES

Thanks to both first and second hand accounts of the life of Hakuin Ekaku[白隱慧鶴; 1686-1769], we can finally start to see the Zen struggle in the context of a flesh and blood human like ourselves. Hakuin was, however, a bold storyteller who had no qualms about sacrificing historicity for drama. There’s also a good deal of forgetfulness and slips of memory in his later years, so we do need to take his portrayals with a grain of salt. (By the way, both D. T. Suzuki and Shin’ichi Hisamatsu read Hakuin when they were young.)

As a young child about seven, Hakuin heard a Buddhist sermon by a Nichiren priest which described in frightening detail the sufferings of the eight burning hells. Hakuin was mortified. Later he was taking a bath with his mother when he saw the flames leaping about him and felt the hot water in the tub rumble from the flames heating it below: he let out a piercing scream! He was sure this was to be his fate, so he determined to become a monk and finally was able to at around fifteen: someone, he believed, who fire cannot burn and water cannot drown. In his sixteenth year Hakuin read *The Lotus Sutra* hoping to find an entrance, but was disappointed with it, think-

ing all it offered was karmic legends.

Hakuin took up Zen but his faith was crushed when, in his nineteenth year, he read a story of a renowned Chinese Zen master (Gantô in Japanese) who let out a tremendous scream when murdered by bandits. If a great Zen master died in such an ignoble manner, thought Hakuin, then what good is all this Zen practice?! He despaired: If Zen is worthless and there's really no way to be saved, might as well get some pleasure out of worldly pursuits. Thus he took up the study of literature and calligraphy, which was so important for his later development.

Obviously still in inner turmoil, he decided one day to let fate decide his path, and picked up a book that was part of a collection being aired out. It was the above-quoted *Whips to Drive You Through the Zen Barrier*. (This work also had a profound influence on D.T. Suzuki.) Hakuin opened to the section which describes how a monk stabbed himself with an awl to keep himself awake during long periods of zazen. Needless to say, it aroused Hakuin's mettle. He states that this work then became his "constant companion."

He pursued Zen practice intensely and had his first deep insight in his twenty-fourth year while working on Chao-chou's "*Wu*." It was triggered upon hearing the sound of a distant bell at midnight. He cried out in joy: "Old Gantô is alive and well!" (referring to the old master killed by bandits). He states, in a supplement of a letter to a Nichiren nun, that all his former doubts vanished and he then exclaimed: "The 1,700 koan handed down from the past have not the slightest value whatsoever." His immense joy, however, gradually dissolved into enormous pride. (One important reason for continuing sustained and vigorous practice!)

Fortunately he eventually met Shôju Rôjin[正受老人, aka Dôkyô Etan; 1642-1721], the man who was to become "his master." Shôju asks Hakuin about Chao-chou's "*Wu*." Hakuin's smug retort: "There's no way to touch

it with hand or foot.” Shôju grabs Hakuin’s nose and gives it a good hard push: “How’s that for a firm touch!” Shôju then berates him severely for his attachment to his present state and calls him “You hole-dwelling devil!” (Hakuin states that Shôju often hit him with his fists and at one point pushed him off the veranda.) Shôju urges him to work on further koan, such as “Mondô on Nan-ch’üan’s death,” Yun-men’s “A dry piece of shit!” and Wu-tsu’s “Water buffalo passing through the window” (all mentioned above). Hakuin practices intensely, is out begging one day and virtually loses consciousness of things around him, so absorbed is he in koan samadhi. Then he gets knocked over; when consciousness returns he realizes he has spontaneously penetrated those “impenetrable” koan, “right to the root.”

From then on Shôju’s attitude toward Hakuin changes completely, although Shôju reminds him: “Firmly resolve never to be satisfied with little, and devote your efforts now to after-satori[後悟]practice.” Shôju adds, according to Hakuin, that there is also a difficult, final barrier, and declares, “The more you realize the harder you must strive.”³⁶

By the way, Shôju greatly admired a certain Tang master and followed his eccentric lifestyle. Who do you think that was? Mu-chou. (As we’ve already seen, according to the records, Mu-chou was the disciple of Huang-po who played a decisive role in the awakenings of Lin-chi and Yun-men, and who first used the term *genjôkôan*.)

With the present fascination in the West for Dharma transmission and certification, it should be mentioned that Hakuin stayed with Shôju less than a year and probably did not receive any formal sanction himself.

Hakuin continues rigorous practice; for example, a seven-day retreat with one other monk where they sit the entire week facing each other with a bamboo slat between them, so if one dozes off the other immediately strikes him. He states that not once was the bamboo slat used. Hakuin has many other insights and realizations. But it’s not

over yet; *he still has to break through that final barrier.*

Around his fortieth year Hakuin reread *The Lotus Sutra* (which he had dispensed with in his youth, thinking it offered little more than legendary tales of cause and effect) and realized its true worth with an even deeper awakening:

Teardrops began cascading down my face like two strings of beads—they came like beans pouring from a ruptured sack. A loud involuntary cry burst from the depths of my being and I began sobbing uncontrollably. And as I did, I knew without any doubt that what I had realized in all those satoris I had experienced, what I had grasped in my understanding of those koan[因緣]I had passed—had all been totally mistaken. I was finally able to penetrate the source of the free, enlightened activity that permeated[my teacher]Shôju's daily life.³⁷

Now, what is this “final barrier”? According to Hakuin, one must break through “all the other unsolvable, impassable koan, one by one. Even then, a final, difficult barrier still remains.”³⁸ To explain: If one gives oneself up completely to struggling with a koan, eventually an opening will occur. But one must then be able to truly and freely work out of that insight without being attached—even to nonattachment, in other words, to get rid of any trace of attainment, and thus to dwell in complete egolessness right smack dab in the midst of this world, without missing a beat. This is the Zen understanding of *The Vimalakirti Sutra's* statement: “Realizing the affairs of an ordinary person/ Without abandoning the Dharma-Way.” The closing line in the closing verse for the five ranks of Tung-shan calls it, “Finally returning to sit at ease among the dust and ashes.”³⁹

Can you hear this in the following expression by Hakuin, describ-

ing life around him:

In the temple kitchen, piled with greens, the chopping blade is thin and worn. By the furnace-side, at the autumn burning, the fire tongs are busy.⁴⁰

There's not the slightest smell of satori here. And those terrifying flames that had tortured young Hakuin? Now they're quietly doing their job; no big deal. *And yet, this is not mere secular literature; Hakuin's profound awakening is shining through here with a mature luster all its own.*

It's extremely suggestive to compare this final barrier of koan Zen with Dôgen's approach. For example, in the "Genjôkôan" chapter of his classic *Shôbôgenzô*, Dôgen writes: "All traces of awakening disappear, and this traceless awakening continues on and on without end."⁴¹ This is Dôgen's, Sôtô Zen's, final barrier, if I may put it that way. But note where Dôgen put it: "Genjôkôan," from which this is taken, is *the opening chapter* of his magnum opus! Indeed, this is not just something that emerges finally, after long, long, years of training. It's the *end*—and the *beginning*—of true Zen practice. Here Rinzai and Sôtô reveal their common source and join hands, even as they develop apparently opposing approaches.

To return to Hakuin: In his own teaching, to achieve the initial breakthrough, Hakuin eventually replaced the "Wu" koan with his own koan, "What is the sound of the single hand?" He first mentions it in writing in his sixty-fifth year (1749). There he explains it in terms of *Kannon Bosatsu* [*Avalokitasvara, Bodhisattva* of great compassion who has innumerable hands and eyes]: "By *Kannon Bosatsu* is meant the contemplation of sounds, and that is what I mean by [hearing] the sound of the single hand."⁴² Commentators have also pointed out the similarity to Hsueh-tou's remark in case eighteen of *The Blue Cliff Record*: "A single hand does not make random sound."

Hakuin's koan in context reads: "When two hands are put together a sound comes forth. What is the sound of the single hand?" The "Wu" koan in context: "A monk asked Chao-chou whether this dog has the Buddha-nature or not. The master answered 'Wu!' ['No, it doesn't'] Now, what is 'Wu'? or Be 'Wu!'" Can you see an important difference between this koan and Hakuin's single hand koan?

With Hakuin's koan there's no Buddhist reference at all. The "Wu" koan had become, after hundreds of years, a loaded term by Hakuin's time. It was often handled improperly, leading to blank inactivity and "dead sitting," or to random speculation due to "metaphysical" interpretations that had grown up around it. Again, look at Hakuin's own experience! Thus he states repeatedly that with his single hand koan it is easier to arouse the great doubt.

Hakuin was not, however, an absolutist when it came to koan practice (ie, You can only enter the Zen way through koan practice). He strongly recommends it of course, but his mention of the commoner Heishiro is instructive here. In his "Rôhatsu Exhortations" Hakuin tells this story as an example of great courage and determination: After carving a stone Buddha and placing it near a waterfall, Heishiro suddenly realizes the impermanence of all things while watching bubbles on the surface of a stream. Soon after, he happens to hear someone reading some Zen words aloud, and determines to get to the bottom of things. He locks himself in a small room, and sits erect with eyes wide open for three days and nights. He gains a deep insight but isn't fully aware of it until he happens to visit Hakuin at someone's urging. On the way to Hakuin's temple, Heishiro gains an even deeper insight and, according to Hakuin: "Excitedly, he came to my dokusan room and immediately passed several koan." Hakuin continues: "Now let us remember that Heishiro was just an ordinary man. He knew nothing of Zen nor had he practiced formal zazen."⁴³

I can't help throwing in a bit of Hakuin's comments on *The Heart*

Sutra here, to give you a sense of Hakuin at the flush of his powers. *The Heart Sutra* is *the* sutra in Zen: at Tōfukuji, where I practice with the monks, it's chanted three times before eating the morning meal—and that's at 4am! Here is Hakuin's comment on the renowned heart of *The Heart Sutra*, the expression "Form is no different from Emptiness; Emptiness no different from form" [*Shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*]:

A nice hot kettle of stew, and he [*Kannon*] plops a couple of rat turds in and ruins it. It's no good pushing delicacies at a man with a full belly. Striking aside waves to look for water when the waves *are* water!

To give a sense of his poetic powers (and the need to really chew on, chew *through*, koan), here are a few lines in verse from the same commentary:

...don't try to tell me my poems are too hard—
Face it, the problem is your own Eyeless state.
When you come to a word you don't understand, quick
Bite it at once! Chew it right to the pith!
Once you're soaked to the bone with death's cold sweat,
All the koan Zen has are yanked up, root and stem....⁴⁴

THE PRESENT KOAN SYSTEM

In Hakuin's own religious struggle we can clearly see the importance of an initial breakthrough, followed by further intensive practice with koan under a master to deepen and clarify, to "pull up the nails and knock out the wedges" and to keep from falling into the "devil's cave" or getting attached to one's attainment, however unsurpassable it may seem at the time. He also emphasized a final barrier.

None of this seems to be new with Hakuin though, as he often puts statements about these things in the mouth of his master, Shôju Rôjin. Similar sentiments could undoubtedly be traced back centuries earlier. Hakuin did not *create* the contemporary koan system; perhaps it is more accurate to say that he breathed life back into a dying and in some cases utterly corrupt, loosely organized koan practice. He helped to give it a focus and order that his Dharma descendants brought to fruition.

While Hakuin does repeatedly stress the need to gain an initial awakening through struggling with a koan and then go through a lengthy period of practice with other more complex koan, there's no hint in his writings of a detailed koan system like the present one. While "1,700 koan" does refer to the number of people mentioned in *The Ching-tê Transmission of the Flame*, if one includes all the follow-up koan, there are a good three thousand in one of the contemporary Takujû lines! Hakuin's Dharma descendants must have filled in the detail. Modern Japanese Rinzai Zen has been called koan Zen and also Hakuin Zen; I think post-Hakuin Zen is more accurate. One gets the impression that Hakuin's Dharma descendants were so bent on preserving the tradition that they were incapable of throwing anything out!

It's worth noting that both Ta-hui and Hakuin, two of the most important figures in the development of koan Zen, emphasized great doubt-great awakening, yet in the same breath are said to have spoken of "Eighteen great satoris, small ones too numerous to count" [大悟十八、小悟その数を知らず]. There should be a clear and decisive awakening; further practice, however, is still necessary. Both aspects are clearly reflected in the life-struggles of Ta-hui and Hakuin. *The kernel of the present koan system is found here.* This koan system is not so different from earlier practices; but it is more systematized, more explicit, in a sense more self-conscious. Only one great breakthrough is often emphasized in the texts about Tang masters (although they were

often compiled hundreds of years after the master's death). Still, if you look carefully there's almost invariably further insights, clarifications, etc. (Hisamatsu's once-and-for-allness is a useful sounding board here. We will look at his views below.)

Hakuin's disciple Tôrei Enji [東嶺圓慈; 1721-1792] wrote in his *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Flame of the Zen School*: "Barriers were set up to check what has been attained; this is the purpose of koan."⁴⁵ But it was through another of Hakuin's heirs, Gasan Jitô [峨山慈棹; 1727-1797], that the present koan system comes down to us. For it was through his two Dharma heirs, Inzan Ien [隱山惟琰; 1751-1814] and Takujû Kosen [卓洲胡僊; 1760-1833] that the "system" was split into two and solidified into its present form. The Inzan line is said to have remained largely the way Inzan received it, to be the more dynamic, and more liberal in choosing koan to fit the circumstances or individual. The Takujû line is said to have been modified somewhat by Takujû (thus either to have *strayed* from the straight and narrow, or to have *creatively developed*—depending on one's outlook), and to be more detailed and meticulous. For example, the Inzan masters tend to take koan from a variety of sources, including many from the koan collection compiled in Japan, *Shûmon Kattô-shû*. The Takujû masters tend to go right through a text from first to last, often with many follow-up koan. However, each master naturally brings his own character and style, which is at least as important as the relatively minor differences of the Inzan and Takujû lines.⁴⁶

With initial koan, usually Chao-chou's "Wu" or Hakuin's single hand, every possible form and facade that the disciple brings to the private interview is systematically stripped away. The disciple may try to express his understanding through affirmation or negation, through speaking or silence, action or stillness. The master rejects them all with a ring of his handbell, indicating the present encounter is over and calling the next disciple to enter. The disciple may try to act spontane-

ously or emote. The master naturally rejects this as well, although he may offer a word of advice or encouragement, occasionally a razor-sharp remark to undercut the disciple's unconscious attachment. The disciple will eventually despair of all attempts—through intellect, will or emotion. Yet the master is still there, waiting: like a brick wall he does not budge. The present koan method is, in a sense, a calculated ploy to help the disciple break through. It is a systematic development to help others awaken, although compared with Mu-chou's approach it inevitably looks like it is watered down.

To give a general overview based on the Takujû line of Rinzai Zen: The disciple begins with Chao-chou's "*Wu*"—What is *Wu*? Then there are about one hundred follow-up koan such as, What is the state of mind of *Wu*? Talk about *Wu* to a baby! What is the origin of *Wu*? etc. These can be seen as *probes*, to clarify the initial breakthrough; as Tôrei said: "...to check what has been attained; this is the purpose of koan."

Then there is Hakuin's sound of the single hand, again with about one hundred follow-up koan. "*Wu*" and the single hand are the two basic koan that give one an entrance into the Zen world, so to speak.

Then one goes through in order, often with a number of follow-up koan, collections beginning with the *Mumonkan* (*Gateless Barrier*, actually beginning now with the second case because the first case, Chao-chou's "*Wu*," has already been done), then some cases from a koan collection assembled in Japan, the *Shûmon Kattô-shû*, then, again, in order and often with many follow-up koan, *The Blue Cliff Record*, etc.

For the koan of course, one must come up with his or her own answer. But after completing a koan, one often must "sum it up" by finding an appropriate capping phrase from a Zen phrase book (not one's own expression). This attunes one with the rich poetic heritage of Zen. When one's response to a koan is finally accepted by the master in the private interview, the master then presents the "traditional answer." Seeing this live presentation of the traditional answer allows the

disciple to see where his or her own response may have been a bit weak or unclear. The student then begins work on the next koan.

PROBLEMS WITH THE PRESENT KOAN SYSTEM

Bankei Yôtaku[盤珪永琢;1622-1693]provides valuable insight into the dangers of incorrect koan practice. Further, his own accounts of his struggle and awakening to the “unborn” are a precious record of a “pure” practice with one’s own natural, burning koan-problem.

Bankei criticizes the masters of his time for their dependence on “old tools” (including koan), and for trying to force the great doubt block down people’s throats:

In recent times, wherever you go you find that Zen teachers use “old tools” when they deal with pupils. They seem to think they can’t do the job without them. They’re unable to teach directly, by thrusting themselves forward and confronting students without their tools. Those eyeless bonzes with their “tool Zen”—if they don’t have their implements to help them, they aren’t up to handling people.

What’s worse, they tell practicers that unless they can raise a “great doubt block” and then break through it, there can’t be any progress in Zen. Instead of teaching them to live by the unborn Buddha-mind, they start by forcing them to raise this doubt block any way they can. People who don’t have a doubt are now saddled with one. They’ve turned their Buddha-minds into “blocks of doubt.” It’s absolutely wrong.⁴⁷

Another valuable lesson we can learn from Bankei is his stress on using one’s own everyday language, rather than specialized terms from

a foreign idiom. This tendency to use the common language became a hallmark of Tang Zen; Bankei tried to revive it almost a thousand years later to promote the use of everyday Japanese rather than struggling with the technical terms and Sino-Japanese that Zen is preserved in to this day.⁴⁸

Things change slowly in Japan, where “tradition bound,” in its most literal sense, is often taken as a sure sign of authenticity. So much energy is spent preserving and maintaining; precious little seems left to apply to other problems. *Japanese* monks entering the monastery nowadays are sometimes unable to understand the master’s remarks in the personal interview. (Remarks that are a strange kind of medieval Sino-Japanese). Then they have to ask a senior monk to explain what the master said. So much for the immediate effect of *that* encounter! You can imagine the linguistic difficulty for westerners.

The structure and hierarchy that defined every facet of Japanese society in the Tokugawa Period (1603-1867) permeated Zen monastic life as well. To a large extent it still does. Monastic life became highly stylized and formalized. This is typified in the rigidly fixed and secretive Inzan and Takujû koan systems that we have today. They have been handed down for about seven generations now with no substantial adaptation. Well, occasionally riding a horse gets changed to riding a bus, but that’s about it.

This is how the prolific translator Jonathan Christopher Cleary sees it:

At a certain stage of the decline of Buddhism in Japan, so-called koan study became a routinized method of gaining certification within a rigidly institutionalized form of state-supervised “Zen.” The real liberating use of koan has nothing in common with the ritualized teacher-student interview formats and concept of “passing koan” carried

on like a form of mummery. This institutional deterioration of Zen in Japan led debunkers to come out with books that claimed to reveal “the right answers” to the koan—meaning the standardized answers that the inmates of these institutions holding the office of teacher would accept to pass the student. It is indeed appalling to find that this travesty of koan study is still being carried on in various imitation-Zen groups even today.⁴⁹

I don't know where, or even if, J. C. Cleary practiced Japanese koan Zen; but we fellow “inmates” should listen carefully to such criticisms. Without getting down to the problem ourselves, koan study can, and sometimes does, degenerate into this kind of thing.

The Zen scholar Bernard Faure has already shown how ambivalent D. T. Suzuki was toward the koan.⁵⁰ If we look at Suzuki's autobiographical essay “Early Memories,” we can see this attitude: Koan were helpful indeed, but the real motive force must come from out of oneself. It's true; there's no magic to the koan system. It is a kind of necessary evil. Suzuki often addresses the corruption that Japanese koan Zen is subject to. For example:

When...it comes to resemble the fixed gestures and patterned moves learned in a fencing class, Zen ceases to be Zen. At times patterns work well and are useful. And they do have the virtue of universal currency. But by that alone no living thing is produced. I suppose, though, there are some who even find enjoyment in such a counterfeit, lifeless thing, much as they would divert themselves with games of chess or mahjong.⁵¹

A year before Suzuki passed away in his ninety-sixth year, he wrote

the following as part of a preface to a book on koan practice:

The Zen sect is spoken of as something of great profundity, but in reality maybe it is better called a web of lies. With koan, you can imagine to what extent Zen is a matter of startling people by shouting in a vacuous voice and making bizarre, frightening gestures.⁵²

Turning now to Shin'ichi Hisamatsu and his autobiographical essay, "Memories of My Academic Life," we can see many similarities to Suzuki's "Early Memories," and also some significant differences. Both emphasize the necessity of being driven to the limit before one can break through, a central theme that runs through much Zen literature. But note how Hisamatsu refuses any hint of a further awakening, while Suzuki emphasizes that he had a "greater depth of realization" when the Zen phrase "The elbow does not bend outwards" suddenly became clear. This resolved the problem of freedom and necessity that had plagued Suzuki since childhood.⁵³ Such an emphasis on becoming fully conscious of one's experience is an important theme in Suzuki's Zen, and is also an element in koan practice today.

Hisamatsu, however, emphasizes the totality and completeness of his existential plight—and the totality and completeness of his awakening. Elsewhere he criticizes contemporary koan Zen by comparing it to trying to draw a circle by connecting the dots; what you may end up with is a warped polygon rather than a full and complete circle—which can only really be drawn *at once*. A suggestive critique which emphasizes the totality and thoroughness of the breakthrough rather than the long, drawn out *process* of koan training:

In koan practice as it is employed in Zen today, it seems to me that the approach resembles the effort to approx-

imate a circle by forever increasing the number of sides of a polygon. Not only will you fail to emerge with a circle, this kind of thinking can actively interfere with your practice, in that it prevents your drawing the circle all at once. The same kind of thing is found in many of the sermons and talks given in the Zen world these days—you are told to carry your training forward step by step, or to count off so many koan, or some such. Go ahead and count off a thousand, ten thousand koan—any satori you achieve by doing so is not immediate[頓]awakening any more, it's not the immediate that I'm talking about. No matter how you look at it, you are dealing with gradual[漸]awakening. It is important for Zen at the present time that we keep this matter of immediate awakening in mind, the idea that satori is reached once and for all.⁵⁴

In response to this gradual process, often disparagingly called “Up-the-ladder Zen,” Hisamatsu emphasized the fundamental koan: “When nothing whatever will do, what do you do?” With this explicit and universally applicable formulation he tried to circumvent the tendency to get stuck on particularity with set koan and to drive the person to the end, once and for all. This was Hisamatsu’s “direct pointing,” his “short-cut method.” A precious corrective for koan practice today, the world over.

Hisamatsu’s approach is neither unique nor new though; it is a return to the uncompromising and thoroughgoing “Zen” of teachers like Mu-chou, although with a decidedly modern and explicit tone. Indeed, there’s a long history of similar statements that approach Hisamatsu’s fundamental koan: Suzuki hinted at something like this when he interpreted the historical Buddha’s situation under the Bodhi tree as “What do I do?!” Shih-t’ou Hsi-ch’ien [Sekitô Kisen 石頭希遷;

700-790], when asked what Zen's "direct pointing" was, supposedly said: "This way will not do, and any other way will not do either. No way, neither this way nor any other way will do. What do you do?" Wu-tsu Fa-yen[Goso Hôen 五祖法演; 1024?-1104], commented on Chao-chou's "*Wu*": "...I don't ask you to say it is or it isn't, nor to say that it neither is nor isn't; what do you say?" In the "Zen Warning"[禪箴]found in the appendix of some versions of the *Mumonkan* and attributed to the author, Wu-mên Hui-k'ai[Mumon Ekai 無門慧開; 1183-1260]:

If one proceeds, he will go astray from the principle. If one retreats, he will be against the Truth. If one neither progresses nor retreats, he is a dead man breathing. Now tell me, what will you do?²⁵⁵

Although we could add innumerable other criticisms by scholars writing about contemporary koan practice, there's really no need to look outside the tradition at all: the most devastating lambasts come from the very heart of the Zen tradition! For example, the problem of koan practice degenerating into mere imitation has been with us since the beginning—and it has been criticized by the great Zen masters since then. Remember what Lin-chi and Yun-men said about the koan addicts of their time. Suzuki and Hisamatsu also are criticizing what they have gone through themselves, albeit as laymen; they're not standing outside as mere scholars or critics of Zen when they say these things. Neither am I. A thoroughly critical—*self-critical*—spirit arising from within the Zen school itself is, I believe, necessary again. With this, a living and vital Zen Buddhism in an international setting can emerge. Indeed, the seeds of a koan practice appropriate for the contemporary west are naturally developing out of our struggles.

IN CONCLUSION

What is a koan? Nampo Jōmyō [南浦紹明; 1235-1308, aka Daiō Kokushi] – the early Japanese Zen master and teacher of Daitō Kokushi, stated:

Although the number of koan is said to be only one thousand seven hundred, actually the mountains and rivers, the great earth, the grasses and trees, the forests – whatever is seen by the eyes, whatever is heard by the ears – all of these are koan.⁵⁶

Hakuin, in a letter to the governor of Settsu Province, wrote:

What is true meditation? It is to make everything: coughing, swallowing, waving the arms, motion, stillness, words, action, the evil and the good, prosperity and shame, gain and loss, right and wrong, into one single koan.⁵⁷

Bankei, when asked about the koan of the triple invalid (visually, auditorily, and verbally challenged?), responded:

...Right at this instant you are not a triple invalid, so instead of trying to be one – which would be very difficult in any case – please, get to the bottom of your own self!⁵⁸

I hope these lectures have helped to show that the self-contradiction of the self must be realized in/as the koan for the koan to take effect. Koan as a *problem* is the contradiction that I *am*, the living and existential *self-contradiction* of my very *be-ing* – as something, anything. At the same time, a koan as genuine *expression* is not a problematic contradiction at all; it's now my very *be-ing*, freed from this

self-contradiction, as a positive and genuine expression in word, deed, and action. Thus, koan can take the form of explicit self-contradiction as well as utter conformity with things as they are. (“Willows are not green, flowers are not red.” “Willows are green, flowers are red.”) As problem, the self-contradictory form serves to intensify this self-contradiction (that I am); ie, no form whatsoever will do. But to truly grasp them *as koan*—to truly be them—both forms offer the same difficulty! When this is genuinely resolved, as true *self-expression*, *any* form will do. This may sound confusing or nonsensical to the outsider, but it’s not easy for today’s Japanese either: the colloquial expression, “*Zen mondô mitai*” [Like a Zen mondô, a Zen dialogue] means something completely incomprehensible! What I’m trying to do is make it as simple and clear as possible and at the same time remain authentic.

I think you can now see what I meant in the beginning when I suggested that koan are, in a sense, an immediate expression of awakening and a superlative religious heritage. And also why we must recognize that they are, at times, reduced to hollow shells. The fault is not in the koan, but in the way they are used. We must grasp them from within, as our own living and most vital *problem-challenge*, and genuinely use them to *probe and express* what is discovered. Only then do they truly reveal their precious treasure, which is nothing other than our own true self, our formless self.

Finally: What if this whole koan system had never been developed? What if Chao-chou had never said “*Wu*”? What if Shakyamuni had never come down from the mountain? *The koan that remains is the true one; honestly and sincerely looking within right here and now, that’s where to start.* And this is where I end. Thank you.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 I will occasionally refer to these two figures. I recommend their autobiographical essays: D. T. Suzuki's "Early Memories" in *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered* pp. 3-12, and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu's "Memories of My Academic Life" in *The Eastern Buddhist*, XVIII, 1(Spring 1985) pp. 8-27.
- 2 Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 2.
- 3 Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, p. 212.
- 4 Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 3.
- 5 See Zenkei Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, pp. 58-66. On the meaning of Dharma transmission, see *FAS Society Journal*, 1995, pp. 29-34.
- 6 *FAS Society Journal*, 1986, pp. 21-22, with minor revisions.
- 7 Sôgen Omori, "Kôan Zen" in *Kôza Zen*, vol. 2, p. 48.
- 8 Zenkei Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, p. 285, with revisions; see *FAS Society Journal*, 1995, pp. 32-34 for an explanation of these revisions.
- 9 Zenkei Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, pp. 286.
- 10 Zenkei Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, pp. 288, 289, with revisions.
- 11 Kitarô Nishida, "On the Doubt in Our Heart" *The Eastern Buddhist*, XVII, 2 (Autumn 1984) p. 9.

- 12 *Taishô shinshû daizôkyô* 51: 291b; cf. Miura and Sasaki's *Zen Dust*, p. 154.
- 13 Quoted in Miura and Sasaki's *Zen Dust*, pp. 4-7.
- 14 On Chinese law, see *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1993) vol. 3, pp. 234-35.
- 15 Chang Chung-yuan (tr.), *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 108.
- 16 Cleary and Cleary (trs.), *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 66, with minor revisions.
- 17 See Ryômin Akizuki's "Patriarch Zen and the Kôan" in *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 72 (1993), pp. 21-24.
- 18 Shin'ichi Hisamatsu's "On the Record of Rinzai" in *The Eastern Buddhist*, XIV, 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 10-11, with minor revisions.
- 19 "Patriarch Zen and the Kôan", pp. 23-24, with revisions.
- 20 Ruth Fuller Sasaki (tr.), *The Record of Lin-chi*, pp. 19, 25, 28, 31.
- 21 "Patriarch Zen and the Kôan" pp. 24-27, with revisions.
- 22 Urs App (tr.), *Master Yunmen*, p. 20, with revisions.
- 23 From *The Record of Yunmen* version as quoted in *Master Yunmen*, pp. 107-8, with revisions. For *The Ching-tê Transmission of the Flame* version, which is almost identical, see *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 573, and *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, pp. 286-88.
- 24 Miura and Sasaki's *Zen Dust*, p. 12.
- 25 In William LaFleur (ed.), *Dôgen Studies*, pp. 54-82.

- 26 J. C. Cleary (tr.), *Meditating with Koans*[a translation of Ch'an-kuan T'sê-chin 禪關策進]pp. 30-31, with revisions.
- 27 *Meditating with Koans*, p. 38, with revisions. Chinul (知訥; 1158-1210), considered the founder of the Korean tradition of Zen, read Ta-hui's works and was profoundly influenced by them. Ta-hui's "introspecting-the-koan Zen" has been, according to Robert Buswell, "the hallmark of the Korean Sôn[Zen]school and is widely practiced even today in Sôn monasteries." (Robert Buswell's *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen*, p. 29)
- 28 See English studies and translations: Arthur Braverman (tr.), *Mud and Water: A Collection of Talks by the Zen Master Bassui*; Sonja Arntzen (tr.), *Ikkyū and the Crazy Cloud Anthology*; Norman Waddell (tr.), *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei*.
- 29 On Kamakura koan, see Trevor Leggett (tr.), *The Warrior Koans: Early Zen in Japan*[a translation of Shōnankattōroku 湘南葛藤錄].
- 30 See Kenneth Kraft's *Eloquent Zen: Daitō and Early Japanese Zen* and William M. Bodiford's *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, esp. p. 146.
- 31 Quoted in Yusen Kashiwahara and Koyu Sonoda (eds.), *Shapers of Japanese Buddhism*, p. 177, with revisions.
- 32 See *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, p. 152, quoting Rikizan Ishikawa.
- 33 See *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, pp. 146-47.
- 34 Sōnin Kajitani, "Kōan no Soshiki" in *Kōza Zen* vol. 7, p. 264.
- 35 On koan classification see Miura and Sasaki's *Zen Dust*, pp. 46ff; in Jap-

anese see Taiun Rikugawa's *Shinzenron*, pp. 225ff; Sōnin Kajitani's "Kōan no Soshiki" in *Kōza Zen* vol. 7; Sōgen Omori's "Kōan Zen" in *Kōza Zen* vol. 2; Shōkin Furuta's "Kōan no Rekishiteki Hatten ni Okeru Shinrisei no Mondai" in *Bukkyō no Konpon Shinri*, Zenkei Shibayama's "Hakuin-kei Kanna no Ichikanken" in *Zengaku Kenkyū* 83 (December 1943).

36 For translations of reminiscences by Hakuin, see Philip Yampolsky (tr.), *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*, Norman Waddell (tr.), *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin* and "Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Hakuin Ekaku" Part 1 in *The Eastern Buddhist*, XV, 2 (Autumn 1982) pp. 71-109, and Part 2 in XVI, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 107-139.

37 *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin*, p. 33, with minor revisions.

38 "Wild Ivy" Part 1, p. 103.

39 See *Zen Dust*, pp. 71-2.

40 "Wild Ivy" Part 2, p. 107.

41 See Waddell and Abe translation in *The Eastern Buddhist*, V, 2 (October 1972), p. 135.

42 From Hakuin's "Neboke no Mezame" as quoted in Gishin Tokiwa's "Hakuin Ekaku's Insight into 'the Deep Secret of Hen-Sho Reciprocity' and his Koan 'The Sound of a Single Hand'" in *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū)*, March 1991, p. 988, with minor revisions.

43 Quoted in Eido Shimano's *Golden Wind Zen Talks*, pp. 179-183, with minor revisions.

- 44 Norman Waddell (tr.), “Zen Master Hakuin’s Poison Words for the Heart” [a translation of Dokugo Shingyô 毒語心経] in *The Eastern Buddhist*, XIII, 2 (Autumn 1980) pp. 89-111.
- 45 Yoko Okuda (tr.), *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp* [a translation of and commentary on Shûmon Mujin Tôron 宗門無盡燈論] p. 339 with minor revisions.
- 46 See Miura and Sasaki’s *Zen Dust*, p. 28; in Japanese see Taiun Rikugawa’s *Shinzenron*, pp. 286-290.
- 47 Norman Waddell (tr.), *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei*, p. 57.
- 48 See D. T. Suzuki’s “Dôgen, Hakuin, Bankei” Part 2, *The Eastern Buddhist* IX, 2 (October 1976), pp. 12-13.
- 49 *Meditating with Koans*, translator’s introduction, p. 14, minor revisions. On the use of “koan” outside the Buddhist context, see Janine Sawada Anderson’s *Confucian Values and Popular Zen: Sekimon Shingaku in Eighteenth-Century Japan*. Also see Michel Mohr’s review of this book in *Japanese Religions*, 20, 1 (1993), pp. 85-95.
- 50 See Bernard Faure’s *Chan Insights and Oversights*, p. 60.
- 51 “Dôgen, Hakuin, Bankei” Part 2, p. 17.
- 52 “Patriarch Zen and the Kôan” in *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 72 (1993), p. 12.
- 53 See Suzuki’s “Early Memories” pp. 11-12, and Hisamatsu’s “Memories of My Academic Life” passim (footnote 1 above).

- 54 Howard Curtis (tr.), "Shôzan Rôshi and Contemporary Zen, an Interview with Shin'ichi Hisamatsu" in *FAS Newsletter*, Spring 1978, p. 3, with revisions.
- 55 For Shih-t'ou, see *Master Yunmen*, pp 51-53; for Wu-tsu Fa-yen, see Gishin Tokiwa's "Hakuin Ekaku's New Device for Chan Practice" in *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies*, March 1990, p. 6; for the Mumonkan (Gateless Barrier), see *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, p. 332.
- 56 Quoted in *Sôtô Zen in Medieval Japan*, pp. 146-7.
- 57 *The Zen Master Hakuin*, p. 58.
- 58 Quoted in "Dôgen, Hakuin, Bankei" Part 1, p. 18.