

Hakuin's *Yasenkanna*

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Yasenkanna, the dramatic story of Zen master Hakuin Ekaku's (1685–1768) “Zen sickness” and the cure he achieved through a meditation he learned from the cave-dwelling hermit Hakuyū,¹ is the most popular of his many writings. From the time it was first published in 1757, *Yasenkanna* has remained in print almost continuously until the present day.²

The *Yasenkanna* story was a favorite of Hakuin's, judging from the number of times he uses it or alludes to it in his writings. In a more or less complete form, it appears in three separate works: *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* 寒山詩闡提記聞 [A record of Sendai's comments on the poems of Han-shan], *Yasenkanna* [Idle talk on a night boat], and *Itsumadegusa* 壁生草 [Wild ivy].³ It is not known when the basic story first began to take shape, but it was well before *Yasenkanna* was published as an independent work in 1757. Its first occurrence in print was over ten years earlier in *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* (1746),⁴ where it appeared as an extensive note to one of

¹ 白幽. Also Hakuyūshi (Hakuyūji) 白幽子.

² Most of these editions reproduce the Japanese text of *Yasenkanna*, although some later editions, usually issued under the title *Rentan biyō* 練丹秘要, use the *kambun* text found in the final chapter of *Itsumadegusa*. Cf. *Shinsan Zenseki mokuroku* 禪籍目録 (Tokyo, 1962), p. 484. There is another work written in 1755 bearing the title *Yasenkanna*, but it is a completely different work.

³ Hakuin also presents the basic outlines of the story in *Orategama* 遠羅手釜 (1749), *Hōkan Isbō* 寶鑑貽照, and other works.

⁴ Hakuin's Zen-style commentary, in Chinese *kambun*, on the poems of the Chinese poet Han-shan (Japanese Kanzan). According to the *Hakuin osbō nempu* 白隱和尚年譜, a chronological biography compiled by Hakuin's disciple Tōrei Enji 東嶺円慈, Hakuin gave a series of Zen lectures on the Han-shan anthology as early as 1731, when he was forty-six.

Han-shan's poems.⁵ Hakuin used it a third and final time in his late spiritual autobiography *Isumadegusa* (1766), inserting a text almost identical to the one in *Yasenkanna* as a fourth chapter independent of the main narrative.⁶

In all three versions the texts parallel one another so closely as to be almost identical. The main exceptions are that (1) the text in the initial *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* version is shorter by about one-fourth in total wordage than the other two; (2) the *Yasenkanna* version is accompanied by a long preface in which Hakuin gives a detailed description of an important meditational technique involving koan-like themes not found in the others; and (3) in *Isumadegusa*, the final version, he makes some minor alterations to the text and adds a page or so of new material at the end in which he reports the fact of Hakyū's death.

Of the three, those in *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* and *Isumadegusa* have remained largely unknown, or at least unread, to the present day: the former because it was a supplementary note buried away in a lengthy commentary, the latter because it was composed in an eccentric and difficult form of Chinese poetry.⁷ *Yasenkanna* has thus been the only version readily accessible to readers.

⁵ The note begins with Hakuin pointing out the importance for those engaged in religious training of having the *ki*-energy concentrated in the lower body. He mentions he has written a short work setting forth the essential techniques for achieving this end for students of his who were suffering from the symptoms of Zen sickness. The method proved so effective—"nine out of ten achieving complete recoveries"—monks were soon eagerly copying the manuscript for personal use. Hakuin then goes on to relate the basic *Yasenkanna* story.

⁶ *Isumadegusa* is composed in a peculiar form of Chinese prose (cf. next note). See my translation of *Isumadegusa*, *Wild Ivy* (Boston, Shambhala, 1999).

⁷ Although *Isumadegusa* is printed in seven-character lines as if it were Chinese *kanshi* poetry, the text is in fact rhymeless and differs only slightly from the *kambun* prose text Hakuin had used before in *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon*. The additions he made in expanding on the earlier text, however, show the influence of the *kyōshi* 狂詩 ("crazy poem") style of *kanshi* that at the time of his writing in the Meiwa period was at the height of its popularity.

The Preface to *Yasenkanna*, which is attached only to the single volume edition of 1757, is attributed to a disciple or disciples referred to as “Hunger and Cold, the Master(s) of Poverty Hermitage,” but it was obviously composed by Hakuin himself. It begins with a letter purportedly sent from a Kyoto publisher named Ogawa to Hakuin’s personal attendants. Mr Ogawa expresses an interest in publishing *Yasenkanna*, which he has heard contains “secret recipes for disciplining the vital *ki*-energy that were known to the divine sages.” Hakuin then sets forth his reason for composing the work: to make Zen students aware of certain meditations he had used in his youth and found effective against “Zen sickness,” a condition brought on by the rigors of training.⁸

The work itself begins with some brief comment on the early part of Hakuin’s religious life, describing the meditation sickness he contracted during his twenties that forced him to curtail his religious training.⁹ Physically and mentally exhausted and desperate for help, he travelled to Kyoto to visit the hermit Hakyū, whom he had heard possessed knowledge of secret techniques that might offer him hope of a cure. The remainder of *Yasenkanna* is devoted almost entirely to the teaching that Hakuin received from Hakyū.

Hakyū sets forth the basic principles of Chinese medical theory, then presents a series of Taoist and Buddhist meditational techniques for preserving health and extending life, all of which are designed to concentrate

⁸ These meditations involving the use of koan-like themes are fundamentally different from the more purely therapeutic “butter method” described in the main body of the work. Hakuin’s reasons for advocating in the Preface an entirely different meditation are not entirely clear. In his autobiographical writings he states that he was gradually able to integrate the butter method with orthodox Rinzai meditation, but he does not venture to say what form of meditation resulted from this. It may be those he sets forth in the Preface.

⁹ Although the exact nature of the malady is difficult to determine, from the descriptions he gives of its symptoms, modern writers have diagnosed it variously as tuberculosis, pleurisy, nervous collapse, or some combination of the three. Current opinion seems to favor a psychological rather than physical cause for the illness.

ki-energy in the lower body. Finally, Hakuyū teaches Hakuin the “butter method”—his own recipe for dealing with Zen sickness. The work concludes with Hakuin declaring that the method enabled him to achieve a complete cure.

In *Yasenkan*, as in many of his writings, Hakuin displays a penchant, and undeniable gift, for story-telling, and his visit to Hakuyū is dramatized with detail, colorful description, and dialogue that would do credit to a novelist. Occasionally, this leads to some obvious exaggeration, as when he states that Hakuyū was more than two hundred years old,¹⁰ perhaps even immortal, and that he was the teacher of Ishikawa Jōzan (1583–1672).

No doubt this hyperbole was largely responsible for the questions about Hakuyū’s historicity and the factuality of Hakuin’s story which had already begun to surface during Hakuin’s lifetime. In the *Hakuin osbō nempu* [Chronological biography of Zen priest Hakuin],¹¹ Hakuin’s disciple Tōrei voices concern over his teacher’s reputation as a man “given to spinning tall tales and engaging in idle talk.” He even deemed it necessary to undertake a fact-finding trip to the Shirakawa district of Kyoto, where he succeeded in locating an old man who could verify that a recluse named Hakuyū had indeed lived in the area.¹²

Similar doubts were addressed in the first known commentary on *Yasenkan*, *Yasenkan hyōshaku* [Dispelling doubts about *Yasenkan*].¹³

¹⁰ In *Itsumadegusa*, the age is given as “over three hundred and seventy.” YF, p. 33.

¹¹ HN, p. 124. While it is not known when Tōrei completed his draft of the *Nempu*, from a reference made to the work in a letter he wrote to Hakuin, we know that he was working on it during Hakuin’s lifetime. HN, p. 6.

¹² The *Hakuin osbō nempu* was not printed until well into the nineteenth century, and in any case the evidence Tōrei presents does not seem to have been widely known.

¹³ *Yasenkan hyōshaku* 夜船氷釈, which was originally compiled in the mid-nineteenth century but not published until 1914, is an exceptionally thorough commentary done by someone conversant with both Hakuin Zen and Chinese medicine. The author, known only by the sobriquet Kohaku Dōnin 虚白道人, has not been identified. The work has been a basic source for most modern commentaries on *Yasenkan*.

In a section of the work titled “*Yasenkanna to Hakuyū sennin*” [*Yasenkanna* and the sage Hakuyū], the author examines the question of Hakuyū’s historicity, citing inscriptions written by Hakuyū and contemporary records in which he is mentioned, and concludes that Hakuyū was indeed an actual person. In so doing, he also points out incongruities in Hakuin’s account of his visit to Hakuyū. The fact, for example, that Hakuyū probably died the year before the visit is supposed to have taken place, and inconsistencies between the story Hakuin tells in *Yasenkanna* and the accounts of his Zen sickness that appear in his autobiographical narratives.¹⁴

But neither the information in the *Nempu* nor the material presented in the *Hyōshaku* seem to have become widely known. It was not until Itō Kazuo’s *Hakuyūshi shijitsu no shin-tankyū* 白幽子史実の新探究 appeared in 1960 that the doubts about Hakuyū’s historicity were finally laid to rest.¹⁵ In addition to introducing a few additional contemporary references to Hakuyū and some new holograph inscriptions, Itō also discovered a death registry (*reimei-ki* 霊名記) preserved in the Jōgan-in 乗願院, a Jōdo temple in the Shirakawa district not far from Hakuyū’s cave, in which the date and manner of Hakuyū’s death are clearly recorded.

Itō’s book established once and for all that a man using the sobriquet Hakuyū did in fact exist at approximately the time Hakuin is supposed to have visited him. His real name was Ishikawa Jishun 石川慈俊, 1646–1709. Although not the teacher of Ishikawa Jōzan,¹⁶ as Hakuin asserts, he probably

¹⁴ The main autobiographical narratives are found in the third fascicle (*kan*) of *Yaemugura* 八重葎 [Goose grass], and in *Isumadegusa* [Wild ivy].

¹⁵ Portions of Itō’s book had appeared before, in articles such as “Hakuyūshi no hito to sho” 白幽子の人と書, *Zen Bunka* #6 (1956), pp. 40–48.

¹⁶ Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山, 1583–1672, was a famous samurai turned recluse whose villa Shisendō 詩仙堂, located in the Shirakawa district, was not far from the cave Hakuyū is supposed to have occupied.

was Jōzan's student. In 1661, at the age of fifteen, Jishun entered the hills in back of the Shisendō and took up residence in a cave.¹⁷ He remained there for about forty-eight years, shunning the world, until 1709, when he died from injuries sustained in a fall from a cliff¹⁸—at the respectable but not unusual age of sixty-four.

But the question of whether or not Hakuin had invented the story of his visit to Hakuyū has not been as easy to resolve. At this date, it seems unlikely anyone could prove that Hakuin did *not* visit Hakuyū, and many of the rank and file within Hakuin's own Rinzai school still seem inclined to believe the encounter took place. However, among those who have closely studied the circumstantial evidence involved in what is an extremely complicated issue, there now seems to be fairly generally agreement that Hakuin did not visit Hakuyū, but was merely using the hermit-like figure as a means of dramatizing techniques of meditation he had probably worked out on his own and found to be effective for preserving health and curing disorders that were not uncommon among the monks training at his temple.

They point to the discrepancy, noted above, between the dates of Hakuyū's death and Hakuin's visit, and to the improbability, given what is known about his movements that year, that Hakuin could have travelled to Kyōto .at the time he says he did. Another argument concerns the title Hakuin

¹⁷ The Neo-Confucian teacher Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), whose writings include several works dealing with matters of health and hygiene, mentions in one of his diaries a visit he made to Hakuyū at his cave in Shirakawa in the fifth year of Genroku (1692). “Inza Hakuyūshi no koto,” *Zen bunka* #54, Sept. 1969, pp. 51–2.

¹⁸ The entry in the Jōgan-in death registry states that “the hermit Shōfū-kutsu 松風屈 Hakuyūshi—of whom nothing is known except that his family name was Ishikawa and that he was born in the province of Musashi—fell from a cliff on the 23rd day of the seventh month, 1709, and died two days later on the 25th. He had lived in the mountains for forty-eight years, having initially gone there at the age of fifteen.” The entry is reproduced in HSK, p. 8.

chose for his work. *Yasenkanna* derives from a popular saying, *Shirakawa yofune* 白川夜船 (“night boat on the Shirakawa River”), which is used to refer to a person who is only pretending he has been somewhere or has seen something.¹⁹ In calling his story *Yasenkanna*, then, Hakuin was probably alerting readers at the outset that he was engaging in fiction.

The text used is that in the *Yasenkanna furoku* [Supplement to *Idle Talk on a Night Boat*, 1996] edited by Yoshizawa Katsuhiko, which is included as a supplement to a facsimile reproduction of the original Edo period woodblock edition. Variations between the *Yasenkanna* text and those in *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* and *Isumadegusa* are translated and given in the footnotes, with the exception of two passages Hakuin added to the end of *Isumadegusa*, which, owing to their length, are appended to the translation as supplemental notes.

¹⁹ The saying is based on the story of a countryman who brags to his friends that he has visited Kyoto and seen its marvelous sights, but when they ask him about the scenery along the Shirakawa River (which is in fact a shallow brook), he replies that he couldn't rightly say, because it was night when his boat floated down the river.

ABBREVIATIONS:

HN *Hakuin osbō nempu* 白隱和尚年譜 [Chronological biography of Zen priest Hakuin]. Ed. Katō Shōshun. Kyoto, 1985.

HOS *Hakuin osbō sbōden* 白隱和尚詳伝 [Detailed biography of Zen priest Hakuin]. Rikugawa Taiun. Tokyo, 1963.

HOZ *Hakuin osbō zenshū* 白隱和尚全集 [Complete works of Zen priest Hakuin]. Tokyo, 1934–5. 8 volumes.

HSK *Hakuyūshi sbijitsu no shin-tankyū* 白幽子史実の新探究. Itō Kazuo. Kyoto, 1960

HY *Hyōsbaku Yasenkanna* 評釈夜船閑話. Rikukawa Taiun. Tokyo, 1982.

MS *Maka Sbikan* 摩訶止觀, vol. 2. Ed. Sekiguchi Shindai. Iwanami, Tokyo, 1966.

YH *Yasenkanna byōsbaku* 夜船閑話氷釈 [Dispelling doubts about *Yasenkanna*]. Kohaku Dōnin. Tokyo, 1914.

YF *Yasenkanna furoku* 夜船閑話附録 [Supplement to *Idle Talk on a Night Boat*]. Ed. Yoshizawa Katsuhiko. Zenbunka kenkyūsho, Kyoto, 1996. In *Hakuin Zenji jibitsu kokubon sbūsei* 白隱禪師自筆刻本集成 Kyoto 1996–, a collection of fascimiles of the original Edo period woodblock editions, which were themselves printed as fascimiles of Hakuin's holographs. Each of the works in the collection will be accompanied by an annotated typeset edition of the text.

Preface to *Yasenkanna*

Compiled by Hunger and Cold
*Master of Poverty Hermitage*¹

In spring of the seventh year of the Hōreki era, a Kyoto bookseller by the name of Ogawa dispatched an urgent letter to the Shōin-ji in far-off Suruga Province.² It was addressed to the monks who attended master Kokurin.²

It has come to my attention that there is lying buried among your teacher's unpublished writings a manuscript bearing some such title as *Yasenkanna*. It is said to contain many secret techniques for disciplining the vital *ki*-energy,³ sustaining the seminal force, filling the defensive

¹ Hakuin used this same attribution—"Compiled by Hunger and Cold, the Master of Poverty Hermitage," *Kyūbō-anju kitō-sen* 窮乏菴主飢凍選—in the *Dokugo shingyō* 毒語心經 [Poison words for the Heart Sutra] and other works. Although, a few paragraphs below, one of Hakuin's students is put forward as the author of this preface, it was obviously written by Hakuin himself. The seventh year of the Hōreki era is 1757.

² Kokurin 鶴林 ("Crane Grove") is the *sangō* 山号 ("mountain name") of Hakuin's temple, Shōin-ji 松蔭寺; full name Kokurin-san Shōin-ji 鶴林山松蔭寺. By extension, Kokurin also refers to Hakuin himself. According to legend, at the time the Buddha entered Nirvana, a grove of Saul (*Sāl*) trees burst into white blossom. "[When the Buddha died], the grove of Saul trees at Kushinagara turned white, like a white crane" (*Nirvana Sutra*). Hakuin often inscribed his paintings and calligraphic works with the signature *Sarajuge kokurin rōnō* 沙羅樹下鶴林老翁—"By the Old Monk Kokurin beneath the Saul Trees".

³ *Ki*-energy translates the term *ki* 氣 (Chinese *ch'i*), a key concept in traditional Chinese thought and medical theory that has been rendered into English in various ways, e.g., vital energy, primal energy, vital breath, vital spirit. *Ki*-energy, circulating through the body, is central to the preservation of health and sustenance of life. The "external" alchemy of the Taoist tradition involved the search for a "pill" or "elixir" of immortality, the most important element of which was a mercury compound (cinnabar). Once found and taken into the body, it was supposed to assure immortality and ascent to heaven, commonly on the back of a crane. The meditations taught in *Yasenkanna* are concerned rather with the internal ramifications of this tradition, in which the "elixir" is cultivated in the "cinnabar field" (*tanden* 丹田) or "ocean of *ki*-energy" (*kikai tanden* 氣海丹田), the center of breathing or center of strength located slightly below the navel.

energy and nutritive blood to repletion,⁴ and in particular for attaining long life. In short, it contains the ultimate essentials of “refining the elixir” that were known to the divine sages.

Superior men of today who are strongly interested in such matters would be as eager to read it as farmers seeking signs of rain in a parching drought. Although occasionally Zen monks may have been permitted to make copies of the manuscript for their private use, they keep them hidden away in boxes, and they are useless to others.⁵

To respond to the yearnings of these superior religious seekers, I would like to have the manuscript printed and ensure that it will be passed on to future generations. I have heard that as your teacher grows older, he takes constant pleasure in helping his fellow men. If he believed publishing his work would benefit people, surely he would not refuse my request.

My fellow attendants and I took Mr. Ogawa’s letter and showed it to the master.⁶ As he read it, his mouth formed into a faint smile. Taking this as a sign of consent, we brought out the old box containing the manuscripts.

⁴ “Defensive energy” *e-ki* 衛氣 and “nutritive blood” *ei-ki* 營氣 (given in the text in the compound form *ei-e* 營衛) are both forms of *ki*-energy. “Defensive energy” circulates in the subcutaneous layer of the body and functions as the first line of defense against external pathogens; “nutritive blood” (“nutritive energy” or “nourishing energy” is another possible translation, since blood was thought to circulate together with *ki*-energy) is derived from food and circulates in the blood. Also see below, footnote 73.

⁵ *Tenbyō munashiku bitsu ni osamete kakushitaru ga gotosbi* 天瓢むなしく櫃におさめて匿したるが如とし. *Tenbyō* 天瓢 is a gourd the gods use for ladling beneficial rain down to earth. Here the phrase refers to the monks’ keeping their manuscripts to themselves, thus preventing the teachings contained in them from benefiting others.

⁶ For *attendants* the text has *niko* 二虎, “two tigers,” a metaphor for attendant monks, regardless of number. From an anecdote in the *Ching-te ch’uan-teng lu* 景德伝燈録, *cb.* 8. Instead of the usual attendants, Ch’an master Hua-lin 華林 was served by two tigers, Ta-k’ung 大空 (Big Emptiness) and Shao-k’ung 小空 (Little Emptiness). Prefect P’ei Hsiu, not knowing this, visited the master and asked where his attendants were. When Hua-lin called out their names the tigers emerged from behind the hermitage, badly frightening P’ei. Hua-lin then dismissed them, saying, “You can go now, I have a guest.” They excused themselves by emitting loud roars and left.

But when we opened it, we found more than half of the pages were already gone, digested inside the bellies of the bookworms. Thereupon the monks in the master's assembly brought together the copies of the text that they had made, and from them we were able to piece together a fair copy. In all, it came to some fifty pages of writing. We wrapped it up and sent it off to Mr. Ogawa in Kyoto. Being slightly senior to the other monks, I was urged to write something to introduce the work to readers and explain how it came to be written. Without hesitating, I accepted the task.

It has been nearly forty years now since the master hung up his bowl pouch at Shōin-ji.⁷ Ever since that time, monks intent on plumbing the Zen depths have been coming to him. From the moment they set foot inside the gates, they willingly endured the venomous slobber the master spewed at them. They welcomed the stinging blows from his stick. The thought of leaving never even entered their minds. Some stayed for ten, even twenty years, totally indifferent to the possibility that they might have to lay down their lives at Shōin-ji and become dust under the temple pines.⁸ They were, to a man, towering giants of the Zen forest, dauntless heroes to all mankind.

They took shelter in old houses and other abandoned dwellings, in ancient temple halls and ruined shrines. Their lodgings were spread over an area five or six *ri*⁹ around Shōin-ji. Hunger awaited them at morning. Freezing cold lurked for them at night. They sustained themselves on greens and wheat chaff. Their ears were assaulted by the master's deafening

⁷ "Bowl pouch," *bonō* 鉢囊 (also *hatsunō*; *bachibukuro*), is a bag in which the begging bowl is carried during the Zen pilgrimage. Hanging it up signifies one's practice is at an end.

⁸ Akiyama Kanji notes that among the gravestones in the Shōin-ji cemetery are a great many of young monks (*unsui* 雲水) that date from the period of Hakuin's residency (SH, p. 61). Most of them were presumably victims of sickness or famine. The famine that struck the Hara area in 1747, for example, was so severe it forced the assembly of monks at Shōin-ji to disperse (HN, p. 220).

⁹ *Ri* 里. A Japanese mile, a distance of about four kilometers.

shouts and abuse. Their bones pummeled by furious blows from his fists and stick. What they saw made their foreheads furrow in disbelief. What they heard made their bodies break out in cold sweat. There were scenes a demon would have wept to have seen. Sights that would have moved a *dévil* to press his palms together in pious supplication.

When the monks first arrived at Shōin-ji, they possessed the beauty of a Sung Yü or Ho Yen, their complexions glowing in radiant health. But before long they were as thin and haggard as a Tu Fu or Chia Tao, pallid skin drawn taut over their bony cheeks. You would have thought you were witnessing Ch'ü Yüan at the river's edge, about to leap to his death.¹⁰

Would a single of these monks have remained at Shōin-ji even a moment if he had not been totally devoted to his quest, grudging neither health nor life itself?

In utter dedication to their quest, these monks cast aside all restraint, pushing themselves past the limit of human endurance. Some injured their lungs, parching them of fluid; this led to painful abdominal ailments, which became chronic and serious and difficult to cure.

The master observed their suffering with deep concern and compassion. For days, he went around with a worried look on his face. Unable to suppress his feelings any longer, he finally "descended from the clouds"¹¹

¹⁰ Sung Yü 宋玉 and Ho Yen 何晏 were celebrated for their fine masculine beauty. The lives of the T'ang poets Tu Fu 杜甫 and Chia Tao 賈嶋 were marked by periods of extreme privation. The poet and loyal minister Ch'ü Yüan 屈原 committed suicide after being unjustly dismissed from his position and sent into exile. In the *Sbib-chi* 史記 he is depicted as "wandering along the river embankment lost in thought, his hair unbound, his face haggard with care, his figure lean and emaciated...[finally] he grasped a stone in his arms, cast himself into the Mi-lo river, and drowned." Burton Watson, *Records of Grand Historian of China* (New York, 1962) 1:504.

¹¹ "Descended from the clouds" 雲頭を按下し (*untō o ange shi*). Originally a Taoist expression describing the manner in which cloud-riding immortals direct their vehicles to descend when they want to walk on the earth. The phrase appears several times in Hakuin's works, where it is used to describe a teacher leaving the realm of the absolute, where verbal explanation is impossible, and descending to the relative plane and employing expedient means to make his teaching accessible.

and began to explain to them the essential secrets of Introspective Meditation.¹² He was like a mother wringing the last drops of milk from her paps to nourish a beloved son.¹³ He said,

If one of you superior religious seekers who are vigorously engaged in Zen training finds that his heart-fire is mounting upward against the natural flow, draining him physically and mentally and upsetting the proper balance of his five organs,¹⁴ he may attempt to correct his condition by means of acupuncture, moxabustion, or medicines. But even if he could enlist the aid of a physician as illustrious as Hua T'o, P'ien Ch'iao,¹⁵ or Ts'ang Kung, he would find it impossible to cure himself.

¹² *Naikan* 内観. *Naikan* is used in the Taoist tradition to refer to methods of meditation in which the practitioner turns his focus solely within himself, cutting off thought. In earlier Chinese Buddhism, *naikan* describes an inner-directed type of introspection; e.g., T'ien-t'ai founder Chih-i's 智顛 *Mo-bo chih-kuan* 摩訶止観, *ch.* 5. In Hakuin's writings, it generally refers to such techniques performed for therapeutic benefit (e.g., the "butter method"—*nanso no hō*—explained below, note 102), but he also uses it for a more Zen-type introspection employing koan-like themes. In *Orategama*, Hakuin states that Shakyamuni Buddha and Chih-i both taught the essentials of the *naikan* method and stressed the importance of keeping the *ki*-energy in the *tanden* below the navel (HOZ 5, p. 115).

¹³ *Rōba no shūnyū o shibotte* 老婆の臭乳を絞って.

¹⁴ The five organs 五臓—heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys—generate and store the *ki*-energy vital to life.

¹⁵ P'ien Ch'iao 扁鵲, Ts'ang Kung 倉公, and Hua T'o 華佗 are three legendary physicians of ancient China (the text gives a combined form P'ien Ts'ang 扁倉 for the first two). P'ien Ch'iao, 5th cent. B.C., lived during the "Warring States" period. An innkeeper, he one day received a mysterious drug from a stranger that allowed him to see into the true nature of things and gave him the power to perform miraculous cures. It was said he could see into the vital organs of his patients, and knowledge of the pulse is still inseparably associated with his name (Giles, *Biographical Dictionary*, #396). Ts'ang Kung is said to have flourished during the Han dynasty. Hua T'o, who flourished during the Latter Han, is said to have mastered life-nurturing techniques that enabled him to live past the age of one hundred.

Fortunately, I have been entrusted with a secret technique, perfected by the divine sages, for returning the elixir to the ocean of vital energy below the navel.¹⁶ I want you to try this technique. If you do, you will see for yourselves its marvelous efficacy: it will appear to you like a bright sun breaking through a veil of cloud and mist.

Once you undertake to practice this secret technique, you should, for the time being, cease your practice of *zazen*. Set aside your koan study. First of all, it is important for you to get a good sound sleep.¹⁷ Before you close your eyes, lie on your back with your legs together. Stretch them out straight, pushing downward as hard as you can with the arches of your feet. Then draw all your primal energy¹⁸ down into the cinnabar field, so that it fills the lower body—the space below the navel, down through the lower back and legs, to the arches of the feet. Periodically repeat the following thoughts:

¹⁶ Returning the elixir (*gentan* 還丹) refers to the secret method by which Taoist alchemists refined cinnabar to obtain the pure elixir. The Taoist alchemist Ko Hung's *Pao p'u tzu* 抱朴子 [The master who embraces purity] states, "If you consume elixir turned nine times, you will in three days time become an immortal" (YF, p. 11). Also below, note 53. Here the term is applied to the perfecting of the *naikan* 内観 technique for returning the *ki*-energy down into the ocean of vital energy below the navel. The more or less identical terms *kikai* and *tanden* ("cinnabar field") sometimes appear in a combined form as *kikai tanden*, "cinnabar field [located] in the ocean of vital energy." "While there are *tanden* located at three places in the body, the one to which I refer is the lower *tanden*. The *kikai* and the *tanden*, which are virtually identical, are both located below the navel. The *tanden* is two inches below the navel, the *kikai* an inch and a half below it. It is in this area that the true *ki*-energy always accumulates" (*Orategama*, HOZ 5, p. 120).

¹⁷ 熟睡一覺すべし *jukusui ikkaku subesbi*. The phrase appears in the *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin* 禪関策進 [Spurring students beyond the Zen barriers], which Hakuin read constantly during his early years of training.

¹⁸ Primal *ki*-energy (*gen-ki* 元氣).

1. This cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy, the lower back and legs, the arches of the feet—it is all my true and original face.¹⁹ How can that original face have nostrils?

2. The cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy, the lower back and legs, the arches of the feet—it is all the home and native place of my original being.²⁰ What news or tidings could come from that native place?

3. The cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy, the lower back and legs, the arches of the feet—it is all the Pure Land of my own mind.²¹ How could the splendors of that Pure Land exist apart from my mind?

4. The cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy—it is all the Amida Buddha of my own self. How could Amida Buddha preach the Dharma apart from that self?²²

Turn these contemplations over and over in your mind. As you do, the

¹⁹ True and original face: *bonrai no menmoku* 本来の面目: the Buddha-nature innate in all beings.

²⁰ Native place of my original being: *honbun no kakyō* 本分の家郷.

²¹ “Pure Land of the mind,” *yuishin jōdo* 唯心淨土. The Pure Land sutras state that “Amida Buddha resides to the West, a hundred billion Buddha-lands distant from here.” The Zen school, especially in Japan, gives this a characteristic twist, asserting that you yourself are Amida Buddha, and that Amida’s Pure Land exists within your own mind. Assertions to this effect are found in the Yüan dynasty Ch’an master T’ien-ju Wei-tse’s 天如惟則 *Ching-t’u buo-wen* 淨土或問, and, in Japanese Zen, in such works as Ikkyū Sōjun’s 一休宗純 *Amida hadaka monogatari*, あみだはだかものがたり, Shidō Munan’s 至道無難 *Sokusbin-ki*, 即心記, and Suzuki Shōsan’s 鈴木正三 *Mōan-jō*, 盲安丈. In secular literature, they also appear in Noh plays such as *Sanemori* 實盛 and *Kashiwazaki* 柏崎.

²² The point in the rhetorical questions that conclude each of the contemplations is that the Pure Land and Amida Buddha must not be sought outside the self: e.g., if the Pure Land is located in the ocean of *ki*-energy below the navel, how could it possess the “splendors” or beautiful adornments (*sbōgon* 莊嚴) described in the Pure Land sutras? The four contemplations outlined here, alluding to the return of one’s true and essential being (e.g., “Original Face”) to its native place, are designed to bring the practitioner’s *ki*-energy down into the cinnabar field. Cf. YH, p. 26. In *Orategama*, Hakuin adds one more contemplation to these four: “The cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy, the lower back and legs, the arches of the feet—it is all Chao-chou’s Mu. What principle can this Mu possibly have?” (HOZ, 5, p. 115). Chao-chou’s Mu is the first koan in the *Wu-men kuan* 無門闕 collection.

the cumulative effect of focusing your thoughts on them will gradually increase. Before you even realize it, all the primal energy in your body will concentrate in your lower body, filling the space from the lower back and legs down to the arches of the feet. The abdomen below the navel will become distended and taut²³—as tight and full as a leather kickball not yet prepared for play.

Continue to practice the contemplations assiduously in this same way. In as little as five to seven days, and in no more than two or three weeks, all the various disorders you have been suffering from—caused by congestion within the five organs and six viscera that depletes the *ki*-energy and weakens the body²⁴—will be swept totally away and cease to exist. If in that time you are not totally cured, this old neck of mine is yours for the taking.²⁵

The master's students bowed deeply to him, their hearts filled with joy. They began to put in practice the instructions they had received. Each one of them experienced for himself the marvelous effects of Introspective Meditation. For some, results came quickly; for others, it took somewhat longer. It depended entirely on how assiduously they practiced the technique. Almost all experienced complete recoveries. Their praise of the

²³ *Saika-kosen* 臍下瓠然. The precise sense of the following simile is not entirely clear. I follow YH, which describes it as a brand-new leather kickball, one that has not been beaten with a bamboo staff to soften it for use (YH, p. 27).

²⁴ *Gosbaku rokuju kikyō rōeki* 五積六聚 氣虛勞役. Any congestion of *ki*-energy in the five organs 五臟 and six viscera 六腑 (gall bladder, stomach, small and large intestines, urinary bladder, and the *san chiao* 三焦, or “triple heater,” described in note 76 below) that restricts its movement will create an imbalance between the organs and result in disorder and illness. According to the *Hyōsbaku*, the term *rōeki* 勞役, translated here as “weakening the body,” refers to “weakness in the lungs and spleen, a condition we call today tuberculosis” (YH, p. 41).

²⁵ The T'ang Ch'an master Chao-chou said to a disciple, “Just investigate the Dharma-principle by doing zazen for two or three years. If after that time you are still unable to attain the Way, you can come and cut off my head” (*Chao-chou yü-lu* 趙州語錄; *Jōsbū-roku*, ed. Akizuki Ryōmin, Tokyo, 1972, p. 191).

meditation knew no bounds. The master continued:

Once the infirmity in your hearts is cured, you must not rest content with that. The stronger you become, the harder you must strive in your practice. The deeper you penetrate into enlightenment, the more resolutely you must press forward.

When I was a young man taking my first steps along the religious path, I too developed a serious illness. Cure seemed impossible. The misery I suffered was ten times greater than anything you have experienced. I was at the end of my tether. I didn't know what to do, which way to turn. One thing I was sure of, however. I'd be better off dying and having done with it. At least I'd be free and no longer troubled by this wretched carcass-bag of skin.²⁶ Anything was better than going on as I was, wallowing impotently in black despair. Yet still I suffered. How I suffered! Then I encountered a wise man²⁷ who taught me the secret method of Introspective Meditation. Thanks to him, I was able to cure myself completely, just like you monks.

According to this man, Introspective Meditation is the secret method the divine sages employed to prolong their lives and attain immortality. It enabled those of even mediocre and inferior ability to live for three hundred years. A person of superior capacity might prolong his life almost indefinitely. I could scarcely contain my joy when I heard him say that. I began to practice the meditation and continued it faithfully for some three years. Gradually, my body and mind returned to perfect health. My vital spirits revived. I felt myself grow steadily stronger and more confident.

It became increasingly clear at this point that even if I did master the

²⁶ *Kakunō* 革囊. In the *Ssu-shib-erb chang-ching* 四十二章經 [Sutra of forty-two sections], section 26, the Buddha refers disparagingly to “this bag of skin, full of every kind of filth!”

²⁷ *Hakuyūshi* 白幽子. The teacher who appears in main text below.

method of Introspective Meditation and lived to be eight hundred years old like P'eng Tsu,²⁸ I'd still be no better than one of those disembodied, corpse-guarding spirits that cling mulishly to emptiness.²⁹ I'd turn into an old polecat, slumbering away in a comfortable old burrow until eventually I passed away. Why do I say this? Well, has anyone today ever caught sight of Ko Hung? Or T'ieh-kuai? How about Chang Hua or Fei Ch'ang?³⁰ Or any others who are celebrated for their longevity? In any event, attaining long life in itself cannot compare with establishing the Four Great Universal Vows in your heart and constantly working to impart the great Dharma to others as you acquire the dignified comportment of Bodhisattvahood.³¹ It cannot compare with realizing the true and invincible Dharma-body, which, once attained, is never lost, which is as unborn and undying as the great void.³² It cannot

²⁸ P'eng Tsu 彭祖 is the Chinese Methuselah. According to the *Lieh-hsien chuan* 列仙伝 [Lives of the sages], "He lived over eight hundred years, ate nothing but the *ling-shih* 靈芝 fungus, and was adept in the yogic practice of controlling the *ki-energy*" 導引行氣. *Ressen-den, Shinsen-den*, ed. Sawada Zuihō (Tokyo, 1993), p. 34.

²⁹ *Gankū muchū no shusbiki* 頑空無智の守屍. Yoshizawa explains "corpse-guarding spirit" (*shusbiki* 守屍鬼) as an allusion to a death-in-life type of existence in which the mind merely keeps watch over the body without exerting any effort toward spiritual betterment (YF, p. 20).

³⁰ Taoist figures noted for great longevity: the physician Ko Hung 葛洪, 283–363 (autobiography in James Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine, and Religion*. Cambridge, 1966); Fei Ch'ang 費張 (Fei Ch'ang-fang 費長房), necromancer of the Latter Han; [Li] T'ieh Kuai [李] 鐵拐; and Chang Kuo 張果 (the text has Chang Hua 張華). T'ieh Kuai and Chang Kuo are counted among the Eight Immortals 八仙 of Taoism.

³¹ The Four Universal Vows taken by all Bodhisattvas (Buddhist practitioners) at the start of their training, embodying the Mahayana ideal of working to assist others to enlightenment while striving to deepen one's own attainment: "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them. The deluding passions are inexhaustible, I vow to extinguish them. The Dharma gates are manifold, I vow to master them. The Buddha Way is supreme, I vow to attain it." The phrase "dignified ways of the Bodhisattva" (*Bosatsu no igi* 菩薩の威儀) alludes to the Bodhisattva's practice, which is dedicated to fulfilling the Universal Vows.

³² "How old have you become, Old Mind-master Woman?" "Me? Why I'm old as the great void" (Hakuin's *Shusbū obaba konabiku uta* 主心お婆婆粉引き歌 [Tea-grinding song of the old mind-master woman]; quoted in YF, p. 21).

compare with realizing the great, incorruptible, adamantine body of the Buddhas.

Later, when I acquired two or three students of my own, men of superior ability who were deeply committed to penetrating the secret depths, I had them do Introspective Meditation along with their Zen practice—just like those countrymen who work their fields and fight in the militia as well. Perhaps thirty years have passed since then. My students have increased, one or two each year. Now they number almost two hundred. Over those three decades, I've had monks come from all over the country. Some of the more zealous type pushed themselves too hard in their practice and reached a state of extreme physical and mental exhaustion that made them feeble and spiritless. Some were pushed to the brink of madness as the heart-fire rushed upward against the natural flow. Out of concern and compassion, I took them aside and imparted to them the secret teaching of Introspective Meditation. It returned them to health almost immediately, and the more they advanced into satori, they more assiduously they gave themselves to their training.

I'm more than seventy years of age, but even now I don't have the slightest trace of illness or infirmity. I still have a good set of sound teeth. My hearing grows more acute with each passing year. So does my sight: I often forget to put on my spectacles at all. I give my regular sermons twice each month without fail. I travel extensively to conduct Zen meetings in answer to teaching requests from all over the country. Three hundred and sometimes five hundred people attend these gatherings. They last for fifty, even seventy days at a stretch. The monks select various sutras and Zen texts and I deliver my arbitrary views on them. I must have conducted fifty or sixty of these meetings, yet never have I missed a single lecture. I feel more fit and vigorous today, both physically and mentally, than I did when I was in my twenties or thirties. There is not a doubt in my mind that it is all due to the marvelous effects of Introspective Meditation.

The monks came and bowed before the master, their eyes wet with tears. “Please, Master Hakuin,” they said, “write down the essentials of Introspective Meditation. By committing them to paper, you will relieve the suffering of future generations of monks like us, when they succumb to the exhaustion and lassitude brought on by meditation sickness.”³³

Nodding his agreement, the master took up his brush and without delay began writing out a draft. In it, he set forth the following:

There is nothing better for sustaining life and attaining longevity than disciplining the body. The secret of disciplining the body is to focus the vital energy in the cinnabar field located in the ocean of vital energy. When vital energy focuses in the cinnabar field, the vital spirit gathers there. When the vital spirit gathers in the cinnabar field, the true elixir is produced.³⁴ When the elixir is produced, the physical frame is strong and firm and the spirit is full and replete. When the spirit is full and replete, long life is assured.³⁵ This corresponds to the secret method that the ancient sages perfected for ‘refining the elixir nine times over’ and ‘returning it to the source.’³⁶

³³ “Meditation sickness” (*Zenbyō* 禪病; also “Zen sickness”), alluded to previously, is the central theme of *Yasenkanna*.

³⁴ True elixir—*shintan* 真丹—refers to the fully matured elixir or *ki*-energy in the cinnabar field below the navel, obtained by means of Introspective Meditation. When *ki*-energy always fills the cinnabar field, “body and mind remain in constant equanimity; even at the age of one hundred the hair does not turn white, the teeth remain sound, the eyes see more keenly than ever, and the skin acquires a fine luster—the result of nurturing the primal energy and bringing the divine elixir to maturity” (*Orategama*, HOZ 5, pp. 120–21).

³⁵ This formulation for nurturing the *ki*-energy was a favorite of Hakuin’s, who used it frequently for calligraphic inscriptions. The passage has not been traced, but since Hakuin attributes the same passage to at least five different people elsewhere in his writings, it seems at least likely that he either wrote it himself or cobbled it together from other texts.

³⁶ 仙人九転還丹の秘訣. In the so-called external alchemy of Taoism, the true elixir for longevity is produced by “turning” or kneading the cinnabar substance

You must know that the elixir is not located outside the self. What is essential is to make the vital energy in the heart descend into the lower body so that it fills the cinnabar field in the ocean of energy.

Monks of Shōin-ji, if you practice assiduously the essential teachings I have given you, and are never remiss, it will not only cure you of meditation sickness and relieve you of fatigue and spiritual torpor, it will also enable those of you burdened with the mass of years of accumulated doubt and struggling to reach the final crowning matter of Zen training to experience a joy so intense you will find yourselves clapping your hands ecstatically and whooping in fits of laughter. Why is this?

*When the moon reaches the summit, shadows disappear from the wall.*³⁷

Offering incense and bowing to the floor, Hunger and Cold, the Master of Poverty Hermitage, respectfully composed this preface on the twenty-fifth of the first month, in the seventh year of the Hōreki era. [1757].

*nine times. “If you consume elixir turned nine times, you will in three days time become an immortal” (*Pao p'u tzu*; see above, note 16). In the inner alchemy, and from Hakuin’s Zen standpoint, this is a matter of concentrating *ki*-energy in its ultimate source in the *tanden* or cinnabar field below the navel.

³⁷ A line from a poem titled 酬暢當 (Reply to Ya Tang), by the T’ang poet Keng Wei 耿滄, found in the *San-t’i shih* 三體詩 (Japanese, *Santai shi*) [Poems in three forms], a Sung anthology of T’ang poetry much read and studied in Japanese Zen circles. The full couplet is: “The moon reaches the summit, shadows disappear from the wall / The frost is heavy, willow branches are sparse” 月高城影尽：霜重柳條疎. The second line, according to one authority, alludes to the moonlight penetrating even the darkness beneath the willow tree. Yanagida Seizan, *Hakuin: Bunjin shofu* 9 (Kyoto, 1979), p. 90. Hakuin uses the couplet as a “capping verse” 下語 in *Kaian-kokugo* 槐安國語.

Yasenkanna

On the day I first committed myself to a life of Zen practice, I pledged to summon all the faith and courage at my command and dedicate myself with steadfast resolve to the pursuit of the Buddha Way. I embarked on a regimen of rigorous austerities. I continued it for several years, pushing myself relentlessly. One night, everything suddenly fell away, as I crossed the threshold into enlightenment.³⁸ All the doubts and uncertainties that had been burdening me over the years suddenly disappeared, roots and all—just like melted ice. Deep-rooted karma that had bound me to the cycle of birth and death for endless kalpas vanished like foam on the water.

It is true, I thought to myself, the Way is not far from man.³⁹ All those stories about the ancient masters taking twenty or even thirty years to attain it must be fabrications. For the next several months I was waltzing on air, flagging my arms and stamping my feet in a kind of mindless rapture.

Afterwards, however, as I began reflecting over my everyday behavior, I could see that the two aspects of my life—the active and the meditative—were totally out of balance.⁴⁰ No matter what I was doing, I never felt free or completely at ease. I realized I would have to rekindle a fearless resolve and once again throw myself life and limb together into the Dharma

³⁸ Hakuin was ordained at fourteen and began his Zen pilgrimage at nineteen. The enlightenment referred to here is probably one he experienced in his twenty-third year while he was at Eigan-ji in Echigo Province (HN, p. 97).

³⁹ Reference to a well-known saying from *The Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (*Chung yung*), chapter 13.

⁴⁰ In the *Hakuin osbō nempu* (Age 24), Tōrei says Hakuin “realized that in the daily affairs of life he was still not complete master of his mind and body. When working on a koan during zazen his mind would be calm and focused; yet this same composure was lacking when he reentered the busy world of everyday life” (HN, pp. 115–16).

struggle. With my teeth clenched tightly and eyes focused straight ahead, I began devoting myself singlemindedly to my practice, forsaking food and sleep altogether.

Before the month was out, my heart–fire began to rise upward against the natural course, parching my lungs of their essential fluid.⁴¹ My feet and legs were ice–cold—they felt as though they were immersed in tubs of snow. There was a constant buzzing in my ears—as though I was walking beside a raging mountain torrent. I became abnormally weak and timid, shrinking and fearful in whatever I did. I felt totally drained, physically and mentally exhausted. Strange visions appeared to me during waking and sleeping hours alike. My armpits were always wet with perspiration. My eyes watered constantly. I traveled far and wide, visiting wise Zen teachers and seeking out noted physicians, but none of the remedies they offered brought me any relief.

Then I happened to meet someone who told me about a hermit named Master Hakuyū, who lived in a cave high in the mountains of the Shirakawa district of Kyoto. He was reputed to be between a hundred and eighty to two hundred and forty years old. His cave was three or four leagues from any human habitation.⁴² He didn't like having visitors. Whenever he saw someone approach, he would run off and hide. From the look of him it was hard to tell whether he was a man of great wisdom or merely a fool, but the people in the surrounding villages venerated him as a sage. Rumor

⁴¹ It was a commonplace of Chinese medical lore that excessive exercise of the intellect would cause the heart–fire to overheat and mount upward. Symptoms such as cold feet result from the heat rising upward instead of being concentrated in the lower body. Tōrei's *Hakuin oshō nempu* (Age 25) lists twelve morbid symptoms that appeared at this time: fire–like burning the head; icy coldness in the loins and legs; constantly watering eyes; ringing in the ears; instinctive shrinking from sunlight; irrepressible sadness in darkness or shade; thinking an intolerable burden; recurrent bad dreams sapping the strength; emission of semen during sleep; restlessness and nervousness during waking hours; difficulty digesting food; cold chills unrelieved by heavy clothing (HN, pp. 123–24).

⁴² In *Itsumadegusa*, Hakuyū's age is given as three hundred and seventy, and his cave is described as two or three leagues from human habitation (YF, p. 33–4).

had it he had been the teacher of Ishikawa Jōzan,⁴⁴ that he was deeply learned in astrology and well versed in the medical arts as well. People who had approached him and requested his teaching in the proper manner, observing the proprieties, had on rare occasions been known to elicit a remark or two of enigmatic import from him. After leaving and giving the words deeper thought, the people would generally discover them to be of great benefit.

In the middle of the first month in the seventh year of the Hōreki era,⁴⁵ I shouldered my travel pack, slipped quietly out of the temple in eastern Mino where I was staying,⁴⁶ and headed for Kyoto. On reaching the capital I bent my steps northward, crossing over the hills at Kurodani and making my way to the small hamlet at Shirakawa.⁴⁷ I dropped my pack off at a teahouse and went to make inquiries about Master Hakuyū's cave. One of the villagers pointed his finger to a thin thread of rushing water high above in the hills.

Using the sound of the water as my guide, I struck up into the mountains, hiking on until I came to the stream. I made my way along the bank for another league or so until the stream and the trail both petered out. There was not so much as a woodcutters' trail to indicate the way. At this point I lost my bearings completely and was unable to proceed another

⁴⁴ The samurai Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山 retired to the hills northeast of Kyoto in 1641. His villa, the Shisendō 詩仙堂 (Hall of Poetry Immortals), is located on a hillside overlooking the northern part of Kyoto. See Thomas Rimer, *Shisendō* (New York: Weatherhill, 1991). Several caves Hakuyū is said to have inhabited are located in the hills just behind the villa.

⁴⁵ 1710. Hakuin was twenty-five. In his draft manuscript of the *Hakuin osbō nempu*, Tōrei places the visit to Hakuyū in Hakuin's thirty-first year, just prior to his return to reside at Shōin-ji.

⁴⁶ According to the *Hakuin osbō nempu*, this was the Reishō-in 靈松院 in Mino Province (HN, p. 124).

⁴⁷ Kurodani 黒谷 ("Black Valley") and Shirakawa 白川 (White River") are both located in northeastern Kyoto. After arriving from the east on the main Tōkaidō road Hakuin would have passed Kurodani on his way north to Shirakawa, the site of Hakuyū's cave.

step. Just then I spotted an old man.⁴⁷ He directed my gaze far above to a distant site up among the swirling clouds and mist at the crest of the mountains. I could just make out a small yellowish patch, not more than an inch square, appearing and disappearing in the eddying mountain vapors. He told me it was a rushwork blind that hung over the entrance to Master Hakuyū's cave. Hitching the bottom of my robe up into my sash, I began the final ascent to Hakuyū's dwelling. I clambered over jagged rocks, pushed through heavy vines and clinging underbrush, the snow and frost gnawing into my straw sandals, and damp clouds thrusting against my robe. It was very hard going and by the time I reached the spot where I had seen the blind, I was covered with a thick oily sweat.

I now stood at the entrance to the cave. It commanded a prospect of unsurpassed beauty, completely above the vulgar dust of the world. My heart trembling with fear, my skin prickling with gooseflesh, I leaned against some rocks for a while and counted out several hundred breaths.

After shaking off the dirt and dust and straightening my robe to make myself presentable, I bowed down, hesitantly pushed the blind aside, and peered into the cave. I could make out the figure of Master Hakuyū in the darkness. He was sitting perfectly erect, his eyes shut. A wonderful head of black hair flecked with bits of white reached down over his knees.⁴⁸ He had a fine, youthful complexion, ruddy in hue like a Chinese date. He was seated on a soft mat made of grasses, and wore a large jacket of coarsely woven cloth. The interior of the cave was small, not more than five feet square, and, except for a small desk, there was no sign of household

⁴⁷ The *Itsumadegusa* text inserts a passage at this point that makes more narrative sense: "Not knowing what else to do, I sat down on a nearby rock, closed my eyes, placed my palms before me in *gasshō* and began chanting a sutra. Presently, as if by magic, I heard in the distance the faint sounds of someone chopping at a tree. After pushing my way deeper through the forest in the direction of the sound, I spotted a woodcutter" (YF, p. 36).

⁴⁸ The Confucian Fujii Shōsui 藤井象水, who in 1698 (Hakuin was eight years old) wrote the earliest known account of Hakuyū and his cave, describes his hair as falling down and covering his entire back. Fujii's work (HSK, p. 34).

articles or other furnishings of any kind.⁴⁹ On top of the desk I could see three scrolls of writing, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *Lao Tzu*, and the *Diamond Sutra*.⁵⁰

I introduced myself as politely as I could, explained the symptoms and causes of my illness in some detail, and appealed to the master for his help.

After a while, Hakuyū opened his eyes and gave me a good hard look. Then, speaking slowly and deliberately, he explained that he was only a useless, worn-out old man—"more dead than alive." He dwelled among these mountains living on such nuts and wild mountain fruit as he could gather. He passed the nights together with the mountain deer and other wild creatures. He professed to be completely ignorant of anything else, and said he was acutely embarrassed that such an important Buddhist priest had made a long trip expressly to see him.

I persisted, begging repeatedly for his help. At last, he reached out and grasped my hand with an easy, almost offhand gesture. He proceeded to read my nine pulses⁵¹ and examine my five bodily organs. His fingernails, I noticed, were almost an inch long.

Furrowing his brow, he said with a voice tinged with pity, "Not much can be done. You have developed a serious illness. By pushing yourself too hard, you forgot the cardinal rule of religious training. You are suffering from meditation sickness, which is extremely difficult to cure by medical means. If you attempted to treat it by using acupuncture, moxabustion, or medicines, you would find they have no effect—not even if they were administered by a

⁴⁹ This description of Hakuyū's cave seems to have been influenced by the account written by Fujii Shōsui described in the previous note: "The mountain [where Hakuyū lives] is in the northern part of Shirakawa. There is a giant rock, six or seven *shaku* in height, on the mountainside. In it is a small cave, no more than five *shaku* square. The opening to the cave is covered by a screen made from woven reeds" (HSK, p. 34). One *shaku* 尺 is approximately one English foot.

⁵⁰ *Chung Yung* 中庸, *Tao-te ching*, 道德經, and *Diamond Sutra* 金剛經. The three works show Hakuyū's roots in the three traditions: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

⁵¹ The pulses are taken at three points on the wrist, with each place being read at three levels: shallow, medium, and deep.

P'ien Ch'iao, Ts'ang Kung, or Hua T'o.⁵² You came to this grievous pass as a result of meditation. You will never regain your health unless you are able to master the techniques of Introspective Meditation. Just like the old saying goes, 'When a person falls to the earth, it is from the earth that he must raise himself up.'⁵³

"Please," I said, "teach me the secret technique of Introspective Meditation. I want to practice it together with my Zen training."

With a demeanor that was now solemn and majestic, Master Hakuyū softly and quietly replied,

Ah, I see you're determined to find an answer to your question, young man. I suppose I can say a few things about Introspective Meditation that I learned many years ago. It is a secret method for sustaining life known to few people. Practiced diligently, it will yield remarkable results and enable you to look forward to a long life as well.⁵⁴

The Great Way is divided into the two instruments of yin and yang. Combining, they produce human beings and all other things. A primal inborn energy circulates silently through the body, moving along channels or conduits from one to another of the five great organs. The defensive energy and nutritive blood circulate together, ascending and descending throughout the body, making fifty complete circulations in each twenty-four hour period.⁵⁵

The lungs, manifesting the Metal principle, are a female organ located above the diaphragm. The liver, manifesting the Wood principle, is a

⁵² Celebrated physicians of ancient China who appeared before; see note 15.

⁵³ An adage, originally from the *Ju chuang-yen lun* 大莊嚴論, ch. 2, that also appears in the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 景德伝燈録, ch. 1, section on Upagupta 優波鞠多.

⁵⁴ At this point, the *Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon* version of the *Yasenkanna* story has Hakuyū say: "Be sure that you do not divulge the secret method recklessly to others. If you do, not only will it hurt you, it will be very harmful to me as well."

⁵⁵ Traditional Chinese medical theory describes the *ki*-energy as moving constantly between the five internal organs: lungs, heart, spleen, liver, kidneys. If they do not maintain a full and vital supply of *ki*-energy, or if the *ki*-energy becomes stagnant, illness results. Defensive energy and nutritive blood (or nourishing energy) are two forms of *ki*-energy (see note 4 above); the former protects the surface of the body against external pathogenic factors, the latter, produced from food, flows inside the blood vessels, circulating through the body and supplying it with nutrients.

male organ located beneath the diaphragm. The heart, manifesting the Fire principle, is the major yang organ located in the upper body. The kidneys, manifesting the Water principle, are the major yin organ; they are located in the lower body. The five internal organs are invested with seven marvelous powers, the spleen and kidneys each possessing two.⁵⁶

The exhaled breath issues from the heart and the lungs; the inhaled breath enters through the kidneys and liver. With each exhalation of breath the defensive energy and nutritive blood move forward three inches in their conduits: they also advance three inches with each inhalation of breath. Every twenty-four hours there are thirteen thousand five hundred inhalations and expirations of breath, and the defensive energy and nutritive blood make fifty complete circulations of the body.⁵⁷

Fire is by nature light and unsteady and always wants to mount upwards, while Water is by nature heavy and settled and always wants to sink downward. If a person ignorant of this principle strives too far in his meditative practices, the Fire in his heart will rush violently upward, scorching his lungs and impairing their function.

Since a mother-and-child relation obtains between the lungs, representing the Metal principle, and the kidneys, representing the

⁵⁶ In traditional Chinese medical theory the concepts of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water (the five "phases": 五行 *wu-hsing*) are used to describe qualities of *ki*-energy within the body in a process of mutual production and overcoming. They serve as the core for a system of relations and correspondences which, together with the yin 陰 and yang 陽, operate in cycles of rise and fall and in a universal pattern, uniting Man and Nature. The five phases are tied to many corresponding categories of five, among them the five internal organs 五臟 (lungs, heart, liver, spleen, and kidneys, corresponding to Water, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water, respectively). Maintaining the correct balance between them is essential for preserving health. Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 249-50. The internal organs are invested with seven marvelous powers: the liver with the aspect of the soul 魂 (*hun*) belonging to heaven; lungs with the aspect of the soul 魄 (*po*) belonging to earth; heart with the spirit; spleen with thought and knowledge; kidneys with the life essence and will.

⁵⁷ The description in this paragraph is taken from the Chinese medical classic *Huang-ti nei-ching* 黄帝内经 [Yellow Emperor's manual of corporeal medicine] (Cf. YF, p. 46).

Water principle, when the lungs are afflicted and distressed, the kidneys are also weakened and debilitated. Debilitation of the lungs and kidneys saps and enfeebles the other five internal organs and disrupts the proper balance within the six viscera.⁵⁸ This results in an imbalance in the function of the body's four constituent elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Wind), some of which grow too strong and some too weak. This leads in turn to a great variety of ailments and disorders in each of the four elements. Medicines have no effect in treating them, so physicians can do little but look on with folded arms.

Sustaining life is much like protecting a country. While a wise lord and sage ruler always thinks of the common people under him, a foolish lord and mediocre ruler concerns himself exclusively with the pastimes of the upper class. When a ruler becomes engrossed in his own selfish interests, his nine ministers vaunt their power and authority, the officials under them seek special favors, and none of them gives a thought to the poverty and suffering of the people below them. The countryside fills with pale, gaunt faces and famine stalks the land, leaving the streets of the towns and cities littered with corpses. The wise and the good retreat into hiding, the common people burn with resentment and anger, the provincial lords grow rebellious, and the enemies on the borders rise to the attack. The people are plunged into an agony of grief and suffering until finally the nation itself ceases to exist.

On the other hand, when the ruler turns his attention below and focuses on the common people, his ministers and officials perform their duties simply and frugally, the hardships and suffering of the common people always in their thoughts. As a result, farmers will have an abundance of grain, women will have an abundance of cloth. The good and the wise gather to the ruler to render him service, the provincial lords are

⁵⁸ Hakuin uses the terms *go-i* 五位 and *roku-zoku* 六屬 to refer to the five internal organs and six viscera 六腑 *rokufu*—the large intestine, small intestine, gall bladder, stomach, urinary bladder, and the *san chiao* or “triple heater” 三焦, which is described as a network of energy conduits that participate in the metabolic functions located in three parts of the body cavity, one below the heart and above the stomach, another in the stomach area, a third above the urinary bladder.

respectful and submissive, the common people prosper, and the country grows strong. Each person is obedient to his superior, no enemies threaten the borders, and the sounds of battle are no longer heard in the land—the names of the weapons of war themselves come to be forgotten.

It is the same with the human body. A person who has arrived at attainment always keeps the heart's vital energy below, filling the lower body. When the lower body is filled with the heart's vital energy, there is nowhere within for the seven misfortunes to operate, and nowhere without for the four evils to gain an entrance.⁵⁹ The defensive energy and nutritive blood are replete, the heart and mind vigorous and healthy. The lips never know the bitterness of medical potions, the body never feels the discomfort of the acupuncture needle or moxa treatments.

An average or mediocre person always allows the heart's vital energy to rise up unchecked so that it diffuses throughout the upper body. When the heart's vital energy is allowed to rise unchecked, the heat emanating from the heart on the left side damages the lungs on the right.⁶⁰ This puts a strain on the five senses, diminishing their working, and causes harmful disturbances in the six roots.⁶¹

Because of this the *Chuang Tzu* says, "The True Person breathes from his heels. The ordinary person breathes with his throat."⁶²

Hsü Chun said,⁶³ "When the vital energy is in the lower heater, the

⁵⁹ The seven "misfortunes" *shichi-kyō* 七凶—joy, anger, grief, pleasure, love, hate, and desire—are so called because they are the causes of illness. The four evils 四邪 (*shi-ja*) are harmful influences to the body caused by wind, cold, heat, and moisture.

⁶⁰ *Left side* and *right side* refer to diagnostic areas on the left and right wrists where the pulses to taken in reading the five internal organs.

⁶¹ The terms *go-kan* 五官 and *roku-shin* 六親, translated here as the *five senses* (the five organs of sense: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin) and *six roots* (the five senses plus the mind), are given various explanations in the commentaries. I follow the interpretation in YF p. 52.

⁶² The expression "the True Man 真人 (*shin-jin*) breathes from his heels" is from the *Chuang Tea*. Cf. Watson trans. (Columbia Univ. Press, 1968), p. 78.

⁶³ Some commentators identify Hsü Chun 許俊 as the Korean physician Ho Chun (n.d.), but the quotation has not been found among his works.

breaths are long; when the vital energy is in the upper heater, the breaths are short.”⁶⁴

Master Shang Yang said,⁶⁵ “There is a single genuine vital energy in man. Its descent into the lower heater signifies the return of the single yang. If a person wants to experience the occasion when the yin reaches completion and yields to returning yang, his proof will be found in the warmth that is generated when the vital energy is concentrated in the lower body.”

The golden rule in the art of sustaining life is always to keep the upper body cool and the lower body warm.

There are twelve conduits along which the defensive energy and nutritive blood circulate through the body.⁶⁶ These conduits correspond to the twelve horary signs or stems, to the twelve months of the year, and to the twelve hours of the day. They also correspond to the various permutations the hexagrams or divination signs in the *I Ching* [Book of Changes] undergo in the course of their yearly cycle.

Five yin lines above, one yang line below—the hexagram known as “Ground Thunder Returns”—corresponds seasonally to the winter

⁶⁴ The “lower heater” (*kashō* 下焦) and “upper heater” (*jōshō* 上焦) are two elements of the *san chiao* or “triple heater” described above, note 59. The essential point in all these quotations is to concentrate the *ki*-energy in the lower body.

⁶⁵ Shang-yang tzu 上陽子 is a sobriquet of the Yuan physician Ch'en Chih-hsü 陳致虛, who is described as an adept in the Taoist arts of prolonging life. The source of the quotation is unknown. Here and in the following section various permutations of the divination signs in the *I Ching* 易經 [Book of Changes] are used in describing the movement of *ki*-energy within the body. The *I Ching*, a manual on divination used since ancient times and one of the Five Classics of Confucianism, is based upon five diagrams made up of trigrams—three lines—undivided and divided, which are increased by doubling them into hexagrams to sixty-four. Attached to each hexagram is a short, enigmatic essay ascribing a meaning to each line of the hexagram.

⁶⁶ The twelve conduits or meridians (*jūni no keimyaku* 十二の経脉) through which the *ki*-energy circulates through the body. There is a conduit for each of the five organs and six viscera and one additional conduit for the heart, lungs, and aorta.

solstice. It is this Chuang Tzu refers to when he speaks of “the True Person breathing from his heels.”

Three yang lines below and three yin lines above—the hexagram “Earth and Heaven at Peace”—corresponds seasonally to the first month, when the ten thousand things are pregnant with the vital energy of generation, and the myriad buds and flowers, receiving the beneficial moisture, burst into blossom. It is the configuration of the True Person, whose lower body is filled with primal energy. When a person achieves this stage, his defensive energy and nutritive blood are replenished and his spirit is full of vigor and courage.

Five yin lines below and one yang line above—the hexagram known as “Splitting Apart”—corresponds seasonally to the ninth month. When the heavens are at this point, foliage in the garden and forest drains of color, flowers droop and wither. It is the configuration of the “ordinary man breathing with his throat.” When a person reaches this stage, he is thin and haggard in appearance, his teeth grow loose and fall.

Because of this, the *Enju-sho*⁶⁷ states: “When all six yang lines are exhausted and man is wholly yin, death may easily occur.” What you must know is that for sustaining life the key is to have the primal energy constantly filling the lower body.

Long ago when Wu Ch’i-ch’u went to visit Master Shih-t’ai, he first prepared himself by performing ritual purifications,⁶⁸ then he inquired about the art of refining the elixir. Master Shih-t’ai told him, “I possess a marvelous secret for producing the genuine and profound elixir, but only a person of superior capacity would be able to receive and transmit it.” This is the very same secret Master Kuang Ch’eng imparted to the Yellow Emperor, who received it only after he had completed a retirement

⁶⁷ 延壽書 [Treatise on prolonging life]. Several works have titles similar to this, but the present quotation itself has not been traced to any of them.

⁶⁸ Neither Wu Ch’i-ch’u 吳契初 nor Master Shih-t’ai 石臺先生 have been identified. This formulation for refining the elixir appeared before in the Preface (see note 36). Although here Hakuin has Shih-t’ai teaching Wu Ch’i-ch’u, when he quotes the same passage in *Isumadegusa*, their roles are reversed, with Wu Ch’i-ch’u teaching Shih-t’ai. Hakuin also attributes this passage to others.

and abstinence of twenty-one days.⁶⁹

The genuine elixir does not exist apart from the Great Way: the Great Way does not exist apart from the genuine elixir. You Buddhists have a teaching known as the five non-leakages.⁷⁰ Once the six desires are dispelled and the working of the five senses is forgotten, the primal, undifferentiated energy will gather to repletion under your very eyes. This is what T'ai-pai Tao-jen meant when he spoke about "combining one's vital inborn energy with the primal energy of heaven and earth whence it derives."⁷¹

You should draw what Mencius called the "vast expansive energy" down and store it in the cinnabar field—the ocean of vital energy located below the navel.⁷² Hold it there over the months and years. Preserve it singlemindedly. Sustain it without wavering. One morning you will suddenly overturn the elixir furnace.⁷³ When you do, everywhere within

⁶⁹ The text has Huang Ch'eng 黄成, a mistake for Kuang Ch'eng 廣成. A dialogue between Master Kuang Ch'eng and the Yellow Emperor 黄帝 (Huang Ti) similar to this appears in the *Chuang Tzu* (Watson trans., pp. 118–20), and in the *Shen-bsien chuan* 神仙伝 [Lives of the sages], a work attributed to Ko Hung, 283–363.

⁷⁰ The state of five non-leakages 五無漏 (*go-muro*) is attained when afflicting passions disappear from the mind. In *Orategama*, Hakuin has Hakyū say: "People often learn only that the divine elixir is refined by bringing together the five elements—Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth—without knowing that the five elements are also the five sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. To bring the five organs together and refine the divine elixir, we have the teaching of the five non-leakages: when the eye does not see erroneously, when the ears do not hear erroneously, when the tongue does not taste erroneously, when the body does not feel erroneously, when the consciousness does not think erroneously, the diffuse primal energy accumulates right before your eyes" (HOZ 5, p. 119).

⁷¹ Neither T'ai-pai Tao-jen 大白道人 nor the source of the quotation have been identified.

⁷² Mencius describes this "vast, expansive energy" (浩然氣 *hao jan ch'i*) as "immense and flood-like, unyielding in the highest degree. If man nourishes it with integrity and places no obstacle in its path, it will fill all Heaven and Earth and he will be in the same stream as Heaven itself." D. C. Lau, *Mencius* (Penguin Books, 1970), II a. 2.

⁷³ *Tansō o kenpon suru* 丹竈を掀翻する. The elixir furnace (originally referring to the stove used by Taoist alchemists for refining the cinnabar elixir) is "overturned" when you succeed in refining the elixir within yourself and realize the futility of seeking it externally. The phrase appears in a verse titled 送川道士 in the *Chiang-bu feng-yüeh-chi* 江湖風月集 [Wind and moon collection of Zen poetry]: "If you are

and without the entire universe will become a single immense piece of pure elixir.⁷⁴

When that happens you will realize for the first time that you yourself are a genuine sage, as unborn as heaven and earth, as undying as empty space. It is that moment that the true and authentic elixir furnace is completed.⁷⁵ This is not a superficial feat such as raising winds or riding mists, shrinking space, or walking over water, the kind of thing that can be performed by lesser sages. For you, the object is to churn the great sea into finest butter, to transform the great earth into purest gold.⁷⁶

A wise man of the past said, “‘Elixir’ refers to the cinnabar field, ‘liquid’ to the fluid in the lungs. References to ‘reverting the Metal liquid to cinnabar’ thus indicate the blood in the lungs returning down into the cinnabar field below the navel.”⁷⁷

At this point I [Hakuin] said to Master Hakuyū: “I am deeply grateful for your instruction. In order to cure my illness I want to discontinue my Zen study for a while and concentrate my efforts on Introspective Meditation.

*able to work the elixir furnace, your *ki*-energy is like a rainbow. If you overturn the elixir furnace, you arrive at a state of perfect freedom.” Cf. Suzuki Kojun, *Gokōfugetsu-shū kōgi* (Tokyo, 1935), p. 8.

⁷⁴ In other words, when this threshold (described here as a kind of satori) is achieved, you realize that the Great Way and the elixir are one.

⁷⁵ An allusion to the verse cited above, note 73.

⁷⁶ In *Tsuji-dangi* 辻談議, Hakuin explains “churning the Long River into the finest butter” as a reference to the Mahayana Bodhisattva’s activity of assisting others to enlightenment. HOZ 6 p. 198. “Transforming the earth into purest gold” would have a similar connotation. Hakuin contrasts these activities with the “superficial feats of magic” attributed to Taoist sages enumerated in the previous sentence.

⁷⁷ The source of this quotation has not been traced. The reason Hakuin cites it here is not entirely clear. According to Rikugawa, what is being described is a process of refining the cinnabar elixir by sending the blood in the lungs—the Metal principle—down into the cinnabar field where it can circulate with the kidneys—the Water principle. HY, p. 75.

There is something that still bothers me, however. Wouldn't the method you teach be an example of 'overly emphasizing cooling remedies in order to bring the heart-fire down,' which the great physician Li Shih-ts'ai warned against?⁷⁸ And if I concentrate my mind in a single place, wouldn't that impede the movement of my defensive energy and nutritive blood, making them stagnate?"

A flicker of a smile crossed Master Hakuyū's face. He replied,

Not at all. Don't forget that Master Li also said, "the nature of fire is to flame upward, so it must be made to descend; the nature of water is to flow downward, so it must be made to rise. This condition of fire descending and water ascending is called Intermingling. The time when Intermingling is taking place is called After Completion; the time when it is not taking place is called Before Completion."⁷⁹ Intermingling is a configuration of life. Not Intermingling is a configuration of death."

When Master Li and those of his school speak of "overly emphasizing cooling remedies to bring down the heart-fire," they do so to save people who study the teachings of the Tan-hsi school⁸⁰ from the harmful effects that could result from overemphasizing such remedies.

Fire functions in two ways: as prince and as minister. The princely fire is found in the upper body; it presides in tranquillity. The ministerial fire is found in the lower body; it presides in activity. Princely fire is

⁷⁸ Li Shih-ts'ai 李士才 was a noted Ming physician who wrote several important medical works, including the *I-tsung pi-tu* 醫宗必讀.

⁷⁹ *Kisei* 既濟 and *Bisei* 未濟 are the two final hexagrams in the *I Ching*. In the After Completion configuration, Descending Fire and Ascending Water intermingle; in the Before Completion configuration, they are separated, Water above and Fire below, and do not intermingle.

⁸⁰ Tan-hsi 丹溪. The school of medicine founded by the Yuan physician Chü Tan-hsi 朱丹溪.

master of the heart. Ministerial fire works as its subordinate.⁸¹

Ministerial fire is of two kinds, one found in the kidneys, the other in the liver.⁸² The kidneys correspond to the dragon, the liver to thunder. There is a saying: “The crash of thunder is never heard so long as the dragon stays hidden in the depths of the sea. The dragon never soars in the skies as long as thunder remains confined in the marshes and bogs.”⁸³ Assuming that is true, and in view of the fact that both the seas and marshes are composed of water, doesn’t the saying indicate the suppression of the ministerial fire’s tendency to rise?

It is also said that the heart overheats when it becomes tired and exhausted [of energy]. When it is depleted of energy, the heart can be replenished by making it descend below and intermingle with the kidneys. This is known as Replenishing. It corresponds to the principle of Already Completed mentioned before.

You, young man, developed this grave illness because your heart–fire was allowed to rush upward against the natural flow. Unless you succeed in bringing the heart down into your lower body, you will never regain your health, not even if you master all the secret practices the Three Worlds have to offer.⁸⁴

You probably regard me as some kind of Taoist. You probably think what I’ve been telling you has no relation to Buddhism. But you’re wrong. What I’m teaching you is Zen. If in the future you get a glimpse

⁸¹ The division of fire into “princely fire” *kunka* 君火 and “ministerial fire” *shōka* 相火 appears in chapter 71 of the *Su-wen* 素問 [Plain questions] the first part of the *Huang-ti Nei-ching* 黃帝內經 [Yellow Emperor’s manual of corporeal medicine].

⁸² According to the *Hyōshaku* (YH, p. 102), this paragraph is based on Chū Tan-hsi’s *Hsiang-buo lun* 相火論 [Treatise on ministerial fire].

⁸³ Apparently, sea, marsh, and bog indicate the cinnabar field below the navel. “When ministerial fire in the kidneys and liver tries to mount upwards, physical discomfort results” (YH, p. 101).

⁸⁴ These are the Three Worlds 三界 (*sangai*; the worlds of desire, form, and formlessness) in which sentient beings transmigrate.

of true awakening, you will smile as you recall these words of mine.

As for the practice of contemplation, authentic contemplation is non-contemplation. False contemplation is contemplation that is diverse and unfocused. You contracted this grave illness by engaging in diverse contemplation.⁸⁵ Don't you think that now you should save yourself by means of non-contemplation? If you take the heat in your heart, the fire in your mind, and draw it down into the region of the cinnabar field and the arches of the feet, you will feel naturally cool and refreshed. All discrimination will cease. Not the slightest conscious thought will occur to raise the waves of emotion. This is true meditation—pure and undefiled meditation.

So don't talk about discontinuing your study of Zen. The Buddha himself taught that we should "cure all kinds of illness by putting the heart down into the arches of the feet."⁸⁶ The Agama sutras teach a method in which butter is used. It is unexcelled for treating debilitation of the heart.⁸⁷

The Tendai sect's *Mo-bo chih-kuan* [Great Concentration and Insight] sets forth in great detail the fundamental causes of illness as well as the methods of treating them. Twelve breathing techniques are given that are effective for a curing a wide range of ailments.⁸⁸ There is another

⁸⁵ "Diverse contemplation" 多觀 (*takan*) presumably refers to unfocused koan-type meditation in which the meditation topic becomes the object of discrimination and *ki*-energy is not gathered in the lower body. "Non-contemplation" 無觀 (*mukan*) refers to an advanced meditative state in which intellectual discrimination ceases.

⁸⁶ Although no source has been found for the words here attributed to the Buddha, the *Hyōshaku* cites a similar teaching in Chih-i's *Mo-bo chih-kuan* [Great concentration and insight]: "If the mind is always concentrated in the feet, any illness can be cured" (YH, p. 109).

⁸⁷ Agama sutras 阿含經: a generic term for Hinayana sutras. No source in the Agama sutras has been found, but see below, note 116.

⁸⁸ *Mo-bo chih-kuan* 摩訶止觀, a manual of religious practice in 10 *chüan* (T46, pp. 1-140), is one of the major works of the T'ien-t'ai teacher Chih-i. In the eighth *chüan*, which is devoted to the therapeutic uses of Buddhist meditation, a method is described for concentrating the mind on the afflicted area of the body (觀病患境法) in which eight types of breathing are set forth and their use for specific ailments explained (MS, pp. 195-96).

technique of visualizing the mind as a bean resting on the navel.⁸⁹ Ultimately, the essence in all these methods is to bring the heart-fire down and gather it in the area from the cinnabar field down to the arches of the feet. Not only is it effective for curing illness, it is extremely beneficial for Zen meditation as well.

I believe that the *Mo-bo chib-kuan* also speaks of two kinds of concentration: concentration on ultimate truth and concentration on temporary truth.⁹⁰ The former is a full and perfect meditation on the true aspect of all things; in the latter, primary importance is placed on focusing the heart-energy in the region of the cinnabar field. Students who practice these concentrations derive great benefit from them.

Dōgen, founding patriarch of Eihei-ji temple, traveled to China and studied with Ch'an master Ju-ching at T'ien-t'ung monastery. One day when he went to Ju-ching's chambers to receive his instruction, Ju-ching said, "When you practice zazen, you should place your mind above the palm of your left hand."⁹¹ This generally corresponds to the Tendai

⁸⁹ "Concentrate the mind above the navel. Imagine it the size of a bean. Loosen your robe and give yourself to this visualization.... By concentrating the mind above the navel, the breath will issue from the navel and enter through the navel. Exhaling and inhaling in this way through the navel, it will not be difficult to realize the [truth of] impermanence" (*Mo-bo chib-kuan*, ch 8; MS, p. 192).

⁹⁰ The concentrations on ultimate truth 諦真止 (*taishin-sbi*) and temporary truth 繫緣止 (*ke'en-sbi*), achieved during samadhi and leading to clear discernment, are two of three kinds of concentration (止) set forth in the *Mo-bo chib-kuan*. In the first, one grasps that illusion is, as such, true reality; in the second, the mind remains unaffected by changes in external or internal conditions. MS, p. 192.

⁹¹ T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching 天童如淨, 1163-1228, the Sung dynasty Ts'ao-t'ung (Jap. Sōtō) Ch'an master best known as the teacher of Dōgen Kigen 道元希玄 (1200-1252), founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen and of Eihei-ji temple 永平寺 in Echigo Province. This particular teaching is found in Dōgen's practice diary *Hōkyō-ki* 寶慶記, which he kept while he was studying in China. Ju-ching told Dōgen that placing the heart (mind) above the palm of the left hand during zazen was "the method rightly transmitted by the Buddha-patriarchs." For the full passage and context, see Norman Waddell, "Dōgen's *Hōkyō-ki*," Part II, *Eastern Buddhist*, vol. XI, No. 1, 1977, p. 81.

sect's concentration on temporary truth.

In the *Hsiao chih-kuan*,⁹² Chih-i relates how he first came to teach the secret technique of Introspective Meditation (concentration on temporary truth), and how by using it he saved his elder brother, gravely ill, from the brink of death.

The priest Po-yün said, "I always keep my heart down filling my lower belly. I use it all the time—when I'm teaching students, guiding the assembly of monks, receiving visitors, when I'm having encounters with students in my chambers, when I'm engaged in talks and lectures of various kinds—and I never use it up. Since reaching old age I've found its benefits to be especially great."⁹³

How commendable! Don't Po-yün's words agree with the teaching found in the *Su-wen*?: "If you are tranquil and free of troubling thoughts, the primal energy will conform. As long as you preserve that energy within, there is no place for illness to enter."⁹⁴

⁹² The *Hsiao chih-kuan* 小止觀 [Smaller concentration and insight] (full title, *Hsiu-hsi chih-kuan tso-ch'an fa-yao* 修習止觀座禪法用), epitomizing the teachings in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, is said to have been compiled by Chih-i for his sick brother Ch'en Chen 鎮鍼. The *Hyōshaku* quotes the following story from the biography of Ch'en Chen in the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 佛祖統記: At the age of forty Ch'en Chen, Chih-i's elder brother, encountered a sage who examined his physiognomy and told him that his "vital yang energy" was exhausted and he had only one month left to live. Chih-i thereupon taught Ch'en the basics of his *chih-kuan* meditation. After Ch'en performed the meditation assiduously day and night for one year he was cured, and went on to live a long life. The *Hyōshaku* points out the striking similarities between the illnesses and cures experienced by Ch'en Chen and Hakuin, as well as the roles that Chih-i and Hakyū played in those cures. Quoted in YH, 114.

⁹³ Po-yün Ho-shang 白雲和尚 (Hakuun Oshō in Japanese) is an extremely common religious name in both China and Japan. In a letter to a lay follower Hakuin attributes this quotation to the eleventh century Rinzai priest Huang-lung Hui-nan 黃龍慧南 (HOZ 6, p. 445), but its source has not been traced.

⁹⁴ *Su wen* 素問 [Plain questions] is the title of the first part of the ancient Chinese medical treatise *Huang-ti nei-ching* 黃帝內經 [Yellow Emperor's manual of corporeal medicine], the basic medical text in Tokugawa Japan. The quotation appears in *chüan* 24.

Moreover, the essence of preserving the energy within is to keep it replete and secure throughout the entire body—extending to all the three hundred and sixty joints and each of the eighty-four thousand pores of the skin. You must know that this is the ultimate secret of sustaining life.

P'eng Tsu said, "Close yourself up in a room where you won't be disturbed. Prepare a mat with bedding that has been warmed and a pillow about three inches high. Lie face upward with your body completely straight. Close your eyes and confine the heart-energy within your breast. Place a goose feather on your nose. When your breathing does not disturb the feather, count three hundred breaths. Once you have reached a state where your ears do not hear and your eyes do not see, cold and heat will no longer discomfort you; the poisonous stings of bees and scorpions will be unable to harm you. Upon attaining the age of three hundred and sixty, you will be very close to becoming a True Person."⁹⁵

Su Nei-han gave the following advice:⁹⁶ "If you are hungry, eat some food, but stop eating before you are full. Take a long leisurely stroll. When you feel your appetite return, enter a quiet room and seat yourself in an upright posture. Begin exhaling and inhaling, counting your breaths—from ten to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand. By the time you have counted a thousand breaths, your body should be as firm and steady as a rock, your heart as tranquil and motionless as the empty sky.

⁹⁵ P'eng Tsu 彭祖 is the Chinese Methuselah. Yoshizawa has found a passage similar to this quoted in a work by Su Tung-p'o (see next note), who ascribes it to the T'ang physician Sun Ssu-miao 孫思邈 (d. 682), author of Taoist medical treatises such as the *Cb'ien-chin yao-fang* 千金要方 [Prescriptions worth a thousand in gold] (YF, p. 76).

⁹⁶ Su Nei-han 蘇內翰. The Sung poet and Ch'an layman Su Tung-p'o 蘇東坡 (1037-1110). *Nei-han* was a title given scholars belonging to the Hanlin 翰林 academy. Su Tung-p'o was well versed in Taoist medical lore and wrote several works on the subject. Although the present quotation has not been found among them, portions of it appear in one of Su's verses (YF, p. 78).

“If you continue to sit like this for a long period, in time your breath will hang suspended. You will no longer inhale or exhale. Your breath will exude in clouds and rise up like mist from the eighty-four thousand pores of your skin. You will realize with perfect clarity that all the illnesses you have suffered from, each of the countless disorders you have experienced from the beginningless beginning, have vanished of themselves. You will be like a blind man suddenly regaining his sight and no longer having any need to ask others for guidance on his way.

“What you must do is to cut back on words and devote yourself solely to sustaining your primal energy. Hence it is said, ‘Those who wish to strengthen their sight keep their eyes closed. Those who wish to strengthen their hearing avoid sounds. Those who wish to sustain the heart-energy maintain their silence.’”⁹⁷

“You mentioned a method in which butter is used,” I [Hakuin] said. “May I ask you about that?”

Master Hakuyū replied,

When a student engaged in meditation finds that he is exhausted in body and mind owing to disharmony in the four constituent elements of his body, he should gird up his spirit and perform the following visualization:⁹⁸

Imagine a lump of soft butter, pure in color and fragrance and the size and shape of a duck egg, is suddenly placed on the top of your head. Slowly it begins to melt, imparting an exquisite sensation as your head becomes moistened and saturated within and without. It continues oozing down, moistening your shoulders, elbows, and chest, permeating your lungs, diaphragm, liver, stomach, and bowels, and then down the spine

⁹⁷ Ch’u Ch’eng’s 褚澄 *Ch’u-shih i-sbu* 褚氏遺書 (YF, p. 81).

⁹⁸ Itō Kazuo has found several methods of meditation vaguely similar to this one in Buddhist sutras (HSK, pp. 65–66). Yoshizawa cites a “butter” method (*nanso* 軟蘇 [酥]) in the *Ch’ih ch’an-ping pi-yao fa* 治禪病秘要法 [Secrets of the essential method for curing meditation sickness] (T15, *cb.* 1).

through the hips, pelvis, and buttocks.

At that point, all the congestions that have accumulated within the five organs and six viscera, all the aches and pains in the abdomen and other affected parts, will follow the heart as it sinks down into the lower body. You will hear it distinctly—like water trickling from a higher to a lower place. It will continue to flow down through the body, suffusing the legs with beneficial warmth, until it reaches the arches of the feet, where it stops.

The student should then repeat the contemplation. As his vital energy flows downward, it will slowly fill the lower region of the body and suffuse it with penetrating warmth, making him feel as if he is sitting immersed to his navel in a hot bath filled with a decoction of rare and fragrant medicinal herbs that have been gathered and infused by a skilled physician.

Inasmuch as all things are created by the mind, when you engage in this contemplation the nose will actually smell the marvelous scent of pure soft butter, your body will feel the exquisite sensation of its melting touch. Body and mind will be in perfect peace and harmony. You will feel better and enjoy greater health than you did as a youth of twenty or thirty. All the undesirable accumulations in your vital organs and viscera will melt away. Stomach and bowels will function perfectly. Before you know it, your skin will glow with health. If you continue to practice the contemplation unfalteringly, there is no illness that cannot be cured, no virtue that cannot be acquired, no level of sagehood that cannot be reached, no religious practice that cannot be mastered. Whether such results appear swiftly or appear slowly depends only upon how scrupulously you apply yourself.

I was a sickly youth, in much worse shape than you are now. I experienced ten times the suffering you have endured. The doctors finally gave up on me. I explored hundreds of cures on my own, but none of them brought me any relief. I turned to the gods for help, praying to the deities of both heaven and earth, begging them for their imperceptible

assistance. I was marvelously blessed, because they extended me their support and protection and I came upon this wonderful soft butter method of contemplation. My joy knew no bounds. I immediately set about practicing it with total and singleminded determination. Before even a month was out, my troubles had almost totally vanished. Since that time I've never been bothered the least bit by any complaint, physical or mental.

I became like an ignoramus, mindless and utterly free of care. I was oblivious to the passage of time. I never knew what day or month it was, or whether it was a leap year or not. I gradually lost interest in things the world holds dear, forgot completely about the hopes and desires and customs of ordinary men and women. In my middle years I was compelled by circumstance to leave Kyoto and take refuge in the mountains of Wakasa Province.⁹⁹ I lived there nearly thirty years, unknown to my fellow men. Looking back on that period of my life, it seems as fleeting and unreal as the dream-life that flashed through Lü-sheng's slumbering brain.¹⁰⁰

Now I live here in this solitary spot in the hills of Shirakawa, far from all human habitation. I have a layer or two of clothing to wrap around my withered old carcass. But even in mid-winter, on nights when the cold bites through the thin cotton robe, I don't freeze. Even during the

⁹⁹ The *Kanzan-sbi sendai-kimon* text does not mention this. A note Taikan Bunshu 大観文守 added to the *Hakuin osbō nempu* says that Hakuyū wandered through Tamba, Tajima, Yamashiro, and Wakasa provinces.

¹⁰⁰ A reference to a well-known tale known as *Kantan no yume* (邯鄲の夢), from a T'ang work titled *Chen-chung chi* 枕中記. A young man named Lü-sheng on his way to seek a career in the capital stopped off at a place called Han-tan (Japanese, Kantan). While waiting for his lunch to cook he took a nap and dreamed that he rose through the ranks of officialdom and finally attained the post of prime minister. Awakening, he saw his yellow millet still cooking on the fire, realized life was an empty dream, and returned home.

months when there are no mountain fruits or nuts for me to gather, and I have no grain to eat, I don't starve. It is all thanks to this contemplation.

Young man, you have just learned a secret that you could not use up in a whole lifetime. What more could I teach you.

Master Hakuyū sat silently with his eyes closed. I thanked him profusely, my own eyes glistening with tears, and then bade him farewell. The last vestiges of light were lingering in the topmost branches of the trees when I left the cave and made my way slowly down the mountain. Suddenly I was stopped in my tracks by the sound of wooden clogs striking the stony ground and echoing up from the sides of the valley. Half in wonder, half in disbelief, I peered apprehensively around to see the figure of Master Hakuyū coming toward me in the distance.¹⁰¹

When he was near enough to speak, he said, "No one uses these mountain trails, it's easy to lose your way. You might have trouble getting back, so I'll take you part way down." A skinny wooden staff grasped in his hand, high wooden clogs on his feet, he walked on ahead of me, talking and laughing. He moved nimbly and effortlessly over rugged cliffs and steep mountainside, covering the difficult terrain with the ease of someone strolling through a well-kept garden. After a league or so we came to the mountain stream. He said if I followed it I would have no trouble finding my way back to the village of Shirakawa. With what seemed a look of sadness, he then turned and began to retrace his steps.¹⁰²

I stood there motionless, watching as Master Hakuyū made his way up the mountain trail, marveling at the strength and vigor of his step. He

¹⁰¹ Fujii Shōsui's account of Hakuyū (see note 49) mentions him wearing *geta* or pattens, adding that even when Hakuyū was wearing them he "could run like the wind" (HSK, p. 35).

¹⁰² Here the *Itsumadegusa* text has: "Again I pressed my palms together and bowed my head low in gratitude."

moved with such light, unfettered freedom, as if he was one who had transcended this world, had sprouted wings and was flying up to join the ranks of Immortal Sages. Gazing at him, my heart was filled with respect, and with a touch of envy as well. I also felt a pang of regret, because I knew that never in this lifetime would I again be able to encounter and learn from a man such as this.

I went directly back to Shōin-ji and set about practicing Introspective Meditation over and over on my own. In less than three years, without recourse to medicine, acupuncture, or moxabustion, the illnesses that had been plaguing me for years cleared up of themselves. What is more, during the same period I experienced the immense joy of great satori six or seven times, boring through and penetrating to the root of all the hard-to-believe, hard-to-penetrate, hard-to-grasp, and hard-to-enter koans that I had never before been able to get my teeth into at all. I attained countless small satoris as well, which sent me waltzing about waving my hands in the air in mindless dance. I then knew for the first time that Ch'an master Ta-hui had not been deceiving me when he wrote about experiencing eighteen great satoris and countless small ones.¹⁰³

In the past, I used to wear two and even three layers of *tabi*, but the arches of my feet still always felt as though they were soaking in tubs of ice. Now, even in the third month, the coldest time of year, I don't need even a single pair.¹⁰⁴ I no longer require a brazier to keep warm. I am more

¹⁰³ Hakuin refers frequently to this statement by the Sung master Ta-hui Tsung-kao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163). No source has been located among Ta-hui's records. Yoshizawa cites a reference in the *Chu-ch'uang erh-pi* 竹窓二筆 [Jottings at the bamboo window, 2nd series], a seventeenth century Chinese work by the Ming priest Yün-chi Chu-hung 雲棲祿宏 (YF, p. 98).

¹⁰⁴ Here Rikugawa Taiun quotes from a letter by Reigen Etō 靈源慧桃 (1721–1784), a Dharma-heir of Hakuin: "When he was young, the master [Hakuin] wore three pairs of heavy-soled *tabi* (雲齋[織りの底]の足袋) on his feet. [Later,] after he learned to bring his mind down into the 'cinnabar field,' he never even went near a brazier, even during the coldest part of the winter" (YH, p. 193).

than seventy years old this year,¹⁰⁵ but even now I never suffer from the slightest indisposition. Surely this is all due to the lingering benefits I enjoy from having practiced the wonderful secret technique of Introspective Meditation.¹⁰⁶

Don't be saying old Hakuin, half-dead and gasping out his final breaths, has recklessly scribbled out a long tissue of groundless nonsense hoping to hoodwink superior students. What I've put down here is not intended for those who possess spiritual powers of the first order—the kind of superior seeker who is awakened at a single blow from his master's mallet. But if dull plodding oafs like me—the kind of people who will suffer from illness as I did—set eyes on this book, read it and contemplate its meaning, they should surely be able to obtain a little help from it.¹⁰⁷ I'm only afraid that when other people read it, they will clap their hands and break into loud peals of laughter.¹⁰⁸ Why is that?

*A horse chomping dried bean hulls disturbs a man at his noonday nap.*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Here in the *Itsumadegusa* version, which Hakuin wrote about ten years after *Yasenkanna*, the age is adjusted accordingly, making him “over eighty years old.”

¹⁰⁶ Here, in the *Itsumadegusa* version, Hakuin inserts a long passage that reports the death of Hakuyū. Supplementary note A.

¹⁰⁷ In *Itsumadegusa*, Hakuin inserts another long passage at this point, citing examples of people who had been saved from serious illness by practicing Introspective Meditation. Supplementary note B.

¹⁰⁸ The *Hyōsbaku* (pp. 145–46) interprets this as appreciative laughter. However, the context of Hakuin's statement—that his intended audience is “mediocre students,” not those of superior capacity, that all others will only “clap their hands and laugh [when they read his words]”—suggests the laughter is derisive.

¹⁰⁹ This is a line from a poem by the Sung poet and Ch'an layman Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅 (1045–1115), titled “Seventeenth Day of the Sixth Month: Noonday Nap”: “A straw-hatted, black-booted worldling, amid the world's red dust/ My mind on the island of immortal spirits and its dancing white cranes/ The sound of my horse chomping dried bean hulls by my noonday pillow/ Became in my dream a tempest that raised great waves on the river.” The poem derives from a metaphor found in the *Leng-yen ching* 楞嚴經, ch. 4: “While a man sleeps soundly in his bed, someone in the house is using a rice pounder....In his dreams, he hears the sound as a

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE A. (SEE NOTE 106)

Even thinking about it now, the tears trickle down my leathery old cheeks—I just can't help it. Four or five years ago I had a dream. Master Hakuyū had come all the way from the hills of Shirakawa to visit me here at Shōin-ji. We spent a whole night laughing and talking together. I felt so happy that the following morning I told the monks living at the temple all about it. They bowed and pressed their palms together in attitudes of worship. "Good! Good!" they said. "Maybe it will come to pass. Perhaps the dream will become reality. If Master Hakuyū did come here, it would be a great honor for the temple.

"You turned eighty this year, Master, but your mind and body are both still strong and vigorous. You teach us and extend your help to other students far and wide. Isn't it all thanks to Master Hakuyū? Let one or two of us go to Kyoto and invite him to visit Shōin-ji. He could live here at the temple. We could provide for his needs through our begging."

A feeling of elation passed through the brotherhood. Plans began to be laid. Then a monk stepped forward.

"Hold on," he said, laughing. "You're making the mistake of 'marking the side of a moving boat to show where the sword fell in.' I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you this, but Master Hakuyū, the person you are talking about, is no longer alive. He died this past summer."

The monks clapped their hands in astonishment.

"You shouldn't repeat idle rumors like that!" I said, admonishing the monk. "Hakuyū is no ordinary person. He is one of the immortal sages who by chance just happens to walk the earth. How could such a man die?"

"Unfortunately, that was his undoing. It is because he walked the earth that he met his death. Last summer, it seems he was walking in the mountains and came to the edge of a deep ravine. It was more than a hundred yards to the other side. He tried to leap across but he didn't make it. He fell to the rocks below. His death was lamented by villagers far and near."

The monk, his story completed, stood there with a forlorn look on his face. I found my own eyes shedding copious tears.

*drum-beat or the booming of a bell." Araki Kengo, *Ryōgon-kyō* (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 356–7. While Hakuin's precise reason for quoting the verse here is unclear, the following is one possible explanation: "Other people [excepting superior or mediocre students] will find my idle words a nuisance, like a grating noise distracting them from their midday nap" (YH, p. 146). This would suggest that such people are kept from understanding the worth of Hakuin's words by their somnolent (unawakened) state.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE B (SEE NOTE 107)

In fact, after giving the matter more consideration, I think perhaps the benefit will not necessarily be small. In any event, the main thing—what we must all cherish and revere—is the secret method of Introspective Meditation. In the spring of the seventh year of the Hōreki era [1757] I composed a work in Japanese that I called *Yasenkanna*, in which I set forth the essential principles of the meditation. Ever since then people of all kinds—monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen—have told me how, when the odds were stacked ten to one against them, they were saved from the misery of grave and incurable illness owing to the wonderful benefits of Introspective Meditation. They have come to me here at Shōin-ji to thank me in person in numbers I cannot even count. Two or three years ago a young man—he must have been about twenty-two or twenty-three—showed up at the temple asking to see me. When I stepped out to greet him, I was taken aback by the great bundle of presents, including several gold coins, that he had brought for me. He bowed his head to the ground. “I am so-and-so from Matsuzaka in Ise Province,” he said. “About six years ago I came down with a serious ailment that I found impossible to cure. I tried all the secret remedies I knew, but none of them had any effect whatever. All the physicians I consulted wrote me off as a hopeless case. It seemed that there was nothing left for me to do except await the end. Then a wonderful thing happened. I chanced to read *Yasenkanna*. As best I could with my meager abilities I began to practice the secret technique of Introspective Meditation on my own. What a blessing it was! Little by little my energy began to return, and today I am restored to perfect health. I can’t tell you how happy and thankful I felt. Why, I was dancing on air! It was all owing to the powerful influence of *Yasenkanna*, but there was nowhere I could go, no physician or healer to whom I could express my gratitude. Fortunately, as I was mulling what I should do, I heard a vague rumor that you, Master Hakuin, were the author of *Yasenkanna*. Immediately, I wanted to see your revered countenance so that I could express my profound gratitude to you in person. On the pretext of transacting some business in Edo, I traveled all the way from Ise Province to see you. This is the happiest moment of my entire life. Nothing could exceed it.”

As I listened to him relate the particulars of his story, can you imagine the happiness this old monk also felt?