

# INSTANT

# ZEN

*Waking  
Up in the  
Present*

*Translated by*  
**Thomas  
Cleary**





***Instant Zen: Waking Up in the Present***

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## *Introduction*



“While we persistently look forward for tomorrow’s technologies to solve our problems,” writes Robert V. Adams, CEO, Xerox Technology Ventures, and president, World Business Academy, “we often find ourselves simultaneously looking backward, reexamining ancient wisdom on how to understand and enjoy ourselves and others in the process.”

As the practical relevance of ancient wisdom to modern problems becomes increasingly apparent, there is an ever greater need to retrieve these essential insights from ages of cultural overlay, embellishment, and historical decline. Whether we are simply interested in developing the cosmopolitan outlook proper to citizens of the world, or whether we are also interested in higher philosophy and free thought, today it is no longer plausible to regard world wisdom traditions as the domain of esoteric cultists and fringe intellectuals.

The effort to extract useful knowledge and pragmatic procedures from ancient lore is a hallmark of the original science of mind known as Zen. While many sects and cults eventually grew up around the traces of original Zen, as a rule these spin-offs returned to the very same sort of sentimental religiosity and dogmatic authoritarianism that original Zen eschewed, making them useless, even counterproductive, in the way of Zen mind liberation.

The essence of original Zen is self-understanding and self-



realization. In classical Zen terminology this development is called attainment of maximum potential and maximum function. This is envisioned as a kind of liberation, and a kind of awakening, which the many techniques of Zen mind art are designed to provoke and develop.

The Zen understanding of the human condition is that we habitually get ourselves into all sorts of binds on account of our vulnerability to the influences of external and internal changes. The crux of the problem seems to be a lack of fluidity, a sort of rigidity in the way we view the world and think about it.

In a famous Zen simile, we are like someone in a boat who thinks the bank of the river is moving. Closer observation reveals it is the boat that is moving, resulting in a changing perspective. Similarly, through Zen understanding we can observe the changes in our bodies and minds that cause our view of the world and feelings for other people to fluctuate from time to time, altering our reactions and behavior. In this way we can gain an extra perspective on ourselves and our lives, a more objective point of view, less distorted by unexamined biases and undetected inner currents, and thus master our own potential.

What is the true self that Zen seeks to understand and to realize? "To say it is like something," replied one ancient master, "would be to miss the mark." A description, after all, is not the self itself; Zen seeks direct knowledge that must be experienced oneself. The use of Zen theory and concentration formulas is to arouse this latent faculty while making it possible to monitor its performance both rationally and intuitively.

Many famous Zen sayings illustrate the seeming paradox of the self, so near at hand and yet so subtle and inscrutable to the self itself: "Though it has long been in use, when questioned, no one knows what it is." What is this? "Everyone uses it every day, without being aware of it." How to become aware of it, and how to use this awareness as a foundation for mastering its use, is the task of Zen realization.

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It could be said that the object of Zen, therefore, is to awaken the self and to develop it to a degree of maturity that is not dictated merely by physical or social needs. This involves inward discovery and empowerment of an autonomous core of subtly conscious, intelligent awareness, which oversees and harmonizes the instinctual, emotional, social, and intellectual facets of one's being.

In Zen terminology, this faculty is sometimes referred to as the "director" by way of allusion to the function of the mature self. Referred to in Zen lore as the "work," the development of the "director" is summed up with characteristic precision and beauty in a Buddhist scripture often quoted in Zen literature: "It is better to master the mind than be mastered by mind."

Thus self-knowledge is an aim, but it is also a means. Self-knowledge is a means of deeper self-understanding, and ultimately of self-realization. In other words, self-knowledge in the Zen process is not pursued by means of theoretical study but by means of itself. How this is accomplished is the content of Zen study; when this is done, everything turns into Zen learning.

There are many statements in Zen technical literature designed to orient the learner toward understanding, then experiencing, the real self, or the self apart from socially conditioned views; from which vantage point one then understands the real world through the real self.

"You do not need to seek," said one of the great masters, "but you must save yourself; no one can do it for you." The original Zen teachings fostered the utmost in supreme independence and supreme responsibility for oneself. In order to overcome the potential for self-deception inherent in this posture, Zen masters insisted on experiential insight into the most fundamental nature of being itself; this was called seeing nature, or seeing essence.

Seeing essence is also called "gaining entry," signifying the initiatory nature of this experience. Zen teachings and practices

do not deal only with the process of awakening insight into essence, but also with the aftermath of awakening, the process of maturing and applying Zen consciousness.

### Religious and Secular Zen

Zen arose in China several hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism there, and operated in both religious and secular contexts.

In religious contexts—first Buddhism, then Taoism, and later Confucianism—Zen taught people to study the “living word” of personal experience, rather than the “dead word” of doctrinaire dogmatism.

Religious Zen was both patronized and suppressed by despotic secular authorities, resulting in numerous distortions and deteriorations well documented in critical Zen lore. According to the accounts of the masters, by the 1100s religious Zen had largely degenerated into stagnant sects and cults.

Secular Zen is somewhat harder to trace than religious Zen. Records indicate its existence from the beginnings of Zen in China. Nearly half of the Second Patriarch's enlightened disciples were secular people, and many other lay people of both upper and lower classes are on official record through the ages as being known to have mastered Zen.

There were also many female Zen masters, again from the very beginnings of Zen. One of the greatest of these women on record was only thirteen years old when she was recognized by the most distinguished master in China. Another famous adept was barely sixteen when she was enlightened; and she was also the daughter of an enlightened woman.

One of the characteristics of degenerated religious cults, in contrast, is the spiritual suppression of women and secular people. Since the inner degeneration of religion into cults tended to coincide with the deepening of affiliation with, or captivation by, political authorities, such cults are mostly what survived as

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religious Zen, with official recognition and support under extremely rigid conditions. In late feudal Japan, for example, lay Zen masters were legally forbidden to lecture on Zen classics, and journeyman Buddhist priests commonly taught that females could not attain enlightenment. Zen was under arrest.

The unfortunate aberrations of misogyny and personal power-mongering witnessed in modern Zen cults are, like pseudo-religious sectarianism, the heritage of such circumstances, not characteristics of original Zen itself, or of real Zen in any age. This distinction needs to be made in order to actually experience the freedom and enlightenment of original Zen, avoiding the webs of suggestion and emotional conditioning used by religious systems that have become power structures affording people means and opportunities for dominating and manipulating others.

The usurpation and alienation of Zen at the hands of ambitious careerists turning it into a cult is described by many of the masters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Dahui, one of the greatest of all time, wrote,

Students in recent times often abandon the fundamental and pursue trivia; turning their backs on truth, they plunge into falsehood. They only consider learning in terms of career and reputation. All they have as their definitive doctrine is to take riches and status and expand their schools. Therefore their mental art is not correct, and they are affected by things.

Mi-an, another distinguished master of the Song dynasty, vigorously repudiated cultism and upheld secular Zen in no uncertain terms:

Those who have not learned are in confusion; not relying on the source, they abandon their families, quit their jobs, and wander around in misery, running north and south looking for “Zen” and “Tao” and seeking “Buddha” and

“Dharma” on the tongues of old monks all over the land, intentionally waiting for their “transmission,” unaware they have missed the point long ago.

### Zen and Culture

In the statement of its own masters, the message of Zen is “not of the East or West, North or South.” It is inherent to Zen, to say nothing of common sense, that people need not adopt an Eastern culture in order to understand and actualize Zen in one’s own life. The so-called “director” in Zen psychology is so called precisely because it refers to a faculty or capacity of consciousness that is not itself controlled or intrinsically modified by the processes of social and cultural conditioning.

One way to recognize a cult as a cult, in fact, is its superficial Orientalism. Changes in mood caused by environmental redecoration may occur, especially when combined with other forms of suggestion, but these are not actually Zen effects. Western Zen cults with an Oriental veneer neither reproduce Eastern cultures nor enhance Western cultures. Authentic Zen is not a sideshow; the teaching is to harmonize with the environment, as illustrated in the famous proverb, “A good craftsman leaves no traces.”

There is, nevertheless, a way to describe the overall cultural context of Zen in a more specific manner. Zen master Foyan refers people to the Fifth Stage of Enlightenment according to the teaching of the Ten Stages in the comprehensive *Flower Ornament Scripture*, a favorite book of many classical masters and source of many of their teachings and techniques.

In this fifth stage, while focus is on perfection of meditation, at the same time, “The practitioners, thus engaged in developing people, with minds continually following enlightened knowledge, engaged in unregressing goodness, intent on the search for supreme truth, practice *whatever in the world* would benefit living beings.” The text goes on to name occupations like writing, teaching, mathematics, science, medicine, song and dance, drama,

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music, storytelling, entertainment, city planning, agriculture, horticulture, and so on. The relevance of this approach to Zen, so different from that of self-centered cults, need hardly be further argued. The seventeenth century Japanese Zen master Man-an also wrote, "If you want to quickly attain mastery of all truths and be independent in all events, there is nothing better than concentration in activity."

In the world of the modern West, where democracy and individual human rights are legally recognized but not as yet fully realized, no issues could be more timely than self-understanding and self-mastery, or liberating the individual from confusing and deluding influences of all kinds so as to empower freedom of choice as an authentic individual capacity and not just an abstract constitutional right or social ideal. The bafflement and mystification of exotic cults have no place in real Zen today, East or West.

### **Zen Meditation**

While it is common knowledge that Zen Buddhists used meditation of various sorts in their arts of mind cultivation, original Zen and imitation Zen cultism may also be distinguished in a parallel manner by comparison of specific attitudes toward meditation. Zen that is exaggerated into a meditation cult, in which meditation assumes the status of a value in itself, or attention is fixated on a given posture or procedure presented as inherently sacrosanct, is a characteristic deterioration. This is more of the nature of fetishism than enlightenment, as is particularly evident in cases where meditation is done ritualistically in random groups according to fixed schedules, even under pressure; such activity results in obsession, not liberation. This was not the procedure of the masters, and it is not recommended in classical Zen meditation texts. The great master Dahui said,

Nowadays they sound a signal to sit and meditate. If you want a solemn scene, there you have it, but I don't believe

you can sit to the point where you attain stability. People who hear this kind of talk often think I do not teach people to sit and meditate, but this is a misperception; they do not understand expedient technique. I just want you to be in Zen meditation whether you are working or sitting, to be essentially at peace whether you are speaking, silent, active, or still.

The roots of the deterioration of meditation from a living means into a dead end were already observed in the classical era of Zen. The renowned Tang dynasty master Linji said, "There are blind baldies who, after they have eaten their fill, sit in meditation and arrest thoughts leaking out, to prevent them from arising, shunning clamor and seeking quietude. This is a deviated form of Zen." A generation later, the redoubtable master Xuansha went even further in contrasting living Zen with pietistic quietist cults:

This business cannot be pinned down; the road of mind and thought ends. It does not depend on embellishment; it is original true peace. In movement and action, talking and laughing, it is everywhere clear; there is nothing lacking.

People these days, not realizing this truth, arbitrarily get involved in things, in material objects, influenced by all that is around them, fixated and bound up everywhere.

Even if they understand, they find the material world a profusion of confusion, with labels and characteristics not corresponding to realities, so they try to freeze their minds and curtail their thoughts, returning things to voidness, shutting their eyes, clearing away thoughts over and over again whenever they arise, suppressing even subtle ideas as soon as they occur.

Such an understanding is that of an outsider who has fallen into empty nothingness, a corpse whose soul has not yet dissolved. Void of awareness, void of cognition, plunged

and thus can provide a fertile field for charlatans and poseurs. Master Mi-an said,

The reason this path has not been flourishing in recent years is nothing else but the fact that those who are acting as teachers of others do not have their eyes and brains straight and true.

They have no perception of their own, but just keep fame and fortune and gain and loss in their hearts. Deeply afraid that others will say they have no stories, they mistakenly memorize stories from old books, letting them ferment in the back of their minds so they won't lack for something to say if seekers ask them questions.

They are like goats crapping: the minute their tails go up, innumerable dung balls plop to the ground! Since students do not have clear perception, how are they supposed to distinguish clearly? Students believe deeply, with all their hearts; so unseeing individuals lead unseeing crowds into a pit of fire.

In the West, where neither the Chinese language nor Buddhist thought are generally known, it is even more critical to make sure that we understand the true structure of Zen stories, and know how their structure guides constructive concentration before trying to employ them. Considering what became of Zen koans even in the land of their origin, if we are to derive any real living enlightenment from contemplation of Zen stories we must beware of naively mistaking bafflement or mystification for authentic Zen effects.

### Zen Enlightenment

One of the peculiarities of Zen Buddhism is the idea that awakening can take place instantaneously. Zen training, from this point of view, does not mean learning doctrines, rituals, and postures, but preparing the mind to accept this awakening and integrate it constructively with daily life in the world.



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Several deteriorations in Zen are associated with instant awakening. One is the premature induction of experience, resulting in failure to attain an integrated personality. Another is inability to sustain and develop the newly awakened consciousness, again resulting in failure to achieve complete integration. In this connection it should be noted that enlightenment in Zen generally refers to the initiatory awakening, not the full development known in classical Buddhism as complete perfect enlightenment.

A rather more common deterioration of the instant awakening of Zen is mistaking an ecstatic experience or altered state of consciousness for this Zen awakening. There are many records of this in Zen lore, where it is sometimes described as mistaking a fish eye for a pearl. Since enlightenment may often be accompanied by a release of tension, furthermore, there are cases where people mistake emotional catharsis for awakening, or even deliberately induce excessive tension in an effort to produce an ecstatic feeling of release. Attempts to mimic the Zen effect in this way can be observed in both Eastern and Western Zen cults, especially in recent generations.

A more radical deviation in the sudden enlightenment teaching was the doctrine that there is actually no such thing. This became fashionable among cultists in both China and Japan, many centuries ago. Master Dahui (1089–1163) observed,

In the monastic Zen communities of recent times, there is a kind of false Zen that clings to disease as if it were medicine. Never having had any experiential enlightenment themselves, they consider enlightenment to be a construct, a word used as an inducement, a fall into the secondary, a subordinate issue. Those who have never had experience of enlightenment themselves, and who do not believe anyone else has had experience of enlightenment, uniformly consider empty, inert blankness to be the primordial. Eating two meals daily, they do no work but just sit, calling this “inner peace.”

Those who adopted this posture in feudal Japan also spoke of “just sitting,” but surrounded it with elaborate rituals, considering obedience to the regulations and observances of their cult to be all that was needed in the way of enlightenment. Back in China, master Mi-an also pointed out a more subtle fallacy of this “no enlightenment” Zen: “Just because of never having personally realized awakening, people temporarily halt sensing of objects, then take the bit of light that appears before their eyes to be the ultimate. This illness is most miserable.” The construction of fancy rituals and titles to celebrate and enshrine these experiences as absolutes made the situation extremely critical in the context of religious Zen. It might be said that this is another advantage of secular Zen, wherein realization must actually be effective in all experiences and is not sacramentalized.

Historical records show the spiritual failure of the Zen-without-enlightenment movement, but they also show the attraction of this doctrine for authorities who wanted a static and ineffectual state-approved religion to absorb excess energies of the populace in a way that the authorities could control without military action against their own subjects. As the classical masters themselves already pointed out in China long ago, authoritarian cultism with its magisterial potentates, courts, regalia, and sacred mysteries, is actually a historical relic of politico-religious affairs, not the authentic heritage of enlightened living Zen.

### Shortcuts to Zen

This book contains translations of general lectures on Zen by Foyan (1067–1120), who is universally recognized as one of the greatest masters of the Song dynasty Zen revival. Going back to the original and classical Zen masters, Foyan presents many simple exercises in attention and thought designed to lead to the awakening of Zen insight into the real nature of the self.

After the passing of the classical masters, very few Zen teachers equaled Foyan in the degree to which he fostered indepen-

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dence and autonomy and freedom in his hearers from the very outset. He was completely free of any desire for fame or followers, and made no attempt to recruit disciples. All he wanted was for people to open their own eyes and stand on their own two feet, to see directly without delusion and act on truth without confusion. It is said that dozens of his hearers attained enlightenment; at least fifteen of them are known to have become Zen masters and teachers in their own right.

# ZEN LECTURES





## *Freedom and Independence*



**O**NE WHO IS not a companion of myriad things has departed the toils of materialism. The mind does not recognize the mind, the eye does not see the eye; since there is no opposition, when you see forms there are no forms there to be seen, and when you hear sounds there are no sounds there to be heard. Is this not departing the toils of materialism?

There is no particular pathway into it, no gap through which to see it: Buddhism has no East or West, South or North; one does not say, "You are the disciple, I am the teacher." If your own self is clear and everything is It, when you visit a teacher you do not see that there is a teacher; when you inquire of yourself, you do not see that you have a self. When you read scripture, you do not see that there is scripture there. When you eat, you do not see that there is a meal there. When you sit and meditate, you do not see that there is any sitting. You do not slip up in your everyday tasks, yet you cannot hold of anything at all.

When you see in this way, are you not independent and free?

## Zen Sicknesses



**T**HE SPIRITUAL BODY has three kinds of sickness and two kinds of light; when you have passed through each one, only then are you able to sit in peace. In the *Heroic Progress Discourse*, furthermore, Buddha explained fifty kinds of meditation sickness. Now I tell you that you need to be free from sickness to attain realization.

In my school, there are only two kinds of sickness. One is to go looking for a donkey riding on the donkey. The other is to be unwilling to dismount once having mounted the donkey.

You say it is certainly a tremendous sickness to mount a donkey and then go looking for the donkey. I tell you that one need not find a spiritually sharp person to recognize this right away and get rid of the sickness of seeking, so the mad mind stops.

Once you have recognized the donkey, to mount it and be unwilling to dismount is the sickness that is most difficult to treat. I tell you that you need not mount the donkey; you *are* the donkey! The whole world is the donkey; how can you mount it? If you mount it, you can be sure the sickness will not leave! If you don't mount it, the whole universe is wide open!

When the two sicknesses are gone, and there is nothing on your mind, then you are called a wayfarer. What else is there? This is why when Zhaozhou asked Nanquan, "What is the path?"

Nanquan replied, "The normal mind is the path." Now Zhaozhou suddenly stopped his hasty search, recognized the

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sickness of “Zen Masters” and the sickness of “Buddhas,” and passed through it all. After that, he traveled all over, and had no peer anywhere, because of his recognition of sicknesses.

One day Zhaozhou went to visit Zhuyou, where he paced back and forth brandishing his staff from east to west and west to east. Zhuyou asked, “What are you doing?” Zhaozhou replied, “Testing the water.” Zhuyou retorted, “I haven’t even one drop here; what will you test?” Zhaozhou left, leaning on his staff. See how he revealed a bit of an example, really quite able to stand out.

Zen followers these days all take sickness for truth. Best not let your mind get sick.



## *Facing It Directly*



**I**F YOU DON'T ASK, you won't get it; but if you ask, in effect you've slighted yourself. If you don't ask, how can you know? But you still have to know *how to ask* before you can succeed.

I have stuck you right on the top of the head for you to discern the feeling, like lifting up the scab on your moxacautery burn. Spiritually sharp people know immediately; then for the first time they attain the ability to avoid cheating themselves in any way.

I'm not fooling you. Remember the story of the ancient worthy who was asked, "What was the intention of the Zen Founder in coming from India?" Amazed, the ancient said, "You ask about the intention of another in coming from India. Why not ask about your own intention?"

Then the questioner asked, "What is one's own intention?"

The ancient replied, "Observe it in hidden actions."

The questioner asked, "What are its hidden actions?"

The ancient opened and closed his eyes to give an indication.

The ancients often took the trouble to talk quite a bit, but their descendants were not like that; they would shout at people the moment they entered the door, with no further whats or hows or maybes.

If you don't understand, there is something that is just so; why not perceive it? In other places they like to have people look at model case stories, but here we have the model case story of

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what is presently coming into being; you should look at it, but no one can make you see all the way through such an immense affair.

People spend all their time on thoughts that are nothing but idle imagination and materialistic toil, so wisdom cannot emerge. All conventions come from conceptual thought; what use do you want to make of them?

Wisdom is like the sun rising, whereupon everything is illuminated. This is called the manifestation of nondiscriminatory knowledge. You should attain this once, and from then on there will be something to work with, and we will have something to talk about. If you indulge in idle imagination and toil over objects, then you have nothing for me to work with.

What a laugh! When I talk about the east, you go into the west, and when I talk about the west, you go into the east; I can do nothing for you! If you could turn your heads around, when your insight opened up you'd be able to say, "After all it turns out that the teacher *has* told me, and I have told the teacher," and when the head was shaken the tail would whip around, everything falling into place. You brag about having studied Zen for five or ten years, but when have you ever done this kind of work? You just pursue fast talk.

When you have come to me and I see it as soon as you try to focus on anything, that means your inner work has not yet reached the point of flavorlessness. If you stay here five or ten years and manage to perfect your inner work, then you will awaken.

Whenever I teach people to do inner work, what I tell them is all in accord with the ancients, not a word off; understand, and you will know of the ancients. But don't say, "An ancient spoke thus, and I have understood it thus," for then it becomes incorrect.

How about the ancient saying, "It is not the wind moving, not the flag moving, but your mind moving"—how many words

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here are right or wrong in your own situation? It is also said, "I am you, you are me"—nothing is beyond this.

Also, someone asked Yunmen, "What is the student's self?" Yunmen replied, "Mountains, rivers, the whole earth." This is quite good; are these there or not? If the mountains, rivers, and earth are there, how can you see the self? If not, how can you say that the presently existing mountains, rivers, and earth are not there? The ancients have explained for you, but you do not understand and do not know.

I always tell you that what is inherent in you is presently active and presently functioning, and need not be sought after, need not be put in order, need not be practiced or proven. All that is required is to trust it once and for all. This saves a lot of energy.

It is hard to find people like this. When my teacher was with his teacher, his teacher used to say, "This path is a natural subtlety attained by oneself," generally focusing on the existence of innate knowledge. When I saw my teacher, I was unable to express this for ten years; just because I wondered deeply, I later attained penetrating understanding and now do not waste any energy at all.

It is not that it is there when you think of it but not so when you don't; Buddhism is not like this. Don't let the matter under the vestment bury me away. If you do not reflect and examine, your whole life will be buried away. Is there in fact anything going on here?

Nowadays there are many public teachers whose guiding eye is not clear. This is very wrong! How dare they mount a pulpit to try to help others? Showing a symbol of authority, they rant and rave at people without any qualms, simply pursuing the immediate and not worrying about the future. How miserable! If you have connections, you should not let yourself be set up as a teacher as long as you are not enlightened, because that is disaster! If there is something real in you, "musk is naturally fragrant." See how many phony "Zen masters" there are, degener-

### *Facing It Directly*

ating daily over a long, long time. They are like human dung carved into sandalwood icons; ultimately there is just the smell of crap.

Wishing to get out of birth and death, wishing to attain release, you try to become unified; but one does not attain unification after becoming homogenized. If you try to make yourself unified, you will certainly not attain unification.

Once a seeker called on a Wayfarer and asked, as they roamed the mountains, "An ancient teacher said he sought unification for thirty years without being able to attain it; what does this mean?" The Wayfarer replied, "I too am thus." Then he asked the seeker, "Understand?" He also gave the seeker a poem:

*The ancient teacher attains unification  
and I too am thus;  
before the end of this month,  
I will settle it for you again.*

At the end of the month, the Wayfarer passed away. Tell me about unification; is it good or bad? The ancient teacher attained unification, and I too am thus. I announce to Zen seekers: facing it directly, don't stumble past. Each of you, go on your way.

## *Seeing and Doing*



**M**ANY ARE THOSE who have seen but can do nothing about it. Once you have seen, why can't you do anything about it? Just because of not discerning; that is why you are helpless. If you see and discern, then you can do something about it.

Nevertheless, if you expect to understand as soon as you are inspired to study Zen, well, who wouldn't like that? It's just that you have no way in, and you cannot force understanding. Failing to mesh with it in every situation, missing the connection at every point, you cannot get it by exertion of force.

Whatever you are doing, twenty-four hours a day, in all your various activities, there is something that transcends the Buddhas and Zen Masters; but as soon as you want to understand it, it's not there. It's not really there; as soon as you try to gather your attention on it, you have already turned away from it. That is why I say you see but cannot do anything about it.

Does this mean that you will realize it if you do not aim the mind and do not develop intellectual understanding? Far from it—you will fail even more seriously to realize it. Even understanding does not get it, much less not understanding!

If you are spiritually sharp, you can open your eyes and see as soon as you hear me tell you about this. Have not people of immeasurable greatness said this truth is not comprehensible by thought, and that it is where knowledge does not reach? Were it not like this, how could it be called an enlightened truth?

## *Seeing and Doing*

Nowadays, however, people just present interpretations and views, making up rationalizations; they have never learned to be thus, and have never reached this state.

If people with potential for enlightenment are willing to see in this way, they must investigate most deeply and examine most closely; all of a sudden they will gain mastery of it and have no further doubt. The reason you do not understand is just because you are taken away by random thoughts twenty-four hours a day. Since you want to learn business, you fall in love with things you see and fondly pursue things you read; over time, you get continuously involved. How can you manage to work on enlightenment then?

Generally speaking, there are appropriate times for those who study business. Over the age of thirty, it's better not to study, because it will be hard to learn even if you do, and it will also be of dubious value. If you have taken care of your own business, on the other hand—that is, the business of the self—then you will still be able to learn through study, because you have been transformed. But if you have done with your own business, why would you study? If you are twenty years of age or thereabouts, you can still study, but if you are spiritually sharp and intent on the matter of life and death, you won't study anything else.

Whenever you seek Zen, furthermore, your mind ground must be even and straight, and your mind and speech must be in accord. Since your mind and speech are straightforward, your states are thus consistent from start to finish, without any petty details.

Do not say, "I understand! I have attained mastery!" If you have attained mastery, then why are you going around asking other people questions? As soon as you say you understand Zen, people watch whatever you do and whatever you say, wondering why you said this or that. If you claim to understand Zen, moreover, this is actually a contention of ignorance. What about

the saying that one should “silently shine, hiding one’s enlightenment”? What about “concealing one’s name and covering one’s tracks”? What about “the path is not different from the human mind”?

Each of you should individually reduce entanglements and not talk about judgments of right and wrong. All of your activities everywhere transcend Buddhas and Masters, the water buffalo at the foot of the mountain is imbued with Buddhism; but as soon as you try to search, it’s not there. Why do you not discern this?

## *The Marrow of the Sages*



**M**Y LIVELIHOOD IS the marrow of all the sages; there is not a moment when I am not explaining it to you, but you are unwilling to take it up. So it turns out, on the contrary, to be my deception. But look here—where is it that I am not explaining for you?

Professional Zennists say I do not teach people to think, I do not teach people to understand, I do not teach people to discuss stories, I do not cite past and present examples; they suppose we are idling away the time here, and think that if they had spent the time elsewhere they would have understood a few model case stories and heard some writings. If you want to discuss stories, cite past and present, then please go somewhere else; here I have only one-flavor Zen, which I therefore call the marrow of all sages.

Now let me ask you something. Why do you pay respects to an icon of wisdom? Does the icon acknowledge you when you pay respects? Does it agree with you?

If you say it acknowledges you, it is a clay icon—how can it give any acknowledgment? If you say it agrees, can you agree? Since you are incapable of acknowledgment or agreement, why do you pay respects? Is it social convention? Is it producing goodness from seeing a representation?

If you say it is social duty, how can there be social convention among renunciants? How can they produce good by seeing representations?



Do you pay respects as a consequence of going along with the crowd? If so, what is the logic in that?

Here you must understand each point clearly. Have you not read how the great teacher Changsha one day turned around and saw the icon of wisdom, whereupon he suddenly realized the ultimate and said, "Turning around, I suddenly see the original body. The original body is not a perception or a reality; if you consider the original being to be the same as the real being, you will suffer hardship forever." Do you understand the logic of this?

## *Not Knowing*



SOMETIMES WHEN I question students, they all say they do not know or understand; they just say they eat when hungry and sleep when tired. What redemption is there in such talk? You even say you are not cognizant of whether the month is long or short, and do not care whether it is a leap year; who understands this affair of yours?

Now I ask you, how do you explain the logic of not knowing? You hear others say this, so you say it yourselves; but have you ever understood that principle of not knowing?

An ancient said, "Not knowing means nothing is not known, nowhere not reached." This is called unknowing so that you people today may reach that unknown state. This is the realm of the sages —how could it be like the blindness and nonunderstanding that people today call not knowing?

If you go on like this always declaring you don't know and are not concerned, how will you communicate if someone questions you? There might be no one to continue on the road of Zen! It won't do to be like this. Make your choice carefully!

## Emancipation



IN ANCIENT TIMES a Zen worthy asked an old adept, "What is less essential for emancipation?" The old adept said, "Fog is rising from your feet, reverend!" At these words, the Zen worthy suddenly got the message.

Do you know about emancipation? If you formulate the idea that you can understand, then you are blocked off from it.

Later, another adept said, "I dare not turn my back on you, master; for fog is rising from *your* feet!"

Then there is the story of when Beiyuan Tong left Dongshan. Dongshan said, "Where are you going?" Tong replied, "Into the mountains." Dongshan said, "Flying Monkey Ridge is steep—a fine sight!" Tong hesitated. Dongshan said, "Reverend Tong!" Tong responded, "Yes?" Dongshan said, "Why don't you go into the mountains?" At these words, Tong suddenly got the message.

The ancients were quite direct in their ways of helping others. Whenever people came to them, they would show them. In this case, he said he was going into the mountains; what does this mean?

People today do not realize clearly, inevitably making an understanding. By a bit of understanding, they have blocked themselves off. One can only investigate comprehensively through experience; one cannot understand just by intellectual interpretation. Once you have comprehended thoroughly with unified comprehension, you will no longer doubt.

Nevertheless, this is not easy to maintain. If you have entered into it correctly, you will not backslide. Thus, even if you have clarified what can be understood, that is not comparable to seeing what cannot be understood and also having the ability to maintain it. Then you will always be aware and always be alert.

This is why an ancient said, "The normal mind is the path; can one aim for it?" "If you try to head for it, you are turning away from it." Seeing as how you are not allowed to head for it, then how do you maintain it? It's not easy!

Is this not emancipation? If you seek a state of emancipation, this is what is called a cramp! Xuansha said, "The whole earth is an eon of hell; if you do not clarify yourself, this is a serious cramp." It will not do to idle away the time.

## *Stop Opinions*



**T**HE THIRD PATRIARCH of Zen said, “Don’t seek reality, just put a stop to opinions.” He also said, “As soon as there are judgments of right and wrong, the mind is lost in a flurry.” These sayings teach you people of today what to work on.

When you read his saying, “Don’t seek reality,” you say there is no further need to seek—this means you are still entertaining opinions and are in a flurry of judgments; after all you have not reached a state of mind where there is no seeking, and are just making up an opinionated interpretation.

People who study Zen nowadays are all like this; reading a transformative saying and reaching an insight into the words, they then try to apply it to all sayings, thinking they are all the same. Keeping this in their hearts, they think of it as their own attainment; far from realizing they have lost their minds by entertaining an opinionated understanding, they cling to it and will not let go. What ignoramuses!

Would you like to attain a state of mind where you seek nothing? Just do not conceive all sorts of opinions and views. This nonseeking does not mean blanking out and ignoring everything. In everyday life, twenty-four hours a day, when there is unclarity in the immediate situation it is generally because the opinionated mind is grasping and rejecting. How can you get to know the nondiscriminatory mind then?

Thus when an ancient sage was asked if the created and the

uncreated are different, he said they are not. Sky and earth, rivers and seas, wind and clouds, grasses and trees, birds and beasts, people and things living and dying, changing right before our eyes, are all called created forms. The uncreated way is silent and unmoving; the indescribable and unnameable is called uncreated. How can there be no difference?

Grand Master Yongjia said, "The true nature of ignorance is the very nature of enlightenment; the empty body of illusions and projections is the very body of realities." These two are each distinct; how do you understand the logic of identity? You have to experience the mind without seeking; then they will integrate and you will get to be trouble-free.

In the ten stages of enlightenment, the fifth is the stage Difficult to Conquer, which means that it is extremely difficult to attain equality of real knowledge and conventional knowledge; when you enter this stage, the two are equal, so it is called the stage that is difficult to conquer. Students of the path should take them in and make them equal twenty-four hours a day.

And do you know they are drawn up by your nondiscriminatory mind? Like an artist drawing all sorts of pictures, both pretty and ugly, the mind depicts forms, feelings, perceptions, abstract patterns, and consciousnesses; it depicts human societies and paradises. When it is drawing these pictures, it does not borrow the power of another; there is no discrimination between the artist and the artwork. It is because of not realizing this that you conceive various opinions, having views of yourself and views of other people, creating your own fair and foul.

So it is said, "An artist draws a picture of hell, with countless sorts of hideous forms. On setting aside the brush to look it over, it's bone-chilling, really hair-raising." But if you know it's a drawing, what is there to fear?

In olden times, when people had clearly realized this, it became evident in all situations. Once when the great teacher Xuansha was cutting down a tree, a tiger bounded out of the woods. The

teacher's companion said, "It's a tiger!" The teacher scolded him and said, "It's a tiger for you."

Another time, when he saw a seeker performing prostrations, Xuansha said, "It is because of the self that one can bow to the other." These expedients are in profound accord with the intent of Buddha.

The great teacher Fayan once pointed to a dog right in front of him and said, "An engraving." When you look at this, do not look to the dog itself for clarification; you must see it in your own experience before you can get it. Only then will you understand that saying, "As soon as there are judgments of right and wrong, you lose your mind in a flurry." I hope you get the point!

## *The Director*



**E**VEN IF YOU trust directly in the rightness of reality this very moment, already you are called a dullard; how much the more if you cannot trust directly—what are you good for then?

If you directly trust the rightness of reality, why are you called a dullard? When have you been coming and going all this time? You should know you've lost one part; then you see that what you had hitherto not comprehended turns out to be a view that has no relevance to you.

As I observe the ancients since time immemorial, there were those who attained enlightenment from confusion; all of their statements are teachings on attaining enlightenment from confusion. Then there were those who came to understand confusion after becoming enlightened; all of their statements are teachings on understanding confusion after becoming enlightened. Then again, there were those for whom there is neither confusion nor enlightenment; all of their statements are teachings on freedom from both confusion and enlightenment. Next, those who attained enlightenment outside of confusion were also very numerous, so they are not worth talking about. How much less worthwhile are those who neither know enlightenment nor understand confusion! These latter are, properly speaking, merely ordinary mortals.

In ancient times, only a few people such as Nanquan and Guizong could be referred to as having vision free of both con-



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fusion and enlightenment. Students nowadays run off at the mouth talking about freedom from both confusion and enlightenment, but when have they ever actually arrived at it? Don't say things like that too easily!

Since you still have doubts, now I will ask you something. When you were first conceived in your mother's womb, what did you bring with you? You had nothing whatsoever when you came, just mental consciousness, with no shape or form. Then when you die and give up the burden of the physical body, again you will have nothing at all but mental consciousness. At present, in your travels and community life, this is the director.

Now let me ask you something. We receive portions of energy from our father and mother through their sperm and egg; clinging to what we receive, we call it our body. From the time of birth, as it gradually grows and matures, this body always belongs to the self. But tell me, does it belong to you or not? If you say it belongs to you, when first conceived you had nothing with you; when did the sperm and egg of your father and mother ever belong to you? Life can last a hundred years at most, furthermore, before the corpse is abandoned; when did it ever belong to you?

And yet, if you say it doesn't belong to you, right now there is no possibility of taking anything away. When it is reviled you anger, when it is pained you suffer; how could it not belong to you? Try to determine whether you have anything there or not, and you will find you cannot determine, because your root of doubt is not cut through. If you say you have something there, while during the process of growth from birth up to the age of twenty, there is no change in this certainty, but when you get to be forty or fifty the body changes and deteriorates from moment to moment, so you cannot say it is definitively there. But if you say there is nothing there, nevertheless you can perform all sorts of actions, so you cannot say there is nothing.

Once upon a time, a man lost his way on a journey, so he

lodged in a vacant cottage. That night a ghost came, carrying a corpse. Then another ghost came and said, "That's *my* body!" The first ghost said, "I got it over yonder." Then the second ghost snatched it away by force. The first ghost said, "There's a traveler here who can stand witness!" So the two ghosts approached the man and said, "Who brought this corpse?"

The traveler reflected, "Both of the ghosts are evil; at least one of them is sure to hurt me. I've heard that if one avoids telling a falsehood when facing death, one will be born in heaven." So he pointed to the first ghost and said, "This ghost brought it."

Enraged, the second ghost tore out the traveler's arms and legs. Now the first ghost, repentant and grateful, said, "Your word of testimony for me has crippled you." So the first ghost used the corpse to patch the man up. The parts were again taken by the second ghost, and the first ghost repaired the man once again. Finally both ghosts wound up on the ground trying to eat the man's flesh as fast as they could, each one trying to get more than the other. When all of the man's flesh had been consumed, the ghosts left.

Now the traveler saw his parents' bodies right in front of his eyes, already devoured by the ghosts. Then he gazed upon his own changed body and wondered what it was. "Is it me? Is it not me? Is it something? Is it nothing?" He went crazing thinking about these things, and bolted off into the night.

Eventually he came to a cloister. There he saw a mendicant, to whom he related the foregoing events. The mendicant saw that he would be easy to teach and to liberate, because he already knew that his body was not his possession. So the mendicant gave the traveler a summary of the teaching, and he actually attained enlightenment after that.

You people just talk about studying Zen by bringing up stories as if that were Buddhism. What I am talking about now is the marrow of Zen; why do you not wonder, find out, and understand in this way? Your body is not there, yet not nothing. Its

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presence is the presence of the body in the mind; so it has never been there. Its nothingness is the absence of the body in the mind; so it has never been nothing.

Do you understand? If you go on to talk of mind, it too is neither something nor nothing; ultimately it is not you. The idea of something originally there now being absent, and the idea of something originally not there now being present, are views of nihilism and eternalism.

## *Saving Energy*



**G**ENERALLY SPEAKING, PRACTICAL application of Zen requires detachment from thoughts. This method of Zen saves the most energy. It just requires you to detach from emotional thoughts, and understand that there is nothing concrete in the realms of desire, form, and formlessness; only then can you apply Zen practically. If you try to practice it otherwise, it will seem bitterly painful by comparison.

Once there was a disciplinarian monk who had kept the precepts all his life. As he was walking one night, he stepped on something that squished, which he imagined to be a frog, a mother frog laden with eggs. Mortified at the thought of having killed a pregnant frog, when the monk went to sleep that night he dreamed that hundreds of frogs came to him demanding his life. He was utterly terrified.

Come morning, the monk went to look for the frog he had squashed, and found that it had only been an overripe eggplant. At that moment, the monk's perplexities abruptly ceased; realizing there is nothing concrete in the world, for the first time he was really able to apply it practically in life.

Now I ask you, when he stepped on it by night, was it a frog or an eggplant? If it was a frog, yet when he looked at dawn it was an eggplant; if it was an eggplant, yet there were frogs demanding his life the night before. Can you decide? I'll try to decide for you:

*Feelings of frogs may be shed,  
but the idea of eggplant remains.  
If you would be free  
of the idea of eggplant,  
strike the evening chime at noon.*

## *The Most Direct Approach*



**W**HY DON'T YOU understand the essence that has always been there? There is not much to Buddhism; it only requires you to see the way clearly. It does not tell you to extinguish random thoughts and suppress body and mind, shutting your eyes and saying "This is It!" The matter is not like this.

You must observe the present state. What is its logic? What is its guiding pattern? Why are you confused? This is the most direct approach.

How about when I have not spoken to you, and you have not heard me; is there any point in coming and going? At such a time, do not make up forced rationalizations.

From the Buddhas above to the totality of beings below, all is *thus*. In this sense, sages and ordinary people are equal, wrong and right are equal, samsara and nirvana are equal. Now I ask you, whose business are the ancient Buddhas, and the generations of past, present and future? Whose business are the contaminated lands of the ten directions?

I say, if you understand all this thirty years from now, you will realize that I did tell you. Just don't say, "This is It!" If you do, that is called the view of an outsider.

## *Asleep*



**R**IGHT NOW IF you are questioned and cannot speak, where is the fault? It is generally because of seeing forms where there is no form, hearing a voice where there is nothing said, forcing rationalizations where there is no reason, asserting control where there is no control.

If you cannot get rid of this, that is referred to as “diseased eyes still there, flowers in the sky fall in confusion.” Why? Just because mind is still there; so you cannot speak.

There is not much to Buddhism; it only requires you to make a statement plainly and simply, that is all. But what is a plain and simple statement? If someone asked me, I’d say, “It’s already become two statements.” Understand?

An ancient said, “The Buddhas and Zen masters have given a clear and detailed explanation of what is beyond words, but most of those who get here are confused, muddled, and uncomprehending.”

If you don’t see this, you are asleep on your feet. You are always in the light, and yet do not know it, even with your eyes open. How do you expect me to do anything for you?

## *No Seeing*



**W**HEN I BRING up one thing and another for you as I do, you think I am explaining Zen; but the minute you go into action you make it into worldly convention.

Only if you keep your attention on it will you be able to make a discovery; but as I see, most of you just remain in eyes and ears, seeing and hearing, sensing and feeling—you've already missed the point. You must find the nondiscriminatory mind without departing from the discriminating mind; find that which has no seeing or hearing without departing from seeing and hearing.

This does not mean that "no seeing" is a matter of sitting on a bench with your eyes closed. You must have nonseeing right in seeing. This is why it is said, "Live in the realm of seeing and hearing, yet unreached by seeing and hearing; live in the land of thought, yet untouched by thought."



## Independence



**W**HAT DO YOU people come to me for? Each individual should lead life autonomously—don't listen to what other people say. An ancient declared, "I knew how to lead life by the time I was eighteen." You people must learn to live independently.

You say, "Lead what life?" Just do not seek elsewhere. Most people today are compulsively active; this is already not knowing how to lead life. This is called abandoning home, scattering the family, and becoming a drifter. Clearly this is not understanding. Just searching and seeking, studying a bit of intellectual knowledge, memorizing a few sayings, is called "hauling manure inside."

When you get here, your actions have to be truly accurate; eventually it will sink in thoroughly, and then you will understand. An ancient said, "Everywhere is you. Go east, and it's you; go west, and it's you. Who are you?" If you say, "Me," this is emotional and intellectual consciousness, which you must pass through before you attain realization.

In ancient times Vasubandhu asked Asanga, "Elder brother, when you went to the inner palace, what teaching did Maitreya expound to you?" Asanga replied, "He expounded *this* teaching." Now tell me, what teaching is *this*? You must be able to discern it before you can realize it.

Don't fix recognition on *this*. Many people have been fooled by the term *this*. That is why they speak of illness as if it were medicine. Therefore we say they are pitiful.

## *In Tune*



**D**ON'T SAY WHAT is speaking right now is It; that's not quite right. As soon as there is an affirmation, then there is a denial. That is the reason why it is said, that no verbal expressions correspond to this reality.

What you must do is live in harmony with it. This matter is not in another; but are you in tune with it? And if you are in tune, in tune with whom?

If you say you are in tune with the ancients, the ancients are gone. If you say you are in tune with a teacher, a teacher has no connection with you.

This is why the sages compassionately told us to tune into the source of our own minds. Now tell me, what is the source of mind, to which one tunes in on one's own?

If you mindfully try to tune into mind, you will definitely be unable to tune in. You have to tune in with mindless mind.

## *Learning Zen*



**Y**OU MUST BE attuned twenty-four hours a day before you attain realization. Have you not read how Lingyun suddenly tuned in to this reality on seeing peach blossoms, how Xiangyan set his mind at rest on hearing the sound of bamboo being hit?

An ancient said, "If you are not in tune with this reality, then the whole earth deceives you, the environment fools you." The reason for all the mundane conditions abundantly present is just that this reality has not been clarified. I urge you for now to first detach from gross mental objects. Twenty-four hours a day you think about clothing, think about food, think all sorts of various thoughts, like the flame of a candle burning unceasingly.

Just detach from gross mental objects, and whatever subtle ones there are will naturally clear out, and eventually you will come to understand spontaneously; you don't need to seek. This is called putting conceptualization to rest and forgetting mental objects, not being a partner to the dusts.

This is why the ineffable message of Zen is to be understood on one's own. I have no Zen for you to study, no Doctrine for you to discuss. I just want you to tune in on your own.

The only essential thing in learning Zen is to forget mental objects and stop rumination. This is the message of Zen since time immemorial. Did not one of the Patriarchs say, "Freedom from thoughts is the source, freedom from appearances is the substance"? If you just shout and clap, when will you ever be done?

## *The Basis of Awareness*



**E**XPAND ENLIGHTENMENT, AND the mind is always calm; go along with things, and consciousness runs at a gallop. I only wish to be rich in enlightenment though personally poor, generous with virtue though emotionally aloof.

Here, I am thus every day, thus all the time. But tell me, what is “thus”? Try to express it outside of discriminatory consciousness, intellectual assessments, and verbal formulations.

This reality is not susceptible to your intellectual understanding. Now those who think, attend, and reflect all have some intellectual understanding; but then when they turn back to examine their own eyes and think of the mind that thinks, at this point why do people unknowingly say, “It has never been blue, yellow, red, or white; it has no appearance, no form”? I tell you, this is what I call talk; it is not your original mind.

How can you think of your original mind? How can you see your own eye? When you are looking inward, furthermore, there is no seeing subject. Some people swallow this in one gulp, so their eye of insight opens wide and they immediately arrive at their homeland.

How can people nowadays reach the point where there is no seeing and no hearing? Everything is always there; you see people, houses, and all sorts of forms, like boiling water bubbling.

When you were infants, you also heard sounds and saw forms, but you didn’t know how to discriminate. Once you came to the

age of reason, then you listened to discriminatory thinking, and from that time on have suffered a split between the primal and the temporal.

At this point, it is inevitably hard for people to restore natural order even if they want to. Those who attain enlightenment do not see walking when they walk, and do not see sitting when they sit. That is why the Buddha said, “The eyes seeing forms is equivalent to blindness; the ears hearing sounds is equivalent to deafness.”

How can we say we are as if blind and deaf? When we hear sound, there is no sound to be heard; when we see form, there is no form to be seen. What we see and hear is all equivalent to an echo. It is like seeing all sorts of things in a dream—is there all that when you wake up?

If you say yes, yet there’s only the blanket and pillow on the bed; if you say no, yet all those things are clearly registered in your mind, and you can tell what they were. The same is true of what you see and hear now in broad daylight.

So it is said, what can be seen by the eye or heard by the ear can be studied in the scriptures and treatises; but what about the basis of awareness itself—how do you study that?

## *Just Being There*



*Where is Shakyamuni, the Buddha?*

*What? What?*

*Where is Bodhidharma, Founder of Zen?*

*Just there.*

**H**OW DO YOU explain the logic of just being there? It's unavoidably hard to clarify. If you can clarify this, you will finally know that true reality is always there.

Many Zen specialists say, "The mention itself is It." Then what about when you're dying, or too sick to speak? It is necessary to penetrate this experientially before you'll get it.

Have you not read how a seeker asked Deshan, "Where have the ancient sages gone?" Deshan said, "What? What?" Does that mean that "what" is itself the sages?

You people either interpret literally or else fall into conventional echoes of what is said. If you don't fall into echolike expressions, then you fall into wordlessness and speechlessness.

This reality you actually cannot figure out by conceptual interpretations; if you keep any of that on your mind, it turns into an inclination, alienating you from your self. Even if you try to attain harmony by means of mystic devices and wondrous doctrines, you will certainly be unable to do so. If you do not think at all, though, that won't work either. You must personally experience it before you will attain clear vision with no doubt.

## *Two Sicknesses*



**W**HEN PEOPLE TODAY studying Zen learn it wrongly, it is because of no more than two sicknesses.

One sickness is speechless, formless motionlessness in the haunt of the mind-body complex, where you say, "Even if the Buddhas and Zen Patriarchs came forth, I would still just be thus." This is one sickness.

Next is to give recognition to that which speaks, hears, works, acts, walks, stands, sits, and reclines. This is also a sickness. Do you know that activity is the root of suffering, sustained by the power of wind?

If people can get away from these two sicknesses and can engage in total investigation, someday they should wake up. Otherwise, there is no cleaning things up.

There are also two kinds of benefactors who speak bitterly as an expedient for two kinds of students.

Students of one type make up rationales on their own and express things on their own, advancing and withdrawing, raising their fists and joining their palms, thinking this to be the way of Zen. Benefactors, seeing them this way, speak bitterly to them, saying, "You have misunderstood. Why is your attention so fixated when there is really no problem?" This is one kind of benefactor.

Another type of student says, "I do not understand, I do not know. Why? Because I am not tuned in at all." Therefore bene-

factors, seeing people thus, tell them, "There is nothing the matter with you; why do you seek to understand and tune in?" This is another kind of benefactor.

If both the former and latter types of students hear benefactors speaking like this, and are able to turn their attention around and study through experience, they will inevitably attain clarification. If they just say they don't understand, they are creating their own stagnation; even after a thousand years they would just be the same.

Fortunately, you are in its very midst; if you go on saying you do not understand and seek to tune in to it, when will you ever be done?

Do you want to understand? You must not set up limited measurements; you must apprehend it directly before you can get it.



## *Mind Itself*



**L**ET ME GIVE you an illustration. People have eyes, by which they can see all sorts of forms, like long and short, square and round, and so on; then why do they not see themselves? Just perceiving forms, you cannot see your eyes even if you want to. Your mind is also like this; its light shines perceptively throughout the ten directions, encompassing all things, so why does it not know itself?

Do you want to understand? Just discern the things perceived; you cannot see the mind itself.

An ancient said, “The knife does not cut itself, the finger does not touch itself, the mind does not know itself, the eye does not see itself.” This is true reality.

## *Seeing Through*



**Y**OU PEOPLE HAVE been standing here for quite a while; have you seen a single real teacher yet? Don't keep on standing there for nothing.

I am only what I call a provisional elder. An ancient sage said, apropos of this, "Just using provisional terminology to guide people, Buddha was an old Indian mendicant, who did not trouble you to discriminate appearances and grasp forms."

What is Shakyamuni the Buddha? Who is Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen? Was there any Buddhism before the founder came here? How can you say there was none? If you say there was none, that is just self-deception. When Bodhidharma was facing a wall for nine years, were there so many verbal teachings and public cases? To see through in this way is a very economical shortcut.

When you had not come here, I had not seen you and you had not seen me. If you do not see me and I do not see you, how can there be discernment and clarification? If you can attain clarification, what else is the matter?

Before Buddha appeared in the world, it was thus; after Buddha appeared in the world it was also thus, and after Buddha passed away it was still thus. If you arrive at this state of thusness, there is really nothing the matter at all.

As you people go about your daily activities and take care of your needs as they arise, how can you say there is nothing

the matter? Only those who have actually seen it can know it is so.

In ancient times, when Kasyapa the Elder paid respects to the Buddha at the assembly on Spiritual Peak, on seeing the vast crowd in a state of dignified composure, he had an insight and said, "This immense crowd here now is as if it had never been." You tell me, what does this mean?

A while ago you people were in your own places, where you didn't see so many people. Now that you're here, clearly you see a considerable number of people. How can you say they are as if they had never been?

In olden times, a certain old adept asked a seeker, "Where have you just come from?" The seeker replied, "The city." The adept said, "Where are you now?" The seeker said, "The mountains." The adept said, "I have a question to ask you. If you can answer, you may stay. If not, then leave. Now then, when you left the city, the city was lacking you; when you came to the mountains, the mountains had you extra. If you are absent in the city, the reality of mind is not universally omnipresent; if you are an extra in the mountains, then there is something outside of mind." The seeker had nothing to say.

If you can comprehend this, as it is said, you will not fall into nihilism or eternalism; your six sense faculties will be peaceful, and you will be tranquil and quiet whether active or still. One mind unborn, myriad entanglements cease.

Otherwise, if you are not like this, you fall into nihilism or eternalism, depending on being or nonbeing. This is like running away from home.

At this point, I really do not tell you to expend the slightest bit of effort; you will then get an understanding in this way. If you want to harmonize with this reality, making it so there is no gap, then you have already split away from it.

When I contemplated this matter in the past, I used to think it would take two or three lifetimes to attain enlightenment.

Later, on hearing that someone had an awakening, or someone had an insight, I realized that people today can also become enlightened. At times when it is possible to minimize involvements, study your self clearly; this is very important.

## *Speaking Effectively*



**I**F SOMEONE SHOULD question you, how would you speak? Can you speak effectively? If you can only speak after thinking and concentrating, what use is your statement?

At midnight, how do you speak? Getting up at-dawn, how do you speak? In the hallway, in the washroom, how do you speak?

Can you speak effectively? Your eyes must be clear before you can.

## *Naked Realization*



**J**UST NOW AN assistant came and announced that the rain isn't stopping, and people may not be able to hear if a meeting is held in the rain. Supposed the rain stopped right now—then would you hear?

I say it's best when the rain doesn't stop. Why? Because you are not deliberately trying to listen.

How about when they say the sound of the rain has given you a sermon? Is that correct? I do not agree; the sound of the rain *is* you giving a sermon. But do you understand? Clarify it directly; then what else is there?

People who go journeying to study Zen today should bring a statement to harmonize with the teacher. Why do you pain yourself and cramp yourself as you do?

Let me also ask you, what teacher would you harmonize with? If you want to harmonize with a teacher, just get to know your own mind.

Now let me ask you, what is your mind? And how do you know it?

Here you ~~cannot~~ force an understanding; you must actually look inward and discover it.

The ancients had no choice but to ~~make~~ provisional explanations where there is no explanation, skillfully employing expedient means where there are no expedients. One day when Xuansha went into the mountains, he encountered a tiger. His

assistant told him there was a tiger there, but Xuansha just said, "It's your tiger." Now with mountains and rivers crisscrossing the land, domains of existence everywhere, discriminating thoughts branching off in a thousand ways and diverging in a million ways, how can you explain this logic of "it's yours"?

If you don't understand this, you will be fatally obstructed everywhere. It's just because you have been following material senses and been influenced by things since time immemorial. You try to point out—what are things, and what are you?

This is why a seeker asked Xuansha, "I have just entered the community; please show me a way of access." Xuansha said, "Do you hear the sound of the valley stream?" The seeker said, "Yes." Xuansha said, "Gain access from here."

Nowadays people do not clearly understand this story, simply saying, "The essence of mind is omnipresent; who else hears?" What relevance has this sort of discourse? You must be completely naked before you will attain realization.

For now I ask you, have you dressed?

You can be so shameless!

## Seeing Mind



**A**S SOON AS you rationalize, it's hard to understand; you must refrain from rationalization before you can attain realization.

Hearing such talk, some people immediately declare, "I have nothing to say at all, and no reason either." They do not realize this is in fact a rationalization!

I will settle something for you right now: the ultimate rule is to see your own mind clearly. This is what Buddhism is, as far as I am concerned.

An ancient said, "The mind does not know itself, the mind does not see itself." So how can you see it clearly?

Even though it's your own mind, it's hard to see. All the sages since time immemorial have been people who clearly saw their own minds. My late teacher was someone who saw his own mind, but among those here who were also associated with him in the past, there are very few who clearly see their own minds.

Mind does not see mind; to get it, you must not see it as mind. This is a realm apart from thoughts.

Now if I say this to people, they think I am criticizing everyone else, but if I do not talk about it, it will be hard to elucidate. Zen teachers of a certain type say to people, "Fools! Why don't you understand this thing?" First they make a cliché of "your own mind," then try to use the mind to "realize" it. This is called driving a spike into a stump and then running round and round



the stump. They pass it on this way, and it is taken up this way, knocking on their chairs and holding up their whisks. This is called trying to use the mind by means of the mind.

There is another type of Zen teacher who tells people not to make logical assessments, that they lose contact the minute they speak, and should recognize the primordial. This kind of "teacher" has no explanation at all. This is like sitting on a balloon—where is there any comfort in it? It is also like the croaking of a bullfrog. If you entertain such a view, it is like being trapped in a black fog.

I am exhorting you in utter seriousness; I am not lying, I am not making up rationalizations to trap people, I will not allow people to oppress the free. I have no such reasons. If you recognize this, that is up to you. If you say you also see this way, that is up to you. If you say that everything is all right according to your perception, that is up to you. If you say your mind is still uneasy, that is up to you. You can only attain realization if you don't deceive yourself.

There are quite a few Zen teachers in the world, talking about Zen, talking about Tao. Do you think they are self-deceived, or not self-deceived? Do you think they are deceiving others, or not deceiving others? It is imperative to discern minutely.

In the old days, when I was in the school of my late teacher, I once accepted an invitation to go somewhere. On the way I ran into a downpour and slipped in the mud. Feeling annoyed, I said to myself, "I am on the journey but have been unable to attain Zen. I haven't eaten all day, and now have to endure this misery too!" Then I happened to hear two people ranting at each other, "You're still annoying yourself!" When I heard this, I suddenly felt overjoyed. Then I realized I couldn't find the state where there is no annoyance. That was because I couldn't break through my feeling of doubt. It took me four or five years after that to attain this knowledge.

Now you should exercise your attention in this way. I have

brought up the saying that inanimate things teach, but many are those who misunderstand. When you see inanimate things, you say they're inanimate, and when you see animate beings you consider them animate.

If you who study Zen do not understand the teaching of the inanimate, how can you understand the task of the journey? If those who act as teachers do not understand the teaching of the inanimate, how can they deal with people in beneficial ways?

I urge you to examine closely enough to effect an awakening. If you do not yet have an awakened perspective, then approach it in a relaxed manner; do not rush.

## *Discovery*



**M**Y TEACHER USED to tell a metaphysical story. Suppose two people from a foreign country come to a great nation to investigate things. When they first enter the territory, the two have a discussion and decide to part ways; one will go east, the other west. From state to state they go, county to county, traveling over hill and dale, until they arrive at the eastern capital. The two suddenly run into each other at the gate of the capital city. As they look at each other, without saying a word, the things they had discussed in their own country are clear. Now they go in, side by side, unknown to anyone.

Strange! Tell me, how is it when they run into each other? It is like Zen practitioners working: today they realize a little bit, tomorrow they find out a little bit, and they keep on investigating until one day it becomes evident to them. This is like that encounter at the gate of the capital city. This is called awakening, or breakthrough, or discovery. You must attain this at least once; only then can it be said that the task of the journey is done.

It is also like meeting your father in a big city many years after having left your home town. You do not need to ask anyone whether or not it is your father.

Just keep focused in this way. Do not take it for idleness; time does not wait for anyone. An early teacher said, "Don't waste time!" Each of you should work on your own.

## *Show the Truth*



**A**N ANCIENT SAID, "There is no drum sound in a bell, and no bell sound in a drum." How can students today manage to reach this state? Sometimes when I give personal interviews, you make a statement, and then when I press you further you merely insist you have already replied, and there could be nothing else. Quite clearly, if you work in this way you have not got a grip on the matter at all.

Idiots! Haven't you read the saying of ancient sages, "Show the truth in every word, refer to the source in every statement." You do not yet understand; you just adopt positions at random. Don't be like this any more when you come for interviews. While it can be said you do not understand, you can be straightened out.

## *Real Zen*



**T**HOSE WHO CLAIM to be Zennists must trust in what people who know say before they will attain it. If you do not believe, you make all talk useless. If you just listen without believing to the talks of people who know, how can you be called Zennists?

Real Zennists understand it all when the grass bends in the breeze, when dust rises in the wind; they discern immediately before any signals have occurred, before falling into trains of thought, before anything stirs. Only then can one be called a Zennist.

Why? This thing is used against birth and death, so you have to be someone who's not far off in order to get it.

Haven't you read how Yunyan studied with Baizhang for twenty years without clarifying this matter? His elder brother Daowu bit his finger to the quick out of concern for him. See how that man of old still did not worry even though he hadn't clarified this matter, saying he did not understand. His will never gave out, and he didn't go chasing after verbal expressions either.

And how about master Xuefeng, who went to Touzi three times and Dongshan nine times! When he was at Touzi's school, one day he rolled up the screen and entered the hermitage. When Touzi saw him coming, he got off his bench and stood.

Xuefeng hesitated, searching for something to say; Touzi pushed him out. Xuefeng could only cry. Later, when he went to Dongshan, he was still unable to understand. Then, when he

went to Deshan, he asked, "Has the student a part in the enlightenment of the sages of time immemorial?" Deshan hit him and exclaimed, "What are you saying!" At that, Xuefeng's mind opened up, like a bucket with the bottom fallen out. When he got to Tortoise Mountain, however, he said he still had some doubt. See how that man of old would not rest until his mass of doubt had been broken up. So it is said, "The task done, the mind rests; this actuality, after all, is everywhere you find it."

Nowadays most Zen students create interpretations based on words, arbitrarily assuming mastery, or else they take stories of the ancients' awakenings and look at them, calling this "gazing at sayings." What relevance is there? When Xuefeng went to Touzi three times and Dongshan nine times, do you suppose he did it for the sake of words?

You should simply step back and study through total experience. How do you step back? I am not telling you to sit on a bench with your eyes closed, rigidly suppressing body and mind, like earth or wood. That will never have any usefulness, even in a million years.

When you want to step back, if there are any sayings or stories you don't understand, place them in front of you, step back and see for yourself why you don't understand.

Professional monks say, "Thinking will not do; not thinking will not do either." Then how do they teach people to contemplate? I tell you, just step back and look.

Phew! Sure gives people trouble! Sure is hard to understand! But look here—what is it that troubles people? Who is it that troubles anyone? Step back and look in this way; gradually you will wake up, with each passing day illumination will expand and enlarge.

And yet, you should not fanatically recognize this alone and immediately claim perfect attainment, for then you are dependent and fixated. Then it will be ineffective. You must apply some wisdom in your observation.

The ancients allowed you to focus on a route: if you stop and step back in this way, I guarantee there is a reason. This is what is considered incomprehensible and not susceptible to knowledge.

There is also a type who talks wildly and speaks at random, questioning this and that. Again, just step back and look; what is it that talks wildly and speaks randomly? Just turn your attention around and reflect. Go on working like this, and eventually you will be sure to awaken. If you don't believe it, there's nothing I can do about that.

When I first called on a certain teacher, he taught me to contemplate this saying: "What is the great meaning of Buddhism? Next to the city of the King of Chu, the river flows eastward." He also taught me to contemplate the saying, "It's not the movement of the wind, nor the movement of the flag, but the movement of your mind."

Then when I left and went to call on teachers all over the land, I asked them questions. The ancients were wholly true to reality, and the old teachers explained in countless ways, but I simply could not understand.

Finally I left to travel to eastern China, but halfway there I turned around and came back. Now I was told to contemplate the story, "If you kill your parents, you repent before Buddha; if you kill Buddha, where do you repent?" Yunmen said, 'Exposed.'" This case study is like a hot iron ball in the mind, and I suffered all kinds of trouble for seven years. Those of you who have studied Zen for a long time will know what I mean.

Let me tell you another story. When Huaitang started to study Zen, he first saw Yunfeng Yue. For three years, he could not understand what Yunfeng was talking about. He also studied with Zen-master Nan, and after two years still did not understand. Then he went to spend a summer retreat in a cloister. In *Transmission of the Lamp*, he read the story where someone asked Duofu, "What is the bamboo grove of Duofu?" He replied,

“One cane, two canes slanted.” At this, Huaitang finally opened up and awakened.

Nowadays people just call these dialogues. This is because of lack of precision in applying effort, failing to understand the expedient devices of the ancients. I urge each of you, since you are already in a society, to study the path independently, not spending any time uselessly, taking enlightenment as your rule.



## Wonder



**A**SSOCIATION WITH GOOD companions is a serious recommendation of the ancient sages. Students today should follow the words of the Buddhas and Patriarchs by finding a teacher to attain discernment. Otherwise, how can you call yourselves students?

If you want to clarify this matter, you must arouse wonder and look into it. If you wonder deeply about this matter, transcendental knowledge will become manifest. Why? The task of the journey just requires the sense of doubt to cease. If you do, not actively wonder, how can the sense of doubt cease?

My teacher was thirty-five years old before he became a monk. He stayed in the city of Chengdu to listen to lectures on *The Hundred Phenomena as Only Representation*. There he heard a saying of how when a Buddhist enters the path of insight, knowledge and principle merge, environment and mind join, and there is no distinction between that which realizes and that which is realized. A Hindu challenged the Buddhists, "If there is no distinction between what realizes and what is realized, what is used as proof?" No one could answer this challenge, so the Buddhists were declared the losers in debate. Later the Buddhist canonical master of Tang came to the rescue of the doctrine: "When knowledge and principle merge, environment and mind unite, it is like when drinking water one spontaneously knows whether it is cool or warm."

What about the travels of my late teacher calling on teachers—why did he later say he questioned an aged grandfather? What about selling and buying oneself—what is that? You should realize there is no excess; what the man of old said is all you.

He also said, “I have never had a single statement to reach you. If I had a statement to reach you, what use would it be?” Do you want your feeling of doubt broken? You too must be like my late teacher once before you can accomplish it.

Now my teacher thought, "It may be cool or warm, all right; but what is this business of spontaneous knowing?" He wondered and questioned very deeply. He asked the lecturer about the principle of spontaneous knowing, but the lecturer couldn't answer; instead, he said, "If you want to clarify this principle, I cannot explain it, but in the South there are adepts who have found out the source of the enlightened mind; they know about this matter. You will have to journey for it."

So my teacher went traveling. He went to the capital city, and all around the eastern riverlands, asking every Zen adept he could find about this matter. And everyone he asked gave him a reply. Some explained, some spoke in aphorisms. In any case, his feeling of doubt remained unbroken.

Later he came to Fushan. Seeing that everything Fushan said in lectures and interviews was relevant to what was in his mind, he wound up staying for a year. Fushan had him contemplate the phrase, "Buddha had a secret saying, Kasyapa didn't conceal it."

One day Fushan said to him, "Why didn't you come earlier? You should go call on Baiyun Duan." So my teacher went to Baiyun. One day when he went into the teaching auditorium, all of a sudden he realized great enlightenment. "Buddha has a secret saying, Kasyapa didn't conceal it' —of course! Of course! When knowledge and principle merge, environment and mind unite, it is like when one drinks water one spontaneously knows whether it's warm or cool. How true these words are!" Then he composed a verse on his attainment:

*At an idle patch of field before the mountain  
Politely I question an aged grandfather.  
How many times have I sold and bought myself?  
Charmingly, the pine and bamboo draw a clear breeze.*

When Baiyun read this, he nodded. Is this not a case of doubting and wondering profoundly, approaching people who know, and only then succeeding in clarification?

## *Just This*



CONSIDER THE CASE of Grand Maestro Ma: seeing a monk going downstairs, the Maestro called to him, “O Worthy!” When the monk turned his head, the Maestro said, “From birth to death, it’s just this person; why turn your head and revolve your brains?” That monk understood the essential message at these words.

What is the logic of this? “From birth to death, it’s just this person.” Tell me, what person is it? As soon as you arouse the intention to see “this person,” then you do not see this person.

“This person” is hard to see. Very, very hard. People today simply say, “This is ‘this’ person”—who else is there? There couldn’t be any other.” Ninety-nine out of a hundred understand in this way; what grasp have they? If you interpret in this way, how can you understand the matter of “from birth to death,” and how can you immediately see it as “just this person”?

If you do not see “this person,” you have no idea how your mortal being will end up.

What about this lecturing and listening right now—is there actually lecturing and listening, or is there no lecturing and listening? If you say you are standing there while I am sitting here, I am lecturing and you are listening, any villager can say such things—how can you call yourselves Zenists? If you say there is no lecturing and no listening, still he made the statement “from birth to death, it’s just this person.”

Therefore, when you get to this point, you need to find a realized individual to discern precisely.

Before I had understood, I was totally helpless, so I asked of my teacher. As soon as I'd ask a question, my teacher would just say, "I don't understand. I don't know. I'm not as good as you." I also asked if Zen is ultimately easy to learn or hard to learn. He just told me, "You're alright; why are you asking about difficulty and ease? Learning Zen is called a gold and dung phenomenon. Before you understand it, it's like gold; when understood, it's like dung." I didn't accept this at the time, but now that I've thought it over, although the words are coarse the message in them is not shallow.

These are examples of how perfectly realized people never utter a single word or half a phrase without purpose. Whenever they try to help others, they never give random instructions, and they do not approve people arbitrarily. Nowadays there are teachers all over who sometimes speak correctly and sometimes speak without a grasp. Why? Because they have not yet attained perfect realization. Sometimes they approve people and say they are right, but then sometimes they say they are not right; how is it possible to clarify "from birth to death, it's just this person" in such a manner?

When you look closely, you see that people of the present are none other than people of yore, and the functions of the present are none other than the functions of the past; even going through a thousand changes and myriad transformations, here it is just necessary for you to recognize it first hand before you can attain it.

The reason people today cannot attain it is just because they do not know how to distinguish it with certitude. How is it that they cannot distinguish it with certainty? They just make up interpretations of ancient sayings, boring into them subjectively. If you just do this, you will never understand. Why? I tell you, if you "turn your head and revolve your brains," you're already

wrong. The most economical way here is to save energy, not asking about this and that but clearly apprehending it in the most direct manner.

You people first came forth with rationalizations, using ancient sayings to wrap and bind yourself. It's like scattering a handful of dirt on a clean surface.

I have told you that you should not come here now as you were before. You must attain an understanding before this is possible. Some say, "I was just so before, and I am just so now." Right away you run into emotional consciousness.

How can I blame you? The ancients were so compassionate as to tell you, "Walking is Buddha walking, sitting is Buddha sitting, all things are Buddha teaching, all sounds are Buddha's voice." You have misunderstood, supposing that all sounds are actually the voice of Buddha and all forms are really forms of Buddha. Since it is not admissible to understand in this way, then what would be right?

I tell you, the instant you touch upon signals, you're already alienated; when you want to manifest it by means of the light of knowledge, you've already obscured it. Now, don't hold onto my talk; each of you do your own work independently. You may contemplate the stories of ancients, you may sit quietly, or you may watch attentively everywhere; all of these are ways of doing the work. Everywhere is the place for you to attain realization, but concentrate on one point for days and months on end, and you will surely break through.

When Guling returned from his journey, his mentor asked him, "You left me to go traveling; what did you attain?" Guling said, "I saw Baizhang and attained peace and bliss." Then he quoted a verse by Baizhang:

*The spiritual light, shining independently,  
transcends the senses and objects;  
the essence is revealed, real and eternal.  
not confined to written words.*

*The nature of mind has no stain;  
it is basically complete of itself.  
Just detach from false mental objects  
and be enlightened to being-as-is.*

On hearing these words, the old mentor realized enlightenment.

Also, master Xuefeng, on seeing a breeze stirring taro leaves, pointed them out to a student. The student said, "I am quite frightened." Xuefeng clucked his tongue and said, "It's an event in your own house; why are you afraid?" That student then had an awakening too.

Since the whole time is an event in your own house, why don't you understand? Because you wander off everywhere, you are not at home all the time. But now that you're facing a teacher, don't let yourself forget. This is called acting according to reason, knowing the ultimate within oneself.

From birth to old age, it's just this person; why turn your head and revolve your brains? Each of you look into this on your own.

## *Keep Evolving*



**I**F YOU HAVE just now understood, where is that which you couldn't understand before? If you can't understand now, when will you understand?

Just examine over and over in this way, and you should come to understand. That is why it is said, "What you misunderstood before is what you now understand; what you now understand is what you misunderstood before."

It is also said, "When light comes, darkness vanishes; when knowledge comes into play, confusion is forgotten." But can it actually be so? How can it be so? That would mean there is darkness to be destroyed and there is confusion to be removed. Have you not read the ancient saying, "Don't change the former person, just change the former behavior."

You Zen followers say, "What is the difficulty? Misunderstanding is just 'this person,' and understanding is just 'this person.' There can be no other." But then when asked what "this person" is, you are helpless; or else you talk at random. This is because of not having attained truly accurate realization. This is a disease that has entered your bones and marrow.

People in error attach recognition to a lifetime of cessation. Indeed, they "stop" not only for one lifetime, but for a thousand lifetimes, myriad lifetimes. As for the spiritually sharp, they should know how to experientially investigate who "this person" is, directly seeking an insight.



Whew! Buddhism today is lackluster; even in large groups it's hard to find suitable people. As long as you people are here studying the path in this school, you should not waste the twenty-four hours of the day; focus on attaining insight.

You people are still not far off; have you not read how master Linji said, "There is a true person of no rank in the naked mass of flesh, always going out and coming in the doors of your senses; those who haven't witnessed it, look!" At that time, a student came forward and asked, "What is the true person of no rank?" Linji got out of his chair, grabbed the student, and said, "Speak! Speak!" The student hesitated, trying to think of something, so Linji pushed him away.

Linji also said, "Your eyes radiate a light that shines through the mountains and rivers." The ancients were so compassionate, yet people today don't take it to heart, so they need to look for someone to find certainty.

Have you not read how Yantou, Xuefeng, and Jinshan went to see Linji, then met Elder Ding on the way? Yantou asked, "Where are you coming from?" Ding said, "From Linji." Yantou inquired, "Is the teacher well?" Ding said, "The teacher has passed away." Yantou said, "We came especially to pay respects to the teacher Linji, but now we hear he has passed away, and we do not know what he said. Please quote an example or two of his sayings." Ding then cited the foregoing story about Linji's saying, "There is a true person of no rank in the mass of naked flesh, always going out and coming in through the doors of your senses; those who have not yet witnessed it, look!" When a student came forward and asked what the true person of no rank is, Linji got out of his chair, grabbed the student, and said, "Speak! Speak!" When the student hesitated, trying to think up something to say, Linji pushed him away and said, "What a dry turd the true person of no rank is!" Then Linji went back to his quarters.

Hearing this recital, Yantou was stunned. Jinshan remarked, "Why didn't he say, 'In the mass of naked flesh is not a true per-

son of no rank'?" Ding grabbed him and said, "Tell me, how far apart are a true person of no rank and not a true person of no rank? Speak quickly!" Jinshan's face paled, then clouded. Yantou and Xuefeng both said, "Please forgive this novice for insulting you, Elder." Ding remarked, "If it hadn't been for you two old guys, I'd have punched this little bed-wetter out!"

Look: when Jinshan said, "Not a true person of no rank," why did Ding not agree? How can students today reach such a state? They just recognize the mortal body and forcibly act as if they were in charge, unable to let go of it. Now I will cite some stories for you to consider.

Xuefeng called on Touzi and asked, "Is there anyone to call on here?" Touzi threw down his hoe. Xuefeng said, "Then I'll dig right where I am." Touzi said, "Dullard!" Even though he said he would dig right where he was, he was still called a dullard.

When Great Elder Nanji met Xuefeng, their conversation was in complete accord. Xuefeng sent him to see Xuansha. Xuansha asked, "An ancient said, 'Only I can know this.' How do you understand?" Nanji said, "You should realize there is someone who does not seek to know." Xuansha said, "You are a Great Elder—why go to so much trouble?" What is the logic of this?

When my late teacher was in the school of Master Baiduan, the master cited an ancient saying, "It is like a mirror casting images; when an image is formed, where has the shine of the mirror gone?" At the time, there were a number of students in the group who offered replies, but the master did not accept any of them. In those days, my teacher was working as a fundraiser; when he came back, Baiduan cited the foregoing saying and asked him about it. My teacher approached, offered greetings, and said, "Still not far off." Baiduan clapped and laughed. Everyone thought Baiduan was pressing to make him chief fundraiser; what kind of talk is that?

Here I only require you to study ~~the path~~. Your first priority, twenty-four hours a day, should be to get rid of unenlightened

egotism toward others. Why? Egotism toward others is the business of mediocrities.

My late teacher never had any egotism toward others. As his assistant I saw quite a lot, but I never saw him have a single thought of annoyance. Once when he was at Haihui, there was a certain senior monk serving as superintendent of hospitality. When my late teacher sent a great elder to lead the community at Sihai, he had the superintendent of hospitality escort him. The senior spat in my teacher's face and said, "Who are you to tell me to escort him?" He kept on with this vile talk, so my teacher finally gave up. No one knew about this. Later, when my teacher came to Taiping, he nominated that individual to be keeper of the treasury, and also made him assembly leader. My teacher himself asked to be made superintendent of the institution, and even nominated the other for the abbacy there at Taiping. The governor did not approve of this appointment, and the superintendent reviled my teacher, saying he did not support him strongly enough. Now my teacher finally spoke out; "This fellow," he said, "has hollered at me twice!" By this we can see he had no egotism toward others.

People now want to understand theoretically at once, as soon as anything is said. How can you learn the way in this fashion? Sometimes I see beginners come to interviews helpless to do anything about the fact that I have already seen through them. They are like villagers armed with carrying poles trying to do battle with a general. Here I am fully equipped; in my hand is the hundred-pound sword of a legendary warrior, while they have nothing but a carrying pole. They strike a blow, and, seeing the man not move, they strike several more times and leave. It's not that I fear them; it's because they are no match for me. Ha, ha!

Large you not to be crude minded. In your conduct, day and night, keep evolving higher; then even if you do not attain enlightenment, you will still be a highly refined individual. Be sure to be attentive.

## Approval



**A**S SOON AS you accept and approve anything, recognizing it as your own, you are immediately bound hand and foot and cannot move. So even if there are a thousand possibilities, nothing is right once you have recognized, accepted, and approved it as your own.

It is like making a boat and outfitting it for a long journey to a land of treasures, then as soon as you get started you drive a stake in the ground and tie the boat down, then row with all your might. You may row till the end of time, but you will still be at the shore. You see the boat moving from side to side, and think you are on the move; but actually you haven't gotten anywhere.

It is also like someone turning a millstone, going round and round in circles from morning till night. What a laugh! If someone whose eyes are unclear saw you fixated on recognition and told you it was right, he'd been seen through by someone with clear eyes; on examination, there would be quite a few loose ends.

These days quite a few just employ this path of "right now," totally unable to get out of the immediate present. Nailed down in this way, they try to study Zen without getting the essential point. Once they have taken it up, they have already misunderstood; acting as if they were in charge, they do not realize Buddhism is not understood in this way.

Have you not read how Magu met Zhangjing, staff in hand? Magu shook the staff once and stood there serenely. Zhangjing said, "Yes!" He also met Nanquan the same way, and Nanquan said, "No!" Magu said, "Zhangjing said yes; how can you say no?" Nanquan said, "Zhangjing is right, but you are wrong. This is vulnerable to outside influences, and ultimately disintegrates." Only then did Magu see his error.

Look, people: if you are about to misunderstand your whole life, how can you not go to someone to find certainty?

When I first went on my journey, I read verses by my teacher and immediately believed this man spoke like the ancient sages and must have genuine realization. So I studied with him for ten years. One of those verses said,

*To learn the way, first you must find out  
the ultimate point;  
hearing sound and seeing form  
are inconceivable.  
If you discuss high and low  
based on words,  
it's just like before you were enlightened.*

Another verse said,

*There is a road to emptiness;  
everyone arrives.  
Those who arrive then realize  
the excellence of the aim.  
The mind ground does not grow  
useless plants and trees;  
naturally the body spontaneously  
radiates clear light.*

When I was young, even though I had not attained the way, in my heart I knew these were extraordinary lines. But how about hearing sound and seeing form? They are both conceivable; how

can they be inconceivable? Then when he talks about realization, he turns around and says, "It's just like before you were enlightened." Everything before enlightenment is conceivable; how can you see a realization? This man attained nonattainment; only when you reach the ultimate stage can you be like this. Only after ten years did I actually understand him.

Generally speaking, when you go journeying to learn the path to enlightenment, you seek. Do not sit ignorantly, but go to someone to find out the truth with certainty. When this truth is hard to realize, that is called unfinished business. Have you not heard it said that once you realize, then there's a difference? Yesterday one had breakfast and dinner, today one has breakfast and dinner—is it the same person as before? There's a difference; it's not the same. Zhaozhou said to someone, "Have you had breakfast yet?" He said, "Yes." Zhaozhou said, "Go wash the dishes." This is different.

Do you suppose I am an ordinary man? You tell me where the difference is.

## *Self Knowledge.*



**I** TELL PEOPLE TO get to know the self, but seekers who hear this equate it with what beginners see, and think there is nothing hard to understand about it. You should take it more slowly for a while, and be more careful. What do you call the self?

How about the sayings of ancient worthies on the self? "Roaming the mountains, enjoying the rivers"—you say, "I understand—who else is it?" Another saying goes, "It is your self"—you say, "I understand this too; it is myself." But how about the reply, "Mountains, rivers, the whole earth"? It is also said, "When you eat, the meal is your self"—how do you understand that? You still can't get to it. An ancient worthy said, "The whole earth is your self"—so how can you clear your mind?

Whenever I see that people have misunderstood, I quote ancient stories to question them. For example, Jingqing asked Xuansha, "I have just entered the school; please point out a way in." Xuansha said, "Do you hear the sound of the valley stream?" Jingqing replied, "Yes." Xuansha said, "Enter from here." Jingqing got the message from this. I ask you, when he heard, what did he hear? Everyone says he heard the sound of the water, but what use is such an interpretation? According to their view, the hearing clearly takes in everything at once, so there is no sound to be found apart from this hearing; everything being a manifestation from one's subjectivity, it is representation of active consciousness. Some answer that it was not the sound of water

he heard, but his self. To this I say, how can the self hear the self? This is what is called recognizing mind, recognizing nature.

Buddhism is an easily understood, energy-saving teaching; people strain themselves. Seeing them helpless, the ancients told people to try meditating quietly for a moment. These are good words, but later people did not understand the meaning of the ancients; they went off and sat like lumps with knitted brows and closed eyes, suppressing body and mind, waiting for enlightenment. How stupid! How foolish!



## *Step Back and See*



**A**N EARLY TEACHER said, "Is it the wind ringing, or is it the chimes ringing?" He should have stopped right there, but he went on to vex others by saying, "It is not the wind or the chimes ringing, but only your mind ringing." What further opportunity to study do you seek?

When Zen came to China, an early teacher said, "It is not the wind or the flag moving; it is your minds moving." The ancient teacher gave this testimony; why don't you understand? Just because of subject and object. That is why it is said, "The objective is defined based on the subjective; since the objective is arbitrarily defined, it produces your arbitrary subjectivity, producing difference where there was neither sameness nor difference."

People nowadays talk about certain discernment, but how do you discern with certainty? It is not a matter of declaring, "This is an initiatory saying, this is a saying for beginners, that is a saying for old-timers." It's not like this at all. As a matter of fact, letting go all at once is precisely how to discern with certainty—there will be no different focus at any time.

You get up in the morning, dress, wash your face, and so on; you call these miscellaneous thoughts, but all that is necessary is that there be no perceiver or perceived when you perceive—no hearer or heard when you hear, no thinker or thought when you think. Buddhism is very easy and very economical; it spares effort, but you yourself waste energy and make your own hardships.

If you do not see the ease, then sit for a while and examine the principle. Since you have come here to study Zen, don't come here with imagination and figuring like you find in other places; just step back and look, and you will surely understand.

However, there are those who accept attunement and those who do not; there are the foolish and the wise, there are those who can be saved and those who cannot be saved.

Those who do not accept attunement insist on using fluctuating habit-ridden consciousness and energy from food. When questioned, they make their eyes bulge, walk back and forth, hold up their regalia, accepting and approving perceptions and emotions in the dimness of their skulls and bodies. This is irremediable. Just let go, then step back and look; only then will you understand.

There are senior students of a certain type who say, "I do not reason, I make no calculations; I am not attached to sound and form, I do not rely on either the impure or the pure. The sage and the ordinary mortal, delusion and enlightenment, are all completely empty; there are no such things in the Great Light."

They are shrouded by the light of knowledge, attached to an extreme of knowledge. This is also irremediable.

Of these two illnesses, the former is slighter than the latter. If those who have illness are willing to set it aside, step back and look, they too will naturally understand.

This task spares energy to the utmost. The way of the ancients is very economical and most quintessential.

Why do you waste energy? Sometimes I observe seekers come here expending a lot of energy and going to great pains. What do they want? They seek a few sayings to put in a skin bag; what relevance is there?

Nevertheless, there is a genuine expedient that is very good, though only experienced seekers will be able to focus doubt on it. It is like when Xuansha was going to give a talk on the teaching one day, but didn't speak a single word, no matter how long

the assembly stood there. Finally they began to leave in twos and threes. Xuansha remarked, "Look! Today I have really helped them, but not a single one gets it. If I start flapping my lips, though, they immediately crowd around!" You come here seeking expedient techniques, seeking doctrines, seeking peace and happiness. I have no expedient techniques to give people, no doctrine, no method of peace and happiness. Why? If there is any "expedient technique," it has the contrary effect of burying you and trapping you.

Zhaozhou said, "Just sit looking into the principle; if you do not understand in twenty or thirty years, cut off my head." This too was to get you to become singleminded.

Have you not read how the Second Patriarch of Zen used to expound the teaching wherever he was, and everyone who heard him attained true mindfulness? He did not set up written formulations and did not discuss practice and realization or cause and effect.

At the time, a certain meditation teacher heard about the Zen patriarch and send a senior disciple to spy on his lectures. When the disciple didn't come back, the meditation teacher was enraged. When they met at a major convocation, the teacher personally said to his former disciple, "I expended so much effort to plant you; how could you turn your back on me this way?" The former disciple replied, "My vision was originally right, but was distorted by teachers." This is what Zen study is like.

Later, someone asked Xuefeng, "How is it when one's vision is originally correct but distorted by teachers?" Xuefeng said, "Confused encounter with the founder of Zen." The seeker asked, "Where is one's own vision?" Xuefeng said, "It is not gotten from a teacher." This is the way you have to be before you attain realization.

Of old it was said, "Enlightenment is always with people, but people subjectively pursue things." In scripture it says, "If you can turn things around, they are the same as realization of suchness."

But how can things be turned around? It is also said, “All appearances are unreal; if you see appearances are not inherent characteristics, then you see realization of suchness.”

Just step back, stop mental machinations, and look closely. When suddenly you see, nothing can stop you.

## *All the Way Through*



**N**O DELUSION, NO ENLIGHTENMENT”—only when you have arrived at such a state are you comfortable and saving energy to the maximum degree. But this is simply being someone without delusion or enlightenment; what is there deluding you twenty-four hours a day? You must apply this to yourself and determine on your own.

All realms of existence are there because of the deluded mind; right now, how could they not be there? Once you realize they are not there, they cannot delude your feelings and certainly cannot do anything to you. It is necessary to attain the reality where there is no delusion and no enlightenment before you can become free and unfettered.

People on the journey call this the reality under the vest; if this reality is not fully realized, it is a disaster.

The patriarch Ashvaghosha explained three subtle and six coarse aspects of mentation; stir, and there is suffering. How to not stir? Uttering a few sayings does not amount to talking of mysteries and marvels, or explaining meanings and principles; sitting meditation and concentration do not amount to inner freedom.

Think about it independently. Other people do not know what you are doing all the time; you reflect on your own—are you in harmony with truth or not? Here you cannot be mistaken; investigate all the way through.

## *All the Way Through*

When my late teacher appeared in the world to teach, he said, "I rise from this jewel flower throne and sit upon it every day along with all of you; it is just that you avoid what is right before you." This is a good saying. He also remarked, "In over ten years at one place, I couldn't find a worthy opponent; only when I went elsewhere did I actually see such a person as would live up to my sense of indignation." Good words; few people can talk like this.

I spent over thirty years journeying; you people were not even born when I found the way. If younger folk believe what I am talking about, you will step back each day, look into yourselves, and see all the way through.

## *Comprehending Everything*



**T**HE Zen SCHOOL is called the school of Kasyapa's great absorption in quiescence. Without stirring a thread, all is understood; without stirring a hair, all is realized.

It is not just a matter of not stirring and letting it go at that. Do not rouse the mind or stir thoughts throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, and you should be able to comprehend everything. This is called being a member of Kasyapa's school. Only then can you enter great absorption in quiescence.

Now what is there that acts as a mental object and an obstruction? Although people can investigate, people can study, they cannot understand by arousing the mind and stirring thoughts. When you encounter a situation or hear a saying, if your thoughts stir, your mind gets excited, and you make up an interpretation, in any case you are in a scattered state.

When Elder Ming has accomplished "not thinking good or bad," only then did he manage to see; thereupon he said, "Although I was in the school of the Fifth Patriarch of Zen, I really did not know what the Buddha meant by saying, 'Not this shore, not the further shore, not the current in between.'" Nanquan said, "It is not Buddha, it is not a thing." This is precisely what you are focusing on now. Simply study in this way.

Just as a scholar has the attitude of an official once he's passed the civil service examination, you must come to the realization

that you are Buddha; only then will you be free from doubt. Each of you must take responsibility for this yourself; don't pass the time pursuing the hubbub.



## *Seek Without Seeking*



**T**HERE IS SOMETHING in each of you that you will only be able to perceive when you turn around. So how does one turn around? By nonseeking seeking, seeking without seeking. This is precisely what people find hard to deal with or get into. How can you seek if you are not seeking? How can you not seek if you are seeking? If you only seek, how is that different from pursuing sounds and chasing forms? If you do not seek at all, how are you different from inert matter?

You must seek, and yet without seeking; not seek, yet still seek. If you can manage to penetrate this, you will then manage to harmonize seeking and nonseeking. So it is said, “Nonseeking nonseeking—the body of reality is perfectly quiescent. Seeking seeking—responsive function does not miss. Seeking without seeking, nonseeking seeking—objects and cognition merge, substance and function are one.” Therefore you find the three bodies, four knowledges, five eyes, and six spiritual powers all come to light from this. Students must be able to turn around and search all the way through in this way before they can attain realization.

A seeker asked Yangshan, “What special pathway do you have? Please point it out to me.”

Yangshan said, “If I said there is anything in particular or nothing in particular, I would confuse you even more. Where are you from?”

The seeker said he was from such and such a place. Yangshan asked, "Do you still think of that place?"

The seeker replied, "I think of it all the time."

Yangshan said, "What you think of are the buildings, towers, and habitations, of which there are a variety. Now think back to what thinks—is there a variety of things there?"

The seeker replied, "There is no variety of things there."

Yangshan said, "Based on your perception, you have only attained one mystery. You have a seat and are wearing clothes; hereafter see for yourself."

This seeker said that the object of thought is varied, while the thinker is not varied. This view is biased; this is what prompted Yangshan to say he had only attained one mystery—his perception of the path was not accurate.

If you ask me, the object of thought, with a variety of buildings and houses, is in fact not various, while the unvaried thinking subject is in fact various. This can be demonstrated. Right now there is a variety before your eyes; there are not so many of these. There are, similarly, many types of the unvaried.

When the seer Bhishmottaranirghosha took the seeker Sudhana by the hand, Sudhana saw Buddhas as numerous as atoms in infinite worlds. When the seer let go of Sudhana's hand, everything was as it had been before. Now how do you understand this reversion to normal on release of the hand? You'd better understand!

## *Original Reality*



**A**N ANCIENT SAGE said, “Every phenomenon is the original reality.” Fine. Yunmen held up his cane and said, “This is not the original reality.” After a pause, he said, “If so, then the three poisons, four perversions, five clusters, six senses, twelve media, eighteen elements, and twenty-five realms of being are not the original reality.” Why not understand in this way—you’d save quite a bit of effort.

Buddhism is a most economical affair, conserving the most energy—it has always been present, but you do not understand.

I tell you, moreover, that there is nothing that is true and nothing that is not true. How can there be truth and untruth in one thing? Just because of seeking unceasingly, everywhere is seeking; pondering principles is seeking, contemplating the model cases of the ancients is also seeking, reading Zen books is also seeking; even if you sit quietly, continuously from moment to moment, this too is seeking.

Do you want to understand? Then that seeking of yours is actually not seeking. This is extremely difficult to believe and to penetrate, hard to work on. Those of you who are not comfortable are that way, generally speaking, because you are either oblivious or excited. That is why you say you do not understand.

Right now, how can you avoid being oblivious or excited? When that very thought of yours arises, it is the flowing whirl

### *Original Reality*

of birth and death: do you consider it habit-activated consciousness, or do you consider it immutable? Contemplate in this way over and over again, and you will have a bit of guiding principle.

## *Same Reality, Different Dreams*



PEOPLE MAY SLEEP on the same bed, under the same covers, yet their individual dreams are not the same. An ancient sage said, "We share the same one reality, yet do not realize it." For example, within the single reality of life and death, there are those who can enter into life and death without being bound by life and death, and there are those who are bound by life and death in the midst of life and death. In the midst of the same common reality, one person is bound while another is freed; is this not the individual differences in the dreams?

You usually make birth and death into one extreme, and absence of birth and death into another extreme; you make thinking into one extreme and nonthinking into another extreme; you make speech into one extreme and nonspeech into another extreme. Here I have neither the business of Zen monks, nor anything transcendental; I just talk about getting out of birth and death. This is not a matter of simply saying this and letting the matter rest at that; you must see that which has no birth or death right in the midst of birth and death.

The great master Yongjia visited the Sixth Patriarch of Zen and said, "The matter of birth and death is serious; transitoriness is swift." The Sixth Patriarch said, "Why not comprehend the birthless and realize what has no speed?" Yongjia said, "Comprehension itself is birthless; realization of the fundamental has no speed."

When Caoshan took leave of Dongshan, Dongshan asked, "Where are you going?" Caoshan replied, "To an unchanging place." Dongshan retorted, "If it is an unchanging place, how could there be any going?" Caoshan replied, "The going is also unchanging."

Were these not realized people? You make thought one extreme and nonthinking another extreme; you make the unspoken outside of the spoken—even if you understand the unspoken clearly, as soon as words are spoken they block you.

Why not study Zen in this way—walk, stand, sit, and recline all day long without ever walking, standing, sitting, or reclining.

Sometimes seekers come here, utter a phrase, and clap their hands; how does this amount to an understanding beyond dualistic extremes?

You should think in this way: "Clearly I am in the midst of birth and death; how can I get free of birth and death?" Don't say this itself is It, that you basically have no birth or death. It is not realized by your uttering this statement.

There are those who hear someone say there is no birth and death, and immediately say, "Right! There is originally no birth or death!" If you make your interpretation in this way, it will be impossible to understand.

Since it does not admit of rationalization and contrived understanding, and does not admit of being explained away, how can you work on it? An ancient said, "I only use what you bring me to point out an entryway to you." Take care.

## *Watch Yourself*



**A**S I SEE members of present-day Zen communities, it is as if none of them are talking about this reality. Now wherever you go there are Zen communities and teachers preaching Zen and Tao, holding interviews and lectures, all talking about this matter—why do I say they haven't been talking about it at all? They are talking, to be sure, but they cannot actually speak of it. Not only can they not speak of it, they are unable to see it. Not knowing how to work on it as it is, they simply say, "When the true imperative is brought up in its entirety, the ten directions are cut off: any Buddha that shows up will get a beating, and any demon that shows up will get a beating." They fanatically talk Zen, but never touch upon what is most urgent.

What I talk of here is something that others neglect. I casually pick it up from a trash heap and ask people about it, but they cannot say anything. Right now, when people who have already entered the room, inquired into the way, and attained understanding see the incense stand, is it an incense stand or not? If they say it is an incense stand, this is the same as ordinary people. If it is not an incense stand, to whom was the incense stand given away? Lightly question them, and they go to pieces. This is because they have always been working in idleness.

Now let me ask you a question. Never mind about since you've been here; before you went journeying, before you entered this community, when you saw an incense stand, what did you

call it? You called it an incense stand. Everyone calls it an incense stand; why do you not think why you call it an incense stand? Zen should be studied in this way; you must understand what has been in you since beginningless time. Master Siushan said, "If you don't see the original reality, obstacles will follow you all along; if people have obstacles, they go wrong countless thousands of times."

My teacher said, "Suppose a bit of filth is stuck on the tip of the nose of a sleeping man, totally unknown to him. When he wakes up, he notices a foul smell; sniffing his shirt, he thinks his shirt stinks, and so he takes it off. But then whatever he picks up stinks; he doesn't realize the odor is on his nose. If someone who knows tells him it has nothing to do with the things themselves, he stubbornly refuses to believe it. The knowing one tells him to simply wipe his nose with his hand, but he won't. Were he willing to wipe his nose, only then could he know he was already getting somewhere; finally he would wash it off with water, and there would be no foul odor at all. Whatever he smelled, that foul odor wouldn't be there from the start. Studying Zen is also like this; those who will not stop and watch themselves on their own instead pursue intellectual interpretation, but that pursuit of intellectual interpretation, seeking rationales and making comparative judgments, is all completely off. If you would turn your attention around and watch yourself, you would understand everything. As it is said, 'When one faculty returns to the source, the six functions are all in abeyance.'" Just see in this way, and you will have some enlightened understanding.



## *Understand Immediately*



**H**A, HA, HA! You still don't understand on your own. I tell you this—if you still don't understand on your own, then how will you understand if you go somewhere else?

At other places, they either put you through changes, or abruptly fixate you. Here, I neither put you through changes nor abruptly fixate you. This saves energy and is easy to comprehend; so why don't you understand? Because of your millions of rationalizations; these make it hard for you to understand.

Buddhahood is an easily comprehended state, comfortable and pleasant. But even though it is easily understood, nevertheless it is hard to enter into and hard to work on. At other places, if they abruptly fixate you, then you have something to work on; if they put you through changes, then you have something to chew on.

People come here and declare that they do not dare to say they are right. So why don't you dare say you are right? Then how should you be? Why not look at it in this way?

I'm just afraid you will misunderstand here and get the wrong idea. I just want to have you understand immediately, without stirring a single thought.

Then again, there are those who say, "According to my view, everything is all right." They are like scorched sprouts, like rotten seed, which will never grow. When you have declared you're

right, then how can you be helped out any more? This is why it is said that ordinary people may still evolve.

There are also those who, having understood, still cannot express it in speech. Even if they talk of it, they do not make any sense. Don't be careless and crude; examine carefully.

I am a fellow seeker with you; if I comprehend, you must comprehend too. If you don't comprehend, I don't comprehend either.

Have you not read how Xuansha pointed to a white spot on the ground in front of him and asked a student, "See?" The student said, "Yes." Xuansha said, "I see, and so do you. Why don't you understand?"

One of my fellow students, one Elder Li, saw my late teacher for a year and a half; every time he went in for a personal interview, the teacher would just say to him, "Elder, have you distinguished black and white at all?" Every time he went, this is what happened. How do you interpret talk like this? How do you work?

Nowadays there are no adepts like this helping people. There are no elders who seek like this either. Anyone else would have gotten upset. One day he heard the teacher say in a lecture, "Going in and out the same door—hereditary enemies," and suddenly his previous understanding turned out to be like flowers in the sky, and he now saw the truth.

You should work in this way and realize enlightenment in this way. Zen should be studied this way. As none of you have had an awakening, you should look straight into your vital spirit. If no one told you and no one instructed you, it would be hard to work. Now that you have met someone, you should work. You must distinguish black and white before you can do it.

## *Instant Enlightenment*



**T**HOSE WHO ARE now on the journey should believe that there is such a thing as instant enlightenment. In other places they also should say that there is such a thing as instant enlightenment; if they have no instant enlightenment, how can they be called Zen communities?

It's just because what they have inherited and transmit is only the practice of looking at the model cases of the ancients. They may contemplate one or two examples and get a rough bit of knowledge, a bit of interpretation. If there is any point they cannot understand, they seek a gap to bore into, seeking understanding. Once they have understood, they say the matter is only like this, and then they immediately go on to circulate it in the Zen communities. None of them have ever spoken of what instant enlightenment is. If there is no such such thing as instant enlightenment, how can you free your mind of the twenty-five states of being in the three realms? How can you free your mind of the sensation of uncertainty?

Now there have already been professional priests coming here saying, "Perception is unobscured," totally accepting perception and claiming that is right. That means they do not see what is not obscured. When I ask them about other worlds, they do not know; and when I question them about the senses and objects, it turns out they have not broken through. How can they imag-

ine that the feelings and perceptions of ordinary people are exactly the same as instant enlightenment?

Today I say to everyone, just trust that there is such a thing as instant enlightenment. It is like a farmer finding an alchemical pill as he plows the fields; after taking it, the whole family goes to heaven. It is also like a commoner being appointed prime minister.

In the Teachings it says that those ordinary feelings and perceptions of yours are like unbaked clay, which is useless before it has been fired. You have to bake it in a hot fire before it is useful; that is like an instant enlightenment.

When I came out of Szechwan, I only called on one person. I know this person's talk was the same as the ancients. I once asked my teacher, "I've heard it said that there is enlightenment in Zen; is that so?" My teacher said, "If there were no enlightenment, how could it be attained? Just investigate in an easygoing way." So I studied in a relaxed frame of mind. There was a certain Elder Fu, whose insight was so luminously clear that I used to go to him with questions. But he just used to tell me, "You must make a living on your own; don't come questioning me."

One day he recited a story to me: Zhaozhou showed some fire to a student and said, "Don't call it fire. What is it?" I wondered deeply at this: obviously it is fire—why not call it fire? I contemplated this for three years, always reflecting, "How dare I use the feelings and perceptions of an ordinary man to ask about the realization of sages?"

I have also heard what it says in the *Lotus Scripture*, "This truth cannot be understood by the discriminations of discursive thought," and have always kept this in mind. Today when you say you are right just as you are, that is because you have produced an interpretative understanding, and so do not understand.

Once my teacher went to the residence of Judge Li, who invited him into the library. After lighting some incense, the judge picked

up a copy of *Transmission of the Lamp* and said to the teacher, "Although I am a man of the world, I have always taken an interest in this path. Whenever I read this book I find many points I do not understand." My teacher said, "This matter is not understood in that way. You need to have realization of enlightenment first. If you have enlightenment, you naturally need not ask others about whatever you do not understand. If you have no enlightenment, even what understanding you do have is not yet right either." The judge remarked, "My teacher, you have spoken rightly."

As for me, since I was the superintendent of guests, I attained understanding at the fireside; after that, there was nothing I did not understand. You must see the reality of instant enlightenment yourself before you can attain it. No one in the Zen communes of the present time tells of it.

## Zen Mastery



**T**HERE IS NOTHING in my experience that is not true. If there were anything at all untrue, how could I presume to tell others, how could I presume to guide others? When I affirm my truth, there is no affirming mind and no affirmed objects; that is why I dare tell people.

As for you, obviously there is something not true; that is why you come to someone to find certainty. If you had found truth already, then when would you go off questioning another?

However, here I just point out where you're right. If you're not right, I'll never tell you that you are. When you *are* right and true, then I'll agree with you. Only bet on what's right and true.

I see through everyone. If I've seen people, I know whether or not they have any enlightenment or any understanding, just as an expert physician recognizes ailments at a glance, discerning the nature of the illness and whether or not it can be remedied. Once who knows all this only after a detailed inquiry into symptoms is a mediocre physician.

This is like a story I have quoted on another occasion. Fayan pointed to a hanging screen, whereupon two students went and rolled it up. Fayan said, "One gain, one loss." People like you, in your state, must not say, "What gain or loss is there?" Some say, "One went to roll up the screen with understanding—this is gain. One went to roll up the screen without understanding—this is loss." If this were so, how could a remedy be possible?

## INSTANT ZEN

Now if you have not managed to understand clearly, it is because your enlightenment is not true; like someone ignorant of medicine claiming to be a doctor, you cannot discern when people understand, and you cannot tell when they do not understand—you cannot discern at all whether or not they have any insight. Then how can you help people? How can you teach people? You must examine reality through and through before you can.

If you are willing to examine reality through and through, you will not fail to understand. Have you not read how an ancient said, “Just sit there investigating the truth for twenty or thirty years; if you do not attain understanding, cut off my head and make a piss pail out of it.” Seekers sometimes say this is right, but when it comes to investigating reality through and through, they change unstably. It is like watching a horse ridden past a window; in a flash it’s gone.

One must be like thirty tons of iron, which cannot be pulled forward or pushed back—only then do you know it’s the real thing. People like you stir the minute you’re shaken by someone; one more push, and you tumble.

You should be so perfectly clear that you see your three hundred and sixty joints and eighty-four thousand pores open up all at once; inside your body and outside in the physical world, every phenomenon is the original reality—nothing is not It. Only then will you get it.

But professional priests nowadays can only speak after dawdling; if I proceed all at once, they have nothing to cling to and think they have wasted their time. You people had better not waste this time! Since you are already involved, stabilize and awaken your vital spirit in the effort to find out the truth.

## *Equality*



**I**F YOU TALK about equality, nothing surpasses Buddhism. Buddhism alone is most egalitarian. If one says, "I understand, you do not," this is not Buddhism. If one says, "You understand, I do not," This is not Buddhism either. In the Teachings it says, "This truth is universally equal, without high or low—this is called unexcelled enlightenment." My perception is equal to yours, and your perception is equal to mine.

And yet, an ancient also said, "I know everything others know, but others do not know what I know." Why don't they know? Because they harbor "high and low" in their minds, and do not rely on enlightened insight; thus they see this world full of all kinds of crap.

What the Sage taught is an egalitarian teaching; he said, "I get all types of beings to enter nirvana without remainder, whereby I liberate them. I have liberated countless sentient beings in this way, yet there are really no beings who attain liberation." Is this not an egalitarian teaching?

An ancient said, "Nirvana is called universal liberation; it takes all in uniformly, without remainder; no matter what type of being, empty or existent, sinking or floating. The supernal being can descend to live on earth; the world of enlightenment is inherently omnipresent. If suddenly the highest thing is there, one lingers forever on this shore." If there is the slightest left-over, that is "this shore," the mundane. It is also said, "In an



instant one flows into ideation, which constitutes the root of birth and death." How can you have random realizations and arbitrarily produce intellectual interpretations?

In ancient times, there was an adept who told people, "Each of you has your inspiration; when you first determined to go journeying, you must have made this determination on account of life and death. Some may have aroused the determination to avoid misery, or because of the pressure of circumstances; in any case it is called inspiration. Why? To get people to look at their initial inspiration." That is, if your original thought of inspiration has not changed, turning back to it is most powerful.

This is the Zen for you to study; if you actually attain it, it is simply clear purity of mind. When you seek out teachers along the way and contemplate day and night, you are simply nurturing this mind. Then when you have awakened and realized it, you will then see that it had not been lost even before you were inspired. The saint Ashvaghosha said of this, "Initial enlightenment is itself fundamental enlightenment; fundamental enlightenment itself is unconscious. The nonduality of the initial experience and the fundamental reality is called ultimate enlightenment."

It is also said, "At the time of initial inspiration one attains true enlightenment," meaning first realize the fruit, and the six perfections and myriad deeds of Buddhas are a matter of ripening. This is why I have you just investigate the initially inspired mind. And my perception is one with yours; why not understand in this way?

## *Clear Eyes*



**P**EOPLE WITH CLEAR eyes do not settle complacently into fixed ways. The reason you haven't attained this in everyday life is simply that your eyes are not clear. If your eyes were clear, you'd have attained it. That is why it is said that people with clear eyes are hard to find. As soon as you say "This is thus and so," that is a complacent fixation; people with clear eyes are not like this.

Have you not read how Deshan said, to an assembly, "Tonight I will not answer questions. Anyone who asks a question gets a thrashing." How could anyone without clear eyes comprehend this? Fail in the slightest to comprehend this, and you fall into conceptual thought, which constructs signals. That is why Deshan's normal experience of life was comprehended by only one person, Yantou. Therefore I say you have to have clear eyes before you can attain this.

## *Finding Certainty*



**T**HE ORIGINAL ZEN masters are real true friends. Ha, ha, ha! One can only say this much; if you understand, you can have the experience yourself. Then you will have something to act on. If you get involved in rationalizations, comparisons, and verbalizations, then you do not understand, and you cannot experience it yourself.

When you are going about and doing your chores, do you see that the original Zen masters are real true friends? Since you don't see, when asked about it you get flustered.

Where is the problem? The problem lies in the fact that you are always coming from the midst of conceptual comparisons, and do not personally attain experience. All of you go sit on benches, close your eyes, and demolish your thinking all the way from the Milky Way above to Hades below before you can make a statement or two. But when you get to a quiet place, you still don't get the ultimate point. Before your eyes is nothing but things that obstruct people. Lightly questioned, you cannot reach the aim.

Right now, let's base the discussion on realities; we mustn't talk at random. For the moment, let me ask you this: when you haven't eaten anything at all for three days, can you be active? Certainly you cannot be active. Only after eating something can you be active. If so, it is all food energy. But when you get here, if you want to find suitable people, first it is necessary to see that

## *Finding Certainty*

which is not food energy. Zen should be studied in this way; this alone is called finding certainty.

Once you have eaten, that should sustain you as you take this matter up and look into it. But you are totally ignorant of this matter; instead you try to apply it in idleness, discussing right and wrong, focusing on useless things, either thinking about them or trying to demolish them. What a pity! It's all misapplication.

You do not realize that as soon as you aim your mind you're already a generation too late! In an instant, you have flowed into ideation, which forms the root of birth and death.

Furthermore, if you don't know even while physically alive, where will you seek after your material body dissolves?

In recent days there are those who just sit there as they are. At first they are alert, but after a while they doze. Nine out of ten sit there snoozing. How miserable! If you do not know how to do the inner work, how can you expect to understand by sitting rigidly? This is not the way it is. How can you see?

When Danxia held up a whisk, Layman Pang held up a hammer. When Danxia tossed his whisk down, Layman Pang put his hammer down. The next day, Layman Pang said, "How do you interpret yesterday's case?" Danxia relaxed and reclined. Layman Pang left. Are these not real knowers? How could this admit of your arbitrary explanations, or permit you to add explanatory footnotes?

Also, Yantou said, "These who cultivate purification must let it come forth from their own hearts in each individual situation, covering the entire universe." How can this be quiet sitting and meditating?

My teacher said, "When you sleep, study Zen as you sleep; at meals, study Zen as you eat." An ancient also said, "When you sit, there is the logic of when you sit; when you stand, there is the logic of when you stand."

Have you not read how Touzi asked Cuiwei, "Can I hear the

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secret message of Zen?" Cuiwei stood and looked around. Touzi said, "I don't understand the hidden statement; please give me another indication." Cuiwei said, "You want to get soused with a second ladle of foul water?" Touzi was thereupon enlightened.

You people have not attained the experience, so you miss quite a few good things in the course of a day. That is why I say the original Zen masters are real true friends. The path of the original Zen masters is like the bright sun in the blue sky—why are there people losing the way?

## *Get an Understanding*



**W**HEN YOU CANNOT understand, where is your mistake? You do not understand at all; fundamentally not understanding, you then seek understanding. An ancient said, "Don't abandon this world and cling to the beyond; for if you do so, it will be even harder to understand." I told you that you fundamentally do not understand; why not look at it as when Fayan was journeying and Dizang asked him where he was going; when Fayan replied that he was journeying, Dizang asked, "And do you understand what the journey is for?" Fayan answered, "No." Dizang said, "If you want to know what the journey is for, the one who does not understand is it." Fayan realized enlightenment from this. I ask you, since he did not understand, then how did he attain? You must find a way to penetrate before you will know.

This is not a matter of forced understanding, or all sorts of contrived understanding. Since you basically do not understand, what are you capable of doing? You need to examine attentively; look to see where the not understanding comes from.

Do you want to know? This nonunderstanding of yours basically comes from nowhere. Since it comes from nowhere, how could this not understanding be? And when you understand, the nonunderstanding goes nowhere. When you look at it in this way, you may be sure of attaining clarification.

As long as you do not know how to be people in the midst

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of enlightening realities, you only exercise your minds in the mundane world. If you have never taken a moment to look into this matter, how could you actually understand right away? When someone asks you a question, you talk randomly; but this is not a matter that can be handled in this way.

In the old days I once heard an old mendicant relate that Master Xianglin saw a seeker coming and said, "I do not deny that you can talk about it, but by the time you've gone two or three steps down the stairs, you're already no longer thus. Better not talk wildly!" See how the ancients examined from the root how people are to go about things. In Buddhism, no waste is reasonable; get an understanding of it!

## *Principle and Phenomena*



**G**RAND MASTER YUNMEN said, "If you really have not yet attained, for now follow principle to gain discernment." Students of Zen should also proceed in accord with principle, not being so presumptuous as to hope for something transcendental.

In general, students nowadays make phenomena into one extreme and principle into another extreme. This causes them to be physically and mentally uneasy. Why not have phenomena always conform to principle?

Without even talking about the phenomena of beginningless time, just consider the instant of conception, when there is a sudden change of the physical body and the material world; from that point on, all is phenomena. Every diverse element in the conditional body is a phenomenon. Right now, how can you clear your mind of these phenomena so as to conform to principle?

Phenomena have discrete forms, while principle is formless. Once the ancients realized the principle, they adapted to phenomena in accord with principle. Have you not read how someone once clapped his hands and laughed on hearing a signal sounded, saying, "I understand! I understand!" Is this not following principle to learn? Why not observe in this way twenty-four hours a day, doing inner work like this? Eventually it will ripen, and you will naturally harmonize with the principle.

One of the original Zen masters said, "If you want to attain



harmonization quickly, just speak of nonduality.” It is not a matter of just saying it and thereupon understanding; you must actually attain harmonization before you can realize this. Guishan said, “Phenomena and principle are not two; the real Buddha is suchness as is.”

I have seen many who cannot follow principle; when they take it up, they turn it upside down at once. They make useless theoretical interpretations of the sayings and model cases of the ancients, their different challenges, records of seasonal addresses, and the modalities of their individual schools, considering this to be Zen study. How miserable! Study of the path is not like this.

People of the later generations are even more ignorant; spending ten or fifteen years on vain conceit, they attain nothing at all. You have unconsciously acquired habits of thinking about yourself and others, and hardly even give a thought to the matter of independence. How will you be in the future?

Don't keep standing here—each of you find out on your own.

## *Keys of Zen Mind*



**Y**OU SHOULD NOT set up limitations in the boundless void, but if you set up limitlessness as the boundless void, you encompass your own downfall. Therefore, those who understand voidness have no concept of voidness.

If people use words to describe mind, they never apprehend mind; if people do not describe mind in words, they still do not apprehend mind. Speech is fundamentally mind; you do not apprehend it because of describing it. Speechlessness is fundamentally mind; you do not apprehend it because of not describing it. Whatever sorts of understanding you use to approximate it, none tally with your own mind itself.

A high master said, "It is only tacit harmony." Because it is like this, if you haven't attained the path yet, just do not entertain any false thoughts. If people recognize false thoughts and deliberately try to stop them, it's because you see there are false thoughts. If you know you're having false thoughts and deliberately practice contemplation to effect perception of truth, this is also seeing that there are false thoughts. If you know that falsehood is fundamentally the path, then there is no falsehood in it. Therefore those who master the path have no attainment. If the path were sought by deliberate intention, the path would be something attained. Just do not seek elsewhere, and realize there is no confusion or falsehood; this is called seeing the path.

In recent times, everyone says, "Nothing is not the path."

They are like people sitting by a food basket talking about eating; they can never be filled, because they do not themselves partake. Realization obliterates the subject-object split; it's not that there's some mysterious principle besides. In your daily activities, when you see forms, this is an instance of realization; when you hear sounds, this is an instance of realization; when you eat and drink, this is an instance of realization. Each particular is without subject or object.

This is not a matter of longtime practice; it does not depend on cultivation. That is because it is something that is already there. Worldly people, who do not recognize it, call it roaming aimlessly. That is why it is said, "Only by experiential realization do you know it is unfathomable."

People who study the path clearly know there is such a thing; why do they fail to get the message, and go on doubting? It is because their faith is not complete enough and their doubt is not deep enough. Only with depth and completeness, be it faith or doubt, is it really Zen; if you are incapable of introspection like this, you will eventually get lost in confusion and lose the thread, wearing out and stumbling halfway along the road. But if you can look into yourself, there is no one else.

Once we say "this matter," how can we know it any more than that? "Knowledge" may be arbitrary thought, but this matter itself isn't lost. The path is not revealed only after explanation and direction; it is inherently always out in the open. Explanation and direction are expedient methods, used to get you to realize enlightenment; they are also temporary byroads. Some attain realization through explanation, some enter through direction, some attain by spontaneous awakening; ultimately there is nothing different, no separate attainment. It is simply a matter of reaching the source of mind.

People say that to practice cultivation only after realizing enlightenment is in the province of curative methodology, but Zen also admits of using true knowledge and vision as a cura-

tive. In terms of a particular individual, however, this may not be necessary.

“The path of Buddhahood is eternal; only after long endurance of hard work can it then be realized.” It is continuous throughout past, present, and future; the ordinary and the holy are one suchness—this is why it is said that “the path of Buddhahood is eternal.” If you do not produce differing views, you never leave it—this is the point of “long endurance of hard work.” Ultimately there is no separate reality—thus it is said that it “can then be realized.”

This is a matter for strong people. People who do not discern what is being asked give replies depending on what comes up. They do not know it is something you ask yourself—to whom would you answer? When people do not understand an answer, they produce views based on words. They do not know it is something you answer for yourself—what truth have you found, and where does it lead? Therefore it is said, “It’s all you.” Look! Look!

Some people say, “The verbal teachings given out by the enlightened ones since ancient times circulate throughout the world, each distinctly clear. Why is all this oneself? That is profound ingratitude toward the kindness of the ancient sages.” I now reply that I am actually following the source message of the enlightened ones; you yourselves turn your backs on it, not I. If you say they have some doctrine, you are thereby slandering the enlightened.

Do not be someone who finally cuts off the seed of enlightenment; if you do not discern the ultimate within yourself, whatever you do will be artificial. No matter how much you memorize, or how many words you understand, it will be of no benefit to you. Thus it is said, “You want to listen attentively to Buddha; why doesn’t Buddha listen to himself? If you seek a formal Buddha outside the listening, it will not resemble you.”

An adept said, “For me to make a statement in reply to you

is not particularly hard; now if you could gain understanding at a single saying, that would amount to something." If you do not understand, then I have gone wrong.

Students nowadays all consider question and answer to be essential to Zen, not realizing that this is a grasping and rejecting conceptual attitude. Terms such as study "in reference to principle" and "in reference to phenomena" are recently coined expressions. Even if you have a little perception, you still shouldn't stop; haven't you heard it said that the path of nirvana aims at absolute liberation?

You have to be able to monitor yourself. When people proceed on the path because they are confused and do not know their own minds, they come to mountain forests to see teachers, imagining that there is a special "way" that can make people comfortable, not realizing that the best exercise is to look back and study your previous confusion. If you do not get this far, even to go into the mountain forests forever will be a useless act.

Confusion is extremely accessible, yet hard to penetrate. That is why ancient worthies said, "It is hard to believe, hard to understand."

This is an explanation of the path characteristic of the instant school. Looking back into what has been going on is already an expression of change; but what about if you do not do so! Later generations eventually took this statement to refer to plain ordinariness, but this is just failure of understanding and absorption on the part of later students.

Since time immemorial, there have been two kinds of method: there is true method, which is what is called the exposition that has no interruption; then there is expedient method, which is what is referred to as subtle response to all potentials. If you gain entry by way of true method, you understand spiritually in a natural and spontaneous manner without needing to make use of contemplation, never to regress, with countless wondrous capacities. If you gain entry by way of expedient method, you

must "take the seat, wear the clothing, and hereafter see for yourself" before you can attain. This can not yet be considered ultimate. These two kinds of method are one reality, and cannot be lost for an instant; students should think about this.

Xuefeng said to people, "Don't have me make a statement that refers to you; if there is a statement that refers to you, what use is it?" It is simply that the ancient had no choice and could not avoid speaking in these terms; later people who did not understand the ancient's intention thought it means that there is nothing to say about one's self; thus they misunderstood.

People nowadays mostly take the immediate mirroring awareness to be the ultimate principle. This is why Xuansha said to people, "Tell me, does it still exist in remote uninhabited places deep in the mountains?"

Enlightenment of mind and seeing its essence should be like Xuefeng and Xuansha; genuine application to reality should be like Nanquan and Zhaozhou. Students nowadays just take the methods of the ancients to be the way of Zen; they are unable to study from the same source as the ancients themselves did.

It is like a strong man carrying a heavy load over a log bridge without losing his balance. What supports him like this? Just his singleminded attention. Working on the path is also like this; as it says in scripture, a lion has all of its power whether it is catching an elephant or a rabbit. If you ask what power we should have all of, it is the power of nondeception. If you see anything in the slightest different from mind, you forfeit your own life. Thus for those who attain the path, there is nothing that is not it.

◦ This power is very great; it is only that the function of the power is made deficient by infections of unlimited misapprehension. Without all these different states, different conditions, different entanglements, and different thoughts, you can transform freely, however you wish, without any obstacle.

You shouldn't strain to seek the path; if you seek it, you will

lose the path. You need not strain to make things fluid; if you try to make them fluid, things remain as they are. If you neither seek nor try to produce fluidity, the path will merge with things; then what thing is not the path?

Suppose a man with clear eyes goes into a jewel mine but does not know how to go about it; in other words, suppose he thinks he can go in without a torch to light the way. Then when he bumps his head and hurts himself, he thinks it to be a dangerous cave, not a jewel mine. An intelligent person going in there would take a lamp to light up the mine to view; then all kinds of jewels could be selected at will and taken out. Similarly, you should be using the light of insight and wisdom twenty-four hours a day, not letting the six fields of sense objects hurt you.

In the old days, Assembly Leader Yong took leave of Fenyang along with Ciming, but Yong had not yet completely realized the marvel; though he had followed Ciming for twenty years, after all he was not free and untrammelled. One night they sat around the brazier until very late; Ciming picked up the fire tongs, hit the embers, and said, "Assembly Leader Yong, Assembly Leader Yong!" Yong clucked his tongue and said with disapproval, "Foxy devil!" Ciming pointed at Yong and said, "This tired old guy still goes on like this!" In this way Yong finally realized the ultimate end. Nevertheless, he continued to follow Ciming to the end of his life. Whenever Ciming would pose complex stimulating questions that the students could not answer, Yong alone hit the mark, and Ciming would nod approval.

This is called medicine without disease. Few of those who study it attain the essential; needless to say, mere intellectuals of later times have no way to comprehend this matter. Your attainment of it should be like Yong, your activation of the medicine should be like Ciming; then, hopefully, you will be all right.

When you find peace and quiet in the midst of busyness and clamor, then towns and cities become mountain forests; afflictions are enlightenment, sentient beings realize true awakening.

These sayings can be uttered and understood by all beginners, who construe it as uniform equanimity; but then when they let their minds go, the ordinary and the spiritual are divided as before, quietude and activity operate separately. So obviously this was only an intellectual understanding.

You have to actually experience stable peacefulness before you attain oneness; you cannot force understanding.

In recent generations, many have come to regard question-and-answer dialogues as the style of the Zen school. They do not understand what the ancients were all about; they only pursue trivia, and do not come back to the essential. How strange! How strange!

People in olden times asked questions on account of confusion, so they were seeking actual realization through their questioning; when they got a single saying or half a phrase, they would take it seriously and examine it until they penetrated it. They were not like people nowadays who pose questions at random and answer with whatever comes out of their mouths, making laughingstocks of themselves.

People who attain study the path twenty-four hours a day, never abandoning it for a moment. Even if these people do not gain access to it, every moment of thought is already cultivating practical application. Usually it is said that cultivated practice does not go beyond purification of mind, speech, action, and the six senses, but the Zen way is not necessarily like this. Why? Because Zen concentration is equal to transcendent insight in every moment of thought; wherever you are, there are naturally no ills. Eventually one day the ground of mind becomes thoroughly clear and you attain complete fulfillment. This is called absorption in one practice.

Nowadays people only work on concentration power and do not open the eye of insight. For them, stories and sayings just become argumentation, unstable mental activity.

Zen study is not a small matter. You do not yet need to tran-



scend the Buddhas and surpass the adepts; but once you have attained it, it will not be hard to transcend and surpass them if you wish.

## *Sitting Meditation*



The light of mind is reflected in emptiness;  
its substance is void of relative or absolute.  
Golden waves all around,  
Zen is constant, in action or stillness.  
Thoughts arise, thoughts disappear;  
don't try to shut them off.

Let them flow spontaneously—  
what has ever arisen and vanished?  
When arising and vanishing quiet down,  
there appears the great Zen master;  
sitting, reclining, walking around,  
there's never an interruption.

When meditating, why not sit?  
When sitting, why not meditate?  
Only when you have understood this way  
is it called sitting meditation.

Who is it that sits? What is meditation?

To try to seat it  
is using Buddha to look for Buddha.  
Buddha need not be sought;  
seeking takes you further away.  
In sitting, you do not look at anything.  
Meditation is not an external art.  
At first, the mind is noisy and unruly.

there is still no choice but to shift it back.  
 That is why there are many methods  
 to teach it quiet observation.  
 When you sit up and gather your spirit,  
 at first it scatters helter-skelter;  
 over a period of time, eventually it calms down,  
 opening and freeing the six senses.  
 When the six senses rest a bit,  
 discrimination occurs therein.  
 As soon as discrimination occurs,  
 it seems to produce arising and vanishing.  
 The transformations of arising and vanishing  
 come from manifestations of one's own mind.  
 Put your own mind to use to look back once:  
 once you've returned, no need to do it again;  
 you wear a halo of light on your head.  
 The spiritual flames leap and shine,  
 unobstructed in any state of mind,  
 all-inclusive, all-pervasive;  
 birth and death forever cease.  
 A single grain of restorative elixir  
 turns gold into liquid;  
 acquired pollution of body and mind  
 have no way to get through.  
 Confusion and enlightenment are temporarily  
 explained;  
 stop discussing opposition and accord.  
 When I think carefully of olden days  
 when I sat coolly seeking,  
 though it's nothing different,  
 it was quite a mess.  
 You can turn from ordinary mortal to sage  
 in an instant, but no one believes.  
 All over the earth is unclarity;

best be very careful.

If it happens you do not know,

then sit up straight and think;

one day you'll bump into it.

This I humbly hope.

## Notes



### Zen Sicknesses

The three kinds of sickness of the spiritual body are descriptively termed “leaving before arriving,” “attachment after arriving,” and “penetration with no reliable basis.” The meanings can be deduced from these names.

The two kinds of light of the spiritual body refer to the gross and subtle semblance of something actually being there. These semblances are called “light not penetrating freely.” This does not mean that free penetration results in total absence of appearances, but that appearances are not made into objects of gross or subtle fixation. This can only be understood by experiencing it.

The *Heroic Progress Discourse* is a Buddhist text commonly used by Chinese Zen practitioners for self-monitoring during the declining centuries of Zen Buddhism in China, from the Song dynasty onward. See *Dream Conversations* for a more accessible discussion of Zen sicknesses.

Zhaozhou (pronounced Jow-joe) (778–897) and Nanquan (pronounced Nan-chwen) (747–834) were two of the very greatest adepts of classical Zen. The vastness and clarity of Nanquan’s mind can be glimpsed in such sayings as these: “The true principle is one suchness: unobtrusive practice of inner application, unknown to anyone, is called nonleaking knowledge. Nonleaking, inconceivable, is equivalent to the immutability of space, not

the current of birth and death. The Way is the Highway, unimpeded nirvana full of wondrous capacities. Only thus do you attain freedom in all activities. This is what is meant by the expression 'Acting without fixation in all activities,' and the expression 'absorption in universal activity, manifesting the physical body everywhere.' Because nobody knows, one's operations are traceless and imperceptible; the truth is spontaneously effective, the subtle function intrinsically adequate. The universal Way has no form, Truth has no opposite; so they are not in the realm of perception or cognition. There are neither coarse nor fine conceptions in it." Nanquan also defined Zen practice in this way: "Right now, just understand the principle of suchness, being-as-is, and act on it directly. Why not ask how to act on it? Just understand the essence that has been thus for infinite eons does not fluctuate or change—this in itself is practical application."

Like other classical masters, Nanquan denounced cultism: "Nowadays there are too many 'Zen Masters'! I'm looking for an innocent, but can't find one! I don't say there are none at all, only that they are rare." He also said, "Just embody practical application in touch with reality; do not say 'I am a Zen Master'!" Asked about practical application, he said, "If you need to act, act; don't just follow behind another!" To explain the nonconventional nature of the special Zen consciousness, Nanquan said, "The basis of understanding does not come about from perception and cognition. Perception and cognition are conditioned, only existing in relation to objects. The spiritual wonder is impossible to conceive, not relative to anything. That is why it is said that wondrous capacities are spontaneously effective and do not depend on other things."

Zhaouhou, who attained enlightenment at a word from Nanquan, also spoke of a fundamental awareness underlying Zen consciousness: "This essence existed before the world existed; this essence will not dissolve when the world disintegrates." Statements like this, it must be realized, are not philosophical argu-

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ments, but exercises in attention. This is made clear in Zhaozhou's manner of addressing the usage and inner meanings of symbolic language in Zen: "A gold Buddha cannot get through a furnace, a wooden Buddha cannot get through a fire, a clay Buddha cannot get through water. The real Buddha sits within; 'enlightenment,' 'nirvana,' 'suchness,' and 'buddha-nature' are all clothing sticking to the body."

See also *No Barrier*, chapters 1, 7, 11, 14, 19, 27, 30, 33, 34, and 37.

### Facing It Directly

Yunmen (d. 949), was one of the latest and greatest masters of the classical era, known for exceptional brilliance. He said, "Why do you traipse around with your luggage through a thousand towns, over ten thousand miles? What are you missing? You are fine; who has no lot? If you can't even manage to take responsibility for yourself on your own, you shouldn't accept deception from others, or take people's judgments. As soon as you see old monks open their mouths, you should shut them right up; and yet you act like flies on manure, struggling to feed off it, gathering in threes and fives for discussion." He also said, "Ordinary phonies consume the piss and spit of other people, memorizing a pile of junk, a load of rubbish, running off at the mouth wherever they go, bragging about how they can pose five or ten questions. Even if you pose questions and answers from morning to night until the end of time, would you ever see? Where is the empowerment?"

Yunmen was one of the first Zen masters known to have given overt instructions for contemplating Zen stories and sayings as an expedient method of cultivating Zen consciousness: "The ancients had a lot of complications to help you, such as Xuefeng's saying, 'The whole earth is you,' Jiashan's saying, 'Pick out the teacher in the hundred grasses; recognize the emperor in a bustling market place,' and Luopu's saying, 'As soon as a par-

ticle of dust arises, the entire earth is contained therein; the whole body of a lion is on the tip of a single hair.' Take these up and think about them over and over again; eventually, over time, you will naturally find a way to penetrate. No one can substitute for you in this task; it rests with each individual, without exception." This is quite different from the highly artificial standardized and pressurized "koan study" as practiced in many present-day Japanese and American Zen cults, most of which does not follow the teachings of the original Zen masters, but actually dates only from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yunmen was outspoken about the futility of cultic attitudes of emotional enthusiasts; he said, "You rush here pointlessly; what are you looking for? All I know how to do is eat, drink, piss, and shit; why do you make a special interpretation? You travel around to various places studying Zen, inquiring about the path, but let me ask you a question: what have you learned at all those places? Try to bring it out." He also insisted on common sense in Zen practice: when someone asked, "What is the road beyond?" Yunmen replied, " $9 \times 9 = 81$ ." Asked about Zen in these terms, "How does one apply it on the road?" Yunmen replied, " $7 \times 9 = 63$ ." These are not silly nonsequiturs, like so much nonsense seen in cults; and they are not just numerological symbolic statements either. Nine times nine does equal eighty-one, in the daily world we face when we wake up in the morning; a variety of "Zen" that does not help you is obviously not too useful, and has to retreat into the bosom of a cult, a tribe of supposedly "like-minded" people who agree to agree. See *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapters 6, 8, 14, 15, 22, 27, and 34; and *No Barrier*, chapters 21, 39, and 48.

### Seeing and Doing

The statements about learning ~~business~~ may require some clarification. One of the main ideas is that it is better to learn professional skills when young so that you may have more freedom



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for other interests later on. Another idea is that too much interest in business can inhibit this freedom. Yet another is that after enlightenment things can often be mastered without having to be learned. People in the East often studied Zen to improve their skills in arts, crafts, writing, government, soldiering, and other businesses, even to the extent that secondary purposes crowded out the original essence of Zen.

### The Marrow of the Sages

Changsha lived in the ninth century. A wandering teacher with no fixed abode and no fixed doctrine, Changsha was one of the greatest classical masters. He said, "The entire universe is your own light; the entire universe is within your own light; there is no one in the whole universe that is not you. I always tell you that the realms of desire, form, and formless abstraction, the enlightened ones, the universe, and the totality of all beings, are the light of universal perfect wisdom. When the light has not yet shone forth, where can you turn to become intimately acquainted with it? Before the light shines forth, there is no news of Buddhas or sentient beings; where do we get the mountains, rivers, and earth?" See also *No Barrier*, chapter 46.

The icon of wisdom is a statue of Manjushri, a personification of wisdom, commonly used in Zen meditation halls as a reminder that "there is no meditation without insight," in the word of Buddha himself as written in the ancient *Dhammapada*. For more on Manjushri, see *No Barrier*, chapter 42, and *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, chapters 8, 9, 10, and 39.

### Not Knowing

There are still Zen cultists who stick to their "not knowing" in the blind and ignorant manner described here; they even have their Western imitators.

## Emancipation

Dongshan (pronounced Doong-shan) (806–869) was one of the great classical masters, particularly noted for the didactic scheme known as the Five Ranks, which Dongshan and his distinguished student Caoshan used to analyze the structures of Zen sayings and stories to define and describe stages of practice and realization.

## Stop Opinions

In Buddhist psychology, opinions are considered one of the major afflictions, psychological conditions or disturbances that inhibit the evolution of consciousness. Because people become narrow-minded and bigoted by fixation on their own ideas and opinions, subjective views are considered afflictions.

The Third Patriarch of Zen died in 609. The sayings quoted are from his *Poem on Trust in the Heart*, one of the earliest Zen classics. Because of the importance of this text in understanding the theory and practice of instant Zen enlightenment, I have included a complete translation in an appendix to this volume that begins on page 133.

Grand Master Yongjia (d. 712) was a master of the Tiantai school of Buddhism; he visited the illustrious Sixth Patriarch of Zen and was instantly recognized as an illuminate. Because of this, in Zen tradition Yongjia is also referred to as the Enlightened Overnight Guest. He is here quoted from his *Song on Realization of Enlightenment*, another early Zen classic.

“Difficult to Conquer” is the fifth of the Ten Stages of Enlightenment as expounded in *The Flower Ornament Scripture* (pages 695–811). Containing the prototypes of all Buddhist teachings and practices, the Ten Stages are called the Alphabet of Buddhism. The fifth stage is one in which perfection of meditation is cultivated in harmony with useful worldly occupations, integrating transmundane and conventional realities.

Xuansha (pronounced Shwen-shah) lived in the ninth cen-

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tury. Originally a fisherman, he later became one of the greatest Zen masters of all time. According to tradition, he attained instant enlightenment spontaneously one day when he stubbed his toe as he started out on a journey. Xuansha placed great emphasis on independent investigation into the source of confusion and understanding. He said, "The substance of phenomena is inherently uncreated and inherently indestructible. Everything is just so, now and forever; so how is it possible to not understand? If you don't understand, it's just you; if you do understand, it's still just you. So what is the difference between understanding and not understanding? The substance of enlightenment may emerge or disappear, becoming passive or active freely, with countless ineffable functions. Even right here and now there are thousands of uncanny functions taking place, all just so; myriad transformations and developments are also just so. Why? Because they are inherently there, inherently complete, their essence and characteristics always there; this is the 'Buddha' of immutable knowledge. This is why it is possible to 'not know' and 'not understand,' just as someone who is full of benevolence is not aware of it. Simply because that which is permanent and unchanging is there, you therefore say you don't recognize or sense it. You may know it and sense it, but don't try to quantify it!" See *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapters 22 and 88, and pages 595–596.

Fayan (pronounced Fah-yen) (885–958) was one of the last grand masters of the classical era of Zen. His school consisted mostly of advanced students, and on the whole is generally notable for erudition in Buddhist psychology and philosophy as well as subtle enlightenment. Four of his many disciples were teachers of kings in China and Korea. Something of the subtle simplicity of his manner of teaching can be seen from his lectures: "Zhaozhou said, 'Don't waste energy.' This is a very good saying; why not go on as ever? Things of the world have ways of access; how could Buddhism have none? It just seems that way if you don't go on as ever. Therefore all the Buddhas and all the

Zen Masters simply attain within going on as ever." See also *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 7, and *No Barrier*, chapter 26.

### The Director

Guizong (pronounced Gway-dzoong) lived in the eighth century. He is sometimes referred to as one of the very greatest Zen masters of all time, but relatively little is known of his teaching. He said, "The ancient worthies since time immemorial were not without knowledge and understanding; those lofty people were not the same as the common run. Now you cannot mature yourselves and stand on your own, so you pass the time uselessly. Don't misapply your minds; no one can take your place, but there's nothing for you to worry about either. Don't seek from others. All along you have been depending on interpretations from others, so you get bogged down whatever you say, and your light does not penetrate freely simply because there is something in front of your eyes."

### Independence

Vasubandhu and Asanga were Indian Buddhist writers who promulgated the Vijñānavāda, or Explanation of Consciousness, one of the main streams of Buddhist thought, which Asanga is said to have learned from a teacher named Maitreya. In Chinese Zen, Vasubandhu was considered the twenty-first Indian Zen Patriarch. "This" means "suchness," (Sanskrit *tathata*), also referred to as "thusness," (*bhutatathata*) or "being-as-is" (*yathabhuta*). See also *Transmission of Light*, chapter 22, and *Buddhist Yoga*, which outlines the theory and practice of Vijñānavāda Buddhism, one of the Indian antecedents of Zen.

### Learning Zen

Lingyun and Xiangyan (pronounced Xiang-yen) both studied Zen for a long time without success. Eventually to attain instantaneous enlightenment through unexpected impacts. Lingyun

woke up one day when he happened to see peach trees in blossom, while Xiangyan finally awoke one day on hearing the sound of bamboo being hit by some pebbles he swept off the pathway.

"If you just shout and clap, when will you ever be done?" This passage refers to imitators who literally "shout and clap" in a pretended show of "nonconceptual" realization or "transcendental" enlightenment. People like this still exist, and even have their imitators in the supposedly rational West. These are among those who have mistaken Zen "mindlessness" for ordinary witlessness.

### Seeing Through

In the Far East, Kasyapa the Elder was traditionally considered the First Patriarch of Zen in India. See *No Barrier*, chapter 6, and *Transmission of Light*, chapter 2.

For more on Bodhidharma, the Founder of Zen in China, see *No Barrier*, chapter 46, and *Transmission of Light*, chapter 29.

### Real Zen

Yunyan, Baizhang, Daowu, Xuefeng, Touzi, Dongshan, and Deshan were all classical Zen masters; many stories about them can be found in *The Blue Cliff Record*. See *No Barrier*, chapter 13 for Deshan and Xuefeng, chapter 2 for Baizhang. The record of Xuefeng's (822–908) sayings also provides some of the clearest indications of the theory and practice of classical Zen: "You must see your essence before you attain enlightenment. What is seeing essence? It means seeing your own fundamental nature. What is its form? When you see your own fundamental nature, there is no concrete object to see. This is hard to believe in, but all Buddhas attain it." He also explained how many terms are used to achieve the same focus of attention. Many of the purified mind are buddha-nature, true suchness, the pure essence, the pure spiritual body, the pedestal of enlightenment, the innocent, universal round mirror-like mind.

source, the ultimate truth, and pure consciousness. The enlightened ones of past, present, and future, and all of their discourses, are all in your fundamental nature, inherently complete. You do not need to seek, but you must save yourself; no one can do it for you."

Yunfeng Yue, Huaitang, and Zen Master Nan were exceptional Zen masters of the early Song dynasty. See *Zen Lessons*, pages 41-47.

### Wonder

*The Hundred Phenomena as Only Representation* is a classic treatise on the Buddhist Explanation of Consciousness, Vijñānavāda, which deals with the relationship between mind and objects.

Fushan and Baiyun Duan were among the greatest early Song dynasty masters. See *Zen Lessons*, pages 9-17 and 18-23

### Just This

Grand Master Ma, also known as Mazu or Ancestor Ma (709-788) was one of the most brilliant of the early classical masters, said to have had from eighty-four to 139 enlightened disciples. He said, "The Way does not need cultivation; just don't pollute it. What is pollution? As long as you have a fluctuating mind creating artificialities and pursuing inclinations, all is pollution. If you want to understand the Way directly, the normal mind is the Way. What is the normal mind? It has no artificial contrivance, no right or wrong, no grasping or rejection, no nihilism or eternalism, no ordinariness and no sanctity." See also *No Barrier*, chapter 30.

### Keep Evolving

Linji (d. 866) was one of the greatest classical masters, famed for his blasting directness. He said, "What I teach people just requires you not to take on the confusion of others. Act when

necessary, without further hesitation or doubt. When students today do not attain this, wherein lies their sickness? The sickness is in not trusting yourself. If your inner trust is insufficient, then you will frantically go along with changes in situations, and will be influenced and affected by myriad objects, unable to be independent. If you can stop the mentality of constant frantic seeking, then you are no different from Zen masters and Buddhas." See also *Zen Essence*, pages 4–9. Elder Ding was one of Linji's spiritual heirs; his story is told in *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 32.

### Approval

Magu, Zhangjing, and Nanquan were all students of Great Master Ma. See *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 31, for further comments on this story.

### Step Back and See

The Second Patriarch of Zen was a monk for a time, then was laicized during a persecution of Buddhist orders in northern China in the middle of the sixth century. He is said to have then spent thirty years as a day laborer in a big city. When asked why he did not return to religious orders but instead worked at menial jobs, the Second Patriarch replied, "I am tuning my mind by myself; what business is it of yours?" It is recorded that he used to give informal talks outside the gates of large Buddhist monasteries, drawing such crowds that the formal clerics were furious. He lived to be more than a hundred years old, but eventually he was put to death by people opposed to spiritual freedom. One traditional version of his story is found in *Transmission of Light*, chapter 30. The story of his enlightenment given in *No Barrier*, chapter 41, is a diagram of a key method of Zen meditation called "turning the light around and looking back."

## All the Way Through

Ashvaghosha, an Indian Buddhist writer, was the reputed author of *Awakening of Faith in the Great Vehicle*, a treatise highly esteemed in China. Ashvaghosha was one of the principle expounders of Vijnanavada, and in Chinese tradition is considered the Twelfth Patriarch of Zen in India. See *Transmission of Light*, chapter 13.

The three subtle and six coarse aspects of mentation refer to an analytic scheme used in Buddhist yoga for self-observation. The three subtle aspects are: 1) inherited predispositions and habits; 2) entertaining of subjective assumptions; and 3) subjective perception of objects. The six coarse aspects follow on these: 1) cognition; 2) continuity; 3) clinging; 4) defining and labeling; 5) developing habitual compulsive behavior; and 6) suffering bondage to habitual compulsive behavior.

## Comprehending Everything

Kasyapa's place in Zen tradition is epitomized in *No Barrier*, chapters 6 and 22; and *Transmission of Light*, chapter 2. For the story of Elder Ming, see *No Barrier*, chapter 23, and *Transmission of Light*, chapter 34.

## Seek Without Seeking

The three bodies, four knowledges, five eyes, and six spiritual powers refer to attributes of a Buddha, or fully enlightened individual.

The three bodies are the reality body, or pure spiritual body of essence; the enjoyment body, or the differentiated spiritual body of knowledge; and the emanation body, or the energetic body of physical manifestation.

The four knowledges are the mirror-like knowledge, which simply reflects being as is; the knowledge of equality, which penetrates appearances; observational knowledge, which distin-



guishes phenomena; and practical knowledge, which employs the body.

The five eyes are: the physical eye, the clairvoyant eye, the eye of wisdom, the eye of objectivity, and the eye of complete awareness.

The six spiritual powers are: psychic travel, clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind reading, direct knowledge of life histories, and ending of contamination and indulgence.

Yangshan (813–890) was one of the great classical masters. For an analysis of the story of Yangshan cited here as a guide to meditation, see *Shobogenzo: Zen Essays by Dogen*, pages 11–13. For more on Yangshan, see also *Zen Essence*, pages 10–11; and *No Barrier*, chapter 25.

Bhishmottaranirghosha and Sudhana are figures in the book “Entry into the Realm of Reality” in *The Flower Ornament Scripture* (pages 1214–1217 and 1577–1579)

### Same Reality, Different Dreams

The Sixth Patriarch Huineng (638–713) is one of the most important figures in the tradition of instant Zen. He was an illiterate woodcutter, yet had the “teacherless knowledge” esteemed by Zen Buddhists. For his story, see *No Barrier*, chapters 23 and 29; and *Transmission of Light*, chapter 34. A Song dynasty painting of the Sixth Patriarch is featured on the cover of this book.

Caoshan (pronounced Tsow-shan) (840–901) was a great classical master particularly noted for his work on structural analysis of symbolism with the Five Ranks scheme. See *No Barrier*, chapter 10.

Birth and death (Sanskrit *samsara*) refers to the continual varying and shifting of mental states, moods, and thoughts in the ordinary mind. Getting out of birth and death means stabilizing the autonomous function of the “directorate” faculty of the essential mind, which is not emotionally influenced by the wavering of moods or the rise and fall of thoughts and ideas.

## Understand Immediately

For more on the methods of Foyan's teacher, the redoubtable Wuzu, see *No Barrier*, chapters 35, 36, and 38; *Zen Lessons*, chapters 18–28; and *Zen Essence*, pages 24–25.

## Instant Enlightenment

Several ideas from the Buddhist *Lotus Scripture* are commonly cited in Zen talks. One is the inconceivability of ultimate truth; another is the compatibility of all productive work with reality.

“Twenty-five states of being in the three realms” refers to the spectrum of conditioned mental states in the instinctual, emotional, and intellectual domains.

“Other worlds” refers to worlds of experiences other than one's own personal subjectivity; here the teacher is talking about sensitivity and perceptivity, not other planets.

“Breaking through senses and objects” refers to penetrating the distinction between the primordial and the conditioned, with the result that one is no longer deluded into thinking that the way one perceives the world is intrinsically definitive.

*Transmission of the Lamp* is one of the early compendia of Zen lore, a source of countless stories, sayings, and poems.

## Zen Mastery

For an explanation of the two monks rolling up the screen, see *No Barrier*, chapter 26.

## Clear Eyes

Deshan (pronounced Duh-shan) (781–867) was one of the great classical masters: once a Buddhist scholar, he originally set out to refute the Zen claim of instant enlightenment. His own understanding refuted by an enlightened Zen nun, Deshan was sent on to her teacher and attained instant enlightenment himself.

## Notes

Deshan lived on a mountain for a long time and refused to become a public teacher until he was put under arrest by a government official who was interested in Zen and wanted Deshan to teach. Deshan's arrest, recorded as historical fact, is also a useful metaphor for what actually happened to Zen Buddhism after the golden age; it was put under arrest by the authorities. See *No Barrier*, chapters 28 and 13.

Yantou (827–887) was another great classical master, one of the freest and most outstanding of all time. He said, “Just let go and be natural and naked: you do not need to keep thinking fixedly. In the dark, the moment you prize anything, it has turned into a nest, a dodge. The ancients called this clothing sticking to the body, a disease most difficult to cure. When I was journeying in the past, I called on teachers in one or two places; they just taught day and night concentration, sitting until your buttocks grow callouses, and all the while your mouth is drooling. From the start they sit in the utter darkness in the belly of the primordial Buddha and ignorantly say they are sitting in meditation conserving this attainment. At such times, there is still desire there! Have you not read the saying, ‘When independent and unimpassioned, you yourself are Buddha’! An ancient remarked, ‘If you poison the milk, even clarified butter is deadly.’ This is not something you attain by hearing, not something you reach or abide in, not something in your forms; don’t misperceive what is merely a gate or a door, for that will cheat you on the last day of your life, leaving you in utter chaos, of no help to you at all. What you should do is avoid artificialities and concocted eccentricities: just take care of your physical needs, passing the time according to your place in life. Do not disturb social order, pretentiously identifying yourself as one who follows the Path.”

### Finding Certainty

Danxia (pronounced Dan-syah) (738–824) and Layman Pang (n.d.) were both students of Great Master Ma. On Danxia, see

*The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 76. On Layman Pang, see *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 42. On the great master Cuiwei (pronounced Tsway-way) (9th century), see *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapter 20. On Touzi (pronounced Toe-dz) (845–914), see *The Blue Cliff Record*, chapters 41, 79, 80, 91; and pages 608–610.

### Get an Understanding

Xianglin (10th century) was a student of the great master Yunmen.

### Keys of Zen Mind

Fenyang (947–1024) was one of the very greatest masters of the early Song dynasty; he studied with more than seventy teachers and collected and commented on a great deal of Zen lore, attempting to harmonize all the various traditions of Zen. Ciming (pronounced Tse-ming) was one of his most eminent spiritual heirs. For more on the work of Fenyang, see *Zen Essence*, pages 15–16, and *The Blue Cliff Record*, pages 638–641.

### Sitting Meditation

Foyan's teachings on meditation, much like those of the ancient masters, are quite different from the obsessive compulsive attitudes inherited by Western Zen cultists from Japanese sectarians automatically following late feudal and neo-imperial models of Zen organization and discipline. Foyan's teachings were evidently different from those of obsessive cultists of his own time too. Xutang (pronounced Syw-tahng), whose student Jomyo imported Zen to Japan in the thirteenth century, is on record as teaching, "It is essential not to become attached to the form of sitting; when you sit, you should do so in a suitably convenient manner. If you lack inner direction, you will uselessly weary your spirit." Under the military authoritarian regimes that actually controlled most of the Zen establishments in feudal Japan, this original flexibility tended to give way to extreme disciplinarian

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rigidity. For more on authentic methods of Zen meditation, see *Minding the Mind*. For more on Buddhist theory and practice of meditation in general, see *Buddhist Yoga*.

## *Appendix*

### *Song of Trusting the Heart*

Sengcan, the Third Patriarch of Zen



The Ultimate Way is without difficulty; it's only averse to discrimination:

Just do not hate or love, and it will be thoroughly clear.

A hairsbreadth's miss is as the distance between sky and earth.

If you want to have it appear before you, don't keep conforming and opposing.

Opposition and conformity struggling becomes a sickness in the mind.

If you don't know the hidden truth, you work in vain at quieting thought.

It is complete as space itself, without lack or excess.

It is indeed because of grasping and rejecting that you are therefore not thus.

Do not pursue existing objects, do not dwell in forbearance of voidness:

In a uniformly equanimous heart these quietly disappear of themselves.

Stop movement to return to stillness, and stopping makes even more movement:

As long as you remain in dual extremes, how can you know they're of one kind?

If you don't know they're of one kind, you will lose efficacy in both realms.

Trying to get rid of existence is obscuring being;

Trying to follow emptiness is turning away from emptiness.

Much talk and much cogitation estranges you from it even more:

Stop talking and cogitating, and you penetrate everywhere.

Return to the root and you get the essence;

Follow perceptions and you lose the source.

The instant you turn awareness around, you transcend the emptiness before the eon.

Changes in the emptiness before us all come from arbitrary views:

It is not necessary to seek reality, all that is needed is ending the views.

Dualistic views do not abide; be careful not to pursue them.

As soon as there is affirmation and denial, you lose your mind in confusion.

Two exist because of one; do not even keep the one.

When the one mind is unborn, myriad things have no fault.

No fault, no things; unborn, unminding.

When the subject disappears from objects, objects submerge along with the subject.

Objects are objects because of the subject, the subject is the subject because of objects.

If you want to know them both, they are basically one void.

One voidness the same in both equally contains myriad images.

If you do not see fine and coarse, how could there be preference?

The Great Way is broad, without ease or difficulty.

Small views and foxy doubts slow you up the more you hurry.

If you cling to it, you lose measure, and will inevitably enter a false path.

## *Song of Trusting the Heart*

Let it be as it naturally is; its substance neither goes nor stays.  
Let your nature merge with the Way, and you will roam free  
of vexation.

Tying down thoughts goes against the real; oblivion is not good.  
It is not good to belabor the spirit; why estrange the familiar?  
If you want to gain the way of oneness, don't be averse to the  
six sense fields.

The six sense fields are not bad; after all they're the same as  
true awakening.

The wise do not contrive; fools bind themselves.

Things are not different in themselves; you arbitrarily get  
attached yourself.

If you take the mind to use the mind, is this not a big mistake?  
When deluded, you create peace and chaos, when enlightened,  
there is no good or bad.

All dualistic extremes come from subjective considerations.  
Dreams, illusions, flowers in the air; why bother to grasp them?  
Gain, loss, right, wrong; let them go all at once.

If the eyes do not sleep, dreams disappear of themselves.

If the mind does not differ, all things are one suchness.

One suchness embodies the mystery, utterly still and  
unconditioned.

To see all things equally, is to return again to the natural state.  
Without any reason therefore, you cannot judge or compare.  
Stopping is movement without motion, movement is still  
without stopping:

Since both are not established, how can one be such?

When you find out the ultimate consummation, you do not  
keep rules and models.

When the mind in harmony is equanimous, all doings come to  
rest.

When doubts are thoroughly cleared, true belief is directly in  
tune.

Nothing at all stays; there's nothing to fix in mind.



When open and clear, spontaneously aware, you aren't  
wasting mental effort.  
The realm that is not an object of thought cannot be assessed  
by conscious feelings.  
The reality realm of true suchness has no other or self.  
If you want to tune in right away, just speak of nonduality.  
Nonduality is all the same; there's nothing it doesn't contain.  
The wise ones of the ten directions all enter this source.  
The source is neither expansive nor contracted; one instant is  
ten thousand years.  
There is nowhere that it is not; the ten directions are right  
before the eyes.  
The small is the same as the large; you forget all about the  
bounds of objects.  
The largest is the same as the small; you do not see beyond it.  
Being is none other than nonbeing, nonbeing is none other  
than being;  
Anything that is not like this definitely should not be kept.  
One is all, all are one;  
If you can just be like this,  
What ruminations will not end?  
The true mind is nondual, nonduality makes the mind true.  
There's no more way to talk of it; it is not past, or future, or  
present.