

Zen  
Mind,  
Buddha  
Mind



Thomas Cleary

# Zen Mind, Buddha Mind

## Introduction

Chan Buddhism, ancestor of Zen, was called the school of the mind of Buddha, or the school of the source or the aim. Based on the principle known in Sanskrit as *vijnapti-matra*, “consisting of representation,” or *citta-matra*, “consisting of thought,” expounded in the seminal scripture *Lankavatara-sutra*, Chan Buddhists considered the world as experienced and conceived to be a reflection of mental construction, and sought insight into the essence of mind itself, apart from temporal conditioning and artificially inculcated views and interpretations of reality, in order to become mentally free and independent.

The principle of *vijnaptimatra* or *cittamatra* has sometimes been confused with a philosophy of idealism, in the case of Chinese Buddhism and its derivatives, in part because Chinese characters used for the Sanskrit words for representation and thought were also used for consciousness and mind. The practical purpose of the principle of *vijnaptimatra* in the Buddhist context is to facilitate disentanglement from subjective ideas and opinions that form the basis of mental afflictions such as the so-called “three poisons” of greed, hostility, and folly.

When Chan Buddhism was developing in China, one of its aims was overcoming the influence of such poisons not only in secular life but also in the study of Buddhism, infested as it was by personal ambition, institutionalized dogmatism, and superstitious imagination. In modern times, when the production and marketing of the three poisons have become massive industries and enterprises, the ability to resist these infections has far-reaching potential for liberation of awareness and energy enabling positive evolution in personal, social, economic, political, and religious spheres of interest and activity.

This volume presents translations of teachings of two of the most famous Chan masters in history, known as Huangbo (d. 850) and Linji (d. 867).

According to the earliest compilation of Chan records, *Collection from the Halls of the Ancestors*, Huangbo left home at an early age and was “by nature untrammelled by petty restrictions.” He was first enlightened through interaction with a woman he met while begging in the course of his travels; she then directed him to the famous Chan master Baizhang. The later collection of Chan lore *Transmission of the Lamp (compiled in) the Jingde Era (1004-1008)*, which was edited by a Confucian scholar, cuts out the part about his

being enlightened by a woman, and the famous *Blue Cliff Record* casebook says he was “enlightened by nature.” According to the early record, the woman who first opened Huangbo’s mind had studied with the National Teacher Huizhong (d. 776), one of the distinguished successors of Huineng, the peerless Sixth Patriarch of Chan.

The teachings attributed to Huangbo, collected in *Essentials of the Teaching of Communication of Mind* and *The Wanling Record*, emphasize the immediate individual first-hand experience of the basic mind, apart from acquired habit and second-hand understanding. This is epitomized in a lecture immortalized in the *Blue Cliff Record*, wherein he scolds his audience, “You are all slurping dregs; if you go on like this, where will you have the actuality of Today?”

The story of Huangbo’s famous successor Linji was also considerably redacted. According to the *Collection from the Halls of the Ancestors*, he went to see the reclusive Chan master Dayu after hearing Huangbo recounting Dayu’s request to send him a spiritually sharp individual if he should find one. After repeatedly traveling back and forth between Huangbo and Dayu, Linji spent more than ten years in attendance on Dayu, but was formally recognized as a

successor of Huangbo. According to the standard story, Huangbo sent Linji to Dayu after rebuffing his questions; then when Dayu told Linji that Huangbo was being kind to him by rebuffing him, trying to relieve him of his burden, Linji was suddenly enlightened.

Linji was noted for his challenging manner of teaching.

According to the non-sectarian *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, his students were erstwhile canonical scholars, and his lectures provide many examples of experiential explanation of scriptural symbolism, while his dialogues illustrate his effort to interrupt indulgence in intellectual rambling and imitative acting, urging people to achieve genuine independence. He cited and followed the admonition of the *Lankavatara-sutra* that real Buddhism is not a matter of fixed doctrine, but rather expedient means of “dissolving sticking points and untying bonds” according to individual needs. *Biographies of Eminent Monks* states that records of his lectures were widely circulated; the stream of Linji’s successors and descendants grew to become regarded as a sect of Chan, and the record of his sayings remains a perennial classic.

# Essentials of the Teaching of Communication of Mind

The Buddhas and all living beings are just one mind. There is nothing else. This mind, since beginningless time, has never been born and has never died. It is not blue, not yellow; it has no form, no appearance. It is not in the realm of existence or nonexistence. It does not count as new or old. It is not long, not short, not large, not small. It is beyond all limitation, quantification, terminology, tracks, traces, and relations. This very being is it; if you stir thoughts, you turn away. Like space, it has no boundaries and cannot be measured.

Just this one mind is itself Buddha. Buddha and living beings are no different. However, living beings grasp appearances and seek outwardly. By seeking it they lose it: getting Buddha to seek Buddha, using mind to grasp mind, they never can get it in all their lives. They do not know that if they stop thoughts and forget cogitation, Buddha spontaneously becomes manifest.

This mind itself is Buddha; Buddha is living beings. When it is living beings, this mind is not diminished, and when it is Buddha, this mind is not augmented. Even the six ways of transcendence, myriad practices, and countless virtues are originally inherent and not added by cultivation. They are exercised when conditions are



meet, and quiescent when conditions cease. If you do not trust with certainty that this is Buddha, and try to cultivate practices fixated on appearances to seek effective application, this is all imagination, contrary to the Way.

This mind is Buddha; there is no separate Buddha, and no separate mind. This mind is clear and pure, like space, with no appearance at all. If you excite the mind and stir thoughts, you turn away from its true essence. This is fixation on appearances, and there has never been a Buddha fixated on appearances. If you cultivate the six ways of transcendence and ten thousand practices seeking to become a Buddha, this is a step by step process, and there has never been a step by step Buddha. Just realize one mind; there is nothing more to be attained. This is the real Buddha.

Buddhas and living beings are one mind, no different, like space, without mixture, without decay. It is like the sun illuminating the world; when the sun rises, light covers the world, while space has not been illumined. When the sun sets, darkness covers the world, yet space has not been darkened. States of light and darkness supersede one another, while the nature of space is empty and unchanging. Buddhas and the mind of living beings are also like this; if you contemplate Buddhas as characterized by purity, light,

and liberation, and look upon living beings as characterized by pollution, darkness, and birth and death, those who entertain this understanding will never attain enlightenment, even in countless eons, because they are fixated on descriptions.

It is just this one mind; there is nothing more to attain at all. Mind itself is Buddha. People who study the Way now do not realize the essence of this mind, and so produce mind upon mind, thought upon thought, seeking outwardly to become Buddhas, cultivating practice fixated on forms. This is all wrong; it is not the path to enlightenment.

Making offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions is not as good as making offerings to a single unminding wayfarer. Why? Because unminding means being free from all mentalities. The essence of being as such is inwardly undisturbed and unshakable as wood or stone, while outwardly unobstructed and unimpeded as space. There is no subject and object, no location, no appearance, no gain and loss. Those who head for it do not gain access to this reality; because they fear they'll fall into emptiness, with no place to rest, they shrink from the prospect. Because everyone seeks knowledge far and wide, those who seek knowledge are many, while those who realize the Way are few.

Manjusri stands for principle, Samantabhadra stands for action. Principle is the principle of true emptiness without obstruction, action is inexhaustible action detached from appearances. Avalokitesvara stands for great compassion, Mahasthamaprapta stands for great wisdom. Vimalakirti means Pure Name; purity is essence, name refers to characteristics. Essence and characteristics do not differ; so he is called Pure Name. All people have what these great bodhisattvas represent, which is not apart from one mind—realize this, and that's it.

People who study the Way today do not seek enlightenment in their own minds; so they fixate on appearances outside the mind and grasp mental objects. This is all contrary to the Way.

As for “the sand of the Ganges River,” Buddha said of the sand that when Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities walk over it the sand does not rejoice, and when oxen, goats, insects, and ants walk over it the sand is not angry. The sand does not covet jewels or perfumes, and the sand does not hate excrement or filth. This mind is mind without minding, detached from all appearances. Living beings and Buddhas have no distinction. If you can just not mind, this is the ultimate. If people who study the Way are not immediately mindless, they will never attain the Way even if they cultivate

practice for eons. Bound by the practices of the Three Vehicles, they will not attain liberation.

Nevertheless, the realization of this mind may be slow or fast. There are those who attain mindlessness in an instant as they hear the teaching. There are those who only attain mindlessness on reaching the ten stages of faith, ten abodes, ten practice, and ten dedications. Whether it takes a short time or a long time, when they attain mindlessness, then they stop; there is nothing more to cultivate, nothing more to realize. In reality, nothing is attained. Real truth is not vanity. Those who attain in an instant and those who attain with the ten stages are equal in practice; there is no more deep or shallow.

But this is just mistakenly suffering eons of painful effort. Doing good and doing evil are both attachment to appearances. Do evil attached to appearances, and you mistakenly suffer repetitious recycling. Do good attached to appearances and you mistakenly suffer toil. Neither compares to immediate spontaneous recognition of the basic truth when it's told. This truth is mind; there is no truth outside of mind. This mind is truth; there is no mind outside of truth. The mind is itself mindless; and there is no one mindless either. If you mindfully try to be mindless, minding then comes to be. Silently

accord, that's all. Cut off all cogitation. That's why it is said, "The path of language ends; the activity of thought dies out."

This mind is originally pure; Buddhas and living beings both have it. Squirming sentient beings and Buddhas and bodhisattvas are one, not different. It's just that discrimination produces various results of action because of false thinking; in basic Buddhahood there's really not a single thing, just open awareness, silent clarity, and subtle peace and bliss, that's all. When you enter by deep self-realization, then right away this is complete fulfillment, with nothing lacking. Even if you diligently cultivate practice over three immeasurable eons, the moment you experience it you are just experiencing the inherent Buddha that's always been; you cannot add anything more beyond this. Rather, you see the eons of application as all illusory activity in a dream. That is why the Realized One said, "In unexcelled enlightenment I actually attained nothing. If I had attained anything, the Burning Lamp Buddha would not have given me the prediction of enlightenment." He also said, "This reality is equal, with no high or low—this is called enlightenment." This is the mind that is pure at its source; it is equal in respect to all living beings, all Buddhas, worlds, mountains and

rivers, the manifest and the formless, throughout the universe, with no other or self.

This fundamentally pure mind is always naturally completely enlightened, illumining everywhere. Worldly people do not realize it, and just recognize perception and cognition as mind; being veiled by perception and cognition, therefore they do not see the pure luminous original essence. Simply be mindless, and the original essence will spontaneously appear, like the sun rising in the sky and illuminating everywhere in the ten directions, with no further obstruction.

So students of the Way only recognize the activity of perception and cognition; if you empty perception and cognition, the mental circuit is cut off, and there is no way in. Just recognize the original mind within perception and cognition. However, the original mind does not belong to perception and cognition, yet it is not apart from perception and cognition. Just do not give rise to opinionated interpretation on top of perception and cognition, and don't excite thought on top of perception and cognition. But don't seek mind apart from perception and cognition, and don't reject perception and cognition to grasp truth. They are not identical, yet not disparate;

when not dwelling and not fixating, you are free in every way—nothing is not the site of enlightenment.

When worldly people hear it said that all Buddhas transmit the teaching of mind, they take it to mean there is something special in the mind to be realized and grasped. So they use the mind to seek truth, not knowing mind itself is truth and truth is mind. You cannot use mind to further seek mind—you'll never get it, even in ten millions eons. That is not as good as immediately being mindless—this is the basic truth.

It is like a wrestler not knowing a pearl has been driven into his forehead, and looking for it outside; he goes all over, but never can find it. If someone with knowledge points it out to him, right then he himself sees the original pearl was always there. Thus people who study the Way miss their own original mind and do not recognize it is Buddha, so they seek outwardly, taking up deliberate practices, depending on gradual realization: they may seek diligently for eons, but never attain the Way. That is not as good as immediately not minding, knowing for certain that all things originally have no existence and cannot be grasped. With no dependence and no dwelling, no subject and no object, not exciting errant thoughts, you immediately experience enlightenment. When you realize the

Way, you are just realizing the Buddha of the original mind. Eons of efforts are all vain cultivation. It's like when the wrestler finds the pearl, he just gets the pearl originally in his forehead—it has nothing to do with searching for it outside. That is why Buddha said, “I really didn't acquire anything in unexcelled enlightenment.” It was because he feared people wouldn't believe that he cited what five eyes see, what five statements say. Real truth is not in vain: this is the highest truth.

People who study the Way should not doubt the four major elements constitute the body. The four elements have no self, and the self has no master. So we know this body has no self and no master. The five clusters constitute the mind; the five clusters have no self and no master, so we now this mind has no self and no master. This is also true of the birth and death of the combinations of six sense organs, six sense fields, and six consciousnesses: since these eighteen elements are empty, everything is empty—there is only the original mind, clear and pure.

There is conscious eating and there is wise eating. When the physical body is afflicted by hunger, to provide nutrition appropriately without greedy fixation is called wise eating. To indulge in feelings and grasp flavor, arbitrarily creating



discrimination, just seeking to please the palate insatiably, is called conscious eating.

Listeners attain enlightenment from the spoken word; that's why they are called listeners. But they don't comprehend their own minds; they create interpretations of spoken teachings, based on spiritual powers, or auspicious speech and action. They hear of enlightenment, nirvana, and three incalculable eons of cultivating the path to Buddhahood. This all belongs to the path of hearing the spoken; these are called listeners. Buddhas just comprehend directly and immediately that their own mind is originally Buddha, and there is nothing at all to attain, no practice to cultivate. This is the unexcelled path; this is the Buddha that really is as is.

People who study the Way just fear they will have a thought, and thus are blocked from the Way. When thoughts have no definition and thoughts have no contrivance, this is Buddha. If people who study the Way want to become Buddha, they do not need to learn any Buddhist doctrine, but just learn to have no seeking and no fixation. Without seeking, the mind is not aroused; with no fixation, the mind does not die out. Not being aroused and not dying out is Buddhahood.

The eighty-four thousand teachings counter eighty-four thousands afflictions; they are just methods of instruction and guidance. Fundamentally there are no doctrines at all; detachment is the teaching. Those who know detachment are Buddhas. Just detach from all afflictions—then there is no doctrine to attain.

If students of the Way want to get to know the essential secret, just don't fixate on anything in your mind—this is called Buddha.

The reality body is likened to space. This is representing the reality body as space; space is the reality body. Ordinary people think the reality body pervades space, and space contains the reality body; they do not know the reality body *is* space, or space *is* the reality body. If you positively assert that there is space, space is not the reality body; if you positively assert there is a reality body, the reality body is not space. Just do not make an interpretation of space, and space is the reality body; do not make an interpretation of the reality body, and the reality body is space. Space and the reality body do not have different characteristics; Buddhas and living beings do not have different characteristics. Birth and death and nirvana do not have different characteristics. Detachment from all characteristics is Buddhahood.

Ordinary people grasp objects, people of the Way grasp mind; when mind and objects are both forgotten, this is real truth. Forgetting objects is comparatively easy; forgetting mind is extremely difficult. People do not dare to forget mind; they fear falling into a void where there is nothing to get ahold of. They do not know that emptiness fundamentally has no void; there is only one reality realm, that's all. This spiritually aware essence has always been the same age as space; it has never been born, never died, never existed, never been nonexistent, never been polluted, never been purified, never been warm, never been extinct, never been young, never been old, has no location, no inside or outside, no measurements, no shape, no form, no sound. It cannot be searched out, cannot be sought, cannot be known by intelligence, cannot be grasped by language, cannot be understood through things in the environment, cannot be reached by application of effort. The Buddha, bodhisattvas, and all conscious creatures alike have this nature of great nirvana. The nature is mind, mind is Buddha, Buddha is truth. Every thought departing from reality is arbitrary imagination. You cannot seek mind by means of mind; you cannot seek Buddha by means of Buddha; you cannot seek truth by means of truth. Therefore people who study the Way just accord with it

silently, immediately free from thought; if you aim for mind you miss it. Communicating mind by mind is the correct view; be careful not to pursue an object externally, recognizing an object as mind—this is taking a thief to be your son.

Discipline, concentration, and insight are established because there are greed, hostility, and ignorance. Originally there are no afflictions—how can there be enlightenment? Therefore an ancestral teacher said, “Buddha expounded all the teachings to eliminate all thoughts; I have none of these thoughts, so why employ all the teachings?” Nothing sticks to the fundamentally pure Buddha. It is like space; even if you adorn it with countless jewels you can never fixate it. Buddha nature is like space; even if you adorn it with immeasurable virtue and knowledge you can never fixate it. But if you miss the fundamental, all the more you fail to see it.

The “teaching of the mind ground” means myriad teachings are set up based on this mind. When encountering objects, it is there; when there are no objects, it is not. Don’t make out pure essence to be an object. So-called concentration and insight are clarity of mirroring function, silently alert; all perception and cognition are it. Understanding based on objects is alright as a temporary

explanation for people of middling and lesser faculties. If you want personal realization, you should not entertain such understanding at all. These are all objective phenomena, which disappear; they disappear into the ground of being. Just don't view phenomena as existent or nonexistent—this is seeing the truth.

Ever since the great teacher Bodhidharma arrived in China, he only spoke of one mind, only transmitted one teaching, communicating Buddhahood by Buddhahood, not speaking of other Buddhas, communicating truth by truth, not expounding other teachings. The truth is truth that cannot be spoken; Buddhahood is Buddhahood that cannot be grasped. This is the fundamentally pure mind. "Only this one fact is true; no other is real."

Prajna is insight. This insight is the formless fundamental mind. Ordinary people do not proceed on the Way; they only indulge six senses, and go on six paths. The moment people who study the Way think of birth and death, they fall into the path of demons. The moment they produce opinions they fall into the paths of outsiders. If they see there is birth and head for its extinction, they fall into the path of listeners. If they do not see there is birth and only see there is extinction, they fall into the path of those awakened to conditions. Truth originally was not born and presently has no extinction. If you do not produce dualistic views, and do not reject or rejoice, all things are only one mind. Then this is the vehicle of Buddhahood.

Ordinary people all arouse the mind pursuing objects; the mind then rejects and rejoices. If you want to be free of objects, then you should forget that mind. When the mind is forgotten, then

objects are empty. When objects are empty, then the mind is quiescent. If you do not forget the mind and just try to eliminate objects, objects cannot be eliminated; this just increases confusion and disturbance.

So all things are only mind, and mind cannot be grasped, so what more is there to seek? People who learn insight do not see that there is anything that can be grasped, stopping attention to the Three Vehicles. Only one reality is true, which cannot be realized. Any who say, “I can realize, I can attain,” are all conceited people. Those who left the Lotus of Truth assembly were all of this ilk. Therefore Buddha said, “I really did not attain anything in enlightenment”—it is just silent accord, that’s all.

When ordinary people are about to die, if they just look upon the five clusters as all empty, on the four gross elements as having no self, the real mind as formless, neither coming nor going, the essence not coming at birth and not departing at death, deeply in complete silence, mind and objects as one, if they can just be like this, they will immediately comprehend, and not be bound by past present, or future. Then they are people beyond the world. Be sure not to have the slightest inclination: if you see auspicious signs, Buddha coming to welcome you, and various manifestations, still

have no thought of going off with them. If you see inauspicious signs variously appearing, still have no thought of fear. Just forget thoughts yourself, merge with the realm of reality, and you will attain freedom. This is the key.



The “phantom city” means that the Two Vehicles, Ten stages, equal enlightenment, and subtle enlightenment are all provisionally established inductive teachings—all of them are phantom cities. The “place of treasure” refers to the treasure of the inherent essence of the original Buddha of the true mind. This treasure is not in the domain of subjective measurement and cannot be set up. There is no Buddha and no sentient beings, no subject and no object—where is there a city? If you ask, “Since this is a phantom city, where is the place of treasure?” The place of treasure cannot be pointed out. Whatever you point out has a location, and is not the real place of treasure. Therefore it is said to be near, that’s all—it cannot be said definitively. Just merge with the immediate essence of being, and that’s it.

The term “icchantika” [“one who is cut off”] means faith is not complete. All sentient beings in the six paths of existence, as well as the Two Vehicles, do not believe they have Buddhahood; all of them are called icchantika who have cut off the road of good. As for bodhisattvas, they deeply believe they have Buddhahood, and do not see that there are a great vehicle and small vehicles; Buddha and sentient beings have the same real essence. These are called icchantikas with the root of good.

Generally, those who awaken based on spoken teachings are called listeners; those who awaken by observing causes and conditions are called awakened by conditions. If they do not turn to their own minds to awaken, even if they reach buddhahood they are still called listener Buddhas. People who study the Way mostly awaken on the basis of teachings, and do not awaken on the basis of the reality of mind. Even when they awaken on the basis of teachings, they devalue mind and value teachings. Eventually they “chase the clod” and forget the fundamental mind.

So just accord with the fundamental mind, and you don't need to seek doctrines. The mind is the teaching. Ordinary people are mostly obstructed in mind by objects; phenomena obstruct noumenon. When they want to escape objects to pacify the mind, shut out phenomena to keep to noumenon, they don't know this is mind blocking objects, noumenon blocking phenomena. Just make the mind empty, and objects are empty of themselves; just make noumenon peaceful, and phenomena are peaceful of themselves. Don't apply mind backwards.

Most ordinary people are unwilling to empty their mind, fearing they'll fall into a void. They do not know their own mind is originally empty. Foolish people clear away phenomena but do not

clear their minds; wise people clear their minds and do not clear away phenomena. The mind of bodhisattvas is like space, relinquishing everything. Whatever virtues they practice, they do not fixate on them with greed.

But there are three levels of relinquishment. Relinquishing everything internal and external, body and mind, being like space, grasping nothing, then after that responding to people appropriately, forgetting both subject and object—this is great relinquishment. If on the one hand you practice the Way and exercise virtue, while on the other hand turn around and relinquish, entertaining no hopes, this is middling relinquishment. If you cultivate lots of virtues extensively with hopes, then hear the teaching, know they're empty, so then do not get fixated, this is lesser relinquishment.

Great relinquishment is like a torch ahead—there's no more confusion or realization. Middling relinquishment is like a torch to the side—there is some light and some darkness. Lesser relinquishment is like a torch behind—you don't see pitfalls.

Therefore bodhisattvas' mind is like space, relinquishing everything. "The past mind cannot be found" is relinquishment of the past. "The present mind cannot be found" is relinquishment of the present. "The future mind cannot be found" is relinquishment of the

future. This is what is called relinquishment of past, present, and future.

Ever since the Realized One imparted the teaching to Kasyapa, mind has been impressed by mind, mind to mind not differing. When an impression is made on space, the impression does not form a pattern; when an impression is made on a thing, the impression is not true. Therefore mind is impressed by mind, mind to mind not differing. That which impresses and that which is impressed both are hard to meet, so those who attain are few.

However, mind is no mind, attainment is no attainment. Buddhas have three bodies: the reality body expounds the truth of inherent nature reached by emptiness; the reward body expounds total purity; the emanation body expounds six ways of transcendence and myriad practices. The teaching of the reality body cannot be sought through words, sounds, forms, or letters: it has no doctrine and no realization; it is only reached by emptiness of inherent nature. That is why it is said that “there is nothing to say” is called expounding the truth. The reward body and emanation body are both sensed and manifested according to potential, and their teachings also respond to faculties, according to events, in order to accommodate and educate; none of them are real truth. That is why

it is said that reward and emanation are not the real Buddha, and not what expounds the truth.

In the saying that the senses are alike a single pure light distributed in six combinations, the single pure light is one mind, while the six combinations are the six sense faculties. These six sense faculties each combine with sense data. The eye combines with form and color, the ear combines with sound, the nose combines with scent, the tongue combines with flavor, the body combines with touch, the intellect combines with phenomena. Between them they produce six consciousnesses, making eighteen elements. If you understand the eighteen elements have no independent existence, you bundle the six combinations into a single pure light. The one pure light is the mind. People who study the Way all know this, but they cannot escape making an understanding of one pure light and six combinations, so they are bound by doctrine and do not merge with the fundamental mind.

When the Realized One appeared in the world, if he tried to expound the real truth of one vehicle, then people would not believe, but repudiate it and sink in the ocean of suffering. If he didn't speak at all, they would fall into greed. Not giving up the subtle Way entirely for the sake of living beings, eventually he set up expedients

and said there are three vehicles. The vehicles were great and small, attainment was shallow or deep. None of this was fundamental truth; therefore he said there is only one vehicle, the other two are not real. However, he was still not able to reveal the truth of one mind. Therefore he invited Kasyapa to share the seat of teaching and separately communicated one mind, apart from spoken teachings. This branch of teaching direction was carried out separately; if any can realize accord with it, they immediately reach the stage of Buddhahood.

Question: What is the Way? How is it practiced?

Answer: What thing is the Way, that you want to practice?

Question: What about the practice of meditation and study of the Way transmitted by the Chan teachers everywhere?

Answer: These are sayings to lead in people with dull faculties, not to be relied on.

Question: If these are sayings to lead in people with dull faculties, then what is taught to deal with people of superior faculties?

Answer: If they are people of superior faculties, where would they seek that from others? Even the self cannot be found—how could there be any further teaching besides to suit their condition? Haven't you seen the saying in the teachings, "What form governs the truth?"

Question: If so, then there is no need to seek at all.

Answer: This way you save mental energy.

Question: Then it all becomes negation—it can't be nonexistence.

Answer: Who makes that nothing? Who is that? You're trying to seek it.

Question: If you don't allow seeking, why do you also say not to negate it?

Answer: If you don't seek, you're at rest. Then who makes you negate? You see space in front of you—how can you annihilate

that?

Question: If this truth can be attained, is it the same as space?

Answer: When did space ever tell you it has sameness or difference? I speak this way for the time being; then you produce interpretations here.

Question: Shouldn't understanding be produced for others?

Answer: I've never obstructed you; but interpretation is subjective, and when subjectivity arises, then wisdom is blocked.

Question: Is it right not to give rise to subjectivity here?

Answer: If you don't give rise to subjectivity, who says it's right?

Question: As soon as I say anything to you, why do you not say words fail?

Answer: You yourself are someone who doesn't know how to talk; what failure is there?

Question: All you've been saying so far are counter-statements, with no real truth to indicate to people.

Answer: Real truth has no contradiction; your question now itself creates contradiction. What real truth do you seek?

Question: If the question itself creates contradiction, what about your answer?



Answer: You should examine yourself—don't be concerned with other people. That's like a mad dog that barks whenever it sees something moving. The wind blows grasses and trees, without distinguishing. Ever since it has been transmitted from antiquity, this Chan school of ours has never taught people to seek knowledge or seek understanding. Even to speak of studying the Way is just an expression for making contact and leading in. Yet the Way cannot be studied; subjective dwelling on learning and understanding contrarily results in missing the Way. The Way has no location—this is called the mind of the Great Vehicle.

This mind is not internal, external, or in between; it really has no location. Above all, don't make intellectual interpretations; this just expresses your present subjective assessments. If subjective assessments are ended, the mind has no location.

This Way is naturally real; it fundamentally has no name. Just because worldly people don't recognize it, they wander in subjectivity. That's why the Buddhas came forth to explain this matter: fearing you people wouldn't understand, they temporarily set up the term "Way." Don't stick to the name and conceive interpretations. Hence it is said, "When you've caught the fish, you forget the trap."

Body and mind attain the Way naturally; by knowing the mind and arriving at its source are you therefore called a sramana. The fruit of the sramana comes from stopping thought; it is not attained by learning. You are now using mind to seek mind, approaching another's house trying to grasp it just by learning—when will you ever find it?

People of old were sharp in mind; as soon as they heard a word they were done with study. Therefore they were called uncontrived free wayfarers with nothing to learn. Nowadays people just want to get a lot of knowledge, a lot of understanding; they seek literal meaning extensively and call that practice, not knowing that a lot of knowledge and a lot of understanding turns into blockage. They're only concerned with "giving a child a lot of milk to drink, not knowing at all whether it will be digested or not." People who study the Way via the Three Vehicles are all like this; they are all said to consume without digesting. What it means is that when knowledge and understanding are not digested, they turn into poison. It is all grasped within production and destruction, whereas there are no such things in reality as is. So it is said, "There is no such sword in my royal treasury."

All previous understanding should be excluded, emptied, with no more false conceptions; then this is the empty treasury of realization. The treasury of realization has nothing at all that can be possessed; this is the spiritual leader Breaking Through Existence appearing in the world.

“There was nothing at all to get from the Burning Lamp Buddha”—this saying is just to empty your subjective intellectual understanding. Just melt down the subjective sense of outside and inside completely, to have no dependent clinging at all, and you are people without issues.

The teachings of the Three Vehicles are just medicines corresponding to needs, expounded as appropriate, prescribed for the occasion, not the same for each individual. As long as you can realize this, you won't be confused. Above all, don't stick partially to the letter of one teaching for one need and make that out to be understanding. Why? There really is no fixed doctrine that the Realized One could expound. This school of mine does not make this claim. Just know how to stop the mind, and you're at rest—you don't need to think of the past and mull over the future anymore.

Question: From olden times everyone has said mind itself is Buddha; which mind is itself Buddha?

Answer: How many minds do you have?

Question: Is the ordinary mind Buddha, or is the sage's mind Buddha?"

Answer: Where do you have ordinary and sage minds?

Question: Now in the three Vehicles it says there are the ordinary and the sage—how can you say there are not?

Answer: In the Three Vehicles it clearly tells you that the idea of ordinary and sage is false—now you don't understand, and instead hold them to exist. You take the empty to be actual—isn't this wrong? Because it is false, it misleads your mind. Just eliminate the sense of the ordinary or the object of sagehood; outside of mind there is no Buddha besides.

The founding teacher came from the West and directly pointed out that the totality of all people is Buddha. Now you don't recognize this; you cling to "ordinary," cling to "sage," and go running outside contrarily missing mind on your own. This is why you are told that mind itself is Buddha. The moment subjectivity arises, you fall into different tendencies. Beginningless time does not differ from

today; there is no different truth, so it is called equivalent true awakening.

Question: What is the principle of being identical that you speak of?

Answer: What principle are you looking for? As soon as you have a principle, then the identical mind is different.

Question: What is the principle of your statement that beginningless time is no different from today?

Answer: It is just because you're seeking that you differ from it. If you don't seek, where is there difference?

Question: If it is no different, what further need is there to speak of identity?

Answer: If you don't believe in the ordinary and the sage, who would tell you they're identical? If identity is not identity, mind is not mind either. Here if mind and identity are both forgotten, then where will you go seeking?

Question: Falsehood can block one's own mind; now how is falsehood eliminated?

Answer: Producing falsehood to eliminate falsehood also amounts to falsehood. Falsehood basically has no root—it only exists because of subjective thought. Just end all sense of both ordinary and holy, and there will naturally be no falsehood to aim at how to eliminate it anymore. Don't have any dependence or grasping at all;

this is referred to by the saying, "If I give up both arms, I'll surely attain Buddhahood."

Question: If there's no dependence or grasping, what is to be transmitted?

Answer: Mind is communicated by mind.

Question: If mind is communicated, why do you say there is no mind?

Answer: Not grasping anything is called communicating mind. If you realize this mind, then this is having no mind and no doctrine.

Question: If there is no mind and no doctrine, how can it be called communication?

Answer: You hear tell of communicating mind, and take it to mean there is some thing that can be obtained. This is why a founding teacher said, "When you realize the essence of mind, it can be said to be inconceivable; comprehending perfectly, nothing is obtained."

When you get it, you don't say you know; if you are taught this matter, how could you bear it?

Question: How could the space before our eyes not be an object? Aren't you pointing to an object to see mind?

Answer: What mind are you told to see in an object? Even if you can see it, this is just the mind aware of objects. It is like using a mirror to see your face; even if you can see your features clearly, after all it's just a reflection. What does it have to do with you?

Question: If we don't rely on perception, when can we ever see?

Answer: If it's a matter of reliance, you'll always need to depend on things—when will you ever be done? When I tell you to let go, it's like you have nothing at all, yet you expend effort blabbering about all sorts of stuff.

Question: If one has discerned it, is there nothing to perception?

Answer: If there were no things, what would be the use of perception? Don't go on talking in your sleep with your eyes open.



A lot of knowledge of a hundred kinds is not as good as having no seeking. This is foremost. People of the Way are people without issues. There really are not so many kinds of mind, and no principle to speak of. Go away untroubled.

Question: What is the worldly truth?"

Answer: Why are you talking complications? Why does original purity need verbal explanation or questions and answers? Just have no mind at all—this is called wisdom without affliction. In your everyday activity and speech, just do not stick to artificial things, and speaking and blinking are all the same as the state without affliction. At present the ending of true teaching is going on—most of those who study the Way of Chan stick to all the verbalization and forms; why not be mentally like space, same as me? Be like dead wood or rocks, like cold ashes, extinguished fires—only then will you have some accord. Otherwise, some day you'll certainly all be tortured by the king of death.

Just detach from all things, existent or nonexistent, and your mind will be like the sun always in the sky, the light naturally shining without trying to shine.

This is not a matter of sparing effort. When you get here, there is nowhere to stay. This is doing the deeds of all Buddhas. This is “activating the mind without dwelling on anything.” This is your pure reality body. It’s called unexcelled enlightenment. If you don’t understand this meaning, even if you learn a lot of knowledge and diligently labor at cultivating practice, wearing plants and eating from trees, if you don’t know your own mind it is all called false practice. You’ll surely become cohorts of the celestial devil. What is the benefit of cultivating practice like this?

Mr. Zhi said, “Buddha is basically made by one’s own mind; how can you find it in writings? Even if you learn the three levels of wisdom, four fruits, and fulfillment of the ten stages, you’re still sitting inside the ordinary and the holy.”

Haven’t you seen it said, “All actions are impermanent; these are phenomena that arise and perish.” When their momentum is exhausted, arrows fall. How can bringing on future dissatisfaction compare to the gateway of uncontrived truth, directly entering the state of the Realized in a single bound? Because you are not such a person, you have to turn to the temporary teaching methods of people of old to make extensive study of knowledge and understanding. Mr. Zhi said, “If you don’t meet an enlightened guide

beyond the world, you ingest the medicines of the Great Vehicle at random.”

Now in all your conduct at all times, whether active or still, sitting or lying down, just learn to have no mind; at length you will actually attain it. It is just because you have little strength that you cannot transcend all at once. Just take three years, or five years, or even ten years, and you should gain entry and spontaneously understand. Because you cannot do so, you need to mindfully study Chan, study the Way. What has this got to do with Buddhahood? This is why it is said, “What the Realized One says is all to develop people; it is like pretending yellow leaves are gold to stop a child’s crying.” It is certainly not real; if you have actually acquired anything, you are not in our school; and what does it have to do with your fundamental essence? Therefore scripture says, “There is really nothing at all to be attained; this is called unexcelled enlightenment.” If you understand what this means, then you’ll know that the path of Buddhas and the path of devils are both off.

Originally purity, thoroughly clear, has no such features as square or round, no great or small, no long or short. It has no affliction, no effort, no confusion and no enlightenment. With perfect clarity you see there is not a single thing, neither any person nor any

Buddha. The universe is a bubble in an ocean; all saints and sages are like a flash of lightning. All of them do not compare to the true reality body of mind; it is equal to the Buddhas and masters of all times—where is it lacking at all?

Once you have understood what this means, you must work diligently all your life—when you breathe out, that doesn't guarantee you will breathe in.

Question: The Sixth Patriarch didn't understand the scriptures; why did he inherit the robe and become the patriarch? Elder Shenxiu was at the head of five hundred monks, acting as a mentor, able to lecture on thirty-two scriptures and treatises—why didn't he inherit the robe?

Answer: Because Shenxiu had intent, and these were constructed teachings. What he cultivated and what he realized, he thought was right. That's why the Fifth Patriarch entrusted the Sixth Patriarch—at that time the Sixth Patriarch just attained silent accord, and got the most profound meaning of the Realized One, which is handed on mystically. That is why the Fifth Patriarch entrusted the teaching to him. Haven't you seen it said, "The teaching basically has no doctrine as a rule; the teaching of no doctrine is also a teaching. Now that no doctrine is imparted, when has taking a doctrine for a rule ever been a rule?" If you understand what this means, only then can you be called a true leaver of home; only then should you cultivate practice. If you don't believe, how was it that when Elder Ming came running to the peak of Mt. Dayou pursuing the Sixth Patriarch, the Sixth Patriarch asked him, "What did you come looking for? Are you looking for the robe, or for the teaching?" Elder Ming said, "I didn't come for the robe; I've come only for the teaching."

The Sixth Patriarch said, “Rein in your thoughts for a moment; don’t think of either good or evil.” Ming accepted his words. The Sixth Patriarch said, “Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, right at such a time, bring me back your likeness before your father and mother gave birth to you.” At these words Ming suddenly attained silent accord. He then bowed and said, “It is like someone drinking water; knowing for himself whether it is cool or warm. When I was in the congregation of the Fifth Patriarch, I misapplied thirty years’ effort. Now I’ve finally realized my former error.” The Sixth Patriarch said, “So it is.”

When you attain this, then you know that the founding teacher’s coming from the West, directly pointing to people’s minds so they see the essence and become Buddha, is not in verbal explanation. Haven’t you seen how Ananda asked Kasyapa, “Besides handing on the golden-sleeved robe, what did the World Honored One hand on?” Kasyapa called, “Ananda!” Ananda responded. Kasyapa said, “Take down the monastery banner in front of the gate.” This is the sign of the founding teachers. How did it come about that Ananda was Buddha’s attendant for thirty years just for learning and knowledge? He was scolded by Buddha, “For you to study knowledge for a thousand days is not as good as

learning the Way for one day. If you don't learn the Way, even a drop of water will be hard to digest.”

[Note: For the story of the Sixth Patriarch, see *The Sutra of Hui-neng, Grand Master of Zen*. For the story of Kasyapa and Ananda, see *Transmission of Light: Zen in the Art of Enlightenment*.]

Question: How can we not fall into stages?

Answer: Eating all day without ever chewing a single grain of rice, walking all day without stepping on a single bit of ground. At such a time there are no such descriptions as others and self. All day long not leaving all affairs yet not being confused by objects; only then can you be called independent. Furthermore, at all times, moment to moment, you do not see any descriptions; don't take notice of past, present, and future. The past does not leave, the present doesn't stay, the future doesn't come. Sit straight at peace, not caught up in whatever happens; only then is it called liberation.

Work hard, work hard! Out of a thousand or ten thousand in this school, I've only found three or five individuals. If you don't make it your task, someday you'll have trouble. So it is said, "Apply effort in this life, and you should finish; who can suffer leftover trouble for ages on end?"



## The Wanling Record

Prime minister Pei asked the teacher, “Of the four or five hundred people on this mountain, how many get your teaching?”

The teacher said, “There’s no telling how many get it. Why? The Way is realized in the mind—how could it be in talk? Talk is just to develop the immature.”

Question: What is Buddha?

Answer: Mind itself is Buddha. Not minding is the Way. Just let there be no arousal of mind, or excitation of thought, no minding of long and short, others and self, subject and object, and so on. The mind is originally like space. You don’t need to specially seek. Seeking is all suffering. Even if you carry out the six ways of transcendence and ten thousand practices to attain the enlightenment of Buddhas, that is still not the ultimate. Why? Because it is contrivance in the domain of conditioning. When conditions come to an end, it returns to impermanence. That is why it is said, “Reward and emanation are not the real Buddha, and not what expounds the truth.” Just know your own mind; with no self and no other, it is originally Buddha.

Question: When sages are mindless, they are Buddhas; but when ordinary people are mindless, don't they sink into empty quietism?

Answer: In truth there is no ordinary or sage, and no quietism. Truth is fundamentally not existent, but don't see it as nonexistent. Truth is fundamentally not nonexistent, but don't see it as existent.

Existence and nonexistence are both subjective views. They are like illusory cataracts. That is why it is said, "Perception is like illusory cataracts; cognition is sentient being." In the Chan school we just talk about stopping impulses and forgetting views. Then when you stop impulses, the Way of Buddhas flourishes; when you think falsely, the army of devils rages.

Question: If the mind is originally Buddha, does one still cultivate the myriad practices of the six ways of transcendence?

Answer: Enlightenment is in the mind; it has nothing to do with the myriad practices of the six ways of transcendence. The myriad practices of the six ways of transcendence are all developmental methods; they are about dealing with people to deliver the living. Even awakening, reality as such, ultimate truth, liberation, the body of reality, as well as the ten stages, four fruitions, and ranks of the saints, are all methods of deliverance; they have nothing to do with the Buddha mind. Mind itself is Buddha; therefore the Buddha mind is foremost among all methods of deliverance.

Just have no such thoughts as birth and death or affliction, and you don't need teachings such as awakening. Therefore it is said, "Buddha expounded all the teachings to get over all our thoughts; if we don't have any thoughts at all, what need is there for all the teachings?"

From the Buddhas to the Patriarchs, none of them discussed anything other than one mind, also called one vehicle. Therefore you may search everywhere, but there is no other vehicle. "This congregation has no branches or leaves, only the substantial core." Therefore "the meaning of this is hard to believe." When

Bodhidharma came to this land, he went to both nations of Liang and Wei, but there was only one man, great master Ke, who impersonally had faith in his own mind; he immediately understood when told the mind itself is Buddha.

When mind and body are both nothing, this is called the Great Way. The Great Way is originally egalitarian, hence the profound faith that living beings have the same one true essential nature. Mind and essential nature are not different; essential nature is identical to mind. When mind doesn't differ from essential nature, this is called mastery. So it is said, when you recognize the essence of mind, it can be called inconceivable.

Question: Doesn't Buddha deliver sentient beings?

Answer: There are really no sentient beings for the Realized One to deliver. Even self cannot be found; how can non-self be found?

Question: How can you say there is no such thing as appearing with the thirty-two marks of distinction and delivering sentient beings?

Answer: All marks are illusory. If you see all appearances are not definitive, then you see the Realized. Buddhas and sentient beings are all false views you fabricate. Simply because you do not know your original mind, you deceptively fabricate opinions and interpretations. As soon as you make up a notion of Buddha, you are obstructed by "Buddha." When you make up a notion of sentient beings, you're obstructed by "sentient beings." When you make up notions such as "ordinary" and "holy," "pure" and "polluted," they all become obstructions. Because they obstruct your mind, they all become vicious cycles. It is like monkeys letting go of one and grabbing another, with no end in sight. All alike is learned. You simply should be free of what is learned—there is no ordinary, no holy, no purity, no defilement, no great, no small, no affliction, no fabrication. In a unified mind like this, if you expediently strive to

adorn it, you may learn the twelve-part teaching of the Three vehicles.

All opinionated interpretation should be abandoned. That is why Vimalakirti removed what he had and only put one bed where he lay resting in illness. This is just not producing any views; there is not a single thing that can be grasped. Not being obstructed by anything, passing through to liberation beyond the boundaries of ordinary and holy states in the three realms, only then can you be called a Buddha beyond the world. That is why it is said, “I bow to the spacelike, independent, beyond all other ways.”

Once the mind does not vary, reality does not vary either. Once the mind has no contrivance, reality is also uncontrived. All things change according to mind; therefore when our minds are empty, all things are empty—a thousand kinds, myriad types, are all the same; the realm of space in the ten directions is the same one nature of mind. The mind fundamentally does not differ, and truth does not differ either—it is just because your views and interpretations are not the same that they differ. It is like when the gods eat from the same bowl, the color of the food differs according to their qualities.

The Buddhas of the ten directions really have nothing at all to attain; this is called unexcelled enlightenment. They are just one mind; they really have no different characteristics, and no colors. It has no superiority or inferiority either. Because there is no sign of superiority, there is no appearance of Buddhahood; because there is no inferiority, there is no appearance of sentient beings.

Question: If the mind has no appearance, is it possible that there are utterly no thirty-two marks of greatness and eighty refinements developing and delivering sentient beings?

Answer: The thirty-two marks are in the province of description, and all descriptions are illusory. The eighty refinements are in the province of form; “If they see me in terms of form, these people are traveling a false path, and cannot see the Realized.”

Question: Are the nature of Buddhas and the nature of sentient beings the same or different?

Answer: Essential nature has neither sameness nor difference.

According to the doctrine of the Three Vehicles, they say there is a Buddha-nature and a nature of sentient beings. Consequently there are cause and effect of the Three Vehicles, so there is sameness and difference. According to the Buddha-vehicle and the tradition of the ancestral teachers, they don't say such things—there is only one mind, neither same nor different, neither cause nor effect. That is why it is said that there is only this one vehicle, no second or third, except as explained by Buddha expediently.



Question: Why does the Bodhisattva with a Boundless Body not see the mark on the crown of the Realized One's head?

Answer: Really there's nothing to see. Why? The Bodhisattva with a Boundless Body is identical to the Realized One, and need not see further. It is just to teach you not to make up a view of Buddha, not to fall within the bounds of Buddha, not to make up a view of sentient beings, not to fall within the bounds of sentient beings, not to make of a view of existence, not to fall within the bounds of existence, not to make up a view of nonexistence, not to fall within the bounds of nonexistence, not to make up a view of the ordinary, not to fall within the bounds of the ordinary, not to make up a view of the holy, not to fall within the bounds of the holy. Just have no views—this is the boundless body. If you have a view, this is called an outside path. Outsiders indulge in views, while bodhisattvas are not moved by views. The “Realized One” means all things are as such. That's why it is said, “The future Buddha Maitreya is also thus, the saints and sages are also thus.” “Thus” has no birth, “thus” has no extinction, “thus” has no view, “thus” has no repute. The Realized One's crown is complete vision yet with no view of completeness, hence no fall within the bounds of completeness. Therefore the body of Buddha has no construction and does not fall within any

measurement. It is provisionally likened to space, complete as cosmic space, with no lack and no excess.

Be free, with no issues; don't force arguments about other states. If you argue about them, that becomes consciousness. That is why it is said that completion sinks into the sea of consciousness, flowing in circles like a whirlwind, just saying "I know, I have learned, I understand, I am liberated, I have the principle." Where you're strong you have your way, but where you're weak you don't have your way. What's the use of such an opinionated understanding? I tell you to be free, without issues; don't use your mind deceptively. You don't need to seek reality; you should just stop opinions. Therefore inward views and outward views are both mistaken; the path of Buddhas and the path of devils are both off.

This is why when Manjushri temporarily produced a dualistic view, he was banished between two surrounding iron mountains. Manjushri stands for true knowledge, Samantabhadra stands for temporal knowledge; the temporal and the true quell each other, so ultimately there is neither temporal nor true—they are just one mind. Mind, moreover, is not Buddha, not sentient being; it has no divergent views. As soon as there is a notion of Buddha, that produces a notion of sentient beings. The notion of existence and

the notion of nonexistence, the notion of eternity and the notion of annihilation—these become two surrounding iron mountains, because you are obstructed by views.

The founding teacher pointed directly to the original mind of all living beings; the fundamental essence is originally Buddha. It does not depend on cultivation, and is not subject to a gradual process. It is not light or dark; because it is not light it has no enlightenment, and because it is not dark it has no obscurity. Therefore, “There is no ignorance, and no end of ignorance.”

If you enter this school of ours, you need mindfulness like this. Seeing is called Dharma; because of seeing Dharma, it is called Buddha; the nonexistence of the Buddha and Dharma is called the Sangha, referred to as the unconstructed community. This is also called the Three Treasures of One Substance.

The seeker of Dharma does not seek fixated on Buddha, does not seek fixated on Dharma, does not seek fixated on the Sangha, but should have no object of seeking. Because of not seeking fixated on Buddha there is no Buddha; because of not seeking fixated on Dharma, there is no Dharma; because of not seeking fixated on the Sangha, there is no Sangha.

Question: You are expounding the Dharma right now—how can you say there is no Sangha and no Dharma?

Answer: If your view is that there is a Dharma that can be expounded, this is “seeking me through sound.” If your view is that there is a self, this is being in a place. The Dharma is also no Dharma; the Dharma is mind. This is why an ancestral teacher said, “When this mind-Dharma is transmitted, when has reification of Dharma ever been Dharma?” When there is no Dharma and no original mind, only then do you understand mind and the Dharma of mind. In reality there is nothing at all that can be grasped—this is called sitting on the site of enlightenment. The site of enlightenment is simply not producing any views. Realizing that phenomena are fundamentally empty is called the empty repository of realization. “Fundamentally there is not a single thing—where is there any dust?” If you get the meaning of this, you are free—what is there to argue about?

Question: “Fundamentally there is not a single thing”—then is “no thing” right?

Answer: Nothingness is not right either. Enlightenment has no affirmation, yet it is not without knowledge and understanding.

Question: What is Buddha?

Answer: Your mind is Buddha. Buddha is mind; mind and Buddha are not different. So it is said, “This very mind is Buddha.” Apart from mind there is no Buddha.

Question: If one’s own mind is Buddha, when the founding teacher came from the West, how did he transmit it?

Answer: When the founding teacher came from the West, he only communicated the mind-Buddha. He directly pointed out that your mind is originally Buddha. It is because their minds do not differ that they are called masters. If you see what this means immediately, then at once you transcend all the stages of the Three Vehicles. This has always been Buddha, and doesn’t depend on cultivation.

Question: If so, what Dharma do the Buddhas of the ten directions expound when they appear in the world?

Answer: When the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, they all just expound the Dharma of one mind. This is why the Buddha intimated it to Mahakasyapa. The substance of this Dharma of one mind comprehends space and pervades the universe. It is called the theory of all Buddhas. How can you understand this Dharma in verbal statements? It is not a matter of seeing it in one situation or one state either. The meaning can only be gotten by silent accord.

This method is called the teaching of no contrivance; if you want to understand, just master having no thought. You get it by sudden realization—if you deliberately try to grasp it by study, you become further and further away from it. If you have no divergent thought, no grasping and rejecting thought at all, only then do you have a part in learning the Way.

Question: Right now there actually are all sorts of random thoughts--  
-how can you say there are none?

Answer: Delusion fundamentally has no substance—it is produced by your mind. If you recognize mind is Buddha, mind originally has no delusion—how can you arouse the mind to go on to recognize delusion? If you don't excite the mind and stir thoughts, you'll

naturally have no delusion. So it is said, “When thoughts arise, all sorts of things are produced; when thoughts cease, all sorts of things disappear.”

Question: Now, just when random thoughts are presently arising, where is Buddha?

Answer: When you are presently aware of random thoughts arising, this very awareness is Buddha. Here, if there are no random thoughts, there is no Buddha either. Why so? Because you are arousing your mind to produce the view of “Buddha,” then you say there is Buddhahood to attain. You produce the view of “sentient beings,” and then you say there are sentient beings to liberate. Arousing the mind and stirring thoughts is all in your views; if you have no views at all, where is “Buddha”? It’s like the case of Manjushri—as soon as he produced a notion of Buddha, he was banished between two iron enclosing mountains.

Question: Now when we awaken, where is Buddha?

Answer: Where does this question come from? Where does awareness come from? Speech, silence, movement, stillness, all sound and form, are all Buddha's affairs—where would you look for Buddha? Don't put a head on top of your head, or add a beak to a beak. Just don't conceive different views—mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers, monks and nuns are monks and nuns, lay people are lay people. Mountains, rivers, earth, sun and moon, stars and planets, are all not beyond your mind. The whole universe is your self. Where are there so many lands? "Outside mind, there are no phenomena; filling the eyes, green mountains." The realm of space is clear—there is not so much as a thread or a hair for you to fabricate views and interpretations of. Therefore all sounds and forms are Buddha's eye of insight. Phenomena do not occur in isolation—they only come to be dependent on context. It is because of describing them that there is so much knowledge. That is why Shakyamuni "spoke for forty-nine years without saying a single word."

Question: If so, what state is enlightenment?



Answer: Enlightenment has no affirmative state. Neither did Buddha gain enlightenment, nor have sentient beings lost enlightenment. It cannot be attained by the body, and cannot be sought by the mind. All sentient beings are the manifestation of enlightenment.

Question: How does one awaken the will for enlightenment?

Answer: Enlightenment has no attainment. Now just awaken the mind that has no object of attainment and certainly does not grasp a single thing; this is the will for enlightenment. Enlightenment has no location; therefore there is no one who attains it. So Buddha said, “There was nothing at all for me to attain from the Burning Lamp Buddha, so the Buddha gave me the prediction of enlightenment.” Clearly we know all sentient beings are originally enlightened, and will not also “attain” enlightenment. Now that you’ve heard of awakening the will for enlightenment, you think an individual mind learns Buddhahood, and just try to become a Buddha. Even if you cultivate for three incalculable eons, you’ll just attain reward and emanation Buddhahood—what has this to do with the Buddhahood of your original real nature? So it is said, “If you seek a formal Buddha externally, it won’t resemble you.”

Question: If they're originally Buddha, how can there still be the various different forms of the four kinds of birth and six paths of existence?

Answer: All Buddhas are essentially complete, no more, no less; flowing into the six paths, all are everywhere complete. Every individual among myriad species is a Buddha. It is like a glob of mercury scattered all over—each globule is round. When not divided, it is just one mass. This is “one is all, all are one.” The various physical forms are like houses. You leave a donkey house and enter a human house. Leaving a human body, you attain a celestial body. And so on, up to the houses of listeners, conditional illuminates, bodhisattvas, or Buddhas—all of these are in your grasping and rejecting; that's why there are distinctions. In the original essence, how can there be distinctions?

Question: How do Buddhas practice great kindness and compassion and expound the Dharma for sentient beings?

Answer: Buddhas' kindness and compassion have no object; therefore they are called great kindness and compassion. Kindness is not seeing that there is Buddhahood to attain; compassion is not seeing that there are sentient beings to deliver. The Dharma they expound has no explanation and no indication; those who listen to the Dharma have no hearing and no attainment. It is like a magician teaching phantoms. How can you say of this Dharma, "I have attained understanding from the words of a teacher; I comprehend, I understand"? As for this kindness and compassion, how can you learn another's perception and understanding by arousing the mind and stirring thoughts? If it is not your own realization of the original mind, ultimately it is no use.

Question: What is diligence?

Answer: When mind and body are not excited, this is called the foremost robust diligence. As soon as you arouse the mind to seek outside, this is called a contentious king loving to go hunting. When mind doesn't wander outside, this is called a wizard of forbearance, free of body and mind—this is the Way of Buddhas.

Question: If there is no mental activity, is this Way attained?

Answer: Having no thoughts is practicing this Way—what attaining or not attaining is there to speak of anymore? The moment you produce a thought, this is an object. If you don't have a single thought, this object disappears, and the mind spontaneously becomes quiet. There's nothing more to pursue.

Question: What is getting out of the triple world?

Answer: Don't think about good or bad, and right there you'll get out of the triple world. The Realized One emerged in the world to break through the three realms of being. If you don't have any thoughts, the triple world is also not existent. It's like an atomic particle split into a hundred parts—if ninety-nine are nonexistent while one part is existent, the Mahayana cannot transcend. If all hundred parts are nonexistent, only then can the Mahayana transcend.

Mind itself is Buddha. From the Buddhas above down to insects, all animate beings have Buddha-nature, the same one essence of mind. That is why Bodhidharma came from India only communicating the teaching of one mind, directly pointing out that all sentient beings are originally Buddha. It doesn't depend on cultivation—just recognize your own mind right now, see your own original nature; don't seek anything else anymore.

How do you recognize your own mind? What is speaking right now is indeed your mind. If you're not speaking, and not doing anything, the essence of mind is like space—it has no form, and no location. Yet it is not totally nonexistent and imperceptible.

Therefore an ancestral teacher said that the real essence, the mine of the mind ground, has no head or tail; it influences people according to conditions—this is expediently called wisdom. When it is not responding to conditions, it cannot be said to exist or not.

When it is responding, it still has no traces. Once you know it as such, right now just abide in nothingness; this is traveling the path of Buddhas. Scripture says, “Activate the mind without dwelling on anything.”

The reason all sentient beings revolve in birth and death is that their attention focuses on fluctuating thought, on the six paths of



being, not stopping, which causes them to undergo all sorts of suffering. *Vimalakirti's Advice* says, "Intractable people have minds like monkeys. Therefore a variety of methods are used to control their minds; after that, they are tamed. So when thoughts are produced, all sorts of things are produced; when thoughts are extinguished, all sorts of things disappear." So we know that all things come from mental construction. Even humanity, divinities, hells, the six paths, and titans all depend on mental construction. Right now just learn to have no thoughts, stop all focus on objects at once, do not conceive false ideas and imaginings, and there is no other or self, no greed or hostility, no hatred or love, no winning or losing. Just get rid of so many kinds of false conceptions—essential nature is originally pure. This is called cultivation, enlightenment, Dharma, Buddha, and so on. If you don't understand what this means, even if you study extensively and toil diligently cultivating practice, eating from trees and wearing plants, without knowing your own mind, it's all called aberrant practice. All of it produces celestial devils, outsiders, and spirits of water and land—what is the benefit of such practices?

Master Zhi said, "The fundamental essence is the doing of your own mind—how can you find it in writings?" Right now just

recognize your own mind and cease thinking—false ideas and toil over sense objects will naturally not arise. In *Vimalakirti's Advice* it says he only placed a bed to lie resting while ill—this means thoughts do not arise. It is like when someone lies sick, and clinging to mental objects ceases, and errant thoughts die out—this is enlightenment. Now if there is a flurry going on unsettled in your mind, even if you study the Three Vehicles, four fruitions, and the ranks of the ten stages, in sum you're just sitting in the midst of ordinary and holy; all actions wind up impermanent. All powers have an end, like arrows shot into the air, falling once their energy is spent—you return to the cycle of birth and death. If you cultivate practice like this, not understanding Buddha's meaning, you suffer in vain— isn't that a big mistake?

Right now just learn to have no thought, no imagining, no dependence, and no dwelling, at all times, whatever you are doing, buoyant all day long whatever goes on, as if you were an imbecile. Worldly people will not know you at all; and you don't need to get people to know or not know either. With a mind like a rock, with no gap at all, nothing whatever can penetrate into your mind, which remains unmoved, without attachment, When you are like this, only then will you have a bit of accord.

Passing beyond the objects of the three realms is called Buddha emerging in the world. Not being infected by mental descriptions is called untainted wisdom. Not creating human or celestial karma, not creating hellish karma, not producing any thoughts, when all entanglements end and do not occur, then this body and mind are a free person. One is not completely unborn, but is just born at will. This is what is meant by the scriptural term “intentionally produced body.”

If you don't understand freedom from thoughts, and act with fixation on appearances, all of it belongs to the work of devils. Even if you do Pure Land Buddhist ceremonies, all of them become karma. This is called the obstacle of Buddha, because it blocks your mind; constricted by cause and effect, you have no freedom to leave or stay.

Therefore phenomena such as enlightenment and so on originally are not existents; what the Realized expound is all to develop people, like calling yellow leaves gold as an expedient to stop a child from crying. Then there really is no phenomenon called supreme enlightenment.

Now if you have understood what this means, what is the need for a variety? Just dissolve old karma according to conditions,

and don't make new trouble, so there is clarity in your mind.

Therefore former opinionated understanding should all be discarded. *Vimalakirti's Advice* says, "Clear away your holdings."

The *Lotus sutra* speaks of constantly having waste removed for twenty years. This is just getting rid of the formation of opinionated understanding in your mind. It is also called cleaning out the waste of specious argument.

Therefore the treasury of realization is originally naturally empty and silent, not retaining anything at all. So scripture says the lands of the Buddhas are also all empty. If you say the enlightenment of Buddha is attained by cultivation and learning, such a view is irrelevant.

Some act out one potential, one state, raising eyebrows and rolling eyes, and if the response corresponds they say you have understood, realized the principle of Chan. If they meet someone who doesn't understand, they say he knows nothing at all. Those who are told they get the principle are delighted, but if they are repudiated as not up to snuff, they are disappointed. What relevance does such conceptual study of Chan have? Even if you understand a bit of principle, you've only gotten a mental state—it has nothing to do with the Way of Chan.

Therefore Bodhidharma's facing a wall does not let people have any views. So it is said that forgetting mental machinations is the Way of Buddha, while imagination is the realm of devils.

The essential nature is not lost even when you're deluded, and it is not attained when you're enlightened. Natural inherent nature fundamentally has no delusion or enlightenment. The whole realm of space is basically the body of one's own single mind. Whatever you do, how could it be apart from space? Space basically has no great or small, no affliction and no fabrication, no delusion and no enlightenment. Clearly it has not a single thing, no person, and no Buddha, utterly no definite measurement. No dependence, no sticking, a single clear flow—this is inherent recognition of nonorigination; what hesitation is there? The real Buddha has no mouth and cannot expound a teaching; real hearing has no ear—who listens?

# The Record of Linji

1. The prefect Attendant Wang and other government officials invited the teacher to speak. The teacher went up in the hall and said, "This mountain monk cannot help but mount this seat today, only because of bending to human feelings. Were I to expound the Great Matter according to the school of the masters, I simply couldn't open my mouth; there would be nowhere for you to get a foothold. Today, since the Attendant insists, how can I conceal the overall aim? But is there a competent war commander who will directly set forth a battle line and hoist a flag? Try to prove it to the assembly."

A monk asked, "What is the essential aim of Buddha's teaching?"

The teacher shouted.

The monk bowed.

The teacher said, "This monk can stick to what he says."

He asked, "Whose song do you sing? Whose way of teaching did you inherit?"

The teacher said, "At Huangbo's place I asked a question three times and was hit three times."

As the monk tried to think of something to say, the teacher hit him.

After that he hit him again and said, "You can't drive a peg into

space.”

A lecturer asked, “Doesn’t the twelve-part teaching of the Three Vehicles illumine Buddha-nature?”

The teacher said, “The weeds haven’t been hoed.”

The lecturer said, “Would Buddha deceive people?”

The teacher said, “Where is Buddha?”

The lecturer had nothing to say.

The teacher said, “You’re trying to embarrass me in front of the Attendant. Back off—you’re preventing others from asking questions.” He went on to say, “Today’s teaching event is for the sake of the one great matter; are there any more questioners? You may bring your questions right up, but as soon as you open your mouth you’re already out of touch. Why so? Haven’t you seen how Shakyamuni Buddha said, ‘The teaching is beyond writing, because it is not in the domain of cause and is not in conditions’? Today’s complications are due to your lack of faith. I’m afraid you’ll bog down the Attendant and the officials, obscuring the Buddha-nature; it would be better to withdraw.” He shouted “Huh!” and said, “People lacking in the faculty of faith will never comprehend. You’ve been standing a long time; goodbye.”



2. One day the teacher went to the administrative center of Hebei. The prefect, Attendant Wang, asked the teacher to give a talk. At that time Magu came forth and asked, "Of the thousand hands and eyes of Great Compassion, which one is the true eye?"

The teacher said, "Of the thousand hands and eyes of Great Compassion, which one is the true eye? Speak up, speak up!"

Magu dragged the teacher off the seat, and then sat in it himself.

The master approached and said, "How are you?"

Magu tried to think of something to say; the teacher pulled Magu off the seat too and sat on it himself.

Magu thereupon left.

The teacher then got down from the seat.

3. In a talk, he said, “In the mass of naked flesh there is a real human with no status, always going out and in through your senses. Those who haven’t witnessed the evidence, look, look!”

At that time a monk came forth and asked, “What is a real human with no status?”

The teacher got off the meditation platform, grabbed hold of him, and said, “Speak, speak!” The monk tried to think of something to say.

The teacher pushed him away and said, “A real human—what piece of crap is this?” Then the teacher went right back to his room.

4. When the teacher went up in the hall, a monk came forward and bowed. The teacher immediately shouted. The monk said, “The old teacher should not be calculating.”

The teacher said, “You tell me—where is the loss?”

The monk immediately shouted.

There was also a monk who asked, “What is the essential aim of the Buddha’s teaching?”

The teacher immediately shouted.

The monk bowed.

The teacher said, “You tell me—was it appropriate to shout or not?”

The monk said, “The bandit is busted!”

The teacher said, “Where is the fault?”

The monk said, “A second offense is not allowed.”

The teacher thereupon shouted.

On this day, when the head monks of the two halls met, they shouted simultaneously. A monk asked, “Are there still guest and host?”

The teacher said, “Guest and host are clear.”

The teacher said, “Everyone, if you want to understand Linji’s expression ‘guest and host,’ ask the two head monks of the halls.”

Then he got off the seat.

#### Note

Linji's shout was imitated in his own time, and eventually turned into a cliché. According to the Blue Cliff Record, Linji said, "I've heard all of you imitate my shouting. But I ask you, if a monk comes from the east hall and another monk comes from the west hall, and they both shout at once, which one is the guest and which one is the host? If you can't distinguish host and guest, then you must not imitate me any more after this."

The Blue Cliff Record also reports that Linji's successor Xinghua said, "I see all of you shouting in the east hall and shouting in the west hall. Don't shout at random. Even if you shout me up to the heavens, break me to pieces, and I fall back down again without even a trace of breath left in me, wait for me to revive and I'll tell you it's still not enough."

Chan master Muzhou, like Linji a successor of Huangbo, once asked a monk, "Where have you just come from?" The monk immediately shouted. Muzhou said, "I've been shouted at by you once." The monk shouted again." Muzhou said, "After three or four shouts, then what?" The monk had nothing to say. Muzhou hit him and said, "What a thieving phony you are!"

5. When the teacher went up in the hall, a monk asked, “What is the essential intent of Buddha’s teaching?”

The teacher held up a whisk.

The monk thereupon shouted.

The master then hit him.

Another monk also asked, “What is the essential intent of Buddha’s teaching?”

The teacher again held up a whisk.

The monk shouted.

The teacher also shouted.

The monk tried to think of something to say; the teacher hit him.

Then the teacher said, “Everyone, those whose purpose is truth do not shrink from losing their lives. I was at my late teacher Huangbo’s place for twenty years; three times I asked what exactly is the essential intent of Buddha’s teaching, and three times I got his caning, but it was like being brushed with a sprig of mugwort. Now I’m thinking of getting another caning—who can do it for me?”

At that time a monk came forth from the assembly and said, “I can do it.”

The teacher picked up his cane and offered it to him. The monk made as if to take it, whereupon the teacher hit him.

6. When the teacher went up in the hall, a monk asked, “What happens on the edge of a sword?”

The teacher said, “Disaster, disaster!”

The monk tried to think of something to say, so the teacher hit him.

Someone asked, “What about the worker of the cave, who forgot the movement of his feet while treading a mortar—where has he gone?”

The teacher said, “Sunk in a deep spring.”

The teacher then said, “Whenever anyone comes, I don’t short them; I fully recognize where they’re coming from. If you come as such, it’s like losing your footing; if you don’t come as such, you bind yourself without rope. At all times, don’t figure randomly; understanding and not understanding are both mistaken. Having clearly spoken thus, I leave it to anyone in the world to criticize. You’ve been standing a long time; goodbye.”

7. When the teacher went up in the hall, he said, “One person is on the summit of a solitary peak, with no way forth; one person is at a crossroads, neither facing nor turning away. Which one is ahead, which one is behind? Don’t act like Vimalakirti, don’t act like the Great Man Fu. Goodbye.”

Note

“Don’t act like Vimalakirti, don’t act like Great Man Fu” means don’t remain silent in response to the question.

Vimalakirti is the main character in the Buddhist scripture called *Vimalakirti’s Advice*, one of the most popular Buddhist books in China, often cited in Chan literature. In a chapter of this scripture on the subject of nonduality, after a series of replies by visiting sages to his question of the way to nonduality, Vimalakirti himself is asked the same question by Manjusri, an iconic figure representing insight. In response, Vimalakirti remains silent.

Great Man Fu was an historical figure, Fu Shanhui, an enlightened lay Buddhist contemporary with the nominal founder of Chan, Bodhidharma, and similarly known for his interaction with Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, who reigned for most of the first half of the sixth century. When Great Man Fu was asked by the emperor to lecture on the *Diamond Cutter* scripture on insight, Mr. Fu shook the desk once and got down from the seat without saying anything. This story was



later included in *the Blue Cliff Record*, a famous compilation of cases and commentaries used in Chan study and teaching.

8. Going up in the hall, he said, "One person is forever on the road without leaving home; one person has left home without being on the road. Which one deserves the support of humanity and heaven?" Then he immediately got down from the seat.

9. When the teacher went up in the hall, a monk asked, “What is the first statement?”

The teacher said, “When the seal of the three keys is removed, the crimson mark stands alone. Without any room for debate, host and guest are distinguished.”

He asked, “What is the second statement?”

The teacher said, “How could subtle understanding admit the questioning of Asanga? How could expedients contradict the capacity to cut off the flow?”

He asked, “What is the third statement?”

The teacher said, “Look at the puppets playing on the stage—all along there’s been someone inside pulling the strings.”

The teacher also said, “An expression of each statement must include three hidden doors. Each hidden door needs three keys. There is potency and there is function. How do you people understand?” Then he got right off the seat.

Note

Asanga was a prolific author, known for his works on formal definition and logic.

How could formless insight admit formal logic, but how could the use of logic as an

expedient be contrary to the aim of stopping futile thinking?

The three hidden doors are described by one of the great spiritual descendants of Linji, Fenyang Shanzhao (947-1024) in these terms: 1) Before Buddha personally entrusted the teaching to his successor Kasyapa. Observation and application complete all at once, the light of the seven stars of the Dipper handle shines; no dust or smoke for ten thousand miles. 2) Beyond description, apart from verbal explanation. Hook and awl sharp and pointed, hesitate and they pierce through your jowls, splitting your face so it rests on both shoulders. 3) A clear mirror reflecting without partiality. Subtle function complete with square and round illumines phenomena and noumenon according to potential; myriad things are complete therein.

He describes the three keys in these terms: 1) No fabrication in speech. Senses and objects both forgotten, eliminating traces; mountains crumble, oceans evaporate, dust is blown away; only when dead ashes are cleared away do you attain the marvel. 2) A thousand sages enter the mystic depths. Hook and awl observe and distinguish, presenting subtlety of skill; letting go and taking away, the capacity to arrest lightning; penetrating the scabbard, the light of the seven stars shines. 3) Outside all propositions of logic, treading all the way through the cold mountain road. No need to lower the hook and go fishing; facing the situation, one tune, a voice of a song of the South; those who know are all induced to introspect.

Fenyang's successor Ciming described the three hidden doors in these terms: 1) What do the Buddhas of past, present, and future try to proclaim? Extending compassion in a dream produces disrespect; sitting straight turns out to be falling to the extreme of nihilism. 2) Spiritually sharp patchrobed monks' eyes are not yet clear; even a spark and a lightning flash are still slow; raising the eyebrows and winking gets into obstructing mountains. 3) With myriad forms and appearances, the universe is wide; when the clouds disperse, in the clear sky mountain peaks are still; falling flowers on the flowing water fill the Long River.

Ciming described the three keys in these terms: 1) How can we speak of the subtlety of saints and sages? Hesitation gets onto a long road. Raising your head, you've already fallen over. 2) On the peak, tapping the door bar and calling, spiritual capacities come freely; learning cries outside the gate. 3) Getting up and falling down makes people laugh; when taking heaven and earth in hand, a thousand differences are a single perception.

10. In an evening gathering, he said to the assembly, “Sometimes the subject is taken away, but not objects. Sometimes objects are taken away, but not the subject. Sometimes both subject and object are taken away. Sometimes neither subject nor object is taken away.”

At that time there was a monk who asked, “What is taking away the subject but not objects?”

The teacher said, “The warming sun produces embroidery spread over the earth; a baby’s hanging locks are white as silk.”

The monk said, “What is taking away objects but not the subject?”

The teacher said, “The royal rule is already in effect throughout the land; the general, beyond the borders, is clear of smoke and dust.”

The monk said, “What is taking away both subject and objects?”

The teacher said, “Bing and Fen have cut off communications, remaining isolated in one region.”

The monk said, “What is not taking away either subject or object?”

The teacher said, “The king goes up into the jewel palace, the old rustics celebrate in song.”

The teacher then said, “People who study Buddha’s teaching in the present time should seek real true perceptive understanding for now. If you attain real true perceptive understanding, you are not affected by birth and death, free to leave or to stay. You don’t need to seek anything extraordinary—the extraordinary will come of itself.

“Followers of the Way, past worthies since olden times all had ways to develop people; as for what I point out to people, it just requires that you do not take on the delusions of others. If you need to act, then act, with no further hesitation and doubt.

“When students today do not attain, where is the illness? The illness is in not trusting yourself, being turned around and changed by myriad objects, not attaining independence. If you can put to rest the mind that runs around seeking, thought after thought, you will not be different from masters and Buddhas.

“Do you want to know a master, a Buddha? It is just what is in your presence listening to the teaching. It is when students don’t trust that they run seeking outside. Even if you find something, it is all literal description of excellence; you never get the living meaning of the masters.

“Make no mistake about it, Chan worthies; if you don’t encounter it this time, you’ll revolve in the triple world for a thousand lifetimes over myriad eons; taking to whatever you like, you’ll be born in the wombs of donkeys and cattle.

“Followers of the Way, according to my perception, it is not different from Shakyamuni’s—what is lacking in present functions? The six paths of spiritual light have never been interrupted. If you can see in this way, you’ll simply be people without issues all your life.

“Great worthies, the triple world is as insecure as a burning house, not a place you can stay for long. The killing demon of impermanence, in the space of an instant, doesn’t choose between upper and lower classes, or between the old and the young. If you want to be no different from masters and Buddhas, just don’t seek



outside; the pure light in your mind at any given moment is the reality-body Buddha in your house. The non-conceptual light in your mind at any given moment is the reward-body Buddha in your house. The undifferentiated light in your mind at any given moment is the emanation-body Buddha in your house. These three kinds of body are you, the person now presently listening to the teaching. It is only by virtue of not running in search outside that you have these effective functions.

“Those who rely on scriptures and treatises take the three kinds of body as an ultimate law, but according to my perception that is not so. These three bodies are names, words; they are also three kinds of dependency. An ancient said, ‘The bodies are defined depending on meaning, the lands are spoken of based on substance.’ The body of the nature of reality and the land of the nature of reality are clearly reflections of a light. Great worthies, you should discern the person who is manipulating the reflections. This is the basic source of all Buddhas. Everywhere is where Wayfarers return home.

“The fact is that your physical body cannot expound the teaching or listen to the teaching. Your spleen, stomach, liver, and gall bladder

cannot expound the teaching or listen to the teaching. What is it that can expound the teaching and listen to the teaching? It is the formless solitary light manifest in your presence. It is this that can explain the teaching and listen to the teaching. If you can see this way, then you are not different from masters and Buddhas.

“Just don’t let it be interrupted at any time—whatever meets the eye is it. It is just because ‘when emotions are aroused, wisdom is blocked; when conceptions change, entities differ’ that you revolve in the triple world and suffer all sorts of misery. As I see it, nothing is not profound, no one is not free.

“Followers of the Way, the reality of mind is formless and pervades the ten directions. In the eyes it is called seeing, in the ears called hearing; in the nose it smells, in the mouth it talks, in the hands it holds, in the feet it does the running. Basically it is one spiritual light, differentiated to function in six combinations. Once you’re free of subjectivity, you’re liberated wherever you are.

“In speaking thus, wherein lies my purpose? Just because followers of the Way cannot stop their minds from all running and seeking,

they value useless devices and perspectives of the people of old. Followers of the Way, if you get what I see, you sit on the heads of reward and emanation Buddhas; those whose minds have fulfilled the Ten Stages are like hirelings; those with equal and subtle enlightenment are folks carrying stocks and locks; saints and solitary illuminates are like sewage. Enlightenment and nirvana are like donkey-tethering stakes. Why so? It is just because wayfarers have not arrived at the emptiness of incalculable eons that they have these obstructions.

“If you are real people of the Way, you’ll never be like this. Just be able to dissolve old karma according to circumstances, dress as appropriate to the time, act when you need to act, sit when you need to sit, without a single thought of seeking Buddhahood. Why is this? An ancient said, ‘If you want to perform practices to seek Buddha, Buddha is a major sign of birth and death.’

“Great worthies, don’t waste your time; you just go off studying Chan, studying the Way, accepting terms and statements, seeking Buddhas, seeking masters, seeking teachers, calculating

conceptually. Make no mistake about it, followers of the Way—you only have one father and mother; what else are you seeking? Try looking into yourselves. An ancient said, ‘Yajnadatta lost sight of his head, but when his seeking mind stopped, then there was no issue.’

“Great worthies, now you need to be normal—don’t concoct appearances. There’s a kind of baldy who doesn’t know good from bad, and sees spirits, sees ghosts, points east and delineates west, celebrates clear weather and celebrates rain. People like this will all have to pay their debts; someday, in the presence of Death, they’ll swallow balls of molten iron. Men and women of good families who are fascinated by this sort of wild fox sprite hoke up wonders. Blind fools—someday they’ll be charged for their meals.”

## Notes

*Yajnadatta* looked in a mirror, saw his face, and thought he had lost his head. This is used to illustrate the illusion of taking a reflection for objective reality.

11. The teacher instructed the assembly,

Sometimes I first observe and act afterwards. Sometimes I first act and observe afterward. Sometimes observation and action are simultaneous. Sometimes observation and action are not simultaneous.

First observing and afterwards acting is when personality is there.

First acting and afterwards observing is when phenomena are there.

Observing and acting at the same time drives off the plowman's ox, taking away the hungry man's food, tapping bones to get marrow, jabbing with needle and awl.

When observation and action are not simultaneous, there are questions and there are answers, defining guest and defining host, mixing with mud and water, dealing with people according to potential.

In the case of people beyond measure, to get up and go before any mention is made still amounts to a little bit.

12. The teacher instructed the assembly,

Followers of the Way, you urgently need to seek to attain real true perceptive understanding to go anywhere in the world freely and avoid being confused by the commonplace sprites. Just do not contrive; just be normal. When you try seeking elsewhere outside, searching for something extra, your standpoint and method are already mistaken. You just try to seek Buddha, but 'Buddha' is a name, a term—do you know what it is that is running off searching?

The emergence of Buddhas and masters past present and future everywhere is just to seek truth. Followers of the Way now engaged in study also just do it to seek truth. Only when you've found truth are you finished. If you don't, you go round and round in mundane states as before.

What is the truth? The truth is the phenomenon of mind: the phenomenon of mind is formless, all-pervasive, presently functioning, evident in action right now. Because people don't trust enough, they then accept names and terms, seeking in writings, to

figure out the Buddha's teaching conceptually. This is as far from it as the earth is from the sky.

Followers of the Way, what truth do my sermons expound? They expound the phenomenon of the ground of mind, which can enter into the ordinary and enter into the holy, can enter into purity and enter into pollution, can enter into the absolute and enter into the conventional, and yet is not your absolute or conventional, ordinary or holy, but is able to assign names to everything, absolute and conventional, ordinary and holy, while the absolute and conventional, ordinary and holy, cannot fix a label on this person. Followers of the Way, if you can, go ahead and use it, without attaching labels anymore, calling it mysticism.

My teaching is different from everyone else. Even if a Manjusri or a Samantabhadra were to show up, each manifesting embodiment to inquire into the teaching, as soon as they said, "I ask you..." I will have already distinguished them. I sit in peace; then when followers of the Way come to meet me, I distinguish them all. How so? Just because my perception is distinct; outwardly I do not grasp ordinary

or holy, inwardly I do not dwell in the fundamental. I see through, not doubtful or deceived anymore.

## Notes

*Manjusri* is an iconic bodhisattva representing wisdom and knowledge.

*Samantabhadra* is an iconic bodhisattva representing the totality of religious practices.



13. The teacher instructed the assembly,

Followers of the Way, Buddha's teaching has nowhere to apply effort; it's just being normal, without issues. Answer the calls of nature, wear clothes, eat, lay down when fatigued. Ignorant people laugh at me, but the wise know it. An ancient said, 'Those who make efforts outwardly are all ignoramuses.' You just be the host wherever you are, and where you stand is reality. When objects come they cannot change you. Even if you have habits from the past, even the five acts that bring immediate consequences, they naturally become an ocean of liberation.

Students today do not recognize truth at all; they are like goats—anything that touches their noses, they take into their mouths.

Servant and master are not distinguished, guest and host are not differentiated. Followers like this enter the path in the wrong state of mind; they cannot enter the hubbub. They are called genuine renunciants, but they are really worldly people.

As for renunciants, they must be able to discern normal real true perceptive understanding, distinguish Buddhas and distinguish

devils, distinguish the real and distinguish the artificial, distinguish the ordinary and distinguish the holy. Those who can discern this way are called genuine renunciants. If devils and Buddhas are not distinguished, you cannot be called a genuine renunciant, a leaver of home—in fact you are leaving one home and entering another home. This is called an ordinary person creating karma, and cannot be called a real renunciant.

At present there is an indiscriminate identification of Buddhas and devils, like a mixture of milk and water; a king goose drinks the milk. As for wayfarers with clear eyes, they beat both devils and Buddhas. If you love the holy and hate the ordinary, you float and sink in the ocean of birth and death.

Someone asked, “What are Buddha and devils?”

The teacher said “A thought of doubt in your mind is a devil. If you actually realize all things have no origin, that mind is like an illusory projection, there is no longer a single atom or a single phenomenon, and everywhere is pure—this is Buddha. But Buddha and devils are two domains, purity and defilement—as I see it, there is no Buddha, there are no ordinary people, nothing ancient and nothing new.

Those who get it get it immediately, without taking time, without cultivation, without realization, without attainment, without loss. At all times there is nothing else anymore. Even if there were something beyond this, I say it is like a dream, like a projection. All I ever explain is this.

“Followers of the Way, the one whose present solitary light is clearly listening right now is someone who does not linger anywhere, going throughout the ten directions, free in the triple world; unchangeable even in the midst of the variety of all objects, instantly penetrating into the realm of reality, speaking of Buddhas when meeting Buddhas, speaking of masters when meeting masters, speaking of saints when meeting saints, speaking of hungry ghosts when meeting hungry ghosts, traveling through lands everywhere educating people , without ever departing from unified mindfulness, pure and clear no matter where, the light pervading the ten directions, so everything is one, as is.

“Followers of the Way, those with strength will have realized today that there is fundamentally no issue. It is only because you don’t really believe it that you run off seeking, thought after thought,

discarding your head and looking for a head, unable to stop yourselves. Even the bodhisattvas of complete and immediate awakening who enter into the realm of reality to appear bodily disdain the ordinary and delight in the holy in pure lands. In types like this, grasping and rejection have not yet been forgotten, and thoughts of pollution and purity remain.

“The perceptive understanding of the Chan school is not like this; it is right here and now, no further question of time or timing. Everything I say is a temporary prescription of medicine for disease—there is no actual doctrine at all. If you can see this way, you are a real renunciant; you can use up ten thousand ounces of gold a day.

“Wayfarers, don’t be in a hurry to have your forehead stamped by the old teachers all over and say ‘I understand Chan, I understand the Way.’ Even if eloquence flows like a waterfall, it is all creating hellish karma. If you are people who really and truly study the Way, you don’t look for the faults of the world; what is most urgent is the need to seek real true perceptive understanding. When you attain complete illumination of real true perceptive understanding, only then are you finished.”

Someone asked, “What is real true perceptive understanding?”

The teacher said, “In all your entries into the ordinary, entries into the holy, entries into pollution, entries into purity, entries into the lands of Buddhas, entries into Maitreya’s tower, entries into the reality realm of Vairocana, with becoming, abiding, dissolution, and emptiness of lands manifest everywhere, with Buddhas emerging in the world, turning the wheel of the great teaching, and then entering nirvana, you do not see any appearance of going or coming, and cannot find their birth and death at all; then you enter the reality realm of no origin, and travel through lands everywhere, enter the Flower Treasury world and see the empty aspect of all things, all without substantial reality; there is only the independent wayfarer listening to the teaching—this is the mother of the Buddhas. So Buddhas are born of independence; if you realize there is nothing to rely on, even ‘Buddha’ cannot be found. If you can see in this way, this is real true perceptive understanding.

“Students don’t understand because they cling to names and terms; they are obstructed by the names ordinary and holy, thereby blocking their perception of the Way, so it cannot be clear. The

canonical teachings are all representational explanations; when students don't understand, they produce interpretations based on representational names and terms. This is all dependent, falling into cause and effect, not yet escaping birth and death in the triple world.

“If you want to attain liberation and freedom from the going and coming of birth and death, right now perceive the person listening to the teaching, with no form, no description, no root, no basis, no abode, full of life. Responsive, it is where all kinds of facilities function, but it has no location; that is why when you seek you're further away—search for it and you turn away all the more; you make it out to be a secret.

“Followers of the Way, don't give recognition to the party of dreams and illusions; it'll wind up evanescent. What are you looking for in this world to construe as liberation? You spend your time looking for a mouthful of food to eat, and mending your ceremonial robes, when you should be looking for guidance. Don't dilly-dally and pursue whims. Time is precious—it slips away with every moment. In crude terms, you are subject to earth, water, fire, and air; in specific terms,

you are oppressed by the four appearances of origination, abiding, change, and destruction.

“Followers of the Way, at the present time what you need is to know the four kinds of formless state, to avoid being buffeted by objects.”

Someone asked, “What are the four kinds of formless state?”

The teacher said, “When you have a thought of doubt, you get obstructed by earth. When you have a thought of attraction, you get obstructed by water. When you have a thought of hostility, you get burnt by fire. When you have a thought of delight, you are blown away by wind. If you can discern in this way, you won’t be turned around by objects; you use objects wherever you are, emerging in the east and disappearing in the west, emerging in the south and disappearing in the north, emerging in the center and disappearing in the periphery, walking on water as if it were earth, walking on earth as if it were water.

“Why is it like this? Because of realizing the four gross elements are like dreams, like illusions. Followers of the Way, that in you which is now listening to the teaching is not your four elements, but can use

your four elements. If you can see this way, then you are free to leave or to stay.

“According to my perception, there is nothing to disregard; if you love the holy, ‘holy’ is a term for sagacity. There is a kind of student who searches for Manjusri on Mt. Wutai; they’ve gone wrong already—there is no Manjusri on Mt. Wutai. Do you want to know Manjusri? When your present functioning never deviates, not doubtful anywhere, this is the living Manjusri. The undifferentiated light in immediate awareness everywhere is in totality the real Samantabhadra. If you can release yourself from bondage in immediate awareness, and be liberated wherever you are, this is Avalokitesvara’s method of concentration. These are hosts and companions to each other; when they emerge, they emerge at once. One is three, the three are one. When you understand this way, only then should you read scriptures.”

Notes

*Maitreya’s tower, the reality realm of Vairocana and the Flower Treasury world refer to imagery of the Flower Ornament Scripture. Avalokitesvara’s method of concentration is described in both the Lotus Scripture and the Flower Ornament Scripture. Maitreya, ‘The Kind One,’ represents the Buddha of the future; the*



tower of Maitreya represents the ten stages of enlightenment expounded in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*. Vairocana, 'The Illuminator,' represents cosmic awareness; Avalokitesvara, 'Master of Objective Observation,' represents universal compassion.

14. The teacher instructed the assembly,  
Right now students of the Way need to rely on themselves; don't seek outside. Everyone gets involved in the useless scenarios of others, not distinguishing false or true at all. Just supposing there are masters, there are Buddhas—they're all things in the traces of the teaching. When someone brings up a saying, whether it comes from the esoteric or exoteric, doubt immediately arises; looking all over the world, you go around questioning others, and very hastily at that.

Don't be like this, talking about owner and thief, talking about right and wrong, talking about sex and money, passing the days telling useless stories.

Here I don't make an issue of monastic or lay person; anyone who comes, I comprehend. Wherever they are coming from, they only have words and phrases, all of which are dreams, illusions. Instead, see the person riding states—this is the mystic message of the Buddhas. The state of Buddhahood cannot declare of itself, "I am the state of Buddhahood." After all it is this individual person on the path who comes forth riding states. If someone comes forth and

asks me about seeking Buddhahood, then I go forth in accord with a state of purity. If someone asks me about bodhisattahood, then I go forth in accord with a state of kindness and compassion. If someone asks me about enlightenment, I go forth in accord with a state of pure subtlety. If someone asks me about nirvana, I go forth in accord with a state of peace and quiet. States have myriad differences, but the person is not different. That is how one appears according to people, like the moon reflected in water.

Followers of the Way, if you want to attain truth, you simply must be strong before you can do it. If you are weak and passive, you can't; that's being like a cracked pot that can't be used to store clarified butter.

To be like someone of great capacity just requires not being confused by others; be the master wherever you are, and where you stand is all real. Whoever comes on, don't accept anyone; a single moment of doubt on your part, and a devil enters your mind, like when a bodhisattva doubts, the devil of birth and death takes advantage. Just be able to stop thoughts—don't seek outside anymore. When things come up, be aware; just be sure that which

is presently functioning does not have any issues whatever. Your mind produces the triple world in a single thought, divided by objects into six sense fields, according to conditions. In your responsive function right now, what is lacking? In an instant it enters purity, enters pollution, enters the tower of Maitreya, enters the lands of the three eyes, traveling freely everywhere, only seeing empty names.

Someone asked, "What are the lands of the three eyes?"

The teacher said, "I enter with you into the land of pure subtlety, put on the clothing of purity, and explain the reality-body Buddha. I also enter into the land of no differentiation, put on the clothing of no differentiation, and explain the reward-body Buddha. I also enter into the land of liberation, put on the clothing of illumination, and explain the projection-body Buddha.

"These lands of three eyes are all dependent transfigurations.

According to devotees of scriptures and treatises, the reality-body is taken to be the basis, while the two bodies of reward and projection are considered functions. As I see it, the reality-body cannot expound the teaching. This is why an ancient said, 'bodies are defined according to meaning, lands are discussed based on

substance.’ The reality-body’s land of the nature of reality is obviously something constructed. The land of dependent realization is an empty fist, yellow leaves, used to fool small children. What soup do you expect to get from pricking a dry bone with a thorn?

“There is no doctrine outside the mind, and the inside can’t be grasped either—what are you looking for? Everywhere you go they say there is practice and there is realization; make no mistake about it—even if there is something attained by cultivation, it is all activity that is born and dies. You speak of the equal cultivation of myriad practices of the six ways of transcendence; I see it all as made-up action. Reading scriptures, reading the teachings, is also made-up activity. Buddhas and masters are people with no issues. So when there are impulses, there is contrivance; without impulses, there is no contrivance—this is pure action.

“There is a kind of blind baldy who sit and meditate—after having eaten their fill—and practice observation, holding thought impulses still and not letting them arise, avoiding the hubbub and seeking quietude. This is a method of outsiders. An ancestral teacher said, ‘If you halt the mind and observe quietude, or alert the mind to view

outside, or concentrate the mind to clarify it inwardly, or freeze the mind to enter absorption, such trends are all made up.’

“It is you, right now, the person listening to the teaching this way—how can you try to cultivate that, realize that, or arrange that? That is not something cultivated, not something attained by arrangement. If you have it do the arranging, it can arrange everything.

“Make no mistake, followers of the Way—you take the word of this kind of teacher and consider it the true way: ‘This is a teacher, inconceivable, while mine is an ordinary person’s mind—I cannot presume to fathom that old adept.’ Blind ignoramuses, you just entertain this view all your life, turning away from the only pair of eyes you have in frigid silence, like donkey colts on ice—‘We do not dare to criticize the teacher, for fear of creating verbal karma.’

Followers of the Way, it is only a great teacher who dares criticize Buddhas, criticize masters, judge the world, set aside the canonical teachers, scold the immature, and seek people in both adverse and favorable circumstances.

“This is why I searched twelve years for an essence of karma, and realized none can be grasped at all. A sissy ‘Chan master’ would get scared and chase me out of the monastery, refuse me food, and be uneasy and unhappy. My predecessors since ancient times, wherever they went, were not believed by people, and were ejected. That’s how I know they were important. If people all agree with you wherever you go, what are you capable of? This is why ‘at a single roar of a lion, the brains of foxes burst.’

“Followers of the Way, everywhere else they say there is a path to practice, there is a doctrine to realize: tell me, what doctrine do you realize, what path do you practice? What is missing in your function right now? What are you trying to fix? Youngsters don’t understand, so they believe this kind of wild fox sprite, letting them explain things. Tying people up, they say you can only attain Buddhahood when principle and practice correspond, and conduct, speech, and thought are carefully guarded. Those who talk like this are as common as drizzle in springtime. An ancient said, ‘If you meet a Wayfarer on the road, first of all don’t address the Way.’ That is why it is said that when people cultivate the Way, the Way doesn’t work; all sorts of false states occur in profusion.

“When the sword of wisdom is drawn, there is not a single thing. Before it is evident in the light, it shines in the dark. This is why an ancient said that the normal mind is the Way. Great worthies, what are you looking for? The independent person on the Way presently listening to the teaching is clearly evident, and has never been missing. If you want to be no different from masters and Buddhas, just see this way, without going astray doubting. When your mental continuum does not deviate, this is called living mastery. If there is deviation in your mind, then nature and description differ. It is when mind does not deviate that nature and description do not differ.”

Someone asked, “What is the state where the mental continuum does not deviate?”

The teacher said, “When you figured you’d ask, you had already deviated. Nature and description are separated. Followers of the Way, make no mistake: mundane and transcendent phenomena all lack inherent nature, and also have no created nature. There are only names without content, and the names are also empty. The way you recognize those inert names as realities is very much mistaken. Even if they do exist, they’re all dependent changing



states. There is the dependence of enlightenment, the dependence of nirvana, the dependence of liberation, the dependence of the three bodies, the dependence of objective knowledge, the dependence of bodhisattvas, the dependence of Buddhas—what are you looking for in realms of dependent change? Even the canon is old paper for wiping up a mess; Buddha was an embodiment of an illusory projection; the masters were old beggars. Weren't you born of women? If you seek Buddhahood, you are taken in by the bedevilment of 'Buddha.' If you seek mastery, you are bound by the bedevilment of 'masters.' If you seek anything, it will all be painful; it's better to have no preoccupations.

“There's a kind of bald beggar who tells students that Buddhahood is the ultimate end, that it takes three immeasurable eons cultivating practice to fulfillment of results before one accomplishes the Way. Followers of the Way, if Buddha had reached the ultimate, why did he lay down and die after eighty years? Where is Buddha now? Obviously he was no different from us in being born and dying. You say the thirty-two signs and eighty refinements of great people are Buddhahood; but then emperors should be Buddhas. Obviously these are projections of illusions. An ancient said, 'The Realized

One mentioned physical characteristics to accommodate worldly feelings; fearing people would conceive nihilistic views, he strategically established empty names of thirty-two and eighty, but these are empty sounds.’ The physical is not the substance of awakening; the indefinable is the true form. You say the Buddha has six psychic powers that are inconceivable. All celestials, spiritual immortals, titans, and powerful demons also have psychic powers—does that mean they’re Buddhas?

“What I’ve mentioned are all practiced powers, dependent powers. The six powers of Buddhas are not like that: they enter the realm of form without being confused by form, enter the realm of sound without being confused by sound, enter the realm of scent without being confused by scent, enter the realm of taste without being confused by taste, enter the realm of touch without being confused by touch, enter the realm of phenomena without being confused by phenomena. Thus they realize that these six—form, sound, scent, taste, touch, and phenomena—are all empty descriptions, which cannot bind this independent wayfarer. Even the leaky body of five clusters is the uncanny power of walking on the earth.

“Followers of the Way, the real Buddha is formless; the real truth has no definition. The way you create models and likenesses on top of illusory projections, even if you find anything in your search, it will all be wild fox sprites, not the real Buddha. This is a view of outsiders. Real students of the Way do not grasp Buddha, do not grasp bodhisattvas or arhats, do not grasp the wonders of the world. They are far beyond it all, independent, liberated, not caught up in things. Even if sky and earth turned upside down, I wouldn’t wonder at all. Even if the Buddhas of the ten directions appeared before me, I wouldn’t have a single thought of delight; even if hells should suddenly appear, I wouldn’t have a thought of fear.

“Why is this so? I see all phenomena as empty descriptions; they are there when projected, not there when there’s no projection. ‘The world is but an idea; myriad phenomena are only perceptions.’ So why bother to grasp dream illusions, flowers in the sky? There is only the person presently listening to the teaching, who enters fire without burning, enters water without drowning, enters hells like strolling in a park, enters into the states of hungry ghosts and animals without being subject to consequences. Why so? Because

there is nothing rejected. If you love the holy and hate the ordinary, you bob in the ocean of birth and death.

“Afflictions exist because of mind; if you don’t mind, how can afflictions capture you? Without laboring to discriminate and grasp definitions, you attain the Way naturally in an instant. What you restlessly try to learn elsewhere over three immeasurable eons returns to birth and death in the end. It does not compare to sitting cross-legged on the edge of a bench in a forest community, without issues.

“Followers of the Way, when students come to other places, once host and guest have met, they have a saying to discern the teacher before them. Having been presented with a strategic way of speaking by a student to encourage the teacher to speak, to see if you perceive or not, if you realize it is an object and take it and throw it into a pit, the student then is as ever. After that he seeks a saying from the teacher, and as before is deprived of it. The student says, ‘Superior wisdom indeed! This is a great teacher.’ You really don’t know good from bad.

“Teachers will set forth a bunch of objects and play with them before students. If the people present are discerning and can be the host, they will not be confused by objects. The teachers then show half a body; the students immediately shout. The teachers then enter into all different ways of speaking to knock them down. The students say, ‘Old baldies who don’t know good from bad.’ The teachers praise them as genuine followers of the Way.

“There’s a kind of baldy who doesn’t know good from bad but points east and delineates west, celebrates clear weather and celebrates rain, and has a liking for lamps and pillars. Look and see how many strands of eyebrow hair they have. Students with potential don’t understand and go crazy. Such types are all wild fox sprites and bogeys. Laughed at by good students, these blind old baldies confuse other people all over the world.

“Wayfarers, renunciants do need to study the Way. In my case, in days gone by I used to set my mind on the code of conduct, and I also used to look into scriptures and treatises. Later I realized these are medicines to cure the world, representational teachings. Finally I set them aside for a time to seek the Way and concentrate on Chan.

Subsequently I met a great teacher, and only then did my perception of the Way become clear. For the first time I could perceive the old monks all over the world, and know if they were false or genuine. This is not inborn understanding; I investigated thoroughly, refined and polished, until one day I got insight myself.

“Followers of the Way, if you want to attain truthful perceptive understanding, just don’t be confused by others. Whatever you encounter, inwardly or outwardly, kill. If you meet ‘Buddha,’ kill ‘Buddha.’ If you meet ‘Patriarchs,’ kill ‘Patriarchs.’ If you meet ‘arhats,’ kill ‘arhats.’ If you meet ‘father’ and ‘mother,’ kill ‘father’ and ‘mother.’ If you meet ‘relatives,’ kill ‘relatives.’ Only then will you obtain release, not be caught up in things, and penetrate through to liberation and independence.

“The likes of followers studying the Way everywhere else invariably come forth based on things; here I hit them right from the start: if they come forth in their hands, I hit them in the hand; if they come forth in the mouth, I hit them in the mouth. If they come forth in the eyes, I hit them in the eye. There hasn’t been a single one who comes forth independent and free. They’re all hung up on standard

scenarios of the ancients. I have no doctrine to give people, just curing illnesses and untying bonds. You followers of the Way from elsewhere, try to come forth independently of things; I want to deal with you. There's been no one at all these fifteen years; they're all spirits of bamboo and wood, haunting the grasses and sticking to the leaves, wild fox sprites. They bite randomly into every pile of crap, blind folks misusing the donations of the faithful everywhere, claiming they are renunciants.

“If you entertain such an understanding, I tell you there is no Buddha, no Dharma, no practice, no realization. What are you seeking besides? Blind folks put a head on top of their head—what do you lack? Followers of the Way, what is presently functioning in you is no different from masters and Buddhas. It's just that you don't believe, so you seek outside. Make no mistake—there is no thing outside, and inside is also ungraspable.

“You grasp my words, but it's better to stop and have no issues. What has arisen, don't continue. What hasn't arisen, don't let it arise. That will be more effective than for you to travel for ten years.

“As I see it, there aren’t so many matters; just being normal, dressing, eating, passing the time uneventfully. You who come from other places all have a will to seek Buddha, seek Dharma, seek liberation, seek to leave the world. You want to leave the world—where will you go? ‘Buddha’ and ‘master’ are laudatory expressions. Do you want to know the world? It is not apart from the ground of your mind now listening to the teaching. A greedy thought is the realm of desire, an angry thought is the realm of form, an ignorant thought is the formless realm. This is furniture in your own house. The three realms of the world do not themselves say, ‘We are the triple world.’ Rather, followers of the Way, it is the person presently aware, paying attention to all sorts of things and assessing the world, who assigns names to the three realms of the triple world.

“Great worthies, the body of four gross elements is impermanent. Be it spleen, stomach, gall bladder, liver, hair, nails, or teeth, we only see empty definitions of everything. When you can stop mentally for a moment, that is called the tree of enlightenment; when you cannot stop mentally for a moment, that is called the tree of ignorance. Ignorance has no permanent location; ignorance has no beginning or



end. If your mind cannot stop, thought after thought, you are climbing the tree of ignorance. Then you enter the six ways of life and four modes of birth, becoming hairy and horned. If you can stop, this is the realm of the pure body; if you do not conceive a single thought, this is climbing the tree of enlightenment. With uncanny powers in the three realms, transfiguration, mentally produced projected bodies, spiritual joy and meditative bliss, personal radiance shines of itself. Think of clothing, and there are a thousand layers of fine patterned silk; think of food, and a hundred flavors are all there. There is no more uncontrollable disease. Enlightenment has no place of abode; that's why there is no attainment.

“Followers of the Way, stalwarts, what do you still doubt? Who else is it presently functioning? If you can take hold, use it—don't label it, calling it mysticism. If you can see this way, there is nothing to dislike. An ancient said, ‘Mind is activated according to myriad objects; the point of activation is actually hidden in the subject. If you can recognize the essence while going with the flow, you have no joy and no sorrow.’

“Followers of the way, according to the understanding of the Chan school, death and life are a cycle; people who participate in this study must pay close attention. When host and guest meet, there is an exchange of words, sometimes showing forms according to people, sometimes total engagement, sometimes taking an opportunity for strategic approval or disapproval, sometimes showing half oneself, sometimes riding on a lion, sometimes riding on an elephant. If there is a genuine student who shouts to set forth a bowl of glue first, if the teacher doesn’t discern that this is an object, then gets hung up on that object and makes an imitation, displaying an appearance, the student then shouts; but the teacher is unwilling to let it go. This is a fatal illness, which cannot be cured. It’s called a guest looking at a host.

“It may be that a teacher doesn’t present anything, but goes along with a student’s question to take it away. The student being deprived absolutely resists letting go. This is a host looking at a guest.

“There may be a student who appears before a teacher in accord with a state of purity. The teacher recognizes it is an object, and takes it and throws it away into a pit. The student says, ‘What a

great teacher!’ Then the teacher says, ‘Tsk! You don’t know good from bad.’ The student thereupon bows. This is called a host looking at a host.

“There may be a student who appears before a teacher fettered and chained. The teacher puts on yet another layer of fetters and chains, and the student is delighted. Neither one discerns the other; this is called a guest looking at a guest.

“Great worthies, what I have brought up this way is all discerning devils and weeding out deviants, knowing whether they are aberrant or authentic.

“Followers of the Way, real truth is very difficult; the Buddha’s teaching is arcane and obscure. Gaining understanding, as it happens, I explain it to others all day long, but students don’t pay attention at all. They walk over it a thousand times, ten thousand times, as if blacked out. When students don’t fully trust the utterly formless clear solitary light, then they conceive interpretations based on names and terms. Even at the age of fifty they just go carrying a

corpse around, running all over the world with a load of baggage.  
Someday you'll be billed for the cost of your sandals.

“Great worthies, when I say there is no thing outside, students don't understand, and interpret it to mean turning inward. Then they sit against a wall and brace their tongue on their upper palate, still and unmoving, considering this to be the Buddhist teaching of the school of the masters. Big mistake. The fact is that if you take a state of unmoving purity to be right, you are recognizing ignorance as your master. An ancient said, ‘The darkness of stillness is a deep pit, truly to be feared.’ This is what is referred to. But if you acknowledge movement as right, all plants and trees move—they should be the Way.

“So movement is the element of air, not moving is the element of earth. Moving and not moving both have no independent essence. If you try to grasp It in movement, it stands unmoving; if you try to grasp It in not moving, it stays in movement. It is like a fish hidden in a spring, which drums up ripples as it frolics by itself. Followers of the Way, movement and unmoving are two kinds of state; it is just the independent wayfarer who uses movement and uses unmoving.

“If students from other places come, here I make a judgment of three categories of faculties and potentials. If people of mediocre to lower faculties and potentials come, I immediately take away their perspectives, yet without eliminating their principles. If people of middling to superior faculties and potential come, I take away both their perspectives and principles. If people with faculties and potentials that are superior among the superior come, I don’t take away perspective, principle, or person. If people with extraordinary perceptive understanding come, here I work with the totality of being without graduating it according to faculties and potential.

“Great worthies, when they get here, where students apply effort doesn’t let wind through; in a spark, a lightning flash, it’s passed you by. If students’ eyes move, they lose contact. Try to set your mind on it and you miss; stir thought and you turn away. For anyone who understands, it is not apart from immediate presence.

“Great worthies, you carry your bowl and bag and load of crap and run around looking for Buddha and looking for Dharma. Do you know the one who is running in search this way right now? That one

is vibrant with life, but has no root, cannot be gathered in, cannot be scattered abroad, is further away when you seek. The voice of the spirit is in the ears; if people don't believe, they'll labor in vain for a hundred years.

“Followers of the Way, in an instant enter into the Flower Bank world, enter the land of Vairocana, enter the land of liberation, enter the land of psychic powers, enter the land of purity, enter the realm of reality, enter pollution, enter purity, enter the ordinary, enter the holy, enter the company of hungry ghosts and animals; everywhere you look you don't see that there is birth or there is death—there are only empty names. Don't bother trying to grasp illusive projections, flowers in the sky; let go of gain and loss, right and wrong, all at once.

“Followers of the Way, my Buddhism has been received with certainty from master Magu, master Danxia, master Daoyi, Lushan, and master Shitou. They went all over the world on a single road, and nobody believed them. Everyone started slandering them.

“As for master Daoyi, his application was wholly pure and unadulterated. Students numbered three to five hundred, but none of them saw what he meant.

“As for master Lushan, his freedom was genuine; his application, conventional and unconventional, students couldn’t comprehend—all of them were at a loss.

“As for master Danxia, he sported a pearl, concealing and revealing; students who came were all scolded.

“As for Magu’s application, it was bitter as cork tree berries; nobody could approach.

“As for Shikong’s application, he searched people out on an arrowhead; all comers were scared.

“As for my application today, I truly create and destroy, sporting spiritual transfigurations entering into all states, having no obsession wherever I may be, so states cannot change me. Whenever anyone comes seeking, I go out and look at them. They don’t perceive me,

so I put on several kinds of clothes. Student conceive interpretations, totally immersed in my verbal expressions. How miserable! Blind baldies, people without eyes, grasp the clothes I put on and recognize blue, yellow, red, and white. I take them off and enter a state of purity; once students perceive this, they immediately conceive delight and desire. I shed this too, and students lose their minds. I then say to them, 'Do you perceive me, the person who puts on the clothes?' Suddenly they turn their heads and have perceived me.

“Great worthies, don't give recognition to clothes; clothing cannot act—it is the person who wears the clothes. There is the clothing of purity, there is the clothing of no origin, the clothing of enlightenment, the clothing of nirvana; there is the clothing of mastery, there is the clothing of Buddhahood. Great worthies, as long as there are spoken names and literary expressions, they are all changes of clothing. Drummed out from the ocean of breath in the umbilical sphere, the chattering of teeth produces those statements and doctrines. Obviously these are illusory projections.



“Great worthies, the action of externally expressed speech and internally expressed states of mind, having thoughts because of cogitation, is all clothing. The way you acknowledge the clothes worn as true understanding, even after countless eons it will just be understanding of clothing.

“The triple world cyclically goes round and round, being born and dying; it’s better to have no preoccupations. Meeting, you do not recognize each other; conversing, you do not know the name. Students of the present time fail to attain because they take terminology for understanding; they copy sayings of dead old folks in notebooks, not letting anyone see, saying they are esoteric teachings, so they’re safeguarding them. Big mistake. Blind ignoramuses, what soup are you looking for in dry bones?

“There is a type who doesn’t know good from bad and who takes ideas from doctrines and deals with them literally and dogmatically. This is like taking a piece of crap in your mouth and spitting it out at other people. They are just like people of the world passing on verbal orders. They’re wasting their lives. They say they are renunciants, but when questioned about the Buddha’s teaching

they're speechless; their eyes go dark and their mouths sag. This type will be removed to another world when the future Buddha Maitreya appears, sent to hell to suffer.

“Great worthies, you impulsively go around to various places—what are you looking for? You may walk your feet flat, but there is no Buddha to seek, no Way to fulfill, and no Dharma to attain. If you seek a formal Buddha outside, it won't resemble you. If you want to know your basic mind, it is neither involved nor disconnected.

“Followers of the Way, the real Buddha has no form, the real Way has no substance, the real truth has no definition. These three things are combined in one; if you can't distinguish them, you are referred to as ordinary people with unfocused habit-ridden consciousness.”

Someone asked, “What are the real Buddha, the real Dharma, and the real Way?”

The teacher said, “Buddha is purity of mind. Dharma is the light of mind. The Way is the pure light that is unobstructed in any place. The three are one; all are empty names, and have no true

existence. As for genuine students of the Way, their minds are uninterrupted moment to moment. Ever since the great teacher Bodhidharma came from the West, he just sought someone who was not deceived by others. Later he met the second grand master, who understood at a single saying, whereupon he realized he had been wasting effort all along. My perception today is not different from the masters and Buddhas.

“If you attain in the first statement, you are a teacher of masters and Buddhas. If you attain in the second statement, you are a teacher of humans and celestials. If you attain in the third statement, you cannot even save yourself.”

Someone asked, “What was the intention of Bodhidharma’s coming from the West?”

The teacher said, “If he had an intention, he couldn’t have saved himself.”

The questioner asked, “If there was no point, how did his successor attain the Dharma?”

The teacher said, “Attainment is not attaining.”

The questioner asked, “If one doesn’t attain, what’s the point of not attaining?”

The teacher said, “It’s because you cannot stop your mind running off seeking everywhere; that’s why a master teacher said, ‘Tsk—grownups using their heads to look for their heads.’ If you turn your own light around and reverse your attention at these words, you won’t seek elsewhere any more; you’ll know your body and mind do not differ from the masters and Buddhas, and right then be freed of concern. Only then is it called attaining the Dharma.

“Great worthies, it is only out of necessity that I am now speaking measured words, talking so naively. Make no mistake—as I see it, there really aren’t so many principles. If you need to apply them, then apply them; if you don’t need them, then quit. The way everyone else speaks of myriad practices of six perfections as Buddhism, I say these are methods of adornment, methods of Buddhist service, not the Buddha’s Dharma. Even if you maintain discipline of diet and conduct very carefully, if the eye of the Way is not clarified you’ll have to repay all your debts—some day you’ll be billed for your meals. Why so? If you enter the Way but don’t

penetrate its principles, you give back your body to return the donations of the faithful.

“Even if you live alone on a solitary peak, eat once a day at six in the morning, sit for a long time without lying down, and practice six times a day, you are all people creating karma. Giving up everything, even your head, eyes, marrow, brain, country, wife, children, and possessions, views such as this all torment body and mind, so they bring about painful results. It is better to have no preoccupations, wholly uncompromised. Even bodhisattvas who have fulfilled the ten stages get into tracks and traces seeking this Way. When they understand it’s ungraspable, this is why the celestials celebrate, the spirits of earth support their feet, and all the Buddhas of the ten directions pronounce praises. Why so? Because the application of the Wayfarer now listening to the teaching has no tracks or traces.”

Notes

The Flower Bank world is a vision of the universe described in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*. Entering into this world refers to visionary experience fostered by alteration of perception produced by recitation of the scripture.

Vairocana is the name of the cosmic Buddha, or universal fundamental awareness. The *Flower Ornament Scripture* includes a chapter on Vairocana

personified.

Daoyi, better known as Mazu, was one of the most famous Chan masters of the eighth century. He and his contemporary Shitou were known as the Two Gateways to Immortality. Mazu's sayings are translated in *Teachings of Zen*, "The Normal Mind is the Way." Shitou's writing *Merging of Sameness and Difference* is translated in *Timeless Spring*. Magu, Luzu, Danxia, and Shikong were all students of Mazu. Luzu appears in the *Book of Serenity*. Shikong was a hunter when he met Mazu, and later as a teacher in his own right used to draw his bow against seekers to put them on the spot.

Maitreya, or The Kind One, is the name of the Buddha of the future, a standard Buddhist icon.

Bodhidharma's coming from the West refers to the transmission of Chan from India to China.

Someone asked, "The Buddha Great Higher Knowledge Overcoming by Knowledge sat for ten eons at a site of enlightenment but the reality of Buddhahood did not appear, and he couldn't complete the Way of Buddhas—what does this mean? I ask the teacher for instruction."

The teacher said, "Great higher knowledge is oneself; in all situation realizing that myriad things have no essence and no definition is

called great higher knowledge. As for Overcoming by Knowledge, in all situations not doubting and not grasping a single thing is called overcoming by knowledge. 'Buddha' is pure light pervading the realm of reality—this can be called 'enlightened.' Ten eons sitting at a site of enlightenment refers to the ten ways of transcendence.

That the reality of Buddhahood doesn't appear means that Buddhahood is not born, and reality does not die—how can there be any further manifestation? Not being able to attain the Way of Buddhas means that a Buddha cannot turn into a Buddha. An ancient said, 'Buddha is always in the world, but without being stained by things of the world.'

Note

The case of the Buddha of Great Higher Knowledge Overcoming by Knowledge is an allusion to a story in the Lotus scripture, one of the great masterpieces of Mahayana Buddhism, often cited by Chan masters. This theme appears as a *gongan (koan)*, or case study, in the collection *No Barrier*.

"Followers of the Way, if you want to be Buddhas, don't follow myriad things. 'When mind is aroused, myriad phenomena are born; when mind is quiescent, myriad phenomena perish. If the whole mind is not aroused, myriad phenomena are blameless.' In the world or

beyond the world, there is no Buddha, no Dharma; they do not become manifest, nor are they ever lost. Even if they exist, they are both names, expressions, devices to take in children, illustrative terms and expressions to remedy ailments.

“Now, names and expressions do not name and express themselves; it is your present luminous lively awareness and knowledge, that which sheds light, that assigns all names and expressions.

“Great worthies, only when you commit the five acts with immediate consequences do you attain liberation.”

Someone asked, “What are the five acts with immediate consequences?”

The teacher said, “Killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, shedding a Buddha’s blood, breaking up a community, burning scriptures and images and so on. These are the five acts with immediate consequences.”

The questioner asked, “What is one’s father?”

The teacher said, “Ignorance is one’s father. The moment you discover that you cannot find origin or destruction anywhere, like



echoes resounding in the air, and you are free of preoccupation wherever you are, this is called killing your father.”

The questioner asked, “What is one’s mother?”

The teacher said, “Craving is one’s mother. The moment you go into the realm of desire looking for craving and only see the empty aspect of things, you have no attachment anywhere—this is called killing your mother.”

The questioner asked, “What is shedding a Buddha’s blood?”

The teacher said, “When you do not conceive a single thought of interpretation in the pure realm of reality, then everywhere is utter darkness; this is shedding Buddha’s blood.”

The questioner asked, “What is breaking up a community?”

The teacher said, “The moment you truly realize afflictions and compulsions are baseless as space, this is breaking up a community.”

The questioner asked, “What is burning scriptures and images?”

The teacher said, “When you see causes and conditions are empty, mind is empty, phenomena are empty, in a moment of absolute certainty you transcend, free of preoccupations; this is burning scriptures and images.

Note

This theme comes from the *Lankavatara sutra*, one of the main scriptures used in Chan teaching. Another symbolic interpretation is found in the sayings of Baizhang, Linji's forefather in Chan, translated in *Introduction to Chan Buddhism*.

“Great worthies, if you attain realization like this, you will avoid being obstructed by those terms of ordinary and holy. The moment you conceive an interpretation of the empty fist, the tip of the pointing finger, as the truth, vainly hoking up bogeys in the phenomena of senses and objects, you slight yourselves and retreat, saying, ‘I am an ordinary person, that one is a sage.’ Bald ignoramuses, what’s the rush? You put on a lion’s skin, then cry like jackals, great men who don’t breathe like great men. You will not trust something in your own house, seeking outside this way, getting hung up on irrelevant terms and expressions of other people of ancient times, expounding upon obscurities, unable to attain independently, objectifying whatever state you come upon, whatever you sense, getting confused by whatever you feel, with no certainty of your own.

“Followers of the Way, don’t grasp what I say. Why? Talk has no authority; it’s a temporary illustration drawn in space, likened to painting or sculpting.

“Followers of the Way, don’t take Buddhahood as the ultimate end; I see it as a toilet hole. ‘Bodhisattvas’ and ‘arhats’ are all things that bind people with fetters and chains. That’s why ‘Manjusri drew a sword to kill Gautama’ and ‘Angulimalya wielded a knife to slay Shakyamuni.’ Followers of the Way, there is no Buddhahood to attain; the traces of teachings of Three Vehicles, five natures, and complete all-at-once enlightenment are all temporary remedies for ailments—there is no real doctrine. Even if it’s there, it’s all a semblance, illustrative announcements, arrangements of written letters.

#### Notes

Manjusri symbolizes insight that cuts through all views; in Buddhist iconography, Manjusri is typically represented wielding a sword, cutting through confusion.

Angulimalya was a worshipper of Kali, goddess of death. The cult of the Phansigar (wielder of the noose, or Strangler), also known as Tagi (“Thuggee,” from which the term Thug is derived), like Angulimalya, practiced ritual murder.

Unlike the Thugs, who buried their victims and appeared to live normal lives when not engaged in predation, Angulimalya wore a necklace of finger bones taken from his victims. It is said that Angulimalya was overcome by the Buddha’s charisma

and gave up his practice, but here he is used as a symbol of overcoming attachment to ideas of holiness.

“Now then, when I speak in this manner, Followers of the Way, there is a kind of baldy who turns inward to apply effort, trying to find a truth beyond the world. This is mistaken. Whoever seeks Buddhahood loses Buddhahood, whoever seeks the Way loses the Way, whoever seeks mastery loses mastery.

“Followers of the Way, make no mistake: I don’t care if you understand scriptures and treatises, I don’t care if you’re rulers of nations or important ministers, I don’t care how eloquent you are, I don’t care how brilliant and intelligent you are; I only want you to be truly perceptive.

“Followers of the Way, even if you can interpret a hundred scriptures and treatises, you are not as good as one who has no preoccupations. When you ‘understand,’ and then look down on others, contentiousness and egotistic ignorance foster hellish behavior. The monk Sunakshatra, for example, understood the whole canon but fell living into hell; the earth could not contain him.

It is better to have no preoccupations, to be at peace, eating when hungry, closing your eyes when sleep comes. Foolish people laugh at me, but the wise know this.

Note

Sunakshatra was a disciple of Buddha who thought he had become an arhat, or saint, when he had experienced the fourth stage of meditation, and became so conceited that “the earth could not contain him.”

“Followers of the Way, don’t seek in the written word; mental excitement is fatiguing, and inhaling cool air is no help. It is better when the conditional arousal of a single thought does not occur; you transcend beyond the bodhisattvas provisionally studying in the Three Vehicles.

“Great worthies, don’t pass the days shilly-shallying. In days gone by when I did not yet have insight, I was totally in the dark. Time is not to be wasted; with heat in my guts and hurry in my heart, I ran restlessly to inquire into the Way. Later I attained power, and only then got to the point today where I am talking to you in this manner. I urge all followers of the Way, don’t do it for food and clothing. Observe how the world slips by, while a good teacher is hard to find,

like the udumbara flower that blooms but once in an age. You've heard it said elsewhere that there is an old fellow Linji, and you come and try to ask difficult questions, to make me unable to speak. Exposed to my total application, students open their eyes blankly, dumbstruck, confused, not knowing how to reply to me. I tell them donkeys can't go where dragons and elephants tread. You just point to yourselves everywhere and claim you understand Chan, understand the Way, but when you come here, in twos and threes, you are helpless. Tsk! You take this body and mind and flap your lips wherever you go, deceiving the populace. Some day you'll be caned with an iron rod. You are not renunciants—you're all in the realm of titans.

“The Way of ultimate truth does not seek to preach by argument, or to break down other ways by hitting them. When it comes to the heritage of the Buddhas and masters, there is no special meaning: even if there is verbal instruction, it falls within the category of methodology, the Three Vehicles and five natures, the causes and effects of human and celestial states. As for the complete all-at-once teaching, however, it is not so—the lad Sudhana didn't seek any of these.

## Note

Sudhana is the protagonist of the final book of the *Flower Ornament Sutra*, who goes on a journey visiting fifty-three teachers.

“Great worthies, don’t misapply your minds, as ‘the ocean does not retain a corpse.’ The way you carry it around running all over the world, you create your own barriers of views, blocking your minds. When no clouds cover the sun, it shines throughout the clear sky; when there are no ailments of the eye, there are no flowers in the sky.

“Followers of the Way, if you want to accord with the Dharma, just don’t conceive doubt. In extension it pervades the realm of reality; on withdrawal, nothing at all can stand: the clear, evident, solitary light has never been missing. The eyes do not see it, the ears do not hear it—what do you call it? An ancient said, ‘to say it is like any thing is inaccurate.’ You just see for yourselves—what else is there? If you talk about it, there’s no end—let each of you apply effort yourself.

“Goodbye.”

