THE HEART OF ZEN

Huangbo's Teachings on Mind

A NEW TRANSLATION WITH COMMENTARY

SECOND EDITION



Introduction and commentary by Soh Wei Yu

The Heart of Zen

Huangbo’s Teachings on Mind

A New Translation with Commentary

A new English translation from Chinese sources
with introduction and commentary by
Soh Wei Yu

The recorded teachings of Huangbo Xiyun
Pei Xiu’s Preface · Essentials of Mind Transmission
Wanling Record · Twenty-eight appended materials

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The translation presents the received Chinese textual traditions in English. The introduction, interpretations, and commentary are by Soh Wei Yu. The source records, later encounters, and modern commentary are distinguished throughout. Language-model tools contributed to translation drafting, comparison, and checking under his Chinese-language review and editorial direction. The Note on Translation and Editorial Method explains the development of this edition.

Contact me at https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2025/05/contact-us.html

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The translated texts run in their received order, with commentary collected after each main work. Links beneath the passages lead to their commentary, textual notes and relevant glossary entries; the commentary and reference sections link back to the passages. The Contents and the Guide to Key Terms and Passages offer other ways into the book.

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Preface: The Teachings of Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun

Note on Translation and Editorial Method

This edition brings together a newly developed English translation grounded in Chinese sources and the substantial preface, explanations, annotations, and commentary from my 2025 book, The Heart of Zen. Its translated texts replace the earlier English renderings. My commentary remains an integral part of the book, now brought into correspondence with the new translation.

I have directed this work through Chinese-language review and editorial guidance, extensively developing and repeatedly refining specialized Awakening to Reality (AtR) translation and review protocols. These instructions grew in response to concrete difficulties: omitted clauses, misplaced attribution, misleading implications, inconsistent terminology, unnatural English, and the insertion of a hidden knower or agent where the source did not warrant one.

Language-model tools contributed to drafting, comparison, and checking; their output remained subject to critical examination and revision. This was a sustained process of direction and review, not a single unreviewed rendering. I did not draft every English sentence unaided, and repeated review is not a guarantee of infallibility. I take responsibility for my commentary and for the editorial decisions that shape this edition.

In the textual notes, “Chinese companion” means the collated Chinese source dossier used to prepare this translation. It records the received texts, local variant readings, and the reasons for particular translation choices. This is an English-primary edition with Chinese citations and textual notes; the bibliography identifies the underlying textual witnesses.

Huangbo and the Chan lineage

The texts translated herein preserve the austere yet profound teachings of Chan (Zen) Master Huangbo Xiyun (黃檗希运, Huángbò Xīyùn), a towering figure of the late-middle Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), China's 'golden age' of Chan Buddhism.

Honored posthumously as “Duanji Chanshi” (断际禅师; interpreted here as “Chan Master of Decisive Judgment”), Huangbo flourished during the first half of the 9th century, likely passing away around the 850s CE, during the Tang Dazhong reign period (847–860).

Born in what is now Fuzhou, Fujian Province (福建福州), he demonstrated a strong affinity for monastic life from a young age. He was ordained in Fujian; he later presided at Mount Huangbo (Jiangxi) from which he takes his name. Tradition holds he possessed unique physical marks, including a distinctive protrusion on his forehead likened to a "flesh pearl" (肉珠), often seen as indicating future spiritual eminence. Known for his quick intelligence and striking demeanor, he mastered not only Buddhist scriptures ("inner" learning) but also familiarized himself with non-Buddhist classics ("outer" learning), preparing him for the skillful guidance of diverse seekers.

Huangbo occupies a pivotal place in the Chan lineage directly descending from the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng (慧能). The transmission runs:

Sixth Patriarch Huineng (六祖慧能) ↓

Nanyue Huairang (南岳怀让) ↓

Mazu Daoyi (马祖道一) ↓

Baizhang Huaihai (百丈怀海) ↓

Huangbo Xiyun (黄檗希运)

He received the "direct transmission of Mind" from his immediate teacher, Baizhang Huaihai (720–814). Baizhang, famed for establishing Chan monastic regulations and the maxim "A day without work is a day without food," guided Huangbo to deep realization within the dynamic Hongzhou school tradition, which emphasized direct experience and sudden awakening over solely scriptural approaches.

After his initial training, Huangbo eventually settled and taught primarily at Da'an Monastery on Mount Huangbo (distinct from the mountain of his ordination, sometimes written 黄蘗 using a variant character) in Hongzhou, Jiangxi Province, a major Chan center.

His stature within the tradition is reflected in comments like that of later Soto Zen Master Hong Wen Liang (洪文亮, a Zen teacher who lives in Taichung, Taiwan, whose deep wisdom and teachings I greatly appreciate): “Venerable Rujing was extremely strict and most incisive. Among those recognized by him as true patriarchs, very few appear. Hongzhi, Huangbo,

and Dōgen were among the ones he recognized…" (Full talk accessible at https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2025/02/the-admonitions-on-seated-meditationa.html)

Hong Wen Liang's remarks are excerpted from "A Needle for Zazen (Zazenshin)—The True Meaning of Seated Meditation Transmitted Through Successive Generations," lectures compiled by Wu Cheng-da and reproduced in English at Awakening to Reality. Public text: https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2025/02/the-admonitions-on-seated-meditationa.html.

The lineage account above follows the received Chan tradition. Pei Xiu's preface uses a different kinship expression, calling Huangbo "a Dharma-nephew of Xitang and Baizhang." That wording belongs to the preface's own account and should be distinguished from the later presentation of Huangbo as Baizhang's direct disciple.

Anecdotes illuminate Huangbo's character and teaching. One notable story recounts his encounter with a traveling monk displaying supernatural ability by walking effortlessly across a flooded river. When the monk beckoned Huangbo to follow, Huangbo rebuked him, reportedly lamenting that he hadn't crippled the monk to prevent such displays of mere personal power, which he saw as contrary to the Mahayana ideal of universal liberation over individual miracles. This highlights his unwavering focus on the compassionate Bodhisattva path rather than siddhis (powers).

Huangbo's teaching style embodied directness. The title "Duanji" reflects his mastery – cutting through illusory boundaries. He employed abrupt methods – shouts (喝), blows, silence – as skillful means (方便, *upāya*) to shock students out

of habitual thought and provoke direct insight into the One Mind.

His reputation attracted vast "sea-like assemblies" (海众).

Among his foremost disciples was **Pei Xiu (裴休, 791–864)**, a high-ranking official who became a devoted student, invited Huangbo to teach in Zhongling and Wanling, and meticulously recorded and organized his teachings around 857 CE into the *Chuanxin Fayao* (传心法要) and *Wanling Lu* (宛陵录), verifying the records with other monks. Another famed disciple was **Linji Yixuan (临济义玄, d. 866)**, founder of the influential Linji (Rinzai) school.

Following his passing during the Dazhong reign period (847–860), tentatively dated to around 850 CE, Huangbo was honored with the title "Duanji Chanshi" by Emperor Xuanzong, and later received additional titles like "Jue Zhao Chanshi" and "Hongzong Miaoxing Chanshi." His impact deeply shaped Chan/Zen in **both China and Japan**, primarily via the Linji school. His recorded teachings remain a touchstone for practitioners worldwide, valued for their uncompromising focus on realizing the nature of Mind.

Huangbo's teaching centers on the "One Mind" (一心). This term points not to a universal source, substratum, substance, or consciousness (like Brahman), but to the fundamental nature (本性) of awareness itself—a primordial, empty, and unborn gnosis (本觉, *běnjué*) that is the essential quality of each discrete instance of consciousness. To clarify, the Buddhist tradition maintains that each sentient being is a

distinct mind-stream (citta-saṃtāna, 心相续 *xīn-xiāngxù*); they do not share an underlying, metaphysically existent universal consciousness as posited in Advaita. All diversities remain, for we do not reduce, subsume, or extrapolate them into an underlying oneness or same substance (such as the "one without a second" Brahman).

However, the luminous clarity (明性 *míngxìng*) and empty nature (空性 *kōngxìng*) of Mind is—conventionally speaking—similarly present in all beings as a generic characteristic, like heat is to fire, without being reified as a truly existent, singular, overarching ontological ground. It is in this sense that Buddhas and sentient beings are said to have the same nature. To make the point still clearer, Huangbo's "One Mind" denotes the immediate, luminous, and empty presence of every single mind-moment or vivid appearance (whatever seen, heard, sensed, touched, etc.)—clear-knowing (灵知 *língzhī*) yet empty—shared as an always-and-everywhere mode of occurrence, not as a single substance pervading all beings. Saying that clarity-emptiness is "like heat to fire" means only that whenever mind appears it is inseparably radiant and hollow, never that it constitutes a hidden ground underneath appearances.

Indeed, the very belief that things possess intrinsic natures collapses under simple scrutiny: wetness and water are not two different entities, so wetness cannot be the "nature" of water; just as heat and fire are inseparable, yet heat is not some extra essence clinging to fire. Consider the question: does water depend on wetness, or does wetness depend on water? Whichever way we approach this dilemma, it becomes

evident that no independent 'nature' can be isolated. Terms like 'wetness' and 'water', or 'heat' and 'fire' merely serve as alternative labels for the same entity. Consequently, the concept of an autonomous, standalone nature proves untenable in every instance.

Gnosis or Awareness is empty of inherent existence (无自性, *wú zìxìng*), unborn, indestructible, and beyond conceptualization or substantiality. It is unborn not in a substantially existent way, but in the sense that nothing self-existent ever arose even in its vivid "arising" (appearance).

Mind is also signless (无相, *wúxiàng*): empty of any intrinsic characteristics, such as fixed forms and colors that can be grasped, and precisely because of its signlessness, all appearances are thereby possible as its unceasing potentials and displays.

Mind is not an inert emptiness: it is fundamentally **luminous** and clear, yet empty, actively manifesting as myriad appearances and activities. Huangbo likens Mind's radiance to a great sun wheel, as he illustrates: "Like the great sun-wheel illuminating the four continents: when the sun rises, brightness pervades the world, yet empty space has never brightened; when the sun sets, darkness pervades the world, yet empty space has never darkened."

Empty-clarity experientially has a quality of spaciousness. While using empty space as an analogy is not exactly incorrect, one must be careful not to reify this spaciousness of empty clarity into an ultimate background that either exists behind phenomena or contains phenomena, as that would amount to a false dichotomy or dualism rooted in

ignorance. It should also be mentioned that if we reduce all to a common space-like background morphing into appearances, this means the habitual tendency to reify Mind remains even if non-duality is experienced, and the truth that Mind is by nature No-Mind and essence-less remains elusive.

Realizing the empty nature of dualistic consciousness (*vijñāna*) reveals this non-dual gnosis. Thus, the core teaching of Huangbo, **"Mind itself is Buddha" (即心是佛),** as well as **"Mind itself is no-mind" (心自无心)**, taken together signifies that this very empty, luminous, fundamental gnosis *is* the awakened state. Awakening is the direct recognition (见性, *jiànxìng* – "seeing the nature") of this non-substantial, ever-present nature of Mind (心性), not an attainment of something external.

Furthermore, the interdependence of Mind (as this fundamental gnosis) and phenomena (dharmas) is expressed clearly in the teachings. Huangbo states directly: **"This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mind." (此法即心，心外无法；此心即法，法外无心。)** This resonates with teachings from his lineage predecessors.

His Dharma grandfather Mazu taught, "Outside the Mind, there is no other Buddha; outside the Buddha, there is no other mind... Whatever forms are seen are entirely seeing the mind. Mind is not intrinsically mind; it depends on forms (色)." The First Patriarch of Chan in China, Bodhidharma, similarly taught: “Form is not intrinsically form but depends on mind; mind is not intrinsically mind but depends on

form… If the mind does not stir, the environment does not arise. When both mind and environment are pure, this is true seeing."

These words highlight the dependent co-arising of mind and matter—neither exists independently or substantially, precluding any reduction of reality exclusively to mind or to matter. Regarding one-taste and non-duality in experience, a non-substantialist holds that the seamlessness and boundlessness of phenomena—like space—do not imply that mind and matter share the same substance or that one is the by-product of the other (reductionist monism). Instead, diversity remains: mind is mind because matter is matter and vice versa; they just have to be empty by nature.

The Mazu passage is preserved in Yongming Yanshou's Record of the Source-Mirror (Zongjing lu), fascicle 1, Taishō vol. 48, no. 2016, 418c6–10. The second passage comes from the Treatise on Realizing the Nature (Wuxing lun), traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma.

Mazu in the Record of the Source-Mirror · Chinese text of the Treatise on Realizing the Nature (p. 3)

> **A monk asked**, 'Master, why do you say that mind is Buddha?'
>
> Mazu said, 'To stop babies from crying.'
>
> The monk said, 'What do you say when they stop crying?'
>
> Mazu said, 'No mind, no Buddha.'

Instead of seeing 'No mind, no Buddha' as a denial or rejection of Mind, it should be understood as a more thorough penetration into the *nature* of this radiant Mind, as being empty of any inherent, substantial, or separate existence.

No-Mind and the full realization of Mind

Consistent with this non-dual, empty view, Huangbo's teaching on **"No-Mind" (无心, *wúxīn*)** is paramount. This points to the realization that Mind is fundamentally empty of inherent, substantial existence (*anātman* applied to Mind). None of these teachings imply nihilism, although nihilism is a genuine danger for those who misunderstand emptiness. "No Mind" points directly to what is always already the case—it has no independent existence of its own. There is no mind apart from phenomena, and no phenomena apart from mind. This is precisely what the great Chan/Zen Masters meant when they stated that mind has no true existence.

True No-Mind is the realization of True Mind as empty: No-Mind. The word "true" does not give Mind an exemption from emptiness. It points to the direct realization of this very luminous knowing, free of the imagined self or independent essence we impose upon it. No-Mind is therefore not a denial of Mind, and realizing it does not extinguish seeing, hearing, feeling, or the capacity to respond. What falls away is the assumption that an independently existing agent or background subject stands behind these appearances.

The Treatise on No-Mind (無心論), traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma, expresses this directly:

> "No-mind is precisely true mind; true mind is precisely no-mind."

夫無心者即真心也。真心者即無心也。

The same treatise rejects the idea that No-Mind makes us insensible like wood or stone. Its teaching concerns an

ungraspable mind whose wisdom responds without obstruction. To realize that Mind cannot be found as an entity is to release the limitations we place upon its living expression. The emptiness of Mind and its vivid manifestation are inseparable.

Treatise on No-Mind, Taishō, vol. 85, no. 2831, 1269c8–19 (quotation at c16); compare its inquiry into the unfindable mind at 1269b10–13. The English sentence above is a rendering of the Chinese quoted here; the traditional attribution is not a claim of established historical authorship.

Chinese text of the Treatise on No-Mind

Two inseparable insights

A pairing shared by Yin Ling brings out these two aspects of realization. The first verse is attributed to Naropa in the Awakening to Reality post:

> I Am that empty Hermitage,
> Smoke comes out of my chimney
> But no one is home.

She paired it with this verse, attributed there to Tilopa:

> The Mind of Clear Light
> Is disguised as
> Dust on the window sill,
> A chair, a table,
> And even your favorite coffee cup...
> All things are a pulsating pointing
> To a world in which
> Nothing exists.

Yin Ling commented:

> "I cut out these two because these two insights make up 'no self realization'. One without the other is skewed. Must have both."

The empty hermitage points to no agent and no background subject: there is functioning, yet no self standing apart from or behind it. The second verse points to the immediacy and richness of experience. Luminosity is not hidden elsewhere, waiting to be found apart from ordinary things. It is this colour, this sound, this sensation, this very appearance.

I understand "Nothing exists" here in the sense of emptiness: no independently existing thing can be found. It does not mean that appearances, conditions, compassionate activity, or the consequences of our actions are absent. Without this experiential fullness, "no self" can become a sterile idea of nothingness; without emptiness, vivid knowing can be grasped as an eternal Self.

The verses and Yin Ling's comment are reproduced as shared in the Awakening to Reality article cited below. The Naropa and Tilopa attributions are those of that modern sharing; an original-language source and an identifiable translation have not been established for these English verses.

Yin Ling's pairing and comment: https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2023/05/nice-advice-and-expression-of-anatta-in.html

John Tan on anatta

John Tan made the distinction particularly clear in his 2023 conversation with the AtR bot. His questions and corrections

are reproduced below, with the bot's replies separately identified:

John Tan: "What is anatta?"

AI: "Anatta is the realization that there never was a truly existing mind/Mind/Awareness/Brahman/Presence/Ultimate-Reality etc. Mind, Awareness, Seeing, etc, all these are just conventions for the ongoing appearance. There is simply no seer-seeing-seen."

John Tan: "Anatta is the seeing through of reified mental construct in relation to 'self'. There are 2 main insights, one relates to reified mental construct, the other is the direct taste of consciousness as appearances."

AI: "Yes, that is correct. Anatta is the realization that there is no truly existing self or consciousness beyond the ongoing appearances of the six senses. It involves seeing through the reification of mental constructs related to the self and gaining a direct taste of consciousness as appearances."

John Tan: "If we merely negate reified construct of 'self' without authentication of consciousness as the appearances, then it is only a conceptual understanding of anatta."

AI: "Yes, that is correct. Simply negating the reified construct of the self without gaining a direct taste of consciousness as appearances would only be a conceptual understanding of anatta. To truly realize anatta, one must also see through the reification of consciousness and gain a direct taste of it as mere appearances."

John Tan's correction is decisive. An intellectual conclusion that there is no self is not yet the realization of anatta. The apparently solid seer, hearer, and knower must be seen through, and consciousness must be directly tasted as appearances themselves. In hearing, sound is vividly self-evident without an additional hearer; in seeing, colour is vividly present without a seer standing apart from it. This does not reduce experience to dead objects. It releases the imagined division between a knowing subject and an independently existing object, while leaving no substantial consciousness behind them.

Yin Ling's pairing and comment, and John Tan's conversation with the AtR bot, are reproduced in "When Sound Hears Itself: The Journey to Experiencing Anatta," Awakening to Reality. The article identifies the conversation as 2023. The bot's replies are part of the recorded exchange, not an independent authority for the teaching.

https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2023/05/nice-advice-and-expression-of-anatta-in.html

Image of the original conversation

By "no agent and no background subject," I do not mean merely that actions happen without deliberate control. A detached observer can remain even when a personal doer seems absent. Nor is anatta a passing state in which subject and object feel dissolved. It is the insight that no independently existing seer, hearer, thinker or knower has ever stood behind experience.

At the same time, luminous knowingness is directly authenticated as the vivid appearances of the six senses: in seeing, the seen; in hearing, sound; in thinking, thoughts. These appearances are empty and dependently arisen; they

are not the expressions of an unchanging consciousness-substance. Conditions, intention, discernment and compassionate activity continue to function.

For fuller explanations of these distinctions, see the following essays on Awakening to Reality:

John Tan (Thusness), "On Anatta (No-Self), Emptiness, Maha and Ordinariness, and Spontaneous Perfection"

Soh Wei Yu, "Different Degrees of No-Self: Non-Doership, Non-dual, Anatta, Total Exertion and Dealing with Pitfalls"

John Tan (Thusness), with commentary by Soh Wei Yu, "Buddha Nature is NOT 'I Am'"

Luminosity and the living heart of Mind

I use luminosity to point to the living heart of experience: radiant, cognizant Presence, intensely alive and wondrous. Its direct, doubtless realization and taste is more than heightened clarity, mindfulness or thoughtless absorption. Experience comes alive with an intimacy that feels "more real than real."

Initially this may be recognized as "I AM." This precious breakthrough is not yet the full realization of anatta. Through anatta, the imagined centre and ultimate background behind appearance are seen through; luminous knowingness is the very colour, sound, scent, taste, touch and thought. There is no separate illuminator, no agent and no background subject. I call this presencing: the dynamic life of transience.

Its vitality and intelligence remain. With insight into conditionality, even a breath expresses boundless total exertion—the complete activity of interdependent conditions,

without a cosmic controller or an enduring substance behind appearances.

Soh Wei Yu, "The Transient Universe has a Heart" (18 February 2019).

My dharma mentor John Tan expressed this fully in 2014:

> "The purpose of anatta *(i.e. the realization of No-Self)* is to have full blown experience of the heart (Mind) -- boundlessly, completely, non-dually and non-locally. Re-read what I wrote to Jax.
>
> In every situations, in all conditions, in all events. It is to eliminate unnecessary contrivity so that our essence can be expressed without obscuration.
>
> Jax wants to point to the heart but is unable to express in a non-dual way... for in duality, the essence cannot be realized. All dualistic interpretations are mind made. You know the smile of Mahākāśyapa? Can you touch the heart of that smile even 2500 yrs later?
>
> One must lose all mind and body by feeling with entire mind and body this essence which is 心 (Mind).
>
> Yet 心 (Mind) too is 不可
>
> 得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable).. The purpose is not to deny 心 (Mind) but rather not to place any limitations or duality so that 心 (Mind) can fully manifest.
>
> Therefore without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to limit 心 (Mind). without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to place limitation in its manifestations. You must fully

> experience 心 (Mind) by realizing 无心 (No-Mind) and fully embrace the wisdom of 不可得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable)." - John Tan, 2014

John Tan, conversation dated 18–19 October 2014, reproduced in "Fully Experience All-Is-Mind by Realizing No-Mind, Conditionality, Unreality and Non-Arising," Awakening to Reality. The wording here retains the expanded abbreviations and explanatory glosses of the 2025 book.

John Tan's 2014 conversation in its fuller context

John Tan's point is that anatta allows the heart, Mind, to be experienced boundlessly, completely, non-dually, and non-locally. He insists that Mind is 不可得—ungraspable, unobtainable, unfindable—and that understanding conditions is essential to its unrestricted manifestation. The purpose is to release Mind from reification and duality so that its empty, responsive nature can be fully realized.

John Tan's 2014 passage in Contextual Perspectives

Directly pointing to Mind

This is why Chan points directly to Mind and calls for seeing its nature: 直指人心，見性成佛 (zhí zhǐ rén xīn, jiàn xìng chéng fó). In the received Huangbo record, the teaching is expressed in these words:

> "At this point one knows that the Patriarch coming from the West directly pointed to the human mind; seeing nature and becoming Buddha do not depend on words and speech."

Huangbo, Essentials of Mind Transmission: direct pointing and seeing nature

The Platform Sūtra makes the urgency of this recognition equally clear. In its familiar account of Huineng's transmission, the Fifth Patriarch Hongren tells him:

> "If you do not recognize your original mind, studying Dharma is of no benefit."

不識本心，學法無益。

Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch, Taishō, vol. 48, no. 2008, chapter 1, 349a16–25 (quotation at a21–22). The saying also occurs in the Dunhuang recension, Taishō no. 2007, 338a4–5, in the account of composing a verse to demonstrate insight. The wording concerns recognition of one's own mind; it is not a rejection of learning when learning serves realization.

Platform Sūtra, received recension (T2008) · Platform Sūtra, Dunhuang recension (T2007)

The point of these teachings is direct realization. To repeat "there is no mind" while remaining unfamiliar with this luminous knowing misses their heart. To recognize vivid knowing but take it to be an independent, enduring Self leaves its empty nature unresolved. True No-Mind fully realizes Mind without making Mind into something graspable. Seeing, hearing, feeling, and responding are intimate and unobstructed: there is no agent and no background subject, and their arising is inseparable from conditions. This is the experiential force of True Mind being No-Mind, and No-Mind being True Mind.

The path to realizing this involves more than intellectual understanding alone. Thus, Huangbo prioritizes direct

experience and wordless transmission. Furthermore, in practice, it often involves stages of clarification by means of direct insight. As many teachers elaborated, there's a distinction between initially **apprehending the Mind** (明心, *míngxīn*)—recognizing its luminous clarity—and fully **seeing the Nature** (见性, *jiànxìng*)—realizing its empty, unobtainable/unfindable essence.

Deluded sentient beings have no inkling of the radiant essence of Mind, and identify themselves only with thoughts and perceptions, just like what was expressed by Huangbo: "People of the world do not awaken to it; they recognize only seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing as mind. Veiled by seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing, they do not behold the clear-luminous fundamental essence."

However, by turning one's fixation away from thoughts and perceptions, taking the backward step and tracing awareness back to its source (回光返照) through meditation and self-inquiry or kōan-introspection, one may come to a direct and immediate certainty of one's Mind-essence as a doubtless, luminously clear and vivid Presence or numinous awareness (灵知). It is a total and unshakeable conviction in one's deepest core of one's True Heart-Mind (真心), as the truth of one's very Beingness and Pure Existence reveals itself in its utter nakedness and crystal clarity, staring right at your face. Without this direct realization, nothing is worthy of being termed "awakening".

Although realizing this numinous awareness (灵知) is an important, precious, and crucial initial fundamental

breakthrough, merely stopping here means one has not yet fully penetrated the relationship between Mind or radiance and all phenomena, nor realized the empty, non-arisen, and **unobtainable/unfindable** nature of both Mind and phenomena. Instead, at this stage, one's understanding is prone to views resembling the Hindu view of Atman-Brahman. One may identify with numinous awareness (灵知) as the ultimate, pure, and unchanging Subjectivity that underlies or pervades all phenomena, grasping at this awareness as one's unchanging true Self while perceiving all phenomena as emerging, changing, and subsiding within this changeless ground.

Zen Master Dogen, along with many great masters of the past, explicitly criticized such views. Dogen critiqued those who hold such views—that numinous awareness (灵知) is unchanging while mind and body change—as proponents of the non-Buddhist Shrenika heresy. As Zen Master Shohaku Okumura explained in his insightful article (https://www.sotozen.com/eng/dharma/pdf/36e.pdf - Soto Zen Journal Number 36), Dogen identified teachings using metaphors like the "mani jewel (one bright jewel) which is permanent and never changes, even though the surface color is changing" as "nothing other than [the false view of] atman." Hence, working with a deeply awakened teacher who has thoroughly resolved "the great matter" is often considered essential to arrive at the complete understanding, moving beyond this stage to fully realize the empty nature.

Shohaku Okumura, "The 7th Chapter of Shobogenzo Ikka-myoju (One Bright Jewel), Lecture (2)," edited by Hoko Karnegis, Dharma Eye, no. 36 (November 2015), pp. 6–16; the jewel and ātman

discussion is on pp. 7–8. Publisher’s copy: https://www.sotozen.com/eng/library/journal/pdf/36e.pdf. The address printed above is the earlier publication URL.

Master Huangbo Xiyun’s legacy endures as a powerful expression of Chan's core insight: liberation arises from recognizing the already-present, empty, luminous Mind. His life and words challenge practitioners to cease seeking externally, drop discriminating thought, cut off clinging to dualities, and instead turn directly inward to encounter the luminous clarity of one's Mind that is already free precisely because it is empty of substance and ultimately **unobtainable/unfindable** as an inherently existing entity, separate object, or state. I would express the practical thrust of his teaching in this way: to see into one’s Mind is to see the Buddha.

Summary of Huangbo's Teachings

This text comprises the recorded teachings (dialogues and discourses) of the influential Tang Dynasty Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun, preserved in the *Chuanxin Fayao* and *Wanling Lu* recorded and organized by his disciple Pei Xiu, together with separately identified appended materials. The central focus is the direct, non-conceptual realization of the "One Mind," which Huangbo equates with the fundamental nature itself, accessible here and now beyond intellectual grasp or gradual attainment.

Huangbo relentlessly expounds the core Chan tenet: **Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛)**. He asserts that all beings share this same One Mind essence (一心体), which is fundamentally complete, perfect, empty, quiescent (空寂), and unborn. Recognizing this Mind involves seeing directly what is functioning ("It is precisely your mind that is speaking right now."), realizing its nature is like empty space—devoid of inherent divisions, substance or existence, yet luminously aware ("numinous awareness" – 灵知), and is none other than the myriad displays and appearances ("Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars").

Duality is the root of delusion; thoughts, perceptions, and distinctions (Buddha/sentient being, self/other) are baseless projections arising from the mind. True seeing transcends opposites, understanding all phenomena as dependently arisen and inseparable from one's own miraculous, empty and radiant Mind, and conversely, Mind is not found separate from phenomena or conditions (as established

by Huangbo: "This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mind.").

Although **Mind** is already **by nature No-Mind**, as expressed by Huangbo: **"Mind itself is no-mind"** (心自无心), a point he emphasizes should not be mistaken for a stage to be attained, but rather recognized as the fundamental, already-so nature of Mind (Huangbo: "Mind itself is no-mind, yet there is no separate no-mind to posit. If one uses mind to make the mind into no-mind, one instead turns mind into something existent."), he also describes **No-Mind** as a state of actualization through continuous practice in every moment ("Eat rice all day without ever biting a single grain. Walk all day without ever stepping on a single piece of ground. At such a time there are no marks such as self and others. All day long one is not apart from all affairs, yet is not confused by any object-realms — only then is one called a free person. Furthermore, at all times and in every thought, do not perceive any marks; do not recognize the past, present, and future. The past has no going, the present has no abiding, the future has no coming. Sit peacefully and upright, freely functioning without constraint — only then is one called liberated. Exert yourselves, exert yourselves!").

Here, actualizing Zen, or No-Mind, involves the cessation of conceptual proliferations ("Mind itself is Buddha; no-mind is the Way. Simply do not give rise to or stir any thoughts of existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and the like."), discrimination, seeking, and attachment ("顿息诸缘，莫生妄想分别"), and the realization and embodiment of the luminously clear, empty, and

unobtainable/unfindable nature of Mind/dharmas that is without self, subject or object.

No-mind (无心, mushin) in Zen is not merely a blank state of thoughtlessness; rather, it is the luminous functioning of **Prajña (wisdom)**, the penetrating wisdom that dispels delusive reification and reveals the pristine clarity of appearances free from conceptual imputations. This state of true, thought-free wakefulness is characterized by spontaneous, boundless intuitive discernment that operates unimpeded by conceptual proliferations ("existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and the like"). Experiential insight into no-mind and anātman arises when the substrate of a background self or knower—realized to be a mere reified construct—is seen through and exhausted, dissolving any sense of a substantially existent knower, agent, self or Self behind vivid appearances and activities. To mistake Zen's wúniàn (无念, "no-thought") for a vacuous mind incapable of distinguishing left from right is a fundamental misunderstanding and a manifestation of pure ignorance.

Huangbo strongly emphasizes abandoning all delusional views (见解) and clearing away the "dung" of conceptual elaboration. Dry intellectualism ("mouth Zen") divorced from direct insight, gradualism focused on attainment, and attachment to external forms or even subtle spiritual concepts are critiqued as deviations.

However, abandoning views here should not be misunderstood merely as withholding views or cultivating a blank state of thoughtlessness. Rather, true abandonment of

views—which really means the cessation of the deluded views of self (我见), subject and object (能所), existence and non-existence (有无)—can only occur through directly realizing the emptiness or non-arisen nature of Mind and whatever appears (which is none other than) as Mind. Such self-luminous appearances manifest like reflections or mirages, without ever amounting to something genuinely arisen or inherently existent. To that end, grasping the right understanding and right view (正见) of the Dharma, skillfully guided by a truly awakened and wise teacher, is essential—even if, at first, this understanding is primarily intellectual.

Although it must be stressed that the key to Zen is a direct, non conceptual realization of the nature of Mind, the Zen Masters of old have also warned against misinterpreting Zen practice as a form of quietism—as if it consisted merely of shutting out all thoughts, anti intellectualism, passivity and withdrawal from engagement with the world, neglect of ethical conduct, rejection of doctrinal study, an obsession with nihilistic emptiness, mechanical concentration devoid of insight, romanticized anti intellectualism, the mistaken belief that suppressing thoughts alone yields Prajna or jñāna (智; knowledge), or neglect of compassionate action.

As the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, Hui Neng said: "Learned Audience, when we use Prajna for introspection we are illumined within and without, and in a position to know our own mind. To know our mind is to obtain liberation. To obtain liberation is to attain Samadhi of Prajna, which is 'thoughtlessness'. What is 'thoughtlessness'? 'Thoughtlessness' is to see and to know all Dharmas (things) with a mind free

from attachment. When in use it pervades everywhere, and yet it sticks nowhere. What we have to do is to purify our mind so that the six vijnanas (aspects of consciousness), in passing through the six gates (sense organs) will neither be defiled by nor attached to the six sense objects. When our mind works freely without any hindrance, and is at liberty to ‘come’ or to ‘go’, we attain Samadhi of Prajna, or liberation. Such a state is called the function of ‘thoughtlessness’. But to refrain from thinking of anything, so that all thoughts are suppressed, is to be Dharma ridden, and this is an erroneous view.”

Dharma Master Hui Lü made this comment in his discourses on Huangbo's teachings: "Listen carefully: ceasing thoughts refers to resting delusive thoughts while right mindfulness (正念, zheng-nian, which literally means "Right Thought" in Chinese) remains; forgetting rumination means relinquishing mental scheming while the mind’s pure wisdom endures. In brief, function is still active. Ceasing thoughts does not mean discarding all mentation—human beings are not corpses. If you interpret it as “eliminating thought,” you go astray. Ceasing thoughts means halting grasping and discrimination; right mindfulness abides. Right mindfulness is precisely no-thought (无念, wu-nian).

No-thought is the vast Dharmakāya (法身); the Dharmakāya is equality, and equality expresses itself as the four immeasurables—great loving-kindness, great compassion, great sympathetic joy, and great equanimity. Thus “ceasing thoughts” does not stop mental activity; it stops attachment and discrimination within mental activity, while right

mindfulness endures. Though right mindfulness abides, it is nevertheless no-thought; though it is the fundamental essence, its wondrous functioning is fully present. Hence, while there appear to be thoughts, they are actually no-thought; and though there is no-thought, when causes and conditions arise it immediately responds and acts."

Hui Lü, Lectures on the Essentials of Mind Transmission (傳心法要講記), lecture 2, on ceasing thoughts and forgetting rumination. The Chinese transcript was published by Fojiao Daohang on 19 August 2013.

Chinese transcript of Hui Lü's lecture 2

Huangbo stresses the **urgency** of resolving the great matter of birth and death now. In the closing discourse of the received Wanling Record, he advocates for determined effort and, illustrating the direct methods used even before later formalized systems, explicitly recommends investigating specific kōans **(公案, gōng'àn), such as Zhaozhou's famous 'Wu' (or in Japanese: 'Mu')**. He describes a method of continuous contemplation (holding the word Wu, rendered "No" in this translation, in mind) as a potent way to cut through thought and arrive at realization ("suddenly the mind-flower bursts open"). Direct, personal and experiential realization (in Ming's words, "Like a person drinking water, I know myself whether it is cold or warm.") is paramount.

Another powerful kōan in the text, put forth by Huangbo, urges one to gaze directly at one's original face before concepts take shape, as Huangbo said, "The Sixth Patriarch said: 'When not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, right at such a time, bring me Head Monk Ming's original face

before your parents were born.’ At these words, Ming suddenly entered silent accord."

The passage on contemplating Wu appears in the received Wanling Record. Its place in that transmitted text and the historical development of later kōan curricula are separate questions; the practical instruction can be read in its full received context without treating it as proof of when those later systems arose.

Dialogues clarify concepts like unconditional compassion (无缘慈悲), exiting the three realms (via ceasing thought), the nature of transmission ("no Dharma to give," illustrated by Huike's **unobtainable/unfindable** mind), and the paradoxical view of ignorance (无明) as the ground of awakening. Anecdotes involving encounters with Nanquan, Guizong, an Emperor-novice, and others serve as practical demonstrations of these teachings in action.

Overall, Huangbo's teachings consistently point to the immediate realization of the empty, luminous, unborn Mind. His uncompromising style aims to cut through all delusions, external seeking and false concepts, leading practitioners to see for themselves the liberation inherent in their own fundamental nature.

An Elaboration on Kōan-Introspection

In the Zen tradition, different kōans serve distinct purposes. The five categories of kōans range from hosshin, which provides practitioners their initial insight into the absolute, to the "five ranks," designed to awaken practitioners to the spontaneous unity of the relative and absolute—non-duality. The experience derived from the kōan, "Before birth, who are you?" grants merely a preliminary glimpse into our Mind-essence as a pure, naked Beingness and Existence—the numinous awareness (灵知) previously described. This differs significantly from Hakuin's kōan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?", which, after the initial breakthrough, prevents the practitioner from stagnating in dead water (一潭死水) and clinging exclusively to the Absolute (偏真).

Instead, it directs practitioners to intimately encounter the ten thousand faces of radiant Mind. Specifically, it explores the "Sound" of one hand clapping. Whether one hand claps or before both hands clap, what precisely is that sound? This kōan guides practitioners into realizing that throughout, there has only ever been one hand clapping—two hands, symbolizing the duality of subject and object, hearer and sound, are neither needed nor ever genuinely existent. This is akin to the contemplation of "in hearing, always only sound, no hearer," leading to the realization of no-self (anātman), which realizes Mind-Radiance as the ten thousand things and simultaneously realizes that Mind is No-Mind: it has no

singular 'Original Face' of its own besides these ten thousand faces.

Illustrating this clearly, a Zen master was said to have proclaimed at the moment of awakening, "When I heard the sound of the bell ringing, there was no I, and no bell, just the ringing." The Zen Abbot of SANBÔZEN, Ryoun Yamada wrote, "The oak tree in the garden, besides that tree nothing else exists in heaven or earth--an even less so, a "Joshu" who is looking at it. This is the world that is manifested in this utterance. "The oak tree in the garden, but there is no I.""

Yamada Ryoun, "Was Descartes Right?," opening comments in Kyôshô, no. 342 (May/June 2011), translated by Jerome Cusumano with the assistance of Sato Migaku; reproduced by Mountain Cloud Zen Center on 23 October 2015: https://www.mountaincloud.org/was-descartes-right-by-yamada-ryuon/.

Guidance from a deeply awakened Zen master is essential to navigate these subtle distinctions, deepen one's insights beyond initial glimpses, and fully actualize one's non-dual and empty nature.

Huangbo beautifully expressed:

> "Mountains are mountains, water is water, monastics are monastics, laity are laity. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars—none lie outside your mind. The entire three-thousandfold world-system is none other than yourself. Where are there so many kinds? Outside mind there are no dharmas; green mountains fill the eyes. The empty world is brilliantly clear, without even a hair's breadth on which you could form an

> interpretation. Thus all sounds and forms are the Buddha's wisdom-eye."

Yet, before we can recognize sounds, mountains, and rivers as our own Radiance, it is crucial to first awaken clearly to what Mind truly is. If our attention merely fixates on external sounds, mountains, and rivers—as deluded sentient beings habitually do—or we merely verbally repeat "Mind is mountains and rivers" like a mantra, such practices offer little genuine help and instead perpetuate fundamental ignorance (to restate the earlier point: deluded sentient beings remain unaware of the radiant essence of Mind, identifying themselves only with thoughts and perceptions). Thus, when stating, "Mind is mountains and rivers," the primary step must be to directly realize and intimately taste the essence of Mind before proceeding further. Without clearly illuminating and tasting Mind’s essence, teachings remain mere eloquent expressions without transformative power.

Here, Zen Master Huangbo—alongside other great Zen masters—skillfully reinforces the essential message, repeatedly striking at the heart of Zen with precision and grace: awaken to the One Mind, luminously clear, non-dual, and empty—this very nature of Mind is also the true nature of all phenomena.

Translator’s Note from the 2025 Edition

My reasons for translating Huangbo were already central to the 2025 edition. The following note gives that earlier account of the project’s motivation and method. Its description of Chinese paragraphs followed by English concerns the earlier edition; the present volume uses the new translation described at the opening of this preface.

I made the decision to produce this new translation because I found some widely circulated older English translations unsatisfactory in terms of precision, accuracy, and interpretation, particularly concerning key doctrinal points.

A primary motivation for this new rendition was to address significant misinterpretations observed in earlier, influential English translations—most notably John Blofeld’s *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind*. **Blofeld's work was pioneering and undeniably instrumental in introducing Huangbo's profound teachings to a wide Western audience for the first time.** Blofeld's translation is often lauded for its smooth, accessible, and sometimes elegant English prose. He successfully made complex Chan ideas feel approachable and engaging for a Western audience unfamiliar with the tradition, contributing significantly to its popularity.

For this significant contribution, many readers remain grateful. However, from a strict Buddhist doctrinal perspective, his translation shows Vedāntic over-tones, which can lead readers to reify Mind as an absolute substance. This led him, for instance, to reframe Huangbo’s "One Mind" (一心)

in terms suggesting a universal, eternal, or substantive consciousness, akin to the concept of Brahman in Advaita Vedānta. Such an interpretation inadvertently misrepresents a cornerstone of Huangbo's (and indeed, Mahayana Buddhist) teaching: that the 'One Mind', like all phenomena, is inherently **empty of self-nature** (无自性, *wú zìxìng*) and devoid of any ultimate, enduring substance. Any attempt to reify the Mind into an Absolute entity distorts its profound meaning within the Chan context.

This "One Mind" is not a universal, undifferentiated oneness underlying and pervading the whole universe as a monolithic substance, but rather points to the empty, fundamental nature of awareness itself, which is beyond conceptual grasp. This aligns with core Buddhist teachings found, for instance, in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, it is taught that "There is no mind in the mind; the original nature (prakṛti) of the mind is luminous" (其心无心，心者本净，本净心者，自然而乐清明而净). Huangbo's teachings, along with those of his Dharma grandfather Mazu and the first Patriarch Bodhidharma, consistently point to this non-substantial, empty, yet aware nature.

Source of the Chinese quotation. The Chinese wording cited above appears in the Guangzan jing (光讚經), translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa, fascicle 3, chapter 7, Taishō vol. 8, no. 222, p. 166b23–24.

Guangzan jing, fascicle 3 — CBETA text:

https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T0222/3

Furthermore, Blofeld's translation sometimes misinterpreted "No-Mind" (无心, *wúxīn*) as merely a psychological state of non-conceptuality or mental quietude, replacing "No Mind"

with "ceasing thoughts", thus missing its deeper ontological significance as the realization of Mind’s lack of inherent existence.

The use of essentialist terms such as the 'Absolute' or his initial rendering of 'One Mind' as 'Universal Mind' (Blofeld began with an earlier translation, “The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind” in 1947, and then revisited the text before releasing it as “The Zen Teaching of Huang Po” in 1959, although he still held the view of a Universal Spirit in the 1959 edition) introduced concepts absent from the original Chinese and fundamentally misaligned with Buddhist doctrines of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and no-self (*anātman*).

While covering the main teachings, the interpretive and paraphrasing approach by Blofeld means that nuances and sometimes entire clauses or distinctions present in the original might be omitted or glossed over.

Source note on Blofeld’s edition. References here use the first Grove Press edition of The Zen Teaching of Huang Po (New York, 1959; copyright 1958). Blofeld withdraws his earlier “Universal Mind” terminology on p. 19, while his note on anātman at pp. 109–110 invokes “Universal Spirit” and One Mind. His introduction also explicitly rejects blank or sleep-like trance and an inert mind (pp. 19–20). These locators distinguish his explanatory statements from Huangbo’s translated words and make the philosophical criticism above open to direct examination.

Blofeld, first Grove Press edition (1959): complete scan

While acknowledging the historical importance of Blofeld's work in making these texts accessible, this new translation seeks greater precision and fidelity to the original text's specific philosophical context, aiming to avoid these particular interpretive difficulties. Readability was secondary

to accuracy. While aiming for clear English, the strict adherence to literalness and source structure sometimes might make the prose less fluid than a more interpretive translation. The inclusion of annotations helps clarify potentially obscure points or technical terms.

In this translation, a rigorous, literal approach was adopted, working directly from the standard Chinese editions of 黃檗禅师传心法要. Each paragraph of the source text is presented in full, followed immediately by its corresponding English rendition and annotations where clarification of terms, context, or allusions is necessary. This method aims to preserve every essential nuance – from the insistence on the **unobtainability/unfindability** (不可得, *bù kě dé*) of Mind to the precise meaning of doctrinal terms within their specific context. This translation aimed for **extremely high fidelity by working directly from the Chinese source text 黃檗禅师传心法要**, translating paragraph-by-paragraph, including the original text for comparison, and strictly adhering to a detailed glossary for key terms. This translation emphasized **literalness** and **completeness** over paraphrasing.

The goal is to provide readers with a clearer, more accurate, and contextually faithful version of Huangbo's teachings, allowing for a direct engagement with his insights free from the distortions introduced by previous interpretations influenced by non-Buddhist philosophical assumptions. This effort seeks not only to honor the integrity of Huangbo's wisdom but also to offer a reliable resource for understanding the subtleties of Chan thought, bridging the gap between the original texts and contemporary readers.

Contextual Perspectives

1. Dharma Master Hui Lü (慧律法师) on Reading Chan Texts and Practice:

Another contemporary teacher living in Taiwan, Master Hui Lü (慧律法师), who is a very famous, prominent and esteemed master, possesses profound clarity and insight. He is an awakened teacher who integrates teachings from both Zen and Pure Land traditions and is a lineage holder of both the Caodong and Linji schools of Chan (Zen).

Venerable Hui Lü's talks are consistently filled with profound insights and clarity of View, stemming from his personal realizations and extensive study of the Tripitaka. He has mentioned that he has read the entire collection—which includes all of the Buddha's scriptures: the Vinaya (monastic rules), the Sūtras (the Buddha's teachings), and the Abhidharma (systematic, scholastic works or commentaries)—at least three times. He delivered lectures on a wide array of sutras and other scriptures, Huangbo's teachings included, many of which are available on YouTube in Chinese. These lectures have gained significant popularity among Chinese audiences, with numerous videos attracting hundreds of thousands of views. Yet, he is far more than just an intellectual or academic; he has also shared his own spiritual awakening, having awakened to his true nature at an early age.

Venerable Hui Lü said (my translation):

"If you want to see (your own) nature, there are several Chan school books you must read; VCDs, DVDs, mobile phones can be of great help, network Facebook, Dharma audio players, DVDs, and, alas, this technology advances daily; therefore, we Buddhist disciples must apply this technology, coordinating Buddhism with technology to spread it far and wide!

As Buddhist disciples, as we just discussed, we should play a stable and important role for the entire nation and society; we must make the greatest contribution to the family, to society, to the country, to the Party, and to all humanity! May our five-thousand-year-old Chinese nation live for ten thousand upon ten thousand years.

With the little time remaining, I will introduce a few books that should be read; regarding books that should be read, well, some Chan school books, I am not saying other scriptures are not good, but rather if you want to attain awakening and see the nature, to instantly realize the pure self-nature, several books must be read:

first, the **Essentials of the Transmission of Mind (传心法要) by Chan Master Huangbo Duanji**, must read;

second, the **Essential Treatise on sudden awakening and Entering the Way (大珠和尚顿悟入道要门论) by Great Master Dazhu**, must read;

third, the **Faith in Mind (信心铭)**, must read; why introduce these? Because they all hit the nail on the head directly [lit. pierce blood with one needle], without entanglements;

fourth, the **Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (六祖坛经)**, must be read repeatedly; **reading the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch in conjunction with the Buddha-spoken Diamond Sutra offers a distinct flavor**; well, when Great Master Bodhidharma came from the West, crossing eastward to our China, the first text transmitted was the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra; later, the Fifth Patriarch transmitted the Diamond Sutra because the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra was too profound, too obscure, discussing the Great Emptiness of the First Principle, the Five Dharmas, Three Self-Natures, Eight Consciousnesses, and Twofold Emptiness—this is really not something average Buddhist disciples can comprehend; well, I have already finished lecturing on it, have already finished lecturing, and it is now being actively compiled."

On another occasion, Master Hui Lü said:

"Uh, let me give an example, and you'll understand how difficult it is when you can't find the right way to begin your practice. There was a young man in Taiwan whose parents passed away very early. He was gradually raised by his uncle. After graduating from university, he also came to understand impermanence amidst life's complexities. Under these circumstances, he joined others to live in simple huts, and he stayed there for a full ten years.

One day, he really couldn't bear it anymore. Despite reading many books, contemplating koans and causal conditions, studying scriptures, prostrating to Buddha, and chanting Buddha's name, he constantly felt that he hadn't

attained awakening. He realized that simply suppressing thoughts wasn't the solution. He didn't know where the strength came from, but he resolved, "I must find a master to ask for guidance on the Dharma."

So, he came alone. I thought, "Ah, this monk is very solemn, and highly educated too. He could be a 'dragon and elephant' [a great figure] within the Dharma gate." I decided to welcome him warmly. I asked, "Where are you from?"

He replied, "From mainland China."

"Where do you reside? Your esteemed monastery?"

He said, "I don't have a monastery. A group of monks and I each live in separate huts."

"Oh," I thought, "he's being modest." The point I am making with this story is about how difficult it is to achieve awakening and see one's true nature.

He very respectfully asked me – I told him to relax, as I could see this young monk was extremely deferential, which moved me – "Future dragon and elephant of the Dharma, what questions do you have?"

He dared to ask, "Master, have you seen your true nature?"

"Mm, I have seen my nature."

"Then, may I ask the Venerable Sir, what is seeing? What is nature?"

I replied, " An outsider asks for an insider's perspective. Seeing is nature, and nature is seeing. Without nature, there can be no seeing. How can the Dharma be dualistic?" He seemed to grasp a little, understanding that splitting

the Dharma into two prevents entry into non-duality. Chan (Zen) is about direct apprehension.

"Then, Master, how do you explain 'clarifying the mind and seeing the nature' (明心见性)?"

I told him, "It means clarifying the True Suchness original mind (真如本心) and seeing the unborn, undying pure self-nature (清净自性)."

The monk then asked again, "Master, so do you mean 'Mind is Buddha' (即心是佛)?"

I said, "No. My meaning is 'Not Mind, not Buddha' (非心非佛)."

He became increasingly confused. "So, it's 'Not Mind, not Buddha,' are you sure?"

I replied, "No. It is 'Mind is Buddha'."

Now he was completely lost. "Master, which one is it? Which one is it exactly?"

I explained, "Making a choice implies discrimination. Choosing 'Mind is Buddha' is incorrect. Choosing 'Not Mind, not Buddha' is also incorrect. Yet, choosing 'Mind is Buddha' is correct, and choosing 'Not mind, not Buddha' is also correct."

He felt like he was on a rollercoaster, completely spun around. "Master, when do you say 'Mind is Buddha'?"

"To demonstrate that the Dharma is not nihilistic, to affirm that the True Suchness original mind genuinely exists. At that time, we use 'Mind is Buddha'."

"Then Master, what does 'Not mind, not Buddha' mean?"

"It means you cannot be attached to the idea of a 'true mind.' The true mind is empty of self-nature, hence 'not Mind.' Buddha is signless; you cannot attach to characteristics. The Tathagata is the Thusness of all dharmas. You cannot cling to Buddha as something concrete; he is the signless Dharmakaya. Therefore, you also cannot be attached, which is why we say 'Not Mind, not Buddha.' Because if you assert 'Mind is Buddha,' you become attached to the view that 'Mind' and 'Buddha' truly exists. I say 'Not Mind, not Buddha' to tell you that both Mind and Buddha are empty of inherent existence (心跟佛都空无自性)."

"Hmm," he said, "Master, I lived in a hut for ten years, and no one answered me like this. I need to go back and really ponder this."

I told him, "Intellectual deliberation is useless. Great awakening and seeing the nature require wielding the sword directly in battle; only then is it easily seen."

"Hmm... difficult. May I ask, Master, you often speak of 'all dharmas are unborn' (一切法无生). How do you explain 'unborn' (无生)?"

I answered him, "All dharmas arising is called non-birth (万法皆生名为无生)."

"Master, I am asking about non-birth!"

"Yes," I said, "I am answering your question. All dharmas arising is called non-birth."

"Wow! Doesn't non-birth mean nothing exists at all?"

I responded, "Oh, monk, why do you cling to the heterodox views of annihilationism and eternalism? Non-birth is all dharmas arising. All dharmas arising is precisely what I mean by true non-birth. You must understand this clearly."

"Wow... I need to go back and ponder this more."

I told him again, "Intellectual deliberation is useless. True liberation comes from wielding the sword directly in battle; only then is it easily seen. What need is there for questions and answers?"

"May I ask, Master, where will you go when you die?"

I said, "That is your delusion. Didn't I tell you all dharmas are unborn? If there is no birth, how can there be such a thing as death? I've already told you about non-birth, yet you still ask me where I will go when I die?"

He still didn't get it. "Master, do you mean you will go to the Pure Land after death?"

I replied, "From birth to death, you use terms of metabolic change. Before birth and after death are also terms of metabolic change. You are consistently using a mind of arising and ceasing (生灭的心) to inquire about the Tathagata's realm of non-arising and non-ceasing (不生不灭的境界). How can you possibly realize it?"

"So Master, are you saying the mind is the Pure Land?"

I said, "Yes."

"Then aren't you going to the Pure Land after death?"

I countered, "What does the Pure Land look like? On what road? Which street? What number? Tell me the address, and I'll move there."

He had been ordained for ten years, yet with just a few simple replies from me, he couldn't grasp anything. How much more difficult would it be to realize the sacred path through a scattered and unfocused/leisurely and unhurried approach? As I said yesterday, even being ordained for twenty years doesn't guarantee possessing the Tathagata's right view. It's already clear how difficult it is to enter the Buddha's right view.

I just turned him around a couple of times like that. Because he immediately latched onto "Mind is Buddha". I had to break his attachment with "Not Mind, not Buddha." Then he attached to "Not Mind, not Buddha." When he asked about "all dharmas are unborn," he clung to a nihilistic idea of non-birth. I answered him, "All dharmas arising is called non-birth."

"Master, why do your answers always seem to contradict me?"

I said, "To break your attachments!"

Fundamentally, dharma is non-dharma (法法本来就无法). It only becomes a 'dharma' (*the definition of an entity (dharma) in Buddhist teachings is something that bears characteristics*) because of attachment to illusory appearances (假相). Patriarchs, great masters, and virtuous spiritual teachers have no choice but to use skillful means (善巧方便) to untie knots and relieve suffering.

> Okay, this is a very real incident that happened to me. Let me tell you one more thing: resolving the confusion in your mind, clarifying the mind and seeing the nature – this is incredibly difficult. Just like this young man, ordained for ten years, looking here and there, yet with just a couple of replies from me, he couldn't find his way out. This tells everyone that spiritual practice is truly not easy, truly not easy. Ah, attaining insight into one's nature is a matter of real substance, "real guns and live ammunition" (真枪实弹); it's not about cultivating a facade or decorating oneself with appearances. When afflictions arise, such methods are useless. When life and death are imminent, one is utterly lost. Now, throughout the twenty-four hours (二六时钟), you must penetrate through completely, lest you be frantic and confused when the end of life approaches."

Hui Lü, “The Difficulty in Realizing One’s True Nature / Mind is Buddha vs No Mind, No Buddha.” An English rendering, Chinese transcription, and links to the Chinese audio appear in Soh Wei Yu’s Awakening to Reality article of 2 April 2025.

Hui Lü’s teaching: Chinese transcript, English rendering, and audio links

This realization of Mind (Mind is Buddha), the realization of No Mind, No Buddha, and the realization of the non-arising of whatever dependently originates: these insights expressed by Dharma Master Hui Lü are likewise expressed in Chan Master Huangbo’s teachings. Only apprehending Mind is Buddha is therefore at best a partial understanding.

2. My dharma mentor John Tan on the Unobtainable/Unfindable Mind (2014):

"The purpose of anatta *(i.e. the realization of No-Self)* is to have full blown experience of the heart (Mind) -- boundlessly, completely, non-dually and non-locally. Re-read what I wrote to Jax.

In every situations, in all conditions, in all events. It is to eliminate unnecessary contrivity so that our essence can be expressed without obscuration.

Jax wants to point to the heart but is unable to express in a non-dual way... for in duality, the essence cannot be realized. All dualistic interpretations are mind made. You know the smile of Mahākāśyapa? Can you touch the heart of that smile even 2500 yrs later?

One must lose all mind and body by feeling with entire mind and body this essence which is 心 (Mind).

Yet 心 (Mind) too is 不可

得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable).. The purpose is not to deny 心 (Mind) but rather not to place any limitations or duality so that 心 (Mind) can fully manifest.

Therefore without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to limit 心 (Mind). without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to place limitation in its manifestations. You must fully experience 心 (Mind) by realizing 无心 (No-Mind) and fully embrace the wisdom of 不可

> 得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable)." - John Tan, 2014

John Tan, conversation dated 18–19 October 2014, reproduced in "Fully Experience All-Is-Mind by Realizing No-Mind, Conditionality, Unreality and Non-Arising," Awakening to Reality. The wording here retains the expanded abbreviations and explanatory glosses of the 2025 book.

John Tan's 2014 conversation in its fuller context

This is the heart of the distinction drawn earlier between intellectual negation and realization. John Tan does not ask us to deny Mind. He points to its full, non-dual manifestation through the realization that Mind is unfindable and inseparable from conditions. The realization of No-Mind sees through the imagined agent and background subject as well as the supposed substance of knowing; it does not leave a lifeless absence. The smile, the sound, the touch, and the response to another person are not outside this empty, luminous Mind. True Mind is fully realized as No-Mind.

I. Pei Xiu's Preface

Collected and prefaced by Pei Xiu of Hedong.

There was a great Chan master whose Dharma name was Xiyun. He lived below Vulture Peak on Mount Huangbo in Gao'an County, Hongzhou. He was a direct descendant of the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi and a Dharma-nephew of Xitang and Baizhang. Alone he wore the seal of the Supreme Vehicle, apart from words and letters.

He transmitted only the One Mind; there was no other Dharma. The essence of mind is also empty, and the myriad conditions are all quiescent. It is like the great sun-wheel rising in empty space: its light shines forth, pure and without the finest speck of dust. Those who realize it do not find anything new or old, shallow or deep. Those who speak of it establish no doctrinal interpretation, set up no sectarian authority, and open no doors or windows. Directly, just here, it is so. The moment a thought is stirred, one misses it. Only then is it the fundamental Buddha.

Thus his words were concise, his principle direct, his Way steep, and his conduct solitary. Students from the four directions looked toward the mountain and hastened there; upon seeing his appearance, they awakened. The oceanlike assembly of those who came and went regularly numbered more than a thousand.

Commentary on the teacher and the traditional lineage · A note on the preface's lineage wording and date · Glossary entry: One Mind 一心

In the second year of Huichang, while I was serving as commissioner at Zhongling, I invited him down from the mountain to the prefecture, where he rested at Longxing Monastery. Morning and evening I asked him about the Way. In the second year of Dazhong, while I was commissioner at Wanling, I again went in person to pay respects and invite him into my jurisdiction. The Master resided at Kaiyuan Monastery, and morning and evening I received the Dharma from him.

After withdrawing, I recorded what I remembered, perhaps capturing only one or two parts in ten. I carried it as a mind-seal and did not dare to broadcast it. Now, fearing that these profoundly penetrating essential teachings might not be heard by future generations, I have brought it forth and entrusted it to the monastic disciples Dazhou and Fajian, sending them back to Guangtang Monastery on the original mountain to ask the elders and the Dharma assembly whether it agrees with or differs from what they personally heard in former days.

Commentary on Pei Xiu’s record

Prefaced on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the eleventh year of the Dazhong era of the Tang.

Commentary on the date of the preface · A note on the preface’s lineage wording and date

Commentary on Pei Xiu’s Preface

The teacher and the traditional lineage

Read the passage: There was a great Chan master whose Dharma name was Xiyun. He lived below Vulture Peak on Mount Huangbo i…

- **法讳希运 (fǎhuì Xīyùn):** Dharma name Xiyun (d. 850?).

  Huangbo is the mountain where he taught; Duanji (斷際) is his posthumous title; “cutting off the indeterminate” is an interpretive gloss on his teaching.

- **曹溪六祖 (Cáoxī Liùzǔ):** The Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi, Huineng (638–713), the most famous Chan Patriarch in China. In the traditional lineage through Nanyue Huairang, Mazu Daoyi, and Baizhang Huaihai, Huangbo stands four generations after Huineng.

- **西堂百丈 (Xītáng Bǎizhàng):** Baizhang Huaihai (720–814), a direct disciple of Mazu Daoyi and Huangbo's teacher. Xitang Zhizang (735-814) was a Dharma brother of Baizhang under Mazu. Huangbo studied under Baizhang.

Pei Xiu’s record

Read the passage: In the second year of Huichang, while I was serving as commissioner at Zhongling, I invited him down from…

- **会昌二年 (Huìchāng èr nián):** The second year of the Huichang era of Emperor Wuzong of the Tang dynasty, corresponding to 842 CE. This period saw a major persecution of Buddhism.

- **钟陵 (Zhōnglíng):** Present-day Nanchang in Jiangxi Province. Pei Xiu (裴休, 791–864) was a high-ranking scholar-official and a devout lay Buddhist.
- **大中二年 (Dàzhōng èr nián):** The second year of the Dazhong era of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty, corresponding to 848 CE.
- **宛陵 (Wǎnlíng):** Present-day Xuancheng in Anhui Province.
- **大舟、法建 (Dàzhōu, Fǎjiàn):** The monastic disciples Dazhou and Fajian, entrusted by Pei Xiu to return to Guangtang Monastery and consult its elders and Dharma assembly.

The date of the preface

Read the passage: Prefaced on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the eleventh year of the Dazhong era of the Tang.

- **唐大中十一年 (Táng Dàzhōng shíyī nián):** The eleventh year of the Dazhong era, corresponding to 857 CE.

II. Essentials of Mind Transmission by Chan Master Duanji of Mount Huangbo

The Master said to Xiu: “All Buddhas and all sentient beings are only the One Mind; there is no separate Dharma. This mind, from beginningless time, has never arisen and has never ceased. It is not blue or yellow; it has neither form nor characteristics. It does not belong to existence or non-existence; it is not reckoned as old or new. It is not long or short, large or small. It goes beyond every boundary and measure, every name and word, every trace and opposition. In its very essence, it is just this. To move a thought is already to miss it. It is like empty space, without limit and impossible to measure.

Only this One Mind is Buddha. Buddhas and sentient beings have no further difference. Yet sentient beings attach to characteristics and seek outwardly; in seeking it, they lose it all the more. To use Buddha to seek Buddha, to use mind to grasp mind — even if they exhaust kalpas and wear out their bodies, they will never get it. They do not know that when thoughts are stilled and concerns forgotten, Buddha naturally appears before them.

Glossary entry: One Mind 一心

“This mind is Buddha; Buddha is none other than sentient beings. As sentient beings, this mind is not reduced; as Buddhas, it is not increased. Even the six pāramitās, the myriad practices, and merits as many as the sands of the

Ganges are originally complete in it and do not need cultivation or addition. When conditions are encountered, it manifests in activity; when conditions cease, it is quiescent. If you do not decisively trust that this is Buddha, but instead attach to characteristics and cultivate practices in order to seek efficacy, this is all deluded thinking and goes against the Way.

"This mind is Buddha. There is no other Buddha and no other mind. This mind is bright and pure, like empty space, without even the slightest defining characteristic. To raise the mind and move thought is to miss the Dharma-essence; that is attachment to characteristics. Since beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha attached to characteristics. To cultivate the six pāramitās and myriad practices in order to become Buddha is gradualism. Since beginningless time, there has never been a gradual Buddha. Simply awaken to the One Mind. There is not even the smallest Dharma to be obtained. This is the true Buddha.

"In this One Mind, Buddhas and sentient beings are without difference. Like empty space, it is not mixed with anything and cannot be destroyed. Like the great sun-wheel illuminating the four continents: when the sun rises, brightness pervades the world, yet empty space has never brightened; when the sun sets, darkness pervades the world, yet empty space has never darkened. Brightness and darkness take each other's place, but the nature of empty space remains open and unchanged. The mind of Buddhas and sentient beings is also like this.

If you regard Buddha in terms of characteristics of purity, luminosity, and liberation, and sentient beings in terms of

characteristics of defilement, turbidity, darkness, and birth-and-death, then, making such an interpretation, you will not attain Bodhi even through kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, because you are attached to characteristics. There is only this One Mind, and not even a mote of Dharma can be obtained. Mind itself is Buddha.

"Students of the Way today do not awaken to this essence of mind. They produce mind upon mind, seek Buddha outside, and practice by clinging to characteristics. These are all erroneous methods, not the Bodhi path. Making offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions is not equal to making offerings to one person of the Way who is without mind. Why? One who is without mind is without every kind of mind. The essence of Suchness is inwardly like wood or stone, unmoving and unshaken; outwardly it is like empty space, unblocked and unobstructed. It has no subject or object, no direction or location, no defining characteristics, and no gain or loss.

Those who approach it do not dare enter this Dharma; they fear falling into emptiness with no place to rest, and so they retreat at the cliff-edge. For the most part they seek broad knowledge and views. Thus those who seek knowledge and views are as many as hairs, while those who awaken to the Way are as rare as horns.

Commentary on a person of the Way without mind

"Mañjuśrī corresponds to principle; Samantabhadra corresponds to practice. Principle is the principle of true emptiness without obstruction. Practice is the inexhaustible practice free from characteristics. Avalokiteśvara corresponds to great compassion; Mahāsthāmaprāpta corresponds to great wisdom. Vimalakīrti means Pure Name: purity is the nature, name is the characteristic; since nature and characteristic are not different, he is called Pure Name. What the great Bodhisattvas represent is present in everyone. It is not apart from the One Mind. To awaken to it is just this.

Commentary on Vimalakīrti and the bodhisattvas

"Students of the Way now do not awaken in their own minds; instead they attach to characteristics and grasp object-realms outside the mind. All this turns against the Way. As for the sands of the Ganges, the Buddha said they are simply sand. When Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Śakra, Brahmā, and the devas walk over them, the sand is not pleased. When cattle, sheep, insects, and ants tread on them, the sand is not angry. With jewels and fragrance, the sand has no greed; with dung, urine, and foul odor, the sand has no aversion.

This mind is the mind of no-mind, free from every characteristic. Sentient beings and Buddhas have no difference. If you can simply be without mind, that is the ultimate. If students of the Way are not directly without mind, even if they cultivate through successive kalpas, they will never accomplish the Way. Bound by the meritorious practices of the Three Vehicles, they will not attain liberation.

"Yet realization of this mind may be swift or slow. Some hear the Dharma and in one thought immediately attain no-mind. Some arrive through the Ten Faiths, Ten Abodes, Ten

Practices, and Ten Dedications before attaining no-mind. Whether it takes a long or short time, once no-mind is attained, that is the stopping point; there is nothing more to cultivate or realize. Truly there is nothing obtained; this is true and not false. One who obtains it in a single thought and one who obtains it at the Ten Grounds are exactly equal in function, with no depth or shallowness. It is only that the latter has uselessly endured hardships through kalpas.

Doing evil and doing good are both attachment to characteristics. Attached to characteristics while doing evil, one vainly undergoes rebirth; attached to characteristics while doing good, one vainly endures toil. Neither is as good as immediately recognizing and accepting the fundamental Dharma upon hearing the words.

Commentary on Stages and sudden realization

"This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mind. Mind itself is no-mind, yet there is no separate no-mind to posit. If one uses mind to make the mind into no-mind, one instead turns mind into something existent. Silent accord is all; all thought and discussion are cut off. Thus it is said: 'The path of speech is cut off; mental activity comes to an end.' This mind is the fundamentally pure Buddha. Everyone has it. All living beings that move and possess sentience are of the same essence as all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, without difference. Only because of deluded thinking and discrimination do they create various karmic results.

Commentary on Speech mind and sentience · Glossary entry: No-mind 無心

"As for the fundamental Buddha, there is truly not a single thing. It is simply open and unobstructed, quiescent and still, luminous and wondrous, peaceful and blissful. Awaken deeply and enter into it yourself: directly here, it is complete and lacks nothing. Even if one vigorously cultivates for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas and passes through all the stages, when realization occurs in one thought, one realizes only that one has always been Buddha. Not a single thing is added above it. Looking back on the work of many kalpas, it is altogether deluded activity in a dream. Therefore the Tathāgata said: 'As to Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi, I truly obtained nothing. If there had been anything obtained, Dīpaṃkara Buddha would not have given me the prediction.' He also said: 'This Dharma is equal, without high or low; this is called Bodhi.'

Commentary on Bodhi and nonattainment

"This fundamentally pure mind and all sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains and rivers, and things with or without characteristics throughout the ten directions are entirely equal, without any marks of self or other. This fundamentally pure mind is always perfectly luminous and universally illuminating. People of the world do not awaken to it; they recognize only seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing as mind. Veiled by seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing, they do not behold the clear-luminous fundamental essence. If one is directly without mind, the fundamental essence appears of itself. Like the great sun-wheel rising into empty space, it universally illuminates the ten directions without obstruction.

Therefore, students of the Way recognize only seeing, hearing, sensing, knowing, and active functioning. If seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing are emptied, the path of mind is cut off and there is no way in. Simply recognize the fundamental mind right at seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing. Yet the fundamental mind does not belong to seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing, nor is it separate from them. Do not raise interpretations on seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing; do not move thoughts on seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing; do not seek mind apart from them; do not abandon them to grasp Dharma. Neither identical nor separate, neither abiding nor attached. Free in every direction, everywhere is a site of awakening.

Commentary on Seeing hearing sensing and knowing · Glossary entry: No-mind 無心 · Glossary entry: Fundamental mind 本心 · Glossary entry: Seeing hearing sensing and knowing 見聞覺知

"People of the world hear that all Buddhas transmit the mind-Dharma and suppose that apart from mind there is some Dharma to be realized and grasped. So they use mind to seek Dharma. They do not know that mind is Dharma and Dharma is mind. One cannot use mind to seek mind again. Through thousands and tens of thousands of kalpas, the day of attainment will never arrive. It is better to be without mind in the present moment; that is the fundamental Dharma.

It is like a strong man who forgets the jewel in his own forehead and seeks it outside, traveling throughout the ten directions without ever finding it. When a wise person points it out, he instantly sees his original jewel just as it was.

Thus students of the Way are confused about their own fundamental mind and do not recognize it as Buddha. Therefore they seek outwardly, raise effortful practices, and rely on stages of realization. Through kalpas of diligent seeking, they never accomplish the Way. It is better to be without mind right now and decisively know that all dharmas are fundamentally without anything whatsoever; nothing can be obtained, there is no reliance or abiding, and there is no subject or object. Not moving deluded thought is realizing Bodhi.

When the Way is realized, one realizes only that the fundamental mind is Buddha. All the efforts of successive kalpas amount to empty cultivation. Just as when the strong man obtained the jewel, he only obtained the jewel originally on his forehead; it had nothing to do with the effort of seeking outwardly. Therefore the Buddha said: 'As to Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi, I truly obtained nothing.' To dispel disbelief, he appealed to what the five eyes see and what the five modes of speech declare: this is true and not false—the ultimate truth.

Commentary on the jewel and the five eyes · Textual note on Five modes of speech

“Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elements have no self, nor is there any controller. Thus know that this body has neither self nor controller. The five aggregates constitute the mind. The five aggregates have neither self nor controller. Thus know that this mind has neither self nor controller. The six faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses likewise arise and cease through conjunction. Since the eighteen elements are empty, all is empty. Only the fundamental mind is vast, clear, and pure.

A note on Self and controller · Glossary entry: Five aggregates 五陰

“There is nourishment by consciousness and nourishment by wisdom. The four-element body is afflicted by the sore of hunger. To nourish it in accordance with need without giving rise to greed or attachment is called nourishment by wisdom. To indulge one's appetite, grasp at flavors, falsely discriminate, and seek only what pleases the mouth, without giving rise to disenchantment or detachment, is called nourishment by consciousness.

Śrāvakas awaken through sound, hence they are called hearers. But they do not understand their own mind; they form interpretations on the basis of verbal teachings. Whether through spiritual powers, auspicious signs, words, or actions, they hear of Bodhi and Nirvāṇa and of accomplishing the Buddha Way through three asaṃkhyeya kalpas of cultivation. All this belongs to the śrāvaka path; they are called śrāvaka-Buddhas. Only directly and suddenly comprehending that one's own mind is originally Buddha, that not a single Dharma can be obtained and not a single practice needs to be cultivated — this is the unsurpassed Way; this is the Buddha of True Suchness.

Commentary on Nourishment consciousness and wisdom

"Students of the Way need fear only a single thought that something exists; it immediately separates them from the Way. Thought after thought without characteristics, thought after thought unconditioned — this is Buddha. If students of the Way wish to become Buddha, they need not study all the Buddha-Dharma. They need only study non-seeking and non-attachment. Non-seeking means that mind does not arise; non-attachment means that mind does not cease. When mind neither arises nor ceases, that is Buddha. The eighty-four thousand Dharma gates correspond to the eighty-four thousand afflictions; they are only gates for teaching and guiding. Fundamentally there are no dharmas at all. Detachment is the Dharma; one who knows detachment is Buddha. Just detach from all afflictions; there is no Dharma to be obtained.

Commentary on Non-seeking and the unconditioned · Glossary entry: Unconditioned 無為

"Students of the Way, if you wish to know the essential key, simply do not attach a single thing to the mind. It is said: 'The Buddha's true Dharma-body is like empty space.' This is a simile: the Dharma-body is empty space, and empty space is the Dharma-body. Ordinary people say that the Dharma-body pervades empty space and that empty space contains the Dharma-body. They do not know that the Dharma-body is empty space and empty space is the Dharma-body.

If you definitively say there is empty space, empty space is not the Dharma-body. If you definitively say there is a Dharma-body, the Dharma-body is not empty space. Just do not make an interpretation of empty space: empty space is the Dharma-body. Do not make an interpretation of Dharma-body: the Dharma-body is empty space. Empty space and Dharma-body have no distinguishing marks. Buddha and sentient beings have no distinguishing marks. Birth-and-death and Nirvāṇa have no distinguishing marks. Afflictions and Bodhi have no distinguishing marks. To be free from all characteristics is Buddha.

"Ordinary people grasp object-realms; people of the Way grasp mind. To forget both mind and object-realm is the true Dharma. Forgetting objects is still easy; forgetting mind is extremely difficult. People dare not forget mind, fearing they will fall into emptiness with nothing to grasp. They do not know that emptiness is originally without emptiness; there is only the one true Dharma-realm.

This nature of numinous awareness has, since beginningless time, been coeval with empty space. It has never arisen or ceased, never fallen into existence or non-existence, never been defiled or pure, never been noisy or still, never been

young or old. It has no direction or place, no inside or outside, no number or quantity, no shape or form, no color or image, no sound or voice. It cannot be sought or pursued; it cannot be recognized through wisdom, grasped in words, encountered through objects, or reached through effortful practice. All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all moving sentient beings share this great Nirvāṇa-nature. Nature is mind; mind is Buddha; Buddha is Dharma.

One thought apart from the real is entirely deluded thinking. One cannot use mind to seek mind, Buddha to seek Buddha, or Dharma to seek Dharma. Therefore students of the Way should be directly without mind; silent accord is all. To intend with the mind is already wrong. Mind transmitting mind — this is right view. Be careful not to chase external objects. To mistake object-realms for mind is to take a thief for one's son.

Because there is greed, anger, and delusion, precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are established. Fundamentally there are no afflictions; how could there be Bodhi? Therefore the Patriarch said: 'The Buddha spoke all dharmas to eliminate all minds. If I am without every kind of mind, what use are all dharmas?'

Not a single thing is attached to the fundamentally pure Buddha. It is like empty space: even if one adorns it with immeasurable jewels, there is nowhere for them to remain. Buddha-nature is the same as empty space: even if one adorns it with immeasurable merit and wisdom, there is nowhere for them to remain. It is only because people are deluded about the fundamental nature that they fail to see it.

Commentary on the Patriarch's saying on minds and dharmas

"The so-called Dharma-gate of the mind-ground means that the myriad dharmas are all established in dependence on this mind. When an object-realm is encountered, dharmas are present; when there is no object-realm, they are absent. Do not turn the pure nature into an object of interpretation. Expressions such as 'concentration and wisdom,' 'mirror-like functioning, clear and distinct,' and 'the serene and alert functions of seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing' are all interpretations made on the basis of object-realms. They may be provisionally spoken for people of middling and inferior faculties. If you wish to verify it personally, do not form such views. They are all object-dharmas. Even when they disappear, their disappearance still occurs on the ground of existence. Simply do not form views of existence or non-existence with regard to any Dharma; that is seeing Dharma.

Glossary entry: Seeing hearing sensing and knowing 見聞覺知

On the first day of the ninth month, the Master said to Xiu: "Since Great Master Bodhidharma came to China, he spoke only of the One Mind and transmitted only the One Dharma. Through Buddha, Buddha is transmitted; no other Buddha is spoken of. Through Dharma, Dharma is transmitted; no other Dharma is spoken of. Dharma is the Dharma that cannot be spoken; Buddha is the Buddha that cannot be grasped. It is the fundamentally pure mind. Only this one matter is real; the other two vehicles are not true. Prajñā is wisdom, and this wisdom is the fundamental mind without characteristics.

"Ordinary people do not turn toward the Way. They indulge the six senses and thereby move through the six paths. If students of the Way form a single thought that reckons in terms of birth-and-death, they fall into the path of Māra. If in one thought they give rise to various views, they fall among externalists. To see arising and seek its cessation is to fall into the śrāvaka path. Not seeing arising and seeing only cessation is to fall into the pratyekabuddha path. Dharmas are originally non-arising; even now, there is no cessation. Do not give rise to these two views; do not feel aversion or delight. All dharmas are only the One Mind. Only then is it the Buddha Vehicle.

Commentary on Dependent arising and non-arising · A note on Arising and ceasing · Glossary entry: Non-arising 無生

"Ordinary people all pursue object-realms and give rise to mind; the mind then likes and dislikes. If you wish there to be no object-realms, you must forget mind. When mind is forgotten, object-realms are empty; when object-realms are empty, mind ceases. If you do not forget mind and merely eliminate object-realms, object-realms cannot be eliminated and confusion only increases. Therefore the myriad dharmas are mind-only. Mind too cannot be obtained; what else is there to seek?

Those who study Prajñā see not a single Dharma that can be obtained. They cut off intention toward the Three Vehicles. There is only the one reality; it cannot be realized or attained. Those who say 'I can realize' or 'I can attain' are people of overweening conceit. Those who brushed off their robes and left the Lotus assembly were of this kind. Therefore the Buddha said: 'As to Bodhi, I truly obtained nothing.' Silent accord is all.

Commentary on the departing Lotus assembly · A note on Arising and ceasing

"When ordinary people approach death, they should simply contemplate: the five aggregates are all empty; the four great elements are without self; the true mind is without characteristics, neither going nor coming. At birth, the nature also does not come; at death, the nature also does not go. It is clear, perfectly quiescent; mind and its object-realms are one in suchness. If one can directly comprehend it in this way, one is not bound by the three times and is a world-transcending person.

One must not have even the slightest inclination in any direction. If one sees auspicious signs, Buddhas coming to welcome one, or various phenomena appearing, one should not let the mind follow them. If one sees ominous signs or various phenomena appearing, one should not let the mind become afraid. Simply forget your own mind and be the same as the Dharma-realm; then you gain freedom. This is the essential point."

On the eighth day of the tenth month, the Master said to Xiu: "The 'conjured city' means the Two Vehicles, the Ten Grounds, Equal Awakening, and Wondrous Awakening. All are

provisional teachings established to guide beings; all are conjured cities. The 'treasure place' means the treasure—the true mind, the fundamental Buddha, and self-nature. This treasure does not fall within conceptual measurement and cannot be established. There is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no subject, no object — where could there be a city?

If asked, 'Since this is the conjured city, where is the treasure place?' — the treasure place cannot be pointed out. If it is pointed out, it has direction and location and is not the true treasure place. Thus it is said to be nearby only. It cannot be described in fixed, measurable terms. You should simply realize it directly and accord with it; that itself is it.

Commentary on the conjured city and the treasure · Textual note on Indic names for the stages

"An icchantika means one whose faith is incomplete. All sentient beings in the six paths, even those of the Two Vehicles, who do not believe in the fruition of Buddhahood are called icchantikas with severed good roots. Bodhisattvas deeply trust the Buddha-Dharma, yet do not see Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna; they see Buddha and sentient beings as sharing the same Dharma-nature. They are called icchantikas of good roots.

In general, those who awaken through verbal teachings are called śrāvakas; those who awaken through contemplating causes and conditions are called pratyekabuddhas. If one does not awaken within one's own mind, even if one reaches Buddhahood one is still called a śrāvaka-Buddha. Most students of the Way awaken to doctrinal teachings, not to the mind-Dharma. Even if they cultivate through successive kalpas, they are ultimately not the fundamental Buddha. If one does not awaken in mind but awakens only to doctrinal teachings, one slights mind and esteems the teachings, becoming like a dog chasing a clod and forgetting the fundamental mind. Therefore just accord with the fundamental mind; there is no need to seek Dharma. Mind itself is Dharma.

Commentary on Icchantikas and direct awakening · Glossary entry: Dharma-nature 法性

"For ordinary people, object-realms often obstruct the mind, and affairs obstruct principle. They always wish to escape object-realms to pacify mind and screen off affairs to preserve principle. They do not know that mind obstructs object-realms and principle obstructs affairs. Simply let mind be empty, and object-realms are naturally empty. Simply let principle be quiescent, and affairs are naturally quiescent. Do not apply mind in this inverted way. Ordinary people often refuse to empty mind, fearing that they will fall into emptiness. They do not know their own mind is fundamentally empty. The foolish eliminate affairs but not mind; the wise eliminate mind but not affairs.

"The Bodhisattva's mind is like empty space, relinquishing everything. One neither covets nor clings to any merit or

virtue one creates. Yet relinquishing has three grades. First, relinquishing everything — inner and outer, body and mind — like empty space with nothing grasped or attached, then responding to beings wherever one is, with subject and object both forgotten: this is great relinquishing. Second, while practicing the Way and spreading virtue, one immediately relinquishes it, without expectation: this is middling relinquishing. Third, broadly cultivating good actions with some expectation, then hearing the Dharma, knowing emptiness, and becoming unattached: this is small relinquishing.

Great relinquishing is like a candle in front, with neither confusion nor awakening. Middling relinquishing is like a candle to the side, sometimes bright and sometimes dark. Small relinquishing is like a candle behind one, so that pits and traps cannot be seen.

Therefore the Bodhisattva's mind is like empty space, relinquishing everything. Past mind cannot be obtained — this is relinquishing the past. Present mind cannot be obtained — this is relinquishing the present. Future mind cannot be obtained — this is relinquishing the future. This is called relinquishing all three times together.

Glossary entry: Subject and object 能所

"Since the Tathāgata entrusted the Dharma to Kāśyapa, mind has sealed mind, and the minds have not differed. Pressed into empty space, a seal leaves no pattern; pressed onto a thing, its imprint does not become the Dharma. Thus mind seals mind, and the minds do not differ. Yet what seals and what is sealed are difficult to bring into accord, so few attain it. Yet mind itself is no-mind, and attainment itself is no-attainment.

Commentary on Mind sealing mind

"The Buddha has three bodies. The Dharma body (dharmakāya) expounds the Dharma of self-nature's openness and unobstructedness; the enjoyment body (saṃbhogakāya) expounds all pure dharmas; the emanation body (nirmāṇakāya) expounds the Dharma of the six pāramitās and myriad practices. The Dharma expounded by the Dharma body cannot be sought through language, sound, form, or writing. There is nothing spoken and nothing realized; there is only self-nature's openness and unobstructedness. Thus it is said: 'No Dharma can be spoken; this is called speaking Dharma.'

The enjoyment body and emanation body both appear in response to capacities; the Dharma they speak also adapts to circumstances and capacities in order to guide and transform beings. All of this is not the true Dharma. Thus it is said: 'The enjoyment and emanation bodies are not the true Buddha, nor are they the speakers of Dharma.'

Commentary on the three Buddha bodies

"The saying that 'the six faculties are alike in luminous clarity, though distinguished as six conjunctions' means this: what is called 'one luminous clarity' is the One Mind; the six conjunctions are the six faculties. Each of these faculties conjoins with a sense object: eye with form, ear with sound, nose with smell, tongue with taste, body with touch, and the mind faculty with mental objects (dharmas). In between, six consciousnesses arise, making the eighteen elements. If one understands that the eighteen elements have no independent existence, one gathers the six conjunctions into the single luminous clarity. The single luminous clarity is mind. Students of the Way all know this, but they cannot avoid making an interpretation of 'single luminous clarity' and 'six conjunctions'; they are therefore bound by Dharma and do not accord with the fundamental mind.

Commentary on the six faculties and luminous clarity

"When the Tathāgata appeared in the world, he wished to speak the true Dharma of the One Vehicle. But sentient beings would not believe it; they would slander it and sink into the sea of suffering. If he did not speak at all, he would fall into stinginess and would fail to bestow the wondrous Way broadly on sentient beings. Therefore he established expedient means and taught that there are Three Vehicles. The vehicles are great or small, and attainments are shallow or deep. None is the fundamental Dharma. Thus it is said: 'There is only the Way of the One Vehicle; the other two vehicles are not true.'

Yet this still could not reveal the Dharma of the One Mind. Therefore he summoned Kāśyapa to share the Dharma seat and separately entrusted the One Mind, a Dharma apart from words. This branch of the Dharma was transmitted separately. One who can accord with it and awaken immediately reaches the Buddha ground."

Commentary on One Vehicle and the mind-Dharma

Question: "What is the Way, and how is it cultivated?"

The Master said: "What sort of thing is the Way? What do you wish to cultivate?"

Commentary on What is the Way

Question: "Masters of various places inherit the practice of investigating Chan and studying the Way. What of that?"

The Master said: "These are words used to guide people of dull faculties; they are not to be relied upon."

The questioner said: "If these words are used to guide people of dull faculties, what Dharma is taught to people of superior faculties?"

The Master said: "If you are a person of superior faculties, why would you still seek it from someone else? Even you yourself cannot be found; how much less could there be some separate Dharma for conceptual discrimination to seize upon? Do you not see the teaching say: 'What form could any dharma have?'"

The questioner said: "If so, then one should not seek at all."

The Master said: "If so, you can spare yourself the mental effort."

The questioner said: "Then this amounts to complete annihilation. Surely it cannot be nothingness?"

The Master said: "Who made it into nothing? What is this 'it' that you intend to seek?"

The questioner said: "Since seeking is not permitted, why also say not to cut it off?"

The Master said: "If you do not seek, then rest. Who taught you to cut it off? Look at the empty space before your eyes: how could you cut it off?"

The questioner said: "Can this Dharma then be said to be the same as empty space?"

The Master said: "When did empty space ever tell you that there is sameness or difference? I temporarily speak in this way, and you immediately make an interpretation there."

The questioner said: "Should one not make an interpretation there?"

The Master said: "I have never obstructed you. But interpretation belongs to conceptual discrimination, and when conceptual discrimination arises, wisdom is obstructed."

The questioner said: "At this point, is it right not to give rise to conceptual discrimination?"

The Master said: "If you do not give rise to conceptual discrimination, who says it is right?"

Commentary on Seeking and the fear of nothingness

Question: "As soon as I speak before the Venerable, why do you immediately say that my words have fallen (話墮)?"

The Master said: "You simply do not understand what is being said. What fall or defeat is there?"

Commentary on When words fall

Question: "All the statements just now were merely countering replies. Have you never directly pointed out the real Dharma to people?"

The Master said: "The real Dharma has no inversion. Your present questioning itself produces inversion. What real Dharma are you seeking?"

The questioner said: "If the questioning itself produces inversion, what about the Venerable's answer?"

The Master said: "For now, take a mirror and look at your own face. Do not concern yourself with other people."

He also said: "It is just like a foolish dog: as soon as it sees something move, it barks, not distinguishing whether it is the wind blowing through grass and trees."

He also said: "In this Chan lineage of ours, from the ancient transmission until now, we have never taught people to seek knowledge or seek understanding. Just saying 'study the Way' is already an expedient expression for guiding people. Yet the Way also cannot be studied. If attachment to study and understanding remains, it instead becomes confusion about the Way. The Way has no direction or place; its name is Mahāyāna mind. This mind is not inside, outside, or in between. It truly has no direction or place.

First of all, do not make intellectual interpretations. This is simply being spoken at the level of your present conceptual measurement. When conceptual measurement is exhausted, the mind has no direction or place. This Way is uncontrived and originally nameless. Only because people of the world do not recognize it and are lost in conceptual discrimination did the Buddhas appear and explain this matter. Fearing that you all would not understand, they provisionally established the name 'Way.' Do not hold to the name and produce interpretation. Thus it is said: 'Having caught the fish, forget the trap.' Body and mind then naturally reach the Way. By recognizing mind, one reaches the original source; therefore one is called a śramaṇa. The fruit of a śramaṇa is accomplished by stilling thought; it is not obtained from study.

Commentary on Names learning and stilling thought

"You now use mind to seek mind, rely on someone else's teachings, and seek only to acquire through study. When will you ever attain anything? The people of old were sharp in mind. As soon as they heard one word, they cut off study. Thus they were called 'leisurely people of the Way who have ceased learning and are free from contrivance.'

People today only want much knowledge and much understanding. They widely seek textual meanings and call this cultivation. They do not know that much knowledge and understanding instead become obstruction. It is like only knowing how to give a child much ghee and milk to eat, with no idea whether the child can digest it. Students of the Three Vehicles are all like this; all are called people whose food is undigested. So-called undigested knowledge and

understanding are all poison; they all fall within the domain of arising and ceasing. Nothing of this kind is found in True Suchness. Thus it is said: 'In my royal treasury, there is no such blade.'

All the understandings you had before must be entirely pushed aside and emptied, with no further discrimination. This is the empty Tathāgatagarbha. In the Tathāgatagarbha, not even the finest dust can be found. Here the Dharma King who destroys cyclic existence appears in the world. It is also said: 'In the presence of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I obtained not even the slightest Dharma.' This statement is only to empty your conceptual measurement, knowledge, and understanding. Simply melt them away; when conceptual discrimination is exhausted within and without, there is no reliance or attachment. This is a person free of affairs.

The nets of the Three Vehicle teachings are only medicines according with capacities, spoken as appropriate and provisionally established for the time, each different. If you can understand this, you will not be confused. Above all, do not cling to the wording around any one occasion or one teaching and create interpretations. Why is this so? Truly, there is no fixed Dharma the Tathāgata can speak. In this school of ours, we do not discuss these matters. Just know that resting the mind is enough. There is no need to ponder before or after."

Commentary on Beyond accumulated understanding

Question: "From former times it has always been said, 'Mind itself is Buddha.' Which mind is Buddha?"

The Master said: "How many minds do you have?"

The questioner said: "Is the ordinary mind Buddha, or is the sage mind Buddha?"

The Master said: "Where do you have an ordinary or sage mind?"

The questioner said: "Right now the Three Vehicles speak of ordinary and sage. How can the Venerable say there are none?"

The Master said: "In the Three Vehicles it is clearly told to you that ordinary mind and sage mind are delusion. You now do not understand; instead you grasp them as existent, treating what is empty as real. Is this not delusion? Because it is delusion, it confuses the mind. You need only remove ordinary attachments and sage states. Apart from mind there is no other Buddha.

When the Patriarch came from the West, he directly pointed out that every person is wholly Buddha. You now do not recognize this; clinging to ordinary and sage, you gallop outward and so confuse your own mind. Therefore I say to you: mind itself is Buddha. As soon as a single thought of conceptual discrimination arises, one falls into a different realm of existence. Since beginningless time it has not differed from today. There is no separate Dharma; therefore it is called attaining complete and perfect awakening."

The questioner said: "What principle is there in the 'is' that the Venerable speaks of?"

The Master said: "What principle are you seeking? Once there is a principle, mind is already different."

The questioner said: "Earlier you said, 'Since beginningless time it has not differed from today.' What principle is this?"

The Master said: "Only because of seeking, you make yourself different from it. If you do not seek, where is there difference?"

The questioner said: "Since there is no difference, why still speak of 'is'?"

The Master said: "If you did not believe in ordinary and sage, who would tell you 'is'? If 'is' is not 'is,' mind is also not mind. If both mind and 'is' are forgotten, where do you intend to seek?"

Commentary on Mind itself is Buddha

Question: "Delusion can obstruct one's own mind. By what can delusion now be removed?"

The Master said: "Raising delusion to remove delusion also becomes delusion. Delusion originally has no root; it arises only because of discrimination. Just exhaust attachment to ordinary and sage; delusion will naturally be absent. How else would you remove it? There must not be the slightest reliance or attachment. This is called 'I relinquish both arms and will surely attain Buddhahood.'"

The questioner said: "Since there is no reliance or attachment, what is transmitted?"

The Master said: "Mind is transmitted by mind."

The questioner said: "If mind is transmitted to mind, why say mind too is absent?"

The Master said: "Not obtaining a single Dharma is called transmitting mind. If this mind is understood, it is no-mind and no-Dharma."

The questioner said: "If there is no mind and no Dharma, why is it called transmission?"

The Master said: "You hear of transmitting mind and suppose there is something obtainable. Therefore the Patriarch said: 'When the mind-nature is recognized, it may be called inconceivable. Clearly, there is nothing obtained; when obtained, one does not speak of knowing.' If this matter were made clear to you, how could you bear it?"

Commentary on Delusion transmission and no-mind

Question: "Is the empty space before the eyes not an object-realm? Can one not point to the object-realm to see mind?"

The Master said: "What mind is it that would have you look toward an object-realm? Even if you see it, it is only a mind that reflects object-realms. It is like someone using a mirror to look at his face. Even though he gets to see eyebrows and eyes clearly, from the start they are only reflections. What does this have to do with you?"

The questioner said: "If not by reflection, when can one see?"

The Master said: "If seeing depends on conditions, you must always rely on objects. When would there ever be an end? Have you not seen it said: 'Let go with open hands; for you there is not a single thing. In vain are thousands of explanations spoken.'"

The questioner said: "If one recognizes it, is there then nothing to reflect?"

The Master said: "If there is no thing, why still use reflection? Do not speak dream-talk with open eyes."

Commentary on the reflecting mind

Ascending the hall, he said: "A hundred kinds of knowledge are not as good as non-seeking, which is foremost. A person of the Way is one who is free of affairs. Truly there are not many kinds of mind; nor is there any principle to explain. There is nothing further; disperse!"

Commentary on Non-seeking and freedom from affairs

Question: "What is conventional truth?"

The Master said: "Why talk about entangling vines? Originally pure, why rely on words, questions, and answers? Simply be without every kind of mind; this is called uncontaminated wisdom. In your daily walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and all speech, do not attach to conditioned dharmas. Every utterance and blink of the eyes is equally uncontaminated.

Now, going into the Dharma-ending age, most students of the Chan way attach to all sounds and forms. Why not let your mind, moment after moment, be like empty space, like a withered tree or a stone, like cold ashes or an extinguished fire? Only then will you have a slight measure of accord. If not, one day you will be interrogated by old Yama.

Just detach from all dharmas of existence and non-existence. Let the mind be like the sun-wheel always in empty space, its light naturally illuminating without deliberate illumination. Is this not a matter of saving effort? When this time is reached,

there is no place to perch or moor; this is carrying out the practice of all Buddhas. It is precisely: 'Give rise to mind without abiding anywhere.' This is your pure Dharma-body, called Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.

If you do not understand this meaning, then even if you learn much knowledge, cultivate with hardship, wear grass garments and live on food from trees, if you do not recognize your own mind, it is all called deviant practice, and you will certainly become kin of heavenly Māras. What benefit could such cultivation have? Zhigong said: 'Buddha is originally made by one's own mind; how could it be sought in written words?'

Even if through study you attain the Three Worthies and the Four Fruits and reach the completed mind of the Tenth Ground, you still remain within the categories of ordinary and sage. Do you not see it said: 'All conditioned phenomena are impermanent; they are dharmas of arising and ceasing.' 'When its force is exhausted, the arrow falls, bringing a future life that is not as wished. How can this compare with the gate of unconditioned true reality? In one leap, directly enter the Tathāgata ground.'

Because you are not such a person, you must broadly study the knowledge and interpretations of the ancient expedient teaching gates. Zhigong said: 'If you do not meet a world-transcending enlightened teacher, you take the Mahāyāna Dharma medicine in vain.'

Now, in all times of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, simply learn no-mind. After a long time, you must truly get it. Because your strength is small, you cannot suddenly leap beyond. Whether it takes three, five, or ten years, you must

gain an entry point; then you will naturally understand. Because you cannot be this way, you insist on using mind to study Chan and study the Way. What connection does this have with the Buddha-Dharma?

Therefore it is said: 'What the Tathāgata spoke was all for transforming people.' Like taking yellow leaves as gold to stop a child's crying, it is definitely not real. If there is any real attainment, you are no student of our school. Moreover, what connection does it have with your fundamental essence? Thus the sūtra says: 'Truly not the slightest Dharma can be obtained; this is called Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.'

If you understand this meaning, only then will you know that both the Buddha path and the Māra path are mistaken. Originally pure, bright and clear, without square or round, large or small, long or short, and other characteristics; uncontaminated and unconditioned, without confusion and without awakening. One clearly sees not a single thing—no person and no Buddha either. Great-thousand world-systems, countless as grains of sand, are bubbles in the sea; all sages and worthies are like flashes of lightning. None of them compares with mind—the true Dharma-body. From ancient times to the present, it has been no different from that of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Where is it deficient by even a single hair? Since you understand this meaning, you must exert yourself greatly in this present life. The outgoing breath does not guarantee the incoming breath."

Commentary on Everyday activity and uncontaminated wisdom · A note on the question about saving effort · Glossary entry: Arising and ceasing 生滅

Question: "The Sixth Patriarch was not versed in scriptures. How could he receive the robe-transmission and become Patriarch? Senior monk Xiu was the head seat among five hundred, served as a teaching master, and could lecture on thirty-two volumes of sūtras and treatises. Why was the robe not transmitted to him?"

The Master said: "Because he had an intentional mind, this was a conditioned dharma; he took what he cultivated and realized to be correct. Therefore the Fifth Patriarch entrusted it to the Sixth Patriarch. At that time the Sixth Patriarch was only in silent accord and received the secret conferral of the Tathāgata's profound meaning, and therefore the Dharma was entrusted to him. Have you not heard it said: 'Dharma is originally no-Dharma; no-Dharma is also Dharma. Now that no-Dharma is entrusted, how has Dharma ever been Dharma?' If you understand this meaning, only then are you called one who has truly left home; only then are you fit to cultivate.

If you do not believe it, how was it that Head Monk Ming ran to the top of Dayu Ridge seeking the Sixth Patriarch?

The Sixth Patriarch asked: 'What have you come seeking? The robe, or the Dharma?'

Head Monk Ming said: 'I have not come for the robe; I have come only for the Dharma.'

The Sixth Patriarch said: 'For a while, rein in thought; do not think of good or evil.'

Ming then responded respectfully.

The Sixth Patriarch said: ‘When not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, right at such a time, bring me Head Monk Ming's original face before your parents were born.’

At these words, Ming suddenly entered silent accord. He bowed and said: ‘Like a person drinking water, I know myself whether it is cold or warm. I wasted thirty years of effort in the Fifth Patriarch's assembly; only today do I realize my former mistake.’

The Sixth Patriarch said: ‘Thus it is.’

At this point one knows that the Patriarch coming from the West directly pointed to the human mind; seeing nature and becoming Buddha do not depend on words and speech.

Have you not seen Ānanda ask Kāśyapa: ‘Apart from transmitting the golden brocade robe, what else did the World-Honored One transmit?’

Kāśyapa called: ‘Ānanda!’ Ānanda answered.

Kāśyapa said: ‘Knock down the flagpole before the gate.’

This is precisely the signpost of the Patriarchs. Why, after serving as attendant for thirty years, was Ānanda rebuked by the Buddha? It was only because of his extensive learning and wisdom. The rebuke was: ‘Your thousand days of studying wisdom are not as good as one day of studying the Way.’ If one does not study the Way, even a drop of water is hard to digest.”

Commentary on Huineng Ming and direct transmission · A note on Ming’s intervening response

Question: "How can one avoid falling into stages?"

The Master said: "Eat rice all day without ever biting a single grain. Walk all day without ever stepping on a single piece of ground. At such a time there are no marks such as self and others. All day long one is not apart from all affairs, yet is not confused by any object-realms — only then is one called a free person.

Furthermore, at all times and in every thought, do not perceive any marks; do not recognize the past, present, and future. The past has no going, the present has no abiding, the future has no coming. Sit peacefully and upright, freely functioning without constraint — only then is one called liberated.

Exert yourselves, exert yourselves! In this gate, among thousands and tens of thousands, only three or five attain it. If you do not take this as your task, there will surely come a day when you suffer calamity. Thus it is said: 'Put forth effort and finish it in this life; who can endure remaining calamities through successive kalpas?'"

End of Essentials of Mind Transmission by Chan Master Duanji of Mount Huangbo.

Commentary on the Essentials

A person of the Way without mind

Read the passage: “Students of the Way today do not awaken to this essence of mind. They produce mind upon mind, seek Buddh…

- 无心道人 **(wúxīn dàorén):** Literally "person of the Way without mind." Refers to one who has realized the truth of No-Mind. No-Mind is not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).

Vimalakīrti and the bodhisattvas

Read the passage: “Mañjuśrī corresponds to principle; Samantabhadra corresponds to practice. Principle is the principle of …

- **Vimalakīrti (维摩):** The central figure of the Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra, a lay bodhisattva known for his profound wisdom. His name means "Undefiled Reputation" or "Pure Name" (净名, Jìngmíng).

Stages and sudden realization

Read the passage: “Yet realization of this mind may be swift or slow. Some hear the Dharma and in one thought immediately a…

- 十信、十住、十行、十回向 **(shíxìn, shízhù, shíxíng, shíhuíxiàng):** The Forty Stages of the Bodhisattva path

preceding the Bhūmis according to certain Mahāyāna schemas (e.g., Huayan, Tiantai).

- **十地 (shídì):** The Ten Bhūmis, the ten stages or grounds of realization on the Bodhisattva path to Buddhahood.

Speech mind and sentience

Read the passage: "This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mi…

- **言语道断，心行处灭 (yányǔ dào duàn, xīnxíng chù miè):** A common Chan expression pointing to the inadequacy of language and conceptual thought to grasp ultimate truth. The first clause appears in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, chapter 12, in Vimalakīrti's description of seeing the Tathāgata.

Vimalakīrti Sūtra (維摩詰所說經), Taishō, vol. 14, no. 475, fascicle 3, chapter 12 (見阿閦佛品), 555a14–15. Chinese text: https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T0475/3

- **蠢动含灵 (chǔndòng hánlíng):** Literally "wriggling creatures possessing numinous awareness." A classical term for all sentient beings, emphasizing their shared potential.

Bodhi and nonattainment

Read the passage: "As for the fundamental Buddha, there is truly not a single thing. It is simply open and unobstructed, qu…

- **三秖 (sān qí):** Abbreviation for 三阿僧祇劫 (sān āsēngqí jié), three asaṃkhyeya kalpas (incalculably long eons), the traditional timeframe for a Bodhisattva's path. The abbreviated source form uses 秖.

• Reference to the Diamond Sūtra: This paraphrases a passage where the Buddha explains that his encounter with Dīpaṃkara Buddha involved realizing that no fixed dharma called "Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi" was actually attained.

• Reference to the Diamond Sūtra: This also paraphrases a passage emphasizing the equality and non-dual nature of Bodhi.

Seeing hearing sensing and knowing

Read the passage: "This fundamentally pure mind and all sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains and rivers, and thin…

- **见闻觉知 (jiàn wén jué zhī):** Seeing, hearing, sensing (or feeling/awareness), and knowing (or cognition). Refers to the functions of the sense faculties and consciousness. Huangbo warns against mistaking these functions for the fundamental Mind itself.

The jewel and the five eyes

Read the passage: "People of the world hear that all Buddhas transmit the mind-Dharma and suppose that apart from mind ther…

- **五眼 (wǔ yǎn), 五语 (wǔ yǔ):** The Five Eyes (physical, divine, wisdom, dharma, Buddha eye) represent escalating levels of perception. The 2025 edition's English gloss "Five Tongues" refers here to 五語, the five modes of speech, expressing the Buddha's capacity to speak truthfully and effectively to all beings. The two expressions emphasize his comprehensive insight and truthful speech.

The Diamond Sūtra gives five descriptions of the Tathāgata's speech —真語、實語、如語、不誑語、不異語—and also enumerates the five eyes. These passages provide a likely scriptural context for Huangbo's paired expressions 五眼 and 五語, rendered here as "five eyes" and "five modes of speech."

Diamond Sūtra (金剛般若波羅蜜經), Taishō vol. 8, no. 235; conventional sections 14 and 18, 750b27–28 (five modes of speech) and 751b13–20 (five eyes).

Diamond Sūtra, T235 (Chinese CBETA text)

Return to the passage

Nourishment consciousness and wisdom

Read the passage: "There is nourishment by consciousness and nourishment by wisdom. The four-element body is afflicted by t…

- **识食 (shí shí), 智食 (zhì shí):** Nourishment through consciousness (clinging, discrimination) versus nourishment through wisdom (mindful sustenance without attachment). This contrasts ordinary, craving-driven consumption with the mindful approach of a practitioner. I read the lack of disenchantment here as including a failure to turn away from *saṃsāra*.

Non-seeking and the unconditioned

Read the passage: "Students of the Way need fear only a single thought that something exists; it immediately separates them…

- **无为 (wúwéi):** The translation here reads "unconditioned." As a practical interpretive gloss, the term may also suggest non-action in the sense of acting without attachment, effort,

or dualistic concepts, rather than complete inaction or the unconditioned state specifically, though it resonates with the latter.

The Patriarch's saying on minds and dharmas

Read the passage: "Ordinary people grasp object-realms; people of the Way grasp mind. To forget both mind and object-realm …

- 祖师云… **(Zǔshī yún…):** This saying is often attributed to Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Chan in China. Earlier in the same passage, 灵觉性 is rendered "nature of numinous awareness."

Dependent arising and non-arising

Read the passage: "Ordinary people do not turn toward the Way. They indulge the six senses and thereby move through the six…

- In Mahayana Buddhism, particularly emphasized in Madhyamaka philosophy, whatever arises dependently on causes and conditions necessarily lacks inherent existence or self-nature (svabhāva). Because phenomena are devoid of such an independent essence, they cannot be said to truly or substantially arise from a state of non-being or cease into non-being in an ultimate sense. Their appearance and disappearance are conventionally observed but ultimately understood as illusory, like a dream or reflection—unborn (anutpanna) and unceasing. Like a reflection appearing in a mirror when conditions are met, or an echo resulting from sound waves, phenomena appear contingently but without any substantial entity actually being created or born. From the ultimate perspective (paramārtha-satya), reality is

characterized by non-arising, non-ceasing, non-permanence, non-annihilation, non-coming, and non-going. This realization is central to Mahayana liberation, as it cuts the root of clinging to phenomena as truly existent.

This view differs significantly from those associated with certain Śrāvakayāna schools, such as the Sarvāstivāda, which analyzed reality by deconstructing and dissolving the illusion of a Self (ātman) in favor of the truth of No-Self (anātman). These schools maintained that reality is composed of constituent dharmas—each possessing only a momentary existence or a specific essence—that genuinely undergo processes of arising, abiding, and ceasing, even while being dependently conditioned. In contrast, the Mahāyāna critique emphasizes the ultimate śūnyatā (emptiness) and asserts the non-arising nature of even these constituent dharmas.

The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana states:

> "Regarding the view of 'substantial existence of dharmas and of a self,' the Buddha taught only the emptiness of a self for the dull-rooted of the two vehicles. Because that teaching was not ultimate, they still regard the five aggregates as arising and ceasing and are afraid of birth and death, clinging foolishly to nirvana. How to counter that? Because the self-nature of the five aggregates is not born, there can be no extinction. They have been in nirvana from the start."

Here 法我見 is the view that dharmas possess a self or independent essence. The treatise distinguishes this from 人我見, the view of a personal self, and contrasts 人無我, the selflessness of persons, with

recognition that the five aggregates themselves are unborn. This is the distinction at issue in the quoted passage.

Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna (大乘起信論), Taishō, vol. 32, no. 1666, 579c26–28 and 580b4–7. Chinese text: https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T1666

The departing Lotus assembly

Read the passage: "Ordinary people all pursue object-realms and give rise to mind; the mind then likes and dislikes. If you…

- **法华会上拂衣而去者 (Fǎhuá huì shàng fú yī ér qù zhě):** Refers to the incident in the Lotus Sūtra (Chapter 2, "Expedient Means") where five thousand arrogant monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen leave the assembly when the Buddha prepares to reveal the ultimate truth of the One Vehicle, believing they have already attained enough.

The conjured city and the treasure

Read the passage: On the eighth day of the tenth month, the Master said to Xiu: "The 'conjured city' means the Two Vehicles…

- **化城 (huàchéng):** Phantom city, from the parable in the Lotus Sūtra (Chapter 7). A guide conjures up a resting place (phantom city) for weary travelers halfway to their destination (the jeweled place, symbolizing Nirvāṇa or Buddhahood) to encourage them to continue. It represents provisional teachings or attainments. 宝所 is rendered "treasure place" in the translation.
- **十地、等觉、妙觉 (shídì, děngjué, miàojué):** Ten Bhūmis, Equal Awakening (等覺, the 51st Bodhisattva stage), and

Wondrous Awakening (妙覺, the 52nd stage, Buddhahood) according to the Tiantai/Huayan Bodhisattva path schema. Huangbo considers even these high stages as provisional relative to the direct realization of the One Mind.

Indic terminology for the stages. The proposed glosses Samyañ̃āṇa for Equal Awakening and Sarvajñāṇa for Wondrous Awakening remain provisional: exact source-language correspondences for these two stage names have not been established here. The stage definitions in this commentary rest on the Chinese terms 等覺 and 妙覺. The fifty-first-stage use of 等覺 is distinguished from its broader use as an epithet of a Buddha.

DILA: 等覺; DILA: 妙覺

Return to the passage

Icchantikas and direct awakening

Read the passage: "An icchantika means one whose faith is incomplete. All sentient beings in the six paths, even those of t…

- **闡提 (chǎntí):** Icchantika. Originally meaning those deemed incapable of attaining Buddhahood due to lack of faith or grave misdeeds. Mahāyāna texts later reinterpreted it, suggesting even icchantikas possess Buddha-nature.
- **善根闡提 (shàngēn chǎntí):** Icchantika of good roots. Huangbo uses this specific contrast for Bodhisattvas who deeply trust the Buddha-Dharma, do not see Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna, and see Buddha and sentient beings as sharing the same Dharma-nature. As a practical warning, even deep faith (good roots) would not prevent someone from remaining 'cut off' from ultimate direct realization if they

clung to concepts of Mahāyāna/Hīnayāna or differences, rather than directly realizing the unified Dharma-nature. It highlights the subtlety required for true awakening beyond conceptual frameworks.

Mind sealing mind

Read the passage: "Since the Tathāgata entrusted the Dharma to Kāśyapa, mind has sealed mind, and the minds have not differ…

- **Mind seals mind (以心印心, yǐ xīn yìn xīn):** Refers to the direct transmission of awakening from master to disciple in Chan, beyond words and scriptures, signifying a direct experiential recognition of the nature of mind.
- **The minds do not differ (不异, bù yì):** Lit. "not different." Signifies the unchanging, non-dual nature of the mind transmitted.
- **No-mind (无心, wúxīn):** Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
- **No-attainment (无得, wú dé):** Since the fundamental nature is already complete, there is nothing external to attain. Awakening is the realization of this nature, not the acquisition of something new. Furthermore, Mind is empty of Mind, it is by nature not something obtainable or graspable.

The three Buddha bodies

Read the passage: "The Buddha has three bodies. The Dharma body (dharmakāya) expounds the Dharma of self-nature's openness ...

- **Three bodies (三身, sān shēn):** The Trikāya doctrine in Mahayana Buddhism: Dharmakāya (法身, Dharma-body: ultimate truth itself), Sambhogakāya (报身, Reward-body: body of enjoyment, appearing to advanced Bodhisattvas), and Nirmāṇakāya (化身, Transformation-body: manifested body, appearing in the world, like Śākyamuni Buddha).
- **Self-nature's openness and unobstructedness (自性虚通, zìxìng xūtōng):** Describes the nature of the Dharmakāya – empty, and freely penetrating all phenomena without obstruction.
- **Six pāramitās (六度, liù dù):** The six perfections: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom.
- **Myriad practices (万行, wàn xíng):** The countless skillful means and practices undertaken by Bodhisattvas.
- **True Dharma (真法, zhēn fǎ) / True Buddha (真佛, zhēn fó):** Refers to the ultimate truth (Dharmakāya) as opposed to conventional or provisional teachings and appearances (Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya).

The six faculties and luminous clarity

Read the passage: "The saying that 'the six faculties are alike in luminous clarity, though distinguished as six conjunctio…

- **One luminous clarity (一精明, yī jīngmíng):** Refers to the fundamental, luminous nature of Mind. This phrase originates from the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.
- **Six conjunctions (六和合, liù héhé):** The coming together of the six sense faculties (六根, liù gēn: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) and their corresponding six sense objects (六尘, liù chén: form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects). In this pairing, 意 denotes the mind faculty and 法 its mental objects (dharmas).
- **Six consciousnesses (六识, liù shí):** The consciousnesses arising from the contact between sense faculty and sense object (eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.).
- **Eighteen elements (十八界, shíbā jiè):** The collective term for the six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses.
- **Bound by Dharma (被法缚, bèi fǎ fù):** Bound by conceptual understanding or attachment to doctrinal formulations, even correct ones, thus obstructing direct realization of the mind itself.
- **Fundamental mind (本心, běnxīn):** The fundamental mind, which is the true nature or Buddha-nature.

One Vehicle and the mind-Dharma

Read the passage: "When the Tathāgata appeared in the world, he wished to speak the true Dharma of the One Vehicle. But sen…

- **One Vehicle (一乘, yī shèng):** Ekayāna. The single vehicle that leads all beings to Buddhahood, representing the ultimate teaching of Mahayana Buddhism, contrasted with the Three Vehicles.
- **Three Vehicles (三乘, sān shèng):** Triyāna. The vehicles of the Śrāvakas (voice-hearers), Pratyekabuddhas (solitary realizers), and Bodhisattvas, traditionally seen as provisional teachings leading towards the ultimate One Vehicle.
- **Fundamental Dharma (本法, běn fǎ):** The original, ultimate teaching, identified here as the Dharma of the One Mind.
- **True (真, zhēn):** Used here again to contrast the provisional teachings with the ultimate truth.
- **Dharma of the One Mind (一心法, yīxīn fǎ):** The teaching pointing directly to the One Mind as the essence of everything and the basis of awakening.
- **Separately entrusted (别付, bié fù):** Refers to the Chan lineage's claim of a special transmission outside the scriptures, initiated by the Buddha transmitting the essence to Kāśyapa.
- **Accord with it and awaken (契悟, qì wù):** To realize directly and experientially, aligning one's understanding with the reality itself.

- **Buddha ground (佛地, fó dì):** The state or level of a fully awakened Buddha.

What is the Way

Read the passage: Question: "What is the Way, and how is it cultivated?" The Master said: "What sort of thing is the Way? W...

- This exchange exemplifies the Chan method of challenging the questioner's underlying assumptions. The Master questions the idea of the Way (道, Dào) as an external object to be cultivated, pointing back towards one's nature.

Seeking and the fear of nothingness

Read the passage: Question: "Masters of various places inherit the practice of investigating Chan and studying the Way. Wha...

- **Dull faculties (钝根, dùn gēn) / Superior faculties (上根, shàng gēn):** Traditional classification of practitioners' capacities. Chan masters often used paradoxical or direct methods for those considered "superior," while employing more gradual or explanatory methods for others. Huangbo dismisses reliance on any fixed method.
- **Conceptual discrimination (情, qíng):** Here refers broadly to emotional responses, conceptual thinking, and volitional impulses based on dualistic views and attachments, which obscure primordial wisdom (智, zhì).
- **Spare yourself the mental effort (省心力, shěng xīnlì):** A common Chan expression suggesting that stopping futile conceptual seeking is the most direct path.

- **Nothingness (无, wú):** The questioner fears nihilism (断灭见, duànmiè jiàn), a view explicitly rejected in Buddhism. Huangbo counters by questioning the very basis of the concept of "nothingness" and the supposed “it” that the questioner intends to seek. This also invites inquiry into who supposedly perceives such “nothingness.”
- The dialogue repeatedly subverts the questioner's attempts to grasp a fixed concept or method, pointing away from intellectual understanding (解, jiě) tied to feelings/concepts (情, qíng) towards direct, non-conceptual awakening to one's own primordial wisdom of the One Mind.

When words fall

Read the passage: Question: “As soon as I speak before the Venerable, why do you immediately say that my words have fallen ...

- **Words have fallen (话堕, huà duò):** Lit. "speech falls" or "speech has lapsed/failed." In Chan contexts, this often means the words have fallen into conceptual traps, dualism, or missed the essential point, thus failing to convey the living truth. Huangbo turns it back, suggesting the problem isn't the words themselves but the questioner's lack of understanding of how language functions in relation to reality.

Names learning and stilling thought

Read the passage: Question: "All the statements just now were merely countering replies. Have you never directly pointed ou…

- **Countering replies (抵敌语, dǐdí yǔ):** Words that seem to block, challenge, or oppose the questioner's line of thought.
- **Directly pointed out the real Dharma (实法指示, shífǎ zhǐshì):** Seeking concrete, affirmative teachings about ultimate truth.
- **No inversion (无颠倒, wú diāndǎo):** Free from distorted views or upside-down thinking (viparyāsa), which perceives the impermanent as permanent, suffering as happiness, non-self as self, and the impure as pure. Huangbo points out that seeking a "True Dharma" while already operating from an inverted (dualistic, conceptual) standpoint is itself the problem. The inversion lies in the seeking mind, not in the absence of Truth.
- Foolish dog: Metaphor for reacting indiscriminately to phenomena without discerning their true nature.
- **Study the Way (学道, xué dào):** While a common term, Huangbo points out its provisional nature and the impossibility of "learning" the Way conceptually. The same passage's 知解 (zhījiě) is rendered "intellectual interpretations."
- **Conceptual measurement (情量, qíngliàng):** The combination of emotional reactions and intellectual measurements/assessments that characterize the ordinary, dualistic mind. Exhausting these leads to the Way.

- **Uncontrived (天真, tiānzhēn):** Innate, uncontrived, fundamentally real.
- **Having caught the fish, forget the trap (得鱼忘筌, dé yú wàng quán):** A famous analogy from Zhuangzi, meaning once the goal (understanding) is achieved, the means (words, concepts, methods) should be discarded.
- **Śramaṇa (沙门, shāmén):** A wandering ascetic or monk. The quote emphasizes that the state of a true Śramaṇa comes from inner realization (recognizing the mind, ceasing thoughts), not external learning.
- **Stilling thought (息虑, xī lǜ):** Stopping the flow of discursive, discriminating thought that imputes delusional constructed realities such as subject and object, self and other, existence and non-existence, and so on. This is not to be confused with a mundane state of non-mentation or thoughtlessness; rather, it is the luminous functioning of Prajñā (wisdom), the penetrating wisdom that dispels delusive reification and reveals the pristine clarity of appearances free from conceptual imputations.

Beyond accumulated understanding

Read the passage: "You now use mind to seek mind, rely on someone else's teachings, and seek only to acquire through study....

- **Rely on someone else's teachings (傍他家舍, páng tā jiā shè):** The literal image is leaning on others' houses. Relying on external teachings or authorities instead of realizing one's own mind.

- **Leisurely people of the Way who have ceased learning and are free from contrivance (绝学无为闲道人, juéxué wúwéi xián dàorén):** Describes one who has transcended conceptual learning (绝学), abides in the unconditioned state or non-dual activity (无为), and is thus free and at ease (闲道人). "Unconditioned" or "non-action" fits 无为 here. The translation expresses this freedom as being “free from contrivance.”
- **Obstruction (壅塞, yōngsè):** Excessive intellectual knowledge blocks direct insight.
- **True Suchness (真如, zhēnrú):** Tathatā. The state of "thusness" or "suchness," reality as it is, devoid of conceptual overlay.
- In my royal treasury, there is no such blade: The image recalls the royal-treasury parable in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra. In Huangbo’s immediate context, undigested conceptual knowledge has no place in True Suchness. I also read the image as pointing to ultimate truth being devoid of the dualistic tools (like swords) needed for conventional struggle or attainment.

Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō, vol. 12, no. 374, fascicle 8, 412b17–c29. See also Appended Items 12–13. Chinese text: https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T0374/8

- **Empty Tathāgatagarbha (空如来藏, kōng rúlái zàng):** The womb or storehouse of the Tathāgata (Buddha-nature), which is fundamentally empty of any inherent, separate existence or defilement.

- **The Dharma King who destroys cyclic existence (破有法王, pò yǒu fǎwáng):** Refers to the Buddha, whose teaching overcomes the illusion of inherent existence.
- In the presence of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I obtained not even the slightest Dharma: A quote from the Diamond Sutra, signifying Śākyamuni's realization that there was nothing to attain.
- **Person free of affairs (无事人, wúshìrén):** One who has realized the nature of mind and is free from the 'business' of striving, seeking, and conceptualizing.
- **Resting the mind (息心, xī xīn):** Similar to 息虑, stopping the agitated, seeking, discriminating mind.

Mind itself is Buddha

Read the passage: Question: “From former times it has always been said, ‘Mind itself is Buddha.’ Which mind is Buddha?” The…

- **Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛, jí xīn shì fó):** A central and famous Chan declaration, attributed originally to Master Mazu Daoyi. Huangbo rigorously defends its absolute, non-dual meaning.
- **Ordinary mind (凡心, fánxīn) / Sage mind (圣心, shèngxīn):** Dualistic concepts the questioner introduces. Huangbo insists these distinctions are illusory (妄, wàng).
- **Delusion (妄, wàng):** False, unreal, based on delusion or misconception.

- **Patriarch came from the West (祖师西来, zǔshī xī lái):** Refers to Bodhidharma bringing Chan from India (the West) to China.
- **Directly pointed out (直指, zhí zhǐ):** Chan emphasizes direct pointing to the human mind, bypassing intermediaries.
- **Conceptual discrimination (情, qíng):** Again, refers to conceptual thought and emotional impulses based on duality.
- **Different realm of existence (异趣, yì qù):** Different states of existence within samsara, or different dualistic viewpoints.
- **Attaining complete and perfect awakening (成等正觉, chéng děng zhèng jué):** Samyaksaṃbodhi, the perfect awakening of a Buddha. Huangbo equates this with the nature of mind itself.
- **Is (即, jí):** This word, often translated as "is" or "itself is," is crucial. Huangbo stresses it denotes identity, not a relationship between two separate things

  (mind and Buddha). Seeking a "principle" (道理, dàolǐ)

  behind it introduces duality (心异, xīn yì - mind becomes different). When the non-difference is revealed, external seeking stops.

Delusion transmission and no-mind

Read the passage: Question: "Delusion can obstruct one's own mind. By what can delusion now be removed?" The Master said: "…

- **Delusion (妄, wàng):** Delusion, illusory thought, misconception.
- **Discrimination (分别, fēnbié):** Vikalpa. Conceptual proliferation, distinguishing self/other, subject/object, etc., which is the basis of illusion.
- **Delusion will naturally be absent (自然无妄, zìrán wú wàng):** Awakening is not achieved by actively fighting illusion but by dropping the dualistic framework (ordinary/sagely feelings) from which it arises.
- "I relinquish both arms and will surely attain Buddhahood." The wording recalls the Medicine King chapter of the Lotus Sūtra (chapter 23), where the bodhisattva

  Sarvasattvapriyadarśana (一切众生憙见), later identified as Medicine King, makes this vow after offering both arms. The image symbolizes complete letting go of self-clinging. The Chan story of the Second Patriarch, Huike, cutting off his arm to show his sincerity to Bodhidharma offers a related illustration.
- **Transmitted (相承, xiāngchéng):** The lineage transmission in Chan.
- **Mind is transmitted by mind (以心传心, yǐ xīn chuán xīn):** The core idea of Chan transmission – a direct, non-verbal, mind-to-mind realization.

- **Mind too is absent (心亦无, xīn yì wú):** Refers to the emptiness of any inherent, substantial mind-entity.
- **No-mind and no-Dharma (无心无法, wú xīn wú fǎ):** The truth where neither a substantive mind nor any graspable Dharma (phenomenon, entity) is found. This is the nature of Mind transmitted.
- Patriarch said...: A quote emphasizing that recognizing the mind-nature is inconceivable and involves realizing there is nothing to obtain. True attainment isn't spoken of as "knowing" in the conventional sense.
- **Made clear (会, huì):** "If this matter were made clear to you, how could you bear it?" I read this as a challenge to merely conceptual understanding: true realization (悟, wù) is different from grasping this matter intellectually.

The reflecting mind

Read the passage: Question: "Is the empty space before the eyes not an object-realm? Can one not point to the object-realm ...

- **Object-realm (境, jìng):** Sensory or mental object, the objective pole in a subject-object duality.
- **Mind that reflects object-realms (照境的心, zhào jìng de xīn):** A mind that functions dualistically, perceiving itself as a subject observing external objects. Huangbo points out this is not the fundamental mind.
- **Reflections (影像, yǐngxiàng):** Images, appearances. Likens perceived objects (even one's reflection) to mere appearances without independent substance.

- **Reflection / To reflect (照, zhào):** Can mean to illuminate, reflect, or perceive/be aware of (often with a connotation of dualistic observation).

- **Seeing depends on conditions (涉因, shè yīn) / Rely on objects (假物, jiǎ wù):** Huangbo is exposing the dualistic attempt to discover Mind as something seen by an observer through an object or reflection. This continues the preceding warning about the "mind that reflects object-realms": so long as seeing is established as a seer confronting a seen object, another object or reflection is always needed. The point is not a rejection of dependent origination, nor a claim that sensory appearances arise independently of conditions. True non-dual seeing is the vivid appearing itself, with no agent and no background subject; Mind is not an entity found behind it or reached through it as a separate object.

- Let go with open hands; for you there is not a single thing: Likely a quote or allusion emphasizing the state of having "not a single thing"—complete non-attachment and emptiness of inherent existence—contrasted with futilely speaking about myriad concepts.

- **No thing (无物, wú wù):** Lit. "no thing." Refers to the emptiness of inherent existence. If true nature is already understood as "no thing," the need for a dualistic process of "reflection" disappears.

- **Speaking dream-talk with open eyes (开眼寐语, kāiyǎn mèiyǔ):** Speaking nonsense or delusion while appearing awake; clinging to concepts when the reality is obvious.

Non-seeking and freedom from affairs

Read the passage: Ascending the hall, he said: "A hundred kinds of knowledge are not as good as non-seeking, which is forem…

- **Ascending the hall (上堂, shàng táng):** A formal Chan sermon delivered by the master in the Dharma Hall.
- **Non-seeking (无求, wúqiú):** Freedom from desire and the striving for attainment, considered supreme because seeking reinforces the illusion of lack and duality.
- **Person of the Way (道人, dàorén):** Practitioner, one who follows the path.
- **One who is free of affairs (无事人, wúshìrén):** One who has realized the fundamental nature and rests in non-striving, free from the 'business' of samsaric concerns or conceptual pursuits.
- **Principles (道理, dàolǐ):** Rational explanations, doctrines. Huangbo dismisses their ultimate value compared to direct realization.
- **There is nothing further; disperse! (无事散去, wúshì sàn qù):** A common way for Chan masters to conclude a sermon, emphasizing the ultimate pointlessness of conceptual discussion and urging a return to simple presence.

Everyday activity and uncontaminated wisdom

Read the passage: Question: "What is conventional truth?" The Master said: "Why talk about entangling vines? Originally pur…

- **Conventional truth (世谛, shìdì):** Saṃvṛti-satya. Conventional truth, relative truth, contrasted with ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya). Huangbo dismisses discussing it as getting entangled.
- **Entangling vines (葛藤, géténg):** A common Chan metaphor for complex, entangling, and ultimately useless intellectual or verbal discourse about the Dharma.
- **Originally pure (本来清净, běnlái qīngjìng):** The original purity of the mind and all phenomena.
- **Without every kind of mind (无一切心, wú yīqiè xīn):** Complete freedom from all forms of conceptual, discriminating, attached mind.
- **Uncontaminated wisdom (无漏智, wúlòu zhì):** Anāsrava-jñāna. Wisdom free from the "outflows" or defilements (kleśas) that perpetuate samsara.
- **Conditioned dharmas (有为法, yǒuwéi fǎ):** Saṃskṛta-dharma. Phenomena that arise from causes and conditions, are impermanent, and characterized by arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. Contrasted with unconditioned dharmas (无为法, wúwéi fǎ).
- **Uncontaminated (无漏, wúlòu):** Anāsrava. Free from defilements.

- **Dharma-ending age (末法, mòfǎ):** The final period after the Buddha's passing, when the capacity to practice and realize the Dharma is believed to decline.
- Like a withered tree or a stone, like cold ashes or an extinguished fire: Metaphors for a mind completely quiescent, unresponsive to external stimuli in a clinging way, free from the "heat" of passion and discrimination.
- **Accord (相应, xiāngyìng):** Accordance, resonance, being in tune with the Way.
- **Old Yama (阎老子, yán lǎozi):** The king of the underworld judges beings after death.
- **Dharmas of existence and non-existence (有无诸法, yǒu wú zhū fǎ):** All phenomena conceived within the duality of existence and non-existence.
- **No place to perch or moor (无栖泊处, wú qībó chù):** The state of non-abiding, not fixating or settling anywhere conceptually or emotionally.
- **Give rise to mind without abiding anywhere (应无所住而生其心, yīng wú suǒ zhù ér shēng qí xīn):** Famous quote from the Diamond Sutra, pivotal in the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng's awakening. It describes the functioning of the awakened mind – responsive yet unattached.
- **Pure Dharma-body (清净法身, qīngjìng fǎshēn):** The Dharmakāya in its original purity.
- **Anuttara[-samyaksaṃbodhi] (阿耨菩提, ā nòu pútí):** Supreme, perfect awakening.

- **Own mind (自心, zìxīn):** One's own intrinsic mind-nature.
- **Deviant practice (邪行, xié xíng):** Practices based on wrong views, even if outwardly ascetic.
- **Heavenly Māras (天魔, tiānmó):** Māras who obstruct practitioners, often associated with subtle attachments to spiritual states or merit. The complete expression, 天魔眷属 (tiānmó juànshǔ), is rendered "kin of heavenly Māras" in the translation.
- **Zhigong (志公):** Master Baozhi (宝志), a semi-legendary Buddhist monk of the Liang Dynasty, respected in Chan.
- **Three Worthies (三贤, sān xián), Four Fruits (四果, sì guǒ), Tenth Ground (十地, shí dì):** Stages of attainment in traditional Mahayana and Śrāvakayāna paths. Here "the completed mind of the Tenth Ground" refers to the culmination of the Ten Bhūmis, the ten Bodhisattva grounds. Huangbo dismisses these attainments as still "within the categories of ordinary and sage" compared to direct realization of the One Mind.
- **All conditioned phenomena (诸行, zhū xíng):** Saṃskāra. All conditioned things, compounded phenomena. Quote refers to their impermanence (诸行无常, zhū xíng wúcháng - anitya).
- **Arising and ceasing (生灭法, shēng miè fǎ):** The nature of conditioned phenomena.

- **Gate of unconditioned true reality (无为实相门, wúwéi shíxiāng mén):** The path of realizing the unconditioned (asaṃskṛta) nature, the true reality (实相, shíxiāng - bhūtalakṣaṇa).
- **Expedient teaching gates (建化门, jiànhuà mén):** Provisional teachings or methods established by past masters.
- **Learn no-mind (学无心, xué wúxīn):** Practice actualizing the wisdom of no-mind and be thoroughly without any [trace of] self/Self.
- **Understand (会, huì):** Experiential understanding or realization.
- **Transforming people (化人, huà rén):** Guiding and transforming beings through skillful means.
- Taking yellow leaves as gold: Metaphor for using expedient, ultimately unreal means to pacify or guide (like tricking a child).
- **Fundamental essence (本体, běntǐ):** One's own true nature.
- **Mara path (魔道, módào):** Path of delusion, obstruction, attachment to phenomena or self. Huangbo states both conventional Buddha-path seeking and Mara's path are mistaken from the ultimate view.
- **Bright and clear (皎皎地, jiǎojiǎo de):** Pure and luminous.
- **Uncontaminated (无漏, wúlòu) and unconditioned (无为, wúwéi):** Key characteristics of the absolute.

- **Without confusion and without awakening (无迷无悟, wú mí wú wù):** In the ultimate truth, the duality of confusion and awakening does not exist.
- **Clearly seeing (了了见, liǎoliǎo jiàn):** Direct, unobscured perception.
- Bubbles in the sea... flashes of lightning: Metaphors for the ephemeral, insubstantial nature of the universe and even sagely accomplishments compared to the reality of Mind.
- **Mind—the true Dharma-body (心真实法身, xīn zhēnshí fǎshēn):** The ultimate truth is the nature of mind itself.
- The outgoing breath does not guarantee the incoming breath: Reminder of impermanence and the urgency of practice.

Huineng Ming and direct transmission

Read the passage: Question: "The Sixth Patriarch was not versed in scriptures. How could he receive the robe-transmission a...

- Sixth Patriarch: Huineng (慧能, 638–713), the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China, known for emphasizing direct realization over scriptural study.
- Senior monk Xiu: Shenxiu (神秀, 606?–706), a prominent Chan master favored by the imperial court, often contrasted with Huineng. In this traditional contrast with Huineng, he represents a more gradual approach to awakening.
- Fifth Patriarch: Hongren (弘忍, 601–674), the teacher of both Huineng and Shenxiu.

- Head Monk Ming: Huiming (惠明), formerly a general, pursued Huineng after the latter received the transmission, seeking the robe and Dharma. The encounter on Dayu Ridge (大庾岭) is a famous Chan story.
- Original face before your parents were born: A classic Chan expression pointing to one's fundamental nature, unconditioned and prior to conceptualization.
- Like a person drinking water...: A metaphor emphasizing the personal, non-transferable nature of direct experiential realization.
- Patriarch coming from the West: Refers to Bodhidharma, traditionally considered the first patriarch of Chan in China, who came from India.
- Ānanda and Kāśyapa: Mahākāśyapa is considered the first patriarch of Chan in India, receiving the "mind-to-mind transmission" from the Buddha. Ānanda was the Buddha's cousin and primary attendant, famed for his memory of the teachings. The dialogue about the robe and the flagpole is a classic Zen koan illustrating the transmission beyond words.
- Knock down the flagpole...: A seemingly nonsensical instruction typical of Zen, intended to break conceptual thinking and point directly to mind. The flagpole (刹竿, chatra-pole) often symbolized the Buddha or the Dharma.
- Even a drop of water is hard to digest: A monastic saying meaning that accepting offerings from lay devotees is a heavy responsibility that can only be repaid through genuine practice; otherwise, one incurs karmic debt.

III. The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Duanji

Prime Minister Pei asked the Master: “Among the four or five hundred people in the mountains, how many have obtained the Venerable's Dharma?”

The Master said: “Their number cannot be fathomed. Why? The Way is realized in the mind; how could it be in words and speech? Words and speech are only for instructing the ignorant and immature.”

Commentary on Pei Xiu’s question

Question: “What is Buddha?”

The Master said: “Mind itself is Buddha; no-mind is the Way. Simply do not give rise to or stir any thoughts of existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and the like. Mind is originally Buddha; Buddha is originally mind. Mind is like empty space. Therefore it is said: ‘The Buddha's true Dharma-body is like empty space.’

Do not seek elsewhere; all seeking is suffering. Even if one practices the six pāramitās and myriad practices for kalpas as many as Ganges sands and attains Buddhahood, it is still not ultimate. Why? Because it belongs to conditioned construction through causes and conditions. When causes and conditions are exhausted, it returns to impermanence. Thus it is said: 'The enjoyment and emanation bodies are not the true Buddha, nor are they the speakers of Dharma.' Simply recognize your own mind, which is without self and without person; from the beginning it is Buddha."

Commentary on Mind is Buddha and no-mind is the Way

Question: "If the sage's no-mind is Buddha, does the ordinary person's no-mind perhaps sink into empty stillness?"

The Master said: "In Dharma there is neither ordinary nor sage, nor any sinking into stillness. Dharma is originally not established as existent, so do not make a view of non-existence. Dharma is originally not established as non-existent, so do not make a view of existence. Existence and non-existence are both entirely attachment-based views, like illusions and cataracts. Therefore it is said: 'Seeing and hearing are like illusions and cataracts; knowing and perceiving belong to sentient beings.' In the gate of the Patriarchs, we discuss only resting contrivance and forgetting views. Therefore, when contrivance is forgotten, the Buddha Way flourishes; when discrimination occurs, Māra's armies blaze."

Commentary on No-mind and empty stillness

Question: "Since mind is originally Buddha, must one still cultivate the six pāramitās and myriad practices?"

The Master said: "Awakening lies in mind; it has nothing to do with the six pāramitās and myriad practices. The six pāramitās and myriad practices are all expedient methods for guiding and liberating beings. Even Bodhi, True Suchness, reality-limit, liberation, Dharma-body, up to the Ten Grounds, Four Fruits, and sagely positions, are all gates of deliverance and have nothing to do with Buddha-mind. Mind itself is Buddha. Therefore among all the gates of deliverance, Buddha-mind is foremost. Simply be without minds such as birth-and-death and affliction, and you do not need dharmas such as Bodhi. Therefore it is said: 'The Buddha spoke all dharmas to deliver me from every kind of mind. If I am without every kind of mind, what use are all dharmas?'

From Buddha down to the Patriarchs, they never discussed other matters; they discussed only the One Mind, also called the One Vehicle. Search carefully in the ten directions: there is no other vehicle. 'This assembly has no branches or leaves; there are only the true and real.' Therefore this meaning is hard to believe.

When Bodhidharma came to this land, arriving in Liang and Wei, only Great Master Ke deeply trusted his own mind and immediately understood upon hearing the words: mind itself is Buddha. When body and mind are both absent, this is called the Great Way. The Great Way is originally equal. Therefore deeply believe that beings with sentience share the same true nature. Mind and nature are not different; nature itself is mind. When mind does not differ from nature, one is called a Patriarch. Thus it is said: 'When the mind-nature is recognized, it may be called inconceivable.'"

Commentary on Buddha-mind and the vehicles

Question: "Does the Buddha ferry sentient beings across?"

The Master said: "In reality there are no sentient beings for the Tathāgata to ferry. Even the self cannot be obtained; how could what is not self be obtained? Buddha and sentient beings are both unobtainable."

The questioner said: "Yet the Buddha manifestly has the thirty-two major marks and ferries sentient beings across. How can you say there are none?"

The Master said: "'All that has characteristics is illusory and unreal. If you see all characteristics as non-characteristics, then you see the Tathāgata.' Buddha and sentient beings are entirely deluded views of your own making. Only because you do not recognize the fundamental mind do you rashly make interpretations. As soon as you make a view of Buddha, you are obstructed by Buddha. As soon as you make a view of sentient beings, you are obstructed by sentient beings. Making views of ordinary, sage, pure, impure, and so on — all become obstructions. Because they obstruct your mind, they keep you

turning in saṃsāra. It is like a monkey letting go of one thing and grabbing another, with no time of rest. All of this is merely learning.

You must directly go beyond learning: no ordinary, no sage, no pure, no defiled, no large, no small, uncontaminated, unconditioned. Within this One Mind, diligently adorn [it] through skillful means.

Even if I let you learn the Three Vehicles and the twelve divisions of teaching, every view and interpretation must still be completely discarded. Thus everything is cleared away; only one bed remains, and [Vimalakīrti] lies there ill. This is just not giving rise to any views. When no single Dharma can be obtained, one is not obstructed by dharmas and passes beyond the domains of ordinary and sage in the three realms; only then can one be called a world-transcending Buddha. Therefore it is said: 'I bow to one who is like empty space, without reliance, and who surpasses the externalists.'

Since mind is undifferentiated, dharmas are likewise undifferentiated. Since mind is unconditioned, dharmas are likewise unconditioned. The myriad dharmas are all transformations by mind. Therefore, 'Because my mind is empty, all dharmas are empty; the thousand kinds and myriad types are all the same.' Throughout the entire realm of empty space in the ten directions, all is of the same essence as the One Mind. Mind is originally undifferentiated, and dharmas are likewise undifferentiated. Distinctions arise only because your views and interpretations differ. It is like devas eating from a shared jeweled vessel: according to their merit, the color of the food differs.

The Buddhas of the ten directions in reality have not obtained the slightest Dharma; this is named Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. It is only the One Mind, truly without distinguishing marks, without radiance, and without superiority or inferiority. Since there is no superiority, there is no mark of Buddha; since there is no inferiority, there is no mark of sentient beings."

Commentary on Deliverance without fixed views · A note on Vimalakīrti's room and illness · Glossary entry: Skillful means 方便

The questioner said: "Since mind is without characteristics, how could there be no thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks for transforming and ferrying sentient beings across?"

The Master said: "The thirty-two major marks belong to the category of characteristics: 'All that has characteristics is illusory and unreal.' The eighty minor marks belong to the category of form: 'If by form one sees me, that person practices a deviant path and cannot see the Tathāgata.'"

Commentary on the Buddha's marks and signlessness

Question: "Are Buddha-nature and sentient-being-nature the same or different?"

The Master said: "In nature there is no sameness or difference. If one follows the teachings of the Three Vehicles, then Buddha-nature and sentient-being-nature are spoken of; this establishes the causes and fruits of the Three Vehicles and gives rise to distinctions of sameness and difference. If one follows the Buddha Vehicle and the Patriarchal transmission, such matters are not spoken of. There is only the One Mind, neither same nor different, neither cause nor effect. Therefore

it is said: 'There is only this One Vehicle path, no two and no three, except for the Buddha's expedient speaking.'"

Commentary on Beyond sameness and difference

Question: "Why does the Boundless Body Bodhisattva not see the Tathāgata's crown-mark?"

The Master said: "In reality there is nothing to see. Why? The Boundless Body Bodhisattva is the Tathāgata himself; he need not see the Tathāgata again. It only teaches you not to make a view of Buddha and not fall to the Buddha side; not to make a view of sentient beings and not fall to the sentient-being side; not to make a view of existence and not fall to the existence side; not to make a view of non-existence and not fall to the non-existence side; not to make a view of the ordinary and not fall to the ordinary side; not to make a view of the sage and not fall to the sage side.

Simply to have no views is the Boundless Body. Anyone who holds to any view is called an externalist. Externalists delight in various views. Bodhisattvas are unmoved amid various views.

Tathāgata means the suchness of all dharmas. Therefore it is said: 'Maitreya is also suchness; all sages and worthies are also suchness.' Suchness is non-arising. Suchness is non-ceasing. Suchness is non-seeing. Suchness is non-hearing. The Tathāgata's crown is perfect seeing; yet there is also no perfect seeing, and so it does not fall to the side of perfection. Therefore the Buddha-body is unconditioned and does not fall within any category. Take empty space as an analogy: it is perfectly identical with the great void, with neither lack nor excess.

At ease and free of affairs, do not force distinctions about object-realms. When distinction is made, it becomes consciousness. Therefore it is said: 'The perfected nature sinks into the ocean of consciousness; through saṃsāra it drifts like a tumbleweed.' Merely saying, 'I know,' 'I have learned,' 'I have accorded and awakened,' 'I am liberated,' 'There is a principle' — where you are strong, things go as you wish; where you are weak, they do not. What use is this kind of view and interpretation?

I tell you: remain at ease and free of affairs; do not needlessly exert the mind. There is no need to seek the real; one must only cease views. Therefore inner views and outer views are both wrong; the Buddha path and the Māra path are both wrong.

This is why Mañjuśrī, when he briefly gave rise to dualistic views, was banished to the two Iron Encircling Mountains. Mañjuśrī is true wisdom; Samantabhadra is expedient wisdom. Expedient and true are mutually opposing remedies; ultimately there is neither expedient nor true, only the One Mind. Mind is neither Buddha nor sentient being; there are no differing views. As soon as there is a view of Buddha, a view of sentient beings is made. Views of existence and non-existence, permanence and annihilation, become the two Iron Encircling Mountains, because one is obstructed by views.

Commentary on Boundless Body and the obstruction of views · Glossary entry: Non-arising 無生

"The Patriarchs directly point to the fundamental mind of all sentient beings: the fundamental essence is originally Buddha, not achieved by cultivation, not belonging to stages, not a matter of brightness or darkness. It is not brightness; hence

there is 'no brightness' (ignorance). It is not darkness; hence there is no darkness. Therefore there is neither ignorance nor the extinction of ignorance. Entering this school of ours, you must carefully attend in this way. Seeing in this way is named Dharma. Because one sees Dharma, one is named Buddha. When Buddha and Dharma are both absent, it is named Saṅgha, called the unconditioned Saṅgha and also named the Three Jewels of one essence.

Those who seek Dharma should not cling to Buddha in their seeking, should not cling to Dharma in their seeking, and should not cling to Saṅgha in their seeking. They should seek nothing. Because they do not cling to Buddha in their seeking, there is no Buddha. Because they do not cling to Dharma in their seeking, there is no Dharma. Because they do not cling to Saṅgha in their seeking, there is no Saṅgha."

Commentary on the Three Jewels of one essence

Question: "Venerable, you are now speaking Dharma. How can you say there is no Saṅgha and no Dharma?"

The Master said: "If you see that there is a Dharma that can be spoken, then you are seeking me by sound. If you see that there is an 'I,' then you have posited a locus. Dharma also is no-Dharma; Dharma is mind. Thus a Patriarch said: 'When entrusting this mind-Dharma, how has dharma ever been Dharma? No Dharma, no fundamental mind — only then does one understand the mind-to-mind Dharma.'

Truly there is not a single Dharma that can be obtained; this is called sitting at the seat of awakening. The seat of awakening means simply not giving rise to any views. Awakening to the fact that dharmas are originally empty is called the empty Tathāgatagarbha. Originally there is not a single thing; where can dust alight? If you grasp the meaning here, you are free and at ease—what more is there to discuss?"

Commentary on Speaking Dharma without obtaining Dharma

Question: "'Originally there is not a single thing' — is 'no thing' itself it?"

The Master said: "'No' is not it either. Bodhi is nowhere to be affirmed as 'this is it'; nor is there any understanding of 'no.'"

Commentary on Beyond affirmation and negation

Question: "What is Buddha?"

The Master said: "Your mind is Buddha. Buddha is mind. Mind and Buddha do not differ; therefore it is said, 'Mind itself is Buddha.' Apart from mind, there is no other Buddha."

The questioner said: "If one's own mind is Buddha, when the Patriarch came from the West, what did he transmit?"

The Master said: "When the Patriarch came from the West, he transmitted only this: mind is Buddha, directly pointing out that your minds are originally Buddha. The minds do not differ; therefore he is called Patriarch. If you directly see this meaning, you at once leap beyond all stages of the Three Vehicles. Originally you are Buddha; there is no need to achieve it by cultivation."

The questioner said: "If so, when the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, what Dharma do they speak?"

The Master said: "When the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, they all speak only the Dharma of One Mind. Therefore the Buddha secretly entrusted it to Mahākāśyapa. The essence of this One Mind Dharma extends throughout empty space and pervades the Dharma-realm. It is called the principle of all Buddhas.

As for discussing this Dharma, how could you understand it through words and sentences? It is also not something seen through a single occasion or a single situation. This meaning can only be silently accorded with. This one gate is called the unconditioned Dharma-gate. If you wish to understand it, simply know no-mind; suddenly awaken and you obtain it. If you use mind intending to learn and grasp it, you turn further away. If your mind does not branch into divergent paths, does not grasp or reject, and is like wood and stone, only then are you qualified to study the Way."

Commentary on the mind-Buddha transmission

Someone said: "At present there are all kinds of deluded thoughts appearing. How can you say there are none?"

The Master said: "Delusion originally has no essence; it is exactly what rises from your mind. If you recognize that mind is Buddha, mind is originally without delusion. How could you then give rise to mind and further acknowledge delusion? If you do not give rise to mind and move thoughts, naturally there is no delusion. Therefore it is said: 'When mind arises, various dharmas arise; when mind ceases, various dharmas cease.'"

Someone said: "Right now, just when deluded thoughts arise, where is Buddha?"

The Master said: "At the moment you are aware that delusion has arisen, that very awareness is Buddha. If there were no deluded thoughts there, there would also be no Buddha. Why? Because you raise mind to make a view of Buddha and then say there is a Buddha to be accomplished; you make a view of sentient beings and then say there are sentient beings to be ferried. Raising mind and moving thought are altogether where your views arise. If there are no views at all, where could Buddha have a place? Just as Mañjuśrī, the moment he raised a view of Buddha, was banished to the two Iron Encircling Mountains."

Someone said: "Right now, in the very moment of awakening, where is Buddha?"

The Master said: "Where does the question come from? From where does this awareness arise? Speech and silence, movement and stillness, all sounds and forms — all are Buddha-activity. Where would you seek Buddha? Do not put a head on top of a head or add a mouth on top of a mouth. Just do not give rise to different views.

Mountains are mountains, water is water, monastics are monastics, laity are laity. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars—none lie outside your mind. The entire three-thousandfold world-system is none other than yourself. Where are there so many kinds? Outside mind there are no dharmas; green mountains fill the eyes. The empty world is brilliantly clear, without even a hair's breadth on which you could form an interpretation.

Thus all sounds and forms are the Buddha's wisdom-eye. Dharmas do not arise in isolation; they arise in dependence on object-realms. In response to things, wisdom takes many forms. Speaking all day, when has anything been spoken? Hearing all day, when has anything been heard? Therefore Śākyamuni spoke for forty-nine years, yet never spoke a single word.”

Someone said: “If so, where is Bodhi?”

The Master said: “Bodhi is nowhere to be affirmed as ‘this is it.’ Buddhas also do not obtain Bodhi; sentient beings also do not lose Bodhi. It cannot be obtained by body and cannot be sought by mind. All sentient beings are themselves the appearance of Bodhi.”

Someone said: “How does one give rise to the mind of awakening (bodhicitta)?”

The Master said: “Bodhi cannot be obtained. You now should simply give rise to the mind of non-attainment. Decisively not obtaining a single Dharma is the mind of awakening. Bodhi has no place of abiding; therefore there is no one who obtains it. Thus it is said: ‘In the presence of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I did not have the slightest Dharma that could be obtained, and the Buddha then gave me the prediction.’ Clearly know that all sentient beings are originally Bodhi; they should not obtain Bodhi again.

You now hear 'give rise to the mind of awakening' and suppose it means setting up a mind to learn Buddhahood, solely intending to become Buddha. Even if you cultivate for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas, you will attain only an enjoyment-body or emanation-body Buddha. What connection does this have with the Buddha of your fundamental true nature? Therefore it is said: 'A Buddha defined by characteristics and sought outside is unlike you.'"

Commentary on Delusion, Bodhi, and everyday experience · Glossary entry: Non-attainment 無所得 · Glossary entry: Mind of awakening 菩提心

Question: "Since it is originally Buddha, how can there still be the four births, the six paths, and many different forms and appearances?"

The Master said: "The essence of all Buddhas is perfectly complete, without increase or decrease. Flowing into the six paths, it is complete everywhere. Among the myriad kinds, each one is Buddha. It is like a mass of mercury divided and scattered in many places: every particle is perfectly round. When not divided, it is just one mass. One is all; all is one. The many forms and appearances are like houses. Leaving a donkey's house and entering a human house, leaving a human body and reaching a deva body, up to the houses of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas — all arise from your grasping and rejecting. Therefore there are distinctions. How could the nature of the fundamental source have distinctions?"

Commentary on the six paths and the mercury analogy

Question: "How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion and speak Dharma for sentient beings?"

The Master said: "The Buddhas' loving-kindness and compassion are nonreferential; therefore they are called great loving-kindness and compassion. Loving-kindness means not seeing any Buddha to be attained. Compassion means not seeing any sentient beings to be delivered. The Dharma they speak is neither spoken nor shown; those who listen neither hear nor attain anything. It is like an illusionist speaking Dharma for illusory people. As for this Dharma, how could it be a matter of saying, 'I received it upon hearing a spiritual friend's words; I understood; I awakened'? As for this loving-kindness and compassion, if you raise mind and move thought in order to learn another's views and interpretations, then this is not awakening to your own original mind. Ultimately it is of no benefit."

Commentary on Nonreferential compassion

Question: "What is vigor?"

The Master said: "When body and mind do not arise, this is called the foremost and firmest vigor. As soon as one raises mind and seeks outwardly, this is called King Kali going hunting for pleasure. Mind not wandering outward is the Sage of Forbearance (Kṣāntivādin). When body and mind are both absent, this is the Buddha Way."

Commentary on Vigor and the Sage of Forbearance

Question: "If one is without mind, can one practice this Way?"

The Master said: "No-mind itself is practicing this Way. What more is there to say of 'can' and 'cannot'? For example, a sudden single thought is already an object-realm. If there is no

single thought, then the object-realm is forgotten and mind naturally ceases. There is nothing more to pursue."

Question: "What is going beyond the three realms?"

The Master said: "Do not think of good and evil at all. Right where you are, you go beyond the three realms. The Tathāgata appeared in the world in order to break the cycle of existence in the three realms. If there is no mind of any kind, the three realms too are not established as existent. It is like breaking one mote of dust into a hundred parts: if ninety-nine parts are absent and one part exists, Mahāyāna still cannot transcend the three realms. Only when all hundred parts are absent can it transcend them."

Commentary on Going beyond the three realms

In the hall he said: "Mind itself is Buddha. From all Buddhas above down to all moving beings with sentience below, all have Buddha-nature and are of the same essence as the One Mind. Therefore Bodhidharma came from the West only transmitting the One Mind Dharma, directly pointing out that all sentient beings are originally Buddha, with no need of cultivation. Now just recognize your own mind, see your own fundamental nature, and seek nothing else.

How do you recognize your own mind? It is precisely your mind that is speaking right now. If there is neither speech nor functioning, the mind-essence is like empty space: it has no defining characteristics and no location. Nor is it simply nonexistent, though it cannot be seen. Therefore the Patriarch said: 'True nature is the treasury of the mind-ground; it has neither head nor tail. Responding to conditions, it transforms beings; expediently it is called wisdom.'

When it does not respond to conditions, one cannot speak of its existence or non-existence. Even when it is precisely responding, there is also no trace. Since you know this, simply rest without abiding in anything; that is walking the path of all Buddhas. The sūtra says: 'Give rise to mind without abiding anywhere.'

Commentary on the responsive mind · Textual note on Mind-ground treasury

"All sentient beings who cycle in birth and death do so because their mental consciousness chases after conditions, while their minds move ceaselessly through the six realms, causing them to undergo many kinds of suffering. Vimalakīrti said: 'People difficult to transform have minds like monkeys; therefore many kinds of Dharma are used to restrain their minds, and only afterward are they tamed.' Thus, when mind arises, various dharmas arise; when mind ceases, various dharmas cease. Therefore know that all dharmas are made by mind — humans, devas, hells, the six paths, and asuras, all are made by mind.

Now simply study no-mind and suddenly cease all conditions. Do not give rise to deluded thoughts and discrimination: no person, no self, no greed and anger, no hatred and love, no victory and defeat. Simply eliminate these many kinds of deluded thought. The nature itself is originally pure; this is precisely practice, Bodhi, Dharma, Buddha, and so forth.

If you do not understand this meaning, then even if you study widely, cultivate painstakingly, live on food from trees and wear grass garments, if you do not recognize your own mind, all is called deviant practice; you will all become heavenly Māras, externalists, or spirits of water and land. What benefit could such cultivation have? Zhigong said: 'The fundamental essence is made by one's own mind; how could it be sought in written words?' Now simply recognize your own mind and put thinking to rest. Deluded thoughts and dust and toil naturally do not arise.

Commentary on the monkey mind and its training

"The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: 'Only one bed was left, and he lay there ill.' This means that mind does not arise. Now, lying ill, when grasping at conditions has entirely ceased and deluded thoughts rest and cease — this is Bodhi.

If now within the mind there is agitation and lack of steadiness, then even if through study you reach the various stages of the Three Vehicles, the Four Fruits, and the Ten Grounds, you still remain within the categories of ordinary and sage. All conditioned phenomena are ultimately impermanent; their force has a time of exhaustion. It is like an arrow shot into empty space: when its force is exhausted, it falls again, returning to saṃsāra. Cultivating like this and not understanding the Buddha's intent, you suffer hardships in vain. Is this not a great mistake? Zhigong said: 'If you have not met a world-transcending enlightened teacher, you take the Mahāyāna Dharma medicine in vain.'

Now, at all times in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, simply study no-mind, without discrimination, without reliance, without abiding and attachment. All day long, move

freely according to conditions like a foolish person. The people of the world will not recognize you, and you need not concern yourself with whether others recognize you or not. Let the mind be like stubborn stone, with no fissure. No dharma can penetrate into your mind. Utterly unattached, only in this way do you begin to have a slight measure of accord.

Penetrating beyond the object-realm of the three realms is called the Buddha's appearance in the world. Not letting mind-characteristics leak out is called uncontaminated wisdom. Not making human or heavenly karma, not making hell karma, not raising any mind, with all conditions exhausted and not arising — then, with this very body and mind, one is a person of freedom. This does not mean that nothing ever arises; rather, it arises freely in accord with intent. The sūtra says: 'Bodhisattvas have a mind-born body (意生身).'

If you have not yet understood no-mind, then to act while attached to characteristics all belongs to Māra's karma. Even performing Pure Land Buddhist activities will all become karma and be called a Buddha-obstruction. Because it obstructs your mind, you are constrained by cause and effect, with no share of freedom to go or stay. Therefore dharmas such as Bodhi are originally not established as existent. What the Tathāgata spoke was all for transforming people, like taking yellow leaves as gold to stop a child's crying. Thus truly there is no Dharma named Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Commentary on Vimalakīrti's illness and freedom · A note on Vimalakīrti's room and illness

"Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust old karma and do not create new calamity. Keep the mind perfectly clear. Therefore, all former views and interpretations must be discarded. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra recounts that Vimalakīrti 'removed everything.' The Lotus says: 'For twenty years I always had him remove dung.' This simply means clearing away the formation of views and interpretations in the mind. It also says: 'Clean away the dung of conceptual elaboration (prapañca).' Therefore the Tathāgatagarbha is originally empty and still and does not retain even one Dharma. Thus the sūtra says: 'The Buddha-lands too are all empty.'

If you say the Buddha Way is obtained by cultivation and study, such a view has no connection at all. Or one takes some particular device or situation — raising the eyebrows, moving the eyes, or matching responses appropriately — and then declares that one has accorded and realized, and has awakened to the principle of Chan. If such a person suddenly meets someone and cannot understand him, he immediately dismisses him as knowing nothing. If, in confronting the other, he gets the better of the argument, his mind rejoices; if the other refutes and overcomes him, he becomes dejected. What does studying Chan with such a state of mind have to do with the Chan Way? Even if you understand a little principle,

it amounts only to a mental factor (心所法) and has no connection with the Chan Way.

Therefore Bodhidharma faced the wall and gave people no foothold for views. Thus it is said: forgetting contrivance is the Buddha Way; discrimination is Māra's realm. Whether you are confused or awakened, this nature is not lost in confusion

and not obtained in awakening. The uncontrived self-nature is originally free of both confusion and awakening.

The whole realm of empty space throughout the ten directions is originally the essence of my one mind. Even when you move, function, and construct, how could it leave empty space? Empty space is originally neither large nor small, uncontaminated and unconditioned, without confusion and awakening. One clearly sees not a single thing—no person and no Buddha either. Utterly beyond even the slightest measure, without reliance or attachment — one clear stream: this is self-nature. As for acceptance of the non-arising of dharmas (無生法忍, anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti), what deliberation could there be? The true Buddha has no mouth and does not expound Dharma. True listening has no ears; who is there to hear? Take care."

Commentary on Clearing away views and interpretations · A note on Vimalakīrti's room and illness · Glossary entry: Mental factor 心所法 · Glossary entry: Conceptual elaboration 戲論 · Glossary entry: Acceptance of the non-arising of dharmas 無生法忍

One day the Master ascended the hall and instructed the assembly:

"If you have not broken through in advance, when the thirtieth night of the twelfth lunar month arrives, I guarantee you will be flustered and confused. There are some externalists who, as soon as they see someone talk of doing the work, laugh coldly and say, 'There is still this.' I ask you: if the time of death suddenly arrives, what will you use to fend off birth-and-death? Think it over. There must be some way.

How could a Maitreya be born naturally, or a Śākyamuni arise spontaneously?

There is a kind of idle spirit and wild ghost who, as soon as they see someone a little ill, say to that person, 'Just put it down.' But when they themselves are ill, they cannot handle it; they flail about in panic. What will you do when your flesh is cut to pieces as though by a sharp knife and you cannot remain in control?

All matters must be settled in times of leisure; then when urgency comes, they can be put to use. How much effort is saved! Do not wait until you are thirsty to dig a well; by then you will be unable to make the necessary preparations, and the whole scene will be a shambles. How will you avoid it? The road ahead is dark; you will simply crash around blindly and at random. Bitter indeed! Bitter indeed!

Commentary on Practice before the final urgency

"On ordinary days you only study verbal samādhi, speaking Chan and speaking the Way, scolding Buddha and reviling Patriarchs. When you arrive here, none of it is of any use. On ordinary days you only deceive others. How could you know that today you deceive yourself? Avīci hell will definitely not let you go.

Now, as the Dharma-ending age sinks into decline, everything depends on those with strength. Brothers, bear the burden and continue the Buddha's wisdom-life; do not let it be cut off. Nowadays even if there are one or two traveling monks, they only go to look at mountains and scenery, not knowing how little time there is. One breath that does not return is the next life. Who knows what face and form you will have?

Alas! I advise you, brothers: while your body and strength are healthy, gain a clear understanding of this great matter so that others cannot deceive you. These pivotal points are very easy. It is only that you refuse to set a deathlike resolve and do the work. You only keep saying, 'It is hard, hard.' Let me teach you: where could there be a wooden ladle that grows by itself on a tree? You too must make the change yourself.

Commentary on Sustaining the Buddha's wisdom-life

"If you are a man of mettle, look at this kōan: A monk asked Zhaozhou, 'Does a dog have Buddha-nature or not?'

Zhaozhou said, 'No.'

Just go throughout the twelve periods of the day and look into this word 'No.' Investigate by day and investigate by night, in walking, standing, sitting, lying down, while dressing and eating, while defecating and urinating. Hold it in mind, moment after moment. Muster fierce energy and guard this word 'No.'

As days and months pass, it becomes one continuous whole; suddenly the mind-flower bursts open, and you awaken to the pivotal working of Buddhas and Patriarchs. Then you will not be deceived by the tongues of all the old monks under heaven. You will be able to open your great mouth: Bodhidharma's coming from the West stirred up waves where there was no wind; the World-Honored One's holding up the flower was a complete failure. At this point, what is there to say of old Yama? Even a thousand sages can do nothing with you. Do you not believe it? There truly is this kind of wonder. Why is it so? Nothing is difficult for a person with resolve."

Commentary on Investigating Zhaozhou's No

Verse:

> To break completely free from dust and toil is no ordinary matter;
> Grip the rope's end firmly and make one decisive effort.
> Without one spell of cold piercing to the bone,
> How could plum blossoms give off penetrating fragrance?

Commentary on the plum-blossom verse

Commentary on the Wanling Record

Pei Xiu's question

Read the passage: Prime Minister Pei asked the Master: "Among the four or five hundred people in the mountains, how many ha…

- Prime Minister Pei: Pei Xiu (裴休, 791–864), a high-ranking official in the late-middle Tang Dynasty and a devoted lay student of Huangbo. He recorded and organized Huangbo's teachings.
- **Venerable (和尚):** Referring to Huangbo himself.

Mind is Buddha and no-mind is the Way

Read the passage: Question: "What is Buddha?" The Master said: "Mind itself is Buddha; no-mind is the Way. Simply do not gi…

- **No-mind (无心):** Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
- **Subject or object (能所):** The duality between the perceiver (subject) and the perceived (object).
- **Dharma-body (法身, Dharmakāya):** The ultimate, true body or nature of a Buddha, often described as formless and like space.
- Six paramitas and myriad practices: The traditional Mahayana path involving generosity, discipline, patience,

diligence, meditation, and wisdom, along with countless other wholesome activities. Huangbo emphasizes that realization is not dependent on these practices but on recognizing the mind's fundamental nature.

- **Causes and conditions (因缘):** The Buddhist principle that all compounded phenomena arise dependently on causes and conditions and are therefore impermanent.
- **Enjoyment and emanation bodies (报化, Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya):** Two of the three bodies (Trikāya) of a Buddha. The Sambhogakāya is a body of bliss experienced by advanced Bodhisattvas, and the Nirmāṇakāya is the physical body manifested in the world (like Siddhartha Gautama). Huangbo points beyond these relative forms to the ultimate Dharmakāya, which is equated with one's own mind.

No-mind and empty stillness

Read the passage: Question: "If the sage's no-mind is Buddha, does the ordinary person's no-mind perhaps sink into empty st...

- **Empty stillness (空寂):** A potential pitfall in meditation where one might mistake a state of mental quietness or blankness, devoid of wisdom, for true emptiness or liberation. Huangbo clarifies that the Dharma itself is beyond such states.
- **Attachment-based views (情见):** Views based on subjective feelings, attachments, and conceptual discriminations rather than direct insight.

- **Illusions and cataracts (幻翳):** Metaphor for how ordinary perception and conceptual thinking obscure the true nature of reality.
- **Knowing and perceiving belong to sentient beings (知觉乃众生):** This line suggests that discriminative consciousness, the ordinary way of knowing and perceiving based on subject-object duality, is what constitutes the state of being an unenlightened sentient being.
- **Resting contrivance and forgetting views (息机忘见):** A key Chan practice: stopping the discriminating mind (机, literally 'mechanism' or 'trigger') and letting go of all conceptual standpoints (见, views).
- **Māra's armies (魔军):** Refers to Māra, the personification of temptation, distraction, and the forces that obstruct awakening, often associated with discriminative thought and attachment.

Buddha-mind and the vehicles

Read the passage: Question: "Since mind is originally Buddha, must one still cultivate the six pāramitās and myriad practic…

- **True Suchness (真如, Tathatā):** The state of things as they truly are, unconditioned reality.
- **Reality-limit (实际):** The actual, ultimate state.
- **Ten grounds (十地, Daśa-bhūmi):** The ten stages of development for a Bodhisattva on the path to Buddhahood in Mahayana Buddhism.

- **Four fruits (四果):** The four stages of attainment in the Śrāvaka (hearer) path: Stream-enterer, Once-returner, Non-returner, Arhat.
- ‘The Buddha spoke all dharmas...’: A famous quote often attributed to Bodhidharma, summarizing the idea that teachings are remedies for the mind's afflictions; if the afflictions cease, the remedies are unnecessary.
- **One Mind (一心):** The central doctrine of Huangbo, the fundamental nature of Mind, which is identical to Buddha-nature.

  Pei Xiu's Preface states: "Alone he wore the seal of the Supreme Vehicle, apart from words and letters. He transmitted only the One Mind; there was no other Dharma. The essence of mind is also empty, and the myriad conditions are all quiescent. It is like the great sun-wheel rising in empty space: its light shines forth, pure and without the finest speck of dust."

- **One Vehicle (一乘, Ekayāna):** The doctrine, most famously elaborated in the Lotus Sutra, that the various paths taught by the Buddha (for Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas) are ultimately skillful means leading to the single, universal Buddha Vehicle.
- ‘This assembly has no branches or leaves...’: A quote from the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 2 (Expedient Means), where the image describes the assembly after five thousand people have left. Huangbo’s use here emphasizes the directness and authenticity of the ultimate teaching and the discarding of temporary or provisional doctrines.

- **Bodhidharma (达摩):** The semi-legendary Indian monk credited with bringing Chan Buddhism to China in the 5th or 6th century.
- Liang and Wei: Dynasties/states in China during Bodhidharma's time.
- Great Master Ke: Huike (慧可, 487–593), the second patriarch of Chan in China, who famously received the transmission from Bodhidharma after demonstrating his sincerity (in legend, by cutting off his arm).
- **When body and mind are both absent (身心俱无):** Refers to the realization of the emptiness of both physical form and mental phenomena.
- **Great Way (大道):** The ultimate path or reality.
- **True nature (真性):** The true nature, synonymous with Buddha-nature or mind-nature.
- **Mind-nature (心性):** The inherent nature of the mind.

Deliverance without fixed views

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha ferry sentient beings across?" The Master said: "In reality there are no senti…

- "In reality there are no sentient beings..." & "All that has characteristics...": Direct references or strong echoes of verses from the Diamond Sutra, emphasizing emptiness and the illusory nature of perceived distinctions.
- **Tathāgata (如来):** "Thus Come One" or "Thus Gone One," an epithet for a Buddha.

- **Thirty-two major marks (三十二相):** The major physical characteristics said to adorn the body of a great being like a Buddha or a universal monarch (Cakravartin). Huangbo dismisses these as mere characteristics.
- **Rashly make interpretations (谩作见解):** Creating interpretations or conceptual frameworks based on delusion rather than direct insight into the fundamental mind.
- **Obstructed by Buddha (佛障):** Even the concept of "Buddha," if clung to as an external reality or goal, becomes an obstacle to realizing one's own inherent Buddha-mind.
- **Turning in saṃsāra (轮转):** The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara), driven by ignorance and attachment to views.
- Monkey, letting go of one and grasping another: Metaphor for the restless mind that constantly grasps at thoughts and objects.
- **Go beyond learning (无学, aśaikṣa, “no-learning”):** The stage beyond learning, characteristic of an Arhat or Buddha who has completed the path and has nothing further to train in or learn in the conventional sense.
- **Uncontaminated (无漏, anāsrava):** Free from the "outflows" or "cankers" – sensual desire, desire for existence, wrong views, and ignorance – that perpetuate samsara.
- **Unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta):** Not produced by causes and conditions; referring to the ultimate truth, Nirvana, or the nature of the awakened mind. Here it concerns the cessation of afflictive conditioning.

- **Diligently adorn [it] through skillful means (方便勤庄严):** In the context of the preceding negations ("no ordinary, no sage..."), this phrase likely means to simply maintain awareness of the One Mind, free from these dualistic views, as the fundamental 'practice' or 'adornment'. It's an adornment devoid of conventional effort or attributes.
- **Three Vehicles and the twelve divisions of teaching (三乘十二分教):** The traditional classification of Buddhist paths (Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattva) and scriptures. Huangbo insists that even mastery of these is insufficient without abandoning conceptual views.
- Everything cleared away, with only one bed remaining: An allusion to the layman Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, who demonstrated profound wisdom while seemingly ill in an empty room, symbolizing liberation from all attachments and conceptual frameworks.
- **Three realms (三界):** The realms of desire, form, and formlessness that constitute samsara.
- **World-transcending Buddha (出世佛):** A Buddha who has gone beyond the conditioned world (samsara).
- 'I bow to one who is like empty space, without reliance, and who surpasses the externalists.': The opening words echo the elder's son Baoji (宝积) praising the Buddha in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, chapter 1 ("Buddha Lands"). The image points to the ultimate truth (often equated with Dharmakāya or Buddha-nature) which is like space – boundless, centerless, and without any fixed support or attribute.

- **Externalists (外道):** Followers of non-Buddhist teachings, often characterized in Buddhism as holding erroneous views (e.g., eternalism, nihilism, belief in a permanent self). Huangbo uses it here for anyone clinging to views.
- **Unconditioned (无为):** Used again here, meaning free from afflictive conditioning and conceptual fabrication.
- The myriad dharmas are all transformations by mind: A key Mahayana concept, particularly emphasized in Yogācāra and Chan, that perceived reality is inseparable from the mind that perceives it.
- Devas eating...: A common Buddhist analogy illustrating how the same reality (the food/vessel) is experienced differently based on individual karma and merit (the devas' fortune). Similarly, the One Mind appears differentiated due to differing views.
- **Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (阿耨菩提):** "Unsurpassable Perfect Awakening," the supreme awakening of a Buddha. Huangbo equates it with the realization of the One Mind, wherein nothing is actually attained because it was never lost.

The Buddha’s marks and signlessness

Read the passage: The questioner said: “Since mind is without characteristics, how could there be no thirty-two major marks...

- **Without characteristics, or signless (无相):** Lacking inherent, fixed characteristics. The imputation or assumption of a svabhāva (own-being) that possesses characteristics is the “sign” that is negated in signlessness,

which also means an absence of characteristics. This conveys the meaning that minds and appearances are not actual entities, not persons, places or things. The conventional entity is what is mistaken to be a substantial entity and the validity of the conventional entity is undermined since the svabhāva cannot be found or obtained (不可得) when sought.

- **Eighty minor marks (八十种好):** Secondary physical characteristics attributed to a Buddha, complementing the thirty-two major marks.
- **Form/color (色, rūpa):** Physical form, matter, color – the realm of sensory appearance.
- 'All that has characteristics...' & 'If by form one sees me...': Quotes from the Diamond Sutra, used here to deconstruct attachment to the physical or visible attributes of a Buddha, pointing instead to the signless nature of mind/reality.

Beyond sameness and difference

Read the passage: Question: "Are Buddha-nature and sentient-being-nature the same or different?" The Master said: "In natur...

- **Three Vehicles (三乘教 sān shèng jiào):** The paths of Śrāvakas (voice-hearers), Pratyekabuddhas (solitary realizers), and Bodhisattvas, often presented in Mahāyāna sutras as distinct paths with different goals, contrasted with the One Vehicle (Ekayāna 佛乘 fó shèng) which encompasses all and leads to supreme Buddhahood. The One Mind teaching of Chan transcends these distinctions.

- **One Mind (一心 yī xīn):** A central concept in Chan/Zen and some Mahāyāna schools, referring to the ultimate, the fundamental nature of all beings, identical to Buddha-nature.
- **Patriarchs (祖师 zǔshī):** The lineage holders in Chan Buddhism, starting from Bodhidharma, who are believed to have transmitted the direct experience of the One Mind.

Boundless Body and the obstruction of views

Read the passage: Question: "Why does the Boundless Body Bodhisattva not see the Tathāgata's crown-mark?" The Master said: ...

- **Boundless Body Bodhisattva (无边身菩萨 wúbiān shēn púsà):** Represents the boundless nature of the enlightened mind, which is non-different from the Tathāgata (Buddha).

  Seeing the uṣṇīṣa (顶相 dǐng xiàng, a mark of a Buddha) would imply a separation between seer and seen, a duality that is transcended.
- **Views (见 jiàn):** Refers to conceptual viewpoints, opinions, or fixed ideas, especially those rooted in duality (Buddha/sentient being, existence/non-existence, etc.). Chan emphasizes transcending all views. Sakkāya Diṭṭhi (self-view) is a primary one, but here it refers broadly to all conceptual fixation.
- **Externalist (外道 wàidào):** Literally "outside the way," referring to someone on a non-Buddhist path or following any approach attached to views and conceptual frameworks, missing the direct experience of the Mind.

- **Suchness (如 rú):** Tathatā. The state of things as they truly are, beyond conceptual elaboration, designation, or duality.
- **Unconditioned (无为 wúwéi):** Here refers to the state beyond conditioned existence, free from afflictions, causes, and effects; transcendent and unconstructed. Not simply inaction, but action free from dualistic effort.
- **Great Void (太虚 tàixū):** Similar to empty space (虚空 xūkōng), symbolizing the boundless, formless, and empty nature of reality/Mind.
- **At ease and free of affairs (等闲无事 děngxián wúshì):** A Chan expression signifying the state of mind free from contrived activities, seeking, or mental complication; a natural, uncontrived state.
- **When distinction is made, it becomes consciousness (辨着便成识 biàn zhuó biàn chéng shí):** Conceptual discrimination creates the subject-object split and the operations of discriminative consciousness (vijñāna).
- **Cease views (息见 xī jiàn):** Stop the arising of and clinging to conceptual views and discriminations.
- **Mañjuśrī (文殊 Wénshū) and the two Iron Encircling Mountains (二铁围山 èr tiě wéi shān):** Mañjuśrī represents wisdom. This story, also found in the Jingde chuandeng lu (fascicle 27) and used often in Chan, illustrates that even a slight lapse into dualistic thought (like distinguishing Buddha from non-Buddha) constitutes an obstruction, metaphorically represented by imprisonment between two

concentric iron mountains (Cakravāḍa), symbolizing entrapment in duality.

- **True wisdom (实智 shí zhì) and expedient wisdom (权智 quán zhì):** Prajñā that directly realizes ultimate truth versus skillful means or wisdom adapted to context.

  Samantabhadra (普贤 Pǔxián) often represents the application of wisdom in activity. Ultimately, this distinction also dissolves in the One Mind.

The Three Jewels of one essence

Read the passage: "The Patriarchs directly point to the fundamental mind of all sentient beings: the fundamental essence is...

- **Not achieved by cultivation (不假修成 bù jiǎ xiū chéng):** Emphasizes the Chan view that Buddhahood is not something to be newly created through practice but is one's fundamental true nature to be recognized.
- **Not belonging to stages (不属渐次 bù shǔ jiàncì):** Highlighting the sudden awakening aspect of Chan, contrasting with gradual path approaches.
- **Ignorance (无明 wúmíng):** Avidyā. Fundamental unawareness of the true nature of reality. The text plays on the literal meaning of 无明 (no brightness) and its opposite. The line "Therefore there is neither ignorance nor the extinction of ignorance." (所以无无明，亦无无明尽) directly echoes the Heart Sutra, indicating the ultimate emptiness of both ignorance and its cessation.

- **Unconditioned Saṅgha (无为僧 wúwéi sēng) / Three Jewels of one essence (一体三宝 yītǐ sānbǎo):** When all conceptual distinctions (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha as separate entities) dissolve into the realization of the One Mind (which is unconditioned), the Three Jewels are realized as inseparable aspects of this single reality.
- **Not cling to Buddha in their seeking (不着…求 bù zhuó… qiú):** Seeking while being attached to the concepts of Buddha, Dharma, or Sangha prevents realization. True seeking is 无所求 (wú suǒ qiú) - seeking nothing, having no objective goal.

Speaking Dharma without obtaining Dharma

Read the passage: Question: "Venerable, you are now speaking Dharma. How can you say there is no Saṅgha and no Dharma?" The…

- **Seeking me by sound (以音声求我 yǐ yīnshēng qiú wǒ):** Referencing a famous passage in the Diamond Sutra where the Buddha states that those who try to see the Tathāgata through form or seek him through sound are on a wrong path.
- **Locus (location or abode) (处所 chùsuǒ):** Grasping at a self ('I') implies fixing it in a conceptual location or state, a form of clinging.
- **Mind-Dharma (心法 xīnfǎ):** The Dharma that is the Mind itself, the core transmission in Chan.

- Verse "付此心法时...始解心心法": This verse points to the ineffable nature of the transmission. True understanding comes when notions of "Dharma" and "Mind" are transcended. "Mind-to-Mind Dharma" (心心法 xīn xīn fǎ) refers to the direct transmission beyond words.
- **Truly there is not a single Dharma that can be obtained (实无一法可得 shí wú yī fǎ kě dé):** A key Mahāyāna and Chan expression emphasizing emptiness and the absence of any substantial entity to be grasped or achieved.
- **Seat of awakening (道场 dàochǎng):** Bodhimaṇḍa. Here, it's defined not as a physical place but as the state of mind free from arising views.
- **Empty Tathāgatagarbha (空如来藏 kōng rúlái zàng):** Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-nature) understood through the lens of emptiness (śūnyatā). While possessing the potential for Buddhahood, it is fundamentally empty of inherent existence.
- **"Originally there is not a single thing; where can dust alight?" (本来无一物，何处有尘埃? běnlái wú yī wù, hé chù yǒu chén'āi?):** The famous verse attributed to Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, expressing the fundamentally pure and empty nature of the mind, contrasting with Shenxiu's verse about polishing the mirror.
- **Free and at ease (逍遥 xiāoyáo):** A term often associated with Daoist ideals (e.g., Zhuangzi), adopted into Chan to describe the freedom and ease that comes with awakening.

Beyond affirmation and negation

Read the passage: Question: "'Originally there is not a single thing' — is 'no thing' itself it?" The Master said: "'No' is...

- **无亦不是 (wú yì bù shì):** "No" is also not right/correct. This negates clinging even to the concept of emptiness or nothingness, preventing it from becoming another fixed view.
- **菩提无是处 (pútí wú shì chù):** Bodhi (awakening) has no place where it "is" or "is correct." It transcends affirmation and negation.
- **亦无无知解 (yì wú wú zhī jiě):** Nor is there an understanding characterized by "no." Understanding cannot be based on the concept of negation alone.

The mind-Buddha transmission

Read the passage: Question: "What is Buddha?" The Master said: "Your mind is Buddha. Buddha is mind. Mind and Buddha do not...

- **Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛 jí xīn shì fó):** A cornerstone statement in Chan Buddhism, attributed to masters like Mazu Daoyi and Huangbo.
- **Patriarch came from the West (祖师西来 zǔshī xī lái):** Refers to Bodhidharma bringing Chan from India (the West relative to China) to China.
- **Transmitted only this: mind is Buddha (唯传心佛 wéi chuán xīn fó):** The transmission was not of doctrines or

scriptures primarily, but a direct pointing (直指 zhí zhǐ) to the hearer's own mind as Buddha.

- **The minds do not differ (心心不异 xīn xīn bù yì):** Describes the nature of the Chan transmission – a direct, non-verbal understanding passed from the mind of the master to the mind of the disciple.
- **At once leap beyond (顿超 dùn chāo):** Emphasizes the "sudden awakening" (dunwu 顿悟) aspect of Chan, where realization is immediate and complete, surpassing gradual stages.
- **Secretly entrusted it to Mahākāśyapa (密付与摩诃大迦叶 mì fù yǔ Móhē Dàjiāshè):** Refers to the origin story of Chan transmission, where the Buddha held up a flower, Mahākāśyapa smiled in understanding, and the Buddha acknowledged this direct mind-to-mind transmission beyond words.
- **Essence of the One Mind Dharma (一心法体 yī xīn fǎ tǐ):** The fundamental nature or essence of the One Mind Dharma.
- **Extends throughout empty space and pervades the Dharma-realm (尽虚空遍法界 jìn xūkōng biàn fǎjiè):** Describes the omnipresent, boundless nature of the One Mind. Dharma realm (法界 fǎjiè) is Dharmadhātu.
- **Principle of all Buddhas (诸佛理 zhū fó lǐ):** The underlying truth or reality realized by all Buddhas.

- **A single occasion or a single situation (一机一境 yī jī yī jìng):** Refers to specific circumstances, encounters, states of mind, or objects of meditation. The One Mind cannot be grasped through such particulars.
- **Silently accorded with (默契得 mòqì dé):** Understood intuitively, directly, without relying on language or concepts.
- **Unconditioned Dharma gate (无为法门 wúwéi fǎmén):** The path that leads to the unconditioned, the state beyond conceptual fabrication and conditioned phenomena. See the earlier discussion of 无为 (wúwéi).
- **No-mind (无心 wúxīn):** Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
- **Suddenly awaken (忽悟 hū wù):** Instantaneous realization.
- **Branch into divergent paths (岐路心 qílù xīn):** A mind that gets lost in distinctions, alternatives, and complexities.
- **Grasp or reject (取舍心 qǔshě xīn):** A mind caught in liking and disliking, accepting and rejecting, the root of dualistic attachment.
- **Mind like wood and stone (心如木石 xīn rú mù shí):** A mind that is unresponsive to dualistic provocations, unmoving, free from passions and discriminations. This indicates stability and non-attachment, a prerequisite for deep practice.

Delusion, Bodhi, and everyday experience

Read the passage: Someone said: "At present there are all kinds of deluded thoughts appearing. How can you say there are no…

- **The Two Iron Encircling Mountains (二铁围山):** In Buddhist cosmology, these are ranges surrounding Mount Sumeru. Being banished there is a metaphor for falling into dualistic views or conceptual limitations, even seemingly positive ones like "seeing Buddha." Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, is often depicted in Zen anecdotes as engaging in profound, sometimes paradoxical, dialogues.
- Dīpaṃkara Buddha: The Buddha who, according to the scriptures (like the Diamond Sutra mentioned here implicitly), predicted Śākyamuni Buddha's future attainment of Buddhahood. The reference emphasizes that this prediction was given precisely because Śākyamuni realized the unobtainability/unfindability of any "dharma" (thing, concept, state).
- **Three asaṃkhyeya kalpas (三祇劫):** An immeasurably long period, traditionally said to be the time required for a Bodhisattva to practice the path to attain Buddhahood through gradual cultivation. Huangbo contrasts this with the sudden awakening approach of Zen, which points directly to one's self-perfected Buddha-nature.

The six paths and the mercury analogy

Read the passage: Question: "Since it is originally Buddha, how can there still be the four births, the six paths, and many…

- **Four types of birth (四生):** Birth from womb, egg, moisture, and transformation.
- **Six realms of existence (六道):** Realms of gods (deva), demigods (asura), humans, animals, hungry ghosts (preta), and hell-beings.
- **Śrāvakas (声闻), Pratyekabuddhas (缘觉):** Disciples of the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle, contrasted with Bodhisattvas and Buddhas of the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle. The analogy emphasizes that the luminous clarity and empty nature of Mind is universally present in all beings as the generic characteristics of all minds, like heat is to fire, while the conditional forms and states experienced arise from conceptual discrimination, acceptance and rejection (取舍).

Nonreferential compassion

Read the passage: Question: "How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion and speak Dharma for sentient…

- **Nonreferential (无缘):** Wu yuan ci bei (无缘慈悲) signifies compassion that arises spontaneously from the enlightened nature, not dependent on specific objects, reasons, or relationships. It is universal and unconditional.
- **Illusionist speaking Dharma for illusory people (幻士为幻人说法):** A common Mahayana metaphor illustrating the dreamlike, unreal nature of both the teacher (Buddha) and

the audience (sentient beings), as well as the teaching itself, from the perspective of ultimate truth. True understanding comes from direct realization (自悟本心), not conceptual learning.

Vigor and the Sage of Forbearance

Read the passage: Question: "What is vigor?" The Master said: "When body and mind do not arise, this is called the foremost…

- **King Kali (歌利王):** Refers to King Kaliṅga from the Jātaka tales, who dismembered the Bodhisattva (Śākyamuni in a past life) practicing patience as an ascetic (the Sage of Forbearance, called the "Patient Immortal" in the 2025 edition) in the forest. Here, seeking outwardly is likened to the King's destructive activity, driven by delusion.
- **Sage of Forbearance (忍辱仙人; called "Patient Immortal" in the 2025 edition):** The Bodhisattva practicing kṣānti-pāramitā (perfection of patience) who endured dismemberment by King Kali without anger. Here, the mind not wandering outwardly symbolizes this unwavering inner stability and patience.

Going beyond the three realms

Read the passage: Question: "What is going beyond the three realms?" The Master said: "Do not think of good and evil at all…

- **Three Realms (三界):** The realms of desire (kāmadhātu), form (rūpadhātu), and formlessness (arūpadhātu), encompassing all samsaric existence.

- **Three Existences (三有):** Another term for the three realms, emphasizing the cyclical existence within them.
- **Mahāyāna (摩诃衍):** The Great Vehicle path in Buddhism, aiming for the liberation of all beings and Buddhahood, contrasted with paths focused solely on individual liberation. The analogy suggests that complete transcendence requires the utter cessation of all conceptualizations and perceived realities, leaving no trace of existence ("one part") behind.

The responsive mind

Read the passage: In the hall he said: "Mind itself is Buddha. From all Buddhas above down to all moving beings with sentie…

- **Patriarch (祖师):** The quoted verse is attributed in the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 2, to Punyamitra (不如密多), the traditional twenty-sixth Indian patriarch, on transmitting the Dharma to Prajñātāra (般若多羅). Huangbo's record introduces it simply with "the Patriarch." The quote describes the fundamental nature (真性) or mind-ground (心地).

Mind-ground treasury (心地藏). The translation reads, "True nature is the treasury of the mind-ground; it has neither head nor tail." The gloss cittabhūmi-garbha is an interpretive formulation in Sanskrit terms. The verse is transmitted here in Chinese; a Sanskrit original for it has not been established. Huangbo says that when it does not respond to conditions, one cannot speak of its existence or non-existence, and that even in responding there is no trace.

Wanling Record, T48, no.2012B, 386b9–13; Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fasc.2, T51, no.2076, 216a11–14.

Wanling Record, T2012B (386b9–13); Jingde Record, fascicle 2 (216a11–14)

Return to the passage

- **'Give rise to mind without abiding anywhere.' (应无所住而生其心):** A famous line from the Diamond Sutra, central to Zen understanding. It points to the mind functioning freely without attachment or fixation.

The monkey mind and its training

Read the passage: "All sentient beings who cycle in birth and death do so because their mental consciousness chases after c…

- **Vimalakīrti Sūtra (《净名》):** A key Mahayana text emphasizing non-duality and the Bodhisattva path practiced by laypeople. The quote about the monkey mind is from Chapter 10 (The Buddha of Fragrance). In this passage, 意 is rendered "mental consciousness"; 思惟 is the thinking to be put to rest, and 尘劳 is rendered "dust and toil."
- **'when mind arises, various dharmas arise; when mind ceases, various dharmas cease' (心生种种法生，心灭种种法灭):** A fundamental principle in Mind-Only (唯识) and Zen philosophy, stating that phenomena arise and cease depending on the activity of the mind.
- **Living on food from trees and wearing grass garments (木食草衣):** Describes extreme ascetic practices. Huangbo

implies that without recognizing the mind, even severe austerities are misguided.

- **Zhi Gong (志公):** Usually refers to Baozhi (宝志), a revered monk from the Liang Dynasty known for his eccentric wisdom and prophecies, often quoted in Zen literature.

Vimalakīrti’s illness and freedom

Read the passage: “The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: ‘Only one bed was left, and he lay there ill.’ This means that mind does not…

- **‘Only one bed was left, and he lay there ill.’ (唯置一床，寝疾而卧):** An allusion to the narrative in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, Chapter 5 (Mañjuśrī’s Visit). Vimalakīrti explains his "illness" arises from compassion for the suffering of beings and that a Bodhisattva's true resting place is non-abiding awareness, symbolized by lying ill and ceasing activity.
- **Three Vehicles (三乘), Four Fruits (四果), Ten Bhūmis (十地):** Stages of attainment in various Buddhist paths (Hinayana and Mahayana). Huangbo suggests that without realizing the nature of mind (无心), even achieving these stages remains within the duality of ordinary (凡) and saintly (圣), subject to impermanence.
- **Mind-born body (意生身, manomayakāya):** A subtle body created through meditative power, possessed by advanced Bodhisattvas, allowing them to manifest freely in various realms to benefit beings. Here, it illustrates arising freely according to conditions, without the constraints of ordinary

karmic birth. In the surrounding passage, 任运腾腾 is rendered "move freely according to conditions," and 兀然无着 is rendered "utterly unattached." The later phrase 随意而生 is rendered "arises freely in accord with intent"; the account of the mind-born body arising according to conditions is an interpretive gloss.

- **Pure Land Buddhist activities (净土佛事):** Practices aimed at rebirth in a Buddha's Pure Land, such as reciting the Buddha's name. Huangbo warns that even these can become obstacles if performed with attachment to form and results, obscuring the direct realization of mind.
- **Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi (阿耨菩提):** Supreme, perfect awakening. Huangbo echoes the Diamond Sutra's point that ultimately, even this highest attainment is conceptually designated and not a 'thing' to be grasped.

Clearing away views and interpretations

Read the passage: "Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust o…

- **'removed everything' (除去所有):** From the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, referring to letting go of all attachments, mental and physical.
- **'For twenty years I always had him remove dung.' (二十年中常令除粪):** A reference to the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 4. The son spends years doing menial work (removing dung) before recognizing his true

inheritance. Metaphorically, it represents the gradual purification of defilements and wrong views.

- **Conceptual elaboration (戏论, prapañca):** Idle or proliferating conceptual thought that obscures reality.
- **Tathāgata-garbha (如来藏):** The womb or storehouse of the Tathāgata; the innate potential for Buddhahood within all beings, often equated with the fundamental nature of mind, described here as empty and quiescent (空寂).
- **'The Buddha-lands too are all empty.' (诸佛国土亦复皆空):** A quotation from the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, Chapter 5 (Mañjuśrī's Visit), emphasizing the emptiness not only of beings but also of the environments (Buddha-lands) perceived.
- **Bodhidharma faced the wall (达摩面壁):** Refers to the legend of Bodhidharma meditating facing a wall for nine years at Shaolin Temple, symbolizing direct, non-conceptual realization beyond intellectual understanding or external forms. The same passage uses 禅理 ("principle of Chan"), 天真自性 ("uncontrived self-nature"), and 拟议 ("deliberation").
- **Uncontaminated (无漏, anāsrava) and unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta):** Terms denoting freedom from defilements/afflictions and the unconditioned nature of reality, respectively. Note: 无为 (wu wei) here aligns with the Buddhist meaning of "unconditioned" rather than the Taoist "non-action," fitting the context of describing the fundamental nature of reality (虚空).

- **Acceptance of the non-arising of dharmas (无生法忍, anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti):** The realization and acceptance of the non-arising nature of all phenomena. A high stage of Bodhisattva realization.

Practice before the final urgency

Read the passage: "If you have not broken through in advance, when the thirtieth night of the twelfth lunar month arrives, ...

- **The thirtieth night of the twelfth lunar month (腊月三十夜):** New Year's Eve in the lunar calendar; metaphorically, the moment of death when accounts must be settled.
- **Doing the work (做工夫):** Engaging in dedicated Chan/Zen practice, often involving meditation or kōan work.
- **"How could a Maitreya be born naturally, or a Śākyamuni arise spontaneously?" (天生弥勒，自然释迦):** Implies that awakening is not effortless or automatic; it requires dedicated practice.

Sustaining the Buddha's wisdom-life

Read the passage: "On ordinary days you only study verbal samādhi, speaking Chan and speaking the Way, scolding Buddha and ...

- **Avīci Hell (阿鼻地狱):** The lowest and most torturous hell in Buddhist cosmology.
- **Dharma-ending age (末法):** The final degenerate age after the Buddha's passing, when genuine understanding and practice decline.

- **Pivotal points (关棨子):** Key points, barriers, or kōans used in Chan practice.

Investigating Zhaozhou's No

Read the passage: "If you are a man of mettle, look at this kōan: A monk asked Zhaozhou, 'Does a dog have Buddha-nature or ...

- **Zhaozhou's "Wu" (赵州狗子无字公案):** One of the most famous kōans in Zen. A monk asked Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen (赵州从谂) if a dog has Buddha-nature. Zhaozhou replied "Wu" (无), rendered here as "No." Although "nothingness" is sometimes used as a gloss, Wumen's later commentary warns against understanding the kōan as sheer nothingness or as a conceptual position on existence and nonexistence. Practitioners investigate this "Wu" single-pointedly. Here, 机 is rendered "pivotal working" in the phrase "the pivotal working of Buddhas and Patriarchs."
- **Bodhidharma... waves; World-Honored One... failure (达摩西来，无风起浪；世尊拈花，一场败缺):** These lines paradoxically diminish even the foundational acts of Zen (Bodhidharma's arrival) and Buddhism (Buddha's silent transmission by holding up a flower). From the perspective of ultimate realization, even these pivotal events are seen as mere ripples or flaws within the already perfect nature of reality. To "open one's great mouth" after awakening means to speak from this profound understanding, potentially overturning conventional interpretations.

- **Old Yama (阎罗老子):** The king of hell, judge of the dead. Being beyond his reach signifies transcendence of karmic retribution and the cycle of birth and death.

The plum-blossom verse

Read the passage: To break completely free from dust and toil is no ordinary matter;...

- **Grip the rope's end firmly (紧把绳头):** Metaphor for holding firmly to the method of practice (like the "Wu" kōan).
- **Plum blossoms’ fragrance after cold (不是一翻寒彻骨，争得梅花扑鼻香):** A famous couplet attributed to Huangbo, used widely in Chan/Zen. It signifies that profound awakening (fragrance) comes only after enduring hardship and intense, dedicated practice (bone-chilling cold). Plum blossoms bloom in winter, symbolizing resilience and beauty emerging from adversity.

IV. Appended Encounters, Dialogues, and Biographical Notices

The following twenty-eight items comprise encounter stories, questions and answers, and brief biographical notices presented after the Wanling Record. They form a separately identified appendix so that the sources of the received texts and the choices made in translation remain clear. The Chinese companion uses the simplified-character text from the PDF against which it was prepared as its direct witness. The English translation takes that witness as its base and selectively adopts local corrections from stronger lamp-record or Taishō witnesses where the companion’s source apparatus explicitly supports them. Items 01–26 preserve the appended sequence traced principally through Project Gutenberg eBook 25236, with additional parallels in related lamp records. Item 27 intentionally repeats the closing passage of the Essentials of Mind Transmission (Taishō no. 2012A). In item 28, the wording of the notice of the Master’s death, posthumous title, and stupa name has been brought into agreement with fascicle 9 of the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp (Taishō no. 2076). Sources and significant variants are explained in Sources and Textual Notes.

Appended 01: Early ordination and travels to Tiantai

The Master was originally from Fujian (闽中). In his youth, he left the household life at Huangbo Mountain in his home province. There was a protrusion on his forehead like a pearl; his voice was resonant and clear, and his aspirations were tranquil and detached.

Later, while traveling to Mount Tiantai, he met a monk who seemed like an old acquaintance. They thus traveled together. They encountered a stream whose waters had suddenly risen; the Master leaned on his staff and stopped. The monk urged the Master to cross together.

The Master said: "You cross first, elder brother."

The monk then floated his bamboo hat on the water and crossed over.

The Master said: "I have actually ended up traveling in company with a boatman (艄子; current witness 稍子); I regret not striking him dead with one blow of my staff."

Commentary on Item 01: Early ordination and travels to Tiantai · Sources for appended item 01

Appended 02: Guizong's One-Flavor Chan

A monk took leave of Guizong. Guizong said: "Where are you going?"

[The monk] said: "To various places to study the five-flavor Chan."

Guizong said: "Various places have five-flavor Chan; here I only have one-flavor Chan."

[The monk] said: "What is the one-flavor Chan?"

Guizong immediately struck him. The monk said: "I understand! I understand!"

Guizong said: "Speak! Speak!" The monk was about to open his mouth, and Guizong struck him again.

Later, this monk arrived at the Master's [Huangbo's] place. [Huangbo] asked where he came from.

[The monk] said: "From Guizong."

The Master said: "What words or phrases did Guizong offer?"

The monk then recounted the previous exchange.

The Master then went up to the hall, related this encounter, and said: "Master Ma[zu] brought forth eighty-four Spiritual Friends (善知识, kalyāṇamitra). When questioned, each one shits uncontrollably (屙漉漉地); only Guizong is somewhat better."

Commentary on Item 02: Guizong's One-Flavor Chan · Sources for appended item 02

Appended 03: In Yanguan's assembly with the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗)

When the Master was in the assembly of Yanguan, the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗) was a novice monk (śrāmaṇera). The Master was bowing to the Buddha in the Buddha hall.

The novice monk said: "Not clinging to Buddha, Dharma, or Saṅgha in seeking—what are you seeking when you bow, Elder?"

The Master said: "Not clinging to Buddha, Dharma, or Saṅgha in seeking, I always bow in this way."

The novice monk said: "What is the use of bowing?"

The Master immediately slapped him.

The novice monk said: "Too coarse!"

The Master said: "What kind of place is this to talk of coarse and fine?" Subsequently, he slapped him again, and the novice monk ran off.

Commentary on Item 03: In Yanguan's assembly with the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗) · Sources for appended item 03

Appended 04: Nanquan's seat and the bamboo hat

When the Master was traveling on foot, he arrived at Nanquan. One day during the mealtime, holding his bowl, he went and sat in Nanquan's seat. Nanquan came down, saw him, and asked: "Elder, in which year did you start practicing the Way?"

The Master said: "Before the Buddha Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja (威音王)."

Nanquan said: "Still a grandson-disciple of Old Teacher Wang." The Master then got down [from the seat].

One day, when the Master was going out, Nanquan said: "Such a large body, wearing such a tiny little bamboo hat."

The Master said: "The three-thousand-great-thousand world-system is entirely contained within it."

Nanquan said: "What about Old Teacher Wang?"

The Master put on his hat and walked away.

Commentary on Item 04: Nanquan's seat and the bamboo hat · Sources for appended item 04

Appended 05: In the tea hall, not relying on a single thing

One day, the Master was sitting in the tea hall. Nanquan came down and asked: "Regarding the equal cultivation of concentration and wisdom, clearly seeing the Buddha-nature – what is this principle?"

The Master said: "Throughout the twelve periods of the day, rely on nothing."

Nanquan said: "Is this not precisely the Elder's insight?"

The Master said: "I dare not say so."

Nanquan said: "Set aside the money for gruel and water for now; who should repay the straw-sandal money?" The Master then fell silent.

Later, Guishan related this encounter and asked Yangshan: "Could it be that Huangbo was unable to corner Nanquan?"

Yangshan said: "Not so. One must know that Huangbo possessed the tactic to trap a tiger."

Guishan said: "Your insight reaches so far!"

Commentary on Item 05: In the tea hall, not relying on a single thing · Sources for appended item 05

Appended 06: Communal work selecting vegetables

One day during communal work, Nanquan asked: "Where are you going?"

The Master said: "To select vegetables."

Nanquan said: "What will you use to select?"

The Master held up his knife.

Nanquan said: "You know only how to act as guest; you do not know how to act as host."

The Master tapped three times with the knife.

Nanquan said: "Everyone, go select vegetables."

Commentary on Item 06: Communal work selecting vegetables · Sources for appended item 06

Appended 07: Six newly arrived monks and the antelope, with rare-yang or 羯-yang variant readings

One day, six newly arrived monks came together for an interview. Five of them bowed. One did not bow, but drew a circle with his hand and stood there.

The Master said: "Do you still recognize a good hunting dog?"

[The monk] said: "I come following the scent of the antelope (羚羊; variant lamp-record witnesses have rare-yang or 羬-yang readings)."

The Master said: "The antelope has no scent, where will you search for it?"

[The monk] said: "I come following the tracks of the antelope."

The Master said: "The antelope has no tracks, where will you search for it?"

[The monk] said: "I come following the traces of the antelope."

The Master said: "The antelope has no traces, where will you search for it?"

[The monk] said: "Then it is a dead antelope." The Master then said no more.

The next day, after ascending the seat [for a discourse] and concluding, [the Master] asked: "Will the monk who was seeking the antelope yesterday please come forward?"

That monk came forward.

The Master said: "Yesterday this old monk had no final word. What would you say?"

The monk had no reply.

The Master said: "I thought he was a genuine patch-robed monk, but he turns out to be just an exegetical śramaṇa."

Commentary on Item 07: Six newly arrived monks and the antelope, with rare-yang or 羬-yang variant readings · Sources for appended item 07

Appended 08: Wall paintings at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou

The Master had once dispersed the assembly and was residing at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou. One day, Prime Minister Pei entered the monastery. While walking, he saw a mural and asked the temple superintendent: "What is this painting?"

The superintendent said: "A painting of an eminent monk."

Prime Minister Pei said: "The painted likeness (形影) is here, but where is the eminent monk?" The superintendent had no reply.

Prime Minister Pei asked: "Are there perhaps any Chan monks here?"

The superintendent said: "There is one person."

Prime Minister Pei thereupon invited the Master for a meeting and raised the previous question to the Master.

The Master called out: "Pei Xiu!"

Xiu responded: "Yes?"

The Master said: "Where are you?"

Prime Minister Pei had a realization upon these words. He then requested the Master again to open the hall [for teaching].

Commentary on Item 08: Wall paintings at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou · Sources for appended item 08

Appended 09: "There are no Chan masters in the Great Tang"

Discourse in the hall: "You people are all wine-dreg gobblers! Traveling on foot like this, you make others die laughing. If it were all so easy, how could things have come down to today? Do you perhaps know that in the empire of the Great Tang, there are no Chan masters?"

At that time, a monk asked: "Given that in various places there are currently those appearing in the world, guiding disciples and leading assemblies, why then say there are no Chan masters?"

The Master said: "I do not say there is no Chan; I only say there are no masters."

Later, Guishan related this encounter and asked Yangshan: "What does this mean?"

Yangshan said: "The goose-king selects the milk; it is fundamentally not in the category of ducks."

Guishan said: "This is truly hard to discern."

Commentary on Item 09: "There are no Chan masters in the Great Tang" · Sources for appended item 09

Appended 10: Pei Xiu requests a name and presents a poem

One day, Prime Minister Pei presented a Buddha statue, knelt before the Master, and said: "I request the Master to bestow a name."

The Master called out: "Pei Xiu!"

Xiu responded: "Yes?"

The Master said: "I have finished bestowing the name for you." Prime Minister Pei then performed obeisance.

One day, Prime Minister Pei presented a verse. The Master received it and immediately sat down. He then asked: "Do you understand?"

Prime Minister Pei said: "I do not understand."

The Master said: "Not understanding like this is somewhat better. If it takes the form of paper and ink, where is our school's principle?"

The poem read: "Since the Great Being transmitted the mind-seal (心印), his forehead bore a round pearl, his body seven feet tall. For ten years he rested his staff by the Shu waters; Today, afloat on a cup, he crosses to the Zhang River's bank. A thousand "dragon-elephant" disciples follow his noble steps; Ten thousand miles of fragrant flowers form auspicious karmic causes. I wish to serve the Master as a disciple; I do not know to whom the Dharma will be entrusted?"

The Master replied [in verse]: "The mind is like the great ocean, boundless; The mouth emits red lotuses to nourish the sick body. Though I have a pair of hands free of affairs, I have never lightly bowed to an ordinary person."

Commentary on Item 10: Pei Xiu requests a name and presents a poem · A note on Images in Pei Xiu's poem · Sources for appended item 10

Appended 11: Those who study the Way must first set aside miscellaneous studies and conditions

Discourse in the hall: "Those who study the Way must first put aside miscellaneous studies and various conditions. Resolutely do not seek; resolutely do not cling. Hearing the extremely profound Dharma should be like a clear breeze reaching the ears: it passes in a flash and is not pursued further. This is what makes it profound. Enter Tathāgata Chan without giving rise to thoughts of Chan. From the Patriarchs of the past, only the One Mind has been transmitted; there is no second dharma. Pointing to the mind as Buddha instantly transcends the levels of Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening. Let no second thought (念) follow; only then does one begin to enter our school's gate.

For such a Dharma, how could people who take things casually approach here intending to learn? Therefore it is said: when intending the mind, one is bound by the demon of the intending mind; when not intending the mind, one is bound by the demon of the non-intending mind; when one takes up a neither-intending-nor-not-intending mind, one is bound by the demon of neither-intending-nor-not-intending. Demons do not come from outside; they arise from your own mind. Only the Bodhisattva without supernatural powers has footprints that cannot be traced.

If at all times the mind holds a view of permanence, one is an eternalist. If one contemplates all dharmas as empty and adopts a view of emptiness, one is an annihilationist. Even 'the three realms are mind-only, the myriad dharmas are consciousness-only' is still said only for people who hold the

wrong views of externalists. If speaking of the Dharmakāya as the ultimate fruit, this is spoken in relation to the Three Worthies and Ten Sages. Therefore, the Buddha severed two kinds of ignorance (愚): first, subtle ignorance regarding the knowable (微细所知愚); second, extremely subtle ignorance regarding the knowable (极微细所知愚). Since the Buddha is like this, what more is there to say about Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening?

Therefore, people merely wish to turn toward brightness and do not wish to turn toward darkness. They merely wish to seek awakening and refuse to accept afflictions and ignorance (烦恼无明); hence they say that Buddha is awakened and sentient beings are deluded. If one holds such views, for hundreds of kalpas and thousands of lifetimes, one will cycle through the six realms with no end. Why? Because one slanders the fundamental source, the self-nature of all Buddhas.

It is clearly stated to you: Buddha is not bright, sentient beings are not dark, because the Dharma is without brightness or darkness. Buddha is not strong, sentient beings are not weak, because the Dharma is without strength or weakness. Buddha is not wise, sentient beings are not foolish, because the Dharma is without foolishness or wisdom. It is you who step forward claiming to understand Chan, but the moment you open your mouth, the sickness manifests. You speak not of the root, only the branches; speak not of delusion, only awakening; speak not of the essence (体), only the function (用). There is utterly no place for your arguments.

All dharmas are not established as existent from the start, and now are also not established as non-existent. When they arise from conditions, they are not established as existent; when they cease with conditions, they are not established as non-existent. Fundamentally, too, they are not established as existent, because the 'fundamental' is not fundamental. Mind is also not mind, because mind is not mind. A characteristic (相) is also not a characteristic, because a characteristic is not a characteristic. Therefore it is said: no dharma, no fundamental mind; only then does one understand the mind-to-mind Dharma. Dharma is itself non-Dharma; non-Dharma is itself Dharma. No Dharma, no non-Dharma; therefore it is the mind-to-mind Dharma.

Suddenly, a fleeting thought arises – clearly know that it is like an illusion, like a transformation, and it immediately flows into the past Buddha. The past Buddha is not established as existent; the future Buddha is not established as non-existent, yet is also not called 'future Buddha'. The present moment's thoughts do not abide, so they are not called 'present Buddha'. When 'Buddha' arises as a thought, do not intend it as awakened or deluded, good or evil. Absolutely do not grasp or cling to it, nor cut it off.

Like a single thought fleetingly arising: a thousand heavy locks cannot lock it; ten thousand fathoms of rope cannot bind it. Since it is like this, how could you then intend to extinguish it or stop it? It is clearly stated to you: this is cognition of the knowable (尔焰识); how do you intend to sever it? It is analogous to a mirage (阳焰): you say it is near, yet searching the ten directions of the world, it cannot be found; you then

say it is far, yet when you look, it is right before your eyes. You intend to chase it, yet it moves further away. You then avoid it, yet it comes pursuing you. It cannot be grasped, nor can it be abandoned.

Since it is like this, know therefore that the nature of all dharmas (法性) is fundamentally and originally so (自尔). Thus, do not worry about it or be anxious about it.

As for the saying, 'The preceding thought is ordinary, the succeeding thought is noble, like turning the hand over' – this is the culmination of the Three Vehicle teachings. According to my Chan school, the preceding thought is not ordinary, and the succeeding thought is not noble; the preceding thought is not Buddha, the succeeding thought is not sentient being.

Therefore, all forms are Buddha-form; all sounds are Buddha-sound. Raise one principle, and all principles are thus. See one affair, and see all affairs; see one mind, and see all minds; see one path, and see all paths; everywhere is nothing but the path. See one dust mote, and the ten directions of the world, mountains, rivers, and the great earth are all thus. See one drop of water, and see the nature of all water in the ten directions of the world.

Furthermore, to see all dharmas is to see all minds. All dharmas are fundamentally empty (本空); the mind is not mere non-existence (不无); not being mere non-existence is wondrous existence (妙有). Even existence is not established as existent; yet this very non-establishment is itself existence. This is true emptiness and wondrous existence.

Since it is like this, the ten directions of the world do not go beyond my one mind. All lands as numerous as dust motes do not go beyond a single thought of mine. If so, what talk is there of internal and external? Like honey whose nature is sweet – all honey is thus; one cannot say this honey is sweet and the rest are bitter. Where could such a thing exist? Therefore it is said: empty space has no inside or outside; the dharma-nature is fundamentally and originally so. Empty space has no middle; the dharma-nature is fundamentally and originally so.

Thus, sentient beings are identical to Buddha; Buddha is identical to sentient beings. Sentient beings and Buddha are originally of the same essence. Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa,

conditioned (有为) and unconditioned (无为), are originally of the same essence. Worldly and world-transcending, even the six realms and four types of birth, mountains, rivers, the great earth, sentient and insentient, are also of the same essence. Speaking of 'sameness' means names and characteristics are also empty; existence is also empty; non-existence is also empty; worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are all originally one in emptiness.

Since it is like this, where is there a Buddha delivering sentient beings? Where are there sentient beings receiving the Buddha's deliverance? Why is this so? Because the nature of the myriad dharmas is fundamentally and originally so. If one turns this into a view of spontaneous production, one falls among externalists who believe that dharmas arise of themselves. If one forms the view that there is no self and nothing belonging to a self, one falls into the stages of the Three Worthies and Ten Sages.

How can you now take a ruler of one foot or one inch and intend to measure empty space? It is clearly stated to you: dharmas do not reach one another (法法不相到), because each dharma is quiescent in itself (法自寂故). In its own place, it naturally abides; in its own place, it is naturally true. Because the body is empty, it is called emptiness of dharmas (法空); because the mind is empty, it is called emptiness of nature (性空). Body and mind altogether empty, thus called emptiness of dharma-nature (法性空). Even the thousand different paths of explanation are none other than your fundamental mind.

Nowadays, talk of Bodhi, Nirvāṇa, True Suchness (真如), Buddha-nature, the Two Vehicles, Bodhisattvas – these are all pointing to leaves as gold, fist-and-palm provisional explanations. If the hand is opened, the entire great assembly, whether gods or humans, all see that within the palm there is utterly not one thing. Therefore it is said: 'Originally there is not one thing; where could dust alight?' Since fundamentally there is no thing, the three periods [past, present, future] are fundamentally without anything whatsoever to be found.

Therefore, the person studying the Way must cut straight in with a single blade (单刀直入); one must see this meaning to succeed. Thus, Master Bodhidharma came from the West to this land, traversed many lands, and found only Master Ke, to whom he secretly transmitted the mind-seal. It seals your fundamental mind: mind seals Dharma, and Dharma seals mind. Since mind is thus, Dharma is also thus: the same as the reality-limit (真际), equal to the dharma-nature (法性).

Within the emptiness of dharma-nature, who is the one giving the prediction? Who is the one becoming Buddha? Who is the one obtaining the Dharma? It is clearly stated to you: Bodhi cannot be obtained through the body, because the body is without characteristics (身无相故); cannot be obtained through the mind, because the mind is without characteristics (心无相故); cannot be obtained through nature, because nature itself is the uncontrived Buddha—the fundamental source and self-nature (性即便是本源自性天真佛故). One cannot obtain Buddha again through Buddha; cannot obtain the absence of characteristics again through the absence of characteristics; cannot obtain emptiness again through emptiness; cannot obtain the Way again through the Way. Fundamentally there is no attainment; non-attainment also cannot be attained. Therefore it is said: not one dharma is attainable.

It only teaches you to recognize your fundamental mind. At the moment of recognition, do not grasp at a mark of recognition. Neither a mark of recognition nor a mark of non-recognition can be obtained. With a Dharma such as this, those who attain it simply do so; they are not self-consciously aware of attaining it, and those who do not attain it are likewise unaware of not attaining it. This kind of Dharma, since ancient times, how many people have come to know it? Therefore it is said: how many people in the world have forgotten themselves?

Nowadays, if you take it up before the gates of the six senses at one occasion, one object-realm, one scripture, one teaching, one lifetime, one time, one name, or one word – how is this different from a mechanical wooden puppet? If someone

suddenly comes forth who does not form interpretations based on any single name or characteristic, I say: search throughout the worlds of the ten directions, and you will not find such a person, because there is no second person. Therefore, they succeed to the Patriarchal seat, also called a descendant of Śākya (释种), pure and unmixed. Thus it is said: ‘When the king becomes Buddha, the prince also follows and leaves home.’

This meaning is exceedingly difficult to know. It just teaches you: do not seek; seeking immediately loses it.

Like a fool shouting on a mountain top; an echo comes from the valley, and he runs down the mountain to chase it. When he cannot find it, he shouts again; the echo on the mountain responds again, and he runs up the mountain to chase it. Like this for thousands of lifetimes and myriad kalpas, just a person seeking sounds and chasing echoes, a fellow who lives in vain and dies aimlessly.

If you make no sound, there is no echo. Nirvāṇa means no hearing, no knowing, no sound, with tracks and traces cut off. If one can be this way, one has come close to being a next-door neighbor of the Patriarchs.”

Commentary on Item 11: Those who study the Way must first set aside miscellaneous studies and conditions · Sources for appended item 11 · Textual note on Two kinds of birth and death

Appended 12: The king's treasury and sheep horns

Question: “Regarding the King's treasury, there is absolutely no such sword within it. I humbly request your instruction and guidance.”

The Master said: “The King's treasury is precisely the nature of empty space (虛空性). It can encompass the empty space and worlds of the ten directions; none of them lies outside your mind. It is also called the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (虛空藏菩薩). Whether you call it existent, non-existent, or neither existent nor non-existent, all such assertions become sheep horns. Sheep horns are precisely that which you seek.”

Commentary on Item 12: The king's treasury and sheep horns · Sources for appended item 12

Appended 13: The true sword in the king's treasury

Question: “Is there a true sword in the King's treasury or not?”

The Master said: “This too amounts to sheep horns.”

[The questioner] said: “If there is fundamentally no true sword in the King's treasury, why is it said, ‘The prince, holding the true sword from the King's treasury, went out to a foreign country’? Why say specifically that there is none?”

The Master said: “The one holding the sword and going out – this is a metaphor for a Tathāgata's messenger. If you say the prince held the true sword from the King's treasury and went out, then the treasury should have become empty. The empty-

space nature of the fundamental source cannot be taken away by another person. What kind of talk is this? If you suppose you possess something, it is all called sheep horns."

Commentary on Item 13: The true sword in the king's treasury · Sources for appended item 13

Appended 14: Kāśyapa as messenger

Question: "Did Kāśyapa, having received the Buddha's mind-seal, become a messenger?"

The Master said: "Yes."

[The questioner] said: "If he is a messenger, he should not be able to escape sheep horns."

The Master said: "Kāśyapa personally realized the fundamental mind; therefore this was not sheep horns. If, instead, he had received the Tathāgata's mind, seen the

Tathāgata's intent, or seen the Tathāgata's physical form (色相), he would have been a Tathāgata's messenger, transmitting a message. Therefore, Ānanda, having served as attendant for twenty years, only saw the Tathāgata's physical form, and thus was rebuked by the Buddha, saying: 'You only contemplate the Savior of the World [externally].' Ānanda could not escape sheep horns."

Commentary on Item 14: Kāśyapa as messenger · Sources for appended item 14

Appended 15: Mañjuśrī holding a sword

Question: "Regarding Mañjuśrī holding a sword before Gautama, what about that?"

The Master said: "Five hundred Bodhisattvas attained knowledge of past lives (宿命智) and saw the karmic obstacles from past births. The five hundred are precisely your body of the five aggregates (五阴身). Because they saw these past-life obstacles, they sought Buddha, sought Bodhi, and sought Nirvāṇa. Therefore, Mañjuśrī used the sword of wisdom-understanding (智解剑) to slay this mind that views Buddha as existent (有见佛心). Thus, it is said, 'You slay well.'"

[The questioner] said: "What is the sword?"

The Master said: "The understanding-mind (解心) is the sword."

[The questioner] said: "The understanding-mind is the sword. It cuts off this mind that views Buddha as existent; but as for the view-mind that can cut off, how can that be eliminated?"

The Master said: "Still use your non-discriminating wisdom (无分别智) to cut off this discriminating mind that views [Buddha] as existent (有见分别心)."

[The questioner] said: "If one forms an existence-view and a mind that seeks Buddha, and cuts it off with the sword of non-discriminating wisdom (无分别智剑), what can be done about this wisdom-sword still being there?"

The Master said: "If non-discriminating wisdom (无分别智) slays views of existence and non-existence, non-discriminating wisdom also cannot be obtained."

[The questioner] said: "Can one not use wisdom to cut wisdom again, and a sword to cut a sword again?"

The Master said: "A sword destroys a sword; when swords destroy one another, even the sword becomes unobtainable. Wisdom eliminates wisdom; when wisdom eliminates itself, even wisdom becomes unobtainable. Mother and child both perish; it is also like this."

Commentary on Item 15: Mañjuśrī holding a sword · Sources for appended item 15

Appended 16: What does it mean to see one's nature?

Question: "What does it mean to see one's nature (见性)?"

The Master said: "Nature is seeing; seeing is nature. One cannot use nature to see nature again. Hearing is nature; one cannot use nature to hear nature again. It is just that when you form a view of a nature capable of hearing and seeing, distinctions of identity and difference immediately arise. It is clearly stated: 'That which can be seen, cannot be seen again.' Why do you place another head on top of your head?

It is clearly stated: 'Like pearls scattered in a dish, the large are round in their largeness, and the small are round in their smallness; each one does not know the others, each one does not obstruct the others.' 'When arising, they do not say "I arise"; when ceasing, they do not say "I cease".' Therefore, among the four types of birth and six realms of existence, there has never been a time when they are not thus.

Furthermore, sentient beings do not see Buddha; Buddha does not see sentient beings. The Four Fruits do not see the Four Approaches; the Four Approaches do not see the Four Fruits. The Three Worthies and Ten Sages do not see Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening; Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening do not see the Three Worthies and Ten Sages. Even water does not see fire; fire does not see water. Earth does not see wind; wind does not see earth. Sentient beings do not enter the Dharma realm; Buddha does not exit the Dharma realm. Therefore, the dharma-nature has no coming or going, no subject or object (无能所).

Since seeing is like this, why do you say 'I see, I hear,' 'I came into accord and awakened in the presence of a Spiritual Friend,' 'The Spiritual Friend spoke Dharma to me,' 'The Buddhas appear in the world to speak Dharma for sentient beings'? Kātyāyana was rebuked by Vimalakīrti for using a mind of arising and ceasing to transmit the Dharma of true reality (实相法). It is clearly stated: 'All dharmas are originally unbound; why try to liberate them? Originally unstained; why try to purify them?' Thus it is said: 'True reality is just so; how could it be spoken?'

You now just foster a mind of right and wrong, a mind of defilement and purity, learn some piece of knowledge or understanding, roam around the world, and upon seeing people, immediately intend to assess them – who has the mind-eye, who is strong, who is weak. If you proceed like this, the difference is as vast as that between heaven and earth; what further talk can there be of seeing one's nature?"

Commentary on Item 16: What does it mean to see one's nature? · Sources for appended item 16

Appended 17: If the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out?

Question: "When the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out?"

The Master said: "I have not a single thing; never have I ever given a single thing to anyone. Since beginningless time, it is only because others have given you pointers that you seek accord and understanding. Is this not a case in which disciple and teacher both fall into a calamity brought by a king (王難)?

You should simply know: when, in a single thought (念), feeling is not taken up, this is precisely the body free of the feeling aggregate (受); when, in a single thought, no perception is formed, this is precisely the body free of the perception aggregate (想); when there is definitely no shifting, flowing, or fabrication, this is precisely the body free of volitional formations (行); when there is no thinking (思量), calculating, or discriminating, this is precisely the body free of consciousness (识).

As soon as you now give rise to a separate thought, you enter the twelve links of dependent origination. Ignorance conditions volitional formations (无明缘行) – both cause and effect; continuing up to old age and death – also both cause and effect.

Therefore, when the youth Sudhana sought Spiritual Friends (善知识, kalyāṇamitra) in one hundred and ten places, he was merely seeking within the twelve links of dependent origination. Finally, he saw Maitreya, but Maitreya then directed him to see Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī is precisely your original-ground ignorance (本地无明).

If your mind differs from moment to moment and you seek Spiritual Friends externally, as soon as one thought arises, it ceases; as soon as it ceases, it arises again. Therefore, you bhikṣus also undergo birth, old age, sickness, and death. In responding to causes and repaying effects, this is precisely the arising and ceasing of the five groupings (五聚). The five groupings are the five aggregates (五阴, skandhas).

If one thought does not arise, then the eighteen elements are empty; this very body is then the flower and fruit of Bodhi; this very mind is then numinous wisdom (灵智), also called the numinous terrace (灵台). If there is any abiding or attachment, then the body becomes a dead corpse, also called a ghost guarding a dead corpse."

Commentary on Item 17: If the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out? · Glossary entry: Five aggregates 五陰 · Sources for appended item 17

Appended 18: Vimalakīrti's silence

Question: “Vimalakīrti remained silent, and Mañjuśrī praised him, saying: ‘This is truly entering the non-dual Dharma gate.’ What does this mean?”

The Master said: “The non-dual Dharma gate is precisely your fundamental mind (本心). Speaking or not speaking involves arising and ceasing. When there is no speech or talk, there is nothing displayed. Therefore, Mañjuśrī praised this.”

[Someone] said: “Vimalakīrti did not speak; is sound thereby annihilated?”

The Master said: “Speech is identical to silence; silence is identical to speech. Speech and silence are non-dual. Therefore, it is said the true nature of sound is likewise not annihilated; Mañjuśrī's fundamental hearing is likewise not annihilated. Therefore, the Tathāgata constantly speaks; there has never been a time of not speaking. The Tathāgata’s speaking is precisely Dharma; Dharma is precisely speaking; speaking and Dharma are non-dual. Thus, even the enjoyment and emanation bodies (saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya), Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, mountains, rivers, the great earth, waterbirds, trees, and forests are all simultaneously speaking the Dharma. Therefore, speech too expounds Dharma, and silence too expounds Dharma; expounding Dharma all day, yet never having expounded it. Since it is like this, just take silence as fundamental.”

Commentary on Item 18: Vimalakīrti's silence · A note on Arising and ceasing · Sources for appended item 18

Appended 19: Śrāvakas hiding form in the three realms

Question: "Regarding Śrāvaka practitioners hiding their form in the three realms, but being unable to hide within Bodhi – what does this mean?"

The Master said: "Form (形) here means material form (质). Śrāvaka practitioners can sever only the afflictions eliminated on the paths of seeing and cultivation within the three realms (三界见修). They have left afflictions behind (烦恼, kleśa), but they cannot hide within Bodhi. Therefore, they are still captured by King Māra within Bodhi. Even while sitting calmly in meditation in the forest, they still give rise to a subtle mind that views Bodhi.

Bodhisattva practitioners, regarding the three realms and Bodhi, are definitively neither abandoning nor grasping. Because they do not grasp, they cannot be found even if sought among the seven great elements. Because they do not abandon, external demons also cannot find them.

As soon as you intend to attach to a single dharma, the seal (印子) is already formed. If the seal is stamped on existence (有), the patterns of the six realms and four types of birth emerge; if it is stamped on emptiness (空), a pattern of no characteristics appears. Now simply know decisively not to stamp the seal on anything whatsoever. This seal is empty space (虚空), neither one nor two. Emptiness is fundamentally not nothingness; the seal is fundamentally not established as existent.

Throughout the empty space and worlds of the ten directions, Buddhas appearing in the world are like flashes of lightning; contemplating all animate beings endowed with sentience is like hearing an echo. Seeing the lands of the ten directions as numerous as dust motes is just like seeing one drop of water in the ocean. Hearing all profound Dharma is like illusion, like transformation. Mind does not differ from mind; dharma does not differ from dharma. Even the thousand sūtras and ten thousand treatises are solely for the sake of your one mind. If you can refrain from grasping at any marks whatsoever, then, as it is said: 'Within this One Mind, diligently adorn [it] through skillful means.'"

Commentary on Item 19: Śrāvakas hiding form in the three realms · Sources for appended item 19

Appended 20: King Kali cutting the body

Question: "Like when I, in a past life, was the Sage of Forbearance whose body was dismembered by King Kali – how should this be understood?"

The Master said: "The Sage is precisely your mind. King Kali was fond of seeking; failing to keep to his royal position is called greed for gain. Nowadays, students accumulate merit and virtue; whatever they see, they immediately intend to learn. How are they different from King Kali? For example, when you see forms, you damage the Sage's eye; when you hear sounds, you damage the Sage's ear. The same applies even to sensing and knowing (觉知). This is called dismemberment joint by joint."

[Someone] said: "But when the Sage was practicing forbearance, there should not have been any further joint-by-joint dismemberment. It cannot be that one mind endures, and another mind does not endure."

The Master said: "When you form a view of non-arising, an interpretation of forbearance, and an interpretation of non-seeking, all of this is damaging."

[Someone] said: "When the Sage was being cut, did he still know pain?"

The Master said: "He felt pain."

[Someone] said: "It is also said: 'Here there is no one who experiences feeling.' Who, then, experiences the pain?"

The Master said: "Since you feel no pain, why do you stick your head out looking for something?"

Commentary on Item 20: King Kali cutting the body · Sources for appended item 20

Appended 21: Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction

Question: "Regarding Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction [to Śākyamuni], was it given during those five hundred lifetimes, or beyond them?"

The Master said: "No prediction is received during those five hundred lifetimes. What is meant by the prediction is this: your fundamental mind is definitively neither forgotten nor lost; within conditioned activity (有为), you do not grasp Bodhi. Just by understanding the mundane as non-mundane, one does not separately receive a prediction beyond those five hundred lifetimes, nor within them."

[Someone] said: “Is it enough to understand that the marks of the world throughout the three times (past, present, and future) are unobtainable?”

The Master said: “Not a single dharma is obtainable.”

[Someone] said: “Why then is it said: ‘Frequently passing through five hundred lifetimes, the periods before and after are extremely long’?”

The Master said: “A span of five hundred lifetimes is long; you should know that this still refers to the Sage. Therefore, when Dīpaṃkara gave the prediction, there was truly not the slightest dharma that could be attained.”

Commentary on Item 21: Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction · A note on the five hundred lifetimes · Glossary entry: Unobtainable or cannot be obtained 不可得 · Sources for appended item 21

Appended 22: “Eliminate my inverted thoughts of vast numbers of kalpas”

A note on the immense number in the quoted verse

Question: “In the teachings it says: ‘Eliminate my inverted thoughts accumulated over vast numbers of kalpas (億劫); without traversing asaṃkhyeya kalpas, obtain the Dharmakāya.’ What does this mean?”

The Master said: “If one practices for three incalculable eons (asaṃkhyeya kalpas) with something to realize or attain, one will not attain it even through eons countless as the sands of the Ganges. If within a single instant (kṣaṇa) one obtains the Dharmakāya, directly understanding and seeing one’s nature, this is still the ultimate discourse of the Three Vehicle

teachings. Why is this so? Because this still regards the Dharmakāya as obtainable, it falls entirely within the teachings of provisional meaning (不了义教).”

Commentary on Item 22: “Eliminate my inverted thoughts of vast numbers of kalpas” · A note on the immense number in the quoted verse · Sources for appended item 22

Appended 23: One who sees the Dharma and instantly understands

Question: “Does one who sees Dharma and instantly understands see the Patriarch's intent?”

The Master said: “The Patriarch's mind is beyond empty space.”

[Someone] said: “Does it have a finite bound?”

The Master said: “Finite and infinite bounds are both dharmas of measure and dualistic opposition. The Patriarch said: ‘It is neither finite nor infinite, nor is it a position of being neither finite nor infinite,’ because it is free from dualistic opposites (绝待).

You students nowadays have not yet been able to go beyond the Three Vehicle teachings; how can you be called Chan masters? Let me clearly tell you: 'In studying Chan, do not carelessly give rise to differing views.' It is like a person drinking water – they know for themselves whether it is cold or warm. In every movement and every stillness, in each instant, thought after thought does not differ. If it is not like this, you cannot avoid saṃsāra."

Commentary on Item 23: One who sees the Dharma and instantly understands · Sources for appended item 23

Appended 24: The Buddha's body-relics

Question: "The Buddha's body is unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta) and does not fall within any category. Why then are there eight 斛 (hu) and four 斗 (dou) of Buddha's body relics (舍利, śarīra)?"

The Master said: "Holding such a view, you see only illusory relics, not true relics."

[Someone] said: "Are relics originally present, or are they due to merit?"

The Master said: "They are neither originally present, nor due to merit."

[Someone] said: "If they are neither originally present nor due to merit, why are the Tathāgata's relics so thoroughly refined and pure, with golden bones remaining eternally?"

The Master then rebuked him, saying: "You hold such views; how can you be called a Chan student? Have you ever seen

bones in empty space? The minds of all Buddhas are identical to the great void; what bones are you looking for?"

[Someone] said: "Currently, one sees that there are relics; what dharma is this?"

The Master said: "This arises from your mind of deluded thinking (妄想心); thus you see relics."

[Someone] said: "Does the Reverend Master also have relics? Please bring them out for me to see."

The Master said: "True relics are difficult to see. Only if you can reduce the whole of Mount Sumeru to fine dust between your ten fingers will you then see the true relics. Indeed, when investigating Chan and studying the Way, one must not give rise to mind in any situation. Concern yourself only with forgetting contrivance (忘机): the Buddha Way then flourishes; with discrimination (分别), the armies of Māra grow strong. Ultimately, there is not even a hair's breadth of the slightest dharma to be obtained."

Commentary on Item 24: The Buddha's body-relics · A note on the refined and pure relics · Glossary entry: Unconditioned 無為 · Sources for appended item 24

Appended 25: To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?

Question: "To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?"

The Master said: "There is no Dharma to transmit to anyone."

[Someone] said: "Why then did the Second Patriarch ask the [First] Master to pacify his mind?"

The Master said: "If you say there is [a mind to be pacified], the Second Patriarch should then have been able to find the mind. Because the mind cannot be obtained when sought, [Bodhidharma] said, 'I have pacified your mind for you.' If anything were obtained, it would entirely belong to arising and ceasing."

Commentary on Item 25: To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma? · Glossary entry: Unobtainable or cannot be obtained 不可得 · Glossary entry: Arising and ceasing 生滅 · Sources for appended item 25

Appended 26: Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance?

Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?"

The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely where all Buddhas attain the Way. Therefore, dependent origination (缘起, pratītyasamutpāda) is the seat of awakening (道场, bodhimaṇḍa). Every mote of dust and every form one sees already accords with boundless principle-nature (理性). Lifting the foot, setting the foot down, one does not leave the seat of awakening. The seat of awakening is non-attainment (无所得). I tell you, just non-attainment is called sitting at the seat of awakening."

[Someone] said: “Is ignorance bright or dark?”

The Master said: “It is neither bright nor dark. Brightness and darkness are dharmas of alternation. Ignorance is precisely not bright and also not dark. Not bright is simply the fundamental brightness. Not bright, not dark—just this one phrase confuses the eyes of everyone under heaven. Therefore it is said: ‘Even if the entire world were filled with those like Śāriputra, exhausting their thoughts together to measure it, they could not fathom the Buddha's wisdom.’

Its unobstructed wisdom surpasses empty space; there is no place for your words or discussions. Śākyamuni's measure equals a three-thousand-great-thousand world-system. If a Bodhisattva suddenly appeared and crossed that entire world-system in a single stride, that Bodhisattva would still not emerge from one hair-pore of Samantabhadra. What skill do you possess now that you intend to learn from him?”

[Someone] said: “Since it cannot be learned, why is it said: ‘Returning to the source, the nature is non-dual; skillful means (方便, upāya) have many gates’?”

The Master said: “‘Returning to the source, the nature is non-dual’ means that the true nature of ignorance is precisely the nature of all Buddhas. ‘Skillful means have many gates’ means that Śrāvaka practitioners see ignorance arise and see ignorance cease; Pratyekabuddha practitioners only see ignorance cease, they do not see ignorance arise, moment by moment realizing quiescent extinction (寂灭); all Buddhas see sentient beings arising throughout the day yet without arising, and ceasing throughout the day yet without ceasing. Non-arising and non-ceasing is precisely the fruit of the Mahāyāna.

Therefore it is said: 'When the fruit is full, Bodhi is perfected; when the flower opens, the world arises.' 'Lifting the foot is precisely Buddha; setting the foot down is precisely sentient beings.' 'All Buddhas are honored as supreme among bipeds (两足尊, dvipadottama)' is here interpreted through a play on 足, "complete": complete in principle (理足) and complete in phenomena (事足); sentient beings are complete, birth and death are complete; all are equally complete. Because they are complete, there is no seeking.

Your current thought-after-thought intention to learn Buddhahood implies aversion towards sentient beings. If you have aversion towards sentient beings, you are slandering the Buddhas of the ten directions. Therefore, when the Buddha appeared in the world, he wielded the dung-removing implement, cleansing away the dung of conceptual elaboration (戏论之粪), just teaching you to remove the mind of learning and the mind of views that you have had all along. Once removed completely, you do not fall into conceptual elaboration; this is also called carrying the dung out.

It just teaches you not to give rise to mind. If the mind does not arise, you naturally become a greatly wise person. Definitely do not discriminate between Buddha and sentient beings; do not discriminate anything at all. Only then can you enter the gate of my Caoxi lineage. Therefore, the ancient sages of the past said: 'Few practice my Dharma gate.' Thus, no-practice (无行) is my Dharma gate; it is simply the One Mind gate. At this point, people all shrink back and dare not enter. It is not that there are none at all; only that few people attain it. Whoever attains it is a Buddha. Take care!"

Commentary on Item 26: Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance? · A note on Few practice and no-practice · A note on Arising and ceasing · Glossary entry: Non-attainment 無所得 · Glossary entry: Skillful means 方便 · Glossary entry: Conceptual elaboration 戲論 · Glossary entry: Principle and phenomena 理 / 事 · Sources for appended item 26

Appended 27: How can one avoid falling into stages? (repeated from the end of Chuanxin Fayao)

Question: "How can one avoid falling into stages?"

The Master said: "Eat rice all day without ever biting a single grain. Walk all day without ever stepping on a single piece of ground. At such a time there are no marks such as self and others. All day long one is not apart from all affairs, yet is not confused by any object-realms — only then is one called a free person.

Furthermore, at all times and in every thought, do not perceive any marks; do not recognize the past, present, and

future. The past has no going, the present has no abiding, the future has no coming. Sit peacefully and upright, freely functioning without constraint — only then is one called liberated.

Exert yourselves, exert yourselves! In this gate, among thousands and tens of thousands, only three or five attain it. If you do not take this as your task, there will surely come a day when you suffer calamity. Thus it is said: ‘Put forth effort and finish it in this life; who can endure remaining calamities through successive kalpas?’”

Commentary on Item 27: How can one avoid falling into stages? (repeated from the end of Chuanxin Fayao) · Sources for appended item 27

Appended 28: Passing away and stupa name

The Master passed away at his home mountain during the Dazhong reign period (847–860) of the Tang Dynasty. An imperial edict bestowed the posthumous title ‘Chan Master Duanji’ (断际禅师), and his stupa was named ‘Guangye’ (广业, Vast Activity).

Commentary on Item 28: Passing away and stupa name · Sources for appended item 28 · Textual note on Duanji’s title

Commentary on the Appended Materials

Item 01: Early ordination and travels to Tiantai

Read the passage: The Master was originally from Fujian (闽中). In his youth, he left the household life at Huangbo Mountain …

- **Fujian (闽中):** A coastal province in southeastern China.
- **Huangbo Mountain (黄檗山):** The mountain where Master Huangbo Xiyun initially ordained, located in Fujian. This is distinct from Mount Huangbo in Jiangxi where he later taught extensively.
- **Mount Tiantai (天台):** A major center for Buddhism in China, particularly associated with the Tiantai school.
- **Boatman (艄子, shāozi; current witness 稍子):** The witness's 稍子 is obscure; the adopted reading 艄子 means "boatman." The image may suggest someone relying on minor tricks or supernatural powers (like floating on a hat) rather than true understanding or proper means. Huangbo's harsh comment reflects a Chan emphasis on direct realization over displays of powers, seeing the latter as potentially misleading or superficial.

Item 02: Guizong's One-Flavor Chan

Read the passage: A monk took leave of Guizong. Guizong said: "Where are you going?" [The monk] said: "To various places to...

- **Guizong (归宗):** Refers to Chan Master Guizong Zhichang (归宗智常), a prominent disciple of Mazu Daoyi.
- **Five-flavor Chan (五味禅):** A term possibly used critically by Guizong to denote various types or approaches to Chan practice circulating at the time, perhaps implying they were mixed or impure compared to his direct "one-flavor" approach.
- **Master Ma[zu] (马大师):** Refers to the highly influential Chan Master Mazu Daoyi (马祖道一), the teacher of both Guizong and Huangbo's teacher Baizhang Huaihai (百丈怀海). Mazu was known for having many accomplished disciples.
- **Shits uncontrollably (屙漉漉地):** A coarse Chan expression used by Huangbo to suggest that despite their reputation, many of Mazu's disciples lacked true, unshakeable realization when put to the test. He singles out Guizong as being relatively solid.

Item 03: In Yanguan's assembly with the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗)

Read the passage: When the Master was in the assembly of Yanguan, the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗) was a novice…

- **Yanguan (盐官):** Refers to Chan Master Yanguan Qi'an (盐官齐安), another disciple of Mazu Daoyi. Huangbo spent time in his assembly.
- **The Dazhong-era emperor (大中帝):** Refers to Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty (reigned 846-859, era name Dazhong). The Chan encounter account relates that, before becoming emperor, he spent time as a monk, hence the reference to him as a novice (沙弥, śrāmaṇera). This anecdote is famous in Zen history.
- **Not clinging to Buddha, Dharma, or Saṅgha in seeking (不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求):** The novice quotes a principle emphasizing non-attachment and not seeking externally. Huangbo’s response and actions demonstrate that true non-seeking doesn't necessarily mean abandoning conventional forms like bowing, but performing them without conceptual attachment or objective seeking. His slaps cut through the novice's intellectual understanding.

Item 04: Nanquan's seat and the bamboo hat

Read the passage: When the Master was traveling on foot, he arrived at Nanquan. One day during the mealtime, holding his bo…

- **Nanquan (南泉):** Refers to Chan Master Nanquan Puyuan (南泉普愿), a major disciple of Mazu Daoyi, known for his sharp and unconventional teaching style.
- **The Buddha Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja (威音王):** A Buddha of the inconceivably distant past in the Lotus Sūtra’s chapter on Never Disparaging Bodhisattva (chapter 20). Saying one practiced before him is a Chan way of indicating the timeless, unborn nature of the fundamental mind, transcending temporal origin.
- **Old Teacher Wang (王老师):** Nanquan's playful, self-deprecating way of referring to himself (his lay surname was Wang). By calling Huangbo his "grandson-disciple," he is humorously acknowledging Huangbo's claim to primordial practice while also asserting his own connection to that same source (as if Huangbo were descended from him in the Dharma lineage of timelessness). The exchange about the hat further plays on the Chan themes of the absolute (the whole universe in a small hat) and the relative, often involving witty challenges between masters.

Item 05: In the tea hall, not relying on a single thing

Read the passage: One day, the Master was sitting in the tea hall. Nanquan came down and asked: "Regarding the equal cultiv...

- **Equal cultivation of concentration and wisdom (定慧等学):** The balanced cultivation of meditative stability (samādhi, 定) and insight (prajñā, 慧). The related pairing *śamatha-vipaśyanā* (calm abiding and insight) offers an interpretive comparison; it should be distinguished from the specific terms 定慧, concentration and wisdom, used here.
- **Twelve periods of the day (十二时中):** Refers to the entire day (24 hours), based on the traditional Chinese division of the day into twelve two-hour periods. Implies constantly, at all times.
- **Money for gruel and water... straw-sandal money (浆水钱...草鞋钱):** Nanquan's question shifts abruptly from the high principle of Buddha-nature to mundane matters of debt. "Gruel and water" might refer to basic sustenance offered by the monastery. "Straw sandals" were worn by traveling monks. The question is a Chan challenge, possibly testing Huangbo's ability to integrate the absolute ("not relying on a single thing") with the relative, practical world, or perhaps hinting at karmic debts or the debt of gratitude owed for teachings/support. Huangbo's silence is itself a response, open to interpretation.
- **Guishan (沩山):** Chan Master Guishan Lingyou (沩山灵佑), founder of the Guiyang school of Chan, and a disciple of

Baizhang Huaihai (making him a Dharma-brother to Huangbo).

- **Yangshan (仰山):** Chan Master Yangshan Huiji (仰山慧寂), Guishan's main disciple and co-founder of the Guiyang school.
- **Tactic to trap a tiger (陷虎之机):** Yangshan interprets Huangbo's silence not as defeat or inability, but as a subtle and powerful move, like setting a trap for a formidable opponent (Nanquan, the "tiger"). This suggests Huangbo’s response was profound, perhaps demonstrating non-reliance so completely that there was nothing for Nanquan’s probing question to grasp.

Item 06: Communal work selecting vegetables

Read the passage: One day during communal work, Nanquan asked: “Where are you going?” The Master said: “To select vegetable...

- **Communal work (普请, pǔqǐng):** A traditional Chan monastery practice where all members, including the abbot, participate in manual labor. Nanquan (泉) refers to Master Nanquan Puyuan.
- **Guest/Host (宾/主):** In Chan dialogue, "host" often refers to the fundamental essence, the awakened mind, or the master's position, while "guest" refers to phenomena, discriminating thoughts, or the disciple's position. Nanquan is challenging Huangbo, suggesting his action (showing the knife) is merely a response (guest) rather than stemming from the fundamental ground (host). Huangbo's three taps with the knife are a non-verbal assertion or response;

Nanquan then tells everyone to go select vegetables. The account does not specify what he tapped. Was it the ground or a chopping block? That detail remains open.

Item 07: Six newly arrived monks and the antelope, with rare-yang or 羯-yang variant readings

Read the passage: One day, six newly arrived monks came together for an interview. Five of them bowed. One did not bow, but…

- **Circle (圓相, ensō):** Often used in Chan to represent emptiness, completeness, the Dharmakāya, or the mind-nature, beyond words. The monk uses it instead of a conventional bow.
- **Antelope (羚羊):** Often used metaphorically in Chan for the subtle, traceless nature of reality or awakening, which cannot be caught by ordinary means (scent, tracks, traces). Huangbo systematically negates all ways of searching, pointing towards its ungraspable nature. The monk's final statement "Then it is a dead antelope." might imply giving up the chase or realizing its unobtainability/unfindability, but Huangbo tests him further the next day.
- **Genuine patch-robed monk (本色衲僧):** An authentic Chan practitioner who embodies the realization directly.
- **Exegetical śramaṇa (义学沙门):** A monastic who studies Buddhist doctrines intellectually or conceptually, contrasted with a Chan practitioner focused on direct experiential insight. Huangbo dismisses the monk as merely intellectual when he cannot respond further.

Item 08: Wall paintings at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou

Read the passage: The Master had once dispersed the assembly and was residing at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou. One day, Pr…

- **Hongzhou (洪州):** A major center for Chan Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty, particularly associated with Mazu Daoyi and his lineage. Kaiyuan Monastery was a prominent temple there.
- **Prime Minister Pei (裴相公):** Refers to Pei Xiu (裴休), a high-ranking government official, scholar, and devoted lay disciple of Huangbo. He recorded and organized Huangbo's teachings into the Chuan Xin Fa Yao and Wanling Lu.
- The painted likeness (形影) is here, but where is the eminent monk?: Pei Xiu poses a classic Chan question about the relationship between appearance (the painting) and reality (the actual person or essence).
- Master calls Pei Xiu's name... "Where are you?": Huangbo turns the question back onto Pei Xiu. By calling his name and eliciting a response, he points directly to Pei Xiu's immediate awareness, the living presence responding "Yes?", implying that is where the "eminent monk" (or the essential nature) is to be found – not separate from one's own immediate experience. This leads Pei Xiu to an awakening (有省).

Item 09: "There are no Chan masters in the Great Tang"

Read the passage: Discourse in the hall: "You people are all wine-dreg gobblers! Traveling on foot like this, you make othe…

- **Wine-dreg gobblers (啊酒糟汉; parallel reading 噇酒糟漢):** A very harsh and dismissive term Huangbo uses for his assembly. The image evokes consuming useless leftovers—perhaps clinging to superficial understanding or lacking true determination. The witness's 啊 is obscure; the parallel 噇 points to gobbling or consuming the dregs. The suggestions that 啊 is a variant of 同 (tóng, "same") or implies "muddled" are conjectural; the parallel 噇 supports the selected wording. The sense is strongly pejorative.
- **No Chan masters (无禅师):** Huangbo clarifies this provocative statement: he means there are no true masters who fully embody the realization, not that the practice of Chan itself doesn't exist.
- **The goose-king selects the milk (鹅王择乳):** An allusion to the mythical Hamsa bird (often translated as swan or goose king) said to be able to drink only the milk from a mixture of milk and water, leaving the water behind. Yangshan uses this metaphor to imply that Huangbo (the king goose) makes a fine distinction, recognizing true mastery (milk) from the mere appearance of it (water), a discernment ordinary people (ducks) lack.

Item 10: Pei Xiu requests a name and presents a poem

Read the passage: One day, Prime Minister Pei presented a Buddha statue, knelt before the Master, and said: "I request the ...

- **Knelt (胡跪, húguì):** A specific form of kneeling, often on the right knee with the left up, used when presenting offerings or making requests.
- Naming the Buddha: Huangbo again uses the technique of calling Pei Xiu's name to point directly to the immediate, responding awareness as the essence, rather than engaging in the conventional act of naming the statue. The true "name" or essence is found in the living mind.
- **Paper and ink... where is our school's principle? (形纸墨, 何有吾宗？):** Huangbo dismisses reliance on written words (the poem) as inadequate for conveying the true principle (宗) of Chan, which is transmitted mind-to-mind. Not understanding conceptually is deemed "somewhat better."
- **Great Being (大士, Mahāsattva):** An honorific for a bodhisattva or eminent master. Pei Xiu's poem is addressed to Huangbo and celebrates the transmission of the mind-seal; its praise belongs in that immediate setting.
- Forehead... pearl... seven feet tall: The poem describes Huangbo in the received encounter account. The pearl-like protrusion on his forehead also appears in the account of his early life.
- **Rested his staff (挂锡):** A monk settling down in a place. In Pei Xiu's poem to Huangbo, the image evokes settling down

for practice. Shu waters (蜀水) refers to Sichuan. The line may carry poetic significance and should not, by itself, be treated as a precise biographical record of the ten-year residence.

- **Afloat on a cup (浮杯):** A Chan travel image in Pei Xiu's poem to Huangbo. Cup-floating should be distinguished from the familiar legend of Bodhidharma crossing the Yangtze River on a single reed. Zhang riverbank (漳滨) likely refers to a location relevant to Huangbo or Pei Xiu's context, perhaps symbolically crossing over into the realm of Chan.
- **Dragons and elephants (龙象):** Metaphor for outstanding disciples or great practitioners.
- **Fragrant flowers (香花):** Offerings, symbolic of reverence and karmic connection.
- **Mouth emits red lotuses (口吐红莲):** Metaphor for speaking profound and pure Dharma.
- **Nourish the sick body (养病身):** Refers perhaps to the Mahayana concept of the Bodhisattva remaining in the "sick" world of samsara out of compassion, using the Dharma to sustain themselves and others. Alternatively, it could be a humble self-reference by Huangbo.
- **"Though I have a pair of hands free of affairs, I have never lightly bowed to an ordinary person." (无事手，不曾只揖等闲人):** Asserts the Master's independence and discrimination, engaging only with those ready for the profound Dharma, not wasting effort on the unprepared

("ordinary people"). "Hands free of affairs," also glossed "idle hands" (无事手), implies hands not engaged in worldly striving but embodying effortless action or non-action.

Item 11: Those who study the Way must first set aside miscellaneous studies and conditions

Read the passage: Discourse in the hall: "Those who study the Way must first put aside miscellaneous studies and various co...

- **Equal Awakening (等觉) and Wondrous Awakening (妙觉):** The 51st and 52nd (final) stages in the Mahayana Bodhisattva path according to the Tiantai school classification, representing stages just below and at supreme Buddhahood. Huangbo asserts that the direct realization of Mind transcends even these highest conceptual and graduated stages, since it is the immediate and direct non-conceptual realization of one's self-perfected state or timeless Buddha-nature.
- Intending mind... non-intending mind... neither-nor intending mind: Refers to getting caught in conceptual traps, whether actively trying to control the mind, trying not to control it, or trying to find a middle way conceptually. All involve intention (拟心) and create demonic obstacles (魔).
- **Bodhisattva without supernatural powers (无神通菩萨):** Perhaps refers to a Bodhisattva who relies on wisdom rather than powers, or one whose realization is so profound it leaves no traceable signs (足迹不可寻), unlike those who manifest powers.

- **Eternalism (常见外道) and Annihilationism (断见外道):** Two extreme views refuted by Buddhism. Eternalism posits a permanent self or reality; annihilationism posits complete cessation after death with no continuity. Huangbo warns against mistaking meditative states or conceptual views of emptiness for these extremes.
- **Three realms are mind-only, myriad dharmas are consciousness-only (三界唯心，万法唯识):** Core tenets of the Yogācāra (Mind-Only) school. Huangbo implies that even these profound statements are provisional, used to counter cruder externalist views.
- **Dharmakāya… Three Worthies and Ten Sages (三贤十圣; called "Three Worthies and Ten Saints" in the 2025 edition):** The Dharmakāya is the ultimate body/reality of a Buddha. The Three Worthies and Ten Sages are stages on the Bodhisattva path prior to Buddhahood. Huangbo suggests that viewing the Dharmakāya as a final goal to be achieved is still relative to these stages, not the ultimate non-dual realization.
- **Subtle ignorance regarding the knowable and extremely subtle ignorance regarding the knowable (微细所知愚, 极微细所知愚):** These refer to the most subtle knowledge obscurations (所知障), hindrances related to understanding the nature of reality, as opposed to affective obscurations (烦恼障, kleśāvaraṇa) related to emotions.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism two
principal obscurations (Skt. āvaraṇa; Tib. sgrib pa) are

distinguished—afflictive obscurations (Skt. kleśāvaraṇa; Tib. nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa) and knowledge obscurations (Skt. jñeyāvaraṇa; Tib. shes bya'i sgrib pa)—each defined by its essence (bhāva), cause (hetu), and function (varaṇa).

Afflictive obscurations are the defiling emotions—passion (rāga), aggression (dveṣa), delusion (moha), and the like—which arise from grasping at a self, agent or soul (Skt. ātmagrāha, Tib. bdag tu 'dzin pa) and block final liberation from saṃsāra.

Knowledge obscurations are the subtler veils of misperception—beginning with the classic three spheres of subject, object, and action; extending to all notions of how phenomena arise, abide, and cease; to supposed inherent causes and effects; to misconceived characteristics (lakṣaṇagrāha); to dualistic divides of internality versus externality; and to extremes of existence versus nonexistence—each stemming from ascribing true, independent reality to phenomena (grasping at a "self of phenomena," Skt. dharmātmagrāha, Tib. chos kyi bdag tu 'dzin pa) and thereby obscuring omniscience.

Although Śrāvaka Ārhat and Pratyekabuddha practitioners likewise uproot the afflictive obscurations, entry into the eighth bhūmi marks the first stage at which a bodhisattva has eliminated all kleshas—putting them on par with arhats in that respect—yet they remain subject to the knowledge obscurations until full Buddhahood.

On the eighth ground and latent seeds. In the Cheng weishi lun's account of the path, afflictions no longer become active from the eighth ground onward, while the final eradication of their remaining seeds is placed at the vajra-like concentration before Buddhahood. This distinction between manifest afflictions and latent seeds belongs to that account and should be kept in view when comparing Mahāyāna descriptions of the stages.

Cheng weishi lun, fascicle 10, T31 no.1585, 54a06–21 and 54a25–b01.

Saṃsāric Cycles: 分段生死 and 变易生死

分段生死 ("rebirth in segmented lifetimes") refers to the grosser cycle of rebirth through the six realms (hellbeings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, asuras, and devas), driven by afflictive karma and ignorance. Śrāvaka Ārhats, Pratyekabuddhas and the eighth bhūmi Bodhisattvas are able to put an end to this type of saṃsāric rebirth.

变易生死 ("the subtler cycle of conditioned transformation") denotes the inconceivable "births and deaths" of mind made bodies (意生身, manomaya-kāya). In a broader interpretive sense, I also use it for transformations of spiritual states—such as progress through the bodhisattva bhūmis, Pure Land rebirths, and shifts among meditative absorptions. The Cheng weishi lun explains this subtler continuity through uncontaminated karma still involving discrimination (無漏有分別業), with the cognitive obstruction (所知障) as a supporting condition, and the power of compassion, vows, and concentration. Although these beings no longer undergo realm to realm rebirth, they still experience state to state

transitions until the final eradication of all obscurations at Buddhahood.

On the source of transformative birth and death. "Uncontaminated" (無漏) should not be confused with "unconditioned." The Cheng weishi lun explains that uncontaminated concentration and vows sustain existing karmic causes and transform body and lifespan, with the cognitive obstruction as a supporting condition. The expressions "nonfabricated karmic seeds" and "transformative seeds" are not attested technical equivalents for 無漏有分別業 in this passage. The examples of progress through the bhūmis, Pure Land rebirths, and changes of meditative absorption illustrate transformation more broadly; this passage does not supply them as its definition of 變易生死.

Cheng weishi lun, fascicle 8, T31 no.1585, 45a17–25 and 45b01–28.

Only the tathāgata, having eradicated both the afflictive and knowledge obscurations, transcends both 分段生死 ("rebirth in segmented lifetimes") and 变易生死 ("the subtler cycle of conditioned transformation"), thereby realizing unsurpassable awakening.

Terminology of the two kinds of birth and death. The proposed Sanskrit glosses pṛthaksaṃleśasaṃsāra for 分段生死 and pariniṣpannasaṃsāra for 變易生死 remain unverified as source-language equivalents. The distinction is established in the Chinese sources: the Śrīmālādevī Sūtra names 分段死 and 不思議變易死 and speaks of 意生身, while the Cheng weishi lun describes the transformation of body and lifespan through compassion and vows and uses 意成身. These passages provide the textual basis for the distinction; they do not attest the two proposed Sanskrit compounds.

Śrīmālādevī Sūtra, T12 no.353, 219c20–23 (CBETA XML); Cheng weishi lun, fascicle 8, T31 no.1585, 45a14–25 (CBETA XML)

Return to the passage

A Partial Excerpt from Examination of the Five Aggregates (五蕴观)

The following bilingual excerpt from Chengguan's Examination of the Five Aggregates reproduces the English wording circulated through the Dharma Depository and Awakening to Reality. The concluding English phrase is discussed below in relation to its Chinese source.

Examination of the Five Aggregates: https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2011/07/examination-of-five-aggregates.html

Dharma Depository translation: https://sites.google.com/site/dharmadepository/translations/examination-of-the-five-aggregates

"若能依此身心相。谛观分明。於一切处但见五蕴。求人我相终不可得。

> If we rely on these characteristics of body and mind, carefully examine and see clearly, then in all places we only see the five aggregates. We search out the self-characteristic of the person and in the end it cannot be found.

名人空观。乘此观。行出分段生死。永处涅盘。名二乘解脱。

> We call this the examination of the emptiness of persons. If one utilizes this examination then one departs birth and

> death within the six realms and forever abides in nirvāṇa (cessation). We call this the liberation of the two vehicles.

计法我者用後观照之。知一一蕴皆从缘生。都无自性。求蕴相不可得。则五蕴皆空。

> For the conception of the self of a phenomenon we utilize the later examination and investigate it. We then know that each of the aggregates all arise from conditions and all are without self-essence. We seek out the characteristics of the aggregates and they cannot be found and so the five aggregates are all empty.

名法空观。若二观双照。了人我法我。毕竟空无所有。

> We call this the examination of the emptiness of phenomena. If we investigate with both examinations we understand the person's self and the phenomenon's self are ultimately empty without existence.

离诸怖畏。度一切苦厄。出变易生死。名究竟解脱。

> Free from all fears, crossing over all pains and emerging into existence as a Bodhisattva – we call this ultimate liberation."

The concluding Chinese 出變易生死 means going beyond transformative birth-and-death. It does not say "emerging into existence as a Bodhisattva." The distinction here is between two forms of saṃsāric continuity, and the final line describes liberation from the subtler one.

五蘊觀 X1004: https://deerpark.app/cbeta/X1004

- **Mind-to-mind Dharma (心心法):** The direct transmission or realization of mind through mind, beyond words or concepts.
- **Cognition of the knowable (尔焰识):** The text compares cognition to a mirage (阳焰), seeming near yet unfindable, seeming distant yet immediately before the eyes, and neither graspable nor abandonable. The image evokes consciousness flickering and unstable like a flame or mirage, unable to be grasped or stopped by force.
- **Wondrous existence (妙有):** A key Mahayana term indicating that true emptiness (真空) is not mere nothingness but is dynamically manifest as wondrous, ungraspable presence or function.
- **Pointing to leaves as gold, fist-and-palm provisional explanations (指叶为黄金，拳掌之说):** Standard metaphors for expedient means (upāya) – teachings given provisionally to guide beings but not representing the ultimate truth itself (the open hand revealing nothing, or the actual gold).
- **'Originally there is not one thing; where could dust alight?' (本来无一物，何处惹尘埃):** Famous verse attributed to the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, expressing fundamental emptiness and purity.
- **Master Ke (可大师):** Refers to Huike (慧可), the Second Patriarch of Chan, who received the transmission from Bodhidharma.

- **'When the king becomes Buddha, the prince also follows and leaves home' (王若成佛时，王子亦随出家):** An analogy possibly suggesting that when the fundamental mind (king) is realized, its functions or subsequent thoughts (prince) naturally align with awakening (leave home). Huangbo notes its difficulty.

Item 12: The king's treasury and sheep horns

Read the passage: Question: "Regarding the King's treasury, there is absolutely no such sword within it. I humbly request y...

- **King's treasury (王库藏):** Metaphor for the fundamental nature, the mind-essence, or the Tathāgata-garbha. The question refers to the royal-treasury and sword parable in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra; see the source note following appended item 13.
- **Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (虚空藏菩萨):** The Bodhisattva whose name means "Treasury of Empty Space," symbolizing boundless wisdom and merit like space itself. Huangbo equates this with the mind's empty nature.
- **Sheep horns (羊角):** A Chan term symbolizing entanglement in dualistic concepts, useless seeking, delusion, or getting stuck on extraneous points. Any attempt to define the empty nature (treasury) as existent, non-existent, etc., is falling into conceptual delusion.

Item 13: The true sword in the king's treasury

Read the passage: Question: “Is there a true sword in the King's treasury or not?” The Master said: “This too amounts to sh…

- ‘The prince, holding the true sword…’: The question recalls the same royal-treasury parable, including the prince’s departure and the mistaken comparison of the sword with ram’s horns. Huangbo interprets it metaphorically: the "sword" is wisdom or the teaching, the "prince" is a messenger (like a Bodhisattva or teacher), and the "treasury" is the fundamental source. He rejects the literal interpretation that something tangible (the sword) is removed from the inherently empty source (treasury). Holding onto the idea of a tangible "true sword" (a specific doctrine or attainment) is delusion ("sheep horns").

The treasury and sword in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra. In the parable, a prince departs with a fine sword, and people who claim to know it offer conflicting descriptions, including ram’s horns. The king rejects that description as unlike any sword in his treasury. The sūtra uses the mistaken descriptions to explain fabricated notions of self: the teaching of no-self corrects those views, and what the sūtra calls the “true self” is identified with Buddha-nature, compared to a pure sword. This is the scriptural setting of Huangbo’s images. The commentary above interprets Huangbo’s use of these images within his own teaching.

Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, fascicle 8, T12, no. 374, 412b17–c29. https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T0374/8

Item 14: Kāśyapa as messenger

Read the passage: Question: “Did Kāśyapa, having received the Buddha's mind-seal, become a messenger?” The Master said: “Ye…

- **Messenger (传语人):** Someone who relays teachings or information. The questioner implies this role is inherently secondary or conceptual ("sheep horns"). Huangbo distinguishes between Mahākāśyapa, who received the mind-to-mind transmission (心印) and realized the essence directly, and Ānanda, who initially focused on the Buddha's words and form without the same depth of direct realization, thus remaining entangled in "sheep horns" until his own later awakening.
- **‘You only contemplate the Savior of the World [externally]’ (唯观救世者):** This wording is preserved in Chan records, including the Zongjing lu’s discussion of Ānanda. A close thematic parallel occurs in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, where Ānanda describes being drawn to the Buddha’s bodily marks and the Buddha points him toward the true mind. Huangbo’s words challenge reliance on external form rather than realization of the mind-nature within.

Gu Zunsu Yulu, fascicle 3, X68, no. 1315, 21a02–06; Zongjing lu, fascicle 26, T48, no. 2016, 566b01–03; Śūraṅgama Sūtra, fascicle 1, T19, no. 945, 106c21–107a08 and 109a19–27.

Item 15: Mañjuśrī holding a sword

Read the passage: Question: "Regarding Mañjuśrī holding a sword before Gautama, what about that?" The Master said: "Five hu...

- Mañjuśrī holding a sword before Gautama: Refers to a story in the Mahāratnakūṭa (大宝积经), fascicle 105, where Mañjuśrī, embodying wisdom, brandishes a sword, often interpreted as cutting through delusion or attachment.
- **Five hundred Bodhisattvas... body of the five aggregates (五百菩萨... 五阴身):** Huangbo interprets the 500 Bodhisattvas seeing past karma as representing the five skandhas (form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness) recognizing their own conditioned nature and history of creating obstacles.
- **You slay well (你善害):** Huangbo's wording recalls the Buddha's instruction to Mañjuśrī in that Mahāratnakūṭa story: if he is to strike, he should do so well (应当善害). "Slay" here means to cut through or eliminate delusion.
- **Mother and child both perish (母子俱丧):** A metaphor for the complete elimination of both the object of elimination (child - discriminating thought, views) and the tool of elimination (mother - non-discriminating wisdom used as a tool). In the ultimate realization, the dualism of means and end, wisdom and ignorance, subject and object, dissolves entirely.

Item 16: What does it mean to see one's nature?

Read the passage: Question: "What does it mean to see one's nature (见性)?" The Master said: "Nature is seeing; seeing is nat…

- **'That which can be seen, cannot be seen again' (所可见者, 不可更见):** A paradoxical statement suggesting that true seeing (见性) is not an act of a subject seeing an object; the nature itself is the seeing. Trying to see the nature as an object is redundant and impossible ("adding a head onto a head").
- **Pearls scattered in a dish… (盘中散珠…):** Analogy illustrating the self-contained, non-interfering, self-so nature of phenomena when seen from the perspective of emptiness or fundamental nature. They simply are as they are.
- **Four Fruits / Four Approaches (四果/四向):** Stages of attainment in the Śrāvaka (Hinayana) path: Stream-enterer (towards/fruit), Once-returner (towards/fruit), Non-returner (towards/fruit), Arhat (towards/fruit). Huangbo asserts their mutual non-perception from the standpoint of non-dual reality.
- **Sentient beings do not enter… Buddha does not exit… (众生不入法界，佛不出法界):** Emphasizes the non-dual nature of the Dharma realm (dharmadhātu). There is no actual movement of entering or exiting; beings are already within it, and Buddha is not separate from it.
- **Kātyāyana… rebuked by Vimalakīrti (迦旃延… 被净名呵责):** Refers to a passage in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (Chapter 3)

where Vimalakīrti criticizes Mahākātyāyana for explaining the ultimate truth (实相) using dualistic concepts of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self, which still operate within arising and ceasing.

- **'All dharmas are originally unbound… Originally unstained…' (一切法本来无缚… 本来不染…):** Quotes echoing Vimalakīrti's sentiment, emphasizing inherent liberation and purity.

Item 17: If the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out?

Read the passage: Question: "When the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out?" The Master said: "I h…

- **Fall into a calamity brought by a king (陷王难):** A metaphor suggesting that seeking external validation or conceptual understanding leads both teacher and student into entanglement and trouble, away from true liberation.
- **Body free of volitional formations (无行身):** 行 (xing) corresponds to Saṃskāra-skandha (volitional formations).
- **Body free of the feeling aggregate; body free of the perception aggregate; body free of volitional formations; body free of consciousness (无受身…无想身…无行身…无识身):** Huangbo explains the emptiness of the five skandhas (form/rūpa being implied as the physical basis) not as annihilation, but as the absence of grasping, conceptualizing, fabricating, and discriminating consciousness when the mind does not give rise to separate thoughts (一念不起). The

terms 受 (shou), 想 (xiang), 行 (xing), 识 (shi) correspond to Vedanā (feeling/reception), Saṃjñā (perception/conceptualization), Saṃskāra (volitional formations), and Vijñāna (consciousness) skandhas respectively.

- **Sudhana (善财童子):** The pilgrim protagonist of the Gaṇḍavyūha chapter of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, who visits numerous teachers (kalyāṇamitra) seeking awakening.
- **Mañjuśrī is precisely your original-ground ignorance (文殊者即汝本地无明):** This is a radical Chan interpretation. Mañjuśrī represents supreme wisdom (prajñā). In my reading, identifying him with the fundamental ground (本地) of ignorance (无明, avidyā) points to the non-dual insight that wisdom is not separate from ignorance; rather, seeing through ignorance reveals the primordial wisdom, which is the mind's fundamental nature. Seeking externally, even for wisdom (Mañjuśrī), is still operating within the causal chain rooted in ignorance.
- **Eighteen elements (十八界):** The six sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind), six sense objects (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects), and six sense consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, mental). Their emptiness signifies the cessation of dualistic subject-object perception.
- **Numinous terrace (灵台):** A Taoist term adopted into Chan, referring to the mind or heart as the seat of consciousness/spirit.

Item 18: Vimalakīrti's silence

Read the passage: Question: "Vimalakīrti remained silent, and Mañjuśrī praised him, saying: 'This is truly entering the non...

- **Vimalakīrti's silence... non-dual Dharma gate (净名默然... 不二法门):** Refers to the famous episode in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (Chapter 9) where various Bodhisattvas explain the non-dual Dharma gate. Mañjuśrī asks Vimalakīrti for his explanation, and Vimalakīrti responds with profound silence, which Mañjuśrī praises as the ultimate expression of non-duality, transcending all verbal formulations. Huangbo equates this non-dual gate with one's own fundamental mind.

Item 19: Śrāvakas hiding form in the three realms

Read the passage: Question: "Regarding Śrāvaka practitioners hiding their form in the three realms, but being unable to hid...

- **Śrāvaka (声闻):** "Hearer" disciple, associated with the Hinayana path, focused on individual liberation (Arhatship) by understanding the Four Noble Truths and overcoming afflictions within the cycle of birth and death (three realms).
- **Afflictions eliminated on the paths of seeing and cultivation within the three realms (三界见修):** The erroneous views (dṛṣṭi) and the afflictions eliminated through cultivation (bhāvanā) that bind beings to the realms of desire, form, and formlessness. Śrāvakas aim to eliminate these.
- **King Māra (魔王; Māra-rāja):** The king of demons, symbolizing obstacles to awakening, including subtle

attachments. Here, even attaining liberation from gross afflictions, the Śrāvaka may still have a subtle attachment to the idea or experience of Bodhi (awakening) itself, making them vulnerable.

- **Seven Great Elements (七大):** Earth, water, fire, wind, space, consciousness, and often perception/cognition (见大 in some texts like Śūraṅgama Sūtra). Refers to the fundamental constituents of reality; being unfound among them implies ultimate non-graspability.
- **Seal (印子):** Like a seal making an impression. Refers to the mind fixing or conceptualizing reality as either existent or non-existent (empty), thus creating a definite pattern or view (文), leading to further karmic consequences (six realms) or subtle states (formlessness). True freedom lies in not imprinting anything.
- **'Within this One Mind, diligently adorn [it] through skillful means.' (如是一心中，方便勤庄严):** This couplet also appears in the Fanwang jing (梵網經), fascicle 2 (T24, no. 1484, 1010a08). Here it suggests that all practices and skillful means (方便) are ultimately about working within/adorning this one mind, by realizing its nature free from grasping characteristics.

Item 20: King Kali cutting the body

Read the passage: Question: “Like when I, in a past life, was the Sage of Forbearance whose body was dismembered by King Ka…

- **King Kali (歌利王):** See the earlier commentary on King Kali and the Sage of Forbearance. The question cites the Buddha’s account of a past life as the Sage of Forbearance (忍辱仙人).
- **Fond of seeking (好求也):** Huangbo interprets King Kali's actions not just as cruelty, but as a form of greedy seeking or external grasping, analogous to spiritual practitioners who chase after external teachings or experiences without cultivating inner stability. The "dismemberment" becomes a metaphor for the mind being fragmented and harmed by grasping at sense objects (forms, sounds, etc.).
- **Since you feel no pain, why do you stick your head out looking for something? (你既不痛，出头来觅个什么？):** A sharp, dismissive Chan retort. Huangbo cuts off the intellectual/philosophical questioning about the nature of pain and the "receiver" (受者, vedaka, the feeler of sensation/vedanā). If the questioner truly realized the truth of "no receiver," the question about who feels the pain wouldn't arise. Asking the question reveals they are still operating from a conventional viewpoint, "sticking their head out" into conceptual problems.

Item 21: Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction

Read the passage: Question: “Regarding Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction [to Śākyamuni], was it given during those five hundred…

- **The five hundred lifetimes (五百岁中… 五百岁外):** The surrounding dialogue concerns past lives and Dīpaṃkara’s prediction, and the selected translation reads “five hundred lifetimes.” The question probes the temporal aspect of the prediction. Huangbo refutes the relevance of such temporal frameworks, grounding the “prediction” in the timeless nature and the realization of non-attainment.
- **Within conditioned activity (有为, saṃskṛta):** Refers to actions within the realm of cause and effect. Even while seemingly active in the world, the one who understands does not grasp at Bodhi as something conditioned or attainable.
- **‘Frequently passing through five hundred lifetimes…’ (频经五百世，前后极时长):** This quote likely refers to accounts of Śākyamuni's past lives as a Bodhisattva practicing austerities for vast periods.
- **Still refers to the Sage (犹是仙人):** In my reading, Huangbo equates these long periods of past practice with the stage of the "Sage" (called the "Immortal" in the 2025 edition, as in "Patient Immortal"), implying it was still a phase before the final realization of non-attainment which triggered Dīpaṃkara's prediction. The prediction wasn't based on the duration of practice but on the realization itself.

Item 22: "Eliminate my inverted thoughts of vast numbers of kalpas"

Read the passage: Question: "In the teachings it says: 'Eliminate my inverted thoughts accumulated over vast numbers of kal…

- **'Eliminate my inverted thoughts… obtain the Dharmakāya' (销我亿劫颠倒想，不历僧只获法身):** The Chinese companion's wording quotes the verse of praise spoken by Ānanda and the assembly in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra (fascicle 3; T19, no. 945, 119b13). The sūtra's CBETA text has 僧祇 where the companion has 僧只. The verse contrasts the instantaneous realization possible through understanding the mind-nature with the gradual path taking immense periods (asaṃkhyeya kalpas, abbreviated as 僧祇 in the sūtra and written 僧只 in the companion). Dharmakāya is the "Dharma-body," the ultimate aspect of a Buddha.

Śūraṅgama Sūtra, fascicle 3, T19, no. 945, 119b03–13. https://deerpark.app/cbeta/T0945/3

- **Teachings of provisional meaning (不了义教, neyārtha):** Teachings given according to the capacity of the audience, not expressing the final, ultimate truth (了义教, nītārtha). Huangbo classifies even the idea of obtaining the Dharmakāya, however quickly, as provisional, because the ultimate view is that the Dharmakāya is self-perfected and not something to be obtained.

Item 23: One who sees the Dharma and instantly understands

Read the passage: Question: "Does one who sees Dharma and instantly understands see the Patriarch's intent?" The Master sai...

- **Free from dualistic opposites (绝待):** A key Chan term indicating transcendence of all relative pairs and conceptual dichotomies (limit/limitless, being/non-being, etc.). The Patriarch's mind, or the ultimate, cannot be defined by such dualistic measures.
- **Like drinking water... know for themselves (如人饮水，冷暖自知):** A famous Chan saying emphasizing the direct, personal, non-transferable nature of experiential realization.

Item 24: The Buddha's body-relics

Read the passage: Question: "The Buddha's body is unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta) and does not fall within any category. Why ...

- **Eight 斛 (hu) and four 斗 (dou):** Traditional Chinese units of volume, often cited as the quantity of relics left after the Buddha's cremation. 斛 (hu) and 斗 (dou) are measures of grain; their application to relics emphasizes the apparent paradox.
- **Mount Sumeru (妙高峰):** The mythical central mountain of the world in Buddhist cosmology. Gathering it into micro-particles is an impossible task, symbolizing the transcendence required to see the "true relics," which Huangbo equates with the unconditioned mind, like empty space.

- **Armies of Māra (魔军):** Forces of delusion, represented by Māra, that obstruct awakening. Discriminating thought fuels these forces.

Item 25: To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?

Read the passage: Question: "To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?" The Master said: "There is no Dharma to transm...

- **Second Patriarch (二祖):** Refers to Huike (慧可), the successor to Bodhidharma (the First Patriarch of Chan in China).
- **Ask the Master to pacify his mind... 'I have pacified your mind for you' (请师安心... 与你安心竟):** Refers to the famous story where Huike, distressed, asks Bodhidharma to pacify his mind. The following dialogue is a paraphrase of that traditional story, expanding the brief allusion translated here. Bodhidharma demands, "Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it." Huike searches but replies, "I have searched for the mind, but cannot find it." Bodhidharma declares, "There, I have pacified your mind for you." This illustrates that the mind, when sought as an object, is unobtainable/unfindable, and realizing this unobtainability/unfindability is peace of mind. It confirms Huangbo's point of "no Dharma to give" and nothing to obtain.

Item 26: Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance?

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely...

- **Dependent origination is the seat of awakening (缘起是道场):** Seeing the interconnected, conditioned nature of reality directly is the place of awakening. Ignorance isn't something separate to be destroyed, but the very field within which wisdom arises.
- **Śāriputra (舍利弗):** One of the Buddha's chief disciples, foremost in wisdom within the Śrāvaka tradition.
- **'Even if the entire world were filled with those like Śāriputra, exhausting their thoughts together to measure it, they could not fathom the Buddha's wisdom.' (假使满世间... 不能测佛智):** A quote emphasizing the inconceivable nature of Buddha's wisdom, beyond the grasp of even the wisest Śrāvakas using conceptual thought. Often found in Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra.
- **Samantabhadra (普贤):** A major Bodhisattva embodying practice and vows, often depicted riding a white elephant. The imagery highlights the vastness and all-encompassing nature of the Bodhisattva's realization/state, making even cosmic scales seem small.
- **'Returning to the source, the nature is non-dual; skillful means (方便, upāya) have many gates' (归源性无二，方便有多门):** A common Buddhist phrase summarizing that the

ultimate nature is non-dual, but various skillful means (paths, practices) exist to lead beings toward it.

- **Pratyekabuddha (缘觉):** "Solitary Realizer," one who attains awakening independently, often through contemplating dependent origination, but does not teach widely like a Buddha. The pairing *śānti-nirvāṇa* expresses peace and *nirvāṇa* as an interpretive gloss for "quiescent extinction" (寂灭); it does not identify an attested Sanskrit original or a fixed equivalent in this passage.
- **'When the fruit is full, Bodhi is perfected; when the flower opens, the world arises.' (果满菩提圆，华开世界起):** The closing couplet of a transmission verse attributed to Prajñātāra (般若多罗) in the Jingde chuandeng lu (fascicle 2), here linking the perfection of Bodhi (fruit) with the manifestation of enlightened reality (flower opening, world arising).
- **'Lifting the foot is precisely Buddha; setting the foot down is precisely sentient beings.' (举足即佛，下足即众生):** A dynamic expression of non-duality in action. The potential (lifting foot) is Buddha; the manifestation in the relative world (setting foot down) is sentient beings, yet both are inseparable aspects of the same reality.
- **Supreme among bipeds (两足尊):** An epithet of the Buddha, literally "most honored among two-legged beings (humans and gods)." Huangbo reinterprets it non-literally as "complete in two aspects"—principle (理) and phenomena

(事), or wisdom and compassion, etc. signifying holistic perfection.

- **Dung-removing implement… conceptual elaboration (除粪器… 戏论之粪):** Revisiting the metaphor from the Lotus Sutra (Parable of the Prodigal Son). Removing "dung" means clearing away proliferating concepts, discriminations, and intellectual views ("conceptual elaboration," prapañca).
- **Caoxi lineage (曹溪门下):** Refers to the lineage descending from the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, whose temple was at Caoxi (漕溪). Huangbo places his teaching firmly within this tradition of direct mind-pointing.
- **No-practice (无行):** While 行 (xing) often means volitional formations (skandha) or practice, here 无行 (wu xing) is rendered "no-practice." I understand this as "non-doing" or "non-fabrication," aligning with the core teaching of "no mind" (无心) – ceasing contrived effort and conceptual activity. It signifies the natural functioning of the One Mind itself.

Item 27: How can one avoid falling into stages? (repeated from the end of Chuanxin Fayao)

Read the passage: Question: "How can one avoid falling into stages?" The Master said: "Eat rice all day without ever biting…

- **"Eat rice all day without ever biting a single grain. Walk all day without ever stepping on a single piece of ground." (终日吃饭，未曾咬着一粒米。终日行，未曾踏着一片**

地): Metaphors for functioning in the world without attachment or conceptual fixation. Actions are performed, but the mind does not grasp at or establish the action, the object, or the self performing the action as truly existing or separate. This embodies non-abiding and freedom from dualistic perception, thus transcending stages. In this passage, 阶级 is rendered "stages," 自在人 "free person," and 解脱 "liberated."

> Zen master Munan said, "There is nothing to Buddhism—just see directly, hear directly. When seeing directly, there is no seer; when hearing directly, there is no hearer."
>
> Shidō Munan (至道无难, 1602-1676) was an early Tokugawa Zen master mostly active in Edo. He was the teacher of Shōju Rōjin, who is in turn considered the main teacher of Hakuin Ekaku. He is best known for the phrase that one must "die while alive," made famous by D.T. Suzuki.

This biographical description is quoted from Eduardo Cuellar, Tokugawa Zen Master Shidō Munan (MA thesis, University of Arizona, 2016), p. 5; the Chinese characters are given here in simplified form.

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

Zen: Waking Up in the Present, translated by Thomas Cleary, North Atlantic Books, 1994, p. 70)

- **'Put forth effort and finish it in this life; who can endure remaining calamities through successive kalpas?' (着力今生须了却，谁能累劫受余殃？):** A verse urging immediate and determined effort to achieve liberation in this lifetime, rather than continuing endlessly in saṃsāra.

Item 28: Passing away and stupa name

Read the passage: The Master passed away at his home mountain during the Dazhong reign period (847–860) of the Tang Dynasty…

- **Dazhong reign period (大中年中):** 847-860 CE. The received notice gives this reign period rather than an exact death year. McRae tentatively places Huangbo's passing in the mid-850s (Zen Texts, 2005, p. 6). The date around 850 CE is given in Furuta Kazuhiro's preface and Yanagida Seizan's historical introduction to The Record of Linji (2009, pp. ix and 93, n. 12); the precise year remains uncertain.

Duanji (斷際). The title is preserved as “Chan Master Duanji.” The interpretive renderings “Chan Master of Decisive Judgment” and “cutting off the indeterminate” draw attention to the decisiveness of Huangbo’s teaching. The Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp records the posthumous title and the stupa-name Guangye, but gives no explanation of the title’s wording. These English glosses express an interpretation of his teaching; they do not establish the historical reason for the title or a definitive etymology. Read literally, 斷際 can be glossed “cutting off limits”: 斷 means cutting or severing, and 際 can mean a boundary or limit. The Ministry of Education dictionary entries for 斷 and 際 attest these senses; they do not establish why the title was conferred.

For Guangye (廣業), rendered “Vast Activity” here, the alternative gloss “Vast Karma/Activity” brings out the Buddhist sense of 業 as karma. The notice does not explain the choice of stupa-name, so the gloss should be understood as an interpretation.

Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fasc.9, T51, no.2076, 266c15–16.

Jingde Record, fascicle 9 (266c15–16)

Return to the passage

Sources and Textual Notes

Pei Xiu's preface and the Essentials of Mind Transmission follow the Chinese text catalogued as Taishō volume 48, no. 2012A (T48n2012A). The Wanling Record follows the separate text at Taishō volume 48, no. 2012B (T48n2012B). They are presented as separate works, followed by a collection of appended encounters, questions and answers, and a biographical notice.

Project Gutenberg's Chinese eBook 25236, 筠州黃檗山斷際禪師傳法心要, provides the working text for appended items 01–26 and closely matches their sequence. Most early encounter stories also occur in Zhiyue Lu, fascicle 10, Wudeng Huiyuan, fascicle 4, and the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp. Additional continuous parallels in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu, fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu, fascicle 3, are identified below.

Appended item 27 intentionally repeats the ending of the Essentials. Item 28 follows the death, posthumous-title, and stupa-name notice in the Jingde Record, Taishō volume 51, no. 2076 (T51n2076), fascicle 9.

The Chinese source companion prepared for this edition preserves the simplified-character wording of the appended passages, including readings that differ from the English. At particular points the translation follows a better-supported reading in a Chan transmission record or the Taishō canon. The notes therefore distinguish the wording recorded in the companion, the wording of a parallel text, and the reading adopted in English. A difference between them is not, by itself, an omission. These comparisons clarify the appended materials; they do not replace the separate textual bases of the Essentials and the Wanling Record.

The appended passages have identified sources and parallels, but this collection is not a new critical edition of every character and punctuation mark. The Project Gutenberg text contains doubtful forms, including 口土紅蓮, compared here with the intelligible

correction 口吐紅蓮, corrupted forms of 瞿曇 (Gautama), and the suspect reading 舀外. Such differences may arise in copying, transcription, or optical character recognition (OCR); the precise origin of an individual error is not established merely by finding it in a digital text.

Some encounters also survive in shorter and longer versions. A simplified-character transcription is not the same thing as a fixed traditional-character canonical text. The notes identify stronger evidence for particular readings and retain the remaining doubts; they do not claim an exhaustive character-by-character critical text.

The notes compare individual passages and groups of sentences. Each entry identifies the working text, the parallel source, important differences, and the adopted or provisional reading. English fragments attached to a Chinese witness explain or summarize that witness's wording; they are not all quotations from the running English translation.

Assessments such as "High" or "Medium-high" describe the strength of the evidence for the stated passage or comparison. They do not authenticate every textual detail or establish that a transmitted encounter is a verbatim historical record.

John R. McRae's translation in Zen Texts provides an independent comparison for Pei Xiu's preface and the Essentials of the Transmission of Mind, including the passage repeated as appended item 27. It does not translate the Wanling Record or appended items 01–26 and 28. Its divisions and headings are its own editorial presentation, not numbering imposed on the texts in this volume.

How to Read the Source Notes

These notes explain where a passage is preserved, how its versions differ, and why a particular reading appears in English. "Witness" means a document or edition that preserves a version of the text. A

parallel witness contains the same or a related passage; agreement can support a reading without making the two documents identical.

Project Gutenberg is the online digital library that hosts the Chinese text cited here as eBook 25236. The number identifies the eBook, not a page. Its catalogue title is 筠州黃檗山斷際禪師傳法心要. It is a digital transcription used for the sequence of appended items 01–26, not a photographic reproduction or a newly established critical edition. The item numbers in this book belong to this arrangement of the appended material.

The Chinese companion is the collated Chinese source dossier prepared alongside this translation. A diplomatic reading preserves what that particular witness says, including a doubtful character; an adopted reading is the wording chosen for the English after comparison. In a translated parenthesis, "current witness" identifies the companion's recorded reading. For example, appended item 1 distinguishes 稍子 in that witness from 艄子, the boatman reading used in English.

T identifies the Taishō shinshū daizōkyō, a published collection of Buddhist texts. Thus T48n2012A means volume 48, text no. 2012A; T2012A is its shortened form when the volume is understood. X identifies the revised Manji continuation canon, commonly called the Xuzangjing. Codes such as X1553 identify a work in that collection; page, column, and line are given separately.

The principal abbreviated references are T2012A for the Essentials of Mind Transmission, T2012B for the Wanling Record, and T2076 for the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp. X1553 is Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu, X1315 is Gu Zunsu Yulu, X1557 is Liandeng Huiyao, and X0330 is Lengqie Jing Zongtong. The bibliography gives their Chinese titles and the sections used here.

A fascicle is a traditional division of a Chinese work, usually called juan (卷). A reference such as 379c13 means page 379, column c, line 13 in the cited edition. It is distinct from this book's pagination. CBETA supplies digital Buddhist texts and their source references; SAT is another digital database of the Taishō canon. A database address is a route to a text, not itself evidence that every possible edition has been compared.

Chan transmission records, often called lamp records, preserve biographies, encounters, and teachings in the lineage traditions. They may give a fuller story or a different phrase from the working text. A critical edition compares such evidence systematically; these notes state the particular comparisons used here.

A suspected OCR error is a character that may have been misread during optical character recognition, but a doubtful form can also arise through copying or transcription. The notes preserve the actual alternatives even when their origin is uncertain.

The notation U+263EA identifies a rare written character by its Unicode number. In the animal-name notation U+263EA-yang, yang represents the following 羊. Keeping this identifier alongside 羚 and 羺 allows the recorded character variants to remain distinguishable.

The source assessments retain the distinctions "High" and "Medium-high" for the evidence specified in an entry. They concern the identification or comparison described there. They do not rank the spiritual value of a teaching, prove every word historically original, or make a parallel collection the source of passages outside its stated scope.

Notes on selected passages

The preface's lineage wording and date

The preface calls Huangbo a Dharma-nephew of Xitang and Baizhang (西堂百丈之法姪). This wording is retained alongside the familiar lineage account of Huangbo as Baizhang's disciple.

Its date is the eighth day of the eleventh month of Dazhong 11. The eleventh month is the reading of the Chinese source used here and of the CBETA transcription at T48n2012A, page 379, column c, line 13 (379c13); McRae's English prints the tenth month (p. 12). The difference between these witnesses remains explicit. The Taishō/CBETA apparatus at 379c13, note 6, also records a Chinese tenth-month variant: witness 甲 omits 一 from 十一月. The month difference therefore has a basis in the Chinese transmission.

Read the passage: There was a great Chan master whose Dharma name was Xiyun. He lived below Vulture Peak on Mount Huangbo i…; Prefaced on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the eleventh year of the Dazhong era of the Tang.

Self and controller

In the Essentials, the four elements and the five aggregates are examined in terms of both self and controller. The two negations remain distinct: neither the constitution of the body nor mental aggregation establishes a self or a governing agent. The eighteen elements are likewise described through their arising and ceasing in conjunction.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…

Ming's intervening response

明乃稟語 marks Ming's respectful response between the Sixth Patriarch's instructions. The translation retains that speech action without supplying words that the text does not give.

Read the passage: Question: "The Sixth Patriarch was not versed in scriptures. How could he receive the robe-transmission a…

Vimalakīrti's room and illness

The Wanling passages about clearing the room, leaving a single bed, and lying ill allude to the narrative of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra. They describe the scene rather than an instruction spoken by Vimalakīrti. The ensuing Chan explanation relates the cleared room and illness to the cessation of grasping at conditions and the formation of views. The English translation retains the narrative attribution and does not add a claim that the illness was merely simulated.

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha ferry sentient beings across?" The Master said: "In reality there are no senti…; "The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: 'Only one bed was left, and he lay there ill.' This means that mind does not…; "Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust o…

Images in Pei Xiu's poem

In Pei Xiu's verse, 浮杯 evokes crossing the water afloat on a cup; 漳濱 is the Zhang River's bank. 勝因 denotes auspicious karmic causes, retaining the Buddhist causal sense of 因. 龍象 is a single honorific image for eminent practitioners, so the "dragon-elephant" epithet qualifies the thousand disciples rather than adding two groups of literal animals. The count follows 千徒 in the Chinese companion; the different numbers in other versions remain separate readings.

Read the passage: One day, Prime Minister Pei presented a Buddha statue, knelt before the Master, and said: "I request the …

The immense number in the quoted verse

Appended item 22 retains 億劫 alongside "vast numbers of kalpas."

億 has had different numerical values in historical Buddhist usage, so a fixed modern value of one hundred million would be more precise than the evidence warrants. The explicit immense number remains distinct from the following asaṃkhyeya, or incalculable, kalpas. The source expression is preserved rather than converted into an asserted chronology.

Read the passage: Appended 22: "Eliminate my inverted thoughts of vast numbers of kalpas"; Question: "In the teachings it says: 'Eliminate my inverted thoughts accumulated over vast numbers of kal…

Fo Guang dictionary entry on 億, reproduced by Fodizi: https://m.fodizi.tw/f05/79280.html

BuddhistDoor dictionary entry 億: https://dictionary.buddhistdoor.net/details/%E5%84%84/

SAT T0945 source quotation: https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php?kaeri=&mode=detail&nonum=&useid=0945_%2C00%2C0121

楞嚴經疏解蒙鈔 discussion of 億: https://www.shidianguji.com/mid-page/7409411516983869450

楞嚴經宗通, fascicle 3: https://hermit.place/zh-TW/canon/x/x16n0318/juan-03/

The five hundred lifetimes

Appended item 21 opens with 五百歲 and later explains the period through 五百世 and the Sage of Forbearance. The English therefore renders the period as five hundred lifetimes. The notes retain both Chinese expressions, 歲 and 世, so that the wording of the companion remains visible alongside this contextual interpretation.

Read the passage: Question: “Regarding Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction [to Śākyamuni], was it given during those five hundred…

Chinese Text Project comparison witness: https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?chapter=150927&if=en

Shidian Guji comparison witness: https://www.shidianguji.com/zh/book/FZZ1283/chapter/1ku43vrvq0hsa

The refined and pure relics

The relic question contains 唯煉唯精 (with 鍊 and 煉 spellings in the parallel witnesses) followed by 金骨常存. The English preserves the objection that the relics are thoroughly refined and pure and that golden bones remain. The wording does not assert a repeated comparative process in which further refining makes them progressively purer.

Read the passage: Question: “The Buddha's body is unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta) and does not fall within any category. Why …

Few practice and no-practice

In appended item 26, 少行 and the subsequent 無行 have different functions. The first speaks of how few practice the Dharma gate; the second names no-practice. The following statement that few attain it reinforces the first expression’s sense of scarcity. Earlier in the same

item, 便合 describes immediate accord with boundless principle-nature; it is not an obligation to achieve accord in the future.

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…

Arising and ceasing

The rendering of 生 and 滅 follows each passage's relation and context. When paired as processes, they are translated as arising and ceasing rather than automatically as biological birth and death. Appended item 26 retains the paradox of beings arising without arising and ceasing without ceasing. In the exchange about speech and silence in item 18, 斷滅 instead concerns annihilation: sound and fundamental hearing are not annihilated by silence.

Read the passage: "Ordinary people do not turn toward the Way. They indulge the six senses and thereby move through the six…; "Ordinary people all pursue object-realms and give rise to mind; the mind then likes and dislikes. If you…; Question: "Vimalakīrti remained silent, and Mañjuśrī praised him, saying: 'This is truly entering the non…; Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…

The question about saving effort

In the Essentials, 不是省力底事 is read as a colloquial rhetorical question: "Is this not a matter of saving effort?" Its negative form introduces an affirmative implication. Sheng Yen cites the expression with a question mark and explains the effort-saving sense; a further received commentary makes the rhetorical construction explicit with 豈不是省力底事. These commentaries help explain the expression; the Chinese companion remains the source text for the translation.

Read the passage: Question: "What is conventional truth?" The Master said: "Why talk about entangling vines? Originally pur…

Sheng Yen's discussion of the rhetorical expression: https://old.ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/text/04-15/134.php

Commentarial comparison in X0468, fascicle 2: https://tripitaka.zensoul.org/X/X0468/2

The principal textual witnesses

Text and scope	Use in this edition	Strength of evidence
The Essentials and Wanling texts (T2012A/B)	**Use in this edition:** The base text for Pei Xiu's preface, the Essentials, and the Wanling Record.	**Strength of evidence:** High
Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236	**Use in this edition:** The direct working text for appended items 01–26. It contains suspect or corrupt forms attributable to transcription or textual transmission; a specific OCR origin is not established for every difference.	**Strength of evidence:** Medium-high as a working text, with the textual reservations described above.
Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10	**Use in this edition:** Supplies strong local comparisons for appended items 01, 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 10, 16, and others.	**Strength of evidence:** High for comparing the specified passages in the Chan transmission records.

Text and scope	Use in this edition	Strength of evidence
Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4	**Use in this edition:** Supplies local comparisons for the early biography, encounter stories, naming episode, "no Chan masters" case, and short death notice.	**Strength of evidence:** High for comparing the specified passages in the Chan transmission records.
T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp fascicle 9	**Use in this edition:** Corroborates important parts of appended item 09 and the death and stupa-name notice in appended item 28.	**Strength of evidence:** High; an identified text in the Taishō canon.
Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3	**Use in this edition:** Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves continuous traditional-character parallels for appended item 05 and items 11–26. Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, independently parallels items 12–25. The specifically identified passages therefore have lamp-record corroboration in addition to Project Gutenberg.	**Strength of evidence:** High for the identified passages in these Chan records preserved in the Xuzangjing. Their use is limited to those comparisons; the Essentials and Wanling texts (T2012A/B) retain their own textual basis.

Roles of the textual witnesses

Source role	Text	Use in this edition
1. Textual basis of the main works	**Texts:** The Essentials of Mind Transmission (T48n2012A) and the Wanling Record (T48n2012B).	**Use in this edition:** Used for the main body and appended item 27.
2. Chan transmission records for comparison	**Text:** Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4, Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8, Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3, and T51n2076 Jingde Record fascicle 9	**Use in this edition:** Local witnesses for readings in the appended materials, where the particular textual evidence warrants their use. Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) supply specific local readings for appended items 12–25; neither is a wholesale replacement for the appended collection or the T2012A/B main body.

Source role	Text	Use in this edition
3. Working text of the appended collection	**Text:** Project Gutenberg Chinese eBook 25236, 筠州黃檗山斷際禪師傳法心要. Its descriptive English title in these notes is "Junzhou Huangboshan Duanji Chan Master's Essentials of Transmitting the Dharma-Mind."	**Use in this edition:** Closely matches the order of appended items 01–26. Its suspect characters and transmission uncertainties prevent it from serving alone as an independently established critical Chinese text.
4. Provisional comparisons	**Texts:** Additional Chan records, Mengqiu-type collections of Chan episodes and allusions, and texts preserved in the Xuzangjing whose relevant passages have not been fully compared.	**Use in this edition:** These provisional comparisons may clarify further small differences of wording. Appended items 02, 05, and 11–26 already have identified parallels in Chan records or other Xuzangjing texts; they still belong to the appended collection whose working text is Project Gutenberg.

Source groups within the appended collection

Item range	Identified sources	Strength of evidence
Appended 01-10	**Identified sources:** Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; most also occur in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 and Jingde Record related transmission streams.	**Strength of evidence:** High to medium-high for identifying these sources; the individual differences are set out in the passage notes.
Appended 11-26	**Identified sources:** Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236 is the direct working witness. Appended 11–26 have a continuous traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; Appended 12–25 are also paralleled in Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3. The individual variants remain local textual questions.	**Strength of evidence:** High for the particular parallel passages compared. The Chan records help resolve suspect characters and transmission differences within those passages; the appended collection retains its own working text.

Item range	Identified sources	Strength of evidence
Appended 27	**Identified sources:** The final passage of the Essentials of Mind Transmission (Chuanxin Fayao), Taishō volume 48, no. 2012A (T48n2012A).	**Strength of evidence:** High; the same passage belongs to the Essentials text in the Taishō canon and its CBETA transcription.
Appended 28	**Identified sources:** T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 9.	**Strength of evidence:** High. The Jingde Record (T2076) records death at the home mountain during the Tang Dazhong era, the posthumous title Chan Master Duanji, and the stupa name Guangye.

Sources of the appended materials

Appended item · Identified sources · Source assessment · Source use and textual differences

Variants and local readings

Item and passage · Working texts · Text compared · Textual differences and translation choices

What the Chinese witnesses say

Item · Working texts · Parallel text · Textual differences and readings

The notes below follow the twenty-eight appended items. Each entry first identifies its sources and the strength of the evidence, then sets out local variants and fuller comparisons. The working text, parallel witnesses, and translation choices remain distinct; a parallel supports only the passage for which it is cited.

Appended item 01

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236, corroborated by the Huangbo biographical streams in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Project Gutenberg supplies the working text for this item. The Chan transmission records preserve variant wordings.

01.1 Biographical opening

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 and the simplified-character Chinese companion both contain the passage "the Master was originally from Fujian; a protrusion rose on his forehead like a pearl."

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: Project Gutenberg and the Chinese companion have corresponding accounts, but

Project Gutenberg reads 音辭明潤 and 治意. The Chan transmission records offer stronger readings for the description of resonant, clear speech and a tranquil, detached aspiration. The English passage uses that description.

01.2 Tiantai river crossing

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion give a shorter narrative containing "floating hat" and "I regret not striking him dead with one blow."

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The Chan-record narrative is fuller: the monk discards his hat and plants his staff, lifts his robe and steps over the waves; Huangbo says he should have cut off the monk's shins. These remain the preferred biographical readings for a critical appendix. The Chinese companion and the English passage here retain the shorter account, including the floating-hat episode and the different threat. The two versions of the encounter remain distinct.

Appended 01 | Early ordination and Tiantai travels

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg

record: originally from Fujian; 音辭明潤: speech bright/clear and

moist; 治意沖淡 (the Chinese companion's reading): intention tranquil and detached; monk crosses water by "floating hat"; Master says "I went together with a boatman."

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4: Fujian person; speech resonant and clear; aspiration tranquil and detached; lifted robe and stepped over waves; "Had I known earlier, I would have cut off

your shins." Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 adds Luoyang begging and old woman and Nanchang material.

Textual differences and readings: The simplified-character companion retains its working witness. Wudeng Huiyuan and Zhiyue Lu provide the stronger biographical comparisons; Project Gutenberg records the direct branch used for the appended sequence.

Appended item 02

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; the Guizong core exchange is independently preserved in Liandeng Huiyao (X1557), fascicle 4, while Huangbo's evaluative line is preserved in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8.

Source assessment: High for the separately matched encounter and evaluation; they are not treated as one continuous passage in a single transmission record.

Source use and textual differences: The core encounter and Huangbo's later evaluation survive in separate but matching lamp records. Project Gutenberg remains the direct working witness for the appended sequence.

02 Guizong's one-flavor Chan

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including "elsewhere there is five-flavor Chan; here there is only one-flavor Chan" and "defecating all over."

Text compared: Liandeng Huiyao (X1557), fascicle 4, preserves the complete Guizong core exchange; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 preserves Huangbo's "eighty-four Spiritual Friends" evaluation.

Textual differences and translation choices: The encounter and Huangbo's evaluation are independently corroborated in matching lamp-record streams. They are separately transmitted components;

Project Gutenberg remains the direct working witness for their appended sequence.

Appended 02 | Guizong's one-flavor Chan

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: studying five-flavor Chan elsewhere; here there is only one-flavor Chan; Guizong is somewhat better.

Parallel text: Liandeng Huiyao (X1557), fascicle 4, preserves the complete Guizong core exchange; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 preserves Huangbo's matching evaluative line.

Textual differences and readings: The core encounter and Huangbo's evaluation are separately corroborated in matching lamp-record components. Project Gutenberg supplies their sequence; these two components are not treated as a single continuous lamp-record passage.

Appended item 03

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; same case also in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Project Gutenberg supplies the working text; the named Chan collections provide comparison passages.

03 Yanguan and Emperor Xuanzong as novice

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion preserve corresponding versions.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The Chan-record wording distinguishes Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha in the three

statements about not seeking through attachment. The Chinese companion likewise reads 不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求, and the English passage retains that distinction. In this encounter, Project Gutenberg instead reads 不著佛求，不著佛法，不著眾求, repeating 佛 in the second phrase and making the sequence less clear.

Appended 03 | Yanguan's assembly and the Dazhong-era emperor (Tang Xuanzong, 唐宣宗)

Working texts: Both the Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg place the Master in Yanguan's assembly, with the emperor as a novice, and include "too crude." Their three phrases differ. The companion reads 不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求; Project Gutenberg reads 不著佛求，不著佛法，不著眾求, summarized here as "not seeking Buddha, not seeking Buddha-Dharma, not seeking the assembly".

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 and Zhiyue Lu: the Master bowing in Yanguan's palace or hall; Tang Xuanzong as novice; "not seeking Buddha, not seeking Dharma, not seeking Saṅgha"; "very crude."

Textual differences and readings: Wudeng Huiyuan and Zhiyue Lu provide the local comparison. The simplified-character companion retains its own wording, including "great emperor," to document that witness.

Appended item 04

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; both the seat and King Weiyin passage and bamboo-hat passage also occur in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan streams

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Both episodes occur in the identified sources, whose wording differs in places.

04.1 Nanquan's seat and King Weiyin

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion preserve corresponding versions.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 has "holding the bowl, sat in Nanquan's seat," "before King Weiyin," and "descendants of Old Teacher Wang."

Textual differences and translation choices: The identified Chan-record version supplies the stronger comparison for the seat and King Weiyin episode. Suspect characters in the digital or simplified-character transcription need to be assessed against that fuller wording when establishing a critical Chinese text.

04.2 Bamboo-hat passage

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion preserve corresponding versions.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The Chan-record version has the great-thousand world contained within the hat and the question about Old Teacher Wang. It supplies the stronger wording for comparison; the Chinese companion preserves the wording of its own working text.

Appended 04 | Nanquan's seat and bamboo hat

Working texts: The simplified-character witness and Project Gutenberg combine the seat and bamboo-hat passages: before King Weiyin; descendants of Old Teacher Wang; three-thousand-great-thousand world-system contained within it.

Parallel text: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 has the seat passage and bamboo-hat passage; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 clearly preserves the bamboo-hat passage.

Textual differences and readings: The two episodes are distinct. Zhiyue Lu supplies the seat passage; Wudeng Huiyuan and Zhiyue Lu supply the bamboo-hat passage.

Appended item 05

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: A complete parallel covers the tea-hall exchange, the twelve periods, gruel-water money, and straw-sandal money. The item belongs to the appended collection.

05 Tea hall concentration and wisdom

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including "throughout the twelve periods, relying on nothing" and "put aside the gruel-water money; who will repay the straw-sandal money?"

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete tea-hall exchange and Guishan/Yangshan evaluation.

Textual differences and translation choices: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves the complete exchange and confirms 十二時中不依倚一物, 漿水錢, 草鞋錢, and 陷虎之機. The episode remains part of the appended collection.

Appended 05 | In the tea hall, relying on nothing

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: concentration and wisdom equally studied; throughout the twelve periods relying on nothing; put aside gruel-water money, who repays straw-sandal money?

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete same-passage traditional-character sequence.

Textual differences and readings: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) provides a complete comparison for the twelve periods, gruel-water money, straw-sandal money, and tiger-trapping expression.

Appended item 06

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; also in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Project Gutenberg supplies the working text; the named Chan collections provide comparison passages.

06 Communal work selecting vegetables

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion preserve corresponding versions.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The witnesses distinguish 師扣三下 in the simplified working text, 師扣刀三下 in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu, and 師以刀點三下 in Wudeng Huiyuan. The English renders the action as "tapped three times with the knife." The selected lamp-record version also includes Nanquan's

closing instruction for everyone to select vegetables; the verb does not describe directional pointing.

Appended 06 | Communal work selecting vegetables

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: picking or selecting vegetables; Master raises a knife; only knows guest, not host; Master knocks three times.

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4: Master raises the knife and makes three brief contacts/taps with it (師以刀點三下); Nanquan then says everyone should go select vegetables. Zhiyue Lu has a similar selected lamp-record account.

Textual differences and readings: The simplified companion and Project Gutenberg have 師扣三下, "tapped/knocked three times"; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu has 師扣刀三下, explicitly naming the knife; Wudeng Huiyuan has 師以刀點三下, describing three brief contacts with the knife. "Tapped three times with the knife" expresses their shared action. The closing instruction from Nanquan follows the selected lamp-record witness.

Appended item 07

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; also in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Variants include five or six arrivals, the animal-name graphs 羚 / U+263EA / 羺, and 氣 / 聲.

07 Five or six monks and the antelope / U+263EA-yang / 羬羊 variant readings

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion correspond, including a reading with "five people newly arrived."

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The lamp-record version often gives six arrivals and five bows, whereas the working witness has five arrivals. Animal-name variants include 羚羊, U+263EA-yang, and 羬羊; the differing graphs are retained as variants.

Appended 07 | Five or six monks and antelope / U+263EA-yang / 羬羊 variant readings

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: one day five people newly arrived; seek the antelope's breath, traces, or tracks; originally only a doctrinal-learning śramaṇa.

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4: six newly arrived, five bowed; seeking U+263EA-yang / 羬羊 sound, traces, or tracks; "I thought you were a true patch-robed monk, but originally you are only a doctrinal-learning śramaṇa." Zhiyue Lu same stream.

Textual differences and readings: The English follows the lamp-record count of six arrivals and five bows. The animal-name graphs 羚 / U+263EA / 羬 remain separately noted variants.

Appended item 08

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; also in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 and related sources

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Project Gutenberg supplies the working text; the named Chan collections provide comparison passages.

08 Hongzhou Kaiyuan wall painting

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion correspond; both include Pei Xiu asking where the eminent monk is.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 has "the true image is visible; where is the eminent monk?"

Textual differences and translation choices: In the mural context, 形影 is rendered "the painted likeness." Zhiyue Lu supplies the fuller question about the true image or likeness and the eminent monk; the compound is not divided into a separate form and reflection.

Appended 08 | Kaiyuan wall painting at Hongzhou

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: the painted likeness (形影) is here; where is the eminent monk? Pei Xiu responds; Huangbo asks "Where?"

Parallel text: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 preserves the fuller temple-master and wall-painting exchange: "the true image is visible; where is the eminent monk?" Pei immediately knew the intent.

Textual differences and readings: Zhiyue Lu is a strong local witness. 形影 denotes the depicted likeness in this mural context rather than two objects, a form and its reflection.

Appended item 09

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; Jingde Record fascicle 9 and Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 also contain the "no Chan masters in the Great Tang" case

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: The short Project Gutenberg version and the fuller lamp-record versions remain distinct witnesses.

09 "No Chan masters in the Great Tang"

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg preserve the shorter encounter. Huangbo's question about the Great Tang has "no Chan masters" (无禅师) in the companion and "no Chan" (無禪) in Project Gutenberg; the following monk's question in Project Gutenberg has "no Chan masters" (無禪師).

Text compared: T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 9; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The fuller parallel in the main text of T2076 has "eighty-eight people," while Wudeng Huiyuan has "eighty-four people." Project Gutenberg's eighty-four Spiritual Friends occur in the separate Guizong encounter corresponding to Appended 02, not in its shorter encounter about Chan masters. These numerical readings belong to their respective passages and should not be forced into one reading.

Appended 09 | No Chan masters in the Great Tang

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg preserve the shorter encounter, ending with Guishan and Yangshan's exchange. Huangbo's question about the Great Tang has "no Chan masters" (无禅师) in the companion and "no Chan" (無禪)

in Project Gutenberg; the following monk's question in Project Gutenberg has "no Chan masters" (無禪師). In both, Huangbo says: "I do not say there is no Chan; I only say there are no masters." Neither shorter encounter contains the numerical or hell-arrow clauses of the fuller lamp-record parallels. Project Gutenberg's eighty-four Spiritual Friends belong to the separate Guizong encounter corresponding to Appended 02. The Chinese companion's apparatus also reports "five arrows" (五箭). This form occurs in CBETA's digital Zhiyue Lu, fascicle 10 (X83, no. 1578, p. 511c6), in 入地獄五箭; the corresponding passages of T2076 and Wudeng Huiyuan instead have 如箭, "like an arrow." These readings remain distinct witness forms.

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 and T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 9 preserve a long passage; T2076 has "inside the Great Tang there are no Chan masters," "eighty-eight people," and "enter hell like an arrow."

Textual differences and readings: The Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp (T2076) and Wudeng Huiyuan preserve the fuller passage and remain the preferred basis for establishing its critical text. The short simplified-character version remains an excerpt witness; the numerical and wording differences remain distinct.

Zhiyue Lu, fascicle 10: Huangbo's discourse and the 五箭 reading (X83, no. 1578, p. 511c6)

Appended item 10

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; naming episode and Pei Xiu poem also in Zhiyue Lu and Wudeng Huiyuan streams

Source assessment: Medium-high

Source use and textual differences: Project Gutenberg contains Huangbo's answering poem and reads the doubtful 口土 in its red-lotus line. The intelligible correction is 口吐; the difference may reflect a transcription or character-recognition error.

Further source evidence: Huangbo's complete answering poem in the Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu

10.1 Naming and Pei Xiu's poem

Working texts: Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion preserve corresponding versions.

Text compared: Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4.

Textual differences and translation choices: The naming episode and Pei Xiu's presentation poem have lamp-record parallels. 挂锡 is rendered contextually as "rested his staff," expressing a monk's residence.

10.2 Huangbo's answering poem

Working texts: The passage, including "Mind like the great ocean, without boundary…", is present in Project Gutenberg and the simplified-character Chinese companion.

Text compared: The complete answering poem is not present in the short Zhiyue Lu and Wudeng Huiyuan passages identified for this comparison.

Textual differences and translation choices: Project Gutenberg reads the doubtful 口土紅蓮. The intelligible correction is 口吐紅蓮, "the mouth emits red lotuses." The difference may reflect a transcription or character-recognition error. For the complete answering poem, Project Gutenberg remains a working text rather than an independently established critical text.

Further parallel for the answering poem: The Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu, fascicle 8, also preserves Huangbo's complete four-line reply (X78, no. 1553, p. 452c11–13). Its second line reads 口吐紅蓮養病身, corroborating the adopted 吐, "emits," against Project Gutenberg's doubtful 土. Its final line has 不曾祇接等閑人, while the Chinese companion has 不曾只揖等闲人; this witness difference remains distinct. This parallel strengthens the poem's source identification without making the Project Gutenberg text a critical edition.

Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu, fascicle 8: Huangbo's answering poem

Appended 10 | Pei Xiu's request for a name, presentation poem, and Huangbo's reply poem

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record the request for a name and Pei Xiu's poem, followed by Huangbo's reply. The following summary also notes the corrected character: "Mind like great ocean without boundary; 口吐紅蓮 ('mouth emits red lotuses') / OCR-suspect 口土 variant..." Here "OCR-suspect" identifies a possible explanation for the corrupt form, not a verified account of how the digital text was produced.

Parallel text: Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 has the naming and Pei Xiu poem, but not the Huangbo answering poem in the short passage compared here.

Textual differences and readings: The naming episode and Pei Xiu's poem have a Wudeng Huiyuan parallel. The complete answering poem follows Project Gutenberg with the correction of the red-lotus reading from 口土 to 口吐. In Pei Xiu's verse, 挂锡 is rendered "rested his staff."

The complete answering poem: further Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu parallel and witness difference

Appended item 11

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete continuous traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; parts also appear in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) supplies a complete parallel and evidence for assessing local readings that may reflect character-recognition or transmission errors; Project Gutenberg remains the direct working witness for this appended passage.

11 "Those who study the Way must first…"

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains the long passage, including "set aside miscellaneous studies and conditions" and "bound by the demon of intending."

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete long traditional-character sequence from 併却雜學諸緣 through the Nirvāṇa conclusion.

Textual differences and translation choices: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves a parallel for the entire passage, allowing its particular characters and clause relations to be compared. The English follows the Chinese companion's sentence division, 是为甚深。入如来禅，离生禅想: "This is what makes it profound. Enter Tathāgata Chan without giving rise to thoughts of Chan." The punctuated Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu text instead reads 是為甚深入如來禪，離生禪想 as a continuous clause. 决定不流，至第二念，始似入我宗門 makes entry into the school's gate depend on no second thought following.

心心法 is rendered as mind-to-mind Dharma. 爾焰 in 爾焰識 is the Buddhist transcription of jñeya, the knowable or cognitive object, rather than ordinary 焰, "flame"; the translation uses "cognition of the knowable (尔焰识)." The distinct 陽焰 remains "mirage."

The predicative 凡 / 聖 pair is rendered "ordinary / noble," with "not noble" in the following negation. This contextual choice does not erase different uses of holy, sage, or named stages elsewhere.

Appended 11 | Those who study the Way must first set aside miscellaneous conditions

Working texts: Both the Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg begin by setting aside miscellaneous studies and conditions. The companion records all three demon-bondage clauses—intending, non-intending, and neither-intending-nor-not-intending—and reads 尔焰识, rendered "cognition of the knowable." The Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu parallel also has all three clauses and reads 爾燄識. Project Gutenberg omits the separate non-intending clause and reads 爾焰熾 at the latter locus.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete long traditional-character passage.

Textual differences and readings: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves the complete continuous passage. For 是为甚深。入如来禅，离生禅想, the English follows the Chinese companion's sentence division, retaining "This is what makes it profound" as an independent statement before the instruction to enter Tathāgata Chan without giving rise to thoughts of Chan. The punctuated Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu text instead reads 是為甚深入如來禪，離生禪想 as a continuous clause. 决定不流，至第二念，始似入我宗門 says that only when no second thought follows does one begin to enter the gate.

心心法 is rendered as mind-to-mind Dharma. 爾焰識 / 尔焰识 contains the transcription of jñeya, "the knowable"; the English is "cognition of the knowable (尔焰识)." The separate 陽焰 simile remains "mirage." 前念是凡，後念是聖 distinguishes the preceding ordinary thought from the succeeding noble thought, followed by "not noble." Other contexts of 聖 retain their own appropriate register.

Appended item 12

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) preserve complete parallels. 十方虛空世界 refers to the empty space and worlds of the ten directions. This remains an appended passage.

12 King's treasury and sheep horns

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including "the king's treasury is precisely the nature of empty space."

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete traditional-character passage.

Textual differences and translation choices: The complete Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) parallels support reading 十方虛空世界 as the empty space and worlds of the ten directions. These are corroborating witnesses for an appended passage.

Appended 12 | King's treasury and sheep horns

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: the king's treasury is the nature of empty space; all is within your mind; all becomes sheep horns.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve 王庫藏者即虛空性、能攝十方虛空世界、皆總不出你心 and the sheep-horn conclusion.

Textual differences and readings: The complete parallels distinguish empty space and worlds; 十方虛空世界 is not treated as a compound meaning empty-space worlds.

Appended item 13

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) preserve the true-sword, emptied-treasury, and sheep-horn sequence. The passage remains part of the appended collection.

13 True sword in the king's treasury

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including “is there a true sword in the king's treasury?”

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve the complete true-sword, emptied-treasury, and sheep-horn exchange.

Textual differences and translation choices: The complete parallels corroborate this exchange. Project Gutenberg's

punctuation is a modern editorial feature, not evidence of ancient sentence division.

Appended 13 | True sword in the king's treasury

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: true sword in the king's treasury; prince carries the true sword to another country; treasury should be empty.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve the entire prince, true sword, emptied treasury, fundamental-source empty-space nature, and sheep-horn exchange.

Textual differences and readings: The complete parallels corroborate the exchange. The item retains its role in the appended collection.

Appended item 14

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) preserve the Kāśyapa and Tathāgata-messenger conditional and the contrast with Ānanda.

14 Kāśyapa as messenger

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including “Did Kāśyapa receive the Buddha's mind-seal and become a messenger?”

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve the complete Kāśyapa / Tathāgata-messenger / Ānanda sequence.

Textual differences and translation choices: 传语人 is rendered "messenger." The exchange distinguishes Kāśyapa's own realization of the fundamental mind from merely carrying a message. 若是…應不離得 has a present modal relation: "If he is a messenger, he should not be able to escape sheep horns." The heading follows the same messenger terminology.

Appended 14 | Kāśyapa as messenger

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: did Kāśyapa receive the Buddha's mind-seal and become a messenger? Ānanda served twenty years seeing only the Tathāgata's physical form; "only contemplate the World-Savior," and could not be free from sheep horns.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve Kāśyapa's self-realization of the fundamental mind, Huangbo's later counterfactual about receiving the Tathāgata's mind and becoming a messenger, Ānanda's twenty years, and the sheep-horn conclusion.

Textual differences and readings: 传语人 is rendered "messenger," preserving the contrast between Kāśyapa and Ānanda. The questioner's earlier 若是传语人，应不离得羊角 is a present conditional, rather than a past-perfect counterfactual: if he is a messenger, he should not be able to escape sheep horns. Huangbo's subsequent hypothetical alternative about receiving the Tathāgata's mind is a different clause. The heading uses the same messenger terminology.

Appended item 15

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) support 菩提 in 求佛求菩提涅槃, in place of 菩薩 in Project Gutenberg, and confirm 無分別智. The differing character may reflect a transcription or character-recognition error; its precise origin is not established.

15 Mañjuśrī holding a sword

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve the complete Mañjuśrī-sword passage, including 求佛求菩提涅槃 and 無分別智.

Textual differences and translation choices: The parallel witnesses support 菩提 in the seeking sequence, where Project Gutenberg has 菩薩, and also confirm 無分別智. The passage retains Gautama and the concluding mother-and-child analogy. The 不可以 … question and 劍自害劍 / 智自害智 answer express the reciprocal cancellation of sword and sword, wisdom and wisdom.

Appended 15 | Mañjuśrī holding a sword

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: Mañjuśrī held a sword before Gautama; five hundred

bodhisattvas with past-life knowledge; wisdom sword cuts views of Buddha.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) fascicle 8 and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) fascicle 3 preserve 瞿曇, 求佛求菩提涅槃, 智解劍, 無分別智, and the mother-and-child conclusion.

Textual differences and readings: The parallels support 菩提 in the seeking sequence, in place of 菩薩 in Project Gutenberg, and preserve 無分別智 and Gautama. The 不可以智更斷智 / 不可以劍更斷劍 questions and the sword-and-wisdom answer express reciprocal cancellation, concluding with the mother-and-child analogy. The differing character may reflect a transcription or character-recognition error; its precise origin is not established.

Appended item 16

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallels in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3; a related passage also appears in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Complete parallels preserve the seeing-nature and scattered-pearls sequence and clarify possible character-recognition errors and the relations between clauses. The paired formulas 三賢十聖 and 等妙二覺 are rendered "Three Worthies and Ten Sages" and "Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening."

16 What does it mean to see one's nature?

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete traditional-character passage; Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 preserves a related stream.

Textual differences and translation choices: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) preserve complete parallels for seeing one's nature, seeing and not-seeing, and the scattered-pearls image. Zhiyue Lu is a related comparison; Project Gutenberg is the direct working witness. The paired taxonomy 三賢十聖 / 等妙二覺 distinguishes "Three Worthies and Ten Sages" from the two named attainments "Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening."

Appended 16 | What does it mean to see one's nature?

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: nature is seeing; seeing is nature; what is seen cannot be seen again; scattered pearls in a tray. The passage also contrasts 三賢十聖 with 等妙二覺.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete traditional-character passage; Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 preserves a related stream. They explicitly preserve 三賢十聖 and 等妙二覺.

Textual differences and readings: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) supply complete local comparisons for possible character-recognition errors and the relations between clauses; Zhiyue Lu is a related witness and Project Gutenberg remains the working branch.

The paired taxonomy is "Three Worthies and Ten Sages" and "Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening," the latter naming two attainments. 於善知識處得契悟 is rendered "I came into accord and awakened in the presence of a Spiritual Friend": 契悟 preserves

accord and awakening, while 處 marks the context rather than requiring a literal physical place.

Appended item 17

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: A complete parallel covers 王難, the clauses that distinguish the individual aggregates, the twelve links, Sudhana, and the dead-corpse sequence. This remains an appended passage.

17 If the student does not understand

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including "I have not a single thing; I have never taken a single thing and given it to anyone."

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete 王難, 無受身 / 無想身 / 無行身 / 無識身, twelve-link, Sudhana, and five-aggregate sequence.

Textual differences and translation choices: The complete Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) parallel supports the clauses that distinguish the individual aggregates. This evidence concerns the present appended passage.

Appended 17 | If the student does not understand

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: I have not a single thing; disciple and teacher both fall into a calamity brought by a king (王難); in a single thought feeling is not

taken up, no perception is formed, there is no shifting, flowing, or fabrication, and there is no thinking, calculating, or discriminating; the passage then identifies the five clusters as the five aggregates.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete passage, including 王難, the four descriptions of bodies free of the respective aggregates, twelve links, Sudhana, and 五聚者五陰也.

Textual differences and readings: The complete Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) parallel preserves the clauses that distinguish the individual aggregates and the passage's other components. This remains an appended text.

Appended item 18

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: A complete parallel preserves Vimalakīrti's silence and the speech-and-silence nonduality sequence. This remains an appended passage.

18 Vimalakīrti's silence

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including "speech is silence; silence is speech."

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete Vimalakīrti / Mañjuśrī and speech-silence sequence.

Textual differences and translation choices: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves the question-and-answer structure

and the non-annihilation of sound and hearing. 水鸟 is the single compound "waterbirds." 語亦說，默亦說，終日說而未嘗說 presents the paradox that speech and silence both expound Dharma, while one expounds all day without ever having expounded it.

Appended 18 | Vimalakīrti's silence

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: Vimalakīrti silent; Mañjuśrī praises him; speech is silence, silence is speech; speaking all day yet never speaking.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete Vimalakīrti-silence passage.

Textual differences and readings: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) confirms the speech-and-silence structure and the question-and-answer punctuation. 水鸟 is "waterbirds." 語亦說，默亦說，終日說而未嘗說 says that speech and silence both expound Dharma, while one expounds all day without ever having expounded it.

Appended item 19

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: A complete parallel covers hiding form, the seal metaphor, 十方虛空世界, dust-mote lands, and the closing One-Mind formula. This remains an appended passage.

19 Śrāvaka hiding form in the three realms

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete hiding-form, subtle Bodhi-view, seal, 十方虛空世界, dust-mote lands, and One-Mind sequence.

Textual differences and translation choices: The complete Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) parallel distinguishes empty space from the worlds of the ten directions. 菩薩人 / 菩提人 remains a separate local variant.

Appended 19 | Śrāvaka hiding form in the three realms

Working texts: In the Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg, Śrāvakas hide form in the three realms but cannot hide within Bodhi. The English passage reads Bodhisattva practitioners (菩薩人) as neither abandoning nor grasping the three realms and Bodhi. The notes also preserve the related summary or variant form "bodhi person" (菩提人), distinct from 菩薩人.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the complete passage from hiding form through the One-Mind closing formula.

Textual differences and readings: The complete Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) parallel distinguishes empty space from worlds at 十方虛空世界. 菩薩人 / 菩提人 is a separate, local variant.

Appended item 20

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; the competing no-explicit-reply / 不積功累德 branch is also quoted in Lengqie Jing Zongtong (X0330).

Source assessment: High for the particular variant readings discussed here; the comparison does not establish every reading of the whole collection.

Source use and textual differences: At 積功累德 and the explicit 師云痛 reply, the translation follows Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553). The Chinese companion, Project Gutenberg, and Lengqie Jing Zongtong (X0330) preserve a different version. These choices concern this appended passage only.

20 King Kali's cutting

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including the Sage of Forbearance and King Kali analogy.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves a parallel with the explicit 師云痛 reply and the reading 積功累德. The Chinese companion, Project Gutenberg, and the later Lengqie Jing Zongtong (X0330) quotation preserve a different version: they omit the reply and read 不積功累德.

Textual differences and translation choices: At these two points the English follows Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553): 積功累德 and the explicit 師云痛 reply, rendered "He felt pain." Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) is the earlier lamp-record witness; its positive merit clause fits the critique of acquisitive spiritual learning, while the explicit reply preserves the acknowledgement of pain within the exchange about pain and a separate feeler. The different version in the Chinese companion, Project Gutenberg, and Lengqie Jing Zongtong remains separately recorded.

忍辱仙人 / 仙人 is rendered "the Sage of Forbearance / the Sage," with Kṣāntivādin introduced at the first Wanling occurrence; an immortal in a different religious register is not intended. These are local choices within the appended collection.

Appended 20 | King Kali cutting the body

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: when I formerly was cut and dismembered by King Kali; the Sage is your mind; called dismemberment joint by joint.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, reads 積功累德 and preserves an explicit 師云痛 reply. The Chinese companion, Project Gutenberg, and the later Lengqie Jing Zongtong (X0330) quotation instead preserve 不積功累德 and omit the explicit reply.

Textual differences and readings: The translation follows Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) selectively at 積功累德 and the explicit 師云痛 reply on chronological, contextual, and doctrinal grounds. The different version in the Chinese companion, Project Gutenberg, and Lengqie Jing Zongtong remains separately recorded.

忍辱仙人 is "the Sage of Forbearance," 仙人 is "the Sage," and 忍辱解 is an "interpretation of forbearance." The explicit reply is rendered "He felt pain." These are local choices, not a wholesale replacement by the lamp record.

Appended item 21

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Complete traditional-character parallels clarify the fundamental-mind clause and the five-hundred-lifetime context. The passage remains part of the appended collection.

21 Dīpaṃkara prediction

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the full passage, including 本心, 有為中, 五百歲, and the explicit explanation through 五百世 and the Sage of Forbearance.

Textual differences and translation choices: The traditional parallels corroborate the passage locally. The English identifies the five hundred as lifetimes because the exchange explicitly explains 五百歲 through 五百世 and connects the period with the Sage of Forbearance. This does not change the appended passage’s source role.

Appended 21 | Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction

Reading summarized here: prediction during or beyond the five hundred lifetimes; the fundamental mind is neither forgotten nor lost; within conditioned activity Bodhi is not grasped; no dharma is obtained; the same exchange explicitly speaks of frequently passing through five hundred lifetimes. The comparison sources are Project Gutenberg, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315); the following notes distinguish their wording from the adopted English where necessary.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete sequence, including 本心 / 有為中 and the 五百歲 → 五百世 contextual explanation.

Textual differences and readings: The two traditional parallels corroborate the passage locally. The five hundred is rendered as lifetimes because the same exchange identifies the period as 五百世

and links it to the Sage of Forbearance; the surface distinction between 歲 and 世 remains visible in the apparatus.

Appended item 22

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallels in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Complete parallels preserve the conditional syntax of 有所證得者 followed by 不得: practice that posits something to realize or attain is followed by the denial of attainment. The passage remains part of the appended collection.

22 "Eliminate inverted thoughts…"

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete traditional-character passage and confirm 若以三無數劫修行、有所證得者、盡恒沙劫不得.

Textual differences and translation choices: The traditional parallels corroborate the conditional relation. 有所證得 describes something posited for realization or attainment during practice, not an achievement already completed before the following denial. The concluding 可獲 / 不了義 relation places regarding the Dharmakāya as obtainable within teachings of provisional meaning.

Appended 22 | The verse on inverted thoughts and the Dharma body

Reading summarized here: practicing for three incalculable eons with something to realize or attain cannot yield attainment even through Ganges-sand eons; obtaining the Dharmakāya in one instant still belongs to provisional meaning. The comparison sources are Project Gutenberg, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315); the following notes distinguish their wording from the adopted English where necessary.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve complete traditional-character parallels with the same clause order and key terms.

Textual differences and readings: Project Gutenberg supplies the working witness and Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) corroborate it. The technical terms asaṃkhyeya and Dharmakāya are retained. 有所證得 describes something posited for realization or attainment, rather than an already completed achievement that would conflict with 不得. The final 可獲 / 不了義 relation explains why regarding the Dharma body as obtainable belongs to teachings of provisional meaning. For the immense number 億劫 in the opening verse, see the separate note on the adopted wording "vast numbers of kalpas."

Appended item 23

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete traditional-character parallels in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Complete parallels preserve the finite-and-infinite-bound sequence and 一行一住. The English

uses boundary language and distinguishes movement from stillness. The lamp records are local corroborating witnesses, not the textual basis of the Essentials or the Wanling Record.

23 One who sees Dharma and instantly understands

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the same exchange, including 有限劑 / 有無限劑, 非有限量 / 非無限量 / 非非有無限量, and 一行一住.

Textual differences and translation choices: The terms 劑 / 量 concern finite and infinite bounds. The third negation denies a position of being neither finite nor infinite; it does not introduce an undefined further level of negation. 一行一住 is rendered in terms of movement and stillness. Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315) provide comparison evidence for this particular passage.

Appended 23 | One who sees Dharma and instantly understands

Reading summarized here: the Patriarch's mind goes beyond empty space; finite and infinite bounds are quantitative opposites; it is neither finite, nor infinite, nor a position of being neither finite nor infinite; like drinking water, one knows cold and warm for oneself; movement and stillness remain non-different thought after thought. The comparison sources are Project Gutenberg, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315); the following notes distinguish their wording from the adopted English where necessary.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, confirm the traditional-character sequence 有限劑 / 有無限劑, the threefold finite/infinite negation, and 一行一住.

Textual differences and readings: The complete parallels support boundary language for 劑 / 量 and movement-and-stillness language for 一行一住. The item remains part of the appended working-witness collection.

Appended item 24

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Complete traditional-character parallels preserve the quantity, the illusory-and-true relic contrast, 妄想心, and the image of pulverizing Mount Sumeru.

24 Buddha body relics

Working texts: This passage is present in Project Gutenberg eBook 25236.

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete traditional-character passage from the eight hu and four dou question through the Mount Sumeru and no-mind conclusion.

Textual differences and translation choices: Complete parallels preserve the illusory-and-true relic contrast, 妄想心, and 撮盡妙高峰為微塵. The stated quantity remains eight hu and four dou; the witnesses belong to the appended passage's textual apparatus.

Appended 24 | Buddha body relics

Reading summarized here: eight hu and four dou of relics; false relics and true relics; relic-appearance arising from the mind of deluded thinking; reducing Mount Sumeru to fine dust between ten fingers before seeing true relics. The comparison sources are Project Gutenberg, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315); the following notes distinguish their wording from the adopted English where necessary.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve a complete traditional-character parallel.

Textual differences and readings: The complete parallels preserve the stated quantity and the true-and-illusory relic structure. 妄想心 is rendered in the register of deluded thinking; 撮盡妙高峰為微塵 retains the impossible image of reducing Mount Sumeru to fine dust between the fingers.

Appended item 25

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; complete parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: Complete parallels preserve the short Huike mind-pacification exchange and its conclusion that nothing is obtained.

25 To whom was the Patriarch's Dharma transmitted?

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains this passage, including “there is no Dharma to give to people,” “the Second Patriarch requested mind-pacification.”

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete Huike mind-pacification exchange.

Textual differences and translation choices: Complete traditional parallels corroborate the short Huike exchange, the unobtainability of mind, and 若有所得全歸生滅. The exchange is not expanded from other Huike narratives.

Appended 25 | To whom did the Patriarch transmit Dharma?

Reading summarized here: no Dharma is given to anyone; the Second Patriarch asks the Master to pacify the mind; the sought mind is unobtainable; anything obtained belongs wholly to arising and ceasing. The comparison sources are Project Gutenberg, Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315); the following notes distinguish their wording from the adopted English where necessary.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, and Gu Zunsu Yulu (X1315), fascicle 3, preserve the complete short exchange.

Textual differences and readings: The complete parallels preserve the short exchange. Other Huike narratives do not expand this particular question and answer.

Appended item 26

Identified sources: Project Gutenberg Chinese text, eBook 25236; continuous traditional-character parallel in Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8; related passage also in Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10.

Source assessment: High for the passage compared here; the evidence supports the specific readings discussed in these notes.

Source use and textual differences: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves the continuous sequence from ignorance to no-practice. Local textual variants remain distinct.

26 Did the Buddha exhaust ignorance?

Working texts: Project Gutenberg eBook 25236 contains the long passage ending with "the one who attains it is Buddha; take care!"

Text compared: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the continuous passage from 佛窮得無明否 through 少人行我此法門 / 無行為法門; Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 preserves a related shorter stream.

Textual differences and translation choices: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves this continuous sequence. Local variants such as 理足 / 事足 / 變足 remain distinct textual questions.

Appended 26 | Does Buddha exhaust ignorance?

Working texts: The Chinese companion and Project Gutenberg record: ignorance is where all Buddhas attain the Way; returning to source, nature is not two; expedients have many gates; when fruit is complete, Bodhi is round; flowers bloom and worlds arise.

Parallel text: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553), fascicle 8, preserves the continuous traditional-character passage; Zhiyue Lu fascicle 10 remains a related comparison stream.

Textual differences and readings: Tiansheng Guangdeng Lu (X1553) preserves the continuous passage. Local variants remain explicit; the passage retains its source role in the appended collection.

Appended item 27

Identified sources: The final passage of the Essentials of Mind Transmission (Chuanxin Fayao), Taishō volume 48, no. 2012A (T48n2012A), repeated here.

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: This intentionally repeats the ending of the Taishō/CBETA Essentials; it is not a separate appended-source tradition.

27 Not falling into stages

Working text: The passage is intentionally repeated at the end of the appended collection.

Text compared: The final passage of the Essentials of Mind Transmission (Chuanxin Fayao), T48n2012A.

Textual differences and translation choices: The passage follows the Essentials text (T2012A); its source is the repeated passage itself, rather than a separate Project Gutenberg witness.

Appended 27 | How not to fall into stages

Working text: The simplified-character Chinese companion repeats the passage: eat all day without biting one grain; walk all day without stepping on one piece of ground.

Parallel text: The final passage of the Essentials of Mind Transmission (T48n2012A) contains the corresponding sequence:

eating (喫) all day, the reference to that time, and three or five among thousands. This is the ending of the Chuanxin Fayao.

Textual differences and readings: The text follows the end of T2012A. Its repetition is intentional and does not establish an independent appended source.

Appended item 28

Identified sources: T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 9, entry for Huangbo Xiyun of Hongzhou Huangbo Mountain

Source assessment: High

Source use and textual differences: The death, posthumous title, and stupa name are recorded in the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp (T2076).

28 Passing away and stupa name

Working text: The simplified-character witness explicitly names

Emperor Xuanzong (唐宣宗) before the posthumous title and stupa name.

Text compared: T51n2076 Jingde Record fascicle 9; Wudeng Huiyuan fascicle 4 also has a short death and title notice.

Textual differences and translation choices: The translation follows the Jingde Record (T2076): death at the home mountain during the Tang Dazhong era, the posthumous title Chan Master Duanji, and the stupa name Guangye. The simplified-character witness additionally names Xuanzong; the Jingde notice records an imperial decree without naming the emperor.

Appended 28 | Passing away and stupa name

Working text: The simplified-character Chinese companion records death at the home mountain during the Tang Dazhong era, names

Emperor Xuanzong (唐宣宗) as bestowing the posthumous title Chan Master Duanji, and gives the stupa name Guangye.

Parallel text: T51n2076 Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, fascicle 9: during Tang Dazhong, he passed away at his home mountain. Decree bestowed the posthumous title Chan Master

Duanji. Stupa named Guangye. Wudeng Huiyuan has death and title but no stupa name in the consulted segment.

Textual differences and readings: The translation follows the Jingde Record (T2076). The Chinese companion explicitly names Xuanzong; the Jingde notice records an imperial decree without naming the emperor.

Glossary

These entries explain recurring terms in the passages linked below. Their meanings remain sensitive to the particular dialogue and its argument.

One Mind 一心

The opening discourse identifies One Mind with Buddha while denying form, measure, and confinement within existence or non-existence. Its positive expressions are to be read together with those denials, rather than as the description of a bounded object.

Read the passage: The Master said to Xiu: “All Buddhas and all sentient beings are only the One Mind; there is no separate …; There was a great Chan master whose Dharma name was Xiyun. He lived below Vulture Peak on Mount Huangbo i…

No-mind 無心

Mind free of the grasping and contrivance addressed in these dialogues. The text warns that using mind to manufacture no-mind turns mind into something existent. It also rejects seeking mind apart from seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing.

Read the passage: “This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mi…; “This fundamentally pure mind and all sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains and rivers, and thin…

Fundamental mind 本心

The mind to be recognized directly at seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing. The passage says that it neither belongs to these functions nor is separate from them; recognition does not require abandoning the functions to grasp another Dharma.

Read the passage: "This fundamentally pure mind and all sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains and rivers, and thin…

Seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing 見聞覺知

The four experiential functions repeatedly considered in the Essentials. Huangbo's instructions reject both constructing interpretations upon them and discarding them in pursuit of mind elsewhere. These words do not name an agent or background subject standing apart from the functions.

Read the passage: "This fundamentally pure mind and all sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains and rivers, and thin…; "The so-called Dharma-gate of the mind-ground means that the myriad dharmas are all established in depend…

Subject and object 能所

The paired poles of an activity or experience. In the discussion of great relinquishing, responding to beings continues while subject and object are both forgotten. The instruction concerns grasping at the poles, not withdrawal from responsive conduct.

Read the passage: "The Bodhisattva's mind is like empty space, relinquishing everything. One neither covets nor clings to a…

Dharma-nature 法性

The nature in which Buddha and sentient beings are said to be alike. The text speaks of sharing the same Dharma-nature; the passage does not turn that shared description into an independently graspable possession.

Read the passage: "An icchantika means one whose faith is incomplete. All sentient beings in the six paths, even those of t…

Non-attainment 無所得

The absence of a Dharma to acquire as an object. In the Wanling dialogue, decisively not obtaining a single Dharma is called the mind of awakening. Appended item 26 also identifies the seat of awakening with non-attainment. Pronunciation: wú suǒdé.

Read the passage: Someone said: "At present there are all kinds of deluded thoughts appearing. How can you say there are no…;

Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…

Unobtainable or cannot be obtained 不可得

A recurring statement that what is sought cannot be grasped as an independently obtainable thing. In the mind-pacification exchange, the mind sought cannot be obtained; anything obtained would belong to arising and ceasing.

Read the passage: Question: "To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?" The Master said: "There is no Dharma to transm…;
Question: "Regarding Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction [to Śākyamuni], was it given during those five hundred…

Non-arising 無生

Used with non-ceasing in passages that challenge the views of arising and cessation. In the Essentials, dharmas are originally non-arising and there is no cessation; the passage immediately warns against constructing either of the two views.

Read the passage: "Ordinary people do not turn toward the Way. They indulge the six senses and thereby move through the six…; Question: "Why does the Boundless Body Bodhisattva not see the Tathāgata's crown-mark?" The Master said: …

Arising and ceasing 生滅

The occurrence and passing away of conditioned processes. Its force depends on context and need not be biological birth and death. The mind-pacification exchange says that anything obtained would fall within this domain.

Read the passage: Question: "What is conventional truth?" The Master said: "Why talk about entangling vines? Originally pur…; Question: "To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?" The Master said: "There is no Dharma to transm…

Mental factor 心所法

In the Wanling warning about disputation, understanding a little principle can still be only a mental factor. Here the term marks the limit of an understanding held as knowledge or a view, rather than serving as a new description of the whole Chan Way.

Read the passage: "Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust o…

Skillful means 方便

The varied gates of teaching and response. Appended item 26 contrasts their multiplicity with returning to the source where nature is non-dual. Elsewhere, the phrase occurs in the instruction to adorn through skillful means within One Mind.

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…; Question: "Does the Buddha ferry sentient beings across?" The Master said: "In reality there are no senti…

Unconditioned 無為

Used in contrast with conditioned cultivation, characteristics, and acquisition. The Essentials speaks of thought after thought without characteristics and unconditioned; the relic dialogue also applies the term to the Buddha's body. These are local uses, not a command to cease all activity.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way need fear only a single thought that something exists; it immediately separates them…; Question: "The Buddha's body is unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta) and does not fall within any category. Why …

Conceptual elaboration 戲論

The proliferation of views and interpretations likened to dung to be cleared away. In appended item 26, the image addresses the mind of learning and the mind of views. The technical expression is distinct from every ordinary use of thought or speech.

Read the passage: "Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust o…;

Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…

Mind of awakening 菩提心

The Wanling dialogue answers a question about arousing this mind by directing attention to non-attainment. It contrasts not obtaining a single Dharma with setting up a project of becoming Buddha as something to acquire.

Read the passage: Someone said: "At present there are all kinds of deluded thoughts appearing. How can you say there are no…

Five aggregates 五陰

The five groupings through which embodied and mental experience is analyzed. The Essentials says that the aggregates have neither self nor controller. Appended item 17 explicitly glosses the five groupings (五聚) as the five aggregates and gives separate examples concerning feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…; Question:

"When the student does not understand, how does the Master point it out?" The Master said: "I h…

Acceptance of the non-arising of dharmas 無生法忍

An established technical expression used in the Wanling passage on clear self-nature. It appears in a rhetorical question about deliberation and is followed by the teaching of true expounding and true listening; the context does not present it as an object acquired by calculation.

Read the passage: "Now that you understand this meaning, why keep laboring over it? Just according to conditions, exhaust o…

Principle and phenomena 理 / 事

In appended item 26, these terms occur in a play on 足, which can suggest completeness as well as feet. The text explains the epithet "supreme among bipeds" through being complete in principle and complete in phenomena. This particular wordplay is the local context of the pair.

Read the passage: Question: "Does the Buddha fully fathom ignorance (无明, avidyā)?" The Master said: "Ignorance is precisely…

Sanskrit terms used in the commentary

Āyatana (English plural: āyatanas)

Sense base (處 or 入). In the passage on the eighteen elements, the six faculties (六根) are the internal sense bases.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…

https://glossaries.dila.edu.tw/search?g=KLS&term=%E5%85%AD%E8%A1%B0

Viṣaya (English plural: viṣayas)

Sense object. Six objects (六塵) correspond to the six faculties.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…

https://glossaries.dila.edu.tw/search?g=KLS&term=%E5%85%AD%E8%A1%B0

Vijñāna (English plural: vijñānas)

Consciousness. The six consciousnesses (六識) arise and cease through the conjunction of faculties and objects.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…

Dhātu (English plural: dhātus)

Element or realm. The eighteen elements (十八界) comprise the six faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses.

Read the passage: "Students of the Way, do not doubt this: the four great elements constitute the body. The four great elem…

Adhimāna

Overweening conceit (增上慢), here associated with claiming "I can realize" or "I can attain."

Read the passage: "Ordinary people all pursue object-realms and give rise to mind; the mind then likes and dislikes. If you…

https://glossaries.dila.edu.tw/search?commit=Search&locale=zh-TW&term=%E5%A2%9E%E4%B8%8A%E6%85%A2&utf8=%E2%9C%93

Mahā-maitrī-karuṇā

Great loving-kindness and compassion (大慈悲).

Read the passage: Question: "How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion and speak Dharma for sentient…

Maitrī

Loving-kindness (慈). In this dialogue it is described as not seeing any Buddha to be attained.

Read the passage: Question: "How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion and speak Dharma for sentient…

Karuṇā

Compassion (悲). In this dialogue it is described as not seeing any sentient beings to be delivered.

Read the passage: Question: "How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion and speak Dharma for sentient…

Vīrya

Vigor or diligence (精進). Huangbo calls the non-arising of body and mind the foremost and firmest vigor.

Read the passage: Question: "What is vigor?" The Master said: "When body and mind do not arise, this is called the foremost…

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Guide to Key Terms and Passages

This selected-passage guide points to useful discussions of terms, people and texts; it is not an exhaustive concordance. Page references are to the paginated edition. In electronic editions, the linked entries open the passages directly.

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Other Translations by Soh Wei Yu

Readers who have found this book useful or interesting may also wish to explore my other translations at Awakening to Reality. A companion volume is The High-Fidelity Transmission of Bodhidharma: A New Translation, a collection of teachings attributed to Bodhidharma, with explanations of Mind, No-Mind, and practice. It offers another way to continue the inquiry developed in these pages.

The publication page and download are available here:

https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2026/01/the-high-fidelity-transmission-of.html

Contact

Contact me at https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2025/05/contact-us.html

“Mind itself is Buddha.”

Huangbo · Essentials of Mind Transmission

Huangbo Xiyun was a major master of Chinese Chan (Zen) in the ninth century and the teacher of Linji Yixuan, whose lineage became known in Japan as Rinzai.

Huangbo’s recorded teachings challenge the habit of turning awakening into something to acquire. They speak of One Mind and no-mind, sudden awakening, and the end of grasping—teachings that invite both careful study and direct inquiry.

This revised edition brings together a newly developed English translation grounded in Chinese sources and Soh Wei Yu’s substantial introduction, explanations and commentary. It includes Pei Xiu’s preface, the *Essentials of Mind Transmission*, the *Wanling Record* with its closing verse, and twenty-eight appended encounters, teachings and notices.

The commentary explores luminosity without an independent knower, anatta, cultivation and nonattainment, and the practical force of kōans. Textual notes, a contextual glossary and a bibliography support sustained reading while keeping the translated teachings and modern interpretation distinct.

