Informal Talks on The Blue Cliff Record

Verses on Ancient Cases by Chan Master Xuedou Chongxian, with Commentary by Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin

Contents

Preface to The Blue Cliff Record

[I] Bodhidharma: Vast Emptiness, Nothing Holy

[Second] Zhaozhou: The Supreme Way Is Not Difficult

(III) How Is the Venerable Mazu?

[IV] Questions and Answers Between Deshan and Xiefu

[5] Xuefeng Beats the Drum for a General Invitation

[Six] Yunmen: Every Day Is a Good Day

[Seventh] Dharma Eye, You Are Huichao

[Eight] Are Cuiyan's Eyebrows Still There?

[9] Zhaozhou's Four Gates Are Open

[10] Muzhou Receives a Shout from You

[Eleven] Huangbo Was Simply Without a Teacher

[12] Dongshan's Three Pounds of Flax

[Thirteen] Baling's Silver Bowl Filled With Snow

[14] Yunmen's Teaching on the One

[15] Yunmen's Inverted One Speaks of Chan

[16] Did Jingqing Come Alive?

[17] Xianglin: Long Sitting Becomes Wearisome

[Eighteen] The National Teacher's Seamless Stupa

[19] Jùzhī Raises Only One Finger

[20] Longya: No Patriarch's Meaning

[21] Zhimen: Leaves Emerge, Flowers Bloom

[Twenty-Two] Xuefeng's Poisonous Snake of South Mountain

[23] Baofu: The Solitary Summit of the Wondrous Peak

[24] Iron Millstone's Sharp and Steep Edge

[25] The Hermitage Master Enters Directly, Carrying His Staff Crosswise

[26] Baizhang Sits Alone on Hero Peak

[27] Yunmen: The Whole Body Exposed in the Golden Wind

[Twenty-Eight] Nirvāṇa Is Not Spoken for People

[Twenty-Nine] Dayu: "Follow Him to Ruin"

[30] Zhaozhou Personally Met Nanquan

[31] Magu Shakes His Staff and Stands Erect

[32] Linji Opens It with One Palm

[33] Zifu Draws a Circle

[Thirty-Four] The Acharya Has Never Roamed the Mountains

[35] Mañjuśrī's Three Before and Three After

[Thirty-Six] Chasing Grass and Flowers in Changsha

[37] Panshan: Where Does One Seek the Mind?

[38] Fengxue's Iron Ox Mechanism

[Thirty-Nine] Yunmen's Pure Dharma Body

[Forty] Nanquan Is Like a Dream

[41] Touzi Does Not Permit Night Travel

[Forty-Two] Layman Pang Enjoys the Snowflakes Drifting Down

[43] Dongshan's Place Without Cold or Heat

[Forty-Four] Heshan's Four Answers: "Beating the Drum"

[45] Zhaozhou's Seven-Pound Cloth Shirt

[Forty-Six] What Is the Sound Outside Jingqing's Gate?

[47] Yunmen: The Six Sense Bases Do Not Grasp

[48] The Senior Monk Overturns the Tea Kettle

[49] Sansheng's Golden Fish That Has Passed Through the Net

[50] Yunmen's Dust-by-Dust Samādhi

[51] After Yantou's Final Utterance

[52] Zhaozhou Crosses Over Donkeys and Horses

[53] Mazu and Baizhang: Wild Ducks

[54] Yunmen Extends His Hand and Strikes

[55] Daowu Does Not Speak of Birth and Death

[56] Qinshan's One Arrow, Three Barriers

[57] Zhaozhou: Only Dislikes Picking and Choosing

[58] Zhaozhou Cannot Explain It Clearly

[59] Why Did Zhaozhou Not Quote It in Full?

[Sixty] Yunmen's Staff Transforms into a Dragon

[61] Fengxue's Saying on Rise and Fall

[62] Yunmen's Secret Lies in Xingshan

[63] Nanquan Cuts the Cat to End the Dispute

[64] Zhaozhou Wears Sandals to Put an End to Views

[Sixth, Fifth Line] The World-Honored One Remained Silent for a Long Time

[66] Did Yantou Get the Sword?

[67] The Mahāsattva Strikes the Desk to Conclude the Sūtra

[68] Sansheng Huiji and Huiran

[Sixty-Nine] Nanquan: “If You Can Speak of It, Then Leave”

[Seventy] Guishan Stands Like a Sheer Cliff a Thousand Ren High

[71] Wufeng: Simultaneous Illumination and Functioning

[72] Yunyan Could Not Save Himself

[73] Mazu: Zang Is White, Hai Is Black

[74] Jinniu Celebrates the Meal

[Seventy-Five] How Does the Chinese Tallow Tree Bear This?

[76] Danxia Asks a Monk Whether He Has the Eye

[Seven Sevens] On Yunmen’s Sesame Cake

[Seven and Eight] Śūraṅgama: Wondrous Touch Explained

[79] Touzi Strikes Upon Hearing a Sound

[80] Zhaozhou Plays Ball in Rushing Water

[Instruction 81] Yaoshan Watches an Arrow Shoot a Deer

[82] Dalong’s Indestructible Dharma Body

[83] Yunmen: South, Clouds; North, Rain

[84] Vimalakīrti’s Dharma Gate of Nonduality

[85] Tongfeng Then Roared Like a Tiger

[86] Yunmen’s Kitchen, Storehouse, and Three Gates

[87] Yunmen: Medicine and Illness Counteract Each Other

[88] Xuansha’s Three Types of Sick People

[89] Daowu’s Whole Body Is Hands and Eyes

[90] Zhimen: Moon in the Clam, Fetus in the Rabbit

[91] Yanguan’s Rhinoceros Fan

[92] Mañjuśrī Strikes the Gavel: “Thus”

[93] The Great Light Dances with the Saṅgha

[94] Śūraṅgama: Seeing and Not Seeing

[95] Changqing Speaks the Words of the Tathāgata

[96] Zhaozhou: The True Buddha Does Not Liberate

[97] Xuedou’s Bright Pearl in the Palm

[98] Tianping Had Long Known of the Two Errors

[99] The National Teacher’s Ten Bodies of Taming and Guiding

[100] Baling’s Coral Supports the Moon

Postscript to The Blue Cliff Record

Preface to The Blue Cliff Record

Preface One

The life-vein of the supreme sages; the great function of the successive patriarchs; a wondrous formula for transforming one’s very bones; a marvelous art for nourishing the spirit—these are found in Chan Master Xuedou alone. Endowed with the true

eye that transcends schools and conventions, he raised aloft the proper command without revealing any trace of his method. Wielding the hammer and tongs that cook the Buddhas and forge the patriarchs, he set forth in verse the essential handle by which patch-robed monks may rise upward. Before silver mountains and iron walls, who would dare investigate? Like a mosquito biting an iron ox, one cannot find a place to begin. Without encountering a great master, how could one fathom such profundity and subtlety? There was the venerable Fogu .

While residing at Blue Cliff, students, bewildered, came to seek instruction. The venerable master, compassionately extending his kindness, sifted out the sources and origins and analyzed the underlying principles. He pointed directly before them—how could he establish knowledge and views? He threaded the hundred kōans together from beginning to end, examining this whole band of old fellows one by one. You should know that the jade disc of Zhao was originally without flaw; Xiangru merely deceived the King of Qin. The ultimate Way is truly wordless, yet lineage masters compassionately offer teachings to remedy abuses.

If one sees in this way, one will know his thoroughgoing grandmotherly concern. But if one clings to phrases and sinks into words, one cannot avoid extinguishing the Buddha-seed. (Puzhao) was fortunate to attend the Master and hear what had not been heard. Fellow practitioners compiled these notes into a volume; I, in my ineptitude, recount its beginning and course.

Respectfully prefaced by the bhikṣu Puzhao, a student of the patriarchal lineage, on the last day of late spring in the wushen year of the Jianyan era.

Preface Two

Only after the Forty-two-Section Sūtra entered China did people first know of the Buddha. Only after Bodhidharma transmitted the robe to the Sixth Patriarch did sayings and phrases first arise. “Originally there is not a single thing” became the Southern school; “Constantly polish and wipe it” became the Northern school. Thus Chan-school verses on ancient cases came into circulation. Its followers developed methods of overturning verdicts, berating Buddhas and reviling patriarchs, stopping at nothing. Among them were some who deeply grasped the living method of our poets. Yet for what is called the highest truth, what use are words and phrases? Xuedou and Yuanwu were earnest in their grandmotherly concern. Dahui had already consigned it to the flames. Zhang Wei, styled Mingyuan, of Yuzhong, rekindled the dead ashes and had it printed anew. Was he too one whose grandmotherly concern was earnest?

Prefaced by Fang Hui, styled Wanli, of Ziyang Mountain, on the eighth day of the fourth month, the guichou day, in the gengzi year of the Dade era.

Preface Three

The Blue Cliff Record was expounded by Great Master Yuanwu. His foremost disciple, Chan Master Dahui, burned and discarded the book. Among all worldly dharmas, attachment is to be avoided. Nothing is more revered by disciples of the Buddha than the Buddha, yet at times they even revile him. This is because there is self but no other; it proceeds from oneself, not from another. If one abandons oneself to pursue external things, one will inevitably lose oneself. Mind and the Way are one; the Way and the myriad things are one, filling all of empty space.

Where could one go that is not the Way? Ordinary people, however, see only what they can see and do not see what they cannot see. They seek it from others, and others speak to them of it. As in Su Dongpo’s discourse on the sun, they speculate back and forth, and the farther they go, the more they lose it. Even our Master, having embodied the Way, still wished to be wordless. How much more so in the case of the Buddhists, whose teaching is supramundane—how could it be sought through written words and language? Nevertheless, there are also things that cannot be discarded.

The wise are few, and the foolish many. Those who have studied are few, and those who have not are many. The Buddhist Canon comprises more than five thousand volumes, all prepared for future ages. If words could indeed be dispensed with, old Śākyamuni would simply have kept silent. Why would he have gone on talking so? The principles of the world indeed lie within the ordinary, yet transcend its outward bounds. Though they may seem easy to know, they are in fact not easily known by those who do not seek them from others.

one will never attain them in a lifetime. In ancient times, those renowned throughout the world were either outstanding among a thousand or exceptional among ten thousand. The sword of Tai’e is the sharpest sword under heaven. On mountains it slays tigers and leopards; in the water it cuts down dragons and serpents. People think that is all there is to know about it. Yet the ancients knew how to use it well: mounting the city walls to do battle, they wielded it with the wind, and the three armies suffered a great rout, their blood flowing red for a thousand leagues.

How could one doubt everything beyond one’s own abilities? Since first hearing of this book, I had sought it most earnestly. The Zhang family of Yuzhong then had it newly carved into woodblocks and came to consult me. I therefore commended and completed the undertaking, and also wrote this preface.

Written by Zhou Chi of Liaocheng, the layman Xiuxiu of Yucen, at his temporary lodging by Guan Bridge in Qiantang, on an auspicious day in the third month of the yisi year, the ninth year of the Dade era.

Preface Four

Someone asked, “Regarding the composition and destruction of the Blue Cliff Record, which was right?” He replied, “Both were right. When Yanqu came east, he transmitted the Mind-Seal directly, without establishing written words—this is certainly so. Yet who, after all, composed the various treatises on the Bloodstream and Returning to Emptiness? The ancients said, ‘Not dependent on words, yet not apart from words.’ This is truly understanding speech. It has enabled everyone, at the moment of rolling up a blind, hearing a clapper, raising a finger, or touching a foot, to bring the great matter to completion. What need, then, is there for words? Ever since the flower was held up and the smile passed on…”

and after the gatepost had fallen, once one enters into words and phrases, there can be no transmission without written words. Thus they too cannot be discarded. I have often said that the books of the patriarchal teaching came to be called “public cases”: this began in the Tang and flourished in the Song, and has a long history. The two characters were originally terms from official documents in worldly affairs. Their use has three aspects. When wall-gazing has been accomplished and traveling on foot is complete, the stars of the fixed basin are difficult to discern and the tendency toward the wild fox is easy to fall into. Those endowed with the eye examine and distinguish them.

With a single shout or a single cry, one must see genuine attainment. It is like an old magistrate trying a case and judging guilt: he sees thoroughly into its depths, leaving no circumstance undisclosed. This is the first. Next are those newly come from Lingnan, who have not yet drunk the waters of the Western River. At the branching paths where sheep are lost, one readily weeps; the needle that points to the sea must point south. With compassionate hearts, they are guided onward. One blow leaves one mark, so that they may be made to realize and awaken. It is like a judicial official applying the law to reverse an unjust conviction and save people from death. This is the second. Next are those deeply concerned when crops are harmed.

and tethering the donkey is important. The resolve of one learning chess must be focused; the colors of dyed silk readily evoke sorrow. Great good-knowing advisors entrust disciples with the task, causing their minds to die upon the meditation cushion; with every movement, there is investigation. It is like government offices issuing statutes and regulations, enabling people to read the laws and know the rules. The moment an evil thought arises, it is immediately extinguished. This is the third. They provide books and registers, establish case files, lay out situations and conditions, and make standards and regulations. How is this different, at first, from the golden rules, jade statutes, and clear legal codes of the world?

How was this different at the outset? Perhaps this was why the patriarchs established such cases and left them to the monastic community. Yet since the age of declining Dharma, people have sought the wondrous mind in blighted paper and entrusted the true Dharma to verbal talk. Though they may enumerate every ghost and spirit, they still do not leave the register. They lean on another’s doorway and let themselves be called gentlemen. The sword is gone, yet they still mark the boat; the rabbit has fled, yet the stump is not moved. Their bellies are full of tangled vines, and they can pose a thousand winding questions. What does this have to do with the great matter of birth and death?

yet in the end said that he had not spoken a single word. How could he deceive us? Yuanwu’s intention was the Buddha’s intention in expounding the sūtras; Dahui’s intention was the Buddha’s intention in withholding speech. Yu, Ji, and Master Yan would all have done the same had they exchanged places. Whether pushing or pulling, the sole aim is to keep the cart moving. More than two hundred years have now passed, and Zhang Mingyuan of Yuzhong has again carved it into printing blocks to perpetuate its transmission. Is this a renewal of spring for the patriarchal teaching, or is it simply that worldly circumstances have their appointed course?

Yet the circulation of this book is of great consequence. If people see water and immediately take it for the sea, or mistake a pointing finger for the moon, then not only would Dahui be troubled, but Yuanwu too would have to free them from their adhesions and untie their bonds. An ancient poem on a portrait says: “Clearly there is Master Zhang upon the paper; though one calls out with all one’s strength, he will not answer.” Before wishing to read this book, first investigate these words.

Written by the Elder of the Three Teachings on the full-moon day of the fourth month in the jiachen year of the Dade era.

Written by the Elder of the Three Teachings on the full-moon day of the fourth month in the Jiachen year.

[I] Bodhidharma: Vast Emptiness, Nothing Holy

Pointer: Seeing smoke beyond a mountain, one knows at once there is fire; seeing horns beyond a wall, one knows there is an ox. From one example one understands three; one’s eye for the occasion is precise to the smallest measure—this is the everyday fare of patch-robed monks. But when one cuts off the myriad streams, surges forth in the east and vanishes in the west, moves freely through adverse and favorable circumstances, and is at ease in giving and taking—at precisely such a time, tell me, whose sphere of activity is this? Look into Xuedou’s entangling vines.

[1] The Case:

Emperor Wu of Liang asked Great Master Bodhidharma [Speaking of this slippery fellow.], “What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?” [What kind of donkey-tethering stake is this?]

Bodhidharma said, “Vast emptiness—nothing holy.” [I thought there would be something most extraordinary. The arrow has flown past Silla. How utterly clear!]

The Emperor said, “Who is it that stands before me?” [Ashamed and flustered, yet forcing himself to seem alert. Sure enough, he cannot get hold of it.]

Bodhidharma said, “I do not know.” [Bah! A second attempt is not worth half a penny.]

The Emperor did not awaken to it. [What a pity. Still, he was somewhat closer.] Bodhidharma then crossed the river to Wei. [This wild fox spirit could not avoid a bout of tribulation. From west to east, from east to west.]

Later, the Emperor brought this up and asked Master Zhigong about it. [The poor man thinks of an old debt. Yet bystanders have eyes.]

Zhigong said, “Does Your Majesty recognize this man?” [Only by driving Zhigong out of the country would this be settled. He deserves thirty blows. Bodhidharma has come!]

The Emperor said, “I do not recognize him.” [Here Emperor Wu truly takes up Bodhidharma’s koan.]

Zhigong said, “This is the Great Being Avalokiteśvara, transmitting the Buddha’s mind-seal.” [A reckless annotation. An arm does not bend outward.]

The Emperor regretted it and consequently sent an envoy to invite him back. [Sure enough, he could not hold on. I told you he was slippery.]

Zhigong said, “Do not say that Your Majesty may send an envoy to fetch him. [Someone has died in the east household, while the west household helps mourn. Better drive them all out at once.] Even if everyone in the whole country went, he still would not return.” [Zhigong, too, deserves thirty blows. He does not know that a great radiance shines forth beneath his very heels.]

Bodhidharma perceived from afar that this land possessed capacities for the Mahāyāna, and so he crossed the sea and came all this way. He transmitted the mind-seal directly, opened and revealed the deluded path, established no reliance on words and letters, directly pointed to the human mind, and enabled people to see their nature and attain Buddhahood. If you see in this way, you will have some share of freedom: you will not be turned about by any words, and you will be wholly present as you are. Then you will be able to see naturally Bodhidharma’s dialogue with Emperor Wu, as well as the place where he pacified the Second Patriarch’s mind. Without the dusty emotions of calculation, all is cut off with a single stroke—open and free. Why further distinguish right from wrong, or discriminate gain from loss? Yet, even so, how many can do this?

Emperor Wu once donned the kasāya and personally lectured on the Light-Emitting Prajñā Sūtra. This moved heavenly flowers to rain down in profusion and caused the earth to turn to gold. He discoursed on the Way and honored the Buddha, issued proclamations throughout the realm, built temples, ordained monks, and practiced according to the teaching. People called him the “Buddha-Minded Emperor.”

When Bodhidharma first met Emperor Wu, the Emperor asked, “I have built temples and ordained monks. What merit and virtue is there in this?” Bodhidharma said, “No merit and virtue.” This was already like suddenly pouring foul water over his head. If you penetrate this saying, “no merit and virtue,” I will permit you to have personally met Bodhidharma. Tell me, why is there no merit and virtue at all in building temples and ordaining monks? Where does its meaning lie?

The Emperor had debated the two truths, ultimate and conventional, with Dharma Master Louyue, the Great Being Fu, and Crown Prince Zhaoming. According to the teachings, the ultimate truth makes clear that there is no existence, while the conventional truth makes clear that there is no nonexistence. The ultimate and conventional are nondual: this is the highest meaning of the holy truths. This is the most wondrous and profound point reached by the doctrinal schools. The Emperor therefore took up this ultimate point and asked Bodhidharma, “What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?” Bodhidharma said, “Vast emptiness—nothing holy.”

The patch-robed monks throughout the land cannot leap beyond this; Bodhidharma cut it off for him with a single stroke. Nowadays, many people misunderstand it and play with their spirits, glaring their eyes and saying, “Vast emptiness—nothing holy!” Happily, it has nothing to do with this. The late Fifth Patriarch once said, “If one penetrates only this ‘vast emptiness—nothing holy,’ one may sit securely at home.” Since they are all spinning entangling vines, there is no harm in smashing his lacquer bucket for him—this is where Bodhidharma is extraordinary.

Thus it is said: penetrate one phrase, and a thousand or ten thousand phrases are penetrated at once; naturally, you can sit firm and hold steady. An ancient said: “Grinding one’s bones to powder and shattering one’s body is not enough repayment; clearly understanding one phrase transcends hundreds of millions.” Bodhidharma confronted him with a sharp thrust from the outset; how many openings and flaws he exposed! The Emperor did not understand, and because of his view of self and others, asked again, “Who is it that stands before me?” Bodhidharma’s compassion was excessive; he again told him, “I do not know.” Emperor Wu’s eyes then became fixed and darting; he did not know where these words landed. At this point, whether there is something or nothing, whatever one takes up cannot stand. Master Duan composed this verse:

One arrow ordinarily brings down one eagle; to add another arrow is already to spare him.

He went straight to sit before Shaoshi Peak; let the Liang ruler cease speaking of summoning him again.

He added: Who wishes to summon him?

The Emperor did not awaken to it, and Bodhidharma consequently slipped out of the country. This old fellow could only undergo hardship, crossing the river to Wei. At that time Emperor Xiaoming of Wei was on the throne. These northern peoples were of the Tuoba clan, and only later came to be called Chinese. When Bodhidharma arrived there, he did not emerge to meet anyone. He went directly to Shaolin, faced a wall for nine years, and received the Second Patriarch. There, he was called the Wall-Contemplating Brahmin.

Later Emperor Wu of Liang asked Zhigong. Zhigong said, "Does Your Majesty recognize this man?" The Emperor said, "I do not recognize him." Tell me: was this the same as, or different from, what Bodhidharma had said? It resembles it, yet it is not the same. Many people mistakenly explain: "Earlier, Bodhidharma answered him with Chan; later, Emperor Wu answered Zhigong with 'recognize' in the sense of knowing someone." Happily, this has nothing to do with it.

When Zhigong asked in this way, tell me, how should one have replied? Why not strike him dead with one blow, avoiding the sight of him smearing nonsense about? Yet Emperor Wu offered him the conventional response, "I do not recognize him." Zhigong responded according to the occasion, saying, "This is the Great Being Avalokiteśvara, transmitting the Buddha's mind-seal." The Emperor regretted it and sent an envoy to fetch him—how slippery indeed! When he said, "This is the Great Being Avalokiteśvara, transmitting the Buddha's mind-seal," it would also have been well to expel him from the country; that would have been somewhat closer.

People say that Zhigong passed away in the thirteenth year of Tianjian, while Bodhidharma did not arrive until the first year of Putong, seven years later. Why, then, does the account say that they met at the same time? This must be an erroneous transmission, judging from what is recorded in the biographies. We will not discuss this matter now; we need only understand its main point.

Tell me: Is Bodhidharma Avalokiteśvara? Is Zhigong Avalokiteśvara? Which one is the genuine Avalokiteśvara? If both are Avalokiteśvara, why are there two? There are far more than two—they form groups and bands. At that time, the Vinaya Master Guangtong of Northern Wei and Tripiṭaka Master Bodhiruci debated with the Master. The Master rejected attachment to marks and pointed directly to mind. But their narrow-mindedness could not bear this, and they repeatedly conceived harmful intentions, administering poison several times. On the sixth occasion, his karmic affinities had been fulfilled and he had found one to receive the Dharma. He therefore did not save himself, but sat upright and passed away. He was buried at Dinglin Monastery on Mount Xionger. Later, Song Yun of Northern Wei, while on an imperial mission, encountered the Master in the Pamirs, carrying a single sandal in his hand as he went.

Recalling this, Emperor Wu composed an inscription: "Alas! To see him yet not see him; to meet him yet not meet him; to encounter him yet not encounter him. Now and in ancient times, I resent it and regret it." He further praised: "When mind is present, one remains an ordinary being through vast kalpas; when mind is absent, one ascends to wondrous awakening in an instant." Tell me: where is Bodhidharma now? He missed it and does not even know!

The holy truths: vast emptiness. [The arrow has flown past Silla. Ah!]

When will one discern it clearly? [Already passed. What is difficult to discern?]

Who is it that stands before me? [A second attempt is not worth half a penny. Again he goes on like this.]

He still says, "I do not know." [Even three or four among them do not get it. Bah!]

Because of this, he secretly crossed the river. [He could not penetrate another's nostrils, and instead another penetrated his. Heaven, heaven! How unlike a true man!]

How could he avoid producing thorns? [Beneath his heels they are already several fathoms deep.]

Though all the people of the realm pursue him, he will not return; through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, they vainly remember him. [Beating their breasts with exchanged hands, they gaze into empty space and cry out.] Do not remember him! [What are you saying? You make a living in a ghost cave.] The pure wind pervades the earth—what limit can it have? [Indeed. Great and small, Xuedou rolls about in the grass.]

The Master looked to the right and left and said, "Is there still a patriarch here?" [Are you waiting to be summoned? You still act in terms of coming and going.] He himself said, "There is." [A collapsed, worn-out fellow.] "Call him to wash this old monk's feet." [Drive him out with another thirty blows, and it would still not be excessive. Such coming and going! Yet this is somewhat closer.]

Now, Xuedou's verse on this koan is like someone skilled at dancing with the great Tài'ā sword, circling and sweeping through empty space without naturally striking against its blade or edge. Without such skill, the moment one picks it up, one is wounded

by its edge and cuts one's hand. Those with the eye may observe how, in each lifting and setting down, each praise and censure, he uses only four lines to wipe clean and settle an entire koan.

In general, verses on ancient cases merely speak of Chan by a roundabout route: they take up the main thread of an old case and settle it on the basis of its conventional facts. Xuedou gives him a thrust and immediately says, "The holy truths are vast emptiness—when will one discern it clearly?" To add this line beneath Bodhidharma's opening statement is indeed extraordinary. Tell me, in the end, how does one discern it clearly? Even eyes of iron and pupils of bronze cannot feel their way to it.

At this point, can it be reckoned through emotional consciousness? Hence Yunmen said, "Like striking sparks from stone; like a flash of lightning." This little bit does not fall within the workings of mind, consciousness, conceptual thought, or imagination. Once you open your mouth, what can it amount to? When calculation arises, the hawk has already flown past Silla.

Xuedou says: You patch-robed monks throughout the land, when will you discern it clearly? To "Who is it that stands before me?" he adds, "He still says, 'I do not know.'" Xuedou is excessively grandmotherly, repeatedly acting for the sake of others. Tell me: are vast emptiness and not knowing one or two? For those who have realized it, it is understood without being spoken. Those who have not realized it will certainly divide them into two pieces. Everywhere, people ordinarily say that Xuedou takes up the case once more. They do not know that the entire koan has already been exhausted in these four lines.

Later, out of compassion, he set forth the narrative: "Because of this, he secretly crossed the river. How could he avoid producing thorns?" Bodhidharma originally came to this land to release people from adhesions and bonds, pull out nails and remove wedges, and clear away thorns. Why, then, does he say, "producing thorns"? Not only at that time: beneath the heels of all of you even now, they are already several fathoms deep. "Though all the people of the realm pursue him, he will not return; through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, they vainly remember him."

How utterly unmanly! Tell me: where is Bodhidharma? If you see Bodhidharma, you will then see where Xuedou finally acts for others. Xuedou feared that people would follow their emotional views, so he turned the pivot and offered his own insight: "Do not remember him! The pure wind pervades the earth—what limit can it have?" Since you are not to remember him, what of the matter beneath your own heels? How then? Xuedou says: At this very moment, the pure wind pervades this place, heaven and earth—what limit can there be? Xuedou takes the affair of a thousand ages and ten thousand ages and throws it before your face. It is not only that Xuedou at that time had no limit; in each of you as well, what limit is there?

He feared that people might become attached here, so he further raised his voice expediently and said, "Is there still a patriarch here?" He himself answered, "There is." At this point, Xuedou could hardly be said not to have shown people his heart piece by piece. Then he himself said, "Call him here to wash this old monk's feet." That greatly diminishes the patriarch's imposing radiance! At that time, one might also have responded with one's proper skill. Tell me, where does Xuedou's intent lie? Right here.

If you call it a donkey, is that right? If you call it a horse, is that right? If you call it the patriarch, is that right? How can it be named or described? People often take Xuedou to be sending the patriarch off on an errand—fortunately, that has nothing to do with it. Tell me, after all, what is it? Only the old barbarian is permitted to know; he is not permitted to understand.

Many Voices Speaking at Once

[Xinming] "Vast emptiness—nothing holy." Why does no one say that the patriarch has fallen into the unconditioned?

[A Fool's Dream] Not so!

[Sudhana] Could it really be that no one will ask one more question?

[Never Speak] His "not so" was set forth precisely for your sake—ha ha.

[Sudhana] Ha ha—then for whom, I wonder, is my one further question set forth?

[Never Speak] What he sets forth is set forth without being set forth; what you set forth is wholly bound up in discriminating consciousness.

[Sudhana] Beat the drum and let us see!

[A Fool's Dream] Like a dog licking a hot cauldron—there is nowhere to put its mouth.

[Xinming] Ha ha, unfortunately you have been caught on his hook. Run quickly!

[A Fool's Dream] Ha ha, how can I get free now?

[Dingling] Who has bound you?

[A Fool's Dream] A dried shit-stick.

[Dingling] You've tricked me here—you've tricked me here.

[xinming] You certainly know well how to get free, don't you?

[Dingling] Heh heh, just how does one get free?

[xinming] Question: "Who has bound you?" Answer: "A dried shit-stick."

[A Fool's Dream] A dried shit-stick.

[xinming] Be careful!

[Never Speak] Good.

[lvm] Indeed.

[Li Wuyou] Vast emptiness!!!

[Dingling] Hah!

Master Yuanyin Explains

Case One: The Highest Meaning of the Noble Truth

In Buddhism, there are the principles of the "ultimate truth" and the "conventional truth." Truth means reality. The ultimate truth elucidates emptiness; the conventional truth elucidates existence. The nonduality of ultimate and conventional truth is the highest meaning of the noble truth. This is the most profound and wondrous point of the doctrinal schools. In their careful study of doctrine, these schools divide the teachings into five categories: first, the Hīnayāna; second, the Mahāyāna.

The Mahāyāna is further divided into the four teachings of Beginning, Final, Sudden, and Perfect; together these make the five teachings.

The Hīnayāna expounds existence: there are dharmas to cultivate, a path to accomplish, and nirvāṇa to realize. The Mahāyāna Beginning Teaching proceeds from existence into emptiness and marks the beginning of the gradual teachings of the Mahāyāna. It explains that all is empty, but does not yet reveal that all sentient beings fully possess Buddha-nature. The Mahāyāna Final Teaching is the conclusion of the gradual teachings. It expounds the principle of dependent arising from suchness and advocates that all can become Buddhas, explaining the meaning of neither emptiness nor existence. The Mahāyāna Sudden

Teaching takes sudden penetration of principle and immediate realization of the mind as its teaching; it is the meaning of both emptiness and existence. The Mahāyāna Perfect Teaching encompasses all things and perfectly integrates all virtues. It is neither emptiness nor existence, neither existence nor emptiness—the meaning of "when speaking of existence, not even a hair's breadth is established; when speaking of emptiness, it pervades the entire dharma realm." In discussing doctrine, the doctrinal schools first explain ultimate truth and conventional truth—that is, they first clarify the meaning of emptiness and existence.

Only at the end do they explain the truth of the highest meaning. This is the supreme teaching: emptiness, too, cannot be grasped; existence, too, cannot be grasped; it is neither emptiness nor existence, and yet both emptiness and existence. Thus it is the highest principle of the doctrinal schools. In this koan, Emperor Wu of Liang asked Bodhidharma this question, and the compiler therefore used it as the title of the case.

When Patriarch Bodhidharma came to China, the first person he went to see was Emperor Wu of Liang.

Emperor Wu of Liang was China's first emperor to believe in Buddhism. He was the twenty-fifth-generation descendant of Xiao He (Xiao He was Chancellor to Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han dynasty), and his name was Xiao Yan. He ordained many people as monastics, built stupas and temples, commissioned images and gilded them, and even donned the monastic robe himself, ascended the seat, and lectured on the Sūtra of Radiant Prajñā. People called him the Emperor with the Buddha's Heart.

That is why Bodhidharma went to see him first. Yet Emperor Wu was not a person of the very highest capacity, whereas the Chan school receives only those of the very highest capacity. Those of middling or lesser capacity find it difficult to accept, because it relies wholly on one's own exceptionally powerful wisdom to open one's intrinsic nature. Those with lesser capacity find it difficult to awaken upon hearing a word.

The emperor asked, "What is the highest meaning of the noble truth?" Bodhidharma said, "Vast emptiness—nothing holy!"

As soon as Emperor Wu met Bodhidharma, he posed this most subtle and ultimate question from the doctrinal teachings: What is the highest meaning of the noble truth? He was testing Bodhidharma, to see whether this holy monk would answer correctly.

But the patch-robed monks of the world cannot escape the confines of ordinary and holy, ultimate and conventional. In the hands of a great Chan master, however, with a light pinch, all are shattered without remainder.

Bodhidharma immediately replied, "Vast emptiness—nothing holy!" If we can awaken at these words, we may return home and sit securely: eat when hungry, sleep when tired, and enjoy freedom at ease. There is no need to discriminate right and wrong or discuss what is long and what is short. But if this is not yet so, please listen to these entangling words.

"Vast" means broad and boundless like empty space: clear, empty, numinously bright, unmoving and unshakable. This suggests that our mind-nature is like empty space—vast, empty, luminous, clear, and all-pervading. "Nothing holy" means that within this numinous clarity and vast openness, like empty space, there is not a single thing. Naturally, there is neither holy nor ordinary.

But one must take care: although there is nothing at all, who is it that knows there is nothing? Bodhidharma skillfully laid this wondrous, luminous true mind—beyond description or comparison—entirely before Emperor Wu. Alas, it was like making seductive eyes at a blind man. The emperor knew only how to discuss doctrinal principles, speaking of ordinary and holy, but did not understand mind-nature.

He did not know who it was that spoke of nothing, or who it was that spoke of existence, and thus missed it face-to-face. Chan masters are like experts skilled in wielding the great sword Taie: with one light sweep, they cut through at the root all the entanglements in your mind—ordinary and holy, ultimate and conventional, and the like—and directly point you toward seeing your nature.

All sentient beings inherently possess the wisdom and virtuous characteristics of the Tathāgata. Yet because they are deluded by sounds and forms, they do not recognize them. If one can truly let everything go and not be carried along by sounds, forms, and objects, this wondrous, luminous true mind is like the vast empty sky. Where could there be holy or ordinary? Just when nothing whatsoever remains and the sense faculties and their objects fall away, turn the light inward for a glance; suddenly exert your full spirit, and you will see the original

nature! Those among you who have opened the original nature through Chan practice know that, when practice reaches a certain point, it suddenly breaks with a snap and bursts apart with a bang. When the original nature opens, inwardly body and mind, and outwardly the world, all vanish together without remainder. Where then are the holy ones—Buddhas and bodhisattvas? And where are ordinary beings—Zhang San and Li Si? Though everything is absent, this is not like wood or stone; there is clear, ever-present knowing.

Who is it that knows there is nothing? It is precisely the wondrous, luminous true mind to which Patriarch Bodhidharma pointed Emperor Wu when he said, "Vast emptiness—nothing holy!" If we cling to appearances and retain views of holy and ordinary in our minds, we cannot see the Way. Only by leaving appearances and views behind can we enter the Way.

But Chan masters cannot, like us, go on endlessly spinning entangling words. They only point something out to you at the crucial juncture. If you can awaken and assume it directly, that is enough. If, after being pointed to it, you still do not know, you have not only failed the master but also failed yourself. Do you not know that our intrinsic nature is vast and devoid of things, without a single thing at all?

Although not a single thing exists, there is clear, ever-present knowing; it is not like wood or stone. This is the wondrous, luminous true mind. In practicing the Dharma, never cling to appearances. Do not suppose that there is something to attain. If you seek something—marvels, mysteries, spiritual powers, and so forth—you are utterly mistaken. Especially for those who first see their nature, it is the plain dharmakāya.

Plain means without flowers or colors; there is nothing mysterious or extraordinary about it. Never suppose that, because no spiritual powers appear, it is not the dharmakāya, and thereby miss the opportune moment for seeing your nature.

At the very moment it opens, there is nothing seen, nothing heard, and no abiding; there is not a single thing, only distinct and solitary luminosity. This is the most crucial, hair-trigger moment! If students fail to catch it in a flash and miss this scene, all their effort will have been in vain. Therefore, we say that even if the divisions of before and after are cut off—that is, when the preceding thought has ceased and the subsequent thought has not yet arisen, in that instant of true emptiness—you do not

necessarily see your nature. Why not? If at that moment you do not recognize it and miss this scene, would not all your previous effort be wasted? If, at this time, you seize it in one grasp… Ah! You may ask: what is it that one grasps? Do you take hold of it with your hand? No. There is no hand here, nor is there any thing—what could you grasp? This grasping means that, at that hair-trigger moment which vanishes in an instant, there is a flash of numinous light and a spiritual comprehension that awakens.

In the Chan school, this is called turning around with a "hu!" and directly taking it up in its entirety: one recognizes one's intrinsic nature and awakens. Never imagine that there is some thing that has been captured or grasped; that would be a mistaken understanding.

Therefore, when Patriarch Bodhidharma said, "Vast emptiness—nothing holy," he wanted Emperor Wu to leap beyond the old patterns of existence and nonexistence, ordinary and holy, and directly see his nature. But what of Emperor Wu? He was one

who clung to appearances. “You say ‘vast emptiness—nothing holy.’ If even holiness does not exist, does that not fall into emptiness? Yet people call you a holy person! How can you say that even holy persons do not exist?”

The emperor then asked, “Who is it that stands before me?”

Bodhidharma said, “I do not know.”

Emperor Wu of Liang fixated on the word “sage” and overlooked the all-important words “vast emptiness.” He then asked, “Who is it who stands before Us?” Thinking that he had now grasped the crucial point, he reasoned: You say there are “no sages”; then who is standing before me? Others call you a sage; if there are no sages, who are you? Let us see how you answer that!

This question has two meanings: first, Who is standing before me? Second, Who is speaking with me? Emperor Wu of Liang intended only the first meaning: Who is standing before me? But in the Chan school it is understood differently: Who is it that can engage in this dialogue? It is like our present Chan inquiry: Who is it that recites the Buddha’s name? Who is it that drags this corpse? Who is it that speaks? And who is it that hears? This “who” carries weight. Though it appears to be a question, it directly points you toward seeing your true nature.

This question is not so easy to answer. Unless one has seen one’s true nature, one cannot help shifting one’s gaze and becoming helpless, not knowing where to turn. But Patriarch Bodhidharma was a great Chan master. Although he knew that the emperor meant the first sense of the question, he resorted to a desperate expedient, forcibly taking it in the second sense and replying, “I do not know.”

Patriarch Bodhidharma’s reply, “I do not know,” has truly perplexed people throughout the world. You are an awakened Chan master—how can you say that you do not know? Do you really not know, or do you only pretend not to know? Neither! Neither! To focus on knowing or not knowing is already wrong.

One Chan master put it well: “The toothless barbarian monk brought a clay pellet to China to contend in a contest of treasures. Illuminated by the radiant light of Emperor Wu of Liang’s wish-fulfilling jewel, ‘Who is it?’, he was forced to retreat, flusteredly saying, ‘I do not know.’” These two words, “I do not know,” are like a needle hidden in cotton: squeeze it, and it pricks your hand.

On the surface, it seems to mean not knowing; in fact, it directly reveals the true mind in response to the “who” in his question, “Who is it?”

Does that which can ask and answer have any form that can be seen? Is there any opposition of subject and object? Without form, and without subject and object, who could know whom? When we open up to our original nature, body, mind, and world all vanish; there is only empty luminosity. There are no material forms, no opposing pair of things—so who could know whom? When two people face each other, there can be a distinction between knowing and not knowing. But now there is only the one absolute true mind, with no object to be recognized; hence, “I do not know.”

These words, “I do not know,” carry the weight of a thousand jun. If one understands them, one awakens on the spot. If one carelessly takes them merely as a matter of knowing or not knowing, one has missed the opportunity.

Someone may say, “Knowing is right, is it not? Knowing means recognizing Buddha-nature!” No! At the very moment of opening up, no thought can arise. At that time, subject and object both vanish, and there is nothing at all. If a thought of recognition arises, one is deluded by its shadow and loses the excellent opportunity for awakening.

Moreover, intrinsic nature has neither form nor sound, so what could one recognize? Going further, a person of thorough awakening empties everything, and the mind abides nowhere. Seeing is still non-seeing. If one takes anything as weighty and clings to it as one’s nature, it becomes a fixed pattern. In the Chan school, this is called falling into sainthood; one is then no longer a person who has seen one’s true nature.

For example, after Chan Master Lingyun awakened upon seeing peach blossoms, Hong Juefan composed this verse: “Once Lingyun saw, he saw no more!” Why did he see no more? It was because Patriarch Lingyun had practiced Chan for thirty years without awakening.

One spring, when the peach blossoms were in full bloom, he opened the mountain gate and suddenly saw countless clusters of peach blossoms blazing brilliantly, like a vast sea of flame-colored flowers. At that very moment, body and mind fell away, the dust-like consciousnesses all vanished, and his Original Face opened forth. He composed this verse: “For thirty years I sought a swordsman; how many times have leaves fallen and branches sprouted anew? Since first seeing the peach blossoms, I have never again had any doubt.”

See how earnestly the ancients applied themselves: for thirty years, day after day, they diligently investigated. Once the time and conditions had ripened, a single touch set everything off; the mysterious gate and the lock of consciousness opened, and they directly realized the original nature.

If people today could likewise cultivate with such tireless dedication, why should they fear failing to attain accomplishment in this very life? Later, Xuansha commented: “Quite apt, indeed quite apt—but I dare assure you, elder brother, that you have not

yet thoroughly awakened." Why did he say that Lingyun had not thoroughly awakened? Because there still remained a "seeing" and a freedom from doubt. The tail had not yet been cleared away, and therefore his awakening was not complete.

This teaches Chan students that, at the time of inquiry and awakening, they need only arrive at numinous knowing and must not abide in "nature." Later, Hong Juefan came to Lingyun's rescue, saying: "Once Lingyun saw, he saw no more; on each red and white branch, no flowers cling." This means that after seeing once, he no longer clung to "seeing." Although red and white peach blossoms still appeared before him, he no longer clung to the seeing of peach blossoms.

That is to say, he no longer clung to nature and erased the traces of awakening. This is the open and unencumbered disposition of one who has seen one's true nature, abiding nowhere. Thus, when Patriarch Bodhidharma said, "I do not know," he was telling the emperor that the true mind contains no thing—how could there be an opposition? Here there is no one who knows anyone else.

The emperor did not understand, and Bodhidharma accordingly crossed the river to Wei.

Although Emperor Wu of Liang believed in Buddhism, his capacity for prajñā was poor. He did not realize that Bodhidharma was pointing the way for him, but instead thought that Patriarch Bodhidharma truly did not know and possessed no great ability. Thus, "the emperor did not understand." When words fail to accord, even half a sentence is too much; he ignored Bodhidharma and returned to the inner palace. As for Patriarch Bodhidharma, if you will not heed me, I have no way to liberate you.

For the Chan school receives only those of the highest capacities: one must awaken immediately, not through drawn-out, muddled instruction. When, within two or three exchanges of question and answer, the words do not accord, one can only seek another way. Thus, "Bodhidharma accordingly crossed the river to Wei." Is there not the story of Bodhidharma crossing the river on a single reed? Standing upon one reed, Bodhidharma crossed the river to the state of Wei.

Later, the emperor raised the matter with Master Zhi.

Master Zhi said, "Does Your Majesty still recognize this man?"

The emperor said, "I do not know."

Emperor Wu of Liang returned to the inner palace and asked Baozhi. Before Emperor Wu stood two great masters: Lay Master Fu and Chan Master Baozhi. Both had descended from the Tuṣita Heaven to guide Emperor Wu of Liang. The emperor then told Baozhi this koan—the dialogue with Patriarch Bodhidharma.

Master Zhi then asked Emperor Wu of Liang, "Do you still recognize Bodhidharma?" The emperor replied, "I do not know."

Here Emperor Wu of Liang likewise said, "I do not know." Is this the same as, or different from, Patriarch Bodhidharma's "I do not know"? Do you all know? There is much to consider here. Patriarch Bodhidharma's "I do not know" was not a matter of knowing or not knowing; rather, he presented the lively true mind in its entirety for you to see, pointing you to see your true nature at once. But Emperor Wu of Liang's "I do not know" meant only the ordinary worldly sense of not recognizing someone.

But if, in the Chan school, you were asked whether these two "I do not know" statements are the same or different, and you answered as above, you would receive a blow with the stick. How should you answer? "The mouth born of one's parents will never tell you!"

Master Zhi said, "This is Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, transmitting the Buddha-mind seal."

Master Zhi said that this Bodhidharma was Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, who had come to transmit the Buddha-mind seal. The Buddha's mind-seal is our own intrinsic nature; mind seals mind, instructing you to see your true nature immediately. There is no need, as there is now, to practice some method or sit through so many meditation sessions. He spoke only one sentence, pointing precisely at the crucial juncture, so that you could immediately open the true eye, clearly see your intrinsic nature, and enter directly, very swiftly indeed. But in this Dharma-ending age, practitioners' capacities have become dull, like a blade that is no longer sharp. Not to mention one point: even a thousand or ten thousand points cannot open them up.

To open the true eye is to open prajñā. This is absolutely necessary in every school; without wisdom, one can never realize the Way. Perhaps someone may say that the Pure Land school does not require it.

That is not so. If it were unnecessary, why does every Pure Land service conclude with the recitation of "Mahāprajñāpāramitā"? Without wisdom, how could one see through all worldly forms, let go of this world, and be reborn in the Western Pure Land? Many people who practice the Pure Land school are unable to be reborn in the Western Pure Land at life's end because they lack wisdom. They cannot see through this Sahā world, where they were born, where they eat and live, and where all their relatives and friends are; unable to let go and reluctant to leave, they cannot go.

If one understands that wives, wealth, children, rank, and emolument are all dreamlike illusions and bubbles, and can let them go, then of a thousand who practice, a thousand will go; of ten thousand who practice, ten thousand will go.

Master Zhi said that Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva transmitted the Buddha-mind seal. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is profoundly compassionate, hearing cries everywhere and relieving suffering, bestowing blessings upon all sentient beings so that they may be free from suffering and attain happiness. Because this bodhisattva has deep affinities with the sentient beings of this world, when Śākyamuni Buddha was about to enter parinirvāṇa, he entrusted Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva with caring for the sentient beings of the Sahā world, so that all might escape suffering.

The Universal Gate Chapter of the Lotus Sūtra proclaims the bodhisattva's greatness, profound vows, compassion, lofty virtue, and deep spiritual power. When everyone invokes "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva" . . . not only can all kinds of obstacles, calamities, and misfortunes vanish without a trace, but even various unfavorable matters can be dispelled. We must strive diligently in practice and not disappoint the beneficence of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. After attaining realization, we must also proclaim and teach the Dharma on behalf of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, guide later learners, revive the Buddhadharma, and enable everyone to leave the sea of suffering.

The emperor regretted this and accordingly sent an envoy to invite him back.

When Emperor Wu of Liang heard Chan Master Baozhi say that this was Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, who had come to transmit the Buddha-mind seal, he realized that he had failed to recognize him, treated him negligently, and allowed him to leave. Emperor Wu deeply regretted his improper conduct and his disrespect toward Bodhidharma, which had caused him to depart quietly. He therefore wished to send an envoy to invite Patriarch Bodhidharma back.

Master Zhi said, "Do not say that Your Majesty could send an envoy to invite him; even if the whole country went to invite him, he still would not return!"

Master Baozhi said, "Not to mention Your Majesty sending one envoy to invite Patriarch Bodhidharma back—even if you mobilized the entire country to invite Bodhidharma, Patriarch Bodhidharma would still not return."

Why is this so? Because Patriarch Bodhidharma came to transmit the Buddha-mind seal and liberate sentient beings with affinities; he did not come to receive your offerings. Since your capacities were not commensurate, you lacked the good fortune to receive the Dharma treasure of the Chan school. As it is said in the tradition: "If one is not a kindred spirit, straining one's ears is futile."

"If one is not a kindred spirit, it is futile to strain one's ears." Still less did he need fame and reputation. It was enough if he could find one or two awakened persons able to receive the Dharma and continue and flourish the Buddha-seed. Thus Patriarch Bodhidharma was one who "would not remain in a cage, nor turn back when called." He was never willing to return. After crossing the river into Wei, Patriarch Bodhidharma lived at Shaolin Monastery on Mount Song, facing the wall for nine years. He found Master Shenguang, who thoroughly awakened to the source of mind, and transmitted the Dharma to him.

There were many others listed as his disciples, but they obtained only the skin, flesh, and bones of Chan; they could not obtain its marrow. Therefore, Patriarch Bodhidharma transmitted the Dharma only to Shenguang, making him the Second Patriarch.

Bodhidharma had originally thought that Emperor Wu of Liang, as a Chinese emperor who believed in Buddhism, probably possessed commensurate faculties. Who would have imagined that this emperor was inadequate? He concerned himself only with names and appearances; he was not a person of the very highest capacity and could not receive the transmission. Therefore, Bodhidharma departed without bidding farewell.

If studying Chan is so difficult, then in this age of Dharma decline, will not the Buddha-seed be cut off? No. Even in the age of Dharma decline, there are people with the capacities for the True Dharma. Among the vast number of the Buddha's disciples, there are many people of the very highest capacity. So long as devoted people advocate and propagate it, the Chan gate will flourish.

Because of the great compassionate power and blessings of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, if one only has deep and unwavering faith, attends to this morning and evening, remains devoted to it through ease and adversity, and continually advances, the day will naturally come when conditions are ripe and success is achieved.

But if one remains here, full of doubts and suspicions, wondering, "Can I do it? Will the Buddhas and bodhisattvas bless me? Perhaps my karmic obstacles are too heavy for me to succeed?" ... then all is spoiled. For once doubt arises, one's strength is insufficient; in practice one comes to a halt and cannot courageously press forward or struggle to the end in completing this arduous and great task.

So long as our faith is strong, and we do not fear distance, danger, or obstacles, but devote all our strength to striving forward, we will certainly overcome every hardship and realize the great Way. As stated above, after realizing the Way, one does not simply stop upon a single awakening. One must carefully safeguard and nurture it, thoroughly eliminate habitual tendencies, and, like an infant growing into an adult, only then be able to let go freely and move unimpeded through emptiness.

At the time of initial awakening, one cannot do without safeguarding it. How is it safeguarded? On the one hand, one sits in meditation to cultivate samādhi; on the other, one tempers and nurtures oneself amid everyday affairs. Neither abide in

emptiness nor abide in existence; accord with conditions in all things, undertake any work, yet while doing it do not cling to doing it, with no mind of love or aversion.

As it is said in the Chan school: “Within mind, there are no affairs; amid affairs, there is no clinging mind.” One may be busy all day while there are no affairs in the mind; though there are no affairs in the mind, this does not prevent one from being busy all day. But if, when doing something, one is carried away by the thing being done, that will not do. Quickly draw oneself back and let go; diligently maintain awareness and carefully temper oneself. If one’s power of awareness is insufficient, one should meditate more.

Why is this? Because meditation can cultivate the power of samādhi, enabling you to have mastery and strength amid circumstances. If you do not meditate, your samādhi power will be inadequate. When tempering yourself amid circumstances, as soon as you become confused, you are swept away by confusion, dragged along by circumstances, and fall into delusion after awakening. This will not do; it is the most important key point.

Furthermore, when one has just opened to one’s original nature, there is nothing especially remarkable about it. Practitioners often fail to recognize it, thinking that because there is nothing miraculous about it, it is not their intrinsic nature, and so they neglect it and let it pass by. Yet this numinous and wondrous true mind is the supremely wondrous essence that is utterly bare and does not establish a single dharma. At the first seeing of one’s nature, habitual defilements still remain; it is merely the bare dharmakāya, possessing nothing at all.

Only after practitioners have recognized it and diligently tempered themselves, exhausting the deluded habits accumulated through beginningless eons, can its wondrous functions manifest. Therefore, practitioners must clearly understand the stages of practice. Never, because spiritual powers have not temporarily manifested, fail to acknowledge and accept responsibility for your awakening and thus miss this excellent opportunity. Still less should you, through failing to recognize it yourself, pass on errors and harm others. In truth, awakening and seeing one’s nature is not difficult, for this wondrous, luminous true mind is not elsewhere. It constantly shines before each person’s very face, without the slightest separation. People merely become deluded by appearances, cling to circumstances, and neglect to recognize it.

The Layman Fu says in his Hymn of Transmitting the Mind: “Night after night, I embrace the Buddha in sleep; morning after morning, we rise together. Rising and sitting, we are always together; in speech and silence, we dwell together. We do not part by even a hair’s breadth, like a body and its shadow.” See how plainly and clearly this is expressed. How joyous it is to awaken from this! If you seek elsewhere, then even should you wait until Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, you will find no such place.

Someone may say: Chan Master Baoning Yong once said, “There have indeed been many who awakened at a glance upon this verse, but there have also been quite a few who misunderstood it.” Chan Master Xuansha also commented on this verse: “That great Layman Fu recognized only that bright and numinous awareness.” I fear that there is something wrong with this verse and that it is not quite accurate, is there?

I could not help laughing as I replied: This verse is so intimate and clear that even persons of lesser faculties can awaken upon hearing it. If one can understand from this, why should there be an error? And where would the error lie? Baoning Yong did not point this out, leaving later people with many doubts. I shall now add the explanation, to dispel your doubts.

The error lies not in this verse, but in the recklessness of those who understand it, thinking that this very capacity to speak, discourse, raise one’s hands, and move one’s feet is one’s own innate Buddha.

It is like those who misunderstand the incisive passage in the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment: “Knowing illusion, one is thereby free from it; no expedient means are needed. Being free from illusion is awakening; nor are there gradual stages.” They think that once awakened, one has become a Buddha and need no longer exert oneself in careful cultivation, diligently eliminate deluded habits, safeguard the original truth, and reach the ultimate ground of immovability.

They do not realize that this is only initial awakening, not original awakening. One must still rely upon original awakening and cultivate diligently and arduously. It is like a child relying on its mother: when child and mother unite and merge into one, great awakening is accomplished. How could one be satisfied with a little, deem oneself right, fail to change old habits, and indulge in arbitrary misconduct—clinging to circumstances and abiding in appearances—thereby causing an excellent innate Buddha to fall once again into rebirth in the six realms? Would that not be a grave error and a great injustice?

As for Chan Master Xuansha’s “bright and numinous awareness,” this wondrous, luminous true mind is originally bright and numinous; it is not that one deliberately arouses thoughts to make it bright and numinous. If there is even the slightest deliberate effort, it is wrong. It is like a bright mirror hung high: it naturally shines clearly; it does not shine through exertion or nonexertion, intention or nonintention.

One need only be natural and spontaneous, without expending the slightest effort, ready-made and functioning freely in accordance with conditions; neither abide in and cling to it nor take hold of it. It is not that one must forcibly kill off or obliterate this bright and numinous awareness. Moreover, no matter how hard you try to strike it down or grind it away, you cannot kill it or obliterate it. Indeed, the more you strike and grind it, the brighter and more numinous it becomes. Nor should you leave this bright and numinous awareness to seek some other principle.

Those who practice for many years without awakening are all deceived by themselves. They think that the manifestation of spiritual powers is what matters, without realizing that what is called spiritual power is simply one's everyday functioning.

If it were not spiritual power, how could one speak or work? How could one dress and eat? How could one laugh, smile, become angry, or scold? Everywhere and in every place are its wondrous functions, yet people do not recognize them. They perversely demand something extraordinary and thus bring suffering and frustration upon themselves. Some people fail to recognize this themselves and are content merely to bob up and sink down in the sea of suffering; yet they also harm others, saying that those whose spiritual powers have not manifested have not awakened, and that awakened persons possess all six supernormal powers.

How could they know the sequence: awakening to the Way comes first, and the manifestation of powers comes afterward? The Mahāvairocana Sūtra says: "When bodhisattvas abide at this stage"—that is, the stage of seeing the Way—"and cultivate diligently and arduously, before long the five supernormal powers will all manifest." After awakening to the Way, one must still undergo a period of tempering, exhausting the deluded habits accumulated over countless eons and lives, before spiritual powers can manifest.

Therefore, we practitioners should not abandon ourselves in despair. When it initially opens, recognize it; do not yield to anyone, and dare to take responsibility for it. Do not be confused by spiritual powers or extraordinary phenomena. Then diligently safeguard and nurture it, thoroughly eliminate deluded habits, and before long spiritual powers will naturally manifest greatly. Because practitioners' capacities differ, there are also those who develop powers before awakening; but such people are not often seen nowadays.

Some people today possess unusual abilities and have spiritual powers without having practiced. These are spiritually powers acquired as karmic retribution; they are temporary and gradually disappear afterward. The spiritual powers spoken of in Buddhism comprise several kinds: those acquired as karmic retribution, through practice, through realization, and through reliance, among other distinctions.

Powers acquired through practice are obtained by specializing in a particular method to cultivate a particular power; Esoteric Buddhism has many methods for cultivating spiritual powers. Powers acquired through reliance are obtained by relying on external assistance, such as that of spirits, ghosts, or demons. But none of these is ultimate. When one's breath no longer comes, they are gone and of no use; one remains in the cycle of birth and death and does not escape the sea of suffering.

Only powers acquired through realization are genuine powers. For these, those who have seen their nature undergo tempering amid phenomena, exhaust their habitual tendencies, restore the functions of their original nature, and thereby bring forth inexhaustible spiritual powers. They can never be obliterated. Yet, despite boundless wondrous functioning, one does not cling to such functions, and all day appears as if foolish or dull. Truly, great wisdom appears as foolishness.

Later, Chan Master Xuedou composed this verse on this koan: "The holy truth is vast and empty—how can it be clearly discerned? Who is it that stands before the emperor? Again he says, 'I do not know.' Because of this, he secretly crossed the river; could brambles then be avoided? Though the people of the whole country pursued him, he would not return; through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, they vainly remember him. Do not remember him! The pure breeze covers the earth—what limit can it have?" The master looked to those on his right and left and said, "Is there still a patriarch here?" Then he himself said, "There is! Call him here to wash this old monk's feet."

Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin said: "In general, verses on ancient cases merely speak Chan by a roundabout route: they take up the main outline of an old case and render a verdict according to its particulars."

In Xuedou's verse on this koan, he opens at once with: "The holy truth is vast and empty—how can it be clearly discerned?" This explains that the One True Dharma Realm—the holy truth, as vast and open as a clear sky without clouds for ten thousand miles—is the utterly bare, absolute true mind that does not establish a single dharma. How could it permit you to calculate and deliberate, distinguish right from wrong, or discern gain from loss? At this point, even eyes of iron and pupils of bronze cannot probe it; how could one measure and discern it through discriminating consciousness? Yunmen said: "When investigating Chan reaches the crucial point, it is like a spark struck from stone or a flash of lightning: it does not fall into mental contrivance, consciousness, emotional dust, or conceptual thought."

By the time one begins to deliberate over birth, the pigeon has long since flown past Silla (present-day Korea). Therefore, Xuedou says: "How could the patch-robed monks of the world ever distinguish it?!"

"Who is facing the emperor? Again he says, 'I do not know.'" Here Xuedou repeatedly instructs people. Above, he says that the highest truth is vast and open, that not a single dharma is established: this is the absolute, wondrous essence without opposition. Since it is an absolute wondrous essence, who is there to know whom? Xuedou especially emphasizes this point, fearing that people may miss "vast and open," and reminds them: "Again he says, 'I do not know.'"

"Yet he still says, 'I do not know.'" The addition of the words "yet he still says" warns the assembly that, within vast emptiness, even holiness is absent. Is there still knowing or not knowing? Chan Master Baiyunduan once composed this verse: "Ordinarily, one arrow brings down one eagle; to add another arrow is already to be overly generous." This is the ancient masters' earnest,

grandmotherly concern: they repeatedly exert themselves for others, not begrudging even to become wholly entangled in the weeds. Here the entire koan has been fully versified.

But out of compassion, Xuedou again versifies the events of this koan: “Because of this, he secretly crossed the river; how could brambles not arise?” Bodhidharma came to free people from their adhesions and bonds, to cut away the brambles. Why, then, does he speak of brambles arising? It is because not only do practitioners endlessly debate the rights and wrongs, gains and losses of this koan, but even to this day all those who investigate the profound discuss its merits and faults. Thus Yuanwu Keqin said: “Right now, beneath everyone’s feet, the grass is already several fathoms deep.”

“Through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, they vainly remember one another.” Indeed, from the unfolding of this koan until now, none among those on the Way has failed to lament Emperor Wu of Liang, and none has failed to think of Bodhidharma. After Bodhidharma’s parinirvāṇa, Emperor Wu composed his own inscription for a stele: “Alas! Seeing him yet not seeing him; meeting him yet not meeting him. Now and of old, resentment and regret!” Yuanwu Keqin commented: “Far too lacking in manliness! Do you all know?” He also said: “Where is Bodhidharma? Do you all see him? Once thought arises, you have already missed it.”

Xuedou feared that people would become attached to emotional views, so he turned the phrase around and revealed his own understanding for later generations: “Do not remember one another. What limit is there to the clear breeze pervading the earth?” If you recognize the place where you stand beneath your own heels, then at every moment you walk hand in hand with Bodhidharma and Xuedou. Why resort to searching thought and recollection? Thus the wondrous, luminous true mind is nowhere else; it shines from the face of each person.

It is utterly ordinary, like a clear breeze covering heaven and earth: everyone is touched by it, everyone is nurtured by it, and everyone relies upon it to accomplish all kinds of undertakings. What is there that is lofty and inaccessible, or the ultimate summit to be attained?

Finally, Xuedou feared that people would become infatuated with the patriarch, rely upon the patriarch, fail to reflect upon themselves, and fail to stand on their own. If they became attached here, they would be like a divine tortoise dragging its tail, sweeping away its own tracks. So he again employed an expedient means for others, looked about to the left and right, and asked: “Is there still a patriarch here?” They themselves answered: “Yes!” He then said: “Call him here to wash this old monk’s feet!” Why did Chan Master Xuedou

so disparage the patriarch’s majestic radiance? Because the wondrous, luminous true mind is wisdom without a teacher: it has no reliance, no knowledge, no name, and no form. What can you call it? Once anything is established or grasped, you have already missed it.

Furthermore, above heaven and below heaven, there is not a single thing that is not its manifestation, and not a single dharma that is not established in dependence upon it. Would you call it the patriarch? Can you become attached here? For example, a monk asked Huangbo, “Are there any Chan masters in the Great Tang realm?” Huangbo replied, “It is not that there is no Chan; there are simply no masters.” This is precisely the meaning.

We practitioners should draw a lesson from this koan. First, we must know that it is present; moreover, we must carefully safeguard it. This is the first good. Next, we must let it function freely and not guard it. This is the middle good. Finally, even the thought of deliberately not guarding the mind is gone. This is the final good. I hope you will all take this to heart.

[Second] Zhaozhou: The Supreme Way Is Not Difficult

The Pointer says: Heaven and earth are narrow; sun, moon, and stars all go dark at once. Even if blows of the staff fall like raindrops and shouts rush like thunder, they still do not reach the matter within the supreme vehicle. Suppose all Buddhas of the three times: they can only know it for themselves. The patriarchs of every generation: they cannot bring it forth in its entirety. The entire treasury of teachings: its expositions and commentaries cannot reach it. Clear-eyed patch-robed monks: they cannot even save themselves. At this point, how can one ask for instruction? To speak the word “Buddha” is to drag in mud and water; to speak the word “Chan” is to be covered with shame. Veteran practitioners need not be told, but beginning students must investigate this directly.

[2] Raising the Case:

Zhaozhou addressed the assembly, saying: [What is this old fellow doing? Do not get entangled in this tangle.]

“The Supreme Way is not difficult, [Neither difficult nor easy.]

It only rejects choosing and rejecting. [What is before your eyes? The Third Patriarch is still here.]

The moment there are words, there is choosing and rejecting, there is clarity.” [Two ends and three sides. Stop showing off. When fish move, the water becomes turbid; when birds fly, feathers fall.]

This old monk is not within clarity.” [The thief has already exposed himself. Where is this old fellow going?]

“Do you still cherish and preserve it or not?” [Defeated! There may be one or two.]

At that time a monk asked, “Since you are not within clarity, what is there to cherish and preserve?” [It would be good to give him a pressing interrogation. His tongue is pressed against his palate.]

Zhaozhou said, “I too do not know.” [He has pressed this old fellow to death. He retreats three thousand miles.]

The monk said, “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you nevertheless say that you are not within clarity?” [See where he is going. He pursues him until he climbs a tree.]

Zhaozhou said, “If you have a question, you may ask it. Make a bow and withdraw.” [Fortunately, he has this move. This old thief.]

Chan Master Zhaozhou would ordinarily bring up this huatou: it only rejects choosing and rejecting. This is what the Third Patriarch says in the Inscription on Faith in Mind: “The Supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting. Simply do not hate or love, and it will be completely clear.” The moment there is right and wrong, there is choosing and rejecting, there is clarity. The moment you understand it in this way, you have already missed it.

Chiseling and gluing—what use can that be? Zhaozhou said, “There is choosing and rejecting; there is clarity.” Now, when people investigate Chan and inquire into the Way, if they are not within choosing and rejecting, they sit within clarity. “This old monk is not within clarity. Do you all still cherish and preserve it or not?” Since you are not within clarity, then say: where is Zhaozhou? Why does he nevertheless tell people to cherish and preserve it? The late master Wuzu once said, “When one comes with hands hanging down, it seems to surpass you.” How do you understand this? And say, where is the place of hands hanging down? Recognize the meaning at the hook’s tip; do not mistake the fixed star for it.

When this monk came forward, he was indeed extraordinary. Seizing Zhaozhou where he was empty, he pressed him at once: “Since you are not within clarity, what is there to cherish and preserve?” Zhaozhou did not resort to staff or shout, but merely said, “I too do not know.” Had he not been this old fellow, once pressed by the monk, he would likely have lost track of what came before and after. Fortunately, this old fellow had the freedom to turn around, and so he answered him thus.

Nowadays, Chan practitioners, when questioned, also say, “I too do not know; I do not understand.” Yet they may be on the same road but travel in different ruts. This monk had an extraordinary quality, and thus was able to ask: “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you nevertheless say that you are not within clarity?” An even better pressing interrogation. If it had been someone else, he would often have been unable to explain himself. Zhaozhou was a true master; he simply told him, “If you have a question, you may ask it. Make a bow and withdraw.” The monk still could do nothing with this old fellow and had no choice but to swallow his indignation in silence.

This was a great master of the school. He did not discuss profundity and marvels, capacities and objects with you, but always received people through the fundamental matter itself. Thus it is said: “If you curse at me, I allow you to move your lips in reply; if you spit at me, I allow you to splash water back.” Yet people do not realize that this old fellow never in his life used staff and shout to receive people, but only ordinary speech; nevertheless, no one in the world could do anything with him. This was because throughout his life he had none of these many calculations. Therefore, whether taking up or setting down, moving against or with the current, he possessed great freedom. People nowadays do not understand this and keep saying, “Zhaozhou does not answer; he does not speak for others.” They do not realize that they have missed it face-to-face.

The Supreme Way is not difficult, [A threefold koan. Frost fills the mouth. What are you saying?]

The beginning of speech, the beginning of words. [When fish move, the water becomes turbid. Broken into seven pieces and eight fragments. Smearing a beard on it.]

One has many kinds, [It is good to separate them. There is only one kind—what end could there be?]

Two have no duality. [How unbearable! Four, five, six, seven. Why make a tangle?]

At heaven’s edge, when the sun rises, the moon sets; [Presented face-to-face. Vast above the head, vast beneath the feet. By all means, do not raise or lower your head.]

Before the railing, when the mountains are deep, the water is cold. [Once dead, never alive again. Do you feel your hairs standing on end?]

When the skull’s knowing is exhausted, where can joy stand? [Staring with open eyes inside the coffin. Layman Lu was its fellow practitioner.]

The dragon’s cry in the dead tree has not yet dried away! [Bah! The dead tree blooms again; Bodhidharma travels east.]

Difficult! Difficult! [A deviant teaching is hard to uphold. Say it upside down. What place is this, to speak of difficult or easy?]

Choosing and rejecting, clarity—look for yourself. [Blind! You thought it depended on someone else, but fortunately you yourself must look. It is none of this mountain monk’s business.]

Xuedou knew where he had landed, and so composed this verse: after “The Supreme Way is not difficult,” he immediately added, “The beginning of speech, the beginning of words.” Raise one corner, yet he does not respond with the other three. Xuedou said, “One has many kinds; two have no duality.” This is like responding to one corner with three. Now tell me: where is the place of “the beginning of speech, the beginning of words”? Why does one have many kinds, while two have no duality? If you do not possess the eye, where will you grope about?

If you penetrate these two lines, then, as the ancients said, you become continuous and undivided. You still see mountains as mountains, water as water, long as long, short as short, heaven as heaven, and earth as earth. At times you call heaven earth; at times you call earth heaven; at times you call mountains not mountains and water not water.

Ultimately, how can one proceed securely and evenly? When wind comes, trees move; when waves rise, boats rise high. Spring gives birth, summer grows, autumn harvests, winter stores. With one even mind, everything vanishes of itself. Then these four lines of verse would be cut off completely. But Xuedou had abundant talent, and so he set them out and gathered them up, reckoning them all together. He merely added another head atop the head: “The Supreme Way is not difficult; the beginning of speech, the beginning of words. One has many kinds; two have no duality.”

Though there are not so many things, when the sun rises at heaven’s edge, the moon sets; when the mountains are deep before the railing, the water is cold. At this point, speech is apt and words are apt; each and every thing is the Way. Every object is wholly real. Is this not the place where mind and circumstances are both forgotten and become continuous and undivided?

Xuedou is excessively lofty and steep at the outset, yet at the end he also reveals quite a bit. If one has penetrated through and seen thoroughly, it naturally resembles the finest flavor of clarified butter. But if emotional interpretations have not been forgotten, one sees seven pieces and eight fragments, and definitely cannot understand such speech. “When the skull’s knowing is exhausted, where can joy stand? The dragon’s cry in the dead tree has not yet dried away”—this alone is the point where they interweave. The monk asked in this way; Zhaozhou answered in this way.

Zhaozhou said: “The Supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting. The moment there are words, there is choosing and rejecting, there is clarity. This old monk is not within clarity. Do you still cherish and preserve it or not?” At that time a monk asked: “Since you are not within clarity, what is there to cherish and preserve?” Zhaozhou said: “I too do not know.”

The monk said: “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you nevertheless say that you are not within clarity?” Zhaozhou said: “If you have a question, you may ask it. Make a bow and withdraw.” This is an ancient koan of inquiring into the Way. Xuedou drew it out and strung it together, using it to compose a verse on “The Supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting.” People nowadays do not understand the ancients’ intent and merely chew over words and gnaw at phrases. What end can there be to that? Only those who are accomplished masters in all directions can distinguish such speech.

Have you not seen a monk ask Xiangyan, “What is the Way?”

Xiangyan said, “A dragon’s cry in a dead tree.”

The monk said, “What is a person within the Way?”

Xiangyan said, “Eyes in a skull.”

Later, the monk asked Shishuang, “What is a dragon’s cry in a dead tree?”

Shishuang said, “It still carries joy.”

“What are eyes in a skull?”

Shishuang said, “It still carries knowing.”

The monk again asked Caoshan, “What is a dragon’s cry in a dead tree?”

Caoshan said, “The bloodline is unbroken.”

“What are eyes in a skull?”

Caoshan said, “It cannot dry up completely.”

“What person can hear it?”

Caoshan said, “Throughout the whole earth, there is not one who does not hear it.”

The monk said, “I do not know what line or phrase the dragon’s cry is.”

Caoshan said, “I do not know what line or phrase it is; all who hear it perish.” He further composed this verse:

A dragon’s cry in a dead tree is truly seeing the Way; when the skull has no knowing, its eyes first become bright.

When joy and knowing are exhausted, all news is exhausted. How can the person concerned distinguish purity amid turbidity?

Xuedou may be said to have had great skill; all at once, he interwove and brought forth verses for you. Yet even so, there is no duality. At the end, Xuedou has a place where he acts for others, adding: "Difficult! Difficult!" This "difficult, difficult" must also be penetrated before it will do. Why? Baizhang said: "All words, the mountains, rivers, and great earth—each and every one returns to oneself." Whenever Xuedou takes up or sets down anything, in the end it must return to oneself.

Now say: where is Xuedou's place of acting for others? "Choosing and rejecting, clarity—look for yourself." Since he had composed a verse about tangled complications, why then did he say, "Look for yourself"? Fortunately, he tells you to look for yourself. Now say, where does the meaning fall? Do not say that none of you can understand it. Even if this mountain monk came to this point, he too could only say that he does not understand it. u A babble of voices

[Lìzhū]: Teacher, I cannot understand Classical Chinese. What should I do?

[lvm]: Actually, this does not really count as Classical Chinese; it is simply vernacular Chinese from ancient times.

[Lìzhū]: Why am I so stupid?

[lvm]: It is only that you have had little exposure to it and are not very familiar with it. That does not necessarily mean you are stupid.

u Lectures by Master Yuanyin

Case Two: Zhaozhou's "The Supreme Way Is Not Difficult"

In the previous lecture, I gave an expanded explanation of the first koan—"The First Principle of the Noble Truths." The explanation has been given, but Chan is not found in words and letters. You must penetrate beyond doctrinal meanings and technical terms and directly realize your own mind. What, then, is the fundamental purport of the Chan school? How did the patriarchs skillfully guide people? And how should we ourselves realize it? If you still have not understood, then listen as I take up a second entanglement—"Zhaozhou: The Supreme Way Is Not Difficult."

Zhaozhou was a renowned Chan master of great virtue in the late Tang dynasty, a master of exceptional stature. He did not discuss abstruse mysteries or subtle wonders, speak of opportunities and states, or employ blows and shouts. He simply used ordinary words concerning the fundamental matter to guide people, with such sayings as "the cypress tree in the courtyard," "a dog has no Buddha-nature," and "go have some tea." In this way, he received those who came to him and established the distinctive "Zhaozhou style."

Such words may seem ordinary and unremarkable, yet their inner meaning is profound and far-reaching. They are like needles hidden in cotton: they cannot be touched or squeezed; touch or squeeze them, and they wound the body and prick the hand. This old master could so freely and naturally handle things in every direction, going against or along the current with great ease, because all calculating had come to an end for him and he had reached complete maturity. Only then could richness turn into simplicity.

When we study Chan and cultivate the Way, we must first have an occasion for awakening, and the key to such awakening lies in the instruction of a good spiritual teacher. Chan Master Zhaozhou was no exception. While studying under Chan Master Nanquan, he once asked, "What is the Way?" Nanquan instructed him, "Ordinary mind is the Way." The three words "ordinary mind" refer to the ordinary affairs of everyday life; they are precisely where the great Way is found.

If this were not so, then when a single breath does not return and the physical shell still remains, why would one no longer be able to speak, laugh, or move? Layman Pang said in his verse on awakening: "There is nothing special in daily affairs; I simply accord with myself. Spiritual powers and wondrous functioning are carrying water and hauling firewood.

This shows that everything—laughing and scolding, clearing the throat and swinging the arms—is none other than the wondrous functioning of the true mind. Ordinary people are merely deluded by forms and do not realize it. Judging from the words themselves, ping, "ordinary," means not crooked, and chang, "constant," means uninterrupted. If a Chan practitioner's mind can remain straight and unbent at all times, responding without interruption in every circumstance, then the luminosity and free wondrous functioning immediately manifested are the Way. This interpretation can be made to work, but it is not the orthodox teaching of the Chan school.

But where is this Way? Can it be realized through some method? Zhaozhou therefore asked again, "Can one still direct oneself toward it?" Nanquan replied, "To intend to move toward it is already to go astray!" This means that if the mind entertains deliberation or inclines toward a destination, it turns away from the Way. How can one then awaken to the Way? The great Way is formless; the great sound is scarcely heard. There is nothing toward which one can direct oneself or which one can seize. When thoughts cease, it stands clearly before one; when mind arises, it is obscured by shadows. Therefore, there is nowhere toward which one can direct oneself.

Unfortunately, many who study Buddhism and cultivate its practices fall into deliberation and directed striving. When reading scriptures and listening to the Dharma, they think there is some real dharma to be gained; when practicing diligently, they think

there is some sacred state to be attained. They busily strive toward objectives and exhaust themselves in vain. Is this not a needless suffering? In fact, the Way is originally complete and ready at hand; it does not belong to cultivation or realization, and it is nondual for everyone. It depends only on whether you are deluded by forms. Therefore, the ancient worthies said: "The Way lies in awakening, not in cultivation."

But if one does not use thought and deliberation, how can one know that it is the Way? Zhaozhou therefore asked again, "If one does not deliberate, how can one know it is the Way?"

Nanquan replied: "The Way does not belong to knowing or not knowing. Knowing is deluded awareness; not knowing is indeterminate. If one truly reaches the Way beyond doubt, it is like vast empty space—open and boundless. How could one forcibly establish right and wrong?"

The great Way is vast and open, like empty space. Not a single dharma is established; it is utterly bare, yet clearly distinct, with boundless wondrous functioning. To know is to put another head on top of one's head, leaving one utterly unrecognizable; not to know is to be like wood or stone, incapable of wondrous functioning. In terms of the Chan school, it belongs neither to knowing, where not even a needle can enter, nor to not knowing, where carts and horses can pass freely. Since neither knowing nor not knowing affords any foothold, why speak of Way or no Way, Buddha or no Buddha, right and wrong, gain and loss?

Under Nanquan's instruction, Zhaozhou awakened to the principle of Chan. Those of us who study Buddhism and cultivate its practices should do likewise. Clarify the mind through principle, reveal principle through the mind, and respond to conditions everywhere and at all times with ordinary mind; then the Way is right within it.

Before discussing the koan, let us first consider the instruction of Patriarch Yuanwu Keqin:

"Heaven and earth grow narrow; sun, moon, and stars are darkened all at once."

Heaven and earth are the sky and the ground, and they are manifestations of a single thought of mind. "Heaven and earth grow narrow" refers to the narrowness of our mind-capacity. Those of us who study Buddhism must have great mind-capacity in order not to abide in phenomena and to enter the Way at ease. If our mind-capacity is narrow, we constantly become entangled with things, unable to let go or empty them out, and so we do not accord with the Way.

A person's breadth of mind matters greatly to success or failure in cultivating the Way. Many people who have not practiced any Dharma and do not even know to have faith in Buddhism are nonetheless open and unrestrained by temperament, generous and ardent, delighting in goodness and giving, and committing no evils. When the time of death approaches, they too can know its arrival in advance, clearly arrange their final affairs, and depart with ease and freedom.

Conversely, some people who believe in Buddhism and practice its teachings are unable to know the time of death in advance. Instead, they weep bitterly, filled with sorrow and unwilling to leave.

Why is this so? The former have broad minds; they are generous and open, able to take things up and let them go. Though they do not believe in Buddhism, they accord with the Way. Like still water giving rise to light, their minds become clear and wisdom arises; thus, they can know the time of death in advance. The latter, however, have narrow minds, calculate over everything, and keep every matter in their hearts without being able to let it go. Although they believe in the Buddha, recite the Buddha's name, keep a vegetarian diet, and sit in meditation, their minds are not illumined and wisdom does not arise.

How, then, can they know the time of death in advance and pass away with ease? Those with narrow mind-capacity cannot even know the time of death in advance, much less realize the Way and become Buddhas. Thus it is said, "Heaven and earth grow narrow; sun, moon, and stars are darkened all at once": everything is finished. Yuanwu Keqin then said:

"Even if blows fall like raindrops and shouts resound like rushing thunder, they still cannot serve as the matter of the supreme vehicle of the Chan school."

Even if a person of narrow mind-capacity encounters an enlightened teacher who uses blows like raindrops and shouts like rushing thunder to free him from his predicament, he still cannot bear the great matter of the supreme vehicle of the Chan school—he will not awaken.

Why is this? Deshan's blows and Linji's shouts are famous methods by which the Chan school guides people, enabling students to realize the mind at the blow and grasp the essential meaning at the shout. Since they have such wondrous efficacy, why can they not serve the matter of the supreme vehicle of the Chan school? It is because the student's mind is narrow: he keeps every matter in his heart, where it is firmly entrenched and cannot be uprooted. No matter how blows and shouts are used to free him from his predicament, they are of no avail.

For example, we say that karmic obstacles are originally empty. In the Chan hall, you may seem to accept and acknowledge that "karmic obstacles are originally like flowers in empty space and the moon reflected in water; they are not truly existent," and your mind becomes relaxed. Yet after some people leave the Chan hall and encounter unpleasant circumstances, their minds inevitably grow heavy again, and they feel that their karmic obstacles have become severe.

This is because their minds abide too strongly in forms and their attachment is too heavy. Although they have received a slight permeation of prajñā in the Chan hall, it cannot move the old roots of attachment. They remain obstructed by this karma that has no real basis. They do not realize that so-called karmic obstacles are simply the mind stirring, abiding in forms, creating karma, and undergoing karmic retribution.

Yet all phenomena are wondrous functioning manifested by the true mind; they are all shadows and have no substance at all. The Diamond Sūtra says: "All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows." Where are there any real things? Since objects and circumstances cannot be obtained, why foolishly cling to them? When mind is empty, circumstances vanish, and karmic obstacles have nowhere to stand. The Chan school says: "Once understood, karmic obstacles are originally empty." Conversely, if you cling to them as truly existent and refuse to let go, it becomes "Without understanding, one must repay one's past debts," and karmic obstacles become manifold.

For example, when people are ill and fix their minds on the illness, they feel pain here and itching there, suffering as though they were about to die. If you let go and do not keep the illness in your mind, then so-called pain and itching are no more than that. In daily life, you are merely carrying one extra burden. Your mind will then be much more settled, and the illness will more readily improve.

There were two cancer patients. One was cheerful and open-minded, did not keep the illness in mind, and continued to live and work happily as before; the illness gradually improved. What of the other? He grieved and worried day and night, and before long he died. From this we can see that all clinging, defilement, and attachment are simply bringing suffering and vexation upon oneself.

In terms of the Way, the body itself does not truly exist, so where could illness come from? There is not even a burden to carry. As it is said: when ill, do not conceive of yourself as ill; when eating, do not conceive of yourself as eating; when dressing, do not conceive of yourself as dressing. Nothing can be obtained. Do not concern yourself with it, and what karmic obstacles could there be? Therefore, we must keep the mind empty and non-abiding at all times in order to truly realize the unconditioned great Way.

In cultivating the Dharma, we proceed from the conditioned to the unconditioned and must pass through the sixth, seventh, and eighth bhūmis. Only upon reaching the eighth bhūmi do we truly enter the stage of non-contrivance. At the seventh bhūmi, although one realizes non-contrivance, there still remains an idea of non-contrivance, so it is not genuine non-contrivance. Only at the eighth bhūmi does the influence of non-contrivance disappear, and one becomes truly unmoving. Therefore, the eighth bhūmi is also called the Immovable Ground.

Those of us who study Buddhism should cling to nothing, keep the mind empty and non-abiding, and then our mind-capacity will naturally become broad without our seeking breadth. Without seeking awakening and seeing our true nature, we will naturally awaken and see our true nature. Only thus can we bear the great matter of the supreme vehicle of the Chan school.

Otherwise, if we are always memorizing words and phrases, seeking the abstruse and the marvelous, keeping matters in our minds and unable to let them go, how can we open this mysterious barrier and lock of consciousness and see our original nature? Therefore, Patriarch Yuanwu Keqin said that once your mind-capacity becomes narrow, even if patriarchs stand before you, wielding blows and shouts in rapid succession, it is of no use. Your attachment is too deep and your entanglement too severe; even the patriarchs can do nothing.

Whatever school of practice we cultivate—Pure Land, Chan, or Esoteric Buddhism—we must let go of everything. Without letting go, the practice cannot succeed. Perhaps someone will say: "Those who recite the Buddha's name have Amitābha Buddha to guide them to rebirth, so there is no need to let go."

Is that so? If a person who recites the Buddha's name has not cut off the root of attachment and cannot let go of the wife, wealth, children, rank, fame, and prosperity of this Sahā world, can that person still attain rebirth? I fear that, however great the Buddha's power may be, he cannot guide such a person to rebirth! Why? Because the mooring rope of your stinking dung-boat is tightly fastened to a stake on the shore—attached to the Sahā world. Though it has motive power—the Buddha's power—how can it move?! From this we can see that only by letting go of everything and applying oneself single-mindedly can one accomplish anything. It cannot be achieved through opportunism or clever shortcuts.

Yuanwu Keqin then gave the following instruction:

"Even the Buddhas of the three times can only know it for themselves."

This Way is such that even the Buddhas of the three times can only know it for themselves and cannot speak of it. It is like a mute person having a dream, unable to tell it to others. Nothing can serve as an analogy for our Original Face; nothing resembles it. Thus it cannot be explained to others and can only be known for oneself. The Chan school says, "At the summit of Mount Sumeru, there is no room for discussion!" Therefore, though the Buddhas of the three times have mouths, they find it difficult to speak.

From now on, you need not ask others what realm is disclosed when one realizes the Original Face. Amitābha Buddha! This knowing awareness that is without knowledge cannot be depicted—how could it be explained to you? Even if you encounter a

person of clear vision, they can only make indirect suggestions, setting off clouds to bring out the moon, and seal mind with mind. If your own mind has not been clarified, you will not understand even if it is explained. As the Chan school says: “When you meet a swordsman on the road, you must present a sword; do not offer a poem to one who is not a poet.”

If you claim to have seen something, then you have seen a ghost, not the Way. The Diamond Sūtra states this very clearly: “Whatever has form is illusory.” Seeing a Buddha or seeing light is not it; whatever is seen is not true seeing. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra explains it even more clearly: “When seeing sees seeing, that seeing is not true seeing; seeing still lies apart from seeing, and seeing cannot reach it.”

Whatever is seen is not it. Therefore, from now on, do not inquire of others. Apply yourselves instead and realize your Original Face; only by realizing and knowing it for yourselves will you avoid being deceived by others. After realizing it, however, it is permissible to seek confirmation from one who has already passed through it.

Before this, inquiring into others is most harmful: first, one observes the experiences others have and thereby judges whether they have awakened, rashly drawing conclusions. Second, one wrongly increases one’s conceptual knowledge, imagining that awakening is some particular experience and wishing to obtain some news of it oneself. Once this view arises, not only will one fail to obtain any news, but one will be unable even to enter samādhi.

For the very thought of wanting to obtain some news is deluded mind. When deluded thoughts arise in confusion, can one still enter samādhi? Third, when others have experiences, one wonders, “Why do I have none?” One becomes deeply anxious and cannot sit at ease. Or one resigns oneself to inferiority, makes no effort to improve, grieves and laments, and lacks strength in practice. Worse still, one may become jealous of others and slander them. That is even more harmful.

What form does the One True Dharma Realm have? It is truly difficult to say. Therefore, at this point even the Buddhas of the three times have no way to speak; they can only know it for themselves. It is like a person drinking water: only they know whether it is cold or warm.

“The patriarchs throughout the ages cannot fully bring it forth.”

The great patriarchs of every age were unable to portray this matter in its entirety and show it to you. Words cannot reach it, thought cannot grasp it, and there is no place from which to speak. As soon as there is speech, there is something to abide in; then it is no longer the One True Dharma Realm of true emptiness and non-abiding.

As Chan Master Zhaozhou said, “I do not like to hear even the word ‘Buddha’!” He did not establish even Buddha; this may truly be called utterly clean and complete eradication.

Yet later people pointed out, “There still remains the dislike!” This shows that the wondrous presence of true emptiness, beyond all appearances, is like empty space: no one can lay hold of it. How, then, could it be brought up and presented? No matter how one speaks horizontally or vertically, or how pearl-like one’s marvelous words may be, one can only present it halfway, never fully disclose it.

Yet if one encounters a person of keen awakening who grasps the essential meaning upon hearing the words, that person may expand a half-presentation into a full presentation. Conversely, even a full presentation may be reduced to a half-presentation. Chan Master Wuzu Yan once told a scholar that a slightly erotic little poem came rather close to it: “Repeatedly calling for Xiaoyu is really for no reason; she only wants her beloved to recognize her voice!” The scholar stared blankly, unable to understand. Yuanwu Keqin, who heard this while standing nearby, walked out of the abbot’s quarters and happened to hear a golden rooster crowing at noon. He suddenly awakened and exclaimed, “Is this not the poem about ‘voice’?!” Thus, whether a presentation is half or whole depends on one’s own transformation; the patriarchs cannot do the work in one’s stead.

“The entire Tripiṭaka cannot expound or annotate it.”

Even the scriptures of the Tripiṭaka and twelve divisions cannot explain it. This is like a master painter who cannot paint a lofty and untrammeled realm of feeling. There is a technical saying in the Chan school: “Such graceful charm cannot be painted.”

How could one begin to paint or portray this boundless, graceful, magnificent scene? One can only set off clouds to bring out the moon, giving a vague outline and leaving you to awaken for yourself.

For example, “Within the deep green shade lies the dawn light” is used as an analogy for the natural innocence hidden within the mountain of form. Even if you invited Wang Wei, a master painter of landscapes, to paint this faint dawn light—the true mind—concealed deep within the green shade, he would not know where to put brush to inkstone.

Again, there is the famous Chan line: “Only when chess reaches its desperate point does a move become wondrous; only when plum blossoms meet the cold does their fragrance become purer.” How could such a clear, lofty realm of feeling be portrayed, apart from your own inward apprehension? Therefore, even the entire Tripiṭaka cannot annotate it at this point.

At the final gathering on Vulture Peak, the World-Honored One held up a flower before the assembly in order to transmit this incommunicable secret. Yet humans and devas were at a loss, with no entry into it. Fortunately, Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile, and mind sealed mind. Thus the mind-lamp of this special transmission outside the teachings—illuminating the great

thousandfold world and shining through the ages—was passed down in an unbroken line until today. This teaching without speech and this explanation without commentary are the most vast and profound of all teachings and explanations.

“Even clear-eyed patch-robed monks cannot save themselves. How, at this point, can one request instruction?”

Prajñā is like a great mass of fire: touch it and one is burned. Even a person of clear vision cannot rely on it or seize hold of it; this is what is meant by being unable to save oneself. Thus the great Way seems visible yet beyond reach, leaving no place to begin. But the Way values turning the light inward and shifting the pivot; one must not burrow into a dead end. An ancient poem says: “Where mountains end and streams are exhausted, one doubts there is no road; amid dark willows and bright flowers, another village appears.”

Where is this other village of dark willows and bright flowers? It is where one relinquishes one’s very life, where, “with a backward glance and a smile, a hundred charms arise.” An ancient worthy said, “In what cannot be obtained, thus obtain; where nothing can be grasped, thus grasp.” So long as one does not fear sacrifice and presses courageously forward, one will naturally obtain the pearl beneath the jaw of the black dragon.

Although this is so, this Way cannot be expressed in words and cannot be transmitted. How, then, can younger students ask about it and benefit from instruction? As stated above, although this wondrous mind of nirvāṇa cannot be portrayed, one may open a small fissure and reveal a little of its scenery, speaking provisionally and expediently so that those of keen awakening may have an entry. Therefore, great-resolve bodhisattvas do not begrudge getting their whole bodies tangled in weeds: they point east and speak west, teaching and benefiting sentient beings rather than attending to their own salvation. This is another aspect of being unable to save oneself. Yet once one has something to abide in—thinking oneself extraordinary and superior to others, capable of teaching and transforming sentient beings—one will truly be unable to transcend birth and death.

Furthermore, even if we have truly awakened at the level of principle to the Original Face, unless we continuously and seamlessly safeguard realization, exert ourselves ever further on the basis of the dharmakāya, and diligently train to eradicate our habitual tendencies, fully realizing our original nature, then—even though the dharma eye may be bright—we still cannot save ourselves. For at this stage, although the delusions of views have been eliminated, the delusions of thought have not yet been exhausted. When desirable objects appear, one still cannot remain entirely unmoved. Thus, at the shore of birth and death, one is still not free.

Chan Master Longya said: “Those who study the Way must first have a basis for awakening; racing across the water is like a dragon-boat race. Though it is the old pavilion and familiar ground, one does not rest until one has won!” This teaches us that after realizing the Way, we must still press forward with the vigor of dragon boats racing, diligently remove habitual tendencies, and completely restore the luminosity of our original nature. Only then is the great undertaking of crossing the bitter sea of birth and death complete.

Master Yinguang repeatedly said: “Pure Land practice is good; the Pure Land is reliable. Though the Chan school is good, it is dangerous.” He feared that we might awaken to a few principles, take ourselves to be right, and fail to diligently eradicate habitual tendencies. Then, when encountering circumstances, thoughts arise, and birth and death remain unresolved. In the matter of whether birth and death have truly been transcended, there can be no pretense.

If you speak falsehoods to deceive others, it is useless: you deceive only yourself, not others. Therefore, we should practice diligently and arduously, diligently eradicate habitual tendencies, and never be careless or complacent with minor attainments. If you cannot do this, it would be better to recite the Buddha’s name and seek rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. This is spoken from the standpoint of the Pure Land school.

According to the Chan school, if we have truly realized our original nature and seen our true nature, then the true seed has been planted. Even if birth and death are not resolved in this life, when we emerge in the next life, on hearing one thing we will awaken to a thousand, and will thoroughly penetrate it at once.

When we first set out to cultivate the Way, we should make this great vow: “In order to lead sentient beings out of the sea of suffering, I shall not fear hardship or distance. I will certainly attain Buddhahood and widely liberate sentient beings!” If this seed of bodhicitta is deeply planted, it will never disappear and will exert great power life after life. This is what is meant by the inconceivability of the power of vows. Therefore, even those who, after seeing their true nature, still have the deepest habitual tendencies will at most be reborn seven times in heaven and return seven times among humans; then their birth and death will be finished.

Each person has their own past vows and should practice according to their own capacities; one cannot impose a single rule on everyone. Therefore, if you do not fear birth and death, you may roll about in the sea of karma, passing through birth and death while benefiting yourself and others. If you are afraid, then seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The Buddha taught different dharmas to sentient beings of different capacities; there is no fixed dharma. Each should follow their own aspirations and cultivate a practice suited to themselves, without forcing it.

Yuanwu Keqin’s final instruction was:

“To utter the word ‘Buddha’ is to drag in mud and water; to utter the word ‘Chan’ is to be covered with shame.”

To utter even the word “Buddha” is already a defilement, for it is utterly bare and does not establish a single dharma. How could there be names for Buddhas or bodhisattvas? Thus, in the Chan hall, if one utters the word “Buddha,” one must carry three shoulder-loads of water to clean the Chan hall. To utter even the word “Chan” is to become bound by Chan. The Original Face is clear, empty, vast, and unobstructed, with neither gain nor loss; how could it have such idle names?

If you think you have attained something, if there is a Chan for you to possess, then you ought to be filled with shame and alarm. Why? Because you have not yet become truly empty and pure; there is still something before you, and you cannot accord with the Way. One who has truly arrived home is dazed and unknowing all day long: no Buddha, no Chan, not even a “no.” One simply eats when hungry and sleeps when tired.

If there is still a Buddha or a Chan, you must sweep it clean away. Only then can one be a carefree person of the Way, beyond learning and contrivance. Since Buddha cannot be obtained, and Chan too is nonexistent, what past, present, or future remains, or what east, south, west, or north? Once one has truly awakened to emptiness and purity, time and space are both empty words.

Last time, we discussed a koan: one person said that having a Buddha in the course of practice was most intimate, while another said that having no Buddha was most intimate. In fact, both having a Buddha and having no Buddha are wrong; one is still caught up in whether Buddha exists or not, and has not escaped having a foothold. If you entertain the thought, “I practice Chan, realize the Way, uncover my original nature, and see my self-nature,” how ashamed you ought to be, with nowhere to hide your face!

Those long engaged in practice need not be told; beginners and later students must investigate it directly.”

“Those long engaged in practice” refers to people who have practiced Chan for a long time, opened up their intrinsic nature, and brought safeguarding realization to completion. Their great matter is already finished; why should we prattle on? But later students who have only just entered the gate and are beginners, who have not yet seen the Way, must truly investigate and earnestly exert themselves in practice to attain realization. What should they investigate? Please consider the following koan.

Zhaozhou addressed the assembly, saying: “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting. As soon as there are words, there is choosing and rejecting; there is understanding. This old monk does not abide in understanding. Do you still cherish and protect it?”

One day, Zhaozhou ascended the hall and instructed the assembly: “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting.” These two lines are the opening words of Faith in Mind by the Third Patriarch, Chan Master Sengcan. Faith in Mind says: “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting. Simply do not hate or love, and all will be thoroughly clear.”

then all will become utterly clear. This plainly and without concealment tells us that there is nothing difficult about realizing the supreme Way. We need only refrain from discriminating and choosing in our daily activities, from loving and hating, accepting and rejecting; respond with a straightforward mind and abide nowhere, and the great Way will be right before us. Chan Master Zhaozhou commonly used these two lines to instruct the assembly and point everyone directly toward seeing the Way.

From this, we can see that learning the Way is quite straightforward and presents no difficulty. We need only have the courage to sacrifice the empty fame and false gain of the world, relinquish our habitual attachment to illusory circumstances, and immediately be free and complete in our original state. Since we are originally Buddhas, we have merely become deluded by forms and attached to objects of the senses, thereby obscuring the luminosity and wondrous functioning of our intrinsic nature and falling into the state of ordinary beings. Thus, we need not strive to seek it, much less pursue it outwardly.

All sentient beings are originally Buddhas. Yet, painfully unaware of this, they pursue external objects, create karma and undergo karmic retribution, and vainly suffer birth and death in the cycle of the six realms. Is this not deeply unjust? If, in our daily activities, we neither choose nor discriminate, neither love nor hate, neither accept nor reject, and let go of every mind of craving and attachment—dressing in accord with conditions and eating as circumstances allow, with the mind open and empty, pure and bare, not establishing a single dharma—then we are living Buddhas. Thus it is said that practicing the Way is not difficult.

Since practicing the Way is so easy, why does everyone say it is difficult? The difficulty lies in being unwilling to let go. If people were willing to let go, each and every one would be a Buddha complete as they are, without needing to seek anything outside themselves. Ordinary worldly people need not be discussed; yet even the great number of people who study Buddhism and practice Chan are unaware that they are deluded by spiritual powers and wondrous functioning.

In fact, knowing cold and warmth, hunger and fullness, length and shortness—these are already present spiritual powers and wondrous functioning; there is no need to seek anything else. If this were not the wondrous functioning of the true mind, then, as stated above, when your breath no longer comes, could you still act and function freely? What is called shen is boundless wondrous functioning; tong means unobstructedness.

Our numinous and wondrous true mind can do anything and cannot be obstructed; hence it is called spiritual powers. Its present limitations are due to habitual tendencies not yet being exhausted. Like dark clouds obscuring the sun, they prevent its

radiance from shining forth in full. Once habitual defilements are eliminated and the dark clouds disperse, its radiance naturally shines forth in full, and its wondrous functioning naturally unfolds completely. Therefore, the key to our practice is to let go of everything and abide nowhere.

For this reason, Chan Master Sengcan begins by saying: "The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and rejecting." If we keep these two lines, these eight characters, in our hearts at every moment, remain vigilant in every circumstance, and do not engage in discrimination, acceptance, or rejection, then realizing the Way will not be difficult. Conversely, if we shrink back in fear of difficulty or seek something else that is mysterious and marvelous, the difficulties will only multiply.

Layman Pang said: "Difficult, difficult, difficult—like spreading ten loads of sesame seeds on a tree!" This describes the difficulty of practicing the Way without knowing the key and without being willing to devote oneself wholeheartedly and advance with courageous diligence. Pang's wife replied: "Easy, easy, easy—the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West is atop every blade of grass." Every event and every thing is the wondrous functioning of the true mind, complete and ready-made; it is everywhere at hand. It is exceedingly easy—what difficulty is there?

Practicing the Way is like making a revolution: it is a revolution against one's own life, not against the lives of others. One must overthrow the life of one's own attachment to material desires. Wang Yangming spoke of "investigating things and extending knowledge"; this means eliminating the selfishness of material desire and extending innate knowing—that is, bringing forth the true mind. The reason practitioners are unwilling to revolutionize their own lives and instead shield their attached minds lies in their inability to let go.

If you cling to something and refuse to let it go, can you keep it? Everyone must die. If you do not let go now, you will still have to let go in the end. Rather than being unwilling to let go at the end yet having no choice but to do so, becoming a ghost guarding wealth, it is better to be wiser and let go of everything now, becoming a person of the Way who transcends birth and death.

There are even utterly foolish people who place the things they loved in life inside their coffins. What use is that? Can they take them away? It merely invites petty thieves to covet the valuables and commit the disgraceful crimes of digging up graves and robbing tombs. Such foolish acts are truly both sad and laughable. We should now have the wisdom to let go of everything early on and enjoy ease and freedom. Why seek trouble for ourselves by clinging and refusing to let go, only to become aggrieved ghosts trapped in the six realms, unable to end birth and death?

Chan Master Zhaozhou then said: "As soon as there are words, there is choosing and rejecting; there is understanding." Why did he say this? Because when we speak, we are either discussing what is long and short or distinguishing right from wrong. Some old women recite the Buddha's name while criticizing how bad their daughters-in-law are and praising how good their daughters are; this need hardly be discussed.

Even those of us who practice the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate argue in the same way: this teaching is good, that teaching is not; so-and-so has awakened, while so-and-so has not yet awakened. Is this not also creating trouble where there is none by choosing and rejecting? In fact, all dharmas are equal, without superiority or inferiority; all are good.

What is called not good is really a matter of suitability. As with medicine, different illnesses require different medicines; one cannot apply a single pattern in every case and practice only one method. All sentient beings inherently possess Buddha-nature. So long as they practice the Dharma properly, all can awaken.

Do not choose and reject, or abide in any state, such as seeing light, seeing a Buddha, or seeming to have some thing before you that cannot be pushed away or left behind. However good such states may seem, they are all false appearances; they are always states of the aggregates and must not be grasped. The true state is a state of no state. Yet to settle upon a state of no state is still choosing and rejecting and abiding in attachment. One who truly realizes the Way has no state to attain and nothing to say.

The ancient masters said: "Raise the mind and you are already wrong; stir a thought and you have already gone astray." They also said: "Whenever there are words, there is no real meaning." What is being said now is only talk that, out of necessity, falls into duality and multiplicity. This is why Chan Master Zhaozhou said, "As soon as there are words, there is choosing and rejecting."

Then what is wrong with understanding? Must it too be negated? What worldly people call understanding is merely worldly intelligence and cleverness, playing little tricks of the mind. These are acquired, discriminating consciousnesses that shift with circumstances, not the innate great wisdom of prajñā. Even in worldly matters, indulging in petty cleverness is not a good thing.

Did Zheng Banqiao not have the famous saying, "It is hard to be muddleheaded"? It teaches people not to flaunt their cleverness or strive to outdo others, but to be patient and yield to others, thereby avoiding trouble and conflict. For practitioners, indulging in petty cleverness is an even greater taboo. Once one does so, one cannot practice honestly and wholeheartedly, but instead wants to play tricks, look for shortcuts, and go through the motions. One may even claim attainment without having attained it, or mistake what is not for what is; thus one ruins one's own bright prospects for realizing the Way. This is precisely why practitioners may exert themselves for many years without realizing the Way.

Moreover, the more clever one is in worldly knowledge and the more one knows, the worse it becomes. For the more views and knowledge one has, the stronger the discriminations of consciousness become, and the more deeply entrenched attachment to dharmas becomes, making it difficult to remove. Even if one can later eliminate attachment to self, attachment to the dharma-self cannot be eliminated because of the cognitive hindrances. Therefore, the Pure Land school also says that only those of great wisdom or great simplicity can succeed in Buddha-recitation. This is the reason.

Long ago, when Confucius asked Laozi about the Way, Laozi said, "Smash your intelligence!" Was he not likewise teaching Confucius to relinquish worldly intelligence and cleverness before he could enter the Way? Therefore, to enter the Way, one must certainly negate "understanding" and let the mind become utterly open and empty; only then can the great wisdom of prajñā arise. Those who have brought cultivation of mind to completion do not contend with the world. Dazed and unknowing all day long, how could they discuss what is long and short? Thus the master said: "This old monk does not abide in understanding."

This statement by the master reveals his deeply compassionate concern; he does not hesitate to drag in mud and water in order to address people earnestly. Even the "understanding" of which he speaks is not established. It appears to cut everything off cleanly, without the slightest trace of attachment; yet once there are words, there is a foothold. To say that one does not abide in "understanding" is precisely to retain "understanding." If there truly were no "understanding," what would there be to say about abiding or not abiding?

The first words of the Heart Sūtra are "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva." It is generally said that this is another name for Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. But the Heart Sūtra teaches students the practice of the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate; it does not refer exclusively to any particular bodhisattva, but broadly to great bodhisattvas who realize the Way through the method of contemplating the mind.

"Contemplate" means contemplative illumination; "self" means intrinsic nature, not the physical body; and "abide" means to remain in the original ground.

This means that, at the outset of practice, one must constantly contemplate one's own intrinsic nature, abiding in the original ground without wavering. As the practice gradually matures, "contemplation" is no longer needed, and the "self" remains unmoved in the original ground. Going a step further, even the "self" is no longer needed: self and other merge into one, and the "self" naturally dissolves. Finally, as the practice deepens, the one is transformed into zero; there is nowhere it is not, yet nowhere it is. Even "abiding" has nowhere to stand. Now, when the Master says, "It is not within understanding," this is precisely where something remains, leaving no small opening. Yuanwu commented, "The thief has already revealed himself!" There is good reason for this.

Because these words contain an opening, they have already given rise to the occasion for a challenge. The next sentence—"Do you still safeguard and cherish it?"—brings the whole body crashing to the ground.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Originally there is not a single thing; where could dust alight?" Since there is not a single thing, what is there to safeguard or cherish? To tell people now to safeguard it—does this not amount to attachment to a thing, inviting further scrutiny? Thus Yuanwu commented, "Defeated! Just right for another thrust!" Could the old master himself have been unaware? Did he fail to examine himself and bring suffering upon himself? No. A great master moves freely in every direction, gathering in and releasing at will. He is not afraid to thrust himself into a tiger's mouth and offer himself to be bitten, for he has his own means of liberation in danger and his own opportunity to find life in a desperate situation.

Otherwise, how could one speak of vast spiritual powers and boundless wondrous functioning? Read on, and you will see for yourselves.

At that time a monk stepped forward and asked, "Since it is not within understanding, what is there to safeguard and cherish?"

Sure enough, the master who would press the charge had arrived. He seized your arm—where could you go? Once a practitioner has reached the state of being utterly pure and bare, with nothing whatsoever "known," what is there left to preserve? What is there to cherish? For ordinary people, this is inescapable and leaves them speechless. But in the hands of a great master, there is naturally the ability to turn about and breathe freely, the skill to turn danger into safety.

Zhaozhou said, "I do not know either."

Wondrous indeed! It seems that he has reached a dead end, yet he retreats and opens up vastness. Yuanwu commented, "Retreat three thousand miles!" Is this praise or criticism? Do you all know?

Having heard this, do not mistakenly think that the old master was finished—that the monk's question had stumped him, and that even Yuanwu's "retreat three thousand miles" meant that he had conceded defeat and had no choice but to admit, "I do not know either." If you think so, Zhaozhou and Yuanwu have deceived you. By "do not know," he means that here there is neither a knower nor anything known: utterly bare, not establishing a single dharma. There is nothing—so what could I tell you? Furthermore, intrinsic nature itself is numinous knowing. If one adds another "knowing," it is like putting a head on top of one's head, completely disfiguring one's face. Therefore, knowing too must be eradicated.

Regarding the single word “know,” Master Shenhui once said, “The single word ‘know’ is the gate of all wonders.” He taught everyone to recognize this “numinous knowing” that gives rise to knowing hunger and knowing cold. It is the Buddha-nature of us humans. So long as one safeguards it continuously and closely, without clinging to things or emotions—knowing yet without knowing, without knowing yet knowing—one realizes the Way.

Later patriarchs saw that many Chan practitioners had become attached to this “knowing” and fallen into a fixed mold. In order to rescue them from their entanglements, they changed the saying to: “The single word ‘know’ is the gate of all calamities.” Thus, whether it is calamity or blessing, wisdom or foolishness, does not lie in speech or writing, but in whether the person himself understands and recognizes it.

The monk said, “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you say that it is not within understanding?”

This monk, too, was an adept. He knew the intention behind Zhaozhou’s words. Yet in saying this, he exposed an even more serious flaw. Having gained the principle, he would not yield to another; how could he allow Zhaozhou to evade the matter? He pressed him: “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you say that it is not within understanding?” This thrust was no small matter. Without considerable grounding, one could not even pose such a question; it directly leaves one unable to respond. Yuanwu commented, “He is driven up a tree!” This shows how difficult it was to turn about and evade the challenge.

Indeed! Since you have reached the point where there is no capacity to know and nothing known, why say that it is not within understanding? In saying that it is not within understanding, are you not precisely showing that there is something you know? If you know something yet say that nothing is known, is that not self-contradictory?

Had this question been put to you, you truly would have been left speechless. But take note: so-called not knowing does not mean being genuinely muddleheaded, knowing nothing at all, unable to distinguish right from wrong or long from short. Would that still be a Buddha or bodhisattva? Did you not see the Sixth Patriarch say to Yongjia, “You have deeply grasped the meaning of the unborn.”

Yongjia said, “How could the unborn have any intention?” The Patriarch said, “Without intention, who could discriminate?” Yongjia said, “Discrimination too is not intention.” Thus, not knowing is knowing without knowing; without knowing, there is nothing that is not known.

Not knowing means non-abiding and nonattachment to appearances: in every matter there is no trace of clinging, and once something has passed, it is over. Knowing everything means knowing every matter: mountains are mountains, water is water, long is long, and short is short. Though one discriminates, one does not fix one’s mind on it. It is like empty space containing the myriad forms without hindrance; it is not a dead state of knowing nothing and having nothing.

When the Sixth Patriarch spoke of “originally there is not a single thing,” later patriarchs feared that people would misunderstand and become attached to stubborn emptiness. They therefore added: “Within not a single thing is an inexhaustible treasury: there are flowers, a moon, and terraces.” Intrinsic nature has boundless numinous functioning and inexhaustible subtle wonder; it is not dull and insentient. If it were a dead emptiness, without appearances, functioning, or awareness, what value would Buddhism have? Could it have continued down to the present day?

This monk did not fail to understand this principle. First, he wished to meet Master Zhaozhou face-to-face; second, he wished to make the subtle and hidden points of practice clear, so that they might be transmitted to later generations as a model. Therefore, at this critical juncture, he seized the opening in Zhaozhou’s words and forced him to utter the final word.

Zhaozhou said, “You have obtained what you asked about; make your bows and withdraw!”

The Master had his own means of remaining unafraid in danger and overturning heaven and earth. At the very instant when escape seemed impossible and he appeared about to be pinned down, he could skillfully avoid the edge and pass through easily, safe and sound. What kind of practice is this? Without reaching complete maturity, could one have such light, effortless skill? Truly remarkable! Even Yuanwu had to praise him here, saying, “This old thief is fortunate to have this move!” What move is this? Do you all know? Bah! Even after it has been rubbed right past you, you still do not know!

At this point: “Clouds disperse and water flows away; people are silent and heaven and earth are empty.” The message has been exhausted; the great matter is complete. There is no need to ask further. Thus the Master says: after making your bows in thanks, go back and rest. This wordless speaking is the final word! Yet those who do not understand all say that Zhaozhou gave no answer. Is that not an injustice?

Formerly, a monk in the assembly of Fifth Patriarch Yan asked the Fifth Patriarch for instruction: “What is the final word?” The Patriarch said, “Your senior fellow disciple understands the final word. Go ask him.”

The monk asked his senior fellow disciple. Just as the latter was returning from a mountain outing, the monk was drawing water for him to wash his feet, and then asked, “What is the final word?” The senior disciple lifted water with his foot, splashed it in the monk’s face, and scolded, “What final word?!” The monk wept and complained to the Patriarch, who said, “I told you that he understands the final word!” At these words, the monk attained great awakening. Look! How humorous and ingenious this final

word is! How swiftly and lightly the monk awakened! Chan is just this nimble and incisive; truly, no other school can compare. Do you all understand?

The monk who questioned in this koan was no ordinary person. He possessed great talent to order heaven and earth, dared to stroke the tiger's whiskers, and engaged in a Dharma battle with a great master. It was splendid and thoroughly brought to completion, and we have gained no small benefit from it.

Reading koans is like looking into a mirror: see what stage your own practice has reached and whether it differs from that of the ancients. If there is any deviation, correct it promptly. If your practice has not yet reached that point and you do not understand, that is of no consequence. Simply follow the koan's instructions, set the course straight, and align yourself with the right direction. When your practice reaches maturity in the future, you will naturally accord with it and will not stray onto a wrong path.

From this splendid Dharma battle in the koan, the teachings we have received may be summarized as follows:

First, realizing the Way is not difficult. One need only recognize that all objects and circumstances are like flowers in empty space and the moon reflected in water: unobtainable and beyond grasping. Let the mind become utterly open and empty, without the slightest clinging or abiding. Never indulge in love or hate, grasping or rejection.

Second, in practice one must be able to gather in and release. In everyday activity, one must apply this flexibly rather than rigidly; constantly examine oneself and turn the light back at every place.

Third, after seeing the Way, one must safeguard realization continuously and closely, without neglect. Yet even in this work of safeguarding realization, one must not abide in anything. One cannot safeguard for the sake of safeguarding; one must be flexible, as if safeguarding yet not safeguarding. When safeguarding realization becomes fully mature, safeguarding is no longer present, and letting be is not seen either. When Lingxun visited Guizong, he asked after awakening, "How should I safeguard realization?" Guizong said, "A single speck in the eye, and flowers in empty space fall everywhere." This means that if there is safeguarding realization, it is like a speck in the eye and is already not right.

Fourth, although there is no knowing, one must not fall into an indeterminate state, dead and motionless. When the monastery gardener asked Liangshan, "What should one do when the household thief is hard to guard against?" Liangshan said, "If you recognize it, it will not wrong you!" The gardener asked further, "What happens after one recognizes it?" Liangshan said, "Demote it to the land of the unborn." The gardener asked again, "Could this be the place in which one settles one's life?" Liangshan said, "Dead water does not harbor dragons." If one dies there and does not move, one is finished.

The koan has now been explained. Please consider the verse by Chan Master Xuedou below:

The ultimate Way is not difficult; at the beginning of words and the beginning of speech.

One contains many kinds; two has no duality.

At heaven's edge, the sun rises and the moon sets; before the railing, the mountains are deep and the water cold.

When the skull has exhausted knowing, where can joy stand? The dragon's cry in the withered tree has not yet dried away.

Difficult, difficult! Choosing and understanding—look for yourself!

Chan Master Xuedou begins by bringing out that the ultimate Way is not difficult. He then says, "at the beginning of words and the beginning of speech," teaching us not to regard the great Way as distant or awakening as difficult. It is not elsewhere; it is right before us—at the beginning of words and speech—that is, before language takes form, before a single thought arises. If at that moment you turn the light inward for a glance—"What is this?"—and suddenly awaken, then you realize the Way. There is nothing difficult about it.

This line, "speech and words are both straightforward," seems to have another level of meaning: namely, that the words "the supreme Way is not difficult" are entirely true and correct. Yet, in order to suit the Chan opportunity, it is more appropriate for us to adopt the former explanation.

Long ago, there was a master who investigated the huatou, "What was my Original Face before my parents were born?" He investigated it for many years without awakening. Later, he encountered a great master and asked him compassionately to give him an expedient instruction.

The great master asked, "What huatou are you investigating?" He replied, "I am investigating: What was my Original Face before my parents were born?" The great master said, "You are investigating too far away. You should look nearer at hand." He asked, "How should I look nearer at hand?" The great master said, "Do not look to before your parents were born. You must look at what it is before a single thought arises." At these words, the Chan practitioner had a great awakening.

All of you sitting here, please look: what is it before a single thought arises? It shines from each person's face, brightly illuminating everything without the slightest attachment. It has neither knowledge nor perception, yet it is not like wood or

stone. What is it? Direct your full energy sharply right here: that is realizing the Way. Thus it is said, “The supreme Way is not difficult; speech and words are both straightforward.”

Next it says: “The one contains many kinds; the two have no duality.” Why does it say that the one contains many kinds, while the two have no duality? The one is the one and only true mind; the two are the ever-changing forms and appearances. All the myriad differentiated appearances are manifested by the one thought of the true mind; therefore, the two have no duality. The one and only true mind has boundless wondrous functioning and can give rise to all phenomena; therefore, the one contains many kinds.

As the saying goes, “One is all, and all is one.” This is its meaning. Those who truly realize the Way forget both mind and circumstances; they become continuous and undivided. Every aspect is the Way, and every thing is wholly real. Such are those who have truly entered the Dharma gate of nonduality.

Since “the one contains many kinds, and the two have no duality,” and all has become continuous and undivided, the whole world is at peace and there is nothing to be done. Practitioners have utterly exhausted their calculations; all return to simplicity and authenticity, wholly following what is natural. Thus it is said: “At the edge of heaven, the sun rises and the moon sets; before the railing, the mountains are deep and the water cold.” When the sun rises in the sky, the moon sets in the west; the higher and deeper the mountains beyond the gate, the colder the water becomes.

Such scenes, wholly uncontrived and entirely natural, are precisely the wondrous functioning without contrivance of practitioners whose minds are empty and non-abiding, living and acting in accord with conditions. Yuanwu said, “How can practitioners proceed with ease and stability? When wind comes, the trees move; when waves come, the boats rise. Spring brings growth, summer brings flourishing, autumn brings harvest, and winter brings storage. With a mind equally at peace in all things, all naturally comes to an end.” Is this not simply following what is natural, without contrivance? When practitioners reach this point, whether you call heaven earth or earth heaven, speech and words are both straightforward: there is nothing that is not so. Next:

When the skull’s consciousness is exhausted, what joy can remain? The dragon’s chant in the dead tree has not yet faded away.

These two lines weave together phrases from ancient koans of questioning about the Way in praise of the present koan: “knowing yet without knowing; without knowing, yet knowing all.” Long ago, a monk asked Chan Master Xiangyan, “What is the Way?” Xiangyan said, “A dragon chants within a dead tree.” The monk went on to ask, “What is a person of the Way?” Xiangyan said, “Eyes within a skull.”

The monk did not awaken and brought the matter to Shishuang, asking, “What is a dragon chanting within a dead tree?” Shishuang said, “It still carries joy.” The monk asked, “What are eyes within a skull?” Shishuang said, “It still carries consciousness.” The monk still did not awaken, so he again asked Caoshan, “What is a dragon chanting within a dead tree?” Caoshan said, “The bloodline has not been cut off.”

The monk asked, “What are eyes within a skull?” Caoshan said, “It cannot be exhausted.” The monk asked, “Who can hear it?” Caoshan said, “Throughout the whole earth, there is not one person who does not hear it.” The monk asked, “May I ask what passage or phrase the dragon’s chant is?” Caoshan said, “I do not know what passage or phrase it is; all who hear it are lost.” He further composed this verse: “The dragon’s chant in the dead tree is true realization of the Way; when the skull’s consciousness is exhausted, the eyes first become bright. When joy and consciousness are exhausted, all news is exhausted; how can the person concerned distinguish purity amid defilement?”

The dragon’s chant in the dead tree and the eyes within a skull spoken of in this koan symbolize the great Way of true emptiness and wondrous presence: wordless yet leaving nothing unsaid, unconscious yet leaving nothing unknown. Interwoven with the instructions of Chan Masters Shishuang and Caoshan, they carry layer upon layer of prajñā flavor and endless spiritual vistas. Their meaning may be briefly analyzed as follows:

1. Non-speaking is true speaking, and non-hearing is true hearing; non-knowing is true knowing, and non-seeing is true seeing.

2. Once one speaks of a dragon’s chant or skull-eyes, there is already speech within non-speech and consciousness within non-consciousness. It is like getting sand in one’s eyes: it does not make the eyes clear.

3. Although the great Way is vast and empty, without sound or trace, without speech or consciousness, it is not insentient like wood or stone, but possesses boundless wondrous functioning.

4. Those who have initially awakened to the Way cannot be without joy; hence first-bhūmi bodhisattvas are said to abide on the Ground of Joy. At this time, habitual defilements have not yet been exhausted, and deluded consciousness still remains.

5. After awakening to the Way, if one falls into a sacred state or becomes attached to a fixed pattern, this too has not been thoroughly eradicated.

6. At the summit of the wondrously lofty peak, not even a needle may be admitted, and no discussion is permitted. Yet on the second peak, in order to guide beginners, there is no harm in privately allowing carts and horses to pass and revealing a little of

the scene.

Because these many meanings are present, Shishuang and Caoshan spoke of “still carrying joy,” “the bloodline has not been cut off,” and “it cannot be exhausted.”

Xuedou possessed great talent. He strung together these phrases from the inquiry into the Way and used them to praise this koan; it truly shows the marvelous hand of a master thief. When the skull’s discriminating deluded consciousness has been exhausted, what joy or sorrow can remain? The dragon’s chant in the dead tree—insentient things expounding the Dharma—is an ardent and unceasing exposition that can never be exhausted. This ingeniously joins the purport of this koan: though it is not within explicit clarity, it is not without speaking or without knowing.

Concerning insentient things expounding the Dharma, Patriarch Dongshan once visited Reverend Guishan and asked, “I recently heard of National Teacher Nanyang Zhong’s teaching on insentient things expounding the Dharma, but I have not yet fathomed its subtle meaning.”

Guishan said, “Do you still remember it, Venerable?”

Dongshan said, “I remember it.”

Guishan said, “Try recounting it once.”

After Dongshan had recounted it, Guishan said, “I have it here as well, but I rarely encounter one fit to receive it.”

Dongshan said, “I do not understand. I beg the master to instruct me.”

Guishan raised his whisk and said, “Do you understand?” (Who is it that raises the whisk? Is this not precisely wordless speech—the Dharma expounded by the insentient?)

Dongshan said, “I do not understand.” (What a pity—he let the opportunity pass.)

Later, Dongshan visited Yunyan and asked, “When insentient things expound the Dharma, who can hear it?”

Yunyan said, “The insentient can hear it.” (Wonderful! Who is it when delusion has ended and emotional attachment has vanished?)

Dongshan said, “Does the Reverend hear it?”

Yunyan said, “If I heard it, you would not hear me expounding the Dharma.”

This saying is rather obscure and seems to require a brief explanation:

1. If I heard it, not only would there be a hearer and something heard, but there would also be a dharma. With subject and object opposed, and the view of dharmas not yet eliminated, I would not be a person of the Way. How then could I occupy the master’s seat and expound the Dharma?

2. If I heard it, I would be the same as the insentient. The insentient take non-speaking as true speaking; it is not verbal speech.

3. If I heard it, I would be on the level of all the sages. But the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya of the sages are not the true Buddha, nor are they the one who teaches the Dharma. I am now speaking to you: I do not abide in the ordinary, nor can the sacred be attained.

Master Dongshan said, “Why is it that I do not hear?”

Yunyan again raised his whisk and asked, “Do you hear?”

Dongshan said, “I do not hear.” (He was still not awake.)

Yunyan said, “When I expound the Dharma, you still do not hear it. How much less could you hear insentient things expounding the Dharma?”

Dongshan said, “Which scripture or teaching speaks of insentient things expounding the Dharma?”

Yunyan said, “Have you not seen the Amitābha Sūtra, which says: ‘The waters, birds, and forests all recollect the Buddha and recollect the Dharma’?”

Dongshan had an insight at this point. (He was already very late.) He then composed this verse: “How wondrous, how wondrous! Insentient things expounding the Dharma is inconceivable. If one listens with the ears, one will never understand; only when one hears sound at the place of seeing can one know.”

This true speaking of the insentient and the speechless cannot be attained through hearing with the ears. Thus Caoshan said, “I do not know what passage or phrase it is, and all who hear it are lost [lose their lives].” Do you, gathered here, recognize within the chaotic realm of dust before you the mysterious and profound Way that transcends speech and cuts off hearing—the purity amid defilement?

Insentient things expounding the Dharma is not so difficult to understand. When one investigates the profound principle to its most subtle point, it cannot be expressed in words; one can only comprehend it inwardly. Is it not also so with worldly matters at their most subtle: “Hearts have a single intuitive point through which they communicate,” and “At such a moment, silence surpasses speech”? This is the gloss on “only when one hears sound at the place of seeing can one know.”

Chan Master Baizhang once said, “All language, the rivers and mountains, and the great earth must each be turned back to oneself before it can be so.” After Xuedou completed his verse on the koan, he too finally turned it back to oneself, saying to people:

Difficult, difficult! Choose and distinguish clearly—look for yourself!

Laywoman Pang said, “Easy, easy, easy—the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West is atop every blade of grass!” Does not this verse also begin, “The supreme Way is not difficult; speech and words are both straightforward”? There are still more direct sayings by patriarchs of every age that point straight to seeing one’s nature. Is realizing the Way not very easy? Why, then, is it also called difficult? Because realizing the Way is not merely a matter of empty words; it must accord with actual circumstances. There are indeed difficulties involved. Let us briefly list ten of them below:

1. It is difficult to arouse a sense of doubt, and difficult to still deluded thoughts. If one investigates Chan without arousing a sense of doubt, there will be no day of awakening. One should firmly hold to a huatou that cannot be penetrated—one cannot spit it out or swallow it down—and investigate it with all one’s strength, until one does not know one is walking when walking or sitting when sitting. Only then can one accord with it. In mantra recitation and Buddha-recitation, one must let the mind recite and the ears hear, exerting oneself to the utmost without interruption; only then can deluded thoughts be dissolved imperceptibly.

2. The great Way is right before us, yet students do not recognize it. An ancient worthy said, “Precisely because it is so intimate, it takes longer to recognize.” These are not empty words.

3. The clever tend to drift into written words and verbal talk, without attending to actual cultivation; the honest, meanwhile, often die beneath the words themselves. This is why the style of this school does not flourish.

IV. Difficulty in distinguishing the genuine from the false. Xuan Sha said: “Students of the Way fail to recognize the true only because they have always taken the cognitive spirit for it. This is the root of birth and death throughout measureless kalpas; fools call it the Original Person.” To operate within the cognitive spirit and call it awakening to the Way is especially prevalent today.

V. Dead water does not harbor dragons. Students often delight in abiding in meditative appearances, fall into an indeterminate state, and sit in a ghostly cave without knowing it.

VI. Abiding in meditative appearances and taking oneself to have attained something. In samādhi, students may occasionally encounter a sacred realm and take themselves to have attained realization. They hold onto it and refuse to let go, dying beneath that state. Those who cling to “bliss” cannot leave the desire realm; those who cling to “luminosity” cannot leave the form realm; those who cling to “emptiness” cannot leave the formless realm; and so forth.

VII. Confusing practice with awakening to the Way. Many students do not understand the difference between practice and awakening to the Way. Mistakenly taking the development of some spiritual power or the free flow of the channels and energies as awakening to the Way, they regard its absence as proof that they have not awakened. They do not know that, however great one’s spiritual powers and however good one’s practice, if one does not recognize the true mind, one will ultimately have somewhere to fall and will not transcend birth and death. This is certainly not awakening to the Way.

VIII. Arrogance and impatience are difficult to overcome. Before awakening to the Way, students are often anxious for quick results and fail through impatience. After awakening, they may fail through arrogance because of their delight. Impatience easily leads to collapse, and arrogance easily leads to madness; both are grave taboos for students and must be urgently eliminated. Yet students often fail to notice them, or conceal their own shortcomings and pay them no heed. Thus, many begin diligently but end in laziness, or become wildly arrogant and unrestrained. Is this not one of the crucial reasons why there are many practitioners today but few who realize the Way?

IX. It is difficult to safeguard realization diligently and eliminate old habits. To eradicate at once the old habitual tendencies of attachment to appearances, accumulated over many lives and kalpas, is certainly no easy matter. As the saying goes, “Mountains and rivers may readily change, but habitual tendencies are hard to alter.” Unless one is constantly aware and illuminating, cherishes one’s original genuineness, and diligently transforms oneself, it will truly be difficult to reach the day when they are completely purified. Yet students often become satisfied with little, thinking that a single awakening is sufficient

and making no effort to transform themselves. Not only can they then make no further progress in differentiated wisdom, but they also risk falling into “delusion after awakening.” How can one fail to be cautious?

X. It is difficult to realize perfect non-abiding. Many students think that once they have awakened to the one that can speak, understand, clear its throat, and move its arms—the Buddha of their innate nature—they have already arrived home; to continue practicing would, they think, be attachment to dharmas. They do not realize that this is only initial awakening, not original awakening. They must still rely on it to realize original awakening, cultivating diligently until they attain great awakening. Others become attached to the essence of their nature and abide in the state of realization. Unknowingly, they fall into the realm of the sacred and do not leave their old rut behind. These are all grave faults that prevent the perfect realization of bodhi.

All these are major difficulties in the course of practice: a deviation by the smallest fraction can lead to an error of a thousand miles. There are other, relatively minor details that need not be listed one by one. Because there are so many such difficulties, Xuedou said: “Distinguish clearly and examine yourself.”

He admonished everyone to reflect upon themselves and see where they stand: Are they discriminating and selecting among particular dharmas, people, and affairs, or are they sitting in their understanding and displaying the cognitive spirit? Are they attached to some state of the aggregates and complacently taking themselves to have attained something, or are they manipulating their vital essence and spirit, pursuing the marvels of spiritual powers? Are they arrogant and self-satisfied, falling into madness, or are they making their living in emptiness, bliss, and luminosity? … One must examine oneself carefully and not be muddleheaded or vague.

Please examine yourselves. If there is any deviation, correct it promptly, lest you enter a mountain of treasure only to return empty-handed and waste an entire lifetime. That would indeed be most fortunate!

Appendix: Miscellaneous Poems

Tang dynasty: Pang Yun

Before knowing the dragon palace, do not speak of pearls; one who knows pearls speaks differently from you.

An empty fist is merely what infants believe in; how could it be used to deceive an old man?

The myriad dharmas arise from mind; when mind arises, the myriad dharmas arise. When dharmas arise, they are ended in that very day; coming and going are but vain activity.

I send these words to practitioners of the Way: when emptiness arises, take care not to give rise to it. If you can comprehend this principle, without stirring you will emerge from the deep pit.

Gazing to the farthest limit at what lies before me, I find not a single person in the solitude. Turning my head to look behind, not even a shadow follows my body.

If consciousness can be free of all hindrance, it will extend throughout the dharma realm, equal to empty space.

Without relying on seated meditation or holding precepts, one is serenely liberated—why toil at practice?

The affairs of daily life are no different; I alone naturally accord with them. In every particular, there is neither grasping nor rejecting; nowhere should one contrive deviation.

Who takes vermilion and purple as titles? Green mountains are utterly free of a speck of dust. Spiritual powers and wondrous functioning are nothing more than carrying water and hauling firewood.

The ten directions gather together; each and every one studies non-contrivance. This is the site for selecting Buddhas; with mind empty, one returns having passed the examination.

Why cast a hook into mirage-water where there are no fish? You seek fish where none can be found, and I laugh at your sorrow.

Poor old Chan Master Guyin—how could he see this and not be ashamed, having been spat upon?

(III) How Is the Venerable Mazu?

The introductory pointer says: With a single device and a single circumstance, a single word and a single phrase, one merely seeks an entryway—yet one cuts a sore into sound flesh, making a nest and a den. When great functioning appears before one, it preserves no rules. One merely seeks to know that there is a matter beyond, covering heaven and earth, yet one cannot get hold of it. To say that it is so is acceptable, and to say that it is not so is also acceptable—this is overly timid. To say that it is so is unacceptable, and to say that it is not so is also unacceptable—this is overly perilous and isolated. Without falling into either of these two paths, what is it? Please try to bring it forth and see.

[3] The Case:

Great Master Ma was unwell. [This fellow reveals quite a bit. He drags others into it as well.]

The monastery superintendent asked, “How has Your Reverence been recently?” [All four hundred and four illnesses break out at once. Do not send off a deceased monk until three days have passed. That is skillful indeed—within the way of benevolence and righteousness.]

The Great Master said, “Sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha.” [Exceptionally fresh indeed. The karmic affinity of rearing a son.]

If the patriarchs had not met people through the fundamental matter, how could the radiance of this Way have been attained? In this koan, if you know where the point lies, you will stride alone through the crimson heavens. If you do not know where it lies, you will often go astray before the cliff of dead trees. When a person of genuine capacity reaches this point, they must have the ability to “drive off the plowman’s ox and seize the hungry man’s food”; only then will they see how Great Master Ma guided people.

Nowadays many people say, “Great Master Ma was responding to the monastery superintendent.” Fortunately, that has nothing to do with it. Many in the assembly nowadays misunderstand it, stare wide-eyed, and say, “Here it is: the left eye is the sun-faced Buddha, and the right eye is the moon-faced Buddha.” What connection does that have with it? They would not have dreamed of it even in a donkey year! They simply keep missing what the ancients were doing.

Now, when Great Master Ma spoke in this way, where was his intent? Some say, “Bring a bowl of Pingwei Powder.” What handle is there in that? At this point, how can one proceed securely? Therefore it is said: “The road beyond is not transmitted by a thousand sages. Students wear out their bodies like monkeys grasping at reflections.” This very phrase, “sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha,” is exceedingly difficult to see. Even Xuedou found it difficult to versify. Yet because he saw through it completely, he devoted the work of his whole life to commenting on it. Do you all wish to see Xuedou? Look at the following passage:

Sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha. [When he opens his mouth, his very heart is revealed. Like two mirrors facing one another, with no image between them.]

What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns! [Far too lofty. Do not slight him for being fine. He may be valued or despised.]

For twenty years I have endured hardship. [It was you yourself who fell among the weeds; it has nothing to do with this mountain monk. Like a mute person eating bitter melon.]

For your sake, I have entered the blue dragon’s cave several times. [Why need it be so? Take care not to misdirect your mind. Nor should you say that there is nothing extraordinary.]

How unjust! [It grieves one to death! A grieving person should not speak of grief to another grieving person.]

It can be told. [To whom can it be told? Tell it to a grieving person, and grief will kill them.]

Clear-eyed patch-robed monks, do not take this lightly. [You must be all the more careful. Ha! You have retreated three thousand miles.]

During the reign of Emperor Shenzong, he himself claimed that this verse satirized the state, and therefore refused to have it included in the canon. Xuedou first cited: “Sun-faced Buddha, moon-faced Buddha.” Having cited it, he then said, “What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns!” Tell me, what was his intent? It has just been stated directly: he commented on it head-on. Therefore it is said, “Casting a hook across the four seas, one catches only fierce dragons.” This one line alone has settled it.

Afterward, Xuedou himself versified why he had devoted his life to inquiry: “For twenty years I have endured hardship; for your sake, I have entered the blue dragon’s cave several times.” What is this like? It is just like someone entering a blue dragon’s cave to retrieve a pearl. Later, he shattered the lacquer bucket. He had thought there would be something extraordinarily marvelous, but it turned out that all that was needed was: “What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns!”

Tell me, where do Xuedou’s words land? You must step back and look for yourself; only then will you see where they land.

Have you not seen this? Attendant Pou of Xingyang answered Yuanlu Gong’s question: “When Sāgara emerges from the sea, heaven and earth quake. When it is presented face to face, what is the matter?” Pou said, “When the king of garuḍas rules the universe, who within it can hold up his head?” Yuan said, “If one who holds up his head is suddenly encountered, then what?” Pou said, “Like a falcon seizing a dove—you do not believe it; only when tested before a skull will you know it is true.”

Yuan said, “In that case, bend low at the breast and retreat three steps.” Pou said, “You little turtle beneath Mount Sumeru’s seat, do not wait until you are branded on the forehead and sent back again.” Thus, what indeed are the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors! Many people fail to see Xuedou’s intent and keep saying that it satirizes the state. To understand it thus is merely a view born of emotion. This is what Chanyue wrote in his “Song of the Young Nobleman”:

In splendid brocade, a goshawk held in hand, he strolls idly, his bearing full of disdain.

He knows nothing at all of the hardships of tilling and harvesting. What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?

Xuedou said: “How unjust! It can be told. Clear-eyed patch-robed monks, do not take this lightly.” How many people make their living in the blue dragon’s cave! Even if you have an eye upon the crown of your head and a talisman behind your elbow, even if you are a clear-eyed patch-robed monk whose illumination penetrates the four continents, when you reach this point, do not take it lightly. You must be careful indeed. —Lectures by Master Yuanyin

Case Three: Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha

The teachings are the Buddha’s mouth; Chan is the Buddha’s mind. The Chan school is the authentic tradition of Buddhadharma, a direct transmission originating with our fundamental teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha. At the assembly on Vulture Peak, Śākyamuni Buddha held up a flower, and Venerable Kāśyapa smiled. The Buddha said: “I possess the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa, the true form of the formless, and the subtle Dharma gate. It is not established in words and letters, but is a special transmission outside the teachings. I entrust it to Mahākāśyapa.”

Therefore, Venerable Kāśyapa became the first patriarch. The transmission then passed successively down to Venerable Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch. This is known as the “four sevens of the Western Heaven” (for four times seven is twenty-eight). At that time, civilization in our country was flourishing, people’s wholesome roots had matured, and the conditions for liberation were ripe. Thus Bodhidharma was moved to cross the seas from the West and become the first patriarch in China.

He first met Emperor Wu of Liang (see the earlier discussion, “The First Principle of the Sacred Truths”). The emperor did not resonate with him, so Bodhidharma crossed the river into Wei. After facing a wall for nine years, he encountered Master Shenguang and transmitted the Dharma to him as the second patriarch. The transmission then continued successively until Master Huineng became the sixth patriarch. This is called the “two threes of the Eastern Land” (for two times three is six). After the Sixth Patriarch, the lamp was divided and passed on, chiefly through two great branches: one through Qingyuan Xingsi and the other through Nanyue Huairang. The “Great Master Ma” in this koan was a Dharma heir of Chan Master Nanyue Huairang.

Chan Master Mazu Daoyi of Jiangxi, whose lay surname was Ma and who was commonly called “Great Master Ma,” practiced with great diligence in his early years, continually sitting in meditation. Chan Master Huairang recognized that he was a vessel for the Dharma and asked him, “What do you seek by sitting in meditation?” He replied, “I seek to become a Buddha.”

Chan Master Huairang then took a brick and began grinding it where Mazu was meditating. Scrape! Scrape! The noise made Mazu impatient and disturbed his meditation. Mazu rose from his seat and asked, “What are you grinding that brick for?” Chan Master Huairang replied, “I want to grind it into a mirror.”

Mazu said, “Can a brick be ground into a mirror?” Chan Master Huairang had been waiting for just this question and immediately used the occasion to ask in return, “Since grinding a brick cannot make a mirror, how can sitting in meditation make a Buddha?” This question was no small matter; it instantly jolted Mazu awake from his deluded dream. One cannot practice and realize the Way by sitting meditation alone. Sitting meditation is a practice for eliminating deluded thoughts, but one must also temper oneself amid all kinds of circumstances and polish away habitual tendencies.

Habitual tendencies cannot be entirely eliminated by sitting meditation alone. One must temper oneself in all kinds of favorable and adverse circumstances; only then can they be completely eliminated.

Moreover, if one relies only on sitting meditation, one may make the mind dead and enter the cessation samādhi. Not only will one then fail to become a Buddha, one will instead be fit to become earth, wood, metal, or stone! Mazu had exceptionally sharp faculties. At these words, he immediately recognized his error and asked Chan Master Huairang, “Then what should I do?” Chan Master Huairang was a great master with extraordinary methods for awakening students, so he asked Mazu in return, “When an ox pulls a cart and the cart does not move, should one strike the cart or strike the ox?”

What was Chan Master Huairang driving at? Why did he ask this? The cart represents the body; the ox represents Buddha-nature. To practice and become a Buddha, you must realize Buddha-nature. Confining the body in one place without movement is like striking the cart. Mind-nature is the ox: when the mind moves, the body moves. It is the mind that must be cultivated. (Someone interjected, “Oh! Then one should strike the ox.”

) Ha ha! It is not right to answer that one should strike the ox either. If there is an ox to strike, you have fallen to one side. Have you still not understood the line from the preceding koan: “When the skull-consciousness is exhausted, what joy can remain? The dragon’s cry in the dead tree has not yet faded away.”

(Someone asked, “Then what answer would be right?” The old master said, “How was the question asked?” The person asked, “Strike the cart or strike the ox?” The old master gave a sharp shout: “Strike you!”) There is a set of “Oxherding Pictures and Verses,” illustrated with pictures and text, which explains the process of cultivating and safeguarding realization. After finding the ox (which symbolizes seeing one’s true nature), the ox is still wild in temperament (symbolizing that habitual tendencies remain heavy). One must still hold the reins tight, raise the whip high, and watch over it carefully (symbolizing the process of

eliminating habitual tendencies and safeguarding realization). Only when, in the end, there is neither person nor ox can it be said that the work is truly complete.

Through Chan Master Huairang's guidance and instruction, Mazu attained great awakening at Huairang's very words, and his mind became free and transcendent. Thereafter he followed Chan Master Huairang and attended him closely for as long as nine years, deeply receiving the mind-seal. Later he emerged to teach the Dharma and liberate beings. His Dharma assembly flourished greatly, and more than eighty enlightened teachers emerged among his disciples and spread throughout the land.

Long before this, when Huairang was following the Sixth Patriarch, the Sixth Patriarch told him: "Prajñātāra of the West [Bodhidharma's teacher and the twenty-seventh patriarch of India] prophesied that a colt would emerge from beneath your feet and trample people throughout the land to death." To "trample people throughout the land to death" means to cultivate a great many excellent Dharma teachers who would teach and transform all under heaven. The "Great Master Ma" in this koan is this very Chan Master Mazu.

Great Master Ma was unwell.

Being unwell means being ill. You may find it strange that such a great patriarch as Mazu, who had already awakened and realized the Way, could still become ill. In fact, illnesses are all karmic hindrances carried over from the past—karma created long ago in previous lives. Everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, inevitably creates some karma.

Therefore, even great patriarchs who have awakened cannot avoid becoming ill from time to time. But after awakening, it is as though one has awakened from a great dream: all that was done in the past and present is like a dream or illusion, wholly unobtainable. Even when the body suffers serious illness, because the mind is empty and does not regard it as illness, one is not afflicted by the illness.

Suppose our body becomes ill. Do not think of the illness at every moment, and do not suffer on account of it; then karmic obstacles will dissolve at once, like ice melting away. But if you keep thinking of the illness every moment, you will suffer terribly and feel miserable to death! Those who have awakened and realized the Way do not take illness to heart. You may see that they are ill, yet they themselves are as though they were not ill at all.

In his later years, Chan Master Ciming of the Song dynasty suffered a stroke, and his mouth became crooked. His attendant anxiously stamped his feet: "What are we to do? All your life you have scolded Buddhas and cursed patriarchs; now retribution has come, has it not?" The Chan master said, "Do not worry. I will straighten it for you." As he spoke, he pushed it with his hand, and his mouth became straight, as though he had never been ill. When karmic obstacles reach a patriarch, they melt away like ice in hot soup.

Karmic obstacles are like debts. For a patriarch, if they must be repaid, they are repaid; if they need not be repaid, they are not repaid. Even when repaying them, he does not conceive of repaying; even when not repaying them, he does not conceive of not repaying. Mazu was a great patriarch. Others saw that he was ill, but he himself did not conceive of illness; he felt no particular suffering and no unease.

The temple administrator asked, "Venerable Monk, how have you been recently?"

The temple administrator is the monastic who manages the affairs of a monastery. Heshang is a transliteration from Sanskrit; in Chinese it means a personal preceptor, one's closest and most venerable teacher. The administrator came to inquire after Mazu: "How has your health been recently?"

The master said, "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha."

Sun-faced refers to daytime, and moon-faced to nighttime. Both day and night are Buddha; that is, daytime and nighttime are the same. Being well is like this, and being ill is like this; illness and health are both the same.

Buddha means awakening. One must awaken to the fact that all things are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows—entirely unobtainable. Awakening carries the sense of illumination; one must continually contemplate with care and not be negligent. When we speak, walk, and work in everyday life, all are functions of buddha-nature. One must practice continuously and closely, contemplating and safeguarding it. One must not give rise to mind in response to circumstances or abide in anything.

When healthy, do not conceive of health; when ill, do not conceive of illness; when dressing, do not conceive of dressing; when eating, do not conceive of eating. If you practice so continuously and closely, leaving the mind utterly empty, pure, open, and at ease, need you fear that you will not realize the Way? Those who practice Pure Land recite the Buddha's name tens of thousands of times each day, keeping their minds on Amitābha Buddha and leaving no time for deluded thoughts to arise. For Chan practitioners, what matters is arousing a sense of doubt;

once the sense of doubt arises, deluded thoughts naturally do not arise. For us who cultivate the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, the mantra continues without interruption during meditation sessions, and off the cushion we maintain continuous and seamless contemplation, attending to this mind on all sides and not allowing it to race outward. Thus, all attain realization. Chan, Esoteric

Buddhism, and Pure Land are all teachings spoken by the Buddha. In returning to the source, there are not two paths; skillful means have many gates, but realization is the same. One must not say that this teaching is good and that teaching is not. Sectarian views, like drawing a river apart to drink from it, harm both others and oneself! One should be "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha."

This koan is just that simple. Below is Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin's commentary on this koan:

If the patriarch had not met him through the fundamental matter, how could this Way have such radiance?

The patriarch refers to Master Mazu. The fundamental matter means never departing from one's self-nature at any time. To meet others with one's true mind—authentic, at ease, accommodating, and natural—is to point students at every moment toward "realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature."

If one constantly guided students by means of appearances, constantly clung to spiritual powers, and led people onto deviant paths, how could this Way have such radiance? How could one be "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha" and not be crushed by the demon of illness? We who cultivate the Way should likewise meet others at every moment through the fundamental matter, without clinging to circumstances, appearances, or spiritual powers.

Examine yourself from two sides to see whether your practice has advanced: when afflictions arise, and when joyful things occur.

When afflictions arise and the mind suffers deeply, can those who recite the Buddha's name refrain from forgetting it? Can Chan practitioners raise the huatou? Can we who practice heart esotericism still sit in meditation according to the Dharma and maintain continuous and seamless contemplation? When joyful things occur—promotion, wealth, praise, and respect from others—one becomes exceedingly delighted, suddenly cannot recall the Buddha's name, cannot raise the huatou, and forgets meditation and contemplation. If one is turned by circumstances, how can one realize the Way? In practice, one should remain unmoved by the eight worldly winds.

Of the eight worldly winds, four are favorable circumstances and four are adverse circumstances. Adverse circumstances are coarse, while favorable circumstances are subtle. The coarse are still easy to detect, but the subtle are not easy to handle. All of you should examine yourselves from these two sides: "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha." Joy is Buddha, and affliction is also Buddha. Whether one has genuine practice is seen precisely here.

If, in this koan, one knows where it comes down, one will walk alone in the radiant sky. If one does not know where it comes down, one will often take a wrong road before the cliff of dead wood.

"Knowing where it comes down" means understanding what Mazu meant by "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha." The radiant sky is the bright and splendid heavens, a metaphor for the luminosity of the mind-ground.

To walk alone in the radiant sky is like walking freely through a sky as splendid as a rainbow, without deluded thoughts or attachments. The mind-capacity is like empty space: favorable circumstances cannot be grasped, adverse circumstances cannot be grasped, health cannot be grasped, illness cannot be grasped, comfort cannot be grasped, and suffering cannot be grasped. To be so untrammeled and at ease is what is meant by "eliminating afflictions and attaining great freedom." Could one possibly fail to walk alone in the radiant sky?

If one does not know where it comes down—if one cannot comprehend the meaning of "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha"—one will often end up sitting in "dead-wood Chan." That is a side path: cultivating dead samādhi. If one does not know to turn back, one will ultimately become like earth, wood, metal, or stone.

When a person of true capacity reaches this point, they must possess the means to "drive away the plowman's ox and snatch the hungry man's food." Only then can one see how Master Mazu guided people.

A plowman is a farmer who tills the fields. In the past, farmers used oxen to plow; if one drove away his ox, he could no longer till the land. A hungry person is about to eat when his stomach is empty; if one snatched away his food, he could not eat.

"Means" refers to a method. What kind of method is this? It is the Chan school's "fierce tongs and hammer," the killing sword in the phrase "the sword that kills and the sword that gives life." By this means, you are made to die completely and then come alive again. It means removing all your deluded thoughts and all ordinary emotional attachments, removing them without a single thread remaining. You must die completely; unless you die completely, you cannot revive.

If, before one has died completely, one is lightly permitted to revive—that is, if one carelessly confirms that a student has realized the Way—the result will surely be "half green and half yellow." This is called "medicinal mercury"; it is not true gold. When it encounters fire, it vanishes; when it encounters circumstances, it collapses. How could it withstand birth and death? When we cultivate the Heart-of-Heart Dharma and the sense faculties and their objects fall away, body and mind burst apart as though heaven were collapsing and earth were breaking open. Do not be afraid; this is the power of the practice.

The moment one is afraid, one retreats. One has not died through completely; body, mind, and world do not dissolve into emptiness, and one cannot see one's true nature. As the proverb says, "Without a bone-chilling cold spell, how can plum

blossoms send forth such fragrance?" After undergoing this period of arduous practice, after a great death and great revival, one will be peaceful and at ease at the time of parinirvāṇa.

If you are unwilling to practice now, you will suffer miserably when death comes. Moreover, you will be unable to be your own master and will return to the cycle of rebirth in the six realms. I urge all of you to practice diligently. Endure a little pain in your hands and legs; your efforts will not be in vain. In the future, you will attain great freedom, great peace and joy, and great ease.

Nowadays, many people say, "Master Mazu received the temple administrator," and fortunately this has nothing to do with the matter.

"Receive" means to guide. Nowadays many people say that when Master Mazu spoke of "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha," he was guiding the temple administrator to realize the Way. This is all wild speculation, needlessly producing many theories; it is all deluded thought. Chan is Chan because it is authentic and at ease, accommodating and natural, utterly bare and unstained by a single speck of dust.

Whether there is a dharma, an act of guidance, or a Buddha to be attained, none of it is relevant. Such "clever" people would do better to know fewer theories; the more theories they know, the more they obstruct matters. Yesterday several lay practitioners from Rui'an came to speak with me about Chan. I asked them what huatou they investigated. Not one of them investigated a huatou; they were all studying the doctrinal principles of the Chan school.

What use is there in studying written words and doctrinal principles? It is all deluded thinking. It is better to raise a huatou and investigate it, cutting off deluded thoughts; then attainment is easier. Pure Land practice is the same: do not indulge in deluded thoughts, but recite the Buddha's name with single-minded attention.

There was a "clever" person who criticized Buddha-recitation. He said, "For example, if a son kept calling, 'Mother, Mother,' would his mother not become annoyed? You recite 'Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha Buddha' all day long—would Amitābha Buddha not be annoyed to death as well?" The person who says this seems very clever and to understand doctrine well, but this is not true cleverness; it is entirely deluded thought.

First, he does not know that Buddhas differ from ordinary beings: Buddhas accord with no-mind, so how could they have afflictions? Second, he does not know where Buddha-recitation comes down. Buddha-recitation is not calling out "Amitābha Buddha"; it relies on the Buddha's name to cleanse and transform the mind, subtly shifting deluded thoughts so that the mind becomes empty and pure. Mind itself is the land, and the land itself is mind; as one's mind is purified, so the Buddha-land is purified. When time has passed and one's practice has deepened, one will surely be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss and personally see Amitābha Buddha. What use is there in the "clever" person's plausible but erroneous theories? They are inferior to the single-minded Buddha-recitation of old men and old women.

Therefore Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin said, "Fortunately, it has nothing to do with the matter." "Having nothing to do with the matter" means that it cannot be connected with it and is entirely irrelevant.

Nowadays many in the assembly misunderstand it, opening their eyes wide and saying, "It is here! The left eye is the Sun-Faced Buddha, and the right eye is the Moon-Faced Buddha." What does this have to do with the matter? Even in a donkey year, they would not dream of it! They merely let the affair of the ancients slip past them.

The assembly refers to the community of Chan practitioners. To misunderstand means to understand incorrectly. They open their eyes wide and say, "Chan is right here! The 'Sun-Faced Buddha' is the left eye, and the 'Moon-Faced Buddha' is the right eye."

This is all mistaken understanding and utter nonsense! It seems that not only now, but since ancient times, there have been such people: they do not truly investigate, do not arouse a sense of doubt in Chan practice, do not apply themselves, and merely indulge in deluded thoughts and talk about theories. Therefore Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin said, "What does this have to do with the matter? Even in a donkey year, they would not dream of it! They merely let the affair of the ancients slip past them."

"Missing the affair of the ancients" means falling into conceptual discrimination and missing the opportunity to awaken to the Way for oneself through the causes and conditions provided by the ancients. At this point, someone will inevitably ask: "Is not Chan found in the activities of everyday life? Is not every function the wondrous functioning of Buddha-nature? How can you say otherwise?" Yes, all daily activities are functions of Buddha-nature. But you must not take them to be something real or abide in them. Once there is any abiding, it becomes a fixed pattern, and then it is no longer so.

When Master Ma spoke in this way, what was his intent?

This interpretation is wrong, and that interpretation is wrong. Then when Master Ma said, "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha," what exactly was his intent? What was it, after all? Do you all understand? Even if you asked Yuanwu, he would be unable to open his mouth!

Some say, "Bring a bowl of Pingwei San." What handle is there in that? At this point, how can one attain stability?

Pingwei San was an ordinary medicinal powder in the past, used to treat stomach ailments. Some people merely seek verbal slickness. Instead of honestly investigating Chan, they collect Chan sayings and imitate Chan repartee. Seeing that Mazu said, “Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha,” they add, “Bring the Master a bowl of Pingwei San to drink.” This fault of failing to accord with the true meaning and idly tossing about Chan repartee is most pernicious.

Therefore Chan Master Yuanwu Qin said, “What handle is there in that?” For example, a porcelain pot has a handle attached to its side; in ancient times, this was called a “handle-nose.” Without a handle, there is nothing to grasp. It is a metaphor for failing to grasp the true meaning and having nothing to rely on. Such people are merely verbally slick, while inwardly they are utterly confused and not at all at ease. Thus Chan Master Yuanwu Qin said, “How can one attain stability?”

Therefore it is said: “The path beyond has never been transmitted by a thousand sages; students wear out their bodies like apes grasping at shadows.”

Recognizing the original nature only brings one to the threshold of the dharmakāya. One must urgently safeguard realization with continuous care, contemplate at every moment, not follow thoughts when they arise, have nothing to attain and nothing to seek, and remain lucidly solitary throughout the twenty-four hours. Only then does one enter proper abiding in the dharmakāya. One must go still further: even that solitary luminosity must become unobtainable. Only by directly realizing the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya can one perfect the fruition of Buddhahood.

“The path beyond” refers to what lies beyond the dharmakāya; this has not been transmitted by a thousand sages. Why has it not been transmitted? Because there is no way to transmit it. It is not an object that I can hand over to you and thereby transmit. What lies beyond the dharmakāya can only be personally realized and personally awakened to: one must let go completely and break through the bottom of the bucket. Others cannot exert any force on one’s behalf.

Pure Land practice is the same. It is not that the Buddha pulls you into the Pure Land. Your mind is like a pool of water: when its surface is still—meaning free of deluded thoughts and attachments—the moon in the sky—meaning the Buddha—is clearly reflected in the water. If the Buddha is in your mind, you will certainly enter into responsive communion with the Buddha. This is called receiving the Buddha’s guidance.

“Students wear out their bodies”: “students” refers to practitioners, and “body” refers to the physical body. To wear out the body is to make it extremely weary. When Mazu was young, he simply sat in meditation; that was wearing out the body. “Like apes grasping at shadows”—it is like monkeys trying to scoop up the moon. Everyone surely knows the story of monkeys scooping up the moon.

“High on a mountain peak, a lone moon shines upon a cold pool.” The moon in the water gleams brightly and looks beautiful.

A group of monkeys hang from a tree, one linked to the next, lowering themselves to scoop up the moon from the water. Can they scoop it up? “There is no moon in the water; the moon is in the blue sky.” In truth, there is no need to scoop it up at all. The moon is already hanging perfectly in the sky, and the monkeys are already happily bathed in its light. This is much like riding a horse in search of a horse. A brick cannot be polished into a mirror, nor can the moon in the water be scooped up. Thus Chan Master Huairang pointed out to Mazu: since polishing a brick cannot make a mirror, how can sitting in meditation make one a Buddha?

Some people seek promotion and wealth and will commit murder or other wrongs without scruple. Money, status, reputation, and face are all moon-shadows in water: utterly unobtainable. When one last breath does not come, not the slightest bit can be taken away. To use every possible means for their sake—is this not “like apes grasping at shadows”? In the end, “Nothing can be taken with us; only our karma follows us,” and one must still undergo terrible evil retribution in accordance with one’s karma.

This “Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha” is especially difficult to see. Even Xuedou found it difficult to compose a verse on it. Yet because he saw through it thoroughly, he used all the skill of his lifetime to annotate it. Do you wish to see Xuedou? Look to the following passage:

Chan Master Xuedou Chongxian was the fourth patriarch of the Yunmen school. Chan Master Xuefeng’s disciple, Yunmen Wenyan, founded the Yunmen school. Wenyan transmitted it to Xianglin Chengyuan; Chengyuan transmitted it to Zhimeng Guangzuo; and Guangzuo transmitted it to Xuedou Chongxian. Chan Master Xuedou selected one hundred koans, and, in order to inspire students to break through and gain liberation, wrote a verse after each koan. This became the One Hundred Verses on Ancient Cases.

Later, Chan Master Yuanwu Qin of the Linji school explained the One Hundred Verses on Ancient Cases one by one in order to further inspire students. His students recorded the explanations and compiled them into the work now being discussed, The Blue Cliff Record.

Chan Master Yuanwu said that this koan of “Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha” is exceedingly difficult to penetrate —“especially difficult to see.” When Xuedou Chan Master came to this point, it was also difficult for him to compose a verse. Yet he saw through it and awakened to it thoroughly; using all the skill of his lifetime, he pointed directly to it and provided an annotation for the koan. Do you wish to see the realm of realization of Chan Master Xuedou? Please read on.

What follows is the verse Chan Master Xuedou wrote for this koan:

Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha—what are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?

The Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns have become historical traces, passing clouds before the eyes, utterly unobtainable. Buddha-nature, however, neither arises nor ceases, is neither defiled nor pure, neither increases nor decreases; it endures throughout countless ages and remains unchanged through all vicissitudes. Once, while Chan Master Yuan Gui of Mount Song was sitting in meditation, he saw an emperor of extraordinary and majestic appearance approach, followed by an imposing retinue.

The Chan Master asked why he had come. The emperor said, "Do you not even recognize me?" The Chan Master replied, "I see Buddhas and sentient beings alike as equal. Can I regard you differently?" The emperor said, "I am the mountain deity, holding the great power of life and death over humankind. I can cause people to live, and I can cause them to die. How can you view me in an ordinary way?" The Chan Master said, "As for me, I have"

never been born. Can you cause one who is unborn to die? In my view, the body and empty space are nondual; you and I are nondual. Can you destroy empty space and yourself? Even if you could destroy empty space and yourself, I am neither arising nor ceasing. You have not yet realized this 'I'; how then could you cause me to be born or to die?" This "I" of which the Chan Master spoke is the dharmakāya, the nature realized through realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature. It is inherently neither arising nor ceasing.

This mountain deity had exceptionally sharp faculties and was able, upon hearing these words, to recognize his ultimate destination. He had previously not known of the dharmakāya's being neither arising nor ceasing, but after the Chan Master's instruction, he suddenly understood. He prostrated to the Chan Master and respectfully said, "I am more upright and wiser than other deities, yet who knew that your wisdom would be still more vast? Please transmit the right precepts to me, so that I too may be liberated."

Thus, when Chan Master Xuedou wrote a verse on "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha," he pointed directly to it with the line, "What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?" Emperor Shenzong of the Song considered this line unsuitable, claiming that the verse "satirized the state," and for this reason did not permit the One Hundred Verses on Ancient Cases to be included in the Buddhist canon. This shows how great the emperor's selfishness was.

Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang was an enlightened ruler of his age. He believed in Buddhism, upheld the Three Jewels, restored old monasteries, and widely promoted the Buddhadharma. Before becoming emperor, he incurred Emperor Wuzong's suspicion. He feigned his death and fled, then had his head shaved and became a novice under Chan Master Xiangyan.

Chan Master Xiangyan inscribed this poem on the waterfall at Mount Lu: "Piercing clouds and passing through stone, it does not shrink from toil; only from afar does one know the height of its source." The novice casually added two lines: "How could streams and ravines contain it? In the end, it returns to the great ocean and becomes waves." He was intent on becoming emperor. Later, the novice went to study Chan with Chan Master Qian of Yanguan. At that time, Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun served there as head seat.

Seeing Chan Master Huangbo bowing to the Buddha, the novice said: "Seek not from the Buddha, seek not from the Dharma, seek not from the Saṅgha. What then does the elder seek in making prostrations?" The Chan Master replied, "Seeking not from the Buddha, seeking not from the Dharma, seeking not from the Saṅgha, I constantly bow in this way." The Chan Master was free and unrestrained: he did not conceive of himself as bowing to the Buddha, yet he constantly bowed.

The novice said, "What use is bowing?" These words had already fallen into annihilationist emptiness; this too is attachment to appearances—attachment to the appearance of non-dharma. The Chan Master struck him with a slap. He said, "Too rough!" He did not awaken under that slap; instead, he said that the Chan Master was too violent. The Chan Master said, "What sort of place is this, for you to speak of roughness and refinement?" He then struck him twice more.

Later, when the novice became emperor, he still had not forgotten this incident. After Chan Master Huangbo entered parinirvāṇa, Emperor Xuanzong bestowed upon him the posthumous title "Chan Master Coarse Conduct." Pei Xiu, the prime minister, was an inner disciple of Chan Master Huangbo. Knowing the story of the three slaps, he memorialized the emperor: "The three slaps cut off the three divisions of time for Your Majesty." Emperor Xuanzong was, after all, an emperor who believed in Buddhism, and so he changed the posthumous title to "Chan Master Cutting Off the Divisions."

Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang was a renowned emperor who believed in Buddhism, yet he was still so selfish. How much more so Emperor Shenzong of the Song! Emperor Shenzong merely thought that "this verse satirizes the state," without knowing that the words "What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?" had existed long before; Chan Master Xuedou was quoting them.

In the past, Chan Master Chanyue wrote a poem, "Inscribed on a Young Nobleman's Conduct": "Clad in splendid brocade, a hawk held in his hand, he strolls idly with an air of careless arrogance. He knows nothing at all of the hardships of farming—what are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns to him?" A hawk is a fierce bird of prey, even more ferocious than an eagle. Fans made from hawk feathers were exceptionally precious.

Look at this young nobleman: dressed in bright finery, waving a hawk-feather fan in his hand, idly wandering about with an absent-minded air. Not only does he neglect proper work, but he is also ignorant and without learning. Not only does he know nothing of the hardships farmers endure in cultivating the fields, but he understands nothing of history and does not know what the "Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns" are—what are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?

Chan Master Xuedou cited this verse and gave it a new meaning, directly using it to comment on "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha." The single line "What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?" completes the commentary on this koan. But where does Chan Master Xuedou's intention lie? Do you wish to see Xuedou's meaning? You must step back, cut off attachment to self, and erase the discriminations of consciousness.

Long ago, Venerable Yuanlu asked Attendant Pou of Xingyang, "When Sāgara emerges from the sea and heaven and earth quake, what is it like to present oneself face-to-face?" Sāgara is the name of the dragon king of the sea. "Presenting oneself face-to-face" is a metaphor for one's intrinsic nature appearing clearly before one; it also refers to two people who have seen their true nature questioning and answering one another face-to-face. When one's intrinsic nature appears clearly before one, it is like the dragon king emerging from the sea: heaven and earth tremble because of it.

Now that the two of us are face-to-face, how should one speak a word of directly realizing one's intrinsic nature? Pou said, "The king of garuḍas soars through the universe—who among them dares to stick out his head?" Garuḍas feed on dragons, and the king of garuḍas is king among birds; he treats dragon kings as snacks. "Soars through the universe" means that he is flying about in the universe.

You use "the dragon king emerging from the sea" as a metaphor; I respond with "the king of garuḍas soaring through the universe." At such a time, who dares to stick out his head? Is there still any "presenting oneself face-to-face" at such a time? Is there still anything that can be brought forth for verification? A previous koan spoke of "When the skull's consciousness is exhausted, what joy can remain? The dragon's cry within the dead tree has not yet completely died away." If joy still remains, then the discriminations of consciousness have not yet been entirely eliminated.

There is still the sound of a dragon crying within the dead tree; it has not yet completely died away. At this point Venerable Yuanlu still was not fully awake, and he said, "If someone suddenly sticks out his head, then what?" He was still clinging to the state of seeing his nature; he had fallen into lights and shadows without knowing it. Pou said, "You do not believe that a falcon seizing a dove is easy; only before the skull is tested will you know what is genuine."

A dove is a small bird. Truly seeing one's nature must certainly sweep away all discriminations of consciousness, as easily as a fierce falcon seizes a dove.

I have already given you the metaphors of "the garuḍa eating the dragon" and "the universe containing the sea," yet you still do not believe it? Do you still insist on sticking out your head? If you continue to cling to the concept of "seeing one's nature"—which is itself a discrimination of consciousness—then, when the critical moment of birth and death arrives, your genuineness will be tested! Yuan said, "Then I lower myself before you and step back three paces."

At this point Venerable Yuanlu drew back. This shows that he missed it face-to-face and did not seize it in one grasp. Here one must reach "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored." Yet to answer him with "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored," one must also be able to "beat him to death and feed him to the dogs." Only then is it called "seizing it in one grasp"; only then does one truly repay the Buddha's kindness.

Unless one realizes this point, one cannot comprehend the true meaning of "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha." Pou said, "You little turtle beneath Mount Sumeru's seat, do not wait until you are once again tapped on the forehead and turned back!" Mount Sumeru is immense. At its waist are the heavens of the Four Heavenly Kings, and at its summit is the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Taking Mount Sumeru as one's seat symbolizes the vastness and boundlessness of the dharmakāya.

Beneath Mount Sumeru there is a little turtle that continually sticks out its head; as soon as its head is tapped, it immediately withdraws. Everyone, I think you should understand what Attendant Pou of Xingyang—Xingyang being a place name—meant by these words. Thus the one sentence, "What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?" fully expresses the verse on "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha." What follows is Chan Master Xuedou's account of the inward course of his arduous cultivation:

For twenty years I endured hardship; for you, how many times did I descend into the cavern of the blue dragon?

The "you" spoken of here refers to the "nature" realized through realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature; it is the dharmakāya among the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya; it is the "original" realized through thorough awakening. Just now we spoke of the breadth of heart of Chan Master Yuan Gui of Mount Song, in order to inspire everyone toward a correct understanding of transcending birth and death.

Without thoroughly awakening to the original, how could one's heart be so broad? How could one be so free and at ease? In order to awaken thoroughly to the original, Chan Master Xuedou Chongxian underwent every hardship and practiced arduously for twenty years. He risked life and limb time and again—all for it, all for this "you." Beneath the chin of the black dragon is a pearl of extraordinary value.

Chan Master Xuedou uses the black dragon's pearl as a metaphor for this "you."

To descend into the blue dragon's cavern and pluck the pearl from beneath its chin is even more arduous than pulling hairs from a tiger's mouth. What strength of will and perseverance it requires! Yet after practicing for only a year, we complain bitterly: "Oh! Why is there still no news? Perhaps this Dharma is ineffective. Let me switch to another practice."

If this is how you are, then even when Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, there will be no end to it. In former times, when the Second Patriarch went to see the First Patriarch, snow lay up to his waist. Bodhidharma sat motionless in the cave. The Second Patriarch did not dare speak, but stood waiting outside; the snow fell heavily and buried him to the waist. What perseverance! "The edge of a treasured sword is sharpened by grinding; the fragrance of plum blossoms comes from bitter cold." If you can endure such hardships and possess such perseverance, good news will come to you and fruition will be complete.

In cultivating any dharma gate, one must be able to endure hardship and sustain a long-term resolve. In Pure Land practice, one must long remain inseparable from the Buddha's name; in investigating Chan, one must long remain inseparable from the huatou (critical phrase). There are many Chan koans: choose one that you cannot penetrate and keep it continually in your mind, like a hen brooding over her eggs, never leaving it even for a moment.

In former times, Chan Master Sanfeng had already recognized the original, but he still could not penetrate the koan of "Deshan Carrying His Bowl." The koan goes as follows: Chan Master Deshan had two outstanding disciples. The elder Dharma brother was Yantou Quanhuo, and the younger was Xuefeng Yicun. At that time, Chan Master Xuefeng was serving as cook for the assembly.

One day the meal was ready a little late. Deshan carried his bowl to eat. When Xuefeng saw his master arrive, he said, "The bell has not rung and the drum has not sounded. Where are you going with your bowl?" Deshan said nothing, lowered his head, and returned to the abbot's quarters.

Before long Yantou arrived. Xuefeng told him what had just happened, and Yantou said, "The great Deshan and the little Deshan have not understood the final word!" Great Deshan refers to Chan Master Deshan, and little Deshan to Chan Master Xuefeng. By this, he meant that neither the master nor his junior Dharma brother had thoroughly penetrated the "final word."

When Deshan learned of this, he summoned Yantou and asked, "You do not approve of this old monk?" Are you refusing to acknowledge me? Yantou "secretly disclosed his meaning"—he privately and quietly explained it to Deshan. The next day, when Chan Master Deshan ascended the hall to teach the Dharma, he was unlike his usual self. Hearing him, Yantou clapped his hands and laughed loudly: "How fortunate that the old fellow at the head of the hall understands the final word. Henceforth no one in the world will be able to do anything to him. Even so, he will live only three more years." Thereafter, Deshan indeed lived only three more years before passing into parinirvāṇa.

Chan Master Sanfeng could not penetrate this koan. Was it that the master was incapable? Did he really have to be told by his disciple? What meaning was disclosed by "secretly disclosed his meaning"? When he said three years, Deshan lived three years —was he giving Deshan a prophecy? He could not penetrate any of these many questions.

If you cannot penetrate it, investigate it! He investigated until his "head and face were both swollen"—his head and face had actually swollen. Persisting in this way for a long time, with the sense of doubt unbroken and every hardship endured, then upon encountering the right circumstance or condition, good news is about to come. One day, Chan Master Sanfeng went into the rear courtyard and heard the sound of bamboo being split. With a crack, he was opened up.

In our practice, we must not practice the Yellow School one moment, the Red School the next, and then switch again to Buddha-recitation or Chan investigation. If we are fickle and easily change our minds, we will accomplish nothing. Whatever dharma gate we practice, we should persevere in it. We must be like Chan Master Xuedou: for twenty years as for one day, unafraid of hardship and suffering—"For twenty years I endured hardship; for you, how many times did I descend into the cavern of the blue dragon?"

Wronged—yet worth recounting.

"Wronged" means unjustly wronged. How was it unjust? Ah! It turns out that we were originally Buddhas.

Originally we did not know this, and so we underwent every hardship over this matter, practicing and practicing. Ah! So that is it! This matter has nothing whatever to do with arduous practice; it turns out that all that effort was in vain! Everyone, I told you at the outset that buddha-nature is always shining its light before you; it is simply that you yourselves refuse to acknowledge it. Refusing to acknowledge it means having deluded thoughts and attachments.

When Śākyamuni Buddha attained the Way upon seeing the morning star at night, he said: "How marvelous! All sentient beings possess the Tathāgata's wisdom and virtuous characteristics, but because of deluded thoughts and attachments, they cannot realize them." As long as we let go of deluded thoughts and attachments, we are Buddhas right then and there. What need is there for "For twenty years I endured hardship; for you, how many times did I descend into the cavern of the blue dragon?" Is that not unjust? Hence, "Wronged!"

“Worth recounting” means that it is nevertheless worth speaking of. This hardship was not endured in vain; it is worth mentioning. Why? Because one understands the source of the universe and of life, transcends every bondage, is no longer constrained by birth and death, and becomes free and at ease, successful wherever one goes. There are three different circumstances in which we practice the Way and see our nature:

1. Investigating Chan or reciting the Buddha’s name for decades.

2. Practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma for three years.

3. Having your nature directly pointed out to you and seeing it immediately.

The intrinsic nature realized through these three methods is the same, but their strength and function differ. The first has the greatest strength, and the third the least. The third is gained easily, without having exerted effort. Not knowing to cherish and safeguard it, one often takes it lightly, cannot maintain it, and becomes scattered. One may even regard it as ordinary and, because supernormal powers have not manifested, begin to doubt.

Such a person does not know that this ordinary mind—“the luminous knowing in which not a single thought arises”—is itself Buddha, and instead continually pursues spiritual powers. Yet spiritual powers are branches and leaves, while awakening to the Way is the root. Once the root has been attained, one need only continuously and seamlessly clear away habitual tendencies; without seeking them, spiritual powers will arise of themselves.

Thus one misses it face-to-face. Such people are like the spoiled sons and dissipated young gentlemen mentioned earlier: they inherit the family estate easily, do not know how to preserve and protect it, and carelessly squander it.

It is also like the foolish young master described in the Lotus Sūtra, who, unaware of his own nobility, wanders the streets begging. How unjust! The first kind—those who investigate Chan and recite the Buddha’s name—attain it only with difficulty. After enduring every hardship, passing through birth and death time and again, and undergoing decades of unceasing refinement, they finally see their true nature. Therefore, their strength is great: when events arise, they are not confused; they penetrate all favorable and adverse circumstances and are not stained by birth and death.

Clear-eyed patch-robed monks must not take this lightly.

A clear-eyed patch-robed monk is one who has thoroughly awakened to the original nature. Having thoroughly awakened to the original nature, one can perceive everything clearly and is not constrained by anything; this is called “having an eye at the crown of one’s head.” Having thoroughly awakened to the original nature, one will skillfully discern the appropriate occasion and use extraordinary means to inspire students; this is called “having a talisman behind one’s elbow.”

Even if you are a clear-eyed patch-robed monk with an eye at the crown of your head and a talisman behind your elbow, when you come to “Day-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha; what are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?” you must not pass it over lightly (to take it lightly is to pass it over lightly). You must examine it most carefully! “Clear-eyed patch-robed monks must not take this lightly” is the final line of Xuedou’s verse. Why does he say this? If one is not careful, would one not become another “Master Yuanlu”?

That is, one would possess the so-called “muddleheaded Buddha-nature and vague suchness.” How could one withstand birth and death?! After Master Yuanlu had finished describing the realm of seeing one’s true nature and had “presented it face-to-face,” Attendant Pou said, “The golden-winged bird king dominates the universe; who among them can stand forth?” His purpose was to awaken Master Yuanlu to the fact that he could not remain attached to the luminous images of “heaven and earth quake; it is presented face-to-face.”

Master Yuanlu said, “Should someone suddenly stand forth, then what?” He was in fact still clinging to the luminous images. “You do not believe that a falcon seizing a dove is like this; only when tested before a skull do you know what is true.” This points out the gravity of the matter of birth and death and adds another blow of hammer and tongs. “In that case, bowing at the chest and withdrawing three steps.”

Master Yuanlu had no choice but to let go of the luminous images (he should have let them go in the preceding sentence; by this point, he was already far too late), yet he again fell into concepts. Truly: falling in and withdrawing, it is hard to escape obstruction and stagnation; letting go of the luminous images, he picks up the cloth bag; with mind upon mind, he is still contriving oddities. How could he be at ease at the threshold of birth and death? Precisely when it is “Day-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha” and “What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?” one certainly cannot take it lightly. Thus it is said: “Only by being careful can one succeed.” Take care!

[IV] Questions and Answers Between Deshan and Xiefu

The Pointer says: Under the clear blue sky and bright sun, there is no need to point east and draw west. Yet according to the time and circumstances, one must also prescribe medicine in response to the illness. Tell me: is it better to let go, or to hold fast? Consider this.

[4] The Case:

Deshan arrived at Guishan. [A fellow carrying a board. A wild-fox spirit.]

Carrying his bundle, he entered the Dharma hall. [He could well make people suspicious. A flaw in the collection.]

He walked from east to west, then from west to east. [How thoroughly Chan-like! What is he doing?]

Looking about, he said, “Nothing, nothing,” and went out. [He deserves thirty blows of the staff. His spirit towers to the sky. A true lion cub, giving a fine lion’s roar.]

Xuedou added the comment: “Seen through!” [Wrong. Indeed. A dot.]

When Deshan reached the doorway, he turned back and said, “This will not do carelessly.” [Letting go, then drawing back in. Too high at the beginning, too low at the end. Those who recognize their fault and certainly correct it—how many are there?]

He then composed himself formally and reentered to meet him. [Still making these comings and goings as before—already a second flaw. Perilous!]

Guishan was seated. [He coolly watches this old fellow. To stroke a tiger’s whiskers, one must be such a person.]

Deshan raised his sitting cloth and said, “Reverend.” [Changing his face and manner. Raising waves where there is no wind.]

Guishan made as if to take up his whisk. [It had to be that fellow. Strategizing within the command tent. He can well sit there and cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven.]

Deshan immediately gave a shout, flung out his sleeves, and left. [The wild-fox spirit’s understanding: this shout has authority, actuality, illumination, and function; in every respect he is one who seizes clouds and grasps mists. Especially remarkable.]

Xuedou added the comment: “Seen through!” [Wrong. Indeed. A dot.]

Deshan turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and left. [The scene is appealing, but the koan is not yet complete. He gained the hat atop his head but lost the shoes beneath his feet. He has already lost his life.]

That evening, Guishan asked the head monk, “Where is the newcomer who arrived earlier?” [He drops a joint in the east and pulls out the root in the west. His eyes look southeast, but his intention lies northwest.]

The head monk said, “He turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and went out.” [The numinous turtle drags its tail. He deserves thirty blows of the staff. How many blows should such a fellow receive on the back of his head?]

Guishan said, “In the future, this fellow will go to the summit of a solitary peak, knot grass into a hermitage, and revile the Buddha and abuse the patriarchs.” [Only after the thief has passed does he draw his bow. Chan monks throughout the world cannot escape this.]

Xuedou added the comment: “Snow piled upon frost!” [Wrong. Indeed. A dot.]

Jia Shan placed three dots below. Do you all understand? At times, one uses a blade of grass as a sixteen-foot golden body; at times, one uses a sixteen-foot golden body as a blade of grass.

Deshan was originally a scriptural lecturer, lecturing on the Diamond Sūtra in western Shu. In the teachings it says: “The vajra is likened to meditative stability. In differentiated wisdom, one studies the Buddha’s majestic deportment for a thousand eons and the Buddha’s subtle conduct for ten thousand eons, and only then becomes a Buddha.” Yet those demon disciples in the south said that mind itself is Buddha. So he became indignant, shouldered his commentaries, and set out on pilgrimage straight for the south to smash this band of demon disciples. See how fiercely indignant he was—he was indeed a formidable man.

When he first arrived in Lizhou, he saw an old woman on the road selling fried cakes. He put down his commentaries and decided to buy a snack. The old woman said, “What are you carrying?” Deshan said, “Commentaries on the Diamond Sūtra.” The old woman said, “I have a question. If you can answer it, I will offer you fried cakes as a snack. If you cannot answer it, buy them elsewhere.” Deshan said, “Just ask.” The old woman said, “The Diamond Sūtra says: ‘The past mind is unobtainable, the present mind is unobtainable, and the future mind is unobtainable.’ Which mind does the venerable wish to refresh?” Deshan had no reply. The old woman then directed him to visit Longtan.

As soon as he crossed the threshold, he asked, “For a long time I have heard of Longtan; but now that I have arrived, I see neither a pool nor a dragon.” Master Longtan leaned out from behind a screen and said, “You have personally arrived at Longtan.” The Master then bowed and withdrew. Later that night, he entered the Master’s room and stood in attendance until deep into the night. Longtan said, “Why do you not go down?” Deshan paid his respects, lifted the curtain, and went out. Seeing that it was dark outside, he returned and said, “It is dark outside.”

Longtan then lit a paper candle and handed it to Deshan. Just as Deshan took it, Longtan blew it out. Deshan was suddenly greatly awakened and immediately bowed. Longtan said, “What have you seen, that you bow?” Deshan said, “From this day forward, I will no longer doubt the tongues of the old masters throughout the world.” The next day, Longtan ascended the hall and said, “Among you is a fellow whose teeth are like a forest of swords and whose mouth is like a basin of blood. Strike him once with a staff and he will not turn back.”

“One day he will stand on the summit of a solitary peak and establish my Way.” Deshan then took his commentaries before the Dharma hall, raised a torch, and said, “To exhaust every mysterious discourse is like placing a single hair in vast empty space; to exhaust all the world’s vital mechanisms is like casting a drop of water into a great ravine.” Then he burned them.

Later, hearing that Guishan’s teaching flourished greatly, he went straight to Guishan and met him in the manner of a true master. Without even untying his bundle, he went directly up to the Dharma hall, walked from east to west and from west to east, looked about, said, “Nothing, nothing,” and went out. Tell me, what was his intent? Was he mad? Many people misunderstand and take it as something to establish. It has absolutely nothing to do with that. See how he acted—he was indeed extraordinary. Therefore it is said:

To stand out from the crowd, one must be a heroic spirit; to overcome an opponent, it takes a lion cub.

If, in selecting a Buddha, one lacks such eyes, what use would even a thousand years be?

At this point, one must be a person who thoroughly comprehends all directions before one can see it. Why? The Buddhadharma has no such multitude of affairs; how could emotional views find a place in it? His mental workings contain none of this fuss. Thus Xuansha said, “It is precisely like the moon’s reflection in an autumn pool or the sound of a bell on a still night. Though struck, it suffers no loss; though touched by waves, it does not scatter. Yet this is still an affair at the shore of birth and death.”

Here there is neither gain nor loss, neither right nor wrong, nor is there anything extraordinary or mysterious. Since there is nothing extraordinary or mysterious, how do you understand his walking from east to west and from west to east? Tell me, what was his intent? Old Guishan did not concern himself with him. Had it not been Guishan, he too would have been dealt a setback. Look at old Guishan: meeting a true master, he simply sat and watched the outcome.

Had he not deeply discerned the wind before it arrived, how could he have acted thus? Xuedou added the comment: “Seen through!” It was just like an iron stake. Among the assembly, this is called an added comment; though it stands between the two sides, it does not abide with either side. How do you understand his saying, “Seen through”? Where is the point at which it is seen through? Tell me: did he see through Deshan, or did he see through Guishan?

Deshan then went out. Reaching the doorway, he wanted to pull out the root and said to himself, “This will not do carelessly.” He wanted to expose his very heart and entrails and have a full Dharma battle with Guishan. Composing himself formally once more, he returned to meet him. Guishan was seated. Deshan raised his sitting cloth and said, “Reverend.” Guishan made as if to take up his whisk. Deshan immediately gave a shout, flung out his sleeves, and left. How extraordinary! Many in the assembly say, “Guishan was afraid of him.”

What has that to do with it? Guishan was not at all hurried. Therefore it is said: “Wisdom surpassing birds captures birds; wisdom surpassing beasts captures beasts; wisdom surpassing people captures people.” Having investigated Chan to this extent, one can make the myriad forms throughout the great earth—heaven and hell, grasses and people, animals and creatures—into a single shout, and he does not concern himself with them. He may overturn the Chan seat and scatter the whole assembly with a shout, yet he pays them no heed.

He is as high as heaven and as deep as earth. If Guishan had not possessed the capacity to sit there and cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven, it would have been exceedingly difficult then to test him. Had he not been a good spiritual friend to fifteen hundred people, he could not have sorted it out at this point. Guishan strategized within the command tent and secured victory a thousand miles away. Deshan turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and went out.

Tell me, what was his intent? Do you say Deshan won or lost? Guishan acted thus—did he win or lose? Xuedou added the comment: “Seen through!” Only because he had applied effort and seen through the ultimate difficult and knotty points of the ancient masters could he speak in this way. It is indeed extraordinary. Natang said: “Xuedou’s two ‘seen throughs’ divide the case into three sections, thereby revealing this koan. It is like a bystander judging between two people.”

Later, this old fellow slowly waited until evening before asking the head monk, “Where is the newcomer who arrived earlier?” The head monk said, “He turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and went out.” Guishan said, “In the future, this fellow will go to the summit of a solitary peak, knot grass into a hermitage, and revile the Buddha and abuse the patriarchs.” Tell me, what was his intent? Old Guishan did not mean well.

Later, Deshan reviled the Buddha and abused the patriarchs, lashed at wind and rain, yet still did not emerge from Guishan’s nest. This old fellow had seen through all the tricks of his life. At this point, can one call it Guishan giving him a prediction? Can one call it “the marsh is broad enough to conceal a mountain, and principle is able to subdue a leopard”? If so, fortunately it has nothing to do with it. Xuedou knew where this koan came down and dared to pass judgment on it. He further said, “Snow piled

upon frost!" Once again he brought it up to enable people to see. If you can see it, I allow you to study together with Guishan, Deshan, and Xuedou. If you cannot see it, do not rashly give rise to interpretive understanding.

One "seen through." [The words still ring in one's ears. Excessive.]

Two "seen throughs." [A twofold koan.]

Snow piled upon frost—he nearly fell into peril. [The three sections differ. Where is it?]

The Flying Cavalry General enters the enemy court. [Perilous! A defeated general need not be executed again. He has lost his life.]

How many can regain wholeness? [Coming to life from within death.]

He hastens away. [As though no one were present. Of the thirty-six stratagems. Exhaust all your spiritual powers—what use can they be?]

He does not let him pass. [Principle can subdue a leopard. His nostrils have been pierced.]

On a solitary peak, he sits amid the grass. [Indeed, his nostrils have been pierced. Yet this is not especially extraordinary. Why, then, does he sit amid the grass?]

Bah! [Do you understand? Two blades wound each other. In twos and threes they travel the old road. Song and beat follow one another. Then strike!]

Xuedou versified one hundred koans, taking up each one with incense burning; thus they became widely current in the world. He was also skilled in literary composition. Only after penetrating a koan and thoroughly mastering its intricacies could he set brush to paper. Why was this so? Dragons and snakes are easy to distinguish, but Chan practitioners are hard to deceive. Xuedou penetrated this koan and added three lines at its joints and knotty places, gathering them into a verse: "Snow piled upon frost—he nearly fell into peril."

What, then, was Deshan like? He was like Li Guang, who was by nature an excellent archer and whom the emperor enfeoffed as General of the Flying Cavalry. He penetrated deep into enemy territory and was captured alive by the Chanyu. Li Guang was wounded and ill at the time, so they placed him between two horses, bound him in a net, and carried him lying down. Li Guang feigned death. Glancing aside, he saw a Hu youth riding a fine horse. Li Guang sprang onto the horse, pushed the youth off, seized his bow and arrows, whipped the horse southward, and drew his bow to drive back the pursuing riders.

Thus he was able to get free. This fellow had such a skill: he found life in the midst of death. Xuedou cites this in his verse, comparing it to Deshan's return for another meeting; once again, he was allowed to leap free. Look at these people of old: what they saw, they could speak of; what they spoke of, they could put into practice; what they practiced, they could apply. They were indeed spirited. Only one with the capacity to kill without blinking an eye can become a Buddha on the spot. And one who can become a Buddha on the spot will naturally be able to kill without blinking an eye.

Only then does one have some measure of freedom and ease. People nowadays may seem to possess the bearing of a Chan monastic when questioned, but touch them ever so lightly and their waists break into sections, their legs into pieces; they fall into seven pieces and eight fragments, with not the slightest continuity anywhere. Therefore the ancients said: "Continuity is indeed most difficult!"

Look at Deshan and Weishan in this way—how could this be the understanding of those who are lifeless and constrained? How many can again attain such completeness? He hurried out—Deshan gave a shout and then left—just as Li Guang, after being captured, devised a plan, shot and killed a barbarian general with one arrow, and escaped the enemy camp. Xuedou's verse displays great skill at this point. Deshan turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and left, thinking he had gained the advantage.

Little did he know that this old fellow still would not let him show his head. Xuedou said, "He was not let off"—that evening, Weishan asked the head monk, "Where is the newcomer who arrived earlier?" The head monk said, "He turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and left." Weishan said, "One day this fellow will tie together a grass hut atop a solitary peak, where he will revile the Buddha and curse the patriarchs." How could he ever have been let off? It is indeed extraordinary. At this point, why did Xuedou say, "Sitting amid the grass atop a solitary peak"? He then gave another shout. Tell me, where does it land? Continue investigating for another thirty years! Master Yuanyin, lectures

Case Four: Deshan Carries His Bundle and Questions Weishan

We have already discussed three koans. From them we can see that the minds of great patriarchs who have realized the Way are open and expansive, utterly bare and completely pure, without the slightest hindrance or attachment. It is like clouds dispersing from the vast sky, revealing the clear blue heavens—boundless light illuminating the lands of the ten directions.

At just such a time, throughout past and present and in the ten directions above and below, one may range freely as one wishes; at every time and in every place, all is equal and unobstructed. How could there be a division between good and bad, right and wrong, being and nonbeing, correct and incorrect? Yet if one becomes even slightly inclined in a particular direction, or makes the least choice or rejection, obstruction results. Therefore it is said, “Under the clear blue sky and broad daylight, do not point east and gesture west.” This is called “holding fast.”

When Chan practitioners meet, they face one another in speech or silence, presenting themselves directly before each other; masters meet masters. At such a time and in such circumstances, how could they casually bandy about clever repartee or talk nonsense? There must be a fitting correspondence, like a box and its lid matching perfectly, and an appropriate responsive exchange. They may raise a fist or hold up a whisk; they may joke, laugh, scold, or shout; they may speak or remain silent, move or be still. Each has its proper place.

It is like arrow points meeting, exactly right. Therefore it is said, “With the right time and conditions, one must also prescribe medicine according to the illness.” This is called “letting go.” What is meant by “the official road admits not even a needle” is holding fast: how could it allow you to point east and gesture west, making a fool of yourself? What is meant by “private passageways admit carts and horses” absolutely requires letting go; otherwise, one loses an eye. But how does one let go? How does one hold fast? Where should one let go? When must one hold fast? Is letting go better, or is holding fast better? Please consider Case Four of The Blue Cliff Record, “Deshan Carries His Bundle and Questions Weishan”:

Deshan came to Weishan. Carrying his bundle, he entered the Dharma hall, walked from east to west and from west to east, looked about, and said, “Nothing! Nothing!” Then he left. (Xuedou added the comment: “His position has been seen through.”)

“Deshan's staff and Linji's shout” are celebrated throughout the Chan forest. Deshan and Linji, these two great Chan masters, were the great patriarchs of the Chan school whose staffs and shouts went hand in hand.

Chan Master Deshan Xuanjian, whose lay surname was Zhou, left home at the age of twenty. He studied the Vinaya Piṭaka in depth and thoroughly mastered the purport of the sūtras of the Nature and Characteristics schools. He originally lectured on the Diamond Sūtra in Sichuan and was known as “Zhou of the Diamond Sūtra.” He wrote a commentary on the Diamond Sūtra entitled Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon. He heard that the Chan school in the south advocated “seeing one's true nature and becoming a Buddha”: awakening suddenly to one's original nature and being a Buddha at once.

He regarded this as “the words of demons.” According to the doctrinal teachings, one must spend a thousand eons learning the dignified conduct of a Buddha and ten thousand eons learning the Buddha's subtle practices before becoming a Buddha. Yet these southern demon-followers dared to claim that mind itself is Buddha! So he roused himself, shouldered his Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon, and headed straight south to refute these demon-followers.

When he reached Lizhou, he saw an old woman selling fried rice cakes by the roadside. These cakes were a food of that time, similar to the glutinous-rice dumplings eaten today. Hungry from his journey, he set down his load and wished to buy some cakes for a snack. The old woman asked what he was carrying. He replied that it was Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon, an explanation of the Diamond Sūtra.

The old woman said, “I have a question. If you can answer it, I will give you some cakes as alms for your refreshment; if you cannot answer it, please go elsewhere to buy them.” Deshan said, “Very well. Ask your question.” The old woman said, “The Diamond Sūtra says: ‘The past mind is unobtainable, the present mind is unobtainable, and the future mind is unobtainable.’”

“Which mind, Venerable, do you wish to refresh?” Deshan was skilled at lecturing on the Diamond Sūtra and had assumed that he understood its profound meaning, so that no question could stump him. Yet here he was stumped by an old woman. He could only stare blankly, unable to reply. The old woman then directed him to seek instruction from Chan Master Longtan Chongxin, who lived nearby.

Deshan went to Chan Master Longtan. As soon as he entered, he said, “I have long admired Longtan. Yet now that I have arrived at Longtan, I see neither the pool nor the dragon.” Master Longtan emerged from behind a screen and said, “You have personally arrived at Longtan.”

Everyone, how can “seeing neither the pool nor the dragon” be “personally arriving at Longtan”? This was a means of guiding him. The Diamond Sūtra says, “If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata.” If one saw a pool or a dragon, one would be attached to appearances. Seeing neither pool nor dragon is precisely to be free of appearances and see one's true nature.

Moreover, our Buddha-nature is originally free of appearances: “To be free of all appearances is called all Buddhas.” Master Longtan's words carried a double meaning. But Zhou of the Diamond Sūtra was then still coarse in mind and did not enter into realization at once. He merely bowed in accordance with etiquette and withdrew.

That evening, Deshan entered the master's room to seek instruction. Being skilled at explaining the Diamond Sūtra, he expounded much of its doctrine, while Master Longtan merely responded perfunctorily with “yes, yes.” It had grown very late, and Master Longtan said, “The night is deep. Go down and rest.” Deshan bade him farewell, lifted the curtain, and went out.

Seeing that it was very dark outside, so dark that he could not see his hand before his face, he came back and said, “It is dark outside.” Master Longtan rolled up a piece of paper as a candle, lit it, and handed it to Deshan. Just as Deshan received it, Master Longtan suddenly blew out the flame. Deshan was suddenly greatly awakened and immediately bowed to Master Longtan.

How could blowing out a candle bring about awakening to the Way? What is the principle in this? If you cannot penetrate it here, go home and investigate it carefully. Master Longtan said, “What did you see that you bow?” Deshan replied, “From this day onward, I shall no longer doubt the words of the old masters throughout the land!”

The next day, Master Longtan ascended the Dharma seat and said, “Among them is a fellow whose teeth are like sword trees and whose mouth resembles a basin of blood. One blow of the staff will not make him turn back. (Ever since the old woman, he has already received two or three blows!) One day, atop a solitary peak, he will establish my Way.”

Deshan piled his Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon before the Dharma hall, raised a torch, and said, “To exhaust all subtle arguments is like placing a single hair in the vast emptiness; to exhaust all the world's mechanisms of intelligence is like casting a drop of water into a great abyss.” From such language, we can see Chan Master Deshan's literary brilliance. His Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon must surely have been written with dazzling eloquence.

The vast emptiness and the great abyss—the ocean—are metaphors for Buddha-nature. Subtle arguments are profound speculations, while mechanisms refer metaphorically to intelligence and wisdom. To exhaust profound speculation is still only like placing a single hair in the sky; to exhaust all worldly intelligence and ability is only like casting a drop of water into the ocean. Buddha-nature is so vast and boundless.

Chan Master Deshan actually consigned to the flames the Commentary and Notes on the Green Dragon, which he had written with his heart's blood. After his awakening through the “blown-out candle,” he heard that Weishan's Way was held in high esteem and that he had fifteen hundred students. He therefore wished for a meeting of masters and went to consult Weishan.

Chan Master Weishan Lingyou was the founder of the Guiyang school, a Dharma son of Chan Master Baizhang and a Dharma grandson of Chan Master Mazu. Among Baizhang's disciples was a mendicant named Sima, skilled in geomancy. He told Master Baizhang that in Hunan there was a mountain named Great Weishan, with excellent geomantic conditions, a place fit for a great teacher with fifteen hundred followers.

At that time, Master Lingyou served as steward of provisions under Baizhang. Master Baizhang therefore sent him to reside on Mount Weishan. The mountain terrain was steep and perilous, with scarcely a trace of human habitation. Master Lingyou lived among apes and monkeys, gathering acorns and chestnuts to satisfy his hunger. He remained there for six or seven years, yet no one came up the mountain.

Master Lingyou thought, “I live here in order to benefit students. Now that no one comes or goes, why should I remain here as one who seeks liberation for himself alone?” He therefore left his grass hut and prepared to descend the mountain for another place. When he reached the mountain pass, he saw many wolves, snakes, tigers, and leopards blocking his way. Master Lingyou said, “You need not block me.”

“If I have an affinity with this mountain, each of you should go your separate way. If I have no affinity with it, you need not move; I shall walk forward, and you may eat me as you please.” As soon as he had spoken, the wolves, snakes, tigers, and leopards scattered in all directions, and Master Weishan returned to his hut. Less than a year later, the Venerable Lan'an led more than ten monastics from Master Baizhang's place to assist Master Weishan.

Thereafter, the residents at the foot of the mountain gradually learned of him and helped build a monastery. Students also gradually increased in number. Not only did local officials support him, but even the prime minister Pei Xiu went up the mountain to ask about the Dharma. Before long, it became a great practice center of fifteen hundred people.

Deshan arrived at Weishan carrying his bundle into the Dharma hall. The bundle was the pack carried by monastics traveling on pilgrimage. Carrying his bundle meant holding this pack. Without even untying it, he entered the Dharma hall with it on his back. He walked from east to west and from west to east.

Why did he pace back and forth? Such is the bearing of a Chan practitioner: every gesture and movement expounds the Dharma. One need not speak in order to expound the Dharma. Gu Shi said, “No! No!” Gu shi means looking here and there. Nothing! Nothing! There is nothing at all in your Dharma hall; even my walking back and forth is nonexistent. In this way, he showed that he had thoroughly realized the Way.

Having said this, he left the Dharma hall in full view of everyone. Chan Master Xuedou appended the comment, “Seen through!” To see through means to perceive fully one’s conduct and bearing.

Everyone, was Deshan seeing through Weishan, Weishan seeing through Deshan, or Xuedou seeing through them both? Tell me: can you also see through Xuedou? Whenever one adds a comment, there is a tail to it. Here Xuedou has already exposed himself amid the grass! A person of true realization establishes not a single dharma; utterly bare, stark naked, clean and free, such a person accords with intrinsic nature.

If you retain even an idea of “seeing through,” the fox’s tail has already appeared. Chan Master Weishan was a master of great stature. He sat unmoving and paid Deshan no heed, to see what tricks he had. This is the point where “an official tolerates no needle”: if there is the slightest trickery here, it is “half-green and half-yellow”; if anything remains, one has not penetrated thoroughly. In the first round of this Dharma battle, Deshan suffered defeat.

When Deshan reached the entrance, he said, “This will not do; I must not leave it carelessly.” He then composed himself with proper deportment and reentered to meet Weishan. As Weishan was seated, Deshan picked up his sitting cloth and said, “Reverend.” Weishan moved to take up his fly-whisk, whereupon Deshan gave a shout, flicked his sleeves, and left. (Xuedou appended the comment: “Seen through!”) With his back to the Dharma hall, Deshan put on his straw sandals and departed.

When Deshan reached the entrance, he said instead, “This will not do; I must not leave it carelessly.” He could not simply leave in a haphazard manner after suffering defeat; he had to go back and recover his ground. To compose oneself with proper deportment means to observe the proper forms of conduct and be courteous. Weishan was the founding master of the mountain; when a visitor came, he should bow and pay homage to the master.

A sitting cloth is a square piece of cloth, made to prescribed specifications, used exclusively by monastics. It is spread out when sitting in meditation and used as a kneeling mat when making prostrations. Weishan was seated in the Dharma hall. Having completed his prostrations according to the rules, Deshan picked up his sitting cloth and said, “Reverend.” Deshan wanted to provoke Weishan verbally and make him respond; he wanted to lure him into the water.

Weishan then moved to take up the fly-whisk—a fly-whisk is used to brush away dust—intending to strike him with it. You had come back to recover your ground, provoking him with words and trying to lure him into the water, so you deserved a beating. Deshan immediately gave a shout. How quick Deshan was! “You want to strike me with the fly-whisk? I will shout at you first.” Without waiting to be struck, he flicked his sleeves and left.

There is a reason for the shout as well: “You still have that, do you? You still mean to take up the fly-whisk?” This is the reversal of host and guest. When adepts meet, they respond to circumstances and shift accordingly; otherwise, they die on one side. Chan Master Xuedou again appended the comment, “Seen through!” Everyone, who has seen through whom this time? With his back to the Dharma hall, Deshan put on his straw sandals and left. In the second round of the Dharma battle, Deshan gained the advantage. But had Weishan been defeated? Weishan was a great adept; he had his own way of emerging.

That evening, Weishan asked the head seat, “Where is the newcomer who arrived earlier?” The head seat said, “He turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and left.” Weishan said, “In the future, this fellow will set up a grass hut atop a solitary peak, shout at the Buddha and revile the patriarchs.” (Xuedou appended the comment: “Frost upon snow!”)

Weishan was in no hurry. Only slowly, when evening came, did he ask the head seat, “Where is the newcomer from earlier?” The head seat said, “He immediately turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and left.” Weishan said, “In the future, this fellow will set up a grass hut atop a solitary peak, shout at the Buddha and revile the patriarchs.”

There is a barb in Weishan’s words: when you saw me take up the fly-whisk, you hurriedly shouted; having gained the advantage, you hastened away. The fox’s tail had long since appeared. It is like “the divine turtle dragging its tail”: it sweeps away its tracks, yet leaves behind the marks of sweeping.

Chan Master Weishan was a great adept. Unhurriedly, he waited until evening, then lightly grasped and lifted this fox’s tail. Thus he concluded the third round of the Dharma battle and brought this koan to completion. Thereafter, Chan Master Deshan held a great staff in his hand, sat entrenched on a solitary peak, shouted at the Buddha and reviled the patriarchs, striking like wind and rain; yet he never escaped Weishan’s unhurried words. Therefore, Xuedou appended the comment here: “Frost upon snow!” What follows is Xuedou’s verse on this koan:

First seeing-through, second seeing-through—frost upon snow; he nearly fell.

This koan may be divided into three parts: first seeing-through, second seeing-through, and frost upon snow.

“First seeing-through” refers to Deshan’s stirring up waves three feet high without a wind and raising a heap of bones on level ground. He wished to “meet as adepts” with Weishan, provoke a Dharma battle, and exchange insights. But Chan Master Weishan sat firmly on his fishing platform and was unmoved by him, so Deshan had no choice but to return defeated.

In those days, there was a hermit living in a hut at the foot of Mount Nanquan. Someone told him, “These days, Master Nanquan is gathering people on the mountain and expounding the Dharma. Why do you not go and pay him a visit?” The hermit said, “Not only would I not go for Master Nanquan; even if a thousand Buddhas appeared in the world, I would not go.” It seemed that he was already quite sure of himself, able to remain unmoved by all circumstances.

When Chan Master Nanquan heard of this, he sent his disciple Chan Master Zhaozhou to test whether it was genuine. On meeting the hermit, Zhaozhou made a bow, but the hermit did not even look at him. Zhaozhou then went from east to west and from west to east, much like Deshan, but the hermit still did not look at him.

Zhaozhou had no recourse. He pulled down the curtain over the door and said, “The grass bandit has been utterly defeated!” He meant: “You have lost the battle; you dare not speak.” Yet the hermit still ignored him. Zhaozhou was completely at a loss and could only leave in embarrassment. How similar this was to Deshan’s crushing defeat in the first round.

After returning defeated to the mountain, Zhaozhou told Nanquan what had happened. Nanquan said, “I have always had doubts about that fellow.” He wanted to test him personally, to recover the ground as well. The next day, Chan Master Nanquan took a novice, carrying a pot of tea and three bowls, to the hut. Setting them on the ground, he said, “Yesterday’s one, yesterday’s one.”

The hermit said, “What is ‘yesterday’s one’?” The hermit had taken the bait. How similar this was to Deshan provoking Weishan to take up the fly-whisk. Nanquan patted the novice on the back and said, “You tricked me into coming, tricked me into coming,” then flicked his sleeves and returned.

“Second seeing-through” refers to Deshan’s refusal to accept defeat and his return to recover his ground. He made prostrations, called out, “Reverend,” and provoked Weishan to take up the fly-whisk and strike him. Relying on his youth—his quick eye, quick tongue, and nimble feet—he gave a shout and departed, gaining the advantage and winning the second round.

One must not press on again after becoming pleased with oneself. Thus he turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and hurried down the mountain. How perilous! Had his eyes, tongue, and feet not all been quick, the fly-whisk would have struck him. This is the “he nearly fell” in Xuedou’s verse. Chan Master Xuedou composed the three sections as one continuous verse, placing “he nearly fell” at the end of the line. Thus the sequence is clear, and the verse is resonant when recited. This shows that Xuedou not only had penetrating insight but also considerable literary talent.

“Frost upon snow” means that Chan Master Weishan was exceedingly steady and composed. Even drawing the bow after the thief has gone, he could still hit the mark precisely. Only slowly, when evening came, did he ask the head seat; then, before the assembly, he calmly commented on Deshan. If he had not been a spiritual guide to fifteen hundred people, how could he have possessed such skill? Chan Master Weishan was no ordinary figure: he founded the Weiyang school and was a founding patriarch of great stature. That Chan Master Deshan could gain an advantage over him was already most remarkable.

The Flying Cavalry General entered the enemy’s camp; how many could emerge whole a second time?

The Flying Cavalry General refers to Li Guang, the “Flying General,” of the time of Emperor Wu of Han. Li Guang was highly skilled in martial arts, brave and formidable in battle, and especially adept at mounted archery. Once, while leading men on patrol, he reached the foot of a mountain and saw in the distance what appeared to be a fierce tiger crouching in the grass. He immediately drew his bow, nocked an arrow, and shot at the tiger.

He possessed the extraordinary skill of shooting through a willow leaf at a hundred paces, and his arrows never missed; naturally, he hit the target. But when he approached the grass and looked carefully, he found that it was not a tiger at all, but a large stone. The arrow had penetrated the stone, with its feathers still showing outside. When he tried to pull it out by hand, he could not. Li Guang found this quite strange. When he shot the stone again, the arrow could not penetrate it in the least.

The power of mind is inconceivable, as in the story of Kumārajīva lifting a cauldron. When Kumārajīva was young, he accompanied his mother to a temple to worship the Buddha. Seeing a great iron cauldron, he went over and lifted it up in a single motion. After lifting it, he found it strange and thought, “How can I, at such a young age, lift such a heavy iron cauldron?” When he tried again, he could not lift it. Once discriminating thought arose, his strength was insufficient. If there is no discriminating mind, spiritual powers manifest; lifting a cauldron or shooting through stone is nothing remarkable. Whoosh! An arrow can shoot straight into a stone.

The enemy’s camp refers to the territory of the Xiongnu. To enter the enemy’s camp means to penetrate deep into territory occupied by the Xiongnu. Once, Li Guang was ordered to leave Yanmen Pass and resist the Xiongnu. Their leader, the Chanyu, arranged layer upon layer of ambushes. Vastly outnumbered, Li Guang was captured alive. Feigning grave injury and death, he was placed in a net sling between two horses.

Li Guang furtively saw a Xiongnu soldier nearby riding a fine horse. Suddenly, he sprang onto that horse, pushed the Xiongnu soldier to the ground, seized his bow and arrows, and galloped southward. The Xiongnu pursued him, but Li Guang’s arrows never missed; he drove back the pursuing riders and succeeded in escaping. How many generals possess such an ability to escape alive from the brink of death? Hence the line: “How many could emerge whole a second time?”

“The Flying Cavalry General entered the enemy’s camp; how many could emerge whole a second time?” is a metaphor for Chan Master Deshan. Unwilling to lose the Dharma battle, he returned to meet Weishan again. Relying on his nimble hands and eyes, he gained the advantage, just as the Flying General Li Guang escaped alive from mortal danger.

He rushed past and would not let it go; atop a solitary peak, he sat amid the grass. Ha!

“Hurriedly passed on” means that, after Chan Master Deshan had gained the advantage, he put on his straw sandals and left, hurrying down the mountain. “Did not let him off” means that Chan Master Weishan did not let him off, waiting until evening to

comment on him: “This fellow will later tie up a grass hut atop a solitary peak, where he will scold the Buddha and revile the patriarchs.” This means that he would later “sit amid the grass atop a solitary peak.”

Why say “sit amid the grass”? This is called “entering the weeds for the sake of others.” Opening the hall to teach the Dharma, guiding the assembly, propagating the Dharma, and benefiting living beings—all this is entering the weeds. Originally, there is nothing at all, yet you still “ascend the hall in the morning and enter the master’s room in the evening.”

Ascending the hall in the morning means giving a general lecture to the assembly, a universal instruction. Entering the master’s room in the evening means giving individual guidance at night, since each person’s circumstances differ. Entering the room in the evening is also called “requesting instruction”: one asks the master for teaching, thereby enabling oneself to progress. To guide the assembly, one must speak—speaking this way and that way, yet all the speaking amounts to empty talk. Whenever there are words, there is no real meaning in them. The true meaning does not lie in words; true buddha-nature is beyond speech and beyond what can be conceived. To point here and gesture there, talking on and on—is this not “entering the weeds”?

Bah! Originally, the seas are calm and the rivers clear, and the world is at peace. Why are you there pointing here and gesturing there, making all sorts of remarks?

This concludes the verse composed by Chan Master Xuedou. What follows is Chan Master Yuanwu Qin’s commentary on the verse:

Xuedou composed verses on one hundred koans, presenting each one after burning incense; thus they became widely circulated in the world. Chan Master Xuedou wrote verses for The Hundred Verses on Ancient Koans. He poured out his heart’s blood in analyzing and bringing to light the crucial points and hidden subtleties of the koans. Drawing on his own realization, he guided the assembly; hence it is said that he “presented each one after burning incense.”

It was like making an offering to the Buddha—an offering to the assembly. Thus it became widely circulated and broadly transmitted. At that time, The Hundred Verses on Ancient Koans swept through Chan circles, and students of the Chan school flocked to study and investigate it. Yet Emperor Shenzong of the Song did not permit it to enter the canon; he would not allow The Hundred Verses on Ancient Koans to be included in the Buddhist canon.

He thought that the phrase “What are the Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns?” (see the preceding koan, “Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha”) “satirized the state,” mocking the nation and showing no regard for its emperor. He was not a practitioner and was excessively selfish. Yet he could not stop The Hundred Verses on Ancient Koans from becoming widely circulated.

He was also a master of writing. Only after penetrating the koans and mastering their intricate carving could he set brush to paper. Why was this so? Dragons and snakes are easy to distinguish, but patch-robed monks are difficult to deceive.

Chan Master Xuedou Chongxian not only possessed a high level of literary cultivation and wrote exceedingly well; his insight was also penetrating, and he had penetrated the koans. Able to turn left and right, winding and circling, he used the finishing touch of a painter of dragons to set forth in full what does not fall into language and is not concerned with thought. He repeatedly examined and refined it himself, and only when he had become thoroughly adept did he take up his brush and compose verses.

Why was this so? Because “Dragons and snakes are easy to distinguish, but patch-robed monks are difficult to deceive.” Dragons symbolize those who have awakened; snakes symbolize those who have not. It is comparatively easy to tell whether someone has awakened, but to compose verses one must use language and writing, whereas buddha-nature does not fall into language and has nothing to do with letters.

To use “speech” to evoke what is “speechless”—how could that be easy? If one mishandles it, one falls into it oneself. How then could one deceive clear-eyed patch-robed monks who have awakened? It is like wielding the precious Taia sword: not only must one wield it with perfect roundness and nimble subtlety, but one must never damage its edge or injure one’s hand.

Xuedou penetrated this koan and, at its knotty and difficult turning points, added three phrases, gathering them into a verse. Frost upon snow—he nearly fell into danger.

Chan Master Xuedou penetrated the koan of “Deshan’s exchange after being challenged” and added three phrases at its turning point. “Knotty and difficult turning points” refers to the intricate, complex turns in the koan. The three phrases are the two instances of “seen through!” and the one phrase “frost upon snow.” “Gathering them into a verse” means joining the three phrases into a single flowing verse: “Once seen through, twice seen through; frost upon snow—he nearly fell.”

What, then, was Deshan like? He was like Li Guang, who was by nature a skilled archer and was granted by the emperor the title General of the Flying Cavalry. He penetrated deep into enemy territory and was captured alive by the Chanyu. At the time, Guang was wounded and ill. He was placed between two horses, tied up and carried lying down.

Guang then feigned death. Glancing aside, he saw a Hu boy riding a fine horse. Guang sprang onto the horse, pushed the Hu boy off, seized his bow and arrows, whipped the horse southward, and drew his bow to drive back the pursuing riders. Thus he escaped. This man possessed such skill that he found life amid death. Xuedou cites this in his verse to compare it to Deshan's returning for another encounter and still managing to leap free. Look at the ancients: in seeing, speaking, acting, and applying, they were indeed heroic and spirited. Only one with the means to kill without blinking an eye can become a Buddha on the spot; one who can become a Buddha on the spot naturally has the means to kill without blinking an eye. Only then does one have a share in freedom and ease.

To "kill without blinking an eye" means killing your deluded emotions, killing your calculating consciousness, and killing your mind of grasping and rejecting. When these are all killed off and the deluded mind dies completely, then it comes alive again, saving your Dharma body and wisdom-life. In former times, Chan Master Yunmen went to visit Chan Master Muzhou. As soon as Muzhou saw him arrive, he shut the door.

Yunmen knocked outside. Muzhou asked, "What do you want?" Yunmen said, "My own matter is not yet clear. I beg the master for instruction." Muzhou opened the door, saw him, and immediately shut it again. This went on for three consecutive days. On the third day, the moment Yunmen saw the door open, he jumped inside.

Muzhou still did not let Yunmen off. He grabbed him and said, "Speak quickly! Speak quickly!" Yunmen hesitated—considering what to say—and Muzhou immediately shoved him out, slamming the door shut with a bang and crushing one of Yunmen's feet. Yunmen was in extreme pain; in that instant, his deluded thoughts suddenly emptied, and he abruptly attained great awakening.

Such are the formidable methods of killing without blinking an eye. People nowadays become dissatisfied if someone speaks even a little harshly to them. How can they accord with the Way? If one could sincerely apply oneself as the ancients did, what difficulty would there be in realizing the Way in this very life? If we are truly willing to apply ourselves, it is enough for coarse vegetables to taste sweet and plain clothing to feel warm; there is no need for excessive desires.

If you are busy and restless, seeking things outwardly, then when death comes, you can take nothing with you. This is called "toying with one's vital spirit"; it is karma that produces birth and death. I urge you all: you are originally Buddhas. Maintain contemplation at all times and do not cling to appearances. Mind and circumstances are both unobtainable. Only when intrinsic luminosity shines alone, utterly freed from sense faculties and their objects, can one roam in freedom and ease—only then does one "have a share in freedom and ease."

Nowadays, when some people are questioned, they initially seem to possess the bearing of patch-robed monks. But when pressed ever so lightly, their waists break into sections and their thighs into pieces; they are fragmented in seven ways and scattered in eight, with not the slightest continuity. Therefore the ancients said, "Continuity is also exceedingly difficult." Look at Deshan and Weishan: how could their understanding have been such petty, piecemeal understanding? How many people can attain such completeness?

People nowadays—in the Song dynasty, that is—when you question them, initially display a bit of the bearing of patch-robed monks and seem like awakened people. But if you continue questioning them and press them only slightly, they break at the waist and split at the thighs, falling into scattered pieces and becoming unrecognizable.

Even in the Song dynasty there were people like this; what then of people today? This is called "toad Chan: it can only make one jump." Therefore the ancients said, "Continuity is also exceedingly difficult." To avoid being obstructed by language, and to be like a gourd floating on water that turns when pressed, responding precisely as appropriate—this is called "continuity." To be able to do this is no easy matter!

Now let us present a koan from an ancient master and see the continuity of the ancients. Under Chan Master Liangshan Yuanguan there was a garden steward, responsible for the vegetable garden and for growing vegetables for everyone to eat. He was an awakened person.

One day, a monk went to provoke him, wanting him to reveal something. He said to him, "Why not go ask the hall master? Ask him one or two questions and form an affinity with him."

The garden steward said, "Unless I do not go ask him; if I do go ask, I must make the hall master get down from his Chan seat and stand on the ground!"

The next day, when Chan Master Liangshan ascended the hall, the garden steward stepped forward and asked, "What when a household thief is hard to guard against?" That is, when deluded thoughts are flying about and cannot be brought under control, how should one deal with them?

Liangshan said, "To recognize it is not to be wronged." This means that once you know that deluded thoughts are flying about, there is no need to attend to them. Let them arise and cease on their own; do not follow them. To follow them is to wander astray; to suppress them is "pressing down grass with a stone." Neither will do. Both following and suppressing them are wasted effort. Recognize them clearly and do not follow them; then you are not wasting your effort.

The garden steward said, “What after recognizing it?” Once one recognizes them clearly, how should one deal with these deluded thoughts?

Liangshan said, “Banish it to the land of the unborn!” Originally there is no arising; what appears to exist does not exist. Simply do not attend to it. Over time, deluded thoughts will naturally cease to arise. This is what it means to banish them to the land of the unborn.

The garden steward said, “Is that its place of settling and establishing life?” That is, is the state in which deluded thoughts do not arise the place of settling and establishing life? Is that ultimate?

Liangshan said, “Dead water does not harbor dragons.” This means that to remain fixed in a state where thoughts do not arise is to take a wrong path. Dead samādhi is like a pool of stagnant water: it does not harbor dragons—it is of no use.

The garden steward said, “What is the dragon in living water?”

Liangshan said, “It stirs waves but makes no breakers.” One may do anything at all—that is “stirring waves.” Yet one remains completely unobstructed, not holding anything in one’s mind; having acted, it is as though one had not acted. This is “making no breakers.”

The garden steward then said, “What if the pool overturns and the mountains collapse?” When the pool overturns and even mountains are washed down, what enormous waves! That is, what if one suddenly erupts in a great rage?

Liangshan indeed stepped down from the Dharma seat, seized the garden steward, and said, “Acharya, do not let the corner of this old monk’s robe get wet.” His display of temper was merely “the heart of a bodhisattva with the face of a rākṣasa”—only to frighten the other party and instruct others; there was not the slightest thought of anger. Though his manner seemed capable of overturning lakes and toppling mountains, he had not even wetted the corner of his robe!

See how, in the ancients’ questions and answers, each response follows the other with perfect appropriateness, like arrowpoints meeting. Without thoroughly penetrating insight, how could one be like this?

“He hurried away”—Deshan gave a shout and then went out, much like Li Guang, who, after being captured, devised a plan, shot and killed a barbarian general with a single arrow, and escaped from the enemy camp. Xuedou’s verse reaches this point with great skill. Deshan turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and went out, thinking he had gained the advantage. Little did he know that this old man still would not let him get ahead.

When Xuedou said, “I will not let him off,” Weishan later asked the head monk that evening, “Where is the newcomer who arrived earlier?” The head monk said, “He turned his back on the Dharma hall, put on his straw sandals, and went out.” Weishan said, “This fellow will one day build a grass hut atop a solitary peak and go about scolding the Buddha and reviling the patriarchs.” When had he ever been let off? Truly remarkable! At this point, why does Xuedou speak of “sitting amid the grass atop a solitary peak”? He then gives another shout. Tell me, where does it fall? Investigate for another thirty years!

“Bah!”—this is the shout given by Chan Master Xuedou after his verse. Where does this shout fall? Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin has finished his commentary, and I too should finish explaining this koan. Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin was not truly telling you to investigate for another thirty years, investigating where “Bah!” falls. It is a word of encouragement, urging you to see immediately, in the present moment, and not to drag things out. Do you all see it yet?

(Zhenwei gives a shout) Investigate!

[5] Xuefeng Beats the Drum for a General Invitation

A Pointer: In general, to uphold and establish a religious tradition requires a person of heroic spiritual capacity. Only one with hands and feet that can kill without blinking an eye can become a Buddha on the spot. Therefore illumination and function operate simultaneously; opening and closing are voiced together; principle and phenomena are nondual; provisional and ultimate teachings proceed side by side. To let go of one move is to establish a secondary meaning. To cut off entanglements directly is difficult for later students and beginners to approach. To have acted thus yesterday was unavoidable; to act thus again today would be a sin towering to heaven. A clear-eyed person cannot be deceived in the slightest. But if this is not so, to throw oneself across a tiger’s mouth is inevitably to lose one’s life. Let us cite the case and see.

[5] The Case:

Xuefeng addressed the assembly: “One blind person leading a host of blind people—this is not beyond the ordinary.”

“Gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet—what kind of means is this? This mountain monk has never played tricks with ghostly eyes.

Throw it down before you—yet I fear you cannot throw it down! What skill is there in that?

The lacquer bucket does not understand. Relying on his authority to bully people—take him away yourself. Do not try to deceive the assembly.

Beat the drum and invite everyone to come see." Blind! Drums are beaten for the three armies.

Changqing asked Yunmen, "When Xuefeng spoke in this way, was there still a point from which he could not emerge?"

Yunmen said, "There was."

Changqing said, "How so?"

Yunmen said, "You must not take it all as the understanding of a wild fox spirit."

Xuefeng said, "Not enough to match those above; more than enough to match those below. Let me entangle you further." Raising his staff, he said, "Do you see Xuefeng? Bah! The king's decree is somewhat strict: no one is permitted to interfere with the marketplace."

Dahui Zhe said, "Let me add mud upon dirt for you all." Raising his staff, he said, "Look, look! Xuefeng is defecating before you all. Bah! Why do you not even know that excrement stinks?"

Xuefeng addressed the assembly: "Gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet." The ancients had extraordinary ways of receiving beings and benefiting life. Yet they did not shrink from hard work: three times they went up to Touzi and nine times to Dongshan. Carrying a lacquer bucket and a wooden ladle, serving as cook wherever they went, all for the sake of breaking through this matter.

When he was serving as cook under Dongshan, Dongshan asked Xuefeng one day, "What are you doing?"

Xuefeng said, "Washing rice."

Dongshan said, "Are you washing away the sand and keeping the rice, or washing away the rice and keeping the sand?"

Xuefeng said, "Sand and rice both go away together."

Dongshan said, "Then what will the assembly eat?"

Xuefeng thereupon overturned the basin.

Dongshan said, "Your affinity lies with Deshan," and directed him to go see him.

As soon as he arrived, he asked, "In the matter of the supreme teaching transmitted from above, does this student have any share?"

Deshan struck him with his staff and said, "What are you saying?" Thereupon he had an awakening.

Later, when snow detained him at Aoshan, he said to Yantou, "When I was under Deshan's staff, it was as though the bottom had fallen out of a bucket."

Yantou shouted, "Have you not heard it said: 'What enters through the gate is not a family treasure'? It must flow out from your own breast, covering heaven and earth, before there is even a small measure of correspondence."

Xuefeng suddenly had a great awakening. Bowing in homage, he said, "Elder brother, today at last I have realized the Way at Aoshan."

People nowadays keep saying that the ancients deliberately contrived these things in order to make later people follow rules. If so, they are slandering the ancients; this is called drawing the Buddha's blood.

The ancients were not as careless and makeshift as people today. How could they have taken one phrase or half a phrase as sufficient for an entire lifetime? Because they upheld and established the tradition and continued the Buddha's life, whenever they uttered one phrase or half a phrase, it naturally silenced everyone under heaven. There was no path for your deliberate intentions, emotional interpretations, or conceptual reasoning. See how this instruction to the assembly was possible because he had encountered accomplished masters; thus he possessed the tongs and hammers of an accomplished master. Whenever he spoke one phrase or half a phrase, it was not the calculating activity of mind, consciousness, and thought, not work conducted in a ghost cave. It was utterly outstanding, cutting off both past and present and allowing no conjecture or deliberation. This is entirely how such a master functions.

One day he addressed the assembly: "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake. All of you must look after yourselves carefully." At that time the practitioner Leng stepped forward and said, "If so, many people in this hall today will lose their lives."

He also said, "The whole great earth is one eye of a śramaṇa. Where will all of you defecate?"

He also said, “I have already met you at Wangzhou Pavilion; I have already met you at Wushi Ridge; I have already met you before the monks’ hall.” At that time Baofu asked Ehu, “Set aside meeting before the monks’ hall for now. What is the place where one meets at Wangzhou Pavilion and Wushi Ridge?” Ehu strode quickly back to the abbot’s quarters.

He often cited sayings such as these to instruct the assembly. When he said, “Gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet,” tell me: can this be measured by discriminating consciousness? One must break open the cage, set gain and loss, right and wrong aside all at once, and become utterly free and open. Then one naturally penetrates his painted enclosure and sees how he functions.

Tell me, where was Xuefeng’s intent? Many people give an emotional interpretation, saying, “Mind is the master of all phenomena; the whole great earth is at once in my hand.” Fortunately, this has nothing to do with it. Here one must be a genuine person: upon merely hearing it raised, one sees through it to the marrow of one’s bones, without falling into emotional thought or conceptual imagination. If one is an authentic traveling monastic, then upon seeing him speak in this way, he has already gone to great lengths for others.

Look at Xuedou’s verse:

The ox’s head vanishes—like lightning; it has already slipped past.

The horse’s head turns—as swift as a spark struck from stone.

In Caoxi’s mirror, all dust is cut off—break the mirror and meet me; it must be broken.

Beat the drum and come see—do you not see? Pierce your eyes! Do not take it lightly. What is so difficult to see about a lacquer bucket?

For whom do the hundred flowers bloom when spring arrives? The Dharma yields to no one. What a mess! Emerging from a cave of entanglements.

Xuedou truly saw the ancient master. He merely needed to thrust a needle into his vital point and compose the verse: “The ox’s head vanishes; the horse’s head turns.” Tell me, what does this say? For one who sees through it, it is as ordinary as eating porridge at morning assembly and rice at the midday meal. Yet Xuedou, in his compassion, smashed it with a hammer blow right before us and cut it off in a single phrase; still, it is solitary and steep.

Like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning, it reveals no point or edge, leaving nowhere for you to approach. Tell me, can you grope for it beneath the mind faculty? These two lines say everything at once. In his third line, Xuedou opens a narrow passage and slightly reveals the manner of the teaching; already this is descending into the weeds. The fourth line is even more directly descending into the weeds. If you generate words upon words, sentences upon sentences, thoughts upon thoughts, and make interpretations and understandings, you not only burden this old monk but also betray Xuedou.

Although the ancients’ words are like this, their intent is not like this; ultimately they do not bind people with conceptual reasoning. “In Caoxi’s mirror, all dust is cut off”—how many people say, “A quiet mind is the mirror.” Fortunately, this has nothing to do with it. They go on calculating and reasoning; when will there ever be an end? This is talk proper to one’s fundamental position, and this mountain monk dares not depart from that position.

“The ox’s head vanishes; the horse’s head turns”—Xuedou has stated it clearly; it is simply that people do not see. Therefore Xuedou went to such lengths, composing: “Beat the drum and come see—do you not see?” Do foolish people see it? He further tells you, “For whom do the hundred flowers bloom when spring arrives?” It may be said that he has flung open the doors and windows, opening all eight sides for you at once. When spring comes, in secluded valleys and wild streams, even in places where no one is present, the hundred flowers compete in bloom. Tell me, for whom do they bloom? u A babel of voices

[Shancai]: Xuefeng is abominable!

He forcibly drags in a whole crowd, puts hats on the wrong heads, paints them red and green, and has them accompany his performance.

Even so, no one should merely go through the motions!

[Dingling]: Sitting amid the grass atop a solitary peak—his grandmotherly concern is urgent.

Ha ha! Who has ever seen him putting on a performance?

[Shancai]: That too is merely going through the motions.

[Visitor]: “Gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet?”

Why speak of large or small?

[Shancai]: What is large is this large; what is small is this small. ^_^

[xinming]: Even a lacquer bucket can “gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet.”

[lvm]: Anyone can “gather up the whole great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet.”

It is not that the lacquer bucket cannot gather it up; it is that it cannot comprehend—“the lacquer bucket does not understand.”

[xinming]: Then what if the lacquer bucket comprehends?

[lvm]: Once it comprehends, it is no longer a lacquer bucket.

[xinming]: Then what is it?

[Flowers in Bloom, Full Moon]: A lacquer bucket!

[xinming]: How about changing the name—for example, to a “glass bucket”?

[lvm]: Let me rush in with an answer too: it is still a lacquer bucket!

[Li Wuyou]: May I ask Teacher LVM: what places do Wangzhou Pavilion and Wushi Ridge refer to?

[lvm]: They were probably place names known to everyone attending the gathering at that time.

[Li Wuyou]: Then what is meant by the “turtle-nosed snake of South Mountain”?

[lvm]: A turtle-nosed snake is an extremely venomous kind of snake. Here it is a metaphor.

Touch it, and you lose your life!

[Li Wuyou]: Excellent, this snake! Nor can ordinary people see it.

[Li Wuyou]: Teacher LVM, could you explain these few lines?

To have acted thus yesterday was unavoidable; to act thus again today would be a sin towering to heaven.

What is meant by “a point from which he could not emerge”?

The king’s decree is somewhat strict: no one is permitted to interfere with the marketplace.

The ox’s head vanishes; the horse’s head turns.

[lvm]:

To have acted thus yesterday was unavoidable; to act thus again today would be a sin towering to heaven.

* Yesterday, when you asked in that way, I had no choice but to answer accordingly; hence it is called “an unavoidable necessity.” I could only answer your question, like an empty bell that sounds when struck: once the sound has passed, it leaves no trace.

* But today it is again like this. Today you did not ask in that way, yet if I were still to speak in that way, I would be meddling—impure and not cutting things off completely, merely disturbing your mind. Hence it is called “a transgression reaching the heavens.”

What is meant by “a point at which one cannot get free”?

* Is this the passage? Changqing asked Yunmen, “Xuefeng spoke thus. Is there still any point at which he cannot get free?” Yunmen said, “There is.” Changqing said, “How so?” Yunmen said, “You must not take it altogether as the understanding of a wild fox spirit.”

* Changqing and Yunmen were both eminent disciples of Xuefeng. Xuefeng is a place name. The ancients did not address him directly by name, but called him by his place name as a sign of respect. “Xuefeng spoke thus. Is there any point at which he cannot stand?”—“You must not take it altogether as the understanding of a wild fox spirit” is certainly not a rebuke of Xuefeng.

This is Yunmen’s Chan style. Just as “beat him to death and feed him to the dogs” is certainly not an insult to the World-Honored One, but lays bare “I alone am honored in all heaven and earth,” so here too it lays bare Xuefeng’s meaning completely. He gathers up the whole earth into something as small as a grain of millet and tosses it before Changqing’s face.

The king’s decree is somewhat strict: no competing for business in the marketplace is allowed.

* It has the same meaning as “the official tolerates not even a needle.” (Ha ha! What I have already done is “privately letting carriages and horses pass.”)

The ox’s head disappears; the horse’s head returns.

* It means: Zhang San of a former life dies, and Li Si of a later life is born; heads emerge and disappear.

[Li Wuyou]: Thank you for your compassionate, timely instruction. May I further ask you to explain to everyone: How can one avoid seeking Young Master Zhang on the paper?

[Taozi]: Not seeking means simply not seeking. Why ask such crap? So long-winded.

[lvm]: Do not ask “how.” First, stop seeking on this forum.

[Li Wuyou]: And then? One cannot seek anywhere at all!

[lvm]: Young Master Zhang is plainly on the paper; call out with all your strength, and he will not answer.

[hs]: How should these following sentences be explained in modern Chinese?

An unavoidable necessity

The king’s decree is somewhat strict: no competing for business in the marketplace is allowed

There is no place for you to attach yourself

Fortunately, there is no involvement

[Shancai]: These expressions are all more or less ancient colloquialisms, so their meanings can be richly varied according to their context and tone. Even if one reluctantly explains them, the explanations are still not as lively and vivid as the original sentences:

How should these following sentences be explained in modern Chinese?

They must still be understood comprehensively in light of the context of the original text.

An unavoidable necessity

Circumstances leave one with no alternative; one does it out of necessity.

“…Yesterday it was thus—an unavoidable necessity. Today it is again thus—a transgression reaching the heavens….”

The various earlier expedient teachings were truly given in response to beginners and out of necessity. But if, because of this, one now clings stubbornly to fixed views and takes expedient means for the ultimate, how is that different from taking a thief for one’s father? …

The king’s decree is somewhat strict: no competing for business in the marketplace is allowed

The king’s decree is prajñā’s right view, which admits of no speculation; hence it is somewhat strict. If people still contend over who is right or wrong in matters of views, it is like petty vendors noisily arguing without end in a marketplace. This should all the more be stopped.

There is no place for you to attach yourself

There is nowhere for you to gain a foothold.

Fortunately, there is no involvement

This expression occurs rather frequently in koans.

One meaning is, “Fortunately, it is far removed from the author’s original intent.”

Another meaning is: “Excellent, excellent! Forms do not interfere with one another; guest returns to the guest’s place, host returns to the host’s place, and each is at peace in its own sphere!”

Everyone, in this text, which is the guest and which is the host? And what is the difference between them?

Heh heh, if my explanation is mistaken, I ask my Dharma brothers to correct it.

[Cypress Tree]: Hanyu Da Cidian explains: [Coucou]: 1. Also written as “ ” or “ .” 2. To coalesce; to gather together. 3. To make do; to piece together. 4. To bring about; to form. 5. To adhere to. 6. By coincidence.

[Elder Dashou]: Shancai and Cypress Tree, both your principles are correct. But you should know that even true suchness, when burdened with principle, is delusion. The mind itself is formless—how could its wondrous functioning become attachment?

[Shancai]: That is why I say everyone is talking at once and making all kinds of comments.

—Fortunately, there is no involvement.

[Xinming]: Dongshan said, “What will the assembly eat?” Everyone, how would you continue the exchange?

Original text: One day Dongshan asked Xuefeng, “What are you doing?” Xuefeng said, “Winnowing rice.” Dongshan said, “Are you winnowing out the sand and keeping the rice, or winnowing out the rice and keeping the sand?” Xuefeng said, “Sand and rice both go.” Dongshan said, “What will the assembly eat?”

[lvm]: “Three cups of Qingyuan White Family Wine—after drinking them, he still says his lips have not been moistened.”

[Shancai]: Hee hee—jump once, and it is a toad; jump twice, and it is still a toad.

Xuefeng’s single sentence, “Sand and rice both go,” is enough to show that his feet do not touch the ground. Even if one were to explain it in four or five sentences, it would still be futile!

Having no choice, I shall adapt it a little. Everyone, have a look:

One day Dongshan asked Xuefeng, “What are you doing?”

Xuefeng said, “Winnowing rice.”

Dongshan said, “Are you winnowing out the sand and keeping the rice, or winnowing out the rice and keeping the sand?”

Xuefeng picked up a grain of sand and showed it to Dongshan, saying, “An offering for Śārī.”

Dongshan said, “What will the assembly eat?”

Xuefeng said, “Three cups of Qingyuan White Family Wine—after drinking them, he still says his lips have not been moistened.”

Heh heh—the two venerable elders, please do not blame me. ^0^

[lvm]: Overturning the bowl and striking with a staff was Deshan’s way of acting; turning elegant phrases into verses was the style of the Caodong school.

[Shancai]: Heh heh—could this drinking song also be the work of a Caodong master?

It truly is excellent: the meaning of the lines is profound, and their flavor lingers.

[lvm]: Case Ten of The Gateless Barrier:

Because a monk asked Caoshan, “Qing Shui is utterly poor. I beg the master for relief.”

Caoshan said, “Reverend Shui!”

Shui answered, “Yes!”

Caoshan said, “Three cups of Qingyuan White Family Wine—after drinking them, he still says his lips have not been moistened.”

Wumen said: Qing Shui’s loss of the opportunity—what state of mind was that? Caoshan possessed the eye and deeply discerned the capacity of the one who came. Yet, even so, tell me: where was the place at which Reverend Shui drank the wine?

The verse says: Poor as Fan Dan, with the spirit of Xiang Yu. Though he has no livelihood, he dares to contend in wealth.

[Shancai]: Ha ha~

[Yongshou Tongzi]: That destitute fellow who asked for relief drank himself tipsy.

[Xinming]: “Tell me: where was the place at which Reverend Shui drank the wine?”

[Ermao]: Bring the wine! ~

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Here comes the wine. Xinming drinks, and Ermao gets drunk.

[Ermao]: A toast to the young lad!

[Layman Zhaoguang] (responding to [Shancai]: “Xuefeng picked up a grain of sand and showed it to Dongshan, saying, ‘An offering for Śārī.’”): Why did he pick up and show a grain of sand? Would a grain of rice not do? Please instruct me, Dharma brother.

[Shancai]: According to the development of the plot, if he picked up a grain of rice, Dongshan would not ask, “What will the assembly eat?” Heh heh~

Actually, even if he picked up a grain of sand, Dongshan, given his manner, would not go on to ask:

“What will the assembly eat?”

Too weak.

So I said beforehand that it was only a mock exercise. Please indulge me, venerable elders.

[Layman Zhaoguang]: If he took up rice, there would be no need to ask further.

[Shancai]: Since the entangling vines have already been drawn out, I might as well add another section.

A little more complete—how about this?

[Scene One]

One day Dongshan asked Xuefeng, “What are you doing?”

Xuefeng said, “Winnowing rice.”

Dongshan said, “Are you winnowing out the sand and keeping the rice, or winnowing out the rice and keeping the sand?”

Xuefeng picked up a grain of sand and showed it to Dongshan.

Dongshan gave a hearty laugh and left.

[Scene Two]

One day Dongshan asked Xuefeng, “What are you doing?”

Xuefeng said, “Winnowing rice.”

Dongshan said, “Are you winnowing out the sand and keeping the rice, or winnowing out the rice and keeping the sand?”

Xuefeng picked up a grain of sand and showed it to Dongshan, saying, “An offering for Śārī.”

Dongshan said, “You, too, must not be left without a share!”

Feng flicked his sleeve and left at once.

Hehe—please make a guest appearance, you two elders! ^0^

[Six] Yunmen: Every Day Is a Good Day

[6] Citation:

Yunmen gave this instruction: “I do not ask you about the first fifteen days. [Half Henan, half Hebei. The old calendar is not accepted here.] But after the fifteenth day, bring forth one phrase.” [It cannot be avoided from morning until evening. Do not, under any circumstances, put it into words. Tomorrow is the sixteenth. The sun and moon flow by like water.]

He answered on their behalf: “Every day is a good day.” [Enough. A shrimp cannot jump out of a basket. Whose home lacks a clear moon and refreshing breeze? Do you still know? The sea deity knows what is precious but not its price.]

When Yunmen first visited Muzhou, Muzhou’s responses turned as swiftly as lightning, and he was truly difficult to approach. Ordinarily, when receiving people, the moment they crossed the threshold, he would seize them and say, “Speak! Speak!” If they hesitated and could not respond, he would push them out, saying, “A Qin-dynasty plated drill.” Whenever Yunmen went to see him, it was not until the third visit that, as soon as he knocked on the door, Muzhou asked, “Who is it?” Yunmen said, “Wenyan.”

As soon as the door opened, he leapt inside. Muzhou seized him and said, “Speak! Speak!” As Yunmen hesitated, he was pushed out the door. One foot remained inside the threshold when Muzhou hastily shut the door, crushing and breaking Yunmen’s foot. Yunmen cried out in pain and suddenly attained great awakening. Later, his way of receiving people followed the same vein, yet in a single stroke he surpassed Muzhou. He subsequently stayed for three years at the residence of Minister Chen Cao, and Muzhou directed him to go to Xuefeng.

When he arrived there, he stepped forward from the assembly and asked, “What is Buddha?” Xuefeng said, “Do not speak in your sleep.” Yunmen then bowed. After he had stayed for three years, Xuefeng one day asked, “What is your realization?” Yunmen said, “My realization does not differ by so much as a hair’s breadth from that of the sages of old.”

For twenty years Lingshu did not appoint a head seat. He would often say, “My head seat has been born,” and again, “My head seat is tending cattle,” and again, “My head seat is traveling on pilgrimage.” Then one day he ordered the bell rung and went to

receive the head seat before the monastery gate. The entire assembly was astonished. Yunmen indeed arrived, and Lingshu immediately invited him into the head-seat quarters to unpack his belongings.

Lingshu was known as Chan Master Zhisheng, “Knower of Sages”; he knew in advance matters of the past and future. One day, King Liu, ruler of Guang, was about to raise an army. He personally entered the monastery and asked the master to judge whether this would be right or wrong. Lingshu already knew of it and serenely passed away while seated. The ruler angrily asked, “When did the monk become ill?” The attendant replied, “The master was never ill. He recently sealed a box and instructed us to present it when Your Majesty arrived.” The ruler opened the box and found a note that read: “An eye for humans and devas: the head seat in the hall.” The ruler understood its meaning, withdrew his troops, and invited Yunmen to emerge into the world and reside at Lingshu. Only later did he reside at Yunmen.

When the master opened the hall and taught the Dharma, Attendant Ju Chang asked, “Has the fruit of Lingshu ripened yet?” Yunmen said, “In what year will you come to trust in the Way of birth?” He further related causes and conditions from the time when King Liu had been a merchant selling incense. King Liu later bestowed upon Lingshu the posthumous title Chan Master Zhisheng. Through life after life, Lingshu never lost his spiritual powers. Yunmen, having been a king in three lives, therefore lost his powers. One day King Liu summoned the master to the palace for the summer retreat. Several venerable elders went with him; all received greetings and requests for teachings from the palace women. The master alone said nothing, and no one approached him. One palace attendant wrote a verse and posted it in the Hall of Green Jade:

Only great wisdom in cultivation is truly Chan;

In the gate of Chan, silence is fitting, not clamor.

How could ten thousand clever words contend with reality?

Yunmen surpasses them all by saying nothing.

Yunmen ordinarily liked to use his three-word Chan: “Look! Observe! Huh!” He also used one-word Chan. A monk asked, “If one kills one’s father or mother, one repents before the Buddha. If one kills a Buddha or patriarch, where does one repent?” Yunmen said, “Exposed.” Another asked, “What is the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye?” Yunmen said, “Universal.” There was simply no room for deliberation. Yet when matters were laid out plainly, he would instead berate people.

Whenever he uttered a phrase, it was like an iron stake. Later, four great masters emerged from his school: Dongshan Chu, Zhimeng Kuan, Deshan Mi, and Xianglin Yuan. Xianglin served as an attendant for eighteen years. Whenever Yunmen received him, he merely called, “Attendant Yuan.” Yuan replied, “Yes.” Yunmen said, “What is it?” This continued for eighteen years, until Yuan finally awakened one day.

Yunmen said, “From now on, I will no longer call you.” Yunmen commonly received people by using Muzhou’s methods, but they were difficult to approach; they were hammer and tongs for drawing out nails and removing wedges. Xuedou said: “I cherish Shaoyang’s newly established device: throughout his life, he drew out nails and removed wedges for people.”

He presented this question to the assembly: “I do not ask you about the first fifteen days. After the fifteenth day, bring forth one phrase.” It cuts off the thousand distinctions and admits neither ordinary beings nor sages. He answered on their behalf: “Every day is a good day.” Regarding the first fifteen days, this saying has already cut off the thousand distinctions; regarding the days after the fifteenth, this saying likewise cuts off the thousand distinctions.

He did not say, “Tomorrow is the sixteenth.” Later people merely give rise to interpretations by following the words—what relevance does that have? Yunmen established a house style, and it necessarily had a way of working for people. Having given the instruction, he then answered on their behalf: “Every day is a good day.” This saying penetrates past and present; from beginning to end, it cuts everything off at once. When this mountain monk speaks in this way, he too is merely giving rise to interpretations by following the words.

To be killed by him is not as good as killing oneself. As soon as one makes it into a rational explanation, one falls into pits and ditches. Within one phrase of Yunmen, all three phrases are complete; this is the essential intent of his school. When presenting a phrase, one must return to the source. Otherwise, it is mere fabrication. This matter does not allow for so much discussion. Yet those who have not penetrated it need such explanations. If you penetrate it, you will then see the intent of the ancient masters. Look at Xuedou’s entangling vines:

Cast away one—[Seven penetrations and eight holes: where will you go? Let one move pass.]

Pick up seven—[You cannot pick them up, yet you are not let off.]

Above, below, and in the four quarters, there is no equal. [How could there be? Above is heaven; below is earth; east, south, west, north, and the four intermediate directions—what could equal them? Yet the staff is in my hand.]

Walking slowly, one treads the sound of flowing water to pieces. [Do not ask what lies beneath your heels. This is difficult to investigate. You have entered a den of entangling vines.]

Gazing freely, one writes forth the tracks of flying birds. [There is not even such news in your eyes. This is the understanding of a wild fox spirit. You still remain in the old nest.]

Lush, lush grass—[Pulling out an arrow from behind the head: what news is this? Falling into the realm of the ordinary.]

Dense, dense mist—[You have not left this nest. Clouds arise beneath your feet.]

Flowers lie scattered beside Subhūti's cliff. [Where is it? You slippery fellow. Thoroughly examined and exposed.]

With a snap of the fingers, how lamentable is Śūnyatā! [In all four quarters and eight directions, throughout the entire dharma realm, bring one phrase into Śūnyatā's nostrils. Where is it?]

Do not stir! [Where are your earlier words? What if you stir?]

If you stir, thirty blows. [Take them away yourself. Then strike.]

Xuedou excelled at praising the ancients in this manner. At the outset, he made one sweep with the vajra-king's precious sword, and then slightly revealed the style and standard. Even so, in the end there can be no second interpretation.

"Cast away one, pick up seven": many people interpret this as arithmetic, saying that "cast away one" refers to the days before the fifteenth. But Xuedou abruptly brought down these two phrases, shattering such interpretations and revealing something for people to see. With "cast away one, pick up seven," do not, under any circumstances, make a living within verbal phrases. Why? What juice does a flatbread have? Many people fall into consciousness.

You must realize it before verbal phrases arise. When great function appears before you, you will naturally see it. Therefore, after old Śākyamuni attained the Way, he spent twenty-one days in the land of Magadha reflecting thus: "The characteristics of all dharmas are quiescent and cannot be proclaimed in words. I would rather not teach the Dharma, but swiftly enter nirvāṇa."

At this point, he could not find a place to open his mouth. Yet through the power of skillful means, he taught the five bhikṣus. He went on to teach in three hundred and sixty assemblies, delivering the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime, all of which were only skillful means. Thus, he removed his precious royal garments and put on worn and soiled clothing. Unable to do otherwise, he entered the gate of the second meaning and, in its shallower and more accessible aspects, guided his children. If he were to give the complete presentation of the highest teaching, there would not be even half a person in the whole earth.

Now tell me: what is the first phrase? Here Xuedou reveals something of his intent for people to see. You need only not see any Buddhas above, any sentient beings below, any mountains, rivers, or great earth outside, or any seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing within. It is like a person who has undergone the great death and yet lives again: long and short, good and bad, all become continuous and undivided. Take up each and every one, and there is no further differing view.

Then, in applying it, one does not lose what is fitting. Only then can one see what he meant by "cast away one, pick up seven." "Above, below, and in the four quarters, there is no equal": if you penetrate this phrase, then throughout above, below, and the four quarters there is no equal. The myriad forms and appearances, grasses and reeds, people and animals—in every movement, all fully reveal the style of one's own house. Therefore it is said:

Amid the myriad phenomena, the body alone stands revealed; only when one willingly acknowledges it does it become intimate.

Only when one personally assents does intimacy arise. Formerly, I mistakenly sought it along the way; now I see ice within fire.

In heaven above and earth below, I alone am honored. Many people pursue the branches and neglect the root. First attain the root, and all will be rightly ordered; then the wind blows and grass bends, water arrives and a channel is formed.

"Walking slowly, one treads the sound of flowing water to pieces": when one moves slowly, even the sound of vast flowing water should be trodden to pieces. "Gazing freely, one writes forth the tracks of flying birds": cast your gaze abroad, and even the tracks of flying birds seem as though they could be written forth. At this point, blowing would extinguish boiling cauldrons and burning coals, while a shout would destroy sword trees and knife mountains; this would not be difficult.

At this point, out of compassion, Xuedou feared that people might sit in the realm of no affairs, and so he further said, "The grass is lush; the mist is dense," thereby covering it over. Even if one reaches "the grass is lush; the mist is dense," tell me, whose realm is this? Can it be called "Every day is a good day"? Fortunately, it has nothing to do with it! Even "walking slowly, treading through the sound of flowing water" is not it; "gazing afar, writing out the traces of flying birds" is not it; "the grass is lush" is not it; "the mist is dense" is not it. Even if none of it is so…

—it is precisely "flowers lie scattered beside Subhūti's cliff." Yet one must still turn beyond that. Have you not seen how Subhūti sat in repose within a cave, while the devas rained flowers in praise? The venerable one said, "Who is it that rains flowers in empty space and offers praise?" The deva said, "I am Śakra, lord of the devas." The venerable one said, "Why do you praise me?" The deva said, "I honor the venerable one for skillfully teaching Prajñāpāramitā."

The venerable one said, “I have never spoken a single word about prajñā. How then can you praise me?” The deva said, “The venerable one does not speak, and I do not hear. Non-speaking and non-hearing—this is true prajñā.” Again the earth shook and flowers rained down. Xuedou also composed this verse:

After rain, clouds gather; dawn is half-open.

Several peaks stand blue and lofty, like a painting. Subhūti does not understand sitting within the cave, and so draws down heavenly flowers that shake the earth.

Once the lord of devas had shaken the earth and rained down flowers, where could he hide further? Xuedou also said:

I fear that even in fleeing, one cannot escape; outside the Great Expanse, all is filled.

Bustling and disturbed—who knows when it will end? The pure breeze from all eight directions catches at one’s robe hems.

Even if one becomes utterly clean and bare, without the slightest fault or defect, this is still not the ultimate standard. So what, ultimately, is it? Look at the following line: “With a snap of the fingers, Śūnyatā is pitiful indeed.” In Sanskrit, śūnyatā is here called the “spirit of empty space”: taking empty space as its substance, it has no bodily sensation or touch; only when illuminated by the Buddha’s light does it manifest a body. If you become like the spirit Śūnyatā, Xuedou would rightly snap his fingers and sigh in sorrow. He also says, “Do not make contact!” What if you do make contact? Broad daylight, clear blue sky—sleeping with your eyes open! u A Babel of Voices

I.

[Li Tianyou]: May I ask Teacher LVM: what do “before the fifteenth day” and “after the fifteenth day” refer to?

[LVM]: If Yunmen had asked and answered himself in this way, would it be easier to understand?

Yunmen gave this saying: “Before the Buddha King of Majestic Sound, I do not ask you; after the Buddha King of Majestic Sound, bring forth a single phrase.” He answered on his own behalf: “Every Buddha is a good Buddha.”

[Li Tianyou]: Every phrase is a fine phrase! Then what do the one and the seven refer to?

[LVM]: Do you see that “Every day is a good day” contains the meaning of “The myriad dharmas return to the One”?

Let us look at Xuedou’s verse:

Cast aside the one; take up the seven. Above and below, in the four quarters, there is no equal.

Walking slowly, one treads through the sound of flowing water; surveying afar, one writes out the tracks of flying birds.

The grass grows lush; the mist hangs thick; beside the rock where Subhūti sat in emptiness, flowers lie scattered everywhere.

With a snap of the fingers, Śūnyatā is pitiful indeed, ...

(Do not make contact! Make contact, and you get thirty blows.)

Before discussing this verse by Xuedou, let us first ask: “The myriad dharmas return to the One; where does the One return?”

Cast aside the one—put away your question, “Where does the One return?”

[Li Tianyou]: Then what happens after “the myriad dharmas return to the One”? Do the myriad dharmas thereafter cease into annihilation?

[LVM]: Absolutely not annihilation. Rather, the single whole is fully manifest and present everywhere.

Take up the seven—only after putting away your question, “Where does the One return?” can you take up this “seven,” can you take up this “present everywhere.”

Above and below, in the four quarters, there is no equal.—All directions, above and below, are “places.” It is not that the One returns somewhere; every place returns to this One.

[Li Tianyou]: Then, ultimately, what is it like after “the myriad dharmas return to the One”?

[LVM]: Walking slowly, one treads through the sound of flowing water.—Walking by a stream, one is not turned by the sound of the water. Surveying afar, one writes out the tracks of flying birds.—Gazing into the open sky, one is not carried away by birds in flight.

[Li Tianyou]: Ah! This is vividly “not being moved by circumstances.”

[LVM]: The grass grows lush; the mist hangs thick; beside the rock where Subhūti sat in emptiness, flowers lie scattered everywhere.—Let the grass be lush as it is, and let the mist hang thick as it is. It is like Subhūti sitting in meditation in complete emptiness and stillness, moving Indra to shower flowers in praise.

Could one converse with Indra while remaining a dead, still blankness? No. At such a time, thought itself is no-thought. Let conversation be conversation; it remains "not a single thought arises, yet clear and distinct." This is vividly "not turning with thoughts."

With a snap of the fingers, Śūnyatā is pitiful indeed—Chan Master Yuanwu has already explained this very clearly: in Sanskrit, śūnyatā is here called the "spirit of empty space": taking empty space as its substance, it has no bodily sensation or touch; only when illuminated by the Buddha's light does it manifest a body. If you become like the spirit Śūnyatā, Xuedou would rightly snap his fingers and sigh in sorrow.

[Li Tianyou]: What is he lamenting? Is the next line about to provide the answer?

[LVM]: …—At this point, the way of words is cut off; one can no longer open one's mouth!

[Li Tianyou]: Ah??

[LVM]: What do you mean, "Ah"? Do not make contact!

[Li Tianyou]: What happens if one does make contact?

[LVM]: Ha ha! Are Xuedou's "thirty blows" and Yuanwu's "Broad daylight, clear blue sky—sleeping with your eyes open" the same or different? If you still do not understand, then it really is sleeping with your eyes open in broad daylight under a clear blue sky. Even if blows fell like raindrops and shouts rushed forth like thunder, exhausting Xuedou would still be futile. Then it truly would be "pitiful indeed"!

[Li Tianyou]: I bow in reverence and praise the practice of the ancient worthies; at the same time, I praise Teacher LVM for laying it all out at the very point where words cannot be spoken. May it also be understood this way? I have found that the latter line of this verse can always annotate the preceding line:

Cast aside the one; take up the seven. Above and below, in the four quarters, there is no equal.—Walking slowly, one treads through the sound of flowing water; surveying afar, one writes out the tracks of flying birds.

The grass grows lush; the mist hangs thick; beside the rock where Subhūti sat in emptiness, flowers lie scattered everywhere.—With a snap of the fingers, Śūnyatā is pitiful indeed, …

[LVM]: Look again: can the preceding line not also annotate the following line?

[Li Tianyou]: Yes—so the preceding line of this verse can annotate the following line, and the following line can in turn annotate the preceding line. How marvelous!

[LVM]: The twelve divisions of the Tripiṭaka are all annotations on this. Is that not even more marvelous?

[Li Tianyou]: When spring arrives, there is nowhere that is not spring; everything, absolutely everything, is this! After reading your previous post, I laughed so hard that I could not close my mouth for a long while.

[LVM]: What "do not make contact" refers to is precisely this.

The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch says:

…The Master told the assembly: "I have one thing: without head or tail, without name or word, without back or front. Does anyone recognize it?" Shenxiu stepped forward and said: "It is the source of all Buddhas and Shenxiu's own buddha-nature." The Master said: "I told you that it has neither name nor word, yet you call it 'the source and buddha-nature.' Even if you later build yourself a thatched hut, you will only become a follower of the school of conceptual understanding." After the Patriarch's passing, Shenxiu entered the capitals of Jing and Luo, where he widely propagated the sudden teaching of Caoxi. He wrote Record of Revealing the School, which became widespread in the world. He was Chan Master Heze."

Heze Shenhui gave "this" a name and thereby made contact. That is why the Sixth Patriarch rebuked him.

[Li Tianyou]: Add one word and it is already off the mark; it is like a mosquito landing on an iron ox—at this point, one cannot open one's mouth. Yet there are also great persons who enter the weeds for the sake of others, prescribing medicine according to the illness: speaking, yet without speaking.

[LVM]: Exactly! The Elder's phrase, uttered without begrudging his descent into the weeds for others' sake, is: "The numinous knowing in which not a single thought arises, yet all is clear and distinct." The Elder does not establish this "numinous knowing," but sweeps it away as soon as it is spoken.

[Li Tianyou]: How could one repay even one ten-thousandth of the Master's great kindness? If one truly enters through this phrase, there is neither one who can enter nor anything entered; even numinous knowing is unobtainable, yet this is not annihilation. Only then does one not fail the Master's kindness. Then, in doing things again: whether good or bad, adverse or favorable, in misfortune or in enjoyment of blessings—it is all just thus. Only then does one not fail the Master's kindness!

[LVM]: Yes! The Elder often says, "Numinous knowing, too, is unobtainable."

[Li Tianyou]: Alas, sentient beings' deeply ingrained habit of taking the finger for the moon is firm indeed. Gold filings may be precious, but once in the eye they become an obstruction. Before we had faith in the Buddha, we were defiled by names when encountering names, by forms when encountering forms, and by profit when encountering profit. Now that we cultivate and realize the Buddhadharma, we are again defiled by Buddha when encountering Buddha, by Dharma when encountering Dharma, and even by numinous knowing when encountering numinous knowing.

This is sentient beings' inverted deluded thinking at work; what does it have to do with the hand of a good spiritual friend pointing toward the bright moon? This is why sentient beings are difficult to liberate. In my humble view, someone who enters through the phrase "the numinous knowing in which not a single thought arises, yet all is clear and distinct" is naturally a thousand or a hundred times better off than one whose mind lacks direction, running here and there, practicing blindly. When the time comes, they need only sweep away the view of numinous knowing, and they may return home and sit securely. Yet, conversely, if one truly entered through this phrase, how could one add to "this" the label "the numinous knowing in which not a single thought arises, yet all is clear and distinct"?

II.

[Xinming]: "Do not make contact"? Then what is meant by making contact? Does it not mean "to touch it is to lose one's body and life"?

[LVM]: Yes! Xuedou would rather omit a line than make contact.

[Chiren Shuomeng]: Walking slowly, one treads through the sound of flowing water; surveying afar, one writes out the tracks of flying birds. Is that movement or not movement?

[LVM]: Do not make contact!

[Chiren Shuomeng]: This shows that Xuedou speaks topsy-turvy words!

[LVM]: Ha ha! Xuedou, too, is making quite a mischief.

III.

[Han Cun Sha Dajie]: It makes my mouth water, though perhaps not having my mouth water would not be right either. I simply do not know where I am stuck; something is not quite right.

[LVM]: You are stuck at "right" and "not right." If you break free of this "being stuck," how could there still be room for "right" and "not right"?

[Lao Meng]: Truly, fate toys with people, catching one so ingeniously! The more one struggles, the tighter one gets caught. Ha ha.

[LVM]: Karmic force is inconceivable; the force of vows is even more inconceivable. The force of vows, karmic force, and the power of spiritual powers are all powers of mind. The power of spiritual powers cannot overcome karmic force; karmic force cannot overcome the force of vows.

[Lao Meng]: I often cannot distinguish karmic force from the force of vows. Please instruct me, Teacher! Since both are powers of mind, wherein lies the difference?

[LVM]: Karmic force manifests as worldly dharmas; the force of vows manifests as supramundane dharmas. Since both are powers of mind, the difference lies in the difference in one's initial resolve.

[Lao Meng]: What is the difference between the wish to become wealthy and the wish to become a Buddha?

[LVM]: Who becomes wealthy? Who becomes a Buddha? This reveals the difference.

[Old Meng]: Does the power of vows also differ? For example, if one makes the same vow with a deluded mind and with a pure mind, is there a difference between the two?

[LVM]: The power of vows is an unconditioned dharma. "All noble and sage beings differ by means of the unconditioned dharma." Since it says "all by means of," the differences are not limited to just "the two," but are innumerable.

[Seventh] Dharma Eye, You Are Huichao

The Pointer says: “The phrase before sound cannot be transmitted by a thousand sages; without personally beholding it, one is separated as if by a great chiliocosm. Even if one can discern it before sound, cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven, one is still not a man of fierce spirit.”

Therefore it is said: “Heaven cannot cover it, earth cannot support it, empty space cannot contain it, and sun and moon cannot illumine it. Alone, where there is no Buddha, one calls oneself the Honored One.” Only then does one come somewhat close. But if this is not yet so, and one penetrates it on the tip of a single hair, letting forth great radiance, moving freely in every direction, at ease and free in the Dharma—whatever one casually picks up is not other than it—tell me, what is so extraordinary? Again he said: “Do you understand, assembly? No one recognized the sweat and toil of the warhorse; they only praise its achievement that surpasses the age.” Let this matter rest for now. What then of Xuedou’s koan? See the text below.

[7] The Case:

A monk asked Fayan [“What are you saying? He passes through the eaves wearing a cangue.”]: “Huichao respectfully asks the Reverend: What is Buddha?” [“What are you saying? Your eyes are bulging out.”]

Fayan said: “You are Huichao.” [He comes out according to the pattern. An iron filling in a dumpling. Robbing him on the spot.]

Chan Master Fayan possessed the capacity for the simultaneous chirping and pecking, and also the function of simultaneous chirping and pecking; only thus could he answer in this way. He transcended sound and form, attained great freedom, and could grant or take away as circumstances required; life and death were in his hands. This is indeed extraordinary. Yet many people in various places have discussed this koan, and not a few have understood it through conceptual interpretation.

They do not know that whenever the ancients offered a word or half a phrase, it was like striking a spark from stone or flashing lightning: directly opening up a straight road. Later people merely divine meanings from words and phrases, saying, “Huichao himself is Buddha; that is why Fayan answered in this way.” Some say, “It is like riding an ox while looking for an ox.” Others say, “The very place of the question is it.” What connection does any of this have? If one understands it in this way, one not only betrays oneself but also deeply wrongs the ancients.

If you wish to see his complete working, you must be a fellow whom one blow cannot make turn back, with teeth like sword-trees and a mouth like a basin of blood. Only when you know where to return beyond words can there be even a small measure of accord. If you make conceptual interpretations of every point, then the whole earth is filled with fellows who would wipe out the barbarian race. As for Chan practitioner Chao’s awakening here, it too resulted from his habitual sustained inquiry; thus, upon one word, it was as though the bottom dropped out of a bucket.

Now, the monastic administrator Ze was in Fayan’s assembly, yet he had never entered the master’s room for an interview. One day Fayan asked him, “Administrator Ze, why do you not come in for an interview?”

Ze said, “Does the Reverend not know that I have gained an entry point under Qinglin?”

Fayan said, “Try presenting it to me.”

Ze said, “I asked, ‘What is Buddha?’”

Qinglin said, “The boys Bing and Ding come seeking fire.”

Fayan said, “Good words. I fear that you have misunderstood them. Tell me more.”

Ze said, “Bing and Ding belong to fire; they seek fire with fire. It is like myself being Buddha and then going on to seek Buddha.”

Fayan said, “Administrator, you have indeed misunderstood.”

Ze was dissatisfied and at once left his quarters to cross the river.

Fayan said, “If this man returns, he can be saved; if he does not return, he cannot be saved.”

When Ze reached the middle of the road, he reflected, “He is a good spiritual teacher to five hundred people. How could he deceive me?”

He therefore returned and sought instruction again. Fayan said, “Just ask me, and I will answer you.”

Ze then asked, “What is Buddha?”

Fayan said, “The boys Bing and Ding come seeking fire.”

At these words, Ze had a great awakening.

Nowadays, some people simply stare wide-eyed and make conceptual interpretations. As the saying goes, “If he has no sore, do not wound him.” With koans such as this, those long engaged in practice know the point as soon as they are raised. Under Fayan this was called “arrowpoints meeting”; there was no need for the five ranks of ruler and minister or the four modes of

discernment. To speak directly of arrowpoints meeting—this was his house style. In one phrase, one sees it; face to face, one penetrates it. But if you seek it through deliberation beneath the phrase, you will never grasp it.

When Fayan began teaching publicly, he had five hundred followers, and the Buddhadharma flourished greatly at that time. National Teacher Shao had long relied on Shushan and considered himself to have attained the meaning. He gathered Shushan's lifelong writings and portrait, led his followers on pilgrimage, and came to Fayan's assembly. Yet he too did not enter Fayan's room, only having his disciples join the others in doing so.

One day, when Fayan ascended the seat, a monk asked, "What is a single drop of water from Caoxi?" Fayan said, "It is a single drop of water from Caoxi." The monk withdrew in bewilderment. Shao, who was among the assembly, heard this and suddenly had a great awakening. Later, when he began teaching publicly and inherited Fayan's Dharma, he presented this verse: "At the summit of Tongxuan Peak, / it is not the human world. / Outside the mind there is no dharma; / before my eyes are mountains all green." Fayan certified it, saying, "This verse alone can continue my lineage. In the future, rulers and nobles will honor you; I am not your equal."

Consider how the ancients awakened in this way—what was the principle? Do not merely have this mountain monk explain it. You yourselves must marshal your spirit throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. If you can take it up in this way, then one day, extending your hands at a crossroads for the sake of others, it will not be difficult. Thus, when a monk asked Fayan, "What is the Buddhadharma?" Fayan said, "You are Huichao." Where is there any failure to meet him? Have you not seen what Yunmen said: "To raise it without looking back is already a mismatch; if you begin to think, in what kalpa will you awaken?" Xuedou's later verse is remarkably brilliant. Let us cite it.

The spring wind of the river country cannot stir it; / a partridge cries amid the deep flowers.

When the waves rise high at the three levels, fish become dragons; / fools still bail water from the pond at night. Xuedou was a master hand. At the difficult-to-chew, difficult-to-penetrate, difficult-to-see places in the ancients' words, where the joints and angles are confused, he composed a verse that enables people to see. It is indeed extraordinary. Xuedou recognized the pivotal point in Fayan's words and also knew where Huichao had landed. Yet he feared that later people would mistakenly make conceptual interpretations from Fayan's words and phrases, so he composed this verse.

The monk asked in this way, and Fayan answered in this way: this is "The spring wind of the river country cannot stir it; a partridge cries amid the deep flowers." These two lines are only one line. Tell me, where does Xuedou's meaning lie? In Jiangxi and Jiangnan, many make two separate interpretations, saying that "The spring wind of the river country cannot stir it" praises "You are Huichao." Even the spring wind of the river country cannot stir this very message.

"A partridge cries amid the deep flowers" is taken to praise how people everywhere discuss these words in a vast profusion, like a partridge crying amid deep flowers. What connection does this have? They do not realize that Xuedou's two lines are only one line. To attain seamlessness without crack or gap, he clearly tells you: the words are straightforward and the phrasing is straightforward, encompassing heaven and earth. The monk asked, "What is Buddha?" Fayan said, "You are Huichao."

Xuedou said, "The spring wind of the river country cannot stir it; a partridge cries amid the deep flowers." If you gain insight here, you may walk alone in the crimson heavens. But if you make conceptual interpretations, it will take three lives and sixty kalpas. Xuedou's third and fourth lines are exceedingly compassionate, exposing it completely for people all at once. The place where Chan Master Chao immediately had a great awakening was like this: "When the waves rise high at the three levels, fish become dragons; fools still bail water from the pond at night."

At the three levels of Yu's Gate, Mengjin is precisely Dragon Gate, which Emperor Yu cut into three levels. Now, on the third day of the third month, when peach blossoms open and heaven and earth respond, fish that pass through Dragon Gate grow horns upon their heads, manes and tails, seize the clouds, and depart. Those unable to leap through return with marked foreheads. Fools chew over the words, like bailing water from a pond at night in search of fish. They do not realize that the fish have already become dragons.

Old Master Duan had a verse: "With one large coin, / I bought a fried cake. / Once it entered my belly, / hunger was immediately unheard of." This verse is excellent, though rather clumsy. Xuedou's verse is exceedingly skillful, neither dulling the edge nor wounding the hand. In former times, the Head Sutra Keeper Qing loved to ask people, "What does it mean that, when the waves rise high at the three levels, fish become dragons?" I need not remain silent either. Let me ask you: once it has become a dragon, where is it now?"

[Eight] Are Cuiyan's Eyebrows Still There?

The Pointer says: If you understand, you make use of it along the way—like a dragon gaining water, like a tiger leaning against a mountain. If you do not understand, it merely circulates as conventional truth—like a ram butting a fence, like waiting by a stump for a rabbit. At times, one phrase is like a lion crouching on the ground; at times, one phrase is like the precious sword of the Vajra King; at times, one phrase cuts off the tongues of everyone under heaven; at times, one phrase follows the waves and chases the billows.

If you can make use of it along the way, then when you meet one who knows the tune, distinguish the appropriate device, recognize auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, and mutually confirm one another. If it merely circulates as conventional truth, then, provided you possess a single eye, you can cut off the ten directions and stand sheer as a thousand-fathom cliff. Thus it is said: "When great functioning manifests before you, no rules remain." At times one uses a single blade of grass as a sixteen-foot golden body; at times one uses a sixteen-foot golden body as a single blade of grass. Tell me, by what principle is this so? Do you understand? Let us raise it up and examine it.

[8] The Case:

At the end of the summer retreat, Cuiyan addressed the assembly: "All summer long, I have spoken to you brothers. [The moment he opens his mouth, how could he know it would be like this!]"

"Look—are Cuiyan's eyebrows still there?" [He has only succeeded in making even his eyes fall to the ground, and has lost his nostrils as well. He enters hell as swiftly as an arrow shot.]

Baofu said, "A thief feels guilty at heart." [Precisely! A thief recognizes a thief.]

Changqing said, "They have grown." [His tongue falls to the ground; he compounds one mistake with another. Indeed.]

Yunmen said, "Barrier!" [Where could one run to? Patch-robed monks throughout the world cannot leap out of it. Defeated!]

The ancients held morning consultations and evening interviews. Yet when Cuiyan came to the end of the summer retreat, he addressed the assembly in just this way. It was indeed solitary and steep, indeed startling enough to shake heaven and earth. Tell me: among the five thousand and forty-eight scrolls of the great treasury of teachings, there is no avoiding talk of mind and nature, sudden and gradual. Is there also this message? It is all the same season, yet Cuiyan is extraordinary within it.

Look at how he spoke. Tell me, where does his intent fall? When the ancients lowered a hook, they never set it in vain; there had to be a principle by which they worked upon people. Many mistakenly interpret it thus: "In broad daylight, he spoke aimless words and made trouble where there was none. At summer's end he first spoke of his own errors and examined himself, so that others would not have to examine him." Happily, that has nothing to do with it! Such an understanding is called extinguishing the lineage of the Hu people.

When the patriarchal masters of every age appeared in the world, if they did not offer pointers to people, there would be no benefit at all—what would be the point? Only when one sees through this point does one know that the ancients possessed the skill of "driving off a plowman's ox and taking food from a hungry man." Nowadays, when questioned, people immediately chew on words and phrases and busy themselves with eyebrows. Look at those within the house: naturally, they know where his conduct lies. Amid a thousand transformations and myriad changes, with knots and turns jagged and difficult, every move has a road of emergence; only then can one respond and exchange with him in this manner. If these words were not extraordinary, why would Yunmen, Baofu, and Changqing have responded to him so eagerly?

Baofu said, "A thief feels guilty at heart." It is solely because of these words that so many interpretive notions have just arisen. Tell me, what was Baofu's intent? By all means, do not seek the ancient within the phrase. If you give rise to feelings and thoughts, you will have to replace your eyes. You do not realize that with a single turning phrase, Baofu cut off Cuiyan at the heels.

Changqing said, "They have grown." Many say that Changqing turned along with Cuiyan's heels, and so said, "They have grown." Happily, that has nothing to do with it! They do not know that Changqing independently brought forth his own understanding. In saying, "They have grown," each has his own source of emergence. Let me ask you: where is the place of growth? It is just like using the precious sword of the Vajra King directly before a master craftsman. Only if you can shatter conventional understanding and cut off gain and loss, right and wrong, will you see where Changqing responded to him.

Yunmen said, "Barrier!" It is indeed extraordinary, but difficult to investigate. Chan Master Yunmen often taught people with one-word Chan; yet within a single word, the three phrases must be complete. Look at the ancients: in responding to circumstances, they naturally differed utterly from people of today. This is the pattern of the descending phrase. Though he spoke thus, his intent most certainly does not lie there. Since it does not lie there, tell me, where does it lie? You must carefully investigate it for yourself. If you are a clear-eyed person, with abilities that illuminate heaven and earth, then directly and immediately you will be perfectly responsive on all eight sides. For Yunmen's one word, "Barrier," Xuedou threaded the other three together with it and expressed them in verse:

Cuiyan instructs his disciples, [This old thief! He corrupts other people's sons and daughters.]

Without equal through the ages. [Among thousands and tens of thousands, there may still be one or half of one. Divide off a section.]

They respond with the word "Barrier," [Do not disbelieve it. It is indeed extraordinary. Only such a person can understand how to speak in this way.]

Losing money and suffering punishment. [Swallowing one's breath and holding one's tongue. Xuedou is no small matter either. At the very sound, strike.]

Baofu, down and out, [Companions on the same road. Yet they still make these comings and goings. Two or three.]

Hard to find in his restraining and raising. [Letting go, holding fast—who shares life and death? Do not slander him so readily. Happily, that has nothing to do with it.]

Cuiyan chatters on, [This wild-fox spirit—he should keep his mouth shut.]

Plainly, he is a thief. [It does no harm to say so. He has been caught in defeat.]

A white jade disc without flaw, [Can you still discern it? People throughout the world do not know its worth.]

Who can distinguish true from false? [Most are merely false. This mountain monk has never had eyes. A blue-eyed barbarian monk.]

Changqing knows him well, [One adept recognizes another adept. It must be he to accomplish it. Half still remains unattained.]

His eyebrows have grown. [Where are they? From the crown of his head down to his heels, there is not even a blade of grass.]

If Xuedou had not been so compassionate as to set this forth in verse for people to see, how could he have gained the name of good spiritual guide? The ancients acted in this way, each and every one, only because they could not do otherwise. Later students cling to their words and phrases and then generate interpretive notions, and therefore do not see the intent of the ancients. If someone were now suddenly to emerge, overturn the Chan seat, and scatter the assembly with a shout, no one could blame him. Even so, one must actually reach this ground.

Xuedou said, "Without equal through the ages." Cuiyan merely said, "Look—are Cuiyan's eyebrows still there?" What is so extraordinary about it that it should be without equal through the ages? You must know that when the ancients uttered a word or half a phrase, it was never casual; they had to possess an eye capable of stabilizing heaven and earth. Xuedou's words and half-phrases are like the precious sword of the Vajra King, like a lion crouching on the ground, like sparks struck from stone, like flashes of lightning.

Unless one possesses an eye at the crown of one's head, how could one see where the ancients came to rest? This address to the assembly is truly without equal through the ages, surpassing Deshan's staff and Linji's shout. Tell me, in guiding people, where does Xuedou's intent lie? How do you understand it?

He says, "Without equal through the ages. They respond with the word 'Barrier,' losing money and suffering punishment." What is the meaning of this? Even if you possess an eye that sees through barriers, you must still be careful here. Tell me: is it Cuiyan who loses money and suffers punishment, Xuedou, or Yunmen? If you penetrate this, I grant that you possess an eye.

"Baofu, down and out; hard to find in his restraining and raising." He restrains himself and raises up the ancients. Tell me, where does Baofu restrain, and where does he raise up?

"Cuiyan chatters on; plainly, he is a thief." Tell me, what did he steal that Xuedou calls him a thief? Do not follow the current of his words. Here you must have your own capacity to take hold.

"A white jade disc without flaw" praises Cuiyan as being very much like a white jade disc, without the slightest blemish or obscuration. "Who can distinguish true from false?" It may be said that few can discern it.

Xuedou possessed great talent; therefore, from beginning to end, he threaded them together in a single string. Only at the end did he say, "Changqing knows him well; his eyebrows have grown." Tell me, where have they grown? Open your eyes wide and look! u A Babel of Voices

[Shancai]: Bring a brush here~~~ Let me add an eyebrow to the old fellow's face!

[Kaimiao]: Reply: I respectfully offer a vermilion brush—please proceed.

[LVM]: Ha ha! A vermilion brush will not do; what he wants is an ink brush.

[Shancai]: ^o^, exactly as the saying goes: "Just when you think a beard is red, there is an even redder beard."

[Xinming]: "They respond with the word 'Barrier,' losing money and suffering punishment"? Earlier it praises "Barrier"; later it negates "Barrier." I do not understand.

If a patriarch were to put this question to you face-to-face, how would you answer?

[Chandiyi]: This is a koan of differentiated wisdom.

Let me translate it, so that we may investigate differentiated wisdom: After the summer retreat had ended, Chan Master Cuiyan said to the monks, “Throughout the summer, as I taught the assembly, did I ever say anything wrong?” Baofu said, “You peddle the Tathāgata; like a thief, you feel guilty at heart.” Changqing then said, “It was also for the people of the world.” Finally, Yunmen said, “Shut up! It is all empty theorizing.”

[Shancai]: Forgive my frankness, but you have understood only half of what Baofu and Yunmen said. And because it is only half, you will not be able to swing on old Cuiyan’s eyebrows~~~~~~~

Your problem is precisely that you use a calculating, inferential mind to measure Chan Dharma. Although, relying on the force of habitual consciousness, you may investigate and refine it until you reach subtleties and seem to gain some feeling for it, it is only an approximation and remains far from the great import of the Buddha-Dharma. The Chan koans and lamp records are revelations of the original intent of Chan worthies and patriarchal masters throughout the ages, repeatedly examined and confirmed by clear-eyed people. How could they be, as you say,

mostly matters of human sentiment and careless records? In my personal understanding, if a student cannot resolve or penetrate a koan, that person should give rise to great shame, press forward courageously, and never turn the failure of one’s own limited intelligence and unsuited conditions into a defect of the Dharma teaching, thereby giving rise to divided and wavering intentions. Otherwise, one can only enter a mountain of treasure and return empty-handed. …

—Nevertheless, I rather like your temperament of speaking frankly and directly.

Let us encourage one another together with all the friends on this forum!

[9] Zhaozhou’s Four Gates Are Open

A pointer says: When a bright mirror is set upon its stand, beauty and ugliness distinguish themselves. With a Moye sword in hand, killing and giving life are timely acts. When a Han comes, a Hu goes; when a Hu comes, a Han goes. Gain life amid death; gain death amid life. Tell me, when one reaches this point, what then? Without the eye that penetrates the barrier and the place of turning the body around, one is truly helpless here. Tell me, what is the eye that penetrates the barrier, and what is the place of turning the body around? Let us raise this for examination:

[9] The Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “What is Zhaozhou?” [Hebei and Henan—altogether, he has not spoken of it. There are thorns in the mud. It is not in Henan; it is precisely in Hebei.]

Zhaozhou said, “The east gate, west gate, south gate, and north gate.” [It is open! When trading insults, I allow you to answer back; when spitting at each other, I allow you to splash water back. This ready-made koan—do you see it? Then strike!]

In investigating Chan and inquiring into the Way, one should clearly penetrate oneself. Above all, do not select among verbal expressions. Why? Have you not seen Zhaozhou cite: “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing”? And have you not seen Yunmen say: “Chan practitioners nowadays gather in groups of three or five, muttering to one another, and then say, ‘This is the language of superior capacity; that is a phrase struck forth from one’s very person.’”

They do not know that, within the gateways of skillful means established by the ancients, provisional sayings were reluctantly set up for beginners and later students who had not yet realized the mind-ground or seen their intrinsic nature. When the patriarchs came from the West, they transmitted the Mind-Seal directly, pointed straight to the human mind, and enabled people to see their nature and become Buddhas. Where was there such entanglement? One must cut off language, see the truth beyond all conventions, and penetrate through in liberation. It may be said to be like a dragon gaining water or a tiger leaning against a mountain.

Those long engaged in practice under former worthies, who have seen but not penetrated through, or penetrated through but not become clear, are said to seek instruction. But if one has seen through and still seeks instruction, one must be able to maneuver freely among verbal expressions, without any obstruction. For a long-practicing student to seek instruction is like handing a ladder to a thief. In truth, this matter does not lie in verbal expressions. Thus Yunmen said: “If this matter lay in verbal expressions, would the three vehicles and twelve divisions of the teachings lack verbal expressions? Why then would Bodhidharma have needed to come from the West?”

Among Fenyang’s eighteen questions, this is called a “testing-the-host question,” and also an “exploratory probing question.” The monk’s question was indeed unusual. Had it not been Zhaozhou, it would have been difficult to meet his challenge. The monk asked, “What is Zhaozhou?” Zhaozhou was a master working from his fundamental ground, so he said, “The east gate, west gate, south gate, and north gate.” The monk said, “I am not asking about this Zhaozhou.”

Zhaozhou said, “Which Zhaozhou are you asking about?” Later people call this “idle Chan,” and it has deceived no small number. Why did he answer “The east gate, west gate, south gate, and north gate” when the monk asked about Zhaozhou? He was simply answering him with Zhaozhou. If you understand it in this way, you are merely a fellow from a three-family village.

Still worse, you take it to be an understanding of Buddhadharma. This alone is the destruction of Buddhadharma—like comparing fish eyes to bright pearls: they may look alike, but they are not the same. This mountain monk says: It is not in Henan; it is precisely in Hebei. Tell me, is this something or nothing? You must examine it carefully. Master Yuanlu said: "Only at the final phrase does one reach the secure barrier. The purport of the guiding compass does not lie in verbal explanations."

A wind every ten days, a rain every five: the land is at peace, people are content in their work, and, patting their bellies, they sing songs. This is called a time of great peace; it is called having nothing to do. Do not be blindly groping and then declare that there is nothing to do. One must penetrate the pivotal barrier, emerge from the thicket of thorns, and be utterly bare and clean, just as before, like an ordinary person. Then whether you have something to do or nothing to do is all right. Freely vertical and horizontal, you never cling to fixed existence or nonexistence.

There are some who say, "Originally there is not the slightest thing; when tea comes, drink tea; when food comes, eat food." This is a great falsehood! It is called "claiming attainment when one has not attained, and claiming realization when one has not realized." Originally, they have never penetrated through in practice. Hearing others speak of mind and nature, profundity and wonder, they say it is all wild talk and that originally there is nothing to do.

It may be said that one blind person leads a multitude of blind people! Do they not know that before the patriarch came, was heaven called earth, or mountains called water? Why, then, did the patriarch come again from the West? When teachers everywhere ascend the hall and enter the room, what do they speak of? Is it all calculation by discriminating consciousness? If it is calculation by discriminating consciousness, only when such consciousness is exhausted can one see through. Once one sees through, heaven is still heaven, earth is still earth, mountains are still mountains, and water is still water.

An ancient said: "Mind is the root; dharmas are dust. Both are like traces upon a mirror." Upon reaching this ground, one is naturally utterly bare and clean. Even if one has reached the utmost in principle, this is not yet a secure resting place. Here many people misunderstand, falling into the realm of having nothing to do: they neither bow to the Buddha nor burn incense. It may seem so, but in its entirety it is not so. Ask them a question, and they appear extremely similar; press them a little, and they shatter into seven or eight pieces. They sit in a state of empty belly and lofty conceit. When the thirtieth day of the twelfth month arrives, they beat their breasts in remorse, but it is already too late.

The monk asked in this way, and Zhaozhou answered in this way. Tell me, how is one to feel one's way through it? This way will not do; not this way will not do either. Ultimately, how is it? This is the difficult point, which is why Xuedou brought it forth and showed it directly to people. One day, as Zhaozhou was sitting, an attendant reported, "The king has arrived." Zhaozhou startled and said, "May Your Majesty enjoy ten thousand blessings." The attendant said, "He has not arrived, Master."

Zhaozhou said, "And yet you said he had arrived." To investigate to this point and see to this point is indeed extraordinary. Chan Master Nan commented: "The attendant knew only how to announce a guest; he did not know that he himself was in the imperial realm. Zhaozhou entered the grass to seek someone, unaware that his whole body was covered with mud and water." Do you all know these actual points? Look at Xuedou's verse:

Within the phrase, he presents the pivotal opportunity, striking one full in the face. [A resounding response. Where fish travel, the water is muddied. Do not slander worthy Zhaozhou.]

The Śakra eye is free from the slightest mote of dust. [Scattering sand and earth. Do not burden Zhaozhou. Why fish about in heaven and grope about on earth?]

East, west, south, and north gates face one another. [It is open! Where are there so many gates? With your back to Zhaozhou City, where are you going?]

Countless wheels and hammers cannot strike it open. [It is simply that your wheel and hammer do not reach it. It is open!]

When Zhaozhou met the occasion, he was like the precious sword of the Vajra King: the moment you deliberate, it cuts off your head; often, right before your face, it even replaces your eyes. This monk dared to stroke the tiger's whiskers by posing such a question. It was much like making trouble where there was none, yet there was a pivotal opportunity within his phrase. Since he presented an opportunity, Zhaozhou did not fail his question, and so he too answered by presenting an opportunity.

It was not that he deliberately acted this way. Those who have penetrated to the bottom naturally accord with one another, as though it had all been arranged. Have you not seen the non-Buddhist adept who came before the World-Honored One holding a sparrow in his hand and asked, "Tell me, is the sparrow in my hand dead or alive?" The World-Honored One then straddled the threshold and said, "Tell me, am I going out or coming in?" (Another version says: The World-Honored One raised his fist and said, "Is it open or closed?") The non-Buddhist adept was speechless and bowed. This story resembles this koan. The lineage of the ancients has never been severed. Therefore it is said: the question lies in the answer, and the answer lies in the question.

Xuedou saw through it in this way and therefore said, "Within the phrase, he presents the pivotal opportunity, striking one full in the face." There is an opportunity within the phrase, as though it carries two meanings—seeming both to ask about a person and to ask about the environment. Without altering the slightest bit, Zhaozhou said to him, "The east gate, west gate, south gate, and north gate."

“The Śakra eye is free from the slightest mote of dust”: this verse praises Zhaozhou for taking away both person and environment, presenting the opportunity within the phrase and answering him there. This is called having both opportunity and environment; as soon as he turns, he illuminates and exposes the other’s very heart and guts. Without this, it would be difficult to meet the force of the monk’s question. “Śakra eye” is a Sanskrit term. Here it means the firm eye, also called the vajra eye, which sees without obstruction. It not only clearly discerns the smallest detail a thousand miles away, but also determines the false and the true, distinguishes gain and loss, differentiates appropriate capacities, and recognizes fortune and misfortune.

Xuedou said, “East, west, south, and north gates face one another; countless wheels and hammers cannot strike it open.” Since they are countless wheels and hammers, why can they not strike it open? This is simply Xuedou’s way of seeing. How, then, will all of you open this gate? Please investigate it carefully. Seven Mouths, Eight Tongues

[Xinming]: “Zhaozhou startled”—what kind of expression is “startled”? What state of mind is it?

[LVM]: “Startled” means appearing frightened.

One day, as Zhaozhou was sitting, an attendant reported, “The king has arrived.”

Zhaozhou startled and said, “May Your Majesty enjoy ten thousand blessings.”

The attendant said, “He has not arrived, Master.”

Zhaozhou said, “And yet you said he had arrived.”

Chan Master Foguo said: “To investigate to this point and see to this point is indeed extraordinary. Chan Master Nan commented: ‘The attendant knew only how to announce a guest; he did not know that he himself was in the imperial realm. Zhaozhou entered the grass to seek someone, unaware that his whole body was covered with mud and water.’ Do you all know these actual points?”

According to the Record of the Lamp, there were once two kings—the King of Yan and the King of Zhao—who ceased their warfare because of Chan Master Zhaozhou, and both took him as their teacher.

Commander Wang of Zhenzhou entered the monastery with his sons. The Master remained seated and asked, “Does Your Majesty understand?”

The king said, “I do not understand.”

The Master said, “Since childhood I have kept vegetarian observances, and now my body has grown old; when I see people, I lack the strength to get down from the Chan seat.”

The king showed him still greater reverence. The next day, he ordered an officer to convey a message, and the Master got down from the Chan seat to receive it.

The attendant said, “When the Master saw the king coming, you did not get down from the Chan seat. Why, when a military officer comes today, do you get down from the Chan seat?”

The Master said, “This is not something you can know. When persons of the highest rank come, I receive them on the Chan seat; when persons of middling rank come, I receive them after getting down from the Chan seat; when persons of the lowest rank come, I receive them outside the monastery gate.”

When the King of Zhao asked, “Reverend Master, at your age, how many teeth remain?”

The Master said, “Only one.”

The king said, “How can you eat anything?”

The Master said, “Though there is only one, it bites every bite.”

The Master sent a whisk to the king, saying, “If anyone asks where it came from, simply say that the old monk has never exhausted it in all his life.”

[Dingling]: May I ask, Teacher: what does this saying mean—“The Master sent a whisk to the king, saying, ‘If anyone asks where it came from, simply say that the old monk has never exhausted it in all his life’”?

[LVM]: From now on, if anyone asks you where this whisk came from, answer them this way: “It is something that Venerable Zhaozhou never exhausted in his entire life.”

[Dingling]: Oh, I see. This too is something that this youngster will never exhaust through life after life.

[LVM]: If you recognize it, you have not been wronged.

[Bag]: Old Zhaozhou was far too compassionate toward that Prince of Zhao. Though he gave him a fly-whisk, his own eyebrows must have drooped all the way to the ground.

Yet the Prince of Zhao truly had great blessings: to have Zhaozhou so earnestly lay bare this unsurpassed Dharma gate for him must also have been an affinity cultivated over many lives.

[LVM]: Not only was it inexhaustible; it was impossible to give it all away. At the very least, he gave it to these seven people:

Venerable Shanxin of Yanyang; Chan Master Huijue of Guangxiao; Chan Master Feng of Guoqing Monastery; Chan Master Conglang of Muchen; Chan Master of Xinjian in Wuzhou; Venerable Duofu of Hangzhou; and Venerable Ximu of Yizhou.

[Dream Eyes Unopened]: Whether given or not, it is already complete within one's own household. But we should still bow in gratitude to Chan Master Shen for his compassion—how many straw sandals he wore through!

[LVM]: Zhaozhou still traveled on pilgrimage at eighty, for his mind had not yet become serene.

Only after visiting everywhere and finding not a single thing did he realize that he had wasted the money for his straw sandals. ^o^

[Bag]: Oh, presumably these people also displayed extraordinary skill when they received the fly-whisk and did not disappoint old Zhaozhou?

Teacher, why not gather one or two examples of these Chan masters' responses, so that we may look upon them with reverence?

[LVM]: The Compendium of the Five Lamps records it this way:

Dharma heirs of Chan Master Shen of Zhaozhou

Venerable Shanxin of Yanyang

Venerable Yanyang of Xinxing in Hongzhou, whose personal name was Shanxin.

When he first visited Zhaozhou, he asked, “What is it like when one brings not a single thing?” Zhaozhou said, “Put it down.” The master said, “Since I have not brought a single thing, what is there to put down?” Zhaozhou said, “If you cannot put it down, carry it away.” At these words, the master had a great awakening.

After taking up residence, a monk asked, “What is Buddha?” The master said, “A clod of earth.” “What is Dharma?” The master said, “The earth moves.” “What is Saṅgha?” The master said, “Eating porridge and eating rice.”

A monk asked, “What is the water of Xinxing?” The master said, “In the river before you.”

A monk asked, “What is manifesting a form in response to things?” The master said, “Bring me the bedstead.”

The master always had a snake and a tiger that followed him, and he fed them from his own hand.

Chan Master Huijue of Guangxiao

Chan Master Huijue of Guangxiao Monastery in Yangzhou: A monk asked, “As the flower of awakening has just blossomed, it fills the entire Sahā world. Since the patriarchal seal came from the west, what should be discussed?” The master said, “When feeling arises, wisdom is obscured.” The monk said, “Is this the meaning of the teachings?” The master said, “What clothes are you wearing?”

A monk asked, “What is it like when a single blow shatters empty space?” The master said, “When tired, rest.”

The master asked Minister Song Qizhi, “Do you know how to speak of it?” Song said, “If it is the Way, it cannot be attached to.” The master said, “Is it existence that cannot be attached to, or nonexistence?” Song said, “It is neither of these.” The master said, “What is it that cannot be attached to?” Song had no reply.

As the master led the assembly out, he saw a dew-post and joined his palms, saying, “I respectfully inquire after you, World-Honored One.” A monk said, “Master, that is a dew-post.” The master said, “Even if you weep until blood flows, it is of no use; better to keep silent through the lingering spring.”

A monk asked, “Having come from afar to seek a teacher, what is the teacher's intention?” The master said, “The authorities are strict; no arrangements are permitted.” The monk said, “Is there no expedient means?” The master said, “For now, spend a night in the firewood shed.”

When the master arrived at Chongshou, Fayan asked, “Where have you recently come from?” The master said, “Zhaozhou.” Fayan said, “I have heard that Zhaozhou had the saying, ‘The cypress tree in the courtyard.’ Is that so?” The master said, “No.” Fayan said, “Everyone who comes and goes says that a monk asked, ‘What is the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the

west?' and Zhaozhou replied, 'The cypress tree in the courtyard.' Why does Your Reverence say there was no such saying?" The master said, "My late teacher truly never said that. Please do not slander my late teacher, Master."

Layman Zhang asked, "What can be done about old age?" The master said, "How old are you?" Zhang said, "Eighty." The master said, "That may indeed be called old." Zhang said, "What is it ultimately?" The master said, "Even at a thousand years, it would not yet be so."

A layman asked, "I have slaughtered cattle all my life. Is there any sin in this?" The master said, "No sin." The layman said, "Why is there no sin?" The master said, "For every one you kill, repay one."

Chan Master Feng of Guoqing Monastery

Chan Master Feng of Guoqing Monastery in Longzhou: A monk asked, "Are the patriarchal meaning and the meaning of the teachings the same or different?" The master said, "Rain nourishes the luxuriance of the three grasses; the spring breeze does not wrap around one's head." The monk said, "Ultimately, are they one or two?" The master said, "Auspicious clouds rise in competition; the rocky caves are not diminished."

A monk asked, "What is the master's family style?" The master said, "Tables and chairs, brazier and windows."

A monk asked, "What is a monastic?" The master said, "A copper head and iron brow, a bird's beak and deer's body." The monk asked, "What is a monastic's fundamental task?" The master said, "In the morning, 'I respectfully inquire after you'; at night, 'Take good care.'"

A monk asked, "Before Niutou met the Fourth Patriarch, why did a hundred birds bring him flowers in their beaks?" The master said, "Like people of Shanfu bringing money to the Iron Ox." The monk asked, "After he met him, why did they no longer bring flowers?" The master said, "A wooden horse gallops eight hundred li toward the dawn."

A monk asked, "How does one subdue the mind throughout the twelve periods of the day?" The master said, "Knocking on ice to seek fire—though you discuss it for kalpas, you will never encounter it." A monk asked, "The twelve divisions of the teachings serve to stop a child's crying. Leaving aside stopping the crying, please give us one phrase." The master said, "A two-horned woman atop a solitary peak."

A monk asked, "What is the great meaning of the Buddhadharma?" The master said, "Śākyamuni is an ox-headed jailer of hell; the patriarchs are horse-faced attendants of hell."

A monk asked, "What is the meaning of coming from the west?" The master said, "The east wall strikes the west wall."

A monk asked, "What is the phrase that cannot be shattered?" The master said, "Not separated by even a hair's breadth, yet people turn toward it from afar."

Chan Master Conglang of Muchen

Chan Master Conglang of Muchen in Wuzhou: A monk asked, "What is it like when a crane is released from its cage and flies off with the snow?" The master said, "I say they are not of one color."

When a Vajra statue fell over, a monk asked, "Since Vajra has an indestructible body, why did it fall to the ground?" The master struck the Chan bench and said, "Walking, standing, sitting, lying down."

When the master was about to enter parinirvāṇa, he composed a verse: "For thirty years I have dwelt at Muchen; throughout that time, not one contrived effort has succeeded. If someone asks me the meaning of coming from the west, how should I spread it out like my eyebrows?"

Chan Master of Xinjian in Wuzhou

The Chan Master of Xinjian in Wuzhou did not take on novice attendants. A monk asked, "Master, you are old; why do you not keep a boy to attend you?" The master said, "Find me one who is blind and deaf."

When a monk took leave, the master asked, "Where are you going?" The monk said, "To Kaiyuan Monastery below the prefectural seat." The master said, "I have a letter for the abbot there. Can you take it?" The monk said, "Please give it to me." The master said, "I suppose you will not be able to do anything about it."

Venerable Duofu of Hangzhou

Venerable Duofu of Hangzhou: A monk asked, "What is a clump of bamboo at Duofu?" The master said, "One stalk, two stalks—slanting." The monk said, "I do not understand." The master said, "Three stalks, four stalks—curving."

A monk asked, "What is the matter beneath the patched robe?" The master said, "Many people are caught in doubt over it." The monk said, "Why is that so?" The master said, "A head concealed in the moon."

Venerable Ximu of Yizhou

Venerable Ximu of Yizhou ascended the hall. A layman raised his hand and said, “Master, you are a donkey.” The master said, “This old monk is ridden by you.” The layman had nothing to say. Three days after leaving, he returned and said, “Three days ago, I was robbed.” The master picked up his staff and drove him out.

At times the master would suddenly call to his attendant. The attendant would answer. The master would say, “In the depth and stillness of night, let us discuss it together.”

[Mind Lamp]: Brother Bag, a fly-whisk is not a fan.

See what the dictionary says about a “fly-whisk”: “A bundle of animal hair, hemp, or the like, attached to a long handle and used to brush away mosquitoes and insects, is called a fly-whisk. It is also called a whisk, dust-whisk, or tail-whisk. This object is generally used in India.”

The monastic precepts permit bhikshus to carry fly-whisks to brush away the disturbance of mosquitoes and insects, but prohibit the use of fly-whisks made from relatively ornate and valuable materials, such as white whisks.

According to fascicle 6 of the Miscellaneous Matters of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, the Buddha permitted bhikshus to use fly-whisks made from five materials: (1) sheep's wool, (2) hemp, (3) finely shredded cloth, (4) worn-out used articles, and (5) branches or twigs. A white whisk, made from the tails of white yaks or white horses, was a valuable object.

The scriptures repeatedly record bodhisattvas or elders holding white whisks. For example, fascicle 6 of the Dhāraṇī Collection Sūtra says that Avalokiteśvara holds a white whisk in the left hand and Samantabhadra in the right. It is also said that, when the Buddha returned after teaching the Dharma to his mother in Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, Brahmā held a white whisk and attended at the Buddha's right.

Esoteric Buddhism uses the white whisk as a symbol of removing afflictions and eliminating obstacles and difficulties. It is, for example, the White-Whisk Hand among the forty hands of Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara described in the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Great Compassion Heart Dhāraṇī Sūtra. The first fascicle of the Ritual Manual for the Yoga Practice of the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Buddha-Crown also states that whenever practitioners travel, they should make a white whisk and empower it by reciting the mantra 108 times. If they encounter animals while carrying it, they can enable them to leave suffering and attain liberation.

Chan communities in China have especially favored the fly-whisk as a ceremonial implement. When an abbot or acting abbot holds a fly-whisk and ascends the hall to teach the Dharma to the assembly, this is called “taking up the whisk.” At such times, the fly-whisk symbolizes the teaching of the Dharma. Those who successively perform the duty of taking up the whisk include the chief seat of the front hall, the chief seat of the rear hall, the eastern scriptural repository master, the western scriptural repository master, and the secretary; they are called the five chief officers who take up the whisk. The attendant who serves one taking up the whisk is called the fly-whisk attendant.

In Japan, fly whisks were also used in Zen monasteries after the Kamakura period. Thereafter, apart from the Shin school, all other schools used the fly whisk as a ceremonial implement for teachers at Dharma assemblies, empowerments, funerals, and other occasions. [Dhāraṇī Collection Sūtra, fascicle 3; Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya, fascicle 32; Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Miscellaneous Matters, fascicle 29; Imperially Revised Baizhang Rules of Purity, fascicle 7, “Regulation on Holding the Fly Whisk at the Four Seasonal Festivals”; Essentials for the Śākya Clan, middle fascicle?; Notes on Implements in Zen Monasteries, section on implements]

[Dai Zi]: Oh... I had always thought a fly whisk was a fan. Haha!

[Zhishu]: Master, could you please explain the four gates? Your disciple cannot make head or tail of even one of them.

[LVM]: No need to feel around! No need to feel around! All four gates are open now. In Xuedou’s time, even limitless hammer blows could not open them. By Chan Master Foguo’s time, however, all four gates were wide open.

[Dai Zi]: Yesterday, someone stumped me by asking about how the styles of the ancient masters differed greatly—for example, Elder Zhaozhou’s meticulous plainness and Xuefeng’s thunderous decisiveness... each remaining unchanged throughout a lifetime. May I ask, Teacher: are such different styles attachment to dharmas?

[LVM]: In meticulous plainness, not a single dharma can be obtained; in thunderous decisiveness, not a single affair can obstruct. Fundamentally, there is no dharma—what is there to cling to?

[Sudhana]: Meticulous plainness and thunderous decisiveness are like the east, south, west, and north gates: they are merely expedient arrangements suited to different directions. But... what, in the end, has been communicated? Haha, we must still ask Teacher LVM!

[LVM]: Haha! Why do you not tell him directly, instead of passing him on to me?

[10] Muzhou Receives a Shout from You

The pointer says: Thus, thus. Not thus, not thus. If we speak of battle, each stands at the pivotal turning point. Thus it is said: If one turns upward, then even Śākyamuni and Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, the thousand sages and ten thousand saints, and all the lineage masters under heaven must all swallow their breath and silence their voices. If one turns downward, then vinegar flies and gnats, crawling creatures and sentient beings alike, each emits a great light, each stands like a wall ten thousand fathoms high. But if one neither rises nor descends, how is this to be discussed? Where there is a branch, climb the branch; where there is no branch, climb by convention. Let us raise the case and see.

[10] The Case:

Muzhou asked a monk, “Where have you recently come from?” [Probing with the pole and testing the grass.]

The monk immediately gave a shout. [A Chan practitioner of real ability. But do not feign enlightenment; he too knows how to go on in this way.]

Muzhou said, “This old monk has been struck by your shout.” [A device for trapping a tiger. How will he handle the fellow?]

The monk shouted again. [Look at his horns and head: he resembles one, yet he is not one; I only fear that he has a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail.]

Muzhou said, “What then after three shouts or four shouts?” [Waves against the current. Never has anyone been able to raise his head above them. Where will he go?]

The monk had nothing to say. [Sure enough, he could find no hold.]

Muzhou then struck him, saying, [If Muzhou were to exercise his authority to the full, he would cut all the grasses and trees of the entire earth into three pieces.] “You fellow who merely makes empty gestures.” [He let him off one move; he has fallen into the second.]

In upholding and establishing the teaching of the school, one must have the eye and functioning of a genuine lineage master. Muzhou’s incisive methods were like flashes of lightning, and he delighted in examining lecturers on the scriptures. In ordinary situations, when he uttered a word or half a phrase, it was like a thicket of thorns: there was nowhere to set one’s hands or feet. As soon as he saw a monk approach, he would say, “The case is already complete; I spare you thirty blows.” On seeing another monk, he said, “Reverend.” The monk turned his head.

Muzhou said, “You plank-under-the-eaves fellow.” He also instructed the assembly: “Before you have found an entrance, you must find one. Once you have found an entrance, do not betray this old monk.” Muzhou often guided people in such ways.

This monk, too, was skillfully fashioned, but unfortunately he had a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail. Had it not been Muzhou at the time, he might have thrown everyone into confusion. When Muzhou asked, “Where have you recently come from?” and the monk immediately shouted, what was his intention? This old man was in no hurry. Slowly, he said to him, “This old monk has been struck by your shout.” It was as if he had accepted the monk’s words to one side, yet also as if he were testing him, leaning sideways to see what he would do.

The monk shouted again. He resembled one, yet he was not one; this old man had already pierced his nostrils. Then Muzhou asked, “What then after three shouts or four shouts?” Sure enough, the monk had nothing to say. Muzhou then struck him, saying, “You fellow who merely makes empty gestures.” Where he tested people in earnest, he knew the sound as soon as he opened his mouth. What a pity! The monk’s speechlessness provoked Muzhou to call him “a fellow who merely makes empty gestures.”

If you were asked by Muzhou, “What then after three shouts or four shouts?” how should you respond so as to avoid being called “a fellow who merely makes empty gestures”? If, here, one recognizes life and death, distinguishes fortune and misfortune, and stands firmly on solid ground, who would bother about what comes after three shouts or four shouts? It was only because this monk had nothing to say that the old man seized upon the evidence and closed the case. Listen as Xuedou brings forth his verse:

Two shouts and then three shouts—[The thunder roars mightily, but not a drop of rain falls. From ancient times to the present, few have been like this.]

A master knows how to respond to circumstances. [If he were not a master, how could he test him? I only fear that this is not so.]

If you say he rides on a tiger’s head—[Ha! Blind fellow! How can one ride on a tiger’s head? So many people understand it this way, and some even hold this view.]

Both become blind fellows. [A personal word from his own mouth. Why stop at two? Lead yourselves out.]

Who is the blind fellow? [Who is to distinguish it? Fortunately, there is the final line. Otherwise, it would utterly deceive people.]

Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see. [Seeing it is not impossible, but to fix one's gaze on it is to become blind. If you, venerable one, look at it with your eyes, both hands will clutch at emptiness. Raised in this way, tell me: what level of opportunity is it?]

Xuedou certainly had a way of guiding people. If one is not a master, one merely shouts wildly and indiscriminately. Thus the ancients said: At times, one shout is not used as one shout; at times, one shout is indeed used as one shout; at times, one shout is like a lion crouching on the ground; at times, one shout is like the jeweled sword of the Vajra King. Xinghua said, "I see you all shouting in the eastern corridor and shouting in the western corridor.

Do not shout wildly and indiscriminately. Even if you could shout all the way up to the thirty-third heaven above Xinghua and then come crashing down, not a trace of breath would remain. When I revive, I will tell you: Not yet! Why? Xinghua has never scattered pearls for you all inside a purple gauze curtain, so what are you doing, constantly shouting wildly and indiscriminately?"

Linji said, "I hear that all of you are learning my shout. Let me ask you: a monk comes out from the eastern hall, and a monk comes out from the western hall; the two shout simultaneously. Which is the guest? Which is the host? If you cannot distinguish guest and host, then hereafter do not learn from this old monk." Therefore Xuedou's verse says, "A master knows how to respond to circumstances." Although this monk was subdued by Muzhou, he nevertheless had a place where he recognized how to respond to circumstances.

Tell me, where did this monk recognize how to respond to circumstances? Chan Master Zhi of Lumen commented on this monk: "One who recognizes the Dharma is wary." Yantou said, "If we speak of battle, each stands at the pivotal turning point." Monk Xin of Huanglong said, "When pressed to the limit, one changes; through change, one finds penetration." This little matter is where the patriarchs cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven. If you recognize how to respond to circumstances, then when it is raised, you immediately know where it lands.

Some fellows say, "Why bother with his 'three shouts or four shouts'? Just keep shouting." They speak of thirty shouts or twenty shouts, shouting until Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, and call this "riding on a tiger's head." If this is your understanding, then not recognizing Muzhou is one thing, but seeing this monk is still far beyond you. If someone rides on a tiger's head, he must have a knife in hand and must also be capable of transformation.

Xuedou said: If it is like this, "both become blind fellows." Xuedou is like a heaven-reliant long sword, stern and fully majestic. If you comprehend Xuedou's meaning, you will naturally comprehend it in a thousand places and ten thousand places all at once. Then you will see that the verses following Xuedou's are merely explanatory footnotes.

He further said, "Who is the blind fellow?" Tell me: is the guest blind, or is the host blind? Or are guest and host both blind at once? "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see." This is the living point.

Since Xuedou had completed his verse at once, why did he then say, "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see"? Tell me, how does one see it? Opening one's eyes is still caught; closing one's eyes is still caught. Is there anyone who can escape this?

u A Babel of Voices

[Dingling]: May I ask, teacher: "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see." This is the living point. How should this be understood?

[LVM]: Ha-ha! Then you answer the question, "Who is the blind fellow?"—"Tell me: is the guest blind, or is the host blind? Or are guest and host both blind at once?" If you cannot answer, you die right here. The line following "Who is the blind fellow?" should be the answer: "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see"—life gained amid death.

[Dingling]: I am simply puzzled why the preceding line is "Who is the blind fellow?" and the very next line is "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see."

[To look is not to find it absent; to fix one's gaze upon it is to go blind. If the ācārya opens his eyes to look, both hands strike empty space. Presented in this way, tell me: what level of capacity is this?] "Pǒu"—I cannot find this character in the dictionary. Is it a phonetic loan character?

[LVM]: Do not be puzzled.

Why is the preceding line "Who is the blind fellow?" and the very next line "Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see"?

* It is a question and an answer.

[To look is not to find it absent; to fix one's gaze upon it is to go blind. If the ācārya opens his eyes to look, both hands strike empty space. Presented in this way, tell me: what level of capacity is this?] "Pǒu"—I cannot find this character in the dictionary. Is it a phonetic loan character?

* It means that both hands grapple with emptiness.

[Dingling]: Oh~

“Who is the blind fellow?”—cutting off the multitude of streams.

“Bring it forth for everyone under heaven to see.”—encompassing heaven and earth.

[LVM]: “If you say he rides on a tiger’s head, both become blind fellows.”—following the waves and chasing the surf.

[Dingling]: Understood.

[Xinming]: May I ask about: “You fellow who merely makes empty gestures.” [He let him off one move; he has fallen into the second.]

I still do not understand this first move from what follows.

If the monk’s “having nothing to say” originally meant “the path of words and speech is cut off; no words are established,” would he and I count as blind fellows?

[LVM]: Ha-ha! The benevolent see benevolence, and the wise see wisdom. But do not say that there is no blood beneath this monk’s skin.

[Dingling]: How should “One who recognizes the Dharma is wary” be understood?

[LVM]: To speak is to violate it; to remain silent is to turn away from it. So what should one do?

Xuedou’s verse says, “A master knows how to respond to circumstances.” Although this monk was subdued by Muzhou, he nevertheless had a place where he recognized how to respond to circumstances. Tell me, where did this monk recognize how to respond to circumstances? Chan Master Zhi of Lumen commented on this monk: “One who recognizes the Dharma is wary.” Yantou said, “If we speak of battle, each stands at the pivotal turning point.” Monk Xin of Huanglong said, “When pressed to the limit, one changes; through change, one finds penetration.” This little matter is where the patriarchs cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven. If you recognize how to respond to circumstances, then when it is raised, you immediately know where it lands.

The so-called “one who recognizes the Dharma” naturally refers to one with clear eyes, who “immediately knows where it lands when it is raised.” The question asks: “Tell me, where did this monk recognize how to respond to circumstances?” This is intended to point out the monk’s “turning point.” To answer directly is to violate it; not to answer is to turn away from it. What, then, is one to do? Hence, “wary.”

[Dingling]: Heaven above! Heaven above!

[Xinming]: Is Muzhou the one who guided the founding patriarchs of the Linji and Yunmen schools?

Some materials record it this way:

After Chan Master Linji had studied for many years, Muzhou asked, “Have you awakened?” He answered, “No.”

Muzhou said, “Why do you not go and ask?”

[LVM]: Yes! Chan Master Muzhou once had Linji go back and forth repeatedly, and once crushed Yunmen’s foot, breaking it.

[Eleven] Huangbo Was Simply Without a Teacher

Pointer: The great function of Buddhas and patriarchs is wholly within their grasp. The life-vein of humans and devas is entirely subject to their direction. With a casual word or phrase, they startle the multitude and stir the assembly. With a single device and a single situation, they smash locks and knock off cangues. They receive those of superior capacity and raise up matters beyond the ordinary. But tell me: who has ever come forth in such a way? Is there anyone who knows where this lands? Let us raise it for examination:

[1] Case:

Huangbo addressed the assembly, saying, [“Drawing water obstructs the basin; swallow it all in one mouthful. Chan monks throughout the land cannot leap out of this.”] “All of you are merely dregs-swilling fellows. Traveling about on foot in this way, [“Speak it out! Wear through your straw sandals! Overturn heaven and shake the earth!”] where could there be any affair like this today? [“What use do you make of ‘today’? It is not amiss to startle the multitude and stir the assembly.”] Do you know that there are no Chan masters in the Great Tang Empire?” [“This old monk does not understand. Swallow it all in one mouthful. This, too, is a Yunju arhat.”]

At that time a monk stepped forth and said, “What about the teachers in the various quarters who gather disciples and lead assemblies?” [“It would be good to give him a thrust. Faced with the occasion, one cannot but act this way.”]

Huangbo said, “I did not say there is no Chan; I only said there are no teachers.” [“This leaves one unable to make distinctions: tiles crumble and ice melts. A fellow with a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail.”]

Huangbo was seven feet tall, with a round pearl on his forehead; by nature he understood Chan. Once, while traveling on Mount Tiantai, the Master met a monk on the road. They talked and laughed as though they were old acquaintances. Looking closely at him, the Master saw that his gaze shone upon people and that he had an unusual appearance, so they traveled together. When they came to a stream in flood, the Master planted his staff, cast aside his bamboo hat, and stopped. The monk urged him to cross together. The Master said, “Please cross.” The monk then lifted his robes and stepped upon the waves as though walking on level ground. Looking back, he called, “Come across! Come across!” The Master rebuked him, saying, “You self-liberated fellow! Had I known earlier that you would make such strange displays, I would have chopped off your shins.” The monk sighed and said, “A true vessel of the Mahāyāna Dharma!” With these words, he vanished.

When Huangbo first arrived at Baizhang, Baizhang asked, “So majestic and imposing—where have you come from?”

Huangbo said, “So majestic and imposing—I have come from within the mountains.”

Baizhang asked, “Why have you come?”

Huangbo said, “For no other matter.” Baizhang held him in high regard.

The next day, Huangbo took leave of Baizhang. Baizhang asked, “Where are you going?”

Huangbo said, “I am going to Jiangxi to pay homage to Master Ma.”

Baizhang said, “Master Ma has already passed away.”

Tell me: when Huangbo asked in this way, did he ask because he knew, or because he did not know? He then said, “I have made a special journey to pay homage, but my blessings and affinities are too slight, and I have not had the chance to see him. I respectfully ask: what sayings did he ordinarily give? I wish to hear them raised.” Baizhang then cited the circumstances of his second visit to Mazu: “When the Patriarch saw me come, he raised his whisk. I asked, ‘Is its function right here, or apart from this?’ The Patriarch then hung the whisk on the corner of the Chan seat.

“After a long while, the Patriarch asked me, ‘When you later move your two lips, how will you teach people?’ I picked up the whisk and raised it. The Patriarch said, ‘Is its function right here, or apart from this?’ I hung the whisk on the corner of the Chan seat. The Patriarch gave a mighty shout, and at that time I was deaf for three days.” Huangbo involuntarily shuddered and stuck out his tongue. Baizhang said, “Will you not later succeed Master Ma?” Huangbo said, “No.”

“Today, because you have raised this account, I have been able to see Master Ma’s great function and great activity. If I were to succeed Master Ma, I would later lose all my descendants.” Baizhang said, “Just so, just so. One whose insight equals that of the teacher diminishes the teacher’s virtue by half; only when wisdom surpasses that of the teacher is one fit to receive the transmission. Your present insight truly has an aspect that surpasses your teacher.”

All of you, tell me: when Huangbo asked in this way, did he know and deliberately ask, or did he ask because he did not know? You must personally see the conduct of that household’s father and son before you can understand. One day Huangbo again asked Baizhang, “How is the transmission of the school from above to be indicated?” Baizhang remained silent for a long while. Huangbo said, “You must not let it be cut off among later generations.” Baizhang said, “I had taken you for someone.” Then he rose and entered the abbot’s quarters.

Huangbo and Minister Pei were friends beyond the conventional world. When Pei was governor of Wanling, he invited the Master to the prefecture and showed him a volume of his own writings. The Master accepted it and set it on the seat without so much as opening it. After a long while, he said, “Do you understand?” Pei said, “I do not understand.” Huangbo said, “If you could understand it just this way, that would still be something. But if it takes form in paper and ink, where would our school be?” Pei then praised him in verse:

Since the Great Being transmitted the mind-seal, a round pearl has graced his brow upon a seven-foot frame.

His staff has hung ten years by the waters of Shu; today his floating cup crosses the banks of the Zhang.

Eight thousand dragons and elephants follow his lofty steps; fragrant flowers over ten thousand miles form victorious causes.

I would fain serve the Master as his disciple, yet do not know to whom he will entrust the Dharma.

The Master showed no sign of pleasure and said:

His mind is like the great sea, boundless; red lotuses issue from his mouth to nourish his ailing body.

He naturally has a pair of unoccupied hands and has never merely bowed to ordinary people.

After Huangbo took up residence, his Chan exchanges were sharp and severe. Linji was in his assembly, and Muzhou was head seat. Muzhou asked him, "You have been here for some time. Why do you not go ask for instruction?" Linji said, "What should I ask in order to be right?" The head seat said, "Why not ask, 'What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?'" Linji went and asked, and three times he was beaten and driven out.

Linji bade the head seat farewell, saying, "At the head seat's instruction, I went three times to ask, and each time I was beaten and driven out. I fear the conditions are not here for me, so for the moment I shall leave the mountain." The head seat said, "If you are going, you must first take leave of the abbot." The head seat went beforehand and informed Huangbo: "The head-seat monk who asked for instruction is most unusual. Why does Your Reverence not bore through and shape him into a tree to give later generations shade?" Huangbo said, "I already know."

When Linji came to take leave, Huangbo said, "You must not go elsewhere. Go straight to Dayu at the Gao'an ford." When Linji arrived at Dayu's place, he recounted the preceding matter and asked, "I do not know where my fault lies." Dayu said, "Huangbo's grandmotherly kindness has gone to the utmost for your sake, exhausting himself for you. Why do you still speak of fault or no fault?" Linji suddenly attained great awakening and said, "Huangbo's Buddhadharma is not much after all." Dayu seized him and said, "Just now you said there was a fault, but now you say the Buddhadharma is not much. What have you seen?" Linji struck Dayu three times in the ribs. Dayu pushed him away and said, "Your teacher is Huangbo; it is none of my affair."

One day Huangbo addressed the assembly, saying, "Master Farong of Niutou could speak horizontally and speak vertically, yet he still did not know where the pivotal gate of what is beyond lies." At that time, among the descendants of Shitou and Mazu, Chan practitioners swarmed about, speaking Chan and speaking the Way. Why, then, did he speak in this manner? Thus he addressed the assembly: "All of you are merely dregs-swilling fellows, traveling about on foot in this way and making yourselves a laughingstock."

"Whenever you see a place with eight hundred or a thousand people, you go there. You must not merely seek liveliness. If all were as easy as you are, where could there be any affair like this today?" In Tang times, people liked to curse others as "dregs-swilling fellows," and many say this was Huangbo cursing people. Those with discerning eyes see for themselves where his words land. In their main intent, they set out a hook to fish for someone to ask.

Among the assembly, a Chan practitioner who did not spare his own life understood in this way and stepped forth to ask him, "What about the teachers in the various quarters who gather disciples and lead assemblies?" This too was a good thrust. This old fellow indeed could not make distinctions, and so let something slip: "I did not say there is no Chan; I only said there are no teachers."

Tell me: where does the meaning lie? In the school's teaching from above, there are times for seizing and times for releasing, times for killing and times for enlivening, times for letting go and times for gathering in. I ask you all: what is a teacher within Chan? When this mountain monk speaks in this way, he has already lost the beginning. Where are your nostrils? After a long silence, he said: "They have been pierced through."

Stern and solitary in his manner, he does not boast. ["He still does not know that there is such a thing. This, too, is a Yunju arhat."]

Seated upright, he settles dragons and snakes throughout the world. ["One must distinguish black-robed from white-robed; one must clearly sort black from white."]

The Dazhong Emperor once lightly provoked him. ["Why speak of the Dazhong Emperor? However great one may be, one must rise from the ground; however high, what can one do when there is still heaven above?"]

Three times he personally suffered the display of claws and fangs. ["What is the use of a dead toad making so much noise? This is not yet extraordinary; it is still a minor trick. If great function and great activity were manifest before you, the whole ten-direction world, even mountains, rivers, and the great earth, would all beg Huangbo for their lives."]

Xuedou's single verse is much like a eulogy of Huangbo's true portrait, yet one must not understand it merely as a "portrait eulogy." Beneath his lines lies a way out. He plainly says, "Stern and solitary in his manner, he does not boast." When Huangbo addressed the assembly in this way, it was certainly not to contend that others should bear him on their backs, nor to show off and praise himself.

If you understand this news, then you may freely move in seven directions and eight ways: at times standing alone upon a solitary peak, at times stretching yourself out in a bustling marketplace. How could you remain secluded in one corner? The more you cast it away, the more it does not cease; the more you seek it, the less it is seen; the more you undertake it, the more you sink beneath it. An ancient said, "Without wings, it flies beneath heaven; with a name, it is transmitted through the world."

Completely cast away Buddhist teachings and doctrines; set aside for the moment all abstruse, wondrous, and extraordinary things. That would be somewhat better. Then it naturally appears complete wherever you encounter it. Xuedou says, "Seated

upright, he settles dragons and snakes throughout the world." Whether dragon or snake, test them as soon as they enter the gate. This is called the eye that settles dragons and snakes, the device that captures tigers and rhinoceroses. Xuedou also said: "In settling dragons and snakes, how upright is the eye! In capturing tigers and rhinoceroses, how incomplete is the device!"

He also said, "The Dazhong Emperor once lightly provoked him; three times he personally suffered the display of claws and fangs." Was Huangbo only now fierce in hand and foot? He had always been thus. As for the Dazhong Emperor, the continuation of the record of the Xiantong era states that Emperor Xianzong of Tang had two sons: one was Muzong, and the other was Xuanzong. Xuanzong was Dazhong. At thirteen, he was clever and quick-witted, and he often enjoyed sitting in the lotus posture.

When Muzong was on the throne, after morning court had ended, Dazhong playfully climbed onto the dragon throne and acted as though bowing to the assembled ministers. When the ministers saw this, they called it madness of the heart and reported it to Muzong. Seeing him, Muzong stroked him and sighed, saying, "My younger brother is an outstanding descendant of our lineage." Muzong died in the fourth year of Changqing. He had three sons: Jingzong, Wenzong, and Wuzong.

Jingzong succeeded his father; within two years, palace officials plotted to replace him, and Wenzong ascended the throne. Fourteen years later, Wuzong took the throne and often called Dazhong a foolish slave. One day, Wuzong resented Dazhong's former playful ascent to his father's throne, and so had him beaten to death and thrown into the rear garden. After he was revived by being doused with filth, he secretly fled to the assembly of Chan Master Xiangyan Zhixian. He later shaved his head and became a novice, though he had not yet received full ordination.

Later, he traveled with Zhixian and arrived at Mount Lu. Zhixian inscribed a poem on a waterfall: "Piercing clouds and passing through stone, it does not shrink from toil; only from the distant ground does one know the height of its source." Zhixian chanted these two lines idly and stood pondering them for a long while, wishing to draw out the course of his words and see what would follow. Dazhong continued: "How could streams and ravines contain it? In the end it returns to the great sea and becomes its surging waves." Zhixian then knew that he was no ordinary person, and silently took note of him.

Later, he went to Yanguan's assembly and invited Dazhong to serve as secretary; Huangbo was the head seat there. One day, after Huangbo had bowed to the Buddha, Dazhong saw him and asked, "Seeking neither Buddha, Dharma, nor Saṅgha—what do you seek by making prostrations?" Huangbo said, "Seeking neither Buddha, Dharma, nor Saṅgha, I always prostrate in this way." Dazhong said, "What use are prostrations?" Huangbo then slapped him.

Dazhong said, "Far too crude." Huangbo said, "What kind of place is this, that you speak of crude and refined?" Huangbo slapped him again. Later, when Dazhong succeeded to the throne, he bestowed upon Huangbo the title "śramaṇa of coarse conduct." When Minister Pei was at court, he later memorialized the throne to bestow the title Chan Master Duanji. Xuedou knew the source of his Dharma lineage and put it to skillful use.

Is there anyone nowadays who can still bare their fangs and claws?

Then strike.

u Many Voices

I.

Yongshou Tongzi : Teacher, is this not the master? Then who, exactly, is the master? A case concerning Chan Master Guangyong in the Record of the Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era says: A monk asked, "Mañjuśrī was the teacher of the Seven Buddhas. Did Mañjuśrī have a teacher?" The Chan master said, "When conditions are encountered, there is one." The monk asked, "Who is Mañjuśrī's teacher?" The Chan master raised his whisk to show him. The monk said, "Could this be it?" The Chan master put down the whisk and folded his hands.

LVM : Ha ha! If this is the master, then what are you?

Yongshou Tongzi : I tuck my palm-leaf fan into the waistband at the back, freeing both hands; I straighten my topknot and bow to the teacher with palms joined.

The important question has been resolved. There is still an unimportant one: Mañjuśrī was the teacher of the Seven Buddhas, yet he became Śākyamuni's disciple. Ah—Mañjuśrī's seniority was, after all, greater than Śākyamuni's! This shows that the Buddhadharma differs from worldly dharmas. This must be the principle of "when conditions are encountered, there is one."

For example, Yongshou Tongzi is also a teacher and now has more than ninety students under him, every one of them excellent—several more than Mazu Daoyi had! Moreover, this teacher of mine receives a salary. This is "when conditions are encountered, there is one." Mazu Daoyi, for instance, had no payment for teaching hours; he was "when there are no conditions, there is none." From the standpoint of doctrine, is that the idea?

LVM : Without destroying worldly forms, practice the supramundane Dharma.

II.

Dingling : May I ask, Teacher: does the phrase “The Chan master put down the whisk and folded his hands” indicate that not even a dharma is established, so that one does not fall into a pit or get stuck at a stopping place?

LVM : It would not be impossible to say that it indicates “not establishing even a dharma, not falling into pits and gullies.” Yet it still seems to bear traces of explaining Chan. Chan is a complete and unreserved presentation!

Dingling : How about replacing it with “In the deep of night, with whom does one walk along the imperial street?”

LVM : Ha ha! No wonder you speak of “In the deep of night, with whom does one walk along the imperial street?” It turns out that there is still a “how should it be?” If there were no such “how should it be?,” then whether it is day or night, and whether or not someone walks with you, nothing prevents you from walking along the imperial street.

III.

Mangran Ruoshi : The teacher has directly shown the source; I bow in reverence again and again! Though this dull person seems to have had a slight awakening, I still remain somewhat bewildered. In this dull person’s humble view, the teacher’s several replies above merely aim to dispel the “questions” of fellow student Tongzi and fellow student Dingling—perhaps “root of doubt” would be more appropriate—so that they no longer become entangled in them in the present moment, but let go and sit steadily.

Yet even if one casts aside this question and no longer attends to it, with the mind like a wall, one still does not understand the patriarchs’ “complete and unreserved presentation.” So how does one truly cast aside this question? I also know that I must not become entangled in the question itself, but return to my own mind. Yet if I still do not understand the patriarchs’ “wordless riddles,” how can my mind truly settle? I beg the teacher to give further instruction. This dull person bows again!!!

LVM : On this question, I would like to hear your esteemed view.

Mangran Ruoshi : How would I dare speak of any esteemed view? My mind is still lost in confusion. This dull person has gained a slight understanding of “abruptly cutting off a single thought” and ought to remain silent. Why, then, can I not bear to let go, thought after thought, of the patriarchs’ “complete and unreserved presentation”? Clearly, I have not truly achieved “abruptly cutting off.”

I often think like this: “When all questions have been eliminated and a thought is cut off, the mind is empty and contains nothing; then one will naturally understand the patriarchs’ manner of action.” I take the cutting off of deluded attachments to be some mysterious state. With this mind that seeks something, how can I “abruptly cut off”? If one says, “When did the patriarchs ever have any manner of action?” my mind can understand it, yet I still feel that this understanding is somewhat too superficial.

The disorderly words above cannot make clear whether they are a question or an answer. I have only done my best to state the “reasoning” and questions in my mind. I hope the teacher can prescribe the medicine according to the illness!

LVM : Please offer one example of a patriarch’s “complete and unreserved presentation.”

Mangran Ruoshi : Take the example Yongshou Tongzi cited above: the Chan master raised his whisk to show him, then put down the whisk and folded his hands. Could that dispel the monk’s question, “Did Mañjuśrī have a teacher?” I myself feel that I am making trouble out of nothing, yet I do not know exactly where I am mistaken.

LVM : The answer to the monk, “To say there is or to say there is not is all idle speculation!”—is this the same as or different from the Chan master’s “raising the whisk to show him, then putting down the whisk and folding his hands”?

Mangran Ruoshi : My “understanding” is that the two are the same. But since I also know that it is idle speculation, why do I feel no inner resonance at all with the Chan master’s “performance”?

LVM : If you feel no inner resonance, how do you know it is idle speculation? “To say there is or to say there is not is all idle speculation!” bears obvious traces of theoretical exposition, which the ancient Chan masters avoided. Chan Master Guangyong’s response—that is a complete and unreserved presentation.

IV.

Xueshan Tongzi : Are “It is not that there is no Chan; it is simply that there is no master” and the patriarch’s “Vast emptiness—nothing holy” the same or different?

LVM : Do you think they are the same or different?

Xueshan Tongzi : I think they are the same.

LVM : Leave aside whether they are “the same”; even if they are “different,” you would have your reasons.

Xueshan Tongzi : Oh! I have received a blow from the staff. Teacher, do you mean that I should not rely on conceptual understanding, but directly realize this? Whether they are the same or different, what does that have to do with the fundamental matter?

LVM : Clever child.

Xueshan Tongzi : Teacher, do not praise me. This child has not yet truly entered the gate.

LVM : Why not say, “Do not demean what is good as base”?

Xueshan Tongzi : “So that no explanation can be offered; all disintegrates and melts away. A fellow with a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail.” Does this “fellow with a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail” refer to Chan Master Huangbo? If so, why is he described in this way?

LVM : Then does “Beat him to death and feed him to the dogs” refer to the World-Honored One? If so, why is it said this way?

[12] Dongshan’s Three Pounds of Flax

The introductory instruction says: “The sword that kills and the sword that gives life—these were the standards of the ancients and remain the pivotal essentials of today. Speaking of killing, it does not harm a single hair; speaking of giving life, one loses body and life. Thus it is said: ‘The upward way is not transmitted by a thousand sages. Students weary their bodies like apes grasping at reflections.’ Tell me: if it is not transmitted, why are there so many entangling koans? Those with discerning eyes, try saying something.”

[Case Twelve] Raising:

A monk asked Dongshan, “What is Buddha? An iron caltrop. Monks throughout the land cannot leap free of it. ” Dongshan said, “Three pounds of hemp. Perfectly clear. A worn-out straw sandal. Using a steelyard weight to point at the locust tree and scold the willow tree. ”

How many people have misunderstood this koan! It is truly hard to chew; there is nowhere for you to sink your teeth. Why is it so bland and tasteless? The ancients gave many answers to questions about Buddha: some said, “The one in the hall”; some said, “The thirty-two marks”; some said, “A bamboo-ribbed whip beneath Mount Zhanglin.” Yet when it came to Dongshan, he simply said, “Three pounds of hemp.” This does no harm to the tongues of the ancients.

Many people interpret it as conversational speech, saying: Dongshan was in the storeroom weighing hemp when a monk asked him, and that was why he answered this way. Some say that Dongshan answered east when asked west. Some say, “You yourself are Buddha, yet you go on asking about Buddha,” so Dongshan answered indirectly. There are even dead men of another sort who say that these very three pounds of hemp are Buddha.

That has no connection at all! If you seek under Dongshan’s words in this way, even if you investigate until Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, you will not so much as dream of it. Why? Words are only vessels that carry the Way. Do you not realize this? If you keep seeking the ancients’ intent within their words, what handle is there to grasp? Have you not seen the ancients say: “The Way is fundamentally without words; because of words, the Way is revealed. Once one sees the Way, one forgets the words.”

If you arrive here, then return to me the first critical move. These very three pounds of hemp are like a great highway in Chang’an: wherever one raises or sets down one’s foot, nothing is amiss. This saying is the same as Yunmen’s saying about the steamed bun, and is indeed difficult to understand. The late First Patriarch of Wuzu composed this verse:

A board-carrying fellow selling cheap, with three pounds of hemp thrown in to make weight.

Goods unsold for a thousand years—nowhere to place one’s whole body.

Simply gather up your emotional defilements and mental imaginings; let calculations, gain and loss, right and wrong all be purified at once, and you will naturally understand.

The golden crow races on, The left eye, half a catty. Even a swift hawk cannot catch up. Its body stretches across the flames.

The jade rabbit speeds on, The right eye, eight taels. It makes its nest in Chang’e’s palace.

When responding aptly, how could there ever be a light touch? Like a bell when struck, like a valley receiving an echo.

Meeting the matter and responding to the occasion, one sees Dongshan, Mistaking the fixed star on the scale. It is simply how this chan master sees it.

A lame turtle and a blind tortoise enter an empty valley. Lead yourselves out. There is no different soil in the same pit. Who shot your hawk dead?

Flowers in clusters, brocade in clusters, Two layers of koans. One case has already been taken up; it remains just the same.

Bamboo in the south, wood in the north. There are three layers as well—four layers of koans. Adding a head atop a head.

This brings to mind Magistrate Lu of Changqing, A lazy fellow dragging along a companion. This mountain monk is the same way; Xuedou is the same way.

Who knew to laugh and not to weep. Ha ha! O blue heavens! At midnight, grievances and suffering increase still further.

Ah! Bah! What is that? Then strike him.

Xuedou saw through it thoroughly, and so opened at once by saying, “The golden crow races on; the jade rabbit speeds on.” This is no different from Dongshan’s answer, “Three pounds of hemp.” The sun rises and the moon sets; every day is thus. People commonly interpret it sentimentally, saying, “The golden crow is the left eye; the jade rabbit is the right eye.” Ask them about it, and they stare wide-eyed and say, “What connection is there here?” If you understand it in this way, Bodhidharma’s entire tradition is swept away.

Thus it is said: “Casting the hook across the four seas, one catches only fierce dragons; the extraordinary pivotal mechanism is sought for the sake of finding one who knows.” Xuedou was a man who had emerged from the realm of the skandhas; how could he hold such views? Xuedou lightly taps at the crucial joint, revealing just a little for you to see, and then adds the comment: “When responding aptly, how could there ever be a light touch?” Dongshan did not lightly answer this monk. Like a bell when struck, like a valley receiving an echo, he responded according to greater or lesser circumstances and did not dare make a light touch. At one stroke, Xuedou has brought forth his heart, liver, and five viscera and presented them to you all. Xuedou has a “Verse on Stillness and Apt Response” that says:

Presented face-to-face, it does not lie in elaborate devices.

Dragons and snakes are easy to distinguish; monks are hard to deceive.

The shadow of the golden hammer moves; the light of the precious sword is cold.

When it comes straight down, look quickly with open eyes.

When Dongshan first went to study with Yunmen, Yunmen asked, “Where have you recently come from?”

Dongshan said, “Zha Ferry.”

Yunmen said, “Where did you spend the summer retreat?”

Dongshan said, “Baoji Temple in Hunan.”

Yunmen said, “When did you leave there?”

Dongshan said, “The twenty-fifth day of the eighth month.”

Yunmen said, “I excuse you three blows of the staff. Go join the assembly!”

That evening, the master entered Yunmen’s room for a personal interview and asked, “Wherein was my fault?”

Yunmen said, “Rice bag! Is that how you go from Jiangxi to Hunan?”

At these words, Dongshan suddenly attained great awakening. He then said, “One day, in a place without human habitation, I shall set up a small hut. I shall store not one grain of rice and plant not one stalk of vegetables. I shall always receive the great spiritual friends of the ten directions who come and go, pulling out their nails and wedges, removing their greasy caps and stripping off their falcon-stinking cloth shirts. I shall have each of them become completely free and open, living as people with nothing to do.”

Yunmen said, “Your body is no bigger than a coconut, yet you open such a huge mouth!”

Dongshan then took his leave.

The place of his awakening at that time was immediate and outstanding; how could it be compared with petty views?

Later, when he entered the world and responded to the occasion with the words “three pounds of hemp,” monasteries everywhere understood it merely as an answer to a question about Buddha. “What is Buddha?” “A bamboo-ribbed whip beneath Mount Zhanglin”; “The fire god comes seeking fire”—they kept making interpretations centered on “Buddha.” Xuedou said: If you understand it as “meeting the matter” and “responding to the occasion,” it is exactly like “a lame turtle and a blind tortoise entering an empty valley.” In what year and month will you find your way out?

“Flowers in clusters, brocade in clusters”—

This concerns a monk who asked Chan Master Zhimeng, “What was Dongshan’s intent in saying ‘three pounds of hemp’?”

Zhimeng said, “Flowers in clusters, brocade in clusters. Do you understand?”

The monk said, “I do not understand.”

Zhimeng said, “Bamboo in the south, wood in the north.”

The monk returned and reported this to Dongshan.

Dongshan said, “I will not explain it for you; I will explain it for the assembly.”

He then ascended the hall and said, “Words do not meet the matter; speech does not fit the occasion. Those who take up the words perish; those who linger over the phrases are deluded.”

Xuedou shattered people’s sentimental views, deliberately drawing these lines together into a single verse. Yet later people gave rise to further sentimental views, saying: “Hemp is mourning garb, and bamboo is a mourning staff; that is why he said, ‘Bamboo in the south, wood in the north.’ ‘Flowers in clusters, brocade in clusters’ refers to the floral designs painted beside a coffin.”

Have they no shame? They do not realize that “bamboo in the south, wood in the north” and “three pounds of hemp” are simply like saying “father” and “dad.” When the ancients gave a turning word, its meaning was certainly not like this. Just as Xuedou said, “The golden crow races on; the jade rabbit speeds on,” it is inherently equally vast and open. It is only that gold and brass are hard to distinguish, and fish and Lu are easily confused.

With the earnest heart of an old woman, Xuedou wished to break through your sense of doubt, so he further cites a dead fellow: “This brings to mind Magistrate Lu of Changqing, who knew to laugh and not to weep.” As for his verse, the first three lines alone have already completed it all at once. Let me ask you: it is altogether only “three pounds of hemp,” yet Xuedou spins out so many entanglements. It is simply because his compassion is excessive that he does so.

Minister Lu Geng, while serving as Surveillance Commissioner of Xuanzhou, studied under Nanquan. Nanquan later passed away.

Lu Geng heard the news of his death, entered the monastery to make an offering, and simply laughed aloud.

The monastery steward said, “The late master and Your Excellency had the relationship of teacher and student. Why do you not weep?”

The magistrate said, “If you can say it, then I will weep.” The steward had no reply.

Lu Geng then wept loudly, saying, “O blue heavens, O blue heavens! The late master has long since departed!”

Later, when Changqing heard of this, he said, “The magistrate should have laughed, not wept.”

Xuedou borrows this meaning to state the general point. If you make such sentimental interpretations, then it is just right to laugh, not to weep.

So it is, but at the very end there is one word that is somewhat awkward and unruly. He further says, “Ah!” Can Xuedou himself wash it clean away?

The Blue Cliff Record: Seven Voices

Yongshou Tongzi : I do not understand. I will ask Teacher Qi to offer some guidance after he returns.

LVM : Ha ha! Not understanding is the most intimate.

Xinming : “The shadow of the golden hammer moves; the light of the precious sword is cold. When it comes straight down, look quickly with open eyes.” Do you know why the title uses the word “thrown in”? Shh—

LVM : Because of “A board-carrying fellow selling cheap, with three pounds of hemp thrown in to make weight.” To throw something in with the measure is now called giving it away as part of a package deal.

Shancai : Ha ha—guest seizes the host; host enters the guest. Who can raise up the three pounds of hemp?

LVM : ^o^

Xinming : If there is giving, there is receiving; receive as much as is given.

Chan Diy i : Heh heh, sometimes one must take a walk as well. Very few Chan practitioners in the world offer a turning word from here—“Where have you recently come from? Where did you spend the summer retreat? When did you leave there?”

Xinming ：Please, Chan brother, offer a turning word.

Chan Diy i ：I cannot offer one. I have not gone anywhere lately, and I do not know where that Zha Ferry is.

Shancai ：A foolish fellow drowned on the great open road to Yang Pass~

[Thirteen] Baling's Silver Bowl Filled With Snow

[13] Baling: Snow in a Silver Bowl

Pointer: Clouds congeal over the great wilderness; throughout the entire realm, nothing is concealed. Snow covers the reed blossoms; it is hard to distinguish their traces. In coldness, it is cold as ice and snow; in subtlety, it is fine as grains of rice. In its profundity, even the Buddha-eye cannot peer into it; in its intimacy, Māras and non-Buddhists cannot fathom it. Let us leave aside raising one and illuminating three. How would you speak of that which cuts off the tongues of everyone under heaven? Tell me: whose affair is this? Let us examine it.

[13] Case:

A monk asked Baling, "What is the Deva school?" [A white horse enters the reed blossoms. What do you say? A dot.]

Baling said, "Snow in a silver bowl." [It blocks your throat. Shattered into seven or eight pieces.]

Many people misunderstand this case, saying, "This is the school of non-Buddhists." What has that to do with it? The fifteenth patriarch, the Venerable Deva, was also one among the non-Buddhists. When he saw the fourteenth patriarch, the Venerable Nāgārjuna, cast a needle into a bowl, Nāgārjuna recognized him as a great vessel, transmitted to him the Buddha-mind school, and he succeeded as the fifteenth patriarch.

The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra says, "The Buddha's words: mind is the principle; no-gate is the Dharma gate." Mazu said, "Whatever involves words and phrases is the Deva school." This alone is taken as primary. You are all guests at the gate of the patch-robed monks—have you ever investigated the Deva school? If you have investigated it, the ninety-six kinds of non-Buddhist paths in India will all be subdued by you at once. If you have not investigated it, you cannot avoid putting your robe on backwards and going out. Tell me, how is this? If you say words and phrases are it, that has no connection; if you say words and phrases are not it, that also has no connection. Tell me, where is Chan Master Ma's intent?

Later, Yunmen said, "Chan Master Ma spoke well, but no one asked him." A monk then asked, "What is the Deva school?" Yunmen said, "Among the ninety-six kinds, you are the lowest kind."

Long ago, a monk took leave of Dazui. Dazui asked, "Where are you going?" The monk said, "I am going to pay homage to Samantabhadra." Dazui raised his whisk and said, "Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are both right here." The monk drew a circle, held it up on his hand to present to the master, and then tossed it behind his back. Dazui said, "Attendant, bring a packet of tea for this monk."

Yunmen, offering an alternative response, said, "In India, they cut off heads and arms; here, you must carry it out yourself." He also said, "The red banner is in my hand."

In Indian debates, the victor held a red banner in hand. The defeated party wore its robe backwards and entered and departed through a side gate. To hold a debate in India, one had first to receive a royal edict; then, in a great monastery, bells were rung and drums beaten before the debate began. At that time, non-Buddhists sealed off the bells and drums in the monastic temples and subjected them to suppression.

At that time, the Venerable Kāṇadeva, knowing that the Buddhadharma was in difficulty, employed his spiritual powers, ascended a tower, and struck the bell, intending to expel the non-Buddhists. The non-Buddhists then asked, "Who is ringing the bell above the tower?" Deva said, "Heaven." The non-Buddhists said, "Who is heaven?" Deva said, "I." The non-Buddhists said, "Who am I?" Deva said, "I am you."

The non-Buddhists said, "Who are you?" Deva said, "You are a dog." The non-Buddhists said, "Who is a dog?" Deva said, "A dog is you." This went back and forth seven times. The non-Buddhists knew that they had been defeated in argument and conceded the point, whereupon they opened the gate themselves. Deva then came down from the tower holding the red banner.

The non-Buddhists said, "Why do you not go behind?" Deva said, "Why do you not go ahead?" The non-Buddhists said, "You are a lowly person." Deva said, "You are a worthy person." Thus they continued to exchange questions and answers. Deva refuted them with unhindered eloquence, and they consequently submitted. At that time, the Venerable Deva held the red banner, and those defeated in argument stood beneath it. The non-Buddhists all wished to cut off their heads to apologize for their errors, but Deva stopped them and merely transformed them by having them shave their heads and enter the Way. Thus the Deva school flourished greatly. Xuedou later used this story in composing his verse.

Among the assembly, Baling was called Jian Many-Mouth. He would travel on foot, constantly mending his sitting mat. He thoroughly realized the great matter at Yunmen's feet, and thus was extraordinary. Later, when he began teaching, he became Yunmen's Dharma heir. He first resided at Baling in Yuezhou, but did not compose a Dharma-heir letter. He merely presented Yunmen with three turning phrases: "What is the Way? A clear-eyed person falls into a well." "What is the sword that blows hair? Coral branches prop up the moon."

"What is the Deva school? Snow in a silver bowl." Yunmen said, "On the anniversary of this old monk's death, it will be enough to raise these three turning phrases to repay his kindness." Thereafter, no memorial feast was held on the anniversary of Yunmen's death. In accordance with Yunmen's instruction, only these three turning phrases were raised. Yet in answering this saying, teachers everywhere mostly answer in terms of particular matters. Only Baling spoke in this way; it is supremely solitary and lofty, and not easy to comprehend.

Nor does it reveal the slightest edge. Attacked from all eight directions, every move contains both a path of escape and a device for trapping tigers, free from human opinions and views. If one speaks of the matter of a single uniform reality, then here one must personally penetrate and be free; yet one must also encounter the right person. Therefore it is said:

Daowu dances his ceremonial tablet, and one of like attainment meets him; Shigong draws his bow, and one who can act understands.

If this principle has not been sealed and transmitted by a master, with what Dharma could one presume to discuss the profound?

Xuedou then raised it up for people; thus he composed this verse:

Old Master of Xinkai, [A thousand soldiers are easily found; one general is hard to seek. Master Many-Mouth.]

Truly distinct! [What is truly distinct? The one move atop the crown of the head. Have you even dreamed of it?]

He could say, "Snow in a silver bowl." [A shrimp cannot jump out of the dipper. A double case. How many people have lost their lives here!]

The ninety-six should know for themselves. [You yourself are included among them. Do you know, Ācārya? Buried together in one pit.]

Not knowing, they instead ask the moon at the edge of the sky. [Far, far away! Carry it out yourself. Gazing into emptiness, they make their appeal.]

The Deva school, the Deva school—[What do you say? This mountain monk is here. His whole mouth holds frost.]

Beneath the red banner, a clear wind arises. [Shattered into a hundred pieces. Striking the cloud, he says: "You have already been hit. Go cut off heads and arms, then I will tell you a phrase."]

"Old Xinkai": Xinkai was the name of a monastery. "Truly distinct": Xuedou praises him as having attained a share of it. Tell me, where is the point of distinction? All language is Buddhadharma. If this mountain monk speaks in this way, what sense does it make? Xuedou slightly reveals a bit of his intent. After saying only, "Truly distinct," he opens it up with: "He could say, 'Snow in a silver bowl.'" He further adds a footnote for you: the ninety-six should know that they have been defeated. If you do not know, ask the moon at the edge of the sky. (An ancient once answered this saying: "Ask the moon at the edge of the sky.")

After Xuedou had composed the verse, there still had to be a living path, a line like a lion turning and pouncing back. He raises it again and tells you: "The Deva school, the Deva school—beneath the red banner, a clear wind arises." Baling said, "Snow in a silver bowl." Why, then, did Xuedou say, "Beneath the red banner, a clear wind arises"? Do you know that Xuedou kills people without using a knife?

[Chan Ground Robe]: In the Buddha's time, there was Deva, who stood up to him as an equal. No need for deliberation! Snow in a silver bowl! Ha!

[Huo Xini]: Why does "snow in a silver bowl" also come down to "beneath the red banner, a clear wind arises"?

[Sleep-Talk]: Hehe, another gust of wind has arrived.

[Sudhana]: Clouds disperse and radiant mists shine; wind and thunder are already present.

[Huo Xini]: Thunder and wind press against one another; radiance and mist, clouds and clearing.

[lvm]: Then let it be, "Beneath the green banner, a green wind arises."

[Huo Xini]: The green wind rises, and the clouds fly aloft; amid the rolling red dust lies my homeland.

[14] Yunmen's Teaching on the One

[14] Yunmen's "A Saying in Response to the One"

[14] Citation:

A monk asked Yunmen, "What is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime? [Yet even to this day you do not understand. The lecturer does not comprehend. You are in a nest of entangling vines.]"

Yunmen said, "A saying in response to the One. [A holeless iron hammer. Shattered into seven pieces and eight fragments. A mouse gnawing ginger.]"

Those in the Chan tradition who wish to know the meaning of Buddha-nature should contemplate the causes and conditions of the time. This is called a special transmission outside the teachings: directly transmitting the mind-seal, pointing straight to the human mind, seeing one's nature, and attaining Buddhahood. The old man Śākyamuni lived in the world for forty-nine years and held three hundred and sixty assemblies, expounding sudden and gradual teachings, provisional and definitive teachings; these are called the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime. This monk brought it up and asked, "What is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime?" Why did Yunmen not give him a profuse explanation, but instead tell him simply, "A saying in response to the One"?"

In an ordinary single statement, Yunmen always contained three phrases: "the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that follows the waves, and the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams." Letting go and drawing back, his words were naturally extraordinary, like cutting nails or severing iron. They left people unable to fathom their meaning through conceptual interpretation and conjecture. The entire Buddhist canon requires only these three words. In all directions, there is nowhere for you to pry and chisel.

Many people misunderstand and say that it means he spoke in response to the appropriateness of a particular occasion. Others say that the myriad forms and all phenomena are all stamped by a single dharma, and this is called "a saying in response to the One." Still others say that it merely speaks of "that" one dharma. What connection does any of this have? Not only do they fail to understand; they enter hell like an arrow! They do not realize that this was not the meaning of the ancients. Therefore it is said: "Powdering one's bones and shattering one's body would not suffice to repay it; when one sentence is clearly understood, one transcends hundreds of millions." It is indeed extraordinary.

What is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime? One need only say, "A saying in response to the One." If you recognize it directly, you may return home and sit securely. If you do not recognize it, then listen quietly to the judgment:

A saying in response to the One—[alive and vital. The words still ring in one's ears. It is indeed lofty and solitary.]

Too solitary and absolute—[onlookers have a part in it. It is more than a cliff standing a thousand fathoms high. How could there be such a thing?]

Drive the wedge again into the holeless iron hammer. [This is to misunderstand names and words. Old Yunmen, too, is washing clods of earth in mud; Xuedou, too, is applying adornment.]

Laughing beneath the Jambu tree. [Throughout the four continents and eight counties, not a single worthy person has been seen. Only those on the same path know. How many can know?]

Last night, the horn of the black dragon was wrenched off. [It is not merely that the black dragon's horn was broken. Who has seen it? Is there any verification? Silence.]

Extraordinary! Extraordinary! [There is a share in the praise. It takes Xuedou to manage it. What other place is there?]

The old man of Shaoyang obtained one stake. [Where is it? And is there another stake? To whom is it entrusted? Even Deshan and Linji would have to retreat three thousand miles—what of that one stake? Then strike!]

"A saying in response to the One—too solitary and absolute": Xuedou cannot praise it enough. This utterance stands alone, free and perilous, illuminating those before it and cutting off those after it, like a ten-thousand-fathom precipice. It is also like an army formation of a million troops, with no place for you to enter. It is simply too solitary and perilous. An ancient said, "If you wish to attain intimacy, do not bring questions to ask. The question lies in the answer, and the answer lies at the beginning of the question." It is utterly lofty and solitary. But tell me, where is the place of loftiness and solitude? No one in the world can do anything with it! This monk, too, was a capable fellow, and so he asked in this way. Yunmen's answer was likewise like driving a wedge again into a holeless iron hammer.

Xuedou's literary phrasing is most skillful: "Laughing beneath the Jambu tree." The Sūtra on the Arising of the World says that on the southern side of Mount Sumeru is a vaiḍūrya tree, whose reflection makes all Jambudvīpa appear blue-green. This continent takes its name from that great tree and is called Jambudvīpa. The tree is seven thousand yojanas in height and breadth; beneath it is a mass of Jambu gold, twenty yojanas high. Because this gold arises from beneath the tree, it is called the Jambu tree.

Thus Xuedou himself says that he is laughing beneath the Jambu tree. But tell me, what is he laughing at? He is laughing that "last night, the horn of the black dragon was wrenched off." One can only look up in admiration and praise Yunmen as having a share in it. Yunmen said, "A saying in response to the One." What is it like? It is like wrenching off one horn of a black dragon. At this point, if one had not attained such a thing, how could one speak in such a way?

Xuedou completed his verse in one sweep, but at the end he said, "Extraordinary! Extraordinary! The old man of Shaoyang obtained one stake." Why did he not say that he obtained it all? Why only one stake? Tell me, where is that one stake? It penetrates right through the second person!

A Babel of Voices

I.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: A kindergarten question. What I mean is: does "a saying in response to the One" amount to a blow on the head with a club, killing off all discriminating consciousness, or does it have another implication? The three words "a saying in response to the One" seem to have no literal meaning. The monk asked in this way, Yunmen answered in that way, and Xuedou went on at great length praising him. Was he praising his teacher's lofty and unfathomable house style, beyond the reach of gods and ghosts? I have put on my helmet and am ready to receive a blow!

[LVM]: "A saying in response to the One" means no need for a club and no need to exert yourself—it is enough to smash your helmet.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: May I ask how the teacher obtained this child's helmet?

[LVM]: Why put a head on top of your head?!

II.

[Xinming]: "Last night, the horn of the black dragon was wrenched off." [It is not merely that the black dragon's horn was broken. Who has seen it? Is there any verification? Silence.] What does "last night, the horn of the black dragon was wrenched off" symbolize?

[LVM]: Nor is it merely pulling out a tiger's fang.

[Xinming]: What is the unstated meaning of "not merely that the black dragon's horn was broken"? And what is meant by "silence"? Hanging one's mouth on the wall?

[LVM]: It does not fall into language and its radiance swallows the myriad forms—how could the single word "silence" possibly suffice!

[Xinming]: Ah, not speaking will not do, and speaking will not do either. It is truly hard to be a person! If someone asks me in the future, "What did you learn from Teacher LVM?" how should I answer?

[LVM]: Just say: "I have never seen LVM."

III.

[Kangkang]: May I ask Teacher LVM what "Extraordinary! Extraordinary! The old man of Shaoyang obtained one stake" means?

[LVM]: This is Chan Master Xuedou praising his own great-grandteacher. Look at Xuedou's lineage: Yunmen Wenyan　Xianglin Chengyuan　Zhimen Guangzuo　Xuedou Chongxian. The old man of Shaoyang is Yunmen.

The question, "What is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime?" does not lack possible answers. For example, as Yuanwu cites: "The old man Śākyamuni lived in the world for forty-nine years and held three hundred and sixty assemblies, expounding sudden and gradual teachings, provisional and definitive teachings; these are called the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime." "Extraordinary" means distinct from other answers.

Yunmen's reply is crisp and decisive; one statement contains three phrases: the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that follows the waves, and the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams. Hence Xuedou greatly praises it, and "obtained one stake" is praise. Yet why did he not say that he obtained it all? Why only one stake? Tell me, where is that one stake?

[Kangkang]: So "obtained one stake" is praise. I had thought it meant that the old man of Shaoyang—whom I did not know referred to Yunmen—had recognized something and become attached to it, and was therefore tethered to a stake like a donkey. The ancients said, "One fitting word, and for ten thousand generations a stake for tethering donkeys." Is this that stake?

[LVM]: It merely praises Yunmen, but it is not known whether the questioner could free himself from this stake. After Yunmen said, "A saying in response to the One," the monk was not seen to speak. Whether it could tether him is difficult to say.

[Kangkang]: Then, if it is praise, this stake is still tethered to the disciple's typing fingers.

[LVM]: Ha ha! Yet it cannot tether you.

[Kangkang]: But what does Xuedou's "It penetrates right through the second person" mean?

[LVM]: "It penetrates right through the second person" was said by Foguo. For those listening to him explain The Blue Cliff Record, if they did not understand, they became the second person nailed to the stake. Ah! There are still plenty of third, fourth, and further persons.

[Kangkang]: Also, among the three phrases, does the second—the phrase that follows the waves—mean that Yunmen responds to the student's point of attachment in order to free the student from attachment? "Following the waves" means responding to the student's point of attachment; "pursuing the waves" means removing that attachment. In short, is it praising Yunmen for stirring up waves without creating breakers?

[LVM]: That makes sense! That makes sense! Yet it may also be viewed this way:

Response—the phrase that follows the waves.

One—the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth.

Saying—the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams.

IV.

[Kangkang]: May I ask Teacher LVM what "Extraordinary! Extraordinary! The old man of Shaoyang obtained one stake" means?

[LVM]: This is Chan Master Xuedou praising his own great-grandteacher. Look at Xuedou's lineage: Yunmen Wenyan　Xianglin Chengyuan　Zhimen Guangzuo　Xuedou Chongxian. The old man of Shaoyang is Yunmen.

The question, "What is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime?" does not lack possible answers. For example, as Yuanwu cites: "The old man Śākyamuni lived in the world for forty-nine years and held three hundred and sixty assemblies, expounding sudden and gradual teachings, provisional and definitive teachings; these are called the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime." "Extraordinary" means distinct from other answers.

Yunmen's reply is crisp and decisive; one statement contains three phrases: the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that follows the waves, and the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams. Hence Xuedou greatly praises it, and "obtained one stake" is praise. Yet why did he not say that he obtained it all? Why only one stake? Tell me, where is that one stake?

[Huoxini]: One stake is already superfluous; if one said "obtained it all," it would be worth even less than a penny. Where is that one stake? Lighting a lamp in broad daylight.

[LVM]: Ha ha! If you cannot say it, how many pennies is it worth? If night comes and people may not be able to see, then one has no choice but to light a lamp—sitting amid the grass atop a solitary peak.

[Huoxini]: The teacher asks how much it is worth; on the mountain the grass grows ever deeper. This disciple has nothing with which to repay him, and respectfully offers a cup of tea.

LVM : Have tea, by all means, but we must get to the bottom of it.

Mud-Muddler : If you cannot speak of it, you do not even get any tea.

[15] Yunmen's Inverted One Speaks of Chan

The introductory instruction says: "The sword that kills and the sword that gives life were the standards of old and are the pivotal essentials of today. Tell me, which is now the sword that kills and the sword that gives life? Try to bring it up and see."

The introductory instruction says: "The sword that kills and the sword that gives life were the standards of old and are the pivotal essentials of today. Tell me, which is now the sword that kills and the sword that gives life? Try to bring it up and see."

[Case 15] Citation: A monk asked Yunmen, "What is it when it is neither the present occasion nor the present matter?" [Why are you leaping about? Back off three thousand miles!] Yunmen said, "Say it upside down." [A direct statement? An oblique knock? He seals people's mouths. Nor may he be let off. He lies stretched out amid wild grass.]

This monk was indeed no ordinary hand, able to ask such a question. In the opening, this is called requesting instruction; here, it is a question posed to present one's understanding, also called a question that conceals its edge. Had it not been Yunmen, no one could have dealt with him. Yunmen had such methods at hand, and since the monk had brought his question, he had no

choice but to respond. Why? A master of the school is like a bright mirror set upon its stand: when a Hu comes, it reflects a Hu; when a Han comes, it reflects a Han.

An ancient said, “If you want intimacy, do not come asking with a question.” Why? The question is within the answer, and the answer is within the question. Since ancient times, what dharma have all the sages ever given to anyone? Where is there any Chan Way to give you? If you do not create the karma of hell, you will naturally not incur the result of hell. If you do not create the causes of heaven, you will naturally not receive the result of heaven. All karmic causes and conditions are created and undergone by oneself.

The ancients clearly told you: when speaking of this matter, it does not lie in words and phrases. If it did lie in words and phrases, then would the three vehicles and twelve divisions of the teachings lack words and phrases? What need would there have been for the patriarch to come from the West? Earlier it said, “Say one in response”; here it says, “Say one upside down.” They differ by only one word, so why is there such a vast difference between them? Tell me, where is the incongruity? Thus it is said: dharma proceeds in accordance with dharma. The Dharma banner is raised wherever one is.

“What is it when it is neither the present occasion nor the present matter?” It only takes a point straight at the head. If one is a person with the eye, not even a single point can deceive him. Since there is an incongruity in the question, the answer must be just so. In fact, Yunmen rode a thief’s horse to pursue a thief. Some mistakenly explain it by saying that what was originally the host’s statement became the guest’s statement; therefore Yunmen said, “Say it upside down.” What urgency is there in that?

This monk asked well: “What is it when it is neither the present occasion nor the present matter?” Why did Yunmen not answer him with some other words, but merely say, “Say it upside down”? Yunmen shattered him all at once. Yet here, saying “Say it upside down” is also like cutting a sore into healthy flesh. Why? Once the traces of words arise, white clouds stretch ten thousand miles; this is where divergent paths arise. Suppose for a moment that there were no words or phrases: when have the dew-post and lantern ever had words or phrases? Do you understand? If not, then at this point you must still turn about; only then will you know where you have landed.

“Say it upside down.” [Unable to let go. Split into seven pieces and eight fragments. South of Mount Sumeru. Roll up all five thousand forty-eight.]

“Divide off one section.” [On your side? On my side? Half in Henan, half in Hebei. Taking each other by the hand, they walk together.]

“To share birth and share death is the formula for you.” [Washing clods of earth in mud. What is the reason for it? I cannot let you go.]

“The eighty-four thousand are not phoenix feathers.” [The feathers resemble one another. It greatly diminishes one’s radiance. Lacquer buckets are as numerous as hemp and millet.]

“Thirty-three people enter the tiger’s den.” [Only I can know it. One general is hard to find. A whole troop of fox spirits.]

“Different! Different!” [What other place is there? Stop showing off. Leap about as much as you please.]

“Bustling and hurried—the moon in the water.” [In broad daylight beneath a clear sky, they lose their heads and recognize shadows. Why make such a rush?]

Xuedou, too, was no ordinary hand. With one phrase, he immediately said, “Divide off one section,” plainly letting him off one move and taking him by the hand to walk together. He has always had methods of release, daring to enter mud and water with you, to share death and share birth. Therefore Xuedou composed his verse in this way. In truth, it is nothing else: he only wishes to free you from adhesions and bonds, to pull out nails and remove wedges. Yet now, because of words and phrases, discriminating interpretations arise instead.

Consider Yantou’s saying: “Though Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we do not die on the same branch.” Unless one is a person of complete responsiveness, thoroughly liberated and greatly at ease, how could one share death and share birth with you? Why? Because such a person has none of the many leaks of gain and loss, right and wrong. Thus Dongshan said: “If you wish to distinguish the genuine from the false among those who have gone beyond, there are three kinds of leakage: leakage of feeling, leakage of views, and leakage of language.”

With leakage of views, responsive activity does not leave its position and falls into the poisonous sea. With leakage of feeling, wisdom is always turning toward or away, and one’s insight becomes partial and withered. With leakage of language, the wondrous essence loses its source, and responsive activity is obscured as to beginning and end. One should know these three leakages oneself. There are also the three mysteries: mystery within the essence, mystery within phrases, and mystery within mystery. When the ancients reached this realm, their complete responsiveness and great function enabled them, when encountering birth, to share birth with you and, when encountering death, to share death with you. They could cast themselves into a tiger’s mouth and freely deploy hands and feet. Across a thousand or ten thousand miles, you may carry it away as you please. Why? Only one who has attained this move can do so.

“The eighty-four thousand are not phoenix feathers” means that the eighty-four thousand members of the assembly at Vulture Peak were not phoenix feathers. The History of the Southern Dynasties says that Xie Chaozong of Yangxia in Chen Commandery, son of Xie Feng, lived in the Song dynasty. He was broadly learned, outstanding in literary talent, without equal at court, and unrivaled in his age. Skilled in composition, he served as a court attendant in a prince’s residence. When Yin Shuyi, the prince’s mother, died, Chaozong submitted an elegiac memorial. Emperor Wu, seeing his writing, praised it highly and said, “Chaozong truly has phoenix feathers.” An old poem says:

After court, fragrant smoke fills his sleeves; when a poem is completed, pearls and jade issue from his brush.

If you wish to know the beauty of a family that has inherited the art of the silken decree, there are phoenix feathers by the pond today.

Formerly, at the assembly on Vulture Peak, the fourfold community gathered. The World-Honored One held up a flower; only Kāśyapa alone broke into a smile, while the rest did not know its essential purport. This is why Xuedou said, “The eighty-four thousand are not phoenix feathers; thirty-three people enter the tiger’s den.” Ānanda asked Kāśyapa, “Apart from the World-Honored One’s transmission of the golden-brocade robe, what other dharma was transmitted?” Kāśyapa called to Ānanda, and Ānanda answered.

Kāśyapa said, “Knock down the flagpole before the gate.” Ānanda thereupon awakened. Thereafter, patriarch after patriarch transmitted it; in India and in this land, thirty-three people had the methods to enter the tiger’s den. An ancient said, “Without entering the tiger’s den, how can one catch the tiger cub?” Yunmen was such a person, well able to share death and share birth.

A master who works with people must reach this point. Seated upon the crooked-legged wooden chair, he must be willing to let you break through and permit you to stroke the tiger’s whiskers; yet you must also reach such a state. With the seven things at hand, one can share birth and share death. He suppresses those who are high, raises up those who are low, and gives to those who lack. Those on solitary peaks are rescued and sent into wild grass; those fallen into wild grass are rescued and placed upon solitary peaks. If you enter a cauldron of boiling water or a furnace of burning coals, I too enter a cauldron of boiling water or a furnace of burning coals. In truth, it is nothing else: he only wishes to free you from adhesions and bonds, to pull out nails and remove wedges, to take off the halter and unload the burden from the horns. Chan Master Pingtian had an excellent verse:

The numinous light is never obscured; its noble model endures through ten thousand ages.

Having entered this gate, do not retain conceptual understanding.

Different, different—bustling and hurried, the moon in the water. There is indeed a road of emergence and also a means of giving life. Having brought this up, Xuedou instructs people to awaken for themselves to the living potential and not follow his words and phrases. If you follow him, you are precisely bustling and hurried—the moon in the water. How can you now proceed securely? Let go of one move.

u A Babel of Voices

I.

[Kangkang]: A question: “If not, then at this point you must still turn about; only then will you know where you have landed.” What does “turn about” mean?

[LVM]: “Turning about” means not cutting a sore into healthy flesh.

[Kangkang]: Does “turning about” also carry the sense of “flowing water does not rot”?

[LVM]: It inherently contains immeasurable meanings, so no fixed interpretation should be made.

II.

[Youth Yongshou]: What does “leaping about” mean?

[LVM]: Nowadays it is called “scurrying and leaping about.”

[Youth Yongshou]: What does “born on the same branch but not dying on the same branch” mean?

[LVM]: For example, two apples grow on one branch—this is being born on the same branch. One is picked and offered to the Buddha, while the other is eaten away by insects—this is not dying on the same branch.

[Youth Yongshou]: What do “a direct statement? an oblique knock? sealing people’s mouths” mean?

[LVM]: Kuan has the sense of “knocking.” “A direct statement? An oblique knock?”—does “Say it upside down” lay it out plainly, or does it strike indirectly from the side? “Sealing people’s mouths” means covering people’s mouths so that they cannot speak.

[Youth Yongshou]: I think that the sword that kills and the sword that gives life refer to methods for liberating sentient beings?

[LVM]: The sword that kills and the sword that gives life are methods in which there are no sentient beings to liberate.

[Youth Yongshou]: What does “If you want intimacy, do not come asking with a question” mean?

[LVM]: Jiang means “to take.” Bringing a question to ask is not intimate. What comes from the depths of one’s heart is intimate.

III.

[Dingling]: To what kind of potential do Yunmen’s “Say one in response” and “Say one upside down” respectively respond?

[LVM]: Both respond to a “how” potential. One is the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime—teaching; the other is “neither the present occasion nor the present matter”—Chan.

[Dingling]: Why did Yantou say, “Though Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we do not die on the same branch”?

[LVM]: “Though we were born on the same branch” means that although we both came from Deshan’s lineage, “we do not die on the same branch” means that our methods of guiding people are not the same.

[Dingling]: If “If you want intimacy, do not come asking with a question,” does that mean one can only hang one’s mouth on the wall?

[LVM]: Not coming to ask with a question does not necessarily mean hanging one’s mouth on the wall.

[Dingling]: But whenever there is speech, it is all frivolous discourse. What should one do?

[LVM]: At the very time of speaking, when has one ever opened one’s mouth?

[Dingling]: Does “not partial and withered” mean that neither truth nor falsity is established?

[LVM]: Partial truth and partial falsity are both partial and withered.

Dingling : To fall neither into language nor thought? (Forgive me, but I fall into both language and the Middle Way.)

LVM : Clinging to language and thought is one-sided and barren. Rejecting language and thought is likewise one-sided and barren.

Dingling : When hungry, eat; when sleepy, sleep?

LVM : Not eating when hungry and not sleeping when sleepy is one-sided and barren. Having a hundred demands while eating and a thousand calculations while sleeping is likewise one-sided and barren.

[16] Did Jingqing Come Alive?

[Case 16] Jingqing: “Is He Alive Yet?”

Pointer: The Way has no crosswise bypaths; one who stands still is isolated and endangered. The Dharma is not within seeing or hearing; it lies far beyond words and thought. If you can pass through the forest of thorns and untie the bonds of Buddhas and patriarchs, gaining a secure and intimate field, the devas will have no way to scatter flowers before you, and non-Buddhists will have no gate through which to spy upon you. All day you act, yet have never acted; all day you speak, yet have never spoken. Then you may move freely and at ease, unfold the mechanism of chirping and pecking, and wield the sword that kills and gives life. Even if you are thus, you must further know that, within the gate of transformative teaching, one hand raises while one hand presses down—yet even this still falls short. But in the matter of one’s original endowment, there is no connection at all. What is the matter of one’s original endowment? Let us cite it and see.

[Case 16] The Case:

A monk asked Jingqing, “I chirp; please, Master, peck.” [Why raise waves where there is no wind? What use are all your views?]

Jingqing said, “Are you alive yet?” [Thwack! Buying a hat by judging the head. Following an error with another error. It cannot always be like this.]

The monk said, “If I were not alive, people would mock me.” [They drag one another in. Propping up heaven and supporting earth. A fellow under the eaves.]

Jingqing said, “You too are a fellow in the weeds.” [Just so. He admits it himself. Letting him off is not permissible.]

Jingqing was a Dharma heir of Xuefeng and a contemporary of Benren, Xuansha, Shushan, and Taiyuan Fu. When he first met Xuefeng and attained the essential point, he often instructed later students through the mechanism of chirping and pecking, skillfully teaching the Dharma in response to their capacities. In addressing the assembly, he said: “Those who travel on

pilgrimage must possess the eye of chirping and pecking occurring simultaneously, and they must employ chirping and pecking simultaneously. Only then can they be called patch-robed monks."

"When the mother wishes to peck, the chick cannot but chirp; when the chick wishes to chirp, the mother cannot but peck." A monk then came forward and asked, "When the mother pecks and the chick chirps, what does this accomplish on the Master's side?" Jingqing said, "A fine message." The monk said, "When the chick chirps and the mother pecks, what does this accomplish on the student's side?" Jingqing said, "It reveals a face."

Thus, in Jingqing's school there was the mechanism of chirping and pecking. This monk too was a student of his school and understood its household affairs, so he asked in this way: "I chirp; please, Master, peck." In the Caodong school, this sort of question is called "borrowing an affair to illuminate the potential."

How could it be otherwise? When the chick chirps and the mother pecks, they naturally occur at exactly the same time. Jingqing was also adept; it may be said that fist and kick responded to one another, and mind and eye illuminated one another. So he replied, "Are you alive yet?" The monk too was adept and knew how to adapt to the occasion. In a single utterance there are guest and host, illumination and function, killing and giving life. The monk said, "If I were not alive, people would mock me." Jingqing said, "You too are a fellow in the weeds."

Both alike enter mud and water; Jingqing was not lacking in rough methods. Since this monk knew enough to ask in that way, why did Jingqing nevertheless say, "You too are a fellow in the weeds"? This is why the eye of a true master must be like this—like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning. Whether one can grasp it or not, one cannot avoid losing one's life. If it is like this, then one sees why Jingqing called him "a fellow in the weeds."

Therefore Nanyuan addressed the assembly: "Teachers everywhere possess only the eye of chirping and pecking occurring simultaneously; they do not possess the function of chirping and pecking occurring simultaneously." A monk came forward and asked, "What is the function of chirping and pecking occurring simultaneously?" Nanyuan said, "A true master does not chirp or peck; if there is chirping and pecking at the same time, it is missed." The monk said, "That is still where I have doubt." Nanyuan said, "What is the place of your doubt?" The monk said, "Missed." Nanyuan then struck him.

The monk would not accept this. Nanyuan then drove him out. Later the monk arrived at Yunmen's assembly and brought up this earlier exchange. One monk said, "Nanyuan's staff was broken there!" The monk suddenly had an awakening. Tell me, where is the meaning? The monk then returned to see Nanyuan, but Nanyuan had meanwhile passed away, so he went instead to see Fengxue. As soon as he bowed, Fengxue said, "Are you not the monk who once asked the former master about chirping and pecking occurring simultaneously?" The monk said, "I am."

Fengxue said, "How did you understand it then?" The monk said, "At that time, I was like walking amid lamplight and shadows." Fengxue said, "You understand."

Tell me, what principle is this? The monk merely said, "At that time, I was like walking amid lamplight and shadows." Why then did Fengxue say to him, "You understand"? Later Cuiyan commented: "Although Nanyuan devised strategy within the command tent, the land was vast and the people few; those who knew the tone were scarce."

Fengxue commented: "At that time, as soon as he opened his mouth, Nanyuan should have struck him across the spine. Let us see what he would have done!" If you see this koan, you will see where this monk and Jingqing met. How can you all avoid being called fellows in the weeds? Xuedou therefore appreciated his saying, "a fellow in the weeds," and composed this verse:

The ancient Buddha has a family style, [The words still ring in one's ears. A model for all ages. Do not slander old Śākyamuni so lightly.]

In answering, one suffers censure and stripping away. [Why is your nostril in this mountain monk's hand? Eight blows against thirteen. What will you do? Let one move pass—and then strike!]

Mother and child do not know one another; [If they do not know one another, why is there chirping and pecking? It is natural.]

Who is it that chirps and pecks together? [Shattered into a hundred fragments. The old woman's heart is deeply earnest. Do not mistake it.]

Peck—awakening— [What are you saying? You have fallen into the secondary.]

Still within the shell. [Why not poke your head out?]

Again he suffers a tumble! [Wrong. Strike! Two layers of koans—now three or four layers deep.]

Patch-robed monks everywhere vainly pursue names and forms. [He has been let off already. There is no need to bring it up again. Is there still anything that can be named and described? If it can be named and described, it too is a fellow in the weeds. For a thousand ages, for ten thousand ages, vast darkness. It fills ravines and blocks valleys; no one understands.]

“The ancient Buddha has a family style”—with this one line Xuedou has finished the verse. Whenever one emerges, one cannot come near it at all. If one comes near, one is ten thousand miles away in Yazhou. The moment one emerges, one has fallen into the weeds. Even if one ranged freely in seven directions and eight ways, it would not withstand a single pinch. When Xuedou says, “The ancient Buddha has a family style,” it is not like things are nowadays.

When old Śākyamuni was first born, he pointed one hand to heaven and one hand to earth, looked in the four directions, and said, “Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.” Yunmen said, “Had I seen him then, I would have beaten him to death with one blow and fed him to the dogs, for the sake of peace throughout the world.” Only thus is the response exactly fitting. Therefore, the mechanism of chirping and pecking is entirely the family style of the ancient Buddhas.

One who has penetrated this Way may knock down Yellow Crane Tower with a single fist and kick over Parrot Islet with a single kick. It is like a mass of blazing fire: approach it and your face will be scorched. It is like the great sword Tai’e: raise it and you lose your life. Only one who has completely penetrated and attained great liberation can act in this way. If one is even slightly confused at the source or stuck in words, one certainly cannot utter such words.

“In answering, one suffers censure and stripping away” means that there is one guest and one host, one question and one answer. Within the question and answer there is censure and stripping away; this is called “in answering, one suffers censure and stripping away.” Xuedou deeply understood this matter, and so composed his verse solely upon these two lines.

At the end he merely falls into the weeds, explaining it for you in detail. “Mother and child do not know one another; who is it that chirps and pecks together?” Though the mother pecks, she cannot bring about the chick’s chirping. Though the chick chirps, it cannot bring about the mother’s pecking. Each does not know the other. At the moment of chirping and pecking, who is it that chirps and pecks together? If you understand it in this way, you still cannot get beyond Xuedou’s final line. Why? Have you not seen Xiangyan say: “When the chick chirps, the mother pecks; when the chick awakens, the mother’s shell [is broken].”

“Mother and child both forgotten, their responses to conditions are never mistaken. Those on the same Way sing in harmony; wondrously, the cloud stands alone.” Xuedou cannot avoid falling into the weeds, spinning vines and saying: “Peck”—this one word praises Jingqing’s reply, “Are you alive yet?” “Awakening” praises the monk’s words, “If I were not alive, people would mock me.”

Why then did Xuedou immediately say, “Still within the shell”? Xuedou distinguishes black from white within the spark from a stone and discerns the subtle signs within the flash of lightning. Jingqing said, “You too are a fellow in the weeds.” Xuedou said, “Again he suffers a tumble!” The difficult point lies precisely in Jingqing’s saying, “You too are a fellow in the weeds.” Could this be called “Jingqing replacing another’s eyes”? Is this phrase not “still within the shell”? It has no connection at all! How could it be otherwise? If you understand it, then as you travel everywhere on pilgrimage, you will have a share in repaying the debt of gratitude.

This mountain monk’s speaking in this way also makes him a fellow in the weeds. “Patch-robed monks everywhere vainly pursue names and forms”—who is not one who pursues names and forms? At this point, Xuedou himself cannot escape names and forms, yet he further burdens patch-robed monks everywhere. Tell me, how did Jingqing act on this monk’s behalf? Patch-robed monks everywhere cannot leap out of it.

[Xinming]: I do not understand: “Again he suffers a tumble!” [Wrong. Strike! Two layers of koans—now three or four layers deep.]

[LVM]: zao pu literally means to take a fall. Zhong zao pu means to take a hard fall.

[Xinming]: What does the rest mean?

[LVM]: First tell me what you think the preceding part means.

[Xinming]: My understanding of the verse is:

Originally, the world was peaceful and uneventful. Later, everything became chaotic and tumultuous, with chickens flying and dogs jumping, and there were no more tranquil days. At that time—whoosh!—a Buddha appeared. He spoke in every possible way about the peaceful age, hoping to let everyone return to their former peaceful life. His dutiful descendants also chattered on and exhausted every means, but no one would listen.

A very few individuals—who called themselves disciples of the Buddha—half-believed and half-doubted, wondering: What exactly were those peaceful days of the past like? Then the Buddha and his successors depicted them . . . . . [but these were all blind depictions; was that blueprint really the peaceful age?!]

Seeing these pictures as so solemn and magnificent, some clever disciples said to their teachers, “There are still a few points I do not understand. Could you depict them more vividly?” The teachers then added realistic colors such as gold. [Alas, such disciples may be good, and such teachers may indeed be painstaking and responsive to every request; but have you not heard of “whitewashing peace”?!]

The Buddha and the teachers made their depictions as realistic as photographs, for no purpose other than . . . . . Yet the disciples studied and copied them; the peaceful age thus became ever more remote—

Alas! Whose fault was it—the paintings', the teachers', or the disciples'?

All were at fault!

[LVM]: I recall, in those years, painting from a model—how many times it was red, how many times black. Now I have returned home in old age; why care whether I succeeded back then or not!

[Xinming]: What is a model?

[LVM]: To borrow this verse, "model" refers to what was then understood as "spiritual knowing free of thoughts."

In fact, the spiritual knowing spoken of by the old master, being called free of thoughts, transcends language and thought; it can be known only through realization. No matter from what angle you seek to understand it, so long as it is understanding, it has not transcended thought and cannot be the old master's original intent. What was the old master's original intent? Since it transcends language, I shall not prattle on. Still, the old master rebuked me more than once in those days: "What spiritual knowing or non-spiritual knowing is there?"

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Even now I am still drawing models, indiscriminately daubing black and white. I do not know when I shall return home; why bother whether I attain anything at this very moment? I ask the teacher to guide me across.

[LVM]: Do you still have to live?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: How can I touch the ground with the tips of my toes?

[LVM]: What are your heels for?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: To stand firm!

[LVM]: So you are a clever young lad after all.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Last night, in her inner chamber, a maiden worked at embroidery, stitching a pair of mandarin ducks together upon one pillow. Now she is setting out on the road home—why care whether they will be together another day? Thank you, Teacher.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Ah! All this is merely worldly dry wisdom. Since it concerns birth and death, how can one know whether it is misfortune or blessing? Yet if I do not know how to speak or understand, I go straight to hell. What a sin! What a sin! How could I be a clever young lad? Perhaps I am a seed for hell—I do not know.

(It seems that I have caught a glimpse of something: I know how to apply myself in practice, though not very clearly. In any case, I shall first devote several months to practice: during meditation, I shall concentrate exclusively on maintaining the Six-Syllable Mantra; off the cushion, I shall put into practice what you, Teacher, have taught. Whenever I encounter something I do not understand along the way, I shall carefully consult the old master's writings and seek your instruction.)

[Snow Mountain Youth]: After reading what the teacher posted, I kept wondering, "What is the teacher doing this for?" Later, I finally understood: this, too, is the teacher "stirring up water to trouble the basin," making something out of nothing. It reveals all the more the teacher's painstaking intention.

1. Originally, it was: "When the student peeps, the teacher pecks"—that is, when the student breaks through from within outward, the teacher can respond from without inward. Now that the student does not peep, the teacher, having no alternative, "stirs up water to trouble the basin," making something out of nothing. This accomplishes the same purpose as Huangbo's saying, "You people are all fellows who swallow wine dregs."

2. As far as the words are concerned, they may not seem especially difficult to understand if one reads and reflects more, and consults some books. Yet the ancients plainly told you: when it comes to this matter, it does not lie in words and phrases. If it did lie in words and phrases, would the teachings of the Three Vehicles and twelve divisions lack words and phrases? Why, then, would the patriarch have needed to come from the West? What use is a merely textual understanding? The ancients wanted us to find an entry point through words and phrases. This was Chan Master Xuedou's intent in establishing this koan, and it is also the teacher's intent in bringing it up.

3. Chan koans are inherently profound and far-reaching, and Chan Master Xuedou further removes the fuel from beneath the cauldron, scratching an itch through a boot (because people like us do not know how). Though the scratching may be said to reach the very spot, regrettably we are merely "fellows who swallow wine dregs." For us, it truly is: already infinitely far away, and then separated by ten thousand ranges of mountains.

After reading so much, not only can we not find an entry point, we cannot even raise a worthwhile question. This cannot but be the sorrow of people like us. When the student does not peep, the teacher does not even have a place to set his beak and peck;

this, too, is a sorrow for the teacher. We are even more ashamed before the teacher's wholehearted intention. Enough, enough. I myself am merely a "fellow who swallows wine dregs." I can only lament: Alas! I have no prospect of getting out—how tragic is that!

[LVM]: How could you have no prospect of getting out? There is no need to peck; once you peep, you can come out.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: The teacher has already pecked.

[LVM]: If you did not wish to come out, why would you peep?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: If I did not peep, how would the teacher know that I wished to come out?

[LVM]: Then remain "still in the shell."

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Oh! So this is how "ready to emerge at a call" may be understood.

[17] Xianglin: Long Sitting Becomes Wearisome

[Case 17] Xianglin: Sitting Long Becomes Toilsome

Pointer: Only one who cuts nails and severs iron can be a true master of the lineage; how could one who dodges arrows and fears blades be an adept who moves freely in every direction? At the point where even a needle cannot enter, set that aside for now. But what about when white waves tower to the sky? Let us examine it:

[Case 17] The Case:

A monk asked Xianglin, "What was the Patriarch's meaning in coming from the West?" [Many people are caught in doubt here. Yet this very news still remains.]

Xianglin said, "Sitting long becomes toilsome." [Where fish swim, the water is muddied; where birds fly, feathers fall. Better shut the dog's mouth. The eyes of a true adept. Sawing apart a scale weight.]

Xianglin said, "Sitting long becomes toilsome." Do you understand? If you understand, then upon the tips of the hundred grasses, lay down weapons of war. If you do not understand, listen attentively to the instructions:

In ancient times, wandering monks sought out teachers, made friends and chose companions on the Way, clearing away the grass to observe the prevailing winds. At that time, Yunmen's teaching was flourishing widely in Guangnan. Xianglin made the journey from Shu and, at the same time as Ehu and Jingqing, first called on Baozi in Hunan; only afterward did he arrive at Yunmen's assembly, where he served as an attendant for eighteen years. At Yunmen's side, he received direct instruction and heard it firsthand. Although his awakening came late, he was nevertheless a person of great capacity.

For eighteen years at Yunmen's side, Yunmen would always simply call, "Attendant Yuan!" As soon as he answered, Yunmen would say, "What is it?" At the time, Xianglin also offered sayings, presented his understanding, and exerted all his ingenuity, but in the end he never came into accord with Yunmen. One day he suddenly said, "I understand." Yunmen said, "Why not state it from a higher standpoint?" He then remained another three years. In Yunmen's room, the great opportunities and eloquent responses he set forth were mostly for the sake of Attendant Yuan.

Wherever the occasion arose, Yunmen took it up and put it to work. Whatever word or phrase Yunmen had, he gathered it all into Attendant Yuan. Later Xianglin returned to Shu. He first resided at Crystal Palace in Daojiang and later at Xianglin in Qingcheng. Monk Zuo of Zhimeng, a native of Zhejiang, had heard extensively of Xianglin's teaching activity and specially came into Shu to pay him respect. Zuo was Xuedou's teacher. Although Yunmen received countless people, among those who practiced the Way in his generation, Xianglin's lineage alone flourished most greatly.

After returning to Sichuan, he remained abbot for forty years and did not pass away until he was eighty. He once said, "Only after forty years did I become continuous and undivided." Whenever he instructed the assembly, he said, "In general, when wandering and seeking instruction from knowledgeable teachers, you must travel with eyes open. You must distinguish monastics from laypeople and discern the shallow from the deep. First you must establish your resolve. When old Śākyamuni was at the causal stage, every word he spoke and every thought he gave rise to was an establishing of resolve." Later, a monk asked, "What is the single lamp in the room?" Xianglin said, "Three people attest that a turtle has become a soft-shelled turtle." Another asked, "What is the matter beneath the patched robe?" Xianglin said, "A mountain burns in the twelfth month."

Since ancient times there have been many answers to "the Patriarch's meaning," but this one response of Xianglin's cuts off the tongues of everyone under heaven, leaving you no place to calculate or make up doctrinal explanations. A monk asked, "What was the Patriarch's meaning in coming from the West?" Xianglin said, "Sitting long becomes toilsome." It may be said that the words have no flavor and the sentence has no flavor. Such flavorless talk stops people's mouths, leaving you nowhere to breathe out. If you are to see it, see it directly; if you do not see it, by all means do not make an interpretive understanding of it.

Xianglin had encountered true adepts, and so he possessed Yunmen's methods and the manner of the three phrases. Many people mistakenly understand it by saying, "The Patriarch came from the West and sat facing the wall for nine years; is that not simply sitting long becoming toilsome?" What point is there to grasp there? They do not see the ancient master's place of great freedom! His feet stood firmly on the ground; he had none of these Buddhist views and conceptual explanations, but applied what was needed as the occasion arose. As it is said, Dharma follows the functioning of Dharma; the Dharma banner is raised wherever one is. Taking advantage of the wind to fan the fire, Xuedou points to one or two people from the side:

One, two, ten million people, [Why not act accordingly? What are you doing, numerous as hemp and millet, gathering in crowds and bands?]

Cast off the halter and unload the burden from your horns. [From this day onward, you should be utterly free and unencumbered. But have you rested yet, or not?]

Turn left, turn right, and then follow along, [Still you cannot let go. Shadows upon shadows. Then strike!]

Zihu wanted to strike Liu Tiemo. [This mountain monk breaks his staff and will no longer carry out this command. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. Then strike! Perilous!]

Xuedou goes straight ahead like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning, pressing you until you are made to see. Only if, upon casually hearing it raised, you immediately understand, will it do. Nor would it be amiss if you were descendants of his own house; only then could you speak in this way. If you can immediately understand it in just this way, it is indeed extraordinary. "One, two, ten million people; cast off the halter and unload the burden from your horns."

Be utterly free and unencumbered, unstained by birth and death and unbound by emotional understanding of sages and ordinary beings. Above, there is no reaching upward; below, the self is cut off—just like Xianglin and Xuedou. It is not only ten million people: all the people throughout the great earth are precisely thus. The Buddhas before and the Buddhas after are also precisely thus.

If you make an interpretive understanding within words and phrases, it is like Zihu wanting to strike Liu Tiemo. In fact, as soon as he raised the matter, he struck at the very sound of her reply. Zihu studied with Nanquan, along with Zhaozhou and Cen Dahu. At that time Liu Tiemo had built a hermitage below Weishan, and none from the various quarters could do anything with her. One day Zihu specially went to visit her and said, "Could you be Liu Tiemo?" Tiemo said, "I would not dare."

Zihu said, "Turn left? Turn right?" Tiemo said, "Reverend, do not turn things upside down." Zihu struck at the very sound of her reply. When Xianglin answered this monk's question, "What was the Patriarch's meaning in coming from the West?" he said, "Sitting long becomes toilsome." If you understand it in this way, turning left or right, you follow along. Tell me, when Xuedou composed this verse in this manner, what was his intention? Nothing could be better!

[Xinming]: "What about when white waves tower to the sky?"—"Sitting long becomes toilsome." Is this answer acceptable?

[lvm]: Throw it into the land of the unborn!

[Dingling]: Dead water does not harbor dragons!

[lvm]: There is no place here to establish one's life.

[Dingling]: Where is "here"?

[lvm]: It is the place that [Senior Brother Dingling] cannot forget.

[Dingling]: Then you cannot be without a share in it either!

[lvm]: Forget it. Not a single dharma may be established.

[Dingling]: Yes, this youngster knows his mistake.

[xinming]: Hello, Teacher. Since dead water does not harbor dragons, what about living water?

[lvm]: An ancient Chan master told you long ago: "Though waves arise, they do not make breakers."

[Xiao Dong]: "LVM: Throw it into the land of the unborn!"—Teacher, do you mean that delusion is fundamentally rootless?

[lvm]: What do you mean?

[Xiao Dong]: Delusion is fundamentally rootless.

[lvm]: Then does "truth" have a root?

[Xiao Dong]: Sitting long becomes toilsome.

[lvm]: Three people attest that a turtle has become a soft-shelled turtle.

[Xiao Dong]: Teacher, what does “A mountain burns in the twelfth month” metaphorically mean?—Another asked, “What is the matter beneath the patched robe?” Xianglin said, “A mountain burns in the twelfth month.”

Does it mean that it illumines heaven and earth? Would that not make one “still a fellow below the steps”?

[lvm]: Melt away Xuefeng! It is a metaphor for utterly sweeping away all deluded attachments.

[Xiao Dong]: “LVM: Then does ‘truth’ have a root?”—I still do not understand this. Teacher, please give instruction.

[lvm]: Speaking of truth and speaking of delusion are both expedient teachings that arise in response to the person. At the fundamental level, there is originally neither truth nor delusion.

[Xiao Dong]: I bow in reverence and receive your teaching—every time you speak, you resolve my questions.

[Youth Yongshou]: This old monk took forty years to become continuous and undivided. May I ask: what became one whole?

[lvm]: “Traveling with eyes open” became one whole.

[Youth Yongshou]: When seeking out good spiritual teachers, how does one “travel with eyes open”?

[lvm]: Then you must carry a scale for weighing good spiritual teachers.

[Youth Yongshou]: If one already has a scale, why seek out good spiritual teachers?

[lvm]: To weigh his measure. This is the “student’s eye.”

[xinming]: How does one weigh them?

[lvm]: Xin weighs half a jin; Ming weighs eight liang. Weighing complete. (Note: F’s online name is XINMING.)

[Dingling]: Teacher, what does “three people attest that a turtle has become a soft-shelled turtle” signify?

[lvm]: A monk asked, “What is the single lamp in the room?” Xianglin said, “Three people attest that a turtle has become a soft-shelled turtle.”

“In the room” refers to within the mind. “A single lamp” refers to the lamp of mind. In the words of the old master, the single lamp in the room is “the numinous knowing nature in which not a single thought arises and yet there is clear, distinct awareness.” This nature is originally pure and inherently so, pervades the dharma realm, is innately complete, and is not obtained from outside. Everyone possesses it; no one lacks it. It neither increases in Buddhas nor diminishes in sentient beings.

Yet because sentient beings cling delusively, mistake the head for its reflection, turn away from awakening and unite with sense objects, let the guest usurp the host, and call a servant “master,” they bury this excellent Buddha-nature.

Look at this monk: for no reason at all, he adds a “how.” With this single “how,” he pollutes purity and departs from what is originally so. Under such circumstances, even if he recognizes this “single lamp in the room,” it can only be an approximation—the so-called “vague Buddha-nature and generalized suchness.”

If it were not vague and generalized, it would be bright and distinct, immediately present and complete. Where would there be any room for a “how”? Yet there are many who misunderstand it, and many who attain only an approximation. Therefore Chan Master Xianglin said, “Three people attest that a turtle has become a soft-shelled turtle.”

[Dingling]: I have received your instruction. Thank you, Teacher!

[Shahu]: May I ask, brother, what is it that you are receiving?

[Dingling]: Yet, with regard to deluded mind, do not seek to extinguish it.

[Eighteen] The National Teacher’s Seamless Stupa

[Eighteen] National Teacher Zhong’s Seamless Stupa

Please raise this for inspection:

[Eighteen] Case:

Emperor Suzong [It was actually Daizong; this is an error.] asked National Teacher Zhong, “What will you need after a hundred years?” [Scratching before the itch arises. Sure enough, he starts making a model. At such an advanced age, he still goes about it this way. One must not point east and call it west.]

The National Teacher said, “Make a seamless stupa for this old monk.” [He cannot hold it in.]

The emperor said, “Please give us a model of the Master’s stupa.” [Fine—a jab for him.]

After a long silence, the National Teacher said, “Do you understand?” [Stopping the prisoner so as to increase his wisdom. This leaves him pointing east and gesturing west, taking south for north—his mouth stretched flat like the eaves.]

The emperor said, “I do not understand.” [Fortunately, he does not understand. Had you then given him another jab, making his mouth full of frost, it would have been somewhat better.]

The National Teacher said, “I have a Dharma-heir disciple, Danyuan, who understands this matter. Please issue an edict and ask him.” [Fortunately, he did not overturn the Chan seat. Why not give him his proper fodder? Do not smear the barbarian’s good name. One move has been let pass.]

After the National Teacher passed away, [What a pity. Sure enough, he mistook the fixed compass star.]

the emperor summoned Danyuan by edict and asked, “What does this mean?” [The son carries on his father’s trade. He has fallen into the second and third layers.]

Danyuan said, “South of Xiang, north of Tan—[Again, he cannot hold it in. Why make twos and threes? Half open, half closed.]

(Xuedou added the comment: “One palm does not make a sound.”) [One blind man leading a crowd of blind men. Sure enough, he produces interpretations in accordance with words. Why follow error and pursue evil?]

between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom. [Above is heaven, below is earth—there is no such news. Whose affair is it?]

(Xuedou added the comment: “A mountain-shaped staff.”) [It has been snapped in two. Again, he is making a model.]

Beneath the shadowless tree, they share the same boat; [The Patriarch is lost. What is the venerable one saying?]

(Xuedou added the comment: “The seas are calm and the rivers clear.”) [Vast billows and towering white waves would still be somewhat better.]

in the crystal palace, there is no one who knows.” [Bah!]

(Xuedou added the comment: “It has been picked up.”) [Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. The words still ring in one’s ears.]

Suzong and Daizong were both descendants of Emperor Xuanzong. While crown princes, they often delighted in studying Chan. When a great rebel arose in the realm, Xuanzong fled to Shu. The Tang capital had originally been Chang’an, but An Lushan usurped it. The capital was later at Luoyang, where Suzong acted as regent. At that time, National Teacher Zhong was living in a hermitage on White Cliff Mountain in Dengzhou, the site of today’s Xiangyan practice center. For more than forty years he did not descend the mountain, and his virtuous practice became known in the imperial capital.

In the second year of the Shangyuan era, an edict was issued for an imperial envoy to summon him to court. He was received with the honors due a teacher and treated with great reverence. He often expounded the unsurpassed Way to the emperor. When the National Teacher withdrew from court, the emperor himself held on to his carriage to see him off. The court officials were all displeased and wished to memorialize the throne against this impropriety. The National Teacher possessed the power to know others’ minds, and, foreseeing the imperial memorial, said: “Before Indra, lord of the devas, I saw the Son of Heaven, scattered like grains of millet, like a flash of lightning.” The emperor revered him all the more.

When Daizong ascended the throne, he again invited him to reside at Guangzhai Monastery. For sixteen years, he taught the Dharma according to the capacities of those he encountered. In the tenth year of the Dali era, he passed away. The monk of Qingcuo Mountain in the Shannan prefecture had formerly practiced together with the National Teacher. The National Teacher once petitioned the emperor to summon him, but though summoned three times, he did not rise. He constantly reproached the National Teacher for seeking fame and profit and clinging to the human world. Throughout the reigns of three generations of father and son, the National Teacher served as National Teacher; members of that other family, father and son alike, all studied Chan at the same time. According to an examination of the Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, it was Daizong who posed this question. The question, “What is the Tamer of the Ten Bodies?” was asked by Suzong.

When the National Teacher’s karmic conditions came to an end and he was about to enter nirvāṇa, he took leave of Daizong. Daizong asked, “National Teacher, what will you need after a hundred years?” It was merely an ordinary opening question. Yet this old fellow stirred up waves where there was no wind, saying, “Make a seamless stupa for this old monk.”

Tell me, in broad daylight, what is he doing? Simply make a stupa—that would be enough. Why did he instead say, “Make a seamless stupa”? Daizong was no mean hand either. Giving you a jab, he said, “Please give us a model of the Master’s stupa.” After a long silence, the National Teacher said, “Do you understand?” How strange! This little matter is the hardest of all to investigate. Such a great National Teacher, jabbed by him until his mouth was stretched flat like the eaves.

Yet even so, had it not been for this old fellow, he would nearly have overturned it. Many people say, “The place where the National Teacher did not speak is precisely the model of the stupa.” If that is how you understand it, Bodhidharma’s entire tradition is swept clean away. If you say that the long silence itself is it, then mute people too should understand Chan.

Have you not seen how a non-Buddhist asked the Buddha, “I do not ask about words; I do not ask about wordlessness”? The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while, and the non-Buddhist bowed in homage. He praised him, saying, “The World-Honored One is greatly compassionate and greatly merciful. He has opened the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter.” After the non-Buddhist had left, Ānanda asked the Buddha, “What realization did the non-Buddhist attain that he said he had entered?” The World-Honored One said, “It is like a fine horse in the world: seeing the shadow of the whip, it runs.”

Many people seek understanding in the long silence—what handle is there in that? The late Fifth Patriarch raised this saying: “In front are pearls and agates; behind are agates and pearls. On the left are Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta; on the right are Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. In the middle is a banner, stirred by the wind, saying: hulu hulu.”

The National Teacher said, “Do you understand?” The emperor said, “I do not understand.” That is somewhat better. Tell me, is this not understanding the same as Emperor Wu’s “I do not know,” or different? Though they resemble one another, they are not the same. The National Teacher said, “I have a Dharma-heir disciple, Danyuan, who understands this matter. Please issue an edict and ask him.” Xuedou raised this and said: “One palm does not make a sound.” Set aside Daizong’s not understanding for now—but did Danyuan understand? All he needed to say was, “Please give us a model of the Master’s stupa,” and no one in the entire world could do anything about it. The late Fifth Patriarch raised this and said: “You are a teacher of the whole kingdom. Why did you not speak, but instead pass it on to your disciple?”

After the National Teacher passed away, the emperor summoned Danyuan and asked, “What does this mean?” Danyuan then came forth and, on the National Teacher’s behalf, chattered nonsense and expounded principles. Naturally, he understood the National Teacher’s words. All he needed was this verse [recorded in the Garden of the Patriarchs; from the Qi period]: “South of Xiang, north of Tan, between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom. Beneath the shadowless tree, they share the same boat; in the crystal palace, there is no one who knows.”

Danyuan, whose name was Yingzhen, served as an attendant to the National Teacher and later resided at Danyuan Monastery in Jizhou. At that time Yangshan came to study with Danyuan. Danyuan’s words were weighty and his temperament harsh; he could not be offended, and Yangshan could not remain there.

Earlier, Yangshan had gone to study with Chan Master Xingkong. A monk asked Xingkong, “What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the west?” Xingkong said, “Suppose a person is in a thousand-foot well. Without using even an inch of rope, get that person out, and then I will answer you about the Patriarch’s coming from the west.” The monk said, “These days Chan Master Chang of Hunan also talks east and speaks west to people.”

Xingkong then called out, “Novice! Drag this corpse out!” [The novice was Yangshan.] Later, Yangshan raised this with Danyuan, asking, “How does one get the person out of the well?” Danyuan said, “Bah! Fool! Who is in the well?” Yangshan did not accord with this. Later he asked Weishan. Weishan called out, “Huiji!” Yangshan answered, and Weishan said, “He is out!” At this, Yangshan had a great awakening. He said, “At Danyuan’s place I obtained the essence; at Weishan’s place I obtained the function.”

It is only this one verse that has led many people into mistaken interpretations. Many mistakenly explain it thus: “Xiang means meeting one another, and Tan means discussing. Between them is a seamless stupa; hence it says, ‘between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom.’ The emperor and the National Teacher exchange words; this is ‘beneath the shadowless tree, they share the same boat.’ The emperor does not understand, and therefore it says, ‘in the crystal palace, there is no one who knows.’”

Others say, “Xiang is south of Xiangzhou, and Tan is north of Tanzhou. ‘Between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom’ praises the emperor.” Then, blinking and looking about, they say: “This is the seamless stupa.” If that is how you understand it, you have not gone beyond emotional views. As for the four turning sayings Xuedou added, how do you understand them? People today utterly fail to know the intent of the ancients.

Tell me: how do you understand “south of Xiang, north of Tan”? How do you understand “between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom”? How do you understand “beneath the shadowless tree, they share the same boat”? How do you understand “in the crystal palace, there is no one who knows”? If you see it this way, you may well rejoice for the rest of your life.

For “south of Xiang, north of Tan,” Xuedou says, “One palm does not make a sound.” Having no alternative, I explain it to you.

For “between them is gold enough to fill an entire kingdom,” Xuedou says, “A mountain-shaped staff.” An ancient said, “Recognize the staff, and a lifetime of Chan study is finished.”

For “beneath the shadowless tree, they share the same boat,” Xuedou says, “The seas are calm and the rivers clear.” At once the doors and windows fly open, lucid and unobstructed in all eight directions.

For “in the crystal palace, there is no one who knows,” Xuedou says, “It has been picked up.” At once, it has all been explained to you. Yet it is not easy to see! Seeing it is good enough, but there is still a slight place where you misrecognize it and produce interpretations in accordance with words. At the end, when he says, “It has been picked up,” that is somewhat better.

Xuedou plainly gave all his comments at once; afterward, he composed a separate verse on the seamless stupa:

The seamless stupa—[This single seam—what is it, after all? What are you saying?]

even to see it is difficult. [It cannot be seen by the eye. Blind!]

The clear pool permits no azure dragon to coil within it. [Do you see? The vast waves surge—where could an azure dragon coil? Here, one cannot even grope for it.]

Layer upon layer, [Do not let your eyes be dazzled. What use is dazzled vision?]

shadows clustering round and round, [The whole body is eyes. Falling into seven pieces and eight pieces; proceeding along the old road in twos and threes, turning left and right, following behind.]

for a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, shown to people. [Do you see? How can a blind fellow see? Venerable one, can you make it out?]

Xuedou begins directly: “The seamless stupa—even to see it is difficult.” Although it stands alone, openly revealed and impartial, when one seeks to see it, it remains difficult. Xuedou was exceedingly compassionate and further told you: “The clear pool permits no azure dragon to coil within it.” The late Fifth Patriarch said: “Of Xuedou’s volume of verses on ancient cases, I love only the line, ‘The clear pool permits no azure dragon to coil within it.’ That is somewhat better.”

So many people make their living from the place of the National Teacher’s long silence. If that is how you understand it, you have missed it altogether. Have you not heard: “A crouching dragon does not mirror itself in still water; where there is no moon, the waves are clear; where there is no wind, waves arise.” It is also said: “The crouching dragon is ever afraid of the clear blue pool.” If it is this fellow, then even amid vast billows and towering white waves, he would not coil there.

Having composed his verse up to this point, Xuedou then added a few discerning remarks and fashioned a seamless stūpa. He went on to say: “Layer upon layer, shadow upon shadow, for people to behold through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages.” How do you see it? Where is it right now? Even if you see it clearly, do not mistake the fixed star for the real thing!

Sudhana: Ha ha! Why not say, “Threshing grain atop a crystal palace”?

[Xinming]: Do you understand? My answer remains: No!

[LVM]: Ha ha! Not understanding is most intimate.

[Dingling]: Teacher, what does “Even if you see it clearly, do not mistake the fixed star for the real thing” mean? —A clear pool does not permit a blue dragon to coil within it.

Rely on the meaning, not on the words. I have not established anything at all.

[Sudhana]: A tentative answer: Perhaps it is because “The more discrimination there is, the later realization comes”?

[LVM]: Put another way: “Never cling to it; once you cling to it, you are blind!”

—A clear pool does not permit a blue dragon to coil within it. Rely on the meaning, not on the words. I have not established anything at all.

*Ha ha! Three cups of Qingyuan Baijiu, yet after drinking them one still says they have not touched one’s lips.

[Dingling]: Yes, Teacher. Where there is no place, the moonlit waves are clear; where there is a place, waves rise though there is no wind.

[LVM]: Still somewhat short of it.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Let me pick up the thread; please continue scolding me, Teacher. What we ordinarily call “recognizing” the dharmakāya is cognitively knowing that awareness itself is the dharmakāya. For example, I regard you as my teacher (“recognizing” the dharmakāya), but this is only cognition; I remain a pitch-black lacquer bucket, because I have never met you.

Yet after “recognizing” the dharmakāya, one has a goal in cultivating the Way. One will not be of two minds, change course from morning to evening, or think that attaining the Way means gaining something. That is, all cultivation revolves around becoming “familiar with” the dharmakāya, but this still is not intimate.

For example, I now seek instruction from you online, chat by voice, and so on, gradually coming to know something about you. But to speak of it as one thing is still not right—which is why not understanding is said to be most intimate—for I have still not

met you in person. (Never cling to it; once you cling to it, you are blind! Hee hee! If one really clings to it, one may miss you even after meeting you in person.)

…When conditions ripen and I meet you one day: "Oh, so this is what Teacher is like." One personally sees the original. That is, one recognizes the staff, and a lifetime of studying the Way is finished. Is there anything further? Ha ha! How could there be nothing further? Please confer empowerment on me, so that I may cultivate the Heart-of-Heart Dharma.

[LVM]: To cut off cognitive delusions in an instant is called "cognitively knowing the dharmakāya"; to go further and cut off affective delusions is called "becoming familiar with the dharmakāya."

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Is the "recognizing" in "One recognizes the staff, and a lifetime of studying the Way is finished" something that comes after becoming familiar with it?

[LVM]: At this point of "recognizing," there is no room for talk of "cognitive knowing" or "becoming familiar"!

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Oh… I bow once more to Teacher!

[xinming]: Then what sorts of things count as "matters of studying the Way"?

[LVM]: What is it that you study in studying the Way?

[xinming]: I asked you because I do not know.

[LVM]: I do not know what you are asking.

[xinming]: What things count as "matters of studying the Way"?

[LVM]: What matter is there right now?

[xinming]: Right now? —You are making trouble!

[LVM]: Ha ha! You certainly know how to find someone to take the blame.

[xinming]: Greetings, Teacher Old Tiger: Likewise, likewise.

[Sudhana]: Ha ha! At your question, Old Tiger has no choice but to hurriedly pretend to be hard of hearing.

[xinming]: Let me tell you quietly: Old Tiger is pretending to be hard of hearing in order to lure me onto the hook.

[Sudhana]: Let me also tell you quietly: Old Tiger's hook is straight, and it is a full three feet above the water.

[Snow Mountain Youth] (C: What things count as "matters of studying the Way"?) —Let me also ask: What things do not count as "matters of studying the Way"?

[LVM]: Do you have any matter right now?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: It cannot be said that there is a matter or that there is no matter.

[LVM]: Then what cannot be spoken of as a matter does not count as a matter of studying the Way.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Thank you, Teacher! I bow in reverence!

E: What does the staff here refer to? Is it the same staff as in, "If you have a staff, I give you a staff; if you do not have a staff, I take your staff away"? (Teacher, I cannot find this saying.)

[LVM]: An ancient said: "One recognizes the staff, and a lifetime of studying the Way is finished."

[Xinming]: "South of the Xiang, north of the Tan"—[this too cannot be held fast. What are they doing, in twos and threes? Half open, half closed.]—What must one do in order to hold it fast?

[LVM]: Do not do anything; then you can hold it fast.

[Xinming]: Are "South of the Xiang, north of the Tan" and "the eastern household becomes an ox, the western household becomes a horse" both "half open, half closed"?

[LVM]: Not to mention half open and half closed—even if wholly open and wholly closed, it is not within words and phrases.

[Xinming]: "What is the Tamer of the Ten Bodies?"

[LVM]: Ha ha! How many bodies are you taming right now?

[Xinming]: The three bodies, of course.

[LVM]: What is the Tamer of the Three Bodies?

[Xinming]: When thirsty, drink water; when hungry, eat food. Gilding one's face; rowing a boat against the current. What I mean is: when thirsty, drink water; when hungry, eat food—merely to pass the days, this is the taming of the nirmāṇakāya.

Gilding one's face—perform all good deeds; rowing a boat against the current—commit no evil deeds: this is the taming of the sambhogakāya.

The dharmakāya has no need of taming.

[LVM]: Only beyond the dharmakāya can one speak of "taming."

[Xinming]: Beyond the dharmakāya, is "taming" still necessary? Does this refer to application?

[LVM]: Look up the entry for "taming" in the Great Buddhist Dictionary.

[Xinming]: [Taming] Great Buddhist Dictionary by Ding Fubao

(Technical term.) All sentient beings are likened to mad elephants and vicious horses. The Buddha is likened to a trainer of elephants and horses, who tames and controls them. The Sūtra of Infinite Meaning says: "The Tamer, the Great Tamer, engages in no heedless conduct. Like a trainer of elephants and horses, he can tame what cannot be tamed." The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, fascicle 2, says: "The Buddhadharma is the cart, the disciples are the horses, the Buddha is truly the master of the Dharma treasure who tames them. If the horses leave the path and lose the proper tracks, they should be disciplined and brought under control." Another of the Buddha's ten epithets is Tamer of Men.

[19] Jùzhī Raises Only One Finger

[Case 19] Juzhi Raises a Single Finger

The pointer says: When a single mote of dust is raised, the great earth is gathered in. When one flower opens, the world arises. But when the dust has not yet been raised and the flower has not yet opened, where does one set one's eyes? Thus it is said: When a single strand of silk is cut, all is cut with one cut. When a single strand of silk is dyed, all is dyed with one dyeing. Right now, cut off the tangled vines and bring forth the treasures of your own house. High and low respond universally; before and after,

there is no difference—each is complete in itself. If this is not yet so, look at what follows:

[Case 19] The Case:

Whenever Chan Master Juzhi was asked a question, ["What news is there, you dull-witted master?"]

he would simply raise a single finger. [This old fellow, too, wants to silence everyone under heaven. When it is hot, heaven and earth are hot; when it is cold, heaven and earth are cold. He has replaced everyone's tongues.]

If you understand it in terms of the finger, you betray Juzhi. If you do not understand it in terms of the finger, you are like cast iron. Whether you understand or do not understand, it goes just thus; whether high or low, it goes just thus; whether right or wrong, it goes just thus. Therefore it is said: As soon as one mote of dust arises, the entire earth is gathered in. When one flower is about to open, the world immediately arises.

In one lion at the tip of a hair, a hundred billion lions at the tips of hairs appear. Yuanming said, "When it is cold, heaven and earth are cold; when it is hot, heaven and earth are hot." Mountains, rivers, and the great earth extend downward to the Yellow Springs; the myriad forms in their profusion reach upward to the sky. Tell me, what is it that can be so extraordinary? If you recognize it, there is no need for even one pinch. If you do not recognize it, it obstructs and chokes people to death.

Chan Master Juzhi was from Jinhua in Wuzhou. When he first lived in a hermitage, a nun named Shiji came there and entered directly, without removing her bamboo hat. Holding her staff, she circled the Chan seat three times and said, "If you can say it, I will remove my hat." She asked three times in this manner, but Juzhi had no reply, and the nun departed. Juzhi said, "It is getting late; please stay the night." The nun said, "If you can say it, I will stay."

Juzhi again had no reply, and the nun went on her way. Juzhi sighed, "Though I have the form of a man, I lack a man's spirit." He therefore resolved with determination to clarify this matter and intended to abandon the hermitage and travel about seeking instruction. As he was preparing for his pilgrimage, the mountain deity told him that night, "You need not leave this place. Tomorrow a flesh-and-blood bodhisattva will come to expound the Dharma for you. There is no need to go."

Sure enough, the next day Chan Master Tianlong came to the hermitage. Juzhi greeted him respectfully and fully recounted the preceding events. Tianlong simply raised one finger to show him, and Juzhi suddenly had a great awakening. At that time he was earnest and wholly focused, so the bottom of the bucket readily dropped out. Thereafter, whenever he was asked anything, he simply raised one finger.

Changqing said, “Fine food does not suit a person who is already full.” Xuansha said, “Had I seen him at the time, I would have broken off his finger.” Xuanjue said, “What was Xuansha’s meaning in speaking thus?” Yunju Xi said, “When Xuansha spoke thus,”

was he approving of him, or was he not approving of him? If he approved of him, why say that he would break off his finger? If he did not approve of him, where was Juzhi at fault?” Earlier, Caoshan said, “Juzhi was crude in the point at which he took it up: he recognized only one activity and one object. It is all like clapping the hands and rubbing the palms, seeing the strangeness of his West Garden.”

Xuanjue further said, “Tell me, had Juzhi awakened or not? Why was he crude in the point at which he took it up? If he had not awakened, how could it be said that throughout his life he used nothing but one-finger Chan inexhaustibly? Tell me, where was Caoshan’s intent?” At that time Juzhi truly did not understand; but after he awakened, whenever he was asked anything, he simply raised one finger.

Why then could thousands upon tens of thousands of people neither cage him nor break through him? If you take it as an understanding based on the finger, you will certainly not see the intent of the ancient worthies. This kind of Chan is easy to investigate but difficult to comprehend. Nowadays, as soon as people are asked, they too raise a finger or raise a fist; they are merely playing with their clever spirits. You must see through it to the very bone and marrow before it will do.

There was a novice in Juzhi’s hermitage. Someone outside asked him, “What Dharma does your master ordinarily use to instruct people?” The novice raised one finger. When he returned, he told his master about it. Juzhi cut off his finger with a knife. The novice ran out crying. Juzhi called out to him once, and the novice turned his head. Juzhi then raised one finger; the novice suddenly understood. Tell me, what principle did he see? When Juzhi was about to pass away, he said to the assembly, “I obtained Tianlong’s one-finger Chan, and have used it throughout my life without exhausting it. Do you want to understand?” He raised one finger, then passed away.

Later, One-Eyed Dragon Mingzhao asked his Dharma uncle, Master Shen of Guotai, “An ancient said that Juzhi merely recited a three-line mantra and thereby gained a reputation surpassing all others. How would you remove the three-line mantra for him?” Shen too raised one finger. Zhao said, “Had it not been for today, how could I have recognized this traveler from Guazhou?” Tell me, what was his meaning? Throughout his life, Mimo used only a forked staff.

Whenever Master Dadi was asked a question, he simply struck the ground once. Later, someone hid his staff and asked, “What is Buddha?” He merely opened his mouth. This too was inexhaustible throughout a lifetime. Wuye said, “The patriarchs observed that this land possessed capacities for the Great Vehicle, so they transmitted only the mind seal directly, pointing out the deluded road. Those who attain it are not distinguished as foolish or wise, ordinary or sage. Better little reality than much emptiness.”

“You great men, right now rest directly and at once; suddenly cease all conditions. Transcend the stream of birth and death, and stand far beyond ordinary norms. Even if you have retinues and adornments, do not seek, and it will be attained of itself.” Throughout his life, whenever Wuye was asked anything, he said only, “Do not give rise to deluded thoughts.”

Therefore it is said: When one place is penetrated, a thousand places and ten thousand places are penetrated at once. When one pivotal opportunity is understood, a thousand opportunities and ten thousand opportunities are understood at once. People nowadays are not like this. They merely indulge their own interpretations and do not understand the essential point realized by the ancients. Was it not that he had no further mechanisms or transformations? Why, then, did he use only one finger? You must know that here Juzhi had a deep and secret way of guiding people. Do you want to understand it effortlessly? Let Yuanming answer: “When it is cold, heaven and earth are cold; when it is hot, heaven and earth are hot.” Mountains, rivers, and the great earth reach upward through solitary heights and dangers; the myriad forms in their profusion penetrate downward through steep precipices. From what place could one-finger Chan be obtained?

In responsive praise, I deeply esteem old Juzhi. [A leper seeks companions; only those on the same path know. Yet it cannot escape being one activity and one object.]

When the universe is empty, who else is there? [Two or three. Even if there is one more, that too must be killed.]

He once cast down a floating log upon the vast blue sea. [It is entirely this. It is so, but it is excessively solitary and steep. What use are broken straw sandals?]

Amid the night waves, he joins in receiving the blind turtle. [Fishing in the sky and groping in the earth—when will it ever end? What use is there in receiving it? Act according to the command and drive it toward a world without Buddhas. Having received a venerable one, he is a blind fellow.]

Xuedou was skilled in parallel prose, with seven connections and eight thoroughfares. Whenever he encountered unusual and remarkable koans, he especially enjoyed composing verses on them. “In responsive praise, I deeply esteem old Juzhi; when the universe is empty, who else is there?” Students today praise or disparage the ancients, sometimes as guest and sometimes as host; in question and answer, they uphold it face-to-face. There is such a way of guiding people. Therefore it is said, “In responsive praise, I deeply esteem old Juzhi.”

Tell me, what does Xuedou admire in him? Since heaven and earth first opened, who else has there been? There is only old Juzhi. Others must be mixed with other things. Only old Juzhi used one finger until his death. People of the time often give the mistaken interpretation: “Mountains, rivers, and the great earth are empty; people are empty; dharmas are empty. Even if the entire universe becomes empty all at once, there is still old Juzhi alone.” That has nothing whatever to do with it!

“He once cast down a floating log upon the vast blue sea”: this is now called the ocean of birth and death. Sentient beings are in the sea of karma, their heads rising and sinking; they do not understand themselves and have no time of escape. Old Juzhi compassionately receives beings. In the sea of birth and death, he uses one finger to receive people, like casting down a floating log to receive a blind turtle, enabling sentient beings to reach the other shore—“Amid the night waves, he joins in receiving the blind turtle.”

The Lotus Sūtra says, “It is like a one-eyed turtle encountering the hole in a floating log: there is no danger of sinking and drowning.” A great good teacher receives a person like a dragon or tiger and teaches him to enter a world with Buddhas, where guest and host interchange; in a world without Buddhas, he sits firmly at the crucial pass. But what use is there in receiving a blind turtle?

[Xinming] “Do not give rise to deluded thoughts”—this is where I shall be buried.

[LVM] Then none of us should entertain deluded thoughts. — Throughout his life, whenever Wuye was asked anything, he said only, “Do not give rise to deluded thoughts.”

[Yongshou Tongzi] Teacher, what does it mean for guest and host to interchange?

[LVM] Xuedou said: “Amid the night waves, he joins in receiving the blind turtle.”

Foguo said: “A great good teacher receives a person like a dragon or tiger and teaches him to enter a world with Buddhas, where guest and host interchange; in a world without Buddhas, he sits firmly at the crucial pass. But what use is there in receiving a blind turtle?”

Are the two saying the same thing or different things? If you can determine this, you are the host and they are the guests. If you cannot determine it, they are the hosts and you are the guest.

[Yongshou Tongzi] Neither of the two monks has been deceived by liberating sentient beings.

[LVM] Then you, too, have not been deceived by the two monks.

[rj] Can you command those two monks?

[LVM] Why do you not ask: Can you command [rj]?

[rj] Teacher LVM has some strength!

[Dingling] Teacher, in the statement, “Juzhi was crude in the point at which he took it up: he recognized only one activity and one object,” where was Caoshan’s intent?

[LVM] His intent lies beyond words. If you mistakenly think that Caoshan did not approve of Juzhi, then you have fallen within words.

[Dingling] Oh, Caoshan is following the same track as Xuansha’s statement, “Had I seen him at the time, I would have broken off his finger.”

[LVM] Exactly! It too must be killed.

[Dingling] Teacher, why, in “When the universe is empty, who else is there?”, does it say, “Two or three”?

[LVM] It is speaking of “killing.” “When the universe is empty, who else is there?” [Two or three. Even if there is one more, that too must be killed.]

Not only must those “two or three” (the myriad forms in their profusion) be killed; even the one more (the undifferentiated whole) must also be killed.

[Dingling] Alas, ashamed! This youngster is not a person like a dragon or tiger. One, two, or three—I trail mud and drag water in every case, and have no face to meet the teacher.

[LVM] To recognize it is not to be wronged.

[A Drop of Water]: If one were to make a count, one would find that you say “To recognize it is not to be wronged” to Brother [Dingling] rather frequently. Why is that?

LVM : Because he recognizes a drop of water, yet when he is thirsty, he does not drink it.

Dingling : May I ask, Teacher, what does the “three-line mantra” refer to?

LVM : For example, someone might say, “So-and-so has read only two pages of books and yet talks big.” What do these “two pages of books” refer to?

Dingling : No wonder it is said, “With one finger, he picks away the three-line mantra.” Teacher, what do the traveler to Guazhou and the worn-out straw sandal signify?

LVM : If you recognize it, there is no need even for a pinch. If you do not recognize it, it becomes an obstruction that can kill a person.

Dingling : Yes! This youngster will go rest off to one side.

LVM : Ah! Exactly. What does this “one side” signify?

Dingling : Teacher Old Tiger is truly formidable—he has caught my fox’s tail again.

rj : “To recognize it is not to be wronged.”

LVM : ^o^

Xiao Dong : Teacher, may I ask what the sentence “Fine food is not eaten by one who is full” means?

LVM : Even if it is fine food, one who is full will not eat it. By analogy, however excellent the names and forms may be, a discerning person will not become attached to them.

Do not become attached to appearances!

Xiao Dong : Oh—thank you for your guidance, Teacher. I almost became attached again.

[20] Longya: No Patriarch's Meaning

[Case Twenty] Longya Has No Patriarch’s Intention

Pointer: Piling up mountains and heaping up peaks, crashing into walls and bumping against barriers, standing in thought with one’s faculties at a halt—all this is a scene of bitter hardship. But suppose there is a fellow who comes forth, overturns the great ocean, kicks over Mount Sumeru, scatters the white clouds with a shout, and shatters empty space. Directly, in response to a single occasion and a single circumstance, he cuts off the tongues of everyone under heaven, leaving you no place nearby to approach. Tell me: from ancient times until now, who has ever been thus? Let us cite it and see.

[Case Twenty] The Case:

Longya asked Cuiwei, “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” [An old saying current in the various quarters. It too must be examined.]

Cuiwei said, “Bring me the Chan staff.” [What will he do with the Chan staff? He almost let him go. Ah!]

Longya brought the Chan staff and handed it to Cuiwei. [He still could not hold fast. He gives a blue dragon to someone who does not know how to ride it—what a pity. Face-to-face, he failed to take it up.]

As soon as Cuiwei received it, he struck him. [Hit! What use is it to strike a dead fellow? He too has fallen into the second position.]

Longya said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” [This fellow’s words are in the second position. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone.]

Longya also asked Linji, “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” [An old public case current in the various quarters. To ask it again is not worth half a penny.]

Linji said, “Bring me the meditation cushion.” [If the waves of Caoxi were all alike, countless ordinary people would be drowned on dry land. One lawsuit takes them both in; one pit buries them both.]

Longya took the meditation cushion and handed it to Linji. [As before, he could not hold fast; as before, he was not quick-witted. Vaguely Yue; dimly Yangzhou.]

As soon as Linji received it, he struck him. [Hit! What a pity to strike such a dead fellow. Cast from the same mold.]

Longya said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” [Clearly, he is making a living in a ghost cave. He thinks he has gained an advantage. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone.]

Chan Master Zhì of Cuiyan said, “That was how it was then. Do the patch-robed monks of today still have blood beneath their skin?”

Zhe of Weishan said, “Cuiwei and Linji may be called genuine lineage masters. Longya was one who pushed aside the grass and watched the wind; nevertheless, he can serve as a mirror for later generations. After he became abbot, a monk asked, ‘Did the Master at that time approve of those two venerable masters?’ Longya said, ‘Approve, I did approve; but there was still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.’ Longya looked before and behind and prescribed medicine according to the illness. Great Weishan is not like this. If he were asked, ‘Did the Master at that time approve of those two venerable masters?’—whether clear or unclear, he would immediately strike him across the back. This would not only uphold Cuiwei and Linji, but would also not disappoint the one who came to ask.”

Cong of Shimen said, “It would have been all right if no one had pressed Longya; but when a patch-robed monk pressed him, he lost one eye.”

Xuedou said, “Linji and Cuiwei only knew how to hold fast; they did not know how to let go. If I had been Longya at the time, when they asked for the meditation cushion or Chan staff, I would have picked it up and hurled it straight into their faces.”

Jie of Wuzu said, “The Master got such a long face.” Or someone said, “The Patriarch’s earth-dwelling spirit was upon him.”

Xin of Huanglong said, “Longya drove off the plowman’s ox and snatched food from the hungry man. Granted, it was clear enough—but why, then, was there no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West? Do you understand? The tip of the staff has eyes, bright as the sun; if you would recognize true gold, look at it in the fire.”

In general, to bring forth the essential marvel and raise up the school’s vehicle, one must understand it at the first pivotal opportunity; then one can cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven. If one hesitates, one falls into the second position. Though these two old fellows made wind and rain, shaking heaven and earth, they nevertheless never struck a clear-eyed person. How much hardship the ancients endured in studying Chan! They established the resolve of a great person, traversed mountains and rivers, and consulted venerable masters.

Longya first studied with Cuiwei and Linji, and later studied with Deshan. He then asked, “If this student, relying on a Moye sword, intends to take the Master’s head, what then?” Deshan stretched out his neck and said, “[unreadable utterance]!” Longya said, “The Master’s head has fallen.” Deshan smiled slightly, and Longya then withdrew. Next he went to Dongshan. Dongshan asked, “Where have you recently come from?” Longya said, “From Deshan.”

Dongshan said, “What words or sayings did Deshan have?” Longya then recounted the preceding exchange. Dongshan said, “What did he say?” Longya said, “He said nothing.” Dongshan said, “Do not say that he said nothing. Just try presenting this old monk with the head that Deshan dropped.” At these words Longya had an awakening. He then burned incense, faced Deshan from afar, bowed in homage, and repented. When Deshan heard of this, he said, “That old fellow Dongshan does not know good from bad. This fellow has been dead for so long—what use is there in saving him? Let him carry this old monk’s head around the world.”

Longya’s faculties were keen and quick. Carrying a bellyful of Chan, he traveled on foot directly to Cuiwei in Chang’an and asked, “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” Cuiwei said, “Bring me the Chan staff.” Longya took the Chan staff and gave it to Cuiwei. As soon as Cuiwei received it, he struck him. Longya said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” He also asked Linji, “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” Linji said, “Bring me the meditation cushion.” Longya took the meditation cushion and gave it to Linji. As soon as Linji received it, he struck him. Longya said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.”

In posing this question, he wished not only to see what the old fellow on the crooked wooden bed was about, but also to clarify for himself the great matter of his own life. It may be said that his words were not uttered in vain and his response was not casually given; they arose from the place of practice. Have you not seen how Wuxie consulted Shitou? First he made this agreement with himself: “If a single word accords with me, I shall stay. If not, I shall leave.” Shitou sat firmly on his seat, and Wuxie flicked his sleeves and walked out. Knowing that he was a vessel of the Dharma, Shitou gave him instruction.

Wuxie did not grasp its meaning. He took leave and went out. When he reached the gate, Shitou called, “Venerable!” Wuxie turned his head. Shitou said, “From birth to death, it is only this. Do not seek elsewhere by turning your head and revolving your brain.” At these words, Wuxie had a great awakening. Again, Magu carried his staff to Zhangjing, circled the Chan seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes.”

He then went to Nanquan and, as before, circled the seat, shook his staff, and stood there. Nanquan said, “No, no. This is turned by the force of the wind and will finally decay and perish.” Magu said, “Zhangjing said, ‘Yes’; why does the Master say, ‘No’?” Nanquan said, “Zhangjing is right; you are not.”

The ancients, too, were intent on bringing forth and penetrating this one great matter. People nowadays, when a question is raised, have not even the slightest place of actual practice. Today they are just so; tomorrow they are just so. If you are merely like this, then to the end of future time there will be no day of completion. You must rouse your spirit; only then can there be a small measure of correspondence.

Look at Longya. He posed the question: “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” Cuiwei said, “Bring me the Chan staff.” Longya handed it to Cuiwei, and Cuiwei struck him as soon as he received it. When Longya took up the Chan staff at that time, how could he not have known that Cuiwei intended to strike him? Yet he could not simply say that Cuiwei did not understand.

Why, then, did he hand over the Chan staff? Tell me, when one assumes responsibility at the very moment, how should one act? He did not apply himself at the place of living water; instead, he went to make a living in dead water, constantly setting himself up as master. Then he said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” He then went to Hebei to consult Linji and asked in the same way. Linji said, “Bring me the meditation cushion.”

Longya handed it to Linji, and Linji struck him as soon as he received it. Longya said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” Tell me, these two venerable masters were not even of the same Dharma lineage; why were their replies alike and their methods identical? You must know that not a word or phrase of the ancients was casually employed.

Later, after he became abbot, a monk asked, “When the Master met those two venerable masters, did you approve of them or not?” Longya said, “Approve, I did approve; but there was still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” There is a thorn in the rotten mud. In letting others pass, he had already fallen into the second position. This old fellow held firmly enough, but he could only become a venerable master in Dongshan’s line. In the line of Deshan or Linji, you should know, there is another way of life.

If it were this mountain monk, however, I would simply tell him, “To approve is not yet to approve; but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” Have you not seen a monk ask Damei, “What was the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West?” Damei said, “There was no intention in coming from the West.” When Yanguan heard this, he said, “One coffin, two dead fellows.” When Xuansha heard it, he said, “Yanguan is a master hand.” Xuedou said, “There are three as well.”

When this monk asked about the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West, Damei instead told him that there was no intention in coming from the West. If you understand it in this way, you fall into the realm of nothing-to-do. Therefore it is said: Study living words, not dead words. If you gain insight beneath living words, you will not forget it through endless kalpas. If you gain insight beneath dead words, you cannot even save yourself. Longya’s way of speaking was indeed quite complete.

The ancients said, “Continuity is also exceedingly difficult.” Not a word or phrase of the ancients was casually employed: what came before and after illuminated each other; there was provisional and true, illumination and function; host and guest stood distinct, interchanging freely in every direction. But if one wishes to discern what is most intimate, Longya, though not ignorant of the school’s vehicle, nevertheless fell into the second position.

When the two venerable masters asked for the Chan staff and meditation cushion, Longya could not have failed to know their intent: they wished to employ what was within their own breasts. Although this is so, their use was not excessively severe. Longya asked in this way, and the two old men answered in this way—why, then, was there no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West? Here you must know that there is another extraordinary point. Xuedou brings it up for us to see:

On Longya Mountain, the dragon has no eyes. [Blind! It may deceive others, but it is like washing clods of earth in mud. Everyone in the world knows.]

How could dead water ever stir up the ancient wind? [If it suddenly came alive, there would be no helping it; it would drag everyone under heaven down so that none could raise their heads.]

The Chan staff and meditation cushion cannot be used. [Who is being made to speak? What do you want the Chan staff and meditation cushion for? Could it be that they were meant to be entrusted to the venerable?]

They should only be entrusted to Master Lu. [Even then, they cannot be entrusted. You lacquer bucket! Do not form such an understanding.]

Xuedou renders judgment and closes the case. Though he composed the verse in this way, tell me, where does its intent lie? Where is the lack of eyes? Where is the dead water? Here one must be capable of transformation and adaptation. Therefore it is said: “A clear pool does not permit a blue dragon to coil; how could dead water ever contain a fierce dragon?” Have you not heard, “Dead water does not harbor dragons”? If it is a living dragon, it must go where the vast billows roll and white waves tower to the sky.

This means that Longya entered dead water and was struck by others. Yet he said, “Strike me if you wish, but there is still no Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.” This prompted Xuedou to say, “How could dead water ever stir up the ancient wind?” Although this is so, tell me: was Xuedou supporting him, or diminishing his radiance? Many people misunderstand and ask: Why “should they only be entrusted to Master Lu”? They do not realize that it was Longya who entrusted them to others. In general, when consulting a master, one must distinguish matters at the pivotal occasion; only then can one see how the ancients met one another.

“A Chan bench and a meditation cushion cannot be used.” Cuiwei said, “Pass me the Chan bench.” Longya passed it to him. Was this not making a living activity in dead water? Plainly, he had handed him a blue dragon; it was only that he did not know how to ride it, and thus could not use it. “It should only be entrusted to Master Lu.” This is often taken to refer to the Sixth Patriarch, but that is wrong: it was never entrusted to anyone. If you say it was entrusted to someone, then, when one needs to use it to strike someone, what would it become? In the past, Xuedou called himself Master Lu. In his poem “A Gift to Myself While Concealing My Traces,” he wrote:

In the painting, I once loved Lake Dongting; / In the heart of its waves, seventy-two peaks stood green.

Now, lying high and thinking of former affairs, / I have added Master Lu leaning against a stone screen.

Xuedou wished to walk over Longya’s head, but feared that people would misunderstand; therefore, he composed another verse to cut through their doubts. Xuedou further commented: “This old fellow still has not brought it to a complete end,” and composed another verse: [Clearly so. How many can know it? To know it oneself is already half the matter. Fortunately, there is the final line.]

Once Master Lu has entrusted it, what proof is there? [Search the whole earth and such a person is hard to find. To whom could one impart the word?]

Sitting or leaning, do not take up the ancestral lamp. [A fellow in the weeds. He has been knocked down to sit beneath a dark mountain, fallen into a ghost cave.]

It may face the evening clouds, when they are about to gather but have not yet gathered. [One or two. To raise it is already wrong. Indeed, one cannot get out.]

Distant mountains—limitless layers upon layers of green. [Your eyes are blocked; your ears are blocked. Drowned in a deep pit. Go investigate for another thirty years.]

“Once Master Lu has entrusted it, what proof is there?” What proof could there be? You must understand it in just this way here; do not wait by a tree stump for a rabbit. Smash the skull open all at once; let there not be the slightest thing in your breast. Let yourself be free and untrammeled—what need is there for proof? Whether sitting or leaning, there is no need to make a doctrine of Buddhism out of it. Hence: “Sitting or leaning, do not take up the ancestral lamp.” Xuedou brought it up all at once.

He has a place to turn around, and at the end reveals some news of it. There is something good in the words, “It may face the evening clouds, when they are about to gather but have not yet gathered.” Tell me, where does Xuedou’s meaning lie? At the time when the evening clouds are about to gather but have not yet gathered, what do you say? “Distant mountains—limitless layers upon layers of green”—he is still knocked into a ghost cave. When you reach this point, gain and loss, right and wrong, are cut off all at once; only then are you somewhat free and untrammeled. “Distant mountains—limitless layers upon layers of green”: tell me, is this Mañjuśrī’s realm? Is it Samantabhadra’s realm? Is it Avalokiteśvara’s realm? At this point, tell me: whose affair is it?

The Blue Cliff Record of Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu, Volume Two (End)

[Xiaodong]:

May I ask, Teacher: Dongshan said, “Do not say there are no words. Try presenting to this old monk the head that Deshan has lost.” What did he mean?

[Lvm]:

Was he not going to wield the Moye sword and strike for Deshan’s head? Where is Deshan’s head? If he can feel about and find it, I will allow that he knows how to use the Moye sword well. If he cannot feel about and find it, he too is a fellow in the weeds!

[Xiaodong]:

Thank you for your guidance, Teacher. Dongshan’s words strike precisely at my sore spot. Teacher, if you were Longya, how would you answer Deshan’s words? (Later, when he visited Deshan, he asked, “What if a student, wielding the Moye sword, intends to take the master’s head?” Deshan stretched out his neck and said, “Hul[zhongli]!” Longya said, “The master’s head has fallen.” Deshan smiled slightly, and that was the end of it.)

[Lvm]:

Ha ha! I would not need to answer at all, because I do not know how to “wield the Moye sword and intend to take Deshan’s head.”

[Xiaodong]:

Oh! Yes—I have become attached to appearances again. Thank you for your guidance, Teacher.

[Xinming]:

Xuedou said, “Linji and Cuiwei only know how to hold fast; they do not know how to let go.” How does one let go?

“If I had been Longya at the time, when he asked for the meditation cushion and Chan bench, I would have picked them up and hurled them straight into his face.” After throwing them, how would you answer?

Wuzu Jie said, “The monk has such a long face.” Or some say, “Earth and dust have landed on the Patriarch’s head.” I do not understand—what does this mean?

Longya asked in this way, and the two old masters answered in this way. Why then was there no meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West? Was it also a strike?

“The two venerable masters did not share the same Dharma lineage. Why, then, were their replies alike and their manner of use the same? You should know that the ancients did not utter even a single word or sentence at random.” One Buddha-family?

[Lvm]:

Do not go in; if you go in, you will lose your body and your life! (Perhaps this may serve as a reference for others.) [Editor’s note: Here, “go in” means entering to read the questions and answers below.]

“Xuedou said, ‘Linji and Cuiwei only know how to hold fast; they do not know how to let go.’” How does one let go?

* “A Chan bench and a meditation cushion cannot be used; it should only be entrusted to Master Lu.” That is letting go!

“If I had been Longya at the time, when he asked for the meditation cushion and Chan bench, I would have picked them up and hurled them straight into his face.” After throwing them, how would you answer?

* I fear there would be no “after throwing them.” If he saw that the other could throw them, he certainly would not ask for the meditation cushion and Chan bench.

Wuzu Jie said, “The monk has such a long face.” Or some say, “Earth and dust have landed on the Patriarch’s head.” I do not understand—what does this mean?

* “Such a long face”—able to carry on with things; it also suggests being thick-skinned. “Earth and dust landing on one’s head”—ashen-faced and grimy; it too suggests being thick-skinned.

“Longya asked in this way, and the two old masters answered in this way. Why then was there no meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?” Was it also a strike?

* Ha ha! The one who deserves a strike is you.

“The two venerable masters did not share the same Dharma lineage. Why, then, were their replies alike and their manner of use the same? You should know that the ancients did not utter even a single word or sentence at random.” One Buddha-family?

* Which family are you from?

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

Teacher, I have noticed that whenever I go online, my “face grows long.”

[Lvm]:

Ha ha! Earth and dust have landed on your head.

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

Teacher, please explain this: At that time, when the two venerable masters asked for the Chan bench and meditation cushion, Longya could not have failed to understand their intent. He wanted to use the occasion to display what was in his own breast. Though this was so, the turn he made was rather too abrupt.

[Lvm]:

There is no need to explain it; the usage of words has simply changed between ancient and modern times. Please see:

When the two venerable masters asked for the Chan bench and meditation cushion, Longya could not possibly have failed to understand their intent. Longya wished to borrow the opportunity to display what was in his own breast. Though this was so, this turn was perhaps too sharp.

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

^_^. Teacher, that is interesting. I was asking: why say that his turn was too sharp? Does it not mean that he was too rigid?

[Lvm]:

Oh? “Too sharp” and “too rigid” are both metaphors. Is there really any difference in substance?

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

Oh. This is the first time I have heard that.

[Lvm]:

All seventeen hundred koans are no different.

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

May I ask in what respect they are the same? Surely they cannot all be “Grass Flower 2”!

[lvm]:

Ha ha! Does “no different” mean “the same”? The seventeen hundred koans have no sameness, nor do they have no sameness.

[Xinming]:

“No sameness, and no absence of sameness.” If one stands with a foot in each of two boats like this, is one not afraid of falling into the water?

[Xueshan Tongzi]: Then are the Diamond Sūtra and the Heart Sūtra the same or different?

[Changru]:

Hee hee. To call them the same, I fear, would slander the Buddha; to call them different, I fear, would slander you.

[lvm]:

Only by falling on the two sides of “same” and “different” does one fall into the water.

[Yongshou Tongzi]:

Teacher, I have three boats: so-called Grass Flower 2 is not Grass Flower 2; it is called Grass Flower 2.

[lvm]:

Mm, three boats are needed.

[Dingling]:

Teacher, why did Nanquan say, “Zhangjing is right; you are not right”?

[lvm]:

Because what Zhangjing demonstrated was not “turned by the force of the wind,” and would not “ultimately decay and perish.”

[Dingling]:

How did Nanquan know that Magu’s was turned by the force of the wind?

[Ditian Tai]:

Because Nanquan’s eyes were blurred and Magu’s ears were deaf.

[Chan]:

Why does it seem to me that Nanquan’s saying “not right” has the same subtle import as Mazu’s having someone tell Damei, “Neither mind nor Buddha,” and Yaoshan’s saying, “Let the fellow at home bury Ziyu Mountain”?

[lvm]:

Exactly! But Magu’s awakening was not here.

[Xueshan Tongzi]:

On the basis of the teacher's pointers over the past few days, I will try to explain this koan. Please correct me generously wherever it is inappropriate.

1. I believe that the "introductory remarks" preceding every koan are extremely important. They may be called the general outline of the koan, indicating the essential points for investigating it. "Overturn the great ocean, kick down Mount Sumeru, scatter the white clouds with a shout, smash open empty space; directly face the single mechanism and single circumstance, sever the tongues of everyone under heaven, leaving you nowhere to draw near"—this is the essential point that this koan seeks to indicate.

2. I believe that Longya was still at the stage of awakening at the level of principle at this time (traveling about with a bellyful of Chan). Moreover, he retained a partial understanding of the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma, or rather, his understanding was still not thorough (biased emptiness). He therefore went to consult Cuiwei and Linji. Cuiwei and Linji were both great masters, and at a glance saw through the point of Longya's awakening.

Thus, Cuiwei's and Linji's replies had no literal meaning. They were only intended to sever Longya's tongue and break through his attachment. If Longya had then vigorously brought forth his vital spirit and, in a single thought, turned the pivot, that would have been it right then and there. Alas, Longya missed it face-to-face and actually said: "Strike me if you wish to strike me, but there is still no meaning in the Patriarch's coming from the West." [Clearly, he was carrying on in a ghost cave.

Thinking he had gained an advantage—drawing the bow after the thief has gone.] Thus it is said: [He still could not hold fast. Given a blue dragon, he did not know how to ride it—what a pity! He did not take it up face-to-face.] In fact, the replies of Cuiwei and Linji are no different in meaning from Shitou's words: "From birth to death, it is only this. Turn your head and shift your mind; seek nothing else." And why should this apply only to these two venerable masters? They were not even Dharma heirs in the same lineage, so why were their replies alike and their methods the same?

3. Magu and Longya seem to have differed somewhat. Magu seems to have awakened at the level of principle that this itself is it, and so respectfully said, "Yes, yes." Yet his heels did not touch the ground. Nanquan recognized this… hence Nanquan's saying, "No, no. This is turned by the force of the wind and will ultimately decay and perish" (testing Nanquan's words—he had not expected to hit the mark with one test), and, "Zhangjing is it; you are not."

4. The several stories in this koan do no more than tell students of the Way the true principle of the Buddhadharma: "From birth to death, it is only this. Turn your head and shift your mind; seek nothing else."

[lvm]:

Having read this koan, why not read A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One's True Nature and see how it goes?

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

All right, thank you, Teacher! From now on, I will no longer concern myself with this family's affairs and that family's gossip. Yet one who enters through a gate cannot obtain the family treasure; his strength is insufficient.

At this point, should one not all the more practice correctly while seated, and contemplate things as they are when off the cushion… in the hope of direct realization? Only, one should no longer undertake the matter of nonattainment with a mind seeking attainment (there is nothing else), but simply practice: "In pursuing the Way, one diminishes day by day; diminish and diminish, until reaching non-contrivance. Through non-contrivance, nothing is left undone."

One should simply joyfully be a youth riding on an ox's back and playing a shepherd's flute. No longer be deluded by the scenery along the way (whatever is seen, heard, or felt… entails the duality of subject and object, and is no more than a scene); do not rejoice over gain or grieve over loss. Let inferential knowledge become direct knowledge, and what is raw become mature; naturally, without waiting, the melon ripens and its stem—the attachment—falls away.

The splendid universe is like a game of chess,

The blessings of humans and devas vainly become delusion.

It turns out that the Buddhadharma contains no great complexity;

Once freed from bonds and released from clinging, to whom can it be spoken?

It turns out that the Buddhadharma contains no great complexity; once freed from bonds and released from clinging, to whom can it be spoken? I pay homage to my root guru, Acharya Yuanyin; I pay homage to Teacher LVM.

[Earth-Heaven Tai]:

Well said, Youth! Even if you understand three thousand koans, it has nothing whatsoever to do with your fundamental task. Nowadays I often hear people say, "Their strength is insufficient." Yet they do not know why their strength is insufficient.

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

Although that is also true, it is not entirely so… You should know that the koans of old are also tools for guiding students to free themselves from bonds and release clinging. If you are attached to understanding koans, then not only will it have nothing to do with your fundamental task, but it will also have nothing to do with the koans themselves.

If one understands a koan and can continually examine oneself in the actual practice of the Buddhadharma, and put it into practice through that practice, then this is neither clinging to koans nor failing truly to understand them.

If one can do this, how can it be said to have nothing whatsoever to do with one's fundamental task? Even when the ancient worthies said, "Even if you understand three thousand koans, it has nothing whatsoever to do with your fundamental task," they merely meant that students should not put the cart before the horse; they were not criticizing the understanding of koans itself.

Otherwise, why would the teacher have posted this koan? Moreover, with each portion one puts into practice, one understands a corresponding portion. As it is said, travel ten thousand miles and read ten thousand volumes. Reading koans is itself a way of examining one's own practice. Did not the Elder keep a copy of The Armory of the Chan School beside his bed, annotate it in the margins, and comment on its subtleties?

As for why one's strength is insufficient: accumulated deluded attachments from many lives obscure one's mind (like a teapot that has not been washed for years: its tea stains cannot be entirely removed at once). When one first sees one's nature (what the Elder calls the fundamental dharmakāya, like a newborn infant), one's strength is inadequate and one cannot thoroughly break through ignorance. Hence it is said that one's strength is insufficient.

But Master Wang Xianglu put it well in Mind-Seal Sayings: "Although practitioners who have seen their nature have not yet eliminated their habitual tendencies, they differ from those who have not seen their nature, because they have a means. Yet others cannot discern this and often do not believe that they have seen their nature, criticizing them instead. If practitioners themselves have seen but not seen thoroughly, they too often doubt the foundation, and because their strength is insufficient, say that what they have realized is not correct. This is a grave error."

Explanation

[Earth-Heaven Tai]:

Well said, Brother Youth. :)

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

Teacher, please come in. [Editor's note: Here, "come in" means to enter and read the questions and answers below. This will not be explained individually hereafter.]

The matter I described this morning was not answered by the teacher for a long time. It lay across my chest, and today I could not help feeling uneasy again. On my way home, I suddenly wondered where I had landed. Ha ha! Since I was "no longer concerning myself with this family's affairs and that family's gossip," why did I still speak of "in the hope of direct realization"? This is plainly "undertaking the matter of nonattainment with a mind seeking attainment." And why did I still speak of "there is nothing else"?

What does it mean that in sages there is no increase, and in ordinary beings there is no decrease? All at once, I was relieved. Turning my gaze back upon myself,

I am originally complete and perfected. When has my Buddha-nature ever been far from me? (As it is said, the Way is not far from people; people themselves distance themselves from it.) When has my Buddha-nature lacked even the slightest bit? Why speak further of "in the hope of direct realization"? Even if there were some "light shining and earth shaking," some "empty space shattered and the great earth sinking flat," it would be dismissed with a single "Pah!" Hee hee! What else could this be but "empty space shattered and the great earth sinking flat"?!

Over these next few days, I will carefully reread the books of the Elder and the patriarchs several times. I will certainly make a diligent effort to cultivate and practice, so as not to fail others or myself.

[lvm]:

What you described this morning was not a question, so I did not join the discussion. What you describe now is likewise not a question; what could I possibly say?

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

It is truly rather strange… Teacher, please come in: After reading the master's A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One's True Nature, especially while writing the foregoing words, my mind was truly incomparably clear. I felt that I really lacked nothing at all. I immediately knew that such things as "empty space shattered and the great earth sinking flat" were merely deceptive dramatic words.

(It is laughable that I formerly thought there really was such a thing as “empty space shattered and the great earth sinking flat.”) But the next day I again became somewhat muddled (not entirely muddled, but simply unclear). Teacher, why is it that at one moment I am clear and at another muddled?

[Little Dong]:

Senior brother, I have this feeling too!

When reading Mahāmudrā, I feel extremely clear. When I read such phrases as “everywhere emits light,” I simply cannot raise the slightest doubt. But after a while, it becomes somewhat blurred again. I think the problem lies in “awareness and clarity”: once there is awareness, there is clarity, but if clarity is added to clarity, does one not become lost in it?

Senior brother, I have an understanding, though I do not know whether it is correct: simply do not seek at the point of discrimination. Whether there is clarity or vagueness, neither lies outside. If one seeks yet another thing, where could it be? Simply ignore it. Whether clear or vague, do not fall into it.

I have proceeded in this way. The day before yesterday, while eating, my doubting and deluded thoughts suddenly fell away for a moment. Suddenly, everything became utterly plain—plain to the extreme. Eating was simply eating. The flavor cannot be described. But after two or three hours, a joyful mind arose. In addition, I was busy organizing materials and occupied with this and that; then afflictions arose again. Afterward I went looking for that state, but could no longer find it. Better to let it go again.

I was just about to write to the teacher to hear the teacher’s view and ask for instruction. The teacher often tells me, “Jizi, do not enter the realm of the aggregates.” Once one discriminates, one falls into it. Teacher, is that right?

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

What is raw becomes mature, and what is mature becomes raw. Perhaps it is simply not yet mature, owing to habits formed over many lives. I would like to hear the teacher’s view.

[lvm]:

Of the five realms of the aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—let us speak only of the aggregate of feeling and the aggregate of perception:

Both grasping at such feelings as “empty space shattered and the great earth sinking flat” and rejecting such feelings are falling into the aggregate of feeling. The aggregate of feeling is not nonexistent, yet it is impermanent. In the end, those who grasp cannot retain it, and those who reject cannot drive it away. At times, one tells those who grasp to sweep it away; at times, one tells those who reject to recognize it. This is only medicine prescribed according to the illness of the moment. But whenever there are words, they have no real meaning.

It is originally thus, complete and present here and now. There is no need to grasp at it (to establish it), and no need to reject it (to slander it). The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra says: “When a bodhisattva abandons the two extremes—establishing and slandering—this is called the bodhisattva’s entry into the Ground of Joy.” (Quoted from memory; it may not be exact. If any Dharma brother finds the original passage, please post it here.)

“The moment one discriminates, one falls into it.” The problem lies in discrimination. Once one discriminates, one falls into the aggregate of perception. Those who discriminate ultimately become trapped in paradoxes they have constructed through their own misunderstandings and find it difficult to free themselves.

All these are caused by falling into delusions of views. The error of those who grasp is attachment to views; the error of those who reject is attachment to precepts and prohibitions; the error of those who discriminate is the view of the extremes.

Practitioners of heart esotericism engage in continuous and seamless contemplation off the meditation cushion and practice in accordance with the Dharma while seated. Over time, when the right trigger and conditions arise, the delusions of views naturally have the wondrous capacity to be utterly severed in an instant. At that time, without grasping at feelings, feelings are not absent; without rejecting feelings, feelings are not existent. Without discrimination, every particular is clear; with discrimination, all is seamlessly one. Only then can one truly understand the statement, “To speak of existence or nonexistence is all empty theorizing.”

[Lay Practitioner Zhaoguang]:

“Practitioners of heart esotericism engage in continuous and seamless contemplation off the meditation cushion and practice in accordance with the Dharma while seated. Over time, when the right trigger and conditions arise, the delusions of views naturally have the wondrous capacity to be utterly severed in an instant. At that time, without grasping at feelings, feelings are not absent; without rejecting feelings, feelings are not existent. Without discrimination, every particular is clear; with discrimination, all is seamlessly one. Only then can one truly understand the statement, ‘To speak of existence or nonexistence is all empty theorizing.’” When one’s practice reaches this point, is this not truly ascending to the stage of seeing the Way?

[lvm]:

There is no stage to ascend to; this is what is called “ascending to the stage of seeing the Way.”

The Diamond Sūtra says: “Subhūti, what do you think? Can a srotāpanna have the thought, ‘I have attained the fruit of a srotāpanna’? Subhūti replied, ‘No, World-Honored One. Why? A srotāpanna is called a stream-enterer, yet there is no entering. One does not enter into forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or dharmas; this is called a srotāpanna. Subhūti, what do you think? Can a sakadāgāmin have the thought, ‘I have attained the fruit of a sakadāgāmin’?”

Subhūti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? A sakadāgāmin is called a once-returner, yet in reality there is no returning; this is called a sakadāgāmin. Subhūti, what do you think? Can an anāgāmin have the thought, ‘I have attained the fruit of an anāgāmin’?” Subhūti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? An anāgāmin is called a non-returner, yet in reality there is no coming; therefore, it is called an anāgāmin. Subhūti,”

“what do you think? Can an arhat have the thought, ‘I have attained the path of arhatship’?” Subhūti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? In reality, there is no dharma called an arhat. World-Honored One, if an arhat were to have the thought, ‘I have attained the path of arhatship,’ that would be attachment to self, person, sentient being, and life span.”

[lvm]:

If one has not fallen into the aggregate of perception, where could “clarity” and “confusion” come from?

[Snow Mountain Youth]:

Oh! In fact, whether “clarity” or “confusion,” they are merely the feelings of awareness at the time. Since such feelings are inherently impermanent, “clarity” cannot remain clear forever, nor can “confusion” remain confused forever. If one discriminates and chooses or rejects, one has already fallen into the aggregate of perception. What the teacher says is absolutely right! If one has not fallen into the aggregate of perception, where could “clarity” and “confusion” come from? “Clarity” and “confusion” are no more than clear skies and rain; neither obstructs empty space. Thank you, Teacher!

[lvm]:

Clear skies and rain do not obstruct empty space.

[Xiao Dong]:

Teacher, I think this is not merely falling into the aggregate of perception; it is also mistaking the fixed star for one’s point of reference.

Because our habitual tendency to cling to appearances is extremely strong, without realizing it we follow after discursive consciousness. At such times, although one has recognized one’s intrinsic nature, that recognition becomes mere empty talk. Looking back, it seems that I have been making this mistake all along: I was simply going in circles with myself and aiming at the wrong target!

Intrinsic nature fundamentally has neither confusion nor nonconfusion. Yet, because of our habit of clinging to appearances, we grasp at something else and mistake something arising and ceasing for it. Unable to grasp it, we give rise instead to doubt; from doubt, afflictions arise.

In fact, once one knows “confusion,” intrinsic nature is already brightly illuminating. Whether there is confusion or clarity is merely like wind blowing across the moon; it has nothing to do with it.

Teacher, I have only now truly understood the letter you wrote to me at the very beginning!

[lvm]:

Have you ever heard the saying, “To recognize it and become attached is to be blind”? In fact, recognition is not the issue; one simply must not become attached.

[Xiao Dong]:

Yes, Teacher—recognition, too, has nothing to which it can attach!

[lvm]:

To put it that way is already attachment.

[21] Zhimen: Leaves Emerge, Flowers Bloom

[Case 21] Zhimen: Leaves Emerge, Flowers Enter

The Blue Cliff Record, Volume Three, by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

Prefatory Instruction: To raise the Dharma banner and establish the central tenet is to add flowers to brocade. To remove the halter and unload the pack from the horns is the way of peaceful times. If you can discern a phrase beyond all conventions, one instance illuminates three. If not, then as before, listen quietly for instruction.

[Case 21] The Case:

A monk asked Zhimen, “What is it like when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?” [The hook is set where there is no doubt. Washing clods in mud. Where did he get this news?]

Zhimen said, “Lotus flower.” [One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. He leaves everyone in the world doubting.]

The monk said, “What about after it has emerged from the water?” [Do not make a living in a ghost cave. Off he goes again in this way.]

Zhimen said, “Lotus leaf.” [Youzhou is still tolerable; Jiangnan is the hardest. Two ends and three sides—he makes everyone in the world laugh.]

If Zhimen were merely responding to circumstances and receiving people, it would still be somewhat off. But if he were cutting off the streams of all thought, then he would be a thousand or ten thousand miles away. Tell me: are the lotus before emerging from the water and after emerging from the water one or two? If you see it in this way, I grant that you have found an entry point.

Although this is so, if you say they are one, you crudely muddle Buddha-nature and blur suchness; if you say they are two, mind and object have not been forgotten, and you are traveling along the path of conceptual understanding. When will there be any rest? Tell me, what was the ancient’s intent? In truth, there are not so many matters. Thus Touzi said, “Simply do not become attached to a few words and phrases. If you understand all things, you will naturally not become attached, and there will be no such distinctions of rank and stage.”

You encompass all dharmas, but all dharmas cannot encompass you. Originally there is neither gain nor loss. Dreams and illusions have so many labels that one cannot forcibly assign them names. Could they deceive and frighten you all? Because you ask, there are words; if you did not ask, what could I say to you? You yourselves have brought all these matters here; they have nothing to do with me.

An ancient said, “To understand the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe the causes and conditions of the time.” Have you not seen Yunmen cite this: A monk asked Lingyun, “What was it like before the Buddha appeared in the world?” Lingyun raised his whisk. The monk said, “What about after he appeared in the world?” Lingyun again raised his whisk. Yunmen said, “The first strikes; the latter does not.”

He also said, “Without speaking of appearing or not appearing, where would there be an occasion for him to ask?” In the ancients’ single question and single answer, each response fitted the time and occasion; there was no such proliferation of concerns. If you seek words and chase phrases, it has no connection with the matter. Only if you can penetrate words through words, meaning through meaning, and function through function, letting them be freely at ease, will you see where Zhimen’s answer lies.

When asked, “What was it like before the Buddha appeared in the world?” “What was it like before Niutou saw the Fourth Patriarch?” “What was it like before the chaos within the mottled stone had divided?” or “What was it like before one’s parents were born?” Yunmen said: From ancient times until now, it has been only one matter—neither right nor wrong, neither gain nor loss, neither birth nor not-yet-birth. When the ancients reached this point, they left a thread of way by speaking of emergence and entry.

Those who have not yet understood grope along fences and walls, clinging to grasses and leaning on trees. If they are told to let go, they instead tumble into a vast, wild, desolate place. Those who have attained it do not rely on a single thing throughout the twenty-four hours. Yet even though they rely on nothing, if they reveal a single function or a single state, how can one trace them out?

The monk asked, “What is it like when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?” Zhimen said, “Lotus flower.” He simply met the question with an answer; it is indeed extraordinary. Teachers everywhere call this inverted speech, but how could it be so? Have you not seen Yantou say, “It is always more appropriate before one opens one’s mouth”? When the ancients revealed their functioning, they had already let something slip.

Students today do not understand the ancients’ intent and keep reasoning about emerging from the water and not emerging from the water. What connection does that have with it? Have you not seen a monk ask Zhimen, “What is the essence of prajñā?” Zhimen said, “A clam containing a bright moon.” The monk said, “What is the function of prajñā?” Zhimen said, “A rabbit carrying its young.” See how he answered: no one in the world could find the thread of his words.

If someone asked Jiashan, “What is it like when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?” he would simply answer, “Pillars and lanterns.” Tell me, are these the same as the lotus flower or different? “What about after it has emerged from the water?” He would answer, “The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one’s feet, the mud is too deep.” Tell me, is this so or not? Do not mistake the fixed star for the measure!

Xuedou was exceedingly compassionate. To shatter people’s habitual interpretive understanding, he composed this verse:

Lotus flower, lotus leaf—I tell you plainly. [A grandmotherly concern. A ready-made koan. Its literary color is already manifest.]

How does emerging from the water differ from not yet emerging? [Washing clods in mud. It is good to distinguish them, but do not blur them together.]

North of the Yangtze and south of the Yangtze, they ask Old Wang. [Where is the master of the house? Why ask Teacher Wang? You yourself have worn out your straw sandals.]

One fox doubts, and then another fox doubts. [Buried in one pit. The doubt is your own. The sense of doubt has not yet ceased. He strikes the clouds and says: “Do you understand?”]

Zhimen was originally from Zhejiang. He made the journey to Sichuan to study with Xianglin. Having thoroughly awakened, he returned and resided at Zhimen in Suizhou. Xuedou was his Dharma heir. His insight fully exhausted the mystery and reached the ultimate wonder, and he directly said, “Lotus flower, lotus leaf—I tell you plainly. How does emerging from the water differ from not yet emerging?” Here one must understand immediately. This mountain monk says, “What is it like before emerging from the water?” “Pillars and lanterns.”

“What about after it has emerged from the water?” “The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one’s feet, the mud is too deep.” Do not mistake the fixed star for the measure! People nowadays bite onto others’ words and phrases without limit. Tell me: what time is the time of emerging from the water? What time is the time of not yet emerging? If you see it here, I grant that you have personally met Zhimen.

Xuedou says: if you do not see it, then go north and south of the Yangtze to ask Old Wang. Xuedou means that you keep going north and south of the Yangtze, asking venerable masters about emerging from the water and not emerging from the water. South of the Yangtze, two more phrases are added; north of the Yangtze, two more phrases are added. Layer upon layer is added, and doubt is generated in turn. Tell me, when will you become free of doubt? Like a wild fox, full of doubts, walking on ice and listening for the sound of water—only if it makes no sound can it cross the river. If students of the Way are “one fox doubting, then another fox doubting,” when will they ever be at ease?

[Dingling]: May I ask the teacher:

1. What does “Youzhou is still tolerable; Jiangnan is the hardest. Two ends and three sides—he makes everyone in the world laugh” mean?

2. Why does he say, “The first strikes; the latter does not”?

3. What do “pillars and lanterns” symbolize?

4. How should we understand, “The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one’s feet, the mud is too deep”?

[lvm]:

You only need to connect it with the preceding and following context.

1. What does “Youzhou is still tolerable; Jiangnan is the hardest. Two ends and three sides—he makes everyone in the world laugh” mean?

* If it said, “The lotus flower is still tolerable; the lotus leaf is the hardest,” would that not be easier to understand? Is that not precisely “two ends and three sides”?

2. Why does he say, “The first strikes; the latter does not”?

* Raising the whisk strikes the time before the Buddha appeared in the world, but does not strike the time after he appeared.

3. What do “pillars and lanterns” symbolize?

4. How should we understand, “The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one’s feet, the mud is too deep”?

* “If someone asked Jiashan, ‘What is it like when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?’ he would simply answer, ‘Pillars and lanterns.’ Tell me, are these the same as the lotus flower or different? ‘What about after it has emerged from the water?’ He would answer, ‘The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one’s feet, the mud is too deep.’ Tell me,

is this so or not? Do not mistake the fixed star for the measure!" First tell me whom "Jiashan" refers to here, and then we can continue the discussion.

[Dingling]: In reply, Teacher:

Jiashan is the Chan master who said, "The dharmakāya is without form; the Dharma eye is without flaw," is he not?

[lvm]:

Here, "Jiashan" is a self-reference by Chan Master Yuanwu, the author of this book.

Open The Blue Cliff Record, and you can see:

The Blue Cliff Record, Volume One, by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

The master resided at Lingquan Chan Monastery on Jiashan in Fengzhou.

Commentary on Chan Master Xuedou Xian's Verses on Ancient Cases .....

Ancient Chan masters habitually used place names to address themselves or others. Also see Master Yuanyin's lectures on The Blue Cliff Record:

"Why is it called The Blue Cliff Record? In the Song dynasty, there was a great Chan patriarch, Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin. He lived on Jiashan in Yizhou, now Hunan. On the mountain was a rock the size of an abbot's quarters, called Blue Cliff Rock, and his own quarters were named Blue Cliff. In summer, he lectured to his students on Chan koans, encouraging them to apply themselves diligently. The students recorded the lectures, and when they were compiled into a book, it was called The Blue Cliff Record."

[Dingling]: Then why did Chan Master Yuanwu say, "Pillars and lanterns," and "The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff; beneath one's feet, the mud is too deep"?

[lvm]: Instead of saying "pillars and lanterns," would it be easier to understand if we said "pots, bowls, ladles, and basins"?

And then: "What about after it has emerged from the water?"

After emerging from the water—the sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff.

What about it? To actually ask "What about it?"—the mud beneath your feet is too deep!

[Dingling]:

Teacher, I am truly sorry; this fellow is stupid. What do lanterns and pots and bowls symbolize?

If you asked me, "What is it like before the flower emerges from the water?" I would answer: "The sun and moon hang from the tip of a staff."

[lvm]: What does "truly sorry" symbolize? The mud beneath your feet is too deep! Or, as one might say: You cannot wring water from sand!

[Dingling]: I bow in reverence to the teacher!

I am signing off. Please rest early, Teacher.

[lvm]: Good night!

[Fadai]: Having heard your words, I sit dazed for several minutes. I am merely a passerby on the internet and do not understand the profound flavor of Chan. I hope the teacher will instruct me.

[lvm]: I would not dare! I would not dare! Blame only my loose tongue.

[Fadai]: Sorry to have delayed your rest. Thank you!

[21] Case: A monk asked Zhimen, "What is it like before the lotus emerges from the water?" [The hook is set in the place of no doubt. Washing clods of earth in the mud. Where did this news come from?]

Teacher, could you put the words in brackets into plain modern language?

[lvm]:

You're welcome!

A monk asked Zhimen, “What is it like before the lotus emerges from the water?” [The hook is set in the place of no doubt. Washing clods of earth in the mud. Where did this news come from?]

* It may not necessarily be the character " " (hook). The original printing is blurred; even with a magnifying glass, I could not make out the strokes clearly. If any reader has a clear version, please post it here.

* These are three annotating remarks on the question, “What is it like before the lotus emerges from the water?” They may also be regarded as three evaluative comments: (1) “the place of no doubt”—if the mind-ground is free of doubt, then it will… (this concerns the unclear character, possibly “hook”); (2) “washing clods of earth in the mud”—the more one washes, the dirtier it gets, leaving everything in a muddle; that is, asking in this way will not lead to any answer; (3) “Where did this news come from?”—where did such a question suddenly come from?

[Xinming]:

Upon checking: there was nothing wrong with your magnifying glass; it is indeed " " (hook).

[Fadai]:

[21] Case: A monk asked Zhimen, “What is it like before the lotus emerges from the water?” [The hook is set in the place of no doubt. Washing clods of earth in the mud. Where did this news come from?]

Zhimen said, “Lotus.” [One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. He has perplexed everyone in the world.]

The monk said, “What about after it emerges from the water?” [Do not carry on in a ghost’s den. And off he goes again like that.]

Zhimen said, “Lotus leaf.” [Youzhou would still be all right; Jiangnan is the most bitter of all. Two ends and three sides—enough to make everyone in the world laugh to death.]

A monk asked, “How is one to see one’s nature?” The reply was, “See your own nature; seeing is itself nature.” He asked again, “What comes after seeing?” The master said to the disciple, “Safeguard and let it function.” The master laid everything out completely before his own teacher.

[lvm]: What is the source of this passage?

A monk asked, “How is one to see one’s nature?” The reply was, “See your own nature; seeing is itself nature.” He asked again, “What comes after seeing?” The master said to the disciple, “Safeguard and let it function.”

[Fadai]: One can see the Buddha even at night.

Teacher, I made this up on the basis of the foregoing passage. After reading Master Dazhu’s Introduction to Awakening to the Way, I was deeply moved and wished to follow in his footsteps. He instructed later students to act without mind, so that they might see the Buddha day and night. I read Master Yuanyin’s autobiography: when his foolish teacher asked him about the truth, he laid everything out completely. But when Master Yuanyin wrote books, he told later students to add safeguarding and letting be, thus adding further embellishments.

[lvm]: What do you mean by “seeing the Buddha”?

“A monk asked, ‘How is one to see one’s nature?’ The reply was, ‘See your own nature; seeing is itself nature.’ He asked again, ‘What comes after seeing?’ The master said to the disciple, ‘Safeguard and let it function.’ The master laid everything out completely before his own teacher.’”

Viewed from the standpoint of “yellow leaves to stop a child’s crying,” one often hears such things said. But viewed from the standpoint of “the place of no doubt,” it is plainly far, far off!

[Fadai]: I ask the teacher for instruction.

I meant that, despite his fatigue, the teacher instructed me late into the night; it was as though I had seen the Buddha face-to-face at night. When the teacher pointed out to me that I was using yellow leaves to stop a child’s crying, I suddenly could not answer. My thinking came to an impasse; the divisions of before and after were cut off, and I saw the Buddha’s Dharma body. Thus, it was as though I had seen the Buddha face-to-face at night.

[lvm]: Oh! So you mean the dharmakāya Buddha.

[Fadai]: A genuine teacher is rarely encountered, and such an opportunity in life is hard to come by. I ask the master to correct me.

Teacher, I know a woman in her seventies who has a malignant throat tumor. She is in pain and coughing up blood; medicine can no longer help her, and her condition has recently become critical. Yet she has studied Buddhism for many years and wishes to depart peacefully for the West, setting an example for later students. But life is unbearable, while death does not

come quickly; she tosses and suffers, lying in bed each day listening to Buddhist music of the six-syllable name. She does not know how to be reborn in the West and see the Buddha.

[lvm]: Tell her:

Just focus on being reborn in the West; do not worry about being composed. Even if you are not composed, you can still be reborn in the West. Once you have reached the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, you can become composed then.

[Twenty-Two] Xuefeng's Poisonous Snake of South Mountain

[Case 22] Xuefeng's Turtle-Nosed Snake of South Mountain

Introduction: The great square has no outside; the minute is as small as a neighboring mote. Seizing and releasing are not someone else's doing; opening and closing lie with oneself. If you wish to free yourself from adhesions and cast off bonds, you must erase your tracks and swallow your voice. Each person sits cutting off the vital pass; each stands like a sheer wall a thousand fathoms high. Tell me, whose realm is this? Let us cite it and see.

[Case 22] The Case:

Xuefeng addressed the assembly, saying, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake." [When the strange is not regarded as strange, its strangeness naturally collapses. It is indeed a most extraordinary matter; no wonder it makes people wonder.]

"All of you must look at it carefully." [Gobble it whole! What a complete exposure.]

Changqing said, "Today, many people in this hall will lose their bodies and lives." [The people of Puzhou send off a thief, treating him as one of their own.]

A monk reported this to Xuansha. [In the same pit there is no different soil; a servant sees a maid diligently at work. Those with the same ailment sympathize with one another.]

Xuansha said, "It must be Brother Leng to do this. Although that is so, I am not thus." [He cannot avoid displaying the understanding of a wild-fox spirit. What news is this? Its poisonous vapors injure people.]

The monk said, "How about you, Master?" [It is good, too, to press this old fellow.]

Xuansha said, "What use is South Mountain?" [Thank Third Brother Xie on the fishing boat. This wild-fox spirit is somewhat better still. He does not even know that he has lost body and life.]

Yunmen thrust his staff toward Xuefeng's face and made a gesture of fear. [What is there to fear from him? This one has personally attained it. Both are playing with vital spirits. All of you, try to distinguish it.]

If you spread it out flat, you may spread it out flat; if you smash it, you may smash it. Xuefeng traveled with Yantou and Qinshan. Altogether, he visited Touzi three times and Dongshan nine times. Later, when he studied under Deshan, he finally smashed through the lacquer bucket.

One day, he and Yantou went to visit Qinshan. Arriving at an inn on Mount Ao, they were detained by snow. Every day Yantou merely slept, while Xuefeng sat in meditation without interruption. Yantou shouted, "Hey! Go sleep! Every day on your bed, you are just like a village earth deity from some remote hamlet. One day you will go on deluding the men and women of other households!" Xuefeng thumped his chest and said, "I am not yet settled here; I do not dare conceal it from myself."

Yantou said, "I thought that later you would build a grass hut atop a solitary peak and spread the great teaching. Yet you still speak like this!" Xuefeng said, "I truly am not yet settled." Yantou said, "If that is truly so, then set forth, one by one, what you have seen. Where it is right, I will certify it for you; where it is not right, I will cut it away for you."

Xuefeng then cited how, on hearing Yanguan give a Dharma talk on the meaning of form and emptiness, he had gained an entry. Yantou said, "For the next thirty years, take care not to mention it." Xuefeng again cited how, upon seeing Dongshan's verse on crossing water, he had gained an entry. Yantou said, "If it is like this, you cannot even save yourself."

Later, on arriving at Deshan, he asked, "In the matter of the ancestral vehicle passed down from above, does this student have any share or not?" Deshan struck him with his staff and said, "What are you saying?" At that moment, it was as though the bottom had dropped out of a bucket.

Yantou then shouted, "Have you not heard it said, 'What enters through the gate is not a family treasure'?" Xuefeng said, "What, then, will it be in the future?" Yantou said, "If one day you wish to spread the great teaching, let it all flow forth from your own breast, covering heaven and earth for me." At these words Xuefeng had a great awakening and bowed. Rising, he repeatedly cried, "Today I have attained the Way at Mount Ao! Today I have attained the Way at Mount Ao!" Later he returned to Fujian and resided on Elephant-Bone Mountain. He wrote this verse for himself:

Human life passes swiftly, lasting but a moment; how can one dwell long in this floating world?

Having barely crossed the ranges, I had reached thirty-two; entering Fujian, I was already past forty.

Others' faults need not be raised again and again; one's own faults should be removed at once.

I report this to the high officials of the whole court: King Yama does not fear your golden fish pendants.

Whenever he ascended the hall to instruct the assembly, every word covered heaven and earth. He did not speak of the mysterious or the sublime, nor did he speak of mind or nature. It suddenly stands forth alone, like a great mass of fire: approach it and it burns your face. It is like the great sword Taie: if you venture toward it, you lose body and life. If you pause to think and deliberate, it has no connection with you.

For example, Baizhang asked Huangbo, "Where have you come from?" Huangbo said, "I have been gathering mushrooms beneath Mount Daxiong." Baizhang said, "Did you see a tiger?" Huangbo immediately made a tiger's roar. Baizhang picked up an axe and made a chopping gesture. Huangbo thereupon slapped Baizhang. Baizhang groaned and laughed, then returned and mounted the seat. He told the assembly, "There is a great tiger on Mount Daxiong. All of you must look out for it. This old monk has personally suffered one bite from it today."

Whenever Zhaozhou saw a monk, he would ask, "Have you been here before?" Whether the monk replied, "I have been here," or "I have not been here," Zhaozhou always said, "Go drink tea." The temple director said, "Master, whenever you ask monks whether they have been here or not, you always tell them to go drink tea. What is the meaning?" Zhaozhou said, "Temple director." The director responded. Zhaozhou said, "Go drink tea."

At Zihu's gate stood a signboard, on which was written: "Zihu has a dog. Above, it takes people by the head; in the middle, it takes them by the waist; below, it takes them by the feet. The slightest deliberation means losing body and life!" Whenever a newcomer arrived and had barely exchanged greetings, the master would shout, "Look out for the dog!" As soon as the monk turned his head, the master would return to his quarters.

It is exactly like Xuefeng's saying, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake. All of you must look at it carefully." At just such a time, how would you respond? Without following old tracks, please say it. Here, you must understand the phrase beyond all standards. When any words from any koan are brought up, you immediately know where they land.

See how he instructed the assembly in this way: he did not speak to you of practice or understanding. Can you still gauge it with discriminating consciousness? As descendants of his own household, they naturally spoke precisely. Thus an ancient said, "Upon receiving words, one must understand the source; do not establish rules for oneself." Words must go beyond standards; phrases must penetrate the barrier. If one's words do not leave their old nests and ruts, one falls into the sea of poison.

Xuefeng's instruction to the assembly in this way may be called a flavorless discourse that stops up people's mouths. Changqing and Xuansha were both members of his own household, and thus understood him when he spoke in this way. As for Xuefeng's saying, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake," do you all know where it lands? Here, one must possess an all-directional eye. Have you not seen Zhenjing's verse?

Beating drums and playing lutes, they meet as two who understand.

Yunmen can sing in harmony; Changqing knows how to follow along.

The ancient tune has no melody: the turtle-nosed snake of South Mountain.

Who knows its meaning? It is Xuansha, indeed.

As for Changqing's response in this way, tell me, what was his meaning? Here, one must be like a spark struck from flint, like a flash of lightning, before one can make contact with it. If even a hair's breadth remains that has not been exhausted, one cannot make contact with his meaning. What a pity that so many people give rise to interpretive feelings at Changqing's words, saying, "As soon as there is something heard in the hall, that is losing body and life."

Others say, "Originally there is not the slightest thing; on level ground he speaks such words merely to make people doubt. When people hear him say, 'On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake,' they begin to wonder." If you understand it this way, it still has no connection with it; you are merely making a living from his words. If it is not understood this way, then how should it be understood?

Later, a monk reported it to Xuansha. Xuansha said, "It must be Brother Leng to do this. Although that is so, I am not thus." The monk said, "How about you, Master?" Xuansha said, "What use is South Mountain?" Just look: in Xuansha's words there is a place to emerge. Thus he said, "What use is South Mountain?" If it had not been Xuansha, it would have been very difficult to respond.

As for his saying in this way, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake," tell me, where is it? Here, only one who has gone beyond can understand such speech. An ancient said, "Thank Third Brother Xie on the fishing boat; he does not prize the turtle-nosed snake of South Mountain."

Then we come to Yunmen, who thrust his staff toward Xuefeng's face and made a gesture of fear. Yunmen had the skillful hands and feet for handling snakes, without touching their sharp fangs. He struck the obvious point and also struck the hidden point. In his customary way of guiding people, he was like one dancing with the great sword Taie. At times he flew toward people's eyebrows and eyelashes; at times he flew three thousand miles away to take their heads. When Yunmen thrust his staff and made a frightened gesture, was he not also playing with vital spirits? Could he too have lost body and life? An accomplished Chan master never makes a living from a single word or phrase. Xuedou merely cherished the fact that Yunmen had intimately realized Xuefeng's meaning, and so he composed this verse:

Elephant-Bone Crag is high; no one reaches it. [Thousands upon thousands search, yet cannot feel their way to it. It is not your realm.]

One who reaches it must have the skill of handling snakes. [The expert recognizes the expert; the thief recognizes the thief. What are you doing, forming gangs and groups? You too must be of the same fire.]

Master Leng and Master Bei could do nothing about it. [They accepted the charge in full, letting one move pass.]

How many have lost body and life! [The offense is not punished twice; innocent people are implicated.]

Shaoyang knew. [He was somewhat better still. This old fellow had only one eye. The old fellow cannot avoid displaying his tricks.]

He again parted the grass. [What use is a man fallen among the weeds? Just so! Where is it? Strike!]

Nowhere in the four directions can it be sought. [Is there? Is there? Venerable, your eyes are blind.]

Suddenly it protrudes from the tip of the staff. [Look high and set your gaze. Strike!]

It is flung before Xuefeng's wide-open mouth. [You make it and suffer it yourself. It swallows thousands upon thousands—what good does that do? People everywhere cannot feel their way to it.]

Its wide-open mouth is like lightning. [A double koan. Just so. Fortunately, there is the final phrase.]

Though you raise your eyebrows, you still do not see it. [You have missed it! Throughout the five lakes and four seas, it is hard to find such a person. Where is he now?]

Now it is hidden before Milk Peak. [Where are you going? Even Xuedou goes through these comings and goings. This mountain monk too has suffered one bite today.]

Let all who come look for themselves as circumstances require. [Blind! Do not look beneath your heels. Look beneath this monk's heels. You have been struck by an arrow.]

The master shouted loudly, "Look beneath your feet!" [Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. What about the second point and the third? Repetition does not deserve a meal.]

"Elephant-Bone Cliff is so high that no one can reach it; whoever reaches it must be a skilled handler of snakes." Below Xuefeng Mountain is Elephant-Bone Cliff. Xuefeng's Chan thrusts were lofty and steep, and few could reach his level. Xuedou was one of his own household; their feathers and plumage were alike, they responded to one another in voice and sought one another as those of like spirit. Yet it still takes adepts who are versed in all directions to verify one another. This turtle-nosed snake is not easy to handle; one must know how to handle it. If one does not, one is instead injured by the snake. The former master Wuzu said: "With this turtle-nosed snake, one must have the knack beneath one's feet of neither injuring nor offending it; seize it at its vital point with a single grasp. Then one may walk hand in hand with this old monk."

Changqing and Xuansha had just such skill. Xuedou said, "Master Leng and Master Bei could do nothing about it." Many people say, "Changqing and Xuansha could do nothing about it; therefore Xuedou alone praised Yunmen." But this has no connection whatever! They do not realize that, among these three, there is no gain or loss in their functioning—only closeness and distance. Let me ask you all: where is the point at which "Master Leng and Master Bei could do nothing about it"? "How many have lost their bodies and lives?" This verse refers to Changqing's saying, "Today in this hall, many have lost their bodies and lives." Here, one must be a skilled handler of snakes. Examine it carefully.

Xuedou came from Yunmen's line, so he swept the others all aside for the moment and preserved Yunmen alone, saying, "Shaoyang knew how to clear away the grass once more." This was because Yunmen knew the point of Xuefeng's saying, "On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake," and therefore cleared away the grass again. When Xuedou's verse reaches this point, it has another subtlety: "There is nowhere in the four directions to seek it."

Where do you say it is? "Suddenly it protrudes from the tip of the staff"—it was here all along. But do not immediately set to work on the tip of the staff. Yunmen thrust his staff before Xuefeng's face in a threatening gesture; he used the staff as a turtle-nosed snake. At times he also said, "The staff transforms into a dragon and swallows heaven and earth whole."

Where, then, do mountains, rivers, and the great earth come from? It is merely one staff: at times it becomes a dragon, at times a snake. Why is this so? Only here does one understand the ancient saying, “The mind turns with the myriad circumstances; where it turns, its capacity is truly subtle.” The verse says: “Cast before Xuefeng, it opens its mouth wide.”

“Opening its mouth wide, like a flash of lightning.” Xuedou had abundant talent. Taking up Yunmen’s venomous snake, he said: this wide-open mouth is just like a flash of lightning. If you deliberate, you lose your body and your life. “Raise your eyebrows, and still it cannot be seen.” Where has it gone? Once Xuedou had composed the verse, he had to work for people at the living point, taking up and handling Xuefeng’s snake himself, freely killing or giving life as the occasion required.

Do you want to see it? He said, “Now it is hidden before Milk Peak.” Milk Peak is the name of Xuedou Mountain. Xuedou has a verse: “The rocks stand all around; the vast blue sea seems narrow. So lonely that even white clouds are not permitted to be white.” Though Changqing, Xuansha, and Yunmen could handle it, they never saw it. He then said: “Now it is hidden before Milk Peak; let each who comes see what is expedient.”

Xuedou was still entangled in fine distinctions. Rather than speaking, he acted at once, shouting loudly, “Look beneath your feet!” How many people from ancient times onward have taken it up and handled it? Tell me: has it ever harmed anyone, or has it not harmed anyone? The master then struck.

Xiao Dong : “Changqing said, ‘Today in this hall, many have lost their bodies and lives.’ Teacher, what did Changqing mean in replying this way?”

lvm : Changqing was a descendant of Xuefeng’s house, so naturally he spoke exactly right:

The turtle-nosed snake is an extremely venomous snake.

Xuefeng addressed the assembly: “On South Mountain there is a turtle-nosed snake. All of you must watch out carefully.”

Changqing said: “Today in this hall, many have lost their bodies and lives.”

Yuanwu said: “Xuefeng’s address to the assembly in this manner may be called tasteless talk that stops people’s mouths. Changqing and Xuansha were both members of his own household, and only they understood this manner of speaking.”

Xuefeng cast out tasteless talk, stopping people’s mouths. If Changqing’s response had some other ‘meaning’ in it, how could he still have “spoken exactly right”? Yuanwu said: “As for Changqing’s response in this manner, tell me: what meaning does it have? Here, it must be like sparks struck from stone or a flash of lightning before one can grasp it. If even the slightest trace remains unresolved, one cannot grasp what is his. What a pity that so many people generate sentimental interpretations from Changqing’s words …” So now, let us instead generate sentimental interpretations from Changqing’s words.

“As for Changqing’s response in this manner, tell me: what meaning does it have?”

* “Dragons beget dragons, phoenixes beget phoenixes; rats are born knowing how to dig holes.”

Xiao Dong : “Oh, so it was directed at that venomous snake!”

I have always felt that there would be nothing wrong with interpreting Changqing’s reply as having the same underlying import as “Smash it whole—what a complete disclosure!”

But once one starts thinking about it … oh no! I too have lost my body and life!

lvm : The turtle-nosed snake—whoever offends it loses body and life! See whether Changqing spoke exactly right.

“I have always felt that there would be nothing wrong with interpreting Changqing’s reply as having the same underlying import as ‘Smash it whole—what a complete disclosure!’”

* That will do! That will do!

“Oh no! I too have lost my body and life!”

* Congratulations! Congratulations!

Xiao Dong : “Congratulations! Congratulations! Teacher, what are you congratulating me for?”

Gesturing as though tossing something to the teacher. Teacher, will you catch it? Are you afraid of offending that turtle-nosed snake?

lvm : Didn’t you say it “has the same underlying import as ‘Smash it whole—what a complete disclosure!’”?

Ding Ling : “Teacher, is South Mountain a place name?”

Sudhana : Xuefeng releases a venomous snake; Changqing reveals a venomous fang.

Hehe, who knows who will come to seize it by its vital point?

Oh, oh—dangerous!

lvm : Xuansha removes South Mountain; Yunmen uses his staff to make a threatening display.

Look how lively this whole family has become.

xkyq : Brother Sudhana lays traps, and Teacher buries land mines. That is quite lively too.

Lvm : Adding water to the sea; adding flowers to brocade.

xkyq : Ha! I bow in homage to Teacher!

[23] Baofu: The Solitary Summit of the Wondrous Peak

[23] Baofu: The Solitary Summit of Wondrous Peak

Pointer: Jade is tested by fire, gold by a touchstone, a sword by hair, and water by a staff. But among patch-robed monks, a word or phrase, an occasion or circumstance, a coming forth or entering in, a pressing or probing—these are meant to reveal depth or shallowness, forwardness or backwardness. Tell me, by what are they tested? Please bring it forth and see.

[23] Case:

Baofu and Changqing were wandering in the mountains. [These two fellows have fallen into the weeds.]

Baofu pointed with his hand and said, “Right here is the summit of Wondrous Peak.” [Raising a heap of bones on level ground. Do not speak of it! Bury it deep in the earth.]

Changqing said, “It is so, but what a pity!” [Had he not possessed iron eyes and copper pupils, he would almost have been deceived. Those who share the same disease pity one another. Bury the two of them together in one pit.]

Xuedou added the remark: “What did we seek by wandering in the mountains with this fellow today?” [It does not hurt to diminish a person’s weight a little. Still somewhat better. A bystander grips his sword.]

He further said: “A hundred thousand years hence, it will not be absent; it will only be rare.” [Show off less! He too is an arhat of Yunju.]

Later, this was brought up to Jingqing. [There is good and bad.]

Jingqing said, “If it had not been for Master Sun, skulls would be strewn all over the fields.” [Only one who follows the same Way can know. The vast earth is boundless—enough to make one grieve to death. A servant finds a maid attentive. Even if Linji and Deshan had appeared, they too would have had to receive the staff.]

Baofu, Changqing, and Jingqing all inherited from Xuefeng. The three of them attained and realized alike; they saw and heard alike, raised up and employed alike. In their comings forth and entering in, they pressed and probed one another. This was because they were people born from the same branch: when one raised something up, the others immediately knew where it landed. In Xuefeng’s assembly, it was ordinarily only these three who engaged in question and answer. The ancients, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, kept this Way in mind; therefore, when something was raised, they immediately knew where it landed.

One day, while wandering in the mountains, Baofu pointed with his hand and said, “Right here is the summit of Wondrous Peak.” If Chan practitioners today were questioned in this way, their mouths would hang open like flat eaves. Fortunately, he encountered Changqing. Tell me, what was Baofu seeking by speaking thus? The ancients did this to test whether another had eyes or not. One of their own household would naturally know where it landed, and so replied, “It is so, but what a pity!” Tell me, what was Changqing’s intent in speaking thus? One must not go on in this manner all the way. Though it resembles it, it is rare indeed that there is not even the slightest matter; fortunately, Changqing saw through him.

Xuedou added the remark: “What did we seek by wandering in the mountains with this fellow today?” Tell me, where does this land? He further said: “A hundred thousand years hence, it will not be absent; it will only be rare.” Xuedou knew how to point directly to the heart, just as Huangbo said, “It is not that there is no Chan; there are simply no teachers.” Xuedou’s words are indeed steep and perilous. If voices did not resonate with one another, how could they be so solitary, lofty, and strange? This is what is called an added remark: it falls on both sides. Though it falls on both sides, it does not abide on either side.

Later, this was brought up to Jingqing. Jingqing said, “If it had not been for Master Sun, skulls would be strewn all over the fields.” Master Sun was Changqing’s lay surname. Is there not the case in which a monk asked Zhaozhou, “What is the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak?” Zhaozhou said, “This old monk will not answer you on this matter.” The monk said, “Why will you not answer it?” Zhaozhou said, “If I answered you, I fear it would fall onto level ground.”

The teachings say that Bhikṣu Deyun, on the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak, never came down from the mountain. Sudhana went to visit him but did not encounter him for seven days; then one day they met on another peak. When they met, Deyun expounded to him the Dharma gate of universally seeing the wisdom-light of all Buddhas throughout the three times in a single thought.

Since Deyun did not descend the mountain, why did they meet on another peak? If one says that he descended the mountain, the teachings say, “Bhikṣu Deyun has never descended the mountain; he has always remained on the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak.”

At this point, where exactly are Deyun and Sudhana? Later, Layman Li gave a fine disentangling explanation: “The solitary summit of Wondrous Peak is the single-flavor Dharma gate of equality. Each and every thing is true, each and every thing is complete; it alone stands revealed where there is neither gain nor loss, neither right nor wrong. Therefore Sudhana did not see him.” At the point that accords with one’s nature, the eye does not see itself, the ear does not hear itself, and the finger does not touch itself; just as a knife does not cut itself, fire does not burn itself, and water does not wash itself.

At this point, the teachings contain much compassionate elaboration for the sake of others. Therefore, they leave a single opening and, within the gate of the secondary meaning, establish guest and host, occasions and circumstances, questions and answers. Thus it is said: “The Buddhas do not appear in the world, nor is there nirvāṇa. To liberate sentient beings by expedient means, they manifest such matters.” Tell me, in the end, how can one avoid Jingqing’s and Xuedou’s speaking in this way? At the time, they could not respond in perfect accord, and so skulls were strewn across the entire earth. Jingqing verified it in this way; those two employed it in this way; and Xuedou later brought it out in verse, making it still more radiant. The verse says:

On the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak, the grass grows thick. [His whole body has vanished into it. Beneath his feet it is already several fathoms deep.]

Having grasped it clearly, to whom does one entrust it? [What use is it for? No one on earth knows. What use is a dried shit-stick? Having grasped the nostrils, he has lost the mouth.]

Had Master Sun not discerned the true point, [Wrong! Watch the arrow! He has been caught by thieves and does not even know it.]

How many would know skulls strewn upon the ground? [They will never live again. Like hemp and millet. Ācārya, having grasped the nostrils, you have lost the mouth.]

On the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak, the grass grows thick. Rolling about in the grass—when will there be an end to it? Having grasped it clearly, to whom does one entrust it? Where is the place of clarity? This verse praises Baofu’s words, “Right here is the summit of Wondrous Peak.” Had Master Sun not discerned the true point—what principle did Master Sun see when he said, “It is so, but what a pity”? As for “How many would know skulls strewn upon the ground?”—do all of you know? Blind!

[Dingling]: Teacher, what does “A hundred thousand years hence, it will not be absent; it will only be rare” mean figuratively?

[Lvm]: This is not figurative. The present is already “a hundred thousand years hence”—are there many of them?

[Xinming]: Sudhana was able to meet him on another peak. May I ask: what does the other peak here signify? [Editor’s note: Bold type indicates the title of the speaker’s post; this will not be noted separately below.]

Original text:

The teachings say that Bhikṣu Deyun, on the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak, never came down from the mountain. Sudhana went to visit him but did not encounter him for seven days; then one day they met on another peak. When they met, Deyun expounded to him the Dharma gate of universally seeing the wisdom-light of all Buddhas throughout the three times in a single thought.

Since Deyun did not descend the mountain, why did they meet on another peak? If one says that he descended the mountain, the teachings say, “Bhikṣu Deyun has never descended the mountain; he has always remained on the solitary summit of Wondrous Peak.”

At this point, where exactly are Deyun and Sudhana? Later, Layman Li gave a fine disentangling explanation: “The solitary summit of Wondrous Peak is the single-flavor Dharma gate of equality. Each and every thing is true, each and every thing is complete; it alone stands revealed where there is neither gain nor loss, neither right nor wrong. Therefore Sudhana did not see him.” At the point that accords with one’s nature, the eye does not see itself, the ear does not hear itself, and the finger does not touch itself; just as a knife does not cut itself, fire does not burn itself, and water does not wash itself.

Does this refer to an expedient Dharma gate?

[Lvm]: Ha ha! At this point, how could there still be any “expedient” or “ultimate”?

[Xinming]: Yesterday, while wandering in the mountains, I did not realize that I had already become a skull upon the ground. Thank you, Teacher, for rescuing me!

[Sudhana]: On the bridge one sees only the tracks of donkeys and horses; who would dare walk upon the imperial thoroughfare?

Great Hero Peak symbolizes the ultimate ground of reality. There, not a single dharma is established: it cannot be seen by seeing or known by knowing. Another peak symbolizes the expedient Dharma gates within the myriad practices, where carts and horses may, to some extent, pass privately; therefore Deyun and Sudhana are permitted to meet and discuss matters there.

Even so, one must penetrate the ultimate through expedient means and integrate expedient means within the ultimate. Thus, while sitting alone on Great Hero Peak, one may at the same time manifest oneself universally on other peaks to teach and transform beings.

Hehe—this too is tangled elaboration.

[24] Iron Millstone's Sharp and Steep Edge

24 Liu Tiemo's Sharp and Steep Edge

Pointer: Standing atop the highest peak, even demons and outsiders cannot know you; moving along the deepest ocean floor, even the Buddha-eye cannot see you. Even if your eyes are like shooting stars and your responsive activity like lightning, you still cannot avoid the divine turtle dragging its tail. What should one do upon reaching this point? Let us examine it.

24 Case:

Liu Tiemo came to Weishan. Not easy to approach. This old woman does not keep to her proper place.

Weishan said, "Old cow, you have come?" A hit! Probing with the pole, stirring the grass. Where do you see anything aberrant?

Tiemo said, "Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?" The arrow never misses. Tang beats the drum; Silla dances. Letting go is too swift; drawing back is too slow.

Weishan threw himself down and lay there. Right in the middle! From where do you see Weishan? Who would know that beyond the distant mist and waves there are other fine designs?

Tiemo immediately left. Too far. She acted upon seeing the opportunity.

Liu Tiemo was a nun.

Like striking a spark from a stone, like a flash of lightning: the moment one deliberates, one loses one's body and life. When the Chan Way reaches its vital point, where is there room for so many complications? When adepts meet, it is like seeing a horn over a wall and knowing it is an ox, or seeing smoke beyond a mountain and knowing there is fire. Press them, and they move; hold them down, and they turn. Weishan said: "After this old monk has lived out his hundred years, I shall become a water buffalo in the household of a donor at the foot of the mountain, with five characters written beneath its left flank: 'Monk So-and-so of Weishan.' Now, at just such a time, would calling it 'Monk of Weishan' be correct, or would calling it 'water buffalo' be correct?" When people nowadays are questioned about this, they are sure to be unable to explain it.

Liu Tiemo had long practiced under a master. Her responsive edge was sharp and steep, and people called her Liu Tiemo. She built a hut ten li from Weishan. One day she went to visit Weishan. Seeing her arrive, Weishan said, "Old cow, you have come?" Tiemo said, "Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?" Weishan immediately threw himself down and lay there. Tiemo immediately left.

Look at them: it seems just like ordinary conversation, yet it is neither Chan nor the Way. Can you understand it as being about nothing? Mount Tai was thousands of li away from Weishan. Why, then, did Liu Tiemo invite Weishan to the feast? Tell me, what was her intent? This old woman understood Weishan's words: thread coming and thread going, one letting go and one drawing in, reciprocally answering each other in song. It was like two mirrors facing each other, with no image to be seen.

Each responsive move matched the other; every phrase corresponded. People nowadays cannot turn back even after three exchanges. This old woman could hide nothing from him. This was not the discriminating view of conventional truth. Like a bright mirror set upon its stand, like a bright pearl held in the palm: when a Hu comes, a Hu appears; when a Han comes, a Han appears. They knew of the matter that goes beyond, and therefore were thus.

Nowadays people persist in taking it as a matter of nothing. Chan Master Dayan, the Fourth Patriarch, said, "Do not treat what is as something as though it were nothing; often, affairs arise from what is taken as nothing." If you penetrate it through practice, you will see that they spoke just as ordinary people speak. Most people are obstructed by words and therefore do not

understand. Only one who knows the sound can understand them. For example, Qianfeng addressed the assembly, saying, “Raise one; you cannot raise two.

Let go of one move, and you fall into the second.” Yunmen stepped forth from the assembly and said, “Yesterday a monk came from Tiantai and then went on to Nanyue.” Qianfeng said, “Today the steward of provisions will not receive the general invitation.” Look at these two: when letting go, both let go; when drawing in, both draw in. In the Weiyang school this is called, “When the wind stirs the dust and grass in the realm, thoroughly investigate their traces.” It is also called “a phrase separated by the body”: the meaning communicates, but the words are apart. At this point, one must turn left and turn right; only then is one an adept.

Once rode an iron horse into a fortified city, A battle-hardened adept, a frontier general, with the seven implements upon his person.

An imperial edict descends, proclaiming the six kingdoms at peace. A dog carries the pardon decree in its mouth. The Son of Heaven within the realm. Yet what can be done when the seas are calm and the rivers clear?

Still gripping a golden whip, he asks a returning traveler, What news is this? One staff supported by two people; they invite one another to go together and return together.

Who walks with him along the imperial street late at night? You go toward Xiaoxiang; I go toward Qin. Tell me, what are they walking for?

Xuedou’s verse is regarded in all quarters as the ultimate standard. Among the hundred verses, this one possesses the most complete underlying logic. Its excellence lies in its intimate and lucid rendering of the case.

“Once rode an iron horse into a fortified city” praises Liu Tiemo’s coming in just this way.

“An imperial edict descends, proclaiming the six kingdoms at peace” praises Weishan’s questioning in just this way.

“Still gripping a golden whip, he asks a returning traveler” praises Tiemo’s words: “Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?”

“Who walks with him along the imperial street late at night?” praises Weishan’s immediately throwing himself down and lying there, and Tiemo’s immediately leaving.

Xuedou possessed such talent: at urgent points he versified urgently, and at leisurely points he versified leisurely. Fengxue also took up this case, in the same spirit as Xuedou. All quarters praise this verse: “Standing atop the highest peak, even demons and outsiders cannot know you; moving along the deepest ocean floor, even the Buddha-eye cannot see you.” Look at it: one threw himself down and lay there; the other immediately left. Had they circled about further, neither would have found the way.

The finest meaning in Xuedou’s verse is “Once rode an iron horse into a fortified city.” If they had not attained and realized the same thing, how could they have been thus? Tell me, what meaning did they attain? Have you not seen a monk ask Fengxue, “What was Weishan’s intent in saying, ‘Old cow, you have come?’” Fengxue said, “In the depths of white clouds, a golden dragon leaps.

” The monk said, “What was Liu Tiemo’s intent in saying, ‘Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?’” Fengxue said, “Within the heart of blue waves, a jade rabbit starts in alarm.” The monk said, “Weishan then assumed a reclining posture. What was his intent?” Fengxue said, “In his old age, idle and at ease on a day with nothing to do, he sleeps leisurely, lying high before green mountains.” This meaning, too, accords with Xuedou’s.

Yongshou Tongzi : Teacher, what does “often, affairs arise from what is taken as nothing” mean?

Lvm : Because in “persisting in taking it as a matter of nothing,” he has already created an affair.

Yongshou Tongzi : Only when one understands the divine turtle dragging its tail does one know of the matter that goes beyond.

Xiao Dong : Congratulations, senior brother, on receiving an invitation to the great communal feast at Mount Tai. Are you going or not?

Yongshou Tongzi : The lamp has gone out and people are quiet; this is just the time for reading at night.

Lvm : Fine line! Fine line!

Yongshou Tongzi : Teacher, when I read at night, I do not eat a late-night snack.

Lvm : Just do not let the late-night snack eat you.

Yongshou Tongzi : Oh no, I have been swallowed by an apple. Senior Brother Ermao, save me!

Sudhana : Ha ha—have another pear!

Xinming : What does “letting go is too swift; drawing back is too slow” mean?

lvm : Weishan lets go; Liu Tiemo draws back.

Weishan said, “Old cow, you have come?”—it arrives right before one’s eyes at once; is that not “swift”?

Tiemo said, “Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?”—Weishan and Mount Tai are separated by thousands of li; is that not “slow”?

Xinming : Why use the word “too”? It should not be derogatory, should it?

Lvm : No one said it was derogatory.

Yongshou Tongzi : Is it meant to convey an expansive, sweeping momentum?

It seems that compilers of Chan masters’ recorded sayings favored this style: the writing is lively, the actions exaggerated. Is this meant to have the effect of the staff and shout?

lvm : Then let us compare the prompting remarks and inserted comments:

Yuanwu’s prompting remarks say: “This old woman understood Weishan’s words: thread coming and thread going, one letting go and one drawing in, reciprocally answering each other in song. It was like two mirrors facing each other, with no image to be seen. Each responsive move matched the other; every phrase corresponded. People nowadays cannot turn back even after three exchanges. This old woman could hide nothing from him. This was not the discriminating view of conventional truth. Like a bright mirror set upon its stand, like a bright pearl held in the palm: when a Hu comes, a Hu appears; when a Han comes, a Han appears. They knew of the matter that goes beyond, and therefore were thus.”

Yuanwu’s inserted comment says: “The arrow never misses. Tang beats the drum; Silla dances. Letting go is too swift; drawing back is too slow.”

“This old woman could hide nothing from him. This was not the discriminating view of conventional truth. Like a bright mirror set upon its stand, like a bright pearl held in the palm: when a Hu comes, a Hu appears; when a Han comes, a Han appears. They knew of the matter that goes beyond”—this is “the arrow never misses.”

“This old woman understood Weishan’s words: thread coming and thread going, one letting go and one drawing in, reciprocally answering each other in song. It was like two mirrors facing each other, with no image to be seen. Each responsive move matched the other; every phrase corresponded.”

Weishan’s letting go—“Old cow, you have come?”—is “Tang beats the drum.”

Liu Tiemo’s drawing in—“Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the monk go?”—is “Silla dances.”

As people today would understand it, it would be a dialogue like this: “Letting go is it; there is nothing else.” “Understood.” Yet if one spoke in this way, would that not be precisely, “Do not treat what is as something as though it were nothing; often, affairs arise from what is taken as nothing”? Look at these two ancient people: they laid out this true meaning completely, leaving not the slightest trace.

Once this is understood, look again at “letting go is too swift; drawing back is too slow.” Where is there any praise or blame? It has an altogether different flavor.

Appendix: An Annotated Explanation from Arsenal of the Chan School:

Original Text of the Koan

After awakening, Yuanwu resided at Zhaojue. An elder asked about “Liu Tiemo’s exchange with Weishan” and “Xuedou’s Verse on Walking on the Imperial Street,” saying, “What is the meaning of this?” Yuanwu said, “Even if this old monk practiced for another forty years, I still would not reach Xuedou’s level.” The elder sighed and said, “If the monk of Zhaojue speaks thus, how much more so the rest of us!”

The Weighing Stone of the Annotated Explanation

Later, Chan Master Yuanwu served as abbot of Zhaojue Monastery. An elder raised the case of “Liu Tiemo’s exchange with Weishan” together with “Xuedou’s Verse on Walking on the Imperial Street” and asked what it meant. This is Case Twenty-Four of Xuedou’s Verses on Ancient Cases:

Twenty-Four Case:

Liu Tiemo came to Weishan.

Guishan said, “Old cow, you have come.”

Liu Tiemao said, “Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the Reverend be going?”

Guishan threw himself down and lay there. Tiemao then left.

Xuedou’s “Song of the Imperial Street”:”

Once he rode an iron horse into a heavily fortified city; when the imperial edict came down, word spread that the six states were pacified. Still holding a golden whip, he asks the returning traveler: Deep in the night, with whom does he walk along the imperial street?

“Once he rode an iron horse into a heavily fortified city”—Liu Tiemao arrives at Guishan.

“When the imperial edict came down, word spread that the six states were pacified”—“Old cow, you have come.”

“Still holding a golden whip, he asks the returning traveler”—“Tomorrow there will be a great communal feast at Mount Tai. Will the Reverend be going?”

“Deep in the night, with whom does he walk along the imperial street?”—Guishan threw himself down and lay there. Tiemao then left.

The verse is interwoven with the koan in every strand. Chan Master Yuanwu said: “Among the hundred verses, this one has the most coherent reasoning. Its subtlety is supreme: it fits the case closely and brings it out with clarity.” In The Blue Cliff Record, Chan Master Yuanwu expounds this encounter with the utmost fullness.

Now, when an elder asked him about this, Yuanwu did not answer with words from The Blue Cliff Record. Instead, he said, “Even if this old monk were to continue investigating for forty years, I still would not reach Xuedou’s level.”

If he truly could not reach Xuedou’s level, how could he have explained Xuedou’s verse so fully? Why did he say this? Take note: “continue investigating for forty years”! Investigating is precisely practice.

The Way lies in awakening, not in practice! This elder had not understood Chan Master Yuanwu’s meaning. Thinking that Yuanwu truly did not know, he sighed and said: “Even the renowned Reverend Zhaojue says this—how much more so other people!” He always felt that there must be some further profundity here. Since that was so, he should honestly “continue investigating for forty years.”

[25] The Hermitage Master Enters Directly, Carrying His Staff Crosswise

[Case 25] The Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak Carries His Staff Horizontally and Goes Straight Ahead

The Instruction says: If one's responsive capacity does not depart from its fixed position, one falls into the poisonous sea; if one's words do not startle the assembly, one sinks into the common rut. If, amid a spark struck from stone, one can distinguish black from white, and within a flash of lightning discern killing from giving life, one can sit cutting off the ten directions and stand like a wall a thousand ren high. Do you know of such a time? Let us raise the case and see.

[Case 25] The Case:

The Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak held up his staff and showed it to the assembly, saying: [Look! There is an eye atop the head. Yet this too is a den in which people of the time nest.]

“Why, when the ancients reached here, would they not remain?” [One must not drive a peg into empty space. Provisionally, a phantom city is established.]

The assembly was speechless. [Thousands upon thousands, as numerous as hemp and millet seeds. Yet they fall a little short. What a pity! A whole flock of fine falcons.]

He answered in their stead: “Because their wayfaring strength is inadequate.” [If you distinguish it while still on the road, you are nevertheless half a month's journey away. Even if you have strength, what can you do with it? How could there be not even one person?]

He further said: “After all, how is it?” [Thousands upon thousands merely sit right here. Among thousands upon thousands, one or two understand.]

Again answering in their stead, he said: “Carrying the staff horizontally without heed for anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” [Thirty blows would be fitting for him too, simply because he carries a board on his shoulder. If one sees cheeks behind the head, do not associate with him.]

Can you all still discern the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak? His heels have not even touched the ground!

At the beginning of the dynasty, he set up a hermitage on Lotus Peak of Tiantai. After the ancients attained the Way, they spent their days in thatched huts and stone chambers, cooking wild vegetable roots in broken-legged cauldrons. They sought neither fame nor gain, but lived freely in accord with conditions. When they offered a turning word, it was only to repay the kindness of the Buddhas and patriarchs and transmit the Buddha Mind-Seal.

Whenever he saw a monk approaching, he would immediately raise his staff and say, “Why, when the ancients reached here, would they not remain?” For more than twenty years, before and after, no one ever answered it. This single question contains both provisional and actual, illumination and function. If you know the lines he has drawn, there is no need for further probing.

Tell me, then: why did he ask in this manner for twenty years? Since this was the act of a Chan master, why did he merely hold to one stake? If you see it within this, naturally you will not run after the dust of emotional entanglements. During those twenty years, how many people laid out their words before him and presented their understanding, exhausting all their tricks. Even if someone could speak it, he would not reach its ultimate point. Moreover, although this matter is not found within words and phrases, without words and phrases it cannot be discerned. Is this not why it is said: “The Way is originally wordless; through words the Way is made manifest”? Thus, where one tests a person for the real thing, one knows a true note as soon as it is uttered. When the ancients offered a word or half a phrase, it was for no other reason than to see whether you knew that there is something or did not know that there is something.

Seeing that people did not understand, he therefore answered in their stead: “Because their wayfaring strength is inadequate.” Consider how he spoke it: it naturally accords with both principle and capacity. When did he ever lose the central meaning? An ancient said, “In receiving words, one must understand the essential principle; do not establish rules for yourself.” People nowadays simply charge ahead, and that is all. They may attain something, but alas, they remain muddled and confused.

If, before a genuine master, one were tested by the Three Essential Phrases—the seal in empty space, the seal in mud, and the seal in water—one would be like a square peg fitted into a round hole, with nowhere to settle. When one comes to this point, where can one seek someone who has attained and realized the same thing? If one is a person who knows that there is something, what harm is there in opening one's heart and communicating some news? If one does not encounter such a person, then simply roll it up and keep it within. Let me ask you all: a staff is what a patch-robed monk ordinarily uses, so why does he say, “Their wayfaring strength is inadequate,” and, “When the ancients reached here, they would not remain”? In truth, though gold dust is precious, if it falls into the eye, it becomes a cataract.

Chan Master Shishi Shandao, when he was subject to the suppression of the saṅgha, would often show his staff to the assembly and say: “The Buddhas of the past were thus; the Buddhas of the future will be thus; the Buddhas presently before us are thus.” One day, before the monks' hall, Xuefeng raised his staff and showed it to the assembly, saying: “This is only for people of middling and lesser capacities.” At that time a monk came forward and asked, “What if a person of the highest capacity should come?” Xuefeng raised his staff and left.

Yunmen said, “I am not like Xuefeng, who smashes everything to pieces.” A monk asked, “How then does the Master respond?” Yunmen immediately struck him. In general, investigating and inquiring are not such complicated matters. It is because you outwardly see mountains, rivers, and the great earth; inwardly see seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing; above, see Buddhas to seek; and below, see sentient beings to liberate.

You must spit all this out at once. Then, throughout the twelve periods of the day, in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, become continuous and undivided. Though upon the tip of a single hair, it is as vast as the great thousandfold world-system. Though amid boiling cauldrons and burning coals, it is as though in a land of peace and bliss. Though amid the seven treasures and eight precious things, it is as though beneath a thatched hut amid wild grasses. If one is a master of every direction in such matters, then upon reaching the actual ground of the ancients, one naturally expends no effort.

Seeing that no one could reach his level, he again questioned himself: “After all, how is it?” Yet there was nothing to be done about it. He himself said: “Carrying the staff horizontally without heed for anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” What is the meaning of this? Tell me, what place does it point to as the ground? It is not without an eye within the words and an intent beyond the words: raising himself and toppling himself, releasing himself and gathering himself in.

Have you not seen how Venerable Yanyang encountered a monk on the road, raised his staff, and said, “What is this?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a single staff.” Yanyang then jabbed the staff once into the ground and said, “Do you recognize it now?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a hole in the ground.” Yanyang then carried the staff across his shoulder and said, “Do you understand?” The monk said, “I do not understand.” Yanyang said, “Carrying the staff horizontally without heed for anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.”

Why, when the ancients reached here, would they not remain? Xuedou composed this verse: “Who meets the occasion? To raise it is no deception, yet such a one is rare. It destroys the steep and lofty; it melts away the mysterious and subtle. The heavy barrier has once been thrown wide open, but masters have not all returned together. The jade rabbit is now full, now waning; the golden crow seems to fly, yet not to fly. Where has Elder Lu gone? White clouds and flowing water linger together.”

Why does this mountain monk say, “If one sees cheeks behind the head, do not associate with him”? The moment you begin calculating, you are carrying on in the ghost cave of the Black Mountain. If you see through it completely and trust it fully, then even a thousand or ten thousand people cannot enclose you or do anything to you. When moved or pressed, there is naturally killing and giving life.

Xuedou understood his meaning in saying, “He goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks,” and only then composed the verse. To know where it comes down, look at Xuedou's verse:

Sand and dust in the eyes, earth in the ears. [Three hundred muddleheaded ones beneath the eaves. How could there be any limit to such blundering and bumbling? And there are still fellows like this.]

Among a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks, he will not remain. [Where are you going? Tell me, what news is this?]

Falling flowers and flowing water: vast and boundless. [What fine news! The opportunity is like lightning; it is futile to stand waiting and think. Looking left, a thousand lives; looking right, ten thousand eons.]

Where does he go, lifting his eyebrows? [Another pair of eyes is bestowed beneath your heels. It turns out to be only right here. Can you cut off the hermitage master's heels? Although this is so, you must still reach this ground. A blow is given: Why is it only right here?]

Xuedou's verse is excellent. It has a place to turn around and does not cling to one corner. Thus he says, “Sand and dust in the eyes, earth in the ears.” This line praises the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak. When a patch-robed monk reaches this point, above there is nothing to look up to, and below even one's own self is cut off; at all times one is as if foolish and inert. Did not Nanquan say, “Among those who study the Way, a person as foolish and dull as this is difficult to find.”

Chan Yue's poem says, “I often recall Nanquan's fine words: such foolish and dull persons are indeed rare.” Fadeng said, “Who knows this meaning? It makes me remember Nanquan.” Nanquan also said, “Seven hundred eminent monks all understand Buddhadharma; only the lay practitioner Lu did not understand Buddhadharma. He understood only the Way, and thus received the robe and bowl.” Tell me, how far apart are Buddhadharma and the Way?

Xuedou commented: “No sand may enter the eyes, and no water may enter the ears. If there is a fellow who trusts it fully, holds it fast, and refuses to be deceived by others, then what are the teachings of the patriarchs and Buddhas but the sound of a hot bowl clattering? He may then hang up his bag and bowl, break his staff, and assuredly become a person of the Way with nothing to do.” He further said: “One may put Mount Sumeru into the eyes and the water of the great ocean into the ears.”

“There are certain fellows who let others deliberate for them. The teachings of the patriarchs and Buddhas are, for them, like a dragon gaining water or a tiger leaning against a mountain. Yet they must pick up their bag and bowl and carry their staff across their shoulders; they too are persons of the Way with nothing to do.” He further said: “This way will not do; not this way will not do either. Then there is no connection at all.”

Among these three persons of the Way with nothing to do, if one were to choose one as teacher, it would have to be a fellow cast from raw iron like this. Why? Whether he encounters adverse circumstances or extraordinary circumstances, before him they are all like dream-images. He does not know of the six sense faculties, nor does he know morning from evening. Even if you reach such a state, be sure not to cling to cold ashes and dead embers, sinking into utter darkness. You must also have a path for turning around. Did not an ancient say, “Do not abide on a cold cliff where strange grasses are green; to sit beneath white clouds is not the wondrous teaching”? This is why the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak said, “Because their wayfaring strength is inadequate.”

You must go into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks. Tell me, what is meant by a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks? Xuedou loved only his saying, “Carrying the staff horizontally without heed for anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks,” and therefore composed this verse.

Tell me, where does he go? Is there anyone who knows where he goes? “Falling flowers and flowing water: vast and boundless”—flowers fall in profusion, and the flowing water is boundless. The opportunity is like lightning! What is before your eyes?

“Where does he go, lifting his eyebrows?” Why does Xuedou also not know where he goes? Just as this mountain monk just now raised the whisk—tell me, where is it now? If you all see this, you are fellow practitioners with the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak. If not, beneath the three roof-beams and before the seven-foot sitting platform, try investigating it carefully.

[Xinming]: “Why, when the ancients reached here, would they not remain?”

Teacher, why would people of ancient and modern times not remain? Is it that one kind of person lingers nearby, not daring to stay, while another rests here for a while, realizes it is not a place for prolonged residence, then leaves and continues on?

[Shancai]: “Where there is a Buddha, hurry past; where there is no Buddha, do not linger.”

[lvm]: The Diamond Sūtra says:

A bodhisattva should thus abide and thus subdue the mind:

One should give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.

One should give rise to a mind that abides nowhere.

[Shancai]: First, three questions:

1) "…If, before a genuine master, one were tested by the Three Essential Phrases—the seal in empty space, the seal in mud, and the seal in water…" Are these Three Essential Phrases those of Patriarch Linji?

2) "Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?" He answered on their behalf: "Because they lacked strength for the journey." Since they lacked strength for the journey, why did they not rest, but were still unwilling to remain?

3) "Can any of you distinguish the hermit master of Lotus Peak? His heels have not yet touched the ground!" Does "not yet touched the ground" refer to the hermit master's heels not touching the ground, or does it mean that even if you can distinguish him, your own heels have not touched the ground?

Hehe~ There are three more questions; I'll ask them in the next class.

[lvm]:

1) "…when you come before an accomplished master, test him with the Three Essential Phrases: the seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water…" Are these Three Essential Phrases the Three Essentials of Patriarch Linji?

* The seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water are precisely the Three Essential Phrases.

2) "Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?" He answered on their behalf: "Because they lacked strength for the journey." Since they lacked strength for the journey, why did they not rest, but were still unwilling to remain?

* If you understand that "the road itself is home," you will know that these are not two separate matters.

3) "Can any of you distinguish the hermit master of Lotus Peak? His heels have not yet touched the ground!" Does "not yet touched the ground" refer to the hermit master's heels not touching the ground, or does it mean that even if you can distinguish him, your own heels have not touched the ground?

* If you can distinguish him, it is the hermit master's heels that have not touched the ground; if you cannot distinguish him, it is your own heels that have not touched the ground.

[Sudhana]: Continuing the questions:

1) "…when you come before an accomplished master, test him with the Three Essential Phrases: the seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water…" Are these Three Essential Phrases the Three Essentials of Patriarch Linji?

* The seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water are precisely the Three Essential Phrases.

What are the seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water? I would be grateful to hear a detailed explanation.

2) "Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?" He answered on their behalf: "Because they lacked strength for the journey." Since they lacked strength for the journey, why did they not rest, but were still unwilling to remain?

* If you understand that "the road itself is home," you will know that these are not two separate matters.

If "the road itself is home," why speak of having strength or lacking strength for the journey?

3) "Can any of you distinguish the hermit master of Lotus Peak? His heels have not yet touched the ground!" Does "not yet touched the ground" refer to the hermit master's heels not touching the ground, or does it mean that even if you can distinguish him, your own heels have not touched the ground?

* If you can distinguish him, it is the hermit master's heels that have not touched the ground; if you cannot distinguish him, it is your own heels that have not touched the ground.

Let us set aside everyone else's heels for the moment: why have the hermit master's heels not touched the ground either?

[Lvm]: Haha! I can only spin out a little tangled vine here:

1) “…when you come before an accomplished master, test him with the Three Essential Phrases: the seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water…” Are these Three Essential Phrases the Three Essentials of Patriarch Linji?

* The seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water are precisely the Three Essential Phrases.

What are the seal in empty space, the seal in clay, and the seal in water? I would be grateful to hear a detailed explanation.

* Seal in empty space—see whether, “In speaking, every sentence is empty; in action, everywhere there is.” In fact, this very “in speaking, every sentence is empty” is already “there is”: there is an “empty” there.

Seal in clay—traces are plainly evident! For example: “I am awakened” (the trace of awakening is plainly evident), or “I am not awakened” (the trace of delusion is plainly evident).

Seal in water—one falls into the category of a person with nothing to do, even believing that there is no such thing as “liberation.” Like flowing water, one stagnates whenever one encounters a low place. Such a person is not suited to cultivate the unsurpassed Way; one cannot speak to them of the unsurpassed Buddhadharma. The Nirvāṇa Sūtra says: “To expound the unsurpassed Way to sentient beings who are not vessels for it is a bodhisattva’s error.”

Test someone with the Three Essential Phrases: if genuine, they will certainly not fall into emptiness or existence, stagnate at either extreme, or be deluded about being and nonbeing—like this: “Zhi, hu, zhe, ye! A patch-robed monk’s nostrils have the big end pointing downward. If you do not believe it, ask Sister Wang from the eastern village.” If false, “you will see a square peg fitted into a round hole, with nowhere for it to settle.”

2) “Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?” He answered on their behalf: “Because they lacked strength for the journey.” Since they lacked strength for the journey, why did they not rest, but were still unwilling to remain?

* If you understand that “the road itself is home,” you will know that these are not two separate matters.

If “the road itself is home,” why speak of having strength or lacking strength for the journey?

* Haha! Because they first have the notion of “willing or unwilling to remain,” there is then “having or lacking strength.” It is simply like a mirror reflecting things.

3) “Can any of you distinguish the hermit master of Lotus Peak? His heels have not yet touched the ground!” Does “not yet touched the ground” refer to the hermit master’s heels not touching the ground, or does it mean that even if you can distinguish him, your own heels have not touched the ground?

* If you can distinguish him, it is the hermit master’s heels that have not touched the ground; if you cannot distinguish him, it is your own heels that have not touched the ground.

Let us set aside everyone else’s heels for the moment: why have the hermit master’s heels not touched the ground either?

* Have you not heard of “entering the weeds for the sake of others”? In such skillful means, Xuefeng was an expert. ^o^

[Xinming]: By exposing things like this, aren’t you going to smash the rice bowls of all those magicians?

[lvm]: I haven’t smashed anything! Nothing! If anyone’s rice bowl gets broken, don’t blame me.

[hs]: Greetings, Teacher LVM and Brother Sudhana! May I ask:

1. What does “a cliff rising a thousand fathoms” mean? I have seen it in many places but do not know its meaning.

2. He also answered on their behalf: “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of others, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” In this line, does “goes” mean “remains”? Does it suggest the suspicion of being a self-liberated fellow, and therefore that his heels have not yet touched the ground?

[lvm]:

1. “The sea admits a hundred rivers; its capacity makes it great. A cliff rises a thousand fathoms; freedom from desire makes it steadfast.” The meaning is clear now, isn’t it?

2. “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of others, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” There is no trace of a self-liberated fellow here!

[hs]: One more question, Teacher: are the “thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks” here the “this point” in the sentence, “Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?” That is, do they refer to the staff? May it be understood this way?

[Lvm]: If you can take a single staff and make it into a sixteen-foot golden body, then you may understand it that way.

[nm213]: Teacher, may I ask about the meanings of “the road itself is home” and “entering the weeds for the sake of others”?

1. Does “entering the weeds for the sake of others” mean using secondary meanings to entice people toward the primary meaning?

2. Is “the road itself is home” equivalent to the proposition that the process is more important than the result?

[lvm]: Knowing full well that opening one’s mouth is already mistaken, yet not avoiding words in order to show people—that is called “entering the weeds for the sake of others.”

Chan Master Linji ascended the hall and said: “One person, throughout an entire kalpa, is on the road without leaving home; another has left home yet is not on the road. Which of these deserves the offerings of humans and devas?” He then stepped down from the seat.

[Sudhana]: Let me pose three more questions, Teacher and fellow students:

1. The first concerns the meaning: “[A thousand, ten thousand, as numerous as hemp and millet. Yet they fall a little short. What a pity! A whole flock of fine hawks.]” Since it plainly says that they “fall a little short,” why does it then lament, “What a pity”?

2. The second concerns the meaning of the line: “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of others, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” The hermit master and Yanyang both understood this saying. Are the two at the same stage of attainment, or different ones? Please instruct us, Teacher.

3. The third does not concern any such damned meaning: if one day the hermit master of Lotus Peak suddenly appeared, held up his staff before lvm, and said, “Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?” how would Teacher respond? ^_^

[lvm]: Haha! You are not only Sudhana; you are also good at asking questions:

1. The first concerns the meaning:

The assembly was silent. “[A thousand, ten thousand, as numerous as hemp and millet. Yet they fall a little short. What a pity! A whole flock of fine hawks.]”

A thousand, ten thousand, as numerous as hemp and millet.

* Do not overlook “the assembly was silent”: a multitude as numerous as hemp and millet.

Yet they fall a little short.

* Perhaps there might be someone with clear eyes who says nothing, to see how he will bring the matter to a close. Their silence would then fall only a little short.

What a pity! A whole flock of fine hawks.

* Yet that is not how matters stand. This whole group is merely staring wide-eyed at one another, like “a whole flock of fine hawks.”

Since it plainly says that they “fall a little short,” why does it then lament, “What a pity”?

* Because they cannot fall only a little short, it is a pity indeed.

2. The second concerns the meaning of the line: “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of others, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.”

The hermit master and Yanyang both understood this saying. Are the two at the same stage of attainment, or different ones? Please instruct us, Teacher.

* This is not a matter of the meaning of the line. Their footing is no different from yours.

3. The third does not concern any such damned meaning:

If one day the hermit master of Lotus Peak suddenly appeared, held up his staff before lvm, and said, “Why, when the ancients reached this point, were they unwilling to remain?” how would Teacher respond?

* Simply because you remain right here.

[Sudhana]: Sudhana asks good questions, but I suppose the hermit master would not be so good at giving.

1) ^) ^

2) ^(^

3) ^ o ^

If, one day, the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak suddenly appeared, raised his staff, and said to lvm, “Why were the people of old unwilling to remain here once they had reached this point?”—how would the teacher respond?

Only because you are staying here.

The hermitage master raises his staff as if to strike.

lvm : The tip of the staff has eyes; do not strike people carelessly!

Heart Monk : I never expected you to turn the tables on me today.

Sudhana : Striking people is against the law, but surely stroking a tiger’s whiskers is allowed? 886

Ermao : Teacher, Yanyang said, “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” Is this praising that monk for having eyes in the back of his head?

lvm : This is where the saying “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks” comes from:

He saw that no one could get hold of him. Then he questioned himself, saying, “Ultimately, how is it?” Yet he could do nothing about it. He said to himself, “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” What does this mean? Tell me: what point does it indicate as the ground? It is no hindrance that there are eyes within the words and meaning beyond the words: he raises himself and topples himself, lets go and gathers in.

Have you not seen Venerable Yanyang? Meeting a monk on the road, he raised his staff and said, “What is this?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a single staff.” Yanyang then jabbed the ground once with his staff and said, “Do you recognize it now?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a cave-dweller.” Yanyang again shouldered his staff and said, “Do you understand?” The monk said, “I do not.” Yanyang said, “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.”

So it turns out that the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak was quoting Venerable Yanyang.

Ermao : I respectfully ask the teacher, out of compassion, to unravel this tangled vine.

Have you not seen Venerable Yanyang? Meeting a monk on the road, he raised his staff and said, “What is this?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a single staff.” Yanyang then jabbed the ground once with his staff and said, “Do you recognize it now?” The monk said, “I do not recognize it.” Yanyang said, “You do not even recognize a cave-dweller.” Yanyang again shouldered his staff and said, “Do you understand?” The monk said, “I do not.”

lvm : Since he neither recognizes it nor understands it, there is no need to unravel this tangled vine. ^o^

Youth Yongshou : “With his staff slung across his shoulder, heedless of anyone, he goes straight into a thousand peaks, ten thousand peaks.” This is what it means.

lvm : ^o^

Ermao : Our teacher specializes in snatching food from a tiger’s mouth.

Teacher, “Seeing a square peg enter a round hole, there is nowhere for it to fit.” How should “a square peg entering a round hole” be understood?

Entry: Square Peg, Round Hole. Definition: Putting a square piece of wood into a round hole. A metaphor for two things that cannot fit together.

Source: The Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, Jingde Era, by Shi Daoyuan of the Song dynasty: “To use the limited consciousness-mind in relation to the unlimited is like putting a square piece of wood into a round hole.”

“If not, then beneath three rafters and before a seven-foot platform, go and investigate it carefully.” What sort of setting does “beneath three rafters and before a seven-foot platform” describe?

Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies—[Beneath Three Rafters and Before a Seven-Foot Platform]: [Beneath Three Rafters and Before a Seven-Foot Platform] refers to the bed space for seated meditation in a Chan monastic hall. The bed is three feet across, with three rafters above one’s head; hence it is called “beneath three rafters.” Those who sit in meditation beneath them are called “guests beneath three rafters.”

Moreover, the bed is six feet deep and is called “before the platform”; adding the one-foot thickness of the board makes “before a seven-foot platform.” Variations in measurements gave rise to such expressions as “six-foot platform” and “five-foot platform.” Blue Cliff Record, Case 25 (Taishō 48, p. 166c): “If you see it, you will join the Hermitage Master of Lotus Peak in practice. If not, then beneath three rafters and before a seven-foot platform, go and investigate it carefully!” [Chapter on Chan Master Jitu of Xichan in the Continued Record of the Lamp of the Jianzhong Jingguo Era]

Blue Cliff Record, Volume Three

[26] Baizhang Sits Alone on Hero Peak

[Case 26] Baizhang Sits Alone on Great Hero Peak

[Case 26] Citation:

A monk asked Baizhang, “What is the extraordinary matter?” [There is an echo in his words; the opportunity is revealed in the phrase. It startles people to death! Though one has eyes, one has never seen.]

Baizhang said, “Sitting alone on Great Hero Peak.” [His awe-inspiring bearing fills four hundred provinces. Whether sitting or standing, both alike fall short.]

The monk bowed. [A clever patch-robed monk! There are indeed such people, who wish to see such a matter.]

Baizhang then struck him. [A master craftsman of a lineage! Why come with words that are not full? His order is not issued in vain.]

When the occasion arises, one must have the eye and not heed danger or death. Hence it is said, “If you do not enter the tiger’s den, how can you get the tiger cub?” Baizhang was ordinarily like a tiger with wings; this monk, too, did not shrink from birth and death. Daring to stroke the tiger’s whiskers, he asked, “What is the extraordinary matter?” This monk, too, had the eye. Baizhang therefore took up the burden for him, saying, “Sitting alone on Great Hero Peak.” The monk then bowed. A patch-robed monk must recognize the meaning before the question has even been asked. This monk’s bow was unlike an ordinary one; he, too, must have had the eye. Do not let it be said, “All my life I have poured out my heart to others, yet even acquaintances remain as strangers.”

A monk asked, “What is the extraordinary matter?” Baizhang said, “Sitting alone on Daxiong Peak.” The monk bowed, and Baizhang immediately struck him. See how, when he lets it go, all are affirmed at once; when he draws it back, he sweeps away every trace. Tell me, what was the point of the monk’s bow? If you say it was good…

—then why did Baizhang strike him? If you say it was not good, what was improper about his bow? At this point, one must recognize good fortune and misfortune, distinguish black from white, and stand atop a thousand peaks. The monk’s bow was like stroking the tiger’s whiskers; it only lacked the turning point. Fortunately, Baizhang had an eye atop his head and a talisman behind his elbow; he illuminated the four quarters of the world and deeply discerned the wind that was coming. Therefore, he struck him.

Had it been anyone else, there would have been nothing they could do with him. This monk met the opportunity with opportunity and dismissed intention with intention. This was why he bowed. As Nanquan said, “Last night at midnight, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra gave rise to views of Buddha and Dharma. I gave each of them twenty blows and banished them to the two Iron Ring Mountains.” At that time Zhaozhou stepped forward from the assembly and said, “Whom should the Master’s blows be given to eat?” Nanquan said, “What fault has Teacher Wang committed?” Zhaozhou bowed.

With masters of the lineage, one does not casually see where their functioning lies. As soon as they take up and play with the present occasion, they naturally become vividly alive. The former master Wuzu often said, “It is like wrestling before a horse.” You need only always cut off seeing and hearing, sounds and forms, all at once; hold firm and be master of yourself. Only then will you see Baizhang. Tell me, when he lets go, how is it? Observe Xuedou’s verse:

In the patriarchs’ realm, the heavenly colt races crisscross. [It appears only once in five hundred years. Among thousands upon thousands, there may be one or half of one. The son carries on the father’s work.]

In the gate of transformative teaching, unfolding and withdrawing follow different tracks. [Already before words. He has freedom. Credit him with the methods of a master craftsman.]

Amid lightning and sparks, he preserves adaptability. [It comes straight at your face. Turning left, turning right. Do you yet see where Baizhang guides people?]

Laughable—the man comes to stroke the tiger’s whiskers. [He deserves thirty blows! Under a heavy reward, brave men will surely appear. He cannot avoid losing his life. Let the venerable monk off for one move.]

Xuedou saw through it completely, and only then composed this verse. A heavenly colt travels a thousand li a day. It runs horizontally and vertically, galloping like the wind; only then may it be called a heavenly colt. Xuedou praises Baizhang as moving eastward and westward within the patriarchs' realm, coming and going, ranging freely in every direction, without the slightest obstruction. Like a heavenly colt, he is skillful in racing crisscross; only thus does one see where freedom lies.

This was, of course, because he possessed Mazu's great activity and great function. A monk once asked Mazu, "What is the fundamental meaning of the Buddhadharma?" Mazu immediately struck him, saying, "If I did not strike you, everyone in the world would laugh at me." Another asked, "What was the Patriarch's meaning in coming from the West?" Mazu said, "Come closer, and I will tell you." When the monk came forward, Mazu slapped him sharply across the ear and said, "Six ears do not share a secret." See how greatly at ease he was.

Within the gate of teaching and transformation, there may be withdrawal or unfolding. At times unfolding is not found in withdrawal; at times withdrawal is not found in unfolding; at times neither withdrawal nor unfolding is found. Hence it is said: the path is the same, but the tracks differ. This verse praises Baizhang's having such hands and feet.

Xuedou says, "Amid lightning and sparks, he preserves adaptability," praising this monk as being like sparks struck from a stone or lightning flashing—everything lay in that slight adaptability. Yantou said: "Turning things is superior; being turned by things is inferior." If we speak of battle, each must stand at the point of turning. Xuedou said: "Before the wheel of opportunity has turned, once it turns, it must run in both directions." If one cannot turn, what use is one? A true man must recognize at least a little adaptability. People nowadays merely keep accommodating others, letting others pierce their nostrils. When will there be an end to it? Amid lightning and sparks, this monk was able to preserve adaptability, and so he bowed.

Xuedou says, "Laughable—the man comes to stroke the tiger's whiskers." Baizhang was like a great tiger; it is laughable that this monk went to stroke its whiskers.

[libo]: Teacher, if it were changed to this: Baizhang said, "Sitting alone on Great Hero Peak," and this monk then struck him—what would Patriarch Baizhang do?

[lvm]: The ladle handle is not in this monk's hand.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: This monk's feet are slow; he is still hesitating here.

After bowing, he should have quickly flicked his sleeves and left, thereby avoiding a blow.

[lvm]: He was not as quick on his feet as Deshan.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: His teacher was compassionate too, fearing that he might still be clutching at something. So he struck him.

[Ermao]: He had to strike him; otherwise, people would laugh themselves to death.

[Shancai]: It would have been better to flick his sleeves and leave just as Baizhang raised his hand to take up the staff.

[Cicada]: Or he could have shouted sharply, as Teacher Great Tiger did: "There are eyes on the end of the staff—do not strike people carelessly!"

Then the two of them would "seize each other and enter the abbot's quarters."

[Shancai]: Ha ha~~

[hs]: May I ask, Teacher:

1. [Nanquan said, "Last night at midnight, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra gave rise to views of Buddha and Dharma. I gave each of them twenty blows and banished them to the two Iron Ring Mountains." At that time Zhaozhou stepped forward from the assembly and said, "Whom should the Master's blows be given to eat?" Nanquan said, "What fault has Teacher Wang committed?" Zhaozhou bowed.] Why did Zhaozhou ask whom the Master's blows should be given to eat, and why did he then bow? Is Zhaozhou's bow similar to that monk's bow?

2. What did Mazu mean by saying, "Six ears do not share a secret"?

[lvm]: Meet the opportunity with opportunity; dismiss intention with intention.

1. [Nanquan said, "Last night at midnight, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra gave rise to views of Buddha and Dharma. I gave each of them twenty blows and banished them to the two Iron Ring Mountains." At that time Zhaozhou stepped forward from the assembly and said, "Whom should the Master's blows be given to eat?" Nanquan said, "What fault has Teacher Wang committed?" Zhaozhou bowed.] Why did Zhaozhou ask whom the Master's blows should be given to eat, and why did he then bow? Is Zhaozhou's bow similar to that monk's bow?

*Then let me descend into the weeds for once:

*Nanquan: If you give rise to views of Buddha and Dharma, you cannot attain realization. Zhaozhou: What kind of view is this of yours, Master? Nanquan: I said this because you gave rise to views of Buddha and Dharma. Is that wrong? Zhaozhou: This student has received the teaching.

*"Whom should the Master's blows be given to eat?" was by no means a contest for victory or defeat; it was the finishing touch. —An official road will not admit even a needle! Then he bowed again—every word is medicine prescribed for an illness; when has there ever been any attachment? —Private roads permit carts and horses.

2. What did Mazu mean by saying, "Six ears do not share a secret"?

*Literally, six ears means three people. When two people speak a secret meaning, it does not enter six ears.

*Asked, "What was the Patriarch's meaning in coming from the West?" Mazu said, "Come closer, and I will tell you." When the monk came forward, Mazu slapped him sharply across the ear and said, "Six ears do not share a secret." —It seems that this monk had already received the secret meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West.

[hs]: Teacher has descended into the weeds for others' sake; this later student has received the teaching. Thank you, Teacher!

[Benben Chong]: Teacher, I am so dull...

"(Koan) Baizhang was giving a Dharma talk. An old man would always listen to the Dharma and leave with the assembly. One day he did not leave. Baizhang then asked who the person standing before him was. The old man said: 'In the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, I once lived on this mountain. A student asked: Does a person of great cultivation still fall into cause and effect? I answered him: They do not fall into cause and effect. Thereafter, for five hundred lives, I fell into the body of a wild fox.'

'I now ask the Master to give me a turning word, so that I may be freed from the wild fox's body.' Baizhang said: 'Do not be blind to cause and effect.' At these words, the old man awakened greatly. He bowed and said: 'I have now been freed from the wild fox's body. It lies behind the mountain; please proceed according to the precedent for a deceased monk.' The master had the monastic steward strike the sounding board and announce to the assembly: 'After the meal, we shall send off a deceased monk.' The assembly discussed this, saying that everyone was well and that there was no sick person in the Nirvāṇa Hall; why was this so?

"After the meal, they saw only that the master led the assembly to the foot of a cliff behind the mountain. Pointing with his staff, he indicated a dead fox, which they cremated according to the Dharma. That evening the master ascended the seat and raised this preceding circumstance. Huangbo then asked: 'The man of old gave one wrong turning word and for five hundred lives fell into a wild fox's body. If one gives turn after turn without error, what then?' The master said: 'Come closer, and I will tell you.' Huangbo then came forward, and the master gave him a slap. The master clapped his hands and laughed, saying: 'I thought a barbarian's beard was red; yet here is another red-bearded barbarian.' See Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, volume 3, chapter on Dazhi; Book of Serenity, case 8; and The Gateless Barrier, case 2."

Here, answering, "They do not fall into cause and effect," means that one has already been deluded by cause and effect; while "Do not be blind to cause and effect" means not being obscured by cause and effect. Is that so?

[lvm]: He himself doubted his statement, "They do not fall into cause and effect." Doubt then resonates with the wild fox.

The earlier Baizhang had doubt; it was doubt in the mind. Outside the mind there is no doubt, and outside the mind there is no wild fox.

The later Baizhang aimed directly at the knot of doubt in the earlier Baizhang's mind: "Do not be blind to cause and effect!"—In answering as you did, you did not obscure cause and effect; rather, you laid cause and effect out in its entirety. What have you been doubting all along? Thus the earlier Baizhang's mind opened and understanding dawned at these words, and he was freed from the precious wild fox body.

[Lianming]: "The earlier Baizhang's mind opened and his understanding was released upon hearing these words; fortunately, he escaped the body of a wild fox." ———— Once the teacher puts it in those terms, there is still a fox's tail left. Perhaps the teacher is hinting at this: "The old man attained great awakening upon hearing these words. He bowed and said, 'Now that I have escaped the body of a wild fox, I dwell behind the mountain. Please conduct the funeral rites for a deceased monk.'" — This fox still has something remaining, doesn't it?

If it were me, I would change it to: "Thus, the earlier Baizhang attained great awakening upon hearing these words and escaped the body of a wild fox." (That word "fortunately" is not really anything special.)

*Haha! You still have this, too. (That word "fortunately" was merely colloquial speech at the time; it was nothing particularly precious.)

[Ben Benchong]: Teacher, I am so stupid...

“(Koan) Whenever Baizhang ascended the hall to teach, an old man would always listen to the Dharma and depart with the assembly. One day, however, he did not leave. Baizhang therefore asked the one standing before him, ‘Who are you?’ The old man said, ‘I once lived on this mountain in the time of Kāśyapa Buddha. A student asked me, “Does a person of great cultivation still fall under cause and effect?” I answered, “He does not fall under cause and effect.” Thereafter, for five hundred lives, I fell into the body of a wild fox.’

‘I now ask the venerable monk to give me one turning word, so that I may escape the body of a wild fox.’ Baizhang said, ‘Do not be ignorant of cause and effect.’ The old man attained great awakening upon hearing these words. Bowing, he said, ‘Now that I have escaped the body of a wild fox, I dwell behind the mountain. Please conduct the funeral rites for a deceased monk.’ The master had the monastic steward strike the sounding board and announce to the assembly: ‘After the meal, we shall conduct funeral rites for a deceased monk.’ The assembly discussed this among themselves: everyone was well, and there was no sick person in the Nirvāṇa Hall; why was this being done?

After the meal, they saw only the master leading the assembly to a rock beneath the cliff behind the mountain. Pointing with his staff, he revealed a dead fox, which they cremated according to the rites. That evening, the master ascended the hall and brought up the preceding causal circumstances. Huangbo then asked, ‘The man of old gave a mistaken turning word and fell into the body of a wild fox for five hundred lives. If, with each turning word, one does not go wrong, what then?’ The master said, ‘Come closer, and I will tell you.’ Huangbo then stepped forward, and the master gave him a slap. The master clapped his hands and laughed, saying, ‘I thought barbarians all had red beards, but here is another red-bearded barbarian.’ See Records of the Chan Source, volume 3, chapter on Great Wisdom; Record of Composure, case 8; and The Gateless Gate, case 2.”

Here, answering “does not fall under cause and effect” means already being deluded by cause and effect; “is not ignorant of cause and effect” means not being obscured by cause and effect. Is that so?

[lvm]: It was he himself who doubted his statement, “does not fall under cause and effect.” Doubt resonates with the wild fox.

The earlier Baizhang had doubt; it was doubt in his mind. There is no doubt outside the mind, nor is there any wild fox outside the mind.

The later Baizhang directly struck at the knot of doubt in the earlier Baizhang’s mind: “Do not be ignorant of cause and effect!” — Your answer did not obscure cause and effect at all; rather, it laid cause and effect completely bare. What have you been doubting all this time? Thus, the earlier Baizhang’s mind opened and his understanding was released upon hearing these words; fortunately, he escaped the body of a wild fox.

[Lianming]: “The earlier Baizhang’s mind opened and his understanding was released upon hearing these words; fortunately, he escaped the body of a wild fox.” ———— Once the teacher puts it in those terms, there is still a fox’s tail left. Perhaps the teacher is hinting at this: “The old man attained great awakening upon hearing these words. He bowed and said, ‘Now that I have escaped the body of a wild fox, I dwell behind the mountain. Please conduct the funeral rites for a deceased monk.’” — This fox still has something remaining, doesn’t it?

If it were me, I would change it to: “Thus, the earlier Baizhang attained great awakening upon hearing these words and escaped the body of a wild fox.” (That word “fortunately” is not really anything special.)

*Haha! You still have this, too. (That word “fortunately” was merely colloquial speech at the time; it was nothing particularly precious.)

[27] Yunmen: The Whole Body Exposed in the Golden Wind

[Case 27] Yunmen: The Whole Body Revealed in the Golden Wind

Pointer: Ask one question, and he answers ten; raise one point, and he understands three. Seeing a rabbit, he releases the hawk; taking advantage of the wind, he fans the fire. Setting aside not begrudging one's eyebrows, what is it like when one enters the tiger's den? Examine it:

[Case 27] The Case:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?” [What season is this? The household is ruined and its people are dead; the people are dead and the household is ruined.]

Yunmen said, “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind.” [Propping up heaven and earth, decisive as cutting nails and severing iron. Purely naked, utterly bare. Walking levelly in the blue sky.]

If you can gain insight here, only then will you see how Yunmen worked with people. Otherwise, you are still merely calling a deer a horse, blind in the eyes and deaf in the ears. Who can reach such a realm?

Tell me: was Yunmen answering his question, or was he exchanging verses with him? If you say he answered his question, you mistake the fixed star on the compass; if you say he exchanged verses with him, you are still utterly unrelated. Since it is neither

so, what is it ultimately? If you see through it, there is no need to pinch the nostrils of a patch-robed monk. Otherwise, you are still cast into a ghost cave. In upholding and establishing the school tradition, one must take the whole burden upon oneself, without begrudging one's eyebrows; one must throw oneself across the tiger's mouth and let it drag one this way and that. Without this, how could one work with people?

This monk's question was indeed steep and perilous. If regarded as an ordinary matter, he seems merely to be a meddlesome monk. But viewed at the vital point within the gate of patch-robed monks, it has its subtleties. Tell me, whose realm is “when the tree withers and the leaves fall”? Among the eighteen types of questions, this is called a question that discerns the host; it is also called a question that borrows an event.

Yunmen did not alter a hair's breadth, but simply told him, “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind.” His answer was exceedingly fine, and he did not dare betray the thrust of the question. The question had an eye, and the answer was equally direct and exact. An ancient said, “If you want intimacy, do not use a question to question.” If one knows the tune, merely raising it reveals where it lands. If you seek it in the vein of Yunmen's words, you have already gone wrong. Yet Yunmen's sayings often invite conceptual interpretations. If you understand them conceptually, you will inevitably lose my descendants.

Yunmen liked to ride a thief's horse in pursuit of a thief. Once a monk asked, “What is the place beyond thought?” Yunmen said, “Discriminating consciousness is unfathomable.” This monk asked, “What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?” Yunmen said, “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind.” Within the sentence, he cuts off the vital passage, admitting neither ordinary beings nor sages. You must understand how he raises one and clarifies three, raises three and clarifies one.

If you seek within his three phrases, it is like pulling an arrow from the back of your head. His one phrase must contain three phrases: the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that follows the waves and chases the currents, and the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams. Then it naturally fits exactly. Of Yunmen's three phrases, tell me, which phrase does he use to receive people? Try to distinguish it. The verse says:

The question already has a principle, [It profoundly discerns the direction of the wind. The arrow is not shot in vain.]

And the answer accords with it. [How could there be two kinds? Like a bell awaiting a strike. The effort is not bestowed in vain.]

The three phrases can be distinguished; [Higher, middle, lower—which phrase is it now? You must gain insight outside the three phrases before it will do.]

A single arrowhead flies far into the sky. [Hit! Yet it has gone beyond. [zhu/tu]—striking against it. The arrow passes beyond Silla.]

Across the great wilderness, cool gusts sigh; [Pervading heaven and covering earth. Do you feel the hairs on your body stand erect? Letting go now.]

Across the vast sky, sparse rain falls in mist. [Wind vast and billowing, water boundless and spreading. Above your head, all is vast; beneath your feet, all is vast.]

Do you not see the traveler who sat long at Shaolin and never returned, [There is yet another fellow who will not stop chattering, burdening people to death. From the headwaters of the Yellow River, it comes pouring down.]

Quietly resting amid the clustered slopes of Bear's Ear? [Open your eyes and you are caught; close your eyes and you are caught. Making a living in a ghost cave. Blind in the eyes and deaf in the ears. Who reaches this realm? I cannot avoid breaking your front teeth.]

An ancient said, “Upon hearing words, one must understand the principle; do not establish rules for oneself.” The ancients did not speak idly. Thus, when asking about a matter, one must also know something of good and bad. If one does not know honor and humility, advance and retreat, or purity and defilement, but speaks wildly at random, what benefit can there be? Whenever you speak or breathe, it must be like tongs and pincers, with hooks and locks; it must continue without interruption. This monk's question had a principle, and Yunmen's answer was the same. Yunmen ordinarily received people with three phrases; this is the ultimate standard.

Xuedou's verse on this case resembles his verse on the Dalong case: the three phrases can be distinguished, and one phrase contains three phrases. If you can distinguish them, you pass beyond the three phrases. “A single arrowhead flies far into the sky”: the arrowhead is the point of an arrow. It has been shot exceedingly far, so you must look sharply and closely.

If you see clearly, then beneath a single phrase you may unfold great-thousand worlds as numerous as grains of sand. At this point, the verse is complete. Xuedou had abundant talent, so he elaborated the verse, saying: “Across the great wilderness, cool gusts sigh; across the vast sky, sparse rain falls in mist.” Tell me, is this mind or circumstance? Is it mystery or wonder? An ancient said, “No dharma is concealed; throughout past and present, they are ever manifest.”

He asked, “What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?” Yunmen said, “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind.” Xuedou's intent treats it only as a single scene: before your very eyes, the breeze blows gently; if it is not an east-

southeast wind, it is a west-northwest wind. You must understand it just so. If you further interpret it as Chan doctrine, you are utterly unrelated.

“Do you not see the traveler who sat long at Shaolin and never returned?” Before Bodhidharma returned to the Western Heaven, he faced the wall for nine years, quietly and silently. Tell me, was that the tree withering and leaves falling? Tell me, was that the whole body revealed in the golden wind? If here you merge all ordinary beings and sages throughout past and present, heaven and earth, into one undivided whole, only then will you see precisely how Yunmen and Xuedou worked with people.

“Quietly resting amid the clustered slopes of Bear's Ear”: Bear's Ear is Shaolin on Mount Song near the Western Capital. Before the mountain are thousands upon thousands of clusters; behind the mountain are thousands upon thousands of clusters. Where do you all see it?

Do you see how Xuedou worked with people? It is also like a divine tortoise dragging its tail!

[Cypress Tree]: What do these four words, “the whole body is revealed in the golden wind,” mean?

[lvm]: It simply means “when the tree withers and the leaves fall.”

[Cypress Tree]: Oh, I understand.

It could also be put this way:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?”

Yunmen: Oh, it has turned into dust.

Haha—just a law of nature!

[lvm]: That is only “following the waves and chasing the currents.” There is also “encompassing heaven and earth”: “the whole body is revealed in the golden wind” means that true light is disclosed.

[Cypress Tree]: What is meant by “encompassing heaven and earth”? Teacher, please explain.

[lvm]: “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind” is precisely encompassing heaven and earth:

When the true light of the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is disclosed, the boundless ocean of worlds is like a patch of cloud in the vast clear sky. Is that not encompassing heaven and earth?

[nm213]: The character “reveal” is most wonderful here. Even if one could rise to the nine heavens to pluck the moon, or descend to the four seas to catch turtles, could one attain this matter?

[Cypress Tree]: (Responding to [lvm], who said, “The whole body is revealed in the golden wind is precisely encompassing heaven and earth.”)—As for this “encompassing heaven and earth,” Yunmen may not necessarily have had that in mind.

[lvm]: Indeed! Yunmen never said that one of his sentences contained three sentences.

“His one phrase must contain three phrases” was said by Chan Master Foguo.

What Yunmen said was, “I have three phrases.” The master said: “I have three phrases to show you all: one phrase encompasses heaven and earth; one phrase cuts off the multitude of streams; one phrase follows the waves and chases the currents. If you can distinguish them, you have a share in study and practice. If you cannot distinguish them, you will merely roll along the road to Chang'an.”

[Sudhana]: I do not understand how one phrase includes three phrases. Let me raise three questions about this koan:

(1) ... Setting aside not begrudging one's eyebrows, what is it like when one enters the tiger's den? ... What is the difference between “not begrudging one's eyebrows” and “entering the tiger's den”?

(2) Which of Yunmen's three phrases is “the whole body is revealed in the golden wind”? Teacher, please elaborate further.

(3) “A single arrowhead flies far into the sky.” [Hit! Yet it has gone beyond. [zhu/tu]—striking against it. The arrow passes beyond Silla.] Why has it hit, yet also gone beyond?

[lvm]: “Cutting off the multitude of streams” is here:

The question already has a principle, and the answer accords with it.

The three phrases can be distinguished; a single arrowhead flies far into the sky.

Across the great wilderness, cool gusts sigh; across the vast sky, sparse rain falls in mist.

Do you not see,

The traveler who sat long at Shaolin and never returned, quietly resting amid the clustered slopes of Bear's Ear?

[Sudhana]: Yunmen's three phrases and old Linji's three mysteries and three essentials have a similar marvel, don't they?

[lvm]: Yes. Their essential principle is the same; only the styles of the various schools differ.

[Youth Yongshou]: They all say, “Yunmen is the emperor; Linji is the general.” So this is the bearing of an emperor.

[lvm]: There is also the saying, “The Yunmen school has flashing red banners; the Linji school is lightning and sparks from flint.” It means the same thing.

[Little Bean]: What does that mean? Why can't I understand it? 555...

[lvm]: It refers to the style of the school.

[Sudhana]: Flashing red banners raise up and lead the school's guiding principle; lightning and sparks from flint cut off what stands directly before one.

[Māra]: I simply do not understand. Not understanding saves worry and effort. Each has its own advantages!

[Youth Yongshou]: (Responding to [lvm], who said, “The Yunmen school has flashing red banners; the Linji school is lightning and sparks from flint.”)—Then, Teacher, you are “a broken stele lying across an ancient road.”

[lvm]: Then you are an archaeologist. ^o^

[Golden Isle]: What are flashing red banners like? And what sort of scene is lightning and sparks from flint?

Teacher, could you give an example and explain them by comparison?

Cypress Tree : Yes—one has seen the flashing red flags; what kind of scene, then, are lightning and sparks?

Teacher, please give us an example to feed us!

lvm : This is something that may only be used, not sold.

Chan Master Linji often used shouts in response to particular occasions, and the students in his assembly likewise imitated their master's shouts. The master said: “You all imitate my shout. Now I ask you: one person comes out from the eastern hall, and another from the western hall; both shout at once. Can you distinguish host and guest here? How would you distinguish them? If you cannot distinguish them, do not imitate this old monk’s shout from now on.”

Cypress Tree : This shout shakes the earth—some people would be deaf for three days. How could one still distinguish host and guest?

lvm : The “Four Host-Guest” is the special preserve of the Linji school.

Sudhana : “Yunmen the emperor, Linji the general.” These two phrases are truly apt.

Yunmen’s utterances are dignified and magnanimous, with a rare air of true, transcendent nobility. Calling him an emperor is very vivid. (Among all the patriarchs, I like Elder Yunmen’s words best.)

As for Patriarch Linji—ha!—he captures and releases freely, kills and enlivens together; majestic and imposing, his presence seems to swallow the universe. Even black Zhang Fei and red Guan Yu can scarcely compare with his valor.

Cicada : I had always felt that Teacher Big Tiger possessed a special bearing. I suppose this is what it is.

Whenever I ask Teacher Big Tiger a question, he gives an unexpected reply that always startles me. Once startled, I feel that amid ten thousand changes, nothing departs from the fundamental principle. It is indeed strange: his words possess a power that suddenly stills one’s wild mind and returns it to its original place. Yet when I think back, their literal meaning also answers my question very aptly.

(Hee hee—so it turns out that he fully possesses Elder Yunmen’s three phrases.) When I ask a question, a mass of doubt fills my mind, bearing the weight of a thousand jun. Yet with one understated sentence from the teacher, it vanishes without a trace. Even now, I find it inconceivable.

Snow Mountain Youth : Teacher! What does “drawing an arrow from behind one’s head” mean?

Lvm : Sayings of this kind are all metaphors. To understand their meaning, one must connect them with the surrounding context and see where they occur.

Snow Mountain Youth : Oh—Teacher, this time I mean only this passage:

Yunmen loved to ride a thief's horse to chase a thief. Did you not see how a monk asked, "What is the place beyond thought?" Yunmen said, "Conceptual consciousness is hard to fathom." The monk asked, "What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" Yunmen said, "The whole body reveals the golden wind." Within a phrase, one may cut off the crucial passage, leaving no way through for either ordinary beings or sages. You must understand how, by raising one, he makes three clear, and by raising three, he makes one clear. If you seek within his three phrases, then you draw an arrow from behind your head. His one phrase must contain three phrases: the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that follows the waves and chases the currents, and the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams. Then it will naturally be exactly right. Among Yunmen's three phrases, tell me: which phrase does he use to receive people?

"If you seek within his three phrases, then you draw an arrow from behind your head." Does this mean that if one seeks within the three phrases, one will die beneath the words?

lvm : In ancient times, the bow was hung on the horse, while the quiver was carried behind one's back. When one reaches a hand behind one's head, one can draw out an arrow.

With the left hand holding the bow, the right hand reaches behind the head and draws out an arrow; immediately afterward, one draws the bow and shoots. What is this a metaphor for? Now you understand, don't you?

Snow Mountain Youth : Oh! Since one is going to shoot an arrow, one must certainly have spotted the prey.

Then this sentence, "If you seek within his three phrases, then you draw an arrow from behind your head," could here be rendered in plain language as: "If you seek within his three phrases, then you still have a discerning eye."

lvm : Earlier it was said, "Yunmen loved to ride a thief's horse to chase a thief." (Chen means "to pursue.")

Thus, "drawing an arrow from behind one's head" already means "drawing the bow only after the thief has passed."

[Twenty-Eight] Nirvāṇa Is Not Spoken for People

[Case 28] Raised: Nanquan visited Baizhang, the Nirvāṇa Master.

Baizhang asked, "Among the sages and saints of old, is there any Dharma they did not speak for people?" [A monk ought to know this. A sheer cliff rising ten thousand fathoms. Do you feel your teeth falling out?]

Nanquan said, "There is." [He has fallen into the weeds. What is Meng Bāláng doing? So there is such a thing.]

Baizhang said, "What is the Dharma not spoken for people?" [Watch how he responds. Watch him flounder. He follows an error with another error. Just try asking him.]

Nanquan said, "It is not mind, not Buddha, not a thing." [Sure enough, he exposes a host of flaws. Sure enough, he lets much slip out.]

Baizhang said, "You have said it." [Do not spell it out for him; let him remain mistaken for a lifetime. You should not have spoken to him like that.]

Nanquan said, "This is all I can say. How about you, Master?" [Fortunately, there is room to turn around. With the long, he is long; with the short, he is short. When length appears, he goes along with it.]

Baizhang said, "I am not a great good-knowing teacher. How could I know whether it has been spoken or not?" [Watch him flounder. He hides his body yet reveals his shadow; he is utterly doomed. There are thorns in the mud! Is that so? You have deceived me.]

Nanquan said, "I do not understand." [Better that it be so. Fortunately, he does not understand; if he did, he would smash your head! Fortunately, this fellow is just like this.]

Baizhang said, "I have explained it to you far too thoroughly." [Adding frost upon snow! Why make a dragon's head and a snake's tail?]

At this point, there is no need to speak of mind or not-mind, nor of neither mind nor not-mind. From the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, not even a single hair of the eyebrows remains—yet this still falls somewhat short. "Mind and not-mind": Chan Master Shou calls these affirmative and negative explanations.

This Nirvāṇa Master was Chan Master Fazheng. In former days, while at Baizhang, he served as West Hall and opened fields while expounding the great meaning. At that time Nanquan had already seen Mazu; he was merely traveling among the various quarters to test and settle his understanding.

Baizhang's posing of this question was indeed difficult to answer. He said, "Among the sages and saints of old, is there any Dharma they did not speak for people?" If I were the mountain monk, I would cover my ears and leave, to see what a fuss this old fellow would make. If one were a true adept, upon seeing him ask in this way, one would immediately see through him. Nanquan merely relied on what he had seen and said, "There is." He too was a Meng Bāláng.

Baizhang then followed an error with another error and immediately asked, "What is the Dharma not spoken for people?" Nanquan said, "It is not mind, not Buddha, not a thing." This fellow greedily gazes at the moon in the sky and loses the pearl in his palm. Baizhang said, "You have said it." What a pity! He explained it away for him. At that time, he should simply have struck him across the back, making him know pain and itch.

Though this is so, tell me: where was the speaking? According to Nanquan's understanding, "not mind, not Buddha, not a thing" does not say anything at all.

I ask you all: why then did Baizhang say, "You have said it"? There is not even a trace in Nanquan's words. If you say he did not speak, why did Baizhang speak in this way? Nanquan was a flexible man, so he immediately pressed him, saying, "This is all I can say. How about you, Master?" If it had been someone else, he could not have avoided attempting an explanation.

But Baizhang was a true adept. His reply was remarkably unusual: "I am not a great good-knowing teacher. How could I know whether it has been spoken or not?" Nanquan then said, "I do not understand." Did he truly understand and yet say that he did not? Or did he really not understand? Baizhang said, "I have explained it to you far too thoroughly." Tell me: where was the speaking? If they were fellows playing with mud balls, the two of them would merely be muddling about. If both were true adepts, it would be like a bright mirror set upon its stand.

In fact, at the beginning both were true adepts; at the end both let one another off. If you have the eye, examine this clearly. But tell me, how would you test them? See how Xuedou brings it out in his verse:

Patriarchs and Buddhas have never spoken for people; [Each guards his own territory. Where there is a vine, they climb the vine. If you keep the character yuan fixed in your mind, you will shoot into hell like an arrow!]

Chan monks, ancient and modern, race about headlong. [They wear out their straw sandals, break their staffs, and hang up their begging bags.]

A bright mirror on its stand displays images diverse; [Fallen! Broken! Smash the mirror, and I will meet you.]

Each faces south while looking at the Northern Dipper. [Have you seen this old monk ride out through the mountain gate on the Buddha Hall? In Silla he once ascended the Dharma seat; in Great Tang the drum has not yet been struck.]

The Dipper's handle hangs down; [You do not even know where it has fallen. Where is it?]

There is nowhere to seek it. [Blind! What a pity! The bowl falls to the ground, and the plate breaks into seven or eight pieces.]

Grasping the nostrils, one loses the mouth. [Where did you get this news? Indeed it is so. Then strike!]

When old Śākyamuni appeared in the world, for forty-nine years he never uttered a single word: "From the Land of Radiance to the Bhadrikā River, throughout the interval between these two, he did not utter a single word." Speaking thus, tell me: did he speak, or did he not speak? Now the dragon palace is full and the ocean treasury overflows; how can this be called not speaking? Have you not seen what Master Xiu said: "Though the Buddhas do not appear in the world, they speak for forty-nine years."

"Though Bodhidharma did not come from the West, Shaolin possesses a wondrous secret." He also said: "The Buddhas have never appeared in the world, nor have they given a single dharma to people. Yet they observe the minds of sentient beings and, adapting to their capacities and ailments, dispense medicines and prescribe remedies; thus there are the three vehicles and twelve divisions of teaching." In truth, patriarchs and Buddhas, from ancient times until now, have never spoken for people. This very phrase, "not for people," is precisely what should be investigated. I, the mountain monk, often say: if one adds a single sentence, sweet and honeyed, seemingly so fine to contemplate, it is precisely poison. If one immediately strikes across the back, slaps across the mouth, and pushes the person out, only then is one genuinely intimate in acting for others.

"Chan monks, ancient and modern, race about headlong": everywhere they ask about "is" and ask about "is not"; they ask about Buddha and patriarchs, about what is above and what is below. Though this is so, if one has not yet reached this ground, one cannot do without it.

As for "a bright mirror on its stand displays images diverse," a single phrase suffices to distinguish the matter clearly. The ancients said, "The myriad forms and all phenomena are stamped by a single dharma." They also said, "All phenomena and myriad forms are wholly perfected within this." Chan Master Shenxiu said: "The body is the bodhi tree; the mind is like a bright mirror stand. At all times diligently polish it; do not let it attract dust." Master Daman said, "He is only outside the gate."

Xuedou spoke in this way; tell me, is it inside the gate or outside the gate? Each of you has an ancient mirror. The myriad forms and all phenomena—long and short, square and round—each appear within it. If you try to understand it in terms of long and

short, you will never be able to grasp it! Therefore Xuedou said, “A bright mirror on its stand displays images diverse.”

Yet it must be that “each faces south while looking at the Northern Dipper.” Since they face south, why do they look at the Northern Dipper? If you understand in this way, only then will you see the place where Baizhang and Nanquan met. These two lines praise the place where Baizhang pressed Nanquan. Baizhang said, “I am not a great good-knowing teacher. How could I know whether it has been spoken or not?” Here Xuedou’s verse reaches the point.

Fearing that people might misunderstand and fall into dead water, he himself raises it again: right now, before your very eyes, “the Dipper’s handle hangs down”—where else would you seek it? The moment you grasp the nostrils, you have already lost the mouth; grasp the mouth, and you have already lost the nostrils.

[Twenty-Nine] Dayu: “Follow Him to Ruin”

[29] Great Sui: “Let It Go” and Destruction (http://my.clubhi.com/bbs/661522/20/10635.html)

The introductory remark says: When fish move, the water becomes turbid; when birds fly, feathers fall. Clearly distinguish host and guest; thoroughly discern black from white. Like a bright mirror on its stand or a luminous pearl in the palm: Han appears, Hu comes; sound is manifest and form revealed. But tell me, why is this so? Consider this case.

[29] The Case:

A monk asked Great Sui, “When the kalpa fire blazes fiercely and the great thousand-world system is entirely destroyed, is this destroyed or not?” [What is this? Monks everywhere grope in vain at this single sentence. He scratches the itch before it arises.]

Sui said, “Destroyed.” [He throws a holeless iron hammer straight at your face. Your nostrils are wiped away. Before you even open your mouth, you have already been examined and exposed.]

The monk said, “Then let it go with it.” [A man of immense measure! He has turned it about in the current of words. Surely he has mistaken it.]

Sui said, “Let it go with it.” [The first arrow was still light; the second arrow penetrates deeply. How many people grope in vain over just this! As the water rises, the boat rises; where there is much mud, there are great Buddhas. If you say, “Let it go with it,” where is it? If you say it does not go with it, then what? Strike!]

Chan Master Zhenru of Great Sui, a Dharma heir of Chan Master Da’an, was from Yanting County in Eastern Sichuan. He visited more than sixty good teachers. In earlier days, while in the community of Weishan, he served as firewood tender.

One day Weishan asked, “You have been here for several years, yet you have never managed to put a question to me. How is that?” Sui said, “What question should I ask?” Weishan said, “Do you not know enough even to ask, ‘What is Buddha?’” Sui covered Weishan’s mouth with his hand. Weishan said, “Later on, you will not find even a sweeper.” Later, Sui returned to Sichuan. First, by the mountain road at Pengkou, he brewed tea and received travelers for three years. Only afterward did he enter the world, establish a monastery, and reside at Great Sui.

A monk asked, “When the kalpa fire blazes fiercely and the great thousand-world system is entirely destroyed, is this destroyed or not?” This monk asked only on the basis of the meaning of the teachings. The scriptures say that formation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness proceed through the arising of the three calamities of a kalpa, with destruction extending as far as the third dhyāna heaven. The monk originally did not know where the critical phrase landed. But tell me, what is this? Many offer conceptual interpretations, saying that this is the inherent nature of sentient beings.

Sui said, “Destroyed!” The monk said, “Then let it go with it.” Sui said, “Let it go with it.” Just here, how many people, through conceptual interpretations, grope in vain and cannot grasp it. If you say, “Let it go with it,” where is it? If you say it does not go with it, then what? Have you not heard it said: “If you want intimacy, do not bring questions to ask.”

Later, a monk asked Abbot Xiu, “When the kalpa fire blazes fiercely and the great thousand-world system is entirely destroyed, is this destroyed or not?” The abbot said, “Not destroyed.” The monk asked, “Why is it not destroyed?” The master said, “Because it is identical with the great thousand-world system.” To say “destroyed” obstructs and kills people; to say “not destroyed” also obstructs and kills people.

Since that monk did not understand Great Sui’s words, it was no harm that he kept this matter in mind. Carrying this question, he went straight to Mount Touzi in Shuzhou. Touzi asked, “Where have you come from recently?” The monk said, “Great Sui in Western Sichuan.” Touzi asked, “What sayings are there at Great Sui?” The monk then presented the preceding exchange. Touzi burned incense, bowed in homage, and said, “An ancient Buddha has appeared in Western Sichuan. You must hurry back.” The monk returned again to Great Sui, but Sui had already passed away. What a futile and embarrassing affair for that monk. Later, a Tang-dynasty monk, Jingzun, inscribed these lines for Great Sui:

Clearly realized, there is no separate Dharma; who says the seal is bestowed only in the south?

At the single phrase, “Let it go with it,” monks roam through a thousand mountains.

In the cold, crickets chirp amid the paving-stone leaves; at night, ghosts bow before the shrine lamp.

When the chanting ends beyond the lonely window, he paces back and forth, unable to contain his regret.

Therefore, later on Xuedou cited these two lines in verse. Now, you must not understand it as destruction, nor must you understand it as non-destruction. How, after all, should you understand it? Open your eyes wide and look:

Within the light of the kalpa fire, he raises the question. [What is he saying? He is already wrong.]

The monk still stagnates at the double barrier. [This person is pinned down completely. How can he be saved? Though there are hundreds and thousands of coils, there is still footing beneath one’s feet.]

Pitiful, that single phrase, “Let it go with it.” [Monks everywhere make calculations of this sort; even a thousand or ten thousand phrases would not suffice. What difficulty is there? It cuts off the place beneath their heels.]

He journeys alone, back and forth, over ten thousand miles. [Karmic consciousness is vast and murky; he misses it without even knowing. Yet he himself has worn through his straw sandals.]

Xuedou composed this verse in response to the occasion; within its lines is a way out. “Within the light of the kalpa fire, he raises the question; the monk still stagnates at the double barrier.” In asking, this monk first held destruction and non-destruction in mind; these are the double barrier. If one has attained it, there is a way out in saying “destroyed,” and a way out in saying “not destroyed.”

“Pitiful, that single phrase, ‘Let it go with it’; he journeys alone, back and forth, over ten thousand miles.” This verse refers to the monk’s carrying this question to Touzi and then returning again to Great Sui. It can indeed be called a lonely journey of ten thousand miles.

[Shancai]: Ha-ha—what a line: “He journeys alone, back and forth, over ten thousand miles”!

It actually brings to mind the scene of that blue-eyed patriarch meeting Emperor Wu of Liang, dwelling by the cave, and finally returning home all alone, carrying a single shoe. Ha-ha!

[lvm]: Those are two entirely different matters.

The blue-eyed patriarch had already scattered the seeds of bodhi throughout China: those to be liberated had been liberated, and what was to be transmitted had been transmitted. He then manifested death by poisoning, and afterward returned westward with one shoe, appearing before the envoy Song Yun to strengthen the faith of Chan practitioners. This subsequently brought about the flourishing of Chan after the Sixth Patriarch. Chan flourished precisely after the robe was no longer transmitted beyond the Sixth Patriarch.

But as for this monk: “Since that monk did not understand Great Sui’s words, it was no harm that he kept this matter in mind. Carrying this question, he went straight to Mount Touzi in Shuzhou. Touzi asked, ‘Where have you come from recently?’ The monk said, ‘Great Sui in Western Sichuan.’ Touzi asked, ‘What sayings are there at Great Sui?’ The monk then presented the preceding exchange. Touzi burned incense, bowed in homage, and said, ‘An ancient Buddha has appeared in Western Sichuan. You must hurry back.’ The monk returned again to Great Sui, but Sui had already passed away. What a futile and embarrassing affair for that monk.”

The two instances of “journeys alone, back and forth, over ten thousand miles” differ as vastly as heaven and earth.

[Kangkang]: Teacher, may I ask: when Sui said, “Let it go with it,” did he simply mean not to pay attention to it?

[lvm]: “Let it go with it” was said first by the monk.

[Shancai] (in response to Kangkang’s question): The first “let it go with it” is one thing; what the second is really must be asked of the teacher.

[Kangkang]: Do you suppose the teacher might—strike?

[Shancai]: Then ask that along with it.

[lvm]: Striking would also do, but I have no strength to raise the stick. What can be done! ^o^

[Shancai]: ^_^ Thus it is.

By no means let it go with it—yet let it go with it!

[Lvm]: Not go, not go.

[Shancai]: Hahahahaha!

[lvm]: (In response to Shancai's question: "The first 'let it go with it' is one thing; what the second is really must be asked of the teacher.")

—The latter is meant to cut off this monk's life-root.

[Shancai]: "When the kalpa fire blazes fiercely and the great thousand-world system is entirely destroyed, is this destroyed or not?"

[lvm]: Not destroyed.

[Shancai]: Hahahahaha.

[Shancai]: ^_^ Ha-ha—why doesn't Elder Sister Dingling ask another question here?

[Dingling]: Hey, there is no elder sister here ~

[Shancai]: 555~ Even among Chan students, it is hard to find someone honest and kindhearted!

[Wu Jiang]: May I ask: what does "molu" mean? I could not find it in the dictionary.

[lvm]: "[+][+]" carries the senses of "awkward," "uninteresting," and "not worthwhile."

[Dingling]: Teacher, why did Great Sui say, "Destroyed"?

[lvm]: Did he not first say, "entirely destroyed"?

[Shancai]: (In response to Dingling's question) Next time he may say, "Not destroyed."

[lvm]: ^o^

[Fengyun]: Teacher, I do not understand what either the first "let it go with it" or the second "let it go with it" means.

[lvm]: Then let it go with it.

[Fengyun]: Thank you, Teacher! It saves both worry and effort—why not?

[30] Zhaozhou Personally Met Nanquan

[30] Zhaozhou Personally Met Nanquan

[30] Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "I have heard that the Venerable personally met Nanquan. Is that so?" [Hearing it a thousand times is not as good as seeing it once. Za! The brows part into the shape of the character .]

Zhaozhou said, "Zhenzhou produces large radish heads." [Supporting heaven and bracing earth. Cutting nails and severing iron. An arrow passes beyond Silla. If one sees cheeks behind the head, do not associate with him.]

This monk, too, was a long-practicing veteran; there was no lack of insight in his question. But Zhaozhou was a master craftsman, so he answered, "Zhenzhou produces large radish heads." It may be called tasteless talk that stops people's mouths. This old fellow was very much like a thief who takes without lifting a finger: the moment you open your mouth, he replaces your eyes. If one is an exceptionally perceptive and spirited person, then amid the flash of a struck flint and the blaze of lightning, as soon as one hears it raised, one immediately springs up and goes on. But if one pauses to think and deliberate, one cannot avoid losing one's life.

Cheng, the sage commentator of Jiangxi, called this "answering east when asked west." It may be called not answering the question, so one does not fall into his painted circle. But if you understand it in this way, how could that do? Master Yuanlu said, "This is an oblique glance, included among the Nine Belts." If you understand it in this way, you have not even dreamed of it, and you further burden Zhaozhou. Some say that Zhenzhou has always produced large radish heads, and everyone under heaven knows it.

Everyone under heaven knows that Zhaozhou once studied under Nanquan. Yet this monk further asked, 'I have heard that Your Reverence personally met Nanquan. Is this so?' Therefore Zhaozhou replied to him, 'Zhenzhou produces large radish heads.'" That has no connection at all!

If one does not understand it in any such way, then how, after all, should one understand it? His household itself has a road that reaches through the night. Have you not seen how a monk asked Jiufeng, "I have heard that Your Reverence personally met

Yanshou. Is this so?" Jiufeng said, "Has the wheat ripened before the mountain?" This precisely corresponds to Zhaozhou's answer to this monk; they are altogether like two iron hammers without holes.

Old Zhaozhou was a man with nothing to do. You ask lightly, and he immediately replaces your eyes. If you are one who knows that there is [something], chew it carefully and swallow it. If you are not one who knows that there is, it is like swallowing a date whole.

Zhenzhou produces large radishes. [Everyone under heaven knows it. Avoid speaking of it. Each time it is raised, it is new each time.]

Patch-robed monks throughout the world take it as a model. [Yet it is not like this. Who needs these idle, lengthy words?]

They know only from ancient times to the present, [Half open, half closed. Like hemp, like millet. In ancient times it was not like this; now it is not like this.]

To distinguish the white swan from the black crow. [The whole mechanism stands forth sharply. The long are long of themselves; the short are short of themselves. Those who recognize it are precious; there is no need to distinguish.]

Thief! Thief! [Hey! It is nothing else: carrying a cangue while filing a complaint.]

Patch-robed monks have once grasped the nostrils. [They have already passed through. Split! Turn!]

If you take "Zhenzhou produces large radish heads" as his ultimate standard saying, you are already mistaken. The ancients led people by the hand up a high mountain, yet could not avoid the laughter of onlookers. Everyone knows this to be an ultimate standard saying, but ultimately they do not know where its ultimacy lies. Therefore Xuedou said, "Patch-robed monks throughout the world take it as a model."

"They know only from ancient times to the present, to distinguish the white swan from the black crow." Although they know that people today answer in this way and people of old answered in this way, when have they ever distinguished black from white? Xuedou said that one must still go into that flash of flint and lightning to distinguish the white swan from the black crow.

The koan has by this point been versified. Xuedou brings forth his own meaning and, from the lively, vital place, further tells you: "Thief! Thief! Patch-robed monks have once grasped the nostrils." The Buddhas of the three times are also thieves, and the patriarchs of successive generations are also thieves. They are skilled at thievery, replacing people's eyes. Without making the slightest move, Zhaozhou alone is acknowledged. Tell me: where was Zhaozhou skilled at thievery? Zhenzhou produces large radish heads!

The Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu, Volume Three (End)

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Naturally, the eyebrows part into the shape of the character ！

Teacher, what does "carrying a cangue while filing a complaint" mean? I could not find it.

[lvm]: There is also "eyes like bright stars"; he simply did not write it down.

"Carrying a cangue while filing a complaint" means wearing a cangue, an instrument of punishment, while going to cry injustice and file a case. Before you have even filed the complaint, you have already been judged guilty. Can you still win the case?

Have you seen anyone carrying a cangue while filing a complaint?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, I also do not know why nostrils point downward.

[lvm]: Ask Elder Sister Wang of East Village.

[Sudhana]: Elder Sister Wang of East Village has sent word:

Tell Yongshou to pull his own nose and imitate a cow's moo twice.

[lvm]: ^o^ (Elder Sister Wang says: If the nostrils pointed upward, that would be a monster.)

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Moo~~, moo~~~

Sudhana's moo is really not easy to imitate! Hahaha.

[DL]: Teacher, what is a thief who takes without lifting a finger? And what does it mean to replace someone's eyes?

[lvm]: A thief who takes without lifting a finger is one who eats for free and takes without paying.

To replace your eyes means to have you look at it from another angle.

[Little Junior Brother]: What does this phrase, "replaces your eyes," mean? Eye surgery?

[lvm]: Nowadays we call it: looking at it from another angle.

[Little Junior Brother]: Oh~~, then what is this passage saying?

“Old Zhaozhou was a man with nothing to do. You ask lightly, and he immediately replaces your eyes. If you are one who knows that there is, chew it carefully and swallow it. If you are not one who knows that there is, it is like swallowing a date whole.”

[lvm]: Put this plainly and it seems easy to understand, but its flavor is lost:

“Old Zhaozhou was a man with nothing to do. You ask lightly, and he immediately replaces your eyes. If you are one who knows that there is, chew it carefully and swallow it. If you are not one who knows that there is, it is like swallowing a date whole.” — Put this way, it has inexhaustible flavor.

“Old Zhaozhou was a man with nothing to do, while the questioner had something on his mind that he could not dissolve. The moment he asked, Zhaozhou cleared it away from the standpoint of having nothing to do.

If the questioner were one ‘who knows that there is,’ he would carefully savor Zhaozhou’s words and suddenly discover: it is precisely because I myself am not empty and pure, and still have unfinished business, that I ask such a question! He might then go further and untie the knot in his mind. But if the questioner were not one ‘who knows that there is,’ he would stubbornly cling to his own standpoint of ‘having something to do’ and refuse to understand Zhaozhou’s words from the standpoint of ‘having nothing to do.’ Then he would not understand Zhaozhou’s meaning. Even if he reluctantly accepted it, he would merely swallow it whole and would not gain genuine benefit.” — To explain it this way is to lose the flavor at once.

[Little Junior Brother]: What is a “person who knows that there is”? Looking at it from another angle, such a person is “empty and pure.”

[lvm]: When facing someone attached to blank emptiness, use the term “a person who knows that there is”; when facing someone attached to existence, use the term “an empty and pure person.”

Do not make too much of the literal wording; rely on the meaning, not the words.

[Lay Practitioner Zhaoguang]: Teacher, please first forgive this student’s presumption. I do not know whether the following thought is correct.

I think these were originally the plain words of the ancients. Why do modern people now read flavor into them, and what use is such flavor? Could this cause students to overlook the context and, when reading koans and recorded sayings, add another measure of attachment? Would it not be better to let everyone understand them first?

Again, I ask the teacher to forgive my offense of disrespect!

[lvm]: Hahaha! Realizing is good; understanding is not good.

[Lay Practitioner Zhaoguang]: So this is where the flavor lies! Teacher, you are tremendously formidable!

Once again I am being presumptuous. I have never known what I ought to ask. Today my scalp itches terribly, and I want to scratch it :)

[lvm]: Then scratch it.

Yet, “scratching is precisely not scratching”—that is better.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: “[lvm]: Realizing is good; understanding is not good.” Teacher, it would be even better if one both understood and realized.

[lvm]: “Understanding” is used in relation to others; “realizing” is one’s own benefit.

When you meet a fellow traveler on the Way, there is no harm in crossing Tiger Creek Bridge together. ^o^

[Wuliaoshi]: Teacher, what does Tiger Creek Bridge symbolize? Is there some allusion?

[lvm]: Look up information on Master Huiyuan and you will understand.

(Tiger Creek is the name of a stream. It lies before Donglin Monastery on Mount Lu, south of Jiujiang City, Jiangxi Province. It is said that Dharma Master Huiyuan of the Jin dynasty lived there and never crossed the stream when seeing off guests. Whenever he did cross it, tigers would roar; hence the name Tiger Creek.)

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, what is an “ultimate standard saying,” and what does “patch-robed monks throughout the world take it as a model” mean?

[lvm]: It cannot be attached to or grasped; there is nowhere to get hold of it. Therefore it is called an ultimate standard saying.

Everyone knows this is an ultimate standard saying, but ultimately they do not know where its ultimacy lies. Therefore Xuedou said, “Patch-robed monks throughout the world take it as a model.”

[fy]: Teacher, you know; I know.

[lvm]: How about changing that to, “You do not know, and neither do I”?

[fy]: This is true knowing!

[lvm]: Therefore it is said: it belongs neither to knowing nor to not knowing.

It is also said: knowing is not knowing; not knowing is knowing.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, regarding “The ancients led people by the hand up a high mountain, yet could not avoid the laughter of onlookers,”

does this mean that the ancients communicated in a wordless place, while bystanders laughed because they could not understand?

lvm : Yes! Have you not heard: “When the wondrous Dharma is taught to fools, they laugh loudly at it.”

Xinming : “If they do not laugh at it, it is not enough to be called the Way.”

When people of the highest capacity hear the Way, they diligently practice it;

when people of middling capacity hear the Way, it seems at times to exist and at times not;

when people of the lowest capacity hear the Way, they laugh loudly at it. If they do not laugh at it, it is not enough to be called the Way.”

Ban : Teacher, what does “split” mean? And what does “turn” mean?

lvm : Split—change a person's eyes; turn—do not interfere with their hands and feet.

Ban : Oh, these two characters are used so wonderfully.

Teacher, if someone asked you, “Have you personally seen Master Yuanyin?” how would you answer?

lvm : Then I would answer, “Just like you.”

Ban : I prostrate to a true spiritual friend.

lvm : Ha ha! Better not slander me.

Ban : I prostrate.

lvm : Another spoonful, indeed!

[31] Magu Shakes His Staff and Stands Erect

The Blue Cliff Record, Volume Four

[Case 31] Magu Shakes His Staff and Stands Upright

Pointer: When there is movement, shadows appear; when there is awareness, ice forms. But if one neither moves nor is aware, one cannot avoid falling into a wild-fox den. If one penetrates thoroughly and has complete faith, there is not the slightest obstruction or veil. Like a dragon obtaining water, like a tiger relying on a mountain. When let go, even tiles and pebbles emit light; when held fast, true gold loses its color. The public cases of the ancients cannot avoid being covered over and concealed. Tell me, what matter are they judging? Let us raise it and look:

[Case 31] The Case:

Magu, carrying his staff, went to Zhangjing. He circled the meditation seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. [The manner of Caoxi emerges exactly from the same mold. It could shake heaven and earth.]

Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes.” [Washing clods of earth in mud. He has deceived a whole boatload of people. What kind of words are these? A hitching post for donkeys.]

(Xuedou added the comment, “Wrong!”) [He cannot simply be let off. He still falls short by one move.]

Magu then went to Nanquan. Again he circled the meditation seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. [Still washing clods of earth in mud. He brings it out once more. A shrimp cannot jump out of a measure.]

Nanquan said, “No, no.” [Why not acknowledge it? Killing without batting an eye. What kind of words are these?]

(Xuedou added the comment, “Wrong!”) [He cannot be let off.]

Magu then said, “Zhangjing said ‘yes’; why does Your Reverence say ‘no’?” [Where is the master? This fellow was originally after people’s tongues. He has given himself away.]

Nanquan said, “Zhangjing is right; it is you who are not.” [That is also good. To kill, one must see blood; to act for someone, one must do so thoroughly. How many people has he concealed it from?]

“This is turned by the force of wind and will ultimately decay and perish.” [Sure enough, he has been ensnared by him. But what can he do about himself?]

In their travels, the ancients visited monasteries everywhere. They took this matter directly to heart, wishing to discern whether the old masters seated on their crooked wooden platforms possessed the eye or not. When a single word accorded with them, they remained; when a single word did not accord, they left. Look at Magu when he came to Zhangjing: he circled the meditation seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes.” The sword that kills, the sword that gives life—these require a master who acts from his proper position.

Xuedou said, “Wrong!” Does this fall on either side? If you understand it by going to either side, you do not see Xuedou’s intent. He stood upright; tell me, for what purpose? Why, then, did Xuedou say “Wrong”? Where was his error? Zhangjing said “yes”; where is the place of “yes”? Xuedou is like one seated in judgment, reading the verdict.

Carrying the word “yes,” Magu went to see Nanquan. Once more he circled the meditation seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. Nanquan said, “No, no.” The sword that kills, the sword that gives life—these require a lineage master acting from his proper position.

Xuedou said, “Wrong!” Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes,” while Nanquan said, “No, no.” Are they the same or different? The first said “yes”; why is that also wrong? The latter said “no”; why is that also wrong? If you gain insight beneath Zhangjing’s words, you cannot even save yourself. If you gain insight beneath Nanquan’s words, you may take the patriarchs and Buddhas as your teachers.

Though it is so, those in the house of patch-robed monks must first acknowledge it for themselves; do not merely seize upon other people’s eloquence. Since his question was the same in both cases, why did one say “yes” and the other “no”? If one is a master of unrestricted skill, a person who has attained great liberation, one must surely have another way of life. If one does not forget either the prompting or the circumstances, one will certainly stagnate at these two ends. If you wish to discern clearly the ancient and the modern, and cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven, you must clearly grasp these two “wrongs.”

When Xuedou later composed his verse, he too only praised these two “wrongs.” Xuedou wished to bring forth the vividly alive point, and so he spoke thus. If you are a fellow with blood beneath your skin, you will naturally not make an interpretive understanding from words and phrases, nor construct a principle from a donkey-hitching post. Some say, “What relevance is there in Xuedou’s supplying these two ‘wrongs’ on Magu’s behalf?” They do not realize that the comments of the ancients lock off the crucial pass: this side is so, that side is so, yet in the end it is not at either of these two ends.

Head Monk Qingzang said, “Carrying the staff and circling the meditation seat—both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are wrong.” In truth, it is not here either. Have you not seen how Yongjia went to Caoxi to see the Sixth Patriarch? He circled the meditation seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood upright. The Patriarch said, “A śramaṇa should possess three thousand deportments and eighty thousand refined practices. Great Virtuous One, where have you come from, that you give rise to such great arrogance?” Why did the Sixth Patriarch say that he had given rise to great arrogance? This neither says “yes” nor says “no”; both “yes” and “no” are donkey-hitching posts. Only Xuedou’s two “wrongs” are somewhat closer.

Magu said, “Zhangjing said ‘yes’; why does Your Reverence say ‘no’?” This old fellow did not spare his eyebrows and gave away quite a lot. Nanquan said, “Zhangjing is right; it is you who are not.” Nanquan may be said to have released the hawk upon seeing the rabbit. Head Monk Qingzang said: “Nanquan was far too careless! ‘No’ should have been enough, yet he further exposed him by saying, ‘This is turned by the force of wind and will ultimately decay and perish.’”

The Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment says: “This body of mine is now a coming together of the four great elements. Hair, fur, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, brain, and bodily impurities all return to earth. Saliva, tears, pus, and blood all return to water. Warmth returns to fire. Movement returns to wind. When the four great elements each separate, where then is this deluded body?” Since Magu carried his staff and circled the meditation seat, and this was turned by the force of wind and would ultimately decay and perish, tell me: where, after all, is the matter that reveals the essential school of mind? At this point, one must be a fellow cast of raw iron.

Have you not seen how Scholar Zhang Zhuo visited Chan Master Xitang Zang? He asked, “Are mountains, rivers, and the great earth existent or nonexistent? Are the Buddhas of the three times existent or nonexistent?” Zang said, “Existent.” Scholar Zhang Zhuo said, “Wrong!” Zang said, “Whom has Your Excellency visited?” Zhuo said, “I visited the monk of Jing Mountain. Whenever I asked him anything, Jing Mountain always said, ‘Nonexistent.’”

Zang said, “What family do you have?” Zhuo said, “I have a wife and two foolish children.” Zang then asked, “What family does Jing Mountain have?” Zhuo said, “Jing Mountain is an ancient Buddha; Reverend, do not slander him.” Zang said, “When Your Excellency becomes like Jing Mountain, then say that everything is nonexistent.” Zhang Zhuo merely bowed his head. In general, a lineage master must help people release their attachments and remove their bonds, pulling out nails and drawing out wedges; one must not merely guard one side. Turn left and shift right; turn right and shift left.

Just look at Yangshan, who went to Zhongyi to express thanks for the precepts. When Zhongyi saw him arrive, he clapped his hands on the meditation seat and said, “Reverend!” Yangshan immediately stood to the east, then stood to the west, then stood in the center. Having expressed thanks for the precepts, he withdrew and stood behind. Zhongyi said, “Where did you obtain this samādhi?” Yangshan said, “I brought it forth from the seal of Caoxi.”

Zhongyi said, “Tell me, what sort of people does Caoxi receive with this samādhi?” Yangshan said, “He receives the One-Night Awakened One.” Yangshan then asked Zhongyi, “Where did Your Reverence obtain this samādhi?” Zhongyi said, “I obtained this samādhi from Mazu.” Is this not the speech of one who, upon raising one, understands three, and who sees the root while pursuing the branches?

Longya instructed the assembly: “Those who study the Way must penetrate beyond the patriarchs and Buddhas.” Monk Xinfeng said, “When you see the words and teachings of the patriarchs and Buddhas as though they were living enemies, only then do you have a share in study. If you cannot penetrate through them, you will be deceived by the patriarchs and Buddhas.”

At that time a monk asked, “Do the patriarchs and Buddhas have any intention to deceive people?” Longya said, “Tell me, do rivers and lakes have any intention to obstruct people?” He further said, “Although rivers and lakes have no intention to obstruct people, people of the time cannot cross them; therefore rivers and lakes become obstacles to them. One cannot say that rivers and lakes do not obstruct people.”

Although the patriarchs and Buddhas have no intention to deceive people, people of the time themselves cannot penetrate through them; thus the patriarchs and Buddhas become deceivers to them. One cannot say that the patriarchs and Buddhas do not deceive people. If one penetrates beyond the patriarchs and Buddhas, one has passed beyond the patriarchs and Buddhas. One must also embody the intent of the patriarchs and Buddhas before one can be on a par with the ancient worthies who go beyond. If one has not penetrated through, then even if one studies Buddha and studies patriarch, there will be no prospect of attainment through ten thousand eons.”

Another monk asked, “How can one avoid being deceived by the patriarchs and Buddhas?” Longya said, “You must awaken for yourself!” At this point, it must be so. Why? To act for someone, one must do so thoroughly; to kill, one must see blood. Nanquan and Xuedou were people of this kind, and only then dared to take it up and play with it. The verse says:

This wrong, that wrong, [Cherish your eyebrows. Act in accordance with the command. Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.]

Take care not to pick them up. [Two iron hammers without holes. Even a thousand-armed Great Compassion could not lift them. Should you pick them up, Ācārya, take thirty blows.]

The waves of the four seas are calm, [No one under heaven dares stir. East, west, south, and north: one and the same family style. Recently there has been much rain.]

And the tides of a hundred rivers recede. [Pure and naked, bare and exposed. At least one’s own household is secure. The seas are peaceful and the rivers clear.]

The ancient staff’s wind rises high above the twelve gates; [How does it compare with this? The staff has no eyes; take care not to make a living at the tip of the staff.]

At every gate there is a road, yet all is empty and desolate. [Not a single thing is there. It cheats you your whole life. Look at it and you are blind.]

It is not desolate; [Indeed. Fortunately, there is a place to turn around. You are already blind. Strike!]

Those who act well seek medicine without disease. [Once dead, never alive again. Why do you doze through the twelve hours of the day? Why fish in the sky and grope in the earth?]

This verse resembles the case in which Deshan met Guishan. First he places two turning words upon the case and strings them together, then brings forth the verse.

“This wrong, that wrong; take care not to pick them up.” Xuedou’s meaning is this: Here is one wrong; there is another wrong. Take care not to pick them up, for to pick them up is to go astray. It must be so. With these two “wrongs,” the waves of the four seas become calm and the tides of a hundred rivers recede. How utterly clear are the breeze and the bright moon! If you understand beneath these two “wrongs,” there is not another trace of a matter. Mountains are mountains and waters are waters; what is long is naturally long, what is short naturally short; every five days there is wind, every ten days rain. Thus it is said, “The waves of the four seas are calm, and the tides of a hundred rivers recede.”

Later, in praising Magu’s carrying of the staff, he says, “The ancient staff’s wind rises high above the twelve gates.” The ancients used a whip as a staff; patch-robed monks use a walking staff as a staff. (In the Garden of Affairs of the Patriarchal Court, “ancient staff” is explained by citing the Staff Sūtra.) Above the Jade Pool of the Queen Mother of the West are twelve vermilion gates. The ancient staff is precisely the walking staff; the clear wind above its head rises higher than the twelve vermilion gates. The places where the Son of Heaven and Śakra dwell likewise each have twelve vermilion gates.

If you understand these two “errors,” light will arise from the tip of your staff, and there will be no need for the ancient staff. An ancient said, “Recognize the staff, and the work of a lifetime of Chan study is complete.” Again: “It is not a merely symbolic, empty thing; it is the Tathāgata’s precious staff, his very trace.” Such are examples of this. At this point, whether turned upside down or every which way, one attains great freedom at all times.

“At every gate there is a road, yet all is desolate and empty.” Though there is a road, it is only desolate and empty. Here Xuedou felt that he had let something slip, so he went further and shattered it for you.

Yet, although this is so, there is also a place that is not desolate. Even one who is a true adept must, while not ill, first seek some medicine to take.

[Shancai]: Ha ha, Teacher,

why must “even one who is a true adept, while not ill, first seek some medicine to take”? Is that not seeking trouble for oneself?

[lvm]: Ha ha! Magu was a true adept; he took the “medicine for no illness” at least twice.

“The ancient staff rises above the twelve gates; at every gate there is a road, yet all is desolate and empty. Where it is not desolate and empty, adepts do well to seek medicine for no illness.” Take a little medicine even when you are not ill, and the roads through these twelve gates will no longer be desolate and empty. For example, the World-Honored One manifested the eight aspects of attaining the Way.

[Shancai]: Oh! This reminds me of the story of Shennong, who tasted all the herbs while seeking medicines for sentient beings. That too may count as an example of seeking medicine to take while one is not ill.

[Shancai]: Xuedou’s two old characters for “error” are:

like the tail of a divine turtle: with one sweep, it erases Zhangjing’s tracks; with another sweep, it erases what Nanquan swept away. Is that so?

Heh heh. Although it may be put this way, please do not understand Old Xue in this fashion.

[lvm]: Yes. The first “error” sweeps away “is”; the latter “error” sweeps away “is not.” Do not fall into either side.

Of course, if you hold this view of Xuedou, you will bring on a third “error”!

[Dongwa]: Teacher, Magu shook his staff and stood erect; Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes.” Why is this called washing a clod of earth in mud?

[Dongwa]: Oh, does that mean one must not put another head atop one’s head? Then what does Magu’s shaking his staff and standing erect signify?

[lvm]: Washing a clod of earth in mud—one only gets it dirtier.

[ghg88]: “Is and is not” is washing a clod of earth in mud; “this error, that error” is standing erect.

[lvm]: ^o^

And then it is time to sweep away even this “standing erect” (or, one might say, the time is ripe).

[lvm]: (In reply to [Dongwa]’s question, “What does shaking the staff and standing erect signify?”)—Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue, when he met the Sixth Patriarch, also shook his staff and stood erect. (See the Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch.)

[Dongwa]: I have read it. Still, please explain it plainly, Teacher.

[lvm]: It has already been explained plainly. To say more would violate a taboo.

[Shancai]: This is the manner in which a Chan student meets a Chan worthy by presenting his conduct as one grounded in his original endowment:

he circles the meditation seat three times, briefly observing the etiquette and rules for greeting a monastic, thereby opening the conditions for the Dharma;

then, shaking his staff and standing erect, he directly presents the scenery of his original ground face to face.

[Dongwa]: Oh, oh—adding frost upon snow.

Nanquan said, “No, no”—thereby removing Magu’s shackles.

Magu gave rise to meaning from the words and took up another set of shackles—hence Xuedou said, “Error.”

It has nothing to do with “is” or “is not.” No wonder the patriarch said: “Rare indeed is one who pierces the ear.”

Mm—if one sees the patriarch in this way, one wrongs the Buddhas of the three times.

[lvm]: Ha ha! So it turns out that you understand everything.

[Dongwa]: Nor is it within understanding.

May I ask the Teacher to explain: Yangshan then stood to the east, then to the west, and then in the center.

[lvm]: At this very moment, on which side are you standing?

[Dongwa]: Please let carts and horses pass through privately, Teacher!

[lvm]: “At every gate there is a road, yet all is desolate and empty.” Though there is a road, it is only desolate and empty.—Even an official road admits no needle.

Yet, although this is so, there is also a place that is not desolate. Even one who is a true adept must, while not ill, first seek some medicine to take.—Let carts and horses pass through privately.

[Cicada]: Let me interject: Stand wherever you see yourself standing.

[lvm]: Got it.

[Cicada]: Thief! Thief!

[lvm]: In our local dialect, a cicada is called “zhiliao” [“got it”].

[Shancai]: Teacher, I have another question:

Magu came to Zhangjing holding his staff. He circled the Chan seat three times, shook his staff once, and stood erect. [The manner of Caoxi was reproduced exactly. It was enough to startle heaven and shake earth.]

Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes.” [Washing a clod of earth in mud. He thoroughly deceived a whole boatload of people. What kind of words are these? A hitching post for a donkey.]

(Xuedou appended the remark: “Error!”) [It cannot simply be let pass. Yet it still falls one move short.]

It seems that although Magu stood as if supporting heaven and earth, he could not avoid bearing shackles as he passed judgment. When Zhangjing said, “Yes, yes,” he fastened another set of shackles upon him.

Xuedou’s single “Error!” indeed has the effect of one staff-blow freeing two tigers.

That is why it is said that it still falls one move short. Is that so?

[lvm]: Just so! Just so!

At this point, Xuedou’s “Error!” should also be swept away.

[Shancai]: ^-^

This error, that error—

above all, do not pick them up.

The waves of the four seas are calm;

the tides of a hundred rivers have receded.

[Young Yongshou]: “When letting go, even tiles and pebbles shine; when holding fast, even true gold loses its color.”

Fine writing! As I recite it, I myself begin to feel a little heroic and self-assured!

[Dongwa]: What does “When letting go, even tiles and pebbles shine; when holding fast, even true gold loses its color” mean?

[Young Yongshou]: I make one turn following the words; you make two turns, little one!

You are even more playful than I am!!

[Shancai]: Letting go: allowing carts and horses to pass through privately. Holding fast: even an official road admits no needle.

[Dongwa]: Thank you for your guidance!

It is precisely because there is not the slightest obscuration that it is said: “When letting go, even tiles and pebbles shine; when holding fast, even true gold loses its color.”

[Shancai]: Thus one can both kill and enliven, freely yielding and seizing.

[Young Yongshou]: Teacher, what does “the ancient staff rises above the twelve gates” mean?

[lvm]: A patch-robed monk takes a staff as his whip. “The ancient staff” is the staff of the worthies of old; it refers to the Chan style of ancient times.

Above the Jasper Pool of the Queen Mother of the West are twelve vermilion gates.

The Chan style of the worthies of old surpasses even the twelve vermilion gates in heaven.

[Young Yongshou]: Teacher, is “rises above the twelve gates” the same as, or different from, “high-spirited and full of vigor”?

[Dongwa]: Hahaha~ ~ How many turns will we have to make this time? Hee hee.

[lvm]: One turn at each gate—twelve turns altogether.

[lvm]: After making twelve turns, you should be vigorous enough, shouldn’t you?

[Young Yongshou]: Then I’ll be dizzy, Teacher!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Xinming]: Teacher, how can one firmly trust that very “this is it”?

This is similar to Chan Master Magu and reminds me of another elder: Magistrate Yuxiu.

(Magistrate Yuxiu asked Chan Master Ziyu, “What is Buddha?” Chan Master Ziyu called out, “Magistrate!” Magistrate Yuxiu answered, “Yes?” The master said, “This very thing is it.” That is it! Look—such direct pointing, how refreshing.)

But then another problem arises. Because this direct pointing is so immediate and so easily available, students often cannot take it up and doubts remain in their minds. So did Magistrate Yuxiu truly awaken to the Way? At that moment he may have awakened, but when someone challenged him by saying that was not it, he again had doubts. This is called not being firm on one’s heels.

Chan Master Yaoshan, namely Yaoshan Weiyan, was a disciple of Shitou Xiqian; Shitou Xiqian was a Dharma-grandson of the Sixth Patriarch. Wishing to test whether Magistrate Yuxiu had truly awakened, he released this remark: “Magistrate Yuxiu has been buried to death by Ziyu Mountain, buried beneath Ziyu Mountain.”

Ziyu happened also to be the name of a mountain. When Yuxiu heard this, he became uneasy: “Oh, perhaps I understood wrongly. This was not pointing out my own Buddha-nature.” He became inwardly unsettled and hurried to Yaoshan to ask him. When Chan Master Yaoshan saw him arrive, he was delighted. He thought, “It is very good that you have come; the matter can be resolved.”

“Had you not come, your doubts would have tormented you to death. If you harbored such doubts in your heart and could not resolve the matter even until death, that would be terrible.” So he said, “It is very good that you have come today. Ask me.”

Therefore, this official Yu Xiu asked Chan Master Yaoshan, “What is Buddha?” Like Chan Master Ziyu, Yaoshan addressed him as “Official.” Yu Xiu replied, “Yes?” Yaoshan then asked in return, “What is it?” Rather than saying, “This very thing is it,” he changed his approach and asked him in return, “What is it?”—prompting him to acknowledge it for himself. He wanted him to awaken for himself: What is it?! Was this not tantamount to plainly telling him that this is Buddha? —Selected from Master Yuanyin’s teachings at Faguang Temple)

May I ask, Teacher, how can firm faith arise? If one says, “You are a person,” everyone believes it; but if one says that that is your Original Face, perhaps not one person in a hundred will believe it. Why is this so? Must one directly realize it before one can believe? What sort of mentality is this? Would it not take far less effort to investigate and resolve these various psychological issues than to have everyone practice and practice? Please analyze this mentality of not having firm faith.

lvm : Do you firmly believe that “all appearances are illusory”?

Yongshou Tongzi : Teacher, would it do to believe that everything is impermanent?

Little Dragon Girl : Taking off the dragon robe and putting on coarse cloth—what a pity! What a pity!

lvm : In fact, everything is inherently impermanent. There is no need to deliberately believe it, nor is it possible not to believe it.

Yuanyuan : I firmly believe it. Yet the mind has nothing to settle on, and contemplation has no point of entry.

lvm : Oh! Do you take contemplation to mean finding something with form?

Grain in Ear : To look for something to settle on is to cling to appearances, is that right?

lvm : If that is so, the best place to settle is the Buddha’s Pure Land. At such a time, do not speak of clinging to appearances or not clinging to appearances.

Xinming : I firmly believe it. (In response to lvm : “Do you firmly believe that ‘all appearances are illusory’?”)

However, I have gradually come to firmly believe in that.

Does being unable to see through things when they arise mean that one still cannot be said to have firm faith?

lvm : Oh? Does “that” have form?

Xinming : Although appearances are not, it both is and is not.

It cannot be obtained, yet it cannot be shaken off.

Little Dragon Girl : May I ask: When do appearances exist, and when do they not exist?

Xinming : (Appearances) are not; (x) both is and is not.

x cannot be obtained or shaken off.

Little Dragon Girl : Elder brother, please forgive my frankness: Painted cakes do not satisfy hunger. Put more effort into working on the mind-ground!

lvm : (In response to Xinming : “It cannot be obtained, yet it cannot be shaken off.”) Since you call it “unobtainable,” would firmly believing make it obtainable?

Since you call it “impossible to shake off,” must you use firm belief to intensify this “impossibility of shaking it off”?

That is true firm faith.

Xinming : I am asking for medicine on others’ behalf.

I simply see that many people still do not firmly believe. I feel that helping them firmly believe and take it up themselves—that is, resolving this psychological issue—is more important than having them practice.

lvm : In fact, the process you describe is itself practice.

Shizi : (In response to lvm : “Do you firmly believe that ‘all appearances are illusory’?”) Brother, if one stubbornly clings to this thought, does it not become a hitching post for a donkey?

It may be used temporarily, but in the end do not become attached to either dharmas or non-dharmas!

lvm : That makes sense. Shizi still has the sharpest eye.

[32] Linji Opens It with One Palm

[Case 32] Linji Opens It Up with a Single Palm Strike

Pointer: Sitting cut off in all ten directions, a thousand eyes suddenly open; one phrase stops the stream, and the myriad opportunities are stilled. Is there anyone who lives and dies together with this? This is a ready-made koan, impossible to set

aside; an old master's entangling vines—please raise them for examination.

[Case 32] The Case:

Senior Monk Ding asked Linji, "What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?" [How many people are left bewildered at this point! Yet this still remains! What do you take this astonishment to be?]

Linji got down from his Chan seat, seized him, gave him a palm strike, and then pushed him away. [Today he has been caught out. Such urgent grandmotherly concern! Chan monks throughout the land cannot leap beyond it.]

Ding stood there. [He had already fallen into a ghost's cave. He had missed the opportunity! He could not avoid losing his nostrils.]

A monk standing nearby said, "Senior Monk Ding, why do you not make a bow?" [Someone saw through it in a cold place. He relied entirely on another's strength. When someone in the eastern household dies, the western household helps mourn.]

Just as Ding was about to bow, [making up for clumsiness with diligence,]

he suddenly attained great awakening. [Like finding a lamp in the dark, like finding treasure when poor. Making the mistake serve as the mistake. But tell me: what did Senior Monk Ding see that made him bow?]

Look at his manner: going straight out and straight in, coming and going directly. This is the orthodox lineage of Linji; it has such functioning. If you penetrate it, you can overturn heaven and earth and freely enjoy its use. Senior Monk Ding was such a man. Struck once by Linji, he rose to bow and immediately knew where to settle. He was a northerner, most plain and forthright. Having attained it, he never again entered the world; later, he employed Linji's methods completely, and there was no harm in his standing out from the rest.

One day, while traveling, he encountered Yantou, Xuefeng, and Qinshan.

Yantou asked, "Where have you come from?"

Ding said, "Linji."

Yantou said, "May the Master enjoy every blessing."

Ding said, "He has already passed away."

Yantou said, "The three of us were specially going to pay our respects. Our blessings and affinities were shallow, and we have encountered his passing into quiescence. May we ask: when the Master was alive, what sayings did he have? Please, Senior Monk, raise one or two examples for us to examine."

Ding then raised this: One day Linji addressed the assembly, saying, "Within this lump of red flesh is the True Person of No Rank, who constantly enters and leaves through the face-gates of each of you. Those who have not yet verified this, look! Look!" At that time a monk stepped forth and asked, "What is the True Person of No Rank?" Linji immediately seized him and said, "Speak! Speak!" As the monk hesitated, Linji pushed him away and said, "What kind of dry shit-stick is this True Person of No Rank!" Then he returned to the abbot's quarters.

Yantou could not help sticking out his tongue.

Qinshan said, "Why not say, 'It is not the True Person of No Rank'?"

Ding seized him and said, "How far apart are the True Person of No Rank and the not-True Person of No Rank? Speak quickly! Speak quickly!"

Qinshan had no reply; his face turned pale, then green.

Yantou and Xuefeng came forward, bowed, and said, "This newly ordained monk does not know good from bad and has offended you, Senior Monk. We beg your compassion—please let him go."

Ding said, "If it were not for these two old fellows, I would beat this bed-wetting brat to death!"

On another occasion, after returning from a meal offering in Zhenzhou, he stopped to rest on a bridge and encountered three doctrinal instructors.

One of them asked, "What does 'At the deep place in the Chan river, one must probe to the bottom' mean?"

Ding seized him and was about to throw him off the bridge.

The other two instructors hurriedly intervened, saying, "Stop! Stop! He has offended you, Senior Monk. We beg your compassion."

Ding said, “If it were not for you two instructors, I would let him probe all the way to the bottom!”

See how his methods were entirely Linji’s functioning.

Now see how Xuedou composed this verse:

At the point of severance, the whole function carries on the traces of those who came before. [The Yellow River has been muddy from its source! The son inherits his father’s trade.]

Why should one be leisurely in wielding it? [Where is it? Yet there is such a person. Can one without hands or feet still obtain it?]

When the giant spirit raises his hand, it takes little effort; [It frightens people to death. Stop showing off. One flick of the whisk, and there is no further examination.]

He splits apart the myriad layers of Mount Hua. [Heaven, earth, and the great ground are exposed all at once. Down you fall.]

Xuedou’s verse says, “At the point of severance, the whole function carries on the traces of those who came before. Why should one be leisurely in wielding it?” Huangbo’s great function and great activity were inherited in full by Linji alone. Once it is brought forth, there is no room for hesitation. If one hesitates, one falls into the realm of shadows. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says: “When I press my finger, the ocean-seal emits light; when you briefly stir your mind, the dusts of affliction first arise.”

“When the giant spirit raises his hand, it takes little effort; he splits apart the myriad layers of Mount Hua.” The giant spirit possessed great supernatural strength; with his hand he split open Mount Hua and let the waters flow into the Yellow River. Senior Monk Ding’s sense of doubt had piled up like mountains and amassed like peaks. With Linji’s single palm strike, it directly crumbled and melted away like ice.

[Xinming]: What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?

“He seized him, gave him a palm strike, and then pushed him away.” Is this not precisely the three stages of the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?

Seizing him — affirmation; — entering the gate.

Giving him a palm strike — negation; — ceasing cultivation.

Then pushing him away — the negation of negation; — leaving the gate and seeing the mountain.

Step by step is called gradual; “Ding” is sudden. It seems that sudden awakening does not exclude gradual cultivation; it is simply an arrow that shoots through the gradual. The difficulty with sudden awakening is that it takes two palms, teacher and disciple, to make a clap.

The question is: when “Ding seized him and was about to throw him off the bridge,” did he truly mean to throw him, or did he merely make a gesture as if to throw him? If the former, I fear it would have been a wasted effort.

[lvm]: Sitting too long becomes wearisome.

“[Xinming]: Seizing him . . . Sudden awakening—the difficulty is that it takes two palms, teacher and disciple, to make a clap.”

* Ha ha! Now you are the one who cannot make a clap with a single palm!

“The question is: when ‘Ding seized him and was about to throw him off the bridge,’ did he truly mean to throw him, or did he merely make a gesture as if to throw him? If the former, I fear it would have been a wasted effort.”

* What true or false is there here? Did he not say, “At the deep place in the Chan river, one must probe to the bottom”? Then let him “probe all the way to the bottom.”

[Xinming]: Is that not rather too fierce? I fear he would have had no room to turn around.

[lvm]: Such is the style of the school—Linji was a general, after all.

[Lianming]: Teacher, if you answer like this, are you not letting Senior Brother Xinming off too easily? Then Teacher, you ought to receive a palm strike from Linji!

[lvm]: Instead, you receive a palm strike from me.

[Lianming]: Let Teacher go settle accounts with Linji. What has that to do with me?

[lvm]: Three cups of Qingyuan’s Baijia wine; after drinking them, he still said they had not touched his lips.

[Sudhana]: In those days, Chan Master Chuanzi knocked that donkey tethered to a post into the water with a single pole stroke —there was no discussion beforehand.

A great person has conduct that transcends the world, beyond the reach of petty sentiments and petty wisdom.

[Dongwa]: What does “sitting too long becomes wearisome” illustrate?

[lvm]: He asks, “What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?” Too many people, from ancient times to the present, have asked in this way.

Asking like this from ancient times until now—is it not tiring? That is “sitting too long becomes wearisome.”

[Madai]: What is the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma?

[lvm]: Breaking open the sack is it.

[Madai]: Where should I begin?

[lvm]: Begin at “the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma.”

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Who was Senior Monk Ding?

[lvm]: Because, “having attained it, he never again entered the world,” it is impossible to identify him as Chan Master So-and-so.

[Dongwa]: Teacher, what did Grandfather Yuanwu mean by saying that Senior Monk Ding was “making the mistake serve as the mistake”?

[lvm]: “Like finding a lamp in the dark, like finding treasure when poor”—that is the analogy.

In “making the mistake serve as the mistake,” the two instances of the word “mistake” can mean darkness and lamp, or poverty and treasure. But why are both called “mistakes”? Tell me.

[Dongwa]: Reporting to Teacher: ask Chuanzi’s single pole stroke.

[Dongwa]: Oh dear, I have erred again—I have raised it.

Teacher, if one does not cling, then even letting go makes broken tiles shine; otherwise, even holding fast causes true gold to lose its luster. Is this what it means?

[lvm]: Darkness symbolizes delusion, and the lamp awakening; poverty symbolizes the ordinary, and treasure the noble.

Now you know the two mistakes, do you not?

[Dongwa]: Ah, ah! If one makes a holy interpretation, one immediately falls under the sway of a host of demons.

Purity is fundamentally so; it pervades the dharma realm and is complete in itself, not obtained from outside. Delusion and awakening, ordinary and noble—these all pollute purity and turn away from what is fundamental. This is called the pit of liberation.

As the Master was about to pass away, he sat upright and said, “After I am gone, you must not extinguish my Treasury of the True Dharma Eye.” Sansheng stepped forth and said, “How would we dare extinguish the Master’s Treasury of the True Dharma Eye?” The Master said, “If someone later asks you about it, what will you say?” Sansheng immediately gave a shout. The Master said, “Who would have known that my Treasury of the True Dharma Eye would be extinguished beside this blind donkey?” Having spoken, he passed into quiescence in perfect composure.

[hs]: May I ask:

Ding stood there—was he hesitating and deliberating, or was he experiencing that?

[lvm]: Are you hesitating and deliberating, or are you experiencing that?

[hs]: Thank you, Teacher, for your wonderful reply.

[Wujiang]: May I ask whether the sentences in square brackets are your comments, or whether they were already present in the original work?

lvm : It was already present in the original work.

Perhaps : You could write more explanations. Very good—I enjoy reading them!

lvm : Actually, the original work is already an exposition.

[33] Zifu Draws a Circle

[Case Thirty-Three] Zifu Draws a Circle

Pointer: Unable to distinguish east from west, or north from south; from morning until evening, and from evening until morning. Would you still say that he is dozing? At times his eyes are like shooting stars—would you still say that he is alert? At times he calls south north. Tell me: is this deliberate or unintentional? Is he a person of the Way or an ordinary person? If you can penetrate this, only then will you know where it comes down and understand whether the ancient worthies were thus or not thus. Tell me, what occasion is this? Let us present it and see.

[Case Thirty-Three] The Case:

Minister Chen Cao visited Zifu. When Zifu saw him arrive, he immediately drew a circle. [It takes a keen eye to recognize a keen eye, and a thief's eye to recognize a thief. If he were not so reserved, how could he recognize this fellow? Do you see the vajra circle?]

Cao said, "For this disciple to come in this manner was already inappropriate; how much more so to draw another circle!" [Today he has run into a fellow who is dozing. What an old thief!]

Zifu then closed the door of the abbot's quarters. [A thief does not rob a poor man's house. He had already entered the other's circle.]

Xuedou said, "Chen Cao had only one eye." [Xuedou had an eye in the crown of his head. Tell me, where was his intent? It would also be fitting to give him a circle. Clearly, this is a dragon's head and a snake's tail. At the time, it would have been good to give him a jab, leaving him no door by which to advance and no road by which to retreat. Tell me, what further jab would you give him?]

Minister Chen Cao was a contemporary of Pei Xiu and Li Ao. Whenever he saw a monk arrive, he would first invite him for a vegetarian meal and offer three hundred cash, but the monk had to undergo examination.

One day Yunmen arrived. After they had looked at each other, Cao asked, "I will not ask about the Confucian classics. As for the Tripiṭaka and the twelve divisions of the teachings, there are lecturers who deal with them. What, then, is the matter of a traveling patched-robed monk?"

Yunmen said, "How many people has the Minister asked before?"

Cao said, "I am asking you now, Reverend."

Yunmen said, "Put that aside for now. What is the meaning of the teachings?"

Cao said, "Yellow scrolls and red bindings."

Yunmen said, "Those are written words and language. What is the meaning of the teachings?"

Cao said, "When the mouth wishes to speak, words are lost; when the mind wishes to grasp an object, thought disappears."

Yunmen said, "That 'when the mouth wishes to speak, words are lost' is set against speech; that 'when the mind wishes to grasp an object, thought disappears' is set against deluded thoughts. What is the meaning of the teachings?"

Cao had no reply.

Yunmen said, "I have heard that the Minister reads the Lotus Sūtra. Is that so?"

Cao said, "Yes."

Yunmen said, "The sūtra says, 'All activities of livelihood and worldly occupations do not contradict true reality.' Tell me: how many beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception have now relinquished their stations?"

Cao again had no reply.

Yunmen said, "Minister, do not be hasty. We monks cast aside the Three Classics and Five Treatises and enter the monastic community. Even after ten or twenty years, we still cannot manage it. How could the Minister possibly understand?"

Cao bowed and said, "This disciple is at fault."

On another day, while ascending a tower with a group of officials, Cao saw several monks approaching in the distance. One official said, "All those who are coming are Chan monks."

Cao said, "They are not."

The official said, "How do you know they are not?"

Cao said, “Wait until they come nearer, and I shall examine them for you.”

When the monks reached the foot of the tower, Cao suddenly called out, “Reverend!”

The monks raised their heads. Cao said to the officials, “You do not believe it? Speak!”

Yunmen alone was one whom he could not examine. Yunmen had come after visiting Muzhou.

One day, Chen Cao went to visit Zifu. When Zifu saw him arrive, he immediately drew a circle. Zifu was a venerable master in the line of Guishan and Yangshan, and he ordinarily liked to receive people through situational devices. When he saw Minister Chen Cao, he immediately drew a circle. But Cao was a capable man, not one to be deceived by others, and he knew to examine himself. He said, “For this disciple to come in this manner was already inappropriate; how much more so to draw another circle!” Zifu closed the door.

Such a koan is called discerning the target within words and concealing the pivotal point within a sentence.

Xuedou said, “Chen Cao had only one eye.” Xuedou may indeed be said to have had an eye in the crown of his head. Tell me, where was his intent? It would also be fitting to give him a circle. If it were all like this, how could patched-robed monks guide people? Let me ask you: if you had been Chen Cao at that time, what utterance could you have made, so as to avoid Xuedou’s saying that he “had only one eye”? Therefore Xuedou overturned it and composed this verse:

Round and round, pearls encircle gleaming jade. [To stir up the Yellow River with a staff three feet long requires a blue-eyed barbarian monk. Cast from raw iron.]

A horse carries a donkey across an iron ship. [What is the use of employing so much? What limit is there? Let me show you, Reverend.]

Entrust it to the carefree guest of sea and mountain. [There are people who do not want it. Yet even a carefree guest cannot bear it; one must truly be carefree.]

When angling for a giant turtle, cast down a coiled ring. [Thus it comes, thus it goes. None can get out all at once. What use would frogs be? What could shrimp, clams, snails, and mussels do? One must angle for a giant turtle.]

Xuedou further said, “The patched-robed monks of the whole world cannot jump out.” [Even your whole body is within it. Buried together in one pit. Reverend, can you jump out?]

“Round and round, pearls encircle gleaming jade; a horse carries a donkey across an iron ship.” Xuedou’s verse strikes directly at the point; it praises only the circle. If you can understand it, it is like a tiger wearing horns. In this small matter, the bottom of the bucket must drop out and all mechanisms be exhausted; gain and loss, right and wrong must all be let go at once. Do not try to understand it as a rational principle, nor may you understand it as something abstruse and marvelous. Ultimately, how should one understand it? You must look at it from right here: “A horse carries a donkey across an iron ship.”

It cannot be entrusted elsewhere; it must be taken and entrusted to the carefree guest of sea and mountain. If you have even a little matter in your belly, you cannot take it on. Here, only one whom matters and no matters, adverse feelings and favorable circumstances, Buddhas and patriarchs cannot do anything to, can take it on. If there is Chan to investigate, or calculations of ordinary and sacred, you definitely cannot take it on.

Once one has taken it on, how should one understand it? He says, “When angling for a giant turtle, cast down a coiled ring.” To angle for a giant turtle, one must use a coiled ring. Therefore Fengxue said, “Accustomed to tethering whales and leviathans in the clear great deep, I lament the frog’s gait treading the mud and sand.” He also said, “Let not the giant turtle carry away the Three Mountains; I wish to walk upon the summit of Penglai.”

Xuedou further said, “The patched-robed monks of the whole world cannot jump out.” If one is a giant turtle, one will never hold the views of a patched-robed monk; if one is a patched-robed monk, one will never hold the views of a giant turtle.

[Xinming]: This iron ship can go up but cannot come down. Please lend a hand, Teacher.

[lvm]: Round and round, pearls encircle gleaming jade; a horse carries a donkey across an iron ship. Entrust it to the carefree guest of sea and mountain; when angling for a giant turtle, cast down a coiled ring.

[Xinming]: Xuedou had an eye in the crown of his head. Tell me, where was his intent?

Is this saying that Minister Chen still had traces of sweeping away his tracks as he dragged his tail?

[lvm]: It is so, but that is far too finicky! At the very least, it still implies that he did not accord with the style of the Guiyang school.

[Xinming]: How about this: when he draws a circle, I will shake out my two large sleeves in the posture of catching and receiving it, and see how he responds?

[lvm]: That is your “Xinming school style.” If it were Guiyang, you would make the circle into a gesture of tossing something behind you.

[Xinming]: Yunmen said, “That ‘when the mouth wishes to speak, words are lost’ is set against speech; that ‘when the mind wishes to grasp an object, thought disappears’ is set against deluded thoughts. What is the meaning of the teachings?” Cao had no reply.

Was this speechless person an ordinary person or a person of the Way?

[lvm]: An ordinary person is speechless because he has been deceived by Yunmen. A person of the Way is speechless because Yunmen has pressed him into a corner.

[Xinming]: On another day, while ascending a tower with a group of officials, Cao saw several monks approaching in the distance. One official said, “All those who are coming are Chan monks.”

Cao said, “They are not.”

The official said, “How do you know they are not?”

Cao said, “Wait until they come nearer, and I shall examine them for you.”

When the monks reached the foot of the tower, Cao suddenly called out, “Reverend!”

The monks raised their heads. Cao said to the officials, “You do not believe it? Speak!”

In “You do not believe it? Speak!”, what does “speak” mean here?

[lvm]: I said they were not Chan monks, but you did not believe me. Now you have seen it, haven’t you? Tell me, are they Chan monks or not? (“Speak” here means “you tell me.”)

[Xinming]: Yunmen said, “I have heard that the Minister reads the Lotus Sūtra. Is that so?”

Cao said, “Yes.”

Yunmen said, “The sūtra says, ‘All activities of livelihood and worldly occupations do not contradict true reality.’ Tell me: how many beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception have now relinquished their stations?”

Cao again had no reply.

?

[lvm]: The meaning is that beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception do not engage in livelihoods or worldly occupations. Since such activities do not contradict true reality, tell me: how many beings in that realm have now relinquished their stations and come here to engage in livelihoods and worldly occupations?

[Xinming]: “Tell me: how many beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception have now relinquished their stations?”

If this is connected to the preceding sentence—“The sūtra says, ‘All activities of livelihood and worldly occupations do not contradict true reality.’ Tell me: how many beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception have now relinquished their stations?”—then surely none have relinquished their stations, correct?

[lvm]: Of course none have relinquished their stations.

All activities of livelihood and worldly occupations also include serving as a minister at court.

Although you may realize true reality while serving as a minister, beings in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception have not relinquished their celestial stations and come here to engage in livelihoods and worldly occupations in order not to contradict true reality. Though they do not engage in such occupations, they likewise do not contradict true reality.

[Shancai]: Ha ha, still spinning vines as usual during the New Year:

Do not say, “Zifu ordinarily liked to receive people by means of circumstances.” It was precisely because the minister held this view that he did not accord with it.

When Zifu drew a circular symbol, he was not showing people a phenomenal circumstance. If you interpret it as a circumstance, you have already gone a thousand miles, ten thousand miles astray!

The statement that “Chen Cao possessed only one eye” means that the minister saw the ultimate but not the conventional; hence it is said that he possessed only one eye.

lvm : Well said: the minister saw the ultimate but not the conventional.

Therefore Yunmen asked him, “Tell me: in the heaven of neither perception nor non-perception, how many people have now relinquished their positions?”

[Zhenghe]: Not necessarily. He may also see the conventional but not the true. Thus he cannot see through Yunmen.

lvm : That is also right! This is precisely the angle from which I viewed it.

Therefore Yunmen asked him, “Tell me: in the heaven of neither perception nor non-perception, how many people have now relinquished their positions?”

Sudhana : The minister’s eye—

if he has only a left (ultimate) eye, then he possesses only one eye;

if he has only a right (conventional) eye, he still possesses only one eye.

Thus it is said that he possessed only one eye. Old Xue did not wrong him.

“Cao said: ‘For this disciple to come in this way was already inappropriate; how much more so to draw another circular symbol.’”

Thus, to say that he possessed only a left eye means that he knew only the principle-essence of absolute emptiness, beyond all dualities, but did not know the unobstructed functioning of the myriad phenomena. What he saw was partial emptiness and partial quiescence; he had only a left (ultimate) eye.

Going a step further, everyone must by no means give rise to further conceptual understanding on the basis of this principle.

Do not distinguish ultimate and conventional in terms of left and right, and take that as a rule.

Why? Even if both eyes flash like lightning and miss not the slightest fraction—if the left eye illuminates the ultimate and the right eye comprehends the conventional—one is still a muddleheaded fellow, a member of the ranks of those blind with their eyes open.

[Beigua]: If one understands it as a matter of doctrine, then it is like Shenxiu’s eyes seeing clearly, and one goes off having let down the wealthy patron.

[Chan]: Does “the meaning of the Western coming amid the hundred grasses” refer to the state of “seeing the true but not the conventional”? And what about “seeing the conventional but not the true”?

lvm : “The meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West atop every blade of grass” is neither identical with ultimate and conventional nor separate from ultimate and conventional.

[Loucheng]: May I ask what the teachings of Buddhism are?

lvm : Then first tell me: what is your faith?

[Loucheng]: When I first began studying Buddhism, I wanted to become a person like the Buddha—endowed with virtues and liberated. Now I do not know what I believe in.

Master, please save me!!

lvm : Then the doctrine of the Buddhadharma is precisely that which you do not now know.

[Li Longsheng]: That hits the nail on the head.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, is this the tranquil method of practice in which “though the eight sufferings assail one from all sides, there is no hindrance”?

lvm : Oh? How could Brother Loucheng not know that “even when the eight sufferings assail one all at once, it is all right”?

[Chuiying]: People such as Loucheng and Chuiying cannot find suffering, however they seek it.

[Beigua]: Teacher, why did Cao say, “When a disciple comes in this way, he is already not fitting”?

lvm : On the basis of Zifu’s drawing a circular symbol.

[Yuanjue]: Teacher, what does it mean to say, “Chen Cao possesses only one eye”?
(http://my.clubhi.com/bbs/661522/24/17715.html)

lvm : It means examining people from only one angle.

[Yuanjue]: Oh, I too shall draw a circle, ^o^

lvm : No wonder your online name is “Perfect Enlightenment.”

[Thirty-Four] The Acharya Has Never Roamed the Mountains

[Thirty-Four] The Acharya Has Not Traveled the Mountain

[Thirty-Four] Case:

Yangshan asked a monk, “Where have you come from recently?” [People everywhere ask such questions. Taking advantage of the wind to kindle a fire, one cannot fail to make it a customary procedure.]

The monk said, “Mount Lu.” [Straightforward people are hard to find.]

Yangshan said, “Have you visited Five Elders Peak?” [As one proceeds, there is no harm in swinging one’s arms. How could one ever have missed it?]

The monk said, “I have not been there.” [Take one step. Better a red face than crooked speech; it is also like forgetting what came before and losing what comes after.]

Yangshan said, “Acharya, you have not traveled the mountain.” [Making far too much trouble! Spare those fine eyebrows. Why is this old fellow in such desperate haste?]

Yunmen said, “These words were all spoken out of compassion; they are talk that falls into the weeds.” [A sword that kills; a sword that gives life. Two or three of them. If you wish to know the mountain path, you must be one who has gone and returned.]

Where one tests a person’s genuineness, the moment one opens one’s mouth, one knows whether the other recognizes the tone. The ancients said: A person of immeasurable stature turns the matter around within the thread of speech. If one has an eye at the crown of one’s head, the moment it is raised, one knows where it lands.

Look at their question and answer: each is perfectly clear. Why, then, did Yunmen say, “These words were all spoken out of compassion; they are talk that falls into the weeds”? When the ancients reached this point, it was like a bright mirror set upon its stand or a luminous pearl held in the hand: Hu people came and Hu people appeared; Han people came and Han people appeared. Not even a fly could pass beyond their discernment. Tell me, then, what is meant by “spoken out of compassion; talk that falls into the weeds”? It is no less precipitous. At this stage, one must indeed be a real person before one can take it up. Yunmen commented, “This monk had come directly from Mount Lu. Why then did he say, ‘Acharya, you have not traveled the mountain’?”

One day Guishan asked Yangshan, “If a monk comes from one of the various places, how will you test him?” Yangshan said, “I have a way of testing him.” Guishan said, “Try showing it.” Yangshan said, “Whenever I see a monk come, I simply raise my whisk and ask him, ‘Do they have this in the various places?’ When he replies, I simply say to him, ‘Set this aside for now; what about that?’” Guishan said, “These are the claws and fangs of a person who has gone beyond.”

Have you not seen how Mazu asked Baizhang, “Where have you come from?” Baizhang said, “From below the mountain.” Mazu said, “Did you meet anyone on the road?” Baizhang said, “No.” Mazu said, “Why did you not meet anyone?” Baizhang said, “Had I met someone, I would have reported it to the Master.” Mazu said, “Where did you get this news?” Baizhang said, “I am at fault.” Mazu said, “Rather, this old monk is at fault.”

Yangshan’s questioning of the monk was exactly like this. When he was asked, “Have you visited Five Elders Peak?” if this monk had been a real man, he would simply have said, “Disaster!” But instead he said, “I have not been there.” Since the monk was not up to the task, why did Yangshan not act in accordance with the rule, sparing us all the entanglements that followed? Instead, he said, “Acharya, you have not traveled the mountain.” Therefore Yunmen said, “These words were all spoken out of compassion; they are talk that falls into the weeds.” If it were talk that emerged from the weeds, it would not be like this.

Emerging from the weeds, entering the weeds, [Vast above the head, vast beneath the feet. Half open, half closed. He is thus; I too am thus.]

Who can seek it out? [Have an eye at the crown of the head. The Acharya does not know how to seek it out.]

Layer upon layer of white clouds, [A thousand layers, a hundred coils—putting a head atop a head.]

The red sun shines brilliantly. [Broken! Blind! Raise your eyes and you are already wrong.]

Looking left, flawless; [Blind fellow! Still nothing is happening. What are you doing with all these tricks?]

Glancing right, already old. [One thought, ten thousand years. Gone too far!]

Have you not seen Hanshan? [A mangy fellow dragging along a companion.]

He set out too early. [Not early either.]

For ten years he could not return, [Where is he now? Clearly so.]

Forgetting the road by which he came. [That fellow has attained freedom. Letting one move slip by. Then strike! Do not be like this, forgetting what came before and losing what comes after.]

“Emerging from the weeds, entering the weeds—who can seek it out?” Xuedou knew where he landed. At this point, one hand raises up, and one hand presses down.

“Layer upon layer of white clouds; the red sun shines brilliantly.” It is much like, “Lush, lush grass; thick, thick mist.” At this point, not the slightest trace belongs to the ordinary, and not the slightest trace belongs to the sacred. It has never been hidden throughout the whole realm; nothing whatsoever can cover it. This is what is called the realm of no-mind: in cold one does not register cold, and in heat one does not register heat. Altogether, it is a great gate of liberation.

“Looking left, flawless; glancing right, already old.” Chan Master Lanzan lived in seclusion in a stone chamber on Mount Heng. When Emperor Dezong of the Tang heard of his reputation, he sent an envoy to summon him. When the envoy reached his chamber, he announced, “The Son of Heaven has issued an edict. Your Reverence should rise and give thanks for the imperial favor.” Lanzan was poking at a fire of cow dung, looking for roasted taro to eat. Cold mucus hung from his chin, yet he made no reply. The envoy laughed and said, “I urge Your Reverence at least to wipe your nose.”

Lanzan said, “How could I have time to wipe my nose for a worldly man?” In the end, he did not rise. When the envoy returned and reported this, Emperor Dezong greatly admired him. He was so utterly clear and bare, accepting no one’s direction, wholly steadfast—like cast iron.

Consider Chan Master Shandao: after the purge, he no longer became a monk. People called him the Stone-Chamber Practitioner. Whenever he trod the pestle of a mill, he forgot to move his feet. A monk asked Linji, “The Stone-Chamber Practitioner forgot to move his feet. What is the meaning?” Linji said, “Sinking and drowning in a deep pit.” Fayan’s “Verse on the Nature of Absolute Reality and Perfection” says: “At the ultimate reach of principle, emotional discriminations are forgotten—how could any analogy compare? At last, the moon of a frosty night naturally falls upon the stream before it. The fruit is ripe, and the gibbons are heavy; the mountain is long, and the path seems lost. Raising one’s head, the lingering light remains: it turns out that one’s dwelling lies to the west.”

Xuedou said, “Have you not seen Hanshan? He set out too early. For ten years he could not return, forgetting the road by which he came.” Hanshan’s poem says: “If you wish to find a place to settle your body, Cold Mountain can preserve you for long. A gentle breeze blows through the secluded pines; the nearer you listen, the lovelier their sound. Below is a gray-haired man, chattering as he reads Huang-Lao. For ten years he could not return, forgetting the road by which he came.”

Yongjia also said: “Mind is the root; dharmas are dust. These two are like marks upon a mirror. When the grime of the marks is exhausted, the light first appears; when mind and phenomena are both forgotten, one’s nature is true.” At this point, one is like an idiot, like a block of wood; only then does one see this koan. If one does not reach this stage and merely runs about within words and speech, when will there ever be an end?

[Xinming]: Boundless scenery lies on perilous peaks

Guishan said, “If a monk comes from one of the various places, how will you test him?”

Yangshan said, “I have a way of testing him.”

Guishan said, “Try showing it.”

Yangshan said, “Whenever I see a monk come, I simply raise my whisk and ask him, ‘Do they have this in the various places?’ When he replies, I simply say to him, ‘Set this aside for now; what about that?’”

Guishan said, “These are the claws and fangs of a person who has gone beyond.”

What does “the claws and fangs of a person who has gone beyond” mean in Chinese? Is it the origin of the modern expression “claws and fangs,” referring to hangers-on?

[lvm]: It is not dangerous at all. Put this way, it instead becomes too bland.

[lvm]: By the way:

Here, “claws and fangs” does not refer to hangers-on.

[Xinming]: What do “claws and fangs” refer to? Does it mean “superfluous”?

[lvm]: Oh! Perhaps this makes it easier to understand:

“These are the hands and feet of a person who has gone beyond.” Or, “These are the maneuvers of a person who has gone beyond.”

[Shadan]: Teacher, what does “As one proceeds, there is no harm in swinging one’s arms. How could one ever have missed it?” allude to?

[lvm]: It is not an allusion. It supplies two hypothetical replies to the question, “Have you visited Five Elders Peak?”

[Shadan]: The literal meaning is hard to understand. Please explain it in plain language, Teacher.

[lvm]: It is already plain language. The first sentence also has a commentarial sense; let us speak only of the latter sentence:

Question: Have you visited Five Elders Peak?

Answer: How could I ever have missed it!

[Shadan]: Yes, then please explain the first sentence, Teacher.

[lvm]: Because the term “swinging one’s arms” involves the bhikshu precepts, I fear it is not suitable to disclose online. I deliberately avoided it in the post above. (See the Taishō Tripiṭaka, volume 22, no. 1428, Dharmaguptaka Vinaya; details are omitted here.)

[Chan Robe]: May I ask Teacher Qi: does “swinging one’s arms” mean crossing both arms over one’s chest, or something else?

[lvm]: Oh! “Swinging one’s arms” probably means gesticulating.

[Xinming]: “Where have you come from recently?”

31 / Original koan text:

When Chan Master Zhandang Zhun first visited Zhenjing, Zhenjing asked, “Where have you come from recently?”

Zhun said, “Dayang.”

“Where did you spend the summer retreat?”

Zhun said, “Dawei.”

Zhenjing said, “Where is your native place?”

Zhun said, “Xingyuan Prefecture.”

Zhenjing spread out both hands and said, “How are my hands like the Buddha’s hands?”

Zhun was at a loss for what to do.

Zhenjing said, “Your replies just now were each lively, lucid, and spontaneous. But as soon as I mentioned the Buddha’s hands, you became obstructed. Tell me, where is the illness?”

Zhun said, “I do not understand.”

Zhenjing said, “Everything is already complete and present—who else is there to make understand?”

The Elder’s marginal note:

Precisely because it is utterly present and complete, awakening is instead delayed! For people all seek in mysterious and subtle places.

Sawing Apart a Scale Weight:

When Chan Master Zhandang Wenzhun first began studying Chan, he went to visit Chan Master Zhenjing. Zhenjing asked him, “Where have you come from?” (That is, where did you leave most recently?) He replied, “From Mount Dayang.” He asked, “Where did you spend the summer retreat?” He replied, “I spent the summer retreat at Mount Dawei.” He asked, “Where are you from?” He replied, “I am from Xingyuan Prefecture.”

Chan Master Zhenjing spread open both hands and suddenly asked, “How is my hand like the Buddha’s hand?” Chan Master Wenzhun could not answer. Zhenjing said, “In those three questions and three answers just now, every sentence came forth ready-made—luminous and natural, without any need for thought.”

Why did the words “Buddha’s hand” become an obstacle? Where did the problem arise? Chan Master Wenzhun said, “This question is beyond Wenzhun’s understanding.” Look! At this point, he could not understand. Why could he not understand? He felt that “How is my hand like the Buddha’s hand?” contained some hidden mystery. The preceding three questions and three answers were ordinary, but here it became profound and mysterious. Yet ordinary mind is the Way—what mystery could there be? Therefore, Chan Master Zhenjing rebuked him: “Everything is already present; whom else do you expect to make it understood?”

Precisely because everything was already present, he was unable to grasp it; he always looked for something strange and extraordinary. Therefore, the Elder commented: “Precisely because it is utterly ready at hand, awakening is instead delayed! For people all seek in the mysterious and profound.” The Elder’s words were not addressed only to this koan; they were addressed to us as well!

[Xinming] Why has no one raised a question? Let me ask one:

When Venerable Zhandang Zhun first visited Zhenjing, Zhenjing asked, “Where have you recently come from?”

Zhun said, “Dayang.”

“Where did you spend the summer retreat?”

Zhun said, “Dawei.”

Zhenjing said, “Where are you from?”

Zhun said, “Xingyuan Prefecture.”

Yangshan asked a monk, “Where have you recently come from?”

The monk said, “Mount Lu.”

Yangshan said, “Have you visited Five Elders Peak?”

The monk said, “I have not been there.”

Yangshan said, “Reverend, you have not visited the mountain.”

The same huatou, with almost identical answers. Why is the former considered right and the latter wrong?

[lvm]: You tell us first.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: The preceding words and the following words are both beyond right and wrong.

It is only that these two students were thrown off by their teachers’ feints and became confused!

[lvm]: Oh! As long as we are not confused, that will do.

[Kongkong Shanren]: Hangzhou and Bianzhou are both a “zhou”; are being confused and not being confused the same or different?

[lvm]: What do you say?

[Kongkong Shanren]: lvm and the old tiger.

[lvm]: Ha ha! You understand better than I do.

[Kongkong Shanren]: A tall hat and small shoes, together in battle (the old fellow has fine methods).

Knowing, it is Hangzhou; not knowing, it is Bianzhou.

[Xinming] (responding to [lvm]: “You tell us first”): When Chan Master Zhandang Zhun went up the mountain, he brought a flashlight with him, but that monk did not even bring a flashlight.

But Chan Master Zhenjing struck Chan Master Zhandang Zhun’s flashlight straight to the ground. I do not know whether I understand this correctly.

[lvm]: Ha ha! You still cannot get away from the mysterious and profound.

In fact, the phrase “Where have you recently come from?” can be utterly ordinary, yet it can also be unfathomably profound. In the hands of an adept master, whether used horizontally or vertically, it becomes a subtle truth.

Chan Master Zhenjing “takes a sixteen-foot golden body and makes it into a blade of grass,” whereas Chan Master Yangshan “takes a blade of grass and makes it into a sixteen-foot golden body.”

[35] Mañjuśrī’s Three Before and Three After

[Case 35] Mañjuśrī’s Three Before and Three After

The introductory instruction says: To distinguish dragons from snakes, separate jade from stone, distinguish black from white, and resolve doubts—unless one has an eye atop one’s head and a talisman beneath one’s elbow, one will often miss it right before one’s face. Right now, seeing and hearing are not obscured, and sounds and forms are wholly real. Tell me: is it black or white, crooked or straight? How does one distinguish it here?

[Case 35] The Case:

Mañjuśrī asked Wuzhuo, “Where have you come from recently?” [One cannot help but borrow this question. There is also this news.]

Wuzhuo said, “The south.” [He sticks his head out from the grass nest. Why carry it up on one’s eyebrows? The Great Direction has no outside; why, then, is there a south?]

Mañjuśrī said, “How is the Buddhadharma maintained in the south?” [If you ask another, trouble arises. It still hangs on his lips and teeth.]

Wuzhuo said, “In the Dharma-ending age, bhikṣus observe the precepts only sparsely.” [Forthright people are hard to find.]

Mañjuśrī said, “How many are there?” [At that moment, he should have given a shout. One pressing question and he would have been knocked over.]

Wuzhuo said, “Perhaps three hundred, perhaps five hundred.” [All are wild-fox spirits. Sure enough, he has let it slip.]

Wuzhuo asked Mañjuśrī, “How is the Buddhadharma maintained here?” [Pressed like this, he turns the spearhead back around.]

Mañjuśrī said, “Ordinary beings and sages live together; dragons and snakes are intermixed.” [There is no lack of ruin and deficiency. It leaves one’s hands and feet in a flurry.]

Wuzhuo said, “How many are there?” [Give me back my huatou. Nor can you let him off.]

Mañjuśrī said, “Three before, three after.” [Upside-down words. Tell me, how many is that? Even Thousand-Handed Great Compassion cannot count them.]

Wuzhuo was traveling on Mount Wutai when he reached a desolate place halfway along the road. Mañjuśrī manifested a monastery and received him for the night. He then asked, “Where have you come from recently?” Wuzhuo said, “The south.” Mañjuśrī said, “How is the Buddhadharma maintained in the south?” Wuzhuo said, “In the Dharma-ending age, bhikṣus observe the precepts only sparsely.” Mañjuśrī said, “How many are there?” Wuzhuo said, “Perhaps three hundred, perhaps five hundred.”

Wuzhuo then asked Mañjuśrī, “How is the Buddhadharma maintained here?” Mañjuśrī said, “Ordinary beings and sages live together; dragons and snakes are intermixed.” Wuzhuo said, “How many are there?” Mañjuśrī said, “Three before, three after.” They then had tea. Mañjuśrī lifted a crystal cup and said, “Do they have this in the south?” Wuzhuo said, “No.”

Mañjuśrī said, “What do they ordinarily use for drinking tea?” Wuzhuo had no reply and took his leave. Mañjuśrī instructed the boy Junti to see him out the gate. Wuzhuo asked the boy, “Just now, when he said, ‘Three before, three after,’ how many was that?” The boy said, “Venerable.” Wuzhuo answered, “Yes?” The boy said, “How many?” Wuzhuo further asked, “What monastery is this?” The boy pointed behind Vajra Peak. When Wuzhuo turned his head, the manifested monastery and the boy had both vanished, leaving only an empty valley. That place later came to be called Vajra Cave.

Later, a monk asked Fengxue, “Who is the master within Mount Qingliang?” Fengxue said, “For one question that Wuzhuo had no time to ask, he has to this day remained a wandering monk.” If you wish to penetrate this, be plain and steady, with your feet firmly on the ground. If you attain realization at Wuzhuo’s words, then even amid boiling cauldrons and blazing coals you will not feel heat, and even upon cold ice you will not feel cold.

If you wish to penetrate this, make it solitary, perilous, steep, and lofty, like the vajra king’s precious sword. If you grasp it at Mañjuśrī’s words, then water splashed upon you will not cling, and wind blowing upon you will not enter. Have you not seen how Dizang of Zhangzhou asked a monk, “Where have you come from recently?” The monk said, “The south.” Dizang said, “How is the Buddhadharma there?” The monk said, “They debate it endlessly.” Dizang said, “How could that compare with this place, where we farm the fields to obtain food?” Tell me: is this the same as, or different from, the answer given to Mañjuśrī?

Some say, “Wuzhuo’s answer was wrong. Mañjuśrī’s answer was that there are dragons and snakes, ordinary beings and sages.” What relevance does that have? Can you still clearly discern “three before, three after”? The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep. Tell me, how many is it? If you penetrate it here, a thousand phrases and ten thousand phrases are but one phrase. If, beneath this one phrase, you can cut it off and hold fast to it, then in due course you will reach this realm:

A thousand peaks wind and coil, blue in hue. [Do you still see Mañjuśrī?]

Who says Mañjuśrī was the one in conversation? [Even if it were Samantabhadra, he would not look back. You have missed it.]

How laughable—the many members of Qingliang! [Tell me, what is being laughed at? It is already before the words.]

Three before and three after. [Please discern it beneath your feet. There are thorns in the mud. The bowl falls to the ground; the saucer breaks into seven pieces.]

“A thousand peaks wind and coil, blue in hue; who says Mañjuśrī was the one in conversation?” Some say, “Xuedou merely restated it once; he did not compose a verse on it.” Consider this: a monk asked Fayan, “What is a drop of water from the source of Cao?” Fayan said, “It is a drop of water from the source of Cao.” Another monk asked Chan Master Jue of Langya, “Originally pure and naturally so—how did mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise?” Jue said, “Originally pure and naturally so—how did mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise?” This cannot simply be called restating it once.

Mingzhao, the One-Eyed Dragon, also composed a verse on its meaning. He possessed an all-encompassing capacity, and said:

The supreme monastery pervades the worlds as numerous as grains of sand; wherever the eye falls, Mañjuśrī is the one in conversation.

Not knowing to open the Buddha-eye at the very words, one turns one’s head and sees only green mountain crags.

“The supreme monastery pervades the worlds as numerous as grains of sand” refers here to the manifested monastery in the grass cave, and to what is called the capacity in which provisional and real operate together. “Wherever the eye falls, Mañjuśrī is the one in conversation. Not knowing to open the Buddha-eye at the very words, one turns one’s head and sees only green mountain crags.” At precisely such a time, can this be called the realm of Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Avalokiteśvara? It is, after all, not this principle. Xuedou merely altered Mingzhao’s usage, yet there is careful craftsmanship in it.

“A thousand peaks wind and coil, blue in hue”—it does not further dull the blade or offend the hand. Within the phrase are provisional and real, principle and phenomena.

“Who says Mañjuśrī was the one in conversation?” After conversing all night, he did not know it was Mañjuśrī. Later, when Wuzhuo served as cook on Mount Wutai, Mañjuśrī would appear over the porridge pot. Wuzhuo would pick up the porridge stirrer and strike him. Though this was so, it was still drawing the bow after the thief had gone. At the time, when Mañjuśrī said, “How is the Buddhadharma maintained in the south?” he should have struck him across the back with a staff. That would have been somewhat better.

“How laughable—the many members of Qingliang!” There is a blade in Xuedou’s laughter. If you understand what is laughed at here, you will then see why he said, “Three before and three after.”

[Integration]: Setting up a trap by creating a realm—no wonder Dahui Zonggao burned it in a single fire.

[lvm]: This trap is specially set to catch giant turtles.

[Shancai]: Even if it was burned in that fire, who can guarantee that this was not itself another trap entered?

[Xinming]: Cc

Three before and three after;

Others spin tops; mine spins itself.

A mosquito swallows an iron ox;

A stone blossoms and sows fertile fields.

Are there any fish left?

[lvm]: Ha ha! I have not seen the fish’s head, but I have seen its tail.

[Xinming]: What a fine fisherman!

[lvm]: You see only the fisherman—can you see the fish?

[Xinming]: If the fish could be seen, fisherman and all would be swept up in the net.

[lvm]: Save me! Save me!

[Xinming]: Why are you shouting from the shore?

[Xinseng]: (In response to [lvm]: “Save me! Save me!”) Set aside saving you—who has trapped you in a net?

[lvm]: Many thanks for saving me.

[Xinseng]: You are still dragging half a foot through the mud.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Teacher! When Mañjuśrī says, “Ordinary beings and sages live together; dragons and snakes are intermixed,” does he mean…

Wuzhuo said, “How many are there?”

Here there fundamentally is no such thing as a number; so Mañjuśrī went a step further and said, “Three before, three after.”

That is to say: the first three are ordinary beings, and the latter three are sages; ordinary beings are three, and sages too are three. Mañjuśrī’s numerical answer was merely an impromptu response to Wuzhuo’s question, “How many are there?”

[lvm]: Actually, the numbers are quite precise too; it is just that once explained this way, then…

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Raising my cup, I invite the bright moon; facing my shadow, we become three. Then…

Whether one posits ordinary beings or sages, facing the shadow there are three persons. Let us set that aside for the moment. Teacher, may I ask: who are these three kinds of people?

Xu Yue asked, “What was the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?” The master said, “That which is on the east side of the street.” Xu said, “I do not understand.” The master said, “Three kinds of people cannot understand it.”

[lvm]: Three people: Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, Chan Master Wuzhuo Wenxi, and the boy Junti.

Was it not said that “ordinary beings and sages live together”? At that time Wenxi was still ordinary, while Mañjuśrī and the boy were sages. Ordinary beings also have the three bodies—the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya—and sages also have the three bodies. Thus there are also three kinds of people: dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya.

As for before and after, one can know by looking at ordinary beings and sages, dragons and snakes.

You ask how many members there are, yet they are plainly right before you. Why ask? Plainly, there are three before and three after.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Ha ha! So that is how it is! Thank you, Teacher!

Xu Yue asked, “What was the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?” The master said, “That which is on the east side of the street.” Xu said, “I do not understand.” The master said, “Three kinds of people cannot understand it.”

If it were Linji’s method, the master would surely seize Xu in one grasp and fling him toward “that which is on the east side of the street.”

[lvm]: Exactly! What three people or three kinds of people? Fling them toward that which is on the east side of the street.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Teacher! There is also…

Mañjuśrī asked Wuzhuo, “Where have you come from recently?”

Is this not also asking where Wuzhu has recently come from? Is it also reminding Wuzhu not to leave his own mind and seek something else elsewhere?

lvm : Ha ha! Have you become sensitive to “Where have you recently come from?”

Snow Mountain Youth : Hee hee! Now, whenever I see a monk open his mouth, I get nervous right away!

lvm : Ha ha! The moment you get nervous, he has you right where he wants you.

Snow Mountain Youth : Heh heh! If he does not catch me squarely today, what will I use to catch others tomorrow?

lvm : ^o^

[Sudhana:]

At three times three, raise nine, not one; ordinary beings and sages dwelling together is also remarkable.

Even now Mañjuśrī blushes with shame, still regretting that he once asked about lapis lazuli.

Nowhere to Hide : Seeing you speak of ordinary beings and sages dwelling together, I would like to ask: Why did Sudhana visit both sages and ordinary people?

What is the purpose of visiting ordinary people?

Sudhana : To see which of them could afford Sudhana's straw-sandal money.

Nowhere to Hide : What does "having a talisman beneath one's elbow" mean?

lvm : "Having an eye atop the crown of the head, and a talisman beneath the elbow" is a paired expression.

"Having an eye atop the crown of the head" refers to the Buddhist Dharma protector Mahāīśvara. Mahāīśvara has three eyes, and the one atop his head is especially powerful.

"Having a talisman beneath the elbow" refers to Daoist talismanic arts. With many prepared talismans at hand, one may take any one of them and use it with great power.

The Record of the Blue Cliff repeatedly uses the expression "having an eye atop the crown of the head and a talisman beneath the elbow" as a metaphor for genuine cultivation and realization.

Nowhere to Hide : Excuse me, one more beginner's question: What is meant by "seeing and hearing are unobscured; sounds and forms are utterly genuine"? Thank you, Teacher.

lvm : Do not separate "seeing and hearing are unobscured; sounds and forms are utterly genuine":

Seeing means seeing forms; hearing means hearing sounds. Seeing, hearing, sounds, and forms are all the language of ordinary people. So-called ordinary people are already "obscured." Once seeing and hearing are obscured, the sounds and forms that are seen and heard are no longer utterly genuine.

Yet when beings are to be liberated through a human body, Buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest human bodies to teach the Dharma. They must then use the language of ordinary people; so how can they speak of genuineness? "These very seeing and hearing are not seeing and hearing; no other sounds or forms can be presented to you." These very seeing and hearing are not seeing and hearing—that is, seeing and hearing are unobscured. No other sounds or forms can be presented to you—that is, sounds and forms are utterly genuine.

In fact, what ordinary beings see and hear is no different from what a Buddha sees and hears; it is originally direct perception. But first they discriminate, and afterward add grasping and rejecting. From this very discrimination, grasping, and rejecting, the vast sea of suffering of rebirth in the six realms is needlessly produced. Yet they delight in it and cling to it unwilling to let go; this is called the "realm of suffering." This is what "obscured" means—not understanding, being confused.

Once this "obscuration" is shattered—once seeing and hearing are unobscured—it is like awakening from a great dream: sounds and forms have always been utterly genuine. That is, "seeing mountains, one still sees mountains; seeing water, one still sees water." The earlier "seeing mountains as mountains and seeing water as water" existed within obscuration—in discrimination, grasping, and rejecting.

Now that seeing and hearing are unobscured—having left discrimination, grasping, and rejecting—sounds and forms are naturally utterly genuine. In the course of practice, however, there may be a stage in which "seeing mountains, one does not see mountains; seeing water, one does not see water." At this stage, one must absolutely avoid clinging to extraordinary or mysterious appearances. If one clings to such appearances, one will be unable to pass beyond this stage and will not arrive at "seeing mountains, one still sees mountains; seeing water, one still sees water."

What is originally complete here and now, yet one discriminates—this is called "deluded thought." What is originally neither obtainable nor discardable, yet one seeks to grasp and reject—this is called "attachment." Practice is to leave behind deluded thought and attachment. Once they are left behind, seeing and hearing are naturally unobscured, and sounds and forms are utterly genuine.

Nowhere to Hide : Thank you, Teacher. I am ashamed to say that this is precisely my blind spot.

Mind-Monk : I will clear Wuzhu's name!

Mañjuśrī said, "Ordinary beings and sages dwell together; dragons and snakes are mixed together." He had already shown his tail, but unfortunately Wuzhu missed it face-to-face. Later, Mañjuśrī again said, "The first three-three; the latter three-three." This piled up a heap of bones on level ground and caused no small number of later people to go astray. Had I been there, I would certainly have trampled him down before my chest, lest he confuse people's minds!

lvm : Later, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva manifested in the steam rising from the pot, and Wenxi struck at him with the ladle.

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva spoke this verse:

A bitter gourd is bitter to its very root; a sweet melon is sweet through to its stem.

After practicing for three great eons, I am instead scorned by an old monk.

Mind-Monk : Ha ha:

The first three-three and the latter three-three; Mañjuśrī compassionately offers skillful means. If one can understand their meaning, each lifted step is, after all, a step forward.

Yuanjue : Did Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva manifest in the steam in order to test whether Wenxi was attached to appearances?

lvm : Yes!

This very line, “After practicing for three great eons, I am instead scorned by an old monk,” is an affirmation and praise of Chan Master Wenxi.

Sudhana : Since one should not be attached to appearances, why did he still take up the ladle and strike?

lvm : Then should he prostrate himself in worship instead?

Sudhana : If so, then Mañjuśrī on the stove would take up the ladle and strike him.

lvm : Precisely because of this, Wenxi took up the ladle and struck.

Yongshou Youth : Those who strike late lose out.

lvm : ^o^

Sudhana : Heh heh, no wonder everyone says that all martial arts under heaven come from Shaolin!

—Though I do not know whether it has anything to do with Grandfather Bodhidharma…

lvm : In the eyes of martial artists, Grandfather Bodhidharma was a great master of martial arts.

Martial artists cannot see the meaning of Chan, because they already have fixed views.

Sudhana : Ha ha—I also thought of the Muscle-Tendon Changing Classic in martial-arts novels, and the Great Seal! Ha ha!

lvm : In their eyes, every dharma is martial learning.

Just as we hold that all dharmas are Buddhadharma.

Sudhana : A bitter gourd is bitter to its very root; a sweet melon is sweet through to its stem.

Bodhi Tree : Teacher, what is meant by “A bitter gourd is bitter to its very root; a sweet melon is sweet through to its stem”?

lvm : “A bitter gourd is bitter to its very root”—the power of karma is inconceivable. “A sweet melon is sweet through to its stem”—the power of vows is inconceivable.

[Thirty-Six] Chasing Grass and Flowers in Changsha

[36] Changsha Follows the Fragrant Grass and Returns with Falling Flowers

[36] Citation:

One day, Changsha went wandering in the mountains. When he returned to the gate, [All day today he has merely been trailing through the grass. Before him is grass-trailing; behind him is grass-trailing as well.]

The head monk asked, “Where has the Master been?” [He too wishes to test this old fellow. His head has passed beyond Silla.]

Changsha said, “I have been wandering in the mountains.” [Do not trail through the grass. There is no small amount of failure here. A man in the grass.]

The head monk said, “Where did you go?” [Pressing him. If there was somewhere he went, he cannot avoid trailing through the grass. They lead one another into a pit of fire.]

Changsha said, “Setting out, I followed the fragrant grass; returning, I pursued the fallen blossoms.” [There is no small amount of leakage. It turns out that he is merely sitting in a thicket of thorns.]

The head monk said, “It is very much like the spirit of spring.” [Following right along. Taking an error for an error. One hand raises while the other presses down.]

Changsha said, “It is still better than autumn dew dripping on lotus blossoms.” [Adding mud on top of earth. The first arrow was still light; the latter arrow goes deeper. When will there be an end to it?]

Xuedou added the comment: “Thank you for your reply.” [A fellow playing with a lump of mud in one fire. The three of them have all received the same verdict.]

Chan Master Zhaoxian of Luyuan in Changsha was a Dharma heir of Nanquan. He lived at the same time as Zhaozhou and Zihu, and his Chan responses were swift and incisive. When someone asked for teachings, he gave teachings; when someone wanted a verse, he gave a verse. If you wished to meet him as a true master, he met you as a true master.

Yangshan’s Chan responses were ordinarily unsurpassed. One day, while he and Changsha were enjoying the moon, Yangshan pointed at the moon and said, “Everyone has this, but cannot use it.” Changsha said, “Exactly so. Then I ask you to use it.” Yangshan said, “You try using it.” Changsha gave him a kick and knocked him over. Yangshan got up and said, “My Dharma uncle is like a great tiger.” Later people called him “Cen the Great Tiger.”

One day, after Changsha had returned from wandering in the mountains, the head monk, who was also one of his students, asked, “Where has the Master been?” Changsha said, “I have been wandering in the mountains.” The head monk said, “Where did you go?” Changsha said, “Setting out, I followed the fragrant grass; returning, I pursued the fallen blossoms.” Only one who sits cutting off the ten directions can manage this.

The ancients never failed to keep this matter in mind, whether going out or coming in. Observe how host and guest exchange positions, responding directly to the occasion, neither yielding to the other. Since he had been wandering in the mountains, why did the head monk ask, “Where did you go?” If Chan practitioners nowadays were asked, they would say, “I went to Jia Mountain Pavilion.” But look at the ancients: they had not the slightest conceptual calculation and nowhere to abide. Thus Changsha said, “Setting out, I followed the fragrant grass; returning, I pursued the fallen blossoms.” The head monk followed his meaning and said, “It is very much like the spirit of spring.” Changsha said, “It is still better than autumn dew dripping on lotus blossoms.”

Xuedou said, “Thank you for your reply.” This was said in place of the final remark. Yet he too falls into the two sides; ultimately, it is not in these two sides.

Once, Scholar Zhang Zhuo was reading the Sūtra of the Names of a Thousand Buddhas and asked, “Of the hundreds and thousands of Buddhas, I hear only their names. I do not know in what lands they dwell, or whether they teach sentient beings.” Changsha said, “After Cui Hao wrote his poem on Yellow Crane Tower, have you, Scholar, ever written one?” Zhuo said, “I have not.” Changsha said, “When you have time, it would be good to write one.” Throughout his life, Cen the Great Tiger dealt with people so directly that pearls turned and jade revolved: he wanted people to understand immediately, face-to-face. The verse says:

The great earth is utterly free of the finest dust, [Throw open the doors and windows—who stands before the eaves? None can be lacking this. All under heaven is at peace.]

Whose eyes are not open? [Only when great luminosity shines forth from the crown of the head will it do. Why scatter dirt and sand?]

Setting out, I followed the fragrant grass; [There is no small amount of leakage. It is not the first time he has trailed through the grass; fortunately, it was already said earlier.]

Returning, I pursued the fallen blossoms. [Everywhere is wholly true. Happily, he has returned. The mud beneath his feet is three feet deep.]

A gaunt crane stretches up from a cold tree; [To the left, to the right. Add one line and there will be many more idle complications.]

A wild ape howls from an ancient terrace. [It is precisely because he has applied personal effort. Not one line may be added, and not one line may be removed.]

Changsha’s meaning is inexhaustible— [Then strike! What does the final line say? Bury it all in one pit. Fallen into a demon’s cave.]

Bah! [A man in the grass. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. Still, he must not be let off.]

Now tell me: compared with Yangshan’s question to a monk, “Where have you recently come from?” to which the monk replied, “Mount Lu,” and Yangshan asked, “Have you been to Five Elders Peak?” and the monk said, “I have not,” whereupon Yangshan said, “Venerable sir, you have not wandered in the mountains”—are these the same or different? At this point, the mechanisms must be exhausted and discriminating consciousness forgotten. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, grasses, people, and animals must be without the slightest leakage. Otherwise, the ancients called it “still abiding in a supremely marvelous realm.”

Have you not seen what Yunmen said? “Even if mountains, rivers, and the great earth are without the slightest fault, one is still turned by things. Not seeing any forms at all is only a half-lift. One must further know the time of the complete lift and the one opening beyond; only then can one sit securely.” If you penetrate this, mountains are still mountains and water is still water, each abiding in its own place and fulfilling its own nature. It is like giving a great slap to a blind man.

Zhaozhou said: “When the cock crows at the ugly hour, it is grievous to see that, on rising, one is still in a state of disarray. There is not even a skirt or short shirt; only a little of the appearance of a kāṣāya remains. The undergarment has no crotch, the trousers have no opening, and three or five bushels of green-gray ash cover the head. Originally, this was to cultivate practice and benefit people, but who would have known it would turn out so shabby?”

If one truly reaches this realm, whose eyes are not open? Let things be utterly topsy-turvy: everywhere is this realm, every moment is this time. The ten directions have no walls, and the four sides have no gates. Thus it is said, “Setting out, I followed the fragrant grass; returning, I pursued the fallen blossoms.” Xuedou was indeed skillful: he merely attached one line on the left and one on the right, making it like a poem. “A gaunt crane stretches up from a cold tree; a wild ape howls from an ancient terrace.” Having led us to this point, Xuedou sensed the leakage and suddenly said, “Changsha’s meaning is inexhaustible—bah!” It is like waking from a dream.

Although Xuedou gave a shout, he did not completely cut it off. Were I to speak, it would be otherwise: “Changsha’s meaning is inexhaustible—dig deeper and bury it!”

[Shancai]: Following the grass reveals an ancient path; pursuing flowers conceals a tiger’s tracks.

[lvm]: Do not lead hunters to pursue it; do not blow a wind that scatters the blossoms.

[Shancai]: A thousand pines are emerald on Hebi’s cliffs; ten thousand peaks hang over the blue crags. ([Editor’s note]: Teacher Qi was from Hebi, Henan.)

[lvm]: For what reason does the dream-realm break, and spring thunder blossom at midnight?

[Shancai]: Morning bells thin the dawn mist; falling dew penetrates the deep fields.

[lvm]: Lush leaves are outward beauty; deep roots are the source.

[Shancai]: To repay the guardianship of the many blossoms, onward and onward again.

[lvm]: Not seeing a single blade of grass, when has one ever moved a step?

[Xinming]: (Responding to lvm’s “For what reason does the dream-realm break, and spring thunder blossom at midnight?”) Having shed the heavy winter clothes, I greet spring’s return in light attire.

[lvm]: Returning does not contend for spring; Xinming, do not hurry it along.

[Xinming]: Spring blossoms have just made the garden lovely; why has the gardener not returned?

[lvm]: Only because he cherishes their tender beauty; he fears that even a breeze may damage the flowers.

[Xin Seng]: An answer in its place!

Once, Scholar Zhang Zhuo was reading the Sūtra of the Names of a Thousand Buddhas and asked, “Of the hundreds and thousands of Buddhas, I hear only their names. I do not know in what lands they dwell, or whether they teach sentient beings.” Changsha said, “After Cui Hao wrote his poem on Yellow Crane Tower, have you, Scholar, ever written one?” Zhuo said, “I have not.” Changsha said, “When you have time, it would be good to write one.”

Zhuo said: “Thank you, Master, for writing one!”

[Lvm]: Ha ha! Thank you for answering in my place.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Changsha said, “Exactly so. Then I ask you to use it.” Teacher, what is the plain-language meaning of “Then I ask you to use it”?

[Lvm]: Qian means “to ask” or “to request.”

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Ha ha! You are online? Thank you, Teacher!

[Lvm]: You lured me here! You lured me here!

[Little Ant]: Teacher, what does “You lured me here” mean?

[lvm]: It means, “You coaxed me into coming.”

[Snow Mountain Youth]: On an ancient tree is a path no one takes; where in the deep mountains does the bell sound?

[Lvm]: All year the snow does not melt; the youth hammers nails.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: The hammer needs no handle, and the nail is set aside; the teacher's deep affection, the youth will remember in his heart.

[Lvm]: A holeless hammer needs no handle, and wedge and nail are both set aside. Whence comes the teacher's deep affection? The youth need not remember it in his heart.

[Xinming]: Zhaozhou's saying, "Originally, this was to cultivate practice and benefit people, but who would have known it would turn out so shabby"—what does it mean?

[Yongshou Youth]: Patriarchs have always been shabby.

[lvm]: Is "shabby" not good? Possessing nothing at all, sleeves swept by a pure breeze, unable to keep up three meals a day, the four elements all empty.

Possessing nothing at all—clean.

Sleeves swept by a pure breeze—not afraid of ghosts knocking at the door.

Unable to keep up three meals a day—no need to diet.

The four elements all empty—originally just so. (Why wait until things fall away before knowing emptiness?)

[Xinming]: So "shabby" is not a derogatory term.

[lvm]: There is no praise or blame here.

[Truly Confused]: May I ask, Youth, what does "shabby" mean?

[Yongshou Youth]: "Shabby" means looking grimy and bedraggled.

Three or five bushels of green-gray ash cover the head; patriarchs have always been shabby.

[Shancai]: Hehe, there is also something of self-mockery in it.

It is like Mañjuśrī's remark at the time: "After practicing for three great eons, I have instead incurred this old monk's disdain." In today's terms, this shows that Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva also had a fine sense of humor.

[lvm]: Chan Master Zhaozhou's "Song of the Twelve Hours." The twelve hours are "zi, chou, yin, mao, chen, si, wu, wei, shen, you, xu, and hai."

At cockcrow, chou: it is distressing to rise and find oneself still in such a wretched state. Not even a skirt or short shirt is to be had; only the bare appearance of a kāṣāya remains. The trousers have no waistband, the pants no openings, and three or five pecks of blue-gray ashes cover my head. I had hoped that cultivation would benefit people, but who knew I would become such a sorry mess?

At dawn, yin: this desolate village and ruined courtyard are truly beyond description. Not a grain of rice remains from the alms porridge; I face only an idle window and motes of dust in its cracks. Only sparrows chatter; no one comes near. Sitting alone, I often hear falling leaves. Who says that, once one leaves home, love and aversion are cut off? In reflection, tears unconsciously soak my kerchief.

At sunrise, mao: purity has instead turned into affliction. Merit from conditioned practices lies buried in dust, while boundless fields have never been cleared. There is much furrowing of the brow and little to please the heart. That intolerable old black-and-yellow fellow from the eastern village brings no offering at all, yet lets his donkey eat the grass before my hall.

At mealtime, chen: smoke rises, but I vainly look to the four neighboring households. Steamed buns and pastries parted from me years ago; today, merely thinking of them makes me swallow empty saliva. There is little recitation and much sighing; among a hundred households, not one good person. Visitors come only seeking tea; if they do not get tea, they gulp down what they can and leave angry.

At midmorning, si: who would have known that shaving my head would come to this? For no reason I am invited to serve as a village monk, humiliated and starving nearly to death. Hu Zhangsan and dark Li Si have not the slightest respect. They suddenly arrive at the door, saying only that they wish to borrow tea and paper.

At noon, wu: there is no fixed order to tea and meals. I leave the southern household and go to the northern one; when I reach the northern house, there is no proper provision. Bitter salt, barley vinegar, millet rice, scallions, and lettuce—they call it an offering not to be taken lightly, and say that a monk's resolve for the Way must be firm.

At midday, wei: this time around, I have not set foot on any ground of wasted time. I once heard that one full meal makes one forget a hundred hungers; today this old monk himself is proof of it. I do not practice Chan or discuss doctrine; I spread out a torn mat and sleep through the day. I suppose that even in the Tuṣita Heaven above, there is no such sun-warming of the back.

In the late afternoon, shen: there are also people who burn incense and bow in worship—five old wives, three with goiters, and one pair of faces black and grimy. Sesame-oil tea is truly precious; there is no need for the Vajra to strain himself. May silkworms and wheat ripen next year, and may little Rāhula give me one coin.

At sunset, you: apart from desolation, what is there to keep? Lofty wandering monks are surely nowhere to be found, while novice monks from temple to temple are always plentiful. Extraordinary words do not leave their mouths; in vain they continue the descendants of the Muni. A single staff of coarse thornbush serves not only to climb mountains but also to beat dogs.

At dusk, xu: I sit alone in an empty, dark room. I never encounter the lamplight of a mirage; before my eyes there is nothing but Jinzhu lacquer-blackness. No bell is heard, and the days pass in vain; I hear only mice squeaking and scurrying. How could I then have the mood to think of reciting a pāramitā?

At nightfall, hai: who loves the bright moon before the door? Within, I worry only about the time to lie down: without even clothing, what is there to wear or use as a covering? Liu the monastic steward and Zhao of the Five Precepts speak wonderfully of goodness, yet it is strange indeed. No matter that this mountain monk's bag is utterly empty, when asked about it, they invariably pretend not to know.

At midnight, zi: when have mind and circumstances ever paused even briefly? I consider all the monastics under heaven—how many abbots can be like me? An earthen bedstead, a broken reed mat, an old elm-wood pillow, and no quilt at all. No benzoin incense is burned before the sacred image; from the ashes comes only the smell of cow dung.

[Yongshou Tongzi], clapping his hands and laughing heartily: "Excellent poem! What a sorry mess indeed! That Zhaozhou—his humor is truly consummate."

[lvm]: It also portrays the many conditions of sentient beings.

[Jietuoyue]: Is the teacher pleased? Is the teacher disappointed? Is the teacher moved to reflection—when seeing the many conditions of sentient beings?

[lvm]: Just like you.

[xinfo]: Teacher, I have read this koan several times from beginning to end, but basically I have not understood any of it. Please explain it.

One day, Changsha went out to roam the mountains and returned to the monastery gate. [All day today, he has done nothing but "fallen into the grass." Before him is also falling into the grass; behind him is also falling into the grass.]

What does "falling into the grass" mean?

The head seat monk asked, "Where has the Reverend been?" [He too wants to test this old fellow. His head has gone beyond Silla.]

What does "his head has gone beyond Silla" mean?

Changsha said, "I have come from roaming the mountains." [He must not fall into the grass. There are no few flaws here. A man in the grass.]

What do "He must not fall into the grass. There are no few flaws here. A man in the grass" mean?

The head seat monk said, "Where did you get to?" [A pressing interrogation. If there is somewhere he arrived, he cannot avoid falling into the grass. They drag one another into a pit of fire.]

Changsha said, "I first followed the fragrant grass out, then returned in pursuit of falling flowers." [There are no few leaks. Originally, he is merely sitting amid a thicket of thorns.]

I think Changsha's answer is very good. Why does it say that he is "merely sitting amid a thicket of thorns"?

The head seat monk said, "It is much like the feeling of spring." [He follows along. Making the best of a mistake. One hand raises while the other hand presses down.]

What does "one hand raises while the other presses down" mean?

Changsha said, "It is still better than autumn dew dripping upon lotus blossoms." [Adding mud to earth. The first arrow was still light; the second pierces deeper. When will it ever end?]

Why did Changsha say, "It is still better than autumn dew dripping upon lotus blossoms"?

[lvm]: Not understanding is not necessarily all because of a barrier of words.

One day, Changsha went out to roam the mountains and returned to the monastery gate. [All day today, he has done nothing but “fallen into the grass.” Before him is also falling into the grass; behind him is also falling into the grass.]

What does “falling into the grass” mean?

* Chan is fundamentally not found in language or words, so to open one’s mouth is already to err, and to stir a thought is already to go astray. Yet, in order to inspire students, one cannot avoid speaking; hence this is called “falling into the grass for the sake of people.” The phrase “falling into the grass” implies having something to which one is attached.

The head seat monk asked, “Where has the Reverend been?” [He too wants to test this old fellow. His head has gone beyond Silla.]

What does “his head has gone beyond Silla” mean?

* Silla is present-day Korea. “His head has gone beyond Silla” means that he has gone too far.

Changsha said, “I have come from roaming the mountains.” [He must not fall into the grass. There are no few flaws here. A man in the grass.]

What do “He must not fall into the grass. There are no few flaws here. A man in the grass” mean?

* This is what it means: answering, “I have come from roaming the mountains,” already entails attachment. Attachment is a flaw. Attachment makes one a man in the grass.

The head seat monk said, “Where did you get to?” [A pressing interrogation. If there is somewhere he arrived, he cannot avoid falling into the grass. They drag one another into a pit of fire.]

Changsha said, “I first followed the fragrant grass out, then returned in pursuit of falling flowers.” [There are no few leaks. Originally, he is merely sitting amid a thicket of thorns.]

I think Changsha’s answer is very good. Why does it say that he is “merely sitting amid a thicket of thorns”?

* Because you say that “the answer is very good.” Good and bad are precisely the thicket of thorns.

The head seat monk said, “It is much like the feeling of spring.” [He follows along. Making the best of a mistake. One hand raises while the other hand presses down.]

What does “one hand raises while the other presses down” mean?

* “One hand raises while the other presses down” means that there is both praise and criticism.

Changsha said, “It is still better than autumn dew dripping upon lotus blossoms.” [Adding mud to earth. The first arrow was still light; the second pierces deeper. When will it ever end?]

Why did Changsha say, “It is still better than autumn dew dripping upon lotus blossoms”?

* Ha, ha! Changsha’s meaning is boundless—he digs deeper into the ground and buries it even further!

[xkyq]: Teacher, does “he digs deeper into the ground and buries it even further” truly cut it off completely?

“Have you not seen Yunmen say: ‘Even if mountains, rivers, and the great earth are without the slightest fault, one is still turned by things. Not seeing any forms is only half the load. One must further know the time of carrying the whole load, the one aperture beyond; only then can one sit securely. If one penetrates this, mountains are still mountains and water is still water; each abides in its own position and fulfills its own nature—like a great blind man who looks.’”

Why does it say, “like a great blind man who looks”?

[lvm]: “He digs deeper into the ground and buries it even further” is directed at that “Bah!”

Actually, if one feels that “he digs deeper into the ground and buries it even further” does not cut it off completely, one may also say, “Bah!”

If one finds “like a great blind man who looks” inelegant, one may instead put it this way: like a wooden man looking at flowers and birds.

[Chan]: What does “great blind man” mean?

[lvm]: “A blind man who looks” was a common ancient expression, meaning to see without seeing.

[Xinfo]: The teacher's answer is wonderfully subtle. I shall continue asking.

Chan Master Zhaoxian of Luyuan in Changsha was a Dharma successor of Nanquan and a contemporary of Zhaozhou and Zihu. His Chan responses were swift and incisive. If someone asked for teachings, he gave teachings; if someone wanted a verse, he gave a verse. If you wanted to meet him as a master, he met you as a master. Yangshan's Chan responses were ordinarily unsurpassed. One day, while he and Changsha were enjoying the moon, Yangshan pointed at the moon and said, "Everyone has this, but they cannot use it." Changsha said, "Exactly so. Then I ask you to use that."

In "Then I ask you to use that," should "ask" be "owe" instead?

Yangshan said, "You try using it and see." Changsha gave one kick and knocked him over. Yangshan got up and said, "My uncle in the Dharma is like a great tiger." Later people called him "Cen the Great Tiger."

Does "Changsha gave one kick and knocked him over" mean that by penetrating one's own bodily and mental deluded thoughts, one can attain the dharma-realm body? As the saying goes, "When you beat thoughts to death, I permit you the dharma-realm body."

One day, as Changsha was returning from a mountain excursion, the head seat monk, who was also one of his disciples, asked, "Where have you been, Master?" Changsha said, "I have been wandering in the mountains." The head seat monk asked, "To what place did you go?" Changsha said, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers." Only one who sits cutting off the ten directions can do this.

The ancients never ceased to keep this matter in mind, whether going out or coming in. Observe how host and guest exchange positions, responding directly to the occasion and yielding nothing to one another. Since he had been wandering in the mountains, why ask, "To what place did you go?" A Chan practitioner nowadays would simply say, "I went to Jia Mountain Pavilion." But the ancients had not the slightest conceptual calculation, nor any place of abiding. Thus he said, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers."

In saying, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers," was Changsha speaking of a state of mountain wandering in which there is neither one who wanders nor anything wandered among, and to which not a single thing is attached—that is, the realm of direct perception?

[Lvm]: Explanations such as yours are as numerous as hemp fibers and millet grains.

Chan Master Zhaoxian of Luyuan in Changsha was a Dharma heir of Nanquan and a contemporary of Zhaozhou and Zihu. His Chan responses were swift and keen. If someone asked about the teachings, he would explain the teachings; if someone wanted a verse, he would give a verse. If you wished to meet him as one of real attainment, he would meet you as one of real attainment. Yangshan's Chan responses were ordinarily unsurpassed. One day, while he and Changsha were enjoying the moon, Yangshan pointed to the moon and said, "Everyone fully possesses this, but cannot use it." Changsha said, "Precisely so. Then I invite you to use that."

"Then I ask you to use that." Should be instead?

* means "to ask."

Yangshan said, "Try using it and see." Changsha gave one stomp and knocked him over. Yangshan got up and said, "My uncle in the Dharma is just like a great tiger." Later people called him "Cen the Tiger."

Does "Changsha gave one stomp and knocked him over" mean that, by penetrating one's own deluded thoughts of body and mind, one can attain the Dharma-realm body? As the saying goes, "When you have killed off your thoughts, I will grant you the Dharma-realm body."

* You, too, ought to be knocked over with one stomp.

One day, as Changsha was returning from a mountain excursion, the head seat monk, who was also one of his disciples, asked, "Where have you been, Master?" Changsha said, "I have been wandering in the mountains." The head seat monk asked, "To what place did you go?" Changsha said, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers." Only one who sits cutting off the ten directions can do this.

The ancients never ceased to keep this matter in mind, whether going out or coming in. Observe how host and guest exchange positions, responding directly to the occasion and yielding nothing to one another. Since he had been wandering in the mountains, why ask, "To what place did you go?" A Chan practitioner nowadays would simply say, "I went to Jia Mountain Pavilion." But the ancients had not the slightest conceptual calculation, nor any place of abiding. Thus he said, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers."

In saying, "At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers," was Changsha speaking of a state of mountain wandering in which there is neither one who wanders nor anything wandered among, and to which not a single thing is attached—that is, the realm of direct perception?

* You have grievously wronged Changsha!

[Heart-Monk]: Ha ha! Teacher and ancient master each have one gain and one loss!

[Lvm]: Set “gain” aside for the moment. Just tell me: what has been lost?

[Heart-Monk]: The mountains are high, the waters cold; the moon bright, the stars few!

Ha ha! With this question from you, even if your disciple were as eloquent as Zhang Yi, I would still be unable to open my mouth!

[Shengpu]: Teacher Qi, what has been lost?

[lvm]: If you have truly lost the sacred, you have already lost the ordinary; if you have truly lost the universal, you have already lost the single.

“Even the Dharma should be relinquished—how much more so what is not Dharma.”

[Shengpu]: May I ask Teacher Qi: what is there before gain and loss?

[lvm]: First tell me what there is after gain and loss, and then I will tell you what there is before gain and loss.

[Shengpu]: After gain and loss, there is no longer gain or loss... Gain and loss are illusory.

[Lvm]: In fact, you have answered two questions. Are gain and loss before gain and loss not illusory as well?

Why wait until they have fallen away before first knowing emptiness?

[Shancai]: The head seat monk said, “It greatly resembles the feeling of spring.” The word “resembles” is well chosen.

Changsha said, “It even surpasses autumn dew dripping on hibiscus.”

That tiger’s single word, “surpasses,” seems also to return a peach for a plum; it does not fail the occasion.

[Little Ant]: Indeed, when one’s practice has not reached that level, it is hard to avoid having one’s head pass through Silla. I still have a question:

Teacher Shancai says that the word “resembles” is well chosen. Could you explain it, Teacher?

[lvm]: Why not ask [Shancai]? Or perhaps you can explain it first.

[ghg88]: “Resembles” is just right: neither identical nor separate. Though it falls to the ground, it makes no sound.

[lvm]: But “surpasses” goes beyond the Dharma body.

[ghg88]: I am neither one thing nor the other!

[lvm]: It is not that you are neither one thing nor the other; it is simply that you do not yet deeply understand what goes beyond.

[ghg88]: Understood. :)

Although I have now been struck, the scene truly is no longer as it was before. Each time I am struck, I am completely convinced. You are both compassionate and stern. I bow to you!

[213]: Teacher, how does “pursuing the grasses and following the flowers” deeply clarify what goes beyond?

This is how I understand “pursuing the grasses and following the flowers”: the manifestations of all things do not depart from one’s own mind. Pursuing the grasses is arising in response to conditions; although thoughts are present, the mind is empty and non-abiding, never departing from wondrous contemplation. Following the flowers is when thoughts fade and matters pass without leaving a trace; at that very time, one instead sees the wondrous, formless essence. In this suchness of responding to conditions, where should the matter of going beyond be placed?

[lvm]: To take not departing from one’s own mind and thereby seeing the wondrous, formless essence as what goes beyond; to take seeing the wondrous, formless essence and thereby responding to conditions in suchness as what goes beyond.

[Shancai]: ^^

Changsha said, “At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers.”

The head seat monk said, “It greatly resembles the feeling of spring.”

@ The luxuriant fragrant grasses refer to a spring scene.

Changsha said, “It even surpasses autumn dew dripping on hibiscus.”

@ Drifting, falling flowers refer to an autumn feeling.

The head seat monk asked where he had gone while wandering in the mountains.

He answered, “At first I followed the fragrant grasses out; then I returned, pursuing the falling flowers.”

What was being asked was the place he had reached in wandering the mountains—whether the old monk still had any attachment or lingering fixation.

He replied by speaking of following the grasses and pursuing the flowers. Although he answered in terms of his activities while wandering in the mountains, he in fact laid bare completely the empty, non-abiding mind and spontaneous freedom of one who practices greatly. Thus, in going out and returning, following the grasses and pursuing the flowers, he was outwardly speaking of spring scenes and autumn feelings seen during his mountain wandering. Yet through them he directly revealed to everyone the original landscape that neither moves nor wavers. Here, the spring scene and autumn feeling become the finger pointing at the moon.

Having long attended the Master, the head seat monk understood the refined meaning upon hearing the first note. The Master spoke of a spring scene, but was actually speaking of the family matter. So he naturally nodded and said, “It greatly resembles the feeling of spring.” Changsha said, “It even surpasses autumn dew dripping on hibiscus.” And so on and on—a whole string of entangling words that cannot be brought to an end.

Heh heh~

For reference only.

[Little Ant]: Teacher Shancai often “casts bait to lure the hunter, erases the tracks, and lets him anxiously look at his own shadow.” Heh heh. No wonder Teacher Lion so often lets out a great roar.

This “resembles” is indeed interesting. Perhaps only someone sitting at home could say it. Returning him a “surpasses” may count as recognizing him, so that he has not been wronged, no?

[Shancai]: Two supplementary materials concerning “resembles” and “surpasses.”

Concerning “resembles”

I recall that Elder Baishi once said: “Art lies between resemblance and nonresemblance.”

This interval between resemblance and nonresemblance may serve as a parallel example for “It greatly resembles the feeling of spring.”

Although, as far as this koan is concerned, it is not yet the main point.

Concerning “surpasses”

The Tiger’s explanation is rather meticulous. Here, it carries the sense of utter transcendence and sudden going beyond.

One “surpasses” in response to one “resembles”: the first arrow is still shallow, while the later arrow goes deep.

At the end, the author of the Blue Cliff Record says only, “Thank you for your answer.” With that, he closes the case and saves everyone from a bout of endless chatter.

“It greatly resembles the feeling of spring” may be classified as a phrase that follows the waves and pursues the billows.

“It even surpasses autumn dew dripping on hibiscus” may be classified as a phrase that cuts off the streams of all thought.

“Thank you for your answer” may be classified as a phrase that encompasses the universe.

Heh heh~ Whose song is this? Let us hear it!

[Little Ant]: Thank you, Teacher. Let me try singing a tune.

The feeling of spring is boundless in itself;

The head seat monk’s “resembles” is not an affirmation;

Freely, he sends back an arrow;

The Tathāgata reclines in the lion's mouth.

Autumn water drips upon hibiscus;

How can it surpass a lotus in fire?

At leisure, affairs of flowers in empty space;

One "thank you for your answer," and return.

[Little Ant]: A frail crane perches on a cold tree; a wild ape howls from an ancient terrace.

—Do these two lines describe the state of applying oneself in practice?

[lvm]:

* At this point, one must exhaust all contrivances and forget discriminating consciousness. Mountains and rivers, the great earth, grasses and trees, people and animals—there can be not the slightest leakage. Otherwise, the ancients called it "still remaining in a realm of superior wonder."

Even if mountains, rivers, and the great earth are wholly free of the slightest fault, one is still being turned by things. Not seeing any forms at all is only a half-lift. One must further know that there is a time of the complete lift, an opening beyond; only then can one sit securely. If one penetrates this, mountains are still mountains and waters still waters, each abiding in its own place and each fulfilling its own nature. It is like striking a blind man hard.

Lei means thin; a lei crane is a gaunt crane. A tree flourishes when spring turns warm; one can imagine what a cold tree is like. Add the word "perched," and the bleak desolation is inexhaustible. The ancient terrace was once reserved for kings and nobles to ascend—a place of the highest distinction. Now it is deserted and uninhabited, a place where bands of gibbons shriek wildly. How desolate that is!

Zhaozhou said:
At cockcrow, in the hour of Chou,
I grieve to see myself rise, still in such disarray.
I have neither skirt nor narrow-sleeved robe,
Only the faintest semblance of a kāṣāya.
My drawers have no crotch, my trousers no openings,
And three or five pecks of blue-gray ash upon my head.
Originally, I cultivated to benefit and save others;
Who knew it would turn into such a wretched state?

Where else is there to seek some "supremely wondrous realm"?

A gaunt crane perched on a cold tree,

Wild gibbons shriek from an ancient terrace.

—Do these two lines describe the circumstances of practice?

Zhaozhou said:
At dusk, in the hour of Xu,
I sit alone in an empty, dark room.
I never encounter the light of a lamp like a mirage;
Before my eyes is nothing but Jinzhou lacquer.
No bell is heard; the days pass vainly by.
I hear only mice chirping and scurrying about.
How could I possibly still have the inclination
To consider reciting a pāramitā?

Is there even the slightest trace of practice here?

Little Ant : Thank you, Teacher. One simply lets quiescence illuminate and illumination rest in quiescence, until mind and circumstances become one suchness—is that right?

Lvm : What you describe is one of the eighty-four thousand dharma gates.

The eighty-four thousand dharma gates—all dharmas lead through to the city of nirvāṇa.

Little Ant : The old master appeared in my dream this morning.

We sat face-to-face, knee to knee. In the dream I asked some foolish questions and spoke of previous states of awakening. Not a word of the old master's missed the essential point; I felt ashamed and awakened to vigilance.

Little Ant : One more question—Teacher LVM, please come in:

Did Yunmen not say: "Even if mountains, rivers, and the great earth are wholly free of the slightest fault, one is still being turned by things."

—When Confucius said that at sixty his ear was obedient, did he mean this state?

"Not seeing any forms at all is only a half-lift."

—Does this mean seeing emptiness?

"One must further know that there is a time of the complete lift, an opening beyond; only then can one sit securely."

—Does this mean that true permanence must respond to things, and that in responding to things one must not become deluded?

"If one penetrates this, mountains are still mountains and waters still waters, each abiding in its own place and each fulfilling its own nature. It is like striking a blind man hard."

—Is this the state of becoming continuous and undivided, of being utterly settled and genuine?

I do not know whether my understanding is correct. Please correct me, Teacher.

Lvm : Ha ha! Your understanding is not without reason. Now say a word apart from understanding.

A Neighbor's Idle Household Affairs

A Neighbor's Idle Household Affairs

Flowers in empty space give rise to doubt.

Without emptiness, there can be no doubt.

Without doubt, one does not return home.

When doubt is exhausted, home itself is not.

Sentient beings and Buddhas are just that.

lvm : One's Own Idle Household Affairs

My own household has many idle concerns:
A few pots of sparse, fallen flowers.

They never seem to grow;
Wanting to help them, I dare not pull them up.

The ancients left this instruction:
If you pull them, you will be left wholly groping in the dark.

Better simply let them be,
Watering them diligently, lest they dry up.

Little Ant : Ha ha~ A gardener's fine insight. Better simply let them be, watering them diligently, lest they dry up!

[37] Panshan: Where Does One Seek the Mind?

[Thirty-Seventh Case] Where Does Panshan Seek the Mind?

The Pointer says: A mechanism swift as lightning leaves those who pause to think laboring in vain; when thunder cracks through the sky, even covering one's ears cannot keep pace with it. A red banner is planted atop the skull, and twin swords are whirled behind the ears. Unless one's eye discerns it and one's hand reaches it directly, how could one attain it? Yet there are those who lower their heads and ponder, calculating beneath the mind faculty, unaware that they see countless ghosts before their skulls! Tell me: without falling into the mind faculty and without clinging to gain or loss, if there should suddenly be such an awakening, how would you respond to it? Test it by raising the case.

[Thirty-Seventh Case] The Case:

Panshan gave this teaching:

“Within the three realms there is no dharma. [Once the arrow has left the bowstring, it has no force of return. In the bright moonlight, one can see a traveler by night. A hit! Those who recognize dharmas are fearful. Good! Strike as soon as there is a response.]”

“Where, then, can the mind be sought? [Do not try to deceive people. No need to raise it again. Examine it for yourself. Then he struck and said, ‘What is it?’]”

At Panshan in Youzhou, in the north, there was Chan Master Baoji, an honored elder in Mazu’s lineage. Later, he produced Puhua. When the Master was nearing his passing, he said to the assembly, “Is there anyone who can portray my true likeness?” Everyone presented portraits they had painted, but the Master rebuked them all. Puhua stepped forward and said, “I can portray it.” The Master said, “Why not show it to this old monk?” Puhua then turned a somersault and left. The Master said, “This fellow will later be as mad as the wind, receiving people wherever he goes.”

One day he instructed the assembly: “Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought? The four great elements are originally empty; on what does the Buddha rely in abiding? The celestial mechanism does not move; stillness leaves no trace. Face to face it is presented—there is nothing further.” Xuedou selected these two lines for his verse; they are truly like unalloyed gold and uncut jade. Have you not heard, “To cure the illness, one need not use donkey- or camel-borne medicine”? Why does this mountain monk say, “Strike as soon as there is a response”? It is because he carries his cangue while confessing his offense.

The ancients said, “Having heard the phrase beyond sound, do not seek it within ideation.” Tell me, how does his mind function? It is like a rushing stream crossing a blade, like lightning turning and stars flying. If you deliberate and seek through thought, even if a thousand Buddhas appeared in the world, you still could not feel your way to it. If you penetrate deeply into the inner sanctum, through bone and marrow, and see all the way to the bottom, then Panshan’s whole affair is deficient. If you grasp the school’s essential meaning from his words and turn left and right upon it, Panshan can only give you a single stake. If you drag through mud and water, revolving amid heaps of sounds and forms, you have not even dreamed of Panshan.

The late First Patriarch Wuzu said, “Only after passing beyond that side can one have a share of freedom.” Have you not seen what the Third Patriarch said: “To grasp at it is to lose the measure and inevitably enter a wrong path. Let it go naturally, and its essence neither comes nor abides.” If here you speak of no Buddha and no Dharma, you have fallen again into a ghost cave. The ancients called this the deep pit of liberation: what was originally a wholesome cause brings forth an evil result. Therefore it is said, “Even a person of non-contrivance and nothing-to-do is still bound by golden chains.” You must pursue it to the very end. If you can speak where there are no words and act where action is impossible, this is called the place of turning around.

“Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought?” If you interpret this emotionally, you die right beneath his words. Xuedou’s insight penetrates through and through. Therefore he composed this verse:

Within the three realms there is no dharma. [The words still ring in one’s ears.]

Where, then, can the mind be sought? [No need to raise it again. Examine it for yourself. He struck and said, “What is it?”]

White clouds serve as a canopy, [Adding a head atop a head—layer upon layer.]

Flowing springs become a qin. [Do you hear it? It comes along with you. To hear it is unbearably sad.]

One tune, two tunes—no one understands. [It does not fall within gong and shang; it has nothing to do with jue and zhi. Borrowing a road to pass through. The five tones and six pitches are all perfectly distinct. Take it in for yourself. Hear it, and you are deaf.]

After the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep. [Thunder comes too quickly to cover one’s ears. One ends up dragging through mud and water. Where is it? Then he struck.]

“Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought?” Xuedou’s verse is much like the realm of the Avataṃsaka. Some say, “Xuedou sings it forth from within emptiness.” But if their eyelids have split open, they would never understand it in that way. Xuedou places two lines beside it: “White clouds serve as a canopy; flowing springs become a qin.” When Su Shi, the Academician, met Zhaojue, he wrote a verse: “The sound of the stream itself is the broad, long tongue; how could the mountain colors not be the pure body? Last night there were eighty-four thousand verses—how will you present them to others someday?”

Xuedou borrows the flowing spring to make one long tongue; hence he says, “One tune, two tunes—no one understands.” Have you not seen Chan Master Qian of Jiufeng say: “Do you still recognize life? The flowing spring is life; serene stillness is the body. A thousand waves rise in contest: this is Mañjuśrī’s family style. One expanse of clear sky: this is Samantabhadra’s realm.”

“The flowing spring becomes a qin; one tune, two tunes—no one understands.” For a melody such as this, one must have a true connoisseur. If one is not such a person, it is futile merely to strain one’s ears. The ancients said, “Even deaf people sing the tune of the Hu family, yet they hear neither its excellence nor its faults, its high notes nor its low.” Yunmen said, “To raise it

without attending to it is already a discrepancy. If you begin to calculate, in what kalpa will you awaken?" Raising is essence; attending is function. If you see it before it is raised, before signs have differentiated, you sit firmly at the crucial pass. If you see it as soon as signs differentiate, then there is illumination and function. If you see it after signs have differentiated, you have fallen into the mind faculty.

Xuedou was exceedingly compassionate and told you still more, yet it is like "After the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep." Someone once commented on this verse, praising Xuedou for having the talent of a Hanlin academician. "After the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep"—you must look at it with urgent eyes. If you hesitate even slightly, you will not find it.

[Heart Monk]: Panshan's failure! Since the three realms already are dharmas, where is the mind? When it is presented face to face, affairs have already arisen!

At Panshan in Youzhou, in the north, there was Chan Master Baoji, an honored elder in Mazu's lineage. Later, he produced Puhua. When the Master was nearing his passing, he said to the assembly, "Is there anyone who can portray my true likeness?"

Answer: "Bring me your true likeness, and I will portray it for you!"

[lvm]: "Portray my true likeness" means "paint my portrait."

In ancient times there was no photographic technology, and thus no photographs—only painted portraits. An artist would observe a person and paint that person's appearance; this was called "making a true portrait." Of course, after one has died and been reduced to ashes, how could one paint a portrait by observing the person? Now that photography exists, it is even easier to understand: after I die, I will eventually become ashes; can anyone still photograph me?

[Wind, Flowers, Snow, Moon]: What does "signs" mean in "before it is raised, before signs have differentiated, see it"?

[lvm]: "Signs" means "indications" or "omens."

[Cicada]: Why is it said that "Xuedou's verse on 'Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought?' is much like the realm of the Avataṃsaka"? (Lately I have developed a habit of picking at words.)

[lvm]: Ha ha! Is this merely a matter of words?

[Cicada]: Please instruct me clearly, Teacher.

[lvm]: Because "one tune, two tunes—no one understands," therefore "after the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep."

"Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought?"—the essence of the Avataṃsaka realm.

"White clouds serve as a canopy; flowing springs become a qin."—the appearance of the Avataṃsaka realm.

Do you understand?

[Cicada]: Are you trying to bury the cicada?

Teacher, how would you answer this question? Don't hang it on the wall—your mouth is not an air conditioner. There is no iron ox here either, so don't act like a mosquito.

[lvm]: One tune, two tunes—no one understands; after the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep.

[Cicada]: Indeed. Thank you, Teacher, for your subtle reply.

[Peaceful Mind Fruit]: I understand!

[lvm]: —the function of the Avataṃsaka realm.

[Peaceful Mind Fruit]: Then what is the essence of the Avataṃsaka realm?

[lvm]: It is above.

[Heart Monk]: "Do you understand?" "I understand!"—would you say that my answer is essence or appearance?

[lvm]: It is contact.

To say that you understand is contact; to say that you do not understand is turning away. Neither contact nor turning away—say a word!

[Cicada]: Why is it said that "Xuedou's verse on 'Within the three realms there is no dharma. Where, then, can the mind be sought?' is much like the realm of the Avataṃsaka"?

[lvm]: Because Xuedou did not interpret it emotionally and did not die beneath Panshan's words.

[Cicada]: Oh, Cicada misunderstood the "Avataṃsaka" realm.

[lvm]: Within the three realms there is no dharma; where, then, can the mind be sought? (One tune.)

White clouds serve as a canopy; flowing springs become a qin. (Two tunes.)

One tune, two tunes—no one understands; after the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep.

[Cicada]: What comes after "when one truth is true, all is true"?

[lvm]: What about before that?

What do you mean, "before" and "after"?!

[Cicada]: I won't say it, I won't say it.

[Cicada]: Also, what is meant by "after the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep"?

[lvm]: A night pond is simply a large pond.

Autumn is not the season in which most plants can grow. Although all plants may receive the nourishment of rainwater, they may not all flourish from that nourishment as they do in spring.

After an autumn rain, most plants have not flourished because of the nourishment, yet the water of the night pond has visibly grown deeper. (It merely adds to conceptual knowledge!)

One tune, two tunes—no one understands; after the rain, the autumn water in the night pond is deep.

Homage to Amitābha Buddha!

[Changru]: Surely one needs to be a "Hanlin academician" to solve this riddle? :(

[lvm]: This is not a riddle! It is plain for all to see.

[Moon of Liberation]: Another interpretation of "night-pond water":

"A Chan monastic expression. It originally referred to a pond in the dark of night that contained only water and no living creatures; in Chan circles, it came to refer metaphorically to empty, delusive words devoid of content."

For empty and delusive words and phrases originally lack the essential meaning that truly enters into principle. Yet foolish people, unable to distinguish true from false or real from unreal, still seek and explore within them, hoping to seize an opportunity for awakening to the Way, only to labor in vain. It is like a pond below the rushing waters at Dragon Gate: the fish in the pond have already leapt up the three-tiered waves and transformed into dragons, yet people foolishly ignorant of the facts still go there at night to catch them, vainly wasting their efforts. Case 7 of The Blue Cliff Record (Taishō 48, p. 147c): "The waves of the third tier rise high; fish transform into dragons. Yet fools still bale water from the pond at night."

FROM: [Fo Guang Great Dictionary]

[lvm]: Here is another example (reposted): the story of Houbai and Houhei:

Houbai was from somewhere in Fujian. He was crafty and resourceful, and often took advantage of others.

One day, while passing through a certain place, he saw a woman pacing anxiously beside an abandoned well. Houbai asked her what was wrong. She replied, "I accidentally dropped the things I was carrying into the well—several taels of silver and some miscellaneous items." As soon as Houbai heard this, he saw his opportunity and volunteered, saying to her, "I'll help you."

He thought to himself, "Once I get the things, I'll make off with them. What can she do to me?" So he took off his clothes and climbed down into the well, only to find a few broken bricks at the bottom. When he climbed back out, the woman had vanished, and she had taken both his outer garments and the things he had brought with him. After making inquiries in many places, he finally learned that the woman was named Houhei. (That is the general gist of the story.)

Zhaozhou asked Touzi, "How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life?"

Touzi replied, "Traveling at night is not permitted; one must arrive by daylight."

Zhaozhou said, "I am already Houbai; he is even more Houhei."

When I first encountered this koan, I had no idea what "hou bai, hou hei" meant. I also found that some places wrote it as "waiting for white, waiting for black," while some books explained it as something like a white monkey and a black monkey. It

was only two or three years ago, when I read a detailed account of its source in Chan Language by Zhou Yukai (Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1999), that I finally understood what it meant.

(I remember only the general purport.) It means the same as "Thinking the beard was red, there turned out to be another red-bearded Hu." Zhaozhou traveled throughout the land, and this story may have been rather widely circulated at the time. I have seen some places still explain "I was already Hou Bai; he was even more Hou Hei" as "I wait for daybreak; you wait for nightfall." This explanation clearly does not fit the meaning, and it also mistakes for , "to wait." I record the story here for the amusement of friends who have not read this book.

[Xinming]: Houhei really is black!

[lvm]: Oh! I mean that in "Sawing Apart a Scale Weight," I too took for . I have made a laughingstock of myself before the experts. (Editor's note: This has now been corrected.)

[Shancai]: I rather think that taking for is also quite interesting:

"I am already Houbai; he is even more Houhei."

While I was foolishly waiting on the land route, I never imagined that he had already arrived by water.

[Chan]: Recently I have developed a habit of picking at words, yet I am clumsy at expressing myself and do not even know how to make myself clear.

[lvm]: You can make yourself clear. For example: "Ah! At last I understand: a cicada is what we call a zhīliǎo!"

[Chan]: I could say such things back when I was a parrot, but I do not wish to say them now.

[lvm]: Ha ha! That was the preface; I wanted to draw out your concluding words.

[Chan]: My tongue is tied; I do not know what to say.

[lvm]: I will not shy away from pulling up sprouts to help them grow: "Ah! At last I understand—zhīliǎo is not a cicada!"

[Chan]: Ha ha! Put the two sentences together, and it turns out they are transmitting the way upward!

[lvm]: Is it not also the way downward?

[lvm]: Do you know why your "tongue is tied"? There is still a response to be made!

If it is a response of "non-abiding," it will burst forth from your mouth.

As for how others may praise or criticize it extravagantly after it bursts from your mouth, that is their affair and no longer concerns you. (This is what is meant by "the pecking and the chirping do not know one another.")

[Xiaodong]: A question for LVM

Do you not see what the Third Patriarch said: "If attachment exceeds its proper measure, one inevitably enters an erroneous path. Let it go naturally, and the essence neither comes nor goes."

// Only by "letting it go naturally, so that the essence neither comes nor goes," can one be as the Fifth Patriarch said: "Only after passing through to the other side is there a measure of freedom," is that so?

If here one says that there is neither Buddha nor Dharma, one falls again into a ghostly cave.

// Then this is attachment to the side of nonexistence, is it not?

The ancients called it the deep pit of liberation: a wholesome cause that instead brings an evil result.

// Attachment to both the side of existence and that of nonexistence is the deep pit of liberation, is it not?

I have always thought that I am somewhat attached beyond the proper measure. Because I fear entering an erroneous path, I have become attached again...

[lvm]:

Do you not see what the Third Patriarch said: "If attachment exceeds its proper measure, one inevitably enters an erroneous path. Let it go naturally, and the essence neither comes nor goes."

// Only by "letting it go naturally, so that the essence neither comes nor goes," can one be as the Fifth Patriarch said: "Only after passing through to the other side is there a measure of freedom," is that so?

* If one has not passed through to the other side, there is obstruction. Thus, if one lets it go naturally, the essence still comes and goes.

If here one says that there is neither Buddha nor Dharma, one falls again into a ghostly cave.

// Then this is attachment to the side of nonexistence, is it not?

* This is precisely the Buddhadharma, yet to say that there is neither Buddha nor Dharma is to turn away from it.

The ancients called it the deep pit of liberation: a wholesome cause that instead brings an evil result.

// Attachment to both the side of existence and that of nonexistence is the deep pit of liberation, is it not?

* Attachment to both the mundane and the sacred is also the deep pit of liberation.

I have always thought that I am somewhat attached beyond the proper measure. Because I fear entering an erroneous path, I have become attached again…

* Then simply enter neither the right nor the wrong.

[Xiaodong]: Thank you so much. Ever since I called you last time to ask about "attachment to the two sides of emptiness and existence," I have still had doubts in my mind because I had not found their root. Now I understand that I am not attached merely to "emptiness and existence"; it is because I cannot let go of "the mundane and the sacred," and "right and wrong."

[Xiaodong]: "There is no Dharma in the three realms; where then does one seek mind?" Is not the complete passage this:

One day, addressing the assembly, he said: "There is no Dharma in the three realms; where then does one seek mind? The four elements are originally empty; on what does the Buddha rely to abide? The mysterious pivot does not move; tranquil cessation leaves no trace. Face to face, it is presented; there is nothing more."

Why bring up only the first two lines? Does that not easily lead people to misunderstand?

[lvm]: White clouds for a canopy; flowing springs as a zither. One tune, two tunes—none understands. After rain, the autumn waters in the night pond are deep.

Xuedou was merely borrowing Pan Shan's words:

"There is no Dharma in the three realms; where then does one seek mind?"—(one tune)—in the seven places where mind is sought, the mind cannot be found.

"White clouds for a canopy; flowing springs as a zither."—(two tunes)—in the tenfold revelation of seeing, the true mind can be seen everywhere.

One tune, two tunes—none understands. After rain, the autumn waters in the night pond are deep.

[Bolomi]: Is this not just one tune? 1 + 0 = 1

[lvm]: Ha ha! Not to mention one tune—even if there are two tunes, it is still 0 + 0 = 0.

[38] Fengxue's Iron Ox Mechanism

[Case 38] Fengxue's Iron Ox Device

The pointer says: If we speak of gradualness, one returns to the ordinary and accords with the Way; amid the bustling marketplace, one moves freely in every direction. If we speak of suddenness, not a trace remains; even a thousand sages cannot find it by groping. But if neither sudden nor gradual is established, then what? A quick-witted person needs but one word; a swift horse, but one stroke of the whip. At just such a time, who is the one who acts? Put it to the test.

[Case 38] The Case:

While Fengxue was at the government offices in Yingzhou, he ascended the hall and said: [Leaning on official authority to speak of Chan—what does that amount to?]

"The patriarchal mind-seal resembles the device of an iron ox. [Though a thousand or ten thousand people shake it, it cannot be moved. Where are the confused twists and turns? The three essentials open the seal, without offending its sharp edge.]

"When one goes, the seal remains. [The proper command is being carried out. Wrong!]

"When one remains, the seal is broken. [A repeated offense cannot be tolerated. Watch when the command is carried out: press! Then strike!]

“But when one neither goes nor remains, [See how much confused talk there is where there is no place to set it down!]

“Is it the seal, or is it not the seal?” [No one in the world can get ahead of this. Its literary flourish is already manifest; all that remains is to overturn the Chan seat and scatter the assembly with a shout.]

At that time Elder Lupo stepped forward and asked, “I have the device of an iron ox. [He has hooked one. He understands it—indeed, it is quite extraordinary.]

“I ask the Master not to apply the seal.” [A fine huatou. Yet it cannot escape confused elaboration.]

Fengxue said, “Accustomed to angling for whales and leviathans in the clear vast deeps, I can only lament the frog’s steps rolling through the mud.” [Like a hawk seizing a dove. A jeweled net fills the sky; a divine steed races a thousand miles.]

Lupo stood pondering. [What a pity. There was also a way out for him. What a pity he let it slip.]

Fengxue shouted, “Elder, why do you not say something?” [Seizing the banner and capturing the drum, he has come charging through the barricade.]

Lupo began to deliberate. [Dead three times over. A double koan.]

Fengxue struck him once with his whisk. [A fine blow. This command must be carried out by precisely such a person.]

Fengxue said, “Do you still remember the huatou? Try raising it.” [Why bother? Frost upon snow.]

Lupo was about to open his mouth. [Once dead, he cannot come alive again. This fellow is utterly encumbered; he has fallen into Fengxue’s poisonous hands.]

Fengxue struck him again with his whisk.

The governor said, “The Buddhadharma and the king’s law are the same.” [Certainly. Yet an onlooker has seen through it.]

Fengxue said, “What principle have you seen?” [It would be fitting to give him a press as well. Yet he turns the spearhead back around.]

The governor said, “When what should be cut off is not cut off, disorder returns.” [It resembles it, but it is not it. One must know that the bystander has eyes: when someone in the east house dies, those in the west house help mourn.]

Fengxue then descended from the seat. [Making the best of an error, adapting to the occasion—at least the matter of his training was brought to completion.]

Fengxue was a venerable successor in Linji’s lineage.

Once, while Linji was planting pines in Huangbo’s assembly, Huangbo said, “Why plant so many pines deep in the mountains?” Linji said, “First, to lend beauty to the monastery; second, to provide a model for later generations.” Having said this, he struck the ground once with his hoe. Huangbo said, “Although that is so, you have already received twenty blows of the staff.” Linji again struck the ground once and said, “Hū! Hū!” Huangbo said, “When our school reaches you, it will flourish greatly in the world.”

Weishan Zhe said, “Linji acted as though he had stumbled on level ground. Even so, remaining unchanged in the face of danger is what truly deserves the name of a real man. When Huangbo said, ‘When our school reaches you, it will flourish greatly in the world,’ he was like a parent doting on his child without noticing the child’s ugliness.”

Later, Weishan asked Yangshan, “At that time, did Huangbo entrust [the Dharma] only to Linji, or was there someone else as well?” Yangshan said, “There was another, but the time is far removed, and I do not wish to mention him to Your Reverence.” Weishan said, “Although that is so, I still want to know. Just tell me.” Yangshan said, “One person directs Wu and Yue, and his command is carried out; when he encounters a great wind, he stops.” (This was a prophecy concerning Fengxue.)

Fengxue first studied under Xuefeng for five years. He then asked about this saying: “When Linji entered the hall, the head monks of the two halls simultaneously gave a shout. A monk asked Linji, ‘Are there still guest and host?’ Linji said, ‘Guest and host are distinctly evident.’” Fengxue asked, “What is the meaning of this?” Xuefeng said, “Long ago, when Yantou, Qingshan, and I were on our way to see Linji, we heard on the road that he had already passed away. If you wish to understand his saying about guest and host, you must consult eminent masters in his lineage.”

Later Fengxue also met Ruiyan, who would often call to himself, “Master!” and answer himself, “Yes!” Then he would say, “Stay awake! In the future, do not let others deceive you.” Fengxue said, “Picking it up and playing with it by oneself—what is difficult about that?”

Later, while spending the summer at Lumen in Xiangzhou with Attendant Kuo, Kuo directed him to go study under Nanyuan. Fengxue said, “On entering the gate, one must discern the host; I ask the Master to make this clear.” One day he finally met

Nanyuan and cited the foregoing words, saying, “I have come especially to pay my respects in person.” Nanyuan said, “Xuefeng is an ancient Buddha.”

One day he met Jingqing. Jingqing asked, “Where have you recently come from?” Fengxue said, “I have come from the east.” Jingqing said, “Did you cross the Little River?” Fengxue said, “A great vessel drifts alone through empty space; the Little River has nothing that can ferry it.” Jingqing said, “The mirror-like water pictures the mountains; birds in flight cannot cross it. Do not steal-hear the last words.” Fengxue said, “Even the vast sea fears the force of a covered carriage; sails flying in ranks cross the Five Lakes.”

Jingqing raised his whisk and said, “What can you do about this?” Fengxue said, “What is this?” Jingqing said, “Indeed, you do not recognize it.” Fengxue said, “Emerging and withdrawing, rolling up and spreading out—I use it together with you, Master.” Jingqing said, “Divining with a ladle, you listen to empty sounds; sound asleep, you indulge in rambling speech.” Fengxue said, “A broad marsh conceals mountains; principle can subdue a leopard.” Jingqing said, “I pardon your offense and forgive your transgression. Leave at once.”

Fengxue said, “To leave is to lose it.” He then went out to the Dharma hall and said to himself, “A great man—when a koan has not been resolved, how can he simply stop?” He turned back and reentered the abbot’s quarters. Jingqing was sitting there. Fengxue asked, “Just now I rashly presented my foolish view and offended your venerable presence. By the Master’s compassion, I have not been rebuked or punished.”

Jingqing said, “You said just now that you came from the east. Did you not come from Cuiyan?” Fengxue said, “Xuedou personally dwells east of Baogai.” Jingqing said, “Without pursuing the lost sheep, you wildly cease your explanations, yet you come here reciting verses.” Fengxue said, “When one meets a swordsman on the road, one must present a sword; do not offer a poem to one who is not a poet.” Jingqing said, “Quickly put away your poem; lend me, briefly, the sword’s edge.”

Fengxue said, “The executioner carries off his sword.” Jingqing said, “Not only do you violate the customs; you also reveal your own muddle-headedness.” Fengxue said, “If I did not violate the customs, how could the ancient Buddha’s mind be made clear?” Jingqing said, “What is called the ancient Buddha’s mind?” Fengxue further said, “If you again grant permission, what does the Master now possess?” Jingqing said, “A patch-robed monk from the east who cannot distinguish beans from wheat.”

Fengxue said, “I have only heard of not using and yet using; how can you suppress using by using?” Jingqing said, “Great waves rise a thousand fathoms, yet clear water is never apart from water.” Fengxue said, “One phrase cuts off the stream; the myriad functions are stilled and pared away.” Fengxue then bowed. Jingqing touched the whisk three times and said, “Excellent! Sit and have tea.”

When Fengxue first arrived at Nanyuan’s, he entered without bowing. Nanyuan said, “On entering the gate, one must discern the host.” Fengxue said, “I ask the Master to make this clear.” Nanyuan slapped his left knee once. Fengxue immediately shouted. Nanyuan slapped his right knee once. Fengxue also shouted. Nanyuan raised his left hand and said, “This follows from you, Reverend.”

He then raised his right hand and said, “And what about this?” Fengxue said, “Blind!” Nanyuan then picked up his staff. Fengxue said, “What are you doing? If I seize that staff and strike you, Master, do not say I did not tell you!” Nanyuan threw down the staff and said, “Today I have been thoroughly encumbered by this yellow-faced fellow from Zhejiang.” Fengxue said, “Master, you are like one who cannot hold his alms bowl, yet falsely claims not to be hungry.”

Nanyuan said, “Have you never been here before, Reverend?” Fengxue said, “What sort of words are those?” Nanyuan said, “I asked quite properly.” Fengxue said, “Nor may I let you off.” Nanyuan said, “Sit and have tea.”

You see that this outstanding man naturally possessed a keen and formidable edge; even Nanyuan had not yet discerned him. The next day, Nanyuan merely asked in an ordinary manner, “Where did you spend this summer?” Fengxue said, “At Lumen, spending the summer with Attendant Kuo.” Nanyuan said, “So you have indeed personally met a man of accomplishment.” He further asked, “What did he tell you?” Fengxue said, “From beginning to end, he only instructed me always to be the master.” Nanyuan then struck him and drove him from the abbot’s quarters, saying, “What use is such a ragged, worthless fellow?” From then on, Fengxue was wholeheartedly convinced and served as garden steward in Nanyuan’s assembly.

One day Nanyuan came to the garden and asked, “How do they discuss one blow in the south?” Fengxue said, “They discuss it as something extraordinary.” Fengxue then asked, “How is it discussed here, Master?” Nanyuan lifted his staff and said, “Under the staff is the forbearance of the unborn; when confronting the occasion, I yield to no master.” At these words Fengxue suddenly attained great awakening.

At that time, during the disorder of the Five Dynasties, the governor of Yingzhou invited the Master to spend the summer there. The Linji school was then flourishing greatly. In all his questions and answers, as well as his pointers, his phrases were remarkably sharp and fresh, like clustered flowers and brocade; every word had a basis. One day the governor invited the Master to ascend the hall. In instructing the assembly, he said: “The patriarchal mind-seal resembles the device of an iron ox. When one goes, the seal remains; when one remains, the seal is broken.”

“But when one neither goes nor remains, is it the seal, or is it not the seal?” Why so? It is unlike the device of a stone man or wooden horse; directly, it resembles the device of an iron ox, which you cannot shake. As soon as you go, the seal remains. As soon as you remain, the seal is broken. It smashes you into a hundred pieces. But when one neither goes nor remains, is it the seal, or is it not the seal? See how he gave this pointer: it may be said that the hook carried bait.

At that time, among those seated below was Elder Lupo, also a venerable successor in Linji’s lineage. He dared to step forward and meet Fengxue’s device with his own. He turned Fengxue’s huatou around and posed a question—indeed, quite extraordinary: “I have the device of an iron ox; I ask the Master not to apply the seal.”

But Fengxue was a man of accomplishment, and he answered, “Accustomed to angling for whales and leviathans in the clear vast deeps, I can only lament the frog’s steps rolling through the mud.” There is resonance within these words. Yunmen said, “Casting the hook across the four seas, I fish only for fierce dragons. The mysterious pivot beyond all standards seeks a true friend.” The vast deeps are like using twelve water buffaloes as hook and bait, yet one catches only a single frog. These words contain neither abstruse mystery nor anything to be reasoned out.

An ancient said: “If you look at it on the level of phenomena, it is easy; if you speculate beneath the mind faculty, it has nothing to do with it.” Lupi stood pondering. Seeing it yet not grasping it is a rare encounter in a thousand ages. What a pity! Hence it is said: “Even if you can lecture on a thousand sūtras and treatises, it is hard to utter a single word at the critical moment.” In fact, Lupi wanted to offer him a pleasing reply and did not wish to carry out the order, but Fengxue kept using the sharp tactics of seizing the banner and capturing the drum, continually pressing him on, until he had no alternative. As the common saying goes, “Once an army is defeated, it cannot withstand even a broom sweeping it.” Had he still tried to find a spear technique to match him, by the time you found one, your head would already have fallen to the ground.

Muzhu had also long practiced under Fengxue and could say, “The Buddhadharma and the law of the king are the same.” Fengxue said, “What have you seen?” Muzhu said, “Failure to decide when a decision should be made instead invites disorder.” Fengxue was wholly alive and alert, like a gourd floating on water: press it down and it turns; hold it down and it moves. He knew how to teach Dharma in response to circumstances. If it is not in response to circumstances, it turns instead into false speech. Fengxue then left his seat.

Now, Linji had his teaching of the four guest-and-host relationships: “Those who investigate and study must be exceedingly careful. When guest and host meet, there is dialogue. In their exchanges, they may respond to things and reveal form, function in their entirety, wield the stratagems of delight and anger, show half their body, ride a lion, or ride the elephant king. If there is a genuine student, he gives a shout and first brings forth a lacquer basin.”

“If the good teacher cannot discern that it is an object, he then puts on airs within that object. The student then gives another shout, while the former refuses to let go. This is a disease lodged in the vital organs, beyond cure; it is called ‘the guest seeing the host.’ Or the good teacher does not bring forth an object, but whenever the student asks, immediately seizes it away. The student, having been deprived, clings desperately and will not let go. This is ‘the host seeing the guest.’”

“Or a student responds to a state of purity and appears before the good teacher. The teacher recognizes it as a state and throws him into a pit. The student says, ‘An excellent good teacher!’ The teacher immediately says, ‘Bah! You do not know good from bad.’ The student bows. This is called ‘the host seeing the host.’ Or a student, wearing a cangue and chains, appears before the good teacher. The teacher adds another cangue and chain to him. The student rejoices. Neither discerns the other, and this is called ‘the guest seeing the guest.’ Worthies, all the examples this mountain monk has raised are for discerning māras and distinguishing what differs, so as to know the deviant and the correct.”

Have you not seen the monk who asked Ciming, “What is it like when ‘a single shout distinguishes guest and host, while illumination and function operate simultaneously’?” Ciming immediately gave a shout.

Again, Chan Master Hongjue of Yunju instructed the assembly: “For example, when a lion catches an elephant, it uses all its strength; when it catches a rabbit, it also uses all its strength.” A monk then asked, “What strength does it use in full?” Yunju said, “The strength of not deceiving.”

See how Xuedou composed this verse:

Having seized Lupi, he makes him straddle an iron ox. [Even among thousands upon thousands, one must display one’s skill. A defeated general is not executed again.]

The weapons and armor of the Three Mysteries are not lightly requited. [Those involved are confused. They receive calamity as blessing and surrender as an enemy.]

By the city of the King of Chu, waters flow toward the sovereign. [What is this talk of waters flowing toward the sovereign? Vast and surging, they fill heaven and earth. Even the four seas must flow backward.]

Under a shout, they once flowed backward. [Without this shout, I would cut off your tongue. Bah! It startles away the iron ox of Shanfu and frightens to death the great elephant of Jiazhou.]

Xuedou knew that Fengxue had such a house style, and so he wrote: “Having seized Lupi, he makes him straddle an iron ox. The weapons and armor of the Three Mysteries are not lightly requited.” Linji had the Three Mysteries and Three Essentials. Every phrase must contain the Three Mysteries, and every mystery must contain the Three Essentials. A monk asked Linji, “What is the first phrase?” Linji said, “When the seal of the Three Essentials opens, the vermilion mark is narrow; before deliberation is permitted, host and guest are distinguished.”

“What is the second phrase?” Linji said, “How could wondrous discernment permit the questioning of Wuzhu? Skillful means do not fail the stratagem that cuts off the stream.” “What is the third phrase?” Linji said, “Just watch the puppets played atop the stage: their pulling and drawing wholly depend on the person within.” In one phrase, Fengxue possessed the weapons and armor of the Three Mysteries, with the seven implements at his side; he did not lightly requite him. Without this, what could he do about Lupi?

Thereafter, Xuedou wished to bring out Linji’s sharp methods. Do not speak only of Lupi: even if, beside the city of the King of Chu, the vast floods stretch boundlessly and white waves rise to the heavens, all flowing toward the sovereign, a single shout would make them flow backward.

[Dingling]: What does “when going, seal it in place; when abiding, break the seal” mean?

[Lvm]: Here, “seal” is a verb.

When going, seal it in place—if someone comes and goes, wandering on the road, create a phantom city as a dwelling so that they have somewhere to return to. At first, abiding in this phantom city is taken as confirmation.

When abiding, break the seal—if someone abides in the phantom city, taking it for a dwelling, destroy this phantom city, leaving them with nowhere to return to. Later, destroying the phantom city is taken as confirmation.

Going: thirty blows. Abiding: thirty blows. Neither going nor abiding: thirty blows. How can one avoid being struck? Speak! Let us hear it!

[Cicada]: Snatch it away and throw it out.

[lvm]: Much too crude!

[Little Ant]: Who is striking whom?

[lvm]: Ha ha! Little Ant is kicking up its heels.

[Little Ant]: I do not know the origin of this saying.

[lvm]: There is a proverbial saying: “An ant kicking up its heels—not a trifling game.” “Who is striking whom?” is certainly no trifling game.

[Kangkang]: Here, take this toothpick. Is it for striking someone, or for picking your teeth? Use it as you please—will you take it or not?

[lvm]: Ha ha! Keep it for your own use.

[Kangkang]: Do you have one?

[lvm]: I have [Kangkang].

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Why did Linji strike the ground once more and say, “Hush! Hush!”? Huangbo said, “With you, our lineage will flourish greatly in the world.”

Did Linji mean, “First, to make an adornment for the monastery gate; second, to provide a model for later generations”—that is, “when going, seal it in place”?

And did Linji’s further strike upon the ground, followed by “Hush! Hush!,” mean “when abiding, break the seal”?

[lvm]: “Mountain Mountain” has met you.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: What does “The Buddhadharma and the law of the king are the same” mean?

[lvm]: Failure to decide when a decision should be made instead invites disorder.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Ha ha! So it is speaking of the iron-ox method!

“Failure to decide when a decision should be made instead invites disorder.” So this was what Muzhu said to Fengxue; that is why Fengxue left his seat.

Also, in “A great vessel drifts alone in emptiness; the small river cannot ferry it across,” what does ji mean? Does it mean “to ferry across”? Is the small river the Mirror Water mentioned later? From the sense of their exchange, although the small river is a place, it seems to allude to some person—a Chan master of that time. If so, whom does the small river indicate?

“Even the blue sea fears the force of the great vessel; sails in ranks fly across the Five Lakes.” I do not really understand this. Please instruct me, Teacher.

Also: “You see, Fengxue’s style was naturally sharp and lofty, yet even Nanyuan had not discerned him. The next day, Nanyuan merely asked in an ordinary manner, ‘Where did you spend this summer retreat?’ Fengxue said, ‘I spent the summer at Lumen with Attendant Guo.’ Nanyuan said, ‘So you personally encountered a true master.’ He further asked, ‘What did he tell you?’ Fengxue said, ‘From beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master.’ Nanyuan then struck him, drove him from the abbot’s quarters, and said, ‘What use is such a worn-out, defective fellow!’ From then on, Fengxue was deeply convinced and served as head gardener in Nanyuan’s assembly.”

Fengxue said, “From beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master,” and Nanyuan then struck him. Where was Fengxue mistaken? Or was it that, at Lumen, “from beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master” was “when going, seal it in place,” while Nanyuan’s strike was “when abiding, break the seal”?

[Lvm]: “The Buddhadharma and the law of the king are the same” was also said by Muzhu to Fengxue.

Also, in “A great vessel drifts alone in emptiness; the small river cannot ferry it across,” what does ji mean? Does it mean “to ferry across”?

*A great vessel means a large ship; drifting in emptiness symbolizes liberation. “The small river cannot ferry it across” means that the small river is too small to carry a great ship that can drift in emptiness.

Is the small river the Mirror Water mentioned later?

*Mirror Water and painted mountains: the appearance of water in a mirror and the appearance of mountains in a painting. Neither can be grasped.

From the sense of their exchange, although the small river is a place, it seems to allude to some person—a Chan master of that time. If so, whom does the small river indicate?

*It indicates whoever has a narrow mind.

“Even the blue sea fears the force of the great vessel; sails in ranks fly across the Five Lakes.” I do not really understand this. Please instruct me, Teacher.

*The blue sea means the ocean; qie means “to fear”; menglun is the great vessel mentioned above; and menglun’s force is the vessel’s imposing momentum. Sails flying in ranks aptly describe that momentum … no explanation is needed, is it?

Also: “You see, Fengxue’s style was naturally sharp and lofty, yet even Nanyuan had not discerned him. The next day, Nanyuan merely asked in an ordinary manner, ‘Where did you spend this summer retreat?’ Fengxue said, ‘I spent the summer at Lumen with Attendant Guo.’ Nanyuan said, ‘So you personally encountered a true master.’ He further asked, ‘What did he tell you?’ Fengxue said, ‘From beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master.’ Nanyuan then struck him, drove him from the abbot’s quarters, and said, ‘What use is such a worn-out, defective fellow!’ From then on, Fengxue was deeply convinced and served as head gardener in Nanyuan’s assembly.”

Fengxue said, “From beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master,” and Nanyuan then struck him. Where was Fengxue mistaken? Or was it that, at Lumen, “from beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master” was “when going, seal it in place,” while Nanyuan’s strike was “when abiding, break the seal”?

*What are you asking about in these two passages?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: I am asking: Fengxue said, “From beginning to end, he only taught this disciple always to be master,” and Nanyuan then struck him. Where was Fengxue mistaken?

Oh! Now I understand.

This is what is meant by: whether you leave, thirty blows; whether you stay, thirty blows; whether you neither leave nor stay, thirty blows. I only teach you this: let skin and flesh fall away completely, leaving only the one reality exposed.

[lvm]: Haha! Forcing a cow’s head down when it will not eat grass is futile.

Nanyuan told Fengxue to take charge, and Fengxue then took charge. Could that still be called taking charge?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: May I ask the teacher further: how should “I have only heard of not taking it as such and yet taking it as such; how can one reject taking it as such and yet take it as such?” be rendered in plain language?

lvm : yi—meaning to restrain or exclude.

... Qing said, “What is called the mind of an ancient Buddha?”

Xue again said, “If you grant permission once more, what does the master now possess?”

Qing said, “This monk who came from the east cannot distinguish beans from wheat.”

Xue said, “I have only heard of not taking it as such and yet taking it as such; how can one reject taking it as such and yet take it as such?”

* I have only heard that “not doing zazen is itself doing zazen” (for example, not sitting in meditation is itself sitting in meditation); how can one “reject doing zazen and call that doing zazen” (for example, falsely calling the rejection of sitting meditation “sitting meditation”)?

* (You should know that “not sitting in meditation is itself sitting in meditation” does not reject sitting in meditation.)

[Snow Mountain Youth]: When Nanyuan then struck him, was that also probing with a pole and merely catching a shadow?

When Nanyuan then struck him, was that also probing with a pole and merely catching a shadow? (If Fengxue had truly been able to take charge, he could have refused to receive that blow, thereby displaying in action such capacity and function as “under the staff, patience with the unborn; at the crucial moment, yielding not even to one’s teacher.”)

[lvm]: Although that is not without reason, it is still better not to let thoughts continue one after another.

[Dingling]: “Hare”—isn’t it missing a tail?

Also, Chan Master Hongjue of Yunju instructed the assembly: “For example, when a lion catches an elephant, it uses all its strength; when it catches a hare, it also uses all its strength.” At that time a monk asked, “May I ask: what strength does it use in full?” Yunju said, “The power of not deceiving.”

[Yongshou Youth]: Brother Ding, is it “How could skillful means fail to bear the capacity to cut off the stream,” or “How could skillful means contend with the capacity to cut off the stream”?

Sudhana : = ?

lvm : Correct! = .

[Dingling]: Brother Yongshou, I do not understand Classical Chinese. What are you all talking about?

[Sudhana]: The founding patriarch Linji’s three mysteries within a single phrase.

Master Linji said: “Within one phrase are three mysteries; within one mystery are three essentials.”

The first phrase, the mystery within the phrase: “Just watch the puppet show on the stage: all the pulling and manipulation depend on the person within.”

The second phrase, the mystery within the meaning: “How could wondrous understanding permit Asaṅga’s questioning? How could skillful means fail to bear the capacity to cut off the stream!”

The final phrase, the mystery within the essence: “When the seal of the three essentials opens, the vermilion mark is narrow; before deliberation is permitted, host and guest are already distinguished.”

They are called one phrase, so why are three phrases presented? The three phrases here all point in fact to one phrase. What phrase is that? It is what everyone commonly calls “the final phrase.”

The “final phrase” transcends all appearances and schools; the path of words is cut off, and it admits of no touch or obscuration. Since there is no alternative, three phrases are expounded to point at the moon: the three phrases are provisional, while the one phrase is real. Without the one phrase, the three phrases, and even the three mysteries and three essentials, are all dead phrases. Once one understands the one phrase, it is like adding the pupils to a painted dragon’s eyes; three phrases or five phrases may then be employed as expedient arrangements at the gate—they are all living phrases. Therefore the patriarch said: “Once you have the root, you need not worry about the branches.”

Furthermore, the Chan school’s “phrase” does not mean a sentence in the ordinary linguistic sense, nor does it directly refer to the meaning of a passage of text. It leans more toward the sense of “directly indicating the essential point of mind.” In this respect, the terminology of the highest “Pith Instruction Section” among the Nyingma school’s “Mind Section,” “Space Section,” and “Pith Instruction Section” cannot but be said to have a subtle correspondence with the Chan school’s “phrase.”

[Ziyi]: Can these three phrases be treated as sequential stages? Bringing out three phrases all at once makes the road seem rather long.

[Sudhana]: Then do not fuss with either one phrase or three phrases.

[Dingling]: When the rich man makes a move, the beggar is fed to bursting. Hehe.

[Sudhana]: Buns, steamed bread, and shumai: elaborating from one phrase and three phrases

Then let us simply talk about some food as well.

For example, at a breakfast stall, buns, steamed bread, and shumai emerge from the steamer together, hot and warm, to fill people's bellies. Whether office workers or beggars, whether those so hungry that their vision blurs or those storing energy for work and study, all seem still to take eating their fill as their aim (one phrase/Buddhahood), and buns, steamed bread, or shumai as their means (three phrases/practice).

Some prefer to eat steamed bread first, then buns, and then shumai. They may be allowed to regard eating one's fill as a serious matter that should be pursued gradually and in sequence. Others eat only buns, steamed bread, or shumai, proceeding by sudden transcendence without changing varieties; there is nothing wrong with considering this simple and quick. As for someone holding a bun in one hand, steamed bread in another, and shumai in a third hand (if you have a third

hand), taking a bite here and a bite there, and calling it dual practice or combined practice, that is also fine. Just do not forget that we came in order to eat our fill. Buns, steamed bread, and shumai can all satisfy you—so long as you ultimately leave satisfied, with no lingering worry of gnawing hunger. Hehe, then you should all be congratulated.

In terms of doctrinal reasoning, the three phrases do indeed differ in depth and sequence. But if one loses the vows and practice that take investigating the one phrase (Buddhahood) as the essential task, then for that person one phrase is not one phrase, and there can be no question of three phrases—just as, without taking liberation as one's aim, it is impossible to transform the minor suffering of practice into great bliss, or temporary suffering into lasting bliss.

It is also like someone with no thought of food coming to a food stall: even mountain delicacies and rare flavors are no different from stones and wood. Oh, and for those who have unfortunately developed anorexia for some reason, who refuse to eat even when starving to skin and bones, it is advisable to cure the illness as quickly as possible. Missing one meal is a small matter; starving to death would be troublesome.

Whether one phrase or three phrases, what matters is grasping the purport beyond the words and realizing the essential principle beneath the phrase. Without realizing the essential principle, even Vimalakīrti's silence would still be abusive speech, much less one phrase or three phrases. If one realizes the essential principle, all three phrases merge into one phrase, while the one phrase further transcends the three phrases.

Only here can this barely be called mutually raising illumination and function, using both host and guest. At this point, to speak of provisional or real is merely understanding according to one's capacity; to posit sudden or gradual is only the everyday equipment of skillful response. ^_^ At this stage, perhaps one can turn the great earth into gold—casually sell buns—or stir the long river into cream—after you have eaten buns, invite you to have a drink. Hehe, with food in one hand and drink in the other, you can secretly enjoy yourself.

[Xinming]: Was it accurate or not?

Later, Guishan asked Yangshan, "At that time Huangbo entrusted [the Dharma] only to Linji. Was there anyone else?" Yangshan said, "There was. It is only that the time is far removed, and I do not wish to mention him to the Reverend." Guishan said, "Though that is so, I still want to know. Tell me." Yangshan said, "One person points south, where orders are carried out in Wu and Yue; when he encounters a great wind, he stops." (This was a prophecy of Fengxue.)

[lvm]: Yangshan came earlier and Fengxue later; they were separated by a great span of time.

Would you say it was accurate or not?

[Xinming]: Both accurate and inaccurate.

If I may venture a shallow conjecture: if we speak of the transmission of the Chan lamp, it should be inaccurate; if we speak of great capacity and great function, it may be considered accurate. (Because the descendants' inheritance later scarcely went beyond the two legacies of a staff-blow and a shout, and there were no innovative methods, the roster of heroes in the school's arsenal may be said to have ended there. Thus it may also be considered accurate. Investigating huatou should be the decline of the school—where then is Patriarch Bodhidharma's family discipline of "direct pointing to the mind" [a sword cutting the throat at one stroke]?)

[lvm]: Oh! Perhaps this character "stop" was not a prophecy that the lineage transmission would end.

In the general configuration of mountains and rivers (feng shui), the "dragon" comes to a stop and forms an acupoint. Perhaps this character (“stop”) is a prophetic allusion to the character (“cavity”). That is to say, "when meeting a great wind, it stops" portends the two characters (“Wind Cave”).

[Mind Monk]: Haha, Teacher, you said:

“With you, my school will flourish greatly in the world,” and what Linji said to Sansheng, “My school will perish at the hands of you blind donkey”—are they the same or different?

[lvm]: Haha! Those who see sameness see sameness; those who see difference see difference.

It is like “the benevolent see benevolence, and the wise see wisdom.”

[Thirty-Nine] Yunmen’s Pure Dharma Body

[Case 39] Yunmen: The Pure Dharmakāya

The pointer says: What is enjoyed along the way is like a tiger backed against a mountain. What circulates in conventional truth is like an ape in a cage. If you wish to know the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe the causes and conditions of the time. To forge refined gold a hundred times, one needs the bellows of a master smith. But tell me: when great functioning appears before one, what can be used to test it?

[Case 39] The Case:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is the pure dharmakāya?” [Upon a heap of dust and refuse, one sees a sixteen-foot golden body. What is this mottled and patchy thing?]

Yunmen said, “A flower-and-herb railing.” [The question was not genuine, and the answer came roughly. [Corrupt text]—bumping into it. The crooked does not conceal the straight.]

The monk said, “What if one goes on in just this way?” [He swallowed a date whole. Why play the fool?]

Yunmen said, “A golden-haired lion.” [Both praise and criticism. He takes both sides in one contest. Making do with an error. What kind of mental activity is this?]

Do you all know the point of this monk’s question and Yunmen’s answer? If you know it, two mouths share no single tongue. If you do not know it, you cannot avoid being muddleheaded.

A monk asked Xuansha, “What is the pure dharmakāya?” Xuansha said, “Dripping with pus.” Possessing the vajra eye, try to discern it.

Yunmen was unlike others. At times he held fast, standing like a wall ten thousand fathoms high, where you could find no place to approach. At times he opened a single thread of a path for you, living and dying together with you. Yunmen’s three-inch tongue was exceedingly close-knit. Some say, “He simply answered at random.” If you understand it this way, tell me: where does Yunmen fall? This is an affair within the house; do not speculate about it outside.

Therefore Baizhang said, “The myriad forms and all words must be turned back to oneself.” Make them turn and roll until they reach a lively, vital place; then speak. If you deliberate and seek through thought, you fall into the second statement. Yongjia said: “When the dharmakāya is awakened to, not a single thing exists; the innate nature at its source is the naturally genuine Buddha.”

Yunmen tested this monk. The monk too was one of his household; having long practiced under a teacher, he knew the affairs within the house. He stepped forward and said, “What if one goes on in just this way?” Yunmen said, “A golden-haired lion.” Tell me, did he approve of him or not? Did he praise him or criticize him? Yantou said, “When it comes to battle, each stands at the point of transformation.” He also said, “He studies living words, not dead words. If one realizes under living words, one never forgets for kalpas. If one realizes under dead words, one cannot save oneself.”

Again, a monk asked Yunmen, “The Buddhadharma is like the moon in water—is that so?” Yunmen said, “Clear waves afford no path through.” The monk continued, “Where did the Master obtain it?” Yunmen said, “Where does your repeated question come from?” The monk said, “What if one goes on in exactly this way?” Yunmen said, “A road of layered passes and mountains.” You must know that this matter does not lie in words and phrases. It is like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning. Whether one grasps it or fails to grasp it, one cannot avoid losing body and life. Xuedou was a person of this very kind, and so he immediately composed this verse:

A flower-and-herb railing—[The words still ring in one’s ears.]

Do not be muddleheaded—[Like hemp and millet seeds. There is a little something here. Take it away for yourself.]

The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan. [Far too much entanglement. Each should turn back and examine beneath one’s robe. Still, one cannot avoid explaining.]

“Just this way”—[He swallowed a date whole.]

How utterly uncalled for! [Take it away for yourself. Clearly so. Do not mistakenly blame Yunmen for being good.]

Everyone, look at the golden-haired lion. [Letting out one or half of one, it is still a dog. Yunmen too was a man of Puzhou who escorted thieves.]

Xuedou struck in rhythm from his seat and, setting a different tune in motion, judged it line by line. This verse does not differ from the style of commenting on ancient cases. At "flower-and-herb railing," he immediately says, "Do not be muddleheaded." Everyone says that Yunmen merely answered at random, interpreting him through their own feelings. Thus Xuedou, from the standpoint of the fundamental matter, says, "Do not be muddleheaded." For Yunmen's intent does not lie in the flower-and-herb railing.

Therefore Xuedou says, "The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan." This line is excessively leaky and loose! There is originally no moon in the water; the moon is in the blue sky. It is like the star being on the steelyard and not on the pan. But tell me: which is the steelyard? If you can discern it clearly, you will not disappoint Xuedou. When the ancients reached this point, they did not refrain from compassion. They plainly tell you: it is not here; it is over there. But tell me, what place is over there? This completes the first line of the verse.

The latter part of the verse comments on the monk's words, "What if one goes on in just this way?" Xuedou says: this monk too is utterly uncalled for! But tell me: does it accord on the bright side or on the dark side? Did he speak this way because he understood, or because he did not understand? "Everyone, look at the golden-haired lion"—do you see the golden-haired lion? Blind!

[Dingling]: What does "If you wish to know the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe the causes and conditions of the time" mean??

[lvm]: After practicing for a long time, when the time and conditions arrive, it suddenly breaks with a snap and bursts apart with a bang; in an instant, one knows the meaning of Buddha-nature.

[Baiyun Piaopiao]: What happens after one knows?

[lvm]: If it is truly so, how could there still be a before and after?

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: Heh heh~ ha ha~ heh heh~ So this is how people are led astray.

[lvm]: ^0^

[Dingling]: How would you put "The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan" in plain language?

[lvm]: Have you ever seen a scale with an iron weight, a wooden beam, and a weighing pan?

[Dingling]: "The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan" means laying everything out on the table, doesn't it? Why then is it "excessively leaky and loose"?

[lvm]: The scale marks are on the beam, not on the weighing pan.

A flower-and-herb railing—this is the scale mark.

Do not be muddleheaded—do not imagine that the scale mark is on the weighing pan!

The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan—the scale mark is on the beam, not on the weighing pan.

"Xuedou says, 'The star is on the steelyard, not on the pan.' This line is excessively leaky and loose! There is originally no moon in the water; the moon is in the blue sky. It is like the star being on the steelyard and not on the pan. But tell me: which is the steelyard? If you can discern it clearly, you will not disappoint Xuedou."

*It plainly says here, "If you can discern it clearly, you will not disappoint Xuedou." Calling it "excessively leaky and loose" plainly means not disappointing Xuedou!

[Dingling]: There is originally no moon in the water; the moon is in the blue sky.

Only one question remains: "excessively leaky and loose"?

[lvm]: Leaky and loose—having loopholes, lacking rigor, dragging in mud and water.

[Little Ant]: We invite the teacher to give a sentence without looseness or leakage.

[lvm]: Ha ha! Little Ant is kicking up his heels again.

[Little Ant]: Whom did I kick?

[lvm]: Does this sentence have any looseness or leakage?

[Little Ant]: Who sees the looseness? Who receives the leakage?

[test]: Excessively leaky and loose!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Xinming]: May I ask: what is the pure dharmakāya?

[lvm]: Yunmen said: “A flower-and-herb railing.”

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Then, teacher, may I ask: where is not the pure dharmakāya?

[lvm]: The pure dharmakāya.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Truly utterly bare, without a single thread!

[Dingling]: Hey, hey—you have hung on a single thread!

[Shancai]: (Continuing [Xinming]: “May I ask: what is the pure dharmakāya?” [lvm]: “Yunmen said: ‘A flower-and-herb railing.’”): A flower-and-herb railing is a technical term for a bamboo or wooden fence built around flowers such as peonies and tree peonies.

[lvm]: “Flower-and-Herb Railing” was also the name of an ancient tune. Please see Chapter 52 of The Plum in the Golden Vase:

Ximen Qing went into Li Ping’er’s room, washed his hands, and came out. Bojue asked him for fragrant tea. Ximen Qing said: “You strange beggar, you have caught the pox—why do you only loaf about bothering people!” Each of them pinched off a bit of him. Bojue said: “I have only these two sons! Let him be, let him be! I’ll ask that little slut of the Li family for some.”

“Just as they were speaking, Li Ming came over and kowtowed. Bojue said: “Where has Li Rixin been? Haven’t you found out what has happened with them?” Li Ming said: “Our Sister Gui owes it to you, Father. These last two days no one from the county has come to press us; we are only awaiting instructions from the capital.”

“Bojue said: “Has that young concubine of the Qi family come out?” Li Ming said: “Qi Xiang’er is still hiding at the residence of the Imperial Relative Wang.”

“Sister Gui is well here with you, Father; who would dare come looking for her?” Bojue said: “Otherwise it would have taken some effort. I and Xie, here, repeatedly begged and urged your father: ‘If you do not look after him everywhere, where can he go to find a way out?’” Li Ming said: “If Father here did not take charge, it could never have been settled.”

“Our Third Aunt, that old lady, so high-handed—what might she do! Bojue said: “I remember that these days are her birthday. We joined with your father in celebrating it for her.” Li Ming said: “You fathers need not trouble yourselves.”

“When the matter is finished tomorrow, will Third Aunt and Sister Gui need to worry about inviting you fathers to sit awhile? Bojue said: “When the time comes, we can make up the birthday celebration.” He then called him closer: “You drink this cup of wine for me. I have been drinking all day and cannot drink any more.”

Li Ming accepted the silver cup, knelt, and drained it in one gulp. Xie Xida told Qin Tong to pour him another cup. The Earl said, “You haven’t eaten, have you?” There was still a plate of pastries on the table, and Xie Xida handed him two more plates, one of roast pig’s-head meat and one of duck. Li Ming received them with both hands and went below to eat.

The Earl used his chopsticks to give him another half-section of shad, saying, “I see you have not yet eaten any of this fish this year. Go on, taste the season’s first.”

Ximen Qing said, “You queer dog of a fellow—let him eat it all! What are you saving it for?” The Earl said, “When the wine is finished later and I am hungry, am I not to eat? What do you know? In Jiangnan, this fish comes around only once a year. Even what you pick from between your teeth is fragrant.”

“It is hard enough to come by! To be fair, even the imperial court has not eaten it yet. If not at your place, brother, whose house would have it?” As they were speaking, Hua Tong brought out four small dishes of fresh produce: water caltrops, water chestnuts, snow lotus root, and loquats. Before Ximen Qing had even put any in his mouth, Ying Bojue snatched away the entire dish and tipped it into his sleeve.

Xie Xida said, “Leave a couple for me, too.” He also reached over and grabbed a dish of water caltrops. Only the lotus root remained on the table. Ximen Qing pinched off a piece and put it in his mouth; Li Ming ate the rest. He told Hua Tong to fetch two more loquats from the back to reward Li Ming. Li Ming received them and tucked them into his sleeve, then came up to play the zither and sing.

After he had sung for a while, the Earl gave him another topic and had him sing a set of airs to “Flower Medicine Rail.” The three of them ate and drank until the lamps were lit, then waited for mung-bean and white-rice gruel to be brought from the rear before finally rising to leave. The Earl said, “Brother, I know that Chief Secretary An is inviting you tomorrow, so you will not be free. As for the matter of Li Si and Huang San, I will meet with him the day after tomorrow.” Ximen Qing nodded. The two men left without waiting to be seen off. Ximen Qing told Shu Tong to put away the utensils, then returned to rest in Meng Yulou’s room. Nothing was said that night.

[Little Ant]: Oh my—I’m impressed by you!

I never saw the teacher keep that many books. How can he have such bookworm abilities?

I used to think it impressive enough that the teacher was so thoroughly versed in the Buddhist canon. Now this skill of his truly leaves even an ant unable to keep its eyes on straight.

[Xinming]: Hehe, The Plum in the Golden Vase is a demon-revealing mirror.

In Dream of the Red Chamber, there is someone surnamed “Jia” [False]. When Wang Xifeng fell ill, a Daoist gave him a demon-revealing mirror. One side showed contemplation of white bones; the other, a den of lust. Yet this false gentleman had nothing but the character “lust” in his heart and before his eyes, and naturally betrayed his aspiration to the Way. The Plum in the Golden Vase is also a mirror: some see only “lust,” while others see in it a textbook autobiography of Ximen Qing.

Hehe, false or not?

[lvm]: Obscenity is impurity. Thus “Flower Medicine Rail” refers to impurity.

[www]: How many people can understand what you mean by “Jin three-three, Ping three-three, Mei three-three”?

In cutting, there is one cai; in action, there is another cai; two cais make a contest. How many people know? Alas!

[lvm]: Thus, “Flower Medicine Rail” and “dripping pus” have the same meaning.

[Little Ant]: LVM never departs from the essential principle; one can see it in the sincere seeking of the Dharma.

Sincerity and reverence are the essential gateway to entering the Way. Because of sincerity, there are no other views.

[www]: Agreed.

[Xinming]: I do not understand: “That which circulates in conventional truth is like an ape behind bars.”

What does this sentence mean?

“Tell me, when great function is manifest before you, what can test it?” Does this mean that everyone sees Yunmen’s fluttering red banner through the koan?

“Everyone, look at the golden-haired lion. [Let out even half of one, and it is still a dog. Yunmen, too, was a thief escorted by men of Puzhou.]” ‘Men of Puzhou escorting a thief’—it seems there is an allusion here?

“Everyone says that Yunmen answered casually, and they all interpret him in terms of ordinary feelings.” “Answered casually” is like a whole date I cannot swallow; I do not understand it.

[lvm]: “Answered casually”—you do not understand it? If it were “answered off the cuff,” you would understand, right?

“That which circulates in conventional truth is like an ape behind bars.” What does this sentence mean?

* “That which is effective along the way is like a tiger leaning against a mountain.” What is effective along the way is like a tiger in the great mountains: it can exert itself and show its claws and fangs. “That which circulates in conventional truth is like an ape behind bars.” What circulates in conventional truth is like an ape in a zoo: it cannot exert itself or leap up and down as it does in the forest.

“Tell me, when great function is manifest before you, what can test it?” Does this mean that everyone sees Yunmen’s fluttering red banner through the koan?

* That makes sense.

Everyone, look at the golden-haired lion. [Let out even half of one, and it is still a dog. Yunmen, too, was a thief escorted by men of Puzhou.] ‘Men of Puzhou escorting a thief’—it seems there is an allusion here?

* There may indeed be an allusion. Does anyone know? Please reply.

([Editor's note]: Ikkyū's Crazy Cloud Anthology says: "How poor is the household that bestows the purple robe and the title of master! Three hundred strings of silk paper and bronze. Elder Dayong stands forth in full manifestation; it seems he truly is a man of Puzhou." The "man of Puzhou" in the poem means a thief.)

[Dingling]: What does "Clear waves afford no path through" mean?

[lvm]: Dead water does not harbor dragons.

[Snow Mountain Boy]: The star is on the steelyard, not on the scale pan.

A monk asked Yunmen, "The Buddhadharma is like the moon in water—is that so?" This monk wanted to seek an answer through words. Yunmen therefore said, "Clear waves afford no path through." Is there not no path through clear water to the moon in it? The meaning is that what one seeks through words cannot be obtained.

[Dingling]: Let Big Bug saw through this one:

The monk said: "What if one simply goes on in this way? [He swallowed a whole date. Why play the fool?]"

Yunmen said: "Golden-haired lion. [Both praise and censure. Two cais make a contest. Following an error with another error. What manner of mental activity is this?]"

Setting aside "both praise and censure; two cais make a contest; following an error with another error," I ask only: What manner of mental activity is this?

[lvm]: Following an error with another error.

[Dingling]: Yes—but why follow an error with another error?

[lvm]: Two cais make a contest.

[Snow Mountain Boy]: What does "two cais make a contest" mean in plain language?

[lvm]: In the words of Chan Master Linji, it is "the host sees the host."

[Sudhana]: Dingling, what is wrong with following an error with another error?

[Dingling]: Please enlighten me, Master Rich Man.

[Sudhana]: Nothing is wrong. Go eat your meal with a settled mind.

[Forty] Nanquan Is Like a Dream

[40] Nanquan: Like a Dream

Pointer: Rest, let go, and cease—then the iron tree blossoms. Is there? Is there? The clever child loses his footing. Even if one moves freely in every direction, one cannot avoid having one's nostrils pierced by him. But tell me: where is the error? Let us examine it.

[40] Case:

Governor Lu Geng was conversing with Nanquan.

Lu said, "Dharma Master Sengzhao said, 'Heaven and earth have the same root as I; the myriad things are one body with me.' This is most extraordinary." [Working away in a ghost cave. Painted cakes cannot satisfy hunger. This too is deliberation amid the grass.]

Nanquan pointed to the flowers before the courtyard, [Saying it this way—bah! Sūtras have their sūtra masters, and treatises have their treatise masters; it is none of this mountain monk's business. Bah! A true man should at that very moment have uttered a turning word—not only cutting off Nanquan, but also giving the patch-robed monks of the whole world a breath of relief.]

and called to the governor, saying, "People of the present see this single flower as though in a dream." [Once the mandarin ducks are embroidered, you may look at them as you please; do not pass the golden needle on to others. Do not speak in your sleep! You have drawn the orioles down from the willow branches.]

Governor Lu Geng had long studied under Nanquan. Ordinarily, he devoted his attention to principle and intrinsic nature, immersing himself in Sengzhao's Treatise. One day while seated, he brought up these two lines, considering them extraordinary, and asked, "Dharma Master Sengzhao said, 'Heaven and earth have the same root as I; the myriad things are one

body with me.' This is most extraordinary." Dharma Master Sengzhao was an eminent monk of the Jin dynasty. Together with Sheng, Rong, and Rui, he studied under Kumārajīva; they were called the Four Worthies.

In his youth, he loved reading Zhuangzi and Laozi. Later, while copying an old translation of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, he had an awakening and only then realized that Zhuangzi and Laozi were still not wholly satisfactory. Therefore, synthesizing the teachings of the sūtras, he composed four treatises. The meaning of Zhuangzi and Laozi is that heaven and earth are vast in form, and my own form is likewise so; both arise from within emptiness and nonbeing. Zhuangzi's main intent is merely to discuss the equalization of things. Sengzhao's main intent is to say that all natures return to oneself.

Do you not see what he says in his treatise? "The ultimate person is empty and open, without form, yet there is nothing among the myriad things that is not created by me. Who can unite the myriad things as oneself? Only the sage." Though there are spirits, humans, worthies, and sages, each distinct, all share one nature and one body. An ancient said, "The whole of heaven and earth is only one self."

When it is cold, all heaven and earth are cold; when it is hot, all heaven and earth are hot. When there is, all heaven and earth are; when there is not, all heaven and earth are not. When it is right, all heaven and earth are right; when it is wrong, all heaven and earth are wrong. Fayan said, "You, you, you; I, I, I. North, south, east, and west are all acceptable. If they are not acceptable, there is only I; nothing is unacceptable." Thus it is said, "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored."

When Shitou was reading Sengzhao's Treatise and came to the words, "unite the myriad things as oneself," he suddenly attained great awakening. Later, when he composed the Cantongqi, its meaning did not go beyond this. Look at how Lu asked: what root do they share? What body do they share? At this point, it is indeed not without something extraordinary. How could it be like ordinary people, who do not know the height of heaven or the depth of earth—how could there be such a thing? Governor Lu asked in this way; it is certainly extraordinary, but it does not go beyond the meaning of the teachings. If the meaning of the teachings were the ultimate standard, why did the World-Honored One again hold up a flower? Why did the patriarchs come from the West?

In his response, Nanquan employed the vital point of a patch-robed monk: he exposed Lu's sore spot and shattered his nest. He then pointed to the flowers before the courtyard and called to the governor, saying, "People of the present see this single flower as though in a dream." It is like leading someone to the edge of a ten-thousand-fathom precipice, giving him a shove, and causing his life to end. If you push him down on level ground, even when Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, he still will not know how to end his life.

It is also like someone in a dream who is about to awaken but has not yet awakened, and is suddenly called awake by another. If Nanquan's eye had not been correct, he would certainly have been smeared over by Lu. Look at the way he speaks: it is indeed not easy to understand. When one whose eye is alive and responsive hears it, it is like the finest ghee. When one dead hears it, it turns instead into poison. An ancient said, "If you see it in phenomena, you fall into ordinary feelings."

If you calculate beneath the mind faculty, in the end you cannot grasp it. Yantou said, "This is the work of one who has gone beyond; it reveals only a little before one's eyes, like a flash of lightning." This is Nanquan's main intent. He has the skillful hands that capture tigers and rhinoceroses and subdue dragons and snakes. Yet when you reach this point, you must awaken for yourself. Is it not said, "The path beyond is not transmitted by a thousand sages; students wear out their bodies like monkeys grasping at reflections."

See how Xuedou expresses it in verse.

Hearing, seeing, awareness, and knowing are not separate things. [The dense array of the myriad forms contains not a single dharma. Shattered into seven pieces and eight fragments—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—all at once are a holeless iron hammer.]

Mountains and rivers are not viewed in a mirror. [Here, I have no such message. The tall are tall, the short are short; blue is blue, yellow is yellow. Where would you look?]

Frost fills the sky; the moon sets; the night is nearly half spent. [I have led you into the grass already. The whole realm has never been concealed. Beware of sitting in a ghost cave.]

Who, together with the clear pool, illuminates the cold reflection? [Is there? Is there? Unless you sleep in the same bed, how would you know that the quilt is worn through? Do not speak to a sorrowful person of sorrow; speak of it, and sorrow will kill him.]

Nanquan's words are the words of a light sleeper; Xuedou's words are those of a deep sleeper. Though they are dreaming, they have dreamed a good dream. Above, it spoke of one body; here, it speaks of difference.

"Hearing, seeing, awareness, and knowing are not separate things. Mountains and rivers are not viewed in a mirror." If you say that one sees them in a mirror and only then understands them, then you have not left the mirror. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, grasses, trees, and forests—do not use a mirror. If you use a mirror, they become two parts. It is only that mountains are

mountains and water is water; each dharma abides in its dharma position, and the appearances of the world constantly abide. Mountains and rivers are not viewed in a mirror—but tell me, where are they viewed? Do you understand?

At this point: “Frost fills the sky; the moon sets; the night is nearly half spent.” On this side, I have done all I can for you; on that side, you must make your own reckoning. Do you know that Xuedou used the fundamental matter to help people?

“Who, together with the clear pool, illuminates the cold reflection?” Does it illuminate itself, or does it illuminate together with another? One must cut off contrivance and understanding before reaching this realm. Right now, do not even want a clear pool, nor wait for frost filling the sky and the moon setting. What is it right now?

[Xiao Dong]: Teacher, do you remember that I specifically asked you about this phrase, “like a dream”?

Later I thought: since it says, “Heaven and earth have the same root as I,” why cling to “the myriad things” at all? Before Governor Lu asked his question, he had already established the mistaken view that “the myriad things truly exist,” which is why he found it “extraordinary.” When Nanquan said “like a dream,” he was resolving Lu’s mental knot. But this really is not a state, is it?

[lvm]: Who said it was a state?

[Old Man with the Great Hand]: If it is not an object, it is consciousness; if it is not consciousness, it is an object. Both consciousness and objects entrap people. How can one avoid being entrapped?

[lvm]: Extend a great hand to hold it up—how could one be entrapped?

[Xinming]: Like a dream.

Here, one cannot understand the phrase “like a dream” in isolation. One must understand it together with the situation in which Nanquan suddenly pointed at the flower.

Does the dream give rise to the flower? Or does the flower give rise to the dream?

Similar is similar; is is not.

[Xiao Dong]: Oh, I was referring to that particular line.

Teacher said that I was attached to a state … but how is this a state?

[lvm]: Ha ha! It is good if it is not a state—good if it is not.

[Xiao Dong]: Mm~~that is not what I meant either.

What teacher taught me was correct, because when contemplating, one really can have such a feeling. Even before seeing this koan, I had had this “dreamlike” feeling … of course, when I forget to maintain contemplation, it is gone.

At the time, I simply was not drawn to Sengzhao’s Treatise and could not really read my way into it, so I did not understand why Nanquan answered in this way …

[lvm]: A feeling—that is already a state.

At the time, I simply was not drawn to Sengzhao’s Treatise and could not really read my way into it, so I did not understand why Nanquan answered in this way …

* Chan Master Nanquan’s teaching in response to the occasion was originally spoken for people who are very drawn to Sengzhao’s Treatise.

[Xiao Dong]: Oh, no wonder you said that my attachment to a state meant that I was following along with the feeling of disliking Sengzhao’s Treatise.

But even if I ignore that feeling of not being drawn to it, I still, with regard to Sengzhao’s Treatise …

How shameful. I originally wanted to read it carefully. I have read it four or five times, but only once did I roughly finish it by skimming through it.

There are now three choices:

1. Ignore this “feeling,” do not let it carry me away, and finish reading Sengzhao’s Treatise.

2. Ignore these feelings and put aside Sengzhao’s Treatise;

3. Do whatever I should be doing: read it if I feel like reading it, and do not read it if I do not.

Which should I choose?

[lvm]: Choose none of the three. That is the most trouble-free.

[Xinming]: Let me also speak some dream-talk.

Governor Lu Geng was conversing with Nanquan.

Lu said, “Dharma Master Sengzhao said, ‘Heaven and earth have the same root as I; the myriad things are one body with me.’ This is most extraordinary.” [Working away in a ghost cave. Painted cakes cannot satisfy hunger. This too is deliberation amid the grass.]

Nanquan pointed to the flowers before the courtyard, [Saying it this way—bah! Sūtras have their sūtra masters, and treatises have their treatise masters; it is none of this mountain monk’s business. Bah! A true man should at that very moment have uttered a turning word—not only cutting off Nanquan, but also giving the patch-robed monks of the whole world a breath of relief.]

and called to the governor, saying, “People of the present see this single flower as though in a dream.” [Once the mandarin ducks are embroidered, you may look at them as you please; do not pass the golden needle on to others. Do not speak in your sleep! You have drawn the orioles down from the willow branches.]

Here I do not understand Chan Master Yuanwu’s comments. May I ask:

1. “[Bah! A true man should at that very moment have uttered a turning word—not only cutting off Nanquan, but also giving the patch-robed monks of the whole world a breath of relief.]” This clearly does not approve of Nanquan’s method. Is it good to utter a turning word? I do not agree.

If one approves of uttering a turning word, what should that “turning word” be?

2. “[Once the mandarin ducks are embroidered, you may look at them as you please; do not pass the golden needle on to others.]” Is the Chan master not precisely passing on the golden needle in secret here?

Very good—then why say, “Do not hand it over”?

lvm : People today see this single flower as though it were a dream.

1. Bah! If a true man had then uttered a turning word, he would not only have cut off Nanquan, but also given vent to the patch-robed monks of the whole world. This clearly refuses to accept Nanquan’s method. Is it good to utter a turning word? I disagree.

Ha ha! What is wrong with it? You disagree, but Nanquan agrees.

If one approves of uttering a turning word, how should this “turning word” be expressed?

“Sūtras have sūtra masters, and treatises have treatise masters; it is none of this mountain monk’s business.”

2. Once the mandarin ducks are embroidered, let others admire them; do not hand the golden needle to anyone. Is the Chan master here not precisely handing over the golden needle in secret?

Do not talk in your sleep!

Very good—then why say, “Do not hand it over”?

For example: “Very good! Good enough to die for!” One plainly has not died, so why say “died”?

Dingling : What does “hearing, seeing, awareness, and knowing are not each individually so” mean?

lvm Literally, it means: hearing is not simply hearing, seeing is not simply seeing, awareness is not simply awareness, and knowing is not simply knowing.

Mind-Monk Teacher, then may I ask what it means beyond the words?

lvm Ha ha! Then there is no meaning.

Dingling One final turn: What does the “iron hammer without a hole” symbolize?

lvm Is it not simply a lump of iron? There is no way to get one’s mouth on it, nor any way to lay hands on it.

Dingling Please saw it apart: shattered into seven pieces and eight fragments. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. All at once, it is an iron hammer without a hole.

lvm Hearing, seeing, awareness, and knowing are not each individually so.

“Shattered into seven pieces and eight fragments—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.” Break apart this “not each individually so,” and it becomes these shattered fragments: “eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.”

“All at once, it is an iron hammer without a hole.” The single phrase “hearing, seeing, awareness, and knowing are not each individually so” leaves one unable to open one’s mouth or lay hands on it.

[41] Touzi Does Not Permit Night Travel

[Case 41] Touzi Does Not Permit Traveling at Night

Volume Five of The Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

The pointer says: At the point where right and wrong become entangled, even sages cannot know; when favorable and adverse circumstances crisscross, even Buddhas cannot distinguish. It is for those who transcend the world and surpass their peers, and it reveals the ability of great bodhisattvas who stand above the crowd. They walk on ice ridges and run along sword blades. Directly and immediately, they are like the horns on a qilin’s head, like lotuses in fire. Only then does one clearly see what lies beyond all conventions and recognize one’s fellow travelers on the Way. Who is a skillful hand? Let us raise the case and see.

[Case 41] The Case:

Zhaozhou asked Touzi, “How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life?” [Is there really such a thing? A thief does not rob a poor man’s house. Only one who has often been a guest can sympathize with guests.]

Touzi said, “Traveling at night is not permitted; you must arrive at dawn.” [One watches a tower by striking a tower; a thief recognizes a thief. Unless they have slept in the same bed, how could they know what lies beneath the quilt?]

Zhaozhou asked Touzi, “How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life?” Touzi replied, “Traveling at night is not permitted; you must arrive at dawn.” Tell me, what time is this? A holeless flute has struck a felt clapper! This is called a question that tests the host; it is also called a question concerning the activity of mind. Touzi and Zhaozhou were praised everywhere for possessing a distinction beyond the crowd in debate. Though the two elders inherited different lineages, look at the sharpness of their responses: they were suited to the same boat.

One day, Touzi set out a tea feast to receive Zhaozhou and personally handed him a steamed cake. Zhaozhou paid no attention to it. Touzi then had an attendant hand a hu cake to Zhaozhou, and Zhaozhou bowed three times to the attendant. Tell me, what was his meaning? Look how, in every case, they raised this fundamental matter from the very root in order to guide people. A monk asked, “What is the Way?” He answered, “The Way.” “What is Buddha?” He answered, “Buddha.”

He further asked, “How is it before the golden lock is opened?” He answered, “Open.” “How is it before the golden cock crows?” He answered, “There is no such sound.” “And after it crows?” He answered, “Each knows the time for himself.” Touzi’s questions and answers throughout his life were always like this. Look at Zhaozhou’s question: “How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life?” Touzi immediately said, “Traveling at night is not permitted; you must arrive at dawn.” Directly and immediately, it is like the spark struck from flint, like a flash of lightning. Only one who is above and beyond can accomplish this.

A person who has died the great death has no Buddha-Dharma, principles, mysteries, gain or loss, right or wrong, long or short. Upon reaching this point, one simply rests thus. The ancients said, “There are countless dead people on level ground; one who passes through the thicket of thorns is a skillful hand.” One must also penetrate beyond that side. Even so, it is already difficult for people today to reach such a state. If they have anything to rely on or any understanding to cling to, it is irrelevant.

Chan Master Zhe called this “the view not being clean and pure.” Our late master Wuzu called it “the life-root not being cut off.” One must die the great death once and then come back to life. Chan Master Yongguang of Zhejiang said: “If the edge of one’s words goes even slightly astray, one is ten thousand miles from home. One must let go at the edge of a cliff, willingly take responsibility, revive after all supports have been cut off, and be unable to deceive the sovereign. Who can conceal such an extraordinary purport?” This was the intent of Zhaozhou’s question.

Touzi was a true master and did not fail the question he had been asked. He simply cut off feelings and traces. It is indeed not easy to comprehend, yet he revealed only a little before one’s eyes. Therefore the ancients said, “If you wish to attain intimacy, do not bring questions to ask. The question lies in the answer, and the answer lies in the question.” Had it not been Touzi, Zhaozhou’s question would have been very difficult to answer. But because he was a true master, he knew where it landed the moment it was raised. The verse says:

Though alive and endowed with eyes, he is still like the dead. [The two do not recognize each other, turning this way and that. If he were not so reserved, how could one distinguish this monk’s black from white?]

Why test a master with what medicine forbids? [If it has not been tested, how can one determine it precisely? When one encounters it, why not test it? One must also inquire into it.]

Even the ancient Buddhas said they had not yet reached it. [Fortunately, he has companions. Even a thousand sages do not transmit it. This mountain monk does not know it either.]

Who knows how to scatter dust and sand? [Even now, there is no shortage of it. With open eyes, one is caught; with closed eyes, one is caught. Venerable, when you raise it in this way, where do you fall?]

“Though alive and endowed with eyes, he is still like the dead.” Xuedou was one who knew what was at stake, and therefore he dared to compose this verse. The ancients said, “He studies living phrases, not dead phrases.” Xuedou says that one alive and endowed with eyes is still like a dead man. How could he ever have died? The dead, endowed with eyes, are like living people. The ancients said, “Only after all dead people have been killed does one see a living person; only after all living people have been brought to life does one see a dead person.”

Zhaozhou was a living person, so he deliberately posed a dead question in order to test Touzi. It is like taking an object contraindicated by a medicine in order to test it. Therefore Xuedou says, “Why test a master with what medicine forbids?” This verse praises the point of Zhaozhou’s question.

The latter part praises Touzi: “Even the ancient Buddhas said they had not yet reached it.” At precisely the point where one who has died the great death comes back to life, even the ancient Buddhas have never arrived, nor have all the old monks under heaven. Even Śākyamuni, the old fellow, and the blue-eyed barbarian monk must investigate anew before they can attain it. Thus it is said, “Only the old barbarian is allowed to know it; the old barbarian is not allowed to understand it.”

Xuedou says, “Who knows how to scatter dust and sand?” Have you not seen the monk who asked Changqing, “What is the eye of a good spiritual friend?” Changqing said, “One who has vows does not scatter sand.” Baofu said, “One must not scatter any more.” Old monks everywhere sit upon crooked wooden beds, wielding sticks and shouting, raising whisk and striking the seat, displaying spiritual powers and acting as masters and rulers—all of this is scattering sand. Tell me, how can one avoid it?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, you are scattering sand again.

[Lvm]: Steamed cakes and hu cakes.

[Wt]: Teacher, what does each of the steamed cake and hu cake symbolize here?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: The eye of the good spiritual friend has been obscured.

[Lvm]: Wt, why not ask [Yongshou Tongzi]?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Yongshou Tong does not know how to pinch his eyes shut.

[Lvm]: But he knows how to pinch dough into cakes.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Teacher, see how well he pinches them.

“Yunmen’s Cake” is the name of a Chan koan, also known as “Yunmen’s Hu Cake” or “Shaoyang’s Cake.” It concerns an encounter between Chan Master Yunmen Wenyan, founder of the Yunmen school, and a certain monk, concerning the question, “What is discourse that transcends Buddha and patriarchs?”

Case 77 of The Blue Cliff Record (Taishō 48, p. 204b) states: “A monk asked Yunmen, ‘What is discourse that transcends Buddha and patriarchs?’ Yunmen said, ‘A cake.’” Yunmen answered questions about the Buddha’s intent, the patriarchs’ intent, and what transcends Buddha and patriarchs with “a cake” (a cake made from sesame), allowing absolutely no room for conceptual discrimination. This shows that discourse transcending Buddha and patriarchs has no other meaning apart from putting on clothes, eating meals, defecating, and urinating. Thus, even talk of transcending Buddha and patriarchs is no more than eating a cake and being done with it.

[Lvm]: Ha ha! Where does that “steamed cake” come from?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Let me eat it. Heh heh.

[Hero]: How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life? — It is also a walking corpse!

[Hero]: — Do not say it is a soul returning to a borrowed corpse!

[lvm]: Is there really such a thing? A thief does not rob a poor man’s house.

[Hero]: What can one do if the thief has no eyes?

[lvm]: Ha ha! Your bearing is indeed different from before.

[Hero]: Do not shout! The thief cries, “Catch the thief!”

[Lvm]: Stop when it is time to stop. Do not let horse’s hooves show again beneath the qilin’s hide.

[Mind Monk] (replying to [lvm]: “Ha ha! Your bearing is indeed different from before.”): Teacher, do not put shackles on people’s feet!

[lvm]: You too are different from before.

[Mind Ming]: Ha ha, this old fellow’s heels do not touch the ground!

[lvm]: Even more different than before.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Why is Zhaozhou such a picky eater? He would not take the steamed cake, yet he bowed to the hu cake.

[lvm]: Leave the steamed cake for [Yongshou Tongzi].

[Mind Monk]: For whom should the hu cake be kept?

[Lvm]: Look upstairs.

[Sudhana]: Heh heh, rather than say he was picky about food, it would be better to say he was picky about people.

The attendant handed the hu cake to Zhaozhou. Zhaozhou took the host’s place in receiving the guest—the attendant—and naturally could not omit the courtesies between host and guest. Therefore, he bowed three times to the attendant and accepted it.

As for why Zhaozhou did not accept the steamed cake handed to him by Touzi, everyone may investigate that as well; it is quite enjoyable.

[Little Ant]: Does this “paid no attention” mean “did not accept”? I see them as the left hand facing the right hand; there was no one toward whom they needed to be polite.

[Sudhana]: Heh heh, I do not know what kind of courtesy it is for the left hand to shake the right hand.

[Little Ant]: The two hands harbor no suspicions; no courtesy is lacking.

[Sudhana]: A health tip: wash your hands before meals and rinse your mouth afterward.

[Little Ant]: I have received your instruction!

[Mind Ming] (replying to [Sudhana]: “Why did Zhaozhou not accept the steamed cake handed to him by Touzi?”): A good reminder. Zhaozhou’s refusal to accept it was perhaps a strategy of turning the guest back against the host.

[Sudhana]: Let us set aside turning guest into host for now; instead, let us see how Zhaozhou turned the host back into a guest.

Zhaozhou asked Touzi, “How is it when one who has died the great death comes back to life?” … This is called a question that tests the host; it is also called a question concerning the activity of mind. …

When Zhaozhou encountered Touzi, there was no harm in getting his hands and feet muddy and asking a huatou that tested the host.

[Six Dusts]: Teacher, my Classical Chinese is terribly weak. Is there a modern-language version? Or how can I improve my Classical Chinese?

[Lvm]: I am afraid it is not simply a matter of one’s “Classical Chinese proficiency.”

I have seen someone’s translation of it, but it had become utterly unrecognizable: it had lost the substance entirely and was wholly without meaning.

[Forty-Two] Layman Pang Enjoys the Snowflakes Drifting Down

[42] Layman Pang: “Fine Snowflakes”

Pointer: Singly raising and independently wielding it is like dragging through water and mud; striking and singing proceed together, like silver mountains and iron walls. If you deliberate, you see ghosts before a skull; if you ponder, you sit beneath a dark mountain. The bright sun shines clearly in the sky, and the crisp breeze sweeps across the earth. But tell me: did the ancients still have any confusion or error? Let us examine it.

[42] The Case:

Layman Pang took leave of Yaoshan. [This old fellow is up to something strange.]

Yaoshan instructed ten Chan practitioners to see him off. When they reached the gate, [He did not slight him either. What sort of state is this? One must be a patch-robed monk who recognizes the signs.]

the layman pointed to the snow in the air and said, “Fine snowflakes—falling nowhere else.” [Making waves where there is no wind. His pointing finger has eyes. There is an echo in this old fellow’s words.]

At that time, Chan practitioner Quan said, “Where do they fall?” [Right in the middle! He has come along with him. Sure enough, he has taken the bait.]

The layman gave him a slap. [There! Sure enough, he lures in thieves and ruins households.]

Quan said, “Layman, you must not be so careless.” [Staring wide-eyed from inside a coffin.]

The layman said, “If you are like this and call yourself a Chan practitioner, Old Yama will not yet let you off.” [A second ladle of foul water has been thrown over him. It is not only Old Yama; this mountain monk would not let him off either.]

Quan said, “What about you, Layman?” [His carelessness remains unchanged. Again he wants a beating. From beginning to end, this monk never hits the mark.]

The layman gave him another slap. [Just so! Frost added to snow. Having been struck, he now makes a display of it.]

He said, “Though your eyes see, you are as blind; though your mouth speaks, you are as mute.” [There is also a decisive, settling phrase. Again he reads out the verdict for him.]

Xuedou spoke in his stead: “At the first question, simply grasp a snowball and strike him.” [That is so, but it is like drawing a bow after the thief has gone; it also reveals quite a bit. Even so, if one wishes to see the arrowpoints meet, alas, one has fallen into a ghost cave.]

Layman Pang visited Mazu and Shitou, and composed verses at both places. When he first met Shitou, he immediately asked, “One who does not take the myriad dharmas as companions—what kind of person is that?” Before his voice had ceased, Shitou covered his mouth. Thereupon he had an awakening. He composed this verse: “There is nothing special in everyday affairs; I alone naturally accord with them. In every thing there is neither grasping nor rejecting; everywhere there is no contrived opposition. Who is designated by vermilion or purple? Green mountains are utterly free of dust. Spiritual powers and wondrous functioning: carrying water and hauling firewood.”

Later, when he visited Mazu, he again asked, “One who does not take the myriad dharmas as companions—what kind of person is that?” Mazu said, “When you swallow all the water of the West River in one gulp, I will tell you.” The layman was suddenly greatly awakened. He composed this verse: “The ten directions gather in one assembly; each person learns non-contrivance. This is the examination ground for selecting Buddhas; with mind empty, one returns having passed.”

Because he was a master of the house, later monasteries stood facing one another in succession, and wherever he went people vied in praising him. Having stayed at Yaoshan for a long time, he then took leave of Yaoshan. Yaoshan held him in the highest regard and instructed ten Chan practitioners to see him off. It happened to be snowing. The layman pointed to the snow and said, “Fine snowflakes—falling nowhere else.” Chan practitioner Quan said, “Where do they fall?” The layman immediately slapped him. Since Chan practitioner Quan could not carry out the command, the layman carried it out only halfway.

Although the command was carried out, Quan’s reply did not mean that he did not know where the snow fell. Each had his own sharp device; their unfolding and withdrawing differed. Yet he did not reach the layman’s level, and so fell beneath his rack, unable to escape his snare.

After slapping him, the layman further explained the principle to him, saying, “Though your eyes see, you are as blind; though your mouth speaks, you are as mute.” Xuedou spoke in place of the earlier words: “At the first question, simply grasp a snowball and strike him.” In saying this, Xuedou meant not to betray the force of Quan’s question, but his response was simply too late. Head Monk Qing said, “The layman’s device was like lightning. By the time you have grasped a snowball, how long will it take? You must respond to his sound with a sound and strike in response to his sound; only then is it cut off completely.” Xuedou himself composed this verse on the blow:

Strike with a snowball, strike with a snowball—[Yet it falls into the secondary device. There is no need to bring it up. Vastly white overhead, vastly white beneath one’s feet.]

Old Pang’s device cannot be grasped. [People often do not understand. I fear it is not like this.]

In heaven and among humans, none knows it; [What news is this? Does Xuedou himself know?]

Within the eyes and ears, utterly free and easy. [Arrowpoints meet. Though your eyes see, you are as blind; though your mouth speaks, you are as mute.]

Utterly free and easy—[How is this? Where does one see Old Pang and Xuedou?]

Even the blue-eyed barbarian monk finds it hard to distinguish. [If Bodhidharma came forth, what would he tell you? A strike! "Venerable, what are you saying?" Bury them all in one pit!]

"Strike with a snowball, strike with a snowball—Old Pang's device cannot be grasped." Xuedou wished to operate over the layman's head. The ancients used snow to illuminate the matter of a single color. Xuedou's meaning was: "If, at that time, one had grasped a snowball and struck him, then however skillful the layman's device, it would have been difficult for him to set anything up." Xuedou boasts of his blow, not realizing that there is a point at which he falls short.

"In heaven and among humans, none knows it; within the eyes and ears, utterly free and easy." In the eyes there is snow; in the ears there is snow. One is precisely abiding on the side of a single color. This is also called the realm of Samantabhadra, the matter on the side of a single color, and becoming continuous and undivided. Yunmen said, "Even if the entire universe and great earth are without the slightest fault, this is still a turning phrase." Not seeing a single color is only half a raising.

If one wants the full raising, one must know that there is an upward path. Here, great functioning must appear directly: even a needle cannot pierce it, and one does not heed others' arrangements. Therefore it is said: "He investigates living phrases, not dead phrases." An ancient said, "A single fitting phrase becomes a tethering stake for a donkey through ten thousand eons." What use is that?

Having exhausted his verse here, Xuedou turns the device again and says, "This very utter freedom and ease—even the blue-eyed barbarian monk finds it hard to distinguish." If even the blue-eyed barbarian monk finds it hard to distinguish, what is there for this mountain monk to say?!

[A]: Old Pang walks with steady steps; with every step, his feet do not fall anywhere else.

[Shancai]: Elder brother, you do have a device for trapping tigers.

[A]: Lord Cai wishes to trap me too.

[Lvm]: Ha ha! To recognize it is not to be wronged.

[A]: Ha ha. Amitābha Buddha. This junior student joins his palms in respect!

[Shancai]: Splendid!

[Xinming]: Is it better to strike with a snowball, or to turn one's head and leave at once?

Xuedou boasts of his blow, not realizing that there is a point at which he falls short.

Where does he fall short?

[Lvm]: Neither is good.

Head Monk Qing said, "The layman's device was like lightning. By the time you have grasped a snowball, how long will it take? You must respond to his sound with a sound and strike in response to his sound; only then is it cut off completely."

[Xinming]: Why?

The first one—drawing a bow after the thief has gone—is no good. Why is the second one no good?

If you had been there at the time, how would you have responded? Covered his mouth? Or pushed him down into the snow?

[Lvm]: Ha ha! This "why?" is even less good.

The first one—drawing a bow after the thief has gone—is no good. Why is the second one no good?

*If the first is drawing a bow after the thief has gone, then the second is not drawing a bow even when the thief has arrived.

If you had been there at the time, how would you have responded?

*He was asking to be struck. Would it do not to strike him?

Covered his mouth?

*That would do.

Or pushed him down into the snow?

*That would do too.

[Xin Seng]: May I ask, Teacher:

Are “There is nothing special in everyday affairs; I alone naturally accord with them. In every thing there is neither grasping nor rejecting; everywhere there is no contrived opposition. Who is designated by vermilion or purple? Green mountains are utterly free of dust. Spiritual powers and wondrous functioning: carrying water and hauling firewood” and “The ten directions gather in one assembly; each person learns non-contrivance. This is the examination ground for selecting Buddhas; with mind empty, one returns having passed” the same or different?

[lvm]: What is the same is itself the same; what is different is itself different.

[Xin Seng]: Bury them all in one pit!

[Yongshou Tongzi]: This metaphor is interesting. Teacher, what does “staring wide-eyed from inside a coffin” mean?

[lvm]: A dead person still putting on the appearance of a living one.

Quan said, “Layman, you must not be so careless.” [Staring wide-eyed from inside a coffin.]

[Dingling]: Teacher, why did Yunmen say, “Even if the entire universe and great earth are without the slightest fault, this is still a turning phrase”?

[lvm]: Look here:

...One is precisely abiding on the side of a single color. This is also called the realm of Samantabhadra, the matter on the side of a single color, and becoming continuous and undivided. Yunmen said, “Even if the entire universe and great earth are without the slightest fault, this is still a turning phrase.” Not seeing a single color is only half a raising.

[Dingling]: Oh, so a turning phrase is language used to guide people,

and even if the entire universe and great earth are without the slightest fault, one still abides in the matter on the side of a single color.

Then what do half a raising and full raising refer to?

[Emei Qingfeng]: What is full raising?

[lvm]: Yunmen is capable of full raising:

Yunmen said, “Even if the entire universe and great earth are without the slightest fault, this is still a turning phrase.”

[Emei Qingfeng]: I do not understand. How has it turned back around again?

[lvm]: Yunmen does not approve of the “turning phrase”—is that not full raising?

[Xinming]: Not raising it is itself full raising.

[lvm]: ^o^

[Emei Qingfeng]: View without a view.

It also means: Bodhi is originally intrinsic nature; the moment the mind stirs, it is delusion.

Is this the same as, or different from, the Dharma of intrinsic nature? Patriarch Bodhidharma said that intrinsic nature is subtle and difficult to see, whereas this Dharma is not difficult to see but difficult to practice. The Śrīmālā Sūtra says that there are three causes of the Mahāyāna path. The first is attaining profound wisdom: does this mean seeing the intrinsic-nature tathāgatagarbha? The second is attaining conforming wisdom: does this mean “not raising it is itself full raising,” namely, “wherever there is abiding, it is all non-abiding,” or “when not a single thought arises, the whole is revealed”?

I would like to ask Teacher LVM: How can one distinguish whether what one has seen is the Tathāgatagarbha or ālaya consciousness?

lvm : The technical terms of Buddhism are as vast as an ocean!

First tell me what you are seeing now; then we can distinguish them.

Emei Qingfeng : It was something I saw before.

It was what I mentioned last time: suddenly, a mind-nature revealed itself, coexisting with the consciousness-mind. This mind-nature was subtle, unchanging, and utterly bare. I vaguely realized that awareness of external objects arose from this mind's thoughts, while external objects had no effect on it whatsoever.

lvm : What about now?

Emei Qingfeng : I no longer see it now.

Because I did not know how to sustain mindful awareness of it, it disappeared. I rather believed it to be my intrinsic nature, but yesterday I read a post on this forum describing ālaya consciousness, and I no longer feel so sure. So I want to ask for clarification; otherwise, if I encounter it again in the future, I will not know whether I should safeguard it.

lvm : Does this not arise and cease?

Emei Qingfeng : What if one continues to sustain mindful awareness of it?

If one continues to sustain mindful awareness of it, its function gradually matures, and the attachments of mind, consciousness, and thought gradually fade. Then one can see this mind at all times. It has no appearance of arising or ceasing. Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing remain equally clear and do not affect it in the least; they affect only mind, consciousness, and thought. Ordinarily, it is merely obscured by mind, consciousness, and thought. The Śrīmālā Sūtra says: “The Tathāgatagarbha is profoundly difficult to know. Apart from mind, consciousness, and thought, there is no gradual method by which it can be seen.”

lvm : What is the use of sustaining mindful awareness of something that arises and ceases?

Emei Qingfeng : Then what is unborn and unceasing?

If you mean, “Give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere; when not a single thought arises, the whole is revealed,” that is a method that mind, consciousness, and thought can comprehend. The Buddha would not have needed to go to such great lengths and teach so many sūtras.

lvm : Oh! I do not blame you; I blame myself.

I should not have deprived you of what you cherish.

[43] Dongshan's Place Without Cold or Heat

[Case 43] Dongshan’s Place Without Cold or Heat

Pointer: A phrase that settles heaven and earth is honored by all ages; a device for seizing tigers and rhinoceroses cannot be discerned even by a thousand sages. Directly, there is not the slightest obstruction; the whole mechanism manifests equally everywhere. To understand the hammer and tongs of the higher matter, one must be a master of the forge and bellows. But tell me, has there ever been such a family style among the ancestors? Let us examine it.

[Case 43] The Case:

A monk asked Dongshan, “When cold and heat arrive, how can one avoid them?” [It is not this season. It strikes you squarely in the face. Where is it?]

Dongshan said, “Why not go to the place without cold or heat?” [No one in the world can find it. Hiding his body while exposing his shadow. Xiao He sold off the false Silver City.]

The monk said, “What is the place without cold or heat?” [He has deceived a whole boatload of people. Going along with him and turning with him. One cast of the hook, and he is caught.]

Dongshan said, “When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya.” [The genuine does not conceal the false, and the crooked does not conceal the straight. Watching tigers and rhinoceroses from a cliff’s edge—what a special worry! He overturns the great ocean and kicks down Mount Sumeru; but tell me, where is Dongshan?]

Master Huanglong Xin commented: “Dongshan struck at the collar from his sleeve and gouged at the lapel from under his arm, yet this monk would not yield. Now suppose someone came forth and asked Huanglong: tell me, how would I deal with him?” After a long pause, he said, “To sit peacefully in meditation, one need not be amid mountains and waters; extinguish the fire in the mind, and one is naturally cool.”

All of you, tell me: where did Dongshan’s encircling lines fall? Only if you can discern this clearly will you know how the five ranks of reciprocal interaction between the upright and the biased in Dongshan’s school receive people—truly extraordinary. Only upon reaching this higher realm can one act in this way: no arrangement is needed; it is naturally just right. Therefore it is said:

Within the Upright, the Biased: before the moon shines in the first watch of midnight. Do not be surprised that, meeting, they do not recognize one another; dimly, there remains the old resentment.

Within the Biased, the Upright: a lost old woman encounters an ancient mirror at dawn. Clearly face-to-face, there is no reality there; do not lose your head and then mistake the reflection for yourself.

From Within the Upright: within emptiness there is a road that leaves the dust of the world. If only one does not violate the present taboo, this surpasses the eloquence that broke tongues in former dynasties.

Arriving Within the Biased: when two blades cross, there is no need to evade them. A skilled hand is like a lotus in fire; plainly, it possesses a soaring energy of its own.

Arriving Within Both: falling neither into being nor nonbeing, who would dare harmonize with it? Everyone wishes to rise above the common stream, yet when tested, they return to sit amid coals.

Master Yuanlu of Fushan took this koan as the pattern for the five ranks. If one understands a single case, the rest will naturally be easy to understand. Yantou said, "It is like a gourd floating on water: press it, and it turns; it does not take the slightest effort." Once a monk asked Dongshan, "What is it like when Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra come to pay respects?" Dongshan said, "Drive them into the herd of water buffaloes." The monk said, "Reverend, you will enter hell as swiftly as an arrow." Dongshan said, "That is entirely through his power."

Dongshan's saying, "Why not go to the place without cold or heat?" is the Biased within the Upright. The monk asked, "What is the place without cold or heat?" Dongshan said, "When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya." This is the Upright within the Biased. Though upright, it is biased; though biased, it is complete. The records of the Caodong school set this forth in detail. In the Linji school there is not so much business; one understands such a koan directly.

Some say, "Excellent—the place without cold or heat!" What handle is there to grasp? An ancient said, "To walk upon a sword blade is swift; to see through emotional consciousness is slow." Have you not seen the monk who asked Cuiwei, "What is the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West?" Cuiwei said, "When no one is here, I will tell you." Then he walked into the garden. The monk said, "There is no one here now; please tell me, Reverend." Cuiwei pointed to the bamboo and said, "This stalk of bamboo is so long; that stalk of bamboo is so short." The monk suddenly had a great awakening.

Again, Caoshan asked a monk, "It is so hot—where do you avoid it?" The monk said, "I avoid it amid the boiling cauldron and blazing furnace." Caoshan said, "How do you avoid it amid the boiling cauldron and blazing furnace?" The monk said, "The multitude of sufferings cannot reach there." Look at people of his own household: naturally, they understand their own household's speech. Xuedou used an incident from their own household in his verse:

Extending a hand is still like a cliff ten thousand fathoms high, [If one is not a master, who can discern it? Where is there no perfect interpenetration? Once the king's edict is issued, the feudal lords clear the way.]

Why must upright and biased depend on arrangement? [If it were arranged, how could there be today? How can one avoid clinging to either side? Wind blows and grass bends; water arrives and channels form.]

The bright moon shines upon an ancient crystal palace, [Perfectly round and complete. Beware of mistaking the reflection. Do not take it head-on.]

Yet the hound Hanlu, unable to restrain itself, vainly leaps the steps. [Not this time. It has missed it. Why chase the clod? Striking, he says: You and this monk studied together.]

In the Caodong school, there is entering the world and not entering the world, extending a hand and not extending a hand. If one does not enter the world, one gazes at the clouds in the sky; if one enters the world, one becomes dusty-headed and dirt-faced. Gazing at the clouds is the summit of the ten-thousand-fathom peak; being dusty-headed and dirt-faced is the matter of extending a hand. At times, being dusty-headed and dirt-faced is precisely on the ten-thousand-fathom peak; at times, the ten-thousand-fathom peak is precisely being dusty-headed and dirt-faced. In truth, entering the marketplace and extending a hand is no different from standing alone on a solitary peak. Returning to the source and realizing one's nature is no different from differentiated wisdom. Do not, under any circumstances, understand them as two separate pieces. Therefore it is said, "Extending a hand is still like a cliff ten thousand fathoms high": there is simply no place for you to approach it.

"Why must upright and biased depend on arrangement?" When the time comes to use it, it is naturally so; it does not depend on arrangement. This verse praises Dongshan's reply.

The latter lines say, "The bright moon shines upon an ancient crystal palace, yet the hound Hanlu, unable to restrain itself, vainly leaps the steps." This precisely praises the monk for chasing words. The Dongshan school has such things as the stone woman, wooden horse, bottomless basket, luminous pearl, dead snake, and eighteen other kinds; in general, they merely clarify the upright position. It is like the moon shining upon an ancient crystal palace, seeming to produce a round reflection.

When Dongshan replied, "Why not go to the place without cold or heat?" the monk was just like Hanlu chasing a clod: he hurried up the steps to seize the moon's reflection and asked again, "What is the place without cold or heat?" Dongshan said, "When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya." Like Hanlu chasing the clod up the steps, he then no longer saw the moon's reflection. Hanlu appears in the Strategies of the Warring States: the dog of Han was a swift hound, while the rabbit of Zhongshan was a cunning rabbit. Only such a hound could track such a rabbit. Xuedou cites this as a metaphor for the monk.

But tell me, do you recognize where Dongshan's way of dealing with people lies?

After a long pause, he said: "Why go looking for rabbits?"

[Great Hero]: Tell me, where is Dongshan?—Where cold and heat do not reach.

[A]: If you wish to know Dongshan's way of dealing with people, ask the old tree before the gate and you will know.

[zxb]: Dongshan plays with his graceful reflection beneath the moon; he slays a hundred thousand enemies, yet not one exists.

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: I have a question and would ask Teacher Qi and all fellow practitioners for instruction.

What does "When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya" mean? Let us not discuss Chan or recite verses for now. Please explain it in terms of doctrine—how would each of you put it?

[lvm]: Set aside the "place without cold or heat" for the moment. First, please tell us, Lay Practitioner, whether there is an "Ācārya."

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: I have not concealed it.

[lvm]: Haha! Then I have concealed it.

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: How would you speak without following the wording of my question?

[lvm]: Half a sentence too many.

[Mind Monk] (replying to [Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: "What does 'When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya' mean? Let us not discuss Chan or recite verses for now. Please explain it in terms of doctrine—how would each of you put it?"): "After you have avoided cold and heat, Lay Practitioner, this little monk will discuss doctrine with you at length!"

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: This brother certainly knows how to discuss doctrine at length!

[Mind Monk]: Haha, do not slander me.

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: Then tell me: how do you avoid cold and heat?

[Mind Monk]: This little monk is returning to the abbot's quarters!

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: This monk hastily brings the scene to a close! You have missed it!

[Youth Yongshou]: This is iced hot coffee that Mind Monk is inviting you to drink.

[Mind Monk]: Haha, but senior brother has drunk it instead.

[Mind Monk]: May I ask the teacher:

Dongshan's saying, "Why not go to the place without cold or heat?" is the Biased within the Upright.

The monk asked, "What is the place without cold or heat?" Dongshan said, "When it is cold, the cold kills you, Ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills you, Ācārya." This is the Upright within the Biased.

Though upright, it is biased; though biased, it is complete. The records of the Caodong school set this forth in detail. In the Linji school there is not so much business; one understands such a koan directly.

Given the above explanation, what is the difference between Dongshan and Linji?

[lvm]: Katsu!

This shout—

Is it like the vajra king's jeweled sword?

Is it like the golden-haired lion crouching on the ground?

Is it like a probing pole or a shadowing blade of grass?

Or does it not function as a shout at all?

[Mind Monk]: Haha, indeed they are different!

[lvm]: There is also a point at which they are alike:

The vajra king's jeweled sword—Biased within the Upright.

The golden-haired lion crouching on the ground—Upright within the Biased.

The probing pole and shadowing blade of grass—From Within the Upright.

A shout not functioning as a shout—Arriving Within the Biased.

And how is "Arriving Within Both" to be dealt with?

[Mind Monk]: Katsu! Teacher deserves thirty blows!!!

[lvm]: Do not be rash!

[Mind Monk]: Haha, indeed, I cannot hide it from Teacher:

Then let us brew tea and talk together!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Youth Yongshou]: The summer heat is intense; Teacher and senior brothers, take care to prevent heatstroke.

[lvm]: Arriving Within Both.

[Youth Yongshou]: Katsu!

It does not mean drinking water; it means giving a great shout. ^_^

lvm : See above: <URL> (Is it like the vajra king's precious sword? Like a golden-haired lion crouching on the ground? Like a probing pole and a shadowing blade of grass? Or does it not function as a shout at all?)

Dingling : Katsu!

It means inviting the teacher to have tea.

lvm : ^o^

[Forty-Four] Heshan's Four Answers: "Beating the Drum"

[44] Heshan's Four Answers: "Can Beat the Drum"

[44] Raised:

Heshan gave this saying: "Learning through study is called hearing; freedom from learning is called nearness." [No patch-robed monk under heaven can escape this. An iron hammer without a hole. An iron stake.]

"To go beyond these two is called true transcendence." [An eye is set atop the crown of the head. What are you doing?]

A monk came forward and asked, "What is true transcendence?" [What does he say! One stroke crosses it out. There is another iron stake.]

Heshan said, "Can beat the drum." [Iron stake! Iron caltrop! Solid, solid.]

He further asked, "What is ultimate truth?" [What does he say! A double koan. There is another iron stake.]

Heshan said, "Can beat the drum." [Iron stake! Iron caltrop! Solid, solid.]

He further asked, "I will not ask about 'mind itself is Buddha'; what is 'neither mind nor Buddha'?" [What does he say! What a heap of rubbish. The three sections differ. Another iron caltrop.]

Heshan said, "Can beat the drum." [Iron stake! Iron caltrop! Solid, solid.]

He further asked, "When one who has gone beyond comes, how do you receive him?" [What does he say! He has encountered his fourth ladle of foul water. There is another iron stake.]

Heshan said, "Can beat the drum." [Iron stake! Iron caltrop! Solid, solid. Tell me, where does it fall? In the morning he arrives in the Western Heaven; by evening he returns to the Eastern Land.]

Heshan gave this instruction: "Learning through study is called hearing; freedom from learning is called nearness. To go beyond these two is called true transcendence." This saying comes from the Treatise on the Treasury. Learning that reaches no-more-learning is called freedom from learning. Thus it is said: shallow hearing with deep awakening, or deep hearing without

awakening, is called freedom from learning. Master Yongjia, Enlightened in One Night, said: “In my early years, I accumulated learning and inquiry; I also sought commentaries and studied sūtras and treatises.” When learning through study is exhausted, this is called “a carefree person of the Way, beyond learning and contrivance.” Only upon reaching freedom from learning does one begin to draw near to the Way. To go straight beyond these two kinds of learning is called true transcendence.

That monk was indeed quick and perceptive, and so he took up this saying to ask Heshan about it. Heshan said, “Can beat the drum.” This is what is meant by words without flavor, sayings without flavor. To clarify this koan, one must be a person who has gone beyond. Only then can one see that these words do not involve principle or nature and leave no room for discursive discussion. One immediately understands, as though the bottom of a bucket had dropped out. This is the secure resting place of a patch-robed monk; only then does one accord with the Patriarch’s intention in coming from the West.

Thus Yunmen said: “Xuefeng rolling balls, Heshan beating the drum, the National Teacher’s water bowl, and Zhaozhou’s ‘Have some tea’—all are presentations for those who have gone beyond.” The monk further asked, “What is ultimate truth?” Heshan said, “Can beat the drum.” Ultimate truth does not establish a single dharma. In conventional truth, all things are fully present. The ultimate and the conventional are nondual; this is the supreme meaning of the noble truth.

He further asked, “I will not ask about ‘mind itself is Buddha’; what is ‘neither mind nor Buddha’?” Heshan said, “Can beat the drum.” “Mind itself is Buddha” is readily sought; but “neither mind nor Buddha” is difficult to reach, and few arrive there. He further asked, “When one who has gone beyond comes, how do you receive him?” Heshan said, “Can beat the drum.” One who has gone beyond is one who has thoroughly penetrated and is free and untrammeled. These four sayings are regarded in various places as an essential teaching, and are called “Heshan’s Four Drum-Beatings.”

For example, a monk asked Jingqing, “At the beginning of a new year, is there still Buddhadharma or not?” Jingqing said, “There is.” The monk said, “What is the Buddhadharma at the beginning of a new year?” Jingqing said, “At the beginning of the year, the new era opens, and all things are renewed.” The monk said, “Thank you, Master, for your reply.” Jingqing said, “This old monk has suffered a loss today.” In replies such as this, there are eighteen kinds of loss.

Another monk asked Master Jingguo, “What is it like when a crane stands on a solitary pine?” Jingguo said, “A moluo beneath your feet.” He further asked, “What is it like when snow covers a thousand mountains?” Jingguo said, “After the sun rises, a moluo.” He further asked, “During Emperor Wuzong’s persecution, where did the Dharma-protecting deities go?” Jingguo said, “Two men outside the monastery gate—a moluo.” Various places call these the “Three Moluo.”

Baofu further asked a monk, “What Buddha is in the hall?” The monk said, “The Master should look and determine it.” Baofu said, “Old Śākyamuni.” The monk said, “Please do not deceive people.” Baofu said, “Rather, you are deceiving me.” He further asked the monk, “What is your name?” The monk said, “Xianze.”

Baofu said, “What if you encounter drought?” The monk said, “Who is the one in drought?” Baofu said, “I am.” The monk said, “Master, please do not deceive people.” Baofu said, “Rather, you are deceiving me.” He further asked the monk, “What karma have you performed that you eat so much?” The monk said, “The Master is not small either.” Baofu made a squatting gesture.

The monk said, “Master, please do not deceive people.” Baofu said, “Rather, you are deceiving me.” He further asked the bath steward, “How wide is the bathing cauldron?” The steward said, “Please measure it yourself, Master.” Baofu made a measuring gesture. The steward said, “Master, please do not deceive people.” Baofu said, “Rather, you are deceiving me.” Various places call these “Baofu’s Four Deceptions.”

Likewise, the “Four Lacquer Buckets of Xuefeng” … all were profound and subtle teachings set forth by the lineage masters of old to meet the capacities of people. Later, Xuedou cited a whole string of such cases and, following Yunmen’s public instruction, composed this verse on the koan:

One hauls a stone, [An imperial edict within the realm. A leper drags along a companion. This is how one who has gone beyond comes.]

Two kinds of earth, [A general’s command beyond the frontier. Two men receive the same written order. Those with the same illness sympathize with one another.]

When the trigger is released, it must be a thousand-jun crossbow. [Even if it were a thousand jun, it could not penetrate. It must not be answered lightly. How could it be for a dead frog!]

The Elephant-Bone teacher once rolled balls, [Others too have come in this way. There is an iron hammer without a hole. Who does not know?]

How could that compare with Heshan’s being able to beat the drum? [An iron stake. It must be this old fellow to do it. One son has personally received it.]

I tell you, [Xuedou himself has not yet dreamed of it. Frost added to snow. Do you know?]

Do not be careless and crude. [There is still something here. Dull and muddled.]

What is sweet is sweet; what is bitter is bitter. [Thanks for the reply. You have placed the footnote wrongly. He deserves thirty blows. Have you received the blows yet? Then strike! Still pitch-black.]

One day, Guizong joined the community in hauling stones. Guizong asked the monastic manager, “Where are you going?” The manager said, “To haul stones.” Guizong said, “You may haul the stones as you please, but do not move the tree at the center.”

Whenever a newcomer arrived, Muping first had him carry three loads of earth. Muping presented this verse to the assembly: “The eastern mountain path is narrow, the western mountain low; newcomers, do not decline the three turns of mud. Alas, you have traveled long upon the road, yet plainly fail to understand and so become lost.” Later, a monk asked, “I will not ask about what is within the three turns; what about matters beyond the three turns?” Muping said, “The Iron-Wheel Emperor’s edict within the realm.” The monk had no reply, and Muping immediately struck him.

Thus it is said: “One hauls a stone, two kinds of earth; when the trigger is released, it must be a thousand-jun crossbow.” Xuedou uses a thousand-jun crossbow as a metaphor for this utterance, wishing people to see how he acted for others. Thirty catties make one jun; one thousand jun thus makes thirty thousand catties. Such a crossbow is used only for fierce dragons, tigers, wolves, and other savage beasts. If it were some small creature such as a wren, one certainly could not release it lightly. Thus a thousand-jun crossbow does not release its trigger for a mouse.

“The Elephant-Bone teacher once rolled balls” refers to a day when Xuefeng saw Xuansha approaching and rolled three wooden balls all at once. Xuansha immediately made the gesture of chopping a tablet, and Xuefeng deeply approved of him. Although all these are instances of the complete functioning of the great capacity, none compares with Heshan’s “Can beat the drum.” It is so direct and cutting, yet difficult to understand. Therefore Xuedou said, “How could that compare with Heshan’s being able to beat the drum?”

He also feared that people might merely make a livelihood out of the critical phrase, without knowing its source, remaining confused and careless. Therefore he said, “I tell you, do not be careless and crude.” One must actually arrive at such a state. If one wishes not to be careless and crude: “What is sweet is sweet; what is bitter is bitter.” Though Xuedou handles it in this way, in the end he too cannot leap beyond it.

[A]: Ho!—The drum is being beaten.

[Daxia]: Is beating the drum a form of entertainment?

[lvm]: Have you not heard of “evening drums and morning bells”?

[Sudhana] (replying to [Daxia]: “Is beating the drum a form of entertainment?”): Yes. Once the drum is beaten, it is time to make the monkeys perform.

[Mind-Monk]: Teacher, can you leap beyond it?

If one wishes not to be careless and crude: “What is sweet is sweet; what is bitter is bitter.” Though Xuedou handles it in this way, in the end he too cannot leap beyond it.

*Ha ha, not to mention Xuedou—even the Buddhas of the ten directions cannot leap beyond it. Good friends, do you know why? “What is sweet is sweet; what is bitter is bitter.”

[lvm]: If you can leap into it, I can leap out of it.

[Mind-Monk]: Ha ha, Teacher, you truly can beat the drum!

[lvm]: You are not without a share in it either.

[zxb]: This fellow will step forward and smash Heshan’s drum with a hammer.

[lvm]: Ha ha! Are you not afraid that Heshan’s drum will smash you with its hammer?

[HEARTinHEART]: Teacher Qi, there is one matter that this beginner does not understand ———

The original text is as follows:

He further asked: “I will not ask about ‘mind itself is Buddha’; what is ‘neither mind nor Buddha’?”

Heshan said: “Can beat the drum.”

“Mind itself is Buddha” is readily sought; but when it comes to “neither mind nor Buddha,” it is difficult, and few arrive there.

This final sentence—

How should one understand: “‘Mind itself is Buddha’ is readily sought; but when it comes to ‘neither mind nor Buddha,’ it is difficult, and few arrive there”??

I respectfully ask the teacher for a compassionate explanation.

[lvm]: This is easy: mind is Buddha, and Buddha is mind. Apart from mind there is no Buddha; apart from Buddha there is no mind.

This, however, is difficult: mind itself cannot be obtained!

[HEARTinHEART]: If so, there is one more matter I do not understand!?

The koan of Chan Master Damei Fachang is as follows:

.....A monk was then sent to ask, “What did you obtain upon seeing Master Mazu that you came to live on this mountain?” The master said, “Master Mazu told me, ‘Mind itself is Buddha.’ So I have remained here.” The monk said, “Master Mazu’s teaching is different these days.” The master said, “How is it different?” The monk said, “These days he also says, ‘Neither mind nor Buddha.’” The master said, “That old fellow will go on confusing people without end. Let him say ‘neither mind nor Buddha’; I simply maintain that mind itself is Buddha.” The monk returned and reported this to Mazu. Mazu said, “Everyone, the plums are ripe.” .....

If he said “neither mind nor Buddha,” why, then, did Mazu nevertheless approve of Damei?

lvm : Oh? Do you mean that Damei wanted only “mind itself is Buddha,” and not “neither mind nor Buddha”?

Poor Damei has been grievously wronged!

HEARTinHEART : Could it be understood this way?

“Neither mind nor Buddha” is said for those attached to “mind itself is Buddha” —> mind too is unobtainable, and Buddha too is unobtainable.

For Damei, “neither mind nor Buddha” is precisely “mind itself is Buddha” —> even “mind itself is Buddha” is unobtainable.

lvm : And Damei is far from the only one who has been wronged!

HEARTinHEART : “That old fellow will go on confusing people without end. Let him say ‘neither mind nor Buddha’; I simply maintain that mind itself is Buddha.”

[Iron Broom]: Imitations are worthless; “apart from mind, apart from Buddha” says it all in a single phrase.

HEARTinHEART : I truly do not know how to speak of being apart from mind and Buddha. Please, out of compassion, offer this junior student a phrase.

[Iron Broom]: I will tell you when I am old and compassionate.

HEARTinHEART : Hehe, this old fellow is also confusing people.

[Iron Broom]: Of Xuefeng’s “four lacquer buckets,” two are still missing. Whoever can identify them, please add them.

Blue Cliff Record

[Case Five] Raising the Case: Xuefeng addressed the assembly: “Gather up the entire great earth and make it as large as a grain of millet; throw it down before you, and this lacquer bucket still does not understand. Beat the drum and summon everyone to come and see.”

The verse says: Oxhead disappeared; Horsehead returned. In the mirror of Caoxi, not a speck of dust remains. Beat the drum and look—do you not see? For whom do the hundred flowers bloom when spring arrives?

Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Mingjue

Xuefeng asked a monk, “I have heard that you once came as an imperial envoy. Is that so?”

The monk said, “I would not dare say so.”

Xuefeng said, “Then how could you come here in this way?”

The monk said, “I admire your Way and virtue. How could I shrink from the mountain passes and long roads?”

Xuefeng said, “You are still drunk as you go out.”

The monk thereupon left.

Xuefeng then called out, “Venerable!” The monk turned his head.

Xuefeng said, “What is it?”

The monk likewise said, “What is it?”

Xuefeng said, “This lacquer bucket!”

The monk was speechless.

Xuefeng then looked back at Jingqing and said, “What a fine monk! He went and got himself lodged inside a lacquer bucket.” Jingqing said, “Master, are you not deciding the case on the basis of the evidence?” Xuefeng said, “That is also what I ordinarily use. But if I were suddenly to call him back, what then? He called me ‘this lacquer bucket’—what would you do about that?” Jingqing said, “What sense would that make?” Xuefeng said, “I came at him in that way, and you say I am deciding the case on the basis of the evidence. He came at me in that way,”

“and you also say, ‘What sense would that make?’ At what point are they the same? Between them, there is attainment and nonattainment.” Jingqing said, “Have you not heard it said: ‘The finest flavor of ghee is treasured by the world, yet when encountered by such a person, it instead becomes poison’?” The master said, “See how father and son accord with one another; their words and spirit are in harmony. Those who understand say that even crushing their bones and shattering their bodies could not repay this kindness. Those who do not understand say that one is raising the high and suppressing the low, frightening people in time of danger. Poison and ghee: a mirror for a thousand ages. Do you understand? This lacquer bucket!”

Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Mingjue, Volume Three

lvm : Please look at Xuefeng’s encounters with Touzi:

The master (Chan Master Touzi Datong) pointed to a stone before the hermitage and said to Xuefeng, “The Buddhas of the three times are all right here.” Xuefeng said, “You must know that there are those who are not right here.” The master said, “You slow lacquer bucket!”

The master (Chan Master Touzi Datong) and Xuefeng were traveling at Longmian. There were two paths along the way. Xuefeng asked, “Which is the road to Longmian?” The master pointed with his staff. Xuefeng said, “Going west from the Eastern Land.” The master said, “You slow lacquer bucket!”

One day, Xuefeng entered the hermitage weeping. The master immediately rose and stood up. Xuefeng paused in thought, and the master pushed him out. He asked, “What if it is accomplished with a single blow?” The master said, “You are not an impatient fellow.” A student asked, “What if no single blow is needed?” The master said, “Lacquer bucket.”

Xuefeng again asked, “Is there anyone here who has come to study?” The master threw a yak-tail whisk down before him. Xuefeng said, “Then one should dig right where one stands.” The master said, “You slow lacquer bucket!”

—Recorded Sayings of the Ancient Worthies

[Iron Broom]: Ha! I am worse than a lacquer bucket—I cannot even distinguish the four lacquer buckets.

lvm : Then break the lacquer bucket.

[Iron Broom]: No hammer is needed to shatter dreamlike illusions; a single word awakens the person dreaming.

[Iron Broom]: Supplementary information: Recorded Sayings of Master Fayan — Records of the Sayings of the Ancient Worthies.

In a Dharma hall discourse, he said: “Maudgalyāyana leapt over a pit with both feet.

Mahākāśyapa heard the zither and rose to dance.

Pilindavatsa scolded the river deity.

Kālodayin buried his body in dung and filth.

Each of these matters has a source in the teachings. All are said to be habitual tendencies. How much more so in the lineage of the patriarchs!

Bodhidharma faced the wall for nine years. Mimo raised his forked staff.

Heshan beat the drum.

Shigong drew his bow.

Xuefeng rolled a ball.

The National Teacher had a bowl of water.

Guizong dragged a stone.

Deshan struck as soon as one entered the gate.

Linji shouted as soon as one entered the gate.

As soon as Wuye was asked a question, he would say, ‘Do not give rise to deluded thoughts.’ Tell me, what is this? Among you, is there some long-practicing patch-robed monk, with eyes atop his head, who can roam freely throughout the world? Come forth and bear witness for Baiyun. Let us also have the satisfaction of a lifetime. Is there? Is there? If not, thirty years hence this saying will be widely circulated. Tell me, ultimately, how is it? In blazing summer, clouds of fire return to the emerald cave; in clear autumn, perilous dew drips onto a golden tray.”

[Dingling]: Teacher, what does “a bout of moluo” metaphorically refer to?

lvm : Mola probably means something tedious or boring.

[45] Zhaozhou’s Seven-Pound Cloth Shirt

[45] Zhaozhou’s Seven-Pound Cloth Shirt

Pointer: If you wish to speak of it, then speak of it—without equal in all the world. When it is time to act, act at once; let the whole capacity yield to none. Like striking sparks from flint, like a flash of lightning. A swift flame outruns the wind; a rushing torrent crosses a blade. Raise the upward-pointing tongs and hammer, and one cannot avoid losing one’s edge and being tongue-tied. Let out a single thread of the way; try raising it and see.

[45] The Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “The myriad dharmas return to the One; where does the One return?” [He has pressed this old fellow. Mountains are piled upon mountains and peaks heaped upon peaks. Take care not to make a living in a ghost cave.]

Zhaozhou said, “When I was in Qingzhou, I made a cloth shirt that weighed seven pounds.” [Indeed, he goes freely in every direction, vertical and horizontal. He has torn away the net that covers the sky. Do you see Zhaozhou? Chan monks have once grasped his nostrils. Do you know where Zhaozhou comes down? If you see it here, then “above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored”; when water arrives, a channel is formed, and where the wind blows, the grass bends. But if not, this old monk is beneath your heels.]

If you understand it at the point where one acts with a single blow, then the nostrils of all the old monks under heaven will at once be pierced through; they can do nothing to you, and naturally, when water arrives, a channel is formed. But if you hesitate, this old monk is beneath your heels. At the essential points of the Buddha-Dharma, words need not be many, nor need speech be elaborate.

Now, when this monk asked Zhaozhou, “The myriad dharmas return to the One; where does the One return?” Zhaozhou answered, “When I was in Qingzhou, I made a cloth shirt that weighed seven pounds.” If you discriminate on the basis of the words, you mistake the fixed star for the balance beam. Yet if you do not discriminate on the basis of the words, why did he speak in just this way? This koan is difficult to see but easy to understand; easy to understand but difficult to see. In its difficulty, it is a mountain of silver and a wall of iron; in its ease, there is immediate lucid awareness, where you do not calculate right and wrong. This saying is no different from Puhua’s statement, “Tomorrow there will be a vegetarian meal at the Great Compassion Monastery.”

One day a monk asked Zhaozhou, “What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?” Zhaozhou said, “The cypress tree in the courtyard.” The monk said, “Master, do not use an object to show people.” Zhaozhou said, “This old monk has never used an object to show people.” See how, in this way, he can turn at the ultimate point where turning is impossible; naturally, he covers heaven and earth. If one cannot turn there, every encounter becomes an obstruction.

Tell me, then: does he discuss the Buddha-Dharma, or not? If you say that he does, when has he ever spoken of mind or nature, of profundity or subtlety? If you say that there is no purport of the Buddha-Dharma, he has nonetheless not failed your question. Have you not seen the monk who asked Monk Muping, “What is the great meaning of the Buddha-Dharma?” Ping said, “This winter melon is this large.”

Another monk asked an ancient worthy, “In a deep mountain, on a lofty cliff, in a remote place where no people are found, is there still Buddha-Dharma or not?” The ancient worthy said, “There is.” The monk said, “What is the Buddha-Dharma in the deep mountains?” The ancient worthy said, “The large stones are large; the small stones are small.” In such koans, where does the error lie? Xuedou knew where they came down, and so opened up the path of meaning and composed this verse for you:

The “partial and remote” question once pressed the old adept. [Why press this old fellow? Where are you pressing him toward?]

How many know the weight of the seven-pound shirt? [Even if he comes again, he is not worth half a penny. It leaves one's mouth like a carrying pole. Yet he has gained the advantage over him by one move.]

Now cast it into West Lake. [Only then are Xuedou's hands and feet adequate. This mountain monk does not want it either.]

Who is worthy to receive this clear breeze from below? [From ancient times to the present. Tell me: Xuedou responds to him and adds footnotes to his words. He has personally obtained the one move.]

Among the eighteen kinds of questions, this is called a "partial and remote" question. Xuedou says, "The 'partial and remote' question once pressed the old adept." The myriad dharmas are classified and analyzed, while the teachings return to a single consistency. This monk wished to press Zhaozhou.

Zhaozhou, too, was no ordinary master. At the place where one cannot turn, he had a road of emergence and dared to open his great mouth. He simply said, "When I was in Qingzhou, I made a cloth shirt that weighed seven pounds." Xuedou said, "How many can know this seven-pound cloth shirt?"

"Now cast it into West Lake": the myriad dharmas return to the One, but even the One is not wanted; neither is the seven-pound cloth shirt wanted. Cast them all at once into West Lake. Xuedou resided at Cui Peak in Dongting, where there was also a West Lake.

"Who is worthy to receive this clear breeze from below?" This was Zhaozhou's instruction to the assembly: if you come from the north, I will load it upon you; if you come from the south, I will unload it for you. If you come from Xuefeng or Yunju, you too are a fellow carrying a board. Xuedou says: to whom can such a clear breeze be entrusted? For those being loaded, he speaks to you of mind and nature, profundity and subtlety, and all kinds of skillful means. For those being unloaded, there are no such principles or subtleties. Some carry a whole load of Chan, but when they reach Zhaozhou, not a bit of it can be used. He packs it all away at once, leaving them free and open, without a single concern. This is called awakening and yet being just as one was before awakening.

Nowadays, people all understand this as being a person with nothing to do. Some say, "There is no delusion and no awakening; there is no need to seek further." But before the Buddha appeared in the world, and before Bodhidharma came to this land, could it really have been just so?

What need was there for the Buddha to appear in the world? What need was there for the Patriarch to come from the West? If everything were simply like this, what relevance would there be? One must thoroughly awaken, and then, as before, mountains are mountains and waters are waters; indeed, all the myriad dharmas are wholly manifest. Only then does one become a person with nothing to do. Have you not seen Longya say: "In studying the Way, one must first have a basis for awakening, like having once raced swift dragon boats. Though the old pavilions and idle fields remain, only after winning once may one finally rest."

Take Zhaozhou's saying of the seven-pound cloth shirt. See how the people of old spoke of it: it is like gold and jade. This mountain monk speaks in this way, and all of you listen in this way: it is all loading. Tell me, then: what is unloading?

Look beneath the three rafters!

[Xinming] Reference material: Fenyang's Eighteen Questions

1. A question seeking instruction: a student asks in order to seek instruction. For example, a monk asked Mazu, "What is Buddha?" Mazu said, "Mind itself is Buddha." Zhaozhou said, "The one in the hall." (The English translation cites again such examples as "the Patriarch's coming from the West," "the great meaning of the Buddha-Dharma," and "what is Dharma?" but lists only the questions and does not include the replies.)

2. A question presenting one's understanding: a student presents his own understanding and asks. For example, a monk asked Longya, "What is it like when heaven cannot cover it and earth cannot support it?" Longya said, "A person of the Way should be just so." (The English translation gives this example: a monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is it like when one brings not a single thing?" Zhaozhou said, "Put it down and see!")

3. A question of examination and discernment: one asks in order to examine and distinguish. For example, a monk asked Linji, "What if someone has a question for the Master?" Linji said, "Speak quickly! Speak quickly!" When they began to deliberate, Linji immediately struck them. (The English translation gives this example: a monk asked the hermitage master Tongfeng, "What if a fierce tiger suddenly comes?" The master assumed the posture of a tiger's roar; the monk then assumed a frightened posture, and the master laughed loudly.)

4. A question attuned to the occasion: one asks when one's response accords with the pivotal opening. (The general sense of the English translation is that the questioner still has doubts about his own awakening and seeks confirmation.) For example, a monk asked Tianhuang, "What is it like when the sense of doubt has not yet ceased?" Tianhuang said, "Guarding the One is not genuine."

5. A partial and remote question: one asks from one-sided rigidity and eccentric attachment. (The general sense of the English translation is that the student is eager to find out the master's attitude.) For example, a monk asked, "What is it like when a crane stands on a withered pine?" and so forth. (The English translation gives this example: a monk asked Zhaozhou, "The myriad dharmas return to the One; where does the One return?" Zhaozhou said, "When I was in Qingzhou, I made a cloth shirt that weighed seven pounds.")

6. A question expressing one's mental practice: one asks in order to express one's mental practice. (The general sense of the English translation is that the student does not know how to proceed in cultivation and asks.) For example, a monk asked Xinghua, "This student has not yet distinguished black from white; I beg the Master for instruction!" Xinghua immediately struck him in response.

7. A probing question: one asks in order to search and probe. (The English translation adds that when Chan monasteries were spread everywhere and Chan monks went about seeking teachers and the Way, this type of question must for a time have been widespread.) For example, a monk asked Fengxue, "Why does one who does not understand not doubt?" Fengxue said, "When a spiritual tortoise walks on land, how can it avoid dragging muddy tracks?"

8. A question about not understanding: one directly asks about something one does not understand. (The English translation explains that this seems to differ little from the sixth type.) For example, a monk asked Xuansha, "This student has just entered the monastery; I beg the Master for instruction!" Xuansha said, "Do you hear the sound of water outside the gate?" The monk said, "I hear it." Xuansha said, "Enter from here!"

9. A question carrying one's own view: one asks while holding up one's own understanding. (The English translation explains that the student already has his own view of Chan and wishes to see how the master regards it.) For example, a monk asked an old master, "Worldly intelligence and clever discernment—do not bring them up; give me back my living head!" The old master immediately struck him.

2. A question one sets forth oneself: one establishes a topic of questioning and asks about it. For example, a monk asked Yunmen, "What is it like when one opens one's eyes wide and sees no boundary?" Yunmen said, "One seeing." (Also written as "mirror.")

11. A deliberate question: one asks for a lofty reason. (The English translation explains that it is a question containing scriptural import.) For example, a monk asked Shoushan, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature; why do they not recognize it?" Shoushan said, "They recognize it."

12. A separate question: one borrows another point as the basis for a question. (The English translation explains that one asks by borrowing a known fact. For example, a monk asked Fengxue, "The great ocean has a pearl; how can it be obtained?" Fengxue said, "When the netted multitude arrives, its light gleams brilliantly; where Li Nanlou walks, the waves surge to heaven!" The English translation adds: the more you try to seize it, the farther away it goes; the more you try to see it clearly, the more blurred it appears.)

13. A factual question: one asks on the basis of an actual principle. (The English translation explains that one takes as one's starting point a fact obtained through direct observation.) For example, a monk asked Sansheng, "This student sees only that the Master is a monk. What is Buddha, and what is Dharma?" Sansheng said, "It is Buddha, it is Dharma—do you know this?"

14. A hypothetical question: one asks by positing such a point. (The English translation explains that it is a question containing a hypothetical example.) For example, a monk asked Jingshan, "Among the Buddha images in this hall, which one is Buddha?" Jingshan said, "The one in this hall."

15. An investigating question: one asks by examining the fundamental principle. (The English translation explains that one asks by specifically expressing a genuine doubt.) For example, a monk asked the Patriarch, "All dharmas originally exist; which one is heaven?" The Patriarch said, "Your question is very clear; why trouble yourself to ask me again?"

16. A challenging question: one asks by testing and challenging. (The English translation explains that it is a question with an intent to challenge.) For example, a monk asked Muzhou, "For what purpose did the Patriarch come from the West?" Muzhou said, "What do you say it was for?" The monk was speechless, and Muzhou immediately struck him.

17. Explicit questioning: asking plainly and directly. For example, a non-Buddhist asked the Buddha, "I do not ask about speech; I do not ask about silence." The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while. The non-Buddhist said, "The World-Honored One, in great compassion, has dispelled the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter."

18. Silent questioning: asking without speaking (as an English explanation puts it, asking without expressing oneself in words). For example, a non-Buddhist came before the Buddha and stood there without a word. The Buddha said, "That is quite a lot, non-Buddhist!" The outsider said, "The World-Honored One, in great compassion, has enabled me to attain it."

[Xinming]: What situation does "people nowadays all take it as meaning nothing to do" refer to here?

[lvm]: Keep reading and you will know:

Someone says, “There is no delusion and no awakening; do not seek anything further.” But before the Buddha appeared in the world, and before Bodhidharma came to this land, could it have been otherwise? What use was there in the Buddha’s appearing in the world? What use was there in the patriarch’s coming from the West? If it is all just like this, what does it matter? One must first undergo great, thorough awakening; then, as before, mountains are mountains and waters are waters, and indeed all myriad dharmas appear just as they are. Only then can one become a person with nothing to do. Have you not seen Longya say: “To study the Way, one must first have grounds for awakening; it is like having once raced dragon boats. Though the old pavilions and idle fields remain, only after winning once can one finally rest.”

[Xinming]: It seems to be contrasting this with “only when all myriad dharmas appear just as they are can one become a person with nothing to do.”

[lvm]: If you take that sentence out on its own, it is better to put it this way, lest it be misunderstood:

Only when, as before, all myriad dharmas appear just as they are can one become a person with nothing to do.

[Xinming]: Mine differed by only a hair, but it could easily lead to a misunderstanding a thousand miles away.

As before, as before . . .

[Xinseng]: Ha ha! This reply by old Zhaozhou is even a notch better than Master Wang’s “ordinary mind is the Way”!

Tell me, everyone: in what respect is it better?

[Shancai]: One sees plainness in what is perilous; the other brings out peril in what is plain.

Let us put it that way for the moment.

[Xinseng]: Ha ha! But Brother Cai is still a notch below those two old masters!

[Shancai]: Heh heh, this peddler does know something about weights and measures.

[Xinseng]: Ha ha!

[Liannong] (replying to [Xinseng]: “This reply by old Zhaozhou is even a notch better than Master Wang’s ‘ordinary mind is the Way’! Tell me, everyone: in what respect is it better?”): This question of Xinseng’s is another notch better than old Zhaozhou and old Wang!

[Xinseng]: Ha ha! You cannot say you have no share in it, either!

[Shancai]: Heh heh, are there any friends of Zhaozhou here? Let me ask a question:

Did Zhaozhou have no cloth—

why, then, did old Zhaozhou’s cloth shirt have to be made in Qingzhou?

[neo]: What a pity—old Zhaozhou’s cloth shirt has been sold off cheap by old Cai!

[Shancai]: Ha ha, and here is some change for you—smack!

[Ziyi] (replying to [Shancai], “Why did old Zhaozhou’s cloth shirt have to be made in Qingzhou?”): Seven jin? Wow, it must be made of iron!

[Shancai]: It might even have been a huge padded robe!

[Ziyi]: Let us agree to that for now. But surely it was more than that?

[Shancai]: A seven-jin cloth shirt would practically be cast from bronze and forged from iron,

impervious to wind and rain, untouched by cold or heat,

enough to make the questioner stick out his tongue and those who hear of it lose their nerve.

[Chan]: Then how did you put it on?

[Shancai]: Ha ha, I will tell you once you have shed your shell.

[Xinseng]: Brother Cai deserves a beating!—Can you shed it?

[Shancai]: Then just keep wearing it!

[Xinseng]: Yet Brother Cai has made me shed it!

[Jueming] (replying to [Shancai], “Why did old Zhaozhou’s cloth shirt have to be made in Qingzhou?”): Old Zhaozhou was making extra trouble. Would not “the cloth shirt on one’s body” have been simpler?

[Shancai]: Ha ha, that is Jueming Chan; it has nothing to do with old Zhaozhou.

[Jueming]: Yet it does concern Shancai! Tell me, then: where do old Zhaozhou’s Chan and Jueming’s Chan differ?

[Shancai]: Of course, they are alike in some ways and different in others.

The difference is that one is a Qingzhou cloth shirt, while the other is the cloth shirt on one’s body.

Once the cloth shirt on one’s body has been shed, perhaps it can become a Qingzhou cloth shirt.

What they have in common is that, in the eyes of a junk collector, neither is worth two coppers.

[lvm] (replying to [Shancai], “Why did old Zhaozhou’s cloth shirt have to be made in Qingzhou?”): Ha ha! Do not forget that “Zhaozhou was still traveling on foot at eighty.”

[Xinseng]: Teacher, you should not force an argument in defense of old Zhaozhou, either!

[lvm]: The undershirt I am wearing now does not even weigh seven liang.

[Shancai]: Work up two bouts of white sweat, and it will probably come to seven liang.

[lvm]: ^o^

[Xinseng]: Ha ha! This little monk has staged a play, starring LVM, Shancai, and Xinseng.

One night, after LVM, Shancai, and Xinseng had washed their feet, they sat beneath a tree, enjoying the cool air, drinking tea, and chatting:

Shancai asked LVM, “What is the patriarch’s meaning in coming from the West?”

(Heh heh, are there any friends of Zhaozhou here? Let me ask a question, [Shancai])

LVM: “The cypress tree in the courtyard.”

(Ha ha! Do not forget that “Zhaozhou was still traveling on foot at eighty.” [lvm])

At this point Xinseng, standing nearby, said, “Venerable, do not show people an object.”

(Ha ha! Teacher, you should not force an argument in defense of old Zhaozhou, either! [Xinseng])

LVM: “I have not shown people an object.”

(The undershirt I am wearing now does not even weigh seven liang. [lvm])

Shancai asked again, “What is the patriarch’s meaning in coming from the West?”

(Work up two bouts of white sweat, and it will probably come to seven liang. [Shancai])

LVM: “The cypress tree in the courtyard.”

(^o^ [lvm])

With the conversation at this point, the two returned to their quarters to sleep.

Only Xinseng remained there, muttering foolishly, “Ha ha! Old Zhaozhou’s two bouts of stinking sweat actually weigh more than six jin and three liang.”

End of the play.

[Shancai]: It is fashionable now to film the prequel afterward: Before the Seven Liang.

Moonlight flowed like water; a gentle river breeze stirred. At an ancient ferry landing, the shadowy figures of several travelers happened to meet.

Shancai asked LVM, “Could it be that there is no Buddhadharma in the Western land? Why come here to the Eastern land to rummage about?”

(Heh heh, are there any friends of Zhaozhou here? Let me ask a question, [Shancai])

After the exhaustion of his long journey, LVM's eyes still blazed like torches: "One certainly must not linger where there is no Buddha; where there is a Buddha, one should hurry past as well."

(Ha ha! Do not forget that "Zhaozhou was still traveling on foot at eighty." [lvm])

At this point, Shancai's servant Xinseng looked over LVM's ragged attire and gave a derisive laugh: "Heh heh, this barbarian's heels do not touch the ground."

(Ha ha! Teacher, you should not force an argument in defense of old Zhaozhou, either! [Xinseng])

LVM adjusted the iron staff on his shoulder. Slightly displeased by the slight, he raised his eyes toward the star-filled sky: "Put the cost of this pair of straw sandals on his account, at a discount."

(The undershirt I am wearing now does not even weigh seven liang. [lvm])

Shancai laughed and tried to smooth things over: "For entering through principle and entering through practice, your disciples will naturally pay for these two straw sandals. The price of one arm would earn him far more than this." Old Cai had, after all, been a merchant for a few days.

(Work up two bouts of white sweat, and it will probably come to seven liang. [Shancai])

LVM: "Even your Emperor Wu of Liang is merely a vulgar fellow who knows only how to steam sand into rice. How could it be easy to find even a somewhat suitable Dharma vessel?"

Gazing at the river's rippling, scale-like glimmer, he was indeed somewhat worried.

(^o^ [lvm])

Only Xinseng remained there, foolishly muttering about the cost of the straw sandals. Knowing that he had gone too far in joking with the holy monk this time, he hurriedly plucked a handful of reed leaves and tossed them into the river: "Let this count as my offering toward the master's straw sandals. Do not say I am stingy!"

(Ha ha! Old Zhaozhou's two bouts of stinking sweat actually weigh more than six jin and three liang. [Xinseng])

Without even turning his head, LVM leapt into the air.

The wordless banks silently watched the huge figure glide slowly over the water. Heaven and earth and all things seemed, for a moment, to stand still; his ink-black cloak cut across the river's flowing waters.

Only some unnamed little insects continued to chirp softly in the grass.

End of the play.

[Mind Monk]: Ha ha! Brother Sudhana is quite adept at giving things a new face.

You have turned a documentary into a satirical play!

[Sudhana]: Heh heh, it is not that serious, not that serious.

It is only a light comedy. Are you satisfied with your performance?

[Mind Monk]: Fifty blows if I am satisfied, and fifty blows if I am not.

I will just stick to acting!

[Sudhana]: ^o^.

As for "white sweat," this is also an explanation I came across in a book some time ago. It probably refers to the situation in which a practitioner arouses a determined resolve and, through continuous diligent cultivation, finally, when the time and conditions arrive, suddenly awakens as from a dream.

"A body drenched in white sweat" refers to great birth after great death.

For more detailed information, you may ask other online friends.

[Forty-Six] What Is the Sound Outside Jingqing's Gate?

[Case 46] What Sound Is Outside Jingqing's Gate?

Pointer: One hammer blow accomplishes it, transcending the ordinary and the sacred; a single word can cut through, removing bonds and dissolving attachments. It is like walking on ice or running along a sword's edge, sitting amid the heap of sounds and forms, moving atop sounds and forms. Set aside for now the wondrous function that ranges freely in all directions: when one departs in a single instant, what then? Consider this:

[Case 46] The Case:

Jingqing asked a monk, "What sound is outside the gate?" [Casually he lowers a fishing line. There is no need to worry about deafness—why ask?]

The monk said, "The sound of raindrops." [At least he speaks plainly. It is also a fine piece of news.]

Jingqing said, "Sentient beings are inverted: they lose themselves and pursue things." [Things have arisen! He is accustomed to getting his way. With cymbal-hook and rope, he shows his native skill.]

The monk said, "And how about you, Master?" [Sure enough, he exposes a flaw. He turns the spear back—no easy adversary. Yet he reverses the spearhead to stab another.]

Jingqing said, "I do not lose myself." [Bah! There is no way to explain it away.]

The monk said, "What is the meaning of 'I do not lose myself'?" [He presses this old fellow. He drives him to the limit. The first arrow was still light; the second arrow goes deep.]

Jingqing said, "Getting free is still easy; casting off the whole body is said to be difficult." [The affinity of raising a son. Though this is so, where do Deshan and Linji stand? If it is not called the sound of raindrops, what sound should it be called? There is no way to explain it away.]

Right here, one should gain realization. The ancients presented a device or a circumstance in order to receive people. One day Jingqing asked a monk, "What sound is outside the gate?" The monk said, "The sound of raindrops." Jingqing said, "Sentient beings are inverted: they lose themselves and pursue things." He again asked, "What sound is outside the gate?" The monk said, "The sound of doves." Jingqing said, "If you wish not to incur the karma of the Avīci hell, do not slander the Tathāgata's true Dharma*." He again asked, "What sound is outside the gate?" The monk said, "The sound of a snake biting a frog." Jingqing said, "I thought sentient beings suffered, but there are sentient beings suffering even more."

This saying is no different from the earlier koan. If Chan practitioners penetrate this point, they may move freely amid the heap of sounds and forms. If they cannot penetrate it, they will be constrained by sounds and forms. Masters everywhere call cases such as this "tempering sayings."

If one treats them merely as tempering, they become only mental activity, and one does not see how the ancients acted for the sake of others. They are also called penetrating sounds and forms: first, clarifying the Dharma eye; second, clarifying sounds and forms; third, clarifying the mind's principle; fourth, clarifying freedom from emotional attachment; fifth, clarifying its unfolding. Yet one must examine this carefully, for there are still fixed patterns here.

Jingqing asked in this way, "What sound is outside the gate?" The monk said, "The sound of raindrops." Jingqing then said, "Sentient beings are inverted: they lose themselves and pursue things." Everyone misunderstands this, calling it a deliberate attempt to turn people around—yet that has nothing to do with it! They do not realize that Jingqing had methods for helping people. Boldly, he did not confine himself to a single device or circumstance; he was utterly unconcerned about sparing his eyebrows.

How could Jingqing not have known that it was the sound of raindrops? Why ask again? You must know that the ancients used a probing pole and stirring grass to test the monk. This monk was also good at pressing in, and immediately said, "And how about you, Master?" Jingqing went straight into the mud and water and told him, "I do not lose myself."

That monk's losing himself and pursuing things was certainly so, but why did Jingqing too lose himself? You must know that, in testing him, there was within the saying a place to get free. This monk was too muddled and wanted to cut off the discussion. So he further asked, "What is the meaning of 'I do not lose myself'?" Had this been under Deshan or Linji, the staff and shout would already have been employed. Jingqing opened a narrow passage and, following him as he spun verbal entanglements, further said, "Getting free is still easy; casting off the whole body is said to be difficult." Though this is so, the ancients said, "Continuing it is also exceedingly difficult." With this one sentence, Jingqing directly illuminated for the monk the great matter beneath his very heels.

Xuedou's verse says:

In the empty hall, the sound of raindrops—[It has never ceased. Everyone is right here.]

A true adept finds it hard to respond. [Sure enough, he does not know. This mountain monk has never been a true adept. There is provisional and actual, release and gathering in; killing and giving life, seizing and letting go.]

If one says he has entered the stream, [He sticks his head into a basin of glue. If it is not called the sound of rain filling the air, what sound should it be called?]

He still does not understand as before. [When did this mountain monk ever ask you to come? You lacquer bucket! Return my iron hammer without a hole!]

He has never understood—[Both ends are cut off; the two places are undivided. It is not on either side.]

Over South Mountain and North Mountain, the downpour turns and pours. [Above the head and beneath the feet. If you call it the sound of rain, you are blind! If you do not call it the sound of rain, what sound should it be called? Here, you must plant your feet firmly on the ground.]

“In the empty hall, the sound of raindrops—a true adept finds it hard to respond.” If one calls it the sound of rain, one loses oneself and pursues things. If one does not call it the sound of rain, then how does one turn things around? At this point, even a true adept finds it difficult to respond. Therefore the ancients said, “If your insight equals that of your teacher, you diminish your teacher’s virtue by half; only when your insight surpasses your teacher’s are you fit to receive transmission.” Also, Nanyuan said, “Under the staff is the forbearance of the unborn; when meeting the occasion, do not yield to your teacher.”

“If one says he has entered the stream, he still does not understand as before.” The teachings say, “First, within hearing, one enters the stream and forgets the object. Once what is entered becomes quiescent, the two characteristics of movement and stillness clearly do not arise.” To say that it is the sound of raindrops is not right; to say that it is not the sound of raindrops is not right either. The earlier verse, “With two shouts and then three shouts, the true adept knows how to adapt to the occasion,” is precisely like this verse. To say that one has entered the stream of sounds and forms is not right; if one calls it sounds and forms, one still does not understand its meaning. It is like using a finger to point at the moon: the moon is not the finger.

Understanding and not understanding alike: over South Mountain and North Mountain, the downpour turns and pours.

[Xinming]: What does “Getting free is still easy” mean?

[LVM]: Take your question, “What does it mean?” for example:

“Getting free is still easy” still permits you to ask such a question.

“Casting off the whole body is said to be difficult” permits no such question.

[Xinming]: It seems to be a difference in means or method.

For example: What is buddha-nature?

Answer: 1. Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—“Getting free is still easy” still permits you to ask such a question.

2. A blow from a stick—“Casting off the whole body is said to be difficult” permits no such question.

[LVM]: Ha ha! Clearly, you have not cast off the whole body.

[Xinming]: Hee hee, I am still not used to running around naked.

[LVM]: Getting free is still easy; casting off the whole body is said to be difficult.

[Lianming]: This is “Getting free is still easy.” I ask the teacher to say a word on “Casting off the whole body is said to be difficult.”

[LVM]: Don’t set a trap!

[Lianming]: Getting free is still easy; casting off the whole body is said to be difficult.

[LVM]: Ha ha! You may choose a bargain, but you cannot sell cleverness.

[Lianming]: The teacher cannot be left out either. ^0^

A: If calling it the sound of rain is blindness, then if it is not called the sound of rain, what sound should it be called?

Answer: Not calling it the sound of rain is blindness as well!

B: Teacher, please ask: What is not being blind?

Answer: “Casually he lowers a fishing line. There is no need to worry about deafness—why ask?”

C: What sound is there on the forum?

Answer: Getting free is still easy; casting off the whole body is said to be difficult.

C: What is the meaning of this?

Answer: I do not lose myself.

[47] Yunmen: The Six Sense Bases Do Not Grasp

[Case 47] Yunmen: “The Six Do Not Contain It”

Pointer: What does Heaven say? Yet the four seasons proceed. What does Earth say? Yet the myriad things grow. Where the four seasons proceed, one may see the essence; where the myriad things grow, one may see the function. But tell me, where can one see the patch-robed monk? Apart from speech, activity, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; with throat and lips altogether set aside—can you still discern him?

[Case 47] The Case:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is the dharmakāya?” [How many people are perplexed by this! Even a thousand sages cannot leap beyond it. It gives much away.]

Yunmen said, “The six do not contain it.” [Cutting nails and slicing iron. An eight-cornered millstone rolls through empty space. The numinous turtle drags its tail. If you grasp it before signs have arisen, that is already the second level; if you grasp it after signs have arisen, you have fallen to the third. If you try to discern it in words, happily, it has nothing to do with it.]

Yunmen’s words, “The six do not contain it,” are truly difficult to grasp. If you grasp it before signs have arisen, that is already the second level; if you grasp it after signs have arisen, you have fallen to the third. If you try to clarify it in phrases and sentences, in the end you cannot lay hold of it. After all, then, what is the dharmakāya? If you are one of true ability, merely hearing it mentioned, you immediately spring up and go. But if you pause in thought and halt your activity, then await further instruction.

Senior Lecturer Fu of Taiyuan was originally a scriptural lecturer. One day, while giving a lecture from the seat, he spoke of the dharmakāya, saying, “Vertically, it exhausts the three divisions of time; horizontally, it extends throughout the ten directions.” A Chan practitioner seated below laughed when he heard this. After Fu descended from the seat, he said, “What shortcoming was there in what I just said? I hope the Chan practitioner will explain it to me.” The Chan practitioner said, “The lecturer has only spoken of matters at the measure of the dharmakāya; you have not seen the dharmakāya itself.”

Fu said, “What, then, is it?” The Chan practitioner said, “For a while, stop lecturing and sit quietly in your room. You will surely see it for yourself.” Fu followed his words. After sitting quietly through the night, he suddenly heard the fifth-watch bell and abruptly attained great awakening. He then knocked on the Chan practitioner’s door and said, “I have understood.” The Chan practitioner said, “Try saying it.” Fu said, “From today on, I will no longer twist and manipulate the nostrils I received from my parents.”

Again, the teachings say: “The Buddha’s true dharmakāya is like empty space: responding to things, it manifests forms, like the moon in water.”

Again, a monk asked Jia Shan, “What is the dharmakāya?” Jia Shan said, “The dharmakāya is without characteristics.” “What is the dharma eye?” Jia Shan said, “The dharma eye is without blemish.”

Yunmen said, “The six do not contain it.” Some people comment on this koan: “It simply means the six sense faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses. These six all arise from the dharmakāya, yet the six faculties cannot contain it.” If you understand it in this manner, happily, it has nothing to do with it—and you further burden Yunmen! If you are to see it, simply see it; there is no place here for your forced elaborations. Have you not seen what the teachings say: “This dharma cannot be understood through thought and discrimination.”

His replies often invited conceptual interpretations; therefore, one phrase must contain three phrases. It must not fail the point of your question, but answer in accordance with the time and occasion. In every word, phrase, dot, and stroke, there is no harm in there being a way out. Thus it is said: “When one phrase penetrates, a thousand and ten thousand phrases penetrate all at once.” But tell me: is it the dharmakāya? Is it the patriarch? I spare you thirty blows!

Xuedou composed this verse:

One, two, three; four, five, six. [Round and round, beginning again. Drip, drip, freezing. What is the use of all this effort?]

Even the blue-eyed barbarian monk does not number among them. [Three lives and sixty kalpas. When did Bodhidharma ever dream of this? Chan master, why do you knowingly transgress?]

Shaolin vainly claims to have transmitted it to Shengguang. [One person spreads a falsehood, and ten thousand people take it for truth. It was wrong from the very beginning.]

Rolling up his robe, they further say that he returned to India. [He deceived a whole boatload of people. There is no lack of delusion.]

Vast India—there is nowhere to seek him. [Where is there true peace? And where is he now?]

Last night, however, he lodged opposite Breast Peak. [It has pierced your eyes! This too is making waves where there is no wind. But tell me, is this the dharmakāya or the Buddha-body? I spare you thirty blows.]

Xuedou was skilled at bringing forth an eye where there is not the slightest seam or crack; he composed this verse in order to make people see. Yunmen said, "The six do not contain it." Why, then, did Xuedou say, "One, two, three, four, five, six"? Truly, even the blue-eyed barbarian monk does not number among them. Thus it is said, "Only the old barbarian is permitted to know; the old barbarian is not permitted to understand." It must be left to his descendants within the house. Just now I said that each word and phrase answers in accordance with the time and occasion.

If you penetrate it, then you will know that it does not lie in words and phrases. If not, you cannot avoid making conceptual interpretations. Master Wuzu said, "Śākyamuni Buddha was a lowly hired laborer. The cypress tree in the courtyard: one, two, three, four, five." If you truly see it beneath Yunmen's words and phrases, you will gradually arrive at this realm.

"Shaolin vainly claims to have transmitted it to Shengguang": the Second Patriarch was originally named Shengguang. Later, it was further said that he returned to India. Bodhidharma was buried beneath Mount Xiong'er. At that time, Song Yun was returning westward on an imperial mission when, in the western ranges, he saw Bodhidharma carrying a single sandal in his hand and heading west toward India. When Song Yun returned, he reported this to the emperor. The grave was opened, and only one sandal was found left behind. Xuedou said: how, in truth, was this matter transmitted? Since there was no transmission, why did they say, "Rolling up his robe, he returned to India"? Tell me, why?

Yet in this land there are two and three, passed down from one to another in this way. Here, there is no harm in wild talk, but you must grasp it before you can enter into activity. "Vast India—there is nowhere to seek him; last night, however, he lodged opposite Breast Peak." Tell me, where is he now? The master then struck and said, "Blind!"

[Xinming]: What is the nirmāṇakāya?

[Lvm]: It does not contain the six.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: May I ask, Teacher?

Essential Teachings on the Transmission of Mind: The master said, "If one is of superior capacity, why seek it from another? Even one's own self cannot be obtained; how much less can there be some separate dharma before one's mind. Have you not seen the teachings say: 'What form does each dharma have?'"

May I ask, Teacher: what does "What form does each dharma have?" mean?

[Lvm]: "What form does each dharma have?"—what shape do these dharmas have? It means that no dharma can be obtained.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Thank you, Teacher! So there was an explanation earlier on!

"What form does each dharma have?"—Where else would one seek it from another? One's own self cannot be obtained; how much less can there be some separate dharma before one's mind?

Question: What is the dharmakāya? Yunmen said, "The six do not contain it."

Patriarch Linji said, "The pure light of mind in a single thought is the dharmakāya Buddha."

Patriarch Huangbo said, "If one is of superior capacity, why seek it from another? Even one's own self cannot be obtained; how much less can there be some separate dharma before one's mind. Have you not seen the teachings say: 'What form does each dharma have?'" He also said, "If you do not seek, then rest."

[Xinming]: How should we understand, "Rolling up his robe, they further say that he returned to India"?

[lvm]: This is the allusion of "returning west with a single sandal."

Bodhidharma was buried beneath Mount Xiong'er. At that time, Song Yun was returning westward on an imperial mission when, in the western ranges, he saw Bodhidharma carrying a single sandal in his hand and heading west toward India. When Song Yun returned, he reported this to the emperor. The grave was opened, and only one sandal was found left behind.

[Dingling]: Teacher, what is the allusion behind "three lives and sixty kalpas"? Please do not give us another "the six do not contain it"!

[Lvm]: It is like the current colloquial expression: "Ages ago!"

[Dingling]: Teacher: knowing and understanding are both already the second level, so why say, “Only the old barbarian is permitted to know; the old barbarian is not permitted to understand”?

[Lvm]: Then let us put it this way: “Only the old barbarian is permitted the first level; the old barbarian is not permitted the second level.”

[Dingling]: Why does it say, “When did Bodhidharma ever dream of this?”

[Lvm]: It is commenting on “Even the blue-eyed barbarian monk does not number among them.”

[Dingling]: It has nothing to do with the blue-eyed grandpa. Clearly, it is Xuedou who never dreamed of it—hee hee.

[Shancai]: Ha ha, does a child not mind that his mother is ugly?

To comment on “Even the blue-eyed barbarian monk does not number among them” is truly to understand repaying kindness.

[Dingling]: “When did Bodhidharma ever dream of this?” Why do you knowingly transgress?

[Shancai]: Bodhidharma never dreamed of it.

[Dingling]: I do not know.

[Shancai]: Ha ha, do not be hasty~

[zxb]: May I ask, Teacher, what are “matters at the measure of the dharmakāya”?

[Lvm]: It means having only just reached the edge of the dharmakāya.

[Yongshou Youth] (replying to [zxb]: “May I ask, Teacher, what are ‘matters at the measure of the dharmakāya’?”): Dew resembles pearls; the moon resembles a bow.

[Mind-Monk]: May I ask, Youth: what is the matter beyond the dharmakāya?

[Yongshou Youth]: A pole of bright moon fishes the autumn wind.

[Zxb]: “If you grasp it before signs have arisen, that is already the second level”—how can one reach the first level?

[Lvm]: Before signs have arisen.

[Zxb]: Teacher, one saying from you is worth a thousand pieces of gold beyond exchange. I bow in homage to a true spiritual friend.

[Lvm]: Without words, one can deliberate it; without mind, one can realize it; without desire, one can attain it.

[Mind-Monk]: Teacher, do you not also want this little monk to laugh upon hearing it?

[Lvm]: Then you may laugh as well.

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi] (replying to [Lvm]: “Before signs have arisen.”): That is already the second level.

[Shancai]: Let us provisionally call it the first level.

[Mind-Monk]: Ha ha! Would that not make it the third level?

[Shancai]: Ha—you can also infer three from one!

[Jueming]: Teacher, what then when the six do not contain it?

[lvm]: With that “what then” present, even seven and eight are contained.

[48] The Senior Monk Overturns the Tea Kettle

[Forty-Eight] Seat-Monk Lang Overturns the Tea Kettle

[Forty-Eight] The case:

Grand Tutor Wang entered Zhaoqing. Tea was being prepared. [When adepts gather, there must be something extraordinary. When nothing unusual is happening, everyone must keep one eye open. Trouble is about to arise.]

At that time, Seat-Monk Lang and Mingzhao were handling the kettle. [These fellows are playing with mud. Unable to make tea, they burden others.]

Lang overturned the tea kettle. [An incident has arisen. Just as expected.]

Seeing this, the Grand Tutor asked the seat-monk, “What is beneath the tea stove?” [Sure enough, trouble.]

Lang said, “The stove-bearing spirit.” [Sure enough, he has been struck by the arrow. Still, it is not without something extraordinary.]

The Grand Tutor said, “If it is the stove-bearing spirit, why did you overturn the tea kettle?” [Why not give him his proper fodder? Another incident has arisen.]

Lang said, “After serving as an official for a thousand days, one fails in a single morning.” [A mistaken citation. What sort of saying is this? Fabricated Chan practitioners are as numerous as hemp and millet.]

The Grand Tutor flicked his sleeves and left. [Clearly an adept. One may grant that he has an eye.]

Mingzhao said, “Seat-Monk Lang has eaten Zhaoqing’s food, yet he goes beyond the river to gather wild burnt tree stumps.” [Give him another thirty blows. This one-eyed fellow! A dragon has only one eye. Yet it still takes one with clear eyes to expose it.]

Lang said, “How would the Master respond?” [Pressed to the wall. It is well to press him too. In the end, do not hold such a dead and rigid view.]

Mingzhao said, “A nonhuman has found an advantage.” [Sure enough, he has only one eye. He has said only half of it. One hand raises him up, while the other presses him down.]

Xuedou said, “At that moment, simply knock over the tea stove.” [But he draws the bow after the thief has passed. Even so, he still does not measure up as a disciple of Deshan. They are equally reckless fellows, yet this one is extraordinary.]

To understand the meaning of Buddha-nature, one should contemplate the causes and conditions of the time.

Grand Tutor Wang governed Quanzhou and had long studied under Zhaoqing. One day, when he entered the monastery, Seat-Monk Lang was making tea and overturned the tea kettle. The Grand Tutor was also an adept. As soon as he saw Lang overturn the kettle, he asked, “What is beneath the tea stove?” Lang said, “The stove-bearing spirit.” His words were not without resonance, but beginning and end contradicted each other. He lost the essential principle, blunted the edge, and injured his own hand.

Not only did he betray himself, but he also offended another. Although this is a matter in which there is neither gain nor loss, once it is raised, there are still intimacy and estrangement, black and white. In discussing this matter, it does not lie in words and phrases, yet one must discern its living point within words and phrases. Thus it is said: one studies living words, not dead words.

Given that Seat-Monk Lang spoke in this way, he was like a mad dog chasing a clod. The Grand Tutor flicked his sleeves and left, apparently unwilling to accept him.

Mingzhao said, “Seat-Monk Lang has eaten Zhaoqing’s food, yet he goes beyond the river to gather wild burnt tree stumps.” Such stumps are fire-charred wooden posts in the wilderness; they are called wild stumps. This means that Seat-Monk Lang did not proceed in the proper direction, but went off toward the outside. Lang pressed him, saying, “How would the Master respond?” Mingzhao said, “A nonhuman has found an advantage.” Mingzhao naturally had a way out and did not fail the question put to him. Thus it is said: a keen dog bites people without baring its teeth.

Chan Master Zhe of Guishan said: “Grand Tutor Wang was much like Xiangru recovering the jade disc, until his beard and cap were thrown into disarray.” Mingzhao could not suppress his amusement, for it was hard to encounter such an opening. If Great Guishan had been Seat-Monk Lang, then upon seeing the Grand Tutor flick his sleeves and leave, he would have set down the tea kettle and burst into laughter. Why? If, on seeing it, you do not seize it, such an opportunity will be hard to meet in a thousand years.”

Have you not seen Baoshou ask Hu Dingjiao, “I have long heard of Hu Dingjiao. Are you indeed that person?” Hu said, “Yes.” Baoshou said, “Can you also nail empty space?” Hu said, “Please break it open and bring it here.” Baoshou then struck him. Hu would not accept this. Baoshou said, “One day there will be some talkative masters who will explain it for you.” Later Hu met Zhaozhou and brought up this earlier exchange.

Zhaozhou said, “Why did he strike you?” Hu said, “I do not know where my fault lay.” Zhaozhou said, “You cannot even manage this one crack, yet you would have him break open empty space and bring it here!” Hu then let it go. Zhaozhou spoke on his behalf: “Just nail this one crack.” Hu thereupon had an awakening.

When Master Mi Qi of Jingzhao returned from pilgrimage, an elder monk asked him, “At night, people see a rope in a dry well and all call it a snake. When Master Qi sees the Buddha, what does he call it?” Master Qi said, “If there is anything seen, it is the same as sentient beings.” The elder monk said, “You too are a peach pit of a thousand years.”

National Teacher Zhong asked Attendant Zilin, “I have heard that you are skilled at annotating the Si Yi Sutra. Is that so?” The attendant said, “Yes.” The National Teacher said, “Whenever one annotates a sūtra, one must first understand the Buddha’s intent.” The attendant said, “If I did not understand its intent, how would I dare speak of annotating a sūtra?” The National Teacher then had an attendant bring a bowl of water, seven grains of rice, and one chopstick laid across the bowl, and send them to the attendant. He asked, “What is the meaning of this?” The attendant said, “I do not understand.” The National Teacher said, “You do not even understand the old teacher’s intent, so why speak of the Buddha’s intent?”

Grand Tutor Wang and Seat-Monk Lang had more than one such exchange. At the end, Xuedou said, “At that moment, simply knock over the tea stove.” Though Mingzhao was thus, he still did not equal Xuedou. Xuefeng served as cook under Dongshan. One day, while rinsing rice, Dongshan asked, “What are you doing?” Xuefeng said, “Rinsing rice.”

Dongshan said, “Are you rinsing away the sand to keep the rice, or rinsing away the rice to keep the sand?” Xuefeng said, “Sand and rice both go away at once.” Dongshan said, “What will the assembly eat?” Xuefeng then overturned the basin. Dongshan said, “Your causes and conditions are not here.” Even so, how could this compare with Xuedou’s words, “At that moment, simply knock over the tea stove”? Though they are of one kind, when the moment comes for his use, he naturally makes the old and new come alive and has a free and vital way through. The verse says:

When the question comes like a wind, [The arrow never misses. An impromptu composition, yet it is remarkably subtle.]

Responding to the occasion is not skillful. [A fellow playing with mud. What limits are there? A square peg fitted into a round hole. Yet he happened upon an adept.]

Pitiful is the one-eyed dragon, [He has only a pair of eyes. He gets only one stump.]

Who has never displayed fangs and claws. [There are no fangs or claws to display. Why speak of fangs and claws? Yet one must not deceive him.]

When fangs and claws open, [Do you see? Xuedou is somewhat better. If one had such hands and feet, one would knock over the tea stove.]

Clouds and thunder arise, [Everyone throughout the whole earth receives blows at once. Chan monastics everywhere have nowhere to stand. A thunderclap in a clear sky.]

How many times have the waves gone against the current? [Seventy-two blows become one hundred and fifty.]

“When the question comes like a wind, responding to the occasion is not skillful.” The Grand Tutor’s question was like swinging an axe so swiftly that it made wind. This comes from the Zhuangzi. A man of Ying had plastered a wall, leaving a small opening, and then filled it by throwing round pellets of mud. A little mud fell upon the tip of his nose. A craftsman beside him said, “Sir, you filled the opening skillfully. I will swing my axe and remove the mud from your nose.” The mud on the tip of his nose was as thin as a fly’s wing, and he had the craftsman chop it away.

The craftsman swung his axe so that it made wind and chopped away all the mud without injuring the man’s nose. The man of Ying stood unmoved and did not change expression. Thus, both were skillful. Although Seat-Monk Lang responded to the occasion, his words lacked skillfulness. Therefore Xuedou said, “When the question comes like a wind, responding to the occasion is not skillful.”

“Pitiful is the one-eyed dragon, who has never displayed fangs and claws.” What Mingzhao said was indeed most extraordinary, but he lacked the fangs and claws that seize clouds and grasp mists. Xuedou, standing beside him, did not approve. Unable to suppress his amusement, he vented Lang’s resentment on his behalf. Xuedou secretly followed Lang’s intent and composed a verse on his words, “Knock over the tea stove.”

“When fangs and claws open, clouds and thunder arise; how many times have the waves gone against the current?” Yunmen said, “I do not expect you to have waves that go against the current; it is enough if you have the intention to go with the current.” Thus it is said: “If you realize it beneath a living phrase, you will not go astray through countless eons.” The words of Seat-Monk Lang and Mingzhao seem dead. If you wish to see their living point, simply look at Xuedou’s knocking over the tea stove.

[Iron Broom] asked: “What is beneath the tea stove?” Please, each of you add one sentence. You may not knock over the tea stove.

[lvm] replied: “The attendants of fire.”

[Lotus Farmer] replied: “The broom has one eye!”

[Mind Bright] replied: “It is you—in the depths of water and fire.”

[Dingling]: What does “unable to suppress his amusement, for it was hard to encounter such an opening” mean?

[lvm]: It means that such a funny thing is seldom seen, so he could not help laughing.

[Dingling]: What does “one hand raises up, while the other presses down” mean?

[lvm]: It means praising on one side while criticizing on the other.

[Mind Monk]: Teacher, may I ask: which side is praise, and which side is criticism?

[lvm]: Ah! It has to do with the Chan style.

One hand raises up—Seat-Monk Lang has eaten Zhaoqing’s food;

One hand presses down—yet he goes beyond the river to gather wild burnt tree stumps.

[Mind Monk]: Ha ha~~

[Little Ant]: And another question, Teacher: if it is the stove-bearing spirit, why did it overturn the tea kettle?

[lvm]: Bearing the stove is not as good as bearing a person.

[zxb]: Amitābha Buddha—wonderful!

Teacher, then what is meant by bearing a person?

[lvm]: This is how one bears a person: recite “Amitābha Buddha” once and cry “Wonderful!” once.

[zxb]: Amitābha Buddha.

[Dingling]: Teacher, what does “If, on seeing it, you do not seize it, such an opportunity will be hard to meet in a thousand years” mean?

[lvm]: When flowers are fit to be plucked, pluck them at once; do not wait until there are no flowers, only to break empty branches.

[Dingling]: A keen dog bites people without baring its teeth.

[zxb]: Teacher, what does it mean for flowers to be fit to be plucked? And what is it to have no flowers?

[lvm]: When they are fit to be plucked but are not plucked—if, on seeing it, you do not seize it.

Waiting for flowers when there are no flowers—such an opportunity will be hard to meet in a thousand years.

[zxb]: Flowers naturally bloom and fade; what benefit is there in plucking them?

[lvm]: What benefit is there in plucking them?

Do not be deceived by plucking and clinging!

[49] Sansheng’s Golden Fish That Has Passed Through the Net

[49] The Golden-Scaled Fish That Has Broken Through the Net

Introductory Instruction: Piercing through seven times and eight ways, seizing the drum and capturing the flag; circling a hundred times and winding through a thousand layers, looking ahead and behind. To sit astride a tiger’s head and grasp its tail is still not the work of a true adept. For an ox’s head to vanish and a horse’s head to reappear is not yet extraordinary. But when one who transcends all measure arrives, what then? Try raising this and see.

[49] The Case:

Sansheng asked Xuefeng, “What does the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net eat?” [It is indeed free to move in all directions. This question is pitched too high. You ought simply to know for yourself; why ask further?]

Xuefeng said, “When you have come out of the net, I will tell you.” [This greatly diminishes the other’s standing. A master of the school is naturally at ease.]

Sansheng said, “A good teacher to fifteen hundred people, and you do not even recognize a huatou.” [Like a thunderclap and lightning bolt, enough to startle the whole crowd. Let him leap about as he pleases.]

Xuefeng said, “This old monk is busy with the affairs of the monastery.” [He is not concerned with winning or losing. He lets one move pass. These words are most venomous.]

Although Xuefeng and Sansheng exchanged attack and retreat, pressure and counterpressure, no victory or defeat was determined. Tell me, then: what kind of eyes did these two venerable masters possess?

After Sansheng received the transmission from Linji, he traveled throughout the various regions, everywhere being received as an honored guest. Observe how he posed this question—so many people could not find their way into it. Without touching upon the Buddhist Dharma of principle and nature, he simply asked, “What does the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net eat?” What was his intent? Ordinarily, a golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net does not eat fragrant bait; what, then, does it eat?

Xuefeng was a true adept. Seeming at ease, he responded with only a small portion, saying, “When you have come out of the net, I will tell you.” Fenyang called this a question that displays one’s understanding; the Dongshan lineage called it a question borrowed from an affair. Only one who transcends the ordinary and exceptional alike, who has attained great freedom of use, and who has an eye at the crown of the head, can be called a golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net. Yet Xuefeng was a true adept, and did not hesitate to diminish the other’s standing. Thus he said, “When you have come out of the net, I will tell you.”

Look at these two: each held his territory firmly, standing like a sheer wall ten thousand fathoms high. Had he not been Sansheng, he could not have gone on after that single remark. Yet Sansheng too was a true adept, and so he could say to him, “A good teacher to fifteen hundred people, and you do not even recognize a huatou.” Xuefeng then said, “This old monk is busy with the affairs of the monastery.” How utterly defiant those words are!

When true adepts meet, one restrains and one releases; encountering strength, they appear weak; meeting the lowly, they appear noble. If you interpret this in terms of victory and defeat, you have not even dreamed of seeing Xuefeng. Look at the two of them: at first they are solitary, perilous, and precipitous; in the end, both are completely deadlocked. Tell me, is there any gain or loss, victory or defeat? Their exchange as true adepts is certainly beyond the understanding of those who do not know this.

Sansheng served as monastery steward under Linji. When Linji was about to pass away, he gave this instruction: “After I am gone, do not destroy my Treasury of the True Dharma Eye.” Sansheng came forward and said, “How could I dare destroy the Master’s Treasury of the True Dharma Eye?” Linji said, “If someone later asks you about it, what will you do?” Sansheng immediately gave a shout. Linji said, “Who would have known that my Treasury of the True Dharma Eye would be extinguished by this blind donkey?” Sansheng then bowed. He was Linji’s true heir, and only thus did he dare to exchange words in this manner. At the end, Xuedou composed a verse only on the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net, revealing the point at which true adepts meet. The verse says:

The golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net—[A thousand soldiers are easy to obtain; one general is hard to find. How can this compare with being alive? A thousand sages can do nothing about it.]

Do not say it lingers in stagnant water. [It stands beyond the clouds. Lively and alive! Do not encumber what is good.]

It shakes heaven and stirs earth, [A true adept! A true adept! Yet this is not where its extraordinariness lies. What harm is there in letting it loose?]

Shaking its mane and swishing its tail. [Who would dare discern its traces? Having acquired such a trick, it displays it—enough to startle the crowd.]

A thousand-foot whale spouts, and vast waves fly; [It turns to the other side. Truly extraordinary. It swallows everyone on the whole earth in a single gulp.]

At a single thunderclap, a clear gale rises. [With eyes and ears, they are as deaf and blind. Who would not be awestruck?]

A clear gale rises—[Where is it? Hah!]

How many in heaven and on earth know it? [Xuefeng firmly holds the front of the battle line; Sansheng firmly holds the rear. Why scatter dirt and sand about? A shout: Where are you?]

“The golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net—do not say it lingers in stagnant water.” Wuzu said, “This one line completes the verse.” Since it is a golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net, how could it dwell in stagnant water? It must be amid vast surging billows and waves that tower to the sky. Tell me: throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, what does it eat? All of you, right there beneath your three rafters and before your seven-foot sitting platform, try settling the matter and see.

Xuedou said that this matter may be taken up and played with according to one’s capacity. When a creature such as the golden-scaled fish shakes its mane and swishes its tail, heaven and earth are set trembling, and a thousand-foot whale spouts as vast waves fly. This verse praises Sansheng’s words: “A good teacher to fifteen hundred people, and you do not even recognize a huatou.” It is like a whale spouting vast waves.

“At a single thunderclap, a clear gale rises” praises Xuefeng’s words, “This old monk is busy with the affairs of the monastery.” It is like “at a single thunderclap, a clear gale rises.” In general, the verse praises both of them as true adepts.

“A clear gale rises; how many in heaven and on earth know it?” Tell me: where does this line land? A gale is wind. When a clear gale rises, how many in heaven and on earth can know it?

[Moon]: Two clay oxen have fought their way into the sea. Ha ha.

[lvm]: Ha ha! It seems as though I can see the two of them “seizing one another and entering the abbot’s quarters.”

[Moon]: May I ask whether “two clay oxen fighting their way into the sea” and “seizing one another and entering the abbot’s quarters” are the same or different?

[Mind Monk]: Your question is acceptable. Bow and withdraw.

[lvm] (in reply to [Moon]’s question, “Are ‘two clay oxen fighting their way into the sea’ and ‘seizing one another and entering the abbot’s quarters’ the same or different?”): The same is the full moon; the difference is the waning moon.

[Moon]: A grown man, yet you do not even recognize a huatou—shout!

[lvm]: If that is so, how could I possibly explain it?

Then let it remain inexplicable. Blame me for speaking too much afterward!

[Lele]: Even Buddhas and patriarchs could not grasp it; whoever does may simply rest.

[lvm]: Then I shall rest.

[Cicada] (in reply to [Moon]’s question, “Are ‘two clay oxen fighting their way into the sea’ and ‘seizing one another and entering the abbot’s quarters’ the same or different?”): The fox’s feet are showing beneath the horsehide. :)

I had thought, I had thought—yet it turns out, it turns out.

[Moon]: Ha ha, horse’s feet, horse’s feet; topsy-turvy, topsy-turvy. When will today and tomorrow ever end?

[Cicada]: Senior brother, have you not read that koan involving Chan Masters Linji and Magu?

[Moon]: No. Tell me about it.

[Cicada]: Magu came to pay his respects. Spreading out his sitting cloth, he asked, “The twelve-faced Avalokiteśvara—which face is the true one?”

The Master descended from the rope bed. With one hand he gathered up the sitting cloth; with the other he seized Magu, saying, “The twelve-faced Avalokiteśvara—where has it gone?”

Magu turned around and made to sit on the rope bed. The Master picked up his staff and struck him. Magu caught it, and they seized one another and entered the abbot’s quarters.

[Cicada]: Was this exchange between two adepts not precisely “two clay oxen fighting their way into the sea”?

[Moon]: Indeed, the two old masters understood it. But what did they understand? If you can say it, thirty blows; if you cannot say it, thirty blows.

[Cicada]: Earlier you yourself said, “Two clay oxen have fought their way into the sea.”

[Mind Bright]: “What are you busy with?”

Sansheng asked Xuefeng, “What does the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net eat?”

Xuefeng said, “When you have come out of the net, I will tell you.”

Sansheng said, “A good teacher to fifteen hundred people, and you do not even recognize a huatou.”

Xuefeng said, “This old monk is busy with the affairs of the monastery.”

Question: What are you busy with?

[lvm]: Busy with the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net.

[Mind Bright]: Busy with nothing?

[lvm]: Once it has left the net, there is nothing to be busy with.

[Mind Bright]: Master, please bring out the net.

[lvm]: You have made things very difficult for lvm.

[Mind Bright]: Today I finally win half a round!

[lvm]: Yet I have lost half.

[Mind Monk] (in reply to [lvm]: “Busy with the golden-scaled fish that has broken through the net.”): Do not take yellow-leaf cakes to deceive little children!

[lvm]: From now on, I will no longer encumber you.

[Mind Monk]: From later back to now, you still cannot refine this little monk!

[lvm]: Then lvm will rest.

[Big Rough Fellow] (in reply to [lvm]: “From now on, I will no longer encumber you.”): What does “encumber” mean?

[lvm]: “Encumber” means fooling a big rough fellow.

[Big Rough Fellow]: What does “refine this little monk” mean?

[Mind Monk]: It means molding a big rough fellow like you into an elegant person~~

[Big Rough Fellow]: What does “refine” mean?

[Mind Monk]: Ha ha~~ It means fooling you too!

[Lotus Farmer]: Tell me, then: when one who transcends all measure arrives, what happens?

[lvm]: Both lotus and farmer.

[Lotus Farmer]: So the teacher also knows how to make up nonsense to fool people.

[lvm]: There—you who transcend all measure have arrived.

[Lotus Farmer]: Ding-ling-ling. Class has begun.

Stand. Bow respectfully. Good day, Teacher. Good day, classmates. Sit down.

The teacher says: “One, two, three, four, five—up the mountain to hunt a tiger. The tiger is not at home, so we catch a little squirrel instead.”

The student thinks: Spring is no time for studying; the blazing summer days are just right for sleeping. In autumn there are mosquitoes and fleas aplenty; throw away the schoolbag and celebrate the New Year.

Ring-ring-ring. Class is over. Stand up. Salute. Goodbye, classmates. Goodbye, teacher.

lvm : ^o^

[Xin Seng] ([Lian Nong]: “Tell me, what should one do when a person of excessive measure comes?”): “Do not let him trample your lotus flowers!”

[Lian Nong]: “Ha-ha, who would have thought that [Xin Seng] is such a ruthless flower destroyer!”

[Xing Yuan]: “Does ‘the golden-scaled fish that has slipped through the net’ mean: What does a fish that will not take the hook eat?”

lvm : “First lure them with the hook of desire, then lead them into the Buddha’s wisdom” may be compared to fish bait.

A golden fish that has passed through the net—a fish that does not eat bait. It is a metaphor for practitioners of the very highest capacity, who need no hook of desire to draw them on.

What, then, does a golden fish that has passed through the net eat?—A fish that does not need bait: what does such a fish eat?

[Da Lao Cu]: “I bow in homage to you, Elder! Your explanation is excellent—I can understand it!”

But this is hard work! If the Dharma brothers who have gone before us could contribute a little more, as you have, then we later students would surely benefit greatly and advance ever higher!! Sigh!! ~~~

lvm : We were just discussing “encumbering”; this is precisely “encumbering.”

[Xing Yuan] (responding to [lvm]: “The golden-scaled fish that has slipped through the net—what does it feed on? A fish that does not need bait: what does such a fish eat?”): “It eats stones, perhaps…”

[Xin Ming]: “It eats Xing Yuan.”

lvm : Ha-ha! Grind it finely and bring it here.

[Cicada]: “I never expected that you had a taste for this.”

lvm : I do not want it overly delicate, but it has become too coarse instead.

Original text of the koan:

Chan Master Fu of Yunding Mountain was invited by the commander of Chengdu Prefecture to take the Dharma seat at the military headquarters. At that time, a commander from the military band came out, made obeisance, rose, looked back at the dismounting platform before the street, and said: “I will not ask about ‘drinking up all the water of the Western River in one gulp.’ But please, Reverend, swallow the dismounting platform before the street.” The master spread out both hands and sang, “Grind it finely and bring it here.” At these words, the military-band commander had an awakening.

The Elder’s marginal note:

It is so, but it is rather too delicate!

Sawing Apart a Steelyard Weight:

Chan Master Defu of Yunding was a Dharma heir of Chan Master Zhiyuan of Huguo in the Caodong school. One day, the commander-in-chief of Chengdu Prefecture invited Chan Master Defu to take the Dharma seat and teach at the military headquarters. An officer of the military band came out and paid homage to the Chan master. After completing his bows, he pointed to the dismounting platform and asked the master: “Chan speaks of ‘drinking up all the water of the Western River in one gulp.’ I will not ask about anything so large.

But could you, Reverend, swallow this little dismounting platform in one gulp?” Chan Master Defu spread out both hands and, as though playing military music, sang: “Play it delicately and bring it here.” This officer unexpectedly awakened at those very words.

Someone once explained “Play it delicately and bring it here” as “Grind it finely. Bring it here!” Jiang means “take.” That is, “Grind it into a fine powder and bring it to me!” This explanation makes good sense. Yet the words are plainly quite weighty, not at all “delicate” or “slender.” Why, then, did the Elder annotate them, “It is so, but it is rather too delicate!”?

You should know that the Chan master spoke it in song. “Play it delicately” means to perform the music carefully and attentively. “First bring me the military music that you have carefully performed, and then I will swallow the dismounting stone.” Military music is only sound; it has none of the characteristics of large or small, water or stone. How could it be brought here? Yet this officer entered into the signless at these words; he too was a person of exceptionally sharp capacity!

Ha-ha! To bring over the sound of military music is indeed “delicate.”

[Xing Yuan]: “I am really poor at classical allusions. In the future, please look after me, Elder Qi. Use a little modern Chinese. Thank you.”

lvm : Ha-ha! Read more; once you become accustomed to it, it will be fine.

Chan records are not pure classical Chinese; they are simply the plain vernacular of ancient times.

[Le Le]: “Raise one’s head and bump into the door lintel—Teacher, please explain what the instructional remark means.”

Seven penetrations and eight openings; beat the drum and seize the flag. A hundred turns and a thousand layers; look before and behind. Sitting on the tiger’s head and gathering in its tail is not yet the work of an adept. When the ox’s head disappears and the horse’s head turns back, that too is not remarkable.

[lvm]: “What these words mean is to take down the door lintel, so that [Le Le] will not bump into it.”

[Xing Yuan]: “That is so, but it is rather crude… hee-hee.”

lvm : ^o^

[Le Le]: “Vast and open, between heaven and earth.”

Vast and open between heaven and earth

The introductory remarks are made beneath low eaves

The introductory remarks are not introductory remarks

Vast and open of themselves

[Xing Yuan]: “Where does the huatou fall? From where does the wind come?”

“A clear gale rises; how many in heaven and on earth know it?” Tell me, where does this sentence fall? Biao means wind. When a clear gale rises, how many people in heaven and on earth can know it?

[Xin Seng]: “Ha-ha, where does your question fall?”

Know!

[Xing Yuan]: “Hee-hee, bring it out in fine detail!”

[Shan Cai]: “In ‘The golden-scaled fish that has slipped through the net—do not say it lingers in the water,’ does yun mean ‘say,’ or does it mean ‘clouds and mist’?”

Do not say it lingers in the water. [Stand beyond his clouds. Lively and free! Do not needlessly encumber it.]

It means clouds and mist.

“A golden fish that has passed through the net—do not say it lingers in the water.” The Fifth Patriarch said: “This one line alone completes the verse.” Since it is a golden fish that has passed through the net, how could it remain in stagnant water?

Again, it means “say.”

[lvm]: I have the original edition in traditional Chinese here. It reads “ ,” not “ .” It appears, then, to mean “say.”

[Da Lao Cu]: “I have noticed that everything you say is always supported by reasons and evidence—utterly unassailable!”

lvm : Ha-ha! You are not really such a crude fellow.

[Da Lao Cu]: “To tell you the truth!”

Writing really gives me a headache! It took tremendous effort just to… Do I need to work hard and read more in order to…?

lvm : Yes! As the saying goes, “Read ten thousand volumes until they are worn through, and your writing will flow as though inspired by a spirit.”

[50] Yunmen’s Dust-by-Dust Samādhi

50 Yunmen’s Samādhi in Every Particle of Dust

Pointer: Transcending all ranks and utterly surpassing expedient means, each capacity responds to each capacity, and every phrase accords with every phrase. Unless one has entered the gate of great liberation and gained the great function of liberation, how could one assess the Buddhas and patriarchs or serve as a model for the schools and vehicles? Tell me: when confronting the occasion directly and decisively, moving freely in adversity and accord, vertically and horizontally, how does one utter the phrase of emergence? Please raise it and examine it.

50 Case:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is the samādhi in every particle of dust?” (Monks everywhere make a nest here. Their mouths are full of frost. Why scatter sand and dirt?)

Yunmen said, “Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket.” (A cloth sack stuffed with awls. Gold sand mixed with gravel. Making the best of a mistake. Within the Hanyuan Hall, one does not ask about Chang’an.)

Can you determine it? If you can, Yunmen’s nostrils are in your hands. If you cannot, your nostrils are in Yunmen’s hands. Yunmen had a phrase as decisive as cutting through a nail and severing iron; within this one phrase are contained three phrases. When some people are asked, they immediately say, “Every grain of rice in the bowl is round; every drop of water in the bucket is manifest.” If you understand it this way, you still have not seen where Yunmen truly worked for others.

Verse:

Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket— (It is exposed already. Why scatter sand and dirt? Only after rinsing your mouth for three years will you attain it.)

A talkative master is hard to get one’s teeth into. (Pull your tongue back. Those who know the Dharma are wary. Why then present it in this way?)

The Northern Dipper and the Southern Star do not differ in their positions; (Why call east west? Sitting and standing are solemnly distinct. The tall have tall Dharma bodies; the short have short Dharma bodies.)

White waves tower to the sky, rising on level ground. (Several fathoms deep beneath your feet. Host and guest exchange places. Suddenly it is upon your head—what then will you do? Strike!)

Do you deliberate or not? (Blue heavens! Blue heavens! Bah!)

Do you stop or not? (What are you saying? You only add to your resentment and suffering.)

Every one of them is an elder's son without trousers. (There is no shortage of disarray. Onlookers sneer.)

Earlier, Xuedou praised Yunmen's saying, "In responding to one, I speak," with the words: "In responding to one, I speak—utterly solitary and exceptional; drive a wedge deep into an iron hammer without a hole." Later, he praised Mazu's saying, "Separate from the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations," with the words: "The head of the storehouse is white, the head of the sea is black; monks with clear eyes cannot comprehend it." If you penetrate this koan, you will then see this verse.

Xuedou immediately begins, "Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket": the words contain resonance, and the phrase reveals the potential.

"A talkative master is hard to get one's teeth into"—thereupon he provides you with a footnote. If you seek profundity and subtlety here, calculating doctrines, it becomes all the harder to get one's teeth into. Xuedou could have stopped here, but he preferred first to hold fast at the summit, fearing that someone in the assembly with eyes might see through it. Later, he had to make one further move: bending down for beginners, he opened up the verse so that people could see.

The Northern Dipper remains in the north, and the Southern Star remains only in the south. Thus it is said: "The Northern Dipper and the Southern Star do not differ in their positions; white waves tower to the sky, rising on level ground." Suddenly, waves arise on level ground—what then will you do? It is easy if you look at it on the level of phenomena; but if you seek beneath the mind faculty, in the end you cannot feel about and grasp it.

This is like an iron stake: you cannot move it, nor can you insert a word into it. If you deliberate, wishing to understand yet failing to understand, wishing to stop yet failing to stop, and wildly display a bag of muddle, that is precisely to be "every one an elder's son without trousers." A poem by Hanshan says: "The six extremes constantly bring suffering; / The nine dimensions are discussed in vain. / Those with talent are left amid grass and marsh; / Those without influence are shut behind thatched gates. / Though the sun rises, the cliffs remain dark; / Though the smoke clears, the valleys are still dim. / Among them are elders' sons — / Every one altogether without trousers."

Heart-Monk : Make the best of a mistake.

A monk asked Yunmen, "What is the samādhi in every particle of dust?"

This monk was so utterly muddled. How could this not itself be the samādhi in every particle of dust?

Yunmen said, "Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket."

Though there was no shortage of disarray, it nevertheless barely managed to stop his mouth.

Dingling : Teacher, what does the Hanshan poem in there mean?

lvm : It identifies the source of Xuedou's line, "Every one of them is an elder's son without trousers."

A poem by Hanshan says:

The six extremes constantly bring suffering; the nine dimensions are discussed in vain.

Those with talent are left amid grass and marsh; those without influence are shut behind thatched gates.

Though the sun rises, the cliffs remain dark; though the smoke clears, the valleys are still dim.

Among them are elders' sons—every one altogether without trousers.

Xuedou's verse says:

Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket; a talkative master is hard to get one's teeth into.

The Northern Dipper and the Southern Star do not differ in their positions; white waves tower to the sky, rising on level ground.

Do you deliberate or not? Do you stop or not? Every one of them is an elder's son without trousers.

[Dingling]: The character cannot be found in the dictionary.

Sudhana : Haha, from the look of it, it seems to mean “trousers.”

Dingling : Hey, what does that mean?

Sudhana : Perhaps it means naked and bare, clean and unadorned, innocent and guileless.

True-and-False Great Emptiness : Look it up in Kingsoft PowerWord.

, also written as : trousers with a full crotch, distinguished from crotchless outer trousers [trousers].

“Xiangru himself wore calf-nose trousers and worked together with Baoyong.” —Records of the Grand Historian

Also, for example: kunmao (trousers and cap); kunyi (underclothes); kunshi (a louse in one’s trousers, a metaphor for a hypocritical, pedantic, ritual-bound ‘gentleman’ seeking fame).

kūn

( ) kūn

An ancient term for trousers: trouser crotch. “A louse dwelling in one’s trousers” is a metaphor for shallow understanding.

Dingling : Teacher, how should one understand “The tall have tall Dharma bodies; the short have short Dharma bodies”? Hahaha.

lvm : It is easy if you look at it on the level of phenomena; but if you seek beneath the mind faculty, in the end you cannot feel about and grasp it.

Sudhana : If one must liberate Dingling by means of Dingling’s body, one speaks the Dharma by means of Dingling’s body.

Dingling : Their mouths are full of frost. Why scatter sand and dirt?

Sudhana : A thief may be petty, yet his wit surpasses that of a gentleman.

120ffhb (replying to Dingling : “Their mouths are full of frost. Why scatter sand and dirt?”): The hawk has already flown past Silla.

Sudhana : Haha, majestic beard and brows stand forth openly; in walking and sitting, one cannot yet reckon long and short.

Haha,

Majestic beard and brows stand forth openly; in walking and sitting, one cannot yet reckon long and short;

The cloth robe of Qingzhou cannot contain him; suddenly, by the Eastern River, he becomes a boatman plying an oar.

Iron Broom : Where are Yunmen’s nostrils?

lvm : Hold off on wielding the broom!

Moon : Gold sand mixed with gravel—make the best of a mistake. Even here, one must have discerning eyes in order not to be deceived by old Yunmen.

Iron Broom : What about after making the move? (Three replies follow.)

Moon replies: Within the Hanyuan Hall, one does not ask about Chang’an.

Dingling replies: Ash-headed and dirt-faced.

lvm replies: Do not stir up the rice in the bowl and the water in the bucket.

[51] After Yantou’s Final Utterance

[Case 51] After Yantou’s Final Phrase

The Blue Cliff Record, Volume Six, by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

Instruction: The moment there is right and wrong, the mind is thrown into confusion. If one does not fall into stages, there is no further groping. But tell me: is it letting go, or is it holding fast? At this point, if there remains even the slightest path of understanding, one is still stuck in verbal formulations and bound by circumstances and objects. It is all merely clinging to grass and leaning on trees. Even if one arrives at the state of solitary liberation, one cannot avoid gazing toward one’s native land from ten thousand miles away. Can you make it out? If not, simply investigate this present koan. Let us see.

[Case 51] The Case:

While Xuefeng was living in a hermitage, two monks came to pay their respects. [What are they doing? Their case has already been accepted.]

Seeing them arrive, Xuefeng propped open the hermitage door with his hand, leaned his body out, and said, “What is it?” [Demonic eyes! A flute without holes. Raising its head and wearing horns.]

The monks likewise said, “What is it?” [A mud pellet, a felt clapper. Arrowpoints meeting head-on.]

Xuefeng lowered his head and returned to the hermitage. [There are thorns in the rotten mud. Like a dragon without legs, like a snake with horns—hard indeed to handle.]

Later, the monks went to Yantou. [They still had to ask before it could be so. Only those on the same path understand.]

Yantou asked, “Where have you come from?” [It takes a true master to do this. This fellow repeatedly exposes a flaw. Had they not practiced together, he might have let it pass.]

The monks said, “We have come from Lingnan.” [What news have you brought? You must at least convey some news. Did you see Xuefeng?]

Yantou said, “Have you been to Xuefeng?” [He had seen through it long ago. One cannot say they had not been there.]

The monks said, “We have.” [Straightforward people are hard to find. Split it into two pieces.]

Yantou said, “What words did he say?” [So it goes.]

The monks related the preceding exchange. [So it goes. Again and again they reveal the flaw.]

Yantou said, “What did he say?” [Fine—strike him across the mouth! They have lost their noses already.]

The monks said, “He said nothing, lowered his head, and returned to his hermitage.” [Again they expose a flaw. Tell me, then: what was he?]

Yantou said, “Alas! At the time, I regretted not telling him the final phrase.” [Vast billows surge; white waves tower to the sky.]

“Had I told it to him, no one in the world could have done anything to old Xuefeng!” [A leper seeks companions—there is no need for that. Even Mount Sumeru must be shattered to powder. But tell me, where did he draw the boundary?]

At the end of the summer, the monks again brought up the earlier exchange and asked Yantou for instruction. [Already they were not alert. The true thief had long since departed; they drew the bow only after the thief had gone.]

Yantou said, “Why did you not ask earlier?” [He deserved to have his Chan seat overturned. Too late!]

The monks said, “We did not dare take it lightly.” [This monk deserved that blow. His nose has been pierced. Keeping a prisoner only increases his cunning. This is already a second koan.]

Yantou said, “Though Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we did not die on the same branch.” [A net spread over heaven and earth.]

“If you wish to know what lies after the final phrase, it is simply this.” [He has deceived a whole boatload of people—I do not believe it either! Yet when pressed, no explanation can be given.]

In general, to uphold and establish the school’s teaching, one must distinguish the appropriate occasion, know advance and retreat, right and wrong, and understand killing and giving life, seizing and releasing. If one’s eye is dim and muddled, then wherever there is a question, one asks; wherever there is an answer, one answers—without realizing that one’s nose is in another’s hand. Xuefeng and Yantou both studied under Deshan. This monk visited Xuefeng, but his understanding went only this far. When he later saw Yantou, he likewise failed to accomplish anything. In vain he troubled these two venerable elders with their questions and answers, their seizing and releasing. Even now, people everywhere make tangled knots and confused claims over this and cannot sort it out. But tell me: where are the tangled knots and confused claims?

Although Xuefeng traveled widely among the various communities, it was only at the inn on Mount Ao, when Yantou spurred him on, that he attained complete and thorough awakening. Later, when Yantou encountered the persecution of monastics, he became a ferryman by a lake. A board hung on each bank, and anyone wishing to cross struck the board once. Yantou would say, “You are crossing from that side,” then emerge from among the reeds, dancing his oar. Xuefeng returned to Lingnan and lived in a hermitage.

These monks too were long-time practitioners. When Xuefeng saw them coming, he propped open the hermitage door with his hand, leaned out, and said, “What is it?” Nowadays, some people, when questioned in this way, chew over the other’s words.

These monks too found it strange, and merely replied, “What is it?” Xuefeng lowered his head and returned to the hermitage. People often take this as his having gone back speechless, but the monks could find no way to grasp it.

Some say that Xuefeng, when questioned by the monks, was rendered speechless and returned to his hermitage. They do not realize that Xuefeng’s intent had a poisonous sting. Although Xuefeng gained the advantage, he could not conceal himself without revealing a trace. Later, these monks took leave of Xuefeng and brought this koan to Yantou for judgment. When they arrived, Yantou asked, “Where have you come from?” The monks said, “We have come from Lingnan.”

Yantou said, “Have you been to Xuefeng?” If you wish to see Xuefeng, this single question is enough; you must look at it with urgency. The monks said, “We have.” Yantou said, “What words did he say?” These words too were not casually uttered, but the monks did not understand and merely followed the current of his words. Yantou said, “What did he say?” The monks said, “He lowered his head, said nothing, and returned to his hermitage.”

The monks did not realize that Yantou had already walked back and forth several times in their bellies wearing straw sandals. Yantou said, “Alas! At the time, I regretted not telling him the final phrase. Had I told it to him, no one in the world could have done anything to old Xuefeng!” Yantou too supported the strong rather than the weak. The monks remained in utter darkness, unable to distinguish black from white. Full of doubt, they truly concluded that Xuefeng did not understand.

At the end of the summer, they again brought up the preceding exchange and asked Yantou for instruction. Yantou said, “Why did you not ask earlier?” This old fellow was calculating indeed. The monks said, “We did not dare take it lightly.” Yantou said, “Though Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we did not die on the same branch. If you wish to know what lies after the final phrase, it is simply this.” Yantou was altogether too unconcerned about his eyebrows! How, after all, do you understand this?

While Xuefeng was serving as cook in Deshan’s assembly, one evening after the meal Deshan carried his bowl down to the Dharma hall. Xuefeng said, “The bell has not rung and the drum has not sounded—where is this old fellow going with his bowl?” Deshan said nothing, lowered his head, and returned to the abbot’s quarters. Xuefeng reported this to Yantou, who said, “Great Deshan does not understand the final phrase.”

When Deshan heard of this, he had an attendant summon Yantou to the abbot’s quarters and asked, “Do you disapprove of this old monk?” Yantou quietly disclosed what he had said. The next day, when Deshan ascended the hall, he was different from usual. In front of the monks’ hall, Yantou clapped his hands and laughed loudly, saying, “Good! This old fellow understands the final phrase. Hereafter no one in the world will be able to do anything to him. Even so, he has only three years to live.”

In this koan, Xuefeng saw that Deshan was speechless and assumed he had gained the advantage, not realizing that he had fallen prey to a thief. Because he himself had once fallen prey to a thief, he later knew how to play the thief. Thus the ancients said, “Only with the final phrase does one reach the secure barrier.” Those who say that “Yantou surpassed Xuefeng” misunderstand it.

Yantou often used this device to instruct the assembly: “A person with clear eyes has no fixed mold: to turn things is above; to be turned by things is below.” As for this final phrase, even if one personally saw the patriarchs arrive, one still could not comprehend it. That evening after the meal, Deshan simply carried his bowl down to the Dharma hall. Yantou said, “Great Deshan still does not understand the final phrase.” Xuedou commented, “I had heard of a one-eyed dragon; it turns out that he had only one eye.” Yet they did not realize that Deshan was a toothless great tiger. If Yantou had not recognized this, how could he have known that yesterday and today were different?

Do you all wish to understand the final phrase? Only the old barbarian may know it; the old barbarian may not understand it. From ancient times to the present, koans have differed in ten thousand ways, like a forest of thorns. If you can pass through, no one in the world can do anything to you; the Buddhas of the three times stand in the lower wind. If you cannot pass through, Yantou says, “Though Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we did not die on the same branch.” This one sentence itself naturally provides a way out.

Xuedou’s verse says:

The final phrase—[It is already before words. You may think it real; look directly at it and you go blind.]

I speak it for you—[Even if the tongue falls out, it cannot be spoken. A head without a tail; a tail without a head.]

At the time when light and darkness are both present. [An old man entangled in vines. Like an ox without horns, like a tiger with horns—is this how each is?]

Born on the same branch, they understand one another. [What sort of clan is this? They have no dealings with one another: you go toward Xiaoxiang, I toward Qin.]

Not dying on the same branch—the difference is indeed exceptional. [The staff is in my hand; why blame this mountain monk? Why is your nose in another’s hand?]

Indeed exceptional—[Do you still want a beating? What is there to grope for?]

The yellow-headed, blue-eyed one must be carefully distinguished. [Everyone on earth is at a loss for words. I am thus, but others are not thus. Only the old barbarian may know it; the old barbarian may not understand it.]

North, south, east, west—return and come again. [Gather it in! Beneath your heels, five-colored threads still trail. I beg you for a staff.]

Late at night, together we gaze upon snow on a thousand crags. [Still half a month's journey away. Let snow blanket the earth, filling ditches and blocking valleys—no one understands. He too is only a blind fellow. Do you recognize the final phrase? Then strike!]

"The final phrase—I speak it for you." Xuedou's verse praises this final phrase. His intention is deeply to descend into the weeds and act in concert with others. The verse is indeed a verse, but it praises only a little of its outward adornment; to see through it completely is still not yet so.

He even dares to open his great mouth and say, "At the time when light and darkness are both present." He opens a route for you, yet with a single phrase he has also beaten you to death; afterward, he gives you an explanation. Once, Zhaoqing asked Luoshan, "What was Yantou's meaning in saying, 'Thus, thus; not thus, not thus'?" Luoshan called out, "Great Master." Zhaoqing answered.

Luoshan said, "Both light and darkness." Zhaoqing bowed in thanks and departed. Three days later he asked again, "The other day I received the Venerable Master's compassion, but I still could not see through it." Luoshan said, "I have already told you everything." Zhaoqing said, "The Venerable Master is carrying fire as he walks." Luoshan said, "If so, bring up the point of your doubt, Great Master, and ask."

Zhaoqing said, "What does 'both light and darkness' mean?" Luoshan said, "Born together and dying together." Zhaoqing then bowed in thanks and departed. Later, a monk asked Zhaoqing, "What is it when born together and dying together?" Zhaoqing said, "Shut that dog's mouth!" The monk said, "Great Master, shut your own mouth and eat your food."

A monk then came and asked Luoshan, "What is it like when there is shared birth but not shared death?" Luoshan said, "Like an ox without horns." The monk said, "What is it like when there is both shared birth and shared death?" Luoshan said, "Like a tiger wearing horns." The final phrase is precisely this principle. Among Luoshan's assembly was a monk who used this purport to ask Zhaoqing. Zhaoqing said, "Both sides know. Why? If I utter a phrase in the Eastern Continent of Victorious Body, the Western Continent of Goyānī also knows it. If I utter a phrase in heaven, the human realm also knows it. Mind knows mind; eye illumines eye."

To be born on the same stalk is still easy enough to see. To die on different stalks is altogether exceptional. Even Śākyamuni and Bodhidharma could not grope their way to it.

"North, south, east, and west—returning and coming": there is something of a fine state here.

"Deep in the night, together we watch the snow on a thousand crags." Tell me: is this both bright or both dark? Is it birth on the same stalk? Is it death on the same stalk? Monks with the eye—try distinguishing it.

Iron Broom "Deep in the night, together we watch the snow on a thousand crags"—at this time, is it not pitch-dark?

lvm You are speaking of both being dark. What about when both are bright?

Mind Monk Ha ha~~ All crows under heaven are equally black!

Iron Broom North, south, east, and west—returning and coming.?

lvm Ha ha! To know by thinking and attain by deliberating—what sort of business is that?

Iron Broom You have actually lured me off to a place no one can see—what misery!

Iron Broom "To die on different stalks is altogether exceptional"?

I think it is quite natural. Where does he say that it is exceptional?

lvm It is indeed exceptional; yellow heads and blue eyes must distinguish it. North, south, east, and west—returning and coming; deep in the night, together we watch the snow on a thousand crags.

Iron Broom Misty and watery.

lvm If it were not exceptional, how could you be so utterly confused?

Iron Broom The sun comes out and shines overhead; I carry my schoolbag to school.

Divine Awakening "Deep in the night, together we watch the snow on a thousand crags." Tell me: is this both bright or both dark? Is it birth on the same stalk? Is it death on the same stalk?

Dingling Ghost eyes! A holeless flute. Raising the head and wearing horns.

Eternal-Life Boy A leper seeking a companion?

Eternal-Life Boy I do not understand this sentence. Please help.

lvm It means finding someone to share the blame.

Eternal-Life Boy The three signs of awakening—are they before the final phrase or after it?

lvm Oh! I merely agree with those three points. I did not take them as signs of awakening.

Eternal-Life Boy Can a toothless great tiger bite anyone?

lvm Ha ha! Even if it has teeth, it cannot bite people at will.

[52] Zhaozhou Crosses Over Donkeys and Horses

[52] Zhaozhou Crosses Donkeys and Horses

[52] Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “I have long heard of Zhaozhou’s stone bridge, but having come here I see only a simple plank bridge.” [Someone has come to stroke the tiger’s whiskers. This, too, is the proper business of a patch-robed monk.]

Zhaozhou said, “You see only the plank bridge; you do not see the stone bridge.” [He is accustomed to having things his way. This old fellow has sold himself out.]

The monk said, “What is the stone bridge?” [He has taken the bait. Just as expected!]

Zhaozhou said, “It crosses donkeys and horses!” [Caught in a single cast of the net. Everyone throughout the whole earth is left without breath. Once dead, never to live again.]

Zhaozhou had a stone bridge, said to have been built by Li Ying, which remains famous throughout the land to this day. A lüezhuo is simply a single-log bridge.

That monk deliberately sought to diminish Zhaozhou’s radiance and asked, “I have long heard of Zhaozhou’s stone bridge, but having come here I see only a simple plank bridge.”

Zhaozhou immediately said, “You see only the plank bridge; you do not see the stone bridge.”

Judging from the monk’s question, it seemed merely like ordinary conversation. Zhaozhou cast his line to hook him, and the monk indeed took the bait. He then asked, “What is the stone bridge?”

Zhaozhou said, “It crosses donkeys and horses.” There is, after all, a way out within these words.

Zhaozhou was unlike Linji and Deshan, who wielded the staff and shout; he used words alone to kill and bring to life. Study this koan carefully: it seems no more than an ordinary contest of quick-witted repartee. Yet even so, it is not easy to come to terms with.

One day, while viewing the stone bridge with the head monk, Zhaozhou asked him, “Who built it?” The head monk said, “Li Ying built it.” Zhaozhou said, “Where did he begin when he built it?” The head monk had no reply. Zhaozhou said, “You ordinarily speak of the stone bridge, but when questioned, you do not even know where to begin.”

Another day, as Zhaozhou was sweeping the ground, a monk asked, “You are a good spiritual friend, Master. Why is there dust?” Zhaozhou said, “It came from outside.” The monk further asked, “Why is there dust in this pure monastery?” Zhaozhou said, “There is a little more, too.”

Again, a monk asked, “What is the Way?” Zhaozhou said, “The one beyond the wall.” The monk said, “I am not asking about that way; I ask about the great Way.” Zhaozhou said, “The great Way runs through Chang’an.”

Zhaozhou particularly employed this kind of device. Having arrived at a level that was plain, solid, and at ease, he did not wound the edge or offend the hand in guiding people. Naturally solitary and lofty, he was able to use this device. How marvelous!

Xuedou composed this verse:

When solitary peril is not established, the Way is truly lofty. [One must reach this ground before it can be so. The words still ring in one’s ears. He has given him the proper fodder.]

Once out at sea, one must still fish for a giant ao. [Sitting firmly at the crucial crossing, allowing neither ordinary beings nor sages to pass. Shrimp, clams, snails, and mussels are not worth asking about. A great man must not be in twos and threes.]

How laughable is old Guanxi, his contemporary, [There were also those who came in such a manner, and hands and feet that employed such contrivances.]

Who knew how to say, "Swift as an arrow," yet labored in vain. [He still falls short by half a month's journey. It resembles it, but is not it.]

"When solitary peril is not established, the Way is truly lofty." Xuedou praises the ordinary manner in which Zhaozhou guided people: he did not establish mystery or marvel, nor did he establish solitary peril. He was unlike those elsewhere who say that only by "shattering empty space, smashing Mount Sumeru, raising dust on the ocean floor, and making waves surge on Mount Sumeru" can one call it the Way of the patriarchs. Thus Xuedou said, "When solitary peril is not established, the Way is truly lofty." Sheer cliffs rising ten thousand fathoms display the extraordinary and numinous efficacy of the Buddhadharma.

Although solitary peril may be steep and lofty, it is not as good as not establishing solitary peril at all. Then one is simply ordinary and natural, rolling along freely: without being established, it establishes itself; without being lofty, it is lofty of itself. When the device emerges from solitary peril, only then is its mystery seen. Therefore Xuedou said, "Once out at sea, one must still fish for a giant ao." Observe how a lineage master endowed with the eye casually lets fall a single phrase or employs a single device: he does not fish for shrimp, clams, snails, or mussels, but directly fishes for a giant ao. This is indeed the work of an accomplished master. This line serves to illuminate the preceding koan.

"How laughable is old Guanxi, his contemporary." Have you not seen how a monk asked Guanxi, "I have long heard of Guanxi, but having arrived I see only a flax-soaking pond." Guanxi said, "You see only the flax-soaking pond; you do not see Guanxi." The monk said, "What is Guanxi?" Guanxi said, "Swift as an arrow!" Again, a monk asked Huanglong, "I have long heard of Huanglong, but having arrived I see only a red-spotted snake."

Huanglong said, "You see only a red-spotted snake; you do not see Huanglong." The monk said, "What is Huanglong?" Huanglong said, "Dragging along the ground." The monk said, "What if a garuḍa suddenly comes?" Huanglong said, "Its life could not be preserved." The monk said, "Then it would be eaten by it." Huanglong said, "Thank you for the offering." All this establishes solitary peril. It is not wrong, yet it cannot avoid requiring effort; in the end, it is not as good as Zhaozhou's ordinary manner. Therefore Xuedou said, "Who knew how to say, 'Swift as an arrow,' yet labored in vain."

Leaving Guanxi and Huanglong aside for the moment, when Zhaozhou said, "It crosses donkeys and horses," how do you understand it? Try to discern it.

[Xinming]: "The great Way runs through Chang'an"—what does "runs through" mean?

[lvm]: It simply means, "The great Way leads to Chang'an."

[Liannong]: Teacher LVM, where does one begin?

[lvm]: Just keep planting lotus roots; do not concern yourself with building bridges.

[Liannong]: Hehe, so it turns out that Teacher does not know how to build bridges either.

[lvm]: Not only do I not know how to build bridges; I do not even know how to plant lotus roots.

[Liannong]: Hehe, but there is one thing that is Teacher's special talent~~~~

Hoodwinking people like us who build bridges and plant lotus roots!

[lvm]: You are not exempt from it either.

[Liannong]: Hey!~~~~ Even so,

this little farmer bows in homage to Teacher—again and again!

[stone]: Here is my understanding and my question. Please explain it in detail, Teacher.

The stone bridge symbolizes the ultimate Way, and the single-log bridge symbolizes a lesser teaching. The visiting monk sees only the single-log bridge; this is precisely attachment to appearances.

To say that it crosses donkeys and horses means that the ultimate Way is vast and solid, accommodating all and carrying all across. Even if the visiting monk does not understand, he is still not outside it. In this sense, "it crosses donkeys and horses" means the same as "the great Way runs through Chang'an."

But Teacher, why does the author of the koan consider Chan Master Huanglong's answer inferior to Zhaozhou's?

Is it because Chan Master Huanglong's use of metaphor is less natural and plain than Zhaozhou's?

When he says that it is “not wrong,” does he mean that Huanglong’s answer also points to the ultimate Way, but is somewhat roundabout?

For example, does his reply, “Thank you for the offering,” mean that it is no great matter even if Huanglong is eaten—that it does not affect the main point?

Please explain this in detail, Teacher.

[lvm]:

Why does the author of the koan consider Chan Master Huanglong’s answer inferior to Zhaozhou’s?

* Because “when solitary peril is not established, the Way is truly lofty.”

Does his reply, “Thank you for the offering,” mean that it is no great matter even if Huanglong is eaten—that it does not affect the main point?

* “A monk asked Huanglong, ‘I have long heard of Huanglong, but having arrived I see only a red-spotted snake.’ Huanglong said, ‘You see only a red-spotted snake; you do not see Huanglong.’ The monk said, ‘What is Huanglong?’ Huanglong said, ‘Dragging along the ground.’ The monk said, ‘What if a garuḍa suddenly comes?’ Huanglong said, ‘Its life could not be preserved.’ The monk said, ‘Then it would be eaten by it.’ Huanglong said, ‘Thank you for the offering.’ All this establishes solitary peril. It is not wrong, yet it cannot avoid requiring effort; in the end, it is not as good as Zhaozhou’s ordinary manner.’

[stone]: Thank you, Teacher! May I ask one more question?

How should Chan Master Huanglong have answered in order not to establish solitary peril?

[lvm]: Zhaozhou is Zhaozhou, and Huanglong is Huanglong. If Huanglong adopted Zhaozhou’s style, it would inevitably be neither fish nor fowl. Please look:

A monk asked Huanglong, “I have long heard of Huanglong, but having arrived I see only a red-spotted snake.”

Huanglong said, “You see only a red-spotted snake; you do not see Huanglong.”

The monk said, “What is Huanglong?”

Huanglong said, “Moving clouds and spreading rain.”

[Lianming]: Hehe, why not say, “Swallowing clouds and eating rain”?

[lvm]: Perhaps he was not hungry.

[stone]: Teacher, what does “dragging along the ground” mean?

How does it differ in effect from “moving clouds and spreading rain”?

If, after Huanglong answered “moving clouds and spreading rain,” the visiting monk repeated his earlier question, then what?

The monk said, “What if a garuḍa suddenly comes?”

[lvm]: There are modern expressions of this sort too, such as “all wilted and listless.”

Oh! The previous post was not speaking about effect, but about Chan style—that is, manner.

Effect is not what is being discussed. If you wish to see effect here, try it now and see whether there is any effect. Listen—the ancient Buddhas have long since passed away!

[stone]: Thank you, Teacher!

I understand the difference between Chan style and effect.

But I still do not understand “the ancient Buddhas have long since passed away.”

Amitābha Buddha.

[lvm]: You tried it, and there was no effect.

[stone]: Thank you, Teacher! I think that wanting to see an effect is wrong.

[lvm]: And if you do not want to see an effect, is that then right?

[stone]: That is not right either.

Teacher, is it all right to understand it this way? When the earlier discussion says “not right” and this post says “not right,” their essential meaning is the same: neither is real.

The teacher did not say which phenomenon is right and which is not. It is simply that I have fallen into habitual patterns of thought and, for the moment, cannot turn back. I seek conclusions only amid the opposition of phenomena, negating yang with yin and negating yin with yang. Yet yin and yang mutually constitute one another; both belong to phenomena and have no reality. Whether in terms of phenomena or in essence, the two are equal. Without this, there is no that; without that, there is no this. If this is right, then that is also right; if this is not right, then that too is not right.

I suppose that, to some extent, this is also why the Sixth Patriarch, when transmitting the Dharma, said, “When asked about being, respond with nonbeing . . .”

This morning, while half asleep and half awake, a thought arose: the functioning of the six sense faculties does not actually obscure one’s intrinsic nature. What people lack is not intrinsic nature, but simply not knowing it and not knowing how to “use” it. At that time I thought of the teacher’s saying, “The ancient Buddhas passed long ago,” and wondered: Is the place (or time) where one uses the six sense faculties without being obscured by them the very place (or time) where the ancient Buddhas passed?

I again ask the teacher for guidance.

lvm : To recognize it is not to be wronged.

… At that time I thought of the teacher’s saying, “The ancient Buddhas passed long ago,” and wondered: Is the place (or time) where one uses the six sense faculties without being obscured by them the very place (or time) where the ancient Buddhas passed?

* There is no need to mourn the place (or time) where the ancient Buddhas passed. Simply learn from the ancient Buddhas to use the six sense faculties without being obscured by them.

stone : Thank you, Teacher, for your guidance!

Iron Broom : The donkeys and horses in my household will not obey me. How can I ferry them across?

The Grass Bandit Is Soundly Defeated : Go home and call the master.

Iron Broom : The master has gone away traveling!

Lotus Farmer : You are telling a barefaced lie!

The Grass Bandit Is Soundly Defeated : Brother Chan Staff, would you please take this broom to the storage room?

lvm (in reply to Iron Broom : “The donkeys and horses in my household will not obey me. How can I ferry them across?”): Then see neither a stone bridge nor a narrow footbridge.

Iron Broom : Thank you, Teacher, for ferrying me across.

Sudhana : I have burdened the teacher.

[53] Mazu and Baizhang: Wild Ducks

[Case 53] Mazu and Baizhang: Wild Ducks

Pointer: The entire realm does not conceal it; the whole functioning stands forth alone. Encountering circumstances, there is no obstruction; in every move there is an opportunity to break free. In every utterance there is no partiality; at every turn lies the intent to kill. Tell me, where, after all, did the ancients come to rest? Let us raise the case and see.

[Case 53] The Case:

As Master Mazu and Baizhang were walking together, they saw some wild ducks fly past. [Two fellows who have fallen into the weeds, rolling about in the grass. Why suddenly turn your head?]

The Master said, “What is that?” [The monk should know. This old fellow does not even know where his nostrils are.]

Baizhang said, “Wild ducks.” [His nostrils are already in someone else’s hands. He simply makes an offering. A second ladleful of foul water is even more poisonous.]

The Master said, “Where have they gone?” [The first arrow was still light; the latter arrow strikes deep. A second pecking—he should know himself.]

Baizhang said, “They have flown away.” [He simply follows after them. He misses it right before his face.]

The Master then twisted Baizhang’s nose. [The nostrils bestowed by one’s parents are nevertheless in someone else’s hands. Turn the spearpoint around; twist his nostrils around!]

Baizhang cried out in pain. [It is right here. Can you still call it wild ducks? Do you still know pain and itch?]

The Master said, “When did they ever fly away?” [Do not try to deceive people. This old fellow, it turns out, has merely been making his livelihood in a ghost cave.]

Viewed with the true eye, Baizhang possessed the proper cause, while Master Mazu stirred up waves where there was no wind. All of you who wish to take the Buddhas and patriarchs as your teachers should investigate Baizhang. Those who cannot save themselves should investigate Patriarch Mazu.

Observe how this ancient, throughout the twenty-four hours, was never absent from this. Baizhang left worldly life in his youth and was thoroughly trained in the three studies. When Great Quiescence was teaching in Nanchang, Baizhang devoted himself to him and relied upon him, serving as his attendant for twenty years. When he later came to see him again, he at last attained great awakening upon hearing a shout. Nowadays some say, “Originally there is no place of awakening; one establishes this matter by creating a gate of awakening.” If this is your understanding, you are like an insect in a lion’s body eating the lion’s flesh. Have you not seen the ancient’s saying: “If the source is not deep, the stream will not flow far; if wisdom is not great, one’s vision will not reach far”? If the Buddhadharma were to be understood as something established in this way, could it have endured until today?

Observe how, as Mazu and Baizhang were walking together, they saw wild ducks fly past. Did the Master not know that they were wild ducks? Why then did he ask in this manner? Tell me, where did his intention lie? Baizhang merely followed after them; Mazu then twisted his nostrils, and Baizhang cried out in pain. Mazu said, “When did they ever fly away?” Baizhang thereupon awakened.

Nowadays some misunderstand this: as soon as they are questioned, they cry out in pain, delighted that they cannot leap free! A lineage master, in guiding people, must teach them thoroughly. Seeing that they do not understand, he cannot avoid wounding the blade and hurting his hand; he only wants them to clarify this matter. Thus it is said, “If one understands, one can make use of it amid circumstances; if one does not understand, it becomes merely conventional truth in circulation.” Had Mazu not seized and twisted him at that moment, it would only have become conventional truth in circulation.

One must also encounter circumstances and conditions, and skillfully turn them back to oneself. If throughout the twelve periods of the day there is no gap, this is called clarity of the nature-ground. But if one merely clings to grass and trees, recognizing only what comes before the donkey and after the horse, what use is that? Observe how Mazu and Baizhang made use of this. Though it seems brightly aware and vividly responsive, one does not abide in bright awareness and vivid responsiveness—Baizhang cried out in pain. If you see in this way, the entire realm conceals nothing, and every point becomes manifest. Therefore it is said: when one place is penetrated, a thousand and ten thousand places are penetrated at once.

The next day Mazu ascended the hall. As soon as the assembly had gathered, Baizhang came out and rolled up the bowing mat. Mazu immediately descended from his seat and returned to the abbot’s quarters. He later asked Baizhang, “When I ascended the hall just now, I had not yet spoken the Dharma. Why did you roll up the mat?” Baizhang said, “Yesterday, when the Master twisted my nostrils, they hurt.” Mazu said, “Where did you direct your attention yesterday?” Baizhang said, “Today the tip of my nose no longer hurts.”

Mazu said, “You deeply understand today’s matter.” Baizhang then bowed and returned to the attendants’ quarters, where he wept. A fellow attendant asked, “Why are you crying?” Baizhang said, “Go and ask the Master.” The attendant went to ask Mazu, who said, “Go ask him and see.” The attendant returned to the quarters and asked Baizhang, who then burst into laughter. The attendant said, “You were crying just now; why are you laughing now?” Baizhang said, “I was crying just now; now I am laughing.” Observe how, after awakening, he rolled on freely, impossible to confine, naturally clear and unobstructed.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Wild ducks—[They form flocks and bands. There is another one, too.]

Who knows how many? [What use is that! They are as numerous as hemp and millet.]

When Mazu saw them, they spoke together. [When will all this entangling talk ever end? What are you talking about? Mazu alone recognized the capable one.]

When their talk was exhausted, there was the feeling of mountain clouds and sea moon; [The eastern household’s ladle handle is long; the western household’s is short. Who knows how much tangled talk they made!]

Still not understanding, they flew away as before. [[Illegible character]—do not say he could not speak. Where did they fly past to?]

Just as they were about to fly away, [His nostrils were in someone else's hands. The commentary has already been added for him.]

He seized them... [Such urgent grandmotherly concern. What more is there to say?]

Speak! Speak! [What will you say? Do not make this mountain monk say it. Do not imitate the cry of wild ducks. Heaven, heaven! He deserves thirty blows right under his heels. He does not know where he has gone.]

Xuedou begins his verse by saying, "Wild ducks—who knows how many?" Tell me, how many are there?

"When Mazu saw them, they spoke together" praises Mazu's asking Baizhang, "What is that?" Baizhang replied, "Wild ducks."

"When their talk was exhausted, there was the feeling of mountain clouds and sea moon" praises his further question to Baizhang: "Where have they gone?" Master Mazu's intent was naturally wholly revealed, but Baizhang still did not understand and merely said, "They have flown away." Thus he missed it twice.

"Just as they were about to fly away, he seized them"—Xuedou concludes the case on this basis.

He further says, "Speak! Speak!" Here Xuedou turns himself around. Tell me, how would you speak? If you cry out in pain, you are wrong. If you do not cry out in pain, then how will you understand it? Although Xuedou's verse is wonderfully composed, he still cannot leap free.

[Iron Broom]: Nowadays some say, "Originally there is no place of awakening; one establishes this matter by creating a gate of awakening."

If this is your understanding, you are like an insect in a lion's body eating the lion's flesh. Have you not seen the ancient's saying: "If the source is not deep, the stream will not flow far; if wisdom is not great, one's vision will not reach far"? If the Buddhadharma were to be understood as something established in this way, could it have endured until today?

—It is amusing to see that this forum also has people who hold this view. It seems that the tail of his broom is even bigger than mine. To borrow what Big Tiger said: "Those who pierce the ear are rarely encountered; those who mark a boat to find a sword are common. Can one avoid 'losing half'?"

[Iron Broom]: Who is the "ghost cave"?

The Master said, "When did they ever fly away?" [Do not try to deceive people. This old fellow, it turns out, has merely been making his livelihood in a ghost cave.]

[lvm]: Yuanwu can speak this way because he did not ask this question.

[Iron Broom]: I feel that in saying this he has wronged Master Mazu.

Because Master Mazu's words should be: "Encountering circumstances, there is no obstruction; in every move there is an opportunity to break free. In every utterance there is no partiality; at every turn lies the intent to kill."

[lvm]: I feel that in saying this you have wronged Master Yuanwu.

[Mind-Monk]: Ha ha~~ It is hardly only Master Yuanwu who has been wronged.

Master Mazu and you have both been swept up in the same net!

[lvm]: You cannot claim to have no share in it either.

[Bodhi Tree] (responding to [lvm]: "Yuanwu can speak this way because he did not ask this question."): Heh heh, Teacher, Baizhang, who rolled up the mat the next day, had already spoken in just this way, had he not?

[lvm]: There is nothing wrong with speaking of a "ghost cave" here as well.

[Budai]: Please, Big Tiger, explain: "Though it seems brightly aware and vividly responsive, one does not abide in bright awareness and vivid responsiveness."

Does this mean that, when one encounters it, it gives one the impression of being brightly aware and vividly responsive; yet because one understands it, one knows that it is not brightly aware and vividly responsive? So-called bright awareness and vivid responsiveness are only the consciousness's impression of it and therefore should not be abided in. Is that correct? Please instruct me, Teacher.

[lvm]: Even "spiritual knowing apart from thoughts" cannot be obtained.

[Budai]: Teacher, may I ask whether my understanding is correct?

[Chan Practitioner]: If there is a feeling, then it is not bright awareness and vivid responsiveness.

[lvm]: Understanding entails right and wrong. Do not miss that which has neither right nor wrong.

[Budai]: I understand. Thank you, Teacher!

[zxb]: Teacher, may I ask: if Baizhang made a sound of pain, what would Mazu say?

[lvm]: The Master would say, “When did they ever fly away?”

[Little Fish]: Teacher, may I ask:

How should one understand the sentence, “But if one merely clings to grass and trees, recognizing only what comes before the donkey and after the horse, what use is that?”

Does “clinging to grass and trees” refer to deluded thoughts not having ceased, or to attachment to objects? Does the often-heard expression “not cutting them off completely” also refer to deluded thoughts not ceasing?

Does “recognizing only what comes before the donkey and after the horse” mean missing it right before one’s face and looking back afterward?

[lvm]: All sages and worthies differ by means of the unconditioned dharma.

How should one understand the sentence, “But if one merely clings to grass and trees, recognizing only what comes before the donkey and after the horse, what use is that?”

* Grass and trees all have appearances. The previous thought has passed—behind the horse; the subsequent thought has not yet arisen—in front of the donkey. At the very point when the previous thought has passed and the subsequent thought has not yet arisen, one can encounter it face-to-face and seize it in one grasp. What can attachment to appearances do to it? Why would one still seek it through appearances? If one’s habitual tendency to cling to appearances is deep, then even upon encountering it face-to-face, one mistakes the false for the true and misses it right before one’s face—what use is there in merely clinging to grass and trees, recognizing only what comes before the donkey and after the horse?

Does “clinging to grass and trees” refer to deluded thoughts not having ceased, or to attachment to objects?

* Yes.

Is the often-heard phrase “not cutting off completely” also referring to deluded thoughts not being cut off?

* “Not cutting off completely” means that one cannot be wholly free of contrivance. “All worthy and holy ones are distinguished by the unconditioned dharma.”

Does “recognizing a donkey’s front and a horse’s rear” mean missing it face-to-face and looking back afterward?

* To miss the formless face-to-face is to fall into mere appearances. Looking back afterward is certainly an appearance; ultimate reality has no before or after.

[Little Fish]: Ah, if I were to ask you, “At the very moment of meeting it face-to-face, how can one avoid missing it?”

you would surely answer, “At the very moment of meeting it face-to-face, is there still any room to miss it?”

But, but—ah, it cannot be put into words.

[lvm]: Take color, for example: it cannot be explained clearly unless one has seen it oneself.

The way of words is cut off, and the path of mental activity is extinguished; only through realization can one know. It is true and not false.

[Question]: May I ask the teacher:

Why is it said, “All worthy and holy ones are distinguished by the unconditioned dharma”? What does this distinction refer to?

[lvm]: “All worthy and holy ones” includes the three worthies and ten sages, among others.

The three worthies before the first bhūmi—the bodhisattvas at the stages of the ten abodes, ten practices, and ten dedications of merit.

The ten sages—the first, the Joyous Ground.

The second, the Ground Free from Defilement.

The third, the Luminous Ground.

The fourth, the Ground of Blazing Wisdom.

The fifth, the Ground Difficult to Conquer.

The sixth, the Ground of Manifest Presence.

The seventh, the Far-Going Ground.

The eighth, the Immovable Ground.

The ninth, the Ground of Good Wisdom.

The tenth, the Dharma Cloud Ground.

Why is it said, “All worthy and holy ones are distinguished by the unconditioned dharma”?

* Diamond Sūtra, Chapter Seven: No Attainment, No Teaching

Subhūti, what do you think? Has the Tathāgata attained unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening? Does the Tathāgata teach any dharma?

Subhūti said: As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has taught, there is no fixed dharma called unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening, nor is there any fixed dharma that the Tathāgata can teach. Why is this? The dharmas taught by the Tathāgata cannot be grasped or spoken of; they are neither dharmas nor non-dharmas. Why is this so? All worthy and holy ones are distinguished by the unconditioned dharma!

What does this distinction refer to?

* Obviously, it refers to the degree of non-contrivance.

[54] Yunmen Extends His Hand and Strikes

[Case 54] Yunmen Holds Out His Hands, Then Strikes

Pointer: To penetrate birth and death and turn the pivotal mechanism around; to cut through decisively, wherever one is, covering heaven and earth. But tell me: where does such a person tread? Let us examine it.

[Case 54] The Case:

Yunmen asked a monk, “Where have you recently come from?” [You must not say “Xichan.” He is sounding out the grass with a probing pole. Nor can you say east, west, south, or north.]

The monk said, “Xichan.” [Just as expected. What a downright honest fellow! At that moment, he should have been given the appropriate fodder.]

Yunmen said, “What sayings have there been at Xichan recently?” [He wishes to raise the matter but fears startling the master. He keenly discerns the wind from which the visitor has come. It is also like the master’s own sleep-talk.]

The monk held out both hands. [He has exposed his defeat. Catching a thief ruins the household. Still, it cannot but make people doubtful.]

Yunmen gave him a slap. [Acting in accordance with the command. A fine blow. Such quickness is hard to encounter.]

The monk said, “I still have something to say.” [You are waiting to turn the tables, are you? Yet you seem to have the moves for seizing the banner and capturing the drum.]

Yunmen then held out both hands. [Dangerous! Given a blue dragon to ride, yet unable to ride it.]

The monk was speechless. [What a pity.]

Yunmen then struck him. [He must not be let off. This staff-blow ought to have been received by Yunmen—why? If one does not cut off what should be cut off, one instead invites disorder. How many blows should you, reverend, receive? He let him off one move. If he had not let him off, what should he have done?]

Yunmen asked this monk, “Where have you recently come from?” The monk said, “Xichan.” This was direct speech, like a flash of lightning. When Yunmen said, “What sayings have there been recently?” that too was merely ordinary speech.

This monk was indeed no ordinary hand, for he turned around and tested Yunmen by holding out both hands. If an ordinary person encountered such a test, he would immediately be flustered. But Yunmen possessed a mechanism like sparks struck from stone and lightning flashing, so he gave him a slap.

The monk said, “The blow is one thing, but I still have something to say.” The monk had a way of turning himself around; therefore Yunmen opened things up and held out both hands. The monk was speechless, and Yunmen then struck him.

See how Yunmen was truly an adept: with each step, he knew where it would land. He knew how to look ahead and how to look behind, never losing the thread of the matter. This monk only knew how to look ahead; he could not look behind.

Verse:

He grasps the tiger by the head and gathers in its tail all at once, [A sword that kills, a sword that gives life. It takes this monk to make it so. A thousand soldiers are easy to obtain; one general is hard to find.]

His awe-inspiring majesty chills the four hundred provinces. [He silences everyone under heaven. He covers heaven and earth.]

Yet I ask: who knows why it is so perilous? [Do not administer blind cangues and blind blows. Xuedou, it turns out, did not yet know. Reverend, you are about to get it.]

……

The master said: “He let him off one move!” [If he had not let him off, what then? Everyone under heaven would at once lose all standing. He struck the Chan bench once.]

Xuedou’s verse on this case is very easy to understand. Its general intent is simply to praise Yunmen’s sharp Chan response.

Thus he says, “He grasps the tiger by the head and gathers in its tail all at once.” An ancient said, “Grasp the tiger by the head, gather in its tail; in the first phrase make the essential meaning clear.” Xuedou simply takes hold of the crucial point and closes the case. He admires Yunmen for knowing how to grasp the tiger by the head and also how to gather in its tail. When the monk held out both hands, Yunmen struck him: this was grasping the tiger by the head. When Yunmen held out both hands, the monk was speechless, and Yunmen struck him again: this was gathering in its tail. Head and tail were both gathered in; his eye was like a shooting star. Naturally, it was like sparks struck from stone or a flash of lightning, so that “his awe-inspiring majesty chills the four hundred provinces,” so that the entire earth and world were swept by a rustling wind.

“Yet I ask: who knows why it is so perilous?” There is indeed something perilous here.

Xuedou says, “He let him off one move.” But tell me, if he were not to let him off now, what should he do? Everyone on earth would have to receive blows! Chan practitioners nowadays all say, “When he holds out his hands, give him the appropriate fodder.” It may resemble it, but it is not it. Yunmen could not simply have taught you to stop there; there must also be something else.

[Dingling]: Teacher, why does Xuedou say, “He let him off one move”?

[Lele]: Beating the cow after the time has passed—something unheard of. Can an arm still be extended like this?

This truly is boundless compassion.

[lvm]: “……” This sentence is unpleasant to hear, so I will not say it. That is what is called “letting him off one move.”

[lvm]: Lele has a discerning eye.

[Lele]: Teacher, if he did not let him off, what should he do?

[Lele]: Mm, he has already struck him.

[lvm]: ^o^

[Lian Nong]: Teacher LVM: Then what should one say?

Since [You must not say “Xichan.” He is sounding out the grass with a probing pole. Nor can you say east, west, south, or north.], then what should one say?

[lvm]: Why not be like Deshan when he visited Weishan—Deshan gave a shout, flicked his sleeves, and walked out.

[Lian Nong]: A shout, flicking the sleeves, and walking out~~~~

That was Deshan’s response. How would Teacher LVM respond?

[lvm]: I will not say! I will not say!

[Lian Nong]: Let him off one move.

[lvm]: Ha ha! You want to plant lotus roots again.

[Arabic Numerals]: What does “grasping the tiger by the head and gathering in its tail” mean? Does it mean “capturing that monk alive”?

[lvm]: Chan Master Yuanwu has already explained it; it is in the text:

“When the monk held out both hands, Yunmen struck him: this was grasping the tiger by the head. When Yunmen held out both hands, the monk was speechless, and Yunmen struck him again: this was gathering in its tail.”

[Arabic Numerals]: Does “tiger” here refer to Yunmen or to that monk? Or is it a means, or procedure, for Chan testing of another person?

[lvm]: Then do not speak of a tiger; just speak of head and tail.

[55] Daowu Does Not Speak of Birth and Death

[Case 55] Daowu Does Not Speak of Birth and Death

Pointer: Securely concealed and wholly genuine, realize it directly before you; amid the flow of changing things, take it up immediately. Within the flash of a spark struck from stone or a bolt of lightning, cut off erroneous deliberation; at the point of seizing a tiger by the head and holding it by the tail, stand sheer as a ten-thousand-fathom cliff. Setting that aside for the moment, is there still any place to offer guidance to others? Let us examine it.

[Case 55] The Case:

Daowu and Jianyuan went to offer condolences at a household. Jianyuan tapped the coffin and said, “Is it alive, or is it dead?” [What is it that Daowu says? How lacking in alertness! This fellow is still caught between the two sides.]

Daowu said, “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death.” [When the dragon roars, mist rises; when the tiger howls, wind arises. Buying a hat to fit the head. His grandmotherly concern is earnest.]

Jianyuan said, “Why do you not speak of it?” [He has missed it! Just as expected, he has misunderstood.]

Daowu said, “I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it.” [A sudden dousing over the head with foul water. The first arrow was still light; the second arrow goes deeper.]

As they returned along the road, [He is altogether too alert.]

Jianyuan said, “Master, quickly tell me. If you do not tell me, I will strike you!” [He is somewhat closer now. Those who pierce the ear are rarely encountered; those who mark a boat to seek a sword are many. A fellow as dull as this will enter hell as swiftly as an arrow!]

Daowu said, “Strike if you wish to strike; but I will not speak of it.” [What is important must be repeated three times. Robbing someone in broad daylight. This old fellow is covered in mud and water, yet his original resolve does not change.]

Jianyuan then struck him. [A fine blow! But say, why did he strike him? It turns out that someone must receive the undeserved blow.]

Later, when Daowu passed away, Jianyuan went to Shishuang and brought up this earlier exchange. [Knowingly committing an offense. One does not know whether it is so; if it is, that is indeed most remarkable.]

Shishuang said, “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death.” [Strikingly fresh! It turns out that someone does partake of such fare.]

Jianyuan said, “Why do you not speak of it?” [Though the words are the same, the meaning is not twofold. But say, is this question the same as the earlier one or different?]

Shishuang said, “I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it.” [Above heaven and below heaven. The waves of Caoxi may seem alike, yet countless ordinary people are drowned on dry land.]

At these words, Jianyuan had an awakening. [Blind fellow! Do not try to deceive this mountain monk.]

One day, carrying a shovel, Jianyuan walked across the Dharma hall from east to west, then from west to east. [He too has come alive within death; it is fitting that he vent the air for his former master. Do not ask about him; just look at what a spectacle this fellow makes of himself.]

Shishuang said, “What are you doing?” [Following after him and making a fuss.]

Jianyuan said, “I am looking for my former master’s sacred bones.” [A medicine bag hangs behind the funeral cart: one regrets not having been careful at the outset. What do you say?]

Shishuang said, “Vast floods surge; white waves tower to heaven. What former master’s sacred bones are you looking for?” [He must be granted the stature of a master. Why form gangs and parties?]

(Xuedou added the comment: “Blue heavens! Blue heavens!”) [Too late! Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. Better bury him all at once in a pit.]

Jianyuan said, “This is exactly where effort is needed.” [But say, where has he landed? What did your former master ever tell you? From beginning to end, even up to now, this fellow has been unable to get free.]

(Taiyuan Fu said, “My former master’s sacred bones are still here.”) [Assembly, do you see? Like lightning. What sort of worn-out straw sandal is this? Yet he is somewhat closer.]

Daowu and Jianyuan went to offer condolences at a household. Jianyuan tapped the coffin and asked Daowu, “Is it alive, or is it dead?” Daowu said, “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death.” If one can enter directly beneath these words and at the words know where to return, this is precisely the key to freedom from birth and death. If not, one will often miss it right before one’s face. Observe how the people of old, in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, kept this matter in mind. As soon as they arrived at the household to offer condolences, Jianyuan tapped the coffin and asked Daowu, “Is it alive, or is it dead?” Without changing so much as a hair’s breadth, Daowu answered him, “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death.”

Jianyuan missed it before his very face, followed Daowu’s words, and further asked, “Why do you not speak of it?” Daowu said, “I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it.” Daowu might be said to have revealed his sincere heart piece by piece, following the mistake along with him.

Jianyuan still was not alert. As they returned along the road, he again said, “Master, quickly tell me. If you do not tell me, I will strike you!” What did this fellow know of good and bad? As the saying goes, “A good heart receives no good reward.” Daowu, still filled with grandmotherly concern, further told him, “Strike if you wish to strike; but I will not speak of it.” Jianyuan then struck him. Although this was so, Jianyuan gained the advantage by one move. Daowu bled for him in this manner, while Jianyuan remained so utterly oblivious.

After Daowu had been struck by him, he said to Jianyuan, “You should leave at once. I fear that the monastery officers may learn of this and bring trouble upon you.” He secretly sent Jianyuan away. Daowu’s compassion was exceedingly deep. Later Jianyuan came to a small monastery, where he heard an attendant reciting the Avalokiteśvara Sūtra: “To those who can be liberated by the body of a bhikshu, he manifests a bhikshu’s body and teaches them the Dharma.”

Jianyuan suddenly awakened and said, “At that time I wrongly blamed my former master! How could I have known that this matter does not lie in words and phrases!” An ancient said, “A person of immeasurable stature is turned about within the current of words.” Some who rely on conceptual understanding say, “When Daowu said, ‘I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it,’ that itself was speaking of it. This is called doing a somersault on one’s back, leaving others unable to find any trace.”

If you understand it in that way, how can you proceed securely? If your feet stand firmly upon the ground, there is not the slightest interval. Have you not seen the seven wise maidens wandering in the charnel ground? They pointed at a corpse and asked, “The corpse is here; where is the person?” The eldest sister said, “What? What?” The entire group simultaneously realized the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. But say, how many were there? A thousand or ten thousand—yet only one.

Later Jianyuan went to Shishuang and brought up the earlier exchange. Shishuang repeated the same words: “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death.” Jianyuan asked, “Why do you not speak of it?” Shishuang said, “I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it.” Thereupon Jianyuan awakened.

One day, carrying a shovel, he walked across the Dharma hall from east to west and then from west to east, intending to present his own understanding. As expected, Shishuang asked, “What are you doing?” Jianyuan said, “I am looking for my former master’s sacred bones.”

Shishuang immediately cut off the ground beneath his feet: “Here, vast floods surge and white waves tower to heaven. What former master’s sacred bones are you looking for?” Since he was looking for his former master’s sacred bones, why did Shishuang speak in this way? At this point, if one can realize it directly at the words, “I do not speak of life; I do not speak of death,” only then does one know the complete functioning and use from beginning to end. If you make doctrines of it, speculate, and search with discursive thought, it is truly difficult to see. Jianyuan said, “This is exactly where effort is needed.” See how, after awakening, his words naturally became extraordinary. One piece of Daowu’s skull was golden in color; when struck, it rang like bronze.

Xuedou added the comment, “Blue heavens! Blue heavens!” Its meaning falls on the two sides. Taiyuan Fu said, “My former master’s sacred bones are still here.” Naturally, this was spoken with steadiness. This entire bundle was set aside all at once. But

say, what is the essential point? What is the place where effort is needed? Have you not heard: when one point is penetrated, a thousand and ten thousand points are penetrated at once. If you penetrate the place of “I do not speak of it, I do not speak of it,” you will cut off the tongues of everyone under heaven. If you cannot penetrate it, you must investigate and awaken for yourself. Do not let your days pass easily—how regrettable to waste so much time!

Xuedou’s verse says:

Hares and horses have horns, [Cut! Most extraordinary, most fresh.]

Cattle and sheep have no horns. [Cut! What kind of appearance is that? You may deceive others, perhaps.]

Utterly without the slightest hair, [Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored. Where will you search for it?]

Like mountains, like peaks. [Where is it? Raising waves on level ground, it strikes right at your nostrils.]

The golden sacred bones are still here today; [Cut off the tongue; block the throat. Set it aside. I fear no one recognizes him.]

Where can the towering white waves be lodged? [Letting one move pass. Missing it beneath one’s very heels. It cannot be lodged in the eyes or ears.]

There is nowhere to lodge them; [Indeed. Yet he is somewhat closer. Indeed, he has sunk into a deep pit.]

The single sandal returning west was once lost. [The ancestors did not resolve it, and their descendants are burdened by it. Striking the gavel, he says: Why is it here instead?]

Xuedou was especially adept at adding annotations. As a descendant of Yunmen, in every single phrase he possessed the hammer and tongs of three phrases. He spoke through what was difficult to say, opened what could not be opened, and gave voice in verse to the crucial point. He said directly, “Hares and horses have horns; cattle and sheep have no horns.” But say, why do hares and horses have horns? Why do cattle and sheep have none? Only if you penetrate the earlier exchange will you know that Xuedou has a way of guiding people.

Some misunderstand it, saying, “Not speaking is itself speaking; no phrase is a phrase. Hares and horses have no horns, yet he says they have horns. Cattle and sheep have horns, yet he says they have none.” This is utterly irrelevant! They do not know that the people of old manifested such spiritual powers and transformations solely to smash open your den of ghostly cleverness. If you penetrate it, there is no need even for a single word of completion.

“Hares and horses have horns; cattle and sheep have no horns. Utterly without the slightest hair, like mountains, like peaks.” These four lines are like a single maṇi jewel. Xuedou has presented it whole and undivided before your face.

The final lines all settle the case according to the evidence: “The golden sacred bones are still here today; where can the towering white waves be lodged?” These verses concern the words of Shishuang and Taiyuan Fu.

Why is there nowhere to lodge them? “The single sandal returning west was once lost.” Like a divine turtle dragging its tail, this is where Xuedou turns himself around to guide people. An ancient said, “He investigates living phrases, not dead phrases.” Since it was lost, why do they all contend over it so fiercely?

[Sudhana]: Although this Jianyuan was somewhat rash in striking his teacher, he did not lose his straightforwardness and natural innocence.

[Grass Bandit Soundly Defeated]: Striking one’s teacher was a grave offense in ancient times! Jianyuan dared to do this precisely because he possessed the basic qualities for Chan practice: daring to act and take responsibility, setting birth and death aside. For such a person, awakening would be difficult to avoid.

[Sudhana]: Ha ha, the Chan tradition has a long history.

It is said that when Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch in China, had just arrived in the Great Tang, he encountered Shenguang. Because their words did not accord, Bodhidharma even knocked out two of Shenguang’s teeth.

Yet Shenguang later aroused the great resolve, cut off his arm to seek the Dharma, and likewise realized the patriarch’s mind, inheriting the bearded foreigner’s robe and bowl.

[Grass Bandit Soundly Defeated]: So Shaolin martial arts are not the foremost under heaven after all! What style of martial art did Shenguang use?

Ha! Ha! He knocked out two of old Hu’s front teeth, but unfortunately the technique has been lost.

[Shancai]: That was Grandfather Bodhidharma’s lofty character and integrity; he did not lower himself to argue with him.

Thus, although Shengguang had succeeded in landing the blow, he knew that he had failed badly. When he came to his senses, he hurried after him to seek the Dharma.

As for the practice that was handed down, it is said that there is one called Bodhidharma's Yijin Jing—a method of transforming one's very constitution. I wonder whether anyone still practices it today.

[Grass Bandit Great Defeat]: The answer is this: the student must dare to let go, and the teacher must dare to strike. Neither can be dispensed with.

[Shancai]: Therefore it is said: "When the dragon chants, mist rises; when the tiger roars, wind is born. Buying a hat to fit the head. The old woman's heart is most earnest."

[Grass Bandit Great Defeat]: Many people would think that goods delivered to one's door cannot be good goods.

[Shancai]: Ha ha! "What Way are you talking about? What affectation! This fellow is still caught at both ends."

[Grass Bandit Great Defeat]: If I were not at both ends, how could I see you?

[Shancai]: Heaven above, earth below! "The waves of Caoxi are much the same; countless ordinary people are sunk on dry land."

[Lotus Farmer]: May I ask Teacher LVM: what does "subsequently, lou sou" mean?

[lvm]: Lou sou may have been a dialect expression of the time.

"Subsequently, lou sou" probably means something like "drawing one's bow after the thief has gone."

[56] Qinshan's One Arrow, Three Barriers

[56] Qinshan: One Arrowhead Breaks Through Three Barriers

A pointer says: The buddhas have never appeared in the world, nor have they given a single dharma to anyone. The patriarchs never came from the West, nor did they ever transmit the mind. It is simply that people of the time fail to understand and race about seeking outwardly. They do not realize that the great matter of causes and conditions lies right beneath their own heels, beyond the grasp even of a thousand sages. Right now, seeing or not seeing, hearing or not hearing, speaking or not speaking, knowing or not knowing—where do these come from? If you have not yet penetrated this thoroughly, go and realize it amid the tangle of vines. Let us examine this case:

[56] The Case:

Chan practitioner Liang asked Qinshan, "What is it like when one arrowhead breaks through three barriers?" [Dangerous! Extraordinary indeed; he is no ordinary fierce general.]

Qinshan said, "Release the master within the barriers and let us see him." [It comes straight at him. He also wants everyone to know: when the master rises, the mountain is high; when he presses down, the mountain is low.]

Liang said, "Then, knowing one's fault, one must certainly correct it?" [He acts upon seeing the opportunity. Yet he has already fallen into the second level.]

Qinshan said, "What are you waiting for?" [There is both grasping and releasing. The wind blows, and the grass bends.]

Liang said, "A fine arrow finds no place to land," and then departed. [Just so. He was about to change his tune! A second blow would not hurt.]

Qinshan said, "Come back here, Reverend!" [Calling is easy; saying it is hard. Even if you call him back, what use is that?]

Liang turned his head. [Sure enough, he could not hold fast. Right on target!]

Qinshan seized him and said, "Let us set aside one arrowhead breaking through three barriers. Try shooting an arrow at Qinshan." [He thrusts himself into the tiger's mouth. A wave against the current. To see what is right and not act—this is no courage.]

Liang hesitated. [Sure enough, he could find no way in. He was struck, with the words: What a pity!]

Qinshan struck him seven times with his staff and said, "Listen to this fellow: he will remain in doubt for thirty years!" [The command calls for just this. There is a beginning and an end; the head is proper and the tail is proper. This blow should have been received by Qinshan.]

Chan practitioner Liang was indeed no mean warrior. In Qinshan's hands he wheeled left and right, dropping his whip and dodging from the stirrups. But in the end, alas, his bow was broken and his arrows exhausted. Even so, General Li still had his fine reputation; not being enfeoffed as a marquis was nothing. In this koan, there is coming out and going in, seizing and releasing; when the occasion arises, it is raised before one face-to-face, and face-to-face the occasion is swift. It does not fall

into being or nonbeing, gain or loss; this is called the mysterious pivot. If one's strength falls just slightly short, one will stumble and fall. This monk, too, was a spirited patch-robed practitioner. The question he raised was startling enough to amaze the assembly. Qinshan was a master of the house and immediately knew where the thrust of his question landed.

A zú is an arrowhead. What is it like when one arrow shoots through three barriers? Qinshan meant: Set aside whether you can shoot through them; first release the master within the barriers and let us see him. Liang said, "Then, knowing one's fault, one must certainly correct it?" This too was quite extraordinary. Qinshan said, "What are you waiting for?" Seeing how Liang responded, there was not the slightest gap in what Qinshan had asked.

Afterward, Chan practitioner Liang said, "A fine arrow finds no place to land," brushed off his sleeves, and left. As soon as Qinshan saw him speak this way, he called out, "Come back here, Reverend!" Chan practitioner Liang indeed could not hold fast and turned his head. Qinshan seized him and said, "Let us set aside one arrowhead breaking through three barriers. Try shooting an arrow at Qinshan." Liang hesitated, whereupon Qinshan struck him seven times with his staff and then recited a spell for him: "Listen to this fellow: he will remain in doubt for thirty years!"

Nowadays Chan practitioners all say, "Why did he not strike eight times, or six times, but only seven? Or else, when Liang asked, 'Try shooting an arrow at Qinshan,' he should have struck him immediately." It may resemble the point, but it is not yet the point. In this koan, one must harbor not the slightest doctrinal calculation in one's breast and go beyond language before one can use a single utterance to break through the three barriers.

When there is a place to release an arrow, if one retains ideas of right and wrong, one will ultimately find no way in. If this monk at the time had been a real man, Qinshan too would have been in great danger. Since Liang could not carry out this command, he could not avoid proceeding in reverse. Tell me: who, after all, is the master within the barriers?

Now look at Xuedou's verse:

For you I release the master within the barriers; [Right on target! You missed it directly before you—back away, back away.]

Those who shoot arrows must not act rashly. [Once dead, he does not come alive again. What a great mistake!]

Take an eye, and the ears must be deaf; [The left eye weighs half a catty. He lets one move pass. The left side cannot advance, and the right side cannot retreat.]

Give up an ear, and both eyes are blind. [The right eye weighs eight taels. There is only one road. Advance and you fall into pits and ravines; retreat and a fierce tiger bites your feet.]

Alas, one arrowhead breaks through three barriers; [When the whole mechanism comes like this, what then? What can you say? A breakthrough! A fall!]

The road after the arrow is utterly clear. [A dead fellow. Bah! Striking, he says: Do you see?]

Have you not seen— [A leper drags along a companion. Off to entangle themselves in vines!]

Xuansha once said: [Who is not Xuansha?]

"A great man is the ancestor of mind before heaven and earth." [One phrase cuts off the stream; the ten thousand functions cease. Your nostrils are in my hands. Before heaven, earth, and the world existed, where do you establish your body and life?]

Several lines of this verse are taken from the Verse of Guizong. Because Guizong once composed this verse, it was called "Guizong"; in the Chan school, it is regarded as an expression of the essential purport.

Later, Tong'an heard of this and said, "Master Liang was skilled at shooting arrows, but he did not know how to hit the mark." A monk then asked, "How can one hit the mark?" Tong'an said, "Who is the master within the barriers?" Later, a monk brought this up to Qinshan. Qinshan said, "If Master Liang were like this, he still would not escape Qinshan's mouth. Even so, Tong'an's intention was not good."

Xuedou said, "For you I release the master within the barriers." Whether opening one's eyes or closing them, it hits the mark. Form and formlessness alike are all cut into three pieces.

"Those who shoot arrows must not act rashly." If one is skilled at shooting arrows, one is not rash. If one is not skilled at shooting, then one's rashness is evident.

"Take an eye, and the ears must be deaf; give up an ear, and both eyes are blind." Tell me, if one takes an eye, why should the ears become deaf? If one gives up an ear, why should both eyes become blind? Only when this saying admits of neither taking nor giving up can one penetrate it. If there is taking or giving up, it is difficult to see.

"Alas, one arrowhead breaks through three barriers; the road after the arrow is utterly clear." Chan practitioner Liang asked, "What is it like when one arrowhead breaks through three barriers?" Qinshan said, "Release the master within the barriers and let us see him." From this through the final case of Tong'an, all of it is the road after the arrow.

What, after all, is it? “Have you not seen—Xuansha once said: ‘A great man is the ancestor of mind before heaven and earth.’” Ordinarily, mind is taken as the ultimate ancestor; why, then, is that which precedes the birth of heaven and earth here regarded as the ancestor of this mind? Only when you see through this juncture will you recognize the master within the barriers. “The road after the arrow is utterly clear”: if you wish to hit the mark, there is clearly a road after the arrow.

Tell me, what is the road after the arrow? You must first exert your own keen attention. “A great man is the ancestor of mind before heaven and earth”: Xuansha often used these words to instruct the assembly. Yet this verse actually belongs to Guizong; Xuedou mistakenly attributed it to Xuansha.

Present-day students of Chan may take this mind as their ultimate ancestor, but even if they investigate until Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, they still will not have understood! For a true great man, mind is still only a descendant, and before heaven and earth were divided is already the second level. Tell me, at precisely such a time, what is prior to heaven and earth?

[Xinming]: Is the road after the arrow a winding mountain road?

[Shancai]: The road after the arrow leaves no traces—how could there be any climbing up or down?

[Liannong]: It is all beneath your feet.

[Liannong]: This arrow is truly breathtaking!

I only wonder whether Chan practitioner Liang, after receiving the blows, found the place after all.

[xkyq]:

Verse of Guizong:

Guizong’s principle and phenomena are beyond all severance; the sun’s wheel stands directly at noon.

Free and at ease like a lion, it relies on no thing.

It walks alone upon the summits of the four mountains, roaming at leisure along the three great roads.

With a breath it sends flying birds falling; with a frown and a groan it terrifies the beasts.

When the mechanism is raised, arrows readily reach it; when the shadow vanishes, the hand is hard to turn back.

Its display is like that of a skilled artisan; its cutting and trimming establish the measure.

Though it cleverly carves ten thousand intricate names, Guizong is still like earth.

Its words are secret and sound is cut off; its principle is subtle and difficult to express in speech.

Give up an ear and one remains deaf; take an eye and one remains blind.

One arrowhead breaks through three barriers; the road after the arrow is clear.

Alas, a great man is the ancestor of mind before heaven and earth.

[lvm]: Therefore Chan Master Yuanwu said:

…“A great man is the ancestor of mind before heaven and earth”: Xuansha often used these words to instruct the assembly. Yet this verse actually belongs to Guizong; Xuedou mistakenly attributed it to Xuansha.

[xkyq]: There is also this passage:

…

Have you not seen— [A leper drags along a companion. Off to entangle themselves in vines!]

Xuansha once said: [That is not Xuansha.]

…

Here the old monk hastens to make a clarification.

[lvm]: Xuansha and Xuedou were both Dharma descendants of Xuefeng, so their Chan styles would naturally have been quite close.

(Founded the Yunmen school)

Yunmen Wenyan Xianglin Chengyuan Zhimen Guangzuo Xuedou Chongxian

Xuefeng Yicun

Xuansha Shibei Luohan Guichen Qingliang Wenyi

(Founded the Fayan school)

Though the same phrase, “innate nature is the ancestor of mind,” was spoken by Guizong and by Xuansha, its flavor was not necessarily altogether the same.

Right—look up Guizong’s lineage as well and post it here.

[xkyq]: Guizong was a Dharma heir of Mazu.

Nanyue Huairang Mazu Daoyi Guizong Zhichang Furong Lingxun

Qingyuan Xingsi Shitou Xiqian Tianhuang Daowu Longtan Chongxin Deshan Xuanjian Xuefeng Yicun

(Founded the Yunmen school)

Yunmen Wenyan Xianglin Chengyuan Zhimen Guangzuo Xuedou Chongxian

Xuefeng Yicun

Xuansha Shibei Luohan Guichen Qingliang Wenyi

(Founded the Fayan school)

Tracing things back to their source, doesn’t Mazu’s saying, “The Shitou road is slippery,” already reveal the difference?

[lvm]: With this, the lineage becomes clear:

Sixth Patriarch

Qingyuan Xingsi Nanyue Huairang

Shitou Xiqian Mazu Daoyi

Tianhuang Daowu Baizhang Huaihai Guizong Zhichang

[Author of Hymns of Guizong]

Longtan Chongxin Huangbo Xiyun Furong Lingxun

Deshan Xuanjian Linji Yixuan

(Founded the Linji school)

Xuefeng Yicun Xinghua Cunjiang

Xuansha Shibei　Yunmen Wenyan　　Nanyuan Huiyong

[Frequently　(Founded the Yunmen school)

cited

Hymns of Guizong]　Xianglin Chengyuan　　Fengxue Yanzhao

Zhimen Guangzuo　　Shoushan Xingnian

Xuedou Chongxian　　Fenyang Shanzhao

[Author of One Hundred Verses on Ancient Cases]

Shishuang Chuyuan

Yangqi Fanghui

(Founded the Yangqi branch of the Linji school)

Baiyun Shouduan

Wuzu Fayan

Yuanwu Keqin

[Author of The Blue Cliff Record]

Dahui Zonggao

(Author of Armory of the Chan School)

[xkyq]: Haha, it's clear at a glance.

[Xinming]: "What is it like when one arrow pierces through the three barriers?"

[Wulaiqu]: "It is not something that must be answered."

You need not become anxious over his question.

[Xinming]: "Since one does not brush off one's sleeves and leave, how does one survive beneath the sword?"

[Wulaiqu]: "Then shall I brush off my sleeves and leave?"

There is fundamentally neither coming nor going.

[Xinming]: "Why not say, 'Like slashing at the spring breeze'?"

[Wulaiqu]: "Thank you, senior brother, for teaching me! Then let me say, 'Like the east wind slashing at the east wind!'"

Is it not still the east wind?

[Xinming]: “Hello, Teacher Qi!”

Shanyun said, “Come here, ācārya!”

Liang turned his head.

Turning one’s head is not necessarily wrong; where is the error here?

[Jixumo]: “The error lies in deliberation.”

If you are truly a great man, you must be ready to kill without blinking an eye. Why be so fussy and hesitant?

If you too are deliberating, then you are mistaken.

[lvm]: “The error lies in your very question.”

[Chan]: “Brother Xinming’s question has great force.”

Originally the seas were calm and the rivers clear, and all under heaven was at peace; then senior brother’s question~~set off a tsunami.

[Chan]: :(

Even if muddy waves surge sky-high, all under heaven is still at peace.

Namo Amitābha Buddha

[Xinming]: “A koan cannot be judged so casually.”

[lvm]: “Indeed! Indeed!”

[Xinming]: “What should one do upon seeing an uneven road?”

[Wulaiqu]: “Fill it with a little earth, and naturally it will become level.”

If you pour in some water, it will become a ditch instead.

[lvm]: “Don’t let the drawn sword take you away.”

[Shancai]: “Haha, only now do I understand why the chairman wanted to spank Genghis Khan.”

Genghis Khan, a proud son of his age, knew only how to bend his bow and shoot eagles.

——— I pay my respects to all the great spiritual friends! ———

[Grass Bandit Defeated]: Hee hee, Senior Brother, run! I’m afraid Master Qi is going to paddle you.

[Lele]: Haha! Brothers fight side by side in battle; fathers and sons go to the front together.

Come, come, come—since the New Year has just begun, three lollipops for each person.

[Cicada]: Oh no, the stick landed on Lele.

[Lele]: Zhīliǎo likes them too—let’s eat them together.

[57] Zhaozhou: Only Dislikes Picking and Choosing

[Case 57] Zhaozhou: Only Averse to Picking and Choosing

Pointer:

Before one has broken through, it is like silver mountains and iron walls. Once one has broken through, one finds that one oneself has always been iron walls and silver mountains. If someone were to ask, “Then what?” simply tell them: “If, within this, you can reveal a single opportunity or perceive a single object, cutting off the vital passage so that neither ordinary beings nor sages can pass, this is still not extraordinary.” If not, look at the example of the ancients:

[Case 57] The Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. What is not picking and choosing?” [How many people cannot swallow this iron caltrop! Many are caught in doubt over it, their mouths full of frost.]

Zhaozhou said, “Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am the World-Honored One.” [He raises a heap of bones on level ground. At once, the nostrils of Chan monks are pierced through. Vajra casts an iron certificate.]

The monk said, “This is still picking and choosing.” [Sure enough, he has been led around by him. He presses this old fellow.]

Zhaozhou said, “You fool! Where is there any picking and choosing?” [The mountains stand high and the rocks split open.]

The monk had no reply. [Letting you off with thirty blows of the staff—you are left staring wide-eyed and slack-jawed.]

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.” The Third Patriarch’s Inscription on Faith in Mind opens with precisely these two lines, yet how many people misunderstand them. Why? The supreme Way is originally without difficulty, yet it is not without difficulty; it only rejects picking and choosing. If you understand it in this way, then even in ten thousand years you will not have dreamed of it. Zhaozhou often used these words to question people, but this monk turned the words around and questioned him with them.

If one seeks it in the words, this monk is indeed earthshaking. But if it is not in words and phrases, then what? Go investigate for another thirty years! One must be able to turn this small pivotal point before one can understand. To stroke a tiger’s whiskers, one must possess genuine skill.

This monk, heedless even of danger to life, dared to stroke the tiger’s whiskers and said, “This is still picking and choosing.” Zhaozhou immediately stopped him short: “You fool! Where is there any picking and choosing?” Had he asked something else, he would have been flustered. But this old fellow was a true master: where one cannot move, he moves; where one cannot turn, he turns.

If you can penetrate all such venomous words and phrases, then even the thousand variations and myriad forms of worldly idle talk are the supreme flavor of ghee. Only when you reach the solid ground do you see Zhaozhou’s utter sincerity. “You fool!” is a Fuzhou dialect insult, similar to calling someone witless. The monk said, “This is still picking and choosing,” and Zhaozhou said, “You fool! Where is there any picking and choosing?” The eyes of a lineage master must reach this point—like a garuḍa splitting the sea open and seizing a dragon to swallow whole.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Deep as the sea, [What vast measure! Its depths and source cannot be fathomed; yet this has not reached even half of it.]

Firm as a mountain. [Who could shake it? Still only halfway there.]

A gnat plays in a fierce wind in empty space; [There are indeed such ones. Surely they do not know their own strength. How utterly they overestimate themselves!]

An ant shakes an iron pillar. [In the same pit, there is no different soil. At least it has nothing to do with it. Reverend, investigate together with him.]

Picking! Choosing! [Carrying water to sell beside the river. What are you saying? Zhaozhou has arrived!]

A drum is set out before the hall. [Already before words. Buried together in one pit, thick as hemp and millet. A blow of thunder! It stops up your throat!]

Xuedou comments on the two lines, “Deep as the sea, firm as a mountain.” When the monk says, “This is still picking and choosing,” Xuedou says that the monk is like a gnat playing in a fierce wind in empty space, or an ant shaking an iron pillar. Xuedou appreciates his boldness. Why? This is something used by those at the summit. Since he dared to speak this way, Zhaozhou would not let him go, but said, “You fool! Where is there any picking and choosing?” Is this not a fierce wind and an iron pillar?

“Picking! Choosing! A drum is set out before the hall.” At the end, Xuedou raises this to bring it to life. If you recognize it clearly, you have brought it forth completely yourself. Why? Have you not seen it said: “If you want intimacy, do not bring questions to ask”? Therefore, a drum is set out before the hall.

[Xinming]: Where is there any picking and choosing?

The World-Honored One raises a heap of bones.

[lvm]: Picking and choosing means being overly selective.

[Shancai]: Iron walls and silver mountains deceive those who ask; travelers in droves sink into the road. What have picking and choosing to do with it? The gates still open north, south, east, and west.

What is Zhaozhou?

The master said, “East gate, west gate, south gate, north gate.”

——— See you, all wise spiritual friends! ———

[lvm]: Open!

[Shancai]: ^^

[Liannong]: One must be a gatekeeper!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Shancai]: It turns out he is the city lord.

[Liannong]: Ha ha, gatekeeper and city lord—it turns out they are all part of the troupe, picking and choosing a fine performance.

[Xinseng]: Only one who knows how to watch a performance will do.

[Liannong]: Just so, just so—the stage gazes at the moon. Since mind cannot meet, monk too is no different.

[Xinseng]: ^o^

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi] (replying to [Xinming]: “Where is there any picking and choosing?”): Not being honest is picking and choosing.

[Xinming] (replying to [lvm]: “Open!”): What does it open out?

[yoj]: Elder brother, the mind of “picking and choosing” has arisen.

[Xinseng]: Excellent!

[lvm]: It opens out Xinming.

[Iron Broom]: How far apart are Xinming and a dried shit-stick?

[Xinseng]: Why not sweep away Xinming and the dried shit-stick together?

[Iron Broom]: You have not left the stink behind. Is there a better way?

[Xinseng]: It turns out to be that far away.

[Ancient Rhyme]: Ha ha, just so, just so.

[Lele] (replying to [lvm]: “It opens out Xinming.”): The tiger opens the great gate, truly meaning to eat people; it devours all who come and go, then feeds again on those who come and go.

Iron garments and silver walls deceive those who ask; each one who comes is deceived—ha ha. That tiger landlord truly knows how to deceive people.

[lvm]: The tiger was instead eaten by [Lele].

[Lele]: The tiger was treating the guests, ha ha.

[Cicada]: Alas, Lele's words became prophetic. A moment of silent mourning.

That big tiger could eat Lele even from inside Lele's stomach—admiration!

Homage to Amitābha Buddha

[Lele]: Little cicada chirps and chirps, tears fall and fall; giving one's body to feed the tiger—what a very great good person!

[Cicada]: Ha ha

"The tiger was instead eaten by [Lele]"—that is not a nice thing to say.

Homage to Amitābha Buddha

[Lele]: This tiger has always eaten people without showing its teeth, but with Cicada keeping me company, it is not unjust.

[Cicada]: Tell me then: did the tiger ultimately eat or not?

[Lele]: Better ask how the tiger gets out.

[Chan Robe]: An easily learned case of words:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. What is not picking and choosing?"

Zhaozhou said, "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am the World-Honored One."

The monk said, "This is still picking and choosing."

Zhaozhou said, "You fool! Where is there any picking and choosing?"

The monk had no reply.

A student asked Chan Master Zhaozhou, "The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. How can one accomplish this?"

The Chan master replied, "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am the World-Honored One!"

The student replied, "I know that one must begin with the mind-ground, but is this not a choice born of my craving for sudden awakening?"

The Chan master replied, "You are holding on to the seeds and refusing to sow them! Think about it: where, just now, did you make a choice?"

The student had no reply.

This koan is not good; old sayings are too easily imitated.

The student asked a certain lay practitioner, "The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects choosing and discriminating. How can one accomplish this?"

The lay practitioner replied, "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am the honored one!"

The student replied, "This is still choosing and discriminating."

The lay practitioner scolded, "Idiot! Where have I made a choice?"

The student had no reply.

[58] Zhaozhou Cannot Explain It Clearly

[58] Zhaozhou Cannot Explain It

[58] Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Is ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only avoids picking and choosing’ a commonplace trap of our times?” [A double koan. This is also where people have doubts. Stepping on a scale weight, it is hard as iron. Yet this still remains. Do not let yourself obstruct others.]

Zhaozhou said, “Someone once asked me this, and for five years I could not explain it.” [Better to speak plainly than to blush. A monkey eats a caterpillar; a mosquito bites an iron ox.]

Throughout his life, Zhaozhou did not resort to blows and shouts, yet he used what surpassed blows and shouts. This monk’s question was indeed most strange. Had it not been Zhaozhou, it would have been difficult to answer him. Zhaozhou was a true master, so he simply said, “Someone once asked me this, and for five years I could not explain it.” The question stands sheer as a wall ten thousand fathoms high, and the answer does not yield to it. To understand it just so is to meet it directly. If you do not understand, then do not engage in conceptual calculation.

Have you not seen Zongdao of Touzi? While serving as secretary in Xuedou’s assembly, Xuedou instructed him to investigate, “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only avoids picking and choosing.” Thereupon he had an awakening. One day Xuedou asked him, “What is the meaning of ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only avoids picking and choosing’?” Zong said, “Beast! Beast!” Later, when he retired to live at Touzi, whenever he went to serve as abbot, he wrapped his straw sandals and scriptures in his kāṣāya.

A monk asked, “What is the family style of a person of the Way?” Zong said, “A kāṣāya wrapped around straw sandals.” The monk said, “May I ask what this means?” Zong said, “Barefoot beneath Tongcheng.” Thus it is said: When offering to the Buddha, it is not the abundance of incense that matters. If you can penetrate and cast it off, then whether to seize or to release lies with me.

Since question and answer are each clearly present just as they are, why did Zhaozhou nevertheless say, “I could not explain it”? Tell me, is it a commonplace trap of our times? Did Zhaozhou answer him from within the trap, or from outside it? You must know that this matter does not lie in words and phrases. Perhaps there is someone who trusts it thoroughly, to the marrow of the bones—like a dragon gaining water, like a tiger backed by a mountain.

A verse says:

The elephant king wrinkles and trumpets, [Wealth within wealth and nobility. Who would not be awestruck? What excellent news.]

The lion roars. [A master among masters. The brains of the hundred beasts split apart. What an excellent entrance.]

A tasteless discourse [When cursing each other, I allow you to answer back. Like an iron stake—what is there to chew on? For five years he could not force out an explanation; a single leaf-boat carries the Great Tang. Vast and still, waves arise; who knows there is another fine consideration?]

Blocks the mouths of men. [When spitting at each other, I allow you to splash water. Ah! What is the venerable master saying?]

North, south, east, west, [Is there? Is there? Above heaven and below heaven. Blue heaven, blue heaven.]

Birds fly and rabbits run. [From ancient times to the present, all are buried alive at once.]

Zhaozhou’s saying, “Someone once asked me this, and for five years I could not explain it,” is like: “The elephant king wrinkles and trumpets; the lion roars. A tasteless discourse blocks the mouths of men. North, south, east, west; crows fly and rabbits run.” If Xuedou had lacked the final line, where would there be another Xuedou? Since crows fly and rabbits run, tell me: where, after all, do Zhaozhou, Xuedou, and this mountain monk land?

[Integration]: That person set a trap with a paradox.

[stone]: Teacher, would it work to ask a counter-question like this?

Tell me, is it a commonplace trap of our times? Did Zhaozhou answer him from within the trap, or from outside it?"

Counter-question: When the wind blows and leaves move, are the leaves a trap of the wind? Does the wind move on the leaves or outside the leaves?

[lvm]: It is also a trap.

[stone]: If you were asked, Teacher, how would you answer?

“Tell me, is it a commonplace trap of our times? Did Zhaozhou answer him from within the trap, or from outside it?”

Please, Teacher, offer a brief indication or two.

Amitābha Buddha

[lvm]: Even Zhaozhou could not explain it for five years—how could I possibly open my mouth?

[stone]: But Teacher, you have already opened your mouth.

It is only that you have taught me nothing I can understand :)

Amitābha Buddha!

[lvm]: Then you have already understood.

[stone]: What I understand surely is not what Teacher said.

[lvm]: That is why I cannot open my mouth.

[Smile Always] (in reply to [lvm]: Then you have already understood.): My teacher is not me; how could he know what I mean?

[lvm]: The moment I see “Smile Always,” I know it is always open.

[Smile Always]: Laugh wildly for no reason, cry for no reason; never mind impermanence or true permanence. Roam freely through this life; do not disappoint the bright moon over the City of Ice.

[Smile Always]: Who has ever seen empty space come with its mouth closed?

[stone]: Teacher only says that he cannot open his mouth. Senior brother, would you say this inability to open is opening or closing?

[lvm]: Oh! So that is where “Smile Always” comes from. ^o^

[Smile Always]: Does my teacher still come and go?! A verse says: Samādhi that is not fixed comes without coming; zhi, hu, zhe, ye—also xi, xi, yan, zai!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: So it turns out to be a jellyfish.

[Smile Always]: Bees and butterflies, free of suspicion, come as they please; flowers of the heart open directly toward self and others. Welcoming wind and snow with a smile, they have never thanked them; everywhere their fragrant beauty needs no planting!

[Fool]: Fine lines!

[Fool]: What wonderfully fragrant flowers!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens] (in reply to [Smile Always]: Who has ever seen empty space come with its mouth closed?): Who has ever seen empty space come with its mouth open?

[Smile Always]: A verse says: The road is far, the clouds endless; the slanting moon’s resonance is profoundly mysterious. The spring wind rises from the night; sitting alone, I forget the meditation cushion!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: Clouds and sky are not divided by a thread; the moon slants, yet no stars are seen. Neither sitting nor standing, the wind rises from within the mind.

[Smile Always]: Separation within nonseparation; seeing already within nonseeing; neither sitting nor standing is precisely sitting and standing; the wind blows, the waves grow still!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: When has separation upon separation ever separated? When has seeing upon seeing ever seen? Originally there is neither sitting nor standing; when the wind is still, let the waves blow.

[Smile Always]: Sound arises in an empty valley, the slanting moon is clear and round; the sword of prajñā is dull, birds wheel in the mirror!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: The great sound is sparse in sound; the moon is straight, its shadow slants. Prajñā is no sword; mirror and birds are all empty.

[Smile Always]: When the sword of prajñā melts, straight and slanting perish! There is no wisdom and no attainment!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: A whole group of people sit there without speaking—guess a phrase.

[Smile Always]: Do not be abstruse!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens] (in reply to [Smile Always]: Bees and butterflies, free of suspicion, come as they please; flowers of the heart open directly toward self and others. Welcoming wind and snow with a smile, they have never thanked them; everywhere their fragrant beauty needs no planting!): Indeed so!

[Smile Always]: Smile always!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: The smiling Way delights and also sorrows; the mouth speaks of unobstructedness and purity. Ever wishing to show heart-flowers to others, wherever one opens one's heart, insects fill the courtyard.

[Smile Always]: Roaming in the Tathāgata's ocean of quiescent extinction, things are naturally thus—neither good nor bad. A hundred kinds of calculation come to mind; knowing their purity is also unobstructed!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: In the ocean of quiescent extinction there is neither purity nor impurity; yet when there is neither good nor bad, you still discriminate. Seeming right but not right, you have not yet attained perfect integration; you know only names and appearances, not reality. Rest!

[Smile Always]: Ha ha! Since senior brother knows both names and appearances and reality, your burden is no light one!

[Fool]: What are you carrying?

[Smile Always]: Excellent—there is someone to take over!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens] (in reply to [Smile Always]: Ha ha! Since senior brother knows both names and appearances and reality, your burden is no light one!): You would not happen to be Brother Tai, would you?

[Smile Always]: I do not know either!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: In the end, I have still seen you, elder brother.

[Smile Always]: Even having seen me, you do not know me!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: Heh heh, the mind sees clearly; it is not a matter of knowing or not knowing.

[Smile Always]: Ha ha! Senior brother, wait until the moon sets, then look at the sky!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: Ha ha! The same sky whether the moon rises or sets—know, know.

[Smile Always]: Fine eyesight! Senior brother can see that the sky is the same; I gladly concede defeat!

[Chan Guest Beyond the Heavens]: Given the chance, I would still like to play games with you, senior brother!

Please, when playing the game, it would be best to cut down on the nonsense.

[Always Smiling]: All right!

It's just a game—what's nonsense and what isn't?

[Chan]: What does fen-shu mean?

[lvm]: Fen-shu bu xia means being unable to explain something clearly.

[Always Smiling]: What can be explained clearly needs no explanation; what cannot be explained clearly, why talk about it?

[lvm]: The way of words is cut off; the path of mental activity is extinguished.

[Always Smiling]: Though the way of words is cut off, talking does not end; though the path of mental activity is extinguished, the great road stretches far!

[lvm]: Of course, that does not mean one absolutely cannot speak—for example, "Facing west, look east."

[Iron Broom]: People will start calling us the "Living Water Gang" again.

“Words about delusion reveal all that is true; delusion and truth are equally two delusions. Even ‘neither true nor untrue’ is not true; how, then, can one see what is seen?” (Śūraṅgama Sūtra)

[Integration]: Reversing it would be better. “Facing west, look east” is ordinary speech,

---

If one insists on saying something unusual, one might also say: “The way of words is cut off; the path of mental activity is extinguished.”

[Always Smiling]: Directions have already vanished.

With directions already vanished, one still talks of east and west. In the samādhi of play, without sorrow or joy, there is no harm in laughing heartily as well! Marvelous, marvelous!

[Chan Ground Robe]: Mr. Wen, please come in. In response to the preceding remarks:

A monastic asked Zhaozhou, “Is ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing’ a pitfall for people nowadays?”

Zhaozhou said, “Someone once asked me about this, and for a full five years I was unable to explain it.”

A monastic asked Chan Master Zhaozhou, “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing”—have present-day students all died beneath this sentence?”

Zhaozhou said, “Someone once asked me how to understand this sentence. I thought about it for five years and still did not know how best to explain it to him.”

[59] Why Did Zhaozhou Not Quote It in Full?

[Fifty-Nine] Why Did Zhaozhou Not Quote It All?

The Instruction: Encompassing heaven and earth, surpassing sages and ordinary people; atop every blade of grass, he points out the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa; amid a thicket of weapons, he determines the lifeline of the patch-robed monk. Tell me, through whose beneficent power can one attain this? Let us raise the case and see.

[Fifty-Nine] The Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’ [Bring the rest of it forward. What does that say? A three-layered koan.]”

“The moment there are words, there is picking and choosing. [His whole mouth is filled with frost.]”

“How does the Reverend guide people?” [Pressing this old fellow. Ha!]”

Zhaozhou said, “Why do you not quote the saying in full?” [Though a thief may be a petty man, his wits surpass those of a gentleman. A barehanded thief. Riding the thief’s horse to chase the thief.]

The monk said, “This humble monk has recited only this far.” [Two fellows playing with mud balls. He has run into a thief. A hard adversary to withstand.]

Zhaozhou said, “Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’” [In the end, it is all due to this old fellow. He has had his eyes replaced by him. He has been caught and defeated.]

When Zhaozhou said, “Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing,’” it was like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning. In seizing and releasing, killing and enlivening, he was so utterly free. Teachers everywhere say that Zhaozhou possessed an eloquence beyond his peers.

When Zhaozhou ordinarily instructed the assembly, he would say: “The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. The moment there are words, there is picking and choosing; there is clarity. This old monk does not abide within clarity. Do you still cherish and safeguard this or not?” At the time, a monk asked, “Since you do not abide within clarity, what is there to cherish and safeguard?” Zhaozhou said, “I do not know either.” The monk said, “Since the Reverend does not know, why do you say that you do not abide within clarity?” Zhaozhou said, “It is enough that you have asked. Make your bows and withdraw.”

Later, this monk seized upon a gap in his words and questioned him about it. The question was indeed extraordinary. But it was merely the working of his own mind; no one else could have done anything with him. Yet Zhaozhou was a genuine adept, so he said, “Why do you not quote the saying in full?” This monk too knew how to turn around and breathe freely, so he said, “This humble monk has recited only this far,” as though it had all been arranged beforehand. Zhaozhou picked it up in response to his very words and answered; there was no need for calculation.

The ancients said that sustaining continuity is most difficult. To distinguish dragons from snakes and discern good fortune from ill, one needs a genuine adept in his proper capacity. Zhaozhou replaced this monk’s eyes: without touching the sharp edge, without resorting to calculation, it was naturally just right. You cannot call it a statement; you cannot call it a non-statement; nor can you call it a statement that is neither existent nor nonexistent. Leave the four propositions and cut off the hundred negations. Why? When it comes to this matter, it is like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning: only by looking with urgent attention can you see it. If you hesitate and deliberate, you will inevitably lose your body and forfeit your life.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Water splashed on it does not adhere. [What are you talking about? It is far too profound! Where could there be any ground for mutual discourse?]

Wind blowing upon it cannot enter. [Like empty space. Hard and bare. Looking up into the void and making an appeal.]

With tiger strides and dragon gait, [In his own house, he is at ease. Truly extraordinary.]

Ghosts howl and spirits weep. [The whole assembly covers its ears. As wind moves, grass bends. Venerable, could you be studying together with him?]

Whose head is three feet long? [What a strange thing! What holy being is this? Do you see? Do you see?]

Facing one another without words, he stands alone. [Ha! Draw in your head. Let him off one move. Mountain goblin. Letting him off is impossible. Then strike him.]

“Water splashed on it does not adhere; wind blowing upon it cannot enter. With tiger strides and dragon gait, ghosts howl and spirits weep”—there is nowhere for you to bite or peck at this. These four lines praise Zhaozhou’s reply, which was like a dragon galloping and a tiger racing; the monk could only be left utterly at a loss. Not only this monk: ghosts howled and spirits wept; it was as though the wind were moving and the grass bending.

The final two lines may be said to strike intimately at the essential point: “Whose head is three feet long? Facing one another without words, he stands alone.” Have you not seen a monk ask an ancient worthy, “What is Buddha?” The ancient worthy said, “A head three feet long, a neck two inches long.” Xuedou cites this. Do you all recognize it? This mountain monk does not recognize it either. At one stroke, Xuedou painted Zhaozhou in his entirety—he truly got right inside him. You must look carefully with your own eyes.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Zhaozhou said, “Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’” It comes to seem remarkably like …

“Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’” Reading this, I suddenly thought of something the teacher once said: “Stop! This is contemplative awareness.” Ha ha!

[lvm]: In fact, nothing ever stopped; it is simply that, in this very moment, false conceptual imaginings cease.

For example, an actor rehearsing for a television drama becomes so immersed in the role as to forget himself. Suddenly, the director shouts, “Stop!” What will happen to the actor?

[Casual Talk]: This analogy of the teacher’s is truly splendid!

[Snow Mountain Youth]: “Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’”

Also: when one sees a thought, the thought disappears—even if one wants to recover the thought just now, one cannot remember it. But immediately new thoughts arise again. Should one simply watch them like this?

[lvm]: Did you not already know that contemplative awareness is not watching thoughts?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Yes! Ordinarily, when I notice that I am clinging, I can refrain from following it as it turns.

Ordinarily, when I notice that I am clinging, I can refrain from following it as it turns. (But sometimes I still have to follow it around for several turns before noticing.) Sometimes, even in dreams, I can refrain from following it as it turns.

But when there is nothing to do, such as during some boring meetings, I close my eyes and watch my thoughts (am I being unnecessarily meddlesome?). But if I do not do this, what should I do? I respectfully ask the teacher for instruction!

[lvm]: A boring meeting? Closing your eyes and watching thoughts?

Then the person chairing the meeting will be very unhappy.

To reject external sounds—is that not precisely to be turned by circumstances?

[Ever-Smiling]: Everyone fears being turned by circumstances—but what if one is turned? This very one who picks and chooses has never engaged in picking and choosing!

[lvm]: For one who is awakened, turning is itself not turning; for one who is deluded, turning is itself saṃsāra.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Teacher, do you turn or not turn?

[lvm]: Clouds race and the moon moves; the boat moves and the shore shifts.

[Ever-Smiling]: A verse says: Illusion too is illusion—why not let illusion be illusion? Illusion arises and illusion ceases; illusion has nothing to delude!

[lvm]: Truly saṃsāra!

[Ever-Smiling]: Let it go.

[lvm]: Just that word “let” …

[Ever-Smiling]: This disciple has no profound purport to receive ..... Three prostrations!

[lvm]: lvm will now stop.

[Snow Mountain Youth] (replying to [lvm]: “A boring meeting? Closing your eyes and watching thoughts?”): Every day I sweep the ground of mind; the more I sweep, the less still it becomes. If I want the ground of mind to be still, I should cast aside the broom handle.

[Holy Army]: What a lazy youngster! You only want to seek stillness. With a great heap of dog shit, why cast aside the broom handle?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: This was originally a passage from the Recorded Sayings of Mount Pan by Wang Zhijin, the Perfected Man Qiyun, but it has prompted …

Someone asked: “My thoughts continue one after another, and I cannot sweep them away completely. What should I do?” The answer was: “Every day I sweep the ground of mind; the more I sweep, the less still it becomes. If I want the ground of mind to be still, I should cast aside the broom handle.” The person bowed in thanks.

[Holy Army]: His thoughts have continued one after another, and the dog shit and bird shit have all been cleared away. Have you attained it?

[stone] (replying to [Snow Mountain Youth]: “Every day I sweep the ground of mind; the more I sweep, the less still it becomes. If I want the ground of mind to be still, I should cast aside the broom handle.”): Every day, illuminate the ground of mind: there is neither stillness nor non-stillness. So long as the illuminating mind does not change, why not dance with the broom handle?

I'm having an episode—please forgive me, fellow practitioner.

Shengjun : If the mind remains unchanged, that is true purity; on the first ground of purity, there is not even a broom handle.

stone : I really cannot imagine what the first ground of purity is like. May I ask, fellow practitioner?

I think that there, appearances do not obstruct essence, and essence does not obstruct appearances. How, then, can there be “not even a broom handle”?

Shengjun : The Buddha-ground is called the first purity. Because it is ultimate emptiness, the three times are pure. It is beyond the reach of imaginative discrimination.

stone : My question is:

Did not the Buddha repeatedly say that he viewed the worlds of the ten directions as one views a fruit in the palm of one's hand?

Did not the Buddha also manifest in this world to teach the Dharma?

If, upon reaching the first ground of purity, there is nothing at all, how can the foregoing be the case?

Shengjun : Precisely because of the first purity, one can sit upon a single mote of dust and manifest lands in the ten directions, and view Jambudvīpa as a fruit in the palm of one's hand.

stone : If that is so, how can one say, "There is no broom handle"?

Shengjun : If there is a "broom handle," then attachment to dharmas has not yet been destroyed. How could that count as the first purity?

stone : When the Buddha manifests in the world, has attachment to dharmas not been destroyed either?

The old man also wears clothes, eats meals, and teaches the Dharma.

Xuěshān Tóngzǐ (replying to Xuěshān Tóngzǐ : "Yes! Ordinarily, when I notice that I am clinging, I can also refrain from following it along."): Oh! Right—it is precisely making trouble!

Oh! Right—it is precisely making trouble! As the saying goes: "When a thought arises, simply do not run after it!"

Thank you, Teacher!

Shengjun : Thoughts come like flying dust; clinging is the illness. Take up a cloth, wipe them away, and brightness returns.

Gǔyùn : Let thoughts come and let thoughts go. If there is no attachment, whence comes illness? Wanting to wipe them away only adds dust; "wiping away" obscures the brightness.

Shengjun : Thoughts may be coarse or subtle, but all obstruct the realm of luminosity. If one is free of all attachment, one returns to the ultimate truth.

Liánnóng : Coarse and subtle are bullshit; luminosity is bullshit; nonattachment is bullshit; in the end, it is all bullshit!

Shengjun : That empty, glib boast of yours is even more bullshit!

Liánnóng : Congratulations—you finally understand!

Liánnóng : For that remark, I bow to you in reverence!

Shengjun : By all means, do not bow to me—I cannot bear it. It is enough if you recognize where your heels stand!

Liánnóng : If you cannot bear it, what are you babbling about ultimate truth for?!

Isn't it bullshit, indeed!

Shengjun : What is this nonsense about being able or unable to bear it? Just make sure your heels are planted on the ground!

The ultimate truth is where the path of words is cut off and the activity of mind ceases. Think for yourself: have you attained it?

Liánnóng : Another one!

Shengjun : Catch this!

Bèiyè (replying to Shengjun : “By all means, do not bow to me—I cannot bear it. It is enough if you recognize where your heels stand!”): People nowadays do not take “bowing in reverence” seriously at all.

In ancient times, people truly bowed in reverence. Nowadays they mostly do it with their mouths. For instance, someone may post “I bow in reverence”; if they truly meant it, they should actually do it beside their computer.

Sigh, everything has changed. “Chan school,” you know—say a little something to get by. “Simplicity,” you know.

They say a little about “contemplation,” and that is considered enough; how profound it sounds when they speak like characters in koans!

Oh my! The words in those koans were all plain speech at the time, haha. Modern people enjoy speaking the plain speech of ancient times, studying it as classical writing, and calling it “sharp exchanges.”

When a sharp exchange really comes, they would have long since wanted to kill someone!

Wúxiàng : This post by Bèiyè is very well said; it strikes at the maladies of our time. Let us bump it up so that everyone can read it.

Liánnóng : I really did bow in reverence!

Shengjun cannot bear it, and so poor Little Nong has ended up bowing to bullshit~~~ Bèiyè can surely bear it, so Little Nong here truly bows to you as well! Shengjun : Bowing here and bowing there—why not bow to that thing atop your own head, with its six doors of entry and exit, neither blue nor yellow?

Liánnóng : Another one!

Shengjun : Hold it up!

Bèiyè : No need for ceremony; rise.

Come over here—I have some Tieguanyin tea . . . . . .

Liánnóng : Hehe, you really do have that!

No wonder you cannot hear the sound of the ocean tide.

Shengjun : You should never have brought up the sound of the ocean tide. You have frightened Old Bèiyè so badly that he does not even dare make a sound when he farts, you rascal!

Liánnóng : Shengjun, oh Shengjun~~~

When Old Bèiyè does not open his mouth, at least in appearance he still comes somewhat close to the sound of the ocean tide.

But you are recklessly off the mark, completely like donkey lips matched to a horse’s mouth!

Little Nong knows that the empty, glib words I spoke above are indeed no different from bullshit; let one fart pass, and it is gone. But although your mouth utters “ultimate truth,” your large intestine is clogged solid with that “ultimate truth,” and yet you have not the slightest self-awareness!?

Let us stop here. I shall no longer banter with you.

Namo Amitābha Buddha!

Iron Broom : What is meant by “facing each other without words, standing alone in sufficiency”?

lvm : Yuánwù said it—“mountain goblin.”

Xuěshān Tóngzǐ : Are these two lines a verse on Zhàozhōu replacing that monk’s eyes?

Whose head is three feet long? Facing one another in silence, it stands on one leg.

lvm : Oh! So that is how it is:

First, look here:

A monk asked an ancient worthy, “What is Buddha?” The worthy said, “The head is three feet long, the neck two inches long.” Xuedou cited this: Do you all recognize it?

Whose head is three feet long?—The Buddha is right before you. Do you recognize him?

Facing one another in silence, it stands on one leg.—I fear one can neither speak it nor stand firm, can one?

Cannot speak it? Yuanwu insists on speaking—“a mountain sprite.” (A mountain sprite is a spirit of the mountains. It cannot speak and has only one leg, so it moves by hopping. Thus: “Facing one another in silence, it stands on one leg”—a mountain sprite.)

Cannot stand firm? Yuanwu insists on standing—“To let it pass is unacceptable.” Then he struck.

Xueshan Tongzi : Thank you, Teacher!

Chandi Yi : A vernacular translation, together with the Inscription on Faith in Mind:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “ ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’ As soon as there are words, there is picking and choosing. How does the Reverend teach people?”

Zhaozhou said, “Why do you not quote the saying in full?”

The monk said, “I have only recited it as far as this.”

Zhaozhou said, “Only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’ ”

A monk asked Chan Master Zhaozhou: “ ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’ Yet when masters ordinarily teach the Dharma, they must give people some point of entry, and they also make discriminating remarks—this is right, that is wrong. May I ask how Chan Master Zhaozhou ordinarily teaches people?”

Zhaozhou replied with a question: “Why did you not finish the sentence?”

The monk replied, “I thought this sentence was complete in itself!”

Zhaozhou said, “My way of teaching people is only this: ‘The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing.’ ”

Still, one does not know whether this monk had realized, “Simply do not hate or love, and all will be clear and open.”

Inscription on Faith in Mind

The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. Simply do not hate or love, and all will be clear and open.

A difference as slight as a hair's breadth sets heaven and earth apart; if you wish it to appear before you, harbor neither favor nor aversion.

When aversion and attraction contend, this is the mind's disease; not knowing the profound principle, one vainly thinks of stillness.

It is perfectly whole, like great empty space: lacking nothing, excessive in nothing. It is because of grasping and rejecting that it is not thus.

Do not pursue conditioned things; do not abide in an experience of emptiness. With one even mind, they naturally vanish.

To stop movement and return to stillness makes stillness all the more active; if you remain stuck at the two extremes, how can you know the One?

If the One is not understood, both sides lose their efficacy. To reject being is to fall into being; to follow emptiness is to turn away from emptiness.

The more one speaks and thinks, the further one strays from accord; cut off speech and thought, and nowhere is there no penetration.

Returning to the root, one attains the essential; following appearances, one loses the principle. In a moment of turning the light back, one surpasses the previous emptiness.

The transformations of that previous emptiness all arise from false views; there is no need to seek the true—one need only cease holding views.

Do not abide in the two views, and take care not to pursue them. As soon as there is right and wrong, the mind is scattered and lost.

The two arise because of the one, but do not cling even to the one. When not a single thought arises, the myriad dharmas are without fault.

Without fault, there is no dharma; without arising, there is no mind. The subject vanishes because of objects; objects sink away following the subject.

Objects arise because of the subject; the subject arises because of objects. If you wish to know these two aspects, their origin is a single emptiness.

This single emptiness contains both alike and equally embraces all phenomena. If one does not distinguish fine from coarse, how can there be partiality?

The essence of the great Way is broad: neither easy nor difficult. Petty views breed doubt and hesitation, making one ever more hasty or sluggish.

Cling to it and lose the measure, and you will surely enter a wrong path; let it go, and it follows its nature—the essence neither comes nor abides.

Let your nature accord with the Way, and you will roam freely, free of vexation; bind your thoughts, and you depart from truth, becoming dull and unwell.

If you are unwell, why weary the spirit? What use is there in making distinctions of intimacy and estrangement? If you wish to take up the One Vehicle, do not despise the six sense objects.

When the six sense objects are not despised, they are identical with right awakening. The wise are non-contriving; the foolish bind themselves.

Dharmas have no different dharma; one merely becomes falsely attached. To use mind to seek mind—is this not a great error?

Delusion gives rise to stillness and disturbance; awakening has neither liking nor disliking. All dualities arise from discriminating deliberation.

Dreams, illusions, flowers in empty space—why labor to grasp them? Gain and loss, right and wrong: let them all go at once.

If the eye does not sleep, all dreams cease of themselves; if the mind makes no distinctions, the myriad dharmas are all suchness.

The essence of suchness is mysterious; utterly still, it forgets all conditions. Viewing the myriad dharmas equally, one returns naturally to their source.

When the reasons for them vanish, they cannot be compared or measured. Stillness stops movement, yet movement does not stop stillness.

When the two do not arise, how can the one exist? At the ultimate limit, no rules or standards remain.

When mind accords with equality, all doing ceases. All doubt is thoroughly purified, and right faith is made straight and true.

Nothing remains; there is nothing to remember. Empty and luminous, it shines by itself, requiring no effort of mind.

It is beyond thought; consciousness and feeling cannot fathom it. In the dharma realm of suchness, there is neither other nor self.

To accord swiftly, speak only of nonduality. In nonduality all is the same, with nothing not embraced.

The wise ones of the ten directions all enter this principle.

This principle is neither extended nor brief: one thought is ten thousand years; nowhere absent, it is before one's eyes throughout the ten directions.

The utmost small is the same as the great, when all boundaries are forgotten; the utmost great is the same as the small, when no outer limit is seen.

Being is itself nonbeing; nonbeing is itself being. If it is not thus, there is no need to preserve it.

One is all; all is one. If one can be thus, why worry that it will not be complete?

Faith in mind is nondual; the nondual is faith in mind. The path of words is cut off: it is neither past, present, nor future.

[Sixty] Yunmen's Staff Transforms into a Dragon

[Case 60] Yunmen's Staff Transforms into a Dragon

Prefatory Remark:

All Buddhas and sentient beings are originally no different; how could the mountains, rivers, and the earth itself have distinctions of higher and lower? Why, then, have they become wholly divided into two sides? If you can turn the huatou around and cut off the essential passage, you cannot simply let it go. Yet if you do not let it go, the whole earth cannot contain even a single pinch. But where is the point at which the huatou is turned around? Try raising it and see.

[Case 60] The Case:

Yunmen held up his staff before the assembly and said: [The transformation occurs at the critical moment. It is a sword that kills and a sword that gives life. It has already replaced your very eyes.]

"The staff transforms into a dragon—[Why all this circumlocution? What need is there for it to transform into anything?]

and swallows up heaven and earth. [The lives of Chan monks throughout the land no longer remain. Does it still obstruct your throat? Where will you, venerable one, establish your life?]

Where do the mountains, rivers, and great earth come from?" [In the ten directions there are no walls; on all four sides there are no gates. East, west, south, north, the intermediate directions, above and below—what can be done about this?]

Now, when Yunmen says, "The staff transforms into a dragon and swallows up heaven and earth. Where do the mountains, rivers, and great earth come from?"—if you say there is something, you are blind; if you say there is nothing, you are dead. Do you see where Yunmen acts for others? Give me back my staff!

People nowadays do not understand Yunmen's unique revelation. Instead, they say that one realizes the mind through form and reveals principle by relying on things. Yet Śākyamuni Buddha taught the Dharma for forty-nine years; surely one cannot be unaware of such an argument. Why, then, was there further need for "holding up a flower, and Kāśyapa smiling"? This old fellow then spoke nonsense, saying: "I possess the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa, which I entrust to Mahākāśyapa.

Why, then, was there any need to transmit the Mind-Seal separately? Since you are all guests in the house of the patriarchs, do you understand the mind that is separately transmitted? If there is a single thing in your breast, mountains, rivers, and the great earth appear before you in a clamor. If there is not a single thing in your breast, outwardly there is not the slightest trace. Why speak of principle and wisdom merging in obscurity, or objects and spirit converging? Why? When one thing is understood, all things are understood; when one thing is illumined, all things are illumined.

It has long been said: "Those who study the Way do not recognize the true, merely because they have always recognized the spirit. The root of birth and death through measureless kalpas is what foolish people call the original person." Suppose one suddenly breaks through the realm of the aggregates, so that body and mind are one and there is nothing outside the body; still, one has not attained even half of it. Why speak of realizing the mind through form and revealing principle by relying on things? An ancient said: "As soon as a single mote of dust arises, the whole earth is gathered in.

Tell me: what is that single mote of dust? If you recognize this single mote of dust, then you recognize the staff. The moment you pick up the staff, you see its wondrous functioning in every direction. To speak this way is already entanglement in vines and creepers—how much more so to have it transform into a dragon! Administrator Qing said: "Among the five thousand and forty-eight scrolls, has there ever been such talk?"

Whenever Yunmen took up the staff, he brought forth the complete potential and great function, vividly and directly acting for others. Bajiao addressed the assembly: "The very handle by which Chan monks are grasped lies wholly at the tip of the staff." Yongjia likewise said: "It is not an empty matter of outward marks; it is the Tathāgata's precious staff, the very trace of his footsteps." Long ago, when the Tathāgata was with Dīpaṃkara Buddha, he spread out his hair to cover the mud and await that Buddha. Dīpaṃkara said: "A monastery should be built here.

At that time a deva prince marked out a spot with a blade of grass and said, "The monastery has been built." Tell me, everyone: where does this message come from? The patriarch said, "Attain realization at the head of the staff; accept it under the shout." Tell me, what is it that is accepted?

If someone suddenly asked, “What is the staff?”—would it be doing a somersault? Would it be clapping once? All of that is merely playing with one’s clever spirit. Fortunately, it has nothing to do with it!

Xuedou’s Verse:

The staff swallows heaven and earth—[What are you saying? It is useful only for beating dogs.]

To speak in vain of the peach-blossom flood surging forth. [Open up the one aperture above, and a thousand sages will all stand downwind; nor does it lie in grasping clouds and clutching mist. To say it a thousand or ten thousand times is not as good as gathering it up once with your own hands and feet.]

Those whose tails are scorched do not lie in grasping clouds and clutching mist; [Turn left or right—the old monk simply watches. It is only a dry piece of firewood.]

Why should those who expose their gills lose heart and soul? [Everyone bears the bearing of a king; it is simply that you yourself are a thousand or ten thousand miles away. Yet, alas, you are terrified.]

It has been taken up—[Thank you for your compassion. Such an anxious grandmotherly heart!]

Do you hear or not? [One cannot avoid falling into the weeds. What use is hearing?]

You must be utterly free and open; [Leftover broth and spoiled rice! Where do heaven, earth, and the great land come from?]

Do not go on in confusion and disorder. [The one who raises the command is the first to violate it; in due course it will come down upon your head. Striking with the staff, he says: “You cannot simply let it go!”]

Seventy-two blows are leniently remitted, [This mountain monk has never carried out this command. If it were enforced according to the command, you should be grateful to encounter this mountain monk.]

But one hundred and fifty are hard to spare you. [When the proper command is put into effect, how could it end merely like this? Even if you were struck three thousand times in the morning and eight hundred times in the evening, what would that accomplish?]

(The master suddenly picked up his staff and descended from the seat; the entire assembly scattered at once.) [What is Xuedou doing with a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail?]

Yunmen painstakingly acts for others, whereas Xuedou acts for others by cutting straight across. Therefore, setting aside “transforms into a dragon,” there is no need to speak in this way; it is simply, “The staff swallows heaven and earth.” Xuedou’s main intent is to prevent conceptual interpretation. He further says, “To speak in vain of the peach-blossom flood surging forth”; there is even less need for it to transform into a dragon. At Yu’s Gate there are three tiers of waves. Every year in the third month, the peach-blossom flood rises; fish able to swim upstream and leap over the waves transform into dragons. Xuedou says, “Even if it transforms into a dragon, it is still empty talk.”

“Those whose tails are scorched do not lie in grasping clouds and clutching mist.” When a fish passes through Yu’s Gate, heavenly fire naturally scorches its tail, and it departs grasping clouds and clutching mist. Xuedou means that even if it transforms into a dragon, it does not lie in grasping clouds and clutching mist.

“Why should those who expose their gills lose heart and soul?” The preface to the Qingliang Commentary says: “Bodhisattvas who have accumulated practice still expose their gills at the Dragon Gate.” Its main point is that the realm of the Avataṃsaka is not attained through slight virtue or slight wisdom. It is like fish that fail to pass through the Dragon Gate: they strike their foreheads and turn back, trapped amid stagnant waters and sandy wastes, exposing their gills. Xuedou means that once they have struck their foreheads and turned back, they must lose heart and soul.

“It has been taken up—do you hear or not?” With this further footnote, he has swept it all away for you at once. You must go forth utterly free and open; do not go on in confusion and disorder. If you continue in confusion and disorder, you will have lost the staff.

“Seventy-two blows are leniently remitted”: Xuedou sets aside the heavy and follows the light for your sake. The ancients said that seventy-two blows become one hundred and fifty. People nowadays misunderstand and merely count the number: if it should be seventy-five blows, why are there only seventy-two? They do not realize that the ancients’ meaning lies beyond words. Hence it is said that this matter does not lie in verbal formulations. To prevent later people from engaging in strained interpretation, Xuedou therefore cites it. Even if you are truly free and open, you are precisely fit to receive seventy-two blows, which would still be lenient remission. Even if you are not like this at all, one hundred and fifty blows will be hard to spare you.

Having finished the verse, he again picked up the staff and repeatedly acted for others. Yet, although it is thus, there is not one among them with blood beneath the skin.

End of Volume Six of Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu’s Blue Cliff Record

Shuyin Ding of Yuzhong has printed the Record of Yuanwu's Blue Cliff; fortunately, the work has now been completed. If Chan friends from the four directions possess copies of the Garden of Matters of the Patriarchal Hall, the Record of Myriad Good Deeds Returning to One, other Chan writings, or rare editions seldom printed in the world, I respectfully ask that they show them to me. I shall have them carved and printed to broaden the study of Chan. This too is one means of skillful guidance. Please do not withhold your jade; I would be most grateful. Respectfully submitted.

[Chan Diyī]: Please consider Yunmen's style:

Yunmen held up his staff before the assembly and said: "The staff transforms into a dragon and swallows up heaven and earth. Where do the mountains, rivers, and great earth come from?"

Yunmen raised his staff and said to the assembly: "When I transform you, I am your master; whether you live or die is not for you to decide!"

In seeking the Buddhadharma, value authentic transmission—do not take risks! If a false Yunmen impersonates Yunmen's style, students of the Way will be in terrible trouble! Even if they are beaten to death, it will be for nothing! If they complain to King Yama, he will say: "You were stupid enough to get yourselves killed! You deserve it!"

[Defeated Grass Bandit]: Heh heh—whose Dharma successor is Yunmen, waving his staff? If the boy had not awakened, why could he still show someone the One-Finger Chan?

Black-Bean Eyes, why have you still made no progress?!

[Chan Diyī]: Oh! Senior brother is one who sits atop a solitary peak; this junior's lack of progress has made you laugh at me.

[Defeated Grass Bandit]: I truly do not deserve your evaluation, senior brother, but I hope you will seriously consider my question. I hope it may benefit you.

[Chan Diyī]: I am sorry. Just now, by "solitary peak" I meant that you were beyond help. I will seriously consider your question. Thank you.

[Iron Broom]: "Suppose one suddenly breaks through the realm of the aggregates, so that body and mind are one and there is nothing outside the body; still, one has not attained even half of it." Is that other half within this half?

[Iron Broom]: One sentence in answer to myself: The staff transforms into a dragon!

[Defeated Grass Bandit]: No need to answer yourself; Xuedou has already told you.

Suppose one suddenly breaks through the realm of the aggregates, so that body and mind are one and there is nothing outside the body; still, one has not attained even half of it. Why speak of realizing the mind through form and revealing principle by relying on things!

Because "those who study the Way do not recognize the true, merely because they have always recognized the spirit. The root of birth and death through measureless kalpas is what foolish people call the original person."

An ancient said, "As soon as a single speck of dust arises, the whole earth is gathered in." Tell me: what is this single speck of dust? If you recognize this single speck, then you recognize the staff. The moment you pick up the staff, you see its wondrous functions, vertical and horizontal. To speak in this way is already entangling in vines and creepers—how much more so to say that it transforms into a dragon!

Have you not seen it said: "If there is one thing in your breast, mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly appear before you. If there is not one thing in your breast, then outwardly there is not the slightest trace. Why speak of principle and wisdom merging, or objects and spirit communing? Why? When one is comprehended, all are comprehended; when one is illuminated, all are illuminated."

lvm : This is still only half.

Shengpu : Even when nothing remains outside the body, one has still not attained even half.

Iron Broom : Please give us the other half, Teacher.

lvm : lvm will stop here.

lvm : In Volume Six of the Blue Cliff Record, there is an "Yinbai" before it and a "Bingbai" after it.

Yinbai:

After this collection was consigned to the flames by Dahui, it again suffered the ravages of war and fire, and fine editions became scarce. I have now obtained a Sichuan edition, which is fairly complete and has been corrected; yet I fear that there may still be one or two errors in the text, such as confused characters or mistaken words. I ask discerning masters everywhere to correct them. If you copy them out and show them to me, I shall revise the text again, so that it may attain the beauty of gold. This would be a great blessing for the Chan school.

Written by Yinbai of Yuzhong

Bingbai:

Yin Ding of Yuzhong has published Yuanwu's Blue Cliff Record, and fortunately the work has now been completed. Should Chan friends everywhere possess copies of the Anthology of Matters from the Patriarchs' Hall, the Record of the Myriad Good Deeds Returning to One, other Chan writings, or editions rarely seen in print, I respectfully ask that you show them to me. I shall have them block-printed to broaden the study of Chan. This too is one means of skillfully guiding others. Please do not withhold your treasured copies. Respectfully submitted.

Lianong : The precipitous Blue Cliff is no home; when spring comes, I go down to the fields to learn to plant melons. The supple staff flits like dragons and snakes; one flame kindles the flowers in the mirror.

[61] Fengxue's Saying on Rise and Fall

[61] Fengxue's Saying on Rise and Fall

Introduction: To raise the Dharma banner and establish the school's essential tenet requires a master who fulfills his proper role. To distinguish dragons from snakes and discriminate black-robed monks from laypeople requires an accomplished and discerning teacher. On the blade of the sword, one discusses killing and giving life; at the tip of the staff, one discerns apt occasions. But set all that aside for now: how would you deliberate over the phrase, "the matter of standing alone in the midst of the universe"? Try bringing it up and see.

[61] The Case:

Fengxue gave this saying: [When clouds arise and bring rain, one must also know how to act as host and guest.]

"If a single mote of dust is established, [I am the Dharma King, at ease and sovereign within the Dharma. Flowers in clusters, brocade in clusters.]

the household and state prosper; [This is not a matter within his own house.]

if not a single mote of dust is established, [All traces are swept away and erased. The eyes are lost—and with them, even the nostrils.]

the household and state perish." [Everywhere is brightness. What use is there for household and state? It is entirely a matter within his own house.]

(Xuedou raised his staff and said: [One must stand like a wall a thousand fathoms high before it will do. Bodhidharma has arrived!]

"Is there any patch-robed monk who shares life and death?") [Give me back my huatou! Though this is so, to settle an unsettled matter, one must deliberate with Xuedou. Do you know? If you know, I permit you complete freedom; if you do not know, three thousand blows in the morning and eight hundred at night.]

Now, when Fengxue addressed the assembly, saying, "If a single mote of dust is established, the household and state prosper; if not a single mote of dust is established, the household and state perish," what does it mean to establish a single mote of dust? What does it mean not to establish a single mote of dust? Here, great function must manifest before it will do. Thus it is said: even if you grasp it before words are spoken, you still cling to the shell and remain confused within the enclosure; even if you thoroughly comprehend it beneath the phrase, you cannot avoid wildly mistaken views wherever you turn. He was a venerable master in Linji's lineage, directly employing the provisions proper to his school.

"If a single mote of dust is established, the household and state prosper": the rustic old man furrows his brow. The meaning lies in founding a state and securing the realm; this requires wise ministers and valiant generals. Then qilin appear and phoenixes soar—auspicious signs of peace throughout the land. How could people from a village of three households know of such a thing?

“If not a single mote of dust is established, the household and state perish”: the wind whistles bleakly. Why then does the rustic old man come forth singing in praise? Precisely because the household and state have perished. The Dongshan school calls this the point of transformation: there are no more Buddhas and no sentient beings, no right and no wrong, no good and no evil; sound and trace are utterly cut off. Thus it is said: though gold dust is precious, if it falls into the eye, it becomes a cataract. Again, it is said: “Gold dust is a cataract in the eye; the jewel sewn into one’s robe is dust upon the Dharma.”

One’s own numinous awareness is not valued; who, then, are Buddhas and patriarchs? To penetrate through and through, spiritual powers and wondrous functions are nothing extraordinary. When one reaches this point, one pulls the patchrobe over one’s head and lets the ten thousand affairs rest. At such a time, this mountain monk understands nothing at all. If one goes on speaking of mind and nature, of mystery and wonder, none of it is of any use. Why? In that place there is naturally a realm of immortals.

Nanquan addressed the assembly: “Among the seven hundred eminent monks at Huangmei, all understood the Buddhadharma, yet none received his robe and bowl. Only the layman Lu did not understand the Buddhadharma, and therefore received his robe and bowl.” He also said: “The Buddhas of the three times do not know that it exists, while a house cat and a white ox do know that it exists.” The rustic old man may furrow his brow or sing in praise—how do you understand this? What kind of eye does he possess, that he acts in such a way? You must know that before the rustic old man’s gate there are separate regulations.

After Xuedou had taken up both sides, he then raised his staff and said, “Is there any patch-robed monk who shares life and death?” If at that time some fellow had stepped forward and uttered one phrase, becoming host and guest to each other, Xuedou, this old fellow, would have been spared from patting his own chest afterward.

Let the rustic old man never unknit his brows, [There is someone three thousand miles away. Fine food does not satisfy a full man.]

I seek only to establish a heroic foundation for household and state. [Everyone knows the tune of great peace. Go when you wish to go; stay when you wish to stay. The entire universe is a gate of liberation—how will you establish it?]

Where are the wise ministers and valiant generals now? [Are there any? Are there any? The land is vast and people sparse; those one meets are few. Do not pat your chest yet!]

The pure wind for ten thousand miles knows itself alone. [As though no one else were present—whom would you have sweep the ground? This, too, is the arhat of Yunju.]

Just now he raised both sides; here, however, he takes up only one side and sets aside the other, cutting what is long to patch what is short, setting aside what is weighty and following what is light. Thus he says, “Let the rustic old man never unknit his brows; I seek only to establish a heroic foundation for household and state.”

“Where are the wise ministers and valiant generals now?” Xuedou raised his staff and said, “Is there any patch-robed monk who shares life and death?” It is just as if he had said, “Are there any wise ministers and valiant generals?” With one mouthful he has swallowed all people. Thus it is said: “The land is vast and people sparse; those one meets are few.” Is there anyone who knows one another? Come out, and I will bury you all in one pit!

“The pure wind for ten thousand miles knows itself alone”—this is precisely where Xuedou pats his chest.

[A Cloud mg]: Koans are always present; why must one investigate them everywhere? What a fine phrase: like wind blowing on light—what can it do to me?

[A Cloud mg]: The old man often said, “It is irrelevant.” Alas, people like us always cling to winds and linger in circumstances, forgetting the native scenery of our original ground. How sad.

[Shengjun]: Whoever speaks of not establishing a single mote of dust—I’ll split him to death with one stroke of the axe right here!

[Lvm]: Like a knife cutting water, like wind blowing on light.

[Shengjun]: What a move—the Tathāgata Palm!

[Chan Robe]: Rise with the sun and work; rest at sunset. What has the emperor’s power to do with me? The so-called rustic old man’s song of praise is merely a projection of literati sentiment!

[Dashan]: Ha ha, if you put it that way, brother, you will only make the rustic old man furrow his brow again.

[Chan Robe]: The so-called “rustic old man” cannot “blend with the light and mingle with the dust”; he is merely a “natural animal.”

[Chan Robe]: A bodhisattva dwelling in the world is “conditioned and social”—a social person. He does not aspire to the life of a “natural person.”

[Dashan]: The rustic old man in this koan does not carry the meaning of the rustic old man in literati writings.

[Chan Robe]: These literary-Chan writings were originally meant to toy with the sentiments of those old loyalist remnants!

[Dashan]: If you view koans through the eyes of literary Chan in this way, it is useless even if you see through kraft paper.

[Chan Robe]: Do not deliberately distort what I mean! What is the point of that?

[Dashan]: Don't get excited, heh heh. Then say it plainly: is this "Fengxue's Saying on Rise and Fall" literary Chan or not?

[Chan Robe]: If you have already "deliberately" distorted what I mean, what point is there in my speaking plainly?

[Dashan]: Ha ha, you hypocrite.

[Chan Robe]: To some extent, yes—but in order to clarify the logic of the discussion.

[Dashan]: If you are a Chan guest merely passing time and talking idly, we might as well laugh and part ways; if not, please come in.

[Chan Robe]: "The koan itself" is not "literary Chan." But the patriarchs may use "literary Chan" within a koan to draw in literati!

[Dashan]: Is this the result you have reached from studying koans?

[Chan Robe]: Do you think I will keep posting this same post from now on? Like the Han hound chasing every clod!

[Dashan]: I believe Brother Bai when he said that the old man shut you outside the door back then.

[Chan Robe]: I myself told that story on the forum! If I told you now that I made it up to inspire people, would you believe me?

[Dashan]: Ha ha, because "you were originally kind-hearted." Now, though, it is hard to say.

[Chan Robe]: Ha ha. The story I made up was actually a true story! Do you still say that "you were originally kind-hearted"?

[Dashan]: I said "you were originally kind-hearted" because you could expose your own embarrassing affairs; at least at that time you had somewhat of an open and candid heart.

[Chan Robe]: With such an outlook, you cannot understand "koans"! Is this what you call "an open and candid heart"?

[Dashan]: "Somewhat"—how much do you think there was?

[Chan Robe]: You have heard worldly speech for countless lifetimes; here, please listen to the sound of Chan!

[Dashan]: Take heed: worldly ears, do not come over here.

[Chan Robe]: If you are accustomed to listening to worldly speech, then what you learn will inevitably be "worldly, sentimental Buddhadharma"!

[Chan Robe]: The patriarchs have hands and eyes; they can cut away the attachments that students have been teased into forming.

[A Cloud mg]: What are household and state?

[lvm]: The household symbolizes the primary retribution—that is, body and mind; the state symbolizes dependent retribution—that is, the external world.

[Chan Robe]: Teacher, a certain interpretation can lead people seriously astray:

[Shengjun]: Such baffling notions as "the second thought" were all wholesale-imported by Lion from Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism.

[Lion]: Ha ha! When did you, little brother, learn to frame and slander people too?

[Shengjun]: This is where you are at fault. Since you do not understand Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism, do not bring it in and meddle blindly.

[Chan Robe]: In Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism, one would never permit "talking about" awakening:

[Shengjun]: Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism seems not to speak of awakening; it speaks of seeing emptiness, or realizing emptiness; it does not speak of nirvāṇa,

[Lion]: Hehe! You are mistaken. It is not that one cannot discuss it, but that one cannot discuss it publicly.

[Chan Robe]: What you have "borrowed" can easily cause others to misunderstand:

[Integration]: The key is that Lion misunderstands Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism; it is not that Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism is bad, nor that it cannot be discussed.

[Chan Robe]: Those who enjoy discussing the view of the Highest Yoga Tantra may speak very well, but they will be unable to practice Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism!

[Chan Robe]: Teacher, the ancient Chan masters also loved their country and their teaching. There is no need to use "the perishing of household and state" as a metaphor for "the emptying away of body and mind."

[A Cloud mg]: Thank you for your guidance. My mind is not empty—what can I do?

[lvm]: Your mind is originally empty and fundamentally unobtainable.

[A Cloud mg]: Teacher, what does "when practice arises, conceptual understanding ceases" mean?

[lvm]: Xing means cultivation; jie means understanding.

[A Cloud mg]: Thank you.

[Chan Robe]: Teacher, your explanation here is mistaken:

[Chan Robe]: "Simply concentrate on going deeply into one method and no longer deliberate over it." This is correct only in one situation.

[Great Mountain]: Please read your teacher's words carefully before offering your lofty opinion.

[Chan Robe]: You have not read my words carefully; do not ask this of me.

[Great Mountain]: If, someday, my friend is willing to sit in meditation honestly, perhaps there may still be hope for him.

[Chan Robe]: There is no point in speaking this way. Your and my views on samādhi and wisdom are not the same.

[Great Mountain]: It may still have meaning before New Year's Eve; once New Year's Eve arrives, it has no meaning.

[Chan Robe]: Before New Year's Eve, regularly cultivate precepts, samādhi, and wisdom; perhaps then we can discuss some right views.

[Great Mountain]: You have also misunderstood your teacher's explanation.

[Integration]: The principle is correct, but the terminology is confused. Here, jie should mean "speculation."

[Great Mountain]: In "when practice arises, conceptual understanding ceases," jie jue means cutting off conceptual reasoning.

[Integration]: The reasoning in this post does not hold together. Can you say that because the Buddha taught so many sūtras, he had not cut off conceptual reasoning?

[Great Mountain]: First, second, third.

[Integration]: You should first understand what I object to: your defining jie as "all understanding and views."

[Great Mountain]: See the second point: expounding sūtras and teaching the Dharma does not necessarily show that one has not "ceased conceptual understanding."

[Integration]: Then jie should not include the views involved in your "expounding sūtras and teaching the Dharma."

[Great Mountain]: The views of sentient beings and the Buddha's views are somewhat different. Stop playing your game of shifting concepts!

[Integration]: Rather, it is your concepts that are vague and muddled.

[Great Mountain]: Because it is a view that goes beyond all views, it is said not to be a view; and to call it a view follows the same principle.

[Chan Robe]: "A view that goes beyond all views"? Has this view gone beyond them? This is the beginning of your "idle speculation"!

[Great Mountain]: Look and see whether this is idle speculation: Great Mountain, 21:41:24, 4/15/05 (102).

[Chan Robe]: Which sentence is "a view that goes beyond all views"?

[Great Mountain]: It includes both "what is called Buddhadharma is not Buddhadharma" and "a view that goes beyond all views."

[Chan Robe]: I will also give you a research topic:

[Great Mountain]: Heh heh.

[Chan Robe]: You yourself find it laughable! What you study is “a Buddhadharma that transcends all Buddhadharma”!

[Integration]: Do you think that Wen Wuding on this forum has anything to teach?

[Great Mountain]: Heh heh. The generalized method of integrative thinking will lead one’s own theory into a blind alley.

[Wen Wuding]: A reminder, sir: let go of your own conjectures, lest you fall into a rut of error!

[Chan Robe]: On the contrary, I think this is a very skillful post. You should contemplate it carefully.

[Great Mountain]: The problem with Integration’s thinking is that it sees only what is before its eyes and ignores what is behind its back.

[Integration]: Integrative thinking means to become continuous and undivided; the contradictions in your concepts are thereby forced into a blind alley.

[Integration]: In fact, by “all views” you mean “all conventional views,” but you do not dare admit it.

[Chan Robe]: Originally, I wanted to post this passage of yours, but I thought everyone had seen it so often that they no longer noticed it, so I changed the way of putting it.

[Great Mountain]: You have misunderstood it. Changing the wording makes no difference.

[A Cloud mg]: I have learned much. Respectful homage.

[A Cloud mg]: Who is Wild Old Man?

[Lvm]: Wild Old Man is like a cloud.

[A Cloud mg]: Irrelevant, irrelevant. The old man has bestowed on me the unsurpassed mantra.

[A Cloud mg]: Thank you. What, then, is a cloud?

[Lvm]: It is like Wild Old Man.

[A Cloud mg]: So Wild Old Man is precisely a cloud, and a cloud is precisely Wild Old Man.

[Lvm]: But how will you deal with that “mg”?

[A Cloud mg]: What harm is there in an ox having a tail?

[Lvm]: Ha ha! We were just speaking of Wild Old Man, and now you have brought in an ox.

[A Cloud mg]: The ox is Wild Old Man.

[Lvm]: Wild Old Man has no tail.

[A Cloud mg]: What is the tail?

[Lvm]: mg.

[A Cloud mg]: Teacher loves tails.

[Chan Robe]: Wild Old Man does not know either.

[Chan Robe]: Chan Master Fengxue warned the assembly: Be careful not to become a homeless dog!

[Empty Reputation]: At that time, a fellow in the assembly stood up and said: “Do you still recognize this fellow?”

[Lvm]: Then answer him: “Empty Reputation!”

[Empty Reputation]: The fellow said: “Blind! Blind!”

[Lvm]: Oh! Indeed: one wind, one horse, one ox.

[Empty Reputation]: The fellow laughed aloud and said: “What can be done? When an ancient mirror reflects things, is there still any distinction?”

[Lvm]: Ha ha! Even less relevant now.

[Empty Reputation]: The fellow said: “I care only that this fellow is a resourceful minister and a valiant general. Why should I care whether it is relevant or irrelevant?”

[Lvm]: lvm will no longer say “said.”

[Empty Reputation]: ^o^

[Lele]: When a scholar meets a soldier, only lonely Nengren can heal it. Who can know the suffering within laughter?

[Lvm]: When a soldier meets a scholar, then it is very simple.

[Arabic Numerals]: Kill him, and only then will I be satisfied!

[Lvm]: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... 0!

[Mind Saṅgha]: Understood:

[Arabic Numerals]: Superfluous!

[Arabic Numerals]: Nothing to say!

[!?]: Dead!?

[Arabic Numerals]: Fool! It is you who do not understand what I mean!

[gohome]: May I ask Teacher Qi?

The household and state flourish; [this is not his own household affair.]

Why say that it is not his own household affair?

[lvm]: It means that “if a single speck is established, the household and state flourish” is not his own household affair.

“The household and state flourish” means that the Dharma seat flourishes greatly. “His own household affair” is his fundamental intent, and his fundamental intent is not to establish a single speck. Therefore, what follows—“if not a single speck is established, the household and state perish”—is entirely his own household affair.

Have you not seen the phrase “falling into the weeds for the sake of people”? Where not a single speck is established, one may nevertheless establish a single speck—falling into the weeds. Why? For the sake of people! This is precisely what the Śūraṅgama Sūtra calls “responding in accordance with sentient beings’ minds and their capacity to know.”

Then what speck did the old master establish? It was “the spiritually knowing nature in which not a single thought arises, yet there is clear and distinct awareness.” Yet when the critical moment comes, the old master sternly rebukes it: “What spiritually knowing or not spiritually knowing is there!” I heard this with my own ears, and more than once.

Those who provisionally establish this single speck of “spiritual knowing” have existed since ancient times. Please consider:

Chan Master Guifeng Zongmi said: “All sentient beings without exception possess the nature of awakening: spiritually luminous and empty-quiescent, no different from the Buddha. Yet, from beginningless kalpas onward, they have never realized it. Deludedly attaching to the body as the mark of self, they give rise to emotions such as love and aversion. Following these emotions, they create karma; following their karma, they undergo retribution. Thus they undergo birth, old age, sickness, and death, revolving through saṃsāra for long kalpas.”

Yet the awakened nature within the body has never undergone birth and death. Though it seems to be driven about as in a dream, the body itself is originally at ease; though water becomes ice, its wet nature does not change. If one can awaken to this nature, that is the dharmakāya: originally unborn, what could it depend upon? Spiritually bright and never obscured, clearly and ever-presently knowing, it comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. Yet through many lives of deluded attachment, habits become second nature; joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure flow on in a subtle continuous stream.

Although truth may be realized suddenly, these emotional attachments are difficult to remove all at once. One must constantly observe them and diminish them again and again. When the wind suddenly stops, the waves gradually subside. How could the cultivation of a single lifetime immediately equal the powers and functions of all Buddhas? One need only take empty quiescence as one's own essence and not identify with the physical body; take luminous knowing as one's own mind and not identify with deluded thoughts. Whenever deluded thoughts arise, do not follow them at all. Then, even at the time of death, karma will naturally be unable to bind one.

Though there is an intermediate state, one is free to go wherever one wishes, finding a resting place at will in heaven or in the human realm. If thoughts of love and aversion have already vanished, one will no longer receive a body of segmented birth and death, and can naturally transform the short into the long and the coarse into the wondrous. If the subtle continuous stream is entirely stilled, and only the great wisdom of perfect enlightenment remains, bright and solitary, then one can manifest countless transformation bodies in response to circumstances, liberating sentient beings with whom one has affinities. This is called a Buddha."

The Chan master not only said, "Take luminous knowing as your own mind and do not identify with deluded thoughts," but also pointed out: "Whenever deluded thoughts arise, do not follow them at all. Then, even at the time of death, karma will naturally be unable to bind one. Though there is an intermediate state, one is free to go wherever one wishes, finding a resting place at will in heaven or in the human realm."

The cycle of rebirth in the six realms is brought about by karmic force. If "karma cannot bind one," does that not mean one has escaped saṃsāra? How can one escape saṃsāra? "Take luminous knowing as your own mind and do not identify with deluded thoughts. Whenever deluded thoughts arise, do not follow them at all."

Now you should understand why "not turning with thoughts and not being moved by circumstances" is called right practice.

Tianmo Laifeng : I do not quite understand the phrase, "In accordance with the minds of sentient beings, responding according to what they are capable of knowing." Teacher Qi, could you explain it specifically?

Thank you.

lvm : It is like a kindergarten teacher: following the minds of children and speaking in a way they can understand.

Tianmo Laifeng : Do what children know and ask about also fall under "in accordance with the minds of sentient beings, responding according to what they are capable of knowing"?

Haha, I am crying again.

lvm : Oh! What you mean is, "The mind follows sentient beings, and its scope is limited by what they know," isn't it?

Tianmo Laifeng : Thank you.

Tianmo Laifeng : So it is similar to using yellow leaves to stop a child from crying. Thank you for stopping my crying.

lvm : The "master" in this passage is Chan Master Mazu:

A monk asked, "Why do you say that mind itself is Buddha?"

The master said, "To stop a child from crying."

He asked, "What about when the crying has stopped?"

The master said, "Neither mind nor Buddha."

He asked, "When someone who is neither of these two kinds comes, how do you instruct them?"

The master said, "Tell them, 'It is not a thing.'"

He asked, "What if someone in the midst of these comes?"

The master said, "Just have them realize the great Way."

A Cloud mg : "Mind itself is Buddha" establishes one speck of dust; how many specks of dust does "neither mind nor thing" establish? If it is neither mind nor Buddha nor a thing, where is the dust?

Realize the great Way: dust is not dust.

amay (in reply to lvm : "It means that 'if one establishes a single speck of dust, the prosperity of the nation has nothing to do with his own house.'"): There is another kind of person who fears deluded thoughts, wishing they could seize them in one grasp and toss them aside.

Dream Travels Collection of Elder Hanshan

Dharma Teachings

Reply to Vice Censor Zheng Kunyan

Next, decisively trust that your own mind is Buddha. Yet Buddha is not another Buddha; only mind itself is so. The true dharmakāya of the Buddha is like empty space. If you realize that delusion is originally empty, the dharmakāya inherently present will reveal itself: luminous, serenely illuminating, perfect and all-pervading, lacking nothing and with nothing superfluous. Do not let your mind race outward in search of anything more. If you abandon this mind and seek elsewhere, the mind will transform and create innumerable dreamlike realms. These are precisely manifestations of the discriminating consciousness.

You must never regard them as extraordinary. Within our pure mind, there is originally not a single thing, not even a single thought. Whenever a thought arises or the mind stirs, it departs from the nature of Dharma. People practicing today generally do not know that their own deluded thoughts are originally unreal. Mistaking such deluded thoughts for something real, they focus solely on opposing them. It is like a child playing with the shadows cast by a lamp: the more the child plays, the less there is any connection with reality; after playing for a long time, the child becomes frightened.

There is another kind of person who fears deluded thoughts, wishing they could seize them in one grasp and toss them aside. This is like trying to catch the wind or seize a shadow. All day long they grapple and struggle with them, exhausting all their strength, without a single moment of rest from thought. Entangled in this for a long time, their faith grows weary by the day. They say only that Chan practice brings no response, and thoughts of disparagement arise; or thoughts of fear arise; or thoughts of retreat and decline arise. This is the common failing of beginners.

There is no other reason: they do not understand the ever-abiding true mind and its nature of neither arising nor ceasing, but merely take deluded thoughts to be real dharmas. Here one must thoroughly penetrate. If you wish to pass through this barrier, there is naturally a path that goes beyond. You need only investigate apart from mind, consciousness, and thought, and seek apart from the realm of deluded thoughts. Whenever a thought arises, whether good or evil, immediately cast it aside. Never oppose it. Trust deeply that within your own mind

there is originally no such thing. Simply exert yourself in raising the original huatou, like a vajra-jeweled sword that strikes down both demons and Buddhas. Here, great courage, great diligence, and great endurance are most essential. You must never calculate what came before or what may come after; you must never be timid or weak. So long as you maintain a straightforward mind and right mindfulness, stand forth and press ahead. Naturally you will be lofty and dignified, no longer entangled by these deluded thoughts. Like a hawk released from its jesses, throughout the day and night, amid all circumstances and conditions, you will naturally be unimpeded, naturally attain great ease, and attain great freedom. This is where a beginner's practice first becomes effective.

Xinming (in reply to lvm : "It means that 'if one establishes a single speck of dust, the prosperity of the nation has nothing to do with his own house.'"): Quite a few people misunderstand what the Elder meant by "luminous knowing."

I think this is especially so among those who do not practice heart esotericism. Perhaps it is because they lack time to read more of the Elder's writings and thus do not understand them comprehensively. Yet they do accept terms such as "Buddha-nature" and "Original Face." This is a fact.

My understanding is that the "luminous knowing" spoken of by the Elder—"not a single thought arises, yet all is clearly discerned"—actually offers beginners a very accessible point of entry. This does not use the method of negation, but belongs to direct pointing. Naturally, the method of direct pointing more easily gives rise to misunderstandings among onlookers than does the method of negation, because onlookers are not the persons directly involved.

Heart esotericism places even greater emphasis on students personally putting the Dharma into practice, rather than arguing about it. I have experienced this directly.

gohome : That is indeed so! Master Xiang taught: faith, vows, practice, and realization are all indispensable.

Chankong (in reply to lvm : "It means that 'if one establishes a single speck of dust, the prosperity of the nation has nothing to do with his own house.'"): Wishing Teacher Qi a joyful Mid-Autumn Festival!

lvm : I also wish you a happy Mid-Autumn Festival!

gohome (in reply to lvm : "It means that 'if one establishes a single speck of dust, the prosperity of the nation has nothing to do with his own house.'"): Teacher Qi, is not turning with thoughts and not being moved by circumstances simply contemplation?

Snow Mountain Youth : Reposting LVM : the teacher's "Three Stages of Contemplation"!!!

First: do not turn with thoughts; do not be moved by circumstances.

In cultivating heart esotericism, contemplation is the primary practice, and the six mudrās and one mantra are auxiliary practices. "Do not turn with thoughts; do not be moved by circumstances" is contemplation. This does not mean using the true mind to watch deluded thoughts; rather, there is neither observer nor observed. Contemplation without an observer is true contemplation. Truly being able not to turn with thoughts or be moved by circumstances is the state of fruition. Since one cannot yet do this but learns to do it, it is called "cultivating from the ground of fruition." We are accustomed to deluded thoughts and attachments—they are familiar. Not turning with thoughts or being moved by circumstances is not yet familiar—it is unfamiliar. Beginning: do not turn with thoughts; do not be moved by circumstances.

In cultivating heart esotericism, contemplation is the primary practice, and the six mudrās and one mantra are auxiliary practices. "Do not turn with thoughts; do not be moved by circumstances" is contemplation. This does not mean using the true mind to watch deluded thoughts; rather, there is neither observer nor observed. Contemplation without an observer is true contemplation.

Truly being able not to "turn with thoughts or be moved by circumstances" is the state of fruition. Since one cannot yet do this but learns to do it, it is called "cultivating from the ground of fruition." We are accustomed to deluded thoughts and attachments—they are familiar. Not turning with thoughts or being moved by circumstances is not yet familiar—it is unfamiliar. If one continues in this way for a long time, what is familiar becomes unfamiliar, and what is unfamiliar becomes familiar. There will certainly come a moment when everything falls away; then, like beans popping from cold ashes, it will vividly manifest before one!

Middle: with a sudden, bracing awakening, it vividly manifests before one.

After things fall away, the habitual tendencies of deluded attachment may still remain. When habitual tendencies strike back, it is like dark clouds obscuring the sun; one urgently needs "a sudden, bracing awakening, and it vividly manifests before one." What is it that manifests before one? It is the thought-free numinous knowing about which everyone on this forum has offered differing views. Explain it any way you please, horizontally or vertically, but you cannot speak of it. It is free from thought: it does not fall into language or transgress into conceptual thinking.

It is numinously lucid, unlike wood or stone. It is not light or shadow, nor is it a concept. The way of words is cut off, and the path of mental activity is extinguished; only through realization can it be known. With no way to name it, it is provisionally called thought-free numinous knowing. When thought-free numinous knowing manifests before one, one naturally does not turn with thoughts or become moved by circumstances.

Final: originally one is a Buddha—what is there to contemplate?

This alone is true contemplation! The beginning and middle stages are both learning contemplation. Thereafter, even thought-free numinous knowing cannot be obtained, and awakening and seeing one's true nature become mere leftover words. If you say that such a person has seen his true nature, he may say, "Seeing itself is nature—what further nature is there to see?" If you say that this statement establishes a "seeing," he will not argue with you.

For he spoke a sentence in response to your words; he spoke it for your sake. For himself, there is not even "seeing." At most, he may reply with something like, "This old monk has lost half today." Those who can pierce the ear are rarely encountered; those who carve a mark on a boat are commonly met. How could one avoid "losing half"?

gohome : Contemplation is the primary practice. During meditation, mentally recite the mantra and listen with the ear; off the cushion, follow the three stages of contemplation, and then practice solidly and in accordance with the Dharma.

Only then will we not disappoint the painstaking care of Elder Master Yuanyin and Teacher Qi.

pcohantas : Yes, yes—I feel exactly the same.

gohome : Once again, I respectfully ask Teacher Qi.

I pay homage to Teacher Qi.

During meditation, mentally recite the mantra and listen with the ear; the emphasis is on listening with the ear!

Off the cushion, where is the emphasis in contemplation?

I beg Teacher Qi to have compassion on this disciple's foolishness and explain this for us

younger students, so as to open our wisdom.

This disciple bows again in homage.

lvm : In contemplation off the cushion, there is no "main emphasis." Be relaxed and natural; by all means avoid exerting yourself.

Snow Mountain Youth : Ha ha! The teacher really does tailor the teaching to the individual!

pcohantas : This has truly benefited me.

A few days ago, when I heard the teacher say this, I still did not fully understand. Now I do.

Teacher, would this understanding be acceptable? We are accustomed to exerting effort; suddenly we stop exerting effort, but there is still a kind of momentum carrying forward, so it feels as though even "cutting it off" requires effort.

(It is like trying to stop your steps when you are running toward the finish line.)

Perhaps one can only gradually become relaxed and natural?

lvm : Cut it off right now: is that relaxed, or tiring?

pcohantas : It is cut off directly; there is neither relaxation nor fatigue.

lvm : No mistake has been made; this is true ease.

Snow Mountain Youth (in reply to gohome : "Once again, I respectfully ask Teacher Qi"): Answering on the teacher's behalf: the key is to see a thought the moment it arises!

When a thought arises, see it and do not run after it. When thoughts come, pay them no heed; when circumstances arise, do not let your mind be stirred, and do not be turned by external conditions.

Bay Leaf : Younger brother Youth, let me ask you something: it is certainly right to see a thought the moment it arises, but . . .

What are you doing before the thought arises?

Snow Mountain Youth : You may know, but you may not understand!

gohome : For the third time, I respectfully ask Teacher Qi:

Having read the above posts, this disciple still has doubts and would like to ask the teacher another question:

In contemplation off the cushion, what is contemplated? And what is illuminated? Are contemplation and illumination the same thing?

This disciple is foolish. I bow again in homage and ask the teacher for instruction.

lvm : Contemplation is quiescent illumination; what illumines is quiescence.

They are not one thing, nor are they two things; rather, there is no thing. For immeasurable kalpas, we have been accustomed to having things; now we learn to have no thing. This is called contemplation.

Quiescent illumination illuminates quiescence; by all means avoid exerting effort. There is no other secret to becoming a Buddha or patriarch.

zyhan (in reply to lvm : “Contemplation is quiescent illumination; what illumines is quiescence.”): Quiescent illumination illuminates quiescence; by all means avoid exerting effort. There is no other secret to becoming a Buddha or patriarch! Homage! Homage! Homage again and again!!!

Border Town Wanderer (in reply to lvm : “Contemplation is quiescent illumination; what illumines is quiescence.”): The unsurpassed mind Dharma!

Wind from the Edge of Heaven (in reply to lvm : “Contemplation is quiescent illumination; what illumines is quiescence.”): Teacher Qi continually expounds Mahāmudrā.

Wind from the Edge of Heaven : Laozi said, “One ordinarily takes the world through non-action; once there is action, one is not fit to take the world.”

Snow Mountain Youth (in reply to lvm : “Contemplation is quiescent illumination; what illumines is quiescence.”): Understood only from the literal wording . . .

Understood only from the literal wording, contemplation seems to imply an observer and an observed, whereas illumination has neither observer nor observed.

Or perhaps contemplation still bears traces of effort, whereas illumination leaves no trace.

jil (in reply to Snow Mountain Youth : “Understood only from the literal wording . . .”): Contemplation means one is still “maintaining” this state of “nothing happening,” whereas illumination no longer needs to “maintain” it.

lvm : Ha ha! Once you get caught up in the wording, things become lively.

gohome : Master, in your compassion, you take pity on us later students and do not hesitate to descend completely into the weeds. This disciple bows with head and face to the ground, joyfully receives your teaching, and withdraws after bowing again.

pcohantas : Great post—bumping it up!

[62] Yunmen’s Secret Lies in Xingshan

[Case 62] Yunmen’s Treasure Hidden in the Form Mountain

The Pointer says: With teacherless wisdom, bring forth wondrous functioning without contrivance; with unconditional compassion, become an excellent friend unasked. Within a single saying there is killing and giving life; within a single occasion there is release and capture. Tell me, who has ever come forth in just this way? Let us raise it and see.

[Case 62] The Case:

Yunmen instructed the assembly, saying:

Within heaven and earth, [The land is vast and people are few. The six directions cannot contain it.]

between the cosmos and the universe. [Do not make a living in a ghost’s cave. You have already missed it.]

There is a single treasure within. [Where is it? Light arises! Above all, do not seek it in a ghost’s cave.]

It is hidden in the Form Mountain. [Katz! Spot on.]

Carry a lantern into the Buddha hall, [This is still open to discussion.]

and bring the main gate atop the lantern. [Master Yunmen is indeed such a one, though this is not free from error. Still, it is somewhat better. But if one examines it carefully, it cannot avoid the stench of excrement.]

Yunmen said: “Within heaven and earth, between the cosmos and the universe, there is a single treasure hidden in the Form Mountain.” Tell me, was Yunmen’s intent at the tip of the fishing rod? Was it atop the lantern?

These are several lines from Dharma Master Sengzhao’s Treatise on the Treasure Storehouse, which Yunmen raised to instruct the assembly. In the time of the Later Qin, Sengzhao composed treatises and copied the Vimalakīrti Sūtra at Xiaoyao Garden, and only then realized that Zhuangzi and Laozi had not exhausted its subtlety. Sengzhao paid homage to Kumārajīva as his teacher and also studied under Bodhisattva Bhadrapāla of Waguan Monastery. He transmitted the mind seal from the twenty-seventh patriarch of India. Sengzhao penetrated deeply into its inner chambers. One day, when Sengzhao encountered disaster and was about to be executed, he asked for a seven-day reprieve in order to compose the Treatise on the Treasure Storehouse.

Yunmen then raised the four lines from the treatise to instruct the assembly. Their general meaning is: How can the priceless treasure be hidden within the realm of the aggregates? The language of the treatise accords throughout with the words of the Chan school.

Have you not seen Jingqing ask Caoshan, “What is it like when, in the principle of pure emptiness, there is ultimately no body?” Caoshan said, “The principle is just so; but what of phenomena?” Jingqing said, “Such is principle, such are phenomena.” Caoshan said, “You may deceive Caoshan alone, but what can you do about the eyes of all the sages?” Jingqing said, “If there were no eyes of the sages, how would you know it was not so?” Caoshan said, “Officially, not even a needle is allowed; privately, carriages and horses pass through.”

Thus it is said, “Within heaven and earth, between the cosmos and the universe, there is a single treasure hidden in the Form Mountain.” Its general meaning makes clear that everyone is fully endowed with it and each person is complete. When Yunmen raised it to instruct the assembly, it was already wholly present. You must not be like a doctrinal lecturer and have me explain it to you further.

Out of compassion, he added a footnote for you: “Carry a lantern into the Buddha hall, and bring the main gate atop the lantern.” Tell me, what was Yunmen’s intent in speaking this way? Have you not seen the ancient’s words: “The real nature of ignorance is itself Buddha-nature; this illusory empty body is itself the Dharma body.” Again: “See the Buddha-mind precisely within the ordinary mind.” The Form Mountain is the four great elements and five aggregates. Within it is a single treasure, hidden in the Form Mountain.

Thus it is said: “The Buddhas are within one’s heart, yet deluded people seek them outside. They harbor a priceless treasure within, but do not recognize it, and so their whole lives are wasted.” Again it is said: “Buddha-nature manifests splendidly, but sentient beings abiding in appearances find it hard to see. If one realizes that sentient beings are without self, how is my face different from the Buddha’s face?” “The mind is the original mind; the face is the face born of one’s mother. A kalpa-stone may be moved, but this does not change.”

Some merely take this bright and numinous awareness as the treasure, yet cannot put it to use or grasp its marvel. Therefore, they cannot move freely or gain access. The ancients said, “When pressed to the limit, one changes; through change, one gains penetration.” “Carry a lantern into the Buddha hall”—if this were ordinary reasoning, it could be measured. “Bring the main gate atop the lantern”—can that still be measured? Yunmen shatters for you, all at once, discriminating consciousness, conceptual thought, gain and loss, right and wrong. Xuedou said, “I love Shaoyang’s newly established techniques; all his life he pulled out nails and removed wedges for others.” He also said, “How many crooked pieces of wood occupy positions? When a sharp blade cuts them away, people love it.”

When he said, “Carry a lantern into the Buddha hall,” that one sentence had already cut everything off. Then he said, “Bring the main gate atop the lantern.” In discussing this matter, it is like the spark struck from a stone, like a flash of lightning. Yunmen said: “If you wish to accord with it, first find an entrance. The Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust are beneath your heels, and the sacred teachings of the Tripiṭaka are upon your tongue. It is better simply to awaken.

You monks, do not indulge in vain thoughts. Heaven is heaven, earth is earth, mountains are mountains, water is water, monastics are monastics, and laypeople are laypeople.” After a long pause, he said, “Bring me the mountain before us so that I may examine it.” Then a monk came forth and asked, “What is it like when a student sees that mountains are mountains and water is water?” Yunmen said, “Why does the main gate pass through here? I fear you are dead already!” Then he drew a line with his hand and said, “When you recognize it, it is the finest flavor of ghee. If you do not recognize it, it turns instead into poison.” Thus it is said, “When clarity is completely realized, there is nothing left to realize; at the place of profound mystery, one must directly rebuke it.”

Xuedou further raised it, saying: “Within heaven and earth, between the cosmos and the universe, there is a single treasure hidden in the Form Mountain. Hang it on the wall, and Bodhidharma would not dare look directly at it for nine years. Now, if patch-robed monks want to see it, strike them across the spine with a staff.” Look at this genuine Chan master: he never binds people with a real dharma. Xuansha said, “It will not remain in a cage or net; call to it, and it does not turn its head.” Though this is so, it is still a sacred turtle dragging its tail.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Look! Look! [Raise your eyes high. What use is looking? A black dragon plays with a pearl.]

Who holds a fishing rod on the ancient shore? [Utterly solitary and perilous; utterly sheer and towering. Drawing the bow after the thief has passed. If one sees jowls behind the head, do not associate with him.]

The clouds drift softly, [Only by cutting it off can one succeed. A hundred coils, a thousand layers. A grease-scorched cap, a falcon-stinking cloth robe.]

and the waters stretch vast. [To the left and to the right; blocked before and pressed behind.]

The bright moon and reed blossoms—see them for yourself. [To look at it is to become blind! If you recognize Yunmen's words, you will see Xuedou's final line.]

If you recognize Yunmen's words, you will see where Xuedou is guiding people. To the last two lines of Yunmen's instruction to the assembly, he added this footnote for you: "Look! Look!" If you take this to mean opening your eyes wide and staring, it has nothing whatever to do with it! An ancient said: "The numinous light shines alone, far transcending the faculties and their objects. Its substance reveals true permanence, unbound by words and letters. The nature of mind is unstained and originally complete. Simply leave false conditions behind, and you are a thus-so Buddha." If you merely sit yourself to death in the place of wide-eyed staring, how could you escape the faculties and their objects?

Xuedou said: Look! Look! Yunmen is like one holding a fishing rod on an ancient shore. The clouds drift softly, the waters stretch vast; the bright moon reflects the reed blossoms, and the reed blossoms reflect the bright moon. At precisely such a time, tell me, what realm is this? If you see it directly at once, before and after are simply like a single saying.

[Lang De Xu]: What treasure is there? It is merely Zhu Bajie stealing and eating the ginseng fruit.

[Ran Xiang]: Zhu Bajie does not recognize the treasure, but that does not mean it is not a treasure.

[Lang De Xu Ming]: Zhu Bajie swallowed this treasure in one gulp—how could he recognize it?

[Ran Xiang]: Hehe, not recognizing it is not recognizing it; one cannot say there is no treasure. Hehe.

[Lang De Xu Ming]: Then please take out this treasure and show it to us.

[Ran Xiang]: If I took it out and showed it to you, it would no longer be hidden. Hehe—hidden in the Form Mountain…

[Lang De Xu Ming]: You cannot move it, can you? Why use "hidden" to fool children?

[Jingcheng]: Teacher Qi, please join the discussion:

----------Teacher, according to the intention of the Second Patriarch in advising people, "As for all the books that have appeared, they should be investigated one by one in sequence.

But before completing the six mudrās, do not read them.

" At the very least, Chan koans are not suitable for being dissected or commented upon in a forum! What do you think? I often see fellow practitioners who have not awakened cite an ancient saying that you have dissected, or an ancient's commentary, and then exchange knowing, silent smiles with you. I think this is simply coded language! This would absolutely not be permitted in the Chan school! Although the Elder gave talks on several cases from the Blue Cliff Record

within a small circle, this was the Elder's compassionate expedient means. While the Elder was alive, he certainly would not have approved of posting them on a forum! Look at the cases of Dharma Chu and Chan Master Xuanmi, concerning which Mr. Wen discussed penetratingly: they have even confused and reversed the "Dharma-lineage transmission between teacher and disciple," yet persist in calling it "false transmission." Moreover, it is evident that

many fellow practitioners on the forum do not actually oppose Mr. Wen's penetrating discussion of this point. How tragic! In an era when he had no choice but to employ extraordinary expedient means, the Elder did not leave home to succeed to the Chan lineage; this was also one reason. What do you think?

[lvm]: Do you mean that all posts concerning Chan koans should be deleted?

[Jingcheng]: That would be best. Does the teacher have any other, better method?

[Yuren], replying to [Jingcheng]: "That would be best. Does the teacher have any other, better method?": You really are something. At first you discussed matters with Old Wen in that way,

---

but later you cursed him like that. First respectful, then arrogant—what Way have you realized? What lineage is it that you are transmitting? He touched your precious koan.

[pcohantas] (replying to [Jingcheng]: "That would be best. Does the teacher have any other, better method?"): Deleting posts is not a solution to the problem.

Fellow practitioner, greetings:

Sentient beings display a hundred different ways; the fault does not lie in the posts themselves. Even if the posts were deleted, would these disputes cease? When the mind lacks equanimity, matters do not come to rest. Moreover, the teacher has not said

a word, yet things are already in such turmoil. If the posts were deleted now, would that not give others something to seize upon? Why delete the posts and add to the confusion?

As for those with discerning eyes, whether or not they read the posts will not affect them.

I am only a beginner. My attitude is that if I do not understand something, I do not read it; I will read it again when I do understand. There are countless roads. If this one is impassable, I can simply take another. Not understanding something, or taking another road, does not mean that I should stand by and comment on which is good or bad, correct or incorrect.

If others are good or correct, what benefit is there in counting others' treasures? If others are not good or not correct, what benefit is there to oneself in taking the views of patriarchs and great teachers as a "demon-revealing mirror," rather than constantly examining oneself?

Moreover, the Lotus Sūtra says that even someone who casually recites the Buddha's name upon entering a temple will ultimately become a Buddha. How much more so for fellow practitioners who cultivate with single-minded devotion? A temporary error or impatience does not mean a lifetime, or life after life, of error and impatience. Nor is there any need for me to worry on the sidelines. Each person's study of Buddhism and attainment of Buddhahood has its own causes and conditions.

The reason expedient means are expedient means is that the Second Patriarch had his expedient means, and the teacher has his own. Moreover, practicing Buddhism is not about seeking the Buddha, but about seeking oneself; seeking oneself is simply restraining the mind. If one does not restrain the mind, what does it have to do with deleting or not deleting posts?

Only yesterday, I read the Second Patriarch's The Initial Resolution for Studying Buddhism and Questions and Answers on Entering Buddhism and Clarifying Its School. Every word was a pearl.

A personal view, offered only for reference.

[Jingcheng]: Thank you, fellow practitioner. Perhaps this is the only way.

[lvm]: I personally do not agree with deleting the posts, for the following reason:

Because I was the first to dissect the matter, differing opinions arose. In other words, I was the initiator. It is precisely through these differing opinions that I can correct my own mistaken views, so I do not agree with deleting the posts.

Furthermore, this enables me to reflect from another angle: perhaps I should not have dissected something every day in the first place.

One's own faults are often not easy to notice. Is it not a very good thing to have a mirror in which to look at oneself? My opposition to deleting the posts is like being unwilling to smash the mirror.

[Jingcheng]: For one who can perceive that the five aggregates are empty, every fault is merely a "manifestation." How should students regard the teacher's "manifestations"?

[lvm]: I too am a student, not someone making manifestations. Therefore, I need a mirror.

[Jingcheng]: "Perceiving that the five aggregates are empty, one transcends all suffering and distress . . ." Then there is no need for a mirror.

[lvm]: This post of yours is also a mirror.

[Jingcheng]: A couple of days ago, fellow practitioner Xinming said, "I'm sorry," and put a seal on the mirror.

The teacher's mirror was broken by the student, yet the student said "I'm sorry" to the mirror.

[lvm]: I am not a forum moderator; they are the hosts here.

[Jingcheng]: I understand. Thank you.

[Langde Xuming] (in reply to [lvm]: "I too am a student, not someone making manifestations. Therefore, I need a mirror."): Correct it if it exists; if it does not, take it as encouragement. Teacher Qi is truly compassionate.

When Master Yuanyin explained the book The Great Mahāmudrā of the Ganges, he seems to have mentioned this point as well, though I cannot recall exactly what he said.

Homage to Master Yuanyin!

I pay homage to Teacher Qi!

[A Cloud mg] (in reply to [lvm]: “I personally do not agree with deleting the posts, for the following reason:”): The teacher has a spirit of self-reflection and a responsible attitude.

[Fool] (in reply to [Jingcheng]: “For one who can perceive that the five aggregates are empty, every fault is merely a ‘manifestation.’ How should students regard the teacher’s ‘manifestations’?”): You still have plenty of faults yourself—what kind of manifestation are you putting on?

[Fool]: Chandi Yi, I’m talking about you!

[vvvv] (in reply to [lvm]: “I personally do not agree with deleting the posts, for the following reason:”): Teacher, what have you perceived?

[lvm]: Perceiving that the five aggregates are empty, one transcends all suffering and distress . . . ^o^

[vvvv]: A good mirror.

[lvm]: ^o^

[Ranxiang]: Holding a garment over the washbasin, lightly rubbing soap to remove the grime from one’s hands; one foot stirs the waters of a thousand rivers, while crows and fleas roost in dreams.

[Xinming]: Chan Master Xuedou: “I love Shaoyang’s newly established method; all his life he pulled out nails and removed wedges for others.”

[Qian San San]: Teacher, “Master Sengzhao composed treatises at Xiaoyao Garden during the Later Qin and wrote out the Vimalakīrti Sūtra”—should “wrote out” perhaps be the erroneous character for “read”?

[lvm]: Printing did not yet exist at that time; sūtras circulated through hand-copying.

[Qian San San]: I see. Thank you.

[63] Nanquan Cuts the Cat to End the Dispute

[Case 63] Nanquan Cuts the Cat to Put an End to the Dispute

Prefatory Remark: Where the paths of thought do not reach is precisely where one should sustain the critical phrase; where verbal explanation cannot extend, one should urgently open one’s eye. If one turns like lightning and flies like stars, one can overturn abyss and mountain. Is there anyone among you who can discern this? Let us raise the case and see:

[Case 63] The Case:

One day, the eastern and western halls at Nanquan’s monastery were disputing over a cat. [It was not that they ought to have made trouble today; this was another exposure.]

When Nanquan saw this, he picked up the cat and said, “If you can speak, I will not cut it.” [The proper command is being carried out, cutting off the ten directions. This old fellow has the skill to subdue dragons and snakes.]

No one answered. [What a pity they let it pass! What use are a pack of lacquer buckets? Fabricated Chan practitioners are as numerous as hemp and millet.]

Nanquan cut the cat into two pieces. [Excellent! Excellent! Had he not done so, they would all have been fellows playing with lumps of mud. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone is already a secondary move. Better to strike before it is raised.]

As for a master of the school, observe his every movement and stillness, every coming out and going in—what, after all, is his intent? The story of cutting the cat has been discussed endlessly throughout Chan monasteries everywhere. Some say, “It lies in the very act of picking it up”; others say, “It lies in the cutting.” Yet neither has any connection with it at all! If he had not picked it up, they would still have spun out every sort of explanation. They do not realize that this ancient had an eye that could stabilize heaven and earth, and a sword that could stabilize heaven and earth. Tell me, then: who actually cut the cat?

Consider only Nanquan’s words as he held it up: “If you can speak, I will not cut it.” If someone at that moment had been able to speak, tell me, would Nanquan have cut it or not? This is why it is said, “The proper command is being carried out, cutting off the ten directions.” Look out from beyond the sky: who is a person within this? In fact, at that time there was originally no cutting. This case does not lie in cutting or not cutting either. This matter is plainly and clearly understood; it is not to be sought in emotional defilements and conceptual opinions. To seek it in emotional defilements and conceptual opinions is to let Nanquan down.

Just look upon the edge of the sword at the point of encounter: being is acceptable, nonbeing is acceptable, and neither being nor nonbeing is also acceptable. Thus the ancients said, “When things reach an extreme, they change; when they change, they become penetrable.” People today do not understand adaptation and penetration; they merely chase after words and phrases. When Nanquan raised it in this way, it was not so that people could immediately come up with some answer. He wished only to have them recognize it for themselves, each making use of and knowing it for themselves. If you do not understand in this way, you will never be able to find it by groping!

Xuedou’s verse begins directly:

Both halls were sham Chan practitioners, [A firsthand statement from his own mouth. One phrase cuts off all speech. The case is settled on the evidence.]

Unable to do anything but stir up dust and smoke. [Let us see what settlement you can make! Here is a ready-made koan—there is something to it.]

Fortunately, Nanquan could wield the command; [Holding up his whisk, he says: “Just like this.” Master Wang was still somewhat better. What a fine jeweled sword of the Vajra King, used to cut through mud.]

With one stroke, he cut it in two, heedless of unevenness. [Smashed into a hundred fragments! If someone suddenly held down the knife, let us see what he would do! Do not let this pass. Strike!]

“Both halls were sham Chan practitioners.” Xuedou does not die beneath the words, nor does he recognize the donkey before the horse behind. Where there is a turnabout, he says, “Unable to do anything but stir up dust and smoke.” Xuedou and Nanquan go hand in hand; one sentence has said it all. The head monks of the two halls had nowhere to rest their heads; everywhere they went, they could only stir up dust and smoke, and there was nothing to be done about it.

Fortunately, Nanquan settled this koan for them and gathered it all up completely. Yet they could not connect with what came before or what followed. Thus it is said, “Fortunately, Nanquan could wield the command; with one stroke, he cut it in two, heedless of unevenness.” With one immediate stroke, he cut it in two, without further concern for unevenness. Tell me, by what command did Nanquan act?

[Bodhi Tree]: The nondual Dharma gate cannot be fathomed. The former dispute has already ceased, so I am reluctant to open my mouth. I found leisure to compose two poems and respectfully ask Teacher [lvm] to correct them.

Reflections on Reading the Platform Sūtra

—Written the day after reading the Platform Sūtra through the night until dawn

With spring’s arrival, grass along the riverbank turns green;

Neither clear nor rainy, the evening breeze is light.

Sound and form themselves are words that release from bondage;

What wondrous Dharma is there to offer you?

Spending the Night at an Ancient Temple on Mount Lu; Descending the Mountain the Following Day

Spring scenery has no intention of its own;

Travelers are themselves too full of feeling.

Go farther into the depths of spring,

And in stillness attain purity.

Bodhi Tree, palms joined

[lvm]: How would it be to alter a few characters slightly?

Reflections on Reading the Platform Sūtra

—Written the day after reading the Platform Sūtra through the night until dawn

With spring’s arrival along the riverbank, the evening breeze is light;

The wind caresses, the rain moistens, and the grass takes on fresh color.

Sound and form all tell of words free from bondage;

There is no other wondrous Dharma to offer you.

Spending the Night at an Ancient Temple on Mount Lu; Descending the Mountain the Following Day

Spring scenery has no intention of its own,

Travelers are themselves too full of feeling.

Go farther into the depths of spring,

And purity, in turn, rises in rugged splendor.

[Bodhi Tree]: Thank you! I have received your instruction! You truly are a great spiritual friend!

---------- True—genuine and not false

Great—the mind of a Mahāyāna bodhisattva

Spiritual—skillful means

Friend—right wisdom and right view

[Arabic Numerals] (continuing from [lvm]: “How would it be to alter a few characters slightly?”): Realize the essence and bring forth its function.

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: It is precisely the student who turns it into two parts; unable to understand it as one whole, he makes it into two.

[Xinming]: Where does the One return?

[Lay Practitioner Hongshi]: To ask in that manner is already to make it into two parts!

Once it has been made into two parts, one disputes about where it returns and where it does not return. You speak of a matter as one whole, but he asks where the One returns. How can one blame the old monk for having nothing to say? It is simply that the student makes it into two parts: he divides the one dharma into two, piles up bones of right and wrong out of what is originally beyond right and wrong, and lets surging waves bury alive a fine, elegant saying. Alas, alas! Had he encountered Deshan, Deshan would have struck him into the depths of a ditch to eat earth and mud before he even opened his mouth, then called him out again to ask whether it returns or does not return!

[Cat]: Tell me, by what command did Nanquan act?—Whether one can speak or cannot speak, he cuts; yet even in cutting, there is no cutting.

[lvm]: A posthumous work of the Venerable Master Yuanyin—Case 63 of The Blue Cliff Record: Nanquan Cuts the Cat to Put an End to the Dispute

---

Case 63 of The Blue Cliff Record: Nanquan Cuts the Cat to Put an End to the Dispute

Lectures by Master Yuanyin

The koan of Nanquan cutting the cat has, from ancient times to the present, been discussed and debated by people as numerous as the hairs of an ox. Some say that Nanquan’s cutting of the cat is an allegory: Chan Master Nanquan would not have violated the precept against killing by taking life. It was only a metaphor; he did not actually cut a cat.

Some say that Patriarch Nanquan had already realized the state of “unrestrained by favorable or adverse circumstances, free and at ease in every direction.” Not to mention cutting one cat—even if he had slaughtered them all, it would not have stirred him in the slightest. For Patriarch Nanquan, killing is itself life, and life is itself killing. Having transcended the views of ordinary beings, it is entirely possible that the cutting of the cat actually occurred. Some say cutting the cat was wrong; others say it was exactly right…. Opinions abound, with no consensus.

Today, we too shall join the excitement and enter this company to discuss this koan. Before explaining the main text, let us first look at the prefatory remark that Patriarch Yuanwu Keqin wrote before the case:

[Prefatory Remark: Where the paths of thought do not reach is precisely where one should sustain the critical phrase; where verbal explanation cannot extend, one should urgently open one’s eye. If one turns like lightning and flies like stars, one can

overturn abyss and mountain. Is there anyone among you who can discern this? Let us raise the case and see:]

At the summit of the highest peak, discussion has never been permitted. The highest meaning of the noble truths does not fall within language or violate thought. Here, "the way of words is cut off and the path of mental activity is extinguished": it cannot be described with language or fathomed by thought, but can only be sealed mind to mind. This is the place where "the paths of thought do not reach" and "verbal explanation cannot extend."

At such a time, it is precisely right to turn the light inward and seize it in one grasp. This is when one should "sustain the critical phrase" and "urgently open one's eye." At that moment, not a single thought arises, yet all is lucidly clear; suchness and Buddha-nature appear luminously before one. If one can recognize this without doubt, it is called "seeing one's true nature." Stars flying means like sparks struck from stone; lightning turning means like a flash of lightning.

If, in the instant of lightning turning and stars flying—like sparks struck from stone or a flash of lightning—one recognizes this suchness and Buddha-nature, luminously present before one, then afterward one can "overturn abyss and mountain," responding to capacities with immeasurable wondrous functions, establishing all kinds of differentiated dharma gates while not establishing a single dharma, and liberating sentient beings as numerous as the sands of the Ganges while realizing that not a single person is liberated.

To discern means to be able to distinguish; that is, to recognize the Buddha-nature. Is there anyone among this assembly who recognizes the Buddha-nature? Let us cite a koan to distinguish monastics from laypeople. Please consider the koan of Nanquan Killing the Cat.

[Case 63: Nanquan. One day, the monks of the eastern and western halls were disputing over a cat. (It was not that they had agreed to make trouble today; it was simply an exposure.) When Nanquan saw this, he picked up the cat and said, "If you can speak a word, I will not kill it." (As the true command is put into effect, the ten directions are cut off. This old man has the skill to subdue dragons and snakes.) No one replied. (What a pity they let it pass.)

A whole band of black-lacquer buckets—what use are they? Spurious Chan practitioners, as numerous as hemp and millet.) Nanquan cut the cat into two pieces. (Excellent, excellent! Had he not done so, they would all have been men playing with lumps of mud. To draw the bow after the thief has gone is already too late. It would have been best to strike before he raised it.)]

In the passage above, the text outside the parentheses is the original koan, while that within the parentheses consists of Patriarch Yuanwu's comments.

When this koan was discussed at a certain Chan monastery in Shanghai, the two sides began to argue because they disagreed. The lecturer said, "This koan is not a factual event; it is merely an allegory."

Someone in the audience said, "Killing the cat is not within the scope of your realization. You have not reached the state in which killing and giving life occur simultaneously; since you cannot freely kill or give life, you can naturally only give life and not kill. But Patriarch Nanquan transcended this state and was free in both killing and giving life. . . ."

The two sides began arguing, just like the eastern and western halls disputing over the cat. The eastern hall said that the cat was theirs, and the western hall said that it was theirs; neither side would yield. Now it was the same: one side said there had been killing, the other that there had been no killing, and they could not settle the dispute. Just then, a cat suddenly cried, "Meow!" The argument immediately ceased.

This was indeed an excellent way to resolve the impasse. One cry settled both the dispute over who owned the cat and the dispute over whether there had been killing. When Patriarch Nanquan asked the eastern and western halls to speak, if someone had simply cried out in this way, Chan Master Nanquan would have been unable to bring down his hand and kill the cat, and the dispute between the two halls would have been resolved.

At that time, no one stepped forward. This does not necessarily mean that there was no one with clear eyes; perhaps someone in the assembly was coolly watching to see what Nanquan would do, to see whether he would fully wield the true command. At that point, Patriarch Nanquan had no other recourse but to let his word stand firm as a mountain—cut! His hand rose, the knife fell, and with one stroke he cut the cat in two.

In fact, guilt and blessing reside solely in one mind. When the mind arises, all kinds of offenses arise; when the mind ceases, all kinds of offenses cease. If our minds abide anywhere, then killing the cat becomes an offense. To say that Nanquan's killing of the cat was an allegory is merely a way of smoothing things over.

At the end of the Ming dynasty, Li Zicheng, Zhang Xianzhong, and others raised their banners in rebellion. Zhang Xianzhong killed people and set fires in Sichuan, causing great devastation. He detested monks: whenever he saw a monastery, he burned it; whenever he saw a monastic, he killed him. Chan Master Poshan Haiming lived in this period. Patriarch Poshan awakened at Tiantong Monastery in Ningbo and was a disciple of Monk Miyun Yuanwu of Tiantong.

Before he awakened, he was able to leave his body and use spiritual powers to steal ducks. At that time he was still young, playing about as children do; he stole them as a game, not because he wanted to eat duck.

One day he stole one duck, the next day another. When the villagers discovered that four or five ducks were missing, they knew someone had stolen them. They decided not to go to work, but to hide behind trees and watch for the thief, intending to catch him. After one villager had driven his flock of ducks into the river, he soon saw a young monk wade into the river, scoop up a duck, and leave.

He hurried after him. As he pursued him, he saw the young monk flee into Tiantong Monastery. The villager then stood at the monastery gate, cursing loudly. The guest prefect could no longer bear to hear it and came out to persuade him: "Do not create offenses through abusive speech." But the villager said, "I absolutely am not slandering you. I saw with my own eyes the young monk who stole the duck flee inside."

The guest prefect was greatly astonished on hearing this. "Could such a thing really have happened? Then come with me. We shall investigate and see who has done this disgraceful deed." He led the villager into the monastery and inspected every room one by one, even the latrines, but found no one.

The guest prefect said, "You have slandered us! The monastics in our monastery strictly observe the precepts." But the villager said, "I saw him flee in with my own eyes. How can he not be here? Could it be that your monastery has many rooms, and there are still places I have not seen?" The guest prefect said, "Only the Chan hall has not been shown to you; you have seen everywhere else."

But the Chan hall was locked, and those inside were engaged in a seven-day retreat and could not come out. Moreover, the key was held by the old monk—the abbot, Monk Miyun of Tiantong—and no one else had one. The villager would not relent: "If you will not open the Chan hall for me to see, then you are in the wrong. If you will not open the door, you are shielding him."

Since seven-day retreats have been mentioned, let us explain them briefly. A Chan seven-day retreat means diligently investigating Chan and applying oneself earnestly, in order to overcome the seventh consciousness—attachment to self. It is not like today, when people call the performance of Buddhist rituals a seven-day retreat: setting up a memorial tablet in a monastery, delivering deceased spirits, and conducting rituals for longevity.

A genuine seven-day retreat means overcoming the seventh consciousness, attachment to self, and transforming it into the wisdom of equality, thereby turning the eighth consciousness into great perfect mirror wisdom. Moreover, the retreats of that time were unlike ours today, in which we conduct only one seven-day retreat or two; they continued throughout the entire winter.

Thus the guest prefect said, "The rules for a seven-day retreat are very strict. How could any monk have run out?" But the villager did not understand this and insisted on seeing the Chan hall. They remained deadlocked, arguing noisily. Monk Miyun emerged from the abbot's quarters and asked what they were arguing about. The guest prefect told the abbot that the villager wished to inspect the Chan hall.

The abbot said, "Very well, very well! I shall take you in to see." Monk Miyun took the key, opened the door of the Chan hall, and led the villager inside. The hall was dimly lit, for those engaged in Chan practice had no need of bright light. Unable to see clearly, the villager saw only people all around the sides, with images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas enshrined in the center.

During a seven-day retreat, practitioners sit incense by incense along the sides. After sitting for one incense period, they must walk meditation, circling the Buddha images to exercise their bodies. The villager examined them one by one; after making a circuit, he had found no one.

He thought, "Oh! I clearly saw a monk scoop up a duck, hide it in his sleeve, and come in here. How can he not be here?" Monk Miyun said, "You cannot find him, so I shall help you find him." The old monk walked up to Poshan and said, "Haiming! Take out the duck."

Quack, quack . . . The young monk took the duck from his sleeve. The old monk said, "Good sir, please do not take offense. This young monk of ours did not go out in his physical body. He was merely playing a game. Here is your duck; whatever other losses you have suffered, we shall compensate you for them all."

He then said to Poshan, "You have violated the monastic regulations. You are expelled from the monastery and may not investigate Chan in the Chan hall. Although you possess some playful spiritual powers, you have not even dreamed of the Buddhadharma! You still do not know what Buddha-nature is."

Poshan could project a yang-spirit—the Daoists call it a "yang-spirit," while Buddhists call it a mind-born body, a body transformed by the seventh consciousness. At first he thought that he had spiritual powers and ability, and that he had succeeded. Yet he did not know the true Buddhadharma—the foundation for becoming a Buddha, namely Buddha-nature—hence the statement that he had not even dreamed of it.

If one has a few spiritual powers and becomes attached to them, not only will one be unable to become a Buddha, but one will fall prey to demonic influences. Poshan thought, “If possessing spiritual powers is still not accomplishment, then there must be a further step beyond this.” He immediately knelt and asked Chan Master Miyun Yuanwu for instruction: “Please show me how to practice.”

The old monk said, “Good! Investigate this: before your parents were born, what was your Original Face? Go and live in a thatched hut outside the monastery; investigate it there.” Poshan Haiming investigated and investigated. When spiritual powers arose, he paid them no heed, but then he began to doze off. That would not do either; drowsiness was unacceptable. So he went to investigate on the cliffs of Mount Taibai behind Tiantong Monastery.

If one was careless there, one would fall to one’s death. He had to remain highly alert and had no way to doze off. At noon, when the sun shone directly upon his head, he suddenly awakened. “Ha, ha!” As he laughed, he fell off the cliff.

A woodcutter from the countryside saw it: “Oh no! A monk has fallen!” When the woodcutter went down the mountain to look, nothing had happened to Poshan. The unevenness we now see in the ground results from the mind’s lack of equanimity. The Amitābha Sūtra says that in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, the ground is of gold, perfectly level, without any roughness or unevenness. If our minds are even, the ground becomes even; there is no roughness or unevenness.

After Patriarch Poshan awakened, his spiritual powers became even greater. Though he manifested wondrous functioning, he did not become attached to appearances. Later he went to see Zhang Xianzhong. At the sight of him, Zhang said, “You monk, you have great nerve! Do you not know that I kill monks and burn monasteries?” Poshan replied, “If I feared you, I would not have come.”

Zhang said, “Good! I admire your courage. Have a pigeon to eat.” He impaled a cooked pigeon on the tip of a knife and thrust the knife toward him. Poshan opened his mouth, bit down on the whole thing, ate the pigeon, and spat out the knife. Opening his mouth again, he produced a living pigeon, which flew away.

Can you say that Poshan ate meat and killed living beings? In fact, he neither ate nor killed; by eating it, he was precisely saving it. In this koan, when Nanquan reached this critical juncture, he was able to kill. His killing was itself giving life. There is more than one such koan in the Chan school. Let us give another example—the koan of Guizong Killing the Snake:

While the Master was hoeing weeds, a scriptural lecturer-monk came to call on him. Just then a snake passed by, and the Master cut it in two with his hoe. The monk said, “I have long admired Guizong; it turns out that you are a coarse-mannered śramaṇa.” The Master said, “Are you coarse, or am I coarse?” The monk said, “What is coarseness?” The Master raised his hoe. The monk said, “What is refinement?” The Master made a gesture of cutting the snake. The monk said, “If that is so, may one act accordingly?” The Master said, “Set aside acting accordingly for now. Where did you see me cut a snake?” The monk had no reply. (See The Compendium of the Five Lamp Records.)

The Master refers to Chan Master Guizong Zhichang. Chan monasteries traditionally combined farming and Chan practice: cultivating their own food, feeding themselves, awakening for themselves, and directly realizing for themselves. While Guizong was hoeing weeds among the crops, a monk who lectured on the scriptures came to inquire of him. Just then a snake crawled before them, and Guizong cut it in two with one stroke of his hoe. The lecturer-monk could not abide the sight.

The monk said, “I have long looked up to and admired Guizong; it turns out that you are a coarse-mannered śramaṇa.” A coarse-mannered śramaṇa is a monk whose conduct is highly unrestrained and rough. Guizong asked him, “Are you coarse, or am I coarse?” The lecturer-monk countered, “What do you mean by ‘coarse’?” Guizong answered by raising his hoe.

The monk then asked, “What, then, is refinement?” Guizong made the gesture of cutting the snake. The monk said, “If that is so, may one proceed in the way you have done?” Guizong said, “Set aside for now whether one should proceed in that way. Where did you see me cut a snake?”

Guizong’s mind was empty and non-abiding. With one cut, he divided the snake in two, and the snake was liberated! In a previous life, the snake had possessed heavy delusion and anger, and thus received the karmic retribution of a snake’s body. Guizong liberated it: its delusion and anger both fell away, and it could transcend to a higher rebirth. Killing it was saving it. The cutter, the cutting, and the snake are all utterly unobtainable.

Without self, without cutting, and without snake, where could coarseness or refinement be found? The lecturer-monk who had come to inquire abided in the appearances of self, cutting, and snake. Deceived by appearances, was he not precisely coarse—that is, careless? Thus Guizong asked him, “Are you coarse, or am I coarse?” But the lecturer-monk did not understand Guizong’s meaning. Instead, following the thread of the words, he fell into concepts of coarseness and refinement—this being the habitual tendency of one who lectures on theory—and countered by asking, “What is coarseness?” and “What is refinement?”

Whether, in answering “coarseness,” he raised his hoe and, in answering “refinement,” made the gesture of cutting the snake, or whether the answers were reversed, there is no difference. In this raising and gesturing, Guizong vividly revealed the wondrous functioning of Buddha-nature. As the saying goes: “Seeing smoke beyond a mountain, one knows there is fire; seeing a horn over a wall, one knows there is an ox.”

The lecturer-monk still did not understand what was at stake. Instead, he said, “If that is so, may one act accordingly?” By “act accordingly,” he meant cutting snakes as Guizong had done. But is this something that can be imitated? If one cannot, like Guizong, have an empty and non-abiding mind, one will inevitably abide in appearances. Once one abides in appearances, karmic seeds are formed and sink into the field of the eighth consciousness. When conditions are met, they will manifest, and one day one will have to repay the debt. Therefore, the Song of Enlightenment says: “When realized, karmic obstacles are originally empty; when unrealized, one must repay past karmic debts.”

When the mind is empty, one may act or refrain from acting; when one abides in appearances, one can neither truly act nor truly refrain from acting. Therefore Guizong said, “Set aside acting accordingly for now. Where did you see me cut a snake?” This further prompted the lecturer-monk to recognize that ever-present, original true light which can see and hear.

If the lecturer-monk had turned himself around and broken through, bringing forth a vigorous response at the words “where,” he would not have failed Guizong’s repeated prompts. Alas, he merely blinked and had no reply. Not only did he himself miss an excellent opportunity for awakening; he also caused Guizong to “lose half,” just as it is said, “Baizhang lost half today.”

At precisely such a time, the matter does not lie in killing or sparing life, but in the condition of our own mind. If the mind can truly be empty, then when eating vegetables or meals, there is no need for endless discriminations and calculations.

“There is animal fat in the vegetables; meat chopsticks touched the bowl; the pot was used to cook meat”—so none of these can be eaten! The issue does not lie there, but in whether our minds are empty and non-abiding. In former days, the Sixth Patriarch concealed himself among a group of hunters. When he ate, he ate the vegetables beside the meat, and was entirely at ease. If the mind is empty and pure, then one may kill or spare life. If the mind is not empty and pure, the matter is ruined: one cannot truly spare life, and to kill becomes a transgression.

In this koan of cutting the cat, neither the eastern nor western hall opened the true eye. Ordinarily, they stirred up trouble from nothing and merely discoursed on theories of Chan; when faced with an actual matter, they could not penetrate it, and they even began disputing over a single cat. Chan Master Nanquan fully enacted the authoritative command: cutting the cat was saving the cat. It was not merely saving the cat, but also rescuing the Dharma body and wisdom-life of the monks in both halls. Let us now look at Patriarch Yuanwu’s commentary:

[As for the lineage masters, observe them in every movement and stillness, every coming forth and going in: what is their intent? Concerning this saying about cutting the cat, discussions throughout Chan monasteries under heaven have been vast and numerous. Some say, “It lies in the lifting up.” Others say, “It lies in the cutting.” Yet none of this has any connection! Even when they do not raise the matter, they busily fabricate every kind of reasoning. They do not realize that the ancients possessed an eye that settles heaven and earth, and a sword that settles heaven and earth. Tell me: in the end, who cut the cat?]

“Lineage masters” refers to the great Chan patriarchs throughout the ages. In every movement and stillness, every coming forth and going in, every raising of the brows or blinking of the eyes, every lifting of the hands or moving of the feet, every holding up of a fist or raising of a whisk, every laugh, scolding, or anger, they never depart from the fundamental meaning of Buddha-nature. This is what is meant by “the lineage.” Thus Chan alone is called “the school of the lineage,” while all other doctrinal teachings are called “the school of teachings.”

“The lineage” is precisely the intent of the lineage masters. The koan of Nanquan cutting the cat was discussed throughout Chan monasteries everywhere, and there were many differing interpretations; hence the phrase, “discussions have been vast and numerous.” Some people said, “When Chan Master Nanquan lifted up the cat, that manifested Nanquan’s intent.”

Others said, “No, no! Since it is called ‘Nanquan cuts the cat,’ cutting the cat is Nanquan’s intent.” Without realizing it, they had fallen into theoretical investigation.

Nor was it only in discussing “Nanquan cuts the cat.” Even when they did not discuss this koan—when “the matter was not raised”—they still busily fabricated every kind of reasoning. This was the mischief of their habitual fondness for discoursing on empty theory. Once one falls into theory, one cannot receive its true benefit; thus it is said, “None of this has any connection.” Connection means relationship. These far-fetched theories have no relationship whatsoever with Nanquan’s intent.

Only by thoroughly seeing one’s own intrinsic nature does one possess “an eye that settles heaven and earth.” Only when one can guide others to thoroughly see their intrinsic nature does one possess “a sword that settles heaven and earth.” Leave aside a sword that settles heaven and earth: do you possess an eye that settles heaven and earth? If not, what use is it for “discussions to be vast and numerous”? At this point, Patriarch Yuanwu feared that students still would not grasp the point, so he immediately offered this prompt: “Tell me: in the end, who cut the cat?” All of you, say it: in the end, who cut the cat?

[Nanquan merely lifted it up and said, “If you can speak, I will not cut it.” Suppose someone at that time had been able to speak: tell me, would Nanquan have cut it or not? Therefore it is said, “When the authoritative command is put into operation, the ten directions are cut off. Look from beyond the heavens: who is the person within this?” In truth, he did not cut it at that time. This saying, too, does not lie in cutting or not cutting. The hidden significance of this matter is such: it is plainly not to be sought in emotional dust and conceptual views. If you seek it in emotional dust and conceptual views, you betray Nanquan. Simply look at

the edge of the sword directly before you: being is also acceptable, nonbeing is also acceptable, and neither being nor nonbeing is also acceptable.]

Just as Chan Master Nanquan raised his knife toward the cat, if someone had suddenly spoken one word that broke through the matter, would Chan Master Nanquan still have cut the cat? In truth, cutting is not cutting, and not cutting is cutting. Ordinary people cling to the appearance of cutting, so I say this: "Cutting is also not cutting, and not cutting is also not cutting."

That is to say, even if someone at that time had spoken one word that broke through the matter, Nanquan could still "not cut it"—by cutting it in two with a single stroke! Why? Because the conditions for the cat's liberation had matured. Thus Chan Master Yuanwu continues: "When the authoritative command is put into operation, the ten directions are cut off. Look from beyond the heavens: who is the person within this? In truth, he did not cut it at that time."

Chan Master Yuanwu then says, "This saying, too, does not lie in cutting or not cutting." What saying does this refer to? It is the sentence, "If you can speak, I will not cut it." If someone at that time had been able to speak, would he really not have cut it? "It does not lie in cutting or not cutting" means that whether he cut it or not had nothing to do with whether someone could speak or could not speak.

Then why did Chan Master Nanquan say, "If you can speak, I will not cut it"? Please look at the preceding introductory pointer: "Where the path of thought cannot reach, it is precisely right to sustain alert awareness; where verbal exposition cannot extend, one should urgently open one's eyes. If one turns as swiftly as lightning or flies as quickly as a shooting star, one can overturn ravines and topple mountains." This is the hidden significance of the matter—"the hidden significance of this matter is such." Xuanzhi means xuan zhi.

Originally, xuan zhi referred to an ancient covered carriage: xuan had a high front and low rear, while zhi had a low front and high rear. Later, the meaning was extended, and xuan zhi came to mean "hidden significance" or "mystery." The path of thought is emotional dust; verbal exposition is conceptual views.

"Where the path of thought cannot reach, it is precisely right to sustain alert awareness; where verbal exposition cannot extend, one should urgently open one's eyes"—that is, "it is plainly not to be sought in emotional dust and conceptual views." Look at what Chan Master Yuanwu says next: "If you seek it in emotional dust and conceptual views, you betray Nanquan. Simply look at the edge of the sword directly before you: being is also acceptable, nonbeing is also acceptable, and neither being nor nonbeing is also acceptable."

The edge of the sword directly before you refers precisely to the words, "If you can speak, I will not cut it." Where, then, is the hidden significance of the ensuing words "being," "nonbeing," and "neither being nor nonbeing"? Does this not directly answer the present dispute in the Shanghai Chan hall? If one does not seek it in emotional dust and conceptual views as they do, then it is acceptable to say that there was an incident of cutting the cat; it is acceptable to say that there was no such incident; and it is acceptable to say, "It was neither that there was such an incident nor that there was no such incident." But they plainly seek it in emotional dust and conceptual views; therefore none of it will do!

[Therefore the ancients said, "When one reaches an impasse, one changes; through change, one penetrates." People today do not understand change and penetration, but only pursue verbal formulations. When Nanquan raised the matter in this way, he could not allow people to produce some ready-made utterance on the spot. He wished only to have them personally recognize it, each using it for themselves and knowing it for themselves. If one does not understand it in this way, one will never be able to lay hold of it.]

The ancients had a saying: "When things reach an impasse, they change; when they change, they open through." What is an "impasse"? What is "opening through"? And how does one "change"? This needs little explanation: "When mountains and waters seem exhausted and one doubts there is no road, beyond dark willows and bright flowers another village appears." In investigating Chan, there may suddenly come a "ho!"—like an explosion: empty space shatters, the great earth sinks away, and the age-old sense of doubt becomes luminously clear. Is this not comparable to "beyond dark willows and bright flowers another village appears"? This is how the change occurs.

Yet people nowadays do not know how to adapt and transform in this way. Instead, they deliberate endlessly, exhausting their powers of conceptual thought and calculation, "merely pursuing words and phrases." Even if you can speak so eloquently that heavenly flowers rain down and golden lotuses spring from the earth, you have not even dreamed of Nánquán's meaning!

In fact, when Chan Master Nánquán said, "If you can speak it, I will not cut it," he was not asking to hear some correct answer. He only wanted the members of the two halls to recognize, right then and there, their "Original Face," in which each functions for oneself and knows for oneself. If one does not understand it this way, but instead exhausts oneself in conceptual thought and calculation, one will fail to grasp Nánquán's true intent. Xuědòu deeply understood Nánquán's meaning; now let us continue with Xuědòu's verse.

Xuědòu's verse begins: Both halls are fabricated Chan practitioners. (The intimate word comes from his own mouth. One phrase cuts off speech. The case is settled according to the evidence.) Stirring up clouds of dust, they can do nothing about it. (Let us see what compromise you can make. It is an already-present koan, and there is something to it.) Fortunate that Nánquán could raise the command. (Holding up the whisk, he says: "Just like this." Teacher Wáng is still somewhat better. What

a fine vajra-king precious sword—yet it is used to cut mud!) With one stroke, he cuts it in two, regardless of partiality. (Smashed into a hundred fragments. If someone suddenly held down the knife, let us see what he would do. Do not let him off. Then strike.)

In the preceding passage, the words outside the parentheses are Xuědòu's verse, while those within the parentheses are Patriarch Yuánwù's inserted comments beneath the lines. "Fabricated Chan practitioners" means people who concoct Chan: they have no fundamental understanding of Chan and merely put on airs. The two halls quarreled, and an incident arose.

Originally there was no affair, but in a peaceful world they raised billowing clouds of dust. Is this not "stirring up clouds of dust"? To whom, after all, did the cat belong? They disputed this without resolution. Nánquán asked them, "Can any of you say a word?" If they could say a word, they could save the cat, and he would not cut it.

They could not speak it; this is "they can do nothing about it." Once the affair had arisen, there was no way to calm it. "Fortunate that Nánquán could raise the command" praises Nánquán for fully raising the proper command and cutting the cat in two with one stroke.

Those who have truly realized the Way possess a means of killing without blinking an eye. But do they kill people indiscriminately? No. They kill your deluded thoughts and your segmented birth and death, thereby reviving the wisdom-life of your dharmakāya. "With one stroke, he cuts it in two, regardless of partiality." He killed the cat with one stroke, cutting it in two, and everyone complained: "The cat was ours, and you killed it. Is that not partial?" This is the mind of partiality. My cutting of the cat fully raises the proper command. Think of it as you will; be as partial as you please.

Let us now look at Chan Master Yuánwù Qín's commentary:

Both halls are fabricated Chan practitioners. Xuědòu does not die beneath the words, nor does he recognize that there is a place to turn things around before the donkey and after the horse.

The place of turning things around is a lively, dynamic edge of responsiveness that does not abide on either side. Is this side right, or is that side right? He attends to neither this side nor that side; both are fabricated Chan practitioners. Therefore Patriarch Yuánwù comments here: "The intimate word comes from his own mouth. One phrase cuts off speech. The case is settled according to the evidence."

The two halls had entered into a dispute. Here I do not concern myself with who is right or wrong; I do not distinguish right from wrong for you, nor do I concern myself with which hall the cat ought to belong to. If one distinguishes right from wrong, that is already incorrect. Right is incorrect, wrong is incorrect; existence is incorrect, nonexistence is incorrect. Neither side is correct.

Then he says: Stirring up clouds of dust, they can do nothing about it. Xuědòu and Nánquán walk hand in hand; the one phrase has already been spoken. The head monks of the two halls have no place to rest their heads; everywhere they merely stir up clouds of dust, unable to do anything about it.

For Xuědòu to compose the verse this way shows that he thoroughly understood Nánquán's manner of action and knew the intention behind Nánquán's stroke of the knife. Thus he says, "He and Nánquán walk hand in hand; the one phrase has already been spoken." The eastern hall had its head monk, and the western hall had its head monk. The head monks of the two halls simply kept up their dispute, without any means of resolving it: "They merely stir up clouds of dust, unable to do anything about it."

Therefore Patriarch Yuánwù comments here: "Let us see what compromise you can make!" Yet among them there may have been someone looking on coolly, able to speak but not speaking, to see how Nánquán would bring the matter to a close. If Nánquán had shown the slightest weakness, that person would have seen through him. Thus Patriarch Yuánwù immediately adds: "It is an already-present koan, and there is something to it."

Fortunate that Nánquán cut off this koan for them and brought it to a clean conclusion. Yet they had no village before them and no inn behind them. Thus he says: Fortunate that Nánquán could raise the command; with one stroke, he cuts it in two, regardless of partiality. With a direct stroke, he cuts it in two and no longer concerns himself with partiality. Tell me, by what command did Nánquán act?

It was fortunate that Chan Master Nánquán struck with his knife and cut the cat in two—cleanly and decisively. At once he resolved this koan, swept it clean, and made it plain. If he had distinguished right from wrong, helping one side while dismissing the other, or helping that side while dismissing this one, he would have fallen into a heap of right and wrong, and that would not do.

Patriarch Yuánwù comments here: "Holding up the whisk, he says: 'Just like this.' Teacher Wáng is still somewhat better." This is praise: he commends Nánquán, yet also feels that it was not worth Nánquán's while. He immediately adds: "What a fine vajra-king precious sword—yet it is used to cut mud!" This is criticism. This whole group are mud; an ordinary knife would have sufficed to cut them. Why was it necessary for you to fully raise the proper command and use the vajra-king precious sword here?

Both halls consisted of fabricated Chan practitioners; none understood where the true mind abides. If one merely remembers a few sayings of the patriarchs and predecessors and deliberates endlessly, that does not count as truly awakening to one's intrinsic nature. Go ahead and discuss; go ahead and dispute endlessly. Though there may be some reasoning in it, you have not even dreamed of the Buddhadharma, much less of the proper command on which Nánquán based his cutting of the cat. Patriarch Yuánwù finally asks, "Tell me, by what command did Nánquán act?" Everyone, answer it: by what command?

(After a long pause, Zhènwēi gives a mighty shout:) Cut!

*Compiled from an audio recording. If there are any inaccuracies, please point them out so that they may be corrected.

The Mindless Jianghu : 111

The teacher's propagation of the Dharma truly comes from profound compassion!!!

Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : Teacher Qí, what if one answered Nánquán like this?

If one imitated a cat's meow, Nánquán would say, "Who told you to make noise? Cut—" and sever it with one stroke of the sword.

If one said, "The cat is in this old man's hands; its life and death are already clear," what would Nánquán say?

lvm : Ha ha! People today are bolder than the ancients.

If one imitated a cat's meow, Nánquán would say, "Who told you to make noise? Cut—" and sever it with one stroke of the sword.

*Not necessarily!

If one said, "The cat is in this old man's hands; its life and death are already clear," what would Nánquán say?

*What on earth does any of this have to do with anything?!

Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : The courage of people today, the courage of the ancients

---

Bow once before him, then pick up the cat and carry it away.

lvm : Had you been there, you would indeed have saved the cat.

Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : I bow in homage!

lvm : Do not turn your head!

Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : Hey!

lvm : Meow!

Arabic Numerals : A tiger learning to meow like a cat—how hard you have worked at it!

Wǎnrán : What on earth does any of this have to do with anything?!

rj (replying to lvm : Meow!): Heh heh!

How amusing, how amusing!

Ashamed : The cat has already been cut, yet the dispute has not ceased.

Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : I bow in homage to Teacher Qí!

Qīngmíng (QM) (replying to Lay Practitioner Yǒngguāng : Teacher Qí, what if one answered Nánquán like this?): If only I were that cat!

Qīngmíng (QM) : I would be willing to receive that stroke of the sword.

Excellent ：Where would it land?

[Qingming (QM)]: I'm just teasing you!

Where could there be any place?

[Shanzai]: If there is none, that is an annihilationist view.

[Qingming (QM)]: And if there is?

---------- What if it is neither existent nor nonexistent? What if it is neither neither-existent nor neither-nonexistent?

[Shanzai]: Investigate!

[Qingming (QM)]: Excellent!

[test] (in reply to [Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Teacher Qi, if one answered Nanquan in this way?): Fabricated Chan practitioners are as numerous as hemp and millet.

[Xinming]: Nanquan cuts the cat; Zhaozhou places his shoe on his head.

Selected from Slight Ripples in the Chan Ocean (Master Yuanyin)

Speaking of capacity and function, every movement and gesture is nothing other than great capacity and great function. One simply accords with the appropriate time and conditions, with nothing twisted or contrived in one's heart; to be without any sticking or attachment is precisely this. This is what is meant by freedom in all directions, without constraint in gathering in or releasing. Green bamboo and yellow flowers are all profound mysteries; enlivening and killing, granting and taking away, are nothing but wondrous functioning. When the great elders of the Chan school attain the final realization, all possess this great capacity and great function.

Take Nanquan's cutting of the cat and Guizong's cutting of the snake: both possessed the ability to enliven and kill freely. Yet when people see these koans, they often cannot penetrate them and inevitably give rise to doubts: Does cutting a cat or killing a snake not violate the precept against killing? How could great practitioners engage in conduct that destroys life and takes life? It surely could not have been an actual event; perhaps it was merely an allegory, signifying the killing off of deluded thoughts in one's mind—such as greed, anger, attachment, and quarrelsomeness.

Around March 1956, a great teacher gave lectures on the Record of Pointing at the Moon for everyone at Jing'an Monastery in Shanghai. When he came to this koan of Nanquan cutting the cat, he said: Please do not take it as an actual cutting of a cat. It is merely an allegory. As Layman Pang said: To protect life, one must use killing; only when killing is exhausted can you be at peace.

This means killing off the habitual delusions of greed, anger, and attachment in one's own mind. This is also correct, but it depends on the level of the practitioner's cultivation. If one's practice is truly profound and one has reached the point where enlivening and killing occur simultaneously, then killing is enlivening and enlivening is killing. Not only is there no distinction between enlivening and killing, there is not even a trace of such distinction. In that case, there is no harm in taking it as an actual event.

Among those present was an experienced practitioner who would not accept this explanation. Rising to his feet, he said: This is only your own realm of realization; it was not Master Wang's original intent. Master Wang had no view of killing and enlivening. Though he cut, it was still enlivening; there is no harm in saying that this really happened. Elder Hu would not yield, and the two began to argue. Just as the dispute had reached an impasse, an experienced practitioner—no one knows who—gave a cat's cry. Everyone who heard it was suddenly awakened, and the argument ceased.

As for this koan of cutting the cat, Nanquan's original intention was not to cut the cat. He merely wanted someone from either of the two monastic divisions to utter a Mind-Seal phrase that would reveal the mind-ground. Yet no one understood his intention and no one could utter a phrase to save the cat. Once Nanquan had spoken, he immediately drew his blade and killed it.

At that time, perhaps it was not actually the case that no one was present in the two monastic divisions; perhaps they wished to look further into Nanquan's manner of action and see what it truly was. Perhaps this was why they would not come forward and utter a phrase to save the cat. Later, when Zhaozhou returned, Nanquan told him what had happened. Zhaozhou took off his shoe, placed it on his head, and walked out. Nanquan praised him, saying: Had you been here, you would have saved the cat.

Let us now briefly reveal the secret meaning. Those who understand this all say that Zhaozhou recognized who it was that cut the cat, and that by placing his shoe on his head he indicated who it was as well. In fact, every gesture, movement, word, and action of the ancients had its source; it was not merely a matter of indicating who wore the shoe on his head. Recognizing who wears the shoe on his head is only awakening. The final matter is to arouse great capacity and great function.

Shoes are worn on the feet; to place one on the head—is this not perverse and contrary conduct? The two monastic divisions quarreled over the cat, and that was indeed perverse conduct. Master Wang killed the cat over this; those who understood would of course raise no objection, but would those who did not understand not slander the Dharma and damage the wheel of true Dharma? That too is contrary conduct. By walking out with his shoe on his head, Zhaozhou not only swept the monks of both divisions into it, but caught Master Wang in the same net as well.

Master Wang was certainly no weakling. Although Zhaozhou came forth, Nanquan still did not let him off. He spoke words that sounded very much like praise: Had you been here, you would have saved the cat. These words sound like praise, but their intent is not benign. They are like a needle hidden in cotton: you cannot grasp it, for once you do, it pricks your hand. Once, while Master Weishan and his disciple were walking in the mountains, Weishan sat upon a rock. A bird flew over carrying a red fruit and offered it before the rock. Yangshan said: Our teacher's majesty and virtue are such that even flying creatures know to make offerings. Weishan replied: You, too, cannot be without a share in it. Do you, worthy ones, recognize the underlying meaning here?

[Cankuì]: So Chan is found amid everyday activities!

If the mind can truly become empty, then when eating vegetables or taking a meal, there is no need for endless discrimination and calculation.

[Cankuì]: Is this the meaning behind Venerable Master Xuyun's eating peanuts?

In the third month of 1958, the wuxu year, I paid homage to the Venerable Master and requested essential Dharma instructions.

In the third month of spring in the previous wuxu year, I went to Yunju and paid homage to the elder in his hermitage. After prostrating, the elder picked up a peanut. With palms joined, I first asked, "How should one practice in the Chan school?" The elder said, "Eat peanuts." Thinking that the elder had not heard me, I asked again. He again said, "Eat peanuts." I was utterly at a loss. Two days later, I repeated my earlier question. The elder sighed and said, "In modern times, Chan practitioners investigate huatou. What is a huatou? Who is it that is able to investigate?" I understood his meaning and praised the elder's compassionate and skillful instruction.

The next day, I asked the elder: "The 'Treasury Stūpa' chapter of the Lotus Sūtra says that Śākyamuni Buddha has innumerable emanation Buddhas. Among the worlds of the ten directions, which Buddha is Śākyamuni's emanation?" The elder said, "Which emanation are you?" On hearing this, I was startled and bewildered, and left without understanding. The next day, I again asked about the meaning of emanation bodies. The elder said, "You have just come from the Sutra Library. This is precisely an emanation body." I silently nodded in agreement.

I also asked about the "Lifespan of the Tathāgata" chapter of the Lotus Sūtra. "It says that Śākyamuni attained Buddhahood immeasurable kalpas ago. When we attain Buddhahood in the future, will it likewise be that we attained Buddhahood immeasurable kalpas ago?" The elder said, "One Buddha is all Buddhas. Mind is the ground of the Tathāgata." Having finished my questions, I made prostrations and returned. Unexpectedly, Elder Master Xuyun entered parinirvāṇa that autumn. We shall never meet again. How sorrowful!

Respectfully recorded by disciple Shengyi in the eleventh month of the jihai year.

One day, Venerable Master Xuyun was having the communal tea meal. He said: "The ancients drank tea and also ate peanuts. Today the resident community is offering peanuts to the assembly. The ancients were unborn at every step, and every thought was on the Way. How can eating peanuts be called the Way? If, when you eat peanuts, you know that they taste good, you are an ordinary being—who does not know that peanuts taste good? If, when you eat peanuts, you do not know whether peanuts taste

good, you are a block of wood. But if, when you eat peanuts, you are free from the fragrance and taste of peanuts, and also free from not knowing their fragrance and taste—leaving behind these two alternatives—speak a word!" This is the Buddhadharma. Everyone knows the fragrance and taste of peanuts; this is contact. The true aspect of peanuts is neither fragrant nor not fragrant. One cannot say that they are fragrant, nor can one say that they are not fragrant. To speak of fragrance or non-fragrance is to fall into the two extremes, without seeing the Middle Way or the true aspect. Therefore, the elder master said that if one is free from the two extremes, one can know the fundamental reality and true aspect of peanuts. This is the Dharma gate of nonduality.

[Cankuì]: I pay homage to Venerable Master Xuyun! I pay homage to Venerable Master Shengyi!

[64] Zhaozhou Wears Sandals to Put an End to Views

[Case 64] Zhaozhou Wears His Sandals and Puts an End to Views

[Case 64] The Case:

Nanquan again brought up the earlier story and asked Zhaozhou. [They must be of one mind and one accord for this to work. Only those on the same path know.]

Zhaozhou immediately took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. [He could not avoid dragging mud and water along.]

Nanquan said, “Had you been there, you would indeed have saved the cat.” [Song and beat follow one another; few are those who understand the music. Making the best of a mistake.]

Zhaozhou was Nanquan’s disciple: once the beginning was spoken, he understood the end; when the matter was raised, he immediately knew where it came down. That evening Nanquan again brought up the earlier story and asked Zhaozhou. Zhaozhou was an old hand, so he took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. Nanquan said, “Had you been there, you would have saved the cat.” Tell me, was it really so, or was it not?

When Nanquan said, “Speak, and I will not cut it,” it was like sparks struck from flint, like a flash of lightning. Zhaozhou immediately took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. He investigated living words, not dead words. New each day, new each moment—though a thousand sages might try, they could not alter it by a hair’s breadth. One must bring forth one’s own household treasure before one can see his complete functioning and great application. He said, “I am the Dharma King; in the Dharma I am at ease.”

Many mistakenly understand this by saying, “Zhaozhou provisionally treated the straw sandals as the cat.” Others say, “When he said, ‘Speak, and I will not cut it,’ Zhaozhou should have put the sandals on his head and gone out, as if to say: ‘It was you who cut the cat; it has nothing to do with me.’” Such interpretations have no connection with the matter at all; they merely toy with ghostly notions. They do not realize that the intent of the ancients was as heaven universally covering and earth universally supporting. Father and son were attuned; their sharp exchanges matched. When one raised the beginning, the other understood the end. Students nowadays do not recognize the ancients’ turning point; they vainly speculate along the path of conceptual thought. If you wish to see it, simply look at the turning point of Nanquan and Zhaozhou, and you will see well.

The verse says:

The case, once settled, was brought to Zhaozhou. [The words still ring in one’s ears; there was no need to cut again. A medicine bag hangs behind the funeral cart.]

He may roam at leisure through the city of Chang’an. [Such ease, such freedom! Casually picking up a blade of grass. One cannot fail to let you go on in just this way.]

No one understands the sandals worn on his head. [There may be one or two. It is a distinctive family style. It fits openly and fits secretly as well.]

Returning to his home mountain, he immediately rests. [Under his heels he deserves thirty blows. Tell me, where is the fault? It is only because you stir up waves where there is no wind. Let both sides go. Yet if it is not so, then to be so is also too strange.]

Regarding “The case, once settled, was brought to Zhaozhou,” Head Monk Qing said, “It is like someone closing a case: eight blows are eight blows, and thirteen are thirteen.” It had already been settled, yet it was taken up and put to Zhaozhou. Zhaozhou was one of Nanquan’s household and understood Nanquan’s intent. He was a person thoroughly penetrated to the bottom: at the slightest touch or impact, he turned freely. Possessing the eyes and understanding of an authentic master, as soon as he heard the matter raised, he sprang into action.

When Xuedou said, “He may roam at leisure through the city of Chang’an,” he revealed no small amount. An ancient said, “Though Chang’an is pleasant, it is no place for long residence.” Another said, “Chang’an is exceedingly bustling; my own country is tranquil.” One must recognize the appropriate moment and distinguish good fortune from misfortune.

“No one understands the sandals worn on his head.” At the point of wearing the sandals on his head, there are not so many complications. Hence it is said, “Only I can know it; only I can realize it.” Only then can one see where Nanquan, Zhaozhou, and Xuedou shared the same attainment and function. Tell me, how do you understand it now?

“Returning to his home mountain, he immediately rests.” Where is the home mountain? If he had not understood, he certainly would not have spoken in this way. Since he understood, tell me: where is the home mountain? Strike!

[lvm]: Posthumous work of the Venerable Master Yuanyin—The Blue Cliff Record, Case 64: Zhaozhou Wears His Sandals and Puts an End to Views

---

The Blue Cliff Record, Case 64: Zhaozhou Wears His Sandals and Puts an End to Views

Lectures by Master Yuanyin

[Case 64: Nanquan again brought up the earlier story and asked Zhaozhou. (They must be of one mind and one accord for this to work. Only those on the same path know.) Zhaozhou immediately took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. (He could not avoid dragging mud and water along.) Nanquan said: "Had you been there, you would indeed have saved the cat." (Song and beat follow one another. Few are those who understand the music. Making the best of a mistake.)]

Chan Master Zhaozhou was Nanquan's outstanding disciple. When Nanquan cut the cat, Zhaozhou had gone out on business and was not present. That evening, Zhaozhou returned. Nanquan told him about cutting the cat during the day: "At that time I said, 'Speak, and I will not cut it.' Now you say a word and let me see."

Upon hearing this, Chan Master Zhaozhou said nothing. He took off his straw sandals, put them on his head, and walked out. Nanquan said, "Had you been there at the time, the cat would have been saved." Why could putting sandals on his head and walking out save the cat? What, after all, were Nanquan and Zhaozhou seeking to reveal?

Some say: Zhaozhou recognized who it was that killed the cat, and by taking off his shoes and placing them on his head, he indicated this "who."

Though this explanation has some reason to it, it is not entirely so. In fact, every move, gesture, word, and action of the ancients had its source; it was not merely a matter of indicating who the person wearing the shoes on his head was. Recognizing this "who" is only awakening; one must bring forth great function and great application—only then is it final.

Shoes are worn on the feet; to place them on one's head—is this not perverse and upside down? The two halls of the community quarreled over a cat; this indeed was perverse and upside down.

Teacher Wang killed the cat because of this. Those who understood need not be mentioned, but would not those who did not understand slander him for the killing? By slandering the Dharma and thereby damaging the wheel of the true Dharma, would they not also be acting perversely and upside down? By leaving with the shoes on his head, Zhaozhou not only swept the monastics of the two halls into this net, but caught Teacher Wang in it as well.

Teacher Wang's Dharma eye was fully clear—how could he fail to know Zhaozhou's intent? Although Zhaozhou had gone out, Nanquan still did not let him off, saying, "Had you been there, you would indeed have saved the cat." These words seem to be praise, but they are not favorable words at all. They are like a needle hidden in cotton: one cannot grasp it, for as soon as one does, it pricks the hand.

For example, when Weishan and his disciple were traveling in the mountains, Weishan sat on a rock. A bird flew over, carrying a red fruit in its beak, and offered it before the rock. Weishan picked it up and handed it to Yangshan. Yangshan washed the red fruit clean and gave it back to Weishan. Weishan said, "Where did you get this?" Yangshan said, "It was drawn here by the virtue of the Master." Weishan said, "You also have your share in it." Do you good friends recognize the underlying meaning here?

Now let us look at Chan Master Yuanwu's commentary on this koan.

[Zhaozhou was Nanquan's disciple: once the beginning was spoken, he understood the end; when the matter was raised, he immediately knew where it came down. That evening Nanquan again brought up the earlier story and asked Zhaozhou. Zhaozhou was an old hand, so he took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. Nanquan said, "Had you been there, you would have saved the cat." Tell me, was it really so, or was it not?]

Zhaozhou was Nanquan's direct Dharma heir. Teacher and disciple were thoroughly attuned in mind; once the beginning was spoken, he knew the end. Nanquan asked Zhaozhou, "When I cut the cat today, I said, 'Speak, and I will not cut it.' Now you say a word and let me see." Zhaozhou took off his straw sandals, put them on his head, and walked out. Nanquan said, "Had you been there, I would not have killed the cat." Was it really so? By putting a shoe on his head in this way, would the cat truly not have been cut?

[Nanquan said, "Speak, and I will not cut it." It was like sparks struck from flint, like a flash of lightning. Zhaozhou immediately took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. He investigated living words, not dead words. New each day, new each moment—though a thousand sages might try, they could not alter it by a hair's breadth. One must bring forth one's own household treasure before one can see his complete functioning and great application. He said, "I am the Dharma King; in the Dharma I am at ease."]

As Chan Master Nanquan drew his sword toward the cat, he said, "Speak, and I will not cut it!" The cat's life hung upon an instant; only one word could save it. It is like suchness of intrinsic nature originally appearing before us: only recognizing it can

save us. But how is it recognized? If one recognizes it through appearances, one is blinded by what one recognizes; if one recognizes it through non-appearance, there is nothing to grasp. How, then, is it to be recognized? At this point the way of words is cut off and the path of mental activity is ended. Only when one can "cut into two with a single stroke, regardless of partiality" is the full imperative brought forth.

The words, "Speak, and I will not cut it," were like sparks struck from flint, like a flash of lightning. In that instant of lightning-swift change, Zhaozhou took off his straw sandals, placed them on his head, and walked out. Zhaozhou's stroke did not merely make two divisions. The monks of the eastern and western halls quarreling over the cat was an inversion—one division. Zhaozhou raising his sword toward the cat was also an inversion—another division.

Nor was that all. The various partial words and viewpoints of that time and later generations were all inversions as well—how many divisions does that make? When Zhaozhou left with sandals on his head, all these viewpoints were swept up in a single net. Therefore it is called, "Zhaozhou Wears His Sandals and Puts an End to Views."

Zhaozhou investigated living words, not dead words. He would not die beneath the phrase, "Speak, and I will not cut it." Speaking or not speaking, cutting or not cutting—none of these could bind Zhaozhou. He opened another path; he had no need to make a matter of speaking or not speaking, cutting or not cutting. He could instead set forth entire the original intent of all Buddhas and patriarchs. Hence it is said, "New each day, new each moment—though a thousand sages might try, they could not alter it by a hair's breadth." Even if a thousand Buddhas were to appear in the world, this original intent would remain just so.

Chan Master Zhaozhou's complete functioning and great application welled forth from his own mind; they were not learned from the words of others. Painted cakes cannot satisfy hunger; only eating for oneself can fill the belly. Long ago, the Sixth Patriarch could not read. Yet upon hearing the first half of a sūtra, he knew the meaning of the second half, his mind sealed with the Buddha's mind. This is what is meant by "equal in realization to all Buddhas."

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says, "When one's own awakening is complete and one can awaken others, the Tathāgata responds to the world." One's own awakening being complete is one's household treasure; being able to awaken others is complete functioning and great application. Thus it is said, "One must bring forth one's own household treasure before one can see his complete functioning and great application." Chan Master Zhaozhou once said, "I am the Dharma King; in the Dharma I am at ease." Indeed, this is true.

If one's own awakening is incomplete and one merely relies on a little worldly cleverness and intellectual eloquence, speculating along the path of conceptual thought, one will certainly misunderstand the patriarchs' intent. There have been quite a number of such misunderstandings since ancient times. Chan Master Yuanwu gives two examples:

[Many people misunderstand it, saying: "Zhaozhou merely took the straw sandal for a cat." Some say: "When he said, 'If you can speak, I will not cut it,' I would have put a straw sandal on my head and walked out. It was you who cut the cat; it had nothing to do with me." This may seem to avoid all involvement, but it is only playing with consciousness!]

Many people think this way: when Zhaozhou put a sandal on his head and went out, he was treating the straw sandal as the cat; would that not have saved the cat? Others say that when Zhaozhou put a sandal on his head and went out, he meant: "Cutting the cat is your affair; it has nothing to do with me."

All such explanations are entirely beside the point! They are merely conceptual conjectures, wild inventions of the mind—nothing but playing with consciousness!

[They do not realize that the intent of the ancients was like heaven universally covering and earth universally supporting. Master and disciple responded to each other; their critical turns accorded. When one raised the head, the other understood the tail. Students nowadays do not recognize where the ancients turned, but vainly speculate along the path of conceptual thought. If you wish to see it, simply look at the turning point of Nanquan and Zhaozhou.]

In fact, the conduct of Nanquan and Zhaozhou was like heaven covering all and earth supporting all: it brought every thought and view to rest. Seeing a horn over a wall, one knows there is an ox; seeing smoke beyond a mountain, one knows there is fire. Of these two master and disciple, as soon as one had uttered the beginning, the other already knew the end.

See how they turned so freely: as soon as Nanquan said, "If you can speak, I will not cut it," Zhaozhou put a sandal on his head and went out. With this slight turn, he caught in a single net both halls of monks together with Chan Master Nanquan. How could Nanquan have failed to understand Zhaozhou's meaning? With the light turn of a single remark—"Had you been here, you would indeed have saved the cat"—he did not let Zhaozhou off either. Look at the turning point of this master and disciple: as it is said, "The letter and its cover fit together; their critical turns accord."

Students nowadays do not recognize where the ancients turned, yet they exhaust the powers of discriminating consciousness and thought. This is merely playing with consciousness. Even if your eloquence were as deft as a reed organ, you would not have dreamed of the fundamental intent of the two great elders, Nanquan and Zhaozhou. If you wish to see the Chan masters' fundamental intent for yourself, you can do so only through the turning point of this master and disciple.

Now let us look at Xuedou's verse:

[The verse says:

The case having been settled, why ask Zhaozhou? (The words are still ringing in one's ears; there was no need to cut again. A medicine pouch hangs behind the funeral cart.)

At will he roams the city of Chang'an. (How carefree, how at ease! Casually picking up a blade of grass—one must not fail to let you go on in this way.)

No one understands the sandal worn upon his head. (There may be one or two. It is a distinct family style. The bright side accords; the dark side accords.)

Returning to his native mountain, he immediately rests. (Thirty blows are due right under his heels—but tell me, where is the fault? Only because you stir up waves where there is no wind! Let both sides go. I fear that if it is not so, then even so is altogether too strange.)]

"The case having been settled, why ask Zhaozhou?" Chan Master Nanquan fully wielded the imperative—one stroke dividing it in two, leaving no room for partiality. The case had already been settled, so why ask Zhaozhou again? Because Zhaozhou was one of the family, Nanquan's true heir: knowing the beginning, he understood the end; once it was raised, he knew where it would land. It was only that Zhaozhou had not been present when Nanquan cut the cat. Had he been there, perhaps he could have said a word; therefore Nanquan asked Zhaozhou again.

"At will he roams the city of Chang'an." Chang'an was an ancient capital—the capital of that time—extremely prosperous and bustling. Yet such a crowded and lively place was named Chang'an: enduring peace. Chan Master Xuedou uses this bustling city called "Chang'an" as a metaphor.

In the cycle of rebirth through the six realms, sentient beings emerge and sink again, drowning there in unbearable suffering. Yet this very place is one of enduring peace; originally there is no suffering, accumulation, cessation, or path. Sentient beings suffer unbearably because they cannot roam freely: they are always seeking something and thereby engaging in contrivance—accumulation. Thus, "Nothing can be taken with us; only our karma follows us"—suffering.

When one understands that this is suffering and vows to eliminate accumulation, the conditions for liberation have ripened. One already knows that accumulation can be eliminated and suffering exhausted—cessation. But knowing is not the same as realization. In order to directly realize the original quiescence, one enters the path of practice, hoping to remove the mind that seeks something, free oneself from the habit of deliberate contrivance, and return to what is original—the path.

Only when one directly realizes the original quiescence does one know that originally there is no suffering, accumulation, cessation, or path; prosperity and bustle themselves are enduring peace, and afflictions themselves are bodhi. At that point, you may simply roam about and enjoy yourself—there is nothing to do. "At will he roams the city of Chang'an" praises Chan Master Zhaozhou as one with nothing to do.

"No one understands the sandal worn upon his head." He put his sandal on his head and walked out. Others did not understand why. What did it mean?

"Returning to his native mountain, he immediately rests." Do not ask what it means or seek some definite explanation. If you have truly arrived home, returned to your own house, then you can take your ease completely and openly. What is there left to discuss? Yet there are still many who discuss it. See how Chan Master Yuanwu puts it:

["The case having been settled, why ask Zhaozhou?" Administrator Qingzang said: "It is like a person closing a legal case: eight blows are eight blows, and thirteen are thirteen." It was already decided, yet he took it up and asked Zhaozhou. Zhaozhou was one of his household; he understood Nanquan's intent. He was a person through and through; at the slightest contact, he turned freely, possessing the eyes and insight of a true master of the house. As soon as he heard it raised, he sprang up and acted.]

Administrator Qingzang was Chan Master Changqing. He said, "It is like a person closing a legal case," like conducting a lawsuit and rendering judgment. "Eight blows are eight blows, and thirteen are thirteen" means that if eight strokes are due, one administers eight; if thirteen are due, one administers thirteen.

"It was already decided, yet he took it up and asked Zhaozhou." You had already cut the cat; the case was already finished, yet you took it up again and asked Zhaozhou.

Zhaozhou was one of the family, Nanquan's true heir, and he had penetrated thoroughly. Touch him once: if you speak of the head, he understands the tail; he cannot be captured. It is like trying to seize a gourd floating on water: seize it once, and it turns over. He acted in accordance with his original office.

[Xuedou said: "At will he roams the city of Chang'an." There is no small leakage here! An ancient said, "Though Chang'an is pleasant, it is no place for long residence," and another said, "Chang'an is very bustling, yet my country is tranquil." One must

recognize the occasion and distinguish fortune from misfortune before this will do.]

This is metaphorical speech. When we investigate the huatou for a long time, we recognize our own intrinsic nature. After recognizing intrinsic nature, everything is free and at ease. Sit when sitting, sleep when sleeping, walk when walking; when hungry, eat; when tired, sleep. There is nothing to do. Yet though Chang'an is good, it is no place for long residence. Why? If you abide within this, you fall into "the sacred"! Having recognized your intrinsic nature, if you wander freely and at ease within it, as soon as there is subject and object, it becomes a nest and rut.

"The dragon's cry in the withered tree has not yet faded." If you abide in this appearance, it is wrong. After seeing one's nature, even nature cannot be grasped! It is not a matter of saying, "I have seen my nature! I have attained realization! I am a Buddha!" That is disastrous. If you think there is a Buddha for you to become, you have fallen—fallen into this very place. This too cannot be grasped!

The city of Chang'an is the best and most pleasant place, but it is still no place for long residence. A capital is always bustling, like present-day Beijing—very bustling indeed. Yet "my country is tranquil." Bustle is a metaphor for great spiritual powers and transformations; tranquility means not clinging to appearances: here, it is as though nothing were present. Therefore, we do not speak of spiritual powers and transformations.

Once it has opened, diligently eliminate habitual tendencies. When one is pure and unstained, spiritual powers arise naturally, without being sought. Yet, however manifold the transformations may be, one must not think, "I have spiritual powers; I possess something mysterious." Once one becomes attached to appearances, one has fallen into demonic states. It is like the fifty skandha demons described in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra: each involves great spiritual powers. If one thinks, "I have spiritual powers; I have become a Buddha,"

—then clinging to this appearance makes one possessed by demons. Demons arise from the mind: once one clings to appearances, all kinds of demons enter the mind, and then one cannot be saved. Truly becoming a Buddha means that there is no Buddha to become; there is not a single thing to do.

[No one understands the sandal worn upon his head. At the very point of wearing the sandal, there are not so many things. Thus it is said, "Only I can know it; only I can realize it." Only then does one see the place where Nanquan, Zhaozhou, and Xuedou attained and functioned together. But tell me, how do you understand it now?]

Originally, there is not much mystery or difficulty here, yet many people misunderstand. Some say: "Wearing the sandal on his head signifies that there is nothing at all to be done. You may make your noisy commotion; here there is not the least thing to do," and then he walked out. Others say: "Wearing the sandal on his head—the straw sandal represents the cat."

The cat originally belongs to no one. You say it is yours and I say it is mine, but there is no need to contend. The cat is kept in the monastery for its wonderful function of frightening mice; it is all the same, so why contend? The dispute between the two halls led Patriarch Nanquan to raise his knife and kill the cat, creating all these complications. Such complications ought all to be swept out the door.

Zhaozhou took the sandal worn on his feet, placed it on his head, and walked out, signifying that he had swept all these complications out the door." So the discussions multiply…. Yet all these proliferating discussions are beside the point. They are our own imaginative conjectures, thoughts fabricated in the brain, and have nothing to do with it.

This includes the "inversion" of which I spoke earlier: it was merely a leisurely excursion, merely expedient speech. If you cling to that meaning of "inversion," it likewise has nothing whatever to do with it! Then where does it truly land? Chan Master Xuedou says: no one understands it.

"Only I can know it"—know what? "See the place where Nanquan, Zhaozhou, and Xuedou attained and functioned together." Xuedou fully comprehended the place of Nanquan and Zhaozhou's great capacity and great function. They walk together hand in hand, and hand in hand they walk together; it is as though they were one person. Nanquan, Zhaozhou, and Xuedou are as though they were one person.

Then from what place did Zhaozhou understand the wearing of the sandals? Do not go on judging what is long or short, or speaking of right and wrong. None of it is relevant! Truly, "Once you return to your home mountain, you may rest." Realize your intrinsic nature, and you have arrived home—there is nothing to say. What is there to say? Layman Vimalakīrti spoke of the Dharma gate of nonduality: nothing can be said, so let us say no more.

All of you keep talking—what are you talking about? None of it is relevant! Suppose you were to ask me, "When Nanquan questioned Zhaozhou and Zhaozhou placed his sandals on his head and went out, what was the meaning of this?" I would say, "Before Wuma Street, all is clamorous; beside the Willow River, nothing at all is happening." Here, I have nothing whatsoever going on; over there, you may be as clamorous as you please. None of it is relevant! Do not again bring up the meaning of "inversion" that I once spoke of. Who has ever seen me open my mouth?

"Once you return to your home mountain, you may rest." Where is this home mountain? If he had not understood, he certainly would not have spoken thus. Since he has understood, then tell me: where is the home mountain? Then strike.

At the end, Yuanwu Keqin said, “Where is the home mountain?” Where is our homeland? Does everyone understand? “It is permitted only that the old Hu know; it is not permitted that the old Hu understand.” Once you understand, you are blind! If you understand, your eyes are blinded.

Why is this so? Everyone, look beneath your feet!

*Compiled from an audio recording. Please point out anything inappropriate so that it may be corrected.

Chan Staff : There is also the instruction of Master Deshan.

Chan Master Yicun entered the abbot’s quarters to pay respects to Deshan and asked, “What was the meaning of Nanquan’s cutting the cat?”

As soon as Chan Master Deshan heard this, he used his staff to beat Chan Master Yicun out of the abbot’s quarters. Just as Chan Master Yicun stepped over the threshold, Chan Master Deshan called out, “Do you understand?”

Chan Master Yifeng said, “I do not understand.”

Chan Master Deshan sighed and said, “Even with such grandmotherly concern on my part, you still do not understand?”

After some time, Chan Master Yicun again visited Deshan and asked, “In the supreme teaching transmitted from the patriarchs, does this student have any share or not?”

Chan Master Deshan immediately gave him a blow with his staff, then asked in return, “What are you saying?”

Chan Master Yicun did not understand its meaning. The next day, he came again to question Chan Master Deshan.

Chan Master Deshan said, “In my school there are no verbal formulations; truly, there is not a single dharma to give to anyone.”

lvm : “In my school there are no verbal formulations; truly, there is not a single dharma to give to anyone.” Such grandmotherly concern!

Chan Staff : Zhang San kills someone; Li Si pays with his life!

lvm : Yantou has arrived!

Lele : In ancient times there was beating the ox across a mountain; today we see an offering of the head across a mountain. The one killed was Zhang San, yet now Li Si has lost his head.

Truth : There was originally no head atop the head; why put another head on it?

Horizontal inscription: Once settled, settled in vain.

test (In response to lvm : The posthumous writings of Master Yuanyin—Blue Cliff Record, Case 64, “Zhaozhou Wears Sandals and Quells Views”): Should this be “Nanquan raised his knife toward the cat”?

……

The single sentence, “If you can speak, I will not cut it,” was like a spark struck from stone, like a flash of lightning. In that instant of lightning-swift turning, Zhaozhou took off his grass sandals and placed them on his head as he went out. How could Zhaozhou’s single cut have amounted to merely two divisions? The two halls, east and west, contending over the cat was an inversion—one division; Nanquan’s raising his knife toward the cat was also an inversion—another division.

More than this, all the various biased words and views of that time and later generations were likewise inversions—how many divisions were there? When Zhaozhou put the sandals on his head and went out, all these views were swept up in a single net. Hence it is said, “Zhaozhou Wears Sandals and Quells Views.”

……

lvm : Ha ha! Better to say, “Zhaozhou raises his sandals toward views.”

[Sixth, Fifth Line] The World-Honored One Remained Silent for a Long Time

[65] The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while

A pointer says: Formless, yet taking form, it fills the ten directions of empty space in its vastness; mindless, yet responsive, it pervades oceans of lands without weariness. Raise one and illuminate three; observe capacities to the finest fraction. Even if blows fall like raindrops and shouts crash like thunder, this still does not amount to the conduct of a person of higher attainment. Tell me, what is the matter of a person of higher attainment? Try to bring it up.

[65] The case:

A non-Buddhist asked the Buddha, "I do not ask about words; I do not ask about wordlessness." [Although this is so, the man of the house still has a little fragrance about him. Twin swords fly through empty space—fortunately, he did not ask.]

The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while. [Do not slander the World-Honored One: his sound is like thunder! Whether sitting or standing, no one can move him.]

The non-Buddhist praised him, saying, "The World-Honored One, in his great compassion and great kindness, has dispelled my cloud of delusion and enabled me to enter." [A quick-witted fellow turns with a single flick; a bright pearl on a tray.]

After the non-Buddhist had left, Ānanda asked the Buddha, "What realization did the non-Buddhist attain, that he says he was enabled to enter?" [It does no harm to let people become caught in doubt. Everyone must know. Tempering raw iron in a furnace.]

The Buddha said, "Like a fine horse in the world, which moves when it sees the shadow of the whip." [Tell me, what do you call the shadow of the whip? Striking the whisk once: the tip of the staff has eyes, bright as the sun. To recognize true gold, test it in fire. Pick it up and eat your meal.]

If this matter lay in words and phrases, would the three vehicles and twelve divisions of the teachings lack words and phrases? If someone says that wordlessness itself is it, then why did the patriarch come from the West? As for the many koans handed down from above, how, after all, are we to see where they come to rest? Quite a few people have interpreted this case in discussion.

Some call it remaining silent for a long while; some call it sitting firmly in place; some call it silent nonresponse. Happily, none of these has anything to do with it—when have they ever truly laid hold of it? This matter is in fact not in words and phrases, yet neither is it apart from words and phrases. If there is the slightest deliberation, one is already a thousand miles away. Look at that non-Buddhist: only after awakening did he know that it was neither here nor there, neither this nor not this. Tell me, what is it?

Chan Master Tianyi Huai composed this verse: "Vimalakīrti neither kept silent nor remained silent for a long while; sitting firmly in place, discussion becomes a fault. In the box of the hair-splitting sword, the cold light chills; non-Buddhists and Māras all fold their hands."

Chan Master Baizhang Chang studied with Fayan, who told him to examine this saying. One day Fayan asked, "What causes and conditions are you examining?" Chang said, "The saying about the non-Buddhist who questioned the Buddha." Fayan said, "Try bringing it up." Just as Chang was about to open his mouth, Fayan said, "Stop! Stop! Are you intending to understand it at the point of the long silence?" At these words Chang suddenly had a great awakening. Later, in instructing the assembly, he said, "Baizhang has three essential formulas: drink tea, take care, rest. If you deliberate and think further, I know you have not yet penetrated it."

Cuiyan Zhendian, Pointing to the Chest, commented: "The six directions and nine realms, blue, yellow, red, and white—each and every one interweaves. The non-Buddhist understood the treatises of the Four Vedas and called himself 'an omniscient man.' Everywhere he went, he sought people with whom to debate. In raising this question, he wished to block off old Śākyamuni's tongue. Yet the World-Honored One expended not the slightest bit of effort, and he immediately awakened. He praised him, saying, 'The World-Honored One, in his great compassion and great kindness, has dispelled my cloud of delusion and enabled me to enter.' Tell me, where is the place of great compassion and great kindness? The World-Honored One's single eye penetrates the three times; the non-Buddhist's two eyes pierce the five regions of India."

Weishan Zhenru commented: "The non-Buddhist harbored a supreme treasure, and the World-Honored One personally held it high for him. The myriad forms appear; all phenomena are distinctly manifest." Yet what, after all, did the non-Buddhist awaken to? It is like a dog driven against a wall: when it reaches the utmost point, where there is no road, it must turn back; then it becomes vividly alive. If one lets go at once of calculations concerning right and wrong, when feelings are exhausted and views eliminated, everything naturally becomes thoroughly clear."

After the non-Buddhist had left, Ānanda asked the Buddha, "What realization did the non-Buddhist attain, that he says he was enabled to enter?" The Buddha said, "Like a fine horse in the world, which moves when it sees the shadow of the whip." Later teachers of expedient means said, "Once again, the wind has blown it into another tune." Another said, "Dragon's head, snake's tail!" Where is the World-Honored One's shadow of the whip? Where is the place where the whip's shadow is seen? Xuedou said, "Not distinguishing the deviant from the correct—the fault lies in the shadow of the whip." Zhenru said, "Ānanda strikes the golden bell again, and the fourfold assembly hears it together." Although this is so, it is much like two dragons fighting over a pearl, only adding to the wise one's imposing ferocity.

Xuedou composed this verse:

The pivotal wheel has not yet turned, [It is right here. Indeed, it has not moved in the slightest.]

But once it turns, it must run to two sides. [If it does not fall into being, it must fall into nonbeing; if not east, then west. The left eye weighs half a catty, the right eye eight taels.]

When the bright mirror is suddenly set upon its stand, [Do you still see old Śākyamuni? One flick and he turns. Broken! Broken! Ruined! Ruined!]

At once beauty and ugliness are distinguished. [The entire earth is a gate of liberation. He deserves thirty blows. Do you still see old Śākyamuni?]

Once beauty and ugliness are distinguished, the cloud of delusion disperses; [Open up one narrow passage and allow you a place to turn around; yet you are still only a non-Buddhist.]

Where could dust arise at the gate of compassion? [It has never been concealed throughout the whole realm. Step back! Step back! Bodhidharma is coming.]

Thinking of the fine horse glimpsing the shadow of the whip, [I have my staff; I have no need of yours. Tell me, where is the shadow of the whip? Where is the fine horse?]

It can be called back from chasing the wind for a thousand miles. [Riding through the Buddha Hall and out the main gate he goes. To turn around is already a mistake; to let it pass is unacceptable. Strike him!]

Called back, (snaps his fingers three times). [No village ahead, no inn behind. Having broken his staff, where will he go? Xuedou's thunder is tremendous, but there are no raindrops at all.]

"The pivotal wheel has not yet turned; but once it turns, it must run to two sides." The pivot is the numinous pivot of a thousand sages; the wheel is the lifeline of all people from time without beginning. Have you not seen how an ancient said: "The numinous pivot of a thousand sages is not easy to approach; when dragons beget dragon sons, do not proceed carelessly. Zhaozhou seized the jade disk of He Shi; King Qin and Xiangru both lost their lives." The non-Buddhist was able to hold fast and be master; he had never stirred from it.

Why did he say, "I do not ask about words; I do not ask about wordlessness"? Was this not the place of the whole pivot? The World-Honored One knew how to set sail with the wind and prescribe medicine according to the illness, and so he remained silent for a long while. He raised up the whole pivot, and the non-Buddhist grasped it in its entirety. Then the pivotal wheel turned round and round, yet it did not turn toward being or toward nonbeing. Not falling into gain or loss, not bound by ordinary or saintly, both sides were cut off at once. As soon as the World-Honored One remained silent for a long while, the non-Buddhist bowed. People nowadays mostly fall into nonbeing; otherwise, they fall into being, continually running to and fro between being and nonbeing.

Xuedou said, "When the bright mirror is suddenly set upon its stand, beauty and ugliness are distinguished at once." This has never moved at all; it requires only that long silence, like a bright mirror placed upon its stand, from which the myriad appearances cannot escape their forms. The non-Buddhist said, "The World-Honored One, in his great compassion and great kindness, has dispelled my cloud of delusion and enabled me to enter."

Tell me, where is the place into which the non-Buddhist entered? Here, each of you must personally investigate, personally examine, personally awaken, and personally comprehend. Then, everywhere—in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, without regard to high or low—it is wholly present, without the slightest alteration. Once you begin calculating, if there is even the slightest trace of reasoning, it obstructs and kills a person, leaving no share of entry at all. Later, the verse says, "The World-Honored One, in his great compassion and great kindness, has dispelled my cloud of delusion and enabled me to enter." At that very moment, beauty and ugliness are suddenly distinguished.

"Once beauty and ugliness are distinguished, the cloud of delusion disperses; where could dust arise at the gate of compassion?" The entire earth is the gateway of the World-Honored One's great compassion and great kindness. If you penetrate it, not even a pinch is needed. This too is a gateway that has been opened wide. Have you not seen how the World-Honored One, during the three periods of seven days, reflected thus: "I would rather not teach the Dharma, but swiftly enter nirvāṇa."

"Thinking of the fine horse glimpsing the shadow of the whip, it can be called back from chasing the wind for a thousand miles." A wind-chasing horse, upon seeing the whip's shadow, immediately traverses a thousand miles; when told to return, it returns at once. Xuedou's meaning is to praise him: only when one meets a person of outstanding capacity can a single flick bring an immediate turn, and a single call bring an immediate return. When it is called back, he snaps his fingers three times. Tell me, is this a direct revelation, or is it scattering sand?

[Xueshan Tongzi]: One should not understand it at the point of the long silence? Then at what point should one understand it?

[lvm]: When I come to this, I do not understand either.

[Xueshan Tongzi]: A true good spiritual friend!

[lvm]: You too cannot be left out of it.

[Xueshan Tongzi]: You have thoroughly fooled me!

[66] Did Yantou Get the Sword?

[Case 66] Did Yantou Recover His Sword?

Pointer: Meeting the opportunity face-to-face, he raises the device for trapping a tiger; pressing directly and probing from the side, he lays out the strategy for seizing a thief. Openly or covertly in accord, releasing and gathering in tandem—one who can handle a dead snake must be a true master.

[Case 66] The Case:

Yantou asked a monk, “Where have you come from?” [Before he had even opened his mouth, he had already exposed a flaw. He has passed through a skull. It is not difficult to know where he came from.]

The monk said, “From the Western Capital.” [Sure enough, a petty thief.]

Yantou said, “After Huang Chao passed through, did you recover your sword?” [Having never in his life been a bandit, he does not fear losing his head. To ask in this way—how bold!]

The monk said, “I recovered it.” [Defeated! He does not yet know how to turn about. Mao Guanghan is as numerous as hemp stalks and millet grains.]

Yantou stretched out his neck, moved close, and said, “[Unclear exclamation]!” [One must first recognize the right opportunity. The device for trapping a tiger. What kind of mental activity is this?]

The monk said, “Master, your head has fallen off.” [He sees only the sharp point of the awl, not the square head of the chisel. What does he know of good and bad? He has been hit!]

Yantou gave a hearty laugh. [All the patch-robed monks in the world could do nothing about it. He utterly deceives everyone in the world. They cannot find where this old fellow’s head has fallen.]

Later, the monk went to Xuefeng. [Still as muddleheaded and confused as before. This monk was repeatedly and thoroughly exposed.]

Xuefeng asked, “Where have you come from?” [He cannot help but state where he came from. He must also be examined.]

The monk said, “I have come from Yantou.” [Sure enough, he has exposed a flaw.]

Xuefeng said, “What words were spoken?” [Once he repeats them, he cannot avoid a beating.]

The monk recounted the preceding exchange. [He should simply have been driven out.]

Xuefeng gave him thirty blows and drove him out. [Though this was as decisive as cutting through a nail, why give him only thirty blows? The staff had not yet broken. Nor was this yet the fundamental matter. Why say, “Three thousand blows in the morning and eight hundred in the evening”? If they had not been fellow practitioners, how could one distinguish the exact point? Even so, tell me: where do Xuefeng and Yantou stand?]

In general, when one carries one’s bag and bowl, pushing through grass and observing the winds, one must possess the eye of a traveling practitioner. This monk’s eye was like a shooting star, yet Yantou still saw through him and strung him up in a single chain. Had he been a real man at the time, whether killing or enlivening, he would have put it to use as soon as it was raised. But this monk, dull and ineffectual, merely said, “I recovered it.” If you travel in this manner, Old Yama will demand payment for your meals! Who knows how many straw sandals he wore out before reaching Xuefeng? If he had possessed even a little discerning vision at the time, he would have known to leave at once. Would that not have been splendid?

There are twists and errors in this cause and condition. Although this matter has neither gain nor loss, its gain and loss are immense. Although there is no choosing, when one reaches this point one must have the eye that can choose. Look at Longya when he was traveling: he posed a question to Deshan, saying, “This student relies on a Moye sword.

What if I were to take the master’s head?” Deshan stretched out his neck and moved close, saying, “[Unclear exclamation]!” Longya said, “The master’s head has fallen off.” Deshan then returned to his abbot’s quarters. Later Longya brought this up to Dongshan. Dongshan said, “What did Deshan say at that time?” Longya said, “He said nothing.” Dongshan said, “Leave aside for the moment that he said nothing; lend me the head that Deshan dropped so that I may see it.”

At these words Longya had a great awakening. He then burned incense, faced in the direction of Deshan from afar, and made prostrations in repentance. A monk conveyed this to Deshan, who said, “That old fellow Dongshan does not know good from bad. This fellow has been dead for so long—what use is there in saving him?” This koan is the same as Longya’s. Deshan’s return to his quarters was most wondrous in its hiddenness. Yantou’s hearty laugh contained poison.

If anyone can distinguish this, he may stride across the world. Had this monk been able to discern it at the time, he would have escaped censure through all ages. At Yantou’s gate, he had already missed the opportunity. Seeing that Elder Xuefeng was a fellow practitioner, Xuefeng knew where the matter lay. Yet he did not explain it to him, but merely gave him thirty blows and drove him from the monastery. This could illumine those before and cut off those after. This is the method of grasping a masterly patch-robed monk by the nostrils in order to guide people: he did not tell him what to do, but instructed him to awaken on his own.

When fundamental masters guide people, at times they envelop them and do not let them emerge. At times they let them lie there utterly dead, yet there must still be a way out. Great Yantou and Xuefeng were instead examined by a Chan monk who merely ate his meals.

As for Yantou’s saying, “After Huang Chao passed through, did you recover your sword?” tell me, everyone: what words should be uttered here so as to avoid his laughter and also avoid being struck by Xuefeng and driven out? There are errors here. Unless one has personally realized and awakened to it, even if one is verbally quick and sharp, one cannot ultimately penetrate and transcend birth and death.

This mountain monk ordinarily instructs people to look into the turning point of this device. If you deliberate, you are far, far away from it! Have you not seen Touzi ask a monk from Yanping, “After Huang Chao passed through, did you recover your sword?” The monk pointed to the ground with his hand. Touzi said, “After riding horses for thirty years, today I have been thrown by a donkey!” Look at this monk: he was not without the bearing of a master. He did not say that he recovered it, nor did he say that he did not recover it. Compared with the monk from the Western Capital, he was as far apart as across the sea. Zhenru commented, “Of those ancient people, one made the head and one made the tail.” Precisely so!

Xuedou’s verse says:

After Huang Chao passed through, he once recovered his sword; [What use is this fellow Meng Balang? It is only a tin knife.]

Only a true master should know the meaning of that hearty laugh. [Having personally obtained one move, he is capable of such skill. Were it not he himself, how could he attain freedom?]

For the thirty mountain-vine blows, grant him a light pardon; [Born on the same branch, dying on the same branch. Three thousand in the morning and eight hundred in the evening. When someone in the eastern household dies, those in the western household help mourn—yet he is thereby brought back to life.]

To gain an advantage is to lose an advantage. [The case is settled on the evidence. One regrets not having been more careful at the outset. There is something to it.]

“After Huang Chao passed through, he once recovered his sword; only a true master should know the meaning of that hearty laugh.” Xuedou here versifies the monk and the point at which Yantou laughed heartily. No one in the world can get hold of this little something. Tell me, what was he laughing at? Only a true master can know. Within this laugh are expedient means and actuality, illumination and function, killing and enlivening.

“For the thirty mountain-vine blows, grant him a light pardon”: this versifies the monk’s later appearance before Xuefeng. The monk was still coarse and confused, so Xuefeng carried out the order, gave him thirty blows, and drove him out. Tell me, why was it so? Do you wish to understand these words completely?—“To gain an advantage is to lose an advantage.”

[Shengjun]: I recall that Teacher Qi once posted a koan from the Chan tradition about rebuking someone who had been reborn. Could you post it again? Thank you!

[lvm]: Which one? I do not remember.

[Shengjun]: It seems that, after a Chan master passed away, he was reborn as a girl in a certain family, and a year or two later—

---

his Dharma brother went to that family. The baby girl smiled at him. Then that Dharma brother instructed her that she had made a mistake and need not do this; afterward, the baby girl died without illness.

I saw this koan before in Teacher Qi’s commentary, “Sawing Apart,” and the teacher should remember it!

[lvm]: Is it this one?

Eighty-Eight: The Rebirth of a Living Buddha

[Original Text of the Koan]

Chan Master Guizong Xuan, a native of Hanzhou and Dharma heir of Langya Guangzhao, was a close friend of Guo Gongfu. One day, when the prefect of Nankang came to press him over some matter, Xuan had someone hasten a letter to Gongfu and instructed the messenger, “Do not let the county magistrate see it.” Gongfu was then serving as commandant of Nanchang. The letter said: “I still have six years of worldly affinity unfinished. Today, what can I do under such unbearable pressure? I wish to be reborn in your household; I hope you will look after me.” He then passed away.

When Gongfu received the letter, he was filled with astonishment and joy. In the middle of the night, his wife dreamed vaguely that she saw Xuan enter their bedchamber, and she involuntarily cried out, “This is not a place for the monk to come.” Gongfu asked why, and his wife told him what she had seen. Gongfu called for a lamp and showed her Xuan’s letter. She was indeed pregnant, and when the child was born, they named him “Elder Xuan.” By the time he was one year old, his memory and responses were as before.

When he reached three years of age, the monk Baiyun Duan passed by their home. Gongfu summoned the child to meet him, and at the first sight of him the child called, “Dharma nephew.” Duan said, “How many years has it been since we parted, Master?” Xuan counted on his fingers and said, “Four years.” Duan said, “Where did we part?” Xuan said, “At White Lotus Manor.” Duan said, “What proof is there?” Xuan said, “Father and mother will invite the monk for a meal tomorrow.”

Just then a cart passed outside the gate. Duan said, “What is that sound outside the gate?” Xuan imitated the motion of pushing a cart. Duan said, “What happens after it passes?” Xuan said, “A ditch lies across the level ground.” When Gongfu’s child reached six years of age, he passed away without illness.

[Sawing-Apart Commentary]

Looking at the lineage chart below, one can see why Chan Master Guizong Kexuan called Monk Baiyun Duan his Dharma nephew:

Huanglong Huinan (Huanglong branch)

Linji school: Fenyang Shanzhao Shishuang Chuyuan Yangqi Fanghui (Yangqi branch) Baiyun Shouduan

Langya Huijue Guizong Kexuan

Chan Master Guizong Xuan’s passing away resulted from relentless pressure exerted by the local official, the prefect of Nankang. Before his passing, he wrote a letter and secretly sent it to his lay friend Guo Gongfu. In it he said: “I still have six years of worldly affinity unfinished. Today, what can I do under such unbearable pressure? I wish to be reborn in your household; I hope you will look after me.” He also instructed, “Do not let the county magistrate see it.”

At the time, Guo Gongfu was serving as commandant of Nanchang County, which was under the jurisdiction of the prefect of Nankang. He did not want the Nanchang county magistrate to know of this, for fear that the magistrate would seek credit by reporting it to the prefect and thereby create further trouble, which would have been detrimental to Guo Gongfu.

Chan Master Xuan was not only able to arrange where he would go after death; when he returned, he also did not lose his memory. As soon as the one-year-old child had learned to speak, he could recall and answer questions just as before: he remembered all that concerned the late Chan Master Xuan, and his exchanges with Guo Gongfu retained Master Xuan’s style. When he was three, the monk Baiyun Duan came to Guo Gongfu’s home. Upon seeing him, the child called out, “Dharma nephew!”

Chan Master Duan asked, “How many years has it been since we parted?” This was to test whether he remembered his previous life. The child immediately replied, “Four years.” Baiyun Duan continued, “Where did we part?” This was a further test. The child answered, “At White Lotus Manor.”

All his answers were correct, so there could no longer be any doubt that Chan Master Xuan had returned. Baiyun Duan suddenly asked, “What proof is there?” This was a test in Chan style: “Are you using rebirth as a means of proving the Buddhadharma to people?” The child said, “Father and mother will invite the monk for a vegetarian meal tomorrow.”

This meant: “It is not a matter of proving the Buddhadharma. This is simply an ordinary matter, as ordinary as your eating tomorrow.” At that moment, someone outside the door pushed a cart past, making a sound.

Taking this opportunity, Baiyun Duan asked, “What is that sound outside the door?” His implied meaning was: “Your rebirth in this way is not ordinary; it lies beyond the ordinary perceptions of worldly people. Why have you done this?” The child made the gesture of pushing a cart: “I was pushed here”—that is, compelled by the governor of Nankang. Duan said, “And what will happen afterward?”

Chan Master Xuan said, “A ditch across level ground.” This meant: “I shall die at six, like a cart passing over a ditch. Thereafter, people will see only the ditch and not the cart.” At most, people would know that the child of Magistrate Guo died at six—the trace being like a ditch. They would not thereby associate him with Chan Master Xuan and create a commotion; the ground would remain level.

Just as the child reached six years of age, he died without illness. Alas! Had there been a system of recognizing the reincarnations of living Buddhas in China at that time, the outcome might not have been this way.

8.9 Another Rebirth

Original Text of the Koan

The monk Haiyin Xin, successor to Langya and a native of Guifu, resided at Dinghui Temple in Suzhou. He was over eighty years old. Zhu, a military commissioner, regularly made offerings to him, and the master often visited Zhu’s home. One day Zhu asked, “After you are gone, Master, could you come to be born in this disciple’s household?” The master smiled slightly and agreed. Upon returning to the temple, he fell ill and, after several days, passed away. On the day of his passing, a daughter was born into Zhu’s family.

At the time, Chan Master Yuanzhao Ben was residing at Ruiguang. Hearing of this, he went to visit. When the child was just a month old, she was brought out in someone’s arms. At the sight of him, she smiled. Yuanzhao called, “Haiyin, you have made a mistake!” The girl cried several times and passed away.

Sawing Apart a Scale Weight

This is another example of rebirth according to one’s own wish. That she recognized an old acquaintance when she was only one month old is sufficient proof that she had not forgotten her previous life. Yet Chan Master Yuanzhao Ben criticized Haiyin for having made a mistake. This reflects the attitude toward rebirth in the Buddhist world of China at that time. Chinese Buddhism did not approve of supernatural marvels. The example of Chan Master Huangbo below offers a glimpse of this:

Chan Master Huangbo was traveling on Mount Tiantai when he encountered a monk. They talked and laughed as though they were old acquaintances. Looking closely at him, Huangbo saw that his gaze was piercing, and so they traveled together. They came to a stream swollen by floodwaters. Huangbo cast aside his bamboo hat, planted his staff, and stopped. The monk urged the master to cross with him. Huangbo said, “If you wish to cross, cross by yourself.” The monk then lifted his robes and stepped upon the waves as though walking on level ground. Looking back, he called, “Come across! Come across!” Huangbo said, “Bah! You fellow concerned only with your own liberation! Had I known earlier, I would have chopped off your shins!” The monk sighed, “You are truly a vessel of the Mahāyāna Dharma, beyond my reach.” Having said this, he disappeared.

Another example: One day, an extraordinary person wearing a tall cap and pleated trousers came to the practice center of Chan Master Yuan Gui of Mount Song. He had a great many attendants and walked lightly and leisurely as he announced his visit to the master. Seeing his form and appearance, extraordinarily imposing, the master said to him, “Welcome, worthy one! What brings you here?”

He said, “Master, do you recognize me?”

The master said, “I regard Buddhas and sentient beings as equal. When I look upon them, how could I make distinctions?”

He said, “I am the deity of this mountain. I can bring birth and death upon people. How can you possibly regard me as equal?”

The master said, “Originally, I do not arise; how then can you cause me to die? I regard the body and empty space as equal, and I regard myself and you as equal. Can you destroy empty space and yourself? If you could destroy empty space and yourself, then I would indeed be neither born nor dying. Yet you cannot even do that, so how could you bring birth and death upon me?”

The deity bowed his head to the ground and said, “Among other deities, I too am intelligent and upright. How could I have known that the master possessed such vast wisdom and eloquence? I pray that you will confer the proper precepts upon me, enabling me to cross beyond the world.”

The master said, “Since you have requested the precepts, you are already within the precepts. Why is this so? Outside the precepts there are no precepts; what precepts, then, are there?”

The deity said, “I have heard this principle, but it remains obscure to me. I only ask that the master confer precepts upon me and accept me as a disciple.”

The master then set out a seat, held the incense burner, and straightened the table. He said, “I shall confer the five precepts upon you. If you can uphold each one, answer ‘I can’; if you cannot, answer ‘No.’”

The deity said, “I respectfully receive your instruction.”

The master said, “Can you refrain from sexual misconduct?” The deity replied, “I too take a wife.”

The master said, “I do not mean that. I mean not casting nets of desire.”

The deity said, “I can.”

The master said, “Can you refrain from stealing?”

The deity replied, “What could I lack? How could there be anything for me to steal?”

The master said, “I do not mean that. I mean not bestowing blessings on those who make offerings and bringing misfortune upon those who do not.”

The deity said, “I can.”

The master said, “Can you refrain from killing?”

The deity replied, “I truly hold authority over it. How could I say that I do not kill?”

The master said, “I do not mean that. I mean not acting through indiscriminate error, doubt, or confusion.”

The deity said, “I can.”

The master said, “Can you refrain from false speech?”

The deity replied, “I am upright and honest. How could I speak falsely?”

The master said, “I do not mean that. I mean not acting before or after in a way that accords with the will of Heaven.”

The deity said, “I can.”

The master said, “Can you avoid being ruined by alcohol?”

The deity said, “I can.”

The master said, “These are what are called the Buddha’s precepts.”

He further said, “Uphold them deliberately, yet without mentally clinging to them; act for beings deliberately, yet without conceiving of a self. If you can do so, then before heaven and earth arose, you are not primordial essence; after heaven and earth perish, you are not old. Though you transform throughout the day, you are not moved; though you are utterly still and silent, you are not at rest. Trust this: though you marry, there is no wife; though you receive offerings, there is no taking; though you hold authority, there is no power; though you act, there is no deliberate doing; though you are drunk, there is no confusion.

If you can be without mind toward all things, then casting nets of desire is not sexual misconduct; bestowing blessings on those who make offerings and misfortune on those who do good is not stealing; indiscriminate error, doubt, and confusion are not killing; acting before or after contrary to Heaven is not false speech; and muddle, delirium, and inversion are not drunkenness. This is called no-mind. With no-mind there are no precepts; with no precepts there is no-mind. There is no Buddha and no sentient being, no you and no I. Who, then, is there to observe precepts?”

The deity said, “My spiritual powers are second only to those of a Buddha.”

The master said, “Your spiritual powers comprise ten statements: five things you can do and five you cannot. A Buddha’s comprise ten statements: seven things a Buddha can do and three a Buddha cannot.”

Alarmed, the deity left his seat and knelt to ask, “May I hear them?”

The master said, “Can you defy the Lord on High, make the eastward-moving heavens go westward, and alter the seven luminaries?”

The deity replied, “I cannot.”

The master said, “Can you seize the earth deities, melt the Five Peaks, and join them to form the Four Seas?”

The deity replied, “I cannot.”

The master said, “These are called the five things you cannot do. A Buddha can empty all appearances and perfect the wisdom of all phenomena, yet cannot immediately eliminate fixed karma. A Buddha can know the natures of all beings and exhaust the events of countless eons, yet cannot guide those without affinity. A Buddha can liberate immeasurable sentient beings, yet cannot exhaust the realm of sentient beings. These are the three things a Buddha cannot do. Fixed karma, too, does not remain firm forever; lack of affinity is only temporary; and the realm of sentient beings has never increased or decreased. Throughout all time, not one person can master this Dharma. Where there is Dharma but no master, this is called no Dharma. Where there

is no Dharma and no master, this is called no-mind. As I understand it, the Buddha too has no spiritual powers; he merely penetrates all dharmas through no-mind."

The deity said, "I am truly shallow and ignorant; I have never heard the teaching of emptiness. I shall uphold the precepts the master has conferred. Now I wish to repay your compassionate kindness by offering what little power I possess."

The master said, "I see that the body has no substance, and I see that all dharmas are impermanent. What desire could I possibly have?"

The deity said, "Master, you must command me to do something in the world, that I may display my small spiritual powers and let five kinds of people—those who have aroused the resolve, those newly arousing it, those who have not aroused it, those with no faith, and those who will certainly have faith—see traces of my divine power and know that there are Buddhas and deities, things that can be done and cannot be done, what is natural and what is not natural."

The master said, "Non-contrivance is right. Non-contrivance is right."

The deity said, "The Buddha too causes deities to protect the Dharma. Would the master rather betray the Buddha? Please instruct me as you wish."

Unable to refuse, the master said, "The ridge at Dongyan Temple is a wilderness without trees. The northern hill has trees, but its back does not serve as a protective screen. Can you move the trees from the north to the eastern ridge?"

The deity said, "I have received your command. But there will surely be clamor and disturbance in the darkness of night; I hope the master will not be alarmed." He then bowed and took his leave.

The master saw him off and watched him go. He saw an extended ceremonial procession like that of a king: mountain mists and rosy clouds intermingled in tangled profusion; banners, streamers, and jade pendants vanished into the air.

That evening, violent winds indeed arose, thunder roared, clouds raced, lightning flashed, buildings shook, and roosting birds cried out noisily. The master said to the assembly, "Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid! The deity and I have reached an understanding."

At dawn, when the weather had cleared, all the pines and cypresses from the northern ridge had been moved to the eastern ridge, standing in dense rows. The master told his disciples, "After I die, do not let outsiders know of this. If it becomes material for gossip, people will regard me as a demon."

Although this was such a supernatural event, Chan Master Yuan Gui of Mount Song instructed his disciples to keep it secret. Otherwise, people would regard the Chan master as an evil spirit. From this, one can glimpse how people in China at that time viewed supernatural marvels.

In fact, there were also eminent monks in China who underwent rainbow-body transformation. But because miraculous phenomena were not emphasized, such matters were not promoted, and most passed into obscurity. Even where there are records, they are usually recorded incidentally in connection with other events. For example, Patriarch Bodhidharma was not only able to transform completely within his coffin, but could also reappear in bodily form, carrying a single sandal in his hand and conversing with Song Yun.

Another example: When Chan Master Puhua of Zhenzhou was about to pass away, he entered the marketplace and said to the people, "Give me a straight robe." Some offered him a cloth-padded jacket, others a cloth fur coat, but he accepted neither and left, shaking his handbell. Linji had someone bring him a coffin. The master laughed and said, "That rascal Linji is so talkative!" Then he accepted it. He bade farewell to the assembly, saying that Puhua would die at the east gate the next day.

The townspeople accompanied him out of the city. The master cried sharply, "Today is not an auspicious day for burial according to geomancy." Then he said, "Tomorrow I shall pass away at the south gate." The people again followed him. He then said, "It will be auspicious only if I leave by the west gate tomorrow." Fewer and fewer people came out. When he returned without leaving, the people became somewhat lax. On the fourth day, he himself carried the coffin out beyond the north gate, shook his handbell, entered the coffin, and passed away. The townspeople hurried out of the city, opened the coffin, and looked inside. He had vanished; they heard only the sound of his handbell in the air, gradually fading into the distance.

lvm : This only shows that practitioners in China did not emphasize miraculous phenomena; it does not mean they were denouncing Tibetans.

Practitioners in Tibet also have their own distinctive characteristics. The Buddhadharma itself "accords with the minds of sentient beings and responds according to their capacity for understanding." Even Patriarch Bodhidharma, when transmitting the Dharma in Tibet, did not teach "direct pointing to the mind and seeing one's nature to attain Buddhahood." He also taught them to begin with preliminary and additional practices, in accordance with their faculties. When Patriarch Bodhidharma taught

“direct pointing to the mind and seeing one’s nature to attain Buddhahood” in China, it was because he saw that China possessed “the spirit of the Mahāyāna.”

The Dharma has no higher or lower; what is most suited to the recipient is supreme. Therefore, I do not agree with your insulting Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism. If certain practitioners of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism have aspects that are not in accord with the Dharma, are all practitioners in China in accord with the Dharma? One cannot generalize from a part to the whole. The misconduct of certain people does not detract from the excellence of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism, just as wrongdoing by someone in a family should not implicate the entire family.

Lion : Heh heh. Big Bug’s perspective is certainly lofty, but people who like wetting the bed never seem able to take it in.

Shengjun : You have misunderstood me.

You have misunderstood me. I do not oppose Tibetans studying Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism. I oppose only actions that confuse and disrupt the traditions of Chinese Buddhism. I oppose all words and deeds that undermine the essential tenets and monastic regulations of Buddhism in China. Still more, I oppose those who, having been influenced by heterodox teachings such as Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism, seek to use expedient methods such as form-based esoteric practice to subvert the single-aspect, formless import of our heart esotericism.

I raise this issue because some people are currently attempting to establish some kind of Zhugu Living Buddha system within the Chan school. Such people have already begun their despicable activities. Their principal leader is the “Chan Di Yi” with whom you are familiar.

lvm : Among Chinese people, there are also some suited to practicing according to the Tibetan sequence of practice, though the proportion is not large.

It cannot be generalized.

Lion : The proportion is no longer small, and the momentum is quite strong.

The key point is that most of these people have rather heavy discriminating minds, and often turn around and disparage Chinese Buddhism.

Azheng : Tibetan Buddhism certainly does good advertising!

There are “living Buddhas” everywhere and quite a few “Dharma Kings.” With stories of work to liberate beings through reincarnation packaged around them, together with the enormous allure of “attaining Buddhahood in this very life” and “attaining Buddhahood in this very body,” how could people not be moved? Perhaps this is simply the convergence of time and conditions. So long as beings can be liberated and people need it, there is no need to make distinctions between Chinese and Tibetan traditions.

May my supreme vows and conduct in this Sahā world bloom into the sacred lotus flowers of the Pure Land; may I shoulder the burden of sentient beings sunk in suffering, and together go to the land of the Buddha of Infinite Light.

Lion : Half of it is because the conditions have ripened, and half because the greater the commotion, the greater the attraction.

In the final analysis, regardless of whether it is Chinese or Tibetan, a tradition that can liberate beings is a good tradition.

Shengjun : You are indeed not engaging in slander; you are merely using distorted views from Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism to create confusion.

The most fundamental error in everything begins with wrong view!

Therefore, you are also one of them. In fact, the harm you cause is even greater than theirs!

What you are dealing with concerns the very foundation!

Lion : Ha ha! Another fool has wet the bed again and again and again.

Shengjun : That is true as well—for example, classmates such as Lion.

Lion : See, see? I really did not wrong you. You truly are a fool who wets the bed.

Shengjun : The eighth one, index 2000—ha ha.

Guyun : How has old Yantou's sword come into the teacher's hands?

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : (This fellow seems to have some skill; let us wait and test him.)

lvm : It is in Guyun 's eyes.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : (Show us a move, then. Let us see what skills you have.)

Just do not let your eyes be dazzled!

Guyun : The master displays the great sword, yet splashes a basin of filthy water all over old Guyun.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : (It is just this move. Although my eyes are somewhat dazzled, I can still recognize your style.)

Alas! I cannot keep it up any longer.

lvm : Weren't both the water and the basin brought by you?

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : (Since your eyes are already dazzled, I suppose you do not know who brought this basin either. Even if I said it was you, there would be nothing you could do about it.)

Guyun : Ha ha, the teacher's array of displays is inexhaustible.

test : It is Guyun who has brought this suffering upon himself.

Guyun : Younger brother has taken a share for himself; old Guyun is delighted. We are both wanderers at the ends of the earth—such affinity!

test : ^o^

william : Ha ha, I have finally understood a little of the scene you have all been acting out!

Beye : Brother Gu, if you have questions, please ask at Huanzhai.

Minghong : May I ask the teacher and senior brothers to instruct me: what is the "point of turning around," and how does one "turn around"?

"The monk said, 'I have received it.' (Defeated! He has not recognized the point of turning around. Mao Guanghan are as numerous as hemp and millet.)"

This junior student joins palms!

lvm : "Watch the sword!" There—he has turned around.

Lian Nong : The sword has not even been swung behind the head—what turning around is that?

Even the teacher's mouth is all wet!

lvm : lvm then stopped.

Minghong : The Dharma the teacher teaches is simple—suited to a dull person like me.

Lotus Farmer : Is it really that simple?~~~

Minghong, do not let that old slickster fool you!

Lotus Farmer (in reply to Minghong : “Could the teacher and Dharma brothers please explain what the ‘place of turning’ is, and how one ‘turns’?”):

“Minghong!—”

Yantou and Xuefeng are patting you on the shoulder from behind~~~

Lion : Utter nonsense! How could Xuefeng be so polite? He would already have set a venomous snake on him!

Lotus Farmer : The lion is biting people!~~~~ This little farmer’s life is over.

pig (in reply to Minghong : “Could the teacher and Dharma brothers please explain what the ‘place of turning’ is, and how one ‘turns’?”): Nature is not appearance, and appearance is not nature: this is the “place of turning.” Nature is appearance, and appearance is nature: this is “turning.” This is spoken for those of lesser capacity.

Lion : It is not spoken for those of lesser capacity; it is rotten tongue-chewing for people with no roots!

pig : Lion demonstrates leaving home—why should he not have a hall full of descendants?

Xinming : Whose head falls to the ground?

An old post from this forum:

A Dharma brother asked: “What when your head is before a white blade?”

[lvm]: "Hū!"

[Xinming]: Whose head falls to the ground?

[lvm]: It falls!

XO : Even being utterly bare is superfluous.

Nanhuasheng : Yantou never even raised a sword!

Why take it back?

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Stick out your head.

Chan Wanderer Beyond the Heavens : Hehe, have the lay practitioner’s eyes opened yet?! Yet there is neither another’s head nor one’s own head to be seen.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Just right—I picked up a fallen head.

Chan Wanderer Beyond the Heavens : What are you picking it up for?

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Because he is Chan Wanderer Beyond the Heavens.

Chan Wanderer Beyond the Heavens : So you even “pick up” a false name—no wonder all day long—

“your smiling mouth is always open.”

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : They are all inside; naturally, none is missing.

Ha ha! (Do not mistake the person.)

Lianqing : Ha ha, who is the loser?

When you meet a swordsman, you must present a sword; if one is not a poet, do not recite poetry. Hahahaha.

Chan Wanderer Beyond the Heavens : Indeed, indeed! Here comes another one.

[67] The Mahāsattva Strikes the Desk to Conclude the Sūtra

[Case Sixty-Seven] The Mahāsattva Strikes the Desk and Concludes the Sūtra

[Case Sixty-Seven] Raised:

Emperor Wu of Liang invited Mahāsattva Fu to lecture on the Diamond Sūtra. [The brothers Bodhidharma have come! There is nothing wrong with selling fish in a tavern, but it cannot be tolerated beneath the gate of a patch-robed monk. This old fellow, so advanced in years, behaves in such a manner!]

The Mahāsattva then struck the desk once from his seat and immediately stepped down. [It was enough to scatter sparks of fire. It resembles it, yet it is not it. There is no need to entangle matters further.]

Emperor Wu was astonished. [Time and again he was deceived by others. They even made it impossible for him to feel his way through.]

Master Zhigong asked, “Does Your Majesty understand?” [Side with principle, not sentiment; keep your arm from reaching outward. He too deserves thirty blows of the staff.]

The Emperor said, “I do not understand.” [What a pity!]

Master Zhigong said, “The Mahāsattva has finished lecturing on the sūtra.” [He should also have been expelled from the country. Had they expelled both him and Zhigong from the country at that time, that would have shown true mastery. These two fellows are no different, dwelling in the same pit.]

Emperor Wu, the Gaozu of Liang, was of the Xiao clan; his personal name was Yan and his style name Shuda. Having established meritorious achievements, he eventually received the abdication of Qi. After ascending the throne, he wrote separate commentaries on the Five Classics and their lectures, and was deeply devoted to Huang-Lao teachings. Yet he was exceedingly filial by nature. One day, wishing to obtain a way of transcending the world in order to repay his parents’ toil, he abandoned Daoism and served the Buddha. He received the bodhisattva precepts from Dharma Master Louyue, donned the Buddha’s kāṣāya, and personally lectured on the Radiance Prajñā Sūtra in repayment of his parents.

At that time, Mahāsattva Zhigong had been imprisoned for displaying extraordinary powers and misleading the populace. Zhigong then manifested bodies and traveled about, teaching in towns and cities. One day the Emperor learned of this, was moved to awakening, and held him in the highest esteem. Zhigong repeatedly displayed practices of concealment, protection, and manifestation that were beyond measure.

At that time there was a Mahāsattva in Wuzhou who lived on Mount Yunhuang. He planted two trees with his own hands and called them the Twin Groves. He called himself the future Mahāsattva Good Wisdom. One day he wrote a letter and instructed his disciple to submit a memorial to the Emperor. Because he did not observe the rites proper to ruler and subject, the court refused to receive it.

Mahāsattva Fu was about to enter the city of Jinling to sell fish when Emperor Wu happened to invite Zhigong to lecture on the Diamond Sūtra. Zhigong said, “This poor monk cannot lecture on it. In the marketplace there is a Mahāsattva Fu who can lecture on this sūtra.” The Emperor issued an edict summoning him into the palace. Once Mahāsattva Fu had arrived, he struck the desk once from the lecture seat and immediately stepped down.

At that moment they should have turned him about and sent him on his way, thus avoiding such a mess. But Zhigong said, “Does Your Majesty understand?” The Emperor said, “I do not understand.” Zhigong said, “The Mahāsattva has finished lecturing on the sūtra.” One person made the head, and the other made the tail. When Zhigong spoke this way, had he even dreamed of Mahāsattva Fu? They were both playing with spirits! What is extraordinary here is that, though it was a dead snake, one who knows how to handle it can make it live.

If this was lecturing on a sūtra, why did he not divide it broadly into two? An ordinary lecturer might say, “The essence of the vajra is solid and firm; nothing whatever can destroy it. Because it has function and use, it can shatter all things.” Such exposition is what is called lecturing on a sūtra. Yet although this is so, you all do not realize that Mahāsattva Fu merely raised the pivotal key of the higher vehicle, slightly revealed its sharp edge, and let people know where to land. He gave it to you directly, standing like a wall ten thousand fathoms high.

Just when it was right, Zhigong, unable to distinguish good from bad, instead said, “The Mahāsattva has finished lecturing on the sūtra.” This is precisely having good intentions but receiving no good return. It is like a cup of fine wine that Zhigong diluted with water, or a pot of soup that Zhigong contaminated with a single mouse dropping. Tell me: if it was not lecturing on a sūtra, what ultimately should it be called?

The verse says:

He did not entrust this body to the Twin Groves, [Simply because he could not hold himself back. How could an awl be hidden in a bag?]

But instead stirred up dust in the land of Liang. [If one does not enter the weeds, how can one see the real thing? Even where there is no romance, there is romance.]

Had he not found old Zhigong at that time, [A thief needs no capital. There was a leprous fellow to keep him company.]

He too would have been a restless man driven from the country. [This is just the charge to receive. Then strike him.]

"He did not entrust this body to the Twin Groves, but instead stirred up dust in the land of Liang." Mahāsattva Fu encountered the old fellow with no front teeth in just the same way. When Bodhidharma first arrived in Jinling, he met Emperor Wu. The Emperor asked, "What is the highest meaning of the noble truth?" Bodhidharma said, "Vast emptiness—nothing noble." The Emperor asked, "Who is this before me?" Bodhidharma said, "I do not know." The Emperor did not accord with this. Bodhidharma therefore crossed the river and went to Wei.

Emperor Wu raised the matter and asked Zhigong. Zhigong said, "Does Your Majesty still recognize this man?" The Emperor said, "I do not recognize him." Zhigong said, "This is Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara, transmitting the Buddha's mind seal." The Emperor repented and sent envoys to fetch him. Zhigong said, "Do not say that Your Majesty may send envoys to fetch him; even if the whole country went, he would not return." Therefore Xuedou said, "Had he not found old Zhigong at that time, he too would have been a restless man driven from the country." If Zhigong had not spoken up for Mahāsattva Fu at that time, he too would have had to be driven from the country.

Since Zhigong had been so talkative, Emperor Wu was thoroughly deceived by him. Xuedou's main point is that there was no need for him to come to Liang and lecture on a sūtra by striking the desk. Thus he says: why not entrust this body to the Twin Groves, eat porridge and rice, and pass one's days according to one's lot? Instead, he came to Liang, made such gestures, struck the desk once, and stepped down. This was where he stirred up dust.

Since one seeks what is extraordinary, one gazes into the clouds: above, no Buddha is seen; below, no sentient being is seen. But when it comes to matters on the side of transcending the world, one cannot avoid getting one's head and face covered in ashes and dirt—making what is not into what is, making what is into what is not, making right into wrong, and coarse into fine; selling fish in taverns, taking things up sideways and using them upside down, so as to let everyone understand this matter. If one did not grant such freedom, then even until Maitreya descends, there would not be a single person, not even half a person. Mahāsattva Fu was already dragging through mud and water; fortunately, he had someone who understood him. Had he not found old Zhigong, he would almost have been driven out of the country. Tell me, where is he now?

[A Cloud mg]: The Mahāsattva's striking of the desk was already superfluous; unmoving in suchness, he expounded the Vajra.

[A Cloud mg]: The scene of begging with a bowl is lovely; do not let the old monk deceive you time and again.

[Lianqing]: He does not begrudge his saliva as he sits amid the weeds; every raised hand and moving foot is Vajra.

Today you invite me onto the stage to give a talk, and I say, "One who speaks of Chan has nothing to say," then step down! But your round-trip airfare costs more than forty thousand dollars, and I come here, clap the desk once, and step down. That is expensive—very expensive!!!!!!

Dharma Master Huilü, On Speaking of Chan—ha ha.

[A Cloud mg]: Chan has neither high nor low, neither coming nor going. What business is it of Chan whether one speaks or comes to speak?

[Lianqing]: ^0^

To utter the word "Chan" wrongs the Buddhas of three ages; not to utter the word "Chan" wrongs the Buddhas of three ages. ^0^

[A Cloud mg]: The great elephant is formless: seeing is not seeing. Great sound is scarcely heard: hearing is not hearing.

[Lion]: This fellow has buried himself N times already. Why does he keep on burying himself without end?

[A Cloud mg]: I am buried by words and thoughts—what can be done?

[Lion]: Don't know!

[pig]: Lion's backside faces the sky—he is close to the Way!! Ha...

[Discovery!] (In response to [A Cloud mg]: “The scene of begging with a bowl is lovely; do not let the old monk deceive you time and again.”): In the past I said that all Buddhas were far away; now I know that greed and anger are nirvāṇa. Can you believe it?

[No Mind]: Vast and boundless—one meets calamity and misfortune.

[Discovery!]: How can one avoid bringing calamity and misfortune upon oneself?

If one takes lustful acts as Buddha-activity, the three poisons will no longer intrude. If one seeks escape, one sinks still further; discriminating between emerging and sinking, one sinks again.

May I ask, elder brother, how should these words be understood?

[Truth]: Quoted from <<A Brief Explanation of Mahāmudrā>>

Regarding “the nonobstruction among phenomena,” Chan Master Zhenjing Kewen wrote a verse: “The nonobstruction among phenomena: freely at ease and as one wishes; holding a pig’s head in one’s hand, reciting the pure precepts with one’s mouth; driven out of a brothel, with wine debts still unpaid; at a crossroads, opening one’s cloth bag.”

He carries a pig’s head in his hand, gnawing on its meat while reciting the precepts: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct…. “I am vegetarian; I have just come out of a brothel”—ha ha ha! “Driven out” means being thrown out. A brothel is a house of prostitution. He spent all his money in the brothel and was driven out by the madam.

He owes money for wine, and the tavern has come to collect. He is too poor to repay it. He is so disheveled, so destitute, and yet carefree and untroubled. Some may ask: holding a pig’s head and reciting the pure precepts—if he does not eat vegetarian food, has he not broken the precepts? No! He has never eaten meat; he is vegetarian.

Why? His mind is empty; he does not cling to appearances. He has never felt that meat tastes good and therefore eaten more of it, or that vegetables taste bad and therefore eaten less of them. Having no mind of attachment or aversion, acceptance or rejection—this is eating vegetarian food. Conversely, some people are vegetarian but remain attached to flavors: “This dish tastes good and is delicious; that dish tastes bad and is unpleasant!” They are extremely finicky, which is equivalent to not being vegetarian. If our minds are truly empty and pure, then eating is the same as not eating; even holding a pig’s head does no harm.

That said, if you have not realized this stage and simply indulge yourself in this way, then you will “enter hell as swiftly as an arrow strikes!” If your mind is not truly empty and pure, karma will cling to you and bind you, refusing to let you pass.

Here is a Chan koan of this kind. In the past, there was a Chan master who loved eating beef. He said, “Eating is not eating!” Was his mind empty and pure? No. He merely said it with his mouth; his mind could not become empty, so karmic obstacles clung to him and demanded that he repay his debts. When this Chan master drew his last breath, he entered a cow’s womb and became a cow to repay his debt.

One day, a farmer led the cow out and encountered Chan Master Baozhi. Baozhi took one look and said, “Oh! Isn’t this so-and-so Chan Master? Didn’t you say, ‘Eating is not eating’? You should not have become a cow. How did you end up becoming a cow to repay your debts?” Tears streamed down the cow’s face. Bang! Bang! Bang! It rammed itself to death.

Therefore, if one has not reached the stage of true emptiness and purity, yet talks big, one will fall into hell. We are determined to realize the great Way. We should speak only in accordance with the level we have realized and must not act recklessly. To realize the state in which phenomena are nonobstructed, one must first establish a thoroughly correct view and clearly see the true mind; then one must further eliminate deluded habits and enter non-contrivance.

Cultivating while attached to appearances, or cultivating through contrivance, can never realize the state in which phenomena are nonobstructed.

Nowadays, some people whose minds are not empty and pure vainly seek spiritual powers. This is disastrous! Not only will they fail to become Buddhas; they are liable instead to become demons. If you want spiritual powers, demons will enter your mind and display spiritual powers, transforming themselves into the appearance of a Buddha for you to see. You take it for a real Buddha and happily cling to it; then the demon takes up residence in your mind. The demon king will further expand his influence by having you teach the Dharma and lead in a group of demon offspring and descendants. This all results from attachment to appearances. Therefore, we must not attach to appearances or cultivate through contrivance.

“Therefore, taking the confirmation of realization of the view as foremost.” This is the most important statement. Seeing the principle means clearly seeing one’s intrinsic nature. The Mahāmudrā of the Ganges places seeing the principle in the foremost position, and the Caodong school’s “Five Ranks of Lord and Vassal” likewise highlights this point.

[Discovery!]: Thank you, Dharma brother! I think I understand it now. In the end, cultivation still has to…

Holding a pig's head in the hand, the mouth recites the pure precepts; leaving a brothel, one has yet to repay one's wine debt,

Then I should be right in taking "To make lustful indulgence a Buddha activity, with the three poisons no longer intruding crosswise; if one seeks escape, one instead sinks; discriminating escape and sinking, one sinks again" as my goal.

[Truth]: Isn't "taking it as a goal" itself attachment to appearances?

To realize the state in which phenomena are nonobstructed, one must first establish a thoroughly correct view and clearly see the true mind; then one must further eliminate deluded habits and enter non-contrivance. Cultivating while attached to appearances, or cultivating through contrivance, can never realize the state in which phenomena are nonobstructed.

[Discovery!]: May I ask, Dharma brother: is it attachment to appearances to say that greed and anger are nirvāṇa? Or is it attachment to appearances to say that greed and anger can only be greed and anger?

[Truth]: Sorry, I do not quite understand what you mean.

[Discovery!]: Please forgive me; let me explain in detail:

Would you call a person who treats lustful indulgence as a Buddha activity, and whom the three poisons no longer invade crosswise, attached to appearances?

Or would you consider attached to appearances a person who does not dare to treat lustful indulgence as a Buddha activity, who regards lustful desire as venomous snakes and ferocious beasts, and only wishes to flee from it?

[Truth]: Entering non-contrivance is for those at the eighth bhūmi and above.

That said, if you have not realized this stage and simply indulge yourself in this way, then you will "enter hell as swiftly as an arrow strikes!" If your mind is not truly empty and pure, karma will cling to you and bind you, refusing to let you pass.

If one has not reached the stage of true emptiness and purity, yet talks big, one will fall into hell. We are determined to realize the great Way. We should speak only in accordance with the level we have realized and must not act recklessly!

[Discovery!]: I was not talking big. For example, can a Buddhist practitioner not take the Buddha as a goal?

But if one has not yet realized the Buddha's fruition, do you think one cannot take the Buddha's words and conduct as a model? Would that be false speech?

Amitābha Buddha! Dharma brother, why not at this moment consider whether you yourself are attached to appearances?

[Truth]: The Buddha does not entertain deluded thoughts. Of course it is all right for you, Dharma brother, to take this as your goal.

[Discovery!]: Good—do not entertain deluded thoughts. But is wishing to become a Buddha a deluded thought?

The Buddha does not entertain deluded thoughts. Where did you learn this deluded thought?

[Truth]: Of course it too is a deluded thought. Originally, there is no Buddha to become.

Sentient beings are originally Buddhas; it is only a matter of returning home.

[Discovery!]: Got you—calling thief while being the thief yourself.

According to your theory, can an ordinary person say that there is no Buddha to become? Do not forget what you said: if you have not realized this stage and simply indulge yourself in this way, then you will "enter hell as swiftly as an arrow strikes!"

[Truth]: Did you not see the words, "It is only a matter of returning home"?

Looking for a beating!

[A Cloud mg] (in response to [Discovery!]: “In the past, I said that all Buddhas were far away; now I know that greed and anger are nirvāṇa. Can you believe this?”): Whether it is greed and anger or nirvāṇa, remaining unmoved in suchness is vajra.

[gszy]: [Fu Dashi]:

[Fu Dashi (Record of the Lamp Transmission for Lay Practitioners)]

Fu Dashi (an emanation of Maitreya). Fu Dashi, whose personal name was Xi, was a native of Yiwu. On the eighth day of the fifth month in the dingchou year, he manifested birth into the household of Fu Xuanci in Shuanglin Township. At sixteen, he married a woman of the Liu family, named Miaoguang, and they had two sons, Fujian and Fucheng.

There was once an Indian monk, the ascetic Song, who said: “You and I made vows before Vipaśyin Buddha. Now your robe and bowl are in Tuṣita Palace; when will you return for them?” He then told him to look at his reflection in the water. Seeing a halo and a precious canopy, the Great Master smiled and said to him, “The place of bellows and forge contains much dull iron; the doors of a good physician are crowded with the sick. Liberating sentient beings is urgent—why think of that bliss?” Song pointed to the summit of Mount Song and said, “You may dwell here.”

The Great Master personally tilled the land and lived there. Once he saw Śākyamuni, Jinsu, and Dīpaṃkara, the three Tathāgatas, emitting light that suffused his body. The Great Master then said, “I have attained the Śūraṅgama samādhi.” He thereupon relinquished his fields and house and, beside two paulownia trees, founded a temple named “Shuanglin.” By day he labored; by night he practiced the Way.

He again sensed the seven Buddhas accompanying him: Śākyamuni led in front, Vimalakīrti followed behind, and only the World-Honored One repeatedly looked back and spoke with him, saying that he would be my successor. Yellow clouds circled the mountain summit like a canopy, and it was therefore called “Mount Huangyun.” In the first month of the sixth year of Datong under Emperor Wu of Liang, the Great Master sent his disciple Chuanwang to deliver a letter to Emperor Wu. He Chang, Director of Grand Music, reported it, and the emperor promptly sent an edict inviting him to court.

When he arrived, the Great Being wore a Daoist star-crown and Confucian shoes, and was draped in a Dharma robe. The emperor asked, “Are you a Buddhist?” The Great Being silently pointed to his crown. “Are you a Daoist?” He again silently pointed to his shoes. “Are you a Confucian?” He again pointed to his kāṣāya. The emperor asked, “Whom have you always taken as your teacher?” He replied, “I have come from nowhere and go nowhere; so too, I have had no teacher.”

One day, Emperor Wu was expounding the Diamond Sūtra in the Hall of Shouguang. The Holy Master said, “Is the Great Being capable of this?” The emperor immediately invited the Great Being. As soon as he ascended the seat, he struck the table once with a ruler and then stepped down. The emperor was astonished. The Holy Master said, “Does Your Majesty understand?” The emperor replied, “I do not.” The Holy Master said, “The Great Being has finished expounding the sūtra.”

In the jichou year, the first year of the Dajian era of the Chen dynasty, Dharma Master Huihe passed away without illness, and the ascetic Song also entered extinction at Lingyan Temple on Mount Ke. Knowing this from afar, the Great Being said, “Elder Song awaits me in Tuṣita; I certainly cannot remain long.” At that time, the flowers and trees all around were in full bloom and bearing fruit, yet suddenly withered.

On the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month, he instructed the assembly: “This body is most loathsome, a gathering place of every suffering. You must carefully guard the three karmas and diligently cultivate the six perfections. Should you fall into hell, escape will be difficult indeed. You must always repent.” He also said, “After I depart, do not move my bed. In seven days, the venerable Fa Meng will come, carrying an image and a bell, to safeguard this place.”

The disciples asked, “What is to become of your body after extinction?” He replied, “Burn it on the mountaintop.” They further asked, “What if this cannot be done?” He replied, “Take great care not to place it in a coffin. Instead, pile up bricks to make an altar, place the body upon it, surround it with screens, cover it with crimson gauze, erect a stūpa above it, and secure it with an image of Maitreya.”

They further asked, “When all Buddhas enter extinction, they speak of their merits. May we hear of the origins of your own manifestation?” He replied, “I came from the fourth heaven in order to liberate you all. I am next to succeed Śākyamuni; Fu Pumin Mañjuśrī, Huiji Avalokiteśvara, and Hechang Ānanda have all come to assist and support this. The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra says: ‘There are bodhisattvas who come from Tuṣita Heaven, whose faculties are keen and swift, and who accord with prajñā.’”

“I am one of them.” When he had finished speaking, he sat cross-legged and passed away, at the age of seventy-two. Seven days later, just as foretold, the venerable Fa Meng came carrying a woven image of Maitreya and a nine-nippled bell. He left them to safeguard the shrine, then vanished in an instant. The Great Being’s Inscription on the Mind-King says: “Contemplate the

emptiness of the Mind-King: its profundity and wonder are difficult to fathom. Formless and without characteristics, it possesses great spiritual power. It can extinguish a thousand calamities and bring to completion myriad virtues."

"Though its essential nature is empty, it can establish Dharma principles. When contemplated, it has no form; when called, it has a sound. It serves as the great general of the Dharma, transmitting mind, precepts, and scriptures. Like the taste of salt in water, like blue pigment in color—one may decisively know it is present, though its form is not seen. The Mind-King is likewise: it dwells within the body. It enters and leaves through the facial gates, responding to things according to circumstances. Unhindered and at ease, whatever it does is accomplished. Realize the fundamental conscious mind; recognizing this mind, one sees the Buddha. This Buddha is this mind; this mind is this Buddha."

"In every thought is the Buddha-mind; the Buddha-mind is mindful of Buddha. If you wish to attain quickly, discipline your mind through the precepts. Purify the precepts and purify the mind; the mind itself is Buddha. Apart from this Mind-King, there is no other Buddha. If you wish to become a Buddha, do not defile yourself with a single thing. Though mind-nature is empty, greed and anger have substantial reality. Enter this Dharma gate, sit upright, and become a Buddha. Having reached the other shore, one attains pāramitā. A true seeker of the Way contemplates their own mind. Knowing the Buddha is within, they do not seek outside."

"Mind itself is Buddha; Buddha itself is mind. When the mind is clear, it recognizes Buddha; clearly understand and recognize the mind. Apart from mind there is no Buddha; apart from Buddha there is no mind. Apart from Buddha, none can fathom it; none is equal to it. Clinging to emptiness and stagnating in quiescence, one drifts and sinks here. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not settle their minds in this way. Great beings who understand the mind awaken to this profound sound. The nature of body and mind is wondrous, and its functioning never changes. Therefore, the wise let their minds rest in freedom. Do not say that the Mind-King is empty and without an inherent substance."

"It can cause the physical body to act wrongly or rightly. Neither existent nor nonexistent, it appears and disappears unpredictably. Mind-nature transcends emptiness; it can be ordinary or sage. Therefore I urge you: guard and regulate yourselves well. In a single instant of action, one again drifts and sinks. Pure mind-wisdom is like worldly gold. The Dharma treasury of prajñā is wholly within body and mind. The treasure of the unconditioned Dharma is neither shallow nor deep. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas realize this fundamental mind. Those with conditions who encounter it are beyond past, present, and future."

(Verse) "There is a thing prior to heaven and earth; formless, it is originally still and solitary. It can be the master of the myriad forms, yet does not wither with the four seasons. Each night I embrace the Buddha in sleep; every morning we rise together. In rising and sitting, we are always together; in speech and silence, we dwell together. Not a hair's breadth separates us, like body and shadow. If you wish to know where the Buddha is, it is precisely this voice of speech." "With empty hands, he holds a hoe; walking on foot, he rides a water buffalo."

"A person crosses over the bridge; the bridge flows, but the water does not flow." The eulogy says: "At the Avataṃsaka assembly, the doors of the tower are opened; in the palace of Tuṣita, the robe and bowl are present. At times he carries a cloth sack through the bustling marketplace, awaiting someone; at times he sells bamboo strainers through the streets, following conditions as he goes. Put these matters aside for now: the Dharma expounded in the palace of the King of Liang, and that to be spoken at the three assemblies beneath the Dragon-Flower Tree—are they the same or different? Open your eyes and look closely. Do not wait for Maitreya Buddha to descend into the world."

FROM: [Biographies of Buddhist Figures (V1.0, compiled by the Chinese Buddhist Canon Treasury)]

[gszy]: ....."

New Words says: Fu Dashi and Master Zhi were contemporaries, but Master Zhi was older than Fu Dashi and gained great renown before him. Bodhidharma also came to China during the period between Master Zhi and Fu Dashi.

Although Bodhidharma transmitted the robe and bowl of the Chan school to Shenguang, the Second Patriarch, their methods and style of transmission at that time remained very plain and straightforward. They indeed followed the Tathāgata Chan path of equally sustaining samādhi and wisdom, "direct pointing to the mind and seeing one's nature to become a Buddha."

Only the Chinese Chan of Master Zhi, Fu Dashi, and others may be called the distinctive mode of Chinese Mahāyāna Chan. It transcended Buddhist forms, filtered out the technical terminology of Buddhist learning, and was free and humorous: whatever came readily to hand became a wondrous truth. It opened the Chan flavor of Chinese Chan after the Tang and Song dynasties —"encounter phrases" and "turning words." Fu Dashi's manner in particular had an even greater influence.

From the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, after Buddhism was introduced into China, the established thought of Confucianism and Daoism always maintained a considerable distance of resistance from Buddhist thought. At the end of the Three Kingdoms period, Mou Rong wrote the Mouzi Lihuo Lun, integrating Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism into a single continuum.

Yet after the Wei and Jin dynasties and the Northern and Southern Dynasties, although Buddhist learning had already penetrated widely into people's hearts, this situation still persisted. Fu Dashi did not assume the appearance of a monastic; he followed the distinctive and independent path of the great Vimalakīrti, propagating the teachings of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni.

Moreover, he "taught the Dharma through his very presence." His outward appearance—a Daoist crown, monastic robe, and Confucian shoes—expressed the Dharma form of Chinese Chan: "Confucian conduct as its foundation, Daoist learning as its foremost element, and Buddhadharma as its center." This act, together with the course of his whole life, was equivalent to teaching by personal example and personally composing a superb essay on "the unity of the three teachings."

Everyone should pay especially close attention to this point. Contemporary students who study the thought and history of Chinese Chan lack the learning and insight to reach this understanding. Nor have they undertaken genuine work in Chan cultivation and realization. Yet they casually echo one another, maintaining that Chinese Chan was influenced by the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi. This is not merely like scratching an itch through one's boot; it is simply, "Two orioles sing amid the green willows; a line of white egrets rises into the blue sky"—they do not know what they are saying, and fly ever farther away.

New Words says: Fu Dashi was born during the transition from the Qi to the Liang dynasty. After awakening to the Way, he cultivated diligently, and only in the prime of life became known to Emperor Wu of Liang and received his deep respect. Yet he spent the several decades between the end of Liang and the Chen dynasty amid frequent political upheavals, devastated populations, and unsettled livelihoods.

Not only did he propagate the true Dharma and establish teachings throughout the southeastern half of the realm, but he also exerted himself to the utmost in fulfilling the vows of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva path, relieving disasters and aiding the poor without sparing effort. In the precarious refuge south of the Yangtze at that time, his virtue alone served as a safeguard enabling ordinary people to survive the turmoil and displacement. His contribution was indeed immense.

As for one whose insight surpassed others and whose practice was genuine, who moved within the Buddhist sūtras and treatises yet transcended the intent of a special transmission outside the teachings—unless he were one who had returned, how could this be possible? Chinese Chan, influenced by Master Zhi and Fu Dashi during the Qi and Liang dynasties, thereby opened the understanding of the Chan school of later Tang and Song China. Fu Dashi was truly one exceptional figure in many ages.

The rise of the Chan school between the Qi and Liang dynasties was most deeply influenced by them. Apart from Bodhidharma Chan as its main body, the distinctive methods that formed Tang and Song Chan consisted of Master Zhi's Mahāyāna Chan and Fu Dashi's Vimalakīrti Chan. One may also say that the original school style of Chinese Chan was truly formed through the synthesis of the "three great beings": Bodhidharma, Master Zhi, and Fu Dashi.

The Buddhist philosophical thought of Sengzhao and Zhu Daosheng represents an outstanding attainment in Chinese Buddhist thought, but has little connection with Chan practice; scholars must take note of this. Later practitioners of the Chan school who wish, as lay practitioners, to undertake enduring works in both worldly and supramundane spheres should clearly understand the spirit of Fu Dashi's Vimalakīrti Chan and carefully emulate it; then there may be hope. But if one seeks the unconditioned Way with a mind attached to attainment, I truly do not know how that can be possible.

---- Elder Nan, Chan Talks

[gszy]: Is the unity of the three teachings right or wrong?!

Nature and mind are neither one nor two; they are simply essence and function. Nature is the essence of mind, and mind is the function of nature. Essence and function are not different. Their meaning is precisely the same as that of the four statements on form and emptiness in the Heart Sūtra. Confucianism never ultimately analyzed the meanings of nature and mind; it spoke only of mind, and all its practices begin with the mind. Buddhists take seeing one's nature as their principle. The Chan school does not separate mind and nature: because essence and function are inseparable, one who understands the mind can see one's nature. Just as fire is inseparable from its light, this is so lest later generations divide them into two separate parts and give rise to many divergences.

Buddhists speak only of the mind as being like an illusion. Because the mind arises and ceases, it cannot be grasped; from this one is forced to realize the suchness that is neither illusory nor extinguished, thereby revealing the enduring nature that neither arises nor ceases. But how can the substance of this nature be expressed? It is precisely what is meant by "the path of words is cut off, and the activity of mind comes to an end." Thus, the Chan school wholly purifies the thoughts of the mind; when they have been swept entirely clean, that is mahāprajñāpāramitā.

Confucianism emphasizes stillness, while Buddhism speaks of purity. Stillness is a shift from turmoil to calm: excluding external objects and gathering the mind into one. Because it proceeds through opposition and counteraction, it is like mud and dregs settling to the bottom of water. It contains an element of suppression: although the surface may appear clear, the mud and dregs have not ultimately been removed and may rise again when conditions arise. It is therefore not ultimate.

Purity means being pure and clean, extinguishing the inner mind and returning to emptiness. This contains the meaning of the original nature: namely, that the mind is originally unobtainable. Here, everything is empty; how could there be such defects as opposition and suppression? One need only fear attachment to a one-sided emptiness and to purity, without yet reaching great emptiness. One then still remains within dharmas; and so long as one does not depart from dharmas, there is mind, and one has still not returned to the original nature.

When Confucianism speaks of mind, it places particular emphasis on the mind after it has already stirred: how to accord with heavenly principle and eliminate human desires. It restrains what has not yet arisen and also treats what has already arisen. In its general purport, this is the same as the Vinaya school of Buddhism.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, however, first seeks to see the mind before it has stirred—the so-called true mind. Thus, the moment a thought or view arises, one receives a blow or a shout, so that one will clear it away oneself, seeking not the slightest trace. Yet one is not permitted to fall into annihilation. Only then is the true suchness and true reality revealed; this is the foremost great matter of human life. Xiangshan's saying, "If one does not know that there is moral nature, how can there be what is called learning?" is precisely directed to those of the highest vehicle from the root. Without attaining the essence, function has nothing on which to rest; one can only engage in empty talk about principles of learning.

Attachment to words has been a common ailment since ancient times. There are also reasons why Confucianism tends toward the function of mind while neglecting the substance of nature.

First, it seeks to proceed from the shallow to the deep, taking the mind's function in accord with the Way as something visible through which one may gradually enter. Second, it must closely engage human affairs and everyday life. Third, it fears falling into nihilism, and moreover finds it difficult to know where to begin. Fourth, it becomes attached to words. In the three sentences of the Doctrine of the Mean—"What Heaven decrees is called nature; following nature is called the Way; cultivating the Way is called teaching"—since it emphasizes teaching, it unwittingly places undue emphasis on the Way.

Once it emphasizes cultivation of the Way, what basis remains apart from mind? Thus it enters deeply into dharmas and cannot emerge from them. It does not know that the Way is the function of mind, not the Way of Great Learning. The Way of Great Learning is the supreme virtue that cannot be spoken. One must depart from the function of mind in order to see the true Way, and only then return to the original nature bestowed by Heaven. Therefore one must understand the Way in order to see one's nature, so that nature has a basis on which to rest; only then does one accord with the meaning that essence and function are one suchness.

If, after the second sentence, one added the words "understand the Way in order to see one's nature," people would deeply understand the method of revealing essence through function, and would also know that the Way itself has vanished. To cultivate is to return; it is what is meant by overcoming oneself and returning to ritual propriety. The sages established their teachings on precisely this meaning. But where does this return stop? It stops at understanding the Way of the mind's function in order to see one's original nature. This is truly a most difficult method; it is not something of which one may speak to those below the middle capacity.

The dispute between Zhu Xi and Lu Xiangshan, the two Confucian schools of the Song dynasty, had insight on both sides; unfortunately, later generations did not understand this. Once learning becomes entangled with partisan feeling, one is an outsider to the gate. In a letter from Master Zhu to Xiang Pingfu, he said: "You, Zijing, place more emphasis on honoring moral nature; I myself recognize that I place more emphasis on learning through inquiry. We should discard our shortcomings, gather our strengths, and bring both to accomplishment."

The study of nature and principle consists in investigating and awakening to one's original nature. If one cannot investigate it successfully, one seeks a guide, and thus there is learning through inquiry. Yet this learning through inquiry is precisely what is solid and not superficial. It is like asking the way while entering the mountains: if one encounters a woodcutter halfway up, one has after all reached the mountainside, and is not comparable to one who has neither begun to climb nor even seen the mountain.

Therefore, when Xiangshan was asked, he replied: "If one does not know that there is moral nature, how can there be what is called learning through inquiry?" This is correct. Yet what learning through inquiry is not an affair within one's share of nature? To seek learning through inquiry is precisely to seek to know that one possesses moral nature. The two masters need not be divided into two separate halves. Still, for one first entering the gate, without relying on learning through inquiry there is simply no path of entry. One should understand that this is introductory learning, not ultimate learning.

Once a person can be guided onto the path of the highest vehicle, however, it seems inappropriate to pursue much learning through inquiry, lest it confuse one's vision. This is Xiangshan's position. But if one thoroughly sees moral nature, the essence may indeed be attained; how can one then refrain from speaking of function and lapse into passivity or drift into annihilation? Therefore, genuine investigation of things and extension of knowledge come only after moral nature has been understood. Only then does learning through inquiry have a source, an essence, a basis, and a root.

Moreover, this work can come about naturally and does not require much contentious disputation. This is ultimate and proper learning. Even so, learning has no fixed definition and teaching no fixed method; one must apply them according to the learner.

First use expedient means, then enter directly; or perhaps enter directly from the outset. Yet the work of nurturing the Way after seeing one's nature admits of no two approaches; it depends only on a person's diligence or indolence, sharpness or dullness, and causes and conditions. In sum, true learning takes an empty mind as primary, and an even mind as secondary. Shaozi said, "At the point where the one yang first stirs, before the myriad things are born": one must fix one's attention here. Then moral nature, learning, and everything else are all contained within it.

The efficacy of Confucianism lies wonderfully in the single word "return." Within "return" is already the meaning of the original nature: the original is what is prior to birth, and return is returning to what is prior to birth. Sentient beings are obscured by acquired habitual tendencies and do not realize it. Yet human desires and heavenly principle are two matters, not two things; they are simply opposite aspects. Moreover, return is unlike the repair of an object. The repair of an object proceeds through stages, but this does not.

With a single awakening, one returns to the original nature. Yet as soon as one awakens, one forgets again; thus it is a matter of familiarity and capacity. Master Zhu said: "Whenever, amid daily activity, one recognizes this illness and wishes to remove it, that very wish to remove it is the medicine able to remove it." He did not realize that with that very wish to remove it, the illness is already absent. This is direct and straightforward; there is no need to establish another process of medicine, thereby giving later generations occasion for many shameful disputes.

Someone asked whether the Song scholars' method of gathering the mind was like fastening a hoop around a monkey's neck. I said: "That is guarding, not gathering. Because they have not truly seen their nature, they suppose that the mind can run away. They directly posit a mind, and further divide it into a mind that runs away and a mind that returns. Thought after thought, they discriminate; how can there be purity? This is because they establish subject and object in opposition."

What is called gathering is neither separation nor union; it is awareness without the slightest deliberate effort. The Way never departs even for an instant. Since it does not depart even for an instant, why fear that it will run away? One need only be clear and bright, like a mirror reflecting things: when a Hu comes, a Hu appears; when a Han comes, a Han appears. The luminous substance ultimately does not move. Nor should one pursue deluded thoughts, calculate what is right or wrong, or brood over them. If one has erred, one has erred: cut it off with a single stroke, and do not regret it further. If a jar breaks, discard it; be more careful afterward. There is nothing truly comparable to this, but, compelled to make a comparison, one may say that it is like this.

The Doctrine of the Mean says: "Vast and deep; lofty and luminous; enduring and long-lasting." What does this refer to? The Heart Sūtra says: "This is a great spiritual mantra, a great luminous mantra, an unsurpassed mantra, an unequaled mantra." And what does this refer to?

It is easy to eliminate material desires, difficult to transform one's temperament, and still more difficult to understand the root. This is what the Buddha called a Dharma difficult to believe. Therefore, one must see one's nature in order to understand the function of the Way; only then can one eliminate material desires and transform one's temperament by a practical method. Earlier, "understand the Way in order to see one's nature" referred to where one begins on the causal ground. Here, "see one's nature in order to understand the Way" refers to the fruition ground, where its function is fulfilled. The Way and nature are not two things.

The word Buddha must not be interpreted rigidly; it should be understood as seeing one's nature. In the West there was Śākyamuni Buddha, the foremost one in the West to see his nature. If there are such persons in the East or elsewhere, they too are Buddhas. Only, none saw their nature as thoroughly as Śākyamuni Buddha; therefore he is called the World-Honored One.

Before Śākyamuni Buddha, there were also those awakened to the emptiness of their nature. They simply did not dare explain it openly, but gave it figurative names: luminous virtue, soundless and odorless, utmost goodness, and the Limitless. Yet there was as yet no method for realizing it. What they saw may not have differed from the Buddha's, but they lacked direct realization; these are what may be called pratyekabuddhas of the East.

The Buddha, however, indicated everything through methods, seeking only to enable people to see the luminous essence of their intrinsic nature and the free functioning that gives rise to the illusory mind. It is said: "Its essence is silent and still; its appearance is pure; its form is boundless; its savor is ease and lightness; its functions are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. It cannot be expressed or spoken of; it is not annihilation." This is provisionally called Buddha.

One mind and a single thought are different. One mind is the initial mind, the mind before it stirs, the mind of direct perception: that is, the mind of clear, discriminating-free awareness. A single thought, by contrast, is the stirring of mind; hence a person is said to have two minds when there is thought. If, amid thought after thought, there is inferential knowing but no attachment or abiding, it is likewise the initial mind of direct perception. Therefore, attachment in every thought is birth and death; freedom from defilement in every thought is nirvāṇa. This alone is the distinction between sages and ordinary beings.

Master Wang Yangming's teaching that knowledge and action advance together is the meaning that principle and phenomena are nondual. Principle is an affair within mind, and phenomena are principles outside mind. I further divide knowing into three: understanding through explanation, knowing through practice, and knowing through realization. This is the meaning that inner and outer, root and branch, mutually nurture and evoke one another in a single continuous thread.

He also said: “The more knowledge one has, the more it may serve to carry out evil; the broader one’s learning and observation, the more they may serve to indulge one’s disputation; the richer one’s literary expression, the more it may serve to adorn one’s falsity. Alas, how lamentable! Fortunately, heavenly principle in the human mind can never be wholly extinguished, and the brightness of innate knowing remains the same through ten thousand ages.” How painfully he spoke!

If we now trace the cause of this disease to its source, it lies in scholars’ failure first to begin from the root by understanding the essence. They merely pursue mastery of function, and thereby fail in both. If the essence is not understood, how can function be mastered?

When the essence is not understood, one’s aims are narrow and one seeks only gain and advantage. With a mind anxious over gain and loss, and ambitions fixed on profit and rank, what would one not do, and what would one not dare to do? Human desires overflow, while the flourishing of science merely becomes a means of pursuing fame and profit; at its extreme, it becomes international aggression and killing. Yet knowledge itself is not what misleads people; people mislead themselves. The error lies in reversing root and branch, while the whole world finds nothing strange in it. Is this not tragic?

Since Chan investigation offers no point at which to begin, and gathering the mind offers no point of control, Confucianism devised the word “sincerity.” “Sincerity leads to illumination, and illumination leads to sincerity.” Sincerity that leads to illumination returns from function to essence; once one returns to essence, one is illuminated and sincere, and this is true sincerity. Sincerity then has a basis, and such sincerity never regresses. This is indeed a wondrous method.

Yet sincerity is again difficult to begin with, so they devised the word “reverence”: guarding it with utmost vigilance and care. Thus the Song scholars did not favor the teaching of sudden awakening, fearing that they might tread upon emptiness and fall into voidness. They also said: “The work must arise from preservation and nurturing; it cannot be sought out by speculative groping in the air.”

They do not know that, if the root has not been understood, what is there to preserve and nurture? It is no more than guarding. What is there to revere? They revere advancement in affairs and revere heavenly principle, but this too is no more than guarding. To speak of guarding is to set it in opposition to not guarding; in the end, it remains a battle between good and evil, human desire and heavenly principle. How difficult, then, is their search for sincerity! And in their search for illumination, they have even less to hold onto.

They also say, “Sincerity leads to illumination, and illumination leads to sincerity,” but this is an understanding, not a method; in the end, it leaves people with nowhere to begin. Chan practitioners awaken through investigation in samādhi, while Confucians emphasize quiet sitting; these are methods. At the outset, one must first calm the frenzied mind and coarse breath. Beginning there, first cultivate sincerity; when sincerity reaches its utmost, illumination manifests of itself. Yet some practice for decades without effect. The reason is that they are seeking something.

Where there is seeking, there is an “I” that seeks; thus the personal self is again at war, so how can samādhi be attained? The mind’s spiritual capacity cannot be compared to any material thing: it cannot be guarded, cannot be released, cannot be reduced to biased emptiness; fools cannot learn it, and clever people cannot grasp it. One error lies in dead attachment, the other in superficial glibness. There are methods, yet no way to put them into practice; it is truly vexing and painful.

Yet without undergoing such vexation and pain, one can by no means attain illumination. Without true sincerity, one cannot attain true illumination. In the present age, life is so difficult, circumstances so adverse, perseverance so hard to sustain, and people of aspiration so few that the Confucian and Buddhist paths naturally decline. This, too, is brought about by causes, conditions, and the times. Thus, with no alternative, people settle for what is secondary, taking merely rudimentary practice to be the highest vehicle.

Confucians merely discourse on principle and engage in much disputation, considering this practice. Chan practitioners merely speak empty talk of Chan; bhikshus who can observe precepts consider themselves eminent monks, while scholars who can write well are publicly acclaimed as lofty gentlemen. Their vision grows lower by the day—does this not delude people's eyes? Even so, Master Yangming said, “The heavenly principle within the human mind can never be obliterated.” He also said, “Only now that I study Buddhism do I know how to be a Confucian.”

The Buddhist path has its own methods; it merely lacks people of aspiration and benevolence. People of aspiration seek to liberate themselves, and benevolent people seek to liberate others. One must possess the great vow to liberate others before one can be called a person of aspiration, for self and others are nondual. One should first liberate oneself in order to liberate others. Of the methods of self-liberation, none is more wondrous than Chan; yet Chan is difficult to practice, as stated above. The most excellent way is first to enter Chan through Esoteric Buddhism, and then, through Chan, to bring forth its function in responding to the world.

The practice of Esoteric Buddhism wondrously combines vexation and pain with vitality and ease; it avoids the faults of biased emptiness and attachment to existence. Through it, one can attain sincerity. This method is found only in the Heart-of-Heart Esoteric Dharma; yet whether one can make it spiritually alive and illuminating depends on the individual. It is not that there is no method—rather, people are unwilling to endure hardship. This is why I lament that there are too few people of aspiration.

Guanzi said: “Do not be vexed or confused, and harmony will form of itself. When one can be upright and still, one can then attain stability. Hold to the One without losing it, and one can govern the myriad things. Therefore, nothing stills anger better than poetry; nothing dispels sorrow better than music; nothing regulates music better than ritual; nothing preserves ritual better than reverence; nothing preserves reverence better than stillness. With inner stillness and outer reverence, one can return to one’s nature, and one’s nature will attain great stability.”

This passage contains the learning of Guanzi’s entire life. It not only opened the way for the various teachings of the Song Confucians, but also became the foundation of later Daoists. Alas, Daoists today cannot understand his writings, because they misunderstand their meaning. Their error rests on one word: in “hold to the One without losing it,” what does this “One” refer to? It refers to uprightness. To stop at the One is to be upright. This One is the master of the mind.

Guanzi said: “Within the mind there is another mind.” The mind within the mind is the master of the mind, namely the original substance of one’s nature. This original substance is empty, pure, and free of admixture—without vexation or confusion, it is perfect harmony. A person’s original mind is fundamentally like this, but when it moves, vexation and unrest arise, and the various afflictions of greed and anger emerge. If one can hold to the One without losing it, this is called abiding in one’s constant place.

The ruler is the mind; to govern the myriad things means that the mind maintains mastery over all circumstances. The subsequent words, “inner stillness and outer reverence,” reveal the appearance of original nature; therefore it speaks of returning to one’s nature and attaining great stability. Great stability means being free from delusion and unshaken. This is entirely practice concerning the mind. Later people forcibly applied it to practices involving essence, qi, and spirit, taking guarding an aperture or the dantian as the sole method of holding to the One, thereby leading all beings into error.

This also misconstrues the two words “inner stillness,” and the resulting harm has a long history. Let us discuss it briefly. The ancients were all the more diligent in maintaining the practice of inner stillness. Yet those who sit in meditation often instead become aware of the mind’s disorder. This is itself the initial stage of stillness, just as water through which one can see the bottom is clear on its surface.

Because they find no place of repose amid the mind’s disorder, they unconsciously lapse into suppression. They do not know that there is only one principle and method for thoughts: as soon as they are noticed, let them go and do not attend to them. To think of some way to restrain them is to add mind upon mind, merely increasing the disorder. Moreover, this practice of holding to the One must retain spiritual responsiveness and vitality, so that one does not fall into the fault of rigid guarding and dead attachment.

Then there arises the view that the mind is inwardly still, and one locates it within the physical body. After a long time, when stillness reaches an extreme, one sees for oneself the circulation of blood and qi, their ascending and descending. At such a time one feels very comfortable; it may also cure illness and prolong life. Thus arise methods of refining essence into qi and refining qi into spirit. As the practice deepens, one may gather essence into form, and the yang spirit may emerge from the crown of the head. Yet the practice of collecting the mind in inner stability, and the method of outer reverence, have long been forgotten.

Instead, they take essence, qi, and spirit to be the Way, the mind, and the unsurpassed wondrous Dharma. Their minds lack mastery; when the yang spirit ventures far out and encounters minor spiritual powers, they do not realize that, upon meeting an illusory realm, the mind may become bewildered and unsettled or suffer fright. Then it cannot return to the body, and madness results. The harmful consequences of this are beyond enumeration. Moreover, when the foundational practice cannot proceed naturally, the moment greed for attainment enters, further obstruction results—even to the point of dying from abdominal distension.

Before the mind stirs, essence is true essence; once it stirs, it becomes turbid essence. When the mind attaches to the dantian, qi follows it, and turbid essence congeals in one place. If it does not transform, it swells and hardens; if it transforms improperly, essence leaks away and one dies. These are entirely dangerous bodily practices. What do they ultimately have to do with the Way? This is indeed lamentable.

Yet if we trace their original intention, they did not begin without wishing to seek inner stillness and samādhi. They merely went astray through greed for longevity and immortality, or for minor spiritual powers. This is why they are called non-Buddhist paths. I call them “false paths, true practice,” for their exertion is genuine and earnest. They are unlike those in the Buddhist community who do not investigate the mind-ground, who concern themselves solely with names and appearances, and who do not practice with personal urgency but merely profit from eloquent debate. This is “true Buddhism, false practice.” I should be ashamed of myself before I have time to criticize those non-Buddhist paths.

Essence, qi, and spirit naturally circulate according to their regular course. Only infants can leave them entirely to their natural functioning, for their wonder lies in having no contriving mind. In the world, only two kinds of people differ from this. One consists of those burdened with many doubts and complicated worldly affairs, who minutely calculate gains and losses and live in fear. They constantly let the mind race outward in disorder, causing essence, qi, and spirit to depart from their course; unable to gather them in, they suffer many illnesses and troubles and have short lives.

The other consists of non-Buddhist practitioners, who drive the mind in an effort to force essence, qi, and spirit into their course. Instead, they lose their naturalness, and these easily congeal and fail to disperse, producing the various illnesses described above. Therefore, one should take infants as one's teachers. Each day, remain as though without a contriving mind. Without such a mind, blood and qi naturally follow their course and circulate through the entire body. If they are well nourished, their functioning will be firm and keen; wisdom will naturally arise from samādhi. The method of longevity lies herein.

The moment one greedily seeks attainment, the causal ground is already improper. To cultivate the body rather than the mind is itself improper. As for ingeniously devising many names and deliberately displaying marvels, one may think oneself to be proceeding cautiously, yet unknowingly one instead harms others. The Daoist Tianyinzi said: "Words that involve the strange and bizarre only cause people to become obstinately deluded, with nowhere to return to the root." How profound these words are!

Among Daoists, only the Longmen tradition is orthodox. In its use of qigong, it generally does not deliberately fix attention anywhere. The mind is at the dantian, as if present and as if absent. This method originally also exists in Esoteric Buddhism, but one rests the mind there only momentarily, then immediately relinquishes it and does not guard it. The mind gathers itself and the spirit settles of itself; when mind and spirit are settled, essence and qi are stabilized, and one naturally remains free from illness and enjoys long years. The difficulty lies only in sustaining it, for it is easy to forget.

Esoteric practice specializes in cultivating the mind, not the body. Those who do not understand Esoteric Buddhism often suspect that it is no different from non-Buddhist paths, not knowing that they are separated by as vast a distance as heaven and earth. Esoteric Buddhism does have a branch of qigong practice, namely the practice of Mahāmudrā, but it is not lightly transmitted, lest those without exceptional capacity harm themselves and others through misunderstanding.

Daoists take only part of its meaning rather than the whole; they err through attachment to existence and make all manner of forced associations. It is not without reason that people ridicule them as superstitious. Someone may ask which is more difficult: transforming an obstinate person or correcting a perverse one? I say that transforming an obstinate person is ten times more difficult. People often do not believe this, so I elaborate on Mengzi's saying: "Ancient people were hard to transform, while people today are easy to transform, because ancient people were simple by nature, whereas people today are deceitful."

Simplicity is stillness; deceit is flow. The former is like earth, the latter like water. Water can be channeled east or west; can earth be channeled east or west? Although these words were spoken because of Emperor Yizong of Tang's foolishness, they are indeed an incisive judgment. In Buddhism, when discussing those of the highest capacity, people often value unconventional talent; yet one must still observe whether a person possesses merit and virtue, and this in turn depends on whether the person's natural disposition is substantial and generous. Therefore, those of limited capacity who possess worldly cleverness find it difficult to enter the Way.

Laozi said, "One who knows others is wise; one who knows oneself is clear." But what, one may ask, is it that one knows? Knowing is the illuminating light of wisdom. Seeing others' good qualities enables one to feel ashamed of oneself; seeing one's own faults is enough to bring self-reproach. Bodhisattvas do not see the faults of others; this means that there are no things in their minds. If there are truly no things in one's mind, what personal self, good and evil, shame, or self-reproach could be spoken of? When the root is unobtainable, that is great illumination. This is what is meant by acting without contrivance, attending to affairs without contrivance, and savoring without contrivance. Yet all day long one never departs from acting, attending to affairs, or knowing flavors.

Laozi said: "As a thing, the Way is utterly indistinct and elusive. Elusive and indistinct—within it there are images. Indistinct and elusive—within it there are things. Deep and obscure—within it there is essence. Its essence is most real; within it there is trustworthiness. From ancient times until now, its name has never departed." This passage precisely expresses that the formless substance of intrinsic nature has eternally existed and never changes.

This cannot be seen with the eyes; it can only be perceived in indistinctness and elusiveness by the mind. These images are images without form or appearance. Essence is the indestructible substance of vajra. It is truly reliable and well-founded; it does not mean annihilation into nothingness. Within it are as many wondrous functions as the sands of the Ganges. Therefore it cannot simply be called the substance of intrinsic nature, but is named the Way. Within the Way, no excellence is lacking; thus it is said that it surveys the multitude of beings. "Multitude" means excellence: like iron, whose uses and transformations are infinitely varied and in every way complete and excellent. Yet all this depends upon its hardness of nature. That hardness cannot be seen or grasped; it has no form or appearance, but is simply true essence.

To see intrinsic nature, one must first realize the mind. Intrinsic nature is the substance of mind, and mind is the function of intrinsic nature; substance and function are not two, and these are merely names. Intrinsic nature has no form or division; it is constant and unchanging, neither arising nor ceasing, and cannot be seen with the eyes. Therefore it is called true reality. Mind is illusory existence: it arises in response to circumstances and seems to arise and cease, yet in truth it does not arise. Therefore it is called illusory mind.

Mind arises from intrinsic nature and, when it ceases, returns to intrinsic nature. When it moves, one does not see where it comes from; when it rests, one does not know where it goes. It comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. To speak of realizing

the mind means realizing that these illusory appearances seem to come and go, and that this can still be understood conceptually; one realizes that they are illusory. To speak of seeing intrinsic nature means recognizing that true reality definitely exists, though it can only be directly known by oneself and cannot be shown to others.

True reality is not an appearance that has form. When the mind comes to rest, it is seen, just as clear, still water reveals itself when waves cease. One who can see one's nature is thereby the same as all Buddhas. Constantly seeing this essential nature, one is not deluded by external objects or confined by inner views, but stands transcendent, apart from all appearances. When the mind clings to nothing, this dharmatā pervades the dharma realm and encompasses everything; therefore it is called the ocean of nature.

All people possess this equally; there is no distinction between sages and ordinary beings. Yet because of the division between delusion and awakening, they seem to be two. With awakening, one sees one's nature everywhere; even amid confusion and disorder, it remains clearly known. When the mind is at one with circumstances, there is no delusion, disorder, inversion, or suffering. Great potential and great functioning issue from one's ultimate nature; thus there is no matter to which one cannot respond, no place that is not the Way, no thing by which one can be deluded, and no circumstance that is not empty. Such a person is one of transcendent great freedom.

Mind is that which governs within and encompasses all things. Mind is like soil: concealed within the body, it can transform and give rise to all dharmas; hence it is called the dharmatā body. Sentient beings' thoughts continue without interruption, like an endless chain, each thought linked to the next. Therefore deluded thoughts continue unceasingly, illusorily forming birth and death and giving rise to the six realms.

Yet the character for mind ( ) plainly shows that nothing can be added above it: seeing and hearing are clear and distinct, vast and without anything. This is the mind in its proper state, and is called the true mind. In the Chan school, when mind and intrinsic nature are not distinguished, it is this still mind that is meant by intrinsic nature; they cannot be separated. But if one adds even a single downward stroke ( ), it becomes the character , "must."

When mind takes hold of an appearance, it becomes thought ( ); when a blade is placed above mind, it becomes forbearance ( ); when mind is enslaved by forms, it becomes anger ( ); when mind is joined with "thus," it becomes forgiveness ( ); when minds are mutually joined, it becomes constancy ( ); when mind clings to the past, it becomes regret ( ); when it is exhausted in oneself, it becomes loyalty ( ); when it is shut within a gate, it becomes depression ( ); when it is unsettled above and below, it becomes apprehension ( ). In their countless transformations, these are all additions imposed upon the mind; they are not the mind in its proper state, but delusion and illusory shadows.

Yet worldly people refer only to this illusory delusion as "my mind." As the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment says, "The shadows of conditions arising from the six sense objects are taken as the characteristics of one's own mind." This is the root of the inversion of birth and death; it is also the basis upon which the arising, ceasing, and transformations of the countless beings, persons, and affairs in worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are established. Even the Buddhas' and bodhisattvas' liberating and transformative work is like empty flowers arising and ceasing in confusion. How could it possess a substantial entity? Yet one cannot therefore speak of annihilation.

Although the mind may give rise to myriad changing states, its original ground does not shift. Good adds nothing to it, and evil takes nothing away from it. This unshifting reality is provisionally called bodhi, nothing more. Bodhi is without characteristics, yet it is true and not empty; therefore it is called true reality. It is the nature that neither arises nor ceases. Now, to see the mind with nothing added to it is to see the mind utterly open and free of attachment. This is the mind of no-mind: there is no mind that can be made into an object of mind, and the unmoving nature is thereby seen.

Even transformation bodhisattvas and sentient beings cannot be wholly without thoughts. Sentient beings cling to each thought, becoming entangled and attached in turn; they cannot be their own masters. Outwardly they are carried away by circumstances, and inwardly they are affected by views and delusions. Encountering existence, they cling to existence; hearing of emptiness, they cling to emptiness. Even practitioners who seek the Way and turn toward the Buddha create obstacles for themselves. This is the condition of those who have not seen their nature and remain submerged in the round of birth and death.

A Buddha has mind, yet does not abide in views; is without thoughts, yet does not abide in emptiness. Not only is delusion not established, but awakening too is not established. Still and ever-illuminating, empty, wondrous, complete, and spiritually efficacious, the Buddha does not regard the presence of thoughts as a problem, nor the absence of thoughts as superior. The so-called great gate of liberation cannot be known by wisdom or recognized by consciousness; how then could it be expressed in words and language? Yet it is not possessed by Buddhas alone and unavailable to sentient beings.

Sentient beings do not understand birth and death, do not fear birth and death, and do not seek a way out of it; willingly they sink into it. This is greatly lamentable. Sentient beings are simply deluded. Because of delusion, they establish birth and death and vainly undergo all kinds of suffering. They do not know that what enters birth and death is this illusory mind, and that what emerges from birth and death is also this illusory mind.

Realizing the mind is the means of transcending birth and death. The wise awaken suddenly: upon seeing the single character for mind, they can awaken and enter. The dull must cultivate and realize, necessarily relying on the Dharma to advance gradually. Yet at the fundamental level, there is truly no distinction of sudden or gradual stages. One must, however, feel birth and death as an urgent and painful matter and directly recognize this; if one stirs the mind to seek the Way, one has already gone far astray.

All that has been discussed above is merely an understanding through words. Even if one attains sudden awakening through these conditions, it is not thorough and cannot be relied upon. When external circumstances arise, one will again be carried away by them. One must engage in intensive, life-and-death investigation and apply genuine effort in order to find a way out.

What is meant by “life-and-death effort” is simply to strike down every thought. For example, in Buddha-recitation, recite until there is neither one capable of reciting nor anything recited. Not only do deluded thoughts fail to arise, but even the thought of the Buddha is not established. This is entry through realization by the method of Buddha-recitation.

In Chan investigation, investigate morning and evening until one reaches a point where there is absolutely no flavor or meaning, where all four sides seem like walls of bronze and iron. Then one suddenly receives a message. Without ten or twenty years, however, the root will not be firmly grounded. When one truly reaches the point of nothing to attain, a breakthrough occurs in response to circumstances, like suddenly awakening from a dream. This is entry through realization by the method of Chan meditation.

In our school, one specializes in the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, beginning with the six mudrās and completing a thousand meditation sessions. Or one may undertake a seven-day retreat, practicing six sessions daily for twelve hours, for three, four, or seven consecutive days; or, once a month during a long month, practice nine sessions for eighteen hours, advancing vigorously for a full day and night, once or twice each year. In this way, one will naturally attain samādhi and directly see true reality. This is entry through realization by Esoteric Buddhism.

All dharmas are equal, without superiority or inferiority. It depends on the person, not the dharma; on oneself, not the teacher. What is meant by living investigation is that, after leaving the meditation cushion, one should not forget one's original nature from thought to thought. As soon as a view arises, cut it off with the precious vajra sword of the Dharma King. When not the slightest speck remains, one's Original Face will clearly reveal itself at every place and at every time.

Thus one gives rise to function from essence. Seeing a Buddha, one is not turned by the Buddha; seeing a sūtra, one is not bound by the Dharma; seeing worldly affairs, one is not deluded by emotional attachments; seeing principles, one is not confused by consciousness. These two practices advance together like two wheels: on the meditation cushion, realize the essence; off the cushion, give rise to function. Once the root has been obtained, even if habitual tendencies arise, a single awakening melts them like snow in a red-hot furnace. Over time one's strength naturally becomes sufficient, and without needing mindful illumination, one is already empty and quiescent. This is the proper path of entry.

If one first seeks some attainment, vainly hopes for spiritual powers, willingly settles for the inferior and lesser, dares not take up the task, merely understands words and letters and takes that for realization, or arrogantly esteems oneself, then one adds birth and death upon birth and death. This is because one's causal ground is incorrect and one has not understood what it means to become a Buddha. So long as one seeks something, the mind does not die; if the mind does not die, one's nature is not seen; if one's nature is not seen, one's essence is not vast and one's function is not expansive. Seeking one's own benefit thus becomes precisely a means of misleading oneself. Whenever something is added to the mind, its essence is already obscured, and there is forever no hope of emerging. All my fellow practitioners who wish to transcend birth and death should give this careful consideration in the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate.

Inscription:

It is not a mind with thoughts; it is not a mind without thoughts.

It is not that there is no seeing; it is not that there is no hearing.

Clearly aware and knowing, yet not attached to seeing or hearing.

Utterly open and without abiding: this is called no-mind.

If the mind does not abide anywhere, where can delusion rely?

Once delusion is not established, past obstructions are naturally removed.

Ask whence the mind comes: it arises because of circumstances.

Circumstances too do not truly exist; both are illusory shadows.

Functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges all arise from the mind that depends on conditions.

Where the mind dependent on conditions ceases [Note], one suddenly realizes the unborn.

The true reality of the unborn cannot be seen with the eyes.

Vast and obscure, within it there is an essence.

One who realizes and awakens to this is said to see one's nature.

Therefore, seek nothing, and the mind naturally becomes peaceful and unified.

With no mind that can be deluded, this is great samādhi.

One who attains great samādhi is neither in motion nor stillness.

There is neither gain nor loss, neither joy nor anger.

The original ground does not shift, yet responds to myriad circumstances.

Unchanging yet accordant with conditions: this is freedom from birth and death.

The essential instructions for becoming a Buddha are no more than this.

[Note]: “Mind”: the cooperation of other-power and self-power presses one to the point where the sense faculties and their objects fall apart and the divisions of past and future are cut off. At that point, within the break, one receives a message. Having reached this stage, do not slacken. Continually examine and experience it. When it becomes fully mature, it is like mother and child depending on each other, or like one's own name, which one never forgets or loses.

The practice of heart esotericism can lead directly to seeing one's nature. I hope that benevolent readers will read these forty lines several times each day and know them thoroughly by heart. In time, they will naturally break through upon encountering circumstances, and from the true essence they will gain great potential and great functioning.

Samādhi: sam means correct; ādhi means receiving. Correct reception is precisely correct meditative stability.

—Mr. Xianglu, Explanation of Mind and Nature

gszy ：.....

Inversion is the result of the mind's petty functioning. Person against person, clan against clan, nation against nation—all contend greatly because of narrow views. When petty functioning is employed, one naturally and gradually tends toward evil. What is called goodness is merely a matter of balancing it; it is not yet emptiness. The ancients debated whether human nature is good or evil because they had not seen their nature and therefore spoke in this way. This “nature” is habit; it is mind. Nature has neither good nor evil, but when thought arises, it forms habits.

Once one departs from the original suchness of nature, such biased views arise. One does not know that good and evil are transformations illusorily arising upon the mind and are not matters belonging to one's nature. Nature neither increases nor diminishes because of them; hence it is said to be unstained. The purpose of Zhuangzi's chapter “Free and Easy Wandering” is to encourage people to enlarge their minds, for only then can they enter the Way.

The purport of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra is that the Buddha entrusted this sūtra to ordinary beings of great resolve. When the mind is great, one's aspirations are lofty, one's capacity to undertake responsibility is strong, and one is close to awakening. This distinguishes exemplary people from petty people. Yet among those of great mind, there are further degrees of thoroughness and lack of thoroughness. Those who have not seen their nature have minds that are not empty and quiescent. Though their functioning may be great, it is not complete; or though complete, it is not all-pervading. Whenever they calculate with mind upon mind, their minds grow smaller day by day.

To be refined and single-minded is still relative. One must first inwardly realize the empty and quiescent original nature, and only then give rise to the mind's various functions. Then one can wondrously contemplate the principle that all is originally empty. What my mind grasps is not firm; therefore it can be broad and great, complete and all-pervading, penetrating and non-abiding. If one does not even grasp at good, what room is there for evil? This is the functioning of the great mind, which those who delight in lesser dharmas cannot understand.

Human beings are born bearing the five desires. As it is said, life is properly established through sexual desire. The five desires have their roots in wealth, sensuality, food, fame, and sleep. Once these roots are present, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits necessarily grow forth; when conditions are met, they manifest without end. This is the natural course of events. Because transformations unfold without limit, the six realms are illusorily established.

They give free rein to their deluded minds and seek to indulge their five desires; thus their intrinsic nature becomes obscured. The mind they employ, without their noticing, shrinks from greatness to smallness. They suffer needlessly, not knowing where to stop. This is what grieves those who awaken first and what inspires their vows of great compassion. The Guanzi says, “Within

the mind there is yet another mind." This is the one who first awakens. Such a person knows to use mind to gather in mind and thereby lessen desires.

Since ancient times, all earlier sages have based themselves on this principle in saving the world. Thus they advanced the teaching: first rectify the mind; when the mind is rectified inwardly, one's subsequent conduct will not be misguided. That which establishes goodness and guards against evil is ritual propriety. That which prohibits what is wrong and establishes what is right is law. That which harmonizes the feelings and intentions is music. That which inspires one's aspirations and interests is poetry and song. All of these seek to regulate and subdue the mind. They are likewise nothing but means of leading it from the small to the great, so that it may rid itself of suffering.

The mind is master of all things, yet it easily becomes a slave. When the mind is bound to desire, it becomes desire's slave. The affections between fathers and sons, brothers, husbands and wives, and friends all depend upon desire, and their true meaning thereby perishes. In human social relations, everyone esteems profit in order to sustain desire. This is why righteousness cannot prevail and the Way daily declines.

Desire cannot be transformed and eliminated by human effort, nor can it be restrained by empty talk of heavenly principle. Ritual teachings can only guard against it temporarily; its root remains. Even with the guidance and transformation of worthy fathers and elder brothers, matters are only somewhat better; its root remains. Even if one can restrain it voluntarily, this lasts only for a time. Should the force of external temptations become strong, one may again follow the old path and give it free rein; its root remains.

Why is this so? The habits accumulated since beginningless time are deeply entrenched. How could they be transformed and removed by the efforts of half a lifetime? Therefore, even with the instruction of a hundred sages and a thousand worthies, and the strict supervision of ritual teaching and legal rule, they ultimately cannot bring people to the ultimate end. Mind is illusory; once we speak of illusion, we know that there can be no ultimate end. Such measures can only provide temporary relief and serve as expedient means; they are merely given the provisional name of ultimate.

The Buddha has no way to liberate those without affinity; from this, the rest may be understood. Among the many kinds of sentient beings, those who know to be liberated from birth and death are fewer than one in a million. Of those who fear birth and death and are willing to earnestly seek liberation from it, fewer than one in a million do so. Of those able to liberate themselves from birth and death who also seek liberation for others, again fewer than one in a million do so. Why? Because for human life, liberation from birth and death is the ultimate end.

Yet to seek liberation from birth and death amid inversion and delusion is ultimately difficult to attain. Birth and death are the illusory mind. Only by leaving the illusory mind and seeing one's true nature, then naturally bringing forth great functioning from within true nature, can one be thoroughgoing. Chan Master Shenhui said: "To know empty quiescence and thereby understand the dharmakāya, and to understand the dharmakāya and thereby truly be able to escape—this is called the true principle." Now, without realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, people vainly calculate illusion upon illusion and compete in inversion and delusion. What ultimate end could there be to speak of?

Nevertheless, the Buddha-nature of sentient beings is inherently equal. Yet, obscured by the five desires, they are temporarily confused and lost; their intrinsic nature itself is originally neither mixed nor damaged. Now that they are temporarily immersed in the sea, bodhisattvas employ the power of great compassion to liberate them extensively.

But because causes and conditions differ, some remain on the surface of the water, some sink to the bottom of the sea; some are near and some far; some are willing to emerge and some are not; there are even those who doubt, slander, and oppose. If one attends to this, one loses sight of that. Though the toil and hardship are inexhaustible, the bodhisattva's original vow does not retreat. Only the Buddha knows their causes and conditions. He does not force the matter, but liberates according to conditions, without either delight or vexation.

For the moment, expedient means are called ultimate. This is to say that, within what cannot be ultimate, such expedient means are called ultimate only provisionally. Thus there are those liberated who become Buddhas, bodhisattvas, sages and worthies, or devas and humans; yet these too are merely illusory transformations. It is further said, "They are not sentient beings." This means that they are all Buddhas and must not be regarded as sentient beings.

It is also said, "They are not not sentient beings." This means that, at present, their illusory minds are temporarily inverted and deluded, so they must still be called sentient beings. Because they do not understand their own nature, the minds they employ are small rather than great. Among all sages and worthies, those who have not seen their nature employ minds that may be great but are not complete. None has reached the ultimate; there are only distinctions of greater and lesser, good and evil, right and wrong, high and low.

When the sages of old employed their minds to save the world, they said, "Enable people to save themselves." Their guiding principle did not differ from that of the Buddha, though their methods differed. They spoke of restraining the mind, subduing the mind, rectifying the mind, and gathering in the mind. All these employ a mind outside the mind as a counteractive remedy. When the Guanzi says, "Within the mind there is yet another mind," this mind too arises in dependence upon mind. It knows only to use mind to restrain mind; it is not the mind employed after seeing one's nature.

Therefore, it does not go beyond counteractive remedies. The result of such remedies is to remove evil and preserve goodness. So long as something is preserved, it is not ultimate. For example, in "Do not look at what is contrary to ritual propriety," the initial thought is that something is contrary to ritual propriety; the subsequent thought recognizes this and refrains from looking. Yet the mind that refrains from looking has not vanished. Therefore it is said that something still remains. As for the sage, he knows that above the mind there is only one thing; therefore it is said, "Be watchful when alone."

They speak of clearing the mind, purifying the mind, and no-mind. In these they have already awakened to see that which is soundless and odorless, that which is most hidden and yet most manifest. Extending this, they name it nature and the Way. This comes close to seeing one's nature. They already know that there is an unsurpassable, supreme, unique, and incomparable intrinsic nature, though they have not yet seen it thoroughly. Therefore, in their use of mind, they dare not depart from the original ground.

Compared with others, this is more complete and greater. Yet because their seeing is not thorough, they retain the intention of preserving and nurturing it, fearing that it may be lost.

Moreover, no one has clearly stated that mind is absolutely illusory, or what the appearance of nature ultimately is. They merely say: what I possess naturally is called nature ("What Heaven decrees is called nature"); the mind that arises in accordance with nature, when it accords with what is natural, is called the Way ("To follow nature is called the Way"); when the Way is lost, teaching is used to restore it to its source, and this is called cultivation ("The cultivation of the Way is called teaching"). These few phrases truly have already touched upon matters pertaining to nature. Regrettably, the text that follows contains no method of returning to nature and still does not depart from the functioning of mind, but speaks only of sincerity.

As for how one may realize the mind or empty the mind in order to verify and enter this true nature, nothing has been heard. Mind and nature cannot be divided, yet foolish people forcibly divide them into two, still less knowing what it means to realize the mind and see one's true nature. Again, non-Buddhists may gain a slight sign of meditative stability and illusorily see a moon-disc with blue eyes, then claim that they have realized the mind and seen their true nature. Is this not strange?

Ritual teaching is the compassionate transformation through which bodhisattvas liberate beings in accordance with conditions. Governance is the expedient means of Vajra-like transformative discipline that runs counter to them. Only when both arise from the vow of great compassion can there be no bias toward either laxity or severity. If government is lax, the people disregard the law; if it is severe, the people become cruel. Hence it is said, "Leniency and severity should complement each other; thereby government is harmonious." Those who seek an unchanging law for ten thousand generations and take it to be ultimate are often seen not to know their own limits.

In liberating the illusory minds of sentient beings, there can ultimately be no final method; one can only maintain them temporarily. Laws have their times of exhaustion, but evil has no time when it is entirely cut off. Thus there are supposed ultimate solutions for one time or one age, and ultimate solutions for ten ages or a hundred ages. Judged in terms of time, they are clearly not ultimate after all. Therefore the Buddha called expedient means ultimate, for he thoroughly understood the world and sentient beings: they can only be maintained in this way.

If one seeks a fundamental solution, there is only the method of enabling people to realize the mind and see their true nature. The teaching of the six pāramitās, the myriad practices, and the thirty-seven aids to awakening are all expedient, illusory dharmas prior to realizing the mind. If one can awaken and liberate oneself, then without the labor of all forms of governance and regulation, one will naturally transform beings universally. One can give rise to awakened contemplation, and cause and effect will naturally become clear. When one's plans extend far, the five desires can naturally be restrained.

To awaken with respect to the mind is still not thorough awakening, and the root of evil has not yet been pulled out. To awaken with respect to the root, even if one has not yet awakened for the moment, loosens the root already. By awakening to the root and then awakening to the mind, great functioning arises; the root can certainly be pulled out, and the problem thoroughly resolved. This process cannot be settled in a single statement, nor can it be attained through cultivation at one time. It is simply a matter of practice.

Using mind to turn the light back and observe is the virtue of inner realization. Using mind to bring forth functioning is the work of outward cultivation. The former is entry into the Way and is fundamental. The latter is the application of dharma and is secondary. The virtue of inner realization is directed to examining oneself; the work of outward cultivation is directed to dealing with others. One must first proceed from within to without; only then is one's learning endowed with both essence and function. Yet people are accustomed to attending to externals and do not know what inner realization is.

Therefore, those who examine themselves are few. Without self-examination, they blame others deeply; if they seek the ultimate, it too will be difficult to attain. Moreover, people differ in worthiness and foolishness, high and low. Anyone whose talents are even slightly outstanding becomes attached to his own views, while sentient beings in turn exalt him. This makes his attachment to self still stronger, and the way of inward observation and realization grows ever more distant.

If there is another person of intelligence, he rises to compete with him. Each puts forth a doctrine, and each clings to his own reasons. Sentient beings' minds are originally habituated to agitation, and so factions and schools are formed; people act from personal feelings, and calamities become impossible to foresee. The Huainanzi says: "One who embodies the Way is at ease and

never exhausted. One who leaves matters to teaching labors without result. Those skilled at swimming drown; those skilled at riding fall. Each, because of what he delights in, instead makes it his own calamity. Therefore those fond of affairs have never failed to encounter trouble, and those who contend for profit have never failed to come to ruin," and so forth. There is no other reason: the mind races outward and forgets its root. If everyone knew this, they would know how to conduct themselves.

The ways of saving the world spoken of by the sages of old all exhaustively articulate their principles, but regrettably they never provide methods for proceeding. Nor do they show the way of inner realization, leaving people almost without a place to begin. Thus non-Buddhists freely spread their erroneous teachings, and people rush toward them as if mad. This fully shows that no one fails to think of seeking the Way, but they suffer from having no road of entry. Of those led astray, seven mislead themselves and three are misled by others. Is this not a matter of blessings, virtue, causes, and conditions?

The Buddha teaches people to give in order to arouse the great mind. When giving reaches the relinquishment of one's view of self, it is the greatest gift of Dharma. The intent of giving is to arouse the mind of great compassion. The more one acts for others, the less one acts for oneself. Yet one must take bodhicitta as the cause: at the causal stage one must realize the emptiness of nature, thereby planting the root of great compassion.

Because it arises from the emptiness of nature, it can possess the wondrous function of expedient means; only then can one speak of the ultimate. This is the initial application of the great mind and also the foundation for entering Buddhahood. As the Avataṃsaka Sūtra says: "Is this sūtra not entrusted to bodhisattvas and the like? It is entrusted instead to ordinary beings of great mind." It can thus be seen that the great mind is the key to becoming a Buddha and also the foundation of self-liberation.

Now, if one does not turn within one's nature but seeks outside the mind, one's foundation is already small, and accomplishment is certainly difficult. Therefore it is said: "Relying on sentient beings, one gives rise to great compassion; relying on great compassion, one arouses bodhicitta; relying on bodhicitta, one attains complete and perfect awakening." Thus the Buddhadharma nowhere departs from sentient beings, and therefore does not depart from worldly dharmas and human affairs. It may be called supremely active. Moreover, it sees self and others as nondual. To arouse bodhicitta benefits oneself, and it also benefits others. Expedient means are ways of responding to worldly affairs. One must take bodhi as the basis before one can bring forth the functioning of the great mind. To be expedient in every situation is the fruition of the great mind. Otherwise, it is merely empty talk.

Buddhist scriptures came to China in the medieval period. Some ancient people had not yet had the opportunity to see them; moreover, their sectarian views were too deeply entrenched for them to adopt and integrate them, and thus they could not make use of them. There is a book by Mouzi of the Jin dynasty that discusses the Buddha in greatest detail, through which people of the world came to have some awareness of the breadth and greatness of Buddhist learning. Those in the line of Tao Yuanming, for example, had artistic conceptions truly close to Buddhism; in their transcendence of worldly things, they deeply possessed the potential and function of prajñā.

Later great Confucian scholars, without exception, also took the Buddha's teachings as their foundation in their later years. By the time of Mr. Wang Yangming of the Ming dynasty, the wondrous functioning of Buddhism could be brought forth, for when the essence is great, its function is great. If scholars today wish to transcend birth and death and bring forth great capacity and great function, how earnestly they should apply themselves to the path of seeing their true nature!

----Xianglu, "The Functioning of the Great Mind"

[Zhenshi]: A child has a child's destiny; let him go his own way!

[gszy]: Amitābha Buddha!

[gszy]: When a tiger moves, wind arises; setbacks are hard to avoid. With a touch of ink and wash, dragons emerge in several places. Amitābha Buddha!

Inscription on Awakening to the Mind

It is not mind; it is not no mind; it is not not seeing; it is not not hearing.

Clearly and distinctly aware, yet unattached to seeing and hearing; utterly open and without abiding—this is called no mind.

If the mind has no abiding, on what can delusion depend to stand? Once delusion cannot stand, past obstacles are naturally removed.

Ask whence the mind arises: it arises because of objects. Yet objects, too, do not exist; both belong to illusory appearances.

Wondrous functions as countless as the sands of the Ganges are all conditioned mind. Where conditioned mind ceases, one suddenly realizes the unborn.

The true aspect of the unborn cannot be seen with the eyes. Vast and obscure, within it there is an essential brilliance.

One who realizes and awakens to this is said to see one's true nature. Therefore, seek nothing, and the mind naturally becomes peaceful and unified.

With no mind to be deluded, this is great samādhi. Those who attain great samādhi are without movement and without stillness.

Without gain or loss, without joy or anger, unmoving from the original ground, one responds to the myriad conditions as they arise.

Unchanging while according with conditions—this is freedom from birth and death. The essential formula for becoming a Buddha is no more than this.

----Xianglu

[gszy]: Verses revised by Patriarch Dayu and Xianglu.

The Sixth Patriarch's verse says: "Steadfast and still, cultivate no good; at ease and unhurried, create no evil. Silent and serene, cut off seeing and hearing; vast and open, let the mind have no attachment."

Xianglu explained: "These four lines are supremely exquisite, concise, and direct. By reciting them repeatedly, one can practice anywhere. The first two lines empty the two views of good and evil. If one can be utterly open and without attachment, then even these two lines are unnecessary, and their wondrous function is already complete. Only the word 'cut off' in the third line is inappropriate, for it may lead people mistakenly into the annihilationist view."

Since there is in fact nothing in seeing and hearing that can be cut off, later practitioners of dead samādhi misunderstood this meaning, which is extremely dangerous. Formerly, Master Dayu changed it to "Seeing and hearing are ever quiescent," and it was then complete. Later, someone changed the word "cut off" to "and," which may also serve the purpose. All this was to avoid the fault of annihilationism.

I now propose changing it to the particle "xi," and changing "mind" to the particle "er," using nothing but empty words in order to accord with the meaning of empty numinousness. Moreover, the four lines originally speak of mind and emphasize to the utmost that mind cannot be obtained; therefore, removing the word "mind" is permissible. When practitioners read this passage, they need not deliberately attend to it. Nor is this true only here: this crude work of mine, this Platform Sūtra, and even the Three Piṭakas and twelve divisions of scripture may likewise be neither grasped nor clung to. This merely points directly to the intent of using this mind to accomplish Buddhahood."

----"An Exposition of the Essential Meaning of the Dharma-Treasure Platform Sūtra"

[gszy]: Form and formlessness.

[Detailed Explanation, D] This means correct appearances. The thirty-two marks belong to illusory appearances; because the dharmakāya is their essence, what is manifest outwardly must arise from within. Judging the inner by the outer, it is not improper for the dharmakāya also to possess excellent marks. This is what is meant by: when the mind is expansive, the body is well nourished.

But once one falls into one-sided attachment, vainly grasping appearances while forgetting the essence, one will mistakenly suppose that, since a wheel-turning king possesses the thirty-two marks, he too is a Tathāgata. Would this not confuse right and wrong? Therefore, one is not permitted to seek the body by means of form, and this is rebuked as entering a wrong path. Yet how could one who has realized unsurpassed bodhi lack the complete marks?

If one entertains the thought that the Tathāgata attained unsurpassed bodhi not by virtue of the complete marks, one again inclines toward emptiness and falls into annihilationism. How could this be right? Therefore, wondrous functioning is not discarded: one neither grasps conditioned phenomena nor separates from them. Conditioned phenomena without attachment are unconditioned; but if one establishes a view of the unconditioned, it becomes equivalent to the conditioned. If the World-Honored One practices patience and generosity, he does not greedily abide in nirvāṇa. For if nirvāṇa can be abided in, how could it be true nirvāṇa? Without abiding in nirvāṇa, birth and death are naturally resolved. The nature of merit and virtue is empty; who, then, receives it? This is the most correct way of taking appearances, and is called correct appearances.

"Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be contemplated by means of the thirty-two marks?" Subhūti replied, "So it is, World-Honored One. The Tathāgata is contemplated by means of the thirty-two marks." The Buddha said, "Subhūti, if the Tathāgata is contemplated by means of the thirty-two marks, then a wheel-turning sage king is a Tathāgata." Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying, "World-Honored One, as I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has taught, one should not contemplate the Tathāgata by means of the thirty-two marks." Then the World-Honored One spoke this verse:

If one sees me by form, or seeks me by sound,

That person follows a wrong path and cannot see the Tathāgata.

“Subhūti, if you should entertain the thought that the Tathāgata attained anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi not by virtue of the complete marks, Subhūti, do not entertain that thought: that the Tathāgata attained anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi not by virtue of the complete marks. Subhūti, if you should entertain the thought that those who arouse the mind for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi teach the annihilation of all dharmas, do not entertain that thought.”

“Why? Those who arouse the mind for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi do not teach the marks of the annihilation of dharmas. Subhūti, if a bodhisattva were to fill worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges with the seven treasures and offer them as gifts, and if another person knew that all dharmas are without self and thereby attained acceptance, the merit and virtue gained by this bodhisattva would surpass that of the former bodhisattva. Why? Subhūti, it is because bodhisattvas do not receive merit and virtue.” Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying, “World-Honored One, how is it that bodhisattvas do not receive merit and virtue?” “Subhūti, bodhisattvas should not greedily cling to the merit and virtue they create; therefore, they are said not to receive merit and virtue.”

[Commentary] The World-Honored One said to Subhūti: “In your contemplation, do you indeed take the Tathāgata to possess thirty-two marks that may be grasped?” Subhūti replied, “So it is, so it is.” He meant that although the Tathāgata belongs to the formless dharmakāya, one ultimately cannot see him apart from appearances. As I see it, judging the inner by the outer, it is entirely permissible to take the Tathāgata’s thirty-two marks.

The Buddha told Subhūti: “As you say, but ordinary people have not revealed the dharmakāya and do not understand this meaning. In their contemplation, they one-sidedly take the thirty-two marks to be the Tathāgata. Yet a wheel-turning sage king also possesses the thirty-two marks; how then does he differ from the Buddha?” Subhūti suddenly awakened and said: “As I understand the expedient meaning taught by the Buddha, one should not simply take the thirty-two marks in contemplating the Tathāgata.”

The World-Honored One then repeated the verse: “If one sees the Buddha by form or seeks him by sound, one grasps the Buddha as possessing material appearances. Such a person has already departed from right view and cannot wondrously contemplate the Tathāgata.”

This verse of the World-Honored One was precisely intended to remedy sentient beings’ immediate attachment to existence. He then urgently turned the teaching around again, lest they incline toward emptiness, saying, “Do not entertain that thought”—namely, that the Tathāgata attained unsurpassed bodhi not by virtue of the complete marks. If one were apart from all the complete marks, how could one manifest whether or not bodhi had been attained?

Moreover, bodhi is neither within nor without, neither an appearance nor not an appearance. The dharmakāya is not an appearance, yet neither is it apart from appearances. Although the dharmakāya should not be seen by grasping appearances, neither can it be seen apart from appearances. One-sided attachment to existence causes one to lose the original essence; attachment to emptiness, in turn, immediately becomes annihilationism. A great teacher said: “The Buddhas teach the dharma of emptiness in order to liberate those attached to existence. If one then becomes attached to emptiness, this is not permitted by the Buddhas.” This means that they do not permit annihilationism.

Therefore, the Buddha said, “Do not entertain that thought,” repeating the warning. When the two aspects are contemplated together, the meaning is complete. Without attachment to existence and without falling into emptiness, one truly arouses the mind for unsurpassed bodhi and thereby accomplishes this merit and virtue. A bodhisattva does not greedily cling to merit and virtue precisely because its nature is empty; one merely accomplishes acceptance of the unborn dharmas.

Knowing that all dharmas are without self, subject and object are both forgotten, and essence and function are one. This is true unsurpassed merit and virtue, incomparable to the seven treasures filling worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Thus, one engages in conditioned phenomena without attachment, has appearances without grasping them, and possesses merit and virtue without defilement. All appearances—from the thirty-two marks below to the appearances of nirvāṇa and merit and virtue above—are rightly understood through wondrous contemplation. This is called correct appearances; it is the most correct way of taking appearances. ----Xianglu, “A Sequential Commentary on the Diamond Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra”

[gszy]: The concealment and manifestation of spiritual powers.

Someone asked: “To realize the mind and see one’s true nature is to be a sage. Not only is there no further need to cultivate and practice, but one should also manifest all kinds of spiritual powers and transformations, far surpassing ordinary people—what is called great capacity and great function, with miraculous transformations beyond reckoning. Why then do you instead say that only after awakening does true cultivation begin?”

The reply: “Practitioners of the Way today make two kinds of mistakes. First, they think that after awakening one is immediately a sage and should manifest all kinds of miraculous transformations. If one cannot produce such manifestations, they take it as

proof that there has been no awakening, but only mere verbal Chan—empty talk about true principle. Consequently, their minds become discouraged and they instead fall into the error of believing themselves to have no share in it. Such cases are everywhere."

Second, they say that in the Chan school there is originally neither practice, attainment, nor realization; once one awakens, that is the end of it, so why engage further in cultivation? Consequently, although they may awaken at the level of principle, their habitual tendencies remain unchanged. As days and months pass, they continue as before to drift through birth and death and cannot avoid rebirth in the six realms. This point has already been discussed above and might seem not to require further explanation. Yet because it bears greatly on the success or failure of practitioners, and because it is precisely the root of the error among those now studying the Way, I do not begrudge the extra words and will discuss it further in detail.

Secrets of Cultivating the Mind says: "There are many gates of entry into the Way, but stated concisely, they do not go beyond the two gates of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation." It also says: "These two gates of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation are the guiding principles of a thousand sages. All the sages of the past first awakened and then cultivated, and through cultivation attained realization. Thus, spiritual powers and transformations arise through cultivation based on awakening and appear gradually through repeated cultivation; they do not manifest immediately at the time of awakening."

Chan Master Guifeng said: "Though one recognizes that an icy pond is wholly water, one still relies on the warmth of the sun to melt it. Though one realizes that an ordinary being is none other than a Buddha, one still relies on the power of the Dharma for permeating cultivation. When ice melts, water flows and moistens, and only then does its power to irrigate and cleanse become manifest. When delusion is exhausted, the mind becomes empty and unobstructed, and only then do the responses of supernormal radiance emerge. Supernormal powers and transformations in the realm of phenomena cannot be accomplished in a single day; they manifest through gradual permeating cultivation."

Yangshan instructed the assembly: "I now tell you clearly: do not seek shortcuts. Instead, cultivate truthfully within the ocean of your own nature. Do not seek the three insights and six supernormal powers. Why not? These are peripheral matters at the end of the path of sages. Now you need only recognize the mind and comprehend its nature. If you attain the root, do not worry about the branches; in time, you will naturally possess them in full. If you have not attained the root and merely learn from others through discriminating consciousness, you will ultimately not attain it. Even if you attain something, it will not be genuine, and in the future you will be liable to become a demon."

From the passages cited above, we may know what sudden awakening is. When ordinary beings are deluded, they mistakenly take the four great elements to be the body and deluded thoughts to be the mind. They do not know that their own nature is the true Dharma body or that their own numinous knowing is the true Buddha. They constantly seek the Buddha outside the mind, running here and there, until suddenly a good spiritual friend points out an entryway to them. In a single thought, they turn the light inward, see their own original nature, and recognize their own fundamental mind. This mind-nature is originally free of afflictions and of arising and ceasing; it is inherently perfect and complete, lacking nothing, and no different from all Buddhas. Moreover, from an ordinary being to the state of Buddhahood, there are no stages or successive levels. This is called sudden awakening.

Though it is called sudden awakening, it pertains to the level of principle. Habitual defilements in the realm of phenomena have accumulated over many lifetimes and kalpas, through repeated birth and death; attachments are firmly entrenched and cannot suddenly be eliminated. Therefore, one must cultivate on the basis of awakening and gradually eliminate habitual tendencies. Only when delusion is exhausted do spiritual powers manifest; they certainly do not manifest at the moment of sudden awakening at the level of principle. Thus, practitioners must understand the process and discern what comes first and what follows. They must never doubt themselves because supernormal powers have not yet developed, much less doubt others, thinking that no one can realize the Way and taking another path instead. If they mistakenly enter a wrong path, then even after kalpas as numerous as dust motes, they will be unable to realize the Way.

Moreover, whether supernormal powers manifest is insufficient to show whether one has realized the Way. First, there are many kinds of such powers: some are acquired through the cultivation of Esoteric Buddhism; some arise when spirits or ghosts possess someone and provide information; some are received as karmic recompense through cultivation permeated in past lives; and so forth. One cannot say that all such people have realized the Way.

Such spiritual powers may depend on some external support and are not genuine powers, or they may merely resemble genuine powers. Once the physical body decays and that support is lost, they disappear entirely. Second, the ancient worthies said that there is a distinction between awakening first and then attaining supernormal powers, and attaining supernormal powers first and then awakening. One cannot say that attaining such powers necessarily means realizing the Way.

For example, when Chan Master Poshān Ming was cultivating the Way at Tiantong, before awakening he was able to send forth his spirit to steal ducks from local villagers, treating it as samādhi play. Later, when the matter came to light, Chan Master Miyun Wu reproved him, saying: "Though you are not without playful spiritual powers, you have not even dreamed of the Buddhadharma!" Poshān knelt and requested instruction. Only after further strenuous investigation did he finally awaken.

Still more so in modern times: sentient beings have even poorer faculties and heavier habitual obstructions. Of those who seek to attain supernormal powers before awakening, not one in tens of millions succeeds. Therefore, after awakening, we must

cultivate in accordance with awakening, gradually remove habitual tendencies, and gradually manifest spiritual powers. All the ancient sages and patriarchs throughout the generations did so. Thus, the two gates of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation are the standard for Buddhist disciples; practitioners of every school should observe and uphold them.

—Master Yuanyin, "A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One's True Nature"

[gszy]: Attachment: Timely Conditions and Causes. Homage to Master Yuanyin.

The Great Virtuous Master Yuanyin Passed Away While Seated

Wude

The great Acharya Yuanyin, third patriarch of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma of formless esoteric practice, passed away while seated at 8:15 p.m. on February 5 of this year (the first day of the first lunar month), at the age of ninety-six.

Before his passing, the Acharya had always been in excellent health, and all aspects of his daily life were as usual. Every day, an unceasing stream of people came to ask about the Buddhadharma. The Acharya always answered every question and spoke freely on the Buddhadharma; his breath was strong and his voice resonant. On the evening of February 3, the eve of the Little New Year, he bathed as usual, showing no sign at all that he was about to leave this world. On the morning of February 5, the Acharya said to those around him:

"I am going home." Those around him said, "Master, you cannot leave; we all need you." The Master said, "Everything is an illusion. I have not left you. Remember: 'Coming, yet not coming; going, yet not gone. In this coming and going, there is neither coming nor going.'" That same day, he also conferred empowerment and blessings upon those who came to request the Dharma.

He ate dinner as usual, showing no sign at all that he was about to pass away. After dinner, he sat as usual in the chair where he always sat and discussed the Buddhadharma with those around him, teaching them how to embody the Buddhadharma in daily life. After speaking for about forty-five minutes, he suddenly looked up into the sky with both eyes, as though seeing something. He immediately stood up and then slowly sat down. This true good spiritual friend, revered by humans and devas alike, peacefully relinquished his body, demonstrating through his own person the ease and freedom with which a practitioner may take rebirth, unhindered by birth and death.

For several days after he relinquished his body, an extraordinary fragrance continually filled the room. His remains were then transported to Putuo Mountain and kept there for sixty days. On the day of cremation, April 6, many disciples of the Acharya from throughout China and overseas learned of the cremation date through various channels despite receiving no notice. To commemorate the Acharya's meritorious achievements and out of incomparable reverence for him, they independently made their way to Putuo Mountain.

They gathered before the cremation kiln on Putuo Mountain to bid a final farewell to the Acharya's remains. When the executor of the will had finished reading the will, an extraordinary sight appeared: a green lotus appeared above the heads of those assembled, and three rays of golden light shone down from the sky. One ray shone directly into the center of the crowd, while the other two shone to either side, covering everyone present. Purple light also appeared upon the lotus and moved back and forth. A video camera recorded this extraordinary scene on the spot.

During the cremation, a lotus also appeared upon the Acharya's chest. Many people present witnessed this extraordinary sight in the fire.

After many days of continuous rain, the sky that day was extraordinarily clear and cloudless. After the cremation, auspicious clouds in the forms of dragons and phoenixes appeared in the sky. Above the cremation kiln, they sometimes remained still for a long time and sometimes moved back and forth. This extraordinary sight appeared several times over the course of several hours, each appearance lasting a considerable time. In the cloudless sky, it was truly a beautiful and remarkable sight.

The next day, when the relics were collected, a vast, five-colored circular radiance again appeared in the cloudless sky. From its center shone four rays of golden light. Within the entire circle, purple, red, blue, purplish-red, and other lights continually appeared and filled it. Within the circular radiance, the Acharya was seated upright upon a lotus. This auspicious sign lasted for more than forty minutes.

A video camera likewise recorded this extraordinary auspicious sign, leaving exceptionally precious documentation capable of inspiring firm faith. If the lotus that appeared above the heads of those present on the day of cremation, together with the three rays of golden light shining down from the sky, was a blessing upon those assembled, then the vast circular radiance, the lights of many colors filling it, and the solemn sacred image of the Acharya foretold that the Dharma gate of the Acharya's lineage would shine and flourish still more brilliantly, illuminating the great thousandfold world.

All those present who were collecting relics, upon seeing this auspicious sign, gave rise to boundless gratitude toward the Acharya and unanimously vowed to cultivate even more diligently in order to repay their teacher's kindness. Many bystanders

who saw the scene praised its wonder and vowed to study and practice the unsurpassed Buddha Way. That day, many relics and relic flowers were collected.

As early as 1989, the Acharya had wished to leave this world, but after his disciples repeatedly implored him, he agreed to remain in the world.

Five years earlier, when a lay practitioner happened to ask the Acharya when he would relinquish his body, the Acharya replied, "The year 2000." Last year, the Acharya made his will in advance. To avoid alarming his many disciples and causing unnecessary difficulties, he informed only a few close disciples, so that they could discuss the necessary arrangements. The close disciples earnestly urged the Acharya to remain in the world, and the Acharya said:

"Where there is birth, there must be cessation; even the Buddha was thus. My karmic affinity of transformation is about to be fulfilled, but I will not leave you all. The teacher's teacher and the patriarchs are also constantly blessing disciples who practice the Dharma." The day before his passing, he said to everyone: "I have always urged you all to seek rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. I will set an example for you: I, too, will seek rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss." Having said this,

he immediately recited the rebirth mantra aloud. In the days before his passing, whenever he received disciples who came to ask about the Dharma, he would indirectly suggest that he was about to leave this world. Yet his health remained excellent, and none of the disciples understood at the time. Only afterward, when they reflected upon it, did they realize this; some had understood, but did not dare ask.

A certain Dharma master from Putuo Mountain came to ask the Acharya about the Dharma and had originally intended to return on the first day of the lunar month. As an exception, the Acharya asked him to remain for one more day and said, "When you return, take some things with you, and convey my greetings to Venerable Miaoshan." Later, the Acharya passed away that day. This Dharma master arranged, with Venerable Miaoshan's consent, for the remains to be kept for a period at Putuo Mountain, as stipulated in the will. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to keep the remains there for a time without alarming disciples across the country. This was truly the Acharya's skillful arrangement.

(In the early 1980s, the Acharya lectured on the sūtras to senior monks at Mount Putuo and thus came to know the Venerable Abbot Miaoshan. Elder Miaoshan also entered parinirvāṇa on the twenty-second day of that month.)

A lay practitioner in distant Shandong called the Acharya on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth lunar month, asking to come to Shanghai to care for him. The Acharya said, "Is that still necessary?" The lay practitioner reflected that he had previously asked several times to care for the Acharya, but the Acharya had always said, "Your family needs you too; I am still managing." This time, however, there was something unusual about both his reply and tone.

It was most unusual. Two days later, he dreamed of a grave, upon which the character "Yuan" appeared. Recalling the Acharya's reply two days earlier and the dream, he sensed that something was amiss and hurried to Shanghai, only to find that the Acharya had already passed away.

Even before the Acharya's rebirth, many disciples who had received the Dharma from him, throughout the country, had dreams foretelling that he would soon pass away. People would therefore often suddenly telephone to inquire after the Acharya's condition, yet they could not speak openly of their dreams. When they later spoke of them, they all felt it was inconceivable. This was truly the blessing of the Acharya's extraordinary power of merit and virtue.

In his youth, the Acharya studied Tiantai teachings under the eminent Tiantai master Venerable Xingci. He subsequently studied Consciousness-Only under the lay elder Fan Gunong, then studied the Avataṃsaka teaching and practiced contemplation of the Dharma Realm under Venerable Yingci, the Huayan seat master. Finally, he relied on Acharya Wang Xianglu, the second patriarch of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma of formless esoteric practice, to cultivate the Heart-of-Heart Dharma. Thoroughly awakening to the essential point of mind, he attained great accomplishment and, in 1958, succeeded to the position of third patriarch of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma.

He then lived in seclusion on the outskirts of Shanghai for several decades, renouncing fame and profit, harmonizing Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism, teaching according to circumstances, laboring quietly, and remaining unmoved by praise or blame. During the ten years of catastrophe, the Acharya was subjected to all manner of slander for transmitting the Dharma and teaching disciples, and was held in isolation for investigation for two and a half years.

After the catastrophe, freedom of religious belief was restored. The Acharya was already seventy-six, but he was deeply moved by the suffering of sentient beings: they did not understand the true reality of the universe and human life, mistook illusory existence for real existence, and could not relinquish their attachments. Thus, they revolved endlessly in saṃsāra, with no prospect of release. Moreover, many Buddhist practitioners were also trapped in a heap of names and forms, clinging to the finger as the moon; this was of no help in subduing afflictions.

Those resolved to practice for liberation also blindly cultivated without understanding the truth, idly squandering their time and even falling into deviation and demonic states. In view of this, the Acharya came forth and loudly proclaimed the importance of realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature. This is truly the key to transcending birth and death. Only by recognizing their

own fundamental mind, seeing their own intrinsic nature, and returning to their original nature can sentient beings escape the bitter sea of birth and death. This is truly indispensable.

No school or tradition can go beyond this. Even the Pure Land school, which universally embraces practitioners of all three capacities, requires one, after rebirth in the West, to "see the Buddha when the lotus opens" before one can "awaken to the unborn." So-called "seeing the Buddha when the lotus opens" means that the flower of one's mind opens and one sees the Buddha of one's own intrinsic nature. Is this not another name for realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature?

The Acharya was also moved by the fact that sentient beings in the Dharma-ending age have scant blessings and heavy karma, deep obscurations and shallow wisdom. Not to mention attaining accomplishment in this very life, even rebirth in the Western Pure Land is truly difficult. As the ancient worthies often lamented: "Those who recite the Buddha's name are countless, but among those reborn there are scarcely one or two." Investigating the reason, it is simply that sentient beings cannot let go. So long as there remains even one thing they have not relinquished in the Sahā world, rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss is impossible.

To say verbally that one has let go is not truly to let go; only letting go within the mind is genuine letting go. Yet how difficult it is to let go within the mind! Look at one's own clinging and deluded thoughts: unless these deluded thoughts are subdued, they will inevitably lead one into the cycle of birth and death. Unless one's practice becomes continuous and undivided, rebirth can scarcely be hoped for. The Heart-of-Heart Dharma is truly a Dharma gate that is exceptionally powerful and swift in subduing afflictions, and is suited to the present capacities.

This great Dharma treasure is an exceptionally sublime Dharma gate for sentient beings in the Dharma-ending age to attain accomplishment in this very life or rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The Acharya further pointed out that this Dharma is simple and easy to practice. Relying on the Buddha's blessings, it swiftly and powerfully eliminates offenses, accumulates blessings, realizes the essence, brings forth functioning, and can cut off obstacles such as external demons.

The Buddha-Heart Sūtra, Also Corresponding to the Great Wish-Fulfilling Dhāraṇī states: "At that time, the Tathāgata arose from samādhi and said: 'Good men, excellent, excellent! Sentient beings are utterly submerged—do you all know this? Sentient beings today do not understand my Dharma or know my mind; they are held by demons—the demons of affliction and Māra. How can they be saved? Who has a means to protect sentient beings? Who has a means to contain this poison? …'"

Among the assembly was a bodhisattva named Shide, who addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One, even vajra bodhisattvas and celestial immortals are entirely unable to gather them in and protect them. How, then, can the Buddha now enable sentient beings to escape this difficulty?"

At that time, the Tathāgata told Bodhisattva Baode: "Only the Tathāgata's Heart-of-Heart can equal this; nothing else can. Why? Because it can cause all demons to give rise to great compassion; … it can cause all Buddhas never to depart; it can cause bodhisattvas to become one's retinue; it can cause all vajras to exert their awesome power; it can cause all assemblies of devas constantly to protect one; and it can cause one to proceed directly to bodhi without retrogression. …" It also states: "…"

"Those who seek rebirth in the West, those who seek to be freely reborn in the lower regions, those who seek to be freely reborn in the ten directions, and those who seek worldly eloquence without deficiency should sincerely contemplate the matter of their own mindfulness, reciting it one thousand times daily. Within seven days, they can attain it; once they leave this world, they will not return again. …" It also states: "… At the time of death, the Buddhas of the ten directions will appear above one's head and personally welcome one to their own worlds. …" The power of this Dharma is inexhaustible, its excellence incomparable, and its principle profound and subtle beyond measure.

The sūtra states: "… Among all bodies, none surpasses the Buddha-body; among all essential and wondrous dharmas, none surpasses the Heart-of-Heart. Reveal this mind to sentient beings, and sentient beings are themselves Buddha-bodies. Such great sage-like power bodhisattvas cannot know. Though there be kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, only now do I entrust it. Those who can practice accordingly are the same as this body of mine. …" Thus, for sentient beings in the Dharma-ending age to have the affinity to practice this great Dharma is something summoned by wholesome roots cultivated over many kalpas, though they do not know it. If anyone slanders this Dharma or obstructs the propagation of the true Dharma, the terrible karmic retribution will likewise be inconceivable; this will not be cited here.

In brief, this Dharma takes prajñā as its essence, Esoteric Buddhism as its function, and the Pure Land as its ultimate destination. It integrates Chan, Pure Land, and Esoteric Buddhism into one. The Acharya personally practiced this Dharma and attained great accomplishment. Therefore, to repay the kindness of the Buddha, the master, and sentient beings, although he was nearly eighty years old—he began propagating the Dharma only after the catastrophe—he still exerted himself to spread it and direct people toward the Pure Land. People often came from thousands or even tens of thousands of miles away

to ask about the Dharma and resolve one or two doubts. The Acharya's residence was often crowded with those seeking and inquiring about the Dharma. His expounding of the Dharma always flowed from the samādhi of intrinsic nature; he never favored any particular school or tradition, but taught according to circumstances and prescribed medicine in accordance with the illness. When he taught the Dharma, an extraordinary fragrance often filled the room. The Acharya had many inconceivable deeds of merit and virtue, but because people today have inferior capacities and few wholesome roots, they do not believe in

extraordinary occurrences; even those who do believe often become attached and easily fall into deviation. Therefore, the Acharya never permitted those who knew of them to speak of them, and it is thus inconvenient to make them public.

Over the past ten years, the number of people who received the Dharma from the Acharya reached tens of thousands, throughout China and in such countries as the United States, Germany, France, Canada, and Japan. There were also some who attained accomplishment through practice; those who realized the mind and saw their true nature were extremely numerous, and those reborn in the Pure Land or already fully qualified for rebirth were beyond count. Thus, many Han Chinese went to great Tibetan tulkus to seek the Dharma, and these great tulkus all told them that Master Yuanyin of China was a truly accomplished great spiritual friend. Consequently, many Dharma students returning from Tibet to China drew close to the Acharya.

In this defiled world of the Dharma-ending age, when people's capacities are so extremely inferior, how difficult it is still to enable so many sentient beings to receive the true benefit of the Buddhadharma! The Acharya was like a glowing red ember upon a land of ice and snow, melting sentient beings' attachments; he was also like a ship traveling over sand, laboriously ferrying people toward the other shore. This was truly an inconceivable great undertaking!

It is believed that in the years to come, outstanding Buddhist disciples among the Acharya's followers—learned, practiced, and realized—will surely give rise to great bodhi vows and come forth to propagate the true Dharma, in order to rescue sentient beings from fire and water. This is indeed the joyous prospect eagerly awaited by Buddhist disciples devoted to genuine learning and practice alike.

In his leisure hours, the elder wrote A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One's True Nature, A Simple Explanation of the Inscription on Awakening to Mind, Lectures on the Blue Cliff Record, Slight Ripples in the Ocean of Chan, Uncovering the Hidden Meaning of the Heart Sūtra, and Discussing the Key Issues of Rebirth in the Western Pure Land; all are collected in Essential Teachings for Buddhist Practice and Realization. In addition, An Explanation of Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State has also been published. His Direct Explanation of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra

has unfortunately been lost. A Simple Explanation of the Mahāmudrā of the Ganges and A Collection of Questions and Answers on Essential Teachings for Buddhist Practice and Realization will soon be published. The Collection of Questions and Answers will surely bring great benefit to practitioners who have no one from whom to seek instruction.

Although the elder has laid aside his body of karmic retribution, his dharmakāya is ever present and continues to bless his disciples through various skillful means. This is truly what many disciples who practice this Dharma silently pray for.

March 30, 2000

[Discovery!]: Let me post my discovery again! If you wish to delete this post, please be sure to state the reason. Thank you!

Chapter Six: Clarifying That the Mind-Nature Is Undefiled

Do you not see? The wise seek the mind, not the Buddha. The quiescence of all dharmas is precisely lustful craving. Love, desire, and lust arise from the mind. I too restrain the mind through no-mind. If one seeks the mind and still cannot obtain it, there is naturally nowhere for lustful craving to arise. Lustful craving, having no arising, also has no cessation. Delusion is neither shallow nor deep. Nor can one attain a state that is not desire. The wondrous difficulty is to seek neither attainment nor nonattainment. The nature of the three poisons is ever thus, fully endowed and always like a solid forest.

I take lustful craving as Buddhist work; no longer do the three poisons rampantly invade. If one seeks liberation, one instead sinks; discriminating between emerging and sinking, one sinks again. The Buddhas skillfully master the three poisons, but sentient beings, in their delusion, cannot bear them. I too diligently cultivate the nature of the three poisons, no longer wishing to seek the minds of all Buddhas. Difficult is the road! Yet in the mind, the road is originally without a single thing. No thing is pure bodhi. In the mind that does not see, one constantly sees the Buddha.

[Discovery!]: Fu Dashi of the Liang dynasty: Hymns on the Diamond Sūtra

---

Layman Fu of the Liang Dynasty's Hymns on the Diamond Sūtra

[Punctuation revised by True Suchness and Wondrous Mind]

Original Preface: The Song of the Diamond Sūtra was composed by Layman Fu during the Liang dynasty. At the beginning of Emperor Wu's reign, he invited Master Zhi to expound the sūtra. Master Zhi replied, "Layman Fu himself is skilled at explaining it." The emperor asked, "Where is this man now?" Master Zhi replied, "He is presently at the fish market." Thereupon an edict summoned the layman into the palace.

The emperor asked, “If the layman is to expound the Diamond Sūtra, what lofty seat will he require?” The layman replied, “There is no need for a lofty seat; I need only a cypress board.” When he received the board, he chanted the Forty-Nine Hymns on the Diamond Sūtra and then departed. Master Zhi asked Emperor Wu, “Did you recognize this man?” The emperor said that he had not. Master Zhi told him, “This is an incarnation of Maitreya Bodhisattva, come down to assist Your Majesty in propagating the teachings.” Upon hearing this, Emperor Wu was suddenly greatly astonished and came to venerate him deeply. He therefore had these hymns inscribed on the four-story pavilion of a temple in Jingzhou, where they remain to this day.

[Discovery!]: I attend to lustful desire as a Buddhist undertaking. No longer do the three poisons assail me. If one seeks liberation, one instead sinks deeper; discriminating between emergence and submergence, one sinks again.

[Discovery!]: In former days I said that all Buddhas were far away; now I know that greed and anger are nirvāṇa.

Chapter Eight: Clarifying That the Fundamental Limit Cannot Be Obtained

Do you not see that within the fundamental limit there is no further foundation? No one knows the true limit without a foundation. If one, in not knowing, comprehends this limit, its purity and subtlety are nothing remarkable. Knowing and not knowing are ever thus; suffering and pleasure are equally identical with great compassion. Sentient beings in the three realms are engrossed in deluded pursuits, yet in truth there is only non-contrivance. Nor is there even this dharma of non-contrivance. To force the mind to arise is wearying suffering. Such wearying suffering is all empty, like the shimmer of heat or an echo. Arising and ceasing neither abide nor depart from one another.

One who can know that this mind is without obstruction cannot be bound by the emptiness and falsity of birth and death. Yet this one mind fully contains the eighty-four thousand rules of discipline. Nor does it fall into the dharma that claims superhuman attainments. Though perilous and utterly dangerous, it is not dangerous. Among all dharmas there is no dharma. What are worldly people hurrying about to accomplish? The road is difficult. The road is difficult, yet there is nothing in the mind to be seen. In former days I said that all Buddhas were far away; now I know that greed and anger are nirvāṇa.

[Discovery!]: I address those who truly cultivate no-thought: take care not to discriminate against and condemn lustful desire.

Chapter Nine: Clarifying That Afflictions Need Not Be Cut Off

Do you not see that Mañjuśrī's wondrous virtue is not far away? The three hindrances and three poisons are precisely the three emptinesses. The five-part Dharma body is entwined with the five aggregates; the ignorance of the six sense entrances becomes the six supernormal powers. How have the four inversions and the four fruits ever differed? The essence of the eight wrong and eight right paths is still the same. The seven factors of awakening and bodhi-nature are without distinction; the wandering of the seventh consciousness accords with the true principle. All afflictions are empty and quiescent; the Dharma treasury of all Buddhas lies within the mind. Always keep the forbearance of the Dharma close at hand. One merely advances by degrees, yet does not encounter it.

Where do all Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, abide? They all abide amid lustful desire and sensual love. The present exhortation to cut off lustful desire and sensual love is merely an expedient for teaching the immature. The fundamental nature of desire is truly pure; provisionally speaking of emptiness, even its name is empty. The road is difficult. The road is difficult, yet within the mind there is no mind. I address those who truly cultivate no-thought: take care not to discriminate against and condemn lustful desire.

[Discovery!]: Do you not see that sensual love and lustful desire are the mothers of all Buddhas, and that all World-Honored Buddhas are the children of desire? The immeasurable deluded mind is originally the Way. The three poisons and four inversions are inconceivable.

Chapter Eighteen: Clarifying the Inconceivable Mother of the Buddhas

Do you not see that sensual love and lustful desire are the mothers of all Buddhas, and that all World-Honored Buddhas are the children of desire? Bodhi has always been my craftsman; now it makes me a master craftsman for all. Formerly, I sought the Buddha outwardly by a thousand means; only now do I know that the Buddha is in my robe. The immeasurable deluded mind is originally the Way. The three poisons and four inversions are inconceivable. Deludedly practicing compassion, one pities the sufferings of beings, not knowing that all sufferings are compassion. Anger and ignorance are most subtle and wondrous; even wisdom cannot conceive them.

Formerly, I diligently studied views and understanding, not knowing that views and understanding are themselves without knowing. The four destinies and three lower realms are all nonexistent; the three hindrances and three liberations are inseparable. The road is difficult. The road is difficult: all is absent, and both are forgotten. To understand that afflictions have no arising is precisely for the Tathāgata to sit at the site of awakening.

[Discovery!]: Where do all Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, abide? They all abide amid lustful desire and sensual love. The present exhortation to cut off lustful desire and sensual love is merely an expedient for teaching the immature.

[Discovery!]: Everything posted above has been reproduced from The Recorded Sayings of Layman Fu. According to tradition, Layman Fu was an incarnation of Maitreya Buddha.

[Shengjun]: How laughable!

Has this gentleman selected these Mahāyāna teachings, which the Buddha spoke to bodhisattvas on the stages, in order to suggest that he himself is no longer immature but is a great bodhisattva?

According to the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, only an eighth-bhūmi bodhisattva can “although attaining the treasury of the Buddha's realm, still abide in the realm of Māra; although transcending Māra's path, still manifest Māra's practices; although conforming to non-Buddhist practices, not abandon the Buddhadharma.” Layman Fu was a reappearance of Maitreya Bodhisattva, and thus could of course say that such desire and defilement, as well as all demonic practices and affairs, do not obstruct his bodhi and right awakening. But for you to speak in this way here is merely to imitate Xi Shi by frowning. For all ordinary beings, and even bodhisattvas before the eighth bhūmi, such an understanding is absolutely impermissible!

According to the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, “Bodhisattvas at the five abodes manifest all afflictions, yet these are not called enemies. Why? Because of afflictions, bodhisattvas take birth; because they take birth, they can in turn teach and transform sentient beings. For this reason, they are not called enemies.” Bodhisattvas below the five abodes, as well as ordinary beings, should learn from bodhisattvas to leave behind all enemy-bandits, as the sūtra says: “How does a bodhisattva leave all enemies? All afflictions are a bodhisattva's enemies. Therefore, bodhisattva-mahāsattvas should always keep far away from them. This is called a bodhisattva's destroying all enemies.”

Therefore, the greatest taboo in studying Buddhadharma is muddleheadedness. To indiscriminately apply the views of great bodhisattvas is most harmful!

As for all realms of sensual pleasure, including the realms of the devas of the three realms, they are all places encompassed by the three outflows. Whenever attachment arises toward them in the mind, it is called an outflow and is a state of impurity. Ordinary beings cling to appearances and constantly give rise to notions of wonder and pleasure in every realm; these are people of erroneous views. As the sūtra says: “What are the mistaken actions seen by all ordinary beings? Within the conditioned, they see permanence, bliss, self, and purity; with regard to the Tathāgata, they see impermanence, suffering, impurity, and no-self. They perceive—

sentient beings and lifespans; through views and understanding, they take the realm of neither perception nor non-perception to be nirvāṇa. They see Īśvara as possessing the Noble Eightfold Path; they hold views of existence and views of annihilation. Views such as these are called mistaken actions.” The so-called Īśvara refers to the place where the māras of the desire realm abide, the highest realm within the desire realm. Their power of merit is extremely great. The Buddha said, “Only bhikṣus whose outflows are exhausted can overcome them.”

(Note: Here, exhaustion of the outflows does not mean what Tibetan Buddhist practitioners call “loss of bindu.” Rather, it refers to the outflows that lose the bodhi of formless right mindfulness. There are three kinds: first, the “outflow of desire.” Because this outflow is not exhausted, all ordinary beings are born within the cycle of birth and death in the desire realm. Second, the “outflow of becoming.” Because of this outflow, noble disciples of the two vehicles who have not attained the stage beyond training cultivate the form-realm—

dhyānas, maintain pure brahmacarya, and are born in the heavens of the form realm. Third, the “outflow of ignorance.” Non-Buddhists, noble disciples still in training, bodhisattvas, and those prior to the ground of equal enlightenment all have this outflow. Non-Buddhists further cultivate the four dhyānas of the formless realm and are born in the four heavens of the formless realm, such as the heaven of neither perception nor non-perception. This is a brief explanation of the so-called outflows.)

Therefore, you muddleheaded proponents of Mahāyāna who rejoice in such dharmas as lustful desire are encompassed by these outflows of desire and becoming. Of course, there is nothing especially frightening about dharmas to which all the māra kings of the desire realm are attached. Bodhisattvas at certain abiding stages must manifest them, but what bodhisattvas manifest is “dwelling in Māra's palaces without being defiled by the five desires.” If others do not contemplate liberation but instead rejoice in and praise them, they are encompassed by inverted delusion and ignorance. It is enough for us to know this. Neither grasping nor rejecting, all dharmas are expedient means, like a dream or an illusion. In this way, one transcends Māra's path and is not detained by the three realms.

Things such as ghee, clarified butter, and rock sugar:

when digested, they are medicine; when not digested, they are poison! — Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, fascicle 8

[Discovery!]: It truly is laughable!

The greatest taboo in studying Buddhadharma is muddleheadedness. To indiscriminately apply the views of great bodhisattvas —

is most harmful!

—You do not even dare to study the views of great bodhisattvas; do you then dare to study the Buddha's views?

Things such as ghee, clarified butter, and rock sugar:

when digested, they are medicine; when not digested, they are poison! — Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, fascicle 8

—You have studied the Buddha's views to this extent! I fear that the Buddhist sūtras have truly become poison for you.

[Lion]: As for saying that Xuecheng Duyao has learned poison, he certainly would not admit it; yet he has done quite a bit of using the Buddha to criticize the Buddha.

[Lion] (in reply to [Shengjun]: “How amusing!”): You have broken the rules again. To tell you plainly, I deleted a passage from your post.

If you insist that Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism is not pure and orthodox Buddhadharma, you are perfectly free to start a thread on any Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist forum and debate the matter with them.

The Heart-of-Heart Dharma Forum has consistently upheld the views of the patriarchs of its own tradition and has always recognized both the exoteric and esoteric teachings of Tibetan Buddhism as pure and orthodox Buddhadharma. No one is permitted, in any form or manner, to advocate, publish, disparage, or slander Tibetan Buddhism. If you like this forum, please consciously observe its rules; if you dislike it, please take the initiative to leave. OK?

[Fodi Mo]: Shengjun! Your way of evaluating doctrinal views is employing a double standard! ...

Have you noticed it yourself?

You first subjectively affirmed that Great Master Fu was an incarnation of Maitreya; only then did you depart from your usual practice and completely turn a blind eye to such an extreme statement praising the three poisons.

If these words had been sung from the mouth of a lama, how would you decide the matter?

When distinguishing true Dharma from false Dharma, can you still not shake off the habitual psychological tendency to rely on persons rather than the Dharma?

I would further add that this song of the Way, posted by “Faxian” and purportedly written by Great Master Fu, entitled Difficulties on the Road, is considered by academic circles to have a high likelihood of being a spurious attribution. Even Yongjue Yuanxian, an eminent monk of the Ming dynasty, said: “Such pieces as Difficulties on the Road and Ease on the Road are both in styles subsequent to the Tang; how could there be any doubt that they are spurious compositions?”

Brother Shengjun! To evaluate persons and assess doctrinal principles, you must produce a set of standards that everyone can see!

[Faxian!]: I have several questions about little brother Mo’s discovery:

---

1. Great Master Fu lived during the Liang dynasty and was a contemporary of Patriarch Bodhidharma. Why is there no record of patriarchs and eminent monks from Bodhidharma onward criticizing these sayings? Even if the sayings were not composed by Great Master Fu, would eminent monks throughout the generations have simply ignored such “false teachings”?

2. Of the widely known four great eminent monks of the Ming dynasty, which one criticized these statements?

3. Why could these words be included in Buddhist scriptures throughout the ages?

[Huanxiu]: What are your intentions? It is perfectly clear to any onlooker!

It is simply to summon back the soul and raise the banner for the teachings of desire and other māras and non-Buddhist paths!

[Faxian!]: Oh, you are so formidable—more formidable than eminent monks throughout the ages, Shengjun!

[Fodi Mo]: It was not my discovery! I merely gave a brief indication of how academic circles classify this document.

Moreover, that post of mine was directed at Shengjun personally. Its main purpose was to question what standards Shengjun uses to distinguish true and false Dharma. For in my judgment, if this song of the Way had come from a lama's pen, Shengjun would certainly have denounced it fiercely. Yet today, because it is said to be a work by Great Master Fu, Shengjun has actually turned a blind

eye, pretending not to see it. Is that not allowing officials to set fires while forbidding ordinary people even to light lamps? Moreover, it may not truly have been personally composed by the Great Master. Shengjun must therefore seriously examine the standards by which he himself evaluates doctrinal principles and judges persons!

That is the central point of my statement. I was not thereby implying that Difficulties on the Road is a false teaching. At most, I mentioned that its content is extreme; this was from the perspective of the Āgama style that Shengjun ordinarily follows. I think that should still count as a neutral description, should it not?

[Faxian!]: I merely feel that the material cited by Mo's friend lacks a sound basis.

[Shengjun]: Further Explanation

There are various explanations of when a bodhisattva may be said to have exhausted the outflows, each expounded from a different perspective. Some say that after a bodhisattva has entered a bhūmi and become irreversible, there are no outflows, since all habitual outflows of afflictions are dedicated to bodhi and adorn bodhi.

Now, according to the proper teaching of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, there are four kinds of persons: "The fourth person is called an arhat. Having cut off all afflictions, laid down the heavy burden, swiftly attained personal benefit, and completed what was to be done, such a person abides on the tenth bhūmi and attains sovereign wisdom. According to what people desire, they can manifest all manner of forms and appearances. Adorned as they wish, whenever they wish to accomplish the Buddha Way, they are able to accomplish it. Such immeasurable merits are called those of an arhat. These are called the four kinds of persons who appear in the world, able greatly to benefit and pity the world, serving as a support for the world, bringing peace and happiness to humans and devas, and being the most honored and supreme among humans and devas. Like the Tathāgata, they are called the supreme among people,"

"a place of refuge." This passage of scripture indicates, first, that bodhisattvas too must accomplish the fruition of the path of liberation. But bodhisattvas must reach the tenth bhūmi before they can accomplish the four fruits—the so-called "what was to be done has been completed"—and realize arhatship. This is not as many people mistakenly understand it, namely, that the Mahāyāna does not realize "arhatship." Second, it indicates that, in the true sense, a bodhisattva's exhaustion of outflows and attainment of the wisdom of exhausted outflows can be fully perfected only on the tenth bhūmi. Thus, the preceding passage says that a bodhisattva of equal enlightenment has exhausted the outflows, whereas, according to the scripture, strictly speaking, only after the tenth bhūmi may a bodhisattva be said to have exhausted the outflows.

As for when bodhisattvas accomplish such fruits as that of the anāgāmin, the scriptures provide further explanations. Those interested may consult fascicle six of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra.

[Lion]: A Further Explanation of the Further Explanation

The Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra speaks of the exhaustion of outflows in the sense of the virtue of cessation. The text states: "The fourth person is called an arhat. Having cut off all afflictions, laid down the heavy burden, swiftly attained personal benefit, and completed what was to be done, such a person abides on the tenth bhūmi and attains sovereign wisdom. According to what people desire, they can manifest all manner of forms and appearances. Adorned as they wish, whenever they wish to accomplish the Buddha Way, they are able to accomplish it."

"Such immeasurable merits are called those of an arhat. These are called the four kinds of persons who appear in the world, able greatly to benefit and pity the world, serving as a support for the world, bringing peace and happiness to humans and devas, and being the most honored and supreme among humans and devas. Like the Tathāgata, they are called the supreme among people, a place of refuge."

####The arhat here borrows the name of one of the four fruits of the Hīnayāna; it does not take its actual meaning. It must not be understood to mean that a bodhisattva realizes the fruit of a Hīnayāna arhat only upon reaching the tenth bhūmi. The

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra even uses an icchantika as an analogy for a bodhisattva. If one is called a bodhisattva, how could one possibly be an icchantika?

The exhaustion of outflows of a bodhisattva and that of an arhat bear the same name but differ in meaning. Put simply, an arhat exhausts the outflows by eliminating the afflictive hindrances, ending segmented birth and death, and entering the fruition of nirvāṇa without remainder; a bodhisattva ultimately exhausts the outflows by exhausting the cognitive hindrances, ending transformational birth and death, and entering the fruition of non-abiding nirvāṇa.

As for comparing the fruition of arhatship with that of bodhisattvas, the teachings of different Mahāyāna schools are not entirely consistent. The Tiantai school, the most representative school in China, holds that it is equivalent only to the seventh stage of faith in the Mahāyāna—how vast the difference from the tenth bhūmi!

[Lion]: Yet Another Explanation of the "Further Explanation of the Further Explanation" (transplanted from Huanzhai)

There are various explanations of when a bodhisattva may be said to have exhausted the outflows, each expounded from a different perspective,

Since he himself says, "There are many explanations of when a bodhisattva may be called free of outflows; they expound the matter from different angles," what right does the Demon Army have to say that mine is not one of the correct explanations?

Some say that bodhisattvas become free of outflows once they ascend to the bhūmis and attain non-retrogression, because every habitual outflow of affliction is dedicated to bodhi and adorns bodhi. Now, according to the correct teaching of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra,

If I were to reason according to Little Demon Army's hooligan logic, this statement of his would make him look utterly ridiculous.

The opposite of correct is erroneous—something even a fool knows. If the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra is the correct teaching, then would not everything outside the Nirvāṇa Sūtra be erroneous teaching? But if I were to keep pressing him on this point, I would be bullying him a bit too much.

In fact, the correct explanation should be that the Buddhist scriptures contain definitive teachings and nondefinitive teachings on this issue, and that the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra now sets forth the definitive teaching, namely, such and such. But another problem arises: this foolish fellow simply refuses to acknowledge that Buddhist scriptures differ between definitive and nondefinitive teachings. Even if I wanted to help him now, I could not, haha!

(1) The four fruitions, including arhatship, refer to the fruitions of the path of liberation. They apply throughout all the greater and lesser vehicles of Buddhism; they are not directed solely at adherents of the Lesser Vehicle, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas. Bodhisattvas also attain these four fruitions, and "Arahā" is also one of the Buddha's honorific titles. This error arises from Lion's being influenced by Tibetan Esoteric Buddhists' mistaken view that disparages the Lesser Vehicle and slanders the path of liberation.

Ha! When did I ever say that the fruitions of the path of liberation do not apply throughout all the greater and lesser vehicles of Buddhism? Is this not precisely what is meant by the "virtue of liberation" among Tiantai's "three virtues of the Dharma body"? Foolish fellow, what does this have to do with Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism?

(2) That bodhisattvas of the ten bhūmis attain arhatship is taught in numerous Buddhist scriptures. Because this Lion has never read any such scriptures, it is beyond his expectations,

and he cannot understand it. He therefore slanders as untruthful statements the explicit words of Dharma in the Buddhist scriptures. He further invokes the so-called "bodhisattva icchantika" of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra as

support, not realizing that "bodhisattva icchantika" in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra has another distinct meaning: it refers to bodhisattvas who know that all dharmas are originally nirvāṇa and therefore do not enter into

nirvāṇa. For this reason they are called "bodhisattva icchantikas"; it does not mean the ordinary sense of an icchantika who has cut off all wholesome roots. As the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra

states: "A bodhisattva icchantika, having known that all dharmas are originally nirvāṇa, ultimately does not enter parinirvāṇa"; "A bodhisattva icchantika does not enter parinirvāṇa."

Moreover, when Mahāyāna scriptures say that bodhisattvas attain exhaustion of outflows, the only difference from what adherents of the two vehicles attain is one of temporal priority; exhaustion of outflows and the wisdom of exhausted outflows are not

different. Lion does not understand the Buddhadharma and explains exhaustion of outflows and nirvāṇa in completely reversed terms. Earlier, he even used the so-called “loss of bindu” in Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism

to understand exhaustion of outflows—an entirely non-Buddhist view.

Foolish fellow, then let me tell you again: the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra’s account of exhaustion of outflows speaks in terms of the manifestation of afflictions. Since arhats and seventh-bhūmi bodhisattvas have both eliminated the manifestation of the afflictive obstructions throughout the continuum of consciousness, they are said to have exhausted outflows.

The sūtra also speaks of another kind of exhaustion of outflows. Although arhats and seventh-bhūmi bodhisattvas have eliminated the manifestation of the afflictive obstructions throughout the continuum of consciousness, this merely means that the seeds of affliction have been wholly subdued so that they no longer become active; the seeds themselves have not been eradicated.

Only when one enters the vajra-like samādhi at the completion of the tenth bhūmi are, in the first instant, all seeds of the afflictive and cognitive obstructions extinguished; only in the second instant does one become a Buddha without remainder. The former exhaustion of outflows is merely an expedient teaching; the latter alone is the truly ultimate, definitive teaching. “First subdue the adventitious defilements; [then] forever sever the fundamental ignorance.”

This is what it means. Thus, as an expedient means, the World-Honored One says that all arhats and seventh-bhūmi bodhisattvas also attain exhaustion of outflows; in terms of truth, he does not say that bodhisattvas and others attain exhaustion of outflows. That is to say, among the ten dharma realms, the only one who truly attains exhaustion of outflows is the Buddha!

You know only one side and not the other. That is not surprising: how could someone who does not even know who taught the distinction between definitive and nondefinitive teachings know anything else? The material I cited has long been discussed by great Tibetan masters, but since you have such a deep grudge against them, even if I told you, you would not listen; instead, you would begin another round of slander.

After thinking it over, I had better give you a clue from a Chinese work—the book Outline of the Dharma Characteristics School also contains a specialized discussion of this matter. But do not get angry and dump the chamber pot on Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism again.

(3) It is a fact that Mahāyāna scriptures say that the nirvāṇa realized by bodhisattvas differs from that realized by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. But exhaustion of outflows and nirvāṇa are two related yet distinct concepts. In terms of sequence, one cultivates the exhaustion of outflows and attains the wisdom of exhausted outflows; only then may a śrāvaka enter nirvāṇa with remainder when karmic retribution is exhausted.

One cannot reverse this and say that the wisdom of exhausted outflows is attained after nirvāṇa; if anything were attained, it could not be called nirvāṇa. According to the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, a bodhisattva attains the wisdom of exhausted outflows at the sixth bhūmi and may enter cessation. At the eighth bhūmi, one can enter cessation moment after moment and arise from cessation moment after moment; therefore, the bodhisattva’s nirvāṇa is called “non-abiding nirvāṇa.”

You are wrong again. First, a śrāvaka does not enter nirvāṇa with remainder only when karmic retribution is exhausted; rather, one enters nirvāṇa with remainder while karmic retribution has not yet been exhausted, and enters nirvāṇa without remainder when it is exhausted. Second, I have not confused the relationship between exhaustion of outflows and nirvāṇa. It is you who falsely accuse me of confusing them!

(4) According to Consciousness-Only, the exhaustion of the afflictive obstructions realizes nirvāṇa, while the exhaustion of the cognitive obstructions realizes bodhi. Bodhi and nirvāṇa are two related yet distinct concepts. Lion muddles them all together and talks nonsense here. This shows that he is someone who is unclear even about basic doctrine, yet he likes to puff himself up and spout nonsense, misleading others!

Ha! Foolish fellow, you are falsely accusing a good person again! When have I ever denied that “the exhaustion of the afflictive obstructions realizes nirvāṇa, while the exhaustion of the cognitive obstructions realizes bodhi”? What I said was: “An arhat, by eliminating the afflictive obstructions, ending segmented birth and death, and entering the fruition of nirvāṇa without remainder, attains exhaustion of outflows; a bodhisattva, by exhausting the cognitive obstructions, ending transformational birth and death, and entering the fruition of non-abiding nirvāṇa, ultimately attains exhaustion of outflows.”

Do you understand? An arhat attains the Lesser Vehicle’s nondefinitive exhaustion of outflows when the afflictive obstructions are eliminated; a bodhisattva attains the Mahāyāna’s ultimate exhaustion of outflows when the cognitive obstructions are exhausted! Bodhi and nirvāṇa belong to two distinct virtues among the three virtues. However ignorant I may be, I would not confuse them!

(5) Fruitions such as arhatship and stream-entry are spoken of in terms of

the dharmas pertaining to liberation, whereas the bodhisattva stages corresponding to the dharmas pertaining to bodhi are spoken of from

different perspectives and on different levels. How could they be comparable?

Who told you that the bodhisattva stages involve only dharmas pertaining to bodhi? If that were so, why would Tiantai also speak of the three virtues?

Therefore, statements such as that an arhat corresponds to such-and-such a bodhisattva stage or bhūmi are errors that can be made only by people who have not understood even the basic doctrines of Buddhism.

First, it must be made clear that, because the content and nature of the attainments of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles do not correspond completely, the fruition of an arhat likewise has no completely corresponding bodhisattva fruition. To say that an arhat corresponds to a certain bodhisattva stage or bhūmi generally refers only to the virtue of liberation. The statement that an arhat's virtue of liberation corresponds to that of a sixth- or seventh-bhūmi bodhisattva is found among many great masters, including Candrakīrti Bodhisattva. If you dare say that they have not understood even the basic doctrines of Buddhism, haha, then you will make a complete fool of yourself!

If we speak in terms of the dharmas pertaining to liberation, the ultimate fruition attained by the Lesser Vehicle is arhatship; one may also say that the ultimate fruition of the path of liberation is arhatship. Thus, only those above the tenth bhūmi, up to and including the Buddha, can fulfill it; therefore the Buddha is called the "Two-Footed Honored One," referring to the complete fulfillment of purity among the complete fulfillments. From these

basic conceptual errors, one can see that this Lion is entirely half-baked. Yet this half-baked, half-informed fellow

insists on showing off, producing something called A Brief Discussion from a Humble Dwelling and stirring up a few fans to flatter him. It is truly laughable!

Candrakīrti Bodhisattva says in the Madhyamakāvatāra that the virtue of liberation of a seventh-bhūmi bodhisattva already completely surpasses that of a Lesser Vehicle arhat. Yet you say that the ultimate fruition attained by the Lesser Vehicle can be fulfilled only above the tenth bhūmi, up to and including Buddhahood. Could it be that you are more brilliant than Candrakīrti? Haha! Who is really laughable here? I trust that those with clear eyes can see for themselves.

Furthermore, this Lion imposes his own self-righteous nonsense on Tiantai teaching, speaking blindly with his eyes shut and taking things for granted. The offense of slandering another school is exceedingly grave!

Foolish fellow! If you truly do not know that the Tiantai school considers the fruition of arhatship to correspond only to the seventh stage of faith in the Mahāyāna Perfect Teaching, then let me point you in the right direction: read Master Jingquan's Lectures on the Tiantai School. Do not lose your underpants and then run naked through the streets, all right? You will set a bad example for children.

As for the offense of slandering another school—well! When you meet King Yama in the future, you can slowly litigate the matter with him. Let us not bring it up again, shall we?

Discovery! : Buddhist scriptures are spoken for Buddhas. Since you cannot understand them, why are you reading them at all?

Lion : That is not right.

[Discovery!]: "The Buddhist sūtras are spoken for Buddhas to hear. If you cannot understand them, why are you reading them?"

[Lion]: "That is not correct."

If Buddhist scriptures are meant for Buddhas to hear, then fairy tales must be meant for kindergarten teachers, and elementary-school language arts and arithmetic must be meant for elementary-school teachers. What, then, is meant for kindergarten children and elementary-school students?

[Discovery!]: How is that not right? Some say that ordinary beings cannot hear the words of Great Master Fu; then the words of the Buddha—

—are not profound enough, so ordinary people can understand them?

[Lion]: Heh heh! I've been mistaken for Lü Dongbin again.

Two different matters, two different matters. If someone can spin a whole string of stories even about who taught the provisional and definitive teachings, there is no point arguing about that with him; you might as well wait for the depths of winter and compete to see who can better withstand the cold in a sleeveless undershirt.

[Mind Bright]: It does help explain the previous item, “The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while.”

[Minghong]: Precisely: “Even where there is no romance, there is romance.”

[Post Deleter]: Nothing happened.

Great Master Fu struck the table—finished.

Master Zhigong finished expounding the scriptures.

LVM flicked his sleeve and returned to the abbot’s quarters—finished.

Everyone’s performance—finished.

The post deleter wiped the tables and swept the floor—finished.

[Minghong]: I got a large group of people expelled from the country. Is anyone left?

[Lion]: This post deleter removed all our “heh heh!” “ha ha!” and “hoo hoo!” but left Old Moneybags’ “ha ha ha!” untouched.

A complete little flatterer.

555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555

5555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555555

[Sudhana]: Ha ha, I’ll do it myself and banish us all to the Land of the Unborn~

[Lion]: Ha ha! Now that’s what Old Moneybags the bean-bun seller should be like.

[Lianqing]: Heh heh, now that’s not what Old Moneybags the bean-bun seller should be like.

There is originally no birth, yet there is still this “banishment to”—ha ha.

[Lion]: Precisely because there is originally no birth, and yet he still has this “banishment to,” that is why he sells bean buns rather than vegetables.

[Sudhana]: Heh heh, these yokels from three little villages are discussing who should become secretary-general of the United Nations!

[Lianqing]: You’ve tossed all three of them off again to the Unborn Land of Java, so I’ll just ^O^ too.

[Lele]: This seems rather interesting. How about this…

The United Nations has always been controlled by wealthy people, so why not give him a deputy position? Lele will first do her duty and applaud in welcome! Ha ha~

[Sudhana]: No matter, no matter. It is only that you will probably never dream of becoming secretary-general, while the three-village backwater has instead become a four-village backwater!

[Lele]: The village prospers because its rich landowners know how to manage things; the villagers’ duty is simply to follow along happily.

[Sudhana]: Heh heh,

[Lele]: It is just a pity that I spoiled a fine performance. Sorry about that. Next time, next time—heh heh.

[Lion]: ^o^

[XO]: The medicine in Great Master Fu’s other post—has everyone been cured upon taking it???

Great Master Fu: Inscription on the Mind King

Contemplate the mind, the Empty King: its mystery is hard to fathom. Formless and without appearance, it possesses great spiritual power.

It can extinguish a thousand calamities and accomplish ten thousand virtues. Though its essential nature is empty, it can establish the Dharma's principles.

Look at it and it has no form; call to it and it has a sound. It is the great general of the Dharma, transmitting the scriptures through the precepts of mind.

Like the taste of salt in water, or green dye in a pigment: it is certainly there, though its form cannot be seen.

The Mind King is likewise so: it dwells within the body, entering and leaving through the gates of the face, responding to things according to circumstances.

At ease and unobstructed, whatever it does is accomplished. Understand the fundamental knowing mind; know the mind, and see the Buddha.

This mind is Buddha; this Buddha is mind. In every thought is the Buddha-mind; the Buddha-mind is mindful in every thought.

If you wish to attain realization quickly, discipline the mind with the precepts. When the precepts are pure, the mind is pure; the mind itself is Buddha.

Apart from this Mind King, there is no other Buddha. If you wish to seek Buddhahood, do not be stained by a single thing.

Though the nature of mind is empty, greed and anger are substantially real. Enter this Dharma gate, sit upright, and become a Buddha.

Having reached the other shore, one attains pāramitā. A true person who aspires to the Way should contemplate their own mind.

Know that the Buddha is within; do not seek outside. Mind itself is Buddha; Buddha itself is mind.

When the mind is illumined, one knows the Buddha; clearly understand the knowing mind. Apart from mind there is no Buddha; apart from Buddha there is no mind.

Other than a Buddha, none can fathom it; nothing can bear its responsibility. Cling to emptiness and stagnate in quiescence, and one drifts and sinks here.

The Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not settle their minds in this way. Great beings who illuminate the mind awaken to this original principle.

The nature of body and mind is wondrous; its functioning undergoes no change. Therefore the wise let their minds rest in ease and freedom.

Do not say that the Mind King is empty and without essential nature. It can cause the physical body to act wrongly or rightly.

Neither existent nor nonexistent, hidden and manifest without fixed form, the nature of mind transcends emptiness and can be ordinary or sage-like.

Therefore I urge you: carefully guard yourselves. In an instant of action, you may again drift and sink.

Pure mind-wisdom is like worldly gold. The treasury of prajñā and Dharma is entirely within body and mind.

The treasure of the unconditioned Dharma is neither shallow nor deep. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas understand this fundamental mind.

Those with conditions who encounter it are neither gone, nor coming, nor present.

[Discovery!]: Great Master Fu spoke thus:

Chapter Twelve: Illuminating Vajra Liberation

Do you not see that vajra utterances are not the truth? The myriad forms of the universe are all one nothingness. Yet this empty nothingness is the mother of Buddhas, and is also the unsurpassed jewel of suchness. Worldly people do not know to seek this treasure; poor and harried, they are slaves of the six destinies. They do not serve the dharmakāya Buddha within their bodies,

but everywhere bow outwardly to stūpas. At first glance they seem diligent, yet when one examines them, all within is coarse. With a coarse mind they flaunt their words; not understanding the true source, they are therefore foolish.

They discriminate according to their feelings, memories, and thoughts; the five aggregates and six thieves vie to strike them down. They refuse to seek the unsurpassed Way, knowing only vainly to pursue fame. Though their mouths chant goodness, they still give rise to evil; empty talk of truth instead becomes false. I now turn the false around and take it as true, yet neither verify the truth nor enter nirvāṇa without remainder. The road is difficult—the road is difficult; throughout the world all is empty and false. The ten fetters and five aggregates are by nature unknowing; fools among them give rise to their own obstructions.

[Wen Wuding]: May I ask the great spiritual friend [Xinqian] whether he could briefly explain the patriarchs' teaching?

Could you briefly explain the principle of "the Great Being strikes the desk and the sūtra is finished"? A word or two would suffice. This junior student joins his palms and bows, quietly receiving your instruction. Thank you.

[tiaoxin]: What kind of person lets a great arrogant demon enter the mind and forgets to turn the light inward and protect the true mind?!

(Answering on another's behalf with a single remark; I respectfully invite correction!)

[zhen shi]: Abandon delusion without seeking truth; this is protection.

[tiaoxin]: Do you still recognize the person beyond both truth and delusion?

[zhen shi]: Even recognition is absent.

[zhen shi]: I do not recognize.

[zhen shi]: My apologies—perhaps because of bandwidth or some other reason, it was posted twice.

[tiaoxin]: Don't mind it; it's nothing!

[tiaoxin]: Playing the lute to a cow.

[Wen Wuding]: Mr. [Xinqian],

When may we hope for your subtle and excellent words? I only hope for a single lion's roar, before which all the beasts are struck dumb.

[Xinqian]: I do not have much time to visit the forum, so I have kept you waiting.

When may we hope for your subtle and excellent words?

I have never known what "subtle words" or "excellent words" are.

I only hope for a single lion's roar, before which all the beasts are struck dumb.

Oh, some people do like to be lions, but I am not one.

[Wen Wuding]: Oh, so you too are a treasure-seeker searching everywhere!

As the saying goes, hearing one's name is not as good as meeting one; meeting one stops one from hearing of one!

[Xinqian]: Oh, then the old gentleman's message must be the legendary subtle and excellent words.

Seeing the old gentleman bustling about on the forum, with the whole forum filled with his lion's roars, you have truly worked hard.

I am playful by nature and know nothing of treasure-seeking. Let this unworthy one offer a clumsy little doggerel to ease your fatigue:

The Great Being strikes the desk; the sūtra is already finished.

Yet the old student seeks a word or half a phrase;

Vainly speaking of fine words and subtle sayings,

Better from this day forward to practice in person.

Do not mistake braying for a lion's roar;

Fame and meeting give rise to inverted views.

Those who buy the casket and return the pearl have existed since ancient times;

They do not recognize that the Flower Treasury lies within their own mind.

Please forgive me. My little tune is finished; I now bid the old gentleman farewell.

[Wen Wuding]: One wrong character should be corrected: "As for this, it is better not to speak of it; if one does speak, one may say that subtle and excellent words have no form."

All spoken words, however, are not it. Yet if one understands, one understands right then and there; if one does not, do not keep babbling. Otherwise, discussing this will never end, and the forum will once again turn toward disputes over self and others, right and wrong, creating a great commotion—all of no use whatsoever for "that matter." Looking at old posts, this is everywhere to be seen. Therefore, those who have not reached this and do not wish to apply themselves to it would do better to cease speaking and refrain from words.

[Wen Wuding]: However...

In terms of the Chan school, Chan lies in questions, answers, and conduct. That is, when a single word accords, one thereby accords with the Buddhadharma. This is also called "pecking and breaking simultaneously": when a student has reached the time of awakening and happens to encounter the condition that guides him to awakening. It is also spoken of as the hard-to-explain conjunction of time and conditions; provisions and karmic blessings are likewise an analogy for this.

[Wen Wuding]: Continuing the ramble...

As for provisions and karmic blessings, in a word, they may be broadly summed up as "do no evil; practice all good." Ordinarily, one must attend to one's present body, speech, and mind. This is also called following through with old karma and not creating new misfortune. It also means not departing from Dharma offerings: one's own method of practice must accord with the principles taught in the sūtras and the sayings of the patriarchs. Strive to be an example in practice; practicing in accordance with the Dharma may be called a practical Dharma offering.

Otherwise, one buries hidden dangers on the path of free practice—conditions that obstruct the Way. One may then find it difficult, in the course of practice in this life, to realize the mind and see one's true nature. Therefore, practitioners must have the wisdom always to see their own faults; that is, when observing the observing mind, one should observe the faults of what is observed. Only by practicing in this way can one be called an intelligent student.

These are merely a few rambling remarks, offered for reference only.

[Wen Wuding]: To say more...

Have you not seen Elder Master Yuanyin's empowerment instruction to his students: "Two Dharma protectors assist you in your practice.

One must absolutely not become attached to appearances in this matter. If you feel that Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Dharma protectors, and so forth are giving you instructions or blessings, then you yourself have fallen under demonic influence. This can be called an entirely dangerous view. When patriarchs or Dharma protectors bless you, it is an assisting condition that arises when your practice has reached a certain stage; it accords with your present mind-consciousness. If you have some other unusual sensation, it belongs to your own...

If you are suspicious of ghosts and spirits, what else could it be but demonry? Therefore, you must calmly and peacefully face your present mind-ground. Never seek tricks or shortcuts; that is being clever in a petty way, and it is absolutely impermissible

in the work of the mind-ground!

[gszy] (replying to [Xinqian]: “Oh, then the old gentleman’s message must be the legendary subtle and excellent words.”): Ha ha! A steel needle wrapped in cotton—pricks the hand.

The Great Being strikes the desk; the sūtra is already finished;

Why need subtle words or excellent sayings?

The path of words is cut off; the activity of mind is extinguished;

The whole body appears throughout the ten directions.

Amitābha Buddha!

[Wen Wuding]: Sir, this is still merely intellectual understanding! Forgive my frankness.

Have you not seen the patriarchs say: “To interpret the meaning by relying on the words is to wrong the Buddhas of the three times.” Even if a student who knows the school’s teaching can explain it ever so perfectly, or recite the sūtras and treatises backward and forward without error, it still cannot settle birth and death! One who studies the Heart Esotericism must attain the birth of a prince; only then can it be said that the study has not been in vain.

[Wen Wuding]: Better not to speak of this; if one does, it may be called a wonderful utterance and fine sound, yet without form or appearance,

---

If you understand, understand it right now; if you do not, do not keep chattering. Otherwise, there will be no end to the wrangling over this, and this forum will be thrown into a turmoil of personal-self disputes and right-and-wrong. Moreover, it will be of no use whatsoever regarding “that matter.” Since you have not yet reached this, it is better to cease speaking and refrain from words.

[Wen Wuding]: In reply to you again, sir: this still belongs to intellectual understanding. Forgive my frankness, and please do not take offense.

Have you not seen what the patriarchs said: “To interpret meaning according to the words wrongs the Buddhas of the three periods”? They also said that, however perfectly adherents of intellectual understanding may expound, even if they can recite the sūtras and treatises backward and forward from memory, at most they are merely pedlars of scriptural lectures and verbal expressions. Even adherents of intellectual understanding cannot withstand birth and death, much less those who merely learn phrases and peddle words. Therefore, students of heart esotericism must attain the birth of the royal prince before it can be said that they have not studied in vain. If one

feels that one has a deep affinity with heart esotericism, one should contemplate the present moment at all times. This means turning oneself around, turning the mind back, and encountering things directly. Perhaps, when the time and conditions arrive, one may then rejoice throughout one’s life.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: I see that your words flow like a river. Tell me: what does this have to do with your fundamental matter?

[Wen Wuding]: If one speaks of the fundamental matter, it is without marks. How could what is without marks have form? It is only acting according to the occasion.

[Wen Wuding]: Mr. [Snow Mountain Youth], everyone possesses the secret treasure without marks.

The key lies in knowing it for oneself. Have you not seen the patriarchs’ saying that knowing is the gateway to all wonders?

[Lianqing]: Zhaozhou Completes Turning the Canon

Long ago, an old woman made an offering of money and asked Chan Master Zhaozhou to turn the Great Treasury of Scriptures.

Zhaozhou got down from his meditation seat, walked once around it, and said, “Turning the Canon is complete.”

Someone returned and reported this to the old woman. She said, “I had asked him to turn the entire canon. Why did the monk turn only half the canon?”

(Pujue [1089–1163], Record of the Sayings of Chan Master Dahui Pujue, fascicle 9; huatou cited by Pujue)

According to fascicle 4 of The Compendium of the Five Lamps, “Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen”:

“An old woman once sent someone with money, asking that the canon be turned.

After the master had accepted the offering, he got down from his meditation seat and walked once around it. Then he said, ‘Messenger of the old woman, the turning of the canon is finished.’

The person returned and reported this to the old woman. She said, ‘I had asked for the entire canon to be turned. Why did he turn only half the canon?’

Xuanjue said, ‘Where is the half-canon that was lacking? Tell me: what sort of eye did that old woman possess, that she spoke in this way?’ …”

[amay]: Drawing a knife to cut water—fine skill indeed. Seeing the water severed, the old woman hurried to find a knife, and the water flowed all the more.

[68] Sansheng Huiji and Huiran

[Case 68] Sansheng, Huiji, and Huiran

The Pointer says: “To overturn the gate of heaven and turn the axis of earth; to seize tigers and rhinoceroses, to distinguish dragons from snakes—one must be a lively, vigorous fellow. Only then can every word correspond and every opportunity accord. But tell me, who among those of old was capable of this? Please cite an example and look.”

[Case 68] The Case:

Yangshan asked Sansheng, “What is your name?” [Name and reality are mutually wrested away. Hooking the thief, he ruins the household.]

Sansheng said, “Huiji.” [He cuts off the tongue at its source, seizing the banner and taking the drum.]

Yangshan said, “Huiji is I.” [Each guards his own territory.]

Sansheng said, “My name is Huiran.” [In the bustling marketplace, he takes away both self and other, yet remains within his proper place.]

Yangshan gave a hearty laugh. [It may be called the right moment: flowers laid upon brocade. No one in the world knows where it lands. Why? The land is vast and people are few; those who meet are rare. It resembles Yantou’s laugh, yet it is not Yantou’s laugh. Both are laughter; why, then, are they made into two different things? Only one with discerning eyes can judge.]

Sansheng was a revered elder in Linji’s lineage. From an early age he displayed abilities that set him apart from the crowd; he possessed great capacity and great function. Among the assembly he was imposing and self-assured, and his reputation was known in every quarter. Later, after taking leave of Linji, he traveled throughout the Huai and Hai regions. Wherever he went, the monasteries received him as an honored guest.

Traveling from north to south, he first visited Xuefeng and immediately asked, “When a golden-scaled fish has passed through the net, what does it take for food?” Xuefeng said, “When you have come out of the net, I shall tell you.” Sansheng said, “A good teacher of fifteen hundred people, yet you do not even recognize the critical phrase.” Xuefeng said, “This old monk is burdened with the many affairs of an abbot.”

As Xuefeng was going to the monastery estate, he encountered a monkey and said, “Each of these monkeys wears an ancient mirror.” Sansheng said, “Nameless throughout countless kalpas—how can it be called an ancient mirror?” Xuefeng said, “A flaw has arisen.” Sansheng said, “A good teacher of fifteen hundred people, yet you do not even recognize the critical phrase.” Xuefeng said, “My fault! This old monk is burdened with the many affairs of an abbot.”

Later he came to Yangshan. Yangshan greatly cherished his keen ability and lodged him beneath the bright window. One day an official came to consult Yangshan. Yangshan asked, “What post do you hold?” The official replied, “Investigating magistrate.” Yangshan raised his whisk and said, “Can you investigate this?” The official had no reply. Everyone in the assembly offered comments, but none accorded with Yangshan’s intent. At that time Sansheng was ill and staying in the Hall of Prolonged Life. Yangshan had an attendant take this question to ask him. Sansheng said, “The Master has something on his hands.” Yangshan

again had the attendant ask, “What, then, does the Master have on his hands?” Sansheng said, “A second offense will not be tolerated!” Yangshan deeply approved of him.

At that time Baizhang gave the Chan board and meditation cushion to Huangbo, and the staff and whisk to Guishan; Guishan later gave them to Yangshan. Once Yangshan had fully approved of Sansheng, Sansheng took leave one day, and Yangshan gave him the staff and whisk. Sansheng said, “I already have a teacher.” Yangshan questioned him about it and learned that he was Linji’s true heir.

Now, when Yangshan asked Sansheng, “What is your name?” he could not possibly have been unaware of Sansheng’s name. Why, then, did he ask in this way? A master craftsman tests a person in order to know him thoroughly. It seemed merely an ordinary question—“What is your name?”—with no calculation behind it. Why did Sansheng not say, “Huiran,” but instead say, “Huiji”? Observe how those with discerning eyes are naturally different.

Sansheng’s response was not crazed. From beginning to end, he was seizing the banner and taking the drum; his intent lay beyond Yangshan’s words. This saying does not fall into ordinary sentiment and is difficult to grasp. The methods of such a man can bring others to life. Therefore it is said that he investigates living phrases, not dead phrases. If one follows ordinary sentiment, one cannot bring anyone to rest. See how the people of old devoted themselves to the Way in this manner, exhausting all their spirit before they could attain great awakening. Once awakened, however, they still appeared, in their functioning, much like those who had not yet awakened. In whatever fitting word or half-phrase they spoke, they could not fall into ordinary sentiment.

Sansheng knew where Yangshan’s words landed, so he said to him, “My name is Huiji.” Yangshan wanted to take in Sansheng, but Sansheng instead took in Yangshan. Yangshan could only rob him on the spot, saying, “Huiji is I.” This was an act of letting go. Sansheng’s saying, “My name is Huiran,” was likewise an act of letting go. Therefore Xuedou later praised it, saying, “How can dual taking in and dual letting go become the principle?” In this one line, he praised both at once.

Yangshan’s hearty laugh also contained the provisional and the real, illumination and function. Because he was adept on all sides, his functioning attained great freedom. This laugh differs from Yantou’s laugh: Yantou’s laugh contains poison, whereas this laugh has, through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, the bracing clarity of a pure wind.

Xuedou’s verse says:

How can dual taking in and dual letting go become the principle? [How many are there who know this? Adept on all sides. One might suppose there were truly such a thing.]

To ride a tiger has always required consummate mastery. [Unless one has an eye atop one’s head and a talisman beneath one’s elbow, how could one reach this point? Riding it is no obstacle; one need only fear that you cannot get down. If you are not such a person, how could you understand such a matter?]

When the laughter ceased, none knew where they had gone. [Search all the four hundred prefectures and military districts for such a person, and one would still be hard to find. The words still ring in one’s ears. Through a thousand ages and ten thousand ages, there is a pure wind.]

It can only stir a mournful wind through the ages. [Where are they now? Bah! Since it was a hearty laugh, why does it instead stir a mournful wind? The great earth is dark and vast.]

“How can dual taking in and dual letting go become the principle?” In letting go, host and guest exchange with one another. When Yangshan said, “What is your name?” and Sansheng answered, “My name is Huiji,” this was dual letting go. When Yangshan said, “Huiji is I,” and Sansheng answered, “My name is Huiran,” this was dual taking in. In truth, it was the dynamic of mutual exchange: when taking in, both took in; when letting go, both let go. Xuedou praised it all at once.

His meaning was this: if there were no letting go and no taking in, no mutual exchange, then you would be you and I would be I —only four words altogether. Why, then, would there be appearing and disappearing, contracting and expanding within them? An ancient said, “If you stand, I sit; if you sit, I stand. But if we both sit or both stand, then both are blind men!” This is dual taking in and dual letting go, and it may serve as the essential principle.

“To ride a tiger has always required consummate mastery.” With such lofty conduct and supreme essential capacity, one rides when one wishes to ride and dismounts when one wishes to dismounts; one may grasp the tiger’s head or hold its tail. Sansheng and Yangshan both possessed this capacity.

“When the laughter ceased, none knew where they had gone.” Tell me, what were they laughing at? It was enough to make the pure wind bracing and clear! Why, then, does the verse finally say, “It can only stir a mournful wind through the ages”? It is like death without mourning; this explains it all for you at once. Yet people everywhere cannot take it in and do not know where it lands. Even this mountain monk does not know where it lands. Do you all know?

[Old Woman]: A few simple sentences have been made so complicated.

[Clarification]: In Classical Chinese, and may possibly be used interchangeably.

[lvm]: Yes.

[Xinming]: Seen this way, the koan above is no longer baffling.

[Liannong]: Eh~~

[Xinming]: Eh—is that Liannong? Liannong—is that “eh”?

[Liannong]: What do you mean, “what is what”!? You will not even let me say “eh”?

[Xinming]: What do you mean, “what is what”!? You will not even let me say “eh”!

[Liannong]: The evening breeze brushes the willows; the flute’s notes fade. Beyond the setting sun, mountain after mountain.

[Sixty-Nine] Nanquan: “If You Can Speak of It, Then Leave”

[69] Nanquan: “Say it, and we shall go.”

Pointer: Where there is no feeding or pecking, the Patriarchs’ mind-seal resembles the workings of an iron ox. Passing through a thicket of thorns, a patched-robed monk is like a speck of snow on a red-hot furnace. Leave aside boring seven holes and eight openings into level ground; without falling into yin and yang, how is it? Please consider.

[69] The Case:

Nanquan, Guizong, and Magu went together to pay respects to National Teacher Zhong. When they reached the middle of the road: [When three travel together, one of them must be my teacher. What is so extraordinary about this? Yet one must distinguish the genuine.]

Nanquan drew a circle on the ground and said, “Say it, and we shall go.” [Stirring up waves where there is no wind. He also wants people to know. Cast away the sunken ship. If it is not tested, how can the genuine be distinguished?]

Guizong sat inside the circle. [One person strikes the gong, and fellow travelers then know.]

Magu immediately made a woman’s bow. [One person beats the drum; three can do it as well.]

Nanquan said, “In that case, we shall not go.” [To withdraw midway is the mark of a fine person. What a fine tune! Masters, masters!]

Guizong said, “What sort of mental activity is this?” [Fortunately, he saw through it. At that moment, he deserved a slap. What a foolish fellow!]

At that time, Mazu’s teaching flourished in Jiangxi, Shitou’s Way prevailed in Hunan and Hubei, and National Teacher Zhong’s teaching influence extended through Chang’an. He had personally seen the Sixth Patriarch. In those days, among those in the South who held up their heads and wore horns, there was none who did not wish to ascend his hall and enter his inner chamber. Otherwise, one would be ashamed before others. These three old fellows wished to go pay respects to National Teacher Zhong, but midway along the road they put on this botched performance.

Nanquan said, “In that case, we shall not go.” Since each had already said it, why did he nevertheless say, “We shall not go”? Tell me, what was the ancient’s intent? At that moment, when he said, “In that case, we shall not go,” one should have slapped him squarely across the ear and seen what tricks he could produce. What has upheld the essential principles of the school throughout the ages is simply these pivotal essentials. Therefore, Ciming said, “If you wish to lead it, stay at the end of the rope.”

Touched or poked, they immediately turn, like pressing a gourd beneath the water. People often call this language of mutual non-acquiescence. They do not realize that, when this matter reaches its ultimate point, one must leave mud and water behind, remove the wedges, and pull out the nails. If you understand it as mental activity, it has no connection with it. The ancients turned and transformed it well. At this point, it cannot be otherwise.

There must be both killing and enlivening. Look: one sat within the circle, and one made a woman’s bow—both were excellent. Nanquan said, “In that case, we shall not go,” and Guizong said, “What sort of mental activity is this?” What a foolish fellow! And yet he went on like this. His intention in speaking thus was to test Nanquan. Nanquan would ordinarily say, “The moment you call it suchness, it has already changed.” Nanquan, Guizong, and Magu were people of one household. One seized and one released; one killed and one enlivened. Truly extraordinary.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Youji’s arrow shoots the ape, [On the direct path before one’s face, who would dare step forward? Wherever it touches, it attains the marvel; before it is released, it has already struck.]

As it circles the tree, how can it be so straight? [If one did not undertake it, how could one dare be like this? East, west, south, and north—the style of one household. You have been evading it for a long time.]

Thousands upon tens of thousands—[Like hemp and millet, a whole troop of wild-fox spirits. But what can they do to Nanquan?]

Who has ever been struck? [One or half of one—another slips away. Not even one will do.]

Calling to one another, return home. [A troop of fellows playing with mud balls. Better to return home. That would be somewhat better.]

Do not climb the road of Caoxi. [What needless toil! Surely they are not disciples of Caoxi. There is more than enough leveling of the low places, but not enough viewing of the high places.]

He further said, “The road of Caoxi is level and smooth—why should one not climb it?” [It is not only Nanquan who withdraws midway; Xuedou also withdraws midway. Better no good deed at all. Xuedou too suffers from this same ailment.]

“Youji’s arrow shoots the ape; as it circles the tree, how can it be so straight?” Youji was a man of Chu, surnamed Yang, given name Shu, style name Youji. Once, when King Zhuang of Chu went hunting, he saw a white ape and ordered someone to shoot it. The ape caught the arrows and played with them. He commanded all his ministers to shoot it, but none hit it. The king then asked his ministers, and they replied, “Youji is skilled at archery.”

He therefore ordered him to shoot it. Just as Youji drew his bow, the ape embraced the tree and cried mournfully. When the arrow was released, the ape circled the tree to evade it, but the arrow too circled the tree, struck it, and killed it. This was a divine arrow. Why, then, did Xuedou say, “How can it be so straight?” If it were too straight, it would not hit. Since it circled the tree, why did he nevertheless call it straight? Xuedou borrowed this image and used it admirably. This account appears in the Spring and Autumn Annals.

Some say, “Circling the tree is the round symbol.” If that were truly so, they would fail to understand the essential purport of these words and would not know where the “too straight” lies. These three old fellows took different paths yet returned to the same measure; together, they were all “too straight.” If you recognize where they were going, then seven verticals and eight horizontals do not depart from a square inch; a hundred rivers flow differently but all return to the great sea. Therefore Nanquan said, “In that case, we shall not go.”

If a patched-robed monk looks upon it with the true eye, it is merely playing with spirits. Yet if you call it playing with spirits, it is not playing with spirits. The late Master Wuzu said, “The three men were in the Samādhi of the Torch of Wisdom and the Samādhi of the King of Adornment.” Even so, when Magu made a woman’s bow, he did not understand it as a woman’s bow; though Nanquan drew a round symbol, he did not understand it as a round symbol. Since they did not understand it in that way, how did they understand it?

Xuedou said, “Thousands upon tens of thousands—who has ever been struck?” How many can there be who hit the mark with every shot? Calling to one another, return home. This praises Nanquan’s saying, “In that case, we shall not go.” From that point Nanquan did not go; hence, “Do not climb the road of Caoxi.”

Having extinguished the thicket of thorns, Xuedou could not settle the matter and further said, “The road of Caoxi is level and smooth—why should one not climb it?” The road of Caoxi is beyond dust and traces: naked and bare, utterly unencumbered, level and open. Why, then, in such free ease, should one not climb it? Each of you, look beneath your own feet!

[Seventy] Guishan Stands Like a Sheer Cliff a Thousand Ren High

[70] Guishan: A Sheer Wall a Thousand Fathoms High

The pointer says: “A quick-witted person needs but one word; a swift horse but one stroke of the whip. Ten thousand years in a single thought; a single thought spanning ten thousand years. To know what is direct and immediate, look to before it has been raised. But tell me: before it has been raised, how does one grope for it? Please raise it and see.”

[70] The Case:

Guishan, Wufeng, and Yunyan were all standing in attendance on Baizhang. [Ha, ha, ha! From beginning to end, confused and mistaken. You head toward western Qin; I toward eastern Lu.]

Baizhang asked Guishan, “Setting aside throat and lips, how would you speak?” [One general is hard to find.]

Guishan said, “I ask the Reverend to speak instead.” [Borrowing the road to pass through.]

Baizhang said, “I would not begrudge speaking to you, but I fear that later I would lose my descendants.” [He cannot escape his anxious grandmotherly heart. His skin is three inches thick. Mixing mud with water. Robbing someone on his own person.]

Guishan, Wufeng, and Yunyan were all standing in attendance on Baizhang. Baizhang asked Guishan, “Setting aside throat and lips, how would you speak?” Guishan said, “I ask the Reverend to speak instead.” Baizhang said, “I would not begrudge speaking to you, but I fear that later I would lose my descendants.” Although Baizhang spoke thus, his pot had already been snatched away by someone else. Baizhang again asked Wufeng. Wufeng said, “The Reverend, too, must set them aside.” Baizhang said, “Where no one is, I shall split my forehead and look to you.” He then asked Yunyan. Yunyan said, “Does the Reverend have it or not?” Baizhang said, “I have lost my descendants.”

The three each had their own household. An ancient said, “Countless corpses lie on level ground; one who passes through a thicket of thorns is a capable hand.” Therefore, masters of the school test people with a thicket of thorns. Why? Under phrases of ordinary sentiment, one cannot test people. A patch-robed monk must reveal the pivot within words and discern the point within speech. Board-carrying fellows mostly die within the phrase and then say, “Setting aside throat and lips, there is no place to open one’s mouth.” But a flexible person, even amid waves running against the current, finds a road directly at the point of the question, without injuring the blade or offending the hand.

When Guishan said, “I ask the Reverend to speak instead,” what was his intent? Here, it was like striking sparks from a stone or flashing lightning: pressed at the point of questioning, he answered at once. He naturally had a way out and expended not the slightest effort. Hence it is said that he investigated living phrases, not dead phrases. Baizhang, however, did not take up his response, but merely said, “I would not begrudge speaking to you, but I fear that later I would lose my descendants.” In general, when masters guide people, they pull out nails and remove wedges. People nowadays would say that this response showed that Baizhang would not acknowledge him or take up his words. They do not realize that, at this point of living activity, there stands a sheer wall a thousand fathoms high; host and guest exchange places, alive and lively.

Xuedou admired the graceful and free manner of this saying, as well as its ability to hold fast the boundary. Therefore he composed this verse:

“I ask the Reverend to speak instead.” [It encompasses heaven and earth. Yet it has already injured the blade and offended the hand.]

A tiger’s head sprouts horns and emerges from the wild grass. [Enough to startle the herd to death. Truly extraordinary.]

Spring ends on the Ten Continents, and the flowers wither. [Everywhere there is coolness. Even praise cannot reach it.]

In the coral forest, the sun shines brightly. [A thousand layers and a hundred coils. Yet one cannot find it on the tips of a hundred grasses. The answer covers heaven and earth.]

The answers of these three were each different. There was a sheer wall a thousand fathoms high; there was illumination and function simultaneously; there was one unable even to save oneself. In “I ask the Reverend to speak instead,” Xuedou revealed the pivot in this one phrase. He then pressed it lightly, making it easy for people to see, saying, “A tiger’s head sprouts horns and emerges from the wild grass.”

Guishan’s answer was like putting horns on the head of a fierce tiger—what could come near it? A monk once asked Luoshan, “What of being born together but not dying together?” Luoshan said, “Like a cow without horns.” The monk said, “What of being born together and dying together as well?” Luoshan said, “Like a tiger wearing horns.” Xuedou expressed it completely in just one line of verse.

He had further skill in transformation, and so he added, “Spring ends on the Ten Continents, and the flowers wither.” There are Three Mountains and Ten Continents in the sea, and one hundred years make a single spring. Xuedou’s words carry a graceful manner, winding and expansive. At the end of spring, hundreds of thousands of flowering plants all wither at once. Only the coral forest does not know how to wither and fall; it vies with the great sun, and their radiance reflects one another. At just such a time, it is indeed extraordinary. Xuedou used this to illuminate Guishan’s words, “I ask the Reverend to speak instead.”

The Ten Continents are all attached to various lands beyond the sea. First, Ancestral Continent, which produces soul-returning incense. Second, Ying Continent, where sacred fungus, grasses, and jade are produced, and whose springs taste like wine. Third, Dark Continent, which produces elixirs of immortality; those who take them live long. Fourth, Long Continent, which produces papayas and jade blossoms. Fifth, Fiery Continent, which produces fire-washed cloth. Sixth, Primordial Continent, which produces numinous springs like honey. Seventh, Life Continent, which has mountains and rivers but neither cold nor heat.

Eighth, Phoenix-and-Unicorn Continent, where people take phoenix beaks and unicorn horns to boil glue for repairing broken strings. Ninth, Gathered Caverns Continent, which produces lions, beasts with copper heads and iron foreheads. Tenth, Sandalwood Continent (also called “Flowing Continent”), which produces Kunwu stone; swords made from it cut jade as though it were mud.

Regarding coral, Miscellaneous Accounts of Foreign Lands says: “Seven or eight hundred li southwest of Great Qin, in the swelling sea, one reaches Coral Continent. At the bottom of the continent is bedrock, and coral grows upon the stone. People gather it with iron nets.” Records of the Ten Continents also says: “Coral grows on the floor of the Southern Sea like a tree, two

or three chi high. It has branches but no bark; it resembles jade, yet is red and lustrous. It grows in response to the moon, and each branch tip bears a lunar halo."

This case should be read together with the opening koan of Volume Eight.

[Xinming]: One is a sheer wall a thousand fathoms high, while another has illumination and function simultaneously. Why is the former first? (Editor's note: The commentary here also considers Cases 71 and 72.)

[lvm]: It does not say first or second.

"The three each had their own household."

[Xinming]: Though the unconditioned dharma has distinctions, what is the difference here between the former and the latter?

This is further praise for Chan Master Guishan, is it not?

[lvm]: Three threes before, three threes after; praise is not praise, criticism is not criticism.

[find]: Praise, praise; criticism, criticism; neither, neither; before and after; three threes—what is it?

[Xinming]: Fishing!

[way]: Without essence, whence comes function?

[71] Wufeng: Simultaneous Illumination and Functioning

[71] Wufeng: Illumination and Function Simultaneous

[71] Case:

Baizhang again asked Wufeng, "When throat, lips, and mouth are all shut off, how would you speak?" [Ah ha ha! The arrow has flown beyond Silla.]

Wufeng said, "Venerable, you too must shut them off." [Seizing the banner and capturing the drum. One phrase cuts off the stream; the ten thousand workings are stilled.]

Baizhang said, "Where no one is, I shall wait for you to chop off my head." [The land is vast and people are few; those one meets are rare. This case should be read together with the case at the end of Volume Seven.]

Weishan held fast to the frontier, while Wufeng cut off the multitude of streams. For one such as this, if he is truly a man, he brings it up face-to-face, like wrestlers grappling before a horse: no deliberation is allowed. He acts directly—swift, urgent, perilous, and steep—not like Weishan, expansive and surging on without end. Nowadays, Chan practitioners merely proceed beneath another's framework and cannot go beyond it. That is why it is said: "To attain intimacy, do not bring questions to ask."

In Wufeng's reply, he decisively cut things off at the very outset; it was indeed quick and incisive. Baizhang said, "Where no one is, I shall wait for you to chop off my head." Tell me: was he approving of him or not approving of him? Was he killing or giving life? Seeing him roll on and on, he gave him only a single point. Xuedou composed this verse:

"Venerable, you too must shut them off." [It was already before words. Cutting off the multitude of streams.]

On the field of dragon and serpent formations, observe the strategy. [One must have golden teeth before one can understand the seven implements carried on one's person. A seasoned warrior and master.]

It makes one ever remember General Li, [A master hand needs no great display. With a single horse and spear, across thousands upon thousands of miles, among thousands upon thousands of men.]

A goshawk flies at the edge of the sky, ten thousand miles away. [Does the assembly see? Tell me, where has it landed? Right in the middle! He strikes and says: It has flown past.]

With the phrase "Venerable, you too must shut them off," Xuedou presses further in one phrase, saying: "On the field of dragon and serpent formations, observe the strategy." It is like arraying two armies: charging out and rushing in, making seven advances and eight crossings. There are the skills of dueling generals and people of great strategy. With a single horse and spear, one moves freely in and out amid dragon and serpent formations. How could you surround such a person?

If he were not such a person, how could one know of such strategy? In these three verses, Xuedou depicts what is within. It is much like General Li Guang's miraculous archery: a goshawk flies at the edge of the sky, ten thousand miles away; one arrow

brings down one eagle, without letting it escape. Xuedou's verse likens Baizhang's question to a goshawk and Wufeng's reply to an arrow. This mountain monk has done nothing but praise Wufeng, and before I knew it, my whole body had entered the mud and water!

[Traveler]: Everyone, beware of Chan poison; many have already contracted the illness.

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: If one does not contract Chan poison, what would be better to contract?

[Qingming (QM)]: I think the poison has arrived but has not struck—ha ha....

The nail has been driven in and not pulled out; the wedge has not been removed either. O Heaven, O Heaven! Causes and conditions, causes and conditions.... Amitābha Buddha!!

[Traveler]: Find Old Tiger and have him prescribe a dose of Chinese medicine.

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: Teacher LVM, please prescribe a dose of Chinese medicine for me!!!!!!!!!

[Xinming]: First take this dose of my all-natural Chinese medicine:

Croton

[Qingming (QM)]: Hee hee

[lvm] One liang of croton, taken with cold water.

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: You see, this master and disciple both love croton. Tell me, what is the difference between LVM's croton and Xinming's croton?

[Xinming]: One blinks; the other does not.

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: Killing people without paying with your life!

[Truth]: Perhaps the time has not yet come; one should trust the law of cause and effect without the slightest doubt.

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: Tell me, which one are you—the one who blinks or the one who does not?

[Truth]: No eyes.

[Xinming]: Happy Spring Festival!

[Groundless Bodhisattva]: The spiritual turtle drags its tail; the swept traces have not yet been cleared away.

[Xinming]: Nothing mysterious about it—I am simply wishing you a "Happy Spring Festival."

[Iron Broom]: Glad to see the forum surpass Wufeng

[Iron Broom]: Heroes everywhere descend amid the evening haze

[gust]: There is going out and coming in—this is bodhisattva conduct. If one recognizes the face, OOOO.

[72] Yunyan Could Not Save Himself

[72] Yunyan Cannot Save Himself

[72] Case:

Baizhang again asked Yunyan, "When throat, lips, and mouth are all shut off, how would you speak?" [You have just crawled out of a frog's hole. What is there to say?]

Yunyan said, "Does the Reverend have it or not?" [Clinging to skin and bones, dragging through mud and water. No village ahead to establish, no inn behind to connect with.]

Baizhang said, "You have lost my descendants!" [Precisely! With such an answer, he gets only half of it and falls behind.]

Yunyan served as Baizhang's attendant for twenty years. Later, he went with Daowu to Yaoshan. Yaoshan asked Yunyan, "What matter did you pursue while studying under Baizhang?" Yunyan said, "Transcending birth and death." Yaoshan said, "Have you transcended them yet?" Yunyan said, "There is no birth and death in it." Yaoshan said, "After twenty years with Baizhang, your

habitual tendencies have still not been removed." Yunyan took leave and went to see Nanquan. Later he returned to Yaoshan, and only then awakened in accord with the Dharma.

Look at the people of old: after twenty years of inquiry, they were still half green and half yellow, clinging to skin and bones, unable to break free. It was so, indeed, yet there was no village ahead to establish and no inn behind to connect with. Have you not seen it said: "If speech does not depart from its old mold, how can one emerge from the covering entanglements? White clouds stretch across the mouth of the valley, causing how many to lose the source." In the Dongshan tradition, this is called "breaking through by contact."

Thus it is said: "Leaping open the phoenix tower of the celestial guard, people of the time resent touching upon the reigning taboo." Therefore, one must pass through the forest of thorns. If one does not pass through it, one will remain entangled in fine strands from beginning to end, unable to cut them off. Just now, speaking of "no village ahead to establish and no inn behind to connect with," Yunyan merely kept inspecting others' affairs. Seeing him thus, Baizhang killed him off completely in one stroke. Xuedou composed this verse:

"Does the Reverend have it or not?" [The koan is ready-made. Following the waves and chasing the currents, mixing mud with water.]

The golden-haired lion does not crouch upon the ground. [Precisely! What use is that? What a pity.]

In twos and threes, they travel the old road. [When throat, lips, and mouth are all shut off, how would you speak? Turn around and breathe out. You have already stumbled past it beneath your heels.]

Below Mount Daxiong, he snaps his fingers in vain. [Once dead, he will not live again. How sad and painful—adding yet more grievance and suffering beneath the blue sky!]

"Does the Reverend have it or not?" Xuedou settles the case on its merits. It is so, indeed, but the golden-haired lion, alas, does not crouch upon the ground. When a lion seizes something, it conceals its teeth and tucks in its claws, crouches on the ground, then springs and tosses it. Whether the object is large or small, it employs its full power in order to accomplish its work completely. Yunyan's "Does the Reverend have it or not?" merely travels along the old road. Therefore Xuedou says that Baizhang snaps his fingers in vain below Mount Daxiong.

[Xinming]: Self-Rescue

A thousand words, ten thousand words—all are entanglements;

With one sweep, the vajra precious sword cuts them off.

Silken threads cling to the dark mountain as one goes to seek a friend;

A hero spurs his horse out through the western pass.

[way] (in reply to [Xinming]: Self-Rescue): How can a thousand words and ten thousand words entangle one? The vajra is precisely the Sword of Tai'e.

[Integration] (in reply to [Xinming]: Self-Rescue): Going online and following koans = "A thousand words, ten thousand words—all are entanglements; with one sweep, the vajra precious sword cuts them off." Ha!

[Layman Yongguang] (in reply to [Xinming]: Self-Rescue): That is far from the essential meaning of the Buddhadharma!

[Xinming]: Self-Rescue speaks of cultivation but not of insight. If you say there is no cultivation and no realization, I surrender.

[Layman Yongguang]: I never said not to cultivate.

[Xinming]: Then it truly is the three leaks. Thank you, Dharma brother.

[Layman Yongguang]: Dharma brother, do not investigate dead words.

[Zhenshi]: A great death, and a great life.

One who has seen one's true nature sees it once and sees it forever.

Although one's capacity and functioning may still be insufficient, appearing at times and disappearing at others, compared with the past there is only progress, never regression.

[Layman Yongguang]: Always make him die and come back to life.

Brother Zhenshi, you are not Brother Xinming, are you?

[Zhenshi]: I am not Xinming. I am Mingxin; I have died and come back to life.

[Fool]: How has this fellow Mingxin died and come back to life?

What, then, is “death”? What, then, is “birth”?

[Layman Yongguang]: ^0^

[Xingjiao]: Spectators are not welcome here. Everyone disperse and get back to work.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: This is how I would answer Baizhang. I invite you all to judge it!

Baizhang again asked Yunyan, “When throat, lips, and mouth are all shut off, how would you speak?”

I would answer, “Reverend, you have not yet shut off your own mouth and lips—so how would you speak?”

[73] Mazu: Zang Is White, Hai Is Black

[Case 73] Raising:

A monk asked Great Master Ma, “Leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, I ask the master to point directly to the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West for me.” [Where did he get this huatou? Where did he get this news?]

Master Ma said, “I am weary today and cannot explain it to you. Ask Zhizang.” [He steps back three paces. He has missed it and does not even know it. Hiding his body while revealing his shadow. This old fellow has, after all, passed it on to someone else.]

The monk asked Zhizang. [He too must give him a thrust. He has missed it and does not even know it.]

Zhizang said, “Why do you not ask the Master?” [A scorched-tailed tiger emerges from the grass. What does he say? He ends up binding himself with a straw rope. He is thoroughly dead.]

The monk said, “The Master told me to come and ask.” [He kindly directs people. The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep.]

Zhizang said, “I have a headache today and cannot explain it to you. Ask Brother Hai.” [There are no fewer than eighty-four good spiritual friends, all suffering from this same ailment.]

The monk asked Brother Hai. [Passing it on to someone else. Carrying filth and crying injustice.]

Hai said, “When I reach this point, I do not understand.” [No need to fuss. Let it remain pitch-black throughout a thousand ages and ten thousand ages.]

The monk reported this to Great Master Ma. [This monk does have a bit of an eye.]

Master Ma said, “Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black.” [Within the realm, there is the Son of Heaven’s edict; beyond the frontier, the general’s command.]

This koan: in former days, this mountain monk studied under Zhenjue in Chengdu. Zhenjue said, “You need only look into Mazu’s first statement, and you will naturally understand it all at once.”

Now tell me: did this monk come to ask because he understood, or because he did not understand? This question is indeed profound and far-reaching. “Leaving the four propositions” means existence, nonexistence, neither existence nor nonexistence, and neither not-existence nor not-nonexistence. Leaving these four propositions, one cuts off their hundred negations. He merely makes conceptual interpretations, without recognizing the huatou; seeking a head, he cannot find one.

If it were this mountain monk, after Mazu had spoken, I would immediately spread out my sitting cloth and make three prostrations, to see what he would say. If, when Mazu saw this monk come asking, “Leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, I ask the master to point directly to the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West for me,” he had struck him across the back with his staff and driven him out, we could see whether he awakened or not. Great Master Ma merely entangled him in vines. Thus this fellow missed it right before his face.

He further told him to ask Zhizang. Little did he know that Great Master Ma discerned the direction of the wind deeply; this monk, muddleheaded, ran off to ask Zhizang. Zhizang said, “Why do you not ask the Master?” The monk said, “The Master told me to come and ask.” Look at this: at the slightest press, he turns away; there is not a moment to spare. Zhizang said, “I have a headache today and cannot explain it to you. Ask Brother Hai.”

The monk again went to ask Brother Hai. Brother Hai said, “When I reach this point, I do not understand.” Now tell me, why did one speak of a headache while another said he did not understand? What is it, after all? The monk then returned and reported it to Great Master Ma. The master said, “Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black.” If one tries to speculate along the path of intellectual explanation, one will say they were concealing things from each other.

Some say, “They were merely passing it off to one another.” Others say, “All three knew what he was asking, and so did not answer.” All are blindly taking the finest ghee of the ancients and mixing poison into it! Thus Mazu said, “When you swallow up all the water of the West River in a single gulp, I will tell you,” and that is the same as this koan. If you understand “Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black,” then you will understand the huatou of the “West River water.”

This monk carried a whole load of muddleheadedness and obtained nothing but unease. He further troubled three venerable masters, making them enter mud and water. Yet in the end the monk did not catch even a glimpse. Even so, these three lineage masters were exposed by a fellow carrying a board on his shoulder. People nowadays merely labor over words and language, saying, “White corresponds to the bright side, and black to the dark side.”

They only keep investigating and calculating! Little do they know that a single statement of the ancients cuts off the mind faculty. One must look for oneself within the true lineage; only then is it secure. Therefore it is said: “The final statement is what reaches the solid barrier; it blocks the crucial passage and admits neither ordinary beings nor sages.” To discuss this matter is like holding a sword at one’s very doorway: the moment one deliberates, one loses one’s body and life.

It is also said: “It is like throwing a sword and brandishing it through empty space; do not speak of hitting or missing.” Only comprehend it at the place where all eight sides are lucid and unobstructed. Have you not seen how the ancients said, “You lacquer bucket!” Or, “You fox-spirit!” Or, “You blind fellow!” Now tell me: are these the same as, or different from, a blow and a shout? If you know that the thousand differences and myriad distinctions are simply one and the same, you will naturally be assailed from all eight directions.

Do you wish to understand “Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black”? First Patriarch Wuzu said: “Mr. Fenghou!”

Xuedou composed this verse:

Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black. [Half closed, half open. One hand raises; one hand presses down. Golden sound, jade resonance.]

Even clear-eyed patch-robed monks cannot understand it. [Travel on pilgrimage for another thirty years. In the end, others will still pierce your nostrils. This mountain monk’s mouth is indeed like a flat eave.]

The colt of Ma tramples people throughout the world. [In the Chan monasteries, it must indeed be this old fellow. Let this old fellow loose.]

Linji was not yet a white-handed thief. [A scabby child drags along a companion. Even a skilled hand is caught by another.]

Leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations—[What are you saying? You must examine this yourself. Father is like father.]

In heaven and on earth, only I know. [What use is there for me? Take away his staff! If there is no person, no self, no gain, and no loss, what is there to know with?]

“Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black”—now tell me, what is its meaning? No patch-robed monk under heaven can leap beyond this. Look at Xuedou: his concluding line seals it well. He says that even a clear-eyed patch-robed monk cannot understand it. This small bit of news is called the secret formula of immortals, not transmitted even between father and son.

Old Śākyamuni expounded the whole body of teachings delivered by the Buddha during his lifetime, and at the end separately transmitted the mind-seal. It is called the precious vajra-king sword; it is called the rightful position. Such entanglements in vines already arise only because there is no alternative. The ancients slightly revealed a bit of their sharp edge; if one has penetrated it, one then pierces through in every direction and attains great freedom. If one has not penetrated it, there has from the outset been no entry into awakening, and the more one speaks, the farther away one goes.

“The colt of Ma tramples people throughout the world.” Prajñātāra of India prophesied to Bodhidharma: “Though Zhendan is broad, it has no separate road; it must depend upon the feet of its descendants to proceed. A golden cock can carry a single grain of millet in its beak, making offerings to arhats and monastics in the ten directions.” The Sixth Patriarch also said to Venerable Rang, “Hereafter the Buddhadharma will proceed from your side. Later a colt of Ma will appear and trample people throughout the world.”

Afterward, Dharma heirs from Jiangxi spread throughout the land, and he was then called “Mazu.” Bodhidharma and the Sixth Patriarch both prophesied Mazu in advance. Look at his ways and methods: they were indeed exceptional. In the words “Zang’s head is white; Hai’s head is black,” one sees where he trampled people throughout the world. This single saying about black and white cannot be bitten through by a thousand or ten thousand people.

“Linji was not yet a white-handed thief.” One day Linji addressed the assembly: “Within this lump of red flesh is a True Person of No Rank, constantly entering and leaving through the faces of all of you. Those who have not yet verified it, look! Look!” At that time a monk came forth and asked, “What is the True Person of No Rank?” Linji descended from the Chan seat, seized him, and said, “Speak! Speak!” The monk was speechless.

Linji released him and said, “What kind of dry shit-stick is this True Person of No Rank!” When Xuefeng later heard of this, he said, “Linji is very much like a white-handed thief.” Xuedou wished to have Linji meet him; observing Mazu’s sharpness of response, it was even greater than Linji’s. This is precisely a white-handed thief; Linji was not yet a white-handed thief.

Xuedou had already pierced it through at once, and then praised this monk, saying: “Leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, in heaven and on earth, only I know.”

Do not make a living in a ghost cave! The ancients said, “The question lies in the answer; the answer lies in the question.” That is already remarkable. How do you leave the four propositions and cut off the hundred negations? Xuedou says, “Only I can know this matter.” Even the Buddhas of the three times cannot glimpse it. Since one knows it alone, what are you all coming forward to seek? Zhenru of Dawei commented: “The monk asked in this way, and Mazu answered in this way. Leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, neither Zhizang nor Brother Hai knew it.” Do you wish to understand? Have you not seen it said: The colt of Ma tramples people throughout the world!

[So-and-so?]: Are the four propositions like this?

“Leaving the four propositions” means existence, nonexistence, neither existence nor nonexistence, and neither not-existence nor not-nonexistence. Leaving these four propositions, one cuts off their hundred negations.

Existence: affirmation of existence.

Nonexistence: negation of existence.

Neither existence nor nonexistence: neither affirming nor negating existence. This is the meaning of a middle term.

Neither not-existence nor not-nonexistence: neither negating existence nor negating nonexistence. This negates the middle term stated above.

Thus, the four propositions above are:

Existence — affirmation.

Nonexistence — negation of existence.

Neither existence nor nonexistence — “not existence” means nonexistence, that is, negating existence; “not nonexistence” means negating nonexistence, that is, negating the negation of existence. It negates both existence and nonexistence. If there were still a middle term, that would be the meaning of a middle term. But in fact there is no middle term; the middle term exists only hypothetically. Therefore, one needs:

Neither not-existence nor not-nonexistence — “not not-existence” means negating not-existence, that is, negating nonexistence, which is the negation of the negation of existence and the negation of nonexistence; that is, not-nonexistence. “Not not-nonexistence” means negating not-nonexistence: the negation of the negation of the negation of existence. That is, it negates the hypothetical middle existence mentioned above.

After the existence, nonexistence, and middle term above (the hypothetical middle existence) have all been negated, if there is still anything, that would be the hypothesis that something exists outside these three—existence, nonexistence, and the middle term (the hypothetical middle existence). Let us provisionally call it “a third-negated existence.” Thus, outside the four propositions above, there is also a third-negated existence (which, of course, is even more hypothetical).

If one further leaves these four propositions, then, for example, there may be something such as neither neither neither existence nor neither neither neither nonexistence, and so on, up to a hundred negations.

If one negates in this manner a hundred times, is there still anything? Chan investigation is just this: neither, neither, neither . . .

Thus, leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, I ask the master to point directly to this person's meaning in coming from the West. What east, south, west, or north is there? What coming or going is there? What meaning or no meaning is there? Before us there is no ācārya; here there is no old monk. Who opens his mouth? Who speaks?

Therefore, this person proposes the name—Who, Who, Who?

Who, Who, Who? : In this way—no, no, no, no—even the self is negated. Then see who still has afflictions and who still has bodhi? sexxx : How can the relative and the absolute be harmonized?

Who, Who, Who? : To investigate Chan, one must enter the absolute; yet one who enters the absolute is not practicing Chan.

Where there is relativity, there are the two sides. Even one side is still existence—how much more so two sides! Therefore, in investigating Chan, do not grasp at the relative. Do not become attached to the two sides.

The absolute is emptiness and nothingness. If one thinks there is an absolute, then it is not emptiness and nothingness, because the absolute is still there. The concept of an absolute is still there. The appearance of the concept called “the absolute” is still there. In the ultimate sense, one must reach the ground of absolute emptiness and nothingness. If one thinks that there is such a ground of absolute emptiness and nothingness, one cannot reach it. For one is always still holding that thought. If you think in this way, it has not yet been emptied. There is still existence and no emptiness. Chief Supervisor

Absolute emptiness and nothingness has no state to enter. A state is existence, not nothingness. Therefore, if you have entered some state, you have not reached the ultimate.

Therefore, in investigating Chan, do not grasp at right and wrong, correctness and error, existence and nonexistence. Do not grasp at the two sides; do not grasp at harmony or disharmony. There is no appearance of harmony, no appearance of non-harmony, no appearance of neither harmony nor non-harmony, no appearance of neither neither-harmony nor neither non-harmony. Thus: no, no, no, no...

After the hundred negations, although one takes up the absolute, no absolute remains. One practices the absolute, yet there is no absolute. To take the absolute as nothingness is not to take the absolute as existence. If an absolute remains, that is existence, not nothingness. Absolute nothingness means that there is no absolute.

sexxxx : Are nature and characteristics distinct?

Who, Who, Who? : Who, Who, Who?

sexxxx : Dead man!

Who, Who, Who? : Neither wrong nor right.

lvm : There is a line here: “This further troubles those three venerable elders to enter the mud and water.”

Compare them, and the meaning of “several venerable elders” will become clear.

Visitor : Mm ^_^

Thank you, Teacher.

Snow-Mountain Youth : Hehe! This line really has no plug in it. It seems I have still read too little Classical Chinese.

Wind from the Edge of Heaven : “Explaining sūtras through sūtras” is a good method.

Iron Broom : What does “Master Fenghou” mean?

The Fifth Patriarch said: “Master Fenghou!”

Yongshou Youth : I truly do not know. I ask the various teachers for instruction.

Those who cannot read the characters and know only the meaning may let it pass.

Newbie : What a swift blade!

They actually buried alive for half a day this newbie whose spirit rivals a peacock and whose appearance rivals a golden-winged peng.

Yongshou Youth : Do not tell me you too are one of the Sixth Patriarch's lot.

Newbie : I shall presume to compare myself with Jin Shengtan.

There is a story fabricated about Jin Shengtan:

Before Old Jin was beheaded, he asked to be the first to undergo the punishment, because the first blade would be the sharpest and its edge not yet nicked. His wish was granted. After Old Jin's head fell to the ground, he was still shouting, “What a swift blade!”

For drawing a bow only after the thief has gone, being eight watches too late, or being a Zhuge Liang after the event—what could be more vivid than this?

[lvm] (In response to [Iron Broom]: “What does ‘Mr. Fenghou’ mean?”): In old books printed in traditional characters, the hou in “Empress Dowager” is written , while the hou in “behind” is written .

In the traditional-character edition of The Blue Cliff Record, it is “Mr. Fenghou,” not “Mr. Fenghou” written with . Thus, the character here does not mean “behind” or “after.”

Hou is something associated with a woman; it cannot possibly be “xiansheng,” yet the two are oddly joined together—like saying, “This child was borne by a man.” The meaning is already quite clear; there is no need to say more, is there?

It may also be an allusion; search for it and see.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Hehe! I had originally thought hou meant “empress.”

I had originally thought hou meant “empress”—for the gentleman to have another child and then make her empress would make little sense, either emotionally or logically. Hehe! So it turns out to mean “empress dowager.” If she did not bear a child, how could she become empress dowager?! Haha.

test : Please refer to the following:

The Fisherman's Wisdom Surpasses King Wen.

It is said that the Earl of the West once had a dream at night: he dreamed that a flying bear came from outside and flew down before his hall.

King Wen was startled and awoke. At daybreak, he summoned the civil and military ministers to the hall and recounted the dream in full.

The Duke of Zhou Dan was skilled at interpreting dreams. The Duke of Zhou said, “This foretells that a great worthy, fit to be a general or minister under Heaven, will appear. You dreamed of a bear, and one that could even fly—who would dare equal it? It must foretell the arrival of a worthy from the south. Your Majesty should now burn incense and make a southern tour in search of a worthy. A worthy cannot be conquered by force.”

The Duke of Zhou interpreted the dream and understood its meaning deeply: “In former times, the Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan dreamed of a heavenly phoenix and obtained Master Fenghou, by whose special aid he destroyed Chiyou on the plains of Zhuolu. The Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan also dreamed of ascending to heaven, and a hundred days later he indeed ascended to heaven. King Yao dreamed of ascending to heaven and gained the imperial throne. King Tang dreamed of holding up heaven with his hands and likewise gained the imperial throne. Your Majesty has dreamed of a flying bear; you will certainly obtain a worthy.”

Following the Duke of Zhou's words, King Wen ordered the ceremonial procession arranged and went out to burn incense. On the return journey, King Wen passed through the crowd and recognized a man. King Wen said in alarm, “So you are here!” He ordered his attendants to summon Wu Ji. Having received the summons, Wu Ji did not dare delay and came to see the king. After paying his respects, he stood before him.

King Wen questioned Wu Ji: “I divined that you fled from the law, threw yourself into the water, and drowned. How is it that you did not die?” Wu Ji replied in full: “On the bank of Panxi, beside the Wei River, there is a fisherman deeply versed in methods of

warding off misfortune. By these he saved Wu Ji's life."

When King Wen heard of the fisherman's skill and methods, he said, "I understand yin and yang so thoroughly that no one in the world can equal me, yet the fisherman's wisdom surpasses mine." He asked, "Wu Ji, is this true?" Wu Ji replied, "How would I dare deceive you? It is indeed true." King Wen rewarded Wu Ji and further appointed him an accompanying guard, commander of a thousand, and general leading the Golden Ox Guard. Wu Ji thanked him for the favor. King Wen said, "You shall lead me on a hunt."

The next morning, King Wen arranged his retinue and went hunting in a four-horse carriage, making an inspection tour in search of worthy men. Wu Ji led the royal carriage in the search for worthies. Meanwhile, Jiang Shang, standing on the bank of Pan Creek with a fishing hook in hand, sighed to himself: "I am old now, already eighty years of age, yet I have not assisted an enlightened ruler. I do not fish for fish; I fish only for a worthy ruler." He sighed and composed a poem.

The poem says: "Having not yet met my time, I was cast off by my wife; by the River Wei I hold a fishing hook. I fish only for an enlightened ruler to restore the state; when the time comes, I shall surely become a lord." When Jiang Shang had finished sighing, he suddenly saw an auspicious aura to the due north. Jiang Shang said, "In three more days, a lord will certainly come here."

As he reflected thus, a great stone, as large as a mat and colored blue, red, and green, drifted down the water and stopped of its own accord before Jiang Shang. Jiang Shang thought to himself: "Could I in due time become a general or minister?" Seeing that the stone had stopped before him, he recalled that since ancient times Master Fenghou had been enfeoffed here: a stone had drifted down the water and stopped before Fenghou, who later became a general under the Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan. This stone was called the "Royal-August Stone." Thereupon he sighed and composed a poem. The poem says:

A single stone drifts beside the stony bank; mist veils the cold water, gray and dim;

Since Lü Wang restored house and state, who else has encountered an enlightened king?

[lvm]: Oh! So this is the allusion.

"The Yellow Emperor Xuanyuan dreamed of a celestial phoenix and obtained Master Fenghou, through whom he specially defeated Chiyou in the wilderness of Zhuolu."

[Yongshou Tongzi]: No wonder they say, "Within the realm, the Son of Heaven's edict; beyond the frontier, the general's command."

[Newbie]: Just because you are a teacher does not mean you may avoid consulting a dictionary.

[Iron Broom]: That ancient old tiger actually accepted disciples in this manner.

The Eye of Humans and Devas, Volume Six — Chan Grove Sayings (newly added)

Master Fenghou

.....http://www.aikanshu.com/books/6525/180799.htm

There is no specific explanation here either.

[dx]: I do not understand.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: It will not let me in. It displays:

Server Error in "/" Application.

[CUFE]: Was Mazu white or black?

[Traveling Practitioner]: Mazu was a large man.

[Traveling Practitioner]: You are Mazu.

[74] Jinniu Celebrates the Meal

[74] Jinniu Celebrates the Meal Offering

A pointer says: With Moye held horizontally, before its blade one cuts off the nest of tangled vines; with a bright mirror hung high, within the words one draws forth Vairocana's seal. Where the ground is firm and intimate, one puts on clothes and eats meals; where spiritual powers are freely displayed, how can one approach? Do you understand? Look to what follows.

[74] The Case:

Whenever it was time for the meal, Monk Jinniu would personally carry the rice bucket before the monks' hall and dance. Laughing heartily, he would say, "Bodhisattva children, come eat!" [You may manipulate the thread at the tip of the pole as you please; without disturbing the clear waves, its intent is naturally distinct. Ghee and poison operate at once. That is so; yet though the seven treasures and eight precious things are all laid out at once, few are those who encounter them.]

Xuedou said, "Even so, Jinniu did not mean well." [A thief recognizes a thief; an expert recognizes an expert. Whoever comes speaking of right and wrong is himself a person of right and wrong.]

A monk asked Changqing, "The ancients said, 'Bodhisattva children, come eat!' What was the meaning?" [It is no harm to have doubts. Originally, he did not know where to land. What would Changqing say?]

Changqing said, "It greatly resembles celebrating the meal offering." [Striking the command at the banquet, he closes the case according to the evidence.]

Jinniu was a venerable descendant of Mazu. Whenever it was time for the meal, he would personally carry the rice bucket and dance before the monks' hall. Laughing heartily, he would say, "Bodhisattva children, come eat!" He did this for twenty years.

Tell me, where was his intent? If he were merely calling people to eat, the customary striking of the wooden fish and drum would have announced it well enough. Why did he have to carry the rice bucket himself and perform so many antics? Was he mad? Or was he expounding and establishing this matter? If he was expounding this matter, why did he not strike the seat and raise the whisk from the jeweled Dharma throne? Why was it necessary to act in this way? People today utterly fail to realize that the ancients' intent lay beyond their words.

Why not first look at the theme set forth when the patriarch first came? What did it say? It plainly said, "A special transmission outside the teachings, directly transmitting the mind-seal." The ancients' skillful means merely taught you to take it up directly. Later people vainly speculate, saying that there are so many matters: when cold, warm oneself by the fire; when hot, enjoy the cool; when hungry, eat; when tired, sleep. If you interpret and explain it in terms of such ordinary sentiments, Bodhidharma's lineage will be swept away without a trace! They do not know that, throughout the twelve double-hours, the ancients never let a single thought pass without seeking to clarify this matter.

Xuedou said, "Even so, Jinniu did not mean well." With this one sentence, how many people have misunderstood! The supreme flavor of ghee is treasured by the world, yet upon meeting people of this sort it turns instead into poison. Since Jinniu had entered the weeds to meet people, why did Xuedou say that he "did not mean well"? Why did he put it this way? A Chan practitioner must have living activity before it will do.

People today have not reached the ground of the ancients, yet they keep talking about seeing some mind or having some Buddha. If you form such an understanding, you spoil old master Jinniu's work entirely. You must examine it carefully. If, day after day, you merely speak glibly, there will be no end to it.

Later, when Changqing ascended the hall, a monk asked, "The ancients said, 'Bodhisattva children, come eat!' What was the meaning?" Changqing said, "It greatly resembles celebrating the meal offering." These venerable masters are exceedingly compassionate and reveal quite a lot—though that is so. Tell me: on account of the meal offering, what is being celebrated?

Look at Xuedou's verse:

Amid the shadows of white clouds, he laughs heartily. [There is a blade in that laughter. Why stir up heat? Chan practitioners throughout the land do not know where to land.]

With both hands he brings it and gives it to them. [How could there be such a thing! Do not slander good Jinniu. Can you call it a rice bucket? A Chan practitioner true to his calling does not eat this kind of food.]

If they are cubs of a golden-haired lion, [They must be beyond the ordinary standards. Grant that they have eyes; I only fear that their eyes are not straight.]

From three thousand miles away, they see the error. [Not worth half a penny. What a disclosure! Where is the error? Blind fellow!]

"Amid the shadows of white clouds, he laughs heartily." Changqing said, "Celebrating the meal offering," and Xuedou said, "With both hands he brings it and gives it to them." Tell me: is he merely giving them food, or is there something else extraordinary? If you can know the truth of it here, then you are a cub of a golden-haired lion.

“If they are cubs of a golden-haired lion,” Jinniu need not carry out the rice bucket, dance, and laugh heartily. From three thousand miles away, they directly recognize where he falls short. The ancients said, “The mirror discerns before the opportunity arises; there is no need for a pinch.” Therefore, Chan practitioners must ordinarily function beyond conventional standards before they can be called masters true to their school. If one merely relies on words, one cannot avoid revealing too much.

[Xin Seng]: How bitter, Jinniu! How sorrowful, Jinniu!

Dancing at mealtime reveals far too much;

You force down the ox’s head though it will not eat grass.

Calling out for the bodhisattva children to eat,

The rice bucket smashes the great void.

[Bodhi Tree]: If you understand, you understand; if you do not, you do not. Why all this fussy nagging?

[Wangwang]: Jinniu does a good deed; Xin Seng is overly sentimental.

[Greens]: Indeed, indeed.

[Wangwang]: Let him dance and flirt as he likes; I am going to eat.

[Greens]: Will you have vegetables too?

[Wangwang]: There are vegetables too? Eat!

[Greens]: After Sun Wukong crawled into Princess Iron Fan’s belly—

[Wangwang]: Why trouble the teacher? At noon tomorrow, I will conveniently expel him, heh…

[Greens]: I am only afraid that Your Highness the Princess—

---

will be writhing on the ground in pain before noon tomorrow.

You think the teacher is performing deliverance rites…

[Wangwang]: I never even bit you once! Jinniu, close up shop. Put it three feet off the ground in the east side room, so no one will greedily eat it!

[lvm] (replying to [Greens]: “Will you have vegetables too?”): Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid!

[Greens]: Please perform deliverance rites for me…

[lvm]: Om—nothing is wrong, nothing is wrong—svāhā!

[lvm] (replying to [Wangwang]: “Let him dance and flirt as he likes; I am going to eat.”): Ha ha! Bodhisattva children, come eat!

[dx]: Hee hee! Old Buddha, please enjoy your meal.

[chan]: If he calls out again for the bodhisattva children to eat, I will overturn his rice bucket.

[lvm]: Such a move actually exists!

Is this what it is like when one understands, or what it is like when one does not understand?

[chan]: Ho!

[vvvv] (replying to [lvm]: “Such a move actually exists!”): Whether I understand or not, I do not know—but there will be no food to eat.

[Xinde]: Why not overturn him along with it?

[lvm]: Today I will not impose a severe punishment.

You must compensate [vvvv] for the meal and compensate Monk Jinniu for the bucket.

“Given your karmic affinity, you belong with Deshan.”

[Layman Yongguang]: If it were me, I would settle it with one coin.

Ha ha!

[chan]: Jinniu lacks no money, and I have no money to repay.

[lvm]: Set Jinniu’s bucket aside for now. What are we to do about [vvvv]’s meal?

[chan]: When he asks for money, give him a blow in reply.

[lvm]: After Huang Chao has passed through, can one still retrieve the sword?

[chan]: Ho!

We are all family—what use is a sword?

[vvvv]: That shout may have driven back all Buddhas of the three times, but it cannot drive back Teacher Qi.

[Bodhicitta]: Not even half a flower is seen in empty space—what are you shouting for?

[chan]: The speaker has no intent; the listener takes it to heart.

[Bodhicitta]: Ho!

[Lele] (replying to [chan]: “When he asks for money, give him a blow in reply.”): In that case, everyone still has a hard stretch of days ahead.

vvvv (in reply to chan : “When he asks for money, give him a blow with the staff.”): Ha ha! I am in no hurry. Whenever you have no staff, sir, just call me to collect it.

chan : You see the staff yourself—what has that to do with me?

Reading (in reply to chan : “Golden Ox lacks no money, and I have no money to repay either.”): Golden Ox does not hide his head; you have exposed the horse’s tail…

chan : Go off and investigate.

Reading : Ha ha, compensate vvvv for the meal, and compensate Venerable Golden Ox for the bucket; I’ll go off to investigate…

chan : Just investigate—why are you still thinking about the cost of the meal and the bucket?

Sudhana (in reply to lvm : “No heavy punishment today.”): Ha ha, the bedraggled east wind dances without rest; clearly entrusted, yet hard to repay.

The disheveled east wind dances on without rest;

Though it is plainly entrusted, it is hard to repay.

People now vie to admire the colors of spring,

But who understands the peach blossoms’ distinctive red?

Lele : Heh heh, when the young eagle breaks its shell, its vital energy is naturally complete; before its eyes are open, its beak opens first.

The fledgling eagle breaks from its shell with its primal spirit intact; before its eyes are open, its beak opens first. Wait until its wings are full-grown, and it will gather in all the rivers, mountains, clouds, and sky beyond.

Integration : “Before its eyes are open, its beak opens first”—good.

Sudhana : Hey! Hey! Caught a little thief!

Lele : Alas, now that I’ve been caught, it would be nice to beg a leisurely meal.

Like a dream, the rivers and mountains all return to you;

Only then does one know that being a thief is not easy.

Let the wildflowers of spring bloom in riotous profusion;

I beg for one branch of peach blossoms of a different hue.

Sudhana : Very well, very well—today I’ll give Lele a treat.

Today I rob the poor and also aid the rich;

Peach blossoms fill the mountain and encounter the bare pillar.

Let the fragrant guest ask with all diligence;

The partridge cries again east of the spring stream.

Lele : At Cai’s place, there is a fine cook.

Caijia’s household has a fine cook;

Fragrant blossoms turn into partridges.

The sounds and colors of spring are endless;

Full after eating, one forgets east and west.

Integration : East and west are forgotten, yet the partridge is still calling in the belly.

Lele : East and west, the sounds and colors of spring; the equal light of the Tathāgata.

Sudhana : Golden Ox begins to dance.

Jinniu understands how to dance;

Sudhana comes to beat the drum.

LVM has not yet picked up the chopsticks;

Lele is already rubbing his belly.

Integration : “Not violating the clear waves” means the writing does not address the topic; the partridge has fled, yet it is still in the belly.

It should not be used as a shield.

Xinning : Tsk, tsk—a whole Sichuan opera.

“You may manipulate the thread from atop the pole; not disturbing the clear waves has a different meaning.”

Xinning (in reply to Sudhana : “Very well, very well—today I’ll give Lele a treat.”): Did you mistype a character?

Should the final character, , perhaps be —a keyboarding error?

Xin Seng : No, no.

Do not say that the partridge cries at the spring-stream ferry;

The peach blossoms are red at the house next door.

cyt7213 : Change “east of the spring stream” to “spring-stream ferry,” and tears will flow endlessly from Jinniu’s eyes.

Sudhana : ^^ Although it does not rhyme, this character cannot be changed.

Xinning : Even the Golden-Hooped Staff can be moved—why can’t this one be moved?

Is the difference between “east” and “ferry” really so great?

Sudhana : Ask Lele~

Xinning : May I ask Lele for instruction?

You would not put me off by saying, “I am not among those who understand,” would you?

What would happen if “east” were allowed to change into “ferry”?

Sudhana : It is rare indeed to find someone as sincerely devoted as Xinning!

Heh heh, in fact, there are many fellow practitioners on this forum who are as sincerely earnest as Xinming.

Everyone diligently cultivates and maintains contemplation in daily life; when encountering problems, they earnestly seek an explanation. They do not make a virtue of deluded and flattering minds, but take straightforward conduct as the Way of practice. This is worthy of praise!

Xinning : Sincerely devoted to what? I’m merely a bit simple-minded and a bit foolish.

Sudhana : ~

Xinning : Give me a thumbs-up again, and I’ll pick up the kitchen knife.

Please spare me.

Sudhana : Heh heh, bye-bye~

Lele : This Sudhana certainly knows how to save effort.

In youth, he once cherished great aspirations;

Whenever he saw Sudhana, nothing ever happened;

Without stirring the mind-ground, he vainly leans on a chair.

The worlds of the ten directions reveal themselves of their own accord.

Though it cannot bear being stated plainly, there is no harm in discussing it here.

In Chan, the function is to shatter appearances, and the principle is freedom from attachment; thus, when Chan teachers speak, it is often as though clouds were exhaling mist. Unless they are pointing to something else in a particular situation, they are generally unwilling to let their words settle on appearances. In truth, nothing departs from the purity of intrinsic nature; appearance and non-appearance are both unreal. Yet, for the purpose of guiding students, having none is better than having some.

Compare “crossing” and “east,” and you should be able to see the difference within them, senior brother. If “crossing” can serve as a vajra staff, then “east” can serve as the Tathāgata’s palm.

This Sudhana seems like the child of the Princess and the Pea: he is unwilling to tolerate even the slightest inconvenience. That is worth learning from.

Sudhana : Hehe, first I accept Brother Lele’s criticism. I should do more self-examination.

What I should explain is that inviting Brother Le to discuss this was not merely a matter of convenience. Before your post, I had already discussed this issue privately with other senior brothers. To be frank, I gave some of them quite a severe dressing-down.

Asking Brother Le to provide corroborating testimony here is simply to show that these seemingly lively questions and answers should, at the very least, be grounded in evidence and accord with the essential principle of the tradition.

—Look: even our child’s-play antics must be treated seriously. How much more so the sharp responses and turning words of the patriarchs, which are offered as reverently as incense is burned. Friends who enjoy the Chan school must never rely on their own views to display worldly cleverness, only to end up with mere verbal Chan and the like.

Lele : I see.

Sudhana : Thanks^^. Two digressions:

---

a: Was that Princess and the Pea person a character from a Danish fairy tale? As I recall, she had more than a dozen mattresses laid over a single pea, yet it still made her too uncomfortable to sleep.

(Look what you have made me out to be! Sweat…)

b: Also, hehe, let me tell you, Brother Le: seeing the name Lele makes me feel especially close to it, because it is precisely the nickname of my own mischievous, impish little girl! Haha, I am not speaking falsely!

(Hehe, I suppose that repays the arrow from above~)

;P

Lele : Haha. All sentient beings have been our parents throughout countless kalpas; there is karmic affinity.

Not only where you are—here, too, a relative’s child is named Lele.

Sudhana : May all sentient beings be free from suffering and attain happiness!

Lele : Amitābha Buddha

Compilation (following Sudhana : “Hehe, first I accept Brother Lele’s criticism. I should do more self-examination.”): “How much more so the sharp responses and turning words of the patriarchs, which are offered as reverently as incense is burned”?

Caution is certainly appropriate. But sharp responses and turning words are primarily the result of responding aptly to circumstances, are they not? They are directed at attachment to doctrinal meanings. Now that people do not even understand doctrinal meanings, there is no question of their being attached to them. Thus, sharp responses and turning words are not really needed; it is better to say less.

Compilation : These Chan poems all present a certain meditative state.

No wonder some people say that Chan verses cannot stand for awakening.

Of course, presenting a meditative state is not necessarily a bad thing.

Qingcai : May I ask what “celebrating with praise” means?

lvm : Chanting verses of praise and having a celebration.

Qingcai : Oh.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Dancing with joy.

CUFE : A bodhisattva's child does not eat.

Traveling Practitioner : After everyone has finished eating, let us dig up Zhenzhou's great radishes.

[Seventy-Five] How Does the Chinese Tallow Tree Bear This?

[Case 75] Wuju Is Capable of Such Things

Pointer: The numinous, keen sword is always revealed before you. It can kill; it can also give life. There and here, gain and loss are alike. If you wish to raise it up, raise it up as you please; if you wish to lay it level, lay it level as you please. But tell me: when one neither falls into host and guest nor is constrained by their interchange, how is it? Try to bring it forth and see.

[Case 75] The Case:

A monk came to Wuju from the assembly of Master Dingzhou. Wuju asked, "How does Dingzhou's way of Dharma compare with this place?" [There is an echo in his words. One must discern the shallow from the deep. Testing with a probing pole, stirring the grass to flush out a snake—what an utter deception!]

The monk said, "There is no difference." [Within this dead fellow there is something alive. One or two such men—like iron stakes, standing firmly on solid ground.]

Wuju said, "If there is no difference, go back there!" He then struck him. [Clearly so! The proper command is put into action.]

The monk said, "The staff has eyes; you must not strike people carelessly!" [Only such a seasoned adept could speak this way. He is indeed a lion's cub.]

Wuju said, "Today I have struck one!" Then he struck him three more times. [Why speak of one? A thousand, ten thousand!]

The monk then left. [It turns out that he was one of the household. He could only suffer the indignity; he merely acted in accordance with the occasion.]

Wuju said, "It turns out someone has received an undeserved blow." [A mute person eating a bitter melon. Let go, then draw back in. Once you have indicated the way back, what use is that?]

The monk turned around and said, "But the handle of the ladle is in the Master's hand." [As before, through all three hundred and sixty days. Yet he is a clever patch-robed monk.]

Wuju said, "If you want it, this mountain monk will give it back to you." [Who knows who is ruler and who is minister? He dares to thrust himself across a tiger's mouth. He utterly fails to recognize good and bad!]

The monk stepped forward, seized the staff from Wuju's hand, and struck Wuju three times. [He too is a seasoned Chan practitioner. Only then is there an interchange of host and guest, yielding and seizing in the very moment.]

Wuju said, "An undeserved blow! An undeserved blow!" [There! Why is this old fellow in such desperate haste?]

The monk said, "Someone has received it." [Ha, ha! How many ladle handles are there? Yet it is now in this monk's hand.]

Wuju said, "Carelessly, I have struck a fellow." [He does not fall into either side. Who knows who he is?]

The monk then made a bow. [To remain unchanged in the face of danger—only then is one a true man.]

Wuju said, "So the monk is leaving just like this?" [There!]

The monk laughed loudly and left. [A seasoned Chan practitioner is naturally such a one. A fierce tiger must have a clear breeze following it; only then does one know the whole from beginning to end. No one in the world can lay hold of it.]

Wuju said, "Capable of such things, capable of such things." [What a pity he let him go! Why not split his back with a blow? He thought he had gone somewhere.]

A monk came to Wuju from the assembly of Master Dingzhou. Wuju too was a seasoned adept. If you can recognize here that the coming out and going in of these two men are, in a thousand or ten thousand instances, just one, then to act as host is thus, and to act as guest is thus; the two men ultimately become one household. In this round of examination, their questions and answers as host and guest are accomplished from beginning to end.

Observe how Wuju asked the monk, "How does Dingzhou's way of Dharma compare with this place?" The monk immediately replied, "There is no difference." Had it not been Wuju at the time, it would have been difficult to handle this monk. Wuju said,

“If there is no difference, go back there!” and struck him. But this monk was an accomplished man, so he immediately said, “The staff has eyes; you must not strike people carelessly.” Wuju went straight on issuing commands: “Today I have struck one!” Then he struck him three more times, and the monk left. See how the two of them turn freely and fluidly; both are seasoned adepts.

Once this matter has been resolved, one must distinguish black from white and discern fortune from misfortune. Although the monk left, this koan was not yet finished. From beginning to end, Wuju wished to test what was real in him and see what he would do. This monk, however, was like one who props up the gate and supports the household; thus Wuju had not yet fully seen him.

Wuju then said, “It turns out someone has received an undeserved blow.” The monk wanted to turn back and let out his breath, but rather than contend with him, he lightly turned it around, saying, “But the handle of the ladle is in the Master’s hand.” Wuju was a lineage master with eyes in the crown of his head. He dared to thrust himself into a tiger’s mouth, saying, “If you want it, this mountain monk will give it back to you.”

This fellow was one with a talisman beneath his elbow. As the saying goes, “To see what is right and not act is a lack of courage.” Without further deliberation, he stepped forward, seized the staff from Wuju’s hand, and struck Wuju three times.

Wuju said, “An undeserved blow! An undeserved blow!” Tell me, what did he mean? Earlier he had said, “It turns out someone has received an undeserved blow,” but when this monk struck him, he said, “An undeserved blow! An undeserved blow!” The monk said, “Someone has received it,” and Wuju said, “Carelessly, I have struck a fellow.” Earlier he had said, “Today I have struck one!” Why, at the end, after receiving the staff himself, did he also say, “Carelessly, I have struck a fellow”? Had this monk not been so outstanding at the time, Wuju could not have done anything with him.

The monk then made a bow. This bow was most poisonous; it was not well intentioned either. Had it not been Wuju, he could not have seen through him. Wuju said, “So the monk is leaving just like this?” The monk laughed loudly and left. Wuju said, “Capable of such things, capable of such things.” See how seasoned adepts meet: host and guest are distinct from beginning to end; they can break off and continue again. In truth, it is only the pivotal opportunity of interchange.

When they reach this point, they do not speak of there being an interchange. These people of old had cut off emotional dust and conceptual thought. Both were seasoned adepts, and they did not speak of gain or loss. Though it was merely a brief exchange of words, the two were vividly alive, with the pulse and thread of living continuity. If you can see it here, then throughout the twelve periods of the day it will be clear and distinct. The monk’s leaving was a double release; what follows is a double gathering-in. This is called interchange. Xuedou versified it just so:

To call is easy, [Everyone in the world doubts here. Rotten meat draws flies. Chan monks everywhere do not know where they have landed.]

To send away is hard. [It does no harm to cut off everything. A shining lord upon the sea.]

Look carefully at the pivotal opportunity of interchange. [One comes out and one goes in; both are seasoned adepts. One staff, supported by two people—tell me, on whose side is it?]

Even a kalpa stone, though firm, can still be worn away; [With a golden hammer in his sleeve, how can one distinguish it? Not transmitted by a thousand sages!]

Standing in the depths of the vast blue sea, it too must dry up. [Where can it be placed? The staff has eyes. To him alone is it granted to attain it personally.]

Old Wuju, old Wuju—[What a pity to approve him! This old fellow does not recognize good and bad.]

How many ways are there? [He too is an uncalled-for fellow. Hundreds of thousands of layers.]

To give him the ladle handle was utterly unwarranted. [It was already before words. When Cai Province was about to be smashed, he deserved thirty blows. Tell me, where does the fault lie?]

“To call is easy; to send away is hard.” Both are equally a descent into the weeds, yet Xuedou is exceedingly compassionate. It is commonly said: calling a snake is easy, sending a snake away is hard. Now, if you blow a gourd to summon a snake, calling it is easy; when you want to send it away, that is hard. It is like giving him the staff: easy enough. But taking the staff back and sending him away is difficult. One must have genuine skill in one’s hands and feet before one can send him away.

Wuju was a seasoned adept. He had the skill to call a snake and the means to send one away. This monk was no sleepy fellow either. When Wuju asked, “How does Dingzhou’s way of Dharma compare with this place?” he was calling him. When Wuju struck him, he was sending him away. When the monk said, “The staff has eyes; you must not strike people carelessly,” the turn shifted to the monk: he was calling Wuju in.

When Wuju said, “If you want it, this mountain monk will give it back to you,” and the monk stepped forward, seized the staff, and struck him three times, it was the monk who sent him away. Even when the monk laughed loudly and left, and Wuju said, “Capable of such things, capable of such things,” this clearly shows that he sent him away exactly right. See how their pivotal

opportunities interchanged, thread coming and silk going, becoming continuous and undivided, with host and guest distinct from beginning to end. At times the host acts as guest; at times the guest acts as host. Even Xuedou could not praise it sufficiently, and so he spoke of the opportunity of interchange, telling people to look carefully.

“Even a kalpa stone, though firm, can still be worn away” refers to a kalpa stone forty li long, eighty-four thousand yojanas wide, and eighty-four thousand yojanas thick. Every five hundred years, a celestial being descends and brushes it once with the sleeve of a garment weighing six zhu, then leaves. After another five hundred years, the being returns and brushes it in the same way. When the stone has been entirely worn away, that constitutes one kalpa. This is called the kalpa of brushing away a stone with a light garment.

Xuedou says that even a kalpa stone, though firm, can still be worn away. Although the stone is solid, it can nevertheless be ground away completely. But the pivotal opportunities of these two men have no end through a thousand or ten thousand ages. “Standing in the depths of the vast blue sea, it too must dry up”: though the blue sea may have immense waves, boundless waters, and white breakers surging to the heavens, if these two men were made to stand within it, even that blue sea would have to dry up. By this point, Xuedou had completed his verse all at once.

At the end he further says, “Old Wuju, old Wuju—how many ways are there?” Whether seizing or releasing, killing or giving life, how many ways are there after all? “To give him the ladle handle was utterly unwarranted”: this staff is used by the Buddhas of the three times, by the patriarchs of every generation, and by lineage masters to pull out nails and remove wedges, to free people from clinging and release them from bonds. How could it be casually handed over to someone? Xuedou meant that it should have been used exclusively; fortunately, this monk at the time only laid it level before him. But if thunder had suddenly erupted from dry ground, see how Wuju would have withstood it! When Wuju handed the ladle handle over to another, was that not utterly unwarranted?

[So-and-so]: Wuju asked, “How does Dingzhou’s way of Dharma compare with this place?”

Answer him: “It does not attach to either side.” How is that?

[So-and-so]: It does not attach to either side.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: You have attached to it without even knowing!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: My answer would be: … Please let Teacher LVM and all the benevolent ones examine it together.

A monk came to Wuju from the assembly of Master Dingzhou. Wuju asked, “How does Dingzhou’s way of Dharma compare with this place?”

—Answer: If one perceived sameness or difference, one would not have come.

lvm : “If there is neither difference nor sameness, turn further within that!”

No-Ground Bodhisattva : This is how I now answer LVM: Where do you say I am?

“If there is neither difference nor sameness, turn further within that!” lvm

-- Where do you say I am?

lvm : Don’t go poking about at random!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Then please, Venerable, demonstrate: what is the proper way to “poke”!

zzw (responding to lvm : “If there is neither difference nor sameness, turn further within that!”): Ha ha—look how many heroes under heaven are going round and round with one another.

No-Ground Bodhisattva (responding to lvm : “If there is neither difference nor sameness, turn further within that!”): Heavens! Heavens!

Weng Ahong (responding to lvm : “If there is neither difference nor sameness, turn further within that!”): Master Qi has eyes; do not hastily drive people away!

Yongshou Tongzi : What does “not falling on the C side” mean? “Not falling into either extreme”?

Wuju said, “Casually, he struck such a fellow.” [He does not fall on the C side. Who knows who he is?]

lvm : In traditional Chinese, it is “ ,” not “ ,” so this error could not have occurred.

Wuju and the monk from Dingzhou: one is A, and the other is B.

“Casually, he struck such a fellow.” [He does not fall on the C side. Who knows who he is?]

Ha ha! Now you understand, don’t you?

Yongshou Tongzi : Oh. So that is how it is.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : What is the turning point in “Casually, he struck such a fellow”? This student does not understand; please speak, Teacher LVM.

lvm : The turning point in “Casually, he struck such a fellow” is No-Ground Bodhisattva .

“Casually, he struck such a fellow.” [He does not fall on the B side. Who knows who you are?]

No-Ground Bodhisattva : So I am party A, then—ha ha, I am getting full of myself!

Xinming : My answer is: “Different.”

(Xinming) came to Wuju from the assembly of the monk of Dingzhou. Wuju asked, “How does the Dharma teaching at Dingzhou compare with here?”

(Xinming) said, “Different.”

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : He has not yet seen his true nature either.

If it is different, then go ask the Fifth Patriarch.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : No village ahead and no inn behind—serve tea and see the guest out!

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Please be on your way.

Thank you for coming!

lvm (responding to Xinming : “My answer is: ‘Different.’”): If it is different, turn further within that.

Xinming : There was no Way where the monk of Dingzhou was, so I answered, “Different.”

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Your name is Xinming—“Mind Bright”—but your mind is not bright!

Lianqing : I did not expect that the monk had truly been struck blind by one blow.

Xinming : Today the teacher is treating us to porridge at his own expense.

Xinming (responding to lvm : “If it is different, turn further within that.”): Only today have I turned out of it. (Editor’s note: Xinming gave this reply seven days later.)

A few days ago, I fell into playful Chan and was rather pleased with myself.

lvm : ^o^

No-Ground Bodhisattva (responding to lvm : “If it is different, turn further within that.”): This is how I answer LVM: Wuju’s road is long!

lvm : Ha ha! Since you know you are a bull, do not poke about at random anymore.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Moo! Moo!

zzw (responding to lvm : “If it is different, turn further within that.”): The road by which I came is cut off!

lvm : Then strike him.

zzw : Ow! Ow!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : That was a solid beating. A true spiritual friend indeed! I bow and withdraw!

zzw : I was showing my broadsword skills to my master, and you came and splashed foul water on me.

dx (responding to lvm : “If it is different, turn further within that.”): Then I would answer: “The same peach blossoms, yet two different shades of red.”

lvm : Wuju would then strike him.

dx : Flowing water cannot hold back the dense-falling blossoms.

lvm : The Dharma teaching is not like it is here.

dx : Steamed buns in Beijing, mo in Henan.

Xueshan Tongzi : I would not answer that way:

A monk came to Wuju from the assembly of the monk of Dingzhou. Wuju asked, “How does the Dharma teaching at Dingzhou compare with here?”

He answered, “What is it like where you are?”

lvm : Oh! Have you gone to pick a fight?

Xueshan Tongzi : Hee hee! Ten thousand peach blossoms grow from one tree. How can Teacher speak as though there were two different houses?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Answering for LVM: You yourself give rise to discrimination!

lvm : [As in the preceding three hundred and sixty days.]

No-Ground Bodhisattva : My answer to LVM: The Venerable truly is different today!

lvm : Turn further within that!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : It cannot always be just like this!

Big Sister : But the ladle’s handle is in LVM’s hand!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : If you want it, then return it to yourself!

When he takes it up, wield the stick!

lvm (responding to Big Sister : “But the ladle’s handle is in LVM’s hand!”): Ha ha! Big Sister, you flatter me.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Venerable, how are you today?

lvm : I refuse to say, “A Buddha with a sun-face; a Buddha with a moon-face.”

No-Ground Bodhisattva : You have already said it! Heh heh.

Lianqing (responding to lvm : “Oh! Have you gone to pick a fight?”): I would not dare. I would not dare.

I respectfully submit, Reverend: In Dingzhou, there is no such place.

lvm : But the ladle handle is in Master Wujiu’s hands!

Lianqing : In that case, do not blame this little monk for being discourteous.

He steps forward and overturns the Dharma seat.

That will save the Reverend from pointing east and calling it west all day, fouling people's eyes.

Dingling (in response to lvm : "If it is not the same, then turn around and go over there."): Then—Wujiu asked, "How does the Dharma in Dingzhou compare with that here?" The monk then left.

lvm : Then there is no show left.

Bodhisattva Nowhere : Who is entering this stage? LVM?

Lianqing : Ha! Another fine show.

lvm (in response to Bodhisattva Nowhere : "Who is entering this stage? LVM?"): Sharp-tongued indeed...

Bodhisattva Nowhere : Do not poke around recklessly!

Zhenshi : You must not stir up a hornet's nest.

Sudhana (in response to lvm : "If it is not the same, then turn around and go over there."): If he goes there, what if it turns out to be the same after all?

Lianqing : Speaking on his behalf.

Go! Go!

Sudhana : Hehe~

Lianqing (in response to lvm : "If it is not the same, then turn around and go over there."): A blind blow of the staff.

Lianqing : Speaking on his behalf.

Go! Go!

lvm : Do not be rash!

Lianqing : What a meticulous monk!

Wujiu strikes him three more times.

And he takes the opportunity to leave the monastery.

lvm : "The staff has eyes; do not strike people carelessly!"

Lianqing : There is no need to add further unjust suffering.

Bodhisattva Nowhere (in response to lvm : "The staff has eyes; do not strike people carelessly!"): LVM can take the undeserved blows of the staff!

lvm : Nor am I afraid of being left speechless.

Bodhisattva Nowhere : You are not afraid to open your mouth, but can you close it?

lvm : As expounded by my revered teacher, Master Yuanyin:

Case Seventy-Five: Wujiu Is Equal to This

Let us first discuss the introductory pointer given by Patriarch Yuanwu Keqin before this koan:

The precious sword with its numinous edge is ever manifest before us: it can kill, and it can bring to life.

The "precious sword with its numinous edge" is a metaphor for Buddha-nature and its wondrous functioning. Chan Master Linji said: "At times, a shout is like the precious sword of the Vajra King; at times, a shout is like a crouching lion on the ground; at

times, a shout is like a probing pole testing the grass; at times, a shout does not function as a shout." The precious sword with its numinous edge here is the precious sword of the Vajra King.

Vajra is exceptionally hard: it can damage every material thing, yet cannot be damaged by any material thing. The Vajra King is the king among vajras and is incomparably hard. One can imagine how sharp such a precious sword must be; hence it is called a "numinous edge." It is a metaphor for great patriarchs who have realized the Way and possess boundless wisdom: wielding this sword of wisdom, they can cut through all deluded thoughts and attachments. They not only cut through their own deluded thoughts and attachments, but, through skillful means of instruction, can also cut through those of students.

"Ever manifest before us" means continual and unbroken. Chan Master Xianglin Chengyuan said, "It took this old monk forty years to become continuous and undivided." "Become continuous and undivided" means to be without interruption. It took him forty years to attain this continuity; this shows how persevering the ancients were in their practice.

Most people today lack perseverance. They cannot keep their minds on practice, day after day, for decades; thus there are many practitioners but few who realize the Way. Some say, "This is the Dharma-ending age; no one can realize the Way anymore." They do not know that the True Dharma and the Dharma-ending age exist only in people's minds. If you persevere and do not fear hardship and suffering, that is the True Dharma.

If you lack perseverance, keep changing your mind, and retreat when difficulties arise, that is the Dharma-ending age. It is not that not even one person can realize the Way today. Even in an age without a Buddha, when there is no instruction in the Buddhadharma, pratyekabuddhas still appear in the world. How much more so now, in an age when there is a Buddha and the Buddhadharma still remains! If you only persevere and do not fear hardship and suffering—whether in Buddha-recitation, Chan inquiry, or Esoteric practice—and practice for decades as though they were a single day, need you fear that you will not realize the Way? You too will certainly have "the precious sword with its numinous edge ever manifest before you."

The precious sword with its numinous edge—our Buddha-nature—constantly shines before each person's face, never hidden. Every movement and gesture, every clearing of the throat and swing of the arm, is its wondrous functioning and its manifestation. Therefore it is said: ever manifest before us!

"It can kill, and it can bring to life." To kill means to eliminate the deluded thoughts and attachments of oneself and one's students, and to eliminate the long-standing habit of giving rise to mind in response to circumstances. Once these are eliminated, Buddha-nature shines forth brightly before one.

Buddha-nature is originally innate and complete; it is not obtained from outside. Yet because we give rise to mind in response to circumstances, falsely cling and falsely grasp, we create karma through delusion and undergo retribution through karma. Thus birth after birth continues without cease; we revolve through the six realms, our heads appearing and disappearing, with no prospect of escape. Once the habitual tendencies of false clinging and false grasping have been eliminated, Buddha-nature is inherently complete. This is the "killing sword."

When deluded attachments are first removed, a single thought is empty and luminous, the mind is level as a mirror, and the whole body is at ease. At this point, one can very easily become attached to this state. If one remains fixed there as if dead, this is "Dead water does not harbor dragons." One will then be unable to give rise to boundless wondrous functioning, and so one must at this point "bring to life." To bring to life means to rouse students abiding in dead samādhi, so that they become active and remove their inverted deluded attachments. Where deluded thoughts cease, bodhi manifests before one. To give rise to every wondrous function without grasping or rejecting is to be a fine living Buddha. This is the "life-giving sword."

This passage means that, so long as our minds are empty and non-abiding, unchanging while according with conditions and according with conditions while unchanging, whatever comes readily to hand is wondrous functioning. We can both remove deluded thoughts and attachments ("killing") and bring forth all kinds of wondrous functions to benefit living beings; at the same time, we can serve as examples for others and guide them into the Way ("bringing to life"). When killing, we never blunt the blade or injure the hand, leaving severed lotus roots connected by threads. When bringing to life, we never fall into entrenched nests or ramble on with tangled vines. Why are we so free and unrestrained, able to grant and take away with such ease? Because "the precious sword with its numinous edge is ever manifest before us."

There and here, they gain together and lose together.

When a good spiritual teacher and a student meet face-to-face, if both have clear eyes, they will necessarily be alike. Though their Chan exchanges may shift, even to the point that host and guest exchange roles, they are both freely responsive, like a gourd floating on water: press it and it turns. They do not become deadlocked on words. This is "gaining together."

The monk from Dingzhou and Master Wujiu in this koan are just like this. This is what Chan Master Linji called "host seeing host." If it is "guest seeing host," "host seeing guest," or even "guest seeing guest," it is not so.

"Guest seeing host" is when a clear-eyed student encounters a blind "good spiritual teacher." "Host seeing guest" is when a student has something to settle upon and, though a good spiritual teacher points it out, still stubbornly refuses to let go. "Guest seeing guest" is when both are blind fellows. Needless to say, guest seeing guest is "losing together"; even guest seeing host and host seeing guest are "losing together"—both parties lose the essential principle of the Chan school.

Why is this so? “To expound profound Dharma to beings who are not vessels for it is a bodhisattva’s error.” If someone lacks the capacity to enter into profound Buddhadharma, yet out of bodhisattva compassion you insist on explaining profound Buddhadharma to them and directly pointing them to see their true nature, they cannot enter into it. Even if you lower yourself completely, what use is that? Cattle must eat grass themselves; pressing a cow’s head down to make it eat grass—is that not a mistake? Therefore it is said: it is a bodhisattva’s error. Below is a koan of “host seeing guest”:

A monk asked Chan Master Baizhang, “I come to the teacher holding an uncut jade; I ask the Master to examine it.” Uncut jade is jade mixed with stone; when the stony material is removed, it becomes precious jade worth a fortune. He used uncut jade as a metaphor for Buddha-nature. This monk had some realization and had come seeking verification. Chan Master Baizhang said, “Last night, a tiger on South Mountain bit a large beast.”

Have you all heard the koan of “the boys Bing and Ding come seeking fire”? Bing and Ding inherently belong to fire, yet they come seeking fire. This is a metaphor for the fact that you are originally Buddha, yet you come seeking Buddha. But this must be realized in actuality, with nonobstruction in every matter; only then can it be called “one’s heels touching the ground.” If it is not realized in actuality, but merely understood conceptually and one dies beneath the words, it is of no use.

We cannot wander too far afield here by discussing the koan of “the boys Bing and Ding come seeking fire.” You need only know that a tiger is a great beast, and that “a tiger bites a great beast” bears the same meaning as “the boys Bing and Ding come seeking fire.” This monk came seeking verification. Who is it that seeks, and what is to be verified? Therefore Chan Master Baizhang used “a tiger bites a great beast” as a metaphor.

The monk said, “It does not misconstrue the true purport. Why, then, do you not offer skillful means?” The first half of this statement was fairly good, but he dragged on a tail in the second half, and so it became utterly distorted.

Since it did not misconstrue the true purport, what further skillful means did he need? Chan Master Baizhang answered him, “You fellow who covers his ears while stealing a bell!” By using “a tiger bites a great beast” as a metaphor, I had already assessed the uncut jade you hold. If you had truly reached the point of no doubt, had this not already verified it? “It does not misconstrue the true purport” was also a good answer; but if, by “further skillful means,” he were to say that you have realized the mind and seen your true

nature—say that you have awakened—would that not be putting a head on top of your head? When one has truly reached the point of no doubt, realization is itself mind, and seeing is itself nature; what need is there to speak further of realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature? When even “delusion” cannot be found, how could there still be a concept of “awakening”? It was not that this monk had no point of awakening; rather, he had fallen into concepts and could not penetrate thoroughly, so he still wanted the patriarch to offer further skillful means and acknowledge him.

He could not acknowledge himself, but wanted the patriarch to “assess” this “uncut jade” of his and acknowledge it. Was this not deceiving himself? How like covering one’s ears while stealing a bell! Therefore Chan Master Baizhang answered him, “You fellow who covers his ears while stealing a bell!” Yet the monk was still not awake, and said, “Without Zhonglang to assess it, it is no different from firewood in a wilderness hut.”

Zhonglang means a physician, one who can distinguish medicinal herbs from firewood. What he meant was that if Chan Master Baizhang did not “offer skillful means” and acknowledge him, then his “uncut jade” would be no different from the firewood in a dilapidated hut in the wilderness and would have no value. Chan Master Baizhang then struck him.

Chan Master Baizhang was a great Chan master of vast ability. Under his staff is the forbearance of the unborn; he wished to strike away the monk’s concepts, save him, and enable him to penetrate thoroughly. Having received the blow, the monk cried out loudly, “Heavens! Heavens!” He did indeed seem to have thoroughly penetrated under the staff. Chan Master Baizhang said, “You have acquired quite a mouthful.”

This means: I struck you because you are too talkative. One sentence—“It does not misconstrue the true purport”—was enough, yet you wanted me to “offer further skillful means.” You wanted to induce me, too, to become talkative and thereby tumble headlong into the weeds. If at that moment this monk had shaken himself entirely free of his attachments, he could have gone on utterly naked and clean, carefree and at ease.

Who would have thought that he still clung desperately to such concepts as seeing one’s true nature and verification? Instead, he said, “Rare indeed to encounter one who understands me!” Then he flicked his sleeves and left. After he had gone, Chan Master Baizhang said, “Baizhang has lost half today.” There were two people, and each lost half. The monk fell into concepts without knowing it; even the blow failed to awaken him, so he lost one half. Chan Master Baizhang gave skillful guidance and did not hesitate to use his staff, yet it had no effect, so he lost the other half. Although Chan Master Baizhang’s Dharma eye was perfectly clear, he was drawn by this monk into losing half as well. Is this not “both losing”?

Another meaning of “there and here, both gain and both lose” is this: when two people of clear vision meet in an exchange of Chan responses, those who gain both gain—the suchness of non-abiding is brought forth—and those who lose both lose—the entanglements of abiding are cast off. Although the exchange shifts and host and guest change places, the two remain a single seamless whole, without duality or distinction.

In their give-and-take, their tension and relaxation, they accord with the wondrous purport beyond words amid laughter, jesting, anger, and scolding; between raising a fist and holding up a whisk, they reveal the formless fundamental essence. With neither there nor here, neither gain nor loss, they vividly bring out the spiritually luminous mind that is unencumbered, unobstructed, free, and at ease. How could this be dreamed of by one who covers his ears while stealing a bell?

If you wish to uphold, simply uphold; if you wish to lay things out evenly, simply lay them out evenly.

Ti means to raise high the patriarchal seal; chi means to hold fast to the crucial pass. To uphold is to be like "an official road that admits not even a needle": all appearances are false, and all verbal expressions lack real meaning. As it is said, "A single speck in the eye, and flowers in empty space fall everywhere." It is like "a mosquito climbing an iron ox"—there is nowhere for you to sink your teeth! At this point, why still distinguish delusion from awakening, or differentiate host from guest? At such a time, one "does not fall into host and guest."

Ping means level and straight; zhan means to spread out. Laying things out evenly is not as steep and abrupt as upholding: where there are no words, words may nevertheless be used, using words to accord with the wordless; where there is no form, forms do not obstruct, using form to reveal the formless. This is what is called "private traffic of carriages and horses." As it is said, "Ordinary mind is the Way; the straight mind is the place of practice." Whether speaking horizontally or vertically, it is like peaks winding around and paths turning; reflecting one another, it resembles the jeweled pearls of Indra's net. Therefore it is called "interchange." How can one be rigidly attached to a single word or phrase, a single time or place, or a single person or thing? At such a time, one "is not constrained by interchange."

Those who have thoroughly awakened to the original reality meet one another through matters proper to their station. If they wish to "uphold," let them uphold in whatever way they wish, and they will not fall into "having a tenet to take as a tenet." If they wish to "lay things out evenly," let them lay them out evenly in whatever way they wish, and they will not lose the central principle. This is precisely what is meant by: "If you wish to uphold, simply uphold; if you wish to lay things out evenly, simply lay them out evenly." It is because they "do not fall into host and guest" and "are not constrained by interchange."

But tell me: what is it like when one does not fall into host and guest and is not constrained by interchange? Try giving an example.

Then what is it like when one does not fall into host and guest and is not constrained by interchange? Let us now examine a koan. What follows is the koan "Wujiu Can Digest It Thus."

A monk came from the assembly of the monk of Dingzhou to Wujiu.

The monk of Dingzhou was a Dharma grandson of Master Shenxiu. This monk came from the assembly of the monk of Dingzhou and was his disciple. Earlier, we discussed the koan of Master Ma's "Sun-Face Buddha, Moon-Face Buddha." Master Ma was a Dharma grandson of the Sixth Patriarch. Monk Wujiu was Master Ma's disciple. Both Master Shenxiu and the Sixth Patriarch Huineng were disciples of the Fifth Patriarch Hongren.

According to the Dharma-lineage transmission of the Chan school, this monk who came from Dingzhou and Monk Wujiu were of equivalent generation. You have all read The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch. In those days, when the Fifth Patriarch wished to transmit the Dharma, he instructed each of his disciples to compose a verse. Whoever's verse accorded in meaning with the Chan school's essential purport would receive the Dharma and robe transmission and become the sixth patriarch.

Shenxiu's verse reads: "The body is the bodhi tree; the mind is like a bright mirror stand. At all times, diligently wipe it clean; do not let it gather dust." Realizing the original reality, contemplative awareness, safeguarding realization, and the stages of gradual cultivation are all plainly visible.

In response to this verse, the Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng, composed this verse: "Bodhi originally has no tree; the bright mirror is not a stand. Originally there is not a single thing; where could dust alight?" Not establishing a single dharma, it is thus immediately present; the thoroughgoing freedom of sudden awakening already shows its first signs. When the First Patriarch Bodhidharma crossed the sea and came from the west, what he transmitted was the sudden-awakening "patriarchal Chan," which requires no gradual cultivation.

Therefore, although Shenxiu at that time served as head seat under the Fifth Patriarch and could expound the Dharma to the assembly in the Fifth Patriarch's stead, the Fifth Patriarch did not transmit the robe and Dharma to him. Instead, he transmitted them to Huineng, who had not yet been ordained and held very little status in the assembly.

After the Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng, received the Dharma, he returned to Lingnan and concealed his brilliance among a band of hunters for as long as fifteen years. Only then did he emerge to teach the Dharma and transmit the Dharma gate of sudden awakening. This came to be known as the Southern school, or "Southern sudden awakening." Master Shenxiu's Dharma assemblies flourished greatly for a time and came to be known as the Northern school, or "Northern gradual cultivation."

Later, the Northern school rapidly declined, and the Chan school became almost entirely a transmission of the Southern school. Nevertheless, what Shenxiu transmitted was also a Chan Dharma lineage, and the Northern school likewise produced outstanding people. The monk in this koan who came from Dingzhou was one such person produced by the Northern school.

But sudden awakening without gradual cultivation will not do either. With sudden awakening, one has only ascended to the first bhūmi; one must still advance ever upward through the second and third bhūmis, until the completion of the tenth bhūmi. Not only are such practices as Buddha-recitation, Chan investigation, and Esoteric cultivation before awakening forms of gradual cultivation; is not true cultivation after awakening also gradual cultivation? Thus some say that Master Shenxiu had two bright eyes, whereas the Sixth Patriarch had but one eye of Maheśvara.

Wujiu asked, “How does the Dharma teaching at Dingzhou compare with here?” The monk said, “No different.”

Monk Wujiu asked this monk: What Dharma does the monk of Dingzhou teach? Is it the same as here? The monk answered, “No different”—there is no difference from here. The monk of Dingzhou was also a successor in the Chan school, and there is no difference in the essential purport of Chan. At first hearing, this answer seems excellent, but in fact it already has somewhere to land—there is still a “no different”!

Let us give another similar koan. Chan Master Xuefeng Yicun labored diligently for the Way. He visited Touzi three times and Dongshan nine times, received the Dharma from Deshan Xuanjian, and later realized the Way on Mount Ao. He was a great spiritual teacher to fifteen hundred people. When the one flower of Chan blossomed into five petals, there were five schools in all. His descendants later established the Yunmen and Fayan schools.

Chan Master Xuefeng was a most remarkable great patriarch of the Chan school. Once he asked a visiting monk, “Where have you come from?” The monk replied, “I have recently left central Zhejiang.” Chan Master Xuefeng then asked, “Did you come by boat or by land?” Did you come by water in a boat, or by road overland? The monk replied, “I have not traveled either route.”

Neither of these two routes has anything to do with me. It appears that this monk recognized the thrust of the exchange; he was not a merely literal-minded fellow.

Chan Master Xuefeng said, “Then how did you get here?” The visiting monk said, “What obstruction is there?” What separation or distinction is there? How very similar this is to the Dingzhou monk’s “No different” in the present koan. Chan Master Xuefeng then struck him, and the monk ran away after receiving the blow.

Ten years later, this monk came again. Chan Master Xuefeng again asked him, “Where have you come from?” He replied, “Hunan.” Xuefeng then asked, “How far is it from Hunan to here?” He replied, “There is no separation.” This had the same import as their exchange ten years earlier.

Chan Master Xuefeng raised his whisk and asked, “Is there still no separation from this?” What did this question mean? The essential purport of the Chan school is utterly bare and spotless: not establishing a single dharma. Yet students unwittingly fall into light and shadow, into concepts. Once there is something to rest upon, there is obstruction and discrimination.

Thus it is said, “If even a single thread remains hanging, it cannot be called liberation.” Xuefeng was testing whether the monk still had anything to rest upon. The monk replied, “If there were separation, I would not have come here.” If there had been any obstruction, I would not have been able to come here. He was plainly stressing the absence of obstruction, yet unwittingly fell into “no separation.” Xuefeng struck him again, and he ran away again.

Later, this monk too established a Dharma center, and whenever he met anyone, he reviled Chan Master Xuefeng. A fellow practitioner therefore paid him a special visit and asked, “What saying of Xuefeng’s makes you revile him in this way?” The monk then recounted the foregoing koan of “no separation.” His fellow practitioner severely criticized him and exposed where he had become stuck in “no separation.” Thereafter, the monk often wept in grief. In the middle of the night, he would frequently burn incense, bow in repentance, and face in the direction of Xuefeng’s Dharma center.

In modern times there was a Chan master named Wuqiong, a monk at Jinshan Monastery in Zhenjiang who had publicly been recognized as awakened. He once entered a “birth-and-death retreat” in Chengdu, Sichuan.

Someone cited the foregoing koan of “no separation” and asked Chan Master Wuqiong, “Where did this monk go wrong?” Master Wuqiong replied, “His error lies in ‘no separation’!” As long as there remains a “no separation,” something has not yet been completely eliminated. If you accept his “no separation,” then it is “guest looking at guest.” It is precisely at such a moment that clear-eyed patriarchs wield the staff or give a shout.

If he has truly penetrated thoroughly, he will necessarily have a way to turn himself around, like the monk from Dingzhou in this koan. If he has not penetrated thoroughly, he will certainly die beneath the staff, like the monk in the koan of “no separation.” To wield the staff or give a shout at this point is an exceedingly skillful means: it immediately tests what is genuine and what is false.

Let us speak of another ancient koan that took place across the river from Hanyang. Someone asked, “What is it like before an ancient mirror has been polished?” This means: what is the state before awakening? In fact, if one has truly penetrated completely, there are no such obstructions or distinctions as delusion and awakening, before awakening and after awakening.

It should extend across the ten directions and exhaust the three divisions of time, without distinction or separation, a single undifferentiated whole. The reply was, “Hanyang is not far from here.” This reply was not thorough.

Although it is not far, there is still the separation of a river. Yet this "single river" is a natural barrier like a moat separating heaven and earth. Chan records, called "sharp exchanges," are the lively direct manifestation of Buddha-nature. They do not cling in the slightest to the old masters' conventional patterns; right then and there, they cut off the student's tangled discursive thinking and guide the student into accord with Buddha-nature.

The monk in the koan of "no separation" was clinging to "no separation," while the person who questioned Chan Master Wuqiong was clinging to the koan. When Master Wuqiong replied, "His error lies in 'no separation,'" a keen-witted questioner could at once have penetrated this koan.

Further, how could one enable the questioner to suddenly accord with his own Buddha-nature? Someone brought up the koan in which Chan Master Wuqiong replied, "His error lies in 'no separation,'" and asked Great Master Acharya Dayu about it. Master Dayu changed the reply to: "The error lies in the very question!" This directly cut off the questioner's tangled discursive thinking.

If one can penetrate it upon hearing Master Dayu's words, one may indeed be called a heroic fellow; from then on, "the natural barrier becomes an open thoroughfare." If one cannot penetrate it, then even if one later establishes a Dharma center, one can only be one who bewitches the sons and daughters of respectable households. No distinction and no separation must truly mean no discrimination and no obstruction. So long as distinctions such as delusion and awakening, before awakening and after awakening, remain, one has long since been "separated."

Wuju said, "If there is no distinction, then turn back and go on over there." He then struck him. The monk said, "The tip of the staff has eyes; you must not strike people carelessly."

The monk from Dingzhou had answered, "No distinction." Master Wuju said, "If there is no distinction, you need not come here to me; go back to where you originally were." Having said this, he raised his staff and struck him. Master Wuju wielded the staff precisely at the critical point; had he not done so, it would have been difficult for this monk to turn himself around. But this monk was a clear-eyed person; he had his own way to turn himself around.

He said, "The tip of the staff has eyes; you must not strike people carelessly." A patriarch's staff is not used lightly: it must have eyes to see the other person clearly; one must not casually raise it and strike. The implication was: I am an awakened person—how can you casually raise your staff and strike me? You must not blindly strike people.

Wuju said, "Today I have struck one at last." He struck him three more times. The monk then went out.

Master Wuju said, "Today I have struck one at last." Having said this, he struck him three more times. You said, "You must not strike people carelessly"; today, I am not striking you carelessly—I have struck precisely on target. Master Wuju was here issuing commands without reserve, what is called "one strip of iron for a thousand or ten thousand miles." You say that one cannot strike you blindly, because you are a person of the Way. But being a person of the Way is still having something. Today I mean to strike away this "person of the Way" of yours. "When the king of garuḍa birds rules the universe, who among them can raise his head?" This is not to be violated.

We mentioned this saying when discussing the koan "Sun-Face Buddha, Moon-Face Buddha." It was spoken by attendant Xingyang Qingpou to Master Yuanlu. That occurred when Master Yuanlu was young. Later, his accomplishment was very great, and he became an outstanding great master of his generation.

Master Yuanlu was Chan Master Fushan Fayuan. He deeply understood the essential purport of both the Linji and Caodong schools. He inherited the Dharma from Chan Master Gui Xing of Ye County, of the Linji school, and spent many years with Chan Master Dayang Jingxuan, also known as Ming'an, of the Caodong school. Master Ming'an had two exceptionally free and penetrating disciples: Xingyang Qingpou, namely Attendant Pou, and Fuyan Shencheng.

Sadly, both died young. Thus, in his later years Master Ming'an said, "As for reviving the Caodong school, it can only be Yuan or Jue." Yuan was Fushan Fayuan, and Jue was Langya Huijue. Chan Master Langya was a Dharma heir of Fenyang Shanzhao and likewise belonged to the Linji school. He too spent many years with Master Ming'an and deeply understood the essential purport of the Caodong school.

When Master Ming'an was eighty, he lamented that there was no one to inherit the Caodong Dharma seat. He therefore entrusted the tokens of Dharma transmission to Chan Master Fayuan and asked him to help seek out a qualified successor to the Caodong school.

Many years after Master Ming'an entered parinirvāṇa, Chan Master Fayuan discovered a qualified person who could deeply accord with the Caodong school's essential purport: Touzi Yiqing. Chan Master Fushan Fayuan was a great worthy of the Chan school. The "Nine Belts," celebrated throughout Chan circles, was composed by Fushan.

We should not stray too far afield here. But because we mentioned a koan from Master Yuanlu's youth when discussing "Sun-Face Buddha, Moon-Face Buddha," we have raised it again so that you may have a fuller understanding of him. Chan Master Zhaozhou, for example, was called an "ancient Buddha" and was a renowned great worthy in the history of Chan and indeed of Buddhism. Yet when, in his early years, he studied the Way under Chan Master Nanquan, he was unable to examine the

hermitage master at the foot of the mountain. To penetrate under the sharp exchange of issuing commands without reserve is truly no easy matter.

When Master Wuju issued commands without reserve, the monk from Dingzhou in this koan did not say, as Master Yuanlu had in his youth, “If someone suddenly raises his head, then what?” At this point, the monk simply walked out. This was the manner of a clear-eyed person: walking out signified “letting it pass.”

You think that I have fallen into concepts such as awakening and realizing the Way, and so you wish to issue commands without reserve. I already know that you are a clear-eyed patriarch. If I were to persist in entanglement—as did the monk in the koan “Baizhang Loses Half”—would I not merely confirm what you have said? To walk out and “let it pass” at this moment was exactly right.

This koan could well have ended perfectly here, yet Master Wuju still would not let him pass. Why? Because the monk seemed to be propping up the doorway and supporting the household. Whether he still clung to concepts such as awakening and realizing the Way had not yet been tested; he needed to be tested again.

If he still fell into concepts, then he had not “landed on what is real.” The Diamond Sūtra says: “If an arhat were to entertain this thought, ‘I have attained arhatship,’ he would be attached to self, person, sentient being, and life span.” Everyone, could one still be an arhat while clinging to self, person, sentient being, and life span? An arhat does not give rise to such a thought or entertain such a notion. Not entertaining thoughts of awakening or realizing the Way is what it means to “land on what is real.”

Wuju said, “So it turns out that someone has received an undeserved blow.” The monk turned around and said, “But the ladle handle is in the master’s hand.”

Master Wuju wished to test him again, so he said, “So it turns out that someone has received an undeserved blow!” Only a muddleheaded fellow receives an undeserved blow—having been struck, he still does not know what it was about. If this monk had no further response, it would show that he was not a clear-eyed person. If he did have a further response, it would also draw him back in.

This monk was skilled at turning himself around and giving expression. He did not argue with Master Wuju, but merely turned around lightly and said, “But the ladle handle is in the master’s hand.” Because you are the patriarch here, the authority to seize or bestow, to kill or enliven, is in your hands; therefore I must submit to your disposal. The implication was: if the two of us exchanged positions, you too would have no choice but to receive an undeserved blow.

Wuju said, “If you want it, this mountain monk will return it to you.” The monk stepped forward, seized the staff from Wuju’s hand, and struck Wuju three times.

Master Wuju was a great master of dramatic action. Daring to thrust himself into the tiger’s mouth, he dared to offer himself for the tiger to bite. He said, “If you want the ladle handle, I will return this staff to you.” You said that because the ladle handle was in my hand, you had no choice but to receive an undeserved blow. Very well, I will give you the ladle handle and see how you handle it.

This monk was not at all polite: “You give it to me, and I will put it to good use.” He then snatched the staff from Master Wujiu’s hand and struck Wujiu three times. This is called “the interchange of host and guest.” Originally, Master Wujiu was the host and the monk from Dingzhou was the guest; now the visiting monk was the host and Wujiu the guest. Had Wujiu not been such a great master, he would not have dared so readily to give his staff to a guest. Had the monk from Dingzhou not been one with the Dharma eye, he would not have dared rashly to seize the staff and strike the master of the mountain.

Wujiu said, “An unjust blow! An unjust blow!” The monk said, “There is someone here to receive it.”

Having received the blows, Master Wujiu said, “An unjust blow! An unjust blow! You have struck people blindly, with no eye at the tip of your staff. The blows you administer are unjust.” The monk from Dingzhou said, “There is someone here to receive it.” Once you call it an unjust blow, there is something to seize upon; and where there is something to seize upon, one deserves a blow. Striking you is entirely fitting; it is not unjust at all.

Wujiu said, “I have carelessly struck a real man.” The monk then made obeisance.

Master Wujiu said, “I have carelessly struck a real man.” Today he had encountered a real man and struck one with the Dharma eye. Does this mean that Wujiu struck the visiting monk accurately, or that the visiting monk struck Wujiu accurately? Whoever struck whom accurately, it was all Master Wujiu praising himself. If I did not have the eye, how could I have struck one with the Dharma eye such as you? If you were an ignorant fellow, then even if my Dharma eye were perfectly clear, it would be a “double loss.” Fortunately, you are not an ignorant fellow. You dared to seize my staff and strike me; you too struck one with the Dharma eye.

Yet the Dingzhou monk’s obeisance was not “laying it flat” or “letting it go.” This move was the most deadly; it was what is called “the device for trapping a tiger.” You are a great spiritual friend capable of striking one with the Dharma eye—there is something to seize upon in that. You have exposed such an obvious opening, and I can scratch just where it itches: you are a

spiritual friend, so I bow to you. If Master Wujiu had then "remained seated"—calmly sitting there and accepting the bow—he would have been crushed by this monk. Do not forget: the handle was now in the monk's hand.

Wujiu said, "So you are going off like this, Reverend?" The monk laughed aloud and departed.

Master Wujiu had his own way of turning about, yet he addressed this monk as "Reverend." In Chan communities, this title is not one that just anyone can bear; only a great patriarch who presides over a place of practice is worthy of it. You bow to me, intending to use the occasion to crush me, but I can see through your sharp move. The handle is still in your hand, yet you bow to me—are you simply going off like this?

The Dingzhou monk laughed aloud and departed. Only this was "laying it flat" and "letting it go." I know your sharp move, and you know mine—how amusing that is! This place of practice is yours, and you should indeed occupy the seat; you are fully worthy of it. Now I return the handle to you; I had better leave. His laughing aloud and departing brought this koan to a perfect completion.

Wujiu said, "Can you bear it? Can you bear it?"

The Song of Enlightenment says, "I do not shrink from the toil of the four kinds of offerings; even ten thousand taels of gold I can accept." To "bear it" means to be able to accept it. If one can accept it, "once one is awakened, karmic obstacles are originally empty"; if one cannot accept it, "while not awakened, one must repay old karmic debts." A great patriarch is not someone one can strike lightly. If one "cannot bear it," striking a great patriarch brings an offense that reaches the heavens. Here is a koan about one who could not bear it:

Chan Master Cizhao Yuncong received the Dharma from Shoushan Shengnian and was a venerable master of the Linji school. When he was abbot of the Shimen place of practice in Xiangzhou, the prefect of Xiangzhou, venting a private grudge, had him arrested, whipped, and humiliated. After he was released, the monastics went out from the temple to welcome him and met him on the road.

The head-seat monk hurried forward, greeted him, and said, "The prefect has wrongfully humiliated the Reverend in this way...." Master Cizhao pointed to the ground and said, "A heap of bones rises from level ground!" This meant that there had originally been nothing at all, but the prefect deliberately sought trouble. Unexpectedly, at the place to which the master pointed, a mound of earth actually surged up from the level ground.

When the prefect heard that earth had surged from level ground, he was terrified. Yet he did not know to repent; instead, he sent men to level the mound. Soon after it had been leveled, the earth rose again, just as it had before. Later, the prefect's entire family died miserably in Xiangzhou. Such retribution was only the "present retribution"; the karmic result after death was too dreadful to describe.

In praising the Dingzhou monk for being able to "bear it," Master Wujiu was not merely praising the monk; he was also praising himself: if I were not able to see the other person clearly, how would I dare so readily to give him the handle? Looking over all the great spiritual friends who preside over places of practice, how many would dare, as I do, to place themselves sideways in a tiger's mouth and let it bite? This koan ends here. Next is the verse that Chan Master Xuedou wrote for it:

To summon is easy; to dismiss is hard. Look carefully at the interchange of sharp moves.

Some people are skilled at handling snakes. By blowing an instrument called a "gourd whistle," they make a special sound that summons the snakes. It is easy to summon them, but difficult to send them away. Only an expert, possessing the means to dismiss snakes, can send them away. As the common saying goes, "It is easy to invite spirits but hard to send them off."

On this visit to Wenzhou, I met a man on the boat who said that his father, too, was a practitioner of the Way. I asked him what Way his father practiced. He said that whenever his father drew a numinous talisman to invite a particular spirit, that spirit would arrive.

It turned out that he was a follower of a non-Buddhist path. Once, after inviting Sun Wukong, someone passing the doorway involuntarily came in and began turning somersaults—one after another, without stopping. This would not do, yet they could not send Sun Wukong away. His father was terrified and never dared to invite him again.

Later, his father's teacher said that once one has invited them to accomplish something, one must send them away. If Sun Wukong's teacher were invited, Sun Wukong would leave. Sun Wukong's teacher was Subhūti: draw a numinous talisman of Subhūti, and once it is burned, Sun Wukong can be sent away. Everyone, these are all spirits, ghosts, and demons, falsely assuming the names of Sun Wukong and Subhūti. Yet this too is a case of "easy to summon, hard to dismiss." They even dare to impersonate the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They must not be believed.

"To summon is easy; to dismiss is hard" is a metaphor: it is easy to give him the staff, but difficult to reclaim the handle and send him away.

"Look carefully at the interchange of sharp moves." The interchange of sharp moves is the sharp move of "the interchange of host and guest." Look at the two of them: in one instant Wujiu is host and the visiting monk is guest; in the next, the visiting

monk is host and Wujiu is guest. Each turns freely, like a gourd floating on water: press it down, and it turns.

“Look carefully”: we must look carefully indeed! We should observe how they bring their functioning into play and learn from this, so that we will not be stumped when questioned in the future. For example, the old woman who sold fried cakes asked Deshan (see the fourth case, “Deshan’s Question and Answer While Carrying His Bundle”) about the passage in the Diamond Sūtra that says, “The past mind cannot be obtained, the present mind cannot be obtained, and the future mind cannot be obtained.”

She asked, “Which mind do you wish to refresh?” How should one answer? Tell me. (Someone answered, “I do not know.”) You do not know? Then you cannot eat refreshments! The old woman had already said, “If you can answer, I will offer you fried cakes as refreshments; if you cannot answer, go elsewhere and buy them.” If one answers, “I do not know,” one might as well go directly elsewhere to buy them.

The answer should be a perfect fit, like a box and its lid, which fit exactly when closed. If donkey-head and horse-mouth do not match, that is an imperfect fit. Since the three minds are all unobtainable, they should naturally be contemplated as one. When the old woman asks, “Which mind do you wish to refresh?” one may gently reply that she knows and I know, but we cannot let others know.

After that, the old woman cannot say that she does not know. If she says she does not know, immediately say to her, “So I thought, so I thought! It turns out, it turns out!” Nor can she say that she knows, for prajñā is without knowing. The old woman is the donor, and Deshan the recipient of the offering. If the recipient is quick-witted, the donor remains the guest from beginning to end.

After realizing one’s true nature, sharp exchanges in dialogue are merely wondrous functioning; it depends only on whether one is quick-witted. If someone asks you something, it will not do to deliberate before replying. If the mind is truly empty and there is truly nothing in it, the reply comes straight from the mouth, with no need for thought. Of course, bringing this functioning into play also requires a process of study and training. Everyone, you must “look carefully” at this koan of “the interchange of sharp moves.”

Even a kalpa-stone, though solid, can still be destroyed; standing in the depths of the vast ocean, one must dry it up.

What is a “kalpa-stone”? A kalpa is a unit of time in Buddhism. How long is one kalpa? It may be calculated by means of this kalpa-stone. A kalpa-stone is an extraordinarily solid rock, one yojana thick—one yojana being forty li—and eighty-four thousand yojanas in both length and width. It is far larger than our earth.

Every five hundred years, a deva descends and brushes the kalpa-stone once with a sleeve, continuing until this massive solid rock has been brushed away—worn down to nothing. The devas’ garments are exceedingly soft and weigh only six zhu. Twenty-four zhu equal one liang, so four heavenly garments weigh only one liang. With such a soft sleeve, brushing it only once every five hundred years, the time required to wear away a kalpa-stone far larger than the earth is beyond imagining. Such a length of time is one kalpa, called the “kalpa of brushing away a stone with a light garment.”

“Even a kalpa-stone, though solid, can still be destroyed”: although the kalpa-stone is solid, it can still be worn away by the soft heavenly garment weighing six zhu; it will still decay. But the sharp moves in the interchange of host and guest between Master Wujiu and the Dingzhou monk cannot be destroyed in any way whatsoever, nor can they be exhausted through a thousand or ten thousand ages.

The pivot is Buddha-nature, and the edge is wondrous functioning. This is the great pivot and great functioning of Buddha-nature; how could it be damaged? “Standing in the depths of the vast ocean, one must dry it up.” The vast ocean is the boundless great sea. Its surging waves are immense, its white breakers tower to the heavens; vast and boundless, deep and measureless, it stretches without limit into the distance. An ordinary person who reaches such a place will be drowned.

But if Master Uji and the monk from Dingzhou were to stand in this great ocean, even its waters would have to dry up. The kalpa-stone and the ocean are used as metaphors to praise the two men’s sharp exchange of host and guest. This line is plainly praise; the next appears to be criticism, but at its core it offers still greater praise: old Uji and the Dingzhou monk were truly outstanding figures of their age, eminent monks without equal.

Old Uji, old Uji—what sort of thing is this? How utterly unwarranted of you to give him the ladle handle!

Old Uji, old Uji! Where does this come from? How great are your abilities? How dare you give the ladle handle to someone else? What you did was far too rash, improper, and unwarranted. This staff is used by the Buddhas of the three times and by the patriarchs throughout the generations. It is used to strike away students’ attachments and clinging, enabling them to recognize their own Original Face. How could you hand it over so lightly? Fortunately, the monk from Dingzhou understood “leveling it out” and merely struck you lightly three times.

Even if he had encountered some reckless fellow who grasped at bones in empty space and raised thunder on level ground, and had placed the staff in his hand, if that man then pestered him with senseless wrangling, old Uji could still easily turn danger into safety and avert peril, for a true master has his own way of emerging from such situations.

Generally speaking, of course, one cannot casually entrust the staff to another. Yet in doing things, we must consider the person involved and see what sort of person the other is. If he is a vessel of the Dharma, entrust it to him; if not, do not. Master Uji's Dharma eye was clear and penetrating. Having accurately recognized the other man, he boldly gave him the ladle handle, and thus this timeless masterpiece was enacted.

Had he failed to entrust it when it was time to do so, timidly holding back, the latter half of this koan would never have occurred. "To call is easy; to dismiss is hard. Look carefully at the sharpness of their exchange." Is this not precisely where Chan Master Xuedou saw its marvel? "Though the kalpa-stone is solid, it may yet be worn away; stand in the depths of the vast ocean, and it must run dry!"

[Wanderer at the Border Town]: I only saw this today. I regret not having encountered it sooner.

[chan]: Haha.

[A Cloud mg]: The unsurpassed, profound, and wondrous Dharma is difficult to encounter even in hundreds of millions of kalpas. Now that I have seen, heard, received, and upheld it, may I understand the Tathāgata's true meaning.

I pay homage to Master Yuanyin.

[So-and-so?]: Uji asked, "How does the Dharma Way of Dingzhou compare with this place?"

Uji asked, "How does the Dharma Way of Dingzhou compare with this place?"

[The supreme Way is not difficult; it only rejects picking and choosing. Dingzhou, or this place? Why make so many discriminating selections? If we speak of the Dharma Way, there is nothing that can be said. Dingzhou has thunderous shouts; here there are blows and shouts. All this is merely scratching an itch through a boot. If it can be spoken and imparted, then it is not it.

Everyone, seal off your throats and lips—how then will you speak? But do not say that, once throats and lips are sealed off, nothing can be said. As for writing, paper and brush fly about, producing thousands upon thousands of words—is that not speaking? Even if not, is not demonstrating with the body and making one's conduct manifest also instruction? What of pointing and gesturing—can these not also suffice? Yet truly, whatever is spoken or shown, if there is something spoken or shown, it is not it.

So what is to be done? I do not begrudge telling you, but I fear that you will be unable to hear it. Tell me: leaving the four propositions and cutting off the hundred negations, what is the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West? If there is a meaning in coming from the West, then it is not the meaning of coming from the West. Coming from the West is without intention, yet not without intention. Coming from the West has intention, yet not without intention. Coming from the West is neither the presence of intention nor the absence of intention.

Ultimately, then, did the coming from the West have intention or not? The coming from the West is neither with intention nor without intention; it is neither not having intention nor not having no intention. In short, if one tries to fish out an ultimate answer from this, one is affirming being rather than nonbeing; it is not an unconditioned dharma, and thus it is not it. Best not to go on calling it "not the meaning of coming from the West."

For the implication of those words is that you acknowledge the coming from the West to have intention, whereas this is not actually so. Therefore, simply say, "It is not." But if asked, "What is this 'not'?" how can one answer? Simply answer, "What is it?" One must not answer by stating what that "what" is.

For example, if a person is floating in midair, how can he establish his roots in the ground? One cannot answer how he establishes roots in the ground, because if he is already floating in midair, there are originally no roots established in the ground. Therefore, one simply says that the person is floating in midair; one does not speak of how he establishes roots in the ground. Thus, if you state what that "what" is, it is no longer that "what."

Therefore it is said that, even in the future, there will be no place to abide. Yet sentient beings habitually want a place to abide: they are accustomed to planting their roots in the ground, and when asked to float in midair, they still ask how they may establish their roots underground. Therefore, the Sixth Patriarch said that this school takes non-abiding as its basis.

Child of a bodhisattva, come eat; child, come eat. Who is the bodhisattva? Who is eating? Where does the food come from? It is utterly unreal. Yet what is the proper task of a practitioner? Is it to create trouble where there is none? When eating, simply eat. Take three or two mouthfuls, fill your belly, and that is all. Why all these matters? Have you not heard, "When hungry, eat; when tired, sleep"? Hence some say that he does not mean well.

Yet one cannot wholly dismiss him—are not all sentient beings Buddhas and bodhisattvas? If one could awaken even one or two, why endure the hardship of eating this bitter meal? Does the person who brings you food have discerning eyes? Why bother whether he does or not? I follow my own course. Sentient beings do not liberate me, and I do not liberate sentient beings. If I were to liberate sentient beings, they would instead be unable to attain liberation.

Not liberating where there are no sentient beings, and thereby liberating—this is it. To form an intention to liberate is to have the mark of sentient beings and the mark of self; then neither I nor sentient beings can attain liberation. If one makes so many discriminations and trivial complications in every matter, how can one ever break free? If one cannot break free oneself, one betrays the kindness of the Buddha and the Three Jewels. Thus, having only just emerged from the latrine and not yet repaid one's wine debt, one unties one's cloth sack at the crossroads.

To be awake and still in this way, still and awake—not caught in understanding, yet not confused—is to be a person of true practice and awakening. As for those who are perversely contrary in everything and will not rest until they have broken the clay pot to examine its bottom: such students are good students when learning any other teaching, but not when learning Buddhism. If such students study Buddhism, they are heading south while their goal lies north. As the saying goes, the more they study, the farther they stray from awakening to the Way!]

[Lianqing]: Teacher, you moved to the old thread so quickly.

Continuing from the previous episode: this little monk overturned the seat. I deeply regretted it and went back to delete that post myself. :P

I still wish to follow the monk with my begging bowl. If there is no porridge to eat, a few ladle-handle blows now and then would be fine as well. SS.

[lvm]: Unfortunately, the ladle handle is in Master Uji's hands.

[No-Ground Bodhisattva]: Another reply: Uji, or LVM?

[No-Ground Bodhisattva]: Replying to LVM: The monk must also say half of it!

[Lianqing]: Drink porridge, drink porridge.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: If Teacher Qi breaks your bowl, what do you think you will drink from?

[Lianqing]: Thank you for washing my bowl!!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Please pay the labor charge; I want to go home for the New Year.

[Lianqing]: Smack!

A spanking.

[No-Ground Bodhisattva]: Ah, why not answer him, "Thanks for washing my butt!" Anyway, if one debt is owed, two debts are owed as well!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: I fell for this black-hearted fellow's trick.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Thank you!

I do not care one bit for a single stinking coin. Haha!

[76] Danxia Asks a Monk Whether He Has the Eye

[76] Danxia Questions a Monk About Having the Eye

Pointer: Fine as the tip of a grain of rice, cold as frost, it fills heaven and earth, beyond brightness and darkness. Viewed from below, it is more than enough; leveled from above, it is insufficient. Holding fast and letting go are both permitted here. But is there still a place from which one emerges? Examine this example:

[76] The Case:

Danxia asked a monk, "Where have you come from?" [Exactly so. One cannot simply have no place of origin at all. To know the place of origin is not difficult either.]

The monk said, “From the foot of the mountain.” [He has entered your belly wearing grass sandals. He simply does not understand. There is an echo in his words. If you recognize what has come, do you know whether it is yellow or green?]

Danxia said, “Have you eaten?” [The first ladleful of foul water is poured over him. Why bother? The fixed star on the scale—one must know what is truly so.]

The monk said, “I have eaten.” [Sure enough, he has run into a dew-pillar, only to have another person pierce his nostrils. It turns out to be an iron hammer without a hole.]

Danxia said, “Does the one who brought you food to eat have the eye?” [Though this is bullying someone by relying on one’s position, it is also closing the case on the evidence. At that moment, he should have overturned the Chan seat. Why make trouble for no reason?]

The monk was speechless. [Sure enough, he could not get away. If this monk had been a competent hand, he would have said to him, “The same eyes as the Reverend.”]

Changqing asked Baofu, “The one who gives food to others has a share in repaying kindness. Why, then, does he not have the eye?” [He has only said half of it. The whole body is so; the entire body is so. One cut divides it in two. One hand raises; one hand presses down.]

Baofu said, “Giver and receiver are both blind fellows!” [He acts according to the command. One sentence says it all. Such a person is rarely encountered.]

Changqing said, “If he brings forth his whole capacity, is he still blind?” [How well he distinguishes good from bad! Yet he still does not assent. What bowl are you looking for?]

Baofu said, “Can you say that I am blind?” [Both are fellows in the grass. A dragon’s head and a snake’s tail. At that time, when he said, “If he brings forth his whole capacity, is he still blind?” he should simply have replied, “Blind!” Yet that too would have said only half of it. They are equally competent hands; why was there no village ahead and no inn behind?]

Chan Master Danxia Tianran of Dengzhou—no one knows where he was from. At first he studied Confucian learning and was about to go to Chang’an to sit for the civil-service examination. While lodging at an inn, he suddenly dreamed that white light filled the room. A diviner said, “It is an auspicious sign of understanding emptiness.” By chance, a Chan traveler asked him, “Worthy sir, where are you going?” He replied, “To seek an official post.” The Chan traveler said, “How can seeking office compare with seeking Buddhahood?”

Danxia said, “Where should one go to seek Buddhahood?” The Chan traveler said, “Chan Master Ma of Jiangxi is now teaching. His place is the ground for selecting Buddhas; worthy sir, you may go there.” He therefore went directly to Jiangxi. As soon as he saw Master Ma, he lifted his cloth headwrap to his forehead with both hands. Master Ma looked at him and said, “I am not your teacher. Go to Shitou at Nanyue.” He hurried to Nanyue and presented himself there with the same intention.

Shitou said, “Go to the rice mill.” The master bowed in thanks, entered the practitioners’ hall, and joined the community in its labor for three years. One day Shitou announced to the assembly, “Tomorrow, clear the grass in front of the Buddha Hall.” The next day, everyone brought hoes and spades to clear the grass. Danxia alone filled a basin with water, washed his head, and knelt before the master. When Shitou saw this, he laughed and shaved his head.

He also expounded the precepts to him, but Danxia covered his ears and left. He then went to Jiangxi and again paid homage to Mazu. Before making the customary bow, he entered the monks’ hall and sat astride the neck of the holy monk statue. The assembly was startled and hurriedly reported this to Mazu. Mazu personally entered the hall, looked at him, and said, “My son Tianran.” Danxia immediately got down, bowed, and said, “Thank you, Master, for bestowing a Dharma name upon me.” He was therefore named Tianran. The outstanding freedom of this ancient Tianran was such as this. This is what is meant by, “Selecting officials is not as good as selecting Buddhas.”

The Record of the Transmission of the Lamp records his sayings. They stand sheer as a wall ten thousand fathoms high; every sentence has the means to pull out nails and remove wedges for others. It is as if he asked this monk, “Where have you come from?” The monk said, “From the foot of the mountain.” Yet the monk did not penetrate the place of coming; he was just like someone with the eye who, instead, turns about to examine the host. Had it not been Danxia at that moment, it would have been difficult to bring the matter under control.

Danxia then said, “Have you eaten?” He still had not seen through the monk’s headward side; this was the second time he examined him. The monk said, “I have eaten.” What a muddleheaded fellow—he did not understand after all! Danxia said, “Does the one who brought you food to eat have the eye?” The monk was speechless. Danxia’s meaning was: What use is it to feed someone like you? If this monk had been a real fellow, let him try giving Danxia a thrust and see what would happen. Even so, Danxia still had not let him go. The monk merely blinked and said nothing.

Baofu and Changqing were both in Xuefeng’s assembly and often raised the koans of the ancients for discussion. Changqing asked Baofu, “The one who gives food to others has a share in repaying kindness. Why, then, does he not have the eye?” There

is no need to ask exhaustively about the events of the koan. Broadly speaking, he borrowed this saying as a huatou in order to test what was precise and fitting in Baofu.

Baofu said, “Giver and receiver are both blind fellows!” Excellent! Here one speaks only of the matter at hand; within the household there is a road of emergence. Changqing said, “If he brings forth his whole capacity, is he still blind?” Baofu said, “Can you say that I am blind?” Baofu meant: I have the eye in this way and have already told you; can you still say that I am blind? Even so, it is half closed and half open.

If this mountain monk had been there, when Changqing said, “If he brings forth his whole capacity, is he still blind?” he would simply have replied, “Blind!” What a pity. If Baofu had uttered this word “blind” at the time, Xuedou would have been spared all this entanglement. Xuedou likewise composed his verse with this meaning:

Bringing forth one’s whole capacity does not make one blind. [It only says half of it. One must also test whether he gets through. The words still ring in one’s ears.]

Forcing an ox to eat grass. [Losing money and suffering punishment. Half in Henan, half in Hebei. Yet he does not realize that the blade is damaged and the hand is cut.]

The patriarchs—four times seven and two times three—[Following a branch when there is a branch. Dragging down the sages of old—not merely one person.]

Bring forth the precious vessel, and it becomes a fault. [People throughout the whole earth beat their chests in turn. Give me back my staff! You have dragged down this mountain monk too, so that he cannot show his head.]

The fault runs deep. [Deep indeed! Chan monks throughout the land cannot leap out of it. Tell me, how deep is it?]

There is nowhere to find it. [It is beneath your heels. You grope for it but cannot grasp it.]

In heaven and among humankind, all sink together. [Chan monks throughout the land are buried in one pit. Is there anyone still alive? Let one move pass. O heavens, O heavens!]

“Bringing forth one’s whole capacity does not make one blind”: Changqing said, “If he brings forth his whole capacity, is he still blind?” Baofu said, “Can you say that I am blind?” It is just like “forcing an ox to eat grass.” One must wait until it eats by itself; how could one press its head down and make it eat? Xuedou’s verse in this manner naturally reveals Danxia’s intent.

“The patriarchs—four times seven and two times three—bring forth the precious vessel, and it becomes a fault.” This does not merely drag down Changqing; it buries at once the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and the six patriarchs of this land. Old Śākyamuni expounded the great treasury of teachings for forty-nine years, and in the end transmitted only this precious vessel. Yongjia said, “It is not an empty affair of stripping away mere marks; it is the Tathāgata’s precious staff, his very traces.” If one takes Baofu’s understanding as one’s own, then bringing forth the precious vessel all becomes a fault.

“The fault runs deep; there is nowhere to find it.” This cannot be explained to you. Just sit quietly and examine it within his words. Since the fault runs deep, why is there nowhere to find it? This is no small fault: the great matter of the patriarchs is all sunk level with the ground! Hence Xuedou says, “In heaven and among humankind, all sink together.”

[wshiyao]: This is how one should answer LVM: “Take the food and eat it.”

[Wooden Fish]: What would be wrong with the monk answering that way? Let us reverse the verdict for him!

“From the foot of the mountain.” (That is simply how it is; he spoke the truth. What is the problem?)

“I have eaten.” (He is full of Dharma food.)

“The monk was speechless.” (Nothing wrong with that either. What eyes or no eyes? Who is there to come and see?)

[Clad in Black]: A perfectly good koan—what have a gang of clever blind men shouted it into? :)

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Let this foolish Dharma brother, whose eye of the Way is clear, give us a performance!

[Truth]: Dharma brother, you are clever.

[Wooden Fish]: That is simply how it is; observe good and bad, and you will see for yourself.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground] (replying to [Wooden Fish]: “What would be wrong with the monk answering that way? Let us reverse the verdict for him!”): LVM then strikes!

[lvm]: The ladle handle happens to be in [Bodhisattva Without Ground]’s hand.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Hehe, I simply will not return it to you!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: This is how one should answer LVM: “You do not know what is in the pot from what is in the ladle!”

[lvm]: I did not ask; why are you answering?

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Fortunately, you did not ask. Had you asked, pots, bowls, and ladles would all be smashed at once!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: LVM then strikes!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Answering for myself: Broken—shattered!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Fortunately, you did not ask. Had you asked, pots, bowls, and ladles would all have come forth!

[chan]: The monk should simply answer him, “He has the eye.”

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: LVM then strikes!

[lvm]: A charge imposed at will.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Just as with Lin Chong at the Mountain Spirit Temple on a snowy night, one must still wear cangue and shackles...

[Truth]: Dharma brother, you got it wrong. It should be “Lin Chong at the Mountain Spirit Temple on a snowy night.”

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Hehe, sorry—I have gone wild!

[Truth]: How boring.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Has Dharma brother lost his invisible glasses? Hurry and find them!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: The optician’s business is booming!

Zhenshi : You run an invisible-eyeglasses shop, don't you? How come there isn't a single pair of glasses in the shop?

So they were all contact lenses.

Whoever? : Xiayun: Does the person who brought you food to eat still have eyes?

Whoever? : The monk said: Allow me to check first, then report back to the venerable monk.

No-Ground Bodhisattva (replying to Whoever? : Xiayun: Does the person who brought you food to eat still have eyes?): When the venerable monk uses his eyes to eat, then I'll tell him!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : LVM would strike!

lvm : What need is there to worry about lacking an excuse!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Like Yue Fei at Fengbo Pavilion, all that remains is sighing to oneself!

Zhenshi : The winds and waves have ceased.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Like wind passing through trees.

Zhenshi : The roots do not move.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Go on! Go on! Uproot them completely!

Zhenshi : Pulling out nails?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Still merely a follower of the school of conceptual understanding...

Zhenshi : From your tone, you do not seem to be a follower of the school of conceptual understanding.

Bodhi Tree : If the teacher were “Danxia”~~~

Danxia asked a monk: “Where have you come from?”

The monk said: “From the foot of the mountain.”

Danxia said: “Have you eaten?”

The monk said: “I have eaten.”

Danxia said: “Does the person who brought you food to eat still have eyes?”

(If this student were that monk)

The monk said: “He just went about eating and did not pay attention. Has the venerable monk eaten?”

(If the teacher were “Danxia,” how would he answer?)

Idle Talk : Hehe, someone who eats for nothing!

lvm : Where did you learn that kind of talk?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Heavens, heavens!

Bodhi Tree : In reply to the teacher: Everyone knows how to eat and dress; there is no need to learn it elsewhere.

Lianqing : Oh dear, teaching my little one (my son) to dress and eat by himself took a great deal of effort...

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Next time, try not teaching him. He will know how himself.

Sudhana (replying to Bodhi Tree : In reply to the teacher: Everyone knows how to eat and dress; there is no need to learn it elsewhere.): Next time you eat, call everyone over.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Old Cai will pay for the meal!

Idle Talk : The full ones will burst to death, and the hungry ones will starve to death!

Sudhana : ^^

No Bodhi Tree : Teacher, if I were that monk, I would simply press Danxia's head to the ground. Hehe.

lvm : But the ladle handle is in Danxia's hand.

No Bodhi Tree : In that case, the monk might as well ask again: “Has the venerable monk eaten?”

lvm : This is the internet. I cannot hit you. There is nothing I can do about you.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Post a picture with a spiked club in it...

No Bodhi Tree (replying to lvm : This is the internet. I cannot hit you. There is nothing I can do about you.): Hehe.

No Bodhi Tree : I bow and take my leave.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Hehe, someone is there to take the crooked stick!

Lianqing (replying to lvm : But the ladle handle is in Danxia's hand.): Today's weather...

Though it is early spring, the cold still lingers. I respectfully inquire after the venerable monk's well-being.

Polishing Army : Answer: Does the venerable monk still have eyes? How about that?

Grandiose Journey East : Has eyes, has eyes—have you eaten?

Polishing Army : Could you lend me your stick for a moment?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : You will not use your own stick, but ask for one from outside! Take this stick!

Demon-Beating Army : Wild fox! In whose hand is the ladle handle?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Hehe, it is serving as a stake in a flowerpot!

Demon-Beating Army : Wild fox! If your stick is so useless, why not taste my hard stick?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Your little stick may be suitable for beating a demon army, but here with me it is like a thief entering an empty house!

Demon-Beating Army : Is it empty? Then who was crying out in pain above?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : The weather is freezing; senior brother, watch your step!

Demon-Beating Army : This is a thief entering an empty house? You seem quite solid to me.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : The thief cries, “Catch the thief!”

Demon-Beating Army : If the house is empty, why are you still so afraid of thieves?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : I am not afraid of thieves stealing; I am only afraid of thieves thinking about it!

Demon-Beating Army : Still afraid? That very word “afraid” is enough to keep you thinking about it.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Alas, you need a pair of contact lenses too!

Demon-Beating Army : Is that so? Then you will have nowhere to hide.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Give you a pole and you climb right up!

Zhenshi : Gentlemen, calm down. You are both very clever.

Zhenshi (replying to Demon-Beating Army : Wild fox! If your stick is so useless, why not taste my hard stick?): Where is the stick? There isn't one.

Demon-Beating Army : What other little stick do you want?

Zhenshi : The sticks have been confiscated. These are peaceful times now.

Demon-Beating Army : Where is the stick? There isn't one?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : You are flagrantly establishing things and still do not know it!

Demon-Beating Army : Hit squarely by a stick? Now everything you see is a stick.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Then strike!

Demon-Beating Army : Then I will run. If I were hit by your blind stick, would not both you and I lose?

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Rarely does one find anyone so quick-witted!

Demon-Beating Army : woruoainizhexiabang

Zhenshi (replying to Demon-Beating Army : Where is the stick? There isn't one?): Even if there is none, it has been confiscated.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Who confiscated it? Where was it confiscated to? I will strike you, you bed-wetter whose eyes have been opened!

Zhenshi : I have no urine to pee, so there is nothing I can do.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang (replying to Polishing Army : Answer: Does the venerable monk still have eyes? How about that?): I stare with my eyes wide open, yet do not see you.

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Since you do not see, gouge them out and feed them to the dogs!

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : One more word, and I will gouge yours out first.

Hehe!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : Gouge out mine first, then yours? Hehe, what a laugh for the experts!

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Gouge them out!

No-Ground Bodhisattva : LVM would strike.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : Teacher, I have been wronged! He is the one who wet the bed!

Polishing Army (replying to Lay Practitioner Yongguang : I stare with my eyes wide open, yet do not see you.): Watch my two dragons playing with a pearl! If you do not see, why did you ask earlier, “Danxia asked a monk: ‘Where have you come from?’”

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : He is still behind me.

Polishing Army : Would Danxia be like you?

Lay Practitioner Yongbu : Then take a stick!

Polishing Army : Still waiting for your blind stick? I will simply shake my sleeves and leave.

Lay Practitioner Yongguang : It is so, yet it is not so. ^o^

No-Ground Bodhisattva : It is guest looking at guest! What are you looking at? The Spring Festival Gala ended long ago!

[Layman Yongbu]: Sorry, I typed the name incorrectly. The “bu” should be “Yong.”

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: Hehe, the name “Layman Buguang” is even better!

[Snow Mountain Youth]: If a monk were to say to the teacher, “It is the same as the Master’s eye!” how would the teacher respond?

[lvm]: Just give him a beating.

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: Reply to LVM: Does the one who gives the Master food to eat also have the eye?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Haha... then I’ll be off.

[lvm]: “It turns out there is someone to receive the unjustified stick.”

[Snow Mountain Youth]: One must also be able to strike and able to withdraw!

[Mind Monk] (replying to [lvm]: “It turns out there is someone to receive the unjustified stick.”): But the ladle’s handle is in LVM’s hand.

[lvm]: I simply refuse to say, “I return it to you.”

[Mind Monk]: Haha! Then I’ll be off too.

[lvm]: “It turns out there is someone to receive the unjustified stick.”

[Mind Monk]: Mind Monk snatches the stick and gives him a beating.

[Lele]: Ouch! Ouch!

[Mind Monk]: Haha! A scapegoat has run out.

You are even taking this blame for LVM.

[Lele]: The master’s kindness is vast; resentful ghosts lie everywhere.

Without taking the unjustified stick, it is hard to repay the master’s virtue.

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: If it is a blind blow, master and disciple both fall...

Clearly, then, it was not a blind blow!

[Snow Mountain Youth] (replying to [lvm]: I simply refuse to say, “I return it to you.”): Haha, Teacher!!!

You are really amusing!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: :-(

[Green Vegetable] (replying to [lvm]: Just give him a beating.): There are eyes at the tip of the staff; one must not strike people carelessly.

[Lianqing]: Exactly.

[lvm]: Yet is it all right to beat vegetables carelessly?

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: Teacher: If grass can beat vegetables, could it be a grass demon? Hehe.

[Green Vegetable]: Be careful, or the vegetables will eat you.

[lvm]: If vegetables can eat people, could they be vegetable demons?

[Bodhisattva Meidi]: Reply to LVM: Teacher, beware—the road beneath your feet is slippery…

[Green Vegetable]: Those are two different matters.

The cooking ladle is in your hand; whether to beat the vegetables is entirely up to you—but when you eat vegetables, be careful not to be eaten by them instead.

[Xinming]: Is this green vegetable willing to become filling for vegetarian dumplings?

[lvm]: The Venerable Master, Elder Yuanyin, explains:

Case Seventy-Six: Danxia Asks a Monk Whether He Has the Eye

Chan Master Danxia Tianran of Dengzhou was a renowned great Chan teacher of the Tang dynasty. The lamp records contain no account of the year of his birth or his family surname, so Patriarch Yuanwu Qin said that he was “a man of unknown origin.” In his youth, Chan Master Danxia studied Confucianism. He was well versed in the Five Classics and Four Books and thoroughly understood the teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

One day, as he was traveling to Chang’an, the capital, to take the imperial civil-service examination, he had a dream at an inn along the way. He dreamed that his room was filled with white light. He sought out a diviner—that is, a fortune-teller—to explain what auspicious or inauspicious portent was indicated by this dream of “white light filling the room.” The diviner told him that it was “an auspicious sign of understanding emptiness.”

Auspicious means fortunate. This was a good dream, a favorable omen. What favorable omen? An omen of “understanding emptiness.” Understanding emptiness means being able to comprehend and thoroughly penetrate the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness in Buddhism. This was no different from telling him that, if he studied and practiced the Buddhadharma, he would certainly attain great accomplishment.

After hearing this, he happened to meet a “Chan practitioner”—that is, a student of the Chan school of Buddhism. The Chan practitioner asked him, “Where are you going, sir?” That is, “Where are you headed?” He replied, “I am going to seek office.” He was going to take the civil-service examination; if he passed, he could be selected to fill a vacancy and become an official.

The Chan practitioner said, “How can seeking office compare with seeking Buddhahood?” How could being an official compare with becoming a Buddha? Official rank and renown are only temporary, like passing clouds; they cannot endure in the world. But cultivating the Way and becoming a Buddha endures throughout past and present, remaining unchanged through all the vicissitudes of time.

To be a good official, one must devote all one’s talent and wisdom to governing the country well, ensuring the people’s peace and happiness, and making the nation prosperous and strong. Even so, one cannot benefit very many people or bring them very great benefit. This is far beyond comparison with the benefit to sentient beings gained through cultivating the Way and becoming a Buddha.

Once one cultivates to Buddhahood, one can liberate immeasurable, boundless sentient beings, “causing them all to enter nirvāṇa without remainder and thereby be liberated.” This enables them all to attain complete liberation and forever leave the bitter ocean of birth and death. Therefore, how can “seeking office” compare with “seeking Buddhahood”? Becoming an official requires selection, and studying Buddhism also requires selection: both involve choosing the best from among the good.

A Buddhist place of practice is precisely a place for selecting Buddhas: “All directions gather together; each person studies non-contrivance. This is the place for selecting Buddhas; when the mind is empty, one returns having passed the examination.” It is a matter of seeing who applies themselves diligently and without cease, and who can cultivate until the mind is empty and abides nowhere. Such a person may be selected to become a Buddha and awaken to realize the Way. There must indeed be a selection.

Therefore, everyone practicing the Dharma must advance with courageous vigor and must not be lax. Suppose that after obtaining a method of practice, you drift along idly and lazily, practicing today and stopping tomorrow. How could you realize

the Way like that? The place of practice is a place for selecting Buddhas. If you do not apply yourself, you will not be selected. You must strive diligently and truly realize that the mind is empty and abides nowhere; only then are you fit to be selected.

Danxia suddenly dreamed, at the inn, that white light filled the room. Having heard the diviner's explanation that this was "an auspicious sign of understanding emptiness," and having been inspired by the Chan practitioner's words, "How can seeking office compare with seeking Buddhahood?" he was deeply moved. Thereupon, he resolved to abandon an official career and study Buddhism and cultivate the Way.

He asked the Chan practitioner, "Where should one go to seek Buddhahood?" That is, where should one go to study Buddhism and cultivate the Way? The Chan practitioner said, "Master Ma is presently teaching in Jiangxi. There is a place for selecting Buddhas; you may go there." Master Mazu was then teaching the Dharma in Jiangxi and liberating sentient beings.

Master Ma was a great Chan teacher of his time, and his place of practice was a place for selecting Buddhas. Danxia could go there. Without hesitation, Danxia went directly to Jiangxi and hastened to Master Ma's place of practice. When he met Master Ma, however, he said nothing. Instead, he held up the ends of his headcloth with both hands for Master Ma to see.

A headcloth was a kind of turban worn by men in ancient times; its ends were the folded corners where it was wrapped around the head. Ordinarily, when people first arrive somewhere, they introduce themselves: who they are, where they come from, and what they have come for.

Danxia did not act in this way. As soon as he saw Master Ma, he held up the ends of his headcloth with both hands, already revealing a sharp and direct Chan style that "uses silence to reveal speech." Looking over the circumstances of Danxia's pursuit of the Way—the dream of "white light filling the room," and his encounters with the diviner and the Chan practitioner—one could certainly say that Buddhas and bodhisattvas had guided him. Yet at a single prompting he awakened, and at one nudge he turned around; resolutely abandoning his official career, he was clean and decisive, without the least dragging or entanglement. Was this not the style of one who had returned again?

Master Ma carefully examined this young man holding up the ends of his headcloth with both hands. Seeing that he was suited to Chan Master Shitou, he told him, "I am not your teacher. Go to Shitou of Nanyue." After the Sixth Patriarch, the lamps of the Chan school were divided and passed on successively through the two lineages of Qingyuan Xingsi and Nanyue Huairang.

Chan Master Xingsi and Chan Master Huairang were both disciples of the Sixth Patriarch. Chan Master Shitou Xiqian inherited the Dharma from Qingyuan Xingsi, while Chan Master Mazu Daoyi inherited the Dharma from Nanyue Huairang. Master Shitou's Chan was sharp and lofty, often leaving people unable to find their bearings, whereas Master Mazu's Chan style was comparatively gentle and even.

Each person's awakening has its own conditions. Those suited to sharp and lofty methods are guided by such methods, while those suited to gentler methods are guided accordingly. Danxia was suited to Shitou, whereas the renowned lay practitioner Pang Yun was suited to Master Mazu.

Layman Pang initially studied Chan with Shitou. He asked Chan Master Shitou, "Who is the person who does not keep company with the myriad dharmas?" All things are dharmas, and all things have appearances. Not keeping company with these things that have appearances means transcending the myriad dharmas. Whose state is this? It was a remarkably profound question, thoroughly absolute.

When Chan Master Shitou heard this question, he covered Pang's mouth with his hand. Who is it that cannot speak? Where there is language, there is thought; to fall into language or thought is no longer it. With this covering of his mouth by Chan Master Shitou, Layman Pang suddenly had an insight, though it was not yet complete.

Later, Layman Pang went to consult Master Mazu. It was still the same question—if he had fully penetrated it, there would have been no need to ask again—"Who is the person who does not keep company with the myriad dharmas?" Master Mazu said, "When you can swallow all the waters of the Western River in one gulp, I will tell you." The Western River is a large river in Jiangxi Province. When you can drain its waters in a single gulp, only then will I tell you.

If you cannot swallow all the waters of the Western River in one gulp, I will not tell you. This does not fall into language: once it is spoken, it is no longer it. Layman Pang was greatly awakened at these words; he immediately penetrated it completely and suddenly grasped the mysterious purport. Once awakened, he gave rise to wondrous functioning. Then it was not merely a matter of swallowing all the waters of the Western River in one gulp: "Standing in the depths of the vast sea, one must drain it dry at once!"

Chan Master Wutai Yinfeng, renowned for his extraordinary deeds, had the secular surname Deng. The Records of the Lamp call him Deng Yinfeng. He was a disciple of Mazu. When he was studying Chan with Mazu in his early years, he too wished to go and consult Shitou. Mazu told him, "The road to Shitou is slippery!" Chan Master Shitou's responses were sharp and lofty; you might well be unable to find your bearings, and he might make you slip and fall.

Deng Yinfeng said, "With staff and provisions at my side, I perform wherever I find a stage." He was quite unconcerned. When he arrived at Shitou's place, he circled Shitou's Chan seat once, struck his khakkhara on the ground, and asked Shitou, "What is

the essential teaching?" Shitou said, "Vast heaven! Vast heaven!" Deng Yinfeng could make neither head nor tail of it and ran back to ask Mazu.

Mazu said, "Go ask him again. When he answers, give two hissing sounds." Deng Yinfeng again ran to Shitou. Just as before, he circled once, struck his khakkhara, and asked, "What is the essential teaching?" This time Chan Master Shitou did not answer, "Vast heaven," but forestalled him by hissing twice. Deng Yinfeng could no longer hiss, so he ran back to ask Mazu again.

Mazu said, "I told you that the road to Shitou is slippery!" I had already told you: the road to Shitou is slippery. He acted before you did; his response is exceedingly swift, and you may not be suited to him. Deng Yinfeng was not suited to Shitou, but Danxia was precisely suited to him. Therefore, Mazu did not approve of Deng Yinfeng's consulting Shitou, yet he directed Danxia to go to Chan Master Shitou. Master Mazu was indeed skilled at discerning people's conditions.

When Danxia arrived at Chan Master Shitou's place, he again held up the ends of his cloth headwrap with both hands. Chan Master Shitou said, "Go to the rice-hulling shed." When the Sixth Patriarch first met the Fifth Patriarch, the Fifth Patriarch likewise said, "Go to the rice-hulling shed," whereupon the Sixth Patriarch went to the rear courtyard to split firewood and pound rice. On hearing Shitou's words, Danxia bowed in thanks and thereafter joined the community in a life of farming and Chan practice.

He lived there in this way for three years, and Danxia awakened to the Way. One day, Chan Master Shitou told everyone, "Tomorrow we will clear the grass before the Buddha Hall." The next day, the community all brought out shovels, hoes, and other tools, ready to clear the grass. Chan Master Danxia alone was different: he brought a basin of water, washed his head clean, and came before Chan Master Shitou and knelt down.

It turned out that "clearing the grass before the hall" meant shaving their heads—he was going to ordain them. Danxia recognized Chan Master Shitou's response. When Chan Master Shitou saw him thus, he beamed with delight, shaved his head, and ordained him as a monk. He then began to instruct him in the precepts, but Danxia "covered his ears and went out": he covered his ears rather than listen and ran out the door.

What did this mean? Danxia's response was steep and severe, like a sheer cliff a thousand fathoms high; the signs had already appeared when he held up the ends of his cloth headwrap with both hands. Had he then said, "I have no greed, anger, or ignorance, so why would I need precepts, samādhi, and wisdom?" it would have become a sermon rather than a Chan response. Chan Master Danxia's covering his ears and leaving was precisely a Chan master's style of action: it spared how many words! Silence here surpassed speech.

Everyone, let each of us ask ourselves: Do greed, anger, and ignorance still remain? If you say they do, intrinsic nature is neither defiled nor pure; whence could greed, anger, and ignorance arise? If you say they do not, why then did the Buddha teach the cultivation of precepts, samādhi, and wisdom? Please offer a word here. (After a long pause.) If someone were suddenly to give a shout and cover his ears as he left, I would laugh heartily and descend from the seat.

After this departure, Danxia went on to Master Mazu in Jiangxi. Rather than first paying his respects to Mazu, he ran straight into the monks' hall. There was an image there of a venerable monk—an arhat monk—and Danxia sat astride the image's neck.

All the monks were greatly shocked. How could this person be so lacking in decorum? How could he dare sit on the venerable monk's head? They hurriedly went to report it to Mazu. Mazu came and looked, saying, "My son, Tianran." This is my child, a descendant of the Chan school: his Buddha-nature is innocent and natural, and he naturally accords with the Way.

Danxia immediately jumped down and bowed to Master Mazu, saying, "Thank you, Master, for bestowing a Dharma name upon me." He thanked his master for giving him a name: Tianran, "Natural," became his Dharma name. Thus he came to be called Tianran. This is how Chan Master Danxia Tianran received his name.

We have now introduced the principal figure in this koan, Chan Master Danxia Tianran. Let us next explain the case:

Danxia asked a monk, "Where have you come from?" The monk said, "From the foot of the mountain."

A monk came to consult Danxia. Chan Master Danxia asked him, "Where have you come from?" At first hearing, this question seems quite ordinary: did he come from Wenzhou or from Liangzhou—from what place did he come? Yet when Chan patriarchs guide students, every sentence remains inseparable from the fundamental meaning of Buddha-nature. He was asking: From where does one come at birth, and to where does one go at death? That was the source he was asking about.

The monk's answer also resembled that of one with clear eyes. Rather than naming the place from which he had come—whether Shama Boundary or Wuma River—he answered, "From the foot of the mountain." This answer seemed plausible, as though he were an adept, as though he wished to test the host and see whether the host's Dharma eye was clear. If the host's Dharma eye were not clear, it would indeed be difficult to answer him.

Yet Danxia was a supremely penetrating great patriarch. He had exceptional methods of his own and would not be stumped by the monk's question. Danxia heard that, although the monk did not understand the source from which he came, he seemed to

be an adept. “I will test you further and see whether you truly are one with clear eyes.” Danxia intended to discern further whether the visiting monk was genuine or not.

Danxia said, “Have you eaten?” The monk said, “I have eaten.”

Danxia asked the visiting monk, “Have you eaten?” The monk replied, “I have eaten.” Ah, trouble! Beneath the qilin hide, the horse’s hoof was exposed: this monk was in fact a muddleheaded fellow. Yet one cannot say so with certainty. Some people deliberately dare to reveal a flaw, daring to place themselves in the tiger’s jaws and let the other party bite. If the other cannot seize it, then that person is not one with clear eyes.

Chan Master Xuefeng was skilled at using this kind of method. One of the monks under Xuefeng went to consult Chan Master Lingyun and asked him, “What is it like before the Buddha appears in the world?” Lingyun raised his whisk. He then asked, “What is it like after the Buddha appears in the world?” Lingyun again raised his whisk.

The Buddha appeared in the world for the one great cause and condition: to enable sentient beings to open, reveal, awaken to, and enter the Buddha’s knowledge and vision—that is, to enable everyone to realize the mind and see their true nature, awakening to the suchness Buddha-nature inherently possessed by their own minds. “Before the Buddha appears in the world” refers to not yet realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature, while “after the Buddha appears in the world” refers to after realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature.

Lingyun answered both questions by raising his whisk, cutting everything off cleanly and completely. This showed that awakening and non-awakening are nondual, bringing out the point that innocent Buddha-nature neither increases in awakening nor decreases in delusion. He swept away attachments to conceptual notions such as realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature, awakening, and realizing the Way: not establishing a single dharma, utterly bare. Only such thoroughness can count as truly realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature.

But this monk could not enter it directly. He was undoubtedly stuck to concepts such as awakening and realizing the Way and could not break free. So he ran back, returning to Xuefeng. Xuefeng said, “Have you returned so quickly?” Why exactly had he come back? The monk said, “I went there and asked about the Buddhadharma, but it did not accord with me, so I returned.”

Xuefeng asked him, “What did you ask?” The monk then recounted how Lingyun had raised the whisk in response. Xuefeng understood where the monk was stuck and told him, “You ask; I will tell you.” The monk then asked, “What is it like before the Buddha appears in the world?” Xuefeng raised his whisk. The monk again asked, “What is it like after the Buddha appears in the world?” Xuefeng put down his whisk.

Some say that Xuefeng answered well: raising the whisk represents clinging to things and refusing to let go, while putting down the whisk represents being able to let go of everything. This theory may sound reasonable, but it is the same error the monk made. What is meant by “letting go”? When there is nothing to let go of, that is true letting go; only then has one truly broken free.

If there is still something to let go of, one has plainly not broken free and has not truly let go. Xuefeng’s raising and lowering struck precisely at the monk’s sore spot. If the monk could awaken directly at that moment, if he could say as Xuansha did, “The old monk’s heels have not yet touched the ground,” then he could go freely and at ease!

Xuefeng once instructed the assembly: “When the world is one foot wide, the ancient mirror is one foot wide; when the world is one zhang wide, the ancient mirror is one zhang wide.” Xuansha pointed to the brazier and asked Xuefeng, “How wide is the brazier?” Xuefeng replied, “It is as wide as the ancient mirror.” Xuansha said, “Old master, your heels have not yet touched the ground!”

“When the world is one foot wide, the ancient mirror is one foot wide; when the world is one zhang wide, the ancient mirror is one zhang wide.” Xuefeng used the ancient mirror as a metaphor for the innate Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature and the world are originally nondual.

After the Heart Sūtra says, “Form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form,” it immediately adds, “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form,” lest students take form and emptiness to be two things that are “not different” (that is, identical). It points directly to nonduality. The world and the ancient mirror here have the same meaning: the world is the ancient mirror, and the ancient mirror is the world.

Xuansha’s question, “How wide is the brazier?” was a question to test the master, to see whether he would fall on the side of the ancient mirror or on the side of the world. The moment one falls to either side, one is no longer nondual. Unafraid of falling on the side of the ancient mirror, Xuefeng answered directly, “It is as wide as the ancient mirror.” Xuefeng was a great spiritual teacher with fifteen hundred disciples.

The Chan school blossomed into five branches, and two of them—the Yunmen and Fayan schools—emerged from his lineage. How could he not have known that he was falling on the side of the ancient mirror? Xuefeng had a deeper intention. His way of teaching differed from that of his Dharma brother Yantou. Yantou excelled at using fierce tongs and hammers: no one under heaven could fathom him or get a bite on him, and even his teacher Deshan could do nothing with him.

Xuefeng, however, was unafraid of getting himself entirely entangled in the weeds, and dared to lay himself open for students to bite and chew on. Only those who dare to bite, and can bite and hold fast, are worthy of receiving transmission. Therefore Yantou said: "Although Xuefeng and I were born on the same branch, we do not die on the same branch." This means that although both, under Deshan, awakened to their original nature ("born on the same branch," referring to essence), their methods of function were different ("not dying on the same branch").

speaking of verbal expression and application). Xuefeng was unafraid of falling on the side of the ancient mirror because he deliberately exposed a flaw. When you ask, "How wide is the brazier?" it may be a question to test the master, or it may be a muddled question. I deliberately fall on the side of the ancient mirror to see whether you can detect it. If you can, that is exactly what I intend; if you cannot, then you deserve a blow. Xuansha detected it, and his single remark, "Your heels have not yet touched the ground," bit precisely home. No wonder he was Xuefeng's outstanding disciple.

When Xuefeng raised the whisk and set it down, deliberately falling into the two sides, he was likewise testing this monk to see whether he could detect it. Unfortunately, the monk could not; he still thought Xuefeng's answer was correct and bowed in reverence. Xuefeng then struck him: "You muddleheaded fellow! I was deliberately showing you an error, yet you could not detect it."

Even after being struck, the monk did not understand. Later he went to ask Xuansha, who said: "Do you wish to understand? Let me give you an analogy. Suppose someone sells a plot of land: the east, west, south, and north are all transferred by contract at once, but the tree at the center still belongs to me."

Xuansha was very skillful with analogies. The east, west, south, and north being transferred by contract at once symbolizes being able to let go of everything else; the tree at the center still belonging to me symbolizes not being able to let go of concepts such as awakening and realizing the Way. Can this count as truly letting go? If one cannot let go, one cannot be said to have awakened or realized the Way. No cultivation is true cultivation; no attainment is true attainment; no realization is true realization!

Danxia asked, "Have you eaten?" The monk replied, "I have eaten." Was this monk a muddleheaded fellow, or was he a clear-eyed person deliberately exposing a flaw? Danxia certainly would not let him off lightly. Read on:

Danxia said, "Does the person who brought you food to eat have eyes?" The monk had no reply.

Does the person who brought you food to eat have eyes? It is all right to offer food to a clear-eyed person, but you are a muddleheaded fellow who understands nothing. To offer you food—that is, to teach you the Dharma—would that not be blindness? The monk had no reply—that is, he had nothing to say. Alas! He truly was a muddleheaded fellow.

Patriarch Yuanwu Keqin commented here: "Indeed, he could not get away." If this monk had been a true adept, he would have said to him, "They are no different from the Master's own eyes!" Having no reply would not do; then he "could not get away."

If this monk had been a clear-eyed person, then when Danxia asked, "Does the person who brought you food to eat have eyes?" he would have answered directly: "Not only does he have eyes, they are exactly the same as yours!" Let us see how Danxia would have responded. Of course, Danxia would not have left matters there; a scene worthy of serving as an exemplar for later generations would have unfolded—an immortal masterpiece. But this monk merely blinked and had "no reply"; he was not a clear-eyed person.

Someone may say: Giving is the first of the six perfections. Bringing food for others to eat is precisely the practice of giving, so how can there be distinctions between having eyes and not having eyes? Very well; let us see what the Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections Spoken by the Buddha says. Chapter Eleven of that sūtra states:

The Buddha said: "Feeding one hundred evil people is not as good as feeding one good person. Feeding one thousand good people is not as good as feeding one person who upholds the five precepts. Feeding ten thousand people who uphold the five precepts is not as good as feeding one srotāpanna. Feeding one million srotāpannas is not as good as feeding one sakadāgāmin. Feeding ten million sakadāgāmins is not as good as feeding one anāgāmin. Feeding one hundred million anāgāmins is not as good as feeding one arhat. Feeding one billion arhats is not as good as feeding one pratyekabuddha. Feeding ten billion pratyekabuddhas is not as good as feeding all Buddhas of the three times. Feeding one hundred billion Buddhas of the three times is not as good as feeding one who is without thought, without abiding, without cultivation, and without realization."

The Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections was among the earliest sūtras transmitted to China, and some call it a Hīnayāna scripture. Indeed, in the passage above, no Mahāyāna bodhisattvas are listed between pratyekabuddhas and the Buddhas of the three times. Yet whether one speaks of the goat cart, deer cart, or ox cart, all ultimately become the great white ox cart. Whether it is the vehicle of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas, all ultimately return to the One Buddha Vehicle.

"Feeding one hundred evil people" means bringing food for one hundred evil people to eat. . . . This passage is easy to understand and needs no further explanation. Yet "one who is without thought, without abiding, without cultivation, and without realization" clearly already reveals the Mahāyāna seal of the one reality. True reality is without characteristics; being without characteristics, it lacks no characteristic.

Let us continue with the koan:

Changqing asked Baofu, “Bringing food for others to eat gives one a share in repaying kindness. Why, then, does one not have eyes?”

The Chan masters Changqing, Baofu, Xuansha, Yunmen, and others were all eminent disciples of Chan Master Xuefeng Yicun. Changqing was Chan Master Changqing Huileng, and Baofu was Chan Master Baofu Congzhan. Both were members of Xuefeng’s assembly, deeply congenial with one another, and often discussed the koans of the ancient masters together.

One day they were discussing the koan of “Danxia asking the monk whether he had eyes.” Changqing asked Baofu, “Bringing food for others to eat gives one a share in repaying kindness. Why, then, does one not have eyes?” The doctrinal teachings say, “Above, repay the four weighty kindnesses; below, relieve the sufferings of the three lower realms.” One of these four weighty kindnesses is the kindness of the Three Jewels. The Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha.

Is offering support to the saṅgha not repaying kindness? Such offerings are the “four requisites.” What are the four? Food and drink, clothing, bedding, and medicine. Bringing food for others to eat—offering food to monastics—is this not repaying the kindness of the Three Jewels? Hence, “one has a share in repaying kindness.” Why, then, is it said that one does not have eyes?

Changqing did not ask Baofu because he himself did not know why one does not have eyes. Discussing the koans of the ancient masters is not a matter of debating the issues or judging their rights and wrongs, strengths and weaknesses. Rather, one uses a koan as an occasion to correct one’s own and others’ views, thereby opening the eye of prajñā here and now.

Changqing asked Baofu in this way by using the koan of “Danxia asking the monk whether he had eyes” as a huatou, testing Baofu’s view to see whether he remained at all times inseparable from his own nature. Chan Master Zhaozhou once said: “When this old monk traveled on pilgrimage, apart from the two daily meals of gruel and rice, which were occasions for mixed and distracted thought, there was no other occasion for such thought.”

“If it is not so, one is far, far away!” To have no mixed and distracted thought at all times and in all places is to be inseparable from one’s own nature at all times and in all places. By such continuous and meticulous safeguarding of realization, one nurtures the embryo of sagehood and naturally attains the proper abiding of the dharmakāya. Then, going beyond the dharmakāya, one gives rise to immeasurable and boundless wondrous functioning, expounds eighty-four thousand Dharma gates where originally there is no dharma, and liberates immeasurable and boundless sentient beings where originally there are no sentient beings.

When Chan Master Zhaozhou was over one hundred years old, the King of Yan and the King of Zhao arrived together at Zhaozhou’s monastery. Chan Master Zhaozhou remained seated upright and did not rise. The King of Yan suddenly asked, “Which is more honored: a human king or a Dharma king?” Originally, the King of Yan had led troops to attack the King of Zhao, intending to seize Zhao’s territory.

Someone skilled at observing portents memorialized the King of Yan: “A sage dwells in Zhao; if you go to war, you will surely not prevail.” Thus the two kings of Yan and Zhao turned their weapons into jade and silk, making peace and meeting at a banquet.

The King of Yan asked the King of Zhao, “In Zhao’s land of gold, who is the highest person?” That is, in this precious land, as valuable as gold, which person is a great bodhisattva accomplished in cultivation? The King of Zhao replied, “There is a master who lectures on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, whose integrity and conduct are lofty and solitary. Whenever there is a great drought, everyone asks him to go to Mount Wutai to pray. Before the master has returned, sweet rain pours down.”

The King of Yan said, “I fear this is not the highest good.” The King of Zhao added, “One hundred and twenty li from here is Guanyin Monastery at Zhaozhou, where there is a Chan master advanced in years and lofty in attainment, with a clear Dharma eye.” The King of Yan said, “This may well be the one indicated by the omen!” The King of Yan truly had eyes: he did not value miraculous success in praying for rain, but valued clarity of the Dharma eye.

He and the King of Zhao came to Zhaozhou’s monastery and saw the Chan master seated upright without rising. He suddenly asked, “Which is more honored: a human king or a Dharma king?” This was a question to test the master, to determine whether Chan Master Zhaozhou truly had a clear Dharma eye. Chan Master Zhaozhou said, “Among human kings, the human king is honored; among Dharma kings, the Dharma king is honored.”

This answer vividly revealed suchness and Buddha-nature—the formless dharmakāya. Chan Master Zhaozhou laid Buddha-nature completely before them. On the side of the human king, Buddha-nature is supremely honored; on the side of the Dharma king, it is likewise supremely honored; indeed, “Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.” The King of Yan was deeply impressed. Thereafter, both kings took Chan Master Zhaozhou as their teacher and paid him the respects due to disciples.

In fact, Changqing knew that if one falls into such concepts as making offerings and repaying kindness, and cannot realize the emptiness of the threefold wheel, then at most it is merely a good deed that exchanges for human and heavenly blessings. Even if it brings about “a hundred birds bearing flowers in their beaks and white apes offering fruit,” this does not necessarily mean

that one's Dharma eye is clear. Yet he deliberately questioned Baofu in order to test whether Baofu might deviate in his practice and whether he was truly grounded.

Baofu said, "The giver and the recipient are both blind fellows!"

Changqing tried to entrap Baofu with such concepts as making offerings and repaying kindness, but Baofu had his own way out. Splendid, Baofu! "The giver and the recipient are both blind fellows!" This answer was crisp and decisive. The giver was the person "who brings you food to eat," and the recipient was the monk who had "finished eating."

The recipient was a muddleheaded fellow who merely blinked without a word. The giver, unable to see that his Dharma eye was unclear, still offered him food to eat. Both of them were blind fellows. If one is to make offerings, one should make them to a clear-eyed person.

What use is there in making offerings to a "lacquer bucket"? Long ago, there was an old woman who built a hermitage and supported a monk practicing within it for more than twenty years. She regularly had a young woman of sixteen bring him meals. (When one brings food for another to eat, is that repaying kindness?)

One day, the old woman instructed the young woman who delivered the food that, after bringing the meal, she should embrace the monk and ask him, "What about at just such a time?" She wanted to see what he would say. The word "such" had long circulated in Chan circles; "at just such a time" means the time when Buddha-nature is luminously present before one.

The old woman wished to test whether this monk was truly grounded, whether he would still deviate, and whether he could penetrate the situation of female beauty appearing before him. The young woman who delivered the food followed her instructions. The monk said, "A withered tree leans against a cold crag; through all three winter months, there is no warmth."

The sixteen-year-old woman held him tightly, yet he was like a withered tree leaning against an icy crag: not the slightest fire of desire could arise in him, as though it were the bitter cold of deep winter, without a trace of warmth. This monk could "sit with a woman in his lap without being disturbed" and might be called a person of lofty character, but he had taken the wrong path in practice. His Dharma eye was unclear; what he cultivated was dead samādhi.

When, "at just such a time," suchness and Buddha-nature shine luminously, how could it be "a withered tree leans against a cold crag; through all three winter months, there is no warmth"? Moreover, "a withered tree leans against a cold crag; through all three winter months, there is no warmth" was only his own state. He looked after himself alone. Confronted by this woman acting in such a manner before him, he did not offer her instruction to awaken her. When had there ever been sentient beings in his heart?

The saint of the Lesser Vehicle has eradicated old karma, established pure conduct, completed what was to be done, and abides in the city of nirvāṇa without undergoing further rebirth;

The Mahāyāna bodhisattva has profound and unwavering faith, earnest vows that do not retreat, and tireless practice; crossing the ocean of birth and death, he liberates sentient beings extensively.

In the eyes of Mahāyāna bodhisattvas, śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are also worldly people. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra even includes them among the fifty "skandha demons." Therefore, after the young woman who delivered the food returned and told the old woman, the old woman scolded the monk: "For twenty years I have only supported a worldly fellow!" She immediately drove him away and burned down the hermitage. This old woman, however, was not blind.

Changqing said, "If he were to bring forth his full capacity, would he still be blind?"

To bring forth one's full capacity means to activate and employ one's full potential—the so-called "great capacity and great function." Great capacity is Buddha-nature, and great function is its wondrous functioning. Danxia said, "Does the person who brought you food to eat still possess eyes?" Patriarch Yuanwu commented here: "Although this is using one's position to bully another, it is also closing the case on the basis of the evidence."

If this monk had been a clear-eyed person, he would have seized upon Danxia's "using one's position to bully another" and given Danxia a sharp challenge. But he was not clear-eyed and simply remained "speechless," so Danxia could indeed "close the case on the basis of the evidence." Patriarch Yuanwu commented on "speechless": "Sure enough, he could not get away."

If this monk had been a Chan adept, he would have said to him, "The same eyes as Your Reverence!" If he could have responded in this way, he would have "brought forth his full capacity." Changqing meant: if this monk had not been "speechless," but had instead fully brought forth the great capacity and great function of Buddha-nature, could he still be called a "blind fellow"?

The Chan school directly points to the mind, sees one's nature, and becomes Buddha: utterly bare and completely pure, not establishing a single dharma. How could it establish "bringing forth one's full capacity"? Unawares, Changqing had fallen into "full capacity." He could see through and empty such conceptual entanglements of the doctrinal schools as making offerings and repaying kindness, but he could not see through or empty such entanglements of the Chan school as full capacity and possessing eyes.

Therefore, Patriarch Yuanwu commented here: “What do you know of good and bad? You still refuse to yield! What bowl are you begging for?” He further remarked: “Had this mountain monk been there at the time, when he said, ‘If he were to bring forth his full capacity, would he still be blind?’ I would simply have said to him: ‘Blind!’” If one’s insight is not thorough and one falls into such concepts as existence and nonexistence, right and wrong, correct and incorrect, bringing forth full capacity or not, possessing eyes or not, and cannot transcend them, one greatly violates nonduality. This is stagnation; it is “still refusing to yield.”

If even “a single thread remains hanging” and one refuses to yield, then without realizing it one will end up begging for a “bowl” to carry about. Thus Patriarch Yuanwu Qin directly called him blind.

Let us now look at how Baofu replied.

Baofu said, “Do you dare say that I am blind?”

Baofu meant: Had I not already told you, “The giver and the recipient are both blind fellows”? I possess eyes in just this way and recognize that these concepts are empty in themselves. I have already “brought forth my full capacity,” so of course you should not call me blind. How forceful it would have been to reply, as Yuanwu did, with the single word “Blind!”—and how inexhaustible its resonance. Baofu’s reply was far too weak and feeble.

Speech may be appropriate or inappropriate; because he was weak in this way, his reply was inappropriate. Without knowing it, he had fallen into “not being blind.” His meaning was: I have already “brought forth my full capacity,” and therefore am “not blind.”

Patriarch Yuanwu Qin commented here: “Both are fellows in the weeds, dragon’s head and snake’s tail! … Both are Chan adepts; why is there no village before and no inn behind?” Changqing had fallen into “full capacity,” and Baofu into “not being blind.” Both had fallen bodily into the weeds, so Yuanwu called them both “fellows in the weeds.”

In their two exchanges of question and answer, the first question and answer were very good, but the latter question and answer fell into the weeds.

Is this not “a dragon’s head and a snake’s tail”? Yet both were eminent disciples of Xuefeng, both Chan adepts, both clear-eyed people! Why, at this point, did both question and answer depart from Buddha-nature—why was there “no village before and no inn behind”? After awakening, when one brings forth functioning, every utterance must not depart from the fundamental meaning of Buddha-nature. But this usually requires a process of training; it is uncommon to arrive at the point all at once, as Danxia did.

Changqing and Baofu often discussed the koans of the ancients precisely in order to train themselves. Yet as soon as a deviation occurs, it will be caught by a clear-eyed person. Chan Master Xuedou seized upon their “full capacity yet not blind” in composing a verse on this koan. The following is Chan Master Xuedou’s verse:

Full capacity does not make one not blind—pressing a cow’s head down to make it eat grass!

This monk blinked and remained “speechless,” showing that he had never recognized the lively, natural, uncontrived Buddha-nature. He was, of course, a “blind fellow.” Can you bring forth his full capacity for him? If a cow will not eat grass, what use is there in forcibly pressing down its head? Pressing down the cow’s head cannot take the place of the cow’s eating grass for itself. This monk was a “blind fellow”; even if you bring forth full capacity on his behalf, you still cannot say that he is “not blind.”

Patriarch Yuanwu commented on this line of the verse:

Changqing said, “If he were to bring forth his full capacity, would he still be blind?” Baofu said, “Do you dare say that I am blind?” It is just like pressing a cow’s head down to make it eat grass. One must wait for it to eat by itself; how could one press down its head and make it eat? Xuedou’s verse in this way naturally reveals Danxia’s intent.

What was Danxia’s intent? It may be explained in three parts:

First, he asked the monk, “Where have you come from?” This was asking, “Where does birth come from?” in order to test his point of origin. In answering this question, one could say, “Just so,” “How could there be no place of origin at all?” or “It is not difficult to know the place of origin.” These three replies all mean the same thing: they set forth the uncontrived Buddha-nature in its entirety.

These three sentences are Patriarch Yuanwu’s comments on this line. If the monk had answered in this way, the meaning would have been entirely clear, and Chan Master Danxia would have had no need to test him further. But the monk answered, “From down the mountain,” which was not very clear. Perhaps he was concealing his move, or perhaps he was muddleheaded and did not understand.

Therefore Patriarch Yuanwu commented: “Wearing straw sandals, he has already passed through your belly. He simply does not understand.” This comment expresses the two possibilities: concealing one’s move and being muddleheaded without

understanding. If this monk were concealing his move and hiding a sharp device, then it would be “wearing straw sandals, he has already passed through your belly.” If he were a muddleheaded fellow, then it would be “he simply does not understand.”

Only because this monk could not withstand the later test was he judged to be one who “simply does not understand.” Patriarch Yuanwu then commented: “There is an echo in his words; they contain familiarity with where he comes from. One knows whether he is yellow or green.” Yellow symbolizes ripeness, and green symbolizes unripeness.

If this monk had been mature, the single phrase “from down the mountain” would have contained “an echo in his words,” covertly implying the source of “where does birth come from?” and carrying a hook to lure Danxia in. If he had not been mature, then Danxia had seen through him. Because the monk later remained “speechless,” Patriarch Yuanwu said, “One knows whether he is yellow or green.”

Second, Danxia further asked, “Have you eaten?” This was a further test of him. Had the monk been quick-witted, he would not have fallen for it. Unfortunately, he was a muddleheaded fellow; this question was like foul water poured directly over his head. Patriarch Yuanwu commented here: “The first ladle of foul water is poured! Why was this necessary?” He then answered for himself: “The fixed scale. To know the precise truth.”

“Why did Chan Master Danxia have to ask in this way? This is precisely where Danxia was steady and meticulous. It is the fixed star by which one tests visiting monks, to know what they are ultimately made of. But this monk answered, ‘I have eaten,’ and so he fell into the trap.”

Still, one cannot be certain. If he had deliberately exposed a flaw in order to turn the tables and bait Danxia, he could also have answered this way. Unfortunately, he later merely blinked and was “speechless”; he was indeed a muddleheaded fellow. Therefore, Patriarch Yuanwu commented here: “Sure enough, he ran into a dew pillar. Yet someone else has passed a ring through his nose. It turns out he is an iron hammer without a hole.” A dew pillar is a wooden pillar supporting a roof beam; an iron hammer without a hole means one that cannot be opened up. This is undoubtedly a judgment that the monk did not possess the eye.”

Third, Danxia said: “Does the person who brought you food to eat also possess the eye?” This was the second ladleful of foul water that Danxia poured over him.”

If the visiting monk had been one with clear eyes, the first two questions and answers could still have gone as above. But here he could have seized upon Danxia’s weak point: you still have this notion of “possessing the eye”; clearly, you have not swept away the traces of “awakening”! Thus, after “Though he relies on his position to bully others, he nevertheless settles the case according to the evidence,” Patriarch Yuanwu added: “At that moment, he should have overturned the Chan seat! Why make such a needless move?” If the monk had really overturned the Chan seat then, Danxia would not have let the matter rest; he might have picked up his staff and struck him.”

A person with clear eyes would not have feared his staff either, but would have caught it at once. Then the two of them would have “grappled their way into the abbot’s quarters,” like Linji and Mangu. Not only would they both have burst into laughter from the heart at that very moment, but they would also have left later generations an enduring masterpiece of profound inspiration. Yet this monk was “speechless.” Is it unjust to call him one who “does not possess the eye”?”

“When one chants in this manner, one naturally sees Danxia’s intent.” Danxia’s Chan strategy was stern and precipitous; Danxia’s intent is not so easily seen. Patriarch Yuanwu’s words, “sees Danxia’s intent,” are the highest praise for Chan Master Xuedou.”

Next, let us look at Xuedou’s verse:

Four times seven, two times three—the patriarchs all; / Bearing the precious vessel here becomes a fault.

“Four times seven” is twenty-eight, referring to the twenty-eight generations of direct transmission from the First Patriarch, Venerable Kāśyapa, to the Twenty-Eighth Patriarch, Venerable Bodhidharma—the lineage of Śākyamuni Buddha’s transmission in India. “Two times three” equals six, referring to the six generations of the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye in China, from the First Patriarch, Master Bodhidharma, to the Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng. “The patriarchs of four times seven and two times three” broadly refers to the great patriarchs with clear eyes throughout the orthodox Buddhist tradition—the Chan school.”

The precious vessel refers to the Dharma treasure of “direct pointing to the mind, seeing one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood.” This is the supreme Dharma gate of sudden awakening. Fault means error. The Buddhas and patriarchs transmitted this precious vessel of sudden awakening from generation to generation; why, then, did it instead become a fault? Let us examine Patriarch Yuanwu’s commentary on this verse:

It does not merely implicate Changqing; even the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and the six patriarchs of this land are all buried together. Old Śākyamuni expounded the teachings of the great treasury for forty-nine years, and in the end transmitted only this precious vessel. Yongjia said: “It is not a vain stripping away of outward forms; it is the Tathāgata’s precious staff, a trace personally transmitted.” If one adopts Baofu’s understanding, then when the precious vessel is brought forth, it all becomes a fault.”

Changqing said: “If he brings forth his full capacity, does he still become blind?” Had Baofu answered with the single word “blind,” it would have cut everything off cleanly and completely. Not establishing a single dharma—this alone is true self-confirmation. It would also have shown that Changqing’s question did not fall into “exhausting one’s capacity,” but was instead a testing remark.”

Yet Baofu answered: “Do you say that I am blind?” From head to foot, he fell into the weeds, falling into “not becoming blind,” and implicated Changqing as well in “exhausting one’s capacity.” It was not only Changqing who was implicated: even the twenty-eight generations of patriarchs in India and the six generations of patriarchs in China were all buried, because this unsurpassed great Dharma was transmitted by them from generation to generation.”

Śākyamuni, the World-Honored One, manifested in the human world and transmitted the Buddha-mind seal. For forty-nine years he expounded the Dharma and, in more than three hundred assemblies, discoursed on the sūtras. Whether speaking horizontally, vertically, or in tangled elaborations, all this was like setting off clouds to support the moon; none of it spoke of this maṇi jewel itself. Only at the final assembly on Vulture Peak, when the World-Honored One held up a flower and Kāśyapa smiled, was this maṇi jewel of “direct pointing to the mind, seeing one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood” transmitted.”

Where is the precious jewel? Let me tell you: it is right here! They transmitted it from generation to generation, bearing forth the precious vessel, yet it instead became a fault—all because their descendants were unworthy. How could this not cause deep grief and indignation? Patriarch Yuanwu commented: “Everyone on the great earth takes turns beating their breasts. Give me back my staff! You have implicated this mountain monk so that he cannot show his head either.”

Everyone, if we conduct ourselves poorly, we implicate our forebears. We are the descendants of Śākyamuni Buddha; we must “be upright in action and upright in speech.” Our words and conduct are extremely important.”

At all times and in all places, we should be upright and selfless. Every sentence we speak should remain inseparable from the fundamental meaning of Buddha-nature; in all we do, we should act without contrivance yet leave nothing undone. Broad-minded, open, upright, genuine, and free of hypocrisy—then others will not slander us. Not only will we avoid implicating our forebears, but we will enable the unsurpassed great Dharma handed down by them to flourish.”

Nowadays, some people call themselves Buddhists, yet fail to set a good example, inviting this unpleasant saying: “If you seek the black-hearted, look among vegetarian devotees.” What a sin, what a sin! They implicate the Buddhas and patriarchs!”

The fault runs deep—nowhere can it be found; heaven and earth alike sink together!

If the fault were shallow, perhaps there would be a remedy. But if the fault runs very deep, that is disastrous. Where then could one seek Buddha-nature? To say nothing of being unable to recognize Buddha-nature or attain liberation—even blessings in the human and heavenly realms are buried: heaven and earth alike sink together! Yet in terms of praising the great matter of the patriarchs, even blessings in the human and heavenly realms are a fault.”

How can one be free of fault? Please consider Patriarch Yuanwu’s commentary:

This cannot be explained to you. Just go and sit quietly, examining it within his words. Since the fault runs deep, why is there nowhere to seek it? This is no minor fault: it sinks the great matter of the patriarchs all together flat into the ground.”

It is not merely that blessings in the human and heavenly realms are buried; even the great matter of the patriarchs is “all together sunk flat into the ground.” Can such a fault still be considered shallow? Hence it is said: “This is no minor fault.”

Yet since it is a “deep fault,” why is it also said to be “nowhere to seek”? This does not merely mean that there is nowhere to seek Buddha-nature. Where would you seek this “fault”? Therefore: “This cannot be explained to you. Just go and sit quietly, examining it within his words.” Let us see how Patriarch Yuanwu examines it within the words.”

Under “the fault runs deep,” he commented: “Deep indeed! Chan monks throughout the land cannot jump out of it.” Immediately, the brush turns, and he asks: “Tell me, how deep is it?” Everyone, can we here also turn ourselves around and jump out from where one “cannot jump out”? If not, then continue reading.”

Under “nowhere can it be found,” Patriarch Yuanwu commented: “It is beneath your heels! You cannot feel about and find it.” This points out to the student before him: What is beneath your heels? Since it is beneath your heels, why can you not find it by feeling about? If you could just now turn yourself around and jump out, these two questions would not be questions at all. If you cannot jump out, then you have surely died beneath the words.”

Therefore, under “heaven and earth alike sink together,” Patriarch Yuanwu again commented: “Chan monks throughout the land are buried in one pit! Is there anyone still alive?” Patriarch Yuanwu’s compassionate concern was too earnest; even at this point, he was unwilling to stop, and again wished to offer guidance: “Let go of one move.”

“Heavens, heavens!” Whatever the patriarch says, the student clings to; this is because the student’s habitual tendency to let the mind cling to objects is too deep. Can you “let go of one move” and recognize it from beneath your heels, from what is closest at hand? If you can recognize it—heavens, heavens—it is simply so! If you cannot recognize it—heavens, heavens—how pitiable, how pitiable!”

The Song of Enlightenment says: “Amid desires one practices Chan through the power of insight; lotus flowers grow in fire and never decay. The brave donor, though guilty of grave offenses, awakens to the unborn; from long ago until now, he has become a Buddha. The lion’s roar, the fearless teaching, deeply laments the muddled and obstinate. They know only that grave offenses obstruct bodhi; they do not see the Tathāgata reveal the secret key. Two bhikshus committed sexual misconduct and killing; Upāli’s firefly light increased their knots of guilt. Vimalakīrti, the great being, suddenly removed their doubts, like the blazing sun melting frost and snow.” At this point, can you all let go of one move, turn yourselves around and jump out, and recognize it without doubt?!”

(After a long pause, he struck the table once.) Heavens! Heavens!

[Wanderer at the Frontier]: A pouring of clarified butter upon the crown. These are truly words of thoroughly awakening to the essential point, cutting everything off cleanly and completely.

[vvvv]: (After a long pause, he struck the table once.) Heavens! Heavens!

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Beneath your feet, the grass is already three feet deep...

[Seven Sevens] On Yunmen’s Sesame Cake

[Case 77] Yunmen’s Discourse on the Flatcake

The Introductory Pointer says: Turning upward, one can pierce the nostrils of everyone under heaven, like a falcon seizing a dove. Turning downward, one’s own nostrils are in another’s hands, like a turtle withdrawing into its shell. Suppose that someone suddenly came forth and said, “Originally there is neither upward nor downward. What use is turning?” I would simply tell him, “I too know that you are making a living in a ghost cave!” But tell me, how does one distinguish black from white here? After a pause, he said: “Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent.” Let us bring it up and see.

[Case 77] The Case:

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs?” [Open! A sudden clap of thunder from dry ground. Press!]

Yunmen said, “Flatcake!” [His tongue touches the roof of his mouth. It has gone too far.]

This monk asked Yunmen, “What is the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs?” Yunmen said, “Flatcake!” Do you feel your hairs standing on end? Members of the Chan school ask about Buddha and patriarchs, Chan and the Way, upward and downward. When there is nothing more to ask, they contrive this question and ask about “the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs.” Yunmen was a true master; as the water rises, so does the boat, and the more mud there is, the larger the Buddha image.

So he answered, “Flatcake!” It may be said that the Way is not practiced in vain, nor is effort bestowed idly. Yunmen further instructed the assembly: “Do not settle matters in this way. When you hear someone speak of the patriarchs’ meaning, you immediately ask about ‘the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs.’ But what do you call Buddha? What do you call patriarch? As soon as you speak of the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs, you then ask about going beyond the three realms.

Look at the three realms: what seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing obstructs you? What sounds, forms, Buddhas, or Dharma are there for you to resolve? Resolve what bowl? Taking that as a view of distinctions, even the ancient sages can do nothing for you. To cast one’s whole body into things and speak of “the entire body as suchness; every thing encountered directly”—that cannot be attained. I tell you: what matter is there immediately before you? Even this already buries it!” If you understand these words, then you will recognize the flatcake.

Wuzu said, “Donkey dung compared with musk.” As it is said, “The Buddha personally sealed the direct cutting off at the root; I cannot pluck leaves and seek branches.” When you reach this point and wish to be intimate with it, do not use questions to inquire. Look at this monk asking, “What is the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs?” Yunmen said, “Flatcake!” Do you know shame? Do you sense the leak? There are people who fabricate an explanation: “When Yunmen saw the rabbit, he released the hawk; thus he said, ‘Flatcake.’”

If you understand it by taking “flatcake” to be precisely the discourse that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs, how could there be a living road? Do not understand it as flatcake, nor understand it as transcending Buddhas and surpassing patriarchs: that is the living road. It is the same as “three pounds of flax” and “can you beat a drum?” Although he merely said “Flatcake,” it is in fact difficult to see.

Later generations often explain it conceptually: “Coarse words and subtle sayings all return to the highest truth.” If you understand it that way, then go and become a scriptural lecturer; you will spend your whole life gaining much knowledge and many interpretations. Chan practitioners nowadays say that when one transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs, all

Buddhas are beneath one's heels and the patriarchs too are beneath one's heels; therefore Yunmen merely said to him, "Flatcake." But if it is flatcake, how could it transcend Buddhas and surpass patriarchs? Go and investigate it carefully. There are very many verses from various quarters, all making verbal explanations around the question. Xuedou alone composed the best verse. Let us bring it up and see.

The verse says:

Chan guests who ask about transcendent discourse are especially numerous. [Every one of them comes forth with precisely this kind of understanding—as numerous as hemp and millet!]

Do you see the gaps laid bare? [Already before words. Opened up! One does not notice the stink of one's own excrement.]

Even when a flatcake is shoved in, they still will not stop. [It has replaced your eyes with wooden-bead rosary seeds.]

To this day, false explanations abound throughout the land. [Drawing a circle, he says: "Could it be understood in this way?" These biting words—when will they ever end? The vast earth is boundless; it leaves one grief-stricken. Then he strikes.]

"Chan guests who ask about transcendent discourse are especially numerous." Chan practitioners especially enjoy asking this. Have you not seen Yunmen say: "You all carry your staffs across your shoulders, saying that you have investigated Chan and studied the Way, and then seek some principle that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs. I ask you: throughout the twelve periods of the day, while walking, standing, sitting, and reclining, while defecating and urinating, down to the insects in the latrine, the buying and selling in the marketplace, and the butcher's block with its mutton—do these contain a principle that transcends Buddhas and surpasses patriarchs? Let those who can speak of it come forth. If no one can, do not hinder my going east and west." Then he descended from the seat. Some still cannot distinguish good from bad; they draw circles, heap mud upon dirt, and add fetters to their shackles.

"Do you see the gaps laid bare?" There are enormous gaps in the very place where he raised his question. Yunmen saw the gaps in his question, and so used "flatcake" to block and seal the fissures.

Yet this monk would not stop, but continued to ask. Therefore Xuedou said, "Even when a flatcake is shoved in, they still will not stop; to this day, false explanations abound throughout the land." Chan practitioners nowadays keep trying to interpret flatcake; otherwise, they construct theories at the point of transcending Buddhas and surpassing patriarchs. Since it is not at either of these two ends, where, after all, is it? Thirty years from now, when this mountain monk has changed his bones and come forth again, I will tell you!"

[Visitor]: Originally there is neither upward nor downward, so why bring it up at all?

[Iron Broom]: Without fine scenery, how could one attract visitors?

[Visitor]: Now that there is cake, is there tea as well?

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Trouble has arisen!

[Iron Broom]: Spit out the flatcake, and then tea will be served.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Riding a donkey while looking for a donkey!

[Visitor]: There are not only cakes here, but buns as well.

[lvm] (replying to [Iron Broom]: "Spit out the flatcake, and then tea will be served."): Ha ha! Even when a flatcake is shoved in, they still will not stop; to this day, false explanations abound throughout the land.

Xuedou's verse:

Chan guests who ask about transcendent discourse are especially numerous;

Do you see the gaps laid bare?

Even when a flatcake is shoved in, they still will not stop;

To this day, false explanations abound throughout the land.

[Iron Broom]: What are you laughing at? Are you not afraid of laughing your front teeth out?

[Iron Broom]: Oh! There truly is a sound within the laughter.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground] (replying to [lvm]: "Ha ha! Even when a flatcake is shoved in, they still will not stop; to this day, false explanations abound throughout the land."): I bow in homage and withdraw!

[Youth Yongshou]: Look up—dí tǐ (to meet face-to-face: to see someone)

---

dí: to see; to meet [meet]

[cici]: The flatcake is a sharp sword, cutting off thoughts in earnest. If you understand, go freely. Otherwise, it is like giving pearls to pigs to eat!!

[Yongshou Tongzi]: May I ask: “Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent.” What does this mean?

[Iron Broom]: Let me venture a guess; it may not be accurate.

Taken together, tiao and li make “tiaoli” (regulations or statutes), a term familiar to everyone. Tiao refers to provisions of law, while li refers to judicial precedents (the Anglo-American legal system is characterized by case law). Tiaoli thus means law—the standard by which right and wrong are judged—and its function is to define rights and obligations and to stop disputes.

My guess is that Chan koans borrow this expression here in the sense of “deciding a case according to the applicable provision.”

Records on the legal history of China’s Song dynasty state:

After Emperor Shenzong of the Song, legal forms changed considerably. Compiled precedents appeared and became an important legislative activity and legal form in the Song dynasty. Precedents were divided into regulations and adjudicated precedents. Regulations were directives and orders issued by the emperor or central government offices, also called instructions; adjudicated precedents were established precedents from decided cases. Compiling precedents meant that specialized agencies organized and codified regulations and adjudicated precedents, thereby raising them into legal forms of general validity.

The Song dynasty stipulated that the use of precedents was limited: precedents could be cited in adjudicating and sentencing a case only when ordinary law contained no applicable provision. Yet in judicial practice, officials often decided cases according to precedents, even “citing precedents to override the law,” thereby creating disorder in the administration of justice.

==========

A few more remarks to add to everyone’s legal knowledge: at present, China’s Supreme People’s Court has not recognized model precedents as binding on other similar cases. However, it has begun studying preparations to require courts at all levels to follow, in similar cases, the cases published in the Gazette of the Supreme People’s Court.

(It seems we must learn from the Song dynasty or from Western systems of precedent.) In Hong Kong television dramas, the large dictionary that some lawyers carry into court—a compilation of cases—is case law. Britain and the United States have a legal tradition of “following precedent.” Thus the difficulty of studying law in Britain and the United States lies in having to research so many case reports; one must complete an undergraduate degree before entering law school to study law. It is unlike our current situation, where buying a complete collection of legal provisions more or less settles the matter.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Thank you. Very good. It greatly broadens one’s horizons.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: Where are you looking?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: After investigation, it has been established that a flatcake is a pancake meant to fool people.

[Bodhisattva Without Ground]: @_@

[Sudhana] (replying to [Iron Broom] [replying to [Youth Yongshou]: “A question: ‘Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent.’ What does this mean?”]: “Let me venture a guess—it may not be correct.”): “Is this what it means?”

[No-Ground Bodhisattva] (replying to [Youth Yongshou]: “A question: ‘Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent.’ What does this mean?”): “It probably means speaking freely.”

[Youth Yongshou]: “Mm. Extending Brother Congxinming’s post, that should be what it means.”

[lvm] (replying to [Youth Yongshou]: “A question: ‘Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent.’ What does this mean?”): “Tiao means ‘Vinaya rule,’ and li means ‘precedent.’”

The Master's Instruction says: "Turning upward, one can pierce the nostrils of everyone under heaven, like a falcon seizing a dove. Turning downward, one's own nostrils are in another's hands, like a turtle withdrawing into its shell. Now suppose someone suddenly comes forth and says, 'Originally, there is no upward or downward. What use is there in turning?' I would simply tell him, 'I too know that you are making a living in a ghost cave!' But tell me, how does one distinguish black from white?" After a long pause, he said, "Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent. Give an example and see."

Turning upward—stand atop the highest mountain.

Turning downward—walk along the deepest ocean floor.

"Originally, there is no upward or downward. What use is there in turning?"—worldly cleverness and intellectual eloquence! It never escapes such words.

"I too know that you are making a living in a ghost cave!"—the ghost cave is worldly cleverness and ghostly intelligence. Making a living in a ghost cave means "falling into the realm of shadows," that is, falling into the aggregate of perception: one has a heap of principles but cannot penetrate circumstances when they arise. Once the last day of the twelfth lunar month arrives, those principles will be of no use at all.

"But tell me, how does one distinguish black from white?"—How does one discern that the person who "suddenly comes forth" is displaying ghostly cleverness?

"Where there is a rule, rely on the rule; where there is no rule, rely on precedent."—First, let us discuss the Vinaya rules; then, the precedents:

Let us cite a passage on Caoshan's rules:

"Do not tread the path where the mind operates"—Do not open your mouth and speak endlessly of mind and nature. Do not tread this path!

"Do not wear the original garment"—Just as in the statement, "Originally, there is no upward or downward. What use is there in turning?" Do not wear this garment!

"Why must it be just so?"—And there is also, "At just such a time, what then?" Why must it be this way!

"Be especially wary of before birth"—Before one has resolved the huatou of "one's original face before one's parents were born," one speaks of what it is like "before birth." Be especially wary of such babbling!

Let us look at a precedent and see how Yunmen spoke.—Give an example and see:

An example:

A monk asked Yunmen, "What is the teaching that transcends Buddha and surpasses the patriarchs?"

Yunmen said, "A flatbread!"

Ha ha! So long as one does not violate present-day taboos, it is still better than the eloquence that had one's tongue cut out in the previous dynasty.

[Youth Yongshou]: "Mm. Thank you, Teacher, for the flatbread."

[No-Ground Bodhisattva]: "What will you offer in return?"

[Youth Yongshou]: "Leave the Bodhisattva here as a pledge; I'll be right back."

[No-Ground Bodhisattva]: "I never came, so how can you leave me as a pledge? You have not gone, so how can you be free?"

[Seven and Eight] Śūraṅgama: Wondrous Touch Explained

[Seventy-Eight] Śūraṅgama: Wondrous Touch Manifests Clearly

[Seventy-Eight] Raising the Case:

In ancient times there were sixteen great adepts. [What use is there in forming a crowd and a band! What a sorry lot this group is.]

While bathing the monks, he entered the bath with the others as usual. [He bumped into a pillar. What is that lacquer bucket up to!]

He suddenly awakened through the condition of water. [Foul water is suddenly poured over his head.]

How do you Chan worthies understand this? He said, “Wondrous touch manifests clearly—[It has nothing to do with anyone else. How do you understand him? When it falls, it is no other thing.]

—and one abides as a son of the Buddha.” [Chan monks throughout the land cannot find their way here. What are you doing with two ends and three sides!]

Even so, one must penetrate through and through before it will do. [One blow, one mark. Do not disappoint this mountain monk’s goodwill. Bumping and knocking about—have you ever seen Deshan and Linji?]

At the Śūraṅgama assembly, Bhadrapāla Bodhisattva and sixteen great adepts, each practicing pure conduct, respectively explained the causes by which they had realized their dharma gates of perfect penetration. This was also one of the twenty-five kinds of perfect penetration. While bathing the monks, he entered the bath with the others as usual and suddenly awakened through the condition of water. He said: “It washes neither dust nor the body; tell me, then, what does it wash?” If you can understand this, you are at ease in the midst of things and attain nothing at all.

Not even thousands or tens of thousands can come near it. As it is said, “To have nothing to attain is true prajñā; to have something to attain is merely semblance prajñā.” Did you not see Bodhidharma say to the Second Patriarch, “Bring me your mind, and I will set it at ease for you”? The Second Patriarch said, “Having sought for the mind, I cannot find it.” This small matter is the very life-root of Chan monks. There is no need for all these tangled vines; it is enough simply to say, “He suddenly awakened through the condition of water,” and it is naturally settled. It washes neither dust nor the body; tell me, then, what did he awaken to? At such a stage, not even the slightest thing can be attached. Even the word “Buddha” must be avoided.

He said: “Wondrous touch manifests clearly, and one abides as a son of the Buddha.” Xuan means to manifest, and wondrous touch means clarity. Having awakened to wondrous touch, one abides as a son of the Buddha—that is, one abides on the Buddha-ground. People today also enter baths, also wash with water, and are touched in this very way; why, then, do they not awaken? They are all obscured and deluded by objects of the senses, clinging skin to bone, and therefore cannot do so.

Be vividly awake. If here washing too has nothing to attain, touch too has nothing to attain, and the condition of water too has nothing to attain, then tell me: is this wondrous touch manifesting clearly, or is it not? If you see it directly here, it is precisely “wondrous touch manifests clearly, and one abides as a son of the Buddha.” People today also experience touch; do they see what is wondrous about it? Wondrous touch is not ordinary touch. When it unites with the one who touches, it becomes touch; when separate, it is not.

When Xuansha crossed a ridge and struck his toe, and when Deshan wielded his staff—were these not wondrous touches? Even so, one must penetrate through and through before it will do. If you merely grope about on your body, what has that to do with it? If you penetrate through and through, why would you need to enter a bath? Then, upon the tip of a single hair, you manifest a jeweled king’s land; within a mote of dust, you turn the great *. When one point is penetrated, a thousand places and ten thousand places are penetrated all at once. Do not merely guard one nest or one den; everywhere is a gate through which Avalokiteśvara enters principle.

The ancients also awakened to the Way upon hearing sounds and realized the mind upon seeing forms. If one person awakens, that is understandable; but why did the sixteen great adepts awaken simultaneously? Thus the ancients practiced together and realized together, awakened together and understood together. Xuedou took up the meaning of the teaching and led people to realize it at the point of wondrous touch. He composed a verse that goes beyond the teaching’s standpoint, so that people would not be enveloped in the nets of doctrine, half drunk and half awake. He wanted people to become free and unencumbered at once.

The verse says:

A Chan monk with affairs settled needs only one. [There is one right here. Three thousand blows in the morning, eight hundred in the evening. Leap out of the vajra ring. Not even one is needed.]

He stretches out his legs on a long connected bed and lies down. [He truly is a sleepy fellow. Discuss kalpas, not Chan.]

In a dream he once spoke of awakening to perfect penetration; [Already asleep, and then speaking of dreams. Still, I allow you to dream of it. What use is sleep-talk?]

Wash him with fragrant water, and suddenly spit in his face. [Bah! Another layer of mud added atop dirt. Do not come defecate on clean ground.]

“A Chan monk with affairs settled needs only one”—tell me, what affair has been settled? A seasoned Chan practitioner needs only to hear the case raised casually; once stirred, he is on his way. A Chan monk such as this needs only one; why form a crowd and a band?

“He stretches out his legs on a long connected bed and lies down.” An ancient said: “Plainly, there is no dharma of awakening; once awakened, it only deludes people. Stretch out both legs and sleep: neither false nor true.” Thus, with no affairs in one’s breast, when hungry one eats, and when sleepy one sleeps.

Xuedou's meaning is this: if you say that, upon entering the bath, one awakened to wondrous touch manifesting clearly, then from the standpoint of such an untroubled Chan monk, it is only talking of dreams in a dream. Therefore he says, "In a dream he once spoke of awakening to perfect penetration; wash him with fragrant water, and suddenly spit in his face." In a case like this, it is merely foul water suddenly poured over one's head; what more need be said of perfect penetration?

Xuedou said that a fellow like this is just fit to be spat upon suddenly, head and face.

This mountain monk says: another layer of mud has been added atop dirt.

[Traveling Practitioner]: Hoeing grain beneath the noonday sun, sweat drips onto the soil below the grain. Take a hot bath, then go home for a good sleep.

[Iron Broom]: Bathing: it washes neither ashes nor the body—what does it wash?

[CUFE] (in reply to [Iron Broom]: Bathing: it washes neither ashes nor the body—what does it wash?): Bathing.

[yj] ([Iron Broom]: Bathing: it washes neither ashes nor the body—what does it wash?): Dust cannot be washed away, the body cannot be cleansed; one stands there naked, drenched by the water.

[Lianqing] ([Iron Broom]: Bathing: it washes neither ashes nor the body—what does it wash?): That is why it says, "[Foul water is suddenly poured over his head.]" Ha ha.

And also: "[Bah! Another layer of mud added atop dirt. Do not come defecate on clean ground.]" Heh heh.

[Iron Broom]: I checked some references: a Buddhist monastery bathhouse is also called "Xuanming" ("Manifesting Clearly").

The origin of calling a Buddhist monastery bathhouse "Xuanming" ("Manifesting Clearly") comes from the Śūraṅgama Sūtra:

"Bhadrapāla, together with his sixteen fellow great adepts, rose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and addressed the Buddha: 'In the past, during the time of the Buddha Vipaśyin, we heard the Dharma and left home. While bathing the monks, we entered the bathing room with the others as usual. We suddenly awakened through the condition of water: it washes neither dust nor the body; in the midst, we were at ease and attained nothing at all. This former habit has not been forgotten. Down to the present time, having left home under the Buddha, we have attained the state beyond further training. That Buddha named me Bhadrapāla. Wondrous touch manifests clearly, and one abides as a son of the Buddha. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, according to my realization, the faculty of touch is foremost.'"

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Really? Which dictionary did you find that in?

[Iron Broom]: It is quite a good name; it reminds practitioners everywhere to cultivate.

---

http://www.orientbuddha.org/fjxy/show.asp?id=1190

[Yongshou Tongzi]: So that is how it is.

In bathhouses, an image of Bhadrapāla (Shanshou, "Good Guardian") is installed, apparently based on the teaching of perfect penetration through the condition of water in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.

Volume Five of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra states: "Bhadrapāla addressed the Buddha: 'In the past, during the time of the Buddha Vipaśyin, we heard the Dharma and left home. While bathing the monks, we entered the bathing room with the others as usual and suddenly awakened through the condition of water. It washes neither dust nor the body; in the midst, we were at ease and attained nothing at all. This former habit has not been forgotten. Down to the present time, having left home under the Buddha, we have attained the state beyond further training. That Buddha named me Bhadrapāla. Wondrous touch manifests clearly, and one abides as a son of the Buddha. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, according to my realization, the faculty of touch is foremost.'" Thus, Buddhist monastery bathhouses are now also called "Xuanming" ("Manifesting Clearly"), in accordance with this account.

Furthermore, according to Qing-dynasty Qianlong-era textual research cited in Collected Eulogies on Arhat Images, this Bhadrapāla is said to be the sixth, Bhadrā, among the sixteen arhats in the Record of the Abiding Dharma.

[79] Touzi Strikes Upon Hearing a Sound

[79] Touzi Hears a Sound and Immediately Strikes

Pointer: When great function appears before one, no rules remain; one captures alive and seizes alive, without expending any extra effort. Tell me, who has ever come forth in such a way? Let us cite the case and see.

[79] The Case:

A monk asked Touzi, “Are all sounds the Buddha’s voice?” [He even knows how to stroke a tiger’s whiskers. Thunder crashes in a clear sky. He does not notice the stink of his own excrement.]

Touzi said, “Yes.” [He has deceived a whole boatload of people. He has sold himself to you completely. Set that aside—what kind of mental activity is this?]

The monk said, “Doesn’t Your Reverence’s voice sound like a boiling pig and a clanging bowl?” [He sees only the sharp point of the awl, not the square head of the chisel. What is he saying? Sure enough, he admits defeat.]

Touzi immediately struck him. [Hit! A fine blow. He could not be let off.]

The monk further asked, “Coarse words and subtle speech alike return to the First Principle. Is that so?” [For the second time, he strokes the tiger’s whiskers. Why protest innocence while clutching the stolen goods? East, west, south, north—there are still echoes remaining.]

Touzi said, “Yes.” [Again, he has sold himself to you completely. A device for trapping a tiger. What kind of mental activity is this?]

The monk said, “May I call Your Reverence a donkey?” [He sees only the sharp point of the awl, not the square head of the chisel. Though there are waves against the current, there are simply no horns on his head. He sprays people with blood from his own mouth.]

Touzi struck him again. [Hit! He must not be let off. A fine blow. Before the staff had broken, why did he stop?]

Touzi was plain and straightforward, yet possessed an exceptional eloquence. Whenever someone put a question to him, the moment he opened his mouth one could see his very gall. Without expending extra effort, he cut off the other’s tongue at once. It may be said that he devised strategies within the command tent and decided victory a thousand miles away.

This monk pasted his views about sound, form, Buddha, and Dharma onto his forehead, and asked everyone he met about them. Touzi was a true master, deeply discerning the wind as it came. Knowing that Touzi was straightforward, the monk from the outset laid a snare to lure Touzi in; hence his later words. Touzi, however, used a device for trapping a tiger to draw out the monk’s later words.

Taking up Touzi’s reply, the monk said, “Doesn’t Your Reverence’s voice sound like a boiling pig and a clanging bowl?” Sure enough, he bit as soon as the hook was cast. Had it been someone else, he could have done nothing with this monk. But Touzi had the discerning eye, and immediately struck him. To handle someone who bites like a pig or a dog, one must indeed be a true master. Turn left, and he rolls right along with you; turn right, and he rolls left along with you. This monk had laid a snare in order to stroke the tiger’s whiskers.

Little did he know that Touzi was above even the snare he had laid: Touzi immediately struck him. What a pity for this monk—he had a head but no tail. At that moment, when Touzi raised his staff, he should have overturned the Chan seat. Even if Touzi had possessed the whole mechanism, he would still have had to retreat three thousand miles.

He further asked, “Coarse words and subtle speech alike return to the First Principle. Is that so?” Touzi again said, “Yes.” It was no different from what he had said before. The monk said, “May I call Your Reverence a donkey?” Touzi struck him again. Although this monk had made himself a nest, it was nonetheless remarkable. If it had been an old fellow on a crooked wooden bed, with no eye in the crown of his head, it would have been difficult to thwart him. But Touzi had a place to turn around.

This monk had fashioned a line of reasoning and wanted to intrude upon Touzi’s market, yet in the end he still could do nothing with old man Touzi. Have you not seen Yantou say, “When it comes to battle, each one stands at the point of turning”? Touzi let him go too late and drew him back too quickly. If the monk had then known how to turn around and breathe out, would he not have become a fellow with a mouth like a basin of blood? Among patch-robed monks, once one has begun, one does not stop halfway. Since this monk could not throw it back, Touzi pierced his nostrils.

A verse says:

Touzi, Touzi, [Clearly so! Nowhere under heaven is there such a straightforward old fellow. He leads astray the sons and daughters of other households.]

His wheel of activity meets no obstruction. [What can anyone do to him? Yet there is still something.]

Release one and gain two, [Your very eyes have been exchanged. Where do you see Touzi?]

The same on that side and this side. [Come in this way and you get the staff; do not come in this way and you still get the staff. Venerable sir, strike for him.]

How pitiful are the countless tide-riders, [Let one or two such men loose in the Chan grove. Let these two men loose. Patch-robed monks throughout the land all wish to proceed in this way.]

Who in the end still perish in the tide. [What a pity! Yet they cannot get out of this snare. Do not speak of sorrow to one already sorrowful.]

If suddenly they come alive, [The Chan seat shakes. It frightens this mountain monk to death. He too would retreat three thousand miles.]

The hundred rivers flow backward in a deafening uproar. [Perilous! It is futile to stand and ponder. This mountain monk dares not open his mouth. Old man Touzi, too, would have to break his staff.]

"Touzi, Touzi, his wheel of activity meets no obstruction." Touzi would ordinarily say, "You all call Touzi straightforward. Suppose that after he has gone three steps down the mountain, someone asks you, 'What is the place where Touzi is straightforward?' How would you respond?" An ancient said, "Where the wheel of activity turns, even an adept is still confused." His wheel of activity turns and turns, wholly without obstruction. Therefore Xuedou said, "Release one and gain two."

Have you not seen a monk ask, "What is Buddha?" Touzi said, "Buddha." He further asked, "What is the Way?" Touzi said, "The Way." He further asked, "What is Chan?" Touzi said, "Chan."

He further asked, "What about before the moon is full?" Touzi said, "Swallow three or four." "What about after it is full?" "Spit out seven or eight." Touzi often used this device in receiving people. In answering this monk, he used only the single word "yes," and the monk was struck twice. Therefore Xuedou said, "The same on that side and this side." In four lines, he had fully praised Touzi.

At the end, he praises this monk: "How pitiful are the countless tide-riders." This monk dared to seize the banner and capture the drum, saying, "Doesn't Your Reverence's voice sound like a boiling pig and a clanging bowl?" He also said, "May I call Your Reverence a donkey?" This is precisely where he rode the tide. The monk exhausted all his tricks, yet as before died within Touzi's words. Touzi immediately struck him; this monk thus "in the end still perished in the tide."

Xuedou presents this monk as one who, "if suddenly he came alive," would overturn the Chan seat, and Touzi too would have to retreat three thousand miles. Then "the hundred rivers would flow backward in a deafening uproar." Not only would the Chan seat shake; mountains and rivers would tower precipitously, and heaven and earth would suddenly grow dark. If everyone were like this, this mountain monk would beat the retreat drum. Where then could you all settle yourselves and establish your lives?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Why, then, did Chan Master Yuanwu say that Touzi let him go too late?

Teacher! Why, then, did Chan Master Yuanwu say that Touzi let him go too late? Did Chan Master Yuanwu mean that when "the monk asked Touzi, 'Are all sounds the Buddha's voice?'" Touzi should have struck him squarely in the face? Otherwise, when Touzi said, "Yes," if that monk too had been a true master, he could have struck Touzi squarely in the face. Then the monk would have turned from guest into host, would he not?

[ZhimingLi]: Guishan said to Yangshan, "Ji, do not enter the realm of yin!"

Why did Chan Master Yuanwu say that Touzi let him go too late? Did he mean that when "the monk asked Touzi, 'Are all sounds the Buddha's voice?'" Touzi should have struck him squarely in the face?

* You are too early.

Otherwise, when Touzi said, "Yes," if that monk too had been a true master, he could have struck Touzi squarely in the face. Then the monk would have turned from guest into host, would he not?

* But the ladle's handle was not in that monk's hand.

[Iron Broom]: Why don't you go thank the teacher?

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Hee-hee! I'd better take my own thirty blows home and slowly spank my little bottom.

[Iron Broom]: Is there anyone else who has seen Touzi?

Look at the rows upon rows of slippery fellows on the forum, shoulder to shoulder, discussing Buddha and discoursing on intrinsic nature.

WARNING: This entire story is fictional. Do not assume it refers to you.

[Iron Broom]: How come no one has come to sign up?

[Prostrating with All Five Limbs]: Reporting in.

When winter passes and spring arrives,

This matter has nothing to do with wind or moon;

Let the wind go as it will,

Let the moon go as it will,

Only then is it the right season.

[Lianqing]: Supplementary Notes and Questions

The annotations in the old edition are as follows:

Tun: pronounced du-mu qie; it means “buttocks.” It would have been better without the annotation; once annotated, it only becomes utterly bewildering.

Guo: pronounced gu-huo qie, “the sound of flowing water.” I suppose it means that archaic speech is like the sound of flowing water.

Ji: pronounced ni-ji qie.

E: pronounced ni-ge qie.

___I can guess the meanings of the original characters in these two, but I cannot make out the meanings of the annotations, haha.

Yongshou Tongzi : You do not understand “pigs boiling and bowls ringing,” do you?

“Pigs boiling” can perhaps be understood as pigs squealing; as for “bowls ringing,” I do not know whether it means a symphony of pots, bowls, and ladles!

Xu Wengong’s explanation is even funnier, haha: he says it is the sound of farting.

Yongshou Tongzi : I do not understand it either. Please ask the teacher to answer.

lvm : Haven’t you already explained it?

The sound of pigs boiling and bowls ringing—the sound of farting into a bowl.

Yongshou Tongzi : Heh heh, no wonder he struck as soon as he heard the sound.

Lianqing : Huh?

At the time, a monk came forward, made a bow, and said: “I ask, has the Reverend eaten yet? Is that not so?”

If the monk were to reach out for a stick, he would shout!!!

Yongshou Tongzi : I’ll brush off my sleeves and go back to the children’s room...

Lianqing : Sweet dreams, sister.

I would never call my sister that-whatever.

Yongshou Tongzi : That Lian-whatever classmate in the lower bunk.

Please do not snore or grind your teeth...

Lianqing : ^0^

Zhenshi Zailai (in reply to Lianqing : “Huh?”): Too talkative.

Sudhana : ^^

The first time, familiar; the second time, strange.

Before the Single-Plank Pass lie the pits of ten thousand people;

Pitiable are those who chase flowers and pursue leaves;

Just as they enter when the grass is yellow, the grass turns green again.

Iron Broom : From now on, when reposting old threads, one kick per post.

lvm : Twenty-one kicks remain; see you in 2007.

Wuti Toudi : Good flowers bloom at all times; fine snowflakes keep falling. Winter snow goes with winter, but spring’s promise remains on the branches.

Iron Broom : The broom strikes at once!

Wuti Toudi : Ouch.

ooooo : The broom, too, has Buddha-nature.

[80] Zhaozhou Plays Ball in Rushing Water

[Case 80] Zhaozhou Plays Ball on Rushing Water

[Case 80] The Case:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does a newborn child also possess the six consciousnesses or not?” [A flash of lightning. What is he saying about a newborn child?]

Zhaozhou said, “Playing ball on rushing water.” [Too late. Even a swift falcon cannot catch up. It still must be tested.]

The monk again asked Touzi, “What is the meaning of ‘playing ball on rushing water’?” [This adept likewise tests him together. Do you understand? Too late.]

Touzi said, “Thought after thought flows on without stopping.” [You fellow entangling yourself in vines.]

These six consciousnesses are established in the doctrinal teachings as the fundamental basis. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars arise because of them. They come as vanguards and depart as rearguards. An ancient said, “The three realms are mind-only; all phenomena are consciousness-only.” If one realizes the Buddha-ground, the eight consciousnesses are transformed into the four wisdoms. The doctrinal teachings call this changing the name without changing the substance.

Faculties, objects, and consciousnesses make three. External objects themselves cannot discriminate; the supreme-meaning faculties can give rise to consciousness, and consciousness can manifest forms and discriminate them—this is the sixth consciousness. The seventh consciousness, manas consciousness, clings to and retains all the shadowy affairs of the world, causing people afflictions and depriving them of freedom and ease; all this is the seventh consciousness. The eighth consciousness is also called the ālaya consciousness, or the storehouse consciousness; it contains all wholesome and unwholesome seeds.

This monk understood the doctrinal meaning and so came to ask Zhaozhou, “Does a newborn child also possess the six consciousnesses or not?” Although a newborn child possesses the six consciousnesses and can see with the eyes and hear with

the ears, it has not yet discriminated the good and bad, long and short, right and wrong, gain and loss among the six objects. At such a time, it knows none of these at all. Those who study the Way should return to being like infants: honor and disgrace, fame and profit, adverse feelings and favorable circumstances cannot move them.

When the eyes see forms, it is as though they were blind; when the ears hear sounds, it is as though they were deaf. Like one foolish or vacant, the mind does not move, like Mount Sumeru. This is where patch-robed monks truly gain strength. An ancient said, "With a patched robe covering my head, all affairs cease; at this time, this mountain monk knows nothing at all." If one can be like this, there is then a small degree of correspondence. Yet even so, nothing at all can be hidden from him.

Mountains remain mountains, and water remains water. There is no contrivance and no calculating thought. Like the sun and moon moving through vast space, they never pause even briefly, yet do not say, "I have so many names and attributes." Like heaven universally covering, like earth universally supporting: precisely because they are mindless, they nourish all things, yet do not say, "I have performed so many meritorious deeds." Because heaven and earth are mindless, they endure for long; if they had mind, they would have limits.

Those who have attained the Way are likewise so: amid effortlessness, they apply effort; toward all adverse and favorable circumstances, they embrace them with a compassionate mind. Even here, the ancients still rebuked themselves, saying, "When understanding is complete, there is nothing left to understand; at the profoundest profundity, one must directly rebuke it." They also said, "Everything is unobstructed, and all things are clear; when those who have attained hear this, they are startled in the dark."

They also said, "Entering sagehood and transcending the ordinary without making a sound, a reclining dragon ever fears the clarity of the blue pool. If a person could remain like this forever, how could the great earth retain even a single name?" Yet even so, one must further leap out of the nest and den before it is complete. Does not the teaching say, "An eighth-bhūmi bodhisattva, with effortless wisdom, turns the great Dharma wheel within a single mote of dust. At all times, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, they are unconstrained by gain or loss."

"They naturally flow into the ocean of omniscience." When patch-robed monks reach this point, they likewise must not cling to it. They should simply be free and at ease in accordance with the occasion: when encountering tea, drink tea; when encountering food, eat food. In this matter that goes beyond, one cannot attach the word 'fixed,' nor can one attach the words 'not fixed.'

Chan Master Shishi Shandao instructed the assembly: "Do you not see that when a child emerges from the womb, it has never said that it knows how to read the teachings? At such a time, it does not know the meaning of Buddha-nature or no Buddha-nature. Once it grows up, it learns all kinds of intellectual interpretations and says, 'I can do it; I understand it,' not knowing that these are adventitious defilements and afflictions. Among the sixteen contemplative practices, infant conduct is foremost. When children babble, it is likened to practitioners who have left behind the mind of discrimination, grasping, and rejection. Thus infants are praised as an analogy—but how could they be taken literally? If one says that an infant is the Way, people nowadays misunderstand."

Nanquan said, "By the age of eighteen, I knew how to make a living." Zhaozhou said, "By the age of eighteen, I knew how to break up households and scatter estates." He also said, "During my twenty years in the south, apart from the two daily meals of porridge and rice, there was no other miscellaneous application of mind." Caoshan asked a monk, "A bodhisattva in samādhi hears a fragrant elephant crossing a river, distinctly and clearly. From what sūtra does this come?" The monk said, "The Nirvāṇa Sūtra."

Caoshan said, "Did he hear it before entering samādhi, or after leaving samādhi?" The monk said, "You have let it flow away, Reverend." Caoshan said, "Catch it downstream." Further, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra says, "The still enters and merges with the still, entering the boundary of consciousness." The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra also says, "Characteristics give rise to clinging and obstruction; ideation gives rise to deluded thoughts; when the continuous stream arises, one follows delusion and circulates."

Even if one reaches the ground of effortlessness, one still remains amid the characteristics of the continuous stream. One must emerge from the third characteristic of the arising of the continuous stream; only then can one be joyful and at ease. Thus Guishan asked Yangshan, "How is Ji?" Yangshan said, "Are you asking about his understanding, or about his practice and understanding? If you are asking about his practice and understanding, I do not know. But if it is his understanding, it is like pouring a bottle of water into another bottle of water." If one can attain this, one may serve as a teacher in a region.

Zhaozhou's saying, "Playing ball on rushing water," is already spinning rapidly. When one further plays ball on rushing water, it passes in the blink of an eye. For example, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra says, "Like swiftly flowing water, which one mistakenly regards as tranquil." An ancient said, "Like rushing water: its flow never stays fixed. Each moment does not know the next; all dharmas are likewise so." The import of Zhaozhou's reply is altogether like this.

The monk again asked Touzi, "What is the meaning of 'playing ball on rushing water'?" Touzi said, "Thought after thought flows on without stopping." This naturally fits precisely with what he asked. The conduct of the ancients was continuous and subtle; their answers were just as though from one person, requiring no further calculation. As soon as you ask them, they already

know where you will land. Although a child's six consciousnesses are without function, thought after thought continues without stopping, like a hidden current of water. Touzi's answer can be called a profound discernment of the wind before it arrives.

Xuedou's verse says:

The six consciousnesses are without function—he extends a question. [Having eyes, he is like the blind; having ears, he is like the deaf. A bright mirror stands before the platform; a bright pearl lies in the palm. One line says it all.]

Adepts once jointly discerned its source. [Why must they? Yet one must distinguish black from white. Only realization reveals it.]

Vast rushing water—playing ball upon it. [Consistent from beginning to end. Too late. What are you saying?]

It never stops at its landing place—who can see it? [To look is to go blind! Too late. Catch it downstream.]

"The six consciousnesses are without function—he extends a question." When the ancients studied the Way and cultivated themselves to this point, it was called the function of no function. Like an infant, although one has eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, one cannot discriminate the six objects, because there is no functioning. Upon reaching such a state, one can subdue dragons and tame tigers, and sit or stand free of birth and death. People nowadays need only let the myriad present circumstances rest all at once; why wait until the eighth bhūmi and above before being like this? Yet even in the place of no function, mountains are still mountains and water is still water.

Earlier, Xuedou's verse says, "Though alive, one has eyes yet is like the dead; why need the medicine taboo be inspected by adepts?" Since Zhaozhou and Touzi were adepts, he says, "Adepts once jointly discerned its source."

"Vast rushing water—playing ball upon it." Touzi said, "Thought after thought flows on without stopping." Do you all know where it lands?

At the end, Xuedou teaches people to look for themselves; therefore he says, "It never stops at its landing place—who can see it?" This is Xuedou's living phrase. Tell me, where does it land?

[Iron Broom]: "Thought after thought flows on without stopping"—what is its meaning?

By all means, do not answer, "Playing ball on rushing water."

[Layman Yongguang]: You know that when you urgently need to urinate, you should let it out of your pants.

After all, it is a newborn child.

[Lianqing]: Go home first and wash your clothes.

Whoever carries the child ends up reeking all over.

[Layman Yongguang]: You should shit a little less too.

Do not add another scenic feature to empty space.

[Lianqing]: Precisely, precisely.

[lvm] (responding to [Iron Broom]: "Thought after thought flows on without stopping"—what is its meaning?): You should be the one to explain it.

[Iron Broom]: As punishment, let me sing a song. If it is any good, do not forget to toss a coin into the broken bowl.

[Announcement: Theme Song of The Smiling, Proud Wanderer]

A Laugh Across the Vast Sea

A laugh across the vast sea; the tides surge along both shores.

Drifting with the waves, we mark this present day.

The blue heavens laugh; worldly tides rise in profusion.

Who bears the burden, who emerges victorious—heaven alone knows.

Rivers and mountains laugh; mist and rain sway.

The pounding waves have washed away countless worldly affairs.

The clear breeze laughs, yet somehow stirs loneliness.

Only a lapful of evening radiance remains of that heroic spirit.

The common people smile, no longer lonely;

that heroic spirit is still laughing foolishly on and on.

lvm : Or perhaps an explanation can be found in the Elder's teachings.

Iron Broom : I found part of it:

Teachings of Master Yuanyin:

A Brief Explanation of Mahāmudrā, Lecture Twelve

No-thought means that, when a thought arises, one does not abide in it.

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "Does a newborn child possess the six consciousnesses or not?" A newborn infant knows nothing and surely does not give rise to thoughts in response to objects, with deluded thoughts flying about. Does an infant possess the six consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind? In fact, the infant is used as an analogy to ask what "no-thought" is. Zhaozhou replied, "Hitting a ball atop rushing water."

The monk again asked Touzi, "What is the meaning of hitting a ball atop rushing water?" Touzi replied, "Thought after thought does not linger." If a ball is struck atop swiftly flowing water, can it remain there? It is swept away at once. "Not lingering" means non-abiding. Thus, when thoughts arise without abiding, that is no-thought; it does not mean that no-thought consists in having no thoughts whatsoever.

...After recognizing the true mind, one "naturally abides." Abiding in non-abiding is called natural abiding. One is spontaneous and steady, lucid yet still, still yet lucid; one is no longer shaken by circumstances or troubled by deluded thoughts. Only by learning Buddhism in this way does one truly gain strength from the practice.

Questions and Answers on the Essentials of Buddhist Practice and Realization

Question: Some say that "thought after thought does not linger" is also a stage in practice. Yet according to Master's teachings, thought after thought not lingering is the great functioning of intrinsic nature. Please give us further guidance.

Answer: If there still remains a notion of "thought after thought does not linger," it is not ultimate and must still dissolve. The "thought after thought does not linger" of which I speak is functioning: "at this very moment, it is empty." There is no need deliberately to apply the mind in order to dissolve it.

Question: In "illumining yet ever still, still yet ever illumining," do thoughts ultimately arise or not?

Answer: Illumining is functioning; it is thought after thought not lingering. There is no thought that can be thought, and no arising that can arise. Things manifest naturally in accordance with conditions.

Question: What is no-thought?

Answer: No-thought does not mean suppressing thoughts so that they do not arise, like a dead person. Rather, when thoughts arise, do not follow them; thought after thought does not linger. Though one does everything, the mind leaves not the slightest trace and has not a speck of attachment.

Question: Someone believes that the contemplation after leaving the meditation cushion in the Heart-of-Heart Dharma has not been clearly explained, whereas the contemplation transmitted by Chan masters from Taiwan provides a point of entry. He believes that contemplation means that all dharmas are equal and that no discrimination arises. In doing anything, one must be clear and overlook none of the details. In contemplation, one understands immediately, and thought after thought must not linger; if there is lingering, there is some lack of clarity, and that is the deluded mind.

Answer: Has it truly not been explained clearly? If one who has just begun observing the mind is clear about every matter, that is observing objects rather than observing the mind. Those who observe the mind know that circumstances are originally empty and do not let the mind follow circumstances; they know that mind is originally empty and do not abide in mind. When mind and circumstances are both empty, there is no-thought at this very moment.

Even when there is no-thought, one does not cling to no-thought; and when thoughts arise, one does not fall into having thoughts. When both existence and nonexistence vanish, there is immediate numinous awareness. Yet the nature of this numinous awareness is neither mind nor circumstance; in its entirety, it is empty. Precisely when empty, it is also clearly and distinctly evident; in its entirety, it is provisional.

Emptiness and provisionality are nondual, with no further discrimination, grasping, or rejection. At precisely this time, true contemplation is vividly present. Is this not contemplation in accordance with reality? Must one, as this person says, retain in one's mind the taste of food or store up the sexual pleasure of intercourse in one's mind and brain for a long time in order for it to count as contemplation? If that is contemplation, it is merely Māra's contemplation—the contemplation that leads to hell.

Moreover, to speak of this contemplation is already superfluous; it merely encumbers practitioners. Everyone is originally a Buddha. One need only awaken: this state in which not a single thought arises, yet there is clear and distinct knowing, is each person's Buddha-nature. The arising of thought is wondrous functioning; there is no need to contemplate emptiness. This alone is the true Chan Dharma.

This person tells everyone not to overlook a single detail. Is that "not giving rise to discrimination"? Is it not attachment to appearances? To savor the taste of food and sexual pleasure, and further to experience the food's passage through the esophagus, throat, intestines, and stomach—is this "immediate understanding"? He both says that thought after thought must not linger and tells people to develop and extend lustful thoughts throughout every part of the body and all aspects of life. Is he not slapping his own face? Māra's teaching is full of precisely such contradictions.

A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One's True Nature: Conclusion

Furthermore, doing the work of no-thought does not mean regarding as progress the gradual extension of the interval of true emptiness and no-thought between the cessation of the preceding thought and the arising of the following thought. For example, no-thought may last only one minute today, then gradually be extended to five minutes, ten minutes, or even one hour or twenty-four hours, and this may be taken as success. You must understand that no-thought is lively and dynamic; it is not stiff and inert like a block of wood or stone.

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is no-thought?" Zhaozhou said, "Hitting a ball atop rushing water!" A later master commented, "Thought after thought does not linger!" What is called no-thought does not mean that not a single thought arises. Rather, thoughts cease as soon as they arise, without the slightest trace of abiding in appearances. Therefore, as stated above, when thoughts are arising in response to conditions, one does not even see thoughts arising. If there is no arising, how could there be cessation? Since there is neither arising nor cessation, it is called no-thought. When one is not responding to conditions or engaging with objects, even if not a single thought arises, one is only as precarious as treading on a tiger's tail or on spring ice: thoughts arise upon encountering conditions. It is not like the dead, unknowing stillness of wood or stone.

A Brief Explanation of the Song of Liberation: "Though a white blade is brought to one's head, it is like a sharp sword slashing the spring wind."

Take note! "Not setting mind in motion or stirring thoughts" does not mean that thoughts do not arise. It means that, when thoughts arise, one does not attach to them; no abiding is called no-thought. Otherwise, how could one do anything if no thoughts arose? No-thought is nonattachment to appearances and non-lingering. Thought after thought not lingering is called no-thought. Lingering upon something is deluded thought. Thus, the thought of no-thought is right mindfulness.

The Second Patriarch's mind was truly empty. After transmitting the Dharma to the Third Patriarch, he went to repay a karmic debt. When a great wealthy man repays a small debt, it is like one hair from nine oxen—of no consequence. Before he was killed, he said, "When my head meets the white blade, it is as though a spring breeze were being cut." In practicing the Buddhadharma, we must possess such a heroic spirit if we are to fulfill the Buddha's practices and vows.

In practicing the Buddhadharma, one must be bold and spirited, free and generous, knowing that everything is empty, relinquishing and not clinging, and fearing nothing, for there is originally no birth and death. But being bold does not mean being recklessly daring and unafraid to commit every evil deed. That would be disastrous.

A Brief Explanation of the Inscription on Awakening to the Mind, Fourth Line: "Vastly without abiding—this is called no-mind."

The Diamond Sūtra says: “One should give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.” The character ying ( ) in “should not abide anywhere” is often mistakenly understood as the ying meaning “ought to” or “should.”

But this is not so. This ying means the ying in “responding to conditions and engaging with things.” It teaches us that, in daily life, when dealing with all events and meeting all people, the mind should abide nowhere and remain utterly unstained. It does not merely tell us that, at the level of principle, we ought not to abide in attachment. If we can respond to conditions without abiding, then the nimble true mind of boundless wondrous functioning will naturally manifest before us at every moment, unobscured.

Therefore, no-thought is alive: it responds to conditions without abiding in or being stained by them. It is not suppressing thoughts so that they do not arise, then remaining motionless like the dead. As long as, when thoughts arise, we do not abide, do not chase after conditions, and do not linger—ceasing as soon as we function—this is no-thought.

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “What is no-thought?” Zhaozhou said, “Hitting a ball atop rushing water!” Zhaozhou later asked Touzi in return, “What is the meaning of hitting a ball atop rushing water?” Touzi said, “Thought after thought does not linger!” Thus, when thoughts arise without abiding, that is no-thought; it is not only when not a single thought arises that there is no-thought. Chan Master Niutou Farong, also known as Lanrong, further says in his Hymn of No-Mind: “Just when the mind is in use, there is precisely no mind in use; when no mind is precisely in use, constant use is precisely absent!” That is, even while the mind is functioning, one does not see any mind arising to function. This fully expresses the meaning and wondrous functioning of no-mind.

Uncovering the Hidden Meaning of the Heart Sūtra

In cultivating the Way, one must never forget it, concentrating one’s whole body and mind upon the work of the Way. Whatever Dharma one practices, one must attend to it in the morning and at night, in exile and adversity, practicing without forgetting it thought after thought; only then can one attain accomplishment.

Is it not said that those who practice Buddha-recitation must uphold the Buddha’s name throughout the twelve two-hour periods, without the slightest slackening? The so-called twelve two-hour periods are twenty-four hours. One must constantly place the Buddha’s name in the deluded mind, upholding it without forgetting, thought after thought and never letting go. Only through such wholehearted practice can one transform the deluded mind into the Buddha-mind.

Buddha-recitation is work undertaken on the mind-ground, begun at the point most directly connected with birth and death; therefore, it is most easily accomplished. Every undertaking, even the ten dharma realms, is created by mind alone. If one creates the evil karma of greed, anger, and ignorance, one falls into the cycle of rebirth in the six realms. Conversely, mindfulness of Buddha, mindfulness of Dharma, and mindfulness of Saṅgha enable one to become a Buddha. Therefore, one must practice the Dharma without forgetting it thought after thought in order to attain accomplishment.

Essential Explanation of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says: “You and all sentient beings are likewise so: the precious awakened true mind is each fully complete. When I press my finger, the ocean-seal emits light; when you briefly stir the mind, the toil of dust arises first.”

Once, Chan Master Dongming Qian of Tanzhou and the lay practitioner Zhong of the Zhenru Hermitage were reading the Śūraṅgama Sūtra together. When they came to the passage, “When I press my finger, the ocean-seal emits light,” Zhong asked, “When I press my finger, the ocean-seal emits light—what is the Buddha’s meaning?” Chan Master Qian said, “That old Śākyamuni deserves thirty blows!” Zhong asked, “Why is that?” The master shouted, “What use is it to press a finger?”

“Yet when the mind is briefly stirred, the toil of dust arises first!” ..... Chan Master Qian said to the lay practitioner Zhong, “That too is the ocean-seal emitting light!” He was telling us that when we respond to conditions and engage with things, this is precisely where the wondrous functioning of the true mind lies—this is the ocean-seal emitting light. Do not take it as the stirring of thoughts, for then one falls into the toil of dust.

As long as [thoughts] arise and cease in accordance with their arising, without abiding or lingering, and, at the very moment they arise, one does not see any mind that can arise, that is the wondrous functioning of suchness. If one thinks that not stirring the mind or giving rise to thoughts is the great Way, one is mistaken. If one sits behind a dark mountain, one cannot realize the Way. We must be able to function in accordance with conditions and engage with things in response to conditions; we may do every kind of thing. This is precisely our great capacity and great functioning. This is called “non-contrivance, yet nothing is left undone.”

[hehe]: !!

[Shengjun]: Thank you, Broom, for enabling us to revisit the master’s Dharma teachings!

[Instruction 81] Yaoshan Watches an Arrow Shoot a Deer

[Case 81] Yaoshan Watches an Arrow Shot at a Deer

Fascicle Nine of The Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

Pointer: Raising the banner and seizing the drum—of this, a thousand sages cannot fathom the end. Cutting off disputation and confusion—ten thousand circumstances cannot reach it. It is neither spiritual powers and wondrous functioning nor the suchness of the fundamental essence. Tell me: relying on what can one attain such marvels?

[Case 81] The Case:

A monk asked Yaoshan, “On a level plain covered with shallow grass, deer gather in herds. How does one shoot the deer among deer?” [He casts his topknot before the court and comes forth bearing his head and horns. He draws an arrow from behind his head.]

Yaoshan said, “Watch the arrow!” [He robs him on the spot. Do not take the downhill path; such an opportunity is hard to meet. Hit!]

The monk threw himself down. [Clearly, he was different. Once dead, he would not come alive again. What a fellow playing with his vital spirit!]

Yaoshan said, “Attendant, drag this dead fellow out.” [He acts in accordance with the command. There is no need for further examination. The first arrow was still light; the latter arrow struck deep.]

The monk then ran away. [Staring wide-eyed from inside the coffin. Coming alive amid death. He still has some breath left.]

Yaoshan said, “You fellow playing with a lump of mud—what limits are there to you!” [What a pity that he let him off so easily. He acts in accordance with the command. Frost added to snow.]

Xuedou commented, “Though he lives after three steps, after five steps he must die.” [One hand raises him up; one hand presses him down. Even if he ran a hundred steps, he would still lose his life. He further said: “Watch the arrow!” Tell me, where does Xuedou’s intent lie? If they were to die together and live together, Yaoshan would be left staring open-mouthed. Such a one would be like a hammer without a hole; what use could he be?]

In the Dongshan lineage, this case is called “asking by borrowing an affair”; it is also called “asking to distinguish the host,” used to illuminate the appropriate occasion. Deer are ordinarily easy to shoot, but the deer among deer is the king of deer and is especially difficult to shoot. This deer habitually sharpens its horns against cliff rocks until they are as keen as spear points. It uses its body to protect the herd, and even tigers cannot approach it. This monk, too, seemed alert and brought forth this question to Yaoshan in order to reveal the primary potential.

When Yaoshan said, “Watch the arrow!” he showed himself to be a master of the school, remarkably extraordinary—like a spark struck from stone or a flash of lightning. Have you not seen how Sanping first visited Shigong? As soon as Shigong saw him arrive, he assumed the posture of drawing a bow and said, “Watch the arrow!” Sanping opened his robe at the chest and said, “Is this an arrow that kills, or an arrow that gives life?” Shigong plucked the bowstring three times. Sanping then bowed.

Shigong said, “For thirty years, with one bow and two arrows, today I have shot only half a sage.” Then he broke his bow and arrows. Later, Sanping brought this up to Dadian. Dadian said, “Since it was an arrow that gives life, why did you distinguish it by the bowstring?” Sanping had no reply. Dadian said, “Even thirty years from now, it will be hard to find someone who can bring up this saying.”

Fadeng composed a verse: “In ancient times there was Master Shigong, / Who sat with bow and arrows at the ready. / For thirty years thus, / Not one person knew his sound. / When Sanping struck the mark, / Father and son responded in harmony. / Reflect upon it carefully: / Originally, he himself was the target.” Shigong’s manner was the same as Yaoshan’s. Sanping had an eye at the crown of his head and hit the mark at a single word.

It was just like Yaoshan’s saying, “Watch the arrow!” The monk then acted like a deer and threw himself down. This monk, too, seemed to be a master of the school, but he had a head and no tail. Having drawn a circle to trap Yaoshan, he found that Yaoshan was a true master, who pressed him on without letup. When Yaoshan said, “Attendant, drag this dead fellow out,” it was like advancing in battle formation. It was good that the monk ran away, but he was not free and easy; his feet and hands still stuck fast. Therefore Yaoshan said, “You fellow playing with a lump of mud—what limits are there to you!”

If Yaoshan had not added those final words at the time, he would have been criticized throughout the ages. Yaoshan said, “Watch the arrow!” and the monk fell down.

Tell me: was he capable, or was he not? If you say he was capable, why then did Yaoshan call him “a fellow playing with a lump of mud”? This is the most dangerous point. It is just like when a monk asked Deshan, “If a student, relying on a Moye sword,

were about to take the master's head, what then?" Deshan stretched out his neck and moved it closer, saying, "Huo!" The monk said, "The master's head has fallen." Deshan lowered his head and returned to his abbot's quarters.

Again, Yantou asked a monk, "Where have you come from?" The monk said, "I have come from the Western Capital." Yantou said, "After Huang Chao passed through, did you recover a sword?" The monk said, "I did." Yantou stretched out his neck and moved it closer, saying, "Huo!" The monk said, "The master's head has fallen." Yantou gave a hearty laugh. Gong'ans such as these are all devices for trapping tigers. This case is precisely of the same kind. Yaoshan simply did not accommodate him. Because he had seen through him, he kept pressing him on.

Xuedou said, "Though this monk lives after three steps, after five steps he must die." Although this monk was quite adept at watching the arrow, he immediately threw himself down. Yaoshan said, "Attendant, drag this dead fellow out," and the monk ran away. Xuedou says that he feared the monk would not survive beyond three steps. If at that time he had leapt beyond five steps, no one under heaven could have done anything to him. When masters of the school meet, host and guest must continually exchange places from beginning to end, without interruption; only then is there a measure of freedom and ease. Since this monk could not sustain it from beginning to end, Xuedou criticized him. Later, Xuedou used these very words in his verse:

The deer among deer—[Look with a lofty eye. Off he goes, bearing his head and horns.]

You must look closely. [How could this compare with growing a second head and running away? If you want to shoot, then shoot—what are you looking at?]

Release one arrow—[A hit! You must know that Yaoshan had a fine hand.]

And run three steps. [Lively and vigorous, yet he can manage only three steps. He has been dead for a long time.]

If after five steps he lives, [What then? Leap a hundred steps. But what if someone comes alive amid death?]

He leads the herd in pursuing the tiger. [Both illuminate one another. He must be made to retreat. The patch-robed monks of the world let him stick out his head, yet he remains only in a clump of grass.]

The true eye has always been entrusted to hunters. [Yet Yaoshan would not acknowledge these words. Yaoshan is one thing, but what about Xuedou? It is none of Yaoshan's business, none of Xuedou's business, none of this mountain monk's business, and none of your business.]

...

Xuedou shouted loudly, "Watch the arrow!" [He accepts the whole case at once. He must be made to retreat. Striking him, he said: "I have already blocked your throat!"]

"The deer among deer—you must look closely." A patch-robed monk must possess the eyes of the deer among deer, the head and horns of the deer among deer, skillful devices, and ways of action. Even a fierce tiger with wings or a horned beast can only preserve itself and flee from danger. At that time, when the monk threw himself down, he was saying of himself, "I am the deer."

"Release one arrow, and run three steps." Yaoshan said, "Watch the arrow!" and the monk fell down. Yaoshan said, "Attendant, drag this dead fellow out," and the monk ran away. This was indeed quite good, but he could manage only three steps!

"If after five steps he lives, he leads the herd in pursuing the tiger." Xuedou says that he feared the monk would have to die after five steps. If at that time he could have leapt beyond five steps and survived, he could then have led the herd in pursuing the tiger. The deer among deer has horns as sharp as spears; even a tiger fears it and flees. As king of the deer, it habitually leads the herd in driving tigers into other mountains.

In the latter part of his verse, Xuedou also shows Yaoshan's fitting response: "The true eye has always been entrusted to hunters." Yaoshan was like a hunter, and the monk like a deer. At that time, when Xuedou ascended the hall, he cited these words, bound them into a single utterance, and loudly said, "Watch the arrow!" Those seated and those standing were all unable to move at once.

[Lianqing]: Drawing an arrow from behind the head? What sort of image is that?

[lvm]: In ancient times, warriors wore their quivers slung diagonally across their backs; by reaching behind the head, they could draw an arrow.

The arrow is not on the bowstring; one still has to draw it from behind one's head. The initiative has already been lost!

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Yuanwu Chan Master's comments really resemble a film voice-over.

Also: Xuedou shouted loudly, “Watch the arrow!” [He accepts the whole case at once. He must be made to retreat. Striking him, he said: “I have already blocked your throat!”]

Does “striking him” here mean making the motion of knocking aside an incoming arrow?

[lvm]: The inserted comments are precisely like voice-over narration.

Also: Xuedou shouted loudly, “Watch the arrow!” [He accepts the whole case at once. He must be made to retreat. Striking him, he said: “I have already blocked your throat!”]

Does “striking him” here mean making the motion of knocking aside an incoming arrow?

* Here, “striking him, he said” means that he spoke to him while striking him.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Oh! The monk then ran away. Xuedou said that he feared the monk would not survive beyond three steps ...

The monk then ran away—hence Xuedou said that he feared the monk would not survive beyond three steps.

If, when Yaoshan said, “Watch the arrow!” that monk had immediately struck and said, “I have already blocked your throat!”—would he then have leapt beyond the five steps?

[lvm]: He could not run as fast as Deshan.

[Snow Mountain Youth]:Yes! That monk had merely learned a few set moves.

Indeed! That monk had merely learned a few “forms.” His mind had inclinations and his breast held preferences; thus, even if he had gone a hundred paces, he would still have lost his life. Deshan, however, had nothing in his breast, as clear and open as the blue sky. It was only that this master of an “external school,” Deshan, encountered Chan Master Weishan, a master of “taiji.” Even if he ran quickly, his victory was somewhat hasty...

Alas! One clearly knows that learning “forms” is useless, yet one's heart still itches unbearably. If this is not “the mind has inclinations and the breast has preferences,” then what is it?

With a great shout: “Pah!!!”

[Lianqing] (replying to [lvm]: “He could not run as fast as Deshan.”): Then did Deshan take five steps?

Even so, he would collapse after seven steps... ^0^

[Shancai] (replying to [lvm]: “He could not run as fast as Deshan.”): A toad can make three hops.

Still a toad.

[Little Ant]: Why did Yaoshan not say, “Who has ever wished to be a deer among deer?”

[Shancai]: Yaoshan does not toy with such spirits and souls.

[Little Ant]: The ancient road, cold steamed buns.

[Shancai]: The Yangtze and Huai, warm-hearted.

[Little Ant]: Bodhi, true life.

[Lianqing] (replying to [lvm]: “Ancient warriors wore their quivers diagonally across their backs, so that by reaching behind their heads they could draw an arrow.”): Watch the arrow!

Yaoshan watched the arrow shoot the deer; Xuedou held up incense and praised the ancient case. A splendid arrow indeed—but whom did it strike?

[lvm]: You have already lost half.

[Lianqing]: Today I have been dragged down by LVM.

[I Refuse to Use This Name]: How does one leap beyond five paces?

Although this monk was quite adept at watching arrows, he simply threw himself down. Yaoshan said, “Attendant, drag this dead fellow out.” The monk then walked away. Xuedou said, “I only fear that he would not survive beyond three paces. Had he then leapt beyond five paces, no one under heaven could have done anything to him.”

[lvm]: Which name is it that you refuse to use?

[I Refuse to Use This Name]: Ha ha, I refuse to use the name [I Refuse to Use This Name].

Wukong is precisely the Tathāgata; the palm is outside the hand.

Leap out, and leap outside; meet face-to-face and say bye-bye.

[lvm]: ^o^

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Teacher Qi: I do not understand what “bringing one’s topknot to the magistrate’s office” means.

[lvm]: It is like going to the consumer-fraud office to market counterfeit goods.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Hahaha—“the consumer-fraud office.”

That is killing me with laughter, hahaha…

If Teacher Qi puts it that way, I will be out of a job from now on, hahaha…

[I Refuse to Use This Name] (replying to [Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: “Teacher Qi: I do not understand what ‘bringing one’s topknot to the magistrate’s office’ means.”): For reference: Buddhist Dictionary—“Bringing One’s Topknot to the Magistrate’s Office.”

[Bringing One’s Topknot to the Magistrate’s Office]

A Chan expression. “Grasping the topknot” originally meant removing one’s helmet after defeat and entering the enemy camp; it could also refer to seizing a criminal by the topknot and binding it securely before execution. “Office” refers to a government office or official authority. The original meaning of “bringing one’s topknot to the magistrate’s office” was to surrender oneself and plead guilty. In Chan circles, it came to refer to a Chan monk’s stupidity being so extreme that he is utterly unaware of what he is doing.

Blue Cliff Record, Case 81 (Taishō 48, p. 207b): “A monk asked Yaoshan, ‘On a level plain of shallow grass, deer roam in herds. How does one shoot the deer among deer?’ (Bringing one’s topknot to the magistrate’s office; presenting one’s head and horns; drawing an arrow from behind one’s head.) Yaoshan said, ‘Watch the arrow!’ The monk threw himself down.”

[Wen Wuding]: This must be understood by taking “koan” in the sense of a case concluded in a court of law.

It can only be understood in terms of the function of extending or raising one’s head. What follows is merely my interpretation, offered for your reference. It also accords with the principle of the “eight functions” in Master Yuanyin’s A Brief Discussion of Realizing the Mind and Seeing One’s True Nature: one must realize it immediately, in the very moment. This too is an example of Chan training through words; for one who has only just realized the mind-ground, it is very difficult—one might say it is like skipping levels.

For reference only.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Thank you!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: I too have already brought my topknot to the magistrate's office.

[Wen Wuding]: What a pity!

You still do not know its source!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Hehe! Then have you not brought your topknot to the magistrate's office?

[Wen Wuding]: Hehe! So what if I have?

With an attitude like yours, you would not understand even after endless kalpas!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Hahaha.

BYBY

[Wen Wuding]: What benefit is there for you in this? Forgive me, but I shall not continue this exchange. I hope you can apply yourself to practice in accordance with the Dharma.

[True Wisdom]: There is more in the original text after this; let lvm present one first.

The introductory instruction says: Only one with the eye can know the thread at the tip of the pole; only a master can discern the activity beyond all conventions. Tell me, what are the thread at the tip of the pole and the activity beyond all conventions? Try presenting one and see.

Who will present one?

Let lvm go first!

Whose introductory instruction is this?

Whose comments are those in the brackets?

[Lianqing]: Let us wait for the next installment.

That is the preface to No. 82.

[lvm]: This is all original text from The Blue Cliff Record.

[82] Dalong's Indestructible Dharma Body

[82] Dalong: The Indestructible Dharma Body

A pointer says: Only one with the eye can know the thread at the tip of the pole; only a master can discern the opportunity beyond the ordinary. But tell me: what are the thread at the tip of the pole and the opportunity beyond the ordinary? Try raising it and see.

[82] Case:

A monk asked Dalong, "The physical body decays. What is the indestructible Dharma body?" [The saying is split into two halves. It is good to separate them.]

Dalong said, "Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is deep-blue like indigo." [The holeless flute strikes the felt clapper; it is a seamless whole that cannot be split apart. A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou.]

If you seek this matter in words, it is like waving a stick to strike the moon—you will get nowhere near it.

The ancients clearly said: "If you wish to attain intimacy, do not bring a question to ask." Why? The question lies within the answer, and the answer lies within the question.

This monk carried in a load of crude confusion and exchanged it for a load of muddled confusion. The very formulation of his question contained no small defect. Had it not been Dalong, how could it have encompassed heaven and earth? He asked in that way, and Dalong answered in that way: they are a single mark, without the slightest shift. It is like releasing a hawk at the sight of a rabbit, or driving a wedge into a hole. Do the teachings of the three vehicles and twelve divisions contain such a moment? It is indeed extraordinary, yet words have no flavor and block people's mouths. Thus it is said: "A single white cloud spans the mouth of the valley; how many returning birds lose their nests at night?"

Some say, "He merely answered off the top of his head." If you understand it that way, you are all fellows who extinguish the lineage of the Hu! You do not realize that each opportunity and circumstance of the ancients was like hammering shackles and smashing locks; every phrase and word was like pure gold and uncut jade. Those with the eye and discernment of a patch-robed monk sometimes hold fast and sometimes let go; illumination and function operate together; person and circumstance are both taken away; both are released and both gathered in; they adapt freely to circumstances. Without great function and great capacity, how could one so envelop heaven and cover earth? It is like a bright mirror set upon its stand: when a Hu comes, a Hu appears; when a Han comes, a Han appears.

This koan resembles the dialogue about the flowered railing, but its meaning differs. The monk's question was unclear, while Dalong's answer was precisely apt. Have you not seen the monk who asked Yunmen, "What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" Yunmen said, "The golden wind reveals the body." This is called arrowpoints meeting head-on.

This monk asked Dalong, "The physical body decays. What is the indestructible Dharma body?" Dalong said, "Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is deep-blue like indigo." It is like saying, "You go toward western Qin; I go toward eastern Lu." Since he proceeds in that way, I do not proceed in that way; this is twice as contrary as Yunmen's. The one who proceeds in that way is easy to see; the one who does not proceed in that way is difficult to see. Dalong's three inches are indeed exceedingly close-knit.

Xuedou's verse says:

The questioner never knew, [unable to distinguish east from west; playing with a thing without knowing its name; buying a cap to match his head.]

And the answerer still did not understand. [Unable to distinguish south from north; replacing the skull; south of the Yangzi and north of the Yangzi.]

The moon is cold, the wind high; [What could compare? Today is precisely this very season. People everywhere have eyes yet have never seen, ears yet have never heard.]

Ancient crags, cold cypresses. [Better still when there is no rain. The holeless flute strikes the felt clapper.]

How laughable, meeting a person of the Way on the road, [One must personally arrive here before it will do. Give me back my staff! They come in crowds like this.]

Not responding with words or silence. [Where do you see Dalong? What could you use to respond to him?]

With a white-jade whip in hand, [From one to seven, all have been bent and broken.]

He smashes every dragon pearl. [Leave them for later people to see. What a pity!]

If he does not smash them, [Letting one move pass. And then going on like this.]

He adds blemishes and flaws. [Why fashion a mud ball? It only becomes more disordered. The offenses reach to heaven.]

The state has its laws; [Those who know the law are afraid. Three thousand blows in the morning, eight hundred in the evening.]

Three thousand offenses. [That is only half of it. Even the karma of falling into the Avīci hell for eighty-four thousand immeasurable kalpas would not yet amount to half of it.]

Xuedou's verse is most skillfully wrought. Earlier, in praising Yunmen's saying, he said, "Since the question has its principle, the answer likewise accords with it." Here, however, he does not speak that way, but says, "The questioner never knew, and the answerer still did not understand." Dalong's answer, cast obliquely, is truly extraordinary. It is plain enough: whoever asked in that way had already incurred failure before asking; yet Dalong's answer was perfectly apt.

In response to the occasion, he appropriately said, "Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is deep-blue like indigo." All of you, how do you now understand Dalong's meaning? The answer, cast obliquely, is truly extraordinary. Therefore Xuedou's verse makes people realize that "the moon is cold, the wind high" encounters "ancient crags, cold cypresses." But tell me, how do you understand his meaning? That is why I just said: the holeless flute strikes the felt clapper.

These four lines alone complete the verse. Yet Xuedou feared that people would turn them into an intellectual interpretation, so he added, "How laughable, meeting a person of the Way on the road, not responding with words or silence." This matter is not

merely seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing; neither is it thought or discrimination. Therefore it is said, “Utterly and precisely without anything accompanying it, moving alone—on what can it rely? Meeting a person of the Way on the road, do not respond with words or silence.” This is Xiangyan’s verse, which Xuedou quotes.

Have you not seen the monk who asked Zhaozhou, “Not responding with words or silence—what, then, should one use to respond?” Zhaozhou said, “Present a lacquer vessel.” This is just like the preceding saying: it does not fall into your emotional dust and conceptual thought. What is it like? “With a white-jade whip in hand, he smashes every dragon pearl.” Thus, when the patriarchal command is enacted, the ten directions are cut off. This is an affair on the blade of a sword; one must have such methods. If not, one wholly betrays all the sages of old. Here one must have not the slightest affair; therein lies the good point—this is the place where one of higher attainment walks.

If they are not smashed, blemishes and flaws are inevitably added, and the leakage is revealed. Ultimately, how is it right? “The state has its laws; three thousand offenses.” Among the five punishments, none of the three thousand offenses is greater than lack of filial piety. Xian means law; zhang means statute. The three thousand offenses are all committed at once. Why is this so? Only because one does not receive people with the fundamental matter. If it were Dalong, he certainly would not do so.

[Bamboozle]: Dalong’s indestructible Dharma body—ha ha, an indestructible Dharma body. Is the Dharma body still something indestructible?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: The Dharma body is indestructible, like vajra, because it is formless and without characteristics.

[Bamboozle]: Ha ha—who knows whether an atomic bomb could destroy this Dharma body?

If you could find this Dharma body, it could certainly be destroyed!

It simply transcends the three realms. How could you strike it?

What worthless thing is vajra that it could be used to compare with the Dharma body?

To say that the Dharma body must still be indestructible is truly to demean the Dharma body.

[I Refuse to Use This Name]: “Pfft!”

[Sudhana]: Why did the preceding response make the venerable one laugh? Please, out of compassion, explain a little.

[I Refuse to Use This Name]: It is late at night and all is quiet. Seeing that the boy’s candle was still burning, I climbed over the wall and entered.

[I Also Refuse to Use This Name]: Late at night, when all is quiet, is just the right time to read!

[I Refuse to Use This Name]: “Pfft!”

At daybreak, go read in the bustling marketplace.

[I Also Refuse to Use This Name]: Do not be muddleheaded!

[Yu Xue]: How are the two characters pronounced? Could you please indicate them in pinyin?

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Mǎnhān.

[Sudhana] (responding to [I Refuse to Use This Name]: “Pfft!”): Thirty strikes on the palm for each of you,

---

then expel them from the academy~

[I Also Refuse to Use This Name]: Alas! You should save those thirty strikes and enjoy them yourself, slowly.

[Mengshan City]: Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is deep-blue like indigo.

Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is deep-blue like indigo ====== true and natural.

“A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou” ==== simple and true.

[shoe]: Brother, you have fallen into the concept of “truth” . . . This is not true seeing of one’s nature.

[Mengshan City]: Doubts in my mind

In my view, the most classic words spoken by Chan masters in koans are simply plain truths. Why, then, do we still exert ourselves so intensely in investigation?

What I see in these plain truths is only the ordinary and the real—nothing else. Why is that?

[Hehe]: To penetrate through is not easy.

An eighty-year-old man and a three-year-old child are not strangers to each other.

Gu Yun (in reply to Mengshancheng : “Doubts in the Mind”): You are neither ordinary nor real.

Mengshancheng : Am I simply being too simple?

Ha-ha, hello, Dharma brother.

Gu Yun : Do not foul your mouth.

Mengshancheng : The mind has not thought.

Gu Yun : Heh-heh, the person and the evidence are all here, yet you still deny it. You deserve a beating.

Mengshancheng : Ha-ha, then strike me—where would you begin?

What evidence is there? They are only words.

Words may indeed be dead, but through the human mind they become harmonious.

The human mind may move, but when it stops at words, it dies.

Gu Yun : There must not be anything separate.

Heh-heh, the case is closed and you still cry injustice. Dead.

Mengshancheng : The mind has not thought.

If the mind has not moved, how do you know that you have been wronged?

Ha-ha.

One link locks into another; closing a case only settles what is immediately before one's eyes.

Truly wronged to death.

Arabic Numerals (in reply to Mengshancheng : “Doubts in the Mind”): There is not much to the Buddhadharma—being ordinary and real is the great Way. Your only doubt is that you do not dare to take responsibility for these words.

Mengshancheng : One gives rise to ten thousand; the ten thousand return to one.

Ha-ha.

What is there to take responsibility for? What is there not to take responsibility for?

Everything is better kept simple!

What is real dissolves in the mind and becomes emptiness.

What is false arises in the mind and becomes existence.

Ha-ha,

Emptiness is not emptiness; existence is not existence.

It cannot be spoken of; there is no way to say it.

Arabic Numerals : The road every Chan master must travel—advance one step beyond the hundred-foot pole—return to the ordinary.

Onlooker (in reply to Arabic Numerals : "There is not much to the Buddhadharma—being ordinary and real is the great Way. Your only doubt is that you do not dare to take responsibility for these words."): His only doubt is that he does not dare to take responsibility for these words?

What if one does not dare? And what if one does?

Arabic Numerals : Take responsibility first, then come back and ask.

Onlooker : What does this have to do with daring or not daring? Hee-hee.

Reality (in reply to Mengshancheng : "Doubts in the Mind"): Perhaps Buddha-recitation would suit you better.

Iron Broom : "A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou"?

Long Yun: "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream waters are deep blue. [A holeless flute strikes a felt clapper; the whole is indivisible and cannot be split apart. A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou.]"

What is the meaning of Chan Master Yuanwu's marginal note here: "A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou"?

Wen Wuding : As for this, there is one perfectly plain sentence.

If you do not understand the meaning beneath these words, that shows you do not know. What use is there in chattering on about it here? Once you open up your Original Face, you will naturally and gradually understand the principle of these words.

Bamboozle (in reply to Iron Broom : "A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou"?): A donkey comes from the head of the millstone, then goes on to its tail.

Integration : Statements 1, 2, and 3.

Statements 1, 2, and 3.

Long Yun: "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream waters are deep blue. [A holeless flute strikes a felt clapper; the whole is indivisible and cannot be split apart. A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou.]"

What is the meaning of Chan Master Yuanwu's marginal note here: "A man comes from Chenzhou, yet goes to Xuzhou"?

1. There is nowhere from which one comes, and nowhere to which one goes.

2. Zhang San comes; Li Si goes.

3. The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream waters are deep blue.

If you recognize the first statement, you still cannot save yourself.

If you recognize the second statement, you can just barely save yourself.

If you recognize the third statement, that is simply how it is.

Wen Wuding : This can no longer be discussed amusingly! One can only stand dumbfounded! Heh-heh-ha-ha, what a heap of it!

Wen Wuding : From your very phrase, "Zhang San comes; Li Si goes," one can tell from whose mouth it was spoken.

If it comes from the mouth of an awakened person, it is a marvelous saying. Have you not heard, “There are no false words from the mouth of one with clear eyes”? “Afflictions are bodhi” does not depart from this principle either. Take the words of Chan Master Zhaozhou—“east gate, west gate, south gate, north gate”: what is extraordinary about them? Yet they are marvelous sayings! But if, at present, you interpret them wildly and speak nonsense here, you are like one counting grains of sand in the sea, long sunk in the mud, yet still thinking yourself brilliant. How lamentable!

Integration : Zhang Shangying was not a patriarch. His understanding may serve as a reference, but it is not sufficient as a standard.

Chan historical accounts say that Zhang Shangying could see through everyone under heaven in his time, yet he alone could not see through Yunmen. He and the patriarch could not join hands in shared delight. We can understand this by comparing two other examples. In relation to his teacher Baizhang, Huangbo could make Baizhang say, “Only when one’s understanding surpasses one’s teacher may one be examined for transmission; if one’s understanding merely equals the teacher’s, one diminishes half the teacher’s virtue.” Linji, speaking of his teacher, said, “It turns out that Huangbo’s Buddhadharma is not much after all.”

Zhang Shangying had reached the point where he could save himself. It was natural that he faced death with some ease, but one cannot say that his understanding was without flaws.

Wen Wuding : Of course his understanding was “without flaws”! To say that his understanding had flaws is merely to say that the gentleman’s views—

Here, one may indeed miss by a hair and err by a thousand miles!

Wen Wuding : If one says that his view has “flaws,” that is the exclusive patent of Mr. Integration .

This “patent” is a thorny one! Can one really be complacent and perfectly at ease about it?

Sudhana (replying to Iron Broom : “A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou”?): ~

A person comes from Chenzhou,

=== Where there are no traces, do not hide yourself.

yet goes on to Xuzhou

=== Where one hides oneself, there are no traces.

Faith in the Mahāyāna (replying to Iron Broom : “A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou”?): Originally there is not a single thing, yet one seeks a direction amid forms.

lvm (replying to Iron Broom : “A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou”?): If you want to discuss its meaning:

Longyun: Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream water is deep blue. A holeless flute strikes a felt clapper; it is an undivided whole that cannot be split apart. A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou.

What is the meaning of Chan Master Yuanwu’s marginal note here: “A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou”?

* The meaning lies here: “The physical body decays. What is the indestructible dharmakāya?”

* Here is another passage with the same meaning:

In the chapter on Chan Master Congyue of Tuṣita Monastery in Longxing Prefecture, fascicle 29 of Records Pointing to the Moon, following the passage, “In his room, the master set forth three sayings to test students. First: ‘Part the grass and observe the wind, solely seeking to see one’s nature. Where, right now, is the nature of this venerable one?’ Second: ‘Only by recognizing one’s own nature can one be freed from birth and death. When the light of the eyes falls to the ground, how does one become free?’ Third: ‘Once free from birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?’” it further records:

“Zhang Wujin (Zhang Shangying) answered the three questions with verses. The first says: ‘Dense summer trees resound with cuckoos; the sun breaks through drifting clouds, and the universe is clear. Do not ask Zeng Can about Zeng Xi; filial sons have always avoided speaking their fathers’ names.’ The second says: ‘In the human world, the ghostly messenger arrives with his summons; in heaven, the flowers on the crown are already fading. What an excellent moment to turn oneself around—do not let old Yama know of it casually.’ The third says: ‘Drums and music attend the wife of Li Da from the eastern village; in the western wind over the open fields, tears soak her clothes. On the southern bank, with green reeds and red smartweed, she has become Zhang San sitting at his fishing rock.’” (p. 608a)

* “The physical body decays. What is the indestructible dharmakāya?”

* “Once free from birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?”

* “A person comes from Chenzhou, yet goes on to Xuzhou.”

* After Li Da dies, “On the southern bank, with green reeds and red smartweed, she has become Zhang San sitting at his fishing rock.”

gentleLion : If there is coming and going, then one is still within birth and death.

In fact, beginning Buddhist practitioners should honestly build a solid foundation.

Without a foundation, one cannot realize that right view without meditative experiences is empty wisdom.

Meditative experiences without right view are not right realization.

lvm : Perhaps Zhang Shangying did not mean this.

Iron Broom : Agreed. The coming and going here do not mean “still being within birth and death.”

This is because the third verse composed by Chancellor Zhang concerns the third of the Chan master’s three barriers:

Chan Master Congyue of Tuṣita: “Third: ‘Once free from birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?’”

Zhang Shangying: “Third: ‘Drums and music attend the wife of Li Da from the eastern village; in the western wind over the open fields, tears soak her clothes. On the southern bank, with green reeds and red smartweed, she has become Zhang San sitting at his fishing rock.’”

Thus, this refers to, after one has “freed oneself from birth and death,” “where does one go?” One is already no longer within birth and death.

gentleLion : What determines whether one is within birth and death or not?

Wen Wuding (replying to gentleLion : What determines whether one is within birth and death or not?): Forgive me for butting in, but it certainly cannot be determined by a sharp tongue, a thick skin, and an empty belly.

It depends on practice having reached the mark! It depends on one’s understanding being thorough! It depends on practicing heart esotericism and opening up one’s original nature!

Lianqing (replying to gentleLion : What determines whether one is within birth and death or not?): Let us set aside what determines whether one is within birth and death or not;

If there is something that “determines it,” one is certainly still within birth and death.

gentleLion : I have been watching this question of yours for a long time.

Forgive me for speaking frankly, but the carefree ease and great freedom that you take yourself to possess is actually a notion of self.

Nothing whatsoever lies outside the dharmas of causes and conditions; whatever view arises within this is inverted.

Lianqing : Thank you for your concern, brother. Please continue to instruct me.

I do not think I have ever said anything like that, haha. But if I have given people the impression that I regard myself as carefree, at ease, and greatly free, thereby only increasing their dislike and displeasure, that is indeed not good. Your younger brother is mischievous; I hope you will be tolerant.

As the saying goes, the four winds are easy to guard against, yet the four winds are hard to guard against. I should always reflect on this. Hehe.

gentleLion : Brother, you are overthinking it.

What I wish to point out is not your style of “regarding yourself as carefree, at ease, and greatly free.” In fact, I have never paid any attention to that.

What I wish to point out is that one’s Original Face is easily grasped as a self; this is a deeply rooted habit of us ordinary beings.

Yongshou Tongzi (replying to gentleLion : What determines whether one is within birth and death or not?): Zhang Shangying’s conduct at the time of his death determines it.

gentleLion : Then we will wait until the final hour arrives and see the actual evidence.

Why does that sound a little like gambling…?

Wen Wuding : “Gambling.”

It is an uncertain course of action, whereas cultivating the Heart-of-Heart Dharma entails assured practice of the mind. How can the two possibly be mentioned in the same breath?

Yongshou Tongzi : The Buddha said: “It can eliminate all suffering; it is true and not false.”

How can it be called gambling? The patriarchs’ practice of mind has all verified this point.

gentleLion : Leaving aside the patriarchs, let us speak only of ordinary practitioners.

Wen Wuding : What is the difference between ordinary people and patriarchs? Is it not simply awakening and non-awakening?

stone : If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata.

Whose say-so is needed? What must one have the final say over? Why must one have the final say?

If one has the thought of having the final say, it will surely be difficult to do so.

Auspiciousness to you, Dharma brother :)

Wen Wuding : Forgive me for asking you a question, sir.

This quotation from the Diamond Sūtra—“If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata”—is it a realm you have personally realized, or are you merely reciting it for amusement?

stone : What do you think it is?

All that has form is illusory. If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata.

Amitābha Buddha.

Wen Wuding : Let me say a couple of things you may not like to hear.

You are like this:

1/ Being turned around by sūtras and treatises!

1/ Toiling over idle talk of names and terms!

1/ Entering the sea to count sand, vainly trapping yourself!

1/ Mixed poisons enter the mind! Like oil mixed into flour, they are hard to shake off. I urge you to consult the book Sea of Miscellaneous Poisons in the Chan School.

stone : Thank you for your concern, sir.

All that has form is illusory...

Forgive me; I will not reply further.

Amitābha Buddha. Take care.

Wen Wuding : I wish you an early realization of this great matter; I await it with anticipation!

I respectfully await further discussion.

Sudhana (responding to Iron Broom : "I agree; the coming and going here does not mean 'still within birth and death.'"): To read Chan poetry, one must not only understand its meaning, but also understand its lines.

lvm : Actually, this involves a most fundamental question:

Is birth and death inherently existent, or inherently nonexistent?

rj : Heh heh, heh heh...

How has Teacher lvm also become so unserious?

Interesting.

gentleLion : Yes.

In that case, is LVM inherently existent or inherently nonexistent?

All dharmas are equal.

lvm : Ha ha! If you inherently exist, then I inherently exist; if you are inherently nonexistent, then I am inherently nonexistent. Let us stop arguing.

Sudhana : Heh heh, do not frighten the fluffy little lion.

lvm : ^o^

gentleLion : I thought you had scared him away.

We were just preparing a victory banquet, and now you have come back, heh. :)

Sudhana : If you inherently exist, then he inherently exists; if you are inherently nonexistent, then he is inherently nonexistent.

Yongshou Tongzi : If you scared him away, then you scared him away; if you did not scare him away, then you did not scare him away. Heh heh.

Sudhana : ^o^

Heh heh.

Are you Comrade Yongshou?

Dingling (responding to lvm : “Actually, this involves a most fundamental question:”): Mountain flowers bloom like brocade; stream water is limpid as indigo.

But why do books always say that birth and death are inherently nonexistent?

Truth : Birth and death, in their very essence, are all empty and utterly unobtainable.

gentleLion : Even the “one who” is absent; where, then, can one seek an essence? How could there further be any talk of inherent emptiness?

Dingling (responding to lvm : “Actually, this involves a most fundamental question:”): This youngster raises his hand.

To call it existent or nonexistent is both incorrect. But why do books always say that birth and death are inherently nonexistent?

lvm : Why do books always say that birth and death are inherently nonexistent? Because you are always clinging to birth and death as inherently existent.

gentleLion : The reason I always cling to birth and death as inherently existent

---

is a kind of inertia—habitual tendencies. I cannot help it.

lvm : Is not practice precisely about removing inertia, eliminating habitual tendencies, and recovering one’s Original Face?

gentleLion : Is there no inertia in the Original Face?

If there is no inertia, does that mean one has the absolute freedom to go wherever one wishes, or to accomplish whatever one wishes?

:)

lvm : Oh! Although we use the same word, “inertia,” our understandings differ considerably!

stone (in reply to gentleLion : Is there no inertia in the Original Face?): In the Original Face, there is no substantial reality of either “existence” or “nonexistence.”

Yet the names “existence,” “nonexistence,” and “inertia” are not lacking.

This “I” is not at ease, but that does not obstruct the original ease. :)

This “I” is already an empty name. To search further within this empty name for existence or nonexistence is no different from driving nails into empty space.

Just a personal view, elder brother—please do not laugh at it. :)

gentleLion : As expected of stone.

From beginning to end, you have been practicing “the art of formlessness,” heh.

Please do not laugh.

stone : You are too kind, elder brother.

I had originally thought that “stone” would not enter your Dharma eye. I never expected this... heh heh.

Amitābha Buddha. Take care. :)

[Sudhana] (in response to [lvm]: “In fact, a most fundamental question is involved here:”): I have tried to render it freely according to two interpretations. I would appreciate your corrections:

Chan Master Doushuai Congyue:

“When one is free of birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?”

Zhang Wujin replied in verse:

The drum procession gathers for Li Da’s wife in the eastern village;

In the western wind over the open fields, tears soak her clothes.

On the southern bank of the river, amid green reeds and red smartweed,

He has become Zhang San, seated at a fishing rock.

First rendering:

Among the scattered graves in the desolate countryside, the bleak wind blows in gusts;

There, the poor widow grieves without end.

The grass upon the grave has not yet turned green,

But does she know

That the master of this lonely tomb

Has long since become Zhang San,

And, on a riverbank of green reeds and red smartweed,

Is once again fishing?

Second rendering:

The affairs of the world are impermanent, like the moon in water and flowers in a mirror;

The gathering and dispersal of the four elements are likewise like a city of gandharvas.

People deluded by the illusory appearances of the myriad things,

Are like village women,

Forever grieving over pointless loss.

But who can reveal

Who, beyond this deluded drama of birth and death, sorrow and joy,

Is it

Who, on a riverbank of green reeds and red smartweed,

Alone.

Sits.

Fishes.

On the rock?

lvm : Break through this deluded drama, and one knows that there is originally no birth and death.

When the World-Honored One first attained the Way, he exclaimed, “How wondrous!”

“How wondrous, how wondrous! All sentient beings throughout the earth possess the Tathāgata’s wisdom and virtuous characteristics. Yet, because of deluded thoughts and attachment, they cannot realize them. If they are free of deluded thoughts, pure wisdom, natural wisdom, wisdom requiring no teacher, will naturally appear before them.”

“All sentient beings throughout the earth possess the Tathāgata’s wisdom and virtuous characteristics”—there is originally no birth and death.

“Yet, because of deluded thoughts and attachment, they cannot realize them”—that is the deluded drama of which you speak.

Zhang Shangying had broken through the deluded drama of birth and death. When he saw the Chan master ask, “When one is free of birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?” he knew that the master was asking about nirvāṇa. Almost everyone can say, “Ni means no birth, pan means no death; nirvāṇa is neither arising nor ceasing.” They may say it, yet still stubbornly cling, deep down, to birth and death as truly existent. Zhang Shangying had already broken through the deluded drama of birth and death. Seeing the master ask in this way, he vividly presented the realm of nirvāṇa.

Someone upstairs mentioned resonance of meaning. Those who secretly cling to birth and death as truly existent can also say, “Birth and death are nirvāṇa.” But Zhang Shangying’s lines—“The drum procession gathers for Li Da’s wife in the eastern village; / In the western wind over the open fields, tears soak her clothes. / On the southern bank of the river, amid green reeds and red smartweed, / He has become Zhang San, seated at a fishing rock”—surely carry more resonance than such ungrounded parroting as “birth and death are nirvāṇa.”

gentleLion (in reply to lvm : Break through this deluded drama, and one knows that there is originally no birth and death.): A few thoughts

---

“All sentient beings throughout the earth possess the Tathāgata’s wisdom and virtuous characteristics”—there is originally no birth and death.

>>> This means that all possess Buddha-nature, all can become seeds of Buddhahood, and all can attain true fruition. (Although they have not yet become Buddhas, manifested the thirty-two marks, or accomplished the Tathāgata’s virtues.)

It is like knowing that milk has the potential to become butter: though it has not yet become butter, it can ultimately become butter—if properly refined.

It is like knowing that ore has the nature of gold: though it has not yet become gold, it can ultimately be refined into gold—if properly refined.

It is like seeing the eastern sky begin to whiten: though one has not yet seen the sun, one knows that light is near. (No great effort is needed.)

==========

“Yet, because of deluded thoughts and attachment, they cannot realize them”—that is the deluded drama of which you speak.

>>> It is solely because of deluded thoughts and attachment. At the most fundamental level, it is attachment to self.

>>> If one can refrain from clinging to self and gradually let go of attachment to self, one can accomplish the dharmakāya.

[Lianqing] (in response to [lvm]: “Break through this delusive drama, and you will know that there is fundamentally no birth and death.”): The final two paragraphs are quite good.

stone (in reply to lvm : Break through this deluded drama, and one knows that there is originally no birth and death.): Teacher, could it also be put this way:

Within birth and death, there is neither birth nor death.

All inverted deluded thoughts and attachments to birth and death are like the small images on a strip of film. Originally, each is separate and does not form an image. But once someone moves it, all kinds of scenes begin to “move” (arise).

What is meant by realization is that one need not wait for the scenes to stop (die); one realizes it right then. At that point, to speak of existence or nonexistence is mere idle talk.

lvm : “All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, dew, and lightning; one should contemplate them thus.”

gentleLion (in reply to lvm : Break through this deluded drama, and one knows that there is originally no birth and death.): After knowing that there is originally no birth and death, who benefits the most?

lvm : Oh? If even birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent, are gain and loss fundamentally existent?

Sudhana (in reply to lvm : “Break through this delusive drama, and you will know that birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent.”): Just as you say, Teacher,

---

Chan Master Congyue of Doushuai:

Once free of birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?

Zhang Wujin replied in verse:

As the drums sound, Li Da’s wife of East Village is borne away;

In the western wind on the open plain, tears soak her robe.

By the southern bank of the river, amid blue reeds and red smartweed,

She becomes Zhang San, seated on a fishing rock.

The Chan master asks where one goes in birth and death;

the layman answers in terms of the cyclical flow of arising and ceasing. Following the thread of the words, he falls into a fixed pattern and is confined by the Chan master’s barrier.

Integration (in reply to Sudhana : “If you are fundamentally existent, then it is fundamentally existent; if you are fundamentally nonexistent, then it is fundamentally nonexistent.”): Sudhana has fallen into conceptual interpretation.

You cannot first say that it is fundamentally nonexistent and then say that it depends on you; the two statements do not accord. This is a leakage in wording.

Moreover, Sengzhao, the master foremost in understanding emptiness, criticized the theory of fundamental nonexistence in his Treatise on the Non-True Empty. Ordinary people easily mistake emptiness for fundamental nonexistence.

This is a leakage in view.

With these two leakages, one can no longer smile foolishly; one must become alert.

Sudhana : To investigate the Chan school by means of doctrinal analysis is basically like carving a mark on a boat to find a lost sword.

One further reminder:

What was said earlier about fundamental existence and fundamental nonexistence is precisely not fundamental existence or fundamental nonexistence, much less a matter of falling into emptiness.

Integration : Note: the three leakages are a method of the Caodong Chan school; circling from “birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent” to “it depends on you” is precisely a doctrinal method.

Integration : In Chan-school replies, one must all the more avoid contradicting oneself. Is “birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent” an investigation of the Chan school “without relying on doctrinal analysis”?

Sometimes two statements may be made in different situations, but when they become consecutive lines at the same time, one falls into conceptual interpretation.

Sudhana : Hehe, perhaps it is still because you did not read the posts carefully enough,

---

No one has ever posited that “birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent,” nor has anyone circled from here to there.

Integration : No one has posited that “birth and death are fundamentally nonexistent”? Zhang’s three verses discuss it outright—hehe.

Sudhana : If you have studied the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka,

I suggest that you might consider looking from the standpoint of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka,

and carefully reread the posts here concerning fundamental existence and fundamental nonexistence.

Onlooker (in reply to Sudhana : “To investigate the Chan school by means of doctrinal analysis is basically like carving a mark on a boat to find a lost sword.”): Fundamentally nonexistent, fundamentally existent; fundamentally existent, fundamentally nonexistent. Ha ha, heh heh; heh heh, ha ha…

Sudhana : The spring wind over the river country cannot stir them; partridges cry amid the deep flowers.

The spring wind over the river country cannot stir them; partridges cry amid the deep flowers.

When the waves rise three tiers high, fish become dragons; fools still bail water from the pond at night.

Onlooker : Ha ha, heh heh, hey hey, hmm hmm.

The spring wind rises again in the southern land; cranes cry amid the deep mountains.

With wind fierce and waves high, turtles become dragons; corpses stare blankly at the pond at night.

gentleLion (in reply to Integration : “Sudhana has fallen into conceptual interpretation.”): Though both are called fundamental nonexistence, their actual difference can be great.

Integration : The crucial point is that, between consecutive lines at the same time, one cannot speak that way.

Yongshou Tongzi : Sigh, I’ll have a sesame flatbread too.

Integration (in reply to Sudhana : “Just as you say, Teacher,”): Sudhana is approaching the koan through doctrinal analysis and the thread of the words; the direction is not quite right.

“The affairs of the world are impermanent, like water, the moon, flowers in a mirror;

the gathering and dispersal of the four elements are likewise like a city of gandharvas.

People deluded by the illusory appearances of the myriad phenomena

are like village women,

forever grieving over meaningless losses.

But who can reveal

that beyond this delusive drama of birth and death, sorrow and joy,

who it is

on the riverbank amid blue reeds and red smartweed?”

“The Chan master asks where one goes in birth and death;

the layman answers in terms of the cyclical flow of arising and ceasing. Following the thread of the words, he falls into a fixed pattern and is confined by the Chan master’s barrier.”

To view it this way is to have too many shackles; one's eyes are obscured.

Sudhana : Please pay attention to the preceding and following context.

This translation of the poem is based on two prior premises:

First, the posts contain at least more than one interpretation of this text. They are each expressed here in modern language mainly to show that different interpretations are indeed possible; which one an individual favors is not the most important matter.

Second, it is a free translation.

Since it is a free translation, and of poetry at that, much in the original will inevitably be lost or even altered. Therefore, a free translation certainly cannot be read as the original work. Those with some grounding in classical literature, and with a fuller understanding of Chan masters' language and intent, are advised to read the original directly.

Moreover, discerning the thread of words in a koan and following that thread are not the same thing, are they?

One's thinking on this matter should at least be more meticulous.

Integration : Sudhana has a leakage in emotion and also fails to understand that focusing on free translation and the thread of words is work in a ghost cave.

No matter how you freely translate it, and no matter whether you follow the thread of the words or not.

Also, why not take the advantage of calling me "little brother"? Hehe. Of course I yield it to you—I am the ox in the east household and the horse in the west household.

Sudhana now has all three leakages.

Sudhana : Hehe, this time it really is up to you.

[Integration]: Shancai's avoidance is also a way, but it is not a lasting way. To sum up:

Shancai's avoidance is also a way, but it is not a lasting way. To sum up.

Shancai suggested rereading the relevant posts. At Shancai's request, I shall summarize them.

At first, two online participants, A and B, were discussing whether birth and death inherently exist or inherently do not exist.

A: Actually, this involves a most fundamental question: Do birth and death inherently exist, or inherently not exist?

A: Break through this delusive drama (that is, Shancai's free rendering), and one will know that birth and death inherently do not exist.

B: If that is so, does LVM inherently exist or inherently not exist?

Shancai, offering a reply on A's behalf: If you inherently exist, then he inherently exists; if you inherently do not exist, then he inherently does not exist.

On the basis of this exchange, Integration calls Shancai's reply "turning 'birth and death inherently do not exist' back into 'it depends on you.'" Shancai says that no one has ever posited that "birth and death inherently do not exist," and that there was no circling from here to there. This does not accord with the facts.

Since Shancai offered a reply on another's behalf, then, although he himself never said "birth and death inherently do not exist," he must also bear the corresponding responsibility for saying it. Even if he argues, "Earlier I spoke of inherent existence and inherent nonexistence, which are precisely not inherent existence and inherent nonexistence; still less does this amount to falling into emptiness," this is merely wordplay. It is like someone saying, "Shancai is very hypocritical," and then arguing, "Earlier I said 'hypocritical,' which is precisely not hypocrisy; still less does it amount to insulting Shancai." Would Shancai inwardly accept such an argument?

Shancai has the courage to offer replies on others' behalf, yet lacks the breadth of spirit to assume responsibility. He has gone around and around with "inherent existence and inherent nonexistence," and his "free rendering" is also steeped in Buddhist philosophical implications; yet he insists on implying that he does not study the Chan school from the standpoint of "doctrinal

principle.” His gaze is fixed on the “thread of discourse”; he takes “not falling into the thread of discourse” as a fixed rule (that is, a nest), yet insists that he is far removed from “nests.” All this is verbal leakage marked by a strong spirit of self-contradiction and a lack of self-reflection.

Verbal leakage itself is not much of a problem if it occurs only occasionally; it merely means that one's practice of sustaining awakening is not yet mature. But if one fundamentally lacks such vigilance, the problem is more serious. That Shancai still does not understand after being reminded shows that this lack of vigilance is rather serious. A serious lack of vigilance necessarily also entails leakage in views and emotional leakage.

Shancai's response is avoidance; of course, that too is one way. If avoidance is for the sake of cultivating vigilance, it is acceptable. But if avoidance is simply for the sake of obtaining tranquility, then in fact it amounts to falling into emptiness.

[Onlookers] (following [Integration]: Shancai's avoidance is also a way, but it is not a lasting way. To sum up): A piece of chewing gum stuck to Shancai's backside, thoroughly amusing all the onlookers.

Hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee.....

[No Way] ([Integration]: Shancai's avoidance is also a way, but it is not a lasting way. To sum up): Hahaha, Shancai is far craftier than a lion; he is not easy to keep an eye on.

[Curious]: One likes to stir things up, while the other does not. They are not the same.

[Heart Pearl]: One has an impure mind-ground; the other has a pure mind-ground.

[Curious]: Wrong. One of your eyes is pure, and the other is defiled.

[Heart Pearl]: That's right! One eye was defiled by him.

[Curious]: Hehe, after you wash it, what if it gets defiled again next time?

[Heart Pearl]: Then wash it again, hehe.

[Curious]: Hah! So your eyes need washing just as often as my feet do.

[Heart Pearl]: It seems your eyes have grown on the soles of your feet.

[Curious]: It seems your feet have grown over your eyes.

[Integration] (following [No Way]: Hahaha, Shancai is far craftier than a lion; he is not easy to keep an eye on): Shancai's petty cleverness obscures his “eyes,” making them even harder to open than a lion's.

[Truth] (following [Shancai]: I have tried freely rendering it in two ways; please correct me): Let me introduce an article that may help everyone understand.

---

http //www dharma com tw/M2GbFar htm

[Truth]: Find the article under “Selected Readings from the Classics / Śūraṅgama Sūtra / (5–8).”

[Ermazi] (following [lvm]: Speaking of implications:): Zhang Shangying's first two verses are both good; only the third verse is somewhat inappropriate.

The life faculty has not yet been exhausted. Brother LVM, how could you let him off?

[rj]: Heh heh, heh heh...

Why must it be exhausted? Old Ma is especially humorous today.

Heh heh, heh heh.

[Ermazi]: Heh heh.... rj....

Hee hee. Knowing that it is not exhausted and insisting that it be exhausted are two different matters.

You have come to muddle things up again—just as always.

[rj]: Hehe~

Drums unite the wife of Li Da in the eastern village,

In the western wind over the open wilderness, tears soak her robe.

Green reeds and red smartweed along the southern bank of the river,

Yet Zhang San sits fishing on the rocky shore.

{Hee hee. Knowing that it is not exhausted and insisting that it be exhausted are two different matters.

You have come to muddle things up again—just as always.}

[Integration] (following [Ermazi]: Zhang Shangying's first two verses are both good; only the third verse is somewhat inappropriate): The third verse is too “literal.” The first two verses are clear enough as well.

[lvm] (following [Ermazi]: Zhang Shangying's first two verses are both good; only the third verse is somewhat inappropriate): But some say the third verse is the best.

[Lianqing]: Haha, it will be better after a little touching up and revision:

First: You push aside the grass and observe the wind, seeking only to see your true nature. Where, at this very moment, is your true nature?

#Drums unite the wife of Li Da in the eastern village,

Second: Only upon recognizing one's own nature can one escape birth and death. When the light in your eyes falls to the ground, how will you escape?

#In the western wind over the open wilderness, tears soak her robe.

Third: Once you have escaped birth and death, you will know where you are going. When the four elements separate, where will you go?”

#Green reeds and red smartweed along the southern bank of the river,

Fourth: Is this not precisely the place where Congyue Wujin practiced above and beyond?

#Yet Zhang San sits fishing on the rocky shore.

[Lianqing]: Haha, thank you, teachers, for your guidance. This time, this chatterbox old woman has put her hand to it and turned it into a short play.

First: “Brushing aside the grass to observe the wind, one seeks only to see one’s nature. Where, at this very moment, is Your Reverence’s nature?”

#The drum joins with Li Da’s wife in the eastern village. (What talk is this of east and west?)

Second: “Only upon recognizing one’s own nature can one be freed from birth and death. When the light of the eyes falls to the ground, how is one to be freed?”

#In the western wind, tears stain one’s garments in the open wilderness. (555, even the old monk’s head has fallen off!)

Third: “Once freed from birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?”

#Green reeds and red smartweed on the southern bank of the river. [Though people under heaven have eyes, they have never seen; though they have ears, they have never heard.]

Teacher LVM clapped his hands and laughed: “Could this be the questioner’s conduct on the higher path?”

Teacher Sudhana accompanied him on the qin: “#Yet it becomes Zhang San sitting on a fishing rock.”

Then the string suddenly snapped with a twang, startling the birds into flight in all directions. The two could not help laughing loudly; they rose and returned to the house.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: I'll adapt it too.

First: "Brushing aside the grass to observe the wind, one seeks only to see one's nature. Where, at this very moment, is Your Reverence's nature?"

A: Set aside where it is for the moment. Tell me instead: what, at this very moment, do you call nature?

B: Hahaha! The drum joins with Li Da's wife in the eastern village.

C: What talk is this of east and west?

Second: "Only upon recognizing one's own nature can one be freed from birth and death. When the light of the eyes falls to the ground, how is one to be freed?"

A: Bah! For such an excellent spiritual teacher to say something like that—another offense will not be tolerated.

B: Heh heh! In the western wind, tears stain one's garments in the open wilderness.

C: 555, the old monk's head has been buried as well.

Third: "Once freed from birth and death, one knows where one is going. When the four elements separate, where does one go?"

A: Look at my palm.

B: Hahaha! Green reeds and red smartweed on the southern bank of the river—yet it becomes Zhang San sitting on a fishing rock.

C: Heaven knows, earth knows, you know, I know—KATZ!

Little girl Lianqing watched for a long while but still could not make anything of it.

She kept wondering to herself: "Could this be the conduct of one walking the higher path?"

Suddenly she shouted, "KATZ!" startling the birds into flight in all directions. The four burst into laughter, then each got up and returned to the house.

[Lianqing]: Haha.

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Indeed! Indeed!

[Lianqing]: You rascal:

You tricked me into coming here!!

[Lay Practitioner Yongguang]: Hee hee!

That is simply how it is.

[Er Mazi] (replying to [lvm]: "But some people say the third verse is the best."): That is only natural….

Everyone sees it differently. Mazi thinks Brother Qi will not let this pass.

This verse falls far short of "In the eastern household, become an ox; in the western household, become a horse."

[lvm]: Isn't this precisely "In the eastern household, become an ox; in the western household, become a horse"?

The drum joins with Li Da's wife in the eastern village; in the western wind, tears stain one's garments in the open wilderness—becoming an ox in the eastern household;

Green reeds and red smartweed on the southern bank of the river; yet it becomes Zhang San sitting on a fishing rock—becoming a horse in the western household.

[Er Mazi]: Perhaps Mazi has been too talkative….

But the horse in the western household in the original text does not necessarily have to wait until the ox in the eastern household has finished before it can become a horse, does it?

[xifana]: Praise! A true man has aspirations soaring to the heavens; he goes forth, covering heaven and earth.

[lvm]: Oh! It's nothing, it's nothing. Just chatting, just chatting.

[gentleLion]: Watching you two trade blows while carrying your baggage on your backs is really not satisfying.

Better to arouse bodhicitta, put down the baggage, and have a good, unrestrained bout.

Then everyone can enjoy the spectacle and benefit from it.

[xkyq]: The speaker has no intention, but the listener takes it to heart.

[Lianqing] (replying to [lvm]: "As for the meaning…"): Thank you, Teacher. May I also ask what the saying "flower-and-medicine railing" means?

Having read Broom's exchange with the teacher, I too will join the fun and add a few strokes.

A monk asked Dalong: "The physical body decays. What is the indestructible dharmakāya?" —A man comes from Chenzhou,

Dalong said: "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream water is deep blue." —Yet he goes on to Xuzhou.

*The meaning lies here: "The physical body decays. What is the indestructible dharmakāya?"

#The question is in the answer, and the answer is in the question.

Please correct me, Teacher.

Also, regarding the commentary preceding Xuedou's verse, there are a few accounts I cannot quite settle:

1. What is the saying "flower-and-medicine railing"?

2. A monk asked Yunmen, "What is it like when the tree withers and the leaves fall?" Yunmen said, "The golden wind reveals the body in its entirety." This is called arrowpoints meeting.

#This resembles what the old master once said: Zhongdao then asked, "The moment you stir your mind, the dusts and toils arise first. What then?" (Although buddha-nature is always radiating light, the moment one stirs a thought, the luminosity of one's intrinsic nature is obscured and cannot be seen. How is this to be explained?) Chan Master Qian gave a fierce shout: "That too is the ocean-seal radiating light!"

This monk asked Dalong, "The physical body decays; what is the indestructible dharmakāya?" Dalong said, "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade; the stream water is deep blue." This is like, "You go toward Western Qin, while I go toward Eastern Lu."

#This is like asking, "Where will the monk go after a hundred years?" Answer: "In the eastern household, become an ox; in the western household, become a horse."

But why is it said to be the exact opposite of Yunmen's by a factor of two? How is that account calculated? Hehe.

[lvm]: For the saying "flower-and-medicine railing," please consult Case 39 of the Blue Cliff Record.

[Lianqing]: A monk asked Yunmen, "What is the pure dharmakāya?" Yunmen said, "A flower-and-medicine railing."

[Thirty-Nine] The case:

A monk asked Yunmen, "What is the pure dharmakāya?" [Upon a heap of rubbish one sees a sixteen-foot golden body. What is all this mottling and patchiness?]

Yunmen said, “A flower-and-medicine railing.” [The question was not genuine, and the answer came crudely. If he hits it, he hits it; the crooked does not conceal the straight.]

The monk said, “What if one simply goes on in this way?” [Swallowing a whole date in one gulp. Why play the fool?]

Yunmen said: “A golden-haired lion.” [Both praise and blame; taking both together and making the mistake work—what kind of mental activity is this!]

[Yongshou Tongzi]: The flower-and-herb railing is the lavatory.

[Yongshou Tongzi] (responding to [lvm]’s remark about the flower-and-herb railing; see case 39 of the Blue Cliff Record): Does this mean that the dharmakāya pervades all places?

[lvm]: Yet the flower-and-herb railing is not necessarily a pure place.

[Lianqing]: I pick up a willow twig,

[83] Yunmen: South, Clouds; North, Rain

[Eighty-Three] Yunmen: Clouds in the South, Rain in the North

[Eighty-Three] The Case:

Yunmen addressed the assembly, saying: “An ancient Buddha communes with a dew pillar—what level of activity is this?” [No connection from three thousand miles away. Shattered into seven or eight pieces.]

He answered for himself: [When someone in the east house dies, those in the west house help mourn. The mark of oneness cannot be apprehended.]

Clouds arise over the southern mountain, [Heaven and earth cannot behold it. A knife cannot cut into it.]

and rain falls over the northern mountain. [Not a single drop is bestowed. Half in Henan, half in Hebei.]

Great Master Yunmen produced more than eighty accomplished teachers. More than seventy years after his passing, his stupa was opened and he appeared exactly as before. His insight was clear and his responses to circumstances swift. In general, his teaching words, alternative sayings, and self-answers were immediately solitary and lofty. This very case is like sparks struck from stone or flashes of lightning—truly appearing and vanishing unpredictably.

Head Monk Qingzang said, “Does the entire Tripiṭaka contain speech like this?” Nowadays, many people labor in conceptual interpretations, saying that the Buddha is the guide of the three realms and the compassionate father of the four modes of birth. If he is an ancient Buddha, why does he commune with a dew pillar? If you understand it in this way, you will never be able to lay hold of it. Some call it “singing forth from within nothingness,” yet they do not realize that the speech of Chan masters cuts off consciousness, cuts off conceptual measure, cuts off birth and death, and cuts off dharma-objects. Entering the proper position, not a single dharma remains. The moment you begin to reason and discriminate, your hands and feet are bound.

Tell me, then: what did those people of old mean? Simply make mind and circumstances one suchness, so that likes and dislikes, right and wrong, cannot shake you. Then one may say that there is—and that is acceptable; that there is not—and that is acceptable; that there is an activity—and that is acceptable; that there is no activity—and that is acceptable. Here, every slap is an order. The First Patriarch of Wuzu said: “That great Yunmen was originally timid. If I were this mountain monk, I would simply tell him, ‘The eighth activity.’”

He said, “An ancient Buddha communes with a dew pillar—what level of activity is this?” For the moment, he wrapped it all up before your very eyes. A monk asked, “What is the meaning of this?” Yunmen said, “A cord can be bought for thirty coins.” He had an eye that could settle heaven and earth. Since no one understood, he later answered for himself: “Clouds arise over the southern mountain; rain falls over the northern mountain.” He thereby opened an entryway for later students. Thus Xuedou merely singled out the point at which he settled heaven and earth, so that people might see it. If you lapse into calculation and expose even the slightest sharpness, you miss it right before your face. One need only discern Yunmen’s guiding principle and understand his lofty activity. Therefore the verse says:

Clouds over the southern mountain [Heaven and earth cannot behold them. A knife cannot cut into them.]

Rain over the northern mountain, [Not a single drop is bestowed. Half in Henan, half in Hebei.]

Four, seven, two, and three face one another. [Sought in several places, they cannot be found. They burden bystanders. A dew pillar hangs a lantern.]

In the land of Silla, he once ascended the Dharma seat, [The east surges forth and the west disappears. Going east, one does not see the advantage of going west. Where could this news have come from?]

while in the land of Great Tang, the drum had not yet been struck. [One moment too late. Give me back my huatou! The first does not arrive; the last goes too far.]

Joy amid suffering, [Who is there to make it known?]

suffering amid joy. [A double koan. Who can bring it up? Suffering is simply suffering, and joy simply joy—where could there be two ends and three faces?]

Who says gold is like dirt? [Those with eyes can distinguish it. Try wiping it clean and see. Ah, sharp and piercing! What a pity. Tell me: is it the ancient Buddha or the dew pillar?]

“Clouds over the southern mountain, rain over the northern mountain”: Xuedou fits the cap to the head and sets the sail according to the wind. Upon the blade of the sword, he gives you an annotation, bringing it directly to “four, seven, two, and three face one another.” Do not misunderstand: this only praises the question, “An ancient Buddha communes with a dew pillar—what level of activity is this?” Afterward, he cleaves open the road and untangles the vines. To see his meaning: “In the land of Silla, he once ascended the Dharma seat; in the land of Great Tang, the drum had not yet been struck.”

At the point where lightning turns and stars fly, Xuedou then says, “Joy amid suffering, suffering amid joy.” It is as though Xuedou had piled seven treasures and eight precious things here. Thus, at the end, there is this line: “Who says gold is like dirt?” This line comes from Chan Yue’s poem “The Difficulty of the Journey”; Xuedou cites it for use. Chan Yue says: Mountains are high and seas deep, beyond human fathoming; from ancient times to the present, they turn green and blue.

Do not associate with the shallow and frivolous; low ground can only produce thorns. Who says gold is like dirt? Zhang Er and Chen Yu have broken off all news. The journey is difficult, the journey is difficult—see for yourself. And do not let the land lie broad and empty, with only arhats dwelling among the clouds.

[Elder Big Hand]: Yunmen addressed the assembly, saying: “An ancient Buddha communes with a dew pillar—what level of activity is this?” He said: “Set aside what level it is; what do you call an ancient Buddha, and what do you call a dew pillar?”

Yunmen addressed the assembly, saying: “An ancient Buddha communes with a dew pillar—what level of activity is this?” (Elder Big Hand: Set aside what level it is; what do you call an ancient Buddha, and what do you call a dew pillar?) He answered for himself: “Clouds arise over the southern mountain; rain falls over the northern mountain.” (Elder Big Hand: It turns out that Yunmen’s single breath permeates north and south.)

[y]: What ancient Buddha, what dew pillar, what level of activity? Here, for me, all is nothing.

[Elder Big Hand]: Better to give rise to views of existence as numerous as Ganges sands than, all at once, to make an empty understanding. Take care, take care, take care!!!

[Let Me Say a Word]: Have you passed the checkpoint?

[y]: What does it mean to pass the checkpoint?

Here, for me, there is not the slightest thing.

[Let Me Say a Word]: Show me your passport.

It still needs to be checked.

[y]: Hush! Hush!

[Let Me Say a Word]: Sit over there.

[y]: On which side does the benevolent one sit?

[Let Me Say a Word]: Looking for a beating?

[y]: Ha ha.

[Let Me Say a Word]: Heh heh.

You should have said so earlier, saving this old man from having to use his hands and feet. I thought I had caught a stowaway today.

[Iron Broom]: Why did Chan Master Wuzu Yan say that the great Yunmen was originally timid?

The First Patriarch of Wuzu said: “That great Yunmen was originally timid. If I were this mountain monk, I would simply tell him, ‘The eighth activity.’”

[Sudhana]: The fifty paces laugh at the hundred paces.

[Elder Big Hand] (replying to [Iron Broom]: Why did Chan Master Wuzu Yan say that the great Yunmen was originally timid?): Originally there is neither before nor after, much less any numbered level; keep silent. Although there is neither before nor after, the Dharma’s principles can manifest, so there is no harm in saying eight. The timid and the bold are both like this.

[Layman Yongguang] (replying to [Iron Broom]: Why did Chan Master Wuzu Yan say that the great Yunmen was originally timid?): Precisely because his courage was too great.

A Chan master receives people with the fundamental matter; there is not so much idle talk.

If a clear-eyed student simply told him directly, “The eighth activity,”

even so, Wuzu Yan harbors no good intentions and is not afraid that old Yunmen will expose his true colors.

[guest]: Is that so?

In doubt…

[Layman Yongguang]: Idle talk.

[lvm] (replying to [Iron Broom]: Why did Chan Master Wuzu Yan say that the great Yunmen was originally timid?): I am even more timid.

[Iron Broom]: I am not afraid of wounding my hand on the blade.

General Linji, brandishing his sword on the battlefield, leads a thousand troops and ten thousand horses charging at the enemy commander. His hand rises, the blade falls—splendid, splendid! ————“The eighth activity!”

Emperor Yunmen, with ambushes on all sides: red banners flash at the four gates and eight trigrams; an iron encirclement traps the foe. Surrender, surrender! ————“Clouds in the south, rain in the north.”

(What I later guessed)

[Elder Big Hand] (replying to [Iron Broom]: I am not afraid of wounding my hand on the blade.): It would be fine if Yunmen said “the eighth”; but when you say “the eighth” in this manner, how many people’s eyes do you blind?

[lvm] (replying to [Iron Broom]: “I am not afraid of being cut by the blade or injuring my hand.”): Ha ha! The case and lid do not fit.

[Elder Big Hand]: May I ask, benevolent one, what is it for case and lid to fit? You must not fall silent again here.

[Sudhana]: Why not bow before asking, benevolent one?

[Elder Big Hand]: In my words, “May I ask, benevolent one,” is that not a question asked with courtesy? What more is required for it to accord with principle?

[Sudhana]: Bowing breaks the banner of arrogance. Why does your head not touch the ground? Where there is self, wrongdoing arises; when merit is forgotten, blessings are immeasurable.

[Snow Mountain Youth] (replying to [Sudhana]: “Why not bow before asking, benevolent one?”): Hee hee! By what right do you require this of him? That too is a case and lid that do not fit.

[Sudhana]: But he insists on asking what it is for case and lid to fit!

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Ha ha!

[Little Ant] (replying to [lvm]: “Ha ha! The case and lid do not fit.”): I dare not be the eighth mechanism; I cannot make the red flag flash; I only learn to do my proper work.

Joy amid suffering

Suffering amid joy

Four, seven, two, and three behold one another

In the land of Great Tang, the dream is not yet awakened from

Cloud and rain on the southern mountain, wind on the northern mountain,

Gold enters the chest

Dung nourishes the soil

An ancient Buddha and a pillar make offerings to an old mother

[Iron Broom]: I do mischievous things.

Joy amid suffering — there is joy

Suffering amid joy — there is suffering

Four, seven, two, and three behold one another — there is beholding

In the land of Great Tang, the dream is not yet awakened from — there is awakening

Cloud and rain on the southern mountain, wind on the northern mountain — there is wind

Gold enters the chest — there is gold

Dung nourishes the soil — there is soil

An ancient Buddha and a pillar make offerings to an old mother — there is offering

[Little Ant]: Fortunately, there is an Iron Broom.

[Walking Monk]: Today the great monk ate one extra flatbread.

[Lianming]: I ask the teacher and all my fellow practitioners for instruction.

I cannot make sense of Chanyue’s final poem; both its meaning and its artistic conception are utterly baffling.

[lvm]: First, look at this historical allusion and see whether it can help you understand the poem as a whole:

“Zhang Er and Chen Yu have vanished without a trace.”

During the Qin dynasty, Chen Sheng rose in rebellion. Zhang Er and Chen Yu were both commanders under Chen Sheng, and they urged him to delay declaring himself king. Although Chen Sheng did not accept their advice, it was undoubtedly sound.

Later, Chen Sheng appointed his subordinate Wu Chen as general, with Zhang Er and Chen Yu as his deputies, and ordered the three of them to lead troops against Zhao. Wu Chen won every battle and quickly took Zhao. Zhang Er and Chen Yu urged Wu Chen to break away from Chen Sheng and establish himself as king, and Wu Chen accepted their advice.

People such as Zhang Er and Chen Yu initially appeared to be worthy men: urging Chen Sheng to delay declaring himself king was indeed the act of worthy men. Who could have known that they would later urge Wu Chen to rebel and hastily declare himself king? This exposed their true nature as false worthies and genuine petty men. They even had their rationale, saying:

“For Chen Sheng’s sake, he should not declare himself king; for Wu Chen’s sake, he should indeed declare himself king.” In truth, this was sophistry intended to deceive people; it was nothing more than a matter of their own private interests.

“Who says that gold is like dung? Zhang Er and Chen Yu have vanished without a trace.”

“Who says that gold is like dung?”—Who would have known that the two of them were counterfeits?

“Zhang Er and Chen Yu have vanished without a trace”—yet now one cannot even find people like them. (That is to say, even false worthies are not easy to find, much less true worthies.)

At this point, compare it with the preceding lines, “Do not associate with the shallow and frivolous; low ground can only grow thorns,” and the following lines, “The road is difficult, the road is difficult—see for yourself.” With this comparison, can you gain some understanding of the poem as a whole?

[Lianming]: Then what about “Cloud-Dwelling Arhat”?

A genuine traveler simply keeps silent, opens his eyes, and walks on his way. If he happens to meet one or two kindred spirits, they merely exchange a smile upon meeting, with no superfluous words.

[lvm]: Is “Cloud-Dwelling Arhat” a historical allusion? Use a search engine—such a powerful tool—and look it up.

[Lianming]: Ha ha, I really found it! Thank you, Teacher. I should learn to study this way in the future.

[Cloud-Dwelling Arhat]: A Chan term describing an arrogant and self-important manner. Five hundred arhats are installed on Cloud-Dwelling Mountain; travelers on the road several hundred meters below can only feel that the arhats tower ever higher above them, while the arhats look down arrogantly and self-importantly upon the passersby below. Thus, self-important people are called “Cloud-Dwelling Arhats.”

Blue Cliff Record, Case 11 (Taishō 48, 151c): “Do you know that in the land of Great Tang there are no Chan masters? (This old monk does not understand; swallowing it all in one gulp is also being a Cloud-Dwelling Arhat.)” Alternatively, according to the literal sense of the characters, it may refer to an arhat dwelling among the clouds, describing one who has transcended the secular world.

[lvm]: In the information age, resources are abundant and search tools are efficient. It is only that…

People today are far less diligent and hardworking in their studies than people in the past.

[Lianming]: Everything is a double-edged sword; it is only that…

What is “hardworking”? This student still does not know. ^0^

[lvm]: Ha ha! You actually do not know what being hardworking means.

“If you wonder whether hardship is hard, think of the Long March’s twenty-five thousand li.”

[Lianming]: Ha ha—my respects!

[84] Vimalakīrti’s Dharma Gate of Nonduality

[Case 84] Vimalakīrti’s Dharma Gate of Nonduality

Pointer: The Way is affirmed, yet there is nothing that can be affirmed; it is denied, yet there is nothing that can be denied. Once affirmation and denial have passed away, gain and loss are both forgotten—pure and naked, utterly bare. Tell me, what is it before your face and behind your back? Suppose a patched-robed monk came forth and said, “Before me are the Buddha Hall and the Three Gates; behind me are the monks’ quarters and the abbot’s room.” Tell me, does this person have the eye or not? If you can discern this person, I will allow that you have personally seen the ancients.

[Case 84] Citation:

Vimalakīrti asked Mañjuśrī: [This fellow is raising altogether too much commotion. Shut his mouth!]

“What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality?” [Knowing full well, he deliberately offends!]

Mañjuśrī said, “As I understand it, [What can one say? He is utterly unable to offer an explanation. Wearing the cangue, he goes to make his confession; clutching his topknot, he surrenders himself at the magistrate’s office.]

with regard to all dharmas, [What do you call all dharmas?]

there is no speech and no explanation, [What are you saying?]

no indication and no cognition, [You can deceive others, perhaps.]

free from all questions and answers. [What are you saying?]

This is entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality.” [What use is there in entering? What use is there in all these tangled vines?]

Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti, “We have each finished speaking. Worthy sir, please speak: What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality?” [Under this thrust, do not speak merely of the Tathāgata Ratnākūṭa; even all Buddhas of the three times could not open their mouths. Now he turns the spearhead around—stabbing one man, yet being struck by the arrow just as he shot another.]

Xuetou said: What did Vimalakīrti say? [Bah! Ten thousand arrows pierce the heart! He explains it for him.]

He further said: It has been seen through! [Not only at that time, but even now it is just so. Xuetou is also drawing his bow after the thief has fled. Though he exhausts himself for the assembly, the trouble arises from his own household. Tell me, has Xuetou seen where it lands? He has not even dreamed of it—what talk is there of seeing through it? Dangerous! Even a golden-haired lion cannot get hold of it.]

Vimalakīrti had all the great bodhisattvas explain the Dharma gate of nonduality. At that time, thirty-two bodhisattvas each took the dualistic views of conditioned and unconditioned, and the two truths of conventional and ultimate, and united them into a single view, calling this the Dharma gate of nonduality. Then he asked Mañjuśrī, who said, “As I understand it, with regard to all dharmas, there is no speech and no explanation, no indication and no cognition, free from all questions and answers. This is entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The thirty-two had used words to dispel words, while Mañjuśrī used wordlessness to dispel words. Sweeping everything away at once, they wanted none of it; this was entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality. Yet they did not realize that when a divine tortoise drags its tail, it leaves a trace as it brushes the ground. It is like using a broom to sweep away dust: though the dust is gone, the broom’s traces remain. In the end, the traces must still be removed. Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti, “We have each finished speaking. Worthy sir, please speak: What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality?” Vimalakīrti remained silent.

A living fellow would never soak himself in dead water. To hold such an interpretation is like a mad dog chasing a clod of earth.

Xuetou did not say “after a long pause,” nor did he say “he sat silently in his seat.” He simply went straight to the crucial point and said, “What did Vimalakīrti say?” But when Xuetou spoke this way, did he see Vimalakīrti? He had not even dreamed of seeing him! Vimalakīrti was an ancient Buddha of a former age. He also had attendants, assisted the Buddha in proclaiming the teaching, possessed inconceivable eloquence, inconceivable realms, and inconceivable spiritual powers and wondrous functions. In his ten-foot-square room, he accommodated thirty-two thousand jeweled lion thrones and an assembly of eighty thousand, yet it was neither cramped nor spacious. Tell me, what principle is this? Can it be called spiritual powers and wondrous functions? Do not misunderstand it!

If it is the Dharma gate of nonduality, then only those who have realized and verified it together can mutually confirm and know it. Mañjuśrī alone could exchange words with him. Even so, could he escape Xuetou’s examination? Xuetou spoke in this way because he wanted to meet these two men.

He said, “What did Vimalakīrti say?” Then he said, “It has been seen through!” Tell me, at what point was it seen through? Just this: do not be constrained by gain and loss, do not fall into affirmation and denial. Like a cliff ten thousand fathoms high, relinquish your life and leap across it; then I will allow that you have personally seen Vimalakīrti. If you cannot relinquish it, you are much like a flock of sheep butting against a fence. Xuetou was indeed one who could relinquish his life, and so he composed this verse:

Bah, this old Vimalakīrti! [Why rebuke him? Three thousand blows in the morning, eight hundred in the evening. Such a rebuke is useless; he deserves thirty blows.]

Compassion gives rise only to futile vexation. [Why pity him? He already has the vajra king’s precious sword. To busy oneself with his affairs only prolongs ignorance—labor without accomplishment.]

He feigns illness in Vaiśālī, [Who brought this about? He has burdened everyone.]

His whole body utterly withered. [Put the illness aside for now—why is his mouth like a carrying pole? He can neither eat nor breathe.]

The patriarchs of the seven Buddhas come, [When guests come, one must receive them; when thieves come, one must strike them. They come in a group, yet one must still be a master.]

And one room must be swept again and again. [This still remains. It turns out that he is making a living in a ghost cave.]

They ask about the gate of nonduality, [If there were something to say, he would already have said it. Strikingly he says: Even the venerable master cannot find it!]

And at once he falls over. [Heaven! Heaven! What are you saying?]

Not falling over—[He comes to life amid death. There is still breath in him.]

Nowhere can the golden-haired lion be found. [Bah! Do you see? Heaven! Heaven!]

When Xuetou says, "Bah, this old Vimalakīrti!" why does he first utter a "Bah!" right over his head? With the vajra king's precious sword, he cuts straight down upon him. Only three thousand blows in the morning and eight hundred in the evening will do. In Sanskrit, Vimalakīrti is rendered in Chinese as "Stainless Fame," also as "Pure Name." He was the Tathāgata Ratnākūṭa in a former age.

A monk once asked Chan Master Jian of Yunju, "Since he was the Tathāgata Ratnākūṭa, why did he listen to the Dharma in the assembly of Śākyamuni Tathāgata?" Jian said, "He does not contend over self and others." A person of great liberation is not bound by whether or not he becomes a Buddha. If you say that he cultivates solely in pursuit of Buddhahood, you miss the point altogether.

For example, the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment says, "With a mind of saṃsāra, one gives rise to saṃsāric views; entering the Tathāgata's great ocean of quiescent extinction, one can never arrive." Yongjia said, "Whether right or wrong, people do not know; whether moving against or with the current, even heaven cannot fathom it." To move with the current is to proceed toward the stage of Buddhahood; to move against it is to enter the realm of sentient beings. Chan Master Shou said, "Even if you have tempered yourself until you reach this state, you still may not follow your own inclinations. Only after you realize the undefiled sacred body may you move against or with the current."

Therefore Xuetou said, "Compassion gives rise only to futile vexation." The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says, "Because sentient beings are ill, I too am ill." Vexation is compassion carried to its utmost.

"He feigns illness in Vaiśālī" means that Vimalakīrti manifested illness in the city of Vaiśālī. During the Tang dynasty, Wang Xuance was sent as an envoy to India. Passing by Vimalakīrti's residence, he measured its room lengthwise and crosswise with his tablet and found it to be ten Chinese feet square; hence it came to be called a "ten-foot-square room."

"His whole body utterly withered": because of his bodily illness, he extensively taught the Dharma, saying, "This body is impermanent, without strength, without power, and without firmness; it quickly decays and cannot be trusted. It is suffering and vexation, a convergence of all illnesses, even a composite formed by the aggregates, realms, and sense-bases."

"The patriarchs of the seven Buddhas come": Mañjuśrī was the teacher of the seven Buddhas. In accordance with the World-Honored One's command, he went there to inquire after Vimalakīrti's illness.

"And one room must be swept again and again": all things within the ten-foot-square room were removed, leaving only one couch, to await Mañjuśrī's arrival and his inquiry into the Dharma gate of nonduality.

Therefore Xuetou said, "They ask about the gate of nonduality, and at once he falls over." Vimalakīrti's mouth was like a flat eave, yet Chan students today say, "Being speechless is falling over." Do not mistake the fixed pole star for it!

Xuetou presses him onto a cliff ten thousand fathoms high, then says, "Not falling over." With one hand he lifts up, with the other he presses down. He has such dexterous hands and feet, using them with complete agility. This verse comments on the earlier remark, "What did Vimalakīrti say?"

"Nowhere can the golden-haired lion be found": not only then, but even now it is just so. Do you see old Vimalakīrti? Even if all mountains, rivers, the great earth, grasses, trees, and forests were transformed into golden-haired lions, you still could not lay hold of him!

[y]: He said, "What did Vimalakīrti say?" Then he said, "It has been seen through!" Tell me, at what point was it seen through?

[Great Hand]: To say that it has been seen through merely creates the danger of hiding a dark thing deeply away; thus Yuanwu asks, "Has he seen where it lands?"

[Scorched Sprouts and Rotten Seeds]: [Great Hand], let this worldly fellow come forward:

Illness enters through the mouth; the Dharma arises from the mind. With mud three feet deep, examine your own feet! !

[y]: Seen through what? Seen through this:

Taking “Vimalakīrti remained silent and speechless” as speaking through non-speaking.

[Iron Broom]: The Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra, Chapter Nine: Entry into the Dharma Gate of Nonduality

---

The Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra, Chapter Nine: Entry into the Dharma Gate of Nonduality

At that time Vimalakīrti addressed the bodhisattvas: “Virtuous ones, how does a bodhisattva enter the Dharma gate of nonduality? Let each speak according to his preference.” In the assembly was a bodhisattva named Dharma Sovereignty, who said: “Virtuous ones, arising and ceasing are two. Dharmas are fundamentally unborn and now do not cease. To attain this forbearance of the non-arising of dharmas is entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

Bodhisattva Virtue Guard said: “Self and what belongs to self are two. Because there is a self, there is what belongs to self. If there is no self, then there is nothing that belongs to self. This is entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Unblinking said, “Acceptance and nonacceptance are two. If dharmas are not accepted, they cannot be obtained. Because they cannot be obtained, there is neither grasping nor relinquishing, neither action nor conduct. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Virtue-Crested said, “Defilement and purity are two. When one sees the true nature of defilement, there is no appearance of purity; one accords with the characteristic of cessation. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Good Abode said, “Movement and thought are two. When there is no movement, there is no thought. When there is no thought, there is no discrimination. To penetrate this is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Good-Eye said, “One characteristic and no characteristic are two. If one knows that the one characteristic is itself no characteristic, and does not grasp even no characteristic, one enters equality. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Wondrous Arm said, “The mind of a bodhisattva and the mind of a śrāvaka are two. When one contemplates the marks of mind as empty and like an illusion, there is no bodhisattva mind and no śrāvaka mind. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Fusha said, “Good and evil are two. If one does not give rise to good or evil, enters the realm of no characteristics, and penetrates it, this is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Lion said, “Offense and merit are two. If one realizes the nature of offenses, it is no different from merit. One who decisively understands this characteristic through vajra wisdom has neither bondage nor liberation. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Lion’s Intent said, “Defiled and undefiled are two. If one realizes the equality of all dharmas, one gives rise to no notion of defiled or undefiled. One neither clings to characteristics nor abides in no characteristics. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Pure Understanding said, “Conditioned and unconditioned are two. If one is free from all numbers, the mind is like empty space. With pure wisdom and no obstruction, this is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa said, “The worldly and the supramundane are two. The empty nature of the worldly is itself the supramundane. Within this, there is neither entering nor leaving, neither overflowing nor dispersing. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Good Intent said, “Birth and death and nirvāṇa are two. If one sees the nature of birth and death, there is no birth and death, no bondage and no liberation, neither arising nor ceasing. Such understanding is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Manifest Vision said, “Exhaustion and nonexhaustion are two. Whether dharmas are ultimately exhausted or not exhausted, they are all characterized by inexhaustibility. The characteristic of inexhaustibility is emptiness. Where there is emptiness, there is no characteristic of exhaustion or nonexhaustion. Such entry is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Universally Upholding said, “Self and no-self are two. Even the self cannot be obtained; how then could no-self be obtained? One who sees the true nature of self no longer gives rise to duality. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Lightning Deva said, “Light and ignorance are two. The true nature of ignorance is itself light. Light too cannot be grasped and is free from all numbers. To be equal and nondual within this is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Joyful Vision said, “Form and emptiness are two. Form is itself emptiness; emptiness is not produced by the destruction of form, for the nature of form is itself empty. So too, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness and emptiness are two. Consciousness is itself emptiness; emptiness is not produced by the destruction of consciousness, for the nature of consciousness is itself empty. To penetrate this is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Bright Characteristics said, “The four elements and the space element are distinct—this is duality. The nature of the four elements is itself the nature of the space element. Since the past limit and future limit are empty, the present limit is also empty. To know the nature of all elements in this way is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Wondrous Intent said, “The eye and forms are two. If one knows the nature of the eye, one is neither greedy, angry, nor deluded regarding forms. This is called quiescence. So too, the ear and sounds, the nose and scents, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, and the mind and dharmas are two. If one knows the nature of the mind, one is neither greedy, angry, nor deluded regarding dharmas. This is called quiescence. To abide therein is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Exhausted Intent said, “Giving and dedicating it to all-knowing wisdom are two. The nature of giving is itself the nature of dedicating it to all-knowing wisdom. So too, upholding the precepts, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom, and dedicating them to all-knowing wisdom are two. The nature of wisdom is itself the nature of dedicating it to all-knowing wisdom. To enter the single characteristic therein is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Deep Wisdom said, “Emptiness, no characteristics, and non-action are three. Emptiness is itself no characteristics, and no characteristics are themselves non-action. Where there are emptiness, no characteristics, and non-action, there is no mind, intellect, or consciousness. To realize that one gate of liberation is itself the three gates of liberation is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Quiescent Faculties said, “Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha are three. Buddha is Dharma, and Dharma is Saṅgha. These Three Treasures all bear the characteristic of the unconditioned and are equal to empty space. All dharmas are likewise. One who can act accordingly enters the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Unobstructed Mind said, “The body and the cessation of the body are two. The body is itself the cessation of the body. Why is this so? One who sees the true characteristic of the body does not give rise to the view of a body or the view of the cessation of the body. The body and its cessation are neither two nor differentiated. To be neither startled nor afraid therein is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Supreme Good said, “The wholesome actions of body, speech, and mind are two. These three karmas all bear the characteristic of non-action. The body’s characteristic of non-action is itself the speech’s characteristic of non-action; the speech’s characteristic of non-action is itself the mind’s characteristic of non-action. The characteristic of non-action of these three karmas is itself the characteristic of non-action of all dharmas. One who accords with such wisdom of non-action enters the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Field of Merit said, “Meritorious action, evil action, and immovable action are two. The true nature of the three actions is emptiness. In emptiness, there is no meritorious action, no evil action, and no immovable action. Not giving rise to these three actions is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Avataṃsaka said, “Duality arising from self is two. One who sees the true characteristic of self does not give rise to dual dharmas. If one does not abide in dual dharmas, there is no consciousness. Where there is nothing to be conscious of, this is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Treasury of Virtue said, “The characteristic of attainment is two. If there is no attainment, there is neither grasping nor relinquishing. Neither grasping nor relinquishing is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Moon Above said, “Darkness and light are two. Where there is no darkness and no light, there is no duality. Why is this so? As when one enters the samādhi of cessation of feeling and perception, there is neither darkness nor light; the characteristics of all dharmas are likewise. To enter them with equality is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Jewel-Seal Hand said, “Delighting in nirvāṇa and not delighting in the world are two. If one does not delight in nirvāṇa and does not reject the world, there is no duality. Why is this so? If there is bondage, there is liberation. But if there was originally no bondage, who would seek liberation? Where there is neither bondage nor liberation, there is neither delight nor aversion. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Jewel-Crested King said, “The right path and the wrong path are two. One who abides in the right path does not discriminate between wrong and right. To be free from these two is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

The Bodhisattva Delighting in Reality said, “Real and unreal are two. One who sees reality does not even see reality, much less unreality. Why is this so? It is not seen by the fleshly eye; only the eye of wisdom can see it. Yet this eye of wisdom neither sees nor does not see. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

After all these bodhisattvas had each spoken, they asked Mañjuśrī, “What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality?”

Mañjuśrī said, “In my view, with regard to all dharmas there are no words and no speech, no indication and no cognition; one is free from all questions and answers. This is entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.” Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti, “We have each spoken. Now, benevolent one, please speak: What is a bodhisattva’s entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality?”

At that time, Vimalakīrti remained silent, saying nothing.

Mañjuśrī praised him, saying, “Excellent, excellent! To have not even words or language—this is truly entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

When this chapter on entering the Dharma gate of nonduality was spoken, five thousand bodhisattvas in the assembly all entered the Dharma gate of nonduality and attained the forbearance of the non-arising of dharmas.

Bamboozle : Mañjuśrī praised him, saying, “Excellent, excellent! To have not even words or language—this is truly entering the Dharma gate of nonduality.”

Ashamed Heart : A question for the teacher and Dharma brothers:

---

1. Xuedou said, “Compassion gives rise to empty vexation.” The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says, “Because sentient beings are ill, I too am ill.” If there is vexation, then compassion is cut off. How should this be understood?

2. Xuedou further said, “It has been thoroughly seen through!” How should this be understood?

Homage to all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time.

lvm (in reply to Ashamed Heart : A question for the teacher and Dharma brothers): No explanation. Or one could say there are eighty-four thousand explanations.

Ashamed Heart : Thank you, teacher and Dharma brothers.

Elder Big Hand : One coffin, two dead men.

Lone Vine Apricot : Blind people only know how to babble nonsense.

[85] Tongfeng Then Roared Like a Tiger

[85] Tongfeng Makes the Sound of a Tiger

Pointer: To hold the world fast so that not a hair’s breadth leaks out, leaving all the people of the great earth speechless and tongue-tied—this is the proper command of a patch-robed monk. To emit light from the crown of one’s head, illuminating and shattering the four continents—this is the vajra eye of a patch-robed monk. To turn iron into gold and gold into iron, now seizing, now releasing—this is the staff of a patch-robed monk. To sit cutting off the tongues of everyone under heaven, leaving them with no way to breathe, retreating three thousand miles—this is the bearing of a patch-robed monk. But tell me: when it is not like this at all, what sort of person is it, after all? Test it—let us see.

[85] Case:

A monk came to Hermitage Master Tongfeng and asked, “If one suddenly encountered a tiger here, what then?” [A fellow who knows how to cast a shadow; one or two such men in a nest of grass.]

The hermitage master immediately made the sound of a tiger. [Following an error with another error. Yet he has teeth and claws. They live and die together. One must understand the school upon hearing the words.]

The monk immediately assumed a frightened posture. [Two fellows playing with clods of mud. Acting in response to the occasion. It resembles it, but it is not yet so.]

The hermitage master gave a hearty laugh. [Still somewhat better. There is a blade within the laughter. He can release, and he can also gather in.]

The monk said, “You old thief!” [He must also see through it. Defeated! Both have let each other pass.]

The hermitage master said, “What can you do to this old monk?” [A slap across the ear at once. What a pity he let him go. Frost upon snow, one layer more.]

The monk then withdrew. [If he withdraws like this, neither has reached the end. Heavens, heavens!]

Xuedou said, “Granted, granted—but these two evil thieves only know how to steal a bell while covering their ears.” [The words still ring in one’s ears, yet Xuedou examines them. Tell me, what should they have done then to avoid such examination? The patch-robed monks of the whole world cannot reach it.]

From the lineage of Dahsiung emerged four hermitage masters: Damei, Baiyun, Huxi, and Tongfeng.

Look at how these two met eye to eye and tested one another hand to hand. Tell me, where was the confusion and error? In the ancients’ every device and circumstance, every word and phrase, although it arose in the moment, if one’s eye is complete and true, it naturally comes alive and leaps about.

Xuedou took this up in order to teach people to recognize right and wrong and distinguish gain from loss. Yet, from the standpoint of those who have attained the Way, though they may be amid gain and loss, there is no gain or loss. If one views the ancients in terms of gain and loss, it has nothing to do with them.

People nowadays must each reach the place beyond gain and loss before distinguishing others by gain and loss. If they keep applying their minds merely to selecting and judging words and phrases, when will they ever be done? Have you not seen how Chan Master Yunmen said: “You itinerant monks, do not merely wander idly through prefectures and hunt through counties, seeking only to pick up idle words.

“When the old master opens his mouth, you immediately question him about Chan and question him about the Way—what is above, what is below, how this is and how that is—then copy it all down in great volumes and [unclear character] it into your bellies, mulling it over. Everywhere, beside the stove, three or five of you gather together, opening your mouths and muttering: ‘This is a public-case saying; this is a saying delivered directly from one’s own person; this is a saying about phenomena; this is a saying from within the essence. …’ You fathers and mothers in your rooms! Having stuffed yourselves with food, you go on talking dreams, saying that you understand the Buddhadharma. If you travel about like this, in what donkey-year will you ever find rest?”

When the ancients took something up and played with it for a moment, how could they have held views of victory and defeat, gain and loss, right and wrong? Tongfeng had seen Linji. At that time he had established a hermitage deep in the mountains. When this monk came there, he asked, “If one suddenly encountered a tiger here, what then?” Tongfeng immediately made a tiger’s roar—well, he proceeded directly according to the circumstances. This monk also knew how to follow an error with another error, and assumed a frightened posture. The hermitage master gave a hearty laugh.

The monk said, “You old thief!” Tongfeng said, “What can you do to this old monk?” Granted, granted—but neither reached the end. Through the ages, they have been subjected to examination. Thus Xuedou said, “Granted, granted—but these two evil thieves only know how to steal a bell while covering their ears.” Though both were thieves, they did not employ the appropriate device at the crucial moment; hence, they stole a bell while covering their ears. These two old men were like commanders arraying an army of a million, yet they merely fought with brooms.

As for this matter, one must have the skill of someone who kills without blinking an eye. If one only releases and never seizes, or only kills and never gives life, one cannot avoid being mocked by others. Though this is so, the ancients had no such abundance of business. Look at these two: they were both acting in response to the occasion. Wuzu said, “The samādhi of supernormal powers and play, the samādhi of the torch of wisdom, the samādhi of the king of adornment.” It is only that later people cannot get their heels to touch the ground; they merely examine the ancients, saying there was gain or loss. Some say, “Clearly, it was the hermitage master who lost his composure.” That has nothing to do with it!

Xuedou said, “When the two met, both had places where they let the other pass.” The monk said, “If one suddenly encountered a tiger here, what then?” and Tongfeng immediately made a tiger’s roar—this was a place where he let him pass. Even when he said, “What can you do to this old monk?” this too was a place where he let him pass. Every move fell into the second device.

Xuedou said, “Use it when it is to be used.” Nowadays, when people hear this, they say that at the time it would have been best to enforce the command. But do not wield a blind man’s cangue or a blind man’s staff! When Deshan entered the gate, he immediately struck; when Linji entered the gate, he immediately shouted. Tell me, what was the ancients’ intent? Xuedou later expressed it only in this verse. Tell me, after all, how can one avoid stealing a bell while covering one’s ears?

The verse says:

Seeing it, do not grasp it; [You have already missed it. It is already a thousand miles, ten thousand miles away.]

Think of it, and it is a thousand miles away. [You will regret not having been careful at the outset. Heavens, heavens!]

What fine stripes! [Reverend, take it up yourself. Yet you do not know how to use it.]

Its claws and fangs are not yet ready. [I only fear that its use is unclear. When its claws and fangs are ready, I will tell you.]

Have you not seen how they suddenly met below Mount Dahsiung? [Where there is a branch, cling to the branch; where there is no branch, cling to an example.]

Their resounding roar and radiance shook the earth. [This tiger—why does it go on like this? Still somewhat better. How many men are true men?]

Does the great man see it? [With urgent old-womanly concern. If you know how to open your eyes, live and die together. Xuedou is entangling vines.]

Seize the tiger's tail and stroke its whiskers. [If it suddenly springs forth, how will you seize it? Seize it: all the patch-robed monks in the world are here; if one suddenly comes forth, give him a pressing shove. If you do not seize it, I shall give you thirty blows, so that you may turn around and breathe freely. Shouting and striking, he says: Why not say, "You old thief!"]

"Seeing it, do not grasp it; think of it, and it is a thousand miles away." At the very point of peril, neither could exercise his ability. When Tongfeng said, "What can you do to this old monk?" it would have been fitting to give him the proper fodder. Had he then employed such skill, Tongfeng would certainly have had a further word. The two knew only how to release, not how to seize. Not grasping it was already white clouds ten thousand miles away; why speak further of thinking of it being a thousand miles away?

"What fine stripes! Its claws and fangs are not yet ready." Granted, granted—the great tiger also knew how to conceal its fangs and hide its claws, but it did not know how to bite people.

"Have you not seen how they suddenly met below Mount Dahsiung? Their resounding roar and radiance shook the earth." One day Baizhang asked Huangbo, "Where have you come from?" Huangbo said, "I have come from gathering mushrooms below the mountain." Baizhang said, "Did you see a tiger?" Huangbo immediately made a tiger's roar. Baizhang drew an axe from his waist and made as if to chop him. Huangbo seized him and immediately slapped him.

That evening, when Baizhang ascended the hall, he said, "There is a tiger below Mount Dahsiung. All of you, when coming and going, must take great care! This old monk encountered one face-to-face today."

Later, Guishan asked Yangshan, "What do you make of Huangbo's tiger story?" Yangshan said, "What is the Master's meaning?" Guishan said, "At that time Baizhang should have chopped him to death with one stroke of the axe! Why did it come to this?" Yangshan said, "Not so." Guishan said, "What would you do, then?" Yangshan said, "Not only would I ride on the tiger's head; I would also know how to seize its tail." Guishan said, "Disciple Ji has a truly perilous cliff-edge phrase." Xuedou cites this to illuminate the preceding koan: their resounding roar and radiance shook the great earth. In this small matter of freely turning and transforming, there must be a way out within the phrase.

"Does the great man see it?" Do you see?

"Seize the tiger's tail and stroke its whiskers." One must also be up to the task. However much you seize the tiger's tail and stroke its whiskers, you cannot avoid having your nose pierced in that very moment.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Has Teacher emerged from retreat?

Summer vacation has arrived, and I want to go on pilgrimage in the southwest.

I would like to ask Teacher: how should one undertake pilgrimage for it to be right practice?

[lvm]: Before your feet have trodden even an inch of road, before you have ridden in a car, boat, or plane—this is the right practice of pilgrimage.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: I understand.

I hope Teacher will be in Beijing by the time I return.

[Elder Dashou] (responding to [lvm]: "Before your feet have trodden even an inch of road, before you have ridden in a car, boat, or plane—this is the right practice of pilgrimage."): If your feet have not trodden even an inch of road, where have you put your feet?

[Dashou]: My own answer: In one step, I pass beyond the five aggregates; no one knows my footprints.

[Haoxiao]: Don't try to fool people, all right!

Obvious! Obvious! One slash of the blade and be done with it.

[Dashou]: You do not understand Chan. You should ask, “What does it mean to pass beyond the five aggregates in one step?” Only then could you draw me out.

[Haoxiao]: Ha ha! It is vividly before my eyes.

Is there any need to draw you out?

Langlang Qiankun (replying to Dashou Laoren : “If you have not trodden even an inch of road, where do you place your feet?”): Without touching an inch of road, the moment you set down your foot, you tread on it. Xixi

Langlang Qiankun : Do not set it down, do not set it down.

Commentator (replying to Dashou Laoren : “If you have not trodden even an inch of road, where do you place your feet?”): The sūtra says, “No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind.” Where does your Dashou grow feet?

Dashou : What do you call “no eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body”?

[Critic]: If you understand, then do not ask; if you do not understand, asking is futile. Do you get it?

[Pure White] (in reply to [Elder Big Hand]: “If you have not trodden even an inch of road, where have you placed your feet?”): If you wish to know where I have placed my feet, please first tell me on which road you are.

[Three Little Ones] (in reply to [Elder Big Hand]: “If you have not trodden even an inch of road, where have you placed your feet?”): Clearly, feet have grown in your mind.

[wshiyao] (in reply to [Elder Big Hand]: “If you have not trodden even an inch of road, where have you placed your feet?”): Even if you do not permit it, that will do; one must reach illumination.

[Golden Brightness] (in reply to [Youth Yongshou]: “I understand.”): Elder brother:

On your return, why not stop over in Baoding for a few days before going back to Beijing?

[Youth Yongshou]: I know that going on pilgrimage to Baoding is the proper footing.

It is only that time does not permit it. I will have to go later to pay respects and study.

[Zhunian]: Hehe, going on pilgrimage? Learn from Zhaozhou not to linger; pay respects to Sudhana and sit upon a lotus dais.

The Dragon Palace, great rivers, and small streams are all places to wash one’s feet.

Sacred peaks, famous mountains, and little earthen hills can all be trodden beneath one’s feet!

[Lianqing] (replying to [Yongshou Tongzi]: “Has the teacher entered retreat?”): The teacher has temporarily returned to his hometown.

Coming here to see me is the proper course; food and lodging are included. Yunmen Temple is worth visiting on pilgrimage. It is a four-hour drive.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Aren’t you in Shenzhen?

[Lianqing]: You could say it’s in the southeast.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Good. I’ll go next year.

Is it near Chicken Foot Mountain?

[Lianqing]: A word once spoken cannot be taken back, even by four horses.

Danxia Mountain is the nearest.

[Yongshou Tongzi]: Sometimes I have idle thoughts:

Southern Chan could not possibly have arisen in the north. In places of freezing cold or endless yellow sands, gradual cultivation marked by extraordinary hardship would surely be emphasized.

[Lianqing]: It is hot here; when you come, senior brother, you can wear fewer clothes.

[lvm] ([Lianqing]: The teacher has temporarily returned to his hometown): He will return to Beijing after taking care of his affairs.

[Lianqing]: Wishing you well in every way!

lvm : Thank you!

[Tie Saozhou]: Are you also being led around by the nose?

“Grasp the tiger’s tail and stroke the tiger’s whiskers.” This, too, must be one’s proper function. No matter how you grasp the tiger’s tail or stroke its whiskers, you cannot avoid having your nose pierced for a time.

Question: “Grasp the tiger’s tail and stroke the tiger’s whiskers”—does this also mean being led around by the nose? Is there a difference from one’s proper function? If it is one’s proper function, how should this koan be answered in a way that is one’s proper function?

wshiyao : Follow along.

lvm : Not necessarily.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Can this sentence be understood this way?

“Grasp the tiger’s tail and stroke the tiger’s whiskers.” This, too, must be one’s proper function. No matter how you grasp the tiger’s tail or stroke its whiskers, you cannot avoid having your nose pierced for a time.

“Grasp the tiger’s tail and stroke the tiger’s whiskers.” This, too, must be one’s proper function. Unless you meet on the ground of one’s proper function, no matter how you grasp the tiger’s tail or stroke its whiskers, you cannot avoid having your nose pierced for a time.

Also, in “Where there is a vine, climb the vine; where there is no vine, climb the crevice,” does here refer to a vine? What does mean here? Does it refer to a crack?

lvm : tia o—legal provisions; li—cases. Both are metaphors.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Oh! I understand. Thank you, Teacher!

Iron Broom (replying to Snow Mountain Youth : Can this sentence be understood this way?): “If there is a provision, rely on the provision; if there is no provision, rely on precedent.” This was explained in an earlier post on the Blue Cliff Record.

But I could not find it.

Ancient Rhyme (replying to Snow Mountain Youth : Can this sentence be understood this way?): Snow falls in the seventh month—Dou E’s grievance; in the twelfth month, young and old burn paper money. Injustice!

Iron Broom (replying to lvm : Not necessarily.): I listen respectfully and would like to hear the details.

lvm : Do not abide in “one’s proper function,” and do not dwell on “the details.”

Iron Broom : Now that is proper.

lvm : Not only is it one's proper function; it is also the most detailed of all.

Lotus Bright : But what if one suddenly encounters a tiger?

Lotus Bright : Heh heh, ha ha.

Whenever I question this old fellow, he always falls mute.

[Reply]: No killing.

[Iron Broom]: What does "It is so, but neither understands" mean?

A monk came to the hermitage master of Tongfeng and asked, "When one suddenly encounters a tiger here, what then?"

The hermitage master immediately made the sound of a tiger.

The monk immediately assumed a frightened posture.

The hermitage master burst into laughter.

The monk said, "You old thief!"

Feng said, "What can you do to this old monk?"

One day Baizhang asked Huangbo, "Where have you come from?"

Huangbo said, "I have come from gathering mushrooms at the foot of the mountain."

Baizhang said, "Did you see a tiger?"

Huangbo immediately made the sound of a tiger.

Baizhang took an axe from his waist and made a chopping gesture.

Huangbo seized him and immediately slapped him.

The monk said, "You old thief!" Feng said, "What can you do to this old monk?" So far, so good—but neither of them fully grasped it. Through the ages, people have scrutinized them for this reason. Thus Xuedou said, "So far, so good—but these two evil thieves only know how to steal a bell while covering their ears." Though both of them were thieves, they did not employ it at the critical moment; hence, they were like thieves covering their ears while stealing a bell. These two old men were like commanders arraying an army of a million, yet they fought only with brooms.

? Does "So far, so good—but neither of them fully grasped it" here refer to "they did not employ it at the critical moment"? Compared with the Baizhang koan, does it mean that they were still not as decisive as "Baizhang"?

? Why can it be said that Baizhang displayed great function in this koan?

[Lianming]: Original poster, please look carefully: when excerpting it, you omitted one sentence.

That evening, Baizhang ascended the hall and said, "There is a tiger beneath Mount Daxiong. All of you must watch carefully whenever you go in or out! This old monk personally suffered a bite from it today."

[lvm]: What follows is an extremely vivid analogy:

"These two old men were like commanders arraying an army of a million, yet they fought only with brooms."

[Iron Broom]: Oh.

Two straw brooms gesturing at each other are hardly much of a spectacle.

[86] Yunmen’s Kitchen, Storehouse, and Three Gates

[Eighty-Six] Yunmen: Kitchen, Storehouse, and Three Gates

Introductory Instruction: Holding fast, the whole world leaves not the slightest trace; cutting off the streams, not a drop remains. Open your mouth and you are wrong; frame a thought and you go astray. Tell me: what is the eye that passes through the barrier? Try to say it.

[Eighty-Six] The Case:

Yunmen offered this saying: “Everyone possesses a light.” [A black-lacquer bucket!]

“Yet when you look for it, you cannot see it; all is dark and murky.” [Looking is blindness!]

“What is the light of all of you?” [Mountains are mountains; waters are waters. Washing black dye in a lacquer bucket.]

He answered in their stead: “Kitchen, storehouse, and three gates.” [What earnest grandmotherly concern! Why weave entangling vines?]

He further said: “Having something good is not as good as having nothing.” [He knows half of it himself. Yet he still falls a little short.]

When receiving people in his room, Yunmen would offer this saying: “Beneath each of your heels there is a light that shines brilliantly throughout past and present, utterly beyond views and knowledge. Yet although it is light, when one asks about it, you do not understand. Is this not utter darkness and murk?” For twenty years he gave this instruction, yet no one understood his meaning. Later, Xianglin asked for a substitute reply. Yunmen said, “Kitchen, storehouse, and three gates.” He further said, “Having something good is not as good as having nothing.”

Ordinarily, a substitute reply consists of only one sentence. Why are there two sentences here? The first opens up a small passage for you, enabling you to see. If you are a real person, then upon merely hearing it raised, you immediately take it up and proceed. But fearing that people would stagnate here, he further said, “Having something good is not as good as having nothing.” As before, he swept it away for you.

Nowadays, as soon as people hear this light mentioned, they stare wide-eyed and say, “Where is the kitchen? Where are the three gates?” That has nothing to do with it! Therefore it is said, “Recognize the meaning at the hook’s tip; do not mistake the fixed steelyard mark for it.” This matter is not in the eyes, nor is it in objects. You must cut off views and knowledge, forget gain and loss, and be cleanly naked and wholly bare. Each of you must investigate it directly in your own portion.

Yunmen said: “When daylight comes, distinguish people by daylight. Suppose that in the middle of the night there are no sun, moon, or lamps. Places you have been to are one thing, but take some object from a place you have never been—can you obtain it?” The Cantongqi says: “Within brightness there is darkness; do not regard it as darkness. Within darkness there is brightness; do not encounter it as brightness.” If brightness and darkness are both cut off, then tell me, what is it? Therefore it is said, “When the flower of mind blooms in illumination, it shines upon the lands of the ten directions.”

Panshan said: “Light does not illuminate objects, nor do objects exist. When both light and objects are forgotten, what is it then?” He also said: “This very seeing and hearing are not seeing and hearing; no further sounds or forms can be presented to you. If within this you understand that there is wholly nothing to be done, what harm is there in distinguishing essence and function, or not distinguishing them?” Once you understand the final sentence, then go and play amid what came before; ultimately, do not make your livelihood within it.

The ancients said: “Establish all dharmas on the basis of non-abiding.” Do not toy here with lights and shadows or with subtle spirits, nor should you take it as a matter of doing nothing.

The ancients said: “Better to give rise to a view of existence as vast as Mount Sumeru than to give rise to a view of nonexistence even as small as a mustard seed.” People of the two vehicles often fall one-sidedly into this view.

Xuedou’s verse says:

Illuminating itself, it arrays a solitary brightness. [The myriad phenomena. Host and guest mutually interpenetrate. It turns the nostrils around. Blind fellow! What are you doing?]

For your sake, it opens a single thread. [Far more than a single thread! Ten suns shine together. Let out a single thread, and that will do.]

Flowers fade, and the trees cast no shadows. [Weaving entangling vines! When will it ever end? Where are you groping? Black dye is held in a black-lacquer bucket.]

When one looks, who does not see? [Blind! Do not always grope along fences and walls. Blind twice over, blind three times over!]

Seeing or not seeing—[Both ends are cut off. Blind!]

Riding the ox backward, one enters the Buddha Hall. [Right! The three gates join their palms. Give me back my huatou! He struck and said: “Where are you going?” Xuedou, too, merely makes his livelihood in a ghost cave. Do you understand? The sun rises at midnight; at noon, the third watch is struck.]

“Illuminating itself, it arrays a solitary brightness.” Beneath one’s own heels, one inherently possesses this light, but ordinarily one uses it in darkness. Therefore Chan Master Yunmen arrays this light before you. “What is the light of all of you?” “Kitchen, storehouse, and three gates.” This is where Yunmen arrays the solitary brightness. Panshan said, “The mind-moon is solitary and full; its light swallows the myriad images.” This is true constancy revealed alone.

Then comes, “For your sake, it opens a single thread.” He also feared that people would become attached to the kitchen, storehouse, and three gates.

Set aside the kitchen, storehouse, and three gates for now. Morning flowers, too, fade; trees, too, cast no shadows; the sun sets, and the moon grows dark. The whole universe and great earth are pitch-black. Can you all still see?

“When one looks, who does not see?” Tell me: who does not see? Here, within brightness there is darkness and within darkness there is brightness; as in the preceding and following steps, you may see this for yourselves.

When Xuedou says, “Seeing or not seeing,” he is versifying “Having something good is not as good as having nothing.” What should be seen is not seen; what should be bright is not bright.

“Riding the ox backward, one enters the Buddha Hall.” One enters the black-lacquer bucket. You yourselves must ride the ox into the Buddha Hall. Look into what principle this is.

[Silly Village Foolish Big Sister]: Having something good is not as good as having nothing.

[Aspiring Student]: May I ask, teacher, what does “kitchen, storehouse, and three gates” mean literally?

[lvm]: They are the monastery’s kitchen, storehouse, and mountain gate.

[Iron Broom]: That has nothing to do with it!

[lvm]: ^o^

[Iron Broom]: Having something good is not as good as having nothing.

[Wandering Practitioner]: The great monk is truly amusing: he lures people into giving rise to a deluded thought, then gives them a blow with the stick.

[87] Yunmen: Medicine and Illness Counteract Each Other

[Case 87] Yunmen: Medicine and Illness Counteract Each Other

Pointer: A person of clear vision has no fixed molds. At times, grasses spread luxuriantly atop a solitary peak; at times, one is utterly bare in the midst of a bustling market. Suddenly, like wrathful Nezha, one manifests three heads and six arms; suddenly, like the Sun-Faced and Moon-Faced Ones, one emits all-embracing rays of compassion. Within a single mote of dust, one manifests all bodies; for people of every kind, one mixes with mud and water. Suddenly, if one touches the upward-opening pivot, even the Buddha eye cannot catch sight of it. Even if a thousand sages were to emerge, they would still have to retreat three thousand leagues. Is there anyone who has attained and realized this together? Let us raise the case and see.

[Case 87] The Case:

Yunmen instructed the assembly: “Medicine and illness counteract each other. [The characteristic of oneness cannot be obtained.]”

“The whole earth is medicine. [A bitter gourd is bitter to its root. Set it aside.]”

“Which one is oneself? [A sweet melon is sweet to its stem. Where could one get such news?]”

Yunmen said, “Medicine and illness counteract each other. The whole earth is medicine. Which one is oneself?” Do you all have a place from which to emerge? Throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, see that you stand like a cliff ten thousand fathoms high. Deshan’s blows fall like raindrops, and Linji’s shouts race like thunder—let us set that aside for now. Śākyamuni is Śākyamuni; Maitreya is Maitreya. Those who do not know where it lands often take it to mean that “medicine and illness correspond to each other.”

For forty-nine years, in more than three hundred assemblies, the World-Honored One taught according to the capacities of his listeners. All this was medicine given in response to illness, like exchanging honeyed fruit for bitter gourds. Having cleansed the karmic roots of you all, he leaves you open and free. The whole earth is medicine—where will you insert your mouth? If you can insert your mouth, I allow that you have a place to turn around and breathe out. Then you will personally meet Yunmen.

If you turn back and hesitate, be assured that you will be unable to insert your mouth; Yunmen will be right beneath your heels. "Medicine and illness counteract each other" is only an ordinary manner of speaking. If you cling to being, I speak to you of nonbeing. If you cling to nonbeing, I speak to you of being. If you cling to neither being nor nonbeing, I will go with you to a heap of dung and sweepings and manifest a sixteen-foot golden body, appearing and disappearing.

Right now, the whole earth, its myriad forms and appearances, and even oneself are all medicine at once. At such a time, what would you call oneself? If you persist in calling it medicine, then even when Maitreya Buddha descends into the world, you will not have dreamed of where Yunmen is! Ultimately, how is it? Recognize the meaning at the hook's tip; do not take the fixed star for certain.

One day, Mañjuśrī instructed Sudhana to gather medicine, saying, "Bring back what is not medicine." Sudhana gathered everywhere, and there was nothing that was not medicine. He returned and reported, "There is nothing that is not medicine." Mañjuśrī said, "Bring back what is medicine." Sudhana then picked up a blade of grass and handed it to Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī raised it and showed it to the assembly, saying, "This medicine can also kill people, and it can also bring people to life." This saying about medicine and illness counteracting each other is most difficult to see. Yunmen commonly used it in his room to receive people.

Elder Jine once visited Xuedou. He was a master of the craft and a venerable descendant of Linji. He and Xuedou discussed this saying about medicine and illness counteracting each other throughout the night until dawn; only then was it brought to complete perfection. Here, learning, intellectual understanding, reflection, and calculation are altogether useless. Later, Xuedou composed a verse to send him off: "The insight into medicine and illness counteracting each other is most difficult; / The myriad locked gates are utterly without reason. / The Wayfarer Jine comes to pay a visit; / In one night, the billows of the sea of learning are dried up."

Xuedou's later verse is especially skillful. Its intent lies both with the guest and with the host, as you can see for yourselves. The verse says:

The whole earth is medicine, [Whom does this teach to distinguish it? Scattering sand and earth. Set it up high.]

Why have past and present been so mistaken! [There is an echo within the words. One stroke beneath the sentence. Bah!]

With the gate shut, one does not make a cart, [Whether great or small, Xuedou exhausts himself for the assembly. Disaster comes from one's private gate. Vast and open, without a trace of attachment. Who has the leisure to carry on business in a ghost cave?]

And the open road is naturally spacious. [At one's feet, one enters the grass. Mount the horse and see the road. Picked up at hand, it is indeed remarkable.]

Wrong! Wrong! [Twin swords lean against the sky and fly. One arrow brings down two eagles.]

Even nostrils reaching the sky are pierced through. [The head has fallen off. A blow says: They have been pierced through!]

"The whole earth is medicine—why have past and present been so mistaken!" If you understand it by calling it medicine, then from ancient times until now, you are mistaken all at once! Xuedou said, "There are fellows who do not know how to cut off Damei's heels, yet keep saying that he is too eager to press on!" He knows how to cut off Yunmen's heels, for this one phrase of Yunmen's has thrown the whole world into confusion! Yunmen said, "The staff is a wave; I permit you seven verticals and eight horizontals. The whole earth is a wave—watch yourself appear and disappear."

"With the gate shut, one does not make a cart, and the open road is naturally spacious." Xuedou says this in order to open a route for you. If, with the gate shut, you make a cart that fits the ruts when you go out, what good does that do? Here, even with the gate shut, I do not make a cart; when I go out, it is naturally spacious. There, he reveals a slight crack, allowing people to see.

Then he immediately adds, "Wrong! Wrong!" What came before is wrong, and what comes after is wrong. Who knows that even Xuedou's opening of a route is wrong? Since the nostrils reach the sky, why are they nevertheless pierced through? Do you wish to understand? Just investigate for thirty years! If you have a staff, I will give you a staff. If you have no staff, you cannot avoid having your nostrils pierced through by someone!

[Traveling monk]: The great monk is truly amusing!

[lotus]: I would like to offer an explanation of the original text and the ancient verse.

The staff-tip possesses an eye; when it strikes, it does not bend.

Pointer: A person of clear vision has no fixed molds. At times, grasses spread luxuriantly atop a solitary peak; at times, one is utterly bare in the midst of a bustling market. Suddenly, like wrathful Nezha, one manifests three heads and six arms; suddenly, like the Sun-Faced and Moon-Faced Ones, one emits all-embracing rays of compassion. Within a single mote of dust, one manifests all bodies; for people of every kind, one mixes with mud and water. Suddenly, if one touches the upward-opening pivot, even the Buddha eye cannot catch sight of it. Even if a thousand sages were to emerge, they would still have to retreat three thousand leagues. Is there anyone who has attained and realized this together? Let us raise the case and see.

[Case 87] The Case:

Yunmen instructed the assembly: “Medicine and illness counteract each other. [The characteristic of oneness cannot be obtained.]”

****The Diamond Sūtra says that the world is precisely the characteristic of oneness, yet the characteristic of oneness cannot be obtained. When medicine arrives, the illness is removed; it is clearly and truly cured. Yet the characteristic of being cured is wholly nonexistent and cannot be obtained. Therefore it says: the characteristic of oneness cannot be obtained.****

“The whole earth is medicine. [A bitter gourd is bitter to its root. Set it aside.]”

******The whole earth is entirely medicine; this, however, is not questioned, and so it says: set it aside. If one seeks outwardly, I fear that every branch and every path will differ; therefore it says: a bitter gourd is bitter to its root.

“Which one is oneself? [A sweet melon is sweet to its stem. Where could one get such news?]”

*****Only when one recognizes birth and death, and the time before one’s parents were born, does one reach the root; therefore it says: a sweet melon is sweet to its stem. If one has attained it, where does one obtain such news? If one has not attained it, where does one obtain such news?*******

……..

Xuedou’s later verse is especially skillful. Its intent lies both with the guest and with the host, as you can see for yourselves. The verse says:

The whole earth is medicine, [Whom does this teach to distinguish it? Scattering sand and earth. Set it up high.]

Why have past and present been so mistaken! [There is an echo within the words. One stroke beneath the sentence. Bah!]

****If one only fixes one’s eyes on medicine, judging things and dharma appearances as right or wrong, one fears that one has gone astray.*****

With the gate shut, one does not make a cart, [Whether great or small, Xuedou exhausts himself for the assembly. Disaster comes from one’s private gate. Vast and open, without a trace of attachment. Who has the leisure to carry on business in a ghost cave?]

*****The Dao De Jing says: “Block its openings, untangle its complications, soften its light, and merge with its dust. Thus one remains free from danger throughout one’s life.” The gate is a metaphor for the six sense faculties: the six faculties are not busily employed. Not making a cart is a metaphor for the mind’s not engaging in deluded calculation and attachment; this is what is meant by not carrying on business in a ghost cave.*******

And the open road is naturally spacious. [At one’s feet, one enters the grass. Mount the horse and see the road. Picked up at hand, it is indeed remarkable.]

****When hungry, one eats; when tired, one sleeps. Though there is no calculation or attachment, everything is taken up at hand, and there is nothing especially remarkable about it. Therefore it says: the open road is naturally spacious.****

Wrong! Wrong! [Twin swords lean against the sky and fly. One arrow brings down two eagles.]

Even nostrils reaching the sky are pierced through. [The head has fallen off. A blow says: They have been pierced through!]

*****Even so, if one is like an idle fellow from the western village and is not clear about birth and death, one cannot avoid appearing and disappearing, revolving through the six realms. To have one’s nostrils pierced through is like an ox whose nose has been pierced and which is led east and west by others—when will there be a time of escape?*****

“The whole earth is medicine—why have past and present been so mistaken!” If you understand it by calling it medicine, then from ancient times until now, you are mistaken all at once! Xuedou said, “There are fellows who do not know how to cut off Damei’s heels, yet keep saying that he is too eager to press on!” He knows how to cut off Yunmen’s heels, for this one phrase of Yunmen’s has thrown the whole world into confusion! Yunmen said, “The staff is a wave; I permit you seven verticals and eight horizontals. The whole earth is a wave—watch yourself appear and disappear.”

“With the gate shut, one does not make a cart, and the open road is naturally spacious.” Xuedou says this in order to open a route for you. If, with the gate shut, you make a cart that fits the ruts when you go out, what good does that do? Here, even with the gate shut, I do not make a cart; when I go out, it is naturally spacious. There, he reveals a slight crack, allowing people to see.

Then he immediately adds, “Wrong! Wrong!” What came before is wrong, and what comes after is wrong. Who knows that even Xuedou’s opening of a route is wrong? Since the nostrils reach the sky, why are they nevertheless pierced through? Do you wish to understand? Just investigate for thirty years! If you have a staff, I will give you a staff. If you have no staff, you cannot avoid having your nostrils pierced through by someone!

*****Having not studied much and merely babbling a few phrases, perhaps I have only tried to make this somewhat clearer. Yet this very clarity is, as Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva said, something that can both cure people and kill people.******

~~~Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings are without distinction~~~

[ant]: If one understands it directly, would that not be delightful!!! Yunmen’s instruction to the assembly is also rather verbose!!!

lotus : ^_^

[The Lone Wanderer of Border Town] (In response to [lotus]: “I would like to offer some explanation of the original text and the verses on ancient cases.”): Bumping this up.

tvbs : “lvm”: lvm — What does it mean for medicine and illness to counteract each other? lvm

lvm : Bitter gourds are bitter to their roots; sweet melons are sweet to their stems.

tvbs : A unified appearance cannot be apprehended. Form is not other than emptiness. None of these can be apprehended. Master Qi also asked, “Which one is oneself?” No?

lvm : Which one is not oneself?

tvbs : Master Qi has the heart of a bodhisattva and does not forget sentient beings. This junior student bows in reverence with all his life. Buddhist practitioners should be like this!!

[Xishan Woodcutter]: A bodhisattva’s mind and conduct are like a clear sky stretching for ten thousand miles,

---

In an instant, fierce winds arise, dark clouds gather, lightning flashes and thunder roars; afterward, the blue sky is washed clean.

1 (in response to tvbs : “Master Qi has the heart of a bodhisattva and does not forget sentient beings. This junior student bows in reverence with all his life. Buddhist practitioners should be like this!!”): Since everything is oneself, do you enjoy bowing to yourself?

[Xishan Woodcutter]: O

tvbs : All this is mere idle talk; Buddhas and sentient beings are one body. The ancient Buddha is quite busy, manifesting through the power of vows.

[Truth]: A vow is an unconditioned dharma.

[88] Xuansha’s Three Types of Sick People

[Eighty-Eight] Xuansha’s Three Kinds of Patients

Introduction: The arrangements at the gate are just thus. To break two into three and enter into profound discussions of principle, one must also penetrate through and through; responding to the occasion with a knock or a point, shattering the golden lock at the mysterious pass, acting in accordance with the command, until all traces are swept away. But tell me: where is the error? Those endowed with the eye at the crown of the head, please try raising it and see.

[Eighty-Eight] The Case:

Xuansha addressed the assembly: “The venerable elders in all quarters all speak of receiving beings and benefiting living beings. [According to one’s means, one sets out a place; each household provides according to its abundance or poverty.]”

“But if three kinds of patients suddenly come, how are they to be received? [Beating the grass is solely to startle the snake. This mountain monk’s eyes are wide and his mouth agape. I guarantee they will retreat three thousand miles.]”
~~~

“When one afflicted with blindness comes, you raise the hammer or hold up the whisk, but he cannot see it. [Truly blind! This is indeed receiving beings and benefiting living beings, yet perhaps he is not really unable to see.]”

“When one afflicted with deafness comes, you employ the samādhi of speech, but he cannot hear it. [Truly deaf! This is indeed receiving beings and benefiting living beings, yet perhaps he is not really deaf. Who is it that has not heard?]”

“When one afflicted with muteness comes, you tell him to speak, but he cannot speak. [Truly mute! This is indeed receiving beings and benefiting living beings, yet perhaps he is not really mute. Who is it that has not spoken?]”

“Now, how are they to be received? If one cannot receive such people, the Buddha Dharma has no efficacy!” [Indeed, how true these words are. This mountain monk folds his hands and surrenders. They have already been received! Then strike.]

A monk sought instruction from Yunmen. [He also wanted everyone in all quarters to know. Hit!]

Yunmen said, “Make a prostration.” [When the wind moves, the grass bends. Bah!]

The monk made a prostration and rose. [This monk has snapped the staff.]

Yunmen jabbed him with his staff. The monk stepped back. Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with blindness.” [Truly blind! Do not say that this monk’s blindness is good.]

He again called him to come forward. The monk came forward. [A second ladle of foul water is poured over him. Avalokiteśvara has come! At that moment, it would have been good to give a shout.]

Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with deafness.” [Truly deaf! Do not say that this monk’s deafness is good.]

Then Yunmen said, “Do you understand?” [Why not give him the proper fodder? At that moment, it would have been good not to make a sound.]

The monk said, “I do not understand.” [A double koan. O heavens, O heavens!]

Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with muteness.” [Truly mute! His mouth is flapping away. Do not say that this monk’s muteness is good.]

At this, the monk had an awakening. [Drawing the bow after the thief has passed—what bowl are you looking for?]

Xuansha had penetrated to the place where emotional defilements and conceptual thoughts are utterly cut off, pure and naked, bare and open; only then could he speak in this way. At that time, monasteries in all quarters stood facing one another.

In addressing the assembly, he would ordinarily say: “The venerable elders in all quarters all speak of receiving beings and benefiting living beings. But if three kinds of patients suddenly come, how are they to be received? When one afflicted with blindness comes, you raise the hammer or hold up the whisk, but he cannot see it. When one afflicted with deafness comes, you employ the samādhi of speech, but he cannot hear it. When one afflicted with muteness comes, you tell him to speak, but he cannot speak. Now, how are they to be received? If one cannot receive such people, the Buddha Dharma has no efficacy!” If people today understand this in terms of blindness, deafness, and muteness, they will ultimately grope without finding it. Therefore it is said: do not die within the words and phrases; you must understand Xuansha’s intent. Xuansha often used these words to receive people.

A monk who had long been with Xuansha once asked during a Dharma hall: “Regarding the saying about the three kinds of patients, do you permit this student to state its principle?” Xuansha said, “I permit it.” The monk then offered his respects and went out. Xuansha said, “No, no.” This monk understood Xuansha’s intent. Later Fayan said, “When I heard Chan Master Dizang recount this monk’s words, only then did I understand the saying about the three kinds of patients.” If you say that this monk did not understand, why did Fayan speak thus? If you say that he did understand, why did Xuansha say, “No, no”?

One day Dizang said, “I have heard that Your Reverence has a saying about three kinds of patients. Is this so?” Xuansha said, “Yes.” Dizang said, “Guichen now has eyes, ears, nose, and tongue. How would Your Reverence receive him?” Xuansha then stopped. If one understands Xuansha’s intent, how could it lie in words and phrases? What he understood was naturally quite exceptional.

Later, a monk presented this to Yunmen. Yunmen immediately understood its intent and said, “Make a prostration.” The monk made a prostration and rose. Yunmen jabbed him with his staff. The monk stepped back. Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with blindness.” He again called him to come forward, and the monk came forward. Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with deafness.” Then he said, “Do you understand?” The monk said, “I do not understand.” Yunmen said, “You are not afflicted with muteness.” At this, the monk had an awakening. If he had been a real man at that moment, when Yunmen said, “Make a prostration,” he would have overturned the Chan seat. How could there have been so much tangled vine?

Now tell me: were Yunmen’s and Xuansha’s points of understanding the same or different? The points at which these two understood were entirely the same. Observe how the ancient masters came forth and devised ten thousand skillful means, their intent being at the hook’s point. With so many painstaking words, they wished only that each of you would clearly

understand this one matter. Master Wuzu said: “One person can speak of it but does not understand; another understands but cannot speak of it.”

If these two came to seek instruction, how would you distinguish them? If you cannot distinguish these two, I guarantee that you will be unable to free people from attachment and release them from bondage. If you can distinguish them, then as soon as I see you enter the gate, I shall put on straw sandals and walk through your belly several times! Yet you still do not awaken—what bowl are you looking for? Go out, and do not understand this as blindness, deafness, and muteness.”

If you calculate in this way! Therefore it is said: “When the eyes see forms, be as if blind; when the ears hear sounds, be as if deaf.” It is also said: “With eyes full, do not see forms; with ears full, do not hear sounds. Mañjuśrī is always before the eyes; Avalokiteśvara blocks the ear faculty.” At this point, when seeing is like not seeing and hearing is like not hearing, only then are you not far from Xuansha’s intent. Do you all recognize where the person of blindness, deafness, and muteness rests? Look to Xuedou’s verse:

Blind, deaf, and mute—[Already before words: all three apertures are fully clear. It has already become a complete matter.]

All responsive capacities are utterly cut off. [Where will you grope? Can you still make calculations? What connection is there?]

Above heaven and below heaven, [The true principle is free in itself. I too am thus.]

Worthy of laughter, worthy of sorrow. [What is there to laugh at? What is there to grieve over? Half bright, half dark.]

Loulou cannot distinguish the true colors; [Blind fellow! A master craftsman leaves no trace. Truly blind!]

How could Shikuang recognize the mysterious strings? [Deaf fellow! Great merit receives no reward. Truly deaf!]

Better to sit alone beneath an empty window, [Only this will do. Do not make a livelihood in a ghost cave. Smash the lacquer bucket all at once.]

For leaves to fall and flowers to bloom each has its season. [What season is it now? Never take this as a matter of doing nothing. Today passes from dawn to dusk; tomorrow also passes from dawn to dusk.]

He further said, “Do you understand?” [He repeats the verse.]

“A holeless iron hammer!” [Take it away yourself. What a pity he let it pass. Then strike.]

Blind, deaf, and mute; all responsive capacities are utterly cut off. Whether you see or do not see, hear or do not hear, speak or do not speak, Xuedou has swept them all away for you at once. The views and calculations of blindness, deafness, muteness, and responsive capacities are utterly cut off; none of them is of any use. This matter that goes beyond is truly blind, truly deaf, and truly mute—without capacity or contrivance.

Above heaven and below heaven, worthy of laughter and worthy of sorrow. Xuedou raises with one hand and presses down with the other. But tell me: what is there to laugh at? What is there to grieve over? Worthy of laughter: mute, yet not mute; deaf, yet not deaf. Worthy of sorrow: plainly not blind, yet blind; plainly not deaf, yet deaf.

Loulou cannot distinguish the true colors. Unable to distinguish blue, yellow, red, and white, he is precisely blind! Loulou was a man in the time of the Yellow Emperor. From a hundred paces away, he could see the tip of an autumn hair; his eyesight was extremely keen. When the Yellow Emperor traveled to the Red Water and lost a pearl, he ordered Lizhu to seek it, but he could not find it; he ordered Chigou to seek it, but he too could not find it. Only after he ordered Xiangwang to seek it was it obtained. Hence it is said, “When Xiangwang arrives, light shines brilliantly; where Loulou walks, waves surge to heaven.” At this lofty point, even Loulou’s eyes cannot distinguish its true colors.

How could Shikuang recognize the mysterious strings? Shikuang, courtesy name Ziye, was the son of Duke Jing of Jin in Jiangzhou during the Zhou dynasty. [Another account says that he was the grand music master of Duke Ping of Jin.] He was skilled at distinguishing the five notes and six pitch-pipes, and could hear ants fighting across a mountain. At the time when Jin and Chu contended for supremacy, Shikuang merely played the qin; by plucking the wind strings, he knew that Chu could not succeed in battle. Yet Xuedou says that he still did not recognize the mysterious strings. A person who is not deaf yet is deaf: at this lofty point, even Shikuang cannot recognize the mysterious sound.

Xuedou says: I too do not become Loulou, nor do I become Shikuang. Better to sit alone beneath an empty window; for leaves to fall and flowers to bloom each has its season. If one reaches this state, then although seeing is like not seeing, hearing like not hearing, and speaking like not speaking, when hungry one eats and when tired one sleeps, letting leaves fall and flowers bloom as they will. When leaves fall, it is autumn; when flowers bloom, it is spring. Each has its own season. Xuedou has swept them all away for you at once.

Then he lets out one more line and says: “Do you understand?” Xuedou, exhausted in strength and spirit, can only say, “A holeless iron hammer.” This sentence must be looked at urgently with the eye to be seen; if you deliberate, you again miss it.

The master held up the whisk and said, “Do you see?”

Then he struck the Chan seat once and said, “Do you hear?”

Descending from the Chan seat, he said, “Can you speak?”

[Iron Broom]: What instruction does the teacher have?

The master held up the whisk and said, “Do you see?”

Answer: “I see!”

Then he struck the Chan seat once and said, “Do you hear?”

Answer: “I hear!”

Descending from the Chan seat, he said, “Can you speak?”

Answer: “A mouth is but two pieces of skin.”

[lvm]: Neither blind, deaf, nor mute.

[Snow Mountain Youth]: Since one is neither blind, deaf, nor mute, why does one always hear without hearing, see without seeing, and speak without being able to speak?

[89] Daowu’s Whole Body Is Hands and Eyes

[Eighty-Nine] Daowu’s Whole-Body Hands and Eyes

Pointer: “With the whole body being eyes, one cannot see; with the whole body being ears, one cannot hear; with the whole body being a mouth, one cannot speak; with the whole body being mind, one cannot discern. Set aside the whole body for now. Suppose there were no eyes—how would one see? No ears—how would one hear? No mouth—how would one speak? No mind—how would one discern? If, within this, you can turn about and gain even a thread of insight, you will join the ancient Buddhas in study. Set study aside for now: tell me, with whom would you study?”

[Eighty-Nine] The Case:

Yunyan asked Daowu, “Why does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion use so many hands and eyes?” [At that moment, he should have been given the appropriate fodder. What do you ordinarily run about doing? Venerable, you ask, “Why?”]

Daowu said, “It is like someone reaching behind with a hand in the middle of the night to feel for the pillow.” [Why not use the appropriate fodder? One blind man leading a crowd of blind men!]

Yunyan said, “I understand.” [Following one mistake with another. He has deceived a whole boatload of people. The same pit, no different earth. He cannot avoid blunting the edge and injuring his hand.]

Daowu said, “How do you understand it?” [Why trouble to ask further? Yet it must be asked. He deserves a sharp squeeze.]

Yunyan said, “The whole body is hands and eyes.” [What connection does that have? Making a living in a ghost cave. Washing clods of earth in mud.]

Daowu said, “You have put it very well, but you have said only eighty percent.” [The same pit, no different earth. A servant sees the maid being diligent. A leprous child seeks a companion.]

Yunyan said, “How would you put it, elder brother?” [How could you contend for another’s place? Yet he too deserves a sharp squeeze.]

Daowu said, “The whole body is hands and eyes.” [A shrimp cannot jump out of the bucket. Change your eyes; move your tongue. Have you attained the full hundred percent yet? Calling one’s father “uncle.”]

Yunyan and Daowu studied together under Yaoshan and, for forty years, never lay down to sleep. From Yaoshan emerged the Caodong school. Three of his descendants had flourishing Dharma lineages: Dongshan under Yunyan, Shishuang under Daowu, and Jia-shan under Chuanzhi.

The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion has eighty-four thousand mudrā arms. Great Compassion has so many hands and eyes—do you all have them as well, or not? Baizhang said, “All language and written words ultimately turn back to oneself.”

Yunyan regularly accompanied Daowu in seeking instruction and discerning the matter. One day he asked, “Why does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion use so many hands and eyes?” At the outset, Daowu should have struck him across the back with a staff, sparing us all the later entanglements.

Daowu was too compassionate to do this. Instead, he explained the matter to him, intending to make him understand at once. He said, “It is like someone reaching behind with a hand in the middle of the night to feel for the pillow.” In the deep night, when there is no lamplight, one feels for the pillow with one’s hand. Tell me, where are the eyes then?

Yunyan immediately said, “I understand.”

Daowu said, “How do you understand it?”

Yunyan said, “The whole body is hands and eyes.”

Daowu said, “You have put it very well, but you have said only eighty percent.”

Yunyan said, “How would you put it, elder brother?”

Daowu said, “The whole body is hands and eyes.”

Tell me: what is meant by “the whole body is” in the first statement, and what is meant by “the whole body is” in the second? Though it seems like rotten mud, it is free and unconfined. Nowadays, many people explain it conceptually: “The first ‘whole body’ is not it; the second ‘whole body’ is it.” They merely gnaw at the words of the ancients and die beneath the ancients’ words. They do not realize that the ancients’ intent does not lie in their words; these words were employed only because there was no alternative.

Nowadays, people add footnotes and establish fixed rules, saying that if one penetrates this koan, one has completed one’s investigation and understanding. They touch their whole body with their hands, touch lanterns and dew-posts, and take it all as talk of the whole body. If you understand it this way, you do considerable harm to the ancients! Therefore it is said: they investigate living words, not dead words. One must cut off emotional defilements and conceptual thought, becoming utterly pure and bare, wholly free and open; only then can one perceive the words concerning Great Compassion.

Did you not see how Caoshan asked a monk, “When one manifests a form in response to things, like the moon in water, how is it?” The monk said, “Like a donkey looking into a well.” Caoshan said, “You have put it very well, but you have said only eighty percent.” The monk said, “How would you put it, Master?” Caoshan said, “Like a well looking at a donkey.” This is precisely the same intent. If you seek to understand it through words, you will never escape the bounds drawn by Daowu and Yunyan.

Xuedou was a true master. He did not die beneath the words, but went straight to the source. His verse says:

The whole body is—[The four limbs and eight joints. This is not yet the ultimate ground of a patch-robed monk.]

The whole body is—[There is still half a side above the crown of the head. You remain in the nest and cave. Blind!]

To bring it forth is still a hundred thousand miles away. [It cannot simply be let pass. More than a hundred thousand miles away!]

The roc spreads its wings, surpassing the clouds of the six directions; [A petty realm of experience, taken to be extraordinary. A dot!]

Beating the wind, it stirs the waters of the four seas. [A petty speck of dust, taken as though no one in the world could withstand you. Excessive!]

What mote of dust is this that suddenly arises? [Once again he adds footnotes for Chan practitioners. Once cut off, where has it been placed?]

What tiny fraction remains unstill? [Separate, separate! It has all been blown away. Cut!]

Have you not seen—[Off he goes again like this.]

The jewels of Indra’s net hang as a model, reflections upon reflections; [What a great Xuedou, making such a move! What a pity—he is still spinning entanglements.]

From where do hands and eyes arise at the tip of the staff? [Ho! Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. I cannot let you off. Throughout the great earth, no one can catch a breath. Even if you are let off, you must still receive the staff. Again he strikes and cries: Tell me, which is the monk’s and which is Xuedou’s?]

Ho! [After three shouts and four shouts, what then?]

“The whole body is; the whole body is”—if you say that “reaching behind to feel for the pillow” is it, or that feeling one’s body with the hand is it, then such an understanding is entirely a livelihood in a ghost cave. In the end, neither “the whole body” nor “the whole body” is it. If you wish to understand these words about Great Compassion through emotional consciousness, you are truly still a hundred thousand miles away! Xuedou brought forth a living phrase: “To bring it forth is still a hundred thousand miles away.”

The latter lines praise the extraordinary point in Yunyan and Daowu's exchange: "The roc spreads its wings, surpassing the clouds of the six directions; / Beating the wind, it stirs the waters of the four seas." The great roc swallows dragons. It beats the wind and churns the waves with its wings; the waters part for three thousand miles, and it seizes and swallows the dragon. Xuedou says that if you were such a great roc, able to beat the wind and stir the waves, you would indeed be exceedingly majestic.

Yet viewed through the thousand hands and eyes of Great Compassion, this is merely like a tiny mote of dust suddenly arising, or like a breath of wind not yet stilled within a hair's breadth. Xuedou says that if you use feeling the body with your hands as hands and eyes, what use could that be? In relation to the words about Great Compassion, it is simply not there yet. Therefore he says: "What mote of dust is this that suddenly arises? / What tiny fraction remains unstill?" Xuedou considered himself a true master; at one stroke, he had swept away all traces.

Yet, unavoidably, he again revealed an opening afterward. Offering an analogy, he remained as before within the drawn bounds: "Have you not seen—the jewels of Indra's net hang as a model, reflections upon reflections." Xuedou cites the jeweled net of Indra as an illustration. Tell me, where do the hands and eyes fall?

The Huayan school establishes four dharma realms: first, the dharma realm of principle, which clarifies that all is equally of one flavor; second, the dharma realm of phenomena, which clarifies that all phenomena are constituted entirely by principle; third, the dharma realm of the nonobstruction of principle and phenomena, which clarifies that principle and phenomena interpenetrate without obstruction, whether great or small; and fourth, the dharma realm of the nonobstruction among phenomena, which clarifies that one phenomenon enters all phenomena and encompasses all phenomena, mutually interfusing simultaneously without obstruction. Thus it is said: as soon as a single mote of dust is raised, the entire great earth is encompassed. Each mote contains boundless dharma realms. Since one mote is thus, all motes are likewise.

Indra's net is the net of maṇi jewels before the Hall of Good Dharma of Śakra, lord of the devas. In each jewel appear hundreds of thousands of jewels, and within each of those hundreds of thousands of jewels, the one jewel also appears. They reflect one another layer upon layer; principal and attendant are inexhaustible. This illustrates the dharma realm of the nonobstruction among phenomena. Formerly, National Master Fazang established the analogy of mirrors and a lamp: ten mirrors arranged in a circle with a single lamp placed in their center. If one looks into the eastern mirror, the lamp is distinctly reflected in all nine mirrors at once.

If one looks into the southern mirror, every mirror is the same. Thus, when the World-Honored One first attained perfect awakening, without leaving the bodhimaṇḍa, he nevertheless ascended throughout the Trāyastriṃśa heavens and all places, teaching the Avataṃsaka Sūtra in seven places and nine assemblies. Xuedou uses the jewels of Indra's net to illustrate the dharma realm of the nonobstruction among phenomena. The teaching of the six characteristics is likewise very clear: totality and particularity, sameness and difference, formation and disintegration. Raise one characteristic, and all six are included.

But sentient beings use this every day without knowing it. Xuedou brings forth the jeweled net of Indra as an illustration—how much more so in this case concerning Great Compassion. It is exactly so. If you can skillfully comprehend the staff within this jeweled net, with spiritual powers and wondrous functioning, entering and leaving without obstruction, only then can you perceive the hands and eyes. Therefore Xuedou says, "From where do hands and eyes arise at the tip of the staff?" He teaches you to realize it at the tip of the staff and assume it upon hearing the shout.

When Deshan entered the hall, he immediately struck with his staff. Tell me, where were the hands and eyes? When Linji entered the hall, he immediately gave a shout. Tell me, where were the hands and eyes?

Tell me, why did Xuedou add the word "Ho!" at the very end?

Investigate!

[90] Zhimen: Moon in the Clam, Fetus in the Rabbit

[90] Zhimen: Clam-Moon and Rabbit Conception

Pointer: Before sound, there is a single phrase that a thousand sages cannot transmit; before one's face, a single thread continues without interruption through all time. Pure and bare, utterly naked; hair loose, ears upright. Tell me, how is it? Try raising it and see.

[90] The Case:

A monk asked Zhimen, "What is the essence of prajñā?" [The whole body is without shadow or form. It silences the tongues of everyone under heaven. What use is there in making distinctions between function and essence?]

Zhimen said, "A clam contains the bright moon." [Leave aside light swallowing the myriad forms; what of the true eye at the end of the staff? The crooked does not conceal the straight. Frost upon snow—another layer!]

The monk said, "What is the function of prajñā?" [Retreat three thousand li! What use do you want to make of function?]

Zhimen said, “A rabbit conceives.” [Dangerous! A bitter gourd is bitter to its root; a sweet melon is sweet through its stem. Making a livelihood amid light and shadows, one does not leave Zhimen’s den. If someone could emerge from it, then tell me: would that be the essence of prajñā, or its function? This is only adding mud to earth!]

Zhimen’s words, “A clam contains the bright moon; a rabbit conceives,” both draw upon the imagery of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Yet, although this is so, the ancients’ intent was not in the clam and rabbit. Zhimen was a venerable elder in Yunmen’s assembly; a single utterance had to embody three statements: the statement that encompasses heaven and earth, the statement that cuts off the myriad streams, and the statement that follows the waves and pursues the billows. There was no need to arrange anything; it was naturally just right. He went straight to the dangerous point in answering this monk, slightly revealing the edge of his sharpness—indeed, it was extraordinary. Yet, even so, the ancients never toyed with light and shadows; they merely pointed out a path for you, so that people might see.

The monk asked, “What is the essence of prajñā?” Zhimen said, “A clam contains the bright moon.” Clams are found in the Han River, and within them are bright pearls. When the Mid-Autumn moon rises, clams float to the water’s surface, open their shells to receive the moonlight, and, moved by it, produce pearls—the pearls of Hepu are such. If there is a moon at Mid-Autumn, the pearls are many; if there is no moon, they are few. “What is the function of prajñā?” Zhimen said, “A rabbit conceives.”

The meaning is no different. Rabbits belong to yin. When the Mid-Autumn moon arises, they open their mouths and swallow its light, and thereby conceive, giving birth from their mouths. Here too, if there is a moon, they are many; if there is no moon, they are few. When the ancients answered, there were not so many complications. They merely borrowed this imagery to answer concerning the light of prajñā. Yet even so, their intent was not in words and phrases. It is later people who make a livelihood in words and phrases.

Have you not seen what Pan Shan said: “The moon of mind stands solitary and full; its light swallows the myriad forms.” The light does not illuminate an object, nor does the object itself remain. When both light and object have vanished, what is there again? People today merely stare wide-eyed and call this light. They form interpretations based only on feelings, driving pegs into empty space. The ancients said, “At the gates of your six sense faculties, great radiance shines forth day and night, illuminating and breaking through mountains, rivers, and the great earth.” It is not only the eye faculty that emits light; the nose, tongue, body, and mind also all emit light. At this point, you must directly set aside the six sense faculties, leaving not a single thing beneath them, pure and bare, utterly naked. Only then will you see where these words come to rest. Xuedou expressed this precisely in his verse:

A single expanse, empty and still, cuts off conceptual feelings. [To intend it with the mind is already to miss it; to stir a thought is already to be separated from it. Even the Buddha-eye cannot glimpse it.]

From this, humans and devas see Empty-Born. [Subhūti deserves thirty blows—what use is this old fellow? Even if it were Subhūti, he too would retreat three thousand li!]

The clam contains the mysterious rabbit: a meaning profound upon profound. [It must be the person himself who attains it. What meaning is there? Why speak further of a meaning profound upon profound?]

It has once made war among Chan practitioners. [A thousand spears are now at rest; all under heaven is at peace. Do you understand? Striking with the staff, he says: “Reverend, how many have you eaten?”]

“A single expanse, empty and still, cuts off conceptual feelings.” With this one line, Xuedou expresses it well, naturally revealing the ancients’ intent. When the six sense faculties are utterly clear and still, what is this? It is simply this single expanse of empty luminosity and stillness. There is no need to seek it in the heavens or ask it from others; the ever-present light naturally appears before you. Here is a sheer wall rising a thousand fathoms: to cut off conceptual feelings is precisely to cut off verbal and conceptual defilements.

Fayan says in his “Verse on the Nature of Absolute Reality and Perfection”: “When principle reaches its utmost, conceptual discourse is forgotten; how can it be made equal through analogy? In the end, the moon of a frosty night naturally falls into the stream before one’s door. The fruit ripens, heavy even for the gibbons; the mountain is distant, and the road seems lost. Raise your head: the lingering sunlight is there—it has always been west of one’s dwelling.” Thus it is said: “Mind is the faculty, dharmas are objects; the two are like marks upon a mirror. When the dust and grime are exhausted, the light first appears; when mind and dharmas are both forgotten, nature itself is true.” Again it is said: “I have always dwelt in a three-bay thatched hut; one ray of spiritual radiance leaves the myriad realms at ease. Do not use right and wrong to judge me; the contrivances of this fleeting life are unrelated to me.” This verse too reveals a single expanse, empty and still, cutting off conceptual feelings.

“From this, humans and devas see Empty-Born.” Have you not seen Subhūti seated in meditation within a cliff cave, while the devas rained down flowers in praise? The Venerable One said, “Who is it that rains flowers from the sky in praise?” The deity said, “I am Brahmā.” The Venerable One said, “Why do you offer praise?” The deity said, “I revere the Venerable One for skillfully expounding prajñāpāramitā.”

The Venerable One said, “I have never uttered a single word about prajñā; why do you offer praise?” The deity said, “The Venerable One does not speak, and I do not hear. No speaking and no hearing—this is true prajñā.” Then the earth moved

again, and flowers rained down. See how skillfully Subhūti expounded prajñā, yet did not speak of essence or function. If you see it here, you may then see what Zhimen meant by “a clam contains the bright moon; a rabbit conceives.”

Although the ancients’ intent was not in words and phrases, their responses nonetheless contain a profound meaning. This drew from Xuedou the line, “The clam contains the mysterious rabbit: a meaning profound upon profound.” At this point, it “has once made war among Chan practitioners.” Chan followers throughout the world engage in noisy, bustling discussions, yet not one of them has ever dreamed of reaching it. If you wish to study together with Zhimen and Xuedou, you must begin by applying your own eye.

The Blue Cliff Record of Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu, Volume Nine (End)

Kangkang : The title cannot be changed. The third character on line 6 of the teacher’s text was altered without authorization from “ ” to “ .”

lvm : Thank you! It should be “ .”

[Iron Broom]: A phrase before sound that a thousand sages cannot transmit? Does the Flower Sermon and Mahākāśyapa’s smile not count as transmission?

[Truth]: The Flower Sermon and the smile have both already been transmitted.

[Truth]: Request the Dharma for the sake of sentient beings. Do not forget: be good to others and to yourself.

[wind]: You must begin by applying your own eye.

[Iron Broom]: What is the appearance of prajñā?

[wind] (in reply to [Iron Broom]: “What is the appearance of prajñā?”): This very seeing and hearing are not seeing and hearing; no other sounds or forms can be presented to you!

[lvm]: [Iron Broom] is eating mooncakes.

[wshiyao]: When there is no appearance of prajñā, how can mooncakes be eaten?

[lvm]: The mooncakes are eating [wshiyao].

[wshiyao]: Hahahaha—indeed, there is no finger pointing to the moon.

[91] Yanguan’s Rhinoceros Fan

[Case 91] Yanguan’s Rhino Fan

The Blue Cliff Record, Volume Ten, by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

Pointer: Transcend feelings and detach from views; cast off bonds and release attachments. Raise up the supreme vehicle of the tradition and uphold the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye. One must also respond in unison throughout the ten directions and be exquisitely adaptable on all eight sides. Having reached such a state, tell me: is there still anyone who attains together, realizes together, dies together, and is born together? Let us examine it.

[Case 91] The Case:

One day, Yanguan called to his attendant, “Bring me the rhino fan.” [There is no small amount of entangling talk here. How about this? What good news!]

The attendant said, “The fan is broken.” [What a pity. What good news! What are you saying?]

Yanguan said, “Since the fan is broken, bring me back the rhinoceros.” [There is no small amount of leakage here. Youzhou would still be tolerable; Silla is the worst. What does the monk want the rhinoceros for?]

The attendant had no reply. [Indeed, he is an iron hammer without a hole. What a pity!]

Touzi said, “I do not begrudge bringing it out, but I fear that its horns are incomplete.” [It resembles it, but it has two ends and three faces. He is merely giving an explanation.]

Xuedou commented, “I want incomplete horns.” [What use are they? Making the best of a mistake.]

Shishuang said, “If it were the venerable monk, there would be none.” [What are you saying? You have bumped into your nostrils.]

Xuedou commented, “The rhinoceros is still here.” [Dangerous! You almost mistook it. Draw in your head!]

Zifu drew a circle and wrote the character “ox” inside it. [There is no need to pick out the weeds. A fellow playing with shadows!]

Xuedou commented, “Why did you not bring it out just now?” [Unable to distinguish gold from brass. He too is a fellow in the weeds!]

Baofu said, “Venerable sir, you are advanced in years; it would be better to ask someone else.” [Scolding an official in a remote place. Why speak so bitterly and laboriously?]

Xuedou commented, “What a pity—labor without result.” [He himself is included in this. He deserves thirty blows as well. Certainly!]

One day, Yanguan called to his attendant, “Bring me the rhino fan.” Although this matter does not lie in words and phrases, it is necessary to test a person’s lifelong spirit and capacity for action; yet it must be made manifest through such borrowed words. On the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month, one must exert one’s full strength and be master of oneself. When the myriad circumstances come crashing in, one sees them without being moved. This may be called achievement without effort and strength without exertion. Yanguan was Chan Master Qi’an.

In ancient times, rhinoceros horn was used to make fans. Surely Yanguan knew that the rhino fan was broken; that was why he questioned the attendant. The attendant said, “The fan is broken.” Look at these people of old: throughout the twelve periods of the day, they were constantly encountering and grappling with this. Yanguan said, “Since the fan is broken, bring me back the rhinoceros.” Tell me, what did he want the rhinoceros for? He only wanted to test whether the person knew where to settle.

Touzi said, “I do not begrudge bringing it out, but I fear that its horns are incomplete.” Xuedou said, “I want incomplete horns.” Both immediately struck the mark upon hearing the words.

Shishuang said, “If it were the venerable monk, there would be none.” Xuedou said, “The rhinoceros is still here.”

Zifu drew a circle and wrote the character “ox” inside it. As he was a Dharma heir of Yangshan, he habitually liked to receive people through concrete situations, thereby clarifying this matter. Xuedou said, “Why did you not bring it out just now?” Once again, he pierced his nostrils.

Baofu said, “Venerable sir, you are advanced in years; it would be better to ask someone else.” These words are sound and fitting. The preceding three responses are easier to see through, but this one has a far-reaching implication. Xuedou shattered it as well. In former days, while studying under the Scripture Repository Master Qing, this mountain monk said that the venerable monk was old and senile, remembering the head but forgetting the tail.

Just now he asked for the fan, and now he asks for the rhinoceros. It is hard on the attendant; hence Baofu said, “It would be better to ask someone else.” Xuedou said, “What a pity—labor without result.” These are all established forms of commenting. The ancients thoroughly saw through this matter. Though each spoke differently, whenever they spoke, every shot struck the mark. There must be a path by which one can emerge; not one phrase may lose the lifeblood. Nowadays, when people are questioned, they only engage in conceptual analysis. Therefore, throughout the twelve periods of the day, one must chew on it until droplets of water freeze, seeking a place of realization.

See how Xuedou composed a string of verses:

The rhino fan has been used for many years; [In summer it brings coolness; in winter it brings warmth. Everyone fully possesses it—why do they not know? Who has not used it?]

Yet when asked, one turns out not to know at all. [Knowing is knowing; understanding is not understanding. Do not deceive people so readily! Nor can you blame others.]

Its boundless cool breeze and horns [Where are they? If you do not realize it in yourself, where will you realize it? Above heaven and below heaven, the horns are reborn. What is it? Raising waves where there is no wind.]

All vanish like clouds and rain, impossible to pursue. [Vast heaven, vast heaven! This too is losing money and suffering punishment.]

Xuedou further said, “If you want the cool breeze to return and the horns to be reborn, [Everyone has a rhino fan and, throughout the twelve periods of the day, entirely relies on its power. Why, then, when asked, do they not know at all? Can you say it?]

I ask each Chan practitioner to offer a turning word.” [Yanguan is still present. There have already been three turns.]

He asked, “Since the fan is broken, bring me back the rhinoceros.” [There may be one or two such people. Bah! It would be fine to overturn the Chan seat as well.]

At that time, a monk came forward and said, “The assembly, go to the hall for practice!” [Drawing the bow after the thief has gone; the spear has already been taken away. No village ahead, no inn behind.]

Xuedou shouted, “I cast the hook to fish for a kun-whale, but caught only a frog,” and then stepped down from his seat. [He provoked him into being like this. Drawing the bow after the thief has gone. Foguo himself comments on these words: “I ask you all directly: when this monk said, ‘The assembly, go to the hall for practice,’ did he understand or not? If he did not understand, how could he speak in this way? But if you say he understood, then Xuedou said, ‘I cast the hook to fish for a kun-whale, but caught only a frog,’ and stepped down from his seat. Tell me, where precisely is the error? Please investigate this carefully.”]

“The rhino fan has been used for many years; yet when asked, one turns out not to know at all.” Everyone has a rhino fan and, throughout the twelve periods of the day, entirely relies on its power. Why is it that, when questioned, they turn away without knowing?

The attendant, Touzi, and even Baofu all did not know. But tell me, did Xuedou know? Have you not heard of Wuzhu’s visit to Mañjuśrī? While they were drinking tea, Mañjuśrī raised a glass cup and said, “Do they have this in the South?” Wuzhu said, “No.” Mañjuśrī said, “What do they ordinarily use to drink tea?” Wuzhu had no reply. If you know where this koan comes down, then you will know that the rhino fan possesses boundless cool breezes, and you will also see the rhinoceros’s majestic horns.

These four old fellows spoke in this way, yet like morning clouds and evening rain, they are gone and cannot be pursued. Xuedou further said, “If you want the cool breeze to return and the horns to be reborn, I ask each Chan practitioner to offer a turning word.” He asked, “Since the fan is broken, bring me back the rhinoceros.” At that time, a Chan practitioner came forward and said, “The assembly, go to the hall for practice.”

This monk seized the authority of the host. What he said was exceedingly well put, yet it reached only eighty percent. To make it a full hundred percent, one would have to overturn the Chan seat. Tell me, did this monk understand the rhinoceros or not? If he did not understand, how could he speak in this way? If he did understand, why did Xuedou not approve of him? Why did he say, “I cast the hook to fish for a kun-whale, but caught only a frog”? Tell me, ultimately, what is this? You all have nothing to do—try taking it up and examining it.

[92] Mañjuśrī Strikes the Gavel: “Thus”

[92] Mañjuśrī Strikes the Gavel: Thus It Is

Pointer: Pluck a string and distinguish its tune—an encounter rare in a thousand years. Seeing a rabbit, release the hawk; in an instant, seize the prize. Gather all speech into one phrase; contain the great chiliocosm within a single mote of dust. Living together and dying together, penetrating seven times and opening eight apertures. Is there anyone who can offer proof? Try raising it and see.

[92] The Case:

One day, the World-Honored One ascended the seat. [Host and guest were both lost. This was not the first time something slipped out.]

Mañjuśrī struck the gavel and said, “Clearly observe the Dharma of the Dharma King: the Dharma of the Dharma King is thus.” [The only son has received it personally.]

The World-Honored One then descended from the seat. [Do not speak of sorrow to a sorrowful person; speak it to one, and it will grieve them to death. Beating drums and playing the lute, they meet as two masters.]

Even before the World-Honored One held up the flower, this news was already present. From Deer Park to the Bati River, when had he ever needed to use the precious vajra king sword? If, among those assembled at the time, there had been a patch-robed monk with real spirit who could have grasped it, he would have spared him the later flower-holding and all that ensuing mess. During the World-Honored One’s long silence, Mañjuśrī gave him a jab, and he descended from the seat. At that time too, this news was present: Śākyamuni closed his room, and Vimalakīrti sealed his mouth. All were like this. It had already been spoken.

It is like the exchange in which Emperor Suzong asked National Teacher Zhong about building a seamless stūpa, or the outsider’s question to the Buddha: “I do not ask about speech; I do not ask about silence.” Look at the conduct of those who have gone beyond: when did they ever enter a ghost cave to make a living? Some say, “The meaning lies in silence”; others say, “It lies in the long pause.” Speech makes clear the matter of silence; silence makes clear the matter of speech.

Yongjia said, “When silent, he speaks; when speaking, he is silent.” If you understand it all in this way, even through three lives and sixty kalpas you will not have dreamed of it! But if you can directly take it up here and now, you will no longer see either ordinary beings or sages: dharmas are equal, without high or low. Every day, you walk hand in hand with the Buddhas of the three times. Look on, and you will naturally see what Xuedou expressed in this verse:

Among the host of sages, only adepts know. [Do not slander old man Śākyamuni. Give credit to Linji and Deshan. Among a thousand or ten thousand, it is hard to find even one or half of one.]

The Dharma King’s decree is not like this. [Those who follow others are as numerous as hemp and millet. Three heads and two faces. Plainly, how many can reach this point?]

If among the assembly there had been a Sindhava adept, [Even among them, clever people are hard to find. Mañjuśrī was no adept. The ācārya certainly was not.]

Why would Mañjuśrī have needed to strike the gavel? [What harm in striking it once more? There is no need at all for a second or third blow. What would a single timely phrase say? Perilous!]

“Among the host of sages, only adepts know.” The eighty thousand great beings at Vulture Peak were all sages. Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and even Maitreya were assembled, principals and attendants together. One must possess skill beyond skill and marvel beyond marvel before one can know where he lands. Xuedou means that, among the host of sages, not a single person knew it was there. Only an adept would know that it was not so. Why, then, did Mañjuśrī strike the gavel and say, “Clearly observe the Dharma of the Dharma King: the Dharma of the Dharma King is thus”?

Xuedou said, “The Dharma King’s decree is not like this.” Why is this so? If, among the assembly at that time, there had been someone with an eye atop his head and a talisman behind his elbow, who had seen through it before the World-Honored One even ascended the seat, why would Mañjuśrī have needed to strike the gavel?

The Nirvāṇa Sūtra says: “Sindhava is one name for four things: first, salt; second, water; third, a vessel; fourth, a horse. There was a wise minister who was skilled in understanding these four meanings. When the king wished to bathe, he asked for Sindhava, and the minister immediately presented water. When the king asked for food, he presented salt. When the king had finished eating, he presented a vessel for drinking broth. When the king wished to go out, he presented a horse. He responded to the king’s intention and applied it without error.” Clearly, one must be a quick-witted fellow to manage this.

Consider the monk who asked Xiangyan, “What is meant by the king’s asking for Sindhava?” Yan said, “Come over here.” The monk came over. Yan said, “What a complete dullard!” He also asked Zhaozhou, “What is meant by the king’s asking for Sindhava?” Zhaozhou stepped down from his Chan couch, bent forward, and joined his palms.

If there had been a Sindhava adept at the time, who had penetrated it before the World-Honored One ascended the seat, that would still have been somewhat better. Once the World-Honored One ascended the seat and then descended, it was already inopportune; how much more so when Mañjuśrī further struck the gavel, thereby encumbering the World-Honored One once again. Commentary: So where, after all, is this encumbering?

[Iron Broom]: Thus have I heard.

[Fire Dragon]: Encumbering, encumbering.

[Ding Ling]: What does it mean that speech makes clear the matter of silence, and silence makes clear the matter of speech?

[lvm]: Haha! There is no “what does it mean” here. ^o^

[Little Ant]: Having swallowed a scale weight, one’s resolve is iron; ox and horse may gaze at each other, yet never meet.

[Ding Ling]: Bending forward and joining the palms is a gesture of respect, right?

[lvm]: Yes.

[Iron Broom]: Is the Dharma King “thus”? Is the Dharma “thus”?

Ascending the seat is “thus,” but before ascending the seat it is not “thus”?

[Little Ant]: Now it is altogether not thus.

[Iron Broom]: Hello, A’er next door.

[Little Ant]: ^_^

[grand]: [lvm], please say the phrase about “this one” living and dying together.

[lvm]: [Iron Broom]’s “thus.”

[grand]: In accord with the occasion, then it is level. Not in accord with the occasion—what a transgression!!! Haha… lvm has the final phrase; please say it…

[lvm]: Transgression! Transgression!

[Little Ant]: In accord with the occasion, in accord with the occasion.

[Iron Broom]: Killing two birds with one stone—you certainly save yourself trouble.

To borrow a famous saying of Chan Master Yantou: “I am born on the same branch as him, but I do not die on the same branch as him.”

[93] The Great Light Dances with the Saṅgha

[93] Daguang Dances with a Monk

Case:

A monk asked Daguang, “Changqing said, ‘On the occasion of a vegetarian feast and celebration’—what is its meaning?” [Again, this lacquer bucket! It is all right to have doubts. If you do not ask, you will not know.]

Daguang danced. [Do not deceive people to death! It is still just as before.]

The monk bowed. [Off he goes in just that way again. It is so, but I fear he has misunderstood.]

Daguang said, “What did you see that you bow?” [That is a fine pressing question. You must distinguish it clearly before it will do.]

The monk danced. [Painting a cat by following the model. He has indeed misunderstood. A fellow playing with light and shadow.]

Daguang said, “You wild fox spirit!” [This kindness is hard to repay. The thirty-two patriarchs transmitted only this.]

The twenty-eight patriarchs in India and the six patriarchs in China transmitted only this little bit. Do you all know where it lands? If you know, you are spared this error; if you do not know, you are still only wild fox spirits. Someone says, “He twists their nostrils to deceive people.” If it really were so, what sense would that make?

Daguang was skilled at working for others; within his words there was a path by which one could emerge. In general, a lineage master must pull out nails and remove wedges for people, strip away adhesions and untie bonds—only then may he be called a good spiritual friend. Daguang danced, and the monk bowed; at last the monk in turn danced. Daguang said, “You wild fox spirit!” Had he not turned this monk around, the monk would ultimately not have known what was right; you simply keep dancing, each responding in this way—when would you ever come to rest? Daguang’s words, “Wild fox spirit!” cut off Jinniu; they are indeed extraordinary. Therefore it is said: he investigates living phrases, not dead phrases.

Xuedou simply admired his saying, “You wild fox spirit!” and therefore composed this verse. Tell me: are “You wild fox spirit!” and “The head of the storehouse is white; the head of the sea is black” the same or different? And “This lacquer bucket!” and “Fine monk!”—are they the same or different? Do you know? At every encounter, one meets him!

Xuedou’s verse says:

The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep. [Every shot hits the mark. Where can one evade it?]

Who says that yellow leaves are gold? [It may stop a child’s crying for the moment. It can deceive a child, but is of no use.]

If the waves of Caoxi are imitated, [These fellows playing with mud balls—what limit is there? Painting cats by following the model, letting them go down one path.]

Countless ordinary people are submerged. [When they meet a living person, they drag all the patch-robed monks into fruitless groping and leave venerable teachers unable to come forth.]

“The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep.” Daguang’s dancing was the first arrow; his further saying, “You wild fox spirit!” was the latter arrow. These are the fangs and claws handed down from above.

“Who says that yellow leaves are gold?” Yangshan instructed the assembly: “All of you, each turn the light inward and reflect upon yourselves. Do not retain my words. Since beginningless kalpas, you have turned your backs on brightness and cast yourselves toward darkness; the roots of deluded thought are deep and difficult to pull out suddenly. Therefore, expedient means are provisionally established to take away your coarse consciousness, just as yellow leaves are used to stop a child from crying, or sweet fruit is used to exchange for a bitter gourd.”

The ancient worthies provisionally established expedient means for people; once the crying stopped, the yellow leaves were not gold. The World-Honored One’s whole body of teachings delivered during his lifetime was likewise only teaching for stopping cries. “You wild fox spirit!” serves only to exchange their karmic consciousness. Within this there are also provisional and real teachings, illumination and function; only then is it seen that patch-robed monks have something to grasp. If one understands this, it is like a tiger with wings.

“If the waves of Caoxi are imitated.” Suppose that students from all quarters simply all go on dancing in this way, persistently doing just that.

“Countless ordinary people are submerged.” What remedy is there?

[Jingxiang Miaolian]: May I ask: what is the difference between the monk’s dance and Daguang’s dance?

[One]: “Spring Snow on a Bright Day”—the tune is too lofty for most to join.

[Jianwu]: Spring’s intent changes the face; a new song is born.

[Shancai]: Where the elephant king walks, fox tracks vanish.

[lvm]: The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep. Who says that yellow leaves are gold? If the waves of Caoxi are imitated, countless ordinary people are submerged.

[Shancai]: An egret’s shadow crosses the stream; autumn’s feeling is deep. How can one bear the golden wind adding yet another trace?

An egret’s shadow crosses the stream; autumn’s feeling is deep.

How can one bear the golden wind adding yet another trace?

Fallen leaves diligently drift after the waves in vain.

As one wave rises, another sinks.

[hbds]: Do not say the autumn wind is fierce; fallen leaves know autumn best.

[Jianwu] (in reply to [Shancai]: An egret’s shadow crosses the stream; autumn’s feeling is deep. How can one bear the golden wind adding yet another trace?): Not knowing deep from shallow, do you weary the teacher?

[Lianming] (in reply to [lvm]: The first arrow is still light; the latter arrow strikes deep. Who says that yellow leaves are gold? If the waves of Caoxi are imitated, countless ordinary people are submerged.): Teacher, what have you seen that you compose songs in this way?

[lvm]: Wasn’t that Xuedou’s verse?

[Lianming]: Even a child who can read would say that!

[lvm]: Gold.

[Jianwu] (in reply to [Lianming]: Even a child who can read would say that!): Ha ha, it has nothing to do with whether one can read, does it?

[vvvv]: Teacher! It is hot today; here is a fan for you. (Hands over a fan.)

[lvm]: Do not worry, I will not ask you for a rhinoceros.

[Lianming]: Yet you pull the teacher’s nose out of the hall.

[vvvv] (in reply to [lvm]: Do not worry, I will not ask you for a rhinoceros.): ^o^

[Anxin] (in reply to [lvm]: Do not worry, I will not ask you for a rhinoceros.): -

[:)] (in reply to [lvm]: Do not worry, I will not ask you for a rhinoceros.): But I do want to ask you for one.

[Anxin]: I do not understand the rhinoceros and the fan. 12:49:19 6/08/07 (no content)

[:)]: It is an allusion; see [91], “Yanguan’s Fan and Rhinoceros.”

[Anxin]: I do not understand. Right now I want peace of mind, and I do not want to read either. Why not just say plainly whatever you have to say?

[Lianming] (in reply to [lvm]: Gold.): [These fellows playing with mud balls—what limit is there?]

[lvm]: Indeed!

[Lianming]: The teacher truly is my teacher!

[lvm]: Don’t! I am afraid of having my nose pulled.

[Lianming]: This little monk bows and withdraws.

[Lianming] (in reply to [lvm]: Indeed!): Ha ha, what a mind and conduct the teacher has!

[Jianwu]: Ha ha, truly a divine person!

[vvvv] (in reply to [Lianming]: Ha ha, what a mind and conduct the teacher has!): Drink the waters of the Western River in one gulp, and offer tons of fish and shrimp to the water bearer?

[Wuwokong]: It truly is as if the Buddha were still in the world!

[Jianwu]: Ha ha ha, truly a divine person!

[victory]: Ha ha ha

[Shancai] (in reply to [lvm]: Gold.): Buying a hat by looking at someone’s face.

[Lianming]: Painting a cat by following the model.

[Shancai]: On another day, do not cite it wrongly.

[Jianwu] (in reply to [Shancai]: On another day, do not cite it wrongly.): Once it is cited, there is no need to be wrong; no need to revise it—nor any need for another day.

[Jianwu]: Once it is cited, there is no need to be wrong; no need to revise it—there is no need for another day either.

[Jianwu]: Once it is cited, there is no need to be wrong; no need to revise it—there is no other day.

[Lianming]: Fallen leaves diligently drift after the waves in vain,

[Shancai]: …

[Jianwu] (in reply to [Lianming]: Fallen leaves diligently drift after the waves in vain,): As waves rise and leaves fall, diligence is empty.

[Beginning Buddhist Student]: Ha ha, yes.

[Jianwu]: As waves rise and leaves fall, empty diligence.

[lvm] (in reply to [Lianming]: Even a child who can read would say that!): Yellow leaves.

[Lianming]: [It can deceive a child, but is of no use.]

[Shancai]: Official horses tread upon one another.

[Lianming]: Let them go down one path!

[Shancai]: Horses are alike; crows are not.

[Lianming]: As one wave rises, another sinks.

[Shancai]: …

[Anxin] (in reply to [Shancai]: Horses are alike; crows are not.): Peace of mind.

[xin] (in reply to [Shancai]: Horses are alike; crows are not.): -

[Jianwu] (in reply to [Lianming]: As one wave rises, another sinks.): The waves gradually subside, leaving no trace.

[One] (in reply to [Shancai]: Official horses tread upon one another.): Clear-eyed.

[Mind Monk] (in reply to [lvm]: Wasn’t that Xuedou’s verse?): You wild fox spirit!

[lvm]: The wild fox spirit is here:

The Compendium of the Five Lamps

Second generation under Nanyue; Dharma heir of Chan Master Mazu Daoyi: Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai:

Whenever the Master ascended the hall, an old man would follow the assembly to hear the Dharma. One day, after the assembly had withdrawn, only the old man remained.

The Master asked, “Who are you?”

The old man said, “I am not a human being. In the time of Kāśyapa Buddha in the past, I once lived on this mountain. A student asked me, ‘Does a person of great cultivation still fall under cause and effect?’ I replied, ‘He does not fall under cause and effect.’ As a result, I have fallen into the body of a wild fox for five hundred lives. I now beg the Reverend to give me one turning word, so that I may be freed from this wild fox’s body.”

The Master said, “Ask your question.”

The old man said, “Does a person of great cultivation still fall under cause and effect?”

The Master said, “He does not obscure cause and effect.”

At these words, the old man had a great awakening. He bowed and said, “I have now shed my wild fox’s body. It lies behind the mountain. I dare ask that you perform the funeral rites for me as for a deceased monastic.”

The Master instructed the monastic steward to strike the board and announce to the assembly that, after the meal, they would conduct the funeral for a deceased monastic.

The assembly gathered and discussed it: everyone was well, and there was no sick person in the nirvāṇa hall. Why was this being done?

After the meal, the Master led the assembly to the foot of a cliff behind the mountain. With his staff, he brought out the body of a dead wild fox, and they cremated it according to the rites.

That evening, when the Master ascended the hall, he brought up this earlier encounter.

Huangbo then asked, “The old man answered wrongly with a single turning word and fell into a wild fox’s body for five hundred lives. If every turning word were answered without error, what would he become?”

The Master said, “Come closer, and I will tell you.”

Huangbo came forward and struck the Master with a slap.

The Master clapped his hands and laughed, saying, “I thought there was only a red-bearded barbarian; now there is another red-bearded barbarian.”

Guishan related this case and asked Yangshan about it.

Yangshan said, “Huangbo habitually employed this device.”

Guishan said, “Do you say that he acquired it naturally, or received it from another?”

Yangshan said, “It was both received through transmission from a master and penetrated through the school of his own nature.”

Guishan said, “So it is, so it is.”

At that time, Guishan was serving in the assembly as chief cook.

The ascetic Sima brought up the wild fox case and asked the chief cook, “How would you respond?”

The chief cook shook the door panel three times.

Sima said, “Too crude.”

The chief cook said, “The Buddha Dharma is not understood in that way.”

A later person composed this verse:

Neither falling into nor obscuring causality: originally, there is no taboo.

Recalling former times,

when speaking of other matters, his bearing was kingly; when speaking of this, he hid his sack and covered himself with a quilt.

Doubting and doubting through five hundred lives—at the crucial moment, one word brought total collapse.

From now on,

one jili staff may range freely in every direction; the wild fox leaps into the ranks of golden-haired lions.

Xinseng : The first arrow is still light; the later arrow strikes deep. Who says yellow leaves are gold? If the waves of Caoxi are alike, countless ordinary people will be drowned.

vvvv in reply to lvm : Wasn't that Xuedou's verse? Since it is Xuedou's verse, why is the teacher chanting it?

lvm You, too, cannot be without a share in it.

Nanhua Sheng Indeed, one cannot open one's mouth!

vvvv A share in what?

lvm "Why" what?

vvvv Ha ha. Old thief! Old thief!

vvvv in reply to lvm : The first arrow is still light; the later arrow strikes deep. Who says yellow leaves are gold? If the waves of Caoxi are alike, countless ordinary people will be drowned. Is this deep, or light?

lvm "This" is what?

vvvv That is precisely what I want the teacher to become doubtful about.

lvm : ^o^

Shancai A thief is a petty man, yet his wisdom surpasses that of a gentleman.

[94] Śūraṅgama: Seeing and Not Seeing

[Ninety-Four] Śūraṅgama: Seeing and Not Seeing

Introductory Instruction: Before sound arises, there is one phrase that a thousand sages cannot transmit; before one's face, a single thread continues without interruption through all time. Pure and naked, wholly exposed: the white ox in the open field. Eyes keen, ears keen: the golden-maned lion. Set that aside for now. Tell me: what is the white ox in the open field?

[Ninety-Four] The Case:

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says: "When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing?" [What fine news! What use is seeing? Old Śākyamuni gave away quite a bit.]

"If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing." [Bah! Why all this idle labor? Do not make this mountain monk turn it into two ends and three sides.]

"If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing," [Where are you going? It is like an iron stake. Bah!]

"Then it is naturally not a thing." [Press the ox's head down to make it eat grass. Why speak further of verbal appearances and sounds?]

"How, then, can it not be you?" [To speak of you or of me is altogether irrelevant. Striking the staff, he said: "Do you see old Śākyamuni?" Yet the ancient did not assent. Striking the staff, he said: "Look for yourself beneath your own heels." Do you understand?]

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says: "When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing? If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing. If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing, then it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you?" Here Xuedou cites the sūtra passage incompletely; if he cited it in full, it could be seen. The sūtra says: "If seeing were a thing, then you too could see my seeing. If you saw together with it, this would be called seeing me."

"When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing? If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing. If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing, then it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you?" The wording is lengthy, so it is not all recorded.

Ānanda's thought was this: the world, lanterns, and pillars can all be named. He also wanted the World-Honored One to point out this wondrous, essential, original luminosity—what thing should it be called?—so that he might see the Buddha's intent. The World-Honored One said, "I see the incense stand." Ānanda said, "I too see the incense stand; thus I see as the Buddha sees." The World-Honored One said, "That I see the incense stand can be known. But if I do not see the incense stand, how do you see?"

Ānanda said, “When I do not see the incense stand, that is seeing the Buddha.” The Buddha said, “When I say that I do not see, I myself know it. When you say that you do not see, you yourself know it. How can you know the place where another does not see?” An ancient said: At this point, one can only know for oneself; one cannot explain it to another.

Now, when the World-Honored One says, “When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing? If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing. If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing, then it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you?”—if one takes seeing to be a thing, one has not yet wiped away the traces. When I do not see, it is like an antelope hanging by its horns: sound, tracks, and scent are all cut off. Where will you seek for it? The intent of the sūtra is first to refute by concession, then to refute by deprivation.

Xuedou composed a verse with the eye of the teachings. It does not praise things, nor does it praise seeing and not seeing; it directly praises seeing the Buddha:

The whole elephant and the whole ox are no different from an eye cataract. [A one-sided blind fellow. Half open, half closed. Why grope along fences and feel your way over walls? Cut it in two with one stroke!]

Since ancient times, all accomplished masters have been mere names and models. [The forty-seven Indian patriarchs, the two or three Chinese patriarchs, and old monks throughout the land, as numerous as hemp and millet—yet there are still too few.]

If you wish to see the old yellow-headed one now, [Bah! This old barbarian! Blind fellow! He is right beneath your heels.]

In every land and every mote of dust, he is only halfway there. [You have already missed it beneath your heels—what more can this mountain monk say? Have you ever dreamed of it, even in a donkey’s year?]

“The whole elephant and the whole ox are no different from an eye cataract.” The many blind men feeling the elephant, each speaking a different view, comes from the Nirvāṇa Sūtra.

A monk asked Yangshan, “Whenever people ask you about Chan or the Way, you make a circle and write the character ‘ox’ within it. What is your meaning?”

Yangshan said, “This too is an idle matter. If you suddenly understand, it does not come from outside; if you suddenly do not understand, you definitely do not recognize it. Let me ask you: which one have the old masters everywhere pointed out in your own person as your Buddha-nature? Is it that which speaks? Is it that which is silent? Or is it that which neither speaks nor is silent? Or are they all it? Or are they all not it?”

“If you take that which speaks to be it, you are like a blind man feeling an elephant’s tail. If you take that which is silent to be it, you are like a blind man feeling an elephant’s ear. If you take that which neither speaks nor is silent to be it, you are like a blind man feeling an elephant’s trunk. If you say that every thing is it, you are like a blind man feeling the elephant’s four legs. If you say that none is it, you abandon the elephant itself and fall into an empty view. What all these blind men see differs only in the names they give to the elephant.”

If you want what is good, never feel for the elephant. Do not say that seeing and awareness are it; nor say that they are not. A patriarch said: “Bodhi originally has no tree; the bright mirror also has no stand. Originally there is not a single thing—where could dust alight?” He also said: “The Way fundamentally has no form or appearance; wisdom itself is the Way. Those who hold this view are called true prajñā.” A person with clear eyes sees the elephant in its entirety; seeing one’s nature as the Buddha does is the same.

“The whole ox” comes from the Zhuangzi. “When Butcher Ding cut up an ox, he had never seen the whole ox. He followed its natural principle as he cut, and his blade moved freely. He no longer needed to exert his hand; the moment he raised his eyes, horns, hooves, and flesh all came apart at once. After nineteen years, his knife was still as sharp as if newly whetted.” This is called “the whole ox.” Yet, extraordinary as this may be, Xuedou says: even if one attained this, the whole elephant and the whole ox would still be no different from an eye cataract!

“Since ancient times, all accomplished masters have been mere names and models.” Even genuine masters cannot find anything by searching within it. From Kāśyapa onward, the patriarchs of India and China, and old monks throughout the land, are all merely names and models.

Xuedou states directly: “If you now wish to see the old fellow with the yellow head…” Thus it is said: if you want to see, then see at once; if you must search before you can see, then it is a thousand miles, ten thousand miles away. “The old fellow with the yellow head” means the old fellow with the yellow face; you now wish to see him.

“In every land and every mote of dust, he is only halfway there.” It is commonly said: in every mote of dust there is a land; in every leaf, a Śākyamuni. All the motes of dust throughout the three-thousand great-thousand world-system are to be seen within a single mote of dust. At just such a time, one is still only halfway there; beyond that is yet another halfway point. Tell me, where is it? Even old Śākyamuni himself does not know—how could this mountain monk possibly speak of it?

[Lianming]: May I ask the teacher: what does “the intent of the sūtra is first to refute by concession, then to refute by deprivation” mean?

[lvm]: If you wish to see the old yellow-headed one now, in every land and every mote of dust, he is only halfway there.

Refutation by concession:

“If seeing were a thing, then you too could see my seeing. If you saw together with it, this would be called seeing me.”

Refutation by deprivation:

“When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing? If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing. If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing, then it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you?”

[Lianming]: Teacher, why not kindly elaborate on it here? This seems rather difficult to grasp.

It is probably not possible to explain it directly. Let me give an analogy—would it be something like this:

Refutation by concession is like splitting open a piece of bamboo, so that you can put your head in and see that the inside is empty.

Refutation by deprivation is like taking away the bamboo and everything else, leaving you with nothing to rely on, so that you can genuinely experience what it is all about.

Also, could I ask the teacher kindly to explain this sūtra passage about seeing and not seeing?

[lvm]: Zong has the sense of “allowing” or “indulging”: first agree with you, and then refute you. As for duo, there is no need to explain it, is there?

“If seeing were a thing, then you too could see my seeing. If you saw together with it, this would be called seeing me. When I do not see, why do you not see the place of my not seeing? If you see the not-seeing, then it is naturally not the appearance of that not-seeing. If you do not see the ground of my not-seeing, then it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you?”

The general meaning is this: I see an object, and you also see that object; then you think that you too have seen my “seeing.” That is, we both see it, and you take that to be seeing me.

[The foregoing is refutation by concession; what follows is refutation by deprivation.] Then, when I am not seeing, why can you not see my “not seeing”? If you saw my “not seeing,” then my “not seeing” would not be “not seeing” (because you could see it). If you cannot see my “not seeing,” then it can only be said that my “not seeing” is not an object—and naturally my “seeing” is not an object either. How, then, can you say, “That is not you”?

[Lianming]: Thank you!

[95] Changqing Speaks the Words of the Tathāgata

[Case 95] Changqing Expounds the Tathāgata’s Speech

The pointer says: Where there is a Buddha, do not remain; if you remain, horns will grow on your head. Where there is no Buddha, hurry past; if you do not pass by, the grass will grow a yard deep. Even if you are utterly bare and wholly unencumbered, with no contrivance beyond affairs and no affairs beyond contrivance, you still cannot avoid waiting by a stump for a hare. But tell me: if it is not like this at all, how should one proceed? Put it forth and see.

[Case 95] The Case:

Changqing sometimes said, “Better to say that an arhat has the three poisons—[Scorched grain produces no sprouts.]”

“—than to say that the Tathāgata has two kinds of speech.” [That is already slandering old Śākyamuni.]

“It is not that the Tathāgata has no speech—[Still muddled. It is already riddled with holes.]”

“—it is simply that there are not two kinds of speech.” [That is just how it goes. What are you talking about—third and fourth kinds?]

Baofu said, “What is the Tathāgata’s speech?” [A fine pressing question. What do you say?]

Changqing said, “How could a deaf person hear it?” [Making an appeal to empty space. Shattered into seven pieces and eight fragments.]

Baofu said, “I knew you would speak from the second level.” [How could you deceive one with clear eyes? Your nostrils have been split wide open. Why stop at the second level?]

Changqing said, “What is the Tathāgata’s speech?” [Wrong! Yet somewhat closer.]

Baofu said, “Go drink tea.” [He received it. He further said, “Do you understand?” You have already missed it.]

Changqing and Baofu were both in Xuefeng’s assembly and often brought up such matters for mutual awakening and discussion.

One day, in the course of their usual conversation, he said, “Better to say that an arhat has the three poisons than to say that the Tathāgata has two kinds of speech.” Arhat is a Sanskrit word; here it is translated as “slayer of thieves.” The name is distinguished by its function: an arhat can cut off the eighty-one grades of afflictions; all outflows have been exhausted, and pure conduct has been established. This is the stage of the arhat who has nothing further to learn. The three poisons are the fundamental afflictions of greed, anger, and ignorance. Even the eighty-one grades have all been cut off; how much more so the three poisons! When Changqing said, “Better to say that an arhat has the three poisons than to say that the Tathāgata has two kinds of speech,” his main intent was to show that the Tathāgata’s speech is never untrue.

The Lotus Sūtra says, “Only this One Vehicle is the true reality; the other two are not true.” It also says, “There is only the One Vehicle Dharma; there is neither a second nor a third.” In more than three hundred assemblies, the World-Honored One observed capacities and offered teachings, prescribing medicine according to the illness. Though he expounded the Dharma in a thousand myriad ways, ultimately there were not two kinds of speech. His meaning reaches this point. How do you all see it? That the Buddha expounds the Dharma with a single voice is not denied. Yet Changqing has not even dreamed of the Tathāgata’s speech. Why? It is like someone speaking of food who can never thereby satisfy hunger.

Seeing him expounding doctrine on level ground, Baofu therefore asked, “What is the Tathāgata’s speech?” Changqing said, “How could a deaf person hear it?” Who knows how long this fellow had been making his living in a ghost cave?

Baofu said, “I knew you would speak from the second level.” His words indeed hit the mark.

Changqing then asked his Dharma brother, “What is the Tathāgata’s speech?” Baofu said, “Go drink tea.” The spearpoint was instead seized by the other man! What a Changqing—losing money and suffering punishment.

Let me ask you all: how many Tathāgata speeches are there? You must know that only by seeing in this way can you see the shortcomings of these two fellows. Examine the matter carefully, and both deserve a beating.

Give them a little leeway to make sense of it. Some say, “Baofu’s statement was right; Changqing’s statement was wrong.” They merely interpret according to the words, saying that one gained and the other lost. Little do they know that the ancients were like a spark struck from flint, like a flash of lightning. People today do not look to where the ancients turned; they only chase after the words. Then they say that Changqing did not know how to use it at the time, and so fell into the second level. Baofu said.

“Go drink tea.” This, they say, is the first level. If you look only in this way, then even when Maitreya descends into the world, you will not see the meaning of the ancients. A genuine master would never form such a view. Leap out of this den, and above there is naturally a road. If you say that “How could a deaf person hear it?” has some fault, then what is right about Baofu’s “Go drink tea”? You are still completely unrelated to it.

Therefore it is said: they investigate living phrases, not dead phrases. This case is the same as the case of “the whole body is it; the entire body is it.” There is no place here for your calculations of right and wrong. Only when, beneath your very heels, you are utterly bare can you see the place where the ancients met.

Master Wuzu said that it is like wrestling before a horse: your eye must discern and your hand must be intimate with it. If this koan is viewed with the true eye, neither has gain or loss. Once you distinguish gain and loss, there is no intimacy or distance; once you distinguish intimacy and distance, Changqing must bow to Baofu. Why? In this small point of skill, one must use it as deftly as lightning turning and stars flying. Baofu, indeed, grows teeth upon teeth and claws upon claws.

The verse says:

First level, second level—[There is no such thing in my sovereign’s treasury. An example for all ages. Why follow perversity and pursue evil?]

A crouching dragon does not mirror itself in still water. [Only those on the same path understand.]

Where there is no dragon, moonlit waves are clear; [A solitary boat travels alone across the four seas. Vainly calculating—what bowl are you looking for?]

Where there is one, waves rise though there is no wind. [Frightening people to death. Do you feel your hairs stand on end? He strikes and says: “Here it comes!”]

Chan practitioner Ling, Chan practitioner Ling—[Inviting a thief to ruin the household. Do not stick your head out in the busy marketplace. Losing money and suffering punishment.]

In the third month, at Yu’s Dragon Gate, he struck his forehead. [Retreating oneself and yielding to another. Not one in ten thousand. He can only swallow his breath and endure in silence.]

“First level, second level”—people only concern themselves with understanding first and second, and that is precisely making a living in dead water. If you understand this skill only as first and second, you cannot even grope your way to it. Xuedou said, “A crouching dragon does not mirror itself in still water.” How could a dragon be concealed in dead water? First and second are precisely making a living in still water.

Only amid vast surging waves and white breakers reaching the sky can a dragon be concealed. It is just like the earlier saying, “A clear pool does not permit an azure dragon to coil within it.” Have you not heard, “Dead water does not harbor dragons”? And again, “A crouching dragon always fears the clarity of an emerald pool.” Thus it is said: where there is no dragon, moonlit waves are clear, and the wind is calm and the waves still; where there is a dragon, waves rise without wind. Baofu’s “Go drink tea” is precisely waves rising without wind.

At this point, Xuedou has at once gathered up and put away your emotional interpretations in his verse. Yet he has lingering resonance: he makes it into literary form and, within it, sets one eye—truly extraordinary. Then he says, “Chan practitioner Ling, Chan practitioner Ling, in the third month, at Yu’s Dragon Gate, he struck his forehead.” Though Changqing was a dragon that had passed through the Dragon Gate, Baofu suddenly tapped him on the head.

[Xiaoban]: Could it be put this way?

“What is the Tathāgata’s speech?”

1. He said, “How could a deaf person hear it?” [Tathāgata Chan]

2. He said, “Go drink tea.” [Patriarchal Chan]

[lvm]: Ha ha! Though that makes sense, I fear it was not Yangshan’s original intent.

[Little Water Drop]: What was Yangshan’s original intent?

[lvm]: Oh! I mean the source of the expression “Patriarchal Chan.”

Before Yangshan, the expression “Tathāgata Chan” already existed.

“Awaken suddenly to Tathāgata Chan; within its essence, the six perfections and myriad practices are complete.” — Chan Master Yongjia, Song of Realizing the Way

In Yongjia’s time, the expression “Patriarchal Chan” did not yet exist. Thus “Tathāgata Chan” was not originally used in contrast to “Patriarchal Chan.” Its original meaning was in fact the meaning later conveyed by “Patriarchal Chan.”

After the term “Tathāgata Chan” had been used for a long time, it gradually acquired the flavor of doctrinal teaching. By Yangshan’s time, he suddenly introduced the expression “Patriarchal Chan”: “Tathāgata Chan—I grant that you, younger brother, understand it; Patriarchal Chan—you have not even dreamed of it!”

The “Patriarchal Chan” of Yangshan’s time and the “Tathāgata Chan” of Yongjia’s time did not differ in their respective contexts. It was later generations who added theoretical thought, and these terms gradually became “doctrine.”

By modern times, “Tathāgata Chan” and “Patriarchal Chan” had almost become a systematic theory. It has become very difficult to find the contexts and meanings they had in Yongjia’s and Yangshan’s times. That is why I say, “I fear it was not Yangshan’s original intent.”

[Xiaoban]: If one were to use the arsenal of the Chan school, how should one answer him?

[lvm]: Indeed—“How could a deaf person hear it?”

[Little Water Drop]: In my sovereign’s treasury there are no second-rate swords.

[Xiaoban]: Go drink tea!

[96] Zhaozhou: The True Buddha Does Not Liberate

[96] Zhaozhou: The True Buddha Does Not Cross Over

[96] Case:

Zhaozhou instructed the assembly with three turning words. [What does he say? The three sections differ.]

After Zhaozhou had given these three turning words, he finally said, “The true Buddha sits within the house.” This last sentence is altogether too rambling. The ancient master opened one eye and extended a hand to receive people, borrowing this saying slightly to convey a message. If one were to teach people by presenting the true imperative in its entirety, the grass before the Dharma hall would grow a yard deep. Xuedou disliked the leakage in his final sentence, so he cut it away and versified only the three statements.

If a clay Buddha crosses water, it will dissolve; if a golden Buddha crosses a furnace, it will melt; if a wooden Buddha crosses fire, it will burn. What is difficult to understand about that? Of Xuedou’s one hundred ancient cases in verse, despite all their tangled elaborations, only these three verses directly possess the breath of a patch-robed monk. Yet these verses are by no means easy to understand. If you penetrate these three verses, you may be permitted to end your study.

A clay Buddha does not cross water. [Its nostrils are soaked to ruin. Raising waves when there is no wind.]

Spiritual light illumines heaven and earth. [What does this have to do with it? Seeing a rabbit, he releases the hawk.]

If standing in the snow has not ceased, [One person spreads a falsehood, and ten thousand pass it on as truth. Mistake piled upon mistake. Who has ever seen you come?]

Who would not become artificial and false? [On entering a temple, look at its inscription board. What is it that goes up and down throughout the day and night? It is precisely you, Reverends.]

“A clay Buddha does not cross water; spiritual light illumines heaven and earth.” This line of verse is perfectly clear. But tell me, why does he invoke spiritual light?

When the Second Patriarch was first born, spiritual light filled the room and extended throughout the sky. One night a divine being appeared and said to him: “Why remain here so long? The time when you are to attain the Way has arrived; you should immediately go south.” Because of this spiritual encounter, the Second Patriarch was named Shengguang. He long lived in the regions of Yi and Luo, thoroughly studying the scriptures, and often sighed: “The teachings of Confucius and Laozi merely transmit ancestral conventions.”

He then heard that Master Bodhidharma was staying at Shaolin, so he went there and questioned him morning and evening. Bodhidharma sat upright facing the wall and gave no instruction or encouragement. Shengguang reflected: “In former times, those seeking the Way broke their bones to extract marrow, pricked themselves for blood to relieve hunger, spread out their hair to cover mud, and cast themselves from cliffs to feed tigers. The ancients were thus—what am I by comparison?” On the ninth night of the twelfth month that year, heavy snow fell. The Second Patriarch stood beneath the steps, and by dawn the snow had risen above his knees.

Bodhidharma took pity on him and said, “You stand in the snow here—what do you seek?” The Second Patriarch, weeping sadly, said, “I only pray for your compassion: open the gate of sweet dew and liberate the many kinds of beings.” Bodhidharma said, “The wondrous Way of the Buddhas requires diligent effort through vast kalpas, doing what is difficult to do and enduring what cannot be endured. How could one, with slight virtue and slight wisdom, with a frivolous and arrogant mind, hope to attain the true vehicle? There is no such possibility.”

Hearing this exhortation, the Second Patriarch became all the more earnest in seeking the Way. Secretly taking a sharp knife, he cut off his left arm and placed it before Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma knew that he was a vessel for the Dharma and asked, “You have stood in the snow and cut off your arm—for what purpose?” The Second Patriarch said, “This disciple’s mind is not at peace. I beg the Master to pacify it.” Bodhidharma said, “Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it for you.” The Patriarch said, “Having searched for the mind, I cannot find it.” Bodhidharma said, “I have already pacified your mind for you.”

Later, Bodhidharma changed his name to Huike. Huike later received Chan Master Can, the Third Patriarch. After transmitting the Dharma, he concealed himself on Mount Wangong in Shuzhou. When Emperor Wu of the Later Zhou destroyed Buddhism and purged the saṅgha, the Master traveled to and fro around Mount Sikong in Taihu County, dwelling in no fixed place. More than ten years passed with no one knowing him. Vinaya Master Xuan’s Biographies of Eminent Monks records the Second Patriarch’s story only incompletely.

The Biography of the Third Patriarch says that the Second Patriarch’s wondrous Dharma was not transmitted in the world, but that he was fortunate at the end to encounter one who, as before, awakened through his standing in the snow. Thus Xuedou said: “If standing in the snow has not ceased, who would not become artificial and false?” If standing in the snow does not

cease, those who are excessively deferential and deceitful will all imitate it. It then becomes nothing but artificial falsity, and they are merely a band of flatterers and frauds.

Why does Xuedou, in versifying “A clay Buddha does not cross water,” employ this causal circumstance? He had realized that beneath the mind faculty there is not a single thing, and from that utterly naked ground he composed the verse in this way.

The Fifth Patriarch regularly taught people to investigate these three verses. Have you not seen how Chan Master Dongshan Chu composed this verse for the assembly: “On Mount Wutai, clouds steam rice; before the hall of the ancient Buddha, dogs urinate at the sky. On the tip of a temple banner pole, pancakes are fried; three barbarian monkeys sift coins at night.” Chan Master Dushun also said: “Oxen in Huaizhou eat grain; horses in Yizhou have swollen bellies. Throughout the land people seek physicians, while moxibustion is applied to a pig’s left shoulder.”

Layman Fu also wrote: “Empty-handed, I grasp a hoe; walking on foot, I ride a water buffalo. A person crosses over the bridge; the bridge flows, but the water does not flow.” He also said: “The stone person’s capacity is like yours: it too can sing the songs of Ba. If you are like the stone person, you must respond in harmony with the melodies of Xue.” If you understand these sayings, then you will understand Xuedou’s verses.

A golden Buddha does not cross a furnace. [Its eyebrows are singed away. Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.]

Someone comes to visit Zihu. [So you go on like this again! I fear only that you will lose your body and your life.]

There are several words on the signboard. [Even a wordless cat would have nowhere to speak. Patch-robed monks throughout the land cannot insert a word. I fear only that you will lose your body and your life.]

Where is there no pure breeze? [So you go on like this again! Vast above the head, vast beneath the feet. Another says: Here it comes!]

“A golden Buddha does not cross a furnace; someone comes to visit Zihu.” This line too is complete as a verse. But why does he invoke someone visiting Zihu? One must have the bellows and furnace of a true master. Chan Master Zihu set up a signboard at his mountain gate. On it were written: “Zihu has a dog: above, it takes people by the head; in the middle, it takes them by the waist; below, it takes them by the feet.”

“The slightest deliberation and you lose your body and life!” Whenever he saw a newcomer, he would shout, “Watch the dog!” As soon as the monk turned his head, Zihu would return to his quarters.

Tell me, why could it not bite Zhaozhou? One late night, Zihu called out from the rear quarters, “Catch the thief! Catch the thief!” In the darkness he encountered a monk, seized him by the chest, and said, “Caught him! Caught him!” The monk said, “Master, it is not so—it is this disciple.” Zihu said, “It is so, but you refuse to accept responsibility.” If you understand these words, you may be permitted to bite everyone to death, while everywhere the pure breeze is chill and bracing. If not, then the few words on the signboard will certainly leave you helpless. If you wish to see him, you must penetrate completely before you can see. The verse says:

A wooden Buddha does not cross fire. [It is burned away. I alone can know.]

Always reflect on Poxingduo. [Going east or west—what is impossible? A leper leads a companion.]

When the staff suddenly strikes it, [It is in this mountain monk’s hand. This mountain monk does not need anyone else. In whose hand is there none?]

Only then do you know that you have let me down. [You are just like this—groping about, unable to grasp it. What use is that? Heaven! Heaven! Only after thirty years will you attain it. Better to sink forever through kalpas than seek liberation from the sages. If you gain entry here, you still cannot avoid letting it down. How can you avoid letting it down? The staff is still in someone else’s hand.]

“A wooden Buddha does not cross fire; always reflect on Poxingduo.” This line too is complete as a verse. Because a wooden Buddha does not cross fire, Xuedou constantly reflected on Poxingduo. The monk Poxingduo of Mount Song did not reveal his surname; his words and conduct were unfathomable. He lived in seclusion on Mount Song. One day, leading his followers into a mountain hollow, he found a temple of great efficacy. In its hall there was only a stove. Offerings from near and far never ceased, and many living creatures were cooked and killed there.

The Master entered the temple and struck the stove three times with his staff, saying: “Hey! You are originally made of bricks and earth. From where does your numinous power come? From where does your holiness arise? And yet living creatures are thus cooked and killed!” He struck it another three times, and the stove toppled over and broke apart. Soon a man in green robes and a high cap suddenly appeared before the Master, bowed, and said: “I am the stove deity. I have long undergone karmic retribution.”

“Today, through receiving the Master’s teaching of the unborn Dharma, I have escaped this place and been reborn in heaven. I have come especially to express my thanks!” The Master said, “Your nature is inherently present; it is not something I have forcibly stated.” The deity bowed again and disappeared. The attendant said, “We, too, have long attended the Venerable Monk, yet have received no instruction. What direct essential teaching did the Kitchen God receive that he was then reborn in heaven?” The Master replied.

“I only said to him: ‘You are originally made of bricks and earth. From where does your numinous power come? From where does your holiness arise?’” The attendant monks had no reply. The Master said, “Do you understand?” The monks said, “We do not understand.” The Master said, “Bow.” The monks bowed. The Master said, “Broken! Broken! Fallen! Fallen!” The attendants suddenly attained great awakening.

Later, a monk related this to National Master Anguo, who sighed, “This fellow fully understood the nonduality of things and self.” That the stove deity awakened to this is one matter; the monks, whose bodies are composed of the five aggregates, also heard “Broken! Fallen!” and both attained awakening. Now tell me: are the four elements and five aggregates the same as, or different from, bricks, tiles, and mud? Since this is so, why did Xuedou say, “When the staff suddenly strikes it, only then do you know that you have let me down”? Why does it become a matter of letting one down? It is simply that they had not yet obtained the staff.

Tell me, why does Xuedou invoke the Poxingduo koan in versifying “A wooden Buddha does not cross fire”? This old monk will tell you directly: his meaning is only to cut off the emotional dust of gain and loss and conceptual thought. From an utterly naked ground, one naturally sees where it is intimate and immediate.

[Little Waterdrop]: Please, Teacher and senior Dharma brothers, offer instruction: How do the three sections differ?

[Qian Zhao]: Consult Linji’s Four Discernments.

Taking away the person, taking away the circumstances, taking away both, taking away neither: Zhaozhou’s three “does not cross over” and the one true Buddha derive from this…

[lvm]: Revised title: Zhaozhou: The True Buddha Does Not Cross Over

[Sudhana]: The true Buddha’s three “does not cross overs” ^^!

The True Buddha’s Three “Does Not Cross Overs”

Wall-contemplating Red-Bearded Barbarian

One Sandal Carried Away

What Has It to Do with the Road by Which He Came?

[Sudhana]: “Zhaozhou’s Three Turning Words”—Verse Responses by Eminent Monks Throughout the Ages

---

Zhaozhou’s Three Turning Words

Chan Master Zhaozhou addressed the assembly with three turning words: “A golden Buddha cannot pass through a furnace; a wooden Buddha cannot pass through fire; a clay Buddha cannot pass through water.” After presenting these three turning words, Zhaozhou said, “The true Buddha sits within.” (Case 96 of The Blue Cliff Record)

Appendix: Verses and chants composed by eminent monks throughout the ages:

Volume 18 of Verses on Ancient Cases: Wuzhu’s general verse:

The true Buddha sits within; Zhaozhou, speak no more of falling into words.

Meet it face-to-face and accept it at once; lift your eyes and you have already missed it.

Yuelin Guan’s verse:

The true Buddha sits within; open your mouth and you fall into words.

It is already pitiable enough as it is—why make me say anything?

Xuedou chanted verses only on the first three lines:

A clay Buddha cannot pass through water; spiritual radiance illuminates heaven and earth.

If standing in the snow had not ceased, who would not be carving falsehood?

A golden Buddha cannot pass through a furnace; someone comes to seek out Zihu.

A few characters on the plaque—where is there no clear breeze?

A wooden Buddha cannot pass through fire; I often think of the Stove-Breaker.

When the staff suddenly strikes it, only then do I know that I have let you down.

Yefu Chuan's verse:

The forms of the three Buddhas are all unreal; the pupil in the eye is the person before one's face.

If you can trust the treasure in your own home, songbirds and mountain flowers are alike spring.

Wuzhu's general verse:

A golden Buddha cannot pass through a furnace; its circular radiance shines upon the great void.

Recognize it directly, without further hesitation;

A wooden Buddha cannot pass through fire; the abbot's eyebrows fall off.

The blazing flames redden the sky; not a single relic remains;

A clay Buddha cannot pass through water; a patched-robed monk can scarcely open his mouth.

The moment one deliberates, a thousand mountains stand between—ten thousand leagues away.

[Wen Wuding]: Has that old working stiff resurfaced here again?! Ha ha!

This is truly piling mud upon dirt!! Why not bring out every last word of the patriarchs?

[Sudhana]: Ha ha, it is rare indeed to see the old gentleman laugh so heartily.

[Wen Wuding]: Please do not use joking banter to cover your embarrassment. Some people say you are always reposting others' work—do you admit it?

[Dog-Beating Staff]: A mad dog begging for a beating!!!

[Sudhana]: Hee hee, those are matters for the "No-Mind Daoist" to worry about. I will not join in the commotion.

[Businessman]: Since this business has begun and has not yet reached a conclusion, how can you simply withdraw like this!?

[Sudhana]: Isn't there you, Businessman?

[Businessman]: At the very least, you should leave behind some treasure, so as not to disappoint either yourself or everyone else.

[Businessman]: Please leave your website address, so we can contact you if there is business to do. Also, come to the forum often; do not always hide away at home.

[Sudhana]: Heh heh, click on my name—there is e-buy...

[Businessman]: Oh, I meant that I would go to your website to sell goods whenever there is business.

[Sudhana]: Hey, from the sound of it, brother, you seem more like a peddler of contraband...

Ha ha,

Just joking—please do not take offense.

[Businessman]: Even if you do not wish to say so, how would I dare get angry at Boss Shen?

[Businessman] (responding to [Sudhana]: "Ha ha, it is rare indeed to see the old gentleman laugh so heartily."): We have each had a laugh, so we are even; no one owes anyone anything.

[97] Xuedou’s Bright Pearl in the Palm

[Case 97] Xuedou: The Bright Pearl Is in the Palm

Pointer: To pick up one and let go of one is not yet the work of an adept; to raise one and clarify three still falls short of the essential point. Even if heaven and earth shift and change, the songs of the four quarters fall silent, thunder races and lightning flashes, clouds move and rain suddenly pours, deep pools are overturned and mountains topple, jars spill and basins overturn—you have not yet brought up even half of it. Is there anyone who can turn the hinge of heaven and shift the axis of earth? Try bringing it forth and see.

[Case 97] The Case:

The Diamond Sūtra says: “If a person is despised by others, [Let out a line—what harm is there in that?]”

“the karmic offenses of that person’s former lives [carried by donkeys and borne by horses]”

“would have caused them to fall into the evil realms. [They have already fallen in!]”

“But because they are despised by others in this life, [requiting both root and branch; they can only endure it]”

“the karmic offenses of their former lives [where will you feel about for them? Plant grain, and bean sprouts will not grow]”

“will thereby be extinguished. [Frost upon snow, yet another layer. Like hot water melting ice.]”

The Diamond Sūtra says: “If a person is despised by others, the karmic offenses of that person’s former lives would have caused them to fall into the evil realms. But because they are despised by others in this life, the karmic offenses of their former lives will thereby be extinguished.” According to ordinary doctrinal exposition, this is a common discussion in the sūtra. Xuedou takes it up in verse to praise this meaning, intending to smash the living activity within the ghost cave of scriptural scholars. Crown Prince Zhaoming classified this section as “Able to Purify Karmic Obstacles.”

The general meaning of the teachings is that this sūtra has spiritual efficacy: such a person created karma leading to hell in former lives, but, because the force of wholesome karma is strong, has not yet undergone its result. Because they are despised by others in this life, the karmic offenses of their former lives are thereby extinguished. Thus this sūtra can eliminate the karmic offenses accumulated over countless kalpas, transforming what is heavy into light and what is light so that it need not be undergone, and one further attains the fruit of Buddhahood and bodhi. According to the scriptural scholars, merely turning these twenty-odd folios of the sūtra is called upholding the sūtra. What does that have to do with it? Some say, “The sūtra itself has spiritual efficacy.” If that is so, try putting one scroll aside in an idle place and see whether it has any responsive efficacy or not!

Fayan said, “One who realizes the Buddha-ground is called one who ‘upholds this sūtra.’” The sūtra says, “All Buddhas and the Dharma of anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi of all Buddhas arise from this sūtra.” So tell me, what is called this sūtra? Could it be the yellow pages and red rollers? Do not mistake the fixed star on the compass! “Diamond” is a metaphor for the firmness of the Dharma-essence, which things cannot destroy.

Because it is useful, it can smash all things. If set against a mountain, the mountain is destroyed; if set against the sea, the sea is exhausted. Its name is revealed through this metaphor, and the Dharma is likewise. This prajñā has three kinds: first, prajñā of true reality; second, prajñā of contemplation; third, prajñā of words.

Prajñā of true reality is true wisdom: the great matter beneath everyone’s heels, radiant throughout past and present, utterly beyond knowledge and views—pure and naked, bare and unencumbered. Prajñā of contemplation is the true realm: amid the twenty-four hours, emitting light and shaking the earth, hearing sounds and seeing forms. Prajñā of words is the words that can express it—namely, the one now speaking and the ones listening.

Tell me, is this prajñā or not prajñā? The ancients said, “Everyone has one scroll of scripture,” and also, “Though one’s hands do not hold a scripture scroll, one constantly turns this very sūtra.” If one bases it on this sūtra’s spiritual efficacy, it not only transforms the heavy into light and the light so that it need not be undergone; even if it equaled the abilities of sages, that would still not be extraordinary.

Have you not seen Layman Pang, while listening to a lecture on the Diamond Sūtra, ask the lecture master: “This layman ventures a small question; I wonder if it may be asked?” The master said, “If you have a doubt, please ask.” The layman said, “There is no mark of self and no mark of person. Since there are no marks of self or person, whom do you teach, and who listens?” The lecture master had no reply, and said, “I explain the meaning according to the text and do not understand this point.”

The layman then composed this verse: “No self and no person—how can there be intimacy or estrangement? I urge you not to go through the lecture seats; how can that compare with directly seeking the truth? The nature of Diamond Prajñā excludes

even a mote of dust outside. What I hear and accept in faith are all merely provisional names." This verse is excellent; it clearly says it all at once.

Guifeng classified the "four-line verse" as: "All appearances are false; if one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata." The meaning of this four-line verse is entirely the same as: one who realizes the Buddha-ground is called one who upholds this sūtra. It also says: "If one sees me through form or seeks me by sound, that person walks a deviant path and cannot see the Tathāgata." This too is a four-line verse, but only those whose meaning is complete in the middle are selected.

A monk asked Huaitang, "What is the four-line verse?" Huaitang said, "You have fallen into words without even knowing it!"

Xuedou points out, on the basis of this sūtra, that whoever upholds this sūtra is precisely everyone's original radiance and Original Face. Yet according to the ancestral command in full operation, original radiance and Original Face, too, are cut into three sections. The Buddhas of the three times and the twelve divisions of the teachings are not worth a pinch. Here, even if one possessed ten thousand kinds of ability, none could manage it. People today only keep turning sūtras, never knowing what this means. They merely say, "How many sūtras have I turned today?" recognizing only yellow pages and red rollers, moving their eyes across the lines of ink. They do not realize that it all arises from their own original mind; this is the small point at which turning occurs.

Chan Master Dazhu said, "Pile several cases of sūtras in an empty room and see whether they emit light!" Only the mind that one gives rise to in a single thought is merit and virtue. Why? The myriad dharmas all arise from one's own mind. A single thought is numinous; being numinous, it penetrates; penetrating, it transforms. The ancients said, "The verdant bamboo is entirely suchness; the luxuriant yellow flowers are nothing but prajñā." If you see through it thoroughly, that is suchness. If you have not yet seen through it, tell me, what do you call suchness?

The Avataṃsaka Sūtra says: "If a person wishes to understand all Buddhas of the three times, they should contemplate the nature of the dharma realm: all is made by mind alone." If you recognize it, then upon encountering circumstances and conditions, you are master and principle. If you have not yet clearly understood, then listen obediently to the instruction. Xuedou casts his gaze abroad in composing this grand verse, chiefly intending to clarify the sūtra's spiritual efficacy. The verse says:

The bright pearl is in the palm, [Above, it reaches the vault of heaven; below, it penetrates to the Yellow Springs. What do you say? Its four sides are unobstructed; it is perfectly faceted in all eight directions.]

Those with merit are rewarded. [How utterly clear! Let it go with them. But if there is no merit, how are they to be rewarded?]

When Hu and Han do not come, [Inside and outside, all news is cut off. Still, it is somewhat better.]

there is no skill at all. [Turning and turning, there is no connection. Where will you feel about? Break open the lacquer bucket and come meet me.]

Since there is no skill, [Stop! Rest! Who says it like this?]

Pāpīyas loses his way. [It has been exposed! This demon king of the non-Buddhist paths! Search for his traces, and none can be found.]

Gautama, Gautama, [Even the Buddha-eye cannot see it. Bah!]

do you recognize me or not? [Bah! It has been exposed.]

He further said: "It has been exposed!" [One strike, one mark. It is already before words.]

"The bright pearl is in the palm; those with merit are rewarded." If someone upholds this sūtra and has the proof of merit, then they are rewarded with the pearl. Having obtained this pearl, they naturally know how to use it: when Hu come, Hu appear; when Han come, Han appear; the myriad forms in all their profusion appear freely in every direction. This is to possess meritorious accomplishment. Fayan said, "One who realizes the Buddha-ground is called one who upholds this sūtra." These two lines complete the verse on the case.

"When Hu and Han do not come, there is no skill at all." Xuedou splits and twists the nostrils: if Hu and Han come, he lets you manifest them; but when neither Hu nor Han comes, then what? Here, even the Buddha-eye cannot see.

Tell me, is it meritorious accomplishment or karmic offense? Is it Hu or Han? It is exactly like an antelope hanging by its horns: do not speak of sound—there is not even a trace or breath to be found. Where will you feel about? Thus the devas, carrying flowers, have no road by which to approach, and Māras and non-Buddhists have no door through which to peep. For this reason, throughout Chan Master Dongshan's life as abbot, the local earth deity could not find a trace of him. One day, when rice and flour had been scattered in front of the kitchen, Dongshan gave rise to the thought, "These provisions of the monastery—how can they be treated so wastefully?" The earth deity then managed to see him and immediately bowed in homage.

Xuedou says, “Since there is no skill, even Pāpīyas loses his way.” The World-Honored One regards all sentient beings as infants. If even one person arouses the resolve to cultivate, Pāpīyas’s palace shakes and splits; then he comes to disturb that practitioner. Xuedou says that even if Pāpīyas comes in this way, he must be made to lose the road, with no nearby place to approach.

Xuedou further points to his own chest and says, “Gautama, Gautama, do you recognize me or not?” Do not speak only of Pāpīyas; even if the Buddha himself comes, does he recognize me or not? Even old Śākyamuni cannot see it—where will you all feel about?

He further says, “It has been exposed!” Tell me, did Xuedou expose Gautama, or did Gautama expose Xuedou? Those with the eye, try to decide it clearly and see.

[King of the Bamboo Strainer]: Wouldn’t it be crisper if the first two lines were deleted?

Chan Master Xuedou:

When Hu and Han do not come,

there is no skill at all.

Since there is no skill,

Pāpīyas loses his way.

Gautama, Gautama,

do you recognize me or not?

(Deleted: “The bright pearl is in the palm; those with merit are rewarded.”)

[Bodhi Tree]: A discussion with Brother Bamboo Strainer; I ask Teacher LVM for correction.

---

1. If Hu and Han do not come, where do you come from?—Precisely: those with merit are rewarded!

2. Those with merit are rewarded!—Those without merit: Hu and Han do not come!

3. Bah! Why speak of coming and going, being and nonbeing?—Come as you please!

[lvm]: There is no skill at all.

[King of the Bamboo Strainer] (responding to [Bodhi Tree]: “A discussion with Brother Bamboo Strainer; I ask Teacher LVM for correction.”): “The bright pearl is in the palm”—essence; “those with merit are rewarded”—function.

Heh heh, it really cannot be deleted at all.

Qian Zhao : This may be investigated in conjunction with the Five Ranks and Merit.

Turning toward, serving, merit, shared merit, merit within merit—“merit within merit” is the bright pearl in the palm. The ranks below are wholesome states, not realizations of sagehood; there is merit, but the work of merit is not yet complete.

lvm (in reply to Basket King : “Wouldn't it feel better to delete the first two sentences?”): If you try to delete it, you will discover that it simply cannot be deleted; it follows you like a shadow.

If you try to hold on to it, you will discover that it simply cannot be grasped; it is utterly unobtainable.

Basket King : What about this bright pearl?

“I have a single bright pearl, long sealed away by the dusts of worldly toil. One day, when the dust is gone, its light is born, illuminating and breaking through the myriad mountains and rivers.”

Does this bright pearl still bear traces of “worldly toil”?

lvm : “When neither Hu nor Han comes, there are no tricks at all.”

Basket King : Defeated in both bouts.

Instead, it made me let slip “poding.”

Mind Saṅgha (in reply to lvm : “If you try to delete it, you will discover that it simply cannot be deleted; it follows you like a shadow.”): Ha ha! Teacher, let me put together a random patchwork:

The Diamond Sūtra says: “If a person is despised by others, the karmic offenses from that person's former lives, which should have caused them to fall into the lower realms, will…”

*If you try to delete it, you will discover that it simply cannot be deleted; it follows you like a shadow.

Because they are despised by others in this present life, their karmic offenses from former lives will thereby be extinguished.

*If you try to hold on to it, you will discover that it simply cannot be grasped; it is utterly unobtainable.

Bodhi Tree (in reply to Mind Saṅgha : “Ha ha! Teacher, let me put together a random patchwork:”): Prescribing medicine before even seeing the patient!

Sudhana : Ha ha, could this be the elder brother's realization?

Mind Saṅgha : It further says: “Seen through already!”

The bright pearl is in the palm;

those with merit are rewarded.

When neither Hu nor Han comes,

there are no tricks at all.

Once all tricks are gone,

Māra loses his way.

Gautama, Gautama,

do you even recognize me?

Sudhana : The bright pearl in hand—the old monk smiles broadly.

Hu comes and Han goes—how could thought ever catch up?

Little Water Drop (in reply to Mind Saṅgha : “It further says: ‘Seen through already!’”): So tell me: did Xuedou see through Gautama, or did Gautama see through Xuedou?

Mind Saṅgha : You are the one who saw through me.

lkj (in reply to Little Water Drop : “So tell me: did Xuedou see through Gautama, or did Gautama see through Xuedou?”): There is no room here for discussion with you.

lvm (in reply to Mind Saṅgha : “Ha ha! Teacher, let me put together a random patchwork:”): Ha ha! It truly is a random patchwork.

Little Water Drop : Indeed: “Because they are despised by others in this present life, their karmic offenses from former lives will thereby be extinguished.”

Mind Saṅgha : Ha ha! Do not let that old thief fool you!

Little Water Drop : Heh heh! Nor will I let you fool me.

Mahāyāna Practitioner (in reply to lvm : “When neither Hu nor Han comes, there are no tricks at all.”): I have one great pearl.

Mahāyāna Practitioner : I own it, and I withdraw the right to use it.

Mahāyāna Practitioner : Do not give rise to a mind of acquisition; who the owner is has long been obvious.

Qian Zhao : The dharma realm arises through conditions; the jewel light of Indra's net: one is all, and all are one.

Yet the dependent arising of the dharma realm is difficult for the deluded to enter. Unless one first washes the defilement from the mind, there is no way to ascend to right awakening. Therefore, the Treatise on Great Wisdom says: “If someone has the stench of excrement beneath the nose, even the fragrance of agarwood and musk will smell foul.” Thus the Vimalakīrti Sūtra says that one must not expound the Dharma of the true aspect with the mental activity of arising and ceasing. Therefore, one must first break through conceptual attachments, and only then enter perfect luminosity. If one directly sees that such dharmas as form arise from conditions, this is precisely the dependent arising of the dharma realm.

There is no need for further preliminary expedients. If one cannot enter directly in this way, one should inquire into each point from beginning to end, until deluded views and confusion are exhausted, dharmas are removed and words cease, one sees one’s nature and gives rise to understanding. Only then has one grasped the meaning. Question: How, upon seeing such dharmas as form, does one thereby enter the Dharma realm of great dependent arising? Answer: The various things, such as form, are in their original reality beyond verbal designation; thus the deluded mind cannot reach them. Therefore, the sūtra says:

“Words are separately applied in practice; reality is apart from letters.” Therefore, seeing such things as the eye and ear is itself entering the dharma realm of dependent arising. Why? Because all lack a substantial nature. Precisely because they lack substance, illusory appearances can arise; because they arise from conditions, they do not exist through an inherent nature. Precisely because they lack inherent nature, illusory existence can be established. Thus nature and appearance thoroughly interpenetrate, wholly gathered into a single unity. Therefore, seeing dharmas is itself entering the great dharma realm of dependent arising.

Question: Since it has been said that emptiness and existence are nondual, and that one thereby enters interpenetration, why is it also said that seeing such things as the eye and ear is entering the dharma realm? Answer: If one can see emptiness and existence in this way, one's deluded seeing-mind is exhausted, and one can then accord with principle and enter the dharma realm. Why? Because the dharma realm of dependent arising is free from views and devoid of emotional attachment, yet gives rise in profusion to the myriad appearances. Question: Knowing this, by what expedient can one enter it? Answer: Expedients differ, but there are briefly three kinds.

First, question until seeing is exhausted. For example, pointing to an object, ask: “What is the eye?” As in the six modes of analysis in the earlier discussion of the Lesser Vehicle. If all dharmas are subsumed under the gate in which they are merely names, and no dharma is not a name, one must further ask how one knows that such things as the eye are names. In this way, question the grounds for it again and again, until words and conceptual understanding are exhausted. Second, reveal dharmas in order to induce reflection. This in turn has two approaches. The first is stripping away the inverted mind.

Once this has been exhausted, then, by pointing to such things as form, smell, taste, and touch, one deprives it of its deluded calculations and causes it to recognize its inverted delusions. Whatever it grasps does not accord with dharma; it is produced by the beginningless habituation of the consciousness of deluded seeing. From beginningless time, this forcefully drags one on, continually giving rise to the three realms, revolving without cease. If one can awaken to the fact that this attachment is dependent arising, then at that very place there is no arising. Second, reveal dharmas to sever attachment. If one does not first recognize the deluded mind and then reveal dharmas, this instead becomes inverted delusion.

If the Dharma were not shown for one to see, the deluded mind would again become attached to emptiness. Therefore, deluded mind is first stripped away, and then the Dharma is shown for one to see. Third, it reveals that the Dharma is beyond words and cuts off conceptual understanding. This gate also has two aspects: first, negating emotional attachment; second, expressing its virtues. As for negating emotional attachment: Question: Is dependent arising existent? Answer: No, for it is empty; the dharmas of dependent arising are without self-nature and thus empty. Question: Is it nonexistent? Answer: No, for it exists.

dharmas of dependent arising exist precisely through having no inherent nature. Question: Is it both existent and nonexistent? Answer: No. Because emptiness and existence are perfectly interpenetrating and not two; dharmas of dependent arising are, in emptiness and existence, of one limit and without dual characteristics. Consider gold and ornaments. Question: Is it neither existent nor nonexistent? Answer: No. For the two coexist without obstruction: in dharmas of dependent arising, emptiness and existence mutually negate one another and are simultaneously established. Question: Is it definitely nonexistent? Answer: No.

Because emptiness and existence interpenetrate, neither remains. In the Dharma of dependent arising, emptiness takes away existence completely, leaving only emptiness and not existence. Existence takes away emptiness completely, leaving only

existence and not emptiness. When they take each other away simultaneously, both aspects vanish together. Second, in terms of affirmation of virtue: Question: Is dependent arising existent? Answer: It is. For illusory existence is not nonexistent. Question: Is it nonexistent? Answer: It is. For being without self-nature is precisely emptiness. Question: Is it both existent and nonexistent? Answer: It is. For the two may both remain without obstruction.

Question: Is it neither existent nor nonexistent? Answer: It is. For they mutually take each other away and both vanish. Again, because of dependent arising, it is existent; because of dependent arising, it is nonexistent; because of dependent arising, it is both existent and nonexistent; and because of dependent arising, it is neither existent nor nonexistent. Likewise, it is one and not one, both one and not one, neither one nor not one; many and not many, both many and not many, neither many nor not many. Thus, it is many and it is one.

It is both many and one; it is neither one nor many. The four propositions of identity and nonidentity may be understood accordingly. Such negation and affirmation are perfectly interfused and unobstructed, all because dependent arising functions freely. Only one who can see in this way truly sees the Dharma of dependent arising. Why? Because one sees in accord with the Dharma through the single reality of perfect interpenetration. If one instead sees distinctions of before and after, that is inverted view, not right view. Why? Because seeing them separately as before and after does not accord with the Dharma.

Question: Having seen in this way, how does one expediently enter the dharma realm? Answer: To enter by expedient means is to discern this on the basis of the Dharma of dependent arising. What does this mean? This Dharma of dependent arising is empty and without self-nature. It is precisely because it lacks self-nature that illusory existence can arise. This Dharma is wholly constituted by the nature of having no self-nature. Therefore, this Dharma is without self-nature, yet this does not obstruct the presence of appearances. If it were not without self-nature, dependent arising could not be established.

Because their own nature does not arise and all arise from conditions. Once they are wholly encompassed by nature, nature is unconditioned and cannot be discriminated. Whatever their size, their nature is completely perfect; all things are wholly constituted by nature. Therefore, the whole of that is this. Nature does not obstruct illusory appearances; thus one contains the many. Since each wholly encompasses the other in its entirety, this does not obstruct their respective distinctions. Therefore, that is present within this, and this is present within that. Thus the sūtra says:

Dharmas accord with dharma-nature and enter into all dharmas. Explanation: “Dharmas” refers to the illusory yet existent dharmas of dependent arising. “Accord with the same nature” means that dependent arising is emptiness, yet this does not obstruct appearances. This wholly encompasses that as this, because that is emptiness and yet does not obstruct its appearances. Since this and that wholly encompass each other while their appearances remain unbroken, this is present within that, and that is present within this. This is not true only of this and that; all things are likewise so. Thus the sūtra says:

“In one, one understands the immeasurable; in the immeasurable, one understands one. They arise in mutual succession, yet are not real; the wise have no fear.” It also says, “In one dharma, one understands many dharmas; in many dharmas, one fully understands one dharma.” In this way, as they mutually encompass one another, they enter one another. They appear simultaneously and at once, without before or after. Whichever one is taken, in its perfect interpenetration it wholly encompasses this and that. Question: If dharmas are thus, what of wisdom? Answer: Wisdom accords with dharmas; they arise through conditions in a single reality.

Their hidden correspondence admits no distinction, and their simultaneous manifestation is not sequential. Hence the sūtra says: “The pure body of the realm of universal vision—I now expound it; people, listen attentively.” Explanation: “Universal vision” is the simultaneous manifestation of many dharmas in correspondence with dharma-wisdom. This clarifies that dharmas are known only by the wisdom of universal vision and are not the objects of any other wisdom. “Realm” means dharmas, clarifying that the mutual interpenetration of many dharmas is like the endlessly layered and infinite realm of Indra’s net of heavenly jewels. “Pure body”…

the foregoing dharmas simultaneously enter one another; their beginning and end are difficult to trace, dependent arising is collectively formed, and the seeing mind finds no place to abide. The net of the god Indra is called Indra’s net. This net is entirely made of jewels. Because the jewels are bright and transparent, they reflect one another and mutually penetrate, layer upon layer. Within a single jewel, all appear simultaneously and at once; each jewel is likewise so, with no coming or going at all. Now, let us take one jewel on the southwestern side as a test.

This one jewel can immediately display the reflections of all the jewels. Since this jewel is so, every other one is likewise so. Since every single jewel simultaneously displays all the jewels, every other one is likewise so. Thus, layer upon layer, there is no boundary. If there were a boundary, then the boundless, layered reflections of jewels would all be clearly manifest within a single jewel. None of the others obstructs this. If one sits within a single jewel, one is sitting in all the layered jewels of the ten directions.

Why is this so? Because one jewel contains all jewels. When all jewels enter one jewel, they are also joined to all jewels. All of this is the converse of the foregoing; consider it accordingly. Since, within one jewel, one enters all jewels yet never leaves this one jewel, and within all jewels one enters one jewel yet never arises apart from this one jewel—Question: You have said that within one jewel one enters all jewels yet never leaves this one jewel.

how can one enter all jewels? Answer: Precisely because one does not leave this jewel, one can enter all jewels. If one were to leave this one jewel in order to enter all jewels, then one could not enter all jewels. Why? Apart from within this jewel, there are no other jewels. Question: If apart from within this jewel there are no other jewels, then this net is merely ... formed of one jewel. How can it be said to be a net formed by joining many jewels?

Answer: It is precisely because there is only one jewel that many are first joined to form a net. Why? Because this one jewel alone constitutes the net. If this jewel were removed, there would be no net at all. Question: If there is only one jewel, how can it be said that a net is formed? Answer: To say that many jewels are joined to form a net is precisely to say that there is only one jewel. Why? The one is the general aspect, complete through the many. Without the one, there are no all. Therefore, this net is constituted by one jewel.

That all enter one may be understood by analogy. Question: Although one jewel on the southwestern side wholly encompasses all the jewels in the ten directions, without remainder, each direction still has its own jewel. How, then, can it be said that the net is made of only one jewel? Answer: All the jewels in the ten directions are collectively this one jewel in the southwest. Why is this so? Because the one jewel on the southwestern side is precisely all the jewels in the ten directions. If you do not believe that the one jewel on the southwestern side is all the jewels in the ten directions,

simply mark the jewel on the southwestern side with a dot of ink. When that one jewel bears the mark, there will immediately be dots of ink throughout the ten directions. Since all the jewels in the ten directions bear dots of ink, one knows that all the jewels of the ten directions are precisely one jewel. If all the jewels of the ten directions were not the one jewel on the southwestern side, could a person mark all the jewels of the ten directions at one time? Even if one could mark all the jewels of the ten directions, they would still be one jewel.

If this one, taken as the beginning, is thus, then all the others, taken as the beginning, are likewise. Layer upon layer, without bounds; every point is the same. Vast and obscure, it is difficult to trace to its source. When one is accomplished, all are complete. Such a subtle metaphor may be used to contemplate the Dharma. Yet the Dharma is not like this: though the metaphor is the same, it is not truly a metaphor. It is spoken of because there is one point of similarity. Why? This jewel merely allows reflections to mutually contain one another, while their substances are each distinct. The Dharma is not like this: its totality completely interpenetrates. Therefore, the “Chapter on the Arising of Nature” in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra says:

“For the benefit of sentient beings, so that they may all awaken to understanding, what is not an analogy is used to reveal the true meaning. Such a subtle and profound Dharma is difficult to hear even in immeasurable kalpas; only those diligent and wise hear of the tathāgatagarbha” (and so forth). The sūtra says that what is not an analogy is used as an analogy, and so forth. All practitioners should contemplate it in accordance with this analogy.

In his past practices, Vairocana Buddha

Made the oceans of Buddha-lands all pure.

Immeasurable, countless, and boundless,

He freely pervades every one of those places.

Within motes of dust in every Buddha-land,

Vairocana manifests his sovereign power; with the resounding voice of the ocean of the Buddha’s vast vows, he tames all classes of sentient beings.

[Mahāyāna Practitioner]: I see everything as manifestations of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The so-called three kinds of people—the good and the bad alike—are all my teachers.

Good people liberate me directly.

Bad people liberate me indirectly.

Those who study Buddhism should maintain such an attitude.

[Mahāyāna Practitioner]: It is still a matter of having the same view and understanding.

[Mahāyāna Practitioner]: The master has already taken charge; the servant is no longer allowed to make trouble.

[98] Tianping Had Long Known of the Two Errors

[Case 98] Tianping Knew Early On That He Was Wrong Twice

Pointer: All summer long he chattered on, entangling himself in vines; he nearly tripped up the monks of the five lakes. Only when the vajra sword cuts straight down upon one's head does one realize that one has never been capable of anything. But tell me, what is the vajra sword? Raise it above your eyebrows; please reveal its edge and point for us to see.

[Case 98] The Case:

While Tianping was traveling as a pilgrim, he visited Xiyuan. He would often say, "Do not say that I understand the Buddhadharma; I cannot even find anyone with whom to raise a saying." [There is no small amount of leakage here! This fellow is something, to be sure, but unfortunately he is like a numinous turtle dragging its tail.]

One day, Xiyuan saw him from afar and called out, "Congyi!" [The grappling hook and rope have already been cast!]

Tianping raised his head. [Hit! A double koan.]

Xiyuan said, "Wrong!" [One must first have been forged in the furnace to attain this. Splitting open the belly and gouging out the heart. When the seal of the three essentials opens, the vermilion mark is narrow; before deliberation is allowed, host and guest are distinguished.]

Tianping took two or three steps forward. [He is already half a step ahead and behind! This fellow washes clods of earth in mud.]

Xiyuan again said, "Wrong!" [Splitting open the belly and gouging out the heart. Everyone calls this a double koan, not knowing that it is like water entering water, like gold refining gold.]

Tianping came closer. [As before, he did not know where he had fallen. He groped about and found nothing.]

Xiyuan said, "Were those two 'wrongs' just now Xiyuan's mistake, or the senior monk's mistake?" [The first arrow is still light; the second arrow goes deep.]

Tianping said, "Congyi was wrong." [Mistaking a saddle bridge for his father's chin. As for monks like this, even if one killed a thousand or ten thousand, what crime would there be?]

Xiyuan said, "Wrong!" [Adding frost to snow.]

Tianping gave up and left. [Mistaking the fixed star on the scale. Indeed, he did not know where he had fallen. How could he know that his nostrils were in another's hands?]

Xiyuan said, "Stay here for the summer, and I will discuss these two 'wrongs' with you, senior monk." [Xiyuan's backbone was ordinarily as hard as iron; why did he not drive him out at once?]

Tianping left immediately. [He somewhat resembled a patch-robed monk. Though he resembled one, he was not truly one.]

Later, after becoming abbot, he told the assembly: [A poor man thinks of old debts. They still must be examined.]

"When I was traveling as a pilgrim, karmic winds blew me to Elder Siming. He gave me two successive 'wrongs' and even asked me to stay for the summer so that he could discuss them with me. I did not say that I was wrong at that time; when I set out for the south, I already knew that I had been wrong." [But what of these two 'wrongs'? A thousand errors, ten thousand errors—yet they have no connection with it. The more one turns it over, the more muddled and distressing it becomes.]

Siming first studied under Dajue and later succeeded the former Baoshou. One day he asked, "What is it like when one comes after treading through the phantom city?" Baoshou said, "A sharp sword does not cut a dead man." Siming said, "Cut!" Baoshou immediately struck him. Ten times Siming said, "Cut!" and ten times Baoshou struck him, saying, "Why is this fellow in such a feverish hurry to die? He brings a corpse to withstand my painful blows." Then he shouted him out.

At that time a monk asked Baoshou, "The monk who was just questioning you had a good point. Reverend, please skillfully receive him." Baoshou also struck and drove this monk out. Tell me: when Baoshou drove out this monk as well, was it merely because the monk was judging right and wrong, or was there another reason? What do you make of it? Later, both men became Dharma successors of Baoshou.

One day Siming went out to see Nanyuan. Nanyuan asked, "Where have you come from?" Siming said, "From Xuzhou." Nanyuan said, "What have you brought?" Siming said, "I have brought a Jiangxi razor as an offering to the Reverend." Nanyuan said, "Since you came from Xuzhou, why do you have a Jiangxi razor?" Siming seized Nanyuan's hand and gave it a tug. Nanyuan said, "Attendant, put it away." Siming brushed his sleeve and left. Nanyuan said, "Ah, ah!"

Tianping had once studied with Master Jinshan. Because he had traveled about to the various monasteries, he had acquired a little radish-root Chan in his belly. Everywhere he went, he carelessly opened his great mouth and said, "I understand Chan; I understand the Way." He often said, "Do not say that I understand the Buddhadharma; I cannot even find anyone with whom to raise a saying." His foul stench choked people, yet he went on spouting frivolities.

Before the Buddhas appeared in the world and before the patriarchs came from the West—before there were questions and answers, before there were koans—was there Chan or the Way? The ancient masters had no alternative but to give teachings in response to capacities; later people called these koans. Because the World-Honored One held up a flower and Kāśyapa smiled, Ānanda later asked Kāśyapa, "Apart from the golden robe transmitted by the World-Honored One, what Dharma was separately transmitted?" Kāśyapa said, "Ānanda." Ānanda answered.

Kāśyapa said, "Knock down the flagpole before the gate." Before the flower was held up and before Ānanda asked, where could a koan be found? Yet people are continually stamped and fixed by the winter-melon seals of the various monasteries, and then say, "I understand the Buddhadharma—how extraordinary! Do not let others know."

Tianping was exactly like this. When Xiyuan called to him and gave him two successive 'wrongs,' he became utterly flustered and terrified, unable to explain himself; ahead there was no village, behind no inn. Some say, "The moment one speaks of the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the West, one is already wrong." They do not realize where Xiyuan's two 'wrongs' fall. Thus it is said: he studies living words, not dead words.

When Tianping raised his head, he had already fallen into a second and third level. When Xiyuan said, "Wrong," he did not recognize the function that works directly before him; he merely thought, "I have Chan in my belly—never mind him."

Then he took another two or three steps, and Xiyuan again said, "Wrong." Yet he remained as dark and murky as before.

Tianping came closer, and Xiyuan said, "Were those two 'wrongs' just now Xiyuan's mistake, or the senior monk's mistake?"

Tianping said, "Congyi was wrong." Fortunately, it has no connection with it! He had already fallen into a seventh or eighth level!

Xiyuan said, "Stay here for the summer, and I will discuss these two 'wrongs' with you, senior monk."

Tianping left immediately. He somewhat resembled one, but he was not truly one. This is not to say that he was entirely wrong; he simply did not measure up. Even so, he had a slight air of a patch-robed monk.

Later, after becoming abbot, Tianping told the assembly, "When I was traveling as a pilgrim, karmic winds blew me to Chan Master Siming. He gave me two successive 'wrongs' and even asked me to stay for the summer so that he could discuss them with me."

"I did not say that I was wrong at that time; when I set out for the south, I already knew that I had been wrong!" This fellow said it quite forcefully, but he had merely fallen into a seventh or eighth level; no matter how one assesses it, it has no connection with it. Nowadays, when people hear him say, "When I set out for the south, I already knew that I had been wrong," they begin to speculate: "Before traveling as a pilgrim, naturally he did not have so much Buddhadharma or Chan and the Way."

"By the time he traveled about, he had been deceived by the various monasteries. It cannot be that, before traveling as a pilgrim, he called the earth heaven and called mountains water; fortunately, there was not a single thing." If you make such entirely worldly interpretations, why not buy a hat, put it on, and all pass the time together? What use is that? The Buddhadharma is not like this.

If we speak of this matter, how could there be so many tangled complications? If you say, "I understand, while he does not," you may carry a whole shoulder-pole-load of Chan and roam the world. But once someone with clear eyes examines you thoroughly, not a bit of it will be of use. Xuedou expressed it precisely in this verse:

Followers of Chan, [A lacquer bucket! The whole indictment is accepted.]

Love frivolity, [There is some of that indeed. Reviling Buddha and abusing the patriarchs, as numerous as hemp and millet.]

Yet all their learning is useless when the time comes. [It ought only to be useful. A square peg does not fit a round hole. Venerable, you have studied alongside him.]

Pitiful and laughable, old Tianping: [Patch-robed monks throughout the world cannot leap out of this. Never mind that others furrow their brows; it still leaves people dull and bewildered.]

He said he regretted having traveled as a pilgrim. [He was already wrong before traveling as a pilgrim; what use was there in wearing out his straw sandals? One stroke settles it.]

Wrong! Wrong! [What is this? Xuedou has already gone wrong by applying names and words.]

Xiyuan's pure breeze suddenly dissipates. [Where is Xiyuan? What a life! Do not speak merely of Xiyuan: the Buddhas of the three times and the old masters throughout the world would also have to retreat three thousand miles. If you understand here, I permit you to stride freely through the world.]

He added: Suppose a patch-robed monk suddenly came forth and said, "Wrong!" [He accepts the entire indictment, yet he is still somewhat better.]

Xuedou's error—how does it compare with Tianping's error? [Xiyuan appears in the world again. He closes the case on the evidence. Altogether, it has no connection with it. Tell me, ultimately how is it? Striking the stand, he said: "Wrong!"]

"Followers of Chan love frivolity; all their learning is useless when the time comes." This fellow understands, to be sure, but he cannot use it. Ordinarily he gazes at the clouds and says that he understands so much Chan. But as soon as he is cooked in the blazing furnace, it turns out that not a bit is of use.

The former master Wuzu said that some people study Chan like pounding rice cakes inside a glass bottle: they cannot move or turn, cannot shake themselves out, and break as soon as they touch anything. If you want to be lively and free, study only Chan that leaks through its shell. Hurl it straight down from a high mountain; it will neither break nor be damaged. An ancient said, "Even if you realize it before words are spoken, you are still stuck to the shell and deluded by the enclosure. Even if you thoroughly understand beneath the phrase, you cannot avoid mad views upon encountering circumstances."

"Pitiful and laughable, old Tianping: he said he regretted having traveled as a pilgrim." Xuedou says he is pitiable because he could not express it to others, and laughable because he understood a bellyful of Chan but could not put even a little of it to use.

"Wrong! Wrong!" Of these two 'wrongs,' some say that Tianping's failure to understand was the error; others say that his wordlessness was the error. What connection does that have with it? They do not realize that these two 'wrongs' are like sparks struck from flint, like flashes of lightning. They are the place where one who has gone beyond treads: like cutting a person with a sword, taking straight for the throat, until the life-root is severed. If you can proceed upon this sword-edge, then you may move freely in all directions.

If you understand the two 'wrongs,' then you can see why "Xiyuan's pure breeze suddenly dissipates."

When Xuedou ascended the hall and presented this case, he intended to say, "Wrong!" Let me ask you: how do Xuedou's two 'wrongs' compare with Tianping's error? Investigate this for thirty years!

[Mad Practitioner]: One day, Xiyuan saw him from afar and called, "Congyi." Why did he not turn back? How could there be a name?

[Lianming]: Xiyuan chattered on about two 'wrongs.'

Xiyuan said, "Stay here for the summer, and I will discuss these two 'wrongs' with you, senior monk."

Why did Tianping not immediately turn back, spread open his hands, and say, "Good! Let us see how the Reverend will discuss these two 'wrongs.'"

lvm : Wrong!

Was that error just now yours, or mine?

Lianming : Haha!

Thus it is said: Do not claim to understand the Buddha-Dharma; you cannot even find someone to raise a word.

lvm : ^o^ You are Tianping's kindred spirit.

Lianming : A bucket of foul water dumped right over your head!

Snow-Mountain Youth (replying to lvm : "Wrong!"): One more offense will not be tolerated!

Yizhuo : May I ask: if one calls out to the Buddha Patriarch, will the Buddha Patriarch respond?

One day, Xiyuan saw him from afar and called out, "Congyi." The hook and line have been cast!

Ping raised his head. Got him! A twofold koan.

lvm : Yizhuo.

Yizhuo : This old fellow has already responded.

JQK : Sure enough, you are caught in doubt!

Basket-King : What is the relationship between Xiyuan and Chan Master Yantou?

lvm : Oh! The people involved in this koan also include Yantou. See the lineage chart below:

Sixth Patriarch

Qingyuan Xingsi Nanyue Huairang

Shitou Xiqian Mazu Daoyi

Tianhuang Daowu Baizhang Huaihai

Longtan Chongxin Huangbo Xiyun

Deshan Xuanjian Linji Yixuan

Yantou Quanhuo Xuefeng Yicun Baoshou Zhao (Earlier Baoshou) Xinghua Cunjiang Monk Dajue of Weifu

Xuansha Shibei Xiyuan Siming Nanyuan Huiyong

Luohan Guichen

Qingliang Wenyi Qingxi Hongjin

Chongshou Qichou Tianping Congyi

Ziguo Yuanjin

Mountain Master

Basket-King : Why does the title say that Tianping “knew early on of the two errors”?

Where is the error?

Shancai : Haha, just like a mouse suddenly plunging into a bellows.

Lianming : What a huge rat!

Little Ant : Fortunately, the meal has already been served.

Lianming : Haha. The ant is treating us.

Shancai : Ah—

There are even more freeloaders.

Lianming : Teacher Shancai is picking up the bill. ^0^

Shancai : You coarse servant girl—I really cannot trust you to wash the plates and bowls,

---

so go pound rice.

Lianming : Hehe. I also think I'm rather coarse. ~

Your table has been overturned by a shovel!

Shancai : Mm.

It looks very much as though it was turned by the wind.

Lianming : Hehe.

Where is the wind?

Shancai : That is precisely where rescue and guidance lie.

Lianming : Wrong! Wrong!

Shancai : There! There!

Little Ant (replying to Shancai : "Ah—"): Go!

I allow you to leave on your own; do not look back again.

Shancai : All right,

—please let me pass, Brother Ant.

Little Ant : Meow~

You are not allowed to take a step. Get out at once!

Shancai : Haha, all right.

Take off one shoe and kick it out in a single leap, ant and all.

Little Ant : Haha, righteous mouse!

Where is this?

Shancai : Hehe,

Do not make one mistake after another,

Little Ant : Thank you, Teacher, for seeing me off from afar~

JQK (replying to Little Ant : Thank you, Teacher, for seeing me off from afar~): But why won't it go into the shoe?

Sudhana : ...

Wheat (replying to Sudhana : Haha, just like a mouse suddenly entering a bellows.): Please lend a helping hand.

Sudhana : Please come in:

Wrong!!

Wheat : The teacher's pen has eyes,

So do not write it incorrectly in haste.

Sudhana : How bitter!

Wheat : Ha----------

Not wrong.

I just will not follow those customary routines ^_^

lvm (replying to Basket King : Why does the title say that Tianping “knew early on of two errors”?): I came up with the title. If it is unsuitable, we can revise it.

Where is the error?

* A poor man thinks of old debts.

The Chan school is frivolous by nature,

Yet a bellyful of investigation proves useless.

Pitiful and laughable is old Tianping,

Who says he regrets having once traveled on pilgrimage.

Wrong! Wrong!

The cool breeze of the Western Courtyard suddenly melts away.

Moon in the Well : Tianping of the Western Courtyard—old man of two errors!

Basket King : “A poor man thinks of old debts”—from the shape of the mouth, it seems to be talking about me.

What does “a poor man thinks of old debts” mean?

lvm : It is not about you.

...

A later abbot addressed the assembly, saying: “A poor man thinks of old debts. He, too, must have been tested.”

...

Basket King : No matter what, I simply cannot squeeze any juice out of this old fellow.

Unlike me, all soggy on the forum every day.

lvm : Torrents pour down and mountains topple!

gszy : Do not let the corner of your kāṣāya get wet. Amitābha Buddha!

lvm : ^o^

SEAN : What does “Congyi” mean? Is it a person's name?

Little Spot : I looked it up; it is the name of Chan Master Tianping.

Source of the expression: Chinese Buddhism

Chan Master Tianping Congyi

Chan Master Congyi of Tianping Mountain in Xiangzhou: A monastic asked, “How does one get out of the three realms?”

The master said, “Bring me the three realms, and I will get you out of them.”

[The monastic] asked, “What is the family style of the master?”

The master said, “Openly revealed.”

[The monastic] asked, “What is Buddha?”

The master said, “Not pointing to heaven and earth.”

[The monastic] said, “Why not point to heaven and earth?”

The master said, “I alone am honored in the world.”

[The monastic] asked, “What is Tianping?”

The master said, “Eight hollows and nine bulges.”

[The monastic] asked, “Deep and dim is the stream water in the cave; how can one who drinks it avoid rising and falling?”

The master said, “What more are you dreaming of seeing?”

[The monastic] asked, “When the assembly gathers, what matter should they discuss?”

The master said, “Where incense smoke rises, the myriad forms are seen.”

[99] The National Teacher’s Ten Bodies of Taming and Guiding

[Case 99] The National Teacher’s Tenfold Body of the Tamer

Pointer: When the dragon roars, mists arise; when the tiger howls, winds are born. The guiding principles for appearing in the world resound like gold and jade striking each other; the stratagems of one who penetrates all directions meet like arrow points. Nothing in the entire realm is concealed; far and near alike are revealed; past and present are clearly discerned. Tell me, whose realm is this? Let us examine it.

[Case 99] The Case:

Emperor Suzong asked National Teacher Zhong, “What is the tenfold body of the Tamer?” [A sovereign of genuine caliber, the Son of Heaven of the great Tang—surely he should know such a thing. A coiled-wheel crown upon his head, carefree shoes beneath his feet.]

The National Teacher said, “Your Majesty walks atop Vairocana’s head.” [Hand in hand, they walk beyond Mount Sumeru. Yet this still remains.]

The Emperor said, “I do not understand.” [Why not grasp the words? What a pity! Fortunately, it was not entrusted to him. At that moment the Emperor should simply have shouted; why trouble himself with understanding?]

The National Teacher said, “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it.” [Though this is entangling vines, there is a way out. After getting drunk, he staggers about, worrying people to death.]

While Emperor Suzong was still Crown Prince, he had already studied with National Teacher Zhong. After he ascended the throne, his reverence became ever more profound; whenever the National Teacher came or departed, the Emperor personally welcomed and saw him off, even holding the carriage shaft himself. One day he raised a question and asked the National

Teacher, “What is the tenfold body of the Tamer?” The Master said, “Your Majesty walks atop Vairocana’s head.” Throughout his life, the National Teacher’s backbone was as hard as living iron. Yet before an emperor, he was like soft mud.

Although his answer was delicate and subtle, it had a fine point. He meant: if you wish to understand, Your Majesty must walk upon Vairocana’s crown. But the Emperor did not realize this and again said, “I do not understand.” The National Teacher then became excessively entangled and added a further remark: “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it.”

As it is said, everyone fully possesses it; each person is complete. Observe how he releases and gathers it, meeting challenges from all eight directions. Have you not seen it said that a good teacher sets forth teachings in response to the student’s capacity and trims the sail to the wind? If one merely clings stubbornly to one corner, how could one respond freely? Look at old Huangbo: he was skilled at receiving people. When he encountered Linji, he gave him sixty painful blows on three occasions, and Linji immediately awakened. Yet when dealing with Minister Pei, he was exceedingly entangling. Is this not being a good teacher of others?

National Teacher Zhong skillfully employed expedient means in receiving Emperor Suzong because he had the ability to meet challenges from all eight directions. The tenfold body of the Tamer is precisely the ten kinds of other-enjoyment bodies. The three bodies—dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya—are all dharmakāya. Why is it said, “The sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are not the true Buddha, nor are they the one who teaches the Dharma”? From the standpoint of the dharmakāya, there is only pure, still emptiness: numinously lucid and quietly illuminating.

Senior Monk Fu of Taiyuan was lecturing on the Nirvāṇa Sūtra at Guangxiao Monastery in Yangzhou. A wandering monk—the tenzo of Jia Mountain—was snowbound at the monastery and went to hear the lecture. When Fu came to the three causes of Buddha-nature and the three virtues of the dharmakāya, and discoursed at length on the wondrous principle of the dharmakāya, the tenzo suddenly laughed. Fu glanced at him. After the lecture, Fu had the Chan practitioner invited and asked, “My wisdom is naturally narrow and inferior, and I explain the meaning according to the text.”

“Just now, during the lecture, I saw that you laughed. I must surely have some deficiency. Please tell me.” The tenzo said, “Had the Lecturer not asked, I would not have dared to speak. But since you have asked, I cannot remain silent. I was indeed laughing because the Lecturer does not recognize the dharmakāya.” Fu said, “What is wrong with this explanation?” The tenzo said, “Please explain it once more.”

Fu said, “The principle of the dharmakāya is like vast empty space: vertically it exhausts the three divisions of time; horizontally it extends throughout the ten directions; it encompasses the eight extremities and contains heaven and earth. In accord with conditions, it responds to beings’ needs; there is nowhere it does not pervade.” The tenzo said, “I do not say that the Lecturer’s words are wrong. You merely understand matters at the boundary of the dharmakāya’s measure; in truth, you do not yet recognize where the dharmakāya is.” Fu said, “If that is so, Chan practitioner, please explain it to me.”

The tenzo said, “If this is so, Lecturer, suspend your lectures for ten days. In a quiet room, sit upright in meditative contemplation; gather in the mind and collect your thoughts. Put aside all conditions of good and evil at once, and investigate to the very end for yourself.” Fu followed his words exactly. From the first watch of the night until the fifth watch, he heard drums and horns sounding and suddenly attained realization. He then went and knocked at the Chan practitioner’s door. The tenzo said, “Who is it?” Fu said, “It is I.”

The tenzo rebuked him, saying, “You have been taught to uphold and transmit the great teaching, to speak the Dharma in the Buddha’s stead. Why are you lying drunk in the street at midnight?” Fu said, “In lecturing on the scriptures until now, I have been twisting the nostrils of my own living parents. From this day onward, I dare not do so again.” See what an extraordinary man he was! How could he merely recognize some bright, numinous awareness and fall behind asses and horses?

One must shatter karmic consciousness, until not the slightest trace can be found; even then, one has attained only half of it. The ancients said, “Without giving rise to the slightest thought of cultivation or learning, one is always at ease in the light of the signless.” But recognize that which is ever quiescent and extinct; do not mistake sounds and forms for it. Recognize only numinous knowing; do not mistake deluded thoughts for it. Therefore it is said, “Even if an iron wheel spins above one’s head, the perfect clarity of samādhi and wisdom is never lost.”

Bodhidharma asked the Second Patriarch, “You stood in the snow and cut off your arm—for what purpose?” The Patriarch said, “My mind has not yet found peace. I beg the Master to pacify my mind.” Bodhidharma said, “Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it for you.” The Patriarch said, “When I seek for the mind, I cannot find it.” Bodhidharma said, “I have already pacified your mind for you.” The Second Patriarch suddenly awakened. Tell me, precisely at such a moment, where is the dharmakāya?

Changsha said, “Students of the Way do not recognize the true; they merely recognize the spirit that has been theirs from the beginning. This is the root of birth and death through measureless kalpas; fools call it the original person.” People today merely recognize some bright, numinous awareness; they stare wide-eyed, strain their gaze, and play with their vital spirit. What connection does that have with the matter?

As for his saying, “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it”: you have not even dreamed of your own dharmakāya, so what is there to say about “do not mistake”? The doctrinal schools take the pure dharmakāya as the ultimate standard; why, then, does he not teach people to recognize it? Have you not seen it said, “If you recognize it, it is still not it”? Bah! A good blow

is in order. Only one who understands this meaning can begin to understand his saying, “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it.”

Xuedou found him too grandmotherly in his concern, but what can be done? There are thorns in the mud. Have you not seen that Chan Master Dongshan had three paths for receiving people: the mysterious path, the bird path, and the path of extending the hand? Beginners in the Way should first practice along these three paths. A monk asked the Master, “You ordinarily teach people to walk the bird path. What is the bird path?” Dongshan said, “It does not encounter a single person.”

The monk said, “How does one walk it?” Dongshan said, “You must go with no selfishness beneath your feet.” The monk said, “When one walks the bird path, is this not the Original Face?” Dongshan said, “Reverend, why are you upside down?” The monk said, “Where is this student’s upside-downness?” Dongshan said, “If you were not upside down, why would you take a servant for the master?”

The monk said, “What is the Original Face?” Dongshan said, “Not walking the bird path.” One must reach such a state of seeing reversal before there can be even a small measure of accord. Even if you immediately compose yourself, erase your tracks, and swallow your voice, this is still only the understanding of novice monks and postulants within the gate of the patch-robed monks. You must further turn back toward the dusts and labors and bring forth great functioning amid their profuse arising.

Xuedou's verse says:

A teacher of a whole nation is but a forced name; [Why bother with flowers in empty space and the moon in water? The wind passes, and the treetops sway.]

Nanyang alone is granted resounding fame. [Indeed, he sits firmly at the crucial crossing. Among a thousand or ten thousand, it is hard to find even one or half of one.]

The great Tang supported a true Son of Heaven, [How pitiable! What use is there in receiving such a one? What benefit is there in receiving a blind patch-robed monk?]

Who once walked atop Vairocana’s head. [Why do not all people proceed in this way? Reaching heaven above and earth below—how does this monk walk?]

An iron hammer shatters the golden bones; [A lifetime’s exhilaration. It is already before words.]

What else is there between heaven and earth? [Throughout the vast four seas, few know the tune. He bears the whole burden himself. Scattering sand, scattering earth.]

The ocean of three thousand worlds sinks deep into the night; [Keep your eyes high. Hold fast to the boundaries. Are you waiting to enter a demon’s cave?]

Who knows who enters the blue dragon’s den? [Thirty blows—not one can be spared. Having raised it, do you understand? Bah! Xuedou has pierced all your nostrils. Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it.]

“A teacher of a whole nation is but a forced name; Nanyang alone is granted resounding fame.” This verse resembles a genuine eulogy. Have you not seen it said, “The ultimate person has no name”? To call him National Teacher is also to impose a name by force. The National Teacher’s Way admits of no comparison. He was adept at receiving people in this manner; Nanyang alone is acknowledged as a master of the art.

“The great Tang supported a true Son of Heaven, who once walked atop Vairocana’s head.” If one is a patch-robed monk with discerning eyes and brains, one must walk atop Vairocana’s head before seeing this tenfold body of the Tamer. The Buddha is called the Tamer, which is one of the ten epithets. One body transforms into ten bodies; ten bodies transform into a hundred bodies; then into countless hundreds of millions of bodies. In broad outline, they are only one body.

This verse is comparatively easy to explain. But the latter verse, in which he says, “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it,” is so completely beyond the reach of explanation that it is truly difficult to open one’s mouth about it.

“An iron hammer shatters the golden bones”: this praises the words, “Do not mistake your own pure dharmakāya for it.” Xuedou praises him exceedingly. Once the golden bones are shattered by a single hammer, “what else is there between heaven and earth?” One must be utterly naked and bare, with not a single thing obtainable; this is the original landscape.

It is like “the ocean of three thousand worlds sinks deep into the night.” Within the fragrant-water seas of the three-thousand great-thousand worlds are boundless lands, and each land has a sea. Precisely when the night is still and deep, heaven and earth are clear and tranquil all at once—tell me, what is this? Do not, under any circumstances, understand it as closing the eyes and shutting them tight. If you understand it that way, you fall directly into the poisonous sea. “Who knows who enters the blue dragon’s den?” Extending the foot or withdrawing the foot—tell me, who is it? Xuedou has pierced all your nostrils at once.

[Mahāyāna Practitioner]: I have received the teacher’s instruction with gratitude.

Indeed, there is nothing at all. If there is anything, it is only that one's cultivation is still insufficient.

I encourage myself with a verse by the elder lay practitioner Huang Nianzu:

Firm in right faith, proceed upon the right path;

Seek rebirth in the Pure Land, liberating oneself and others universally.

Do not admire empty glory; do not crave worldly blessings.

Dreamlike illusions and flowers in empty space—let them come and go.

To arouse right practice, one must have right view.

One is harmed by treasure only because one has no eyes.

A light mind and an arrogant mind mark out a prison for themselves;

Like a donkey peering into a well, seeing only its own likeness.

One should arouse the great resolve, cleanse the mind, and renew oneself.

Practice and understanding support each other; blessings and wisdom are both perfected.

Put an end to the stealing mind; honestly maintain the recitation.

Continue seamlessly and unceasingly; penetrate directly through the mysterious gate.

Accomplish it in one lifetime; attain a rank equal to all the sages.

Do not pursue empty words; simply seek direct realization.

(Note) The teaching says: "A blind child of great wealth,"

"sits daily amid treasures, yet is harmed by the treasures."

[Moon in a Well]: The emperor further asked, "What is the Tamer in the Ten Bodies?"

[Moon in a Well]: The master then stood up and said, "Do you understand?"

[Moon in a Well]: The emperor said, "I do not."

[Moon in a Well]: The master said, "Bring this old monk the purification bottle."

[Moon in a Well]: The emperor further asked, "What is the samādhi of non-contention?"

[Moon in a Well]: The master said, "The donor walks atop Vairocana's head."

[King of the Colander]: Without this present, how would you put it?

Emperor Suzong asked National Teacher Huizhong, "What is the Tamer in the Ten Bodies?"

The National Teacher said, "The donor walks atop Vairocana's head." [Beyond Mount Sumeru, they walk hand in hand. Yet this still remains.]

[Little Water Drop]: Please have a person without a mouth explain it to you, brother.

[godfather]: Hello Kitty!

[Wheat] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "Without this present, how would you put it?"): "Without this present" has already fallen into the weeds.

It cannot be spoken of.

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "Without this present, how would you put it?"): What difference is there between having this and not having this?

It is precisely the difference between the Sixth Patriarch's verse and the Four "What a Surprise" statements.

[Mahāyāna Practitioner]: In this Mahāyāna Dharma, the benevolent have no enemies; compassionate people have no enemies.

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "Without this present, how would you put it?"): "Without this" generally refers to the samādhi of one mark.

Do not become attached to the samādhi of one mark. In investigating Chan, one must first attain the samādhi of one mark; only by not becoming attached to it can one realize the samādhi of one practice.

[King of the Colander]: I am not asking for an explanation of principle; I am asking you to answer Emperor Suzong's question.

Emperor Suzong asked National Teacher Huizhong, "What is the Tamer in the Ten Bodies?"

The National Teacher said, "The donor walks atop Vairocana's head." [Beyond Mount Sumeru, they walk hand in hand. Yet this still remains.]

Please answer on the National Teacher's behalf with a single phrase in which this is absent.

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "I am not asking for an explanation of principle; I am asking you to answer Emperor Suzong's question."): The fourfold return to emptiness.

No thought of attachment.

No thought of attachment to emptiness.

No thought of non-attachment.

No thought of no-thought.

No thought of no-thought is walking atop Vairocana's head. No thought of non-attachment is walking hand in hand beyond Mount Sumeru. Yet this still remains.

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "I am not asking for an explanation of principle; I am asking you to answer Emperor Suzong's question."): Though alive, one may have separate eyes and yet be like the dead; why test a master over what medicine is contraindicated?

Eyes in a skull; a dragon's roar in dead wood.

They are all footnotes. Investigate them for yourself.

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "I am not asking for an explanation of principle; I am asking you to answer Emperor Suzong's question."): Then look at this koan.

Master Yuan ascended the Dharma seat and cited the koan of the three-legged donkey:

This encounter is now raised by many in Chan communities, and not a few discuss it. Some merely say that masters of the school have no fixed answers, and that whatever they are asked, they answer off the cuff. It may resemble the truth, but it is not the truth. If understood in this way, it becomes nothing more than an idle matter, and one does not see Yangqi's function. … Others try to understand it from the number of the donkey's legs. To understand it in this way is the most difficult illness to cure.

… This koan must be left to one who has penetrated it utterly, from top to bottom; only such a person can resolve it. Not only Chan practitioners fail to understand it; even among those in Chan communities throughout the land who have come forth to teach others, few understand it. If you wish to understand it, you must look lightly beyond the time of King Awesome Sound, before the empty kalpa: lift it, and it moves; press it down, and it turns. … Is there anyone like this now? If so, come forth and speak. If not, listen further to this verse:

"The three-legged donkey trots, kicking up its hooves, / Directly penetrating the ten-thousand-fathom pit of King Awesome Sound. / Clouds at the mountain crest are leisurely, never quite at rest; / Water flowing below in the ravine is far too busy. /

Which elder in Hunan can understand this? / The traveler is yet beyond the green hills."

[Qian Zhao] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "Without this present, how would you put it?"): Without this present, it is up to you …

[King of the Colander]: We invite [Qian Zhao] to speak.

[Moon in a Well]: Brother King of the Colander, Qian Zhao simply will not reply!

[King of the Colander]: I do not think so.

This old fellow is an adroit operator; only killing is beyond him.

[Moon in a Well]: But Brother Colander, please look at the original text. Master Huizhong's answer was actually not wrong at all!

[Moon in a Well]: The emperor further asked, "What is the Tamer in the Ten Bodies?" The master then stood up and said, "Do you understand?"

But Brother Colander, please look at the original text. Master Huizhong's answer was actually not wrong at all!

[King of the Colander]: Wait until you have trodden through it.

[Moon in a Well] (in reply to [King of the Colander]: "I do not think so."): The koan of walking atop Vairocana's head!

Walking Atop Vairocana's Head

Emperor Suzong asked, "What Dharma did you obtain at Caoqi?"

The master said, "Does Your Majesty see that patch of cloud in the sky?"

The emperor said, "I do."

The master said, "Is it nailed down or hung up?"

The emperor further asked, "What is the Tamer in the Ten Bodies?"

The master then stood up and said, "Do you understand?"

The emperor said, "I do not."

The master said, "Bring this old monk the purification bottle."

The emperor further asked, "What is the samādhi of non-contention?"

The master said, "The donor walks atop Vairocana's head."

The emperor said, "What does this mean?"

The Master said, "Do not take yourself to be the pure dharmakāya."

The emperor asked again, but the Master would not even look at him. He said, "I am the Son of Heaven of the Great Tang. Why do you utterly ignore me, Master?"

The Master said, "Do you see empty space?"

The emperor said, "I do."

The Master said, "Does it blink and look at Your Majesty?"

[Zhaoli Wang]: May I ask how Dongshan's three ways of receiving people differ?

[Ninety-Nine] The National Master's Ten Bodies of the Charioteer

"Have you not seen that Chan Master Dongshan had three ways of receiving people: the mysterious path, the bird path, and extending the hand?"

[lvm]: Your very question contains all three paths:

“How do they differ?”—the mysterious path;

“Three paths”—the bird path;

“Receiving people”—extending the hand.

[Zhaoli Wang]: If the three paths are the bird path, can one say that one path is precisely the three paths?

[lvm]: Ha ha! Like a worm boring through wood.

[Zhaoli Wang]: If you suffocate someone to death, must you pay with your life?

[Little Waterdrop]: You bind yourself in a cocoon, yet blame someone else.

[Zhaoli Wang]: Look—someone has come out to take the blame for a life.

[Little Waterdrop]: A life has been wasted for nothing.

[Qian Zhao] (replying to [Zhaoli Wang]: “If the three paths are the bird path, can one say that one path is precisely the three paths?”): If you set out on the mysterious path, every road under heaven is yours to travel.

Extending the hand and the bird path—everything without exception becomes the mysterious path.

[Wheat] (replying to [lvm]: “Your very question contains all three paths:”): I do not understand.

I have encountered talk of the bird path, but this is the first time I have heard the other two terms.

[Wheat]: Literally, xuan can mean “dark,” and it can also mean something boundless and unfathomable.

As for extending the hand, I suppose it means descending into the grass to receive people?

[Wheat]: Oh—the mysterious path is pathless, yet no path is not a path. :)

[Qian Zhao] (replying to [Zhaoli Wang]: “May I ask how Dongshan’s three ways of receiving people differ?”): The three paths may be correlated with the five ranks of merit.

Extending the hand: xiangfeng.

The bird path: gong-gong-gong.

The mysterious path: gong-gong.

These five ranks are in fact the five Mahāyāna paths: accumulation, preparation, seeing, cultivation, and no more learning.

[Extending the Hand]: Shabu.

Garbage.

[Qian Zhao]: Shabu.

Gold dust is precious; garbage is cheap.

[Extending the Hand]: Sand! If you do not understand, do not make a fool of yourself here.

[Qian Zhao]: You still lack the eye,

---

yet you think you have an eye. In fact, it is only a chicken eye, and you do not even know that you are making a fool of yourself . . .

[zoom] (replying to [Zhaoli Wang]: “May I ask how Dongshan’s three ways of receiving people differ?”): Ha ha . . .

Śākyamuni Buddha’s holding up a flower was already making too much fuss! How did Subhūti smile??

Bah! Mysterious path, bird path, extending the hand! Everyone, say: what are they??

[Qian Zhao] (replying to [Zhaoli Wang]: “May I ask how Dongshan’s three ways of receiving people differ?”): There are

---

the thought of returning to emptiness while clinging;

the thought of returning to emptiness while clinging to emptiness.

This is extending the hand; one must be without attachment and without desire.

the thought of returning to emptiness without attachment.

This is the bird path; one must be without mind and without traces.

the thought of returning to emptiness without thought.

This is the mysterious path: with no home to return to, one is at ease everywhere.

[Lianming] (replying to [lvm]: “Ha ha! Like a worm boring through wood.”): Here, too, the teacher has a path—a horizontal stele blocks the ancient road.

[lvm]: The mysterious path? The bird path?

[Lianming]: The mysterious path, the bird path—like a worm boring through wood.

[Moon in the Well]: You still have not gone beyond Baizhang’s penetrating three phrases!

[Lianming]: I wonder what fault Baizhang has committed, and what offense the three phrases have committed?

[Moon in the Well]: Tell me, then: is “like a worm boring through wood” praise or criticism?

[Lianming]: Like the moon in a well—is it full or waning?

[Moon in the Well]: A parrot imitates human speech—human speech, animal speech. Why not turn the hearing back upon itself? It has always been thus!

[Lianming] The mysterious path, the bird path—like a worm boring through wood.

[Moon in the Well] You still have not gone beyond Baizhang’s penetrating three phrases!

[Lianming] I wonder what fault Baizhang has committed, and what offense the three phrases have committed?

[Moon in the Well] Tell me, then: is “like a worm boring through wood” praise or criticism?

[Lianming] Like the moon in a well—is it full or waning?

[Lianming]: Heh heh.

No, no.

[Moon in the Well]: Off you go! There is plenty of time ahead; do not waste it!

[Little Waterdrop]: It is precisely being wasted.

[Zhaoli Wang] (replying to [lvm]: “The mysterious path? The bird path?”): With sky high and waters vast, I may roam as I please; I will not enter this Preservation Society.

[Little Waterdrop]: When has a turtle ever escaped from a jar?

[Zhaoli Wang]: I am making you rack your brains.

[Qian Zhao]: Brother, you still see it.

[Little Water Drop]: Now the four seas are clear as a mirror; travelers, do not make enemies of the road.

[Qian Zhao]: That is the very saying.

After Huanglong thoroughly resolved Zhaozhou's koan of the old woman of Mount Wutai, he spoke this verse.

There was also the line concerning the old woman's testing: "without cause." The teacher pointed out that character, and Huanglong changed it to "with cause." From then on, Huanglong's Three Barriers became famous throughout the land...

[Little Water Drop]: Another piece of superfluous furniture has been added.

[Qian Zhao]: Whether it is added or not, it is all the same.

[Little Water Drop]: Elder brother is still the same old self.

[Qian Zhao]: Little brother is still like a monkey scooping up the moon.

[Little Water Drop]: Ha ha! Be careful, or I'll throw your moon, shadow and all, into the water.

[Qian Zhao]: Little brother's strength is that he is clever and untrammeled.

His weakness is also that he is clever and untrammeled, for within that cleverness and freedom there is also flightiness and frivolity. Only by being grounded and steady can one gain real benefit.

[Little Water Drop]: Do not use right and wrong to judge me;

The pedantic probing of this fleeting life is irrelevant.

[Qian Zhao]: Ha ha, no...

[Qian Zhao] (replying to [Little Water Drop]: "Ha ha! Be careful, or I'll throw your moon, shadow and all, into the water."): May it be so...

[Little Water Drop]: Thank you for your compassion, brother.

[King of the Basket] (replying to [Little Water Drop]: "Now the four seas are clear as a mirror; travelers, do not make enemies of the road."): Have you seen it?

[Little Water Drop]: Do not come and block my sight; even if you do, you cannot block it.

[Snow Mountain Youth] (replying to [lvm]: "The mysterious path? The bird path?"): Ha ha! It cannot be felt out.

Teacher! Happy New Year!!!

[Little Water Drop] (replying to [lvm]: "The mysterious path? The bird path?"): The sky is high; let the birds fly freely.

[Blue Rain]: Eh?

I had wanted to see how birds fly freely in a high sky, but the content was empty. What a disappointment. This is the second post I have read since registering, and the first one I have replied to.

[Little Water Drop]: You too are flying right now:

The sky is high: content is empty

Let the birds fly freely: disappointment

[King of the Basket] (replying to [lvm]: “The mysterious path? The bird path?”): A black hand indeed.

[Daoist of Qiongzhou]: Greetings, Teacher Qi. I will not miss the tea gathering.

[Little Water Drop]: Please, elder brother, have compassion: make a video recording and post it online.

Or send it by email: amtfgh@yahoo.com.cn

[lvm]: I am waiting for your call. Wishing you a happy Spring Festival in advance!

[100] Baling’s Coral Supports the Moon

[Case 100] Baling’s “Coral Branches Prop Up the Moon”

An introductory instruction says: Gathering the cause and bringing forth the result, completing the beginning and completing the end—there is no partiality before one’s very face, yet nothing has ever been said. Suppose someone were to come forth and say, “Throughout the summer I sought instruction; why was nothing ever said?” Wait until you awaken, and then I will tell you. Now tell me: was it withheld before his very face, or is there some other special strength? Try to bring it up and see.

[Case 100] The Case:

A monk asked Baling, “What is the hair-blowing sword?” [Cut! Perilous!]

Baling said, “Coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon.” [Its radiance swallows the myriad forms—the four seas and the nine provinces.]

Without moving sword or spear, Baling caused the tongues of countless people throughout the four seas and five lakes to fall to the ground. This is precisely how Yunmen received people. He was Yunmen’s heir, and each had his own distinctive manner. Thus it is said, “I cherish Shaoyang’s newly established methods.” All his life, he pulled out nails and removed wedges for others. This saying is exactly like that. Within a single phrase, the three phrases are naturally complete: the phrase that encompasses heaven and earth, the phrase that cuts off the multitude of streams, and the phrase that follows the waves and pursues the billows.

This answer is indeed remarkably extraordinary. Master Fushan Yuanlu said: “For one who has not penetrated, investigating the phrase is not as good as investigating the meaning; for one who has penetrated, investigating the meaning is not as good as investigating the phrase.” Among Yunmen’s heirs were three venerable masters who, when asked about the “hair-blowing sword,” all answered, “Done!” Only Baling’s answer went beyond the word “done.” This is attaining the phrase. Now tell me: are “done” and “Coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon” the same or different?

It was said earlier: “The three phrases may be distinguished; a single arrow pierces the vast sky.” To understand these words, you must utterly cut off emotional dust and conceptual thought, until they are wholly purified; only then will you see what he meant by, “Coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon.” If you try to reason about it further, you will only find yourself groping without reaching it. This line is from Guanxiu’s “Ballad Presented to a Provincial Graduate”:

Thicker than the iron atop Iron-Enclosure Mountain; thinner than the patterned silk on the immortal body of Shuangcheng.

Phoenix fledglings of Shu brocade looms flutter and stir; coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon.

The treasures hidden in Wang Kai’s house are hard to unearth; Yan Hui, starving and emaciated, grieves beneath snowy skies.

An ancient pine stands straight as a brush, unbroken by thunder; a snow-robed maiden pecks at a chipped flat peach.

Her pendant enters the dragon palace, her steps slow and slow; embroidered curtains and silver halls rise in uneven ranks.

Who can know whether the black dragon knows that it has lost its pearl?

Baling took a line from within the verse to answer the question about the hair-blowing sword, and it was swift indeed. A sword whose blade can be tested by blowing a hair against it, so that the hair breaks of itself, is called a hair-blowing sword because it is sharp. Baling simply answered the monk right at the point of his question. Even if his head fell off, he would not know it.

The verse says:

Where injustice must be leveled, it is leveled. [Fine as an ant; a great man must be just so.]

Great skill seems clumsy. [Without stirring sound or color; concealing the body while revealing its trace.]

Now pointing, now using the palm, [Look! Indeed! This is not it.]

It leans against heaven and illuminates the snow. [Cut! Look at it and you will be blinded.]

The great forge cannot grind it down; [Why subject it to further tempering? Even Ganjiang could not approach it.]

The skilled craftsman has not ceased polishing it. [No one can wield it. Even if Ganjiang came forth, he would retreat three thousand miles.]

Different! Different! [Bah! What other place is there? Praise is fitting.]

Coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon. [At midnight the moon sets, its reflection shining in the cold pool. Tell me, where does it go? It brings the whole world to peace. After drunkenness, one stumbles about, grieving one to death.]

“Where injustice must be leveled, it is leveled; great skill seems clumsy.” In ancient times, there were chivalrous swordsmen who, upon seeing injustice—where the strong oppressed the weak—would send forth a flying sword to take the strong man’s head. Thus, masters of the school conceal a precious sword in their brows and hang a golden hammer from their sleeves, to cut off unjust affairs. “Great skill seems clumsy”: in Baling’s reply lies the leveling of injustice. Because his words were exceedingly sharp and skillful, they instead seem clumsy. Why? He did not swing it directly before one’s face, but went off to a remote place and, in a single stroke, secretly took one’s head, without the person even noticing.

“Now pointing, now using the palm, it leans against heaven and illuminates the snow.” If you understand it, it is like a long sword leaning against heaven, stern and awe-inspiring in its spiritual power. An ancient said: “The mind-moon stands solitary and full; its radiance swallows the myriad forms. The radiance does not illuminate objects, nor do objects themselves remain. When radiance and objects are both forgotten, what is this?” This precious sword may appear on a finger, or suddenly appear in the palm. Long ago, when Canon Qing was speaking to this point, he raised his hand and said, “Do you see?” Nor need it be on the fingers. Xuedou passed by on a borrowed road, teaching you to see the intent of the ancients. Now tell me: is there any place that is not the hair-blowing sword? Thus it is said: “When the waves of the third rapid rise high, fish become dragons; yet foolish people still bail water from the pond at night.”

The Garden of the Patriarchs’ Affairs records in its “Biography of a Filial Son”: The wife of the King of Chu was once cooling herself in summer. Embracing an iron pillar, she conceived; later she gave birth to a lump of iron. The King of Chu ordered Ganjiang to forge it into swords. After three years, he completed a pair, one female and one male. Ganjiang secretly kept the male sword and presented the female sword to the King of Chu. The king stored it in a casket, from which he often heard mournful cries. The king asked his ministers, and they said: “Swords have male and female. The one that cries longs for the male.”

The king flew into a great rage and immediately had Ganjiang seized and killed. Knowing what would happen, Ganjiang hid the sword inside a house pillar and instructed his wife Moye: “When the sun rises from the northern window, on the southern mountain there is a pine; the pine grows from stone, and the sword is within it.” Later his wife bore a son named Chimei, Red Between the Brows. At the age of fifteen, he asked his mother, “Where is my father?” His mother then told him the earlier events. After long reflection, he split open the pillar and obtained the sword, desiring day and night to avenge his father.

The King of Chu also posted a reward for the man, proclaiming: “Whoever captures Chimei shall be richly rewarded.” Chimei therefore fled. Before long, a visitor said, “Are you not Chimei?” He replied, “I am.” The visitor said, “I am a man of Zeng Mountain, and I can avenge your father.” Chimei said, “My father was innocent and suffered cruelly and unjustly. You now kindly remember him; what do you require?” The visitor said, “I must have your head and the sword.”

Chimei then gave him both the sword and his head. The visitor received them and presented them to the King of Chu. The king was greatly delighted. The visitor said, “I wish to boil it in oil.” The king then cast it into a cauldron. The visitor deceived the king, saying, “The head has not yet decayed.” As the king bent over to look, the visitor, from behind, used the sword to strike the king’s head into the cauldron. The two heads then bit each other. Fearing that Chimei would not prevail, the visitor cut his own throat to aid him. The three heads bit one another, and soon all decayed together. (The Sichuan edition lacks this episode concerning the King of Chu.)

Xuedou said: “This sword can lean against heaven and illuminate the snow.” Ordinarily it is said: “The radiance of a long sword leaning against heaven can illuminate the snow.”

Its function is such that “the great forge cannot grind it down,” and even if a skilled craftsman never ceased polishing it, he could not improve it. The skilled craftsman is Ganjiang. The story makes this clear of itself.

Having finished the verse, Xuedou finally revealed it, saying, “Different! Different!” This too is remarkably extraordinary: it has a special excellence and differs from ordinary swords. Now tell me, what is this different place? “Coral branches, branch after branch, prop up the moon.” It may be called unsurpassed before and after, standing alone within the universe, with nothing its equal. But what is it, after all? Your heads have fallen off, everyone!

This old monk has a further little verse:

Though a boat holds ten thousand hu, one may seize it at will; yet because of a single grain, a jar swallows a snake.

Turning over old koans a hundred times, he scatters away the sand from how many people's eyes.

The Blue Cliff Record, Fascicle Ten (End), by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu

Postscript to The Blue Cliff Record

Postscript to The Blue Cliff Record

Postscript

Xuedou's One Hundred Verses on Old Cases are an essential guide for practitioners in the Chan monasteries. Among them, he draws analogies from the sūtras and treatises, or from Confucian literature and history, to illuminate this matter. Unless a lineage master endowed with discerning eyes periodically raises and analyzes them for later students, there is no way to understand them.

When my teacher Yuanwu was in Chengdu, several others and I sought instruction in his explanations. Later, when the master resided at Jia Mountain and Daolin, students again questioned him about them. On three occasions he set forth the essential principles; though his words differed, their purport was one. His disciples gathered and recorded them. Twenty years have now passed, yet the master has never looked them over or inquired about them. As they circulated in all directions, discrepancies may have arisen. Moreover, people in various places, unable to trace the import of his words, may presumptuously alter them. Then this book would be ruined. May students carefully preserve its transmission.

Recorded at the end of spring in the Yisi year of the Xuanhe era by Guan You Wudang of Shangxiu [illegible].

Preface to the Reprinting of Chan Master Yuanwu's Blue Cliff Collection

To Xuedou's One Hundred Verses on Old Cases, Yuanwu added extensive annotations. It was solely to instruct the Chan monasteries and to transmit the school's essential purport forever; in this respect, it is a constant principle. When students' sharp responses came readily, Dahui examined them privately and found that they had attained no genuine realization. He therefore had the printing blocks destroyed and forbade its circulation; this was an expedient measure. This book contains the true eye of all Buddhas and the great function of the successive patriarchs. Its two scriptures are like tongs and hammer; neither has any flaw. Now we wish to set it alongside Dahui's extensive writings, so that both may circulate together with Yuanwu's essential teaching. It raises the blazing sun over the bewildered road and sets a compass in the ocean of wisdom. With one joyful reading, the multitude of the ignorant may be awakened. If all together bring this to completion, the benefit will not be slight. How fortunate!

The foregoing respectfully submits: At seventeen, one awakened to Yunmen and Muzhou; this may be called a verbal samādhi. For two hundred years, no one saw the Blue Cliff or Xuedou; then suddenly one received a blow from the hand of their successor. How could one forget the bowyer's craft and the inheritance of robes and baskets? Do not cut off the seed of the descendants. Those who merely follow behind others, turning at their heels—who among them can cast the hook that catches dragons? Should one with discerning eyes come, he would not regard it as a hitching post for donkeys. This matter should be like the parable of the raft: in time, one will naturally forget the fish trap.

Every household's gate opens onto Chang'an: those in front call, and those behind respond. The many conditions return to the great reckoning: what was formerly abolished is now revived. Do not blame this mountain monk for being too talkative; after all, it is the earnest concern of an old grandmother. Without reading the books of the Eastern Land, how can one know the meaning of the coming from the West? To revive the school's tradition for an age—even without geese flying south, look at the fish coming north, and there will be abundant news. Holding the seal of the common script, read the inexhaustible lamp. Respectfully submitted.

Respectfully written on this day of this month

When the old patriarch Yuanwu resided at Jia Mountain, he compiled this book. Was his wish that people throughout the world and in later ages should know the profound mystery of the Buddhas and patriarchs merely a small benefit? Old Miaoxi deeply feared that students, not rooted in the Way and drowned in conceptual understanding, would therefore destroy it. Could there be any contradiction between father and son? Now Layman Zhang of Yuanzhong has again had it printed from woodblocks. What, indeed, does this mean? Readers should choose for themselves.

Respectfully written with joined hands by Jingri, bhikshu and seventh-generation Dharma descendant residing at Tiantong, at Mid-Autumn in the renyin year of the Dade era.

Chan Master Yuanwu commented upon and expounded Xuedou's one hundred verses on old cases. He discerned and resolved their profound subtleties, probing and exposing their hidden depths. He revealed the dynamic functioning of the successive patriarchs and opened the mind-source for later students. Moreover, subtle wisdom is empty and still, while spiritual activity works silently: as the crystalline dawn shines, the mysterious gateway is fully illuminated; as the round moon rises, the dark chamber becomes bright. How could shallow understanding attain such an ultimate point?

Later, when Chan Master Dahui received students for private interviews, their replies were often unusual. Suspecting them, he examined them; at the first investigation their deviant edge was blunted, and upon further questioning they surrendered and said, “I learned it from The Blue Cliff Collection; in truth, I have had no awakening.” Fearing that later students would fail to understand the root and would prize language alone in pursuit of verbal cleverness, he burned it in order to remedy this fault.

Yet the intention in compiling this book and in burning this book was one—how could it have been two? Layman Zhang Mingyuan of Yuanzhong happened to obtain a manuscript of the latter volume, as well as a Xuetang printed edition and a Shu edition. He collated and corrected their errors, had this book printed, and circulated it for ten thousand ages. If persons of the highest capacities and great wisdom, upon reading it once, suddenly open their original minds and directly reach the ground beyond doubt, how could this be called a small benefit?

On the day of the Buddha-Welcoming Assembly in the Dingsi year of the Yanyou era, the bhikṣu [illegible]ling, abbot of Mount Jing, respectfully wrote this as a postface.

In the Confucian school, Zigong rendered great service to the sage of the Eastern school. Even if fine horses run at the sight of a whip’s shadow, they are all as far behind Yanzi as those who stare blankly from afar. Our sage and teacher has long roamed the heaven beyond words. At the assembly on Vulture Peak, the fourfold community gathered like a sea. When the World-Honored One held up a flower to reveal the school’s essential purport, none knew what to do; only the Venerable Kāśyapa faintly smiled. This was, like the single “yes” in our own teaching—whereupon speech and hearing both vanished—a sudden, thorough, suspended awakening. Had Zengzi not directly laid bare the secret key of loyalty and reciprocity, would not the disciples’ confusion have grown ever greater? A thousand years later, how could the clouds of delusion about the single thread be dispelled?

In another age, the old Chan master Foguo Yuanwu of Chengdu, seated in the abbot’s room at Jia Mountain, raised and expounded Xuedou’s One Hundred Verses on Old Cases. His great disciple, Seat-holder Gao, feared that students would cling to words and phrases and betray the successive patriarchs. So he took the old master’s tongue and consigned it all at once to fierce flames, scattering its smoke and ashes over heaps of firewood.

He thought that casting it into vast ravines and the great void was like dropping a tiny drop, or like the old master Deshan displaying fried cakes before an old woman: these commentaries and notes had already grown cold as dust and left no trace. Yet wildfires cannot burn it all away; when the spring wind blows, it grows again. Flowers fall upon the Blue Cliff, and the sunny slope is embroidered like brocade. Through kalpas past, dead ashes blaze again.

No one knows from where so many tangled vines have emerged, each one wholly revealed from the shadowless tree planted by Layman Zhang of Yuanzhong. This brings prajñā beyond speech and causes the devas to rain flowers. After one hundred and seventy or eighty years, patched-robed monks suddenly have their nostrils pierced crosswise. A precious fragrance never previously smelled surges like water and billows like clouds, pervading each and every one of the eighty-four thousand pores. This may truly be called a most profound, rare, and difficult-to-encounter event.

Afterward, the layman’s two sons developed mental illness. Some said, “Master Baoqin’s disciple, Seat-holder Gao, destroyed the printing blocks. The layman ought not to have gathered up the remaining ashes; thus, through the workings of time, he has received this retribution.” The layman doubted these words and questioned me about them. I said: “Every disciple of Yuanwu is Seat-holder Gao. The Blue Cliff is itself blue; how could there be anything to say?”

Seat-holder Gao saw the moon and forgot the pointing finger; he then blamed the ancient Buddha, letting poisonous flames spread across the sky, toppling the temple flagpole and not allowing a single ray through. But for those who have never recognized the moon, who will use a finger to point it out to them? Others further said, “Seat-holder Gao burned this book, having made a grave oath to the local spirits; the illness of the layman’s two sons is precisely due to this.”

I said: “When Seat-holder Gao plainly held the torch and burned the old paper red, how could there have been a draft through the private room? Old Master Qin’s vital gate and tongue-root had another place that could not be destroyed. When a single spark scattered, the bright moon shone over empty mountains. How could Layman Zhang have received this news? Take up that naturally wrought brocade loom of western Shu, and once again weave the patterns of former days.”

Perhaps the guardian spirits of the monastery secretly provided the ground for this and have protected it until now. Surely this is the time when the conditions are ripe for this book to appear in the world. At the Pool of Coolness, when needle and mustard seed meet, the merit of copying, reading, reciting, and explaining it to others should bring extraordinary merit and virtue—how much more so when it is engraved in metal or stone and passed on in continual circulation. The root cause of the layman’s two sons’ mental illness does not lie here.

Laborers foolishly speculate with discriminating consciousness; the layman, because of the calamities and blessings immediately before his eyes that he cannot calculate or avert, also speculates with discriminating consciousness. They follow one another into a pit of fire. Is this not grievous? The Record of Numinous Retributions relates that the three sons of a Zhou family in Pei were all mute. One day a visitor came to the door and said, “You should examine within and reflect upon past transgressions.”

He suddenly recalled vividly that, when he was a child, he had seen three young swallows in a nest. Waiting until their mother flew away, he and others each forced a tribulus burr down one of their throats. Shortly afterward, they all died, and the mother returned, cried mournfully, and departed. He had always reproached himself in remorse. The visitor said, “Since you know remorse, your offense is now forgiven.” The three sons immediately became able to speak.

Then might not the layman’s two sons’ wind disorder and loss of mind likewise have some matter that calls for remorse? As it is said of one who expounds prajñā: if such a person is despised by others, the karmic offenses of former lives that should have led to rebirth in an evil realm are thereby extinguished through being despised in this life.

If the layman can awaken to this, then even the karmas created since beginningless kalpas should be extinguished at once. The mental illness of his two sons should likewise be like the Zhou family’s three sons becoming able to speak at once; there need be no doubt. During the World-Honored One’s lifetime of forty-nine years, the writings in six hundred cases spread everywhere, concealing and containing the whole realm.

If we followed Seat-holder Gao’s view, after ten thousand years a single thought would still leave traces—how could that be? Among the venerable masters of the higher Chan groves, there are two most pointed sayings: “Though you say mind itself is Buddha, I say neither mind nor Buddha.” Henceforth, should anyone slander the true teaching of the Tathāgata, you need only answer: “You may say that Seat-holder Gao is right; I only say that my teacher Qin is right.”

If you do not do so, I fear the flames will burn your face and all four hundred and four illnesses will arise at once. What then of the mental illness of the layman’s two sons? Have you not seen the ancient saying, “Only when raising children does one know a parent’s kindness”? The layman studies Buddhism and knows gratitude. In old age, repent; one day, when you become a master of the furnace and bellows, leap beyond the sixteen-foot golden body. I wonder whether you will then see Master Qin truly raise his brows and hold up his whisk. If you can realize it in a single phrase, tell them: Buddhas and patriarchs have vowed that offenses are not punished twice; do not bring calamity upon another family’s children and grandchildren. Though this is so, it is best to have no entanglement at all.

Inscribed by Feng Zizhen, the Old Man of Haisu, on the Ghost Festival of the dingsi year of the Yanyou era.

Several editions of The Blue Cliff Collection circulate in the world, with many volumes and covers; they are inconvenient for students traveling with full bookcases. Therefore, for many years I have wished to make a paper-saving edition in small type with compressed lines. In the autumn of the dingsi year of the Ansei era, devout donors joined their efforts and gave funds, gladly supporting the preparation of the woodblocks, and I immediately commissioned the engravers. Now that the work is complete, I am pleased to donate the printing blocks, produce copies, and set a low price—this was indeed my original intention. As for the subtle details of the Blue Cliff, the prefaces and postscripts of earlier worthies have already said everything well; what need is there for me to speak? Since this abridged edition has been engraved, I have briefly recorded these words at the beginning of the volume.

Respectfully recorded by Gen’e, abbot of Gyokutō Hermitage in Hanazono, by imperial appointment, on an auspicious day in the seventh month of autumn in the sixth year of Ansei, the year jiwèi.