

The First Book of Zen

Qingliao's comments on the classic Poem on Faith in Mind

Translated from the Chinese by Thomas Cleary

Introduction

The first book of Zen, called *Faith in Mind*, is attributed to the third great master of Chan Buddhism, the ancestor of Zen. The title alludes to the 'matter of mind,' the central theme of the *Lankavatara-sutra*, the Buddhist scripture designated by the founder of Chan, according to early sources, for study in his school.

The 'matter of mind' refers to the observation that our ordinary perception of reality is relative to the functions of our faculties, which are conditioned by biological and social histories, and subject to the influence of suggestion and acquired habits involving accepted assumptions, biases, myths, or illusions. It is possible, however, according to this teaching, to disengage consciousness from compulsive habits of thought so as to enable more direct witness of reality. The *Mahaparinirvana-sutra* says, "Be master of mind, don't be mastered by mind." The *Lankavatara-sutra* says, "One should make contact with the uniqueness of first hand ultimate attainment and be able to see independently of what is seen through subjective description."

For practical purposes, the teaching of the 'matter of mind' distinguishes four parts of mind in order to set up the exercises intended to provoke individual experience of first hand realization: these are called the perceiver, the description, the self-witness, and the witness of the self-witness.

The perceiver refers to the state of mind and mental faculties at any given time; the description refers to the experience and interpretation of what is being perceived in that particular state of mind.

The self-witness is the ability to observe the relationship between the perceived and the description, such as the fluctuating influences of emotion, reasoning, and physical conditions on interpretation of experience.

The witness of the self-witness is the ability to monitor the self-witness for quality and consistency of attention and observation.

The immediate object of Chan practice, in these terms, may be described as developing and applying the capacities of the self-witness and witness of the self-witness in order to clarify consciousness.

The traditional stories of the ‘transmission of the lamp’ of enlightenment in the first three generations of the Chan school are designed to illustrate these basic premises and practices.

In the first story, when the future second master asked the founder to ‘pacify his mind,’ the founder said, “Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it for you.” The second master replied, “When I look for my mind, I cannot find it.” The founder then said, “I have pacified your mind for you.”

This story illustrates the exercise known as ‘turning the light around and reversing attention,’ focusing attention on consciousness itself in order to disengage from immersion in impressions of objects and thoughts.

In the second story, the future third master came to the second master as an anonymous middle-aged layman, saying he was afflicted with palsy and begging the master to absolve him of guilt.

The idea that illness is caused by guilt had been promulgated for centuries in China by Taoist Celestial Masters, who offered rites of absolution for healing. The Buddhist *Mahaparinirvana-sutra*, translated into Chinese a hundred years before the founding of Chan, also features a story of illness caused by guilt, in a king who killed his own father. Several philosophers are brought in to rationalize the king’s action to cure him of guilt, but this doesn’t work. Finally he is healed by means of remorse and conscience.

Chan Buddhism develops conscience by developing consciousness. This involves a two-pronged approach; developing understanding of cause and effect, and cultivating the capacity to stand apart from impulses. This latter maneuver is set up by distinguishing the nature or essence of consciousness from the function of consciousness, and cultivating the ability to focus on essence. This is the practice illustrated in the story of the palsied layman who asked for absolution; the Chan master replied, “Bring me the guilt, and I will absolve you.” The layman said, “When I look for the guilt, I cannot find it.” The Chan master said, “I have absolved you.”

This exercise follows on the first, using awareness of the essence of consciousness to deprive impulses of influence. Not finding guilt when looking for it means not becoming immersed in mental content when focused on the nature of consciousness itself, so as not to fall under the spell of impressions, thoughts, and feelings.

In the third story, the future fourth master came to the third master as a teenager and asked to be liberated. The third master said, “Who binds

you?” After a long silence, the teenager said, “No one binds me.” The third master said, “Then why seek liberation?”

The *Lankavatara-sutra* likens the habit of immersion in subjective imagination to the activity of a silkworm wrapping itself in a cocoon of its own making; Chan tradition refers to this as ‘tying yourself up without rope.’ The purpose of the exercise illustrated in this story is to watch the mind for this tendency, in order to develop the ability to refrain from elaboration of subjective imagination. As in the first two stories, the effort of engagement in mental search, here alluded to by reference to the teenager’s pause of silence, is critical to the applied meaning.

To illustrate the aim of awakening proposed by this process, the Buddhist teaching of mind speaks of four kinds of knowledge: these are called mirror knowledge, knowledge of equality, differentiating knowledge, and practical knowledge.

Mirror knowledge is described as non-conceptual awareness like a mirror that reflects whatever comes before it. This is so fundamental that there is no Chan without this mode of experience, but it is also extremely vulnerable to random absorption and is therefore not stable, so it is paired with the knowledge of equality.

The knowledge of equality has a metaphysical basis, which may be used to structure meditation, but effectively it refers in practice to the ability to stabilize the mirror knowledge and counteract its susceptibility to arbitrary immersion in objects. The knowledge of equality is therefore necessary in order to be able to handle mirror knowledge safely, but it too has a serious drawback when used in isolation. This is referred to in the *Lankavatara-sutra* as ‘the affliction of the knowledge of equality,’ meaning the danger of lapsing into indifference. Therefore the third knowledge, knowledge of differentiation, is clarified in order to overcome indifference and observe relevance, understanding relations in the realm of beings and phenomena. A Chan proverb in the classic *Book of Serenity* says, “The heart of nirvana is easy to attain; knowledge of differentiation is hard to clarify.”

Knowledge of differentiation forms the basis of the fourth kind of knowledge, practical knowledge. This practical knowledge, as described in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, another sourcebook used by classical Chan masters, includes both mundane and mystical arts. In the book on the ten stages of enlightenment, for example, referred to repeatedly in the *Lankavatara-sutra*, concentration on perfection of meditation, from which

Chan Buddhism gets its name, is associated with the fifth stage. In this same fifth stage, the *Flower Ornament* says, while perfecting meditation people striving for enlightenment “practice whatever in the world would benefit sentient beings, such as writing, teaching, mathematics, material sciences, medical sciences,” and many other occupations, including “song and dance, drama, music, storytelling, and entertainment” as well as “the construction of villages, cities, parks, canals, reservoirs,” and so on, including the development of moral discipline, meditation, and mystic knowledge.

The first book of Zen, *Faith in Mind*, is an attempt to induce, or restore, the awareness that enables such an expansive approach to the experience of life.

It is explained in the *Lankavatara-sutra* that words cannot capture direct experience, but can have an instrumental function, like a finger pointing at the moon. Therefore traditional Chan commentary, which evolved after centuries of Buddhist history, commonly employs tactics aimed specifically at stimulating first-hand perception and undermining any inclination to freeze direction into doctrine and doctrine into dogma.

The first commentary by a master on the first book of Zen demonstrates this Chan technique, in the process illustrating various contemplative exercises intended to stimulate the development of the four kinds of knowledge.

The author of *Faith in Mind*, known as the Third Patriarch of Chan, died in 606. The author of the first commentary, a Chan master named [Changlu] Qingliao (Choro Seiryō), lived half a millennium later, from 1089 to 1151. He was one of a number of famous Chan masters of the time to compose extensive commentaries on classical cases of Chan teaching.

Verse comments on one hundred cases by Qingliao’s own Chan teacher form the core of the collection known as *Annals of a Vacant Hall*. Another successor of the same school who later assisted Qingliao in teaching wrote verse comments on one hundred cases and prose comments on one hundred more cases, which later formed the core of the classic *Book of Serenity* and *Record of Further Inquiries*. Qingliao was also personally acquainted with the famous Chan master Yuanwu, author of the commentaries in the classic *Blue Cliff Record* and *The Measuring Tap*. An eminent teacher himself with an audience never less than seventeen hundred people, Qingliao left a record of speeches, dialogues, and poems called *Annals Outside Time* in addition to his *Selected Antiquities*, which consists of these comments on *Faith in Mind*. Like numerous other Chan masters, he also practiced and promoted Pure Land Buddhism, and died without illness.

Poem on Faith in Mind

By Chan Master Sengcan

The supreme Way has no difficulty,
Just dislikes picking and choosing.
Just don't hate and love
And it is clearly evident.
The slightest divergence
Is as far off as sky is from earth.
If you want it to be manifest,
Don't maintain accord or opposition.
If you don't know the mystic essence
You toil in vain at meditating on quiet.
It is complete as cosmic space,
No lack, no excess.
It's only due to grasping and rejecting
That it isn't so.
Don't pursue existing objects
Don't dwell in enduring emptiness.
In a uniformly equanimous heart
All disappears, naturally ending.
Stop activity to return to stillness
And stopping is even more activity.
Only lingering in two extremes,
How can you know oneness?
When unity isn't comprehended,
Effectiveness is lost in both places.
Trying to get rid of existence obscures being;
Trying to follow emptiness turns away from emptiness.
Much talk and much cogitation
Is even more out of touch.
Return to the root and you get the essence;
Follow perception and you lose the source.
Stop talk, stop cogitation
And you penetrate everywhere.
Return to the root and you get the essence;
Follow perception and you lose the source.
To reverse perception in a moment

Surpasses the emptiness before time.
Changes in the already empty
are all due to false views.
You don't need to seek reality,
You just have to stop views.
Dual views don't abide;
Be careful not to pursue them.
As soon as there is affirmation and denial
You lose your mind in confusion.
Two exists because of one;
And don't even keep the one.
One mind unborn,
Myriad things are blameless.
No blame, no thing,
Not conceiving, not minding.
Subject vanishes along with object,
Object disappears along with subject.
Object is object due to subject,
Subject is subject due to object.
If you want to know both parts,
Fundamentally they are one emptiness.
If you don't see fine and crude,
How can there be partiality?
The Great Way is intrinsically broad;
It has no ease, no difficulty.
Narrow views are beset with doubt;
The more you hurry, the more the delay.
Cling to this and you lose measure
And surely enter a false path.
Let it go naturally;
The substance neither leaves nor stays.
Trusting nature, merging with the Way,
Roaming freely, you end affliction.
Fixating thought turns away from reality;
Sinking into oblivion is not good.
It's not good to belabor the spirit;
What's the use of avoidance and approach?

If you want to take to the One Vehicle,
Don't be averse to the six sense fields.
The six sense fields aren't bad;
They're the same as true awakening.
The wise have no artificiality;
Fools bind themselves.
There are no special things;
You arbitrarily form your own attachments.
Using mind to apply mind—
Isn't that a big mistake?
Confusion creates tranquility and disturbance;
Enlightenment has no likes or dislikes.
All dual extremes
Are arbitrary subjective judgments.
Dreams, illusions, flowers in the sky—
Why labor to grasp them?
Gain and loss, right and wrong—
Let go all at once.
If the eyes don't sleep,
Dreams vanish of themselves
If the mind does not differ,
All things are as one.
Absorb the mystery as one;
Unmoved, forget objects
Myriad things observed equally,
Return to naturalness.
Eliminate your suppositions;
It cannot be compared.
Still activity and there is no activity;
Activate stillness and there is no stillness.
Since two doesn't come about,
How can one be so?
Find out the end, plumb the ultimate;
Don't keep to tracks and models.
The mind in accord is equanimous;
All fabrication ceases.
When doubt is cleared away,

True faith fits directly.
Nothing remains;
There's nothing to remember.
Empty illumination spontaneously aware
Doesn't expend mental effort.
What is not in the range of thought
The conscious mind cannot fathom.
In the realm of reality as it truly is
There is no self and no other.
If you want to accord quickly,
Only speak of nonduality.
Nonduality is the same for all;
Nothing is not contained.
The wise ones of the ten directions
All enter this source.
The source is not near or far;
One moment, ten thousand years.
There is nowhere it is not,
The ten directions right before the eyes.
The smallest is the same as the great;
You forget the boundaries of objects.
The greatest is the same as small;
You do not see outside the borders.
Existence itself is nonexistence,
Nonexistence itself is existence.
If not thus,
Do not keep it.
One is all,
All is one.
If you can just be thus,
What rumination will not end?
Faith in Mind is nondualistic;
Nondualism is Faith in Mind.
The path of language ends;
It is not past, future, or present.

Introduction by Chan Master Qingliao

Cutting off the byways of the thousand differences is already biting the dust on even ground; shut off your vocal organs and you still can't avoid groping your way along using fences and walls.

To go ahead and open a clam mouth and talk about mind and essence, Chan and the Way, is all fooling people, destroying Buddhists.

What about the perennial matter? Let's try to bring it up without getting too vague.

Poem on Faith in Mind

By Sengcan

Comment by Chan Master Qingliao

This wild fox spirit! What are you talking about! "It is not mind, not Buddha, not a thing"—what is there to trust? Clean and naked, bare and untrammelled, ungraspable—what more can you write?

The Third Patriarch didn't know good from bad; saying this word "mind" already mistakenly assigns a verbal designation fouling his mouth. Even if he rinses his mouth for three thousand years and washes his ears for eighty eons, this is already a vine snaked around your feet, a billboard around your body.

What is more, people come here in droves wanting someone to explain it all. Happily there's no connection; but even so, having brought up one I can't cite a second. Let the first move go, and there is something to discuss. Let me ask you people: the present physical elements and six senses, internal and external, are illusory, fundamentally empty; the clarity and completeness before you fills heaven and earth—what then is it?

If you can trust this way, then this is the scenery of the original ground of your self, your original face. Radiating light and moving the earth day and night, it is always present before you, going out and in. If you ponder and try to discuss, linger in thought and stall your potential, for now listen humbly to the disposition of the case from the edge of your meditation chair.

**The supreme Way has no difficulty,
Just dislikes picking and choosing.**

Comment

Stop, stop! "As soon as words are spoken, 'This is discrimination,' 'This is clarity.'" The heart and guts of the Third Patriarch's everyday life are shown to you all at once. But can you get it? This "The supreme Way has no

difficulty, just dislikes picking and choosing,” correctly stated and correctly spoken, was not only impossible for Zhaozhou to explain for five years; in fact all the old masters in the land turn their spears upside down, take off their armor, and here acknowledge defeat.

Now do you want to penetrate this case through the top and through the bottom, all the way through the bone to the marrow? Just strip away all prior psychological fixations, myriad kinds of cleverness and calculation, learned opinions and intellectual interpretations, slogans and complications—vomit it all out at once, and then check your own life pulse. If you can see through in one look, then please hang up your bowl and bag and break your walking stick; admittedly you are a wayfarer with nothing to do and nothing to be concerned about.

If, however, your conceptual sense is not interrupted and your opinions and interpretations are not forgotten, and you try to figure it out verbally, you’ll be pressed to repay people money for drinking water and money for footgear some day. Even for my telling you this there’s a thirty-stroke beating. Where is the fault? The mouth my father and mother gave birth to will never explain to you.

Notes

“As soon as words are spoken, ‘This is discrimination,’ ‘This is clarity.’” The *Poem on Faith in Mind* is cited in several stories in the Chan classic *Blue Cliff Record*. This quote is from the second case: the famous Chan master Zhaozhou said, citing the poem, “‘The Supreme Way has no difficulty, just dislikes picking and choosing.’ As soon as there are words spoken, ‘This is discrimination, this is clarity.’ I do not remain within clarity; do you preserve anything?” In case 58, a monk asked Zhaozhou “ ‘The supreme Way is without difficulty, just dislikes picking and choosing’—isn’t this a cliché for people these days?” Zhaozhou said, “Once someone asked me, and I simply could give an explanation for five years.”

**Just don’t hate and love
And it is clearly evident.**

Comment

Who says so? (silence) No one knows him.

Even so, if you don’t seek the sages and don’t take your own spirit seriously, what would you hate, what would you love?

But now the common sort take sayings from teachers, imitation sayings, standard sayings, and ad hoc sayings, pass them on verbally and impress them upon others mentally, putting them in print, gradually circulating them, studying them over and over until they get a bellyful of superficial Chan. After two or three years they've forgotten it all and are as ever; wherever they go they contend, compare, and compete, their ignorance spanning the sky. How can they be free of hate and love?

Do you people want to understand lucid clarity? (holding up a whisk)

Utterly mortifies people.

**The slightest divergence
Is as far off as sky from earth.**

Comment

You said it alright, but don't know the ultimate point. Even the great Fayán and Master of Xiushan still seem to be drawing a gourd based on the original. How much the more you now who customarily just quote it and think that's what we're about. Chan followers need to awaken before they'll get it.

Some say, "If you go off it even slightly, you miss it by a thousand miles. This is the realm of no mind; if you try mentally you miss; if you arouse thought you turn away." If you go on adding interpretations like this, you'll just get a slippery tongue. The Third Patriarch had no such things in his gut; he just presents it right to your face, imparting it with both hands.

But what about "the slightest divergence is as far off as sky from earth"—where do you say the ultimate point lies, after all? (A monk was about to open his mouth; the teacher immediately hit him)

Notes

The story of Fayán and Xiushan appears in case 17 of the Chan classic *Book of Serenity*: Fayán asked Xiushan, "The slightest divergence is as far off as sky from earth'—how do you understand?" Xiushan said, "The slightest divergence is as far off as sky from earth." Fayán said, "How can you get it that way?" Xiushan said, "I'm just this—what about you?" Fayán said, "The slightest divergence is as far off as sky from earth." Xiushan thereupon bowed.

**If you want it to be manifest,
Don't maintain accord or opposition.**

Comment

What are you saying? (silence)

It's been set forth all at once; you lot can't avoid it anymore. What is manifest? It is heaped in mountains, but just try to bring me even a hair.

Haven't you read how Guishan spent twenty years "not practicing Chan, not studying the Way," but "just raising a water buffalo"? It is always before your eyes, exposed, uncovered.

If you can be thus, you don't see opposition, you don't see accord; everything everywhere is cut off at once. This is called the manifestation of eternal light, undimmed moment to moment.

If you only understand yourself and don't understand what's in front of you, you only have one eye. If you only understand what's in front of you and don't understand yourself, in this case too you only have one eye.

People, how does this resonate?

*The earth is covered with snow;
when winter comes, as ever it's cold.*

**If you don't know the mystic essence
You toil in vain at meditating on quiet.**

Comment

At the moment he is just about to make final judgment, what is this fellow doing just tying himself up without rope?

This is the gate of great liberation, a state of total independence, alive at every step, alive at every moment, rolling inexhaustibly. If you can recognize it in the teeming hubbub, only then are you crystal clear in all respects, penetrating everywhere. If you go to the mountain of blackness and act senile instead, what connection is there? Even if you can get to where "spiritual clarity is profoundly still," you have not yet gotten out of that cluster of consciousness. This is just sitting in the realm of nothingness without having escaped the notion of quietude, without having clarified your own perception. This is called batting a clean ball. You still don't realize that if you find the purity of the realm of reality when laboring thinking stops forever, then that understanding of purity becomes an issue with which you obstruct yourself. This means attainment is in quietude of spirit, while loss is in the variety of things; mistakenly acknowledging the zero point of the scale, you insist on calling it the realm of no mind. Happily there is no connection; this is in fact the understanding of an outsider with unclear conditioned

consciousness. The lowest of the ninety-six kinds in India would still be better than you people.

Do you want to understand the mystic essence? (silence)

There's only the moon shining on the wall;

There's no more wind blowing the leaves.

It is complete as cosmic space,

No lack, no excess.

Comment

It is just this, nothing else: no traces, no boundaries, like a ram hung by the horns leaving no tracks, like the path of a bird in a dusky sky. The five colors cannot stain it, the five notes cannot disturb it, myriad forms cannot mix in, the totality of appearances cannot participate. Well-rounded and independent, complete without limit, in ordinary people it is called the state of ordinary people, in sages it is called the state of sages. Fundamentally it has no lack and no excess. Where is it? Seen through!

It's only due to grasping and rejecting

That it isn't so.

Comment

Wrong.

If there's fundamentally no lack, what is there to grasp? If there's fundamentally no excess, what is there to reject? If it's complete as space, it's everywhere and cannot be grasped more than that; it's no particular place and can't be discarded more than that.

A man of old also told you that which is clearly evident before you, without form or shadow, is the reality of your one mind, that in you which is listening to Dharma by means of Dharma, seeking mind by means of mind. It is already complete—what more dissatisfaction do you have?

The usual type who fail to penetrate then say, "I won't understand in this life; let me give up on this task and pass the time for now reading scriptures and doing daily recitals." What they don't realize is that whether you're sitting, walking around, even going to the toilet, it is always following you; when you're reading scriptures, doing recitals, performing prostrations, burning incense, it's always following you. How can you abandon it?

It simply cannot be grasped, cannot be abandoned; it is realized thus within unattainability. Do you want to see the Master? “You need to understand thus; only then do you accord with being as is.”

Introduction

Cut nails and shear iron, and the weeds in front of the gate are ten feet deep. Break two into three, and the dead are countless on level ground. Now I'll pick up a staff that kills and gives life, poke through the hundred grasses, use it upside down and wield it sideways. Many hands sift for gold—who will get it?

Don't pursue existing objects

Don't dwell in enduring emptiness.

Comment

Blind fellow, where are you going? Who got you to fall into a pit? Do you know 'existing objects'? This is the inverted consciousness in your senses conditioned by countless eons of life and death, which has now entered into your skulls and bellies unbeknownst to you, grabbing at sense objects day and night, never stopping. Since you don't see through it, you just pursue that greedy grasping and rejecting, acting compulsively and reaping the consequences, bobbing in the ocean of repetitious life and death.

Now do you want to stop chasing objects? You need to stop your conceptual faculty so as to be clean and bare; the myriad objects before your eyes will come to rest all at once, and you will naturally experience a state of peace and comfort.

When they hear people say this, the ordinary type then just totally turn away from the objects of the six senses and disregard myriad phenomena, dwelling mentally in empty silence, sitting in the eon of emptiness, staying like a withered tree alone on a cliff, deathlike, calling that a state of rest. Happily there's no connection. They still don't know that “when potential does not leave a static position, it falls into a sea of poison.” Even if you remain very stable for eighty thousand eons, you're just a dead person whose soul hasn't dissolved yet, a nihilist outsider. Haven't you read Tongan speaking of “Transcendence that the eon of emptiness cannot contain”? Would sense data and mental functions bind or hinder that?

You need to be unaffected by toil over sense objects, not absorbed into pure subtlety; only when you pass through both existing objects and endurance of emptiness do you know there is something beyond.

What do you make out to be what's beyond?
Extracting the sideways bone in the dark,
Cutting off the tongue in the light.

**In a uniformly equanimous heart
All disappears, naturally ending.**

Comment

“Skin shed completely, there is only one true reality.” Illuminating past and present it is as clear as the bright sun appearing before you, naked and clean, but do you see it? It is called the ordinary mind.

When you turn back from the ordinary to merge with the Way, there is no place for you to figure. Seeking horizontally and seeking vertically to the point even Buddhas and masters cannot say, you're like a house cat, a white ox, nondescript: the two extremes of emptiness and existence disappear, naturally ending.

When you reach such a state, your eyes are like your eyebrows, your mouth is like your nose; only then are you able to sit in peace.

How can people attain accord? (silence)

Several notes of the foreign flute after a sparse rain

Come piping past penetrating the mist through the village in the sunset.

**Stop activity to return to stillness
And stopping is even more activity.**

Comment

The talk turns dualistic: why do you just drift with conditioned consciousness, mistaking a reflection for your head? What is active? What is still? There can't be two; this thing is only one, not two. If you want to stop its activity to return to its stillness, there is no connection. You still don't realize that whether walking, standing, sitting, lying down, seeing, hearing, sensing, knowing, speaking, silent, active, or still, the very essence is reality itself, without form, without description, without a sign, without a trace, yet clearly obvious, always in seeing, hearing, sensing, knowing, speaking, silence, activity and function, its light shining brightly, leaving nothing in the dark.

This means stillness is all activity. You now want to stop that mobile functioning and totally return it to stillness, not knowing that stilling makes more and more movement. Chan practitioners, stillness is itself movement; why stop that?

This is why sages empty their heart and do not possess knowledge. Though they live in the midst of activity, they are always in an uncontrived state.

But what about an expression that does not touch upon activity or stillness—how do you say it? (striking his meditation seat, the teacher said) *Totally shattered.*

**Only lingering in two extremes,
How can you know oneness?**

Comment

(striking) Just because the naked mass of flesh, about to come in contact with my cane, doesn't recognize pain and dies under the cane. Just sticking to action, sticking to quietude, losing yourself and pursuing things, carried along by the waves of the world, senses and objects, with and without form, when will you ever realize there is this matter?

Do you want to understand? (A monk started to say something. The teacher said)

Even if I could hit a hundred thousand myriad of them, what would that accomplish?

**When unity isn't comprehended,
Effectiveness is lost in both places.**

Comment

After all you're groping along fences and walls, feet in a hurry and hands in a flurry. Activity completes tranquility, tranquility completes activity; there is only one, not two. You morons here, since you can't get through, when you practice meditation in action you mistake a thief for your son, and when you practice meditation in quietude you cut off your head seeking to live. You only fall into a pit.

One does not become two. This is not a bias in understanding or immersion of senses in objects. Don't say effectiveness is lost in both places—you stumble past everywhere. If you can penetrate one place, then a thousand places, ten thousand places, are penetrated at once. But tell me, what is that one place? (silence)

*When there are flowers and also wine on the way,
One trip is divided into two stages.*

**Trying to get rid of existence obscures being;
Trying to follow emptiness turns away from emptiness.**

Comment

What salvation is there? But let me ask you, what thing is there that you may get rid of? Try to bring me a single hair. The whole universe, the whole world, is the subject, just the household affair experienced by a patchrobed monk. It is called subtle function, it is called subtle existence—how would you get rid of it? If you eliminate myriad forms, remove sense objects, and banish all that is, you miss subtle existence and fall into nihilism.

Chan followers, just think carefully: once you have eliminate myriad forms, removed sense objects, and fallen into the eon of emptiness, you have also turned away from true emptiness, not knowing that myriad forms themselves are in fact true emptiness. Whatever you come in contact with originally has no description; picking it up sideways, using it upside-down, what taboo is there?

Generally, if you don't clarify the ground of mind you'll dismiss all that is and miss subtle existence, follow nihilistic emptiness and turn away from true emptiness. Just stopping activity is dismissing all existents, trying to return to quietude is following emptiness. Here it speaks of existence and emptiness, before it spoke of activity and stillness. Activity is stillness, existence is emptiness—the names are different but the substance is the same; there is nothing else.

But tell me, where is the error?

*Greedily gazing at the moon in the sky,
You lose the pearl in your hand.*

**Much talk and much cogitation
Is even more out of touch.**

Comment

Lower your voice! As soon as you open your mouth you're out of touch! You need to pick up an iron hammerhead with no hole and simply make everyone on earth lose their lives. If you do not do so, you will remain in a nest of complications, like a lame turtle or a blind tortoise entering an empty valley. When will you ever manage to get out?

Chan followers, if this matter is in words, aren't there words in the canon? Why would it have been necessary to "hold up a flower," "smile," and "transmit the eye of truth"? Do you want to understand? Close your skin bag and get it directly, without any further considering before and calculating

after. If you try to discuss or assess in thought you immediately enter a ghost cave.

Therefore, “When feelings arise, knowledge is blocked; when ideas change, entities differ.” You need to cut off the road of language and stop the course of thought. After all what does this accomplish?

A night of rain bringing down the flowers

And the water flowing throughout the city is fragrant.

Notes

“Hold up a flower,” “smile,” and “transmit the eye of truth” refer to a signal Chan story featuring the Buddha and Kasyapa the elder, one his foremost disciples, illustrating the principle of direct experience. According to the recapitulation in *Transmission of Light*, a symbolic Zen history, “When the Buddha raised a flower and blinked his eyes, Kasyapa broke out in a smile. The Buddha said, ‘I have the treasury of the eye of truth, the ineffable mind of nirvana. These I entrust to Kasyapa’”

Stop talk, stop cogitation

And you penetrate everywhere.

Comment

Where did you get this information? (silence)

Better to cut off your tongue than violate the national taboo.

Myriad impulse stripped away all at once, not accompanied by the thousand sages, look upon your self as your own worst enemy, and the Buddhas and Masters will then be disciples.

Deshan and Linji had the cane and the shout, speaking out and glaring, but when you get here it’s all inapplicable. Even so, don’t “keep to the green of unusual plants on a cold cliff,” for “if you keep sitting in the white clouds, realization isn’t subtle.”

Return to the root and you get the essence;

Follow perception and you lose the source.

Comment

Go right on like this, so that the Buddhas of all times, the six generations of original Chan masters, and all the old teachers in the world frown, and you’ve already fallen into confusion. How much the more when you explain doctrines,

discuss pluses and minuses, discourse on basics, expound illumination and function—when will you ever get a rest?

Chan followers, right now if you open your mouth to speak you fall into verbal expression. This is “exhausting the wonder, losing the source.” You will just be swept along by verbal description, report, and interpretation. But if, as an ancient said, “When leaves fall they return to the roots; when I came I had no speech,” then how do you explain “The rootless tree atop the polar mountain blooms on its own, without the influence of the spring breeze”?

To reverse perception in a moment

Surpasses the prior emptiness.

Comment

Are you waiting for a reversal of the verdict? Previously he said, “Trying to get rid of existence obscures being; trying to follow emptiness turns away from emptiness.” Now instead he says “To reverse perception in a moment surpasses the prior emptiness.” Just when you might think this guy wasn’t getting a glimpse, earlier not comprehending the total reality of all things, dismissing existence and obscuring being, now he understands all material phenomena are in themselves reality, and no longer dismisses existence.

Once you understand all things are yourself, there is not a single thing that can strike your feelings—you see through a thousand differences. Right away this is turning matter back into emptiness instantly, no longer detaching in order to contemplate emptiness. Identifying with the very substance, yet without description, is called seeing mind when you see matter. That is why it “surpasses the prior emptiness.”

When study reaches this state, once the key turns it rolls along in the course of everyday activities, inescapably. But even so, this is already burying yourself.

Changes of prior emptiness

Are all due to false views.

Comment

If you know yourself, that will do. Before you just turned away from objects to contemplate emptiness, got rid of thoughts arising and passing away, clarified body and mind, not seeing anything at all, just sensing emptiness all around. You think this is wonderful, not knowing this is a manifestation of

your imagination. If you detach from the imagining mind, this emptiness disappears.

This means that even if the conscious mind doesn't stick to existence but changes to attachment to emptiness, so the notion of emptiness dominates your mental state, this too is a manifestation of illusion. This is a cause of carelessness and abandon, denying cause and effect, rejecting existence and sticking to emptiness, plunging into fire to avoid drowning in water—carefully considered, the crimes are listed on the same indictment.

**You don't need to seek reality,
You just have to stop views.**

Comment

The case of present becoming—why do you look for it? Seeing and hearing are real, sound and form are real, activity and quietude are real, speech and silence are real. Right now your daily activities, perception and awareness, pure reality, immediately span time and fill the whole world. The thousand differences and myriad changes, as a totality, are one reality, manifest all at once without moving a hair, with nothing missing or left out. Whatever your notion of existence or notion of emptiness, notion of Buddha or notion of Dharma, it clearly sweeps away all opinionated understanding. Here, clean and bare, naked and free, you naturally arrive at a state of inner peace. Then what? (silence)

What's going on in your mind?

**Dual views don't abide;
Be careful not to pursue them.**

Comment

Still talking about it! Here he wants you to shed the notion of existence and the notion of emptiness at once to become unburdened—don't recall them anymore, don't pursue them. The more you distance yourself, the closer they seem; the nearer they are, the further away you get; the more you reject them the more they follow. Even if you put ashes on your head and mud on your face, think only of mystery and no longer take food, you've already fallen into nobility.

How can you avoid falling into nobility?

When the one moon rises over the ocean,

How many people go upstairs?

**As soon as there is affirmation and denial
You lose your mind in confusion.**

Comment

(striking a blow with the voice) Where is it gone? (silence)

*Seeking without finding at the ford with the fragrant grasses
Spending the night as before lodging in the reed flowers.*

Introduction

Standing on the highest peak, you pierce the skulls of all the patchrobed monks in the world, horizontally and vertically. Cutting off the subject, you cannot be trapped by a thousand people, ten thousand people.

Right now I'm holding an ox head to feed it hay, picking up a cat off a blanket. If you can ride a tiger's head, both turn out blind. Is there anyone who doesn't take leftovers?

**Two exists because of one;
And don't even keep the one.**

Comment

With whom are you speaking?

Understand? All emptiness and existence, all activity and stillness, all gain and loss, all taking and leaving, all hate and love, all affirmation and negation, is in totality just the subject. There is no second, no other. People of old couldn't avoid calling it the one great matter, the one road to nirvana, the expedient teaching of one vehicle. One word comprehends the ten directions, one statement transcends myriad forms. A thousand statements, ten thousand statements, are just one statement; a thousand truths, myriad truths, are just one truth.

When you reach the state of oneness, then you should turn around; if you keep dwelling in oneness, then it is a donkey-tethering stake. This is why the great teacher Yunmen said, "Even if you realize there is no trouble in the whole world, this is still an expression of turning around; when you do not see a single form, this is just half presentation. You should know there is a time of total presentation."

Chan followers, it is undeniably complicated. Do you want to understand? You must do a flip at the edge of a ten thousand fathom cliff, so your life root is cut off; only then will you get a little resonance.

**One mind unborn,
Myriad things are blameless.**

Comment

(silence) Mountains are mountains, waters are waters, sky is sky, earth is earth—what fault is there?

Dressing, eating, sweeping, brewing tea, traveling east, sightseeing west, answering the calls of nature—what fault is there? “Just get rid of the sickness, don’t eliminate the reality;” “Don’t change the former person, just change the former course of conduct.”

What is your present course of conduct?

When you scoop up water, the moon is in your hands;

When you enjoy flowers, fragrance fills your clothes.

**No blame, no thing,
Not conceiving, not minding.**

Comment

Skewered on a single spit, brought up in a single presentation, crystal clear on all sides, distinct beyond compare, such that the third Patriarch has no place to hide. Do you people know the conclusion?

Best is a single line

Defining the form of the green mountains.

**Subject vanishes along with object,
Object disappears along with subject.**

Comment

“When light and objects are both forgotten, then what is this?” Do you know? What perceives is mind, what is perceived is object. Objects are conceived by mind, mind conceives based on objects. When there are no thoughts in the mind, objects are empty; when objects are not described, the mind is silent. Then you attain “subject vanishing along with object, object disappearing along with subject,” noumenon and phenomenon in mystic accord, “the person and the ox not seen,” so that “When the peach blossoms have all fallen, where do you see Lingyun?”

Note

“When the peach blossoms have all fallen, where do you see Lingyun.” Lingyun practiced Chan for thirty years; then one morning he was suddenly enlightened on seeing peach blossoms.

**Object is object due to subject,
Subject is subject due to object.**

Comment

By whom is this brought about?

When mind is totally identified with objects, then objects are objects due to mind; when objects are totally identified with mind, the subject is subject due to objects.

Subject being subject due to objects is “taking away the environment, not taking away the person.” Objects being objects due to the subject is “taking away the person, not taking away the environment.”

Therefore, to be totally objective in the environment means not taking away the green of the mountains, the blue of the water, the height of the sky, the thickness of earth, adaptations, changes, and developments.

*When totally mental in the mind,
The universe and the whole earth shatter completely.*

Notes

When totally mental in the mind, the universe and the whole earth shatter completely—What are you calling the universe and the whole earth? (Book of Serenity, case 12)

**If you want to know both parts,
Fundamentally they are one emptiness.**

Comment

(The teacher struck as he spoke, saying) What two parts or three parts are you talking about? You just need to get caned. If I want to meet with the grand master, don't you say person and environment are both taken away, the holy and the ordinary are both cut off, there is no person and no Buddha, the whole universe is a bubble in the sea, all sages and saints are like a flash of lightning. Even if you can say it all, you still don't avoid a caning.

**If you don't see fine and crude,
How can there be partiality?**

Comment

When people are at rest, they don't speak; when water is at rest, it doesn't flow. What about when the staff is at rest? Even if you stir curd, butter, and ghee into one flavor, and melt pitchers, dishes, rings, and bracelets into one gold, heaven and earth having the same root, myriad things one body, without partiality, without bias, no fine, no coarse, this is still not extraordinary.

What is extraordinary?

The mountain flowers, blooming, are like brocade;

The valley streams, brimming, are like indigo.

Introduction

Passing a blade through a swift current, breaking in and breaking out are simultaneous; in a spark, a flash of lightning, killing and giving life freely. Even if chickens roost in trees when cold while ducks go into water when cold, already this is losing your life. Is there anyone who pays no heed to living or dying? Try to get out of the nest of complications.

The Great Way is intrinsically broad;

It has no ease, no difficulty.

Comment

When the land is vast and the people sparse, those you meet are few. (silence)

It is so broad that the totality of space itself is born therein, like a fleck of cloud dotting an immense clarity.

Do you want to know the real substance of the Great Way? Master Zhi said, "It's not apart from sound, form, and speech." Each one of you present can speak, see, and hear—where is the real substance of the Great Way?

Have you not read how a monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the path?" Zhaozhou said, "Outside the walls." The monk said, "I'm not asking about this path." Zhaozhou said, "What path are you asking about?" The monk said, "The Great Way." Zhaozhou said, "The great way goes to the capital city."

Old Zhaozhou's speech is excessively simple and direct. The Third Patriarch shows his guts the minute he opens his mouth. Master Zhi's tongue has no bone. "Those who come pronouncing judgment are judgmental people." The three bandits here have been arrested at the same time—how do you banish them to confinement in the citadel of their home state?

**Narrow views are beset with doubt;
The more you hurry, the more the delay.**

Comment

“Take what’s coming to you and get out.”

Who told you to rush? If I tell you there’s simply no concern, your gut is full of doubt, and you won’t step back and accept what is, just going ahead belaboring your body and torturing your spirit in a hurry to get done. You still don’t realize the more you hurry the more the delay, the more you apply your mind the more out of touch you are. Even if you polish for three incalculable eons it will only accomplish contrived practice, not knowing that a single moment without mind immediately transcends the provisional learning of the three vehicles.

Haven’t you read Zhaozhou’s saying, “I’ve seen hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of people. All of them were seeking to become buddhas; it’s hard to find anyone among them who is mindless.”

Chan followers, how can you be without doubt? (silence)

The sky is bright with the white clouds; the stream flows with the bright moon.

**Cling to this and you lose measure
And surely enter a false path.**

Comment

Blind folks, put it down! This matter is like a huge fire; get too near and you die. Where is there any nest or rut for you to stay in or follow along? If your idea of self does not disappear, you become obsessed with the matter, competing with others for superiority, your nose soaring to the skies, not agreeing with anyone in the world. This is all a perverted attitude, being made helpless by a bit of the Chan path, rolled into a ball.

Here, how can you avoid going into a false path?

Last year’s apricots, this year’s willows—

Their color and fragrance are just as before.

**Let it go naturally;
The substance neither leaves nor stays.**

Comment

Let go what? Only people with clear eyes can.

Here, Chan and the Way, Buddha and Dharma, marvel and mystery, do not apply at all; it's just snoozing, doing your part in community work, picking vegetables, drinking tea, talking, passing the time this way.

The old teachers everywhere holding up their gavels and picking up their whisks are dreaming—expounding Chan, expounding the Way, they are all talking in their sleep.

You say, based on what principle?

If you have a principle, what can be done with it?

**Trusting nature, merging with the Way,
Roaming freely, you end affliction.**

Comment

The realm of utter unconcern requires an utterly unconcerned person to be able to bear it. People of old nurtured simplicity like an infant, not distinguishing east from west or south from north; with the six senses at rest all at once, empty illumination spontaneously shines by itself, comprehending clearly without any conceptual thinking. Trusting nature, going along with circumstances, Buddhism and worldly truth don't upset each other. Senses and objects, the physical elements, activity and stillness, speech and silence, are equally unloaded, so there is no longer so much as a thread or hair binding you anymore. All day long you just maintain uncluttered freedom.

But tell me, what does this accomplish? (silence)

*Wherever I go, the frosty night's moon
Falls into the valley stream ahead.*

**Fixating thought turns away from reality;
Sinking into oblivion is not good.**

Comment

Blind sleeper! Right now inside your skull, inside your skin bag, thought after thought is flowing unawares. With thought after thought appearing, how could you not turn away from the Way of natural reality? This is called drinking the wine of unawareness, drunk in the cave of afflictions of sound and form, sunk in oblivion, keeping the great reality body prostrate through the long night of life and death. When will you ever wake up? Even by the year of the ass you still won't have seen it even in a dream.

**It's not good to belabor the spirit;
What's the use of avoidance and approach?**

Comment

What are you doing mistaking your reflection for your head? Direct the mind and you immediately miss; how much more if there is avoidance and approach, picking and choosing, inverted perception, grasping and rejecting intellectual interpretation, seeking on the road of mind, grabbing in the conceptual faculty—what connection is there?

This matter just requires you to forget your subjective state to experience it, to observe mystically where you can't focus attention. What's the need to belabor mind and spirit, torturing thought, all day long in a daze? Even if you seek until Maitreya is born down here, you'll only have gotten a bellyful of false ideas. Don't suspect I'm trying to cheat you, just be afraid you might be wrong. An ancient said, "To try to use concepts to study mysticism is like heading east to go west."

**If you want to take to the One Vehicle,
Don't be averse to the six sense fields.**

Comment

Averse to what? "In the Buddha-lands of the ten directions, there is only the teaching of One Vehicle"—where do you get "objects of the six senses"? You try to pick up even a hair for me; the body within, the environment outside, empty space, the whole earth—all are things manifested in the subtle luminous true mind. Every particle is thus, every thought is thus—there is not a single thing that definitively possesses its own inherent substance; where do seeing and hearing, sound and form, come from?

If you can just dismiss the outside world and shed body and mind within, immediate awareness completely merging without boundary, you will naturally attain great liberation.

Do you people want to see the Patriarch?

Mountains empty, wind tumbles rocks;

Houses silent, the moon steals through the gates.

Introduction

The Way has neither concentration nor distraction; truth is apart from opinion and information. The accord of verbal expressions has no real meaning. The sages since time immemorial had minds like the bright clear moon but mouths

like a drunken man, shutting people up with flavorless talk. Wielding the diamond sword, they cut off complications, every statement addressing the immediate situation, wanting people to get it directly. Now is there anyone who can trust completely?

**The six sense fields aren't bad;
They're the same as true awakening.**

Comment

One statement says it all, tearing up past and present. Not seeing mountains, rivers, and earth outside, not seeing four elements or five clusters inside, form is not form, sound is not sound, hearing is not hearing, seeing is not seeing. (holding up a whisk) Do you see this?

Xuedou said, “The staff is a sense object—what fault is there? If there is no fault, one should talk to the owner appropriately. Hence the sixteen-foot golden body in the trash is set to one side; standing like a thousand-fathom wall in the mass of naked flesh lets the first move go. Even if you're clear in every way, that deserves a series of blows.”

(tossing down the whisk) I shouldn't be blindly administering punishment either.

**The wise have no artificiality;
Fools bind themselves.**

Comment

The crimes are listed on the same indictment.

Still, don't be careless. The external fields of data of the six senses originally have no identifying substance. They are all the place where patchrobed monks turn around, experience enlightenment, and attain the Way. Folks with clear eyes use it continuously all day long without being impulsive or contrived—what is wrong with that?

Those who do not know what's what see things outside mind, and are all at once bound fast by myriad objects, seeing and hearing sound and form, not realizing myriad things are fundamentally nonexistent, that it is only people themselves fussing.

Chan followers, you just see the ordinary, see the sacred, see female, see male—all of these are vain delusions in polluted minds. In absolute terms, there is nothing at all constituting mental objects, just you creating issues where there are none, seeing ghosts in front of your skull by yourself. Taking in

so many things, you are like silkworms making cocoons, wrapping yourself up and binding yourselves.

Haven't you read how the Fourth Patriarch asked the Third Patriarch, "I'm seeking a method of liberation." The Third Patriarch said, "Who binds you?" Chan followers, how do you understand his saying "Who binds you?" (silence)

Get the meaning on the hook; don't go by the zero point of the scale.

**There are no special things;
You arbitrarily form your own attachments.**

Comment

How can you blame others? You, now, from birth to death, are just *this*. A thousand things, ten thousand things, are just one thing—what special distinction is there? You just like this one and dislike that one, stick to this one and reject that one; as long as you have attachment, you are clinging to one side, uselessly adding dreamscapes. If you use your own nature to purify your own nature, you lose the real source even more. All of this is your own confusion and delusion.

Chan followers, how do you understand his "There are no special things"? (silence)

One statement comprehends the ten directions without bringing up anything at all.

**Using mind to apply mind—
Isn't that a big mistake?**

Comment

How can you blame others? Can your material elements listen to the Dharma? Since that mass of naked flesh cannot listen to the Dharma, then what is it that presently uses Dharma to listen to Dharma, uses mind to seek mind, uses Chan to seek Chan? Carrying a load of Buddhism, still you come here asking another to explain Buddhism— isn't this a big mistake? Perhaps you can't say, but don't you recognize disgrace? You come riding an ox asking someone else where the ox is—it would be better not to disappoint people.

**Confusion creates tranquility and disturbance;
Enlightenment has no likes or dislikes.**

Comment

If you talk about confusion and talk about enlightenment, what end will there ever be? Just *this* is it. Everyone has this empty tranquil essence; it is thoroughly clear, and has neither concentration nor distraction in it. It has nothing to do with opinion or information, it transcends ordinary and holy, it is beyond emotion and intellect. A single thought confusing your mental state turns you away from this empty tranquil essence, whereupon you are blocked at once by distracting thoughts and cannot make it manifest. When not a single thought occurs, past and future are cut off and you realize this empty tranquil essence.

This is what is meant by “the noumenal ground of the limit of reality does not admit a single particle.” What more like and dislike is there? But if you don’t have anything to do with either confusion or enlightenment, how do you *always remember the South in spring, the hundred flowers fragrant where the partridges call.*

All dual extremes

Are arbitrary subjective judgments.

Comment

Who got you to run wild—here you are talking about the sage and talking about the ordinary person, talking about confusion and talking about enlightenment, talking about liking and talking about disliking, talking about existence and talking about nonexistence, talking about concentration and talking about distraction, talking about mind and talking about objects, talking about success and talking about failure, talking about right and talking about wrong. These are only relative pairs; all of them are dual extremes. If you use these dual extremes to divine random judgments, it’s all meaningless confusion.

This insight is such that you lose contact the moment you try to apply your mind to it; how much less is it in opening your mouth, where there is just verbal expression and no real meaning at all.

Do you know?

A giant tortoise is not in river or lake:

How laughable that people these days grab their fishing poles.

**Dreams, illusions, flowers in the sky—
Why labor to grasp them?**

Comment

Put it down, and there is nothing the matter at all; why are you creating so many comparisons? All objects are dreams, all appearances are illusions, all phenomena are flowers in the sky, impossible to grasp. It is just your conditioned consciousness mistaking the dead skull and stinking skeleton in the material mass of flesh for your own body, that draws out so much fuss and bother, pursuing the myriad objects before your eyes all day long, just continuing a series of repetitious dreams.

Chan followers, how can you be wakeful? (silence)

Blue sky, bright sun.

Gain and loss, right and wrong—

Let go all at once.

Comment

Let go where?

If you hold onto anything, he has you let it go; but once you know it's like a dream, an illusion, flowers in the sky, then what?

Chan followers, now he wants you to put down gain and loss and right and wrong—this is just using up energy.

You must realize awakening once, then you won't need to put anything down—you'll spontaneously know it's a scene of dream illusion.

In sum, if there's no issue in the mind, myriad things are as one. If your mind is laborious and itchy, with rights and wrongs and gains and losses before your eyes, then how do you understand the principle of his saying "let go at once"? (silence)

Just let the snow melt

And spring will come of itself.

Introduction

The eye that holds the universe steady is continuous, not allowing the slightest leak; detach from views, transcend feelings, and pure clarity is spotless. Try to debate and you miss; as soon as you open your mouth you fail. Blink your eyes and raise your eyebrows, and white clouds cover ten thousand miles. When you get here, how do you turn around and breathe out?

**If the eyes don't sleep,
Dreams vanish of themselves**

Comment

Why are you talking in your sleep?

The Buddhas of all times talk of dreams, the six generations of original masters talked of dreams, all the old teachers in the world talk of dreams, raising the eyebrows and blinking the eyes, raising a gavel or holding up a whisk, are all talking of dreams.

Now tell me, who brought his about? It's just because all beings since beginningless time have kept the great body of reality laying down through the long night of birth and death, experiencing repeated birth and death in six ways of life.

By analogy, it is like when people of the world fall asleep, very tired, their five sense faculties move the sixth or cognitive consciousness to imagine all sorts of dreamscapes. These scenes are nonexistent in reality—they are only changes of consciousness, but they cannot be considered nonexistent when dreaming. Then when they wake up, the states of mind and the scenes vanish, falling into empty nothingness.

Therefore it is said, “In dreams, clearly there are six ways of existence; after awakening, being empty, there is no universe.”

You should know that awakening is a dream. If your eyes are open and you're not snoozing, then there won't be any dream scenes. If your mind is not aroused, then there is no birth and death—the routines of the six tendencies are all made by mind.

The Third Patriarch spoke thus, I have spoken thus, you people have listened thus; now tell me, is this dreaming or wakefulness? (shouting) *Be alert!*

If the mind does not differ,

All things are as one.

Comment

He's said it all at once, but do you understand? You'll directly realize activity and tranquility as one, speech and silence as one, seeing and hearing as one, confusion and enlightenment as one, sage and ordinary person as one; myriad conditions, myriad objects, are in totality one reality—there are no more things outside of mind, and no mind outside of things. You must understand thus before you can connect with being as is.

People, when your eyes sleep, then there are dream scenes; when your mind is fixated, then this is routine existence. If your eyes don't sleep, dream scenes disappear of themselves; if your mind does not differ, then all conditions are

empty. Since *originally there is not a single thing*, let the flowers and willows be red and green; the twitter of the swallows and the call of the nightingale are the livelihood of people of the Way.

Even so, it very much seems like the sense of spring is in the scenery. Alas!

**Absorb the mystery as one;
Unmoved, forget objects**

Comment

Shut your skin bag. (silence)

This is such that even if “your drawers have no seat and your trousers no opening,” and “on your head there are three to five pecks of pale ashes,” you still haven’t seen it even in a dream; even if you can’t tell east from west or distinguish north from south, your eyes are like your eyebrows and your mouth is like your nose, and you have developed pure innocence like an infant, you still haven’t dreamed of seeing it. Understand?

When the wind is still, flowers still fall;

When a bird calls, the mountain seems more recondite.

**Myriad things observed equally,
Return to naturalness.**

Comment

With clear comprehension you see there is not a single thing; heaven and earth are one finger, myriad things are one horse. You embrace all of space in your chest, yet your spiritual mirror is more than enough; you mirror myriad forms in your heart, yet your spirit is always empty. Without disturbing so much as a hair it becomes manifest all at once. Solitary light shining alone is tranquil through all time; return to the origin, go back to the source, take refuge in the root to restore life; when you reach here, then you meet the spontaneous Way of natural reality. If you can do so, you are a true leaver of home.

**Eliminate your suppositions;
It cannot be compared.**

Comment

If you open your mouth again, what will that accomplish? So it is said, once myriad forms disappear, the totality appears. At precisely this time, if you liken it to something you miss the mark; to consider it a thing won’t do. It cannot be categorized, cannot be defined, cannot be combined; it spans past

and present. Like someone drinking water knows for himself whether it's cool or warm, it cannot be explained to others.

Do you people want to understand?

When a white heron stands in the snow, they are not the same color;

The white reed flowers in the clear moonlight do not resemble it.

**Still activity and there is no activity;
Activate stillness and there is no stillness.**

Comment

This bit is like a mass of fire; approach it and you die. How do you figure? Do you want to understand? Stilling itself is activity. When calm, perfect calm is active; so activity has no sign of disturbance. When active, perfect action is calm, so calmness has no sign of inertia.

Your present movement and activity, seeing and hearing, your deeds and actions, with a thousand differences and myriad distinctions—what is this? If you can see the very essence without form, without traces, this is action without any sign of agitation. Even without form, without a trace, always in the midst of activity holding up the sky and bracing the earth—this is calm with no sign of inertia.

To speak of that activity, its form is like the workings of an iron ox. To speak of that stillness, it manifests form in response to people. You cannot figure this out in terms of activity and stillness or speech and silence as dual extremes. This is why Buddhas since ancient times shut their doors, stopped talking, and didn't dare pant. While you're panting, white clouds cover myriad miles.

**Since two doesn't come about,
How can one be so?**

Comment

Totally removed. "Activity and quietude are two"—no connection. "Activity and quietude are one"—no connection.

The master of Xiushan said, "Two does not break down into one; one reality remains forever present."

If people understand one by one, they'll be sunk forever. You need to know this matter has no conceptual elaboration, has no place for you to open your mouth: clean and bare, naked and free, standing like a wall ten thousand feet high. Do you see? (silence)

It's right here in these mountains, but the clouds are so deep its whereabouts is unknown.

Introduction

Someone whose state is tranquil is like a ram hung by the horns, not leaving any tracks. Someone who exercises spiritual powers freely is like a dead tree blossoming. Specially welcome the spring, and suddenly it's like a net cast over the sky; set out a trap to fell a tiger, and you'll see it fall apart. Is there anyone who can pass through the forest of thorns?

**Find out the end, plumb the ultimate;
Don't keep to tracks and models.**

Comment

Atop a hundred foot pole, how do you step forward? When you succeed in reaching the end, speech is helpless, logic is unfounded, the body dies, and ability is exhausted—the profoundest state does not maintain any mysterious marvel, does not maintain any wonders, does not maintain any Buddhist principles. When the great function manifests, what track or model does it have? Sweeping, making tea, patching clothes, dressing and eating according to your means, can requite a debt that cannot be repaid. What further Chan is there to study, what Way is there to learn?

Even so, you have to actually reach this state before you get it.

**The mind in accord is equanimous;
All fabrication ceases.**

Comment

“When the water is abundant, the boat is high; when the clay is plentiful, the Buddha is big.” Where is the inequality?

If you can pass through and see through, and use the mind to experience with equanimity, then the delusions and perversions since beginningless time will spontaneously stop and disappear.

Whether speaking or silent, active or still, continuously keep mindful here, without interruption, constantly mindful and never unaware, and fabrication and contrivance will all suddenly stop; myriad objects, myriad differences, will be cut off at once, each one turned back.

All this is the power of your own effortless subtle function. If you can find it out, it really won't let you down. Otherwise, you'll be spending a lot of effort later on.

**When doubt is cleared away,
True faith fits directly.**

Comment

He thrusts it right in your face; can you recognize it?

He has explained for you thoroughly clearly—why don't you know the conclusion? It's just because you have "Chan" in your bellies that you can't be joyfully alive; you now just take sayings and mysterious cases of people of old, jam them into your belly, and think that is completing your life quest. You still don't realize this is just stupid slobber, snivel, and spit. The ancients called this hauling in crap, polluting your mind field.

Speaking in terms of absolute reality, there is not a dot of ink; if you record even a single stroke, you'll be a fox sprite for myriad eons. Sharp folks will spit it out at once when hearing a quote, then wash out their mouths, directly making the mind ground empty and bare. You will naturally not doubt. When someone opens their mouth you immediately see their gut.

You always say, "I fully believe," but this is just a claim; if you've never had an awakening, it is not true faith.

Do you want to understand?

As evening comes over the river, a scene fit for a painting;

A fisherman wearing a raincoat on his way home.

**Nothing remains;
There's nothing to remember.**

Comment

When it's heaped in mountains, piled in peaks, how can it not stay? Do you know the ultimate point? Just empty your chest of perception and cognition so your mind is like a wall or a brick, like a dead man, totally cutting off ideas and thoughts so that there isn't the slightest breath and your life root is directly cut off. Then though you be in the midst of activity all day long, you spontaneously stay in an effortless state. (pause)

It is not appropriate to say so.

**Empty illumination spontaneously aware
Doesn't expend mental effort.**

Comment

Withdraw your tongue and come up with another citation. (silence)

This realm no one can know; it is not something you can handle by temporary rationalization. The ancients ceased and desisted; their mouths were like fans in winter, their hearts were like withered trees, cold ashes. Out of ten times they were going to speak, nine times they refrained.

People, this is not forced, but happens naturally.

Where is the puzzle?

The moon shines over the river, the breeze blows in the pines;

Through the long night, what does the clear sky do?

What is not in the range of thought

The conscious mind cannot fathom.

Comment

It's come along; you tell me—what is it? This is called the case currently taking place, down-to-earth talk. This is simply elegant, this is simply marvelous.

Have you not read how a monk asked Yunmen, “What is ‘not in the range of thought’?” Yunmen said, “‘The conscious mind cannot fathom.’”

Xuedou said, “Yunmen might not have caught up with this monk if he didn't run downhill. The question was like a box, the answer like a lid. When box and lid fit, the universe is held steady, but you still haven't seen the Third Patriarch even in a dream.”

Tell me, where is the gain and loss?

Shadows waving at a thousand feet—dragons and serpents moving.

Sounds rattling half the sky—wind and rain, cold.

Introduction

The hidden and the secret fully included, the current case; responding to all, high and low, it's inexhaustible in everyday activities. It's useless to boast of ability to stoop streams and sweep away shadows; it's vain to speak of eloquence sharp as a sword. Bundling thatch is against the aspiration of a wayfarer; sculpting sand has no talk of engraving jade. You have to be a transcendent person in order to understand transcendental matters. Is there anyone who can penetrate the barrier?

**In the realm of reality as it truly is
There is no self and no other.**

Comment

But don't gloss over them.

What is this thing that makes you speak this way?

Some say, "Absence of falsehood is called 'truth,' not changing is called 'as is.' The one mind is reality; differentiations according to conditions are called the realm of reality. The unchanging of the essence of this one truth as such is the noumenal realm of reality. Differentiation according to conditions is the phenomenal realm of reality. Noumenon unseparated from phenomena is the realm of reality with no obstruction between noumenon and phenomena. The communion of each and every thing with the realm of reality ad infinitum is the realm of reality with no obstruction between phenomena."

If you add interpretations this way in hopes of seeing the Third Patriarch, you'll never have a chance. An ancient said, "The green, green bamboo are all truly so"—what about that?

Haven't you read how Yanguan asked a lecturer, "What scripture do you lecture on?" The lecturer said, "The Flower Ornament Scripture." Yanguan said, "How many reality realms does the Flower Ornament have?" The lecturer said, "In sum there are four kinds; more fully explained, they are multiples of multiples ad infinitum." Yanguan held up his whisk and said, "Which kind is this?" The lecturer was at a loss. Yanguan said, "To know by thinking and understand by reflection is like a lone lamp under the sun; after all it loses its shine."

Do you people want to know?

One place that can't be reached—

A full bowl of empty attention.

**If you want to accord quickly,
Only speak of nonduality.**

Comment

Still complaining of lack? As soon as it falls on the lips, it's the gate of death, with no more road of life.

It's simply that this statement even a thousand sages cannot begin to utter; even if they tried with all their minds, they couldn't express it, couldn't say it. Haven't you read how Manjusri asked Vimalakirti, "What is the teaching of nonduality?" What did Vimalakirti say to him in reply? All he could do was

stare agape, unmoving; without using a dot of the infinite subtle principles of the infinite teachings he clarified it all at once.

Even so, you also need to know there is someone who laughs out loud. If you recognize this person, I guarantee you won't be saving up money for footgear.

Notes

Xuedou wrote, "In one there are many kinds, in two there is no duality." "You won't be saving up money for footgear" means you won't need to be going anywhere to find yourself.

**Nonduality is the same for all;
Nothing is not contained.**

Comment

Here's swallowed all in one gulp, letting nothing leak out. Even subtle virtues countless as the sands of the Ganges River are all stored therein; a hundred thousand lights of the Way arise from here. Everything is equal, the paths of all Buddhas are equivalent, entering the teaching of nonduality: the sacred and the ordinary are the same body, containing space, including myriad forms.

It's right where you stand now; without budging so much as a hair, it is manifest all at once. But even if you accept it like so, this is already failing to get an advantage. Where is the error?

Where the power of Yu does not reach

The sound of the river goes with the flow.

Notes

Yu was an ancient Chinese sage-king who is famous for having been nominated king for his public service in organizing water works to control flooding of the Yellow River. In this Chan context, controlling flooding refers to the practice of ceasing thought to bring out all-at-once awareness of the totality. This is called forgetting self. Where the power of Yu does not reach then refers to the reemergence of the individual and restoration of particularizing awareness; the sound of the water going along with the flow represents fluid adaptability to life situations enabled by the liberating experience of merging with the totality.

The wise ones of the ten directions

All enter this source.

Comment

The patchrobed monks all over the land cannot leap out; even the Buddhas of all times enter this source. The six generations of patriarchs also entered this source, and the old teachers everywhere all enter this source, manifest great spiritual powers, and perform great Buddha-work. They might cane or shout, do a jig, roll a ball, hold up a whisk, raise a fist, drag rocks and haul earth; each word, each statement, each act, each state, all come from this source. Even in each exit and each entry, responding to changes is inexhaustible.

The source is not near or far;

One moment, ten thousand years.

Comment

Spiritual light shining ten thousand miles penetrates through the heights and depths: nearby, it is in an instant of thought; far-reaching, it is not merely ten thousand years—it is even earlier than before the empty eon, yet is not apart from present daily activities. If you can observe that eternity as like today, past and present will be penetrated, beginning and end the same, outer and inner conditions forgotten, the three times cleared away, a single piece of white silk, one moment ten thousand years.

But this is just an iron hammerhead with no hole, extreme uniformity; you need to know that over the thousand peaks beyond the clouds is also a spiritual pine apart, cold with dew.

There is nowhere it is not,

The ten directions right before the eyes.

Comment

Steadying the spirit, he wraps it all up at once. Even for the mind that pervades the ten directions there is no thing before the eyes; when not being present anywhere, the intent is right before the eyes. If you cut off all at once, so there is no far and no near, no presence or not being present. To take or leave, let go or stop, does not depend on another—it is just your own self that originally has such spiritual power and adaptability. If you can prove it yourself, bear it yourself, carry it yourself, make it your own livelihood, so you can't be trapped and can't be called back, then you can attain great freedom like a golden fish that's gotten out of the net.

But “if it’s not the present potential and not the present phenomenon,” then what?

(the crowd hesitated, trying to discuss; the teacher said) Hurry up and make three prostrations.

Introduction

When you act in the midst of different kinds, only then do you understand the teaching of the inanimate. When the root of life is cut off, you naturally aren’t susceptible to being deceived by others. If you want to open the gate of the empty eon, you need to remove a lock that has no key. “It does not appear at dawn, but is perfectly clear at midnight.” If you happen to break through a picture of a cake, then you’ll see such a mess. Is there anyone who can wash it out?

**The smallest is the same as the great;
You forget the boundaries of objects.**

Comment

Extremely extraordinary! Is the staff small or large?

Hold it up, and it is everywhere; isn’t this the smallest being the same as the great?

On a single hair tip sky and earth appear all at once—isn’t this the smallest being the same as the great?

Sitting inside an atomic particle turning the great wheel of Dharma, with the precious domains on boundless oceans of fragrant water clearly manifest even on a single hair tip in a single particle—isn’t this the smallest being the same as the great?

Casually raising a finger blocking the sky, without bounds—isn’t this the smallest being the same as the great?

Then how do you explain the principle of forgetting the boundaries of objects? (silence)

Even the founder of Chan didn’t understand. It’s very hard, very hard!

**The greatest is the same as small;
You do not see outside the borders.**

Comment

The one great matter that the whole earth cannot support and the sky cannot contain in the eyes is called seeing, in the ears is called hearing—isn’t this the

greatest being the same as the small? The visual faculty pervades the universe, the auditory faculty pervades the universe—what is outside the borders?

In reality, the whole world is just a stove; the whole world is just a staff. It is right on your eyebrows and eyelashes— isn't this the greatest being the same as small?

Another man of old told you, “The whole great earth, when you pick it up, is the size of a rice grain; toss it before you, and there's absolute darkness without understanding.” It is still all-pervasive like this; do you understand?

*Across the bridge, the village wine is delicious;
On the opposite bank, the wild flowers are fragrant.*

**Existence itself is nonexistence,
Nonexistence itself is existence.**

Comment

Summon with one knock; don't think about before and reflect on after anymore.

The conventional immediately explain, “Verbalized nature is empty—existence and nonexistence cannot be apprehended.”

They also say, “Existence and nonexistence are only terms; both are conceptualizations. This is so of whatever we say—how could there be any exception?”

They also say, “Where do existence and nonexistence come from?”

They only recognize verbal sound and form. If you understand this way, you'll go to hell like an arrow.

It's just like the case of a monk asking Zhaozhou, “Does even a dog have Buddha-nature, or not?” Zhaozhou said, “Yes.” The monk said, “If it does, why is it stuck in this skin?” Zhaozhou said, “Because it knows yet deliberately offends.” Another monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does even a dog have Buddha-nature or not?” Zhaozhou said, “No.” The monk said, “All living beings have Buddha-nature—why has a dog none?” Zhaozhou said, “Because it still has habit-ridden consciousness.” Now you all say the second parts are cover-up talk, and what is crucial is in the yes and no. Ouch! Destroyers of Buddhism! What connection is there?

Do you want to see the Third Patriarch and Zhaozhou?

*Putting away the classics of poetry and history, I return to the old temple;
With falling blossoms and calling birds, it's totally spring.*

**If not thus,
Do not keep it.**

Comment

Still a bit off, but I'll grant you have one eye.

Thus, thus, the real human with no status is always there going out and in your senses, without day or night, without agitation or stagnation, proceeding moment to moment, manifesting moment to moment, adapting moment to moment, maintained moment to moment; existence and nonexistence are naturally penetrated.

If you are like a mad dog chasing a clod of earth, conceiving understanding literally, then you tear down your home, demolish your house, and fall into the present, unable to connect with the host.

How can you not fall into the present? (silence)

The form of the moon is seen in the silence;

The sound of the pines is heard in the clear night.

**One is all,
All is one.**

Comment

The tongue has no bone and can speak freely, but bringing up the nature and life of everyone in the whole world only takes a single statement.

Some say, "The one is one mind, the all is myriad things. Myriad things are only one mind, one mind comprehends myriad things." Happily there's no connection. This way, you can hold lectures and be a professor, but in the school of patchrobed monks even if you study another billion years you still won't be approved.

But what is the business of the school of patchrobed monks?

Stepping on the balance beam, it's hard as iron.

**If you can just be thus,
What rumination will not end?**

Comment

Still missing a move. What is the ultimate?

Chan followers often say, "One is all, all is one; things are mind, mind is things. Just understand thus, and the tasks of study will be complete." But don't misunderstand—that patriarch was a totally unconcerned man—what would be the use of having so many complications in his gut? How do you

understand his saying, “If you can just be thus, what rumination will not end”?
(silence)

When three people testify it's a turtle, that makes it a terrapin.

Faith in Mind is nondualistic;

Nondualism is Faith in Mind.

Comment

He embarrasses people to death.

What good and bad do you recognize?

What requires babbling in front of your skull?

Is it not that trust and mind have no duality? Don't talk backwards.

Thus, thus, *every branch of coral holds up the moon.*

Seeing all the way through just amounts to this “Faith in Mind is nondualistic; nondualism is Faith in Mind.” He managed to package the universe and hold the world still.

Even so, if you don't find flowing water, you should pass on to another mountain.

The path of language ends;

It is not past, future, or present.

Comment

(the teacher sighed and said) The Third Patriarch's bow is broken, his arrows are used up. Even though his final summation admits defeat, it's not like it's minor.

If you can find it out, the words comprehend the state of the mountains and clouds, ocean and moon; if you can't find it out, as before you don't understand and it flies away.

Some claim “‘The path of language ends; it is not past, future, or present’ is none other than ‘The supreme Way has no difficulty, just dislikes picking and choosing,’ and ‘The supreme Way has no difficulty, just dislikes picking and choosing’ is none other than ‘The path of language ends; it is not past, future, or present.’ The beginning is the last word, the end is the initial statement.” If you interpret this way, you're still in a ghost cave.

People, this ought to be the boundless teaching methods and infinite subtle meanings of the Buddhas of all times, the six generations of patriarchs, and the old teachers all over the land; now, unable to restrain myself, I just need one statement to explain it thoroughly: Stop, stop—how can you talk idly of past

and present, deliberately occasioning sadness? The people of old were inclined to keep their mouths closed and their eyes open.

I've pushed you east and drawn a line west, forcing the creation of distinctions. Tell me, how does this compare to the people of old?

Even so, I still want you people to know what is. Not only is the Third Patriarch's bow broken and arrows used up; my lance is also broken, my strength depleted, my home broken and people gone.

Ultimately how is it?

Let each of you please go back and rest; don't wait for the rain to soak your head.