

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

THE HEART OF ZEN

BY MASTER HUANG PO

*The Recorded Discourses of
Ch'an Master Huangbo Xiyun*

A Modern, Fresh Translation



Translated by Soh Wei Yu

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THE HEART OF ZEN: Essential Dharma of Mind Transmission (Chuanxin Fayao)

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Contents



- 1 Preface: The Teachings of Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun 4
- 2 Summary of Huangbo's Teachings 10
- 3 Essentials of Mind Transmission (*Chuanxin Fayao*) 22

Preface: The Teachings of Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun



The texts translated herein preserve the austere yet profound teachings of Chan (Zen) Master Huangbo Xiyun (黄檗希运, Huángbò Xīyùn), a towering figure of the late-middle Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), China's 'golden age' of Chan Buddhism. Honored posthumously as “Duanji Chanshi” (断际禅师 – Chan Master of Decisive Judgment), Huangbo flourished during the first half of the 9th century, likely passing away d. c. 850s CE (Dazhong era) during the Tang Dazhong reign period (847–860). Born in what is now Fuzhou, Fujian Province (福建福州), he demonstrated a strong affinity for monastic life from a young age. He was ordained in Fujian; later presided at Mount Huangbo (Jiangxi) from which he takes his name. Tradition holds he possessed unique physical marks, including a distinctive protrusion on his forehead likened to a “flesh pearl” (肉珠), often seen as indicating future spiritual eminence. Known for his quick intelligence and striking demeanor, he mastered not only Buddhist scriptures (“inner” learning) but also familiarized himself with non-Buddhist classics (“outer” learning), preparing him for the skillful guidance of diverse seekers.

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

- Sixth Patriarch Huineng (六祖慧能) ↓
- Nanyue Huairang (南岳怀让) ↓
- Mazu Daoyi (马祖道一) ↓
- Baizhang Huaihai (百丈怀海) ↓
- Huangbo Xiyun (黄檗希运)

He received the “direct transmission of Mind” from his immediate teacher, Baizhang Huaihai (720–814). Baizhang, famed for establishing Chan monastic regulations and the maxim “A day without work is a day without food,” guided Huangbo to deep realization within the dynamic Hongzhou school tradition, which emphasized direct experience and sudden awakening over solely scriptural approaches. After his initial training, Huangbo eventually settled and taught primarily at Da’an Monastery on Mount Huangbo (distinct from the mountain of his ordination, sometimes written 黄蘗 using a variant character) in Hongzhou, Jiangxi Province, a major Chan center. His stature within the tradition is reflected in comments like that of later Soto Zen Master Hong Wen Liang (洪文亮, a Zen

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

teacher who lives in Taichung, Taiwan, whose deep wisdom and teachings I greatly appreciate):
“Venerable Rujing was extremely strict and most incisive. Among those recognized by him as true patriarchs, very few appear. Hongzhi, Huangbo, and Dōgen were among the ones he recognized...”
(Full talk accessible at <https://www.awakeningtoreality.com/2025/02/the-admonitions-on-seated-meditationa.html>)

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

Huangbo's teaching style embodied directness. The title "Duanji" reflects his mastery – cutting through illusory boundaries. He employed abrupt methods – shouts (喝), blows, silence – as skillful means (方便, *upāya*) to shock students out of habitual thought and provoke direct insight into the One Mind.

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

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

Huangbo's teaching centers on the "One Mind" (一心). This term points not to a universal source, substratum, substance, or consciousness (like Brahman), but to the fundamental nature (本性) of awareness itself—a primordial, empty, and unborn gnosis (本觉, *běnjue*) that is the essential quality of each discrete instance of consciousness. To clarify, the Buddhist tradition maintains that each sentient being is a distinct mind-stream (citta-saṃtāna, 心相续 *xīn-xiàngxù*); they do not share an underlying, metaphysically existent universal consciousness as posited in Advaita. All diversities remain, for we do not reduce, subsume, or extrapolate them into an underlying oneness or same substance (such as the

“one without a second” Brahman).

However, the luminous clarity (明性 *míngxìng*) and empty nature (空性 *kōngxìng*) of Mind is—conventionally speaking—similarly present in all beings as a generic characteristic, like heat is to fire, without being reified as a truly existent, singular, overarching ontological ground. It is in this sense that Buddhas and sentient beings are said to have the same nature. To make the point still clearer, Huangbo’s “One Mind” denotes the immediate, luminous, and empty presence of every single mind-moment or vivid appearance (whatever seen, heard, sensed, touched, etc.)—clear-knowing (灵知 *língzhī*) yet empty—shared as an always-and-everywhere mode of occurrence, not as a single substance pervading all beings. Saying that clarity-emptiness is “like heat to fire” means only that whenever mind appears it is inseparably radiant and hollow, never that it constitutes a hidden ground underneath appearances. Indeed, the very belief that things possess intrinsic natures collapses under simple scrutiny: wetness and water are not two different entities, so wetness cannot be the “nature” of water; just as heat and fire are inseparable, yet heat is not some extra essence clinging to fire. Consider the question: does water depend on wetness, or does wetness depend on water? Whichever way we approach this dilemma, it becomes evident that no independent ‘nature’ can be isolated. Terms like ‘wetness’ and ‘water’, or ‘heat’ and ‘fire’ merely serve as alternative labels for the same entity. Consequently, the concept of an autonomous, standalone nature proves untenable in every instance.

Gnosis or Awareness is empty of inherent existence (无自性, *wú zìxìng*), unborn, indestructible, and beyond conceptualization or substantiality. It is unborn not in a substantially existent way, but in the sense that nothing self-existent ever arose even in its vivid “arising” (appearance). Mind is also signless (无相, *wúxiàng*): empty of any intrinsic characteristics, such as fixed forms and colors that can be grasped, and precisely because of its signlessness, all appearances are thereby possible as its unceasing potentials and displays.

Mind is not an inert emptiness: it is fundamentally luminous and clear, yet empty, actively manifesting as myriad appearances and activities. Huangbo likens Mind’s radiance to a great sun wheel, as he illustrates: “Like the great sun-wheel illuminating the four continents: when the sun rises, light pervades the world, yet empty space has never become bright; when the sun sets, darkness pervades the world, yet empty space has never become dark.” Empty-clarity experientially has a quality of spaciousness. While using empty space as an analogy is not exactly incorrect, one must be careful not to reify this spaciousness of empty clarity into an ultimate background that either exists behind phenomena or contains phenomena, as that would amount to a false dichotomy or dualism rooted in ignorance. It should also be mentioned that if we reduce all to a common space-like background morphing into appearances, this means the habitual tendency to reify Mind remains even if non-

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

duality is experienced, and the truth that Mind is by nature No-Mind and essence-less remains elusive. Realizing the empty nature of dualistic consciousness (*viññāna*) reveals this non-dual gnosis. Thus, the core teaching of Huangbo, "Mind is Buddha" (即心是佛), as well as "Mind by its very nature is No-Mind" (心自无心), taken together signifies that this very empty, luminous, fundamental gnosis *is* the awakened state. Awakening is the direct recognition (见性, *jiàn xìng* – "seeing the nature") of this non-substantial, ever-present nature of Mind (心性), not an attainment of something external.

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

His Dharma grandfather Mazu taught, "Outside the Mind, there is no other Buddha; outside the Buddha, there is no other mind... Whatever forms are seen are entirely seeing the mind. Mind is not intrinsically mind; it depends on forms (色)." The First Patriarch of Chan in China, Bodhidharma, similarly taught: "Form is not intrinsically form but depends on mind; mind is not intrinsically mind but depends on form... If the mind does not stir, the environment does not arise. When both mind and environment are pure, this is true seeing." These words highlight the dependent co-arising of mind and matter—neither exists independently or substantially, precluding any reduction of reality exclusively to mind or to matter. Regarding one-taste and non-duality in experience, a non-substantialist holds that the seamless and boundlessness of phenomena—like space—do not imply that mind and matter share the same substance or that one is the by-product of the other (reductionist monism). Instead, diversity remains: mind is mind because matter is matter and vice versa; they just have to be empty by nature.

A monk asked, 'Master, why do you say that mind is Buddha?'

Mazu said, 'To stop babies from crying.'

The monk said, 'What do you say when they stop crying?'

Mazu said, 'No mind, no Buddha.'

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

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

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

The path to realizing this involves more than intellectual understanding alone. Thus, Huangbo prioritizes direct experience and wordless transmission. Furthermore, in practice, it often involves stages of clarification by means of direct insight. As many teachers elaborated, there's a distinction between initially apprehending the Mind (明心, *míngxīn*)—recognizing its luminous clarity—and fully seeing the Nature (见性, *jiànxìng*)—realizing its empty, unobtainable/unfindable essence. Deluded sentient beings have no inkling of the radiant essence of Mind, and identify themselves only with thoughts and perceptions, just like what was expressed by Huangbo: "Worldly people do not awaken to it; they only recognize seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing as mind. Being veiled by seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing, they therefore do not perceive the pure, luminous fundamental essence." However, by turning one's fixation away from thoughts and perceptions, taking the backward step and tracing awareness back to its source (回光返照) through meditation and self-inquiry or kōan-introspection, one may come to a direct and immediate certainty of one's Mind-essence as a doubtless, luminously clear and vivid Presence or numinous awareness (灵知). It is a total and unshakeable conviction in one's deepest core of one's True Heart-Mind (真心), as the truth of one's very Beingness and Pure Existence reveals itself in its utter nakedness and crystal clarity, staring right at your face. Without this direct realization, nothing is worth to be termed "awakening".

Although realizing this numinous awareness (灵知) is an important, precious, and crucial initial fundamental breakthrough, merely stopping here means one has not yet fully penetrated the relationship between Mind or radiance and all phenomena, nor realized the empty, non-arisen, and unobtainable/unfindable nature of both Mind and phenomena. Instead, at this stage, one's understanding is prone to views resembling the Hindu view of Atman-Brahman. One may identify with numinous awareness (灵知) as the ultimate, pure, and unchanging Subjectivity that underlies or pervades all phenomena, grasping at this awareness as one's unchanging true Self while perceiving all phenomena as emerging, changing, and subsiding within this changeless ground. Zen Master Dogen, along with many great masters of the past, explicitly criticized such views. Dogen critiqued those who hold such views—that numinous awareness (灵知) is unchanging while mind and body change—as proponents of the non-Buddhist Shrenika heresy. As Zen Master Shohaku Okumura explained in his

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

insightful article (<https://www.sotozen.com/eng/dharma/pdf/36e.pdf> - Soto Zen Journal Number 36), Dogen identified teachings using metaphors like the "mani jewel (one bright jewel) which is permanent and never changes, even though the surface color is changing" as "nothing other than [the false view of] atman." Hence, working with a deeply awakened teacher who has thoroughly resolved "the great matter" is often considered essential to arrive at the complete understanding, moving beyond this stage to fully realize the empty nature.

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

Summary of Huangbo's Teachings



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

Huangbo relentlessly expounds the core Chan tenet: Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛). He asserts that all beings share this same One Mind essence (一心体), which is fundamentally complete, perfect, empty, quiescent (空寂), and unborn. Recognizing this Mind involves seeing directly what is functioning ("That which is speaking right now is precisely your mind"), realizing its nature is like empty space—devoid of inherent divisions, substance or existence, yet luminously aware ("numinous awareness" – 灵知), and is none other than the myriad displays and appearances ("mountains, rivers, great earth, sun, moon, and stars"). Duality is the root of delusion; thoughts, perceptions, and distinctions (Buddha/sentient being, self/other) are baseless projections arising from the mind. True seeing transcends opposites, understanding all phenomena as dependently arisen and inseparable from one's own miraculous, empty and radiant Mind, and conversely, Mind is not found separate from phenomena or conditions (as established by Huangbo: "These phenomena (dharma) are Mind; outside of Mind, there are no phenomena. This Mind is phenomena; outside of phenomena, there is no Mind.").

Although Mind is already by nature No-Mind, as expressed by Huangbo: "Mind by its very nature is No-Mind" (心自无心), a point he emphasizes should not be mistaken for a stage to be attained, but rather recognized as the fundamental, already-so nature of Mind (Huangbo: "Mind by its very nature is No-Mind, and there is no 'no-mind' to be attained. To treat mind as [needing to become] no-mind is, on the contrary, to reify it as existent."), he also describes No-Mind as a state of actualization through continuous practice in every moment ("Eating rice all day, yet never having chewed a single grain. Walking all day, yet never having trod upon a single patch of ground."¹ When it is like this, there are no characteristics such as self or other. Throughout the day, not departing from all activities, yet not being confused by various objects [environments/conditions] – only then is one called a person of freedom (自在人). Thought after thought, seeing no characteristics whatsoever; do not acknowledge the three

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

times of past, present, and future. The past period has no going; the present period has no abiding; the future period has no coming. Seated peacefully and uprightly, functioning spontaneously without constraint – only then is one called liberated (解脱). Exert effort! Exert effort!").

Here, actualizing Zen, or No-Mind, involves the cessation of conceptual proliferations ("This very mind is Buddha, no-mind is the Way. Just avoid giving rise to mind or moving thoughts such as existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and suchlike minds."), discrimination, seeking, and attachment ("顿息诸缘, 莫生妄想分别"), and the realization and embodiment of the luminously clear, empty, and unobtainable/unfindable nature of Mind/dharmas that is without self, subject or object. No-mind (无心, mushin) in Zen is not merely a blank state of thoughtlessness; rather, it is the luminous functioning of Prajñā (wisdom), the penetrating wisdom that dispels delusive reification and reveals the pristine clarity of appearances free from conceptual imputations. This state of true, thought-free wakefulness is characterized by spontaneous, boundless intuitive discernment that operates unimpeded by conceptual proliferations ("existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and suchlike minds"). Experiential insight into no-mind and anātman arises when the substrate of a background self or knower—realized to be a mere reified construct—is seen through and exhausted, dissolving any sense of a substantially existent knower, agent, self or Self behind vivid appearances and activities. To mistake Zen's wúniàn (无念, "no-thought") for a vacuous mind incapable of distinguishing left from right is a fundamental misunderstanding and a manifestation of pure ignorance.

Huangbo strongly emphasizes abandoning all delusional views (见解) and clearing away the "dung" of speculative discourse. Dry intellectualism ("mouth Zen") divorced from direct insight, gradualism focused on attainment, and attachment to external forms or even subtle spiritual concepts are critiqued as deviations. However, abandoning views here should not be misunderstood merely as withholding views or cultivating a blank state of thoughtlessness. Rather, true abandonment of views—which really means the cessation of the deluded views of self (我见), subject and object (能所), existence and non-existence (有无)—can only occur through directly realizing the emptiness or non-arisen nature of Mind and whatever appears (which is none other than) as Mind. Such self-luminous appearances manifest like reflections or mirages, without ever amounting to something genuinely arisen or inherently existent. To that end, grasping the right understanding and right view (正见) of the Dharma, skillfully guided by a truly awakened and wise teacher, is essential—even if, at first, this understanding is primarily intellectual.

Although it must be stressed that the key to Zen is a direct, non conceptual realization of the nature of Mind, the Zen Masters of old have also warned against misinterpreting Zen practice as a form of quietism—as if it consisted merely of shutting out all thoughts, anti intellectualism, passivity and

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

withdrawal from engagement with the world, neglect of ethical conduct, rejection of doctrinal study, an obsession with nihilistic emptiness, mechanical concentration devoid of insight, romanticized anti intellectualism, the mistaken belief that suppressing thoughts alone yields Prajna or jñāna (智; knowledge), or neglect of compassionate action. As the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, Hui Neng said: “Learned Audience, when we use Prajna for introspection we are illumined within and without, and in a position to know our own mind. To know our mind is to obtain liberation. To obtain liberation is to attain Samadhi of Prajna, which is ‘thoughtlessness’. What is ‘thoughtlessness’? ‘Thoughtlessness’ is to see and to know all Dharmas (things) with a mind free from attachment. When in use it pervades everywhere, and yet it sticks nowhere. What we have to do is to purify our mind so that the six vijñanas (aspects of consciousness), in passing through the six gates (sense organs) will neither be defiled by nor attached to the six sense objects. When our mind works freely without any hindrance, and is at liberty to ‘come’ or to ‘go’, we attain Samadhi of Prajna, or liberation. Such a state is called the function of ‘thoughtlessness’. But to refrain from thinking of anything, so that all thoughts are suppressed, is to be Dharma ridden, and this is an erroneous view.”

Dharma Master Hui Lü made this comment in his discourses on Huangbo’s teachings: “Listen carefully: ceasing thoughts refers to resting delusive thoughts while right mindfulness (正念, zheng-nian, which literally means “Right Thought” in Chinese) remains; forgetting rumination means relinquishing mental scheming while the mind’s pure wisdom endures. In brief, function is still active. Ceasing thoughts does not mean discarding all mentation—human beings are not corpses. If you interpret it as “eliminating thought,” you go astray. Ceasing thoughts means halting grasping and discrimination; right mindfulness abides. Right mindfulness is precisely no-thought (无念, wu-nian). No-thought is the vast Dharmakāya (法身); the Dharmakāya is equality, and equality expresses itself as the four immeasurables—great loving-kindness, great compassion, great sympathetic joy, and great equanimity. Thus “ceasing thoughts” does not stop mental activity; it stops attachment and discrimination within mental activity, while right mindfulness endures. Though right mindfulness abides, it is nevertheless no-thought; though it is the fundamental essence, its wondrous functioning is fully present. Hence, while there appear to be thoughts, they are actually no-thought; and though there is no-thought, when causes and conditions arise it immediately responds and acts.”

Huangbo stresses the urgency of resolving the great matter of birth and death now. He advocates for determined effort and, illustrating the direct methods used even before later formalized systems, explicitly recommends investigating specific kōans (公案, gōng'àn), such as Zhaozhou’s famous ‘Wu’ (or in Japanese: ‘Mu’). He describes a method of continuous contemplation (“guarding the character Wu”) as a potent way to cut through thought and arrive at realization (“Suddenly, the mind-flower will abruptly blossom”). Direct, personal and experiential

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

realization ("like drinking water, knowing cold or warm for oneself") is paramount. Another powerful kōan in the text, put forth by Huangbo, urges one to gaze directly at one's original face before concepts take shape, as Huangbo said, "The Sixth Patriarch said: 'When not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, right at such a time, return to me Head Monk Ming's original face before your parents were born.' Upon these words, Ming suddenly achieved tacit accord."

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

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

An Elaboration on Kōan-Introspection

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

Instead, it directs practitioners to intimately encounter the ten thousand faces of radiant Mind. Specifically, it explores the "Sound" of one hand clapping. Whether one hand claps or before both hands clap, what precisely is that sound? This kōan guides practitioners into realizing that throughout, there has only ever been one hand clapping—two hands, symbolizing the duality of subject and object, hearer and sound, are neither needed nor ever genuinely existent. This is akin to the contemplation of "in hearing, always only sound, no hearer," leading to the realization of no-self (anātman), which realizes Mind-Radiance as the ten thousand things and simultaneously realizes that Mind is No-Mind: it has no singular 'Original Face' of its own besides these ten thousand faces. Illustrating this clearly, a Zen master was said to have proclaimed at the moment of awakening, "When I heard the sound of the bell ringing, there was no I, and no bell, just the ringing." The Zen Abbot of SANBÔZEN, Ryouun

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

Yamada wrote, "The oak tree in the garden, besides that tree nothing else exists in heaven or earth--an even less so, a "Joshu" who is looking at it. This is the world that is manifested in this utterance. "The oak tree in the garden, but there is no I."

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

Huangbo beautifully expressed:

"Mountains are mountains, water is water, monks are monks, laypeople are laypeople. The mountains, rivers, great earth, sun, moon, and stars are altogether not outside your mind. The three thousand worlds all arise as your own self. Where, then, are all these myriad things? Outside the mind, there are no dharmas; the green mountains fill the eyes. The empty world is brilliantly clear, without even a single strand of hair upon which views might cling. Thus, all sounds and forms are the wisdom eye of the Buddha."

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

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

Translator's Note on Methodology

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

A primary motivation for this new rendition was to address significant misinterpretations observed in earlier, influential English translations—most notably John Blofeld's *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

On the Transmission of Mind. Blofeld's work was pioneering and undeniably instrumental in introducing Huangbo's profound teachings to a wide Western audience for the first time. Blofeld's translation is often lauded for its smooth, accessible, and sometimes elegant English prose. He successfully made complex Chan ideas feel approachable and engaging for a Western audience unfamiliar with the tradition, contributing significantly to its popularity.

For this significant contribution, many readers remain grateful. However, from a strict Buddhist doctrinal perspective, his translation shows Vedāntic over-tones, which can lead readers to reify Mind as an absolute substance. This led him, for instance, to reframe Huangbo's "One Mind" (一心) in terms suggesting a universal, eternal, or substantive consciousness, akin to the concept of Brahman in Advaita Vedānta. Such an interpretation inadvertently misrepresents a cornerstone of Huangbo's (and indeed, Mahayana Buddhist) teaching: that the 'One Mind', like all phenomena, is inherently empty of self-nature (无自性, *wú zìxìng*) and devoid of any ultimate, enduring substance. Any attempt to reify the Mind into an Absolute entity distorts its profound meaning within the Chan context. This "One Mind" is not a universal, undifferentiated oneness underlying and pervading the whole universe as a monolithic substance, but rather points to the empty, fundamental nature of awareness itself, which is beyond conceptual grasp. This aligns with core Buddhist teachings found, for instance, in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, it is taught that "There is no mind in the mind; the original nature (*prakṛti*) of the mind is luminous" (其心无心, 心者本净, 本净心者, 自然而乐清明而净). Huangbo's teachings, along with those of his Dharma grandfather Mazu and the first Patriarch Bodhidharma, consistently point to this non-substantial, empty, yet aware nature.

Furthermore, Blofeld's translation sometimes misinterpreted "No-Mind" (无心, *wúxīn*) as merely a psychological state of non-conceptuality or mental quietude, replacing "No Mind" with "ceasing thoughts", thus missing its deeper ontological significance as the realization of Mind's lack of inherent existence. The use of essentialist terms such as the 'Absolute' or his initial rendering of 'One Mind' as 'Universal Mind' (Blofeld begun with an earlier translation, "The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind" in 1947, and then revisited the text before releasing it as "The Zen Teaching of Huang Po" in 1959, although he still held the view of a Universal Spirit in the latest edition) introduced concepts absent from the original Chinese and fundamentally misaligned with Buddhist doctrines of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and no-self (*anātman*). While covering the main teachings, the interpretive and paraphrasing approach by Blofeld means that nuances and sometimes entire clauses or distinctions present in the original might be omitted or glossed over.

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

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

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

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

Contextual Perspectives

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

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

Venerable Hui Lü's talks are consistently filled with profound insights and clarity of View, stemming from his personal realizations and extensive study of the Tripitaka. He has mentioned that he has read the entire collection—which includes all of the Buddha's scriptures: the Vinaya (monastic rules), the Sūtras (the Buddha's teachings), and the Abhidharma (systematic, scholastic works or commentaries)—at least three times. He delivered lectures on a wide array of sutras and other scriptures, Huangbo's teachings included, many of which are available on YouTube in Chinese. These lectures have gained significant popularity among Chinese audiences, with numerous videos attracting

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

hundreds of thousands of views. Yet, he is far more than just an intellectual or academic; he has also shared his own spiritual awakening, having awakened to his true nature at an early age.

Venerable Hui Lü said (my translation):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On another occasion, Master Hui Lu said:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

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

One day, he really couldn't bear it anymore. Despite reading many books, contemplating koans and causal conditions, studying scriptures, prostrating to Buddha, and chanting Buddha's name, he constantly felt that he hadn't attained awakening. He realized that simply suppressing thoughts wasn't the solution. He didn't know where the strength came from, but he resolved, "I must find a master to ask for guidance on the Dharma."

So, he came alone. I thought, "Ah, this monk is very solemn, and highly educated too. He could be a 'dragon and elephant' [a great figure] within the Dharma gate." I decided to welcome him warmly. I asked, "Where are you from?" He replied, "From mainland China." "Where do you reside? Your esteemed monastery?" He said, "I don't have a monastery. A group of monks and I each live in separate huts." "Oh," I thought, "he's being modest." The point I am making with this story is about how difficult it is to achieve awakening and see one's true nature.

He very respectfully asked me – I told him to relax, as I could see this young monk was extremely deferential, which moved me – "Future dragon and elephant of the Dharma, what questions do you have?" He dared to ask, "Master, have you seen your true nature?" "Mm, I have seen my nature." "Then, may I ask the Venerable Sir, what is seeing? What is nature?" I replied, "An outsider asks for an insider's perspective. Seeing is nature, and nature is seeing. Without nature, there can be no seeing. How can the Dharma be dualistic?" He seemed to grasp a little, understanding that splitting the Dharma into two prevents entry into non-duality. Chan (Zen) is about direct apprehension.

"Then, Master, how do you explain 'clarifying the mind and seeing the nature' (明心见性)?" I told him, "It means clarifying the True Suchness original mind (真如本心) and seeing the unborn, undying pure self-nature (清净自性)." The monk then asked again, "Master, so do you mean 'Mind is Buddha' (即心是佛)?" I said, "No. My meaning is 'Not Mind, not Buddha' (非心非佛)." He became increasingly confused. "So, it's 'Not Mind, not Buddha,' are you sure?" I replied, "No. It is 'Mind is Buddha'." Now he was completely lost. "Master, which one is it? Which one is it exactly?"

I explained, "Making a choice implies discrimination. Choosing 'Mind is Buddha' is incorrect. Choosing 'Not Mind, not Buddha' is also incorrect. Yet, choosing 'Mind is Buddha' is correct, and choosing 'Not mind, not Buddha' is also correct." He felt like he was on a rollercoaster, completely spun around. "Master, when do you say 'Mind is Buddha'?" "To demonstrate that the Dharma is not

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

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

"Hmm," he said, "Master, I lived in a hut for ten years, and no one answered me like this. I need to go back and really ponder this." I told him, "Intellectual deliberation is useless. Great awakening and seeing the nature require wielding the sword directly in battle; only then is it easily seen." "Hmm... difficult. May I ask, Master, you often speak of 'all dharmas are unborn' (一切法无生). How do you explain 'unborn' (无生)?" I answered him, "All dharmas arising is called non-birth (万法皆生名为无生)." "Master, I am asking about non-birth!" "Yes," I said, "I am answering your question. All dharmas arising is called non-birth." "Wow! Doesn't non-birth mean nothing exists at all?" I responded, "Oh, monk, why do you cling to the heterodox views of annihilationism and eternalism? Non-birth is all dharmas arising. All dharmas arising is precisely what I mean by true non-birth. You must understand this clearly." "Wow... I need to go back and ponder this more." I told him again, "Intellectual deliberation is useless. True liberation comes from wielding the sword directly in battle; only then is it easily seen. What need is there for questions and answers?"

"May I ask, Master, where will you go when you die?" I said, "That is your delusion. Didn't I tell you all dharmas are unborn? If there is no birth, how can there be such a thing as death? I've already told you about non-birth, yet you still ask me where I will go when I die?" He still didn't get it. "Master, do you mean you will go to the Pure Land after death?" I replied, "From birth to death, you use terms of metabolic change. Before birth and after death are also terms of metabolic change. You are consistently using a mind of arising and ceasing (生灭的心) to inquire about the Tathagata's realm of non-arising and non-ceasing (不生不灭的境界). How can you possibly realize it?" "So Master, are you saying the mind is the Pure Land?" I said, "Yes." "Then aren't you going to the Pure Land after death?" I countered, "What does the Pure Land look like? On what road? Which street? What number? Tell me the address, and I'll move there."

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

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

Buddha's right view. I just turned him around a couple of times like that. Because he immediately latched onto "Mind is Buddha". I had to break his attachment with "Not Mind, not Buddha." Then he attached to "Not Mind, not Buddha." When he asked about "all dharmas are unborn," he clung to a nihilistic idea of non-birth. I answered him, "All dharmas arising is called non-birth." "Master, why do your answers always seem to contradict me?" I said, "To break your attachments!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

One must lose all mind and body by feeling with entire mind and body this essence which is 心 (Mind). Yet 心 (Mind) too is 不可得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable).. The purpose is not to deny 心 (Mind) but rather not to place any limitations or duality so that 心 (Mind) can fully manifest.

Therefore without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to limit 心 (Mind). without understanding 缘 (conditions), is to place limitation in its manifestations. You must fully experience 心 (Mind) by realizing 无心 (No-Mind) and fully embrace the wisdom of 不可得 (ungraspable/unobtainable/unfindable)." - John Tan, 2014

Essentials of Mind Transmission (Chuanxin Fayao)



Text: 黄檗断际禅师传心法要 (Essential Dharma of Mind Transmission by Chan Master Huangbo Duanji)

Recorded and Prefaced by: 河东裴休 (Pei Xiu of Hedong)

English Translation: He was a direct Dharma-descendant of the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi², a Dharma-nephew of Xitang, and a Dharma-heir of Baizhang³. He alone bore the seal of the Supreme Vehicle, detached from words, transmitting only the One Mind; there was no other Dharma. The Mind-essence is also empty; the myriad conditions are all quiescent. Like the great sun wheel ascending into the vast sky, its brilliant light illuminates, pure, without a speck of dust. For those who realize it, there is neither new nor old, neither shallow nor deep. For those who speak of it, they establish no interpretations, set up no sectarian positions, open no doors or windows – it is directly thus. To stir a thought is to deviate. Only then is it the fundamental Buddha. Therefore, his words were simple, his principles direct, his Way steep, his practice solitary. Disciples from the four directions, gazing upon the mountain, hastened towards him; upon seeing his appearance, some attained awakening. The ocean-like assembly coming and going constantly numbered over a thousand. In the second year of the Huichang era,⁴ when I, Pei Xiu, was serving as Prefect of Zhongling,⁵ I invited him from the mountain to the prefectural seat, where he stayed at Longxing Monastery. Day and night, I inquired about the Way. In the second year of the Dazhong era,⁶ when I was serving as Prefect of Wanling,⁷ I again went to pay respects and invited him to my administrative region, where he resided peacefully at Kaiyuan Monastery, receiving the Dharma day and night. After retiring from my post, I recorded what I remembered, obtaining perhaps ten or twenty percent. I cherish it as a mind-seal and have not dared to promulgate it. Now, fearing that its profound and essential meaning might not be heard in future times, I have brought it forth and transmitted it to the monastic disciple Dazhou Fajian,⁸ sending him back to Guangtang Monastery on the original mountain to inquire among the elders and the Dharma assembly whether it aligns with or differs from what they personally heard in former days.

Original Text: 有大禅师，法讳希运，住洪州高安县黄檗山鹞峰下，乃曹溪六祖之嫡孙，西堂百丈之法侄，独佩最上乘离文字之印，唯传一心，更无别法，心体亦空，万缘俱寂。如大日轮，升虚空中，光明照曜，净无纤埃。证之者，无新旧，无浅深；说之者，不立义

解，不立宗主，不开户牖，直下便是，动念即乖，然后为本佛。故其言简，其理直，其道峻，其行孤。四方学徒，望山而趋，睹相而悟，往来海众，常千余人。予会昌二年廉于钟陵，自山迎至州憩龙兴寺，旦夕问道。大中二年，廉于宛陵，复去礼迎至所部，安居开元寺，旦夕受法。退而纪之，十得一二，佩为心印，不敢发扬。今恐入神精义不闻于未来，遂出之，授门下僧大舟法建，归旧山之广唐寺，问长老法众，与往日常所亲闻同异如何也。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 法讳希运 (fǎhuì Xīyùn): Dharma name Xiyun (d. 850?). Huangbo is the mountain where he taught; Duanji ("cutting off the indeterminate") is a title.
- 曹溪六祖 (Cáo xī Liù zǔ): The Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi, Huineng (638–713), the most famous Chan Patriarch in China. Huangbo is considered a third-generation descendant.
- 西堂百丈 (Xī táng Bǎi zhàng): Baizhang Huaihai (720–814), a direct disciple of Mazu Daoyi and Huangbo's teacher. Xitang Zhizang (735-814) was a Dharma brother of Baizhang under Mazu. Huangbo studied under Baizhang.
- 会昌二年 (Huì chāng èr nián): The second year of the Huichang era of Emperor Wuzong of the Tang dynasty, corresponding to 842 CE. This period saw a major persecution of Buddhism.
- 钟陵 (Zhōng líng): Present-day Nanchang in Jiangxi Province. Pei Xiu (裴休, 791–864) was a high-ranking scholar-official and a devout lay Buddhist.
- 大中二年 (Dà zhōng èr nián): The second year of the Dazhong era of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty, corresponding to 848 CE.
- 宛陵 (Wǎn líng): Present-day Xuancheng in Anhui Province.
- 大舟法建 (Dà zhōu Fǎ jiàn): A monastic disciple under Pei Xiu.

English Translation: Prefaced on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the eleventh year of the Dazhong era of the Tang Dynasty.⁹

Original Text: 唐大中十一年十一月初八日序

Footnotes/Annotations:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

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

Title

English Translation: Essential Dharma of Mind Transmission by Chan Master Huangbo Duanji of Mount Huangbo

Original Text: 黄檗山断际禅师传心法要

English Translation: The Master told Pei Xiu: "All Buddhas and all sentient beings are solely this One Mind; there is no other Dharma. This Mind, since beginningless time, has never been born and never perished. It is not green nor yellow; it has no form, no characteristic. It does not belong to existence or non-existence; it is not reckoned as new or old. It is not long or short, not large or small. It transcends all limitations, names, verbal traces, and dualities. This very essence is it (i.e., the One Mind); to stir a thought is to deviate. It is like empty space, without boundaries, immeasurable. Only this One Mind itself is Buddha. There is no difference between Buddhas and sentient beings, yet sentient beings, by attaching to characteristics, seek externally. Seeking it thus, they only lose it. Using Buddha to seek Buddha, using Mind to grasp Mind – even after exhausting kalpas of effort, one can never attain it. They do not realize that if they just cease thoughts and forget anxieties, Buddha spontaneously manifests. This Mind is Buddha; Buddha is sentient beings. As a sentient being, this Mind does not decrease; as a Buddha, this Mind does not increase. Even the Six Perfections (pāramitās), myriad practices, and merits numerous as Ganges sands are fundamentally complete within it, not requiring cultivation or addition. When conditions arise, it is applied; when conditions cease, it is quiescent. If you do not decisively believe that this is Buddha, and instead, attached to characteristics, you cultivate practices seeking some result, all this is delusory and contrary to the Way.

Original Text: 师谓休曰：“诸佛与一切众生，唯是一心，更无别法。此心无始以来，不曾生，不曾灭；不青不黄，无形无相；不属有无，不计新旧，非长非短，非大非小，超过一切限量、名言、踪迹、对待，当体便是，动念即乖，犹如虚空，无有边际，不可测度。唯此一心即是佛，佛与众生更无别异，但是众生着相外求，求之转失。使佛觅佛，将心捉心，穷劫尽形，终不能得。不知息念忘虑，佛自现前。此心即是佛，佛即是众生。为众生时此心不减，为诸佛时此心不添。乃至六度万行、河沙功德，本自具足，不假修添。遇缘即施，缘息即寂。若不决定信此是佛，而欲着相修行，以求功用，皆是妄想，与道相乖。

English Translation: "This Mind is Buddha; there is no other Buddha, nor any other mind. This Mind is luminous and pure, like empty space, without a single speck of characteristic. To activate the mind or stir a thought is to deviate from the Dharma-essence; this is attachment to characteristics. From beginningless time, there have been no Buddhas attached to characteristics. To cultivate the Six Perfections and myriad practices in pursuit of Buddhahood is a gradual approach; from beginningless time, no Buddha [has been attained] by gradual stages. Just awaken to the One Mind; there is not the slightest Dharma to be obtained – this is the True Buddha. Buddhas and sentient beings are the One Mind, without difference. Like empty space, it is unadulterated and indestructible. Like the great sun-wheel illuminating the four continents: when the sun rises, light pervades the world, yet empty space has never become bright; when the sun sets, darkness pervades the world, yet empty space has never become dark. The realms of brightness and darkness naturally supplant each other, yet the nature of empty space remains vast and unchanging. The Mind of Buddhas and sentient beings is also thus. If you view Buddhas as having characteristics of purity, radiance, and liberation, and view sentient beings as having characteristics of defilement, turbidity, darkness, and birth-and-death – holding such views, even through kalpas numerous as Ganges sands, you will never attain Bodhi, because of attachment to characteristics. Only this One Mind – not even a mote of dust of Dharma can be obtained. This Mind is Buddha.

Original Text: “此心即是佛，更无别佛，亦无别心。此心明净，犹如虚空，无一点相貌。举心动念，即乖法体，即为着相。无始以来，无着相佛。修六度万行，欲求成佛，即是次第。无始以来，无次第佛。但悟一心，更无少法可得，此即真佛。佛与众生，一心无异，犹如虚空，无杂无坏。如大日轮照四天下，日升之时，明遍天下，虚空不曾明；日没之时，暗遍天下，虚空不曾暗。明暗之境，自相陵夺，虚空之性，廓然不变，佛及众生，心亦如此。若观佛作清净光明、解脱之相，观众生作垢浊暗昧、生死之相，作此解者，历河沙劫，终不得菩提，为着相故。唯此一心，更无微尘许法可得，即心是佛。

English Translation: "Nowadays, people who study the Way do not awaken to this Mind-essence. Instead, they give rise to mind upon mind, seeking Buddha outwardly, attached to characteristics in their practice. These are all wrong methods, not the path to Bodhi. Making offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions does not compare to making offerings to a single person of the Way who is without mind.¹⁰ Why? Because one 'without mind' is without any mind whatsoever. The body of Thusness [tathatā] is inwardly like wood or stone, unmoving, unshaken; outwardly like space, unobstructed, unimpeded. Without subject and object, without location, without form or characteristic, without

gain or loss. Those who hasten dare not enter this Dharma, fearing they will fall into emptiness with no place to abide, and thus they retreat upon seeing the cliff's edge. They invariably seek extensive knowledge and views. Therefore, those who seek knowledge and views are as numerous as hairs, while those who awaken to the Way are as rare as horns.

Original Text: “如今学道人，不悟此心体，便于心上生心，向外求佛，着相修行，皆是恶法，非菩提道。供养十方诸佛，不如供养一个无心道人。何故？无心者，无一切心也。如如之体，内如木石，不动不摇；外如虚空，不塞不碍。无能所，无方所，无相貌，无得失。趋者不敢入此法，恐落空无栖泊处故，望崖而退，例皆广求知见。所以求知见者如毛，悟道者如角。

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: "Mañjuśrī represents principle; Samantabhadra represents practice. Principle is the principle of true emptiness and non-obstruction. Practice is the practice of being detached from characteristics and inexhaustible. Avalokiteśvara corresponds to great compassion; Mahāsthāmaprāpta corresponds to great wisdom. Vimalakīrti is 'Pure Name'.¹¹ 'Pure' is the nature; 'Name' is the characteristic. Nature and characteristic are not different, hence the name 'Pure Name'. What the great Bodhisattvas represent, everyone possesses. It is not separate from the One Mind; awakening to it is it (*i.e. is precisely realizing One Mind*). Nowadays, students of the Way do not awaken within their own minds but instead attach to characteristics and grasp at realms outside the mind; this is entirely contrary to the Way. The sands of the Ganges River – the Buddha said they are sand. If Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Śakra, Brahmā, and various devas were to walk upon it, the sand feels no joy. If cattle, sheep, insects, and ants were to trample upon it, the sand feels no anger. For precious jewels and fragrant incense, the sand feels no greed. For feces, urine, and foul stench, the sand feels no aversion. This Mind is the mind of no-mind, detached from all characteristics. Sentient beings and Buddhas are without any difference. Just be able to be without mind, and that is the ultimate. If students of the Way do not directly arrive at no-mind, then even after cultivating for countless kalpas they will never accomplish the Path. They will remain fettered by the merit-making practices of the Three Vehicles, unable to achieve liberation.

Original Text: “文殊当理，普贤当行。理者，真空无碍之理；行者，离相无尽之行。观音当大慈，势至当大智。维摩者，净名也。净者，性也；名者，相也。性相不异，故号净名。诸大菩萨所表者，人皆有之，不离一心，悟之即是。今学道人不向自心中悟，乃于心外着相取境，皆与道背。恒河沙者，佛说是沙，诸佛菩萨、释梵诸天步履而过，沙亦不喜；牛羊虫蚁践踏而行，沙亦不怒；珍宝馨香，沙亦不贪；粪尿臭秽，沙亦不恶。此心即无心之心，离一切相，众生诸佛，更无差别。但能无心，便是究竟。学道人若不直下无心，累劫修行，终不成道，被三乘功行拘系，不得解脱。

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: "However, realizing this Mind occurs with varying speed. There are those who, upon hearing the Dharma, instantly attain no-mind in a single thought. There are those who reach the Ten Faiths, Ten Abodes, Ten Practices, and Ten Dedications before attaining no-mind.¹² There are those who reach the Ten Bhūmis before attaining no-mind.¹³ Whether attained quickly or slowly, once no-mind is attained and one abides there, there is nothing further to cultivate or realize. Truly, there is nothing obtained; this is real and not false. One who attains it in a single thought and one who attains it after reaching the Ten Bhūmis – their functional attainment is exactly equal, without any difference in depth. It is merely that one has needlessly endured hardships through accumulated kalpas.

Committing evil or doing good are both attachments to characteristics. Attached to characteristics while committing evil, one needlessly undergoes rebirth. Attached to characteristics while doing good, one needlessly endures toil and suffering. Neither compares to instantly recognizing and accepting the fundamental Dharma upon hearing the words.

Original Text: “然证此心有迟疾，有闻法一念便得无心者，有至十信、十住、十行、十回向乃得无心者，有至十地乃得无心者。长短得无心乃住，更无可修可证，实无所得，真实不虚。一念而得与十地而得者，功用恰齐，更无深浅，只是历劫枉受辛勤耳。造恶造善，皆是着相。着相造恶，枉受轮回；着相造善，枉受劳苦，总不如言下便自认取本法。

Footnotes/Annotations:

• 十信、十住、十行、十回向 (shíxìn, shízhù, shíxíng, shíhuíxiàng): The Forty Stages of the Bodhisattva path preceding the Bhūmis according to certain Mahāyāna schemas (e.g., Huayan, Tiantai).

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

English Translation: "These phenomena (dharmas) are Mind; outside of Mind, there are no phenomena. This Mind is phenomena; outside of phenomena, there is no Mind. Mind by its very nature is No-Mind, and there is no 'no-mind' to be attained. To treat mind as [needing to become] no-mind is, on the contrary, to reify it as existent. Silent accord is all that is needed; it cuts off all deliberation. Therefore, it is said: 'The path of words is cut off; the place of mental activity is extinguished.'¹⁴ This Mind is the fundamentally pure Buddha of the original source; everyone possesses it. All wriggling creatures endowed with sentience are of one essence with all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, without difference. It is only due to deluded thoughts and discriminations that various kinds of karmic consequences are created. Upon the fundamental Buddha, there is truly not a single thing – only vast openness, quiescent stillness, luminous wonder, and peaceful bliss. Deeply awaken and enter into it; directly, it is right here, perfectly complete, lacking nothing. Even if one diligently cultivates for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas,¹⁶ passing through all the stages, when one attains realization in a single thought, one only realizes one's own original Buddha. Nothing at all gets added.

Looking back at the efforts of accumulated kalpas, they turn out to have been deluded actions in a dream. Therefore, the Tathāgata said: 'Regarding Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi, I have truly obtained nothing. If I had obtained anything, Dīpaṃkara Buddha would not have given me the prediction [of future Buddhahood].'¹⁷ He also said: 'This Dharma is equal, without high or low; this is called Bodhi (awakening/gnosis).'¹⁸

Original Text: “此法即心，心外无法；此心即法，法外无心。心自无心，亦无无心者。将心无心，心却成有。默契而已，绝诸思议，故曰：‘言语道断，心行处灭。’此心是本源清净佛，人皆有之。蠢动含灵与诸佛菩萨一体不异。只为妄想分别，造种种业果。本佛上实无一物，虚通寂静，明妙安乐而已。深自悟入，直下便是，圆满具足，更无所欠。纵使三只精进修行，历诸地位，及一念证时，只证元来自佛，向上更不添得一物。却观历劫功用，总是梦中妄为。故如来云：‘我于阿耨菩提，实无所得。若有所得，然灯佛则不与我授记。’又云：‘是法平等，无有高下，是名菩提。’

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 言语道断，心行处灭 (yányǔ dào duàn, xīnxíng chù miè): A common Chan expression pointing to the inadequacy of language and conceptual thought to grasp ultimate truth. Often found in texts like the Vimalakīrti Sūtra.¹⁵ 蠢动含灵 (chǔndòng hánlíng): Literally "wriggling creatures possessing

numinous awareness." A classical term for all sentient beings, emphasizing their shared potential.¹⁶ 三只 (sān qí): Abbreviation for 三阿僧只劫 (sān āsēngqí jié), three asaṃkhyeya kalpas (incalculably long eons), the traditional timeframe for a Bodhisattva's path.¹⁷ Reference to the Diamond Sūtra: This paraphrases a passage where the Buddha explains that his awakening under Dīpaṃkara Buddha involved realizing that no fixed dharma called "Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi" was actually attained.¹⁸ Reference to the Diamond Sūtra: This also paraphrases a passage emphasizing the equality and non-dual nature of Bodhi.

English Translation: "This very original source, the pure Mind, is equal with sentient beings, all Buddhas, worlds, mountains, rivers, the formed and the formless, pervading the ten directions – everything is equal, without the characteristic of other or self. This original source, the pure Mind, is constantly, spontaneously, perfectly luminous and universally illuminating. Worldly people do not awaken to it; they only recognize seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing as mind. Being veiled by seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing, they therefore do not perceive the pure, luminous fundamental essence. Just directly be without mind, and the fundamental essence reveals itself. Like the great sun wheel ascending into the vast sky, it illuminates the ten directions universally, without any obstruction. Therefore, students of the Way merely recognize seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition, applying them in actions and movements. If seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition are emptied, the mind-path is cut off, with no place to enter. Just recognize the fundamental Mind within the domain of seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition. However, the fundamental Mind does not belong to seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition, nor is it separate from seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition. Simply do not give rise to views based on seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition; nor stir thoughts based on seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition; nor seek the mind apart from seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition; nor abandon seeing, hearing, awareness, and cognition to grasp some dharma. Neither identical nor separate, neither abiding nor attached – freely and fully at ease in all directions, everywhere is the place of the Way [bodhimāṇḍa].

Original Text: “即此本源清净心，与众生诸佛、世界山河、有相无相、遍十方界，一切平等，无彼我相。此本源清净心，常自圆明遍照，世人不悟，只认见闻觉知为心，为见闻觉知所覆，所以不睹精明本体。但直下无心，本体自现。如大日轮升于虚空，遍照十方，更无障碍。故学道人唯认见闻觉知，施为动作，空却见闻觉知，即心路绝无入处。但于见闻觉知处认本心，然本心不属见闻觉知，亦不离见闻觉知。但莫于见闻觉知上起见解，亦莫于见闻觉知上动念，亦莫离见闻觉知觅心，亦莫舍见闻觉知取法。不即不离，不住不着，纵横自在，无非道场。

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: "Worldly people hear that all Buddhas transmit the Mind-Dharma and assume there must be some particular dharma apart from Mind that can be realized and attained.

Consequently, they use mind to seek Dharma. They do not know that Mind is Dharma, and Dharma is Mind. One cannot use mind to seek mind again; through millions of kalpas, the day of attainment will never arrive. It is better to be without mind in the present moment – that is the fundamental Dharma. It is like a strongman confused about the jewel on his own forehead, seeking it outwardly, traveling throughout the ten directions, ultimately unable to find it. When a wise person points it out, he instantly sees his original jewel just as it was. Therefore, students of the Way are confused about their own fundamental Mind, not recognizing it as Buddha. Consequently, they seek outwardly, initiating effortful practices, relying on sequential realization. Striving diligently through kalpas, they never accomplish the Way.

It is better to be without mind right now, decisively knowing that all dharmas are fundamentally non-existent, and that nothing is attained (无所得, wú suǒdé); without reliance, without abiding, without subject, without object. Not stirring deluded thoughts, one realizes Bodhi. When the Way is realized, one only realizes the fundamental Mind-Buddha. The efforts of accumulated kalpas are entirely illusory cultivation. Just like when the strongman found the jewel, he only found the jewel originally on his forehead; it had nothing to do with the effort of seeking outwardly. Therefore, the Buddha said: 'With respect to Anuttarā Samyak Sambodhi, I have truly obtained not a single thing.' Fearing that people would not believe, he cited what is seen by the Five Eyes and spoken by the Five Tongues²⁰ – it is real and not false, the truth of the ultimate meaning [paramārtha-satya].

Original Text: “世人闻道诸佛皆传心法，将谓心上别有一法可证可取，遂将心觅法。不知心即是法，法即是心。不可将心更求于心，历千万劫，终无得日。不如当下无心，便是本法。如力士迷额内珠，向外求觅，周行十方，终不能得。智者指之，当时自见本珠如故。故学道人迷自本心，不认为佛，遂向外求觅，起功用行，依次第证，历劫勤求，永不成道。不如当下无心，决定知一切法本无所有，亦无所得，无依无住，无能无所。不动妄念，便证菩提。及证道时，只证本心佛。历劫功用，并是虚修。如力士得珠时，只得本额珠，不关向外求觅之力。故佛言：‘我于阿耨菩提实无所得。’恐人不信，故引五眼所见，五语所言，真实不虚，是第一义谛。

Footnotes/Annotations:

• 五眼 (wǔ yǎn), 五语 (wǔ yǔ): The Five Eyes (physical, divine, wisdom, dharma, Buddha eye) represent escalating levels of perception. The reference to "Five Tongues" seems unusual; "Five Eyes" is standard. It might be a textual variant or reference to the Buddha's capacity to speak truthfully and effectively to all beings. It emphasizes the Buddha's comprehensive insight and truthful speech.

English Translation: "Students of the Way, do not doubt that the four great elements are the body. The four great elements are without self [anātman], and the self is also ownerless. Therefore, know that this body is without self and also ownerless. Do not doubt that the five aggregates are the mind. The five aggregates are without self and also ownerless. Therefore, know that this mind is without self and also ownerless. The six sense bases [āyatana], six sense objects [viṣaya], and six consciousnesses [vijñāna] arise and cease through combination, and are also thus. Since the eighteen realms [dhātus] are empty, everything is empty. Only the fundamental Mind is vast and clear, pure. There is nourishment through consciousness and nourishment through wisdom. The body of the four great elements suffers from hunger and injury. Nourishing it accordingly without giving rise to craving and attachment is called nourishment through wisdom. Indulging the desires, seeking flavors, deludedly giving rise to discriminations, only seeking what pleases the palate without generating aversion [to samsara], is called nourishment through consciousness.²¹ Śrāvakas ('hearers') attain awakening through sound, hence they are called Śrāvakas. But they do not comprehend their own mind; they form interpretations based on teachings heard through sound, or through supernormal powers, or auspicious signs, words, or actions. Hearing of Bodhi and Nirvāṇa, and cultivating for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas to accomplish the Buddha Way – all belong to the Śrāvaka path; they are called Śrāvaka-Buddhas. Only by directly and suddenly comprehending that one's own mind is originally Buddha, that not a single dharma can be obtained, and not a single practice needs to be cultivated – this is the unsurpassed Way, this is the True Suchness [Tathatā] Buddha.

Original Text: “学道人莫疑四大为身。四大无我，我亦无主。故知此身无我亦无主。五阴为心，五阴无我亦无主。故知此心无我亦无主。六根六尘六识，和合生灭，亦复如是。十八界既空，一切皆空，唯有本心荡然清净。有识食，有智食。四大之身，饥疮为患，随顺给养，不生贪着，谓之智食。恣情取味，妄生分别，惟求适口，不生厌离，谓之识食。声闻者，因声得悟，故谓之声闻。但不了自心，于声教上起解，或因神通，或因瑞相，言语运动，闻有菩提涅槃，三僧只劫修成佛道，皆属声闻道，谓之声闻佛。唯直下顿了自心本来是佛，无一法可得，无一行可修，此是无上道，此是真如佛。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 识食 (shí shí), 智食 (zhì shí): Nourishment through consciousness (clinging, discrimination) versus nourishment through wisdom (mindful sustenance without attachment). This contrasts ordinary, craving-driven consumption with the mindful approach of a practitioner.
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English Translation: "Students of the Way need only fear having a single thought; that immediately separates them from the Way. Thought-moment after thought-moment without characteristics, thought-moment after thought-moment without contrived action [wu wei],²²—this is Buddha. If students of the Way wish to attain Buddhahood, they need not study any Buddhadharma at all; they only need to study non-seeking and non-attachment. Non-seeking means the mind does not arise; non-attachment means the mind does not perish. Not arising and not perishing is Buddha. The eighty-four thousand Dharma gates are remedies for the eighty-four thousand afflictions; they are merely gates for teaching, transforming, and guiding beings. Fundamentally, there are no dharmas at all.

Detachment itself is the Dharma; one who knows detachment is the Buddha. Just detach from all afflictions, and there is no dharma to be obtained.

Original Text: “学道人只怕一念有，即与道隔矣。念念无相，念念无为，即是佛。学道人若欲得成佛，一切佛法总不用学，唯学无求无着。无求即心不生，无着即心不灭，不生不灭即是佛。八万四千法门，对八万四千烦恼，只是教化接引门。本无一切法，离即是法，知离者是佛。但离一切烦恼，是无法可得。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 无为 (wúwéi): Here likely refers to non-action in the sense of acting without attachment, effort, or dualistic concepts, rather than complete inaction or the unconditioned state specifically, though it resonates with the latter.
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English Translation: "Students of the Way, if you wish to know the essential key, just do not attach a single thing onto the mind. It is said, 'The Buddha's true Dharma-body is just like space.' This is using space-like emptiness as an analogy for the Dharma-body; space-like emptiness is the Dharma-body. Ordinary people say the Dharma-body pervades the realm of space-like emptiness, that space-like emptiness contains and accommodates the Dharma-body. They do not know that the Dharma-body is space-like emptiness, and space-like emptiness is the Dharma-body. If you definitively say there is space-like emptiness, then space-like emptiness is not the Dharma-body. If you definitively say there is a Dharma-body, then the Dharma-body is not space-like emptiness. Just do not form an understanding of 'space-like emptiness' – space-like emptiness is the Dharma-body. Do not form an understanding of

'Dharma-body' – the Dharma-body is space-like emptiness. space-like emptiness and the Dharma-body have no differing characteristics. Buddha and sentient beings have no differing characteristics. Birth-and-death and Nirvāṇa have no differing characteristics. Afflictions and Bodhi have no differing characteristics. Being detached from all characteristics is Buddha. Ordinary people grasp at realms [objects]; people of the Way grasp at mind. When both mind and realms are forgotten, that is the true Dharma. Forgetting realms is still easy; forgetting mind is extremely difficult. People dare not forget mind, fearing they will fall into emptiness with nothing to grasp onto. They do not know that emptiness is fundamentally not nothingness; there is only the one true Dharma-realm.

Original Text: “学道人若欲得知要诀，但莫于心上着一物。言‘佛真法身犹若虚空’，此是喻法身即虚空，虚空即法身。常人谓法身遍虚空处，虚空中含容法身。不知法身即虚空，虚空即法身也。若定言有虚空，虚空不是法身；若定言有法身，法身不是虚空。但莫作虚空解，虚空即法身；莫作法身解，法身即虚空。虚空与法身无异相，佛与众生无异相，生死与涅槃无异相，烦恼与菩提无异相，离一切相即是佛。凡夫取境，道人取心；心境双忘，乃是真法。忘境犹易，忘心至难。人不敢忘心，恐落空无捞摸处，不知空本无空，唯一真法界耳。

English Translation: "This numinous awareness-nature (灵觉性), since beginningless time, has the same lifespan as space. It has never been born, never perished; never existent, never non-existent; never been defiled, never been pure; never been noisy, never been silent; never been young, never been old. It has no location, no inside or outside; no quantity, no form or shape; no color or appearance, no sound or voice. It cannot be sought, cannot be pursued; it cannot be known by wisdom; it cannot be grasped by words; it cannot be met through objective things; it cannot be reached by meritorious effort. All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all sentient beings endowed with numinous awareness share this great Nirvāṇa-nature. Nature is Mind; Mind is Buddha; Buddha is Dharma. A single thought departing from the true is entirely deluded thinking. One cannot use mind to seek mind again; one cannot use Buddha to seek Buddha again; one cannot use Dharma to seek Dharma again.

Therefore, students of the Way directly attain no-mind; silent accord is all. To intend with the mind is to err. Transmitting mind with mind – this is the right view. Be cautious not to pursue external realms. Recognizing realms as mind is like recognizing a thief as your son. Because there is greed, anger, and delusion, there are established precepts, concentration, and wisdom. Fundamentally, there are no afflictions; how could there be Bodhi? Therefore, the Patriarchal Master said: "The Buddha spoke all dharmas to eliminate all minds. If I have no mind at all, what use are all dharmas?"²³ Upon the fundamentally pure Buddha of the original source, not a single thing is attached. For example, space,

though adorned with immeasurable precious jewels, ultimately cannot make them stay. The Buddha-nature is like space; though adorned with immeasurable merits and wisdom, ultimately it cannot make them stay. It is only due to being confused about the fundamental nature that one fails to see it.

Original Text: “此灵觉性，无始以来，与虚空同寿，未曾生、未曾灭，未曾有、未曾无，未曾秽、未曾净，未曾喧、未曾寂，未曾少、未曾老，无方所、无内外，无数量、无形相，无色像、无音声，不可觅、不可求，不可以智慧识，不可以言语取，不可以境物会，不可以功用到。诸佛菩萨与一切蠢动含灵，同此大涅槃性。性即是心，心即是佛，佛即是法。一念离真，皆为妄想。不可以心更求于心，不可以佛更求于佛，不可以法更求于法。故学道人直下无心，默契而已。拟心即差。以心传心，此为正见，慎勿向外逐境。认境为心，是认贼为子。为有贪嗔痴，即立戒定慧。本无烦恼，焉有菩提？故祖师云：‘佛说一切法，为除一切心。我无一切心，何用一切法？’本源清净佛上，更不着一物。譬如虚空，虽以无量珍宝庄严，终不能住。佛性同虚空，虽以无量功德智慧庄严，终不能住。但迷本性，转不见耳。

Footnotes/Annotations:

• 祖师云... (Zǔshī yún...): This saying is often attributed to Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Chan in China.

English Translation: The so-called 'Dharma-gate of the mind-ground' is that all phenomena are established in dependence on this mind. When circumstances appear, they are manifest; when no circumstance presents itself, there is no manifestation. One should not reinterpret one's own pure nature as if it were a basis for grasping external forms. The terms 'tranquility and wisdom,' 'discernment in operation,' 'quietude and alertness,' and 'the faculties of seeing, hearing, and knowing' are nothing more than provisional explanations placed upon phenomena—teaching devices suited for those of middling or lesser capacities. If one truly wishes to experience direct realization, one must not hold such conceptual views; all these are merely [responses to] conditions. Where dharmas cease, it is in the very place of their existence that they cease. The Dharma exists (manifests) where it vanishes, and it vanishes where it exists (manifests). Yet with regard to every single phenomenon, if one refrains from adopting any view of “existence” or “nonexistence,” one directly perceives the Dharma itself.

Original Text: “所谓心地法门，万法皆依此心建立。遇境即有，无境即无，不可于净性上转作境解。所言定慧、鉴用历历、寂寂惺惺、见闻觉知，皆是境上作解，暂为中下根人说即得。若欲亲证，皆不可作如此见解，尽是境。法有没处，没于有地。但于一切法，不作有无见，即见法也。”

English Translation: On the first day of the ninth month, the Master addressed Xiu, saying: "Since Master Bodhidharma arrived in China, he only spoke of the One Mind, only transmitted the One Dharma. Transmitting Buddha with Buddha, speaking of no other Buddha; transmitting Dharma with Dharma, speaking of no other Dharma. The Dharma is the Dharma that cannot be spoken; the Buddha is the Buddha that cannot be grasped. This is the fundamentally pure Mind of the original source. Only this one matter is real; the other two [vehicles] are not true. Prajñā is wisdom; this wisdom is the signless fundamental Mind.

Original Text: 九月一日，师谓休曰：“自达摩大师到中国，唯说一心，唯传一法。以佛传佛，不说余佛；以法传法，不说余法。法即不可说之法，佛即不可取之佛，乃是本源清净心也。唯此一事实，余二则非真。般若为慧，此慧即无相本心也。”

English Translation: "Ordinary people do not direct themselves towards the Way; they only give free rein to the six senses, thereby transmigrating through the six paths. Students of the Way, if in one thought they calculate about birth and death, they fall into the way of māras [demons]. If in one thought they give rise to various views, they fall into the way of outsiders [non-Buddhists]. Seeing arising and heading towards its extinction, they fall into the Śrāvaka way. Not seeing arising, only seeing extinction, they fall into the Pratyekabuddha way. Dharma fundamentally is non-arising, and presently is also non-extinguishing. Not giving rise to these two views, nor to aversion or delight—all dharmas are only the One Mind. Only then is it the Buddha Vehicle.

Original Text: “凡夫不趣道，唯恣六情，乃行六道。学道人一念计生死，即落魔道；一念起诸见，即落外道；见有生，趣其灭，即落声闻道；不见有生，唯见有灭，即落缘觉道；法本不生，今亦无灭，不起二见，不厌不欣，一切诸法，唯是一心，然后乃为佛乘也。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

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

The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana states:

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

English Translation: “Ordinary people all pursue realms [objects], giving rise to mind, and the mind then develops liking and aversion. If you wish for no realms, you must forget the mind. When the mind is forgotten, realms are empty; when realms are empty, the mind is extinguished. If you do not forget the mind, but merely try to eliminate realms, realms cannot be eliminated, only increasing confusion. Therefore, the myriad dharmas are Mind-only. Mind is also unobtainable/unfindable; what else is there to seek? People who study Prajñā see not a single dharma that can be obtained. They cut off intentions regarding the Three Vehicles. There is only the One Reality, which cannot be realized or obtained. Those who say ‘I can realize, I can obtain’ are all people of arrogant conceit [adhimāna]. Those who brushed off their robes and left the assembly in the Lotus Sūtra²⁴ were all such types. Therefore, the Buddha said: ‘Regarding Bodhi, I have truly obtained nothing.’ Silent accord is all.

Original Text: “凡夫皆逐境生心，心遂欣厌。若欲无境，当忘其心。心忘即境空，境空即心灭。若不忘心，而但除境，境不可除，只益纷扰。故万法唯心，心亦不可得，复何求哉？学般若人，不见有一法可得，绝意三乘，唯一真实，不可证得。谓我能证能得，皆增上慢人。法华会上拂衣而去者，皆斯徒也。故佛言：‘我于菩提实无所得’，默契而已。

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: "When ordinary people are near the time of death, they should just contemplate: the five aggregates are empty, the four great elements are without self, the true Mind is signless, neither going nor coming. At the time of birth, the nature also does not come; at the time of death, the nature also does not go. It is serene, perfectly quiescent, mind and realm as one. If one can just directly comprehend this in this way, one is not bound by the three times [past, present, future] and is truly a world-transcending person. Absolutely do not have the slightest inclination [towards anywhere]. If you see auspicious signs of Buddhas coming to welcome you or various phenomena appearing, have no mind to follow them. If you see fearsome signs or various phenomena appearing, have no mind of fear. Just forget your own mind, becoming identical with the Dharma-realm, and you will attain freedom. This is the essential point."

Original Text: “凡人临欲终时，但观五蕴皆空，四大无我，真心无相，不去不来。生时性亦不来，死时性亦不去，湛然圆寂，心境一如。但能如是直下顿了，不为三世所拘系，便是出世人。切不得有分毫趣向，若见善相诸佛来迎及种种现前，亦无心随去。若见恶相种种现前，亦无心怖畏。但自忘心，同于法界，便得自在，此即是要节也。”

English Translation: On the eighth day of the tenth month, the Master addressed Xiu, saying: "Speaking of the 'phantom city' [化城],²⁵ the Two Vehicles, as well as the Ten Bhūmis, Equal Awakening, and Wondrous Awakening,²⁶ are all provisional teachings established to guide beings; they are all phantom cities. Speaking of the 'jeweled place' [宝所], it is the jewel of the true Mind, the fundamental Buddha-nature. This jewel does not pertain to conceptual calculation; it cannot be [conceptually] established. There is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no subject, no object – where is there a city? If asked, 'Since this is a phantom city, where is the jeweled place?' The jeweled place cannot be pointed to. If pointed to, it has location and is not the true jeweled place. Therefore, it is said to be 'nearby'. Being 'nearby' cannot be quantitatively stated. One must just experience it; accord with it is it.

Original Text: 十月八日，师谓休曰：“言化城者，二乘及十地、等觉、妙觉，皆是权立接引之教，并为化城。言宝所者，乃真心本佛自性之宝。此宝不属情量，不可建立。无佛无

众生，无能无所，何处有城？若问此既是化城，何处为宝所？宝所不可指，指即有方所，非真宝所也，故云在近而已。在近者，不可定量言之。但当体会，契之即是。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 化城 (huàchéng): Phantom city, from the parable in the Lotus Sūtra (Chapter 7). A guide conjures up a resting place (phantom city) for weary travelers halfway to their destination (the jeweled place, symbolizing Nirvāṇa or Buddhahood) to encourage them to continue. It represents provisional teachings or attainments.
- 十地、等觉、妙觉 (shí dì, děng jué, miào jué): Ten Bhūmis, Equal Awakening (Samyāsambodhi, 51st Bodhisattva stage), and Wondrous Awakening (Sarvajñāna, 52nd stage, Buddhahood) according to the Tiantai/Huayan Bodhisattva path schema. Huangbo considers even these high stages as provisional relative to the direct realization of the One Mind.

English Translation: "Speaking of 'icchantika' [阐提], it means those whose faith is incomplete. All sentient beings of the six paths, and even those of the Two Vehicles, who do not believe in the fruition of Buddhahood, are all called icchantikas with severed good roots. Bodhisattvas deeply believe in the Buddha Dharma, seeing no Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna, seeing Buddha and sentient beings as having the same Dharma-nature – they are called icchantikas of good roots.²⁸ Generally, those who awaken through hearing teachings are called Śrāvakas ('hearers'). Those who awaken through contemplating dependent origination [pratītyasamutpāda] are called Pratyekabuddhas ('solitary realizers'). If one does not awaken within one's own mind, even if one reaches Buddhahood, one is still called a Śrāvaka-Buddha. Most students of the Way awaken based on doctrinal teachings, not based on the Mind-Dharma. Even cultivating through accumulated kalpas, they are ultimately not the fundamental Buddha. If one does not awaken in the Mind, but rather awakens based on doctrinal teachings, one slights the Mind and emphasizes the teachings, consequently becoming one who chases after clumps [of earth, mistaking them for gold], forgetting the fundamental Mind. Therefore, just accord with the fundamental Mind; there is no need to seek Dharma – Mind is Dharma.

Original Text: “言阐提者，信不具也。一切六道众生，乃至二乘，不信有佛果，皆谓之断善根阐提。菩萨者，深信有佛法，不见有大乘小乘，佛与众生同一法性，乃谓之善根阐提。大抵因声教而悟者谓之声闻，观因缘而悟者谓之缘觉。若不向自心中悟，虽至成佛，亦谓之声闻佛。学道人多于教法上悟，不于心法上悟，虽历劫修行，终不是本佛。若不于心悟，乃至教法上悟，即轻心重教，遂成逐块，忘于本心。故但契本心，不用求法，心即法也。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- 阐提 (chǎntí): Icchantika. Originally meaning those deemed incapable of attaining Buddhahood due to lack of faith or grave misdeeds. Mahāyāna texts later reinterpreted it, suggesting even icchantikas possess Buddha-nature.
- 善根阐提 (shàngēn chǎntí): Icchantika of good roots. This seems to be Huangbo's specific terminology, possibly referring to Bodhisattvas who, despite having deep faith (good roots), might still be considered 'cut off' (icchantika) from the ultimate direct realization if they cling to concepts of Mahāyāna/Hīnayāna or differences, rather than directly realizing the unified Dharma-nature. It highlights the subtlety required for true awakening beyond conceptual frameworks.

English Translation: "Ordinary people are often obstructed in mind by realms [objects], and obstructed in principle by affairs. They constantly wish to escape realms to pacify the mind, to screen out affairs to preserve principle. They do not know that it is mind that obstructs realms, and principle that obstructs affairs. Just let the mind be empty, and realms will naturally be empty. Just let principle be quiescent, and affairs will naturally be quiescent. Do not use the mind in reverse.

Ordinary people are often unwilling to empty the mind, fearing they will fall into emptiness. They do not know that their own mind is fundamentally empty. The foolish eliminate affairs but not mind; the wise eliminate mind but not affairs. The Bodhisattva's mind is like space, relinquishing everything. The merits and virtues accrued are all without craving or attachment. However, relinquishing has three grades: First, relinquishing everything, internal and external, body and mind, like space, without any grasping or attachment, then responding to situations according to circumstances, forgetting both subject and object – this is great relinquishing.

Second, if one practices the Way and spreads virtue on one hand, while immediately relinquishing on the other, without any expectant mind – this is medium relinquishing. Third, if one extensively cultivates various good deeds with hope [for reward], then hears the Dharma and knows emptiness, consequently becoming unattached – this is small relinquishing. Great relinquishing is like a candle flame right in front, with no confusion or awakening. Medium relinquishing is like a candle flame to the side, sometimes bright, sometimes dark. Small relinquishing is like a candle flame behind, unable to see pitfalls and wells. Therefore, the Bodhisattva's mind is like space, relinquishing everything. Past mind is unattainable (不可得, bùkědé) – that is relinquishing the past. Present mind is unattainable – that is relinquishing the present. Future mind is unattainable – that is relinquishing the future. This is called relinquishing the three times simultaneously.

Original Text: “凡人多为境碍心、事碍理，常欲逃境以安心，屏事以存理，不知乃是心碍境、理碍事。但令心空境自空，但令理寂事自寂，勿倒用心也。凡人多不肯空心，恐落于空，不知自心本空。愚人除事不除心，智者除心不除事。菩萨心如虚空，一切俱舍，所作福德，皆不贪着。然舍有三等：内外身心一切俱舍，犹如虚空，无所取着，然后随方应物，能所皆忘，是为大舍；若一边行道布德，一边旋舍，无希望心，是为中舍；若广修众善，有所希望，闻法知空，遂乃不着，是为小舍。大舍如火烛在前，更无迷悟。中舍如火烛在旁，或明或暗。小舍如火烛在后，不见坑井。故菩萨心如虚空，一切俱舍。过去心不可得，是过去舍；现在心不可得，是现在舍；未来心不可得，是未来舍；所谓三世俱舍。

English Translation: “Ever since the Tathāgata transmitted the Dharma to Kāśyapa, mind has sealed mind, and these minds have been identical. If the seal is impressed upon emptiness, it leaves no mark; if impressed upon things, it does not form the Dharma. Therefore, mind seals mind, and these minds are identical. Both the sealer and the sealed are difficult to truly match and meet, hence, those who attain it are few. However, mind is no-mind, and attainment is no-attainment.

Original Text: “自如来付法迦叶以来，以心印心，心心不异。印着空，即印不成文；印着物，即印不成法。故以心印心，心心不异。能印所印，俱难契会，故得者少。然心即无心，得即无得。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Mind seals mind (以心印心, xīn yìn xīn): Refers to the direct transmission of awakening from master to disciple in Chan, beyond words and scriptures, signifying a direct experiential recognition of the nature of mind.
 - Identical (不异, bù yì): Lit. "not different." Signifies the unchanging, non-dual nature of the mind transmitted.
 - No-mind (无心, wúxīn): Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
 - No-attainment (无得, wú dé): Since the fundamental nature is already complete, there is nothing external to attain. Awakening is the realization of this nature, not the acquisition of something new. Furthermore, Mind is empty of Mind, it is by nature not something obtainable or graspable.
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English Translation: “The Buddha has three bodies: the Dharma-body preaches the Dharma of the self-nature's unimpeded pervasion; the Reward-body preaches the Dharma of all purity; the Transformation-body preaches the Dharma of the six perfections and myriad practices. The Dharma preached by the Dharma-body cannot be sought through speech, sound, form, or writing. There is nothing spoken, nothing attested to—only the self-nature's unimpeded pervasion. Therefore, it is said: ‘No Dharma can be spoken; that is called preaching the Dharma.’ The Reward-body and Transformation-body both appear in response to circumstances and capacities; the Dharma they preach also adapts to events and faculties for the purpose of gathering and transforming beings; all these are not the true Dharma. Therefore, it is said: ‘The Reward and Transformation bodies are not the true Buddha, nor are they the preachers of the Dharma.’”

Original Text: “佛有三身，法身说自性虚通法，报身说一切清净法，化身说六度万行法。法身说法，不可以言语、音声、形相、文字而求。无所说，无所证，自性虚通而已。故曰：‘无法可说，是名说法。’报身、化身皆随机感现，所说法亦随事应根以为摄化，皆非真法。故曰：‘报化非真佛，亦非说法者。’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: “What is meant by ‘The same single essential brightness is divided into the six unions’? The ‘one essential brightness’ is the one mind; the ‘six unions’ are the six sense faculties. These

six faculties each unite with their corresponding sense objects: eye unites with form, ear with sound, nose with smell, tongue with taste, body with touch, and mind-consciousness [意] with mental objects [法]. In between, the six consciousnesses arise, forming the eighteen realms. If one understands that the eighteen realms are without any existence, one binds the six unions into the one essential brightness. The one essential brightness is the mind. Practitioners of the Way all know this, but they cannot avoid making the interpretation of 'one essential brightness, six unions,' and are consequently bound by the Dharma, failing to accord with the original mind.

Original Text: “所言‘同是一精明，分为六和合。’一精明者，一心也；六和合者，六根也。此六根各与尘合，眼与色合，耳与声合，鼻与香合，舌与味合，身与触合，意与法合，中间生六识，为十八界。若了十八界无所有，束六和合为一精明，一精明者即心也。学道人皆知此，但不能免，作‘一精明六和合’解，遂被法缚，不契本心。

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: “When the Tathāgata appeared in the world, he wished to preach the true Dharma of the One Vehicle, but sentient beings would not believe, would give rise to slander, and would sink into the sea of suffering. If he did not preach at all, he would fall into miserliness and greed, not universally bestowing the wondrous Way upon sentient beings. Consequently, he devised skillful means, teaching that there are Three Vehicles. The vehicles have great and small, and the attainments

have shallow and deep; none are the fundamental Dharma. Therefore, it is said: ‘There is only the Way of the One Vehicle; the other two are not true.’ However, this still could not reveal the Dharma of the One Mind. Therefore, he summoned Kāśyapa to share the Dharma seat and separately transmitted the One Mind, a Dharma preached apart from words. This one branch [of teaching] caused the Dharma to be practiced separately. If one can accord with and awaken to it, one immediately reaches the stage of Buddhahood.”

Original Text: “如来现世，欲说一乘真法，则众生不信兴谤，没于苦海。若都不说，则堕悭贪，不为众生溥舍妙道。遂设方便，说有三乘。乘有大小，得有浅深，皆非本法。故云：‘唯有一乘道，余二则非真。’然终未能显一心法，故召迦叶同法座，别付一心，离言说法。此一枝法令别行，若能契悟者，便至佛地矣。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: Question: “What is the Way? How does one cultivate it?” The Master said: “The Way is what thing, that you wish to cultivate it?”

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

Original Text: 问：“如何是道？如何修行？”师云：“道是何物，汝欲修行？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: Question: “Masters of the various schools everywhere inherit the tradition of practicing Chan and studying the Way. How about this?” The Master said: “Words used to guide people of dull faculties are not to be relied upon.” The questioner said: “These are indeed words to guide people of dull faculties. May I ask, what Dharma is spoken to guide people of superior faculties?” The Master said: “If one were a person of superior faculties, where would they further seek from others? Even finding their own self is unobtainable/unfindable, how could there be some other Dharma corresponding to their feelings? Do you not see it said in the teachings: ‘What state do dharmas upon dharmas have?’” The questioner said: “If it is like this, then one should not seek at all.” The Master said: “If so, then you save mental effort.” The questioner said: “In that case, everything becomes utterly cut off; it cannot be that it is nothingness [无, wú], can it?” The Master said: “Who taught him it is nothingness? Who is he? Are you trying to find him?”

The questioner said: “Since seeking is not permitted, why then say, ‘Do not cut him off?’” The Master said: “If you do not seek, then let it rest. Who taught you to cut it off? Look at the empty space before your eyes—how could you cut it off?” The questioner said: “Can this Dharma be obtained just like empty space?” The Master said: “When did empty space ever tell you there is sameness or difference? I temporarily speak like this, and you immediately give rise to interpretations based on it.” The questioner said: “Should one not give rise to interpretations based on it?” The Master said: “I have never hindered you. However, interpretation belongs to feelings [情, qíng], and when feelings arise, wisdom [智, zhì] is obstructed.” The questioner said: “Regarding this, is it correct not to give rise to feelings?” The Master said: “If you do not give rise to feelings, who says it is correct?”

Original Text: 问：“诸方宗师，相承参禅学道如何？”师云：“引接钝根人语，未可依凭。”云：“此即是引接钝根人语，未审接上根人复说何法？”师云：“若是上根人，何处更就人。觅他自己尚不可得，何况更别有法当情？不见教中云：‘法法何状。’”云：“若如此，则都不要觅也。”师云：“若与么，则省心力。”云：“如是，则浑成断绝，不可是无也。”师云：“阿谁教他无？他是阿谁？尔拟觅他？”云：“既不许觅，何故又言莫断他？”师云：“若不觅便休，即谁教尔断？尔见目前虚空作么生断他？”云：“此法可得便同虚空

否？”师云：“虚空早晚向尔道有同有异？我暂如此说，尔便向这里生解。”云：“应是不与人生解耶？”师云：“我不曾障尔，要且解属于情，情生则智隔。”云：“向这里莫生情是？”师云：“若不生情，阿谁道是？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Dull faculties (钝根, dùn gēn) / Superior faculties (上根, shàng gēn): Traditional classification of practitioners' capacities. Chan masters often used paradoxical or direct methods for those considered "superior," while employing more gradual or explanatory methods for others. Huangbo dismisses reliance on any fixed method.
- Feelings (情, qíng): Here refers broadly to emotional responses, conceptual thinking, and volitional impulses based on dualistic views and attachments, which obscure primordial wisdom (智, zhì).
- Save mental effort (省心力, shěng xīnlì): A common Chan expression suggesting that stopping futile conceptual seeking is the most direct path.
- Nothingness (无, wú): The questioner fears nihilism (断灭见, duànmiè jiàn), a view explicitly rejected in Buddhism. Huangbo counters by questioning the very basis of the concept of "nothingness" and who perceives it.
- The dialogue repeatedly subverts the questioner's attempts to grasp a fixed concept or method, pointing away from intellectual understanding (解, jiě) tied to feelings/concepts (情, qíng) towards direct, non-conceptual awakening to one's own primordial wisdom of the One Mind.

English Translation: Question: "As soon as I start speaking to the Venerable Master, why do you immediately say my words have lapsed [话堕, huà duò]?" The Master said: "You yourself are one who does not understand speech; wherein lies any fault or failure?"

Original Text: 问：“才向和尚处发言，为甚么便言话堕？”师云：“汝自是不解语人，有甚么堕负？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: Question: “All these many words spoken previously were just antagonistic words [抵敌语, dǐdí yǔ]. Have you never at all given pointers to the True Dharma [实法指示, shí fǎ zhǐshì] to people?” The Master said: “True Dharma is without distortion. Your very questioning now arises from distortion. What True Dharma are you seeking?” The questioner said: “Since the questioning itself gives rise to inversion, what about the Venerable Master’s answers?”

Original Text: 问：“向来如许多言说，皆是抵敌语，都未曾有实法指示于人？”师云：“实法无颠倒，汝今问处自生颠倒，觅甚么实法！”云：“既是问处自生颠倒，和尚答处如何？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Antagonistic words (抵敌语, dǐdí yǔ): Words that seem to block, challenge, or oppose the questioner's line of thought.
- Pointers to the True Dharma (实法指示, shí fǎ zhǐshì): Seeking concrete, affirmative teachings about ultimate truth.
- Without inversion (无颠倒, wú diāndǎo): Free from distorted views or upside-down thinking (viparyāsa), which perceives the impermanent as permanent, suffering as happiness, non-self as self, and the impure as pure. Huangbo points out that seeking a "True Dharma" while already operating from an inverted (dualistic, conceptual) standpoint is itself the problem. The inversion lies in the seeking mind, not in the absence of Truth.

English Translation: The Master said: “Just take a mirror to see your face. Pay no mind to others.” He also said: “Just like a foolish dog, barking as soon as it sees something move, without distinguishing whether it’s the wind blowing grass or trees.” He also said: “This Chan school of ours, since it has been transmitted from the ancestors, has never taught people to seek knowledge or seek understanding. Just saying ‘study the Way’ is already a term for guiding people. However, the Way also cannot be studied. If the feeling [情, qíng] of wanting to study and understand persists, it instead leads to confusion about the Way.

The Way is without place or location; its name is the Mahāyāna Mind. This Mind is not inside, not outside, nor in between; it truly is without place or location. The first principle is not to make intellectual interpretations [知解, zhījiě]. It is just said that the point where your current feelings and measure [情量, qíngliàng] are exhausted is the Way. If feelings and measure are exhausted, the mind has

no place or location. This Way is naturally true [天真, tiānzhēn], fundamentally without name. Only because worldly people do not recognize it and are lost in feelings, the Buddhas appeared to explain this matter. Fearing that you all would not understand, they provisionally established the name ‘Way’. One cannot cling to the name and give rise to interpretations. Therefore, it is said, ‘Once the fish is caught, forget the trap.’ Body and mind will then naturally accord with the Way.

‘Recognizing the mind reaches the fundamental source, therefore one is called a Śramaṇa.’ The fruit of a Śramaṇa is accomplished by ceasing thoughts [息慮, xī lǜ]; it is not obtained from study. You now use mind to seek mind, relying on others’ doorways, merely intending to learn and acquire things—when will you ever attain? People in ancient times had sharp minds; upon hearing a single word, they would immediately cut off study. That is why they were called ‘people of the Way who have finished learning, are unconditioned [无为, wúwéi], and at leisure [闲道人, xián dào rén].’

People nowadays just want to gain much knowledge and understanding, widely seeking textual meanings, calling it cultivation. They do not know that much knowledge and understanding, on the contrary, become obstructions. It is like only knowing to give a child much ghee and milk to eat, without knowing at all whether they can digest it or not. Practitioners of the Three Vehicles are all like this, all called ‘those whose food is undigested.’ So-called undigested knowledge and understanding are all poison, entirely grasped within arising and ceasing. Within True Suchness [真如, zhēnrú], there is none of this matter. Therefore, it is said: ‘In my royal treasury, there is no such sword.’ All the points of understanding you previously had, you must completely discard and empty them, without any further discrimination; this is the empty Tathāgatagarbha [空如来藏, kōng rúlái zàng]. The Tathāgatagarbha has not even a fine speck of dust that can exist. This is ‘the Dharma King who destroys existence appearing in the world.’

It is also said: ‘At the place of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I did not attain the slightest Dharma.’ This statement is solely to empty your feelings, measure, knowledge, and understanding. Just dissolve feelings completely, inside and out, having no reliance or clinging at all—this is a person with nothing to do [无事人, wúshì rén]. The nets of the Three Vehicle teachings are merely medicines corresponding to capacities, spoken according to suitability, provisionally established for the time, each different. If you can just understand this, you will not be confused. The first principle is not to cling to the text of any one specific teaching or context and create interpretations. Why is this so? ‘Truly there is no fixed Dharma that the Tathāgata can speak.’ This school of ours does not discuss these matters. Just know that ceasing the mind [息心, xī xīn] is repose; there is no further need to ponder the past or future.”

Original Text: 师云：“尔且将物照面看，莫管他人。”又云：“只如个痴狗相似，见物动处便吠，风吹草木也不别。”又云：“我此禅宗从上相承以来，不曾教人求知求解，只云学道，早是接引之词。然道亦不可学，情存学解，却成迷道。道无方所，名大乘心。此心不在内外中间，实无方所。第一不得作知解，只是说汝如今情量尽处为道。情量若尽，心无方所。此道天真，本无名字。只为世人不识，迷在情中，所以诸佛出来说破此事。恐汝诸人不了，权立道名，不可守名而生解，故云‘得鱼忘筌’，身心自然达道。‘识心达本源，故号为沙门’。沙门果者，息虑而成，不从学得。汝如今将心求心，傍他家舍，只拟学取，有甚么得时？古人心利，才闻一言，便乃绝学，所以唤作‘绝学无为闲道人’。今时人只欲得多知多解，广求文义，唤作修行。不知多知多解，翻成壅塞。唯知多与儿酥乳吃，消与不消，都总不知。三乘学道人，皆是此样，尽名食不消者。所谓知解不消，皆为毒药，尽向生灭中取。真如之中，都无此事。故云：‘我王库内，无如是刀。’从前所有一切解处，尽须并却令空，更无分别，即是空如来藏。如来藏者，更无纤尘可有，即是‘破有法王，出现世间。’亦云‘我于然灯佛所，无少法可得。’此语只为空尔情量知解。但销铍表里情尽，都无依执，是无事人。三乘教网，只是应机之药，随宜所说，临时施設，各各不同。但能了知，即不被惑。第一不得于一机一教边守文作解。何以如此？‘实无有定法如来可说。’我此宗门，不论此事，但知息心即休，更不用思前虑后。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Foolish dog: Metaphor for reacting indiscriminately to phenomena without discerning their true nature.
- Study the Way (学道, xué dào): While a common term, Huangbo points out its provisional nature and the impossibility of "learning" the Way conceptually.
- Feelings and measure (情量, qíngliàng): The combination of emotional reactions and intellectual measurements/assessments that characterize the ordinary, dualistic mind. Exhausting these leads to the Way.
- Naturally true (天真, tiānzhēn): Innate, uncontrived, fundamentally real.
- Get the fish and forget the trap (得鱼忘筌, dé yú wàng quán): A famous analogy from Zhuangzi, meaning once the goal (understanding) is achieved, the means (words, concepts, methods) should be discarded.
- Śramaṇa (沙门, shāmén): A wandering ascetic or monk. The quote emphasizes that the state of a true Śramaṇa comes from inner realization (recognizing the mind, ceasing thoughts), not external learning.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Ceasing thoughts (息慮, xī lǜ): Stopping the flow of discursive, discriminating thought that imputes delusional constructed realities such as subject and object, self and other, existence and non-existence, and so on. This is not to be confused with a mundane state of non-mentation or thoughtlessness; rather, it is the luminous functioning of Prajñā (wisdom), the penetrating wisdom that dispels delusive reification and reveals the pristine clarity of appearances free from conceptual imputations.
- Leaning on others' houses (傍他家舍, páng tā jiā shě): Relying on external teachings or authorities instead of realizing one's own mind.
- Finished learning, unconditioned, and at leisure (绝学无为闲道人, juéxué wúwéi xián dàorén): Describes one who has transcended conceptual learning (绝学), abides in the unconditioned state or non-dual activity (无为), and is thus free and at ease (闲道人). "Unconditioned" or "non-action" fits 无为 here.
- Obstructions (壅塞, yōngsè): Excessive intellectual knowledge blocks direct insight.
- True Suchness (真如, zhēnrú): Tathatā. The state of "thusness" or "suchness," reality as it is, devoid of conceptual overlay.
- In my royal treasury, there is no such sword: A quote possibly alluding to the ultimate truth being devoid of the dualistic tools (like swords) needed for conventional struggle or attainment.
- Empty Tathāgatagarbha (空如来藏, kōng rúlái zàng): The womb or storehouse of the Tathāgata (Buddha-nature), which is fundamentally empty of any inherent, separate existence or defilement.
- The Dharma King who destroys existence (破有法王, pò yǒu fǎwáng): Refers to the Buddha, whose teaching overcomes the illusion of inherent existence.
- At the place of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I did not attain the slightest Dharma: A quote from the Diamond Sutra, signifying Śākyamuni's realization that there was nothing to attain.
- Person with nothing to do (无事人, wúshìrén): One who has realized the nature of mind and is free from the 'business' of striving, seeking, and conceptualizing.
- Ceasing the mind (息心, xī xīn): Similar to 息慮, stopping the agitated, seeking, discriminating mind.

English Translation: Question: "It has always been said from the past, 'Mind itself is Buddha [即心是佛, jí xīn shì fó].' May I ask, which mind is Buddha?" The Master said: "How many minds do you

possess?” The questioner said: “Is it the ordinary mind that is Buddha? Or is it the sagely mind that is Buddha?” The Master said: “Where do you have an ordinary or sagely mind?”

The questioner said: “Right now, within the Three Vehicles, it is spoken of having ordinary and sagely. How can the Venerable Master say there are none?” The Master said: “Within the Three Vehicles, it is clearly stated to you: the ordinary mind and the sagely mind are illusory [妄, wàng]. You now do not understand and instead cling to them as existing, taking emptiness as reality—is this not illusory? Being illusory, the mind is confused. You just need to eliminate ordinary feelings and sagely states; outside the mind, there is no separate Buddha. When the Patriarch came from the West, he directly pointed out that the entire essence of all people is Buddha. You now do not recognize this, clinging to ordinary and clinging to sagely, galloping outwards, thus confusing your own mind. Therefore, I say to you: Mind itself is Buddha. As soon as a single moment of feeling [情, qíng] arises, you immediately fall into different realms. From beginningless time until today, it has not been different. There is no different Dharma, hence it is called ‘Attaining Equal and Right Awakening [成等正觉, chéng děng zhèng jué].’”

The questioner said: “What principle underlies the ‘itself’ [即, jí] that the Venerable Master speaks of?” The Master said: “What principle are you seeking? As soon as there is a principle, mind becomes different [from Buddha].” The questioner said: “You previously said, ‘From beginningless time until today, it has not been different.’ What is the principle behind this?” The Master said: “It is only because of seeking that you make yourself different from it. If you do not seek, where is the difference?” The questioner said: “Since it is not different, what further need is there to speak of ‘itself’ [即, jí]?” The Master said: “If you do not have beliefs about ordinary and sagely, who would tell you ‘itself’? If ‘itself’ is not ‘itself’, mind is also not mind. If both mind and ‘itself’ can be forgotten, where else do you intend to seek?”

Original Text: 问：“从上来皆云‘即心是佛’，未审即哪个心是佛？”师云：“尔有几个心？”云：“为复即凡心是佛？即圣心是佛？”师云：“尔何处有凡圣心耶？”云：“即今三乘中，说有凡圣，和尚何得言无？”师云：“三乘中分明向尔道：凡圣心是妄。尔今不解，返执为有，将空作实，岂不是妄？妄故迷心。汝但除却凡情圣境，心外更无别佛。祖师西来，直指一切人全体是佛，汝今不识，执凡执圣，向外驰骋，还自迷心。所以向汝道即心是佛。一念情生，即堕异趣，无始以来不异今日。无有异法，故名成等正觉。”云：“和尚所言即者，是何道理？”师云：“觅什么道理？才有道理，便即心异。”云：“前言无始以来不异今日，此理如何？”师云：“只为觅故，汝自异他。汝若不觅，何处有异？”云：“既是不异，何更用说即？”师云：“汝若不信凡圣，阿谁向汝道即？即若不即，心亦不心，可中心即俱忘，阿尔更拟向何处觅去？”

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛, jí xīn shì fó): A central and famous Chan declaration, attributed originally to Master Mazu Daoyi. Huangbo rigorously defends its absolute, non-dual meaning.
- Ordinary mind (凡心, fánxīn) / Sagely mind (圣心, shèngxīn): Dualistic concepts the questioner introduces. Huangbo insists these distinctions are illusory (妄, wàng).
- Illusory (妄, wàng): False, unreal, based on delusion or misconception.
- Patriarch came from the West (祖师西来, zǔshī xī lái): Refers to Bodhidharma bringing Chan from India (the West) to China.
- Directly pointed out (直指, zhí zhǐ): Chan emphasizes direct pointing to the human mind, bypassing intermediaries.
- Feeling (情, qíng): Again, refers to conceptual thought and emotional impulses based on duality.
- Different realms (异趣, yì qù): Different states of existence within samsara, or different dualistic viewpoints.
- Attaining Equal and Right Awakening (成等正觉, chéng děng zhèng jué): Samyaksambodhi, the perfect awakening of a Buddha. Huangbo equates this with the nature of mind itself.
- Itself (即, jí): This word, often translated as "is" or "itself is," is crucial. Huangbo stresses it denotes identity, not a relationship between two separate things (mind and Buddha). Seeking a "principle" (道理, dàolǐ) behind it introduces duality (心异, xīn yì - mind becomes different). When the non-difference is revealed, external seeking stops.

English Translation: Question: "Illusion [妄, wàng] can obstruct the self-mind. May I ask, by what means can illusion be eliminated now?" The Master said: "Giving rise to illusion to eliminate illusion also becomes illusion. Illusion fundamentally has no basis; it exists only because of conceptual discrimination [分别, fēnbié]. If you just exhaust your feelings regarding the two realms of ordinary and sagely, illusion will naturally cease [无妄, wú wàng]. How else do you intend to eliminate it? Not having even the slightest reliance or clinging is called 'I offer my two arms and will surely attain Buddhahood.'" The questioner said: "Since there is no reliance or clinging, what is transmitted [相承, xiāngchéng]?" The Master said: "Mind transmits mind [以心传心, yǐ xīn chuán xīn]."

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

The questioner said: “If mind transmits to mind, why is it said that mind is also nothing [心亦无, xīn yì wú]?” The Master said: “Not to attain a single dharma is called transmitting the mind. If one realizes this mind, it is then no-mind and no-Dharma [无心无法, wú xīn wú fǎ].” The questioner said: “If it is no-mind and no-Dharma, how is it called transmission?” The Master said: “You hear ‘transmitting the mind’ and assume there is something that can be obtained? Therefore, the Patriarch said: ‘When the mind-nature is recognized, it can be said to be inconceivable. Clearly understanding there is nothing obtained, when obtained, one does not speak of knowing.’ If this matter were taught for you to understand [会, huì], how could it be endured?”

Original Text: 问：“妄能障自心，未审而今以何遣妄？”师云：“起妄遣妄亦成妄，妄本无根，只因分别而有。尔但于凡圣两处情尽，自然无妄，更拟若为遣他？都不得有纤毫依执，名为‘我舍两臂，必当得佛。’”云：“既无依执，当何相承？”师云：“以心传心。”云：“若心相传，云何言心亦无？”师云：“不得一法，名为传心。若了此心，即是无心无法。”云：“若无心无法，云何名传？”师云：“汝闻道传心，将谓有可得也？所以祖师云：‘认得心性时，可说不思议。了了无所得，得时不说知。’此事若教汝会，何堪也。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Illusion (妄, wàng): Delusion, illusory thought, misconception.
- Discrimination (分别, fēnbié): Vikalpa. Conceptual proliferation, distinguishing self/other, subject/object, etc., which is the basis of illusion.
- Illusion will naturally cease (自然无妄, zìrán wú wàng): Awakening is not achieved by actively fighting illusion but by dropping the dualistic framework (ordinary/sagely feelings) from which it arises.
- I offer my two arms...: An allusion to the story of the Second Patriarch, Huike, cutting off his arm to show his sincerity to Bodhidharma, symbolizing complete letting go of self-clinging.
- Transmitted (相承, xiāngchéng): The lineage transmission in Chan.
- Mind transmits mind (以心传心, yǐ xīn chuán xīn): The core idea of Chan transmission – a direct, non-verbal, mind-to-mind realization.
- Mind is also nothing (心亦无, xīn yì wú): Refers to the emptiness of any inherent, substantial mind-entity.
- No-mind and no-Dharma (无心无法, wú xīn wú fǎ): The truth where neither a substantive mind nor any graspable Dharma (phenomenon, entity) is found. This is the nature of Mind transmitted.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Patriarch said....: A quote emphasizing that recognizing the mind-nature is inconceivable and involves realizing there is nothing to obtain. True attainment isn't spoken of as "knowing" in the conventional sense.
 - Understand (会, huì): Here implies conceptual understanding, which Huangbo suggests is inadequate for this matter. True realization (悟, wù) is different.
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English Translation: Question: "Just like the empty space before my eyes, is it not an object [境, jìng]? Is it not possible to see the mind by pointing to the object?" The Master said: "What mind directs you to see based on objects? Even if you were to see, it would merely be a mind that reflects objects [照境的心, zhào jìng de xīn]. Like a person using a mirror to reflect their face, even though they get to see their eyebrows and eyes clearly, it is originally just reflections [影像, yǐngxiàng]. What does it have to do with you?" The questioner said: "If not through reflection [照, zhào], when can one get to see?" The Master said: "If it involves relying on causes [涉因, shè yīn], one must always depend on things [假物, jiǎ wù]. When will there ever be an end to it? Have you not seen him say to you: 'To wave the hand like you, having not a single thing—how futilely and deceitfully are thousands of kinds spoken of?'" The questioner said: "If he recognizes it, is the reflection also non-existent [无物, wú wù]?" The Master said: "If it is non-existent, what further need is there to reflect? Don't you go speaking dream-talk with open eyes."

Original Text: 问：“只如目前虚空，可不是境，岂无指境见心乎？”师云：“甚么心教汝向境上见？设汝见得，只是个照境的心。如人以镜照面，纵然得见眉目分明，元来只是影像，何关汝事！”云：“若不因照，何时得见？”师云：“若也涉因，常须假物，有什么了时？汝不见他向汝道：‘拨手似君无一物，徒劳漫说数千般？’”云：“他若识了，照亦无物耶？”师云：“若是无物，更何用照？尔莫开眼寐语去。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Reflection / To reflect (照, zhào): Can mean to illuminate, reflect, or perceive/be aware of (often with a connotation of dualistic observation).
- Relying on causes (涉因, shè yīn) / Depend on things (假物, jiǎ wù): Relying on conditions, intermediaries, or objects to perceive reality. Huangbo insists this dependency is endless and futile for realizing the unconditioned mind.
- Wave the hand like you...: Likely a quote or allusion emphasizing the state of having "not a single thing"—complete non-attachment and emptiness of inherent existence—contrasted with futilely speaking about myriad concepts.
- Non-existent (无物, wú wù): Lit. "no thing." Refers to the emptiness of inherent existence. If true nature is already understood as "no thing," the need for a dualistic process of "reflection" disappears.
- Speaking dream-talk with open eyes (开眼寐语, kāiyǎn mèiyǔ): Speaking nonsense or delusion while appearing awake; clinging to concepts when the reality is obvious.

English Translation: Ascending the hall, he said: "Of a hundred kinds of manifold knowledge, none compares to non-seeking [无求, wúqiú], which is supreme. A person of the Way is a person of no affairs [无事人, wúshìrén]. Truly, there are not so many kinds of mind, nor are there principles [道理, dàolǐ] to be explained. Nothing to do—disperse!"

Original Text: 上堂云：“百种多知，不如无求最第一也。道人是无事人，实无许多般心，亦无道理可说，无事散去。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Ascending the hall (上堂, shàng táng): A formal Chan sermon delivered by the master in the Dharma Hall.
- Non-seeking (无求, wúqiú): Freedom from desire and the striving for attainment, considered supreme because seeking reinforces the illusion of lack and duality.
- Person of the Way (道人, dàorén): Practitioner, one who follows the path.
- Person with nothing to do (无事人, wúshìrén): One who has realized the fundamental nature and rests in non-striving, free from the 'business' of samsaric concerns or conceptual pursuits.
- Principles (道理, dàolǐ): Rational explanations, doctrines. Huangbo dismisses their ultimate value compared to direct realization.

• Nothing to do—disperse! (无事散去, wúshì sàn qù): A common way for Chan masters to conclude a sermon, emphasizing the ultimate pointlessness of conceptual discussion and urging a return to simple presence.

English Translation:

Question: “What is conventional truth [世諦, saṃvṛti-satya]?”

The Master said: “Why speak of tangled vines! Fundamentally pure [本来清淨, běnlái qīngjìng], why rely on words, questions, and answers? Just be without any mind at all [无一切心, wú yīqiè xīn], and this is named uncontaminated wisdom [无漏智, wúlòu zhì]. In your daily activities—walking, standing, sitting, lying down—and all your speech, just do not cling to conditioned dharmas [有为法, yǒuwéi fǎ]. When you speak or blink your eyes, let it all be identical to the uncontaminated [无漏, wúlòu].

Nowadays, as the Dharma-ending age proceeds, most of those who study the Chan path cling to all sounds and appearances. Why not make your minds identical with empty space, like withered wood and stone, like cold ashes and dead fire? Only then can you have some small degree of correspondence [相应, xiāngyìng]. If you are not like this, one day you will surely be interrogated by old man Yama. Just detach from all dharmas of existence and non-existence [有无诸法, yǒu wú zhū fǎ], and let the mind be like the sun-disc, constantly in empty space. Its brightness is natural, illuminating without [needing to] illuminate. Isn't this an effortless matter? When this time is reached, there is no place to abide or rest [无栖泊处, wú qībó chù]; this is practicing the practice of all Buddhas, and this is precisely ‘Give rise to the mind that abides nowhere’ [应无所住而生其心, yīng wú suǒ zhù ér shēng qí xīn]. This is your pure Dharma-body [清淨法身, qīngjìng fǎshēn], called Anuttara[-samyaksambodhi] [阿耨菩提, ā nòu pútí].

If you do not understand this meaning, even if you learn much knowledge, practice diligently and arduously, wear clothes of grass and eat food of wood, if you do not recognize your own mind [自心, zìxīn], it is all called deviant practice [邪行, xié xíng], and you are certain to become kin of heavenly demons [天魔眷属, tiānmó juànshǔ]. What benefit could such practice possibly have? Zhigong said: ‘Buddha is originally made by one's own mind; how can one seek it in written words?’ Even if you learn until you fulfill the stages of the Three Worthies, Four Fruits, and Ten Bhūmis, you are still just sitting within the ordinary and sagely realms. Do you not see it said: ‘All formations [诸行, zhū xíng] are impermanent; this is the law of arising and ceasing.’ ‘When its force is spent, the arrow falls back

down, incurring a future life that is not as one wishes. How can this compare to the unconditioned gate of the true characteristic? One leap directly enters the stage of the Tathāgata.’

Because you are not such a person, you need to widely study the knowledge and interpretations from the expedient teaching gates [建化门, jiàn huà mén] of the ancients. Zhigong said: ‘Without encountering a world-transcending enlightened teacher, one futilely takes the Mahāyāna Dharma-medicine.’ Now, at all times—walking, standing, sitting, lying down—just learn to be without mind [无心, wú xīn]. After a long time, you must attain it practically. Because your strength is small, you cannot leap beyond suddenly. But if you just attain it for three years, five years, or ten years, you must find an entry point; you will naturally understand [会, huì]. Because you are unable to be like this, you insist on using the mind to study Chan and study the Way. What connection does this have with the Buddha-Dharma? Therefore, it is said: ‘What the Tathāgata preached was all for transforming people.’ Like taking yellow leaves for gold to stop a small child’s crying—it is definitely not real. If there is any real attainment, you are not a guest of our school’s gate. Moreover, what connection does it have with your fundamental essence [本体, běn tǐ]? Therefore, the sūtra says: ‘Truly, not the slightest dharma is attained; this is called Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.’ If you can understand this meaning, only then will you know that both the Buddha path and the Mara path are mistaken.

Fundamentally pure [本来清净, běn lái qīng jìng], bright and clear [皎皎地, jiǎojiǎo de], without square or round, without large or small, without long or short and other such characteristics; uncontaminated [无漏, wú lòu] and unconditioned [无为, wú wéi], without confusion [无迷, wú mí] or awakening [无悟, wú wù]. Clearly seeing [了了见, liǎoliǎo jiàn], there is not a single thing; also no person, also no Buddha. The great thousand sand-realms are bubbles in the sea; all sages and worthies are like flashes of lightning. Nothing compares to the reality of the mind [心真实, xīn zhēn shí]. The Dharma-body, from ancient times until today, is the same as that of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Where is it lacking even a single hair? Since you understand this meaning, you must greatly exert yourself throughout this present life. The exhaled breath does not guarantee the inhaled breath.”

Original Text: 问：“如何是世谛？”师云：“说葛藤作什么！本来清净，何假言说问答。但无一切心，即名无漏智。汝每日行住坐卧，一切言语，但莫着有为法，出言瞬目，尽同无漏。如今末法向去，多是学禅道者，皆着一切声色，何不与我心心同虚空去，如枯木石头去，如寒灰死火去，方有少分相应。若不如此，他日尽被阎老子拷尔在。尔但离却有无诸法，心如日轮，常在虚空，光明自然，不照而照，不是省力的事？到此之时，无栖泊处，即是行诸佛行，便是‘应无所住而生其心。’此是尔清净法身，名为阿耨菩提。若不会此意，纵尔学得多知，勤苦修行，草衣木食，不识自心，尽名邪行，定作天魔眷属。如此修行，当复何益？志公云：‘佛本是自心作，哪得向文字中求？’饶尔学得三贤四果、十地满

心，也只是在凡圣内坐。不见道‘诸行无常，是生灭法。’势力尽，箭还坠，招得来生不如意，争似无为实相门？一超直入如来地。’为尔不是与么人，须要向古人建化门广学知解。志公云：‘不逢出世明师，枉服大乘法药。’尔如今一切时中，行住坐卧，但学无心，久久须实得。为尔力量小，不能顿超，但得三年、五年或十年，须得个入头处，自然会去。为尔不能如是，须要将心学禅学道，佛法有甚么交涉？故云：‘如来所说，皆为化人。’如将黄叶为金，止小儿啼，决定不实。若有实得，非我宗门下客，且与尔本体有甚交涉！故经云：‘实无少法可得，名为阿耨菩提。’若也会得此意，方知佛道魔道俱错。本来清净，皎皎地，无方圆，无大小，无长短等相；无漏无为，无迷无悟。了了见，无一物，亦无人，亦无佛。大千沙界海中沤，一切圣贤如电拂，一切不如心真实。法身从古至今，与佛祖一般，何处欠少一毫毛？既会如是意，大须努力，尽今生去，出息不保入息。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Worldly truth (世谛, shìdì): Saṃvṛti-satya. Conventional truth, relative truth, contrasted with ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya). Huangbo dismisses discussing it as getting entangled.
- Tangled vines (葛藤, géféng): A common Chan metaphor for complex, entangling, and ultimately useless intellectual or verbal discourse about the Dharma.
- Fundamentally pure (本来清净, běnlái qīngjìng): The original purity of the mind and all phenomena.
- Without any mind at all (无一切心, wú yīqiè xīn): Complete freedom from all forms of conceptual, discriminating, attached mind.
- Uncontaminated wisdom (无漏智, wúlòu zhì): Anāsrava-jñāna. Wisdom free from the "outflows" or defilements (kleśas) that perpetuate samsara.
- Conditioned dharmas (有为法, yǒuwéi fǎ): Saṃskṛta-dharma. Phenomena that arise from causes and conditions, are impermanent, and characterized by arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. Contrasted with unconditioned dharmas (无为法, wúwéi fǎ).
- Uncontaminated (无漏, wúlòu): Anāsrava. Free from defilements.
- Dharma-ending age (末法, mòfǎ): The final period after the Buddha's passing, when the capacity to practice and realize the Dharma is believed to decline.
- Withered wood and stone... cold ashes and dead fire: Metaphors for a mind completely quiescent, unresponsive to external stimuli in a clinging way, free from the "heat" of passion and discrimination.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Correspondence (相应, xiāngyìng): Accordance, resonance, being in tune with the Way.
- Old man Yama (阎老子, yán lǎozi): The king of the underworld judges beings after death.
- Dharmas of existence and non-existence (有无诸法, yǒu wú zhū fǎ): All phenomena conceived within the duality of existence and non-existence.
- No place to abide or rest (无栖泊处, wú qībó chù): The state of non-abiding, not fixating or settling anywhere conceptually or emotionally.
- Give rise to the mind that abides nowhere (应无所住而生其心, yīng wú suǒ zhù ér shēng qí xīn): Famous quote from the Diamond Sutra, pivotal in the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng's awakening. It describes the functioning of the awakened mind – responsive yet unattached.
- Pure Dharma-body (清净法身, qīngjìng fǎshēn): The Dharmakāya in its original purity.
- Anuttara[-samyaksambodhi] (阿耨菩提, ā nòu pútí): Supreme, perfect awakening.
- Own mind (自心, zìxīn): One's own intrinsic mind-nature.
- Deviant practice (邪行, xié xíng): Practices based on wrong views, even if outwardly ascetic.
- Heavenly demons (天魔, tiānmó): Māras who obstruct practitioners, often associated with subtle attachments to spiritual states or merit.
- Zhigong (志公): Master Baozhi (宝志), a semi-legendary Buddhist monk of the Liang Dynasty, respected in Chan.
- Three Worthies (三贤, sān xián), Four Fruits (四果, sì guǒ), Ten Bhūmis (十地, shí dì): Stages of attainment in traditional Mahayana and Śrāvakayāna paths. Huangbo dismisses them as still "within the ordinary and sagely realms" compared to direct realization of the One Mind.
- All formations (诸行, zhū xíng): Saṃskāra. All conditioned things, compounded phenomena. Quote refers to their impermanence (诸行无常, zhū xíng wúcháng - anitya).
- Arising and ceasing (生灭法, shēng miè fǎ): The nature of conditioned phenomena.
- Unconditioned true characteristic gate (无为实相门, wúwéi shíxiāng mén): The path of realizing the unconditioned (asaṃskṛta) nature, the true reality (实相, shíxiāng - bhūtalakṣaṇa).
- Expedient teaching gates (建化门, jiàn huà mén): Provisional teachings or methods established by past masters.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Learn to be without mind (学无心, xué wúxīn): Practice actualizing the wisdom of no-mind and be thoroughly without any [trace of] self/Self.
- Understand (会, huì): Experiential understanding or realization.
- Transforming people (化人, huà rén): Guiding and transforming beings through skillful means.
- Yellow leaves for gold: Metaphor for using expedient, ultimately unreal means to pacify or guide (like tricking a child).
- Fundamental essence (本体, běntǐ): One's own true nature.
- Mara path (魔道, mó dào): Path of delusion, obstruction, attachment to phenomena or self. Huangbo states both conventional Buddha-path seeking and Mara's path are mistaken from the ultimate view.
- Bright and clear (皎皎地, jiǎojiǎo de): Pure and luminous.
- Uncontaminated (无漏, wú lǒu) and unconditioned (无为, wú wéi): Key characteristics of the absolute.
- Without confusion or awakening (无迷无悟, wú mí wú wù): In the ultimate truth, the duality of confusion and awakening does not exist.
- Clearly seeing (了了见, liǎoliǎo jiàn): Direct, unobscured perception.
- Bubbles in the sea... flashes of lightning: Metaphors for the ephemeral, insubstantial nature of the universe and even sagely accomplishments compared to the reality of Mind.
- Reality of the mind (心真实, xīn zhēnshí): The ultimate truth is the nature of mind itself.
- Exhaled breath does not guarantee the inhaled breath: Reminder of impermanence and the urgency of practice.

English Translation: Question: “The Sixth Patriarch did not know the scriptures, so how could he receive the transmission of the robe and become a Patriarch? Head Monk Xiu (i.e. Shen Xiu) was the leader of five hundred monks, served as a teaching master, and could lecture on thirty-two volumes of sutras and treatises. Why was the robe not transmitted to him?” The Master said: “Because he had an intentional mind, which is conditioned dharma. What he cultivated and realized, he took to be correct. Therefore, the Fifth Patriarch entrusted it to the Sixth Patriarch. At that time, the Sixth Patriarch only achieved tacit accord; he secretly received the Tathāgata’s profound meaning. Therefore, the Dharma was entrusted to him. Have you not heard it said: ‘The Dharma fundamentally is no-dharma; no-

dharma is also Dharma. Now that the no-dharma is transmitted, how could the Dharma ever have been Dharma?’ If you understand this meaning, only then can you be called one who has left home, only then is it good to cultivate. If you do not believe it, how was it that Head Monk Ming came running to the summit of Dayu Ridge in search of the Sixth Patriarch?

The Sixth Patriarch then asked: ‘For what matter have you come? Are you seeking the robe? Or seeking the Dharma?’ Head Monk Ming said: ‘I have not come for the robe, but only for the Dharma.’ The Sixth Patriarch said: ‘You should temporarily withdraw your thoughts; do not think of either good or evil.’ Ming then followed the instruction. The Sixth Patriarch said: ‘When not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, right at such a time, return to me Head Monk Ming’s original face before your parents were born.’ Upon these words, Ming suddenly achieved tacit accord. He then bowed and said: ‘Like a person drinking water, knows for themselves whether it is cold or warm. I, this humble monk, was in the assembly of the Fifth Patriarch, wasting thirty years of effort; only today do I realize my former errors.’

The Sixth Patriarch said: ‘Thus it is.’ At this point, one then knows that the Patriarch coming from the West directly points to the human mind; seeing the nature and attaining Buddhahood does not depend on words and speech. Have you not seen Ānanda asking Kāśyapa: ‘Apart from transmitting the golden robe, what else did the World-Honored One transmit?’ Kāśyapa called out, ‘Ānanda!’ Ānanda responded, ‘Yes!’ Kāśyapa said: ‘Knock down the flagpole in front of the gate.’ This precisely is the sign of the Patriarchs, very profound! Ānanda served as attendant for thirty years, only because of his great learning and wisdom, he was rebuked by the Buddha, who said: ‘Your thousand days of studying wisdom are not as good as one day of studying the Way.’ If one does not study the Way, even a drop of water is difficult to digest.”

Original Text: 问：“六祖不会经书，何得传衣为祖？秀上座是五百人首座，为教授师，讲得三十二本经论，云何不传衣？”师云：“为他有心，是有为法，所修所证，将为是也。所以五祖付六祖。六祖当时只是默契，得密授如来甚深意，所以付法与他。汝不见道：‘法本法无法，无法法亦法，今付无法时，法法何曾法。’若会此意，方名出家儿，方好修行。若不信，云何明上座走来大庾岭头寻六祖，六祖便问：‘汝来求何事？为求衣？为求法？’明上座云：‘不为衣来，但为法来。’六祖云：‘汝且暂时敛念，善恶都莫思量。’明乃禀语。六祖云：‘不思善，不思恶，正当与么时，还我明上座父母未生时面目来。’明于言下忽然默契，便礼拜云：‘如人饮水，冷暖自知。某甲在五祖会中，枉用三十年工夫，今日方省前非。’六祖云：‘如是。’到此之时，方知祖师西来直指人心，见性成佛，不在言说。岂不见阿难问迦叶云：‘世尊传金襴外，别传何物？’迦叶召阿难，阿难应诺。迦叶

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

云：‘倒却门前刹竿着。’此便是祖师之标榜也，甚深！阿难三十年为侍者，只为多闻智慧，被佛诃云：‘汝千日学慧，不如一日学道。’若不学道，滴水难消。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Sixth Patriarch: Huineng (慧能, 638–713), the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China, known for emphasizing direct realization over scriptural study.
- Head Monk Xiu: Shenxiu (神秀, 606?–706), a prominent Chan master favored by the imperial court, often contrasted with Huineng. He represented a more gradual approach to awakening.
- Fifth Patriarch: Hongren (弘忍, 601–674), the teacher of both Huineng and Shenxiu.
- Head Monk Ming: Huiming (惠明), formerly a general, pursued Huineng after the latter received the transmission, seeking the robe and Dharma. The encounter on Dayu Ridge (大庾岭) is a famous Chan story.
- Original face before your parents were born: A classic Chan expression pointing to one's fundamental nature, unconditioned and prior to conceptualization.
- Like a person drinking water...: A metaphor emphasizing the personal, non-transferable nature of direct experiential realization.
- Patriarch coming from the West: Refers to Bodhidharma, traditionally considered the first patriarch of Chan in China, who came from India.
- Ānanda and Kāśyapa: Mahākāśyapa is considered the first patriarch of Chan in India, receiving the "mind-to-mind transmission" from the Buddha. Ānanda was the Buddha's cousin and primary attendant, famed for his memory of the teachings. The dialogue about the robe and the flagpole is a classic Zen koan illustrating the transmission beyond words.
- Knock down the flagpole...: A seemingly nonsensical instruction typical of Zen, intended to break conceptual thinking and point directly to mind. The flagpole (刹竿, chatra-pole) often symbolized the Buddha or the Dharma.
- Drop of water is difficult to digest: A monastic saying meaning that accepting offerings from lay devotees is a heavy responsibility that can only be repaid through genuine practice; otherwise, one incurs karmic debt.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

English Translation: Question: “How can one avoid falling into stages?” The Master said: “Just eat rice all day, yet never bite into a single grain; walk all day, yet never tread upon a single piece of ground. At such a time, there are no marks like self or others. All day long, not separate from all affairs, yet not deluded by various realms/objects – only then is one called a free person. Furthermore, moment after moment, do not see any characteristics; do not recognize the past, present, and future. The past has no going, the present has no abiding, the future has no coming. Sit peacefully and upright, function spontaneously without constraint – only then is one called liberated. Strive on, strive on! Within this gate, among thousands and tens of thousands, only three or five attain it. If you do not take this as your task, the day of suffering calamities will surely come. Therefore, it is said: ‘Strive to finish it in this lifetime; who can endure the remaining calamities over accumulated kalpas?’”

Original Text: 问：“如何得不落阶级？”师云：“但终日吃饭，未曾咬着一粒米；终日行，未曾踏着一片地。与么时，无人我等相，终日不离一切事，不被诸境惑，方名自在人。更时时念念不见一切相，莫认前后三际。前际无去，今际无住，后际无来，安然端坐，任运不拘，方名解脱。努力努力！此门中千人万人，只得三个五个。若不将为事，受殃有日在。故云：‘着力今生须了却，谁能累劫受余殃？’”

English Translation: The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Duanji

Original Text: 黄檗断际禅师宛陵录

English Translation: Prime Minister Pei asked the Master: “Among the four or five hundred people in the mountains, how many have attained the Abbot’s Dharma?” The Master said: “Those who have attained it—their number cannot be fathomed. Why? The Way is realized by the mind, how could it be in words and speech? Words and speech are merely for instructing ignorant children.”

Original Text: 裴相公问师曰：“山中四五百人，几人得和尚法？”师云：“得者莫测其数。何故？道在心悟，岂在言说？言说只是化童蒙耳。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

English Translation: Question: “What is Buddha?” The Master said: “This very mind is Buddha, no-mind is the Way. Just avoid giving rise to mind or moving thoughts such as existence or non-existence, long or short, other or self, subject or object, and suchlike minds. Mind is fundamentally Buddha, Buddha is fundamentally mind; mind is like empty space. Therefore, it is said: ‘The true Dharma-body of the Buddha is like empty space.’ Do not seek elsewhere; all seeking is suffering. Even if one were to practice the six paramitas and myriad practices for kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and attain Buddha Bodhi, it is still not ultimate. Why? Because it belongs to creation through causes and conditions. When causes and conditions are exhausted, one returns to impermanence. Therefore, it is said: ‘The Reward and Transformation bodies are not the true Buddha, nor are they the speakers of Dharma.’ Just recognize your own mind, which is without self or person—this is originally Buddha.”

Original Text: 问：“如何是佛？”师云：“即心是佛，无心是道。但无生心动念、有无长短、彼我能所等心，心本是佛，佛本是心，心如虚空。所以云：‘佛真法身，犹若虚空。’不用别求，有求皆苦。设使恒沙劫行六度万行得佛菩提，亦非究竟。何以故？为属因缘造作故。因缘若尽，还归无常。所以云：‘报化非真佛，亦非说法者。’但识自心，无我无人，本来是佛。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- No-mind (无心): Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
- Subject or object (能所): The duality between the perceiver (subject) and the perceived (object).
- Dharma-body (法身, Dharmakāya): The ultimate, true body or nature of a Buddha, often described as formless and like space.
- Six paramitas and myriad practices: The traditional Mahayana path involving generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom, along with countless other wholesome activities. Huangbo emphasizes that realization is not dependent on these practices but on recognizing the mind's fundamental nature.
- Causes and conditions (因缘): The Buddhist principle that all compounded phenomena arise dependently on causes and conditions and are therefore impermanent.
- Reward and Transformation bodies (报化, Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya): Two of the three bodies (Trikāya) of a Buddha. The Sambhogakāya is a body of bliss experienced by advanced Bodhisattvas, and the Nirmāṇakāya is the physical body manifested in the world (like Siddhartha

Gautama). Huangbo points beyond these relative forms to the ultimate Dharmakāya, which is equated with one's own mind.

English Translation: Question: “If the sage’s no-mind is Buddha, does the ordinary person’s no-mind perhaps sink into empty quiescence?” The Master said: “The Dharma has no ordinary or sagely, nor does it have sinking or quiescence. The Dharma is fundamentally not existent, do not hold a view of non-existence; the Dharma is fundamentally not non-existent, do not hold a view of existence. Both existence and non-existence are entirely emotional views, like illusions and cataracts. Therefore, it is said: ‘Seeing and hearing are like illusions and cataracts; knowing and perceiving are [characteristic of] sentient beings.’ In the gate of the Patriarchs, we only discuss ceasing mental activity and forgetting views. Therefore, forgetting mental activity, the Buddha Path flourishes; discriminating, the demon armies blaze.”

Original Text: 问：“圣人无心即是佛，凡夫无心，莫沉空寂否？”师云：“法无凡圣，亦无沉寂。法本不有，莫作未见；法本不无，莫作有见。有之与无，尽是情见，犹如幻翳。所以云：‘见闻如幻翳，知觉乃众生。’祖师门中，只论息机忘见。所以忘机则佛道隆，分别则魔军炽。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Empty quiescence (空寂): A potential pitfall in meditation where one might mistake a state of mental quietness or blankness, devoid of wisdom, for true emptiness or liberation. Huangbo clarifies that the Dharma itself is beyond such states.
- Emotional views (情见): Views based on subjective feelings, attachments, and conceptual discriminations rather than direct insight.
- Illusions and cataracts (幻翳): Metaphor for how ordinary perception and conceptual thinking obscure the true nature of reality.
- Knowing and perceiving are [characteristic of] sentient beings (知觉乃众生): This line suggests that discriminative consciousness, the ordinary way of knowing and perceiving based on subject-object duality, is what constitutes the state of being an unenlightened sentient being.
- Ceasing mental activity and forgetting views (息机忘见): A key Chan practice: stopping the discriminating mind (机, literally 'mechanism' or 'trigger') and letting go of all conceptual standpoints (见, views).

- Demon armies (魔军): Refers to Māra, the personification of temptation, distraction, and the forces that obstruct awakening, often associated with discriminative thought and attachment.

English Translation: Question: “Since the mind is originally Buddha, does one still need to cultivate the six paramitas and myriad practices?” The Master said: “Realization lies in the mind, it is not related to the six paramitas and myriad practices. The six paramitas and myriad practices are all matters pertaining to the expedient means of receiving beings and guiding them across. Even if it concerns Bodhi, True Suchness, Reality, Liberation, Dharma-body, right up to the ten grounds, the four fruits, and sagely positions—these are all gates of deliverance, not related to the Buddha-mind. Mind is Buddha. Therefore, among all the various gates of deliverance, the Buddha-mind is foremost. Just be without minds such as [those involved in] samsara and afflictions, then you do not need dharmas such as Bodhi.

Therefore, it is said: ‘The Buddha spoke all dharmas to deliver all my minds; I have no minds, what use are all dharmas?’ From the Buddha down to the Patriarchs, they did not discuss other matters, only discussing the One Mind, also called the One Vehicle. Therefore, searching truly in the ten directions, there is no other vehicle. ‘This assembly has no branches or leaves, only the true and real.’ Therefore, this meaning is difficult to believe. When Bodhidharma came to this land, arriving in the states of Liang and Wei, there was only Great Master Ke who secretly trusted his own mind and understood immediately upon hearing the words: This very mind is Buddha. Body and mind both non-existent is called the Great Way. The Great Way is fundamentally equal. Therefore, deeply believe that sentient beings share the one true nature. Mind and nature are not different; nature is mind. Mind not being different from nature is called a Patriarch. Therefore, it is said: ‘When mind-nature is recognized, it can be called inconceivable.’”

Original Text: 问：“心既本来是佛，还修六度万行否？”师云：“悟在于心，非关六度万行，六度万行尽是化门接物度生边事。设使菩提、真如、实际、解脱、法身，直至十地、四果圣位，尽是度门，非关佛心。心即是佛，所以一切诸度门中，佛心第一。但无生死烦恼等心，即不用菩提等法。所以道：‘佛说一切法，度我一切心；我无一切心，何用一切法？’从佛至祖，并不论别事，唯论一心，亦云一乘。所以十方谛求，更无余乘。‘此众无枝叶，唯有诸贞实。’所以此意难信。达摩来此土，至梁魏二国，只有可大师一人密信自心，言下便会，即心是佛。身心俱无，是名大道。大道本来平等，所以深信含生同一真性。心性不异，即性即心；心不异性，名之为祖。所以云：‘认得心性时，可说不思议。’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- True Suchness (真如, Tathatā): The state of things as they truly are, unconditioned reality.
- Reality (实际): The actual, ultimate state.
- Ten grounds (十地, Daśa-bhūmi): The ten stages of development for a Bodhisattva on the path to Buddhahood in Mahayana Buddhism.
- Four fruits (四果): The four stages of attainment in the Śrāvaka (hearer) path: Stream-enterer, Once-returner, Non-returner, Arhat.
- ‘The Buddha spoke all dharmas...’: A famous quote often attributed to Bodhidharma, summarizing the idea that teachings are remedies for the mind’s afflictions; if the afflictions cease, the remedies are unnecessary.
- One Mind (一心): The central doctrine of Huangbo, the fundamental nature of Mind, which is identical to Buddha-nature. Pei Xiu’s Preface states: “[The master himself] just esteemed the stamp of the Supreme Vehicle, which stayed far removed from words and letters. He transmitted only the one mind; there was no other dharma. The essence of mind is also empty, and the myriad conditions are all quiescent. It is like the great orb of the sun that rises in the sky: its radiance shines brightly, and it is clear without the slightest trace of dust.”
- One Vehicle (一乘, Ekayāna): The doctrine, most famously elaborated in the Lotus Sutra, that the various paths taught by the Buddha (for Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas) are ultimately skillful means leading to the single, universal Buddha Vehicle.
- ‘This assembly has no branches or leaves...’: A quote from the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 2 (Expedient Means), emphasizing the directness and authenticity of the ultimate teaching, discarding temporary or provisional doctrines.
- Bodhidharma (达摩): The semi-legendary Indian monk credited with bringing Chan Buddhism to China in the 5th or 6th century.
- Liang and Wei: Dynasties/states in China during Bodhidharma’s time.
- Great Master Ke: Huike (慧可, 487–593), the second patriarch of Chan in China, who famously received the transmission from Bodhidharma after demonstrating his sincerity (in legend, by cutting off his arm).
- Body and mind both non-existent (身心俱无): Refers to the realization of the emptiness of both physical form and mental phenomena.

- Great Way (大道): The ultimate path or reality.
 - True nature (真性): The true nature, synonymous with Buddha-nature or mind-nature.
 - Mind-nature (心性): The inherent nature of the mind.
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English Translation: Question: “Does the Buddha deliver sentient beings?” The Master said: “In reality, there are no sentient beings for the Tathāgata to deliver. Even ‘I’ cannot be attained, how can ‘not-I’ be attained? Buddha and sentient beings are both unobtainable/unfindable.” [The questioner] said: “Currently there are the thirty-two marks and the delivering of sentient beings, how can you say they are non-existent?” The Master said: “‘All that has characteristics is illusory and unreal. If you see all characteristics as non-characteristics, you then see the Tathāgata.’ Buddha and sentient beings are entirely your creation of illusory views. It is only because you do not recognize the fundamental mind that you mistakenly formulate views. As soon as you create the view of Buddha, you are obstructed by Buddha; creating the view of sentient beings, you are obstructed by sentient beings. Creating views of ordinary, sagely, pure, impure, and so forth—all become obstructions. Obstructing your mind, they altogether become samsaric turning. It is like a monkey, letting go of one and grasping another, with no time to rest. This is all just learning. You must directly achieve no-learning: no ordinary, no sage, no pure, no impure, no large, no small, without outflows, unconditioned. Thus, within this one mind, expediently and diligently adorn [it]. Even if you learn the teachings of the Three Vehicles and the twelve divisions of the scriptures, all views must be completely discarded. Therefore, remove everything, leave only one bed, and lie down as if sick. This is just not giving rise to any views.

When not a single dharma can be obtained, one is not obstructed by dharmas, and penetrates beyond the domains of ordinary and sagely in the three realms—only then does one get to be called a world-transcending Buddha. Therefore, it is said: ‘Bow the head to the one like space, without reliance,’ surpassing the externalist paths. Since mind is not different, dharma is also not different; since mind is unconditioned, dharma is also unconditioned. The myriad dharmas are all transformed by mind. Therefore, ‘Because my mind is empty, all dharmas are empty; the thousand kinds and myriad types are all the same.’ The entire empty realm of the ten directions is the same one mind-essence. Mind is fundamentally not different, dharma is also not different. It is only because your views are different that there are distinctions. It is like the devas eating from the same precious vessel; according to their merits, the color of the food differs. The Buddhas of the ten directions in reality have not attained the slightest dharma—this is named Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. It is just the One Mind, in reality without different characteristics, also without lustre, also without victory or defeat. No victory, thus no characteristic of Buddha; no defeat, thus no characteristic of sentient beings.”

Original Text: 问：“佛度众生否？”师云：“实无众生如来度者。我尚不可得，非我何可得？佛与众生皆不可得。”云：“现有三十二相及度众生，何得言无？”师云：“凡所有相，皆是虚妄。若见诸相非相，即见如来。佛与众生，尽是汝作妄见，只为不识本心，谩作见解。才作佛见，便被佛障；作众生见，被众生障。作凡作圣作净作秽等见，尽成其障，障汝心故，总成轮转。犹如猕猴，放一捉一，无有歇期，一等是学。直须无学，无凡无圣，无净无垢，无大无小，无漏无为，如是一心中，方便勤庄严。听汝学得三乘十二分教，一切见解，总须舍却。所以除去所有，唯置一床，寝疾而卧。只是不起诸见，无一法可得，不被法障，透脱三界凡圣境域，始得名为出世佛。所以云：‘稽首如空无所依’，出过外道。心既不异，法亦不异；心既无为，法亦无为。万法尽由心变，所以‘我心空故诸法空，千品万类悉皆同。’尽十方空界同一心体，心本不异，法亦不异。只为汝见解不同，所以差别。譬如诸天共宝器食，随其福德，饭色有异。十方诸佛实无少法可得，名为阿耨菩提。只是一心，实无异相，亦无光彩，亦无胜负。无胜故无佛相，无负故无众生相。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- “In reality, there are no sentient beings...” & “All that has characteristics...”: Direct references or strong echoes of verses from the Diamond Sutra, emphasizing emptiness and the illusory nature of perceived distinctions.
- Tathāgata (如来): "Thus Come One" or "Thus Gone One," an epithet for a Buddha.
- Thirty-two marks (三十二相): The major physical characteristics said to adorn the body of a great being like a Buddha or a universal monarch (Cakravartin). Huangbo dismisses these as mere characteristics.
- Mistakenly formulate views (谩作见解): Creating interpretations or conceptual frameworks based on delusion rather than direct insight into the fundamental mind.
- Obstructed by Buddha (佛障): Even the concept of "Buddha," if clung to as an external reality or goal, becomes an obstacle to realizing one's own inherent Buddha-mind.
- Samsaric turning (轮转): The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara), driven by ignorance and attachment to views.
- Monkey, letting go of one and grasping another: Metaphor for the restless mind that constantly grasps at thoughts and objects.
- No-learning (无学, aśaikṣa): The stage beyond learning, characteristic of an Arhat or Buddha who has completed the path and has nothing further to train in or learn in the conventional sense.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Without outflows (无漏, anāsrava): Free from the "outflows" or "cankers" – sensual desire, desire for existence, wrong views, and ignorance – that perpetuate samsara.
- Unconditioned (无为, asaṃskṛta): Not produced by causes and conditions; referring to the ultimate truth, Nirvana, or the nature of the awakened mind. Here, used according to the specific instruction: related to the cessation of afflictive conditionings.
- Expediently and diligently adorn [it] (方便勤庄严): In the context of the preceding negations ("no ordinary, no sage..."), this phrase likely means to simply maintain awareness of the One Mind, free from these dualistic views, as the fundamental 'practice' or 'adornment'. It's an adornment devoid of conventional effort or attributes.
- Three Vehicles and twelve divisions of the scriptures (三乘十二分教): The traditional classification of Buddhist paths (Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattva) and scriptures. Huangbo insists that even mastery of these is insufficient without abandoning conceptual views.
- Remove everything, leave only one bed...: An allusion to the layman Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, who demonstrated profound wisdom while seemingly ill in an empty room, symbolizing liberation from all attachments and conceptual frameworks.
- Three realms (三界): The realms of desire, form, and formlessness that constitute samsara.
- World-transcending Buddha (出世佛): A Buddha who has gone beyond the conditioned world (samsara).
- 'Bow the head to the one like space...': A line from the Song of Realization (证道歌) by Yongjia Xuanjue (永嘉玄觉), referring to the ultimate truth (often equated with Dharmakāya or Buddha-nature) which is like space – boundless, centerless, and without any fixed support or attribute.
- Externalist paths (外道): Non-Buddhist teachings, often characterized in Buddhism as holding erroneous views (e.g., eternalism, nihilism, belief in a permanent self). Huangbo uses it here for anyone clinging to views.
- Unconditioned (无为): Used again here, meaning free from afflictive conditioning and conceptual fabrication.
- Myriad dharmas are all transformed by mind: A key Mahayana concept, particularly emphasized in Yogācāra and Chan, that perceived reality is inseparable from the mind that perceives it.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Devas eating...: A common Buddhist analogy illustrating how the same reality (the food/vessel) is experienced differently based on individual karma and merit (the devas' fortune). Similarly, the One Mind appears differentiated due to differing views.
- Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (阿耨菩提): "Unsurpassable Perfect Awakening," the supreme awakening of a Buddha. Huangbo equates it with the realization of the One Mind, wherein nothing is actually attained because it was never lost.

English Translation: [The questioner] said: "Since the mind is signless, how can it be entirely without the thirty-two marks and eighty minor marks, [manifesting] to transform and deliver sentient beings?" The Master said: "The thirty-two marks belong to characteristics. 'All that has characteristics is illusory and unreal.' The eighty minor marks belong to form/color. 'If one sees me by means of form... that person practices a wrong path and cannot see the Tathāgata.'"

Original Text: 云：“心既无相，岂得全无三十二相、八十种好化度众生耶？”师云：“三十二相属相，凡所有相，皆是虚妄；八十种好属色，若以色见我，是人行邪道，不能见如来。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Signless (无相): Lacking inherent, fixed characteristics. The imputation or assumption of a svabhāva (own-being) that possesses characteristics is the “sign” that is negated in signlessness, which also means an absence of characteristics. This conveys the meaning that minds and appearances are not actual entities, not persons, places or things. The conventional entity is what is mistaken to be a substantial entity and the validity of the conventional entity is undermined since the svabhāva cannot be found or obtained (不可得) when sought.
- Eighty minor marks (八十种好): Secondary physical characteristics attributed to a Buddha, complementing the thirty-two major marks.
- Form/color (色, rūpa): Physical form, matter, color – the realm of sensory appearance.
- ‘All that has characteristics...’ & ‘If one sees me by means of form...’: Quotes from the Diamond Sutra, used here to deconstruct attachment to the physical or visible attributes of a Buddha, pointing instead to the signless nature of mind/reality.

Text: Extract from a Chan/Zen Buddhist text (Likely the Huangbo Chuán Xīn Fǎ Yào 黄檗传心法要 - Essential Teachings of the Transmission of Mind by Huangbo Xiyun, but source not explicitly provided in the prompt).

English Translation: Question: “Are Buddha-nature and the nature of sentient beings the same or different?” The Master said: “Nature is without sameness or difference. If based on the teachings of the Three Vehicles, then it is said there is Buddha-nature and there is sentient being-nature, which leads to the cause and effect of the Three Vehicles, thus there is sameness and difference. If based on the Buddha Vehicle and the transmission of the Patriarchs, then such things are not spoken of; there is only the One Mind, which is neither same nor different, neither cause nor effect. Therefore it is said: ‘There is only this One Vehicle path, neither two nor three, except for the Buddha’s expedient explanations.’”

Original Text: 问：“佛性与众生性为同为别？”师云：“性无同异。若约三乘教，即说有佛性，有众生性，遂有三乘因果，即有同异；若约佛乘及祖师相传，即不说如是事，唯有一心，非同非异，非因非果。所以云：‘唯此一乘道，无二亦无三，除佛方便说。’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Three Vehicles (三乘教 sān shèng jiào): The paths of Śrāvakas (voice-hearers), Pratyekabuddhas (solitary realizers), and Bodhisattvas, often presented in Mahāyāna sutras as distinct paths with different goals, contrasted with the One Vehicle (Ekayāna 佛乘 fó shèng) which encompasses all and leads to supreme Buddhahood. The One Mind teaching of Chan transcends these distinctions.
 - One Mind (一心 yī xīn): A central concept in Chan/Zen and some Mahāyāna schools, referring to the ultimate, the fundamental nature of all beings, identical to Buddha-nature.
 - Patriarchs (祖师 zǔshī): The lineage holders in Chan Buddhism, starting from Bodhidharma, who are believed to have transmitted the direct experience of the One Mind.
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English Translation: Question: “Why does the Bodhisattva Limitless Body not see the crown feature [uṣṇīṣa] of the Tathāgata?” The Master said: “In reality, there is nothing to be seen. Why is this so? The Bodhisattva Limitless Body is precisely the Tathāgata, and should not see again. It only teaches you not to form a view of Buddha, not falling to the side of Buddha; not to form a view of sentient beings, not falling to the side of sentient beings; not to form a view of existence, not falling to the side of existence; not to form a view of non-existence, not falling to the side of non-existence; not to form a view of the

ordinary, not falling to the side of the ordinary; not to form a view of the holy, not falling to the side of the holy. Simply having no views is the Limitless Body. If there is a place of views, it is called an external path. Those on external paths delight in various views; Bodhisattvas are unmoved amidst various views; the Tathāgata is the suchness-meaning of all dharmas. Therefore it is said: ‘Maitreya is also suchness, all sages and worthies are also suchness.’ Suchness is non-arising, suchness is non-ceasing, suchness is non-seeing, suchness is non-hearing. The Tathāgata’s crown is perfect seeing, yet also without perfect seeing, hence not falling to the side of perfection. Therefore the Buddha’s body is unconditioned, not falling into any category. Expediently, it is compared to empty space, perfectly identical to the great void, without lack or excess, ordinarily without affairs. Do not forcefully discriminate other realms/objects; discriminating gives rise to consciousness. Therefore it is said: ‘Perfect completion drowns in the sea of consciousness, transmigrating like drifting tumbleweed.’

Merely saying ‘I know,’ ‘I have learned,’ ‘I have attained accordant awakening,’ ‘I am liberated,’ ‘There is a principle,’ where strong, one feels satisfied, where weak, one feels dissatisfied—what use is this kind of view? I say to you: ‘Ordinarily without affairs, do not deceive yourself by using the mind. No need to seek the true, only cease views.’ Therefore, internal views and external views are both mistaken; the Buddha path and the Mara path are both wrong. This is why Mañjuśrī, momentarily giving rise to dualistic views, was relegated to the two Iron Mountains. Mañjuśrī is the wisdom of reality, Samantabhadra is expedient wisdom. Expedient and real are relative antidotes; ultimately, there is neither expedient nor real, only the One Mind. The mind is neither Buddha nor sentient being, without differing views. As soon as there is a view of Buddha, a view of sentient beings arises. Views of existence and non-existence, views of permanence and annihilation, become the two Iron Mountains, because one is obstructed by views. The Patriarchs directly point to the fundamental mind and fundamental essence of all sentient beings as originally Buddha, not needing cultivation to be achieved, not belonging to gradual stages, not being about brightness or darkness.

Not being bright, thus without ignorance; not being dark, thus without non-darkness. Therefore, there is no ignorance, nor extinction of ignorance. Entering this school of ours, you must pay close attention. Seeing in this way is called the Dharma. Seeing the Dharma, one is called Buddha. When Buddha and Dharma are both absent, it is called the Sangha, referred to as the unconditioned Sangha, also named the Three Jewels in One Essence. Those who seek the Dharma should not seek attached to Buddha, not seek attached to Dharma, not seek attached to the Sangha; they should seek nothing. Not seeking attached to Buddha, thus there is no Buddha; not seeking attached to Dharma, thus there is no Dharma; not seeking attached to the Sangha, thus there is no Sangha.”

Original Text: 问：“无边身菩萨为什么不见如来顶相？”师云：“实无可见。何以故？无边身菩萨便是如来，不应更见。只教尔不作佛见，不落佛边；不作众生见，不落众生边；不

作有见，不落有边；不作无见，不落无边；不作凡见，不落凡边；不作圣见，不落圣边。但无诸见，即是无边身。若有见处，即名外道。外道者乐于诸见，菩萨于诸见而不动，如来者即诸法如义。所以云：‘弥勒亦如也，众圣贤亦如也。’如即无生，如即无灭，如即无见，如即无闻。如来顶即是圆见，亦无圆见，故不落圆边。所以佛身无为，不堕诸数，权以虚空为喻，圆同太虚，无欠无余，等闲无事。莫强辨他境，辨着便成识。所以云：‘圆成沉识海，流转若飘蓬。’只道我知也、学得也、契悟也、解脱也、有道理也，强处即如意，弱处即不如意，似这个见解，有什么用处？我向汝道：‘等闲无事，莫谩用心。不用求真，唯须息见。’所以内见外见俱错，佛道魔道俱恶。所以文殊暂起二见，贬向二铁围山。文殊即实智，普贤即权智，权实相对治，究竟亦无权实，唯是一心。心且不佛不众生，无有异见。才有佛见，便作众生见。有见无见，常见断见，便成二铁围山，被见障故。祖师直指一切众生本心本体本来是佛，不假修成，不属渐次，不是明暗。不是明，故无明；不是暗，故无暗。所以无无明，亦无无明尽。入我此宗门，切须在意，如此见得，名之为法。见法故，名之为佛。佛法俱无，名之为僧，唤作无为僧，亦名一体三宝。夫求法者，不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求，应无所求。不着佛求，故无佛；不着法求，故无法；不着众求，故无僧。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Bodhisattva Limitless Body (无边身菩萨 wúbiān shēn púsà): Represents the boundless nature of the enlightened mind, which is non-different from the Tathāgata (Buddha). Seeing the uṣṇīṣa (顶相 dǐng xiàng, a mark of a Buddha) would imply a separation between seer and seen, a duality that is transcended.
- Views (见 jiàn): Refers to conceptual viewpoints, opinions, or fixed ideas, especially those rooted in duality (Buddha/sentient being, existence/non-existence, etc.). Chan emphasizes transcending all views. Sakkāya Diṭṭhi (self-view) is a primary one, but here it refers broadly to all conceptual fixation.
- External path (外道 wàidào): Literally "outside the way," referring to non-Buddhist paths or any approach attached to views and conceptual frameworks, missing the direct experience of the Mind.
- Suchness (如 rú): Tathatā. The state of things as they truly are, beyond conceptual elaboration, designation, or duality.
- Unconditioned (无为 wúwéi): Here refers to the state beyond conditioned existence, free from afflictions, causes, and effects; transcendent and unconstructed. Not simply inaction, but action free from dualistic effort.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Great Void (太虚 tàixū): Similar to empty space (虚空 xūkōng), symbolizing the boundless, formless, and empty nature of reality/Mind.
- Ordinarily without affairs (等闲无事 dēngxián wúshì): A Chan expression signifying the state of mind free from contrived activities, seeking, or mental complication; a natural, uncontrived state.
- Discriminating... gives rise to consciousness (辨着便成识 biàn zhuó biàn chéng shí): Conceptual discrimination creates the subject-object split and the operations of discriminative consciousness (vijñāna).
- Cease views (息见 xī jiàn): Stop the arising of and clinging to conceptual views and discriminations.
- Mañjuśrī (文殊 Wénshū) and the Two Iron Mountains (二铁围山 èr tiě wéi shān): Mañjuśrī represents wisdom. This story, found in texts like the Vimalakīrti Sutra and used often in Chan, illustrates that even a slight lapse into dualistic thought (like distinguishing Buddha from non-Buddha) constitutes an obstruction, metaphorically represented by imprisonment between two concentric iron mountains (Cakravāḍa), symbolizing entrapment in duality.
- Wisdom of reality (实智 shí zhì) and Expedient wisdom (权智 quán zhì): Prajñā that directly realizes ultimate truth versus skillful means or wisdom adapted to context. Samantabhadra (普贤 Pǔxián) often represents the application of wisdom in activity. Ultimately, this distinction also dissolves in the One Mind.
- Not needing cultivation to be achieved (不假修成 bù jiǎ xiū chéng): Emphasizes the Chan view that Buddhahood is not something to be newly created through practice but is one's fundamental true nature to be recognized.
- Not belonging to gradual stages (不属渐次 bù shǔ jiàncì): Highlighting the sudden awakening aspect of Chan, contrasting with gradual path approaches.
- Ignorance (无明 wú míng): Avidyā. Fundamental unawareness of the true nature of reality. The text plays on the literal meaning of 无明 (no brightness) and its opposite. The line "Therefore, there is no ignorance, nor extinction of ignorance (所以无无明，亦无无明尽)" directly echoes the Heart Sutra, indicating the ultimate emptiness of both ignorance and its cessation.
- Unconditioned Sangha (无为僧 wúwéi sēng) / Three Jewels in One Essence (一体三宝 yītǐ sānbǎo): When all conceptual distinctions (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha as separate entities) dissolve into the realization of the One Mind (which is unconditioned), the Three Jewels are realized as inseparable aspects of this single reality.

- Not seek attached to... (不着...求 bù zhuó... qiú): Seeking while being attached to the concepts of Buddha, Dharma, or Sangha prevents realization. True seeking is 无所求 (wú suǒ qiú) - seeking nothing, having no objective goal.

English Translation: Question: “Venerable Master, you are currently expounding the Dharma, how can you say there is no Sangha and no Dharma?” The Master said: “If you see that there is a Dharma that can be expounded, you are seeking me through sound. If you see that there is an ‘I’ [who teaches], that is [grasping at] a location/abode. Dharma is also no-dharma; Dharma is Mind. Therefore, a Patriarch said: ‘When transmitting this Mind-Dharma, when has dharma ever been dharma? No-dharma, no fundamental mind, only then understand the Mind-to-Mind Dharma.’ Truly, not a single dharma can be attained; this is called sitting in the place of awakening. The place of awakening is simply not giving rise to any views. Awakening to the fundamental emptiness of dharmas is called the empty Tathāgatarbha. Originally there is not a single thing, where can dust alight? If you attain the meaning within this, what is there to discuss about being carefree and unrestrained?”

Original Text: 问：“和尚见今说法，何得言无僧亦无法。”师云：“汝若见有法可说，即是以音声求我。若见有我，即是处所。法亦无法，法即是心。所以祖师云：‘付此心法时，法法何曾法。无法无本心，始解心心法。’实无一法可得，名坐道场。道场者，只是不起诸见。悟法本空，唤作空如来藏。本来无一物，何处有尘埃？若得此中意，逍遥何所论。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Seeking me through sound (以音声求我 yǐ yīnshēng qiú wǒ): Referencing a famous passage in the Diamond Sutra where the Buddha states that those who try to see the Tathāgata through form or seek him through sound are on a wrong path.
- Location/abode (处所 chùsuǒ): Grasping at a self ('I') implies fixing it in a conceptual location or state, a form of clinging.
- Mind-Dharma (心法 xīnfǎ): The Dharma that is the Mind itself, the core transmission in Chan.
- Verse “付此心法时...始解心心法”: This verse points to the ineffable nature of the transmission. True understanding comes when notions of “Dharma” and “Mind” are transcended. “Mind-to-Mind Dharma” (心心法 xīn xīn fǎ) refers to the direct transmission beyond words.
- Not a single dharma can be attained (实无一法可得 shí wú yī fǎ kě dé): A key Mahāyāna and Chan expression emphasizing emptiness and the absence of any substantial entity to be grasped or achieved.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Place of awakening (道场 dào chǎng): Bodhimaṇḍa. Here, it's defined not as a physical place but as the state of mind free from arising views.
- Empty Tathāgata-garbha (空如来藏 kōng rú lái zàng): Tathāgata-garbha (Buddha-nature) understood through the lens of emptiness (śūnyatā). While possessing the potential for Buddhahood, it is fundamentally empty of inherent existence.
- "Originally there is not a single thing, where can dust alight?" (本来无一物，何处有尘埃? běn lái wú yī wù, hé chù yǒu chén'āi?): The famous verse attributed to Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, expressing the fundamentally pure and empty nature of the mind, contrasting with Shenxiu's verse about polishing the mirror.
- Carefree and unrestrained (逍遥 xiāo yáo): A term often associated with Daoist ideals (e.g., Zhuangzi), adopted into Chan to describe the freedom and ease that comes with awakening.

English Translation: Question: "‘Originally there is not a single thing’—does ‘no thing’ mean it is correct/right?" The Master said: "‘No’ is also not correct/right. Bodhi has no place of being correct/right, nor is there understanding of ‘no’."

Original Text: 问：“本来无一物，无物便是否？”师云：“无亦不是，菩提无是处，亦无无知解。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: Question: "What is Buddha?" The Master said: "Your mind is Buddha. Buddha is Mind. Mind and Buddha are not different, therefore it is said, ‘Mind itself is Buddha.’ If separate from the mind, there is no other Buddha." Question: "If one's own mind is Buddha, when the Patriarch came from the West [Bodhidharma], what did he transmit?" The Master said: "When the

Patriarch came from the West, he only transmitted the Mind-Buddha, directly pointing out that your minds are originally Buddha. Mind to mind without difference, hence called Patriarch. If you directly see this meaning, you instantly transcend all the stages of the Three Vehicles. Originally you are Buddha, not needing cultivation to be achieved.”

Original Text: 问：“何者是佛？”师云：“汝心是佛，佛即是心，心佛不异，故云即心是佛。若离于心，别更无佛。”云：“若自心是佛，祖师西来，如何传授？”师云：“祖师西来，唯传心佛，直指汝等心本来是佛。心心不异，故名为祖。若直下见此意，即顿超三乘一切诸位，本来是佛，不假修成。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Mind itself is Buddha (即心是佛 jí xīn shì fó): A cornerstone statement in Chan Buddhism, attributed to masters like Mazu Daoyi and Huangbo.
- Patriarch came from the West (祖师西来 zǔshī xī lái): Refers to Bodhidharma bringing Chan from India (the West relative to China) to China.
- Transmitted the Mind-Buddha (唯传心佛 wéi chuán xīn fó): The transmission was not of doctrines or scriptures primarily, but a direct pointing (直指 zhí zhǐ) to the hearer's own mind as Buddha.
- Mind to mind without difference (心心不异 xīn xīn bù yì): Describes the nature of the Chan transmission – a direct, non-verbal understanding passed from the mind of the master to the mind of the disciple.
- Instantly transcend (顿超 dùn chāo): Emphasizes the "sudden awakening" (dunwu 顿悟) aspect of Chan, where realization is immediate and complete, surpassing gradual stages.

English Translation: Question: “If it is like this, when the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, what Dharma do they speak?” The Master said: “When the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, they only jointly speak the Dharma of the One Mind. Therefore, the Buddha secretly entrusted it to Mahākāśyapa. This essence of the One Mind Dharma exhausts empty space and pervades the dharma realm, called the principle of all Buddhas. Regarding this Dharma, how can you understand it through words and sentences? Nor can you see it through a particular potentiality or realm. This meaning can only be tacitly understood. This gate is called the unconditioned Dharma gate. If you wish to understand, just know no-mind; suddenly awaken, and you attain it. If you use the mind intending to learn and grasp it, you turn further away. If you are without a mind of divergent

paths, without any mind of grasping and rejecting, mind like wood and stone, only then do you have the capacity for studying the Way.”

Original Text: 云：“若如此，十方诸佛出世，说于何法？”师云：“十方诸佛出世，只共说一心法，所以佛密付与摩诃大迦叶。此一心法体，尽虚空遍法界，名为诸佛理。论这个法，岂是汝于言句上解得他？亦不是于一机一境上见得他。此意唯是默契得。这一门名为无为法门，若欲会得，但知无心，忽悟即得。若用心拟学取，即转远去。若无岐路心、一切取舍心，心如木石，始有学道分。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Secretly entrusted it to Mahākāśyapa (密付与摩诃大迦叶 mì fù yǔ Móhē Dàjiāshè): Refers to the origin story of Chan transmission, where the Buddha held up a flower, Mahākāśyapa smiled in understanding, and the Buddha acknowledged this direct mind-to-mind transmission beyond words.
- Essence of the One Mind Dharma (一心法体 yī xīn fǎ tǐ): The fundamental nature or essence of the One Mind Dharma.
- Exhausts empty space and pervades the dharma realm (尽虚空遍法界 jìn xūkōng biàn fǎjiè): Describes the omnipresent, boundless nature of the One Mind. Dharma realm (法界 fǎjiè) is Dharmadhātu.
- Principle of all Buddhas (诸佛理 zhū fó lǐ): The underlying truth or reality realized by all Buddhas.
- Potentiality or realm (一机一境 yī jī yī jìng): Refers to specific circumstances, encounters, states of mind, or objects of meditation. The One Mind cannot be grasped through such particulars.
- Tacitly understood (默契得 mòqì dé): Understood intuitively, directly, without relying on language or concepts.
- Unconditioned Dharma gate (无为法门 wúwéi fǎmén): The path that leads to the unconditioned, the state beyond conceptual fabrication and conditioned phenomena. See footnote on 无为 (wúwéi) earlier.
- No-mind (无心 wúxīn): Not a state of blankness, but realizing and actualizing the truth that Mind is empty of a substantial existence (No-Mind), similar to the truth of anātman (No-Self).
- Suddenly awaken (忽悟 hū wù): Instantaneous realization.
- Mind of divergent paths (岐路心 qílù xīn): A mind that gets lost in distinctions, alternatives, and complexities.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Mind of grasping and rejecting (取舍心 qǔshě xīn): A mind caught in liking and disliking, accepting and rejecting, the root of dualistic attachment.
- Mind like wood and stone (心如木石 xīn rú mù shí): A mind that is unresponsive to dualistic provocations, unmoving, free from passions and discriminations. This indicates stability and non-attachment, a prerequisite for deep practice.

English Translation: [Someone] said: “Currently there are various kinds of illusory thoughts present; how can you say they are non-existent?” The Master said: “Illusion fundamentally lacks substance; it is precisely what arises from your mind. If you recognize that the mind is Buddha, the mind is fundamentally without illusion, how could you then give rise to mind to further acknowledge illusion? If you do not give rise to mind or activate thoughts, naturally there is no illusion. Therefore it is said: ‘When the mind arises, various dharmas arise; when the mind ceases, various dharmas cease.’”

[Someone] said: “Right now, when illusory thoughts are arising, where is the Buddha?” The Master said: “When you are now aware of the arising of illusion, that awareness is the Buddha. Wherein, if there were no illusory thoughts, the Buddha would also not be. Why is this so? Because you give rise to the mind creating a view of Buddha, you then assert there is a Buddha to be attained; creating a view of sentient beings, you then assert there are sentient beings to be delivered. Giving rise to mind and activating thoughts is entirely your place of views. If there are no views whatsoever, where is the location of the Buddha? Just as Mañjuśrī, as soon as he gave rise to the view of Buddha, was immediately banished to the two Iron Encircling Mountains.”¹ [Someone] said: “Right now, at the moment of awakening, where is the Buddha?” The Master said: “Where does the question come from? Where does awareness arise from? Speech and silence, movement and stillness, all sounds and forms, are entirely Buddha’s activity. Where would you seek the Buddha? You must not place a head on top of a head, or add a mouth onto a mouth. Just do not give rise to different views.

Mountains are mountains, water is water, monks are monks, laypeople are laypeople. The mountains, rivers, the great earth, sun, moon, and stars are altogether not outside your mind. The three thousand worlds all come to be your own self. Where are so many kinds [of things]? Outside the mind, there are no dharmas; the green mountains fill the eyes. The empty world is brilliantly clear, without a single strand of hair for you to form views upon. Therefore, all sounds and forms are the wisdom eye of the Buddha. Dharma does not arise in isolation; it relies on conditions [objects/environments] to arise. For the sake of things, there is much wisdom. Speaking all day, when has one ever spoken? Hearing all day, when has one ever heard? Therefore, Śākyamuni spoke for forty-nine years, yet never spoke a single word.” [Someone] said: “If it is like this, where is Bodhi?” The Master said: “Bodhi has no place where it is; Buddhas also do not attain Bodhi, and sentient beings also do not lose Bodhi. It cannot be

attained through the body, it cannot be sought through the mind. All sentient beings are themselves the characteristic of Bodhi.” [Someone] said: “How does one arouse the Bodhi mind?” The Master said: “Bodhi is unobtainable/unfindable. You now just arouse the mind of unobtainability/unfindability; definitively not obtaining a single dharma is the Bodhi mind. Bodhi has no place to abide; therefore, there is no one who attains it. Thus it is said: ‘At the place of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I did not have the slightest dharma that could be attained, and the Buddha then gave me the prediction [of future Buddhahood].’”²

Clearly know that all sentient beings are fundamentally Bodhi; they should not attain Bodhi again. You now hear ‘arouse the Bodhi mind’ and assume it means a mind learning to become a Buddha, solely intending to become a Buddha. Even if you practice for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas,³ you will only attain a Reward Body (saṃbhogakāya) or Transformation Body (nirmāṇakāya) Buddha. What connection does this have with your fundamental source, the true nature Buddha? Therefore it is said: ‘Seeking a Buddha with form externally is not similar to you.’”

Original Text: 云：“如今现有种种妄念，何以言无？”师云：“妄本无体，即是汝心所起。汝若识心是佛，心本无妄，哪得起心更认于妄？汝若不生心动念，自然无妄。所以云：‘心生则种种法生，心灭则种种法灭。’”云：“今正妄念起时，佛在何处？”师云：“汝今觉妄起时，觉正是佛。可中若无妄念，佛亦无。何故如此？为汝起心作佛见，便谓有佛可成；作众生见，便谓有众生可度。起心动念，总是汝见处。若无一切见，佛有何处所？如文殊才起佛见，便贬向二铁围山。”云：“今正悟时，佛在何处？”师云：“问从何来？觉从何起？语默动静、一切声色，尽是佛事，何处觅佛？不可更头上安头，嘴上加嘴。但莫生异见，山是山，水是水，僧是僧，俗是俗，山河大地、日月星辰总不出汝心，三千世界都来是汝个自己，何处有许多般？心外无法，满目青山。虚空世界皎皎地无丝发许与汝作见解，所以一切声色是佛之慧目。法不孤起，仗境方生。为物之故，有其多智。终日说，何曾说？终日闻，何曾闻？所以释迦四十九年说，未尝说着一字。”云：“若如此，何处是菩提？”师云：“菩提无是处，佛亦不得菩提，众生亦不失菩提。不可以身得，不可以心求，一切众生即菩提相。”云：“如何发菩提心？”师云：“菩提无所得，尔今但发无所得心，决定不得一法，即菩提心。菩提无住处，是故无有得者。故云：‘我于然灯佛所，无有少法可得，佛即与我授记。’明知一切众生本是菩提，不应更得菩提。尔今闻发菩提心，将谓一个心学取佛去，唯拟作佛。任尔三只劫修，亦只得个报化佛，与尔本源真性佛有何交涉？故云：‘外求有相佛，与汝不相似。’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

• The Two Iron Encircling Mountains (二铁围山): In Buddhist cosmology, these are ranges surrounding Mount Sumeru. Being banished there is a metaphor for falling into dualistic views or

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

conceptual limitations, even seemingly positive ones like "seeing Buddha." Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, is often depicted in Zen anecdotes as engaging in profound, sometimes paradoxical, dialogues.

- Dīpaṃkara Buddha: The Buddha who, according to the scriptures (like the Diamond Sutra mentioned here implicitly), predicted Śākyamuni Buddha's future attainment of Buddhahood. The reference emphasizes that this prediction was given precisely because Śākyamuni realized the unobtainability/unfindability of any "dharma" (thing, concept, state).
- Three asaṃkhyeya kalpas (三只劫): An immeasurably long period, traditionally said to be the time required for a Bodhisattva to practice the path to attain Buddhahood through gradual cultivation. Huangbo contrasts this with the sudden awakening approach of Zen, which points directly to one's self-perfected Buddha-nature.

English Translation: Question: "Since [the fundamental nature] is originally Buddha, how can there still be the four types of birth, the six realms of existence, and various different forms and appearances?" The Master said: "The essence of all Buddhas is perfectly complete, without increase or decrease. Flowing into the six realms, it is perfectly complete everywhere. Among the myriad kinds [of beings], each and every one is Buddha. It is like a mass of mercury: dispersed into various places, every droplet is perfectly round. When not dispersed, it is just one piece. This one is identical to all; all are identical to this one. The various forms and appearances are analogous to houses. Leaving a donkey's house to enter a human's house, leaving a human body to reach a deva's body, and so on up to the houses of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas—these are all places of your picking and choosing, hence the distinctions arise. How could the fundamental, original nature have distinctions?"

Original Text: 问：“本既是佛，哪得更无四生六道种种形貌不同？”师云：“诸佛体圆，更无增减，流入六道，处处皆圆。万类之中，个个是佛。譬如一团水银，分散诸处，颗颗皆圆。若不分时，只是一块。此一即一切，一切即一。种种形貌，喻如屋舍。舍驴屋入人屋，舍人身至天身，乃至声闻缘觉菩萨佛屋，皆是汝取舍处，所以有别。本源之性，何得有别？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Four types of birth (四生): Birth from womb, egg, moisture, and transformation.
- Six realms of existence (六道): Realms of gods (deva), demigods (asura), humans, animals, hungry ghosts (preta), and hell-beings.

- Śrāvakas (声闻), Pratyekabuddhas (缘觉): Disciples of the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle, contrasted with Bodhisattvas and Buddhas of the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle. The analogy emphasizes that the luminous clarity and empty nature of Mind is universally present in all beings as the generic characteristics of all minds, like heat is to fire, while the conditional forms and states experienced arise from conceptual discrimination, acceptance and rejection (取舍).

English Translation: Question: “How do the Buddhas practice great loving-kindness and compassion (mahā-maitrī-karuṇā), speaking the Dharma for sentient beings?” The Master said: “The Buddhas’ loving-kindness and compassion are without conditions [objects/reasons], hence they are called ‘great loving-kindness and compassion.’ Loving-kindness (maitrī) means not seeing any Buddha to be attained; compassion (karuṇā) means not seeing any sentient beings to be delivered. The Dharma they speak is without speaking and without indicating; those who listen to the Dharma are without hearing and without attaining. It is like an illusionist speaking Dharma for illusory people. This Dharma, if you were to say, ‘I grasped it from the words of a good spiritual advisor, I understood it, I awakened to it’; this loving-kindness, if you were to give rise to mind and activate thoughts to learn his views—this is not awakening to your own original mind by yourself, and is ultimately of no benefit.”

Original Text: 问：“诸佛如何行大慈悲，为众生说法？”师云：“佛慈悲者，无缘，故名大慈悲。慈者，不见有佛可成；悲者，不见有众生可度。其所说法，无说无示；其听法者，无闻无得。譬如幻士为幻人说法。这个法，若为道我从善知识言下领得，会也悟也；这个慈悲，若为汝起心动念学得他见解，不是自悟本心，究竟无益。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Without conditions (无缘): Wu yuan ci bei (无缘慈悲) signifies compassion that arises spontaneously from the enlightened nature, not dependent on specific objects, reasons, or relationships. It is universal and unconditional.
- Illusionist for illusory people (幻士为幻人说法): A common Mahayana metaphor illustrating the dreamlike, unreal nature of both the teacher (Buddha) and the audience (sentient beings), as well as the teaching itself, from the perspective of ultimate truth. True understanding comes from direct realization (自悟本心), not conceptual learning.

English Translation: Question: “What is diligence (vīrya)?” The Master said: “Body and mind not arising—this is called the foremost, firmest diligence. As soon as one gives rise to the mind to seek outwardly, this is called King Kali¹ going out hunting with pleasure. The mind not wandering outwardly is precisely the Patient Immortal.² Body and mind both being non-existent is precisely the Way of the Buddha.”

Original Text: 问：“何者是精进？”师云：“身心不起，是名第一牢强精进。才起心向外求者，名为歌利王爱游猎去。心不外游，即是忍辱仙人。身心俱无，即是佛道。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

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

English Translation: Question: “If one practices this Way without mind (无心), is it possible to attain it?” The Master said: “Without mind is precisely practicing this Way. What more is there to say of attaining or not attaining? For instance, the fleeting arising of a single thought (念) is precisely the object [environment/condition]. If there is not a single thought, then the object is forgotten and the mind naturally ceases; there is nothing further to pursue.”

Original Text: 问：“若无心行此道，得否？”师云：“无心便是行此道，更说什么得与不得。且如瞥起一念，便是境。若无一念，便是境忘心自灭，无复可追寻。”

English Translation: Question: “What is exiting the three realms?”¹ The Master said: “Do not think (思量) about good and evil at all; right where you are, you instantly exit the three realms. The Tathāgata appeared in the world to destroy the three existences.² If there is no mind whatsoever, the three realms are also non-existent. It is like breaking one micro-particle into one hundred parts; if ninety-nine parts are non-existent and one part exists, Mahāyāna cannot transcend.³ When all one hundred parts are non-existent, only then can Mahāyāna transcend.”

Original Text: 问：“如何是出三界？”师云：“善恶都莫思量，当处便出三界。如来出世，为破三有。若无一切心，三界亦非有。如一微尘破为百分，九十九分是无，一分是有，摩诃衍不能胜出。百分俱无，摩诃衍始能胜出。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Three Realms (三界): The realms of desire (kāmadhātu), form (rūpadhātu), and formlessness (arūpadhātu), encompassing all samsaric existence.
- Three Existences (三有): Another term for the three realms, emphasizing the cyclical existence within them.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Mahāyāna (摩訶衍): The Great Vehicle path in Buddhism, aiming for the liberation of all beings and Buddhahood, contrasted with paths focused solely on individual liberation. The analogy suggests that complete transcendence requires the utter cessation of all conceptualizations and perceived realities, leaving no trace of existence ("one part") behind.

English Translation: Discourse in the hall: "Mind itself is Buddha. From the highest Buddhas down to the lowest wriggling creatures and sentient beings, all possess Buddha-nature, sharing the same mind-essence. Therefore, Bodhidharma came from the West solely transmitting the One Mind Dharma, directly pointing out that all sentient beings are originally Buddha, not requiring cultivation. Just recognize your own mind now, see your own fundamental nature, and seek nothing else.

How to recognize one's own mind? That which is speaking right now is precisely your mind. If not speaking and not functioning, the mind-essence is like empty space, without form or appearance, and without location. Nor is it exclusively non-existent; it is present yet cannot be seen. The Patriarch¹ said: 'The true nature is the mind-ground treasury (cittabhūmi-garbha), without head or tail. Responding to conditions, it transforms into things; expediently, it is called wisdom (智).' When not responding to conditions, its existence or non-existence cannot be spoken of. Even when directly responding, there is also no trace. Since you know this, just abide now in the midst of non-existence (无中栖泊), and that is walking the path of all Buddhas. The Sutra says: 'One should give rise to the mind that abides nowhere.'² All sentient beings cycling in birth and death do so because their mental consciousness (意) chases after conditions, the mind ceaselessly moving through the six realms, leading them to endure various sufferings.

The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: 'People hard to transform have minds like monkeys. Therefore, various methods are used to control their minds, and then they are tamed.'³ Therefore, 'when the mind arises, various dharmas arise; when the mind ceases, various dharmas cease.'⁴ Thus, know that all dharmas are created solely by the mind; even the realms of humans and gods, hells, the six realms, and asuras are all created by the mind. Now, just learn to be without mind (无心), instantly ceasing all conditions. Do not give rise to illusory thoughts and discriminations; no self, no other; no greed or anger; no aversion or craving; no victory or defeat. Just eliminate these many kinds of illusory thoughts, and the nature will spontaneously be originally pure; this is practicing Bodhi, Dharma, Buddha, and so forth.

If you do not understand this principle, even if you study extensively, practice diligently and arduously, eating wood and wearing grass,⁵ if you do not recognize your own mind, it is all called deviant practice, entirely becoming celestial demons, external path followers, water and land spirits. What benefit could such practice possibly have? Zhi Gong⁶ said: 'The fundamental essence is made by one's own mind; how can it be sought in written words?' Now just recognize your own mind, cease thinking (思惟) and

illusory thoughts, and the dust of afflictions (尘劳) will naturally not arise. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: ‘Just place a single bed, and lie down ill.’⁷ When the mind does not arise, like a person lying ill, all grasping at conditions ceases, illusory thoughts extinguish – this is Bodhi. If your mind is now agitated and unsettled, no matter if you learn up to the Three Vehicles, Four Fruits, Ten Bhūmis, and various stages, you will ultimately just be sitting amongst ordinary beings and saints. All conditioned phenomena (诸行) return to impermanence; all powers have their time limit. It is like an arrow shot into the sky: when its force is spent, it falls back down, returning to the cycle of birth and death. Practicing like this without understanding the Buddha’s intent, enduring hardship in vain – is this not a great error!

Zhi Gong said: ‘Without encountering a world-transcending enlightened teacher, one takes the Mahāyāna Dharma medicine in vain.’ Now, just at all times – walking, standing, sitting, lying down – learn only to be without mind (无心). Also without discriminations, without reliance, without abiding or attachment. Throughout the day, function spontaneously and freely (任运腾腾), like a fool. The people of the world all do not recognize you, and you also have no need to make people recognize you or not. Let the mind be like a stubborn rock, utterly without cracks. All dharmas cannot penetrate your mind; blankly unattached (兀然无着). Only when like this do you have some small degree of correspondence.”

Original Text: 上堂云：“即心是佛。上至诸佛，下至蠢动含灵，皆有佛性，同一心体。所以达摩从西天来，唯传一心法，直指一切众生本来是佛，不假修行。但如今识取自心，见自本性，更莫别求。云何识自心？即如今言语者，正是汝心。若不言语，又不作用，心体如虚空相似，无有相貌，亦无方所。亦不一向是无，有而不可见故。祖师云：‘真性心地藏，无头亦无尾，应缘而化物，方便呼为智。’若不应缘之时，不可言其有无。正应之时，亦无踪迹。既知如此，如今但向无中栖泊，即是行诸佛路。经云：‘应无所住而生其心。’一切众生轮回生死者，意缘走作，心于六道不停，致使受种种苦。《净名》云：‘难化之人，心如猿猴。故以若干种法制御其心，然后调伏。’所以‘心生种种法生，心灭种种法灭。’故知一切诸法，皆由心造，乃至人天、地狱、六道、修罗，尽由心造。如今但学无心，顿息诸缘，莫生妄想分别，无人无我，无贪嗔，无憎爱，无胜负。但除却如许多种妄想，性自本来清净，即是修行菩提、法、佛等。若不会此意，纵尔广学、勤苦修行、木食草衣，不识自心，皆名邪行，尽作天魔外道水陆诸神。如此修行，当复何益？志公云：‘本体是自心作，哪得文字中求？’如今但识自心，息却思惟妄想，尘劳自然不生。《净名》云：‘唯置一床，寝疾而卧。’心不起也，如人卧疾，攀缘都息，妄想歇灭，即是菩提。如今若心里纷纷不定，任尔学到三乘四果、十地诸位，合杀只向凡圣中坐。诸行尽归无常，势力皆有尽期，犹如箭射于空，力尽还堕，却归生死轮回。如斯修行，不解佛意，虚受辛

苦，岂非大错！志公云：‘未逢出世明师，枉服大乘法药。’如今但一切时中，行住坐卧，但学无心，亦无分别，亦无依倚，亦无住着，终日任运腾腾，如痴人相似。世人尽不识尔，尔亦不用教人识不识，心如顽石头，都无缝罅，一切法透汝心不入，兀然无着，如此始有少分相应。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Patriarch (祖师): Refers to Bodhidharma or subsequent Zen patriarchs. The quote describes the fundamental nature (真性) or mind-ground (心地).
- ‘One should give rise to the mind that abides nowhere’ (应无所住而生其心): A famous line from the Diamond Sutra, central to Zen understanding. It points to the mind functioning freely without attachment or fixation.
- Vimalakīrti Sūtra (《净名》): A key Mahayana text emphasizing non-duality and the Bodhisattva path practiced by laypeople. The quote about the monkey mind is from Chapter 5 (Mañjuśrī’s Visit).
- ‘when the mind arises... when the mind ceases...’ (心生种种法生，心灭种种法灭): A fundamental principle in Mind-Only (唯识) and Zen philosophy, stating that phenomena arise and cease depending on the activity of the mind.
- Eating wood and wearing grass (木食草衣): Describes extreme ascetic practices. Huangbo implies that without recognizing the mind, even severe austerities are misguided.
- Zhi Gong (志公): Usually refers to Baozhi (宝志), a revered monk from the Liang Dynasty known for his eccentric wisdom and prophecies, often quoted in Zen literature.
- ‘Just place a single bed, and lie down ill’ (唯置一床，寝疾而卧): From the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, Chapter 3 (Disciples’ Reluctance). Vimalakīrti explains his “illness” arises from compassion for the suffering of beings and that a Bodhisattva’s true resting place is non-abiding awareness, symbolized by lying ill and ceasing activity.
- Three Vehicles (三乘), Four Fruits (四果), Ten Bhūmis (十地): Stages of attainment in various Buddhist paths (Hinayana and Mahayana). Huangbo suggests that without realizing the nature of mind (无心), even achieving these stages remains within the duality of ordinary (凡) and saintly (圣), subject to impermanence.

English Translation: “Penetrating beyond the environment of the three realms is called the Buddha appearing in the world. Not leaking the characteristics of the mind is called undefiled wisdom (anāsrava-jñāna). Not creating karma for [rebirth in] human or celestial realms, not creating karma for

hell realms, not giving rise to any mind whatsoever, all conditions completely not arising – then this very body and mind belong to a free person. It is not that they consistently do not arise, but simply that they arise according to conditions (随意而生). The Sutra says: ‘The Bodhisattva possesses a mind-made body (manomayakāya)¹ – this is it. If suddenly you have not yet understood being without mind (无心), and engage in activities while attached to characteristics, it all belongs to demonic karma. Even performing Pure Land Buddha activities² will all become karma, and is called a Buddha-obstacle. Because it obstructs your mind, you are bound by cause and effect, without freedom in coming and going. Therefore, Bodhi and other such dharmas are fundamentally not existent. What the Tathāgata taught were all methods to transform people, like using yellow leaves [to represent] gold, temporarily stopping a small child’s crying.

Thus, in reality, there is no dharma called Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.³ Now that you understand this meaning, what need is there for meticulous efforts? Just accord with conditions to dissolve old karma, and moreover, do not create new misfortune. Be clear and bright within the mind. Therefore, all past views must be completely abandoned. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: ‘Remove all possessions.’⁴ The Lotus Sutra says: ‘For twenty years, constantly ordering the removal of dung.’⁵ This just means removing the place within the mind where views are created. It also says: ‘Cleansing away the dung of speculative discourse (戏论之粪).’⁶ Therefore, the Tathāgata-garbha⁷ is fundamentally empty and quiescent (空寂), not retaining a single dharma. Thus, the Sutra says: ‘The lands of all Buddhas are also completely empty.’⁸

If one says the Buddha Way is obtained through cultivation and learning, such views have absolutely no connection [to reality]. Or, engaging in a particular technique or state, raising eyebrows or moving eyes, matching responses appropriately, then saying one has attained 契会, has realized and awakened to the principle of Chan (禅理). If suddenly encountering a person who does not understand, then saying they know nothing at all. If facing them and getting the reasoning right, feeling joyful in the heart; if being refuted by them and feeling inferior, then immediately becoming disheartened in the mind. Studying Chan with such a state of mind, what connection does it have? Even if you understand some minor principles, you just obtain a mental object dharma (心所法); it has absolutely no connection with the Way of Chan. Therefore, Bodhidharma faced the wall,⁹ not allowing people to have any standpoint [view].

Thus it is said: ‘Forgetting discriminations (忘机) is the Buddha Way; discriminating thoughts (分别) are demonic realms.’ This nature—even when you are deluded, it is not lost; when you are awakened, it is not attained. The naturally true self-nature (天真自性) is fundamentally without delusion or awakening. The entire ten directions of the realm of empty space are originally the essence of my one

mind. Even if you move, act, and create, how can you leave empty space? Empty space is fundamentally neither large nor small, without outflows (漏) nor conditioned activity (为),¹⁰ without delusion nor awakening. Seeing clearly, there is not a single thing, nor any person, nor any Buddha. Free from the slightest measure, it is without reliance, without adhesion—a single, clear stream. This is the self-nature's unborn dharma-patience (anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti).¹¹ What room is there for deliberation (拟议)? The true Buddha has no mouth, cannot explain the Dharma; true hearing has no ears, who then hears? Take care!”

Original Text: “透得三界境过，名为佛出世。不漏心相，名为无漏智。不作人天业，不作地狱业，不起一切心，诸缘尽不生，即此身心是自由人。不是一向不生，只是随意而生。经云：‘菩萨有意生身’是也。忽若未会无心，着相而作者，皆属魔业。乃至作净土佛事，并皆成业，乃名佛障。障汝心故，被因果管束，去住无自由分。所以菩提等法，本不是有，如来所说，皆是化人，犹如黄叶为金，权止小儿啼，故实无有法名阿耨菩提。如今既会此意，何用区区？但随缘消旧业，更莫造新殃。心里明明，所以旧时见解总须舍却。

《净名》云：‘除去所有。’《法华》云：‘二十年中常令除粪。’只是除去心中作见解处。又云：‘蠲除戏论之粪。’所以如来藏本自空寂，并不停留一法。故经云：‘诸佛国土亦复皆空。’若言佛道是修学而得，如此见解，全无交涉。或作一机一境，扬眉动目，抵对相当，便道契会也，得证悟禅理也。忽逢一人不解，便道都无所知。对他若得道理，心中便欢喜；若被他折伏，不如他，便即心怀惆怅。如此心意学禅，有何交涉？任汝会得少许道理，即得个心所法，禅道总没交涉。所以达摩面壁，都不令人有见处。故云：‘忘机是佛道，分别是魔境。’此性，纵汝迷时亦不失，悟时亦不得。天真自性，本无迷悟，尽十方虚空界，元来是我一心体。纵汝动用造作，岂离虚空？虚空本来无大无小，无漏无为，无迷无悟。了了见，无一物，亦无人，亦无佛。绝纤毫的量，是无依倚，无粘缀，一道清流，是自性无生法忍，何有拟议？真佛无口，不解说法；真听无耳，其谁闻乎？珍重！”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Mind-made body (意生身, manomayakāya): A subtle body created through meditative power, possessed by advanced Bodhisattvas, allowing them to manifest freely in various realms to benefit beings. Here, it illustrates arising freely according to conditions, without the constraints of ordinary karmic birth.
- Pure Land Buddha activities (净土佛事): Practices aimed at rebirth in a Buddha's Pure Land, such as reciting the Buddha's name. Huangbo warns that even these can become obstacles if performed with attachment to form and results, obscuring the direct realization of mind.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi (阿耨菩提): Supreme, perfect awakening. Huangbo echoes the Diamond Sutra's point that ultimately, even this highest attainment is conceptually designated and not a 'thing' to be grasped.
- 'Remove all possessions' (除去所有): From the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, referring to letting go of all attachments, mental and physical.
- 'For twenty years, constantly ordering the removal of dung' (二十年中常令除粪): A reference to the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 4. The son spends years doing menial work (removing dung) before recognizing his true inheritance. Metaphorically, it represents the gradual purification of defilements and wrong views.
- Speculative discourse (戏论, prapañca): Idle or proliferating conceptual thought that obscures reality.
- Tathāgata-garbha (如来藏): The womb or storehouse of the Tathāgata; the innate potential for Buddhahood within all beings, often equated with the fundamental nature of mind, described here as empty and quiescent (空寂).
- 'The lands of all Buddhas are also completely empty' (诸佛国土亦复皆空): Quote likely referencing Prajñāpāramitā literature (e.g., Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra), emphasizing the emptiness not only of beings but also of the environments (Buddha-lands) perceived.
- Bodhidharma faced the wall (达摩面壁): Refers to the legend of Bodhidharma meditating facing a wall for nine years at Shaolin Temple, symbolizing direct, non-conceptual realization beyond intellectual understanding or external forms.
- Without outflows (无漏, anāsrava) nor conditioned activity (无为, asaṃskṛta): Terms denoting freedom from defilements/afflictions and the unconditioned nature of reality, respectively. Note: 无为 (wu wei) here aligns with the Buddhist meaning of "unconditioned" rather than the Taoist "non-action," fitting the context of describing the fundamental nature of reality (虚空).
- Unborn dharma-patience (无生法忍, anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti): The realization and acceptance of the non-arising nature of all phenomena. A high stage of Bodhisattva realization.

English Translation: One day, the Master ascended the hall and addressed the assembly, saying: "If you haven't thoroughly penetrated beforehand, when the night of the thirtieth of the twelfth lunar month¹ arrives, I guarantee you will be flustered and confused. There is a type of heterodox practitioner who, upon seeing someone talk about doing the practice (做工夫),² just sneers: 'Still holding onto this?' Let me ask you: 'When suddenly facing the end of life, what will you use to resist

birth and death?’ You should ponder this carefully; there is indeed a principle here. How could there be a naturally born Maitreya, a spontaneous Śākyamuni?³ There are some idle spirits and wild ghosts who, upon seeing someone slightly ill, immediately say to others: ‘Just let it go.’ Yet when they themselves get sick, they cannot manage it, becoming frantic and clumsy. How can you endure your flesh being cut as if by sharp knives, unable to be the master? All matters must be settled during times of leisure, so they can be used during times of urgency—how much effort that saves! Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to dig a well, finding your hands and feet unprepared. How can you escape this messy predicament? The road ahead is dark; blindly groping and crashing about—misery, oh misery! On ordinary days, you only learn verbal samādhi, talking about Chan and the Way, shouting at Buddhas and cursing Patriarchs; when it comes to this point, none of it is useful. On ordinary days, you only deceive others; how could you know that today you have deceived yourself? The Avīci Hell⁴ will definitely not let you go.

Now, as the Dharma-ending age⁵ deepens, we rely entirely on powerful brothers to shoulder the responsibility, continuing the Buddha’s wisdom-life, not allowing it to be cut off. Nowadays, there is barely one or half [such person]. Travelers just go to gaze at mountains and scenery, not knowing how much time they have. If one breath does not return, it is the next life, with an unknown form. Alas! I urge you, brothers, while your physical strength is still robust, seek out a place of clear understanding, this great matter of not being deceived by others. These crucial points (关楔子)⁶ are actually very easy; it’s just that you are unwilling to apply deadly determination to do the practice, merely saying it’s difficult, oh so difficult. Let me tell you clearly, how can there be a wooden ladle naturally grown on a tree? You must make the transformation yourself. If you are a true man, look into a kōan. A monk asked Zhaozhou: ‘Does a dog have Buddha-nature or not?’ Zhaozhou said: ‘Wu (No)!’⁷ Just throughout the twelve periods of the day, contemplate this character ‘Wu’. Investigate day and investigate night, while walking, standing, sitting, lying down, putting on clothes, eating meals, defecating, urinating – let mind attend to mind, fiercely apply your energy, guard this character ‘Wu’. As days lengthen and months deepen, it merges into one piece. Suddenly, the mind-flower will abruptly blossom, awakening to the pivotal mystery (机) of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Then you will not be deceived by the tongues of the old monks under heaven, and you will be able to open your great mouth. Bodhidharma coming from the West stirred up waves where there was no wind; the World-Honored One twirling a flower was a complete failure.⁸ Arriving here, what mention is there of old man Yama?⁹ Even a thousand sages cannot do anything to you. Do not disbelieve that there is truly such wonder. Why is it like this? ‘Success favors the determined person.’”

Original Text: 师一日上堂，开示大众云：“预前若打不彻，腊月三十夜到来，管取尔热乱。有般外道才见人说做工夫，他便冷笑：‘犹有这个在？’我且问尔：‘忽然临命终时，尔将何抵敌生死？’尔且思量看，却有个道理，哪得天生弥勒，自然释迦？有一般闲神野

鬼，才见人有些少病，便与他人说：‘尔只放下着。’及至他有病，又却理会不下，手忙脚乱。争奈尔肉如利刀碎割，做主宰不得。万般事须是闲时办得下，忙时得用，多少省力。休待临渴掘井，做手脚不办，这场狼藉，如何回避？前路黑暗，信采胡钻乱撞，苦哉苦哉！平日只学口头三昧，说禅说道，喝佛骂祖，到这里都用不着。平日只管瞒人，争知道今日自瞒了也，阿鼻地狱中决定放尔不得。而今末法将沉，全仗有力量兄弟家负荷，续佛慧命，莫令断绝，今时才有一个半个。行脚只去观山观景，不知光阴能有几何。一息不回，便是来生，未知甚么头面。呜呼！劝尔兄弟家，趁色力康健时，讨取个分晓处，不被人瞒底一段大事。这些关楔子甚是容易，自是尔不肯去下死志做工夫，只管道难了又难。好教尔知，哪得树上自生的木杓？尔也须自去做个转变始得。若是个丈夫汉，看个公案。僧问赵州：‘狗子还有佛性也无？’州云：‘无。’但二六时中看个‘无’字，昼参夜参，行住坐卧，着衣吃饭处，阿鼻放尿处，心心相顾，猛着精彩，守个‘无’字。日久月深，打成一片，忽然心花顿发，悟佛祖之机，便不被天下老和尚舌头瞒，便会开大口。达摩西来，无风起浪；世尊拈花，一场败缺。到这里说甚么阎罗老子，千圣尚不奈尔何。不信道，直有这般奇特，为甚如此？事怕有心人。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Night of the thirtieth of the twelfth lunar month (腊月三十夜): New Year's Eve in the lunar calendar; metaphorically, the moment of death when accounts must be settled.
- Doing the practice (做工夫): Engaging in dedicated Chan/Zen practice, often involving meditation or kōan work.
- Naturally born Maitreya, a spontaneous Śākyamuni (天生弥勒，自然释迦): Implies that awakening is not effortless or automatic; it requires dedicated practice.
- Avīci Hell (阿鼻地狱): The lowest and most torturous hell in Buddhist cosmology.
- Dharma-ending age (末法): The final degenerate age after the Buddha's passing, when genuine understanding and practice decline.
- Crucial points (关楔子): Key points, barriers, or kōans used in Chan practice.
- Zhaozhou's "Wu" (赵州狗子无字公案): One of the most famous kōans in Zen. A monk asked Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen (赵州从谗) if a dog has Buddha-nature. Zhaozhou replied "Wu" (无), meaning "no" or "nothingness." Practitioners investigate this "Wu" single-pointedly.
- Bodhidharma... waves; World-Honored One... failure (达摩西来，无风起浪；世尊拈花，一场败缺): These lines paradoxically diminish even the foundational acts of Zen (Bodhidharma's arrival)

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

and Buddhism (Buddha's silent transmission by holding up a flower). From the perspective of ultimate realization, even these pivotal events are seen as mere ripples or flaws within the already perfect nature of reality. To "open one's great mouth" after awakening means to speak from this profound understanding, potentially overturning conventional interpretations.

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

English Translation: Verse: "Transcending the dust of afflictions is no ordinary matter, Tightly grasp the rope's end and make a determined effort.¹ If not for a round of bone-chilling cold, How could the plum blossoms' fragrance assail the nostrils?"²

Original Text: 颂曰: "尘劳迥脱事非常, 紧把绳头做一场。不是一翻寒彻骨, 争得梅花扑鼻香?"

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Grasp the rope's end (紧把绳头): Metaphor for holding firmly to the method of practice (like the "Wu" kōan).

- Plum blossoms' fragrance after cold (不是一翻寒彻骨, 争得梅花扑鼻香): A famous couplet attributed to Huangbo, used widely in Chan/Zen. It signifies that profound awakening (fragrance) comes only after enduring hardship and intense, dedicated practice (bone-chilling cold). Plum blossoms bloom in winter, symbolizing resilience and beauty emerging from adversity.

English Translation: The Master was originally from Fujian (闽中).¹ In his youth, he left the household life at Huangbo Mountain² in his home province. There was a protrusion on his forehead like a pearl; his voice was resonant and clear, and his aspirations were tranquil and detached. Later, while traveling to Mount Tiantai,³ he met a monk who seemed like an old acquaintance. They thus traveled together. They encountered a stream whose waters had suddenly risen; the Master leaned on his staff and stopped. The monk urged the Master to cross together. The Master said: "You cross first, elder brother." The monk then floated his bamboo hat on the water and crossed over. The Master said: "I actually teamed up with a lesser fellow (稍子);⁴ I regret not striking him dead with one blow of my staff."

Original Text: 师本是闽中人, 幼于本州黄檗山出家。额间隆起如珠, 音辞朗润, 志意冲澹。后游天台, 逢一僧如旧识。乃同行。属涧水暴涨, 师倚杖而止。其僧率师同过, 师云: "请兄先过。"其僧即浮笠于水上便过。师云: "我却共个稍子作队, 悔不一棒打杀。"

Footnotes/Annotations:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Fujian (闽中): A coastal province in southeastern China.
- Huangbo Mountain (黄檗山): The mountain where Master Huangbo Xiyun initially ordained, located in Fujian. This is distinct from Mount Huangbo in Jiangxi where he later taught extensively.
- Mount Tiantai (天台): A major center for Buddhism in China, particularly associated with the Tiantai school.
- Lesser fellow (稍子, shāozi): This term is somewhat obscure. It might imply someone relying on minor tricks or supernatural powers (like floating on a hat) rather than true understanding or proper means. Huangbo's harsh comment reflects a Chan emphasis on direct realization over displays of powers, seeing the latter as potentially misleading or superficial.

English Translation: A monk took leave of Guizong.¹ Guizong said: "Where are you going?" [The monk] said: "To various places to study the five-flavor Chan."² Guizong said: "Various places have five-flavor Chan; here I only have one-flavor Chan." [The monk] said: "What is the one-flavor Chan?" Guizong immediately struck him. The monk said: "I understand! I understand!" Guizong said: "Speak! Speak!" The monk was about to open his mouth, and Guizong struck him again. Later, this monk arrived at the Master's [Huangbo's] place. [Huangbo] asked where he came from. [The monk] said: "From Guizong." The Master said: "What words or phrases did Guizong offer?" The monk then recounted the previous exchange. The Master then went up to the hall, related this encounter, and said: "Master Ma[zu]³ produced eighty-four Virtuous Friends/Spiritual Mentors (善知识, kalyāṇamitra). When questioned, each one shits uncontrollably (屙漉漉地);⁴ only Guizong is somewhat better."

Original Text: 有僧辞归宗，宗云：“往甚处去？”云：“诸方学五味禅去。”宗云：“诸方有五味禅，我这里只是一味禅。”云：“如何是一味禅？”宗便打。僧云：“会也会也。”宗云：“道！道！”僧拟开口，宗又打。其僧后到师处，问甚么处来。云：“归宗来。”师云：“归宗有何言句。”僧遂举前话。师乃上堂举此因缘云：“马大师出八十四善知识，问着，个个屙漉漉地，只有归宗较些子。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Guizong (归宗): Refers to Chan Master Guizong Zhichang (归宗智常), a prominent disciple of Mazu Daoyi.
- Five-flavor Chan (五味禅): A term possibly used critically by Guizong to denote various types or approaches to Chan practice circulating at the time, perhaps implying they were mixed or impure compared to his direct "one-flavor" approach.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Master Ma[zu] (马大师): Refers to the highly influential Chan Master Mazu Daoyi (马祖道一), the teacher of both Guizong and Huangbo's teacher Baizhang Huaihai (百丈怀海). Mazu was known for having many accomplished disciples.

- Shits uncontrollably (屙漉漉地): A coarse Chan expression used by Huangbo to suggest that despite their reputation, many of Mazu's disciples lacked true, unshakeable realization when put to the test. He singles out Guizong as being relatively solid.

English Translation: When the Master was in the assembly of Yanguan,¹ Emperor Dazhong² was a novice monk (śrāmaṇera). The Master was bowing to the Buddha in the Buddha hall. The novice monk said: "Do not seek through the Buddha, do not seek through the Dharma, do not seek through the Sangha."³ Elder, when you bow, what exactly are you seeking?" The Master said: "Not seeking through the Buddha, not seeking through the Dharma, not seeking through the Sangha; I always bow as a matter of course like this." The novice monk said: "What is the use of bowing?" The Master immediately slapped him. The novice monk said: "Too coarse!" The Master said: "What kind of place is this to talk of coarse and fine?" Subsequently, he slapped him again, and the novice monk ran off.

Original Text: 师在盐官会里，大中帝为沙弥。师于佛殿上礼佛，沙弥云：“不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求。长老礼拜，当何所求？”师云：“不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求，常礼如是事。”沙弥云：“用礼何为？”师便掌，沙弥云：“太粗生。”师云：“这里是什么所在，说粗说细。”随后又掌，沙弥便走。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Yanguan (盐官): Refers to Chan Master Yanguan Qi'an (盐官齐安), another disciple of Mazu Daoyi. Huangbo spent time in his assembly.

- Emperor Dazhong (大中帝): Refers to Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty (reigned 846-859, era name Dazhong). Before becoming emperor, he had spent time as a monk, hence the reference to him as a novice (沙弥, śrāmaṇera). This anecdote is famous in Zen history.

- Do not seek through the Buddha... Sangha (不着佛求，不着法求，不着众求): The novice quotes a principle emphasizing non-attachment and not seeking externally. Huangbo's response and actions demonstrate that true non-seeking doesn't necessarily mean abandoning conventional forms like bowing, but performing them without conceptual attachment or objective seeking. His slaps cut through the novice's intellectual understanding.

English Translation: When the Master was traveling on foot, he arrived at Nanquan.¹ One day during the mealtime, holding his bowl, he went and sat in Nanquan's seat. Nanquan came down, saw

him, and asked: “Elder, in which year did you start practicing the Way?” The Master said: “Before King Bhīṣmagarjitasvara-rāja.”² Nanquan said: “Still a grandson-disciple of Old Teacher Wang.”³ The Master then got down [from the seat]. One day, when the Master was going out, Nanquan said: “Such a large body, wearing such a tiny little bamboo hat.” The Master said: “The three thousand great thousand worlds are entirely contained within it.” Nanquan said: “What about Old Teacher Wang?” The Master put on his hat and walked away.

Original Text: 师行脚时到南泉，一日斋时，捧钵向南泉位上坐。南泉下来见，便问：“长老什么年中行道？”师云：“威音王已前。”南泉云：“犹是王老师孙在。”师便下去。师一日出次，南泉云：“如许大身材，戴个些子大笠。”师云：“三千大千世界总在里许。”南泉云：“王老师呢？”师戴笠便行。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Nanquan (南泉): Refers to Chan Master Nanquan Puyuan (南泉普愿), a major disciple of Mazu Daoyi, known for his sharp and unconventional teaching style.
- King Bhīṣmagarjitasvara-rāja (威音王): The first Buddha of the current kalpa according to some traditions, existing countless aeons ago. Saying one practiced before him is a Chan way of indicating the timeless, unborn nature of the fundamental mind, transcending temporal origin.
- Old Teacher Wang (王老师): Nanquan's playful, self-deprecating way of referring to himself (his lay surname was Wang). By calling Huangbo his "grandson-disciple," he is humorously acknowledging Huangbo's claim to primordial practice while also asserting his own connection to that same source (as if Huangbo were descended from him in the Dharma lineage of timelessness). The exchange about the hat further plays on the Chan themes of the absolute (the whole universe in a small hat) and the relative, often involving witty challenges between masters.

English Translation: One day, the Master was sitting in the tea hall. Nanquan came down and asked: “Regarding the equal practice of concentration and wisdom (*śamatha-vipaśyanā*),¹ clearly seeing the Buddha-nature – what is this principle?” The Master said: “Throughout the twelve periods of the day,² not relying on a single thing.” Nanquan said: “Isn’t that precisely the Elder’s viewpoint?” The Master said: “I dare not say so.” Nanquan said: “Let’s set aside the money for gruel and water; who should pay back the money for the straw sandals?”³ The Master then fell silent. Later, Guishan⁴ related this encounter and asked Yangshan:⁵ “Could it be that Huangbo was unable to corner Nanquan?” Yangshan said: “Not so. One must know that Huangbo possessed the tactic to trap a tiger.”⁶ Guishan said: “Your insight reaches so far!”

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

Original Text: 师一日在茶堂内坐，南泉下来，问：“定慧等学，明见佛性，此理如何？”师云：“十二时中不依倚一物。”泉云：“莫便是长老见处么？”师云：“不敢。”泉云：“浆水钱且置，草鞋钱教什么人还？”师便休。后汾山举此因缘问仰山：“莫是黄檗构他南泉不得么？”仰山云：“不然。须知黄檗有陷虎之机。”汾山云：“子见处得与么长。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Equal practice of concentration and wisdom (定慧等学): The balanced cultivation of meditative stability (samādhi, 定) and insight (prajñā, 慧).
- Twelve periods of the day (十二时中): Refers to the entire day (24 hours), based on the traditional Chinese division of the day into twelve two-hour periods. Implies constantly, at all times.
- Money for gruel and water... straw sandals (浆水钱... 草鞋钱): Nanquan's question shifts abruptly from the high principle of Buddha-nature to mundane matters of debt. "Gruel and water" might refer to basic sustenance offered by the monastery. "Straw sandals" were worn by traveling monks. The question is a Chan challenge, possibly testing Huangbo's ability to integrate the absolute ("not relying on a single thing") with the relative, practical world, or perhaps hinting at karmic debts or the debt of gratitude owed for teachings/support. Huangbo's silence is itself a response, open to interpretation.
- Guishan (汾山): Chan Master Guishan Lingyou (汾山灵佑), founder of the Guiyang school of Chan, and a disciple of Baizhang Huaihai (making him a Dharma-brother to Huangbo).
- Yangshan (仰山): Chan Master Yangshan Huiji (仰山慧寂), Guishan's main disciple and co-founder of the Guiyang school.
- Tactic to trap a tiger (陷虎之机): Yangshan interprets Huangbo's silence not as defeat or inability, but as a subtle and powerful move, like setting a trap for a formidable opponent (Nanquan, the "tiger"). This suggests Huangbo's response was profound, perhaps demonstrating non-reliance so completely that there was nothing for Nanquan's probing question to grasp.

English Translation: One day during communal work,¹ Nanquan asked: "Where are you going?" The Master said: "To select vegetables." Nanquan said: "What will you use to select?" The Master held up his knife. Nanquan said: "Only know how to act as the guest, do not know how to act as the host."² The Master struck [the ground or chopping block?] three times.

Original Text: 一日普请，泉问：“什么处去？”师云：“择菜去。”泉云：“将什么择？”师竖起刀子。泉云：“只解作宾，不解作主。”师扣三下。

Footnotes/Annotations:

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Communal work (普请, fǔqǐng): A traditional Chan monastery practice where all members, including the abbot, participate in manual labor. Nanquan (泉) refers to Master Nanquan Puyuan.
- Guest/Host (宾/主): In Chan dialogue, "host" often refers to the fundamental essence, the awakened mind, or the master's position, while "guest" refers to phenomena, discriminating thoughts, or the disciple's position. Nanquan is challenging Huangbo, suggesting his action (showing the knife) is merely a response (guest) rather than stemming from the fundamental ground (host). Huangbo's three strikes are a non-verbal assertion or response.

English Translation: One day, five newly arrived monks came together for an interview. One of them did not bow, but drew a circle¹ with his hand and stood there. The Master said: "Do you still recognize a good hunting dog?" [The monk] said: "I come following the scent of the gazelle." The Master said: "The gazelle has no scent, where will you search for it?" [The monk] said: "I come following the tracks of the gazelle." The Master said: "The gazelle has no tracks, where will you search for it?" [The monk] said: "I come following the traces of the gazelle." The Master said: "The gazelle has no traces, where will you search for it?" [The monk] said: "In that case, it's a dead gazelle." The Master then let it rest. The next day, after ascending the seat [for a discourse] and concluding, [the Master] asked: "Will the monk who was seeking the gazelle yesterday please come forward?" That monk came forward. The Master said: "This old monk's words from yesterday were not finished. What about it?" The monk had no reply. The Master said: "I thought he was a true-colored patch-robed monk,² but he turns out to be just an exegetical śramaṇa.³"

Original Text: 一日，五人新到，同时相看。一人不礼拜，以手画一圆相而立。师云：“还知道好只猎犬么？”云：“寻羚羊气来。”师云：“羚羊无气，汝向什么处寻？”云：“寻羚羊踪来。”师云：“羚羊无踪，汝向什么处寻？”云：“寻羚羊迹来。”师云：“羚羊无迹，汝向什么处寻？”云：“与么则死羚羊也。”师便休。来日升座，退问：“昨日寻羚羊僧出来。”其僧便出。师云：“老僧昨日后头未有语在，作么生？”其僧无语。师云：“将谓是本色衲僧，元来只是义学沙门。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Circle (圆相, ensō): Often used in Chan to represent emptiness, completeness, the Dharmakāya, or the mind-nature, beyond words. The monk uses it instead of a conventional bow.
- Gazelle (羚羊): Often used metaphorically in Chan for the subtle, traceless nature of reality or awakening, which cannot be caught by ordinary means (scent, tracks, traces). Huangbo systematically negates all ways of searching, pointing towards its ungraspable nature. The monk's final statement "it's

a dead gazelle" might imply giving up the chase or realizing its unobtainability/unfindability, but Huangbo tests him further the next day.

- True-colored patch-robed monk (本色衲僧): An authentic Chan practitioner who embodies the realization directly.
- Exegetical śramaṇa (义学沙门): A monastic who studies Buddhist doctrines intellectually or conceptually, contrasted with a Chan practitioner focused on direct experiential insight. Huangbo dismisses the monk as merely intellectual when he cannot respond further.

English Translation: The Master had once dispersed the assembly and was residing at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou.¹ One day, Vice-Minister Pei² entered the monastery. While walking, he saw a mural and asked the temple superintendent: "What is this painting?" The superintendent said: "A painting of an eminent monk." The Vice-Minister said: "The form and reflection (形影) are here, but where is the eminent monk?" The superintendent had no reply. The Vice-Minister asked: "Are there perhaps any Chan monks here?" The superintendent said: "There is one person." The Vice-Minister thereupon invited the Master for a meeting and raised the previous question to the Master. The Master called out: "Pei Xiu!" Xiu responded: "Yes?" The Master said: "Where is [he]?" The Vice-Minister had a realization upon these words. He then requested the Master again to open the hall [for teaching].

Original Text: 师曾散众在洪州开元寺。裴相公一日入寺，行次，见壁画，乃问寺主：“这画是什么？”寺主云：“画高僧。”相公云：“形影在这里，高僧在什么处？”寺主无对。相公云：“此间莫有禅僧么？”寺主云：“有一人。”相公遂请师相见，乃举前话问师。师召云：“裴休。”休应诺。师云：“在什么处？”相公于言下有省，乃再请师开堂。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Hongzhou (洪州): A major center for Chan Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty, particularly associated with Mazu Daoyi and his lineage. Kaiyuan Monastery was a prominent temple there.
- Vice-Minister Pei (裴相公): Refers to Pei Xiu (裴休), a high-ranking government official, scholar, and devoted lay disciple of Huangbo. He recorded and organized Huangbo's teachings into the Chuan Xin Fa Yao and Wanling Lu.
- The form and reflection (形影) are here, but where is the eminent monk?: Pei Xiu poses a classic Chan question about the relationship between appearance (the painting) and reality (the actual person or essence).
- Master calls Pei Xiu's name... "Where is [he]?": Huangbo turns the question back onto Pei Xiu. By calling his name and eliciting a response, he points directly to Pei Xiu's immediate awareness, the living

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

presence responding "Yes?", implying that is where the "eminent monk" (or the essential nature) is to be found – not separate from one's own immediate experience. This leads Pei Xiu to an awakening (有省).

English Translation: Discourse in the hall: "You people are all wine dreg dregs!¹ Traveling on foot like this, you make others die laughing. If it were all so easy, how could today even exist? Do you perhaps know that in the empire of the Great Tang, there are no Chan masters?" At that time, a monk asked: "Given that in various places there are currently those appearing in the world, guiding disciples and leading assemblies, why then say there are no Chan masters?" The Master said: "I do not say there is no Chan; I only say there are no masters." Later, Guishan related this encounter and asked Yangshan: "What does this mean?" Yangshan said: "The king goose selects milk;² it is fundamentally not the category of ducks." Guishan said: "This is truly hard to discern."

Original Text: 上堂云：“汝等诸人，尽是啗酒糟汉。与么行脚，笑杀他人。总似与么容易，何处更有今日？汝还知大唐国里无禅师么？”时有僧问：“只如诸方现今出世，匡徒领众，为什么却道无禅师？”师云：“不道无禅，只道无师。”后汾山举此因缘问仰山云：“意作么生？”仰山云：“鹅王择乳，素非鸭类。”汾山云：“此实难辨。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Wine dreg dregs (啗酒糟汉): A very harsh and dismissive term Huangbo uses for his assembly, implying they are useless leftovers, perhaps clinging to superficial understanding or lacking true determination. 啗 appears to be a variant or error for 同 (tong - same as) or perhaps meant something like 'muddled'. The sense is strongly pejorative.
- No Chan masters (无禅师): Huangbo clarifies this provocative statement: he means there are no true masters who fully embody the realization, not that the practice of Chan itself doesn't exist.
- King goose selects milk (鹅王择乳): An allusion to the mythical Hamsa bird (often translated as swan or goose king) said to be able to drink only the milk from a mixture of milk and water, leaving the water behind. Yangshan uses this metaphor to imply that Huangbo (the king goose) makes a fine distinction, recognizing true mastery (milk) from the mere appearance of it (water), a discernment ordinary people (ducks) lack.

English Translation: One day, Vice-Minister Pei presented a Buddha statue, knelt¹ before the Master, and said: "I request the Master to bestow a name." The Master called out: "Pei Xiu!" Xiu responded: "Yes?" The Master said: "I have finished bestowing the name for you." The Vice-Minister then performed obeisance. One day, the Vice-Minister presented a verse. The Master received it and immediately sat down. He then asked: "Do you understand?" The Vice-Minister said: "I do not

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

understand.” The Master said: “Not understanding like this is somewhat better. If it takes the form of paper and ink, where is our school’s principle?”² The poem read: “Since the Great Being³ transmitted the mind-seal (心印), His forehead bore a round pearl, his body seven feet tall.⁴ Hanging his staff,⁵ he resided by the Shu waters for ten years; Floating his cup,⁶ today he crosses the Zhang riverbank. A thousand disciples, dragons and elephants,⁷ follow his noble steps; Ten thousand miles of fragrant flowers⁸ form auspicious connections. I wish to serve the Master as a disciple; I do not know to whom the Dharma will be entrusted?” The Master replied [in verse]: “The mind is like the great ocean, boundless; The mouth emits red lotuses⁹ to nourish the sick body.¹⁰ Though possessing a pair of idle hands, They have never merely bowed to ordinary people.”

Original Text: 裴相一日托一尊佛于师前胡跪云：“请师安名。”师召云：“裴休。”休应诺。师云：“与汝安名竟。”相公便礼拜。相公一日上诗一章，师接得便坐却。乃问：“会么？”相公云：“不会。”师云：“与么不会，犹较些子。若形纸墨，何有吾宗？”诗曰：“自从大士传心印，额有圆珠七尺身。挂锡十年栖蜀水，浮杯今日渡漳滨。千徒龙象随高步，万里香花结胜因。愿欲事师为弟子，不知将法付何人？”师答曰：“心如大海无边际，口吐红莲养病身。虽有一双无事手，不曾只揖等闲人。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Kneel (胡跪, húguì): A specific form of kneeling, often on the right knee with the left up, used when presenting offerings or making requests.
- Naming the Buddha: Huangbo again uses the technique of calling Pei Xiu's name to point directly to the immediate, responding awareness as the essence, rather than engaging in the conventional act of naming the statue. The true "name" or essence is found in the living mind.
- Paper and ink... where is our school's principle? (形纸墨, 何有吾宗?): Huangbo dismisses reliance on written words (the poem) as inadequate for conveying the true principle (宗) of Chan, which is transmitted mind-to-mind. Not understanding conceptually is deemed "somewhat better."
- Great Being (大士, Mahāsattva): Refers to Bodhidharma, the first Patriarch of Chan in China.
- Forehead... pearl... seven feet tall: Traditional descriptions of Bodhidharma's appearance.
- Hanging his staff (挂锡): A monk settling down in a place. Refers perhaps to Bodhidharma's time or generally to settling for practice. Shu waters (蜀水) refers to Sichuan. The historical accuracy of Bodhidharma spending ten years there is questionable; it may be symbolic.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Floating his cup (浮杯): Alludes to the legend of Bodhidharma crossing the Yangtze River on a single reed. Zhang riverbank (漳滨) likely refers to a location relevant to Huangbo or Pei Xiu's context, perhaps symbolically crossing over into the realm of Chan.
- Dragons and elephants (龙象): Metaphor for outstanding disciples or great practitioners.
- Fragrant flowers (香花): Offerings, symbolic of reverence and karmic connection.
- Mouth emits red lotuses (口吐红莲): Metaphor for speaking profound and pure Dharma.
- Nourish the sick body (养病身): Refers perhaps to the Mahayana concept of the Bodhisattva remaining in the "sick" world of samsara out of compassion, using the Dharma to sustain themselves and others. Alternatively, it could be a humble self-reference by Huangbo.
- Idle hands... never merely bowed to ordinary people (无事手，不曾只揖等闲人): Asserts the Master's independence and discrimination, engaging only with those ready for the profound Dharma, not wasting effort on the unprepared ("ordinary people"). "Idle hands" (无事手) implies hands not engaged in worldly striving but embodying effortless action or non-action.

English Translation: Discourse in the hall: "Those who study the Way must first put aside miscellaneous studies and various conditions. Resolutely do not seek; resolutely do not attach. Hearing the extremely profound Dharma should be like a clear wind reaching the ear: it passes by in a flash, without being pursued further – this is deemed 'extremely profound.' Entering the Tathāgata Chan, one departs from thoughts of Chan arising. From the Patriarchs of the past, only the One Mind has been transmitted; there is no second dharma. Pointing to the mind as Buddha instantly transcends the levels of Equal Awakening and Wondrous Awakening."¹

Resolutely do not flow into a second thought (念); only then is it like entering our school's gate. For such a Dharma, how could you, an ordinary person, approach here intending to learn? Therefore it is said: when intending the mind, one is bound by the demon of the intending mind; when not intending the mind, one is bound by the demon of the non-intending mind; when neither-nor intending the mind, one is bound by the demon of the neither-nor intending mind.² Demons do not come from outside; they arise from your own mind. Only the Bodhisattva without supernatural powers³ has footprints that cannot be traced.

If at all times the mind holds the view of permanence, that is the external path of eternalism. If one contemplates all dharmas as empty and forms the view of emptiness, that is the external path of annihilationism.⁴ That 'the three realms are mind-only, the myriad dharmas are consciousness-only'⁵ – this is still spoken in opposition to external path heretical views. If speaking of the Dharmakāya as the

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

ultimate fruit, this is spoken in relation to the Three Worthies and Ten Saints.⁶ Therefore, the Buddha severed two kinds of ignorance (愚): first, subtle cognitive ignorance (微细所知愚); second, extremely subtle cognitive ignorance (极微细所知愚).⁷ Since the Buddha is like this, what more is there to say about Equal and Wondrous Awakening? Therefore, all people merely wish to face the bright, not wishing to face the dark. They merely wish to seek awakening, not accepting affliction and ignorance (烦恼无明), thus saying Buddha is awakened, sentient beings are deluded. If one holds such views, for hundreds of kalpas and thousands of lifetimes, one will cycle through the six realms with no end. Why? Because one slanders the fundamental source, the self-nature of all Buddhas.

He clearly tells you: Buddha is not bright, sentient beings are not dark, because the Dharma is without brightness or darkness. Buddha is not strong, sentient beings are not weak, because the Dharma is without strength or weakness. Buddha is not wise, sentient beings are not foolish, because the Dharma is without foolishness or wisdom. It is you who step forward claiming to understand Chan, but the moment you open your mouth, the sickness manifests. You speak not of the root, only the branches; speak not of delusion, only awakening; speak not of the essence (体), only the function (用). There is utterly no place for your arguments. All his dharmas are fundamentally non-existent [from the start], and now are also not non-existent. Arising from conditions, they are not existent; ceasing due to conditions, they are not non-existent. Fundamentally they are also not existent, because the 'fundamental' is not fundamental.

Mind is also not mind, because mind is not mind. Form (相) is also not form, because form is not form. Therefore it is said: no dharma, no fundamental mind; only then understand the mind-mind dharma.⁸ Dharma is non-dharma; dharma is not non-dharma. No dharma, no non-dharma; therefore it is the mind-mind dharma. Suddenly, a fleeting thought arises – realize it is like an illusion, like a transformation, and it immediately flows into the past Buddha. The past Buddha is not existent; the future Buddha is not non-existent, yet is also not called 'future Buddha'. The present moment's thoughts do not abide, not called 'present Buddha'. When Buddha [nature] arises, do not intend it as awakened or deluded, good or evil. Absolutely do not grasp or cling to it, nor cut it off. Like a single thought fleetingly arising: a thousand heavy locks cannot lock it; ten thousand fathoms of rope cannot bind it.

Since it is like this, how could you then intend to extinguish it or stop it? He clearly tells you it is your 'flame consciousness' (焰识);⁹ how do you intend to sever it? It is analogous to a mirage (阳焰): you say it is near, yet searching the ten directions of the world, it cannot be found; you then say it is far, yet when you look, it is right before your eyes. You intend to chase it, yet it moves further away. You then avoid it, yet it comes pursuing you. It cannot be grasped, nor can it be abandoned. Since it is like this, know therefore that the nature of all dharmas (法性) is fundamentally and originally so (自尔). Thus,

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

do not worry about it or be anxious about it. As for the saying, ‘The preceding thought is ordinary, the succeeding thought is saintly, like turning the hand over’ – this is the culmination of the Three Vehicle teachings. According to my Chan school, the preceding thought is not ordinary, and the succeeding thought is not saintly; the preceding thought is not Buddha, the succeeding thought is not sentient being. Therefore, all forms are Buddha-form; all sounds are Buddha-sound. Raise one principle, and all principles are thus. See one affair, and see all affairs; see one mind, and see all minds; see one path, and see all paths; everywhere is nothing but the path. See one dust mote, and the ten directions of the world, mountains, rivers, and the great earth are all thus. See one drop of water, and see the nature of all water in the ten directions of the world.

Furthermore, seeing all dharmas is seeing all mind. All dharmas are fundamentally empty (本空); the mind then is not non-existent (不无); not non-existent is wondrous presence (妙有).¹⁰ Existence is also non-existence; non-existence is existence; this is true emptiness, wondrous presence. Since it is like this, the ten directions of the world do not go beyond my one mind. All lands of micro-particles do not go beyond my single thought. If so, what talk is there of internal and external? Like honey whose nature is sweet – all honey is thus; one cannot say this honey is sweet and the rest are bitter. Where could such a thing exist?

Therefore it is said: empty space has no inside or outside; the dharma-nature is fundamentally and originally so. Empty space has no middle; the dharma-nature is fundamentally and originally so. Thus, sentient beings are identical to Buddha; Buddha is identical to sentient beings. Sentient beings and Buddha are originally of the same essence. Samsara and nirvana, conditioned (有为) and unconditioned (无为), are originally of the same essence. Worldly and world-transcending, even the six realms and four types of birth, mountains, rivers, the great earth, sentient and insentient, are also of the same essence. Speaking of ‘sameness’ means names and forms are also empty; existence is also empty; non-existence is also empty; the entire world of Ganges sands is originally one emptiness.

Since it is like this, where is there a Buddha delivering sentient beings? Where are there sentient beings receiving the Buddha’s deliverance? Why is this so? Because the nature of the myriad dharmas is fundamentally and originally so. If one forms the view of naturalism, one falls into the external path of naturalism. If one forms the view of no-self, no-mine, one falls into the stages of the Three Worthies and Ten Saints. How can you now take a ruler of one foot or one inch and intend to measure empty space? He clearly tells you: dharma does not reach dharma (法法不相到), because dharma is itself quiescent (法自寂故). In its own place, it naturally abides; in its own place, it is naturally true. Because the body is empty, it is called emptiness of dharmas (法空); because the mind is empty, it is called empty nature (性空). Body and mind altogether empty, thus called emptiness of dharma-nature (法性

空). Even the thousand different paths of explanation are all not separate from your fundamental mind.

Nowadays, talk of Bodhi, Nirvana, True Suchness (真如), Buddha-nature, the Two Vehicles, Bodhisattvas – these are all pointing to leaves as gold, explanations like [showing] a closed fist.¹¹ If the hand is opened, the entire great assembly, whether gods or humans, all see that within the palm there is utterly not one thing. Therefore it is said: ‘Originally there is not one thing; where could dust alight?’¹² Since fundamentally there is no thing, the three periods [past, present, future] are fundamentally non-existent. Therefore, the person studying the Way must enter directly with a single blade (单刀直入); one must see this meaning to succeed.

Thus, Master Bodhidharma came from the West to this land, passed through how many countries, and only found Master Ke¹³ as the one person, secretly transmitting the mind-seal. Sealing your fundamental mind; using mind to seal the Dharma, using Dharma to seal the mind. Since mind is thus, Dharma is also thus. Same as the true boundary (真际), equal to the dharma-nature (法性). Within the emptiness of dharma-nature, who is the one giving the prediction? Who is the one becoming Buddha? Who is the one obtaining the Dharma? He clearly tells you: Bodhi cannot be obtained through the body, because the body is signless (身无相故); cannot be obtained through the mind, because the mind is signless (心无相故); cannot be obtained through the nature, because the nature is precisely the fundamental source, the self-nature, the naturally true Buddha (性即便是本源自性天真佛故). One cannot obtain Buddha again through Buddha; cannot obtain signlessness again through signlessness; cannot obtain emptiness again through emptiness; cannot obtain the Way again through the Way.

Fundamentally there is no attainment; non-attainment also cannot be attained. Therefore it is said: not one dharma is attainable. It only teaches you to realize your fundamental mind. At the moment of realization, do not grasp the characteristic of realization. The characteristic of no-realization and non-realization also cannot be attained. This kind of Dharma, the one who attains it, attains it. The attainer is not consciously aware [of attaining]; the non-attainer is also not consciously aware [of not attaining]. This kind of Dharma, since ancient times, how many people have come to know it?

Therefore it is said: how many people in the world have forgotten themselves? Nowadays, grasping at a particular technique, a state, a scripture, a teaching, an era, a time, a name, a word, before the gates of the six senses – how is this different from a mechanical wooden puppet? If suddenly one person comes forth who does not make interpretations based on a single name or form, I say that searching for this person throughout the ten directions of the world, they cannot be found, because there is no second person.

Therefore, they succeed to the Patriarchal seat, also called a descendant of Śākya (释种), pure and unmixed. Thus it is said: 'When the king becomes Buddha, the prince also follows and leaves home.'¹⁴ This meaning is exceedingly difficult to know. It just teaches you: do not seek; seeking immediately loses it. Like a fool shouting on a mountain top; an echo comes from the valley, and he runs down the mountain to chase it. When he cannot find it, he shouts again; the echo on the mountain responds again, and he runs up the mountain to chase it. Like this for thousands of lifetimes and myriad kalpas, just a person seeking sounds and chasing echoes, a fellow living vainly and dying wantonly. If you make no sound, there is no echo. Nirvana means no hearing, no knowing, no sound, eliminating tracks, eliminating traces. If one can attain this, one is slightly neighboring the Patriarchs.

Original Text: 上堂云：“夫学道者，先须并却杂学诸缘，决定不求，决定不着。闻甚深法，恰似清风届耳，瞥然而过，更不追寻，是为甚深。入如来禅，离生禅想。从上祖师唯传一心，更无二法。指心是佛，顿超等妙二觉之表，决定不流至第二念，始似入我宗门。如斯之法，汝取次人到这里拟作么生学？所以道：拟心时被拟心魔缚，非拟心时又被非拟心魔缚，非非拟心时又被非非拟心魔缚。魔非外来，出自你心。唯有无神通菩萨，足迹不可寻。若以一切时中心有常见，即是常见外道；若观一切法空，作空见者，即是断见外道。一切三界唯心，万法唯识，此犹是对外道邪见人说。若说法身以为极果，此对三贤十圣人言。故佛断二愚：一者微细所知愚，二者极微细所知愚。佛既如是，更说什么等妙二觉来？所以一切人，但欲向明，不欲向暗。但欲求悟，不受烦恼无明，便道佛是觉，众生是妄。若作如是见解，百劫千生轮回六道，更无断绝。何以故？为谤诸佛本源自性故。他分明向你道：佛且不明，众生且不暗，法无明暗故。佛且不强，众生且不弱，法无强弱故。佛且不智，众生且不愚，法无愚智故。是你出头总道解禅，开着口便病发。不说本，只说末；不说迷，只说悟；不说体，只说用。总无你话论处。他一切法且本不有，今亦不无，缘起不有，缘灭不无，本亦不有，本非本故。心亦不心，心非心故。相亦非相，相非相故。所以道无法无本心，始解心心法。法即非法，法非即法。无法无非法，故是心心法。忽然瞥起一念，了知如幻如化，即流入过去佛。过去佛且不有，未来佛且不无，又且不唤作未来佛。现在念念不住，不唤作现在佛。佛若起时，即不拟他是觉是迷、是善是恶，辄不得执滞他、断绝他。如一念瞥起，千重关锁锁不得，万丈绳索索他不住。既若如是，争合便拟灭他止他。分明向你道尔焰识，你作么生拟断他？喻如阳焰，你道近，十方世界求不可得；始道远，看时只在目前。你拟趁他，他又转远去。你始避他，他又来逐你。取又不得，舍又不得。既若如此，故知一切法性自尔，即不用愁他虑他。如言“前念是凡，后念是圣，如翻覆一般。”此是三乘教之极也。据我禅宗中，前念且不是凡，后念且不是圣；前念不是佛，后念不是众生。所以一切色是佛色，一切声是佛声。举着一理，一切理皆然。见一事，见一切事；见一心，见一切心；见一道，见一切道；一切处无不是道。见一尘，十方世界、山河大地皆然。见一滴水，即见十方世界一切性水。又见一切

法，即见一切心。一切法本空，心即不无，不无即妙有。有亦不有，不有即有，即真空妙有。既若如是，十方世界，不出我之一心。一切微尘国土，不出我之一念。若然，说什么内之与外，如蜜性甜，一切蜜皆然，不可道这个蜜甜，余底苦也。何处有与么事？所以道：虚空无内外，法性自尔。虚空无中间，法性自尔。故众生即佛，佛即众生。众生与佛，元为一体。生死涅槃，有为无为，元为一体。世间出世间，乃至六道四生，山河大地，有性无性，亦为一体。言同者，名相亦空，有亦空，无亦空，尽恒沙世界，元是一空。既若如此，何处有佛度众生？何处有众生受佛度？何故如此？万法之性自尔故。若作自然见，即落自然外道；若作无我、无我所见，堕在三贤十圣位中。你如今云何将一尺一寸，便拟量度虚空？他分明向汝道：法法不相到，法自寂故。当处自住，当处自真。以身空故名法空，以心空故名性空。身心总空，故名法性空。乃至千途异说，皆不离你之本心。如今说菩提、涅槃、真如、佛性、二乘、菩萨者，皆指叶为黄金，拳掌之说。若也展手之时，一切大众，若天若人，皆见掌中都无一物。所以道：“本来无一物，何处惹尘埃”。本既无物，三际本无所有。故学道人单刀直入，须见这个意始得。故达摩大师从西天来至此土，经多少国土，只觅得可大师一人，密传心印。印你本心，以心印法，以法印心。心既如此，法亦如此。同真际，等法性，法性空中，谁是授记人？谁是成佛人？谁是得法人？他分明向你道：菩提者，不可以身得，身无相故；不可以心得，心无相故；不可以性得，性即便是本源自性天真佛故。不可以佛更得佛，不可以无相更得无相，不可以空更得空，不可以道更得道。本无所得，无得亦不可得，所以道无一法可得。只教你了取本心，当下了时，不得了相。无了无不了相，亦不可得。如此之法，得者即得。得者不自觉地，不得者亦不自觉地。如此之法，从上已来，有几人得知。所以道天下忘己者有几人？如今于一机、一境、一经、一教、一世、一时、一名、一字，六根门前领得，与机关木人何别？忽有一人出来，不于一名一相上作解者，我说此人尽十方世界觅这个人不可得，以无第二人故，继于祖位，亦云释种，无杂纯一。故言王若成佛时，王子亦随出家，此意大难知。只教你莫觅，觅便失却。如痴人山上叫一声，响从谷出，便走下山趁。及寻觅不得，又叫一声，山上响又应，亦走上山上趁。如是千生万劫，只是寻声逐响人，虚生浪死汉。汝若无声即无响。涅槃者，无闻、无知、无声，绝迹绝踪。若得如是，稍与祖师邻房也。

Footnotes/Annotations:

• Equal Awakening (等觉) and Wondrous Awakening (妙觉): The 51st and 52nd (final) stages in the Mahayana Bodhisattva path according to the Tiantai school classification, representing stages just below and at supreme Buddhahood. Huangbo asserts that the direct realization of Mind transcends even these highest conceptual and graduated stages, since it is the immediate and direct non-conceptual realization of one's self-perfected state or timeless Buddha-nature.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- Intending mind... non-intending mind... neither-nor intending mind: Refers to getting caught in conceptual traps, whether actively trying to control the mind, trying not to control it, or trying to find a middle way conceptually. All involve intention (拟心) and create demonic obstacles (魔).
- Bodhisattva without supernatural powers (无神通菩萨): Perhaps refers to a Bodhisattva who relies on wisdom rather than powers, or one whose realization is so profound it leaves no traceable signs (足迹不可寻), unlike those who manifest powers.
- Eternalism (常见外道) and Annihilationism (断见外道): Two extreme views refuted by Buddhism. Eternalism posits a permanent self or reality; annihilationism posits complete cessation after death with no continuity. Huangbo warns against mistaking meditative states or conceptual views of emptiness for these extremes.
- Three realms are mind-only, myriad dharmas are consciousness-only (三界唯心，万法唯识): Core tenets of the Yogācāra (Mind-Only) school. Huangbo implies that even these profound statements are provisional, used to counter cruder externalist views.
- Dharmakāya... Three Worthies and Ten Saints (三贤十圣): The Dharmakāya is the ultimate body/reality of a Buddha. The Three Worthies and Ten Saints are stages on the Bodhisattva path prior to Buddhahood. Huangbo suggests that viewing the Dharmakāya as a final goal to be achieved is still relative to these stages, not the ultimate non-dual realization.
- Subtle and Extremely Subtle Knowledge Ignorance (微细所知愚，极微细所知愚): These refer to the most subtle knowledge obscurations (所知障), hindrances related to understanding the nature of reality, as opposed to affective obscurations (烦恼障, kleśāvaraṇa) related to emotions. In Mahāyāna Buddhism two principal obscurations (Skt. āvaraṇa; Tib. sgrib pa) are distinguished—afflictive obscurations (Skt. kleśāvaraṇa; Tib. nyön mongs kyi sgrib pa) and knowledge obscurations (Skt. jñeyāvaraṇa; Tib. ye shes kyi sgrib pa)—each defined by its essence (bhāva), cause (hetu), and function (varaṇa).

Afflictive obscurations are the defiling emotions—passion (raga), aggression (dveṣa), delusion (moha), and the like—which arise from grasping at a self, agent or soul (Skt. ātma-grāha, Tib. bdag lta bu) and block final liberation from saṃsāra.

Knowledge obscurations are the subtler veils of misperception—beginning with the classic three spheres of subject, object, and action; extending to all notions of how phenomena arise, abide, and cease; to supposed inherent causes and effects; to misconceived characteristics (lakṣaṇagrāha); to dualistic divides of internality versus externality; and to extremes of existence versus nonexistence—

each stemming from ascribing true, independent reality to phenomena (the “self of phenomena,” Skt. dharmātmagrāha, Tib. chos lta bu) and thereby obscuring omniscience.

Although Śrāvaka Ārhat and Pratyekabuddha practitioners likewise uproot the afflictive obscurations, entry into the eighth bhūmi marks the first stage at which a bodhisattva has eliminated all kleshas—putting them on par with arhats in that respect—yet they remain subject to the knowledge obscurations until full Buddhahood.

Saṃsāric Cycles: 分段生死 and 变易生死

分段生死 (prṭhaksamleśasaṃsāra, “rebirth in segmented lifetimes”) refers to the grosser cycle of rebirth through the six realms (hellbeings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, asuras, and devas), driven by afflictive karma and ignorance. Śrāvaka Ārhats, Pratyekabuddhas and the eighth bhūmi Bodhisattvas are able to put an end to this type of saṃsāric rebirth. 变易生死 (pariṇiṣpannasamleśa, “the subtler cycle of conditioned transformation”) denotes, as Chinese sources explain, the inconceivable “births and deaths” of mind made bodies (意身生, manomaya-kāya) or spiritual states—such as progress through the bodhisattva bhūmis, Pure Land rebirths, and shifts among meditative absorptions—powered by residual, nonfabricated karmic seeds (the “transformative seeds”) and compassionate vows; although these beings no longer undergo realm to realm rebirth, they still experience state to state transitions until the final eradication of all obscurations at Buddhahood.

Only the tathāgata, having eradicated both the afflictive and knowledge obscurations, transcends both 分段生死 (“rebirth in segmented lifetimes”) and 变易生死 (“the subtler cycle of conditioned transformation”), thereby realizing unsurpassable awakening.

An Partial Excerpt from Examination of the Five Aggregates (五蕴观)

“若能依此身心相。谛观分明。於一切处但见五蕴。求人我相终不可得。

If we rely on these characteristics of body and mind, carefully examine and see clearly, then in all places we only see the five aggregates. We search out the self-characteristic of the person and in the end it cannot be found.

名人空观。乘此观。行出分段生死。永处涅槃。名二乘解脱。

We call this the examination of the emptiness of persons. If one utilizes this examination then one departs birth and death within the six realms and forever abides in nirvāṇa (cessation). We call this the liberation of the two vehicles.

计法我者用後观照之。知一一蕴皆从缘生。都无自性。求蕴相不可得。则五蕴皆空。

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

For the conception of the self of a phenomenon we utilize the later examination and investigate it. We then know that each of the aggregates all arise from conditions and all are without self-essence. We seek out the characteristics of the aggregates and they cannot be found and so the five aggregates are all empty.

名法空观。若二观双照。了人我法我。毕竟空无所有。

We call this the examination of the emptiness of phenomena. If we investigate with both examinations we understand the person's self and the phenomenon's self are ultimately empty without existence.

离诸怖畏。度一切苦厄。出变易生死。名究竟解脱。

Free from all fears, crossing over all pains and emerging into existence as a Bodhisattva – we call this ultimate liberation."

- Mind-mind dharma (心心法): The direct transmission or realization of mind through mind, beyond words or concepts.
- Flame consciousness (焰识): Consciousness flickering and unstable like a flame or mirage, unable to be grasped or stopped by force.
- Wondrous presence (妙有): A key Mahayana term indicating that true emptiness (真空) is not mere nothingness but is dynamically manifest as wondrous, ungraspable presence or function.
- Pointing to leaves as gold, explanations like a closed fist (指叶为黄金, 拳掌之说): Standard metaphors for expedient means (upāya) – teachings given provisionally to guide beings but not representing the ultimate truth itself (the open hand revealing nothing, or the actual gold).
- ‘Originally there is not one thing; where could dust alight?’ (本来无一物, 何处惹尘埃): Famous verse attributed to the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, expressing fundamental emptiness and purity.
- Master Ke (可大师): Refers to Huike (慧可), the Second Patriarch of Chan, who received the transmission from Bodhidharma.
- ‘When the king becomes Buddha, the prince also follows and leaves home’ (王若成佛时, 王子亦随出家): An analogy possibly suggesting that when the fundamental mind (king) is realized, its functions or subsequent thoughts (prince) naturally align with awakening (leave home). Huangbo notes its difficulty.

English Translation: Question: “Regarding the King’s treasury,¹ there is absolutely no such sword within it. I humbly request your instruction and guidance.” The Master said: “The King’s treasury is

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

precisely the nature of empty space (虚空性). It can contain the ten directions of the empty space world; all of it is entirely not outside your mind. It is also called the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (虚空藏菩萨).² If you say it exists, or does not exist, or neither exists nor does not exist, it all becomes sheep horns.³ Sheep horns are precisely that which you seek.”

Original Text: 问：“如王库藏内，都无如是刀。伏愿诲示。”师云：“王库藏者，即虚空性也。能摄十方虚空世界，皆总不出你心，亦谓之虚空藏菩萨。你若道是有是无，非有非无，总成羊角。羊角者，即你求觅者也。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- King's treasury (王库藏): Metaphor for the fundamental nature, the mind-essence, or the Tathāgata-garbha. The questioner seems to be referencing a story or analogy involving a special sword.
- Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (虚空藏菩萨): The Bodhisattva whose name means "Treasury of Empty Space," symbolizing boundless wisdom and merit like space itself. Huangbo equates this with the mind's empty nature.
- Sheep horns (羊角): A Chan term symbolizing entanglement in dualistic concepts, useless seeking, delusion, or getting stuck on extraneous points. Any attempt to define the empty nature (treasury) as existent, non-existent, etc., is falling into conceptual delusion.

English Translation: Question: "Is there a true sword in the King's treasury or not?" The Master said: "This is also sheep horns." [The questioner] said: "If there is fundamentally no true sword in the King's treasury, why is it said, 'The prince, holding the true sword from the King's treasury, went out to a foreign country'?¹ Why uniquely say there is none?" The Master said: "The one holding the sword and going out – this is a metaphor for a Tathāgata's messenger. If you say the prince held the true sword from the King's treasury and went out, then the treasury should have become empty. The fundamental source, the empty nature, cannot be taken away by another person. What kind of talk is this? If you suppose you possess something, it is all called sheep horns."

Original Text: 问：“王库藏中有真刀否？”师云：“此亦是羊角。”云：“若王库中本无真刀，何故云‘王子持王库中真刀，出至异国？’何独言无？”师云：“持刀出者，此喻如来使者。你若言王子持王库中真刀出去者，库中应空去也。本源虚空性，不可被异人将去。是什么语？设你有者，皆名羊角。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- “The prince, holding the true sword...”: The questioner cites a specific story or phrase. Huangbo interprets it metaphorically: the "sword" is wisdom or the teaching, the "prince" is a messenger (like a

Bodhisattva or teacher), and the "treasury" is the fundamental source. He rejects the literal interpretation that something tangible (the sword) is removed from the inherently empty source (treasury). Holding onto the idea of a tangible "true sword" (a specific doctrine or attainment) is delusion ("sheep horns").

English Translation: Question: "Did Kāśyapa, having received the Buddha's mind-seal, become a transmitter of the message?"¹ The Master said: "Yes." [The questioner] said: "If he is a transmitter of the message, he ought not to be free from sheep horns." The Master said: "Kāśyapa himself grasped the fundamental mind, therefore it is not sheep horns. If one grasps the Tathāgata's mind, sees the Tathāgata's intent, [but only] sees the Tathāgata's physical form (色相), then one belongs to the category of the Tathāgata's messenger, acting as a transmitter of the message. Therefore, Ānanda, having served as attendant for twenty years, only saw the Tathāgata's physical form, and thus was rebuked by the Buddha, saying: 'You only contemplate the Savior of the World [externally].'² [He] could not get free from sheep horns."

Original Text: 问：“迦叶受佛心印，得为传语人否？”师云：“是。”云：“若是传语人，应不离得羊角。”师云：“迦叶自领得本心，所以不是羊角。若以领得如来心，见如来意，见如来色相者，即属如来使，为传语人。所以阿难为侍者二十年，但见如来色相，所以被佛呵云：‘唯观救世者。’不能得离羊角。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Transmitter of the message (传语人): Someone who relays teachings or information. The questioner implies this role is inherently secondary or conceptual ("sheep horns"). Huangbo distinguishes between Mahākāśyapa, who received the mind-to-mind transmission (心印) and realized the essence directly, and Ānanda, who initially focused on the Buddha's words and form without the same depth of direct realization, thus remaining entangled in "sheep horns" until his own later awakening.

- 'You only contemplate the Savior of the World' (唯观救世者): Reference to the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, where the Buddha points out Ānanda's reliance on external form rather than realizing the mind-nature within.

English Translation: Question: "Regarding Mañjuśrī holding a sword before Gautama,¹ what about that?" The Master said: "Five hundred Bodhisattvas attained the wisdom of past lives (宿命智) and saw the karmic obstacles from past births. The five hundred are precisely your five skandha-body (五阴身).² Because they saw these past-life obstacles, they sought Buddha, sought Bodhisattvas, sought Nirvana. Therefore, Mañjuśrī, using the sword of wisdom and liberation (智解剑), slew this mind that sees a Buddha [to be attained] (有见佛心). Thus, it is said, 'You slay well.'³ [The questioner] said:

“What is the sword?” The Master said: “The mind of liberation (解心) is the sword.” [The questioner] said: “The mind of liberation is the sword, cutting off this mind that sees a Buddha. But what about the mind that is able to cut – how can that be eliminated?” The Master said: “Still use your non-discriminating wisdom (无分别智) to cut off this discriminating mind that sees [a Buddha].” [The questioner] said: “For example, having the view of existence, having the mind that seeks Buddha, one uses the sword of non-discriminating wisdom to cut it off. But how can one deal with the wisdom-sword still being there?” The Master said: “If the non-discriminating wisdom slays views of existence and non-existence, the non-discriminating wisdom also cannot be obtained [is also eliminated].” [The questioner] said: “Cannot use wisdom to further cut wisdom? Cannot use a sword to further cut a sword?” The Master said: “Sword naturally slays sword; sword slaying sword, then the sword also cannot be obtained. Wisdom naturally slays wisdom; wisdom slaying wisdom, then wisdom also cannot be obtained. Mother and child both perish;⁴ it is also like this.”

Original Text: 问：“文殊执剑于瞿昙前者，如何？”师云：“五百菩萨得宿命智，见过去生业障。五百者即你五阴身是，以见此夙命障，故求佛求菩萨涅槃，所以文殊将智解剑，害此有见佛心故，故言你善害。”云：“何者是剑？”师云：“解心是剑。”云：“解心即是剑，断此有见佛心，只如能断见心，何能除得？”师云：“还将你五分别智，断此有见分别心。”云：“如作有见，有求佛心，将无分别智剑断。争奈有智剑在何？”师云：“若五分别智害有见、未见，五分别智亦不可得。”云：“不可以智更断智，不可以剑更断剑？”师云：“剑自害剑，剑剑相害，即剑亦不可得。智自害智，智智相害，即智亦不可得。母子俱丧，亦复如是。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Mañjuśrī holding a sword before Gautama: Refers to a story, likely from the Vimalakīrti Sūtra or related literature, where Mañjuśrī, embodying wisdom, brandishes a sword, often interpreted as cutting through delusion or attachment.
- Five hundred Bodhisattvas... five skandha-body (五百菩萨... 五阴身): Huangbo interprets the 500 Bodhisattvas seeing past karma as representing the five skandhas (form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness) recognizing their own conditioned nature and history of creating obstacles.
- You slay well (你善害): A phrase likely from the source story, where the Buddha (Gautama) or someone praises Mañjuśrī's action. "Slay" here means to cut through or eliminate delusion.
- Mother and child both perish (母子俱丧): A metaphor for the complete elimination of both the object of elimination (child - discriminating thought, views) and the tool of elimination (mother - non-

discriminating wisdom used as a tool). In the ultimate realization, the dualism of means and end, wisdom and ignorance, subject and object, dissolves entirely.

English Translation: Question: “What is seeing the nature (见性)?” The Master said: “Nature is seeing; seeing is nature. One cannot use nature to see nature again. Hearing is nature; one cannot use nature to hear nature again. It is just that you create a ‘nature seeing,’ a ‘nature that can hear and see,’ and immediately a differentiation between one and other arises. He clearly stated: ‘That which can be seen, cannot be seen again.’¹ Why do you place another head on top of your head? He clearly stated: ‘Like pearls scattered in a dish, the large ones are largely round, the small ones are small round; each one does not know the others, each one does not obstruct the others.’² ‘When arising, they do not say “I arise”; when ceasing, they do not say “I cease”.’ Therefore, among the four types of birth and six realms of existence, there has never been a time when they are not thus. Furthermore, sentient beings do not see Buddha; Buddha does not see sentient beings. The Four Fruits do not see the Four Towards;³ the Four Towards do not see the Four Fruits. The Three Worthies and Ten Saints do not see Equal and Wondrous Awakening; Equal and Wondrous Awakening do not see the Three Worthies and Ten Saints. Even water does not see fire; fire does not see water. Earth does not see wind; wind does not see earth. Sentient beings do not enter the Dharma realm; Buddha does not exit the Dharma realm.⁴ Therefore, the dharma-nature has no coming or going, no subject or object (无能所). Since seeing is like this, why do you say ‘I see, I hear,’ ‘At the place of a good spiritual advisor I attained concordance and awakening,’ ‘The good spiritual advisor spoke Dharma to me,’ ‘The Buddhas appear in the world to speak Dharma for sentient beings?’ Kātyāyana, just because he used a mind of arising and ceasing to transmit the Dharma of the true characteristic (实相法), was rebuked by Vimalakīrti.⁵ He clearly stated: ‘All dharmas are originally unbound; why try to liberate them? Originally unstained; why try to purify them?’⁶ Thus it is said: ‘The precious characteristic is thus; how can it be spoken?’ You now just foster a mind of right and wrong, a mind of defilement and purity, learn some piece of knowledge or understanding, roam around the world, and upon seeing people, immediately intend to assess them – who has the mind-eye, who is strong, who is weak. If like this, the difference is like heaven and earth; what further talk can there be of seeing the nature?”

Original Text: 问：“如何是见性？”师云：“性即是见，见即是性，不可以性更见性。闻即是性，不可以性更闻性。只你作性见，能闻能见性，便有一异法生。他分明道：‘所可见者，不可更见。’你云何头上更着头？他分明道：‘如盘中散珠，大者大圆，小者小圆，各各不相知，各各不相碍。’起时不言我起，灭时不言我灭。’所以四生六道，未有不与时。且众生不见佛，佛不见众生；四果不见四向，四向不见四果；三贤十圣不见等妙二觉，等妙二觉不见三贤十圣。乃至水不见火，火不见水；地不见风，风不见地；众生不入法界，佛不出法界。所以法性无去来，无能所。见既如此，因什么道‘我见我闻、于善知识处得

契悟、善知识与我说法、诸佛出世与众生说法？’迦旃延只为以生灭心传实相法，被净名呵责。分明道：‘一切法本来无缚，何用解他？本来不染，何用净他？’故云：‘宝相如是，岂可说乎？’汝今只成是非心、染净心，学得一知一解，绕天下行，见人便拟定当取，谁有心眼，谁强谁弱。若也如此，天地悬殊，更说什么见性。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- ‘That which can be seen, cannot be seen again’ (所可见者，不可更见): A paradoxical statement suggesting that true seeing (见性) is not an act of a subject seeing an object; the nature itself is the seeing. Trying to see the nature as an object is redundant and impossible ("adding a head onto a head").
- Pearls scattered in a dish... (盘中散珠...): Analogy illustrating the self-contained, non-interfering, self-so nature of phenomena when seen from the perspective of emptiness or fundamental nature. They simply are as they are.
- Four Fruits / Four Towards (四果/四向): Stages of attainment in the Śrāvaka (Hinayana) path: Stream-enterer (towards/fruit), Once-returner (towards/fruit), Non-returner (towards/fruit), Arhat (towards/fruit). Huangbo asserts their mutual non-perception from the standpoint of non-dual reality.
- Sentient beings do not enter... Buddha does not exit... (众生不入法界，佛不出法界): Emphasizes the non-dual nature of the Dharma realm (dharmadhātu). There is no actual movement of entering or exiting; beings are already within it, and Buddha is not separate from it.
- Kātyāyana... rebuked by Vimalakīrti (迦旃延... 被净名呵责): Refers to a passage in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (Chapter 3) where Vimalakīrti criticizes Mahākātyāyana for explaining the ultimate truth (实相) using dualistic concepts of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self, which still operate within arising and ceasing.
- ‘All dharmas are originally unbound... Originally unstained...’ (一切法本来无缚... 本来不染...): Quotes echoing Vimalakīrti's sentiment, emphasizing inherent liberation and purity.

English Translation: Question: “The student does not understand; how does the Reverend Master provide indication?” The Master said: “I have not a single thing; never have I ever given a single thing to anyone. Since beginningless time, simply because you have been indicated to by others, seeking accordance, seeking understanding – is this not a case where both disciple and master fall afoul of the king’s law?¹ You should just know that one thought (念) not being received is precisely the body without reception; one thought not conceptualized (想) is precisely the body without conceptualization; definitively not shifting, flowing, or creating is precisely the body without volition

(行);² not thinking (思量), calculating, or discriminating is precisely the body without consciousness (识).³ As soon as you now give rise to a separate thought, you enter the twelve links of dependent origination. Ignorance conditions volition (无明缘行) – both cause and effect; continuing up to old age and death – also both cause and effect. Therefore, when the youth Sudhana⁴ sought Virtuous Friends/Spiritual Mentors (善知识, kalyāṇamitra) in one hundred and ten places, he was merely seeking within the twelve links of dependent origination. Finally, he saw Maitreya, but Maitreya then directed him to see Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī is precisely your fundamental ground of ignorance (无明).⁵ If mind after mind differs, seeking Virtuous Friends/Spiritual Mentors externally, as soon as one thought arises, it ceases; as soon as it ceases, it arises again. Therefore, you bhikṣus also undergo birth, old age, sickness, and death. In responding to causes and repaying effects, this is precisely the arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. The five aggregates (五聚) are the five skandhas (五阴). If one thought does not arise, then the eighteen realms⁶ are empty; this very body is then the flower and fruit of Bodhi; this very mind is then numinous awareness (灵知), also called the numinous terrace (灵台).⁷ If there is any abiding or attachment, then the body becomes a dead corpse, also called a ghost guarding a dead corpse.”

Original Text: 问：“学人不会，和尚如何指示？”师云：“我无一物，从来不曾将一物与人。你无始以来，只为被人指示，觅契觅会，此可不是弟子与师俱陷王难？你但知一念不受，即是无受身；一念不想，即是无想身；决定不迁流造作，即是无行身；莫思量卜度分别，即是无识身。你如今才别起一念，即入十二因缘。无明缘行，亦因亦果，乃至老死亦因亦果。故善财童子一百一十处求善知识，只向十二因缘中求，最后见弥勒，弥勒却指见文殊，文殊者即汝本地无明。若心心别异，向外求善知识者，一念才生即灭，才灭又生。所以汝等比丘，亦生亦老亦病亦死，酬因答果以来，即五聚之生灭。五聚者，五阴也。一念不起，即十八界空，即身便是菩提华果，即心便是灵智，亦云灵台。若有所住着，即身为死屍，亦云守死屍鬼。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Fall afoul of the king's law (陷王难): A metaphor suggesting that seeking external validation or conceptual understanding leads both teacher and student into entanglement and trouble, away from true liberation.
- Body without volition (无行身): 行 (xing) corresponds to Saṃskāra-skandha (volitional formations).
- Body without reception... conceptualization... volition... consciousness (无受身...无想身...无行身...无识身): Huangbo explains the emptiness of the five skandhas (form/rūpa being implied as the physical basis) not as annihilation, but as the absence of grasping, conceptualizing, fabricating, and

discriminating consciousness when the mind does not give rise to separate thoughts (一念不起). The terms 受 (shou), 想 (xiang), 行 (xing), 识 (shi) correspond to Vedanā (feeling/reception), Saṃjñā (perception/conceptualization), Saṃskāra (volitional formations), and Vijñāna (consciousness) skandhas respectively.

- Sudhana (善财童子): The pilgrim protagonist of the Gaṇḍavyūha chapter of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, who visits numerous teachers (kalyāṇamitra) seeking awakening.
- Mañjuśrī is precisely your fundamental ground of ignorance (文殊者即汝本地无明): This is a radical Chan interpretation. Mañjuśrī represents supreme wisdom (prajñā). Identifying him with the fundamental ground (本地) of ignorance (无明, avidyā) points to the non-dual insight that wisdom is not separate from ignorance; rather, seeing through ignorance reveals the primordial wisdom, which is the mind's fundamental nature. Seeking externally, even for wisdom (Mañjuśrī), is still operating within the causal chain rooted in ignorance.
- Eighteen Realms (十八界): The six sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind), six sense objects (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects), and six sense consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, mental). Their emptiness signifies the cessation of dualistic subject-object perception.
- Numinous terrace (灵台): A Taoist term adopted into Chan, referring to the mind or heart as the seat of consciousness/spirit.

English Translation: Question: “Vimalakīrti remained silent, and Mañjuśrī praised him, saying: ‘This is truly entering the non-dual Dharma gate.’¹ What does this mean?” The Master said: “The non-dual Dharma gate is precisely your fundamental mind (本心). Speaking or not speaking involves arising and ceasing. When there is no speech or talk, there is nothing displayed. Therefore, Mañjuśrī praised.” [Someone] said: “Vimalakīrti did not speak; does sound then have cessation or extinction?” The Master said: “Speech is identical to silence; silence is identical to speech. Speech and silence are non-dual. Therefore, it is said the true nature of sound also has no cessation or extinction; Mañjuśrī’s fundamental hearing also has no cessation or extinction. Therefore, the Tathāgata constantly speaks; there has never been a time of not speaking. What the Tathāgata speaks is precisely the Dharma; the Dharma is precisely the speaking; speaking and Dharma are non-dual. Thus, even the Reward and Transformation bodies (Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya), Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, mountains, rivers, the great earth, water, birds, trees, and forests are all simultaneously speaking the Dharma. Therefore, speech also speaks, silence also speaks; speaking all day yet never having spoken. Since it is like this, just take silence as fundamental.”

Original Text: 问：“净名默然，文殊赞叹云：‘是真入不二法门。’如何？”师云：“不二法门，即你本心也。说与不说，即有起灭。无言说时，无所显示。故文殊赞叹。”云：“净名不说，声有断灭否？”师云：“语即默，默即语。语默不二，故云声之实性亦无断灭，文殊本闻亦无断灭。所以如来常说，未曾有不说时。如来说即是法，法即是说，说法不二故。乃至报化二身、菩萨声闻、山河大地、水鸟树林，一时说法。所以语亦说，默亦说，终日说而未尝说。既若如是，但以默为本。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

• Vimalakīrti's silence... non-dual Dharma gate (净名默然... 不二法门): Refers to the famous episode in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra (Chapter 9) where various Bodhisattvas explain the non-dual Dharma gate. Mañjuśrī asks Vimalakīrti for his explanation, and Vimalakīrti responds with profound silence, which Mañjuśrī praises as the ultimate expression of non-duality, transcending all verbal formulations. Huangbo equates this non-dual gate with one's own fundamental mind.

English Translation: Question: “Regarding Śrāvaka¹ practitioners hiding their form in the three realms, but being unable to hide from Bodhi – what does this mean?” The Master said: “Form (形) means substance/body (质). Śrāvaka practitioners are only able to cut off the views and cultivation pertaining to the three realms² and have already departed from afflictions (烦恼, kleśa), but they cannot hide from Bodhi. Therefore, they are still captured by Māra-rāja³ within Bodhi. While sitting calmly in meditation in the forest, they still form subtle views about the Bodhi-mind. Bodhisattva practitioners, regarding the three realms and Bodhi, are definitively neither abandoning nor grasping. Because they do not grasp, they cannot be found even if sought among the seven great elements.⁴ Because they do not abandon, external demons also cannot find them. As soon as you intend to attach to a single dharma, the imprint (印子)⁵ is already formed. If the imprint fixes on existence (有), then the patterns of the six realms and four types of birth emerge; if the imprint fixes on emptiness (空), then the formless pattern manifests. Now, just know definitively not to imprint any object whatsoever. This imprint becomes empty space (虚空), neither one nor two. Emptiness is fundamentally not nothingness; the imprint is fundamentally non-existent. Throughout the ten directions of the empty space world, the appearance of Buddhas in the world is just like seeing a flash of lightning; contemplating all wriggling creatures and sentient beings is like hearing an echo. Seeing the lands of the ten directions, numerous as micro-particles, is just like seeing one drop of water in the ocean. Hearing all profound Dharma is like illusion, like transformation. Mind after mind is not different; dharma after dharma is not different. Even the thousand sutras and ten thousand treatises are solely for the sake of your one mind. If you can avoid grasping any characteristic at all, hence it is said: ‘Within this one mind, skillfully and diligently adorn [it].’”⁶

Original Text: 问：“声闻人藏形于三界，不能藏于菩提者。如何？”师云：“形者，质也。声闻人但能断三界见修，已离烦恼，不能藏于菩提，故还被魔王于菩提中捉得。于林中宴坐，还成微细见菩提心也。菩萨人已于三界、菩提，决定不舍不取。不取，故七大中觅他不得；不舍，故外魔亦觅他不得。汝但拟着一法，印子早成也。印着有，即六道四生文出；印着空，即无相文现。如今但知，决定不印一切物，此印为虚空，不一不二。空本不空，印本不有。十方虚空世界，诸佛出世，如见电光一般；观一切蠢动含灵，如响一般。见十方微尘国土，恰似海中一滴水相似。闻一切甚深法，如幻如化。心心不异，法法不异。乃至千经万论，只为你之一心，若能不取一切相。故言‘如是一心中，方便勤庄严。’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Śrāvaka (声闻): "Hearer" disciple, associated with the Hinayana path, focused on individual liberation (Arhatship) by understanding the Four Noble Truths and overcoming afflictions within the cycle of birth and death (three realms).
- Views and cultivation pertaining to the three realms (三界见修): The erroneous views (dṛṣṭi) and the afflictions cultivated (bhāvanā) that bind beings to the realms of desire, form, and formlessness. Śrāvakas aim to eliminate these.
- Māra-rāja (魔王): The king of demons, symbolizing obstacles to awakening, including subtle attachments. Here, even attaining liberation from gross afflictions, the Śrāvaka may still have a subtle attachment to the idea or experience of Bodhi (awakening) itself, making them vulnerable.
- Seven Great Elements (七大): Earth, water, fire, wind, space, consciousness, and often perception/cognition (见大 in some texts like Śūraṅgama Sūtra). Refers to the fundamental constituents of reality; being unfound among them implies ultimate non-graspability.
- Imprint (印子): Like a seal making an impression. Refers to the mind fixing or conceptualizing reality as either existent or non-existent (empty), thus creating a definite pattern or view (文), leading to further karmic consequences (six realms) or subtle states (formlessness). True freedom lies in not imprinting anything.
- ‘Within this one mind, skillfully and diligently adorn [it]’ (如是一心中，方便勤庄严): This line, possibly quoting a sutra, suggests that all practices and skillful means (方便) are ultimately about working within/adorning this one mind, by realizing its nature free from grasping characteristics.

English Translation: Question: “Like when I, in a past life, was the Patient Immortal whose body was dismembered by King Kali¹ – how should this be understood?” The Master said: “The Immortal is precisely your mind. King Kali loved seeking;² neglecting to guard his kingly position is called greed for

gain. Nowadays, students who do not accumulate merits and virtues, upon seeing something, immediately intend to learn it – how are they different from King Kali? For example, when seeing forms, it damages the Immortal's eye; when hearing sounds, it damages the Immortal's ear. Continuing through to cognition (觉知), it is also like this. This is called dismemberment joint by joint.”

[Someone] said: “But when the Immortal was enduring, there shouldn't have been any further joint-by-joint dismemberment. It cannot be that one part of the mind endures, and another part does not endure.” The Master said: “You creating views of non-arising, interpretations of patience, and views of non-seeking – these are all damaging.” [Someone] said: “When the Immortal was being cut, did he still know pain? It is also said: ‘Herein there is no receiver [of feeling].’ Who experienced the pain?” The Master said: “Since you feel no pain, why do you stick your head out looking for something?”³

Original Text: 问：“如我昔为歌利王割截身体，如何？”师云：“仙人者，即是你心。歌利王好求也，不守王位，谓之贪利。如今学人不积功累德，见者便拟学，与歌利王何别？如见色时，坏却仙人眼；闻声时，坏却仙人耳。乃至觉知时，亦复如是。唤作节节支解。”云：“只如仙人忍时，不合更有节节支解。不可一心忍，一心不忍也。”师云：“你作无生见、忍辱解、无求解，总是伤损。”云：“仙人被割时，还知痛否？”又云：“此中无受者”，是谁受痛？”师云：“你既不痛，出头来觅个什么？”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- King Kali (歌利王): See footnote on this story in the previous translation section. The questioner identifies with the Patient Immortal (忍辱仙人).
- Loved seeking (好求也): Huangbo interprets King Kali's actions not just as cruelty, but as a form of greedy seeking or external grasping, analogous to spiritual practitioners who chase after external teachings or experiences without cultivating inner stability. The "dismemberment" becomes a metaphor for the mind being fragmented and harmed by grasping at sense objects (forms, sounds, etc.).
- Since you feel no pain, why do you stick your head out looking for something? (你既不痛，出头来觅个什么?): A sharp, dismissive Chan retort. Huangbo cuts off the intellectual/philosophical questioning about the nature of pain and the "receiver" (受者, vedaka, the feeler of sensation/vedanā). If the questioner truly realized the truth of "no receiver," the question about who feels the pain wouldn't arise. Asking the question reveals they are still operating from a conventional viewpoint, "sticking their head out" into conceptual problems.

English Translation: Question: “Regarding Dīpaṃkara Buddha's prediction [to Śākyamuni], was it given within the five hundred years, or outside the five hundred years?”¹ The Master said: “Within the

five hundred years, the prediction is not obtained. What is meant by the prediction is that your fundamental [nature] is definitively not forgotten and not lost; [though seemingly] engaged in conditioned activity (有为),² you do not grasp Bodhi. Just by understanding the mundane as non-mundane, one also does not obtain a separate prediction outside the five hundred years, nor does one obtain the prediction within the five hundred years.” [Someone] said: “Is understanding that the three times (past, present, future) aspect of the world is unobtainable/unfindable sufficient?” The Master said: “Not a single dharma is obtainable/findable.” [Someone] said: “Why then is it said: ‘Frequently passing through five hundred lifetimes, the periods before and after are extremely long?’”³ The Master said: “Five hundred long and distant lifetimes—you should know this still refers to the Immortal.”⁴ Therefore, when Dīpaṃkara gave the prediction, there was truly not the slightest dharma that could be attained.”

Original Text: 问：“然灯佛授记，为在五百岁中，五百岁外？”师云：“五百岁中不得授记。所言授记者，你本决定不忘不失，有为不取菩提。但以了世非世，亦不出五百岁外别得授记，亦不于五百岁中得授记。”云：“了世三际相不可得已否？”师云：“无一法可得。”云：“何故言‘频经五百世，前后极时长’？”师云：“五百世长远，当知犹是仙人。故然灯授记时，实无少法可得。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Within... outside the five hundred years (五百岁中... 五百岁外): This likely refers to periods after a Buddha's parinirvāṇa, often associated with the decline of the Dharma. The question probes the temporal aspect of the prediction. Huangbo refutes the relevance of such temporal frameworks, grounding the "prediction" in the timeless nature and the realization of non-attainment.
- Engaged in conditioned activity (有为, saṃskṛta): Refers to actions within the realm of cause and effect. Even while seemingly active in the world, the one who understands does not grasp at Bodhi as something conditioned or attainable.
- ‘Frequently passing through five hundred lifetimes...’ (频经五百世，前后极时长): This quote likely refers to accounts of Śākyamuni's past lives as a Bodhisattva practicing austerities for vast periods.
- Still refers to the Immortal (犹是仙人): Huangbo equates these long periods of past practice with the stage of the "Immortal" (like the Patient Immortal), implying it was still a phase before the final realization of non-attainment which triggered Dīpaṃkara's prediction. The prediction wasn't based on the duration of practice but on the realization itself.

English Translation: Question: “In the teachings it says: ‘Eliminate my inverted thoughts accumulated over countless eons; without traversing asaṃkhyeya kalpas, obtain the Dharmakāya.’”¹

What does this mean?” The Master said: “If through practicing for three incalculable eons (asaṃkhyeya kalpa), one were to attain some realization, even through eons countless as the sands of the Ganges, it could not be attained. If within a single instant (kṣaṇa) one obtains the Dharmakāya, directly understanding and seeing the nature, this is still the ultimate discourse of the Three Vehicle teachings. Why is this so? Because seeing the Dharmakāya as obtainable, it all belongs within the category of provisional meaning teachings (不了义教).”²

Original Text: 问：“教中云：‘销我亿劫颠倒想，不历僧只获法身’者，如何？”师云：“若以三无数劫修行有所证得者，尽恒沙劫不得。若于一刹那中获得法身，直了见性者，犹是三乘教之极谈也。何以故？以见法身可获故，皆属不了义教中收。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- ‘Eliminate my inverted thoughts... obtain the Dharmakāya’ (销我亿劫颠倒想，不历僧只获法身): A quote, possibly from the Śūraṅgama Sūtra or similar Mahayana texts, contrasting the instantaneous realization possible through understanding the mind-nature with the gradual path taking immense periods (asaṃkhyeya kalpas, abbreviated as 僧只). Dharmakāya is the “Dharma-body,” the ultimate aspect of a Buddha.
- Provisional meaning teachings (不了义教, *neyārtha*): Teachings given according to the capacity of the audience, not expressing the final, ultimate truth (了义教, *nītārtha*). Huangbo classifies even the idea of obtaining the Dharmakāya, however quickly, as provisional, because the ultimate view is that the Dharmakāya is self-perfected and not something to be obtained.

English Translation: Question: “Does one who understands the Dharma instantaneously see the Patriarch’s intent?” The Master said: “The Patriarch’s mind is beyond empty space.” [Someone] said: “Does it have limits or measure?” The Master said: “Having limits, being without limits – these are all dharmas of quantification and dualistic opposition. The Patriarch said: ‘It is neither limited nor limitless, nor is it not non-limited and non-limitless,’ because it is free from dualistic opposites (绝待). You students nowadays have not yet been able to exit beyond the Three Vehicle teachings; how can you be called Chan masters? Let me clearly tell you: ‘When practicing Chan uniformly, do not carelessly give rise to differing views.’ It is like a person drinking water – they know for themselves whether it is cold or warm. In every action, every abiding, in every instant, thought after thought is not different. If it is not like this, you cannot avoid rebirth in the cycle (saṃsāra).”

Original Text: 问：“见法顿了者，见祖师意否？”师云：“祖师心出虚空外。”云：“有限剂否？”师云：“有无限剂，此皆数量对待之法。祖师云：‘且非有限量，非无限量，非非有无限量，以绝待故。你如今学者，未能出得三乘教外，争唤作禅师？分明向汝道：‘一等

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

学禅，莫取次妄生异见。’如人饮水，冷暖自知。一行一住，一刹那间，念念不异。若不如是，不免轮回。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Free from dualistic opposites (绝待): A key Chan term indicating transcendence of all relative pairs and conceptual dichotomies (limit/limitless, being/non-being, etc.). The Patriarch's mind, or the ultimate, cannot be defined by such dualistic measures.
- Like drinking water... know for themselves (如人饮水，冷暖自知): A famous Chan saying emphasizing the direct, personal, non-transferable nature of experiential realization.

English Translation: Question: “The Buddha’s body is unconditioned (无为, *asaṃskṛta*) and does not fall into any category [number/measure]. Why then are there eight 斛 (hu) and four 斗 (dou)¹ of Buddha’s body relics (舍利, *śarīra*)?” The Master said: “Holding such a view, you see only illusory relics, not true relics.” [Someone] said: “Are relics fundamentally existent, or are they the result of meritorious efforts?” The Master said: “They are neither fundamentally existent, nor are they the result of meritorious efforts.” [Someone] said: “If they are neither fundamentally existent nor the result of meritorious efforts, why is it that the Tathāgata’s relics, the more they are refined, the purer they become, with golden bones remaining eternally?” The Master then rebuked him, saying: “You hold such views; how can you be called a Chan student? Have you ever seen bones in empty space? The minds of all Buddhas are identical to the great void; what bones are you looking for?” [Someone] said: “Currently, one sees that there are relics; what dharma is this?” The Master said: “This arises from your illusory thinking mind (妄想心); thus you see relics.” [Someone] said: “Does the Reverend Master also have relics? Please bring them out for me to see.” The Master said: “True relics are difficult to see. Only if you can gather up the entirety of Mount Sumeru² into micro-particles with your ten fingers will you then see the true relics. Indeed, when investigating Chan and studying the Way, one must attain a state where the mind does not arise in response to anything. Just focus on forgetting discriminations (忘机), and the Buddha Way flourishes; engaging in discriminating thoughts (分别), and the armies of Māra³ grow strong. Ultimately, there is not even a hair’s breadth of the slightest dharma to be obtained.”

Original Text:

问：“佛身无为，不堕诸数，何故佛身舍利八斛四斗？”师云：“你作如是见，只见假舍利，不见真舍利。”云：“舍利为是本有，为复功勋？”师云：“非是本有，亦非功勋。”云：“若非本有，又非功勋，何故如来舍利，唯炼唯精，金骨常存？”师乃呵云：“你作如此见解，争唤作学禅人？你见虚空曾有骨否？诸佛心同太虚，觅什么骨？”云：“如今见有舍利，此是何法？”师云：“此从你妄想心生，即见舍利。”云：“和尚还有舍利否？请将出

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

来看。”师云：“真舍利难见。你但以十指撮尽妙高峰为微尘，即见真舍利。夫参禅学道，须得一切处不生心。只论忘机即佛道隆，分别即魔军盛。毕竟无毛头许少法可得。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Eight 斛 (hu) and four 斗 (dou): Traditional Chinese units of volume, often cited as the quantity of relics left after the Buddha's cremation. 斛 (hu) and 斗 (dou) are measures of grain; their application to relics emphasizes the apparent paradox.
- Mount Sumeru (妙高峰): The mythical central mountain of the world in Buddhist cosmology. Gathering it into micro-particles is an impossible task, symbolizing the transcendence required to see the "true relics," which Huangbo equates with the unconditioned mind, like empty space.
- Armies of Māra (魔军): Forces of delusion, represented by Māra, that obstruct awakening. Discriminating thought fuels these forces.

English Translation: Question: "To whom did the Patriarch transmit the Dharma?" The Master said: "There is no Dharma to give to people." [Someone] said: "Why then did the Second Patriarch¹ ask the [First] Master to pacify his mind?" The Master said: "If you say there is [a mind to be pacified], the Second Patriarch should then have been able to find the mind. Because the mind was found to be unobtainable/unfindable, that is why [Bodhidharma] said, 'I have pacified your mind for you.'² If anything were obtained, it would entirely belong to arising and ceasing."

Original Text: 问：“祖传法，付与何人？”师云：“无法与人。”云：“云何二祖请师安心？”师云：“你若道有，二祖即合觅得心。觅心不可得故，所以道‘与你安心竟。’若有所得，全归生灭。”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Second Patriarch (二祖): Refers to Huike (慧可), the successor to Bodhidharma (the First Patriarch of Chan in China).
- Ask the Master to pacify his mind... 'I have pacified your mind for you' (请师安心... 与你安心竟): Refers to the famous story where Huike, distressed, asks Bodhidharma to pacify his mind. Bodhidharma demands, "Bring me your mind, and I will pacify it." Huike searches but replies, "I have searched for the mind, but cannot find it." Bodhidharma declares, "There, I have pacified your mind for you." This illustrates that the mind, when sought as an object, is unobtainable/unfindable, and realizing this unobtainability/unfindability is peace of mind. It confirms Huangbo's point of "no Dharma to give" and nothing to obtain.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

English Translation: Question: “Does the Buddha completely exhaust ignorance (无明, avidyā)?”

The Master said: “Ignorance is precisely the place where all Buddhas attain the Way. Therefore, dependent origination (缘起, pratītyasamutpāda) is the Way-place (道场, bodhimaṇḍa).¹ Every single particle of dust, every single form perceived, should merge with boundless principle (理性). Lifting the foot, setting the foot down, one does not leave the Way-place. The Way-place is unobtainability (无所得). I tell you, just unobtainability is called sitting in the Way-place.”

[Someone] said: “Is ignorance bright or dark?” The Master said: “It is neither bright nor dark. Brightness and darkness are dharmas of alternation. Ignorance is precisely not bright and also not dark. Not bright is simply the fundamental brightness. Not bright, not dark—just this one phrase confuses the eyes of everyone under heaven. Therefore it is said: ‘Even if the entire world were filled with those like Śāriputra,² exhausting their thoughts together to measure it, they could not fathom the Buddha’s wisdom.’³ Its unobstructed wisdom surpasses empty space; there is no place for your words or discussions. Śākyamuni’s measure is equal to the three thousand great thousand worlds. If suddenly a Bodhisattva appeared and took one stride, striding across the three thousand great thousand worlds, they would not exit one pore of Samantabhadra.⁴ What skill do you possess now that you intend to learn from him?”

[Someone] said: “Since it cannot be learned, why is it said: ‘Returning to the source, the nature is non-dual; skillful means (方便, upāya) have many gates?’”⁵ The Master said: “‘Returning to the source, the nature is non-dual’ means that the true nature of ignorance is precisely the nature of all Buddhas. ‘Skillful means have many gates’ means that Śrāvaka practitioners see ignorance arise and see ignorance cease; Pratyekabuddha⁶ practitioners only see ignorance cease, they do not see ignorance arise, moment by moment realizing quiescent extinction (寂灭, śānti-nirvāṇa); all Buddhas see sentient beings throughout the day being born yet without birth, throughout the day ceasing yet without cessation. Non-arising and non-ceasing is precisely the fruit of the Mahāyāna. Therefore it is said: ‘When the fruit is full, Bodhi is perfected; when the flower opens, the world arises.’⁷ ‘Lifting the foot is precisely Buddha; setting the foot down is precisely sentient beings.’⁸ ‘All Buddhas are the Honored Ones with Two Feet’⁹ means being complete in principle (理足) and complete in phenomena (事足); sentient beings are complete, birth and death are complete; all are equally complete. Being complete, there is no seeking.

Your current thought-after-thought intention to learn Buddhahood implies aversion towards sentient beings. If you have aversion towards sentient beings, you are slandering the Buddhas of the ten directions. Therefore, when the Buddha appeared in the world, he wielded the dung-removing implement, cleansing away the dung of speculative discourse (戏论之粪),¹⁰ just teaching you to

remove the mind of learning and the mind of seeing that you have had all along. Once removed completely, you do not fall into speculative discourse; this is also called carrying the dung out. It just teaches you not to give rise to mind. If the mind does not arise, you naturally become a greatly wise person. Definitely do not discriminate between Buddha and sentient beings; do not discriminate anything at all. Only then can you enter the gate of my Caoxi lineage.¹¹ Therefore, the ancient sages of the past said: 'Few practice my Dharma gate.' Thus, non-action (无行)¹² is my Dharma gate, which is just the One Mind gate. All people reaching here dare not enter. It's not said there are none at all, just that few people attain it. Those who attain it are precisely Buddha. Take care!"

Original Text: 问：“佛穷得无明否？”师云：“无明即是一切诸佛得道之处，所以缘起是道场，所见一尘一色，便合无边理性。举足下足，不离道场。道场者，无所得也。我向你道，只无所得，名为坐道场。”云：“无明者为明为暗？”师云：“非明非暗，明暗是代谢之法。无明且不明亦不暗。不明，只是本明。不明不暗，只这一句，乱却天下人眼。所以道：‘假使满世间，皆如舍利弗，尽思共度量，不能测佛智。’其无碍慧，出过虚空，无你语论处。释迦量等三千大千世界，忽有一菩萨出来一跨，跨却三千大千世界，不出普贤一毛孔。你如今把什么本领拟学他？”云：“既是学不得，为什么道：‘归源性无二，方便有多门。’如之何？”师云：“‘归源性无二’者，无明实性即诸佛性。‘方便有多门’者，声闻人见无明生，见无明灭；缘觉人但见无明灭，不见无明生，念念证寂灭；诸佛见众生终日生而无生，终日灭而无灭，无生无灭，即大乘果。所以道：‘果满菩提圆，华开世界起。’举足即佛，下足即众生。”“诸佛两足尊”者，即理足、事足，众生足、生死足，一切等足，足故不求。是你如今念念学佛，即嫌着众生，若嫌着众生，即是谤他十方诸佛。所以佛出世来，执除粪器，扫除戏论之粪，只教你除却从来学心见心，除得尽，即不堕戏论，亦云搬粪出。只教你不生心，心若不生，自然成大智者。决定不分别佛与众生，一切尽不分别，始得入我曹溪门下。故自古先圣云：‘少行我法门。’所以无行为我法门，只是一心门，一切人到这里尽不敢入。不道全无，只是少人得，得者即是佛。珍重！”

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Dependent origination is the Way-place (缘起是道场): Seeing the interconnected, conditioned nature of reality directly is the place of awakening. Ignorance isn't something separate to be destroyed, but the very field within which wisdom arises.
- Śāriputra (舍利弗): One of the Buddha's chief disciples, foremost in wisdom within the Śrāvaka tradition.

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

- ‘Even if the entire world... fathom the Buddha’s wisdom’ (假使满世间... 不能测佛智): A quote emphasizing the inconceivable nature of Buddha’s wisdom, beyond the grasp of even the wisest Śrāvakas using conceptual thought. Often found in Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra.
- Samantabhadra (普贤): A major Bodhisattva embodying practice and vows, often depicted riding a white elephant. The imagery highlights the vastness and all-encompassing nature of the Bodhisattva’s realization/state, making even cosmic scales seem small.
- ‘Returning to the source... many gates’ (归源性无二，方便有多门): A common Buddhist phrase summarizing that the ultimate nature is non-dual, but various skillful means (paths, practices) exist to lead beings toward it.
- Pratyekabuddha (缘觉): "Solitary Realizer," one who attains awakening independently, often through contemplating dependent origination, but does not teach widely like a Buddha.
- ‘When the fruit is full... world arises’ (果满菩提圆，花开世界起): A poetic expression, likely from the Avataṃsaka Sūtra or similar texts, linking the perfection of Bodhi (fruit) with the manifestation of enlightened reality (flower opening, world arising).
- ‘Lifting the foot... sentient beings’ (举足即佛，下足即众生): A dynamic expression of non-duality in action. The potential (lifting foot) is Buddha; the manifestation in the relative world (setting foot down) is sentient beings, yet both are inseparable aspects of the same reality.
- Honored Ones with Two Feet (两足尊): An epithet of the Buddha, literally "most honored among two-legged beings (humans and gods)." Huangbo reinterprets it non-literally as "complete in two aspects"—principle (理) and phenomena (事), or wisdom and compassion, etc. signifying holistic perfection.
- Dung-removing implement... speculative discourse (除粪器... 戏论之粪): Revisiting the metaphor from the Lotus Sutra (Parable of the Prodigal Son). Removing "dung" means clearing away proliferating concepts, discriminations, and intellectual views ("speculative discourse," prapañca).
- Caoxi lineage (曹溪门下): Refers to the lineage descending from the Sixth Patriarch Huineng, whose temple was at Caoxi (曹溪). Huangbo places his teaching firmly within this tradition of direct mind-pointing.
- Non-action (无行): While 行 (xing) often means volitional formations (skandha) or practice, here 无行 (wu xing) likely means "non-doing" or "non-fabrication," aligning with the core teaching of "no

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

mind" (无心) – ceasing contrived effort and conceptual activity. It signifies the natural functioning of the One Mind itself.

English Translation: Question: “How can one avoid falling into stages or grades (阶级)?” The Master said: “Eating rice all day, yet never having chewed a single grain. Walking all day, yet never having trod upon a single patch of ground.¹ When it is like this, there are no characteristics such as self or other. Throughout the day, not departing from all activities, yet not being confused by various objects [environments/conditions] – only then is one called a person of freedom (自在人). Thought after thought, seeing no characteristics whatsoever; do not acknowledge the three times of past, present, and future. The past period has no going; the present period has no abiding; the future period has no coming. Seated peacefully and uprightly, functioning spontaneously without constraint – only then is one called liberated (解脱). Exert effort! Exert effort! Within this gate, out of thousands and tens of thousands, only three or five attain it. If you do not take this as your task, the day of receiving calamity will surely come. Therefore it is said: ‘Strive forcefully in this life to completely resolve it; who can endure the remaining calamities over accumulated eons?’”²

Original Text: 问：“如何得不落阶级？”师云：“终日吃饭，未曾咬着一粒米。终日行，未曾踏着一片地。与么时，无人我等相，终日不离一切事，不被诸境惑，方名自在人。念念不见一切相，莫认前后三际。前际无去，今际无住，后际无来。安然端坐，任运不拘，方名解脱。努力！努力！此门中千人万人，只得三个五个。若不将为事，受殃有日在。故云：‘着力今生须了却，谁能累劫受余殃？’”

Footnotes/Annotations:

• Eating... yet never chewed; Walking... yet never trod (终日吃饭，未曾咬着一粒米。终日行，未曾踏着一片地): Metaphors for functioning in the world without attachment or conceptual fixation. Actions are performed, but the mind does not grasp or establish onto the action, the object, or the self performing the action as truly existing or separate. This embodies non-abiding and freedom from dualistic perception, thus transcending stages. Zen master Munan said, “There is nothing to Buddhism—just see directly, hear directly. When seeing directly, there is no seer; when hearing directly, there is no hearer.” Shidō Munan (至道无难, 1602-1676) was an early Tokugawa Zen master mostly active in Edo. He was the teacher of Shōju Rōjin, who is in turn considered the main teacher of Hakuin Ekaku. He is best known for the phrase that one must “die while alive,” made famous by D.T. Suzuki. Another Zen Master said, ‘You get up in the morning, dress, wash your face, and so on; you call these miscellaneous thoughts, but all that is necessary is that there be no perceiver or perceived when you perceive—no hearer or heard when you hear, no thinker or thought when you think. Buddhism is

The Heart of Zen by Master Huang Po

very easy and very economical; it spares effort, but you yourself waste energy and make your own hardships.' (Foyan Qingyuan, in *Instant Zen*, p 70)

- ‘Strive forcefully... accumulated eons?’ (着力今生须了却，谁能累劫受余殃？): A verse urging immediate and determined effort to achieve liberation in this lifetime, rather than continuing endlessly in saṃsāra.

English Translation: The Master passed away on his principal mountain during the Dazhong reign period (847–860) of the Tang Dynasty.² Emperor Xuanzong bestowed the posthumous title ‘Chan Master Duanji’ (断际禅师, Chan Master of Decisive Judgment) and named his stupa ‘Guangye’ (广业, Vast Karma/Activity).

Original Text: 师于唐大中年中，终于本山。宣宗敕谥断际禅师。塔曰广业。

Footnotes/Annotations:

- Dazhong reign period (大中年中): 847-860 CE. Huangbo likely passed away around 850 CE.

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