

~~The~~ Zen of Non-Duality



Part Two
Dog-Meat Zen and a Puddle of Piss

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PART TWO

Dog-Meat Zen and a Puddle of Piss

Mindful Bird Illustrations
Mei-Rung Huang



Zen is the Zen of Non-Duality

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Master Zhaozhou (778 – 897 J. Joshu) (1)

It's not that there is no holistic truth, but just that it's impossible to contemplate it.

Master Baizhang (709 – 788 J. Hyakujo) (2)

When the time is appropriate, one suddenly achieves realization as if remembering something previously known, but then forgotten.

All Zen is the Zen of Non-Duality



Buddha - in the Lankavatara Sutra:

"Mind itself is not dualistic."

"...there are, Mahamati, those who have fallen into the dualistic way of thinking, being unable to comprehend the truth."



(PART 1 – One Hand Clapping)

(a separate book – not included in this volume)

- 1 **Last Patriarch:** The Aim of Zen is Non-Duality
- 2 **Psychology of Zen:** Our Original Holistic Mindset
- 3 **Labels and Language:** Language is Duality

The Zen of Non-Duality

PART 2 – Dog-Meat Zen and a Puddle of Piss

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INTRODUCTION

Master Huineng (“Whey-nung” 638-713 J. “Eno) the Sixth and last Patriarch of Zen, tells us that:

The aim of Zen is “non-duality”.

He says “Buddhism is not dualistic;”

and that “The aim of Zen is to take hold of this non-duality of truth.” (3)

The *Lankavatara Sutra* is the foundational text of Zen. In the *Lanka*, Buddha addresses non-duality, or *prajna*, the holistic mindset. He explains that using labels, words, and language creates a mindset of dualism. It conceptually divides everything out from our original perspective of holistic bodhi-mind.

As Buddha tells us in the *Lanka's* introduction: it's like "a wind raising up waves on a flat ocean". Buddha tells us how the wind of language ("wind of objectivity") has raised up a conceptualist mindset for us – a mindset of duality and objectivism. (4)

This puts Zen in a special position among the spiritual and self-awareness practices of the world. The point of Zen is non-duality. This is a holistic mindset which cannot exist in the conceptualist domain of words, language, labels, descriptions, and other such dualistic mental tools.

Because students of Zen abjure labels and descriptions, they have a special problem in trying to take hold of this unusual dharma (5) which has no accessible handles, and no describable way to get a grip.

As many masters have pointed out in the koans, Zen has the unique problem that it can be talked about and pointed at with metaphors and allegories, etc. - but it cannot be taught directly.

One must approach through allegories, metaphors, conundrums, and riddles which point out and hint at “bodhi-mind”. Bodhi-mind (Sk. *prajna*) is Buddha’s untenable mindset of non-dual personal awareness.

Sengcan, the Third Patriarch of Zen, said that we can experience bodhi-mind if we can learn to recognize the basic act of choosing one thing over another. And then just learn to fundamentally stop choosing things for a while. He says we should stop choosing our preferences for a while; stop choosing judgments and comparisons between things; stop choosing words, labels, and categories for everything.

Sengcan Third Patriarch, from his poem Hsin Hsin Ming

Bodhi-mind is not difficult – just don't engage in the act of choosing.

Ref_1: Green (2001) p. 94.

Ref_2: Shambhala Dictionary (1991) p. 167.

Ref_3: Suzuki (1956) pp. 73-74.

Ref_4: Wright (2018) Chapter 3

Ref_5: "Dharma" means the knowledge, understanding, internalization, etc. of Zen.

4 - There Are No Teachers of Zen



Master Huangbo (Huangbo Xiyun) (d. 850 J. Obaku Kiun)

Great Master Huangbo told his students, “There are no Zen teachers.” One monk objected, and said, “But aren’t we all students of Zen?” The master replied “I didn’t say there is no Zen, I only pointed out that there are no Zen teachers.”(6)

Master Dahui (1089-1163 J. Daie)

Real Zen has no transmission. (7)

Nagarjuna (“Nahg-are-joo-nuh” c. 200 C.E.) The fourteenth patriarch (Indian) of Zen

No truth(8) has been taught by a Buddha to anyone, anywhere. (9)

Fifth Patriarch Hongren (601-674 J. ‘Gunin’ Daiman Gunin or Konin) Fifth Patriarch of Zen

To understand that the Buddha does not [actually] preach the Dharma is [proof of] having sufficiently listened [to the Buddha’s preaching]. (10)

Master Koan Daigu (c. 9th Cen. J. Gaoan Dayu)

That it can't be described is exactly what the fundamental reality is all about. (11)

Nanquan ("Nahn-**chuen**" 748-835 J. Nansen Fugan)

Yes, there is a dharma beyond what can be taught with words: It's not mind, not Buddha, not thing. (12)

————— . —————

One of the hardest things about Zen's non-duality is understanding that you can't cookbook it. It can't be taught; and there's no describable instructions you can follow to simply go learn it.

Nevertheless you can learn things "about" Zen and "about" bodhi-mind. You can learn what to expect; and some of what it might feel like if you should stumble on to a sudden realization of non-duality at some point.

And you can learn that thinking with labels and words prevents the non-duality of bodhi-mind.

You can learn by contemplating the meaning of Master Koan Daigu's statement (quoted above), as he explains that we're looking for a dharma which can't be grasped with our usual mental tools. You can learn that concepts, ideas and descriptions will take you in exactly the wrong direction.

Zen's dharma of non-duality is something you have to just subjectively stumble into - once you have a feeling for what to expect; and once you know enough about it to recognize it when you half-consciously notice it.

The masters were clear, no teacher, including Buddha, can teach you the dharma. On the other hand, the masters make it very clear that it's already an inherent part of your original basic nature (even though you're usually not conscious of it). It's always there, and you certainly will eventually notice it, if you're paying attention and know what to expect.

Great Master Baizhang

When the time is appropriate, one suddenly achieves realization as if remembering something previously known, but then forgotten. (13)

Master Baizhang

It's not something you can obtain from another. (14)

D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) Zen scholar and translator

The [Zen] experience is beyond description, and can never be transmitted to others. It is only those who have actually drunk the water who know whether it is cold or warm. (15)

Master Xuefeng (822-908 J. Seppo)

A monk asked, “Where is my eye?” Master Xuefeng answered “You can’t get it from your teacher.” (16)

Master Guisan (“Gwee-sahn” 771-854 J. Isan)

Guisan once told a student, “Whatever I have is my own, and can never be yours.” (17)

Sixth Patriarch Huineng

What I tell you is not secret, the secret must be found inside yourself. (18)

Master Deshan (Deshan Xuanjian) (782-865 J. Tokusan Senkan)

Master Deshan said, “My teaching has neither words nor phrases, and contains no dharma that can be given to others.” (19)

Master Dahui (1089-1163 J. Daie)

Real Zen has no transmission. It’s just a matter of people experiencing it. (20)

Ref_6: McDaniel (2012) p. 195.

Ref_7: Cleary (1989) p. 56.

Ref_8: By “truth” Nagarjuna is obviously referencing the absolute holistic truth (Prajna), not the Lesser, relative, dualistic truth (Vijnana) which we usually think about, teach, and learn.

Ref_9: Madyamakakarika: Karikas (25:24); Nagarjuna is important enough to be called the Second Buddha. He is also credited as being the “first in the history of Buddhism to have constructed a ‘philosophical system’.” See Shambala Dictionary (1991) pp. 151-152.

Ref_10: McRae (1986) p.126; Hongren’s Treatise on the Essentials of Cultivating the Mind.

Ref_11: Green (2009) p. 87.

Ref_12: Gateless Gate koan #27

Ref_13: Shambhala Dictionary (1991) p. 167.

Ref_14: McDaniel (2012) p. 201.

Ref_15: Suzuki (1994) p. 179.

Ref_16: Ferguson (2011) p. 264.

Ref_17: McDaniel (2012) p. 211.

Ref_18: Cleary (1989) p. 14.

Ref_19: Ferguson (2011) p. 219.

Ref_20: Cleary (1989) p. 56.

5 - Master Wumen Finds That Buddha Sells Dog Meat

It's a noted irony that Zen has developed a huge literature, both oral and written - attempting to transmit an understanding of prajna, the holistic mindset (which by its nature cannot be described, and can only be misrepresented by words, grammar, and Zen literature).

It's a great literature, ironically aimed at describing the indescribable non-duality of mind.

Master Yuanwu references Confucius in commenting on this irony:

Confucius (551-479 BCE)

When the wise man points out the Moon, the idiot looks at the finger.

Master Yuanwu (1063-1165 J. Engo)

The teachings of the Buddhist scriptures are like a finger pointing at the moon. (21)

_____ . _____

It's a huge problem for Zen that students frequently hold tight to the words of Buddha and Zen literature. In doing so they're like the idiot Confucius warns about above, who focuses devoutly on the pointing finger; never noticing or even suspecting the shining moon behind it.

The idiot mind beholds only the dualistic finger of Zen's "teaching", which at best can merely gesture toward the numinous non-dualistic nature of reality.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, Buddha tries to disabuse us of this mistake; and clue us in that what we're getting from him is only the finger, not the luminous moon of non-duality that we're looking for.

He's not giving us anything; he's only pointing.

Buddha to the bodhisattva Subhuti, *Diamond Sutra*, Paragraph 6

The words of the Buddha, Subhuti, are like a raft built to cross a river; once you've managed to cross the water they must be forgotten and left behind.

_____ . _____

Master Wumen (1183-1260, J. Mumon), the compiler and editor of the famous *Gateless Gate* collection of koans, addresses this ironic dilemma in koan #6 of his collection, published in the year 1228. His approach is much more colorful and provocative than Buddha's words on the subject, to Subhuti in the *Diamond Sutra*.

In this koan #6, the editor Wumen is commenting about the moment at the end of Buddha's famous *Flower Sermon* when Buddha supposedly first transmits the (un-transmittable) dharma on to his successor, Mahakashapa. Wumen says Buddha is speaking falsely here, about this transmission of dharma.

Wumen is outrageously saying that the word-teachings we receive from Buddha are not the transmission of mind he keeps promising. Wumen is saying that even Buddha can not teach anybody the special dharma of non-duality, even though he constantly advertises that he can, that he has in the past, and that he will continue.

Master Wumen in his commentary on *Gateless Gate* koan #6

Old Golden-Face hung out a sheep's head [over his shop door], advertising good mutton, but sold dog-meat instead.

Backhanded teachings like this, and even high praise from the Zen masters, are often couched in such irreverent criticisms. (22) Wumen's accusation here is simply an unusual tool he uses to drive home the very point Buddha is making in his *Flower Sermon*.

All of Buddha's high teachings are beyond dualism; beyond the capacities of words and description. The best Buddha can do is to sell us cheap verbal dog meat, though we go to him for the top-quality mutton he's been promising us.

Buddha can only point at the moon. He can't actually show it to us, or wrap our grasping hands around it. We, on our own, must come to realize that Buddha's pointing finger is not what he's trying to show us.

As Buddha told us in the *Diamond Sutra*, you haven't crossed the river until you abandon the raft. Master Wumen's dog-meat metaphor couldn't explain that point more clearly. Abandon the dualistic dog-meat; look past the finger.

Ref_21: Cleary (1989) p. 34.

Ref_22: Wright 2017 p. 93-94

6 - Do Not Seek The Dharma - No Gate Is the Dharma Gate



The famous contradiction at the heart of Zen is how it's perfectly counter-productive for one to seek the dharma, or to have any intention of obtaining it. The dharma of Zen should not be sought. And so we're faced with a perfect conundrum.

To "obtain" a "thing" which one doesn't have, or even to just consciously identify the thing, one must have a dualistic mindset. So the very mere acts of identifying, and then seeking, run directly counter-productive to the experience of non-duality; just as the masters keep telling us.

In *Gateless Gate* koan #19 for example, young Zhaozhou is asking his master Nanquan ("Nahn-chuen" 748-835 J. Nansen Fugan) how to go about acquiring bodhi-mind.

Quan answered, "If you try to approach it, you go away from it. The more you seek after it, the more it moves away from you." Upon hearing that, Zhou had insight. (23)

Clearly, Zhaozhou suddenly understood his master's point, and was able to turn off his intention to seek. Later in his life he emphasized that when we objectify bodhi-mind and seek to gain it, then we're engaged in a dualistic process; which inherently moves us in exactly the opposite direction from experiencing non-duality:

Master Zhaozhou (Zhaozhou Congshen) ("Zow-**dzoh**": 778 – 897 J. Joshu)

You can seek, but if you do you will not find. ...to seek bodhi-mind is to deviate from it. (24)

At first hearing, this obviously sounds like nonsense. Baizhang, the master of Nanquan (who was Zhaozhou's teacher) explains it with another riddle. It's clever and percipient, but one has to think twice and give it some time to sink in:

...you finally "attain" (the unattainable) realization by entering the mindset of non-duality.

At that moment, you have insight into a non-objective holistic perspective on the world, in which there are no "things". All of reality is integrated into a whole. There's nothing to find, or to be found, and no meaning to the idea of attainment.

It's bodhi-mind, pure simple non-conceptual awareness. It's just being; not conceptualizing and thinking.

Master Baizhang's summary of this:

Enlightenment is attaining the insight that enlightenment is not some "thing" which can be attained. (25)

This may sound very gimmicky, but that's not Baizhang's intention. He's trying to convey the fact that the experience of raw basic holistic non-objective awareness is the one "thing" (pardon the expression) which is not a thing.

He's saying it's possible to be fully conscious, but with a holist mindset - where there is no conceptualizing of reality into separate "things". Understanding that is everything, according to great master Baizhang - that's all it takes.

This same message is repeated in *Gateless Gate* koan #2: Master Baizhang's Fox Roshi discovers in this koan that one can only escape the cause-and-effect world of karma by simultaneously realizing that there is absolutely no possible way to escape the cause-and-effect world of karma.

Non-duality can only happen at a moment when it is not being consciously sought after. It only happens when one understands that it's not something which can be got.

You'll never get it until you finally realize that it's not something you can get. It's something you are; a subtle, unnoticed, overshadowed, big part of your everyday awareness.

Nanquan (“Nahn-**chuen**” 748-835 J. Nansen Fugan) in *Gateless Gate* koan #27

It’s not-Mind, not Buddha, not Thing.

Master Yuanwu

If you desire the self-realization of Zen, then don’t seek it. Seeking is an intellectual path, and cannot lead to Zen. (26)

Master Mazu Master Mazu (709-788 J. Baso Doitsu)

No Gate is the Dharma Gate. Those who seek the dharma should not seek for anything. (27)

Master Dongshan Shouchu (910-990 J. Tozan Shusho)

Samadhi has no Gate. (28)

Master Linji (“Lin-gee” 810-866 J. Rinzai Gigen)

Do not desire to attain Bodhi-mind. Don’t even think of it. Do not strive for Buddhahood by any conscious deed.

...When you look for your real self you become farther from it. When you seek it, you turn away from it even more.

...Never for a moment set your mind on seeking Buddhahood. (29)

Master Foyan (1067-1120 J. Butsugan)

You must seek, without seeking. (30)

The ultimate Zen lesson then is to look past the pointing finger of Zen’s preaching and teaching; to finally see beyond the words of Buddha - and then to turn your back and leave them all behind. In Huineng’s words again, it’s to “take hold of the non-duality of truth”(31) - which is a realization that happens to you when you’re consciously experiencing a non-objective, non-verbal mindset. As Sixth Patriarch Huineng says, you have to be “not thinking good, and not thinking not-good”.

Ref_23: *Gateless Gate* koan #19.

Ref_24: Green (2001) pp. 54 & 37.

Ref_25: *Shambhala Dictionary* (1991) p. 167.

Ref_26: Cleary (1989) p. 30

Ref_27: Cheng (1992) p. 62.

Ref_28: McDaniel (2012) p. 238.

Ref_29: (1) McDaniel (2012) p. 227; (2) Cleary (1989) p. 6; (3) Watson (1993) p. 26.

Ref_30: Cleary (1989) p. 47.

Ref_31: *Platform Sutra, Huineng’s first teaching as the Sixth Patriarch of Zen*: “When you’re not thinking good, and not thinking not-good, then experience your own true original self.”

7 - Dried Poop On A Stick - Vulgarity and Aggression



Gateless Gate Koan #3

Master Juzhi (c. 9th Cen. J. Gutei Chikan) practiced what he called One-Finger Zen. Whenever anyone asked him a question about Zen he would just silently raise his forefinger. (32) This gesture of unity and non-duality was his answer for everything. (33)

A young man at the temple thought he was learning the dharma by mimicking Master Juzhi's one-fingered practice. Finally one day, when the student again raised his own forefinger in answer to a question, Master Juzhi grabbed a knife and cut the finger off. The boy's mimicry was no longer possible.

As his student ran from the hall, Juzhi shouted his name; and when he turned around he saw the master once again silently holding up a single finger. And upon that the young man achieved enlightenment.

Master Mazu (709-788 J. Baso Doitsu)

Shuilao asked Mazu, “Master, what is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the west?” (34) As his student bowed down, the master kicked him and Shuilao had a great awakening. (35)

The Zen of the patriarchs is famous for its aggressive violence, rudeness, deliberate disrespect, and vulgarity. The literature contains countless stories of accomplished masters employing surprise attacks with sticks, fists, and words, against students; and also against each other. (36)

Among the many well-known tales of Zen’s exemplary rudeness, consider Bodhidharma’s uncooperative and dismissive meeting with Emperor Wu - or how great master Guisan was so rude and aggressive in winning his position as roshi of the temple on Gui mountain - or the story of Mu-chu (780-877 J. Bokushu Domyo) violently granting percussive enlightenment to desperate young master Yunmen (864-949 J. Ummon). (37)

Zen is quite a bit unlike most other “spiritual” or enlightenment traditions. Most consciousness-raising and self-awareness practices urge their followers to strive for goodness and/or proper behavior. But for all of its benefits, this striving for goodness automatically requires a dualistic mindset. That’s just what Sixth Patriarch Huineng was warning us against. “Don’t think good versus bad,” he said, while you’re looking for holistic consciousness.

This doesn’t mean you might end up randomly doing bad things – it’s all just about your state of awareness. Proper action doesn’t require any conscious attention to good versus bad. One can help a child cross the creek automatically without considering good versus bad.

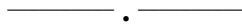
Proper action can just happen automatically, like walking along a familiar path, for example, while not thinking any thoughts about where you’re stepping. (38)

The aim of Zen, as Huineng informed us in Part One, is non-duality; and there’s a specific message of non-duality embedded in Zen’s unconventional practices. With modern brain science we now know that rightbrain thinks holistically, and leftbrain thinks dualistically. They’re even hardwired differently for that effect. (39) So obviously, if we’re hoping for non-dual, holistic thinking, we’d like to bring rightbrain to the fore, and keep leftbrain on the back burner. Much of Zen’s unusual tradition does exactly that.

Modern science has discovered that puzzles, metaphors, irrationality, allegories, etc. activate the rightbrain; (40) as do violence, fear, anger, danger, vulgarity, and disgust. (41) So if the ancient Zen masters had the benefit of modern brain science we would expect their personal behavior and their literature to be full of puzzles, metaphors, slapping, punching and other violence, vulgarity and rudeness, etc. We could also expect it to feature self-deprecation, and insults both to Old Golden Face, and to other respected

members of the sangha. All of the above are known to activate the rightbrain and its non-dual mindset.

It's interesting that the ancients obviously discovered all this without the benefit of modern brain science. In the little collection of offensive and obscene koans recited at the end of this chapter we can see how they employed these techniques to call up the rightbrain with its non-dual perspective and its holistic operations.



The "Pure Land" (Sk. Buddha-kasetra) is sort of a Buddhist paradise where deserving people can be awarded a fantastic future incarnation. Then while living their future incarnation as humans in this paradise, they can pursue their quest for self-realization without the tribulations and mundane distractions of normal earthly existence. They can focus all their energies on the goal of achieving complete enlightenment. One pre-historic Buddha by the name of Amitabha⁽⁴²⁾ is most famous for promising future life in his Pure Land (named Sukhavati) to all who will just repeat his name three times⁽⁴³⁾ with pure intent. Amitabha's *Pure Land* Buddhism is one of Asia's most popular sects.

We'd have to guess that threatening to pee on somebody's foot would work to activate their rightbrain. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ Threats of aggression and disgusting suggestions automatically do that. In any case, Master Zhaozhou's clever, vulgar, and disrespectful lesson here includes more than one approach to activating his student's rightbrain mindset.

A student once asked Master Zhaozhou (778 – 897 J. Joshu):

"Please explain to me the holiness of the dharma." The master answered "Holiness is a puddle of piss in the Pure Land."

The student, shocked at this vulgarity and not understanding at all, said "I ask you to reveal this teaching to me." Zhaozhou replied "Don't tempt me." ⁽⁴⁵⁾

Note that Zhaozhou and these unpleasant masters quoted below are not minor figures. They're all among the most prominent and influential of Zen's revered golden age "ancestors". Also note, that contrary to how more secularized modern people might react, filthy insults to holy figures, particularly in a seventh century temple or monastery setting, would likely be shocking, or even fighting words.

Great Master Linji ("Lin-gee" 810-866 J. Rinzai Gigen) Founder of the Linji (Rinzai) School

Even just the idea of bodhisattva and Buddhahood belongs in the sewer.

...[The very concept of] bodhi-mind and nirvana are hitching posts for donkeys.

...I think of Buddha as I do the hole in the outhouse. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

Wumen *Gateless Gate* koan #30

If you even speak the single word “Buddha,” then you should wash your mouth out for three days.

Master Linji

If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him. (47)

A monk asked Takuan (n.d.)

“Do you ever practice [reciting the name of Buddha]?” The master replied “no, I never do.” “Why do you not?” “Because I don’t want to pollute my mouth.”(48)

Master Deshan (Deshan Xuanjian) (782-865 J. Tokusan Senkan)

Bodhidharma is an old stinking foreigner.

...Buddha is a dried piece of excrement, and the bodhisattvas Manjusri and Samantabhadra are dung carriers.

...The Buddhist scriptures are a collection of devils’ texts, paper fit only for wiping infected skin boils.

...The Buddha is a dried piece of dung of the barbarians, and sainthood is only an empty label. (49)

Yunmen (864-949 J. Ummon)

What can Buddha be compared to? Great master Yunmen answered, “To dried poop on a wiping stick.” (50)

Obviously all the outrageously-profane masters quoted above were addressing bodhi-mind as best they could - employing Zen’s unconventional (rightbrain-activating) techniques to help their students find the ability to experience non-duality.

Ref_32: *The Blue Cliff Record*, Cleary (2005-a) p. 123, also McDaniel (2012) p. 200.

Ref_33: See also: Ferguson (2011) p. 196; Cleary (2005-b) p. 356; and Cleary (2005-c) p. 257.

Ref_34: This was a commonly-asked question/meditation in early Zen. Why did Bodhidharma bring Zen east to China from India in the sixth century? Obviously all answers are totally insufficient, and rise from erroneous dualistic assumptions of cause and effect.

Ref_35: Cheng (1992) p. 70; also Suzuki (1994) p. 20.

Ref_36: Wright (2017) chapter 27.

Ref_37: Wright (2017) chapter 27.

Ref_38: See Jaynes, Julian. (1976) for an interesting explanation of the difference between automatic behavior and actually being conscious.

Ref_39: Ornstein (1977) pp. 35; 20-21

Ref_40: Ornstein (1997) p. 155

Ref_41: Ornstein (1997) pp. 72; 73-90

Ref_42: Amitabha is one of 27 named prehistoric Buddhas, who preceded Shakyamuni Buddha in some Buddhist cosmologies.

Ref_43: Or sometimes ten recitations are needed; Amitabha seems to often change the requirements.

Ref_44: It's both threatening and disgusting. And remember that a part of your brain takes every suggestion of threat seriously, until it gets mentally vetted and sorted out.

Ref_45: Green (2001) p. 32.

Ref_46: Watson (1993) (1 & 2) p. 26; (3) p. 76.

Ref_47: McDaniel (2012) p. 255.

Ref_48: Suzuki (1994) p. 49.

Ref_49: (1, 2, & 3) Ferguson (2011) p. 220 also McDaniel (2012) p. 234; (4) Hu (1953) p. 22.

Ref_50: Gateless Gate koan #21. And yes, that kind of wiping stick. The use of T.P. was first recorded in China in 589, but monks and common folk were still using wiping sticks in the Tang Dynasty.

8 - Avoiding Conceptualism



According to Zen tradition the early Zen masters were able to communicate directly mind-to-mind.

Master Yuanwu (1063-1135 compiler of Blue Cliff Record collection of koans)

The buddhas and ancestral teachers transmitted mind by mind. ...they acted like two mirrors reflecting each other. This is not something that words and images can capture. (51)

We may not accept Yuanwu's report here as literal truth; but even if we don't, our understanding of Zen is increased by suspending our disbelief, and allowing this tradition the benefit of the doubt. It exemplifies an important part of Zen's mindset; and it complements our grasp of the direct non-verbal type of communication constantly promoted by Buddha.

Master Shōju Rōjin (1642–1721) (teacher of the great Japanese Master Hakuin, (52) of the Rinzai or Linji school) explained that these wonderful abilities of the ancients

deteriorated quickly. He wrote that within a few centuries after Yuanwu's lifetime this direct visceral experience of bodhi-mind had devolved into a conceptual system of imitation and representation (labels and symbols): (53)

This Zen school of ours declined in the Song Dynasty [960 - 1278] and died out in the Ming Dynasty [1368 - 1644]. Although some of the residual efficacy was transmitted to Japan, it is as faint as stars in the daytime. ...Nowadays there are only lifeless imitators studying signposts, 'Zen teachers' without liberated vision. Such people haven't even dreamed of what was transmitted by the enlightened masters of old. (54)

D. T. Suzuki further describes this degeneration and loss of direct experience - and how it becomes replaced by experiencing the world digitally, through mental representations. He says we're left with an indirect experience of reality. Our perceptions are filtered through a linear system of discreet symbols, linguistic representations and a dualistic world of defined concepts.

There was a tendency which made for the evaporation of Zen experience into conceptualism. (55)

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* (Vee-MALA-kurdee) tells us that about twenty-six hundred years ago, at a huge gathering with Buddha, there was a special convocation of bodhisattvas. They were each taking turns trying to describe the nature of duality and non-duality. The last two to have a turn and close out the meeting were Great Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, followed by their special guest, Vimalakirti, a simple enlightened layman; not a bodhisattva at all. Vimalakirti's presentation exceeded all of the bodhisattvas, when he perfectly concluded the symposium on non-duality - by remaining silent for his turn to explain. Manjusri had just preceded him, with this now-famous critique of his fellow bodhisattvas at the convocation:

Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, to the convocation:

By attempting to describe and explain duality, you yourselves have all fallen into its trap.

Vimalakirti and Manjusri are reminding us here that there's a natural bodhi-consciousness available to us, which lies beyond the mindset of describing, explaining, and labeling. It's a non-dual original awareness, which we can notice only in the absence of dualistic conceptualism.

This is an idea which leftbrain finds completely untenable. Your leftbrain wants to apply language and grammatic arts to everything - and it can't imagine direct raw consciousness without a defining filter of conceptualist language, labels, and grammars. (56)

In this regard, a lot of modern philosophers explain that what we think of as "thought" itself is basically a function of language. And they argue that without language we would be mostly unable to frame the mental "things" we call thoughts. But Manjusri's teaching

here plainly reassures us of his opinion that there is indeed a non-dual mindstate we will reach - if we can just gain the ability of getting our mental awareness back to a pre-verbal state for a while.

The masters have told us above that this state of bodhi-mind is absolutely not something which one can learn from a teacher; or seek for externally. They tell us that bodhi-mind is already a part of our native mindset; it's just a part that we've been overlooking out of ignorance and habit.

Master Mazu (709-788 J. Baso)

Ignorance is to be ignorant of one's original mind; and enlightenment consists simply in awakening to one's original nature. (57)

Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng in Zen's *Platform Sutra*(58)

... If you know your original mind, this is deliverance. Once you have attained deliverance this then is prajna. (59)

Buddha tells us repeatedly that language, talking, names and labels are not components of our original mind. All of these require dualistic thinking; and will always prevent the conscious experience of bodhi-mind.

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

Meaning is different from words, it will not be made manifest by means of words.

...Meaning is entered into by words as in the same way that objects [are revealed] by a lamp. (60)

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

Words, Mahamati, are an artificial creation. (61)

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

...The realm of self-realization is free from words and discriminations, having nothing to do with dualistic terminology. (62)

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

Mahamati, words are not the highest reality, nor is what is expressed in words the highest reality. (63)

_____ . _____

Buddha and the masters can't deliver bodhi-mind on a platter, but they have told us a lot about what to expect and what it's like. They've strongly stressed that it's not going to happen unless we can let go of thinking with labels, words, and comparisons for a while.

As Master Huineng told us, Zen is about learning to temporarily let go of all duality, including all categories and comparisons such as good versus not-good. We must find how to take the world as-is, whole, unfiltered, un-labeled, undefined, un-preferred, and raw. We need to experience consciousness the way our original mind did, before we started filtering and shaping our experience with language and other dualistic mental tools. (64) Huineng tells us we can do that, if we stop conceptually breaking the world into sets of labeled dualities such as good and not-good, etc.

Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch

Buddhism is not dualistic. To take hold of this non-duality of truth is the aim of Zen. (65)

Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng to General Ming, in *Zen's Platform Sutra*

When you're not thinking good, and not thinking not-good, then experience your own true original self.

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Gateless Gate koan #40, Guisan's graduation:

Around the beginning of the Eighth Century in China an emissary was sent to great master Baizhang's temple, from the nearby Zen monastery on Gui Mountain. This emissary was asking Baizhang to choose a person from among his learned students, to go become the new head master at Gui Mountain. The emissary naturally wanted someone who had achieved bodhi-mind. Baizhang suggested his humble temple cook, a man now called Guisan. Baizhang's learned head monk however objected to that choice. He argued that his own elevated position made him more worthy of the honor, rather than a lowly cook like Guisan.

So Master Baizhang declared a contest between Guisan and the head monk, with the winner to become the new master of Gui Mountain monastery. He pointed over to the temple's water urn, and asked each contestant to tell what it is, but without saying its name. The head monk cleverly said "it's not an oak stool".

Baizhang's head monk here has clearly fallen into the exact same trap as all the bodhisattvas at the Non-Duality convocation in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*. He answers Baizhang's quest for non-duality with discriminative words and categorical grammar. It's almost as though he is deliberately trying to demonstrate that he's trapped in a dualistic mindset. Like all the bodhisattvas at the convocation, Baizhang's head monk here just doesn't get it.

The humble cook though, Guisan, is a perfect model of bodhi-mind. He's the exemplar for us. (Guisan later went on to found the eponymous Guiyang school, one of the five great schools of classical Zen).

Guisan's answer to the contest question displays both parts of what Huineng defines as the "aim of Zen". His answer is uncouth, with no cognizance of good manners versus not-good; or respectful versus not-respectful. Guisan here is not cognizant of such stuff. His answer is non-verbal, and so absolutely raw and direct, that even a pre-verbal toddler would understand exactly. It's a reflection of direct original mind. And it's completely devoid of the labels, words and grammar that Buddha tells us will always preclude holistic bodhi-mind.

The point of the koan, of course, is that we can study Guisan's actions here, and learn to respond the way he does, with his perfect example.

When the head monk had spoken his answer, it was Guisan's turn. He stepped over to the water urn, gave it a stout kick which knocked it over, and splashed the water out all over the floor. Upon that, with no further acknowledgement or niceties, Guisan silently turned his back on great Master Baizhang and the astonished emissary; walked out of the room, and returned to his previous tasks in the kitchen.

Master Baizhang and the emissary immediately agreed, of course, that the new master of the monastery on Gui Mountain would be Guisan the cook. The only one of the two who could communicate without words and symbols – in an absolutely direct-reality manner.

Ref_51: Cleary (1994) p. 14.

Ref_52: This famous Seventeenth Century master created the world's best-known koan "What Is The Sound Of One Hand Clapping." Today all Japanese masters of the Rinzai school trace their lineage back through Hakuin to the Tang Dynasty master Linji.

Ref_53: See Jean Beaudrillard's writings on contemporary loss of direct meaning ("simulacra").

Ref_54: Cleary (2005-c) p. 665.

Ref_55: Suzuki (1994) p.77 *On the deterioration of Zen in Song and later.*

Ref_56: Wright (2017) chapter 4.

Ref_57: Cheng (1992) p. 22

Ref_58: Yampolski (1967) p. 153.

Ref_59: *The non-dual mindset.*

Ref_60: *Lankavatara Sutra*, Suzuki (2009) p. 134.

Ref_61: *Lankavatara Sutra*, Suzuki (2009) p. 91.

Ref_62: *Lankavatara Sutra*, Suzuki (2009) pp. 76-77.

Ref_63: *Lankavatara Sutra*, Suzuki (2009) (1) p. 124; (2) p. 77.

Ref_64: Perhaps "original mind" can refer to either a person's individual mind, in its infant pre-verbal state of a few decades ago, or to our species original pre-verbal mind of a few million years ago?

Ref_65: Suzuki (1956) pp. 73-74.

AFTERWORD

Opening Both Eyes at the Same Time



Samadhi is a Sanskrit word which refers to the holistic state of bodhi-mind. (66) The *sam* root of the word is the same linguistic root as in our English word same - and that's what it means. The *adhi* is the same word-ending as our suffix *ity*. We can still clearly hear that the English word same-ity (sameness) is the same as its Sanskrit cognate samadhi, even though it's been six thousand or so years (since the time when both English and Sanskrit were closely-related dialects of their mother language P.I.E.). (67)

In the mindset of non-duality, everything is the same; it's samadhi. There's no judgements, no comparisons, no differentiation, no good, no bad. Awareness is simply being and doing, not thinking about things and not making conscious judgements or choices about them. Non-dual bodhi-mind is the state of same-ity, or samadhi.

Master Sengcan (Jianzhi Sengcan, d. 606, J. "Sosan" Kanchi Sosan), the Third Patriarch of Zen, is perhaps best known for two lines in his famous poem *Hsin Hsin Ming*. His objective was to cut straight through to the indescribable core of bodhi-mind, and then to

explain it as succinctly, tangibly, and mechanically as possible. The basic conclusion he tries to get across is that the specific mental function of consciously “choosing” one thing over another is the fundamental human act of creating the dualistic mindset. It’s as simple as that.

Sengcan’s idea is that if we can come to understand the basic nature of our subjective act of choosing, then we should know how to suspend that basic act, and thus experience non-duality.

Sengcan Third Patriarch, from his poem Hsin Hsin Ming

Bodhi-mind is not difficult – just don't engage in the act of choosing.

This famous line from Third Patriarch has been quoted and discussed extensively since Sengcan’s time. Sometimes it’s just quoted as advice, but as we might expect, it’s also given rise to interesting problems and questions:

Master Zhaozhou (Zhaozhou Congshen) (“Zow-dzoh”: 778 – 897 J. Joshu)

A monk asked Zhaozhou 'The True Way is without difficulty, just refrain from picking and choosing;' but to talk about it, even a little, is picking and choosing. How then do you instruct people? (68)

The act of labeling or naming things is basically choosing a particular definable category, from among all the categorical possibilities out there - and then choosing whether things around you either belong to that category, or belong-not to that category. To use Buddha's example: “Is that a person walking, or is it not?” Labeling or naming is consciously choosing or discriminating - it’s a duality, and it requires conceptualizing with a non-holistic mindset.

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

Because of discrimination there is a duality. (69)

Buddha, *Lankavatara Sutra*

By "discrimination" is meant that by which names are declared. ...Saying that this is such and no other, for instance; saying that this is an elephant, a horse, a wheel, a person walking, a woman, or a man, each idea thus discriminated is so determined. (70)

Master Zhaozhou

A monk asked “When two dragons are fighting for a pearl: what about that?” Zhaozhou answered “I’m just watching.” [I’m not involved; I’ve got no dog in the fight. It’s all the same to me. I’m just reflecting; not discriminating, picking, or choosing]. (71)

So if we think Sengcan is right about this ‘choosing’ theory, then just by learning how to identify and suspend the basic act of choosing, we will have learned to suspend all the hindrances to the non-dual mindset: labeling, naming, describing, conceptualizing,

comparing, contrasting, etc. He's saying they're all just different aspects of choosing; so this single concise target will achieve the objective. Sengcan is saying that "choosing" is our best label for the essential core of dualism. He's saying that bodhi-mind is achieved simply by avoiding this single mental operation, in all of its iterations.

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Gateless Gate koan #42: A Woman Awakens From Samadhi

Once Great Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, approached Buddha who was meditating on his throne. He approached as close as he was able; but then he noticed a woman, deep in samadhi. She was seated much closer to the throne than Manjusri was able to achieve. Manjusri asked Buddha how it was that this woman could approach closer to the throne than he could. Buddha told Manjusri to awaken the woman and ask her himself. Great Manjusri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom, was shocked to find that all his wise powers were insufficient to awaken the woman from her samadhi. Obviously, despite his unending wisdom, she had reached a state deeper than what he was capable of.

(72)

Buddha on his throne, of course, meditates in an absolute pure state of non-dual samadhi, or bodhi-mind. He tells us that when one is in this state of pure original mind there's no conscious awareness of any distinction, even between form and no-form, (73) or being and not-being. (74) It's just pure awareness, per se. The woman in samadhi wasn't at Buddha's throne yet, but she was so far into sameness that great efforts were required to finally awaken her (75) back to the world of dualities.

Gateless Gate koan #11 explains a very interesting and fundamental practice of the Zen Ancestors who lived around the time of the Tang Dynasty, Zen's classical age. The first step in becoming a Zen master was finding a teacher and studying with them, often at their monastery. The aim here was to gain an understanding of non-duality, as Sixth Patriarch tells us so clearly. Once there is an understanding, then the student is moved out into a hut in the wilderness, to live the life of a hermit for a time. They remain alone on the mountain until they absorb the actual experience of non-duality, through very deep solitary meditation, as with the woman in the Manjusri story.

It would often take a long time for the understanding of what non-duality is to ripen into the actual non-dual experience of full bodhi-mind, and it's easier to achieve as a lone hermit. As explained in *Gateless Gate* koan #2, if your understanding is somehow defective, or perhaps you're a slow learner, or maybe too clever for your own good as the Fox Roshi was, then this process of living alone on the mountain might take as long as 500 lifetimes. It could also be quick though – and in special cases it could possibly happen even at the student's first setting foot on the mountain.

Master Yuanwu (1063-1135 compiler of Blue Cliff Record collection of koans)

When the basic capacity is attuned you pass through to freedom in an instant. It doesn't take three incalculable eons. ... This is what is called realizing Buddhahood right where you stand. ... At the assembly where Buddha

preached the *Lotus Sutra* a naga girl [merely] offered a pearl, and immediately achieved true awakening. (76)

In any case, the Zen masters would go out and check on their hermits, every now and then, to test their state of awareness, and see if they were ready to leave the mountain. (77)

The real objective of the masters here is to train students to be bodhisattvas, and to send them back into society, practicing their bodhi-mind, to function as ordinary people - while they now work tirelessly to help all sentient beings towards enlightenment. (78)

Once they're sent back from the mountain, the hermits are expected to never leave the non-dual state of bodhi-mind, but must at the same time return to society and the world of dualities. (79) The two mindsets must co-exist - impossible as that may seem. How could we be fully engaged in the mindset of holistic non-duality, like the Manjusri woman, and yet at the same time be fully conscious in the pedestrian world of duality?

Samsara is a Sanskrit word for the dualist world, the world of things, and Nirvana is a word for one hundred percent non-dual awareness. Zen is a sub-school of Mahayana (mega-wagon) Buddhism. The highest teaching of Mahayana is that "Samsara and Nirvana are One". (Lower levels of the teaching, however, generally focus on watching the pointing finger: turning one's back to Samsara, and struggling to approach Nirvana).

In the *Platform Sutra*, the Sixth Patriarch is explicit; we need to have a two track mind, and must fully engage both mindsets at the same time.

Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch

Make uttermost differentiations of all phenomena, while remaining inwardly seated, totally unmoved, in the first essence.

i.e. maintain a mindset of differentiation and full-duality, while at the same time remaining a hundred-percent anchored inwardly in the non-duality of original mind; first essence. One hundred percent on both tracks.

Luckily we do have a two-track brain; two very different, independently functioning, cerebral hemispheres which, as extensive research has shown, can have completely independent thoughts from each other. (80) Modern brain science shows we have a leftbrain wired to manage dualistic, sequential awareness, and a rightbrain designed to manage non-dual, holistic consciousness. "Rightbrain sees only the forest, and leftbrain sees only the trees. (81) Huineng tells us that neither of these two tracks should be compromised at all. They should both be "totally" engaged to the "uttermost."

Ref_66: *The word itself precedes the life of Shakyamuni Buddha by a long time.*

Ref_67: *"Proto-Indo-European" the ancient mother tongue of Sanskrit, Latin, Pali (likely Buddha's mother tongue), Hindi, Parsi, English, and most other European languages.*

Ref_68: Green (2001) p. 44.

Ref_69: Lankavatara Sutra, Suzuki (2009) (1) p. 180.

Ref_70: Lankavatara Sutra, Suzuki (2009) p. 195.

Ref_71: Green (2001) p. 91.

Ref_72: One important takeaway from this story is that wisdom is not the path. An ordinary person is more likely to achieve bodhi-mind than the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.

Ref_73: Buddha's Flower Sermon, Gateless Gate koan #6 and other places.

Ref_74: Lankavatara Sutra, Suzuki (2009) p. 46. Buddha says "The state in which noble wisdom is realized is beyond being and non-being." Also many other places in the Lanka.

Ref_75: The rest of the koan tells how she was finally awakened.

Ref_76: Cleary (1994) p. 81

Ref_77: The episode recounted in Gateless Gate koan #11 begins with Master Zhaozhou going out to examine two of his hermits.

Ref_78: When a person becomes a bodhisattva they take a vow to never enter Nirvana themselves, until they have helped all other sentient beings in the universe achieve enlightenment. In other words a person cannot become fully enlightened until they live in a universe where all sentient beings are also enlightened...

Ref_79: Cleary, J.C. and Thomas, trans. (1994) pp. 60-61

Ref_80: Gazzaniga (1967) p. 29; and Blakeslee (1980) pp. 9-10.

Ref_81: Ornstein (1977) p. 12; and Wright (2017) chapter 4.

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- Deshan (Deshan Xuanjian) (782-865 J. Tokusan Senkan)
- Dongshan (Dongshan Shouchu) (910-990 J. Tozan Shucho) Co-Founder of the Caodong school
- Foyan (Foyan Qingyuan) (1067-1120 J. Butsugan Seion)
- Guisan (Guisan Lingyou) (“**Gwee**-sahn” 771–854) J. Isan Reiyu) Co-Founder of the Guiyang School
- Hongren (Daman Hongren) (601-674 J. ‘Gunin’ Daiman Gunin or Konin) Fifth Patriarch
- Huineng (Dajian Huineng) (“**Whey**-nung” 638-713 J. “Eno” Daikan Eno) Sixth Patriarch
- Koan Daigu (c. 9th Cen. J. Gaoan Dayu)
- Linji (Linchi Yixuan) (“**Lin-gee**” 810-866 J. Rinzaigen) Founder of the Linji (Rinzai) School
- Mazu (Mazu Daoyi) (709-788 J. Baso Doitsu)
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